

The New Desert Dispatch

From the Business Car

ARHS TIMETABLE

Tempe Museum Work Sessions

Monday & Wednesday
9:00am to 3:00pm
Tempe Museum
2530 S. Rural Rd.
Tempe, AZ

Annual Banquet

Saturday, October 24,
4 pm to 6:30 pm
Lin's Grand Buffet
3955 E. Baseline Rd.
Phoenix, AZ.

2026 Events

The Hobbyist Model Train Show

1st Sat. of the Month,
7am
1764 W. Broadway Rd.
Mesa, AZ

ARHS Swap Meet

Saturday Nov. 14, 9am
Glendale Christian
Church
9661 59th Ave
Glendale, AZ

Hello ARHS!

Craig Faris, President ARHS

I'd like to congratulate our newly elected BOD members, VP-elect Bob Gibbs, Board member-elect John Mick, and reelected Treasurer Dan Kubarych. I also want to thank our outgoing members, VP Ken Nelson and Board member Dennis Ranke. You guys have been instrumental in shaping our organization over the past two years. Although you no longer hold office, your input will be just as valuable.

We have many irons in the fire for the upcoming year. We'll pursue the grants we've received over the last several years and move forward with four swap meets, two in the East Valley and two in Glendale. Revenue from our tenant will help defray expenses.

Non-layout tasks may include painting the building and parking structure and installing a utility sink in the storage room. In the next couple of weeks, we'll reorganize the new workshop so we can hold our general membership meetings there. More space! Of course, we'll need more chairs!

Our annual banquet is October 24th, 4 pm, at Lin's Chinese Buffet, Please bring your spouse or guest. We'll have our usual year-end recap slideshow and lots of yummy food. It's all you can eat, so don't eat lunch, LOL. The banquet is a great opportunity for the wives to get together and talk about us. The slideshow will show them what we're doing when we're not home doing honey-do's. This year's TOBODA award winner will also be announced.

Dennis has informed us this will be his last event as Social Chair. I want to thank him for all his hard work organizing events over the last few years. These events help us stay connected socially. I'll need to appoint another Social Chair, so if you're interested, please let me know.

With Christmas coming quickly, we may have another opportunity to hold an open house for the public. More to come.

In September 2027, the AZ Division of the NMRA PSR is hosting the Regional Convention. Our group is well represented on the organizing committee. It would be fantastic to get as many of our guys to volunteer and attend as possible. You can register online at: azdiv-NMRA.org I'm sure we'll all have a great time.

In closing, we have the best group of model railroaders in the Valley. I'm blessed that you continue to allow me to be a small part of it.

Thank you, *Craig*

NMRA EVENTS

PSR AZ-Division Meet

Scottsdale

**Sat. Oct. 17,
8 am - 5 pm**

Scottsdale

Congregational United
Church of Christ
4425 N Granite Reef Rd.
Scottsdale, AZ 85251

Future PSR Regional Convention

**Wed. Sept 29th to
Saturday Oct 3rd,
2027**

Sheraton Mesa Hotel -
Wrigleyville,
860 N. Riverview Dr.,
Mesa, AZ. 85201

Future National Conventions

2027

Puget Sound Express

Tacoma WA

Aug. 10 - 15

2028

Rochester, NY

2029

Indianapolis, IN

Volume 26 Issue 8

October 2026

Modeling Tip: Make Corrugated Metal Siding from Aluminum Foil

Story by Dennis Ranke

Need corrugated metal siding for an old shed, warehouse, or trackside building? You can make convincing material from something already in your kitchen—aluminum foil.

Start with a piece of ordinary household foil slightly larger than the finished panel. To create the corrugations, place the foil over a piece of commercially made corrugated siding and gently press it into the grooves with a cotton swab or soft eraser. If you don't have a siding pattern, tightly spaced ridges on certain plastic packaging can also serve as a form.

Work slowly because the foil can tear. Once the corrugations are formed, carefully lift the foil and cut it into individual sheets using a sharp hobby knife and straightedge.

Glue the panels to your structure with a thin coat of contact cement or another adhesive suitable for metal. Slightly overlapping the individual panels gives the building a more realistic appearance.

Now comes the fun part—weathering. Start with a coat of dull gray or galvanized-metal paint. Add rust-colored acrylic paint with a small sponge, concentrating on edges, seams, and around nail locations.

For an older structure, bend a corner or dent a panel slightly.

Best of all, the raw material costs only pennies!

