

French toy-train steamliners by Fred

80 years ago, i.e. in 1937, the streamlined Coronation was introduced in England. At the same time in France one of the Super Pacific 4-6-2 locomotives of the NORD railway received a streamlined shroud. Streamlining was in that period popular in the whole world; in France, unlike some other countries, most streamlining was done on existing locomotives. Here I show and describe some French toy-train streamlined steam locomotives (steamliners or in French “locomotive à vapeur carénée”) from the years just before and after WW2. The four most important toy-train manufacturers in France (CR, Hornby France, JEP and LR) all made steamliners. Besides the toy-train steamliners shown here I also collect less toy-like models of steamliners; some of these in H0 and 00 gauge can be seen in a collection of 9 “Steamliners” video’s I made which are viewable via my website: <http://sncf231e.nl/> So this article is about trains for gauges larger than H0/00.

CR (Charles Rossignol)

CR (like JEP) made toy-trains in 0 gauge and other gauges and also floor trains, all made from lithographed tinplate. The trains of CR are quite toy-like and do not follow any prototype. Most CR items wear a CR number. CR made train-sets, i.e. locomotives with matching rolling stock and track and potentially accessories in a box. CR made a large number of different types of steamliners, maybe even more than JEP. I do have 3 of these, see FIG 1.



FIG 1

The first train shown in FIG 2 is made for 28 mm gauge and has number CR50, CR51 and CR52.3 for the loco, tender and coach respectively.



FIG 2

Trains like these came in a set with a circle of rails. The locomotive, which is a 2-2-0, has wheelsets set such that the train can only run in circles, so it can run also on the floor (see FIG 3).

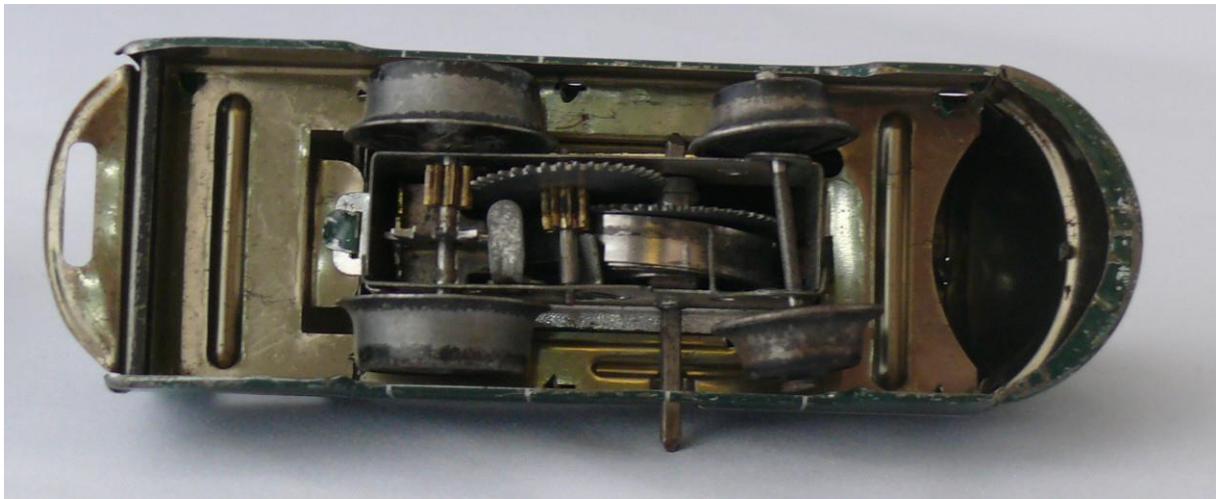


FIG 3

The front of the locomotive does look a bit like the streamlined New York Central Dreyfuss Hudsons; I assume the designer had seen pictures of these. This train was made in 1952 and has a total length of 32 cm.

FIG 4 shows a similar train with different streamlined nose and larger. This is 0 gauge with numbers CR60 for the locomotive and CR61 for the tender; the coach has no number and different colors but according to the CR book is part of this train. This set wears the extra trademark Eclair which was used for some but not all trains CR made. This train was made in 1950 and is 43 cm long.



FIG 4

The set box, see FIG 5, of the next train describes it as a Train Lux Eclair.



