

Trails, Rails, & Tales



January-February 2026

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

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

BY RICK COBLE

Looking forward to a bright and productive new year ahead for our group. The NMRA is off and running with a lot of new changes with the vision of the future of the organization. I've noticed that the website has been worked over and has a new look and some changes. I've found it to be a positive direction and would like to encourage you to check it out. Our sponsored train show is sneaking up fast and would like to encourage participation to help set us stand out of the other shows in our area. I would like to thank all of the participating members for electing me for the Director position and I will give it my best to help make the Chisholm Trail Division a bright spot for our region.

Thank you

—Rick Coble

FROM THE SUPERINTENDENT'S DESK

BY CHARLIE MONCKTON

I hope everyone had a great Holiday and received lots of model train stuff. The last two months have been very busy with the election of officers, the annual Holiday Party and the presentation of the John D. LaRoe award.

During the November meeting the following people were elected as officers for 2026: Rick Coble was elected as Director, Charles Monckton as Superintendent. Redford Walker as Assistant Superintendent, Gene Bowers as Paymaster, and Randy Stucky as secretary. I want to thank Phil Aylward for his many years of service as Director and know he will continue to be a very active part of the Chisholm Trail Division. I also recognize Dean Lippincott for his

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are strongly encouraged.

service as Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent. Dean led us through the difficult Covid period, established us on Zoom and continues to be an active part of Chisholm Trail Division.

The John D. LaRoe award annually recognizes a member who has done extra to help the members of the division and promote the organization. This year's recipient, Terry Ross, is responsible for developing the modular group and

its success. He schedules all of the places the modules go, oversees getting them to the venue, and organizes setting them up and packing them up when the show is over. Congratulations Terry.

It is time to begin to promote the February Train show and planning how you are going to take part helping with the show. The show will be at the Cessna Activity Center, February 7th and 8th.

—Charlie

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

BY JIM MARLETT

Winter is upon us and we should all retreat to the basement or wherever your model railroad may be located, and dive deeply into it. I know I have been working pretty hard on mine.

As our Division Director noted in his column, NMRA is making a lot of changes. This includes how communications will look, including Division newsletters. This goes all the way down to the typefaces we use. We have until April to make these changes, which is lucky for me because I've been too busy this season to mess with it. I like the way our newsletter looks now so this will be a hard pill for me to swallow. But swallow it I will. I'll try to preserve as much of the look as I can, but next issue have a different appearance.

This month I discovered a new trick with artificial intelligence that you might have some fun with yourself. Being a little short on content, I presume because everyone has been busy working on their railroad, I thought I would share some pictures that went well beyond a little help.

Perhaps I am speaking out of turn, but two members of our group have recently lost loved ones. Charlie has notified members of who those people are and I see no need to repeat it in the newsletter. However, it has caused me to think

about one value of our hobby. Other than my parents, I have not lost a loved one – no spouse, no child – but I have received some life changing bad news in my time on earth. I found that when that happened to me, I dug deep into the hobby. Call it displacement activity if you want. It isn't the same for everyone, but if you choose to use it, it can help. I suspect that those for whom it will be useful won't need a reminder. It will already be doing its job. I certainly found it a comfort.

So what has been going on in my own basement? The two sections that have spent way too much time in my shop are finally in place on the layout, connected to each other and fully operational, although they are not connected to the rest of the railroad. I ran a test locomotive over all of it and made repairs as needed. I thought that repairs were a little more than I should have found. I examined my test locomotive and discovered a tender truck had spread on one end and was letting one wheel set go its own way. A change of locomotives fixed a lot of problems. I'll let the pictures explain the things I dealt with that were't ghost problems the locomotive brought on.

— Jim



This is the town of Blakely, CO at its current stage of construction. Still lots of work to do. It isn't attached to the rest of the railroad, but that is the next big step. I can run trains and do some switching if I connect jumpers to a powered section elsewhere on the layout. The buildings are mostly temporary stand-ins just to judge the space. Sorry if this looks like a construction site, but that's what it is!



Down at the far end of the picture above, this is where Blakely will be connected to the classification yard and to the rest of the layout. I can hardly wait!



