IRON AND STEEL FLOOR TRAINS

CATALOGED 1910 to 1912

By: Dave McEntarfer and John Basile

1910 was truly a banner year for IVES. Along with the introduction of new electric O gauge trains came updated more modern passenger and freight outfits. Mixed into the consumer catalogs of 1910 were the cast iron toys and a new line of iron and steel floor trains. Were these really new floor trains? This will be discussed later.

This newly cataloged line of floor toys was based on the tracked trains that had proven successful through the past decade. While floor trains had been a staple of the IVES Manufacturing Corporation and its predecessor companies since the 1870s, this change represented a more modern train for the small boy to play with. As the tracked train line was modernized, one possible explanation for the use of earlier lithographed train cars was that this new line provided a way of disposing of earlier cars that were not part of the newer line introduced for tracked trains in the 1910 catalog. On the other hand there is a distinct possibility that some of the tracked trains were sold earlier, maybe as early as 1908. This earlier date would more likely apply to production of the passenger sets rather than the freights simply because only a couple of cataloged track freight sets existed prior to 1910.

At this time there is no evidence known to the authors that can demonstrate whether these were new floor trains to the market in 1910 or whether they had been in production and sold for a couple of prior years but uncataloged. It is probable that there had been a continuation of the line of iron toys including floor trains following the disastrous 1900 fire. While it was possible that the original toy patterns were lost in the fire, it seems likely that new ones would have been quickly made even if the casting was outsourced as was common. At some point it also seems likely that IVES would have utilized the more modern cast iron locomotives of its tracked line. Since we know that other shops did casting for IVES, floor trains almost certainly were part of the toy line they sold but we know they were not cataloged with the tracked trains in the catalogs until 1910.

It is also quite possible that with the restructuring of the O gauge line in 1910, IVES was looking for an outlet for its earlier lithographed car bodies to utilize the lithographic plates already made. So that may have been why they began the new floor toy line.

Whether the floor train line began before 1910 or not, the 1910 catalog included 23 iron and steel floor train sets. Eleven of these sets were freight and one more was a mixed passenger and freight. The ratio of freight to passenger sets is higher than for the other tracked lines in the catalog and far exceeds what was found in the earlier production. All are priced in the "Retail Prices Ives Toys" booklet for 1910. This included a broad range of sets from the lowly 50 series cars to the larger one gauge trains. While individual tracked train cars are listed and priced for separate sale in the booklet, the floor toy cars were not. So we concluded the floor toys train sets were not intended to be added to in the manner of the miniature railway system. In 1911 and 1912 the same 23 sets are listed and the prices for each set continued to be the same for all three years they were cataloged. In 1913 the iron and steel floor trains are no longer included in the consumer catalog. We presume they were sold only as leftover items thereafter. By comparing the catalog listings for the three years the only differences occur in sets 304 and 306 where a caboose, number 156, is substituted for the merchandise car in 1912.

Another question that arises is how were these floor sets shipped? Were they shipped in the distinctive paper lithographed box tops of the track trains of the period? The only example we have is shown in photograph number 1 from Doc Robinson's archives. This is a plain cardboard box with liners, and the only label was as you see in the photo, which is the same plain label, found

IRON AND STEEL FLOOR TRAINS

on individual pieces sold both before and after 1910. The label reads "One Set No. 303 Iron and Steel Train."

Photo No. 1: Part of Set 303 With Box.

LOCOMOTIVES There are four locomotive types included in the floor train sets. Each of the four series of floor trains had a different locomotive. As with the tracked train locomotives, the floor trains utilized cast iron bodies without the clockwork motors. Therefore, IVES adapted the tracked locomotives by adding to the casting to provide support for axles for the wheels. To do this they had to make new patterns, but that would have been relatively easy since the more complicated part of the casting (the top works) was already designed for the corresponding tracked locomotives. The cast iron drive wheels were different in that they were spindlier and without flanges. The pony trucks had new tinplate flange-less wheels. The pilots were modified to have a small boss with a loophole where a pull cord could be attached. We have not seen the remnants of a pull cord and none of the locomotives we have examined show signs of wear from the movement of such a cord. So most kids must have operated these sets by pushing or pulling the train itself.

