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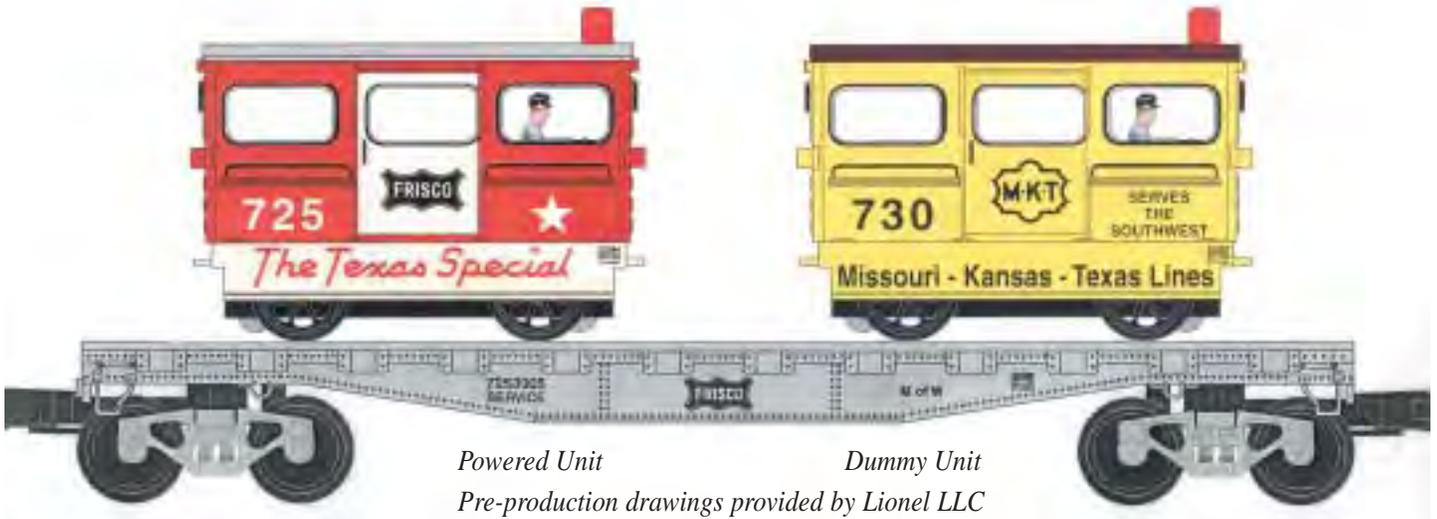
The **Lion Roars**



PUBLISHED BY THE LIONEL® COLLECTORS CLUB OF AMERICA IN FEBRUARY, APRIL, JUNE, OCTOBER, DECEMBER



A TRIPLE SALUTE to St. Louis Railroads and our Convention



Powered Unit

Dummy Unit

Pre-production drawings provided by Lionel LLC

This unique Frisco flat car with two speeders on board will become an instant collectible, an appropriate memento of the 2005 Convention, and a MOW car for track inspections of your layout. A triple play!

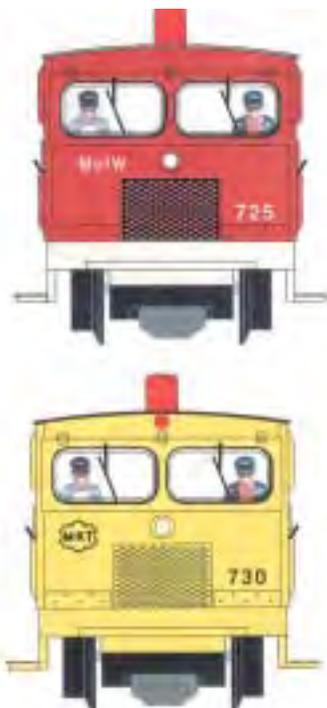
The "Standard O" flat car is painted silver with black lettering. It has die-cast, fully sprung, silver trucks. The underside bears a discreet mark, "LCCA 2005." The two speeders are secured to the flat car with prototypical tie-down chains (not shown).

"The Texas Special" speeder is a powered unit and includes applied details: two figures, windshield wipers, grab irons, door handles, and rooftop strobe light. It is stamped "LCCA 2005" on the undercarriage.

The yellow M-K-T speeder has a tuscan roof. It's a dummy unit with similar detailing.

If you can't attend the Convention, owning this three-element car is the next-best thing to being there.

Limit: two per member. Orders must be received on or before 9-01-05. Cars will be shipped in early December 2005.



Order Form for the LCCA 2005 Convention Car – This Form May Be Photocopied

Name: _____ Birth Date: _____ LCCA #: _____

Address: _____

City _____ State: _____ Zip + 4: _____

NOTE: UPS can not deliver to a Post Office Box; a street address is required.

Frisco flat car with two speeders

1 set @ \$119.95 – includes S&H \$ _____

2 sets @ \$ 239.80 – includes S&H \$ _____

Sales Tax (6% for Michigan residents) \$ _____

1 = \$7.20; 2 = \$14.40

Additional S&H for AK, HI, and foreign: \$12 for one, \$20 for two \$ _____

Total: \$ _____

My check is enclosed

Charge my credit card # _____

Signature: _____ [Visa [MC [Disc Exp: _____

By my signature, I authorize LCCA to charge my account for the amount indicated.

Mail to: LCCA Business Office Dep't L/6-05 P.O. Box 479 LaSalle, IL 61301-0479

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ON THE FRONT COVER
 TMCC and SLLRC make a great combination:
 modern technology and traditional
 model railroading.
Photograph by Mike Mottler

Contacting the LCCA Business Office

Members may contact the Business Office through the club's website at www.lionelcollectors.org, by e-mail at lcca@cpointcc.com, by fax at 815-223-0791, or by mail at: LCCA Business Office, P.O. Box 479, LaSalle, IL 61301-0479.

They will provide or process **changes of address, changes of phone number**, "make good" copies of *The Lion Roars*, applications for membership, replacement membership cards, reinstatements, death notices, commemorative orders, Convention registration, and club mementos.

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LCCA Web Site: www.lionelcollectors.org

People to Contact:

President - Always available and as a last resort
President-elect - Schedule a train meet
Immediate Past President - Complaint against another member
Secretary - Any administrative action not handled by LCCA Business Office
Treasurer - Club finances only

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The President's Report

by Eric Fogg RM 12768

My Favorite Tour

If you only go on one tour during the St. Louis Convention, I suggest the Wednesday night dinner cruise. We've reserved one riverboat so there'll be lots of room. You'll board right downtown, in the shadow of the Gateway Arch. Jane and I took the Delta Queen up-river to Hannibal once, and we left from the same site. In the late 70s, my son Bryan and I rode the last train on Wharf Street right at the edge of the levy.

There's more than just Fogg family history at this spot. Long before the United States was a country, boats docked at this levy. Little has changed in the passing of more than 200 years.

The riverboat will probably head north (up river) and pass under the Eads Bridge built by James Eads who also built the famous Civil War ironclad, the Monitor. Trains crossed this bridge on the lower deck and then went into a series of tunnels under downtown (you can still ride through them on MetroLink.) Eads Station still stands. It's an interesting building with boarding by floor depending on which direction you are going. The return ride (down river and with the current) will be fast and provide a magnificent view of the Gateway City at night. You don't want to miss this one. If you haven't registered, stop reading this now and go and do it! I'll see you there!

Convention Car

Lou Caponi continues to amaze and surprise. Just when you think he can't possibly have another great idea, he pulls one out of his hat like a magician. I can't tell you how many Frisco flatcars I switched when I formerly worked for that railroad, but none were as interesting as what Lou has presented to our Club. Thanks to our friends at Lionel, we will have another outstanding car with a December delivery date. The 2005 Convention car is a winner, and you should order yours as soon as possible. The inside front cover of this issue of *TLR* offers an artist's rendering of the car and the ordering information.

Volunteers Wanted

You can't begin to imagine how important volunteers are to the success of this Club and our yearly Convention. Anytime you feel like you want to "give something back" to the Club, let us know your volunteer interest. Specifically, if you're coming to St. Louis and want to help out, sign up. We have lots of jobs — big and small — that need to be done. These helpful tasks won't interfere with your planned tours.

Jane and I will be volunteers, and so will the other officers and directors and their spouses. My sister Sally and

her husband Mike will be volunteering even though this is their first Convention. Pop says he's willing to help, but at 87 he may have to sit this one out. But don't you sit this one out. Contact Bob Carter at bcdkl@comcast.net, and ask him to find a fun task for you in St. Louis.

More to Come

A lot of you have told us how much you liked last year's Convention in Milwaukee. Trust me on this; you'll really like the St. Louis Convention. The plans for the 2006 Convention in Denver will blow you away with surprises you can't imagine. Then in 2007 we're off to Chicago, and that's shaping up to be a fabulous Convention. Plan your summer vacations for the next few years around our Conventions.

Interchange Track and e-TRACK

Thanks to the hard work by some very techno-savvy members, we will take the train hobby's best buy/sell publication to a higher level. There are now four ways to get your information into the next issue of *IT* and included in *e-Track*. Our electronic site is open 24/7 and the *IT* will continue to be published six times a year. When it comes to buying or selling toy trains, you just can't beat this Club.

Ahead of Ourselves

In the last issue you may have read about a proposed option for electronic voting at the Club's web site. It's a good idea, but we need to do a little more work on the system. If you went to the web site to vote but found nothing there — we will provide more information later.

One Last Time

In 1938 my parents bought a second-hand Lionel train set at a garage sale. It was my first train, and I played hard with it. Sensing their son would grow up to become a collector, over the years they saved that set and its original boxes. Thanks Mom and Pop for getting me started. (With any luck, you'll get to meet them both at the Convention in St. Louis).

Eventually that little set brought me to the LCCA and still later, here to my final column as Club president. It's not always been an easy job, but I wouldn't trade it for all the toy train stations in the world. It's been a wonderful ride, full of interesting sites, sounds, people, and places I'll never forget. I'm indebted to many, but none more than my great family. Thanks Karen, Bryan, and Jane — you're the best!

And thanks to all of you for your support, your generous offers of help, and for honoring me with this opportunity to serve. My car still bears its personalized license plate — LCCA — and it will always remind me of the time you let me help "drive the dream."

Happy trails and happy trains! 



LCCA Board Minutes

by John Ourso
CM 33

Spring Board Meeting – York, Pennsylvania April 28, 2005

The meeting was called to order by President Fogg at 7:08 a.m.

Director and Acting Secretary Ourso called the roll. Those present included: President Fogg, Immediate Past President Fisher, President-Elect Caponi, Treasurer Johnson, Directors Carter, Kolis, Ourso, Overtoom, Schmeelk, Information Manager Black, Web site Editor Tribuzi and *The Lion Roars* Editor Mottler.

Agenda Points Considered

Motion by IPP Fisher, seconded by Director Overtoom, to accept the Minutes of the Fall 2004 Board of Directors meeting as published. The motion passed.

2005-06 Election Slate was presented by President Fogg.

President Elect: Richard Johnson
Alphonse A. Kolis

Treasurer: Dennis DeVito
Susan Ellingson

Director (three available positions):
John A. Fisher Ed Richter
Salvatore Gambino Craig Tribuzi.

IPP Fisher moved to go into executive session; motion seconded by PE Caponi at 7:18 a.m. The executive session ended at 8:07 a.m., and the Board meeting resumed.

A motion to accept the slate as presented was offered by President Fogg; seconded by IPP Fisher. The motion failed.

