The CiTizen co-developed several drugs, his passion for trains that dates back to a childhood Christmas in Auburn. That model train, which was kept in the attic. It was nothing sophisticated, "he said. "My parents got rid of it when I was away at college. Things disappear when you're gone."

The 40-by-60-foot layout also includes the Phoenix Building and its clock tower, Auburn Correctional Facility, the now-demolished Palace Theater and Martin Margate's, a popular ice cream shop where Vince once worked. He and his team of model builders created the stroll down memory lane to not only capture the city of his childhood, but to pay homage to life in the 1950s at large. "I love everything about the past," Vince, 81, told The Citizen. "A lot of these places haven't been anywhere." Vince, who graduated from East High School in 1958 and last visited the area six years ago for a class reunion, doesn't hesitate to recall his memory lane instantly. He reminisced about working as a school crossing guard, and Dickman Farms in Owego. He was still wearing his crossing guard uniform, he said with a laugh, when he went to the garden center asking for a summer job. "I was a small guy and they called me 'Sheriff.'" He said. "Everyone was called by their nickname. They'd say, 'C'mon, Sheriff,' and I'd go and collect the earnings for the day. They paid me 60 cents per hour."

After graduating high school, Vince spent a year at what's now Cayuga Community College and went on to SUNY Buffalo, studying medical chemistry. He and his high school sweetheart wife, Maureen (Ramsey), then headed west so he could teach at the University of Minnesota, where he's been since 1967. He has been the director of its Center for Drug Design since establishing it in 2002. While at Minnesota Vince co-developed several drugs, namely HIV drug acyclovir (Glo- pen) during the AIDS epidemics of the 1980s. He even has a molecule named after him, Vince lactam. His many honors include his induction into the Minnesota Inventor's Hall of Fame in 2009. Throughout his prolific scientific career, Vince maintained a passion for trains that dates back to a childhood Christmas in Auburn. "That model train, which was kept in the attic. It was nothing sophisticated," he said. "My parents got rid of it when I was away at college. Things disappear when you're gone."

At the University of Minnesota, Vince met a group of actors trying to produce a children's show about trains called "The Choo Choo Bob Show," named after a model train store. He offered to help them with what became a 35-episode series that can be viewed on YouTube and other streaming services. It won several regional Emmy's, including one for Vince as executive producer. In turn, "Choo Choo Bob Show" crew members Ryan Axell, Chris Hagner and Chad Kono helped Vince turn his idea for a model train layout replicating 1950s Auburn from a passion project into reality. Using memorabilia, photographs and maps, they slowly populated the layout with imagery from the city's past. He's frequently asked when it will be finished, but he's not ready to put it behind him. "It's never going to be done. I'm just going to keep working on it," he said. "I'm still working. I like what I'm doing. Why retire?"

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The Hunter Dinerant is featured in a sprawling model train setup in Auburn by Auburn native Robert Vince.

The city of Auburn is featured in a sprawling model train setup in Wisconsin by Auburn native Robert Vince.