

## Recalling the monorail: Time for a new home for Santa Claus, in downtown Syracuse?

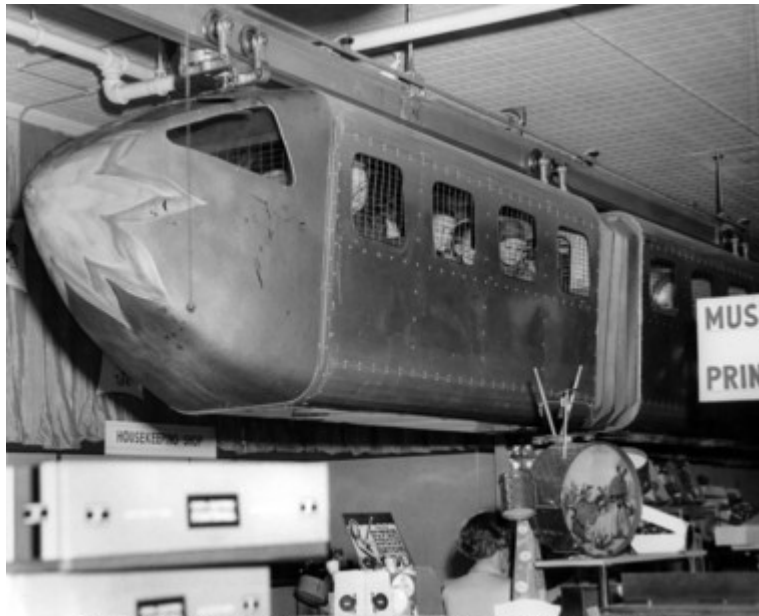


By [Sean Kirst, The Post-Standard](#)

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Monorail Train ride in Toy Department of E.W. Edwards Department Store: c.1955 courtesy of Onondaga Historical Association

The old monorail at Edwards department store: Couldn't we find some modern counterpart in [downtown Syracuse](#)?

Onondaga Historical Association

A thought for Christmas Eve, as I prepare to do my absolutely-last-minute-shopping - just as I end up doing it each year:

[Today's column on Armory Square pioneer George Curry](#), who says downtown Syracuse is experiencing its greatest burst of growth in more than 40 years, brought a tremendous flood of response and conversation from readers. Still, even as we get millions upon millions in new [investment](#) in the city center, it seems to me that one obvious holiday attribute is missing:

During the yuletide, we need some absolutely beautiful and memorable way for kids downtown to visit Santa Claus.

This is my point, which I've also made in the past: For graying baby boomers, in both Syracuse and Rochester, one of the most vivid and evocative memories of Christmas is going to the respective downtowns [in those cities to ride the monorail](#), and then to visit Santa. In Syracuse, a children's monorail ride was set up at the old Edwards [department store](#); in Rochester, a similar ride was offered at the Midtown Mall. Both trains - simple attractions when set against the technological wonders available today - provided little ones with a magical journey around Santa, on his throne.



The Landmark Theatre: Imagine this as a place to visit Santa Claus.

For many kids in Central New York, the monorail was a major element of Christmas; whenever I

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write about it, the proof is in the passionate nature of the response. There was something unique and irreplaceable about the feeling of making that journey through snowy city streets, in December. I'm not suggesting that we try to rebottle the same lightning - what worked in 1960 might fall flat today - but consider this:

We have an absolutely lush and beautiful treasure in the [Landmark Theatre](#). Why not create such an unforgettable Santa experience in those beautiful corridors that Central New Yorkers wouldn't feel like it was really the Christmas season unless they went? Why not set one room up in that building as a throne room every Saturday, for Santa? Why not get Cafe Kubal or Freedom of Espresso or some other downtown business to offer top-notch [hot chocolate](#) for children while they wait? Why not call upon some of the sharpest minds downtown, some of these developers and restaurateurs and merchants who have found ways to battle back against difficult trends, and ask for suggestions on what could make for a truly memorable visit with Santa?

I've written before about how Mark Farrington, a thoughtful correspondent and a longtime reader, [believes that kind of experience makes a deep statement](#) on how a community feels about its children.

Certainly, there's easy proof that people would come downtown for that opportunity: Look at [the crowd that shows up every year for the lighting of the tree](#). But it would have to be done absolutely right, with real passion. The goal: Creating an experience that people would remember in, say, 2042, in the same way they remember the monorail today. And if the Landmark was somehow seen as the wrong choice, what about The Galleries? Or The MOST?

Your thoughts?

- [Sean](#)



A reader, Martha McConnell Greer, with the Santa Claus at Edwards, 1951.

Courtesy Martha McConnell Greer

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