A motion to add Larry A. Black to the 2005-06 election slate was made by Director Overtoom; seconded by Director Schmeelk. The motion passed. Accordingly, his name was added to the list of candidates for Director (three available positions):

Larry A. Black Ed Richter
John A. Fisher Craig Tribuzi.
Salvatore Gambino

President Fogg stated he would ask Constitution Chairman Findley to review the organization and implementation of the Nominating Committee and its

interaction with the president and the Board. He will report to the Board at its next meeting.

President Fogg, IPP Fisher, and PE Caponi reported on the results of their April 18 meeting with members of the Lionel management team. The future looks very positive for our on-going partnership, and the company is eager to work with us on a number of new plans.

President Fogg discussed the open officer position of secretary and said he would appoint someone to that position before the July 25 Board meeting in St. Louis. He also thanked Director Ourso for filling-in for this role at this meeting.

PE Caponi presented plans for the 2005 Convention Car — a silver Frisco Maintenance-of-Way flatcar carrying two speeders. One will be powered. The order deadline will be September 1 and the club will use direct mail, among other communications tools, so members will have plenty of time to order cars. Delivery is expected in December.

IPP Fisher updated the group on the St. Louis 2005 Convention. Tours are filling up nicely and he expects a number of surprises that will delight and impress members. A Board of Directors meeting will be held during the Convention — Monday, July 25, at 2:00 p.m.

IPP Fisher gave a preliminary report on the Denver 2006 Convention. There are some exciting tours planned including a number of train rides through the impressive Colorado scenery. We are also in the process of lining up layout tours that promise to be remarkable.

IPP Fisher reported on the Chicago 2007 Convention to be held at the totally renovated Crowne Plaza Rosemount near O'Hare airport. He, President Fogg, and Director Overtoom recently met with the staff to review plans.

President Fogg thanked IPP Fisher for all his efforts and hard work in handling past, present, and upcoming Conventions.

Reports by Officers and Appointees

IPP Fisher reported there were three member-to-member complaints this year. All involved buy/sell transactions. Two have been resolved, and one is pending.

Treasurer Johnson reported that the LCCA is in a sound financial position, with our balance sheet solidly in the black. He is waiting for 2005 Convention Car expense and income to be processed, but the net effect will be positive.

The Lion Roars Editor Mottler gave his report on the magazine, including plans for themes for future issues. Articles by several first-time authors appeared in the February 2005 and April 2005 issues, a welcome occurrence. He thanked officers and directors for forwarding to him story ideas from members and encouraged members to send him their train stories.

Web Site Editor Tribuzi reported the online Pay Per Click research campaign conducted in the fourth quarter of 2004 was successful. IPP Fisher moved to continue the program, seconded by Director Schmeelk. The motion passed.

Director Overtoom moved to authorize Editor Tribuzi to purchase the URL address www.lionelcollectors.com (in addition to the existing URL, www.lionelcollectors.org) for the Club and to pay up to \$1,200 to acquire the ownership rights to it; seconded by Director Ourso. The motion passed.

Editor Tribuzi also reported on the status of online voting. The Board agreed to try the system for the upcoming election and to review the results at the next Board Meeting.

Information Manager Black reported on the status of the information systems maintained and operated by the LCCA Business Office. The work continues to run well; we need to make sure they are included in all important Club communications.

Black also reported on the *Interchange Track* and *E-track* publications. Black and *E-Track* Editor Elder have developed a revised system of submission options that should simplify the process and make it much less labor intensive. Director Schmeelk moved to implement the new *Interchange Track* submittal options as presented by Black; seconded by Director Carter. The motion passed.

President Fogg notified the Board that the 2005 Fall Board of Directors Meeting will be held September 23, 24, and 25 at the Denver Marriott Tech Center.

Director Ourso moved to adjourn; seconded by Director Schmeelk. The meeting adjourned at 12:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted, John Ourso

Postscript

Upon further review, the Board decided not to institute e-voting this spring but to wait and discuss it further at the next Board meeting, which is scheduled for July in St. Louis. 

Train Meet Saturday, July 2

Ramblin' through Georgia? Check out this LCCA-sponsored Train Meet on Saturday, July 2 at The Catoosa Colonnade, Old Mill Road in Ringgold, Georgia

Off I-75 at Exit 350 (five miles south of the Tennessee state line), west on Georgia H'way 2 (Battlefield Parkway), after 1.6 miles, turn right on Old Mill Road to The Catoosa Colonnade.

Setup and Registration: 8 to 9 a.m.

Trading for LCCA members only:
9 to 10:30 a.m.

Open to the Public:
10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

LCCA members and their families admitted free as a benefit of club membership. Adult guests, \$6 – Children under 18 accompanied by an adult – FREE.

Host – Bill Stitt

9727 Shadow Valley Circle
Chattanooga, TN 37421

Call: 615-894-1284

Reserve tables through Bill at \$12 each
Co-Hosts – George Baltz and Ron Herman

Toy Trunk Railroad

by Erik Sansom



A Tribute to Fathers

by Al Kolis
RM 15902

The Difference between Price and Value

When I hear the question “How much is that train worth?” from people who have rediscovered their trains, I usually reply with “that depends.” One could offer an answer based on the market price for the raw materials that make up the train; by that method the trains are probably worth a few dollars. One could look up the current value in various train price guides such as *Greenberg’s* or *TM* and find out what people report about current prices based on recent train sales in the marketplace.



Me and my dad: Alphonse and Alfonse

But to me, the value of the trains depends upon what they mean to you.

I consider my trains priceless. If someone offered me thousands for my first trains, I would say, “They are not for sale at any price.” My trains mean more to me than their market value in any price guide because of how I rediscovered toy trains.

My parents Alphonse and Estelle Kolis met in 1946 and were married in July, 1947. They lived in a modest suburban bungalow and raised a family. They lived the American dream like most people in the postwar era. My dad worked every day, and my mom was a

stay-at-home housewife.

For Christmas 1955, my father purchased the first Lionel train sets for his two sons. For my brother Tom, dad purchased the green Southern F-3 #2231W set. And for baby Jim, he bought the 736 Berkshire freight set #2225WS. At that time, a Lionel train was the preferred gift on most kids’ Christmas list. I believe he purchased these sets at a discounted, close-out price from the previous year’s inventory. Like my father, I have recently done the same thing for my sons.

In 1958, I was born to the Kolis family as their fifth son. I believe my parents thought that I would be their last child. They named me Alphonse, after my dad. Throughout my childhood, I always felt a special bond with my father, especially since I was named after him. I felt honored to have his name. Much to their surprise, another son, my little brother Raymond, was born in 1961.

From 1955 through 1969, my father set up the trains every year for the two months around Christmas time. He made an L-shaped layout from two 4x8-foot tables. To save space, dad suspended the table from the basement ceiling on chains. When the trains were not in use, he raised the layout to the ceiling. To operate the trains, he lowered the platforms and folded out the table legs.

Throughout the 1950s and early 60s, my father bought Lionel trains and accessories. He had quite a layout. Some of his favorite accessories were the milk loading car, the barrel car and ramp, the log loader conveyer ramp, and the 397 coal loader. The tables were made of flat Homosote™



With his hands on the ZW, my brother Tom was the “birthday boy” for this party picture at dad’s layout, circa 1956. Years later, these trains and accessories would become the foundation for the Lionel-based train layout in our home today.

boards painted “layout green.” We had a couple of tunnels made of compressed cardboard.

As the years passed and the younger children grew up, it seemed to me that the layout grew smaller. The trains received more physical attention. After all, these were toy trains, and we played with them. They were not collectibles to be put on a shelf for display; to us, they were toys. We played Cowboys and Indians, Civil War, etc. We placed plastic Army men on the trains and played war.

I distinctly remember filling the cardboard tunnels with Lincoln Logs®, and sending a train crashing into them. We would test to see how many logs it would take to stop the train. We made piles of logs on the track, and then sent a train at full speed ahead into the logs. We loved to see how far the logs would fly. Oftentimes, we tested the trains to see how fast they could make one lap around the track. There were several times when the train jumped the curved track, flew up and over the table’s raised edge, and fell to the floor with a hellacious bang. When this would happen, it made one cringe.

About 1969, my parents wrapped up the trains, packed them in a box, and stored them in the second-floor attic of our house. Like most kids, we went on with our lives and



At the “L” section of the layout, my son Alfonse II built a model of the twin World Trade Center towers as a memorial to those who perished in the 9/11 attack. In the circle you can see an airplane on a collision course with the first tower.

offer because I have five brothers and didn’t want to offend them. Dad said he was of sound mind, and that if I wanted them, I could have them. In fact, they almost gave the trains away to a friend outside of the family. Dad was pleased that someone in the family expressed an interest in the trains.

I took the trains home, bought new track, and laid out a large loop of track on the basement floor. I hooked up the old ZW transformer to the track and tried to run the trains.

Despite many trial-and-error attempts, I couldn’t get my brothers’ old trains to run. When I was a boy, I wasn’t involved with the wiring and the electrical system for the trains, so I didn’t remember how to wire it up. Frustrated, I called my dad. The next weekend he came over to our house with his trusty voltmeter. With it and my dad’s persistence, we were able to determine the root cause of the problem: an electrical short in a new section of the track. A cardboard insulator that separated the “hot” center rail from the grounded cross-ties was missing.

We replaced the defective track section and the trains sparked to life. The 38-year-old toy trains ran perfectly. The trains survived the use and abuse of six boys, rested in a dark attic for 20 years, yet ran fine! They took a licking, but kept on ticking. It wasn’t until after I started running the trains that I remembered the sights, sounds, and the distinctive smells of running Lionel trains. It brought back clear memories of my childhood — as if I was 6 years old yesterday.

Over the next few weeks, my father and I built a couple of 4x8-foot Homosote train



My boyhood train game with Lincoln Logs was the incident that later inspired me to commission a painting, “Trouble Ahead,” by train artist (and LCCA member) Angela Trotta Thomas. The two boys in the painting are our sons, Vincent and Alfonse II.

Trouble Ahead from the Alphonse Kolis collection was created by Angela Trotta Thomas and is presented here by permission of the artist.



Gina's Diner is an off-the-shelf ceramic product coincidentally bearing the name of my wife Gina, so I wanted to add it to our family-oriented layout.

platforms. We screwed down the track, hooked up the old ZW transformer, and operated a primitive, 1960s-era, fully functioning layout.

After we finished the project, dad and I sat in the parked car in my driveway and talked. Had Gina not been pregnant at that time, I probably would not have said it, but I told him that I loved him and thanked him for providing a happy childhood to me. I said that if I could be half as good as father as he was to me, then I would consider myself a success as a dad.

The following weekend, Sunday March 29, 1992 my life changed forever. It was Gina's birthday, and we were honored at a baby shower party for our expected baby. We received a dreadful phone call. I will remember it as long as I live. My father had died suddenly and unexpectedly of a heart attack. My father never drank or smoked. He was not overweight, and he had older brothers still alive. He was the last person I expected to die suddenly. It felt like my heart had been ripped from my body.

Life is sometimes contradictory, yet poetic. March 29 was the best and worst day of my life. That was the day that my true love entered this world and it was also the day that my father left this planet. It was a very difficult time. Gina and I were very excited about becoming parents, yet we were sad about losing dad. I am so thankful for taking the opportunity to share my deepest feelings for and appreciation of my dad while he was alive. I remain truly grateful for that experience. The Lionel train layout was the last project we did together.

On May 15, 1992, our son Alfonse Andrew Kolis II was born and named after my father and hero, Alfonse A Kolis. The circle of life had been completed, and joy and happiness returned to our lives.

