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ATLAS O's latest Trainman diesel page 80

## A VINTAGE YEAR LIONEL in '53

### DREAM LAYOUTS

- Making the most of modest space Page 52
- New trains, postwar look Page 68

### WIRE 1 LOOP FOR 2 TRAINS Page 74

### CTT VISITS a high-tech layout factory Page 60

**HOW TO**  
Build a modern highway overpass  
turn to page 48

Lionel enjoyed a banner year in 1953. Joe Algozzini and Roger Carp look at the year's dazzling trains. Page 38

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Vol. 20 • Issue 7

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By JOE ALGOZZINI AND ROGER CARP

Great products characterize this key year.

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By KENT JOHNSON

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The O gauge no. 681 Turbine was one of the standout products cataloged by Lionel in 1953; photo by William Zuback



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JLC BIG BOY w/TMCC II LEGACY

Table listing various Lionel train models with prices, including Union Pacific #4024, #4023, #4021, and #2383C Non-Powered B.

POSTWAR CELEBRATION SERIES

Table listing postwar celebration series models like Texas Special B, Western Pacific F-3 'AA', and Virginian Mine Trainmaster.

LIONEL DIESEL LOCOMOTIVES

Table listing Lionel Diesel locomotives such as Lackawanna Trainmaster, 4574/7778 Union Pacific E-7 ABA's, and 4589/93 Santa Fe F7 ABA w/Power 'B'.

COLLEGIATE COLLEGE BOXCARS

Table listing Collegiate College Boxcars including Florida State Boxcar, Penn State #2, and University of Illinois #2.

STANDARD 'O' ROLLING STOCK

Table listing Standard 'O' rolling stock items like Woodside Reeper 3pk, Conrail or U.P. Hopper 3pk, and Offset Hoppers.

LIONEL DIESELS / NON-POWERED UNITS

Table listing Lionel Diesels and Non-Powered Units such as NY H16-44, U.P. SD-40T-2, and N.S. SD40-2.

ROLLING STOCK

Table listing various Rolling Stock items including D&H Waffle-Sided Boxcar, New Haven Waffle Boxcar, and Central of New Jersey Hopper.

OPERATING ROLLING STOCK

Table listing Operating Rolling Stock items like Alaska Boxcar w/Diesel RailSound, Lionel Lines Tender w/Trainsound, and Great Northern Coal Dump Car.

THOMAS THE TANK & FRIENDS

Table listing Thomas the Tank & Friends models including Sir Topham Hat Gateman, Percy or James Engine, and Thomas & Friends Locomotive.

FRANK/NON-OPER ACCESSORIES

Table listing Frank/Non-Oper accessories such as Oper's Hot Dog Stand, Amusement Park Swing Ride, and Mini Golf or 14219 Ice Rink.

LIONEL 'UPS' ITEMS

Table listing Lionel 'UPS' items like The UPS Store, Oper. Billboard Signmen, and UPS Centennial Boxcar.

LIONEL NASCAR SERIES

Table listing Lionel NASCAR series models including #7-11004 NASCAR Train Set, #7-11005 Dale Earnhardt Jr. Train Set, and #7-11007 Dale Earnhardt Sr. Expansion Pk.

PASSENGER CARS

Table listing Passenger Cars such as #15577/81 NYC 4-Car Heavyweight, #25148/53 B&O Madison 6-Car Set, and #25166/61 California Zephyr SL 6-Car Set.

LIONELVILLE 'LIGHTED' BUILDINGS

Table listing Lionelville 'Lighted' buildings including Lionville Water Tower, Irene's Diner, and Oneshop 1-Story (custom dec).

Check our Website @ www.grzyboskitrains.com for complete K-Line by Lionel & MTH lists

LIONEL SET BREAKUPS - CALL IF NOT LISTED

Table listing Lionel Set Breakups such as Santa Fe Waffle-Sided Boxcar, Penn. Silver Boxcar, and C.P. Rail Caboose (no box).

LIONEL 'HALLOWEEN' ITEMS

Table listing Lionel 'Halloween' items like Witch with Cauldron, Halloween Animated Gondola, and Pumpkin Handcar.

MTH RAILKING ITEMS

Table listing MTH Railking items including PA 2-8-0 w/Proto 2.0, T&P 4-8-2 L3 w/P-1 & 30-7714 Cab, and NYC Vanderbilt w/ProtoSound (LN).

MTH PREMIER ITEMS

Table listing MTH Premier items like Union Pacific SD-50 w/Proto 2.0, Union Pacific SD-50 Non-Powered, and Alaska SD-70.

OPERATING ROLLING STOCK

Table listing Operating Rolling Stock including Alaska Boxcar w/Diesel RailSound, Lionel Lines Tender w/Trainsound, and Great Northern Coal Dump Car.

K-LINE BY LIONEL

Table listing K-Line by Lionel models such as Operating Milk Loading Depot, Bethlehem Plymouth Switcher, and 21170/75 NYC Heavyweight Cars (6).

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# 1953 was a vintage year

One chapter in the long history of toy trains

**N**OT LONG AGO, I was asked how toy train guys differ from scale model railroaders. That was not such an easy question. After all, I've seen hi-rail layouts that were startling in their realism, and I've seen HO scale layouts that were little more than a rough loop of track nailed to bare plywood. Even the words "toy trains" are fairly meaningless in this context. "I just like to run 'em" is heard as frequently from scale guys as it is from O and S gaugers.

Since we celebrate toy trains, it can be argued that we're more comfortable with the concepts of whimsy and play value over on this side of the aisle.

Perhaps there's some truth to that, but for every scale modeler intent on operating his or her railroad like the real thing, right down to using timetables and issuing train orders, there's a collector who has devoted years of study – and often considerable amounts of money – to building his toy train collection. We enthusiasts can be very serious about our passions.

The truth is, there's not a lot of difference between the scale and toy train worlds. We're alike in our appreciation of trains great and small, a finely detailed layout is universally admired, and a colorful, action-packed railroad is just plain fun in any gauge or scale.

But toy train guys *are* different in some ways.

First and foremost, we have an awareness of history that's unusual in any hobby. Case in point is this month's cover story on Lionel in 1953.

Although frequently overshadowed in our memories by 1954 – generally acknowledged as the pinnacle of Lionel's amazing run of postwar creativity – the year 1953 was just as significant for the company. It was a year marked by great products including a new automobile-service boxcar, a triple-dome tank car, and that familiar porthole caboose.

Oddly for a toy company racing toward its zenith, Lionel's marketing department seemed to have trouble getting into the swing of things. Of the four trains pictured on the cover of the 1953 consumer catalog only one depicts an outfit actually offered in that catalog, and the new cars are not on the cover.

The reasons behind Lionel's cover choices may never be known, but there's much more to the story of 1953 and noted Lionel experts Joe Algozzini and Senior Editor Roger Carp have done a masterful job of putting the year in perspective.

I'll bet that quite a few readers can still remember the thrill of opening that Lionel catalog back in 1953. The rest of us understand that feeling well, for the excitement is kindled anew each time a new catalog arrives.

For us, a new catalog is more than a listing of the latest and greatest; it's a fresh chapter in a very long story.

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## DO YOU HAVE A STORY?

Readers just like you provide many stories featured in CLASSIC TOY TRAINS. To submit an article and photos, send your work to Classic Toy Trains magazine, 21027 Crossroads Circle, P.O. Box 1612, Waukesha, WI 53187. Write the words "Manuscript Enclosed" on the envelope and include a suitable stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of your material if we cannot use it.

We assume no responsibility for the safe return of unsolicited material. E-mail submissions can be sent to manuscripts@classictoytrains.com.

Before preparing an article, it's best to contact us to determine whether we're interested. Guidelines for writing articles and taking photographs are available for the asking from our editorial associate and from our website. Clear, sharp photographs are essential. Digital images must be taken with a 3.3-megapixel or better camera. Articles are paid for on acceptance.

We encourage you to share opinions about stories in CLASSIC TOY TRAINS and about our hobby in our Reader Correspondence column.

Questions about new and old toy trains should

be directed to our Q&A column.

Layout and other tips should be directed to our Tips, Tools, & Techniques column.

If you are a manufacturer or supplier and would like to see your products in our News or Reviews columns, please write, send an e-mail to editor@classictoytrains.com, or call 262-796-8776 for information.

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**Classic Toy Trains** is the indispensable source for toy train hobbyists. Our mission is to enhance our readers' enjoyment of the toy train hobby by publishing useful information and engaging insights about layouts, how-to projects, and hobby news and heritage.

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**Subscription rates:** United States – 1 year, \$39.95; 2 years, \$74.95; 3 years, \$106.95. Canadian and foreign – 1 year, \$50; 2 years, \$95; 3 years, \$135. Payable in U.S. funds (Canadian price includes GST). BN 12271 3209 RT.

**Expedited delivery service:** Domestic First Class, \$25/year; Canadian Air, \$25/year; Foreign Air, \$45/year.

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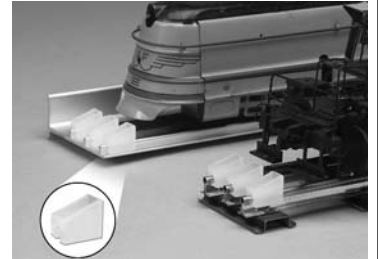
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# CORRESPONDENCE

## Favorite smoke, multimeter tip, Flyer documentation

### Favorite smoke fluid

I always look forward to the Supply List feature, but I noticed in the July 2007 issue of CLASSIC TOY TRAINS that you omitted my favorite smoke fluid. I've used Model Power Locomotive Smoke fluid in my accessories, my Marx locomotives, and my postwar and modern Lionel steamers with great success. It produces nice, thick puffs of white smoke that have just the right "toy train" scent. [It's available from towerhobbies.com. - Editor]

*Allen D. Bordelon  
San Antonio, Texas*

### Multimeter tip

The July issue had a decent presentation on the use of a multimeter ("Measure the power of toy trains" by Ray L. Plummer).

I think it's also worth mentioning that it's sometimes a good idea to disconnect the transformer when testing continuity. The internal wiring of some types of transformers will cause the multimeter to register continuity between positive and negative rails.

This occurrence is normal, but it can fool a first-time user into thinking he may have a short circuit in the wiring when none exists.

*Vince Kolo,  
Pittsburgh, Pa.*

### Flyer documentation

January's Questions & Answers column contained this comment: "Compared to postwar Lionel, the documentation of postwar American Flyer was pretty mediocre. Lionel had a string of Authorized Service Stations across the country and needed to supply its service technicians with intricate schematics, specifications, and tip sheets. A.C. Gilbert, which manufactured American Flyer S gauge trains, did not."

Recently I encountered an eBay listing for an American Flyer service manual, which had belonged to the seller's father, a Flyer repairman for more than 30 years. This manual, covering both prewar and postwar Flyer trains and accessories, is more than seven inches thick and weighs in at 13 pounds.

Mediocre documentation you say? I think not!

Additionally, in October 1954 Gilbert published a 16-page pamphlet listing American Flyer authorized service stations. In its pages one can find addresses that cover 46 states, plus Hawaii (which became a state in 1959), Washington D.C., and Puerto Rico, for a total of 592 authorized service stations. Canada had 26 stations in six provinces.

*Wesley Delano  
Framingham, Mass.*

### Utility line detailing

I was really impressed with the details on Daniel Jioia's "Mid-sized layout" in the March issue - with one exception. Daniel's utility poles have no apparent utility! With all the weathering detail, weeds in the gutter, and oil spots on the pavement, the power poles without power lines look out of place.

Ever since the early 1950s, when my dad got me my first piece of plywood for a layout, I've been a fanatic about ensuring the power poles on my railroad were properly adorned.

I used to string four lengths of my mother's sewing line between each Plasticville pole on my layout, carefully placing Duco Cement on each plastic insulator to keep the thread in place.

Recently I built a layout with handmade poles made from dowels and cross beams made from stirring sticks. I added insulators using glass beads, which allowed any snagged lines to slip off easily without causing damage to the poles.

I also added pole-mounted transformers shaped from extruded foam insulation board and painted gray. I placed a few beads on straight pins and stuck them into the transformers to represent bigger insulators.

I hope this inspires layout builders to thread those lines.

*Gene Phillip  
Great Falls, Va.*

Have a comment on a story or a toy train topic? Write "CTT Correspondence" on your letter and mail it to Classic Toy Trains, P.O. Box 1612, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612, or email us at [correspond@classictoytrains.com](mailto:correspond@classictoytrains.com) and put the words "reader correspondence" in the subject line.

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Tractor details: opening doors, engine detail realistic rubber tires, adjustable fifth wheel & more.  
Trailer details: working tarp, air line details, working coal door, multi-function gate & more.  
Available colors: Gray, Owen Trucking, Red, Rick Kuntz & White!



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- FR-1941-GA - "Georgia"
- FR-1941-IA - "Iowa Highway Patrol"
- FR-1941-IL - "Illinois State Police"
- FR-1941-MD - "Maryland State Police"
- FR-1941-MI - "Michigan State Police"
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- FR-1941-NE - "Nebraska State Patrol"
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- FR-1941-NY1 - "New York State Police"
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- FR-1941-OK - "Oklahoma Highway Patrol"
- FR-1941-SC - "South Carolina Highway Patrol"
- FR-1941-TN - "Tennessee Highway Patrol"
- FR-1941-TX1 - "Texas Highway Patrol"
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# PHOTO ALBUM

We'd love to have you in CLASSIC TOY TRAINS Magazine!

## ► Vincent DeAngelis' O gauge layout

A 3rd Rail Pennsylvania RR K4 4-6-2 Pacific locomotive, proudly displaying all the fine details you would expect to see on an O gauge brass model, pulls its train past the Gold Meadow Dairy on Vincent DeAngelis' three-rail layout. Structures from Korber and Walthers make up this impressive part of Vincent's railroad, which can be found in his home in Warren, N.J.

**SEND YOUR BEST** pictures of toy train subjects to CTT Photo Album, 21027 Crossroads Circle, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612. Be sure to include your name, address, and daytime telephone number; a description of each image, including the gauge and make of the train and the type of photographic equipment used to take the image; and the name of the photographer or layout owner if he or she is someone other than you.

Color photographs should be original transparencies or good-quality 5-by-7 prints. Digital photos must be taken with a 3.3-megapixel or higher camera; file sizes less than about 400K cannot be used. Digital photos can be submitted on a disk or CD, or they can be emailed to [photoalbum@classictoytrains.com](mailto:photoalbum@classictoytrains.com). If you send us a photograph and it is published, we will pay you \$50 as long as we have not previously bought the photograph.

## ▼ Tommy Agee's O gauge layout

Infrared sensors at each station on Tommy Agee's O gauge layout control a series of timers that automatically stop the El train before it resumes its journey. Simple yet slick! Tommy, who makes his home in Franklin, N.C., enjoys running new Marx trains, such as these Chicago elevated cars, over the two levels of his 6- by 16-foot layout and photographing them with a Minolta digital camera.







◀ **Nauset Model Railroad Club's S gauge layout**

Just another busy morning in the main town on the Nauset Model Railroad Club's S gauge layout in Orleans, Mass. That means the engines at the firehouse are being washed, stores are being stocked with new merchandise, and folks are waiting to board the Northern Pacific passenger train led by Lionel American Flyer Alco PA units. Michael Karaim snapped this colorful shot of Richard Houghtaling's diesels using a Canon 20D digital camera.

# PHOTO ALBUM



## ▲ Herb Lindsay's O gauge layout

Longtime readers of *CLASSIC TOY TRAINS* have been watching Herb Lindsay, usually assisted by his wife Dagmar, make progress on his O gauge layout since it was first featured in the April 1990 issue (one update appeared in the February 1997 CTT; enjoy the latest in the January 2008 issue). He skillfully combines postwar and modern-era trains in hi-rail Pennsylvania settings. Herb, a resident of River Edge, S.C., did the modeling and photography, and Dagmar painted the backdrop.

## ▶ Bill Spaulding's O gauge layout

Like so many of us, Bill Spaulding relies on his O gauge layout to carry him back to his youth – in his case, Washington State in the 1950s. An MTH RailKing steam locomotive and Atlas O freight cars complement his great modeling in the town of Juanita. Bill, who lives in Kent, Wash., captured the moment with a Panasonic DMC-FZ5 digital camera. His layout was featured in the December 2006 issue of CTT.





### ◀ Brian Fischer's O gauge layout

Brian Fischer may make his home in Houston, Texas, but when it comes to toy trains, his heart is in New England. He named his O gauge layout the Waterbury, New Haven & Elsewhere. On this morning, a New York Central passenger train consisting of Williams heavyweight cars has just departed while a Pennsylvania RR express led by a K-Line GG1 electric arrives. Brian used an Olympus C-720 digital camera to take this picture on a breezy April afternoon.



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# NEWS



**TIME TRAVELER:** MTH Electric Trains has added an iconic transportation toy to its Tinplate Traditions line – the Leland Detroit monorail. The no. 10-1234-1 Detroit monorail set comes equipped with ProtoSound 2.0 as well as a powered car and two unpowered coaches, a loop of straight and curved rails, and monorail risers with heavy metal bases. The O gauge outfit costs \$699.95. Additional straight- and curved-rail sections as well as riser sets are available separately. For more information, see your MTH retailer or go to [mth-railking.com](http://mth-railking.com) to see the entire Tinplate Traditions product line.

## Industry news

The 2007 Take a Model Train to Work Day will be Friday, November 16, 2007. Be sure to dust off your favorite model locomotive and share the fun of the hobby with your co-workers.

Brasseur Electric Trains of Saginaw, Mich. will be performing warranty work on the K-Line Collectors Club locomotives made by Lionel. In addition, after taking inventory of the remaining parts inventory from K-Line's general product line, Brasseur will distribute those parts. Information about availability of parts will be posted on Brasseur's website [brasseur-electrictrains.com](http://brasseur-electrictrains.com).

The National Toy Train Museum celebrates 30 years of operation this year. Be sure to check the museum website [ntm-museum.org](http://ntm-museum.org) for the latest special events and for special merchandise offers.

## New in O gauge

Is it ever too early to start thinking about starter sets for the holiday?

Lionel and MTH have cataloged an extensive line of O gauge starter sets that will make perfect holiday gifts. Lionel's roster includes the nos. 31956 Thomas & Friends set for \$169.99, the 30021 Cascade Range logging set



**THE SPRINGMAID LINE:** S-Helper Service's latest S gauge PS-2 covered hopper salutes the South Carolina-based Lancaster & Chester RR. The nos. 01746 and 01747 hoppers come in that railroad's distinctive white and light-blue paint scheme and are equipped with die-cast metal trucks and couplers. The cars cost \$42.95 each. See your S gauge retailer or go to [showcaseline.com](http://showcaseline.com) to see the entire S-Helper Service product line.



**TACKLE TALL TIMBER:** Sword Models gets down with some industrial-strength forestry gear, starting with the no. SW3006 Valmet 445EXL feller buncher. The 1:50 scale, die-cast-metal rig costs \$79.95 plus shipping. Order from DHS Diecast, 107 Karl St., Berea, OH 44017 or go to [dhsdiecast.com](http://dhsdiecast.com).

for \$189.99, the 30018 Pennsylvania Flyer set for \$199.99, the 30034 Great Western set (with two Lincoln Log buildings) for \$209.99, the 30056 Halloween set for \$219.99, the 30030 North Pole Central Christmas set for \$219.99, the no. 300651 United Parcel Service Centennial steam set for \$229.99, the 30047 Northwest Special freight set for \$294.99, the 30045 Alaska steam set for \$269.99, the 30016 New York Central Flyer set for \$279.99, and the 31960 Polar Express set for \$299.99.

**MTH's O gauge Rail King starter-set roster includes** the nos. 30-4137-1 Pennsylvania 2-8-0 passenger set for \$349.95, the 30-4136 Pennsylvania 2-8-0 steam set for \$249.95 (LocoSound) or \$329.95 (ProtoSound 2.0), the 30-4181-1 Harley Davidson 2-8-0 steam set for \$349.95, the 30-4185 New York Central 2-8-0 freight set for \$249.95 (LocoSound) or \$329.95 (ProtoSound 2.0), the Anheuser-Busch 2-8-0 steam freight set for \$349.95, the 30-4180 Caterpillar 2-8-0 steam set for \$349.95, the 30-4184 Norfolk & Western 4-8-4 Bantam J steam freight set for \$329.95, and the 30-4182 Southern Pacific 4-8-4 Bantam *Daylight* steam passenger set for \$349.95.

The Railroad Museum of Long

## Lenny Dean dies at 81

**LENNY DEAN**, whose distinguished career with Lionel spanned more than six decades, died on July 16 at the age of 81. From a teenager on the assembly line at the company's New Jersey plant, Lenny moved over to the all-important Service Department in the late 1940s and rose to become the manager in 1964. There, as explained in an exclusive profile published in the July 2003 issue of *CLASSIC TOY TRAINS*, Lenny worked with authorized Lionel Service Stations around the country and contributed to the development of the final product lines of the postwar era.

After General Mills gained the rights to make and market Lionel trains, executives relied on Lenny to facilitate the transition of production to Michigan. An article in the September 2003 *CTT* described Lenny's oversight of the Service Department in the 1970s and his ideas on how to expand the O and O-27 train lines.

Starting in the 1980s, Lenny represented Lionel at shows aimed at the growing number of toy train collectors. He spoke enthusiastically about the company's achievements during the postwar period, but was quick to note that Lionel continued to produce outstanding trains under the leadership of Richard Kughn.

Lenny graciously talked with hobbyists about his career and life at Lionel. He tirelessly answered their questions about manufacturing procedures, original and reproduction parts, and service activities. For the knowledge Lenny shared and the memories he created, this gentleman will be missed. We at *CTT* extend our condolences to his widow, Marie, their four children, and their many grandchildren.



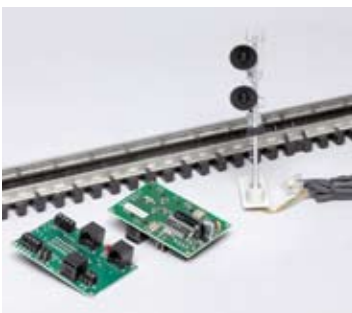


**ATOMIC POWER:** Ready Made Toys offers both the Beep diesel and the caboose in colorful Atomic Energy Commission colors. The O gauge locomotive is available in two road numbers for \$59.95 each, and the caboose costs \$34.95. Go to [readymadetoys.com](http://readymadetoys.com) to order or see the entire product line.



**TIME FOR TIME-SAVER:** John Huster offers an S gauge Baltimore & Ohio boxcar in B&O Time-Saver Service colors. The custom-made S-Helper Service car is available in two car numbers, with either a blue or silver roof. The cars cost \$45 each, and shipping is \$8 for the first car. Pennsylvania residents add applicable sales tax. Order from John Huster, 1130 Matthew Ct., Erie, PA 16504, call 814-824-8633, or go to [johnhuster.com](http://johnhuster.com).

**SIGNAL SUPREME:** Custom Signals' SL-series line of O gauge side-mount searchlight signals is available now. The OSL-45 double-target mast signal (shown) is fully compatible with Atlas O's 21st Century Signal system. These signals offer an impressive degree of flexibility, ranging from simple stand-alone operation utilizing insulated blocks to a system replicating Centralized Traffic Control operations on real railroads. For more information, go to [customsignals.com](http://customsignals.com).



Island is offering a **custom-made North Fork Bank mint car by Lionel**. The car carries the Pennsylvania RR's keystone herald, echoing the Pennsy's one-time ownership of the Long Island RR. The car will be produced in the colors of the North Fork Bank, with the New York & Atlantic RR logo. The car costs \$59.95 (shipping and restricted museum membership included; Canadian and foreign orders add \$10 for shipping). Orders must be received by January 7, 2008; the car will ship the following summer. Order from the Long Island Toy Train Locomotive Engineers, Box 1124, Southold, NY 11971.

### New in S gauge

Willow Associates has released the 10th anniversary edition of *The S Scale Manufacturer and Product Directory*. The 25-page booklet contains contact information for more than 200 manufacturers of S gauge trains and products. It costs \$3.50 postpaid. Order from Willow Associates, 4061 Glendenning Rd., Downers Grove, IL 60515.

### For your layout

Five new structure kits have been announced for the Atlas O Trainman line. The nos. 2009000 rural station costs \$24.95, the 2009001 engine house costs







**DIG IT:** Norscot Scale Models offers a 1:50 scale model of a Caterpillar M316D wheel excavator. The main body can be swiveled 360 degrees, the wheels turned, and the boom and outriggers raised and lowered. The no. 55171 excavator, which sells for \$39.95, is available from die-cast model and hobby retailers or online through [ashvillediecast.com](http://ashvillediecast.com) or [diecastdirect.com](http://diecastdirect.com).



**ON THE REFRESHMENT TRAIL:** The Desert Division of the Train Collectors Association offers an O gauge Apache Beer wood-side refrigerator car, the second in its series of "Celebrate Arizona" cars. Custom-made by Atlas O, the car has die-cast metal trucks and couplers and authentic logos. From the end of prohibition in 1933 into the early 1940s, the Arizona Brewing Co. packaged Apache Beer in this colorful design. The car costs \$71, including shipping (Arizona residents add \$5.50 sales tax). The deadline for ordering the car is November 15, 2007, with delivery expected in the spring of 2008. Order direct from the TCA Desert Division, 25375 N. Feather Mountain Rd., Paulden, AZ 86334.

\$79.95, the 2009002 two-story house costs \$24.95, the 2009003 pedestrian overpass costs \$15.95, and the 2009004 switch tower costs \$19.95. Go to [atlaso.com](http://atlaso.com) to see the entire product line.

