



News from Houston N'Crowd



May/June 2015

THE ORDERBOARD



WP in Houston

by Samuel Townsel II

Greetings fellow railfans! The last time I submitted an article, I told you about a website created and maintained by railfans across the country named www.heritageunits.com. Although the website is a great tool for tracking and spotting your favorite heritage units, sometimes the luck of the draw is just as nice.

In late April, I decided to take the scenic route home from dropping my children off at school. The scenic route crosses the former Southern Pacific "Rabbit Line" in Humble, Texas. As I took my time crossing the tracks, I saw locomotive headlights

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"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Vincent Walker, President

It was mud, not mudbugs...

Sorry we had to cancel the crawfish boil! After the rains, flooding and general Hell we had here in Houston, the forecasters were still calling for an 80 chance of rain that Saturday. Chef Eric called and suggested we cancel and/or reschedule.

All members who had signed up for the event at Zube Park were contacted by email, but we did not send out a general email, and for that we apologize. Thanks to Tom Marsh for his help in contacting everyone.

We wanted to be on the safe side knowing that the park grounds would be wet and muddy, and we didn't want anyone to be caught in the possible additional rains and floods; the cancellation was all about safety. We can always reschedule events, and it would not be any fun if we found out someone was hurt or had their car flooded out getting there.

We'll schedule another event at Zube Park to take advantage of the Houston Area Live Steamers' monthly public run day.

Thanks to hard work on the part of Ray Byer, most of the electrical issues that have cropped up on the club layout have been resolved, and we had a successful operating session on June 3. Let's thank Ray for his work in getting the layout running, and let's keep it that way. Please don't make any alterations to the wiring before talking to Chief Electrician Ray and Layout Master Al Hague.

Remember Papa Ben's is the only true trains-only hobby store in Houston. You need to come by every now and then to show your appreciation for

our layout space. The way I see it, we get a lot of folks coming in and saying where they are from they don't have a good train store to patronize. Without Papa Ben's we could be one of these people wondering where we can get stuff when it's needed right then. So come on down, enjoy your N'Crowd club layout, the shop and your model railroad friends!

If you missed our visit to founding N'Crowd member Greg Johnson's superb SP in East Texas layout, you have another chance. On Oct. 10, Greg has agreed to host the club again, and we may even get him to do another clinic. Last visit, he showed us some quick and easy scenery techniques. We'll be asking for a head count when the date is closer.

Remember October will be a busy month for the club. We have an operating session scheduled, we are tentatively planning a trip to the DeQuincy Railroad Museum along with a ride on Amtrak's Sunset Limited, we have the invitation to Greg's layout and we will be getting ready for the November layout tours. Be sure to come to the June 17 membership meeting at Papa Ben's to get the latest word on all these happenings.

Until next time, happy railroading!

Vincent



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
June 17 / July 15 / August 19 / September 16

BC&G Operating Sessions:
August 5 / October 7 / December 2

Most activities take place at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. Our monthly membership meetings and the BC&G Wednesday operating sessions start at 7 p.m. Come earlier to join us for dinner!

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

President Vincent A. Walker called the meeting to order at 7:04 p.m.

President's Report: The next meeting is March 18 at Papa Ben's at 7:00 pm.

Door prize winners: Al Hague, centerbeam car; Christian Nauls, centerbeam car; Tom Wayburn, two boxcar shells; Steve Lancaster, SP gondola; James Senneff, Jr., motor truck set. **Club cars auctioned:** Al Hague, Tank-Train car \$7; Charles Aselin, Santa Fe flatcar \$10; Christian Nauls, Northern Pacific center flow hopper \$7.

Vice President's Report: no report

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Eddie Aycock reported account totals as of Jan. 31, 2015: cash \$10,790; CD \$4,818. Car sales \$20; donations \$122, club dues \$425. Club dues are due in January of each year. There are no prorated dues.

