

News from Houston N'Crowd



May/June 2020

THE ORDERBOARD



**KEEP
CALM
AND
RAILROAD
ON**

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

We carry on

Welcome everyone to the big pandemic issue of *The Orderboard*. I hope this finds you and yours healthy and as happy as possible given the current circumstances. This issue features model railroading and railfanning updates from many N'Crowd members, proving that model railroaders will pursue their hobby even in trying times. I hope this issue will inspire all of you, even if you are just "armchair railroading"!

N'Crowd achieves IRS nonprofit recognition: Our application to the Internal Revenue Service to be recognized as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization was successful with an effective date of March 22, 2020 (see page 15). This gives us several benefits and added responsibilities. On the benefits side, our organization will no longer pay most sales and income taxes, and most donations to the N'Crowd will be tax-deductible.

On the responsibilities side, we must file annual reports to the IRS and meet certain other obligations. Among these, as a 501(c)(3) organization, the N'Crowd cannot engage in certain types of legislative and candidate election advocacy. We can engage in public advocacy not related to legislation or election of candidates, including supporting the efforts of other nonprofits like museums, historical societies and other groups.

Our 501(c)(3) application stated "N'Crowd Model Railroad Society members strive to learn about and educate the public about contemporary and historical railroading through scale model railroads, demonstrations, tours of museums and historic sites and similar activities." This is really just business as usual for our group, and as always, your suggestions for future activities are welcome.

N'Crowd activity updates: Membership meetings and other in-person gatherings are cancelled until further notice. See the LCL column and Time Table on the back page for more information.

Virtual Test & Tune set for July 1: We're going to experiment with an online web/teleconference for our scheduled July 1 Test & Tune session. More information will be sent by email closer to the date, but plan for a group question and answer session. Got a train problem? Bring your issue to the virtual Test & Tune; we guarantee someone will have an opinion as to what you should do!

Happy railroading!

Tom

Houston N'Crowd 2020 Officers and Volunteers

President Tom Marsh
Vice President John Sweigart
Secretary Bill Busch
Treasurer Eddie Aycock
Board Member (2020) Samuel Townsell II

Board Member (2021) Randy Ollet
Board Member (2022) Allan Melton
Immediate Past President Samuel Townsell II
Layout Master Randy Ollett
Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh



N'Crowd Wednesday **Membership Meetings:**

CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. See the back page for more information.

N'Crowd Test & Tune Sessions: Virtual Test & Tune Session tentatively scheduled for July 1. See comments above, and watch your email for more information.

N'Crowd Operating Sessions: CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

Still working on the railroad!

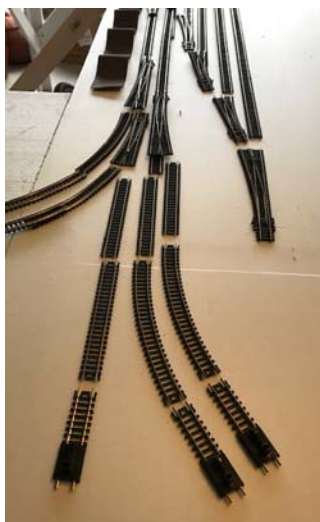
N'Crowd members are moving ahead with various modeling projects despite challenges posed by the ongoing pandemic. Here are updates from some members who are working on their railroads.



Above and right, **Gordon Bliss** shared these photos of new structures under construction for his Santa Fe - All the Way layout.