This phase of construction started with my older son Mike and grandson Oliver bringing the sections in the shop down to the basement. It's lucky they just happened to come by at the right time since my back was out of whack. Track laying and wiring were mostly done while these sections were still in the shop.

Legs went on, a test fitting was made, and the section that needed the delicate coaling tower installed with its final touches added and the ash pit finished up was pulled out to the aisle for easy access from the rear. I love those four foot aisles! Note the legs are recessed to allow operation from a rolling chair.





The coaling tower is in place with the stone ramp carved from foam by my wife Patty who, after I said this is going to take me forever, took over the project and did it in a fraction of the time it was taking me. Ballast and spilled coal are down, the ash pit ramp is lined with concrete and the rods are in that hold the track in gauge above the pit.

The section with the coaling tower and ash pit were moved into position, the tables leveled up and joined together. "All righty!" I said to myself. "Let's get the track between sections laid and wired. Then we can move on." It was not going to be that easy.





After hand laying rail across the center table joint, it turned out there was a significant dip there that caused rolling stock to roll against my wishes. The Homasote was thinner on the ends than it was in the middle. I pulled the rails, soaked the roadbed with an alcohol and water mix, and pried the ties up for do-overs.

The swales were leveled with wood filler then sanded. All three of these tracks were affected. After three tries, including laying track and taking it up again, I finally got them where I wanted them.





I ultimately got the dip so that it was no bigger than a sheet of typing paper. Even then, gremlins raised their heads and it took one more attempt plus a final sanding of the ties to get all three where I wanted them.

I was worried about the other joint between sections, but it was fine. Besides, I won't be spotting cars there. I was really concerned about the switch that went over the joint, but even it behaved just fine. Ties went down, rails were spiked, and it was connected to power. With only a few minor bugs, it all worked fine! Now I'm ready to start the track connecting Blakely to the rest of the layout.



TERRY ROSS RECEIVES JOHN D. LAROE AWARD



Each year a member of the Chisholm Trail Division may be selected for the John D. LaRoe Memorial Award to honor the recipient's service to the Division and to the hobby in general. This award is to commemorate the late John D. LaRoe for his many years of outstanding service to the Division. Terry Ross's leadership with the modular group and other service to the Division is unmistakable.

WINTER FUN WITH AI

On one of the narrow gauge Facebook groups I belong to, someone posted some winter scenes of their layout using AI. I thought it looked pretty spiffy, so I decided to try it myself. I'm no expert, but using the free version of Google Gemini, I cranked out a few using mostly photos I had on file. You just load the picture, type in what you want to have done, and wait for the results. If you don't like it, do it again. I can't say it is perfect; the images are pretty pixilated. Good enough for the newsletter, though.



D&RGW #453 is sitting in the snow on your editor's San Juan Southern. If it's waiting for me to finish the layout, it will be there a while. The AI program substituted its own background for the one that was actually there and it may be better than the original. This was my very first attempt at AI photo editing.



A pair of leased K27s struggle up the 4% grade on the San Juan Southern. I had the AI add smoke as well. I guess it's so cold the snow hasn't melted off the hot boilers! AI doesn't know everything

It's also snowing in Larry Gulick's basement as this Heisler creeps over that tall, spindly trestle with its load of very nervous passengers. I wasn't able to change the distant background on this one. My skills are clearly limited.





It looks like winter has struck the modular layout, too. It took quite a bit of convincing to get the AI program to put snow on the foreground rocks and it still seems to be summer in some of the back areas. I guess we'll ignore that.

Steam on the modular layout is pretty special anytime, but in the winter it is even better. Must be the first snowstorm of the season since the grass is still green.





The folks waiting for a train at Bill Phillips's aptly named Coldwater depot are staying inside on this frigid day. I hope the train is nice and warm.

The town of Rock Wall is getting a dusting on Len Wigton's layout. Time for the retirees to head for Palm Springs.



