

Volume 38, No. 2 December, 2008

# The Lion Roars



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



# CHILL OUT



## LCCA Announces its Unique 2009 Convention Car

This highly detailed model of a 57-foot BNSF mechanical reefer is designed by LCCA and made by Lionel® with exclusive club features. It's now available only to club members as a memento of the upcoming 2009 Convention in Sacramento, California. The dramatic *metallic white pearl* paint and high-gloss finish suggests that the car is "frozen" as indicated by the roof-edge icicles and the "Ice Cold Express" slogan. First-time-ever added features by LCCA include: an on/off indicator light for the onboard diesel refrigeration unit; a simulated load of boxes of California grapes inside the car; a posed delivery man at the door; and the 2009 Convention logo on both sides of the car.

This car also bears the design features of its class:

- Brake equipment positioned low on one end
- Short ladders
- Metal (not plastic) floor
- Modern roof with no running board
- Sliding compartment door reveals the onboard diesel engine.

The car has the features you'd expect on a Lionel Standard O car:

- Die-cast metal sprung trucks, painted ice blue
- Operating couplers
- Rotating bearing caps
- Hidden uncoupler tabs
- Metal underframe detail
- Opening doors.

LCCA members who regularly collect club convention cars will want to add this special product to their cache, and BNSF niche collectors will want this "cool and different" item!

NOTE: This car may become an essential piece in a possible future Lionel train set bearing this distinctive décor scheme. A whispered word to the wise collector – order this car now!

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**Use this order form or place your order online. Order form may be photocopied.**

**LIMIT: Two 2009 Convention cars per member. Deadline for orders: May 31, 2009**

Once submitted, LCCA will consider this is a firm order and not refundable.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ LCCA No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip + 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: (\_\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Note: UPS cannot deliver to a post office box. A street address is required.

Check this box if any part of your address is new.

### PURCHASE METHOD:

My check is enclosed, made payable to "LCCA" with "2009CC" on the memo line.

Bill this purchase to my credit card account.

No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_

Disc  MasterCard  Visa Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
The 3 digits at the signature panel on back of your card

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

By my signature, I authorize LCCA to charge my account for the amount shown according to the terms and conditions cited herein.

### DO THE MATH:

One 2009 Convention Car, \$99.95 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Two 2009 Convention Cars, \$199.90 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

(Includes S&H to Continental USA)

Extended S&H to AK, HI, and Canada — add \$10 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Extended S&H to all other foreign countries — add \$15 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Illinois residents only, add 7% sales tax — \$7 each \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total: (in U.S. funds): \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this order form to the best toy train club on the planet:

**LCCA Business Office • Dept 2009CC • P.O. Box 479 • LaSalle, IL 61301-0479**

To order online: [www.lionelcollectors.org](http://www.lionelcollectors.org) — at the main page, click on "LCCA Store".

Christmasville ..... GIFC  
 2009 Convention Car ..... IFC  
 The President's Report ..... 2  
 Secretary's Report ..... 3  
 LCCA Membership Survey, Part 2 ..... 5  
 A Family Train Adventure ..... 6  
 It's Got to Be Magic ..... 10  
 Several Stocking Stuffers ..... 11  
 Penny Merchandise Car ..... 14  
 Go for the Gold ..... 16  
 Class Remains in Session ..... 18  
 Lionel News & Views ..... 21  
 Interview with Jerry Calabrese ..... 25  
 Toy Trunk Railroad ..... 26  
 The Tinsplate Cannonball ..... 27  
 Art in the Train Room ..... 30  
 Helping Papa ..... IBC  
 Christmas Photo Gallery ..... OBC  
 A Lionel Puzzlement ..... GIBC  
 LCCA Product Development Shop ..... GIBC

LCCA Website: [www.lionelcollectors.org](http://www.lionelcollectors.org)

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**ON THE COVER**

This "Little Engineer" painting by artist (and LCCA member) Angela Troтта Thomas captures the "Wow!" moment of a youngster who loves trains. We can imagine that the Standard gauge train belongs to his grandfather.  
*Digital image of artwork provided by Angela Troтта Thomas*

**Contacting the LCCA Business Office**

Members can contact the Business Office for routine services through the club's website at [www.lionelcollectors.org](http://www.lionelcollectors.org), by e-mail at [lcca@cpointcc.com](mailto:lcca@cpointcc.com), by fax at 815-223-0791, or by mail at: LCCA Business Office, P.O. Box 479, LaSalle, IL 61301-0479.

Business office services are limited to providing or processing changes of address, changes of phone number, "make good" copies of *The Lion Roars*, applications for membership, replacement membership cards, reinstatements, death notices, Convention registration, and orders for club collectibles.

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**People to Contact**

*Business Office* - Their role is limited to routine services.  
*Secretary* - Inquiries about membership lapses and administrative support.  
*Membership Chair* - Joining LCCA and membership questions.  
*Immediate Past President* - Complaint against another member.  
*President* - Always available and as a last resort.

The LCCA is not affiliated with Lionel or Lionel L.L.C. Opinions and comments made in by-lined columns in this publication do not necessarily reflect the official policies of the Board of Directors or the views of officers and appointed officials; nor do they indicate a club endorsement of any products mentioned.



# The President's Report

by Richard H. Johnson  
RM 7103

By the time you read this, Thanksgiving will be a memory, and the Christmas holidays will be just around the corner. What a great time of year!

TLR Editor Mike Mottler asked me to share with you some of my train-related Christmas memories. I think I shocked him when I replied that electric trains were never a part of my parents' Christmas celebrations. Although I received two American Flyer®, three-rail, train sets for Christmas when my father returned home from WW II, these sets were always kept in the basement on a permanent layout. When we moved to a new home three years later, the trains went to the basement of the new home on a new year-round layout. About the only trains-at-Christmas connection of my youth was my receiving a few train-related items each Christmas. This continued until I turned 16 and promptly lost all interest in electric trains until 1980.

Something that Christmas in 1980 rekindled my interest in electric trains, and the rest is history. I have two daughters, and they really had no interest in trains, so trains never played a part in the Christmas celebrations of my current family. That doesn't mean I don't love to see trains running during the Christmas holidays. I make a point of visiting as many Christmas layouts as possible during the holidays. One of my favorites is the B&O/C&O/CSX layout in Cincinnati that has been set up every year since 1946 in the lobby of Duke Energy (formerly CG&E). This fantastic layout is open to the public from the day after Thanksgiving until New Year's Day, and it is visited by hundreds of thousands of people each year.

One piece of holiday cheer that I'd like to share with you is our winning a W3 Silver Award (in the "Toy & Hobby" category) for the LCCA website. It was presented to the club by the International Academy of the Visual Arts through a rigorous competition with more than 3,300 entrants. This would not have been possible without the efforts of Larry Black, IT Manager, and Mike Mottler, Website Editor. Thanks, guys, for your efforts on behalf of The Best Toy Train Club on the Planet!



LCCA is rapidly approaching the deadline for the slate of candidates for office in 2009. Next year, we need to elect a new President-elect, a new Treasurer, and two new Directors. These very important positions need to be filled with qualified candidates to assure that LCCA continues to prosper. We strive to have two candidates running for each position, so please take a moment to reflect on who you think would be good candidates for these offices. I'll be happy to discuss this with anyone interest in serving, so please call or e-mail me.

Despite these difficult financial times, 2008 was an excellent year for LCCA. This would not have been possible without the financial support of our members. To those of you who purchased our products and attended our Convention and train meets, THANK YOU! We'll have some new items for sale in 2009 that will be both affordable and exciting. If you like what you see, order promptly because quantities will be limited.

I wish you all the happiest of holidays and a happy, healthy and prosperous new year! 🚂



*The train layout at Duke Energy (formerly Cincinnati Gas & Electric Co.) in Cincinnati, Ohio, has delighted more than nine million visitors, old and young, since its inception in 1946. It is one of the largest portable, model layouts in the world, measuring 36-1/2 feet wide by 47-1/2 feet long, and it is authentic O gauge. The layout includes approximately 300 train cars and 50 locomotives on 1,000 feet of track. During the holiday season, the trains will run more than 100,000 scale miles.*

*Photographs provided by Duke Energy/CSX*



# The Secretary's Report

by Jerry M. Calkins  
RM 9814

## Board of Directors Meeting

The meeting was held at the Hyatt Regency Hotel at DFW Airport, Dallas, Texas, on Saturday, October 25, 2008.

### I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by President Johnson at 8:45 a.m.

### II. Roll Call

The roll was called by Secretary Calkins.

**Elected Officials Present:** President Johnson; Immediate Past President Caponi; President-elect Kolis; Treasurer DeVito; Secretary Calkins; and Directors Ellingson, Fogg, Ourso, Richter, and Schmeelk.

**Appointed Officials Present:** Electronic Information Manager Black; Convention Co-Manager Fisher; and *Interchange Track* Editor Tribuzi.

### III. Approval of July 20, 2008 Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting held in Buffalo on July 20, 2008, was made by Director Fogg and seconded by Director Ourso. The motion passed.

### IV. Reports

#### A. Immediate Past President

Immediate Past President Caponi reported that no complaints between members were pending.

#### B. President-Elect

President-elect Kolis reported that there were two upcoming meets: one near Chattanooga, TN, on October 25, and one in Naperville, IL, on December 6.

#### C. Secretary

Secretary Calkins reported that as of October 21, 2008, LCCA had a total membership of 7,952 consisting of 23 charter members, 14 courtesy members, 1 honorary charter member, 6 honorary members, 12 junior members, 66 foreign members, and 7,830 regular members.

#### D. Treasurer

Treasurer DeVito presented the Treasurer's Report. The LCCA is solvent and financially sound. He indicated that both the 2008 Convention and the 2008 club promotions were a huge success. With the current market situation, a discussion was held regarding the most appropriate procedure to use for investing LCCA funds. President Johnson will appoint an Investment Committee to investigate additional investment options and make recommendations for consideration at the next Board meeting.

#### E. The Lion Roars

President Johnson gave Editor Mottler's report on *The Lion Roars*. The December issue is complete. Some space is available for the February issue, and there is always a need for material for subsequent issues.

At the recommendation of Director Fogg, Director Schmeelk received a congratulatory round of applause in appreciation for his numerous contributions to *The Lion Roars*. His 150<sup>th</sup> consecutive article appeared in the October issue of *TLR*.

#### F. Interchange Track and eTrack

Editor Tribuzi, with the assistance of IT Manager Black, reported on the status of the *Interchange Track* and *eTrack* including changes that have been made.

As a result of information obtained from the recent LCCA survey, a committee consisting of IT Manager Black, *Interchange Track* Editor Tribuzi, and former *eTrack* Editor Elder made recommendations for improving both the *Interchange Track* and *eTrack*. Several changes were immediately implemented. The clarification of all instructions was considered, written, and implemented. These will appear in the November issue. The Board was asked to review these revisions and comment. The results of a study on font size and page layout [portrait versus landscape] were discussed. The current font size of 7.5 point was compared to font sizes of 9 and 10 point using both portrait and landscape page layouts. President Johnson directed the committee to prepare samples for distribution to and comment by a select sample of members. Based upon their input, a final decision will be made.

*Meeting Break: 9:50 – 10:10 a.m.*

IT Manager Black discussed changes in the responsibilities for the management of the *Interchange Track* and *eTrack*. Barrie Braden has become the new *eTrack* Editor replacing Greg Elder. He receives mailed ads and enters them into the *IT* database. *IT* Editor Tribuzi then sends all the ads to our printer for publication. Once printed, the magazines are then sent to our mailing service which affixes mailing labels and delivers the publication to the post office.

The LCCA Survey indicated that the club needed to make it easier for new and infrequent *IT* users to submit electronic ads. The proposed plan includes the design of a second (or dual) interface to *eTrack* that allows new users to start with a simpler interface. Advanced users can select the current interface (which uses "cookies") and then utilize this option indefinitely. The plan is to tweak the current interface to make it less susceptible to user error. A New User Council will be formed to assist in making changes, conduct telephone conference call sessions for new users, and conduct training seminars at future Conventions. The current plan is to make the changes, conduct user testing, and implement final changes by January, 2009. There will be an article discussing all of these changes in an upcoming issue of *The Lion Roars*.



## G. Website

LCCA has received another award for its website – a Silver Award in the Toy and Hobby category of the W3 competition sponsored by the International Academy of Visual Arts. There were 3,300 entries: 33 were awarded Best in Show; 330 were awarded Gold Awards; and 575 were awarded Silver Awards. On behalf of the LCCA, President Johnson commended Editor Mottler and Webmaster Black for their hard work in making this possible.

## H. Convention Co-Managers

Convention Co-Managers Fisher and Fogg provided a review and update of the 2008, 2009, 2010, and future Conventions.

The 2008 Convention in Buffalo was a huge success. Kudos go to the Convention team and to all our Convention volunteers.

The final arrangements for our 2009 Convention in Sacramento were presented. These will be announced in upcoming issues of *The Lion Roars*. Numerous tours, including several train excursions, museums, and other activities of interest are planned.

