



The Christmas trains were still running in 2015.

The Christmas Trains

by Noel Stanton

My uncle Lou gave me an electric train for my first Christmas. I was much too young to appreciate it, of course. But I think Lou, who had a good union job operating a construction crane, was showing off a bit for his kid sister, who had married an impoverished small-town newspaper reporter.

It was a great Lionel train set. It had a gray Art Deco streamlined steam locomotive, like the ones that pulled New York Central's crack Twentieth Century Limited passenger trains. This toy locomotive had been demoted to freight service: it pulled a yellow and blue Baby Ruth candy boxcar, an orange Shell tank car, and a bright red caboose.

By my second Christmas, Santa had assumed responsibility for setting up the train under the tree on Christmas Eve. By then I was nearly two and could delight in the colorful motion and the mournful sound of the simulated steam whistle in the locomotive's tender. I was fascinated by seeing the locomotive headlight each time it suddenly appeared from behind the Christmas tree.

Santa's train layouts became more ambitious with

each passing Christmas - he really seemed to be into railroading. The simple circle of track became two ovals, and they were mounted on a Masonite board instead of resting on carpet. A second train appeared, a red and black electric-type locomotive pulling three orange passenger cars with interior lighting. There was an illuminated cardboard station, a crossing gate that came down each time a train passed, a stop signal, and an incongruously tall waving flagman who stood several times as high as the trains.

It was wartime and Lionel wasn't making new trains; my family couldn't afford to buy them anyway. All the additions were bought second-hand and then reconditioned by my father. The electric-type locomotive was from the early 1930's, painstakingly refurbished and repainted, and the lighting in the passenger cars, caboose and station were all his handiwork.

The year after I started school, we moved to a house that had a small, enclosed sunporch. That Christmas, Santa outdid himself: on the big morning not only were there presents under the tree, but the sunporch,

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empty the evening before, now held an amazing train layout at table height. It had a paper-mâché mountain with little lighted houses on its slopes; one loop of track climbed the mountain, while the other tunneled through it. There was a red automatic dump car that unloaded its cargo of plastic coal at the push of a button, and a tall yellow, red-roofed coaling tower that scooped up the dumped coal and, making a terrible racket, used a chain of little buckets to hoist it up into storage. Then at the touch of another button, the coal could be discharged out a chute to a waiting car –usually the same red dump car.

It seemed that Santa was not only benevolent, but omnipotent to boot. To this day I don't know how my father got it all done in one night. The layout must have been built in sections in the basement over many months of evenings, under conditions of heightened security. Then it was hauled up from the basement with my mother's help and reassembled during the brief hours between putting a hyperexcited kid down for the night and being awakened early to see Santa's bounty. It was a masterpiece of planning and execution. I strongly suspect that building this layout became an enjoyable obsession for my dad. I never asked him about it or thanked him in later years, and at the time, Santa got all the credit.

The next Christmas, the layout in the sunporch appeared overnight again, but I was a year older, and things weren't quite the same. Even for a credulous lad like me, the whole Santa thing was starting to seem a bit far-fetched. Plus, somebody had left a copy of *Model Railroader* magazine lying around, and I learned that hobbyists actually built train stuff themselves rather than relying on Santa

to bring it. I spent less time running the trains on Santa's layout and more on trying to build my own boxcar out of bits of Erector set, balsa wood and cardboard. The result was rather pitiful, but my astute parents immediately picked up on the clue and got me started on HO gauge scale model railroading. Over the years my dad and I built many model kits and two unfinished layouts together (a little caboose he built still sits on my mantel), a partnership that lasted into my college days. HO model railroading reentered my life after I retired, but that's a whole other story.

Decades later, when I was married with sons of my own, the old Lionel trains came out of mothballs and back under the Christmas tree, set up by me in full view the week before Christmas - no Santa's miracle. Even when my sons were adults and visiting Marie and me in Kansas, these trains were always part of our Christmas tradition. The track in a dogbone-shaped layout circled the tree and tunneled through a snowy bedsheet mountain, passed by a lighted station and two illuminated houses, then traversed a long straightaway that hugged the foot of the fireplace, and finally looped around under an armchair at the far side of the room for the return trip past the fireplace to the tree.