Rail Rax offers a **new aluminum shelf design that allows you to display O, S, and HO trains** on the same shelf at the same time. All Rail Rax shelves are made from heat-treated 6463-T5 aluminum and are anodized with an R5 clear gloss finish. The HO/S/O combo shelf costs \$19.50 for a 6-foot section, an O gauge section costs \$19.50, and an HO/S combo shelf costs \$15 each. Order from Rail Rax, 22c Roache Rd., Freedom, CA 95019, call 800-830-2843 or go to [railrax.net](http://railrax.net) to see the product line.

Bart's Pneumatics offers **Super-smoke, a non-toxic smoke fluid** in a variety of scents. Order from Bart's Pneumatics, 1952 Landis Valley Rd., Lancaster, PA 17601, call 717-392-1568, or go to [bartsneumatics.com](http://bartsneumatics.com).



**RIDING HERD:** The Milwaukee Lionel Railroad Club announces its 18th limited-edition O gauge Milwaukee Road car made by Lionel. The 40-foot stockcar is available in a two-pack for \$124.99 plus \$11 shipping and tax. Send your order to 18th Club Car, c/o Gene Szymanowski, 1500 S. 164th St., New Berlin, WI 53151 or go to [milw-lrrc.com](http://milw-lrrc.com) for more information.



**PANORAMIC VISTAS:** SceniKing offers a line of layout backdrops in a variety of scales that can be seamlessly connected with other backdrops to create extended scenery runs. The latest is the Midhurst Crossing series, which consists of two separate kits (each 8 feet long and 13¼ inches high) that can be joined to create a 16-foot backdrop run. The kits are nos. R013 and R014 (R013 is shown). The photo backdrop kits are printed on 8½- by 14-inch sheets of 24-pound paper. Each kit costs \$39.95. See your hobby retailer or order direct from BPH Enterprises, 22 Brunton Cres., Barrie, ON L4N 7H4, Canada; or call 705-739-4878. To see the complete line of SceniKing products, go to [sceniking.com](http://sceniking.com).

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## Dates & Locations

<b>Chicago: November 24-25, 2007</b>
Schaumburg Convention Center 1551 Thoreau Drive • Schaumburg, Illinois
<b>Sacramento: January 5-6, 2008</b>
Sacramento Convention Center 1400 J Street • Sacramento, California
<b>San Diego: January 12-13, 2008</b>
Del Mar Fairgrounds 2260 Jimmy Durante Blvd. • Del Mar, California
<b>Norfolk: February 16-17, 2008</b>
Hampton Roads Convention Center 1610 Coliseum Drive • Hampton, Virginia
<b>Kansas City: March 15-16, 2008</b>
Kansas City Convention Center 301 West 13th Street • Kansas City, Missouri
<b>Louisville: June 28-29, 2008</b>
Kentucky Int'l Convention Center 221 Fourth Street • Louisville, Kentucky <small>in conjunction with the National N Scale Convention</small>



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**\*NEW DATE\***

**December 29 & 30, 2007**

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**\*NEW LOCATION\***

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**\*NEW LOCATION\***

**December 29 & 30, 2007**

Canterbury Park, Shakopee

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**\*NEW LOCATION\***

**November 24 & 25, 2007**

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## OHIO

**\*NEW LOCATION\***

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## OKLAHOMA

**December 8 & 9, 2007**

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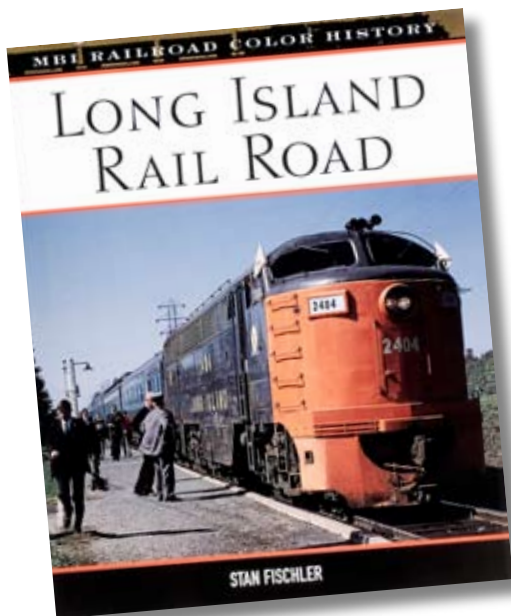
**[GreatMidwestTrainShow.com](http://GreatMidwestTrainShow.com)**



**DIESEL IN A BOX:** MTH offers a Premier line diesel from the earliest years of internal combustion on the rails: the no. 20-5592-1 Alco/GE/Ingersoll-Rand boxcab. The prototype – dating from 1925 – served the Jersey Central until 1957 and is on display at the B&O Railroad Museum in Baltimore. MTH's model features a can-style motor, coil couplers, and ProtoSound 2.0. See your hobby retailer or go to [mth-railking.com](http://mth-railking.com) for more information.



**MEMBERS ONLY:** In an exclusive arrangement for members of the Train Collectors Association or the Toy Train Operators Society, the organizers of the Cal-Stewart train meet are offering a reprise of the Lifesaver tank car originally made by Lionel in 1978. The new cars, also made by Lionel, are available in O and S gauges. The O gauge car (shown here) costs \$49.95, and the S gauge car costs \$53.95. Shipping is \$9 for the first car and \$4 for each additional car, except to Alaska, Hawaii, and overseas, where shipping is \$16 for the first car and \$5 for each additional car. California residents must add applicable sales tax. The order deadline is January 2008, with delivery anticipated for July 2008. Send your check or international money order payable in U.S. funds to: 2007 Cal-Stewart Car Offer, c/o Bruce Lazarus, 4858 Dunman Ave., Woodland Hills, CA 91364-3820.



**THE ROUTE OF DASHING DAN:** Voyageur Press' latest addition to the MBI Railroad Color History line of books is the *Long Island Rail Road* by Stan Fischler. The 160-page hardcover book traces the history of the line from 1834 to the present. The book costs \$36.95. See your hobby retailer or go to [voyageurpress.com](http://voyageurpress.com) for more information.



**HAIL TO THE CHIEFS:** JR Junction Train & Hobby salutes Minor League Baseball's Syracuse Chiefs and their distinctive logo – it features a steam locomotive. The custom-run O gauge boxcar, made by Weaver Models, costs \$46.30 plus shipping. Order direct from JR Junction Train & Hobby, 652 Old Liverpool Rd., Liverpool, NY 13088 or call 315-451-6551.

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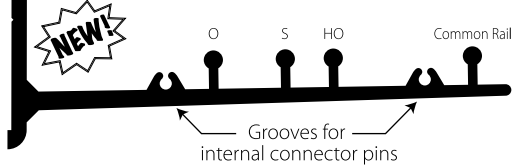


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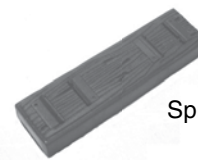
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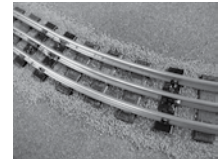
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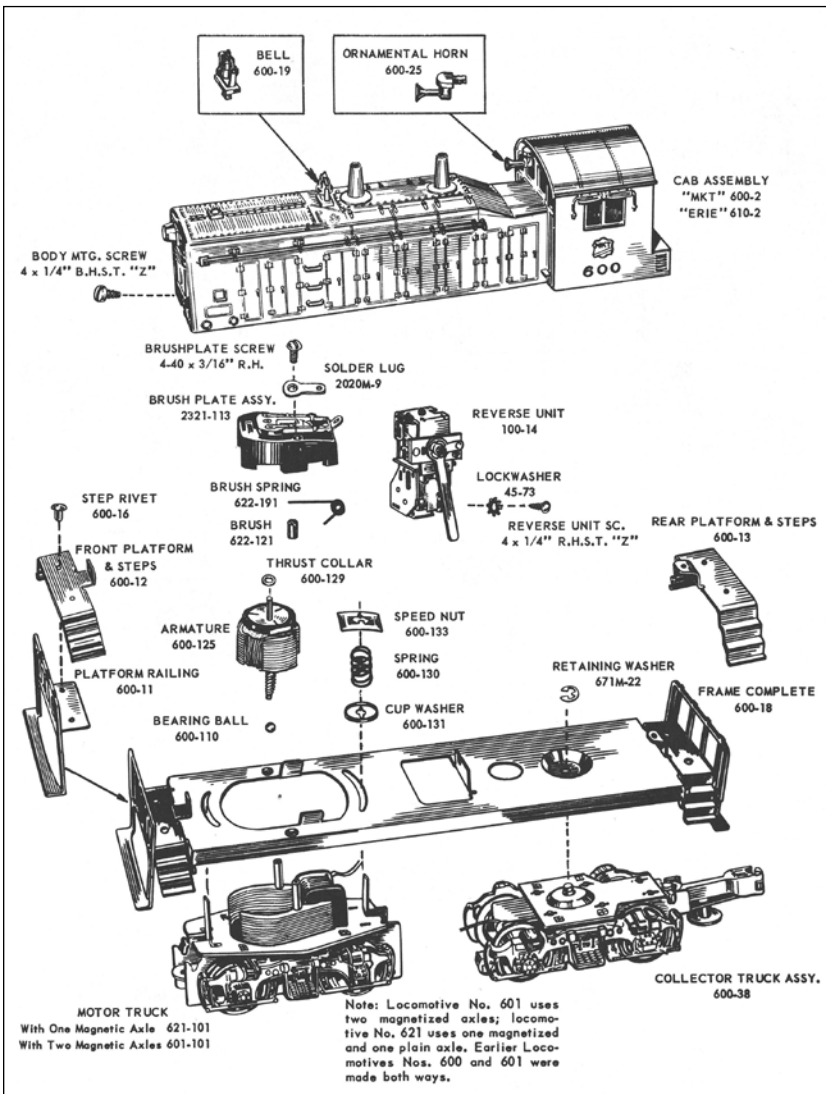
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# QUESTIONS&ANSWERS



## Check under the hood of a Lionel NW2 switcher

Missing parts can complicate operation

I recently acquired a Lionel no. 616 Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe diesel switcher. When I try to run it, the motor seems to jam. If I push it forward to get it started, it runs fine until it stops. Then it will not start up again. I have checked the wiring, brushes, and commutator – all appear fine. I did notice that when the motor changes direction, the armature visibly rises or falls in the housing, which makes me think there are missing

thrust washers or thrust bearings. Can you help? – *Martin Watts, Red Deer, Alberta, Canada*

Most of Lionel's no. 600-series NW2 switchers of the late 1950s and early '60s had the same type of motor, with a vertical armature/worm shaft. (See the above diagram of the no. 600 locomotive.)

A thrust collar (part no. 600-129) was used at the top, under the brush

### Chicagoland's largest variety

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## QUESTIONS&ANSWERS

plate. A bearing ball (part no. 600-110) was used at the bottom of the shaft. The absence of either one of these could cause the annoying symptoms you describe. Look first for the lower bearing ball. It could have been lost when the truck was disassembled.

**Problem with a Texas Special F3**  
I have a Lionel postwar no. 2245 Texas Special F3. The drive gear shaft has been snapped in two, and one of the pieces has pierced through the motor. Any way of repairing it? – *Nazham Othman, Shah Alam, Malaysia*

Diagnosing your problem is complicated by the fact that the no. 2245 is a transitional locomotive. Some of the earlier models have horizontal motors, while the later ones feature the vertical type. Horizontal motors have a spur gear at the end of the armature shaft, while vertical ones have a worm gear. I can't tell from your correspondence which one you have.

In either case, the condition is serious. At minimum, the entire armature/shaft combination will have to be replaced.

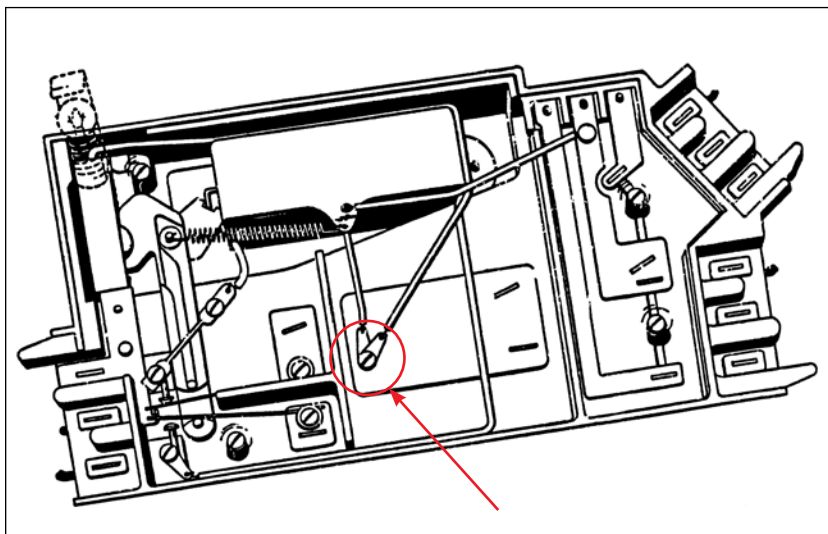
I worry about what kind of force could have "snapped" the shaft in the first place. Chances are quite good it may have done some other damage as well. These shafts don't just break without some gross mishandling.

Although many parts suppliers stock these replacement armature shafts, my suggestion would be to ship the motor truck (or the complete locomotive) to an Authorized Lionel Service Station for repair. If you can't find one in your part of the world, I recommend Rusty's Train House, 4708 E. Hillcrest Rd., Two Rivers, WI 54241. Rusty has been in the business for decades and guarantees his work.

## OO switch conversion to DC?

At low voltage, Lionel's prewar OO gauge no. 0072 non-derailing switches will not operate consistently. Can you suggest a way that I can safely wire direct voltage, as used with O gauge switches? – *Marshall Sawyer, Harrodsburg, Ky.*

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48054 AF U.P. 4-8-4 Northern (Gray)	\$ 469.00	14441 C.P. 4-6-4 Royal Hudson w/PS 2	\$ 429.00



Ray speculates the reader could disconnect wires shown in the red circle and connect them to a DC power source to allow DC switch operation.

We have no OO gauge switches in our archive. No one around here has any experience doing what you desire. We don't even have a wiring diagram. But this we know: the switch is now wired to take power from the rails for the light bulb and to activate the solenoid coils. What you must do is find the center-rail power leads, disconnect them, and hook them up to a constant fixed-voltage source.

The only picture we could find is this drawing from a 1939 instruction sheet, which shows the underside of the unit. My guess would be that the screw with the two solder lugs under it (shown in the red circle above) is what you should remove. At this point, I can only hazard this guess. You'll have to find the answer by trial and error, and bravely go where no man has gone before.

### Identifying a Lionel no. 239

I have been given a Lionel O gauge no. 239 steam engine. Two of the side rods are missing, and the paint is coming off. It has no tender. Have you heard of this engine? – James Rogerson, Shirley, N.Y.

Yes, the no. 239 was cataloged in 1965 and '66 and always came with a no. 234W whistle tender.

In the hierarchy of postwar collectibles, it doesn't rank very high. According to the 2007 edition of *Greenberg's Pocket Price Guide to Lionel Trains*, it can bring about \$55, if complete and in good condition.

### Lionel no. 2345's rough reverse run

My Lionel O gauge no. 2345 Western Pacific F3 is fine going forward, but hardly moves in reverse. I have taken it apart several times and cannot seem to find anything wrong. Any suggestions? – Richard Highman, Newark, Ohio

While it is difficult to diagnose ailments from afar, my first reaction is that the reversing-unit fingers involved in the reverse mode are not making good contact with the drum. They may be dirty, worn, or bent just enough to produce an arc instead of a solid connection. That could cause labored slowness in one direction.

Another possibility might be unequal spring pressure on the brushes.

However, this is less likely because your locomotive is equipped with two motors.

It bothers me a little that you say you have taken the locomotive apart several times. Did you do anything with the gears during these operations? You might check to see that you put everything back into place correctly. That's about the best we can do from here, without examining the piece. Good luck. **CTT**

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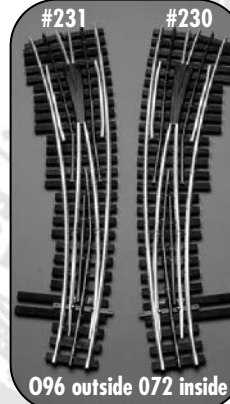
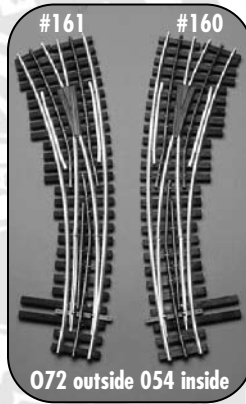
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# TIPS, TOOLS, & TECHNIQUES

## Color-coded track sections

Lionel FasTrack labeled for quick identification

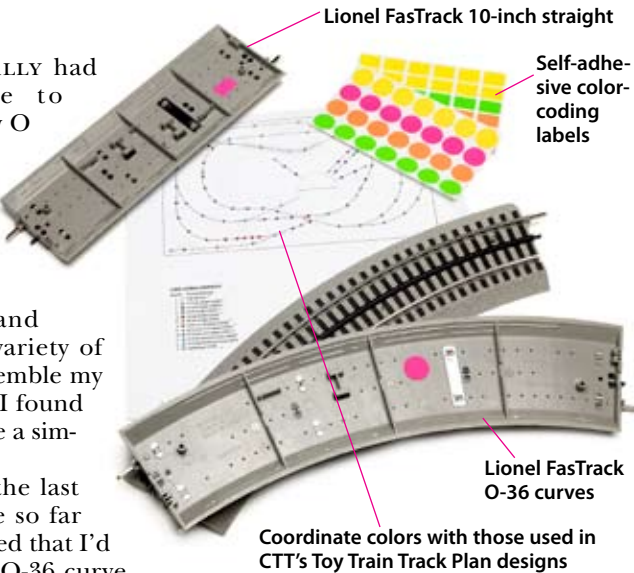
**W**HEN I FINALLY had the space to build a new O gauge layout with wide-radius curves, I decided to use Lionel FasTrack sectional track components. After purchasing both curved and straight sections in a variety of sizes, I attempted to assemble my layout. To my disbelief, I found it was impossible to close a simple loop of track.

I was stumped why the last two track sections were so far apart. Eventually I noticed that I'd mistakenly inserted an O-36 curve into my O-48 loop. As I inspected the rest of the layout, I found a 5-inch straight placed where I really needed a 4½-inch straight.

Yes, I know that each section is identified on the underside of the roadbed, but the markings certainly aren't easy to see. To make it easier to avoid unintentionally mixing sections, I decided to make each track variation more distinctive.

I bought several sets of self-adhesive color labels (small circular or rectangular stickers often used to price items at train meets or yard sales) from a discount store and placed them on the underside of the track. I used red labels on O-72 curves (full and half-sections), blue on O-60, green on O-48, and yellow on O-36. I also used two colors of rectangular labels to clearly identify my 4½- and 5-inch straight sections. You can develop your own color-coding system or maybe even follow the scheme used in CTT's Toy Train Track Plan features.

Unlike a permanent marker or paint, these labels can easily be removed and don't permanently mar the track.



Lionel FasTrack 10-inch straight

Self-adhesive color-coding labels

Lionel FasTrack O-36 curves

Coordinate colors with those used in CTT's Toy Train Track Plan designs

### Behind closed doors

To keep your boxcar doors from vibrating open, cut a 2- by 4-inch section of approximately ½-inch-thick foam padding (from a seat cushion or roadbed). Fold the section into a U shape, and then insert it into the boxcar through an open doorway. Position the foam so that it touches each side of the car, and then close the open door. The pressure of the foam will hold both doors closed.

*John Honish  
Morristown, N.J.*

Rolled foam inserted through door opening



Woodland Scenics no. ST1476 O gauge Track-Bed

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

*Paul Grace  
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If you notice that we've used an outdated address, telephone number, or website, please email CTT Editorial Associate Kelly Shaw at [kshaw@classictoytrains.com](mailto:kshaw@classictoytrains.com).

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**Athearn Trains** – 1550 Glenn Curtiss St., Carson, CA 90746; 310-763-7140. Internet: [athearn.com](http://athearn.com). John Deere farm tractors and Ford trucks in 1:50.

**Boley Corp.** – 2022 Violet St., Los Angeles, CA 90021; 213-688-8802. E-mail: [dept.1-87@boleycorp.com](mailto:dept.1-87@boleycorp.com) Internet: [boley-corp.com](http://boley-corp.com). Cars and trucks in 1:43 and 1:48.

**Classic Construction Models** – 6590 S.W. Fallbrook Pl., Beaverton, OR 97008; 503-626-6395. E-mail: [sales@ccmodels.com](mailto:sales@ccmodels.com) Internet: [ccmodels.com](http://ccmodels.com). Construction vehicles in 1:48.

**Code 3 Collectibles** – Box 54900, Los Angeles, CA 90054-0900. Internet: [code3.net/fire](http://code3.net/fire). Fire and rescue vehicles in 1:64.

**Corgi** – 105 W. Adams St., Ste. 2050, Chicago, IL 60603; 312-302-9940. Internet: [corgi-usa.com](http://corgi-usa.com). Fire and rescue vehicles, cars and buses, and more in 1:43, 1:48, and 1:50.

**DHS Diecast Collectibles** – 107 Karl St., Berea, OH 44017; 800-591-1171 or 440-816-1882. E-mail: [info@dhsdiecast.com](mailto:info@dhsdiecast.com) Internet: [dhsdiecast.com](http://dhsdiecast.com). Construction vehicles and trucks in 1:43, 1:48, 1:50, and 1:64.

**Diecast Direct** – Dept. CT, 3005 Old Lawrenceburg Rd., Frankfort, KY 40601-9351; 800-718-1866. Internet: [diecast-direct.com/ctt](http://diecast-direct.com/ctt). Fire and rescue vehicles, military vehicles, cars and trucks, and more in 1:43, 1:48, 1:50, 1:55, and 1:64.

**Die Cast Promotions** – 10478 St. Joseph Dr., Dubuque, IA

52003; 563-583-1074. E-mail: [customerservice@ffertl3.com](mailto:customerservice@ffertl3.com) Internet: [ffertl3.com](http://ffertl3.com). Construction vehicles in 1:50 and trucks in 1:64.

**Dominion Models** – Box 515, Salem, VA 24153; 540-375-3750. E-mail: [bob@dominionmodels.com](mailto:bob@dominionmodels.com) Internet: [dominion-models.com](http://dominion-models.com). 1930s, '40s, '50s, and '60s automobiles in 1:43.

**Funline Merchandise** – 20405 Business Pkwy., City of Industry, CA 91789-2939; 626-336-6681. Internet: [musclemachines.com](http://musclemachines.com). All-era muscle cars in 1:43 and 1:64.

**Golden Wheel Die Casting Factory** – Toy Bldg., Ste. 618, Sixth Floor, Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10010. E-mail: [sales@goldenwheeldiecast.com](mailto:sales@goldenwheeldiecast.com) Internet: [goldenwheeldiecast.com](http://goldenwheeldiecast.com). Cars and trucks in 1:43 and 1:48.

**Ink Well** – 448 Hillside Dr., Mountville, PA 17554; 800-630-0390. Cars and trucks in 1:43.

**Lledo** – Internet: [ehattons.com](http://ehattons.com) or [corgi.co.uk](http://corgi.co.uk). Buses and cars in 1:43.

**Model Power** – 180 Smith St., Farmingdale, NY 11735; 631-694-7022. E-mail: [info@modelpower.com](mailto:info@modelpower.com) Internet: [model-power.com](http://model-power.com). Aircraft, cars, and trucks in 1:48.

**MTH Electric Trains** – 7020 Columbia Gateway Dr., Columbia, MD 21046; 410-381-2580. Internet: [mth-railking.com](http://mth-railking.com). Cars in 1:43.

**New Ray Toys** – 14317 E. Don Julian Rd., City of Industry, CA 91746; 626-330-1711. E-mail: [lha@newrayusa.com](mailto:lha@newrayusa.com) Internet: [newrayusa.com](http://newrayusa.com). Aviation vehicles in 1:48, cars and trucks in 1:43.

**Norscot Group** – 10510 N. Port Washington Rd., Mequon, WI 53092-5500; 262-518-5305. E-mail: [jbender@norscot.com](mailto:jbender@norscot.com) Internet: [norscot.com](http://norscot.com). Construction vehicles in 1:50 and 1:64.

**Oakridge Hobbies** – Box 247, Lemont, IL 60439; 630-435-8655. Internet: [oakridgehobbies.com](http://oakridgehobbies.com). Construction and farm vehicles in 1:50.

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**Santana's Miniatures** – Box 5364, Lancaster, PA 17606; 800-946-5935. Cars and trucks in 1:43, 1:50, and 1:64.

**Scenery Unlimited** – 7236 W. Madison St., Forest Park, IL 60130; 708-366-7763. E-mail: [info@heimburgerhouse.com](mailto:info@heimburgerhouse.com) Internet: [heimburgerhouse.com](http://heimburgerhouse.com). Cars and trucks in 1:64.

**Spec-Cast** – 428 Sixth Ave. N.W., Dyersville, IA 52040. Internet: [spec-cast.com](http://spec-cast.com). Trucks in 1:64.

**Sword Models** – 107 Karl St., Berea, OH 44017; 440-826-3211. E-mail: [info@swordmodels.com](mailto:info@swordmodels.com) Internet: [swordmodels.com](http://swordmodels.com). Tractors, trucks, and more in 1:50.

