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Toy trains are still alive on TV

YOUNG SHELDON CARRIES ON A NOTABLE TRADITION

Electric trains have enjoyed a special relationship with television since the medium gained a foothold in American households after World War II. They have at times faded to the background, but now, thanks to a popular new series, trains again play an important role on TV. Good news for dedicated hobbyists!

The opportunity to go behind the scenes at Warner Bros. Studios to see the O gauge layout used on the set of *Young Sheldon* thrilled me. I hope my article about the show and its brilliant if occasionally exasperating hero will convey how much fun photographer Steve Crise and I had when we spent a day with the show's production crew as well as the employees of the store that had built the layout for the set.

Everything moved along after CTT Editor Carl Swanson suggested I learn about the layout and its place on *Young Sheldon* (spun off from the award-winning series on CBS, *The Big Bang Theory*). He wanted me to find out how the producers and writers of *Young Sheldon* were incorporating trains into the series.

First, I had to figure out how to learn about the series and the trains. On a hunch, I contacted the crew at the Train Shack in Burbank, Calif. Mindy and Jon were fantastic in explaining how they had built the show's layout. They helped me gain access to the production team. We made a date for Steve and me to visit and take pictures for the feature article beginning on page 38.



Senior editor Roger Carp visited the set of *Young Sheldon*, a popular TV series featuring toy trains.

Extremely insightful was finding out from Marc Klein and other members of the crew how they collaborated with the Train Shack to create a layout typical of what a youngster with limited resources and hobby experience might have built. They told me how they used the layout as one prop among many in the garage said to be part of Sheldon's family home in east Texas in 1989. Making the layout seem rudimentary yet fun challenged them.

Electric trains have helped viewers get to know Sheldon, whose intelligence makes him a genius yet whose social skills make him a nerd. We appreciate him, in part because

of how he interacts with his three-rail layout.

The effect reminded me of how many years earlier American Flyer trains made it possible to understand the difficulties one boy felt about getting older on *Leave It to Beaver*. Or how grown men might still long for moments when they could run Lionel trains on *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*.

Toy trains have long been used to help us better understand our favorite characters on TV. This notable tradition gains new life and meaning on *Young Sheldon*. Go ahead and tune in to the great series and see the layout – but only after reading the article about our exclusive visit to the set.

Roger Carp
Roger Carp, Senior editor

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MORE ON LIONEL'S MONON BOXCARS

The description of the Lionel no. 9230 (November 1918 Collectible Classics) as having an “oxide red or Tuscan red sheet-metal frame” is incorrect. Early 9200-series boxcars have blackened steel frames.

I obtained my no. 9230 in 1971 by mail from a Lionel dealer who used to advertise in *Model Railroader* magazine.

My 9230 has blackened steel door guides top and bottom, which suggests earlier production than the example shown in the article (above). The white markings on my 9230 are identical to those on your example, including the 1-72 built date.

The Chicago, Indianapolis & Louisville RR changed its name to Monon RR in January 1956. The stylized-M “teepee” herald was adopted at that time.

Monon was highly visible in railroading publications, where toymakers often looked for ideas, when the Lionel Corporation chose to issue its first Monon boxcar, the no. 3494-550, in 1957.

Monon officials may have reached out to toy manufacturers seeking publicity. If so, they were successful, as evidenced by American Flyer's no. 956 piggyback car (1956), Lionel's no. 3494-550 (1957), and



Marx's lithographed diesel locomotives. Or, perhaps Monon offered financial backing to the toymakers.

The mundane appearance of the Lionel no. 3494-550 and the similar no. 3494-625 Soo Line car likely generated few advance orders. Neither the Monon nor the Soo Line was included in a cataloged outfit.

Because of their scarcity, the nos. 3494-550 and 3494-625 commanded top dollar among the train collecting fraternity in the 1960s.

As to why Fundimensions chose to produce the 9230 Monon boxcar, I suggest the toymaker paid close attention to the aftermarket for postwar items and sought to reissue pieces for which there was strong demand.

As a further example, note that the collectible postwar no. 3494-625 Soo Line boxcar was also reincarnated – as the no. 9207 – in 1971.

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19038	Adolphus Busch Observation Car	45.00
19960	LOTS Western Pacific St 'O' Boxcar	45.00
19965	LRRC Big Pete Aquarium Car	49.95
19992	LRRC Western Union Tool Car	30.00
26001	BP Piggyback Trailer Car	45.00
26214	U.S. Stamps Boxcar	25.00
29200	LRRC Lionel Corporation 9700 Boxcar	25.00
39217	Century Club II Boxcar	25.00
52000	TCA D.T.&I. Flatcar with Trailer	45.00
52013	Artrain Norfolk Southern Flat w/Trailer	75.00
52047	TTOS Cotton Belt St 'O' Woodside Caboose	55.00
52063	TCA NYC Pacemaker 6464 -overstamped	195.00
52064	TCA Missouri Pacific 6464 -overstamped	195.00
52067	LOTS Burlington Ice Car	45.00
52079	TTOS Southern Pacific b/w caboose	45.00
52099	St. Louis Flatcar w/Trailer & Truck	45.00
52121	TTOS Mobilgas St 'O' Unibody Tanker	55.00
52151	LCCA Amtrak Reifer St 'O' Car	45.00
52171	CLRC Union Pacific Oper. Car	55.00
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52379	CP Rail Flatcar w/WB Mason Trailer	89.95
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52392	Penna. Flatcar w/Hoods Milk Tanker	65.00
52436	LOTS D&H PS-2 Scale Hopper	69.95
52410	TTOS Southern Pacific Piggyback Car	65.00
52412	LCCA Union Pacific Auxiliary Car	95.00
52415	TCA Kids Club Sheriff & Outlaw Car	49.95
52419	LOTS Touring Layout Operating Car	65.00
52456	LOTS 2007 Alpenrose Flatcar w/Milk Cont.	99.95
52505	TTOS Smokey Bear Flatcar w/Airplane	99.95
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36672	Norfolk Southern Porthole Caboose	29.95
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37034	NYC Operating Helicopter Car	39.95
81270	Bethlehem Steel Ore Car	39.95
81346	D&H Red Coil Covered Gondola	39.95
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81484	John Deere Lighted Caboose	39.95
82327	Western Maryland WoodChip Hopper	39.95
82328	C&O Hi-Cube Boxcar	39.95
82328	Chessie Extended Vision Caboose	34.95
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82439	Spirit of 76 Porthole Caboose	39.95
82440	Railbox Hi-Cube Boxcar	34.95
82441	Pennsylvania St 'O' Coal Hopper	44.95
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83298	John Deere Flatcar w/2 Tractors	59.95
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26725	New York Central Jumping Hobo Car	45.00
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82068	Norfolk Southern Coal Dump Car	45.95
82906	Pluto Operating Walking Brakeman Car	71.95
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83252	Gold Medal Milk Car & Platform	128.95
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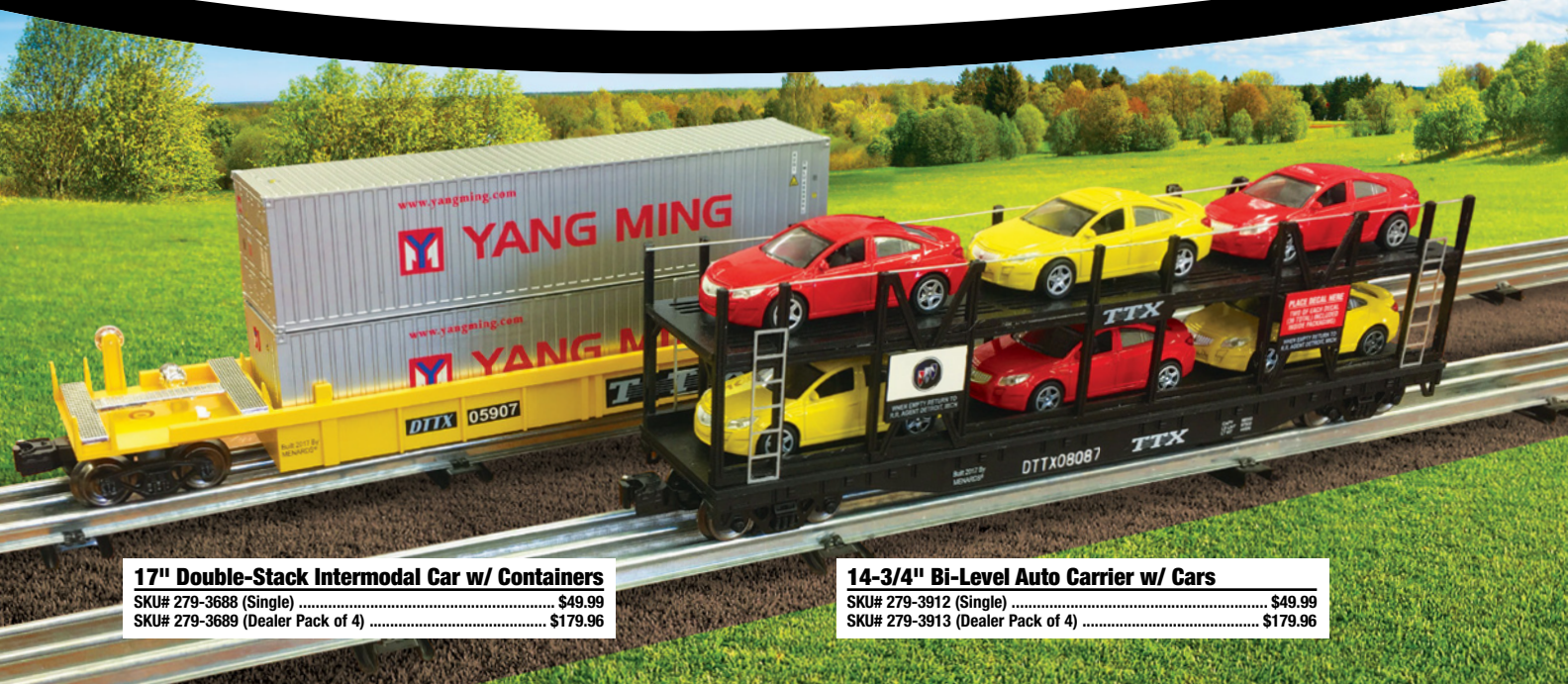
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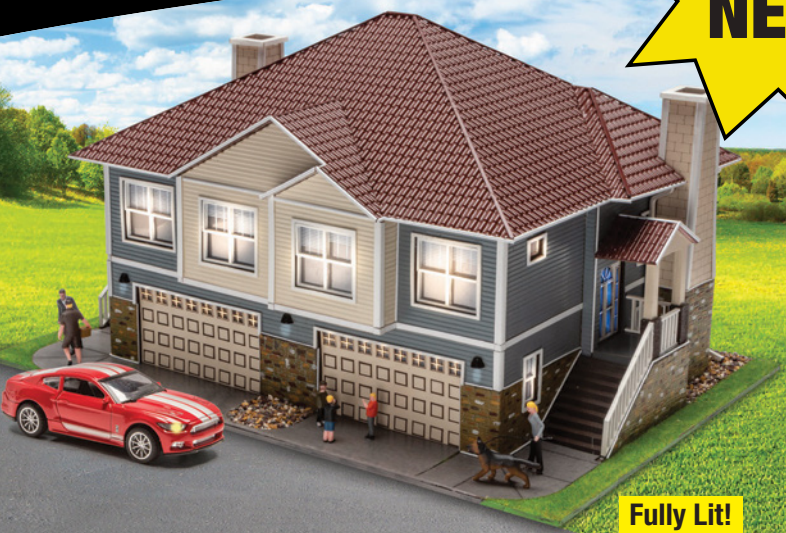
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PHOTO ALBUM

YOUR PICTURES



▲ JOSEPH OLEXA'S O GAUGE DISPLAY

For the past 10 years, O gauge modeler Joseph Olexa has been creating a temporary Christmas display at his place of employment in Tucson, Ariz. His motive? To make the holiday season more enjoyable for the men and women working alongside him while introducing them to the many pleasures associated with toy trains. The wintry scenery and figures must feel right at home in the desert of Arizona!

► KENT FRANKLIN'S O GAUGE LAYOUT

There's no better excuse than Christmas for bringing your toy trains out of storage and letting them stretch their muscles on a layout assembled to fit under a decorated tree. Kent Franklin couldn't agree more. He follows that recipe for delight when the holidays approach in Henderson, Nev. Among the stars on his O gauge railroad is this handsome Lionel no. 671 steam turbine, still going strong after 70 years.





▲ TODD RYAN'S O GAUGE LAYOUT

People have been building displays of toy trains under their Christmas trees for more than a century. Some layouts, as described and pictured in *Christmas and Electric Trains*, can be as simple as what Todd Ryan assembled for his family in Cincinnati, Ohio, using Lionel FasTrack. Others have more elaborate plans and require piles of track and plenty of new or vintage structures. Plenty of help for making your own holiday railroad can be found in that new special-interest publication from CTT.



WANT TO CONTRIBUTE?

PLEASE SEND your best pictures to CTT Photo Album, 21027 Crossroads Circle, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612 or email them to photoalbum@ClassicToyTrains.com. Digital photos must be taken with the camera set at the largest-possible file size. Include your name, address, and daytime telephone number; a description of each image; and the name of the photographer or layout owner. If your photo is published, we will pay you \$50 as long as we have not previously bought the photo.

For help on taking pictures, go to www.ClassicToyTrains.com/SubmissionGuidelines. That will lead you to a number of tips on improving your photographic skills as well as assistance with depth-of-field, lighting, and composition.



▲ THOMAS BYRNE'S O GAUGE LAYOUT

Three levels of track make it possible for O gauge enthusiast Thomas Byrne to operate his version of the North Pole Central without ever getting bored. He notes with pride how he has added more than 300 trees and 100 figures on the holiday display shared with family and friends each year in Poughkeepsie, N.Y. No need to inquire how much artificial snow Thomas sifted onto the many detailed vignettes.



▲ JACK AND MIRANDA ZWICKER'S O GAUGE DISPLAY

Dolls and stuffed animals, action figures and snow globes, miniature houses and electric trains – these are the toys for girls and boys that merchants have put on display in their storefront windows to entice children and their families. Jack Zwicker and his wife, Miranda, count themselves among the millions of baby boomers who loved those Christmas displays. Little wonder the husband and wife residing in Wellsburg, Va., have, in cooperation with a local bank, created this one to nurture memories of what used to be commonplace in the U.S.



▲ SCOTT PLUNKETT'S S GAUGE LAYOUT

American Flyer trains have been parts of Scott Plunkett's life for about as long as he can remember. Not surprisingly, when his sons were growing up, Scott made sure to introduce them to his classic S gauge sets, including his prized Frontiersman old-time steam train. Guess what? A third generation is currently watching the postwar trains run over the loop of two-rail track Scott has set up under the family Christmas tree in Wauwatosa, Wis. Care to join them?

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LIONEL

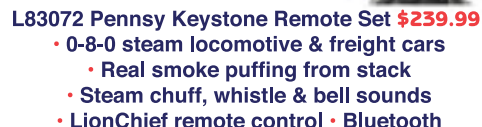
READY TO RUN TRAIN SETS
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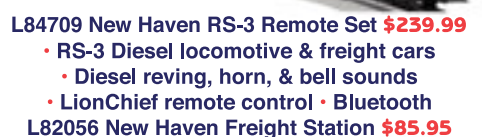
- L83510 Thomas & Friends Remote Set \$149.95**
- 0-6-0 steam locomotive
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 - Set of three removable faces
 - Annie & Clarabel Coaches
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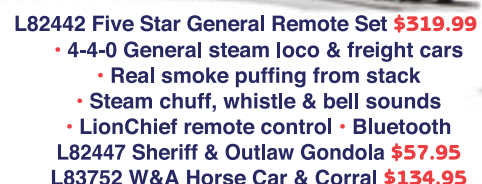
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- L84709 New Haven RS-3 Remote Set \$239.99**
- RS-3 Diesel locomotive & freight cars
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- L82442 Five Star General Remote Set \$319.99**
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L82447 Sheriff & Outlaw Gondola \$57.95
L83752 W&A Horse Car & Corral \$134.95



- L82982 Christmas Express Remote Set \$255.99**
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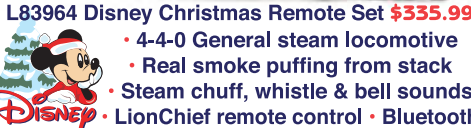
L84500 NS Unibody Tank Car \$53.95
L84498 NS Fire Rescue Car \$53.95



- L84754 Anheuser-Busch Clydesdale Set \$335.99**
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 - Steam chuff, whistle & bell sounds
 - LionChief remote control • Bluetooth



- L85246 Anheuser Busch Reefer \$57.95**
L85247 Clydesdales Reefer \$57.95
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- L83964 Disney Christmas Remote Set \$335.99**
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 - Real smoke puffing from stack
 - Steam chuff, whistle & bell sounds
 - LionChief remote control • Bluetooth



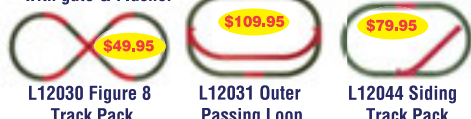
- L83790 Mickey Happy Holidays Boxcar \$60.95**
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 - Real smoke puffing from stack
 - Steam chuff, whistle & bell sounds
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L84748

CHRISTMAS OPERATING CARS		
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AMERICAN FLYER

S-Gauge

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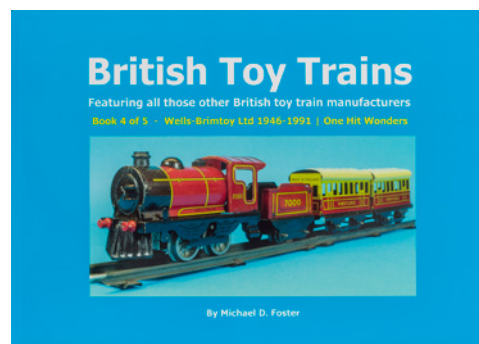
PRODUCT NEWS

WITH THE CTT STAFF



FOUR SILOS OF FUN: A towering rail-served business is the latest O gauge structure from Menards. The no. 279-4434 American Materials Plant is a fully assembled structure standing 16½ inches high with four silos above a 6-inch tall run-through loading bay for hoppers or gondolas. The building's base is 6¼ inches wide and 5¾ inches long. The structure is weathered gray with two American Materials illuminated signs. The signs are animated and depict an American flag waving in the breeze. Eight white security lights, four blinking aircraft warning lights, and two worker figures complete the scene. Included are 14 peel-and-stick signs allowing users to label the silos for a wide range of materials, including sand, gravel, coal, and grain. The accessory requires a Menards no. 279-4062 or no. 279-4050 4.5-volt power supply (sold separately). American Materials costs \$79.99 plus shipping, or select free shipping to your local Menards store. Order online at www.Menards.com/Trains.

