



News from Houston N'Crowd



July/August 2020

THE ORDERBOARD



Allan Melton



Hugh Boyd



Tom Marsh

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And more!



Tom Marsh

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

A little business and a little fun

Time for some changes: Despite the ongoing pandemic, some business of the organization continues and one of these activities is the annual election of officers and board members.

I have always thought the process under the current bylaws to be cumbersome for a variety of reasons, including the fact that they require actions over a lengthy period from August to November. In addition, given that the bylaws have not been amended since 1999, it is time for updates, including making provision for modern electronic communications in lieu of in-person meetings for some activities, and reflecting our new status and requirements as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Accordingly and as specified by the current bylaws, I will prepare for consideration by the membership a number of updates and changes to the bylaws. Watch your email for further information in the coming weeks.

Additional BC&G running sessions?: We've had a request to set up some BC&G running sessions during the week rather than on Sundays only. However, given the lackluster response to the weekly Sunday sessions, I am reluctant to go to the trouble to arrange this.

That said, I am happy to solicit interest from members. For now, I am proposing a monthly late afternoon/early evening BC&G running session to take place on the third Wednesday of each month (our regularly scheduled meeting night in normal times). The sessions would take place after Papa Ben's closes for the day and would follow BC&G General Order 2020-0001 (Revised) as shown on page 3 of this issue of *The Orderboard*.

If you are interested in participating in a monthly running session under these terms or you want to suggest some other arrangement, send an email to me at tom@houstonNcrowd.org with your comments.

Family outing: Member Mauricio Varon, wife Melissa and railfan-in-training daughter Magnolia took advantage of the reopening of the Rosenberg Railroad Museum for a day out with some trains; see the photo below. They did wear masks except when taking the photo. Here's hoping we can all have a little normalcy in our lives in the coming weeks and months!

Happy - and safe - railroading!

Tom



Houston N'Crowd 2020 Officers and Volunteers

N'Crowd Model Railroad Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization incorporated in the State of Texas.

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 monthly Membership Meetings: CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. See the back page for more information.

N'Crowd monthly Test & Tune Sessions: CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. See the back page for more information.

N'Crowd Even-Month Ops Sessions: CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. Sunday BC&G running sessions are ongoing. See the back page.

Limited operations resume on the BC&G

N'Crowd's Bayou City & Gulf Railroad resumed limited train operations on Sunday, June 7, at Papa Ben's Train Place. Operations restarted under BC&G General Order 2020-0001, and will continue on Sundays only under General Order 2020-0001 (Revised).

The General Order was prepared in consultation with the management of Papa Ben's Train Place and will govern BC&G train operations until further notice. The General Order, reproduced at right, supersedes any conflicting previously implemented rule, special instruction, regulation or timetable that conflicts with the General Order.

Engineer assignment procedures are in effect. Running schedules will be set up by email and random drawing. An invitation email will be sent out to all N'Crowd members a few days prior to the Sunday running session. Members interested in running trains should reply to the invitation email as soon as possible. The two engineers' names will be selected by random drawing from all names submitted, and the assigned engineers will be notified by email.

To ensure that everyone who wants to run trains has an opportunity, no engineer will be eligible to run trains on consecutive Sundays unless no other member has been scheduled to run trains.

Member Randy Ollett has volunteered to serve

BC&G GENERAL ORDER 2020-0001 (Revised)

1. Trains will run on the BC&G on designated Sundays only from noon to 4 p.m. beginning June 7. The shop will not be open for retail transactions.

2. Only three persons will be allowed in the shop at any given time during the Sunday running sessions. This will include one road foreman of engines and two engineers.

3. Engineers must reserve operating dates and times in advance. Information about this process will be distributed weekly to N'Crowd members.

4. Effective masks (no bandanas, handkerchiefs or scarves) must be worn by everyone in the shop at all times during the BC&G running sessions. Disposable, single-use masks can be purchased from the N'Crowd for \$2 each while supplies last. Only one mask will be sold per person per operating day.

5. All engineers are encouraged to follow CDC social distancing and hygiene guidelines as closely as possible. Wash your hands!

as Road Foreman of Engines and handle opening of the layout room and distribution of masks as needed. This system has worked well since being implemented in early June, but note that Papa Ben's Train Place reserves the right to cancel any or all running sessions if circumstances dictate.



N'Crowd members Carl White and Randy Ollett implementing BC&G General Order 2020-0001 (Revised) at a recent BC&G Sunday running session.