**Tonkin Replicas** – 1110 N. 175 St., Ste. 210, Seattle, WA 98133; 206-542-6919. E-mail: [info@tonkinreplicas.com](mailto:info@tonkinreplicas.com) Internet: [tonkinreplicas.com](http://tonkinreplicas.com). Trucks in 1:52 and 1:64.

**Toys For Collectors** – 95 Public Square, Ste. 401, Watertown, NY 13601; 888-445-3322. E-mail: [tfusa@northweb.com](mailto:tfusa@northweb.com) Internet: [tfusa.com](http://tfusa.com). Cars, trucks, and more in 1:43 and 1:50. **CTT**

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COVER STORY

# Lionel takes the RIGHT TRACK in 1953

Successes – and a few marketing mistakes – characterize this key year

by Joe Algozzini and Roger Carp | photos by William Zuback

**L**IONEL ENTHUSIASTS usually point to 1954 as the high point of the company's postwar success. Great outfits, colorful and near-scale locomotives and rolling stock, and innovative accessories made that year significant and profitable for Lionel. But did you know that Lionel chalked up as many triumphs the previous year?

Notable models of both steam and diesel locomotives made their debut in 1953. So did some of the finest freight cars of the era. And there were some new accessories.

Why does 1953 get shortchanged by postwar fanatics? Admittedly, the years that followed cast a long shadow. More importantly, Lionel did not always present its new models in the best manner. Where the firm's engineers came through with flying colors, its marketing executives seemed for a few reasons to fall short.

### Expanding the line

In retrospect, it seems clear that Lionel in 1953 faced challenges from two directions. The nature of these challenges involved more than the need to bring more trains to market. The appearance and performance of those trains took on added importance. So did the ways that Lionel sought to reach the public and sell its trains.

On the one hand, Lionel had to retain that segment of the toy market that wanted inexpensive train sets. It had to compete vigorously with, among others,

Louis Marx & Co. at the lower end of the market without compromising the quality of its trains. For Lionel had built a reputation on the excellence of its products.

On the other hand, Lionel had to overcome competitors in the toy and scale model fields whose trains boasted greater realism and detail. Here, the upstart American Model Toys as well as the established American Flyer line from the A.C. Gilbert Co. proved to be the most formidable foes.

Neither of these kind of challenges was new. Lionel had been striving to enhance the realism of its models since the 1930s, sometimes doing so aggressively and sometimes halfheartedly. Competition for the limited dollars of kids and families with little disposable income had been a fact of life for Lionel for half a century.

Unfortunately, Arthur Raphael, a member of Lionel's inner sanctum, had



▲ A youngster looking for toy train action in 1953 might well have asked his parents – or Santa Claus – to bring him Lionel O gauge outfit no. 2211WS. Led by a no. 681 Turbine, it featured two operating cars (nos. 3461 lumber car and 3656 cattle car), the brand-new no. 6464-75 Rock Island near-scale boxcar, and the new no. 6417 porthole caboose.

died in June 1952. As executive vice-president and national sales manager, he had enjoyed the confidence of Joshua and Lawrence Cowen, the father-and-son team that ran Lionel. Only slowly would Alan Ginsburg, who replaced Raphael, feel at home there.

Raphael, as much as the elder Cowen, had learned how to gain balance on the tightrope that ran across the model railroading hobby between action-packed toys for children and realistic scale models for their fathers. His experience and brilliance had enabled him to fine-tune the selection of O and O-27 trains Lionel offered each year.

Since the end of the Second World War, Lionel had made only token efforts to maintain a presence in the world of scale models. To be sure, its replicas of the Electro-Motive F3 diesel (new in 1948) and a scale-length New York Central 4-6-4 Hudson steam locomotive (revived in 1950) had appealed to older and more serious hobbyists.

By and large, the Cowens and Raphael had preferred to develop small, toy-like trains and imaginative operating accessories likely to entrance children. They had sought to offer a wide assortment of sets and a moderately sized roster of locomotives and cars that might find buyers in almost every budget range.

The emergence of American Model Toys in the late 1940s made it impossible

for Lionel to continue to rely only on small passenger and freight cars if it hoped to remain the dominant player in the toy train market. AMT put out near-scale streamliners, boxcars, and other pieces of rolling stock that made inroads among O gauge hobbyists.

Lionel's engineers set out to beat AMT at its own game. First in 1952 came a group of four extruded aluminum passenger cars. Then in succeeding years, the roster of freight cars would be revamped, with longer and more detailed boxcars, flatcars, stockcars, and more replacing the short ones used in the late 1940s and early '50s.

This trend toward near-scale models can be said to have started with the

debut of the no. 6462 long gondola in 1949. Yet the more accurate view has it picking up speed in 1953. In this key year, Lionel brought out landmark boxcars (including an operating version), an automobile car, a triple-dome tank car, and a porthole caboose.

These freight cars reflected a superb balance between toy-like color and scale realism that company engineers pursued and refined well into the 1960s. At the same time, designers and others found ways of creating some low-end trains that did not look or run like low-end trains.

The major challenges facing Lionel were met with confidence and cleverness. Engineers and executives had good reason to be proud of what they unveiled in 1953.

### Marketing the new line

The engineers and production supervisors at Lionel's factory in Hillside, N.J., had held up their end of the bargain. Now it remained to be seen what Lionel's marketing team would do to promote the trains and accessories.

As was typical, advertising personnel showed off the new outfits and models in mass-circulation magazines, juvenile publications (including comic books), and Sunday newspapers. In addition, spots appeared on radio and television.

Nevertheless, the key method of showing off and marketing Lionel's line



▲ Looking at the front cover of the consumer catalog for 1953, you would never know that Lionel was in the process of redesigning its train line with near-scale models.



▲ Although Lionel hardly lifted a finger to promote its new near-scale boxcars, these four models launched the no. 6464 series that became one of the most celebrated in toy train annals.

for 1953 was its catalogs. First came the black-and-white advance catalog. Aimed at distributors and retailers, it hit the streets in the late winter. Six months later, after Labor Day, more than a million copies of the full-color consumer catalog went out.

The latter, a 40-page “wish book” coveted by kids everywhere, shed light on the strategies used by marketing and sales executives. Generally, their plans made sense and contributed to the nearly \$33 million in net sales Lionel reported for the year. Yet sometimes the “best and brightest” fell short and missed opportunities.

Start with the cover of the consumer catalog. There you see simple images of four trains. Smart move, except only one of them duplicated an outfit actually in

the catalog (the top-of-the-line no. 2190W four-car streamlined passenger train).

Of the four locomotives shown, three were new for 1953. Technically, though, the nos. 681 and 2046 were reissues, having been part of the line in 1950-51. (Who knows the reason for incorrectly showing a tender lettered for the New York Central behind the 2046.) Also, the no. 2353 Santa Fe F3 diesel was just a revamped no. 2343.

Truly new engines were nowhere in sight. The nos. 685 and 2055 small Hudson 4-6-4 locomotives and the no. 2037 2-6-4 steamer weren’t spectacular additions. Still, longtime customers might have been interested in seeing what was really new for 1953.

And wouldn’t it have been sensible to promote the new near-scale freight cars on the front of the catalog? Not to Lionel’s marketing and advertising men. The sole clue that longer and better cars were available was the no. 6415 triple-dome tanker. Barely a third of this

model was illustrated, so kids easily could have overlooked it.

Inside, readers discovered a page outlining the ways that “Lionel trains look and act like real ones!” Eleven pictures show how they captured the look of full-sized trains. That was a shrewd way of promoting the growing emphasis at Lionel on realism.

So was the illustration of a layout on page 3. The main purpose of that picture was to remind consumers of the advantages of Magne-Traction, added to most of Lionel’s fleet of locomotives to increase their pulling power and climbing ability.

The shortages of Alnico magnetic material – vital for Magne-Traction – had been resolved as the Korean War wound down in early 1953. As a result, steamers like the 681 Turbine, 736 Berkshire, and 2046, missing in action from the line for a year, could make a comeback in 1953. New entries could say they came with Magne-Traction.

▼ Among the best of Lionel’s O-27 outfits from 1953 was the no. 1507WS. This five-car freight train was led by a no. 2046 steamer and included two brand-new cars (nos. 6415 triple-dome tank car and 6468 Baltimore & Ohio double-door automobile car). It was the only set in 1953 that came with the popular no. 3472 automatic refrigerated milk car.





Elsewhere on page 3 the copywriter spelled out the ways that Lionel trains surpassed those put out by rivals. Implicit in the list of basic features – puffing smoke, built-in whistles and horns, and remote-control knuckle couplers – was the message that American Flyer, Marx, AMT, and HO scale trains didn't compare.

The eye-catching illustration on page 3 did one more thing. The incredible layout shown would encourage boys and their fathers to build model railroads.

That was significant because, as the leaders at Lionel knew quite well, the first group of youngsters born right after World War II was now at the perfect age for enjoying electric trains. They could be counted on to choose which of the new models they wanted and then ask, beg, and cajole their folks into making the right purchases.

No matter where those boys and girls lived, Lionel pushed the idea that there was room for a layout. That attic in a house in the city or the spare bedroom of an apartment. Maybe the basement of a new home built in the booming suburbs. All a family needed was a 4- by 8-foot sheet of plywood and a great layout could be theirs.

### Where to start in O-27

For that great layout, a boy or girl needed a train, of course. So youngsters were advised to dig into the consumer catalog. Just past the introductory pages a phenomenal array of O-27 and O gauge outfits was depicted, all in highly attractive settings.

A close look at any of the two-page spreads in the consumer catalog is enough to make you fall in love with whichever pair of outfits you come upon. The style and content of the illustrations, always strong at Lionel, jumped up a few notches in 1953.



Rare color variations of Lionel's early no. 6464 near-scale boxcars from 1953 whet the appetite of any collector. Check out the red-lettered no. 6464-1 Western Pacific (top) and the robin's-egg blue and the brown versions of the 6464-50 Minneapolis & St. Louis.

## RARE & UNIQUE items for 1953

**IN ADDITION TO** all the mass-produced models from any given year at Lionel, there usually are some difficult-to-find variations. These items differ from the common versions in color or detail. There are also some truly rare pieces, typically paint samples or engineering prototypes of which only a few examples are known.

Unusual variations from 1953 begin with the 1130 steam locomotive that was produced with the die-cast metal shell intended for the 2034 engine. Then there's the 685. This steamer generally came with its number heat-stamped below the cab window. However, examples with rubber-stamped numbering were also produced.

About the only collectible variation

among the new accessories was the black-painted metal tower on the 193. Be aware that the 138 water tower initially had an unpainted gray plastic roof in 1953, but soon an unpainted orange one became the norm.

The story gets really interesting when we turn to the new rolling stock, in particular, the no. 6464 boxcars. Perhaps the rarest items are the examples that were illustrated in the advance catalog. Not one of these uniquely decorated models has ever surfaced!

Until a few years ago, collectors had concluded that the green-painted 6464-50 shown in the consumer catalog was equally rare, perhaps just a figment of some artist's imagination. Then one genuine sample

appeared – it's one of 1953's great rarities.

But not the only rare color variations of the Minneapolis & St. Louis boxcar. One-of-a-kind examples, one painted cream and the other robin's-egg blue, also exist. So do models painted a true brown (that Lionel apparently used on the no. 3484 operating boxcar) and not the Tuscan Red that is typical for this common car.

The first car in the 6464 series, the silver-painted Western Pacific, typically has blue heat-stamped lettering. However, rare early examples come in red. Slightly less desirable are the scarce versions of the blue-lettered car with ribs along the interior of their roofs. Both variations represent the earliest production.



▲ The only truly new O gauge locomotive in 1953 was the no. 685. This small Hudson was available for separate sale and in just a single set. It was dropped after this year.

What caused kids then and middle-aged hobbyists now to linger over this catalog? Above all, the trains were drawn in such a way as to exude authority. These toys seem real – as powerful, heavy, and regal as could be imagined.

One glance created lasting impressions. You could smell the smoke billowing out of their stacks and hear their whistles. You could feel them rumbling over the rails.

Adding to the glory of these colorful illustrations were the settings in which the unidentified artists placed them. Like miniature travel posters, these depictions had freights rolling by factories and farms. Passenger expresses accelerated along mountains and stations. Often the trains worked in tandem with Lionel accessories.

Even outfits at the bottom of the line, like the two Scout sets, looked majestic, a tribute to the skills of the illustrator. They didn't cost much, \$19.95 and \$24.95, respectively, but the three-car no. 1500 and three-car no. 1501S didn't seem cheap or puny when shown racing in a mountain scene out of *National Geographic*.

These outfits deserve our attention because they revealed how Lionel was trying to meet the needs of every segment of the market. In fact, for the smaller outfit, it had redone its 2-4-2 steam engine. Designers came up with a new plastic boiler from the die that in the past had been for the nos. 1655 and 2034 locomotives.

As an aside, collectors should be aware that a scarce variation of the 1130 with a die-cast metal boiler has been reported. Research indicates that it was created when Lionel used previously unstamped 2034 castings that represented leftover stock.

Next came outfit no. 1511S, a four-car freight train led by the new 2037, an unheralded steam locomotive equipped with both smoke and a headlight. Three of its cars were basic items that were introduced in 1952 and included in the low-end sets.

The fourth model in the 1511S set, a no. 3474 Western Pacific operating boxcar, promised some action for owners. Additionally, collectors have learned that finding a genuine boxed version from 1953 is more difficult than is generally thought.

The new 2055, which boasted a smoke mechanism, led a pair of O-27 sets. Matched with a brand-new no. 6026W whistle tender in the no. 1503WS, it pulled four run-of-the-mill freight cars. The no. 1502WS – an underrated outfit now worth about \$2,500 in like-new condition – included three no. 2420-series passenger cars.

Three other sets featured a 2046, which had smoke and a whistle. For 1953, the number under the cab window was heat-stamped instead of being rubber-stamped as in 1950-51. The no. 1509WS work train included nos. 3469 operating dump car, 3520 searchlight

car, and 6460 crane car. Nothing new but a ton of play value here.

The other 2046 outfits brought the near-scale freight cars to the public's attention. Both the no. 1505WS and 1507WS included a no. 6415 triple-dome tank car. The latter set also had a no. 6468 Baltimore & Ohio automobile car.

The otherwise insignificant 1505WS stands out because it introduced the first entry in the no. 6464 series of near-scale boxcars. The plain silver Western Pacific model (known as the 6464-1) didn't stand out for its decoration. Yet rare red-lettered versions have surfaced, as have early models with ribs along the interior of their roof.

Completing the O-27 line were two diesel sets that repeated what had been offered in 1952. The no. 1464W passenger train was just an alternative to the steam-powered no. 1502WS. The no. 1467W came with four common freight cars and no. 2032 Erie Alco units on the point. The retail prices for these outfits had not changed.

Quite a variety of outfits, steam and diesel, freight and passenger, and a price range going from under \$20 up to \$70. Nonetheless, Lionel's marketers overlooked its two diesel switchers (nos. 623 Santa Fe and 624 Chesapeake & Ohio) and its no. 2031 Rock Island Alcos. Trains with these horses would have been solid additions to the lineup of sets.

### Steps forward in O gauge

Lionel complemented its ten O-27 outfits with eight O gauge sets (the same number it had released in 1952). Five of them came with a steam locomotive and tender (either the brand-new 685 small Hudson or the returning 681 or 736), and three used F3 diesels. Six outfits

One glance at these trains created lasting impressions. You could smell the smoke billowing out of their stacks and hear their whistles. You could feel them rumbling over the rails.



included at least one of the new near-scale freight cars.

Set no. 2201WS depended on the 685 for pulling its quartet of cars, three of which were common holdovers. The 685 steamer was a one-year wonder that used the same die-cast metal boiler casting as the 2055 yet had its own boiler front.

The fourth car was the no. 6464-50 Minneapolis & St. Louis boxcar. This newcomer was painted Tuscan Red, but the catalog showed a green paint sample that probably was based on an AMT model. One legitimate green Lionel car has been verified.

The reissued 681, now with heat-stamped numbering instead of rubber-stamped, led two outfits. The first of them, no. 2203WS, included three of the near-scale cars: nos. 6415 triple-dome tank car, 6417 porthole caboose, and 6464-25 Great Northern boxcar. A no. 3520 searchlight car rounded out this set, which retailed for the reasonable price of \$49.95.

Promising more action for an additional \$12.55 was the no. 2211WS. Its 681 was matched with two great operating cars (nos. 3461 lumber car and 3656 cattle car and platform). With them came the fourth of the new boxcars, the no. 6464-75 Rock Island, looking elegant in green. Last was a 6417 Pennsylvania RR porthole caboose.

The heat-stamped 736 weighed in as the key component of two five-car sets. First off was the no. 2205WS, which offered four of the new models, including both the 6468 automobile car and the 3484 operating boxcar. Finishing the list of cars in this outfit were a 6415 tanker, a 6417, and a 6456 Lehigh Valley short hopper.

Turn to pages 18 and 19 of the consumer catalog and you can admire the top O gauge steam outfit, the no. 2213WS. Led by a 736, it contained four of the same cars as the O-27 set 1509WS. In place of the 6456 hopper in the latter, this O gauge set had a no. 3461 operating lumber car. Interestingly, Lionel retailed both sets at \$70.

Also selling for that price were the diesel freight outfits. The same four cars were packed with the nos. 2207W and 2209W. Three were new, including the 3484 Pennsylvania RR operating boxcar. The two sets differed only in their motive power, with the first led by Santa Fe A-B-A units and the other by New York Central engines.

Twin 2353 Santa Fe A diesels were in charge of the no. 2190W, a four-car streamlined passenger outfit that Lionel had introduced in 1952 with 2343 F3s. This train came with one each of the nos. 2531 *Silver Dawn* observation, 2532 *Silver Range* "Astra-Dome," 2533 *Silver Cloud* Pullman, and 2534 *Silver Bluff* Pullman.

One snazzy set! And it raises a good question: Why didn't Lionel catalog the same or a similar passenger train led by its revamped no. 2355 Western Pacific F3s? The fact that the company never used its Western Pacific A-A units to lead any kind of outfit leaves us wondering how executives could have been so blind to its appeal.

Same thing with the two diesel switchers. Surely, a short O gauge work train that used the C&O or the Santa Fe NW2

▼ **Other memorable freight cars introduced by Lionel in 1953 include (clockwise from upper left) the nos. 6468 Baltimore & Ohio automobile car, 3484 Pennsylvania RR operating boxcar, 6561 cable car, 6511 pipe car, and 6415 Sunoco triple-dome tank car.**





▲ Lionel's engineers demonstrated their ingenuity with more operating accessories, notably (left to right) the nos. 193 industrial water tower, 497 coaling station, 445 operating switch tower (advertised but not sold in 1952), and 138 water tower.

would have been a hit. But these tried-and-true locomotives – now with three and not ten wire handrail stanchions – were offered for separate sale at \$25 and nothing else in 1953. What was the rationale at Lionel?

Even two of the brand-new freight cars, including one of the near-scale models, were not packaged with a single outfit. Both the nos. 6511 pipe car and 6561 cable car became stalwart parts of the cataloged line in the 1950s, yet for inexplicable reasons were ignored by Lionel executives in 1953.

### Can't overlook the back of the catalog

For the youngsters who spent hours studying the O-27 and O gauge outfits and then the separate-sale items, the accessories shown at the back of the consumer catalog were the icing on the cake. Buying more track and switches for their layouts was natural and provided Lionel with steady income. But these were the real prizes.

Every year it seemed that Lionel's engineers developed better and more

exciting freight loaders and railroad-related items. 1953 was no exception, starting with the nos. 193 industrial water tower (with blinking light) and 497 coaling station.

The fun began with a 497 when an operating dump car dropped its load of coal into the waiting bin. A lift hoisted the bin overhead and poured the coal into a storage hopper under the roof. The bin returned to the ground level, and coal would, at the press of another button, fall through a chute into a dump car or hopper below.

Besides these brand-new items, the list of accessories included the no. 138 water tower (a reworking of the no. 30, which was last cataloged in 1950) and the 445 operating switch tower. That animated item, although mentioned and pictured in the catalog for 1952, was not available to the public until the beginning of the next year.

Longtime favorites also returned for another year. Counted among these popular operating accessories were such classics as the nos. 125 whistling station, 145 automatic gateman, 154 flashing highway signal, 252 automatic crossing gate, 364 conveyor-type operating lumber loader, 395 floodlight tower, and 456 coal ramp and hopper.

More basic items listed in the final pages included bridges, bags of grass and coal, street lamps, smoke pellets,

sets of barrels and cattle, a maintenance kit, and replacement lamps. Can't forget the transformers. Four were illustrated, ranging from the 110-watt RW (at \$13.95) all the way up to the classic 275-watt ZW (at \$29.95).

### A pretty good year

Judging from the number and variety of cataloged outfits, the new near-scale rolling stock, and the look and performance of locomotives, there is no doubt that 1953 was a very good year for Lionel. Add in that net sales had never been higher, and you can understand why the Cowens and their lieutenants were breaking out the cigars.

In retrospect, the marketing could have been better and more could have been done to create attractive sets and promote the newcomers to the line. That's why we rate 1953 as a pretty good year. Maybe we're being too tough on the world's greatest toy train maker – or are just looking ahead to the triumphs of 1954 and beyond. **CTT**

*Thanks to Dale Ferguson and Mike Toth for their assistance and insights.*



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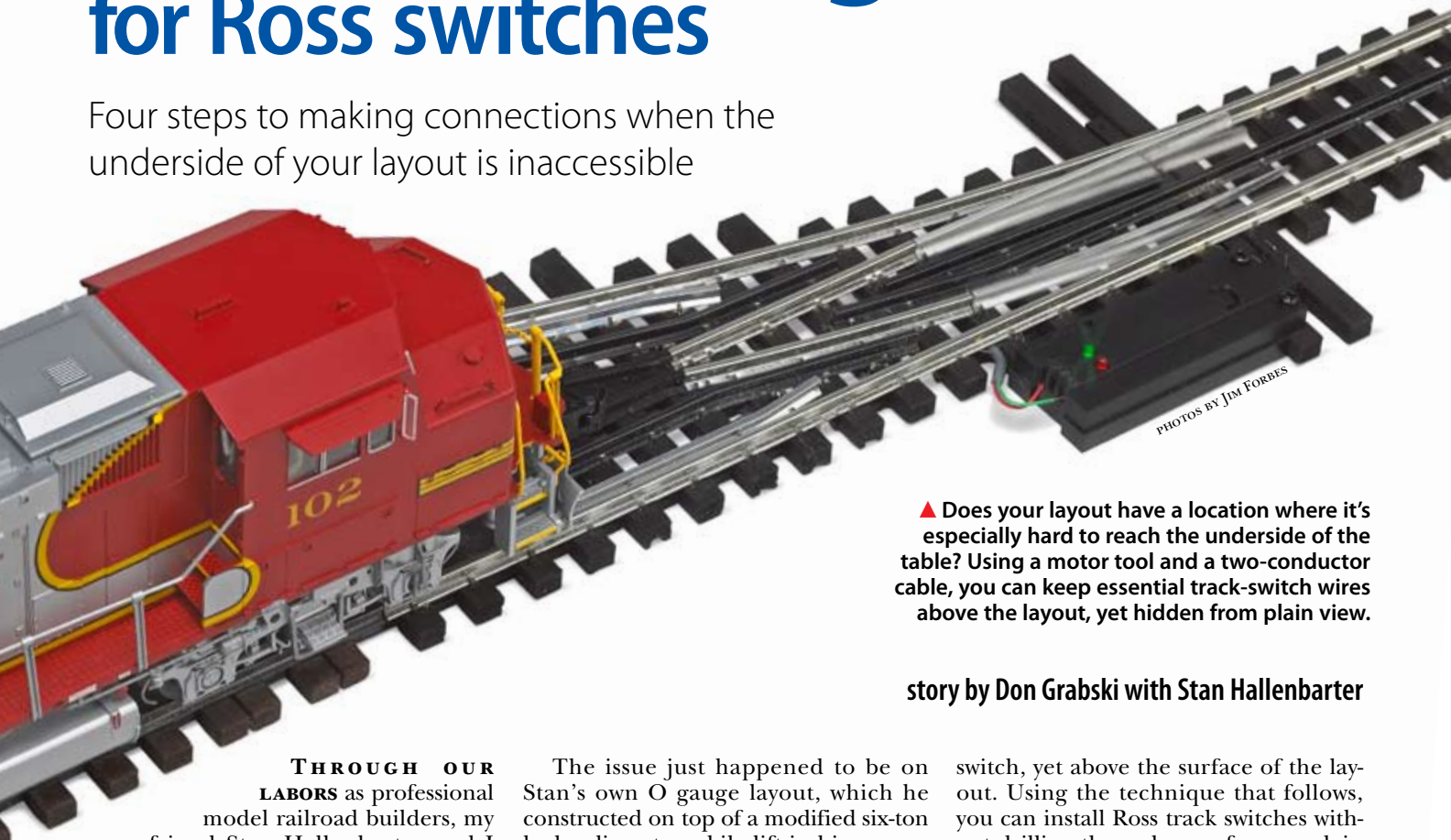
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# Surface wiring for Ross switches

Four steps to making connections when the underside of your layout is inaccessible



PHOTOS BY JIM FORBES

▲ Does your layout have a location where it's especially hard to reach the underside of the table? Using a motor tool and a two-conductor cable, you can keep essential track-switch wires above the layout, yet hidden from plain view.

story by Don Grabski with Stan Hallenbarter

**THROUGH OUR LABORS** as professional model railroad builders, my friend Stan Hallenbarter and I have had plenty of experience installing Ross Custom Switches on various layouts. On a typical layout project we'd drill holes through the layout surface and then feed through the wires, including the additional wires required to provide a non-derailing feature on Ross switches. This technique worked great until we encountered a layout that wasn't framed in a typical fashion.

