

Arizona Railroad



Historical Society

The Desert DISPATCH

Timetable

ARHS

Arizona Capitol Museum
1700 W. Washington St.
Phoenix, AZ

Special Notice Regarding COVID-19

As a public health precaution, **the Museum will be closed to the public until further notice.** The Arizona Capitol Museum is following industry standards and practices of museums across the region with plans for reopening later this Spring. Due to the need to procure sanitizing supplies and protective coverings, in the best interests of our staff and visitors' health, we will open to the public soon. More information at:

<https://azlibrary.gov/azcm>

ARHS Spring Swap Meet TBD Spring 2021

9:00am-1:00pm

Glendale Christian Church

9661 N. 59th Ave.

Glendale, AZ 85302

For more information, call:

Craig 623-340-3529

DeWayne 623-308-1574

Hotel Congress *A Tucson Landmark*



Model of Tucson's Hotel Congress under construction by Dave Irick includes 9 doors and 76 windows

By Dave Irick, MMR 538

What represents the history of Tucson better than the Hotel Congress? I volunteered to build the Hotel Congress, for the layout, at the Museum. So off I went again to Google earth, the internet and my trusty camera. Taking photos of a building is not really an excepted endeavor in today's world; you get all kinds of questions from the building owners and sometimes by the local constabulary. But pressing on I gathered the dimension, drew my construction blueprints and I was ready to go, or so I thought...

You guessed it; I needed to call layout project manager extraordinaire Jesse Poole. Don Stewart had giving me a cut out sheet with the dimension of the spot on the layout where he intended to place the Hotel, but Jesse had other ideas. Bracing myself for the multiple changes I was pleasantly surprised that the only changes were to cut the length of the building from 195 feet to 145 feet and lowering the individual floors by 2 feet each.

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President - Don Stewart
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Secretary - Dave Brown
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Director - Ken Nelson
Director - DeWayne Koltin
Past President - Jesse Poole

The 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.

Editor - Bob Bridges
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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.

We are honored and excited by the opportunity to create an exciting experience in the Arizona State Capitol Museum in downtown Phoenix.

Hotel Congress Construction

This project was going to be easy I only needed to take out a couple of wall sections and delete some windows. First, I took the 0.40mm styrene sheets and cut out the first floor walls. Then I took *Plastruct 91605 brick siding* and cut out the second floor walls. I found windows and doors from Tichy and Grandt Line that worked with modifications.

When scratch building something this size it requires a lot of trial and error construction. You need to think out every move and make changes or even start over when things don't work. Unlike building a kit that has building instructions and everything is cut out to fit, when scratch building you need to be patient and except that Murphy's Law will happen. The included photos show the almost completed Hotel Congress with its 9 doors and 76 windows. It is almost to scale size.

My original hope was to complete the Hotel Congress model before Christmas, sneak into the layout room at the Museum, place it on the layout before Jesse could make any changes and shout “don't blame me Santa Claus did it.”

Merry Christmas



Overhead view of Dave Irick's Hotel Congress model under construction showing wall bracing and view blocks.

Photo by Dave Irick



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A brief history of the Hotel Congress

The Hotel Congress was built in 1919 as an upscale hotel for train travelers. The hotel is located at 311 E. Congress Street, at the corner of Congress Street and Toole Avenue, right across from the historic Southern Pacific Railroad Station built in 1907. The hotel fronts on Congress Street with the rear facing the train depot. Fifth Avenue runs along the west side of the hotel, with 10th Street along the north side. The original three-story brick hotel, built over a basement, offered 80 rooms for guests on the top two floors, with the first floor (in January 1934) containing businesses.

The name "The Congress Hotel" was chosen through a naming competition organized by the Arizona Daily Star newspaper in 1918. The winning suggestion was announced on April 30, 1918, and it was submitted by Dorit Dinkel, who won \$15 worth of baby bonds for having their name chosen.

The Hotel is known for being the site of the capture of gangster and bank robber John Dillinger in 1934. After a series of bank robberies, the Dillinger Gang arrived in Tucson to hide out. On January 22, 1934, a fire started in the basement and spread up to the third floor, where the gang resided under aliases. After the desk clerk contacted them through the switchboard the gang escaped by aerial ladders. On the request of the gang, two firemen retrieved their luggage, identifying who they were. After being transferred to a jail in Indiana. Dillinger escaped again and was eventually shot down in Chicago.

The Rebuilt Hotel Congress

The Hotel Congress fire in 1934 destroyed the third floor and roof of the building. Water heavily damaged the first and second floors. Retaining the original structure and design, the Hotel Congress was rebuilt in 1935/1940 as a two-story hotel



The Rebuilt Hotel Congress Tucson fire foundation photo

cutting in half the number of rooms available for guests, from 80 to 40. A large, red neon, rooftop sign spelling "Hotel Congress" was added after the repairs.

