

## Origins

In 1988, a model railroad club called the Amarillo and Canadian River Model Railroad Association ceased to exist. Due to a lack of funds, no permanent facilities, no future plans and a shrinking membership, the group found was unable to pay rent and utilities for a small building they had been occupying at 100 N. Western Street.

In February of 1990, Carter Osborne, Virgil Doyle, Jerry Michels and Tommy Morris met at the International House of Pancakes in Amarillo to discuss the possibility of starting a new model railroad club in Amarillo. After several discussions on what was wrong with the former club and how a sustainable club could be created, an ad was taken out in the Amarillo Globe News that a meeting would be held to determine interest in forming a new club.

### 1990

The public first meeting of what would become the Amarillo Model Railroad Association (AMRA) and then the Amarillo Railroad Museum was on April 30th, 1990 at the Texas A&M Research and Extension Center, 6500 Amarillo Boulevard West, Amarillo, Texas. Approximately 65 people were in attendance. The basic outline of the association structure, a proposed charter and bylaws, member interests, dues structure and a six-year timetable were presented and discussed. The meeting concluded with a video tape of one of Kalmbach's Video Layout Tours.

At the second meeting, in May of 1990, officers were elected, and the organization was considered to officially have come into existence. Carter Osborne was elected as president, Tommy Morris was elected as secretary/treasurer and Virgil Doyle, Jerry Michels, and Skip Smith were elected as directors. A clinic was conducted by Tommy Morris on tracklaying. At this time, the AMRA membership stood at 26 paid members.

Monthly meetings continued at the Texas A&M Research and Extension Center until the fall. After that the AMRA began meeting at the Autocraft Building at 1100 South Polk Street in Amarillo, Texas. We began meeting in the basement of the main building, but after a few months, moved to the upstairs of the repair and paint shop. The location was donated, free of charge, by member Tracy Ball, who was a co-owner of Autocraft, Inc. The group decided that for the near term, we would build a modular HO-scale model railroad. This had the benefits that the layout would be portable, the National Model Railroad Association (NMRA) had published specification for modular design, and that this layout would allow members flexibility to model scenes and designs in which they were interested. The remainder of 1990 was spent in building modules for a display at the Lubbock Model Railroad Association show in April of 1991. At this time, we began meeting every Thursday evening rather than monthly.

### 1991

The AMRA attended its first train show in April of 1991 as guests of the Lubbock Model Railroad Association on the Texas Tech campus. Our fledgling modular layout was well received and ran well.

Officer elections were held in May of 1991. It was determined that there was a need for a separate secretary and treasurer. This was approved, and one director position was dropped. The Constitution was being drawn up, and it was decided that elections would occur every year in May. In even-numbered years, the president, treasurer and secretary positions would be elected, and in odd-numbered years, the directors would be elected. Each term would be for two years. In 1991, Carter Osborne was elected president, Tommy Morris was elected secretary and Tracy Ball was elected treasurer. Virgil Doyle and Jerry Michels were elected directors.

The AMRA displayed its modular layout in September 1991 at the Amarillo Tri-State Fair. No gate fee was charged, and approximately \$65.00 in donations were collected.

## 1992

The first Tri-State Train Show was held on April 11-12, 1992 at the Rex Baxter Building, at the Amarillo Tri-State Fairgrounds. The Merchant's Train was initiated for the show, and twenty area merchants bought a total of 21 cars at \$50.00 per car. The show was deemed a great success by the public and the members of the AMRA.

The Constitution of the AMRA was formally approved on May 5th, 1992. The election results were: Carter Osborne was elected president, Tommy Morris was elected secretary and Tracy Ball was elected treasurer.

Formal application for Internal Revenue Non-Profit/Tax-Exempt Status was made on June 3rd 1992.

Mutual fund investments, \$4000 in cash, began in July of 1992, using proceeds from the Tri-State Train Show.