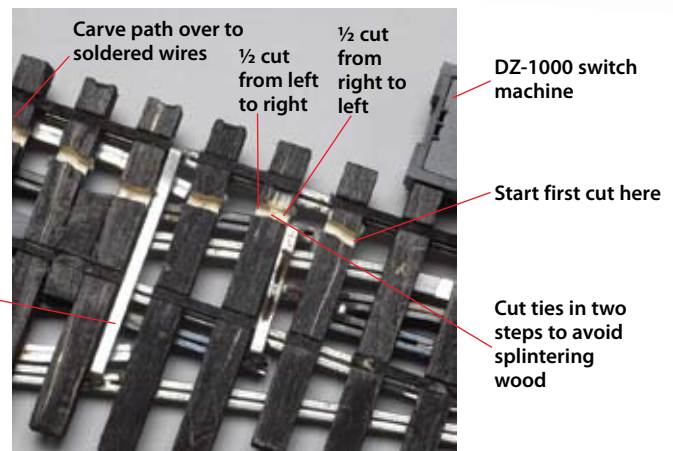
The issue just happened to be on Stan's own O gauge layout, which he constructed on top of a modified six-ton hydraulic automobile lift in his garage. Using a heavy steel apparatus made it possible to park a car and maintain a layout in the same garage space, but the arrangement did create a challenge in wiring the railroad. Since we couldn't drill through the lift's ½-inch-thick steel plating to route wires under the layout, we had to devise another option.

Our solution was to connect and route all the essential wires under the

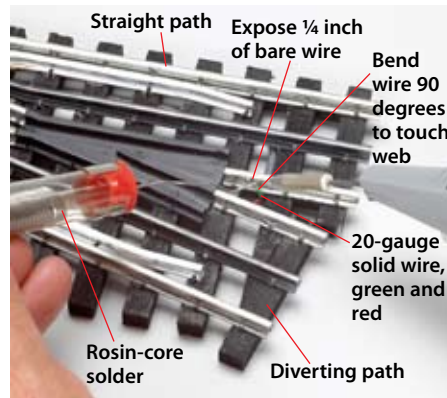
switch, yet above the surface of the layout. Using the technique that follows, you can install Ross track switches without drilling through your framework in a tight or inaccessible space. **CTI**

**Before you begin**, review the wiring scheme that's supplied with each switch. Diagrams are available through the Ross Custom Switches website ([rossswitches.com/technical/zmacinstruct.jpg](http://rossswitches.com/technical/zmacinstruct.jpg)).

**1 Place the switch** upside down on your work surface and determine how you'll route the cable through the ties and over to the attached switch machine. Add the router bit and cutting attachment to your motor tool, and then set it to cut a path deep enough (1/8 inch or less) for the cable. Practice cutting scrap lumber before you work on a switch, and always wear safety glasses.



**2** Find the two short sections of rail that lead into the track switch. These insulated sections serve as part of the non-derailing circuit and must be wired to the switch machine. Feed the red and green wires from the underside of the switch, and bend each wire at a 90-degree angle to reach the web of the rail. Now solder the green wire to the inner rail on the straight path and the red wire to the inner rail on the diverting path.



## Suggested tools and materials

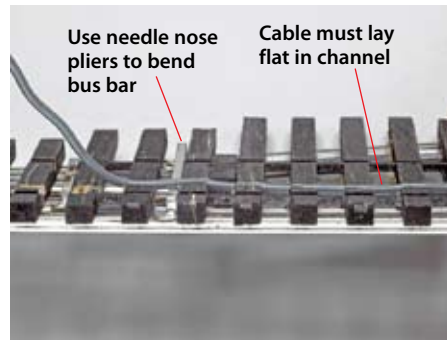
### Tools

- Motor tool with router attachment and 1/8-inch router bit
- Needle nose pliers
- Pin vise with no. 51 bit
- Soldering iron and rosin (not acid) core solder
- Wire cutters, flush-cut

### Materials

- 20- or 22-gauge solid wire
- Ross Custom Switches no. 30-106 track spikes
- Super or Gorilla glue

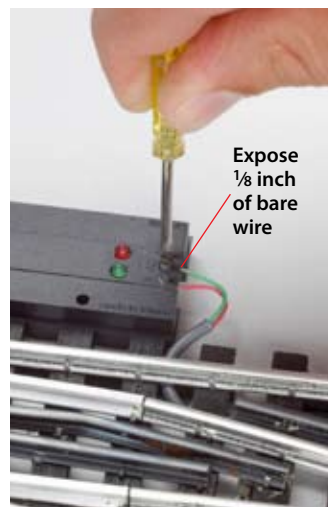
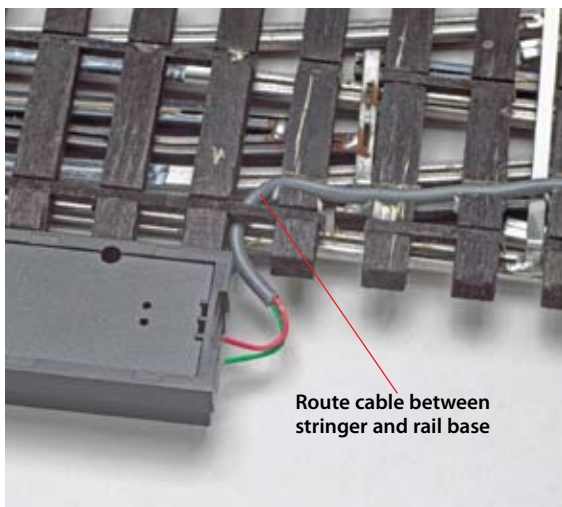
**3** After soldering one end of the wires to the rails, install the remaining length of cable into the routed channel. Use needle nose pliers to bend down the metal bus bar so the cable will lay flat. To avoid a short, don't allow the bus bars to contact rails anywhere other than at the end points. Route the cable to the switch motor, expose the bare wire ends, and then make the appropriate connections on the motor terminals.



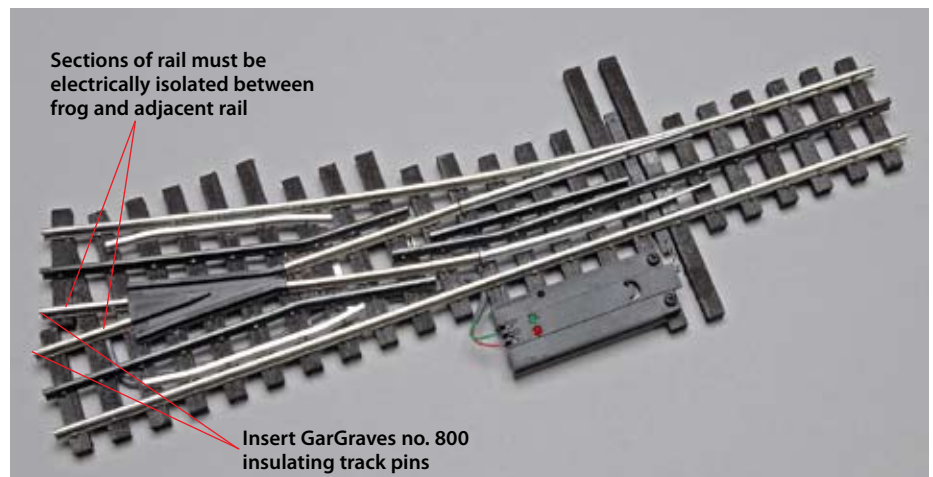
## Insulated pins for GarGraves track

**Prior to the introduction** of GarGraves no. 800 insulating track pins (gargraves.com), layout builders had to devise their own means of electrically isolating a particular section of track. While some builders simply cut a 1/8-inch gap in the outer rail, others preferred using modified insulating pins originally intended for O-27 tubular track.

If you're looking for an economical way to add numerous insulated sections to your layout, you may consider using plastic weed-trimmer line in lieu of commercial pins. With the aid of flush-cutting pliers, cut a 3/4-inch length of .065-inch-diameter line. Use needle nose pliers to grasp the piece at the center, and then carefully insert the line about 1/4 inch into the end of the rail.



**4** Before installing the track switch, add insulating track pins to the two inner control rails, where the red and green wires are attached. These rails must be insulated from the adjoining track in order for the non-derailing feature to operate. Once the switch is installed, add ballast to hide any exposed segments of wire from view. The non-derailing feature will work as designed, without you having to crawl under the layout.



# BUILD A MODERN



Guardrails assembled from finishing trim

Roadway deck made from 1/4-inch-thick hardboard

Base and cap made from dimensional lumber

I-beams made from 1/4-by 3/4-inch plain stock

Post made from 1-inch wood dowel

A Lionel no. 18271 SD90MAC eases its train into the yard, while various Artista figures labor above and below the roadway bridge. Turn the page to see how Kent constructed this bridge for his O gauge layout.



# HIGHWAY OVERPASS



Add a roadway bridge to showcase your vehicles

story and photos by Kent Johnson

**P**ROVIDING AMPLE ROOM for toy train trackwork is certainly the top priority for most layout builders. However, many layouts leave just enough space to include a roadway. No matter how long or how wide these roads may be, they make an ideal location to showcase die-cast metal vehicles.

While it's common to lay roads between, around, and sometimes across your tracks, there's yet another practical option that's not often seen on layouts. In the real world, roadway bridges are frequently used to keep cars and trucks moving above the busy railroad main lines and trains parked on sidings and yard tracks below. Wood, concrete, or steel roadway bridges are typically simple engineering structures, which makes them easy to replicate on a layout.

Although you can use a commercially built railroad bridge to ferry vehicular traffic high over railroad tracks, it's fairly easy to make your own O scale overpass using dimensional lumber and various pieces of wood finishing trim. **CTT**

## SUPPLY LISTS

### Dimensional lumber (pine)

2 by 4, 4-foot lengths  
2 by 2, 4-foot lengths  
1 by 2, 4-foot lengths

### Sheet lumber (Masonite)

4- by 8-foot hardboard, 1/4 inch thick

### Finishing trim (pine)

1/2- by 3/4-inch shelf edge/screen moulding  
1/2- by 3/4-inch base shoe  
1/4- by 3/4-inch plain stock  
1 1/16- by 1 1/16-inch quarter round  
1-inch-diameter dowel

## MISCELLANEOUS TOOLS AND MATERIALS

### Materials

No. 4 wood screws, 1/2 to 1 inch  
No. 6 drywall screws  
Carpenter's wood glue  
Liquid Nails construction adhesive

### Paint and trim

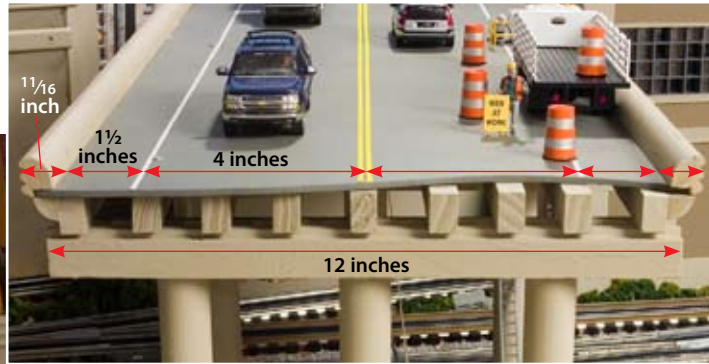
Pactra no. TT21 trim tape, white (testors.com)  
Pactra no. TT26 trim tape, yellow  
Rust-Oleum no. 2081 Light or no. 2089 Dark Gray spray primer (rustoleum.com)  
Rust-Oleum no. 7223 Sandstone textured spray paint

### Tools

Carpenter's square  
Circular or miter-cut saw  
Level  
Phillips-head screwdriver  
Power drill w/ countersinking bit  
Quick-Grip clamps  
Yardstick or tape measure



# BUILD A MODERN HIGHWAY OVERPASS



**1** Prior to construction, use a yardstick to measure your site. It also helps to study the designs of real roadway bridges. I planned my bridge to stand 7½ inches above the rails and stretch 36 inches across multiple tracks.

A typical roadway measures about 21 feet wide (5¼ inches in O scale), allowing 10½ feet (25⅞ inches in O scale) per lane. The added width on my 12-inch-wide roadway helps accommodate two wide lanes of traffic, shoulders, and guardrails.



Tonkin Replicas no. P00195 Freightliner rig (tonkinreplicas.com)

K-Line no. K94403 1998 Chevy Tahoe SUV

Athearn no. ATH90917 Ford C stake bed truck (athearn.com)

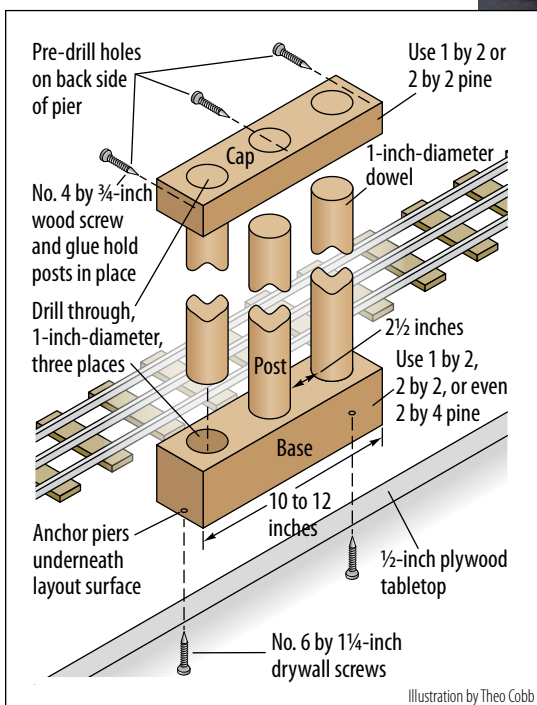
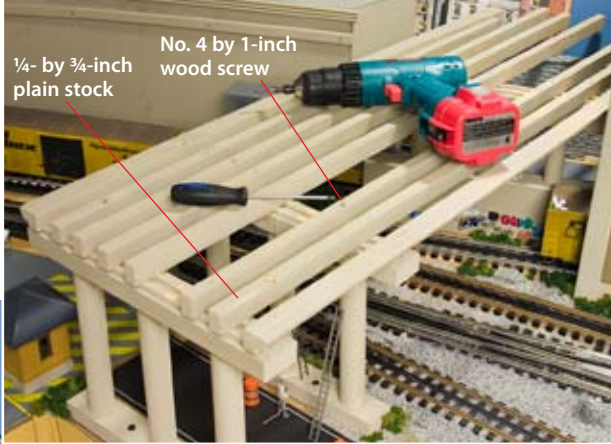


Illustration by Theo Cobb

**2** Each pier requires a base, posts, and a cap. To make a base and cap, drill evenly spaced, 1-inch-diameter holes into 2-inch-wide lumber. Cut dowel posts to the desired bridge elevation, and then build the parts into piers of equal height.

**FOR MORE INFO**  
classictoytrains.com

To purchase detailed information about building an elevated girder bridge, go to [classictoytrains.com](http://classictoytrains.com) and click on "Downloads." Then click on "Toy train layouts" and look for *Toy train scenery*.



1/4- by 3/4-inch plain stock

No. 4 by 1-inch wood screw

**3** Position piers so they don't interfere with passing trains. Cut the stock to length, and then screw the evenly spaced, parallel beams to the top of each pier. Be sure to countersink the screws into the beams.

A bead of adhesive, small screws, and clamps join the base-shoe trim and screen moulding used to form a guard-rail. To give the bridge more character, I glued a strip of quarter-round trim to the two outermost beams on each side.

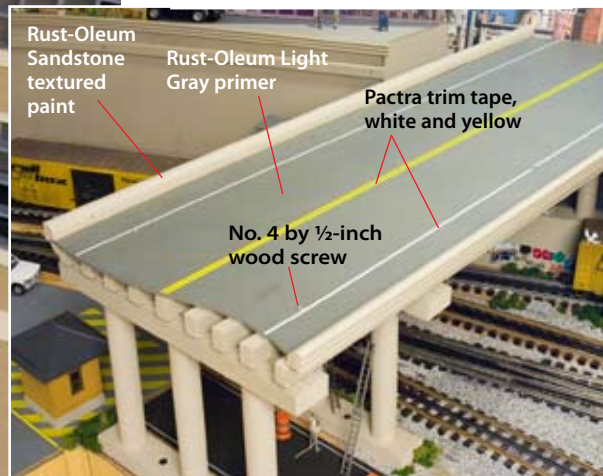


Atlas O no. 6990 45-foot Pines trailer (atlasO.com)

Motorart no. 10409 Volvo V70 wagon (motorartmodels.com)

Artista figures nos. 1234, 1370, 1376, and 1378 (artista.com)

Lionel no. 32922 highway barrels (lionel.com)



Rust-Oleum Sandstone textured paint

Rust-Oleum Light Gray primer

Pactra trim tape, white and yellow

No. 4 by 1/2-inch wood screw

**4** A coat of textured spray paint makes the bridge components look like concrete. Paint the deck with light gray primer to represent asphalt. After marking lanes with trim tape, glue the guardrails to the deck and then screw the deck to the beams. Lastly, use screws to attach the bridge to the layout.



**REAL ROADWAY BRIDGES** are simple structures often made of structural steel and concrete. A single steel or concrete span on this type of bridge can reach 100 feet (25 inches long in O scale) or more between support piers.

While the height of a roadway bridge can vary, those over railroad tracks can rise 21 feet (5 1/4 inches high in O scale) or higher above the rails. Specifications can be altered to fit your layout setting, but be certain the trains you operate will clear the support piers.





▲ 1. The squealing of the wheels on that Lionel no. 28098 4-6-0 Ten-Wheeler as it rounds a bend on Dick Freeman's O gauge layout distracts the deer on a ridge overlooking the main line. This scene is typical of the detailed work that makes this relatively small L-shaped railroad so attractive.

▶ 2. Even with a bowl of fresh milk, the farmer's wife can't lure the scared kitty off the roof of the chicken coop at the right side of the photo. Over on the left, Dick used scenery paper with an embossed stone design to change a wood-sided farmhouse into one built from stone.



# Clever track plan & great scenery

Dick Freeman creates the right mix in just 80 square feet

by Roger Carp

photos by Karen Freeman

**T**HE GREATEST SOURCE of frustration for toy train operators is not having enough space. They dream of having a gymnasium at their disposal and end up with a broom closet. Well, maybe a little more ... but not much.

Dick Freeman knows the feeling only too well. Yet he has managed to design and build a great-looking O gauge layout that is a blast to operate. And his L-shaped layout is just a smidge more than 80 square feet in size, equivalent to 2½ sheets of plywood. The keys to Dick's layout are a clever track plan and excellent scenery.

## What makes it clever?

The adjective “clever” isn’t generally used to describe a track plan. “Expansive,” “complicated,” or “basic” – those are the terms often chosen when evaluating the way networks of track are laid out for model railroads.

Even so, the first time I studied the plan for Dick's L-shaped layout, I kept saying to myself, “Clever, very clever.” A former HO scale modeler, Dick had come up with an exciting arrangement of track for the two main sections that offers a lot of opportunities for operating his freight and passenger trains.

The best way to look at Dick's layout is as a pair of interconnected sections, each of which has character of its own.

The long and narrow area on the left side of the layout, measuring about 4½ by 9 feet, leaves room for cool rural scenery, including a farm and log cabin in the low-lying hills. The track here consists of a



▲ Dick has used the knowledge gained from many years in HO scale modeling to design and build the imaginative and appealing O gauge layout that his wife, Karen, enjoys photographing.

rough oval with one reversing loop cutting diagonally across the middle.

On the right side of the train room, Dick designed a section that's 5 by 8 feet. This area – the fat part of his “L” – features an oval with spur tracks inside. Again, two remote-controlled switches enable trains to enter and move back and forth while dropping off or picking up cars.

If the left side of the layout would have a rural feel to it, then Dick made sure this second “stage” was going to serve a different purpose. Specifically, he created a slightly urban setting – not a metropolis, but a country town that had houses and businesses bordering paved streets, plus a railroad station where passenger trains are scheduled to stop.

Look at the track plan and you'll realize that, at the very least, it gives Dick the



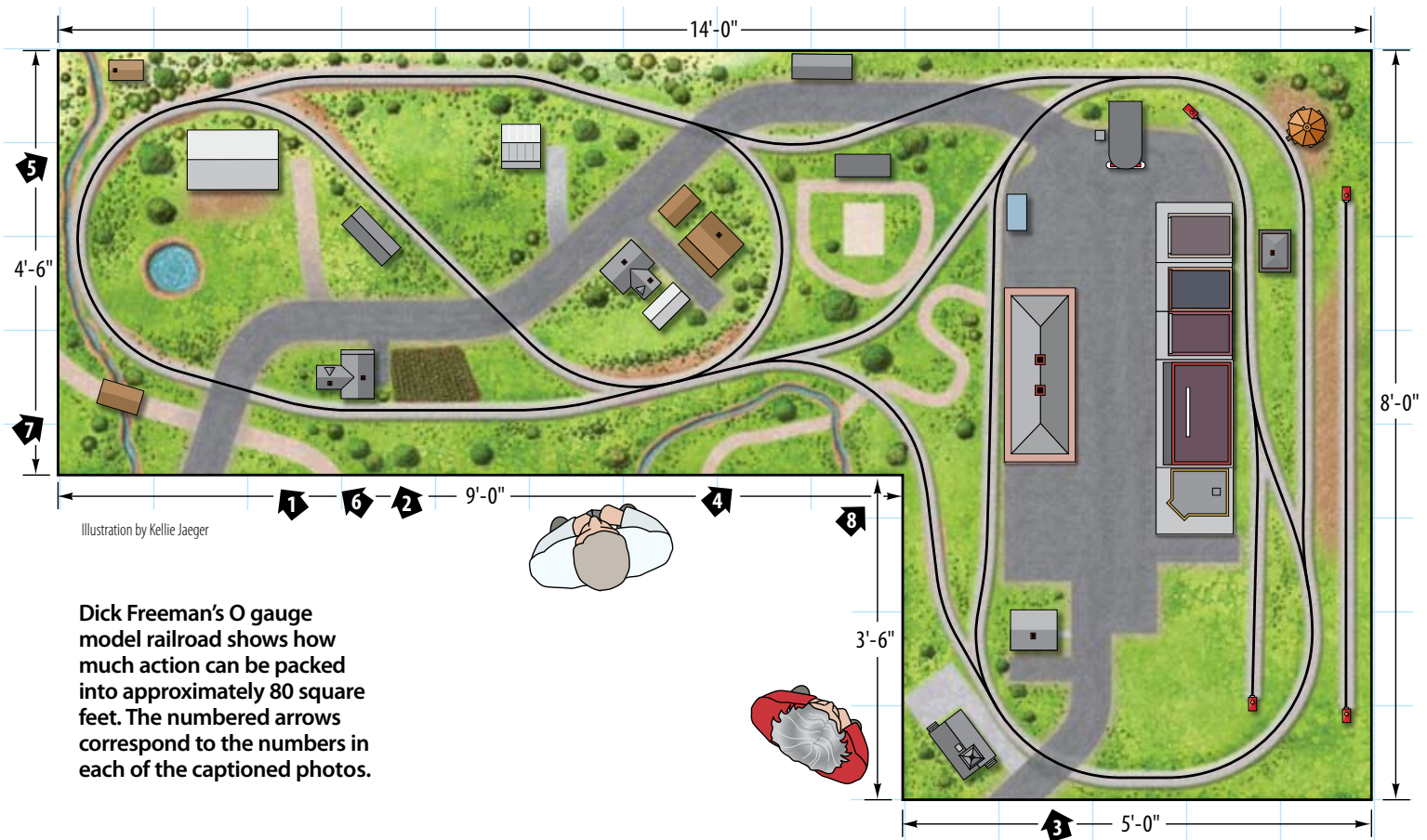


Illustration by Kellie Jaeger

Dick Freeman's O gauge model railroad shows how much action can be packed into approximately 80 square feet. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos.

## Layout at a glance

### Dick Freeman's O gauge layout

**Dimensions:** 8 by 14 feet (L-shaped)

**Track and switches:** Atlas O

**Motive power:** K-Line, Lionel

**Rolling stock:** K-Line, Lionel, MTH

**Controls:** Lionel ZW and CW-80 transformers with TrainMaster Command Control

**Structures:** Ameri-Towne, Lionel, Model Power, MTH, Plasticville, scratchbuilt, Twin Whistle, Walthers

**Vehicles:** Cararama, Ertl, K-Line, New-Ray, Road Champs, Yat Ming

**Figures:** Arttista

ability to run two trains simultaneously. One train can move around the rural loop, occasionally ducking into the line bisecting this section. The other, based in the town area, can dash around or move into the interior tracks.

That kind of operation was sure to bore Dick in short order. He liked having a pair of independent sections, but insisted on finding ways to connect them and make running his trains more challenging and a bit more complicated.

So Dick added six more switches to link the big loops. At its most basic, the plan gained two wyes, one in the center and the other on the upper side. With them, Dick was able to run trains from one section to another and reverse their direction. And he managed to do this without loading the tabletop with excessive track.

### Oriented Strand Board and TMCC

Before rushing out to the lumberyard, Dick finished painting his train room before starting the benchwork. Experience in the scale side of the hobby had reinforced for him the importance of having a comfortable, well-lit train room.

