

News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

September/October 2013



It was peachy in Atlanta!

The NMRA National Convention and National Train Show *page 4*



"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Gordon Bliss, President

Off the tracks, temporarily

I have not been in train mode lately as I have been working on my Mustang. Several members have asked about the BC&G operating sessions, but Eddie and I feel the problems on the railroad need to be fixed first.

The club layout is far enough along that it needs to be maintained regularly to have trains run well. I do not see the forms on the wall being filled out, so it is hard to know what needs to be addressed. Please, if you encounter a problem on the layout, fill out a form so we can fix it.

I will be at the club during some of the coming weekends, so if you would like to help fix the problems, or want to learn how to do it yourself, show up and we'll get to it. Send

me an email at gtbliss@aol.com and I will let you know when I will be at Papa Ben's.

We recently made changes to the mainline so we can run trains all the way around the layout, but when I show up it seems only the front loop is being run. We need to run the entire railroad so we can find and address any other problems. Remember this is YOUR club layout and it HELPS if YOU help find and fix the problems so we can have a smooth running layout and start the operating sessions again!

Here's a different "engine facility" than we usually expect to see from N'Crowd President Gordon Bliss!



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
September 18 / October 16 / November 20

BC&G Operating Sessions:
Wednesday, October 2 / Saturday, November 2

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.

**Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
July 17, 2013
Prepared by Harvey Stalarow - Secretary**

Board member Joe Kingsberry gave a clinic on modifying an older Con-Cor auto parts car. He also demonstrated a painting jig.

President Gordon Bliss talked about his two-week trip to Milwaukee and the National N Scale Convention. He showed photos of a KCS HO layout and the N-scale Deep River Southern in Tulsa. Gordon also showed photos of N and HO layouts in a location in Kansas City that used to be a department store in a mall, and he discussed another large N-scale layout in Kansas and two N-scale ayouts in Chicago.

The meeting was called to order at 7:55 p.m.

President's Report: Gordon said that his pre-meeting report was his report for the day.

Vice President's Report: VP Richard Bartlett announced that the layout for the Texas State Railroad was approved.

Secretary's Report: Eighteen members were in attendance and eight door prizes were given out.

Treasurer's Report: No report.

New Business: The move of the Big Boy from the Dallas museum was discussed.

The SAMRA 38th Annual Jamboree & Train Show will take place January 25-26, 2014, at the Live Oak Civic Center in the San Antonio area.

Layout Master Al Hague talked about a New York Central passenger set donated by David Hand. He also discussed layout maintenance.

Joe Kingsberry is working on locomotives, including painting and decoder installations.

The San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Fall Layout Tour was discussed. It was decided we would open the BC&G on the weekend after Thanksgiving.

Old Business: The layout committee will meet July 24 at 6:00 p.m. The committee consists of Harvey Stalarow, Richard Bartlett, Ted Davis, Gordon Bliss and Ray Byer.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

What have you been up to?

N'Crowd Past President Ted Davis has been making progress on his home layout. As the photo illustrates, benchwork is substantially complete, a preliminary mainline route has been sketched in and building locations and footprints are being considered.

What have you been up to? Send us a photo of your layout or other model railroad work in progress!



Peachtree Express: The NMRA National Convention *by Tom Marsh*

Members of the National Model Railroad Association gathered in Atlanta from July 14 to July 20 for the NMRA annual convention. Hosted by the Piedmont Division of the Southeastern Region of the NMRA, the Peachtree Express featured some beautiful home layouts, interesting prototype tours, a full lineup of clinics on a wide range of topics, a silent auction featuring almost 5,000 items, Georgia's famed southern hospitality and more. The National Train Show capped off the event.



Above right, our Atlanta hosts served up a sampling of some great model railroads on the many layout tours scheduled during the convention. This is a view of Tom Banks' N-scale North South Railroad.



At right, the south Texas-based Gulf Western Modular Railroad Society travelled to Atlanta and the National Train Show to show off their fine HO modular layout.



Above, this sharp N-scale contest entry made a point about convention fun!

The photos at right were taken during the railfan "hot spot" stops during the prototype tours.

