



News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

March/April 2014



No business like show business!

N'Crowd participated in two recent train shows in the Houston area. In January, we had a fine time at the World's Greatest Hobby on Tour show at the George R. Brown Convention Center (above), followed in February by the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club's Greater Houston Train Show (right) at the Stafford Centre. Coming in September: The Big Texas Train Show, also at the George R. Brown. See you there!



"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Vincent Walker, President

Let's keep it tidy

I would like to thank Gordon Bliss, Ted Davis, Al Hague, Samuel Townsel, Tom Wayburn and Tom Marsh for their time and effort in the cleaning and organizing of the N'Crowd layout room at Papa Ben's. We now have a train room where everything is in its place, old items have been removed, tools placed in one area, paints in an area and scenery items in another area. This makes for a cleaner layout room environment and makes it easier to get to the layout wiring when necessary.

With the clean-up now done, there will be some rules up for a vote at our March 19 meeting. We want the

club room to stay clean. Rules that will be proposed at the meeting cover several circumstances. If you take anything from under the layout for any reason, put it back when you are finished. Chairs are to be stored in the designated area whenever they are not in use. Do not create a new area for stuff or bring in and leave any items without club permission.

The area we have now is clean and the layout accessible for work and operations. Let's keep it this way. Now let's enjoy our clean layout room and keep working to improve the layout.

Houston N'Crowd Membership Meeting Report January 15, 2014

Prepared by James Senneff, Jr. - Secretary

President's Report: President Vince Walker called the meeting to order at 7:14 pm. The next meeting is 19 February 2014 at Papa Ben's at 7:00 pm.

The door prizes were a tank car - Gordon Bliss; boxcar - Richard Bartlett; boxcar - Joe Kingsberry; Amtrak calendar - Eddie Aycock.

Treasurer's Report: The club account has \$10,619.92 plus a CD still at \$4,816.73. Treasurer Eddie Aycock started taking 2014 membership dues at the meeting. He will be updating the president with the progress on membership. Editor Tom Marsh requested that the membership email list be updated. The list will be updated by and maintained by Eddie.

Secretary's Report: We had 18 members attending this meeting: Dejan Suskavcevic, Tom Wayburn, Amy Wayburn,

Tom Marsh, Richard Bartlett, Steve Lancaster, James Senneff, Jr., Ted Davis, Gordon Bliss, Samuel Townsel, Vincent Walker, Barry Miles, Al Hague, Harvey Stalarow, Aaron Serwetman, Joe Kingsberry and Eddie Aycock.

Layout Master's Report: Layout Master Al Hague discussed whether to use a scenic backdrop or cut buildings for the backdrop wall behind Union Station; unanimous approval for using cut buildings for the backdrop.

New Business: Ted Davis initiated a discussion about cleaning up the clutter under the club layout, in particular the boxes of VHS tapes. Discussion on the viability of selling the VHS tapes through consignment to Papa Ben's. Also discussion on whether members would like to have some of the videos; members invited to take any they wanted after the meeting. Ted also indicated that one of the batteries for the club's power tools was bad; the club unanimously voted to replace the battery. Ted also brought up the "missing member" calls; a discussion took place between Ted and the president about the calls. No missing member call was made and continuation of the practice will be discussed at a later date.



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
March 19 / April 16 / May 21

BC&G Operating Sessions:
Wednesday, April 2 / Wednesday, June 4

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.

Gordon Bliss brought up for discussion the need for increased club layout maintenance to improve layout and car operations. Maintenance items needed include, but are not limited to, car weights, car couplers, and diagnosis and repair of UR91 if possible, if not purchase of a new one. The club unanimously voted to replace the UR91 if it cannot be repaired.

The president initiated a discussion on clinics to improve club members' overall knowledge. Topics will include personal and club equipment maintenance and other areas of interest to N'Crowd members. An email will be sent out to the members with clinic dates and topics, and to solicit other topics for clinics that members would like to have. The clinics will be held after the monthly meetings and will last about 30 minutes. Upcoming clinic topics include painting, decoder installation, lighting and ballasting. Vincent agreed to give a painting clinic, Gordon Bliss agreed to give a decoder installation clinic and Richard Bartlett agreed to give a clinic on lighting.

