



August 2026

2027 National Garden Railway Convention

James E. Ward Agricultural Center

Lebanon, TN

May 31 to June 5, 2027

Members of the Nashville Area Garden Railroaders eagerly look forward to welcoming our fellow garden railroaders to the 2027 National Garden Railway Convention beginning on May 31, 2027. The “Made in Tennessee Building” at the James E. Ward Agricultural Center (945 Baddour Pkwy) in Lebanon, Tennessee will be the home base for many convention activities. The James E. Ward Agricultural Center is located approximately 25 miles east of the Nashville International Airport and about one mile north of Interstate 40 on highway US70. We have planned many family-friendly activities such a “Meet and Greet” opening reception, a railroad trivia contest and ice cream social for our guests to enjoy.

Back by popular demand from the 2021 National Garden Railway Convention, we have a large block of tickets reserved for our guests who want to attend a performance of the world-renowned Grand Ole Opry. Another popular activity from the 2021 convention the whole family can enjoy is the dinner cruise with a live musical performance on the General Jackson show boat. The cruise will travel down the Cumberland River to downtown Nashville before returning up river to the dock. Traditional convention activities such as layout tours, clinics, and a vendor hall featuring many businesses that support the hobby will be present. There will be a special forum on Thursday June 3 where Mr. Robert Bischoff and colleagues from Sun City Texas Community near Georgetown, TX will lead a presentation on building the Red Poppy Garden Railway. Membership in the Nashville Area Garden Railroaders has more than doubled since we hosted the national convention in 2021. Ten layouts will be on the layout tours in 2027 which were not on the tours six years ago.

In the coming months we will release additional newsletters to keep you informed about important dates related to convention registrations and other developments. These newsletters can be viewed and downloaded from the official convention website; (www.ngrc2027.org).

Convention Registration

Convention registration is now open. There are two different registration tiers for both family and individual registrations; Platinum and regular registrations. What is included in each registration tier is listed on the website. Both Individual Platinum and Family Platinum registrations will be discontinued after January 31, 2027. The early registration period for Individual and Family registrations will end after February 28, 2027.

There will be a modest increase in the registration fees beginning on March 1, 2027 for late registrations. Register early to save some money. On-line convention registrations will close on May 26, 2027. Walk up registrations after this date will be allowed at the Made in Tennessee Building.

Accommodations

Our group is focused on controlling costs for our convention guests, vendors, and our group. While there will be no central convention hotel, we have negotiated reduced room rates at several major hotels in Lebanon and Mount Juliet. We strongly recommend booking hotel rooms early because following the convention is the CMA Music Festival which brings several hundred thousand country music fans to Nashville. There will be high demand for hotel rooms leading up to the CMA Music Festival. Listed on the convention website are the hotels where we have blocks of rooms reserved for our guests along with links to their portal for on-line registrations.

For those who enjoy camping, on the convention website is a list of area camp grounds. There are camping sites at the James E. Ward Agricultural Center. Each site offers 20/30/50-amp electrical hookups and fresh water hydrants. Four dump stations are available on the property. In addition, there are three bath houses available for your use. Camping sites at the James E. Ward Agricultural Center **must be reserved using the 2027 convention website.**

Meet and Greet Opening Reception

Included with your convention registration is the “Meet and Greet” opening reception from 5 to 7 pm on Monday May 31 at the Made in Tennessee building. This is a perfect opportunity to socialize with fellow garden railroaders, greet old friends and make new ones. Light hors d’oeuvres will be served.

Ice Cream Social and Railroad Trivia Contest

During the ice cream social on June 1, convention attendees will have an opportunity to test their railroad trivia knowledge. Will you be the winner? The ice cream social and trivia contest, which are included in all registration tiers, will be held in the Made in Tennessee building.

Layout Tours

Tours of local garden railroads will be held on June 1, 2 and 3. Ten layouts which were not on the layout tours in 2021, will be open to visitors during the 2027 convention. Tour buses will be available for those that do not wish to contend with Nashville traffic. Box lunches will be included each day for those who purchase bus tickets for the layout tours. Not all layouts are accessible by bus. Those layouts not accessible via bus will be noted in the convention book.

Vendor Hall and BBQ Dinner

Beginning at 4 pm on Thursday June 3, the vendor hall will be open for all convention guests. Included in all Family and Individual registration tiers is a BBQ dinner consisting of either pulled pork or pulled chicken sandwiches and sides. Serving will begin at 5:30 pm. Although the vendor hall closes at 8 pm, it will re-open at 9 am on Friday June 4 and closes at 3 pm.

Clinics

Topics for clinics have not been determined and we are open to suggestions from our guests. If you would like to suggest a topic or be a clinic presenter, please send an email to us at info.ngrc2027@gmail.com. We have time slots for six clinics.

Making Trains Fun Youth Clinics

First started in 2021 and at each national convention since then, there will be Making Trains Fun youth clinics for children between 5 and 15 years of age. The building diorama clinic will start at 4:30 pm on Thursday June 3. The first of two flat car load clinics will start at 4:15 pm on Thursday June 3 for convention attendees. Beginning at 6:30 pm on Thursday June 3 is the building diorama clinic. A second Making Trains Fun flatcar load clinic will start at 9:30 am on Friday June 4. All Making Trains Fun clinics will be held in the Made in Tennessee Building at the James E. Ward Agricultural Center. There is no charge to participate in either clinic, but a parent or grandparent must accompany the child during the clinics. Once the children complete their projects, they can enter them in the Youth Modeling Contest. Convention guests will have the opportunity to cast a ballot to determine the winner of the building diorama and flat car load clinics and the overall Best of Show entry. Winners will be announced during the banquet on Friday June 4. The children can take their projects home with them to enjoy in the future. Pre-registration for either or both clinics by using the convention website is required. There is limited seating in each clinic, so registering early is highly encouraged.

Adult Modeling Contest

Are you a skilled and talented modeler? Why not display your talents to your fellow hobbyists by entering your work in the adult modeling contest? There will be three categories in the contest; rolling stock (including locomotives), structures, and dioramas. Winners in each category and Best of Show will be determined by popular vote by convention guests. Winners will be announced at the banquet on Friday, June 4. See convention website for complete contest rules and to enter in the modeling contest.

Banquet

The 2027 National Garden Railway Convention concludes with a formal banquet dinner at the South Hall Building at the James E. Ward Agricultural Center. A social hour with cash bar begins at 5:00 pm with serving of dinner starting at 6 pm. Tickets for the banquet are included with the Family Platinum and Individual Platinum registration tiers. For other registration options, tickets may be purchased as an option to the registration. There are four dinner entrée options to choose from; London Broil (beef), glazed chicken breast, grilled salmon, or vegetarian.

We look forward to seeing you and your family at the 2027 National Garden Railway Convention beginning on May 31, 2027.

Contact Information

Convention website: <https://www.ngrc2027.org>

Convention email address: info.ngrc2027@gmail.com