

# Trails, Rails, & Tales



January-February 2021

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

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY PHIL AYLWARD

From our family to yours MERRY CHRISTMAS & hope you have better 2021.

We are working on the 2021 Train Show. We have sold 74 tables as of today.

The 15th of Jan. we will send out the emails that we have and mail out the rest of them.

Stay safe.

–Phil

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

Greetings to all fellow CTD members.

Well, the holiday season has almost come to an end. Renee and I spent Thanksgiving home alone as well as Christmas. Christmas Day was a marathon internet Facetime of family watching each other opening presents and telling stories of past gatherings. I'm thankful that we live in a time that we can still get together without actually getting together.

Speaking of getting together, we will be having our January Zoom meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> 2021 at 7:00 PM. I will probably start the meeting at about 6:45. I'll be sending out the Zoom Meeting Invitation sometime this weekend. Hope you all can attend.

At this time, I'm not sure it will be ready by the January meeting, but Alan Aagaard and Gene Bowers have been working behind the scenes on revising, clarifying, upgrading and just cleaning up our CTD Regulations and Guidelines. I know that this has taken a lot of

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Submissions for publication are  
strongly encouraged.

Logo Design by Alan Aagaard

their time, but it is something that has needed to be done for some time now. I want to personally thank these two men for their hard work on getting this accomplished. I also want to thank Jim Marlett for the research he did and turned over to Gene and Alan, to make these two documents fall in line with how other NMRA clubs and NMRA proper have addressed these two documents. I'm looking forward to the final product.

Once completed, I will forward the newly revised documents to all members.

Well, that's about it for now. Hope to see many of you at the January Zoom meeting.

–Dean

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

BY JIM MARLETT

This is another hastily assembled issue of Trails, Rails, and Tales. I'd like to blame the Holiday season, but I am afraid it is really my own inattentiveness to blame. That notwithstanding, I think we're all a little discombobulated right now.

As I write this, Covid-19 is at its all time worst. Even Australia has had a bump in what was otherwise a remarkable assault on the virus. I hope the vaccines just starting to roll out can put us back on the track to normalcy.

In the mean time, I hope everyone's model railroading has actually taken off in the pandemic. We're so lucky to have a stay-at-home hobby. But I don't want us to get stuck on the stay-at-home aspect of our hobby. What is missing is the social aspect, which in ordinary times, is quite strong. We gather for our Division meetings, we operate on each others railroads, we have layout tours, we even sometimes get together for the fun of it. I miss that social aspect, although Zoom meetings have helped in that regard.

Speaking of Zoom meetings, the informal group that is now calling itself the Central Kansas Narrow Gaugers has started having Zoom meetings. We're attempting to do it every other

month. In the last one, Ken Neuwfeld showed us his beautiful Sn3 version of the Rio Grande Southern and Larry Gulick shared some updates and special effects on his On3 layout. If narrow gauge is your thing and you'd like to be included, send me an email at [jmarlett@cox.net](mailto:jmarlett@cox.net).

On the home front, my own HOn3 San Juan Southern is continuing to benefit from staying at home. I'm now working on the town of Clarke, or at least the railroad part of it. If you recall from last issue I had torn the old Clarke up and now most of it has been hauled away in the trash. If you recall from last issue, the approach to one end of Clarke will be my "high line" series of trestles perhaps reminiscent of the Rio Grande Southern's Ophir Loop area. I'm not attempting to duplicate Ophir or the loop, but I am inspired by it as I am inspired by the last of the tall RGS trestles to finally collapse, bridge 43a. As I've said, I'm not trying to imitate any of those trestles and I don't have the height to do bridge 43A in that section, but I can do heights similar to the largest Ophir Loop trestle, bridge 45A, even if they are not going to be attempts at replicas. I haven't tackled that yet, but it will be done. For now, it will be

done with temporary roadbed supporting the rails. I'll replace them with trestles when I get to a good pausing place and can spend the time it will take to build them. At least I should be able to get a train into Clarke when I get the rails laid.

