

# THE MANIFEST

## October/November 2021



Greetings!

I hope this newsletter finds you all well. Unfortunately, due to COVID I have not been able to see most of you or be at the park for run days. Since my last newsletter, as many of you are aware, we lost one of our members, E. Don. Pettit. He was a longtime member of the Historical Society, as well as the model railroad club and will be greatly missed by all.

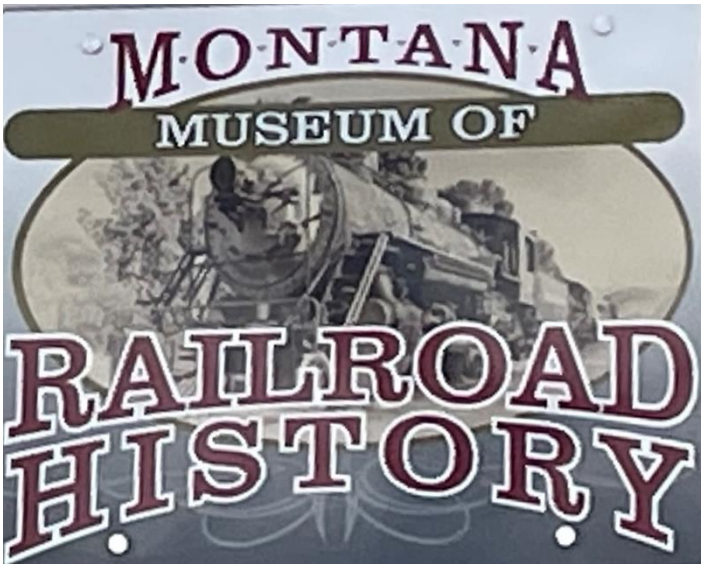
I have been doing some vacationing along the coast, twisted my knee and may have torn a meniscus, but had fun anyway. I then came to Montana for my dad's 94<sup>th</sup> birthday and will be returning home next week. Below I am sharing some photos of the railroad museum they have here, their model railroad layout, etc.

The Montana Museum of Railroad History houses many artifacts from the history of the railroad in the area. Located at the Fairgrounds in Great Falls, Montana, it also is the home to

the local model railroad club. I had been to the layout years ago, and it was quite small at the time.

Pete Ellis was a local icon, and upon his passing his model railroad was added to the museum. I remember Pete well growing up. He always amazed me with his modeling skills, of which he was a member of the NMRA and received a Master Builders Award, and a consultant for Disney.

### The Montana Museum of Railroad History



In Black Eagle Montana (which is literally across the river from Great Falls) there was the Anaconda Copper Company, known to locals as just the Smelter. It was a leading employer in the area for years, and many family members, including my father, worked there. It stood some 350 feet tall on top of a hill surrounded by the various buildings. Not tall for this day and age, but when it was built it was considered massive, equivalent of 35 stories. Unfortunately it was destroyed in 1982.

The reason I give you this very brief history is that it is one of the models at the railroad club.

The "Big Stack" as it was always known, was modeled by Doug Laubach, a board member of the club, and he did an excellent job in modeling the Big Stack, complete with smoke coming from the top, as I remember it so many times over the years.



Below is a model of one of the many farms in Montana. Doug Laubach grew up on a farm, and he modeled the farm scenes.



I found the combine pulled by mules fascinating. It took months to complete.

They made their wheat field using spaced razor blades on a piece of plastic so they could then plant tufts of wheat.



Just the planting part took a little over two months. Then they added mules, and a combine with movable gears. The mules moved their heads and tails, it was fascinating. Everything was modeled to scale if possible.







