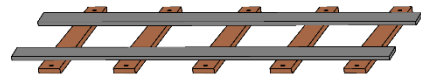


On Track



Vol. 5, Number 3, March 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 or to your humble editor, [John Taylor](#).**

FROM THE PRESIDENT As we move further into 2026, New Mexico Heritage Rail continues to make steady progress during a period of significant growth and transition for the organization. While much of our work happens behind the scenes, the decisions being made now are laying the foundation for NMHR's long-term presence and success at the Albuquerque South Rail Yards (ASRY).

One of the most important milestones this month is the advancement of our ASRY access agreement with the City of Albuquerque. The latest agreement is currently in legal review with the City and reflects a shared understanding of NMHR's long-term operational needs. This agreement provides the infrastructure access and operational certainty required for NMHR to function responsibly on a long-term scale, plan future investments, and continue developing ASRY as a working rail preservation and operations facility.



Progress also continues across our equipment and operations programs. Several stainless-steel passenger cars have been successfully relocated onto City property, and scheduled graffiti abatement work will soon restore them to a presentation standard appropriate for public display. These improvements are an important step in presenting NMHR's equipment professionally while we continue advancing larger infrastructure goals.

Looking ahead, NMHR has received approval for all planned 2026 operating events, allowing us to move forward with confidence in our public programming and coordination efforts with BNSF, NMDOT, and NMRX. In addition, NMHR's Positive Train Control (PTC) informational document will be presented at the **March 21st Members Meeting**. Please keep an eye on your email inbox and the NMHR website for additional details regarding the meeting.

Infrastructure remains a major focus area moving forward. NMHR has received authorization to rehabilitate the engine house lead tracks serving the ASRY turntable—work that is essential to long-term operations and future development. Please keep an eye on your email, the NMHR website, and NMHR's social media platforms for details on an upcoming fundraising drive and how to donate, should you feel moved to do so. **THANK YOU** to everyone considering a contribution to the future of NMHR—your support truly makes this work possible.

None of this progress would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, the generosity of our donors, and the continued support of our members. The months ahead will be busy, but the groundwork being laid now is critical to securing NMHR's future as a working, living railroad at ASRY.

Thank you for your continued support and confidence in New Mexico Heritage Rail.

Mathew Casford, President, New Mexico Heritage Rail

PROFILE OF A MEMBER: This month we have a special treat—a two-fer: Meg Simpson and her daughter, Lillie. Meg was born in Virginia, but her family chased her father, a computer programmer, around the country for a while before settling in Albuquerque. She graduated from La Cueva’s Bear country in 1997.

After high school she attended Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff, graduating in 2004 with a BS in parks and recreation management, specializing in outdoor education. During her university tenure, Meg got involved with GSUSA—North Atlantic, a part of the Girl Scouts, initially working for five summers in Germany as a camp administrator. After graduation, she continued to work for the Girl Scouts in Nevada and here in New Mexico, managing and directing membership, outdoor programs, and organizational logistics.

Taking time out from the public sector, she raised Lillie (more on her later!) and three boys (Cody, currently attending flight school; Caleb, a mechanic attending CNM and deeply buried into the Lurch carburetor; and Hughie, an anthropology major at the University of Alaska).

Although she maintains that she is retired, she is a founder and active participant in Rising Trails New Mexico, a non-profit organization focusing on getting families into the Great Outdoors. In her copious spare time, she indulges in genealogy (one side of her family came to the British Colony of Virginia in 1613), is a member of the Daughters of the American Revolution, substitute teaches in elementary schools, and home schools Lillie.

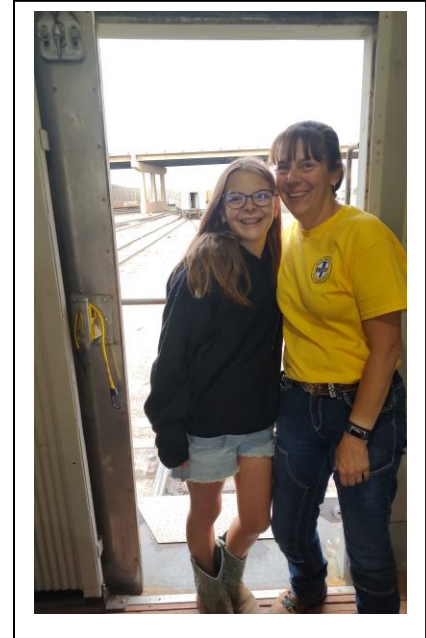
And, of course, she has stepped into the morass that is the membership and administration of the 2926. She came to our organization with Phil Jacobus, whom she has known for 30-some years (according to Phil they were high-school sweethearts!) and has put her management and organizational skills to work to help us streamline our admin practices, especially in communication and membership.