Secretary's Report: Secretary James C. Senneff, Jr. reported 20 members in attendance: Dejan Suskavcevic, Barry Miles, Tom Wayburn, Amy Wayburn, Tom Marsh, Richard Bartlett, Steve Lancaster, James Senneff, Jr., Ted Davis, Gordon Bliss, Vincent Walker, Al Hague, Christian Nauls, Eddie Aycock, Charlie Aselin, Samuel Townsel II, John Sweigart, Joe Kingsberry, Rick Townsend and Ray Byer.

New Business: Club will have one or two tables at the Greater Houston Train Show. Show is at Stafford Centre on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2015, from 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Volunteers are Gordon Bliss, Vincent Walker, Samuel Townsel II, Eddie Aycock, Dejan Suskavcevic, Rick Townsend and Charlie Aselin. Vincent will bring both banners and the test track. Tables and chairs are supplied by the show coordinator. Tom Marsh will bring club applications and newsletters to the show. John Sweigart said that he would be at Papa Ben's Train Place to run trains on the club layout during the show.

Eric Baugham once again is organizing a club crawfish boil. It will be in May or June. It will most likely be held in June. President Walker will let us know when the date is set for the crawfish boil.

Tom Marsh started the discussion on Club train trips for this year. Under consideration are Amtrak trips from Lafayette, La. or Lake Charles, La. This would be a bus ride to either location and then a train ride back. The Lake Charles trip could include a visit to the DeQuincy Railroad Museum. Estimated cost is about \$50 per person, which would include the bus and rail fare. The bus would leave around 8:00 a.m. from the Houston Amtrak station. The return train is scheduled to arrive at 6:18 p.m. the same day.

Harvey Stalarow is still gathering information from suppliers for club shirts and he will find out the pricing and minimum order required. A box in the club room has the name badge template; badges can be made at Office Depot.

There was a motion to the board members to approve renewal members and new members separately. The board members voted and approved the members in review for February.

Upcoming Clinics:

March - Gordon Bliss, passenger train operations clinic.

April - Dejan Suskavcevic, JMRI with a cell phone.

May - Gordon & Eddie, trip to Australia.

June - President Walker, painting.

July - Joe Kingsberry, painting and weathering.

August - Samuel Townsel II, 3-D track planning.

Old Business: Layout report - Ray Byer said we have trouble in the yard to Union Station area, including multiple crossed wires underneath the area. Rewiring will result in four power blocks; lower staging will need a reverser. Ray is still trying to address all the wiring issues. No ballasting or major scenery will be done until the track is running well. There was additional discussion on whether to have a second siding or an engine track by the Austin entrance. A secondary idea was to have a passing track at Flatonia off of the main line, which will cause some minor disturbances to scenery in Flatonia. The question is if the siding will meet the required minimum of six feet in length. Samuel will draw it out for consideration.

Tom Marsh informed the club that the City of Tomball has purchased all the land necessary for the new railroad museum adjacent to Tomball Depot Park.

Eddie Aycock reported that the last operating session was a little too long for some. When it was over, there was still a mix of operating session cars and everyday running cars on the layout. Club discussion on the matter ensued. After the discussion, it was decided to leave the operating session cars on the layout overnight and someone will come the next day and remove them. Eddie also said that the operating session cars need to be checked for weighting and coupler condition, and if there are any duplicate cars, they need to be removed from the operations car stock.

Richard Bartlett donated an industrial backdrop to the Club.

Motion to adjourn made by President Vincent Walker and seconded by Vice President Samuel Townsel II. The meeting was adjourned at 8:12 p.m.

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

President Vincent A. Walker called the meeting to order at 7:07 p.m.

President's Report: The next meeting is April 15, 2015, at Papa Ben's Train Place at 7:00 p.m.

Door prize winners: Randy Ollett, boxcar; John Sweigart, hopper and cattle car; Tom Wayburn, two boxcar shells; Steve Lancaster, ore car and gondola. **Club cars auctioned:** Al Hague, BNSF Hopper \$4 ; Randy Ollett, BN hopper \$4; Randy Ollett, Bush Presidential Box Car \$5.

