



News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

November/December 2013



New power for the BC&G

The Bayou City & Gulf Railroad has taken delivery of several six-axle locomotives from the Joe Kingsberry Paint Shop. In addition to the General Electric C44-9W pictured here on its first day on the property, two Electro-Motive SD60s have joined the roster.

The locomotives will be available for inspection by N'Crowd members at the November 20 membership meeting. Be sure to stop by and check out the latest BC&G power!

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Gordon Bliss, President

Time to vote - and volunteer!

Elections are here! Please try to attend the November meeting and vote; it is important to the club, and as a club member it is your duty.

Speaking of duty, why are you in this club? Is it because you like trains, maybe N-scale trains? If so, have you run a train on the club layout? Have you done so lately? If not, is it because there are problems with the layout? What have you done to work on or to maintain the layout?

These are questions that need to be asked, because what I see are the same four or five people doing all the work and running all the trains on Saturdays - as required by our agreement with Papa Ben's in return for the layout space.

Perhaps you don't have a certain skill set. If so, let the club officers know and we will hold a clinic on that subject. I have been in this club since the beginning and I was only 13 years old. I did not know how to do half the stuff on the railroad but I was willing to learn, and that's what a club is. Today our lives are very hectic and fast-paced, and sometimes we do not have a lot of spare time, but I hope you can spare some time for your club.

That said, the layout has had a few problems of late. Ray Byer and I have been trying to resolve them; we have taken care of a few, but indicators are that we have some more to fix. What we have found are wiring mistakes and lots of electrical "patch" jobs, some of which were completed incorrectly. For example, we have found the wrong color wire has been used in some places, and then the wire is hooked to

the wrong buss/feed, creating a new problem. That means one of us has to crawl around under the layout searching for the problem, and there is a lot of stuff under the layout!

What I will suggest at the next meeting is formation of an Electrical Committee that will include Ray, myself and another volunteer (how about you?), and the committee will approve any electrical work before it is done.

Speaking of stuff under the layout, we need to address some of the clutter and throw away things that we do not need. Remember, our Open House for National Model Railroad Month is set for Nov. 30 and Dec. 1, and I challenge each of you to be at Papa Ben's on either day and run some trains on the layout! We'll be signing people up for the open house at the November 20 meeting, and we hope to see you all!

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 Coder
Editor & Webmaster	Tom Marsh



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
November 20 / December 18 / January 15

BC&G Operating Sessions:
Wednesday, February 5 / Saturday, March 1

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.



Funds have been approved for two major projects on the Bayou City & Gulf. Work is underway on the new refinery and replacement of the Kato track and switches in the nearby staging yard.

**Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
August 21, 2013
Prepared by Harvey Stalarow - Secretary**

Clinic: Tom Marsh showed photos and talked about the NMRA national convention in Atlanta.

The meeting was called to order at 7:45 p.m.

President's Report: Nothing to report

Vice President's Report: Nothing to report

Secretary's Report: 18 members in attendance; two door prizes given out.

Treasurer's Report: \$11,088.49 in checking and \$4,804.08 in the CD.

Old Business: Tom Marsh discussed the railroad museum's upcoming move. President Gordon Bliss talked about the Dallas Big Boy moving out of Fair Park; it is in a yard. The move will be finished Sunday. Vice President Richard Bartlett talked about the Texas State Railroad, where he is building a display layout. He reported that trees have been donated for the layout.

Gordon reminded members to note problems on the layout so that they can be resolved.

New members were voted in. A motion was made and passed to spend \$500 to rebuild the staging area. A motion was made and passed to spend \$750 to build the refinery area.

New Business: No operating sessions until October. Gordon reminded the members to leave a train in Bennett after running trains on the layout.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:52.

**Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
September 18, 2013
Prepared by Harvey Stalarow - Secretary**

Clinic: Al Hague demonstrated engine lubrication techniques.

The meeting was called to order at 7:58 p.m.

President's Report: President Gordon Bliss replaced the turnout at Bennet. The holiday party is tentatively scheduled for Dec. 14 at the Walker's home.

Vice President's Report: VP Richard Bartlett is working on the mill pond for the Texas State Railroad.

Secretary's Report: 12 members in attendance; three door prizes given out.

Continued on next page

Treasurer's Report: \$11,158.49 in checking and \$4,804.08 in the CD.

Old Business: Tom Marsh discussed the railroad museum's upcoming move; the HB&T engine requires brake repairs. Gordon reported that the Big Boy is now in Frisco.