And then there’s Lillie! Probably our youngest adjunct member (recall that you must be 18 to be a full-fledged member, and she is still just 13), Lillie has spent her whole life here in Albuquerque, attending Sandia Vista Elementary until COVID hit and being home schooled by Meg from then on.

In addition to helping us out at the site, Lillie enjoys painting, drawing, and animals, especially her five cats and her beagle-Australian-shepherd mix, Stella. She hopes to become either a marine biologist or a vet (or, perhaps, both) and is already looking at colleges, especially the University of Florida because of its vet program.

In addition to the train, art, and animals, Lillie is a member of Scouting America working on her Eagle rating (as you may have noticed when she hit you up to buy cookies) and is fluent in American Sign Language.

Meg and Lillie have brought not only excellent workers but a softer touch to some of the grease and grime that we are loath to wallow in much of the time.



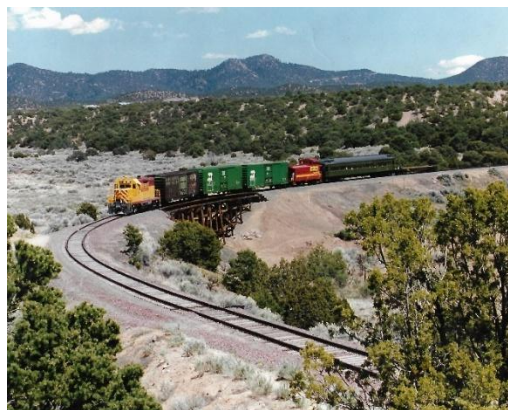
A SHORT HISTORICAL NOTE: Cyrus Holliday had stated his bold vision of a railroad that went from Kansas to Santa Fe, but his engineers and surveyors lived in a more practical world. The terrain from Lamy into the City Different was just too mountainous and twisting for a cost-conscious business, so the mainline turned south at Lamy, heading for Albuquerque. In fact, surveys dating back to the 1860s had noted that no transcontinental route to the Pacific should pass through Santa Fe. The citizens of Santa Fe, however, refused to be left behind. They unanimously passed a bond issue to pay AT&SF to lay the track, and on February 9, 1880, the first train puffed into the capital city along the 18.1-mile Lamy spur.

For the next seventy years the Lamy spur saw much and varied activity. Patrons would patronize the La Fonda hotel, the only Harvey House not on a Santa Fe mainline. Scientists like Enrico Fermi and spies like Klaus Fuchs rode into Santa Fe only to be bussed to the secret city of Los Alamos where the first atomic bomb was being designed, and Japanese citizens from the West Coast were taken into Santa Fe under guard to be interned in Santa Fe in one of the infamous concentration camps decreed by a paranoid administration. Freight trains also plied the Lamy spur, bringing various goods to and from the capital.



La Fonda Hotel

By the 1950s, automobile tourism had overtaken the railroads' domination of the industry. This and other business concerns resulted in many of the railroad companies divesting themselves from short lines and spurs. Although the Lamy spur continued to operate for another 40 years, the costs overwhelmed the romance and history, and AT&SF took measures to either scrap or sell the line. In 1992, a group of local businessmen purchased the spur and named it the Santa Fe Southern Railway after a short line that had run between Santa Fe and Española from 1889 and 1895.



Santa Fe southern pulling passengers and freight

The STI Global owners were enthusiastic but inexperienced and soon found themselves enmeshed in the costly bureaucracy of running a railroad. In 2010, an Australian firm, STI Global, purchased controlling interest in Santa Fe Southern, but they, too, struggled. New requirements such as positive train control, disagreements with use of facilities at the Santa Fe Railyards, competition with the newly operational Rail Runner commuter railroad, and a decline in passenger and freight revenue began to overwhelm the new owners.



