

News from Houston N'Crowd



July 2010

THE ORDERBOARD



Outlaws on the Santa Fe - All the Way!
Page 4

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Ted Davis, President

In this issue, Gordon Bliss has written a report for us about an operating session at his layout that took place just before the N Scale Collector National Convention. That's followed by reports on the convention and construction of the BC&G view blocks.

Recently Tom Wayburn managed another personal visit to a club member's layout. This time he and daughter Amy toured Eddie Aycock's layout. His article will be in the next issue of *The Orderboard*. I think that it's time we accepted another member's invitation to a "private" layout tour. Will it be yours?

I was at the NSC Convention Saturday, June 26, for the public show. Tom Marsh had two tables in the sales area where he was selling some personal items. He also was handling sales for N'Crowd and NMRA Lone Star Region. He managed to sell out of our 2003 Convention Micro-Trains two-car sets. I will publish a new inventory soon to reflect what is left in the N'Crowd company store.

We have ordered another run of BC&G decals from Rail Graphics. In addition, Ray Byer brought in the decals for Ben Pearlman's railroad. If you requested some of these, Ray has stored them in his tool box. If you come by and Ray is not there, I can handle the "sale."

While at the NSC convention I spied a "display" of assembled TrainCat structures. I inquired of the fellow sitting at the table if he were the vendor. He replied grumpily (well, that's my impression), "No, I am the designer!" I then asked if he had delivered a big order to Papa Ben's. He

said no, there were some things he was unable to get on the plane. As one N'Crowd member remarked, "What, a bunch of flat brass kits was hard to pack?"

My guess is that he gave priority to the assembled models, which he could use to promote sales. It's unfortunate that this creates a delay for the BC&G construction team.

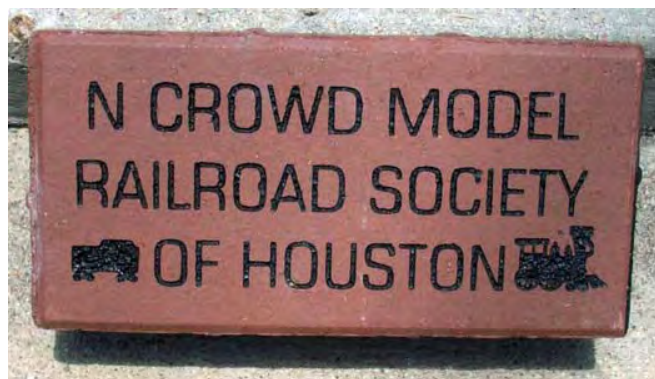
Also of note, our paving brick has been installed at the Rosenberg Railroad Museum. Thanks to Steve Redd for the photo below.

I would like to mention that we usually manage to thank people for their help in the construction of the layout, but I believe that we fail to thank people who donate building materials, kits, etc., so to make up for that, "THANKS" from the club.

In closing, birthday wishes go out to Eddie, Kirk, Gordon and Steve!

Almost too many to mention!

N'Crowd's paving brick recognizing our donation to the Rosenberg Railroad Museum. Photo by Steve Redd.



Next N'Crowd Meeting:

7 p.m. Wednesday, July 21

Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd.
Come and check out progress on the BC&G!

Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
June 16, 2010
Prepared by Rick Gonzalez, Secretary

- Meeting called to order around 7 p.m.; 18 members in attendance.
- Door Prize - Eddie Aycock won a box full of N scale autos.
- Missing member call to Conrad Baum. He answered and was good-natured about it.

President's Report

- Downe & Owlte decals for sale. This was Ben Pearlman's railroad name.
- BC&G decals - \$260 for 150 sets, 50 each of blue, white, and yellow. Motion to spend the money to purchase BC&G decals was passed by a 17-1 vote.
- Did everybody get their copy of *The Orderboard*?
- TrainCat - Some of the order is back-ordered. He will deliver the order to Papa Ben's at the N Scale Convention in Sugar Land.
- Ebay sales continue.
- Members were given a chance to purchase Club Cars. Whatever not sold will be taken to the N Scale convention to be sold. Some surplus bridges were also sold.