In 2010, LCCA will return to Denver and the Denver Marriott Tech Center. The UP excursion will again be on Monday with UP steam locomotives 3985 and 844 providing the motive power. A few of the previous tours and activities will be included, and new and different activities are being planned. The 2010 Convention will be a completely new event.

Negotiations for the 2011 Convention at the Hyatt Regency Hotel at DFW in Dallas are currently under way. For 2012 and beyond, locations in Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Kansas City, and St. Louis are being considered.

As a result of member input, some Convention activities will be continued and some new ones may be implemented. These include the continuation of the first time attendees reception, permitting Convention attendance by a member's extended family, and a registration fee waiver for members who bring a member who has never attended a previous Convention. Another suggestion was a special event to recognize members who have attended multiple conventions.

*Lunch Break: 12:10 – 1:45 p.m.*

## I. Product Chairman

Product Chairman Caponi reported on the status of various LCCA products. Three of the four items pictured on page six of the October issue of *TLR* are under contract and scheduled for production. They will be available to LCCA members at very affordable prices. The yellow water tower is currently available for immediate shipment. The remake of the Burlington #216 set will be announced once all details have been finalized and a contract has been signed.

The 2009 Convention car will be a 57-foot BNSF mechanical reefer containing a man with two cases of grapes. It will be white with blue icicles – Ice Cold Express. A red light will go on and off when the door opens and

closes. Details will follow in an upcoming issue of *The Lion Roars*.

## V. New Business

### A. 2009 Election

For the 2009 election, the offices of President-elect, Treasurer, and two Directors will be open. Director Fogg has replaced Lou Caponi as Nominating Committee Chairman due to Lou's extensive duties as Product Development Chairman. Anyone interested in running for one of these offices should contact Director Fogg. Ideally, every position should be contested.

### B. Assistant Editor Positions

President Johnson recommended that the Board identify possible successors to individuals who currently serve in key appointed positions. These positions include the *TLR* Editor, *IT* Editor, and *eTrack* Editor. Assistant editors are always welcome and can provide needed back-up for the current editors.

### C. Membership Growth

Currently, LCCA's membership is fairly constant at about 8,000. Various options and ideas for increasing membership were discussed. Suggestions included answering the question, "Why should I become a member," making known the many benefits of membership, continuing the club's participation in the World's Greatest Hobby on Tour shows, and offering incentives for joining. The Board will continue to address this issue. Members with ideas on this topic are encouraged to share them with the President.

### D. *TLR* Digital Archive

A proposal to commemorate the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of LCCA in 2010 with a searchable DVD containing all past the issues of *The Lion Roars* was discussed. While the idea received a generally positive response, concern was expressed over the substantial cost of the project and the limited market. The discussion then focused on other special projects that would appeal to a wider audience. President Johnson recommended that we continue to explore possible DVD projects. Because of the very reasonable cost to scan all back issues of *The Lion Roars*, a motion was made by Director Schmeelk, and seconded by Director Ellingson, to authorize the digital scanning of all prior issues of *TLR* into both \*.pdf and \*.jpg formats for future use by the club. The motion passed.

## VI. President's Report

President Johnson reported that all current activities and projects of the club are being handled efficiently by the various committees and Board members assigned to them. In the interest of holding club expenses to a minimum, the next regular Board meeting may be conducted by a telephone conference call if an "in-person" Board meeting is not required. Accordingly, the spring meeting will not be scheduled at this time.

*Continued on page 24*



# We Asked – You Answered

by Eric Fogg  
RM 12768

## LCCA Membership Survey, Part II Feedback Aplenty

Earlier this year, we asked members to answer a brief survey included with the 2008 election ballot. In the October 2008 issue of *TLR*, we shared some of the major findings from that survey including the following points. We received 2,581 responses, which means we heard from more than 32% of the membership!

We learned a great deal about you, your interests, and habits:

- 82% get most of their club information from *The Lion Roars*
- 73% consider themselves both a collector and an operator
- 69% have a permanent layout
- 66% regularly use e-mail
- 60% use the Internet to browse for trains
- 60% have used the LCCA website.

Overwhelming majorities of you think this is indeed the best toy train club on the planet! 99% said you read *The Lion Roars*, 68% from cover to cover. When it comes to the *Interchange Track*, 79% of you use it, 62% as a price guide. Three club programs – Conventions, special commemorative products (like Convention cars), and special price breaks on Lionel® products – earned a solid “B” on this report card. *eTrack* and the LCCA website fell into a category best summarized as “needs improvement.” We will provide more education about it and offer more “help desk” kinds of solutions.

### So, What Are We Going To Do About It?

The first thing to do is study. We will review these results a number of times, glean information and insight, and add to our knowledge base.

Next, we need to overlay your ideas against some of the club’s realities. Giving every member a free Convention car would be a great PR move, but the cost could put us out of business. That’s just an example; no one really suggested we do anything like that!

By way of a real example, a lot of you asked for more club-sponsored meets in various parts of the country. We

applaud your interest in group activities that bring us all closer together and allow members to share. It’s what makes this hobby great. On the other hand, train meets are rapidly being replaced by electronic venues, and it is difficult to find members willing to organize train meets or even attend them. How we address this issue and others from the survey remains to be seen.

However, there are some things we can address right now. In the case of Conventions, you told us you wanted to be able to bring more family members to these events. Starting with the 2009 Convention in Sacramento, club members may register as many family members as they’d like under their membership number. The appropriate costs for tours and meals will apply and, like always,

the individual member will be responsible for all those people who are registered under their member number.

Looking at the big picture, all of this should provide a series of workable ideas and solutions. Prioritizing them would be the next logical step, followed by assigning individuals or groups to work on them. Many might have an “easy fix” – like Convention attendance – while others could take some time and effort. Stay tuned to your favorite publication, *The Lion Roars*, and your soon-to-be-improved LCCA website for more details and progress reports.

Special thanks go out to a small group of both members and non-members who helped make this research effort so successful. Included in that group are:

- The Research Study Subcommittee: Jerry Calkins, Al Kolis, Sal Gambino, Craig Tribuzi, and Eric Fogg
- Questionnaire Reviewers: club members Larry Black and Karen Fogg, ORC Macro, Washington, D.C.
- Jule A. Loy Gray, Jule’s Data Solutions, Des Moines, Iowa; she personally entered all 2,581 returns and created the reports
- All 2,581 of you (you know who you are) who took time to share your thoughts and ideas with us. 🚂

## A Special Thanks to Everyone Who Made This Survey A Success

### Answers to Lionel Puzzlement

1. water, steam; 2. engine, tender; 3. bell, horn; 4. Lionel, dealer; 5. gauge, scale; 6. switch, lockon; 7. light, tower; 8. hopper, boxcar; 9. snow, plow; 10. curved, corner; 11. coach, diner; 12. super, chief; 13. wooden, barrel; 14. girder, bridge; 15. motor, power.



# A Family Train Adventure



by the David Sammet Family  
RM 4155

## Pass it Forward

I'm basically a scientist working in research. For my entire life, I've studied, researched, and designed stuff. Actually, that's all I do these days. I thought it was important for my kids to be involved with these areas, and I wanted to pass along as much as I could to them. The train layout in our home – we call it The Lighthouse – was a catalyst for those skills to “rub-off” on them. And it was fun!

I recognized that creating a train layout as a family project would bring many related activities and skill sets into play: electricity, carpentry, mold making, artwork in scenery, and others. The construction process encourages, even requires, thinking outside the box, and that type of activity is important to me. Also, I like trains. Like a lot of guys in my generation, I grew up with toy trains, and those memories are significant to me.

## Trains for the Family

When Christopher, our oldest son, was born, my trains were packed in boxes because we had just moved into our house. He didn't know they existed, but from the time he was 1-1/2 years old, he had a love for trains. When my wife Niki went to the beauty shop on Saturday mornings, to pacify him I drove him to the local switchyard where trains were at work. In the wintertime while freezing in the car, we watched the trains. Occasionally the engineers would

yell out to us, “Want to bring him on the engine?” Over the years they gave him CSX sweatshirts, engineer's gloves, and other stuff. When I brought my toy trains out of storage, he was already fascinated by them. Our daughter Miranda came along about three years later, and she was interested in the toy trains too. She pushed them by hand around the tracks.

Christopher liked wiring and electrical projects. When he was six years old, I gave him a transformer, switches, and controllers, and he hooked them up all by himself.

The rule around our house was – kids aren't allowed to plug things into AC outlets because it's dangerous. So he asked Niki to plug it in for him. However, testing it would have to wait until I got home, even though he was confident that he had hooked it up right. When I got home, I checked it, and it was correct. He watched the work I did and learned by observation with relatively little trial and error and only a few sparks.

Now we have TMCC™ installed on the layout along with the accompanying stuff, the ASC 3000 and OTC 3000 and that whole series. There are now more than 50 modules around in the layout. We have about 28 uncoupling track sections and 76 switches wired to TMCC for activation by a CAB-1™. There are 10 TPCs for track power plus Block Power Controllers and the Action Recorder. He was deeply involved in wiring all those items.



## Trains for the Holidays

We have an annual holiday open house with the trains, and friends drop in for their “yearly dose” of trains at Christmas time. We invite guests to the house, and about 300 people visit us. Niki places candy in the gondola cars for youngsters – if they’re good. They understand what that means – look a lot, but don’t touch the trains in motion.

We run up to five trains at Christmas time in the living room and dining room area, which is a 20x40-foot space. Visitors see about ninety Department 56™ buildings in place and little dioramas around the house. Then guests go to the permanent layout. It takes them about three hours to see all of it. The layouts capture their curiosity, and some ask, “Would it be all right if I came back sometime?” Many return for more.

### Comments by Christopher

It was fun getting to learn how the electronics interfaced with all the trains and how to solve problems that just naturally occur. Because we have trains running on tracks on multiple levels, we discovered that the TMCC signal would either be lost or degraded in those areas. We couldn’t talk to the trains, and they just stopped. We created a suitable barrier between the two levels to ensure that the signal didn’t cross between them and get mixed up. We created a ground layer with copper mesh and later on with single strand copper wire stapled to the bottom of each level in a zigzag pattern. We connected the TMCC wire to an earth ground barrier, and that stopped the TMCC signal from mixing with another nearby signal path.

The underside of some train layouts looks like an explosion in a spaghetti factory, but we organized our wire pathways to keep it all straight. The need for organization came out of necessity in troubleshooting, like finding the source of a problem when a portion of the layout stopped working. We use standard electrical color coding for ground and power wires – black is ground, red is power.

We used a common power and a data bus along the length of the layout so we can just screw in the module in wherever we need it, run two wires from it to the destination, and solder it into that data bus. Then it’s good to go.

The TMCC Command Base has a nine pin serial port that we intend to plug into the computer. I’m helping my dad create a program that will interface with the Command Base through that port so that we can control the layout through the computer instead of the CAB-1. This would give us more functionality. We’re also working on installing a “fast clock” in order to run trains according to a pre-arranged time schedule. Actually, it’s not that difficult to do.

When I was younger, I invited neighborhood kids and friends to see the layout. They were impressed to say the

least. It was fun for me to explain to them how everything was interconnected and to see their reactions to it.

Beginning with the fall semester of 2008, I will attend Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University for a computer engineering degree. That career interest grew out of helping my dad work with the little bitty hardware modules and the software tasks he does at work. My involvement with the train layout was a practical exercise in thinking outside the box and getting electronic modules to do what I wanted them to do – sometimes for tasks beyond their stated purpose.

### Musings by Miranda

Our family is quite unique in that everyone has found a place to invest their time, talent, and skills in making something that’s very remarkable. I helped with all aspects of the layout. I’ve been with trains my whole life, and I’m



*The Sammet family from left to right: Christopher, Miranda, Niki, and David.*

especially interested in the small details and the overall look of it. Most ideas came out of my own head, but when I saw someone else’s layout I would gather impressions about what works – or not.

We build the scenery around the accessories so that it looks like they’re not just a piece of plastic sitting there. We want it to look real, like it belongs there. We’ve done some custom-built things or added on realistic elements to pre-built structures and kits. We created lots of molded rocks and scenic effects with different shades as in nature. We made tunnel portals look old and rustic, and we use grass and ground cover for realism.





Most of my friends are really amazed by the layout, and visitors always ask me, “How long did this take” or “Can you run it?” Sure, I can run the layout. Some are amazed that I can do well what is often considered a “guy hobby.” I’m not an artist, like for drawing, but I enjoy the 3-D environment. In that zone, I am an artist. The layout is essentially finished, but there are a few things here and there that remain somewhat unfinished.

#### Niki’s Notes

I met David on the East Coast, and as our relationship grew I followed him to the Midwest. I knew he had some trains, and it evolved to the point where I was interested in the trains too. It has grown into a family thing, and I was involved in building the layouts, including this latest version. We attended train shows and LCCA Conventions. Our first club event was the 1993 Convention in Dearborn. The kids were five and three then. It was a 10-hour trip, but we didn’t hear a peep out of them. They knew there was a train at the end of the road.