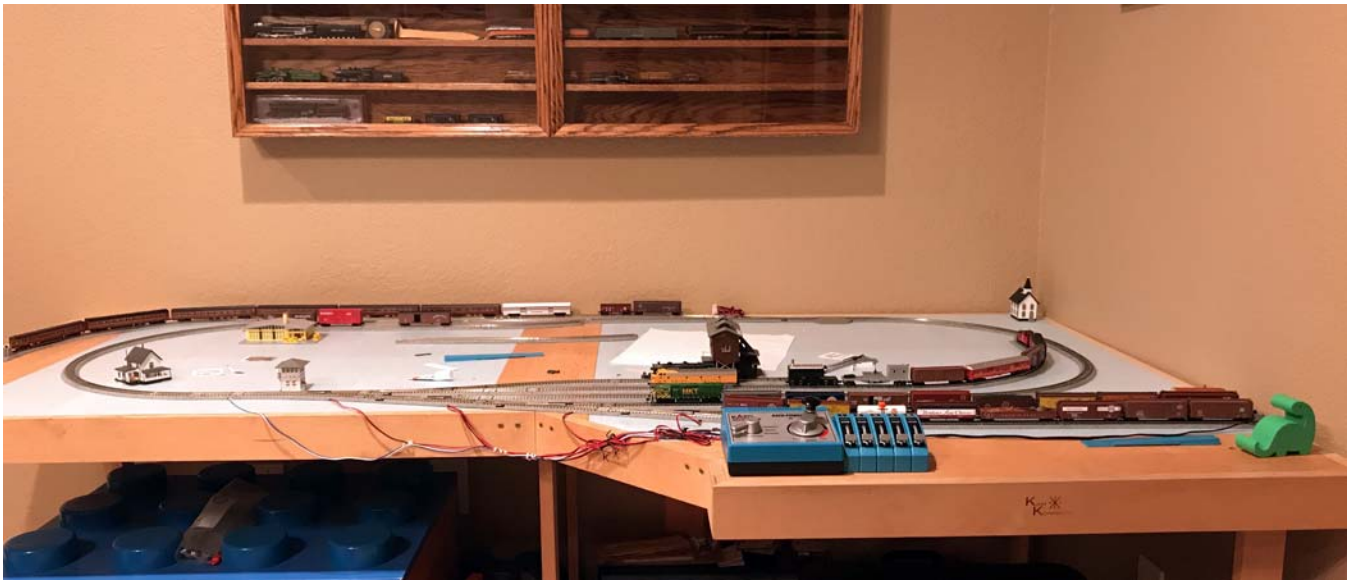


At right, **Russell March** has been engaged in the model railroader's tradition of fitting track on his new layout. Russell is incorporating a continuous running scheme for his grandchildren to enjoy, and a yard and industries for the grownups to enjoy.



CONGRATULATIONS TO PAPA BEN'S TRAIN PLACE

Papa Ben's Train Place received an Honorable Mention in *Model Railroader* magazine's 2020 Readers Choice Awards. Our host shop received the recognition in the "Favorite Retail Hobby Storefront Southwest Region" category.



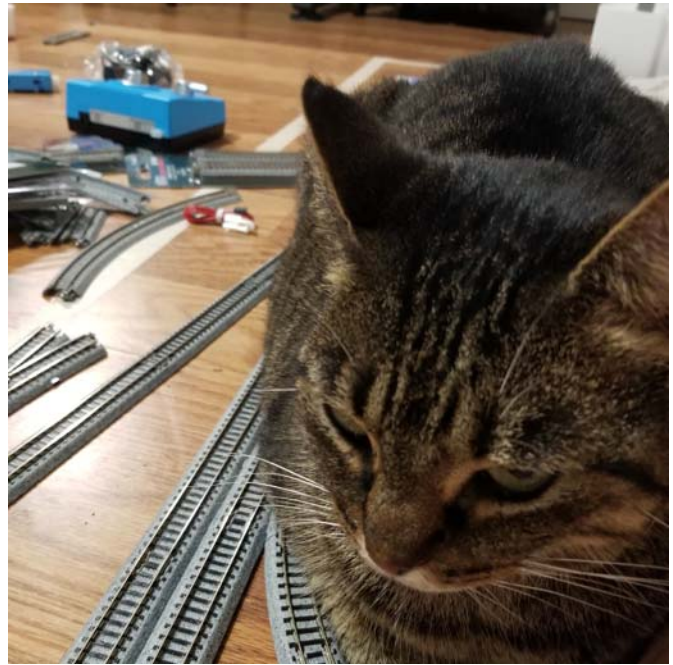
Above and below, **Michael Cianciolo** is adding a new siding to bring in cars carrying produce, furniture and other products for distribution by online industries.