At the other end of Clarke is what is now the helix to nowhere. I have the roadbed connected and I hope to be laying rails in the next few weeks. I'm sweating bullets about how to make this a believable scene. Things are pretty tight in

that area. I wanted to avoid a tunnel so close to a town, but that may be how it gets resolved.

Clarke itself has always seemed to me like a melding of Placerville and Dolores on the Rio Grande Southern. I'm hoping it doesn't really feel like either of those towns because the location on my model doesn't fit the real towns. But the ties are down waiting for rails, so the die is cast.

– Jim



*The good old Arlee Station plastic kit, slightly modified, is the stand in for the stations in all the towns I have laid out so far. I actually like its overall look, so maybe not just a stand in. Here it is as Clarke's depot. At the far end is the lead to the helix to nowhere – at least nowhere yet. This picture was made before the real connection was made and shows a piece of flex track used to size things up. Notice the strips of ties hanging from the right edge of the layout. The vertical wooden scraps are for me to experiment with sight lines. I'd rather have the rails disappear into a canyon than dive into a tunnel right at the edge of town. It all looks pretty chaotic without scenery to hide what shouldn't be seen.*



*The other end of town leads to the trestle-packed line that I expect to be the hardest part of the railroad to build. I guess we'll see because I'm tackling that next. I'll need a new place to stack my junk!*



*So here is the next step part of the way through with temporary supports. There will be three long, high trestles in this run. For now, I'm using straight strips of plywood and Homasote roadbed as stand-ins. You'll notice two different surfaces on the Homasote. The gray ones are some I bought in the early '70s and the surface is just plain Homasote. The white-topped ones were some I bought several years later that was designed as an underlayment for ice rinks. Both seem to work. I have no idea how long it will take to build the trestles, but I plan to move on when I get the grades and supports finished and will build the trestles after the main line is finished. I'm not sure where all the junk went. I hope I can find it again.*

## LAST RIDES

November and December brought the sad news of two deaths within our model railroading family.

Chisholm Trail Division member, NMRA Life Member, and On30 modeler Charles “Chuck” Ingram, Jr. passed away November 16, 2020. Chuck was a regular at Chisholm Trail functions, Central Kansas Narrow Gauge get-togethers, and Wichita Area Model Railroaders luncheons. He will be missed.



Our other loss was Linda Neill, wife of Chisholm Trail Member Bob Neill. Bob sent two emails that say more than anything I could write. “My daughter just tested with the virus. My wife and daughter are always together, so my wife is expecting to head for the hospital tomorrow as well.” Then on December 8, this email came: “My better half just passed away. The virus won.”

Our hearts go out the family and friends of Chuck and Linda. I’m sure all of us who knew them or their loved ones are sharing their grief.

