

# Trails, Rails, & Tales



November-December 2020

Volume 6 • Number 6

The Official Newsletter of the *Chisholm Trail Division* of the **NMRA**

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY PHIL AYLWARD

I hope everyone is doing well. I will be glad when we can meet in person again.

I was told that Jean received over their email that I was requesting that they buy some money cards to send to an address that was not mine. The email did sound real, but please don't fall for this.

The train Show is on track. We are getting some vendors in. I think it will be a good one.

—Phil

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

Hello to everyone,

Hope all is well with you all. Renee is keeping me pretty locked down. We are trying our best to keep the Virus from crossing our doorstep. I am sure that all of us are ready for this to pass. I know I am.

First of all, as a reminder, since our November meeting lands on the same day as our National Elections, we have decided to postpone our next ZOOM meeting until the second Tuesday in November on the 10th. Put it on your calendar.

In case you are interested I blew my first major test in the CAD class that I am taking at Hutchinson Community College. A 70 out of 100. I guess my old brain is not up to the pressure of a big test. Up to that point I had a perfect GPA in the class from the various quizzes and drawings. BUT WAIT! I aced my second major test and with perfect quizzes and drawings I am now back to a 98.55 GPA. I can live with that!

### TRAILS, RAILS, & TAILS

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It is sent to members of the  
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NMRA

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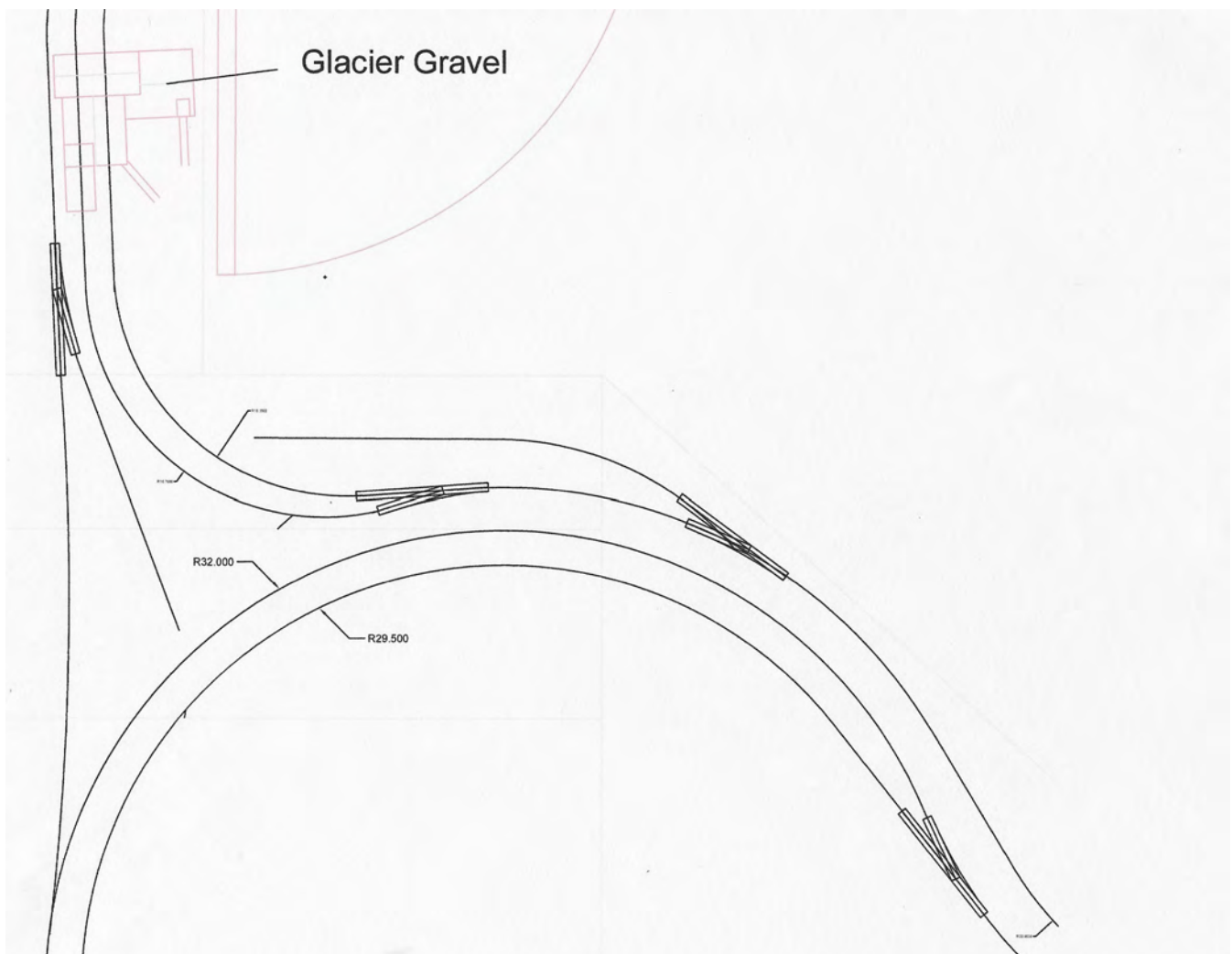
Historically I am not very good at using model railroad planning programs such as 3rd PlanIt or XTrkCAD. Maybe some of you have had good luck with these programs but I myself can't seem to get the sections of track to "snap" together like I want. For my pocketbook 3rd PlanIt is a bit pricey but XTrkCAD is a free program. Google it. I've tried them both and to me, they are pretty much the same. Both programs also will let you construct digital trains to run on your track plan drawing. Some people never get around to building their layout and are happy to just run the trains on their computer generated track plan while sitting in their recliner. Not for me.