My sons weren't keen on running the trains, although they liked to see them go. I was the one who enjoyed them most. I loved to sit in the darkened room, lit only by the tree lights and those in the buildings beneath it, watching the trains make their winding journey.

And I still got a little thrill every time the headlight in the gray Art Deco locomotive came into view from behind the tree.

Tau Beta Sigma's
CHRISTMAS
PERFORMANCE
Thursday, Dec. 4
Community Room
7 to 7:30 pm
All are welcome

Tau Beta Sigma is a
K-State Honorary Band Service
Sorority.
They serve the K-State
Marching and Concert Bands
by providing concert
receptions, helping with
goings-on with the Marching
Band and promoting
instrumental music in college
and our community.



JOIN US FOR A

BLUE CHRISTMAS SERVICE

TUESDAY, DEC. 9, AT 6:30 P.M.

COMMUNITY ROOM/CHAPEL AT MEADOWLARK
2121 MEADOWLARK RD, MANHATTAN, KAN.

Merry Christmas

Thursday, December 25th
Reserve your spot at Prairie Star
Seating's from 11:00 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.



Choice of Starter

SHRIMP BISQUE
CANDIED BACON & PECAN SPINACH SALAD

Choice of Entree

6OZ FILET & LOBSTER TAIL
SURF & TURF \$36
SURF \$30
TURF \$28

Sides

SMOKED GOUDA SCALLOPED POTATOES
HERB ROASTED VEGETABLE MEDLEY

Choice of Dessert

EGGNOG CHEESECAKE
GLAZED CHOCOLATE TART



Christmas Menu

PEPPERMINT MOCHA
Steamed milk, espresso, and peppermint syrup with your choice of chocolate \$4.50/\$5.00

ICED GINGERBREAD CHAI
Chai tea, oat milk and gingerbread syrup, topped with whipped cream \$5.00/\$5.50

CINNAMON DOLCE LATTE
Steamed milk, espresso, brown sugar cinnamon and vanilla syrup topped with whipped cream & cinnamon \$4.50/\$5.00

SUGAR COOKIE LATTE
Steamed milk, espresso, caramel and cookie butter syrup topped with whipped cream & sprinkles \$4.50/\$5.50

BISCOFF LATTE
Steamed milk, espresso, Biscoff cookie butter, and vanilla syrup \$4.50/\$5.00

EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

Construction Start Date: Aster Building

Aster Construction started this week with demolition of two duplexes. Meadowlark residents will see fencing placed around the construction site. Please remember that no one, other than the construction team, is allowed beyond the construction fencing.

Message from the Outdoor Committee

It is getting close to Christmas. If you are looking for a healthy and affordable gift, consider buying a cute teddy bear-shaped bottle filled with our extra special Meadowlark honey. Bottles are only \$6.45 each. Inquire at the Hospitality Desk!

Additional note from resident Sue Hunt: Meadowlark has bee hives on campus! They are located in the south meadow near Kimball Avenue. These hives are maintained and harvested by Valor Honey.

Line Dancing

Starting in January, Meadowlark is planning to offer Line Dancing classes to residents and Passport members. Before days and times can be finalized, we need to have an idea for the number of people interested in the classes. If this is something you would like to participate in, please sign up in the Blue Book at the Hospitality Desk. More information to come.

Meadowlark Singers Concert

Friday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m.

Join us on Friday, Dec. 5, at 7 p.m. in the Community Room to enjoy the beautiful voices of the Meadowlark Singers. Their program features a festive mix of classic holiday favorites, contemporary pieces, and the always-loved audience Christmas carol sing-along. Come share in an evening of music and holiday spirit!

Worship Services

Sunday, Dec. 7, at 10 & 11 a.m.

Join Rev. Melanie Nord, Spiritual Life Leader, for worship at 10 a.m. or 11 a.m. on Sunday, Dec. 7, in the Community Room/Chapel. Continuing the four-part Advent series, this week's sermon title is God Has Heard Your Prayers.

All are welcome to enjoy coffee and fellowship

before or after worship in the lobby between 9:30 a.m. and 12 p.m.

"It's Christmas!"

Monday, Dec. 8, at 6 p.m.

