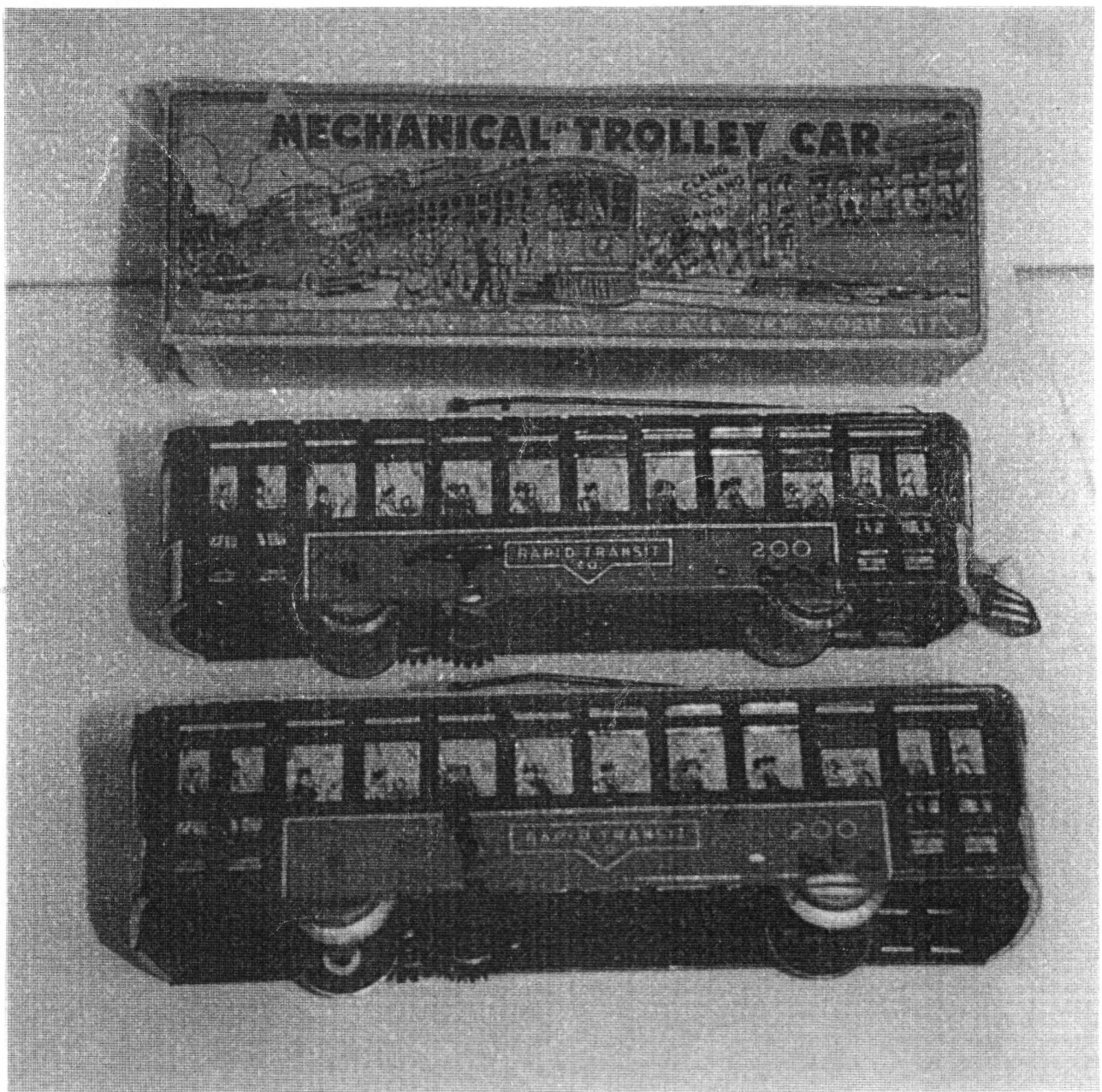


COLLECTING WITH

MAIRX

Issue 34

April



COLLECTING WITH MARX

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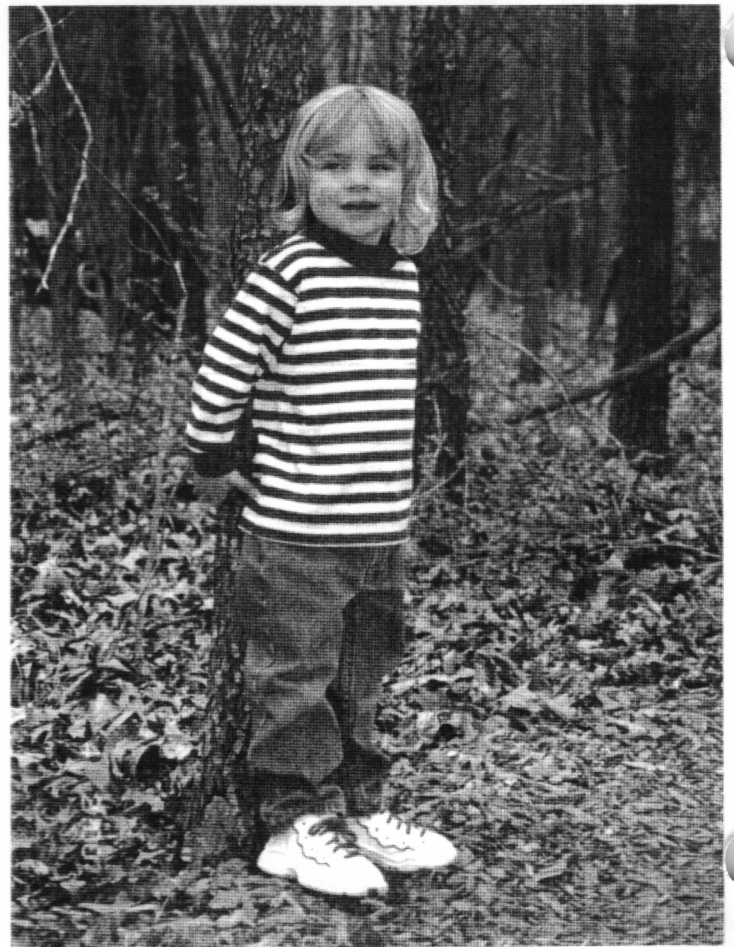
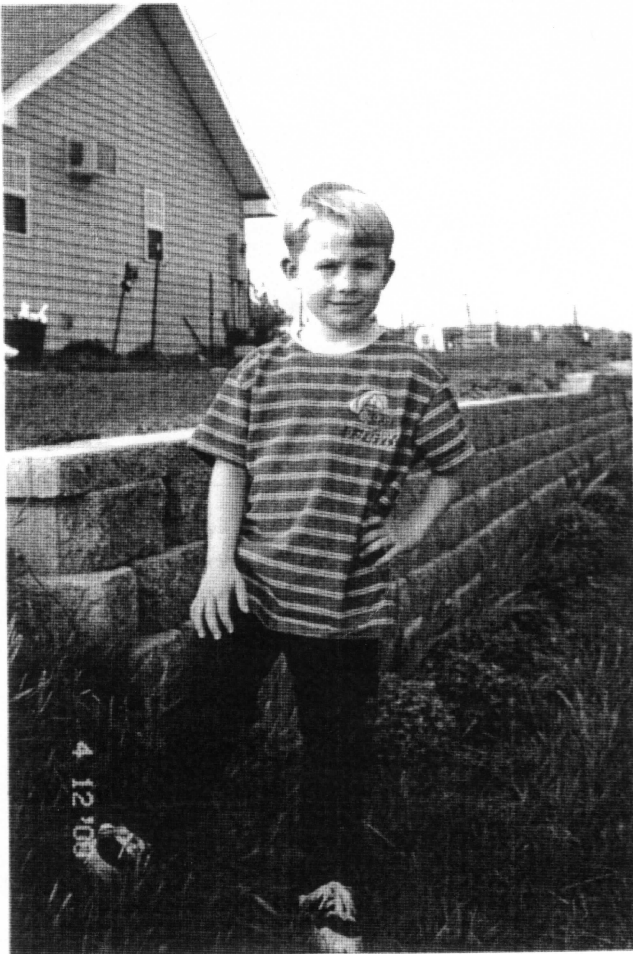
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Marx toy and train collecting is as exciting and pleasurable as ever with people all over the globe reporting great finds. There is little more exciting as a collector than walking into a toy or train show and being fortunate enough to find that piece that you have been looking for for months and maybe even years. What a thrill it is to be at a toy show where you really don't expect to find anything exceptional to add to your collection but you're there to look and browse and maybe learn something or to feed a sideline collection. When all of a sudden you run across a Mickey Mouse train set or train toy that maybe you wouldn't see so much of at a regular train show. They say the thrill is in the hunt and I guess that is just what they mean.

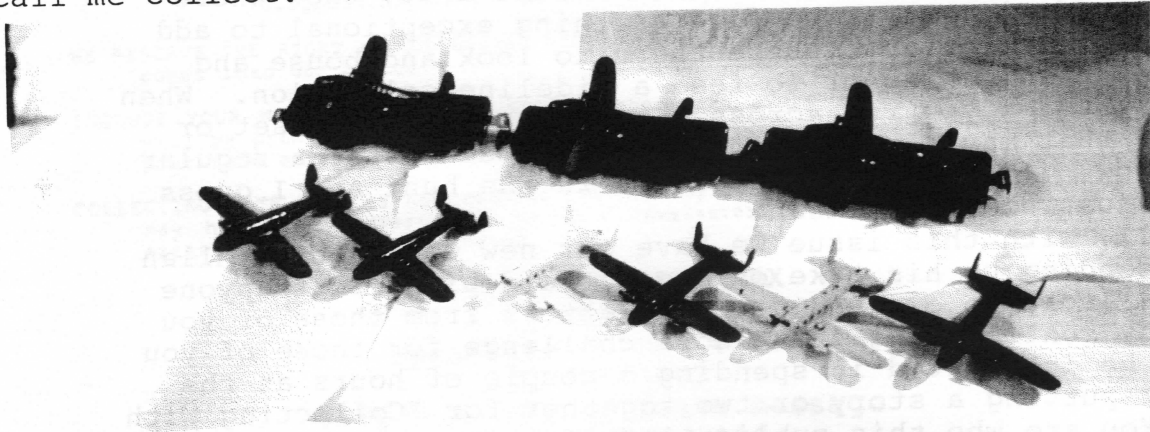
Well, with this issue we have our new contributor Allan Miller sending us his take on a great old piece that anyone would be lucky to own and several letters from those of you who enjoy contributing and also a challenge for those of you who may be interested in spending a couple of hours at the computer putting a story or two together for "Collecting With Marx". You are who this publication is written by and you are who it is written for. Years from now we will look back and see that we as collectors were the only source to feed other collectors. Eric Matzke and the Reverend Robert Whitacre are the only two accurate sources for Marx collectors today and there is so, so much more than either source was able to put together. Try to find a book about collecting Marx trains and you would be hard pressed to find anything. We are the only ongoing source of publication for the Marx collecting community and it is up to us to bring out what is available. We don't collect to accumulate wealth and we shouldn't share the knowledge to obtain wealth.

There are some interesting letters and comments this time and if one sparks your interest or you have a question or story to relate about something feel free to call, write fax or email about it. We are here and if one of the above methods doesn't work try one of the others. It is a pleasure hearing from all of my friends and very enjoyable putting this rag together. Tell your friends about us and please consider contributing. We all enjoy hearing what fellow collectors are finding and have to say about certain subjects. Some of us don't feel like anyone would enjoy hearing about what we have to say but if you think about it chances are someone else does too.