The second major show was conducted during the Amarillo Tri-State Fair in September of 1992. Proceeds of \$4,950 were invested into the mutual funds.

Notification of IRS tax exemption and non-profit status was received on September 17th, 1992. The Association was given an advanced ruling, valid from May 5th, 1992 to December 31st, 1996.

Tax-exempt status for AMRA from the State of Texas was requested on September 28th, 1992, and a five-year preliminary exempt status was issued on October 5th, 1992.

## 1993

In February of 1993, the AMRA membership stood at 22 paid members. The second annual Tri-State Train Show was held in April of 1993 at the Rex Baxter Building. Ten percent of the proceeds were donated to Camp Alphie, a non-profit, charitable organization which runs summer camps for children who have or have had cancer. Proceeds of \$1,200 were invested in

the mutual funds. On May 4th, 1993, director elections were held. David Grantham and Jerry Michels were elected to two-year terms.

A mini-show was conducted at Stratford, Texas, during Stratford Days in September of 1993. Sixty dollars were collected in admissions. In October 1993, the AMRA membership stood at 26 paid members plus six children under 15. The first Christmas Show – The Magic of Christmas Past – was held in Western Plaza. We began the show on the Friday after Thanksgiving, and were open each weekend and the full week before Christmas. This is a schedule we have adhered to for all subsequent shows, oftentimes continuing through Christmas week until New Year's Eve. The members also built a 4' x 8' HO-scale model railroad that was raffled off on Christmas Eve.

#### 1994

The third Tri-State Train Show was held in April. This year we had the show at the Amarillo Civic Center. Carter Osborne secured a grant from the Amarillo Convention and Visitors Council that paid for the rent of the Civic Center. The Civic Center was superior to the Rex Baxter Building both in terms of space available and the fact that we did not have to pay to rent vendor tables from an outside source.

The second Christmas Show was held in Western Plaza in the old storefront of the Interfaith Christian Bookstore, just south of Service Merchandise on the west side of the hall. Instead of an HO-scale model railroad for our raffle, in 1994, we purchased two commercial railroad sets for the raffle. Although we made some money on these commercial sets, much less interest was noted, so we decided to continue with custom-built layouts in the future.

When the Christmas show concluded, Western Plaza management allowed us to remain in the storefront on a permanent basis, as long as we paid utilities. We moved our operations from Autocraft to Western Plaza shortly after the Christmas Show.

#### 1995

As a fund-raising effort, we produced our first custom car, a Santa Fe grain hopper using an InterMountain PS2 hopper in 1995. The first order was for 406 cars with four different numbers and these sold out by December. We ordered an additional 200 cars with an additional four numbers.

The Fourth Tri-State Train Show was held at the Amarillo Civic Center on April 1-2, 1995. Carter Osborne secured a grant from the Amarillo Convention and Visitors Council which covered the rental costs for the Civic Center. Net proceeds from the show were \$4,270.21, which were put in the mutual fund after 10% were donated to Camp Alphonie. We again exhibited at Tri-State Fair in September of 1995.

In September of 1995, we were given permission by the Santa Fe Railroad to remove and preserve the dispatching center display panels and associated equipment. The railroad was in the

process of moving out of the Santa Fe building in downtown Amarillo, and eliminating the divisional dispatching center located on the 12th floor. We spent two days disassembling, moving and storing the display panels. This dispatching system was of a French design and was about five years old. At the time of its installation, it was a multi-million dollar, state-of-the-art system. It replaced a much older Union Switch and Signal Company system that had been in place since the 1940s. The dispatchers panels are presently stored at Autocraft, Inc. The third Christmas Show was held in Western Plaza. We began plans for hosting the 1996 NMRA LSR meeting in Amarillo.

The Newsletter, RUN 8, began publication in November, 1995. Virgil Young took over the duties of editor.

## 1996

Digital Command Control (DCC) was first demonstrated in January of 1996. This new concept in model railroad control systems was just a few years old, and the demonstration made quite an impression on the members. Although the AMRA did not purchase a system at that time, a number of members began buying DCC systems and decoders.