Vintage Faith Church presents "Its Christmas!" at 6 p.m. Monday, Dec. 8, in the Event Center. The program will feature a collection of traditional Christmas carols with a narrative of the original Christmas story from Scripture. All are welcome to enjoy friendly faces with a reminder of God's love for each of us through song.

Page Turners Book Club

Wednesday, Dec. 10, at 11:30 a.m.

The Page Turners Book Club will meet on Wednesday, Dec. 10, at 11:30 a.m., in the Flint Hills Room for our final meeting of the year. We will discuss *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* by Barbara Robinson in its many forms: book, movie, and stage musical. We welcome anyone who would like to discuss any of the iterations of this modern classic Christmas story. The group will resume in January and will kick off the year by reading *The Secret Life of Henrietta Lacks* by Rebecca Skloot. If you have any questions, please contact Katie, Memory & Parkinson's Program Coordinator, at (785) 323-3899.

WTC Presents: The Mini Nutcracker

Wednesday, Dec. 10, at 6:30 p.m.

Celebrate the season with WTC as they present their Christmas event showcasing the Kavas Dance Company's performance of "The Mini Nutcracker." The show will begin at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 10, in the Event Center.

Blood Pressure Check

Thursday, Dec. 11, at 1 p.m.

Meadowlark Home Care hosts a monthly Blood Pressure Clinic on the second Thursday at 1 p.m. in the Kansas Room. The next scheduled clinic is Thursday, Dec. 11, at 1 p.m. No sign up required.

Christmas Cantata

Friday, Dec. 12, at 7 p.m.

College Avenue United Methodist Church Adult Choir presents a Christmas Cantata at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 12, in the Community Room. The

EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

group is directed by Amy Rosine and Dawn Anderson on piano. All are invited!

Little Apple Chorus Holiday Concert

Sunday, Dec. 14, at 3 p.m.

Meadowlark has free tickets available for the Little Apple Chorus show, "Holiday Harmonies," on Sunday, Dec. 14, at 3 p.m. in Forum Hall at the K-State Union. Doors will open at 2:30 p.m. Tickets are available at the Hospitality Desk while supplies last!

Carols & Cocoa

Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 3 p.m.

Get ready to sip, sing, and celebrate! Back by popular demand, the Meadowlark Ambassadors are teaming up once again with beloved music enthusiasts Jim Reed and Vera Williams to bring you a heartwarming holiday gathering: Carols & Cocoa!

Join us for this merry come-and-go celebration during our regular Coffee Corner time between 3 and 4 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 16, in the Community Room. Enjoy joyful Christmas carols led by Jim, Vera, and the Ambassadors, along with delicious hot cocoa and cookies, to keep your spirits bright! All are invited to attend!

The Dancin' Stew Holiday Spectacular

Friday, Dec. 19, at 7 p.m.

Join us in the Event Center as we welcome back **The Dancin' Stew** for a fun and festive evening of music. This group began after the performers sang together in *Beehive: The '60s Musical* and decided to keep the harmony—and the fun—going. Known for their groovy '60s diva sound, they'll bring a special **holiday flair** to this performance. You won't want to miss it!

Shopping at Target & Dollar Tree

Saturday, Dec. 20, at 10:30 a.m.

The next scheduled trip is Saturday, Dec. 20, with transportation going to Target and Dollar Tree West. The bus will depart from the Village Entrance at 10:30 a.m., and the return time is set for 11:45 a.m.

Next month's trip will travel to Hobby Lobby and Dollar Tree East on Saturday, Jan. 17. Please sign up in the Blue Book to participate.

Retirement Party for Rick the Mailman!

Monday, Dec. 22, at 1 p.m.

All are invited as we celebrate Rick the Mailman and his retirement! Be there on Monday, Dec. 22, at 1 p.m. in the Event Center as we show Rick how much we appreciate him! More information to come.



