



News from Houston N'Crowd



November/December 2015

THE ORDERBOARD



**The new faces of U.S.
passenger service**

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"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Vincent Walker, President

You can help!

We need to be sure we honor our commitment to Papa Ben's to run trains on Saturdays and Sundays during the December holiday season. Papa Ben's is the only true trains-only store in our area and we are given free space to operate our Bayou City & Gulf Railroad. This is an important obligation for us to meet, and I encourage every member to show up and support your club and Papa Ben's, even if it's for just an hour or so. If you have an N'Crowd shirt, please wear it.

My wife and I will host our up-and-coming annual holiday bash and combat gift exchange at our home this year. More information about the party can be found on page 6. We hope to see you there!

We have other up-and-coming events as well, including the Greater Houston Train Show in February and the Amtrak ride in conjunction with the Louisiana Railroad Days Festival in April. Also, BC&G operating sessions will begin again on Feb. 7. In October, we experimented with a Sunday operating session, which seemed to work out well, so our first sessions of 2016 will take place on Sundays starting at 5 p.m.

Some reminders about running trains on the club layout: I noticed recently that an SP passenger train powered by an Alco PA had been pulled into Union Station locomotive first. Please remember that our standard operating practice is to back all trains into the station if they are going to be spotted there for any length of time.

In addition, in this case the locomotive in question is owned by member Steve Lancaster and not the club. We don't have an issue with a member leaving his or her train on the club layout for short periods of time as circumstances warrant, but please do not run or handle non-club equipment unless it is yours. If you break it, you will pay for it to be fixed.

If you come to Papa Ben's and run trains on a day other than other than a Saturday and you use one of the club throttles,

be sure you clear your locomotive numbers before you shut down the layout (and please remember to do that as well!). We recently had a situation on a Saturday morning when we could not run trains as the system was locked because someone shut down the layout without clearing the throttle they were using. When we did get the trains running, we had issues with the trains running off the main into passing tracks and sidings. If you align any switches to divert a train off the mainline, be sure to set the switch for the main route before you leave. Early next year, we will have a session on proper startup and shutdown of the layout, and the best method for clearing throttles.

The club and Papa Ben's have no problem with members running trains any time during the store's open hours. However, please be courteous. Don't leave switches set to diverge off the main; don't leave trains blocking the main, long passing sidings or yard ladders; and please don't run other people's trains. These simple actions will enable everyone to enjoy running trains on the BC&G!

Until next time, happy railroading!

Vincent

Houston N'Crowd 2015 Officers and Volunteers

President	Vincent Walker
Vice President	Samuel Townsel II
Secretary	James Senneff, Jr.
Treasurer	Eddie Aycock
Board Member (2015)	Justin Coder
Board Member (2016)	Al Hague
Board Member (2017)	Richard Bartlett
Layout Master	Al Hague
Editor & Webmaster	Tom Marsh



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
November 18 / December 16 / January 20

BC&G Operating Sessions Even Months 1st Sunday:
(no December) / February 7 / April 3 / June 5

Most activities take place at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. Our monthly membership meetings start at 7 p.m. Sunday Ops Sessions start at 5 p.m. Come early to join us for dinner!

Picture 'postcards' from back East

Or, 'What I did on my summer vacation.'

by Tom Marsh

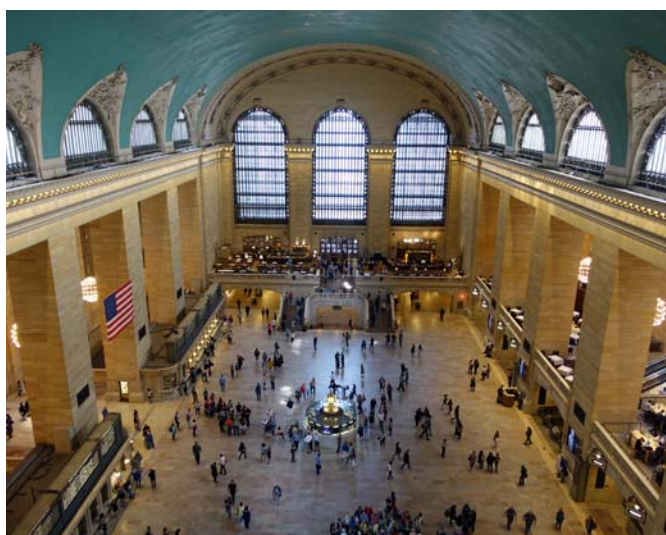
At right, Northeast Corridor action in New Brunswick, N. J., and Cos Cob, Conn.

