



The

Milepost

Volume 46, Number 10 — October 2026

The official newsletter of the Pikes Peak Division

Rocky Mountain Region — National Model Railroad Association.



NEXT MEETING:

Friday, October 9th, 2026, at 7:00 PM

The New Sand Creek Police Station 950 Academy Park Loop

(Northeast of the intersection of Fountain/Academy)

Colorado Springs, Colorado

Calendar of Events

January 9th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Show & Tell Program: The History of the McKeen Motor Car and #22 of the Virginia & Truckee RR

February 13th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: MOW Program: Colorado Midland.... A Train Ride

March 13th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Rolling Stock Program: Blending your Background to your Layout

April 10th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Odd Ball Program: GM's Train of Tomorrow

May 8th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Offline Bldg Program: Colorado Springs & Cripple Creek District Railroad the Short Line

June 12th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Railroad Structure Program: The History of the McKeen Motor Car & #22 of the Virginia & Truckee Railroad

July 10th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Rolling Stock Program: Charles Marchbanks

August 14th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Diorama Program: Sequel; Colorado's Largest Rail Tragedy!

September 11th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Photos Proto Program: AI and MR

October 9th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Photo Model Program: David Solly

November 13th, 2026 (Friday)

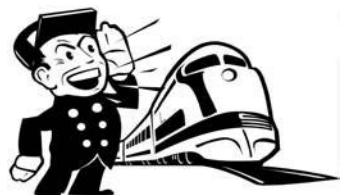
NMRA-PPD monthly meeting

Contest: Loco Steam/Diesel Program: Vintage

December 11th, 2026 (Friday)

NMRA-PPD monthly meeting.

Program: Christmas Party!



from this newsletter in other publications, newspapers, magazines, books, websites, etc., without explicit case-by-case permission. The editor of *The Milepost* is Mr. David Bristow. He can be contacted at the e-mail address dave@bristow-family.org. Thank you.

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The Milepost, Volume 46, Number 10, October 2026, is published monthly as an electronic document (Adobe PDF file) by and under the authority of the Pikes Peak Division (Rocky Mountain Region) of the National Model Railroad Association. Our meetings are usually held on the second Friday of each month at the Sand Creek Police Station, 950 Academy Park Loop (northeast of the intersection of Fountain and Academy), in Colorado Springs, Colorado, at 7:00 PM. Please come to one of our meetings. We would love to meet you. All scales are welcome. Besides our monthly meeting, we have swap meets, train shows, and other model railroads (and railroad) activities. Unless otherwise noted, all content in this journal is copyrighted to its respective owner. Please do not use content

Next Meeting on Friday, October 9

Our meeting will be at The Sand Creek Police Station, 950 Academy Park Loop (northeast of the intersection of Fountain and Academy), in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

2026 Schedule

- October David Solly
- November Ken Rambo
- December Christmas Party!

Editor's Thoughts

Scale Test Cars

A short time ago I had 9 tons of river rock delivered for my landscaping project. The company dumped the rocks on the road in front of my house so I spent about a day shoveling the rock into a wheelbarrow and then pushing it to where I needed the rock, then returning for another load, over and over. As I was shoveling the rock I wondered how the rock compared with coal that was used to fire steam locomotives. That lead me to ask Gemini how the two compared.

Ah—yes. 9 tons of landscape rock gives you a pretty good appreciation for what a steam-locomotive fireman was dealing with, although coal has one important advantage: it weighs considerably less for the same volume.

For comparison, a steam locomotive tender might carry something like 10–20 tons of coal, depending on the locomotive. A large road locomotive could carry considerably more.

But here's the kicker: the fireman didn't just shovel the coal once. He was continually moving it from the tender, across the deck, and through the firedoor into the firebox, breaking up the fire and distributing the coal where it was needed. On a hard-working locomotive, the amount of coal handled over a shift could be many times the tender's capacity.

So I spent a day moving 9 tons of rock, I experienced something analogous to the physical mass of a substantial amount of locomotive coal—but a fireman could potentially handle many tons of coal during a single shift, with a shovel, while standing next to a firebox that could be several thousand degrees.

And there's another interesting comparison: coal being lighter than my river rock actually made the fireman's job somewhat easier per shovel load—but it also meant more shovelfuls for the same weight of fuel.

A typical shovel load might have been on the order of 15–25 lb of coal. At 20 lb per shovel, moving 9 tons would require about: $18,000 \div 20 = 900$ shovel loads.

And that's just nine tons once—not accounting for all the lifting, swinging, throwing, and positioning. It's a pretty sobering way to think about steam-era railroad labor.

Comparing railroad coal with landscaping river rock, the big difference is bulk density—how much a given volume weighs.

Material	Typical bulk density	Approx. weight per cubic yard
Bituminous coal (railroad coal)	45–55 lb/ft ³	1,215–1,485 lb
Anthracite coal	50–60 lb/ft ³	1,350–1,620 lb
River rock (landscaping)	95–110 lb/ft ³	2,565–2,970 lb
Small river gravel	100–115 lb/ft ³	2,700–3,105 lb

So, a cubic yard of landscaping river rock generally weighs about twice as much as a cubic yard of coal.

