

Carolina Conductor



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Monthly Newsletter of the Carolina Railroad Heritage Association, Inc.

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Preserving the Past Active in the Present Planning for the Future

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Hub City Railroad Museum and SOU Rwy Caboose #X3115:

Spartanburg Amtrak Station

298 Magnolia Street

Spartanburg, SC 29301-2330

Wednesday 10-2 & Saturday 10-2

Meeting Site:

Fountain Inn Presbyterian Church

307 North Main Street

Fountain Inn, SC 29644

Third Friday of the Month at 7:00 p.m.

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Articles can be submitted anytime.

Raymond Loewy

This is part 2 of a multi-part series about American Raymond Loewy who to this day affects the industrial designs of railroads and our daily lives. Ed.

Over the years, more than 500 members of his staff worked on the big Nabisco account, made difficult by squabbles with the company's management. While competitor Henry Dreyfuss worked for



John Deere, Loewy designed tractors, trucks, 1,800 dealership buildings, and an outstanding logo (in the image of a farmer on a tractor) for Deere's then-larger competitor, International Harvester.



← International Harvester Tractor



International Harvester Dealership

Raymond Loewy, along with Henry Dreyfuss, Walter Dorwin Teague, and 10 others created the Society of Industrial Designers in 1944, the first professional organization for the field. The SID established ethical standards and only accepted full-time designers who worked on a broad scope of projects.

The Frigidaire Story

After working with Sears on refrigerators, he and the company parted ways, and he accepted work for General Motors' Frigidaire Division in Dayton, Ohio—one of the top makers of refrigerators. Always a great storyteller, Loewy reveled in the following one, which took place after dinner and wine with Frigidaire's General Manager Elmer Biechler. Late at night, Biechler drove Loewy out to watch

the shift change at the Frigidaire plant.

Loewy wrote, "No sounding of horns, no brake screeches, only a mighty purr, a feeling

Continued on Page 3 - Loewy

Museum Happenings



↑ Families had their photograph take with the Thomas background as a memento of Train Day 2026.

↑ One of six new paint schemes the NS has made to celebrate America's 250th anniversary. Keep watching for them to pass through the area.

Train Day 2026 was a success. This photo shows the train ride prior to opening. →

This is the way the train ride was during most of the day—there was always was a line. Attendance was over 650 visitors. ↓



← This is what we all wanted to do after the public had gone!

Wanted—Articles for the Carolina Conductor

Submit an article of 200 words or more with some photos and captions and see them in print. Every one of us has some unique railroad experience that would make interesting reading for our membership. Your editor always needs more contributions of railway history and news.

of order, precision, power. As we reached the crest of a hill we could see the stream of red taillights and the stream of white headlights fading away in the distance. The sprawling plant was ablaze with blue mercury light. Over certain areas the sky was shivering with the blue-white flashes of automatic welding. White, green, red and blue signal lights would punc-



uate the night. The whole sky was aglow, I was utterly moved by the magnificence of it all. It was like seeing the actual flow of the rich, red blood of young, vibrant America.... We paused in a quiet spot, and Biechler took my arm and said: 'Loewy, boys work on our problem, in your penthouse office on Fifth Avenue, you may not realize the real importance of the pretty lines you put on paper. You see, every one of these men around us supports a family of four. They all live well because they have a job. They have a job because, among other things, your design clicked. In this plant alone—and we have dozens of others all over the world—eighteen thousand men are employed. Eighty thousand dependents! And remember for each man employed at the plant, there are three in the field: salesmen, advertising men, maintenance men, traffic and transportation fellows, warehousemen and accountants, dispatchers and repair crews, electricians, statisticians, engineers, draftsmen, etc. That's another sixty thousand. If you add to that another 250,000 for dependents, you get a true picture. More than 320,000 people whose life is directly affected by the success of what you put on paper!'"

This story was key for Loewy, and he shared it when training his new staff members. He said, "We never lose contact with reality, and we do not underestimate our social responsibilities. As we have over one hundred active clients on our list, it may well be that the soundness of our designs affects the lives of millions."

But above all else, he was concerned about the lives of the ultimate customers, saying, "I believe one should design for the advantages of the largest mass of people, first and always."

More Transportation

Despite becoming the largest retail store design firm in the nation, and later renaming his company Raymond Loewy/William Snaith, Inc., in honor of his revenue-producing partner, the retail business never captured Loewy's heart—that remained in motion, in transportation.

In 1939, the firm had designed the interior of the



Boeing Stratoliner interior.

Boeing Stratoliner airliner, and in 1947, the interior of the powerful piston-engined Lockheed Constellation. Much later, they did the same for the Air France Concorde supersonic transport. They also did interiors for ocean liners.

