



News from Houston N'Crowd



May/June 2013

THE ORDERBOARD



Having our cake and eating it, too!

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Gordon Bliss, President

Do something N!

Summer is here as we roll into May and have more outdoor stuff to do like mowing the yard! So the theme this month is: What train-related stuff are you going to do?

Work always need to be done on the club layout, or a building project could be taken home and brought back when done. Or consider a project

at a home layout or on a friend's layout, or maybe a trip. Eddie Aycock and I just got back from a great trip to Denver that will be featured as a meeting clinic. I will be heading to the 2013 National N Scale Convention in Milwaukee this summer and meeting up with an Australian N-scale mate.

So I put it to you, "What are you going to do?"

Houston N'Crowd Membership Meeting Report March 20, 2013

Meeting called to order at 7:06 p.m.

One new member attending - Bill Moss; 15 members present.

Al Hague and Gordon Bliss started with a history of the N'Crowd from the first meeting held March 15, 1978. See the related article in this issue.

The club's 35th anniversary was celebrated on Saturday, March 16. VP Richard Bartlett made chili and President Gordon Bliss brought cake and drinks. Four trains were running on the BC&G at the same time with a total of 145 cars!

Vice President's Report: Richard reported that 18 people have signed up for the Texas State Railroad trip on April 13. Two more are needed to get a 10 percent discount.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Eddie Aycock reported that the club has \$11,775 in the bank. The CD is worth \$4,804.

Door prizes: This month's door prizes were won by Amy Wayburn and apparently lucky new member Bill Moss.

New Business: Layout Master Al Hague reported on the loco roster. Five engines were missing, but Joe Kingsberry reported that he has three engines that he is painting in a patch paint job.

Two engines were donated. Richard made a motion to order decoders. Al seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Al talked about the track diagram made by Tom Wayburn. The diagram will be broken into segments. Al will send out an email to ask for help on the layout, including track, electrical and scenery work. Lend a hand and practice your modeling skills at the same time!



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
May 15 / June 19 / July 18 / August 21

BC&G Operating Sessions:
Wednesday, June 5 / Saturday, July 6

Most activities take place at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. Membership meetings start at 7 p.m. Saturday operating sessions start at 5 p.m. Wednesday operating sessions start at 7 p.m.

Al talked about a \$35 small vacuum to use for cleaning the layout. Gordon made motion to buy one, and Richard seconded. The motion passed.

Gordon has posted six videos on YouTube, including five featuring the BC&G. Eddie talked about the upcoming BC&G Op session on Wednesday, April 3.

Richard made a motion to adjourn. Gordon seconded. The meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

Houston N'Crowd Membership Meeting Report April 17, 2013

The meeting was called to order at 7:04 p.m. Fifteen members were present: Gordon Bliss, Richard Bartlett, Al Hauge, Ray Byer, Charlie Aselin, Dan Gutierrez, Dejan Suskancevic, Joseph Kingsberry, Tom and Amy Wayburn, Eddie Adcock, Ted Davis, Steven Lancaster, Samuel Townsel and Dominic Valdez.

VP Richard Bartlett presented a clinic on LED lighting before the business meeting started.

President Gordon Bliss welcomed everyone.

Vice President's Report: The Texas State Rail-

road trip was a success; 27 people attended and had a good time. Twelve Ford Model As showed up from Austin. After the shop tour at Rusk, some people were almost left behind. At Palestine, the group toured T&P 2-10-2 No. 610, T&P 4-6-0 No. 316 (still warm) and a T&P business car.

Treasurer's Report: The club has \$11,598 in the checking account and \$4,804 in the CD.

New Business: Layout Master Al Hauge noted that the club engine roster had been updated, and he will check into the car inventory. He reviewed work needed on sections of the layout and asked for volunteers.

Richard showed pictures from his fishing trip.

Old business: The April Op session was cancelled due to not enough people. There will be no Op session in May as both Eddie and Gordon will be out of town operating elsewhere! Next Op session will be Wednesday, June 5.

Members noted we have a short circuit and a turnout problem in Austin, and that train shows are running on cable channel RFTV.

The meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m. and we headed to the layout room.



A lashup you can model: Amtrak heritage unit No. 184 leads the eastbound Sunset Limited out of Houston on Saturday, April 21, 2013. The "Phase IV" unit recently made at least two trips through Houston on the Sunset Limited. Photo by Tom Marsh

N'Crowd: 35 Years of fun

by Gordon Bliss and Al Hague

Members Al Hague and Gordon Bliss presented this history of the Houston N'Crowd Model Railroad Society at the March 2013 membership meeting. Our club's initial meeting was held March 15, 1978, but the first seeds were planted the year before, as Gordon and Al recount here.

