

SCOTTSDALE MODEL RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Scottsdale Model Railroad Historical Society (SMRHS) is taking this opportunity to share the story of our new model railroad and some history of our organization and the McCormick-Stillman Railroad Park. This article is the first of a series of articles beginning with some history and background. In future installments, we will explore the details of the design process and building of our HO scale model railroad.

In 1965, the McCormick family donated a portion of their ranch to the city of Scottsdale for a park. The successful future of the park as a railroad park was cast in the early 1970's with two events. Guy Stillman, a McCormick family member, donated his 5/12th scale narrow gauge railroad equipment to Scottsdale for use in the park. Stillman along with others founded the Scottsdale Railroad and Mechanical Society to raise funds for the park. These events led the way for the October 4, 1975 public opening of the McCormick Railroad Park.



PARK GRAND OPENING - OCTOBER, 1975

In the mid 1970's, Stillman's 15 inch gauge Paradise & Pacific Railroad was joined by four clubs who found a new home and became active in expanding the railroad park. Three rooms in the old ranch bunk house were converted into layout rooms for N scale, HO scale and O gauge layouts. The fourth club began work outdoors on a 7-1/2 inch gauge railroad.

Over the years, railroad related equipment and buildings have been added to the park along with a museum and a beautiful carousel. The park's calendar has grown to include Rail Fair, Holiday Lights, Concerts and other special events. The mid-1990's saw the construction of the Stillman Station becoming the focal point for visitor arrival and information and a home for the park staff. In 1996, the park was renamed the McCormick - Stillman Railroad Park to honor the key role Guy Stillman played in creating the park. Stillman forged a unique and lasting partnership between the non-profit "Mechanical Society" and the City of Scottsdale which has allowed the park to become a world class destination.

The Scottsdale Model Railroad Historical Society (SMRHS) began life in the 1960's when a small group of HO modelers, working in members homes, formed the Lak-a-Wampum Model Railroad Club. The group welcomed the opportunity to build a permanent layout at the park in 1975 and became the Scottsdale Model Railroad Club. Thirty-five years and numerous layout changes later, the now 40 plus members rejoiced in the opportunity to build a new layout in a brand new building as we became SMRHS.



IN THE BEGINNING - 32 X 40 FEET OF OPEN SPACE

Ground breaking in February, 2010 for the Model Railroad Building became the fulfillment of a ten year dream for the park staff and the three clubs, Sun-N-Sand, SMRHS and Paradise & Pacific O gauge. The building was nearly complete when it was briefly opened to the clubs and the public for Rail Fair in October, 2010. Over 4,000 people visited the building over two days. Then the building remained closed for three months while contractors completed their work and the three clubs began their layout construction. January, 2011 saw the dedication of the Model Railroad Building and its formal public opening. Over 150,000 park visitors enjoyed the sights and sounds of the model railroads, displays and videos in the first twelve months.



A LOT OF TRACK - NOT MUCH SCENERY

SMRHS is now thirty months into the construction of the new railroad. About 40 % has been completed to the stage of detailed scenery. We conduct several operating sessions per month on the finished portion. Computer controlled trains run daily during visiting hours. Our goal is to have the railroad nearly complete for the NMRA PSR Convention that we will host in Scottsdale in September, 2015. The railroad park is just a mile from the convention hotel and will play a significant role in convention activities.





In the months ahead, we hope you will look for future updates as we tell the story of our railroad and cover the topics of:

Arizona railroads and towns we model

Design process from concept to detailed plans

Bench work, roadbed and track

Scenery design and construction

Electrical systems

Computer systems and automatic trains

Prototype operations

For more information, visit: therailroadpark.com, scottsdalemrhs.org (HO scale), sun-n-sand.org (N scale), pandpr.com (O gauge) and scottsdalelivesteamers.com (7-1/2 inch gauge).