We drove east over 800 miles to see UP and BNSF???



Peachtree Express: **Civil War Modelers**

The American Civil War Rail Road Historical Society displayed dioramas and modules in various scales during the convention.

This Special Interest Group (SIG) covers the antebellum period through the end of Reconstruction, with an emphasis on American railroads from 1860 to 1865. The top photo shows an N-scale diorama depicting Alexandria, Va., in 1862. A number of the modeled buildings are still standing today.

The photos at right and below show portions of an O-scale operating diorama depicting the fictional McCook's Landing, Ala. on the Tennessee River in 1864. While the setting is frelanced, the modular layout evokes the era with a level of detail not usually seen in smaller scales.





Peachtree Express: **Layout Tours**

The majority of the layouts on the various tours were built in that unknown construct in Houston, the basement. Because of this, most of the railroads were relatively large with plenty of room for long runs, big yards and scenic views.

Above, another view of Tom Banks' North South Railroad. The layout is based on the former Southern and L&N lines (now NS and CSX, respectively) between Cincinnati and Atlanta. Equipment spans the late 1970s to the late 1990s, with a range of industries, including an automobile factory, intermodal facility, coal mine and a large truck terminal.

At right, the engine servicing facilities on Tom Brennison's HO scale New River Valley Railway. This freelanced layout is set in southwest Virginia in the steam-to-diesel transition era of the late 1950s and early 1960s. Double-headed Mallet coal drags with 2-8-8-2 helpers run through rugged scenery. The DCC-controlled layout features hand laid track on individually cut ties.



Peachtree Express: Layout Tours

Big time railroading in N-scale: Mike Devaney's massive C&O-themed railroad occupies multiple basement levels. The basement was designed for the layout, the design for the house above came after. The layout's main level has many scenes along the Ohio River, while the lower level will incorporate three levels on relatively narrow shelves. Multiple helixes move trains to the various levels.



Peachtree Express: **Layout Tours**

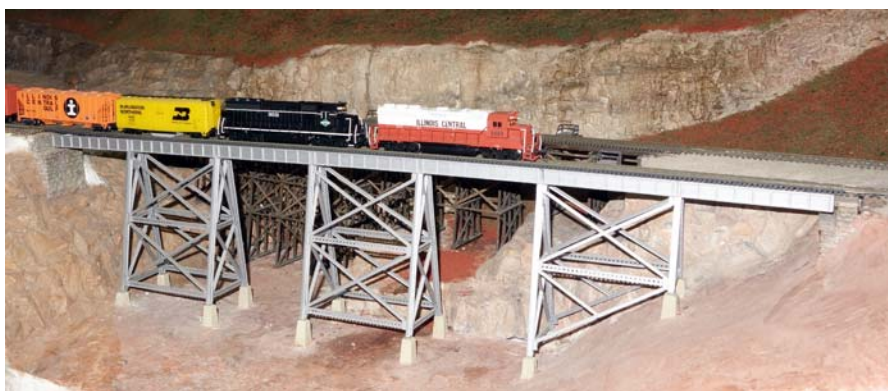
The work in progress at right is Larry Daughtry's Kansas City & Port Arthur Railroad. Larry, who retired from KCS's engineering department, is focused on maximum operation following prototype practices and minimal scenery. The yard at right represents KCS's Deramus Yard in Shreveport, La.

Second from top, this O-scale railroad models the prototype Georgia Railroad mainline from Atlanta to Camak, Ga. A large rock quarry and two branch lines provide operating interest.

Two at bottom right, Ransom Hunt is modeling the Illinois Central and Central of Georgia in N scale. The CofG E-unit is custom painted.

Below, this HO-scale model of Atlanta's Terminal Station as it appeared in later years was photographed on Joe Nichols Sr.'s Delta Southern Railroad. Joe is an NMRA Master Model Railroader.