The 300 set series used a small locomotive with top works the same as the 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4 locomotives. It was the bicycle 2-2-0 wheel arrangement. The next larger size was an adaptation of the numbers 11 and 17 0-4-0 locomotive, which was used in the 310 set series. Finally the deluxe O gauge number 25 locomotive was utilized for the 320 set series. Its pony truck was a fixed part of the casting so that locomotive would pull in a straight line. The 330 set series adapted the much larger one gauge number 40 second series locomotive. It was adapted in the same way as the number 25 with a fixed pony truck and tinplate flangeless wheels.

CARS Each series of sets had freight and passenger cars of a corresponding track series. Thus the 300 series sets included 50 series tracked cars, the 310 the 60 series tracked cars, the 320 the 130 series tracked cars and the 330 the one gauge 70 series cars. While the floor trains had to travel in a straight line, the use of the normal coupler arrangement was modified to have one hook coupler on one end of the frame and a slot in the frame on the other end to accommodate the hook (see photograph number 2). To travel in a straight line trucks had to either be affixed to the frame or a different mounting extending from the frame to hold the axles had to be used. Both types are used for the 130 series cars imitating the earlier inboard truck design and fixed trucks similar to the 70 series one gauge cars. All of the 70 series cars observed by the authors were equipped with the fixed truck attached to the frame design.

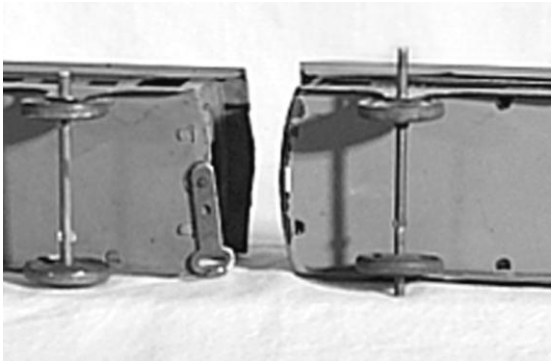

Photo No.2: Floor Train With Tab Coupler and Slotted Frame.

In addition to the hook and slot couplers the 4 wheel car frames have shallow vees on the sides rather than the open design of the tracked trains of the period. The larger 130 and 70 series cars have simple frames without the truss rods of the tracked trains. Most of the frames we have observed are painted a solid gray or solid black

and are not lithographed. The roofs we have observed are painted solid colors and do not have the painted imitation clerestories. The car bodies were lithographed except for the 54 and 63 gravel cars, which generally were painted, shown in photograph number 9. However, examining the paint on these gravel cars reveals the possibility that they were really lithographed in a solid color. Photograph numbers 6 and 14, however, show the exception, a lithographed 154.

Assembly of the earlier cars was made with much lighter metal and is punched differently (It comes together at each end over the door as opposed to the corners in the earlier models) and the lithograph colors and design is slightly different. The same is true of the passenger cars. We believe they just used up old bodies the first year or two, but by 1912 they actually had new tooling and lithography for these cars.

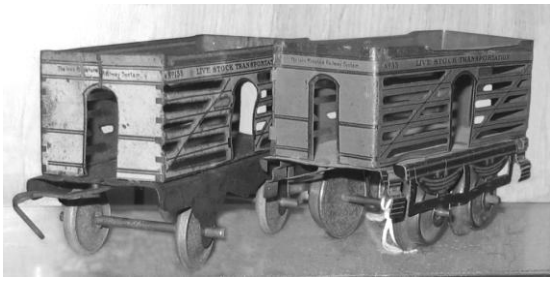

Photo No. 3: showing body construction. Floor version no. 155 on left.

One minor part of the lithography that was changed was to add a 1 in front of the number normally used, thus a 55 stock was a 155 floor train stock car as shown in photograph number 3. The floor toy is on the left. The cars that did not normally carry numbers did not have the "one" added. This change can be confusing, because floor sets traced to the original owners have been observed having floor frames with bodies having track numbers. Obviously, the people assembling these sets sometimes interchanged the 100 series car bodies with the normal series so that a 100 might be in a tracked set while a regular number in a floor set. An example of this is shown in photograph number 4 where the 60 is the floor version (on the left) and the 160 is the tracked version (on the right). This photograph also reveals that the lower part of the body was cut off about 3/16 inch, which shortens the body of the 60-floor version from that of its cousin the tracked train car. Furthermore, the tracked version numbered 160 is presumably from 1909 that just might support the argument of earlier floor train production.