Above, **Vincent Walker** has been finishing up some painting projects, including these MoPac EMD SD40s. They will join other colorful custom painted locomotives on Vince's layout, two of which are seen at right.



Jeff Govin is in the early stages of construction of his new layout. Jeff writes: "Hello folks, Jeff here in Clute, Texas. I hope everyone is hanging in there. Here are some photos I took two weeks before everything went crazy. I'm brainstorming a 5-ft. by 10-ft. layout in my house. My goal is to invite members at some point to show me how to properly wire DCC with Kato track."



Jeff had to modify two walls to accommodate his layout. He has enlisted assistance with track planning.



At right, **Hugh Boyd** has been working on his railroad. Hugh writes: "After many days of quarantine isolation I have my model railroad going pretty much the way I envision. The stack train is proceeding counter-clockwise around my loop at (scale) 40 mph. I replaced the panel graphics and recently automated the selection of two sections of track alignment. Still a couple of minor glitches, but they can wait."

We'll have an article by Hugh about his route automation project in the next issue of The Orderboard.



Above, **James McAuliffe** shared these photos and some information about his N-scale "Valley Quad" layout. The photo at left was taken in June of 2016, while the one at right was taken in December 2019.

The Valley Quad is a 10-ft. by 10-ft., L-shaped layout that is 95 percent finished. James models the 1950s steam-to-diesel transition era in eastern Wyoming, Nebraska and Missouri, featuring trains of the CB&Q, MoPac, MKT, Frisco and other lines.

Four DC power packs allow running of four trains on multiple loops. The layout has 12- and 14-in. radii



curves, some challenging double S curves and 1.2- to 1.8-percent grades

James highlights various freight and passenger operations, including the joint MKT-Frisco Texas Special and Burlington's Silver Streak Zephyr passenger trains. The roster includes 25 steam locomotives, including Big Boys, Challengers, UP FEF Northerns, Mallets, Consolidations and other type. The 35 diesels on the roster represent 15 different models from four builders, EMD, Alco, Fairbanks-Morse and Baldwin. All of the locomotives are representative of the modelled railroads and time frame.

Switching for fun

by Ken Sorrels

I have an N-scale Inglenook switching puzzle layout at home. It is 5-ft. long by 6-in wide. It consists of a main track, a switch lead and two sidings. Equipment needed is an engine, eight cars and a caboose (the caboose is not really necessary for the game).

You need a way to randomize the eight cars. I made up photo cards for each car. To start, draw five photo cards from the eight available. The object is to make up a five-car train on the main track with as few moves as possible, ending with

the cars in the order that you selected them. You can only take three cars into the switch lead, and each siding is limited to three cars.

There are thousands of car arrangements possible. Anyone not familiar with Inglenook switching puzzles should check into them. I find it to be a lot of fun.

Editor's note: You can read more about the Inglenook puzzle here: <http://www.wymann.info/ShuntingPuzzles/sw-inglenook.html>



Above, the basic Inglenook track plan. Below, car cards have been selected and the puzzle solution can begin.



More rocks on the move

A new unit train operation started in early May when Union Pacific delivered 95 hopper cars loaded with limestone to Vulcan Materials at Port Freeport, Texas. The train originated in Medina County, Texas. Vulcan is developing a new aggregate distribution facility on port property. The firm is the nation's largest producer of construction aggregates.

At right, unloading the first unit train delivered to Vulcan Materials at Port Freeport. Photo courtesy Port Freeport



The Ark-La-Tex Line is Back!

by Samuel Townsel II

As we grapple with the effects of COVID-19, most of us have spent a considerable amount of time at home with our families and loved ones. I for one have made the best of the situation and it has given me an opportunity to spend a lot of time on my layout. Since my company banned travel for work in March, I've made considerable progress.

