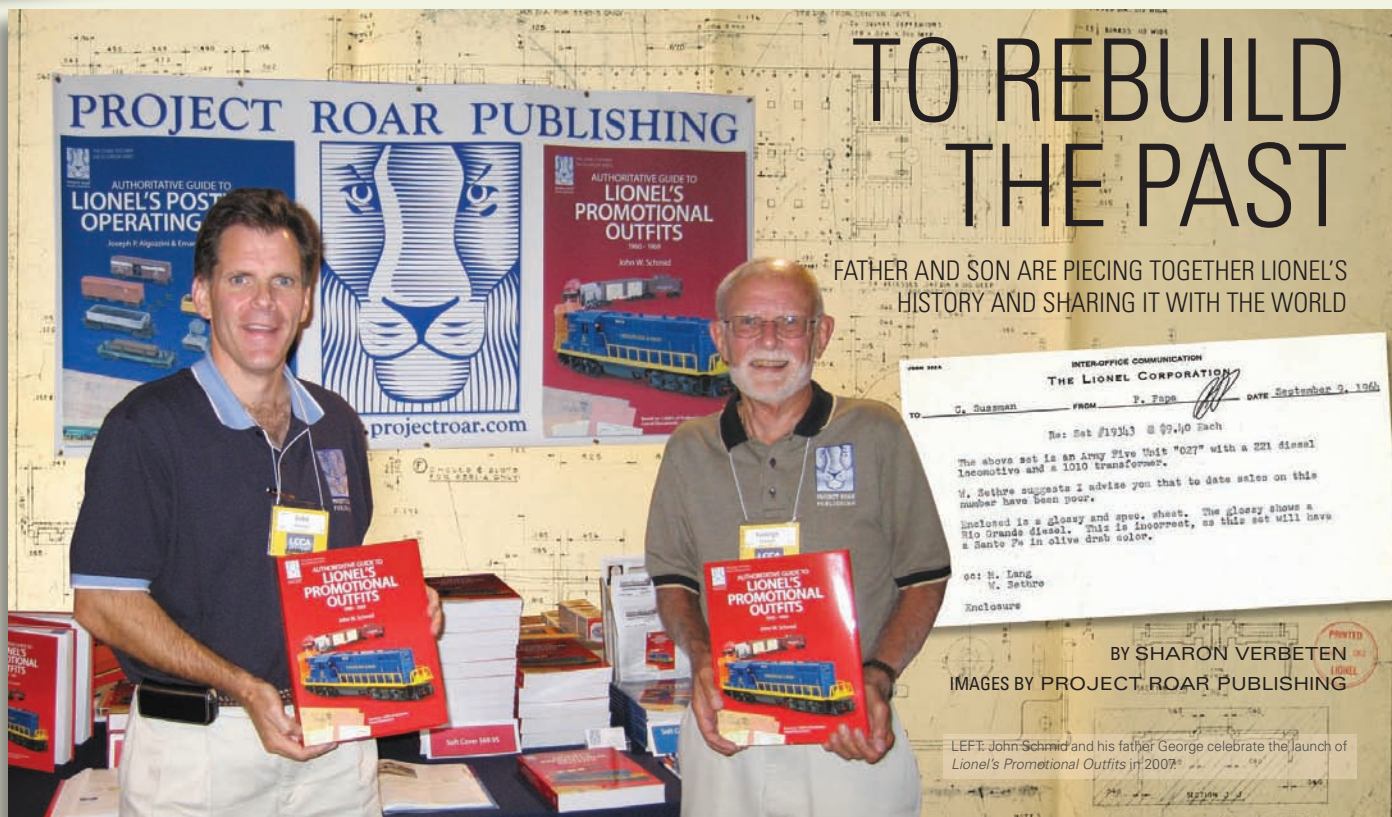




# PROJECT ROAR PUBLISHING AS FEATURED IN TOY COLLECTOR MAGAZINE



FATHER AND SON ARE PIECING TOGETHER LIONEL'S HISTORY AND SHARING IT WITH THE WORLD

BY SHARON VERBETEN  
IMAGES BY PROJECT ROAR PUBLISHING

LEFT: John Schmid and his father George celebrate the launch of Lionel's Promotional Outfits in 2007.