In building the layout, David pre-measured the cuts for the lumber, and the kids would be on the platform with him most of the time. I stayed on the ground and cut the wood to size. We moved our band saw into the train room in the basement, and I became quite proficient with power tools. The process was smooth and saved a lot of time.

I also served as resident shopper and took David’s lists to train shows for purchasing items for the layout. I found things for him. We made a lot of acquaintances that way, and it’s always fun to meet up with those folks again.

Over the years, LCCA members have made friends with our kids; they grew up at club Conventions and train shows. Many LCCA members actually look for our kids to get updates on various subjects. Our kids really enjoy meeting with people at the Conventions and shows. It has turned into a nice occasional reunion of friends. It doesn’t take people very long to figure out that they actually know how to handle trains and “talk the talk.” Christopher and Miranda are rightfully proud of their work on the layout. They have their own engines and cars.

#### On Making Mountains

We made 37 latex rubber molds in different rock formations. We organized an assembly line and everyone in the family was involved. Now we have all the tools and the process, so we could create a mountain range in no time. It’s just a matter of pouring plaster into the molds and bringing a scene into being. On one Saturday morning we poured 140 pieces of rock in just four hours. Miranda cleaned the bowl and prepared the mixture, Christopher peeled rocks out of the molds and cleaned them, and I mixed and poured the plaster. Niki was the entertainment and shopping coordinator.



## Then and Now

As a kid, my train set was just a circle of track and a pair of switches, but my imagination transformed that modest set up into a living railroad. In contrast, our home layout today has about 1,300 feet of track, 76 switches, and many remote control track sections. I can navigate a train anywhere on the layout without taking it off the tracks. We can set the routes and then listen to the click, click, click, click as the switches change to the proper alignment everywhere – then we put the trains in motion from a known starting point. At the end of a session, we park them at their designated positions so that they'll be in the correct starting position for the next session.

With the trains running along their designated routes, we can take time to talk with visitors gathered around the layout. The automated motions catch their eye as they see things in operation – a train stopping and an operating accessory working. Clearly, they are wondering, “How does that work?” Then we point under the layout and say, “Like this.” Wires run everywhere, and that leads to another discussion.

We designed the layout so that in the middle of a route the switches will realign according to plan. The train will run through a series of sections of the track and will come back to its starting point without interfering with another train. We can plan another set of routes, and some of the track used by train number four will be available to train number five and train number four won't use it anymore. That's how we

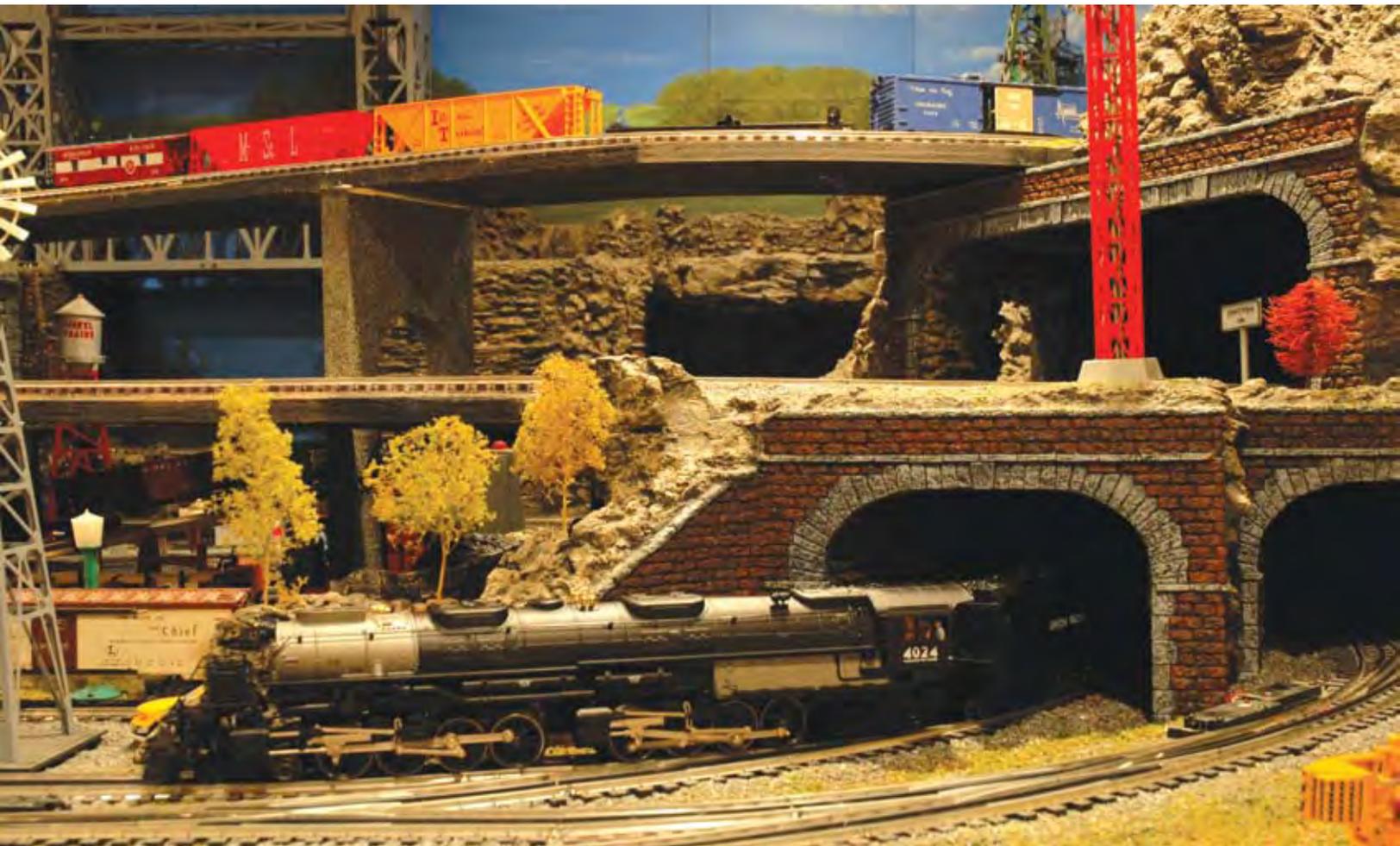
prevent collisions. We don't use block control, signals, and all that. It's difficult and complicated.

## Looking up to the next Level

We will build another layout – 30x50 feet – and we'll install block control on it based on what we learned on the existing “practice layout.” The new layout will be placed in an addition to our house. We'll add another story. I'm working on the track plan now. In the new layout, I want the trains to go in different patterns, reverse direction all by themselves, and take different routes on command.

Hopefully, we'll get it started on the new layout yet this year. We're also planning a room for displaying the trains and cars in eight-foot-long display cases. We want it to be like an old-fashioned neighborhood hardware store where many guys in my generation bought trains when we were boys. We have about 2,000+ cars and about 600 engines in the collection, and we want to display them in a way that will create a wave of pleasant memories from childhood – like reading a Lionel 1953 catalog, pressing your nose to the glass display window at the hardware store, or receiving a Lionel train at Christmas time. 🚂

*Photographs provided by David Sammet*



# *It's Got To Be Magic*

by Bill Fuller RM 11746

Oftentimes, but especially at the upcoming holiday season, a little effort can produce a huge result. Every November, Christmas decorations go up at South Dakota's High Plains Western Heritage Center. Two years ago, the rotunda area sported a single Christmas tree all alone in the middle of the floor. It was pretty – what Christmas tree isn't – but it was dwarfed by the huge cowboy statue behind it. It needed something more.

One year ago, we added a G-gauge oval under the tree and a Bachmann® 4-6-0 Big Hauler with some freight cars in tow. That brought motion to the scene, but it still didn't quite work. Tall people walking through the room had to look down to see the train, and even then they saw mostly the roofs of the cars. For Christmas in 2008, we'll get it right!

Putting three tables together and securing them to one another with C-clamps, duct tape, and whatever else was handy in the supply closet gave us a raised platform waist-high to an adult. Covering them with white sheets and then rolls of cotton batting gave us a surprisingly convincing snow-covered surface. Placing the tree in the middle of this platform gave it height and the impression of grandeur that had been lacking. Circling the base of the tree with inexpensive Plasticville™ buildings not only hid the tree stand but also created a nice background "town scene" for the trains that were to come.

We then circled the tree and the Plasticville buildings with two concentric ovals of O-gauge track. Then we placed a Lionel® Christmas trolley on the inner oval and an O27-size steamer on the outer, each running in opposite directions. We put two important final touches on the project: creating a tunnel and figuring out a failsafe control for museum visitors to use.

The tunnel was the easy part. Who among us never built tunnels with boxes of presents under the tree? We wrapped several empty boxes and arranged them to make canyons and tunnels for the train and the trolley to pass through.

The failsafe control was just a little bit more challenging to conceive. Both tracks received pre-set DC power, the train through a power pack designed for G-gauge use and



the trolley through a simple nine-volt plug-in transformer that had been scavenged from some defunct electronic device. These were plugged into a power strip and hidden under the tables behind the white plastic skirts pinned to the edges and extending to the floor. Now we got creative. The cord to the power strip was modified to feed through a simple 115-volt household toggle switch, the same switch that turns household lights on and off. Be careful to conform to electrical building codes at this point. The switch was firmly mounted in a box attached to the top edge of a table and clearly labeled as to its purpose. All a visitor need do was to flip the switch on to run both ovals and switch it off when leaving the display.

How successful was this simple, two-track addition to our Christmas display? First, the museum's executive director and one of the volunteer workers played for hours critiquing and rearranging the order of the Plasticville buildings. By then, the director was so excited that she ran out and bought a new ceramic train station to add to the layout. Next, another volunteer, who had front desk duty the following week, avowed that she was going to set a chair right beside the layout and just watch the trains run all day long because they took her back to Christmases in her childhood home. When a group of fifth-graders toured the museum on a scavenger hunt, they left plenty of time to play with the trains, too, reversing the trolley by letting the bumpers hit their hands and filling the gondolas behind the steamer with every pine tree they could find on the display, not to mention their pencils and whatever else they had in their pockets. Kids know exactly how to make almost any display truly interactive!

Where was the magic in all of this? That an operating display with two simple ovals of track brought equal pleasure to a sedate museum executive officer, to an elderly lady on the volunteer staff, and to a crowd of very active fifth graders borders on the miraculous. And this is one miracle that will be repeated when Christmas comes again to the high plains. 🚂

*Photographs provided by Bill Fuller*



## Santa Helpers Alert

Now that Christmas is almost here, this is a good time of year to review two new Lionel® entry level starter sets – the Pennsylvania Flyer (6-30089) and the Santa Fe Freight (6-30091). Both have 0-8-0 configurations and busy side rod action. These would make great holiday gifts for a child, a grandchild, or a hobbyist who is young at heart since they are “inexpensive” as trains sets go. With the current economic downturn, inexpensive train sets may look even more attractive. The Pennsy lists for \$200 and the Santa Fe for \$270. However, if these sets are too expensive for your wallet, consider the “Lionel Nation 2” DVD reviewed later in this article as a trains-galore gift for only \$20.

### Part I: The 0-8-0 Trains

For many years, the Pennsylvania Flyer has been Lionel’s entry level steam freight set. Most recently, it had a 4-4-2 locomotive on the point. Frankly, that locomotive looked toy-like and had long overstayed its welcome among



hobbyists. So Lionel recently released a new version of the Pennsylvania Flyer. This one features the 0-8-0 steam loco shown in **photo 1**.

The Pennsylvania Flyer and the Santa Fe Freight sets come with a 0-8-0 steam locomotive with an air whistle in the tender, but there are some notable differences between them to justify the higher price of the Santa Fe set. The Pennsylvania set includes three freight cars – a boxcar, searchlight car, and caboose. The Santa Fe set comes with four cars – a boxcar, flatcar with stakes, operating log dump car, and caboose. It has an upgraded drive rod assembly, and its caboose is lighted; the Pennsy’s is not.

Both sets come with a 40x60-inch oval of Lionel’s FasTrack™. However, one of the straight track sections in the SF set is an operating/uncoupling track that activates the operating log dump car. The Pennsylvania set has a 40-watt Powermax Plus™ transformer (the original Powermax™ is 30 watts). The Santa Fe set features a CW-80 transformer (80 watts).

# Several Stocking Stuffers

by Erol Gurcan  
RM 26800

For \$70 more, the Santa Fe set has a more powerful transformer, an additional operating freight car, upgraded locomotive drive rod assembly, lighted caboose, operating/uncoupling track, and a metal front coupler on the locomotive (the Pennsy loco has a plastic coupler). For those who want more than the \$200 Pennsylvania set, but do not want to spend \$270 for the Santa Fe set, Lionel has offered a mid-priced compromise – the \$230 Keystone Special Set (6-30096). It’s the same entry level Pennsy set but includes the more powerful CW-80 transformer, a lighted caboose, and six construction zone signs.

