



A PLACE FOR THE WHOLE FAMILY 25th ANNIVERSARY



Oklahoma Railway Museum: Experience History In Motion

THE DISPATCHER



Oklahoma Railway Museum, LTD. Central Oklahoma Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society North American Railcar Operators Association NARCOA - Affiliate Member



The month of August, on everyone's mind that has children, helps with children, or is connected with education, Back to School. Stores are busy, supplies are flying off the shelves and into shopping carts as final preparations are made for another busy school year to begin. Did you know you can come Back to School at the Oklahoma Railway Museum? No, classes do not begin in August or September and last through a school year. Interested in serving as crew on the train rides? Volunteers are needed and training is available. Dates and times will be published in future issues of The Dispatcher letting you know when the training will be offered and how to sign up. An excellent article on volunteering at the museum begins on page two. Ever heard of a school train? Take a look at page three. DLJ.



The Oklahoma Railway Museum

In the spring of 1997, the Chapter began working with the Center for Non-Profit Organizations to develop a business plan for the establishment of a railway museum and a partnership with the Central Oklahoma Parking and Transportation Authority (COPTA) for use of the old M-K-T tracks from NE 16th Street to NE 36st Street. A 3-acre piece of property was located along the line.

In July 1999, the Chapter at last had property they could call home. It was very overgrown with weeds and trees but now the volunteers were working on Chapter property. The seed money from the Union Pacific trips in 1995 financed the purchase along with help from about eight members who made small loans to the Chapter which were paid back in three years. This allowed the Museum to get started with no real debt on the books.

In This Issue

Back to School1
The Oklahoma Railway Museum.. 1
The Power of Volunteering 2, 3
The School Train 3
Trustees Update 4
Schedule of Events 4
Timetable 5

The Power of Volunteering

By Paul Stephens

“The trains bring us together, but it’s the camaraderie that keeps us coming back.”

Volunteering isn’t just about giving your time — it’s about discovering your purpose, building lasting connections, and finding joy in service. Over the years, I’ve come to realize just how transformative the experience can be — not only for the organizations we support, but for our own personal growth and well-being.

Physical and Mental Health Benefits

From painting fences to swinging sledgehammers, volunteer work often keeps the body moving. And just as importantly, it keeps the mind sharp. Whether I’m learning a new safety procedure or figuring out how to operate a locomotive, there’s always something new to absorb.

I don’t think as much anymore about how sore I used to be at the end of the day — driving home and taking a salt bath to recover, or nursing sore shoulders from holding onto grab-irons and steps during switching. I still get tired, and it still takes effort to peel off the sweaty socks and work boots. But that fatigue is paired with a deep sense of accomplishment and purpose. I know I’m helping preserve history — and creating opportunities for others to enjoy, experience, or even relive it.

Mentorship That Comes Full Circle

One of the most rewarding parts of volunteering has been the chance to mentor others — just as I was mentored when I began. Whether I’m working with new volunteers at our museum or talking with friends at other museums who are just getting started, I’ve learned that sharing what I’ve picked up along the way helps others feel more confident and capable. I once told a friend who had just started volunteering at another museum, “The trains bring us together, but it’s the camaraderie that keeps us coming back.” I didn’t think much of it at the time, but over a year later, he reminded me of that moment. He had written down the quote and taped it to his refrigerator. When life gets overwhelming, he told me, that simple reminder helps him refocus and remember why volunteering brings him so much joy.

Everyone Has a Skill

I recently had a laugh with my “museum work bestie” during a phone call. We were listing our strengths — and laughing at how different they were. He’ll jump right in to repair a locomotive without hesitation. I, on the other hand, need to watch at least eight YouTube videos before I feel ready. He’s not great with computers, and I write software for accounting and logistics.

That’s the beauty of volunteering: there’s room for every kind of skillset. We find ourselves matched with tasks where we naturally shine — and others where we can stretch and grow. No matter your background, there’s a place for you.

The Power of Connection

On my very first day as a volunteer, I was paired with a longtime member to flag a crossing at 36th Street. That simple assignment led to an instant bond. Since then, every time I saw him, I greeted him by name and genuinely wanted to know how he was doing. He recently passed away, and I was reminded of that first day working with him. Despite his health issues, he remained active on the executive board and showed up at the museum to do whatever was needed. In fact, the day before he passed, he was still volunteering — spending time with

The Power of Volunteering (Cont.)

By Paul Stephens

friends, doing what he loved, and fulfilling a purpose. I'll miss his presence, but I find strength and inspiration in how he lived. That's the real power of volunteering: it connects, uplifts, and transforms — one task, one person, and one day at a time.

School Cars: How trains brought classrooms to children in remote communities

Adapted by Donald L. Jackson

“For 40 years, Canada’s trains brought schooling to children of railway workers, trappers, loggers and hunters...School trains. They were also known as school cars and schools on wheels.

The steam locomotives chugged and chuffed along the tracks of Northern Ontario, blowing their whistles and bringing schooling to children in isolated communities. Children of railway workers, trappers, loggers and hunters.

Children of the bush. Children who had no other way of accessing a physical school building. It was a novel six-month experiment that lasted 40 years, from 1926 to 1967.

The program was an unprecedented collaboration between Ontario’s then Department of Education and the railways: Canadian National and Canadian Pacific. It combined what we’d now call remote education, homeschooling and nation-building.”

<https://www.cbc.ca/radio/ideas/school-trains-cn-cp-railway-remote-education-1.6704732>

The first two trains left the grounds of the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto the evening of September 1926. Eventually, five more cars were added. Teachers were sought who had experience living in the remote north, and teaching in one-room schools.