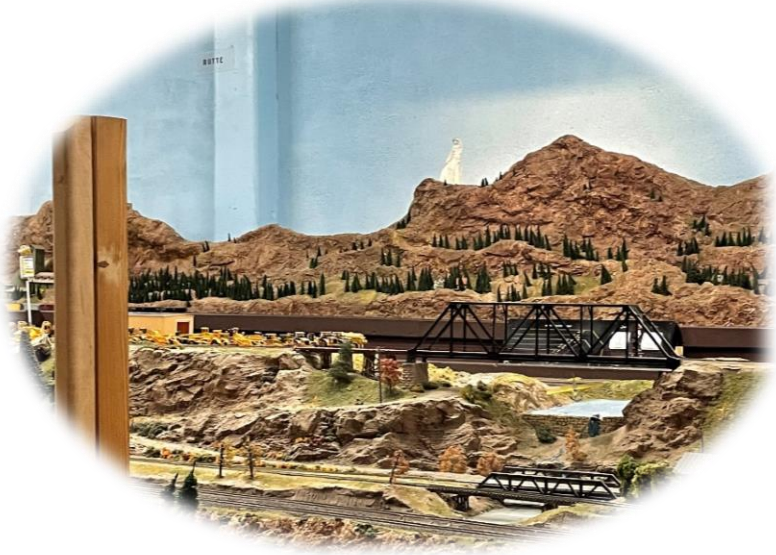
Loaded grain sacks



There are over 400 pieces involved in hitching up the mules.



Following are some miscellaneous pictures from the layout.









That was just a very few of the pictures of the layout, which is the largest model railroad layout in Montana. They have one table that is 12 feet by 72 feet long. The layout consists of a

mainline running from Great Falls, Montana to Butte Montana, (380 feet or over 6 scale miles). All of the models contain working parts, such as the roller coaster shown above, and the windmills, etc.

The trains are controlled from a tower with 5 control panels, or 7 remote control panels located throughout the layout. There is over 3,200 feet of rail, some 85,000 wood crossties, 160 electrical blocks, 140 turnouts, and I could not even imagine how many thousands of feet of wiring.

The building also houses many railroad memorabilia, etc. One of the most interesting items was the "Dinky", an 0-4-0 engine used at the smelter in Black Eagle/Great Falls.

I remember the Dinky well, as one of my very close friends, Jack Hoover, saved it from being scrapped and I have been in it many it to the museum, who is restoring it. I was literally brought to tears when I saw the engine again after so many years.

Here is a picture that my husband Stretch had of the Dinky



Upon receiving the Dinky from Jack's estate, the Montana Museum of Railroad History moved the Dinky into their building to begin restoration.







How happy I am to see for myself that the Dinky is being restored and in a safe place out of the weather.



Among its many memorabilia, the museum also has a speeder.



Outside of the building stands a Burlington Northern Caboose.





I also went by the old railroad yard where the Great Northern had been for years.



The trains are housed about a half a mile from year across the highway now days. On the day I was there, I could not get closer to the buildings, as they were blocked off and no one around to request permission. Perhaps another trip.

I took a short night video of the train passing by close to where my brother lives, unfortunately, unless you have access to an internet you won't be able to see it, and it is not the best quality. I will leave a link here, nevertheless.

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/iu2SAZLzg5XWan9P7>

I totally forgot I was recording my voice and was not really narrating this video clip very well, mind you I was coming out of the local tavern at the time 😊 To view the video right click on the link and you should see an option to open the link.

Below is a screenshot of the video



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Montana and Great Falls has a long railroad history that I will write more about another time, many of you probably know much of it already, and more than I do.

That is all of the train pictures I am going to share, and/or bore you with in this newsletter. I wish and everyone a very happy Thanksgiving, stay well, safe, and healthy, see you soon.

Our next meeting is **December 14, 2021, at 7:00 p.m.** in the model railroad building at south end of parking lot at the Railroad Park. This is the **general election** meeting, in which officers are elected. Any member may run for any of the board positions; however, in particular Allen Dobney is stepping down as the national advisor, so that position in particular will need to be filled. Please consider throwing your name in the at or nominating someone else for that, or any of the positions on the board.

Our volunteers don't get paid, not because they are worthless, but because they are **PRICELESS**



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OFFICIAL Publication of the Southern Oregon Railway  
Historical Society

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[soc-nrhs.org](http://soc-nrhs.org)