As my son grew up, I continued to build and add on to my train layout. Our second son, Vincent, was born in 1996. I have kept the train table that my father made as the cornerstone to my ever-expanding layout. To me, the train

layout is more than just a train platform. It's a memorial to my father, and an intergenerational bond that links me to my dad and my sons to me. The train layout bears a plaque that reads, "This table was made with the loving hands of my father, Alfonse A. Kolis." I named the layout The Alfonse A. Kolis Memorial Train Layout.

The original 736 Berkshire and 2356 green Southern F-3s are scratched and worn now, but they are priceless to me. Each and every time I walk to the basement and start up the trains, I think about dad. When I am in the train room all alone, I can feel his presence. Sometimes, I can almost sense that he is in the room — watching and smiling. I will always treasure the feelings that this living memorial elicits within me and will cherish the hours of joy and fun that it provides to my two sons.



The two ceramic buildings on the right were customized for our family by Stoney Express as Alfonse's Skateboard Shop and Vincent's Pet Shop.

I am sure that other members have stories that may be similar to yet unique from mine. I invite you to share your personal and family story about your toy trains and what they mean to you — then and now. 🚂

Note: To share your family's train story through TLR, contact Editor Mike Mottler.

Photographs by Al Kolis except as noted

I Have a Dream — About Toy Dreams

by Keith Beyer
RM 24986

Part II: Constructing a Layout without Breaking your Back

Editor's Note: Keith continues a multi-part series on layout building from scratch; from the dream, through the sawdust, to wiring, and into operation.

Gotta Unpack those Trains

After I had substantially finished the train room in our new home as described in Part I, I began to think about display shelving. Like most Lionel collectors, when we moved in to our new house I wanted to get the trains out of their boxes and on display as soon as possible.

Our previous home had unfinished cement block basement walls without a finished ceiling. In that bare-bones environment, I attached 2x4s directly to the ceiling joists with the flat side against the vertical wall and the bottom set in place on the cement floor. I found economical



My quick, dirty, and cheap approach to train shelving at my old house. Although rather plain, it served the purpose. I dispensed with the “dirty” part by getting rid of the old Lionel track before our move.

installed old, used O-gauge track on the top surface of each shelf, which worked great; but as my collection grew, so did the need for more track. I ended up with a lot of track that had no other use but as display shelves. When the time came for our move, I didn't want to pay shipping charges for sending third-hand track to our new home. I donated the old track to others before we moved.

Solid Support for Shelves

I had previously experimented with cutting grooves in the shelves to accommodate the wheels of O-gauge locomotives and rolling stock, and I wanted to try that technique again. The trick to this is getting the table saw set just right so that the wheel grooves are at an equal distance from the shelf edges yet fit the spacing between Lionel wheels. This takes some trial and error, no matter how many times you measure! Norm Abram of PBS says, “measure

twice, cut once,” but my suggestion is to double the measurement part and make test cuts on a piece of scrap lumber before shifting into high-gear production mode. Although I did fairly well at spacing the grooves in the shelves, I erred on the side of a little too narrow. Some train pieces didn't rest perfectly in the grooves. It's OK to err in the narrow direction because you can always widen the grooves, but if cut too wide you can't narrow them!

To support the shelves I selected slotted tracks that can be screwed to the wall; the slots accept brackets that support the shelves. This system is both flexible and fast to mount. However, I came to another fork in the road — I couldn't find four-inch-wide support brackets for my 1x4-inch shelves. The shortest bracket I could locate was six inches long. That was an opportunity for ingenuity to step in! I had seen a well-done, tiered shelving system at Sommerfeld's Trains in Milwaukee, and that method of display got me thinking. I could buy eight-inch-wide support brackets and place two shelves on them; the back shelf could be raised



above the front shelf by four or five inches. I cut seven-inch sections of 2x4s and cut a two-inch slot down the center of one end of the 2x4 piece. This slot was wide enough to slip over the support tracks. I placed the back shelf on top of these blocks, and then the front shelf just rested on the bracket. See the result in **photo 1**. This worked well for displaying trains, and I only needed half the number of shelf brackets compared to mounting them individually.

Let the Building Begin

A static display of trains is one thing, but running toy trains is quite another. I like looking at my collection on display shelves, but I was eager to see freight and passenger trains moving! It was time to start building bench work based on my track plan. I like a simple, sturdy, and low-cost approach. At one point I tried 1/4-inch plywood as a platform base, but it was definitely too flimsy. So I chose 1/2-inch plywood. Three-quarter-inch plywood is too heavy and is necessary only if you want to be able to crawl or stand on the layout; which I definitely did not plan to do.

I divided the bench work into 4x8-foot or smaller sections and then figured out how many sheets of 4x8-foot plywood I would need by developing a cutting pattern. Using a circular saw I cut the plywood sheets on the top of a utility trailer with a flat 4x8-foot surface. I cut the 1x4-inch framing wood with my compound miter saw. I also placed a 2x4-inch bracing piece across the long dimension of the section.



Photo 2 shows the basic set up for creating the frames. I pre-drilled and then screwed the pieces of the frame together using large bar clamps for accurate positioning. This task is much easier to do with a cordless drill that has interchangeable bits for drilling pilot holes and driving screws.

Once the frame was finished, I placed the plywood sheets on top of the frames and secured them to the frame with an electric nail gun loaded with one-inch brads. To make sure everything was square and aligned, I nailed in one corner and worked along an edge; usually a long edge. I checked both short ends of the plywood for proper alignment with the frame before nailing them. I nailed along the 2x4-inch bracing piece in the middle to prevent bowing.

I tried not to make mistakes, but it seems they can't be avoided. There were a few misaligned sections — the dimensions of the plywood didn't match up with the frame. The "solution" was to limit the mistake to one edge and then turn that side to the back! Pre-drilling holes is a must, especially when screwing pieces together near an edge. A common mistake — splitting the edge of a board in the frame — isn't tragic, but avoid it if you can. If not, cover it up later with landscaping.

Choose a Topping

The next step of the layout production process can be done either before or after assembling the sections, but it's definitely best to think ahead and ask, "What should be put on top of the plywood base?" The advice I read pointed to Homosote™ or some variation of it to dampen the sound of trains running on tracks. I gave this some thought and decided to look into it, although I had never used it on my previous layouts. At the local home center I found that Homosote was significantly more expensive than plywood! That definitely ran counter to my principle of keeping this project within low-cost bounds. I had a bright idea — the ceiling tiles were made of material that seemed nearly identical to Homosote, and they were less expensive. When I added up how many tiles I needed, this alternative didn't seem to be a necessity; so I decided to forgo it.

Once I had passed that point, my choices for the top of the bench work narrowed to two: paint or simulated grass. For the latter, I considered indoor/outdoor carpet or heavyweight green paper "grass" on a roll found at most hobby shops. I used this last option on my previous layout, and I found it had one significant drawback; eventually, a lot of the "grass" loosens. I looked into the indoor/outdoor carpet option, but the cost seemed fairly high compared to the benefit. I chose the paint option. For about \$13, one can buy a gallon of good quality green paint as an appropriate covering. Had I thought about it more, I might have chosen white to give a winter look to everything, but that option will have to wait for the next layout!



In photo 3 my wife, Anne, liberally rolls green paint onto the tops of the sections of bench work. Two coats hid the wood grain and gave a good green color. We picked a nice, dry day for painting and finished that task quickly. Since we painted outside, it didn't matter if we created green splotches on the driveway. Jackson Pollack might be proud of our asphalt art!

Section by Section, It Comes Together

We carried the painted sections down to the train room and set the sections along the wall in place. I marked a level line on one wall as a starting point with the idea that the other layout sections would also be level based on this reference line. Tommy Silva from the "This Old House" PBS TV series would be pleased with the logic of that idea. This method worked well enough although it certainly wasn't perfect. There isn't much slope to the tables, and this effort was more successful in maintaining level surfaces than my previous layout! After setting this line at a predetermined height, I mounted two "L" brackets to the wall. These brackets would hold one edge of each section against the wall and 2x4 support legs would support the outer edge. I cut the legs slightly shorter than the correct length so that I had some room for adjustment because of unevenness in the poured cement floor. We mounted the table on the brackets and then set two legs underneath. We adjusted the height of the outer edge of the section to a level

point, temporarily clamped the legs to the table framing, and drilled and screwed the legs to the framing. We started in a corner and worked our way out from there. That way we had two edges supported against the wall. This procedure continued along the wall. Once a section was set next to another, I used carriage bolts to hold the two sections together. The big finale came when I set in place the section that completed the bench work from one end of the room to the other in a continuous run. If I had made any measurements wrong — either too long or too short — I would have a big problem to solve. I was actually quite amazed; it fit just right. That was my reward for measuring the room about ten times!

Bridge Work and Surgery

When the sections set along the outside walls were completed, I shifted my attention to the middle of the room. This proved to be fairly easy. I anchored those sections to the ones already set along the walls. The layout plan presented in Part I had a few openings in the bench work where bridges would be located, so those gaps had to be pretty close to right. These openings would be spanned by



six #316 Girder Bridges and one #313 Bascule Bridge. Three of the bridges spanned a simple opening in the bench work, but the other four spanned a space between the bench work and a wall! I certainly wasn't planning to crash the trains into the wall, or have the end of the bridge be a dead-end. I pre-spaced the tracks properly to take account of the location of the studs inside this wall, and I cut openings for the track to pass through.

I cut a hole in the wall paneling with a Dremel® tool, an essential gadget for this purpose. See **photo 4**. I measured the height of the end of the bench work and then marked the appropriate opening through the wall on both sides. With trial-and-error experimentation, I enlarged the opening several times; even relocated one of the tracks to the other side of a stud. My measurements on the other side of the wall either were not precise enough (or the floor was uneven) because the tracks were not perfectly level through that opening. I figured if that was my biggest mistake, I was doing OK!



The open section in the bench work on the left and the stud wall on the right is the bridge gap. The bridges are held in place and rest on a 2x4 mounted to the wall on the right. The power wiring for the tracks also had to pass through this opening. I'll organize these later as I finish the layout!

The bridges on the side with a gap in the bench work were held to the wall by securing a 2x4 to the wall as a pier for the ends of the bridges, see **photo 5**. I wanted the openings in the wall to look like tunnel openings, so I bought Lionel tunnel portals. However, they were too wide for the narrow spacing between tracks. I considered cutting and gluing two of them together, but that spacing didn't seem right and it might look worse — given my poor luck at gluing. I abandoned that idea, and the portals went back before I did any permanent damage. Dressing up the openings in the wall will be left for a future project. Cutting the right-sized holes in the wall and aligning the bridges through the wall was definitely one of the most challenging aspects of building this layout.

One More Bridge — the Final Frontier

Now I was facing the other big challenge on this layout. I had one more bridge section to install. I intentionally designed a large opening in the middle of the layout so that I would have access to the train storage and display shelves along the walls. Since I didn't want to crawl under the layout to get to the shelves to change a train, I needed an opening bridge section that I could easily pass through, would not be too cumbersome to operate, and wouldn't cause adverse affects on train operation. I'd seen some pretty sophisticated opening bridges displayed in



My wife Anne demonstrates opening the bridge section of the layout. It's a big-enough access opening for one person, but probably not for two!



Wires cut to an extra-long length supply power to the three tracks on this section. The green wire is ground. Note that it is connected to the bus piece fastened to the underside of the bridge with connectors running to all three tracks. Make sure there is enough slack in the power wires for the bridge section at full opening, or you may end up with powerless track! You can also see the original position of the hinges, which was too close to the table edge for good track clearance when opening the bridge.