Once those tasks were done, Dick assembled the framework for his tabletop. He bought 2 by 4s for the legs and 1 by 4s for the frame. No need to spend too much time trying to create perfect benchwork,

although Dick sanded and painted the wood. Underneath, there are cabinets where he stores his tools and trains.

For the tabletop, Dick elected to go with  $\frac{7}{16}$ -inch "OSB" – Oriented Strand Board. This material, commonly seen on new-home construction, has the benefit of being stronger than plywood and coming in many thicknesses. One disadvantage is that OSB is more difficult to cut and drill than plywood.

A layer of Homasote came next, as it so often does on model railroads, for the purpose of reducing the sounds generated by operating trains. Dick decided that, rather than lay the Atlas O track and switches on the Homasote, he would use pieces of Midwest cork as the roadbed beneath the sections. Installation proceeded quickly.

After completing the benchwork, Dick turned to wiring the layout and installing a power supply on the control panel that he had assembled.

Familiar with electronics, Dick didn't worry about how he was going to connect every block on the railroad. He moved at a steady pace, adding feeder wires and connecting everything with crimp-type terminals and splices. Color-coding the wires is essential, he says. "Otherwise, the rat's nest under the layout would be unintelligible."



▲ 3. A freight train pulled by a K-Line New York Central RS-3 road switcher snakes its way from the town on Dick's layout into the countryside. He's modified virtually every one of the commercial structures with lights and details. The uncluttered control panel makes it easy to operate this compact L-shaped model railroad, which features Lionel's TrainMaster Command Control.

You may think that with a layout of this relatively small size, Dick would have preferred to go with a conventional-control system. However, he's acquainted with the features of Lionel's TrainMaster Command Control and so chose to install it.

On Dick's control panel, you'll find two Lionel transformers. A giant ZW and a smaller CW-80 provide the juice for his trains as well as the dozens of lights illuminating the streets and bringing good things to life inside the structures.

### Scenery made in modules

Dick took a deep breath when it came time to build scenery. "I had been dreading it because I doubted I could do a nice job making hills and forests."

Many readers of CLASSIC TOY TRAINS can identify with the uneasiness Dick had been feeling. But nervous as he was, Dick wasn't about to leave the tabletop bare. His trains needed places to visit and pass

► 4. The daily New York Central passenger train is such a familiar sight in town that hardly anyone pays attention to it. Youngsters in the playground concentrate on swinging higher and jumping rope faster. As for the retired gent dipping a pole into the stream, he just hopes the noisy Lionel Ten-Wheeler won't disturb any of the fish.

through. Fields and pastures, highways and hills, trees and ponds were critical. So were structures and vehicles and figures. Dick plunged ahead.

"And I'm glad I did," he says with a big smile. "Scenery turned out to be the most enjoyable part of building this lay-

out. Like so many guys, I discovered artistic talents that I didn't know existed in me. Using the right materials and taking my time made all the difference. The pride I take in my layout is even greater because I added the scenery."

Quite a testimonial! The results surely



## 15 ESSENTIAL DETAILS

**DICK FREEMAN** will be the first to tell you that some detail items, despite being small or common, make a world of difference when you want to inject personality into a scene on a layout. Here are 15 of his favorites. Many of these details are commercial items used right from their package. Others Dick crafted himself from simple materials in a few minutes.

- 1 Animals
- 2 TV antennas
- 3 Fences and guard rails
- 4 Painted lines on the streets
- 5 Diverse yet recognizable trees
- 6 Automobiles of the same vintage
- 7 Wires strung between line poles
- 8 Hedges and shrubs
- 9 Window shades
- 10 Interior lighting for structures
- 11 Road signs and billboards
- 12 Mailboxes and fire hydrants
- 13 Shutters on houses
- 14 Ballast for the track
- 15 Figures in bodies of water

support Dick's comments about the materials and techniques that he used. As for discovering unexpected talents, well, the look of this model railroad is truly outstanding. More than being fun to admire, it offers many lessons.

Dick's secret to making attractive scenery involved breaking down the tasks into sizable chunks. To be exact, he decided to build several "scenery modules" on separate pieces of plywood at his workbench. Later, he mounted these modules on the tabletop and blended them into the rest



▲ 5. Most of the residents of Dick's layout reside in town. Naturally, though, one old-timer insists on staying in the log cabin that his great-grandparents erected. Note the many scenery details that Dick added, such as the stack of firewood held in place by a pair of poles and the axe in the stump.

of the layout. This method will enable Dick to pick up and take the modules with him should he move in the future and wish to build a new layout.

Scenery takes different forms on any layout, and that was surely true with Dick's. For example, ballasting the track (but not the switches!) should be considered part of making scenery. Selecting the right size, texture, and color of rubber ballast may not affect the performance of Dick's trains, but it does enhance the realism of his layout.

Streets represent a second type of scenery. Dick chose roofing paper, a material that's easy to work with. To give everything the look of faded asphalt, he went over it with a mix of gray and white paint that he quickly wiped off with a paper towel.

Once the paper had dried, he used a white marker to add lines and highway signs on the pavement. He made certain the roadways abutted vegetation, sidewalks, and grade crossings, as they would in real life.

Of course, roads are merely the stage on which die-cast metal vehicles star. No wonder Dick carefully selected the automobiles and trucks that populate his side streets, boulevards, and parking lots. He investigated the scale of each vehicle. "A lot of stuff is sold for 'O gauge,'" he points out, "that is nowhere near the correct scale."

The rural section of the layout provided the greatest challenges to Dick, who would be the first to tell you that he isn't

an artist. Nevertheless, by becoming familiar with popular materials and techniques for making scenery and then evaluating the range of items sold by Scenic Express, he created a number of outstanding scenes.

For the hills, Dick laid wet strips of Rigid-Wrap (plaster-impregnated cloth) over wadded clumps of newspaper taped to the layout table. Elsewhere, he used pieces of foam board as his base. Once the Rigid-Wrap had dried, he painted the surface with Polly Scale water-based paints and sprinkled on colors and textures of ground foam.

Vegetation on the hillsides and near the right-of-way tended to be commercial products. Many of the trees, for example, evolved from kits marketed by Scenic Express.

Other trees represented Dick's handiwork. He harvested sedum that he found growing near his home. After the plants had dried, he colored them to create "trunks" and glued on ground foam to serve as the foliage.

### Details are the key

Nothing out of the ordinary to this point. So what, you may be asking, makes Dick's layout look so enticing? The answer, as his wife, Karen, will be the first to tell you, is details. Lots of them placed throughout the layout – but never haphazardly.

Pick a scene and then marvel at the details. A grassy ridge has a hunter aiming





▲ 6. Tourists come from far and wide to explore the farms and drive across a covered bridge in the little world that Dick created with central Pennsylvania as his inspiration. Seeing a New York Central steam engine on the point of this short passenger train is a bonus for them.

◀ 7. Let others toil on this hot July afternoon, the two boys want only to frolic in the "old swimming hole." Evocative scenes like this one, which uses as its focal point the Pennsylvania Dutch barn that Dick scratchbuilt, give his model railroad character.



▲ 8. Dick used structures from an assortment of manufacturers to create the small town that dominates half of his home layout. The streets and parking lot are made from roofing paper that Dick lightened with a mix of gray and white paper.

his rifle at an unsuspecting buck. An isolated church stands out because of the thick hedge next to it and the cross perched on its steeple.

A placid stream catches our attention because of the fisherman standing on the bank, poised to reel in a trout for supper. Far off in the town, two-story houses feature window shades and interior lighting that Dick installed. White picket fences surround many of the residences, just as folks would have erected back in the postwar decades.

Ready for more? How about the TV antennas on the rooftops? Wires connect all the buildings with line poles, as we'd expect. There's a mailbox in front of many of the houses. Don't miss the truck dropping off fresh milk.

Gazing at so many details, visitors to Dick's train room can't help but imagine the sounds and smells of life in town. Folks greeting each other on Main Street, peanut butter cookies baking, the announcement of the arriving local, exhaust fumes from an ancient pickup truck, and a youngster tossing the evening newspaper onto the steps of a porch, and so much more.

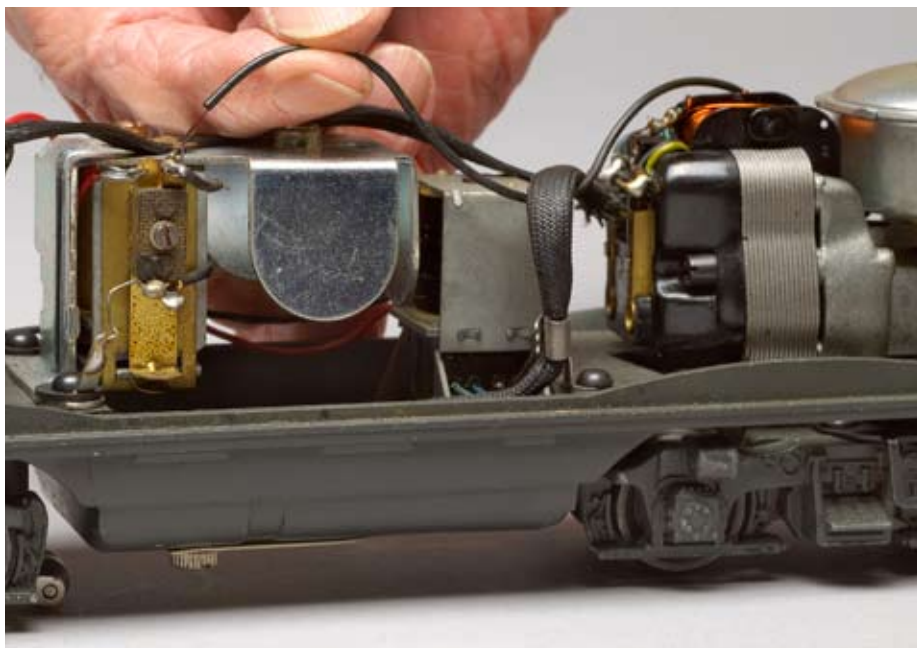
Dick developed a brilliant sense for knowing where to place his trees, vehicles, structures, and roads. The layout may be fairly small, but nowhere does it feel cramped. Every detail stands out, fitting in perfect harmony to the overall look. In this manner, Dick's O gauge railroad seems larger and more interesting to each viewer.

### Will it ever end?

Every hobbyist jokes about how his or her layout will never be finished. But I've always suspected that they do so with a degree of fear. In their voices I can detect an undercurrent of worry that says, "What will I do if this model railroad ever *is* finished?"

You may think that Dick feels the same way because his layout isn't immense and its level of detail seems complete. Rest assured that he has not lost a minute of sleep worrying about what he'll do next. "There are always more details to add," he says.

Also, operating trains on his 80-square-foot layout, especially when switching freight cars in town, has proved to be more fun than Dick expected. "I continue to learn more about upgrading the look and operation of my railroad. It should keep me occupied for a long time." **CTT**



▲ The wire from the horn-relay terminal should be connected to the solder eyelet on the back of the coil-coupler assembly.

◀ With a few simple tweaks, you'll be able to open the couplers of some post-war Lionel locomotives with the press of a horn button. Author Ray L. Plummer is holding a wire that runs from the horn-relay terminal to the coil coupler.

# Remote operation for **electro-couplers**

Enhance your Teledyne couplers

by Ray L. Plummer | photos by Jim Forbes

**I** WAS RECENTLY TALKING with a friend who wanted to adapt postwar Lionel electro-couplers. He wanted to be able to activate them with a conventional whistle/horn button rather than with command-control electronics.

That took me back to a simpler time, when experimentation with the innards of locomotives was possible, if not encouraged. Then, with a little tinkering, you could uncouple a train from anywhere on a layout.

We used the “Teledyne coupler” technology, which Lionel originally introduced in the late prewar era. With this technology, the DC surge overrides the AC track current and activates onboard whistles and horns. The DC surge could also be redirected to operate couplers. Since operators of this technology were forced to choose which feature to activate – the whistle or the coupler – the Teledyne couplers didn't garner favor and were discontinued.

This basic idea can be used with F3 and Alco diesels, as well as with GG1 electrics (except for the no. 2332) made before 1955. All of these locomotives used coil-type knuckle couplers and sported built-in horns. Since there were

several variations in the horn-relay brackets, and in the number and position of the terminals on the front of the relay itself over the years, we have to generalize somewhat.

However, the clear schematic diagram should be easy to follow and adapt to your particular locomotive.

## Here's how to do it

First, remove the dry cell battery.

Second, disconnect the horn-unit wire from its terminal on the relay face.

It is essential to keep the horn relay (and its bracket) well insulated from the

locomotive frame. Make sure that the insulating pad and fiber shoulder-washers (or whatever Lionel used on your particular locomotive) are still in place under the relay bracket and haven't deteriorated over time.

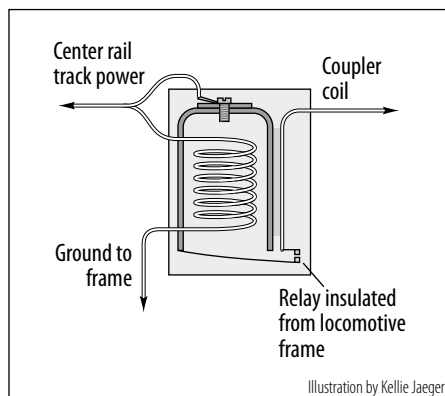
Third, feed center-rail current to the relay frame (and bracket). The easiest way to accomplish this is through a solder lug inserted under the machine screw on top of the relay.

You'll need to run a wire from this new solder lug to a source of third-rail power. The easiest spot to place this is probably the lug on the side of the reversing unit, which is already connected to several other wires.

Use a very supple wire. Run it from the horn-relay terminal (the one formerly connected to the horn itself) to the solder eyelet on the back of the coil-coupler assembly.

Make sure that the very thin wire from the coupler coil remains in place. If you wish, disconnect the wire from the collector shoe. If you leave the wire in place, the coupler will work with either the whistle/horn button or a conventional UCS track section.

It's up to you how to use it. **CTI**





▲ Since 1995, Scale Models, Arts, and Technologies has built approximately 100 layouts. Hi-rail railroads filled with superb structures, landscape, and detailing are a specialty, as is quite evident from seeing Don Williams' O and S gauge layout (left). The craftsmen at SMARTT have no trouble shifting gears and designing a toy train display for the public, as seen by the Standard and O gauge layout at the California State Railroad Museum in Sacramento (right).

## CTT visits

# An innovative custom layout builder

Scale Models, Arts, and Technologies builds state-of-the-art layouts

by Roger Carp  
photos by William Zuback

**HOW DID YOU DESIGN** and build your layout? Most readers of CLASSIC TOY TRAINS would answer that they relied on a pencil and graph paper. They used hand tools and an electric jigsaw to cut the wood for their benchwork. And they made the scenery out of window screen, plaster, and house paint.

All 20th-century techniques that still work today.

But substitute three-dimensional CAD software for a pencil and paper, computer-guided routing tables for handsaws, and 3-D computer software for trial-and-error scenery, and you've entered the 21st-century world of Michael Hart and his staff of professional designers, model makers, and electrical gurus at Scale Models, Arts, and Technologies Inc. (SMARTT).

## Phone calls, DVDs, and answered questions

**CTT RECENTLY** visited SMARTT at its 7,000-square-foot headquarters in North Miami Beach, Fla. There, in the firm's comfortable, brightly lit offices and workshops, we watched as progress was made on several toy train and scale model layouts. We talked with Michael and the 14 men and women on his staff, who design, build, wire, and landscape the layouts under construction.

We watched one craftsman laying track while another installed a bridge on an adjacent layout. Elsewhere, a modeler used her computer to manipulate digital plans for an O scale factory. Wiring preoccupied yet another employee crouched under the benchwork of a third model railroad.

How exciting to see layouts of various sizes and scales being built in such close proximity. But where does the process begin?

"A phone call starts the ball rolling," Michael said, almost reading my mind. "Someone telephones or emails our offices and asks what services we provide."

The answer to that question is, "Everything you can imagine and more."

SMARTT can design layouts and turn over construction to the hobbyist. It can follow to the next stage and build benchwork, lay track, and add wiring in its workshop before delivering a layout to a hobbyist's home. Or it can proceed to the finish line by adding all the scenery, structures, and details before the layout is delivered.

When an experienced model railroader or a newcomer to the hobby calls, Michael spends time learning what he or she wants. Often the person is interested in a layout for home. Sometimes, the voice at the other end of



▲ Designing, constructing, and installing a layout is a team effort at SMARTT. Leading at every step is Michael Hart (second from right), its founder and president. Ably assisting him are (left to right) Alex Vasserman (art director), Raymond Potter (director of creative services), Mel Ivanov (senior project manager), and Tom Kapatelis (general manager).

the line is speaking on behalf of a museum, a shopping mall, or another public institution that wants a layout.

Regardless of who is calling or the size of the layout requested, Michael listens carefully. This is a crucial stage, for he is building a relationship with a client that may last years beyond the time needed to design and build a model railroad.

Michael strives for a solid relationship because he believes in the importance of good communication and keeping his clients informed. "How often," he asked, "do you pay someone and then have to keep after them? Not so with us! You may be the one paying us, but we're usually the ones calling you to discuss your layout."

First, Michael shares the history of SMARTT. He notes how, since 1995, his firm has built dozens of layouts of all sizes and scales.

Then Michael discusses rates and suggests visiting the SMARTT website ([smarttinc.com](http://smarttinc.com)). He also offers to send

a 35-minute DVD that shows trains operating over some of the finest of the model railroads the firm has built. Other segments of the DVD focus on the design, construction, and installation phases.

Michael suggests the prospective client fill out the firm's simple three-page questionnaire so SMARTT can learn more. Some questions are general while others are specific, related to the space available for a layout, track preferences, desired control system, scenic and structure themes, and animation.

Once this questionnaire has been filled out, Michael

studies the answers, discussing what he has read with his chief associates, led by Tom Kapatelis (general manager), Raymond Potter (director of creative services), and Mel Ivanov (senior project manager). Chiming in with thoughts and ideas is Alex Vasserman (art director).

In the meantime, Michael and the client place their signatures on a letter of intent. This authorizes SMARTT to move ahead with the design. A SMARTT employee travels to the delivery site to obtain exact measurements of the room or building in which the layout will be housed.



◀ Prospective clients are given a 35-minute DVD that shows model railroads built by SMARTT and outlines how the firm designs its layouts, builds the benchwork, lays track, and handles the electronics and scenery. Individuals who want to proceed further fill out a questionnaire to help Michael Hart and his crew design a unique layout.

## Design and options



▲ Here's where things get exciting. The three-dimensional design shown on Raymond's computer screen represents a few months of work based on a client's wishes as well as the imagination and experience of SMARTT's managers. It promises to be, in Michael's words, "a very exciting design that delivers both a challenging and a fun-to-operate track plan that will never get boring."

**THEN THE FUN** really starts! Maybe the client wants an O gauge layout that captures coal mining in the Appalachian Mountains in 400 square feet. Or the museum wants a display that shows how the Santa Fe and Southern Pacific dominated railroading in southern California.

Whatever the person or organization desires, Michael begins creating a unique and imaginative layout. "We thrive on design challenges," he says. "A unique design, coupled with uncompromising construction quality, is the key to producing a great layout."

Thanks to the computer programs that are vital elements of SMARTT's design, engineering, and planning process, there is soon a complete set of engineering drawings and a series of scale renderings executed in three dimensions.

Even better is a video animation that shows the imagined layout from every conceivable angle. Watching this DVD is like walking around the railroad, although it exists only in a virtual world.

The scale plans, 3-D renderings, and DVD virtual animation are sent to the client for approval. Accompanying them is a detailed price quotation.

Michael, aided by Tom and other notable members of the team, sets forth estimates of how much labor it will take to build and install each aspect of the layout. Also included are the costs of materials, shipping, and travel.

However, not every layout is built to the ultimate degree when it leaves SMARTT's workshop.

"We will do only as much as a client requests," Michael says. That means

some people want only the benchmark built, the track laid, and the electrical work completed, but insist on doing their own scenery work. So we take care of those early steps and install the layout.

"For another," Michael continued, "we give clients choices about the depth of detail and extent of work that can be done with track, scenery, structures, and electrical.

"Take the structures. With the 'basic' option, you get commercial buildings to which we do some painting and minor detailing. With the second option, we do some kitbashing, plus more painting and detailing. The third option can have many scratchbuilt buildings that are completely custom painted and weathered, often with interior lighting and highly detailed interiors."

## "A gigantic jigsaw puzzle"

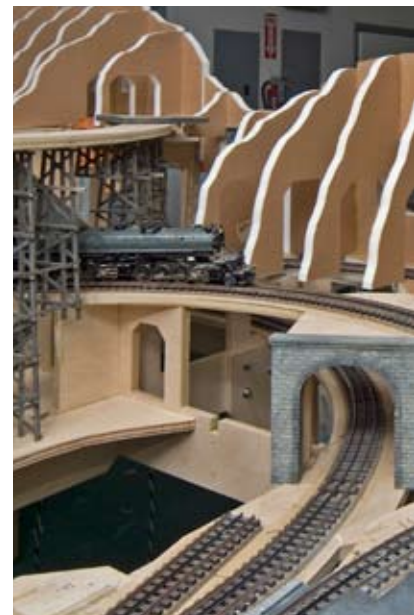
**SEEING THE COST** figures is a sobering experience for most clients, Michael said. Still, their memories of the animated DVD showing what their future layout can look like almost always overcome any doubts.

"Once they've seen the design," Michael pointed out, "more than 90 percent of our clients write the checks and have us move forward. They realize that the quality they're seeking requires the best-skilled people, and there is a cost to that.

"Besides, most folks consider their dream layout to be an investment that will last beyond their lifetime. It can be passed on to their children and grandchildren."

Because SMARTT's layouts are built in modules, they can be dismantled in just a few days and then reassembled at another site.

The process begins on the computer, where designers engineer the entire layout as





▲ The plywood “puzzle pieces” for the modules on this O gauge layout are cut out by a computer-controlled router before being assembled to form the benchwork and subroadbed. The finished pieces fit together precisely. Now GarGraves flex-track and Ross Custom Switches turnouts, plus a few Lionel accessories, are being installed. In the foreground you can also see where custom-made catenary poles will be erected along the main lines.

self-contained sections. Each section, or module, consists of numerous components that await assembly. Later, finished modules are joined together to form the layout.

No wonder Michael referred to each model railroad as “a gigantic jigsaw puzzle.”

The components that make up each module include the framing parts of the benchwork, subroadbed, elevation risers, bridge and tunnel locations, electrical planning, and more. All grades, clearances, and tolerances are precisely determined to ensure smooth running of even the largest locomotives and rolling stock.

◀ The framework for a mountain is cut out from foam board by a computer-guided router. Then tunnel portals are put into position, a scratchbuilt wood trestle is added, and clearances for large articulated steam locomotives are tested before this O gauge layout is wired for command control, specifically, the Digital Command System from MTH.

Once the design work has been completed, the parts are cut on a CNC (computer numerical control) router from ¾-inch cabinet-grade plywood. SMARTT’s computer software guides each cut of the router’s bit as the wood moves across the router table.

When everything has been cut, workers fit the benchwork and subroadbed together and mate the modules using precision-built fixtures. “The result,” Michael said, “is a modular frame that assembles with the accuracy and strength of an aircraft frame.”

Tom pointed out that SMARTT relies on “a system of custom jigs and fixtures in all trackwork assembly to ensure perfectly smooth transitions on curves, grades, and turnouts and to eliminate faulty performance.” Depending on which track

option a client chooses, the curves may be superelevated and even include easements, the rails and ties painted to look weathered, and the track ballasted.

SMARTT has even come up with its own system to scratchbuild the realistic catenary that some layout owners want.

Other decisions that are faced by clients at this early stage of work on their layout include what kinds of tunnel portals and bridges they want. SMARTT generally uses modified commercial tunnel portals or scratchbuilds them.

Custom viaducts and bridges of all sizes and styles are computer-designed with parts cut by lasers or CNC routers. These impressive bridges have become company specialties, and they show up on many of SMARTT’s layouts.



## Electrical and scenery



▲ What a great scene! The low bluffs in the foreground, the rugged mountains behind, and the backdrop in the distance complement one another in creating a truly realistic setting for this S scale layout. Note how the landscape extends down into the fascia in front.

**WITH COMPUTERS** playing key roles in designing the model railroads SMARTT builds, it came as no surprise to learn the firm often promotes command control. SMARTT personnel are experts on the Digital Command System from MTH, though they are just as familiar with Lionel's TrainMaster Command Control, two-rail DCC, and conventional wiring.

Just about every one of the O gauge layouts that leaves its shop, even the most basic, is wired so several trains can be operated simultaneously regardless of which control system is used.

"Our electrical work is designed and built to provide trouble-free operation to last a lifetime," Michael said. SMARTT uses only the best wire, connectors, and components. It devises a logical wiring plan that's carefully explained in a user's manual written for the owner of a particular layout.

On each railroad, Michael explained, "the command-control system or the conventional system is

divided into relevant electrical zones. That way, each main line can be electrically isolated from the other ones and controlled with separate power supplies to obtain better signal strength performance and even power distribution."

SMARTT offers several electrical options, such as occupancy detection, signaling, control panels, and building lights. There's more to think about on the subject of block detection and occupancy in areas where the track is hidden and on/off switches control power to sidings and yard tracks.

Operating signals from Custom Signals, MTH, or other manufacturers can be installed if clients want more animation. They can be integrated as part of a fully functioning automatic signal or block system.