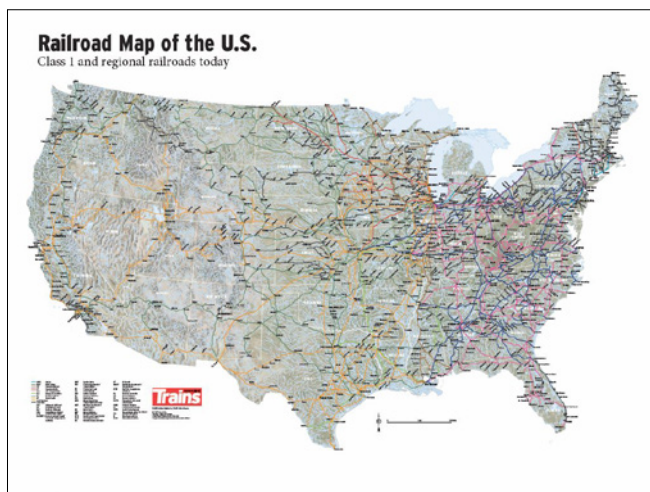
MORE FROM PREWAR BRITAIN: Author Michael Foster has released the fourth volume in his series of comprehensive books researching the lesser-known toy train manufacturers in the United Kingdom. *British Toy Trains Vol. 4, Brimtoy 1946-1991 and One Hit Wonders* covers the latter years of Brimtoy production as well as various small companies. The 165-page book includes more than 350 photographs. The book is available from Blystone Books, 2132 Delaware Ave., Pittsburgh, PA 15218 or call 412-371-3511. It is also available from Al Michelini at Britishmarx@gmail.com.





GIANT OF THE WEST: With Union Pacific restoring an actual 4-8-8-4 "Big Boy," the time is right for MTH to offer a RailKing Imperial line O gauge model of the gigantic articulated steam engine. The no. 30-1779-1 features Proto-Sound 3.0 sound and control, two motors, four traction tires, crew figures, cab interior light, painted backhead gauges, and a real coal load in the tender. Available in four road numbers (4005, 4012, 4014, and 4017), the locomotives are \$799.95 each. See your MTH retailer or go to www.MTHtrains.com for more information.

LINKED BY STEEL: *Trains* Magazine is offering a new map presenting the current routes of more than 30 Class 1 and regional railroads. Printed on heavyweight paper, the map highlights each railroad, what cities it serves, and where it intersects with other lines. The map is available in two sizes, 24 x 36 inches (item no. 83030, \$19.99) and 36 x 48 inches (no. 83029, \$42.99). See your hobby retailer, or order online at www.KalmbachHobbyStore.com.



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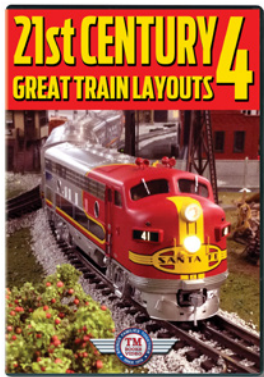
PRODUCT NEWS



NEW O GAUGE BOXCARS: Menards has released a new series of boxcars. The cars are 11 inches long, run on O-27 and wider-diameter track, and feature sliding doors on both sides, detailed logos and markings, and metal trucks and couplers. The O gauge series includes the nos. 279-4530 Milwaukee Road and 279-4538 Morton Salt models. The boxcars cost \$19.99 each plus shipping, or select free shipping to your local Menards store. Order online at www.Menards.com/trains.

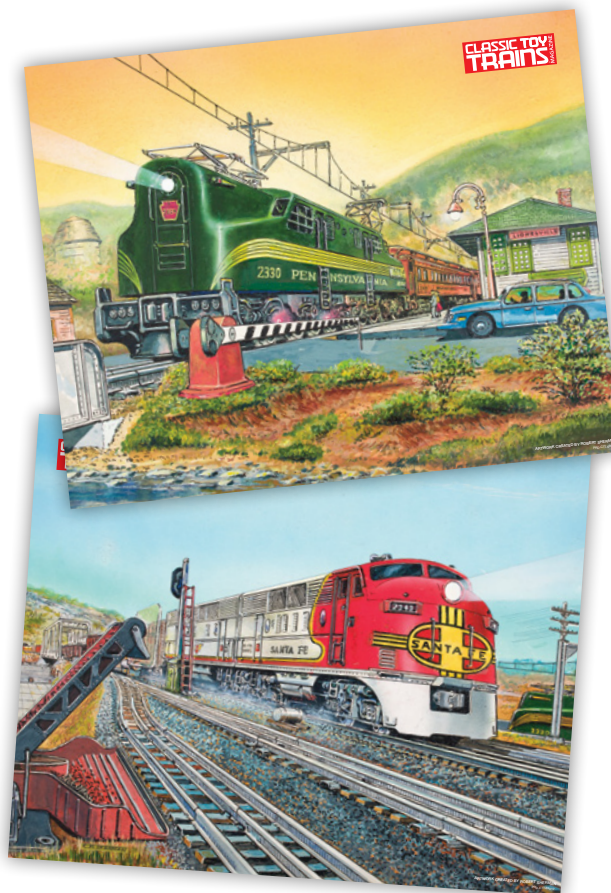


CREATIVE RAILROAD PHOTOGRAPHY: *Historic North American Locomotives*, a new museum-quality book by author Ken Boyd, traces the development of locomotives from the early 1800s to the present. The 232-page collection presents 100 locomotives from the 1805 Trevithick to the 2013 General Electric Genesis in detailed color photographs created with High Dynamic Range (HDR) digital imaging techniques. The hardcover edition (no. 01306) is \$44.99, and the softcover edition (no. 01305) is \$29.99. See your local hobby retailer or order online at www.KalmbachHobbyStore.com.



BEST OF TODAY:

21st Century Great Train Layouts Part 4 is the latest addition to TM Books & Video's library. This 60-minute DVD features the just-completed permanent layout of the Hi-rail Modular Train Club of Griffith, Ind. Other segments include the hi-rail empire created by Art and Jim Williams. The disc costs \$14.99. See your hobby retailer or go to www.tmbv.com to order.



FROM OUR ARCHIVE:

Classic Toy Trains is offering three 16 x 20-inch prints drawn exclusively for the magazine by famed Lionel postwar catalog artist Robert Sherman. Shown is the no. 69018 "GG1 at Lionelville Station," which originally appeared on the cover of the February 1992 CTT, and the no. 69017 "Santa Fe Warbonnet F3 Diesels" from the centerspread of the December 1998 CTT. Not shown is the no. 69016, depicting a Lionel no. 773 Hudson steam engine. The prints are on high-quality 100-pound coated gloss text stock and cost \$14.99 each or all three for \$39.99 plus shipping. To order, go to www.KalmbachHobbyStore.com/cttposters.

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Christmas

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Holiday overhaul

TIPS FOR A SMOOTH-RUNNING DISPLAY

PART TWO

Christmas is just around the corner so it's time to make sure seasonal train displays are ready to deliver holiday fun — toy train style!

Last month I covered the basics of checking over your transformer and track. Now we'll turn the spotlight on locomotives and rolling stock.

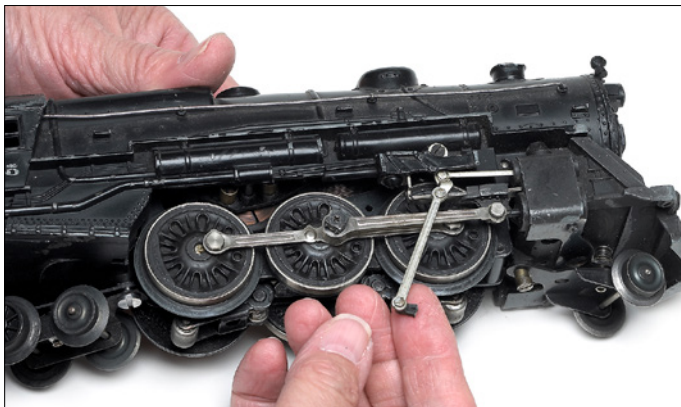
Oil and grease

Before trying to run anything, I recommend doing a preliminary inspection. Now is the time to replace broken or missing parts.

The next step is a general lubrication of each locomotive. The basic rule of thumb is to oil anything that spins within something else and use grease on gears, as shown in the photos at right.

Specifically, I oil the ends of the armature shaft on the motor while trying to avoid getting any oil or grease on the brushes or commutator. In addition, I lubricate the axles where they pass through the truck frame or motor frame. The tiniest drop you can manage is plenty.

Then I apply grease sparingly to the gears and rotate the wheels to distribute it around.



On some models the wheels cannot be rotated by hand. In those cases, I set the engine on the track and apply a little power to rotate the wheels.

Another good tip is to pay attention to rollers and slide shoes. The first thing to do is simply make sure they are present. Then take a closer look for distortion, excessive wear, or corrosion. Repair any major issues you encounter.

PART ONE WAS IN THE DECEMBER 2018 ISSUE

Tips for cleaning vintage track and inspecting transformers.

A few simple maintenance steps now will guarantee reliable holiday running through the Christmas season. Repair and restoration expert Joseph Mania recommends a preliminary lubrication using model-railroad-friendly oil and grease.



Rolling stock

Okay, now it's time to try out your locomotive! Place it on the track and turn up the power slowly. If all goes well, your steamer or diesel will move along as it was designed.

Vintage steam engines with whistles have the mechanism installed in their tenders. To be sure that whistles continue to work reliably through a season of running, check the tenders for missing or broken wiring and make sure all the wheels and rollers are clean.

Car inspection

Before coupling any freight or passenger cars behind the engine, look over all the couplers to ensure they are intact and not broken or bent or are missing any parts.

Next, lubricate the wheels on each car at the point the axles pass through. Give the wheels a spin to work the oil inside. In the case of rolling stock with illumination, check the wiring and rollers. Of course, check the bulbs also.

Add the cars one by one

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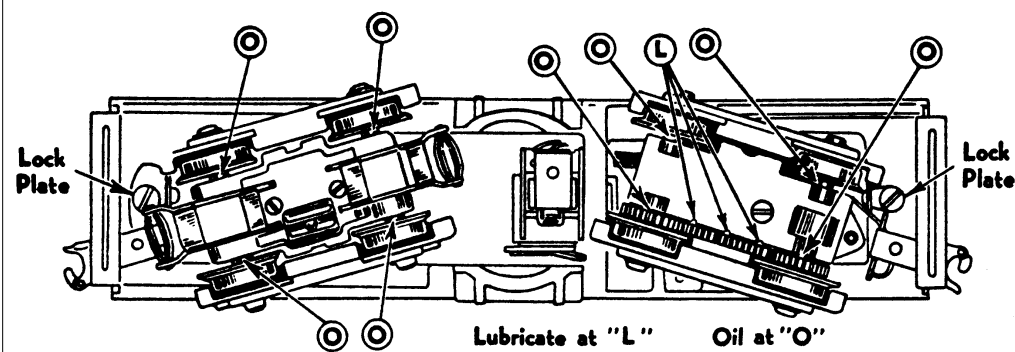
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QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



As this illustration from a Lionel repair manual indicates, oil everything marked "O" and lubricate everything marked "L" with grease. Just the smallest drop or dab you can manage is plenty.

and then operate your train. Sometimes a derailment of one car is actually caused by an adjacent car, so try turning the offending car around after making note of which of its trucks derailed.

If the same truck derailed again, you've found the likely

culprit. If the same car derailed but on the opposite end, you can likely blame the car to which it was coupled.

Sometimes a coupler can become slightly bent during storage or a spring breaks or something has seized up. Be on the lookout for all of these.

Most toy trains from the middle of the 20th century were built well and seldom require extensive repair to get back into operation. Better still, when maintained properly they will remain operational for many holidays to come. Merry Christmas! **CT**

ASK US

HAVE A QUESTION?

Write to "Questions & Answers" at Classic Toy Trains, P.O. Box 1612, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612, or email us at qsandas@ClassicToyTrains.com and put the words "questions & answers" in the subject line.



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It's a bit sad when a favorite series of articles ends, like the recent project railroad, the City Terminal & Transfer, did in the December 2018 issue. But there's good news – you can watch 15 different videos of the layout's progress anytime on Model Railroader Video Plus.

Not interested in the CT&T's theme or track plan? Perhaps you need to build legs for a tabletop display or a future layout. Kent Johnson and David Popp built legs set six inches in from the edge of the frame in Episode 2: Legs for a Layout (MRVideoPlus.com/CTT2). Bonus: you won't kick the legs as you walk around the layout!

If you need scenery advice, check out Episode 11: Starting Scenery (MRVideoPlus.com/CTT11). Follow along as Kent uses water-base paints, white glue, and

hobby scenery materials to create realistic tunnels and rocky ledges.

The CT&T also showcases a new product in a video: The Lionel Corporation Tinplate by MTH no. 256 electric locomotive and passenger car set. Watch it for free at MRVideoPlus.com/PRMTH. Classic tinplate equipment never looked and sounded so good! **CTT**



Kent and David discuss an interesting method of adding legs to any layout in CT&T: Episode 2. Casters on the legs' bottoms give even more functionality.

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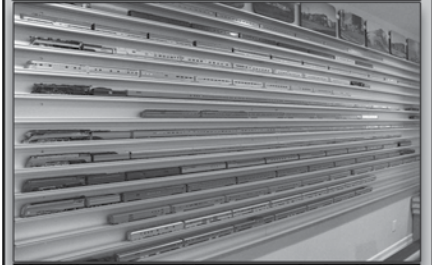
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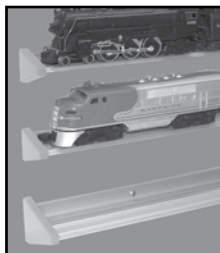


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Holiday lights of the present

LITTLE BULBS CONTINUE TO ENHANCE MY LAYOUT

In my column for the December 2018 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, I mentioned the phrase, "Timing and lighting are everything." I went on to reminisce

about what tiny lights meant to me during the Christmas season when I was growing up. They filled our home with warmth and color and left wonderful memories about the American Flyer line I created for the village my sisters and I made for our family Christmas tree.

Let me bring you up to the present. Colored lights have never stopped adding joy to Christmas, especially when they are part of a toy train display. I still build layouts under our family's tree, and we have a large O gauge

railroad at my store, the Underground Railroad Shoppe, in New Castle, Pa.

I believe lighting is the lifeblood of a train display. Miniature lighting systems have become highly sophisticated. I'm not only talking about the commercial train displays all over the world. I have in mind the lights hobbyists like me put on our O and S gauge layouts.



LED lighting, which uses light-emitting diodes, is very affordable and so easy to add to a village. That's why I use many forms of LED lights on

the display at my store, with LED strip lights being one of the latest additions. They're small, flat LED lights applied to a roll of tape with adhesive backing.

I've used LED strip lights to outline the two 8-foot-long wood overhead double bridges that command attention on our layout. They give them a "big city" look.

Guys at the store installed LED headlights and taillights in many of the 1:43 die-cast metal vehicles on the layout. We disassembled them and wired the lights.

We also have been using many of the structures sold by Menards, the home-improvement chain based in Wisconsin. They have lots of LED lighting.

Holiday lights bring us back to what we loved about celebrations and toy trains in the past. We can relive those experiences as we admire well-lit toy train layouts.

Once again, timing and lighting make the holiday season so special and give life to our home and store layouts.