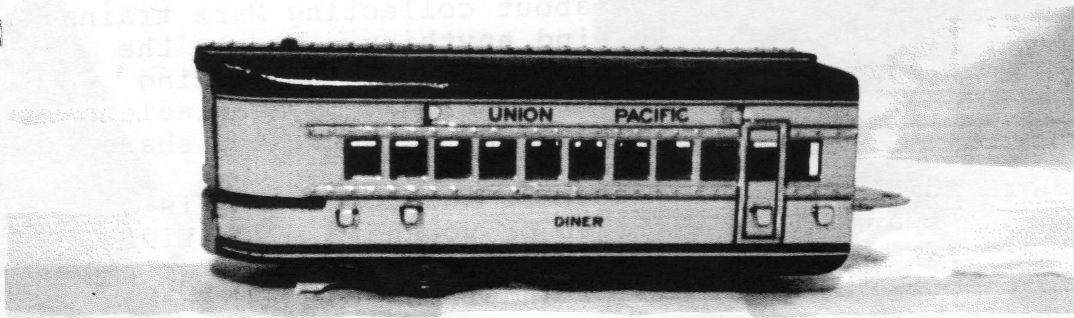
Keep in touch and always remember "Collecting With Marx" is your Marx train collecting source and we are here for you! Use us!

Marx

When I read that you paid 480.00 for a green airplane I almost had a seizure. I never heard of a person paying that much for an airplane (any color). The nine airplanes in my picture are the ones I have. I paid total cost for all nine planes \$895.00 and that's less than a hundred dollars each. I would like to buy an airplane car for each one of my planes. (so would everybody else) I need 6 cars and would pay 100.00 each for the cars. If you have one to sell call me collect. 1-412-823-6895.



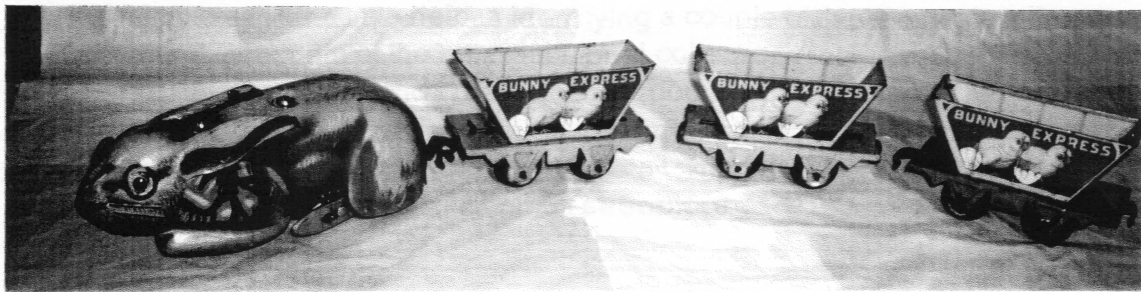
I'm sending you a picture of the Diner car I bought on Feb. 29 this year. I bought a Diner car 5 years ago at a Monroeville Pa. show. I paid \$200.00 each for the first one and I paid 135.00 for this one in the picture. I consider these cars to be rare but I could be wrong. What do you think?



I bought these three pieces in the last 3 months. I don't consider them rare but they are scarce. I've collected Marx for 22 years up till three months ago I never saw a yellow Fruit car for sale at a show. So I bought both cars for 200.00 each (mint condition) "B" unit 150.00 near mint.



This is my Bunny Train which I bought in 1988 at York for \$1650.00. The Bunny is near mint the cars are in lesser condition.
Hugh Caraher



OK Hugh before you go thinking I'm losing my mind let me preface my airplane purchase experience by saying this. The first airplane I bought was \$40.00 and OD with canopy which I had a military set with empty flatcar (which I paid \$5.00 for the whole set 10 pieces) to put it on. The second one I had was the most common red which I paid \$150.00. The next one was a silver colored plane with canopy at a toy show for \$10.00. The next was a cream colored plane at a toy show for \$15.00. The next was a blue plane with canopy in Canada for \$15.00. The next was a yellow plane at a toy show for \$20.00. And last but not least my green in excellent condition for \$450.00. By the way I just got a flat for \$40.00. Now while not bragging I have to say that I have 8 planes with five flats for about 1000.00. But who's counting?

Obviously load cars are my favorite thing to collect, and I really enjoy talking about them.

At one time, Hugh, the Marx collecting community believed there to be only a handful of these Diners. I mean maybe 5 or 10. I believe it still to be one of the most prized cars a collector can have, however there are several more than originally thought. You may look at 100 sets or more to find 1 Diner. This reminds me of a car Richard MacNary owns of a cream and green Diner that is lithoed on the inside of a rather common brown and yellow car.

Hugh I consider the B unit a scarce piece in that it too was like the Diner in that the collecting community felt there weren't many out there. With time and discovering new collectors several have come out of the woodwork. Steve Eckel owned a nice boxed set with a B unit in it. The only one I had seen in the box. As for your Fruit Growers cars if you went by a number you are looking for they are rare. If you are going by just seeing one at a show I feel like they are scarce. Try to find one. When you're looking for one it's hard to find one.

Now Hugh, you throw around these numbers for a Bunny train at 1650.00. I gave 850.00 for mine. Just kidding! I saw a Bunny train sell for \$3750.00 one time and by the way a green airplane for \$1750.00. It's all in what a person is willing to pay. Hugh thanks for the pictures and letter. Don't be a stranger!

Issue number 33 was great. We are in Florida until April so my copy caught up with me late. However, I am looking forward to Allen Miller's column. He and his Father are respected collectors and their museum contains a wealth of information.

Don McCleod

THE OVERLOOKED PLASTIC 0-4-0 STEAMERS
By: Albert Woodward

Beginning in the early 1950's Marx began producing detailed plastic shell steam 0-4-0 engines that replaced, and looked more realistic than, their stamped-steel predecessors. There are four engine numbers in this plastic group: 198, 400, 401, and 490 (excluding the Wm. Crooks 0-4-0, which was out of the main production, only used in certain period sets).

These plastic steamers are seemingly ubiquitous, being readily found at local meets, on sales lists, and on internet auctions such as ebay. They are cheap, as a group, relative to many other Marx steam engines.