Below, two eras of the Century, left at URHS, Boonton, N.J., and right at Danbury Railway Museum, Connecticut



At right, Long Island Rail Road action at Riverhead, and the oldest active LIRR station, St. James, 1873

Below, Grand Central Terminal tour during Penn Central Railroad Historical Society Annual Convention



The new faces of U.S. passenger service

by Tom Marsh



A brand new Amtrak ACS-64 Cities Sprinter toured the Bayou City & Gulf in mid-November of this year. Photo by Tom Marsh

Their names are *Spirit*, *Charger* and *Cities Sprinter*, and they are the new faces of passenger railroading in the U.S. You will soon be able to accurately model trains hauled by one of these new locomotives in N scale, and given the number of orders placed for it to date, another of these new locomotive designs seems likely to appear in model form in the not-too-distant future as well.

First to roll down the mainline in both prototype and model form is the Siemens ACS-64 *Cities Sprinter* for Amtrak. Siemens is building the 8,700 hp electrics in Sacramento, Calif. Kato is supplying the N-scale version. Along with newly-tooled Amfleet I car models, modelers will be able to capture the essence of modern Northeast Corridor locomotive-hauled high-speed services: the nation's most modern locomotives hauling 40-year old cars!

We may see another paint scheme on these modern electrics from Kato in the near future. In November, the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) ordered 13 *Sprinters* for service in the Philadelphia area. The contract includes an option for five additional locomotives. The SEPTA units will be delivered in early 2018.

Diesel fans are not being left out of the fun, which will spread from coast-to-coast.



Above, a new Amtrak ACS-64 highballs through Cos Cob, Conn., with a consist of Amfleet I cars. Photo by Tom Marsh

Below, SEPTA's ACS-64s will be virtually identical to the Amtrak units. Image courtesy Siemens



In September, All Aboard Florida placed an order with Siemens for five complete train sets, each consisting of two *Charger* diesel-electric locomotives book-ending four stainless steel passenger cars. The service will connect Miami and Orlando and will be the first totally new privately-owned and operated intercity passenger trains to enter service since the 1971 startup of Amtrak. Portions of the line will see 125 mph schedules. The locomotives and cars will be assembled by Siemens in Sacramento with components sourced primarily in the U.S., including prime movers supplied by Cummins. The All Aboard Florida service is being developed by Florida East Coast Industries and will be branded as “Brightline”.

Siemens’ *Charger* is proving popular. In addition to the All Aboard Florida order, transit agencies in California, Illinois and Maryland have also ordered new *Chargers*. Siemens now has orders for 69 units, with options for an additional 222 locomotives.

Other locomotive builders have landed smaller orders. Electro-Motive Diesel is building 20 F125 *Spirit* diesel-electric locomotives for California’s Metrolink. The locomotives will be powered with a Caterpillar engine rated at 4,700 hp and will have a maximum speed of 125 mph. Deliveries will begin in 2016.

The Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) has been taking delivery this year of the last of 40 HSP46 diesel-electric locomotives from Motive Power Industries (MPI). The prime movers are 12-cylinder Gevo engines supplied by General Electric. The locomotives, which are the first new power ordered by MBTA in more than 20 years, are being assembled at MPI’s Boise, Idaho, plant.

There are colorful times ahead for fans of modern passenger power!



Top, an artist's rendering of Siemens' Charger diesel locomotive decked out in the proposed "Brightline" livery. Image courtesy All Aboard Florida

Middle, an artists rendering of the EMD F125 Spirit diesel locomotive. Earlier renderings depicted a much sleeker design. Image courtesy Electro-Motive Diesel

Bottom, MPI's HSP46 diesel locomotive has recently entered service on MBTA. Image courtesy MBTA

All Aboard for Fun!

**Join your N'Crowd friends for our annual holiday feast and
COMBAT GIFT EXCHANGE!**

Who: All N'Crowd Members, Families and Friends

What: Our Annual Holiday Bash and Combat Gift Exchange

When: Saturday, Dec. 12, 2015 6:30 pm

Where: The Walkers' Home, 2208 Sandlebrook St., Pearland 77584

Why: For Fun and Food

How: RSVP by email to vawalker@sbec.com or leave a message at 832-463-3017.

Other Stuff: We'll provide the main courses and soft drinks. If you would like, bring a snack, side dish, dessert or your own adult beverages.

Combat Gift Exchange: To participate in the rail gift combat, bring a train gift (in a bag or wrapped), value \$10 to \$20. Bring a similarly priced non-rail gift to participate in the ladies' battle.



Houston N'Crowd Membership Meeting Report 21 October 2015

Prepared by James C. Senneff, Jr. - Secretary

President's Report: President Vincent Walker called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

The next meeting is 18 November 2015 at Papa Ben's at 7:00 p.m. Door prize winners were Ted D. (center beam car); Charlie A. (40-ft. BC&G boxcar); Joe K. (hopper); Tom W. 40-ft. BC&G boxcar; Randy O. (BC&G clock); Gordon B. (50-ft box car). No club cars were auctioned.