Auto Cad I understand and have taken what I have learned so far and am attempting to draw my future layout (which is currently under construction) via that platform. I'm attaching a

piece of the layout CAD drawing for you to see. Of course you cannot run trains on this platform. That's OK because I've invested too much in my trains to let them sit on the shelf while I play on my computer. LOL

Please remember that we have a Facebook Page now and please participate by reading, looking at pictures/videos and submitting your own. Len and Ann have done a great job on putting this together. Also a big shoutout to Jim Marlett for his greatly appreciated efforts in publishing the TR&T newsletter. Please let them know how much we appreciate their behind the scene efforts for our club. Thanks to all who help keep our club moving forward!

Stay safe!  
-Dean



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

BY JIM MARLETT

I will admit that this issue of Trails, Rails, and Tales was put together hastily. Somehow, even with the pandemic curtailing my activities, I got busy and simply kept forgetting to get on with it. Thank goodness we have members who are more reliable than that.

I wanted to get the newsletter out on time to ensure everyone knew about the Augusta Model Railroad Club's Swap Meet in enough time to actually attend. We have had so many cancellations lately that it's nice to see something on the schedule. Each of us has a notion of what is safe for us, so if you are comfortable with the safety measures in place, it will be a nice opportunity to get out for a model railroad event.

I was reminded that folks might like to see what they missed or be reminded of things they saw at the Division meetings and other gatherings, even if it is an on line gathering. Although business meeting minutes will be distributed to members by email now, there is a lot that slips through the cracks. For instance, we have been able to have mini layout tours with our current Zoom meetings. These informal sessions allow people to ask questions and get answers right on the spot. One of these led to Len Wigton's article about his locomotive maintenance program. I'll try to include some of those "between the lines" things in future editions.

Also this month, I got off my lazy duff and wrote a sort of fictional history of my own railroad, the San Juan Southern. I should point out that I am certainly not the only person to use that fictitious

name for their narrow gauge pike. But I've been using it for almost 50 years and I'm not about to change now. While it's story has been brewing in the back of my mind of ages and ages, it wasn't until I started designing this latest version of it that I started jotting things down on paper or, more properly, committing it to electronic data. Regardless, this month you get to see the first public release of my mental doodling.

And finally, here is the usual progress report on my own layout construction. The section of my old layout that was shown in the last issue as it was being cut to a new size and shape has been installed, is working, and has actually been added to. It is now the town of Crandall. The piece of my original layout, the town of Clarke that I had hoped to incorporate in this new layout, has been removed and is waiting for the new version to take its place.

Between Crandall and Clarke will be a connecting section featuring tall trestles inspired by the Ophir Loop area of the Rio Grande Southern. Notice I said inspired by, not a model of the famous trestles. However, actual construction will wait for the new version of Clarke because I have found it is easier to connect the main line to towns than it is to connect towns to the main line.

So that's about it for this edition. I hope the pandemic is treating you gently and you are getting a whole lot done on your model railroads.