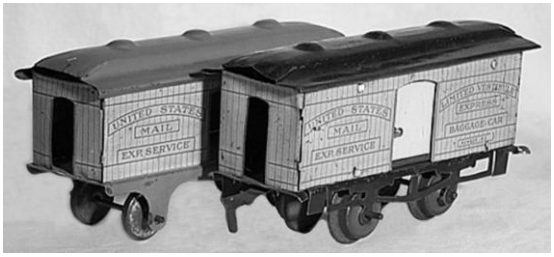

Photo No. 4: Floor Numbered 60 on Left and Track Version Numbered 160 on Right, the Reverse of What Was Expected.

It is not uncommon to find track wheels on floor train cars. Examples such as shown in photograph number 5 are found with tab coupler on one end and the slot on the other end. One could argue that an early owner may have swapped the wheels since they are easy to change. Finding these different combinations are easy to understand since the bodies, wheels and frames are interchangeable. It would have taken modern quality control to maintain consistency; however, at that time there wasn't a need as long as the sets were completed with cars that would work with the appropriate floor or track locomotive.

300 SERIES There are six sets in this series with three passenger and three freight. We have provided two examples. The first is set 303 with the Brooklyn cars. It is led by the smaller 2-2-0 locomotive based on the 1 to 4 tracked locomotives. See photograph number 5. Note the cars have track wheels, but they have tab and slot frames. The second set shown in photograph number 6 is the freight 304 with the 156 caboose from 1912 bringing up the rear. A close up of the 1912 caboose numbered 156 is shown in photograph number 7. Cataloging the caboose in 1912 is a real mystery, IVES didn't have to make any new dies for it as they used the body from a

IRON AND STEEL FLOOR TRAINS

No. 50 baggage, but they did have to prepare the lithographic plates that were unique to only that car.

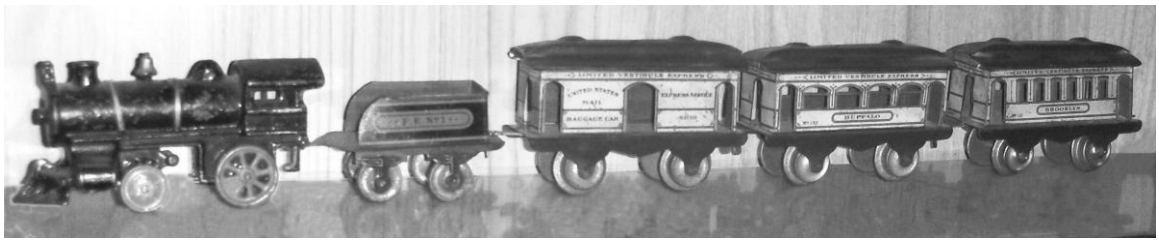

Photo No. 5: Set 303 With Brooklyn Series Cars and the 1-4 Locomotive.

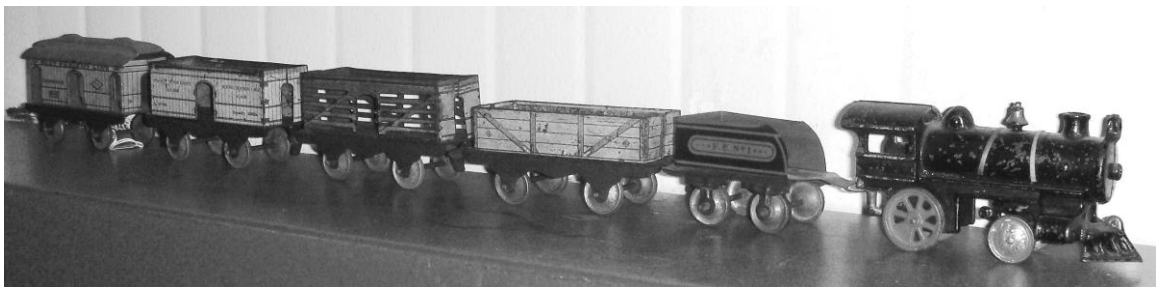

Photo No. 6: Set 304 With the 156 Caboose From 1912.

310 SERIES This series uses the larger adapted 60 series freight and passenger cars pulled by the floor version of the 11/17 locomotive. We have provided an example with passenger set number 314 shown in photograph number 8. The biggest freight set number 317 is shown in photograph number 9. The locomotives and tenders are identical, and the complete line of 60/160 series cars (The caboose is numbered 126.) is included in these two photographs. A comparison of the 154 and 164 Gravel cars can be seen in photographs numbered 13 and 14.

