



WHEELS Museum Newsletter Summer 2021

Letter from the President

Leba Freed

Dear Friends,
Passion + Persistence +
Partners + Progress =
WHEELS. This has been the
equation for WHEELS' success for more than twenty-five years. When I saw the Railyards property in 1994 I fell in love. We formed a 501c3 non-profit organization in 1999 and with the help of so many we now have a site on the Railyards, our seventh location. We have a fabulous team and exhibits worth about 4 million dollars. We also have a private gorgeous railcar, *The Silver Iris*, which is now AMTRAK certified and ready for excursions.

Nothing would be possible without the work and commitment of many people including:

Scott Rhodes who has been on our Board of Directors since day one.

Willard Eastman who has been with us forever.

John Minks who has been a stalwart for over a decade.

Sandy Ginsburg, Rest in Peace, who was in charge of twenty-five fundraisers.

Joe Cromey who has lifted, thought and worked on many projects.

(Continued on page 7)



Volunteers re-opening WHEELS after pandemic.

WHEELS Museum Improvements

Although the pandemic closed WHEELS to the public, we did not just sit still. A lot of work was accomplished.

New Security System

WHEELS unfortunately experienced a rash of break-ins, burglaries and vandalism during the pandemic. We installed improved security grating on the windows and a new up to date electronic alarm and keying system. These improvements stopped the criminal activity and we are much more secure.



New HVAC System

Funds from the City and Legislature were used to install a much needed heating and cooling system

throughout the building. Visitors and volunteers can now enjoy the museum in comfort throughout the whole year.

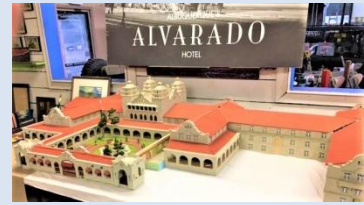
Coming Soon: The New Rail Trail



Artist's rendering of Rail Trail

The City of Albuquerque is building an attractive pedestrian and bike trail to connect downtown at Lomas to the Railyards. The trail will be landscaped with art and historic markers along the path. President Leba and volunteer Dick Barnitz are working with the City to ensure that the trail connects to WHEELS and includes iron fencing and landscaping along the Second Street frontage of WHEELS. Stay tuned for progress.

The Alvarado Hotel Room



Volunteer Patti Santillo took on the challenge of reorganizing and improving the design of the Alvarado Hotel Room. The room has a scale model of the historic Alvarado Hotel as its center piece and includes a valuable collection of china, silverware, Harvey Girl memorabilia and other artifacts from the hotel.

The Model Car Room



Volunteers Chuck Herrmann, Chuck Jones and their team redesigned The Model Car Room into a fine display of hundreds of scale model cars, probably the largest in the state.

WHEELS Summer Speaker Programs

WHEELS has the honor of having speakers this summer who have proven very popular with the public. Events have resulted in capacity crowds of fifty attendees and gained notice in the Albuquerque Journal.

Overhaul Book Event by authors Richard Flint and Shirley Cushman Flint

Five years ago, Leba encouraged authors Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint to write a definitive history of the Albuquerque Railyards. The result is the book *Overhaul* published by the University of New Mexico Press. The authors graciously agreed to discuss their book at public events sponsored by WHEELS. The events attracted crowds of fifty attendees each.

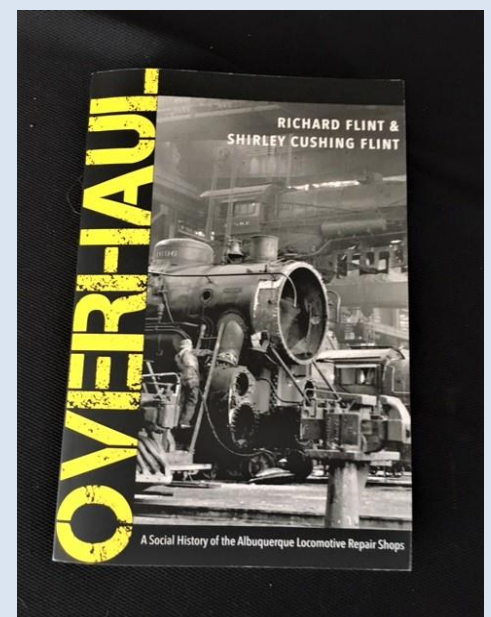
Book Description: In *Overhaul*, historians Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint present the largely forgotten story of Albuquerque's locomotive repair shops, which were the

driving force behind the city's economy for more than seventy years. In the course of their study they also document the thousands of skilled workers who kept the locomotives in operation, many of whom were part of the growing Hispano and Native American middle class. Their critical work kept the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe's steam trains running and established and maintained Albuquerque's unique character in the region.