Tom Marsh asked for volunteers to man the table at the San Jac club's Greater Houston Train Show in Stafford. The show is 15 February from 10 am to 5 pm. Gordon has the club banner and the test track is in the layout room; someone needs to volunteer to bring it to Stafford. Vincent and Gordon committed to helping at the show. At this point we are still looking for some more members to man the tables at the show.

In his trainmaster role, Eddie started a discussion on club operating sessions for 2014. After discussion and a vote, it was agreed that operating sessions will be held on the first Wednesday of the month in even months (February, April, June, etc.), starting in February. A reminder email will be sent out by Eddie one week prior to each operating session.

President Walker discussed having a crawfish boil at Zube Park on a third Saturday in April or May. The third Saturday of the month is when the Houston Area Live Steamers have their open house run days for the public to ride the miniature trains. Members liked the idea and thought a good time would be had. Vincent will organize the event; more details coming soon.

Old Business: N'Crowd 2014 officers elected in November 2013 took office in January. Current officers and volunteers are listed on page 4.

The World's Greatest Hobby train show was last weekend 11 and 12 February at the George R. Brown Convention Center. We had a table toward the front of the show. The different train scale layout modules were at the back of the exhibition hall. We had good assistance by club members at the table on Saturday and adequate assistance on Sunday. Saturday show attendance was roughly 17,000 and Sunday attendance was roughly 15,000 as reported by the show organizers. The club spent \$34.61 on show-related items

(table rental, table covers, etc.) and received \$35.00 from car sales (one car sold to an N'Crowd member).

President Walker reminded everyone that club members can bring their own trains to run during Saturday openings of the N'Crowd layout at Papa Ben's. He also mentioned that we need more membership participation on the days that the layout is open at Papa Ben's. Discussion followed about updating the club equipment inventory to keep club and personal equipment separated.

Trainmaster Eddie stated that the program used for setting up operating sessions has an inventory of club cars but not engines. No suggestion as to how the locomotive inventory was going to be done was mentioned. This prompted a discussion on updating the club member pin color chart. Tom Marsh will print the current chart in the March/April issue of *The Orderboard* for everyone to review and update.

Motion to adjourn was put forth by the president and seconded by Richard and Gordon; the meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Houston N'Crowd Membership Meeting Report February 19, 2014 Prepared by James Senneff, Jr. - Secretary

President's Report: President Vincent Walker called the meeting to order at 7:14 pm. The next meeting is 19 March 2014 at Papa Ben's at 7:00 pm.

Door prizes were a box car - Joe Kingsberry, Amtrak calendar - Steve Lancaster.

Treasurer's Report: Finances are essentially the same as last month. The club account has \$10,619.92 plus a CD still at \$4816.73. Treasurer Eddie Aycock is still collecting membership dues; 25 members have already paid.

Secretary's Report: We had 15 members attending this meeting: Dejan Suskavcevic, Tom Wayburn, Tom Marsh, Richard Bartlett, Steve Lancaster, James Senneff, Jr., Ted Davis, Gordon Bliss, Vincent Walker, Al Hague, Harvey Stalarow, Joe Kingsberry, Eddie Aycock, Charlie Aselin, and Abram VanElswyk.

New Business: Vince announced that the N'Crowd clinic series will start tonight with Gordon Bliss showing basic DCC decoder installation. Also, Dejan will show his latest hand-laid turnouts and a low cost method for DCC and electronic control of the turnouts.

Gordon Bliss put to the floor that if there are any subjects the membership wants clinics on, to please let the club officers know and they will try to find someone to present, even if they are not an N'Crowd member.

Upcoming clinics include equipment painting by Joe Kingsberry in March; structure lighting by Richard Bartlett in April; layout wiring by Ray Byer in May; modeling rock formations by Jason Smith in June; and another session on painting in July, this time presented by Vincent Walker.

Gordon won second and third place for color photos at the Greater Houston Train Show. Vincent said that he found some good items to purchase at the show.