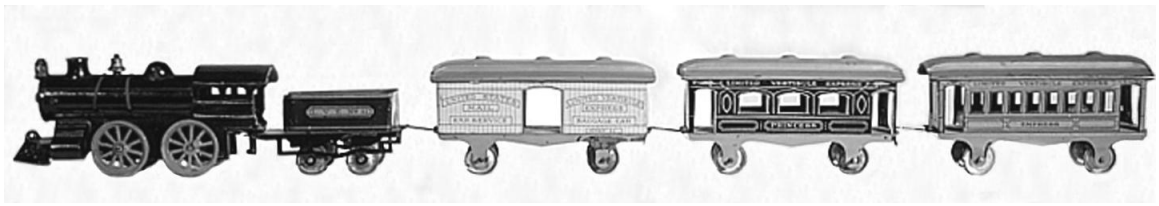

Photo No 8: Set 314 Princess Set With 11/17 Locomotive.

Photo No. 9: Set 317 With All Freight Cars.

IRON AND STEEL FLOOR TRAINS

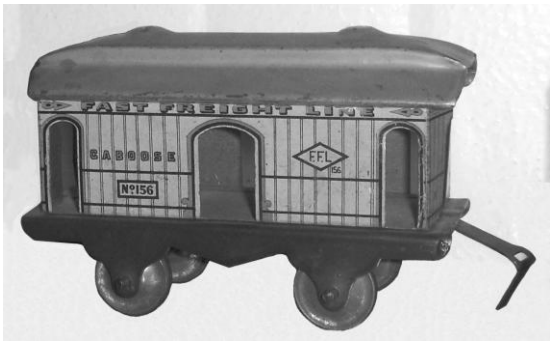

Photo No.7: 156 Caboose From 1912.

320 SERIES This series was made up with the 130 series freight and passenger cars led by the larger O gauge number 25 locomotive adapted for the floor trains. We were somewhat limited in our ability to photograph examples of this series. The one example that we have is shown here in photograph number 10. It is a green Philadelphia 129. Two complete sets, each numbered 322 can be found in *CAST IRON FLOOR TRAINS* By Mr. Rick Ralston. Mr. Ralston's excellent book has large colored photographs of these sets on pages 100 and 101. If you are fortunate to have access to this book you will find excellent photos of these floor train sets. One set is probably of earlier origin with fixed inboard trucks while the other has later outboard trucks affixed to the frame.

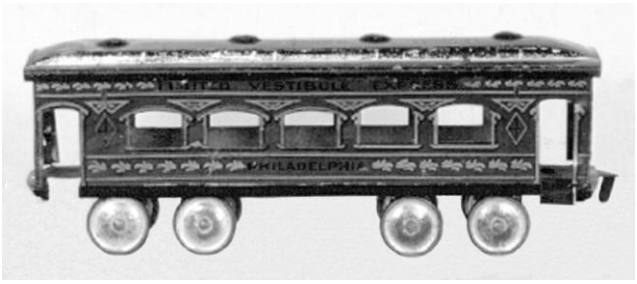

Photo No. 10: Floor Train Version of 129 Philadelphia with inboard trucks.

The authors have observed only the passenger cars in this series. If freights are in any of your collections we would be most interested in seeing photographs.

330 SERIES This is by far the largest of the sets patterned after the One Gauge trains led by a modified second series cast iron no. 40 locomotive with a no. 40 tender. The cars were the 70 series. Photographs number. 11 and 12 show locomotive and tender and a number 71 St. Louis combine.

Photo No. 11: Large Floor Train Series Based on One Gauge Product Line No. 40 Locomotive and Tender.