They are overlooked because they are common and cheap, but they come in a surprising number of variations. Although there are not the three dozen or so CP engine variations or the three dozen plus CV and Mercury variations, the plastic variations are numerous enough to be worthy of special attention and collecting while they still are affordable.

The following is a nonsystematic and unverified list of some of the variations. These plastic engines deserve and await a comprehensive and thorough review.

The 198:

Motor: windup and electric (for the Canadian market passenger sets).

Light: electric with and without headlight (no hole in boiler front).

Color: Red, very shiny or very dull black.

The 400:

Motor: one way, double reduction, or reversible 898/999 type with plain drivers.

Light: Electric with and without headlight.

Striping: White stripe or none.

Smoke: Windup with puffer, electric with puffer.

Color: Olive drab, grey, black.

The 401:

Motor: windup, battery powdered, electric, windup with bottom plate and without.

Striping: White stripe or none (unsure about this).

Smoke: Windup with puffer.

Color: Grey or black.

The 490:

Motor: One way or double reduction motor (different mountings for motor: screw holes or slots in boiler, rivets or screw holes in steam chest).

Striping: White stripe or none.

Sound: One way motor with chugger or none.

Smoke: Electric puffer.

Light: Light or no light with special bracket on one way motor.

Quite a variety!

I am writing to ask for a little help in identifying a couple of Japanese Marx items which I found in 'bottom of the box' in a Lionel collection I recently purchased. They are both battery operated and in reasonably good condition. I apologize for the quality of the pictures. The pic of the bulldozer was taken with my print camera. The camera does not have a close up lens so detail is lacking. The pic of the handcar was taken with a friend's digital camera. I have looked in several toy guides but didn't find any into.

The picture of the shelf unit shows my Marx items which I like to display. I give a lot of tours and I like the trains shown to tell the Marx story. There is everything from 333s to plastic four wheel cars with some Sears sets, tin litho diesels, 3/16" cars, handcars, RDC, and electric and windup CV thrown in.

I also note it is possible to pick up some nice Marx on ebay. I recently picked up a 7205 set in box with a 702 WP switcher, four wheel cars and 643 caboose. It required a minor electrical repair and adjustment to the pickup to produce a very nice running late Marx set. Cost was \$39 including shipping. I looked to have been run very little and cleaned up very nicely (fully excellent condition).

John Roam



John, The two items you have presented are Japanese, however the handcar is not Marx or Linemar. It was produced by another Japanese company which I am not sure of. I believe your bull dozer is a Linemar piece from the mid 50's and it should say either "Linemar" or have the small circle with Linemar somewhere on it. The only reason I know this is because I saw one on Ebay myself. It looks like you have a great train display John with a great mix of several manufacturers. Thanks for the picture and send a letter anytime.

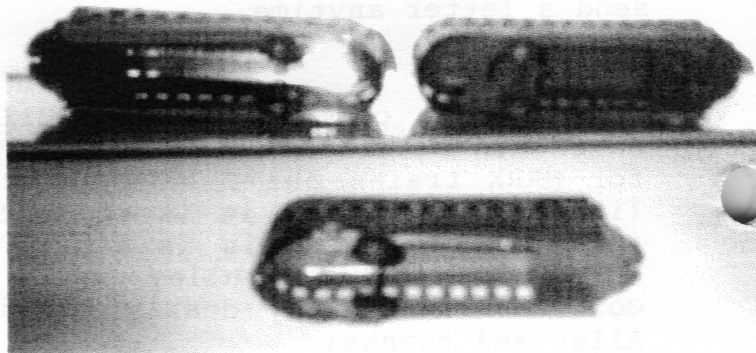
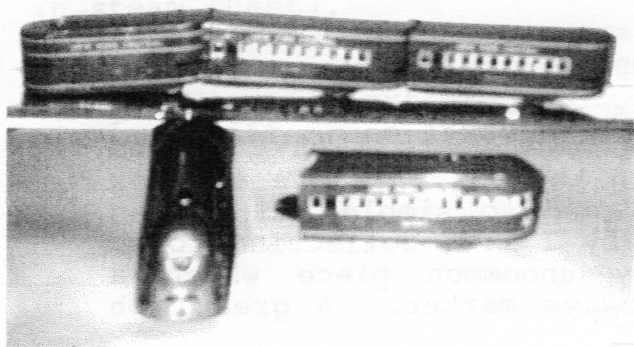
Just a comment on Allan Miller's article in this issue: I have seen several 200 trollies in the many years I have looked for MARX trains but I have never seen the box. I love the box lithography in that it is so colorful and so simple and it has it's own style. This is a part of why I like collecting toys. Also the lighted trolley is a very uncommon piece which a collector would pay dearly for in todays market. A great job Allan and thanks!

Attending train shows sometimes reveal temptations that are just very hard to resist. For instance, this past November, 1999, while at a local train show here in Lansing, MI., and there is only one per year, I was just walking around, looking, with my hands in pocket, thinking, there is not a whole lot here to buy. Then, a table item just rather leapt out at me! There sat a (232) silver Commodore Vanderbilt wind-up engine. It was not in the greatest of shape paint wise, and lettering. But the wind-up threaded key was there; and the engine worked, and even had an original metal sparker plate intact. Do you know I walked away from it three times - going back again and again, trying to make up my mind whether to buy it or not - the price was \$175.00. Well, in 30 years of collecting Marx, I had never even seen one before! That was the deciding factor. I went back and bought it. Now if I can find a tender to go with it!

At that same table was another item that captivated my eye. I am enclosing pictures of this (these) items. It was an articulated Mercury engine and four cars, red. Do you know I walked away from this one 4 times and didn't buy it. After all, I'd paid \$175.00 for the silver Commodore, and depleted my train money. I did get the name, address or phone number of the man who had the set on his table. After talking with 2 other collectors about this set, I called the man a couple of weeks later and bought the set.

Now, here is why: the engine is red Mercury, spoked wheels with 3-piece pick up. But it had a chrome nose. (one is shown on page 109 of Greenberg's Vol. I book). However, the one I found had the talgo coupler unit to pull the articulated cars. The cars included the short tender, the Chicago, Toledo, and Detroit pieces. The underside of the four cars was painted with a light copper color. I have several other red articulated pieces and they are painted underneath with a rather dull gray.