MODULAR GROUP REPORT

BY TERRY ROSS

On Saturday and Sunday, November 15th and 16th, we were able to set up our Modular Layout at the Pine Village campus in Moundridge, KS. Pine Village is a senior living campus on the south edge of Moundridge, consisting of several buildings for assisted living services. We were able to set up our entire layout as the recreation/meeting room we were in was quite spacious. Our layout footprint was 20' wide x 40' long with our "U-Shaped" center modules. With the layout in the middle of the room, we still had 20' of space between us and the wall.

The facility was beautiful, and the hospitality was very welcoming. Randy Stucky acquired the room for us, and Randy's wife Rita provided a delicious lunch of Sloppy Joe's, chips, tea, and of course, homemade cookies. It was a flash-back moment as we sounded like a group of 6th graders in the school lunchroom. "Sloppy Joes's are the best." "This is awesome." "Please pass those cookies around again." We really want to thank

Rita again as we were able to save a lot of time by eating lunch there at Pine Village. Not to mention that tea, lemonade, ice water, and the cookies were available all weekend. Yes, we are going back to Pine Village again as soon as possible. Randy, please thank all of the Pine Village folks for us again.

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. Everyone, all of the residents, the staff, and our modular team had a great weekend. We were open to the public both Saturday and Sunday and had a lot of people from Moundridge tour the layout. Some of the Residents came down several times and were running trains with some of our



No, the Pine Village residents haven't filled the room with smoke. It's just glare from some powerful lights. This was one of the few opportunities to set up all the modules with plenty of space around the layout.

members. Pine Village is definitely on our calendar for a future visit.

I have attached several pictures from Moundridge which I think tell the story better than words. Please enjoy the pictures. We also have a new video to share at our next NMRA meeting as one of our younger (youngest) members shared his tech knowledge and experience with us. Thanks, Ben, for entertaining us and helping your grandpa create the new video. Ben shared his "Go Pro Camera" with us that was attached to a flat car then pushed around the layout in front of a train. It is really neat to see the layout from the

real engineer's view. It's amazing how real it looks when meeting other trains. We already planning some really cool run-bys at future events. After seeing the video, Doris summed it up well. "You Kids and your Toys".

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!!

Hope to see you soon!

—Terry

Residents enjoying the modular layout. It looks like the viewing height was about right for a realistic track level view for wheelchair users.



Not every layout visitor was a resident of Pine Village. Here Dean Lippincott's work is getting some supervision from the younger generation.



Charlie Monckton is at the throttle of this freight train.



Another youthful model rail fan is giving the layout a once over and no doubt dreaming of when he can build one of his own.



This Southern Railway consolidation pulls its freight train past Gargoyle Oil.



This MOP passenger train, complete with RPO car, is pulling into the station.



"All aboard!" It's train time down at the depot.

The MOP varnish is blasting past a herd of cattle. This scene is new to your editor. He doesn't know if it actually is new or if he just doesn't remember it. Things can change on the modular layout.



Just in case you thought the modular guys had gone all steam, here's proof that they haven't.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

The big event for December was the Holiday Party with its covered dish dinner and white elephant gift exchange. Here are a few photos from the evening's festivities.



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. 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

JANUARY 2026

January 3-4 – Great Train Show Kansas City, MO. KCI Expo Center, 11730 N Ambassador Dr. Kansas City, MO. Saturday 10AM-4PM, Sunday 10AM-4PM. <https://www.greattrainshow.com/gts-show-landing-pages/kansas-city-10-26>

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>

February 28-March 1 – Lawrence Model Railroad Club Train Show and Swap Meet Crown Toyota of Lawrence, 3400 South Iowa St, Lawrence, KS. Saturday 9AM-5PM. Sunday 9AM-3PM. <https://lawrencemodelrailroadclub.org/>

APRIL 2026

April 11-12 Rocky Mountain Train Show. Rhema Ninowski National Western Complex, 4655 Humboldt St, Denver, CO. Saturday 9AM-5PM. Sunday 9AM-4PM. <https://rockymountaintrainshow.com/Default.aspx>

April 24-25 Greater Tulsa Area Train Show. Rhema Ninowski Recreation Center, 1367 East 71st South / West Kenosha, Broken Arrow, OK. Friday 5PM-7PM. Saturday 9AM-3PM. <https://www.ttos-soonerdiv.org/train-shows.html>

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

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