Making Corrugated Siding from Aluminum Foil

An easy and inexpensive way to add realistic metal siding to your model buildings.

1 Start with a sheet of foil.
Use ordinary household aluminum foil. Cut a piece slightly larger than the panel you need.



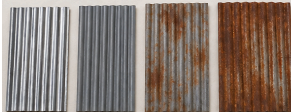
2 Form the corrugations.
Place the foil over a piece of commercially made corrugated siding (or a similar ribbed surface) and gently press it into the grooves with a cotton swab, eraser, or your fingers.



3 Cut the panels.
Carefully remove the foil and cut it to size with a sharp hobby knife and straightedge.



4 Paint and weather.
Prime with a dull gray or galvanized color, then add rust and grime with acrylic paints. Slightly overlap panels when installing on your building.



Finished result.
A realistic-looking corrugated metal structure made from aluminum foil.



ARHS Officers 2026-27

President - Craig Faris
 Vice President - Bob Gibbs
 Secretary - Dave Brown
 Treasurer - Dan Kubarych
 Director - John Mick
 Director - Dewayne Koltin
 Past President - Don Stewart

The New Desert Dispatch is a publication of the Arizona Railroad Historical Society. Views expressed by guest authors are their own and do not reflect the opinions or positions of the ARHS.
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Mission Statement

The Arizona Railroad Historical Society strives to create a world class railroad experience which includes history, education and railroad operations centered around the state of Arizona.

Arizona Railroad Historical Society



TOBODA - An ARHS Tradition

Story by Dennis Ranke

For more than a decade, the TOBODA Award has recognized Society members who have gone above and beyond in their service to the organization.

TOBODA stands for The Out Going Board of Directors Award. The award was created in 2014 by the West Valley Railroad Historical Society, a predecessor of ARHS. The idea was to recognize an active member who is an excellent modeler, and contributed their time and talents in other ways, above and beyond what would normally be expected.

The question was, who should select the recipient? It was decided that the fairest way was to have the outgoing members of the Board of Directors make the choice. Today, that consists of three outgoing board members. From that process came the name TOBODA.

The award is a little different from many other Society awards. There is no application to fill out and members do not nominate themselves. Instead, the outgoing Board looks back over the years and considers the members who have stepped forward to help wherever they were needed. It might be working at events, helping around the museum, assisting with projects, or simply being one of those dependable people who can always be counted on.

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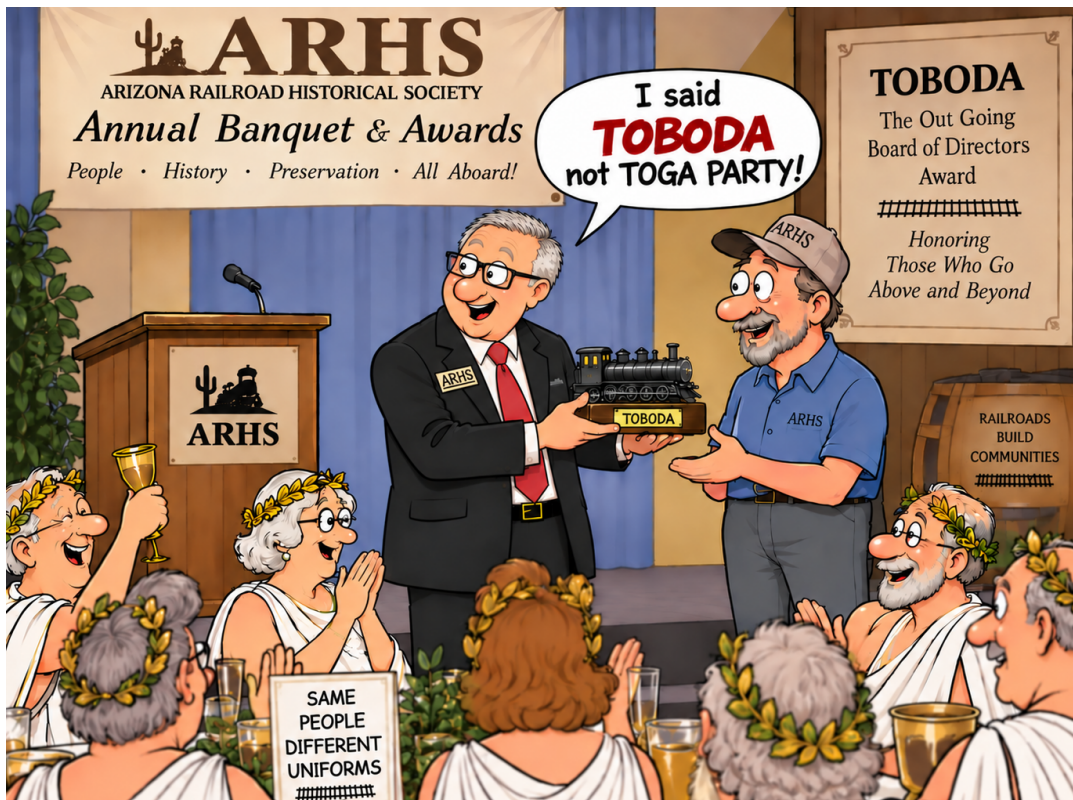
Over the years, many Society members have volunteered hundreds of hours helping make our organization successful. Not every job is highly visible, and many are done quietly behind the scenes. The TOBODA Award is one way of saying thank you and recognizing that extra effort.

