

# Lights, Camera, Lionel Trains! A Photo History of an American Icon

by Roger Carp

Reviewed by Bruce C. Greenberg, Ph.D., Brinkman Publishing & former President Greenberg Publishing Company (1975–1991)

**I have greatly enjoyed reading Roger Carp's *Lights, Camera, Lionel Trains!* and learned much from it.** Although Lionel trains have been the subject of many books for over 40 years, ***Lights, Camera, Lionel Trains!* brings a fresh and insightful perspective to my favorite topic.**

Carp asks, "why did Lionel trains become the most important American childhood and family icon?" What were the features of Lionel toy trains that so endeared them to hundreds of millions of Americans for over 40 years? And how did photography enable this extraordinary interest? As Carp notes, "If anything, the cost of a typical Lionel set, often the equivalent to one or two paychecks caused parents to view it as much more than a plaything for kids to use recklessly."

The answer becomes obvious in the more than 200 photographs presenting the history of Lionel from its founding to its resurgence under the leadership of Richard Kughn from 1986 through 1995. And of equal importance is the well-written and researched and fascinating story told by Carp in his wonderful captions. Furthermore, most of these photographs have not been seen before.

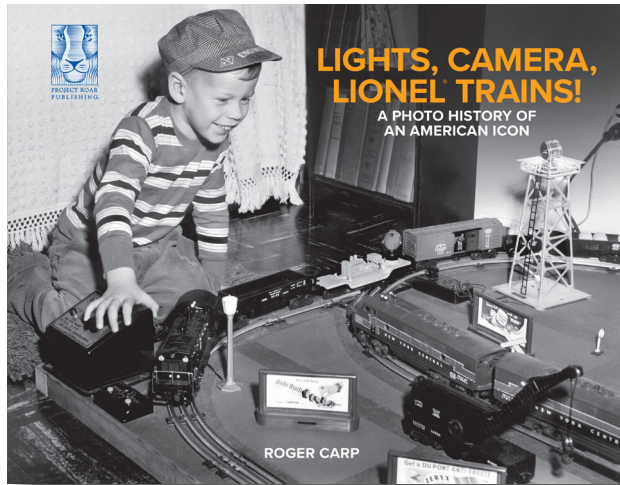
There are many delightful photographs of boys fascinated with trains. There are photographs of Lionel trains with well-known actors and actresses such as Spencer Tracey, Claire Trevor, Rita Hayworth, James Cagney, Barbara Stanwyck, Errol Flynn, Olivia de Havilland, Jed Prouty, George Ernest, Betty Grable, Harry Belafonte, Lucille Bar and Desi Arnaz. Of course there are photo-

graphs of Lionel Cowen as a young man, then at middle age and as an old man; photographs of Lionel's son Lawrence as a boy and later in life. Fascinating photographs of Lionel show room layouts never seen before are included. Lionel managers' photographs include Arthur Raphael, Mike Sweyd, Jack Caffrey, Samuel Belsler, Joseph Bonanno, Charles Giaimo, Joseph Bonanno and also the great Lionel inventor, Frank Petit. Bob Butterfield, senior engineer of the New York Central who appeared on the 1931 Lionel catalogue cover with his grandsons showing them his Lionel locomotive. The caption reads "Just Like Mine". Sports stars Joe DiMaggio and Roy Campanella also publicized Lionel trains. Senior political officials George Marshall, Secretary of State and Supreme Court Justices Thomas Clark and Thurgood Marshall were shown with Lionel trains. Samuel Vauclain the President of Baldwin Locomotive Works was photographed showing Lionel trains to his grandsons while the famous defense lawyer, Samuel Leibowitz, who argued the Scottsboro Boys case, was photographed with his Lionel trains which he introduced as evidence.

Roger Carp's captions explore and explain the significance of the photographs. Carp, the Senior Editor of *Classic Toy Trains* for 20 years has been a lifelong student of Lionel history and has written 20 books on Lionel Trains. He brings his many years of study and experience to the writing of fascinating essays.

**I highly recommend *Lights, Camera, Lionel Trains!* A Photo History of An American Icon.**

The book is available from Project Roar Publishing at [projectroar.com](http://projectroar.com) or call 630-653-7627.



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