

**The History
Of
Martin & Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum
2001 – 2025**



**By Frank T. Hilton
Volunteer**

Dedication

This history of the Martin & Frances Lehnis Train Museum is dedicated to all the staff, volunteers and organizations, who during the eighteen years the museum has been open, have dedicated their time, money and talents to help make the museum what it is today. All of the known staff, volunteers and organizations have been listed at the end of this book that we have been able to find. We apologize if we have left anyone out, but regardless, you are still appreciated for the effort you have dedicated to this museum.

I would like to thank all those men and women who provided information to help make this book possible, and their support of me during this process. I especially want to thank Mary Ann, the Museum Coordinator, and her staff, who have provided me with the resources of the museum to help in my research.

This story of the museum was motivated by the number of directors that have been with the museum and the possible loss of the history of this institution. I first began volunteering at the museum in early August 2007 to help Mary Irving, and others, prepare the displays to open the museum on September 15 of that next month.

Mission of the Museum

“The mission of the Martin & Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum and the Great State of Texas Transportation Complex is to collect, preserve, exhibit, and educate the public about the role of railroading and transportation in the history and growth of Brownwood, the State of Texas and the American Southwest.”

Earlier Collection Policy

(Please note that the Advisory Board is no longer in existence, so this policy may have been updated.)

“The museum is to collect artifacts, photographs, and documents which fulfill the Mission Statement, particularly relating to the railroad and transportation history of Texas and the American Southwest. Items not related to the Mission Statement may only be accepted for a specific purpose, and must be approved by the Advisory Board.”



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Chapter 1: The Story of Martin Lehnis

We all know that the “train museum” in Brownwood, Texas, was named after Martin & Frances Lehnis, but many do not know the back story as to how that all came about. Lehnis railroad journey started when he was just twelve years old and use to hang around the railroad yard of the Abilene & Southern Railroad in Abilene, Texas, as Sam Wyatt, who worked for the railroad, had adopted Lehnis after his parents died at the age of seven in East Texas.

Wyatt lived in a railroad company house right beside the railroad tracks and next door to the roundhouse. It didn't take long before Lehnis spent all this free time after school to hang out in the yard and the roundhouse.

One magical night, Buster got the chance to fire up an Iron Horse all on his own! Despite being just 12 years old, he managed to get old Seventeen roaring to life, much to the initial surprise of his mentor, Jack Miller. Buster's mentor served as the hostler and roundhouse night watchman for the Abilene & Southern Railroad. Old Seventeen refers to the steam locomotive, Engine Number Seventeen that belonged to the Missouri-Pacific and then the Katy railroad lines before the Abilene & Southern acquired it and converted it to burn oil.

Eventually, Martin Lehnis got a job with the railroad starting in 1930, and worked for the Santa Fe Railroad until 1979, for some forty-nine years. He held many different jobs with the railroad during that time.

Lehnis loved everything that had to do with the railroad, and starting in 1955 when the railroad started converting from steam locomotives to diesel he collected anything that was discarded by the railroad in scrape piles, including oil cans, lanterns or anything lying on the side of the track. He would purchase items from flea markets too.

Along the way he acquired a caboose, a business car which he wanted to restore, and the Kress Depot from Kress, Texas when they put it up for sale. He also collected model railroad items, some of it pretty old, which he displayed inside his home.

During this time he acquired a 7 ½ inch gauge live steam locomotive, a second locomotive, and built track all over his yard



and back pasture to run them. Friends would bring their own live steam railroad equipment to run it on his track.

He built a ramp so they could unload their locomotives and cars from their trailers and pickups. This went on for many years until Lehnis finally had to give it up.

Photo above taken from *Keeping Track*, Vol. 1, Issue 2, April 1, 2005

As they grew older, Martin and Frances started planning what should be done with their massive collection of historic railroad artifacts. The railroad community feared the collection would be auctioned off and sent all over the country. William Osborn, a rail fan collector and attorney in Austin, helped the Lehnises form a contract with the City of Brownwood to donate the collection to be used to establish a transportation museum.

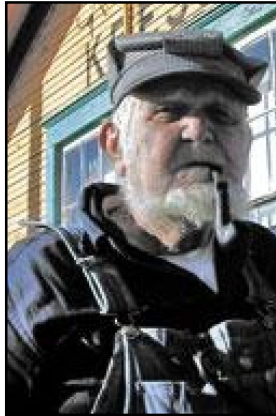


His collection was located at his farm on Hwy 84/183 between Brownwood and Zephyr.

Unfortunately, Lehnis passed away before the museum could be built. "Martin L. Lehnis, 89, passed away Wednesday, February 23, 2005 at Brownwood Regional Medical Center. Funeral services were held at 1 p.m. Saturday at Davis-Morris Funeral Home with Bro. Robert Elkins officiating. Interment followed in the Santa Anna Cemetery with Masonic rites from the Santa Anna Masonic Lodge.



George Frances and Martin L. Lehnis



Services today for train man Martin Lehnis, II

Photo of Martin Luther Lehnis, III

Posted: Saturday, February 26, 2005 12:00 am | *Updated: 3:46 pm, Wed Nov 25, 2009.*

By Candace Cooksey Fulton -- Brownwood Bulletin

Martin Lehnis, whose vast collection of railroad artifacts and memorabilia will be the main attraction and signature of the \$2.8 million transportation museum now under construction, died Thursday.

He was 89, and a railroad man. That destiny, he often said, was determined more than 80 years ago when the papers were signed and he was legally adopted by Sam and Lenora Wyatt. His biological parents died when Martin was a very young child. Sam Wyatt was a railroad man too, and reared young Martin to follow the rails.

He had a 50-year career railroading, interrupted only once, when he served with the Coast Guard during World War II.

Though it had been in the planning for a number of years, groundbreaking for the transportation museum was Jan. 20. Mr. Lehnis had been scheduled to wield a shovel, but was ill and couldn't attend. In his stead, a nephew and daughter-in-law turned the ceremonial dirt on their shovel's tips.

The yearlong project will produce a \$2.8 million museum complex. Included in the museum will be fully restored train cars and the vast collection of artifacts and railroad memorabilia Mr. Lehnis amassed in his life time. Everything from lanterns and oil cans to the dishes that served coffee and hot meals in the dining cars are part of the collection.

Friends, family members and officials said they were glad Mr. Lehnis lived to see the groundbreaking of the museum.

"It was a dream of his," his daughter-in-law Marilyn Lehnis said at the groundbreaking.

According to a 2003 Bulletin story, Mr. Lehnis' formal education didn't take him far past the ninth grade, but 50 years of personal experience and thousands of hours of additional reading and studying should merit him a PhD in railroad history.

"I read a lot -- I learn everything I know from reading," he said. "I had a ninth grade education but I never did quit studying. History was always my main subject and I loved Texas history and I love railroad history."

Services are set for 1 p.m. today in the Davis-Morris Funeral Home Chapel, with Robert Elkins officiating. Burial will follow in the Santa Anna Cemetery with Masonic rites from the Santa Anna Masonic Lodge.

His wife, Frances Lehnis, whom he married on March 29, 1941 in Santa Anna, died Nov. 5, 2004. They had a son, Martin Luther Lehnis IV, who also became a railroad man. He suffered a brain aneurism a number of years ago and died. Marty and Marilyn Lehnis' son, their grandson, William Martin Lehnis, died in infancy.

Mr. Lehnis said in the 2003 interview there had been a great deal of discussion among family members about the fate of the collection. Its estimated value is more than \$1 million.

"We thought about auctioning it all off, but then the collection would probably end up scattered all over the country. We decided to keep it all here in Brownwood and not scattered with the four winds," Mr. Lehnis said. "We would like it to be here for all the people to see." Lehnis said he hoped the museum and its contents tell the story of the whole railroad and not just the tales of a few.

Martin, Frances, and son Martin IV, are buried in the Santa Ann Cemetery.

"He was born October 18, 1915 to Margin Jr. and Bessie Lehnis. They preceded him in death as a child, where he was adopted by Samuel C. and Lenora Wyatt on May 27, 1925. He was married to Georgia Frances Barlett on March 29, 1941, in Santa Anna. She preceded him in death on November 5, 2004. He had been a resident of Brownwood since 1950. A great lover of trains, he worked for the railroad and had been a lifelong railroader, and was very influential in the Brownwood railroad museum, which has been named after him and his wife. Martin was in the Coast Guard during World War II and was very active in the Coast Guard Ships reunions, which he and his wife Frances hosted one year in Texas.



"He is survived by a sister, Shirley Arlene Twilligear of Comanche; a sister-in-law, Evelyn Joyce Wyatt of Brownwood; daughter-in-law, Marilyn Lehnis of San Antonio; and several nieces and nephews.

"He was preceded in death by his adopted parents, Sam and Lenora Wyatt; a son, Martin Luther Lehnis IV; an infant grandson, William Martin Lehnis; and a brother, Dean Wyatt."

(From the Coleman Chronicle and Democrat-Voice, Coleman, Texas, March 1, 2005, page 21.)



Georgia F. Barlett Lehnis, age 84, of Brownwood died Friday, November 5, 2004 at Cross Country Nursing Center in Brownwood, Texas. Funeral service was 2 p.m. Monday at Davis-Morris Funeral Home Chapel with Rev. R.J. Elkins officiating. Davis-Morris Funeral Home of Brownwood was in charge of arrangements.

Born December 3, 1919 in Santa Anna, Texas, she was a member of the Methodist Church of Santa Anna. A resident of Brown County since 1950, she was a retired District Regional

Manager for Kentucky's Central Life Insurance Company. On March 29, 1941, she married Martin Luther Lehnis, III in Santa Anna.

Survivors include her husband, Martin Luther Lehnis, III of Brownwood; a daughter-in-law, Marilyn J. Lehnis of San Antonio; two nieces, Carolyn Johnson and Don of Orange, Texas and Janette Molamphy and Michael of Houston; two nephews, Richard and Margaret Pringle of League City and Barlett and Dianne Pringle of Texas.

She was preceded in death by a son, Martin Luther Lehnis, IV and an infant grandson, William Martin Lehnis.

(Coleman Chronicle and Democrat-Voice, Coleman, Texas, November 9, 2004, page 13.)



Martin Luther Lehnis IV, 45, of Glendale, a roadmaster, died May 8, 1991. He was born in Texas and served in the Army reserves. Survivors include his wife, Marilyn J.; and his parents. Scripture services: 11 a.m. Saturday, Chapel of the Chimes, 7924 N. 59th Ave., with visitation two hours prior to services. Contributions: Martin L. Lehnis, IV Memorial, Texas A & M Association of Former Students, P.O. Box 7368, College Station, Texas 77844-7368.

Information for the tombstones and obituaries are from Find A Grave of the Santa Ann Cemetery, Santa Ann, Texas plis the Coleman Chroncle and Democrat-Voce of Coleman, Texas.

Chapter 2: Building the Museum

Tuesday, June 12, 2001

On this day, Martin and Francis Lehnis and Brownwood Mayor Bert Masses signed a contract and grant request for the donating their railroad collection to the City of Brownwood. This was done during a regular meeting of the city council.



According to the Brownwood Bulletin, dated Wednesday, June 13, 2001, "A presentation was made during the meeting outlining the city's plans to create a multi-million dollar railroad museum near the Depot Civic and Cultural Center, utilizing grant funds that are under application."

"Halff Associates, the firm contracted for the redesign of the Santa Fe Depot and Harvey House, created the plans for the museum. Council was also informed that the Texas Department of Transportation T-21 grant application would need to be completed and submitted for consideration by June 18.

"Total costs on the project are currently estimated around \$7.9 million from grant money with a 20 percent match by the city, approximately \$15,800. The project would also include a renovation of some of the grain elevator, including painting of the structure's exterior.

"Lehnis said that he was overwhelmed by the proposal after viewing the architectural renderings and hearing the ideas Halff Associates had included in the project."

One October 10, 2001, the Brownwood City Council approved a budget amendment resolution to not to exceed \$28,500 for the inventory and cataloging of the Lehnis Train Museum. The inventory services are to be handled by the Iron Mountain firm of Dallas, Texas.

During a City Council workshop on February 7, 2002 the City Manager Gary Butts reported that the following project would come before the council, one at a time, for their approval and funding.

- Purchase of property from the Brownwood Civic Improvement Foundation for the Lehnis Railroad Museum, \$300,000.
- Museum grant matching funds, \$263,660.
- Museum artifacts restoration and capital equipment, \$300,000.

Lehnis Railroad Museum groundbreaking set Tuesday

By Candace Cooksey Fulton
Brownwood Bulletin

Martin Lehnis and Brownwood city officials will break ground Tuesday to officially launch the construction of the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum.

The groundbreaking is scheduled for 2 p.m. Tuesday at the museum site which is where the former Continental Grain Co. warehouse originally stood at Adams and Congress.