The award has been presented at the Annual Banquet for 11 of the past 12 years. The only exception was 2020, when no award was presented.

The award itself has also changed over the years. For the first five years, recipients received a railroad spike with small welded pieces forming what looked like a Gandy Dancer working the track. When this award became unavailable we switched to a 2-6-2 engine molded out of simulated coal.

TOBODA Recipients

2014	Don Stewart	2020	?
2015	?	2021	Craig Faris
2016	Lee Ritterbush (deceased)	2022	Dennis Ranke
2017	Ken Nelson	2023	Ken Nelson (2 time winner)
2017	Jesse Poole (PSR member of the year)	2024	John Mick
2018	? (1st year at the Capitol)	2025	Ray Rumble
2019	Dan Kubarych	2026	Will be announced on Oct.24 at the the Annual Banquet



Ghost Trains of Arizona: Do Spirits Still Ride the Rails?

Story by Dennis Ranke

Arizona's railroad history is filled with steam locomotives, mining trains, lonely depots and abandoned rights-of-way. Add a dark desert night, an old railroad whistle and a little imagination, and you have all the ingredients for a good ghost story.

But are there really ghost trains in Arizona?

I decided to do a little digging. What I found was an interesting mixture of railroad history, ghost-town legends and at least one railroad ghost story that has actually made it into the pages of *Arizona Highways*.



Guy Stillman

The Railroad Man Who Never Left

Perhaps Arizona's best railroad ghost story comes from a place many of us know well - the McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park in Scottsdale.

Guy Stillman was the driving force behind the park and a dedicated railroad enthusiast. In the 1950s, he built his 15-inch-gauge Paradise & Pacific Railroad on the family ranch. He later donated his railroad equipment to Scottsdale, and the railroad park opened in 1975. Stillman remained closely involved with the park until his death on October 28, 1995. The park was renamed the McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park in his honor the following year.

But apparently he may not have completely left his railroad.

An *Arizona Highways* article about the park reported that employees had experienced some unusual occurrences after Stillman's death. Bob McNair, then a senior recreation coordinator, told the magazine, **"We don't think Guy ever left."**

Doors reportedly opened and closed by themselves.

Even stranger, on the second anniversary of Stillman's death, one of his model trains reportedly came to life and began running around its track.

For a railroad man who devoted so much of his life to trains, there might not be a better place to spend eternity.

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Yuma's "Ghost Train"

Yuma has something that is actually called a **ghost train**, although there is a catch to this story.

The Southern Pacific reached Yuma in September 1877, making it the first Arizona community reached by the railroad from California. The arrival of the railroad helped establish Yuma as an important transportation center.

Today, Pivot Point Interpretive Plaza marks the location where the first train entered Arizona.

Visitors to the plaza can see a restored 1907 Baldwin steam locomotive. They can also hear what has become known locally as the "**ghost train.**"

But this ghost is man-made.

A surround-sound system recreates the sounds of a steam locomotive arriving at the old Southern Pacific Hotel. At night, a laser display shows the location where the original railroad bridge once crossed the Colorado River. So if you hear a steam locomotive while visiting Pivot Point, don't run.



That particular ghost is supposed to be there.

Ghosts Along the Verde

Few places in Arizona look more appropriate for a ghost train than the mountains surrounding **Jerome**.

Jerome was once one of Arizona's great copper-mining towns, and railroads played an important part in its success.