1977

At the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Jamboree, Greg Johnson puts out a notebook, asking anyone interested in starting an NTRAK club to sign up.

1978

On March 15, 1978, 17 people attend the first meeting of what will become the Houston N'Crowd Model Railroad Society. Club members start building NTRAK modules at Greg's valve warehouse in South Houston. We set up and run our first layout at warehouse.

1979

Our first public show is at the San Jac Jamboree, held at the Royal Coach Inn; we set up a 24-ft. by 32-ft. NTRAK layout. Member Don Bozman builds the Granite Falls module (now mounted over his dispatcher's panel). He takes the module to the NMRA national convention in Calgary, Canada, and wins the Con-Cor award. Don and crew start work on the Houston Yard modules, first at Greg's warehouse then at Don's home. Loren Nuefeld builds a model of Houston Union Station. The club is asked to set up at the Lone Star Region NMRA convention in New Orleans; we had the only running layout set up at the show. The club's first special run cars, Kato tank cars imported by Con-Cor, arrive in September. We produced 320 cars, 260 in black for general sale, and 60 in dark blue for club members only. Members paid just over cost, or about \$3 per car. Today, black cars go for \$25 and dark blue for \$50.



1980

The club is asked to set up and run the NTRAK layout at the NMRA convention in Orlando, Fla., since there is no club in the area. We rent a box truck to haul our modules to Florida. Ben Pearlman wins the Con-Cor award with his roundhouse corner module. Back home, Foley's hires the N'Crowd to set up in the downtown store from Thanksgiving to Christmas, and run trains during lunch, evenings and on weekends. Ron

Miller builds an extended corner module on which the red line bypass goes into a tunnel and spirals down three loops and back up three loops. Entire 20 car coal trains disappear and then reappear; the crowds go wild!



1981

The club goes to the NMRA convention in San Mateo, Calif. Phil and Gordon Bliss carry five modules and Al Hague, Bob Standley, along with Tom Cotton from Dallas, haul five others. Gordon falls asleep near Barstow and wrecks the truck, luckily not damaging any of the modules. Club coins the term "The Bliss Brothers Event". N'Crowd helps set up the largest NTRAK layout ever to date in one evening! Jim FitzGerald asks the N'Crowd to take over the set up and operation of the layout. With walkie-talkies we run a total of 25 trains at one time! The club wins the Con-Cor award at San Mateo with our Houston Yard module. Don Bozman starts his HO railroad at home, invites the N'Crowd over for a "canyon raising" party. Club sets up modules at Lakewood Country Club for Christmas.

1982

Ideas start floating around for an N scale only convention! The club runs its second special run, a Con-Cor three car set with a Houston Belt & Terminal boxcar, Texas Mexican Railway boxcar and a Texas & New Orleans open hopper car. The club is hired to rebuild the HO display layout inside the Galveston Railroad museum. Greg Johnson and Al Hague head up the project, and the club works for three months on weekends to complete it. Several club members take modules to the Kansas City NMRA convention.

1983

Houston N'Crowd hosts the first ever National N Scale convention on August 11-14, and the big hit starts a trend! Greg Johnson chairs the event, which attracts over 250 attendees. Key Models gives away five brass locomotives. Jim FitzGerald brings his special LONG train layout, but due to the size of the ballroom Jim runs ONLY 959 CARS! This sets a new world record. Our third special run is a rerun of the three Con-Cor cars (HB&T/Tex Mex/T&NO). We also run a Galveston Wharves boxcar, a Moscow Camden & San Augustine boxcar and a smooth side blue passenger car named *Houston*.

1984

The club sets up at every local show over the next ten years: San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Jamboree, GATS, Memorial City and Pasadena Shows.

**1985**

Ben Pearlman opens a new video production studio at the Lakes of 610, and N'Crowd is offered a room above the garage. Our first meeting takes place June 8 at the new, 2,000 sq. ft. club house. The club orders Atlas coal cars in black with yellow ends and dimensional data only.

1986

The club produces more Atlas dim-data only cars, including covered and center flow hoppers (gray and tuscan). The club also places an order for a Houston Belt & Terminal business car and a re-run of the Kato tank cars in white. Both runs eventually are cancelled as we cannot get the cars. The first issue of the club newsletter *The Orderboard* is printed in October. The club also hosts the first of many "Mini-Cons" at the clubhouse in November. Don't miss Ben Pearlman and Greg Johnson at the very LIVE auction. Club starts layout of modules at the clubhouse. Our fifth annual pool party is held at Greg's house.