THE WORLD OF TRAIN collectors is a close-knit one, where the names and faces of key players are familiar to all. So when an unknown bidder paid \$43,000 for a pile of papers at a 2001 Stout Auctions sale, waves of hushed chatter and speculation swept through the room.

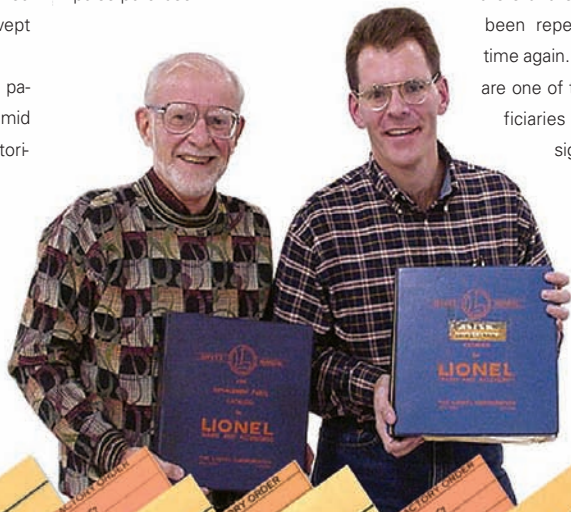
This wasn't just any pile of papers. Winning bidder George Schmid knew the documents were historically significant, but it was not until later that he and his son realized they had purchased the mother lode – thousands of pages of Lionel company documents, including factory orders for all outfits manufactured between 1960 and 1966.

"Initially, my father and I did not comprehend the full significance of what we now owned," said George's son, John Schmid, president of Project Roar Publishing in Winfield, Ill., the company spawned from that impulse purchase.

"Acquiring these documents began another stage in the journey of giving back to the hobby what it has given to my father and me," said John, 42. "Joshua Lionel Cowen's dream of using trains to bring fathers and sons closer has been repeated time and time again. My father and I are one of the many beneficiaries of Cowen's insights and hopes.

"This is the classic train collector's story," he added – one that starts with a sale, a successful bid and a desire to share. The Stout Auctions sale of the Richard Kughn collection in November 2001 was an eagerly anticipated one, with buyers hoping to buy anything belonging to the former owner of Lionel. After the second day of bidding, George, a longtime collector from Illinois, walked away with the archive of documents, leaving many scratching their heads. "The buzz was, 'Who the heck are they?'" John recalled. "We got hounded...[with people asking], 'What are you going to do with these documents?'"

The Schmidts had no intention of squirreling away their treasure. "Many collectors feared that these







John Schmid traveled hundreds of miles to photograph this perfect example of Sears' famed set no. 9836 (Lionel's no. 12885-500) from 1965.

rare documents would again be buried away or, even worse, be lost in storage," John said. "Instead, we decided to publish this information as a way of helping others and enabling

the toy train community to learn more about Lionel and its promotional outfits."

It was all part of what John called his dad's grand scheme. "He

believed very much in stewardship ... to give back to the collector community some of the friendship and fun."

For many years, John and his father shared an affinity for trains. "It was Christmas all year long," John said, as every year massive train layouts filled their basement. His father, he added, "infected his three children with the train bug."

But after the fateful auction, John caught the historical bug, and suddenly, he realized their shared enthusiasm could become a business.

"I sat down, wrote a business plan and gave it to [my dad] and said, 'Here's how we can make this a business,'" said John, who had no previous publishing experience but had an MBA that would help him with the marketing and business end of the

venture.

"It was kind of like a perfect storm," John said, looking back to 2001. His father had retired after decades in manufacturing, the documents came up for sale and they both seemed motivated to forge ahead. In 2002, John left his full-time job in software sales to take the helm of the new undertaking, which they named Project Roar Publishing. The Schmidts had contacted several hobby publishers, none of whom expressed much in-



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## JUST WHAT'S IN THERE?

