

# Trails, Rails, & Tales



January-February 2024

Volume 10 • Number 1

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

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY PHIL AYLWARD

Wishing from our house to our house, may you have a very merry Christmas and a better New Year.

Be safe in all your travels to come.

Thank You

– Phil & Linda

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

BY CHARLIE MONCKTON

Hello everyone. I hope you had a great Christmas and got lots of train stuff.

The annual Chisholm Trail division Christmas Potluck was December 5<sup>th</sup> and we had a great time. This was the 10<sup>th</sup> White Elephant gift exchange, and we made it through without any broken bones and/or bloodshed. I was able to save Dean Lippincott from having to weather two brand new Santa Fe cabooses.

I hope he appreciated it as much as I enjoyed getting them. It is always fun meeting spouses and friends we do not normally see at meetings. The food was fantastic and I want to especially thank everyone who jumped in to help set up and put away. I am already looking forward to next year.

The next meeting of the Chisholm Trail division is January 2<sup>nd</sup> – a great way to start a busy year. The first train show we will be participating in will be in McPherson, KS January 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, followed by The Best Train Show in Wichita February 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.

We are starting the year off with lots of activities.

– Charlie

### TRAILS, RAILS, & TAILS

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#### DIRECTOR

Philip Aylward  
[aylward1@cox.net](mailto:aylward1@cox.net)

#### SUPERINTENDENT

Charles Monckton  
[monckton\\_66061@yahoo.com](mailto:monckton_66061@yahoo.com)

ASSISTANT  
SUPERINTENDENT  
Dean Lippincott  
[DLippP5a@gmail.com](mailto:DLippP5a@gmail.com)

#### PAYMASTER/TREASURER

Gene Bowers  
[gene9366@icloud.com](mailto:gene9366@icloud.com)

#### CLERK/SECRETARY

Randy Stucky  
[ritastucky3@gmail.com](mailto:ritastucky3@gmail.com)

#### SYSTEMS ADMINISTRATORS

Len Wigton: [777@yahoo.com](mailto:777@yahoo.com)  
Ann Wigton: [767@hotmail.com](mailto:767@hotmail.com)

#### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Jim Marlett  
[jmarlett@cox.net](mailto:jmarlett@cox.net)

Submissions for publication are strongly encouraged.

Logo Design by Alan Aagaard

## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

BY JIM MARLETT

It's hard to imagine, but 2023 is in the history books and 2024 here. I'm grateful to be around to see another year.

You probably can't tell it from the newsletter, but this edition is not only the start of a new year, but it is the first being produced on my new iMac computer using Apple's new M3 processor. The changeover has been more complicated than most of my computer upgrades because a number of my old standby applications don't work with the new chip. For some of those, an upgrade or some sort of tweaking did the trick. Some of those upgrades require a subscription service, which I am reluctant to do. I've found alternatives for most, but it turns out my scanner software simply can't be upgraded. Luckily, my laptop is still using the old chip and will work with the scanner.

Here's one example of something I did to make things work. This newsletter is first laid out in Apple's own Pages application, so it works just great on the new machine. However, the version you receive in your email is a PDF, which Pages can generate, but the file is too big to email. To get that PDF to be a size that won't choke the email distribution system, I have been relying on an old version of Adobe Acrobat Pro. We bought it ages ago, and as you might imagine, it won't work with the new computer. To upgrade would require a subscription service, most features of which I would never use. An internet search turned up an online service that can do what I need to have done and will do it for free. A practice run with the last edition of the newsletter seemed to work just fine and with any luck, this newsletter will have been compressed using that service. I hope you won't be able to tell.

But enough of publishing problems. Back in my basement, work on the old San Juan Southern keeps chugging along – except for a few weeks in

November. That's when we took time off to visit southern Chile. You'll find an article about the railroad portions of that trip in this newsletter.

It seems like very little gets accomplished on the old narrow gauge, but working at a snail's pace isn't really the same as not working at all.