Vice President's Report: VP not in attendance.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Eddie Aycock reported cash in checking, \$11,175 and CD \$4,818. We collected \$854 more dollars than we spent in 2014. We have nine new members. The club welcomed new member Randy Ollett, who lives in Katy, Texas and models what he calls transcontinental railroading.

Secretary's Report: Secretary James C. Senneff, Jr. reported 17 members in attendance tonight: Dejan Suskavcevic, Barry Miles, Tom Wayburn, Randy Ollett, Tom Marsh, Richard Bartlett, Steve Lancaster, James Senneff, Jr., Ted Davis, Gordon Bliss, Vincent Walker, Al Hague, Ray Byer, Christian Nauls, Eddie Aycock, John Sweigart, and Joe Kingsberry.

New Business: Chef Eric is ready for the crawfish boil on April 18 at Zube Park. Vince Walker brought Club shirts and Tom Marsh confirmed that the shirts will be \$25 and must be prepaid. Embroidering is an additional \$8. Shirts can be ordered in March and April at the Club meeting. After that, you will have to mail in the order for the shirt with the payment.

Gordon Bliss will present a passenger train operations clinic after the meeting tonight.

At the Stafford train show, President Walker met a gentleman from Baton Rouge, La., named Forrest Becht. He has a train photography business and among the things he sells are old pictures taken at Houston Union Station. Vincent bought 15 pictures from him that he showed at tonight's meeting.

Tom Marsh asked all members to please turn in submissions on time for the newsletter. The club voted to approve one pending membership renewal. Tom Marsh continued the discussion on a possible combination bus/train trip. Most likely it will be in September or October by bus to either Lafayette or Lake Charles, La., and return to Houston on Amtrak. Cost of the day trip will be about \$60 per person.

Upcoming Clinics:

March - Gordon Bliss, passenger train operations clinic.

April - Dejan Suskavcevic, JMRI with a cell phone.

May - Gordon & Eddie, trip to Australia.

June - President Walker, painting.

July - Joe Kingsberry, painting and weathering.

August - Samuel Townsel II, 3-D track planning.

Old Business: Ray Byer reported on layout wiring issues, and indicated that we will not have an operation session in April. Ray has been debugging the layout.

The passenger station and the industrial area by the station need to be rewired. Some of the suitcase connectors and drops are not making good contact. Ray is modifying the power districts on this part of the layout, and four will be set up: bridges and turntable/roundhouse area; Englewood Yard; industries around Union Station; and Union Station loop and passing siding. Ray reports we no longer need an auto reverser at the bridges. In the yard, an ElectroFrog turnout at the end near the engine facility needs to be isolated or replaced. Several sidings are dead due to problems with the suitcase connectors. Also, some drops were never connected. In the far corner where the two tracks come around to the yard, Ray found drops that were intended for one track connected to the other track. Some wires were run across to another power district, making the whole area one giant power district. Ray also found six different splices on the mainline bus wiring. He is going to rewire the main line bus to get rid of the splices. Ray said he was really impressed with our Digitrax equipment, because with all the wiring issues the layout should not be running at all and it is. He expects the layout will be up and running correctly in about three weeks. Eddie Aycock asked Ray if he needed help with the wiring, but Ray said that if he needs additional help, he will let the club know.

President Vincent Walker moved to adjourn; seconded by Richard Bartlett. Meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

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

WP in Houston *from page 1*

approaching the grade crossing and decided to turn around, pull over and take a video of the oncoming train. To my surprise, the point unit was none other than the Union Pacific's Western Pacific heritage unit! I decided to chase this train and that enabled me to put my "Railfanning Guide" to good use.

I have studied all of the UP mainlines in Harris County and marked safe places to watch trains as they leave or approach the railroad's three main yards. Case in point with chasing the Western Pacific: After it passed me in Humble, I jumped on US-59, headed south and waited for it to pass at Bennington Road. I know an interlocking is located just south of that grade crossing that often requires a slow approach or a stop before trains proceed through.