Classic Toy Trains magazine over the years, but none of those fit my budget or my motto of keeping it simple. On my previous layout I had an opening section that was 30 inches long (exactly three straight sections) and opened by swinging down. It was held in the closed position by two rotating locks made for double-hung windows. This worked “OK,” but the alignment was not perfect; it tended to drift out of alignment over time. I was looking for something “new and improved” for this layout. To keep the tracks aligned when the bridge section was closed, I wanted a design that opened in an upward direction and when closed would fit into an aligning slot of some sort. However, the hinges for this configuration could not be placed at the edge of the section because of the track installed on top of the table. The hinges had to be located a few inches back from the edge of the stationary part of the table so that the opening section would swing up and clear the track screwed to the bench.

To accomplish this, I cut a 24-inch section of a 2x4 in half. I screwed each half to the bridge section at an equal distance from each edge and between the tracks. The other end was screwed to the hinges fastened to the stationary bench. This required a couple of trial runs; at first, I located the hinges only about an inch from the edge of the bench. This was not far enough away from the edge of the table for the track to clear as the bridge section swung up. I suppose I could have tried to figure out the

geometry, angles, and minimum distances beforehand, but my trial-and-error method was probably quicker. I simply moved the hinges back an inch or so, and all worked well.

More Minor Surgery

One drawback to my bridge — I didn’t have the foresight to make its length a multiple of 10 inches; i.e., the length of one straight section of track. My bridge section was about 32 inches. At first I used a 40-inch straight section, so the open part in the track was not at the same location as the opening in the bench work on one end. Since I couldn’t screw the end of the track on the bridge section to the table, the track was often misaligned or at a slightly different height than its mating track on the stationary bench. At some point this became unworkable, and I decided to cut the track so that the opening in the track matched the opening in the bench work.

For a long time, I cut Lionel track with a hacksaw and clamps. This method worked OK, but brute-force surgery usually causes the rails to become loose on the track ties. I received some accessories for my Dremel tool for Christmas, and decided it was time to break them in. I locked the grinding wheel into the chuck and used it to cut the track. What a breeze! It was extremely easy, the results were accurate, and there were no loose rails. If I had known this, I would have bought a Dremel long ago just for cutting track! Once the track was cut, I screwed the ends to the



This smaller opening in the bench work is spanned by a Lionel Bascule Bridge. Note the color coded wiring hanging below for track power. On a complex layout, you need many colors.

bench and bridge respectively. It worked like a charm, showed no misalignment, and enabled smooth train operation!

Next time in Part III of this series, I’ll move along to laying track, installing wiring, and placing accessories. 🚂

Photographs by Keith Beyer

Fire, Cinders, Smoke, and Fun

by Harry Overtoom
RM 1185

Toy trains, real trains, and in-between-size trains — the LCCA 2005 Convention will have them all — O-gauge trains in operation and on display and for sale, an AMTRAK train for excursion riding, and three 1:8 scale, 7-1/2-inch gauge locomotives eager to run mini-excursions.

On Friday evening and for most of Saturday of Convention week, two live steam and a gas-powered diesel locomotive will be operating and providing free rides — albeit short ones — along a 150-foot-long track bed to be installed on the parking lot of the St. Louis Airport Marriott Hotel.



The premiere locomotive will be a Southern Crescent 4-6-2 in green and silver livery and trimmed in gold paint like the prototype. The locomotive is coal-fired, and its boiler operates at 80 to 120 pounds steam pressure. In operation, it consumes 10 gallons of water and burns about 20 pounds of coal per hour. The locomotive and its tender weigh nearly 900 pounds when empty.

This PS-4 locomotive is fresh from the back shop as of January 2005 and now has a new boiler weighing 260 pounds, some upgrades, and a new paint job. Owned and operated by Joe Holbrook (RM 9556), it's a very clean machine and a favorite of train show crowds in Kentucky and environs.



A second live steam locomotive — scratch-built, owned, and operated by Don Saager — will also be available for rides. A distinctive Shay logging locomotive with lot of side rod action, it was created from the plans of the prototype.

The third locomotive, a SW-1500 diesel with Southern décor (also built and driven by Joe Holbrook), will be running too. Weighing about 550 pounds, it's powered by a gasoline engine capable of producing seven horsepower. It will be operating when the steam engines are being serviced.



Hop on board for the shortest ride of your life — but a memorable one! If you're up early on Friday morning, drop by to watch the live steam locomotives being fired up; the process is just like the real deal. 

Photos provided by Joe Holbrook and Dick Gill

Local Train Clubs in the USA: The SLLRC Layout

by Mike H. Mottler
RM 12394

Editor's Note: With this article, TLR launches an ongoing series about local train clubs in America committed to Lionel O-gauge, three-rail trains — from “high rail” to very-50s in style and operation. Most visits will be to layouts that are works in progress, because we all realize that a train layout is never “finished.” The fun is the process of building!

The First of a Series

This series of club layout tours begins with the St. Louis Lionel Railroad Club — which just happens to be one of the tour venues of the upcoming LCCA

Convention in the Gateway City. But I'd choose it anyway for several reasons. It's a growing club in the heartland with a well-thought-through approach to layout design. The members favor Lionel trains, and Lionel LLC produces their annual collectible club cars. The club holds to the family friendly philosophy of its founder, Gerry Brunschneider.

Home Layouts and Club Layouts

Anyone who has been a part of the train hobby for a decade or so has probably already discovered GGSS — the Gotta Gettmor Space Syndrome. You have probably observed its early warning signs — purchasing a modest train set (often at Christmas time for around-the-tree enjoyment) and growing to a platform layout or a 4x8-foot sheet of plywood.

Those with a heightened sense of self-awareness may feel GGSS building-up within, and can take pro-active steps. Few train hobbyists can build a 40x60-foot layout in their homes, so carriers of the syndrome can seek an alternative — joining (or establishing) a local train club, renting and refurbishing a building, and polishing-up the power tools in anticipation of a serious group project.

That's what Gerry did in St. Louis and in other cities where he lived and worked during his military service career — Milwaukee, Chicago, Kenosha, and San Francisco. The Lionel-oriented train clubs he founded remain active today and engage hundreds of families in the hobby at a higher — certainly larger — level than is possible at home. He is the Patron Saint of Club-based Model Railroading. Bless him. Bless them all.

A Brief History

Gerry organized the St. Louis Lionel Railroad Club in 1983 when he lived in the area during a term of military service. At the end of that year the club had 13 founding members. Today, club membership has reached 140+. The club has met monthly for decades and has built a portable layout that has often been presented at local train shows. The club now owns and operates a permanent layout.

In the early 90s the club began meeting at the Windsor Community Center at 4092 Robert Avenue, and in 1995 the

center became its home. The club rented a room and installed their portable layout there. In 1997 a new portable layout was designed and built to continue train show presentations, generate income, and build exposure for the hobby.

In January 2003, the club began construction of a new permanent

layout: a 32x16-foot empire with four main lines, a freight yard, a passenger yard, and an interurban line. Members met on Monday nights to run trains and on Friday nights to work on the layout.

In 1996 the club offered its first club car for sale to members and other collectors. This and subsequent Lionel-built products were tankers on flat cars (TOFC). Today, the club cars are tankers on flat cars. Gary Mueller, one of the founding members, serves as President. The club has a Web site: www.stlouislrcc.org. Check it out.

First Impressions

When I visited SLLRC in early May, I learned about their bad news and good news. The bad news was the owner of the center rented their space to another organization. The good news was the club had already found a bigger, better new home. Shortly after my tour of the layout, club members began dismantling it for re-installation at the new location. The members have assured the LCCA Board that



the layout will be up and running for the Convention, yet this will require some fancy footwork and carefully coordinated choreography by all 140+ members.

You can't miss it — the mountain. When I walked into the club train layout room, the eight-foot-tall, partially landscaped mountain with five levels and seven loops of track made a big-league visual impact. It reminded me of the upward-spiraling mountain trackage on the route of the Polar Express. Appropriately, the layout includes a new Lionel PE train set. I also noticed a LCCA "Halloween" General set. This club has great taste in trains!

My guide, club member David Osborn, pointed out a long string of SLLRC club cars on one of the main lines parallel to the painted, cloud-studded back wall of the room — Trailers on Flat Cars and Tankers on Flat Cars. It was an impressive consist. Club cars are important, uncataloged collectibles and successful fund-raisers for the club. The aqua color Navajo trailer was an eye-catcher.

The long N&W coal drag with a Lionel Allegheny 4-6-6-4 on point slowly cruised by on Track 1, the outermost loop. Its confident whistle blast seemed to suggest, "I can pull at least 40 more cars without breathing hard!" On Track 2, a KATY Texas Special passenger train presented an



assertive décor statement in red and silver — quite a show stopper.

The Mountain Division abruptly receded into the plains. The design philosophy of the co-creators, Steve Every and Chris Reinheimer, became apparent. This club loves to run long trains along open runs and on large-radius curves with few interruptions by crossings, switches, or gimmicky trackwork. The

effect is calming and mesmerizing. During my visit, not once did a member need to press the Halt button on a CAB-1 to avert an impending disaster "caused" by complicated routing of trains through difficult-to-read trackage.

Exposed Potential

Most of the layout is unscenicked, which is the norm for a work in progress. Union Station is placed on an elevated section with access tracks leading to/from it and blending into the main lines. A lower concourse under the station echoes the plan of the actual Union Station in downtown St. Louis — a clever accommodation to reality. I learned that the leg supports for the platform were pre-designed to allow for a lower level perimeter loop in the future — a manifestation of mastery of the art of planning ahead.

The freight yard allowed operators who like to re-create the movements of real railroads to jog and shuttle cars,

John & Mary Ellen Blase



Steve Every



make up and set out freight trains, and activate operating accessories. A hand-cranked Atlas turntable spun locomotives around in this area although space for an accompanying roundhouse wasn't available. Perhaps the new location will allow for that.

A suburban enclave with prewar Lionel bungalows and landscape plots is situated in a nook of the layout. Somewhat understated, this neighborhood seems to be an island surrounded by thundering iron horses. I envisioned the residents as desperate housewives; lost souls encapsulated by the clattering train traffic.

The layout has the "feel" of a not-quite-completed new home under construction. Thus visitors can imagine what this layout would look like if finished according to the play-out of their own imagination. I like that aspect of works in progress because they engage observers in completing the dream by exercising their own creativity.

Meet the Home Team

John and Mary Ellen Blase

Although they are relative newcomers to the club, John and Mary Ellen Blase have shared a long history with trains. John received a Lionel 2020 steam turbine train set when he was born, and Mary traced her introduction to toy trains to the time when she met and began dating John 14 years ago. His relatively well-to-do uncle on his father's side participated in the family's tradition of selecting names for



birthday and Christmas gifting, and that uncle always selected John and gave him Lionel stuff.

In first grade, John had Polio, so he has limited use of his right arm. Years later as an adult, he suffered a stroke that adversely affected his left arm. Yet he can operate their home train layout with TMCC or manipulate the ZW transformer with his feet. The layout takes up most of the space in the living

room. "We can walk through the room, but that's about it," he said with a smile.

Steve Every

One of the co-designers of the club layout, Steve Every has known both the agony and ecstasy of layout building. "The old club layout became very inoperable and troublesome, so our group started a contest for designs for a new layout; including the table," he said. One layout design was a wrap-around-the-wall plan, a permanent installation. Unfortunately, it was inaccessible in many areas and would be very difficult to remove from the room in event of our leaving the location.

The second plan borrowed from the design of the club's portable layout. "It was a grouping of 4x8-foot plywood platforms arranged so that we could walk around it, get at it from all sides, and enter between the panels. Then we developed a track plan that made the most out of the lumber we had. It started out as a dog bone design. We wanted to keep the layout simple."

Gregory Foshage



Bill Heger & Chris Reinheimer





teaches history, electronics, and art; it stimulates curiosity in kids. In this club, the members teach each other skills and techniques — like making realistic scenery. The people I've met through this club and the hobby are some of the greatest people I've ever met in my life."

