

# Trails, Rails, & Tales



November-December 2025

Volume 11 • Number 6

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

## FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY PHIL AYLWARD

Looks like train show time is coming. Wichita Toy Train Club was the 25th-26th of October, Mid-Continent RPM meet on November 8th-9th in Benton, on the 15th OKC Show, and also on the 15th, the modular layout will be in Moundridge. We will set up on Friday the 14th about 11am. We will be running on Saturday 11am to 5pm and Sunday 10am to 4pm. Hope You can make one or more.

Thank You

– Phil

## FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

BY CHARLIE MONCKTON

I often think of the upcoming time of year as busy and full of activities but it seems every day has become a busy one full of railfan opportunities. I saw several of you at Railfest and I am including pictures I took at the Great Plains Transportation Museum that day. It is always great to smell coal burning. This weekend not only did I get to once again help set up and run trains on the the Chisholm Trail Division Modular layout during the Wichita Toy Train Club Train Show but I also got to make Mini Modules with the children. I have some pictures of the children working hard on their creations that I am also including with my article. Over 75 mini modules were created and taken home by the children. There were several children who had made modules at our previous shows. Every meeting is important but the November 4<sup>th</sup> meeting is especially important because of what needs to be accomplished. We will be electing officers for next year (all current officers have agreed to serve again) and planing the Holiday celebration for December 2nd.

–Charlie

### TRAILS, RAILS, & TAILS

is published bi-monthly.

It is sent to members of the Chisholm Trail Division of NMRA

#### 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

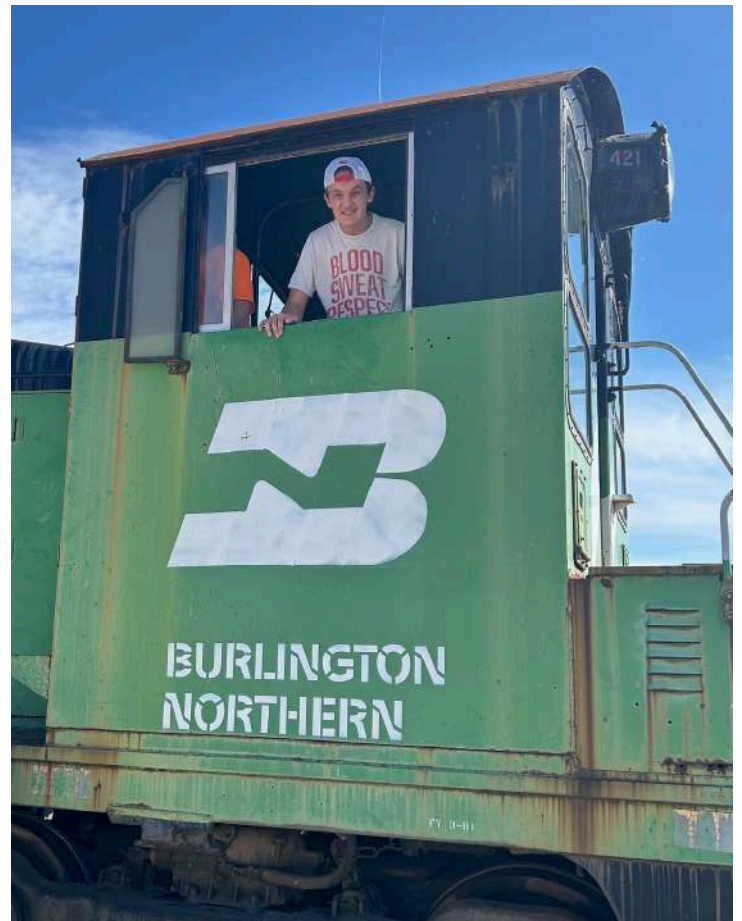
Len Wigton:  
[wigton777@yahoo.com](mailto:wigton777@yahoo.com)  
Ann Wigton:  
[annie767@hotmail.com](mailto:annie767@hotmail.com)

#### NEWSLETTER EDITOR

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

Submissions for publication are strongly encouraged.

# CHARLIE'S PICS OF RAILFEST 2025



# CHARLIE'S PICS OF MINI MODULES AT THE WICHITA TOY TRAIN CLUB SHOW



## FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

BY JIM MARLETT

November is National Model Railroad Month. I hope everyone can do something to promote the hobby and the Division. I tend to be a failure at this personally, but my hat's off to Bob Neill, whose library displays just have to be having an impact.

In this issue of TR&T Bob has given us more food for thought on several issues that we should all be thinking about and Terry Ross gives us what has essentially become a regular column in this newsletter. I'm throwing in an unpublished article written long ago about the sugar cane railroads of Queensland, Australia. I actually saw these little narrow gauge trains in action on our first trip to Australia back in October and November of 2015. It's hard to believe that was ten years ago, but it most certainly was.