The yearlong project will produce a \$2.8 million museum complex — \$2.2 million of which is paid for with money from federal and TxDOT grants. Included in the museum will be fully restored train cars and the vast

collection of artifacts and railroad memorabilia Martin Lehnis has amassed in his life time. Everything from lanterns and oil cans to the dishes that served coffee and hot meals in the dining cars are part of the Lehnis collection.

Debbie Morehead, a longtime family friend of Lehnis and his wife, Frances, who died late last year, helped catalog the collection. "It is incredible," she said. "Mr. Lehnis is 89 years old and he can tell you a story and has the history of everything he's got."

Some of that is saved on video and will be featured in an "interactive" area in the museum.

"I could write two or three

great big books on all the people I've known and all the things I've seen on the railroads," Lehnis said in a 2003 interview. "I worked for some crazy people. Every time I would get a new boss I would say 'I'm going to train you now.'"

"Bosses don't know everything and you don't know everything. You can put your marbles together and get something done. I learned something from every boss I ever had," Lehnis said.

Lehnis said then his collection had modest beginnings in McGregor, Texas, in 1947, when he took home a reflector

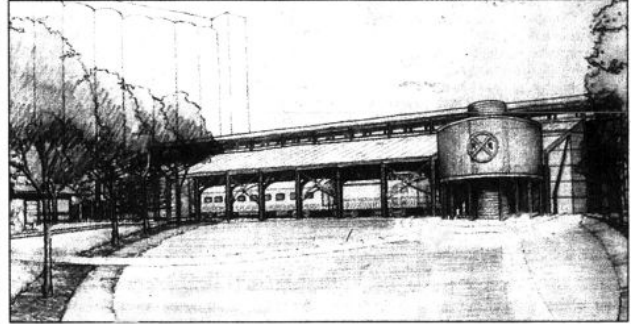


Illustration courtesy City of Brownwood
The \$2.8 million Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum has a planned construction time of about a year. Groundbreaking is set for 2 p.m. Tuesday at the site, at Adams and Congress.

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MUSEUM

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lantern, a coal oil lamp and an oil can which had been scrapped by the railroad.

A big part of the Martin and Frances Lehnis railroad legacy was their son, Martin Luther Lehnis IV. Their son earned a master's degree from Texas A&M University before joining the railroad.

Their son rose to the position of road master for the Santa Fe railroad in Phoenix, Ariz., before he had an aneurysm and died.

"Marty worked all over and did pretty good for himself. The road master has complete charge of all the tracks and their maintenance in a given area. The road master is the lowest official on the railroad, still it's still a big boss," Lehnis said.

The Pullman car in the collection was purchased by the younger Lehnis. Aside from the price of the car, it cost \$800 to get it moved from Kansas to Brownwood and another \$2,900 to get the 75-ton behemoth moved from Brownwood to the farm near Zephyr, where it is now located.

According to the senior

Lehnis, there was a great deal of discussion among the family as to the fate of the collection with a value estimated at more than \$1 million.

"We thought about auctioning it all off, but then the collection would probably end up scattered all over the country. We decided to keep it all here in Brownwood and not scattered with the four winds," Lehnis said. "We would like it to be here for all the people to see."

Lehnis said he hoped the museum and its contents tell the story of the whole railroad and not just the tales of a few.

"People write about the history of the railroads and all they write about are the trains which were running. That's just the tip of the iceberg. There were switchmen, section hands, section bosses, bridge gangs and clerks. Before a train would leave Brownwood, there were about five clerks who had a say-so over what was on that train and where it was going. When a train left here headed for Sweetwater, there were about 50 people involved in moving that train," Lehnis said.

Ground broken on Lehnis museum

By Candace Cooksey Fulton
Brownwood Bulletin

Their golden shovels barely interrupted the top soil on the clearing between Adams and Congress Tuesday afternoon.

But some, who'd waited long and hoped longer that there would one day be the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum, equated the shallow digging to a grander scale.

For them, the earth moved.

Martin Lehnis, 89, who dreamed the dream first and waited perhaps the longest, couldn't be at the groundbreaking ceremony because, said Brownwood City Manager Gary Butts, he wasn't feeling well. Lehnis's nephew, John Walker, had been assigned to video the ceremony for his uncle's review.

Brownwood Mayor Bert V. Massey said the Lehnis Railroad

Museum was to be the showpiece of a larger project, an all-encompassing transportation museum. The showpiece is possible because of "the generous and unequalled donation" of Martin Lehnis and his wife, Frances, who died late last year, Massey said. Martin and Frances's only son, Marty, died in 1991 after suffering a sudden aneurism. His widow, Marilyn Lehnis attended the ceremony, and wielded a ceremonial gold shovel to help break the ground.

Marilyn Lehnis, who lives in San Antonio, said it had been Marty's idea in 1978 to purchase a pullman car to add to his father's growing collection.

The Lehnis railroad collection that includes everything from several sets china used to serve meals in different railroad dining cars, to railroad oil cans and lanterns, and also a

caboose and a depot building from Kress, Texas, will be kept in tact and together. Its dollar worth is reported to be well over \$1 million. Its components, said Massey are second to none.

"This collection is his (Martin Lehnis's) lifelong labor of love."

"I am so happy to see this finally happening," Marilyn Lehnis said after the ceremony. "This was their whole dream."

Butts said, "Many years from now we'll look back on this day as a cornerstone event," and Massey lauded the building of the museum as one of "the great projects of our community."

Their were many people to thank, Butts and Massey said, starting with Martin and Frances Lehnis and their family, and including friends of the

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MUSEUM

Continued from Page 1A

family Debbie Morelock, Mary Marshall Holley and Kay Leipzig, who had encouraged city officials to visit Martin and Frances Lehnis and hear their offer.

"This is not the first time I have said 'thank you' to Martin Lehnis," Massey said, "but I hope when he views this video

he hears it sincerely said."

The museum will be located in front of the grain elevators, where the Continental Grain Co. formerly stood. Construction is scheduled to take a full year and the project, estimated to cost \$2.8 million, is 90 percent funded through a Texas Department of Transportation grant.

Photo by Scott Coers -- Participants in Tuesday's groundbreaking ceremony included, left to right, Lynn Passmore, Brownwood district engineer, Texas Department of Transportation; John Walker, Martin Lehnis's nephew; Emily Walker; City Manager Gary Butts; Marilyn Lehnis, Martin and Frances Lehnis's daughter-in-law; contractor Paul Waldrop Jr.; and Brownwood Mayor Bert Massey.



Three dogs left at Lehnis home

The city of Brownwood was looking for a home for the three dogs left at the Lehnis home as the Move Rite & Transport Company packed up the collection to transport to the city. According to a story that appeared in the Brownwood Bulletin on March 4, 2005 by Candace Cooksey Fulton, the city was looking for a home for the three dogs left at the Lehnis home.



Cindy was an Irish setter mix, Spots was the oldest of the three and the smallest. Last was Tip that seem to be a border collie, and the only one that was an inside/outside dog. She was also hard of hearing.

Moving the heavy artifacts to the museum site





Once the heavy artifacts are on site it was time to build the museum building.



Mary Irving hired as Lehnis Train Museum Consultant



Mary Irving of Temple was hired by the Brownwood City Council in April 2005 to catalogue the collection of Martin and Frances Lehnis that was housed in the Timmins Building (Now the Brownwood Event Center,) She was paid a \$10,000 fee

to catalogue the collection and to prepare a master plan for the proposed museum.

She was curator and director of the Railroad and Heritage Museum in Temple for 22 years. While she was there, the museum went from a staff of one person to a staff of six. She had a degree in art/art history with a specialty in museum science from the West Chester State College in Pennsylvania.

On July 1, 2007, Mary Irving was employed as the director of the Martin and Francis Lehnis Railroad Museum to oversee the \$2.6 million museum which was now completed and located in front of the grain elevators, where the Continental Grain Co. formerly stood. She and the volunteers only had six weeks to get the museum ready to be opened.



Before above and now below



Chapter 3: Opening the doors

Lehnis Museum opens doors

Posted: Saturday, September 15, 2007 12:00 am | *Updated: 4:03 pm, Wed Nov 25, 2009.*
By Gene Deason — Brownwood Bulletin

"It's something we've been waiting for years and years," Marilyn Lehnis of San Antonio said Friday. "This is why they collected things all those years."

Martin and Frances Lehnis didn't live long enough to see how their train collection legacy is being put on display for the public, but their daughter-in-law, Marilyn, and other relatives were on hand for the grand opening of the Great State of Texas Transportation Museum featuring the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum.

The Friday morning ceremony at the facility built especially for this purpose is open to the public, free of charge, today and Sunday as part of the Brownwood Reunion Celebration. It's located at Adams Street and Washington, across from the historic Santa Fe Depot and Harvey House. Hours will be from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

"We are here to celebrate a significant day for our city, for our sister cities in the area and the entire state," Brownwood Mayor Bert Massey said at the dedication ceremony.

Massey related how he and the City of Brownwood became involved in the creation of the museum and how the project ultimately involved the then largest such grant from the Texas Department of Transportation for the building's construction after the Lehnis family chose to donate to the city the railroad items they had spent more than 60 years gathering.

"This is an extremely valuable collection," Massey said. "It is estimated to be worth over \$2 million, and in addition to the Santa Fe, it includes items from dozens of different railroads. The Santa Fe Railroad is a particularly fine collection."

Massey said the collection is so vast, the museum will be able to constantly build exhibits, which will encourage repeat visits.

The mayor also recognized the volunteers who worked with the Lehnis family and the City of Brownwood to make the museum as reality, including Mary Marshall Holley, Kay Leipzig and Debbie Morelock, and also thanked dozens of volunteers who have worked hundreds of hours with Curator Mary Irving to make its opening this weekend possible. The museum also showcases railroad collectibles provided from others in the community.

"What we see around us is only the beginning of a museum complex and entertainment area that will make this a city of destination," Massey said. "The complex will run from the Depot to the Brownwood Coliseum."

He thanked retired City Manager Gary Butts, previous city councils and others who, he said, recognized how important such an area can be to the city.

Lynn Passmore, district engineer of the Brownwood office of TxDOT, expressed his appreciation to staff members who worked on the grant that made the construction possible. Waldrop Construction was the general contractor.

“The history of railroading was very important to him, and he wanted it to be carried on,” Marilyn Lehnis said after the ceremony. “This makes that possible.”

She called how passersby would stop at the Martin and Frances Lehnis home on U.S. Highway 183 south of Early where the railroad cars and other items were kept for decades.

“People would stop and pull in to ask about the collection,” Marilyn Lehnis said. “He would talk and talk.”

The couple’s daughter-in-law was recognized at the ceremony along with sister-in-law Joyce Wyatt of Brownwood, and several nieces and nephews from as far as Orange, LaMarque, Baytown and Houston.

“We have so many things coming in the future,” Irving said. “The Lehnis collection is so famous. I was talking to someone in Houston, and he immediately recognized the name. He asked what had become of his collection, and now he’s planning a visit.”

“We’ve been waiting for this day,” Marilyn Lehnis said. “And it’s just starting. This is a big step.”

Martin Lehnis, who died Feb. 23, 2005, at the age of 89, moved here in 1950. He was a lifelong railroader. He and Georgia Frances Barlett were married in 1941 in Santa Anna.

Brownwood Mayor Bert Massey speaks to the assembled crowd for the opening.





Ribbon cutting by Marlyn Lehnis to officially open museum.

The Lehnis Train Museum was opened its doors during the “Feels Like Home” Brownwood Reunion on September 4, 2007. Some 2,200 people in three days stopped by the museum.



Marlyn Lehnis left, of San Antonio, daughter-in-law of the late Martin and Frances Lehnis, accepts from Curator Mary Irving the emblem of the railroad museum named in the Lehnis' honor after the grand opening ceremonies. They stand in front of a 1929 Pullman executive car that Marlyn Lehnis added to hundreds of items the museum's namesakes donated to the City of Brownwood.

Here are photos of the inside of the museum on opening day. Several of the

local non-profits were invited to have a table in the museum to help fill up the space as there were not a whole lot of exhibits in place. These photos were taken that day by the author.

Photos of opening day at the Martin and Frances Railroad Museum

Here are photos of the inside of the museum on opening day. Several of the local non-profits were invited to have a table in the museum to help fill up the space as there were not a whole lot of exhibits in place. These photos were taken that day by the author.



Joan and Jack Lamkin



New display panels for pictures were obtained



Baggage wagon



Railroad Dispatch Desk



Passenger Train Artifacts



Railroad China Display



Brown County Museum of History



Doris Teague
Blanket Museum



Peggy Gottschalk & Pauline Hochhalter
Brown County Historical Society



Clay Riley
Pecan Valley Genealogical Society

After the museum opened, Mary Irving then advertised for volunteers in the community to help plan, build and operate the museum exhibits and programs. Carpenters, painters, model railroad enthusiasts, exhibit builders, collection caretakers, Liberians, all donated their time and talents and gave many hours of create the museum.

