

Trails, Rails, & Tales



November-December 2023

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

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY PHIL AYLWARD

Wishing everyone happy holidays. Don't forget the holiday dinner on December 5 at 6:00.

– Phil

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

BY CHARLIE MONCKTON

I spent Saturday October 7 with the Chisholm Trail Division Modular Group running trains at the Strong City old Santa Fe Depot. The visitors arrived by the streetcar load. By the end of the day, we had at least 400 visitors, lots of excited children and adults. Some of the children were even able to operate the trains. Several of them asked their parents to make a return trip for one last look. There were many people with lots of questions for our members about model railroading. I would like to thank the office workers at city hall for opening their space up to us and being such wonderful hosts, The City of Strong City, the Chase County Chamber of Commerce and especially Ken Grochowsky for making it possible.

The next opportunity to see the modular group in action was at the Wichita Toy Train Club Train Show October 28 and 29 at Cessna Activity Center in Wichita. I hope you were able to join us.

During the October 3, 2023 meeting it was discovered we did not have any new candidates for office and all the current offices agreed for to remain 2024. All the current officers were reelected by a unanimous vote by all members present.

And don't forget, the annual holiday pot luck will be December 5, 2023 starting at 6 pm. Spouses and guests are welcome to attend. Please sign up at the November 7 meeting to bring a vegetable or desert and let us know how many will be attending. Everyone is encouraged to bring a white elephant gift and participate in the gift exchange. If you cannot be at the November meeting but plan to attend the pot luck let Charlie or Randy know.

– Charlie

TRAILS, RAILS, & TAILS

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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

BY JIM MARLETT

I think it's great that we're sharing model railroading with others. This issue reflects that as we talk some more about getting together with other modelers at conventions and we continue to report on how the modular group is going about sharing the hobby with non-modelers. These are good reminders as we prepare for November's National Model Railroad Month. We can each share our love of the hobby in our own ways, maybe with a neighbor or two or with a group of folks. Bob Neill is an outstanding example of someone who takes advantage of the month to promote the hobby. His approach for several years now is to set up his switching layout in libraries

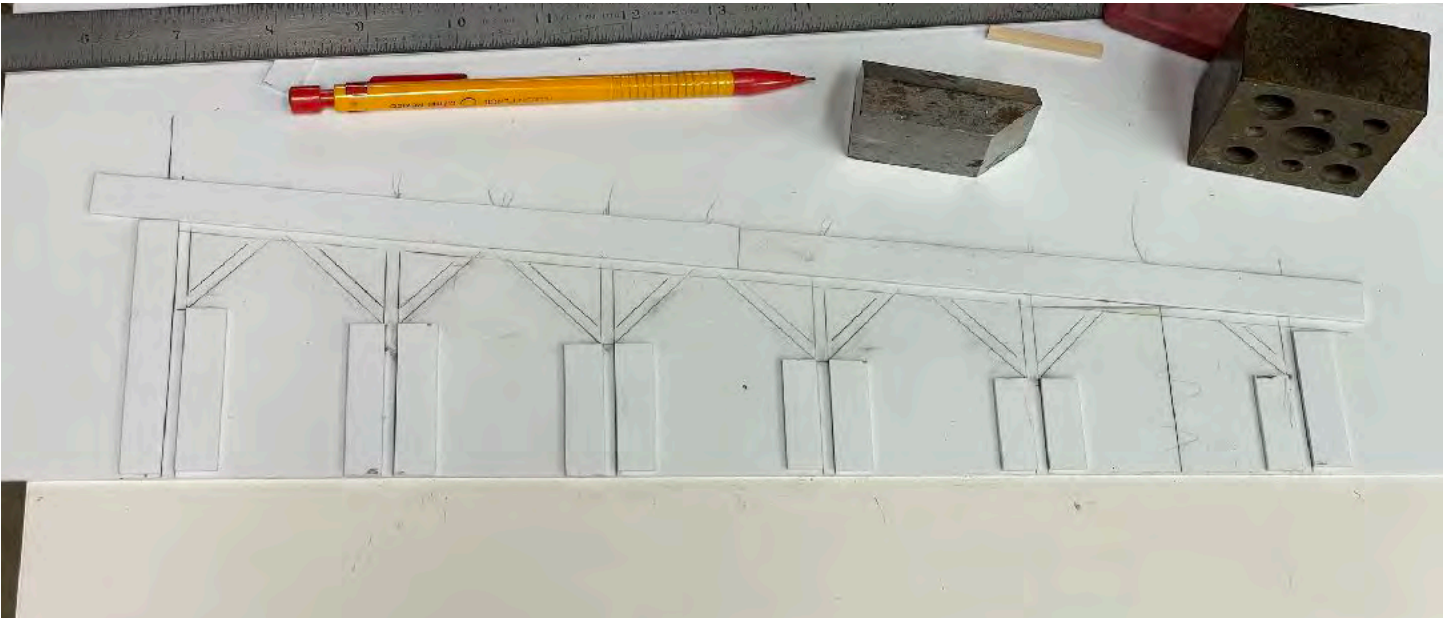
near his home. I'm sure he would love to have some help with this.

