Lionel Trains Encyclopedia Article

Lionel Trains

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Lionel Trains

For generations of Americans, Christmas just wouldn't be the same without the sight of a Lionel train click-clacking along the tracks beneath the tree. Above all other toy train manufacturers, Lionel stands for genuine quality and craftsmanship. Founded in 1903 by Joshua Lionel Cowen, this New York-based company had assumed dominance of the toy train market by 1926. Focused almost exclusively on O-gauge electric trains, the firm's carefully painted reproductions of diesel locomotives and earlier metal die-cast models of steam engines have become coveted collector's items. For the cars behind this motive power, a wide variety of rolling stock, embracing both passenger and freight cars, were made by the company. Moreover, the trademark Lionel layout was typically an animated affair, with a generous supply of operating accessories. The company's direction and fortunes were revitalized during the 1990s, when rock musician Neil Young assumed part ownership.

Further Reading:

Carp, Roger. *The World's Greatest Toy Train Maker: Insiders Remember Lionel.* Waukesha, Wisconsin, Kalmbach Publishing Co., 1997.

Hollander, Ron. *All Aboard!: The Story of Joshua Lionel Cowen and His Lionel Train Company.* New York, Workman Publishing Co., 1981.

McComas, Tom, and James Tuohy. *A Collector's Guide and History to Lionel Trains.* Wilmette, Illinois, TM Productions, 1975.