Chapter 4: Early Days of the Museum



Mary Irving and volunteer Bud Doud

Mary Irving and Bud Doud check out the new displays at the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum. Doud, a museum volunteer, built the display shadow boxes. Photo by Candace Cooksey Fulton

Posted: Friday, May 2, 2008 12:00 am | *Updated: 4:10 pm, Wed Nov 25, 2009.*
By Candace Cooksey Fulton — Brownwood Bulletin

Three new exhibits are scheduled to open Saturday at the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum.

“Two of these exhibits have been created to show visitors how much trains affect our lives every day,” said Mary Irving, curator for the museum. The third exhibit, ‘Cabooses, A Railroader’s Home Away From Home,’ shows the story of the much-loved caboose, gone from the railroads since the late 1980s.”

“Freight Trains Bring Life to You” shows how trains carry products, or “commodities” from farms and manufacturing plants to market, Irving said.

“Train carried everything from orange juice to corn syrup to cotton to coal to rocks. Every day freight trains go through Brownwood carrying all kinds of products. Lumber is carried from the Pacific Northwest to build our homes. Automobiles are carried from both Detroit and Japan (via the Houston shipyards) to be sold to Brownwood residents. And even the 3M plant imports plastic pellets in hopper train cars to make all those reflective signs and license plate laminate.”

The second exhibit “How Trains-Under-the-Tree Became a Tradition” tells the story of toy trains, and how they began and evolved into model train layouts of more and more complexity over the years, Irving said. “The two big giants, Lionel and American Flyer, were aggressively sold to pre- and post-World War II families, giving lots of youngster’s wonderful childhood memories of their toy train sets.”

“The caboose exhibit shows how in the early days of railroading the caboose was the office and home away from home for the conductor and train crew, Irving said. The potbellied stove was used for heating, cooking and gathering around when the crews relied on it during trips,” Irving said.


“Drover” cabooses were used to carry the cowboy drovers who accompanied the train shipment of cattle to market, and train crews often shared the accommodations. To relate the caboose to today, it was the RV on the railroad, providing seating, beds, stove and all the comforts of home away from home.”



The first office was located in front of the museum. In that space is now the gift shop.

Lehnis Train Museum Cats

Since the early days of the museum, cats have always been around the grounds of the museum. Two of their favorite places to hide or sleep were underneath of the business car and the shed at the mini train. Staff members would feed the cats.



Buster
Railroad Conductor
Martin & Frances Lehnis
Railroad Museum

Buster's Guideline for Enjoying the Lehnis Railroad Museum

1. Walk and talk quietly.
2. Stay with your family or class.
3. Clean up after yourself in Play Area.
4. Keep hands to yourself.
5. Learn a lot and enjoy yourself!

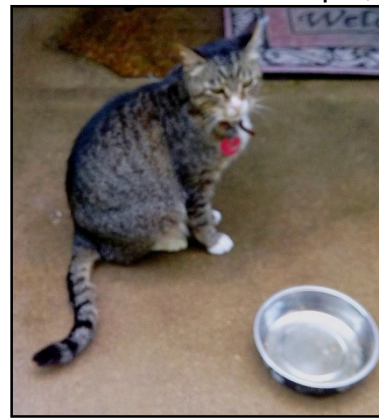
Buster's Treasure Hunt!

(To earn your badge, find Buster's railroad treasures, fill this page out and bring it to the round desk.)

Santa Claus, Meagan Mendenhall & Buster!



Buster at home in Temple, Texas



"Buster" came to the museum as a kitten and was well tamed. The museum staff and volunteers soon became in love with him and made sure he had all the petting and food that he wanted. He was named after Martin Lehnis, as he was called "Buster" as his nickname. The cat was happy at the museum until Mary Irving retired and left for Temple in 2011.

The new director felt that Buster was a danger to young kids, so she had him picked up and taken to the local Corinne T. Smith Animal Center. One of the ladies that worked for the city and knew Buster the cat and Mary Irving, contacted Mary to let her know what had happened to Buster. Mary immediately drove up from Temple, Texas, paid \$45 to get him out of the animal center, and took him back to Temple where he lived out his remaining days.

Michelle Ezra, Museum Coordinator, would buy and feed several cats over by the silo when she worked for the museum. Even after she left the museum in 2022, she would come by and feed the cats. She took several of them over time to live at her farm as barn cats.

Chapter 5: The Museum Displays Changed

None of the displays in the museum were permanent. Each director of the museum added their personal conception of what the displays should look like, or if they needed to be replaced with something new. A good example of this concept was the display of the large collection of dinner ware used in the dining cars on trains. There were at least five different ways about how they would or would not be displayed. The cabinets were sold.



Another display that was moved around a lot was Lehnis's live steam No. 657 locomotive. It was displayed in several different places in the museum. The locomotive was first taken down to the Wimberley Blanco & Southern Railroad in Wimberley, Texas where it was completely overhauled and tested on their tracks. The locomotive was brought back to the museum and fired up and ran at the "Feels Like Home" festival. The locomotive was cleaned up and placed on a stand for display inside the museum. Over the years it has been moved to different places within the museum and even decorated for Christmas.



The locomotive is currently being displayed near the entrance to the museum

Below are photos that were taken over the years of different displays in the museum.





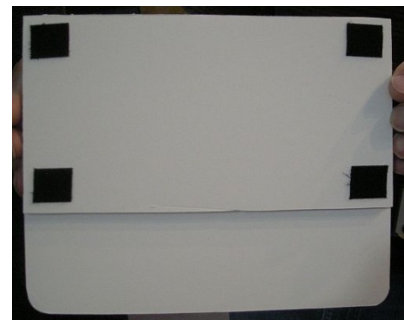
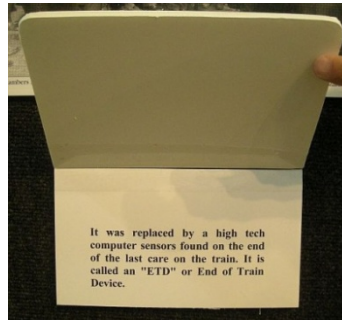




Locomotive painted by June Musick



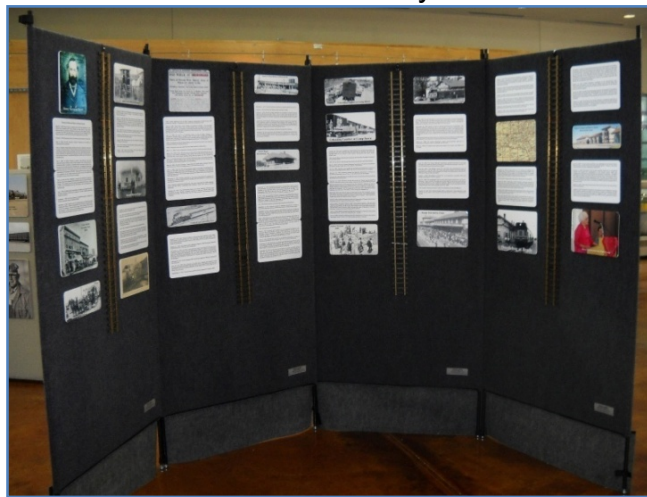
There were 22 signs like this scattered about the museum to be interactive.



This display was of the 1080 Locomotive



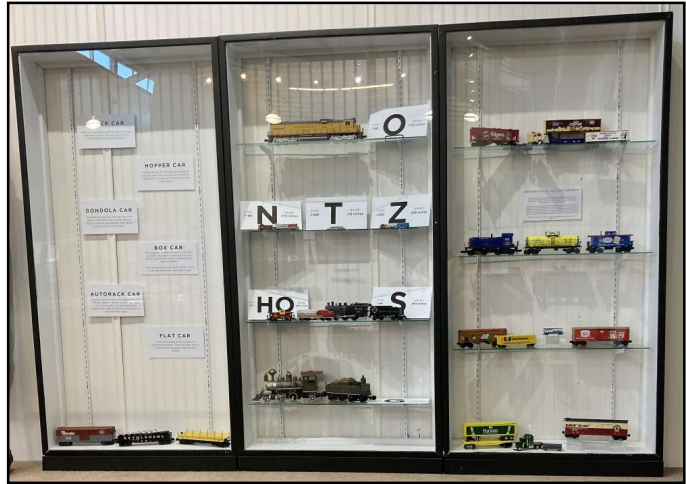
This was an earlier timeline of railroads in Brown County





A special display case was set up to display Martin Lehnis.





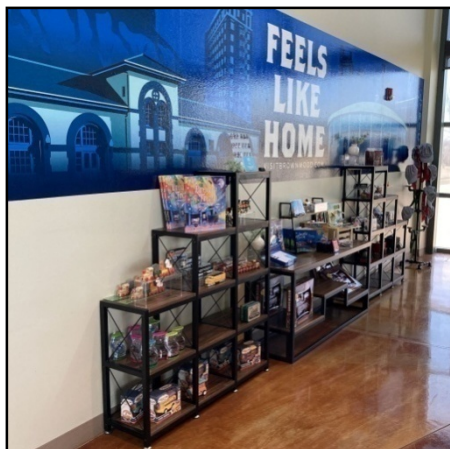
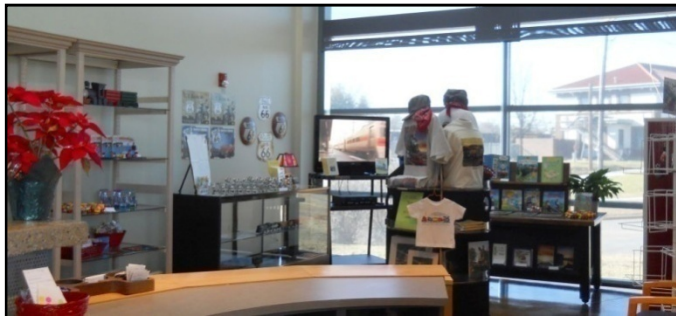
Gift Shop



The gift shop has always done a good business, especially during special events and school tours. Like all places in the museum the gift shop has also changed.

Originally the gift shop was located inside the main part of the museum, opposite the red caboose in 2009. It was moved from there to the front of the entrance, once the director's office was moved, so that one person could take care of the

information desk as well as the gift shop.



Gift
Shop
Today



Children's Play Area

The children's play area in the museum has expanded and been retracted over the years. Parents could pay \$25 a year for unlimited visits to the museum and several parents took advantage of this perk to bring their young kids to the play area.

In 2009 the play area looked like this.



Then it was expanded to look like this.



It was later expanded to a much larger area.



In 2021, it was moved back to its original small area in the museum.



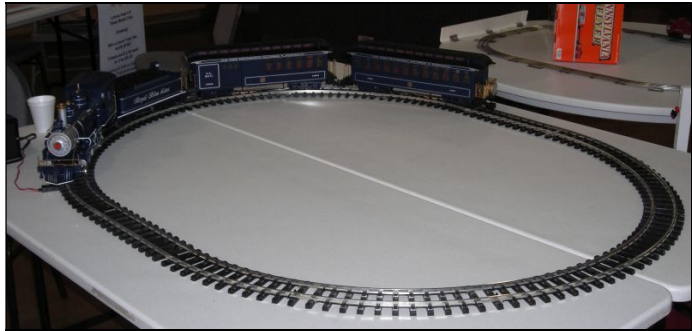
Chapter 6: Exhibit of Model Trains

Several years, starting in May of 2008, the museum began to display their vast collection of model trains. At first, they were displayed in cases and on folding tables.



Photo by Calvin Brown

A crew of volunteers began the process of locating the various train models that were to be used in the displays. Many of the locomotives had to be taken apart and cleaned before they were tested to make sure they could run.



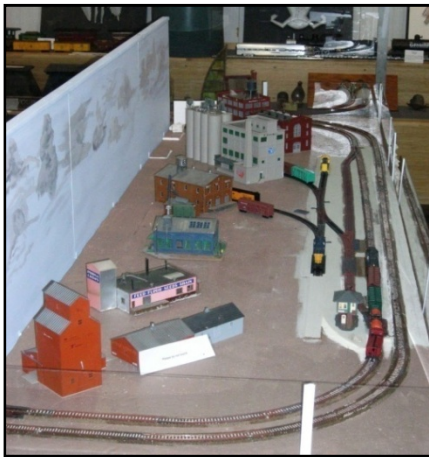
The tables were built with plywood and 2x4s and the table for the O Gauge and HO Gauge were built joined together. But it was decided, early on, to separate the two tables so they could be moved about.

The first two permanent tables were built and created for the displaying the O gauge, HO gage and N gauge model trains. After the tables were built, the track, scenery, and trains were put on the tables.