Steve advocated for including the mountain and elevated track in the plan although some members preferred an all-one-level design. "With the advent of Odyssey technology, our 5/16-inch grades aren't a problem." Eventually the club hopes to install two high-speed trains underneath the main platform, like subterranean bullet trains in a lighted corridor. His design "job" at the club is to maintain the parameters of the co-designer, Chris Reinheimer, and attend to the electrical system.

Gregory Foshage

Greg is the proof for the proposition, "Show the trains, and they will come." He discovered the SLLRC at a Great American Train Show in the city. He met the club's energetic founder, Gerry Brunschneider, and was hooked.

"My dad bought trains to run around the Christmas tree," he explained, "and then we started putting them up all year on a 4x8-foot platform. As I grew older, I became unhappy with the little Scout trains, and I wanted something nicer. Now I have an 8x20-foot layout and 250-plus engines in my collection; God only knows how many cars."

Greg described his three-rail scale home layout. It's full of scenic details that make it come alive. He likes kit-bashing buildings, so if he can't find what he wants in the marketplace, he makes it. He pointed out, "The hobby

Bill Heger

Club member Bill Heger seemed to be the history buff of the group, and he enjoys talking about model railroading from a historical perspective. One of the trains running on the layout during my visit was Bill's Lionel custom repainted Southwestern Limited. "It was the major NYC train running from St. Louis to New York City," Bill pointed out. "Lucius Beebe, a famous railroad author from the 1930s up until the early 60s always rode that train into St. Louis, and he considered it equal to the 20th Century Limited."

His interest has been invested primarily in local railroads; particularly Missouri Pacific, Frisco, Wabash, Gulf Mobile and Ohio. Bill produced an entire section of dioramas on the club's portable layout with a Route 66 theme, including a Lionel diner that smokes, a Conoco gas station, and a kit-bashed Plasticville motel modified to look like the Coral Court (the most famous "no-tell motel") on the Mother Road. He also modified a Plasticville Frosty Bar to look like a local landmark, Ted Drewe's Frozen Custard.

Bill's home layout is HO, and it reflects his view of model railroading. He prefers train operations to conform to the way railroads operate in the real world: moving raw materials from their source to processing and distribution

Tom Hamm & David Osborn



Don Mueller & Martin Floyd



centers for delivery to final destinations.

Chris Reinheimer

By nature, Chris isn't an "I told you so" kind of guy, but his initial vision of the layout envisioned the possibility of moving it someday. That "someday" is now, so he could be considered the club's Prophet. The club layout, although sturdy enough to walk on, is portable. The group will soon discover just how much portability remains in the design!

Chris described his work as "putting the math to the design. We came up with the basic track plan, and I made sure it would work." Track four of the layout, the innermost curve, is 063 and the outer loops are 072 and up. The trolley line is 031, and the five-rail trackage — with both Standard Gauge and O-gauge trackways — is an oddball curvature, "055 or so," Chris guessed.

He believes the most likely future change to the layout will be an expansion of the yards; lengthening the runs. Also, the layout is designed to accept the insertion of in-between tables at places where the tracks are parallel to the edge of the table. Add straight track, splice-in the wire cables, and presto! — the layout is bigger.

Chris has a small, 6x10-foot home train layout. I'm 22 and live with my parents, so I don't want to dedicate too much time in building a layout that I'll move in a year or two. "I have a pretty decent collection for someone my



age," he added. "It's mostly freight, but I have one passenger set."

David Osborn

I asked David what the club layout might look like in three to five years. Without a second of lag time, he projected an upbeat agenda for the organization. "First of all, the layout should be completely finished and scenedecked. I hope we'll attract more and younger members. I'd like to

see the club participate in more community events like the Community Center's successful annual fish fry. We should promote the hobby as ambassadors and use the portable layout effectively; continue taking it to train shows and community centers."

Gary Mueller

Club president Gary Mueller, an eclectic operator/collector with a home layout that supports Lionel and American Flyer trains and streetcars, was confident of success with the relocation to a new home for the club layout and optimistic about ascending to the next level. "We have a permanent layout, a portable 'show and tell' layout, regular meetings and work sessions, and enjoyable social occasions. Where can any train fan have that much fun for \$15 a year dues?"

Capsule Summary

The SLLRC layout accommodates all types of hobby preferences and all eras of trains: prewar, postwar, and modern. With plenty of available power on the rails, a club member could place three, dual-motored postwar F-3s with 15 passenger cars in tow on any main line; no big deal. There are ten 4x8-foot sections to the current layout. Each table is wired independently from a central terminal system.

Club layouts are a collective way to get things done — the necessary work, funding, and organization. One member may be really good at installing track, yet others are skilled with scenery, wiring, everything. The whole seems to be greater than the sum of its parts, and the team can outperform any individual member.

This club knows how to have fun with trains, and they especially enjoy the fun of running trains with friends. 🚂

Editor's Postscript: To nominate your local Lionel-oriented train club for coverage in this ongoing series, contact Editor Mike Mottler.

Photographs by Mike Mottler

Art Schindler & Chris Reinheimer



Anatomy of a Convention

Most of us don't know where we're going to have lunch tomorrow. If you're going to invite more than 1,000 of your closest friends to lunch in a distant city on July 27, 2005, you need to know the location and the details. Also, you need to plan ahead — way ahead. That's what an LCCA Convention is all about — planning ahead.

Every year about 500 members and their families travel to a distant destination during the last full week in July. They expect hotel rooms to be waiting, meeting rooms and exhibit halls to be ready, and three meals a day — wrapped around an interesting schedule of family tours and entertainment. LCCAers love to discover and explore America's great cities.

The task can be quite daunting, and it usually is. Thankfully, LCCA has a dedicated Convention planning team second to none, and the Club applies a planning system that gets better with each passing year.

Rx: A Professional Approach

In the early years, local club members volunteered to host Conventions in their hometowns and provided most of the volunteer labor — with mixed results. Each spring, the membership was asked to vote on which location they preferred two years in the future. Unfortunately, as our Conventions grew in size and complexity, it became apparent that we needed a better, more efficient and effective method.

In 1991 member John Fisher was asked to reorganize the Convention planning process. He knew the convention and hospitality business well because of his position as President/CEO of the St. Paul, Minnesota Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB). He also knew an industry secret — convention contracts were prepared and presented by the hotels in language favorable to the hotels, not necessarily to the visitors.

Acting on John's recommendations, the Board of Directors made several changes to the Convention planning process including: establishing a site selection committee, making location decisions with club Directors, and asking the Board to serve on key committees. The first clear benefit was the elimination of "reinventing the wheel" for each Convention with a new team of inexperienced players.

Scouting the Territory

There are always a number of cities under consideration as possible LCCA Convention sites. Generally speaking, they need to have:

- easy access by both plane and car
- at least one hotel with 500+ sleeping rooms with favorable rates

- 12,000+ square feet of meeting/exhibit space
- additional space for a sit down banquet for 500-700
- lots of free parking for registered guests
- interesting things to see and do, including some train-related activities.



The Timetable for the St. Louis Convention

March, 2002

President-elect Eric Fogg, who was born and raised in St. Louis, made a preliminary trip to the city and investigated two downtown hotels as possible Convention sites

Fall, 2002

Director Harry Overtoom traveled to St. Louis and further reviewed possible headquarter hotels. At the October Board Meeting, he recommended the Club give serious consideration to St. Louis sometime in the next five years.

March, 2003

Eric made another trip to St. Louis and reviewed three more hotels.

April 4, 2003

Harry, John, and Eric met at the St. Louis Airport Marriott. After a tour of the hotel, they believed things looked good enough to move ahead. During the next six+ hours, the group agreed on:

- affordable room costs well below prevailing rates
- complimentary parking for hotel guests and local members
- meeting room locations and set-up
- easily accessible and securable space for a large operating train display in a public area
- menus, prices, and locations for every meal
- size, shape, and design of the Trading Hall
- location of the Registration and Convention sales areas
- tour bus pick-up and drop-off areas
- loading docks with easy access to trading area.

In addition, several "extras" needed to be included in the contract. Were room blocks and attrition clauses fair and reasonable? Did the club have the right to modify space and

room requirements over time? Did the hotel have enough wait staff for the banquet? Could their restaurant feed everyone in time for early morning tours? How often would airport shuttle buses run? Would traffic flow at the Trading Hall for move-in and move-out go smoothly? Would the hotel offer a restaurant discount to club members? The list went on and on. Basically, we had one chance to get it right before signing a binding contract.

At about two o'clock, the group took a break. The hotel sales manager checked with the hotel staff for answers to the questions we raised. The LCCA planning team did a "drive-by" of possible tour sites, including a quick trip up the Gateway Arch. Then, they went back to the hotel for a four o'clock meeting.

The second draft contract looked good, but still needed work. A revised copy would be sent via express service to the members of the team on Monday. The group was done for the day. In a town with hundreds of great restaurants, the LCCA crew had dinner in the hotel. There's no better way to check out the food and the service by waiters. For the same reason, they spent the night in the hotel.

May 2003

President John Fisher signed the final contract with the St. Louis Airport Marriott Hotel and made it the official headquarters for the 2005 LCCA Annual Convention. It had

been exactly 30 years since the Club held its Convention in the Gateway City!

The Deal Is Done; or Is It?

It took more than seven months and four different trips to St. Louis to finalize the Convention deal, but it was worth it. The Club had a strong partner in the Marriott. Room rates were attractive (especially considering a rising market following a post-9/11 recovery in the industry), the first class status of the facility, and the potential for yet another great Convention.

A done deal? Not quite. What about a Convention Car with a tie-in to this great city? Where would the tours go — the National Museum of Transport, Anheuser-Busch Brewery, Forest Park Zoo, St. Louis Union Station, the Gateway Arch? Who could we work with to organize the best tours? Should we arrange another AMTRAK trip? What local layout tour possibilities exist? What kind of entertainment should be arranged? The list kept growing, and the clock kept running.

To find out the answers to these questions, make plans now to join us in St. Louis and see for yourself. We promise a fun, educational and memory-filled experience for you and your family! There will also be some nifty surprises. As the refrain goes, "Meet me in St. Louie." 

The "V" Word

by Bob Carter RM6620

Not "Vioxx," not "Visiting your mother-in-law," and definitely not "Victoria's Secret." The "V" word I'm thinking of is: VOLUNTEERS, for the upcoming LCCA Convention in St. Louis. Our six-day event will be packed with interesting tours, train-related fun, and activities for families to enjoy. The planned tours will be wonderful, ranging from train trips to historical venues, from home layout tours to — my favorite — frozen custard at Ted Drewe's, a very special place in St. Louis. It'll be an A to Z Convention, from Anheuser-Busch to the Zoo!

Consider giving something back to the club in the form of volunteer time invested in the Convention. It's a great way to get to know your fellow LCCAers, and the "work" is actually fun:

- serve at the merchandise table and hover near the spiffy on-site Convention Car
- become a raffle ticket sales entrepreneur
- help set up the Trading Hall — one of the most fascinating aspects of our Convention
- greet the public and accept the admission fee to the Trading Hall on Saturday
- help out at the Registration Desk
- be the club rep at the New Members Sign-up Desk — a great "job" for extroverts.

To sign up as a volunteer, contact me by e-mail at bcdk1@comcast.net or by phone at 972-424-0678 or by US Mail at: Bob Carter, 2205 Westridge, Plano, TX 75075. We will schedule activities a bit differently this year, and it will be a benefit for volunteers as well as the members.

We will open the merchandise and sales areas AFTER the tours have concluded. We love volunteers, but we don't overwork them!