FIG 5

FIG 6 shows the set with a loco, tender, coach and baggage car with fixed articulated connections between the cars and the tender. The total train is 61 cm long. The locomotive and tender have number CR300 and CR301 while both coach and baggage car have number CR302. The book on CR does not mention this train with these numbers, but a similar set is from 1939.



FIG 6

Hornby France

The French Hornby factory made (only) 2 steamliners, both based on real prototypes. In the M series Hornby made from 1937 till 1940 a train inspired by a PLM (Paris-Lyon Marseille) railway streamlined fast train capable of connecting Paris to Marseille in nine hours. This train was operated from May 22, 1937 so Hornby was very fast in bringing out this model. The shrouded locomotive was a 4-4-2 Atlantic; Hornby's version is a 0-4-0. Hornby made a clockwork and an electric version and also made a matching coach with the prototypical correct shrouded connection. The train could be had in a set with 1 or with 2 coaches and the locomotive and the coach were also available separately. The locomotive had the catalogue indication AD for the clockwork version and ADE for the electric version. FIG 7 shows the clockwork version at the front and the electric version at the rear. Note that the coach shown behind the electric version is not an original one but a Hachette reproduction.



FIG 7

In 1939 Hornby made a shortened and small-wheeled, but recognizable, 4-4-2 version of the NORD super pacific 4-6-2 that was streamlined 80 years ago in 1937. The SNCF was established in 1938, so the locomotive received SNCF markings as can be seen in FIG 8.



FIG 8

According to the Clive Lamming French Hornby book a brown version was made from 1939 to 1954 and a green version from 1939 to 1940, so the green version is much rarer. As far as I know the real locomotive was never green; it was painted blue in 1938 for a short period for the highly successful visit of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth to strengthen Anglo-French relations as Europe stood on the brink of war. The blue version would be a nice neverwazza if I ever find this loco in need of external restoration. The Hornby catalogue number is N° 4E and the length of loco and tender is 43 cm. This locomotive was available in a set called Etoile du Nord, but Hornby incorrectly added ETAT type, instead of CIWL type, coaches in this, thus not realistic, set.

JEP (Jouet de Paris)

JEP (like CR) made toy-trains in 0 gauge and other gauges. In 1938 they introduced streamlined locomotives replacing most of their former Nord type locomotives in their catalogue. Their steamliners do not resemble any prototype, however, according to Clive Lamming, two different types are recognized. An American type, looking a bit like the American New York Central Commodore Vanderbilt steamliner, and a French type which looks like a combination of French NORD and ETAT steamliners.

The first steamliner shown in FIG 9 is an S gauge toy-train.



FIG 9

JEP introduced low budget S gauge trains, which they called “Voie S” as well as “25 mm”, in 1953. This 0-4-0 streamliner was only made in a clockwork version and was only available in sets with one green coach or with a green coach and a red postal van. The set shown had catalogue number 4211.22 and is 44 cm long.

JEP also made a range of simple 28 mm gauge trains, which were meant to compete with the cheap CR trains. From 1938 till 1950 they made the small 0-4-0 clockwork steamliner shown in FIG 10. This locomotive is 4 cm shorter than the S gauge version which runs at a smaller gauge. It had catalogue number 4311 and is 18 cm long.



FIG 10

In 0 gauge JEP made a varied collection of streamlined locomotives. FIG 11 shows that, although all running on 0 gauge tracks, different sizes were made for the different budgets of the parents buying a train for their boy.



FIG 11

FIG 12 shows the two smallest 0 gauge steamliners; the black 0-4-0 with catalogue number 4321.LT is 25 cm long while the blue 2-4-0 (catalogue number 4331.LT) is 29 cm long. JEP made both these locomotives in black and blue.



FIG 12

These are both clockwork locomotives and were not available as electric ones. JEP however used the same body of the blue steamliner with an electric motor to make this red articulated train (FIG 13)



FIG 13

They combined the steamliner with one of their railcars resulting in a train with a tail-car with (not illuminated) front lights (FIG 14). This train with catalogue number 5733.2 has a length of 60 cm and was only available in an electric version. The train has markings of the NORD railway, while the streamliners above have SNCF markings.