— Jim



*After finding the mechanical and electrical bugs with a test run by #462, #463 brings the first train into Crandall following its new track extension. Since the locomotives can't be turned here and to satisfy my curiosity about my track laying ability, #463 backed the train up the 2% grade to Elva. Everything stayed on the rails. Hallelujah! But I think that will be the last time for that maneuver. It made me too nervous. I'll run the locomotive around the train in the future so it can pull the train up the hill even though it will be running in reverse. Peace of mind counts for something. I'll be glad when it reaches the end of the line and the locomotive can be turned.*



*Poor old Clarke is now a pile of rubble sitting on my basement floor. I'll salvage what I can re-use, but the rest is headed for the trash.*



**A MODEL RAILROADING  
SWAP MEET  
NOON UNTIL 2:30PM  
NOVEMBER 7, 2020  
519 SCHOOL ST. AUGUSTA, KS**

**The club will sponsor a “Swap Meet” at our club location in Augusta.  
This “free” event is open to all model railroaders in our area!**

**If you have items you would like to offer at this meet, simply call  
316-775-8890 for information about participating in this event.  
You can make arrangements to bring items in advance for the event.  
You do not have to be at the event that Saturday to offer items!  
Club will provide short-term storage for your items, if needed**

**\*\*\*\*\***

**Here are details for making this event a “Safe Event”**

- All attendees must wear masks, at all times!**
- Total number of guests entering the club area, at any one time, will be limited to provide “safe distancing” for the attendees.**
- If you want to communicate with the item’s owner, a method to provide communication will be available.**
- Club will provide monitors to prevent model damage or loss.**
- Cashiers will be available to make change, if needed.**

**Questions: Call 316-775-8890**

## LOCO WORK

BY LEN WIGTON

I attempt to go through my locomotives, cleaning, repairing, lubricating, etc, whenever I have time. Last winter it was the SD40T-2 tunnel motors, this year, I am going through each of the GP38-2 locos. Here are the first 2 that were serviced recently. All of my DNP locomotives are analog DC. All were painted years ago and all are Athearn. Until more recent years, Athearn was the only producer of the popular GP38-2 in HO scale.



I continue to sample new products like this Bachmann model of an Alco S-2. It came with a new Digitrax sound decoder. Unlike the S-1, the S-2 has a turbocharger. I have been critical of many sound decoders that mimic turbocharger sounds. They tend to drown out the engine sound, in my opinion. This one is no different. Yes, I am quite aware that low frequency is difficult to produce on the very small speakers. But it runs nice and has plenty of programmable features.



# THE SAN JUAN SOUTHERN & ITS NAMES

BY JIM MARLETT

My HOn3 railroad is the San Juan Southern, named for the San Juan Mountain Range in Southwestern Colorado. The “Southern” is added to pay homage the Rio Grande Southern, which formed much of the inspiration for it and fits the story. It reflects building south from the fictitious standard gauge San Juan Railroad at the town of New Schofield. Like the RGS, it runs south to a connection with the narrow gauge D&RGW in a town I call Blakely. New Schofield is represented by a staging yard, but Blakely is being modeled. Inspiration also came from the Silverton Branch of the D&RGW as well as the Mears short lines out of Silverton. I have made no attempt to duplicate any of the railroads that inspired me, but I hope to create the feel of the rugged landscape they served.

Names used on the San Juan Southern are typically derived from people I have known and who influenced me in some way or another. I don’t normally just copy the names. I often play around with them using middle names or first names that weren’t actually used in real life. Sometimes I just have fun with them and use them as a jumping off point that ends up even farther from reality.

## The Main Characters

“Big Larry” Fremont – He is the founder of the railroad and discoverer of the richest mineral deposit in the area. Consequently, his mining operation is the largest and most successful on the railroad. He is named for my father-in-law, Lawrence Fremont Gray, who in real life was a geologist. Who better to build a mining empire and a railroad? The real Larry was not a big man, being around five-and-a-half feet tall. Fictitious Big Larry might not have been physically large, but he was certainly a force to be reckoned with.

“Little Larry” Fremont – “Big Larry’s” son is named for my brother-in-law, Larry Gray. In my

tale, Little Larry didn’t follow in his father’s footsteps. Rather he became a biologist and college professor, as did the real Larry Gray. When he was young, Larry the son was often called Little Larry to distinguish him from his father, so I guess this one is not far off.

“Big Jim” Winter – This is Big Larry’s son-in-law who took over the railroad when Big Larry retired. The Jim part is probably obvious – it’s me! The Winter is a bit more obscure. It is my mother’s family name. In real life I am no taller than my father-in-law and to call myself Big Jim seems outrageously funny to me.

Patty Jo (Fremont) Winter – Big Larry’s daughter and Big Jim’s wife is the name sake of the biggest mine and mill on the line. Patricia Jo (Gray) Marlett is my wife and Larry Gray’s daughter in real life.