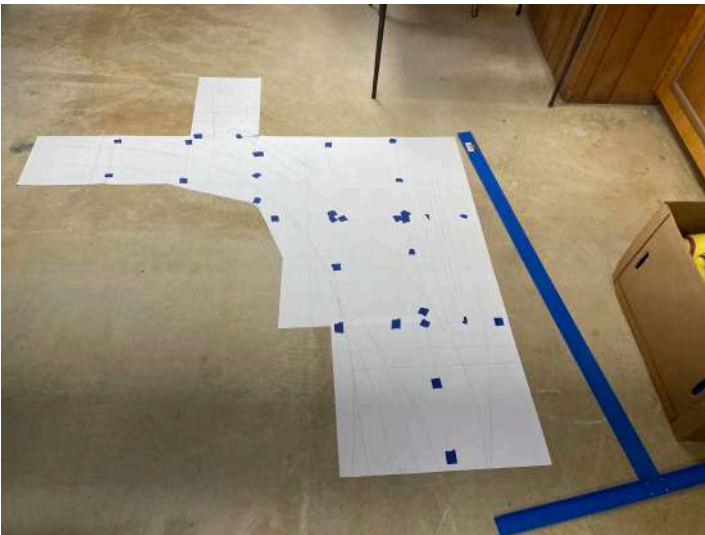
I had reached the stage of construction that I needed to get the track placement finalized on the new sections so I can build a few things or at least leave space for them. In the past, I have simply measured the approximate track locations on my computer-drawn plan and transferred them more or less in place on the actual thing. I discovered my old process wasn't going to work well this time around. The easiest solution was to print out the pertinent parts of the track plan full size and lay it in place on the layout. What a difference that made! For what it's worth, if I had printed out the whole track plan, it would have taken over a thousand sheets of 11x17 paper! I'm glad I didn't try to do that.

One of the things my printout revealed was that I also really needed to get more tabletop sections of the layout built before going much further. Luckily, since I had sold my dragster project, I had room in my shop to build and tack together two more eight foot sections of the layout. Then I could see how well these mate with the roundhouse section and, if it worked, get the track laid out. Putting all three of them together makes a 20ft long layout table that will then need to be disassembled and moved into the basement. I will still need to build a fourth section with the classification yard on it, but that can wait a bit. I certainly hope all my measuring and rechecking results in something that will actually fit into the space available.

– Jim



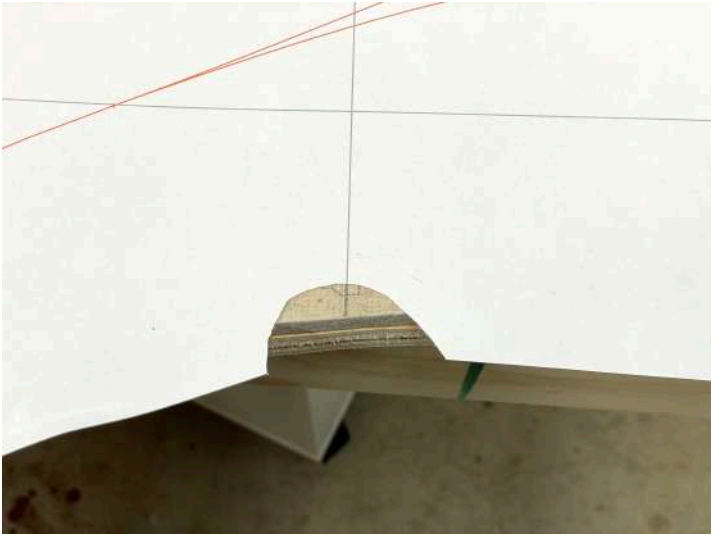
1) Not very much work was done on the roundhouse featured in previous editions to *Trails, Rails, and Tales*. I did put Grant Line hinges on the doors. I tried to think of an easy way make sure they were all placed identically, but I couldn't. They are just "eyeballed" into place, so I suspect each one will have to be individually fitted to the door jambs. I guess mechanical perfection really doesn't matter because they will be glued in the open position rather than being operable.