Vice President's Report

- Kato's Union Pacific No. 4141, the George Bush unit, shipped today, and should arrive at the shop this weekend.

Treasurer's Report -

- At the end of May, we had a checking account balance of \$13,427. We deposited \$106, and paid out \$568. Our CD has approximately \$4,700. We are currently earning 1.5% interest, and the CD will need to be renewed or moved at the end of October. What are we going to do with it?
- The N Scale Convention has approximately 270 people registered so far. If you have not registered yet, you can do so on Tuesday.

Secretary's Report

- We have 18 members present for today's meeting.
- Please see Rick if you have any change of information, so that we may update our roster.

Layout Master's Report

- Sent Ted a job list - Ted never received it.
- The Club is currently working on the fascia.
- Charlie will not be able to work on the layout as often, maybe every other Saturday.

New Business

- A clinic on building turnouts will be held this Saturday, June 19th, at the Houston RR Museum.

Old Business

- RailOp, a program for building switchlists, costs about \$140, Charlie Aselin can get us a computer and printer for about \$400. A discussion was held as to whether we wanted to spend the money for this. A motion to buy RailOps and a computer and printer passed.
- Gordon Bliss mentioned that he was working on some passenger cars for the convention contest.
- Tom Marsh reported that the Houston Railroad Museum is going to repaint the MP *Eagle* sleeping car.
- Ted Davis wants the Club to think about a field trip for sometime after the N Scale Convention. Any suggestions?
- After some troubleshooting, Ray Byer thinks that the Club's PM42 seems to have gone out. A new one will cost about \$80. He feels that the layout can actually use two of them. We can buy a new one and send the defective one to be repaired. A motion to buy a new PM42 passed.
- If Hugh handles the repair of the PM42 and two AR's, will the Club give him a surplus AR? After some discussion, the Motion passed.
- Division 8 President Ray Byer will be term-limited out of his position soon. He thinks that it is a good experience for anybody looking to get more involved with our hobby. Plus, it'll help you earn the Association Volunteer Certificate for the NMRA's Master Model Railroader program.

Motion to Adjourn passed at 8:35 p.m.

‘Outlaw’ operations on the Santa Fe - All the Way

Story and photos by Gordon Bliss

With the National N-Scale Collector Convention coming to town in June, we wanted to host the out-of-towners to an operation session on my Santa Fe - All the Way. After talking to the convention staff, we decided we would need to handle the session separate from the convention - an “outlaw” session!.

After a couple of emails to Kirk Reddie of *N Scale Railroad-ing* magazine and his group, the list grew to about 20-plus people from all over the world. The Sunday evening session filled up very quickly so a second session was set for Monday evening prior to the convention.

On Sunday, we formed a caravan from the pre-convention visit to Houston Area Live Steamers at Zube Park and we made a quick stop at Jason Smith’s Union Pacific Overland Route layout. At the operation session, we had Kirk Reddie and Keith Lyons from Washington state, Marc and Hans Starman from The Netherlands, Dirk Warvel from Germany, David and Collin Reinhart from Pennsylvania, and Kim Saign from Austin. Operations ran into the late hours, with the BS flying for another hour or so, so morning came way too early.

After flipping the railroad for the next session, I met Digitrax’s Rich Businger at Papa Ben’s Train Place; he was

driving Kirk Reddie around to the hobby shops. At the shop, I asked guests to sign the BC&G log and offered latest issues of *The Orderboard* while running a train around the layout. Rich left to pick up operators at the hotel and airport, and we started a caravan from Papa Ben’s Train Place to my layout.