FIG 14

Two versions of a larger streamlined 2-4-0 with 4-wheel tender, which had a total length of 35 cm, were made: A lithographed and a painted version. The painted version of the 2-4-0 steamliner is shown in FIG 15. These are painted in NORD brown but wear the SNCF markings and were made from 1938 until 1950.



FIG 15

These were available in clockwork and electric; the electric version (catalogue number 5751LT) is shown at the front. The clockwork version of this locomotive (catalogue number 4351LT) had a headlight with power supplied by a battery in the tender; on the tender top an on/off switch is present as can be seen in FIG 16. This locomotive's paint was largely damaged, so I repainted it.



FIG 16

The lithographed version, which was made from 1951 until 1956, is shown in FIG 17 in clockwork (catalogue number 4341LT) at the front and electric (catalogue number 5741LT) at the rear. The lithographed versions are made of thinner metal and were some 10% cheaper than the painted versions.



FIG 17

The largest JEP steamliner has a 4-4-4 wheel configuration with 8 wheel tender, see FIG 18. This was only available in an electric version (catalogue number 5761LT) and is 46 cm long. Various versions with different electric motors and with or without automatic reverse unit were made between 1937 and 1952.



FIG 18

Matching 37 cm long coaches were made in various versions (Postal, Pullman, Baggage) as can be seen in FIG 19.



FIG 19

LR (Le Rapide or Louis Roussy)

The most famous and costly LR steamliner is the Super Rapide locomotive, a large 4-8-4 streamliner cast in aluminum, but that is not in my collection. In FIG 20 you see the clockwork tinplate 0-4-0 steamliner LR made with matching coach in colors a bit like the Hornby PLM steamliner (see FIG 7). This has catalogue number 102 and a total length of 48 cm. LR made this set also in an electric version. It does not seem to be based on a prototype, the tender is an oil version. In 1939 this locomotive with tender had a price of 55 FF while the Super Rapide had a price of 395 FF! Nowadays the price difference is even larger.



FIG 20

After WW II LR made a number of steamliners loosely based on the famous French SNCF 232R and 232S 4-6-4 express locomotives. These LR locomotives had cast bodies. The first were a couple of simple tank type locomotives in 0-4-0 for the clockwork and 0-4-2 for the electric version. The electric version is not catalogued and apparently only made for a couple of years after WW II. The clockwork version has catalogue number 111L and appears in catalogues until 1954.



FIG 21

As can be seen in FIG 22 these locomotives were of a tank type but you could wonder where they kept the water. According to knowledgeable people from the French train collectors society CFE the uncatalogued 0-4-2 electric version also came with a tender; I have not seen that version. These locomotives are 21 cm long.



FIG 22

Somewhat looking like the previous type the next LR steamliner has better proportions, see FIG 23 (and the June 2017 page of the TCS calendar).



FIG 23

This 3-rail electric 4-4-2 with 8-wheel tender has catalogue number 1024L and a length of 36 cm. Many LR trains, like this one, look like they had a hard life. I have never seen an LR mint example.

I used the following books for this article:

- Les Jouets C.R., Mick Duprat, 1998 Massin Editeur
- Hornby Les trains Français, Clive Lamming, 2006 LR Presse
- JEP 1902-1964, Clive Lamming, 2008 LR Presse,
- Encyclopedie du Train-Jouet Francais, Clive Lamming, 1993 Editions du Collectionneur

And I used information from the website <http://www.train-jouet.com/catalogues/index.htm> which contains many catalogs.

French toy-train steamliners Addendum by Fred

As mentioned in the original article in Train Collector Issue 43 the French company LR or Le Rapide made a number of steamliners loosely based on the famous French SNCF 232R and 232S 4-6-4 express locomotives. The electric version of this locomotive is not catalogued and apparently only made for a couple of years after WW II. According to knowledgeable people from the French train collectors' society CFE the uncatalogued 0-4-2 electric one came in two versions, with and without tender; but I had never seen the version with tender. Exactly on the day the Train Collector 43 arrived by mail, I found examples of that version on the internet and I bought one. So here you see in FIG 24 the tank locomotive version next to the tender locomotive version. The tank locomotive has buffers and is closed at the back.



FIG 24

FIG 25 and FIG 26 show the tender locomotive with its tender. The tender LR used for this locomotive is very similar to the tender of the LR Fleche d'Or pacific.



FIG 25



FIG 26