Vice President's Report: VP Samuel Townsel II reported the Digitrax DCS 150 booster has been returned.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Eddie Aycock reported as of 21 October, cash is \$11,257.24, CD value \$4,818.15. We are \$131 ahead for the year, and have recruited 26 new members.

Secretary's Report: Secretary James C. Senneff, Jr. recorded 20 members in attendance tonight: Dejan Suskavcevic, Tom Wayburn, Allen Melton, Randy Ollett, Samuel Townsel II, Richard Bartlett, Steve Lancaster, James Senneff, Jr., Kyle Senneff, Vincent Walker, John Sweigart, Ted Davis, Eddie Aycock, Joe Kingsberry, Harvey Stalarow, Tom Marsh, Charlie Aselin, Gordon Bliss, Al Hague and Ray Byer.

New Business: Joe Kingsberry said the field trip to Greg Johnson's layout illustrated that a laser cutter might be useful to club members and as a possible way to generate additional funds. Richard Bartlett researched the topic and found that a decent cutter could cost up to \$3,000. A discussion ensued and a committee formed to do additional research, such as: What is the cost of the cutter? What is the life expectancy of the cutter? What is the cost of the raw materials to be cut? What is the maintenance cost for the cutter? What is the cost of the exhaust fan for the cutter? Who is going to program it to cut out the buildings? Who will decide what will be cut? Where is it going to be housed? What are the rules and

procedures for the use and upkeep? Also, the committee will look into who the possible clients might be for the use of the cutter to increase club income. The committee consisting of Joe Kingsberry, Richard Bartlett and Samuel Townsel II will prepare a proposal for a vote by the club members.

Layout Master Al Hague proposed the club purchase four Walther's backdrops from Papa Ben's Train Place to be used behind the Union Station and Englewood Yard areas. A wide-ranging discussion ensued, after which the members present voted to purchase two city backdrops and two freight yard backdrops.

Tom Marsh reported that all the tables are taken for this Saturday's swap meet at the Tomball Community Center. The Northwest Crossing Model Railroad Club will be setting up T-Track modules for the event. Tom also said the San Antonio N-Trak Association will be trying to set a T-Track world record at the World's Greatest Hobby Show in San Antonio on February 20-21.

Ray Byer said everything is working on the layout and there are no outstanding reported issues.

Samuel Townsel II is looking into a Settegast or Eureka Yard visit in late February or March of 2016. He has a friend with Union Pacific Railroad who mentioned that the company has several outreach programs to help with public relations.

Al has had discussions with Vince Walker and Ted Davis about the scenery plan for the layout and he will distribute a sketch for review. Eddie noted that some members have not yet paid for the club shirts that they ordered and the shirts are available now. Please see Eddie to pay for shirts.

The N'Crowd Open House for the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club's annual fall layout tour is set for December 5-6. Other N'Crowd members participating in this year's layout tour are Al, Eddie (maybe) and Gordon. Vincent discussed club coverage at Papa Ben's during the open house as well as other dates that coverage is needed during November and December. Dates and volunteers so far:

Nov. 28 - John Sweigart, Samuel Townsel II, Al Hague, Joe Kingsberry, Eddie Aycock (fill in if needed)

Nov. 29 - John Sweigart, Tom Marsh, Eddie Aycock (fill in if needed)

Dec. 5-6 Layout Tour Open House - everyone welcome!

Dec. 12 - Vincent Walker, Dejan Suskavcevic, Eddie Aycock, Tom Marsh

Dec. 13 - John Sweigart, Vincent Walker, Dejan Suskavcevic, Eddie Aycock, Tom Marsh

Dec. 19 - Vincent Walker, Joe Kingsberry, John Sweigart, Tom Marsh (afternoon)

Dec. 20 - Vincent Walker, Joe Kingsberry, John Sweigart, Tom Marsh (afternoon)

December 26 - Vincent Walker, Richard Bartlett, Dejan Suskavcevic, Tom Marsh (maybe)

Officer Nominations: Facilitated by Gordon Bliss, current nominees are President, Samuel Townsel II; Vice President, Harvey Stalarow; Secretary, James C. Senneff, Jr.; Treasurer, Eddie Aycock; Board, Joe Kingsberry, Charles Aselin

Upcoming Club Events: The N'Crowd holiday bash and combat gift exchange will take place at the home of Vincent and Ingrid Walker on Dec. 12.

Old Business: Tom Marsh mentioned the Oklahoma City Train Show is Dec. 5-6 and that it is the best train show in the region. Tom also said the N'Crowd trip to Louisiana is postponed until April 2016.

Motion to adjourn made by Tom Marsh and seconded by Vincent Walker. The meeting was adjourned at 7:46 p.m.

(Meeting reports are condensed from the full minutes, which are available to members upon request.)

