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By Harry Levins

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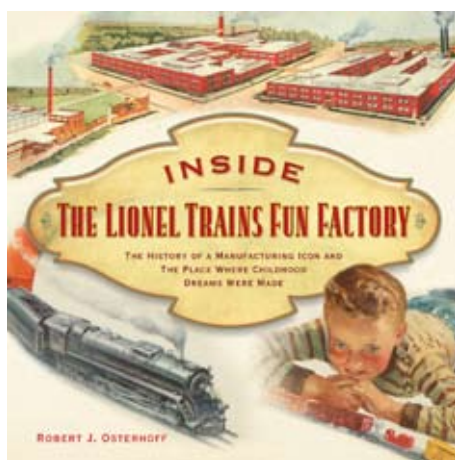
In the decade after World War II, many an American boy awoke to find under the Christmas tree his dream present: a Lionel train set.

Now, those boys are men in their 50s and 60s. Most have long since put Lionel train sets behind them. But the diehards among them have kept their hand in as Lionel collectors.

Wildwood author Robert J. Osterhoff has that niche group in his sights as the audience for "Inside the Lionel Trains Fun Factory." This beautifully designed book, with almost 600 illustrations, is neither a history of the toy train industry in general nor a detailed look at Lionel trains in particular.

Instead, it's a corporate history of the Lionel Corp., with accounts of factory construction, patent disputes, boardroom intrigue, management changes and so on. The general reader will almost surely find the level of corporate detail mind-numbing.

But the **Lionel collectors will eat up Osterhoff's exhaustive research** into such questions as whether those Lionel salt-and-pepper shakers still being traded came from the executive dining room (no, they didn't) and the



248 Pages - 10" x 10"

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real mailing address for the Lionel factory complex in Irvington, N.J. (Or was it in Hillside, N.J.? Osterhoff knows.)

Some of the detail is interesting overall — for example, Lionel's ban on smoking in its factories as early as 1937, and the depressing reality that today, your American-icon Lionel train set is made in Asia.

Still, most of this book is strictly for toy-train buffs and Lionel train collectors. If one of those is on your Christmas-gift list, you can make him as delighted as he's been since — oh, since Dec. 25, 1948, when he got his first Lionel train set.

Inside The Lionel Trains Fun Factory: The History of a Manufacturing Icon and The Place Where Childhood Dreams Were Made by Robert J. Osterhoff. Available from Project Roar Publishing, P.O. Box 599, Winfield, IL 60190. To order, visit www.projectroar.com or call 630-653-ROAR (7627). 248 pages, 575+ color photos and images, Hardcover \$34.95 (ISBN 978-1-9336-0005-5), Publisher's Limited Edition Hardcover \$69.95 (ISBN 978-1-9336-0006-2). It is also available at your local book seller, hobby retailer, bn.com and Amazon.com.



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