After stopping to pick up pizzas before the session, we all arrived and had a feast. Operations started with Paul Graf from Atlas Model Railroad Co., Matt Gaudynski from Fox Valley Models, Chuck Ciaccio of Feather River Train Shop, Mal Rigsby and Steve Walker from Australia, Flash Blackmon from San Antonio, and Jim Hinds from Richmond Controls. We also picked up a couple of tag-alongs from the store, Dirk Warvel from Germany, Kim Saign from Austin, and Kirk along with Keith Lyons from Washington state.

Jason Smith and Rich Businger helped dispatch and make the sessions run smoothly. At the Monday session, we also talked Kirk into dispatching and I thought we would have to pry him out of the chair as he took to it like a fish to water. Monday’s session went to about 11:30 p.m. and a little BS flew till about midnight. Everyone had a great time and we all made some great new friends!





***Action on the Santa Fe - All the Way:** Preceding page, Paul Graf runs the Super Chief through Kingman Canyon; top left, Kirk Reddie works passenger trains at Union Station; top right, Mal Rigsby and Steve Walker switch Marceline, Mo.; above left, Matt Gaudynski works Argentine Yard; above right, Chuck Ciaccio is in charge of the local at Argyle, Iowa; below, Hans Starmans gets a helper over Ash Fork, Arizona.*





N-scalers invade Sugar Land!

by Gordon Bliss and Tom Marsh

The N Scale Collector (NSC) National N Scale Convention came to Houston last month and N-Scalers from around the world attended.

The convention started with two days of pre-convention outings, first on Sunday, June 20, to the Houston Area Live Steamers' superb Zube Park miniature railroad, then on Monday a bus trip to the George Bush Presidential Library and Museum in College Station, Richmond Fire Dept.'s Station No. 1 at the Sunset Route's crossing of the Brazos River and the Rosenberg Railroad Museum. A donation was made to the museum on behalf of NSC, and the donation will be recognized with a paving brick at the museum's entry.

The convention proper started on Tuesday with layout tours to Gordon Bliss's Santa Fe - All the Way, Harry Daniel's Pecos River Railroad and Rick Townsend's Spruce Valley & Texas Railroad. All of these great N-scale layouts elicited many compliments. At the host hotel, Marriott Sugar Land Town Square, Tuesday also saw convention participants preparing for the live and silent auctions and the model contest. NTRAK and T-Trak layout setup began as well. The day concluded with a traditional Welcome Reception, hosted by Micro-Trains.

On Wednesday, a large group took two buses for a tour of Space Center Houston and NASA. Others went on a layout tour to see Jason Smith's Union Pacific Overland Route, Al Hague's Kansas & Pacific Railroad, both N-scale, and Barry and Blake Bogs' Colorado & Western G/Gn3 layout. Again, many compliments were heard about the tour layouts, with the Bogs' atrium-spanning bridges causing a lot of dropped jaws!

Back at the hotel, the N-Trak layout came together with Houston's Northwest Crossing, the North East Oklahoma N Scalers of Tulsa, Fort Bend County Model Railroad Club, TexN Modular Railroad Club of Plano and Austin's AustNTrak all contributing modules. The T-Trak operation was in the capable hands of the Rio Grande Valley T-Trak folks from McAllen.

Voting on the model contest's 23 entries started Wednesday afternoon and the lively live auction was held that evening. Contest voting continued Thursday morning.



NSC Convention Chairman Dick Ollendorf, left, presents a donation to Peter Bryan of Houston Area Live Steamers (HALS). Joining in are Jim Hinds, local convention co-chair, and NSC's Dean Daughenbaugh. The HALS visit was a pre-convention activity on Sunday, June 20. Photos above and below by Tom Marsh; bottom photo by Gordon Bliss.





The last of the layout tours took place Thursday with an outing to Gil Freitag's HO Stoney Creek & Western, Don Bozman's HO GREAT Great Northern Railway and Craig Raymond's Sn3 Rio Grande Southern. As anyone who has visited these fine layouts would have expected, many compliments were heard.

Thursday also featured the "History & High Technology Tour" during which participants visited the Houston Railroad Museum, Battleship Texas and Harris County Metropolitan Transit Authority's Rail Operations Center.