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- An O gauge winter layout that showcases a grandfather's sizable collection of porcelain buildings.
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STARTING SMALL TO MAKE A BIG SPL

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OF BILL BRANT'S STUNNING
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by Roger Carp

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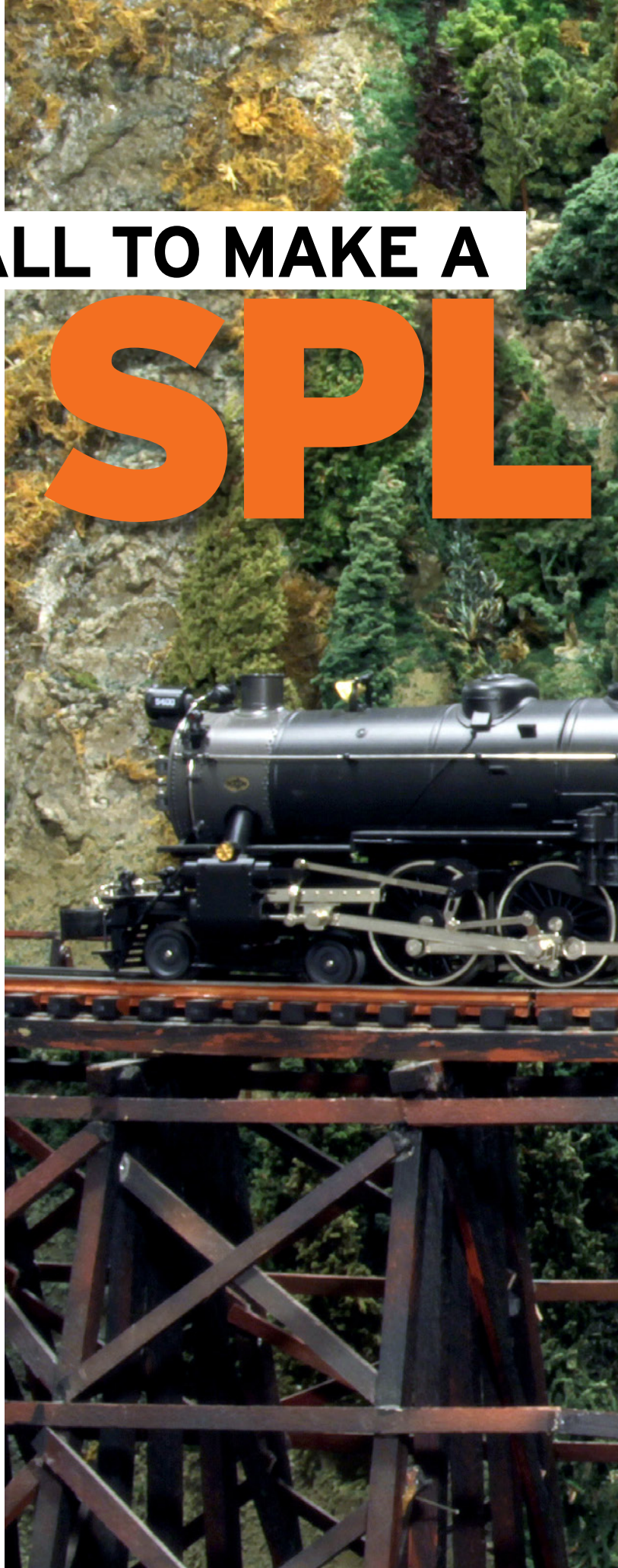
ver hear the adage, “A journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step”? The meaning should be clear, reminding us to start on the projects we dream of accomplishing. Waiting for the right moment to arrive or being daunted by the size of what we want to achieve will mean nothing more than delays.

This statement, modified for this hobby, might read, “A great layout begins with a simple train.”

Many exciting and detailed layouts started as childhood dreams nurtured by an inexpensive train set. In other words, the adults building magnificent displays now can trace their motivation to being given a basic train decades ago.

William Brant, whose 17 x 28-foot O gauge empire reflects his diverse modeling skills and ample hobby knowledge, exemplifies this point. The layout he enjoys operating and continues to upgrade came to life because almost 70 years ago, Santa brought him a Lionel set from the low end.

1 The many passengers riding in style on the Pennsylvania RR's streamlined train feel no anxiety as an MTH 4-6-2 Pacific carries them over the 8-foot-long wood trestle.



ASH





2 A New York Central freight train led by an MTH model of an Electro-Motive Division SW8 switcher dashes across a viaduct towering above an old general store. One family has managed to keep that business prospering for more than half a century and has no plan to retire anytime soon.

Scouting the future

Owners of O and S gauge layouts shown in *Classic Toy Trains* often reminisce about the simple Marx windup or the American Flyer Atlantic set that lit a fire still burning bright. For Bill, the basic set came from Lionel by way of a train shop located in Springfield, Ohio.

Executives at Lionel had realized in the years after World War II they were ceding the low end of the mushrooming domestic market to the A.C. Gilbert Co. and Louis Marx & Co. To combat their main competitors, the leaders of Lionel fielded complete outfits whose low retail price was guaranteed to capture more traffic.

So, in 1948 Lionel announced two basic sets, both selling for less than \$20. The nos. 1111 and 1112, referred by Lionel as Scout sets, helped it challenge Gilbert and Marx while making inroads at giant retail stores and national chains. (The February 2018 CTT sheds light on the two sets.)

Anyone buying a Scout outfit or receiving one, as Bill did, realized fairly soon the steam locomotive operated unreliably and the couplers worked poorly and were not compatible with Lionel's typical rolling stock. The reputation of the Scout engines and cars never recovered, and many of the kids getting them ended up disappointed and frustrated. Some might have abandoned the hobby forever.

Not Bill! Count him among the minority of youngsters given a Scout train who fell in love with it. That low-end set was, he says, the inspiration and motivation for



Bill Brant considers himself very fortunate because his wife supports his hobby of O gauge railroading and has used her talents to improve the layout.

everything he has done in the hobby over the past seven decades.

Serving as Bill's guide along the journey youth was his older brother, Bob. They moved forward together, thanks to the 4 x 8-foot layout Bob constructed as a home for his kid brother's Scout freight set. Amazingly, Bob made everything on the layout from scratch, using both common materials and commercial items.

Traveling on his own

Bill was thrilled by the little rail world his brother had crafted. He added to his roster of Lionel locomotives and rolling stock, advancing to the regular models and leaving his Scout train behind.

Despite maintaining fervor for O gauge trains and building his collection of post-war and modern-era pieces, Bill failed to take the next step and start on a permanent layout. He never blamed a lack of interest or minimal resources for his failure to advance. Instead, as Bill says, "My career as a computer technician meant my wife and I were always on the move."

Then in 1999 Bill retired and prepared to settle into a new home with Linda. The time had arrived when an elaborate, realistic layout could finally become a reality.

Linda and Bill first did just what they believed was necessary to make a home in their new quarters. Then they conferred about the proposed layout, discussing the goals and design before getting ready to start the construction.

PUTTING THEIR HEADS TOGETHER, BILL AND LINDA SKETCHED A TWO-LEVEL LAYOUT WITH THREE INDEPENDENT NETWORKS OF TRACK.



3 The sun may have set just an hour ago, but life in this unnamed city has yet to slow down. In fact, people are driving in to see the performance at the theater. Too bad the gent in the foreground is having car trouble. At least the train won't be late!

Realistic appearance

Bill and Linda agreed on a realistic modeling approach focusing on some of the great American railroads of the post-war era. Specifically, Bill wanted to highlight the locomotives and passenger trains associated with the New York Central and the Pennsylvania RR. So he got O gauge replicas of that equipment.

Putting their heads together, Bill and Linda sketched a two-level layout with three independent networks of track. The outer portion of the railroad would border the walls of the room; a stout peninsula was going to occupy the middle.

Bill saw the many merits of assembling open-grid benchwork with 2 x 4 lumber for the legs and 1 x 4 wood for the supporting units. Over that framework he placed ½-inch-thick pieces of Homasote, with cork roadbed following on top.

The Brants spurned tubular track in favor of straights and curves from Gar-Graves and turnouts from Curtis Hi-Rail Products and Ross Custom Switches. The diameters ranged from 42 to 72 inches.

Automatic operation

Bill envisioned an auspicious plan of operation for the new layout. He wanted

to run a number of trains simultaneously using conventional means of control. Old Lionel transformers (types V and Z) should, he believed, be up to the task of powering as many as 10 trains at once.

Bill developed the outer portion to have one complete loop of track on its main level and a second on the elevated section. The former, he decided, should accommodate five freight trains. The upper area would be for passenger traffic, with three trains handling everything.

Regarding the peninsula in the middle, its double-track main line would encircle a small city before using tunnels to wind

AT A GLANCE

Name: Bill and Linda Brant's O gauge layout

Dimensions: 17 x 28 feet

Track: GarGraves (diameters range from 42 to 72 inches)

Switches: Curtis Hi-Rail Products, Ross Custom Switches

Motive power: K-Line, Lionel, MTH, Weaver, Williams

Rolling stock: Atlas O, K-Line, Lionel, MTH

Controls: Lionel types V and Z transformers

Accessories: Lionel, MTH

Structures: Ameri-Towne, Menards, MTH, Plasticville

Vehicles: Diecast Direct, Ertl, Road Champs, Solido

Figures: Model Power

Three independent networks of track on two separate levels make it a breeze for Bill and Linda to run almost a dozen trains without fear of a collision. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos.

back around over truss bridges. A couple of trains should always be able to operate on that portion of the layout.

How could Bill manage a grant total of 10 trains running at the same time?

"Once I applied power to a loop," he explained, "the trains would run in automatic mode using reed switches with magnets on the last car of each train. When the magnet passed over a reed switch, the relays should be activated. As a result, the incoming train would stop, the switches would be aligned, the signal would change, and the next train would start."

The most ambitious plan has since proved to be an absolute winner. The folks visiting the Brants' train room are enthralled by the streamlined passenger sets and long freight consists barreling around the layout.

Tree-filled landscapes

If the enormous cast of trains represented the star attractions on the new model railroad, then Bill and Linda needed to provide them with a suitably

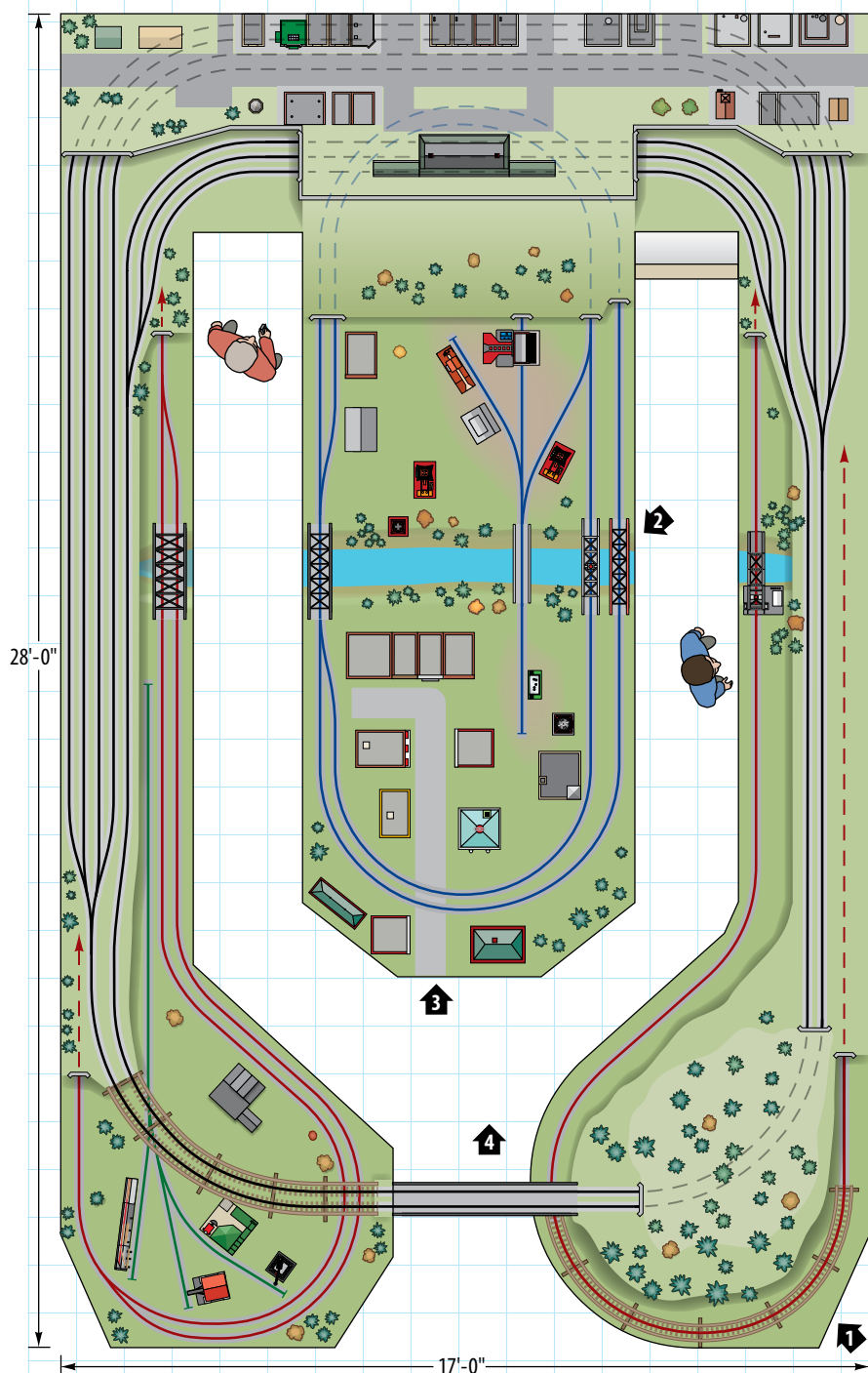


Illustration by Kellie Jaeger

appealing stage. Or, to put it another way, they had to create eye-catching scenes that, however realistic and pleasing on the eye, never threatened to take attention from the trains.

There is, as a consequence, a fairly uniform look to the scenes. The hills tend to be short and steep, with lots of brush and colorful trees covering them.

Bill formed a webbing out of cardboard strips over which he laid paper towels soaked in Hydrocal. He cleverly added brown dye to the mixture to save a crucial

step. The shell soon had dried to yield a hard, porous, and realistic surface.

After spraying diluted India ink into cracks and crevices to leave contrasts, Bill spread actual dirt plus different colors and textures of commercial brands of ground cover. Grass and clusters of weeds went on next. Happy with what he saw, Bill pronounced some areas finished. Elsewhere, he proceeded to add trees.

Really, several compact forests of trees along the interior perimeters of the layout and on the hillside leading from the main



4 There still are areas of the Brants' 17 x 28-foot three-rail layout that Bill states are in need of more detailing. The husband-and-wife team definitely enjoy making the landscapes and communities on their pike look more realistic.

level to the elevated portion at the rear. Trees Bill fashioned out of weeds plucked from nearby yards worked well. So also did other natural materials as well as assorted commercial items.

A few settlements

The goal of building a realistic tribute to railroading in the East as it might have looked during Bill's childhood minimized the use of accessories. The exceptions were light towers, signals, and street lamps whose dimensions seemed close to scale. Nothing big should get a spot.

Structures were another matter. Scale

models boasting details and lights would go far in advancing the Brants' overall goals. Fortunately for Linda and Bill, Ameri-Towne and MTH Electric Trains cataloged many outstanding items. They had only to select some to situate along the roads they had painted black. White and yellow stripes completed the streets and highways leading to the cities.

Meanwhile, Linda was performing her magic to transform commercial models into unique additions. She designed interior features to many of the stores, factories, and stations before wiring lights inside. Better, she painted a multitude of

figures and carefully placed them to create some exciting and thoughtful vignettes.

Credit for naming different areas and businesses on the

railroad belonged to Bill. There would be nothing random about his choices. Bill honored their grandkids with Chanelville, Tyrone City, and ManMan Scrap Metals. The newest member will see her name on Lena Grace's Fine Clothing for Women.

Hearing the wows!

Years of dreaming and planning, of challenging and sometimes tedious labor, have taken Bill a long way from the Scout set running laps around the 4 x 8 model railroad. The three-rail empire filling his dreams has become a reality.

What that means for Linda and Bill surpasses their enjoyment of having O gauge trains run through realistic scenes. The couple takes pride and pleasure in having visitors of all ages express glee and amazement. They love hearing people say, "Wow! This is the best layout I've ever seen." Dreams do come true. **CTT**

**THE COUPLE TAKES PRIDE AND PLEASURE
IN HAVING VISITORS OF ALL AGES
EXPRESS GLEE AND AMAZEMENT.**

OVERLOOKED MODELS WITHOUT
A PEER IN THE EARLY 1950s

♦ American Model Toys ♦

STOCKCARS

By Roger Carp • Photos by William Zuback

The more toy train historians learn about American Model Toys and its successor, Auburn Model Trains, the greater their respect for the small manufacturer based in Auburn, Ind. The company, led by Jack Ferris, dared challenge Lionel for leadership and profits in a domestic market it dominated after World War II.

Above all, Ferris and Carter Collier, the design engineer he hired for AMT, sought to carve out niches for their firm in the O gauge field where Lionel appeared vulnerable. To be

specific, where Lionel had yet to move past producing short, rather toy-like models, AMT intended to sweep it aside by

bringing out longer, near-scale replicas hobbyists now desired.

Contemporary passenger cars, a few modern freight cars, and colorful diesels represented three areas where, in the estimation of Ferris, he could lure consumers from Lionel.

Among the freight cars capturing his fancy was a kind Lionel had all but ignored: stockcars.

Burgeoning market

American Model Toys was merely one of several business ventures that arose after World War II to fight for a share of the burgeoning American market for model trains. Enterprising

individuals, including Ferris, realized money was there to be made from consumers eager to operate miniature versions of what could be glimpsed at stations, yards, and grade crossings throughout the country.