My next place to watch trains (and probably the best) is at a dead end street just south of Quitman St. where the line approaches another interlocking. This location is great because you can see if the train is headed to Englewood Yard or is continuing south. Luckily, this train was headed to Englewood, so I headed to the receiving yard, which is located just north of Wallisville Rd. Because of my "Railfanning Guide", I was able to get some fantastic photos and videos of one of Union Pacific's rarest locomotives.

If you enjoy railfanning in Harris County, I encourage you to scout out strategic and safe places along the mainlines, and enjoy happy and safe railfanning!



Above and bottom photo on the cover: UP No. 1983, the Western Pacific heritage unit, leads its train through Englewood Yard. The top cover photo shows the locomotive and train just south of Quitman St.

Union Pacific's Commemorative Locomotives

Union Pacific refers to its specially painted motive power as "Commemorative Locomotives". According to the company's website, the railroad has created only 15 commemorative locomotives in its 150-year history.

Today's UP is the product of a series of major railroad mergers that took place between 1982 and 1996. No. 1983 is one of the locomotives UP has painted to pay "homage to those railroads, and the generations of men and women who helped to build a great nation, and the foundation for our future."

The other "fallen flags" commemorated by UP include Missouri Pacific Railroad (UP No. 1982), Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad (UP No. 1988), Denver & Rio Grande Western Railroad (UP No. 1989), Chicago & North Western Railroad (UP No. 1995) and Southern Pacific Railroad (UP No. 1996). The locomotive numbers represent the year the various roads were merged into Union Pacific.

Other UP commemorative locomotives have recognized President George H. W. Bush, the Olympics, United Way, scouting, breast cancer awareness and the U.S. military.

Inspiration from the prototype by Tom Marsh

A trip to the Fort Worth area for the annual 24 Hours @ Saginaw gathering afforded an opportunity to study the real railroad and make note of details that will make my model railroad more realistic, if and when I get around to building it!

For the past ten years, the 24 Hours @ Saginaw event has been organized by North Texas Chapter,

National Railway Historical Society. Taking place over Memorial Day weekend, the event brings together railfans at Saginaw, a suburb of Fort Worth and a major railroad junction, to watch trains and participate in various related activities from 7 p.m. on Friday to 7 p.m. on Saturday. The train count through Saginaw can range from about 50 to 70 or more per day.



Modernize

Over the last year or so, the Saginaw interlocking plant has been rebuilt, and new signals and control boxes, still gleaming new, are now in place.

The wooden utility poles that had been part of the old plant have been removed. Is your railroad keeping up-to-date?



Mix it up

Perfectly matched locomotive consists can look great, but in the real world there's more variety, as seen on these trains passing through Saginaw over Labor Day weekend 2015.



Odd man out

In typical unit train fashion, this empty sulphur train was made up of many essentially identical black tank cars, except for one. You can model this!



LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Well deserved: Houston N'Crowd President Vincent Walker recently presented Papa Ben's proprietor Allyn Pearlman with a gift certificate for some fine dining in recognition of Allyn's support of the club. Without that support, we would be out on the streets. Thanks, Allyn!



More thanks: Vincent also forwarded some photos taken at the last BC&G operating session. The hustle and bustle shown at our June 3 operating session would not have been possible without the work of member Ray Byer to get the BC&G's electrical system in shape. Thanks, Ray!



HOUSTON N'CROWD TIME TABLE

May 16-17

Jefferson Train Days and Train Show, Jefferson, Texas

May 20

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

May 22-23

North Texas Chapter NRHS 24 Hours @ Saginaw Railfan Event

June 3

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

June 24-28

National N-Scale Convention, Sacramento, Calif.

June 17

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

July 15

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

July 22-25

NMRA Lone Star Region Convention, Beaumont

July 25-26

San Antonio Model Railroad Association Summer Family Train Show

August 5

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

August 19

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

August 23-29

NMRA National Convention, Portland, Ore.

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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