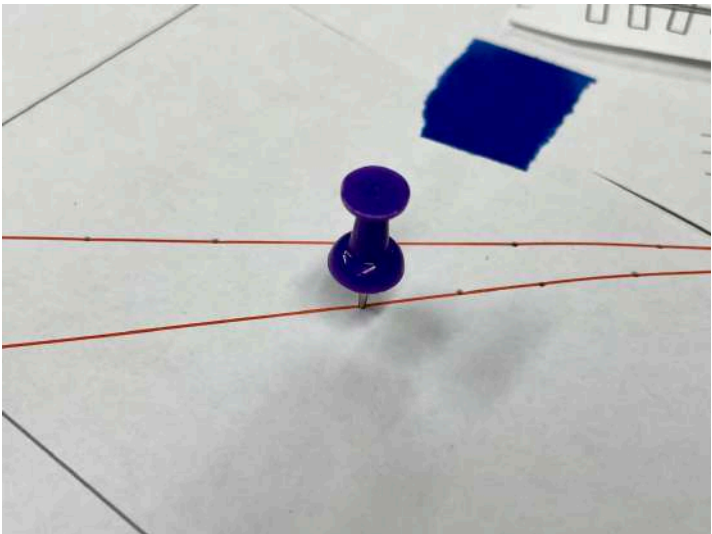
2) I decided I needed to know where the tracks actually fit before did any more work on the roundhouse. I printed out the pertinent parts of the track plan full size on 11x17 sheets, trimmed off the borders, then taped them together on the basement floor as accurately as I could. There are grid lines on the printout spaced one foot apart to help with alignment.



3) I drew grid lines on the layout, again trying to maintain accuracy. This turned out to be harder than I had imagined because those grid lines had to fit actual space in the basement rather than just theoretical space on a plan. When I got it like I thought it should actually be, I aligned the printout on those grid lines.



4) Cut-outs in the paper plan allowed the grid lines on the print to be aligned to the grid lines on the train table. Even something this simple turned out to be a challenge. I eventually got everything placed well enough to go on to the next step.



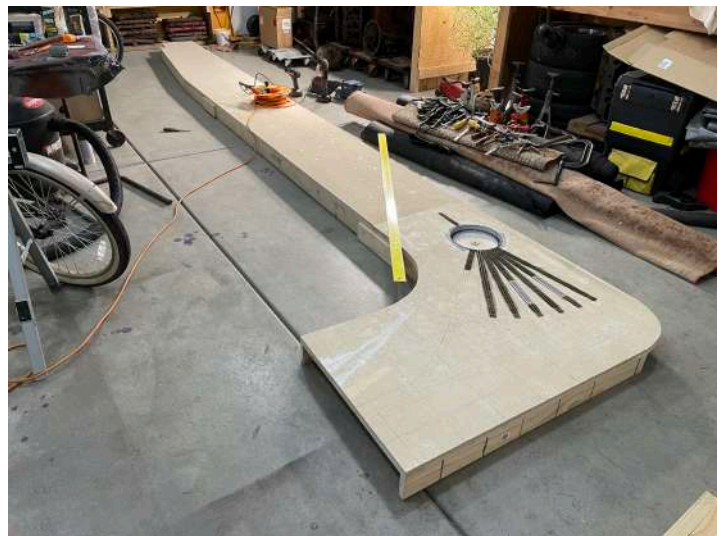
5) The track plan was traced onto the layout table by poking holes through the plan's track center lines with a push pin. The Homasote roadbed showed the pinholes quite nicely. I'm glad the plan's track lines were in red. There were so many lines on the paper that it might have been confusing if they were all the same color.



6) Then it was just a simple matter of connecting the dots and the track plan was on the layout surface.



7) At this point I realized I needed to build the next two sections of train table if I was going to have any chance of getting the rest of the yard plans laid out accurately.



8) Here are three sections of the main town tacked together on my shop floor. Next I'll print out more of the plan and transfer it to the Homasote table tops.

# BOTANICA IS LOOKING FOR A TRAIN TECHNICIAN

Initially this will be a Train Technician position. The Train Technician will be learning for 6 months to a year. I believe that it will be a part time, paid position that will lead to becoming the Botanica Train Coordinator (also a part time position, but with more hours).

A current summary of the Coordinator position is:

The job of the Coordinator is to make sure trains run as requested in an attractive setting. This involves ensuring there are:

- 1) volunteers to run the trains
- 2) functional trains with well working tracks and power system
- 3) buildings and accessories in good condition
- 4) that the plantings are appropriate and adequate.

