



News from Houston N'Crowd



July/August 2018

THE ORDERBOARD



Photo by Vincent Walker

N'Crowd visits Texas State Railroad and Tomball Depot Museum

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

There's more to this than just the models

While the N'Crowd exists to promote our shared hobby of model railroading (and give those of us without a home layout a place to run some trains!), there's more to it than just model trains. This is why we strive to set up related events, such as our recent ride on the Texas State Railroad and our visit to the Tomball Depot Museum.

If you haven't participated in one of our outings for a while, you're missing out on one of the great benefits of the hobby, the fellowship that naturally develops when people with joint interests get together. Sometimes we even learn new things about railroads, railroading and our efforts to model same!

Even something as simple as heading trackside to

catch yet another photo of the *Sunset Limited* can yield a good time, as happened when Barry Miles and I ran into John Sweigart one Sunday when we took a break from working on the BC&G to watch Amtrak hustle past. I think seeing the real thing on a regular basis adds to my modeling enjoyment, and as some of you may have experienced, as a result I can tell you more than you want to know about running accurate Amtrak consists.

We'll have more "extracurricular activities" later in the year when it's not so hot, including a ride on the *Sunset Limited*. Until next time, Happy Railroading!

Tom

Below, N'Crowd members John Sweigart, at left reasonably standing in the shade, and Barry Miles enjoy the sights and sounds of Amtrak's Sunset Limited as it crosses Bellaire Blvd. at about 60 mph on Sunday, May 6. Your president was enjoying the scene as well, and the company of like-minded friends.



Houston N'Crowd 2018 Officers and Volunteers

President Tom Marsh
 Vice President Richard Bartlett
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 Treasurer Eddie Aycock
 Board Member (2018) Joe Kingsberry

Board Member (2019) Allan Melton
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 Layout Master Joe Kingsberry
 Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
 July 18 / August 15 / September 19 / October 17

N'Crowd Operating Sessions: First Sunday of even-numbered months. Watch your email for information.

Most activities take place at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. Our monthly membership meetings start at 7 p.m. and are open to all. Operating sessions take place at various locations.

Kinfolk of the Rails

by Joe Kingsberry

While reading one of my many books on Southern Pacific's early diesel motive power, I came across a passage about the EMD GP9 and GP20 being "cousins" with the same length and wheel base. The last GP-9s SP purchased were low-nosed, similar in appearance to what would be the GP20 carbody.

That got me to thinking. I had a couple of N-scale Life-Like GP20s, one running, the other not. I never really cared much for the Life-Like GP20 mechanisms, so I wondered if I could re-motor them with DCC decoder-friendly Atlas GP9 mechanisms, which are more robust and dependable.

I purchased two up-to-date, decoder-friendly Atlas

GP9s and installed the mechanisms in the GP20 shells. Everything fit well with very little modification needed. The Life-Like fuel tank even snapped into place. I did bevel the upper part of the Atlas frame slightly with a file. With limited space in the GP20 shell, I used a Digitrax DN163A4 decoder.

The GP20 duo runs well and I MU them regularly with high-nose GP9s, GP30s and GP35s just like the SP did. They are truly kinfolk of the rails.

Editor's note: Joe says he might soon tackle a project to combine parts from GP9 and GP20 body shells to model one of SP's low-nosed GP9s.



At top, N'Crowd's own Joe Kingsberry successfully mated Life-Like GP20 shells to new Atlas GP9 mechanisms. Along with Joe's trademark super-detailing and painting, he has captured the look of the prototypes, as shown above in this view of an SP GP20 leading a colorful lashup 1979. At right, Joe has been busy with other projects as well, including painting and detailing a new GP38 and caboose for service on the N'Crowd's Bayou City & Gulf Railroad. Prototype photo by Howard Laker; two others by Tom Marsh



N'Crowd rides the Texas State Railroad!

N'Crowd members joined friends from the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club for a ride behind steam on the Texas State Railroad on May 26. The successful outing was organized by N'Crowd Vice President Richard Bartlett.

Richard picked a great day for our visit, as it was the first steam-powered train of the 2018 season and it marked the first outing for the refurbished former TSRR No. 300. Now lettered as Southern Pine Lumber Co. No. 28, the 2-8-0 looks less like a circus engine and more like a working locomotive. N'Crowd member Gordon Bliss says, "They got rid of that awful red jacketing and the engine is now all black with a graphite smoke box, and it looks awesome!"