The fascia and backdrop have been installed and painted, as has as the underskirt. Trackwork is 98 percent complete and now I'm analyzing a few hiccups to ensure a smooth-running layout. The major project, the Texarkana Roundhouse and Heritage Center, is complete and fully operational.

I am almost to the point of tackling the scenery and now I am doing some "city planning" by drawing out roads, sidewalks, etc. on grid paper before translating them to the layout. This and looking into what approach I want to take regarding operations will be my focus over the upcoming weeks. In addition, be on the lookout for the launching of my YouTube channel featuring the Union Pacific "Ark-La-Tex Line" by mid-summer! This channel will cover operations, how-to tips and other things.

As we continue to push through these trying times, I encourage you all to look at the bright side. Cherish the opportunity to reconnect with loved ones, recharge your bodies, make some progress on your layout and if you feel the need to get out of the house often like I do, go out and watch some trains!

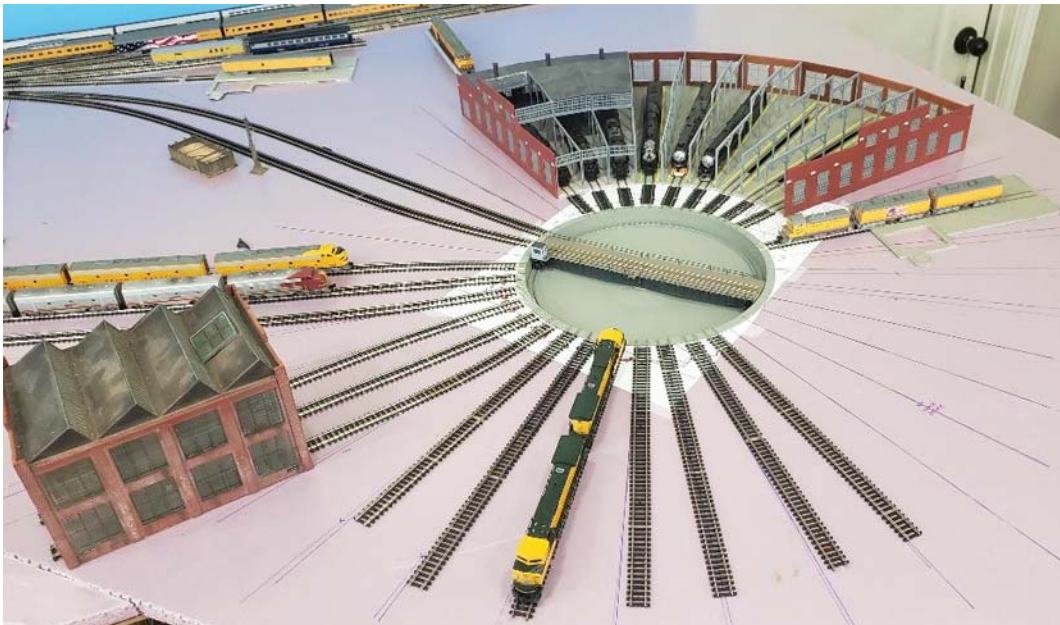
Above, Houston's Settegast Yard on the Ark-La-Tex Line.

At right, staging on the Ark-La-Tex at Lake Charles, La..





The Texarkana Roundhouse and Heritage Center will stable a variety of historic steam and diesel locomotives. Expect to see some exciting excursion specials on the Ark-La-Tex!



An overview of the roundhouse museum. Take a virtual tour of Texarkana and the rest of the Ark-La-Tex Line this summer on YouTube.



Trains, including Amtrak's Texas Eagle, are ready to roll at the North Little Rock staging yard.

End of the line for BNSF locos

photos by David Crawford



N'Crowd member David Crawford submitted these photos of the 100+ BNSF locomotives that have found their way to Galveston in recent months.

Most of these units are expected to be scrapped, although the railfan rumor mill has generated speculation that a few may go to museums.

Locomotive models in David's photos include:

- EMD SD70MAC
- EMD GP38-2
- GE B40-8W
- GE C40-8W
- NRE 3GS21B

There have also been reports that at least one GP30 rebuild has been spotted in the group as well.