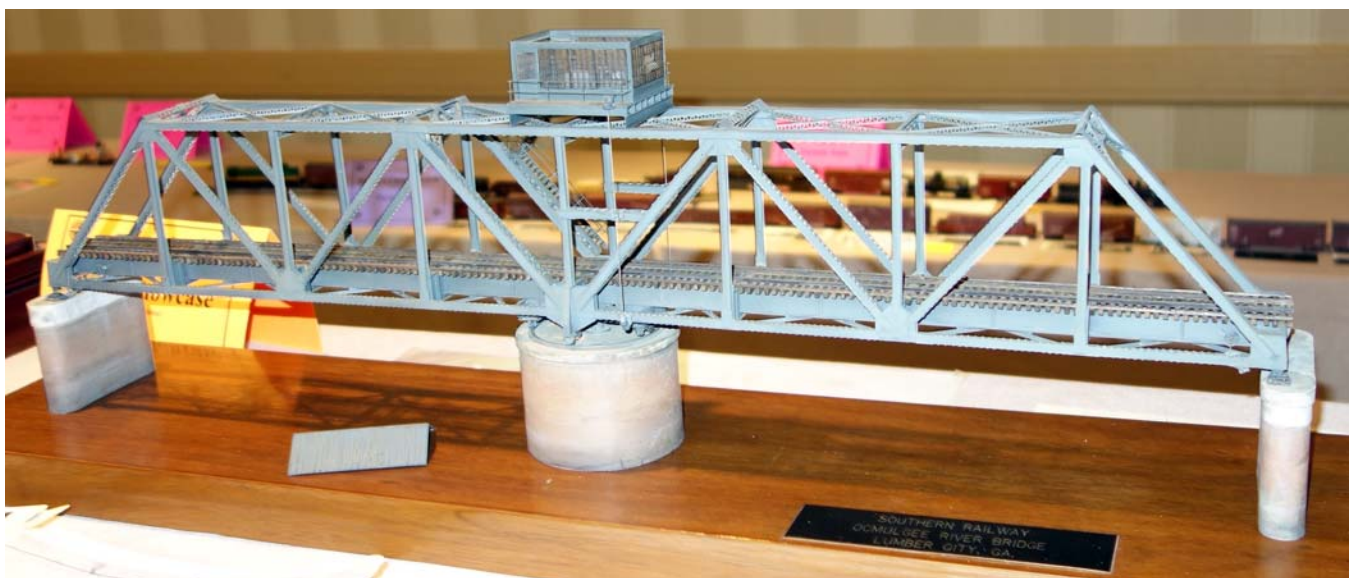
Bottom, operating signals add to the action on Tom Gordon's HO Seaboard Air Line - West Georgia Subdivision.



Peachtree Express: Contest

HO is the most common scale for contest models at NMRA national conventions, but several N-scale entries stood out in Atlanta.

The scratch-built car ferry at right above, the model of Frank Lloyd Wright's Falling Water house, and the swing bridge pictured below showed to advantage what can be done in N scale. In HO, a nicely-done GM&O caboose and a "What If?" L&N GE Dash 8 attracted attention as well. Contest entries are judged on five factors: construction, conformity, detail, appearance and scratchbuilt portion. A point score of 87.5 or higher (out of 125 possible) earns a Merit Award and counts towards Master Builder Awards in the NMRA Achievement Program.



Peachtree Express: **Prototype Tours**

Two of the prototype tours afforded the opportunity to see some of the terminal operations of Atlanta's two major railroads and a shortline, along with stops at several railfanning "hot spots".

The Monday tour took in Norfolk Southern's large intermodal terminal at Austell, northwest of Atlanta. The tour was led by the terminal manager. He and the modern yard office can be seen in the top photo. At right, NS spotted a container and chassis for inspection. In the photo below, chassis are staged two deep alongside the well cars for loading/unloading by the straddle cranes. Most yard activities are handled by a contractor, Parsec, Inc., rather than railroad crews.



The Monday tour also saw the bus unload at two railfanning "hot spots". The most interesting was the junction at Austell, where the former Southern main splits to head west to Birmingham, Ala., and northwest to Chattanooga, Tenn. At right, some interesting loads you can model were seen on a train that took the Chattanooga route. These appear to be new light rail commuter cars. Each car's cover has been marked with an "N" and an "S", implying that which way the cars face mattered either for loading or offloading.

The question of the day came from an NS special agent at the junction, who asked, "What are you people doing?"