For those interested in this locomotive and its tender only, Lionel offers for separate sale a Lionel Lines 0-8-0 locomotive (6-38651) for \$120. It has the upgraded drive rod assembly installed on the SF loco and the features discussed in the next paragraph.

### Nicely Detailed Locomotives

Both locomotives are die-cast metal. They look identical except for the upgraded side rod assembly of the SF version (see **photos 2 and 3** with the Santa Fe loco in **photo 3**). The pick-up rollers are three inches apart. The operating headlight is located above the smoke box. Both have a bell on top. Engineer and fireman figures are present in both cabs. There is also cast-in detail inside the cabs. Like other recent Lionel entry level locomotives such as the 2-8-4 Berkshire (in the Polar Express set) and 0-6-0 Docksider, the detail is very good for an entry level locomotive.

The tender is plastic with plastic trucks and metal wheels. The coal load is semi-realistic looking (see **photo 4**). There is a ladder in the back of the tender, as well as a non-



operating backup light. The Santa Fe tender has two pick-up rollers, but the Pennsylvania has only one. Together, the locomotive and tender measure 18 inches long.

### Details on the Rolling Stock

The Pennsylvania set comes with a brown boxcar, searchlight car with operating light, and red caboose (see



**photo 5 and 6).** The SF set has a red boxcar with black roof, brown flatcar with stakes, silver operating log dump car, and lighted red caboose. The paint and logo application on all of the cars of both sets was good.

While testing the sliding boxcar doors in both sets, I noticed the doors click shut. This is a relatively new feature that I have also noticed on other Lionel boxcars, whether entry level or more expensive. This is a long overdue and welcome improvement to Lionel boxcars. For years, this was one of my complaints about Lionel boxcars – the doors would too easily slide open on inclines or around curves. This unwanted action was frustrating, and I “fixed” it by taping the boxcar doors shut from the inside. Oddly, Lionel has not promoted this new improvement in its catalogs. Advertised or not, nice job Lionel!

### On the Test Track

Lionel’s 2008 Volume 2 Catalog states the Pennsylvania set requires a minimum radius of O27 and the Santa Fe set O31. I suspect this is due to the upgraded side rod design on the SF set.

I tested both locomotive sets on Lionel tubular track with O31 curves and FasTrack with O36 radii. The Pennsylvania loco ran fine in forward and reverse on both track systems without any problems. The Santa Fe locomotive wobbled a little on both types of track, especially around curves. I asked Lionel to send a second Santa Fe locomotive for this test, and that one ran fine; it did not wobble.

Both locomotives can pull up to 10-12 freight cars of varying weight before wheel slippage begins to occur. Both would benefit from a second traction tire.

Both locomotives were dead quiet when in neutral. No unusual noises were noted. Stops in forward were smooth and gradual. Stops in reverse were less gradual, but not abrupt. Lionel does not state in its catalogs if a momentum flywheel is part of the motor. Judging from the way they stopped, I would have to assume both locos most likely did. All the freight cars that came with both sets ran fine.

### About the Transformers

The Pennsylvania set’s Powermax Plus transformer is rated at 40 watts. I was curious to find out if that would be enough to power for this set, with both a larger oval of track than comes with it, and the locomotive pulling more cars. I increased the size of the 40x60-inch oval to 50x80 inches – the equivalent of five more feet of track. I also attached 10 freight cars to the locomotive, six to seven more than come with each set. The transformer had no problem handling the increased load over a longer stretch of track. I was able to run the train at fast speeds for long periods. No transformer overload occurred. The transformer remained cool to the touch, as it has a fan like the CW-80. The 30 watt Powermax (packed with the NASCAR set and presently part of the Thomas the Tank Engine set) does not have a fan.

The Powermax plus and CW-80 are both nice looking transformers. They look identical except the CW-80 has an extra set of terminals for accessories. The CW-80’s power output for an accessory can be adjusted, a nice feature. The orange throttle handle moves smoothly.

### Lights, Sound, and Smoke

The headlights on both locomotives were bright at 10 volts or more. The light on the Santa Fe caboose was bright also.

The sound on both sets was limited to an air whistle in the tender. The Pennsylvania’s air whistle was very low in volume while the train was in motion. Thinking there may have been a defect, I asked Lionel to send a second tender. The second one was a little louder, but both required at least 13-14 volts of power from the transformer to make what I consider an adequate sound.

The Santa Fe’s whistle sounded a lot louder, which was adequate while the train was moving. It sounded more like a diesel horn than a steam whistle. No other sounds (such as a bell) were offered.

In my opinion, at a minimum the sound set for any locomotive produced today should have a bell as well as a whistle; especially when the transformer supplied with the set has a button marked BELL. To attract more young people into the hobby and follow company president Jerry Calabrese’s marketing plan, all train sets should at least have the Trainsounds package, since kids of today’s generation are video and computer savvy. Perhaps if more sets were produced with Trainsounds, the cost of the components could be reduced when spread over a greater number of sets.



Smoke output was adequate – but not thick – for both locomotives while they were in motion at moderate speeds between 12-13 volts and pulling five freight cars. I would have liked 30-50% more smoke, but I realize that smoke output is a subjective thing. The smoke flow was stronger when the locomotives pulled 10 freight cars at 14 volts. Neither locomotives smoked while in neutral, which is normal according to the instruction booklet. The smoke on/off button and the direction button are located underneath the locomotives.

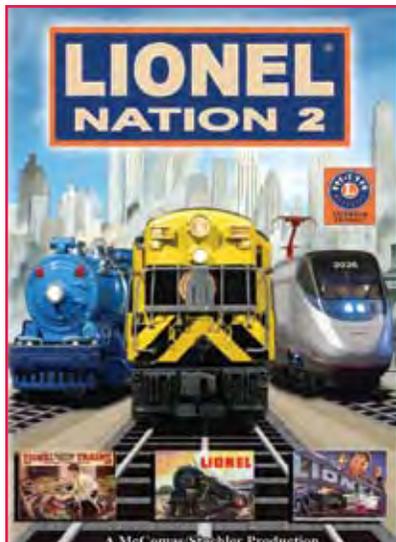
### Lots of Play Value

The Pennsylvania set comes with a lighted searchlight car, a two-sided billboard, and 10 telephone poles. The SF set comes with an operating log dump car that can be activated by an operating track section. It will also uncouple cars that pass over it when the control button is pressed.

In summary, both sets are good starter sets for a young child or grandchild. The Pennsylvania set would be sufficient for a child up to five years old, with adult supervision of course. The Santa Fe set would be the better one for a child six or older since they could appreciate the extra features offered with it. They will also be able to easily expand their empire with more cars and track since it has an 80-watt transformer.

### Part II: "Lionel Nation 2" on DVD

Released in October, this latest DVD from TM Books and Video® concentrates on train layouts. At only \$20, it would make a great holiday gift.



Digital image provided by TM Books & Video

In the opening segment about John Potter's prewar Standard and O-gauge layout and collection, TM shows quick video clips of some of the layouts they have visited over a 20-year period. The point is well made – there are different approaches to what a layout can be, and each is memorable in its own way.

### A Layout with many Oldies

TM first visited Mr. Potter's layout in 1993. Since that time, he built a new train room over his garage, which includes an 11x16-foot layout. The outer loop is Standard gauge and the three inner loops are O gauge. There are also lots of Lionel rare prewar tinplate buildings and accessories. Display shelves filled with trains surround the room.

Mr. Potter has a dry sense of humor. It's delightfully evident during the part of the segment he narrates. Prewar tinplate fans will enjoy this segment.

### Insights from the Marketplace

The second segment tells the story of Stout Auctions located in Williamsport, Indiana. Owner Greg Stout points out that they have been in business for more than 15 years. There are now more prewar and postwar trains available for sale than ever before.

Mr. Stout states that the prices of prewar and postwar trains have dropped over the last few years, but the mint trains have continued to hold their value because there are so few of them available.

### Sweating the Details

To me, the highlight of this DVD is the high-rail weathered layout of Norm Charbonneau. Narrator Joe Stachler calls it the "most realistic" TM has ever visited. This layout is a sharp contrast to the less scenicked one by Mr. Potter.

After watching this video segment, one can truly appreciate the time and effort Mr. Charbonneau has invested in his layout. He is a first-rate layout builder with an eye for detail.

### Postwar Trains Resurrected

There is a segment about Lionel's recently announced Postwar Conventional Classics in the 2008 Volume 2 Catalog (pages 86-91). The first sets in this series will be re-issues of such famous outfits as the 1947 2124W passenger set led by a five-stripe Brunswick green GG-1, 1956 1562W Burlington GP-7 passenger set, 1956 1484WS steam passenger set, and 1954 2219 FM Thunderbird freight set led by a Lackawanna Fairbanks-Morse diesel.

### About the Acela

The last video segment is about Lionel's model of Amtrak's Acela passenger train. This model has Lionel's state-of-the-art Railsounds 5.0, and it sounds great on the DVD audio track. The sounds were recorded from a real Acela. The advanced features include doors that slide open and shut automatically, pantographs that raise and lower at the push of a button on the CAB-1 remote, and cars that lean as they go around a curve.

The videography and sound on the DVD is excellent. Each segment is divided by a close-up of Lionel's Legacy™ CAB-2 remote with titles shown on its LCD screen.

In sum, this is a great 60+-minute video with first-rate sound and video. It has a nice mix of prewar, postwar, and modern era trains for Lionel enthusiasts. I thoroughly enjoyed it. The DVD can be purchased at many local hobby shops or ordered directly from TM at 800-892-2822 or online at [www.TMBV.com](http://www.TMBV.com). Heads up – "Lionel Nation 3" is scheduled for release in April, 2009. 🚂

*Photographs by Eliot Scher*



# Delivering the “Merchandise” in 1946

by Paul V. Ambrose RM 9406

Lionel® introduced the #3454 Automatic Merchandise Car in 1946. It was a wonderfully designed, 9-¼-inch operating boxcar that required completely new tooling. It utilized a highly detailed, molded plastic body mounted on a stamped sheet metal frame. This new model carried the stylized PRR logo, and amazingly was numbered as both “3454” and “X3454.” The most common version is a silver-painted body with blue heat-stamped lettering.

The 1946 small-parts envelope included with this model contained an instruction sheet dated “5-46” printed on either blue or white glossy paper along with six hard-plastic, miniature packing crates. The crates were marked “Baby Ruth” and molded to resemble wooden shipping containers. The coloration was either brown (most common), deep maroon, or black.

Because it was a new item to the product line, experimentation with both body color and decorating schemes were being sampled prior to regular production. Two pre-production examples (not pictured) are featured on page 134 of the very informative Project Roar publication,



*Our lead picture shows a side view of the correct component box for the #3454 Merchandise Car and a most common blue-lettered example on the top shelf. Shown on the bottom-left is a rare red-lettered variation while a rare pre-production tuscan example is positioned on the right.*

“The Authoritative Guide To Lionel’s Postwar Operating Cars”, by Joseph P. Algozzini and Emanuel F. Piazza. Those cars were silver-painted and were decorated with blue “Baby Ruth” and red “Pennsylvania” markings respectively.

Furthermore, the #3454 was erroneously depicted in the 1946 Consumer Catalog as tuscan with white “Pennsylvania” lettering. It was shown separately as such on page three and was included as a component of several outfits but has never been authenticated in this décor scheme. The featured item for this article is a similar one-or-two-of-a-kind, tuscan-painted body with white heat-stamped lettering: “Automatic Merchandise Car”.



*Featured here is the headliner of this article – a one-or-two-of-a-kind, tuscan-painted #3454 “Automatic Merchandise Car” with white heat-stamped lettering.*



As experimentation was still occurring in early 1946, a very limited amount of silver-painted, red-lettered examples (perhaps one dozen at most) were made as possible salesman's samples before the ultimate executive decision was made that blue would be the lettering of choice for routine production. 🚂



Note the underside of the frame for the tuscan #3454. Blue wire was typical for 1946 production and this particular frame has the etched initials "FP" which we assume is for Frank Pettit, a well-known, long-term employee of the Lionel Engineering Department.



This plate features the correct 1946-style No. 3454 Art Deco cardstock box along with a cover shot of the 1946 Consumer Catalog, the blue instruction sheet, and Baby Ruth crates. The white variation of the instruction sheet is not shown here. The end flap of the original #3454 box titles the item "Operating Merchandise Car" while actual production lettered the model as "Automatic Merchandise Car".



Shown here is page three of the 1946 Consumer Catalog picturing the new #3454 Merchandise Car in tuscan and briefly describing the model in text at the bottom of the page.

Digital Imagery by Marc Soracco Photography



# Go for the Gold

by Convention Co-managers  
John Fisher RM 6541 and  
Eric Fogg RM 12768

Recently a member wrote to us concerned about – what else – the economy and what effect current events might have on the club and our Conventions. He wrote:

*“Over the past several months prices for almost everything (except our homes) have gone up dramatically. The concern I have is the future for our Conventions during difficult and uncertain economic times. I would hate to see the Conventions cut back or cheapened to where they would not be as fun and enjoyable as they have always been. If raising dues were necessary, I would not have a problem with it. The club is a great value and I would like it to continue and become even better.”*

We are listening and we do hear you. For starters, please know that as your Convention Co-managers, we spend a lot of time with your Board of Directors reviewing and discussing our plans and decisions, how they might affect members, as well as general economic conditions. From our viewpoint, here’s how we see Conventions.