1987

Greg Johnson resigns as president of the N'Crowd due to work conflicts; he not only organized the club, but held the president's office keeping things going for 10 years! The club hosts its second Mini-Con, and sets up a layout at The Galleria in November.

1988

The N'Crowd produces its first Kadee special run car, a Missouri Pacific express boxcar.

**1989**

The club hosts the N-Scale "Come'N of Age" convention at the NMRA Astrorail national convention in Houston. Ben has a leftover LARGE Texas-shape module built for a power company commercial, and the club converts it to a giant NTRAK module. Ben tapes a "Good Morning America" intro that airs the week of the convention. Special runs for the convention are a shrink-wrapped two-pack of Kadee blue boxcars (our first two pack); Atlas Come'N of Age boxcar; Texas State Railroad boxed set with a 2-8-0 steam loco and three passenger cars, a boxcar, express box and caboose. Danny Dotson chairs the event. Charter member Philip Bliss passes away.

**1990**

On March 4, the club rents out the observation-lounge car on the Houston to Galveston *Texas Limited* excursion train and around 30 members ride. Joe Coen wins the contest to name our club railroad with "Bayou City & Gulf". The club hosts its third Mini-Con. "Port City" is added to the club layout on the end of Houston yard. Loren Neufeld builds a 34 story building from plaster after seeing George Selios build a 28 story HO building.

1991

The club purchases 200 Kadee undecorated cars and has BC&G decals made. A special run Houston & Texas Central boxcar is produced.

**1992**

The club starts work on its next national convention. A special run of Galveston Houston & Henderson wood reefers is produced. Joe Coen wins the Con-Cor award with his cement plant module at the NMRA national convention in Tulsa, Okla. This makes four Con-Cor awards for the club and its members!

1993

Houston N'Crowd hosts the national NTRAK convention "Mak'N Traks to Houston" June 23-27, with 289 attendees. Ralph Roddy chairs the event. Special run convention cars include a Micro-Trains Mak'N Traks to Houston boxcar and MDC Roundhouse two-pack of modern tank cars lettered for NASA featuring "worm" and "meatball" logos. Lamar Williams retires and makes a large donation to the N'Crowd; The club runs three different auctions: silent, live and collector. The club does very well with the convention and proceeds help pay for stairs on the club building.

**1995**

The N'Crowd sets up at the Great American Train Show at the George R Brown Convention Center in Houston.

1996

A rough year for the club, with lots of politics. Ben is offered a cable TV show, and needs our space over the studio garage, so we move out of the clubroom and tear down the newly-started permanent layout after 10 years in the space. The club sets up at Almeda Mall and is open every Saturday. Loren Neufeld builds the Jurassic Park and Grimy Gulch modules.

1997

The club continues to open every Saturday at Almeda mall. A special run bathtub coal car in UFIX black with orange end is produced for the club by DeLuxe Innovations.

1998

The club's 20th anniversary special run cars are two Micro-Trains tank cars, black for general sale and dark blue for the club members. In April, the club moves out of the mall location and is homeless again.

**1999**

The club produces a special run Comanche & Indian Gap steel reefer.

2000

This year sees a two-pack of special run boxcars in yellow and green lettered for International & Great Northern.

**2001**

Special run two-pack this year features San Antonio & Aransas Pass boxcars in green and black.

2002

In January, the club buys a DCC system. Ben Pearlman opens Papa Ben's Train Place in June and again offers the N'Crowd a club room upstairs. The club sets up at its last two modular show layouts, one at the Astrohall and the other at the Pasadena Convention Center.

**2003**

N'Crowd hosts the 20th national N Scale convention "N to the Future", attracting just under 200 attendees. Marty Giesecke chairs the event. Special run Micro-Trains convention cars are a gray N'Crowd box car (included in every registration packet), a 60-ft. N to the Future "moon" boxcar and a NASA tank car with "meatball" logo. Kato donates business cars lettered *Schaumburg* for every packet. The club orders 70 Kato business cars for Bayou City & Gulf named *Houston*; these are given to convention helpers. A group photo of most of the original members is taken. The club sets up modules at Papa Ben's Train Place in the new clubroom. Early member Dale Farney passes away.

2004

A permanent layout committee is established. Early member Bob "Captain Video" Sunderland passes away.

2005

Early member Jimmy Fontenot wins the “hospital layout” raffle. Early member Bob Standley passes away. In November, the club hosts an open house and runs the first train on a temporary loop on the new layout.