The Santa Fe depot in Canyon was explored as a potential permanent site for the AMRA in the spring of 1996, but the depot was sold to the City of Canyon, and the plans were never pursued.

The fifth Tri-State Train Show was held at the Civic Center on March 30-31. A grant was again provided by Amarillo Convention and Visitors Council. The May election results were: President - Tommy Morris, Treasurer - Virgil Doyle, and Secretary - Jerry Michels.

Our second custom car, Walthers two bay hopper painted in four Portland Cement Co. schemes and sold as a four-pack, was ordered in May. The cars were bought unpainted from Walthers and painted by Third Rail Graphics.

The NMRA Lone Star Region convention was held June 14-16 at the Radisson Hotel (I-40 and Lakeside). The LSR meet was a very complex affair. We bid on hosting the convention two years in advance and worked on plans for over a year. The fact that Amarillo was chosen for the event was a credit to our club, and a recognition by the regional association that we were an active, vibrant group capable of hosting such an event. Attendance was considered average for a regional meeting outside a major metropolitan area and was quite successful. In addition to the usual LSR functions, we had tours of local home model railroad layouts, tours of Pantex, Asarco and the SPS plant. Shopping and antiquing trips, as well as a luncheon, were available for attendees' spouses not interested in the model railroad functions. Attendees also took in the play Texas in Palo Duro Canyon on Saturday night. One interesting feature of the convention was what we called a "Tyco Toss." The idea was developed by Carter Osborne. The grand prize was a brass diesel locomotive. Competitors bought tickets and tested their skill at tossing Tyco locomotives (a cheap brand of model railroad equipment) into a specially decorated barrel prepared by Tracy Ball. The one who tossed the locomotive into the barrel at the greatest distance from the barrel was the winner.

Tommy Morris resigned in August because he was taking a new job in Los Alamos, NM. The new officers were decided upon by the Executive Board as follows: President - Jerry Michels, Secretary - Virgil Young, Treasurer - Virgil Doyle, Director - George Bates, Director - David Jusiak.

The modular layout was wired for DCC in August, but members had to bring their own equipment since the AMRA had not yet purchased a DCC control center. We used the fifth position on the rotary switches on the control panel for the DCC installation. This gave us the ability to still use the four analog throttles or DCC as desired.

Our first Hobo Breakfast was held on Saturday, Sept. 7th at 8AM under the 34th Street bridge near the BNSF tracks. This was a social gathering for the AMRA members. Tracy Ball, with his portable kitchen, cooked eggs, bacon, sausage, pancakes and coffee for all. The fourth Christmas Show as held at Western Plaza.

1997

Without notification, the Western Plaza management changed the locks on our storefront in February and a few days later notified us that we were no longer going to be allowed to stay in our storefront rent free. We negotiated a rent of \$300/m plus utilities.

The sixth Tri-State Train Show was held at the Civic Center on April 4-6. The AMRA had decided not to take our modular layout to this show since we believed we had sufficient club layouts to cover the event. However, on Friday night we found out that the ASHOME club from New Mexico was not going to make it to the show. A group of AMRA members quickly disassembled, moved and reassembled the modular layout at the Civic Center the same night. We also noticed at this show that the number of vendor table sales was lower than in previous years and clubs were more reluctant to display at the show. There was concern voiced about continuing the show since we may have exhibited too many times in the last six years, and the public no longer found the show to be of interest. This was also the first year without a grant to cover the Civic Center rent for the show, and our net proceeds were cut by nearly \$1,500 over previous shows.

In May, the Western Plaza mall management notified us that our storefront was going to be rented to Family Photo. We moved to the second Western Plaza storefront, between Radio Shack and the old movie theater.

At the May business meeting we elected two directors as set out in the Constitution. David Jusiak was elected to another term and Paul Sowle replaced George Bates as the second director.