Entrepreneurs looked for specialties Lionel overlooked or hardly touched. Structures and simple accessories fell into those categories. Men at Skyline, Minitoys, and Colber thus pounced in the late 1940s.

Ferris aimed for bigger and potentially more lucrative targets. He started with replicas of the streamlined passenger cars changing travel across the U.S. The array of extruded aluminum models AMT heralded made inroads among O gauge modelers and pushed Lionel to answer with its own in 1952.

Similarly, AMT concluded hobbyists wanted models more



American Model Toys had challenged Lionel in the early 1950s with near-scale rolling stock, including three realistic O gauge stockcars. Models courtesy Edward Gerson



authentic than the stubby and toy-like boxcars Lionel cataloged. So it announced a group of near-scale boxcars for 1952.

The models of 40-foot cars featured realistic if drab paint schemes and the names and emblems of railroads from virtually every region of the U.S. as well as Canada. Not until 1953 did Lionel match the newcomers with the first of its iconic no. 6464 boxcars.

Also flowing from the AMT factory in 1952 and '53 were superior models of a flatcar with a depressed center, a modern gondola, refrigerator cars with vivid designs, and some detailed cabooses, along with three rugged stockcars.

Reviving a standard

More surprising than AMT introducing a trio of realistic stockcars around 1952 was discovering that Lionel had not bothered to offer any kind of stockcar between 1945 and '48.

Yes, a common sight on western, midwestern, and even eastern railroads went unrepresented on Lionel Lines until 1949. And then it was an operating model developed just for a cattle yard with animation.

Oddest of all was knowing that stockcars had been essential members of the O gauge roster put out by Lionel from the 1910s until federal mandates ended toy train production right after the U.S. entered World War II. Even after the A.C. Gilbert Co. had added a stockcar to its American Flyer line of S gauge trains in 1946, Lionel had sat on its hands.

Then in 1950 it announced the short no. 6656.

Little wonder, therefore, that Ferris was eager to step in with near-scale stockcars made using the trucks, frame, and body shell already designed for the new boxcars. Modifying the shell to capture the familiar look of a single-deck stockcar was not difficult. Just a matter of re-creating the open slats and bracing.

Road names

The same attention to detail distinguishing the dozen near-scale boxcars released by AMT characterized the stockcars. Sliding doors, separate brake wheels, injection-molded polyurethane shells, die-cast metal floors and wheelsets were standard on both types of rolling stock. So too were AMT's patented metal "Liftamatic" automatic knuckle couplers (made to be compatible with Lionel's).

Ferris, always with an eye on the expanding market for O gauge trains, had wisely decorated the boxcars with the names and heralds of railroads tied to every region. From the Erie and the New Haven in the Northeast to the Baltimore & Ohio and the Southern farther down the Eastern Seaboard. From the Nickel Plate Road and the Minneapolis & St. Louis in the middle of the U.S. to the Santa Fe and the Great Northern out west. And cars with Canadian lineage.

Why not do something like that with the stockcars? Ferris knew putting out only three models limited his choices. So he picked two railroads associated with cattle-raising areas

Selecting the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy made sense. Only five railroads owned more stockcars at the middle of the 20th century.

and one quite far from it. The Chicago, Burlington & Quincy (model no. 7151) as well as the Missouri-Kansas-Texas (model no. 7150) seemed logical picks to O gauge enthusiasts.

The third road name must have left a lot of model railroaders scratching their heads. The Atlantic Coast Line (model no. 7152) did not rank among the major domestic owners of stockcars at mid-century (defined as having at least 1,000 on their rosters).

AMONG THE FREIGHT CARS CAPTURING HIS FANCY WAS A KIND LIONEL HAD ALL BUT IGNORED: STOCKCARS.

Moreover, no hobbyist was going to confuse the ACL with any of the big rail lines widely known for transporting cattle, horses, sheep, hogs, or poultry.

Perhaps Ferris thought an ACL stockcar would boost sales in a section of the country neglected by toy train firms. Indeed, the AMT model was the only ACL item cataloged

for the O or S gauge market during the entire postwar era.

Still worthy

The three AMT stockcars, outstanding as they were in terms of realistic appearance, didn't make much of a splash on the domestic market. By 1954, Lionel had countered with its no. 6356, a near-scale model marked for the New York Central.

Late in 1954, the Kusan Corp., a manufacturer of plastic toys for young children, purchased the tooling and inventory of AMT. The business, which was located in Nashville, Tenn., planned to dive headlong into the still-thriving toy train market.

Yet tough choices based on current circumstances compelled Kusan to pare the long list of models obtained from AMT. Among the beauties deleted were the ACL and CB&Q stockcars. Only the bright yellow M-K-T returned.

Kusan made slight changes to its only stockcar. Collectors reported the doors might be Tuscan red or yellow and the roof, which AMT had painted black, went to Tuscan red. Also, the two ends of the stockcar were painted Tuscan red.

Regardless of the variation, the M-K-T model, like its brethren, earned acclaim as among the finest rolling stock ever developed for the postwar O gauge market. **CTT**



The most difficult of the stockcars to find is the no. 7152, which was lettered for the Atlantic Coast Line. That railroad in the Southeast was never known as a major owner of stockcars.



When budding genius Sheldon Cooper needs to escape from the pressures of life, he heads to the garage, where his layout beckons. Iain Armitage plays the title character on the hit TV comedy, *Young Sheldon*.





AN O GAUGE
LAYOUT
STARS ON
A POPULAR
TV SHOW

SPOTLIGHT ON

Young Sheldon

By Roger Carp

Photos by Steve Crise and Warner Bros. Entertainment

Curiosity about and interest in toy trains has been boosted by one of the most popular new shows on television. The leading character on *Young Sheldon*, a series airing on CBS on Thursdays (8:30 p.m. EST/7:30 p.m. CST), often escapes to the family garage. There, an O gauge layout offers diversion from the travails of being a nine-year-old genius.



TOP When on a recent episode Sheldon feared he had been exposed to the flu and so needed to feel safe, he sealed off the garage with plastic and focused on running trains. Accessories by American Flyer, Colber, Marx, and Lionel entertained him.

ABOVE This still from an episode of *Young Sheldon* gives you an idea of how the family interacts. While the rest of the Cooper clan, including Sheldon's grandmother and his siblings stare at the TV, he's engrossed in a book about science.

What a nice surprise to discover toy trains on prime-time television. That was a routine occurrence during the first decade of the postwar era, when variety shows and family dramas often showed an electric train in operation. Ozzie Nelson and his sons, Beaver and his pals, and stars like Jackie Gleason and Arthur Godfrey included Lionel or American Flyer trains and accessories on their shows.

Of course, the playthings that were once integral elements of popular culture in America continually change. And electric trains lost favor after the 1960s. Screenwriters and producers generally felt no need to add those toys to their scripts and programs. Everything changed 11 years ago with a very big bang!

MEET A LOVABLE GENIUS

The world met Sheldon Cooper for the first time in 2007. The brilliant yet socially awkward theoretical physicist captivated audiences of the new series, *The Big Bang Theory*. Viewers delighted in becoming acquainted with Sheldon and his quirky habits as well as his opinions on virtually every subject under the sun. Science, comic books, and life – he spoke brashly about them all.

The Big Bang Theory, which Chuck Lorre Productions and Warner Bros. Television produced, also introduced Sheldon's roommates, a few colleagues at Caltech, and assorted friends and rivals. An engaging universe populated by young scientists and their families and associates emerged.



Millions of people quickly found themselves fascinated and occasionally exasperated by Sheldon, Leonard, Penny, and the others. But not many wanted to switch off their TVs. High ratings and Emmy nominations and awards followed.

The executive producers of *The Big Bang Theory* – Chuck Lorre, Steven Molaro, Steve Holland, and Bill Prady – have created humorous yet meaningful plots for the shows that blend science and human relationships, science fiction and office politics. At the same time, they have capitalized on opportunities to develop the characters of Sheldon, Raj, Amy, Howard, Penny and other figures.

In more specific terms, the producers and writers have sought in their scripts to



The staff at the Train Shack, a well-known retail outlet in Burbank, Calif., created the 5 x 9-foot three-rail layout to look as though a youngster had built it. All the vintage trains, structures, and accessories used on the railroad came from its vast inventory.

flesh out the varied interests and diverse backgrounds of each of the principals. The brilliant if exasperating Sheldon, in particular, has often engaged their imaginations.

Indeed, Sheldon has emerged over the past 11 years as a mix of intellectual sophistication and social awkwardness, self-confidence and self-doubt. Played by Jim Parsons, who has won four Emmy Awards, Sheldon has captivated audiences because he can be annoying and lovable.

Every once in a while on *The Big Bang Theory*, Sheldon's passion for trains, both full-size and miniature, comes out. Gradually, writers revealed he had been pursuing that activity his whole life.

BACK TO THE PAST

The ongoing success of *The Big Bang Theory* inspired Jim to suggest a spin-off. Rather than having one of the other characters move to another city or change careers, he thought viewers would appreciate going back 20 years to meet Sheldon as a youngster growing up with his parents, grandmother, older brother, and twin sister in a town in eastern Texas.

Jim shared his idea with Chuck Lorre and Steven Molaro. The latter two proposed filming a pilot to present to CBS, which airs *The Big Bang Theory*, too. Given

two thumbs up by CBS, Chuck Lorre Productions launched work on what it called *Young Sheldon* in November of 2016. The series made its network debut almost one year later; a second season premiered in September of 2018.

Stop for a moment to think about the array of tasks facing the production teams responsible for turning a concept into a captivating series. Writers needed to craft entertaining scripts. At the same time,

**WHAT A NICE SURPRISE TO DISCOVER
TOY TRAINS ON PRIME-TIME TELEVISION.**



Artisans at Warner Bros. viewed the 5 x 9-foot O gauge model railroad constructed by the Train Shack as one prop among many they needed to acquire to make the garage at the Coopers' house seem right for a boy growing up in Texas in the late 1980s.

casting personnel had to fill the roles with the right actors.

Before long, the producers had selected Iain Armitage to play Sheldon. They added Zoe Perry as his mother, Mary; Lance Barber as his father, George; and Montana Jordan and Raegan Revord as his siblings, Georgie and Missy.

PROPS GALORE

Scripts and actors are important and essential. But a couple of things equally noteworthy deserve our attention: the sets and the props used for *Young Sheldon*.

A LOOK AROUND THE LAYOUT WILL REVEAL AN AMERICAN FLYER LIGHT TOWER AND SEVERAL KITS FROM THE PLASTICVILLE U.S.A. LINE

Once given a green light, a group of artistically minded women and men accustomed to working behind the scenes developed what might be called the esthetic of the show. Artisans had to assemble the sets and decorate them with items reflecting the place and period in which *Young Sheldon* takes place – Texas in 1989. They had to create a kitchen, bedrooms, a living room, and a garage for the

Cooper house, all as they might have looked 30 years ago.

The artisans searched the fabled back lot at Warner Bros. in Burbank, Calif., for clothing, household utensils, furniture, appliances, and other domestic artifacts. What they failed to dig up at the studio, they hunted for online.

The results are terrific! This includes the garage, with old magazines, rusty tools, broken tennis rackets, and black-and-white prints depicting Sir Isaac Newton and other heroes of Sheldon's. In the center is his layout. Like the artifacts surrounding it, the railroad was ingenious and appropriate.

It is appropriate because the 5 x 9-foot O gauge layout on *Young Sheldon* really does look like something a typical nine-year-old growing up in a middle-class family might have built in the 1980s – and that demanded considerable ingenuity on the part of its builders.

No one affiliated with the studio felt qualified to build the layout. Instead, after locating a Ping-Pong table to use as the base of the network of track, they looked outside for assistance. They turned, as noted in the accompanying sidebar, to employees at the Train Shack, a retail outlet near the sound stages at Warner Bros. where *Young Sheldon* was being filmed.

First, however, personnel at the studio transformed the Ping-Pong table into something the Cooper family might have been playing with for many years. Then they presented the slightly beat-up table to Mindy Keck and Jon Sirugo, the husband-and-wife team overseeing the layout-building experts at the Train Shack.

CONVINCING TO A TEE

Jon envisioned something beyond just an oval of O gauge track. He thought for the sake of variety and enjoyment, Sheldon should own enough straights, curves, and switches to have assembled a three-rail network with a continuous main line and one or two long sidings. There would also be some connected sections on which Sheldon stored extra railcars.

In addition, Jon imagined a youngster without much spending money would put together an eclectic roster of locomotives and rolling stock. He glanced at some of the used items at the Train Shack. Then he grabbed ones he could see Sheldon having acquired in his hometown and liking a lot.

Leading the way was a Lionel no. 671 steam turbine from 1946. Too bad it was in nice shape. At least the folks on the production team felt unhappy with it!

The props department saw the need to weather the 671 so viewers would believe it had been thoroughly played with. Receiving the same treatment were a few other Lionel items from the 1940s and '50s, including nos. 3469 operating dump car, 3474 Western Pacific operating boxcar, and 6414 Evans auto loader.

In the real world, a boy playing with Lionel trains from the postwar era might have inherited them from his dad or grandfather. So I posed the question about how Sheldon received his trains to Executive Producer Steven Molaro.

Steven has been shaping the character of Sheldon for about as long as that character has been in existence. In fact, having Sheldon passionate about different trains derived from the interest Steven's son had for model railroading a few years ago.

Anyway, Steven said Sheldon came to love toy trains on his own. Maybe a grandparent had given some of the Lionel pieces to him, but overall the layout reflected Sheldon's independent mind and wish to explore the world on his own.

"As Sheldon has said on *The Big Bang Theory*," Steven added, "the world can be a confusing place. Trains represent a beautiful sense of order for him."

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HAPPY 40 YEARS TO THE TRAIN SHACK

THE STORE THAT BUILT SHELDON'S LAYOUT ACHIEVES A MILESTONE

by Roger Carp • Photos by Steve Crise

WHEN THE CREATIVE TEAM associated with *Young Sheldon*, the new TV series shown on CBS, needed a toy train layout, they followed a trail familiar to others in the entertainment industry. They contacted the folks at the Train Shack.

The name doesn't blow your socks off. In fact, hobbyists who have never walked through the front door of this retail business in Burbank, Calif., might easily get the impression the Train Shack is rundown, cramped, poorly lit, and disorganized.

Nothing could be further from the truth. We're talking about a haven for model railroaders. For four decades under the leadership of two generations of the Keck family, the Train Shack has been providing expertise, enthusiasm, and fantastic trains for people modeling in everything from Z to Large scale. These customers include individuals filming motion pictures and television programs.

GUY WITH A DREAM

The Train Shack has definitely left its mark on the hobby for generations. The business began with one enterprising man striving to make his pastime a source of income and maybe full-time employment.

Gary Keck, who died in 2012, had built a professional career for himself in southern California, all the while pursuing a love of miniature trains. Then back in 1979 he took the first step, seeking to augment what he earned as a personnel

manager by purchasing and selling locally both new and used O gauge models.

Six years after Gary began filling tables with different trains at shows run by the Toy

didn't mind. He was proud to announce the business was going to be the Train Shack."

NEVER LOOK BACK

Once Gary had settled in and figured out to display all the O and S gauge trains he had picked up, he looked forward to expanding his stock. Doing so meant catering to the upper end of the HO market with brass and imports.

The Train Shack also started to carry Large scale trains made overseas by LGB and

Neither did it allow Gary to build up his inventory to satisfy customers' demands.

The solution was to move into a much larger site, which is what Gary did in 1991. The new location, where the business has remained ever since, had ample room for trains on shelves as well as for some operating layouts.

Gary hunted for wholesalers who could bring in HO and N scale engines, kits, track, and power sources. Soon the inventory of landscaping tools



The folks at the Train Shack keep everything humming there seven days a week. So it took lots of effort to get them to stop from their jobs for even a few minutes to pose for us. Left to right: Bruce Wrigley, Jon Sirugo, Mindy Keck, Jeff Niedbalski, Tod Gibson, and Gary Anderson.

Train Operating Society, he felt sufficiently confident about his prospects to take the next step. He rented a tiny office space in Burbank. How tiny?

Gary's daughter Mindy recalled, "My brother, Brian, and I said the place was the size of a shack. That was how the name came about. Dad

domestically by Aristo-Craft. Her father's goal, Mindy said, was to reach the growing segment of the hobby interested in building garden railways.

Success proved to be fast and challenging. The store's tight quarters could not accommodate all the people stopping by the Train Shack.

and materials increased. The Train Shack offered as well the books and supplies necessary for wiring and electronically updating any kind of layout.

So, by the turn of the 21st century, virtually everyone in Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley who had any degree of interest in scale or

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LEFT A landscaped O gauge layout enables employees to demonstrate for customers the latest locomotives and all the features of different command-control systems.

BELOW One portion of the store handles new O gauge sets and engines from Lionel, MTH, and other major manufacturers. Elsewhere, HO and N scale reign. The Train Shack also carries Large scale models and Brio wooden trains.



O gauge one, that have won over visitors.

Among the people dazzled by what they saw at the Train Shack were some engaged in the production of motion pictures, television programs, and TV commercials. They discussed what they needed in terms of operating layouts and animated scenes. Gary and now Mindy and Brian found ways to meet those goals.

The curtain went up on this important aspect of the store's

show how spoiled a boy was. So they filmed him running a pristine Lionel freight train faster and faster until it flew off the tracks. Jon grimaced while watching the scene and prayed nothing broke.