Back in my basement, the good old San Juan Southern is about to hit a milestone. Perhaps most importantly, a 30ft photo backdrop is in place on the lower level. That means I can start installing things. The roundhouse section got a bit of scenery where I thought it would be hard to reach once it was in place. That section is now sitting very close where it will ultimately be when it is joined to the other two sections. Finally, after nearly a year of work, I'm calling the coaling tower good enough. All of this means the sections of railroad waiting in the shop can come into the basement and I can get the coaling tower installed. Then those sections can find their place in front of the backdrop and be hooked together. I sure hope I can report on that in the next issue.

– Jim



*My son Chris, my wife Patty and I installed the backdrop. Chris was very handy since he had once worked for a graphics company and had experience installing large prints. Here he is matching the seams on one of the four pieces it took to span 30 feet.*



*The roundhouse section is more or less in place with a bit of scenery where I thought it would be hard to reach once things were screwed down. I'm not sure I like the colors against the background, but maybe I can tone them down a bit with an airbrush. Or maybe not if I start to like it.*

*The roundhouse waiting for locomotives. Looks like the MOW crew needs to clean a little grass out from the rails.*





*The finally completed coaling tower, unless I decide to put nut-bolt-washer castings on each joint. I won't install it until the section it goes on is carried from the shop in the back yard to the basement and set up on legs. I don't want to mess up a year's work with a little "oops" in transit!*

# RUNNING OUT OF TIME

BY BOB NEILL

Yo Ho Ho 'tis the season! I was toying with a lesson for young kids by asking "What do you have planned for the next ten years? OK, next five years?"

During a worship service, I heard from a gentleman that does handyman work, that a lady just lost her husband and he had a layout and train collection. The initial thought was how to help clear her collection. Later I realized that I have too large a collection myself and keep adding goodies. Is this a warning call that I, and some of us, need to do some thinking about planning ahead? When should I start down sizing?

As some of us are approaching the end of our time, what should we plan for? Some of us have lost our better halves. What should be done with their things? What should my kids do with my junk? My collection is still holding much of my dad's collection, but I have added a lot of valuables.

The advertising side of this situation is the question about attracting younger people into the hobby so they can find the fun we have experienced. When NMRA started there were not many kits being produced, so scratch building was the most common way to go. Today it seems that very few people are building things, either models or layouts. Are we hiding too many secrets or are we too slow at getting things done? I know that I am slow (mentally and physically), but I can never bring anything to being finished.

With today's interest in computers, how do we get the "kids" to go outside and play? I am curious to see how 3D computer printing is going to impact model building and the Achievement Program.

The articles I have been reading about NMRA is that they are making changes to fit into current

times (needs). One subject that catches my interest is the rewriting of the Achievement Program. Over the years it seems to me that the judging has changed as the judges have changed. My running question is "what is the judge looking for?" In the "good old days" just building a kit could earn points, today, I do not know.

Since November has been declared "Model Railroad Month" I have been taking my (sloppy John Allen copy) switching module to libraries to amuse kids and parents with hands on fun. I enjoy watching "kids" learn to work the switching module. The challenge causes them to think ahead to be able to swap cars. Some seem eager to return, but some of the older (grey haired) "kids" seem to shy away. Should I offer to sell a train set? That is why I offer the NMRA propaganda (hand outs).

-Bob



*Bob at the Newton Library promoting the hobby.*

# SUGAR CANE RAILROADS OF QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA

BY JIM MARLETT



*A pair of gas hydraulic locomotives pulling a string of two foot gauge sugar cane bin cars in the “Land Down Under.”*

When we visited Australia in October and November of 2015, I was quite taken with the little sugar cane railroads we found in Queensland. Maybe I was already primed by a clinic about them at the National Narrow Gauge Convention, but even with that I didn't expect them to be so extensive and so easily seen.

The northeastern coastal region of Australia is ideal sugar cane growing country. Unlike the dry outback that we Americans tend to picture when we think of the “land down under,” the northern coast is primarily tropical rain forest or tropical savanna. With the development of sugar

processing plants and their supporting cane fields came an extensive network of railroads. These railroads are typically owned by sugar mills and service the fields that feed those particular mills.

In Queensland, almost all sugar cane railroads are 2ft narrow gauge. The exception is one road that is 3ft 6in gauge, which is Queensland's standard gauge. It has been speculated that this railroad will eventually become 2ft gauge to improve interchange between their neighboring mills.

The sugar cane railroads are pretty extensive, with almost 2,500 miles of track of which about

1,950 is main line. They transport up to 36 million tons of cane a year with about 250 diesel hydraulic locomotives and about 52,000 cars, known as cane bins. A number of the locomotives were converted to 2ft gauge from 3ft 6in gauge and even regular 4ft 8.5in standard gauge. In years past, locomotives were steam powered and there is still a tourist line preserving that era.