TSRR marked No. 28's return to service by posing it before the day's run with T&P 2-10-2 No. 610 and the TSRR's recently restored EMD FP9 No. 125. The diesel is painted in an MKT-inspired red, silver and yellow paint scheme, as shown on the front cover of this issue. Gordon reports that a lot of railfans and others were on hand to see the

newly turned-out locomotives.

The trip originated at Palestine. Gordon says, "It was a great ride with 13 N'Crowd and 19 San Jac members riding. I think we had some new engineers, not sure if they knew the railroad that well or not. A couple of times I think we got up to 25 to 30 mph and then down to a crawl at the top of a couple of the hills. The best part was he slipped the drivers at least eight or nine times, producing some of the best stack talk I think I have ever heard here."

After returning to Palestine from Rusk, No. 28 was turned on the wye and then used to return the FP9 and 610 to the car barn. Gordon says, "But the best part was watching No. 28 try to shove 610 into the barn. She is a heavy engine and he slipped her once and then very slowly eased her in."

According to the TSRR website, steam trains will run out of Palestine through July and then start departing from the Rusk depot in August and September. Excursions run every Thursday, Friday and Saturday.



Southern Pine Lumber Co. No. 128, with its new "working class" look, was the star of the day for steam fans at its 2018 debut on the Texas State Railroad. Built in 1917 by Baldwin Locomotive Works for the U.S. Army, No. 128 is one of two surviving U.S. Army "Pershing" locomotives. After the Great War ended, the 2-8-0 was sold for work in the lumber industry in Louisiana and Texas. No. 128 was donated to TSRR in 1976, but did not enter excursion service until the late 1980s. For much of its career on the state-owned railroad, the locomotive sported a bright red boiler jacket and gleaming yellow lettering and striping, as seen in the inset photo. Main photo by Gordon Bliss; inset by Tom Marsh



Above, action at the Palestine car barn as Texas State Railroad 2-8-0 No. 28 prepares for a 10 a.m. departure. Photo by James Senneff, Jr.



TSRR kicked off its 2018 season with the debut of a restored streamlined diesel, FP9 No. 125. The locomotive was built in the late 1950s for Canadian National Railway by GMD, the Canadian division of GM Electro-Motive Division. According to its website, TSRR will use the cab unit "on a number of select dates throughout the 2018 season". At left above, T&P No. 610 stands next to gleaming, "new" Texas State Railroad FP9 No. 125, while at right, N'Crowd member Vincent Walker poses with No. 125. Left by Vincent Walker, right by Vincent C. Walker



Above, despite the heat, N'Crowd members enjoy the ride in one of Texas State Railroad's open-window excursion cars. Photos by Gordon Bliss



Above, SPL Co. No. 28 strikes a fine pose on its first day of operation on the Texas State Railroad in 2018. The 2-8-0 turned 100 years old in 2017. Photo by Vincent Walker



Above, No. 28's engineer puts on a show as the train crosses the Neches River. Photo by Gordon Bliss

At right, this is shortline railroading in the piney woods of East Texas: a tree has fallen across the tracks. Photo by James Senneff, Jr.



N' Crowd Tours Tomball Depot Park

By Tom Marsh

N' Crowd's 40th Anniversary year activities continued on Sunday, June 24, with a tour of the Tomball Depot Museum.

The Tomball depot was built in the early 1900s by the Trinity & Brazos Valley Railway. It is now owned by the city and houses a large Z-scale model railroad and artifacts related to Tomball's history.

The depot has been moved from its original location, but it still sits alongside the railroad. The former T&BV mainline through Tomball is now operated by BNSF.

The town was originally named Peck, but was renamed in 1907 in honor of Thomas Henry Ball after the coming of the railroad. Tom Ball was responsible for the railroad building through the community.



Our day started with lunch at Brautigam's Bar N Grill just a block away from the depot. Despite the "N" in the name, there was no N-scale stuff in the restaurant, so we headed to the depot to see the recently installed Z-scale layout. A bay window caboose on the property houses a Lionel layout, while a new extension to a shed allows display of a Fairmont motor car.





Who will hold the record for the longest train on the BC&G? N'Crowd VP Richard Bartlett's Challengers are in the running, as he proved May 12 when No. 3802 pulled 68 coal cars around the layout!

A challenge to run the longest train!