The first locomotive to burn coal in the USA was the Stourbridge Lion, 1829, which was built in England by Foster, Rastrick & Co. and imported by the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company. It made its first run at Honesdale, Pennsylvania, on August 8, 1829. The railroad connected the Pennsylvania coal fields with the D&H Canal.

It burned anthracite coal. Its tender held approximately ¼ ton (500 lb) of coal.

It was a tiny locomotive by later standards:

- Wheel arrangement: 0-4-0
- Weight: about 7 tons
- Boiler pressure: 50 psi
- Drivers: 48 inches
- Grate area: 8 sq. ft.
- Coal: anthracite
- Coal capacity: about 500 lb
- Cylinders: vertical, driving through walking beams

It was ultimately abandoned because its roughly 7-ton weight was too much for the lightly built track.

In 1830, Peter Cooper built the little Tom Thumb for the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. It was another coal-burning locomotive, and it was built in the United States. On August 28, 1830, Cooper demonstrated it by carrying B&O directors toward Ellicott's Mills.

The Best Friend of Charleston is especially significant because it became the first American-built locomotive to enter regularly scheduled public service, beginning on Christmas Day 1830.

And there's an interesting connection to my 9 tons of rock; the Stourbridge Lion's entire coal supply was only about 500 pounds. I moved 18,000 pounds of river rock. That's the equivalent of 36 fully loaded Stourbridge Lion tenders worth of material.

And remember, that little locomotive's fireman had to shovel that coal while the locomotive was operating, rather than simply moving it from one pile to another.

It also makes the later evolution of the American steam locomotive pretty remarkable. Within roughly 20 years, locomotives went from something like the Stourbridge Lion to engines capable of carrying several tons of coal in their tenders and burning it at rates that would make my 9-ton rock-moving experience look rather modest.

Once you put actual numbers on it, your 9 tons of landscaping rock comparison becomes pretty remarkable. The important qualification is that there isn't one number for "coal per hour." It depended enormously on locomotive size, train load, grade, coal quality, and whether the engine was hand-fired or had a mechanical stoker.

The progression in the United States

Era / locomotive	Approx. coal handled	What that meant for the fireman
1830s small locomotives	Hundreds of lb/hr	Relatively small fires; much less demanding than later engines
Late 1800s, larger locomotives	~1,500–3,000 lb/hr	Sustained hand firing became serious physical work
Early 1900s large hand-fired engines	~4,000–5,000 lb/hr	About the practical limit for one fireman
1920s–30s large freight engines with stokers	~5,000–10,000+ lb/hr	Fireman still worked hard, but the stoker moved the bulk of the coal
Big late steam, e.g. Big Boy	~20,000–25,000 lb/hr	Mechanical stoker did the actual coal feeding

The frequently cited upper limit for a hand-firing American fireman was about 5,000 lb/hour. Sources discussing locomotive firing give a typical U.S. figure of roughly six 14-lb shovel loads per minute, which works out to about 5,000 lb/hr.

Now compare that with my 9 tons (18,000lbs), which I moved. If a fireman were hand-firing at 5,000 lb/hour, he would move the equivalent of your entire 9 tons in: $18,000 \div 5,000 = 3.6$ hours

And that's a very important distinction:

I moved 9 tons of rock. A fireman could move 9 tons of coal through a shovel in roughly four hours—but while standing on a moving locomotive, next to a furnace, maintaining a fire, and doing it repeatedly. And the shovel loads weren't trivial. At 14 lb per shovel, 5,000 lb/hr means: or about 357 shovel loads per hour or approximately; one shovel every 10 seconds.

That's an astonishing amount of repetitive lifting.

David

Keepin' it on the Tracks

By Mark Fuerstenberger

Rail Proto Meet (RPM) – October 16th - 18th, 2026 – Greeley, CO

The event will be held at the Island Grove Event Center in Greeley. You are encouraged to bring anything from locomotives, rolling stock, structures, dioramas, trees, people, and even track plans. If you are modeling it, you can bring it, and they want to see it!

\$35 fee / includes layout tours on Friday and both days at the show.

\$25 – Saturday only Admission

\$15 – Sunday only Admission

Visit: <https://corpm.org/> for more details.

Division SWAP meet – TBD – Colorado Springs, CO

The Pikes Peak Division is still considering a winter swap meet. We are looking in to details around the first weekend in December. More details and decisions to be made at the Division meeting this month.

Division Christmas Party – December 11th, Sand Creek Police Station, Colorado Springs, CO

The Pikes Peak Division will be holding our annual Christmas party at 7:00pm. We do a potluck dinner followed by Men & Women Christmas gift exchange. And then there are normally some additional presents from the Division to anyone that has purchased a drawing ticket throughout the past year. We welcome everyone to show up and join in the fun.

