

## The Observation Car

One of the most popular cars that make up a passenger train is the Observation Car. Pretty much obsolete today with the modern passenger train, but that was not the case in the heyday of rail passenger service. If you were fortunate to get a seat in the Observation Car, it was a real treat. Think about the great passenger trains, Sante Fe Super Chief, the 20<sup>th</sup> Century Limited, the Congressional, The Daylight, and so many more, they all had Observation Cars.

All right, what does this have to do with Village collecting. Well, actually a lot. In 2004 when the Polar Express Movie came busting onto the scene, one of the featured cars in this train was the Observation Car. The lonely boy and the Observation Car were so tied to the story line. It became an integral part of the movie.



Lionel Trains capitalized on the success of this movie and had in place a train set available just as the movie hit the theaters. And, the Observation Car was an important part of this train. I purchased two sets at that time and boy did they become very scarce. I ran one set on our layout but was not all that happy with it. I run mostly scale O-Gauge equipment and this set is O-27, smaller in size.

Shortly thereafter, I started to lobby Lionel to produce a scale version of the PE Train. It took three years, but a scale 1225 PE Engine and Tender became available. Next was to get Lionel to do a set of scale matching PE passenger cars. Another couple of years and finally success, a scale PE Train for those of us who prefer this size.

However, there was one small issue for me. Lionel chose to use the mold for their traditional Observation Car for what are typically referred to as Heavyweights> it's rear deck for the roof and platform are squared -off, unlike the version in the movie that has a rounded roof line and rear deck. Small issue, but it sure bothered me.



I then collaborated with a train friend who is a very talented modeler and craftsman. He basically tote out the PE Observation Car's rear end and customized a total new end. The result, an exact replica to the representation to the one in the movie.

### **Movie Version**



There are only two in existence, mine and my friend's model. What a treat for me every time I run this train.

### **Customized Version (1 of 2)**