Houston N'Crowd Membership Meeting Report 18 November 2015 Prepared by James C. Senneff, Jr. - Secretary

President's Report: President Vincent Walker called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m.

The next meeting is 16 December 2015 at Papa Ben's at 7:00 p.m. All members in attendance this month received a car from the club's surplus car box. No club cars were auctioned this month.

Vice President's Report: none

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Eddie Aycock reported cash on hand as of 18 November is \$10,562.13, CD value is \$4,819.25 and we are now down \$227 for the year.

Secretary's Report: Secretary James C. Senneff, Jr. recorded 16 member in attendance tonight: Dejan Suskarcevic, Tom Wayburn, Allen Melton, Randy Ollett, Samuel Townsel II, Richard Bartlett, James Senneff, Jr., Kyle Senneff, Vincent Walker, Fred Keal, Eddie Aycock, Harvey Stalarow, Tom Marsh, Al Hague, Gordon Bliss and Ray Byer.

New Business: Layout Master Al Hague recommended that the club convert the locomotive from a donated Con-Cor NYC collector passenger train set to DCC and replace the car trucks at an estimated cost of \$100. After discussion, the club voted to put the set

for sale on consignment with Papa Ben's. Al Hague also said the N'Crowd locomotive roster was aging and he proposed we purchase several new Kato locomotives. After discussion, club members present concluded that enough locomotives were available to operate the layout and no action was taken.

Tom Marsh noted that a work cart left in the layout room is blocking access to the area around the refinery. The cart will not fit under the layout, and there is no place to store it at Papa Ben's. Richard Bartlett said he would remove the cart.

Old Business: Vice President Samuel Townsel II, as spokesperson for the committee formed to research and prepare a proposal on the viability of purchasing a laser cutter, presented the committee's report and this initiated a lengthy discussion on the subject. The full minutes related to the discussion are available on request.

Some members felt that there might be a need for the laser cutter but they want to make sure there is enough club usage and interest to justify the high purchase price. Vincent Walker moved that the discussion be tabled until the Dec. 12 party, as that would be a relaxed event without time constraints. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Ray Byer made a motion asking club members to come up with a number of projects they might use the laser cutter for and be prepared to discuss the purchase at the party. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously by club vote.

Members present were reminded that the N'Crowd Open House in conjunction with the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Fall Layout Tour will be Dec. 5-6.

Gordon Bliss presented an update on the recent HOOTERS operating sessions. Gordon hosted two sessions and Eddie Aycock hosted one session during the event. Model railroaders from Oklahoma, Louisiana and Texas participated.

Upcoming Club Events: The N'Crowd holiday bash and combat gift exchange will take place at the home of Vincent and Ingrid Walker on Dec. 12.

2016 Officer Elections: Tom Marsh made a motion to proceed with the election of officers; the motion was seconded by Vincent Walker and passed. Voting was facilitated by Gordon Bliss; no nominations were presented from the floor. The ballots were tallied by Gordon Bliss and witnessed by Ray Byer. The results were as follows.

President: Samuel Townsel II
Vice President: Harvey Stalarow
Secretary: James C. Senneff, Jr.
Treasurer: Eddie Aycock
Board Member: Joe Kingsberry

The elected officers and board member will take office Jan. 1, 2016.

Dejan made a presentation on a \$15 DCC system he built for locomotive control using a cell phone. Parts are readily available to build the module, which can operate either DCC or DC locomotives. Dejan plans to use his to control an outdoor train during the holidays.

Motion to adjourn was made by Vincent Walker and seconded by Gordon Bliss. The meeting was adjourned at 8:07 p.m.

(Meeting reports are condensed from the full minutes, which are available to members upon request.)

LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Wish him well: Best wishes for a speedy recovery to long-time N'Crowd member Steve Lancaster! We hope to see you back in action soon.

How the ACS-64 came to tour the BC&G: As you can see by the photo on page 4 and the one below, Kato's newest N-scale passenger train recently toured

our own BC&G Railroad. Early production samples of the new ACS-64 locomotives and Amfleet I cars were shipped by Kato to selected hobby retailers for display, and Papa Ben's was one of those chosen. The train can be seen in the round display case at the front of the store. We would not have had this opportunity without Papa Ben's. Support your local hobby shop!



HOUSTON N'CROWD TIME TABLE

November 18

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

December 3-5

Southern Plains N-Scale Convention, Oklahoma City

December 5-6

BC&G Open House for San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Fall Layout Tour

Oklahoma City Train Show, State Fairgrounds

December 12

Annual Holiday Bash and Combat Gift Exchange; see page 6

December 16

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

January 20, 2016

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

February 7

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

February 17

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

March 16

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

April 3

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

April 9

Trip to Louisiana RR Days, bus over, Amtrak back

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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