Save the Date: 2027 Rocky Mountain Region Convention – May 13th – 15th, 2027 - Cheyenne, WY

The people in our region have been planning the next convention. It will be held in Cheyenne, WY along with some additional events in Greeley, CO. While details are still be finalized, get these dates on your calendar so that you can attend.

Rocky Mountain Region Website

The RMR region website just underwent a total rebuild. Be sure to check it out now. The website has the latest events and information from the region. <https://www.rmr-nmra.org>

NMRA Interchange

If you like to be online, you should check out the NMRA Interchange. You'll need to create a login on the Discord website. <https://discord.com/> From there you'll need your login information to the

NMRA website, and once you're there check out the link to the Interchange.

<https://www.nmra.org/members/nmra-interchange> You'll find a few simple steps to get setup.

This setup process is only required the first time, and after that it's easy to jump online and see what others are doing. The site also allows for easy conversations, just like you might do on Zoom. I encourage you to check it out.

Drawing Prizes Preview

By Tony Pawlicki

"Teaser" preview of some prizes available at the drawing during intermission at the OCTOBER 2026 Pikes Peak Division NMRA meeting. The idea is to entice more members to our meetings. **HEY – feel free - encouraged, even - to bring/donate surprise items! The more the merrier! (ALERT: We have exhausted ALL of the various donations from Wade Mountz, Alan Hutchins and Mr. Lugg; November's were the last of Andy Buco's donations as well.)**

Reminder: per consensus at the December 2025 meeting, the excess Christmas party gifts are being spread out over this year's drawings.

(SOME OF) THE OCTOBER MEETING OFFERINGS (**feel free to contribute more at the meeting; some more of Wade's freebies will also be available, free to good homes**); for variety, two eras of rolling stock and two types of structure:

CNJ 86721. HO scale model of a 50-foot gondola. A beautifully assembled classic Ulrich cast zinc model of a WWII composite (wood and steel) gondola (3-47 shop date). Lots of goodies: wood floor, formed wire end grab irons, Kadee #5 couplers, Kadee sprung trucks, Kadee 33-inch wheels with shined treads. One of the excess Christmas present drawing prizes. (Such a beautiful job, I might have swiped it myself if it were even close to my era.)



MD&W 15027. HO scale McKean Models Master Series kit of an Evans/ACF 50-foot combination door lumber boxcar. "NEW 4-70." Some work already done: A-Line brass stirrup steps, Kadee weathered trucks and wheelsets with Kadee 33-inch wheels with shined treads. One of the excess Christmas present drawing prizes.



PIKESTUFF Building. HO scale Pikestuff kit model of a modern mid-sized (60 by 40 scale feet) industrial building. New in package. A recent donation.



Roadside Diner. HO scale Walthers Cornerstone series kit model of a 1950s or 1960s typical road-side diner, with refrigerator shed outbuilding. New-in-box. Interior details. A recent donation.



UP1616 – The Abraham Lincoln

By Mark Fuerstenberger

President Abraham Lincoln played an important role in the development of the Transcontinental Railroad. On July 1, 1862, during the Civil War, President Lincoln signed the Pacific Railway Act, which authorized the construction of a railroad connecting the eastern United States with the Pacific Coast. The law provided federal support for the project through land grants and government bonds.

The Pacific Railway Act designated two companies to build the railroad. The Union Pacific Railroad would construct tracks westward from Omaha, Nebraska, while the Central Pacific Railroad would

build eastward from Sacramento, California. The railroad was intended to improve transportation, encourage settlement and economic growth in the West, and strengthen connections between different parts of the country.

Unfortunately, President Lincoln did not live to see the railroad completed, as he was assassinated in April 1865, while construction was still underway. Four years later, on May 10, 1869, the two railroads met at Promontory Summit in Utah, creating the first transcontinental railroad. By connecting the nation by rail, this drastically reduced travel time across the country and helped transform American commerce and transportation.

To honor & recreate that important event in history, the National Parks Service created 2 replica engines, the Jupiter & the No. 119. Pictured below is Union Pacific 119.



In 2025, Union Pacific honored President Lincoln's legacy of connecting the nation and unleashing economic innovation with a specially painted commemorative locomotive, No. 1616. Locomotive UP1616 serves as a lasting tribute to Lincoln's vision. The locomotive was designed with the unique colors from President Lincoln's era, and serves as a nod to locomotive No. 119. Fun Fact: Before becoming UP1616, the locomotive was originally painted as UP4015, which the Union Pacific Steam program had been using as a support locomotive.



After a year of waiting, I finally received my pre-ordered UP1616 from Walthers this month, and am proudly displaying it on my display track in my office at work. That is along side another red, white, & blue locomotive since it is America 250.



Show and Tell

By Tony Pawlicki

This note lays out rules for the **Show And Tell** session/contest at the OCTOBER 2026 Pikes Peak Division NMRA meeting. Free-form show-and-tell really has no rules, just do a little presentation. The *salvage and resurrection* topic is ANYTHING AT ALL that you have rescued from a fate worse than the wastebasket.

