

ELECTRIC TRAINS



This Issue

RAILROADING WITH

Walt Disney

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35 Cents

RAILROADING

with Walt Disney

The creator of Mickey Mouse and other immortal cartoon characters, enjoys the hobby of electric trains, a hobby that first captured his interest forty-two years ago.

By LLOYD SETTLE

With exclusive sketches for "Electric Trains" by Walt Disney Productions.

EVER hear of the Carolwood Pacific Railroad? She's an out of this world, half-pint line that has carried some quite famous people. Its only locomotive, the "Lilly Belle," runs on a half mile of track that is called "The Fair Weather Route."

The C.P.R.R. loses money on every run.

Yet on most any warm Saturday afternoon you can hear its silver-toned whistle in the rolling Holmby Hills, not far from Hollywood. The tiny train hurries through tunnels and across trestles with smoke belching from its stack like fire from the mouth of a miniature dragon.

Lilly Belle is the first of a number of locos that will soon run on the estate of a man who is satisfying a

Missouri farm boy's craving for an electric train—a craving that started 42 years ago. Oddly, the railroad's chief grease monkey, builder and engineer is best known as an artist. He is Walter Elias Disney.

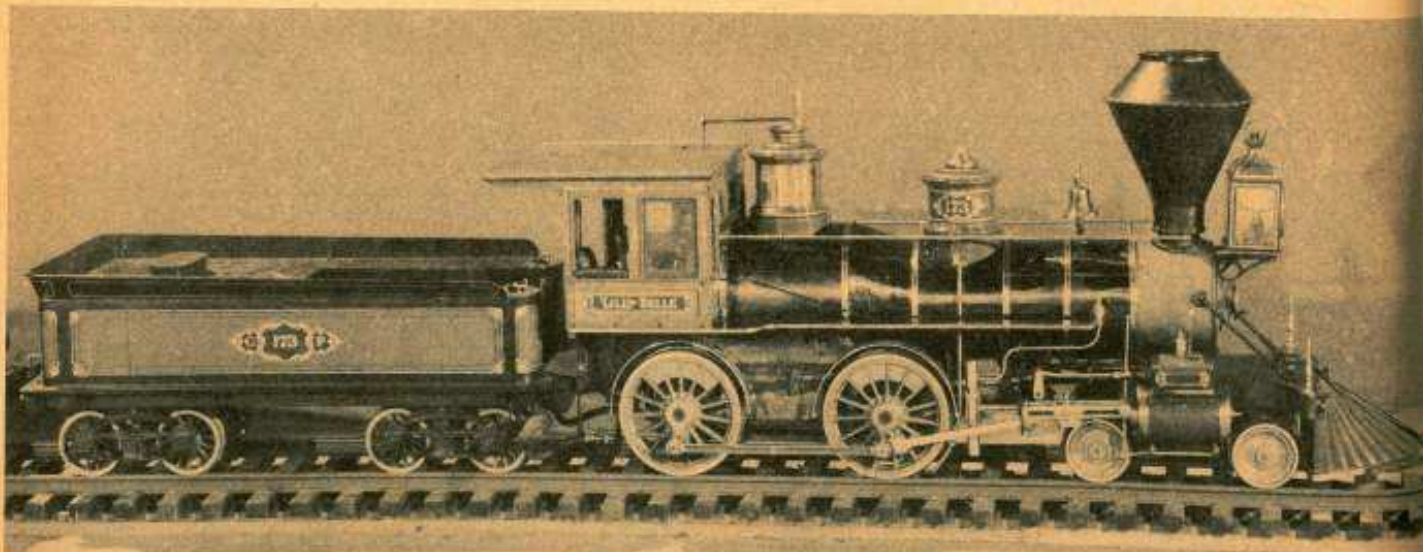
Walt is a leader among the artists whose imaginations have been captured by the romance of miniature railroading. And more practically, the creator of Mickey Mouse considers work on his colorful train a necessary change of pace—an escape from the pressures of a workaday world.