Abram VanElswyk is talking with the organizers of the Houston Japan Festival about setting up a model railroad at the event, which will take place at Hermann Park 18-19 April. Abram has a lot of Kato N scale models of Japanese prototype equipment, particularly commuter equipment. He is looking for anyone else who collects Japanese N-scale equipment who would be interested in participating in setting up and operating a layout at the festival.

Tom Marsh reported that the Houston Railroad Museum is close to signing an agreement to move its collection to Tomball. The new name will be Texas Railroading Heritage Museum. The city may acquire additional property to house the museum.

Upcoming Club events: N'Crowd members are invited to participate in a number of upcoming rail-related activities.

Saturday, 12 April - Gulf Coast Chapter NRHS trip to Louisiana Railroad Festival. Travel by bus to the restored KCS depot and museum in DeQuincy, La., then return to Houston on Amtrak's *Sunset Limited*. The busses leave the Houston Amtrak station at 7 a.m. and the return on the train will be at about 6 pm. Bus tickets are \$30; Amtrak tickets start at \$25. Members can purchase bus tickets at www.houstonRRmuseum.org. NOTE: Buy your Amtrak tickets first so that you will have a guaranteed way home!

Saturday, 19 April - N'Crowd has arranged a tour of the Galveston Railroad Museum's "Santa Fe" F7A. We'll have access to the cab (Vincent Caleb Walker will be taking photos if you want to wave out the engineer's window) and the engine room (don't wear anything that can't handle a little grease or oil). Members must pay normal museum entrance fee. To tour the locomotive, be at the museum by 10 am because the engine will be closed up by 11 a.m. Gordon said that we could also tour around Galveston and see the various rail sites, including where the ATSF roundhouse was (Gordon will bring a blueprint of the roundhouse for reference). N'Crowd will extend an invitation to the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club and other groups to join us for the day.

Saturday, 3 May - Richard Bartlett noted that the Texas State Railroad will hold a railfan photographers' weekend.

Saturday, 17 May - Our president is arranging a crawfish boil at Zube Park, home of the Houston Area Live Steamers' extensive railroad. This will be on HALS public run day. Gordon has some tents we can use. We will need a head count closer to the event. We decided to extend an invitation to the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club as well.

Old Business: The layout room clean up day will be Sunday, 23 February. Richard Bartlett is going to take his show loop home before the clean up this weekend.

Gordon moved to adjourn the meeting and go to the layout room for the clinic. Motion seconded by Vincent Walker and the meeting adjourned at 7:55 pm.

Houston N'Crowd 2014 Officers and Volunteers

President	Vincent Walker
Vice President	Samuel Townsel
Secretary	James Senneff, Jr.
Treasurer	Eddie Aycock
Board Member (2014)	Ray Byer
Board Member (2015)	Justin Coder
Board Member (2016)	Al Hague
Editor & Webmaster	Tom Marsh



Here's what you missed...



...if you missed our February meeting!

In addition to the usual run-through of club business, we had two clinics at our meeting on February 19.

Above, Gordon Bliss demonstrated how to install a plug and play decoder in a DCC-ready locomotive. Gordon showed us that it's fast and painless, and nothing to be afraid of - unless smoke comes out of the decoder when you test it!

At right, Dejan Suskavcevic showed off his latest hand-laid trackwork, only this time the interesting part was under the foam board. Using inexpensive servos and other electronic components, Dejan powered three handlaid switches for DCC control on this segment of his layout in progress. He estimates the cost of controlling each switch at less than \$8; this compares very favorably with the \$20-plus cost that can be incurred using typical commercially-available hobby components. We'll publish more on Dejan's switch controls in the future.



Big Time Operators

N'Crowd's first Bayou City & Gulf operating session of 2014 took place on Wednesday, Feb. 5, and we had a good turnout and a lot of fun. We even had a guest who drove in from Dallas for the session!

Here are a few photos from the February session. The next session will be Wednesday, April 2, starting at 7 p.m. BC&G 2014 operating sessions are scheduled for the first Wednesday of even-numbered months through December. Trains start rolling at 7 p.m., and we have a throttle for you!



Before and after: Above, all's quiet on the BC&G shortly before the start of N'Crowd's first operating session of 2014. Things livened up quickly after the trains started rolling, as seen below.