This event was announced a bit over two months in advance (in the MILEPOST just before the September meeting) in order to give folks enough time to prepare their entries. For OCTOBER, there is a salvage and resurrection contest, topic: ANYTHING AT ALL that you have rescued from a fate worse than the wastebasket.

As a reminder, starting with the June 2024 meeting, we now have two parts to the event:

- The **theme-specific** contest/presentation (for August it is ANYTHING AT ALL).
- **Free-form show-and-tell**, on any topic you choose. This feature was added by popular request - folks had been suggesting this to our Superintendent.

GENERAL IDEA for the theme-specific part (ANYTHING AT ALL this month):

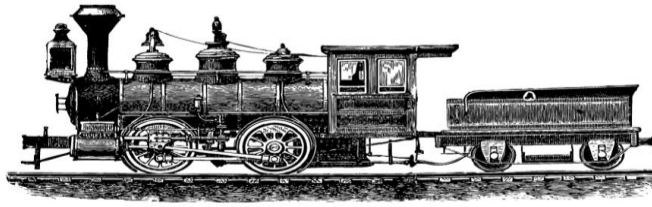
- Grab an old failed project you couldn't bring yourself to discard (or a disaster picked up at a train show or store – or even the remains after an unplanned encounter with an uncarpeted floor).
- Plan a fix (turning it into something good, though not necessarily creating what you originally planned), then actually fix it.
- Bring it, display it, then after regular model contest, stand up and tell us about your adventures.
- **The show-and-tell aspect is the main thing.** Given enough entries (3), there'll be a contest aspect too, but main goals are having fun salvaging something and entertaining the rest of us with the way you had fun.

THIS SESSION'S THEME: ANYTHING AT ALL, still aiming at broader participation.

EXAMPLES:

- An example and the rules were provided in the April 2023 Milepost.
- To remind us that a salvage and resurrection project need not be a huge effort, the **January 2025 Milepost provided an example (SALVAGING INTERNATIONAL HOBBY CORP. (IHC) DTI 10175) where just one major change was needed to "save" the model.**

- This was also an example of **a model that needed saving right out of the box**. A model doesn't always need saving just due to having lived a rough life post-purchase.



September 2026 Minutes

Secretary, John Emmot

The regular monthly meeting was called to order by Superintendent, Mark Fuerstenberger at 7:02 in the community room of the Sand Creek Police Station. There were 21 members.

Secretary Report

The minutes of the August meeting were accepted as published.

Treasurers Report

Tony presented hard and soft copies of the treasurer report. The statement reflected the interest payment, the drawing and the credit card payment to Digitimber for another 3 months of web hosting. The statement was accepted as presented.

Announcements

Mark showed a short video on 9/11 that David Bristow had compiled.

Mark and John gave an update on Mel McFarland's condition.

Mark noted that Copar hobbies had opened a new store on N Academy in Colorado Springs. They have been good in Denver, we hope they will do well here.

Elizabeth had the sign up sheet for 2027 programs. Everyone with information to share was encouraged to do a presentation.

Charles Marchbanks said the display went well in the absence of Mark. He has what appears to be a locomotive axle that was found on the layout if anyone is missing one. Dave Blackham discussed talking trains with many of the visitors enjoying the layout. There was preliminary discussion of if we wanted to go back in 2027.

Mark showed a strawman sample of the new website that he and his crew of programmers have been working on. There was general agreement that it is a great improvement over the current version. They are hoping to be able to host it locally before we need to renew the Digitimber subscription in December.

Plans for the Cripple Creek Railroad Fall outing the next day were discussed. Plan to ride the 11:10 departure. Everyone should plan to buy their own tickets prior to boarding.

The Greeley Proto Rail Show is October 16-17. Many high end vendors are usually in attendance.

A fall PPD swapmeet at the Methodist Church on the west side was discussed. The first weekend of December was mentioned, but it would have to be confirmed with the church. It would also have to be checked for interference with other events. Expect a format similar to what we did in the past.

Program

David Bristow presented an update on the capabilities and uses of AI for model railroading. He presented a chronology of AI development. And gave examples of some direct uses and of using AI to create useful applications for tracking and operations. There may be things that can be found and