Down in my basement, progress on my own railroad took a hit from my participation in the National Narrow Gauge Convention and the Covid-19 infection that followed it. Still, I was able to finish the brick walls of the roundhouse and move on to forming up trusses to support the roof and laying rails into the stalls. Now I'm taking another pause as I prepare to leave the country on another birdwatching adventure, this time to Chile. Don't you just hate it when one of the pleasures of life gets in the way of another?

– Jim



The brick walls have been finished up with the bricks painted and mortared. Windows are installed and the concrete stem walls and wall caps are installed. The rest of the building will be wood.



I made a fixture for assembling the roof supporting trusses. The diagonal braces were drawn as accurately as I could manage, but the actual installation of the pieces was strictly a cut and fit operation. Their angle from the vertical posts was a standard 45 degrees, but the roof slope made everything else a bit fiddly. The front braces were longer than the back ones and they intersect the upper beam at different angles. It was cut, fit, sand, fit, sand, fit, sand, and so on until each one matched the lines on the jig.



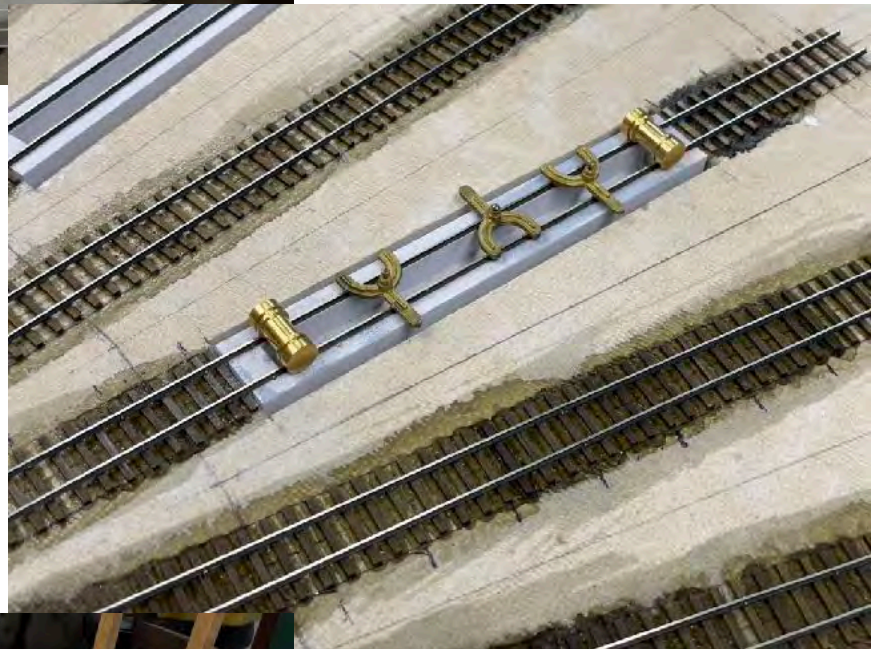
Once fitted and glued, the pieces were weighted so they would dry straight, or at least as straight as I could make them. I think a model railroader can never have too many weights or clamps. I don't know if you can tell from the picture, but I made the vertical supports a little bit longer than the fixture so I could sand them all even later.