## Towns

Blakely – The main town on the San Juan Southern is named for Ronald L. Blakely, the first director of the Sedgwick County Zoo and my first professional zoo boss. He had a tremendous influence on my thinking about what good zoos should be.

Clarke – Named for Gary Clarke, former director of the Topeka Zoo and the first real zoo professional I met. He was another great influence in my professional zoo career.

Crandall – Named for Mark C. Reed, the second director of Sedgwick County Zoo. He was not only a great friend, but was my boss for the second 20 years I worked at the Zoo. When he visited the railroad this year, I was calling the town “Reed.” He asked that it be renamed “Crandall” for his middle name and his mother’s family name, a name I knew he was very proud of. So now there is a new model character, Mark Crandall, for whom the town was named.

Elva – Named for my mother-in-law, Elva Virginia Gray. She never used her first name. In fact, it was some years after my marriage to her daughter that I even knew Virginia wasn't her given first name.

Fremont – The town was named after “Big Larry” Fremont (see above) and is home to the biggest mining operation on the railroad. Fremont is a very Colorado name, but to my knowledge, there is no existing town of Fremont in Colorado. For a short time one of the early settlements that became Cripple Creek was named Fremont, but that only lasted a year or so.

New Schofield – This is the northern terminus of the San Juan Southern. It is named for Ed Schofield who, though not a true zoo professional, was my first boss in the zoo business at the little Riverside Park Zoo in Wichita. The story is that residents of the original town of Schofield, Colorado, which actually existed at one time, decided to pull up stakes and move south to establish a town on the San Juan Railroad. This is where Big Larry decided to build south into the San Juans to tap the mining areas and establish a southern connection to the D&RGW. When the San Juan Railroad standard gauged and traffic turned out to be mostly in the southern section anyhow, Big Larry moved his railroad's headquarters from New Schofield to Blakely.

## **Features**

Olita Canyon – Traveling north from the town of Blakely, the San Juan Southern climbs through Olita Canyon. This is named for my mother, Oleta Marlett. It is pronounced with a long e, as in “oh-lee-ta” but to make a properly pronounced Spanish word, I had change spelling and make it Olita Canyon. Olita in Spanish is pronounced like my mother's name and it turns out to be a real Spanish word meaning “little wave” or “wavelet.”

Rio Olita – This is the river that flows through Olita Canyon and on to Blakely.

Elva Pass – Located near the town of Elva, this is the highest (and only) pass on the railroad. Again, Elva was my mother-in-law's first name, though not the name she actually went by.

## **Structures**

Patty Jo Mine and Mill – My wife Patty never went by Patty Jo, but including the Jo just sounds more like the name of a mine to me. Located in Fremont, it is Big Larry's first mine and still the biggest producer in the area. Of course Big Larry named it for his darling daughter.

Maggie Mae Mine and Mill – Big Larry named this one for his daughter-in-law, Little Larry's wife. In real life this is Margaret Gray, my sister-in-law. This is one where I let my imagination run a bit farther. As far as I know Margaret was never called Maggie and certainly not Maggie Mae since Mae is not her middle name. But this fiction is close enough and it sounded like another good mine name to me.

Virginia Mine and Mill – This was my mother-in-law's middle name, the name she actually used. Obviously, this is in the town of Elva.

Miss Lilly's – I actually have yet to decide whether this will be a bar or bordello, but the name comes from my mother, Lilly Oleta Marlett. Like my mother-in-law, she went by her middle name. She disliked her first name and most people never knew it existed. My mother would be so far removed from running either a bar or a bordello that the thought of naming either after her seems like a colossal joke to me. But another idea has entered my head of late. My mother loved kids and our house seemed to be a gathering spot for my friends from the neighborhood and school. She welcomed everyone with enthusiasm. Most of my friends were male, which is not too surprising, so I'm thinking there might be an orphanage called Lilly's Home for Boys. We'll see.

Chet's Garage – My dad was a mechanic. He never owned his own garage and, as far as I know,

never wanted to. But on my railroad, he has his own successful shop. In this part of the San Juan Mountains, roads are so rough that cars and trucks need a lot of repair so business is good.

I'm sure there will be many other opportunities to name things after friends and family. Some that come to mind are Dangerous Dan's for my brother, Brisco's Bakery for the neighbors that lived behind us growing up, CJ's Welding and Engineering for my son Christopher J. Marlett who is a welder, and Miss Bunny's, which has a story far too long to tell here.