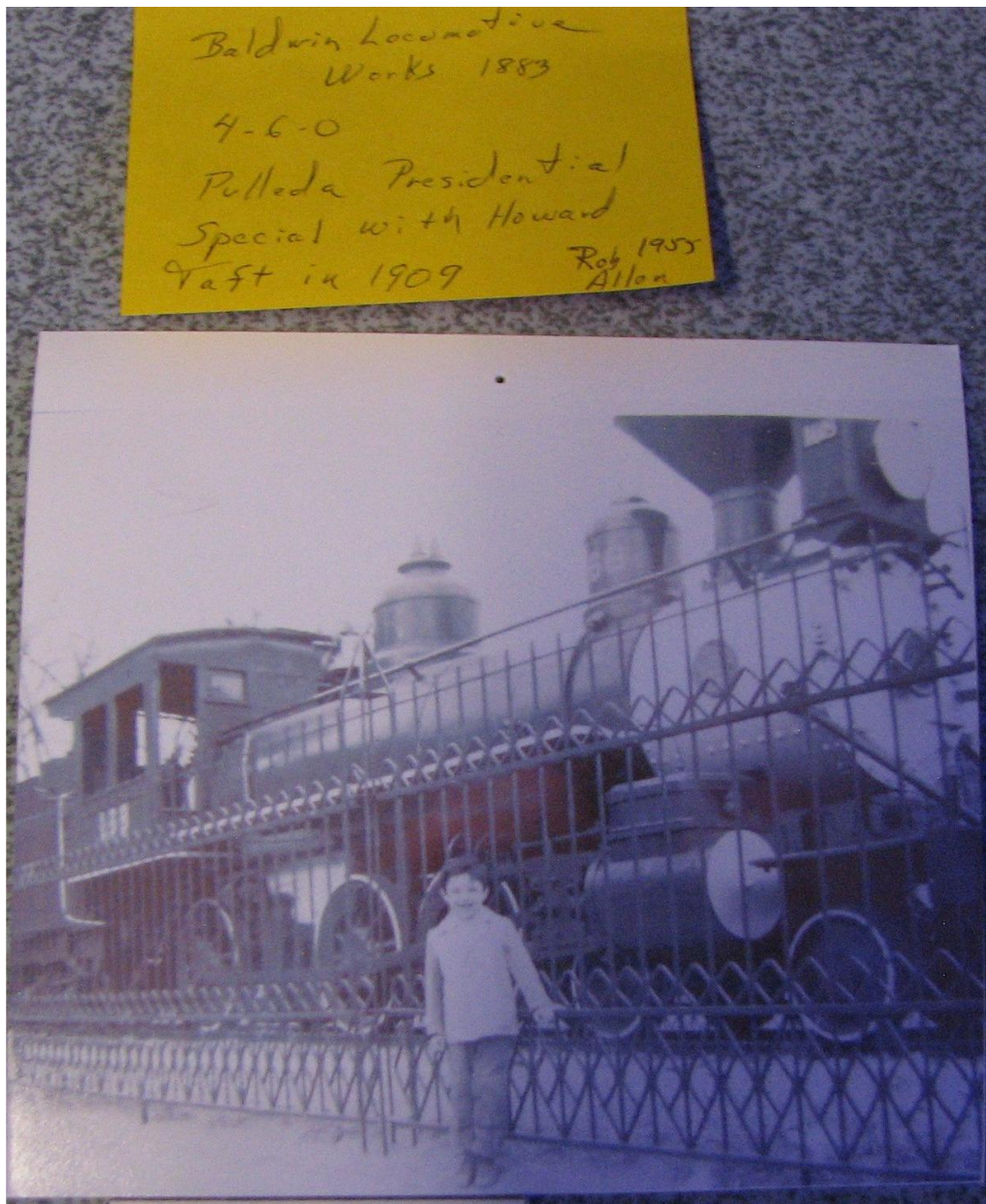
down loaded from the internet ready to use, but in many cases some programming may be necessary to customize the application to your needs.

Contest

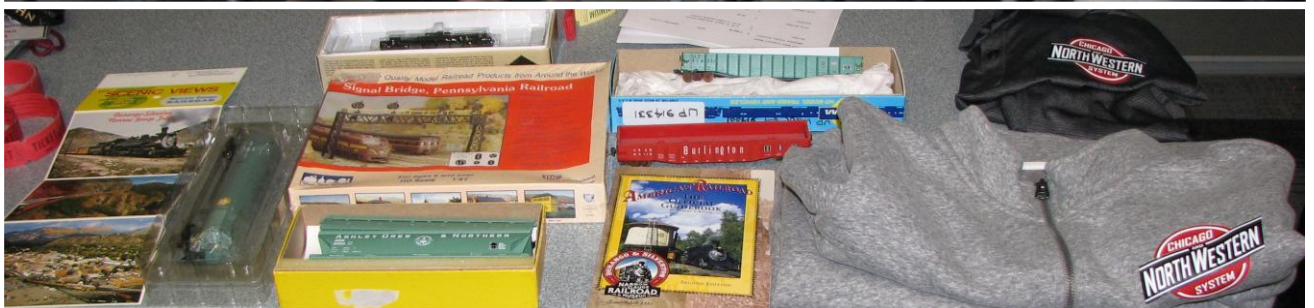
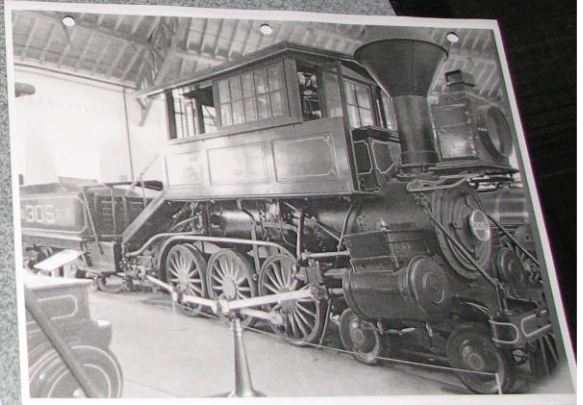
The results of the prototype photo contest were announced. Dave Bristow's C&TS was third, Ken Rambo's Daylight was second and Rob Allan's boy and shay was first.