C&O's Logan Branch in N scale *by Jim Marxen*

Being a fairly new member of the N' Crowd and new to Texas, we finally have moved into our new manufactured home. Even though this part of Texas (Onalaska, outside of Livingston) is hilly, we still do not have basements, so I have acquired a 16-ft. by 36-ft. man-cave for my future N scale layout.

I'm in the process of preparing it to house the layout, having a half bath installed, setting up the front third as a workshop and the back for the layout room. So far I've insulated the walls, put the floor in and sheetrocked the walls. The ceilings have not been done, and I'm debating what to do in that area. Lighting has been installed and I'm getting quotes for a split heat/air conditioning wall unit.

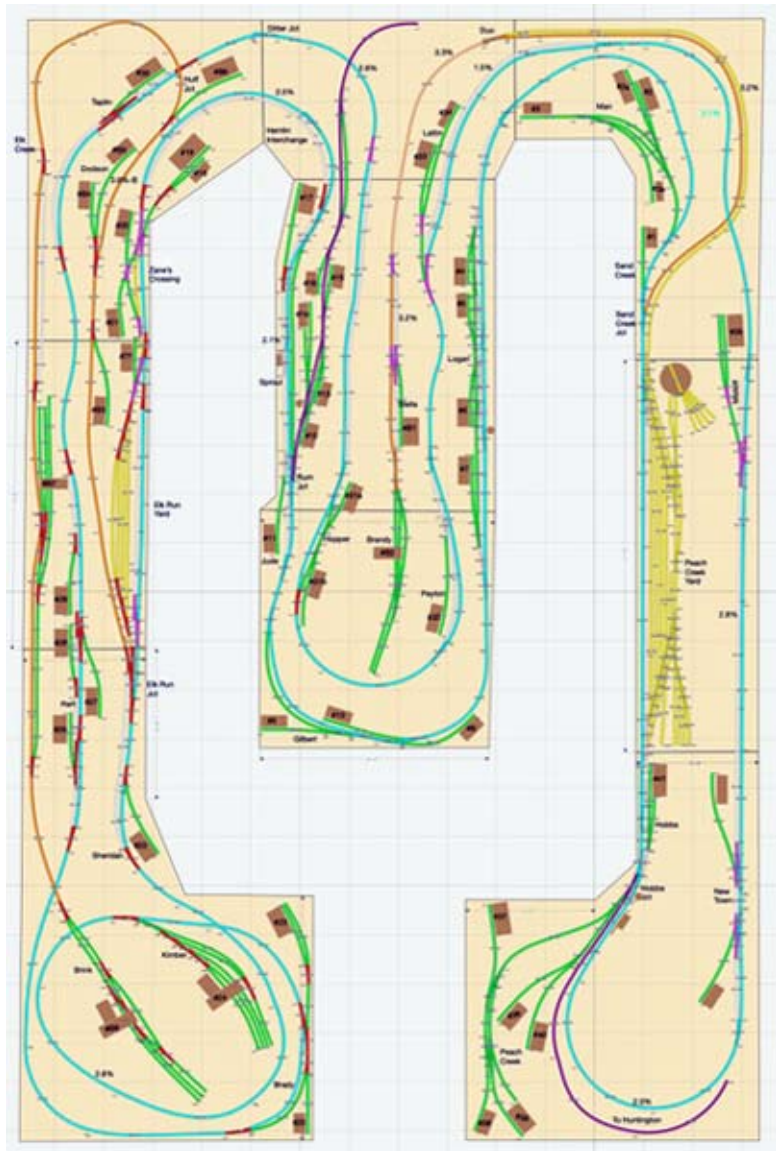
The area available for the trains is approximately 15-ft. by 23-ft. I managed to save a 30-in. by 96-in. yard module from South Carolina where we moved from and will be incorporating it into the track plan.