Above and two below: Setting up for the operating sessions takes a significant amount of time. Almost every freight car in these pictures will be “touched” during the session, so they have to be pre-positioned based on the session’s switch lists. Also, passenger and freight trains must be staged in the proper places. Trainmaster Eddie Aycock handles this task.

At right, top to bottom, Trainmaster Eddie Aycock looks on as N’Crowd President Vince Walker works a local turn; N’Crowd VP Samuel Townsell makes up a train in Bayou City Yard; Justin Coder is working the Austin switch job, getting cars ready for pick up by a soon-to-arrive local; Richard Bartlett concentrates on positioning loads of scrap at Bennett. Which job will you tackle at the next session?



April Fool - sort of!

by Tom Marsh

Recently while doing some internet research at work (there's the real April Fool), I came across this photo of the unique angled turntable at the Indiana Harbor Belt Railroad's roundhouse at Hammond, Ind.

The photo, from Google Maps, has not been retouched other than to enhance the contrast for print. I'm guessing here, but it appears that the photos that were stitched together to make the composite image for Google Maps must have been taken a few moments apart while the turntable was moving.

Or maybe this is how it looks - after all, it is on the Internet, on Google Maps no less, so it's true, right?

According to several online sources, the Chicago, Indiana & Southern Railroad opened the roundhouse in 1906. The CI&S was indirectly controlled by the New York Central, and was consolidated into the Central in 1914 along with several other lines. At that time, IHB took over the roundhouse and also Gibson Yard in Hammond, and its headquarters are on the property to this day.

According to IHB's website, the railroad is the largest switching line in the U.S. The railroad consists of 24 miles of double track mainline, another 30 miles of single track main, and 266 miles of yard and siding tracks. IHB services about 160 customers, generating some 170,000 carloads per year. The railroad has interchanges with 16 other carriers in the Chicago area.

IHB's traffic mix is 38 percent primary metals, 12 percent chemi-



If you don't want to go to all the trouble of having a working turntable on your model railroad, use this one on the Indiana Harbor Belt as your guide. You can hang the photo over the layout to prove your approach follows prototype practice. Imagery ©2014 Google

cals and petroleum products, 11 percent food products, 8 percent scrap iron, 7 percent coal and coke, and 6 percent whole grain. Other traffic includes lumber, paper, and aggregates. In its role as an intermediate switch carrier in the Chicago area, IHB traffic includes an additional 475,000 revenue cars.

The IHB main line circles Chicago from near O'Hare Airport to Northwest Indiana. In addition to Gibson Yard in Hammond, which currently handles only new automobile traffic, IHB operates the 44-track Blue Island hump yard at Riverdale,

Ill., and Michigan Avenue Yard in East Chicago, Ind. IHB owns approximately 1,400 freight cars that are used primarily in steel-related services.

"Harbor" coil cars are regular visitors to the Houston area, and can often be seen at Englewood Yard. N-scale models of various IHB locomotives and cars have been produced in recent years.

For a comprehensive history of IHB, along with photos and maps, visit: <http://www.dhke.com/ihbarchive/index.html>

Houston N'Crowd Truck Pin/Car Owner Color Chart: February 2014

	Purple	Brown	Gray	Silver	White	Green	Blue	Yellow	Orange	Red
Red	Vincent Caleb Walker	Eddie Aycock	Mike & Leslie Bodak	James Senneff, Jr.	Steve Redd	Rick Gonzales	Steve Lancaster	Vince Walker	Gordon Bliss	Richard Bartlett
Orange									Joe Kingsberry	
Yellow			Ray Byer				Tom Wayburn	Ted Davis		
Blue			Charlie Aselin		Tom Marsh	Harvey Stalarow				
Green			Doc Moore	Dominic Valdez	Al Hague	Marty Giesecke				
White				Dan Gutierrez	Justin Coder					
Silver				Terry Hooks						
Gray			Rick Townsend							
Brown										
Purple	N'Crowd Club Equipment									

It's time for a 'truck pin' color chart update

As discussed at the February meeting, we encourage everyone to bring their equipment to operate on the club's Bayou City & Gulf whenever the layout room is open, and particularly on Saturdays when we are obligated to run trains for a few hours when Papa Ben's is open to customers. Store visitors really enjoy seeing the action!