HO Model Train Layout



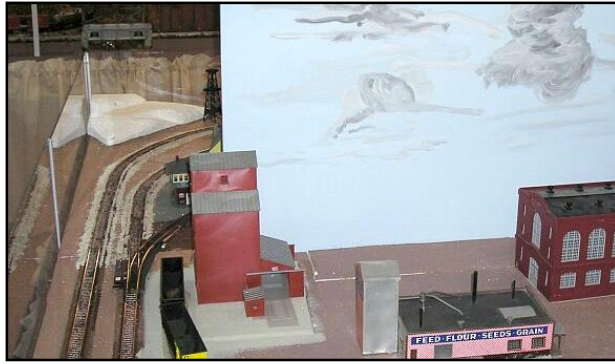
The Lehnis Model Railroad Club took on the task of modeling the table for the HO gauge while various members of the club did one side of the table for the HO gauge, Jim Howell did the track and scenery for the industrial side of the layout. Here of are photos of the original HO gauge layout. First they had to strengthen the table and lay the track.



First, they laid out the track and buildings to see how they would fit on the table.



The club made sure everything worked as they began to place the various buildings and vehicles on the table.



Now it was time to do the scenery on the layout using plaster of Paris, paint and other aids to give it that realistic look.



Fuss Fisher, in front seated, and Dr. Bob Mangrum, in back seated, enjoys running the trains at shows and other museum events. Both of them had their own HO Gauge layouts at their homes.



Mike Lindsey, also a member of the Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club, gave a small layout.

The Second HO Gauge Model Train Layout

In 2023, a decision was made to rebuild the HO Gauge layout with a new one. Dave White, a former member of the Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club, volunteered to do the new HO layout and worked on it for two years.



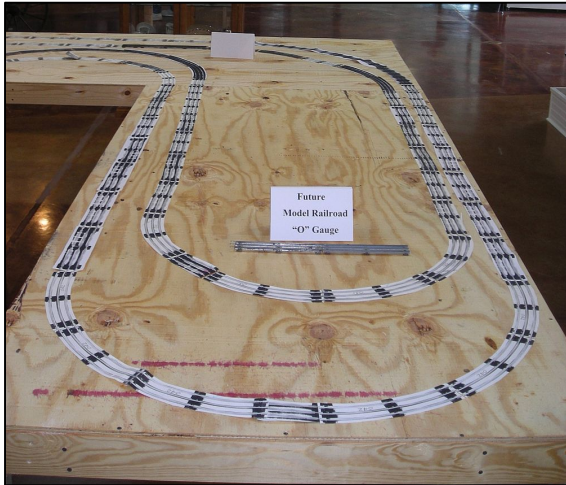
Dave White is holding a cup of plaster.



White used the old table and begins rough in the layout using Styrofoam, plaster of Paris, as well as two x 4 to build the second deck. He then added his details.



O Gauge Model Train Layout

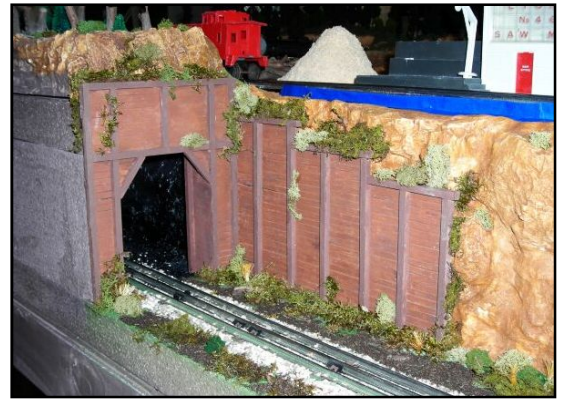


While they were busy with the HO Gauge, they were also busy laying out the track for the O Gauge. Jack Lamkin and Frank Hilton finished the scenery for the O Gauge.

Once the track was laid out, it was time to start adding those features that one wanted on the layout.

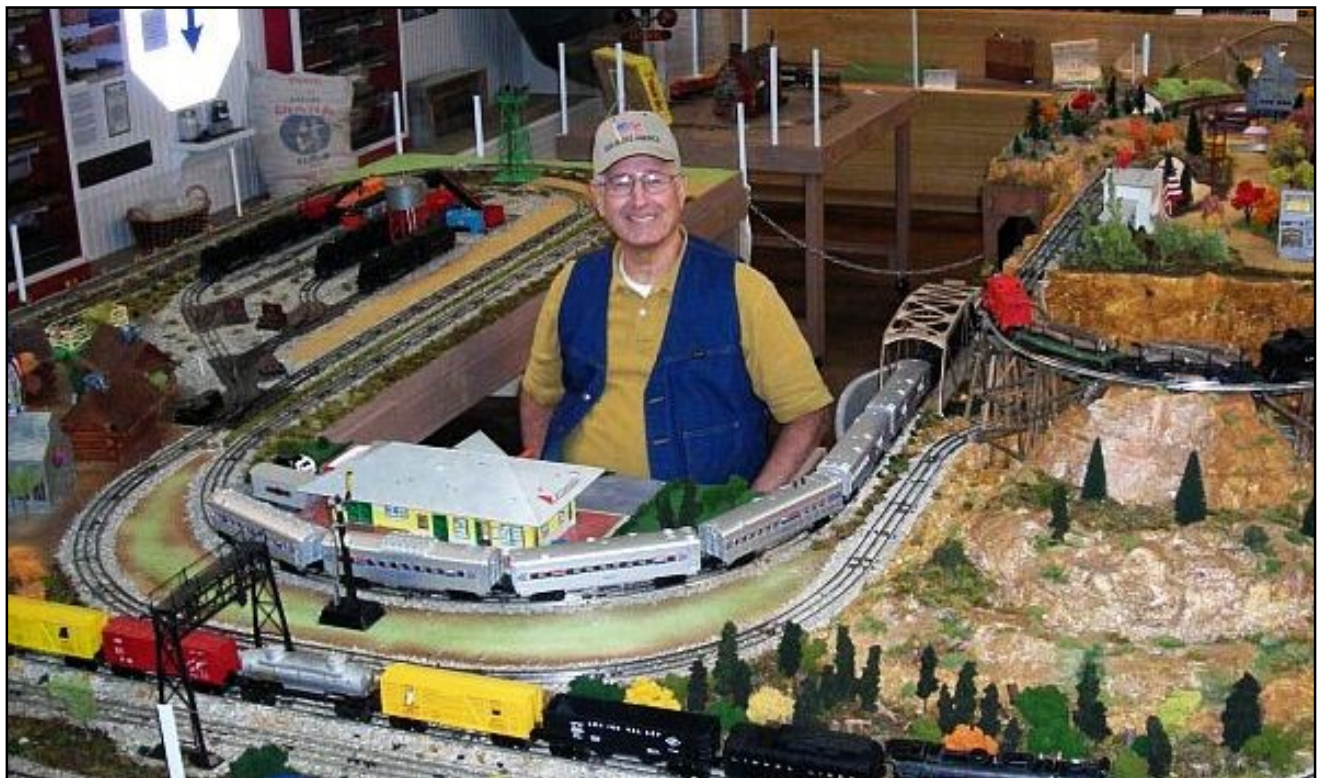
Here below are the before and after scenery has been added to bring the layout to life.





It took several months to get all the scenery in and make adjustments to the layout. But, once it is all completed, then one can be proud of the results of their efforts.

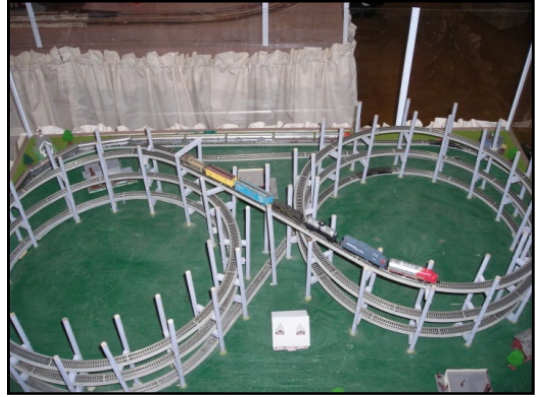
Here you see Jim Bailey, a member of the Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club, running the model O Gauge trains during an event held in the museum. The layout has pretty much remained as it is even today.



There have been other O Gauge layouts from time to time placed in the museum as people gave their layouts to the museum. Pictured above is Jim Bailey a member of the club.

N Gauge Model Train Layout

The N Gauge layout was first used at a Christmas event in 2010 on a table set up by Jud Powell, a member of the Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club. Later, he built another display.



Jud Powell volunteered to build an N Scale layout for the museum at his home and bring it to the museum. It was a 4 x 4 square foot layout was attached to the end of the O Scale layout.

From there came the idea of building a separate table and put the N Gauge on it. Jack Lamkin built the 5 x 8 table in 2010.



From this rough layout came the finished N Gauge display.



A replacement for the N Gauge

An offer was made to donate a large N Gauge layout that was in Cisco that the museum did not need any more. The museum here took a U-Haul truck and picked up the layout and brought it back to the Lehnis Museum in about 2022. In order to accommodate this N Gauge they had to do away with the one above. The table it was on was moved to the center of the layouts and is now used as a work table. Here is the new N Gauge and has a confederate theme.



S Gauge (American Flyer) Model Train Layout



Alan Cass, MD, over the years collected a lot of S Gauge, or American Flyer, model trains and other pieces of equipment, buildings, etc. He was looking for a place to put them so the public could see his collection. In 2012, working with the museum director, Mary Irving, he paid to have a large table built to place his collection on. He donated the table and most of his collection to the museum, provided they would use the table to display his collection.

The table was soon in place. It was Mary Irving's idea to add the bubbles at each end of the table so kids could poke up their heads for their parents to take pictures of them. It has proved to be a very popular feature of the layout.



Members of the Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club first installed the track and then wired it up. Following them, Jack Lamkin and Frank Hilton did the scenery and divided the table up into give different themes to better showcase Dr. Cass's collection.



Here are the different theme areas of the S Gauge



The table was eventually moved to the main part of the museum so there was better control of operating all the model railroad layouts from one site instead of two. Pictured below are Crystal Stanley and Darla Collier shortly after the S Gauge was moved to its present place.



G Gauge Model Railroad Layout

The first G Scale model railroad layout was located at the entrance to the museum.



The table was moved to a different location in the museum in 2014 and the wing was removed. The side rails were added by Larry and Janet Wilke.



The G Scale was later moved to the back of the museum by the rollup doors. Larry and Janet Wilke donated some of the G Scale model trains to the museum.

In 2016, the table was moved into the main part of the museum after a sizable donation of G Scale buildings and scenery was made from a man living in Abilene.





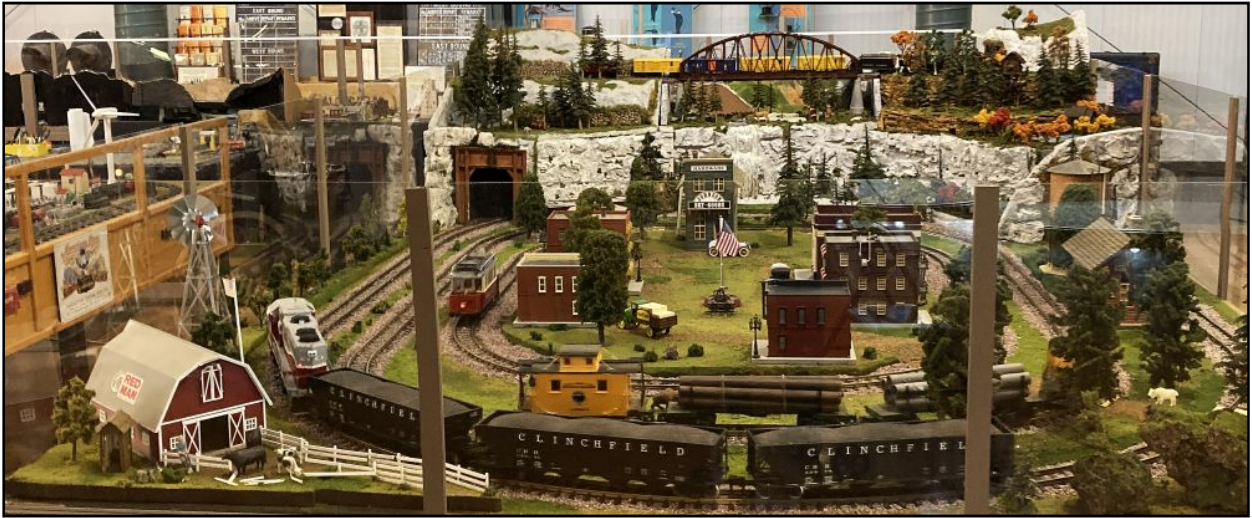
It took nine months for the scenery to be added to the layout.



After nine months the G Scale was completed.



In March of 2025, the front of the layout was once again updated with fresh scenery detailed by Andy Zambrana and Michael Giyer.