Kids and Trains

by George Nelson
RM 13073

A Photo Album

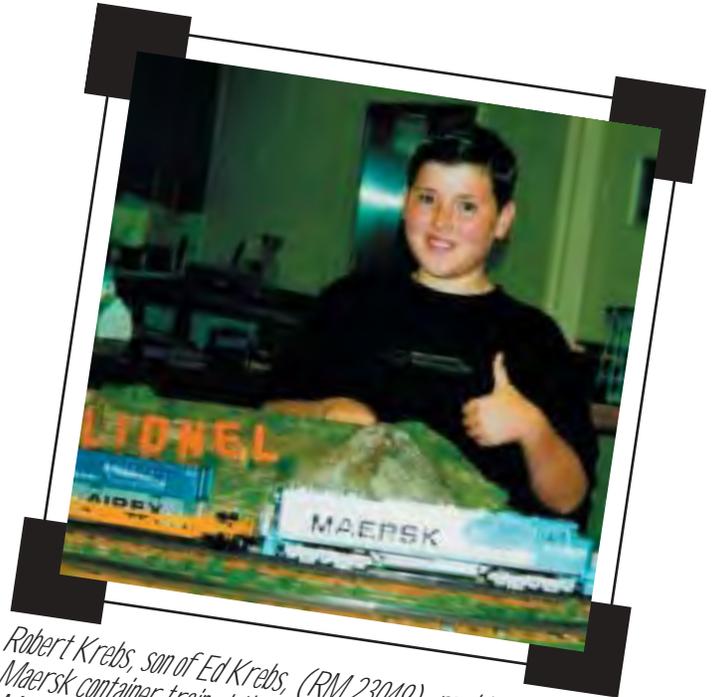
Reaching out to and recruiting kids from this generation — the model railroaders of the future — is a concern for many over-50 train hobbyists, all train makers and marketers, and hobby trend demographers. In my area of the country, we see lots of wide-eyed kids at local train shows,

and the sparkle in their eyes seems to be a good omen for their interest in trains. Many have never before seen (or heard) a steam locomotive. This photo album shows how we involve kids with trains.

For years, families of the South West Alabama Railroad Modelers (SWARM) have engaged their kids in the hobby, although some of them aren't "kids" anymore. Jeb Bailey, son of Dr. John Bailey, has already gone off to college. Drew Madere's youngest son, Dusty, no longer shares his bedroom with the family train layout, but he is still involved in running trains. Meanwhile, his older brother, Shane, has become the Webmaster for the Bay Area Railroaders website.



About once a year, members set up a modular O-gauge layout at the Colonial Mall Bel Air in Mobile, Alabama. The operating display always attracts a large number of passers by and provides an opportunity for club members and their families to operate trains and interact with visitors. Dusty Madere uses TMCC to control one of the trains.



Robert Krebs, son of Ed Krebs, (RM 23049), ran his Lionel Maersk container train at the Fairhope, Alabama, train show in March 2001. We don't often see Robert now that his father has joined CSX. Ed is a supervisor of program construction of the Baltimore Division and is based in Martinsville, WV.

Editor's Note: Local train clubs invest time, talent, and energy in the train hobby. Way down south in a land often called "L.A." (Lower Alabama), this club engages about 100 members representing all train scales. The group includes LCCAers and members of other national train clubs. The club holds monthly meetings and/or operating sessions, publishes a monthly newsletter, and regularly presents its O-gauge modular layout to the public.

It sponsors the Fairhope model train show the third weekend of March during the Fairhope Arts & Crafts Festival: 2005 was their 13th annual show at this event. They also set up their layout at other nearby train shows (Pensacola, Mobile and Biloxi), and once a year set it up in Mobile's Colonial Mall Bel Air, at the Alabama Pecan Festival in Tillman's Corner (just outside Mobile), and at the lighting of the Christmas tree in downtown Mobile.



Jessica Boyer, daughter of Charles Boyer (RM 13925), admires some of the trains in her dad's collection. Jessica has been with trains since she learned to walk, and she rode with her dad as he hauled our modular layout to train shows throughout the area. She's now 10 years old and is a student at St. Dominic's Catholic School in Mobile.



Jennifer Terry, one of two granddaughters of Hugh Gordon, along with her sister, Jasmine, has been involved with the club for years. Hugh has encouraged both to help with layout transport, set up and take down, and operation. Now 15, Jennifer is a sophomore at George County High School in nearby Lucedale, Mississippi.



During the recent Great American Train Show (GATS) held in Mobile, a man came by with his two granddaughters aged about 8 and 10. Jennifer took them under her wing and spent more than an hour showing them around the layouts, explaining how the trains worked and how scenery was made. As they started to leave, Jennifer asked if they had a souvenir of their visit. When she learned they did not, she went to one of the dealers and bought each girl a memento. She was our Good Will Ambassador!



Jasmine Terry contemplates a switching move on the SWARM layout. Now 13, Jasmine attends George County Middle School in nearby Lucedale, Mississippi.



Kids sometimes coax/plead/beg their parents to take them to a train show, and sometimes dad and mom become involved in the hobby as a result. This was the case when Mike and Sharon brought their young son Alex Littlefield to the Fairhope train show. Alex was hooked on the hobby, and his dad joined the club to enhance and extend Alex's interest.



James Tellman visited the Fairhope show decked out in his train engineer's outfit and met pleasant company — the young ladies of the Dogwood Trail Court. His dad Richard takes him to club meetings and is heavily involved in the leadership group this year.



James brought his own layout and Ballyhoo Circus train to the 2005 train show. He had a busy two days demonstrating TMCC to all who came by. He is already planning for the 2006 show.



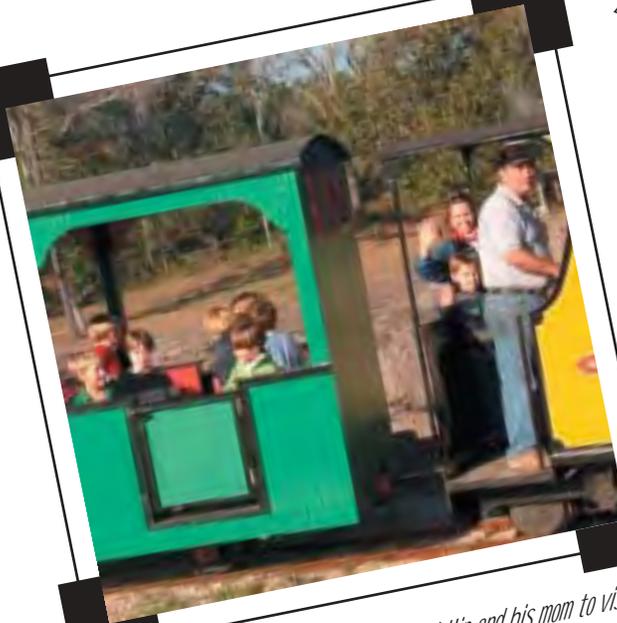
The club makes a big effort to get young people involved with its Fairhope train show. We recruit teenagers to help set up, take down and clean up after the show. The Dogwood Trail Court consists of five young ladies selected from local high schools. They serve as PR Ambassadors for the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay. One of their first public appearances each year is the Fairhope train show. Sometimes they even take the controls of the club layout.



In 2005, we recruited some local young ladies to wear "sandwich boards" to advertise the train show while strolling through the adjacent arts and crafts festival crowd.



While we were running trains at the Alabama Pecan Festival in November, 2005, we noticed a mother with her son. Both Anne and Philip Dobbins seemed enthralled by the trains. They saw our layout at a previous show and came to the Pecan Festival just to see the trains again. Anne confided that he would receive a G-gauge train for Christmas. Philip is a first grader at Bayside Academy in Daphne, Alabama.



Because of his keen interest, I invited Philip and his mom to visit our home and run the trains on our home layout. Soon after their visit, I got a thank you note and a very long passenger train drawing from Philip. Above, Philip and his mom enjoyed a cab ride aboard the train at the nearby Wales West Narrow Gauge Railroad and RV Park.

Postscript

Many LCCA members of my generation often share a common boyhood experience — receiving a Lionel train set for Christmas. My first train set arrived in orange and blue boxes under the tree in 1939. Although I've maintained a lifelong interest in trains, I didn't become a collector/operator until the early 1970s. Perhaps many of the kids we expose to trains today will follow a similar track.

Jennifer Terry said, "I not only love spending time with my grandfather, I love being with trains in general. It only took one trip to a train show to get me hooked when I was little. I think the answer to getting kids involved with trains is to fascinate them as youngsters. It worked for me! I have been an official helper with the club layout my whole life. It helped me develop social skills, too."

They may not stay involved with the hobby but may get back into it later in life. I hope this is the case with one or more of my three grandchildren. Getting kids involved with a hobby as worthwhile as model railroading is a job we get to do as exemplars with our trains. 🚂

The Tinplate Cannonball

by Ken Morgan
RM 12231

Last of the Breed

Enough about Lionel real estate and what's around Christmas trees. With the change of season, it's time to spring ahead to the trains. Speaking about springing ahead, that reminds me of time zones. Do you know how or why domestic time zones were established? As usual, the answer is revealed at the end of this article.

A few issues ago, The Tinplate Cannonball looked closely at Lionel's current NYC S-type electric loco (The Matriarch) and noted the many toy trains based on that

own one of each type; notably that Hiawatha steamer! Why would I have several examples of this one? I confess I'm afflicted with Ferroequinitis. As an addicted victim, I am no longer responsible for my train-buying behavior. That's what I keep telling myself.

Refer back to **photo 1**. Six locos are shown, and they all look roughly the same; except for the obvious differences in color. But there are truly three different locos there: on the top row, left to right, is a first issue 250, a second issue 250 and a repainted 252. Those on the bottom row are all 252s. For what it's worth, I don't see many 252Es, despite there being no real difference in collector cost between the presence or absence of the remote reverse unit justifying the "E." Working on the early pendulum E-units has never been my cup of tea, so maybe I just subconsciously ignored them. The six locos in the photo are in chronological order from left to right by color, with the exception of the repainted 252 on the top.



prototype. I long ago described Lionel's early period O-gauge electric locomotives, all of which (except the armored loco) were S types. With the coming of the classic period in the mid-1920s, Lionel added more bright colors and a much wider variety of loco prototypes. In fact, while they produced six different O-gauge electric locos, plus a couple of lithographed ones under various brands (Ives, Lionel Junior and Lionel) only one was based on the NYC S motor. And it was not even as good a model as the earlier 150/700 series engines. Nevertheless, it's both a personal favorite and a great starting point for a prewar collector. It is widely available and as inexpensive a unit as you'll find in prewar O-gauge locos.

So, what is it? Actually, it's "them:" the 252, 252E, and 250. "250," you may ask; the number on the big Hiawatha steam loco? Yup. In a rare case of reusing numbers, Lionel first used this number for a little electric. To confuse things, it was used twice and didn't mean the same thing the second time it appeared on the little electric.

As you can see from **photo 1**, I really like these engines. I once wondered why people had multiple examples of a loco or a car in their collection. I still don't

Look more closely at them. The green 250 on the top left and the peacock 252 directly below it in **photo 1** are nearly contemporaneous. The difference is that the 250 has no reverse. But the 252 has a reverse lever sticking up through the rear hood — more about this later. That's why Lionel used two catalog numbers in 1926; the 250 had no reverse. Whether it was poor sales of the 250 (\$6.50) compared to the 252 (\$8.00) or the introduction of the lower priced (\$5.75) and also non-reversing 248 in 1927, the 250 was discontinued after only one year. Based on the relative rarity in the listings and the current price, I suspect that poor sales were at least a part of it. These two locos have early strap headlights which date from the pre-classic period. All the others have classic die-cast headlamps.