I removed the weights only after the glue was well set. The result of that was I only churned out one of these a day. Making all five took the better part of a week. Actually, it took even longer because the upper beam is two pieces of wood. I spliced them all and added the pillow blocks before starting the uprights and angled braces.



I figured it was about time to make the roundhouse doors. I needed to do that to ensure things around them were going to fit. I used Monster Modelworks laser-cut kits for the doors. Not only were they very nice looking, but they were a real time saver. The 1/4 inch plate glass in the rear is used as a weight to hold the layers together as the glue dried.

It was also time to spike rails to those empty ties. On the inspection pits I used contact cement and a soldering iron to glue the rails in place. If you use this technique, be sure you use metal track gauges that can take the heat!



Before moving on to the next phase of construction, I propped up the main structural parts in their approximate final positions and took some measurements. In this picture the doors are still in a pile on my workbench, but I did use them to make some calculations. Maybe if I'm lucky and work hard, the next issue of Trails, Rails, and Tales will show something that looks more like a building than of a loose assemblage of pieces and parts.

MODEL RAILROAD MONTH – BOB COULD USE A HAND!

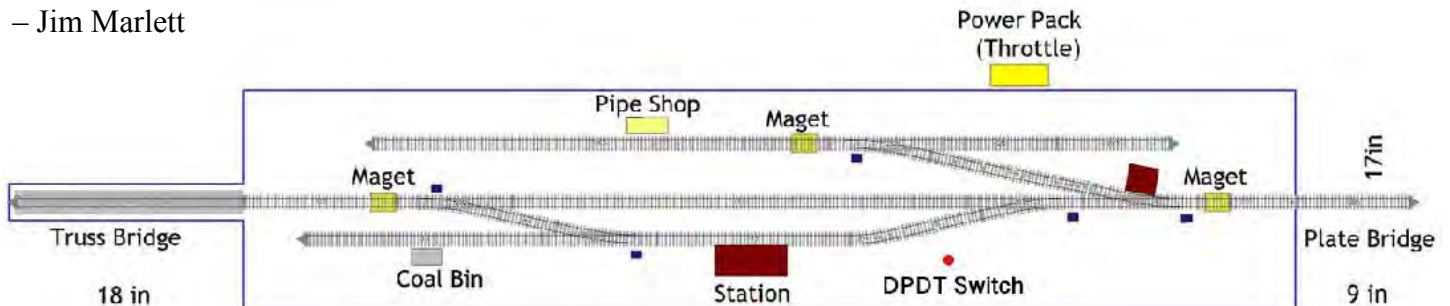
For several years now, Bob Neill has single handedly promoted Model Railroading in libraries near his home, namely Hesston and Newton. This year he has also scheduled December 4-8 at Moundridge.

He sets up his “Timesaver” switching layout for a week at a time in these libraries and lets enthusiastic youngsters (and oldsters) try their hand at solving the puzzle. This would be much easier to do if he had some help. Besides, his worship service is on Saturday so he is unable to take advantage of those days, which would seem popular with many library patrons.

This year I thought it would be a good idea to see if any readers of this newsletter would be willing to step forward and give Bob a hand. You can contact him directly at grandone49@yahoo.com and I’m sure he can provide you with details.

If you aren’t familiar with John Allen’s famous “Timesaver,” here is a plan of Bob’s version. Bob can fill you in on how it works.

– Jim Marlett



Bob says he assumes that anyone interested in teaching from this module would want some time to practice before being asked by a young person "What do I do now?" I expect he is right!

Can You Drive A Train?

November is National Model RR Month!