Another Outdoor G Scale Train Layout was built in 2023

During one of the Summer Train Camps the older kids created an outdoor G Scale layout. Unfortunately the electric plug to provide electricity to run the locomotive was too far away to provide enough juice to run the trains. Also, there was the problem of having to have someone to carry the train out there and run the train when there were people touring the museum. After a couple of years, the outdoor layout was abandon.



T Gauge Model Railroad Layout

In 2014 the museum had a T Gauge model railroad layout displayed on the main floor of the museum. The layout was housed in one of the two 4x4 foot square display cases.



The four cars all together only measured seven inches long.

T gauge has a model railway scale with a track gauge of 3 mm (0.118 in), referred to as "three-millimeter gauge" or "third of N scale." It was introduced at the Tokyo Toy Show in 2006 by KK Eishindo of Japan and went on sale in 2007. It is popular for small places.

Chapter 7: Different Events and Projects at the museum

Over the years, many different types of events were held in the museum. Here are just a few examples of what the museum created or hosted. There was a wedding dinner, receptions, birthday parties, baby showers, HPU Board of Trustees Dinner, Early High School Prom, Red Hat Society tour, BNSF railroad training meetings, adult parties, school tours, workshops, Boy Scout Eagle Scout recognitions and blood drives.

Grant from Centex Rural Rail Transportation District

Centex Rural Rail Transportation District donated \$12,000 to the Lehnis Railroad Museum. The matching grant paid for an exhibit that included a 15 foot mural of a steam locomotive and video screens that depicted the history of railroad in the nation and in this area. The Centex Rural Rail Transportation District was established as a government sub-division in 1991 to preserve, protect and promote railroads in Texas. The District is composed of Brown, Comanche, Erath, Johnson, and Hood counties.

The dedication of the exhibit was held on May 21, 2017.



The Christmas season was always a special time at the museum



Mary Irving pushes the button on a remote, and a G-scale train starts its way around a snowy Christmas village that belongs to Irving's daughter, Cathy Irving. Photo by Candace

Christmas was always a special time in the museum and many hours were spent right after Thanksgiving to decorate both the inside and the outside of the museum for the Christmas holidays.

The first Christmas was held during the month of December 2007, just a few months after the museum opened the previous September. That was also the time that a call was put out for all model railroad folks to come and help get the displays ready and to man the tables for the event. Here are photos of some of those decorations that were created for that first Christmas.



There always had to be a decorated Christmas tree as the main focal point in the museum. This tall Christmas tree was given to the museum by the Brown County Museum of History in 2009 when they no longer used it. It was used for many years and was usually put up with the help of the local prisoners of the Thomas Havins Unit.



Volunteers and staff were always working overtime during December



Sometimes the Silo was lighted up

Trees and sidewalk sparkled



Jud Powell and Mike Lindsey in 1907



Christmas Parade 2022 Mary Ann & Family



The Lehnis Locomotive was always decorated.



HO Gauge in 2024



Other Christmas decorations over the years





Family Day



In March of 2008, the museum began to have Family Day the first Saturday of each month and have continued that practice to this day.

The first program on that first Family Day was a tour of the caboose that had not been opened yet to the public. Over the years many different crafts and programs for the family have been activated.

A special low price was offered to families in an effort to get more attendance to the museum.

Activities included crafts for the kids.



Texas Date Nail Collector's Association



determine when the tie was laid on the road bed.

On March 7, 2008, the Texas Date Nail Collector's Association held its annual show in the museum. The show was held from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. Friday, and from 8 a.m. until 1 p.m. Saturday.

In addition to date nails, other types of railroad-related antiques were put on display as part of the show. Date nails use to be mailed on the railroad ties so the track maintenance men could

Troop 22 adds Givan, McNeese, Taylor to its list of Eagle Scouts

Three members of Boy Scout Troop 22 became Eagle Scouts in a Court of Honor held Friday night at the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum. Pictured from left to right are Scott Taylor, Billy McNeese and Keith Givan with Scoutmaster Tully Hair. Volunteer work on the caboose on exhibit was the Eagle Scout project for Taylor. Photo by Mary Irving



Posted: Monday, June 2, 2008 12:00 am | *Updated: 4:13 pm, Wed Nov 25, 2009.*

By Gene Deason - Brownwood Bulletin

Three members of Troop 22, Boy Scouts of America, were recognized as Eagle Scouts during a Court of Honor Friday night at the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum.

They are Keith Givan, son of Doak and Cynthia Givan; Billy McNeese, son of Bill and Deneisa McNeese; and Scott Taylor, son of Keith and Vivian Taylor.

Troop 22 Scoutmaster Tully Hair was chairman of the court, and he congratulated the three Scouts on their accomplishments.

World War II Oral History Workshop

World War II oral history workshop

Posted: Sunday, March 8, 2009 12:00 am
Updated: 4:25 pm, Wed Nov 25, 2009.

William A. McWhorter, left, military history sites coordinator for the Texas Historical Commission, and Lois E. Myers, center, senior lecturer and associate director of the Baylor University Institute for Oral History in Waco, discuss resources with



Hank Hunter of the Hardin School Museum board Saturday. A World War II oral history workshop at the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum was part of a series of such seminars being held throughout the state. Photo by Gene Deason

Summer Model Railroad Train Camps



Summer model railroad train camps were held in the museum each summer starting in 1917 and ending in 2023. The camps were divided into two sections, one for younger kids, and one for the older kids. Here are some photos of the designs the youth made during the camps. The two pictures below are from the young kid's part in the camp.



Michelle Ezra, Museum Coordinator, is shown helping the younger kids with their display during train camp.



These pictures are from the first camp held in 2017 in the conference room. Russ Fisher and Frank Hilton ran the camp.



Train Camp was again held the summer 2018, in which all the group worked on the same project. They designed a model layout on a 4 foot by 4 foot table. David White was in charge of that camp. After the camp, the project was raffled off to the highest bidder. Dave White was in charge of this camp and all the ones that followed.



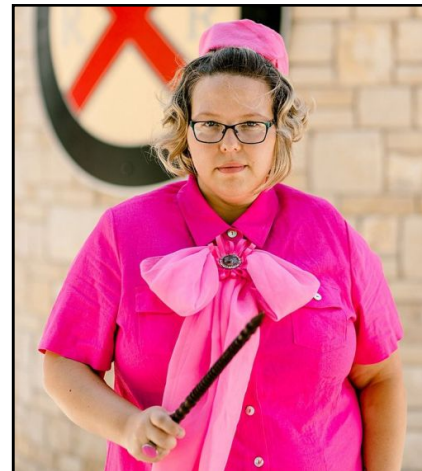
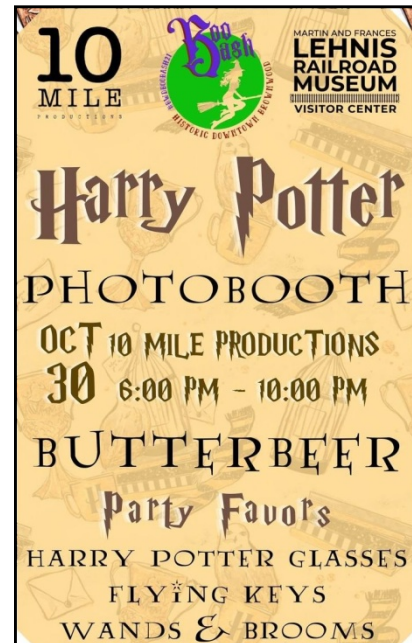
Due to COVID-19 the camp was not held in 2019 to 2021. In 2022, the older group built the outside G Scale table and layout.



The last camp was held in 2023 in which each older participant made a small layout as they did in the first camp, but then spend one and a half hours that week doing switching with three locomotive sets over in the mini railroad. Railcar switching is the process of breaking up trains and their cars and modifying them to fit the specific needs of a particular shipment — if a shipment is small, the railcar will be small as well.

Harry Potter Days

One of the popular events held in the museum was “Harry Potter Days.” This special day gave youth and adults an opportunity to dress up as their favorite character. Here are some photos of some of those characters. The name was later changed.



Harvey Girls gave an artifact presentation – May 2011



Boy Scout Railroading Merit Badge Program

The museum hosted a couple of Boy Scout Merit Badge day in which they taught the requirements of Boy Scouts earning the Railroading Merit Badge.

The first Railroading Merit Badge program was held January 30, 2010 by the Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club in the museum. Thirty-seven Scouts and eight troop leaders participated in the one day event. Scout troops came from Stephenville, Goldthwaite, San Saba, Lometa, Bangs, Early and Brownwood.

The club provided pizza for lunch. The members of the club that helped with the various stations were, Russ Fisher, Charles Harmer, Jim Howell, Jack Lamkin, Mike Lindsey, Bob Mangrum and Dave White.

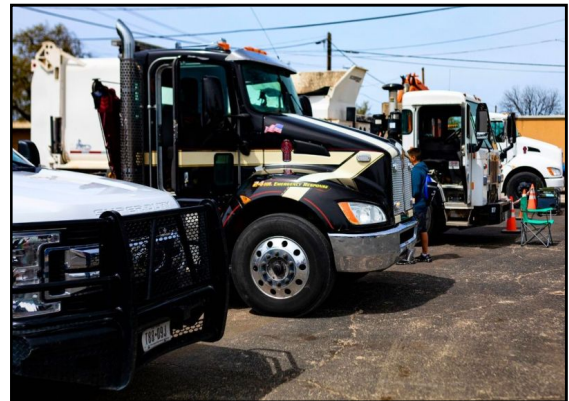
The second Railroading Merit Badge event was held on July 27, 2024. This one was put on by museum staff and some of their volunteers. Several out of town Scout Troops participated in this one with some seventeen in attendance.



Wheels That Move The World



The Wheels That Move the World in 2025 was the seventh one to be held by the museum. There were more than 25 vehicles used in everyday industries on display. Some 1,600 people participated. They had over 513 passengers ride the mini train that day even though it was a windy day. The Remedy band played from 12pm to 2 pm on the Event Center side stage.



School Tours

There were three times during the year when the local elementary schools would bring their kids to the museum to take tours. The most popular time of the year was in December while the museum was decorated for Christmas and Santa Claus was present. During December 2023 the museum had 900 kids from 18 schools tour the museum.

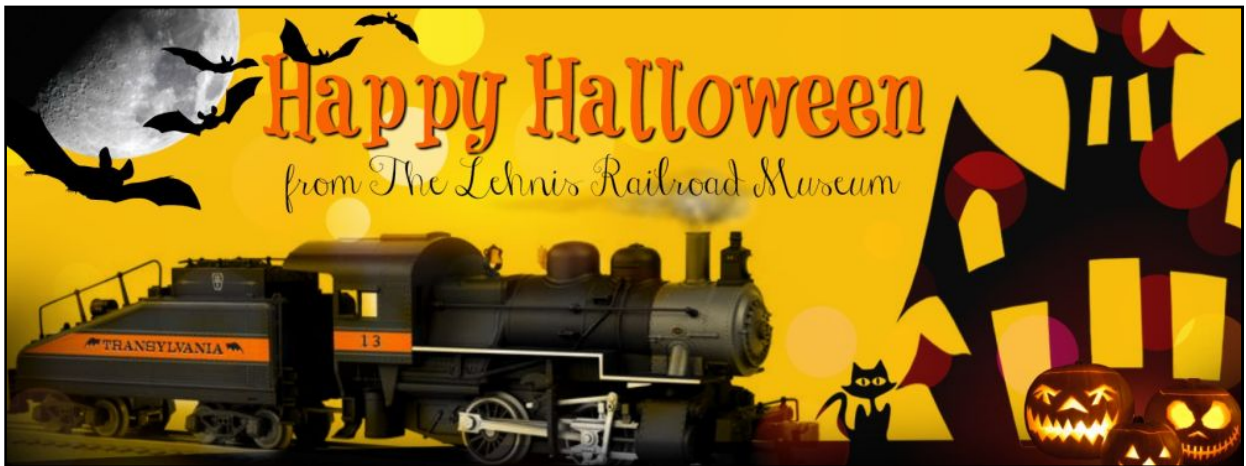
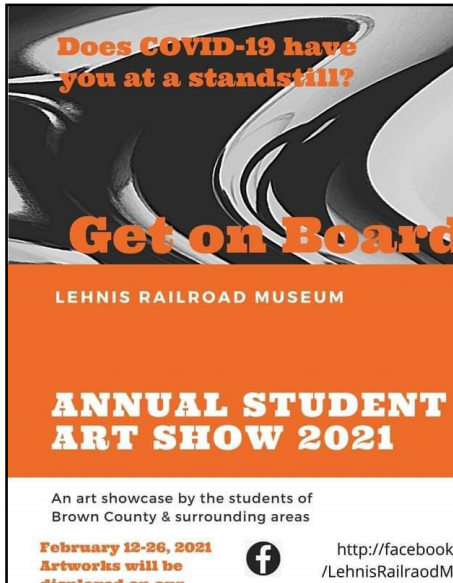


Some other events that were held over the years.