More motion pictures, television shows, and commercials followed. The talented crew at the Train Shack has constructed layouts for them, using trains and track in every scale and brand. Recent TV appearances of their work have included *Two and a Half Men*, *Big Little Lies*, and, as discussed already, *Young Sheldon*.

EXCITEMENT AHEAD

The Train Shack has thrived during challenging times for many hobby shops because from the start its owners have sought to broaden their inventory and find more ways of promoting scale and toy trains. At the same time, they have capitalized on the skills nurtured by the staff to reach out to all customers.

The 5 x 9-foot O gauge layout the store built for *Young Sheldon* beautifully reflects their ability to create exactly what any customer wants. They know how to ascertain the purposes of the projects shown them and then follow through in ways sure to exceed those expectations. Little wonder the future looks bright for the Train Shack after its first 40 years. **CTD**

THE LAYOUT THE STORE BUILT FOR YOUNG SHEDDON BEAUTIFULLY REFLECTS THEIR ABILITY TO CREATE EXACTLY WHAT ANY CUSTOMER WANTS.

toy trains knew about the Train Shack. The store carried every size and brand of trains along with magazines and books, paints and weathering items, lichen and trees, and more. This was the center for one-stop shopping modelers dreamed of having.

BRANCHING OFF

The staff Gary put together and Mindy continued to build combined to offer decades of

experience and expertise. So it came as no surprise when customers began to ask whether they were available to assist with the design, construction, landscaping, and wiring of layouts ranging from Z up to G.

Throughout the history of the Train Shack, its employees have worked on model railroads outside the walls of the business. Of course, it has long been the layouts inside the store, including a very realistic

business in 1987. Jon Sirugo, who assists his wife, Mindy, managing the Train Shack, recalled how they developed an O gauge floor layout using prewar Lionel sets for a movie titled, *Poor Little Rich Girl: The Barbara Hutton Story*.

What made the staging of that film memorable for Jon was that two of his favorite outfits were used – and one of them had to be wrecked!

The producers wanted to



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Iain Armitage felt the same. “Sheldon likes being able to create his own orderly, organized world. His trains are clean, and they always run on time!”

FUN WITH ACCESSORIES

Of course, no layout is truly complete or has genuine personality unless it has some operating accessories on it. Sheldon’s is no exception. Once again, however, John had to make some very careful choices if he wanted it to remain consistent in being the toy train wonderland a boy might really have put together.

The result of Jon’s insightful planning proved to be simple, clear, and wise. Inspecting the inventory of second-hand items at the Train Shack, he brought over a neat group of inexpensive yet entertaining pieces any child, even a genius like Sheldon, would get a kick out of.

Something that made all the difference was wiring an assortment of older items representing a host of manufacturers. After all, a youngster would hardly care about being loyal to a sole firm.

The rather eclectic nature of Sheldon’s roster of electric trains, Plasticville kits, and toy vehicles captures what a typical nine-year-old might have put on his layout. What seems random and chaotic at first, proves to be an appropriate and appealing blend.

Look around the 5 x 9 layout and your experienced eyes ought to be able to identify an American Flyer light tower and several kits from the Plasticville U.S.A. line. There also are streetlights by Colber and two Build a House bungalows (early renditions of the kits made by Plasticville). Most colorful and emblematic of all is the slightly battered old tunnel.

Finishing off Sheldon’s railroad, precisely the way he would have done, are some lichen bushes and miniature trees, a billboard or two, and a parking lot filled with Matchbox and Hot Wheels vehicles. What youngster from the 1970s or ’80s wouldn’t have owned dozens of them?

LOOKING AHEAD

What lies ahead for Sheldon, the budding train enthusiast? The show’s executive producers expect the layout to remain his domain alone. They doubt his dad or siblings will suddenly find it fascinating.

Neither are there plans for Sheldon to forget about the layout. His three-rail display represents for this precocious genius, as similar ones have for countless “ordinary” kids, a refuge from the demands of childhood and a point of entry into life beyond family and community. As Iain says with insight, that the model railroad provides Sheldon with “information about the real world.” He genuinely loves it. **CTT**

SPECIAL THANKS!

This article would not have been possible without the cooperation of the production team at Warner Bros., the cast of Young Sheldon, and Jon Sirugo and others at the Train Shack. Worldwide Television Marketing provided photos. Executive Producer Steven Molaro and Iain Armitage, who plays Sheldon, offered insights into the character and his layout.

Memories of your Christmas trains

READERS LOOK BACK ON THEIR FIRST SET

by Roger Carp

The quest for stories of how and when hobbyists received their first electric train continues to gather steam. Readers are happy to share memories of getting an O or S gauge set for Christmas during the postwar era. They enjoy recounting who long ago gave them the American Flyer or Lionel set that launched a lifelong passion.

The tales of doting grandparents and somewhat distant fathers surprising kids on the morning of December 25 with the gift of a lifetime never wear out their welcome. We at

Classic Toy Trains treasure each and every one of the memories readers have recalled, especially when they can supplement their brief accounts with old black-and-white photos or color snapshots they've uncovered.

We started printing these tales in the November 2017 issue of CTT. Then we added several more to *Christmas & Electric Trains*, our latest annual special-interest publication. But the supply keeps growing, so we have some more to offer here, along the best photos submitted.

You can look forward to reading more pieces. They should do more than entertain. We hope they remind you of how many of your peers in the hobby entered as you probably did – guided by a relative who sensed your life would be made happier if you had a toy train.

Frankly, that uncle, grandpa, or cousin was correct. Your life has been more fulfilling and enjoyable because toy trains were brought to you and made an integral part of what you do for relaxation. Such a realization ought to motivate each of us to express our gratitude and do what we can to bring into the hobby a new generation.

Perfect start with a set from Marx – Frank O'Hare



Decked out in the striped overalls and red neckerchief of an engineer, Frank handled the controls of the Marx layout on a sheet of wood over the freezer.

The Marx train has been with me for more than 60 years. I remember getting it for Christmas 1953 from my grandfather, William Reynolds, while living with my grandparents. The first run of the train was on the kitchen table as I sat wide-eyed on my grandfather's lap, as you can see in the old photo.

My track plan consisted of an oval of O-27 track on a piece of plywood. I had to stand on a small stool to run the train when the plywood was placed on the top of a freezer in the kitchen.

Three Marx accessories adorned the little layout. To start, I had the gray grade-crossing flasher seen in the photos. There also was a lithographed station with the name of Girard on the roof signs. The third accessory was a tunnel.

In addition to the train, I later received a Marx handcar. It could easily fly off the tracks, but the pumping action of the blue and gray railroad workers was fun to watch. A standard Marx transformer had white lettering to indicate speed.

Once when the layout sat on top of the freezer, I turned the power to full, which caused the train to fly into the air before falling 4 feet to the floor. Yes, 4-year-old kids make mistakes! The derailment broke

Common story ends with thanks to parents — Bill Graper

It's really difficult for me to focus on just one Lionel-related moment, locomotive, or accessory from my childhood, since each year brought new gifts and memories. It all started back when I was six years old in 1951, when I got a no. 2175W Santa Fe F3 diesel freight set (I remember taking the dummy unit to bed with me Christmas night).

I later built a layout that lasted from the holidays until my birthday in March. I can hear and smell the trains as they rolled across the rug and crossed the bare wood floor. I also recall the sound of chunks of coal going up the intake tube of my mother's vacuum cleaner after being scattered by the Lionel no. 397 operating diesel-type coal loader.

My Lionel journey culminated with a 6 x 8-foot layout in the mid-1950s. Since we lived upstairs in a two-family house, the best location was a spare bedroom off the kitchen, but my father first had to put up a new ceiling, wall paneling, and a tile floor to get it into usable shape.

Dad accomplished all of this with my limited help, fitting in the enormous project between working long shifts as an engineer for the New York Central. After more work, the layout was finished and the Santa Fe sped around the O-31 curves.

I know my story is similar to that of many other people from the postwar era. All the same, I tell it to honor all the mothers and fathers of the 1950s who sacrificed financially to get their children top-quality electric trains and who put up with (and stepped around) tracks and accessories on living-room floors.

Those parents also built the layouts that brought their offspring hours of joy. That's why, even with a lifetime of other events, memories of those toy trains are still etched in my mind. Fortunately, I have nearly all of my Lionel collection, with the trains waiting for a new layout.

I CAN STILL HEAR AND SMELL THE ELECTRIC TRAINS AS THEY ROLLED ACROSS THE RUG AND RUMBLED ACROSS THE WOOD FLOOR.



A lifelong passion for Lionel electric trains began for Bill Graper with a Lionel Santa Fe F3 freight outfit in 1951. He started work on this fantastic layout a few years later.



Having a father who was then employed as a locomotive engineer must have been heaven to a youngster who loved Lionel trains as much as Bill Graper did in the 1950s.

the tender's front coupler support, which was why the tender was missing in some of the pictures we took. Later, when I was 9 or 10 years old, I cobbled a wire to attach the tender to the locomotive.

Not too long afterward, I received my first Lionel train for Christmas. The Marx set swiftly went back into its box, and I devoted my energy to launching satellites, setting switches, and watching the no. 3370 operating sheriff and outlaw car in action behind a no. 222 Denver & Rio Grande Western Alco diesel.

Around 1990, *Classic Toy Trains* had an article about building a Marx layout



A Marx steam freight set initiated Frank O'Hare into the hobby he has pursued since Christmas of 1953. Back then, it was his grandfather who helped him run the O-27 train. These days, Frank is the softhearted grandpa guiding the kids.

beneath your Christmas tree. It described running two trains at once.

So inspired, I took out all the old trains and accessories and arranged them under our tree for the first neighborhood children's Christmas party. The trains were a hit, with parents on the floor running the trains with their wide-eyed kids.

After Christmas, my wife and I were struggling to carry the heavy train board back to the basement. Frustrated, she finally said, "Why don't you set up the trains in the room over the garage?" From a temporary holiday display under the tree, the layout morphed into a permanent addition located over the garage.

Then we put a second Christmas tree at the top of the stairs of the loft area where there were two ovals of track, along with a Marx tin tunnel and several Plasticville buildings to the delight of many toddlers.

Soon the first of our grandchildren joined the group of kids running the Marx train (occasionally, at dangerously high speeds). We also put down a large oval track on top of the living-room rug. It's soft enough to offer protection to the train when it dashes around at high speeds.

Best present I ever received — Robert Barone

The Lionel set I received for Christmas of 1958 was the best present I ever got. Funny thing, though, I don't remember where it came from. I imagine my mother got it from the Sears catalog. While it might seem odd a family in New York City would depend on a mail-order service, there were good reasons.

We lived in an isolated neighborhood of the Bronx and had no car. I don't recall a model train or toy store nearby. Anything modern, electrical, or just out of the ordinary usually came from the Sears catalog. We had a copy on the kitchen table.

What made my train set so special was that, unlike all the other gifts I received, it was not limited to one year or one Christmas. Not only did I keep playing with it regularly from 1958 through '61 but I also took the set with me when I moved to Italy. I set up the same train for my kids 30 years later. None of my other childhood possessions survived all of my moves and house changes.

My uncle, who had been trained and then was working as a carpenter, cut and prepared the wood table for us, and my mother and I spent winter evenings building the layout. Over time the two of us added some

people, a station, a church, tunnels, trestles, and an ice-skating rink.

The layout increasingly resembled an idealized village somewhere in Vermont — a place my mother and I had never seen and certainly very different from our rough and tough neighborhood. That difference was part of the appeal.

Now that I look back I understand why my mother gave me this train set, a toy that was economically very extravagant for us at the time. Also, it took up a third of our living room, which was the only room we had, so it wasn't practical.

Yet my mother realized how much something like an electric train would

NONE OF MY OTHER CHILDHOOD POSSESSIONS SURVIVED ALL OF MY MOVES AND HOUSE CHANGES.



Robert Barone, who grew up with his mother in a small apartment in the Bronx, says the Lionel steam freight set he received for Christmas of 1958 was the best gift ever. Did he also get the snazzy cowboy outfit and the cap pistol he's aiming?



Something at Christmas must have startled Robert and his cousin Natalie while the train was running laps because both shut their eyes as tightly as possible.

mean to me. My father had died a few years before, and his absence was still strongly felt. The train set was intended more as an activity than an object. By that I mean it was something my mother and I could do together, something that occupied us during the weeks before Christmas. Doing would be better than thinking. We put it up and took it down every year, like the Christmas tree.

My mother also died young, so the Lionel train has become one of my connections to her as well. I don't have all the items we put on the layout but I do have the miniature figures we painted together: passengers, mailman, policeman, and train engineer. When I hold them in my hand I can travel back to 1959, like it was just in another room.

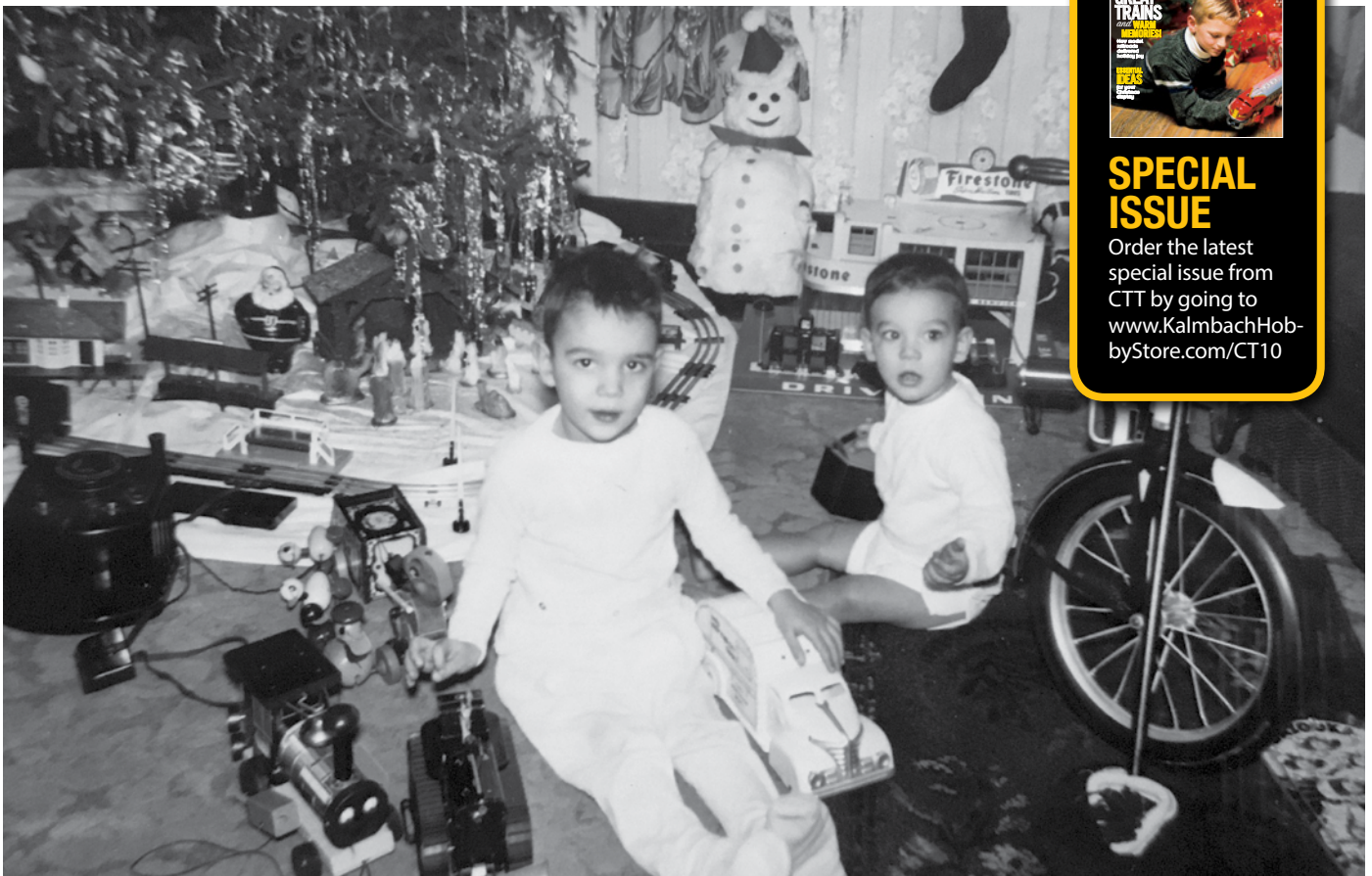


By the time a few of Robert's cousins had stopped by on Christmas of 1961, the layout he had built with his mother had expanded to two levels with Plasticville structures. He's the one in a white shirt.



SPECIAL ISSUE

Order the latest special issue from CTT by going to www.KalmbachHobbyStore.com/CT10



Amid all the toys Tom Sturm and his younger brother, Bob, got for Christmas of 1952, the Lionel train Tom already had enjoyed special status under the family's Christmas tree. His father had given the set to him when he was only two!

Memories of Christmas inspired future layouts — Tom Sturm

I can't tell you much about how or even why I received my first train set because I was only two years old at Christmas of 1951, when my father bought the Lionel steam freight set that started me in the hobby I continue to love.

The no. 3472 milk car was my favorite, along with a locomotive that had smoke and a whistle.

By the time my younger brother, Bob, came along a year later, I was an expert on running the train. You can see in the picture taken of us at Christmas of 1952 how the train was the centerpiece of the layout under our decorated tree. A few Plasticville structures added to the railroad. We each got many other toys.