Further examination brought to light another difference. The Detroit car does not have spacer insert above the wheels. This is a metal piece fastened by two tabs on each side coming through the shell and bent over to hold it firm. Now, I have a couple other Detroit red pieces and they all have the spacer. In comparing the Detroit piece with others, I found that the late Squaw Bonnet Union Pacific red/silver/blue from the M100005 UP unit. I believe this to be late in production because it has the solid blue painting on the car window areas. The Detroit car has the tab impressions in the metal sides, but there are no holes for the spacer piece to provide a more rigid construction with it's 3-piece pickup, but the cars may be late, postWWII. Well, I thought train meet turned out some rather unusual items! Duane Ford



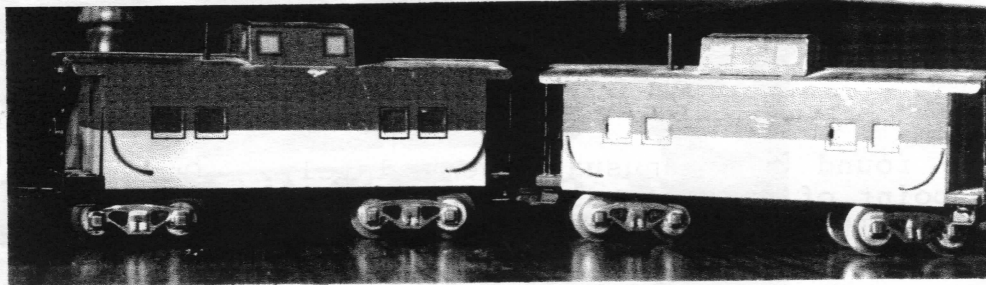
I recently spoke with Gary Anderson concerning the 999 I mentioned in the February issue. He has indicated an article will be forthcoming about the differences in the 999 shell with his by-line. With that in mind I'll let Gary answer any questions and describe the mold's in more detail. I'm sure it'll be a great article given Gary's knowledge and the great collector he is.

Recently I was looking at some color variations in similar rolling stock within my collection. If you've never done that, I'm sure you'd be amazed at the difference's within each individual car. Just look at the 3/16 20102 caboose pictured. Not only in the red but the gray also.

Many collectors consider color changes as variations and proceed to collect many different shades. Is this really a variation or could this be a result of quality control at the time the item was lithographed?

I've thought about this and talked with other collector's about it. Maybe we could get some opinions from the Marx collectors who are your subscribers and settle this question. Are these really variations demanding the necessary search and purchase or are we just adding pieces to our collections for the sake of adding pieces?

John Torgerson



John, this is a very good question. I have noticed this in my collecting days and have wondered this about tin as well as about plastic. From show to show and person to person I think there are varied opinions. Take your milk tank car in plastic. You have what some people call tan, or cream and others have a milk white. Is it intentional or is it color problems or lack of quality control at the factory? This reminds me of a time at York I was in one of the halls furiously trying to find that special piece to add to my collection when here came a fellow collector with a shoe box full of 6" tin cars. Now the kicker is that they were all standard lithography like we see on thousands of other cars but they were in colors nobody had seen before. R+D models? factory mistakes? Intentional limited run color variations? I may never know. I know of one other collector who owns a 6" boxcar and don't remember the road name but it is green. Obviously green and it is not the early mail car. Good question. Those of you who are interested let's hear from you!

By the way, I must tell you that I have been getting Marx stuff on Ebay. While I pay slightly higher prices and have to pay the exchange for Canada (around 50%) at least I have access to items I would never see in Winnipeg, Canada.

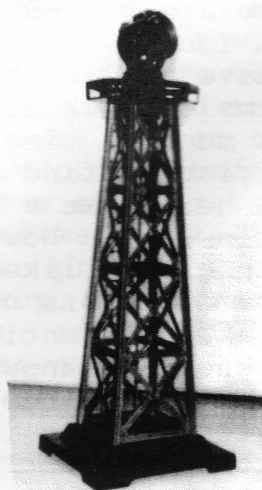
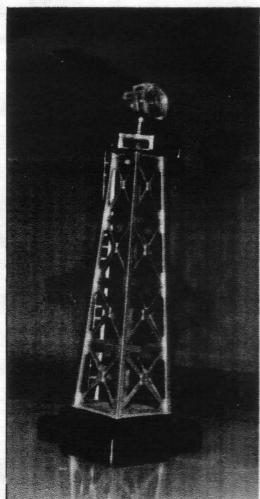
I am looking for a CRI&P Gondola "Gernsey Milk" #548 4-wheel (not 8) with original wooden cans and cardboard insert. All in good condition. Can you help me out on this? --Louis Rodkin, phone 204-3392513.

I have found a few items lately, but all of them have been through ebay. I attended the large Allentown, PA. Spring Thaw train meet in February and did not find any MARX items I needed. Via ebay, I bought a low end wind-up set (no box) which contained a red tender with an orange stripe in decent shape. And I bought a boxed set which contained the flat with gray tractors. I have seen many rare items come up on ebay and I place reasonably high bids on them; but I usually get outbid by someone with deeper pockets. Such is life! I will keep on looking. Once in a while you will score a rare item. --Dan Fenstermaker.

Dan, The shows I have been attending don't turn up much either. As a matter of fact I don't even get to very many shows anymore. I believe I remember seeing both of the items you bought on Ebay and both very nice items to add to a collection. It seems to me that there are hundreds of people on-line that really don't know what they are bidding on. I saw a very common and to me undesirable set of plastic four wheel cars (nothing special at all) sell for \$125.00. The box was nothing special either. You sure can see some rare stuff on there but, you're right, usually someone with deeper pockets gets it.

I would like to thank Mr. Broers for sending along information on a couple of shows I would like to attend one day. He lives in Minnesota and there are several very comprehensive collections in a 300 or 400 mile radius up there. Thanks again!