Disney openly started tinkering with electric trains at a time when other men still claimed such things only for their sons. Today, at 51, his continuing love for railroads makes him as much a boy as any of us.



In Hollywood, men say the quickest way to win Disney's regard is to talk trains. At the 50-acre Walt Disney studio, railroad talk is in constant demand. And by some odd coincidence, trains have appeared in two Donald Duck shorts, "Casey Jones," "Out of Scale," "So Dear to My Heart," "Saludos Amigos," and many others. Walt admits that several pictures with railroad themes are even now in the offing.

But for all the seas of ink splattered in telling his life story, no one



Notice the fine details of the engine in this close-up of the old 173 in miniature. There is the tiny bell and the whistle, a sander and smoke stack, even the mouse on the side of the headlight. Disney's locomotive is patterned after the Central Pacific, built in 1872.

has explained how much railroads have influenced Walt Disney's career. Look at the extent of his hobby. Could it have grown from anything but a long standing love for railroads?

The Lilly Belle, bright pride of the Carolwood Pacific line, is patterned after the old Central Pacific 173. The original was built on the heels of the rough and tumble fight between the Central Pacific and the rival Union Pacific to determine which railroad would rule the west.

The C.P. American type 4-4-0 (four drivers and a four wheel lead truck) was a majestic work back in 1872. Complete with tender the "monster" weighed 150,000 pounds. Today, she weighs less than half as much as a small "local" freight engine.

Walt Disney's locomotive is a colorful scale reproduction of the old Central Pacific. Each one-and-a-half inch represents a foot on the original. And the vivid green, red, gold and black color combination on the 250-pound loco makes it stand out even against the flowered terraces on the Holmby Hills estate.

Lest you be deceived, "Lilly Belle" is not a name taken from history. Walt explains:

"Playing with electric trains was not unusual in our house. But when

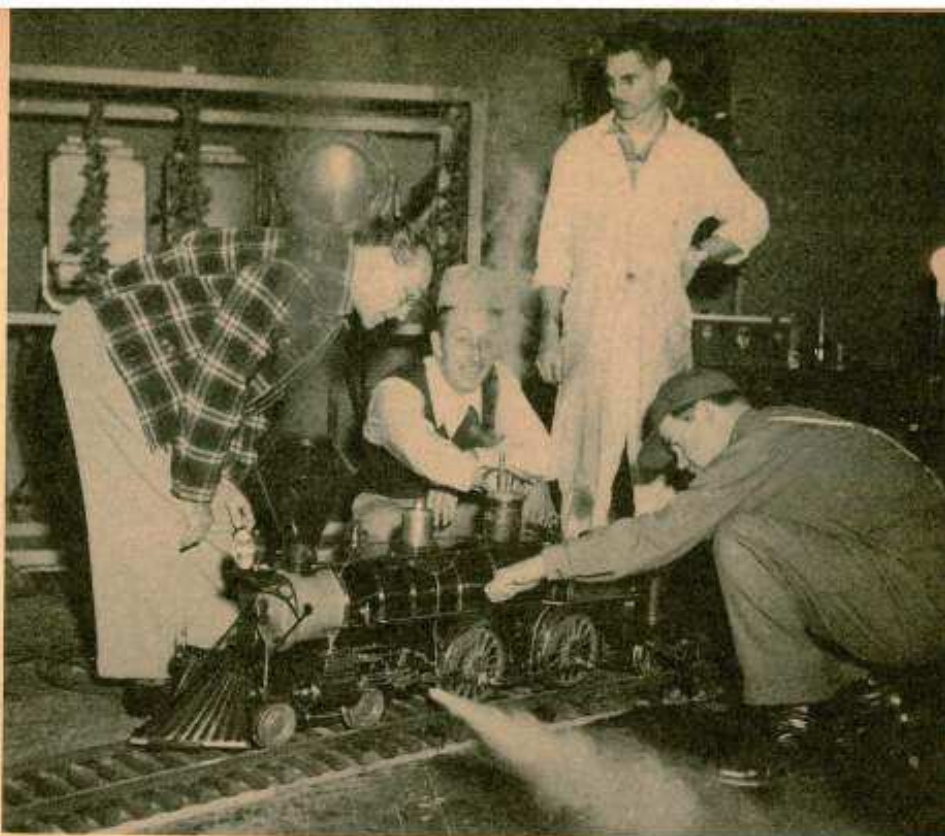


I told my wife that I was going to build a railroad, she thought I was nuts! I named the loco after her to stir up some interest."