In 1895, the narrow-gauge **United Verde & Pacific Railway** began operating between Jerome and Jerome Junction. The approximately 26-mile railroad twisted through extremely difficult mountain country. According to Verde Canyon Railroad's history, the line contained an incredible 186 curves.

Eventually mining operations changed and a new smelter was built at Clarkdale. The old narrow-gauge railroad became obsolete, and its final train left Jerome in 1920.

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Today, Jerome is famous for its ghost stories. Old hotels, mining buildings and other structures have all collected supernatural tales over the years.

I could not find a reliable historical source confirming a specific phantom United Verde & Pacific train. That doesn't mean people haven't told such stories, but it is better to call them folklore rather than documented history.

Still, imagine standing along the abandoned grade after dark.

A narrow-gauge locomotive once worked its way around those mountain curves, smoke pouring from its stack and its whistle echoing across the Verde Valley.

If there were ever a place for a ghost train, this would certainly be it.

The Lonely Tracks to Perkinsville

Another wonderfully spooky railroad setting can still be reached by train today.

The tracks used by the **Verde Canyon Railroad** were constructed to serve the copper industry around Clarkdale and Jerome. The line connected Clarkdale with the Santa Fe system at Drake.

Today the excursion train travels from Clarkdale through the canyon to **Perkinsville** before returning.

Perkinsville itself is almost made for a ghost story. The little settlement once had railroad facilities and served the surrounding ranching and mining country. As the need for the community declined, most of it disappeared.

The railroad, however, remained.

Modern passengers can still travel through country that has changed surprisingly little since trains first ran through the canyon more than a century ago.

And during October, the railroad embraces its spooky surroundings with **Fright Night**. On selected October weekends, old railcars parked below the Clarkdale depot are transformed into a haunted house. Visitors brave darkened cars filled with eerie characters, including werewolves, sinister clowns and a skeletal wedding party. The railroad describes it as Northern Arizona's only haunted house located inside "phantom rail cars." For railroad fans who enjoy Halloween, it is a fitting combination of old trains and things that go bump in the night.



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Every Railroad Has Its Ghosts

After researching Arizona's ghost trains, I discovered something almost as interesting as finding a real ghost.

Some stories are true history. Some are folklore. Others have been repeated so many times that separating the two becomes difficult.

We know that Guy Stillman built the Paradise & Pacific Railroad and helped create Scottsdale's railroad park. We also have a published account in *Arizona Highways* describing the strange events employees associated with him after his death.

We know Yuma has a "ghost train," although technology rather than the supernatural provides the steam locomotive sounds.

And we know that places like Jerome, and Perkinsville have genuine railroad histories that provide perfect settings for ghost stories.

Perhaps that is why railroads and ghosts seem to go together so well.

Railroaders worked long hours in isolated places. Accidents happened. Towns appeared when the railroad arrived and sometimes disappeared when the railroad left. Tracks were abandoned, stations closed and locomotives that once shook the ground vanished.

But the stories remained.

So the next time you are standing beside an old Arizona railroad grade after sunset and hear a faint whistle somewhere in the distance, listen carefully.

There is probably a perfectly reasonable explanation. **Probably...**

Sources

1. **Arizona Highways**, "Scottsdale's Rail Yard." The article discusses McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park and includes Bob McNair's account of unusual events attributed to Guy Stillman after his death.
2. **City of Scottsdale / McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park historical records**. Park history documents Guy Stillman's Paradise & Pacific Railroad, creation of the railroad park, its October 4, 1975 opening and the later renaming of the park in Stillman's honor.
3. **Arizona State Library, Archives and Public Records — Arizona Memory Project, Arizona Transportation History**. Documents the Southern Pacific reaching Yuma in September 1877 and the development of Arizona's early railroad system.
4. **Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area / Yuma Visitors Bureau**. Historical information on Pivot Point Interpretive Plaza and its "ghost train" sound exhibit recreating the arrival of a steam locomotive at the former Southern Pacific Hotel site.
5. **Verde Canyon Railroad, "History of Verde Canyon Railroad."** Historical account of the United Verde & Pacific Railway, Jerome's copper industry, Clarkdale and development of the Verde Valley railroad system.
6. **Arizona Highways, "Arizona Railroads — Past and Present."** Historical account of the United Verde & Pacific, Verde Valley Railway and other railroads serving the Jerome mining district.
7. **Bureau of Land Management, Fairbank Historic Townsite**. History of Fairbank, its 1882 railroad station and its importance as the railroad connection for Tombstone.

