

LIONEL COLLECTORS CLUB of AMERICA

EST 1970

News Release #5 from LCCA

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Re: Backgrounder—What is a Toy Train Convention?

Date of Event: July 25-30, 2016

Web Site: www.lionelcollectors.org

New Media Center: <http://www.lionelcollectors.org/lcca-newsstand/mediacenter.aspx>

Train Hobbyists Consider Kansas City A Great Destination

Kansas City, Mo. — Train hobbyists “Have Trains, Will Travel.” This year, members of the Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA) will travel to Kansas City for a week-long celebration of the hobby they love. Along with nearly 1,000 other train aficionados, they will board excursion trains, visit heritage sites, and enjoy social and business meeting about current status of the world’s greatest hobby. The event will be held at the Kansas City Airport Hilton Hotel in Kansas City, Mo.

Memories of boyhood adventures with toy trains energize now-mature collectors who still love to play with Lionel trains. Many adult hobbyists fondly recall the memories with Lionel and other trains and some still own their prized toys from the 1940s and ‘50s. Although dominated by men and boys, women and girls also participate in the hobby.

The Lionel® brand is a well-established American business icon. Founded in 1900 by Joshua Lionel Cowen, the company grew and continued to make trains during the Great Depression, through World War II, and to the present day. Because of the reservation of metals for the war effort in 1941-45 period, Lionel made wooden and “paper trains” for youngsters and applied most of its manufacturing expertise with metals to military-related products for use during wartime.

Today’s models by Lionel include classic steam behemoths and early diesel trains of yesteryear, and many have contemporary high-tech features: digital sound effects, wireless control, and amazing details. Today’s Lionel line includes contemporary diesel and electric model trains, even environmentally friendly, fuel-efficient models such as the Gen Set diesel locomotive and the high-speed Acela in daily Amtrak service in the NE corridor.

Why Kansas City?

The LCCA selected Kansas City for the club’s 46th event because it’s a region with a great railroad heritage and a namesake of the Kansas City Southern and other historic railroads and, of course, the historic Kansas City Union Station. Excursion train rides are scheduled during the convention.

The convention will include informational clinics with useful tips about the hobby. Skilled presenters will demonstrate how to build a layout, use the radio-controlled technology to advantage, and make inexpensive buildings from cast-away materials. Boy and Girl Scouts in uniform are welcome.

A Tribute to Railroads Past and Present

LCCA designs, and Lionel produces, a limited-edition convention car as a memento of each annual event. It's traditionally based on the railroad legacy of the host city. This year, the Convention Car is a modern day container car with logos of railroads that traversed Kansas City including the M-K-T (the Katy), Burlington Northern, the Missouri Pacific (MoPac), and the Chicago Northwestern railroads.

Different Approaches to the Hobby

LCCA members approach the train hobby along different paths. Some specialize in collecting and operating trains known as "fallen flags;" i.e. railroads that once served a region but were closed, went bankrupt, or merged with a dominant railroad. Others seek to re-acquire trains once owned as a child but were discarded years ago. Some create a fantasy railroad with an invented name as a personal empire. At train shows, auctions, and online sites, they seek trains to make their hobby dreams come true. Others purchase a train because of its unique history, colorful paint scheme, or interesting locale. Perhaps the dramatic "war bonnet" décor of the 1940s/50s Santa Fe diesel passenger train is the most striking example of this aspect of the hobby. The venerable design presented a dramatic splash of southwest colors—red, silver and yellow—with Native American Indian motifs.

Contemporary major railroads in America capture the imagination of some hobbyists who create a home layout with a regional railroad in mind—like BNSF, Union Pacific or CSX. But for others, a lingering love of steam locomotives remains strong. Lionel LLC manufactures models of entry-level steam locomotives as starter sets for youngsters -- many of whom have never seen a steam locomotive in action. The company also makes highly detailed, museum-quality leviathans that once performed the "heavy lifting" on American routes.

Toy Train Heaven

During convention week, LCCA member will meet old friends and probably make some new ones during the activities. One senior club member said, "This will be like going to toy train heaven without having to die to get there."

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LCCA Standard Descriptor

The Lionel Collectors Club of America (LCCA) was founded in the Midwest in 1970 by a group of hobbyists to promote awareness and enjoyment of Lionel toy trains. Today, the LCCA is a not-for-profit, international hobby-based organization with over 11,000 members who are toy train collectors and operators. Members favor Lionel trains, and the club collaborates with Lionel LLC to produce limited-edition collectible cars, train sets and unique product exclusively for members.