I have found some unusual items lately. One is a MARX Factory HO point of purchase display and layout. I believe it is a Sears unit. It has molded base with full scenery and accessories, at the back is a shelving unit with a logo. I also found an unusual accessory, (photo enclosed). It's a revolving beacon tower with a grey searchlight that REVOLVES BY VIBRATING. (0456). --Robert Grossman.

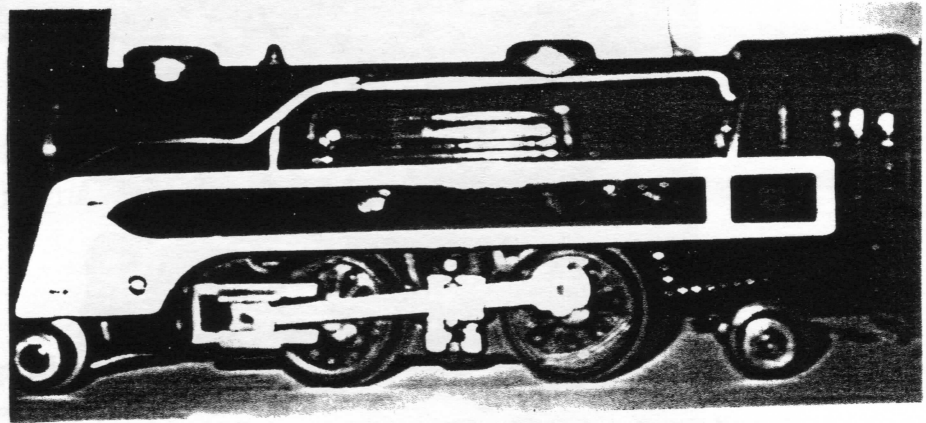
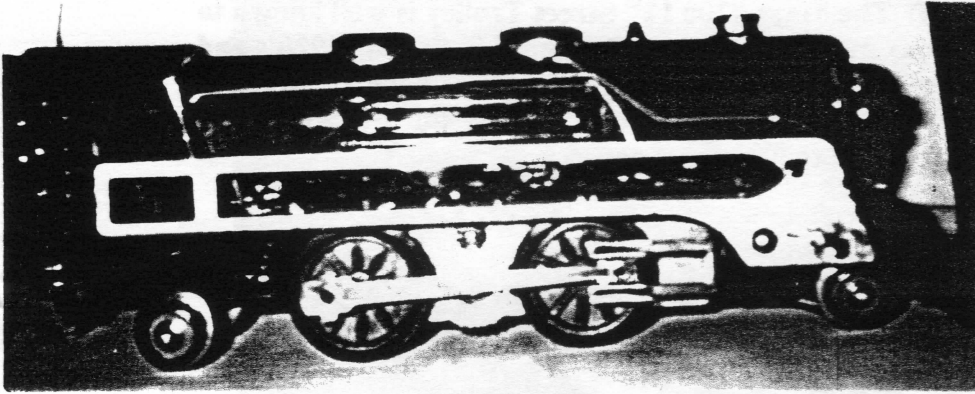


This is not your average searchlight tower. It does ^{not} have the regulator setup with the light weight hood that sits on the bulb. It (according to Bob) vibrates. It looks as though it has a plastic hood and bracket similar to a 4571 plastic searchlight car. Never seen one of these. Nice find Bob and would like to see a closeup of this one.

Duane, That is very interesting and with my limited knowledge I believe that your red set was maybe one of the last run sets in the red articulated line. With no spacer in the back and the nickle nose engine it sounds like they were using up parts and pieces to maybe clean up the articulated series. I have heard of other nickle nose red engines with articulated cars but only a few. Duane it is always good to hear from you. It seems like you are turning up several good pieces and enjoying every minute of it. Thanks for your letter.

I have two different versions of the 391 locomotive and was wondering if anyone has seen the different setup that shows in the picture. The upper picture is a locomotive that my father had when I was young. I have never seen this version either in pictures or at shows/swap meets. It has the tinned Dome in front, has NO stack, a bell and another tinned Dome. The boiler front is also tinned and has jewel side markers. The lower picture shows another 391 with a smoke stack in front (similar to Greenberg's Vol.1, page 105) Bell, and 2 tinned domes. I am wondering if I have something different and any help identifying this locomotive would be greatly appreciated.

Bernard R. Baranowski



Bernie, What I have gathered about the "391" style engine is that it was made both before WWII and after the war. I believe the spoked drivers and prewar and the Baldwin drivers are post war. And as with any other Marx production line a person can have two sets with the same numbers and the same components and the component pieces may vary slightly. I believe certain things such as the prewar smoke stack may have been more difficult to produce than the teardrop shaped post war stack. I could be wrong. Marx tried to simplify operations as much as he could and because of that you saw changes in many different things. This brings up another question. Does anyone have a postwar 396 or 397? Thanks Bernie.

The Curator's Corner: #200 12th Street Trolley

by Allan Miller

As this is my first column for Collecting with Marx, I felt I should first introduce myself, for the benefit of those fellow collectors with whom I have not yet crossed paths. I am 34 years of age, and am the curator and part owner of the Kruger Street Toy & Train Museum in Wheeling, West Virginia. I grew up a mere 12 miles from the Glendale plant of Marx Toys, and have been actively collecting trains and toys for over 25 years.

In that time, I have learned that there are no true experts on Marx. We are all still learning, and that process will never end. The person who tells you "they NEVER ..." or "this ALWAYS came with that..." or "such and such CATALOG shows it this way" doesn't really understand the nature of Marx trains and toys. That is probably the one thing, for me anyway, that truly makes Marx collecting unique - there are no absolutes! With that being said, I hope that through this regular column we can explore some of the countless oddities of these unique scraps of metal and plastic that span generations and unite enthusiasts the world over.

Now on to the good stuff! The Marx #200 12th Street Trolley is well known to collectors, and is a prize for many a Marx train fan. Produced in the late 1920's and early 1930's according to Greenberg's, this toy doesn't seem to have shown up in a catalog until the 1934 Sears Fall issue, but most collectors believe the toys were being sold prior to that. On this point they are wrong.