I kept my layout in our hometown of Duquesne, Pa., until reaching my teenage years. But I never gave up the hobby. After marrying Judy, we found the old trains in storage and arranged them under our Christmas tree every year. Later, our son Jonathan fashioned a building

or two for the display out of wood.

Then came O gauge layouts that seemed to grow bigger and more extensive over time. Entertaining friends and fellow educators made the model railroads even more enjoyable, particularly when I would put together "Train Quizzes." Visitors tried to find the sights and identify the objects listed on the questionnaires. That way, they could study the layouts and gain a true appreciation for the trains. **CTT**

BY THE TIME MY YOUNGER BROTHER, BOB, CAME ALONG A YEAR LATER, I WAS AN EXPERT ON RUNNING THE TRAIN.



Tom showed off his Lionel railroad to his older cousin, Judy, at Christmas of 1953. Would she have traded her doll for the exciting freight set?



Best part of the

HOLIDAY
SEASON



LAYOUT CELEBRATES A MAGICAL TIME OF YEAR

Story and photos by Wayne Flores

Christmas is my favorite time of the year. Here in the Adirondack Mountains of New York State, you're almost guaranteed a white Christmas. My family even has a small Christmas tree farm, where we grow our own Fraser Fir trees.

Our home is in a rural location with no other houses or roadways visible. My daughter, Cathy, once asked why we put up Christmas lights since there's no one around to see them. I told her it was so Santa Claus could find our house more easily. I'm not too sure Cathy bought that, but she humored me nonetheless.

With our emphasis on the joys of Christmas, it

was only natural for us to have a toy train layout. Beginning in the 1980s, in fact, we have built six different O gauge railroads, including the one being featured here in *Classic Toy Trains*.

NO REAL PLAN

Although I'm retired and have lots of free time, I still begin without a track plan. All I have is what I can picture in my head after looking at the floor space available. Then I assemble three-rail sections to get an idea of the layout. I keep reminding myself it is a toy display and not the space shuttle.

For the benchwork, I stuck with the tried-and-true framing system. I designed it with a 20-inch

Christmas and its joys come alive on the neat 8 x 10-foot O gauge display Wayne Flores built for his family and friends. His daughter, Cathy, in the photo with Santa snapped years ago, continues to inspire his holiday layout.



Structures sold by Department 56 and Lemax, along with vintage accessories and loads of miniature fir trees, thrill visitors to the Flores household. Young and old crowd by the layout, eager to operate the vivid Canadian Pacific Holiday Train freight set made by MTH Electric Trains.



The latest of the many O gauge layouts Wayne Flores has built over the past 25 years to showcase his postwar models features two independent loops of Atlas O track. He still makes excellent use of switches and accessories from Lionel's postwar line.

clearance from the floor to the bottom of the framework to allow me to lie on my back and then easily reach underneath it for necessary wiring.

The only drawback to that design was it putting me in a position on the floor under the layout where my Labradors think I'm playing with them. They end up joining me under the table, thereby doubling the time needed for wiring!

Building benchwork this way gives the layout a surface height 30 inches from the floor. This affords kids a bird's-eye view of everything and makes it easier for them to play with the trains and accessories. It is also a good height if you have dogs – high enough to avoid tail-wagging wipe-outs.

The framework helped me develop an 8 x 10-foot railroad with an elevated level 6 inches above the main surface. I used Woodland Scenics' incline sets (they are incredibly easy to work with and seem quite stable) to make the transition between the two levels.

To hold the Styrofoam pieces in place I used Liquid Nails. It had enough immediate adhesion to keep them from shifting out of alignment. Once the Liquid Nails had dried, it provided a strong, secure, and permanent hold.

POSTWAR RULES

I use straights and curves by Atlas O. Besides looking great, they're easy to cut

to length and make into insulated track sections. Best of all they never rust!

The curves range from 31 inches in diameter to 42 and all the way up to 54 inches. All the switches are Lionel no. 022 items from the postwar era. I used them because I like to run postwar rolling stock, many of which came equipped with slider shoes on their trucks. I have yet to find any other switches that can guarantee a freight car with slider shoes can pass through it without problems.

There are a few Lionel accessories on the layout, and most of them come from the postwar era, too. You can see a no. 154 highway flasher and no. 252 automatic crossing gates, along with various street lamps and rotary beacons. The platform used with a no. 3672 Bosco operating milk car occupies a key spot.

One station platform from the modern era of Lionel production stands out. It still carries an American Flag on its roof that my daughter drew and taped on it back in 2001, when she was in second grade, in remembrance of the 9/11 attack.

As for trains my favorites are Lionel engines and cars from postwar days. I grew up with them, being born in 1954 and having a brother 10 years older. He started getting trains for Christmas in the late 1940s. Once I came around, the tradition of trains as the perfect holiday gifts continued through the early 1960s.

I still have almost all of our boyhood trains, including the pride of our fleet: Lionel no. 2343 Santa Fe F3 A-B-A units. But like many other youngsters of our era, I lost interest in them once I hit my teens.



Speeding its way forward is the MTH Premier line General Electric AC4400CW road diesel decked out in the red paint scheme favored by the Canadian Pacific. Will the reindeer and other animals scatter once the locomotive gets closer?

Then in 1987, I bought the premier issue of *Classic Toy Trains*. It inspired me to get my old trains out of storage.

Despite my affection for Lionel, there's no denying MTH trains appeal to me as well. Where we live we are fortunate to have the Canadian Pacific Holiday Train pass through every year. When I learned MTH Electric Trains was producing an O gauge replica, it moved to the top of my wish list.

This set is the best Christmas train I've ever seen. It has tons of multi-colored lights, smokes like crazy, and looks just like the real deal. What more could you ask for from an O gauge set?

SIMPLE OPERATION

A pair of Lionel type-ZW transformers powers all the trains and accessories. As with my track plan, I like to keep the operations as effortless as possible. When I move the throttle forward, I want the train to just move, plain and simple.

That's the reason I like all the postwar

locomotives so much. I love my Canadian Pacific engine, except I have to go back and forth with the throttle a bunch of times until it finally moves. I suppose I could read the instructions that came with the train. (What's next? Asking for directions when I get lost driving? No way!)

For my latest holiday layout, I have put the emphasis on Christmas-oriented items. Buildings are by Department 56, with a mix of city, rural, and suburban structures. There are lots of figurines, ranging from Frosty the Snowman to Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer. Critters come from Department 56, Hallmark, and Lemax.

I want my layout to invoke memories of the past for the adults who see it. For that reason, I use several vintage Corgi die-cast metal vehicles, such as James Bond's Aston Martin from the *Goldfinger* movie. Who doesn't remember the *Bat-*

man and *Green Hornet* shows on TV in the 1960s? Consequently, I have models of their special cars.

UP ALL YEAR

For years, the layout had to be taken down after the holidays. It was only fair to make the living room more accessible to my daughter. Now that Cathy has her own

CHRISTMAS COMES ALIVE ON THE 8 X 10-FOOT O GAUGE DISPLAY WAYNE BUILT FOR HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS TO ENJOY OPERATING.

place, I can leave the layout up all year.

Not that any of our visitors object. They love watching the trains run and smile while taking a turn at the controls. Even CTT readers, who can't join us for Christmas, will get a kick out of our latest holiday display. Maybe some of you will try to figure out the track plan and build your own version. Go for it! **CTT**



Operat!on

EVERYONE WHO HAS A LAYOUT wants to increase the fun it provides. This point takes on greater importance once a model railroad is done. Scenery looks terrific, and structures are fascinating. The challenges associated with construction have been met, so it's up to the owner to find new ways of enjoying model trains.

Thomas Browne strongly recommends operation as the remedy. In particular, he advises running your layout to bring back memories of a specific locale and era.

Even before Thomas finished work on his 25 x 30-foot O gauge Fillmore and Lewistown RR (the fifth three-rail layout he has built in his life), he was planning to

operate freight and passenger trains as they would have been run between those two towns on the Middle Division of the Pennsylvania RR in December of 1948. The array of ideas Thomas shares here should help you discover better ways to upgrade operation while making it more realistic on your model railroad.

Inspired by a master

Hobbyists often speak with awe about Frank Ellison. This pioneering O gauge modeler and advocate published articles in the 1940s and '50s in which he stated how he built unique structures for his legendary Delta Lines layout. Ellison looked as well at the trains operated on it.

Ellison compared running miniature trains on a model railroad to a theater production. He considered the layout the stage and each train an actor with a role and purpose all its own. Therefore, an operating session amounted to a drama during which trains arrived and left at designated moments in order to recreate what happened on a full-size railroad.



fun

GOING BACK IN TIME ON THE O GAUGE FILLMORE & LEWISTOWN RR

by Roger Carp • Photos by Richard Taylor

Thomas endorses Ellison's approach, which he encountered in hobby publications he read as a boy more than 60 years ago. As a result, he developed his latest display as a stage on which trains perform.

According to Thomas, his roster of trains brings back memories of life along the Middle Division of the PRR during the early winter of 1948. He bases each of the 17 trains run with a prototypical consist on an actual one that passed through Lewistown on a typical day (4 to 11 a.m.).

Selecting the Middle Division as the inspiration for the F&L meant there would be a high volume of trains. The majority of them were going to be through trains rather than locals. Also, eight engine

1 The O gauge layout designed and constructed by Thomas Browne to remember the Pennsylvania RR as it existed in the late 1940s honors here four great steam and electric-profile locomotives developed by famed industrial designer Raymond Loewy. Left to right: GG1 (Williams), K4 (Weaver), and T1 and S1 (MTH Electric Trains).

changes had to take place to accommodate the 17 trains. So, the 750-square-foot railroad needed to include fully operational steam and electric locomotive facilities.

Pennsy is the favorite

Thomas knew what he wanted to do even before he launched work on what he considers his fifth O gauge layout. By that time, he had become somewhat of an expert on the PRR and collected models of its equipment. In the 1980s and '90s, more

realistic pieces reached the market from brass importers and as kits sold by American Lightweight, American Standard Car, Athearn, Circus-Craft, and Walthers.

In the early 2000s, Thomas says, three-rail manufacturers failed to offer many ready-to-run scale replicas of the PRR items he wanted. Then things changed for the better until, as he says, he could assemble "a complete collection of every major class of locomotive on the Pennsy in 1948, plus much of the rolling stock."



2 Retired railroad laborers often stop by the engine-servicing facility to swap tales about the steamers they once handled. The Pennsy 2-8-0 Consolidation (a Weaver model) was one of their favorite steeds.

Basic requirements

Behind the 25 x 30-foot display there needed to be a backdrop depicting the hills of the Keystone State as they might have looked when winter arrived. Thomas hired Cathy Hall, a retired artist from Walt Disney Studios, to paint it. So pleased was he with her work that he added a new task. Cathy painted the town of Fillmore behind the detailed rendition of the town's station put together using plans in the October 1942 issue of *Model Railroader*.

Turning to the layout, Thomas envisioned a four-track main line, storage tracks, realistic landscapes characterizing the central part of Pennsylvania, and models of facilities used to service steam and electric-profile locomotives. Locomotive

models faithful to what the Pennsy had owned in 1948 would let him operate the trains he most desired.

Conventional in key ways

Work soon moved forward on the F&L. The commitment to conventional methods and materials forged during Thomas' adolescence gained vigor as he proceeded. Great layouts can still be done in ways that would have been familiar to Ellison.

THE SIGNATURE STRUCTURES ON THE F&LRR ARE, IN THOMAS' ESTIMATION, THE STATIONS AT THOSE MAJOR LOCALES

Benchwork, for example, ended up being flat tabletops firmly supported by pieces of 2 x 4 lumber. The single level stood 42 inches off the floor. From there it gained depth and magnificence, thanks to the painted backdrop framing it.

Thomas opted for GarGraves flextrack mounted on ¼-inch-thick cork roadbed. The four-track main line he laid features prototypical spacing of the main tracks (3½-inch centers). "This looks more realistic than the wider spacing generally used by hi-rail modelers," he says, "and it saves bench space." Another realistic touch Thomas highly recommends involved superelevating the curves on the main line. By the way, they range in diameter from 54 to 96 inches.

3 Passenger trains with heavyweight cars greet one another on the Middle Division of the PRR. It happens on Thomas' Fillmore & Lewis-town RR. The painted backdrop enhances the appearance of his basic landscapes.

For turnouts Thomas chose products from Curtis Hi-Rail and Ross Custom Switches. When he noticed some of his locomotives stalling over those switches because of closely spaced pickup rollers, he fixed everything by running a jumper wire between each engine and a trailing car equipped with a pickup roller.

Assisting the actors

Conceiving of the layout as a big stage over which three-rail trains served as actors meant handling the locomotives and cars with a good deal of thought. How they entered and departed the production and what they did to perform in convincing and eye-catching manners assumed importance to Thomas.

A starting point, as it well might be for any stage manager, was deciding where actors should wait for their moment in the lights. Thomas saw the need for 14 storage tracks from 22 to 24 feet in length. He divided each of them into two blocks, which provided him with 28 potential areas to keep trains.

Selecting curved switches at the points where trains enter and leave the yard added both practicality and visual interest. The curving switches look great and increase the area available for storage.

Before arranging trains on the supplementary tracks, Thomas imagined he was a makeup artist to those actors. For some of the locomotives and virtually all the rolling stock he owned proper makeup amounted to lightly weathering them.

Thomas recalled first studying a stack of color photos taken long ago of motive power and railcars on the Pennsy roster. Once confident about the look he wanted

to replicate, Thomas diluted Scalecoat II no. F2116 Flat Grime paint 6 to 1 and sprayed it on with an airbrush.

Completing the stage

Thomas viewed the trackwork and backdrops with satisfaction. They provided the perfect setting for his trains. All the actors needed to prepare for starring roles were a few more landscape effects and some detailed structures.

Scenery was the starting point. Thomas made mountains and foothills out of 2-inch-thick pieces of insulation board covered with plaster. When everything had dried, he colored the surface of his landforms using earth-colored latex paint. While it was wet, he sprinkled on ground cover from Scenic Express.

Last came shrubs from Woodland Scenics and, where Thomas thought it appropriate, miniature commercial trees as well as a few he fashioned. Professional assistance nicely improving the scenery came from Leon Wasiak.

More important to conveying the notion viewers had traveled back to post-war Pennsylvania were the structures. Thomas put emphasis on them, in particular, the railroad-oriented buildings (depots, locomotive facilities, and such).

The signature structures on the F&L are, in Thomas' estimation, the stations at those major locales. Custom builder Bob Ross undertook Fillmore Station (an Ellison creation influenced by a friend who was an architect) after consulting plans



4 Snow dusts the hills beyond the Korber roundhouse back in December of 1948. A Williams Pennsy 4-6-2 Pacific bravely sticks its nose out into the cold.

originally published in the January 1943 issue of *Model Railroader*. Thomas built the parking lot and viaduct using plans he found in the November 1948 MR.

Fillmore Station was, in Thomas' words, "every boy's dream." Nearly as inspiring was Lewistown Station. An equally talented builder, Stu Gralnick (whose own layout appeared in the May

CTT ONLINE

TO WATCH A VIDEO of Thomas Browne's O gauge layout, please go to www.ClassicToyTrains.com/LayoutVisits

AT A GLANCE

Name: Thomas Browne's Fillmore & Lewistown

Gauge: O

Dimensions: 25 x 30 feet

Track: GarGraves flex-track (54 to 96 inches in diameter)

Switches: Curtis Hi-Rail, Ross Custom Switches

Motive power: Atlas O, Lionel, Locomotive Workshop, MTH, Right-of-Way, Third Rail, Weaver, Williams

Rolling Stock: American Lightweight, American Standard Car, Athearn, Atlas O, Car Works, Circus-Craft, F.M. Models, Golden Gate Depot, I&I Reproductions, Hallmark Models, Intermountain, K-Line, Lionel, Max Gray, MTH, New Jersey Custom Brass, Overland Models, Pacific Limited, Pecos River, Precision Scale, Right-of-Way Industries, Rivarossi, Sunnyside, Sunset Models, Weaver, Westerbroke, Williams

Controls: Lionel type-ZW (2), MTH no. Z-4000 (2) transformers

Accessories: Lionel

Structures: Bar Mills, Downtown Deco, Harry's Trains, Korber, Model Tech Studios, MTH, Pennsylvania Heritage Models, Plasticville, scratchbuilt, Stoney Creek Designs, Weaver

Vehicles: Brooklin, Corgi, Design Studio, Dinky, Ertl, Lapin, Rextoys, Solido, US Model Mint, Vintage Vehicles, Vitesse, Yat Ming