Peachtree Express: Prototype Tours

On Tuesday, a planned bus tour through CSX's Tilford Yard was cancelled due to a derailment in the yard. At right, a stop on a convenient public overpass with views of the yard was offered instead, although an Atlanta city police officer requested the group get back on the bus and move on shortly after the "photo runby" of heavy machinery from R. J. Corman Derailment Services moving to the yard to deal with the derailment.

The derailment did not interfere with a visit to CSX's Railroad Education & Development Institute (REDI). Training at this facility covers almost everything, including train operations, track maintenance, yard operations, signal maintenance and even pole climbing. At right, a signal is set up for training. At far right, the REDI locomotive simulators provide training on the three different types of control stands found on CSX engines that span decades in technology and design.

The Tuesday tour also included a visit to the Georgia Northeastern Railroad's headquarters, dispatch center and yard in Marietta, Ga. GNRR owner Wilds Pierce conducted much of the tour, which included a photo runby, below, up the shortline's steep mainline with the yard power. GNRR operates over portions of a former L&N route between Atlanta and Knoxville that dates through predecessor lines to 1879. The steep, twisting nature of the route prompted L&N to build a straighter, more level route in 1906. However, L&N, and later CSX, operated the original line until 1987.



Peachtree Express: **National Train Show**

The NMRA National Train Show is an affiliated but separate operation from the national convention. Operating layouts and manufacturers' displays are the highlights of the show.

At right above, N-scale modular layouts dominated much of the space given over to operating model railroads, although most scales were represented by at least one group.

At right, the large T-Trak layout with its relatively low table height and lack of viewer barricades, attracted the attention of many of the younger visitors to the show.

Below, the Grand Strand Model Railroad Club of Myrtle Beach, S.C., has a unique way to keep track of activity in a staging yard: staging under glass! Actually, it's framed plexiglass, hinged for easy access to the staging area for set-up and removal of trains. DCC programming and test tracks are incorporated into the top of the module.

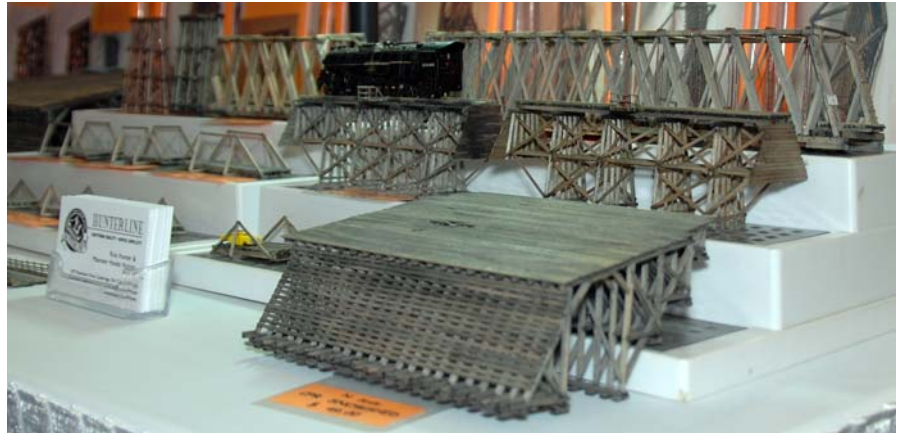




Peachtree Express: National Train Show

Above, the Atlas N-scale display included several shelves lined with locomotives sporting colorful paint schemes. Atlas is offering new road numbers and paint schemes on a number of models this year.

At right, Canada-based Hunterline displayed some nice bridges and a CPR snowshed, all from their N-scale kit line.



DeLuxe Innovations has sorted out most of their manufacturing issues in China and was featuring new paint schemes on their N-scale wood chip car. The "fade through" NP lettering on the car at right below is particularly well done.



Below, Fox Valley Models showed finished versions of the long-awaited N-scale EMD GP60M, along with pre-production shots of the new EMD SD70ACE. The EMD will feature multiple variations, including correct details for the Norfolk Southern heritage units.