Dear N'Crowd members:

As you all know, we have a cadre of members that usually run trains on the club's BC&G Railroad at Papa Ben's on Saturdays. This includes John Sweigart, Joe Kingsberry, Alan Melton, Barry Miles, Randy Ollett and myself. The cadre usually has more than two trains running at any one time and each of us are known for our preferences for trains to run. John likes to run club rolling stock, Joe runs anything Southern Pacific, Alan enjoys running his Challenger or his UP diesels pulling passenger cars, Barry is our Amtrak go-to guy, I generally run various passenger trains, while Randy's preference is "the longer the train the better!"

On Saturday, May 12, the usual members were in attendance. Barry, John and I were running four trains when Randy arrived after the NMRA DCC clinic put on by Ray Byer. Randy had a particularly long coal train pulled by his favorite BNSF three-diesel consist. Within a short time he had 59 coal cars travelling around the layout. As I felt the other three members had the club duties covered, I packed up my two passenger trains. While doing this, I commented to Randy that one of my Challengers could pull his train without any diesel assistance.

Randy declared that was NOT possible. So, I went to my trunk stash of goodies and pulled out my Denver and Rio Grande Challenger No. 3802. While I was gone Randy added nine more coal cars! When I returned, Randy backed his diesel consist into a siding, and I attached the Challenger. The Challenger pulled all 68 coal cars all the way around the layout with an effort that only required throttle numbers of 43 to 48! This establishes a new club record for cars pulled by a single locomotive.

Upon hearing this, Gordon Bliss vowed he will beat this new record! So, the "Challenge" is on to all other N Crowd members! Run your longest train. To see if I can extend this record, I plan on bringing in my Western Maryland Challenger, which is the strongest of my 11 Challenger collection!

Richard Bartlett
Vice President

BC&G represented at 13th Annual 24 Hours@Saginaw

By Tom Marsh



Your editor counting trains at the 2018 24 Hours@Saginaw train-watching event. Photo by Jerry Dorcz

The North Texas Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society and the Saginaw Chamber of Commerce hosted the 13th annual “24 Hours@Saginaw” event on Friday and Saturday, May 25-26, and I was asked by the organizer to be the “Official Train Counter”. I did so in style in a BC&G Safety T-Shirt.

Rather than counting trains, the Official Train Counter counts movements through the busy Saginaw interlocking. This year, 58 movements were recorded. In addition to through and local freight trains, moves included Amtrak’s *Heartland Flyer*, several transfer runs between the BNSF’s former FW&D and Santa Fe facilities, three light engine moves and three hi-rail vehicle moves.

24 Hours@Saginaw attracts an increasing number of young railfans and many camp out overnight at the site with their families. Organizers estimate participants this year numbered in excess of 150. The event provides a safe venue to catch the rail action just north of Fort Worth, where the mainlines of the former Rock Island, Fort Worth & Denver and Santa Fe railroads funnel through the confines of the junction. The Rock Island line is now operated by Union Pacific; the other two are important BNSF lines. At the site, the Saginaw Chamber of Commerce is housed in the restored Houston & Texas Central depot from Kosse, Texas, and the railfan-friendly chamber facilities include restrooms and ample parking.



Art imitating life - for real!

N'Crowd member Barry Miles recently found himself in the right place at the right time while railfanning when he took this shot of a Railbox car with some unique graffiti. Aside from the size of the image, what sets this graffiti effort apart from some others is that Micro-Trains offered the car in its graffiti series in 2015, and Barry owns one!



Above, the real thing on the high iron, and below, the Micro-Trains version on the BC&G. Arguably the graffiti might not be considered art by some, but it is real life. On the other hand, the Micro-Trains model is art of its own sort, generated by the artisans who crafted the tooling and the graphic illustrators who reproduced the image in 1/160 scale.



Atlas acquires Walthers locomotive and rolling stock tooling

Atlas Model Railroad Company, Inc. will purchase all of the tooling for N-scale locomotives and rolling stock currently held by Wm. K. Walthers, Inc.

The sale to Atlas includes former Life-Like tooling owned by Walthers. In a statement, Atlas said the tooling will be incorporated into the company's Atlas Master, Atlas Classic and Trainman N-scale lines. Walthers will continue to offer N-scale items in its Cornerstone, SceneMaster and Walthers Controls brands, including

new items as well as items currently in those lines.

Atlas Executive Chairman Tom Haedrich said, "We're pleased to be bringing these former Walthers N-scale models back to the market so that they can be enjoyed by present and future model railroaders alike."