Figures: Arttista, Golden Gate Depot, K-Line, Woodland Scenics

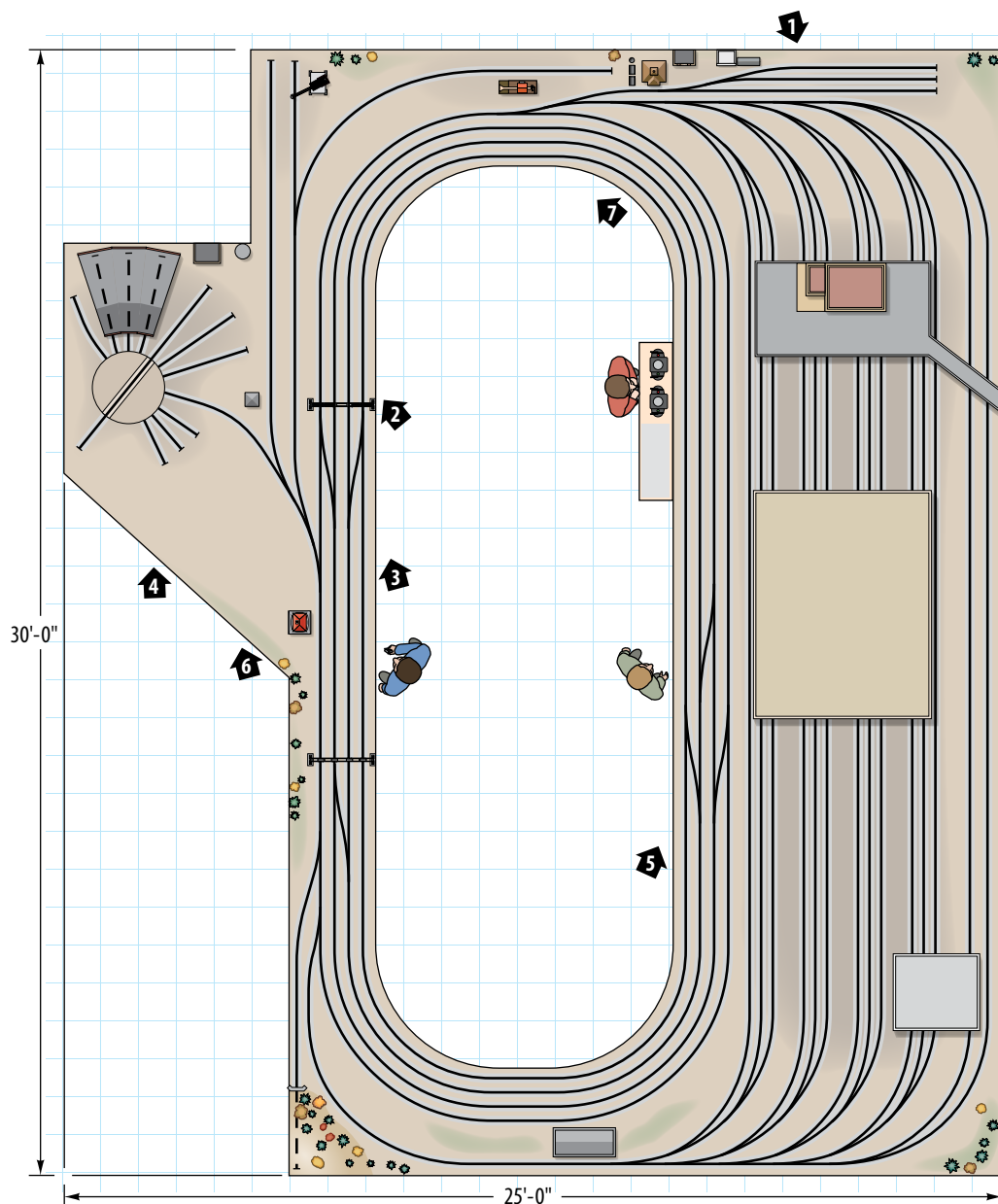


Illustration by Kellie Jaeger



ABOVE The Fillmore & Lewistown RR lets Thomas recall the Middle Division of the Pennsylvania RR. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos.

LEFT 5 The Fillmore section of the sprawling layout features a modern station, a yard, and a raised diorama showcasing diesels and streamlined cars from 1948.



ABOVE 6 Cathy Hall painted the realistic backdrop. Her work beautifully complements the terrific modeling Thomas did with Bob Ross and Leon Wasiak on detailed scenes such as this.

RIGHT 7 Superb modeling characterizes the 750-square-foot F&L. Thomas spent years planning it while building up a great roster of engines and railcars.

2016 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*), studied pictures to develop an exquisite replica. Bob Ross added details to finish the depot.

Bob also guided Thomas' efforts to scratchbuild several structures. For the outstanding maintenance shop and yard, they first had to glean information from Marty McGuirk's book on locomotive-servicing facilities. Shortly thereafter, they got down to work and constructed a great model, adding around it a roundhouse produced by Korber and a turntable made by Ross Custom Switches.

What else? Thomas pointed out the coaling tower from Lionel, the sand facility from Harry's Trains, the conveyor for the cinder pit from St. Charles Model Works, and the poles for the electric facility from House of Duddy.



The Fillmore & Lewistown RR is the fifth O gauge layout Thomas Browne has built. His first display, back in the 1950s, featured Lionel trains.

Show must go on

The fifth O gauge layout Thomas has built during his lifetime is, according to him, the finest and most realistic and detailed of all of them. Now, he can enjoy organizing 90-minute operating sessions for others or just himself, each featuring 17 trains as the actors.

Elsewhere, onlookers notice a special diorama using a 50 x 60-inch rolling platform perched about 7 inches above the primary level. Thomas calls it the Fillmore Rail Show. Inspired by similar events from

the past, it enables him to display favorite models not sporting the color schemes of the Pennsylvania RR.

This diorama lets Thomas show off the attractive hues railroads chose to distinguish the diesels they were introducing right after World War II. In that way, as he does with the operating sessions mimicking what the Pennsy instituted at the same time, he accomplishes more than make his layout enjoyable. It teaches visitors about a notable chapter in the history of transportation in the U.S. **CTT**



The Commodore Vanderbilt steam locomotive painted red with a black nose was among the Marx windups whose motor came with a whistling device.

MARX & LIONEL

Whistle while they

by Gary Anderson • Photos by William Zuback

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN TWO COMPANIES' TRAIN WHISTLES

In the early 1940s, Louis Marx & Co. sold a mechanical, or windup, steam locomotive with a special feature sure to appeal to children. The model came with a functional whistle.

While running the engine, kids could sound two longs, one short, and another long blast when their O gauge train went through a grade crossing. Just as their full-size counterparts did on railroads.

Let's look at the whistle and investigate its development as well as a rather curious connection to what had already been invented for the Lionel Corp. and its steam locomotives. It's a surprising and fascinating journey into history.

What Marx offered

To start, the whistling sound on the Marx product was generated by a spinning die-cast metal impeller placed

by laborers inside a die-cast metal sound chamber.

The whistle motors came with hollow stamped-steel wheels, except for the final models. They were 17-spoke die-cast metal versions.

Two styles of whistle motors have been identified. The first had the sound stop lever swinging from the side of the sound chamber. It had an eight-blade impeller. The second motor had the sound stop



work

lever lift up on the top. It had a four-blade impeller.

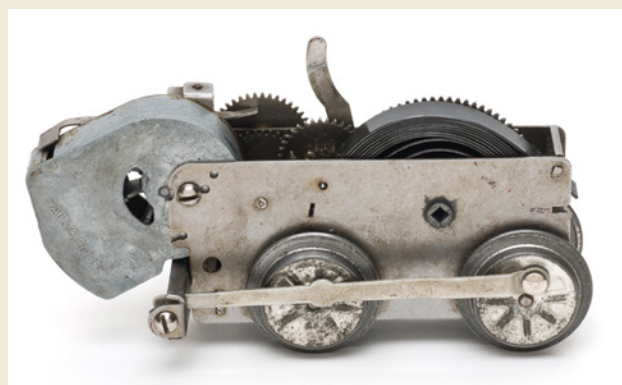
Marx equipped several different steam locomotives with this whistle. The first, shown in the catalog issued by Sears, Roebuck & Co. for 1942 was a Commodore Vanderbilt, probably red, which is the only one with the side lever.

Next appeared the Commodore Vanderbilt steam engine painted red with a black nose. An all-black version of the

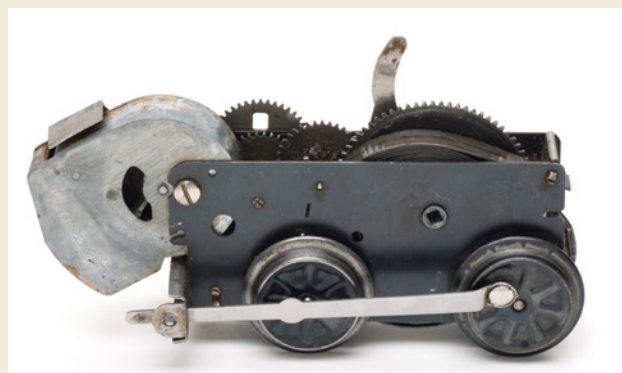
Commodore Vanderbilt then followed (for some reason, this version is not listed in the published reference guidebooks about Marx trains).

The next locomotives with whistles were the Mercurys: black for 1949 and blue for 1950. A later version of the blue engine came with die-cast metal wheels. Also in 1950, Marx released another steamer with a whistle: the no. 994 used to pull 6-inch-long rolling

SIDE BY SIDE



Louis Marx & Co. developed two styles of motors with whistling devices. The first had the sound stop lever swinging from the side of the sound chamber.



The second Marx windup motor built with a whistling device, while identical in many ways, differed from the first motor in having the sound stop lever lift on top.

stock. It was cataloged for another two years.

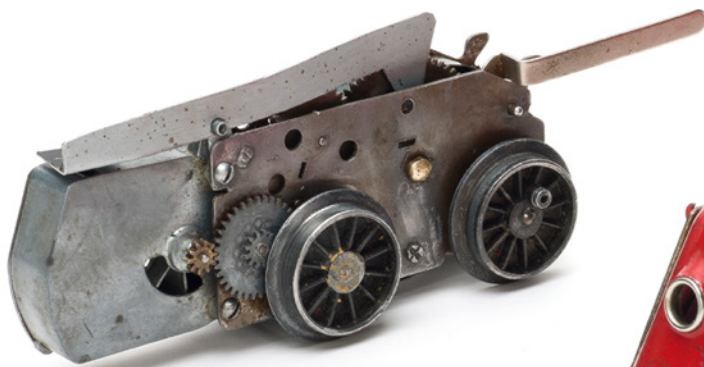
Patent information

Although the first Marx locomotives available with a whistle date from 1942, the firm received a patent for that sound device in 1939. The number (2143513) can be found on the sound chamber.

The patent was awarded to Charles V. Giaimo, who had it assigned to the Lionel Corp.



The first Marx whistle motor had patent no. 2143513. The patent for the mechanical whistle had been awarded to Charles Giaimo, who was assistant plant superintendent at Lionel's factory.



The Lionel Corp. had manufactured and marketed mechanical steam engines in the 1930s. Starting in 1935, it had been able to equip them with a whistle motor.



Why? Because Giaimo was employed, not by Marx, but by its chief competitor. As noted in the November 2004 issue of *Classic Toy Trains*, Giaimo had begun working at the Lionel factory in 1917 when he was only 14 years old. By 1931, he had been promoted to assistant plant superintendent.

Four years later, Giaimo strived to create a small device that replicated the sound of a steam locomotive's whistle. After some trial and error, he achieved success in 1935. From that point on, Lionel proudly heralded an "Authentic Locomotive Whistle!"

What did Marx have to give

Lionel for the use of its patent? One can easily imagine Louis Marx at a private club, seated across a table from Joshua Lionel Cowen, the kingpin at the toy maker with his middle name. Perhaps they negotiated a deal while sharing drinks, finally reaching an agreement both found acceptable.

Lionel, Marx would have been aware, had previously installed its whistling device on windup engines. Since by 1942 the firm had quit selling mechanical trains. Therefore, it might not need the patent any longer. To the relief of Mr. Marx, cooperating with him would have been possible. **CTT**



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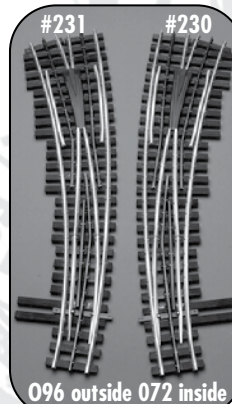
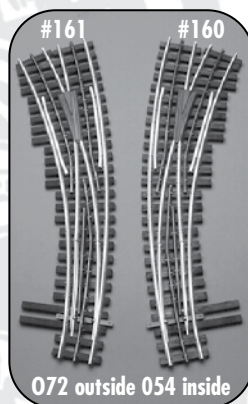
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Make custom tunnel portals

GREAT-LOOKING PLASTER PORTALS ARE EASY TO MAKE

When I started designing my O gauge Basement & Southern RR, I realized I needed four tunnel portals – and I had only two commercial portals.

Since I was on a tight budget, I decided to make the remaining portals myself by

building a simple, reusable mold and casting the portals in plaster (**Photo 1**).

I measured the desired height and width of the portals

I needed. Then I cut a square base a few inches larger from 1-inch-thick extruded foam insulation board.

Next, I cut two sides and a top, matching the outside dimensions of my finished portal, and a bottom piece several inches wider than the top.

All pieces were 1 inch wide and cut from the same foam insulation board. I pinned the bottom piece to the base using

1½-inch finishing nails, as shown in

Photo 2.

To create the texture of cut stone, I tore off a piece of aluminum foil slightly larger than the size of the finished portal and loosely crumpled it into a ball. I carefully unfolded the foil, flattening it out onto the form's base while keeping the creases and dents. I arranged the foil by placing it against the bottom piece already pinned to the form.

I squared the two sides and top of the form atop the foil and pinned them in place. Next, I cut out a piece of foam





PHOTO 1. Casting your own plaster tunnel portals is an easy project, and, as author Alan Sakalas notes, the result, at the right of this photo, looks just as good as the store-bought tunnel portal to its left.

PHOTO 2. Alan made his reusable mold from pieces of 1-inch-thick rigid foam insulation board.

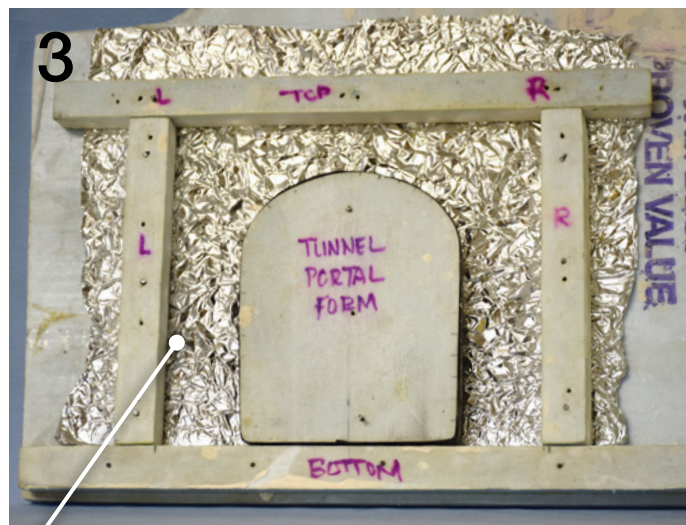


PHOTO 3. Crumpled aluminum foil produces the look of rough-cut stone in the finished portal.

PHOTO 4. Plaster of Paris is an inexpensive and versatile hobby material.



for the portal opening and pinned it to the foil-covered base (**Photo 3**).

I sprayed the mold with automobile vinyl protector to act as a mold release agent. I mixed a batch of plaster of Paris (**Photo 4**) and poured it into the form, which I carefully filled to the top. I left the mold to dry overnight.

With the plaster completely hardened, I unpinned and removed the top, side pieces, and portal opening. Then I

removed the plaster portal casting by gently pulling it away from the foil.

I placed the plaster portal with the rocky face side up on a work surface and used an awl, a ruler, and a square to carve parallel lines representing individual stone blocks. I also carved a course of stone blocks around the opening and topped it with a keystone.

When I was done carving, I stained the portal with diluted

India ink, tinting it darker near the top of the opening arch to represent years of locomotive exhaust. Once it had dried, I dry-brushed on white paint to highlight the rocky texture.

You can reuse the mold form over and over to make matching retaining walls and more portals.

I really enjoyed this affordable project, and I think the end result looks just as good as ready-made tunnel portals. – Alan Sakalas



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Lionel's newly tooled O gauge replicas of the Amtrak EMD F40PH nicely capture the details of a workhorse locomotive that hauled long-distance passenger trains from the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s. Lionel is making the model available in several Amtrak paint schemes and road numbers.

Dynamic duo

LIONEL AMTRAK F40PH AND "CABBAGE UNIT"

What's better than one top-of-the-line Lionel Legacy diesel locomotive? Why two, of course.

Let me explain.

Back in 2017, Lionel showed in its Volume 2 catalog a newly tooled O gauge replica of the Electro-Motive Division of General Motors F40PH diesel in several Amtrak phase paint schemes and road numbers. Also made available at the same time were two non-powered versions of what railfans refer to as "cabbage units."

The powered locomotives grabbed my attention. Their non-powered kin did not. Not really caring for the latter units, I ordered only a powered one.

BIG MISTAKE!

What I didn't realize, mainly because I hadn't fully read the description in the catalog, was Lionel intended for the cabbage units to run in concert with the powered ones. The latter rode at the front of the train,

and the cabbage unit was at the rear. Working together, they provided an entertaining and realistic experience.

Later, after figuring out what the cabbage units were about, I managed to pick up one at a local hobby shop. At last, I had the dynamic duo I really wanted.

PROTOTYPE BACKGROUND

Before we delve into Lionel's F40PH, a few words about its real-world counterpart. Upon its formation in 1971, Amtrak inherited an aging and mechanically incompatible fleet of diesels from the different railroads the federal government had just merged together. To rectify that situation, Amtrak ordered 150 Electro-Motive SDP40F and 25 General Electric P30CH diesel locomotives. The newcomers started entering service in 1973.

Unfortunately, the SDP40F units had problems from the get-go, including a series of derailments. Also, mechanical

problems with the P30CH led Amtrak to cancel further orders of that locomotive.