Chinese Jump Rope Tournament
Saturday, August 26, 2017
11AM – 2PM



Know how to Chinese Jump Rope?
If not, come learn, if yes, come show us your skills!



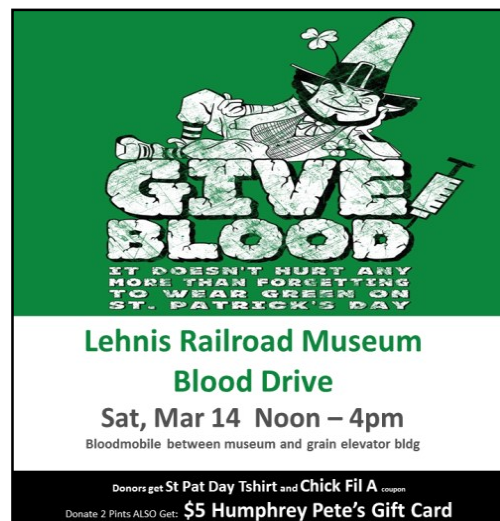
Summer Fun Scavenger Hunt - 2020



Egg Hunt April 20, 2020



March 14, 2020



“ Route 66” Event was held for three months starting September 18, 2015



Birthday parties were popular events to be held in the museum too.



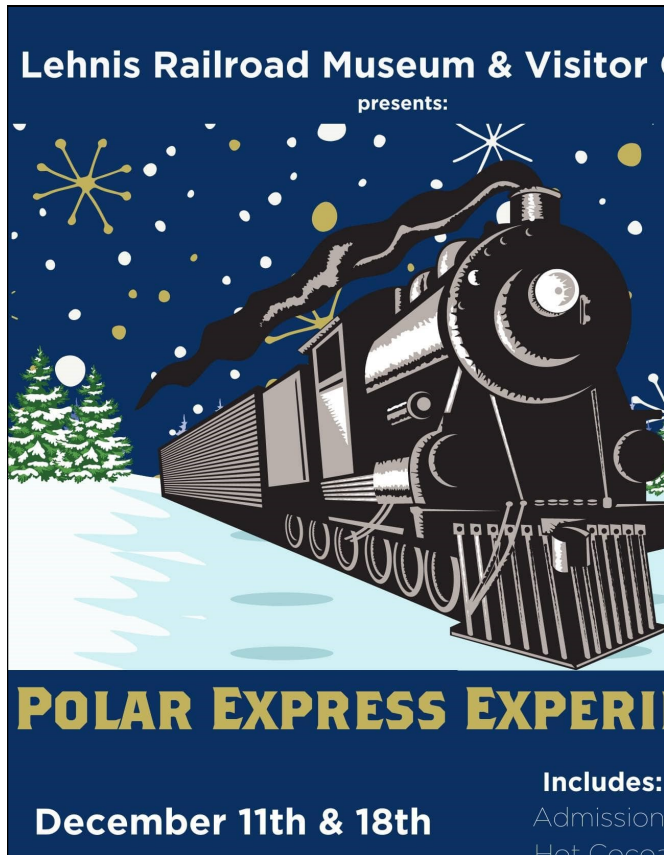
Donuts With Dad, June 21, 2021



Lehnis Book Club February 1, 2021



Polar Express December 11 & 18, 2021



"Move Over Sir!" in August 2021



The museum celebrated its 15th Anniversary on September 3, 2022.



This display was created on the history of the museum for this day.



Three original staff members were there.



Darla Collier and Mary Irving



Rita Nolan

**“I Want the Wide American Earth: An Asian Pacific American Story.”
August through September 2017.**



“A Taste of Asia” was held on August 17th inside the museum.

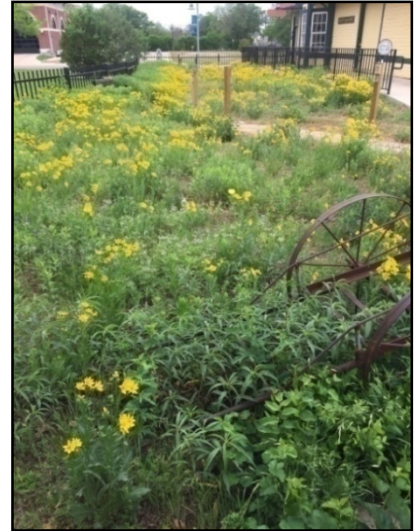


An “Easter Trails” fun event was held on Saturday, April 12, 2025. One hundred and fifty youth and adults participated in this activity.



Butterfly Garden Created by Beverly Norris

During the time of Director Beverly Norris, a butterfly garden was created between the business car and the Kress Depot. This was the idea of Beverly Norris, Museum Director.



BNSF gave the museum some sixteen different signal lights as they replaced them on their line in about 2018. Later, some of them were used as working lights near the mini-railroad.



Chapter 8: Museum Advisory Board

The original Martin & Frances Lehnis Transportation Museum Advisory Board was created by an ordinance Chapter 2, Article III, Division 8 in the City of Brownwood Code of Ordinances by the City Council of the City of Brownwood, Texas Board in August of 2009 and members consisted of:

Jack Lamkin, Chairman
Candace Fulton, Board Member
Frank Hilton, Board Member
Roger Levesque, Board Member
Joe Ratulowski, Board Member
Mary Irving, Museum Curator
David Withers, Parks and Recreation Director

The board had many different functions over the years it was in operation. The most important one was acting as a sounding board for the director of the museum and giving suggestions as how to improve the operation of the museum. They approved accepting artifacts that are to be donated to the museum.



One of the many projects that they undertook was to raise \$5,000 to purchase the first black electric locomotive for the mni railroad that was built by Tom Bee.

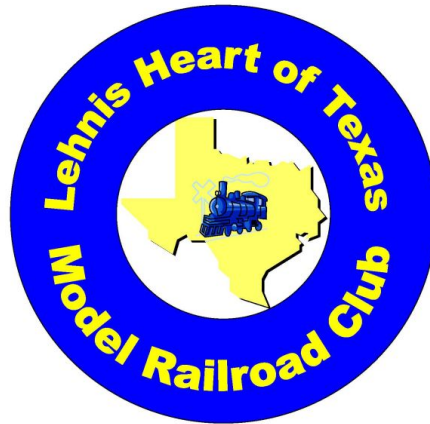
The Advisory board was active for 14 years and then disbanded by the City Council.

On April 11, 2023 an ordinance was passed by the City Council to do away with the Advisory Board. Here is that ordinance.

ORDINANCE NO. 23-03 AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BROWNWOOD, TEXAS REPEALING DIVISION 8. ENTITLED “MARTIN & FRANCES LEHNIS TRANSPORTATION MUSEUM ADVISORY BOARD” FROM CHAPTER 2, ARTICLE III OF THE CITY OF BROWNWOOD CODE OF ORDINANCES IN ITS ENTIRETY; PROVIDING A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE; PROVIDING A REPEALING CLAUSE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Ordinance No. 23-03 03/2023 Page 1 Ordinance Repealing Chapter 2, Article III, Division 8
PASSED AND APPROVED on First Reading this the 28 th day of March 2023. PASSED
AND APPROVED on Second Reading this the 11th day of April, 2023. PASSED AND
APPROVED on Third/Final Reading this the 11th day of April, 2023 .

Chapter 9: Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club



Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club was founded in January 2008.

A call was sent out on November 5, 2007 for model railroaders to help start a model railroad club. Plans for a Christmas exhibit at the museum are also in the works. The museum goal was to open the exhibit on Saturday, December 1, and to hold the first model railroad club meeting.

An organizational and membership meeting for the Model Railroad Club was held Saturday, January 5, 2008 in the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum. Interested area modelers were encouraged to attend.

Organizational Meeting

An organizational meeting was held on Saturday, January 5, 2008, starting at 10 am in the museum meeting room. There were 17 in attendance and Bob Mangrum served as meeting facilitator. Jim Howell volunteered to serve as the secretarial tasks volunteer. Mary Irving, the Lehnis Railroad Museum Curator addressed the group present and went over several items as it related to the club being a part of the museum.

She covered the working relationship with the museum; the Lehnis model trains collection, the desired future display layouts, and a code of ethics.

Under the leadership of Bob Mangrum the club then had the added members in attendance to introduce themselves as their name was read off the club meeting sign-in sheet.

From there the members discussed different possible names for the club and after more than one vote, the club decided on the name "Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club" by a vote of ten to seven.

Bob Mangrum called for Volunteers to work on a committee which would draft the new club by-laws for Club members' consideration. James Pafford, Charles Hamer, & Jim Howell willingly volunteered. Jim Howell will serve as chair person for the committee.

The following persons were verbally selected to serve as temporary active club officers. Those were President, Bob Mangrum; Secretary, Jim Howell; Treasurer, Jim Bailey.

Mike Lindsay made a motion of setting initial club dues at \$10.00 per month with youth membership dues (Age 17 & Under) set at \$5.00 per month. James Pafford seconded the motion. Motion passed.

Finally, Mary Irving made a key available to the Club President and made the Museum's Meeting Room available for their use. The club decided to meet the first Saturday of each month starting at 10:00 am.



Front Row, Left to Right: 1. Chuck Hamer, 2. Jim Bailey, 3. Dr. Bob Mangrum, 4. Jim Howard, 5. Mary Irving, Curator of the museum

Back Row, Left to Right: 1. Doug Grosinger, 2. Jud Powell, 3. Dave White, 4. Mike Lindsey, 5. Unknown, 6. Unknown, 7. Unknown, 8. Walter Hill

The club continued to work on events in the museum. By July of 2008, the club had made arrangements to purchase vests to be worn by the member to help identify them as they helped out at the Brownwood Reunion to be held that September in the museum. The vests were to cost \$22 each.

The club held their May 2010 meeting at the Comanche and Indian Gap Railroad Spring meet where they learned about the three mile 7 ½ gauge train layout in preparation for the club helping with the construction of the new layout outside the Lehnis Train Museum.

Heart of Texas Railroad Festival

The Heart of Texas Railroad Festival weekend of April 18 and 19, 2015 was held in the Santa Fe Depot Cultural Center. The event featured a gigantic model train display (14 feet by 58 feet) with running trains. Other events took place in the museum.

Special Event this weekend!



Heart of Texas Model Railroad Festival

Family Fun--Trains, Trains, Trains!

Only \$3 for adults, and all Kids Under 12 are free!

- See the gigantic model railroad display in action
- Live steam mini-locomotive
- Activities for kids
- Only One Admission for Two Locations

Featuring Mr. David Doege from Seguin, Texas and his 14' x 58' Santa Fe model display with running trains.

**At the Historic Depot and the Lehnis Railroad Museum
Brownwood, Texas**

Saturday 10:00 - 5:00
Sunday 1:00 - 4:00

For more information call the Lehnis Railroad Museum 325-643-6376



Those attending enjoyed two locations for one price. Entrance to the Model Train Festival also gave admittance to the Lehnis Railroad Museum across the street.

The Heart of Texas Railroad Festival was sponsored by the City of Brownwood, the Early Chamber of Commerce, and the Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club.

The members of the club gave valuable volunteer hours to the museum with their knowledgeable talents of model trains and willingness to serve.

The club was dissolved in about 2020 when Russ Fisher moved to Georgia and only a few members were left. They were Dave White, Russ Fisher, Chris Tolin and Kelsin Tolin, according to Dave White. The remaining funds were voted to be used for the benefit of the museum.

List of Known Members Who Were In Club

Nick Adams, Jim Bailey, Lance Burks, Russ Fisher, Douglas Grosinger, Charles Hamer, Judy Hill, Walter Hill, Jim Howard, Jack Lamkin, Mike Lindsey, Dr. Bob Mangrum, Cheryl Mangrum, Tom Potter, Jud Powell, Norman Schultz, Paul Stephen, Chris Tobin, Kelsin Tobin, and Dave White



Russ Fisher and Dr. Bob Mangrum



Cheryl Mangrum and Walter Hill



Jud Powell



Mike Lindsey and Dave White

Chapter 10: Kress Depot

Kress, Texas was on the Amarillo - Lubbock line in the Texas Panhandle. This is part of the Denver - Galveston routing put together by ATSF (GCSF & PSF) in the early 1900s. Passenger service used to be a connection at Amarillo with the San Francisco Chief. Today sees some coal traffic and is important alternate route when detours are needed between Amarillo & Clovis on the Transcon. The Kress Depot is pictured below in Kress, Texas, and



then at Lehnis property.

According to a letter published in *The Kress Chronicle*, July 21, 1983, Vol. 13, Number 46, by Frances Lewis, "The depot was moved by consolidated moving company out of San Angelo, by Jack Logan.

"The depot was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Martin L. Lehnis, IV, of Albq. N. M. They are the son and daughter in-law of Mr. and Mrs. Martin L. Lehnis, III, of Brownwood."