The Greyhound Bus company, for decades the largest carrier of passengers

in the world (larger than any airline or railroad), came to the Loewy office in 1939, asking for new paint schemes on their buses. Raymond Loewy told the head of Greyhound that their dog logo looked like a "fat mongrel." Loewy contacted the American Kennel Club to learn more about the actual shape of greyhounds, resulting in a sleek new dog that is still used today.

Delayed by the war, Greyhound began to introduce new Loewy-designed buses in 1946, but the real advance came in 1954, when the bus company introduced his double-deck "Scenicruiser." The air-conditioned bus with a restroom and air-cushion suspension changed the intercity bus industry. Loewy was so proud of the bus that he rented a showroom on NY's Park Avenue to show full-scale mock-up.



The Greyhound Scenicruiser bus design.

The Studebaker Story

No client brought more acclaim to Raymond Loewy and his staff than automaker Studebaker of South Bend, Indiana. Founded in 1852, the company by 1887 was the “biggest vehicle house in the world,” the leading maker of wagons and carriages. In 1897, John Studebaker’s son-in-law, Frederick Fish, convinced the company to enter the automobile business. At first it produced car bodies for others; then introduced its first cars in 1902, followed by the acquisition of other car makers. In 1936, Studebaker remained one of the biggest “independents” (not one of the Big Three: GM, Ford, and Chrysler) alongside Hudson, Nash, and Packard. Chief executive Harold Vance invited Raymond Loewy to do some work on the 1938 line, then in the planning stages.

Over time, Loewy convinced Studebaker management that the company should differentiate itself by offering lighter, more fuel-efficient cars, an unusual thought for the era. He believed that there was an unmet market for “a slender, compact automobile.” Loewy’s firm added an office and studio in South Bend, which was plastered with signs that read: “Weight is the enemy.” Studebakers soon weighed 15 percent less than comparable Fords and Chevrolets, getting 25 percent better gas mileage.

The king of auto designers and father of big fins, Harley Earl at General Motors, mocked Loewy as a “refrigerator designer.” Yet Loewy had an important impact on future car design. Loewy kept adding staff on the Studebaker account, including young Virgil Exner from General Motors, who went on to head Chrysler’s successful 1950s design department. Another famous car designer—earlier responsible for the incredible Auburn, Cord, and Duesenberg cars—Gordon Buehrig joined the team. Loewy also paid close attention to the interiors of cars, having women

designers focus on that work. Loewy’s 1938 Studebaker Champion was a hit, followed by the 1939 President which was named “the best-looking car of the year” by the American Federation of the Arts. Studebaker hired 1,500 new workers to meet the demand. In 1950, Studebaker hit its high point, selling about 300,000 cars, including the renowned bullet-nosed model, inspired by the fighter jets of the era.



1950 Studebaker Champion.

Loewy and his team engaged in continuous turf and ego battles with Studebaker engineers and executives, but his persuasive powers usually won out. The sporty 1953 Starliner was widely acclaimed and proved there was a market for a “personal luxury car,” opening the way for the Ford Thunderbird, Buick Riviera, and Chevrolet Corvette. Unfortunately, Studebaker thought people would prefer the four-door sedan, but they wanted the sleek two-door coupe, which the company could not produce fast enough.



Studebaker Starliner

By the mid-1950s, Loewy was charging Studebaker a million dollars a year (\$9 million today). But the struggles with

Continued on Page 4 - Loewy

management and declining fortunes of Studebaker led him to close his South Bend office in 1956. Nevertheless, this was not to be Loewy's last (or most remembered) effort for Studebaker.

In 1961, new Studebaker chief Sherwood Egbert brought Loewy back to South Bend to create the Avanti, introduced in 1962. The fast, all-fiberglass car set 29 speed records for a stock production car on Utah's Bonneville Salt Flats. The first American car to have disc brakes, with a dashboard lit red at night for easier visibility, the Avanti took American car critics and buffs by storm. While the Studebaker firm finally gave up making cars in 1963, Avanti fans continued production of the phenomenal car for several more years. The Avanti continues to be considered a highly collectible classic automobile, and one of Loewy's most famous designs.



1963 Studebaker Avanti.

These beautiful Studebakers were not Loewy's last transportation efforts. In the early 1960s, he designed the interiors and exterior paint scheme of Air Force One for his friends John and Jackie Kennedy.

The latest versions of the president's plane continue to use Loewy's elegant paint scheme.

At the extremes of the transportation field, Loewy was asked to design NASA's Skylab and spacesuits in 1967. His most important contribution was that he added a porthole to Skylab so that the astronauts could (literally) see the world. The work gave the 75-year-old great pleasure and publicity, which he made the most of.



