

News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

February/March 2010



Work continues on the Bayou City & Gulf! See Page 4

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Ted Davis, President

First, welcome to our newest club member, Harvey Stalarow!

Good news: The next member to have us over to visit their layout has been selected. We will be going to Rick Townsend's on Saturday, March 27, at 10:00 a.m. Anyone interested in car pooling please meet at Papa Ben's no later than 9:30 a.m. Check your membership roster for the address.



A scene on Rick Townsend's layout

Steve Lancaster continues to build turnkey layouts. He will be sharing his insights by way of *The Orderboard* as they are completed.

While many members went to the Greater Houston Train Show, it seemed only a few wanted to help man our table. Overall maybe it was not exciting enough! I think that next time we need to jazz it up. My ideas toward that end are to include both story boards plus our T-Track modules. How about a scale car display to demonstrate the differences between scales or a copy of the January 1995 model magazine with the two-page spread which explains the difference? I was a little disappointed that more people did not wear their new club shirt, maybe they were afraid to stand out "N" the crowd!

On the plus side, we handed out all 50 of the deluxe BC&G 2010 calendars. The newsletter was also popular as most of them were given away as well. Two members renewed their membership dues at the show. I believe this to be fewer than in years past.

In other news, we are going to place a large group order for TrainCat etched brass kits with Papa Ben's. Check out TrainCat's offerings on their web site at <http://traincat2.com>. If you want to get in on the order, be sure to email the kit numbers, descriptions and quantities you want to order to tedjr1@swbell.net no later than March 19.

I am hoping to enlist some out-of-town members to write a review of the hobby in their area to be featured in *The Orderboard*. This could include a list of shops, clubs, shows and museums.

Now that we are in the month of March we can turn our attention from renewals to recruitment of new members. Because of this change of focus, we will publish a revised member roster soon. I would like everyone who knows someone with an interest in trains to bring them to the club layout or a meeting. If you think you don't know anyone who "still plays with trains" consider putting in extra effort when you are at the layout. Take the time to explain about the club and what we are doing to our visitors. If they express an interest in N scale, give them a newsletter and a membership application.

After discussions at the last two meetings I am happy to announce that we made a donation to the Rosenberg Railroad Museum. Our donation level entitles us to a sponsor's paving brick with the club's name on it.

Recently we have switched the club eBay sales from Ted's account to the N'Crowd's. This makes the "accounting" simpler with direct deposit to the club's checking account so Ted will only have to collect reimbursement for the postage.

Congratulations to Jason Smith for having his layout featured in the March-April issue of *N Scale Railroading* magazine. I counted 14 pages plus the cover! Gordon Bliss gets credit for taking the superb photos. To top this off, Gordon's layout is scheduled to be featured in the May-June issue of the same magazine.

Finally, February and March birthday wishes go to Hugh and... wait for it... Ted!



Next N'Crowd Meeting: 7 p.m. Wednesday, March 17

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

Houston N'Crowd Membership Meeting Report February 17, 2010 Prepared by Rick Gonzalez, Secretary

Door Prizes and Missing Member

- Tom Wayburn won a Comanche & Indian Gap boxcar. Rick Gonzalez and Steve Lancaster won club patches.
- Missing member call made to Steve Redd.

President's Report

- Train show this Saturday. Ted Davis will be manning our information table. Tom Marsh will give a T-TRAK clinic.
- eBay sales - Ted will begin using the club's eBay sales account as opposed to his own. Lots of our cars are on eBay right now being sold by others.
- We still have some club shirts available

Vice President's Report

- Steve has Friday off and will spend it at the clubhouse working on our layout. He somehow managed to get two days in a row off!

Treasurer's Report

- As of January 29 we had \$14,276.99. In January, we deposited ~\$163 and spent ~\$298.

Secretary's Report

- Thanks to Kirk Poorman for taking the meeting minutes last month.
- 15 members present for today's meeting.
- We've had 29 renewals or new members so far for this year. Last year we ended up with 43 members.

Layout Master's Report

- The layout is moving along. One of our fellow members has volunteered to make the switch boards if the Club provides supplies.
- The layout has some areas that need volunteers to scenic. Any volunteers?
- Any suggestions for industries for our sidings?

New Business

- The Houston Railroad Museum will open for the season on April 3 and will have the 2nd Annual Railroad Swap Meet and Bluegrass Festival on April 10. For the price of admission, you can set up a table and sell your excess trains.
- The Railroad Museum also signed a contract with the George R. Brown Convention Center for the Big Texas Train Show on October 16-17, 2010.
- Would the Club be interested in an outing to the Houston Railroad Museum? Some interest expressed.