The NSC Banquet and Contest Awards Ceremony took place Thursday in the Sugar Land Ballroom. Door prizes aplenty were given out!

Above, participants in Monday's tour were treated to a number of train sightings during the event, which ranged from the Bush Library in College Station to Richmond Fire Station No. 1 and the Rosenberg Railroad Museum.

At right, the lunch venue in College Station offered a view of the UP mainline.

At bottom, BNSF obliged the group with a manifest freight crossing the Brazos River behind Richmond Fire Station No. 1. Three photos by Tom Marsh.





Friday's events included the Manufacturers' Breakfast and the NSC's traditional Swap-A-Rama, where a great many good deals were to be found. In addition, a number of model railroad manufacturers were on hand to

answer questions and take suggestions for future models.

At the breakfast, Kato announced they would be producing Amfleet cars and the Tokyo-based firm also showed an early sample of their new Tokyo tram, which could form the basis for American prototype LRV models. Con-Cor reported on new tooling for freight car trucks allowing easy conversion to Micro-Trains couplers; the new trucks will be featured on an upcoming release of 57-ft. mechanical refrigerator cars to be offered in a modern Tropicana paint scheme. Micro-Trains discussed their next heavyweight passenger car, a parlor, and the upcoming PS-2 high-side covered hopper.

Walthers announced that the 130-ft. turntable would now be offered with DCC, and that the 100-ton Greenville hoppers will be arriving in seven road names in early 2011.

Digitrax debuted its new DN-135 decoder "for almost anything N-scale" and with an \$18.95 MSRP. Other announcements from various manufacturers gave convention attendees plenty to talk about.

Friday ended with a visit to a nearby ice skating rink for a catered barbecue and some fun in less than 90-degree heat.

The convention concluded on Saturday with a public train show and a series of model railroad clinics. The show attracted a fair sized crowd, and the clinicians gave tips on operations, NTrak electrical upgrades, how prototype shippers deal with a variety of issues, T-Trak creativity, and tools of the trade. The operations clinic was presented by N'Crowd members Gordon Bliss and Eddie Aycock.

A good time was had by all, as they say, thanks to the efforts of the volunteers who organized the event, the exhibitors who supported the Swap-A-Rama and the public train show, and the N-scalers who traveled from far and wide - and nearby - to attend!

The layout tours featured some of the area's finest N scale model railroads, including Gordon Bliss's Santa Fe - All the Way, seen in the top two photos. In the middle picture, Rick Townsend talks trains with visitors to his Spruce Valley & Western. In the bottom two photos, Harry Daniel's three-level Pecos River Railroad provides interesting western desert vistas. Photos by Tom Marsh.





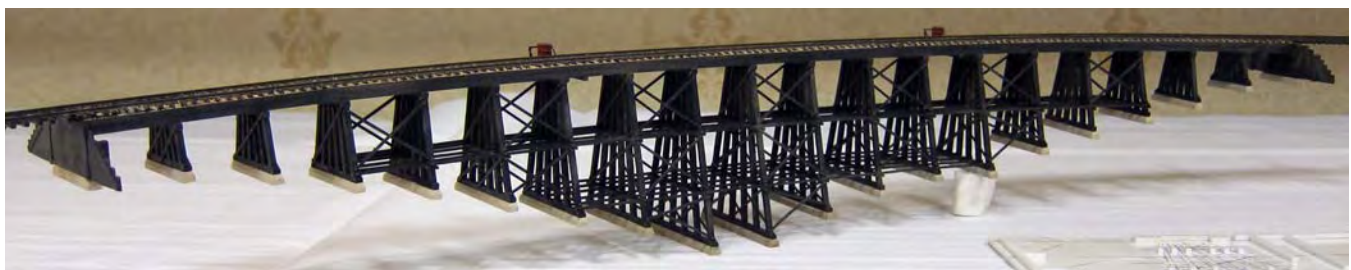
At top left, Gil Freitag's HO Stony Creek & Western is always a favorite, as is Don Bozman's GREAT Great Northern Railway, seen in the photo at top right. At right, second from top, the roundhouse on Craig Raymond's Sn3 Rio Grande Southern. Photos by Howard Laker.

