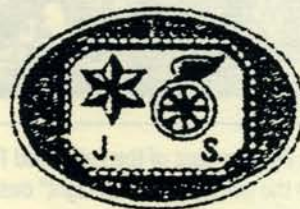




MINIATURE RAILROADS

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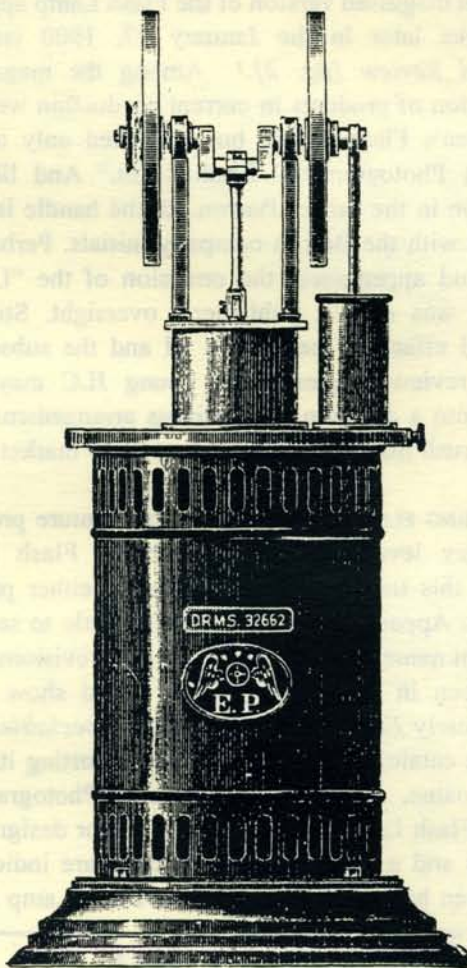


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TRADE MARK



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Flight Plan

- 1-American Flyer logo 1915-1924
- 2-Jean Schoenner logo 1890s
- 3-Ernst Plank hot air engine, circa 1906
- 4-Ernst Plank train tunnel, circa 1906
- 5-Bing trademark - pre-World War I
- 6-Winged wheel seen in Bing jobber catalogs 1898-1900
- 7-Flanged, winged wheel in Bing jobber catalogs circa 1906



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FLIGHTS OF FANCY

By Keith Wills

An idea used by at least three Nuremberg companies was adopted by an American one

COLLECTORS of early American Flyer are well aware of the winged locomotive logo it used prominently from 1915 to 1924. Wings were, however, not original to that company, and more than likely derived from German precedents. We know the Germans dominated our toy markets from just before the turn of the century until World War I, and I believe American Flyer decided to appropriate the winged motif used by several Nuremberg companies once German toys were interdicted from entering the country, as there was now no one to protest its use.

So, where did the wings come from? Jean Schoenner had an oval cartouche surrounding a six pointed star and winged wheel with J under the star and S beneath the wheel; Schoenner used it on catalog covers dating at least from the 1890s. Ernst Plank, another Nuremberg toy maker, made steam trains and accessories, and was known for its many stationary steam engines. A tunnel, circa 1906, shows its logo suspended just under the portal. I've not a clear train model image to reproduce the logo, but have a stationary engine which shows it quite clearly. It too was oval with a winged wheel with E.P. under it.

PERHAPS the most telling display of a winged logo is Bing's. It used GBN (Gerbruder Bing Nuremberg) for corporate identity and utilised a secondary winged wheel in relation to its train models. It was seen circa 1898-1900, in a three-quarter view from the left as spoked and unflanged. By 1906 it had changed with the wheel flanged seen from the other side. I believe Bing was the direct influence upon American Flyer's decision to take flight with the idea. Why?

American Flyer's 1914 catalog showed freight cars manufactured by outside suppliers which supplemented the line, two of which, a caboose and box car, were Bing. It also imported other German accessories such as a footbridge with semaphore (1910-1916), a small metal freight station (1914-1916), track accessories, watchman's huts (1910-1914), and a large metal station. Many of these items were from Carette.

SEEING that American Flyer cataloged Bing freight cars and a few other pieces such as the 208 Signal, its buyers more than likely knew the winged wheel logo from Bing jobber catalogs, and when war interrupted imports, decided to take the idea for American Flyer use. The later dates to 1916 on some items suggest unsold stocks continued to be cataloged once deliveries stopped, which might explain why Flyer's winged locomotive didn't appear until 1917. With "Flyer" in its name, it was logical to incorporate wings with a locomotive.

I have no direct proof for these suppositions, for that is what they are, but my belief is that an idea used by at least three Nuremberg companies was adopted by an American one when there was least likely to be a complaint or legal action taken against it. Even then, American Flyer discarded the wheel for a face-on locomotive which was not an exact infringement, since Schoenner, Plank, and Bing's were but variations on a singular theme. ■

Keith Wills has been writing "Collector's Consist," his monthly column in Railroad Model Craftsman, for twenty years. Keith's articulate commentaries never fail to delight collectors and those interested in the history of toy trains and model railroading.