Old Business

- Ray Byer says that the Lone Star Region has some N scale cars that they want to get rid of. Is the Club interested? They are looking at selling them very, very cheaply.
- April 3 will see another Flatonia train day.
- In late April or early May, Division 8 will have a Chili Cookoff in Alvin at the Santa Fe depot.
- Some interest was expressed by the Club to sponsor some of the local railroad museums. For \$100, the Rosenberg Railroad Museum will carve our name into a paving stone.
- The Union Pacific steam locomotive No. 844 will be passing through Houston in April on the way to Harlingen. No details yet.
- Gordon Bliss had some pictures of his layout that he showed to the membership.
- Motion to adjourn passed at 8:17 p.m.

Members in attendance:

1. Rick Gonzalez
2. Tom Marsh
3. Gordon Bliss
4. Tom Wayburn
5. Vern Burnett
6. Frank Wyatt
7. Corbett Legg
8. Kirk Poorman
9. Eddie Aycock
10. Terry Hooks
11. Charlie Aselin
12. Steven Lancaster
13. Ray Byer
14. Ted Davis
15. Dominic Valdez and Train Dog!!

BC&G

BAYOU CITY & GULF

Work continues on the Bayou City & Gulf!

Here are photos of the latest progress. If you haven't been to Papa Ben's to inspect the railroad lately, you should head over. Bring a train to run!

Photos by Tom Marsh



Charlie Aselin, Steve Redd and Ray Byer were working on the railroad in January and February.





Above, a Santa Fe FP45 trundles past scenery in various stages of completion.

Below left, Tom Wayburn tackles a track repair job. At right, backdrops, benchwork and scenery are moving apace.



Easy EOT flasher

by Hugh Boyd

Those of you who have visited my layout know I'm not heavy on scenery but rather obsessed with simple electrical things. My latest endeavor - a flashing red end-of-train (EOT) device.

A number of very realistic products are available for the HO modeler, but the selection for N scalers is somewhat limited and the available products generally depend on power pick-up from the tracks. I've had only so-so success in this department, so I turned to battery operation. Now the challenge became the on/off switch.

My research took me to magnetically operated reed switches. I found a suitable reed switch on the web and picked up an 8mm magnet from my local hardware store. I also searched around for a 2mm flashing red LED and battery holder, and an appropriate battery.

In my experimentation, I found I could get satisfactory operation with the reed switch set longitudinally under a hopper car in the recess between the two long hopper troughs. The reed switch I selected acted like a SPDT switch but it only had two wires. It worked one way, but not the other, so the connection really was a no-brainer.

I connected the switch to two 0-80 machine screws that I had previously fitted through the car floor. These were there as a reminder of an unsuccessful attempt to pick up track power to report block occupancy to my dispatcher's panel. I drilled a hole through the lower part of the car's end panel to provide a friction fit for the LED. I soldered thin wires to the LED (no resistor required) and to the battery holder and placed these over the inside ends of the 0-80 machine screws and locked the wires down with nuts. I pushed the LED into position and glued the reed switch in place.

I fitted the battery into the holder and placed everything in the car and replaced the coal load. I removed a length of Kato Unitrack and drilled a hole to accommodate the 8mm magnet between the rails. Then I restored the track just like it was before. Later, I removed the steel weights inside the car because they seemed to interfere with the precise placement of the car over the

magnet. Now came the start-up tests: My little project worked!

When the car is parked over the magnet, the magnet pulls the reed switch to the open position and the flasher is idle. When the locomotive pulls the car away from the magnet, the reed switch relaxes to the normally closed position and the flasher starts, only to stop again when the car is returned to its parking position over the magnet.

What I did is not really original, but I had a lot of fun researching and experimenting for this little project. That said, this exercise is about the limit of miniaturization for me. But I do have five coal trains and pretty soon all will have EOT flashers.

Here's the material list:

- 2mm red flashing LED available from Led-Switch.com (Gotta have PayPal)
- CR 1220 coin type battery holder available from microbattery.com
- LR1130 1.5V alkaline coin battery x 2 available from microbattery.com or BR1225 3V lithium coin battery x 1 available from EPO. The single 3V battery by itself is a little loose in the holder so I slid in a 3/8-in. washer. I also went the two 1.5V battery route.
- GC Electronics 35-752 SPDT magnetically operated reed switch available from jameco.com.
- 8mm Super Magnets available from Bering's Hardware.