Middle, above, Al Hague explains operations on his Kansas & Pacific Railroad. At right, third from top, Bayou City & Gulf business car Houston brings up the markers on a train on the K&P. Above, Jason Smith welcomes NSC visitors to his Union Pacific Overland Route, while at right, second from bottom, Jim Brandenburg operates the garden railroad in Jason's back yard. Bottom right, Barry and Blake Bogs' atrium spanning bridges on their G/Gn3 layout never fail to impress. Photos by Tom Marsh.





These fine models were among the contest entries at the NSC convention. Photos by Tom Marsh





Thursday's tour took in the Houston Railroad Museum, Battleship Texas and Metro's Rail Operations Center (ROC), followed by a ride over the full length of Metro's light rail line.

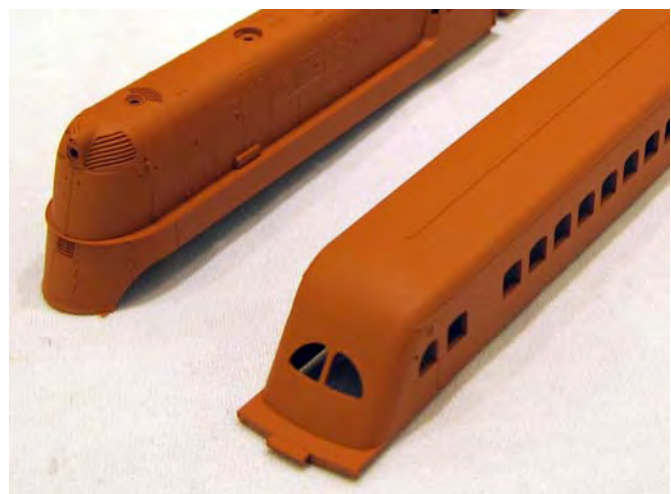
At left, can you spot the eight N-scalers in view on the Texas?

Below, Metro's light rail vehicle (LRV) simulator provided some "entertainment", while the shop tour let everyone get up close to one of Metro's LRVs. Photos by Tom Marsh





Fox Valley Models, top, was among the many manufacturers with displays at the NSC Swap-A-Rama on Friday and the public train show on Saturday. At left and below, Saturday afternoon saw the UPS man deliver a real treat to FoxValley: The first test shots of the company's new Hiawatha in N scale. Top photo by Gordon Bliss, others by Tom Marsh.





NTrak and T-Trak layouts were in operation for much of the convention and during the public train show.

Top, while modest in size, the variety of modules and multi-module scenes incorporated into the layout showcased numerous N-scalers' imaginations.

Above, a tribute to the heroes of the space program.

Above, left, a coal mine scene was nicely presented, and the shiny coal in the Soo Line hoppers looked like gleaming black diamonds.

At left, a happy T-Trakker!

At bottom left, a sharp set of GM&O GP-30s overtakes a train powered by ICG units.

Below, the Houston skyline rendered in miniature, and a Route 66 tourist attraction. Photos by Tom Marsh



The BC&G view blocks:

‘How we did it’

by Charlie Aselin, Layout Master; photos by Tom Marsh

A short while back, I was asked how we made the view blocks on our layout, and that person thought it might make a good article for *The Orderboard*. Well, here goes!

Photo 1: As you can see, Terry Hooks has finished the clouds on the backdrop around the room. Layout benchwork with temporary legs supporting the peninsulas has been installed. The peninsula and view blocks will be supported by 2x4 legs/studs.



Photo 2: Holes have been cut in the brown planning paper for the studs. A pair of permanent legs can be seen on the floor.