At bottom right, despite having a very large booth, this seems to have been the sum total of Walther's N-scale display at the National Train Show. The sleek Alco DL-109s have recently been re-released by Walther in five paint schemes, including two for New Haven.



Peachtree Express: **Railfanning To and From**

It's better than flying: A road trip to an NMRA convention naturally should incorporate some railfan activities while going to and from the host city. Here are a few things spotted between Houston and Atlanta this year.

Two at right, the beautifully-restored Union Station in Montgomery, Ala., offered the opportunity for a "grab shot" of a Meridian & Bigbee Railroad freight. The nearby Western Railway of Alabama freight station is incorporated into the Montgomery Biscuits' minor league baseball team's ballpark.



Above and right, here's a rail/road/rail multiple overpass/interchange complex that would be fun to model. The overpass carries Genesee & Wyoming's Alabama & Gulf Coast Railway (ex-SLSF) mainline over CSX's ex-L&N mainline and US Hwy. 31 at Atmore, Ala. The view above is looking west; the AGR approach from the south rises on a long solid fill that is broken with a short span for a residential street. From the north, as seen at right, the approach is on a combination fill and trestle that incorporates a second road overpass. The track in the foreground is the interchange between the AGR and the CSX mainlines.



Peachtree Express: Railfanning To and From

At right, and below, this coaling tower, a relic of World War II and the steam era, still straddles the former L&N double track mainline in the yard at Flomaton, Ala.



Above and right, a late-running Amtrak *Crescent* arrives and departs in short order at Anniston, Ala. The depot still sports its original "Southern Railway System" signage and platform canopy. For the consist conscious, this is the eastbound *Crescent* on July 20, 2013. In the lead are P42s 92 and 166, followed by baggage 1760 (converted ex-SP coach 2372), Viewliner sleepers 62017 and 62025, diner 8510 (ex-CB&Q *Silver Cafe*), Amfleet cafe 28001, and Amfleet coaches 25035, 25003, 25061 and 25006. A reasonably accurate N-scale model of this train can be assembled with Kato locos and cars.



LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

NWX swap meet: N'Crowd member Tom Wayburn reports that our friends at Northwest Crossing will host a swap meet at their Northwest Mall storefront on Saturday, Oct. 12. Some fine bargains were to be had at the last NWX Swap Meet, so don't miss out!

If you can, you should: The Northern Virginia NTRAK group is sponsoring the Capitol Limited N Scale East 2014, "The Big Daddy of N Scale Conventions", Aug. 7-10, 2014, at the Dulles Expo Center in Chantilly, Va. The group sponsored a huge "Capital

Limited" in 2004, which, along with all the other attractions of the Washington, D.C., area, made for a superb event. The N-Trak layout in 2004 consisted of 511 modules, all connected via the Red Line, which had a total route length of 2,336 feet or 70.8 scale miles. In addition to the giant N-Trak layout, the convention featured a large public train show that included modular layouts in other scales, a large number of vendors and other displays. Prototype tours were also arranged; notable were tours of a large Vulcan Materials quarry and a coal-fired power plant.

More information is at www.bigtrainlayout.org.

Last stop: N'Crowd member William Moses passed away recently. Our sympathies go out to his family.

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2013 TIME TABLE

BC&G Operating Sessions are suspended until October

September 14

NMRA LSR Division 8 Clinic, Bayland Park Community Center, 10 a.m. N'Crowd President Gordon Bliss will cover passenger train operations.

September 18

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

September 21-22

31st Annual Temple Model Train Show.

October 2

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

October 5-6

Galveston Railroad Museum Train Show

October 12

NWX Swap Meet, Northwest Mall

NMRA LSR Division 8 Annual Meeting. Hosted by Houston Area Live Steamers at Zube Park.

AMRE San Antonio Train Show (Oct 12-13), Live Oak Civic Center

October 16

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

November 2

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

November 9-10

Texas City Model Train Festival

Fort Worth Train Show, Amon Carter Hall

November 20

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

December TBA

N'Crowd Annual Holiday Party and Combat Gift Exchange

December 4

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

December 5-8

19th Annual Southern Plains N-Scale Convention, Oklahoma City

OKC Train Show (Dec 7-8), Oklahoma City

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.

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