### **The Railroad's History**

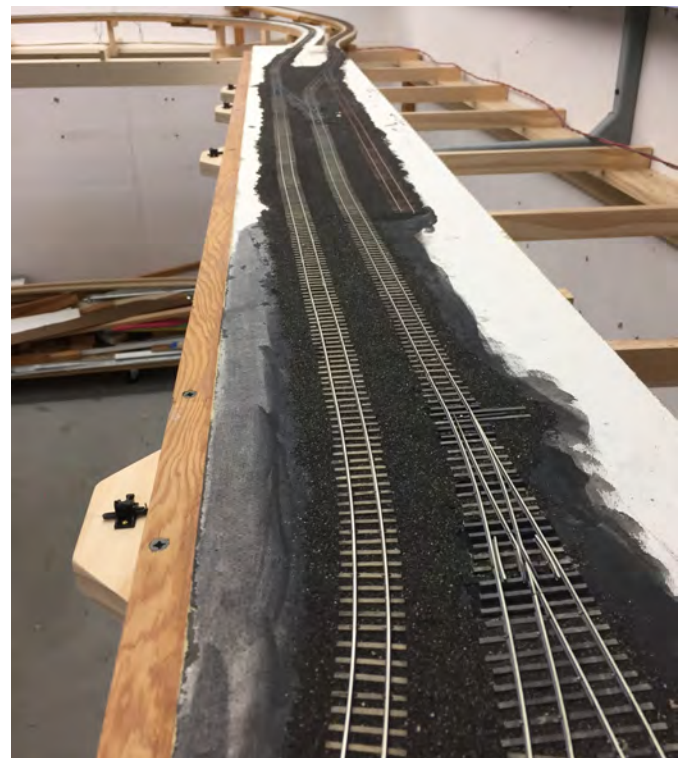
The San Juan Southern was built rather late for a narrow gauge railroad. As a result, it was built with heavier gauge rail than was typical. Big Larry got it at bargain prices as used rail became available when several major eastern railroads were upgrading their track. Big Larry insisted on things being well built and often over-engineered his projects. Big Jim is even more inclined to over-engineering. This is really just my excuse for using code 70 rail in HOn3.

As a result of all this quality construction and an insistence on good maintenance as well as a certain level of dumb luck, the San Juan Southern was considerably more profitable than any of the other narrow gauge lines in the area. Another boost to its financial wellbeing was the abysmal condition of the roads. The roads were so bad that locals thought the highway department didn't even know they existed.

The time period is WWII. Luckily, Big Larry's mines and others served by the railroad were rich in minerals needed by the war effort. It was a boom time for the San Juan Southern. Even so, the railroad seemed to escape notice from the outside world. Big Jim thought this was in part due to the Rio Grande's sense of ownership in all things railroad related and they weren't without power in the region. He thinks they actively suppressed any news about a genuinely profitable competing narrow gauge. Big Jim didn't care. As long as the money kept rolling in, notoriety was

optional. It was as overlooked as Lake Wobegon, Minnesota.

Big Jim couldn't see what the future held in store at that time, but from our omniscient view, we can. After the WWII, things slacked off a little until the Korean conflict boosted business a bit. Unfortunately, the mines were starting to play out and after the hostilities ended, Big Jim was ready to retire. Neither of his sons were interested in continuing in the railroad business, so he sold the operation to the Rio Grande for a fraction of its value. Big Jim didn't care. He was wealthy beyond his wildest dreams and didn't need the money. For the Rio Grande, it was an ego thing. They had managed to keep the existence of the little road completely obscured from anyone that mattered, so it was easy for them to shut it down and sell off the scrap. The highway department was content to let the roads fall into oblivion and today you can't find a trace of the railroad, the towns, or the mines. In fact, you can't even find anyone who remembers them.



*The yard at Elva is still waiting for a town. What would my mother-in-law think about that name?*

## NEILL THOUGHTS

BY BOB NEILL

I find it interesting how often people wait for the last minute to try to organize something, and wonder why others do not come to help. At last night's meeting, I was wanting to know if there were pamphlets, handouts, fliers to give to visitors, and maybe a part time helper. I will visit with Phil to pick up what he has available.

Two years ago, Phil asked for help at the Halstead library, so I volunteered, and did the same last year. This spring Phil said the last library show was so lightly visited he would not have it this year.