The AMRA had been looking for property to purchase for our permanent headquarters for some time. In June a small property at Sixth and Roberts Streets came up for sale. This property bordered on the BNSF railroad and had an abandoned 500' railroad spur on the property. From all indications, it looked like a very good property for our purposes. The

property was purchased on July 10th, 1997: 1.1 acres, 200 feet long (E-W) and 240 feet deep (N-S). We paid \$4,000 for 48,000 square feet .

We were formally recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization on September 22nd after submitting the information required by the IRS when our five-year interim ruling ended.

The AMRA attended the Oklahoma City Train Show for the first time in December and set up a booth to sell our custom cars and distribute information about the club. The fifth Christmas Show was held in Western Plaza.

## 1998

After several months of planning, we decided to cancel the seventh Tri-State Train Show. Only two out-of-town clubs agreed to exhibit at the show and vendor table rentals dropped to an all time low. Since the Amarillo CVC had stopped providing a grant to cover Civic Center rental fees, club exhibits and vendor rental were very poor, we determined that we would lose money if we had the show. In addition, it was discovered that the show dates fell on Easter weekend, and we believed that the show would be poorly attended by the public. Our membership was also ready to take a break from the rigors of setting up for another show. Since 1992, we had conducted over 12 public shows in Amarillo, and averaged two per year. We concluded that Amarillo may have had enough train shows for awhile.

Jerry Michels, Virgil Young and Skip Smith were re-elected as President, Vice-president/Secretary and Treasurer, respectively at the May business meeting.

We ordered our third special car, an InterMountain model of a 40' boxcar painted for the FtW&D in the summer of 1998. The cars were received in August and were sold out by December, before the Oklahoma City train show. This car was followed by our fourth special car, an InterMountain ATSF grain hopper, in mineral brown and assembled.

In July, we changed our name from the Amarillo Model Railroad Association to the Amarillo Railroad Museum (ARM). We had considered a name change for over a year. Since the organization was evolving into an entity that included not only model railroading, but also historic preservation, we believed the name change was appropriate and better reflected our true mission.

That summer, with the announcement that federal helium operations would be sold to the private sector, negotiations began with the Bureau of Mines for donation of a helium car to the ARM.

A "Stay at Home Moms" tour of the layout was held in August. Several members met with mothers and children at Western Plaza to open the layout to the group.

Our second Hobo Breakfast was held on September 12th at the 6th and Roberts property. Tracy Ball, again with his portable kitchen, prepared eggs, bacon, sausage, pancakes and coffee for all. The Texas Panhandle Railroad Historical Society was invited to attend.

In December, we again set up a booth set up at Oklahoma City Train Show, and the sixth Christmas Show was held in Western Plaza. Both HO and N-scale layouts were built and raffled off on Christmas Eve.

Throughout 1998 we sought to develop the Roberts Street property. Almost from the beginning, very difficult problems surfaced. Before the property was purchased, we asked the City of Amarillo Utilities Department what the fees for water and sewer connections would be. We were told that standard fees would apply. After we purchased the property, we went to the City to have the utilities installed. We were notified that the property needed to be re-platted, and that this replating required that utilities be run at full cost, which would be over \$6,000. We were also notified that a full street and curb would have to be built before a building permit would be issued. The estimated cost was \$60,000. We applied for a waiver from the city, were denied, appealed the decision and were denied again. This made the Roberts Street property a financial impossibility.

Fortunately, Wellborn Brothers Tank Company, our neighbor to the west, was interested in acquiring additional land for their operations, and we eventually sold the property to them. However, even this sale was not without problems. When the property was purchased, the AMRA was not incorporated. In order to sell the property, we had to have a signed agreement with each member who was a member of the AMRA at the time of the purchase, agreeing to sell the property. This caused a major delay since some of the original members no longer lived in Amarillo. In fact, one member was in the Navy and on assignment in the Indian Ocean. In the long run, although the problems with this property held up the ARM's plans for a permanent site, we made a small profit from the sale of the land and began to look at other properties with a more experienced eye. In June, ARM membership stood at 27.

