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Streamlined Railroads

May 13, 2025



The role of railroads in America's development and culture cannot be overstated. Those impacts included, in the 20th century, a focus on style and luxury for railroad passengers on high-end trains. Beginning in the 1930s, Art Deco emerged as the prominent design element for railroad locomotives and passenger cars, manifested in streamlining, exterior and interior color palettes and interior space, function and accessories.

This program will illustrate these developments primarily through the work of and rivalry between two well-known 20th Century industrial designers: Raymond Loewy - who designed the 1938 and 1948 Broadway Limited trains for the Pennsylvania Railroad - and

Henry Dreyfuss - who designed the 1938 and 1948 20th Century Limited consists for the New York Central Railroad - as they battled for design supremacy for their respective railroads, which were themselves staunch rivals.

Loewy and Dreyfuss were similar to Frank Lloyd Wright in that their commissions included all aspects of their trains, from the exteriors, colors of and lettering for engines and passenger cars, to the car interiors, space configurations and functions, furniture, china, wall and floor coverings and window treatments.

The presentation will also touch on other railroads and on the period through and after WWII through the 1950s.

Photos and slides will supplement the commentary. Time will be provided for questions.

About the Presenter

David Vaughn, by profession an attorney and labor arbitrator, is a long-time railroad enthusiast who participates in multiple railroad and railfan organizations, including the New York Central and Pennsylvania historical societies. He has held offices in a number of such organizations and is a past National Director of the Nickel Plate Road Historical and Technical Society. David and his wife, Catherine, own and are restoring the 1950 Pullman-built streamlined lightweight passenger car *City of Chicago*, a combination sleeping, dining and lounge car previously owned by the New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad (the "*Nickel Plate Road*").

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