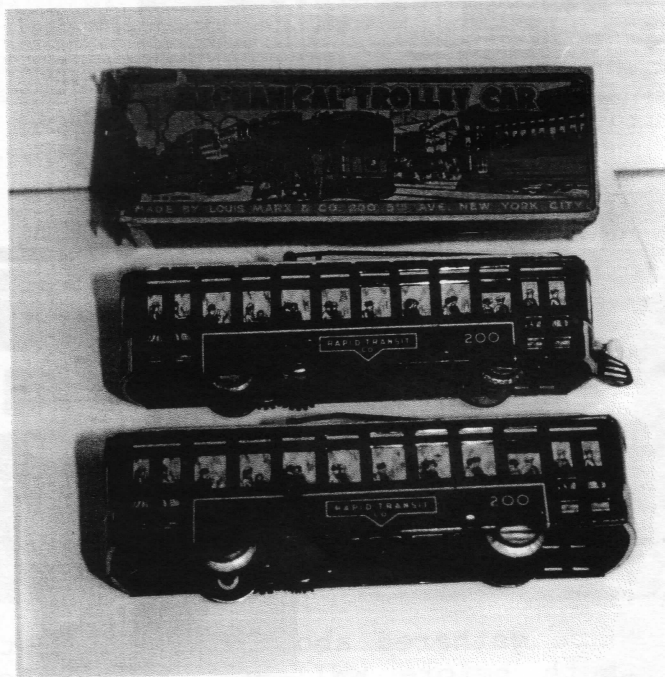


Photo #1: An original box and both major versions of the #200 trolley. The cowcatcher on the front of the trolley only came on the lighted version. Please note that the two trolleys are the same size (the size difference seen in the photo is due to depth of field).

The 12th Street Trolley could not have been made prior to 1934, because that is when Marx purchased the former Fokker Aircraft Plant in Glendale, West Virginia and began toy production there. The trolley is actually a rendition of a Wheeling, West Virginia trolley car! And this would not have been used as a template prior to Marx's involvement in the Upper Ohio Valley. There are numerous clues on the toy itself which tell us this.

First, the number of the toy, #200. This number carries no deep significance to Marx, but does to Wheeling. Wheeling HAD a trolley which carried the number 200.

Second, the name of the trolley company. Rapid Transit Company is a generic name which could fit most anywhere. A trolley lettered for Wheeling would have limited appeal and probably wouldn't have sold well, but ... Wheeling's trolley line was called the WHEELING Transit Company!

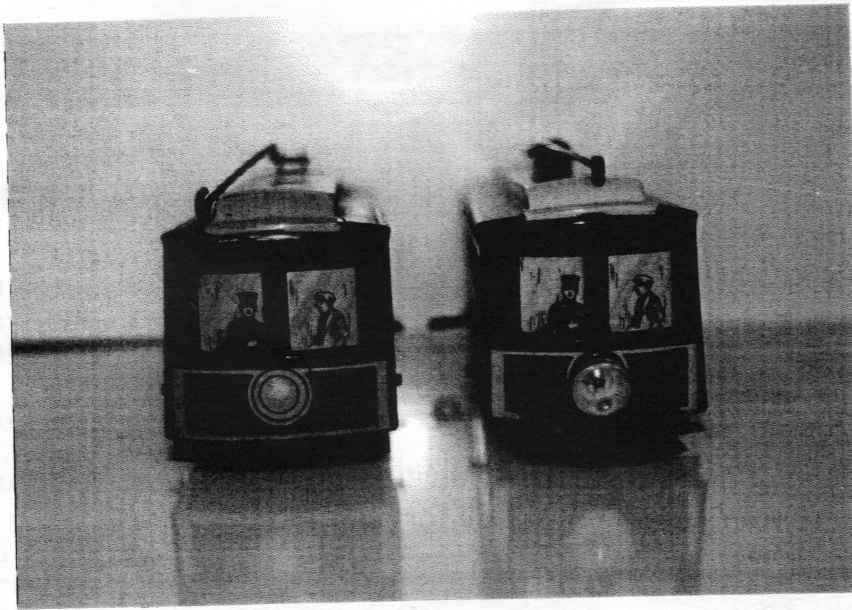


Photo #2: Fronts of the two trolleys, showing the light and cowcatcher (right) or the plain lithographed light (left).

Third, the car is predominantly green and creme, which were colors used on Wheeling trolleys during at least a portion of the thirties. And the stop, at 12th Street, was in the heart of downtown Wheeling, and was a main stop on that line.

Still not convinced? Well, there is one more sign of the car's lineage, and most collectors completely miss it. If you look at the passengers riding this trolley closely, you will notice that the man seated in the sixth window back from the front doors on the trolley is a coal miner, still wearing his helmet with a gaslight on it! Don't see many of those in Chicago or New York, do you! In Wheeling, miners regularly rode the trolleys. In fact, the final stop on the main line was at the coal mine, specifically for those men!

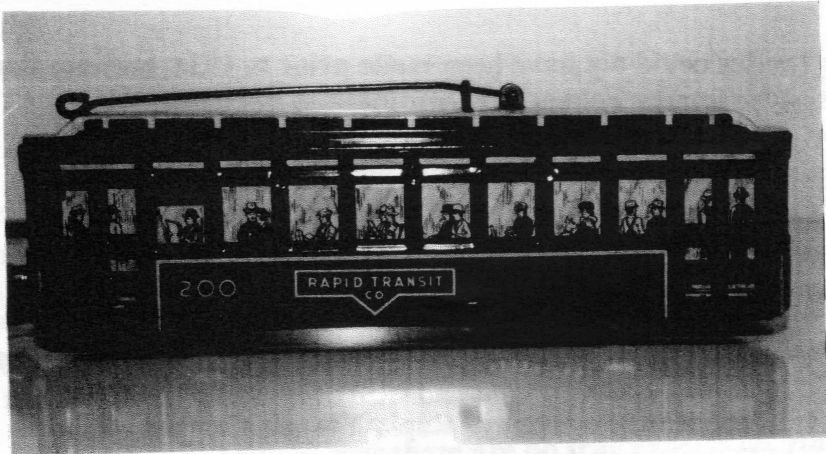


Photo #3: The right side of the trolley car, which is the same on both versions. Note the coal miner in the 6th window back from the door!