The drawing followed the contest.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 PM.







AI & Model Railroading

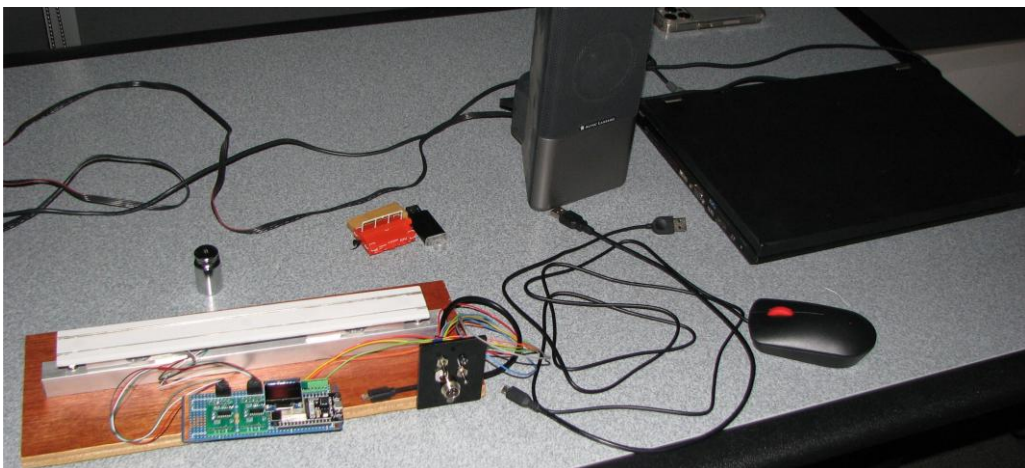
David J. Belskew
11 September 2026

Revolutionizing Model Railroading through Technology



Chronology of the Mind: Key Eras of AI History

- 1950–1956 Foundational Theories & The Birth of AI
- 1956–1974 First Golden Age & Symbolic AI
- 1974–1980 The First AI Winter
- 1980–1993 Expert Systems & The Second Winter
- 1993–2011 Quiet Progress & Deep Blue, Watson
- 2011–2020 The Deep Learning Explosion
- 2020–Present The Generative AI Revolution





PIKES PEAK “N”GINEERS MODEL RAILROAD CLUB

**By Mike Peck
Superintendent's Corner**

Hello All

We have some exciting things going on at the club this month. On October 10th we have the clubs Anniversary dinner at the Airplane Restaurant, the club is paying for dinner for the members and their spouse, if you bring guests you will have to pay for them.

I want to welcome our newest member Marc Cozzitorto to the club. Marc joined us at the beginning of September and has run trains at the clubhouse, and he also joined us at the Dino Resource Center.

We pulled the long cabinet out from under the layout and now have access to the wiring under the yards on the layout, so hopefully getting them fully operational will be easier and faster, and it also gives us access to get the mountain line approaches wired so the mountain line will no longer be isolated from the rest of the layout. There are wires hanging down under the layout, so if you put anything under it please be careful not to snag them. We will get them out of the way and secure as soon as we are able.

If you missed it, we had a great weekend at the Dinosaur Resource Center in Woodland Park and met a lot of great people and possibly a couple of new members. We had a great open house in September, we had a good membership turnout, and I was happy to see a couple of members show up that normally do not attend. In case you didn't know we serve lunch on open house Saturday just fyi, and we will be alternating between jimmy johns sandwiches and dominos pizza, but if you plan to attend, I need a headcount, so we make sure we have enough food. The club does have Refrigerator Magnets and Keychains for sale, contact Mike if interested.

That's all for now,

Brian
Superintendent
Pikes Peak N Gineers Model Railroad Club

Dino Show

This was our first September Dino show and the weather was wonderful. We did some changing to the power cables and how we covered them for this show.

Friday – Arrangements were made to get into the facility at 1 pm instead of 2 due to the new power cable work we had to do. Once we had all the tables set up and tablecloths in place we started adding the modules. Once the modules were in place we started adding the new power cables. Then we tested the yellow DCC line to see where we needed to add any power drops. We encountered some issues with the Raspberry pie and Earl was able to take care of that issue.

Saturday – Members started arriving at 9 am to get in and finish set up. We had trains running on all three lines. We finished setting up the switching puzzle and were ready for visitors.

The crowd was steady but not overwhelming. I was busy with the switching puzzle for a short time and gave away 5 of the key chairs Steve made for the event.