**1** LCCA continues to be a very strong club financially and able to weather economic fluctuations. That said, we are very concerned that we continue to deliver the absolute strongest value for our members in everything we do.

**2** We host “The Best Toy Train Convention on the Planet!” That is the result of intelligent planning and incredible volunteer teamwork. As such, we strive to find ways to improve (lower the cost and/or increase the benefits) each Convention and make it better than the previous one. The upcoming 2009 Convention in Sacramento, California, will continue this positive trend.

**3** No one has lower hotel rates in first-rate properties in great locations than LCCA. Those rates are guaranteed four days before and after each Convention. Our rates also cover one to four occupants in each room. No other train club even approaches LCCA’s hotel rates and member benefits.



*Plan now to be a 2009 conventioneer for exciting train excursions*

California State Railroad Museum — *Photograph by Tom Myers*



Napa Valley Wine Train



# – and the Trains



4 In response to suggestions from our recent Membership Survey, we announced at the Buffalo Convention that members may now include – for free – family members, regardless of age, under the member’s own Convention registration. Our best ideas for improvements have always come from you the members, so please continue to share your thoughts.

5 We keep our registration rates low and always include a free attendance gift for the first 400 registrants. It’s worth more than the registration fee.

6 We utilize professional tour operators and challenge them to deliver the most fun and interesting tours at the lowest cost.

7 Our Get Acquainted Party and Banquet costs are very reasonable by industry standards. And that doesn’t include the entertainment provided at no additional cost at the Party or the incredible gifts piled high on each Banquet table.

8 Room rates and food costs for the next several years are already locked in and they look better and better with each passing day.

9 Before folks can attend our Conventions, someone in the family needs to be a member. We’ve kept dues low for decades. The day may well come when we’ll have to change that, but right now there are no plans for an increase. No other club even comes close to matching LCCA in this area.

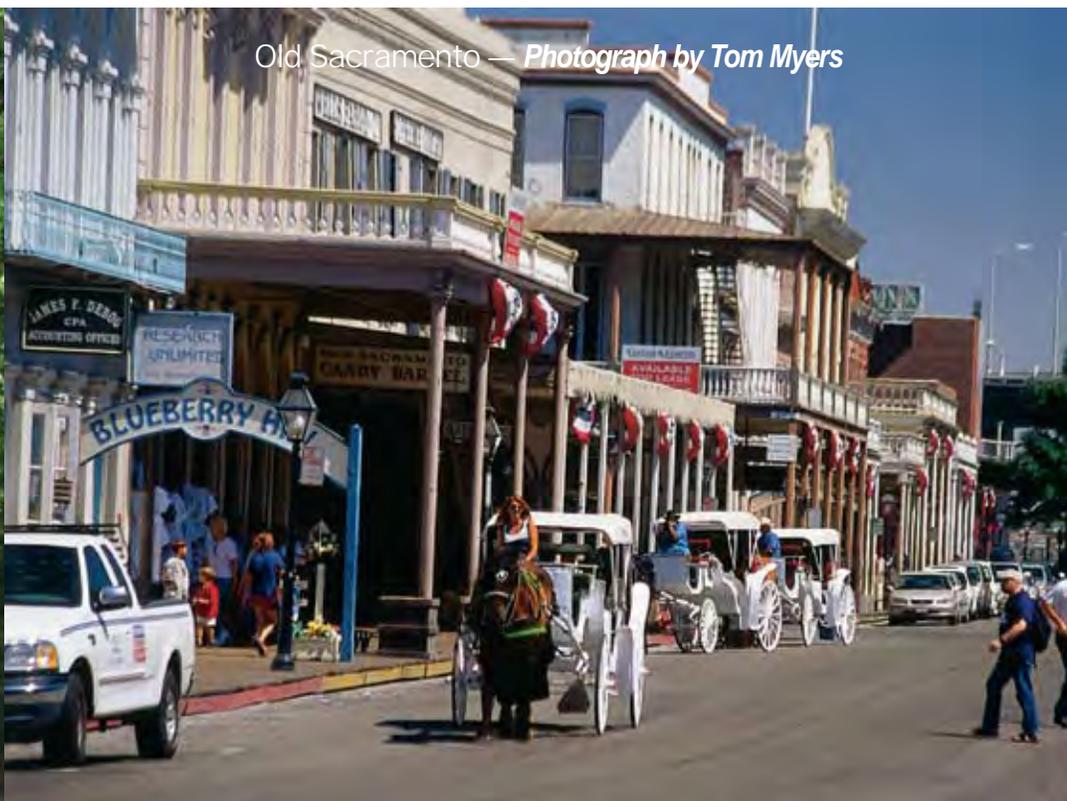
10 Finally, first, last, and foremost, this is a hobby and the idea is to have **FUN!** At times like these, that may be more important than cutting costs. When folks come to our annual Conventions we want to continually delight and surprise them. And we also want to continue to provide them with the best value possible.

Bottom line, we want our members and their families to be able to continue to join us each year for yet another great Convention! And we continue to work hard to make sure that happens. See you in Sacramento for the 2009 version of The Best Toy Train Convention on the Planet! 🚂

*ns, historic tours, and the fun-filled activities of our annual event.*



Train — Photograph by NVWT



Old Sacramento — Photograph by Tom Myers

# Class Remain

by Bill Albright RM 24506

*Editor's note: For several years, club member Bill Albright and his young grandson, LCCA Junior Member Clayton Holderfield (now 10), have presented Bill's home train layout as an educational field trip experience to visiting school groups. Now Bill has taken the next step – bringing a portable toy train exhibit to kids at schools in the area.*

## To the Three Rs, Add a Fourth – Railroads

I'm a former elementary school teacher, and I have a continuing interest in the learning experiences presented in schools today. Some of my former colleagues in school classrooms know about my involvement with toy trains and the layout in my home, and they considered my hobby as a useful learning resource for a unit in transportation, safety, or railroad careers.

Elementary classes at some local schools have been coming to my home for the past four or five years on field trips, and some visiting teachers asked if I'd be willing to bring trains to their school. So I made a small layout that can be taken to an elementary school and set up as an educational demonstration – typically during Career Day.

In 2006, I presented the first on location “show-and-tell” appointment at nearby Cato Elementary School. Sonya Whitfield, the principal, was formerly a teacher at the same school where I previously served on the faculty, and she invited me – drafted me is a better description, I suppose – to bring a program about trains to the school as a mind-stretcher. She believes that some students need to “think outside the book,” and she knows through classroom and administrative experience that a visual experience makes a powerful impression on youngsters, especially at-risk kids. She is very appreciative of the visits.

“Many students in this school need exposure to different approaches to learning, and direct experience is better for some youngsters than traditional classroom methods of talking and reading,” she said. “Teachers engage their students with Bill's train demonstrations in the classroom through writing, artwork, and interactive discussion. I consider him a partner with the school.”

Schools in different districts have different systems and methods, but many teachers have an interest in the transportation theme. Youngsters don't understand the



nation's transportation grid and its impact on daily life. Ask a third grader, “Where does milk come from?” and their answer is likely to be, “From the cafeteria.” The role of the railroads in our economy is a new discovery for most of them. The school sessions include a railroad safety film produced by Operation Lifesaver. A local volunteer handles that part of the program.

The portable layout for schools is 6x8 feet, and I can run three trains on it simultaneously. The kids love to watch the action cars – the Missile Launch Car, Log Dump Car, Walking Brakeman Car, and the Cop and Hobo Car.



# ns in Session



out. He's been involved with grandpa's trains for many years. It works out very well.

The demonstration layout is rather simple, and the trains run in conventional mode. It's at the point where I want it to be. If it were any bigger or more complicated, the logistics would get out of hand. As it is, I need a half-day to set it up. Usually I arrange for permission to enter the school on Sunday afternoon to set things up so that it's ready for use on Monday afternoon.

## Student Reactions

The students ask me if I'll come back next year, and that's encouraging. I'm sure some may see the visit as a treat or as "legal playtime" in school. I distribute handouts to students who show an interest – a booklet about the World's Greatest Hobby, train catalogs, and stickers. Some companies send me freebie books, and I present them to the school's Media Center.

## Field Trips to my Home Layout

For about five years, I've invited school groups to my home layout. Clayton helps with these presentations too. During a typical school year, I'll have ten school groups here on a field trip. Christmas and the spring semester are the busiest periods. I show the safety film by Operation Lifesaver, talk about American railroads, run the trains, and show the kids how to activate the accessories. They push buttons and launch a missile from the Operating Missile Car, empty milk cans from the Operating Milk Car, activate the boy flying his tethered airplane, start the Saw Mill, and activate the Operating Gas Station.

During one Christmas season, I received a call asking if I would present the trains to a visiting group of youngsters from Tokyo.

They arrived in groups of 15, and each group played with the trains for 45 minutes. I couldn't understand their excited chatter, but we had a ball!

Word gets around, and about two years ago these operating sessions came to the attention of a local TV news team. A reporter came to the house and produced an informative piece about the layout. That media exposure presented the hobby in a positive light, and I've become a local ambassador for toy trains. It's a great "job" for me as a military retiree! 🚂

*Photographs by Mike Mottler*



## I Get a Lot of Help

I can't run the entire session by myself, so I ask the teachers to recommend students to serve as my assistants. I teach four students the points to be presented at each demonstration table, and in turn they explain the items on that table to classmates. Some may be reluctant at first, but to their credit they take this "job" seriously and do a good job. I can see them gaining confidence in the task as the day goes on. If someone touches something that is off limits, they inform them right away to keep their hands off. They're not bashful about it! Also, my young grandson Clayton helps



# Lionel News & Views

by Bill Schmeelk  
RM 6643

## K-Line by Lionel Milk Car, Part 2 Automatic Reloading!

Last issue we covered the motor-driven K-Line by Lionel® Milk Car. Its current catalog also offers a unique Milk Loading Depot which as the ad states, "... automatically loads the milk cans into the waiting Milk Reefer – no cramming them through the roof hatch by hand." I found it interesting that Lionel appears to be competing with themselves. One catalog is knocking a product in the other. **Photo 9** shows the depot.

The depot features a mechanism very similar to the one used in the Milk Car. The depot can be used as a stand alone accessory to load the milk cans onto a flat car or a platform, though neither is supplied. To load the depot, you merely place the cans onto the platform outside of the depot. There is a conveyor belt here which will transport the cans into the shed, ready to be delivered by the depot's workman. If you also own the K-Line Milk Car, the depot can be used to deposit the cans through the loading door of the milk car. To do this, the side wall of the car must be 1/4-inch away from the wall of the shed, or 1/8-inch away from the edge of the roof. For this reason, the depot cannot be located directly next to a curved track, as the car will hit the corner of the

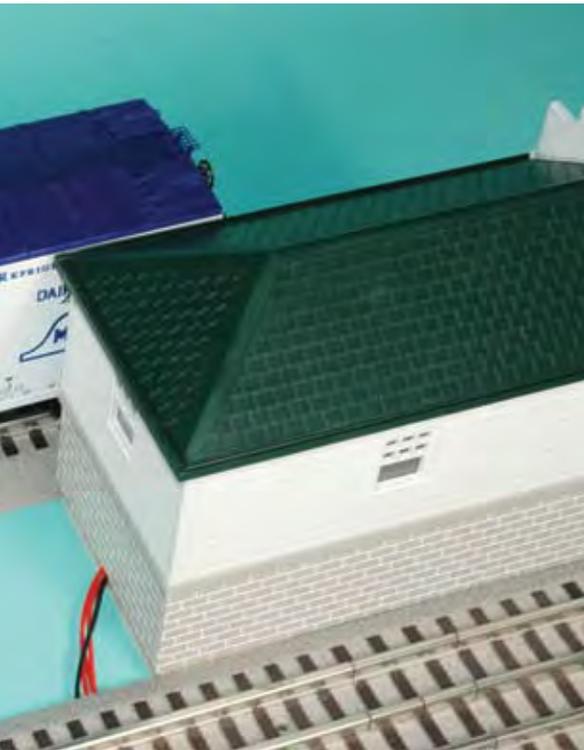
10



depot while making the turn. The instructions mention that there must be a 1/2-inch space, but I found that this was not close enough to ensure that the cans would load properly. It is also necessary to very accurately position the car on the track. I would suggest a mark on the layout with which to accurately line up the car. In **photo 10** the car is just coming off an O84 curve to a straight track. You can see just how close the car comes to the side of the depot roof. This is as

9





close to the curve as the depot can be.