As you can see, there is still much to keep me busy for the next month or so. What I'm thinking is to have a walk-around DCC-controlled M-shaped layout, as shown in my initial plan here. You can see the yard module incorporated into the right side.

The plan is loosely based on West Virginia mountain railroading: I like the C&O Railroad. I am open to everyone's suggestions on how to improve the plan.

Previously I used Micro-Engineering track but will be using Peco track and turnouts on this layout.

The right side will be against the wall and there will be two separate staging areas, one on each leg of the layout. The right side staging will have three tracks and the left leg staging will have five or six tracks. Two branches also are planned.



Any and all suggestions on the track plan are welcomed, especially before I start putting the benchwork up. If you have suggestions, send me an email: j816marxen@gmail.com

Hopefully, I can get the right side track laid and running by the end of summer.



Five trains in 27 minutes

by Tom Marsh

As I've mentioned before, I regularly check a mailbox at the downtown post office, and I usually do that on Tuesdays at midday so I can catch Amtrak's *Sunset Limited*, when it is more-or-less on time. (With the downturn in UP's freight traffic, the *Sunset* is running on time more often than not these days.) My April 14 chase yielded good results: At Tower 71 on the north side of downtown, I saw five trains, including the *Sunset*, in less than 30 minutes. While the rail lines

around Tower 71 and nearby Tower 26 can be busy at times, I think this is the first time I've seen this many trains in such a short period of time. So grab your camera and head out: We can railfan solo or in small groups and still comply with social distancing guidelines. I look forward to another N'Crowd railfan tour around Houston. We'll try to do that in the fall. By the way, on this day the *Sunset Limited* departed Houston exactly on time.



Above left, 12:29 p.m.: First catch at Tower 71. Canadian Pacific GE AC4400CWM is working as the DPU on an eastbound tank train. The train is waiting for the signal to proceed. Above right and below, 12:31 p.m.: Amtrak's *Sunset Limited* glides by. In the lead is GE P42DC No. 189 sporting "Homeland Flyer's Big Game Train" branding. This is a "Pandemic Train" with five cars instead of the usual seven. Missing are the baggage car and the transition dormitory sleeper. This is a typical recent *Sunset* consist: sleeper, diner, lounge, coach-baggage and coach.





Above, 12:35 p.m.: A whistle to the south at one of the grade crossings around Tower 26 warns of another approaching eastbound train. This time, it's a Union Pacific manifest freight headed by GE AC45CCTE No. 7788 and GE AC44CW No. 6776. I lingered a while to watch the freight train rumble by. Soon after it passes, the CP unit on the tank train revs up and that train heads away. Moments later as I'm putting my camera away, another whistle, this time from the north. At first I think it is the head-end power on the tank train, but that train is out of view and the whistle sounds too close. Below, 12:47 p.m.: Out comes the camera again as a BNSF freight swings around the curve headed toward Tower 26. In the lead is BNSF No. 1954, a veteran EMD SD40-2 delivered in 1972 to BN subsidiary Colorado & Southern. Thinking the action must be over now, I pack up the camera and drive away. Then I hear another whistle.



Right, 12:56 p.m.: I'm a couple of blocks away from the tracks, but I make a quick right and head to them. I'm at a dead end at the tracks where road construction blocks the view, but I grab the camera and jump out anyway as the UP local trundles by pushed by EMD GP38-2 No. 579. Another veteran: This locomotive was built in 1990 for Southern Pacific. And that's it: five trains in 27 minutes, a good day!



Fresh Paint No. 1

by Tom Marsh

This is the first in a new *Orderboard* series featuring prototype equipment in fresh paint. Here we have BNSF GE ES44C4 No. 6616 gleaming like new at the head end of a BNSF executive train at Temple. We say “like new” because the photo was taken Nov. 29, 2017, yet the locomotive was delivered to BNSF in March 2009. A perfunctory online search turned up plenty of photos of No. 6616 looking weathered, so the locomotive apparently had been shopped and repainted not too much earlier than the date of the photo. N-scale models of BNSF ES44C4s have been offered by Fox Valley Models and Kato.