IRON AND STEEL FLOOR TRAINS

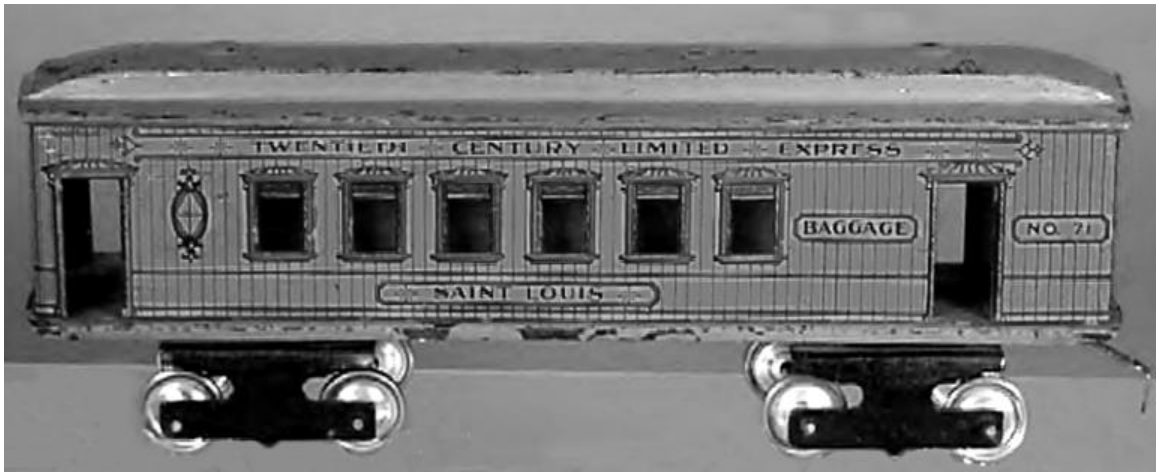

Photo No. 12: Large Floor Train Combination No. 71

END OF FLOOR TRAINS When the 1913 catalog appeared, there were no longer any Iron and Steel Floor Trains included. We must assume that the production ceased and slowly the store and IVES shop stock would have been sold off. So why were these trains discontinued? Unfortunately, as usual, we can only speculate. In 1912 a comparison of the floor sets against the similar clockwork tracked sets reveals the floor sets are significantly less costly. Some of the more expensive floor sets cost as much or more than the least expensive clockwork tracked sets, but it doesn't seem that that reason alone would result in the discontinuance.

Remembering that tracked sets would enable future additions (sales) to add to the Miniature Railway System, we can assume there would be a greater inclination to move away from the floor trains. With the least expensive tracked set being $1, we believe that most Moms and Dads would be inclined to buy the tracked clockwork trains rather than the floor trains. Most probably the real reason the Floor Trains were discontinued was that sales did not bring an adequate return to the company. Couple that with the prospect of modernization of the line and the amount of work controls for nearly duplicate parts, we are sure that this decision was almost a no-brainer.

In 1913 something new appeared in the catalog, Struktiron. Interestingly, a little piece of the floor train sets was incorporated into the Struktiron sets. That piece was the flangeless floor train tin wheel. This allowed the boy engineer to construct his own train cars or other vehicles.

As always we are interested in learning more about these little sets. Please share your collection experience with these sets.

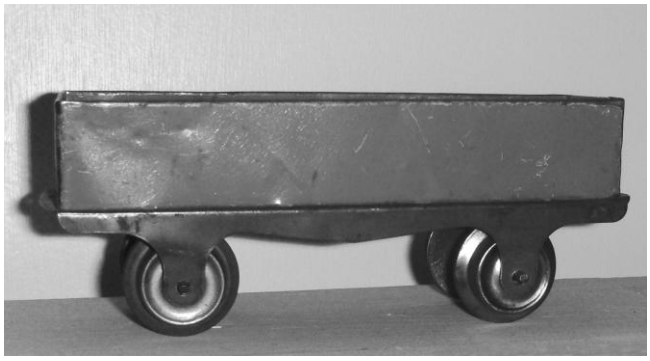

Photo No. 13: Red No. 163 Gravel Car

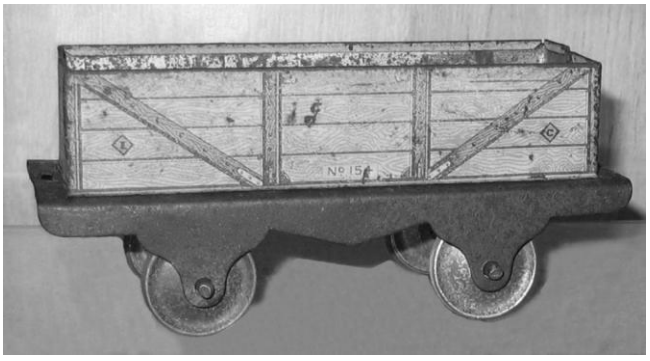

Photo No. 14: Litho Tan/Green No. 154 Gravel Car