By removing the roof of the depot we can see its interior as shown in **photo 11**. As the conveyor moves the cans from the loading platform, the angled lithographed door on the end of the shed directs the cans into position for the workman to push out. The mechanism works in the same manner as the one in the

milk car. **Photo 12** shows the conveyor portion of the depot with the silver platform removed to show the conveyor mechanism. **Photo 13** shows the special controller supplied to operate the depot. Four wires connect the controller to the depot and two more wires connect the controller to the transformer for power.

To operate the depot, first the cans must be placed onto the conveyor belt on the loading platform. The controller has two large buttons. One is a slide switch to turn the conveyor on and off. The second button is a momentary contact and is pressed to activate the workman to push out the can. So you would first start the conveyor and then once the cans are inside the depot you



11



can activate the workman by pressing the lower button. The conveyor must remain on until the workman has moved the last can.

#### “Repeat the Cycle”

Both the car and the depot operated well on their own. The depot is illuminated and works fine as described above. BUT – the catalog description promises more. The catalog states that the milk cans can be unloaded onto the loading conveyor of the depot to repeat the cycle. In theory, you could unload the cans from the milk car to the depot platform and then bring the car around to the loading door of the depot and load the cans into the car. In that way, you would not have to handle the cans or manually reload them. This is a great idea, but unfortunately, we found that it simply will not work as supplied.

12



There are two reasons why this continuous process will not work. Although the depot is supplied with a board to adjust its height, we found that the depot had to be at one height for the loading of the cans into the milk car and another height to allow the milk car to unload onto the depot's loading platform. If you think about it, to load the cans from the depot into the car, the cans must be slightly above the conveyor in the car. Then when the car comes around to unload the cans onto the depot's conveyor, the cans must be above the depot's conveyor.



Both of these situations must occur concurrently. It simply can't be done as supplied.

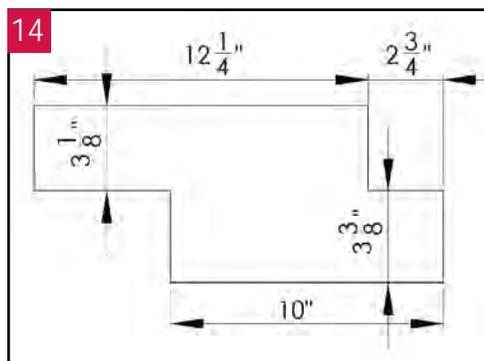
The second problem is that when unloading from the car onto the depot platform, the cans are not pushed out far enough to reach the conveyor belt. The cans wind up on the platform but do not go onto the conveyor. As you continue to unload, the next can pushes the previously unloaded one, but the small step up onto the belt merely guides the cans along the edge of the belt. When we spoke to the folks at K-Line, they admitted that this hadn't quite been worked out.

I was disappointed that this concept didn't work and set about finding a method to solve the problems. After several attempts I was able to get the depot and car to function together and repeat the cycle.

### Nothing Is Impossible

Before you can get the depot and Milk Car to function together, you must plan a section of your layout that will allow the Milk Car to ride on either side of the depot. I used FasTrack™ and will describe how I did this, but the important dimension, regardless of the track used, is a center-rail-to-center-rail distance of 6-1/2 inches. This distance places the car at the proper distance on either side of the depot.

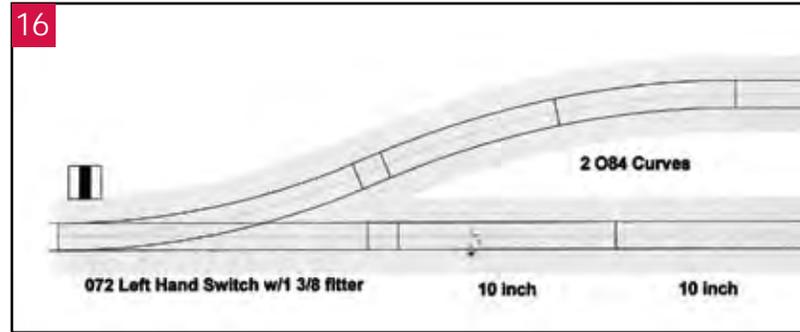
The next detail to consider is that you'll need a remote control track at the rear of the depot, or you could use the K-Line Remote Controller. I used the remote control section. This section of track, where the car will unload, must be



1/4-inch higher than the track on the opposite side of the depot. To do this I made a special piece using 1/4-inch plywood. The dimensions are shown

in **photo 14**. I used two strips of wood. The shorter one is the width and length of a standard section of FasTrack. The second strip which ends up under the depot is 3-1/8 inches wide and the length of the depot. Be precise with these dimensions. I then glued the two pieces together edge to edge with carpenter's glue. To hold the wood together while it dried, I used two-inch packing tape along the joint on the bottom. **Photo 15** shows the result.

Using FasTrack, I was able to get the correct spacing for the siding by using a left hand O72 switch with the smaller 1-3/8-inch sections supplied with the switch in place. Adding two O84 curves on the turnout section made the correct spacing. To position the Remote Control Track correctly, I added

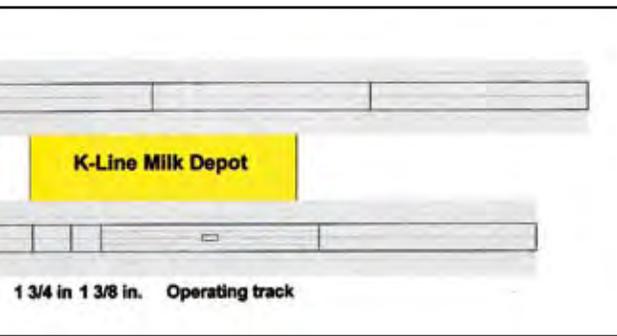


two straight sections to the straight part of the switch and then a 1-3/4-inch section followed by a 1-3/8-inch section, followed by the Remote Control Track. You can of course add more straight sections for a longer siding, but the above arrangement is the minimum that will ensure the end of the depot is far enough from the curve of the turnout to avoid the Milk Car hitting the roof as it makes the turn. **Photo 16** shows the track plan. The siding could also be continued and with the addition of a right hand O72 switch be made into a passing siding.



Now place the 10-inch section of the wood piece under the Remote Control Track and align it flush with that track section. The longer section of the wood will exactly space the parallel siding. See **photo 17**. I also placed an 1/8-inch shim under the track halfway between where the wood ends and where the track hits the table. This should be done on





both sides. Now when the depot is placed on the wood, its rear edge will be against the FasTrack, but its front edge will extend slightly beyond the

wood up to the roadbed of the parallel FasTrack siding. **Photo 18** shows the depot in its correct position.

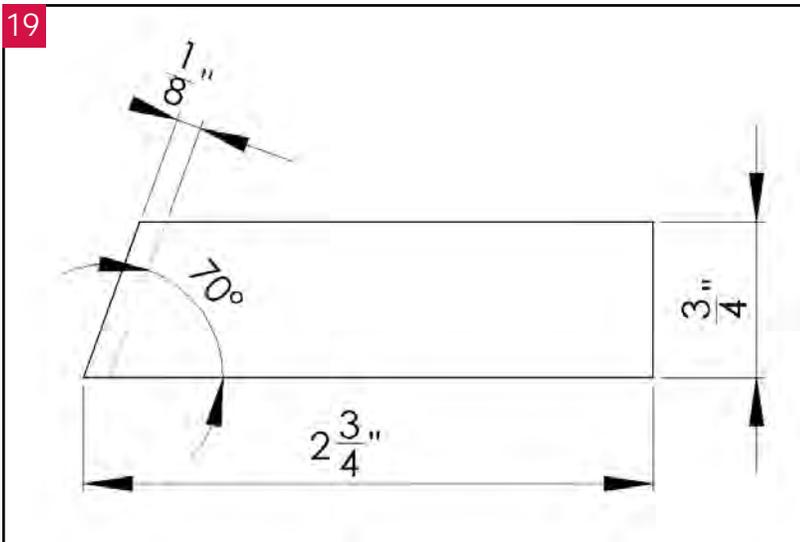
To solve the problem of the Milk Car unloading onto the depot conveyor, I fabricated another piece. I made this with a 3/4-inch-wide piece of .025 thick sheet aluminum. I also found that a stiff oak tag or poster board will work but will not be as durable. The plan in **photo 19** illustrates the dimensions of the piece. The angled line 1/8-inch from the end is a guide line on which the part is bent up at 90 degrees. I painted the piece black. Using double stick tape, I fastened it to the depot platform as shown in **photo 20**. The edge of the piece comes right up to the edge of the conveyor belt, providing a smooth path from the outside edge of the platform to the belt.

**Photo 21** shows the operation of the Milk Car loading cans onto the rear of the platform. With the depot conveyor

18



19



turned on, the first can is unloaded from the car. It will not make it to the conveyor, but will remain on the black piece we installed. **Photo 22** shows the second can being delivered. Because of the bent-up tab on our special piece, the first can will be pushed onto the conveyor by the second can. Each subsequent can will push the previous can onto the conveyor. At the end of the operation one milk can will remain on the platform to go sour — a worthy sacrifice for this continuous operation. Member David Gahagen solved the problem by using a clear strip of Mylar™ and gluing extra milk cans in place to guide the delivered cans. He also suggested that the car is most likely delivering empty cans to be refilled by the depot in which case no milk will go sour.





To load the cans from the depot back into the Milk Car, you must pull your train onto the siding and bring the opposite side of the Milk Car to the opposite side of the depot. The train will be in exactly the same direction on both the main track and the siding.



## Final Notes

I hope I've made this clear. It was quite a challenge, and it was also quite satisfying to see it work. A few final notes are in order. First, be sure that the Milk Car is the widest car that must pass the depot when you are on the siding. For the most reliable operation, the wooden piece should be secured to your table and perhaps a piece of wood added to the table on each end of the depot to keep it in place on the wood. Precise positioning is important – especially when loading the cans from the depot into the Milk Car. Occasionally I found that the action of loading the cans into the car would cause at least one can to tip over. Here again I emphasize that the easiest way to solve that type of problem is to remove the body from the car. This allows full access to the inside of the car. You're bound to have a can fall over in the car at some point, so simply remove the four screws which secure the body to the car making it easy to remove when necessary.



*Photographs by Bill Schmeelk*

Email Bill at: [bill@wellingtonent.com](mailto:bill@wellingtonent.com)

*Secretary's Report — continued from page 4*

## VII. Open Discussion

President Johnson opened the meeting for general discussion of topics of interest to the Board members.

### A. Credit Card Options for LCCA Store

Treasurer DeVito recommended that we electronically integrate the cash register with the credit card machine. By doing so, the potential for error caused by incorrect data input to the credit card machine will be reduced and the time for checkout in the store will be reduced. President Johnson authorized the exploration of the costs of such a system.

### B. Printed Directory

Secretary Calkins asked whether members could obtain printed copies of the LCCA membership directory at their own expense. Since the data is available in the LCCA database, if a member has access to a computer, the Internet, and our website, with some modifications the club might enable a member to download the directory and print it. For those members who do not have access to the Internet, it might be possible to provide them with a special code so they could have it printed by a commercial firm.

At the request of President Johnson, IT Manager Black will research the various issues to see if it is possible to make the membership roster available to members in this way. Any printing costs of the directory would be the responsibility of the member.

### C. Electronic Badges at Conventions

Convention Co-Manager Fisher introduced the concept of using electronic badges at future Conventions. They would assist in tracking the activities of the participants and their interests.

## VIII. Next Board Meeting

The next board meeting was not scheduled for the reasons mentioned above.

## IX. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by Director Schmeelk and seconded by Director Ellingson. The motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m. 

Respectfully submitted,  
Jerry M. Calkins, Secretary  
RM 9418



# Lionel at Christmas and Beyond

by Erol Gurcan  
RM 26800

On October 20, I had the opportunity to speak with Lionel® CEO Jerry Calabrese at the company's office in New York City. The conversation included what the company is doing this holiday season and in 2009.

## Hot New Train Sets

In November, Lionel released the highly anticipated Metro North 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary M-7 Commuter Train Set (6-30085, \$280) and New York Transit Authority R27 subway cars (6-31751, \$699). See **photos 2 and 3**.

## Christmas at Retail Stores

This Christmas season, Lionel will release its train sets to mainstream retail stores, including Target, Macy's, Toys R Us, Bed Bath and Beyond, Sears, and Dillard's, among

others. Target will offer an exclusive 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Pennsylvania steam freight set and the G-gauge, battery powered Holiday Central and Polar Express sets. Macy's, Sears, and Dillard's will carry the Pennsylvania Flyer set. Macy's will also sell the O-gauge Polar Express train set. Toys R Us will offer the G-gauge, battery powered Harry Potter and Polar Express sets, as well as the Great Western set with Lincoln Logs.

## Lionel Trains in Action this Holiday Season

For the fourth year in a row, Lionel will once again have a large operating layout at the New York City Transit Museum within New York's Grand Central Terminal (42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Lexington Avenue) and at Santa Land at Macy's at Herald Square (34<sup>th</sup> Street and Sixth Avenue). At Penn Station in Newark, New Jersey, Lionel will have a 4x8-foot layout inside the main lobby of the terminal. At the Gateway Center Atrium located across the street from Newark's Penn Station, Lionel will feature two 5x9-foot tabletop displays with Christmas decorations along with company products on view.