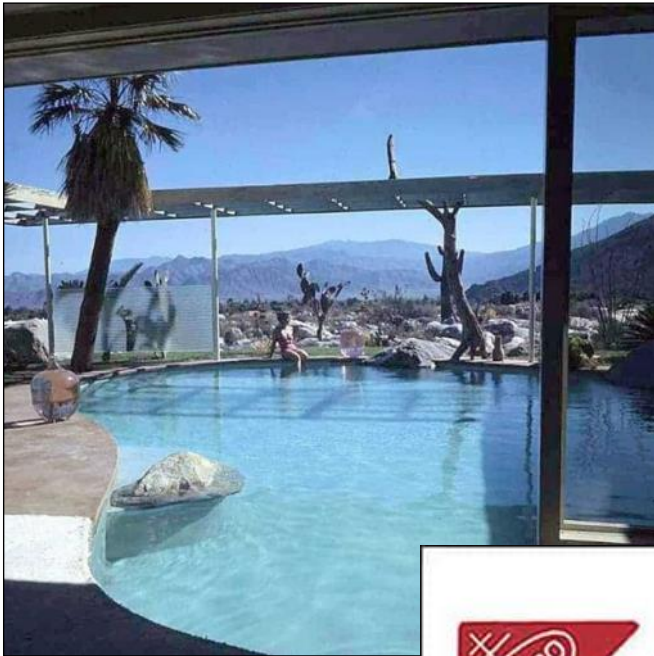
Living Life to the Fullest

After divorcing, but remaining friends with, his first wife, Jean, three years later, in 1948, Loewy married Viola Erickson. That marriage lasted the rest of his long life. Always well-dressed, always at his side, helping at the company, Viola was his constant companion.

Loewy's cars were custom-built to his own designs, as were his fabulous houses (two in France, one in Palm Springs, California, and one outside of Mexico City, as well as his New York apartment). His Palm Springs house had an indoor-outdoor swimming pool that edged right up to the



Continued on Page 6 - Loewy



Loewy's Palm Springs house with indoor-outdoor pool.

front door, causing some famous guests to fall in fully clothed. He hung out with comedian Jack Benny and actor William Powell. His French country estate was built in the sixteenth century by King Henry IV for one of his mistresses.

Of his lifestyle, he said, "Thus we live a life which, to us, is ideal. It is a blend of everything that makes life interesting and eventful. America gives me the opportunity to be creative and imaginative. Europe—and France in particular—brings relaxation and perspective. This slowing down is imperative in order to maintain a balanced outlook. It also gives me a chance to appreciate America more keenly." Loewy grasped the American energy, creativity, and opportunity like few others have.

The man never lost his zest

for life. At 70, he took high speed driving lessons with auto legend Carroll Shelby. At 77, he and Viola were careening around California beaches in a high-powered dune buggy. He loved racing, deep-sea diving, and speedboats.

By 1973, the 80-year-old Loewy had 190 employees in New York, 48 in Paris, and 20 in London. But he finally decided to retire, selling his businesses in 1976. He still had energy left, beginning his book *Industrial Design* in that same year.

Raymond Loewy died on July 14, 1986, at the age of 92. To call his life well-lived would be the ultimate understatement. To see his impact on our world, all you must do is open your eyes. ✓

Some of the logos Loewy's designed over the years.



Continued on Page 7 - Loewy

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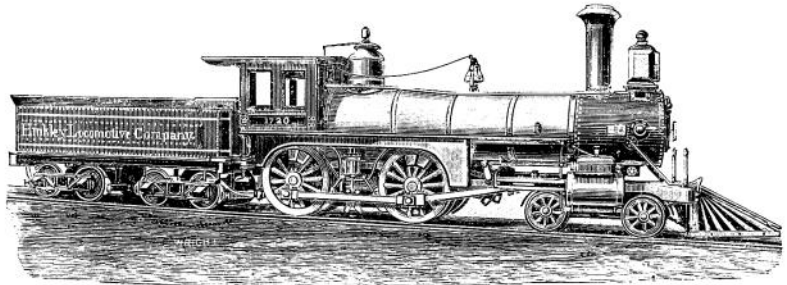
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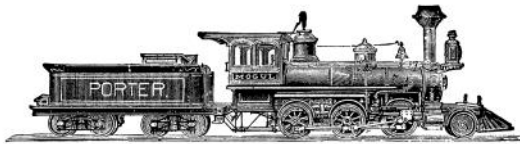
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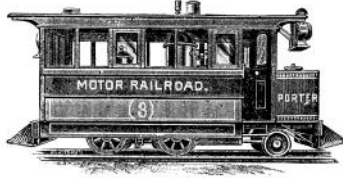
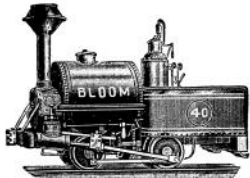
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