In addition to the colors shown above these locos were available in yellow-orange with a black frame and (the only prohibitively expensive one) in maroon with a black frame and cream stripe a non-catalogued department store special (DSS). That one came with the larger 607/608 cars as opposed to the 529/530 or 800 (later 650) series short freight cars which was the catalogued consist for most 252s. However, the earliest ones did come with the bigger

passenger cars like the DSS set. The 252 was catalogued from 1926 to 1932. The 252E from 1933 to 1936. Note that all my sources say 1933-35, but it is included in the 1936 catalog, so I'll go with that date. The early 250 was 1926 only. The late 250 wasn't catalogued, but dates from about 1932 or 1934, depending upon the source. The DSS version is circa 1930.



Photo 2 is the reference shot for the rest of this article. It is an excellent, all-original 252 with the most typical trim in the most common order and in a very common color. From the front: cast headlight, brass reverse lever in the slot, brass pantograph, brass whistle, Nickel journals, latch couplers, solid wheels. And, as we'll see later, an open frame. About the only thing less than "most typical" is its relatively early motor. But from all appearances, it's the baseline model.

Now for a tour of the differences between these locos. While this isn't every possible variation, I feel this narrative will justify my "stable" of six locos.



Starting with the 250, **photo 3** shows the early dark green version and the late yellow-orange on maroon frame version. Note that the latter loco has a reverse unit. So why is it a 250? Because Lionel apparently had some spare number plates to use up. Otherwise, it is the same as a contemporary 252. **Photo 4** shows the same yellow-orange 250. Compare it to the base model 252 in **photo 2**. Other than the color, only the number plate makes it different from a 252. As far as colors are concerned, look at **photo 1** again. The repainted 252 on the top shelf should be the same shade



of yellow-orange as the 250 in front of it, not the deeper orange with which it was done. I learned about that many years after I bought it. So the only difference is the number and that odd looking reverse lever on the repainted loco which I cannot explain. As I said, I bought it a long time ago.

Photos 5, 6, and 7 show the different wheels which are commonly available on the 252s. The early peacock one in **photo 5** has spoked wheels similar to steam locos, but



without the lunate counterweights and screw holes for attaching the drive rods. Some later electric locos do appear with these items, but this loco was made years before Lionel offered any steamers in O gauge.

Now look at the wheels of the locos shown in **photos 6 and 7**. They are the more commonly seen solid wheels. The ones under the olive green loco are originals. Look closely at the wheel directly below the pantograph and see how metal disease has affected it. The terra cotta one has nicer solid wheels for comparison. They may be repros, but I am not sure. They're unmarked, a la Lionel, whereas most repros are marked with the maker's name. But the green one still runs OK. I see far more replacement wheels on standard gauge locos, presumably because the damage



affects their tracking more drastically. **Photo 7** shows that nice cream bead better than **photo 1**. This is one of the relatively few locos with such trim, and it really enhances the appearance. This particular loco comes both with and without this trim.



These locos also provide a bit of history of the development of motors. **Photo 8** shows the guts of the peacock 252. Both the shape of the motor frame and the brush plate mounting are the same as the last 150 series locos. Next to it is the olive 252. It has the same brush plate, but a newer, more rectangular frame. Look also at the hand reverse unit. That's the

round thing at the right-hand end of both frames. The knurled lever on the olive loco is the normal control lever. It unscrews from the unit, and, in fact, you have to do so to remove the body from the frame. The lever on the peacock one is Lionel and unlike the lever on the repainted orange loco. But I have never seen it on any other small electric. It's common on the steamers, such as the 260, 262, etc. I am sure that this loco has been reworked, but I am not sure to what extent. Notice in **photo 1** that it is the only one which has the reverse lever in the rear and the pantograph in the front. It is easy to swap this stuff around, but based on the appearance of the paint on the inside, I think this may be the way it was originally produced. On the other hand, as you'll see later, there is other evidence of reworking.

One other thing: check the front end of the frame. In my collection, that blocky step-like brace appears on this loco only. It is correct but not typical of the majority of 252/250 locos. The open frame of the olive green one is what is normally found. Finally, look at the reverse unit on the peacock loco. You can clearly see the four contacts with wires attached to them. The guts of the switch have two contacts which bridge two of these at a time. As the lever slides, which way they bridge them controls the direction. The fifth wire goes to the headlight.

Photo 9 includes the two 250s. On the left is the late version with the reverse unit. It has the same frame as the olive 252 but the later and more common lozenge-shaped fiber brush mounting plate. On the right is the "true" 250; no reverse, early motor frame, and brush plate; as in the peacock one.

Photo 10 shows the reason I am sure the peacock loco was reworked. Look at the nut holding the coupler in place, as opposed to the stud on the olive loco. It's not as obvious

from the top, because whoever did it ground the screw top flat; it looks close to the peened top of the proper stud. You can see what this looks like in **photo 11**, which is the coupler for the green 250. In addition to the dimple, this





it was repainted, and in the wrong color, the olive green one followed. Next was the peacock one. It was on display at a slow train meet. I hadn't picked up anything else, and the price was right. Then came the late 250. I had to have a 250 version, didn't I? But that loco wasn't an early 250 without a reverse. Hence the dark green one. And



shot shows the transition coupler only available for a few years as Lionel moved from drop hook couplers to the "automatic" latch version. The slot is for the older cars. **Photo 12** shows it from the bottom. Essentially, it is a plate with a slot welded to the bottom of a latch coupler. I find these very useful when mixing equipment of different vintages.

finally, the terra cotta one with the maroon frame and the cream bead along the bottom. I think that is the prettiest version of all the 252s, and it had a matching set of 529/529/530 cars. The BCC&PRR cried out for such a gorgeous set. I hope you enjoyed the tour of one of my personal faves.



Unfortunately, no one makes a repro. No one that I know but yours truly, that is. See **photo 13** for my version at the other end of the same loco. Since the original was at the front, it didn't do me much good. So I traced the original plate on a piece of index card, carefully cut it out, and test-fitted it; then used that as a template to make a plate out of sheet tin. When I had it right, I soldered it to the rear coupler using a heavy duty soldering gun to generate high heat to get the solder well set on both pieces. Works like a champ!

From the trivia department — the standardization of time as time zones was instituted in the U.S. and Canada by the railroads on 18 November 1883. Before then, time of day was a local matter, and most cities and towns used some form of local time, usually based on local observation of noon and maintained by a well-known local landmark clock. This practice made publishing a railroad timetable or schedule difficult. Sanford Fleming, a Canadian civil and railway engineer, spearheaded the effort which led to the adoption of time meridians as used today in both Canada and the United States. He also played a key role in the development of a worldwide system of keeping time. He was instrumental in convening an International Prime Meridian Conference in Washington in 1884. The system of international standard time, still in use today, was adopted at that conference.



As a final note, in case you ever need to justify your train purchases, here is the logic

While the use of standard time zones gradually increased because of its obvious practical advantages for communication and travel, the idea was not immediately embraced by all because it also caused some problems. Congress enacted the Standard Time Act of 1918 and set standard time zones based on those set up by the railroads. It gave the responsibility to make any changes in the time zones to the Interstate Commerce Commission, which was the only federal transportation regulatory agency at the time. When Congress created the Department of Transportation in 1966, it transferred the responsibility for the time laws to the new department.

So we can thank the railroads for our TV schedules. Maybe AMTRAK and the LIRR wish this had never happened!

See you next time along the rails of The Tinplate Cannonball. 🚂

Photographs by Ken Morgan

involved in my purchasing six versions of what is essentially the same loco. The justification works for me, at least. First was the repainted 252. Since I later learned that

Lionel News & Views

by Bill Schmeelk
RM 6643

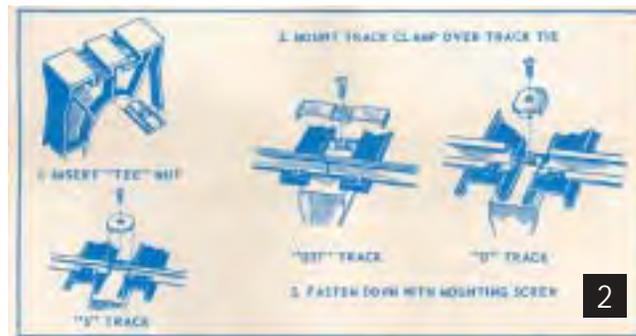
FasTrack™ – Riding High

At a recent train meet I asked dealers how their customers were taking to Lionel's new track system, FasTrack. Without exception I was told that it has become a good seller. When I decided that I was going to review the FasTrack new trestles and remote control switches, I bought more at a local hobby shop so I could properly test them. That dealer also confirmed that the product was a big hit.

Lionel's Postwar Trestles

Lionel's postwar trestles were styled after modern steel construction, while the style of the new FasTrack trestles is modeled on wooden timber construction. The postwar graduated trestle set consisted of 12 pairs of trestles ranging in height from just under 3/16-inch to a max of 4-3/4 inches. The new FasTrack set consists of 11 pairs of trestles that start at 1/2- inch and go to a max of 5-1/2 inches.

Lionel trestles first appeared in the 1955 catalog. They were offered as the No. 110 Lionel Trestle Set and were molded of gray plastic to resemble steel trestles. **Photo 1** shows the tallest of the original postwar trestles along with a variety of hardware used to fasten the track to the trestle. The hardware shown on the left side of the photo is the first type that Lionel used. The hardware included special threaded "tee" nuts that fit into the channels on top of each trestle. The operator placed two clamps over the track and threaded a 1/4-inch, 4-40 machine screw into the "tee" nut to tighten the clamp, track, and trestle together. The trestles were supplied with two sets of clamps, one for O27 track and another for O track. Thus each trestle set had 44 clamps that the user would have no need for. **Photo 2** shows the illustration from the original instruction sheet. No price was printed in the 1955 catalog.



Notice that the early instructions also included information about installing these trestles with S-gauge (American Flyer®) track. Although Lionel was often the train hobby leader in that era, this is a case where A.C.

Gilbert beat Lionel — AF introduced the No. 780 Railroad Trestle Set in their 1953 catalog. **Photo 3** shows an illustration from Flyer's 1954 catalog. Why do you think it took Lionel another two years to offer trestles? I don't have the answer to that.

The Flyer trestles were also modeled to resemble girder construction. They were orange in color, or as the catalog stated, "finished in realistic red-lead color." The catalog description went on to state the trestles were "Quick and easy to set up." The track set into slots in the trestle and a spring clip was easily inserted to secure the trestle to the track. As a youngster, I had a friend who operated American Flyer trains and had the Flyer trestles. I had Lionel trestles on my layout. No two ways about it, the Flyer trestles were much easier to install; especially if you changed the layout often.

In the 1956 catalog, Lionel introduced the No. 111 Trestle Set. It included 10 of the tallest trestle piers and

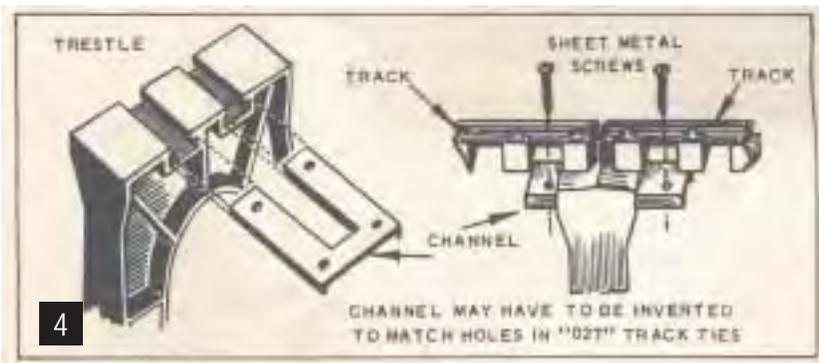


allowed one to extend the elevated portion of a layout. The sets offered in 1956 used the same fastening hardware as the No. 110 set. The catalog description included an added caution in the description, "Recommended only for O27 or O gauge locos with Magne-Traction." Again in 1956, the catalog showed no prices for the trestles. Flyer introduced a similar set in 1954, and it included 12 trestles.

