

The Side Track

**Newsletter of the Sacramento Valley Division
of the
Toy Train Operating Society**

Winter 2011

Christmas Supplement



Jack discovers cardboard holiday treasures under his 1940 Christmas tree

BOXCAR JACK'S ^{holidays} WEB PICK

by Jack Ahearn



What's made of cardboard; about six inches all around and just about as tall, brightly colored, snow covered, a tree in front and a round hole in the back?

If your answer is; an old time Dime Store, twenty-nine cent Christmas House or Chalet; keep on reading because kids, you're in the right place - a warm, cheerful and memory packed place! A place that's not just any place but a magical place, a fairyland place...a place unlike any other!

A Place called:

"Papa Ted's Place!"

An In-Depth History of The Old Dimestore
Christmas Village Houses



AN ONLINE MUSEUM The Full History And Much More!

Let's preview some photos and the fond reminiscences you'll find in this heart warming place

As collectors, many of us have read most of the books, guides, manuals and catalogues of our favorite 'toys'. They concentrate mostly on the production, colors, variations and suggested values of those long ago treasures. The fantasy filled place you're about to discover does that, but also adds a lot more.

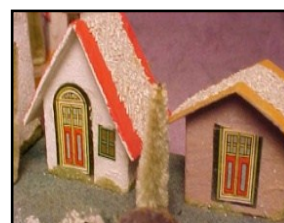
Rather than simply reciting the history of these charming cardboard houses, it also stimulates our imagination and adds the flavor of the times and conditions in which they were made, purchased and enjoyed; societal, political and economical.

Here are a few examples of what you'll see and learn within the myriad pages of delightful pictures, anecdotes and how-to projects... there are lots (pun definitely intended) of those charmingly quaint Christmas houses and many interesting related links.



*A quick look inside; just a few of the hundreds of features **you'll come to love!***

DIMESTORE DWELLINGS . . . remember these?



Tips for building your own heirloom-quality houses

Like to have "lots" of Lionel's #134 bungalows?

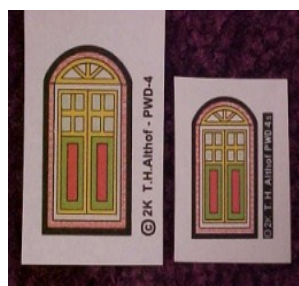


REPAIR & RESTORATION: Great Tips by Tom Hull



Reproduction Parts: Paper Doors and Windows

Lookie! Your old beat-up houses can look new again...Thanks to accurate repro windows brought to you by the Master, Ted Althof!



CHRISTMAS GARDENS AND OLDEN DAY PUTZES THROUGHOUT THE YEARS

Christine Ruer - found in 2009 Putz page



Robbie Lucke - found in 2010 Putz page



Alleger Collection—found in 2003 Putz page



Karl Fey - found in 2008 Putz page

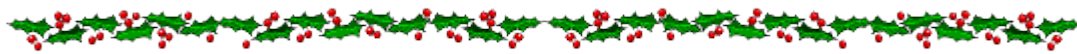


Pat Healy - found in 2009 Putz page



Barb Healy - found in 2003 Putz page





A CHRISTMAS VISIT to the 1930's

New York - January 1938. "Unemployed Workers." Tree left from Christmas 1937. Probably they just acquired this as an after-Christmas castaway. Every one of these fellas was a kid once, and had a real Childhood Christmas. Now they're just trying to keep their ears from freezing, - but they have a Christmas tree!



Oh, the *power* Christmas has . . .



The late 1930's brought us some Made-in-U.S.A. Christmas houses. Above is an example of "Dollies", made by Dolly Toy Co. of Ohio.



Hey guys and gals...do these two look familiar? The boxed set of train-related buildings with a set of figures is an example of "Compos". Made in Japan, they were built mostly of gypsum. I'll bet you got all or most of those figures. Any one have the very rare "Lionel" knock-off?