The sale continues Walthers' exit from the N-scale rolling stock market; the company sold its passenger car tooling to Lowell Smith in December 2017. The passenger cars will be produced under the RailSmith brand.

Another one from the “what could have been” department

In the last issue, N’Crowd member Andrew Monaghan showed us his take on what an EMD SD70ACe would look like in the green and yellow scheme of the MKT. Now Andrew has another modern interpretation to share, this time with an adaptation of Missouri Pacific’s “Jenks Blue” paint scheme. Named after MoPac’s cost-cutting president Downing B. Jenks, the scheme debuted shortly after Jenks took the president’s position in 1961, and was used until the MoP was merged into Union Pacific in 1982. The dark blue replaced a more complicated - and expensive - gray and blue scheme.



Special deals for members from the Veep!

N’Crowd Vice President Richard Bartlett has some special offers for N’Crowd members per his message below. Please contact Richard directly at generepair2@yahoo.com if you are interested.

To Houston N Crowd members:

I am selling my Challenger steam locomotive collection and would like to give club members first chance to buy one of these powerful engines before I put them up on eBay. My price for these is \$250 for non-Greyhound engines and \$275 for the UP Greyhound engines. I have three different numbers for the Greyhound engines; the non-Greyhound engines are a mix of UP, Denver & Rio Grande, and Western Maryland. Please email generepair2@yahoo.com ASAP with your interest and what version you desire.

I also have a selection of Peco code 80 switches and switch machines. The switches are \$15.00 if new or \$13.00 if not boxed. All have the functional spring in the frog. The switch machines can include an indicator switch to show whether the switch is set for the mainline or diverging route using an LED target light. The switch machines are \$10.00 with the indicators, \$8.00 without.

I have over 400 feet of code 70 Shinohara flex track (3' length) and a selection of all types of Shinohara code 70 switches and switch machines. This flex track can be bent in either direction because of alternating connections between the ties, while Atlas can only bend one way. Code 70 is slightly more realistic than 80, and all of the Challengers will roll on this track without tie-hop as some of them do on code 55.

Shinohara switches are \$12 for right and left #6 and #8. There are beautiful double curved left and right switches for \$25 each that are twice as long as the Peco or Atlas switches. There are double crossover as well as double slip and three-way switches, which are \$45, \$25 and \$35, respectively. I have over 200 Shinohara switches. The Peco switch machines work well with these code 70 Shinohara switches as do the Caboose Industries manual switch throws.

Richard Bartlett
generepair2@yahoo.com

LCL *Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor*

Thanks to contributors: Thanks to everyone who submitted articles and photos for this issue of *The Orderboard*. The deadline for the September/October issue is Friday, Sept. 7. Won't you contribute to an upcoming issue?

The graffiti debate: Some like it, many hate it. "It" is the graffiti that seems to be an integral part of modern railroading, as so-called street artists with varying degrees of ability are attracted to the large canvas that is a modern railroad freight car.

As editor, I try to avoid publishing anything that might be construed as approval of this form of vandalism, or for that matter, any other dangerous, illegal activity. I made an exception with the article on page 10 because I thought the unusual intersection between the hobby, the prototype and a club member was of interest. However, for the record, I am in the "hate it" camp when it comes to graffiti.

Layout room reminders: Please remember when the layout room is open to the public, we would like to have at least two members present. Members should greet visitors and tactfully provide advice on looking without touching. If the room becomes crowded and more than two members are present, it's also a good idea if some members step out of the room for a few minutes to allow plenty of space for visitors.

Club shirts: If you ordered and paid for an N'Crowd 40th Anniversary blue polo shirt, you can pick it up at the July 18 membership meeting or anytime the layout room is open (see John Sweigart or me). If you need to make other arrangements for delivery, send an email to me at tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

Keep us in the loop: If your email or mailing address changes, please send a note to Treasurer Eddie Aycock at efaycock@aol.com so we can keep you up-to-date!

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2018 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

July 18

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

September 19

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

August 5

N'Crowd Operating Session, hosted by Gordon Bliss

October 7

N'Crowd Operating Session

August 11

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: Make & Take Building Session 2

October 13

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: Backdrops

August 15

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

October 17

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

September 8

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series, Bayland Community Center, Houston: LEDs for Model Railroaders

October 27-28

9th Annual New Braunfels Fall Train Show, New Braunfels Civic/Convention Center



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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