## Looking ahead to 2009

On January 3 and 4, 2009, Lionel will participate in the World's Greatest Hobby Show (WGHS) in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The company – and also the LCCA – will be present at WGHS events on February 14 and 15 in Nashville, Tennessee; February 21 and 22 in San Antonio, Texas; and March 14 and 15 in Cleveland, Ohio. Lionel will also be present at the "Big E" show in Amherst, Massachusetts, on January 24 and 25. They will have an 80-inch, circular display and 4x8-foot tabletop layout there.

## Reorganization of Product Line Designations

Beginning with the 2009 Volume 1 Catalog scheduled for release in January, Lionel's product line will be divided into four categories – the high-end "Vision" line, semi-scale "Classic" line, "Popular" line, and "Custom" line.



*Jerry Calabrese  
President & CEO of Lionel LLC*



The Vision line category will replace the current Joshua Lionel Cowen line and consist of a limited number of scale steam and diesel locomotives, rolling stock and accessories. Mr. Calabrese described the limited number as “two to five offerings a year.” Jerry stressed, “The items will be the absolute best of what we can think of” and will be made from new tooling. This line will consist of unique and highly collectible items with mechanical and electrical features never done before in O gauge. The trains will provide a very realistic railroading experience for purchasers. The line may also offer sets.

The “Classic” line will consist of traditional semi-scale steam and diesel locomotives and rolling stock. Some items will be conventional control only while others will be Legacy™ equipped. The highly anticipated Prewar Authentics line falls into the Classic line designation.

The “Popular” line will include train sets not considered a high-end set.

The “Custom” line will include special items such as train sets or freight cars that regional train stores or clubs may want produced in relative small quantities.

In addition to these new product designations, Jerry stated part of the new marketing plan is to also reduce the number of items Lionel offers in future catalogs. The goal is to reduce the number of Stock Keeping Units (SKUs). Jerry noted hobby stores can’t carry all the products that Lionel and its competitors produce. The goal is to reduce the number of low-priced “blowouts” that have occurred in the past because of overproduction.

#### K-Line by Lionel in 2009

K-Line by Lionel® will offer a streamlined Pennsylvania Brunswick Green K-4 Broadway Limited locomotive with TMCC™. A tuscan-colored “Fleet of Modernism” set of matching passenger cars will be available for separate sale for the K-4. A scale black Southern Fairbanks-Morse Trainmaster with TMCC will be offered. Also returning will be the always popular 21-inch aluminum passenger cars. The

road names will include a Great Northern set in big sky blue colors and a Milwaukee Road set in yellow, red, and grey colors. All of these items will appear in the spring or summer of 2009.

On the accessory front, some Superstreets™ vehicles will now have TMCC in them. This will allow them to be operated from the CAB-1 remote, and they can be controlled to go in forward and reverse. Special lighting effects such as brake lights will also be added to the vehicles. New Superstreets pieces will include D-16 and D-21 turnouts. Additionally, a 2-1/2-inch straight piece and an adjustable piece of roadway that can easily be cut will appear in mid-2009. Superstreets is now at the point where there are pieces available for almost every possible configuration.

The company is also exploring the possibility of producing more small industrial locomotives like the Plymouth and Porter. Also possible down the road are Superstreets roadway-oriented accessories. Since the Ringling Brothers Circus items have been a big hit, the next step may be to develop contemporary freight cars. These will be like the ones that move the circus at the present time. 

*Product imagery provided by Lionel LLC*

## PREVIEW OF COMING ATTRACTIONS

The February issue of *The Lion Roars* will include full descriptions of the LCCA 2009 Convention in Sacramento, California: the registration form, the hotel reservation form, and information about train excursions, tours, and social events.

## Toy Trunk Railroad

by Erik Sansom



# The Tinplate Cannonball

by Ken Morgan  
RM 12231

Keeping with the theme of this holiday issue, I'll take a break from the usual content and talk about toy trains in relation to Christmas. To warm up, here's a Christmas trivia question. Who was Clement Moore and what's the name of his most famous work?

## Rolling around the Christmas Tree

For many of us, Christmas is a celebration of the day God sent a special gift into the world. That concept of sending a gift has been singularly well received by much of the world, whether the original thought is part of one's own tradition or not. Gift-giving was especially well received and promoted by toy makers, greeting card sellers, department stores, and e-tailers. It was certainly well understood by St. Joshua (Joshua Lionel Cowen) who could be considered a patron saint of Christmas. Holiday sales have always been the make-or-break item period of the fiscal year for Lionel and many other toy makers. The idealized picture of a traditional family playing with the new train set from Santa was a well-established motif in advertising for decades, as were special operating displays in big department stores and window displays in smaller retail stores of all sizes. In fact, that's how Lionel® trains got started.

In the current business environment, banks, shopping malls, outdoor stores, museums and parks, model railroad clubs, libraries, you name it – borrow imagery from trains during this season. Every time I overhear the oft-repeated concern, "Nobody remembers toy trains anymore," I recall the increasing number of displays featuring trains at the holidays, which puts the lie to that. The majority of LCCA members probably received a train set for Christmas as a child and hold memories from years of annual add-ons for it. Since I'm writing and you're reading, you get to listen to mine.

## Trains in NYC

In the line of displays, Citibank sponsored one for many years in The Big Apple. I believe a descendant will be in Grand Central Terminal this year, and the New York Botanical Garden (the next door neighbor of The Bronx Zoo) will present their annual G-gauge extravaganza outside. If you're visiting the New York area, be sure to see

them. I wish I could invite you to the "annual" open house hosted by the Nassau Lionel Operating Engineers, but we are probably a year away from reopening because we moved to a new location. Another NLOE annual event is setting up a display at the Levittown Public Library. We started that quite a few years ago as a one-year deal. We set up for a month late in the year. When we weren't invited back the following year, the library caught the grief. Now we are



there every year, and the event is now a two-month affair during November and December. Check out **photo 1** taken immediately after we set up last year. She was waiting for us. Who says toy trains are dead?

Leading department stores were once a great place to see the latest trains from Lionel in operation during the pre-holiday season – and also a great place to purchase used equipment after the holidays. I visited Macy's flagship store at Herald Square in NYC regularly to see the train running before Christmas, then learned by accident that a visit after the holidays was in order because much of the rolling stock from the layout was sold off at quite a discount. It was a quick fix for the post-holidays blues!

## Begin at the Beginning

But let's go back to the start, at least my start, in the hobby. How did trains and Christmas get together in my family? It started with Christmas of 1947 when I was the first grandchild and a grandson of a grandfather who had three daughters. I was then about to turn three the next month. Santa brought a Lionel set 2125WS plus a Z transformer. Grandpa was obviously planning for future growth. Over the course of the next few Christmases, more train stuff arrived: the #45 Gateman, more tracks, a pair of switches, the #3656 Cattle Car with the platform (that had to be 1949 or later), the Marx Water Tower and an Airport Beacon (with a repro Lionel top added later). All of these train toys – except the track, transformer, and the platform for the stock car – are still "alive and well" and shown in **photo 2**.



The transformer is powering my BCC&PRR home layout. The Cattle Car platform is somewhere in the basement, but not where I could find it in a hurry. Gotta get the basement reorganized – but that’s another story.

Anyhow, that first Lionel set started a long-standing tradition of trains running around the base of the tree. Mom and dad already had a village placed there. Shortly after the #671 steam engine and freight car set arrived and consistently thereafter, my trains circled our village; first with the Lionel set and later with my N-gauge trains (which didn’t overwhelm Mom’s village in proportion. Trains around the tree

were expected, and when I left home to start my own family, I purchased a set of trains for mom to run around the tree so I could claim mine. I provided a Fleischmann HO set. Small enough to fit in the available space but easier to place on the tracks than the N-gauge set. That HO set now resides in our basement with lots of memories. And I can find it.

### Add Something New Each Year

In the meantime, my own Christmas village grew each year. It is a house rule that something new must be added annually. The holiday quiz question is: Can you find it (or them, as the case may be)? So many items have been added to the village that it is now practically a county and not merely a village. Domicile sprawl threatens to take over the living room and confuses our dog. The village has an international ambiance with some pieces from Europe – and Japan, of course. The hand-carved woodmen from some distant relatives were sent to us from Germany after WWI.



The family story is that in view of the poor living conditions there after the war, my grandparents sent some clothing to relatives. In return, they sent the figures. Each of my brothers and I have a couple of them, and we placed them under our trees. Now, many years later, our daughter-in-law is Danish. So we have the little mermaid on her rock and some Danish buildings, including an HO version of Hans Christian Andersen’s house. When my brother visited China ... well, you can see we have a mini-Epcot in the

village. Plus all those memories, which is what makes the search for new stuff even more fun.

Train-giving at Christmas time – started by my grandpa – has carried on to each of our sons. They received trains for Christmas over the years. Their trains are still in the basement, pending larger living quarters for them, but some of them make required appearances around the tree at the end of the year.

**Photo 3** shows an older picture of our Christmas village before it grew into a county. There are a couple of things worth noting. First, look at the cars immediately following the loco. They were homemade for Christmas and were originally used at the NLOE’s annual open house, but they serve well at home too. That’s Santa with decorated Christmas trees on an old sheet metal flatcar adorned with holiday ribbon. He’s followed by all seven dwarves in



gondolas full of wrapped presents, which are actually some old blocks that Mom wrapped many years ago as decorations. Christmas was always Mom's favorite holiday, and these mementos keep her with us. So do some of the older items in the village. Directly above the Santa on the yellow flat car is another Santa skidding down a ski slope. To that Santa's right is a snowman with a little boy peeking out from behind him. They, and a few other things, date back to mom and dad's first Christmas village, well before I was a gleam in their eyes. Some things in the village even go back to my grandparents.

A few years ago after our granddaughter arrived, one of the things I decided to do – with great trepidation, since the village was so traditional – was to replace it for a few years with larger items. I was concerned that some of the very small things in the village might be a problem. I was probably wrong, but it gave me an excuse to address a different tradition: Lionel accessories for the village. I installed a Standard gauge outer loop with an O-gauge loop inside instead of an O-gauge outer loop with an N-gauge inner loop on the living room floor. **Photo 4** shows the later version. It lasted two years. Then by popular demand, I returned to the long-standing family tradition of the mixed vintage county and the O plus N trains. Plus the “find the new stuff.”

### The Next Generation

Now that my wife and I are grandparents, we have a new treasure assisting with the annual construction of the Christmas county. That's yours truly and Sasha discovering a small wooden village that needs to be properly located under the tree in **photo 5**. And speaking of Sasha, just like my grandfather bought trains for me, tradition demanded that I get her started on them. Thomas the Tank Engine is the perfect introduction to toy trains today. With, of course, annual additions. **Photo 6** clearly shows that trains are well appreciated by the next generation! So my next trip to my favorite train store will be to make sure there will be more from the Isle of Sodor for her “collection.” Sasha will be well prepared to carry on our tradition of trains around the village around the tree.



The trivia answer – this one should have been easy. Some possible literary nitpicking aside, Clement Moore wrote “A Visit from Saint Nicholas.” And I bet many of you answered “’Twas the Night before Christmas.” Same story, but the first one is the proper title. And if you thought he played The Lone Ranger, nope, that was Clayton Moore! IF you got it right, see if you can name all eight of Rudolph's companions without looking them up!

Regardless of how you refer to the season, I wish you all the happiest of holidays and offer this sage advice: **GET THE FAMILY TOGETHER AND RUN YOUR TRAINS!** 🚂

*Photographs by  
Ken Morgan*



## My Basement Is a Portal

In the beginning, it was just a Marx® freight train running on an oval of track set up on our kitchen linoleum floor on Christmas day long ago. Then it evolved into a 4x8-foot sheet of plywood in a cold, unfinished basement. Some Lionel® trains were introduced, and the rest is history as each enthusiast well knows. There's now an 8x20-foot layout in a finished basement. Although it may be called a "man cave" by some, the train room has become a focus of other cultures.

First and foremost is the Lionel three-rail network that links miniature dioramas of what might be the real or imaginary world of trains. Although a working library of railroad books and toy train history is fundamental for hobbyists, I also find that a collection of railroad fictional literature, dramatic film, and art gives life to miniature scenes and stimulates the imagination.

When I run my trains, I see stories and paintings and places in my mind where I have been both vicariously and in reality until the two seem wonderfully merged. In addition to our countless Amtrak and tourist railroad experiences throughout America, my family has had the pleasure of rail travel or sightings in England, Poland, and Egypt. I have placed wonderful mementos of those trips on the walls of my train room, and – like proud big-game trophies – each one invites a tale. They also relate to engines, cars, and accessories on my home layout.