1999

We began discussion on the possible purchase of land south of the Maverick Club in Amarillo, but this was abandoned by February due to our inability to come to agreement with the Maverick Club on the cost.

Articles of Incorporation were completed by Tom Jones and approved by the State of Texas in January. This was an important milestone in our history since the organization can now speak as a single entity in negotiations for property, grants, loans, etc. Tom Jones drew up the articles and filed them free of charge.

We took our first look at a potential property at the northeast part of the TSTC (part of the old air force base) campus started in February. Discussions with the membership and TSTC were conducted throughout the year, with the decision to buy the property made in late September. This time, we got written assurances from the City of Amarillo that utilities were in place and could be used, and that we would not be responsible for new streets, or curb and guttering.

In February, with agreement with Wellborn Brothers, rail and ties were pulled up on the Roberts Street property and stored for future use. Tracy and Trey Ball provided and operated the tractor and truck used in the removal, transport and storage of the rail and ties.

We contracted with Intermountain to produce PFE R40-25 reefers as our fifth special car. This was a more complex project than the previous four. Intermountain cast new roofs and ends that would fit on their existing R-40-23 reefer to create a completely different car. We advanced Intermountain \$10,000 for exclusive marketing rights to these cars for one year. This exclusive right to market this car continued as long as we reordered at one year intervals. Intermountain repaid this advance by deducting \$2 from our cost for each car we ordered. The first run of the cars arrived in October.

We took formal title to the helium car MHAX 1242 in April. The car was stored at the Bureau of Mines Excel plant but was inadvertently moved to Amarillo by the BNSF in November and stored for a brief time in the main Amarillo yard. We received permission by PalEx to store the car on their siding near our land, and the BNSF moved the car there in December.

Paul Sowle and David Jusiak were re-elected as directors at the May business meeting. We offered a Boy Scout merit badge program on May 8th.

Web page ([www.amarillorailmusuem.com](http://www.amarillorailmusuem.com)) development began in May. In July we started opening the layout to the public on the last Saturday of each month. A possible third move at Western Plaza to what was Big Apple Comics never materialized.

The seventh Christmas show was held at Western Plaza and we again had a booth at the Oklahoma City Train Show in early December.

In June, ARM membership stood at 29, and 30 in December.

## 2000 – Tenth Anniversary Year

Twelve acres of land on the northeast side of the old Amarillo airbase were purchased on June 15th (final closing date). The land was purchased for \$18,000.

Custom cars in 2000 consisted of a second run of R40-25s which began arriving on June 17th, and a second run of FtW&D boxcars ordered in July, which arrived in September. We published our first custom car catalog for our previous customers.

Elections at the May business meeting resulted in the current officers being re-elected: President, Jerry Michels; Vice-President/Secretary, Virgil Young; Treasurer, Skip Smith.

In May, we looked at the old Rock Island depot in Wildorado, which was for sale, as a potential headquarters for the ARM. However, the condition of the building and the asking price were unacceptable.

Throughout 2000, discussions were held on how we were going to develop the new property, what sort of building we wanted and could afford. Committees formed in July to develop building and layout plans. We decided that we would rely on the expertise of a custom layout designer for our permanent layout. This would have a number of benefits. The obvious

expertise of a person who does this sort of thing for a living is a valuable asset to help eliminate “beginner’s mistakes”, and having a plan developed “outside” the ARM membership would reduce problems with arguments among competing ideas.

Danish member Pelle Soeborg, a graphic designer, gave the ARM a new logo he designed which was accepted as our official logo. Our first order of caps with the ARM logo was placed in August. The first set had an older logo, but the second set had the new logo designed by Pelle.

The eighth Christmas Show was held at Western Plaza, and we had a booth at the Oklahoma City Train Show for the fourth straight year. Membership stood at 33 in December.

- More to Come -