The first question people ask the Schmidts is pretty basic: Just what is in the Project Roar archive, anyway?

John Schmid laughs. "It took years to figure all this stuff out," he admits. "But eventually we got things categorized into sensible groupings that help us with our research — and help us reconnect the dots when we get new bits of information."

The categories run the gamut of typical manufacturing documentation:

- Blueprints
- Component parts indices
- Production control files

- Factory orders
- Engineering specifications
- Change orders  
(affecting future production)
- Production planning records
- Parts cards

To decipher the information, John turned to numerous former Lionel employees. "I still haven't figured out every code, and probably never will, but we know enough to make sense of the information."

What's still out there for discovery? "Change Notices — they help explain why Lionel made things the way they did. But I've been told they were discarded."

terest in reprinting the papers, so launching their own independent publishing company was the logical solution.

"Every day was a new adven-

ture," said John. "We found discovery after discovery that had been locked away for



The no. 19201 (2) was the seventh of nine outfits to include the extremely rare no. 910-1 Navy Cardboard Display (also known as the Atomic Sub Base). It alone drives the value of this outfit to more than \$15,000 in like-new condition.

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Because of its orange and black color scheme, this has become known as the Halloween General. The Schmids uncovered that it was actually a Lionel no. X-507NA originally sold to Druggists' Service Council and advertised in that firm's Gifts Galore catalog.

years waiting to be documented, including the different use of suffixes for boxed and unboxed items, the outfit number of the Halloween General, item variations not previously known and outfits produced in quantities as low as six."

At first, John said, Project Roar planned on photographing the documents and turning them into a book. But they wanted to take it one step further and photograph actual train sets, which would translate to considerable time and expense. The Schmids sought out collectors and asked to photograph their train sets. At the same time, they continued to buy sets of their own to add to their

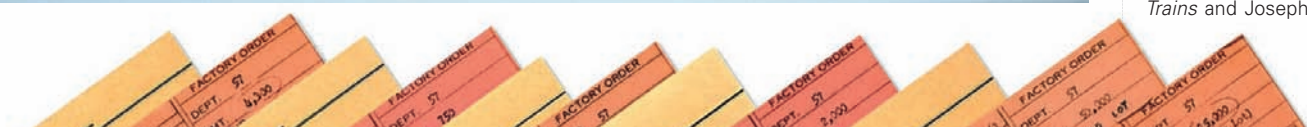


Set no. 19328 came with two rare and valuable paper items—the no. X625-20 Cardboard Scenic Set and no. 903 Set of (2) Sheets Trading Cards. The 19328 included both a steam and a diesel locomotive — a rare combination for Lionel set design.

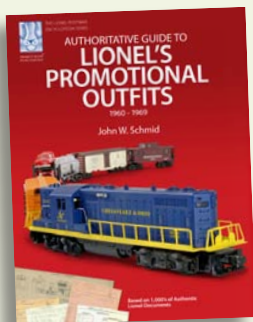
collection and archives.

While the Schmids were relative unknowns at the Stout auction, they knew they'd have to raise their profile to get the type of cooperation needed to produce the caliber of books they had in mind. "I'm trying to build the Mercedes of collector books," John said.

They decided not to be "closet collectors" anymore. "We had to be proactive to make ourselves known," John said. "I went out and started to build a virtual team," which included published authors in the train field, such as Roger Carp, senior editor of Kalmbach Publishing's *Classic Toy Trains* and Joseph Algozzini, whom







## BOOKS AVAILABLE FROM PROJECT ROAR PUBLISHING



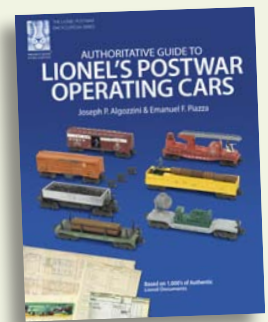
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