

News from Houston N'Crowd



April 2010

THE ORDERBOARD



Union Pacific 844 visits Houston!

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Ted Davis, President

First let's welcome our newest member, Daniel Gutierrez!

Last month, club members took a private tour of the layout of long-time member Rick Townsend. His Santa Fe theme layout includes an oil refinery, turntable with six stall roundhouse, coal mine, intermodal yard, oil field with working pump jacks and grade crossing with working guard arms. Most of the buildings are laser cut wood kits.

The railroad represents the steam to diesel transition period. As a result of our questions, Rick has now named his layout Spruce Valley and Texas.

Rick set up a mini-camera on one train which projected to a wide screen TV. This really was enjoyed by the viewers as it gave an "on board" experience. If you missed the trip you can view several photos of Rick's layout on the N'Crowd web site.

Rick's layout is about 10 years old and highly detailed, yet he remarked that future plans include adding even more detail!

After our tour we dined at the Bellaire Broiler Burger, which is an old fashion burger joint, worth the stop when you are in the area.

On Saturday, April 24, we will travel to Crosby to visit Gordon Bliss's large layout. His layout is the second N'Crowd member's railroad to be featured in N Scale Railroading magazine. The cover and 14 pages of the current issue are dedicated to Gordon's Santa Fe - All The Way empire. The photos and story are by Gordon, who also was instrumental in putting together last month's N Scale Railroading article about Jason Smith's layout. If he keeps this up, Gordon will have to give up his amateur status to become a writer/photographer!

With the visit of Union Pacific steam loco 844 to our area, many members took to the roads to see it in action and at stops along the way. For example, Jason and Gordon have some tales to brag about - see

the cover photo for proof! Turn to page 4 for more photos of the big steamer

I would like to remind you that if you miss the meetings be sure to check out the minutes published in *The Orderboard*. Club Secretary Rick Gonzalez is doing an excellent job of recording the discussions that take place each month.

We placed our TrainCat brass structures order with Papa Ben's in mid-March. We expect the items to ship relatively soon, so please plan on paying for your items at that time.

The work of the BC&G layout crew continues to advance nicely, as you can see in the photo below. If you have not been by to see the layout for yourself, watch for the next website update, which I am sure Webmaster Tom Marsh is planning as you read this.

Finally, please note that we still have two XL club polo shirts for sale. The price is \$15 each.



Home Layout Tour!

**Gordon Bliss's Santa Fe - All the Way
2735 Deep Anchor Way, Crosby**

10 a.m. Saturday, April 24: If you want to carpool or caravan, meet at Papa Ben's Train Place no later than 9 a.m.



Next N'Crowd Meeting: 7 p.m. Wednesday, April 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 March 17, 2010 Prepared by Rick Gonzalez, Secretary

President's Report

- Introductions: New member Richard Bartlett.
- New member voted in.
- Rick Townsend's layout was open for viewing on Saturday, March 27.
- Drawings for door prizes.
- Sold a few of the old 2003 convention polo shirts for \$1.00 each.
- Gordon volunteers to host an open house in April, probably the 24th.
- Missing member calls to: David Hannah no answer; John Fitch didn't answer either.

Vice President's Report

- Lots of undecorated carbodies, wants to have a painting and decaling party.
- Steve now has 90 percent of his mainline laid.

Treasurer's Report

- Cash on hand \$14,327.00.
- We made \$38.14 in interest in 2009!
- Still not in trouble with the IRS.
- February's CD statement still not in.
- Still selling convention cars on EBay.
- The Club donated \$100.00 to the Rosenberg Railroad Museum. We're getting a paving brick.
- Houston Railroad Museum will have a swap meet April 10.

Secretary's Report

- 18 members present for today's meeting. Great turnout.
- Union Pacific's 844 will be in town April 12 and 18.

Layout Master's Report

- Presented schematic of yard.
- Lots of work being done on layout. Hope to be tackling the yard in the next few months.
- Scenery areas still need volunteers.

New Business

- Hugh Boyd is working on the control panel. He and Ray Byer are working on the details. Hugh brought a sample, looks nice.
- The Big Texas Train Show in October is looking good. Union Pacific will bring their parade train.

Old Business

- Flatonia train viewing party April 3.
- Traincat - the Club will be making an order with the store for some of their products.

A motion to adjourn was passed unanimously at 8:07 p.m.

Members in attendance:

1. Rick Gonzalez
2. Tom Marsh
3. Gordon Bliss
4. Vern Burnett
5. Eddie Aycock
6. Charlie Aselin
7. Steven Lancaster
8. Ray Byer
9. Ted Davis
10. Robert Moore
11. Mike Bodak
12. Steve Redd
13. LaChande Chandler
14. Richard Bartlett
15. Bob Folser
16. Hugh Boyd
17. Sally Harrison
18. Dejan Suskavcevic



N'Crowd meets 844!

Everyone probably knows that Union Pacific 4-8-4 No. 844 passed through the Houston area on its way to and from the Rio Grande Valley, where it participated in the City of Harlingen's 100th Anniversary celebrations. Here are some pictures of the big Northern taken by N'Crowd members.

On the cover, Jason Smith scored a short cab ride. At left, Gordon Bliss captured some steamy action. Above and below, Steve Lancaster intercepted 844 at Alvin.





The southbound steam special arrived in Houston on April 11 and departed April 13. On its northbound return, the train arrived in Houston on April 17, and departed April 19.

Your editor staked out photo locations east of Navasota, above, and at the Lavaca River, left, to capture the 4-8-4 in full stride. The action at Alvin, below left, was a little more sedate. A big crowd turned out to see the engine headed north on the return trip.

Below, Steve Lancaster was trackside at Liverpool for this shot.