The Coordinator reports to the Director of Operations and works in collaboration with the Volunteer Coordinator.

This position falls under the non-profit Botanica, Inc., rather than being a city of Wichita employee.

The position is a Permanent Part-time paid position with 20 to 30 hours per week that are flexible according to need.

## **A List of Qualifications preferred:**

### Hard skills

- At least a general knowledge of model train equipment, preferably G-scale.
- Have routinely cleaned and repaired model train equipment, preferably G-scale.
- Competent in MS Word and Excel for reports and schedules.

- At least a general knowledge of small scale horticulture appropriate for a train garden setting.
- Working knowledge of electricity and electronics.
- Capable of using diagnostic and small hand tools.
- Prefer someone capable of physical activity in the train shed or garden itself, such as standing, reaching, bending, stooping, kneeling, crawling, or lifting, up to 20 pounds. This might take place in any weather condition.

### Soft skills

- Previous leadership or supervisory experience and is aware that supervising volunteers is different than supervising paid employees.
- Can deal with public positively and effectively as an operator or giving a presentation.
- Dependable.
- Open minded with personnel and new ideas.
- Can solve problems.
- Adaptable to changing processes and schedules.

**Willingness and ability to learn is more important than any extended formal education.**

Contact Claudia Rollstin

[crollstin@botanica.org](mailto:crollstin@botanica.org)

316-688-0470

# MODULAR GROUP UPDATE

## BY TERRY ROSS

Wow, how time flies when you are busy having fun. It seems like ages ago that the Modular Group had set up and run trains. November and December are pretty slow months in this area. Our last show was the Wichita Toy Train Club Show on Oct 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>. We were only missing a couple of modules, so when we got set up we had a 16' x 32' layout for the show. Everyone had a great time as the layout keeps getting more and more scenery completed and the detail is coming around nicely. We were kept busy running our



own trains, and we enjoyed having several guests run as well. Our Guests were several NMRA Club members, a couple of possible new members, and many young future railroaders. The kids that come by are so much fun. They all seem shocked when we ask them if they want to help us run the train.

One of many stories from this show is of a young rail fan, maybe 12 or so, who asked me if he could be the spotter on the train I was running. I said sure, so he went around ahead of the train to announce our arrival and clear the way. He kept close tabs on the train running ahead of us. After a couple of trips around the layout, I told him he was doing a great job, and maybe he should be promoted to Engineer. He was beaming as we pulled away with the horn blowing. He told me he lives in the neighborhood by Cessna Activity Center. He had walked over in the morning, and had been at the show all day. He was back again Sunday as soon as the show opened. He was there almost as long as we were. By the end of the show, he had won over enough vendors that he had a small train and enough track for a pretty good-sized layout to take home from the show. Maybe an NMRA Membership and a clinic



presentation are in his future. I think if you asked around, a lot of us started out this same way.

Please check out the pictures of the layout and you will see how far we have come in just our first year. For our second year, we have some big expansion plans that we are working on right now, and will write about in a future addition.

We are all having so much fun, we can't wait for the next chance to set-up and run trains. On our schedule for the next few months are the McPherson Train Show in January, and the "Best Train Show in Wichita" in February. Hope you can come out and see us, and bring a train to run.

-Terry



# SOUTHERN CHILE RAILROADS

BY JIM MARLETT

First let me apologize to the folks in the Division's Facebook Group for having to see some of this again, but I know many Division members are not on Facebook.

When I knew I'd be going to Southern Chile on a bird watching trip, I just had to look into the railroads of the area. Guess what – there were none! Granted, there once was service as far south as the town of Puerto Montt at the very north edge of where we would be going, but service had been discontinued. I had absolutely no expectation of seeing anything of interest to a rail fan.

Imagine my surprise to find two things that really did get my attention. One was on Chiloé Island. Chiloé is a rather large island that supports temperate rain forest. That's a rain forest that experiences winter like our Olympic Peninsula. Chiloé once had a 600mm narrow gauge railway (3/8" shy of two feet) that served some ports, but that was long gone. So imagine my surprise at seeing signs advertising a train ride. We stopped for lunch in a little village not far from the town of Ancud and some of our group went searching for birds. They discovered a home-built version of

a rail bus in someone's shed and insisted that I come check out their find. I'm certainly glad they did, even though it was a bit odd.