Progress on the C&O's Logan Branch

Jim Marxen is making progress on his C&O Logan Branch layout, as shown in the photos he provided this month.

Jim first reported on his layout in the last issue of *The Orderboard*. He writes, "Spending an hour or two each day, I have managed to start the benchwork, incorporate a yard module I had from my previous layout and started the track roadbed."

Jim has also been working on the layout's primary town scene.



Above, benchwork progresses on N'Crowd member Jim Marxten's C&O Logan Branch layout. Below, checking out possible scenic arrangements for the layout's main town. Photos by Jim Marxen



Auto-routing for reverse loops *by Hugh Boyd*

I have a small N-scale Kato Unitrack layout and when I run my trains I have a route with two reverse loops that trains traverse frequently. This entails some turnout switching action.

I wanted to automate the turnout alignment switching so that my trains would run continuously without my interaction. But I wanted more: I wanted the routing to be indicated with bi-color LED's on my control panel.

The diagram on the next page illustrates how I accomplished my goal. (The diagram does not show the DCC auto-reversing circuit.)

Early in my design efforts I determined dual power supplies would be required in order to Set (Diverge) and Reset (Mainline) the turnout alignment, along with powering a digital dual block detector and two relays. For the LED panel indicator, a second dual block

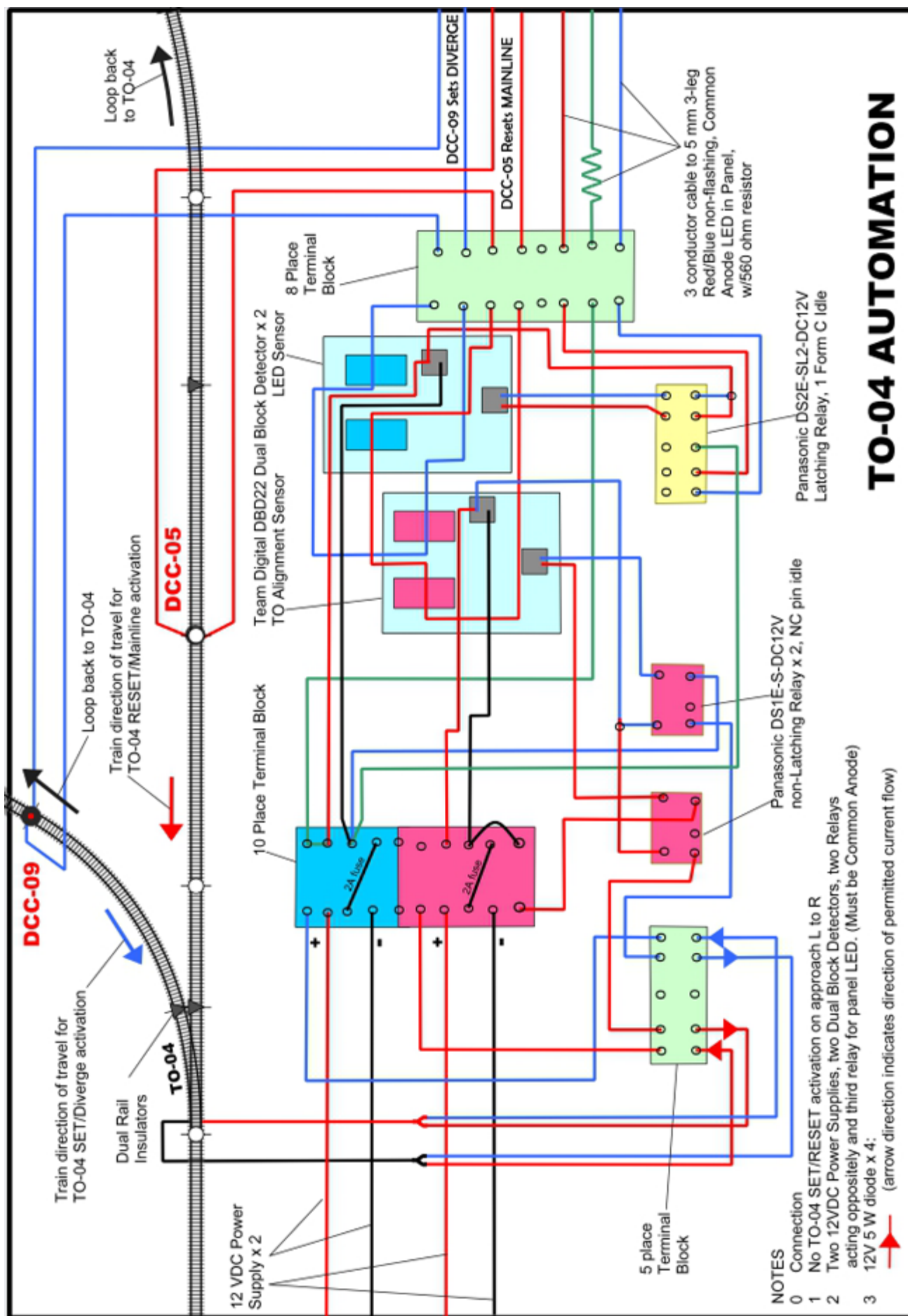
detector and a third relay (to illuminate the LED indicator) were also needed. The complexity of my design would have been simplified by eliminating the LED displays, but the dual power supplies would still be required.