Project railroad in three by five feet

by Steve Lancaster

Around mid-January I began working on an N-scale table top layout for Papa Ben's customer Gordon Lakey. Gordon works for Major League Baseball and during the off season he was readily available to host a few work sessions.



As you can see in the photos, Gordon had constructed a 3-ft. by 5-ft. layout with Kato Unitrack and Woodland Scenics foam risers using a track plan obtained online. He needed a complete scenery job and wanted the terribly sharp curve that ran under the bridge (9 3/4 inches) eased a bit. This would involve relaying three feet of track and burrowing a new tunnel through the riser approaching the bridge.

One of my concerns upon first seeing the layout was that Gordon left out a critical step in

the initial construction. Laying track directly on the risers without first applying plaster cloth results in dozens, if not hundreds, of small holes along the roadbed that need to be filled somehow. Of course, having made this same mistake on the

N scale portion of the store layout makes me somewhat of an expert on the subject.

Needless to say the first few sessions involved applying a great deal of foam and Sculptamold in tight spaces and laying down a basic terrain. I also tore out the sharp curve early on, as this was a major operation and I wanted to get it over with. I dug a train-sized

hole though the four inch riser and relayed Atlas flex track over foam roadbed.

One spur and its turnout were removed and the track was shifted to line up with the new curve. I added foam and plaster around the riser to give it strength and a more natural appearance, but that area still looks like it was blasted into shape by an N scale work crew, which is exactly what happened.

From the beginning Gordon had expressed a desire to operate with DCC, and he had an an-

cient Digitrax Challenger system ready to go. However, after considering the hassle and expense of installing decoders, and a few horror stories about me burning them out, he opted to remain with DC. Probably a wise decision, since his track plan isn't really conducive to realistic multi-engine operations anyway, and he still has two separate mainlines to run multiple trains off the same juice. With the power routing Kato turnouts, he could store a few





engines in the yard if he chooses to do so.

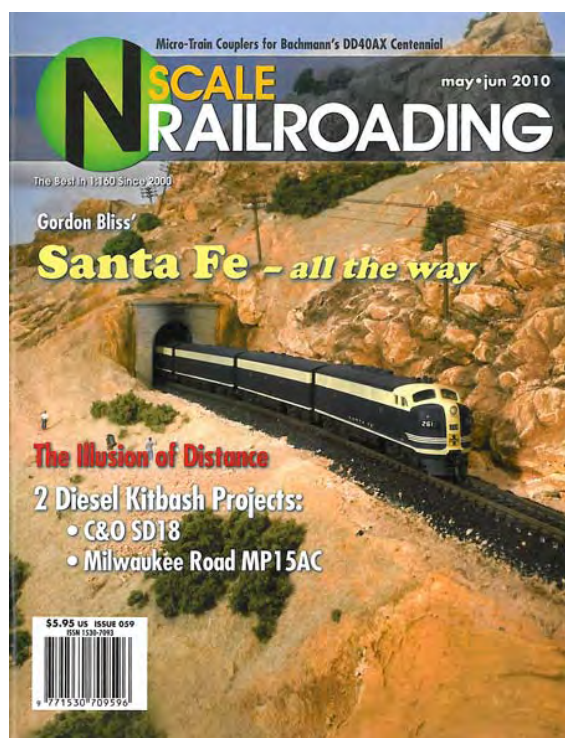
The track feeders were already connected into a single circuit with a tangled web of Kato three way splitters. Just to clean things up down there, I disconnected them all, snipped off the connectors and wired them all to terminal strips.

After covering all of the track with blue painter's tape, a wave of green and brown was washed over the layout, spreading a few feet with each visit. Gordon liked the farm scene on the club's BC&G and wanted one on his layout. Being one of my favorite scenes to model, I was happy to oblige. I laid out a long dirt road, stretching from the yard throat, under the bridge, around the pond and up the hill to the station at the line's maximum elevation.

Halfway to the station, a dirt driveway flanked by crops leads to the farmhouse and barn, both of which are scratch built, as is the station. Gordon also wanted some orange trees on the farm. I've made two and hope to add a few more later.

Unfortunately, a scheduling problem has so far prevented the last work session. Therefore, the final photos don't include the barn, fenced barnyard, or a suitable roof on the house. I hope to rectify this as soon as Gordon is available again. I'm sure you will agree, however, the layout has serious potential for additional detailing, and should be fun to operate.

Next month I'll have a report on my other project layout.



Two for two: Another N'Crowd member has been featured in N Scale Railroading. Check out Gordon Bliss's Santa Fe in the May-June issue, or join us for the club's tour of this fine layout on Saturday, April 24.

See page 2 for details of our Saturday excursion to "trackside" on the Santa Fe mainline.



TIME TABLE

April 21

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

April 24

N'Crowd visit's Gordon Bliss's Santa Fe!

May 8

NMRALSR Division 8 Chili Cook-off, Alvin ATSF depot, 11 am

May 19

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

June 5-6

Lone Star Region NMRA 59th Annual Convention, San Antonio

June 16

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
Papa Ben's Train Place

June 22-26

N Scale Collector National N Scale Convention, Sugar Land Marriott

October 16-17

Big Texas Train Show, Houston

Bayou City & Gulf Fun List

Members are encouraged to join in the construction of the new BC&G at Papa Ben's.

Here are some suggested, fun activities!

Take out the trash and vacuum the floor
Put up tools and organize loose supplies

Build trees

Install benchwork trim

Install risers for sub-roadbed

Install sub-roadbed

Lay cork roadbed and track

Install bus and feeder wires

Propose, get approval and build a structure for future installation

When in doubt or if you have any questions or suggestions:

Call Charlie at 832-578-4900

or Ted at 713-721-8960

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

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