



# On Track

Vol. 5, Number 1, January 2026

If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, welcome to the fold! We continue to catalog our visitor logs, and your email appeared! If you wish to be taken off our list, just let us know, but we hope that you will stay with us, follow us online, and return to visit us in person sometime soon. **Additional financial support will never be turned down (maintaining and operating a steam locomotive is expensive)!** Previous editions of this newsletter may be found on our [website](#). If you have comments on the newsletter, please send them to [nmheritagerail@nmheritagerail.com](mailto:nmheritagerail@nmheritagerail.com) or to your humble editor, [John Taylor](#).

## FROM THE PRESIDENT: Happy New Year, NMHR members and supporters!

As we begin 2026, New Mexico Heritage Rail is entering an important season of transition and momentum. Our focus remains clear: ensuring NMHR's long-term stability, operational readiness, and our ability to execute a safe and orderly relocation while continuing to preserve and showcase New Mexico's railroad heritage.

A major priority right now is advancing our work at the Albuquerque South Rail Yards (ASRY). The updated access agreement is actively moving through the City review process and, once executed, will provide the foundation for our relocation and forward planning.

As we prepare, we remain committed to maintaining a clean, organized, and professional public-facing presence at the Rail Yards, including continued graffiti abatement and equipment presentation improvements.



## Board Elections – July 2026

Each year in July, NMHR holds elections for three Director positions, each serving a three-year term. If you are interested in running for the NMHR Board of Directors, please submit your interest by email to either:

- [cro@nmheritagerail.com](mailto:cro@nmheritagerail.com)
- [c.rosol@nmheritagerail.com](mailto:c.rosol@nmheritagerail.com)

Submissions must be received by the **second Saturday in May** for consideration.

## Volunteers Needed

NMHR is also seeking volunteers for key positions:

- Site Store Manager
- Restoration Site Store Workers
- Online Store Manager
- Chief Safety Officer
- Additional Docents

If you've been looking for a meaningful way to contribute, this is a great time to step in and help shape NMHR's future.

Thank you for your continued support—everything we accomplish is powered by volunteers and community partners working together.

Respectfully,

**Mathew Casford**

President, New Mexico Heritage Rail

**PROFILE OF A MEMBER:** It is unfortunate that most of our newest members never had the honor and privilege of meeting one of the true stalwarts of preserving New Mexico's railroad heritage, Ernie Robart.



Ernie's father, Fremont on the 476 in Silverton

Ernie was born in Albuquerque in 1947. His father was a Railroad Post Office employee, so Ernie got an early exposure to trains, a topic that would become his lifetime passion.



Ernie at age 12 in the D&RG 476



Ernie (several years later) in the engineer's seat of the 2926



Car attendant in summer, 1973

After graduating from high school, Ernie hired on to the Santa Fe as a car attendant, principally working on the *El Capitan*, one of Santa Fe's premier cross-country passenger trains. When Amtrak took over passenger operations in 1971, he elected to change career paths and began to work as a projectionist and in various other roles in local theaters, ending up working for General Cinema until they ceased operations in 2000.

As noted, Ernie's first love was always trains and railroading, especially narrow gauge railroads. His incredible talent for railroad photography blossomed in the 1960s with numerous classic photos of narrow gauge locomotives and rolling stock.



He also spent hours hiking in the New Mexico and Colorado mountains, sometimes in search of a long-forgotten railroad line and sometimes just to enjoy and photograph the scenery. He and Joseph Hereford Jr. also published a book entitled "Rio Grande—the Final Years—Alamosa to Chama" in 2001.

Ernie was passionate about restoring the narrow gauge heritage in northern New Mexico and Southern Colorado and was instrumental in persuading the two states to establish the Cumbres and Toltec Scenic Railroad in 1970.

Ernie also had a long history with the 2926. He is about 10 years old in the lower right corner this photo of the locomotive in Coronado Park around 1957.