The second discovery was after we left Chiloé. To go farther south, we had to go back north to the mainland so we could catch an airplane that took us way, way south. The town we stayed in was Puerto Varas, just north of Puerto Montt, where the southern end of Chile's abandoned five foot gauge main line had ended. Driving to the hotel, I notice rails still in place. I also noticed what appeared to be an abandoned depot just covered with graffiti. Imagine my delight when our hotel turned out to be within easy walking distance of the depot! Of course, I went down there, despite the rather rough look of it. What I discovered was a small railroad yard with some interesting artifacts and a depot that was undergoing renovation. If I'd been there a few weeks later, I suspect all that graffiti would have been painted over.

I'll let the pictures do the talking for me. Well, the pictures and the captions.

–Jim



*The square tubing rails of the home made railroad on Chiloé trundle off into the temperate rain forest.*





*When it comes to home made rail conversions, the Rio Grande Southern's Galloping Geese looked like luxury vehicles compared to this.*

*The front wheels were modified automobile rims with what I presume were thicker steel plates crudely welded to the rolling surface. I suspect the ride is beyond bumpy. Notice there are missing lugs as well.*

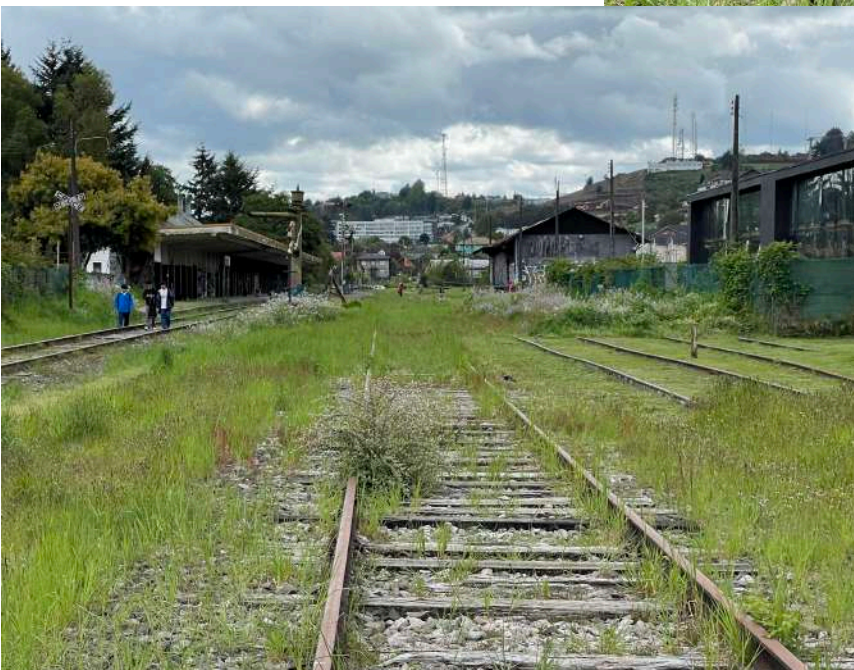


*In the rear were rubber tires with a flange welded to the rim. Maybe this softened the ride from the bumpy front wheels. I think this railroad shows that if there's a will, there's a way.*



*The first I noticed a full sized Chilean railroad was at a grade crossing in Puerto Varas. I saw several crossings, but this is one was within a block of our hotel. "Ferrocarril" translates to iron lane or track and means railroad. "Sin guarda-cruce" means without a crossing guard.*

*Looking to the right of the crossing, I was struck by the obviously wide gauge of the railroad. You wouldn't think you could easily see the difference between the generally accepted standard gauge of 4ft. 8.5in. and 5ft. 6in. standard gauge of Chile, but it was just gob smacking!*

