

The Big Train Project Status Report (Part 107)

This month's article shows some recent changes to the EnterTRAINment Junction (EJ) layout. As usual, the order is as you would see them as you walk the aisle through the layout.

The first change, took a lesson from European landmarks, which during restoration had a full-size picture of what was being worked on hung on the outside the scaffolding used to do the work. Figure 1 shows the original Fox Theater's sign and marquee (left) and their replacements (right). This looks like a worsening rather than an improvement; but, fret not, the change is only temporary. The originals have been removed so that they could be upgraded with the addition of lighting of the letters "Fox" in the sign and the marquee and lighting of the listings of what's playing on the marquee. To save wasted effort, some of the details, like the central finial and the gryphons, were not replicated on the temporary replacement.



Figure 1 Replacement Sign and Marquee

A new steam engine has been added to one of the Middle Period engine servicing facility tracks (Figure 2). It's a bit odd, with a water tank and a coal bunker mounted to the left side of the locomotive, and large windows added to the rear of the cab, where the coal bunker is usually located.



Figure 2. Engine Facility Switcher, Left Side

Figure 3 shows the locomotive's right side, with no water tank which one would expect for a tank engine. This clear right side provides the explanation for the unusual configuration. Since the engineer is normally stationed on the right side of the cab, the primary obstructions to his view have been moved out of the way to the left side, to make it easier for him to see what's ahead and behind the locomotive.



Figure 3. Engine Facility Switcher, Right Side

The unusual hopper car, shown in Figure 4, which was formerly located next to the roundhouse has been moved to a location of greater prominence. “Why does this car have those massive frames over its ends?” you might ask. The answer is: to break icicles off of tunnel entrances and bridges, so that the icicles don’t damage more delicate components on other rolling stock. It’s a clever and simple solution to a potentially critical safety problem.



Figure 4. Tunnel Entrance Icicle Breaker

To help visitors know where they are in the layout, new maps have been added in each of the tunnels along the layout aisle. The one in Figure 5 is located in the tunnel between the Modern City and the equestrian and hot air balloon area. The location is indicated by the small red “You Are Here” balloon in the upper left of this map.

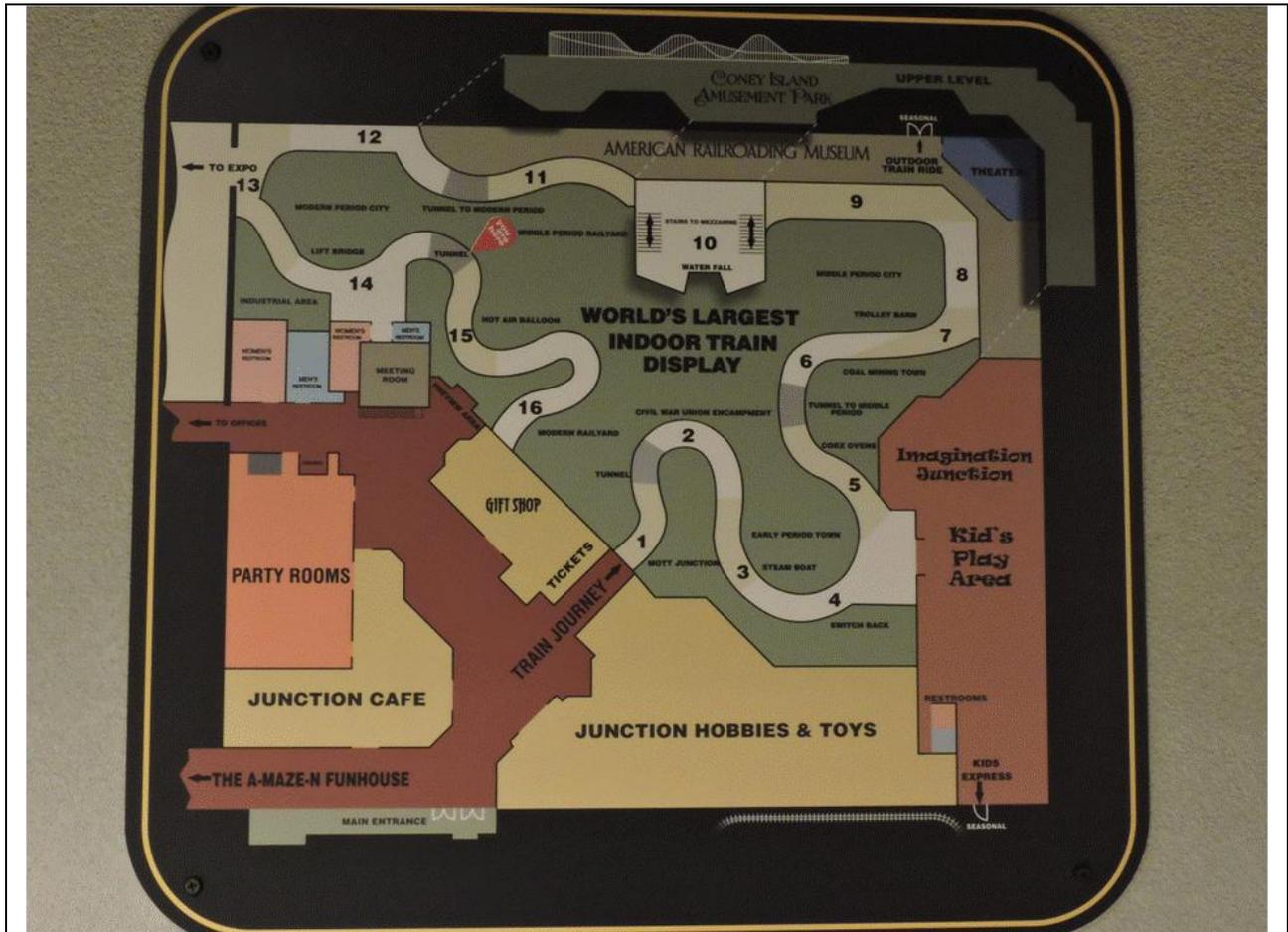


Figure 5. New Layout Map

Finally, a newly decorated balloon, complete with EJ advertising sign, has been installed in the equestrian area in the Modern Period (Figure 6).



Figure 6. New Hot Air Balloon

While these changes are not earth-shattering, they do illustrate the process of continuing improvement that has been ongoing and will continue to characterize the EJ entertainment complex.

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