New Business: A motion to purchase track and turnouts from Richard was made and passed. The upcoming election of officers was discussed.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10

**Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
October 16, 2013
Prepared by Harvey Stalarow - Secretary**

Clinic: Dejan Suskavcevic showed photos of his trip to Italy and some of the trains he rode.

The meeting was called to order at 7:17 p.m.

President's Report: No report.

Vice President's Report: Contrary to some reports,

the Texas State Railroad is not shutting down; it is closing in January and February for maintenance.

Secretary's Report: 17 members in attendance; three door prizes given out.

Treasurer's Report: \$11,158.49 in checking and \$4,804.08 in the CD.

Old Business: The upcoming election was discussed. The following nominations were made:
President - Vince Walker
Vice President - Richard Bartlett, Samuel Townsel
Treasurer - Eddie Aycock
Secretary - Tom Marsh, James Senneff, Tom Wayburn, Justin Coder
Board Member (2016) - James Senneff, Harvey Stalarow, Al Hague, Justin Coder

New Business: Member participation in running trains on Saturday was discussed. A sign-up sheet will be put together for running trains on Saturday. We are required to run trains as a condition of using the space. The upcoming open house was discussed. Joe Kingsberry is painting three BC&G locomotives. Tom Marsh will look into the N'Crowd having a table at the World's Greatest Hobby show in January. Tom also

discussed the railroad museum move. The HB&T engine is still having a problem with its brakes. Tom Wayburn will maintain a railroad events wiki calendar.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

In addition to the changes in the refinery and staging areas, Gordon Bliss and Ray Byer have been tackling some electrical issues. At left, Gordon has "assumed the position" for this important work.

Everyone is requested to report electrical and track issues as soon as they arise, so these problems can be addressed in a timely manner.



The Rock Springs falls

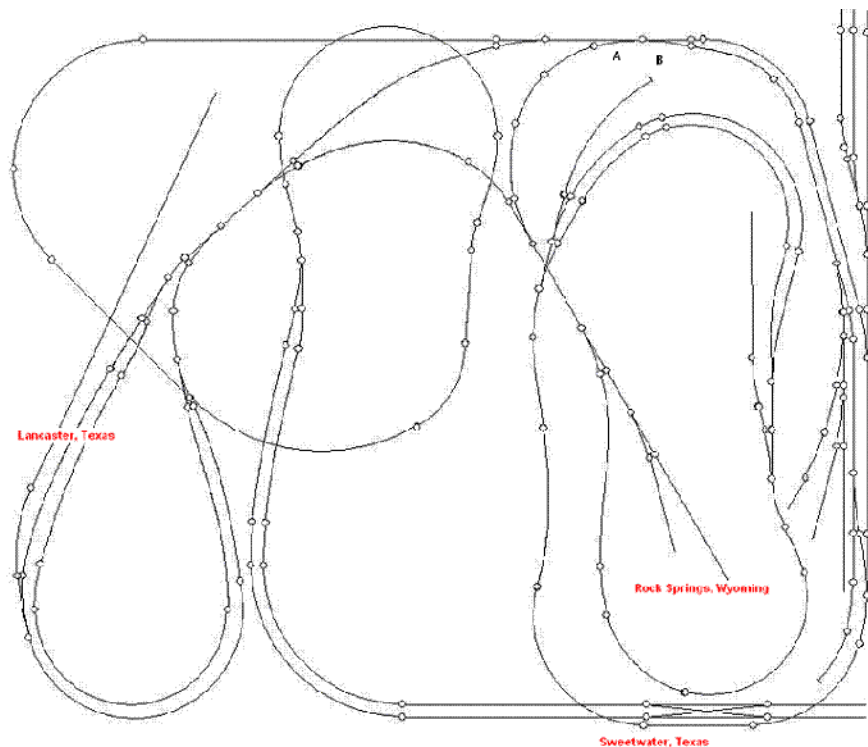
by Tom Wayburn

About five years ago, I asked long-time N' Crowd member Loren Neufeld to advise me how to proceed with the 3-ft. by 6-ft. model railroad I had been working on in a desultory fashion for several years. He said it was OK (just OK) except for the weird colors. When I confessed that I was color blind, he advised me to stop by the N' Crowd layout at the old South Blvd. location and ask for help.

As it happens, Steve Lancaster was hard at work on the old BC&G, and when I explained my difficulty, he generously agreed to help. For that reason, and because he initiated work on the Southern Division of the Rock Springs & Sweetwater County Railroad, the name was changed to Rock Springs & Lancaster County Railroad. This was just after Hurricane Ike hit Houston in September 2008.