Did it work?

"Sure," Walt smiles. "Now she even asks when we're going out and steam-up."

Mrs. Disney's acceptance of a train in her back yard is explained differently by Edgar Bergen (and Charlie), animator Ward Kimball, artist Salvadore Dali, comic Red Skelton, producer Walter Wanger, and many others who have been



Blowing off steam is an exciting business as the "Lilly Belle" is given her first tests. Picture was taken shortly after the engine's completion. Pictured: Ward Kimball (a top animation artist at Disney's), Disney, draftsman Ed Sargeant (in plaid jacket), and Richard Van Every, machinist, who helped Walt build his scale-sized train. Kimball is a hearty railroad fan; he runs a real locomotive around his back yard.

passengers on the C.P.R.R. It is the opinion of such Disney friends that anyone with an imagination would be enthralled by the tiny railroad.

The Lilly Belle is steam powered. Her boiler is built of copper, which makes it possible for Walt to build adequate steam pressure in about 15 minutes—something the parent locomotive could never do. The engine burns ten to 15 pounds of nut-sized coal in an afternoon.

"I use anthracite coal to avoid excess smoke, instead of the coal we get in the west. We have it shipped in from the east," Disney adds. "It's a nuisance, but the anthracite keeps us on schedule."

The locomotive is equipped with actual water injectors, which on full-sized engines overcome the steam pressure and force water into the boiler. But because the injectors are small (they, too, are in scale), their effective use is restricted. So Disney also has installed cross-head pumps, which do the same thing—and which actually were used on the real locomotive of yesterday.

Powered by a maximum steam pressure of 150 pounds, the loaded train averages about six m.p.h. But the speed in no way indicates Lilly Belle's power. She'll pull approximately 3,000 pounds—12 times her own weight!

No detail has been overlooked in Miss Lilly Belle's appearance. An

authentic headlight, complete with ornate elk heads on the sides, glares realistically down the tracks. Electric power is generated by ordinary flashlight batteries.