# MODIFYING FAST TRACKS SWITCHES

BY JIM MARLETT

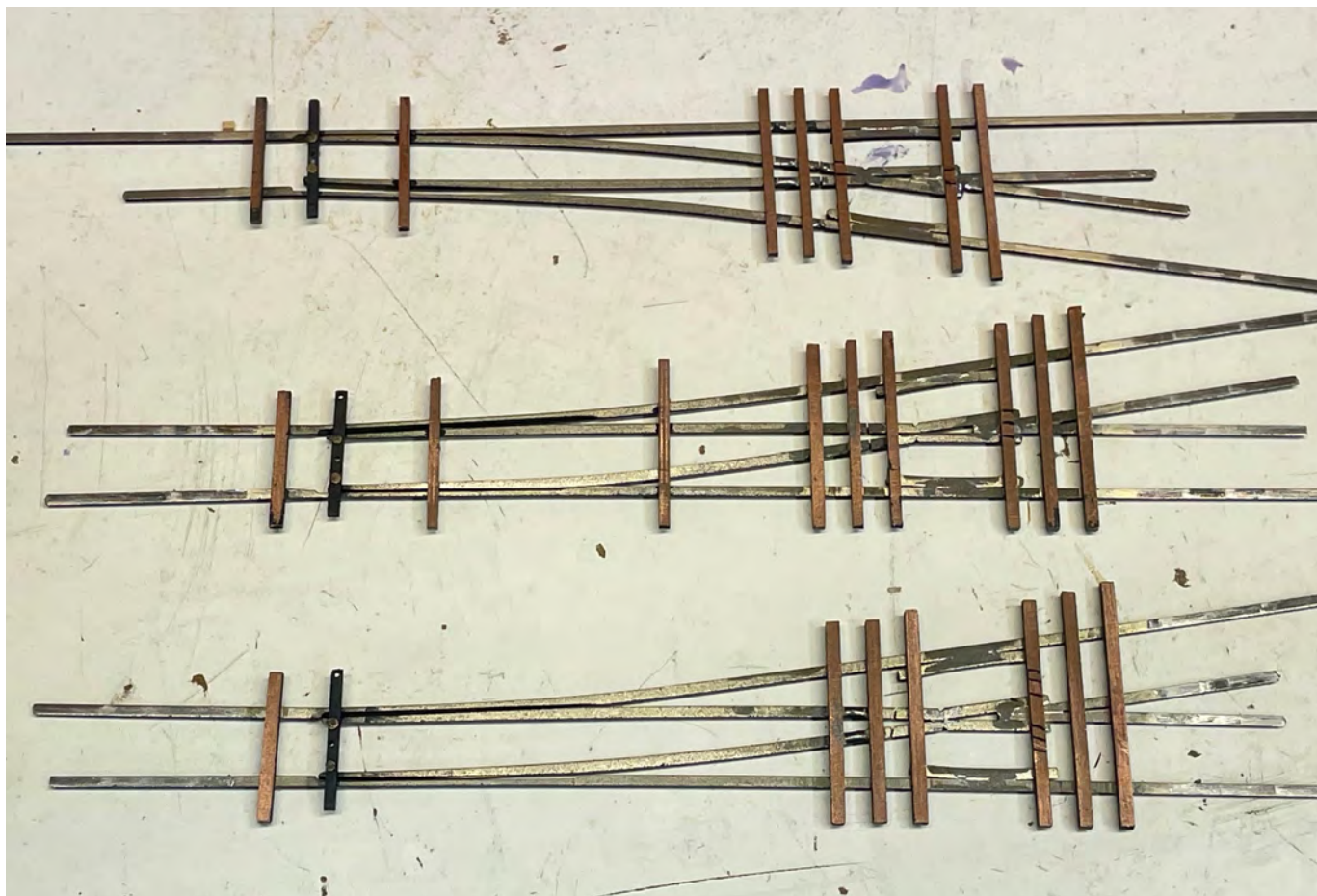
Never being content to leave things the way they are, I started thinking about what I liked and didn't like about switches made with Fast Tracks assembly fixtures and filing tools. I like the fact that frogs and points are pretty easily made with an assembly fixture and a point filer. The closure rails and guard rails are easy as well. What I didn't like were the PC board ties that were hard to match to wooden ties, the fact that the point rails being soldered to the throw bar have to bend in an S curve doubling the resistance on the throw bar solder joint, and I really disliked their Quick

Sticks preformed ties. I don't like the fact that the assembly fixture that lets you get things placed so accurately works as a heat sink making soldering more difficult than it could be. I have yet to solve the heat sink issue, but I've made some efforts at the others. But before I start telling you what I changed, I would encourage you to check the videos and other information on the Fast Tracks web page so you know what is normal. Click the link below and look around.