### Mementos of Poland

Our Polish trips were especially vivid. There is a marvelous prewar brass P.K.P. (Polskie Koleje Panstwowe or Polish State Railways) conductor's kerosene lantern



in my collection and shown as **photo 1**. This style of lantern is clearly shown in a Polish DVD of the film, "Night Train," from 1959 directed by Jerzy Kawalerowicz. The conductor flashes it abruptly in the face of a passenger while collecting tickets. The shiny brass is a beautiful piece in itself and definitely unusual to see in America. It rests among my other American examples, which are also beautiful, but in an industrial way. No Lionel #45 Gateman would be complete without his lantern. And tell me

# A Gallery in the Train Room

by Stanley J. Kozaczka  
RM 19364

please, what the Lionel cardboard store display called "Giant of the Rails" is holding in his gloriously gloved hand? The figures surrounding my lantern are wonderful repros of Lionel's prewar standard gauge figures.

Above the lantern is a colorful postwar boilerplate off a P.K.P. steamer that had been scrapped. Fortunately, I was able to buy this plate in Wolsztyn, in western Poland where steam for both passenger and freight is still in force. In fact, my son and I enjoyed a cab ride we will never forget! Several feature stories have appeared since in *Trains Magazine*, *Railfan & Railroad Magazine*, and on the PBS series *Tracks Ahead*. Beside these treasures is a plate-block set of four Polish postage stamps (see **fig. 1**) that I framed from a 2002 release, which illustrate these marvelous steam engines actually operating in Wolsztyn. If one looks carefully at these stamps one can

see a similar, but tiny boilerplate on those images! In fact, I find myself eyeing through a magnifying glass reading the boilerplates on several of my newer Lionel engines. Sometimes you have to just get up close!



Then, to top all this is an official P.K.P. stationmaster's cap, which was a gift to me from my wife's uncle! Good railroad blood there! In fact, that's me proudly wearing that cap in **photo 2**. European caps are rather military looking and otherwise a different breed from American ones, but I still do justice to my Lionel engineer's cap while operating or even while cutting grass on the weekend! I wouldn't leave home without it! Gifts like that happen when others know



of your hobby. Of course, the stories one collects are priceless. There are also a couple of rail-related Polish paintings that were surprise gifts on a birthday and at Christmas. Both



pictures are rather whimsical. The first one (see **fig. 2**) is done in a deliberately primitive but endearing style. It's of a Hapsburg-era rail station in Vienna, which lets you imagine you could paint a similar picture yourself!



**fig. 3**) that is playful, dreamlike, and grotesque at the same time. It demands an interpretation. Freudians, step up to this assignment! Maybe it's my grandfather driving his steam traction engine.

### Off to Egypt

Next we travel to the Land of the Pharaohs where Hero of Alexandra (c.10-70 AD) produced the world's very first steam contraption (no joke). In fact, check out Lionel's "Famous Inventor's Series," item #3103 produced from 1961 to 1963.

The magnificent reproduction of a 1938 poster advertising the Egyptian State Railways shown as **fig. 4** was a *bon voyage* gift from my wife in December, 1999, on the eve of our vacation to this ancient land in the sands. We saw the great Ramses Central Station in Cairo complete with a giant obelisk; the column was relocated back to the desert where pollution will have less of an effect on it. However, we were discouraged from taking any train rides. As American tourists, we were too vulnerable. However, we did observe passenger sets running along the Nile on our river cruise.



### In the USA

Back in the States in time for Christmas, I saw the appearance of the Lionel "King Tut Museum Transport Car" under the Christmas tree (see **photo 3**). My family rightfully felt this was a must-have gift! I have shared my King Tut car



in two Christmas toy train displays at the college library where I work. Incidentally, our local public library has had a real mummy on

display for over 100 years! Maybe it traveled to Cazenovia on one of the two railroads that once served our community. After rereading "Murder on the Orient Express" (1934) and seeing once more the movie (1974) based on that classic mystery tale, I felt that Near East was more real and near than originally imagined. The wonder of (rail) travel!

### On to England

Our trips to England included all-day visits to the National Railway Museum in York after a delightful high-speed rail ride from our bases in London and Canterbury. Needless to say we also experienced three preserved lines: the Mid-Hants Steam Railway (also known as "the Watercress Line"); the Bluebell Steam Railway southeast of London; and the Kent & East Sussex Railway each about 10 miles long. Closer to O-gauge (at least in my eager three-rail-track mind) was the 15-inch gauge Romney, Hythe & Dymchurch Steam Railway. This is an actual public carrier in the transportation scheme and a remarkable world in miniature with perfect models of famous British steam engines.

There was one common denominator among these venues – the gift shops! While at the museum shop at York I couldn't resist acquiring reproductions of two watercolors



done of the busy interior of Waterloo Station by Helen McKie. Called "Waterloo War" (1943) and "Waterloo Peace" (1948), the contrast between the two is striking. The illustration here is of Peace (**fig. 5**), and a joyful picture it is. It commemorates the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Great Southern Railway's London terminus in 1948. This picture puts me in a Lionel mood! It achieves what the former Lionel Corporation has always done: color and whimsy! For that matter, it's Lionel at any time.



Another souvenir was a collection of nine mounted English cigarette cards from the 1950s (see **Fig. 6**) of famous trains around the world. There were evidently hundreds in the series, and I pity the

parents of a child that insisted that daddy or mummy smoke endlessly to acquire these otherwise beautiful examples of commercial illustration. My parents, at least, did not have



to sacrifice their lungs for the prized reward! The mounting is interesting as one can also turn the picture over to see the reverse of the cards so that the description can be read. Lionel's big and beautiful "Blue Comet," I am proud to relate, is among the group!

### Lionelville in Cazenovia, New York

I had to include an image of "Departing the Depot" (see **fig. 7**), a reproduction of a 1942 painting by Merrill A. Bailey. It depicts a Lehigh Valley Railroad station in my own village of Cazenovia, NY. The very large original picture graces a local 19<sup>th</sup> century pub here called "The Seven Stone Steps"



within the 1835 Lincklaen House. Visitors can admire this snow scene on a summer day with nostalgia in mind and a cool pint of good ale in hand. The restored station is located in back of my house and was built near the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Queen Anne style. It has a red caboose on tracks alongside. A local photographer now uses the station as his studio. He also strings Christmas lights on his caboose for the season. He is an avid train buff, and the station is filled with his own collection of Lionel trains. He offers tours of the caboose year round and has established it as a rail museum. My son "got the tour" more than once!

### In Syracuse, New York

On the stairway leading to my basement train room is a print (see **fig. 8**) of the former New York Central System station in Syracuse. Its art-deco lines were recently restored by the Time-Warner Company to accommodate their new headquarters in the city. The print shows the back of the building facing Interstate I-690 and illustrates a full-size mural depicting the "News Express"



stopping in Syracuse in the late 1930s. Keep in mind that I-690 was once the elevated trackage of the New York Central. The steam engine depicted is the famous Dreyfuss Hudson locomotive, number 5450. Anthony P. Clubine, a local artist in the Syracuse area, made the print and mural in 2004. I used this print in my annual Christmas toy train display in 2007 in the Cazenovia College library where I work. I also elevated the station print so that I could display my Lionel Dreyfuss #5452 locomotive below along with the same baggage-combo car shown in the print. Actually, the artist donated a number of the prints to the Central New York Chapter (Syracuse) of the National Railway Historical Society for use in a fundraiser. I would describe it as a "fun" raiser.

### Angela Trotta Thomas Artwork

As my Santa Fe *Super Chief* rounds the bend, a quick view will allow my lucky miniature passengers to view a heart-warming print of "Holiday Tune Up" by Angela Trotta Thomas. Though they are difficult to see in my photograph, a father and son are sitting together at a stainless steel and Formica kitchen table at work lubricating their GG-1 locomotive. On the wall behind them within the print is a Pennsylvania Railroad calendar with December 1957 in view. What a scenario! I wish I could jump into that picture and participate in the fun. Was there ever a scene like it in reality? I hope so. My own Lionel/Fundimensions GG-1 is out of view, but I can't look at it without recalling this Angela Trotta Thomas artwork with its *Saturday Evening Post* nostalgic imagery.

The wonderfully long, woolen wall hanging in back of me is a fantasized cityscape of the ancient city of Krakow, Poland, a picture postcard medieval city that also has a great history of railroads and a beautifully restored Victorian/Hapsburg train station. During the summer there are steam trains to catch. The "Orient Express" stopped to pay homage to this historic site this year. When will Lionel treat us to its own version of this great train? Lionel's Harry Potter "Hogwarts Express" has only whetted my appetite for trains with a European outline.

### C&O Freight House

Here is another treasure won by my wife at a silent auction and presented to her train-oriented husband – a watercolor of a C&O freight house located in Lancaster, Ohio. This painting by Juanita Howers (see **fig. 9**) has a restful "Shining Time Station" appeal. It complements the Lionel "Thomas the Tank Engine" gang in my train room, and they are all "useful engines." Now there's a work ethic I can agree with! Reverend Awdry and I think alike.



### End of the Line

There are more pictures and objects in my cave, but the unique and personal items are the most fun to write and talk about. They appeal to almost everyone. My wife and I enjoy entertaining and not everyone invited downstairs is a train buff. They are often fellow academics. Nevertheless, they like seeing the train action and lights, hearing the sounds, and smelling the ozone and smoke in the air of my Lionelville in Cazenovia. The wall decorations are added treats that redirect their wonder when the smoke clears and the trains become dormant. But they are never dormant in my imagination, whether they are three-rail, 15-inch gauge, or the four feet, 8-1/2-inch American standard. It began for me on the kitchen floor on a Christmas morning long ago. 🚂

*Photos and figures provided by Stanley J. Kozaczka*



# Helping Papa

by Clayton Holderfield  
JM 28722

*Editor's Note: Clayton is now a 10-year-old recent Junior Member of LCCA. He is the grandson of Bill Albright (RM 24506), and his mom is an LCCA member too. Clayton has appeared in TLR previously and also attended several LCCA Conventions. For the benefit of members living north of the Mason-Dixon Line, "papa" is the southern variant of "grandpa."*

## Helping with Trains Is Fun

I've been with trains a long time with my papa. He taught me the different types of trains. I like to show the trains to other kids and tell them what they are. Groups of kids come to his house on a school field trip. I help papa run the trains and show where the action buttons are so they can push them.

I help him get his layout ready, and I'm the retriever. When something falls, I crawl under the layout and get it for him. When my class at school came to papa's house for a field trip, the guys knew I was like an Assistant Engineer.



Now when we go to visit schools, I go along to help set things up. I'm one of the explainers at a table. I help papa coach the other kids so they can talk about the trains to the students.



## My Own Trains and Layout

I have a NASCAR Jeff Gordon Lionel® train. I got it one year ago. I got a trolley by K-Line® that goes back and forth. Also an Amtrak passenger train and some freight trains. I have an action car – a handcar with guys pumping the seesaw bar.

Papa is making a train layout at my house, and I help out. It has a mountain with two portals. It's made of plaster with cardboard bracing underneath. We're still working on it. It's got a bridge and has a second level. We're still molding everything in place. My mom helped too. Dad wonders about the electric bill because of running the trains a lot.

## Convention Shopper

I sometimes ask for trains for my birthday and Christmas. I go to the Conventions with papa. I'll see something, and sometimes he'll get it for me as a present. I meet other kids at Conventions, and they tell me about their trains. 🚂

*Photographs by Mike Mottler*



# Christmas Photo Gallery

by several of Santa's Helpers

Photo 1: A snapshot of me opening a #2353 Santa Fe F3 on Christmas day in 1954.

Bob Zimmerman — RM 6799

Photo 2: A northbound Katy freight glides through a crossing on a cold and snowy small Missouri town on Christmas Eve behind a Lionel Katy FA-2 ALCo. This is my son's Christmas layout that we built together.

Darrell Lienemann — RM 14013

Photo 3: Trains at Christmas were fascinating displays in hardware store windows and in the toy departments of major retail stores in the 1940s and 50s. With those memories in mind, for the seventh year I have set up a train layout in the meeting room of my hotel. It is open to the public free of charge, and guests and visitors can experience the golden days of model railroading. This year, I am expanding it to a second room for even more excitement. More than 50 Lionel operating items are on display, and eight trains can be operated at one time. The train rooms are open Thursday thru Sunday 1 to 8 p.m. from Thanksgiving to the New Year at America's Best Value Inn, Holts Summit, MO. C'mon down!

Arthur Kristofik — RM 1153

Photo 4: I attended the LCCA Convention this past summer in Buffalo, NY, and received the NYC Water Tower as a free early registration gift. I purchased a NYC passenger set at the event, and it is running beneath the water tower on my home layout built with two 4x8-foot platforms connected by a bridge.

David W. Blaser — RM 27935

Photo 5: My train layout is not a traditional trains-under-the-Christmas-tree layout; rather, it's a seasonal layout with varied scenery and different trains every year. This photo shows a portion of the layout with snow, although there's not always snow at Christmas time here in South Jersey. All the trains are by Lionel, and the scenery is from a variety of sources and manufacturers.

Raymond Brown — RM 1925

Photo 6: Ready to roll on Christmas Eve.

Phil Marks — RM 26738