Santa Fe depot



Sky Railway

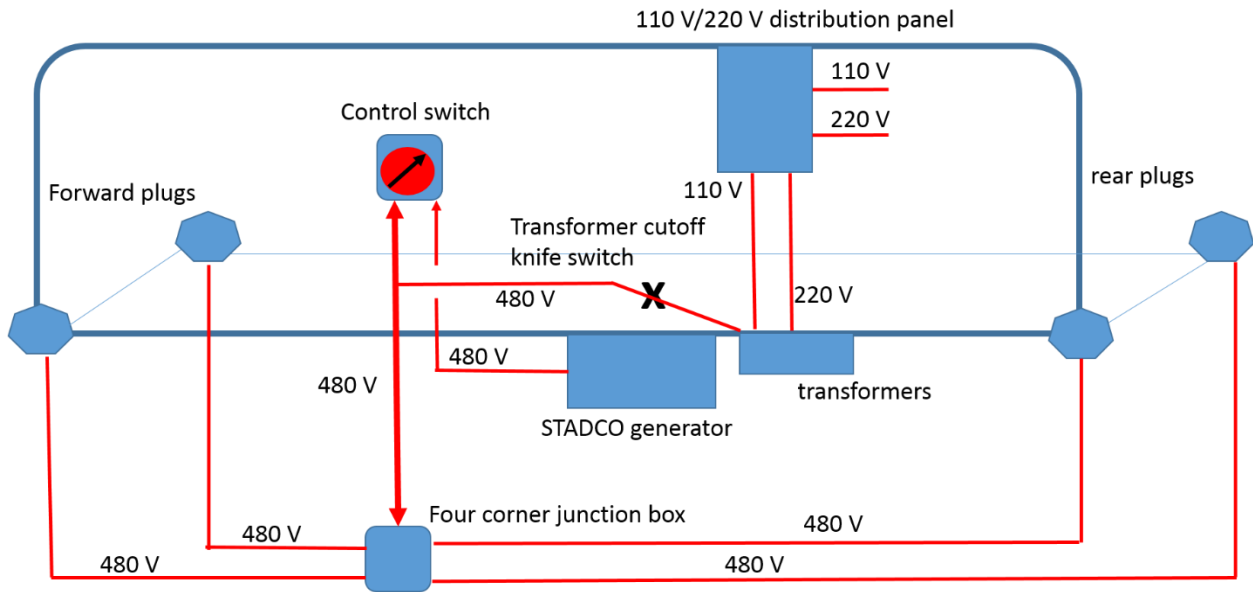
In 2020, over an evening of margaritas and conversation, three Santa Fe entrepreneurs—George R.R. Martin (of “Game of Thrones” fame), Catherine Oppenheimer, and Bill Banowsky—decided it might be fun to “own a railroad.” Together they took the necessary steps to get the SRSR back in good working order and hired a manager, Billy Manfredi, to run the operation.

The newly-renamed Sky Railway is now a going concern, offering “gourmet food, entertainment, and spectacular scenery” on tours (most of which are sold out) from Santa Fe to Lamy from Thursday through Sunday.

Santa Fe, once again, has rail service in place!

HOW DOES IT WORK: Support Car Electrical system The 480 volt, three-phase electrical system that provides power to the support car can come from one of three sources: the diesel locomotive that will accompany the 2926 when she is operating, a shore-power connection when in a yard or other facility, or from the STADCO generator that is attached to the underside of the support car itself. Either shore power or power from the associated diesel is known as Head-End Power (HEP) and comes into the support car from one or two of the 480-volt plugs on any one of the four corners of the support car. Power from the four corner plugs comes into a junction box under the support car that coordinates the power and provides a single output to a three-position control switch located above the deck of the support car. The three positions are HEP, GEN (generator), and FEED (shore power connection).

If the power originates with the installed STADCO generator, the control switch needs to be in the GEN position. If the power originates with shore power, the switch is in the FEED position. If power originates from the accompanying diesel, the switch is in the HEP position. This switch helps to ensure that the system does not have more than one input source. In addition, the control switch ports 480-volt, three-phase power from either the junction box or the generator to the transformers through a knife switch that can cut off all power to the transformers. The transformers send both 120-volt and 240-volt power to the distribution panel. The 120-volt power goes to lights, outlets, etc., and the 240-volt power can be used for the welders or air compressor.



Support Car Electrical System

If there is no need for power in the support car but there is a need for 480-volt power for the remainder of the consist, power from the attached diesel or from shore power can simply pass through one set of corner plugs and the junction box to the other set of corner plugs and on to the remainder of the consist. In that case, the control switch would be in the HEP position and the knife switch will be open. If the STADCO generator is needed to provide power for more than just the support car, the control switch is in the GEN position and the knife switch will be closed.



480 VAC shore power device

Note that power can flow either to or from the four-corner junction box, depending on whether the STADCO generator is providing power to other cars.

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.