On October 23, 1971 the Hotel Congress suffered its second major fire - this time confined to the first floor. This fire apparently started when smoldering cigarette ashes ignited rags and paper in a trash container located at the side of the bar. Damage was estimated at \$25,000, the bulk of it in the hotel bar which was destroyed. The second floor received minor smoke damage. Thirty four guests were evacuated, with nine requiring brief hospitalization from smoke inhalation.

The hotel was soon repaired and over the years since has focused on developing and providing entertainment, bringing in money to maintain the building and upgrade the rooms, as well as adding creature comforts like bathrooms and air conditioning.

Editor's Note: This article was compiled from Wikimedia and the tucsonfirefoundation.com websites. The Tucson Fire Foundation information was written by Al & Bob Ring.



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Autumn Update

By Don Stewart, AHRS President

As of late November, ARHS members have continued to work on several projects at the layout and offsite. Members have met at *Casa Poole* aka Jesse’s house on several Saturdays to complete work on custom toolbox drawer cabinets for storage under the layout.

Seven of us met on November 14 and prepared the drawers as well as built one of the 5 boxes. There were three different drawer systems in the sets of drawers we obtained. This caused some delay in assembling the first cabinet. Work was completed after Thanksgiving

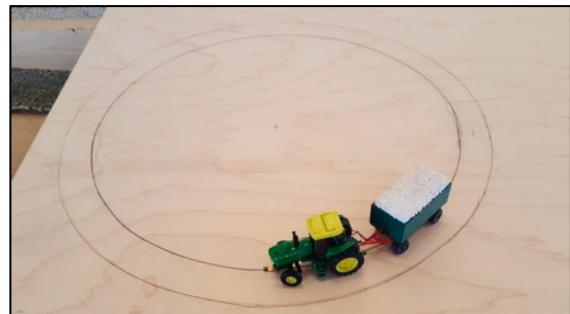


Automatic Automobile Roads Take Shape

In the past few weeks a few small projects have been completed at the Museum.

The automatic auto roads and wires were glued to the layout. The first tractor, a John

Deere, was tested on a small circle to show it would work in the Goodyear area cotton fields. Al Shultz kit-bashed and modified the tractor from its original European style. The tractor will run down in Goodyear near the cotton fields.



John Mick, a friend of the ARHS and an excellent electrical engineer, has designed a system to turn on the 12 layout power supplies one at a time to minimize in-rush current and prevent fires. His design also dims the LEDs.



The crossover in Tempe was installed and the rail painted. Drops will be added and then the track ballasted. This crossover was added to improve operation on the layout.

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Autumn Progress Update



Drops in the Tucson area were added and connected to the wiring buss.

Work on the scenery above Prescott continued with new groundwork laid and additional rocks added. The beginnings of Route 66 through Williams were started by Ray and Al, better known as the *Road Scholars*, digging into the Ash Fork rise.



Route 66 is planned for Williams

Storage Cabinets Near Completions

The storage cabinets are almost done. On Saturday, December 12, four hearty souls gathered to finish the custom storage cabinets. Though not completed,



the five cabinets were lined up for a group photo at the end of the day.

Several drawers are still at the Capitol Museum but cannot be installed until we can get back into the museum. The cabinet on the left still needs the black fascia trim added, and one drawer is missing its silver trim. They are otherwise complete.

The large electrical cabinet still needs some work. Lots of large holes were noisily drilled by one of our renowned noisemakers, Ray Rumble. His able assistant Jesse Poole kept up his end by drilling his own holes. A few more holes and we can start adding the components.



L-R Ray Rumble, Don Stewart, John Clarke

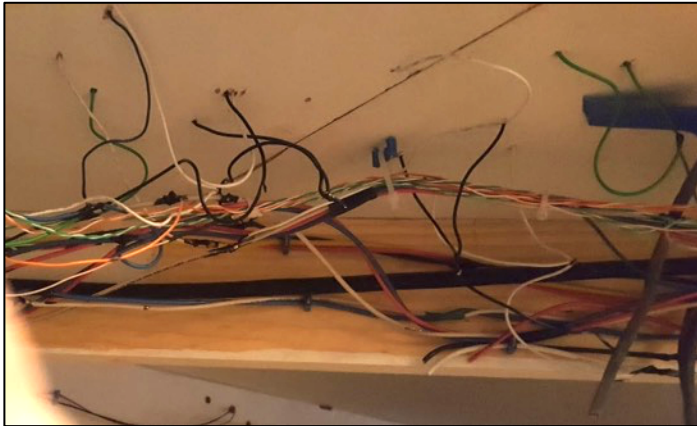


L-R: Jesse Poole Ray Rumble, John Clarke

2021 Layout Update

By Don Stewart, ARHS President

Fellow ARHS Members, access to the Museum has been minimal for the last month or so. A few visits have seen some work accomplished. In early December, some electrical work was accomplished. I am not sure what. Jesse wired in the new reverse loop in Tucson and reconfigured the blocks for the Tempe crossover.