Kid...tell your folks to buy every light in that window...because they won't be able to buy any in 1942, '43, '44 or '45!



A Mighty Strong Gift to The Axis from the Link-Belt Corporation!

A CHRISTMAS VISIT to WORLD WAR II



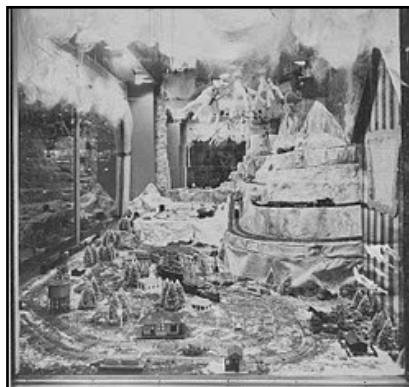
December 1941: The A.C. Gilbert factory in New Haven, CT. Yes, the "Erector" Set Gilbert, who bought out the old Chicago American Flyer train Co. around 1938 and added electric trains to his other lines. Here a girl assembles a number of the last of the Gilbert Flyer 3-rail, 0-gauge engines. Looks like the #565.



February 1942: The A.C. Gilbert Factory just weeks later; same girl and another now assemble parachute flare canisters for the war, using same electric screw drivers that had been used making trains
Jack's Note: Notice the woman is wearing the same sweater and apron....although several weeks apart...war time shortage?



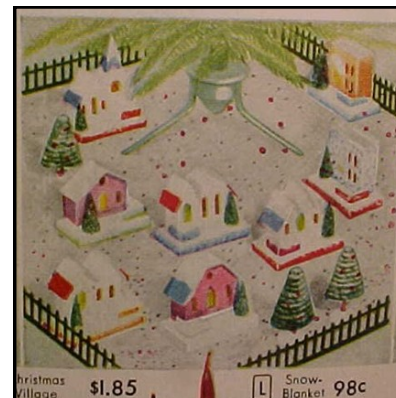
The Postwar Era



Holiday Store Window,
November 1950



Made in Occupied Japan, 1945-48



Sear's Christmas Wishbook,
1955



Plastic Town Light Covers, Early Post War



The covers were held to the neck of the bulb
by this sliding stamped-metal piece, which

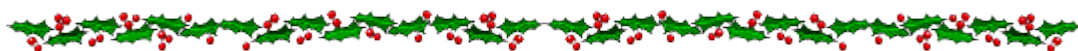
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BONUS FEATURE: Wishbook Web allows you to page through actual holiday catalogs from 1933 through 1988. Christmas Village houses like the ones in Papa Ted's Place can be found in many of them -

WishbookWeb Click on the 1933 Spiegel Christmas Sale Catalog to browse through complete full color 1930s through 1980s vintage Sears, Penney's, Lord & Taylor, Wards, Spiegel and FAO Schwarz Christmas catalogues.





A few words about....

Ted Althof; brings to us hundreds of pages of colorful and entertaining pictures, stories and reference material featuring early 20th Century Christmas gardens. Those charming snow covered cardboard houses come alive again on our 21st Century Computer screens!

Along with being a fine gentleman and benevolent webmaster, Mr. Althof seems to have a wonderful knack for collecting “collectors”. He successfully has passed along his love of those old time dime store “ ’neath the tree” Christmas houses to the many contributors who regularly submit photographs and stories of their present day putzes.

Those contributions, along with Ted’s guidance and knowledge, offer a present day view of Christmases Past. I've been looking all through Papa Ted's Place for two years...and there are still many pages and sections I've yet to discover! Try it...you may find a whole new world of modeling and collecting. And, oh yeah...turn the sound up...the music is delightful!

In Ted’s own words . . . *where’d the “papa” come from ?*

The handle "Papa" Ted is not something with which I crowned myself. In the mid-'80s when my grandkids were just learning to talk, both my Dad and I were present in their lives. I was in my forties, he had white hair. They couldn't quite make out their relationship to us and so made up their own names that made sense of it for them. Dad they called "Grampoo;" - and I was "Papa Ted."