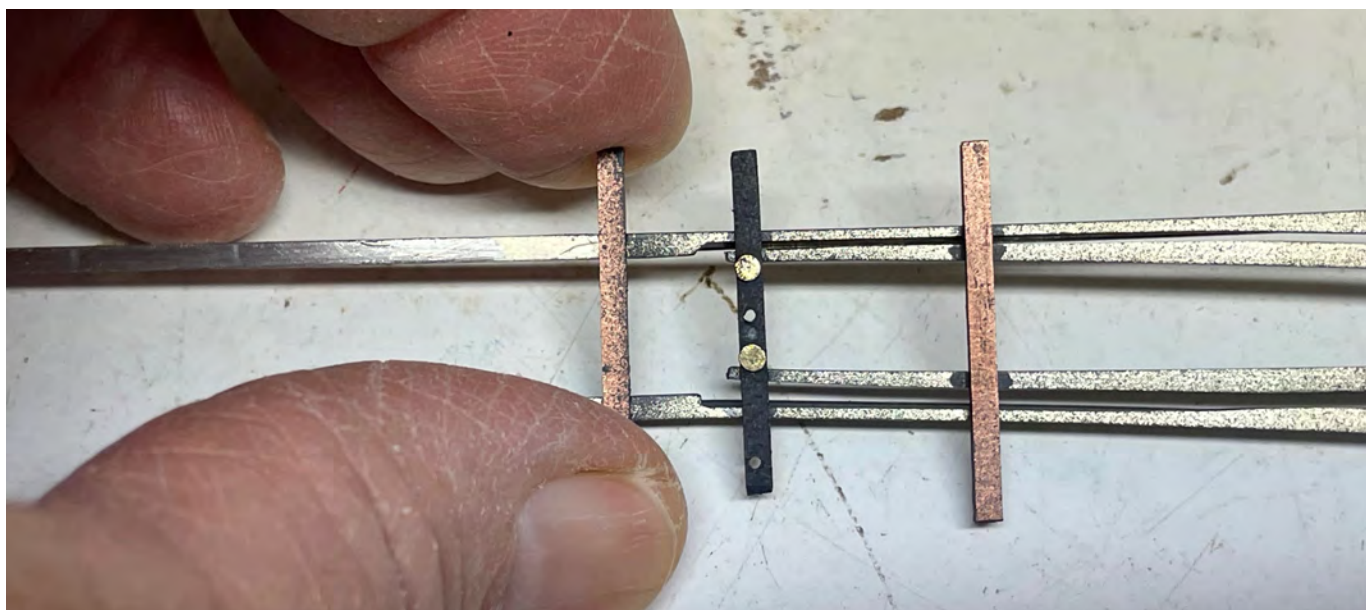
<https://www.handlaidtrack.com/>



This Fast Tracks assembly fixture is the one I use. It is a #6 HOn3 for making left and right hand switches. I suspect you can imagine how quickly it can take the heat out of the rail you are trying to solder. Practice has helped, but it's still a little tricky for me.



One of the things I tackled was reducing the number of PC board ties. As you can see on this view of the undersides of the switches, on the bottom one I omitted both PC board ties between the anchoring ties near the points all the way to the tie in front of the throw bar. My thinking was that I could simply do what I always did with hand built switches before Fast Tracks and just use spikes to secure the rails to wooden ties. The problem comes when the rails are a little unruly and hard to keep in place when attaching the throw bar. This one worked. The rails on the one above it apparently didn't get bent right when in the fixture, so I added both of the optional ties in the fixture and it behaved. The switch on the top has the steadying tie near the throw bar per instructions, but I deleted one of the PC board ties on the right behind the frog. The reason for this is I decided to stop cutting two electrical gaps in the frogs and just use one in front of the point of the frog. The gap behind the frog could just be wherever the end of that rail turned out to be as long as it wasn't so long it would cause a short. A collision would occur before a short if two trains tried to share those rails. I use spikes to hold the rails in alignment rather than rail joiners, so no problem there either. You may notice that I have pre-tinned the undersides of the rails near their ends so I can more easily solder power drops to their undersides. I prefer that to soldering to the sides of the rails. To make sure the solder doesn't make a bump against the ties, I always wipe off the excess solder. This involves reheating short sections and quickly wiping with a dry folded piece of paper towel. I do this bit-by-bit rather than trying to heat the whole length and risking unsoldering the switch. You can see where I repeated the process as the borders of each melt-and-wipe are visible.