Including a generous selection of historic photographs, *Overhaul* provides a glimpse into the people, places, culture, and special history found in Albuquerque's locomotive shops during the boom of steam

railroading. The Flints provide an engaging and informative account of how these shops and workers played a crucial role in the formation and development of the Duke City.

Copies of the book are available for \$20 at WHEELS.



August 21 Event

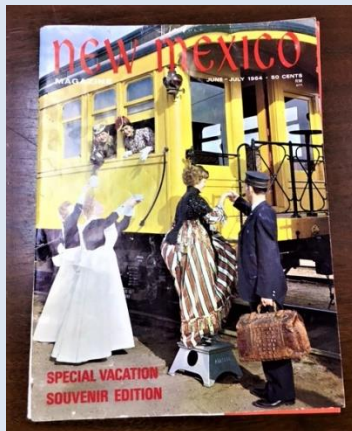
Event: The Nationalities of the Albuquerque Railyard Workers

On August 21, author and historian Cecelia Navarette discussed her research about the nationalities of the Railyard workers, some from New Mexico; some from around the country and some from around the world who toiled to keep the trains running for the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. Her discussion should be fascinating and enlightening.



New Exhibits Recently Added!

New Mexico Magazine Cover Harvey Girl Dress



Look at the beautiful dress that is pictured on the woman boarding the train on the cover of New Mexico Magazine's' 1964 special issue on New Mexico tourism. Now look at the picture on the right. It is the same dress that is now on display at WHEELS.



More New Exhibits

Route 66 Travel Trailer

This model travel trailer is constructed of actual old Route 66 billboards. This one of a kind piece of memorabilia was made by art professors, one of whom is from Albuquerque. The trailer most recently resided in the Cincinnati Museum of Contemporary Art.



As you sit inside, prepare for a “ride” as the trailer shakes and rocks as the “speed” increases.

New Telegraph Exhibit



This “hands on” exhibit allows visitors to hear recordings of historic transmissions and try their hand at Morse code.

Ford Model T Truck.

This rare vintage truck is owned by one family and passed down through generations since it was first purchased. The family has graciously loaned the vehicle to WHEELS for exhibit.



Washburn Player Piano

This new exhibit has been refurbished and newly tuned. Visitors are already being transported by piano music when visiting the museum.



[Please come and see the new exhibits and enjoy the old ones.](#)

Silver Iris News

The Silver Iris is the beautiful 1952 model Budd Lounge and sleeper car. It was donated to WHEELS in 2019.

Volunteer Kurt Olsen and his team have worked on the car and he is pleased to report that it is AMTRAK certified and is ready to roll. Leba and Kurt have been working with Rail Runner and State of New Mexico officials to plan public excursions.

If you and a group are interested in a trip on the Silver Iris and the luxurious Santa Fe lounge car Acoma (a car that Bob Hope and Marilyn Monroe traveled on), please contact us.



Contact us

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e-mail: info@wheelsmuseum.org

Donate

We welcome financial donations and artifact donations.
Call or e-mail Leba (505.243-6269) for information.

Would you like to be a volunteer at WHEELS? WHEELS is seeking volunteers--everyone from Board Members to workers. Do not worry if you feel that you do not have skills. We will train you.

A WHEELS was founded in 1999 as a nonprofit 5-01C3 organization. Our mission is to preserve the transportation history of New Mexico, educate the public about our history and to make our city and state a historic destination site.

Letter from President Leba (continued from page 1)

Dick Barnitz, a retired BNSF engineer, who has just completed a World War II exhibit.

Lynn Lewis who has great design ability and talent.

Dr. Tom Sims, Coordinator of Volunteers.

Patti Santillo, who has worked extensively on the Alvarado Room exhibit.

Dr. Dave Hartson, who has given us hundreds of thousands of dollars' worth of model train layouts and so much more.

While it is impossible to thank everyone in this letter, I love all of the volunteers, donors and visitors.

We recently had fifteen Navajo orphans visit us recently and people come from around the world; everyone with joy, experience and with ideas, suggestions, paint brushes and kind words.

We are all working to help save the iconic Albuquerque Railyards, grow WHEELS and create educational programs to inspire the future of New Mexico.

I love you all and thank you!
Leba