My BNSF coal train has resumed its journey to a distant power plant. The last car has just cleared the in-track magnet allowing the reed switch to relax and turn on the flashing red EOT device. Photo by Hugh Boyd

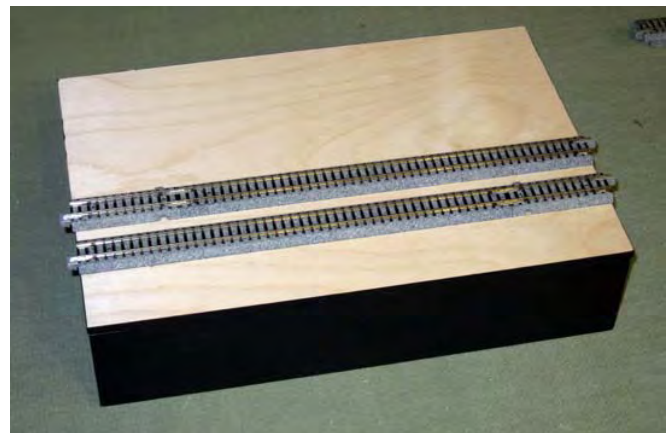
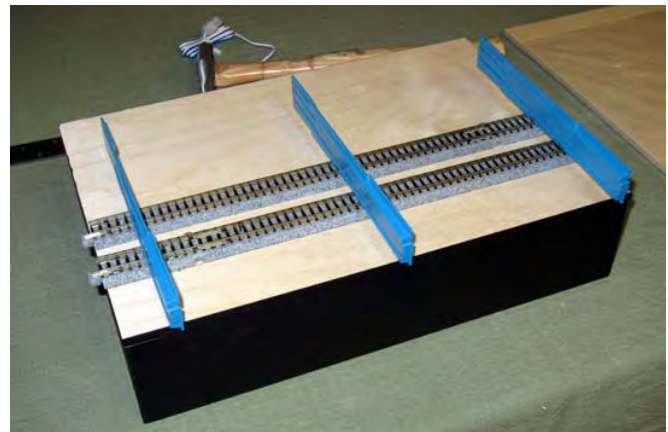
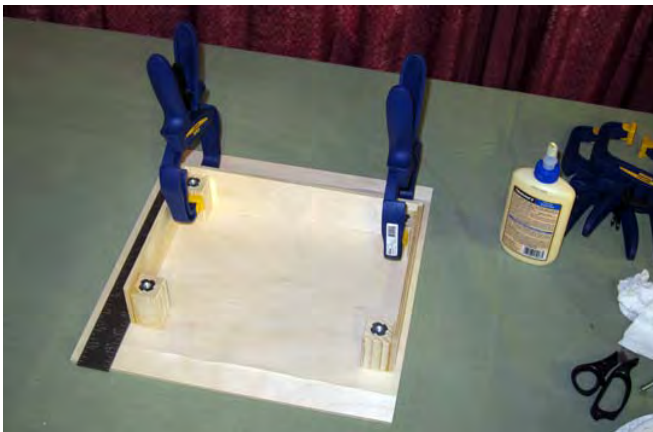


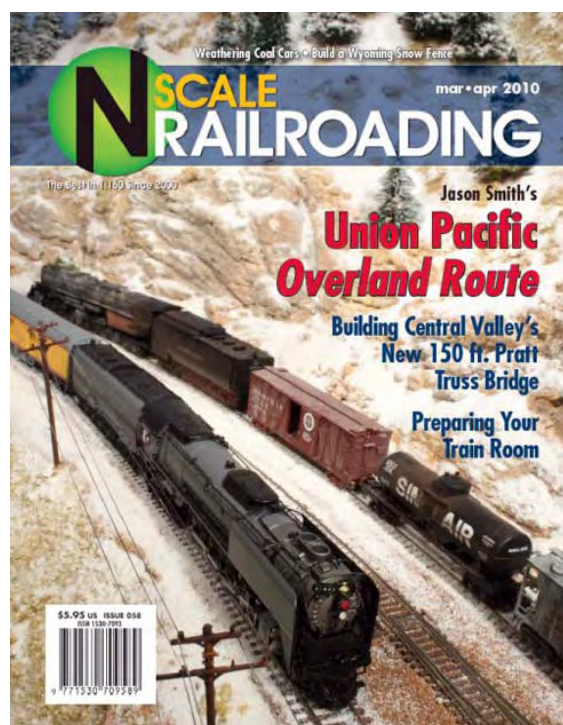
T-TRAK fast track

by Tom Marsh

Want to get into T-TRAK, fast? Order a kit (above) and you'll be up and running in no time! Check out www.t-trak.org for information.

It really is this easy. Go from kit to ready-to-scenic in two short evenings: The longest part is letting the glue and paint dry.





If you haven't seen it yet, go get a copy! N'Crowd member Jason Smith's UP-themed layout is featured in the March-April issue of N Scale Railroading, with photos by our own Gordon Bliss.



Coming soon! Register today!

The National N-Scale Convention
Sugar Land, Texas June 22-26, 2010
www.nationalscaleconvention.com

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TIME TABLE

March 17

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
 Papa Ben's Train Place

April 3

Flatonia Railroad Pavilion Party

April 10

Houston Railroad Museum Bluegrass by the Tracks Railfair

April 21

N'Crowd Membership Meeting
 Papa Ben's Train Place

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

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

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www.houstonNcrowd.org

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