Most of the activity on these railroads occurs in about 20-22 weeks or so each year during the “crushing” season. This normally runs from about July to December depending on weather and location. It is important to move the cut cane to the refinery as quickly as possible and in an even, sustained pattern that keeps the mills going at an even pace. As a result, sugar cane railroads are 24/7 operations during crushing season.

Rolling stock is pretty much limited to cane bins. Imagine extremely scaled down versions of container flat cars. These can have either bogies

(trucks to us Americans) or can be four-wheeled fixed axle designs. There are also some work cars.

Modeling potential does exist. Some sugar cane “bins” based on U.S. prototypes have been seen in the modeling contests at some National Narrow Gauge Conventions. Because sugar cane railroads are usually in flat places, they would be ideal for a flat shelf layout with tight curves. I suspect modeling in larger scales would be better since emphasis would probably be on detailed model building. Since operations consist almost entirely of bringing empty bins to the fields and bringing loaded bins back to the mills, I suspect an operations oriented modeler could be disappointed with these little lines.

Regardless, it was a real kick to see day-to-day working narrow gauge railroads in these modern times. Besides, they are just so cute!

– Jim



*We tend to think of three foot gauge rails as being pretty darned close together, but two foot is just ridiculously narrow compared to our four foot, eight and a half inch standard gauge.*



*Track maintenance is about what you would expect from a narrow gauge line – not too much as shown by this approach to a concrete trestle.*

*The trestle was made from concrete and steel, but it still looked pretty shaky to me. I thought the shape of the ties was interesting.*



*I liked the simplicity of the switch stands. Gravity held things in place.*



*This is where it all starts. The cane is harvested, chopped, and loaded into these truck-like things, which then carry the chopped cane to the bin cars. “Exotic” to us birds hang around to see what critters are stirred up for a quick lunch.*

*Some operations dump the chopped cane into waiting open-topped bins.*

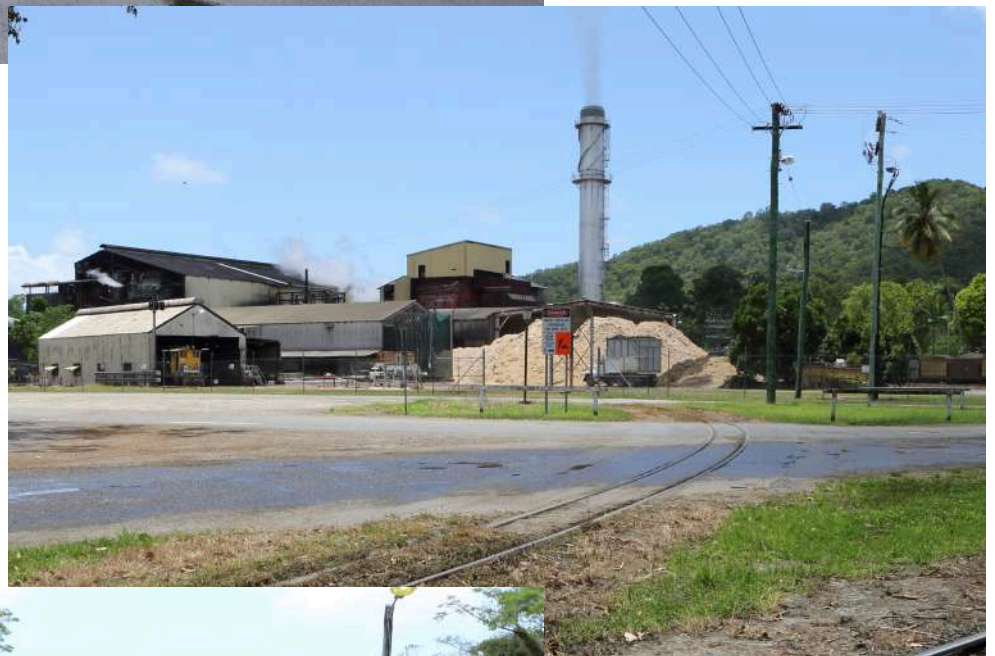


*In other places, the bins were moved from truck to waiting container car just like an intermodal yard.*



*From the fields to the sugar mill often means rails through city streets. This is downtown Mossman and the mill is at the far end around the corner.*

*This is the sugar mill in Mossman. Notice the engine house on the left. The bins come in from the right.*



*This locomotive at the mill is quite a bit bigger than the little ones I saw on the train. I am assuming that it has yard duty in the mill, but it could just as easily be a road engine. Notice different styles of bins behind the locomotive.*