Sunday – When Brian first arrived, he was informed that the Dino Resource Center had over booked a birthday party and could we reduce the size of the layout before 1 pm. Once Mary & I arrived I took a quick look at what we could do. Since we were not open to the public yet, I said let's get it done now. We got the layout reduced to half of its original size and the modules and tablecloths put away. We also took down the switching puzzle as that table was needed. We were kind of grumpy the rest of the day.



Saturday groups getting trains running.



Sunday - with half the layout being gone, this is what we did until closing time.



The blue table throws to cover wiring.



A couple of future model railroaders?



Dave, Lucas, Kristin and Lee Saturday.



The Dave on Sunday.

The birthday party started around 2:30 and we didn't have any customers at that time, so we decided to tear down. With everyone working on getting everything put into racks and boxes, we were packed up on the road by 3:50.

On a good note we may have a couple of customers interested in joining the club, we'll see!

Clubroom Workings

Superintendent Hunter would like the club to start doing some operations soon. Over the last few month as we have done some track repairs and got all the blue yard trackage and switches working, mostly just a good cleaning of switch points and some cold solder joints.

The red yard trackage and switches are our next big project. There are some wiring issues we are working on and trying to get fixed. We plan to have the trackage from the blue yard to the green line wired and operational. We had a problem with this part of the project due to a long cabinet blocking access to this wiring project. Last Saturday, Brian, Steve, Joe and Mike took care of that problem. Now to crawl under the layout to do the wiring. This will be the easy part; the hard part is getting us old geezers up off the floor when we finish.



Brian and Steve dismantling the cabinet

Brian giving it another wack.

In Memorium



Mel McFarland 1944 – 2026

On Monday September 21, 2026 we lost our friend and great railroad historian Mel McFarland. Mel will be greatly missed!

Editor's Notes

I don't have a lot say at this point. The loss of Mel kind of took the wind out of my sails. Just keep the photos and stories coming.

The Lighter Rail

By Kristin Phillips
Hobo Stew

The weather has turned a bit nipier. A few mornings have fog in them before it burns off. Our menus start changing and the crockpot comes out. Suddenly, soups and stews sound good. The hobo camps made stew.

Some of you may remember hearing the Stone Soup story. The traditional European folk story is a story about cooperation, sharing, and community. Many variations exist however the lessons it teaches are consistent in all variations. One plot begins with hungry soldiers, another with hungry travelers, and yet another with hungry monks. The group arrives at a village and find the villagers,

either through a poor harvest or fear of food scarcity have had hidden all their food to keep it for themselves and refuse to share any of it with travelers. Instead of begging, the travelers decide to use a clever strategy.

The travelers fill a big pot with water, drop a stone into it and place it over a fire in the village square. Curious villagers gather round to see what they are doing. The travelers enthusiastically explain they are making stone soup. Tasting the water the travelers exclaim how delicious it is although it would taste better if it had a little bit of cabbage in it. One villager wanting to taste the soup, goes home and returns with a cabbage. The process repeats with a request for an onion then a carrot, potatoes, a bit of beef, and salt. In the end the travelers take out the stone, and the villagers and the travelers eat a hearty soup, a feast for all. So it seems something is made from nothing.

Hobos in a jungle camp did a similar thing between 1929 and 1939, especially near the Southern Pacific line. A #10 tin can hung over a fire could feed twenty men. Meals that cost almost nothing kept twelve million men alive in those years. There was no recipe for the stew. It was survival disguised as brotherhood, hope boiled down to its essence. All men were equal because everyone donated something. If you didn't contribute, you didn't eat. It became known as mulligan stew or philosopher's stew. Contributions varied from stolen potatoes to vegetables, and if the stew pot was lucky, a bit of meat scraps on a bone. Even dandelion greens went into the pot and the greens prevented scurvy. Wild onions were free, salvaged tomato paste cans created flavor, and bacon grease and flavor became tasty combinations. The stew created conversation, formed friendships, and created community contact. Like the three Musketeers it was one for all and all for one. It allowed men too proud to accept charity to eat as they had contributed to the pot.

Just like hobo stew all of us have talents to contribute to the whole. By combining our knowledge, sharing our wisdom, and having a vision to enrich the group we all win.

Classic Railroad Heritage Beef Stew:

Prep: 25 min | **Cook:** 150 min | **Servings:** 6 | **Calories:** ~420 per serving

Ingredients:

- 1.5 lbs. beef chuck roast, cubed
- 3 medium carrots, diced
- 2 large potatoes, diced
- 1 large onion, diced.
- 4 cups beef broth
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 1 tsp salt, ½ tsp black pepper
- 2 tbsp oil

Method:

1. Season beef with salt and pepper; sear in batches in a heavy pot over medium-high heat until deeply browned, then set aside.
2. In the same pot, sauté onion for 5 min, add carrots and potatoes, stir in broth and thyme, scraping up browned bits.
3. Return beef to pot, cover, and simmer on low for 2.5 hours until beef is fork-tender and vegetables are cooked through.
4. Serve hot; reheat the leftovers gently in a 350°F oven or microwave.