PSR 2026 Convention Brings Model Railroaders to San Diego

Story by Dennis Ranke

The NMRA Pacific Southwest Region gathered in San Diego September 9–13 for the 2026 PSR Regional Convention, held at the DoubleTree in Mission Valley. Hosted by the San Diego Division and led by Convention Chairman Don Fowler, MMR, the five-day event offered a full schedule of clinics, layout tours, operating sessions, contests, prototype activities, and plenty of opportunities to talk trains with fellow model railroaders.

The convention got underway Wednesday evening with a special opening reception hosted by the San Diego Model Railroad Museum in Balboa Park. The museum provided an ideal setting to welcome attendees and kick off several busy days of model railroading activities.



Don Fowler, MMR
Convention Chairman

Three Days of Clinics

Education was a major part of this year's convention. Six rooms buzzed with presentations over a three-day period, with around 40 clinics presented by numerous well-known modelers, authors, scratch builders, and NMRA Master Model Railroaders.

The wide variety of subjects gave attendees plenty to choose from, whether their interests were prototype railroading, modeling techniques, layout construction, scenery, electronics, operations, or improving their modeling skills.



Bob Gilmore digs in
to modeling a store

The schedule also included two new Make & Take clinics presented by PSR Masters, giving participants an opportunity to do more than just listen. Modelers could sit down, learn new techniques firsthand, and leave with something they had actually worked on themselves.

With six rooms operating at the same time, the biggest challenge may have been deciding which clinic to attend!

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Hobo Auction and Swap Meet

One of the most entertaining events was Friday evening's Hobo Auction. It was a swap meet's delight, with tables filled with model railroad items, including many products that are no longer in production. Valuable gift certificates and railroad artwork were also up for grabs.

John Mick apparently decided the artwork needed a good home—his—and managed to win almost all of it!

Saturday morning brought the convention Swap Meet, and if you were an N scaler, this was the place to be. There was an impressive selection of N scale equipment along with plenty of merchandise for modelers in other scales.

One entire wall was devoted to tools and supplies from Model Train Solutions, giving attendees an opportunity to stock up on some of those tools we model railroaders can never seem to have enough of.

Celebration of Models

The Celebration of Models room was open for People's Choice voting and model evaluations. A number of excellent models and railroad photographs were on display, demonstrating the wide range of talent within the Pacific Southwest Region.

Your editor was fortunate to come home with a few ribbons as well, receiving first and second place in Prototype Black & White Photography; first, second and third place in Prototype Color Photography; third place in Model Color Photography; and first place in the Tom Thumb Award for the Skeleton Car.



Layouts and Operations

Layouts were another major part of the convention. Several self-drive layout tours gave visitors the opportunity to see some outstanding area railroads at their own pace, while guided prototype tours offered a look at the real railroad world.

Five model railroad owners also opened their layouts for operating sessions throughout the week, allowing visiting operators to take the throttle and experience different styles of railroad operation.

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Saturday Night Awards Banquet

The formal convention activities reached their climax Saturday evening with the Awards Banquet.

The keynote speaker was noted author and Southern Pacific historian Jeff Cauthen. Cauthen has coauthored several railroad books and written numerous articles for the Southern Pacific Historical & Technical Society's Trainline magazine. Many Southern Pacific enthusiasts will also recognize his contributions to the six-volume series covering Southern Pacific passenger cars.

The banquet also marked the official kickoff for our own Arizona 2027 PSR Regional Convention, which will be held next year in Mesa.

Enthusiasm for the Arizona convention was evident right from the start. Forty people registered in San Diego, taking advantage of the special convention price being offered through September 15. It was an encouraging beginning as Arizona prepares to welcome PSR members in 2027.

Although the awards banquet wrapped up the formal convention activities Saturday night, there was still plenty of railroading left for Sunday.

About a dozen layouts opened their doors for open houses, giving attendees one final opportunity to visit some of San Diego's model railroads before heading home. From the opening reception at the San Diego Model Railroad Museum to the final Sunday layout visits, the 2026 PSR Regional Convention offered something for just about every model railroader—clinics, models, photography, operations, prototype railroading, swap-meet treasures, tools, and, most importantly, several days spent with friends who share our enthusiasm for the hobby.

Congratulations to Don Fowler, MMR, the San Diego Division, and the many volunteers whose hard work made the 2026 convention possible.