A full-featured control panel is another electrical option that's available from SMARTT to show track occupancy, turnout-position, and uncoupler activation.

While the electrical wizards on the staff deal with



▲ Details transform a modeled scene into a moody vignette. This one isn't finished, but already there are figures, fire hydrants, parking meters, manhole covers, dogs and birds, seams on the sidewalk, signs, and cones in the road. Plus, the structures have been weathered.

the wiring, artists handle the scenery. They are familiar with every technique in the book, and their knowledge of diverse methods and materials contributes to layouts that never have a uniform look or feel.

A decade of success has taught SMARTT's artists that scenery needs the right foundation. Scenic contours for mountain ranges, canyons, and valleys are usually drawn out on the computer as separate scenic modules.

These modules are designed to precisely follow the subroadbeds they mate to, regardless of the nature of the terrain and the dictates of adjacent bridge abutments, and tunnel portals.

The components that make up these modules are cut from hard foam on the CNC routers and assembled to form the ribs of all the scenic areas. These frames are fitted with a "skin" and covered with plaster, urethane foam, or Sculptamold. The shell gets "a realistic color texture with paints, washes, dry-brush highlights, and ground foam."

Alex Vasserman, SMARTT's art director, acknowledged that the scenery finishing methods used at SMARTT are pretty conventional up to a certain point. He commented on the subtle tones and shading in the colors selected, the assortment of ground textures and materials, and the extensive range of natural vegetation utilized.

"We use purchased and scratchbuilt molds and hand-carved plaster and foam to create realistic rock formations and cliffs." Alex launched into a discussion of the three-step technique SMARTT perfected for making all kinds of roads.

"Realistic depiction of water areas can make or break the scenic believability of a layout," Michael has learned. So his employees have mastered the use of various materials to make the most effective water.

"Nobody does seasons as well as we do," Mel Ivanov asserted. The coloring and effects to create a summer or winter scene are some of what SMARTT does best.



# Structures and installation

**THIS IS THE** point at which a client's eyes tend to grow wider and wider, dreaming of how many structures can be fit onto the layout. Naturally, the prevailing feeling is that more will be better – and they should be scratchbuilt, weathered, illuminated, and loaded with detail.

So Michael must explain that structures can inflate the cost of a railroad. Nice as the scratchbuilt depots and industries may be, prudence often dictates using commercial structures and kitbashing new ones as ways to hold down expenses.

Still, customers generally find ways to keep within their budgets and still have buildings unlike those on other layouts. There isn't anything that SMARTT can't produce: farms, lineside structures, city terminals, mines, warehouses, urban business fronts, mills, courthouses, suburban houses, and the list goes on.

Clients spell out on questionnaires and in conversations whether they want injection-molded kits made out of the box or mingled with parts from others to form unique structures. Craftsman-type kits that use resin castings, laser-cut wood parts, or plaster pieces have appeal, especially because they lend themselves to superdetailing.

The experience that SMARTT has had in designing and fabricating architectural and engineering models and dioramas helps when a client requests scratchbuilt structures.

Raymond elaborates on the techniques used to produce the most unique structures. As he explains, "We often take photos of key locations from the client's life, work them up in the computer, and duplicate them in miniature."

No idea is too exotic for SMARTT's artists. Once the designing is complete, lasers and CNC routers produce



▲ Raymond Potter, director of creative services, offers some tips to modeler Rali Mitzova. Using photographs and plans of actual buildings, SMARTT constructs scale models of contemporary structures as well as stations, factories, houses, and more from the past.

the parts and the firm's artisans finish the job.

Before long, it's time to test the modules that constitute a layout rapidly approaching completion. When every one is operating flawlessly, Michael makes arrangements with the new owner for the layout to be delivered by truck. On average, nine months have elapsed since the order to go ahead was given to SMARTT.

Michael likes to joke that the layout system developed at SMARTT keeps peace in his clients' families. Why? Because SMARTT layout installations happen in a matter of days, not months.

On that special day, when the client flashes a huge smile, the modules are delivered, assembled, and locked together. The final track sections that span each module are secured, wired, and tested. Scenery joints between modules are blended.

A few days later, Michael "hands his client the keys." The most pleasing comment he usually hears from the client is "Wow! This is way more than I expected!"

## Ready for more

Once the owner of the new layout is satisfied, Michael, Tom, and the others head back to Florida. Waiting for them will be more layouts to build, questionnaires to read, and telephone calls to answer.

Having a professional builder design and construct a toy train or scale model railroad may not be for everyone. But for those who want a layout that takes full advantage of 21st-century technology, the services offered by SMARTT are right up to date. **CTD**

*Scale Models, Arts, and Technologies Inc. can be contacted at PO Box 600505, North Miami Beach, FL 33160; 305-949-1706; smarttinc.com*



To see two model railroads that SMARTT built using the process outlined here, go to [classictoytrains.com](http://classictoytrains.com) and click on "Train layouts." Then click on "Layout visits" and check out the layouts belonging to Bob Porges and Don Williams.



▲ Scratchbuilt and kitbashed structures line the boulevard of an O gauge layout soon to be completed. Michael and his staff will transport the modules to the client's home, where they will be assembled and tested.

# FasTrack up-and-over oval

This legendary 8- by 14-foot O gauge plan recalls model railroading's origins



by Neil Besougloff | Illustrations by Kellie Jaeger

**T**HE TRACK PLAN SHOWN on these pages is famed model railroader John Allen's first HO scale Gorre & Daphetid layout, which dates to the late 1940s.

John, as many hobbyists know, was a groundbreaking model railroader who inspired literally tens of thousands of layout builders over two generations with his serious, yet whimsical Gorre & Daphetid Railroad (pronounced "Gory and Defeated").

While many hobbyists recall his rugged floor-to-ceiling scenery and soaring bridges thanks to dozens of photos published in model railroading magazines over three decades, not all realize that the origin of his 24- by 32-foot empire was an up-and-over oval smaller than a sheet of plywood. John built it before he moved to a hillside California residence that became home to the ultimate Gorre & Daphetid.

This Lionel FasTrack O gauge plan, fitting into an 8- by 14-foot space, is fairly faithful to the original (featured in the Kalmbach book *101 Track Plans for Model Railroaders*). However, some small tweaks were necessary to adopt John's plan to sectional track.

Enlarging the original HO plan to O gauge has put the center of the layout well beyond arm's length. At the very least, you'll want to make the lake bed a hinged access hatch or omit the "water" material as a matter of convenience.

FasTrack is tricky to work with for this plan. FasTrack curves, like other types of sectional track, follow a specific geometry in which standard curve sections are measured in increments of 22.5, 30, or 45 degrees. For example, four 45-degree curves would equal a half circle (180 degrees) and six 30-degree curves would equal a half circle. But a rambling half circle made of three 45-degree curves and two 30-degree curves will never equal a complete 180-degree turn without turning to a hacksaw.

Keeping faithful to the original Gorre & Daphetid requires an asymmetrical mix of FasTrack O-48 (30-degree) curves and O-72 (22.5-degree) curves. Mixing those sections means everything doesn't always add up to 180 or 360 degrees, resulting in some joints where the track needs to be "fudged" just a tiny bit to connect.

Track without built-in roadbed can be "fudged" more easily than FasTrack and MTH's RealTrax. On this plan, there are enough track joints surrounding the "fudged" areas (in front of the Gorre depot and just to the right of the turntable) to get the job done. **CTT**



For information on John Allen's first HO scale Gorre & Daphetid layout, go to [classictoytrains.com](http://classictoytrains.com) and click on "Train Layouts." Then click on "Layout visits."

## Suggested accessories

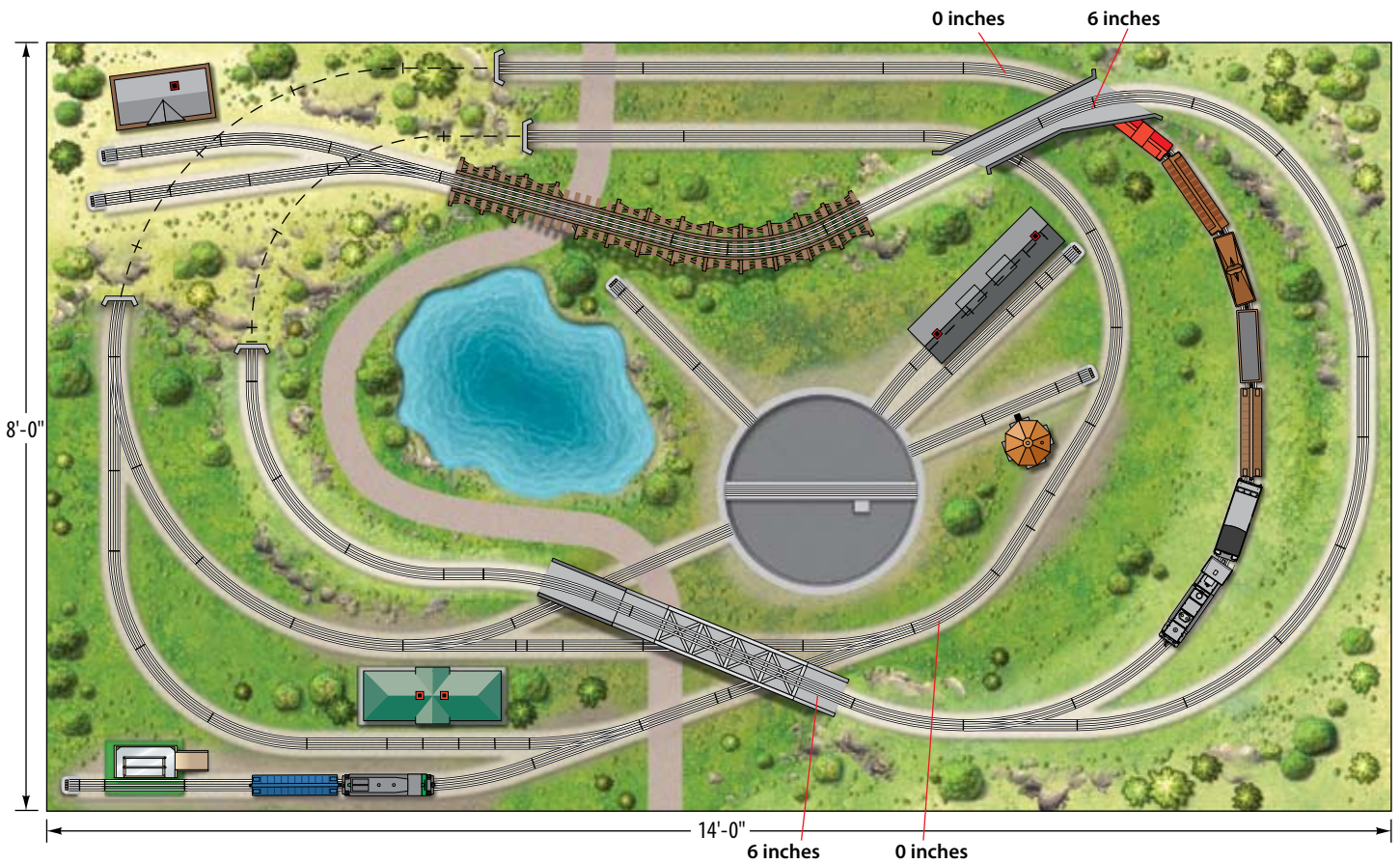
**ATLAS O**  
Number/Product  
6910 turntable

**LIONEL**  
Number/Product  
12734 passenger/freight station  
12773 freight platform  
12897 engine house  
14086 no. 38 water tower

**MTH**  
Number/Product  
30-9087 country train station  
40-1013 30-inch truss bridge  
40-1014 10-inch girder bridge

## LIONEL FASTRACK COMPONENTS

Quantity	Description/Number
1	□ 1.38-inch fitter
3	■ 1.75-inch straight (12026)
5	■ 4.5-inch straight (12025)
6	■ 5-inch straight (12024)
23	■ 10-inch straight (12014)
9	■ 30-inch straight (12042)
17	● 0-48 curve, 30-degree (12043)
4	● 0-72 curve, 11.25-degree (12055)
24	● 0-72 curve, 22.5-degree (12041)
4	▲ 0-72 left-hand track switch (12048)
2	▲ 0-72 right-hand track switch (12049)
7	■ track bumper (12059)



Make sure there are at least 5½ inches of vertical clearance here, and don't forget to compensate for the height of the FasTrack roadbed

This curve is the site of John's wooden trestle overlooking a lake. See the July 2007 issue of CTT for a fast way to build O and S gauge trestles

John's scratchbuilt two-stall engine house won a modeling award for its groundbreaking interior details. MTH has produced a two-stall engine house in O gauge, but combined with the 24-inch turntable it was just too massive for this part of the track plan. A Lionel no. 12897 one-stall engine house was substituted

**DAPHETID**

Daphetid, pronounced "Defeated," is at an elevation of 8½ inches. If space allows, one or both of the spur tracks should be lengthened

The lake surface offers a good place to create an access hatch. The edges of the hatch can be hidden by the shoreline

**GORRE**

Gorre is pronounced "Gory." The small town was one of two on John Allen's original HO layout. An MTH no. 30-9087 country train station is narrow enough to fit between the siding and main line, and a Lionel no. 3656 stockyard substitutes for John's scratchbuilt stockyard

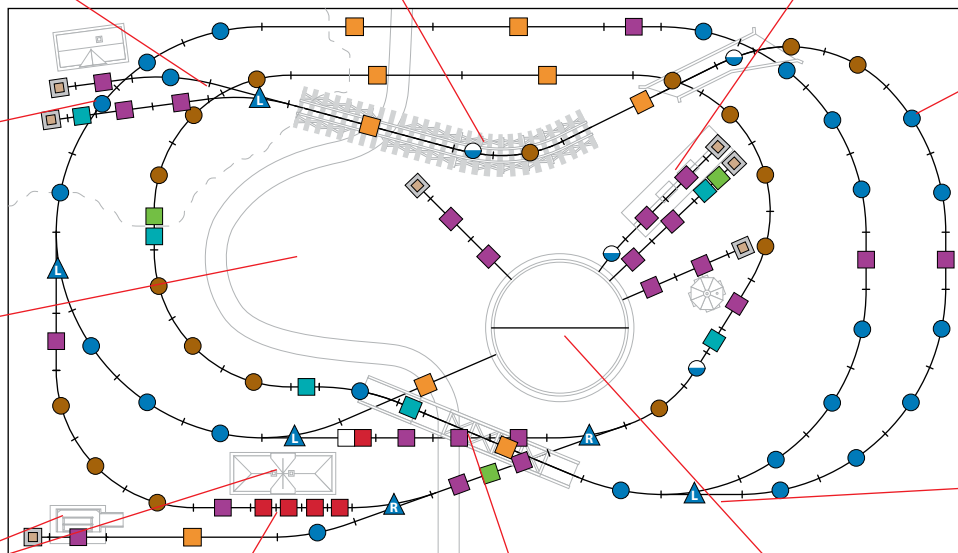
Four 4½-inch FasTrack sections are used to fill an 18-inch gap. If a 10-inch straight section were used, there is no combination of fitter sections that would complete the remaining 8 inches

Here John scratchbuilt a stone-arch viaduct. For this O gauge plan, we've substituted an MTH no. 40-1013 30-inch truss bridge and an MTH no. 40-1014 10-inch girder bridge

Atlas O no. 6910 turntable may require transition tracks to align with Lionel FasTrack sections

This curved spur track must climb continuously to the depot at Daphetid to clear two sections of mainline track below that are descending and ascending

All switches are O-72 for smooth operation



# Best of both WORLDS

Paul Grande uses new trains and structures on a postwar-inspired layout

by Roger Carp | photos by Geoff Stunkard

**W**ITH GASOLINE PRICES above \$3 a gallon and Paris Hilton invading the supermarket check-out line each week, it's easy to conclude that life ain't what it used to be. "If only we were back in the 1950s," many of us say with a sigh.

Well, gas did cost a lot less half a century ago and our glamour girls possessed more style, but the selection and performance of O gauge trains paled in comparison to what's now available. Think I'm joking? Take a look at the new trains and accessories, including some dazzling reissues, which take center stage on Paul Grande's layout.

## Memories of Lionel displays

Some of the warmest memories toy train enthusiasts retain from the postwar years relate to the multi-tiered displays of O and S gauge sets and accessories that once filled department store windows during the holiday season.

Nothing like those displays entertains us at the mall anymore. One more sign the times aren't a' changing for the better. Not many toy train operators build layouts that hearken back to those displays. They opt for something basic – track on green carpeting – or build a complex world with realistic scenery and detailed structures.

Paul expressed a different goal. Besides collecting a moderate share of postwar Lionel models, he has been picking up

many of the great products now on the market. Why not, he thought, design an O gauge layout that served as a showcase for these excellent new locomotives, structures, bridges, signals, and much more?

What Paul had in mind was a model railroad built with contemporary products yet inspired by postwar displays. Such a layout represented a step in a different direction. Years before, when collecting vintage trains had been uppermost in his mind, Paul had constructed a layout with O-31 curves in his family room.

The layout was a success, but over time Paul felt himself yielding to the lure of larger, scale-like locomotives and cars.

So, when Paul wasn't winning competitions as a country-and-western dancer with



his wife, Ginny, he played the favorite game of every model railroader: "My Next Layout." Most of you have engaged in this pastime, too, imagining how much bigger, fancier, and definitely better the next toy train layout you build is going to be.

## An idea and a plan

"Ginny and I liked the way the train room looked, and she encouraged me to move ahead with a larger layout than I had built before," Paul explains. Had she known how large it was going to be, Mrs. Grande might not have been so generous.

For dancing around in her husband's head were ideas of a layout in the shape of a bent dog-bone that filled parts of two sections of their basement. The control



▲ 1. An O gauge Santa Fe DL-109 from MTH glides out of Lionel's all-metal lift bridge, past the passenger cars going by on an inner track. Railroad memorabilia and collectible locomotives fill the paneled walls behind in Paul Grande's inviting train room.

panel would occupy the middle area, so an operator could watch the trains while handling a bank of postwar Lionel transformers as well as an MTH Z-4000.

Unlike Paul's first layout, where the main lines wrapped themselves around the walls of the room, he wanted the new railroad to be an "island" open on every side and therefore accessible to visitors.

In the time it takes Paul to twirl Ginny around the dance floor a couple of times, he was back from the local lumberyard with the wood necessary to construct the benchwork. He needed plenty of lumber because the main section of the layout he had in mind would measure 8 by 20 feet; its extension would be half that size at 8 by 10 feet.

The open-grid benchwork Paul built is beautifully crafted and as solid as Ohio State's offensive line. He made it out of 1 by 4s and 1 by 8s holding a ½-inch plywood tabletop. The supporting legs are fashioned out of 1 by 4s.

"I couldn't wait to finish the table and decide where my track would go," Paul says. "But I had no exact plan for that. So instead of using a computer to design the location of the main lines and sidings, I adopted the most basic method.

"I just winged it and started assembling pieces in an arrangement I thought would help me show off my trains."



◀ Paul and Ginny Grande love collecting toy trains and operating them on their new O gauge layout, which brings back memories of the display layouts that Lionel created in the 1950s.



▲ 2. Paul, though a postwar fanatic, enjoys operating the best of today's electric trains. He downplays scenery and hi-rail effects on his layout to showcase some new locomotives, including this MTH no. 20-3025 Southern Pacific Cab-Forward.

Trial and error led to a network of three-rail straights, O-54 and O-72 curves, and O-72 switches that the superintendent (Paul, that is) liked. Surrounding the lines of track would be colorful metal and plastic structures (new ones and reissues of classics). There would be several accessories, although hardly any that operated.

The arrangement of the mains and spurs puts function above all else. Paul avoided a complex track plan that

extended over several levels. He shunned helixes and tracks that pass over each other inside massive tunnels.

Instead, your eyes relax as they gaze at long stretches of track that wind around the table to form extended loops. Under each line, Paul tacked down strips of vinyl roadbed from Hobby Innovations. In some places he also inserted stained wood ties to fill gaps beneath the tubular-track rails.

Paul's plan called for two reversing loops, with two passing sidings on each of the loops. In addition, there would be a reversing "junction" hidden behind the embankment in the middle of the railroad. Paul laid four O-72 switches in this special section.

### Hills and houses

When it came time to add scenery, a "less is more" view prevailed. Paul recalled what Lionel had done on its 1950s display layouts with brown and green paint, dyed sawdust, and clumps of lichen. As Lionel did, Paul created a pleasing but simple stage for his trains with short hills and embankments for the upper level and grassy fields for the lower level.

With Ginny's help, Paul built up the embankments using products from Scenic Express and Woodland Scenics. Over a wooden frame, they laid dampened strips of plaster-impregnated cloth that, once dry, were colored with latex paint in earth tones.



◀ 3. Streamlined trains remain timeless, whether they're full-sized or scale models. No surprise that Paul likes to run his miniature *Super Chief* and *El Capitan* (models from Lionel, MTH, and Williams on the lower and upper tracks) whenever he ventures into his basement.

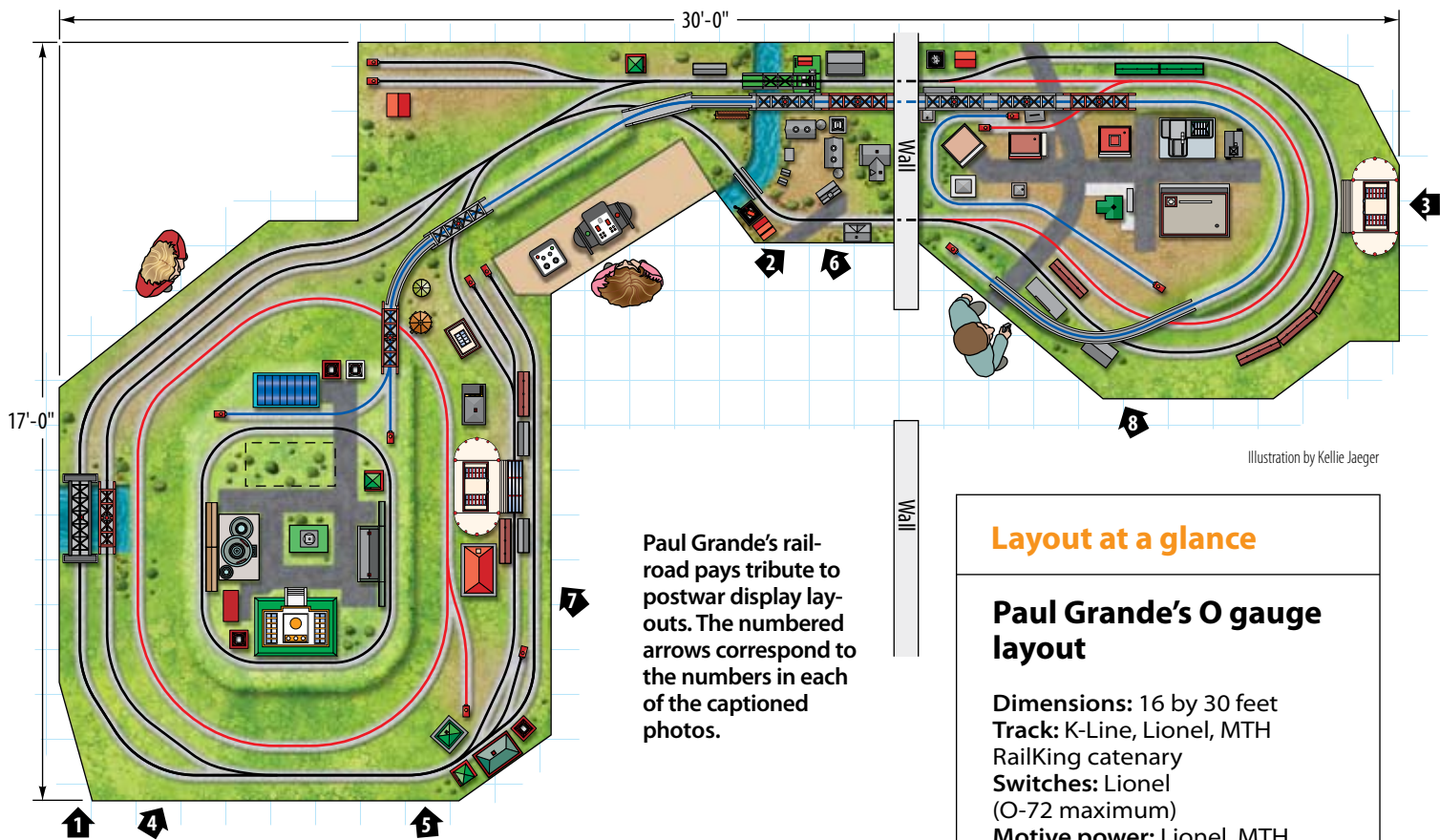


Illustration by Kellie Jaeger

Paul Grande's rail-road pays tribute to postwar display layouts. The numbered arrows correspond to the numbers in each of the captioned photos.

### Layout at a glance

#### Paul Grande's O gauge layout

- Dimensions:** 16 by 30 feet
- Track:** K-Line, Lionel, MTH RailKing catenary
- Switches:** Lionel (O-72 maximum)
- Motive power:** Lionel, MTH, 3rd Rail, Weaver, Western Hobbycraft, Williams
- Rolling stock:** K-Line, Kris Model Trains, Lionel, MTH, Williams
- Controls:** Lionel 1033, 1034, Z, ZW transformers; MTH Z-4000 (conventional control)
- Accessories:** Lionel, MTH, Pride Lines, T-Reproductions
- Structures:** Atlas O, Downtown Deco, Fischer's Creations, Lionel, MTH, Plasticville
- Vehicles:** Corgi, K-Line, Road Champs, Solido
- Figures:** Arttista, Circus Craft, Jim's Miniatures, K-Line, Keith Elson, MTH, Plasticville

Before the paint had dried, Paul was sprinkling Life-Like grass and bits of ground foam on the landforms. His hills and valleys needed some vegetation, he says, even if they were going to be secondary to the network of track running through and over them.