# MODULAR GROUP REPORT

BY TERRY ROSS



On Saturday and Sunday October 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>, we were able to set up our Modular Layout at the Wichita Toy Train Club Show here in Wichita. Our layout foot print was 20' wide x 36' long with our "U-Shaped" center modules. There were about 7 layouts in total and we were the largest layout there. When you consider one of the layouts was "O Scale" we thought we looked pretty good. If we didn't set up the "U-Shaped" center and put those modules on the outside rectangle, the layout would have been 20' x 56' long. As you can see from some of the pictures, we can and do run some very long trains, with some nice consists of engines for power. On Sunday, we traveled back to the 1950's and ran some "Big Steam" power on both tracks at the same time. You could hear the "Chuffing Sounds" and see the smoke for some distance (and that's saying a lot when you're next to a large Lionel Layout running Steam and Smoke). Those Guys should be required to wear gas masks. We also are the only layout that I have seen that features the "K & O" Railroad from right here in Wichita. See the pictures for some

great shots of this train in action. Thanks Rick Coble for making our layout something special. Great Modeling!!

The Show had excellent attendance and we were very busy all-day Saturday. We had about 12 members and several NMRA guests running trains. We also had some young family members (grandchildren and children) and some regular visitors running trains and enjoying themselves. There's nothing better for the Hobby than letting people experience it with a DCC throttle in their hands blowing the whistle and ringing the bell. A Great Time was had by all. Several of us were talking about how tired we all are after moving it all in and setting it up, but it sure is worth it on Saturday and Sunday.

I say a great sign for sale at the show that I should have bought for the layout. It said, **"Model Railroad is a Great Teacher" It Teaches Carpentry / Electrical / Architecture / History / Design / Art / and "Imagination."**

Our next display showing will be at Pine Village in Moundridge on November 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>. We are really looking forward to Pine Village as setting up the layout at a site other than a Model RR Show is a very different experience. Non-railroaders are very interested in how everything is built, what materials are used, what makes it work the way it does, and of course seeing the trains run. Most importantly, everyone

has a childhood memory based on a train experience, and we get to hear those stories.

Again, we would like to invite everyone to come out, bring a friend, your favorite train or rolling stock to run, and most of all, just join us in the "Fun of Model Railroading." See you at the next show!!

-Terry

*The rarely modeled K&O making the rounds on the modular layout.*



*Long live steam! Dig that Coffin feed water heater in front of the smoke box.*



*Diesels had their turn, too.*



*So who's having the most fun here?*

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT



In October, your editor presented a program on the National Narrow Gauge Convention in the St. Louis area. I missed the September meeting because I was at the Convention.

# 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. Hutchinson Public Library, 901 N Main St, 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

**Third Thursday Model Railroaders's Lunch.** Every third Thursday at a location and time to be announced. If you are not receiving notices and would like to be included, contact Terry Ross (316) 258-4029.

### SCHEDULED EVENTS

#### NOVEMBER 2025

**November 8 – Joplin Model Train Show & Swap Meet.** Joplin History & Mineral Museum, Schifferdecker Park, 504 S Schifferdecker Ave, Joplin, MO. Saturday 9AM-3PM. <http://www.tristatamodelrailroaders.com/>

**November 8-9 – Festival of Trains.** Century II Exhibition Hall, 225 W Douglas Ave, Wichita,

KS. Saturday 10AM-5PM. Sunday 10AM-4PM. <https://www.festoftrains.com/wichita>

**November 8-9 – Mid-Continent Prototype Modelers Meet.** Benton Lions Community Center, Benton, KS. Saturday 8AM-5PM. Sunday 10AM-3PM. <https://bentonrpm.com/>

**November 9 – Mid-America Train & Toy Show** KCI Expo Center, 117 NW Ambassador Drive, Kansas City, MO. Sunday 9AM-2PM <https://kciexpo.com/organizer/midamerica-toy-and-train-show/>

**November 15-16 – OKC Train Show** Bennett Event Center, Oklahoma State Fairgrounds, 3101 Gordon Cooper Blvd, Oklahoma City, OK. Saturday 9AM-5PM, Sunday 10AM-4PM. <https://www.okctrainshow.com/>

#### DECEMBER 2025

**December 6 – Greater Tulsa Area Holiday Train Show.** Rhema Ninowski Recreation Center, 1367 East 71st South West Kenosha, Broken Arrow, OK. Saturday 9AM-4:30PM. <https://www.ttos-soonerdiv.org/train-shows.html>

#### FEBRUARY 2026

**February 7-8 – Wichita Train Show & Swap Meet. “The Best Train Show in Wichita, KS.”** Cessna Activity Center, 2744 George Washington Blvd, Wichita, KS. Saturday 9AM-5PM. Sunday 10AM-4PM. <https://www.nmra.org/events/train-show-and-swap-meet-wichita>

**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)