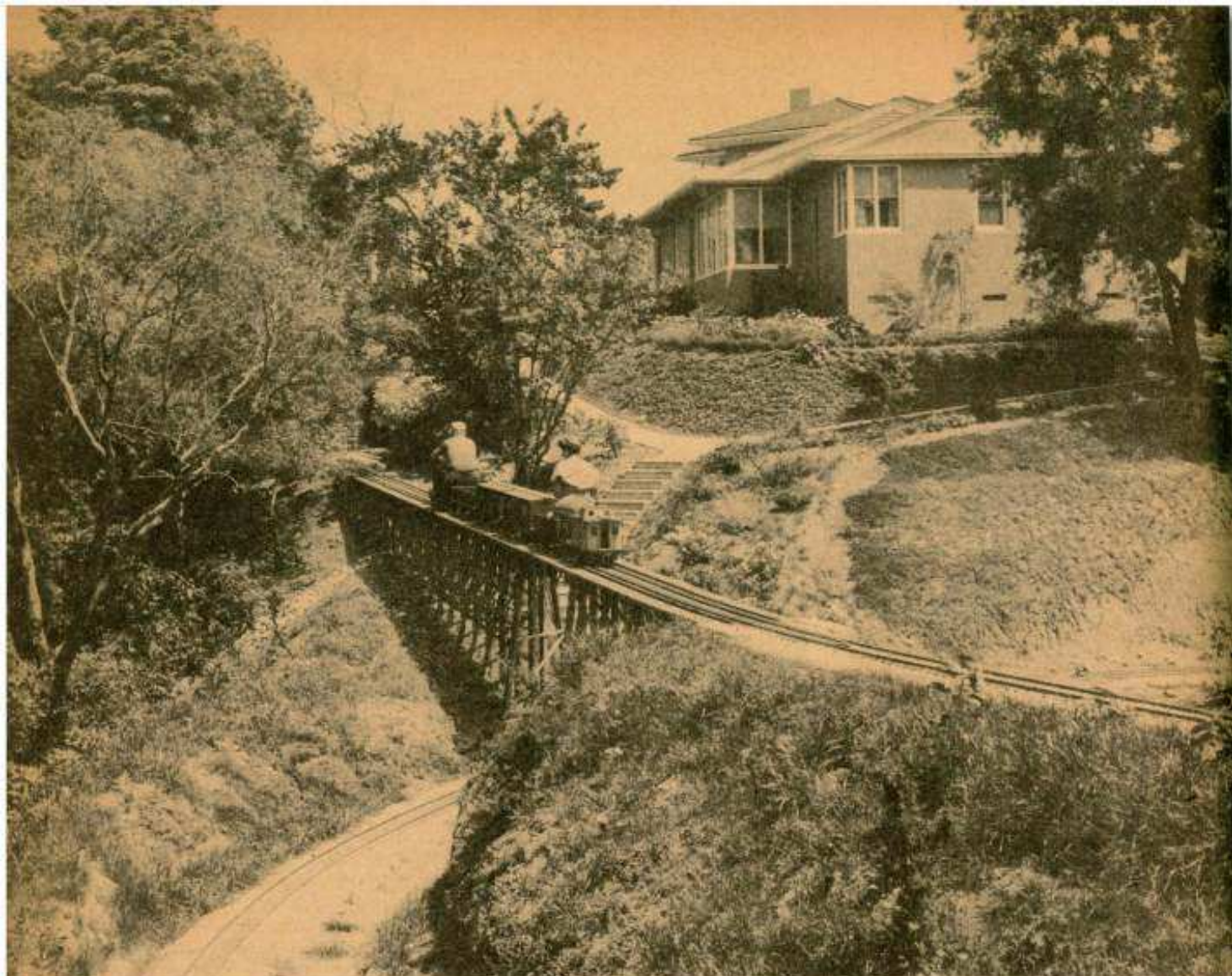
The engine's cab creates the impression that you are looking at the old 173 herself. The back head (a locomotive's dashboard) has been duplicated exactly — including a working steam pressure gauge! The cab has a full working throttle with ratchets, a reverse gear, a miniature water glass, whistle cord, and brake controls.

If you are interested in technicalities, note that the Carolwood Pacific line has sprung trucks on the locomotive and all cars. The trucks have real springs that are made to equalize the weight load on each wheel. This lets the train travel over relatively uneven track with a minimum danger of derailment.

The lead trucks and locomotive drivers are even complete with old fashioned mud guards. And Lilly Belle boasts built-up leaf springs, with individual leaves.

The golden bell that warns the unwary visitor of the approach of the tiny train is authentic in contour and sound. The whistle is a chime type, contributed by a policeman at the Disney studios in Burbank, California.

The tender, two box cars, two cattle cars, flat-car and caboose that Disney built to follow his locomotive



Wearing his engineer's cap, the cartoonist takes Mrs. Disney for a flyer around his Holmby Hills estate. The trestle is ten feet high, crosses above an underpass. To get the weather resistance and strength necessary to protect as many as ten passengers, the trestle was built in exact duplicate of those used on railroads today.

are linked by knuckle-type couplers. They also have an adapter, to use with the old link-and-pin type coupler. This arrangement was typical in the '70s, when the nation's railroads were shifting from one coupler to another during the transitional era. The adapter enabled a locomotive to haul a car with either type coupler. Strength in the cars? Each will easily support the weight of two persons.