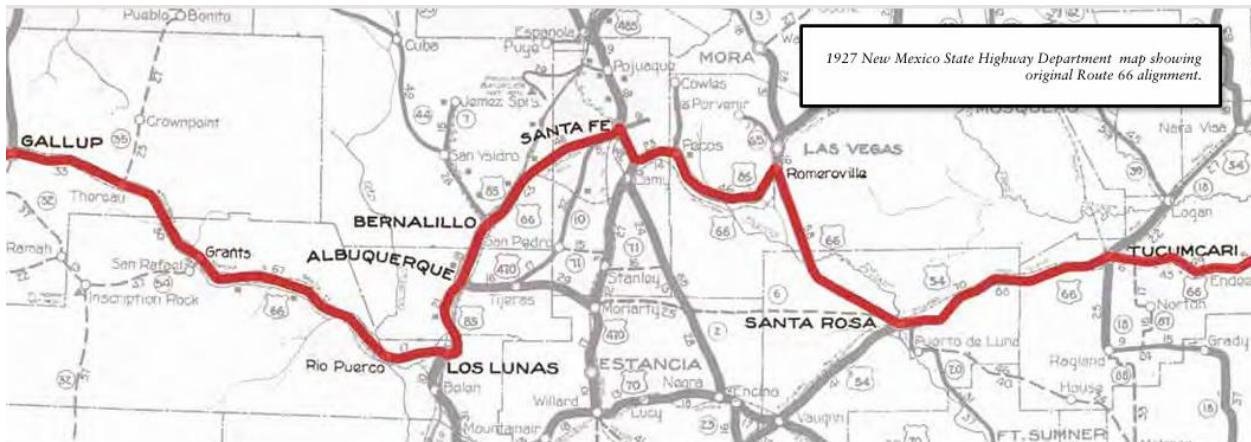


His artistry was evident in the painting he did on the tender. He also spent a good deal of time keeping the ground outside the site clear of trash and weeds. His outside work was so significant that we named the large pond that forms in our parking lot after heavy rains Lake Robart.



Ernie met Lourdes Catalan while she was working at the Mexican Consulate in Albuquerque. After they married, they moved to Washington, D.C. for a few years then returned to Albuquerque where they lived until Ernie's passing in 2018. He is fondly remembered by everyone who knew him as a gentle soul with an amazing passion for trains!

**A SHORT HISTORICAL NOTE:** This year, 2026, is the one hundredth anniversary of Route 66, the so-called Mother Road. Route 66 and railroading in New Mexico have had a long relationship. Almost from its origins in 1926, parts of Route 66 followed the Santa Fe Railroad (and its partner/subsidiary the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad), from Romeroville, just south of Las Vegas, along the route of the Santa Fe Trail through Glorieta Pass to Santa Fe. From there both the highway and the railroad turned south along the old El Camino Real to Los Lunas.



In 1880, the Atlantic and Pacific started a western branch of the Santa Fe system at Isleta, just north of Los Lunas, with a southern branch continuing toward El Paso and Deming. The highway, however, continued south from Isleta and turned west at Los Lunas along the old wagon trail toward Laguna. Route 66 merged with the old A&P route near the village of Rio Puerco and used some of the original A&P roadbed for the highway. The railroad and the highway were almost intertwined the rest of the way across Arizona to the Colorado River.

In 1937, largely through the efforts of New Mexico Governor Arthur Hannett and Albuquerque Mayor (and friend of President Franklin Roosevelt!) Clyde Tingley, Route 66 was rerouted directly from Santa Rosa through Tijeras Canyon to Albuquerque and west to Laguna, completely discarding the loop completely discarding the loop from Santa Rosa to Los Lunas. The railroad, however, kept their original route, running south to Isleta where one branch turned west and the other continued south to Rincon, where it split again with one leg going to El Paso and the other to Deming.



Governor Arthur Hannett



Mayor Clyde Tingley

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The newly rerouted Route 66 joined the old Los Lunas branch of Route 66 (now New Mexico Route 6) at Laguna and continued to California. From Laguna west across New Mexico (with a few exceptions) Interstate 40 closely follows old Route 66. The Mother Road was officially abandoned (but obviously not forgotten) on June 27, 1985.