Changes for Super O

In 1957 Lionel introduced Super O track and adjusted the hardware needed to secure the trestles to the track. Lionel solved the problem by coming up with a single type of hardware that could be used on O27, O, or Super O track. This hardware can be seen on the right side of **photo 1**. **Photo 4** shows an illustration from the later instruction sheet. This new method used a stamped metal U-shaped piece and sheet-metal screws placed through the mounting holes of the track.

Although there had always been a drawing in the accessory section of the catalogs, it is interesting to note that it wasn't until three years after their introduction — in the 1958 catalog — that the trestles were shown in the artwork of the main portion of catalogs. In that catalog they were featured on no less than six pages highlighting four different train sets. The price was now listed as \$5.95 for the graduated set and \$3.95 for the elevated set. Flyer's 1954 prices were \$7.95 and \$4.95.

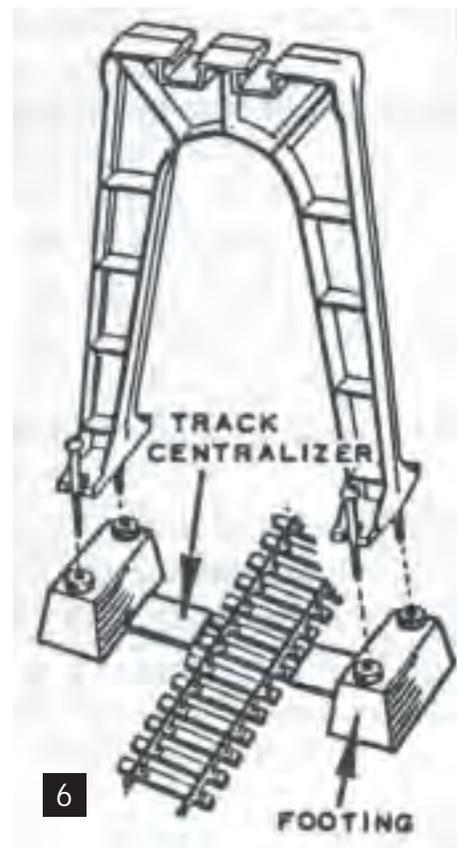


At some point in the late 50s the trestles were molded in black plastic, although they were never shown in that color in the catalog. All illustrations continued to depict them as gray. In the 1960 catalog, two sets were offered that included trestles. These two Super O sets were the Great Northern Diesel Freight at \$75.00 and the most expensive



set in the catalog, the Identical Super O and HO Twin Railroad Empire at \$150. See **photo 5**.

Postwar trestle sets are easy to find at reasonable prices. The one exception is the elevated set of trestles included in the twin set. This set included 20 No. 110A elevated piers. Because the common elevated pier was not quite high enough to allow the HO train to operate underneath it,



special footings were made to raise the height. The pier itself was modified by the removal of the strut which joined the two legs of the pier at the bottom. **Photo 6** shows an illustration from the instruction sheet for the twin railroad set; you can see the modified pier and the special footings. A set of these special trestles in their box is rare and commands a high price.

The price of the trestles remained the same through the 1964 catalog. In 1965, when catalog prices were rounded to the nearest dollar, they increased to \$6 and \$4.

In the 1968 catalog the price per set increased by a dollar to \$7 and \$5.

When MPC produced the trestles, they were molded in a brown color to simulate rusted steel. The new number designation was 2110 and 2111. The metal U-channel fastening system was replaced by a new plastic fastening system that eliminated the need for screws. When first introduced however, this new and easier to use fastener would only work with O27 track. Years later a slight modification was made to also allow it to be used with O-gauge track. A sticker on existing boxes identified the redesign. The illustrations in the assembly instructions printed on the box



were never corrected. **Photo 7** shows both versions of this system. The later version is on the right.

Lionel's trestle sets have remained a staple in their catalogs. The last year they were cataloged was 2003. The price was then \$19.95 for either the 2110 or the 2111 sets. The 2004 and 2005 catalogs no longer offered the original trestle sets. With a new track system in the works then, modifying the original trestles was not an option.

FasTrack Gets a Lift

In the 2005 catalog, Lionel announced a totally new trestle system for use with its new FasTrack. Near the time when you receive this issue of *TLR*, the new FasTrack Graduated Trestles will be available. We borrowed a production sample from Lionel so that we could consider them in this issue.

When you first open the box, you are presented with 107 parts. They're all shown in **photo 8**. There are 22 base pieces in six different sizes and ten different-height piers; two of each. The first thing to do is snap the appropriate bases onto each of the piers. The numbers on the bases were small and I had to put on my reading glasses to see them. Once assembled, there is really

no reason to ever disassemble them. **Photo 9** shows both the tallest pier assembled to its base and the shortest one, which is only a base. On the left in the photo is the same thing from an original style set made in the MPC era. The tallest pier from the original set was 4-3/4 inches. The tallest pier from the new set is 5-1/2 inches. The shortest pier in the original set is 3/16-inch, and the shortest pier in the new set

(actually, it is just a base) is 1/2-inch.



In addition to the piers and bases, you receive a lot of additional hardware. Thankfully, no screws are needed to assemble the track to the trestles; they simply snap together. For each trestle you receive a plastic pin, a metal spacer bar, and a metal crosspiece which caps the top of the pier and snaps to the track. See **photo 10**.



Photo 11 shows hardware in place across two trestles. For the first pier, the plastic pin is first inserted into one end of a spacer bar and then into the cross piece, and then into the top of the base. The remaining piers are assembled in a similar manner except that you will have two spacer bars



The track sections can be snapped into the metal crosspieces. Assemble the track sections together before snapping them onto the trestle piers. Once assembled with track in place, we found that the rise from the table level to the first section was a bit steep. If you secure the track to your table it will look as it does in **photo 12**. This makes a definite angle where it connects to the secured track. If you do not secure the track, the joint will look like **photo 13**. A locomotive passing over this joint will cause it to bend under the weight. In the postwar trestles, the first pier was merely a flat piece 3/16 of an inch thick and that started a more gradual incline to the first trestle.

I found the perfect solution to this problem — snap-on one of the metal crosspieces to the track joint 10 inches before the 1/2-inch high first step. This provided support at that point and was the perfect height to continue the slope nicely down to the table level as shown in **photo 14**. While this solved the problem, you'll need two more crosspieces than are supplied in the set.

What about Grade?

Grade describes the increase in height compared to the distance; that is, the ratio of rise to run. Lionel's postwar trestles had a difference of 1/2-inch between most of the trestles. It was actually less at the beginning and at the end of the slope. To figure the percentage of grade, simply divide the height by the distance in the same units of measure. If you use the entire distance from the lowest pier to the highest, the result will be the average slope of the entire grade. Rather than that, I used the distance from one trestle to the next. By using the 1/2-inch maximum distance in height, we'll wind up with the highest grade percentage of the slope. We know that each straight section of O-gauge track is 10 inches long, so divide the 1/2-inch difference in height by the 10-inch distance. The arithmetic result is .05, which translates to a 5% grade. Because a straight section of Super O track is only 9 inches long, the math would show a grade of 5.5%.

The FasTrack trestles are a constant 1/2-inch between piers, and a FasTrack section of straight track is also 10 inches long. So even though the highest trestle is 5-1/2 inches tall as compared to 4-3/4 inches for the postwar trestle, the

maximum grade remains 5%. The metal spacer bars ensure that the spacing between trestles is constant — even on curved sections which are longer than straight sections.

How does a 5% grade compare to the grades used on real railroads? It is rather high; no real train would attempt a 5% grade. However, to match a gentler prototypical grade, you would need considerably more distance than offered by typical 4x8-feet of plywood. For example, a 2-1/2% grade, still high by real railroad standards, would require twice as long a run to reach the same rise. That would demand more real estate, so the higher toy train grade is a space-saving alternative.

Final Thoughts

Because the FasTrack trestle set I had was a production sample, it didn't include the instructions. I discovered a very convenient solution on Lionel's web site. I clicked on Customer Service and chose Instruction Manuals for access to all of Lionel's instruction manuals. The information about the trestles was posted there even though the set has not yet been released. The manual referred to a height of 4-3/4 inches, which is an error; that's the height of the postwar trestles. The FasTrack trestles reach a height of 5-1/2 inches.

Lionel's postwar instruction sheet also included several layout plans using the trestles. This would be a nice addition to the new instructions.

I was especially glad to see that this new system does not require screws to install the track to the trestles. Each

base unit includes holes that would allow you secure the trestles to your train table, but they could also be used successfully on temporary layouts without securing them to the table.

The postwar instructions suggested that additional support might be necessary if you are running heavy locos on them. The metal spacer bars of FasTrack are unique to Lionel. They provide additional support for the track suspended between the trestles and prevent the track from bending under the weight of a hefty locomotive pulling a heavy load of die-cast (not plastic) cars.

I suggest that Lionel include two additional metal crosspieces for placement at the section before the lowest step of the uphill grade and after the lowest step on the downhill side. These additions would provide a more gradual rise and fall at the incline and at touch down.

In the next issue, we'll explore the new FasTrack Remote Control Switches. I can't wait to try them out. Until then — I hope to see you in St Louis at the LCCA Convention. It promises to be a great Convention. I hope to see you there. Step up and say, "Hi!" 🚂

Editor's Note: Bill Schmeelk welcomes train-related comments and questions. He can be reached by U.S Mail at 15 Birchwood Lane, Hillsdale, NJ 07642; or by phone at 201-479-8179. His e-mail address is bill@wellingtonent.com.

Photographs by Bill Schmeelk

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A Lionel Puzzlement

by Gene H. Russell, Ed.D.
RM 24608

The letters **T-L-R** are familiar and recognizable to readers of **The Lion Roars** and all LCCA members.

Below are clues to 15 words that contain the letters **T-L-R**. While not always in the "correct" LCCA order, the words are Lionel-related and provide additional clues to solving this Puzzlement. Use only one letter per dash. Good luck! 

Answers to April's puzzle:

- | | |
|------|--------|
| 1. c | 9. c |
| 2. a | 10. a |
| 3. c | 11. b |
| 4. b | 12. b |
| 5. a | 13. c |
| 6. a | 14. a |
| 7. c | 15. b. |
| 8. b | |

1. Piggy back load

T _ _ _ L _ R

2. Caterpillar hauler

_ L _ T _ _ R

3. Tanker contents

_ _ T R _ L _ _

4. Two sets of driving wheels

_ R T _ _ _ L _ _ _

5. Boxcar needing sweeping

_ _ _ L T R _

6. Small freight mover

_ _ R _ L _ _ T

7. Sleek modern diesel

_ T _ _ _ L _ _ _ R

8. Sikorsky invention

_ _ L _ _ _ T _ R

9. Mountainous opening

_ _ R T _ L

10. "Toonerville"

T R _ _ L _ _

11. Depot deck

_ L _ T _ _ R _

12. Power connector

_ _ _ T _ _ L _ _ R

13. Locomotive rotator

_ _ R _ T _ _ L _

14. "LIONEL _____ Trains"

_ L _ _ T R _ _

15. Moveable night illumination

_ _ _ R _ _ L _ _ _ T

Answers will be published in the next issue of *TLR*.

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