RESTAURANT **SPECIALS**

Sunday, Dec. 7	Sunday Brunch Brunch Menu available from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	\$12 Dinner Philly Cheesesteak French Fries
Monday, Dec. 8	\$11 Lunch Beef & Cheddar Sandwich Fried Pickle Spear Coleslaw	\$15 Dinner Cinnamon Apple Pork Chop Wild Rice Snap Peas
Tuesday, Dec. 9	\$11 Lunch Broccoli Cheddar Bread Bowl Side Caesar Salad	\$13 Dinner Spaghetti & Meatballs Garlic Toast Green Beans
Wednesday, Dec. 10	\$10 Lunch Chicken Fajita Quesadilla Corn Salad	\$15 Dinner Cornflake Chicken Wild Rice Sweet Fried Brussel Sprouts
Thursday, Dec. 11	\$2/\$4 Lunch Pizza by the Slice <i>Served in the Kansas Room.</i>	Christmas Carousel <i>Prairie Star Restaurant closed for event.</i>
Friday, Dec. 12	\$11 Lunch Soup and Salad Bar	\$16 Dinner Fried Catfish Cornbread Pudding Coleslaw
Saturday, Dec. 13	\$11 Lunch Fried Pork Cutlet Sandwich Pub Chips	\$24 Dinner 10 oz. Ribeye Baked Potato Jack Daniels Green Beans & Bacon

Weekly Opportunities Calendar Dec. 7 to Dec. 13

Sunday • Dec. 7 *Put your trash at the curb!*

8:45 a.m. ~ Transport to College Ave UMC, ME
9:30 a.m. ~ Sunday Morning Fellowship, ME
10:00 a.m. ~ Transport to College Ave UMC, ME
10:00 a.m. ~ Worship Service, CR
10:30 a.m. ~ Transportation to FUMC, ME
11:00 a.m. ~ Worship Service, CR

Monday • Dec. 8 *Trash pick-up*

9:30 a.m. ~ Seated Strength, CR/**1960**
9:30 a.m. ~ Memory Care Partners Group, **STM**
10:30 a.m. ~ Weights 101, CR/**1960**
11:00 a.m. ~ Rock Steady Boxing, **PF**
11:30 a.m. ~ Sit & Be Fit, CR/**1960**
11:30 a.m. ~ Meadowlark Valley Luncheon, BR
1:00 p.m. ~ Parkinson's Exercise Class, CR/**1960**
1:45 p.m. ~ Parkinson's Voice Class, CR
2:00 p.m. ~ Tai Chi, **1960 only**
4:15 p.m. ~ Hable Espanol, FHR
6:00 p.m. ~ "It's Christmas" Program, EC
7:00 p.m. ~ Community Bingo, CR

Tuesday • Dec. 9

10:00 a.m. ~ Memory Activities Class, EC
10:00 a.m. ~ Mat Yoga, KSU CL
10:30 a.m. ~ Steady Yourself, CR/**1960**
11:15 a.m. ~ Chair Yoga, CR/**1960**
12:00 p.m. ~ 4th Floor Luncheon, MR
2:00 p.m. ~ 10-Point Pitch Group, GR
2:00 p.m. ~ Social Circles, PS
3:00 p.m. ~ Coffee Corner, EC
6:30 p.m. ~ Blue Christmas Service, CR

Wednesday • Dec. 10

9:30 a.m. ~ Seated Strength, CR/**1960**
10:00 a.m. ~ Walmart/Dillons Shopping Trip, ME
10:00 a.m. ~ Memory Care Partners Group, FHR
10:00 a.m. ~ Memory Café, KSU CL
10:30 a.m. ~ Weights 101, CR/**1960**
11:30 a.m. ~ Sit & Be Fit, CR/**1960**
11:30 a.m. ~ Page Turners Book Club, FHR
11:30 a.m. ~ Lutheran Luncheon, BR
2:00 p.m. ~ Tai Chi, **1960 only**
3:00 p.m. ~ Rock Steady Boxing, KSU CL
3:00 p.m. ~ Sing-a-long, FHR
4:00 p.m. ~ 4th Floor Social, FHR
6:30 p.m. ~ The Mini Nutcracker, EC

Thursday • Dec. 11

9:00 a.m. ~ Messenger Team, KSU CL
10:30 a.m. ~ Steady Yourself, **1960 only**
11:15 a.m. ~ Chair Yoga, **1960 only**
11:30 a.m. ~ Caring Conv. For People w/ PD, MR
1:00 p.m. ~ Parkinson's Exercise Class, EC/**1960**
1:00 p.m. ~ PD Care Partners Support Group, MR
1:00 p.m. ~ Blood Pressure Check, KR
2:30 p.m. ~ Knitting & Crocheting, KR
4:00 p.m. ~ Christmas Carousel, Community Center