Benchwork For Sale

Member Caleb Walker writes that he no longer has time to work on his switching layout due to his work schedule. He's offering the benchwork for sale for \$50. The layout measures 5-ft. 6-in. long by 1-ft. 6-in. wide and stands 3-ft. 5.5-in. high. If you are interested, contact Caleb via email at walkervincentc@gmail.com. This might make a good base for the Inglenook puzzle (see next page).



INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE
P. O. BOX 2508
CINCINNATI, OH 45201

DEPARTMENT OF THE TREASURY

Date: **MAY 05 2020**

NCROWD MODEL RAILROAD SOCIETY INC

Employer Identification Number:
26-3893069
DLN:
26053484001520
Contact Person:
CUSTOMER SERVICE ID# 31954
Contact Telephone Number:
(877) 829-5500
Accounting Period Ending:
December 31
Public Charity Status:
509(a)(2)
Form 990/990-EZ/990-N Required:
Yes
Effective Date of Exemption:
March 22, 2020
Contribution Deductibility:
Yes
Addendum Applies:
No

Dear Applicant:

We're pleased to tell you we determined you're exempt from federal income tax under Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 501(c)(3). Donors can deduct contributions they make to you under IRC Section 170. You're also qualified to receive tax deductible bequests, devises, transfers or gifts under Section 2055, 2106, or 2522. This letter could help resolve questions on your exempt status. Please keep it for your records.

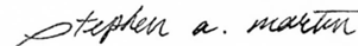
Organizations exempt under IRC Section 501(c)(3) are further classified as either public charities or private foundations. We determined you're a public charity under the IRC Section listed at the top of this letter.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that you're required to file Form 990/990-EZ/990-N, our records show you're required to file an annual information return (Form 990 or Form 990-EZ) or electronic notice (Form 990-N, the e-Postcard). If you don't file a required return or notice for three consecutive years, your exempt status will be automatically revoked.

If we indicated at the top of this letter that an addendum applies, the enclosed addendum is an integral part of this letter.

For important information about your responsibilities as a tax-exempt organization, go to www.irs.gov/charities. Enter "4221-PC" in the search bar to view Publication 4221-PC, Compliance Guide for 501(c)(3) Public Charities, which describes your recordkeeping, reporting, and disclosure requirements.

Sincerely,



Director, Exempt Organizations
Rulings and Agreements

Letter 947

LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

N'Crowd Time Table note: Due to the coronavirus pandemic, most events, including N'Crowd gatherings, have been cancelled until further notice. This issue's Time Table includes only N'Crowd activities and omits trains shows and other non-club events. N'Crowd activities that have been cancelled are marked as such in the Time Table. Activities that are tentative are marked as TBC (to be confirmed).

We have one experimental virtual activity scheduled, our July 1 Test & Tune session. See page 2 for

more details. Additional information will also be sent by email closer to the date.

Thanks: Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of *The Orderboard*. I look forward to seeing updates from more people for the July/August issue.

Next Orderboard deadline: Deadline for the July/August 2020 issue of *The Orderboard* is Friday, July 3. Send us an update on YOUR activities!

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2020 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

May 20

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

May 24

BC&G Sunday running session, noon - 5 p.m. **CANCELLED**

June 7

N'Crowd Operating Session **CANCELLED**

June 17

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

June 21

BC&G Sunday running session, noon - 5 p.m. **CANCELLED**

July 1

N'Crowd Test & Tune Virtual Meeting. See page 2 for more information.

July 15

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

July 19

BC&G Sunday running session, noon - 5 p.m. **TBC**

August 2

N'Crowd Operating Session **TBC**

August 19

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

August 23

BC&G Sunday running session, noon - 5 p.m. **TBC**

September 2

N'Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben's Train Place, 6 p.m. **TBC**

September 16

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

September 20

BC&G Sunday running session, noon - 5 p.m. **TBC**

October 4

N'Crowd Operating Session **TBC**

THE ORDERBOARD

News 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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