View of the Tucson reverse loop wiring by Jesse.



Tempe crossover blocks taped in place. This is to indicate placement as they are not yet installed



The reddish rocks near Flagstaff and the Johnson canyon area were painted (first coat).



On December 7, the Museum restricted access to the building until January 4, 2021, so we went back to Jess' place to work on the storage drawers and electrical cabinet.



On December 12, several members got together at Jess's garage and finished most of the remaining work on the storage drawers. They will be taken down to the layout area as soon as we are granted access to the Museum.



A week later, on December 19, more work was accomplished on the electrical cabinet. Holes were drilled (that is one tough cabinet) and power supplies were installed.



We were allowed access to the Museum on January 4 and the storage drawers were taken down to the layout room. Al, Ray, Jess and Don loaded up the drawers and a toolbox and Ray carted them down to the Museum. Don, Jess, and Ken N. met Ray there and we moved the drawers up to the layout area.



Don got some scenery work in while Ken and Ray accurately measured the window openings. You can compare the area under Flagstaff to the earlier photo above for the area above the Prescott track.



Jess had built a prototype window opening and insert and tested it on the layout. To our surprise, it fit perfectly.



On January 4, 2021, an overall picture of the layout was taken from the northwest and southwest sides.



January Business Meeting

The meeting on Monday January 11 was good in a couple of ways; we set up the Spring Swap Meet for May 15 and had an enjoyable time. The banter and laughter were good at chasing away the blues of the current situation. We started the work to make the Swap Meet a success by coordinating with the church, Model Railroader magazine, and getting a flyer started.

We have accumulated 29,631 total hours (\$651,882.00 value) up to the end of 2020. The rate we are accumulating the hours has slowed considerably since March 2020, dropping from about 300 hours a week to 100 hours per week. The only reason there are hours accumulating is through Saturday work sessions and work by members at home on buildings, cars, and other items that may be installed later on the layout.

Our financial situation is good with the Union Pacific donation of \$10,000.00 in July 2020. We will use it to build the outside wall and windows as well as the plexiglass viewing shield. Another donation of \$10,000.00 was made by John Mick, an

electrical engineer and model railroader in Alpine, AZ. He has been helpful to us since July 2019 with electrical designs. He has designed and is building an electronic brain to turn on the 12 power supplies in the electrical cabinet one-by-one so the inrush current does not overload the Museum circuits. He has also designed a system for adjusting the brightness of the LED lighting for the layout, buildings, and other accessories on the layout. This includes a method of dimming lights automatically as the sun sets. For this support the members of the ARHS at the meeting on Monday discussed making John an associate member.

Ken Wolf has resigned from the ARHS. He was responsible for most of the trackwork and turnout installation. He has built most of the buildings for Flagstaff and is laying out their positioning on the layout. He said that he will finish the buildings he has underway and we may pick them up when they are completed. He is a good modeler and will be missed.

The large signal bridge seen in several photos over the layout at the bridge area of the layout will be built from steel by an outside source to the signal bridge standards

of the Santa Fe RR. Blueprints will be obtained from the Santa Fe Historical and Modeling Society to make an accurate structure.

Work Sessions will continue on Saturdays for a while to build the window inserts for the lower (25”) level on the layout. There are 11 windows of varying widths on this level. We will also have some clinics about building light wiring to a common standard.

Future work at the Museum will be on Mondays, starting on Monday, January 25. We will coordinate with Ken at the Museum to make sure it is OK to go down and then let the members know.

Buildings and Cars for the ARHS layout

By Don Stewart

Some ranch house style buildings were purchased from Hobby Depot and assembled. Lights will be added when the lighting standard is taught. Some interior lights and a couple of porch lights.



In addition, a couple of post war prefab houses were purchased. One has been built. Lighting will be the same as the ranch style houses



Several American Bungalow houses have been built. A couple more are underway. Quite a few freight cars have been acquired at little or no cost. They have been built or reworked to NMRA and ARHS operating standards by adding appropriate weight, new trucks, metal wheels, KD couplers and details. In many cases the grab irons and stirrup steps, along with doors were repaired or replaced. Many cars needed underframe and trucks painted. All cars were weathered appropriately.



There was even a Gorre & Daphetid boxcar in the items we got from Bill Kress’s estate.