A similar setup controls the second turnout that I traverse in my double loop route.

A third return loop without LED panel indicators is set up to work differently. This loop uses a Kato wye turnout. Trains always take the same direction through this turnout and around the loop. Upon returning to the turnout, locomotives and properly-weighted cars are able to deflect the lightly sprung switch points and pass through the turnout without derailing. The DCC auto-reversing system handles the polarity change. This effectively simulates a prototype spring switch.



This photo shows a portion of my layout's remote panel, indicating a train is approaching the reverse loop turnout. The 8 mm blue LED confirms the presence of a train on the gold colored return track marked "Crossover". The 5 mm amber LED indicates the turnout has been automatically set to allow the train to proceed on the red colored track. The yellow and blue toggle switches and the unlit LED are not involved in the automatic turnout alignment function.



Loco-spotting

photos by Allan Melton

N'Crowd board member Allan Melton shared some photos he took while out and about recently. Included in these is the photo of the hopper in distress at Corsicana on this month's cover. A similar scene can be found at the scrapyard in Bennett on our own BC&G.



Above, Allan caught a pair of former Missouri Pacific locos at Corsicana. UPY No. 706 is an EMD GP15-1 built for MoPac in 1980. UP No. 825 is a GP38-2, built for MoPac in 1981.

Below, while in Sulphur Springs, Allan was stopped at a grade crossing by a trio of KCS GP40-3 rebuild locomotives switching tank cars.



KCS No. 2800 is a rebuilt EMD GP40 delivered to New York Central in 1965.



KCS No. 2956 was built for the Frisco as a GP40-2 in 1979.



KCS No. 2826 was delivered as a GP40 to Western Railway of Alabama in 1968.

Allan writes this about a recent railfanning ride around town with members Gordon Bliss and Randy Ollett: "We checked out Englewood yard and some other hot train spotting sites such as Tower 13 and Tower 26, but never saw a moving train all afternoon. The UP MOW guys were out in force, redoing track everywhere."

The guys did spot UP No. 1059, below, at Eureka Yard. The EMD GP60 was built for Southern Pacific in 1991.



Classic Budd observation car donated to Galveston Railroad Museum

Bonnie Brook, a classic Budd Co. round-end stainless steel sleeper/lounge/observation car, has been donated to the Galveston Railroad Museum. The car travelled from New Orleans to Houston on Amtrak's Sunset Limited on May 25, and was delivered to Galveston the next day. The museum offers short rides on the car, which was built for New York Central in 1949.



Above and on this month's cover: ex-NYC observation car Bonnie Brook at Houston's Amtrak station. Photos by Tom Marsh

Masks and other signs of the times *by Tom Marsh*

As many of you know, I try to schedule my essential errands so that I can see a train or two. One of the easiest ways to assure some action is to time my travels around a train with a known schedule. In our parts, that means one thing: Amtrak's *Sunset Limited*, which runs on time more often these days apparently because freight traffic is down on Union Pacific.

Amtrak's ridership has taken a beating during the pandemic, falling by about 70 percent on long-distance trains. The drop is reflected in the *Sunset's* current consist. Before the pandemic, the usual consist at Houston was two locomotives, a baggage car, a dormitory/sleeper, sleeper, dining car, lounge car and

two coaches. Over the last few months, most consists do not include the baggage car and one of the sleepers. I've also seen trains with only one coach on occasion. The photos here, taken July 14 except as noted, illustrate a typical pandemic *Sunset Limited*. The *Sunset Limited's* schedule in Houston allows an hour for unloading and loading passengers and baggage, and an engineer change, although it all usually takes only about 20 minutes. On one occasion earlier in the pandemic, I recorded a three-minute dwell time, implying little or no passenger action at the station that day. Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, the shortest dwell time I had recorded was 11 minutes.