Come see our display & test your operating skills:

Hesston Library: NOV 6 THRU 10

Newton Library: NOV 13 THRU 17



We will be switching cars like a real train – for all age kids, even gray hair.

A FEW WORDS ABOUT CONVENTIONS AND THE NATIONAL NARROW GAUGE CONVENTION

BY JIM MARLETT

One of the great things about any hobby is getting together with people who share the same enthusiasm. We learn from each other and we just enjoy being around like-minded folks who don't snicker under their breath that, in our case, we still "play with trains." We do this with NMRA division meetings, model railroad clubs, train shows, NMRA conventions, and various special interest conventions such as the Santa Fe Modelers Convention, the Prototype Modelers Convention, NMRA Special Interest Group conventions (like the Steel Mill Modelers SIG) and, if you will pardon my extreme prejudice, the very best of all, the National Narrow Gauge Convention. OK, I admit, narrow gaugers really are a minority in the hobby, but the idea is that conventions of various sorts are great experiences and if you haven't been to any, it will be worth your time to check out one that interests you.

This year we have been lucky in having several conventions near us. The NMRA Mid-Continent Region Convention was in Kansas City, the NMRA National Convention was in Dallas, the Missouri Pacific Historical Society Convention was in Wichita, and the National Narrow Gauge Convention was in Denver. All of those were within an easy day's drive and there were probably more that I don't know about or have forgotten. I hope some of you got to attend one or more of those. I'm pretty sure it would have been well worth your time.

For me the "don't miss" convention is the National Narrow Gauge Convention (NNGC). I attended my first one at Kansas City in 2014. I could never make it to one before I retired because it interfered with the Association of Zoos and Aquariums annual conference, which I either

attended or held down the fort while others attended. But even after I retired, it took me a couple of years to make it to my first one. That was a mistake. I had a great time and haven't missed one since.

This year's convention in Denver was not only close, but Colorado is the narrow gauge capital of the known universe. As a result, it was very well attended with almost 1,200 slim gauge enthusiasts making an appearance. There were plenty of layouts to see with 31 being available and, no, there is no way to see all of them. There were 54 clinics with each one being given twice, and 145 contest entries. By comparison, there were only 54 entries at the NMRA National Convention in Dallas. One of the conventioners remarked that the quality of entries was so good that any one of them would have won a ribbon at the NMRA National. I guess it's true that narrow gaugers tend to be builders.

This may be repetitive for those who can remember previous write-ups about NNGCs, but it bears repeating. These conventions are arranged such that clinics are available in the mornings and evenings and there is always time between clinics to visit the vendors' hall without missing anything. Modular layouts are available when the vendors' hall is open and are usually nearby. In the afternoons everything shuts down for layout visits. That allows everyone, even the vendors, to see layouts or visit local railroad museums or other attractions.

Enough words. I'll let the pictures do the rest of the talking. And if you want to see more, I'll be sharing my experience at the Chisholm Trail Division meeting in January.



The convention started with afternoon “layout” tours. We headed to the Colorado Springs portion where the first stop was the Colorado Mining Museum. It wasn’t a layout at all, but it was fascinating. We had a guided tour which included this rescue device which was used in a famous mine cave-in in Chile in 2010. Thirty-three miners were trapped for 69 days. All were rescued one-by-one via this tiny cage lowered through a narrow shaft bored down to them. Patty said it was a little claustrophobic, but I bet the miners didn’t care.

A layout I really wanted to see was the Rio Grande Southern of Dave Volmer. Dave chose to keep his railroad relatively small, but managed to represent many of the famous scenes from the prototype. This is Rico with its iconic depot and engine house. The photo backdrops are of the actual locations modeled.



Not every layout on display was narrow gauge. This is the three-rail O standard gauge Colorado Midland of Kenneth Wilson. I had never seen three rail O scale with hand laid track, but there it was! And I thought it looked darned good. The locomotives, rolling stock, buildings, track work and scenery were all superbly done.