Steve scratchbuilt the depot at Lancaster, Texas, the county seat of Lancaster County near the Wyoming-Texas border in our fictional world. In the photo at right above, taken by Amy Wayburn, Steve is a giant presence looming over Sweetwater, Texas, the highest elevation served by a small standard-gauge railroad with big mountains.

The track plan of the Rock Springs & Lancaster County Railroad, with the three major towns labeled, appears at right.



The original Rock Springs & Sweetwater County Railroad that is shown on the N'Crowd website is approximately the right one-third of the diagram. It is based upon Atlas N-scale track plan number N-107, which appears in later editions of Atlas track plan books with a different number. This is the part that “fell”.

The left one-third with Lancaster, Texas, has been recycled by Steve Lancaster. Just before Hurricane Ike, an unknown lady called Papa Ben's with a request for a small, simple portable layout for Texas Children's Hospital. After Hurricane Ike, she could not be located and the original figure-eight layout was developed somewhat beyond what is suitable for children.

The Texas Children's Hospital Module with TCH spelled out in flowers is at top right. Additional photos of the 30-in. by 72-in. layout can be seen at <http://modrr.net/TCH.html>.

The bottom photo shows the central mountain on the transition (middle) module under a sonic sky with a few white clouds. Terry Hooks, who painted the backgrounds for the club's layout, indoctrinated me into the fine art of sky painting. I used his color suggestions: Sonic Sky, Kilz white primer, and the black enamel I used to paint my curb address. The straight edge formed by Sweetwater Creek with the edge of the table has been a source of great irritation and represents an unsolved problem from this perspective.



More photos of the Rock Springs module can be found at <http://modrr.net/rocksprings3.htm>.

Trouble with the two turnouts under the mountain (indicated at A and B in the track plan) precipitated the fall. I found it difficult-to-impossible to stabilize the turnouts on track that began at grade and reached the high point of the track on the Rock Springs module. The turnouts were supported by wood on hydrocal on florist foam on old-fashioned white foam insulation. The turnouts, which were electrically isolated with live frogs and Peco switch machines, necessitating seven wires per turnout, were mounted on nearly the worst possible foundation. I don't know why; it just happened. I began with the idea of replacing all the track on the grade under the mountain and ended up with the decision to replace the whole layout.

After removing the yard tracks in one piece (top photo) and the wood from the legs and frame, I was left with the transition module in good shape (middle photo), with removable mountain removed and the track under the mountain, which was part of the problem, ripped out. I also had the central loop lying in its own dust and debris with the buildings removed, as seen in the bottom photo.

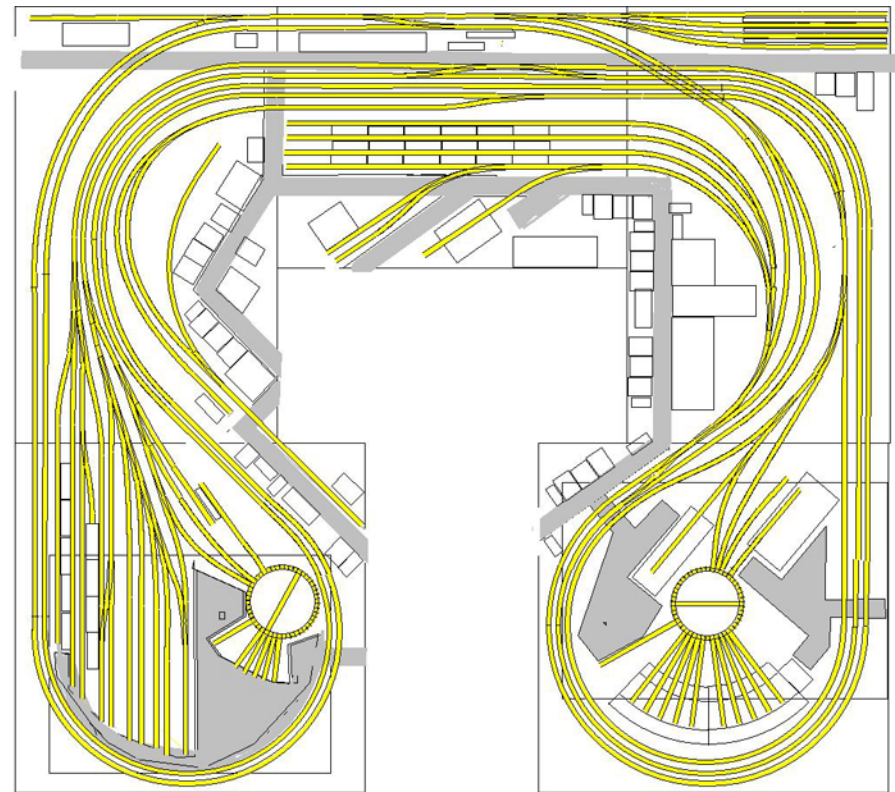
What's next? Even before the fall, I contemplated massive changes in the Rock Springs & Lancaster County, including the replacement of the children's



hospital module with two long ship channel modules with an N-scale supertanker to be modeled by John Hunt of the Northwest Crossing Operating Model Railroad Club.