The river in the center of the layout and the lake at the far end (under the lift bridge) required special effort. Paul used window screen and the plaster-impregnated cloth to form the contours of the basin. He then painted the area, adding pebbles and grass before pour-

ing melted E-Z Water Pellets (a product from Woodland Scenics).

Structures would be another story, Paul and Ginny knew. There are dozens of easy-to-build kits to choose from. MTH has a wide range of residential and commercial buildings, and Paul bought several of them. The passenger station and Mel's Diner serve as centerpieces of the town of Emporia, located on the upper platform.

Other areas show off an assortment of contemporary structures from Atlas O and Lionel. The farm, always a hit with youngsters, testifies to Paul's love of Plasticville.



◀ 4. The main lines on the two tiers use O-72 curves to give trains lots of room to accelerate. An MTH no. 20-5543-1 Pennsy L5 electric leads the *Broadway Limited* under MTH RailKing catenary, and a no. 20-3055-1 Pennsy H10s 2-8-0 Consolidation passes the powerhouse.



Subscribers can see a video of trains running on Paul Grande's O gauge layout. Simply go to [classictoytrains.com](http://classictoytrains.com) and click on "News." Then click on "Videos."



▲ 5. Santa Fe doodle-bugs from MTH prepare to stop at the Emporia station (also from MTH) located on the upper level of Paul's layout.

▶ 6. Cows quit mooing and hens stop laying eggs when a Southern Pacific freight causes the ground beneath them to shake and roll. The shiny crane behind the general store is an MTH reproduction of a Lionel no. 165 magnetic crane from the late pre-war period.







▲ 7. The largest section of Paul's layout stretches out before us as a Milwaukee Road passenger train and a Southern Pacific freight idle in the main terminal. He nicely designed this scene to feature reissues of prewar accessories from Pride Lines and T-Reproductions. From the left are reproductions of a Lionel no. 124 station and a no. 116 station with a no. 129 terrace, plus an Ives no. 121 glass dome station canopy.

He used a barn, windmill, fencing, animals, and produce stand from that line.

Paul, like other hobbyists, confesses to a fascination with prewar accessories. Rather than sacrifice to buy original Ives and Lionel pieces, he opts for new reissues of classic models from Lionel, MTH, Pride Lines, and T-Reproductions.

Deciding where to situate industries, stations, and houses proved to be fun for Paul. Even better, he had some scratch-built structures to add, crafted by his friend Fritz Stunkard. Ginny likes the dance hall (complete with a wood floor) because it reminds her of nights spent two-stepping and waltzing with her hubby.

### Looking ahead

The layout and its roster of trains, particularly those decorated for the Santa Fe (Paul's favorite railroad), look so great that Ginny has forgotten how much of the basement Paul ended up claiming for himself. Does that mean he's suddenly free to resume playing My Next Layout.

"Not exactly," Paul said. "I'm extremely happy with the current layout, but would like to make a few additions. Installing more catenary is at the top of my agenda. So is building a subway line so I can operate the great cars that MTH has been selling."

Interesting that a guy who collects postwar toy trains and wanted to build an updated version of a 1950s display layout now has his vision trained on the latest models. "The hobby has never seen better days," Paul states. "That's why I see so many people doing what I'm doing and showing off what's currently on the market." **CTT**

◀ 8. This broiling August morning is not the time to make your living as a roofer, not with the sun beating down without mercy. Convertibles have their tops down, and the air-conditioning is blasting away inside the MTH RailKing Rail Diesel Cars crawling out of the big city.



# Two trains, one track, NO COLLISIONS!

A clever circuit uses infrared detectors and relays to automate layout operation



by Robert H. Walker

**O**PERATING TWO TRAINS ON a single loop of O gauge track is one of the biggest thrills you can enjoy on a layout. It's also one of the toughest feats to accomplish without operator intervention.

In the following paragraphs, I'll describe the electrical circuit I devised to keep two trains operating in the same direction without colliding on a single loop of track. While some circuits rely on insulated track sections to control train spacing, my circuit employs three infrared (IR) block detectors and three relays to automate operation.

## Circuit setup

The first step in assembling this circuit is to separate the selected track loop into three electrically isolated blocks, as shown in **Diagram 1**. The entire arrangement is very simple. Only the center rail needs to be insulated at the break points, and only three break points are required in the entire loop.

Next, I defined these three isolated blocks as left section (LS), right section

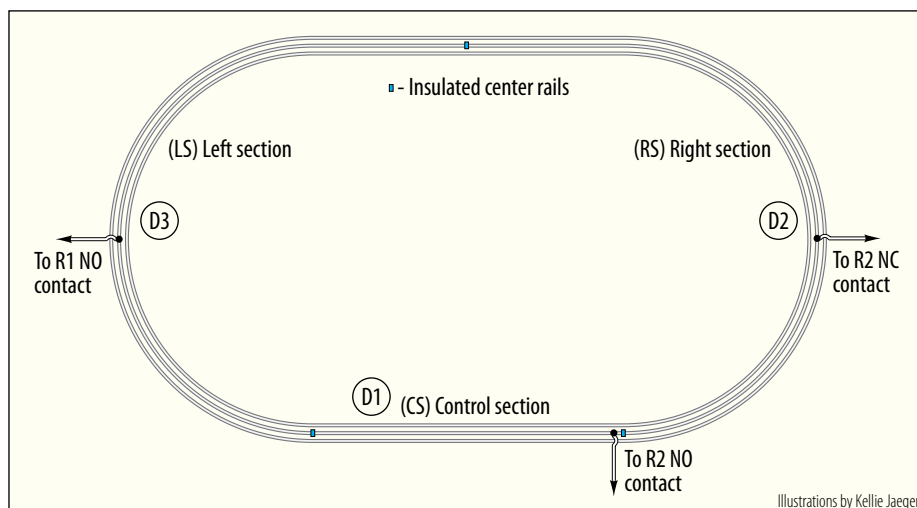


Diagram 1

(RS), and control section (CS). The left- and right-hand sections can be any length, but each section should be roughly equal to the other. The best length for the control section is approximately 16 to 18 inches, roughly the equivalent of two straight track sections.

Train control comes by way of a simple logic circuit that senses the location of each train and then automatically turns the track power on or off to each block. The trains running on the layout are monitored by three IR block detectors. These detectors, labeled D1, D2, and D3, are placed within each block, as shown in **Diagram 1**.

**Diagram 2** shows the schematic diagram of the relay-based logic circuit used to read the IR detectors and control train movements. I used Z-Stuff for Trains (z-stuff.net) nos. DZ-1011 block

signal detectors and DZ-1008 relay modules. These worked fine, but you could easily substitute alternative components with similar electrical specifications.

To power the logic circuit, you'll need a separate 12- to 14-volt AC or DC fixed-voltage power supply. Only one source of track power is required and this should come from your conventional toy train transformer.

Note that the block detector D1 controls relay R1; block detector D2 controls relay R2; and block detector D3 controls relay R3. Relay R1 controls track power to the left section; relay R2 controls track power to both the right section and the control section, depending on which way R2 is thrown; and relay R3 controls relay R2.

## How it works

Let's start with Locomotive A (with a few cars) positioned in the control section alongside detector D1. In turn, Locomotive B (with a few cars) moves forward, toward detector D2, and through the right-hand section.

As soon as detector D2 senses Locomotive B, relay R2 drops track power to the right-hand section, thereby causing the locomotive to halt. In the same scenario, relay R2 transfers track power to the control section, which causes Locomotive A to move forward and enter the left section. The consist trailing Locomotive A will keep detector D1 switched on long enough for Locomotive A to be sensed by detector D3.

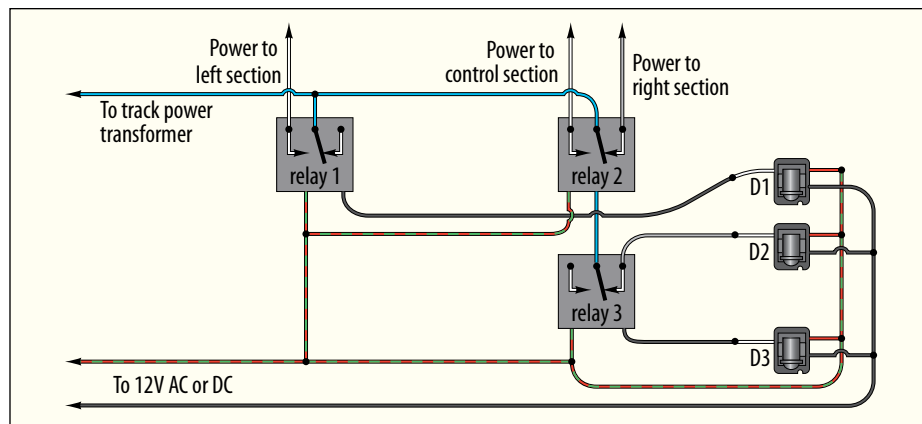


Diagram 2

By the time Locomotive A reaches detector D3, detector D1 has dropped out and relay R1 has cut track power to the left section, thereby halting Locomotive A alongside detector D3. When detector D3 senses Locomotive A, relay R3 shuts down relay R2, thereby restoring track power to the right section.

This causes the idling Locomotive B to start up and move forward into the control section, where it will again halt due to lack of track power. Detector D1, which operates relay R1, now senses Locomotive B and subsequently restores track power to the left section where Locomotive A waits.

Locomotive A moves forward and traverses the left section. The locomotive then continues through the right section, before finally approaching detector D2. At this point the entire operating cycle will repeat indefinitely without operator intervention.

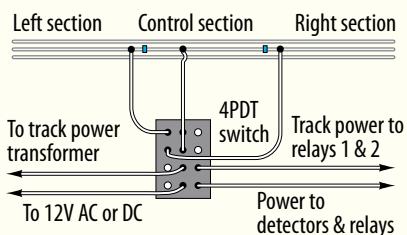
### Proven performance

This setup for track-loop configurations eliminates dependency on insulated outer rails, which require contact with rolling stock wheels. Dirty wheels quickly become unreliable conductors.

Although this dual-train, single-loop circuit executes what appears to be a complex series of moves all on its own, the concept is fundamentally simple in its overall design. When implemented, this circuit will perform reliably, just as it has on my layout for years. **CTT**

## REVERT TO MANUAL MODE

**IF YOU WANT** to revert your track loop back to normal manual operation, simply connect the center rails of the three isolated sections together. To accomplish this task, I used a four-pole double-throw (4PDT) switch. Two switch poles connect the isolated blocks together, while the third pole connects as an on/off switch for the power to the detector/relay logic circuit, and the fourth pole connects as an on/off switch to cut the track-power feed to the relays.



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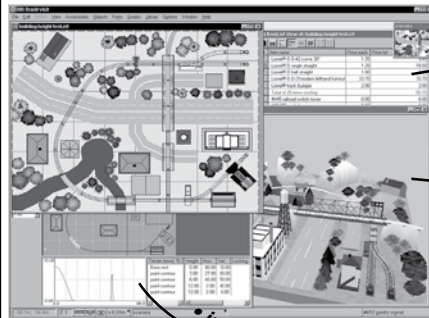
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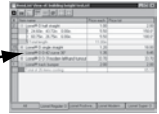
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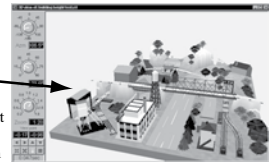
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# Command control for your layout



The most significant developments in the past 20 years

**C**LASSIC TOY TRAINS celebrates its 20th anniversary in 2007. To commemorate this milestone, we asked readers like you to complete a survey to help us learn what you consider the most significant toy train products, events, and activities of the past two decades.

In the previous issues of CLASSIC TOY TRAINS published throughout 2007, we've shared how readers responded to specific survey categories including hobby trends, sets, steam locomotives, accessories, rolling stock, and layout products. This month we'll look at some of the most influential toy train electronics and layout control innovations.

Even though the AC power that moved the first generation of electric toy trains hasn't changed, the transformers used to regulate the current certainly have. It's hard to battle the iconic status of a nearly 60-year-old Lionel ZW transformer, but a few new products have risen to the challenge.

The most notable new transformers include the updated Lionel ZW, the MRC Dual-Pure Power, and the MTH Z-4000. Filled with cutting-edge electronics, these contemporary examples provide consistent power, performance, and features that equal, if not surpass, that of a postwar ZW. More importantly,

these modern transformers offer a degree of safety that wasn't feasible many decades ago.

Ironically, the can-style motors found in newer locomotives require a fraction of the transformer power that open-frame motors in postwar units need to operate. That leaves plenty of juice to energize the array of operating enhancements you'll find on many recently manufactured units.

These days O gauge engines can be equipped with practically any feature imaginable, including stunningly realistic locomotive sound systems, speed control, fan-driven puffing smoke, electrically operated couplers, bright LED lights, crews chattering over the radio, and even self-raising pantographs.

As these full-featured locomotives race around a layout it's likely they'll activate an accessory or signal as they go past. Rather than rely on a spring-loaded contactor to trigger the action, many layout builders have discovered the ease of using an infrared activation device.

There's no question that each of the previously mentioned innovations is significant to our readers, but none of them gathered as many votes – a virtual tie – as Lionel's TrainMaster Command Control (TMCC) and MTH's Digital Command System (DCS). CTT readers

voted command-control technology as the top trend (see January 2007 CLASSIC TOY TRAINS), so we weren't surprised to see it lead the list of electronic and layout control developments.

Just as the name implies, a layout operator can take command of an entire railroad using a single wireless, handheld controller. When integrated with either a TMCC or DCS system, practically any electrical layout component – locomotive, track switch, and operating accessory – can be regulated with the push of a few buttons.

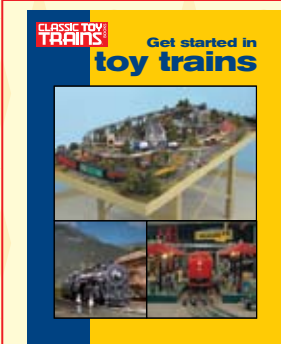
In addition to the plethora of functions they can activate, these command-control systems have allowed operators to follow the layout action from various inspiring trackside perspectives. While it may have been hard to fathom 20 years ago, some layout builders have even gone construction of the once iconic control panel. In our opinion, that alone makes command control one of the most significant toy train developments ever – *Kent Johnson*



To read previous CTT 20th anniversary survey results, go to [classictoytrains.com](http://classictoytrains.com) and click on "News." Then click on "New toy trains & more."

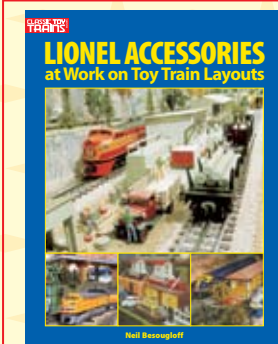
# Start planning your layout today!

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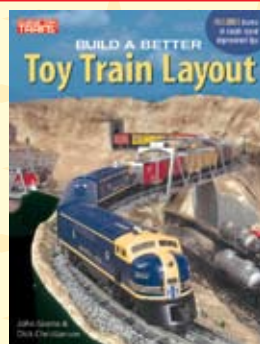


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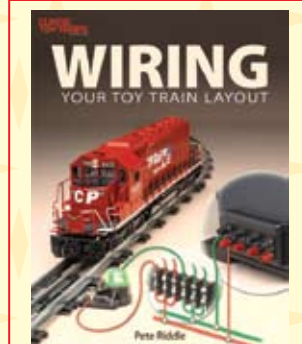


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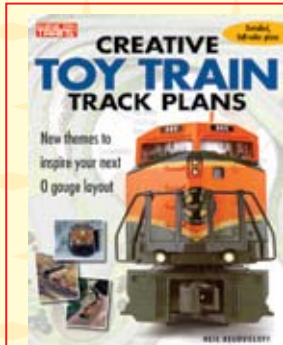
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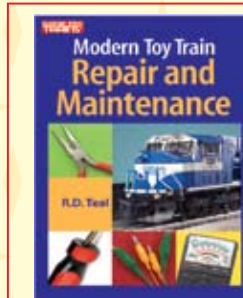


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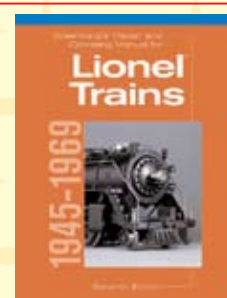


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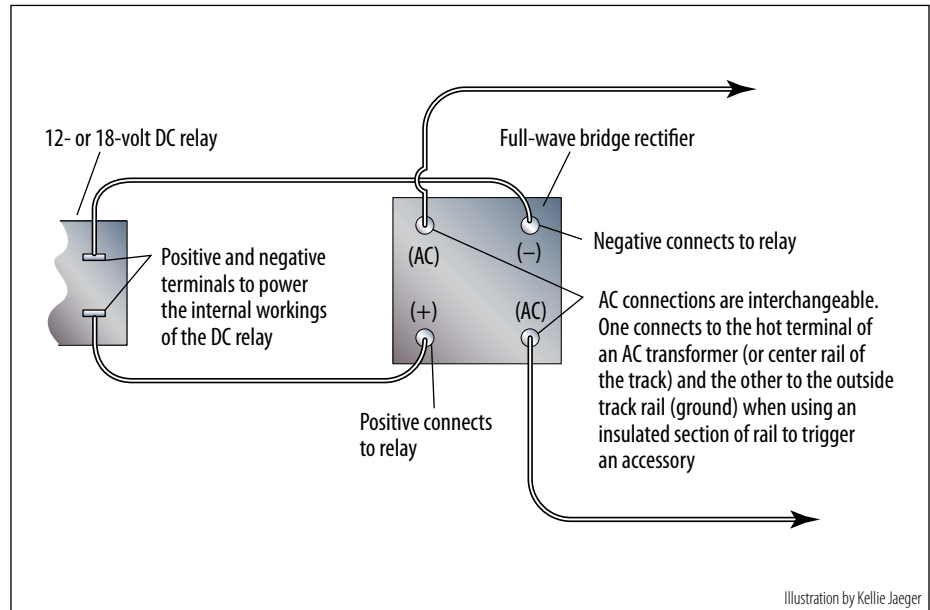


# WIRING DIAGRAMS

## How to use DC relays on AC layouts

**R**ELAYS HAVE BEEN USED to trigger locomotives and accessories on AC-powered layouts for decades. However, in today's electronic age AC-powered relays, especially those designed to operate at toy train voltages, are hard to come by. On the other hand, DC-powered relays designed to operate at 12 or 18 volts are easily obtained.

To use one of these DC relays you'll need to convert AC power to DC by adding a full-wave bridge rectifier to the circuit, positioned between the power source and the relay. Use a rectifier rated at 4 or more amps and at least 24 volts. RadioShack part no. 276-1173, at 4 amps and 400 volts, is a favorite of ours (it's okay that the voltage capacity is well beyond toy train level). Full-wave bridge rectifiers come in many shapes, but they all perform in the same way and connect in the same manner. – Neil Besougloff



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# REVIEWS



## All-purpose power

Atlas O Trainman line Alco RSD-7/15 diesel road switcher

**A**LCO DIESELS are popular with the O gauge crowd. After checking out the models of the RSD-7 and RSD-15, you may have to crown Atlas O the king of three-rail Alco power.

The RSD-7 and the RSD-15 are basically the same locomotive, except that the RSD-7 had an Alco 244-series diesel engine and the RSD-15 had a 251-series diesel engine. In either rendition, the locomotive was an attempt by Alco to design a single product that would be up to the task of drag freights, fast freights, or high-speed passenger service.

Like many Alco diesels, this road switcher wasn't an especially successful seller when stacked up against the competition from General Electric and Electro-Motive Division of General Motors. Just 17 of the 2,400-horsepower RSD-7s were built, though 87 of the more famous RSD-15 "alligators" were constructed from 1956 to 1960.

But one version – the low-nose model operated by the Santa Fe – developed its own cult-within-a-cult status, and they have their own fan base

in railfandom. No RSD-7s survived, but six RSD-15s are at home in museums or running on tourist railroads.

### Opening the box

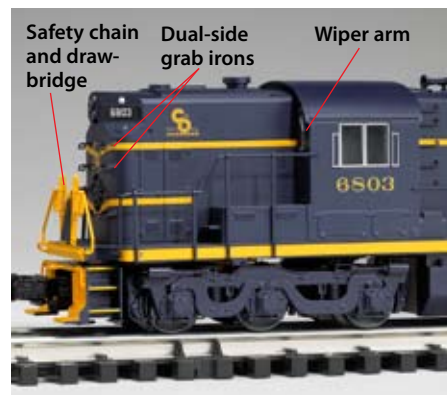
While Atlas O's Trainman line targets thrifty three-railers, its product managers clearly didn't cut too many corners. Even the shipping container of our RSD-7/15 sample model looks classy.

The diesel comes mounted in a rigid plastic frame to assure perfect, intact delivery. The locomotive is screwed into place (the box includes rubber plugs to fill the small holes in the bottom of the fuel tank) on the frame. The frame itself fits so snugly that I imagine the only danger from damage would be from a steel shaft harpooning the box. This isn't going to shake apart in transit.

The model has a pretty impressive size – the frame measures 15 ½ inches long (62 feet in O scale) and has a good hefty feeling to it.

The shell's cast-in detail is first rate. Of special note is a cast-in screen on the long hood that may have the most intricate, overlapping detail I've seen. Though solid, it has a three-dimensional layered look to it. There's plenty of hinge, latch, and rivet detail. The deck also has cast-in safety tread.

Add-on detailing on the



RSD-7/15 includes grab irons, horn, vents, and great see-through screens and exhaust fan blades. The grab irons leading up to the roof deserve a special mention. Why? Because they actually look like grab irons, not just metal staples fed through a wire bending machine.

The end platforms have simulated uncoupler bars and cast-in brake and multiple-unit cables.

The three-axle trucks are well executed. The paint on the trucks of our sample might have been just a fraction too deep in spots, but this didn't undermine the appearance of the frames, or diminish the look of the model.

The overall paint application was superb; edges were clean and crisp. The yellow Chesapeake & Ohio accent stripes were well done, as were the "C&O For

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Subscribers can see a video of the Atlas O Trainman Alco RSD-15 in action by going to [classictoytrains.com](http://classictoytrains.com).





Progress” logos on the hood ends.

### On the test track

I always prefer to check out the conventional version of Trainman locomotives. These scale-sized beauties are designed to attract the newbie, but they should also satisfy the experienced three-railer. By testing the conventional model, I put myself in a beginner’s shoes. Even after all these years I still get a rush when I see a brand-new product. If I’m pleased with what I see – and how a locomotive runs – there’s a good chance that a novice three-railer will get a kick out of it too.

And the experienced model rail-roader in me has yet to be disappointed with the look, feel, or quality of the Trainman diesel line.

### O GAUGE ATLAS O TRAINMAN LINE ALCO RSD-7/15

**Price:** \$239.95 (no. 20020001) conventional version with horn/bell, and thumbtack couplers, \$389.95 (no. 20030001) command version with Lionel’s TMCC and RailSounds systems and coil couplers

**Features:** 0-45 operation, die-cast trucks and couplers, two can-style motors, horn and bell sounds, directional lighting, operating couplers (conventional version)

**Pros:** Superb tooling, smooth running

**Cons:** Tough to pivot trucks to access screws beneath rear truck

Made in the People’s Republic of China for Atlas O

Motor operation of our RSD-7/15 sample was very quiet, and the model was very responsive to transformer commands. Each truck mounts a single center-rail power pickup. They are spaced 10 ½ inches apart.

Lighting is basic – headlights only, but they are directional. The horn and bell are simple and satisfactory, and they sound right.

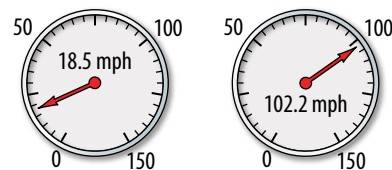
Our low-speed average was 18.5 scale

### O gauge Alco RSD-7/15 by Atlas O

Drawbar pull (pounds)



Low and high speed (scale mph)



mph, and the high-speed average was 102.2 scale mph. Drawbar pull for the model was 2 pounds 12 ounces.

The trucks each mount four traction tires, and they have magnetic couplers with an easy-to-finger release prong. During our testing, we had no trouble with spurious uncouplings.

I enjoyed running the “bare bones” conventional version of the latest Alco from Atlas O. It is a top-quality locomotive that would be an excellent addition to the fleet of a new O gauger.

For a more experienced operator, it should be just fine, though the calls of Lionel’s TrainMaster and RailSounds systems are certainly tempting! Atlas O’s Trainman Alco RSD-7/15 earns my three-G rating: Good model, Good runner, and Good value. – *Bob Keller*

CONTINUED ON PAGE 84

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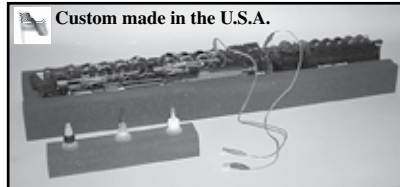
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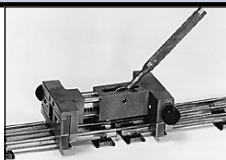
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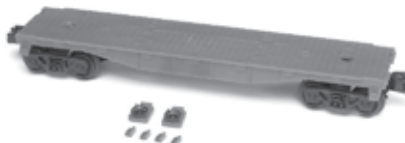
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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 81

# Light fantastic

Frontier-era O gauge 4-4-0 by SMR

I'LL BET THAT most children of the baby boom spent at least a little time in their school library thumbing through books about the Civil War or the Wild West. As model train enthusiasts, we probably spent extra time gazing at black-and-white images of impossibly frail-looking steam power and rolling stock – those trains always appeared just a notch or two more durable and comfortable than a packing crate. Accordingly, I classify the period of railroading before 1900 as the Old Timey era.