Art Lort has done a spectacular job of modeling the D&RGW's line from Salida to Gunnison by way of Marshall Pass and the Black Canyon. I absolutely love this canyon scene. This is a large layout built for operation and even though I had seen it before, there was plenty that was new to me.

I have a perhaps unhealthy fascination with the entrances to layout rooms, possibly because my own showcases a furnace and hot water heater that I can't seem to make attractive. This stone archway into Dan Raap's HOn3 Florence and Cripple Creek beats anything I've ever seen. The abandoned roadbed of the Florence and Cripple Creek was my first exposure to narrow gauge and I was really pleased to finally see someone modeling it.



It was a grueling drive to Idaho Springs fighting Denver's mass exodus to the mountains for the Labor Day weekend, but Mike Horner's massive and very well done layout was worth it. It features the Rio Grande Southern, Denver and Rio Grande and the Denver, South Park and Pacific in HOn3. This is the DSP&P engine house at the Alpine Tunnel with the tunnel portal just out of sight in the upper left of this photo.



Another railroad on my “must see” list was Jim Gray’s Denver and Rio Grande Western. It has been featured in Narrow Gauge and Shortline Gazette and in the HOn3 Annual. It is not a model of any specific place, but gives a great overall feel of mountain railroading.

The Colorado Railroad Museum hosted us on Friday afternoon and had both Rio Grande Southern #20 and D&RGW #491 steamed up and hauling passengers.



I was awfully glad the Museum’s Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg exhibit was still up. Two of their books, “Narrow Gauge in the Rockies” and “Mixed Train Daily,” were huge influences in my love of Colorado narrow gauge back when little else existed in print.



Back at the hotel, if you couldn't find a clinic that interested you, you just weren't trying. This one on tools had a lot of advice on drilling tiny holes. One tip was keeping your bits pre-mounted rather than trying to fuss with fitting a tiny bit into a collet each time you wanted to drill a hole.

From scratch built to kit bashed, the contest room is always filled with top quality models. Judging is by popular vote by a bunch of nit-picking narrow gaugers. If you win something here, you deserve it.



Greeting us at the entry to the vendor hall was this life size styrofoam model of a narrow gauge locomotive! I have to admit, I've never seen anything like it before.

To say there were a lot of modular layouts would be an understatement. I spent several sessions checking them out. This one caught my attention because it shows all the trestles of the Ophir Loop. I also was fascinated with the support system. I'm not sure how it worked and I can't believe I didn't ask someone about it.



MODULAR GROUP UPDATE – BELAIR RECREATION CENTER

BY TERRY ROSS

The Modular Group continues to find new venues to promote Model Railroading and the NMRA. Last month we set up our 16' x 28' layout plan in the City of Bel Aire Recreation Center. Adam Goldsmith worked with Rec Center officials to get their approval to have us set up the layout in the Center. We set up on Friday morning and were hosting visitors by early afternoon. We were then open for public viewing Saturday from 9:00 AM until 3:00 PM. We were able to stay Saturday evening and all-day Sunday to work on



the layout while it was assembled. Some work was completed but most of us took advantage of the time to run some trains. Family and friends, NMRA Members, and several grandchildren took advantage of running trains on Sunday. We packed everything up and went home on Monday.

We want to thank the Bel Aire Recreation Committee for their hospitality and generosity. We had a wonderful time and you have a 1st class facility. Thank you from all of us at the Chisholm Trail Division NMRA Modular Group.

We estimated about 80 families (it seemed like about 4-6 people per family) came through the two days we were open. The Rec Center ran an ad for us on their Facebook page. In addition to the ad, there were soccer games going on Saturday morning and we would get a surge of families between games. We also saw a number of pickleball players and walkers who were at the Rec Center and just stopped in to see the layout. Several kids and adults got to run trains with DCC Wireless Throttles for the first time, and were having a great time. We answered lots of questions, and were in several discussions about model railroading and the NMRA Chisholm Trail



Division. Hope to see a couple of new members at a meeting soon.