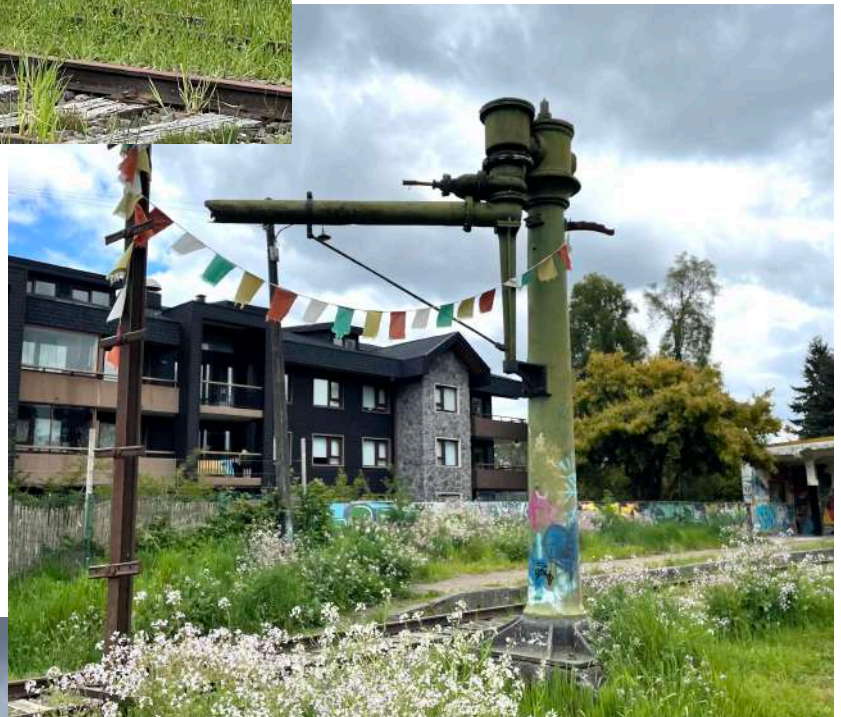


*On the other side of the crossing was a small rail yard and on the left side of the picture was the depot I had seen from the road. I must have timed my visit with the end of the school day because there were lots of teenagers hanging around the depot. It made this old fat man a tiny bit uneasy, but I needn't have worried. They were just school kids.*



*Among my discoveries in the yard were these two enclosed track speeders. The graffiti artists had gotten to them, and as decorative as they were, I hope they can be restored to their original appearance*

*This water column is a remnant from the days of steam. I suspect there was a downturn on the end of the pipe, but it looks like it rotted off some time ago. In the background are some nice new-looking apartments.*



*The station platform hadn't seen passengers in many years, but it had seen graffiti artists. It looks like there were more tracks at one time. Notice the semaphore in the background.*



*Out front, things were markedly different. Clearly, something was happening to the old structure. Poking around a little bit, I discovered that it was being renovated and on that day the graffiti I'd seen the day before was being covered with a nice new coat of paint.*

*A peek inside the front door quickly revealed that things were in much better shape. The ticket office looked quite spiffy except for a bit of graffiti on the sign.*



*Next to the ticket office was this very nice looking restaurant. When I returned home I discovered it had a five star review on Trip Advisor. Maybe I should have eaten there.*

*Across the street from the depot was a restored historical house with absolutely fantastic gardens. I'm pretty sure the whole area is being transformed into real showpiece with the old depot being an important part of it.*



# Where were we?



# 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/](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/](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. Spear's Restaurant and Pie Shop, 4323 W Maple, Wichita, KS

### SCHEDULED EVENTS

#### **JANUARY 2024**

**January 13-14 – Model Train Convention & Expo.** McPherson Community Building, 122 E Marlin St, McPherson, KS. Saturday 9AM-5PM, Sunday 10AM-3PM. <https://www.mcphersoncountymakerspace.org/trains>

#### **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>

#### **MARCH 2024**

**March 2-3 – Lawrence Model Railroad Club Train Show and Swap Meet.** Crown Toyota, 3400 South Iowa St, Lawrence, KS. Saturday 9AM-5PM, Sunday 9AM-3PM. <http://lawrencemodelrailroadclub.org/TrainShow.html>

#### **APRIL 2024**

**April 20 – Arkansas City Train Show.** Agri-Business Building, 712 West Washington, Arkansas City, KS. Saturday 9AM-4PM. <http://www.wichitatomymuseum.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

[jmarlett@cox.net](mailto:jmarlett@cox.net)