Friday • Dec. 12

7:30 a.m. ~ Rock Steady Boxing, **PF**
9:30 a.m. ~ Seated Strength, CR/**1960**
10:30 a.m. ~ Weights 101, CR/**1960**
11:30 a.m. ~ Sit & Be Fit, CR/**1960**
2:30 p.m. ~ Fanny & Furby, KR
7:00 p.m. ~ Christmas Cantata, CR

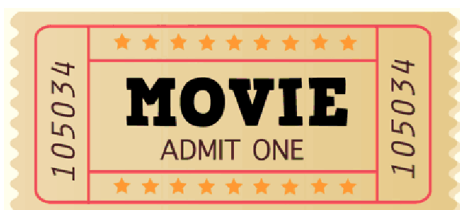
Saturday • Dec. 13

9:00 a.m. ~ Tai Chi, **1960 only**
9:30 a.m. ~ Band Bust Exercise Class, **1960 only**

Room Abbreviations

1960 , TV Channel 1960	ME, Main Entrance
BR, Bison Room	MM , 120 Scenic Drive
CR, Community Room	MR, Manhattan Room
CY, Courtyard	PF , Peakform Wellness Center
EC, Event Center	PR, Patriot Room
FHR, Flint Hills Room	PS, Prairie Star Restaurant
GC, Grosh Cinema	STM , St. Thomas More Church
KR, Kansas Room	VBL, Verna Belle's Lounge
KSU CL, KSU Classroom	WPL , Wamego Public Library





GROSH CINEMA SHOWTIMES

MONDAY TO SATURDAY 1:00 P.M. / 4:00 P.M. / 7:00 P.M.
SUNDAY 2:00 P.M. / 6:00 P.M.

SUNDAY: Dec. 7

RESIDENT REQUEST

PEARL HARBOR (2001) PG-13, 3 hr. 3 min. *Period Drama, Action Epic*

Cast: Ben Affleck, Kate Beckinsale, & Josh Harnett

A tale of war and romance mixed in with history. The story follows two lifelong friends and a beautiful nurse who are caught up in the horror of an infamous Sunday morning in 1941.

MONDAY: Dec. 8

HOW THE GRINCH STOLE CHRISTMAS (2000) PG, 1 hr. 44 min. *Holiday, Comedy, Family*

Cast: Jim Carrey, Taylor Momsen, & Jeffrey Tambor

On the outskirts of Whoville lives a green, revenge-seeking Grinch who plans to ruin Christmas for all of the citizens of the town.

TUESDAY: Dec. 9

THE MERRY GENTLEMEN (2024) TV-14, 1 hr. 27 min. *Romance, Comedy*

Cast: Britt Robertson, Chad Michael Murray, & Maria Sokoloff

To save her parents' small-town performing venue, a former big-city dancer decides to stage an all-male, Christmas-themed revue.

WEDNESDAY: Dec. 10

RESIDENT REQUEST

THE GODFATHER: PART II (1974) R for, 3 hr. 22 min. *Epic, Crime, Drama*

Cast: Al Pacino, Robert De Niro, & Robert Duvall

The early life and career of Vito Corleone in 1920s New York City is portrayed, while his son, Michael, expands and tightens his grip on the family crime syndicate.

THURSDAY: Dec. 11

NO MOVIE DUE TO THE CHRISTMAS CAROUSEL EVENT.

FRIDAY: Dec. 12

CHRISTMAS WITH THE KRANKS (2004) PG, 1 hr. 39 min. *Comedy, Family*

Cast: Tim Allen, Jamie Lee Curtis, & Dan Aykroyd

With their daughter Blair away in Peru, Luther and Nora Krank decide to skip Christmas altogether until she decides to come home, causing an uproar when they must celebrate it at the last minute.

SATURDAY: Dec. 13

ARTHUR CHRISTMAS (2011) PG, 1 hr. 37 min. *Family, Comedy, Adventure*

Cast: James McAvoy, Jim Broadbent, & Bill Nighy

Santa's clumsy son Arthur sets out on a mission with Grand-Santa to give out a misplaced present to a young girl in less than two hours on Christmas Day.