When Disney decided to build his train, he went about it with a thoroughness best understood by his associates. At the Walt Disney studios, it is a standing joke that the very particular boss would still be working on "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs" if he had his way.

He borrowed books on railroads from his friends, checked-out others from the library. His reading took him to the coal mines of England, where railroads had their humble beginnings. He studied pictures and sketches made of the Baltimore and Ohio's "Atlantic," the finest locomotive

in 1832. He even considered the "De Witt Clinton," the first engine owned by the New York Central Railroad.

When the old 173 became Disney's choice, he amazed the studio gang.

The big boss, the dreamy, imaginative artist whose delicate brush strokes and whimsical humor had touched the hearts of millions of people, decided to turn manual laborer. He went into the studio machine shop, the carpenter shop, to the electrician and the designer. To each he explained that he wanted to build a train, and asked for help.

Disney was then put to work on the bench saw and the lathe, and from there he was given menial tasks in the carpenter's shop. About his work, engineer Roger Broggie (who helped his boss design and plan the train), says: "He surprised all of us. In many ways, Walt's a temperamental guy. Lots of the boys didn't think he'd be much good in the shops. But he has a high aptitude for machine work."

Disney sluffs off such compliments. He replies, "Any boy of sixteen could build a train like mine, if he applied himself. And it wouldn't cost him much money!"

As the patterns were made and the parts moulded into shape, the studio personnel developed a feeling of community ownership in their boss's new toy. Suggestions for changes and improvements were given daily. When the engine was completed, only to fail in operation, the entire studio shared Walt Disney's disappointment.

When the last kink was finally out of the train, Disney remembered his employees' interest. He ran the locomotive around the studio for several days.

The delays and disappointments were not ended, however. At Walt's home, it was necessary to chisel away hillsides and level ground, to remove gardens and punch a five-foot tunnel through hard granite.

The steel that Disney needed for his trackage was not available and

Dural extrusion was finally used. Completed, his track was on a one-eighth scale—with seven and a sixteenth inches between rails.

Because of the track's size, Disney abruptly realized that he would require a large area in which to complete a circle. The minimum loop possible would be one-fifth of a mile, or 80-feet in diameter. More revision of plans was necessary.

The track finally was laid, with proper drainage and necessary consideration given to grading. As with actual railroads, the track was ballasted with gravel to prevent any collection of moisture that would rot the ties. Necessary trestles (one of them is 10-feet high) were constructed by Walt from plans made for a major construction company.



"Then I was stuck. I wanted an easy-to-build switch," Walt said. "Finally I got an idea from my Lionel electric train set. I decided to enlarge their switch."

Simply, this is a system for automatically aligning the tracks when the train approaches, if the switch is set against the train. Now railroader Disney doesn't have to jump out and throw the switch by hand. Major railroads today use a spring-type, by which the weight of an approaching train automatically throws the switch.

To assure proper traction, Disney previously had a working, scale-sized sand dome and sander made for Lilly Belle. He can now sand his tracks on need.

In spite of these precautions, the train soon had several major wrecks on early runs, and was returned to the studio, where Disney and his crew made the necessary repairs. The wrecks were primarily caused by trouble with the track.

Walt Disney does not remember when he first thought about railroads. Undoubtedly it was during his boyhood years on a farm near Marceline, Missouri. He does re-

member the nights he lay in bed and thrilled to the distant wail of a locomotive.

With expansive gestures, Walt recalls his first actual experience on a train. He was eight at the time.

"Several of the fellows and I went down to the tracks. A locomotive was sitting on a siding and the crew was indoors—in a shack—eating lunch. I climbed up in the loco and pulled the whistle. How she blew! The men came tumbling out of the shack and I jumped down and ran like mad."

The crewmen tried to catch the youngsters—but they didn't try very hard.

The young Disney's imagination was stimulated most by a boyhood hero, his uncle Mike. In memory, Mike is an immense, friendly man, with a voice as powerful as the locomotives he drove. He was a "hogger," or engineer on the Santa Fe, and few jobs commanded more respect in the small Missouri community.