The depot was moved to the Lehnis Train Museum in 2007 from Martin Lehnis property.



Here is how the interior looked when the depot was opened at the museum.



The inside display of the Kress Building has been changed in recent years.

The prisoners from the Thomas Havins Unit in Brownwood painted the outside of the Kress Depot in June 2009. They also prepped the front interior rooms and local Scout Explorers came in August of that year and painted the interior areas.

Chapter 11: Superintendent's Car 408

The 408 was built by Pullman in 1929, Lot 6350. It spent time assigned to the New Mexico Division. In 1968 it was sold to Barton Salt, Hutchison, KS.



The car became the property of railway collector Martin Lehnis on September 21, 1978. We do not know how much he paid for the car but we do know that it cost him \$800 to get it moved from Kansas to Brownwood and another \$2,500 to get it moved to his farm.

Lehnis left his collection to the City of Brownwood, TX, where it is now a part of the museum.

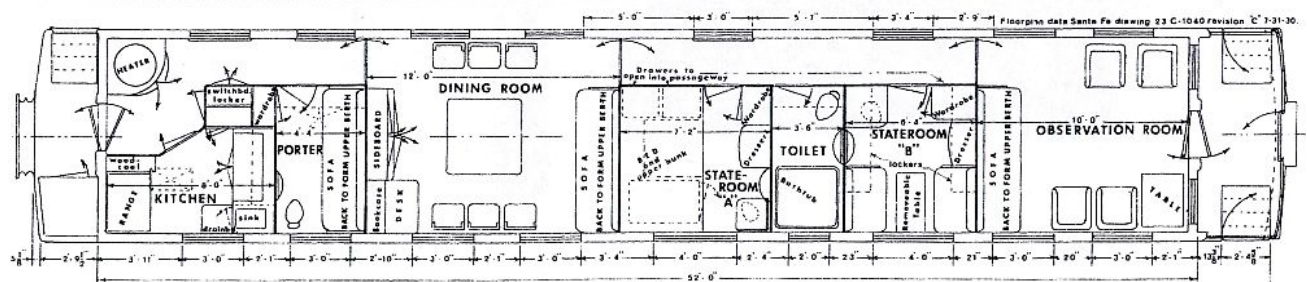
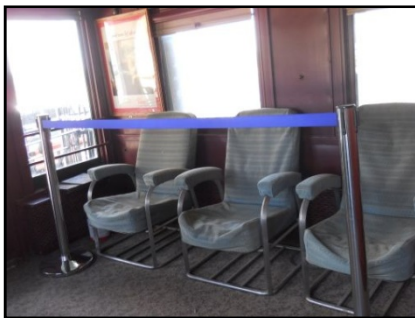




In July of 2010, Refugio Sanchez, left, and Joseph Gray painted the Superintendent's car "Pullman Green." The two youth were Workforce Solutions youth employees.

Blevins Body Shop donated car body paint for the project. Pullman Palace cars were painted the shade of dark black/olive green color, and had its letters and numbers painted in gold.

This short business car is a "Pullman car," but its purpose was designed for the mid-level railroad superintendent to use as his traveling office during his trips up and down the railroad line in his district. The car had two bedrooms for the superintendent and his secretary, normally a man, a parlor, dining room, bathroom, kitchen and small bedroom for the Pullman Porter, assigned to the car. The Porter usually lived on the car and prepared the meals for the other two men as needed as well as kept the car clean and ready for use by the superintendent.



Chapter 12: Santa Fe Caboose



Photo by Rick Phelps


Billy Franks, a volunteer at the Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum, along with other volunteers, in March, 2009, scraped and added a base coat to the 1967 Santa Fe caboose. This was the first time the caboose had been painted since its acquisition by Martin Lehnis September 21, 1978 and moved to museum in 2007.

After the base coat had been applied, Scott Taylor of Boy Scout Troop 22 and his volunteers, painted a fresh coat of red as his Eagle Scout Service Project. They worked on his project during 2008. Blevins Body Shop donated \$3,000 in car body paint for the project. Mary Irving added the decals.



Later, an "End of Train" signal was added to the car.



The Caboose

Built in 1931 • Weight: 25 tons

A caboose was the operating headquarters and the conductor's office on the freight train. It also served as living quarters for the crew and as a lookout post for possible trouble on the tracks ahead.

At the table-desk located inside, a Conductor spent as much as half his time on paperwork which included handling waybills and the "wheel report", a detailed listing of the cars of his train, with contents and weight, along with the owner's initials and freight car numbers.

At least one Brakeman also rode in the caboose, taking care of the work of switching (coupling and uncoupling rolling stock to make up or break up trains) and flagging (signaling the engineer). Compartments inside gave storage room for tools the crew might need for repairs. Train crews spent the night on seats that folded out to make beds, and cooked their meals on the pot-bellied stove located inside the caboose. Travelling with the train was necessary in order to make repairs en route.

Notice the "cupola", or glassed-in upper story. As the last car on the train, a caboose served as a lookout. Brakemen in the cupola kept watch on the moving train ahead for over-heating of wheels or problems on the track.

By the end of the 1980's virtually all railroads had taken the caboose out of service. Longer trains and the use of double stacked ocean containers made it impossible to see an entire train and check equipment from the caboose cupola.

Today, the ends of freight trains are monitored by remote radio equipment called "End of Train" devices, or EOTs. Although replaced by modern equipment, the caboose is still recognized affectionately as a symbol of the railroad industry.

Chapter 13: Building the Lehnis 7 ½" Gauge Mini-Railroad

This proposed project was presented to the Brownwood City Council by Mary Irving for their consideration:

Project: Restore Lehnis 7 ½" gauge Mini-railroad to operating status to generate further interest and income for the Martin & Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum by building the railroad on the museum grounds.

Goal: Make the Martin & Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum a "Tourist Destination", drawing tourists to Brownwood to visit the museum and ride the mini-railroad, thus producing tourist dollars around the entire town.

Steps:

1. Restore the Lehnis Steam Locomotive 687 COMPLETED at cost \$4,000.
Restore Lehnis gas switcher COMPLETED at cost \$600.
2. Design a tentative site plan for the railroad for planning and fundraising purposes.
COMPLETED (See Attachments A (railroad plan on BNSF property) & Attachment B (railroad plan on Museum grounds))
3. Request a donation of the land south of the museum across Washington St. from BNSF Railroad to be used as the site for the 7 ½" gauge mini-railroad. – The request has been made and is still pending. Site Plan A shows the railroad located on the BNSF land and Site Plan B shows the railroad located on the City of Brownwood's museum grounds in case the donation of land does not occur.
4. Purchase track and check old track salvaged from the Lehnis Railroad to build at least a portion of projected railroad track (minimum of 1,000 feet of track). See below.
5. Purchase treated 2 X 4 lumber and screws to build the track (proxies for cross ties and spikes).

2 X 4 treated lumber, 2000 board feet	\$760.00
Hex screws	\$100.00

Purchase a gasoline or electric locomotive and at least 3 passenger cars to go with the Lehnis steam locomotive #687, gas switching locomotive, and 2 passenger cars. The steam locomotive will be run on special occasions, as it is very manpower intensive to start up, run and maintain. The second gasoline-powered locomotive will be used every day for easy operations. The Lehnis small switching engine will be used as a backup engine and to switch around the different passenger cars as needed.

a. Special purchase opportunity: A "lightly used" 7 ½" gauge train has come on the market in Arkansas. It includes 2,000 feet of rail, (1,000 feet of finished track), 3 switches, a gasoline/hydraulic locomotive, 3 passenger cars and a caboose. The total price is \$12,000, with an additional \$1,500 to deliver it.

b. Compare \$13,500 for the whole railroad to new:

Great American Train Company Train Starter Package:

(From website) "If this is your first backyard train, our Train Starter Package is the perfect way to begin. Everything you need is included. Starter kits are available only in 7.5" gauge and with .5" wheel flange depth.

- Pioneer Mogul Locomotive
- Riding Tender
- Gondola Riding Car
- Bobber Caboose
- 228 feet (69.5m) of prefabricated track, configured for a 60' x 80' oval (18.3m x 24.4m)
- All connectors and other hardware

42300 Train Starter Package \$ 22,995.00

New Track:

- 42401 Straight track panels, 10-foot length (3048mm), must be shipped by truck .. \$ 189.00 X 50 sections = \$9450 (500 feet)
- 42402 Curved track panel, 10-foot length (3048mm), 30' (914 cm) radii, can be field-modified for larger radii..... \$ 189.00 X 50 = \$9450 (500 feet)
- 42600 Grade crossing for driveways, 8-foot section (244cm) x 6" (152mm) deep – secured with concrete bed..... \$ 350.00
- 42410 Switch Actuator, 7.5"/7.25" gauge, 1.5" scale, automatic and manual with over center spring. Bronze and red powder-coat finish and waterproof battery enclosure. Includes wireless remote control, 6VDC battery and all hardware to connect to GATC switches #42414/#42415 \$ 1350.00
- 42414 Switch track assembly, Left-Hand, 10' x 30' radius \$ 595.00
- 42415 Switch track assembly, Right-Hand, 10' x 30' radius \$ 595.00"

Total track and accessories (for additional 1000 feet)\$18,928.90

Total for new train & track & accessories\$41,923.90

Minus cost of Arkansas train & track & accessories.....--\$13,500.00

= Savings for initial start-up track, train & accessories to City \$28,423.90

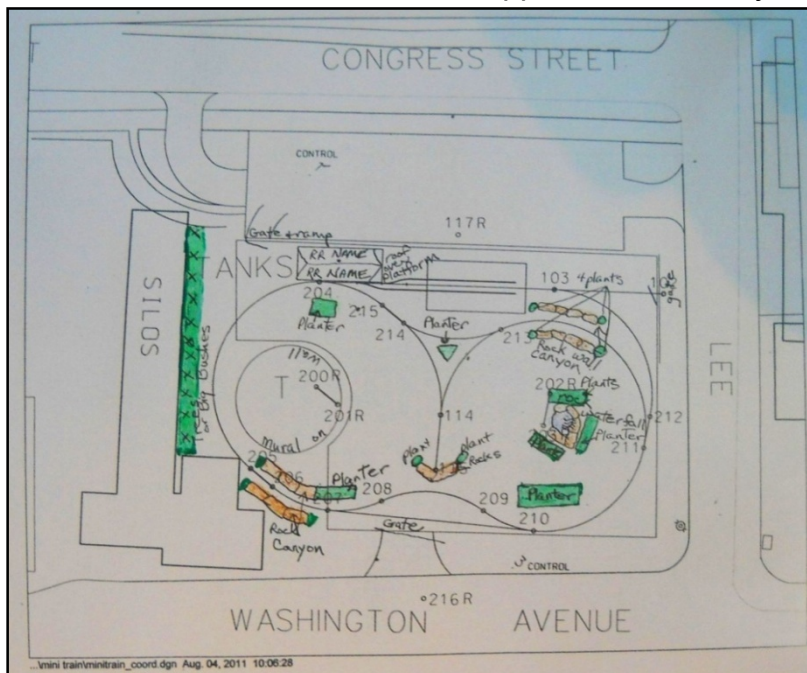
The train package from Arkansas is an excellent way to save over \$28,000.00 on the initial cost of the train and track. However, we need to buy it immediately to keep it from being sold to someone else. I told them that I would need to get the purchase approved by the Brownwood City Council and that it would take several weeks.

6. Host Annual Meets with the Southwest Live Steam Club: Become a member of the statewide Southwest Live Steam Club, and host an annual meeting. The club members spend a week at the host railroad, repairing and building, before holding the actual invitational meet with members running their trains. This gets the club members working on our railroad annually, as well as getting a weekend filled with running trains from all over the state to share with the public.

Project Approved

The proposed project was approved by the Brownwood City Council on February 2011 and the money was budgeted for the project. Funds could be start being expended on June 1 and the project had to be completed no later than September 11, 2011. There was two visitor work session at local 7 ½ inch gauge layouts in Texas to learn how to lay track, etc. The first one was held May 5-6 in Wimberley and the second one was held in May in Priddy. The Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club elected to hold their May meeting at the one in Priddy.

The next step was to acquire the land for the mini railroad. The proposed site across the street from the museum did not happened, so the city decided to build the mini railroad on



the other side of the silo from the museum and Kress Depot on a concrete pad that was already in place. This site created some unique challenges in that most mini railroads were built on dirt so the track could be stabilized and not move out on curves.

A site plan was then developed to see how much track and the number of switches that would be needed to build the base of the railroad.



Jack Lamkin, right, president of the Lehnis Museum Board, helped unload the used gasoline Santa Fe locomotive delivered to the museum on July 7, 1910. Included with the shipment were three passenger cars, a caboose, and 2,000 feet of used rail and 1,000 feet of track. The cost was \$13,500 with money left over from a museum project.