A few words of gratitude for two wonderfully supportive folks who have made it possible to bring Papa Ted's Place to your Place. First of course, is Ted; his labor of love has brought to us a world, which over the years, had been left behind...but through his dedication to, and love of those times, he has brought them all back...the Five & Ten's...Christmassy Store Windows...the patriotic joining of hands during good... and not so good times. And most of all, those quaint and wondrous snow covered chalets that once again come to life on Toy Train layouts, Christmas Gardens, Traditional Putzes and,even Fireplace Mantels; which serves to introduce another of Ted's many friends and 'Collectors'...Antoinette Stockenberg!

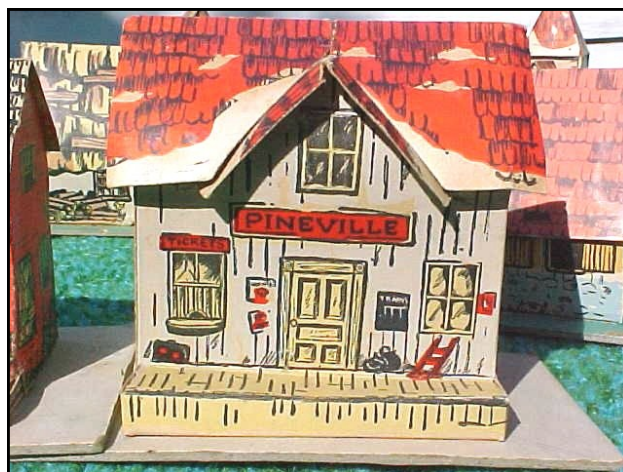
Ms. Stockenberg has annually filled "Ted's Place" with delightful images of her Cheery Yule Tide Gardens atop a Fireplace Mantel. Along with thanking her for those many pictures, I also express appreciation for her support and gracious permission to reproduce them within this feature Story. Kudos also go to her husband John; his Geekacious talent brings her artful displays to life! In tribute to Antoinette, I urge all to click onto her Website. You'll soon learn that she is truly a 21st Century Renaissance Lady...Author, Sailor, Navigator, Explorer of the Caribbean and New England's hidden waterways and of late, a gardener; bedecking John's hand crafted arbors and trellises with a colorful array of flowers. Simply click onto her Home Page link on the following page and meet this multi-talented lady.

I'll close with this brief sentiment which I wrote, placed on my "Pineville" putz and now dedicate to beloved "Papa Ted" Althof:

**BEFORE THERE WAS CERAMIC
OR EVEN PORCELAIN
AND EVEN BEFORE
THERE WAS PLASTIC
THERE WERE... ENCHANTING
ALL SNOW COVERED
FIVE & DIME STORE HOUSES
MADE 'O CARDBOARD**
© Jack Ahearn 2011

***And now . . . click on this picture
to enter "Papa Ted's Place"***

... Sound up, full screen!



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Web Links

Like to get your hands on a few of these little houses for a Holiday display? Despite the Five and Dimes being long gone... hundreds of them are at your fingertips. Click on any of the images below and you'll find a half dozen eBay pages regularly offering these nostalgic gems. Most are priced surprisingly low but do check the shipping charges...these cardboard houses weigh only several ounces. Good luck and enjoy...!



Also...If you're having trouble finding the Glitter House page and its many fun projects...Click on the image at right . . .



. . . and to find out how to easily build a Lionel Bungalow, click on the image at left.



And...if you like to get into the mood while perusing these pages of Christmas Past, listen to Leroy Anderson's "A Christmas Festival" by the Boston Pops... One of my favorites! Just click on the image at right to start the show.



Antoinette Stockenberg

You've read of Antoinette and her spectacular Christmas mantels...now you can see all of them in their Seasonal Scenic Sparkling Splendor! Click the image below to see her web page. After reading about Antoinette, be sure to click onto "Christmas" and see all of her Wondrous Winter Wonderlands.