To ensure that nobody loses any equipment, we recommend you mark your truck pins or underframes with your color code. (Truck pins have been known to drop out and become lost.) This can also identify your trains if you run on one

of the N-Trak or T-Trak layouts at a train show.

The chart above is the most recent in *The Orderboard's* files; we need to update, correct and add missing/new members at the March meeting. If you can't make the meeting and already have a color combination but your name is not in the chart, send an email to tom@houstonncrowd.org and we will update the chart. If you have never been assigned a color combination and can't attend the March meeting, send an email as well and request your first and second choices for a color code and we will get you on the chart.

Everyone who operates on layouts other than their own should consider color-coding equipment for easy identification. While some people color-code truck pins, these can go missing; color-coding car underframes is an alternative way to identify equipment. Paint pens are handy for color-coding.

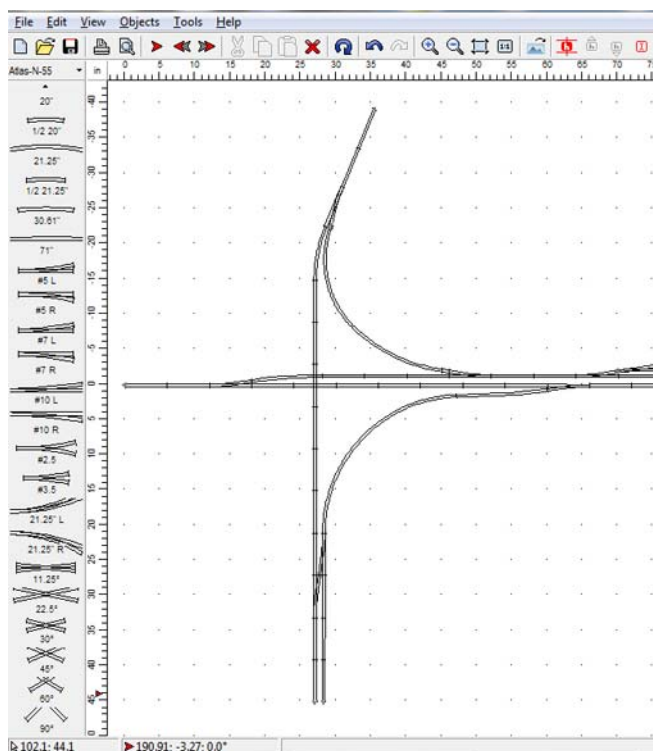


LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

This is a 10-pager: This month's *Orderboard* is 10 pages, which means if you print it in booklet format you will have two blank pages at the end unless you print pages 5 and 6 back-to-back on a single sheet.

Track design freeware: I've come across what I think is a neat track design application, and it's free. Called SCARM (Simple Computer Aided Railway Modeller), the program can be downloaded at its dedicated website: http://www.scarm.info/index_en.html. SCARM comes with libraries for 32 different track manufacturers in virtually every scale. Most operations are point and click, and the application can generate both line plans like the example at right, and "3D" views. The planning tool can handle varying elevations and generate rudimentary benchwork designs. The partial SCARM screen shot at right is my compressed version of the BNSF/UP (ATSF/MKT) junction at Sealy, Texas, laid out with Atlas Code 55 track. This took less than an hour to complete; I used satellite images from Google maps as a guide.



HOUSTON N'CROWD 2014 TIME TABLE

March 19

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

April 2

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

April 12

Gulf Coast Chapter - NRHS bus/rail trip to Louisiana Railroad Festival, DeQuincy, La. Information at: www.houstonRRmuseum.org

April 16

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

April 19

N'Crowd trip to Galveston Railroad Museum for tour of

one of the museum's "Santa Fe" F7s. Be at the museum at 10 a.m. to tour the locomotive, which will be in operation beginning at 11 a.m.

May 3

Texas State Railroad Rail Fan Photographer's Special

May 17

N'Crowd Crawfish Boil at Zube Park. We will be riding trains with the Houston Area Live Steamers!

May 21

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

June 4

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

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:

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

Visit our Web site:

www.houstonNcrowd.org

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