**2006**

In January, Gordon hosts a helix cutting party for the club layout. Work progresses on the BC&G. In June, charter member “Papa” Ben Pearlman passes away unexpectedly, having served 28 years as club treasurer and having provided clubhouse space twice.

2007

Work progresses on the BC&G, which is now open every Saturday to the public from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.. The club names the major display town Bennett in honor of Papa Ben. Ben’s brother Allyn Pearlman takes over the store. Early member Ralph Roddy passes away.

**2008**

On March 15, the Houston N’Crowd celebrates 30 years! Irene Pearlman decides to sell the building housing the shop and the club, and Allyn moves the store to its present location. Allyn offers space to the club, so N’Crowd dismantles the BC&G layout and recycles as much as possible at the new location, which opens Dec. 12. Hurricane Ike destroys the Galveston display layout.

2009

Work progresses on the new BC&G layout. In June, Bennett is in place with plexiglass protection and lighting in the main part of the store. On August 19 the new BC&G opens for service with a 12-car passenger special.

2010

The N Scale Collector national convention is held in

suburban Sugar Land in June. Work continues on the layout, and in August the club buys RailOP software to support operations on the BC&G.

2011

Houston N’Crowd hosts a Boy Scout troop to help with the Railroading Merit Badge program. Gordon presents a “history of the railroads clinic” for the troop. In May, a special run BC&G yellow modern boxcar is produced. Vince Walker paints four “new” BC&G locomotives, which roll out in June. On July 6 the club starts operations on the BC&G, followed on July 20 with a golden spike ceremony marking completion of the mainline. Robert “Doc” Moore makes a real gold spike in N scale, which charter member Gordon Bliss drives in the main at Bennett. Two BC&G locos meet pilot to pilot to mark the big event. In September, club member Steve Lancaster is contracted to build an O scale layout in the restaurant Tookies, which was damaged during Hurricane Ike. Later in the year Steve also rebuilds our Houston Union Station model.

**2012**

Vince Walker paints the BC&G Alco PA locomotives in a blue and gray passenger paint scheme. At the March operating session, Gordon debuts *The Bluebonnet*, the BC&G’s new six-car lightweight passenger train. *The Dome Express*, a six-car heavyweight passenger train debuts at the next session. Unfortunately, that session is cancelled due to the “Great Bam Bam Flood” when water pours down from the martial arts academy above the store. Work continues on the BC&G layout.

**2013**

On March 16, the N’Crowd Model Railroad Society celebrates 35 years of fun and friendship! Is everyone ready for another 35?

LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Not exactly historic pix: The pictures that accompany this issue's N'Crowd history article are the images we've used over the past several years to spotlight the N'Crowd meeting notices in the newsletter. While I would have liked to use photos from the club's more distant past, we don't have a digital archive of old photos.

Is anyone willing to tackle the job of scanning some of the older photos and slides various people have? If so, let us know and we will start gathering them for you.

Time and tide (and the N'Crowd) wait for no man: This issue took much longer than expected to get to you. In fact, the day of the May membership meeting, your editor stopped by Papa Ben's to check out the new magazines, not realizing that he did not have the one more week (and weekend) he thought he had to get the newsletter published before said meeting! With luck, he'll do better with the next issue, and maybe will even figure out on what day the membership meeting will take place.

Museum on the move: Everyone probably knows that the Houston Railroad Museum is moving its equipment to storage. It appears that the big move out Commerce Ave. near downtown will take place in June. We will try to keep everyone posted as to the date.

Houston N'Crowd 2013 Officers and Volunteers

President	Gordon Bliss
Vice President	Richard Bartlett
Secretary	Harvey Stalarow
Treasurer	Eddie Aycock
Board Member (2013)	Joe Kingsberry
Board Member (2014)	Ray Byer
Board Member (2015)	Justin Corder
Editor & Webmaster	Tom Marsh



TIME TABLE 2013

Note: No BC&G Operating Session in May

May 11
National Train Day

Texas State Railroad Photographers Special,
featuring 4-6-0 No. 316

May 15
N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's
Train Place, 7 p.m.

May 29 - June 2
NMRA Lone Star Region Convention, Irving, Texas

June 5
Wednesday BC&G Operating Session, 7 p.m.

June 19
N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's
Train Place, 7 p.m.

June 26-30
N-Scale Enthusiast National Convention,
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

July 6
Saturday BC&G Operating Session, 5 p.m.

July 14-20
NMRA National Convention, Atlanta, Georgia

July 17
N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's
Train Place, 7 p.m.

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

Tom Marsh, Editor

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Send newsletter contributions to:
tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

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