Unfortunately, the ship channel modules will never grace my home. Therefore, I am free to build (but may never) a 9-ft. by 10-ft. collection of Free-moN modules on removable casters with an inordinate amount of track but numerous operating possibilities. Perhaps it will endure as one of my earliest fantasy model railroads, as I have recently begun to refer to armchair model railroading as “fantasy model railroading”, which I do in earnest just as I would do fantasy baseball, if I did that.

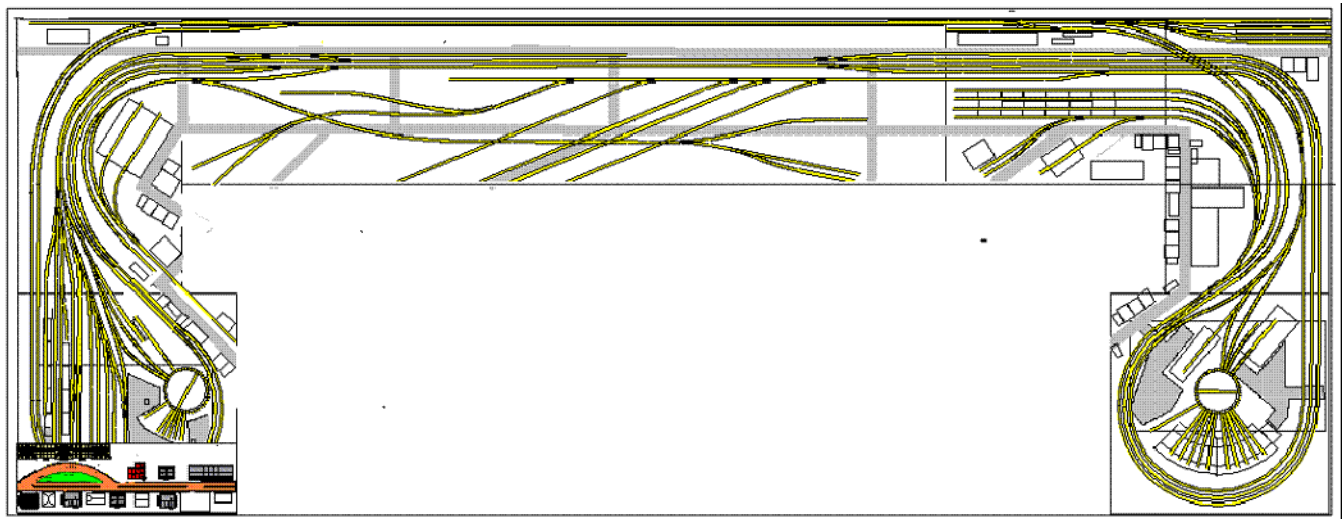
The double-track, twice-around plan is shown at top right. Perhaps a simplified version is achievable, maybe a point-to-



point design with fewer yard tracks and a long stretch of single track with a passing siding.

The plan below is an expanded

version with two long single track runs and potentially many more industries; however, this is way beyond me and must remain pure fantasy.



WANTED!

Your contributions to *The Orderboard*.

As with most aspects of your club, this only works if you participate.

Southern Belle calls on Houston

On a tip from friend Rich Businger, N'Crowd President Gordon Bliss caught the Kansas City Southern business train at the Houston Amtrak station on Nov. 16. Gordon notes, "Looks like a Kato train straight out of the box, a pretty and perfectly matched train!"

Gordon took these photos and recorded the consist. Powering the train was the KCS A-B-A F-unit set:

F7A *Shreveport*
F7B *Pittsburg*
F7A *Meridian*

The consist included 11 cars:

Baggage car *Heavener*
Power car *St. Louis*
Crew dormitory *Dallas*
Sleeping car *Veracruz*
Sleeping car *San Luis Potosi*
Sleeping car *Lazaro Cardenas*
Dining car *Lake Charles*
Conference car *Jackson*
Lounge/dance car *Laredo*
Dome lounge *Kansas City*
Inspection car *Arthur E. Stilwell*



BC&G business car *Houston* spotted on NKP

Your editor spotted BC&G business car *Houston* on the house track at the freight depot in John Pearce's Nickel Plate Road yard at the recent

New Braunfels fall train show. John is a member of the AustNtrak club, which had one of the largest modular layouts at the Nov. 16-17 show.