Photo 3: The first three studs are installed on the near peninsula and studs on the second are ready to install. All legs were heavily braced under the layout to support the peninsula and view blocks, as we didn't want any twisting.



Photo 4: The second peninsula's view block studs are in place. You will notice that it doesn't go straight down the center of the peninsula, but is angled several degrees off at the back. That was done on purpose, to give a little more room on one side. When this photo was taken, Ted Davis was busy putting in risers, while Tom Wayburn contemplated the quarry he would build later on the peninsula's end.





Photo 5: We installed temporary brown paper to study the effect of each peninsula and to determine how high we wanted the view blocks to be. One member said that it gave each side of the peninsulas the feeling of a vignette.

Photos 6 & 7: These pictures show members working and the effect of the view blocks. Steve Redd at left is unaware of Dominic Valdez and his brother Jason at the other end of the peninsula. In an operating session, that is what we would want.

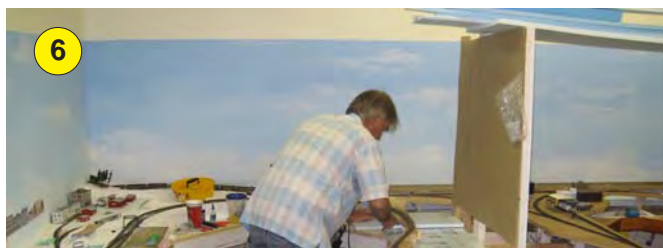


Photo 8: El Presidente Ted Davis and I are clamping masonite, having cut the board to size and opened the portals... measure once cut twice, no that's not it, it's the other way around! We tapered the end of the masonite to minimize the seam against the end tubes. We used 8-in. concrete form tubes to form the rounded ends.

Photo 9: With tubes in place, we had an Open House sneak up on us. Even unfinished, this gives you an idea of how rounding the view block doesn't really give the view block an end, but allows the scene to continue to the other side.

Photo 10: Glued, screwed, primed and now spackled with drywall mud: Terry Hooks sands the seams and makes sure to maintain the round appearance of the view block ends. After another coat of primer, he will paint the sky and clouds as he did all the way around the room.



Photo 11: Don't mind me, I'm running trains - testing track... sure! This is a good view of both view blocks painted blue and ready for clouds.



Photo 12: A little higher angle of the view block. You can see the ends of the 2x4s and the tube. As you can see, with clouds added it looks great. Steve Lancaster is showing off his farm. I don't remember what I was doing in this picture but it was important...

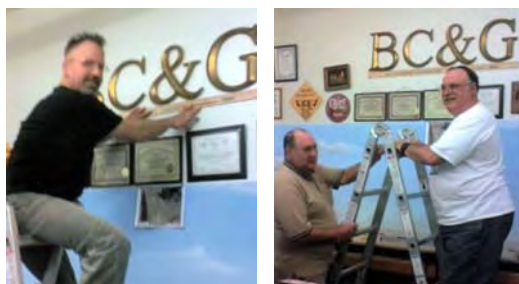


If you have any questions about the layout, I will be happy to answer, as I am the Layout Master - no really, I am! I was "Railroaded"!!!!

(If I can't answer your question, I'm sure I can find someone who can. This club has a wealth of knowledge among its members.)

N'Crowd member Kirk Poorman provided these photos of installation of his "BC&G pride" letters in the layout room.

That's Kirk on the ladder doing the final fitting. Later, President Ted Davis and Layout Master Charlie Aselin inspect the results. Thanks, Kirk!



TIME TABLE

July 10-18

NMRA 75th Anniversary Convention and National Train Show, Milwaukee, Wisconsin

July 21

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

August 18

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

September 15

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

October 16-17

Big Texas Train Show, George R. Brown Convention Center, Houston

October 20

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

November 17

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

December 15

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

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Tom Marsh, Editor

Send newsletter contributions to: tom@houstonNcrowd.org. We reserve the right to edit submissions for clarity and length.

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