When we moved in May, I visited the Hesston library in June to see if I could stir up some interest. After trying to unpack this summer (and yard and house work), in September I confirmed the interest with the library. One thing they said was that with the virus attendance has dropped from 80 a day to about 50 a day. They also have people regularly

stopping by to read their railroad magazines. Like the old saying about "targets of opportunity," it sounds like it could be a busy time. So I am trying to confirm that some of the ducks are in a row.

I missed the description of the Hutchinson club doing a static display at their library, I thought it was something new. To my warped mind it seems that model railroading is hidden too much in the basement, we need to be more in display to distract young people away from computer games. Since Wellington and Newton are railroad towns there should be more interest stirred up and maybe clubs formed.

No, my layout is not available for showing, I cannot even find all my tools. In fact some of my layout is taking space at Phil's train station. Something else I need to be doing. Does being retired make your list any shorter?

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

INCLUDES NON-NMRA EVENTS

### RECURRING EVENTS

**Please check the listed recurring events to find out if they have been cancelled or not due to COVID-19. Most are on hiatus.**

**Chisholm Trail Division of NMRA Monthly Meeting.** Every first Tuesday of the month. Gather at 6:45PM. Olivet Baptist Church, 3440 W. 13th St., Wichita, KS (13th & High) <http://ctd-mcor-nmra.tripod.com/ctd-mcor-nmra.html>

**Please note:** Chisholm Trail Division is conducting Zoom meetings on the internet until further notice. Members will be apprised of the details and be receiving meeting notices by email. **November's Zoom meeting has been moved to Nov. 10 due to the election.**

**Kansas Central Division of NMRA.** Every second Saturday of even numbered months at 1:00PM. Locations vary. Contact information is here: [http://www.mcor-nmra.org/Divisions/Kansas\\_Central\\_Division/](http://www.mcor-nmra.org/Divisions/Kansas_Central_Division/)

**Kansas Central Model Railroaders Business Meeting.** (Not the same as Kansas Central Division of NMRA) Every second Saturday from 11:00AM-Noon. 16 East 3rd Ave, Hutchinson, KS <http://www.kansascentralmodelrailroaders.org>

**Wichita Area Model Railroaders Luncheon.** Every second Thursday at 11:30AM. Spears Restaurant and Pie Shop, 4323 W. Maple, Wichita, KS (Not meeting due to COVID-19)

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS (CONTINUED)

### INCLUDES NON-NMRA EVENTS

Any of the following events is subject to cancellation. Unless otherwise noted, the organizers have not cancelled at press time. Check websites for updates.

## NOVEMBER 2020

### November 7 – Augusta Model Railroad Club

**Swap Meet.** Augusta Model Railroad Club, 519 School Street, Augusta, KS. Noon until 2:30PM. Covid restrictions apply (see ad elsewhere in this newsletter). <http://augustamodelrrclub.org/>

## DECEMBER 2020

December 12-13 – Holiday Train Show. Payne County Fairgrounds, 3 miles east of Stillwater, OK. Sponsored by the Toy Train Operating Society Sooner Division. <http://www.ttos-soonerdiv.org/division-events.html>

## FEBRUARY 2021

### February 6-7 – The Wichita Train Show &

**Swap Meet.** Cessna Activity Center, 2744 George Washington Blvd., Wichita, KS. Saturday from 9AM-5PM. Sunday from 11AM-4PM. Masks Required. Sponsored in part by Chisholm Trail Division NMRA. <https://besttrainshow.com/>

### February 20-21 – Winter Train Show. Payne

County Fairgrounds, 3 miles east of Stillwater, OK. Sponsored by the Toy Train Operating Society Sooner Division. <http://www.ttos-soonerdiv.org/division-events.html>

## JUNE 2021

### June 17-20 – NMRA Tulsa Union Convention.

This takes the place of the annual Mid-Continent Region Convention. It is a collaboration between Lone star Region, Mid-Continent Region & Indian Nations Division of NMRA. Embassy Suites by Hilton Tulsa I-44, 3332 South 79th East Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74145. <http://www.2021tulsaunion.com/>

## JULY 2021

### July 4-11 – NMRA National Convention “Rails by the Bay.” Santa Clara Marriott Hotel,

2700 Mission College Blvd, Santa Clara, CA. <https://www.nmra2021.com/>

## SEPTEMBER 2021

### September 1-4 – National Narrow Gauge

**Convention.** Events at both the Hickory Metro Convention Center and the Crowne Plaza Hotel, Hickory, NC. <https://41nngc.com/>

**Please send me any events or meetings that you think should be included on this calendar.**

Jim Marlett

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