While working on the layout Saturday night and Sunday we got into a discussion about clouds on our backdrops. Dean has been experimenting with air brushing clouds that has turned out quite well. He set up a clinic and hands-on painting clouds class which Ben (Rick's grandson) and Alexis (my granddaughter) enjoyed. Alexis painted one of my backdrops and is anxiously waiting for Grandpa to purchase an airbrush so she can finish all of my backdrops.

Speaking of grandchildren, I want to acknowledge a couple of young railroaders that

have been around for setup and teardown help at almost every show – Rick's grandson Ben, and Charlies grandson Alijah. Both of them have been real assets to our group as they help everyone with moving and setting up our heavier or awkward pieces. They help load and unload trucks and trailers until we are all ready to go. We all thank them for their help, and enjoy their company.

On Saturday night we took a dinner break, and being the adventurous group we are, we thought we would try the new RailRoad Themed restaurant "Rail Hoppers" just south on Oliver Street about a mile. As we were being seated Dean announced to the Hostess that he was wearing an appropriate t-shirt for dinner since it has a railroad theme. First clue: the hostess didn't know what Dean was talking about. Second clue: as we set at our table, we noticed they didn't have any railroad theme-related menu items, nor were there any displays of vintage railroad posters, tools, or equipment. The third clue was a strong sign: a real train thundered past the building and we were the only people trying to watch it go by. Finally, we asked our waitress what "Rail Hoppers" means and we were enlightened that it is a "Skate Boarding" term referring to skating down a staircase on a handrail. That's when we realized all of the signage and displays were skateboard related. Two of our teenage grandchildren were with us, and soon moved to a table of their own. What's up with that.

All in all, we had a great 3 days of model railroading. Several of the NMRA Club Members stopped by to say "Hi" and run a few trains of their own. We always enjoy seeing any club members and welcome them to operate or just give us their ideas on improving our layout.

We appreciate your support.

I have attached a number of pictures of the event for your enjoyment.

–Terry



Makin' clouds. Looks like she has the touch!



A few scenes of the modular layout in Bel Aire. It just keeps growing and improving!



CALENDAR OF EVENTS
INCLUDES NON-NMRA EVENTS

Recurring Events

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://www.mcor-nmra.org/Divisions/Chisholm_Trail_Division/

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/

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

SCHEDULED EVENTS

NOVEMBER 2023

November 4-5 – Oklahoma City Train Show.

The Pavilion at Oklahoma State Fairgrounds, 3212 Wichita Walk, Oklahoma City, OK. Saturday 9AM-5PM, Sunday 10AM-4PM <https://www.okctrainshow.com/?fbclid=IwAR3QwKQsE0j3gnfSa-RIUPwq8LjdTs-Ct3ikXRpjnD3ISd3sSuZhwU32d68>

DECEMBER 2023

December 16 – Kansas Central Model Railroaders Annual Christmas Open

House 16 East 3rd Avenue, Hutchinson, KS. Saturday 10AM-5PM. <http://www.kansascentralmodelrailroaders.org/home.html>

FEBRUARY 2024

February 3-4 – The Best Train Show in

Wichita, KS. Cessna Activity Center, 2744 George Washington Blvd., Wichita, KS. Saturday 9AM-5PM, Sunday 11AM-4PM <https://www.nmrachisholmtraildivision.org/best-train-show.html>

February 17 – Heartland Toy Train Show.

Payne County Expo Center, 4518 Expo Circle East, Stillwater, OK. Saturday 9AM-3PM. <https://www.ttos-soonerdiv.org/events.html>

APRIL 2024

April 20 – Arkansas City Train Show.

Ari-Business Building, 712 West Washington, Arkansas City, KS. Saturday 9AM-4PM. <http://www.wichitatomytrainmuseum.org/home-page.html>

April 27-28 – Herington Railroad Days,

Herington Community Building, 810 S. Broadway, Herington, KS. Saturday 9AM-5PM, Sunday 10AM-4PM. <https://www.facebook.com/HeringtonRailroadDays/> and <https://heringtonhistory.org/heringtonrailroaddays/>

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

Jim Marlett

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