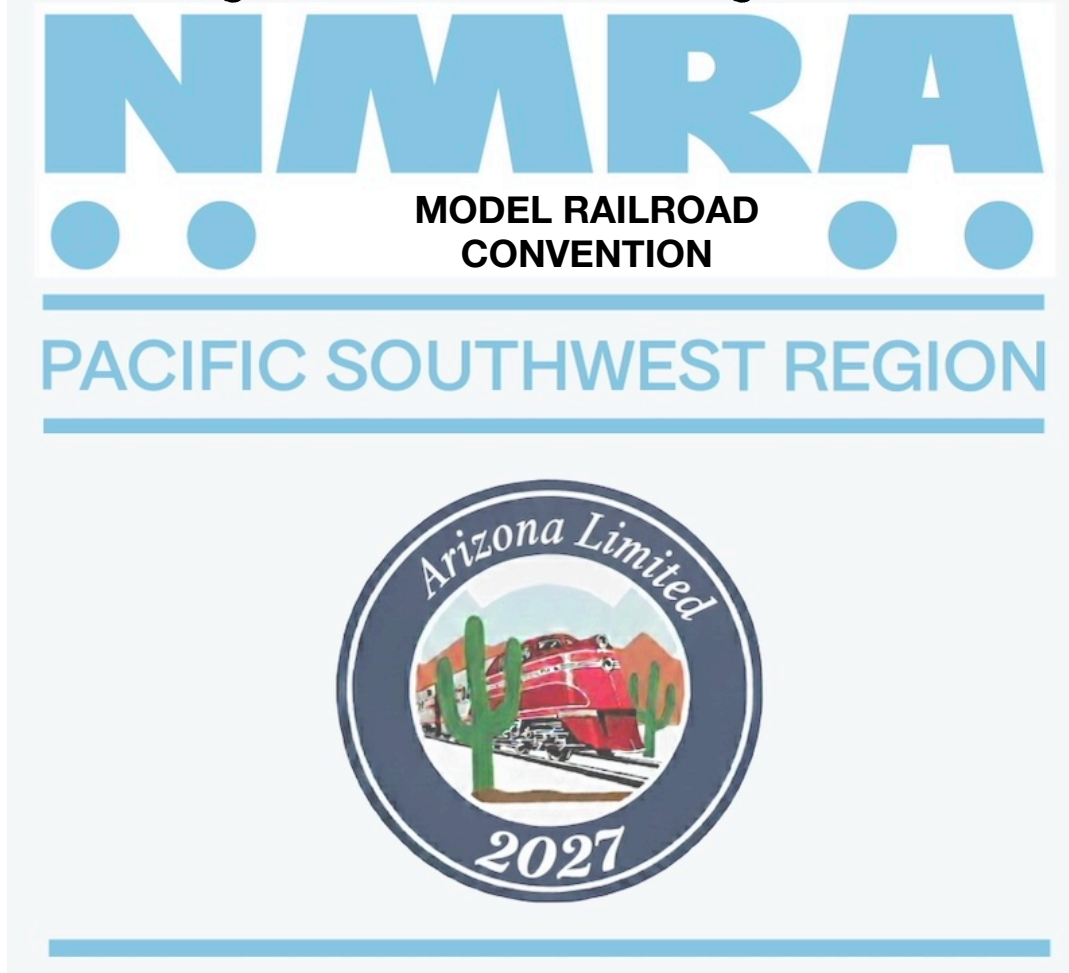
And now the convention torch passes east to Arizona.

Next stop—Mesa and the Arizona Limited 2027!

Corrections in the Sept 2026 issue: Page 1, column 1, the correct location for the November 14 Swap Meet is Glendale Christian Church, 9661 59th Ave, Glendale, AZ. Page 4 and 5, the correct name spelling is, John Clark.

SAVE THE DATE

Wednesday Sept. 29th - Sunday Oct. 3rd 2027



Convention Highlights*

EVENTS: Welcome Reception - Hobo Auction - Swap Meet - Operations - Modular Railroads - Contests - Fred Harvey Inspired Awards Banquet and much, much more!

PROTOTYPE TOURS: AZ Railway Museum - Valley Metro Rail - Phoenix Trolley Museum

CLINICS: Lots of great clinics by top Modelers and Historians

LAYOUT TOURS: Visit some unique home & club layouts or sign up for operations

LOCATION: the Sheraton Mesa Hotel - Wrigleyville,
860 N. Riverview Dr., Mesa, AZ. 85201

SIGN UP IN ADVANCE, OR AT THE DOOR

www.azdiv-nmra.org

PLENTY OF FREE PARKING

*Subject to Change