So, as the State raises a toast to the Mother Road this year, remind your toasting friends that the railroad was here first and was a companion to the highway when it was just a wagon trail.

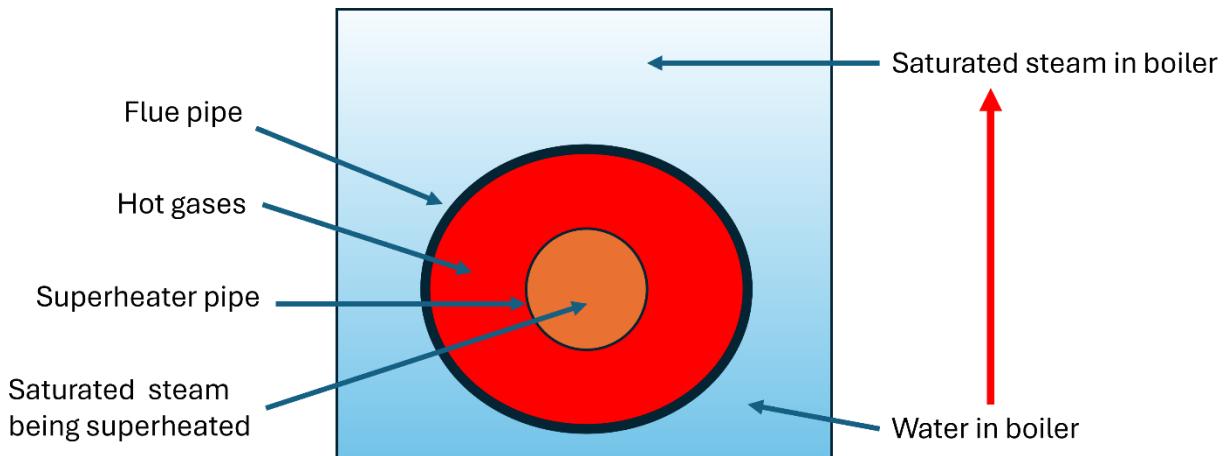


**HOW DOES IT WORK:** In the past, we have described various aspects of the superheat system. But what is superheat? Is it some magical material? Absolutely not! In fact a better description from our point of view might be "extra heat" or "extra internal energy."

We start out in the boiler with liquid water at ambient temperature. The hot gases from the firebox flow through the tubes and flues with the boiler water on the outside. This heats the water until it eventually boils. This gives us a mixture of steam and liquid water that has not yet boiled. This mixture is called "wet steam." As we continue to heat the mixture, the water droplets in the steam continue to boil until all the water droplets have boiled. This material is called saturated or dry steam. In our case, at our altitude, this is steam at 418°F and about 300 psig. Some of this steam flows into the fountain on top of the boiler and is used to run auxiliaries such as the cylinder cocks, the injector, the dynamos, etc.



The rest of the dry steam flows forward through a large pipe called the dry pipe (the large yellow pipe in the top of the boiler in the image above). This pipe dumps the dry steam into the superheater manifold which distributes it into the superheater pipes. These pipes run inside the large flues. In this case, we have saturated steam on the inside of the superheater pipe surrounded by the hot gases flowing in the rest of the flues.



This arrangement adds more internal energy to the steam, eventually raising its temperature to 718°F. This steam with extra energy, and higher temperature, is what we call superheated steam which is used for the main drivers as well as a few auxiliary functions.

**How you can help and other tidbits:** If you are interested in donating to our cause (because operating a steam locomotive is expensive!) go to our [GoFundMe](#) and [Venmo](#) links! Be sure to check out our [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [Instagram](#) pages as well! Other potential sites of interest: our friends at the [Wheels Museum](#), [Rio Metro](#), and activities at the [Albuquerque Railyards](#). Please see our Membership page to discover our other volunteer opportunities



*Celebrate Martin Luter King Jr.'s Birthday on  
January 19, 2026*