Remembering the big man's frequent visits to the farm, Walt says: "Uncle Mike won our hearts. He always brought my sister and me a bag of hard candy. Afterward, he would fill me full of railroad lore. I think it was from him that I first heard the story of Casey Jones."

After each of Uncle Mike's visits, the boy's trips to the railroad yards increased. So did his hours of waiting to watch a train pass on the nearest right-of-way.

Walt Disney's biographers have

said that at this time he taught himself to draw by sketching farm animals on the margins of his school books. This he did. But as frequent in appearance were sketches of the great locomotives he watched and felt come rumbling down the tracks.

Back in those days, Walt recalls, the boys were getting the old brass type toy trains—a far cry from the perfectly machined electric trains of today.

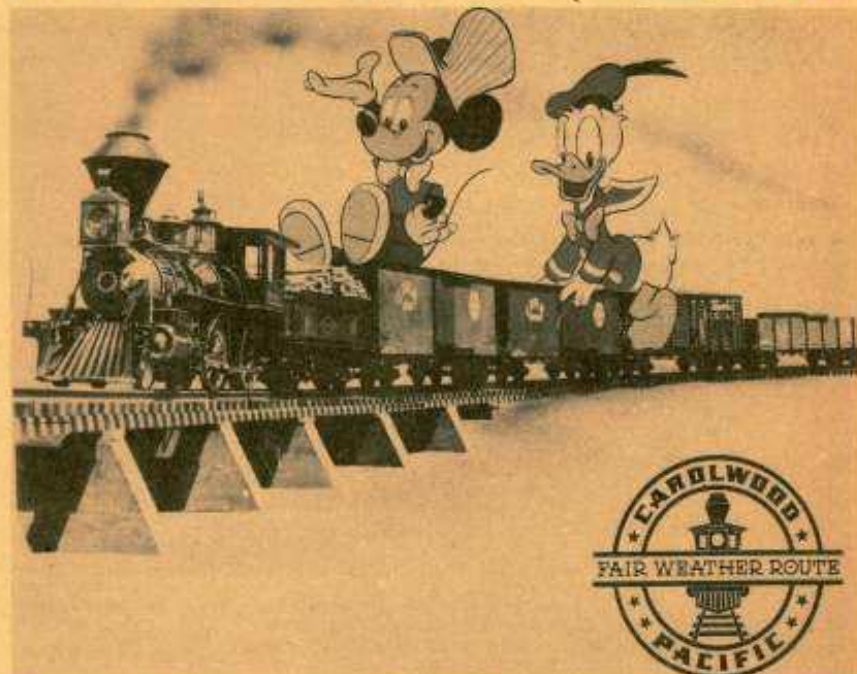
Not many years later, during his high school days, Walt had an opportunity to learn railroading at first hand. He went to work out of Kansas City as a news vendor on the Missouri Pacific Line.

"I was a hungry kid," he reflects. "I was hungry to do things, and for things new. I was also just hungry. I sold candy and apples with my papers, and I ate-up most of my profits."

In the years that followed, some of the home town folks thought that young Walt might forget his love of railroading. He was about as busy as any young man with great ambitions and no money could



(Continued on page 40)



Mickey and Donald have become railroad fans, are seen here riding cartoonist Walt Disney's train. The "Carolwood Pacific" line was named after Walt's estate, not far from Hollywood. The engine itself, "The Lilly Belle," was named after his wife—to interest her in his railroad. Walt started as an electric train man.

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Railroading with Walt Disney

be. His art work now was limited to sketching things that would add to his income. Sketching trains wasn't profitable.

The story of Disney's life from this point on is well known. Many versions have been written of his apprenticeship, at 16, in the Academy of Fine Arts in Chicago; of his work with a Kansas City advertising firm, sketching illustrations for farm journals; of his service overseas during World War I as a reckless young Red Cross ambulance driver, when he was too young to enlist in the army.