By 1975, Amtrak was in desperate need of reliable power. Salvation came when EMD delivered its F40PH that year. Based on the GP40-2 road diesel, the F40PH was an instant hit. Even though it was originally intended to be used only for short-haul routes, it soon became the backbone of Amtrak's entire diesel fleet.

Electro-Motive made the F40PH through 1992, cranking out more than 500 before Amtrak started to phase them out in the middle 1990s in favor of the new GE Genesis. As the latter replaced F40PH units, Amtrak converted a number of the retired EMD diesels into what railfans nicknamed "cabbage units."

Officially known as Non-Powered Control Units, they had been stripped of their engine, generator, head-end power plant, radiator, and so forth. By doing so, Amtrak created a hollow space for baggage in the body of the F40PH while retaining an intact cab and operating controls to provide a place for engineers to run trains over short distances, such as between Chicago and Milwaukee.

Such corridors, usually characterized by many grade crossings, benefited from having trains configured in a push-pull manner. The cabbage units provided engineers with protection in case of collisions at the frequent grade crossings.





When F40s began to be phased out in the 1990s, Amtrak converted several into “Non-Powered Control Units.” By stripping the prime mover, generator, head-end power plant, wiring, and so forth Amtrak created a hollow space for baggage in the body of the F40PH while retaining an intact cab and operating controls.

OPENING THE BOXES

Each of the Lionel powered and non-powered F40PH locomotives arrived in the standard orange-and-blue box, packed in plenty of Styrofoam to keep them safe on the long journey from China to your layout. Both units contained spare traction tires, and the powered one also came with a Legacy memory module.

Both the powered and non-powered units measure right at 14 inches in length. The powered unit weighs 3 pounds 14 ounces, while the cabbage unit is only 2 pounds 10 ounces. The minimum curve needed to operate them is O-54.

ON THE TRACK

After placing the dynamic duo on the track, you should first program them into your TMCC/Legacy remote. Each unit should be assigned its own unique ID in your system. Once you’ve done so, you will need to create a “train” within the TMCC/Legacy system and add both

engines to that train with the lead powered unit facing forward and the rear non-powered unit facing backward.

If you plan to run the non-powered unit in concert with the powered one, start by lifting up the hidden panel on the roof of the non-powered unit to see a switch labeled “Unit/Pair.”

If you’re going to be operating the non-powered unit by itself, you can leave that switch in the “Unit” position. If you plan on running the unit with the powered unit, you’ll want to throw that switch to the “Pair” position.

Completing the necessary programming and powering up the train gets the fun started! Especially because the cabbage unit is no ordinary non-powered unit. It has many of the same features as the powered unit, including fully functional sound and light systems. Only motors, prime mover sound effects, and a smoke unit are missing.

WELL DONE, LIONEL. THE OPERATION OF THE TRAIN WAS AS SMOOTH AS SILK.

When the dynamic duo is in “Pair” mode, the lights and the sounds work in concert with the powered unit up front. When the train is moving in a forward direction, the cabbage unit goes quiet and the lights are that of a rear-end unit. But when you change the direction of the train, the lights change accordingly and the sounds of the horn, bell, and crew transfer to the rear cabbage unit. Pretty slick!

Running these two Amtrak units together with a string of passenger cars in between is unlike any operating experience I’ve had before. You get the sense you’re running a complete train.

Operation of the train was as smooth as silk. The low-speed average for the powered unit was 3 scale mph; the high-speed average was 88 scale mph. The powered unit boasts 1 pound 13 ounces of pulling power, which should be plenty to pull any normal-size passenger train.

The new Lionel F40PH is great on its own, but if you really want to unleash its full potential do yourself a favor and invest in the accompanying cabbage unit to ride at the back of the train. Although doing so requires a deeper financial commitment, I believe it is totally worthwhile. Having both units makes for enjoyable runs and is sure to impress visitors to your layout. –

Eric Siegel

O GAUGE AMTRAK EMD F40PH FROM LIONEL

Price: \$549.99 (nos. 82453 and 82454, Phase II; 82455 and 82456, Phase III, powered); \$399.99 (no. 82457, non-powered) **Min Curve:** O-54 **Features:** Lighting, horn and bell sounds, prototypical lettering and painting, Lionel TMCC/Legacy command control, remote couplers **Road names:** Amtrak Phase II and Phase III.
www.lionel.com

PRODUCT REVIEWS



Hang on to that rope! The no. 279-4439 limited edition O gauge UFO scene is a new action accessory from Menards. It features a tug-of-war between a silver flying saucer and a farmer to decide the fate of one of his cows.

Mars attacks!

MENARDS O GAUGE UFO SCENE ACTION ACCESSORY

Farmers have many worries. The weather changes all the time but never for the better, fuel costs always rise, and the fluctuations of commodity markets make farming more of a gamble than anything seen in Las Vegas.

And then, of course, there are Martians stealing your cows....

Based in Eau Claire, Wis., where I imagine this sort of thing happens all the time, Menards is well positioned to bring the interstellar drama of rural life to

O gauge layouts everywhere. Its no. 279-4439 O gauge UFO Scene is a fully assembled and landscaped diorama 15¼ inches

wide, 9¾ inches deep, and 7¼ inches high.

The silver flying saucer features a motor-driven claw in its belly that slowly lifts a cow. But the farmer isn't giving up without a fight. He has thrown a lasso around Bossie and is hauling her back to earth. The tractor beam reasserts itself, pulling the farmer forward as the cow rises. The farmer figure strains back on the rope and lowers the cow. Back and forth the struggle rages.

THE CRAFT INCLUDES AN EYE-CATCHING DISPLAY OF LED LIGHTS.

LIGHTS-A-PLENTY

In common with many of the structures Menards has released, the UFO Scene makes effective use of LED lighting.

Bright white lights in the saucer's underside spotlight the cow-lifting action while a belt of LEDs around the middle of the craft alternately flash blue, red, and green. Up top, the little green man at the controls sits under a clear plastic bubble. The cockpit is illuminated in slowly pulsating green light as white and red LEDs blink on the instrument panels.

The diorama includes an illuminated farm shed, four trees, four round hay bales, and three additional cows. Jack the German Shepherd defends the farmer from two hulking aliens at the UFO's base.

The craft is lettered Greater East Martian Cow Abduction Co. ("Our Mission Statement: We Take Your Steak!").

Menards' UFO Scene is a creative and well-made accessory. Its clever lighting draws the eye, and the tug-of-war action is entertaining.

Now that the company has made a full-fledged action accessory, it will be interesting to see what it has in store for the future. Until then, though, "Keep watching the skies!" – Carl Swanson

O GAUGE UFO SCENE FROM MENARDS

Price: \$99.99 (no. 279-4439) **Features:** Fully landscaped diorama with illuminated flying saucer and farm shed, human, cow, dog, and alien figures, motorized cow abduction action. **Power supply:** Menards no. 279-4062 or no. 279-4050 4.5-volt power supply (sold separately). www.menards.com/trains

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Events Rate: \$35 per issue (\$5 word maximum). Ads will contain the following information about the event: state, city, sponsoring organization and name of event, meet, auction or show, dates, location, times, admission fee, name and/or telephone number and/or email of person to

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Events

CT, WALLINGFORD: Classic Shows, LLC will hold a Train and Toy Show on Sunday, February 10, 2019 from 9:00am-2:00pm at Zandri's Stillwood Inn, 1074 South Colony Road, (U.S. Route 5), exit 13 on Interstate 91. Admission is \$6.00, children 12 and under are free with adult. For information 203-926-1327 or www.ClassicShowsLLC.com

FL, DELAND: 66th Florida Railfair, Saturday, January 12, 2019, 9:00am-4:00pm and Sunday, January 13, 10:00am-3:30pm. Volusia County Fairgrounds (Tommy Lawrence Arena), 3150 E. New York Ave. (SR44 and I-4). Admission \$9.00, under 12 free. Info: Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213. 703-536-2954. Email: rrshows@aol.com or www.gserr.com.

GA, ATLANTA: 56th Model Train & Railroadiana Show. Saturday, January 19, 2019 9:00am-4:00pm. Infinite Energy Center, 6400 Sugarloaf Parkway. Admission: \$9.00, under 12 free. Info: Charles Miller, 3106 N. Rochester St., Arlington, VA 22213. 703-536-2954 or rrshows@aol.com.

IN, MIDDLEBURY: Essenhaus Train Show. On the Das Dutchman Essenhaus campus, 240 US 20. Saturday, February 16, 2019, 9:00am-2:30pm. Admission \$3.00/person or \$6.00/family. (Children under 7 FREE w/adult). All gauge, operating layouts, repairs, parts dealers, selling and trading. Display tables \$20.00 each. Essenhaus.com or call 800-455-9471 (x443).

NJ, BRICK: National Collector's Club Show, Elks Lodge, 2491 Hooper Avenue, Brick, NJ 08723. Sunday, January 6, 2019, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$6.00; under 10 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to www.eastcoasttrainparts.com and click on The Brick Show.

NJ, MONTVALE: National Collector's Club Show. St. Joseph's High School, 40 Chestnut Ridge Rd. Sunday December 16, 2018, 9:00am-3:00pm. Admission: \$7.00; under 10 free with adult. Contact: John LaLima, 732-845-5966 or Joe Bianco 201-327-5254. Go to www.eastcoasttrainparts.com and click on Montvale Show.

NJ, TOMS RIVER: National Collector's Club Show, Elks Lodge, 600 Washington St. Sunday, December 30, 2018, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$6.00; under 10 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to www.eastcoasttrainparts.com and click on Toms River Show.

NJ, WAYNE: National Collector's Club Special Christmas Show, P.A.L. Hall, 1 Pal Drive, Wayne, NJ 07470. Sunday, December 23, 2018, 9:00am-2:00pm. Admission: \$6.00; under 10 free with adult. John LaLima 732-845-5966. Go to www.eastcoasttrainparts.com and click on The Wayne Show.

NY, LINDENHURST: Northern Spur Train/Diecast Vehicles/Toy Meet. Firemen's Memorial Park, 555 Heiling Blvd. (north of Hartford St.) January 6, 2019, February 17, 2019, March 24, 2019, September 22, 2019, November 3, 2019 8:30am-1:00pm. \$5.00 adults, under 16 free w/adult. Handicap accessible. Contact: Carmelo Sancetta. PO Box 1286M. Bay Shore, NY 11706. 631-666-6855

NY, WEST SENECA: TCA Upstate NY Chapter Train Show. Ismailia Shrine Center, 1600 Southwestern Blvd., Zip Code: 14224. Sunday, January 13, 2019. TCA Members: 9:00am. General Public: 9:30am-2:30pm. Admission: Adults \$5.00, under 17 free with paid adult. Contact: Chuck 716-390-8216. E-mail: usnyc2015@gmail.com or www.upstate-ny-tca.com

OH, PARMA: Cuyahoga Valley 'S' Gauge Association, UAW Hall, 5615 Chevrolet Blvd., Parma, Ohio 44130. January 5, 2019, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission is \$6.00 each, children under 12 free with an adult. This is an ALL GAUGE SHOW. 440-833-4366. www.cvsaga.com.

SC, LAKE CITY: Ragsdale Building, 245 S. Church Street. Saturday, January 12, 2019, 9:00am-3:00pm. Admission \$5.00, under 5 FREE. Over 200 vendor tables. Lots of G, O, HO, S, N gauge. Contact Todd at 843-307-8674. sctradeshow.com

TX, PLANO: Dallas Area Winter Train Show. Plano Center, 2000 E. Spring Creek Parkway. January 19-20, 2019, Saturday 10:00am-5:00pm; Sunday 10:00am-4:00pm. Adults \$10.00, 12 and under free w/adult. All scales & Tin Plate. Dealer tables, How-To Clinics. Information: Chris Atkins, chris@railroadmodeler.com 469-438-0741. Visit www.dfwtrainshow.com

WI, LA CROSSE: The 28th Annual Great Tri-State Rail Sale. La Crosse Center, 2nd & Pearl Streets. January 26, 2019 9:00am-3:00pm. Admission \$5.00, under 12 free. 300 Tables; All Scales; Model, Toy & Antique Trains & Memorabilia. Information: 4000 Foundation, PO Box 3411, La Crosse, WI 54602, 608-781-9383.

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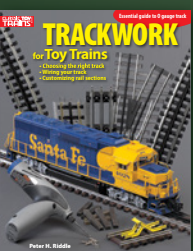


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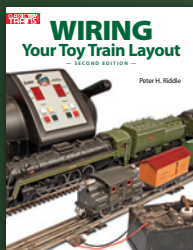
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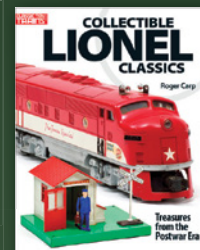
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**CLASSIC TOY
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ON SALE
JANUARY 1

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

(Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

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3. Street vendors and counter sales	2,706	2,348
4. Other classes mailed through USPS (through 40)	0	0
C. Total paid circulation (sum of 15B (1 through 40))	29,432	28,387
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1. Outside county	0	0
2. In county	0	0
3. Other classes through USPS	292	292
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E. Total free distribution (sum of 15d)	307	292
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H. Total (sum of 15f and 15g)	35,832	35,053
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a. Paid electronic copies	713	611
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17. Publication of Statement of Ownership: Statement of Ownership will be printed in the January 2019 issue of this publication.		
18. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.		
(signed) Nicole McGuire		
Vice President, Consumer Marketing		

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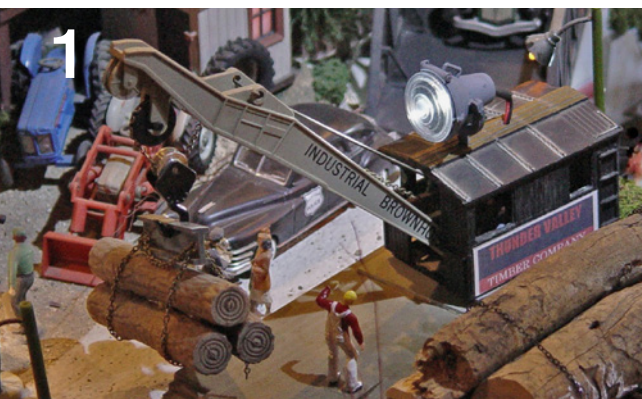


PHOTO 1. Thunder Valley Timber's crane features the cabin from a Lionel work caboose and the boom arm from an American Flyer crane car. It's one of three trackside cranes the author made from junkbox parts.

PHOTO 2. Removed from its frame, the cabin and boom from a Marx crane car have a second life.

PHOTO 3. The Railway Express Agency is ready to handle oversized shipments, thanks to this crane made from cast-off parts.

Load that freight

A TRIO OF EASY-TO-MAKE STATIONARY CRANES

Recently I used cast-off and repurposed parts to make three stationary cranes for loading and unloading materials from flatcars and gondolas. These trackside accessories are simple to build, look great, and add operating interest to an O gauge layout.

Log-loading crane

The Thunder Valley Timber Co.'s log-loading crane (**Photo 1**) is made from the cabin of a Lionel work caboose. I opened the front of the cabin and attached the boom arm of an American Flyer derrick, which I found in a junkbox at a train meet.

Being S gauge, the arm's size is in keeping with the small proportions of the Lionel work caboose's cabin.

I made a bracket from scrap wood to support the base of the arm. I added a floor of thin styrene sheet to the cabin and fastened the cabin and boom assembly to a Plasticville freight platform using a small bolt through the crane floor and through a second piece of styrene cemented to the platform base. I loosely secured the bolt with a lock washer and nut, allowing the crane to rotate.

To finish the project, I added a Marx spotlight equipped with an LED bulb powered by a 9-volt battery. I can turn the light on and off using a switch mounted under the front of the platform. I also added a Lionel crane hook I purchased from a parts dealer.

Stationary Marx crane

For the second project, I used the cabin and boom salvaged from a Marx crane car that was missing a wheel and had a bent frame. This crane (**Photo 2**) rests on a nylon gear that allows it to be rotated as desired.

I used an HO scale plaster of Paris bridge pier for the crane's base, which

I cut to approximately 1½ inches tall.

I used two battery-operated spotlights for lighting set on top and to the rear of the crane. I purchased them from a Walmart store's Christmas Village display section.

Railway Express crane

After I completed the first two cranes, I liked what I saw – and I had one more Lionel work caboose cabin and a second American Flyer derrick, also found in a train meet.

Although there were no more Plasticville freight platforms in my junkbox, there was an orange juice cap from a ½-gallon Tropicana bottle that, with a bit of paint and aging, worked out fine. The crane, with its thin Masonite floor, is attached to the bottle cap in the same manner, but I added a large nylon gear under the cabin for looks. I installed a battery-operated light inside the cabin for the benefit of the operator.

I found the crane by itself will not support very much weight with its orange-juice lid base. I solved this by adding several wheel balancing weights with tape under the base.

Painted and decaled for the Railway Express Agency, my third crane (**Photo 3**) is ready to assist with oversized freight shipments.

I purchased the nylon gears from All Electronics (www.allelectronics.com). This electronics supplier has a number of handy items in its catalog, including small motors and power supplies. – J.D. Caboor

WANT TO SHARE? Write to "Tips" at Classic Toy Trains, P.O. Box 1612, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612, or email us at tips@classictoytrains.com and put the word "tips" in the subject line. We'll pay you \$25 for any tip we publish unless it was contained in a previously purchased article.

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