The next thing I tackled was hinging the throw bar. This isn't an original idea. I got it from the late Tom Troughton. <http://www.troughtonmodelworks.com/movingthepoints.html> This, again, is a view of the underside of the switch. The big round things on the throw bar are the heads of the "head pins" that I use for this. Notice I have stained the throw bar with black shoe leather dye.



To make the throw bars, I file the copper off both sides of a PC board tie scrap that is a little too short to use for anything else, but long enough to be a throw bar. I found that it was slow and difficult to do the filing just holding the tie in your hand, so I built this fixture out of scraps. It really works well. I labeled it because I have a habit of building little gizmos like this and two or three years later, I can't remember what they are for. The bare unclad PC board is easily stained with shoe leather dye. This tie is only filed on the right side



I built this fixture for drilling the tie bars. It has guide holes for the pins used to attach the points and one for the pin used to throw the switch. I usually put another hole in the throw bar near one end to attach a switch stand if I ever get around to that. It's a lot easier to drill the hole now than it is to do it after the switch is installed. The way this fixture works is I stack the fixture on top of the throw bar, placing it by eyeball. Then I hold the two pieces of stripwood tight against the edges of the throw bar and the drilling fixture. Then I drill the first hole while continuing to hold them together with the boards. I used to do this by hand, but now I use a drill press and it goes much faster. Once the first hole is drilled, I insert a pin into the hole to lock the two guide and the throw bar in position. Then I drill the second hole, still holding everything together with the strip wood, and put the second pin in that one. The third hole is the middle one and I just repeat the process holding everything with the two pieces of stripwood. Finally, I put in the hole for the future switch stand and I just do that by eyeball.



This is what the finished switch looks like with the head pins soldered to the point rails. This one has seven copper plated PC ties somewhat disguised with paint. They stand out to me, but I hope my visitors will never see them. I sure sawed these frog rail gaps crooked! Oh well, maybe I'll get the hang of this in another thirty or forty years.

## HESSTON LIBRARY DISPLAY

BY BOB NEILL



For the last two years I have been helping show model trains at the Halstead, KS library (north and a little west of Wichita) for November, so this year I attempted to display at the Hesston, KS library (north of Wichita).

The week was fun and I had a number of kids of all ages learning how to switch train cars on a timesaver layout. I did not count people because I was too busy. Most seemed to enjoy the exercise. I only heard one say, "It's too hard". One, a school teacher said, "It's harder than it looks" but seemed to enjoy the challenge. If it is too easy, it is no fun. One, a newspaper reporter for "Harvey Co. Now," said we would have a newspaper article. She was

true to her word, but it was, shall we say, "interesting" and left a few things out.

With the virus, the library had to reduce the number of people that could be admitted inside. I was hoping to meet other people in this neighborhood interested in model railroading and maybe for a club.

A few days later, I got the camera working and took pictures of the static display at the library. While I was there the ladies said they had received several phone calls asking if the switching module was still there for them to play with. Alas, the virus won again!

## 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.

**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)

### SCHEDULED EVENTS

**The following events are subject to cancellation. Unless otherwise noted, the organizers have not cancelled at press time. Check websites for updates.**

### 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. 9AM-3PM. Sponsored by the Toy Train Operating Society Sooner Division. <http://www.ttos-soonerdiv.org/division-events.html>

### APRIL 2021

#### **April 10 – Greater Tulsa Area Train Show.**

Bixby Community Center, 211N. Cabaniss Avenue, Bixby, OK. 9AM-3PM. Sponsored by the Toy Train Operating Society Sooner Division. <http://www.ttos-soonerdiv.org/division-events.html>

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS (CONTINUED)

INCLUDES NON-NMRA EVENTS

### **April 24 – Wichita Toy Train Club Ark City**

**Show.** Agri-Business Building, 712 W.  
Washington, Arkansas City, Kansas.

9AM-4PM. [http://  
www.wichitatoystainmuseum.org/club-  
shows-1.html](http://www.wichitatoystainmuseum.org/club-shows-1.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 information about any events or meetings you think should be included on this calendar.**

Jim Marlett

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