Tip: This stew improves in flavor after 1–2 days

And a bonus recipe:

Railroad Pie: a ground beef and cornbread casserole (You Tube, catherinesplates.com)

Ground beef is browned with onion and bell pepper, then combined with Rotel tomatoes, cream-style corn, tomato soup, chicken broth, and seasonings as the base layer. A cornbread topping

made from muffin mix, milk, egg, cream-style corn, and cheddar cheese is spread over the meat mixture, optionally garnished with jalapeños, and baked until golden brown for a comforting, flavorful dish.

Step by step

Brown Beef: Cook 2 lbs. ground beef in skillet; add diced bell pepper and onion to soften.

Drain & Season: Remove excess grease, then mix in Rotel, cream corn, tomato soup, broth, and spices

Simmer: Let meat mixture simmer for 15 minutes

Make Cornbread: Combine muffin mix, milk, egg, cream corn, and cheddar cheese

Assemble: Spread cornbread batter over meat; top with optional jalapeños

Bake: Cook at 400°F for 20–25 minutes until golden; rest 10 minutes before serving

Highlights

Beef Base: Brown beef with onion, pepper, and seasonings for a flavorful casserole base.

Cornbread Topping: Mix corn muffin mix, milk, egg, corn, and cheese for the crust.

Bake & Serve: Top meat with batter, bake until golden, rest, then enjoy warm comfort.

Q&A

How did this recipe get its name?

A: The cook explains that they discovered the recipe while Thomas was researching his ancestry and found relatives who had worked for the railroad. This dish, called Railroad Pie, had been passed down among them but never reached their family until recently. It's essentially ground beef and cornbread casserole with its own flavor twist.

What flavors go into the meat layer?

A: The meat layer starts with browned ground beef combined with diced bell pepper and onion, then drained of excess grease. It's flavored with Rotel tomatoes (with green chilies), cream-style corn, tomato soup, chicken broth, and seasonings like salt, black pepper, garlic powder, and chili powder. The mixture is simmered so the flavors meld before being topped with cornbread.

What's in the cornbread topping?

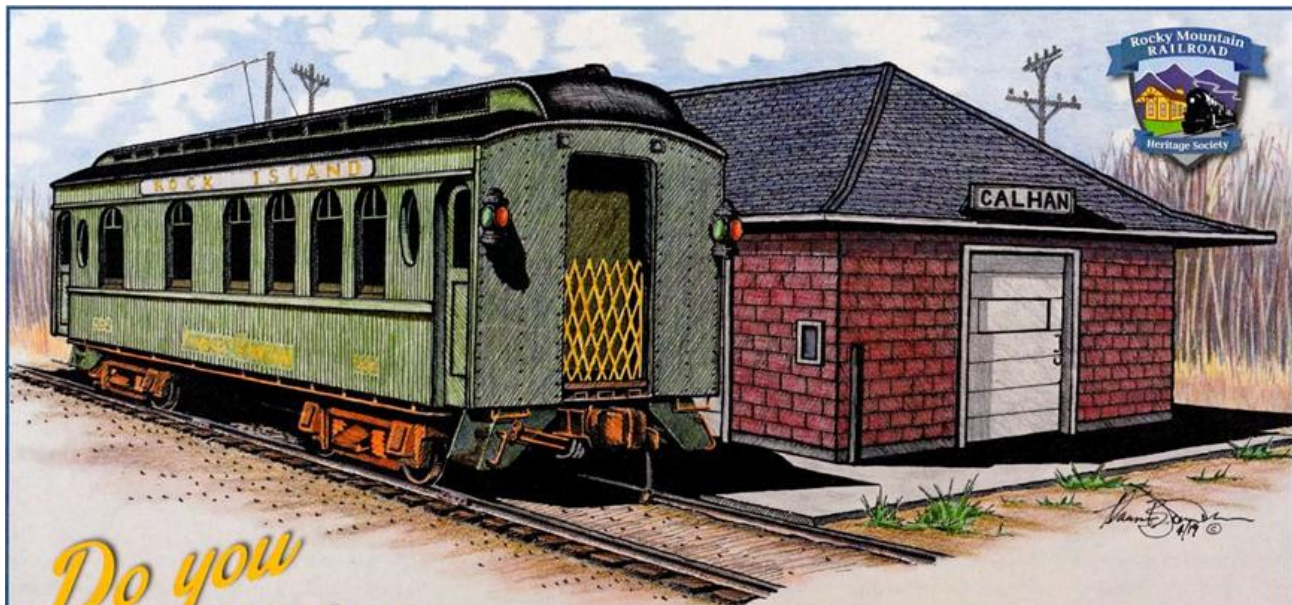
A: The cornbread topping is made from an 8.5-ounce box of corn muffin mix blended with milk, an egg, cream-style corn, and shredded sharp cheddar cheese. This creates a moist, cheesy batter spread evenly over the meat mixture. Optionally, seeded jalapeño slices can be placed on top before baking to add mild heat.

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