The school trains stopped wherever there were children along the northern railway line which meant there could be as few as three or four students in a classroom, or as many as 15.

“The tiny number of students meant “there was no slack time. The teacher, Mr. Sloman, would spend 15-20 minutes with one and then 15-20 minutes with the other. And then begin again.”

The school car stopped in each location and remained for most of a week before a train arrived and pulled the school car and teacher to the next stop. A month later, the school car returned for another five days.

At their peak in the 1940s, as many as seven school trains operated. During the 1960s, the number of students. In 1967, the school car program came to an end.

<https://www.centralhuron.ca/en/recreation-and-events/cnr-school-on-wheels-museum.aspx>

CNR School on Wheels Museum

<https://normhc.com/>

Q. When did the first locomotive arrive in Oklahoma?

A: The first locomotive in Oklahoma arrived in Vinita on September 1, 1871, marking the arrival of the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad (A&P).

Trustee Meeting Updates

Trustee Meeting June 24, 2025

Approved Minutes of May meeting
Financials Review and Budget
Employee and Department Reports
Inspection Car 1045 Power Plant
Group Tour to the Enid Railroad Museum
on June 29th

Treasurer's Report & Expenditure Review
Status of Grants and Donations
Hi-Rail Truck Surplus
Perimeter Fence Agreement
Next meeting July 29, 2025



Schedule of Events

August 2nd, Run Day
August 16th, Run Day
August 30th, Run Day Labor Day
October 4 - 5 Motor Car Run AOK
October 8 - 12, Steam
October 11, Members' Meeting and Picnic
October 17 - 19, Steam
October 18, Railroaders Appreciation Day
October 18, Book Club
October 25th & 26th, Halloween Train
November 1st & 2nd, Train Show
November & December, Polar Express



Do you have a favorite recipe connected to railroading? Or a family tradition or custom from railroading in your family or friends that relates to Thanksgiving that you would like to share for the November, 2025 issue of The Dispatcher? If so, please send it to info@oklahomarailwaymuseum.org for consideration for publication.

Support The Museum

If you would like to make an immediate monetary donation to the ORM, [click here](#). Please note if you have a specific project or purpose you would like to support — we'll make sure the money goes where you want it to go.

[Make an online donation](#)

You can also donate to our endowment fund with the Oklahoma Community Foundation by [clicking here](#):

[Endowment Fund](#)

And finally, if you would like to set up planned giving like an annuity, estate, or other major contribution, [click here](#):

[Planned Giving](#)

Sponsor a Brick

You can purchase one of the bricks in our platform as a sponsorship or dedication for \$75 per brick. Order online now, or download our order form and send it through the mail to Oklahoma Railway Museum, 3400 NE Grand Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73111.

Please keep the following criteria in mind:

Maximum 3 lines

Maximum 16 characters per line including spaces

Please complete your form in capital letters

[Order A Brick Online](#)

[Download Mail-In Order Form](#)

Donate a Crosstie

You can donate for crossties, equipment, and facilities on the Museum property and the leased track by making a specific note on your monetary contribution. Crossties are a common purchase, and \$150 will purchase a new crosstie for the leased track.

To donate a crosstie, make a donation of \$50 online or send a check made out to Oklahoma Railway Museum Ltd. to Oklahoma Railway Museum, 3400 NE Grand Boulevard, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73111. Please note on your donation form or check what the money is for and whether there's a special dedication to someone.

[Donate A Crosstie Online](#)



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Our mailing address is:
Oklahoma Railway Museum
3400 NE Grand Blvd
Oklahoma City, OK 73111

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Oklahoma Railway Museum, LTD

3400 NE Grand Boulevard
Oklahoma City, OK 73111-4417

Return Service Requested

Timetable

- Oklahoma Railway Museum (ORM)** - Open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM
Closed on major holidays.
- ORM Train Rides** - First and third Saturdays, April through August at 11:00 AM, 1:00 PM and 3:00 PM
- ORM Board Meetings** - Last Tuesday of every month at Oklahoma Railway Museum - 7:00 PM
- Oklahoma "N" Rail** - For information, call Rick Inselman (405) 412-1552
- Oklahoma Model Railroad Association** - For information contact Phil Howell via email omratrains@gmail.com
- Central Oklahoma Garden Railroad Society** Contact information:
Steve Lemcke (405) 703-0209 e-mail steve.lemcke@att.net
Marshall Douglas (405) 290-8989
Steve Kamm (405) 685-3755 email skamm@college.occ.edu
- Passenger Rail Oklahoma** - Passenger Rail Oklahoma volunteers provide Amtrak depot hosting for the Heartland Flyer in City of Norman, OK most evenings, holidays, Saturdays, and Sundays. The depot opens at 7:50 AM. Contact Evan Stair at sfrr@aol.com, www.passengerrailok.org, or (405) 366-8957. Depot volunteer opportunities are available.
- Oklahoma S.W. Division NMRA** - 2nd Saturday of each month, 1:00 PM, Goldman Room, Kirkpatrick Center, Jim Heidon, President
- Yukon's Best Railroad Museum** - Thursday/Saturday/Sunday and by appointment. Located 1 block north of Main and UP tracks in Yukon. Call John Knuppel, (405) 354-5079, for times and information.
- Waynoka Station/Waynoka Historical Society** - 202 South Cleveland, Waynoka, (580) 614-1896. If you can help, call Charlene Bixler.

Corrections: Any changes to the above information or articles in "the Dispatcher" should be directed to the editor, at info@oklahomarailwaymuseum.org. For information on upcoming programs contact Anne Chilton at annem@oklahomarailwaymuseum.org.