In the summer of 1910, Crag Seger supervised the building of the needed track in the Timmins Building (now the Brownwood Event Center building) with the prisoners from the Thomas Havins Unit and Brownwood Community Service men and women.

Fifteen year old Luke Broussard, of Early High School, built the 13 switches that were needed, working in the back of the main museum. Luke put in over 700 volunteer hours while still in high school.

Both were shown how to do it by Nick Edwards of Wimberley.





At the same time site work was being done by the city.



The fence around the site came from the back of the BNSF yard that was not be used.



The storage building was purchased and erected on the concrete slab. Enough track and switches were built to get started on the laying of the track and switches.



In the hot summer of 2011, Aibit T. Elwess and Craig Seger started laying the track and installing the switches on the concrete slab.



In addition to laying rails outside, rails were also laid inside the storage building.



Shade was provided for the track work.



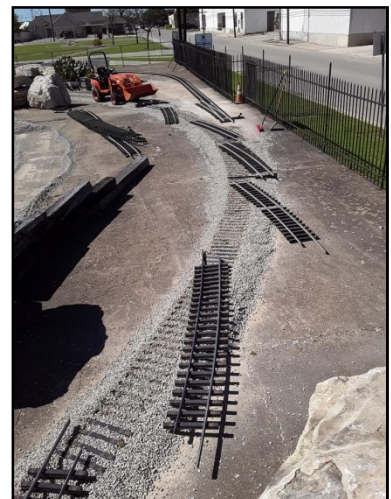
Planter boxes were built and placed



Volunteers Russ Fisher and Luke Broussard helped with laying track

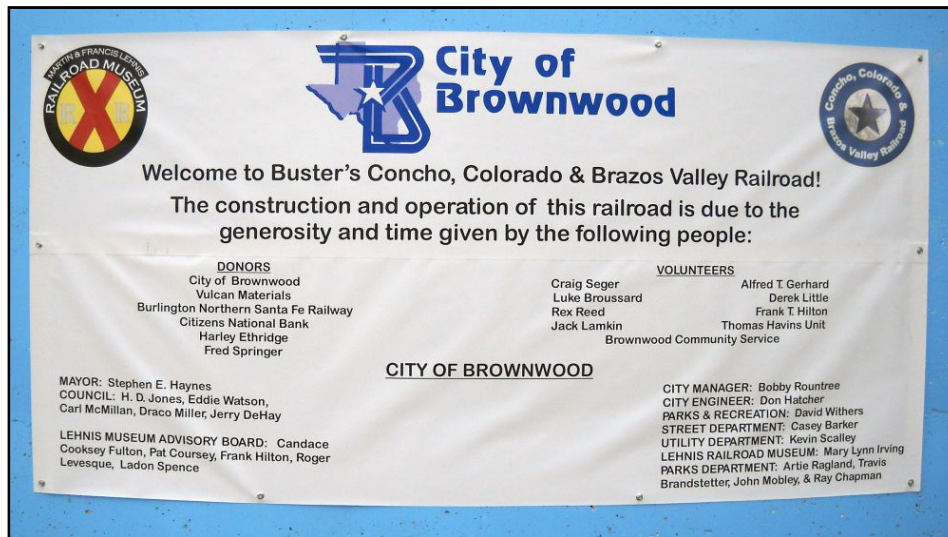


Dirt was hauled in and additional track was laid around the site.



Dedication Day September 17, 2011

The 7 ½ inch gauge mini railroad was finally dedicated on September 17, 2011 during the 'Feels Like Home' weekend. There 2,200 people came the three days of the festival and some rode the live steam trains brought in for that weekend as well as tour the museum.



Two additional electric locomotives built by Tom Bee were later purchased; buildings and railroad equipment were added to the mini train, as well as additional changes to the layout.

Purchased in 2019



Purchased in 2019



Two bridges were built and painted by the prisoners of the Thomas Havins Unit



Ramp to service locomotives was built by the prisoners of the Thomas Havins Unit.



Chest built by Luke Broussard to store tools at mini railroad.



A special handicap car and ramp was obtained for the railroad.



The two bridges were joined together and enclosed.



New sign on storage shed





Various signals, working switches and track were built by Ken Smith and installed around the mini railroad layout. Crystal Stanley had the cluster of railroad signal lights installed outside the mini railroad. The lights were donated to the museum by BNSF Railroad.



The wood and solid composite ties were replaced with a more modern tie. Additional lanes of track were built, as well as worn out track was replaced. William Tollett and Brian Banks are shown replacing track with new type of ties and with a steel outside rail.



The fence was replaced next to the parking lot.



Ken Smith and Dave White pictured installing a special cross section of track. Double of rails were built through the bridge.



June Misick painted a mural completely around the center silo.







Misick also painted murals on other silos facing the mini railroad.



**An Aerial View Mini Railroad April 24, 2025
by Christopher Bisset.**



Roster of some who have helped with the Mini Railroad

Technical Advisers 7 ½ Gauge Railroad: Nick Edwards of the Wimberley, Blanco & Southern Railroad, Wimberley, Texas, and Bob Hornsby, also of the WB&S Railroad, Tom Bee for manufacturing car parts and locomotives for mini railroads including this museum.

Helped with 7 ½ Inch Railroad in various ways: Mary Ann, Brian Banks, Chris Bissett, Luke Broussard, Pat Coursey, Dustin Crawford, Aibit T. Elwess, Michelle Ezra, Russ Fisher, Scott Fritz, Alfred T. Gerhard, Frank Hilton, Mary Irving, Bob Lambert, Jack Lamkin, Derek Little, Dr. Bob Mangrum, June Musick, Kim Peterson, Rex Reed, Craig Seger, Betty Smith, Ken Smith, Crystal Stanley, William Tollett, Don Turnbull and Dave White

Groups: Brownwood Community Service, Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club, Thomas Havins Unit and Howard Payne University Students



Nick Edwards, Luke Broussard, Bob Hornsby
Mary Irving, Frank Hilton



Dr. Bob Mangrum, Cheryl Mangrum



Russ Fisher, Mike Lindsey



Danny Click



Betty Smith

Chapter 14: Staff, Volunteers and Organizations

There have been many different employees and volunteers who have helped to make the “Martin and Frances Lehnis Railroad Museum” what it is today. Although the name has been changed to “Lehnis Railroad Museum & Visitors Center,” it still provides an exciting experience to all who visit it. We are pleased to list all names we have been able to find.

All are employees of the City of Brownwood

Museum Directors, Managers and Employees

Mary Irving 7-1-2007 to 1-11-2011 - Museum Director

Kim Peterson 3-1-2011 to 2014 - Museum Director

Beverly Norris 2015 to 2017 - Museum Director

Crystal Stanley 2018 to 8-2023 - Museum Director

Dustin Crawford 10-2015 to 9-2018 & 8-2022 to 8-2023– Museum Coordinator

Michelle Ezra 10- 2016 to 7-2022- Museum Coordinator

Brooklyn Britton 9-2023 to 9-2024 - Museum Coordinator

Mary Ann 10 –2024 to Present - Museum Coordinator

Jolyn Knight 8-2023 – 2-15-2025 - Visitor Service Manager & Over Museum Supervision

Tatiana Figueroa 8-2024 to 5-1-2025- Museum Facility Operations Associate, 5-2-2025 to Present, Visitor Services Manager



Mary Irving



Kim Peterson



Beverly Norris



Crystal Stanley

Part-time Employed Staff

Darla Collier – 2015 to about 2022 – Served in reception, accession clerk, run trains, tours.

Sharon McCarty – Helped with front desk and with school tours.

Steve Nash – Reception, run model trains, tours

Rita Nolan – Reception, run model trains, tours under several museum directors.

Ken Smith 5-2020 to Present – Runs trains and building projects at mini railroad and inside.

Corrender Taylor 5-2022 to 6-2023 – Did electrical work and created displays.

Andy Zambrana 6-20-2023 to Present – Maintain model railroads, displays and tours.

Some of the past and present museum staff



Mary Ann



Brooklyn Britton



Darla Collier



Dustin Crawford



Michelle Ezra



Tatiana Figueroa



Sharon McCarty



Rita Nolan



Ken Smith



Corrender Taylor



Andy Zamgbrana

List of some of the known volunteers and their job.

Edmond (Last name unknown) – Run trains at mini railroad, model trains, tours

Brian Banks – Helped rebuild track at mini railroad and add an additional lane.

Tom Bee – Built the two electric locomotives used at the mini railroad.

Chris Bissett – Helped at mini railroad with electrical and aerial photography.

Luke Broussard – Over 700 volunteer hours, built switches, rain trains, built track.

Dr. Alan Cass – Donated S Gauge model railroad and maintenance of railroad stock.

Danny Click – Helped with mini train, ran his steam locomotive at special events.

Darla Collier – Helped with accessions, reception, ran model trains, tours.

Pat Coursey – Photographed and documented building of mini railroad.

Dustin Crawford – Helped at mini railroad.

Emily Crawford – City manager, helped at museum.

Bud Doud – Built first N and HO gauge layouts.

Aibit T. Elwess – Helped at mini railroad.

Michelle Ezra – Helped at mini railroad.

Russ Fisher – Helped with HO model trains, helped build mini railroad, run mini trains.

Billy Franks – Helped in museum where needed.
 Scott Fritz- Helped at mini railroad.
 Alfred T. Gerhard – Helped get mini railroad built and open.
 Michael Giyer – Helped with model trains in museum and helped with displays.
 Kenneth Gould – Helped with model trains in museum.
 Timothy Greeshaw – Donated used real railroad artifacts.
 Frank Hilton – Historical research, displays, scenery, mini railroad, over 2,000 hours.
 Beth Hooven – Helped maintain gift shop and other tacks.
 Mary Irving – Helped at mini railroad, building track and running the trains.
 Wayne Keeler – Electrical, locomotive repairs, all gauges, helped with T Gauge.
 Bob Lambert – Helped at mini railroad.
 Mike Lindsay – Helped with O gauge model railroad display and maintenance.
 Jack Lamkin – 5,345 volunteer hours, chairman of first Museum Advisory Board, displays.
 Joan Lamkin – Cataloged library books and helped at reception desk.
 Derek Little – Helped get mini railroad built and open.
 Dr. Bob Mangrum – Helped at mini railroad, first president of Lehnis HOT Railroad Club.
 Judy Misick – Painted the locomotive inside and the mural on silos at mini railroad.
 Kim Peterson – Help get ticket office installed at mini railroad.
 Jerry Payne – Helped in museum where needed.
 Rex Reed – Helped to get mini railroad built and open.
 Craig Seger - Built track and installed first track at mini railroad.
 Betty Smith – Helped install new track at mini railroad.
 Ken Smith – Build switches, install new track, repaired rolling stock at mini railroad.
 Crystal Stanley – Helped run trains at mini railroad.
 William Tollett – Helped install repair and install new track at mini railroad.
 Don Turnbull – Volunteer to drive mini trains on weekends and special events.
 Shirley Wyatt – Volunteer in main museum.
 Brandon Wells – Helped with running model railroad trains inside museum.
 Mary Lou Wells – Helped with tours and special events.
 Dave White – Built new HO gauge display, ran train camps and helped at mini railroad.
 Larry Wilke – Contributed G Scale models and built second G Scale layout, maintenance.
 Andy Zamgbrana – Worked on model trains 2010-2012 in high school, 2015—2015 HPU student, 2022-2023 after college, and before being hired by museum.



Chris Bissett



Tom Bee



Michael Giyar



Betty Smith



Don Turnbull



Brandon Wells



Mary Lou Wells

Organizations That Have Helped with the Museum:

Brownwood Community Service men and women – Help with housekeeping in the museum.

Cen Tex Rural Rail Transportation District – Donated a grant to the museum for a display.

Early High School Key Club - Cleaned up the Kress Depot as a service project.

Howard Payne University Students – Helped with maintenance at the museum.

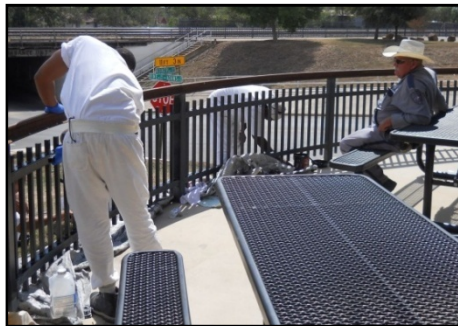
Lehnis Heart of Texas Model Railroad Club – Provided money and volunteers for the Museum, and built the HO model railroad layout.

Texas Rock Crusher Railway employees – Put in standard rails just outside museum.

Thomas Havins Unit – Helped with maintenance inside and outside museum, repair and maintained track at mini railroad, as well as built the two bridges in the mini railroad.



Howard Payne University



Thomas Havins Unit



Early High School Key Club



Texas Rock Crusher Railway employees



The End