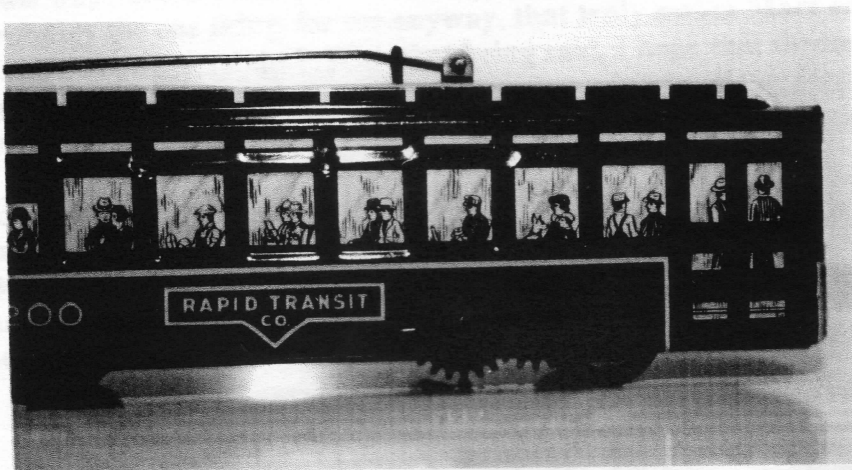


Photo #4: A closeup of the right side of the trolley, showing the coal miner in the sixth window (could substitute for photo #3)

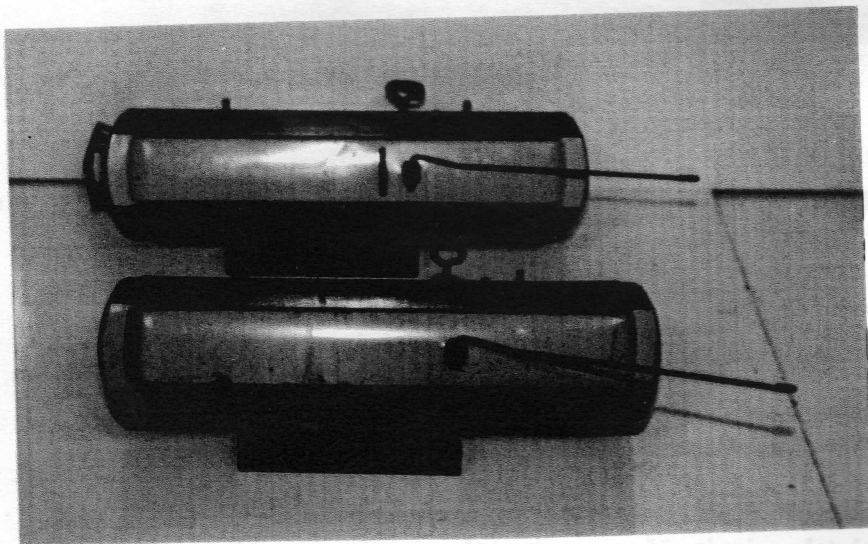


Photo #5: The tops of the two trolley versions, showing the slot and switch on the battery lighted version. Occasionally, you will find an unlighted trolley with this slot punched out. These can be legitimate, as some were known to have left the factory that way.

Marx was known throughout his career as a stickler for authenticity. Many of the toys his company produced through the years have a basis in reality. One former model worker in the Erie area even told me that, while working on the HO train line, they would have REAL railroad signals shipped in to the factory so they would get the details correct! Just another of the many Marx stories ... have you heard all of them?

I would love to hear your comments, additions, ideas for future columns, or just get to meet more of you! I can be reached via email at Allan@ToyAndTrain.com, or through the museum at:

The Kruger Street Toy & Train Museum
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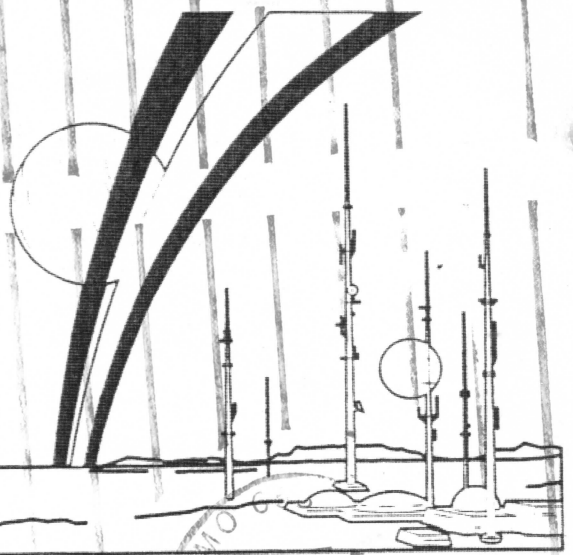
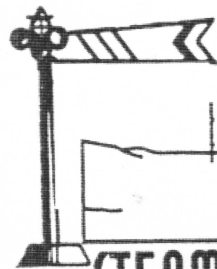
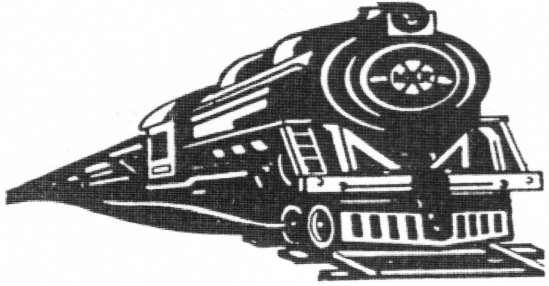
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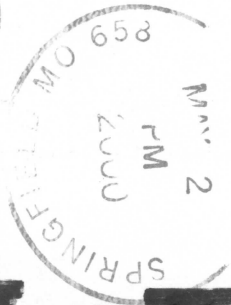


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