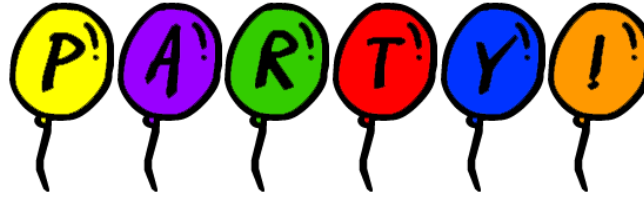


METRORail tests new light rail cars

On Oct. 25, new METRORail light rail cars were making test runs over elevated portions of the new Red Line extension north of downtown Houston. These photos were taken at and near the Burnett Transit Center, the only elevated station planned for the Red Line. The line crosses UP's former SP mainline where the massive SP Hardy Street Shops sat. All of the shop buildings have been razed, and most of the property not set aside for use by METRO for parking at the Burnett Transit Center is for sale. *Photos by Tom Marsh*



This is your invitation to



It's time for our annual holiday bash!

This year, thanks again to the generosity of long-time member Vince Walker and his understanding wife, we will be gathering at the Walker residence for our holiday party on Saturday, Dec. 14. Plan to arrive between 6:30 and 7 p.m. to maximize your fun!

Somehow Vince has convinced his wife Ingrid that they will do most of the work. All they ask is we provide an approximate head count.

Please send an email with your party head count to info@houstonNcrowd.org or call 281-468-3276 with the information. You can take the opportunity to update your birthdays (month and day) and other contact information for 2014 as well.

Ingrid will send out an "e-vite" with more information as the date approaches. The Walkers' address is 2208 Sandlebrook St., Pearland 77584.

And don't forget, this is the venue for the **Combat Gift Exchange!** Railroaders who want to participate should bring a wrapped gift valued around \$10 to \$15. Non-rails should bring a similar value gift geared to the other half.

The rules are unchanged. Pick a gift; if you don't like it, make someone else give you theirs. This can only go so long, but it can get exciting.

Don't miss the action: See you there!

LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Tireless NTRAK promoter dies: Jim FitzGerald, well-known advocate for N-scale model railroading for 40 years, passed away on Oct. 24 at his home in Paso Robles, Calif. Jim is survived by his wife, Lee Monaco-FitzGerald. Jim and Lee have been instrumental in the growth in popularity of NTRAK and T-Trak modular model railroading. Jim edited the NTRAK newsletter and other publications for many years. A history of NTRAK and overview of Jim's efforts can be found in the July/August 2013 issue of the NTRAK newsletter at <http://ntrak.org/Newsletter/NL-13-JAbw.pdf>.

Check the calendar: We have expanded the N'Crowd Time Table (below) in this month's issue to inform you about the many model railroad

events that will be taking place in late 2013 and early 2014. If you have not attended a train show lately, you will have plenty of chances in the next few months - don't miss out! N'Crowd will have a table at the two upcoming Houston area shows.

Speaking of calendars: N'Crowd member Tom Wayburn has set up a wiki calendar of area railroad-related events. The public calendar is set up so anyone can add to or edit the events entries. Go to: <http://hou-area-mrr-cal.wikispaces.com>.

Follow up: N'Crowd VP Richard Bartlett reports that his intensive two-month therapy ended in late August, he is fully healed and has ended his daily trips to Memorial Hermann.

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2013/2014 TIME TABLE

November 20

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

November 23

R&LHS Annual Railroading Symposium, George Bush Presidential Library & Museum, College Station

November 30/December 1

N'Crowd Open House for National Model Railroad Month/San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Fall Layout Tour. Stop by and run some trains!

December 4

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

December 5-8

19th Annual Southern Plains N-Scale Convention and Annual OKC Train Show (Dec. 7-8)

December 14

N'Crowd Annual Holiday Party and Combat Gift Exchange

December 18

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

January 11-12, 2014

World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, George R. Brown Convention Center

January 18-19

29th Annual Dallas Area Train Show, Plano Centre

January 22

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

January 25-26

38th Annual SAMRA Model Railroad Jamboree, Carmack Event Center, San Antonio

February 15

San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Annual Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

Tom Marsh, Editor

Published fairly regularly for members and friends of N'Crowd Model Railroad Society, Inc., Houston, Texas.

Send newsletter contributions to: tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

Please note: We reserve the right to edit submissions for clarity and length.

Visit our Web site:

www.houstonNcrowd.org

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