But it was not until the hungry young man made his third try at making a Mickey Mouse picture, "Steamboat Willie" (1928), that the realization of his boyhood dream was in sight. His first success was followed by "Trees and Flowers," the first animated cartoon ever made in Technicolor, the "Three Little Pigs," "The Tortoise and the Hare."

While Walt Disney had never forgotten his desire for an electric train, he still was too busy to work with the kind of layout he wanted. And while his short subjects and cartoons had won every award that Hollywood and its critics could bestow, Walt still did not have much money. What profits the Disneys did have were usually reinvested in their studio holdings.

Then came the memorable decision to make "Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs." Walt's friends in Hollywood called it a colossal gamble. Those who were not his friends called the coming picture, "Disney's Folly."

How could a picture without a star—a light fantasy, a fairy tale—hold audience interest for seven reels? Disney had borrowed bank money to make the movie and had to make \$2,500,000 before he could break even.

Some three years, 2,000,000 drawings and sketches, 250,000 pictures and \$1,600,000 in cash outlay later

—Walter Disney learned that Snow White and Dopey, Grumpy, Doc, Sneezy, Bashful, Happy and Sleepy had conspired to make him a success. The first feature-length cartoon in history was a solid hit!

Disney could once again think about such things as owning an electric train.

Walt's first electric train layout was immense. With the enthusiasm any of us would have if we were given the liberty of picking all the toys we wanted from a toy shop, he chose everything that money could buy. And needless to say, he put special emphasis on his scenery!

Disney next tried model trains, those tiny cars to be built in scale from kits. This phase of his railroading ended when he found a boy without the resources to buy such a layout. He presented the lad with his entire collection.

Today, Disney is at last able to give free rein to his interest in railroads. He is a member of the live steam association. He has ridden in the cabs of many of the country's most famous trains. At the Chicago Railroad Fair, Disney had the time of his life climbing in and out and over all the trains he could see. And it is interesting to note, that as in his boyhood, the producer is once again doodling and scribbling on odd scraps of paper. While other men doodle with circles, squares, stars and faces, Walt sketches trains of all sizes and types; sometimes he pictures Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs as passengers, at other times he creates new, and modernistic trains that seem to belong to a strange world a century ahead.

He owns a complete engineer's outfit, from cap to baggy britches. He keeps his train in repair with tools made in scale size. His oil can,

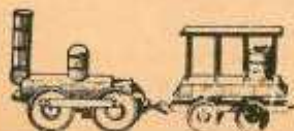
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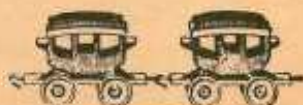
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for example, is about the size of a sewing machine car—but he seldom uses it. Disney finds a larger size more convenient.

His method of operating the "Lilly Belle" is simple. Rather than try to run his loco from within the small cab, he has concealed a control box in the first car behind the tender.

At this moment, Disney is building a turntable. A complicated set of blueprints call for early installation of a back shop, additional track, a block-signal system and even a round-house. Eventually he'll run everything on a strict time schedule.

New locomotives and trains are planned by the artist-cartoonist. He currently is half way through construction of a second locomotive and a series of cars. The new engine is a 4-6-0 ten wheeler, of an old freight type. With its construction, Disney hopes to eliminate one of the weaknesses inherent in the Lilly Belle: the little train has enough power, but not enough traction.

Whatever the future of the Carolwood Pacific Railroad, several things are certain.

Walt Disney's, long unconcealed interest in toy trains will encourage

those who have been reluctant to admit that miniature railroading is not just for younger men. As an adult who enjoys relaxing with a miniature railroad of any kind, he has shown us that no pride is more false than that which makes a man unable to accept himself.

A man young in heart and appearance, Disney has in effect said: "A secret of remaining young is to keep an enthusiasm burning within. It keeps a harmony in the soul."

Walt Disney knows that anyone can ride the thundering streamliners every day—if only in spirit and imagination!



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