For the most part, re-creating this time period in O or S gauge has been limited to the Lionel *General* and the American Flyer Franklin steamers. In recent years, MTH has added new locomotion and rolling stock suitable for a layout set during the Civil War or the 19th-century Wild West. I don't know whether this represents a new field of interest or simply an area of demand that had been ignored by train marketers.

I do know that Schneider Model Railroading (SMR Trains) has taken some important steps to identify and capture the high

end of the Old Timey era.

SMR's first Civil War product was an O gauge model of the 1863 version of the famed Western & Atlantic 4-4-0 christened *The General*. The model was most significant for being based on the actual prototype, as it was at the time of the great locomotive chase, not as it looked after later rebuilds or as "seen on TV."

The model's accuracy was cutting-edge. And this diminutive scale model benefited from some creative thinking about where to place the power system – in the tender.

SMR's product line has expanded to include a few more 4-4-0s. The newcomers are modeled after locomotives on the Central Pacific RR and Civil War-era U.S. Military RR.

## Out of the box

Our sample is based on a real steamer made by the Mason Locomotive Works for the Central Pacific RR. Central Pacific no. 5, named *Atlantic*, was one of the first locomotives hauling transcontinental trains. As fitting for a \$1,400 model, this comes very securely packaged. These products are exceptionally fragile, so follow the instructions on opening the boxes and handle with care.

The model measures 12 ¾ inches long (approximately 51

feet in O scale), and it incorporates an amazing amount of "things to see."

Gazing at the intricate and fragile detail, you'll have second thoughts about even touching it. The fun will begin once you overcome those fears. Just don't pick up the locomotive with your fingers on the side rods!

Though the real *Atlantic* was a far less sophisticated locomotive than, say, a Pennsylvania RR K4-s Pacific, that doesn't mean the model is a "plain Jane." The running gear is notable. While it is unlike later steam power, the basics are all there and well crafted – from the steam cylinders, rockers, and lift arm through the eccentric rods. The rods look great when running, as well.

Exterior detail is superb, from the long, long, long pilot (you can see those cows 'a flyin' through the air), the big, boxy headlight, the domes, and even the bell and lanyard.

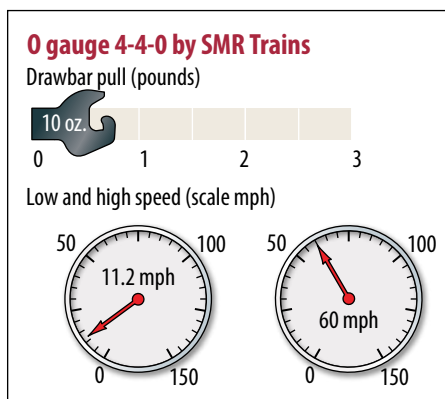
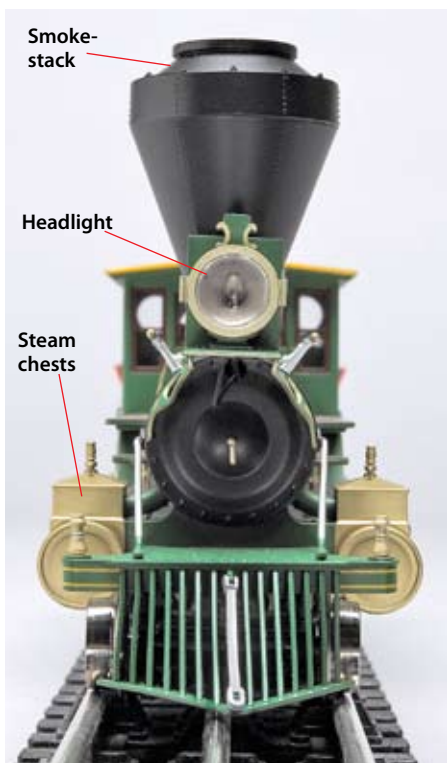
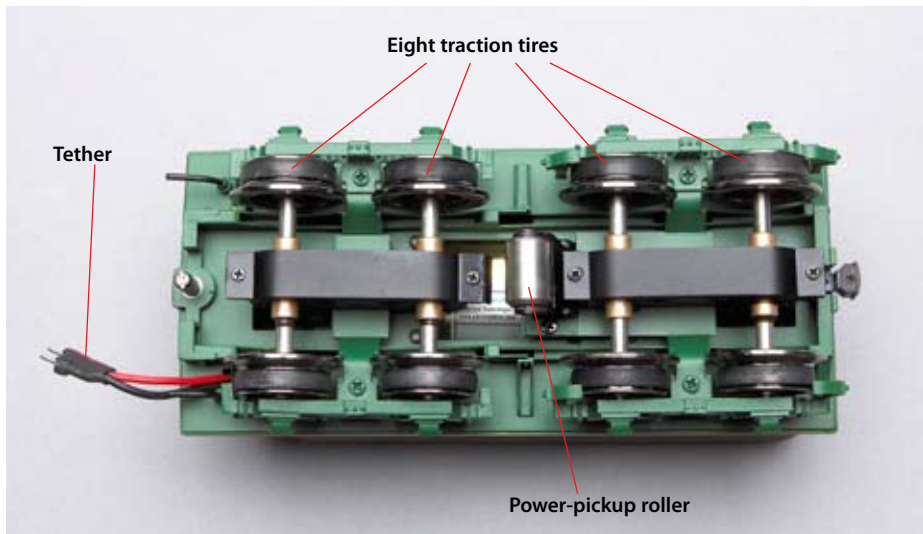
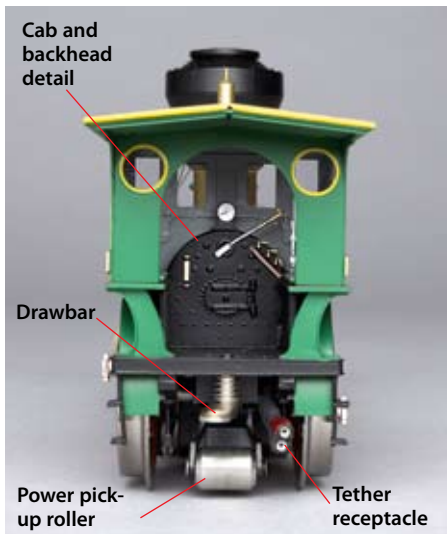
The cab struck my fancy, with its round, rear porthole windows and rudimentary backhead. The controls were basic and appropriate for the time.

Visually, the model falters only when it's viewed at track level. There, the large pickup roller is pretty obvious.

The *Atlantic*'s colors are rather sedate when compared to some of the garish 19th-century locomotive liveries I've seen in books. Clearly, the combination of colors was meant to make the loco-

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Subscribers can see a video of the SMR 4-4-0 Atlantic steam locomotive in action by going to [classictoytrains.com](http://classictoytrains.com).



**O GAUGE BRASS 4-4-0 STEAM LOCOMOTIVE BY SCHNEIDER MODEL RAILROADING**

**Price:** \$1,399.95 (locomotive *Atlantic*)

**Features:** Can-style motor, illumination, eight traction tires, Seuthe smoke unit; available as Central Pacific Atlantic U.S. Military RR *General Haupt* or *W.H. Whiton*

**Pros:** Superb detail, excellent craftsmanship, good operation

**Cons:** High-end pricing, pilot occasionally sparked the center rail

Locomotive made in Republic of Korea, electronics made in the United States for SMR

tive stand out, from the green pilot to the Russian iron blue boiler (and gold-color boiler bands).

Worth special mention is the Mason Locomotive Works plate that is mounted just above the center of the drive wheels. This is really cool.

This O gauge locomotive gets high marks for re-creating a workhorse of another era. From its non-operating link-and-pin coupler on the pilot and the diamond stack, to its domes and basic cab (unlike that of any 20th-century road engine) to its simple side-rod layout, this locomotive brings to life the

Civil War and great frontier eras.

While you can just purchase the locomotive, you'll really want to include some rolling stock if you plan on even limited operation. The pin-and-link couplers preclude strapping on cars from MTH or Lionel, so you'll need to score some of the vintage-style brass boxcars and flatcars available from SMR. Be warned: They aren't priced for the faint of heart or light of wallet. An overview of these cars follows this review.

### On the test track

The motor is mounted in the tender, and it powers two axles. Having run trouble-free freights with a single powered diesel pushing two dummy units, I half-expected to see some sort of obvious visual nudge as the tender began to push the locomotive, but that wasn't the case at all. If I hadn't known that the motor was buried in the tender, I'd have thought it was situated inside the boiler/cab area.

Looking at the size of the *Atlantic*, I figured it would probably run on O-27 track (hey, it is tiny). Boy, was I wrong.

Per the instruction sheet, the three-rail version prefers O-64 diameter curves! Surely, I thought, that couldn't be right.

But it was. I did get the locomotive to "sort of" run on O-54 diameter curves, but it didn't enjoy the experience and was inclined to rise off the track.

However, "sort of stays on track" and "\$1,400" really don't go together, so don't do what we did – follow the manufacturer's instructions. And, unless you curve your own O-60-something flex-track, stick with running on O-72.

Motor operation of our 4-4-0 was smooth and quiet. You'll find two center-rail power pickups spaced 3 inches apart beneath the locomotive. A third power pickup is beneath the tender, roughly 3 1/2 inches from the nearest locomotive pickup roller.

The only operating glitch we encoun-

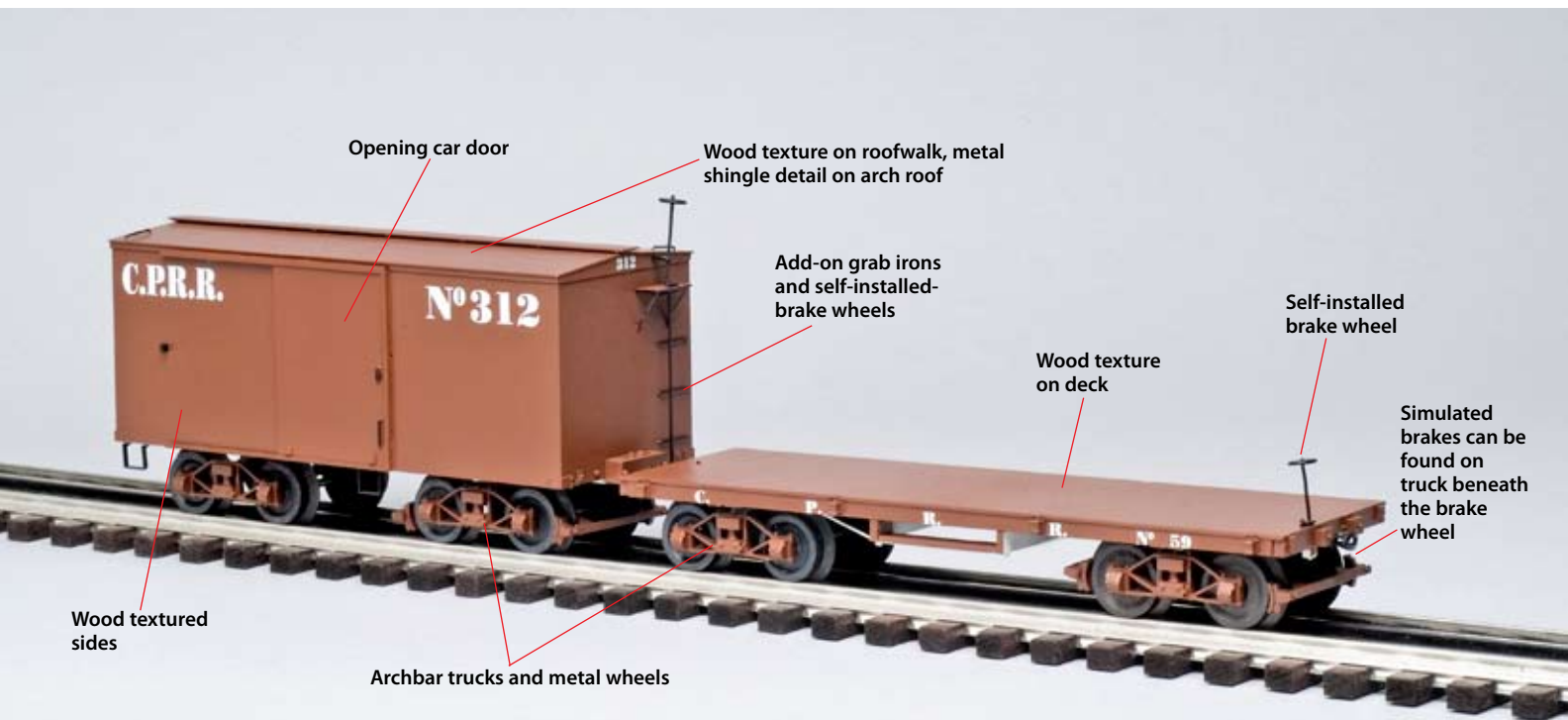
tered was that occasionally the tip of the long cow-catcher would come into contact with the center rail and spark. Just like a real railway, the smoother – or flatter – that your track is, the better.

Our low-speed average was 11.2 scale mph, while the high-speed average was 60 scale mph. Drawbar pull for the steam locomotive was 10 ounces.

Should you be interested in converting your locomotive to either Lionel’s TrainMaster or MTH’s DCS command system (or adding a sound system), SMR offers what it calls a sound-and-control wood boxcar. The boxcar comes with center-rail power pickups and pre-cut openings in the floor for wiring and switches. The electronics are up to you.

The car costs \$299.95.

The O gauge Central Pacific 4-4-0 by SMR Trains successfully carves out its own niche in the three-rail market. The locomotive looks unlike anything else on the market, and its performance is very satisfying. If you’re comfortable with the price tag, you should take a peak into SMR’s take on the Old Timey era. – Bob



## Fancy rolling stock

Frontier-era O gauge cars by SMR

**W**HILE CREATING an operating scale model of a vintage locomotive is commendable, not too many of us will be happy just staring at it in a case. The folks at Schneider Model Railroading (SMR Trains) acknowledge the inner engineer of potential customers, and they’ve launched a line of scale-sized brass equipment that looks right at home hauling battle supplies to Chickamauga, or running rails and casks of spikes out to the railhead in Utah.

The first two SMR O gauge freight-car styles are a boxcar and a flatcar, both of which are made of brass with die-cast metal wheels.

The Central Pacific RR 25-foot boxcar measures 6 inches

long (24 feet in O scale). It has archbar trucks, along with wood texture on the interior floor and the sides. The doors can be slid open.

Topside, the roofwalk also has wood grain texture and the arch roof has metal shingle detail. Brass grab irons are added to the ends of the car and roof, and there are an add-on brake wheel and a brake-line chain.

Let me note that the add-on brake wheels of both the box and flat cars are self-installed. As the photos show, we were a little shaky on installing them because the cars were “loaners,” and we didn’t dare drop a dab of glue to hold them in alignment.

The U.S. Military RR boxcar has a few design differences. It has a canvas arch roof and wooden end-ladder, so you can buy some “surplus” USMRR cars and build a train with two distinctively different-style cars!

The Central Pacific RR 30-

foot flatcar measures 7½ inches long (30 feet in O scale). To help you secure cargo, it comes with wood-side stakes to install. The stakes can pop out easily (one briefly got stuck between my computer keyboard’s keys). The flatcar also comes with an add-on brake wheel. Both cars have links and coupler pins. And yes, you can buy spares from SMR.

The deck has a wooden texture, and the metal truck sideframes are prototypical for the era. Of special note are the old-school brake shoes; in the pre-airbrake era, these must have been a doozy to tighten.

I was pleased to see that the freight cars didn’t match in length – each car has its own prototype. Both the flatcar and boxcar have a pretty cool addition – chains leading from the simulated brake shaft and the brake system on the truck.

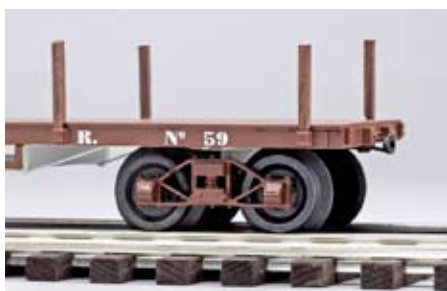
Since both pieces model rolling stock that preceded the invention of air brakes, their underbody detail is limited to support beams and wooden-deck tex-

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The boxcar includes wood-texture detail, opening door, and an add-on brake to install on the car's end.



You can run the flat with or without wooden side stakes.

ture. There are no suspended pipes or hoses from a modern brake system.

This all struck me as being authentic with a capital "A."

In the "rollability" department, the cars moved smoothly.

Now, about those couplers ...

The SMR gear uses an archaic, but prototypical link-and-pin coupler system. In the early days, railroads used a primitive system with a metal link (similar to a link in a chain) and two pins, one pin to hold the link to each car's coupler pocket. This method resulted in a lot of severe injuries and led to the development of the knuckle coupler.

That being noted, it was challenging to get the links and pins together. If you're fumble-fingered as I am, you'll need a good magnifier and a pair of tweezers. Once everything was buttoned up, the pins were snug in the pockets and the cars stayed together.

SMR does offer a three-rail coupler converter, which comes with a knuckle coupler that you insert into the standard SMR coupler pocket on a car's end. You then slide in a pin to secure it in place. The brass couplers cost \$12.95 each.

SMR Trains is dead serious about



The cars come with pin-and-link couplers. Here is an empty coupler pocket.



Here is the boxcar's coupler pocket with a link and pin installed.



The couplers provide an exceptionally snug fit and the pins stay in place.

### O GAUGE ROLLING STOCK BY SCHNEIDER MODEL RAILROADING

**Price:** \$289.95 (boxcar), \$259.95 (flatcar), \$299.95 (sound-and-control boxcar – does not include electronics)


**Features:** Brass construction, metal wheels, add-on brake wheels, flatcar stakes

**Pros:** Excellent appearance, smooth rollability

**Cons:** High-end collectible price; coupling is snug, but can visually be a challenge

Made in Republic of Korea for SMR Trains

staking out the high ground in the Old Timey era of railroad history.

Thus far SMR Trains has crafted some very nice O gauge pieces, with even more interesting items on the horizon. If 19th-century trains captivate you, keep your eye on these guys! – Bob 



## Long-term review

### S-Helper Service 2-8-0

It's hard to believe that it has been more than a year since I reviewed the new 2-8-0 Consolidation from S-Helper Service for the September 2006 CTT. It seems like yesterday when I opened the box for the first time and was amazed at the locomotive's level of detail.

Twelve months later and I'm still amazed and very pleased with the model's performance. The locomotive was notable for its wealth of detail (as fine as any high-end O gauge steamer) as well as its quiet motor and sure-footed ability to haul freight.

Since I reviewed that model, it's racked up a fair amount of mileage on my home layout. How has it fared?

The S gauge model has performed very well, indeed.

I've experienced zero mechanical problems. The extent of my preventive maintenance has been occasionally dabbing lubricant on the side rods and axles.

I'm not a big fan of train running in my basement with the smoke unit on, so I utilized this feature rarely.

Like most trains, the 2-8-0 has the occasional mysterious derailment. But compared to other locomotives I run, its car-spreading accidents have been few and far between. When reviewing Lionel's S gauge die-cast 4-8-4 steam locomotive in the September 2007 issue, I noted that the S-Helper Consolidation skimmed right through one particular stretch of track that almost always stopped the heavier 4-8-4 dead in the tracks. I surmise that weight is the issue, but haven't bothered to investigate and fix the problem, since it involves only the 4-8-4.

I still believe that anyone who is serious about S gauge operation – and who isn't concerned with maintaining a Flyer-only fleet – needs to check out this locomotive. – Bob



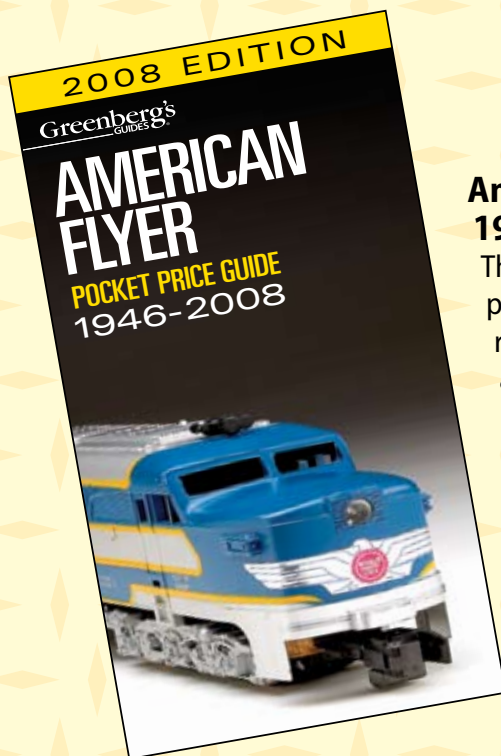
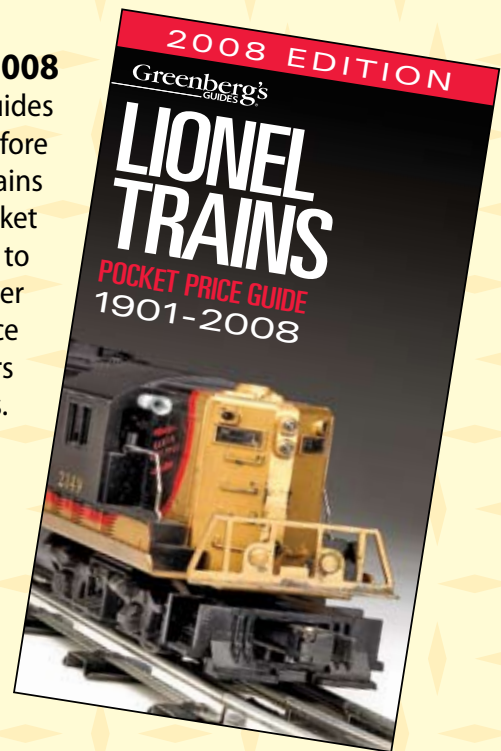


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As long as playthings were made out of wood, paper, or metal, there was no way to enable a youngster to gaze through its opaque surface and see the interior. The introduction of thermo-plastics in the 1940s changed this. Utilizing the right injection-molded materials, a manufacturer could create a clear shell that was durable and safe to use.

Lionel first capitalized on this development in 1948. Eager to show off the two motors installed in its brand-new no. 2333 Santa Fe F3 diesel, it created a handful of models with clear bodies that it shipped to its regional showrooms and major dealers for display.

Kids might have appreciated owning a clear-shell diesel so they could watch the motors in action. But Lionel never mass-produced what have become valuable F3s.

A decade later, in 1959, a novel plaything exploded on to the market that probably caused Lionel to think again about clear plastic. Renwal, an established toy maker, announced its Visible Man, a 16-inch-tall model kit of the male body. Inside a clear-plastic exterior (the skin of

the Visible Man) were assembled miniature veins, arteries, bones, and organs.

This kit, which could be taken apart and put together again, took the toy industry by storm. Soon a Visible Woman had joined her male counterpart. In time, there were even clear plastic models that showed the "innards" of a horse, a dog, and a V-8 engine.

If kids were intrigued by what went on inside a human being, perhaps they were equally curious about what was carried inside an enclosed railcar. This line of reasoning might have sparked Tony Rocco, a member of the Engineering Department at Lionel, to design something that the firm could have nicknamed the Visible Boxcar.

Tony pushed the envelope when he came up with the idea behind the no. 3435 traveling aquarium car, which Lionel first cataloged in 1959. Two years later, he modified the shell of the "fish car" to create the no. 6445 Fort Knox gold reserve car, which stayed in the line through 1963. At last, kids could see what a boxcar carried.

The 6445 was no ordinary boxcar loaded with washing machines or other manufactured goods. Instead, Tony imagined a special car with clear plastic sides (windows, really) behind which were piles of dazzling gold bullion.

The silver-painted model featured black heat-stamped lettering, a brake wheel, and AAR trucks with operating couplers. Lionel altered the body mold to put

a slot in the roof in which kids could insert coins. Sort of a piggy bank on wheels!

The Fort Knox gold reserve car served as a component of a few cataloged outfits, both Super O and O-27, in 1961 and '62. It was also available as a separate-sale item for \$5.95 in those years and 1963. And the 6445 appeared in some promotional sets.

The influence of the car with "see-thru sides" lasted far longer than its appearance in the catalog. General Mills, which leased the rights to make and market Lionel trains, offered at least half a dozen reissues of the 6445 between 1979 and 1986.

These models, led by a duplicate of the postwar model (no. 9320), were painted blue, gold, maroon, orange, and silver. Their lettering celebrated past or present U.S. mints in Denver, New Orleans, and Philadelphia, among other cities.

In modern times, Lionel has added new loads behind the windows. Themed loads have included scale vehicles, fantasy aliens, mummies, and more. — *Roger Carp*

### LIONEL 6445 FORT KNOX GOLD RESERVE CAR

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*Data courtesy of Greenberg's Pocket Price Guide to Lionel Trains, 2007 edition*

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