Above and right, Amtrak's Sunset Limited arrives in Houston on July 14, 2020, with an abbreviated pandemic consist. Note the railfan on the end of the platform capturing the arrival. He and I were both wearing masks.



Compare the scene of passengers boarding at Houston's Amtrak station on July 14 at left below with the scene at right captured in November 2017.



More from the Monaghan paint shop



N'Crowd member Andrew Monaghan has been busy in the paint shop, and some of his recently-released vehicles were spotted around the BC&G.

The two Gordon Trucking rigs are Trainworx models with Microscale decals. The Ford day cab kit is by Showcase Miniatures, while the Ford Bronco and Chevrolet Monte Carlo are resin kits sold online by Brian Fedoroff.

The auto carrier trailer is a Train-Cat etched metal kit paired with a GHQ pewter Peterbuilt tractor kit.

The oil trailers are also Microscale decals, this time on Micro-Trains trailers. The Valvoline tractor is by Con-Cor, with the frame shortened. The Quaker State tractor is another GHQ pewter kit.

Finally, the Swift trailer in the cover photo is a paper kit from Digcom Designs. The tractor is from Trainworx.



Fresh Paint No. 2

by Tom Marsh

Sometimes things aren't what they seem. I spotted this gleaming, new-looking Union Pacific locomotive near the Kirkpatrick St. grade crossing at the railroad's Settegast Yard on March 26 of this year and of course had to stop and grab a photo. I decided this would be a good subject for *The Orderboard's* first Fresh Paint feature, so I went online to get No. 3082's details for the newsletter.

Imagine my surprise when none of the usual sources had a build date listed for the locomotive, and conflicting model names. After spending too much time online trying to figure out what was going on, I decided to find another photo for the first Fresh Paint feature, settling on the BNSF locomotive that appeared in the last issue.

I wanted to use this photo of No. 3082 in this issue, so I headed back to the web for a deeper dive. I cobbled together what I think is the (mostly) correct

information from various online forums, roster and rail photo sites. Despite the locomotive's new appearance, it turns out No. 3082 is not that new. According to one source I came across, it was built at EMD's Muncie, Ind., locomotive assembly plant in September 2018. It looks new because it has spent much of its life in storage. Based on what I turned up online, the locomotive is a model T4-SD70ACe, and (depending on the information source) was stored shortly after (or just prior to) delivery along with others of the same model either for warranty reasons, the need for T4 "mods" or "changes", and/or because UP has only a limited number of this particular model and they aren't as fuel efficient as some other EPA Tier 4 compliant locomotives.

Even if I don't know the whole story (let me know if you do), No. 3082 in fresh UP Armour Yellow and Harbormist Gray is a good-looking "Fresh Paint" locomotive in my book.

Union Pacific EMD T4-SD70ACe No. 3082 basks in the late-afternoon March sun at Settegast Yard in Houston.



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). Note that the new Sunday BC&G running sessions are ongoing. See page 3 for details.

We appreciate your contributions: Thanks as always to everyone who sent photos and other items for *The Orderboard*. I received enough material that some excellent submissions are being carried over to the next issue.

However, don't let this rare occurrence deter you from putting something together for the next newsletter! Deadline for the September/October 2020 issue of *The Orderboard* is Friday, September 4. I look forward to hearing from YOU!

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2020 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

BC&G Running Sessions take place most Sundays from noon to 4 p.m. under terms agreed with Allyn Pearlman of Papa Ben's Train Place.

Notice of each week's session is sent by email several days before the event. See page 3 of this issue or watch your email for more information.

July 1

N'Crowd Test & Tune Virtual Meeting. **CANCELLED**

July 15

N'Crowd Membership Meeting **CANCELLED**

August 2

N'Crowd Even-Month Operating Session **CANCELLED**

August 19

N'Crowd Membership Meeting **CANCELLED**

September 2

N'Crowd Test & Tune **CANCELLED**

September 16

N'Crowd Membership Meeting **CANCELLED**

October 4

N'Crowd Even-Month Operating Session **To Be Confirmed (TBC)**

October 21

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

November 1

Holiday season BC&G running schedule begins **TBC**

November 4

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

November 18

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

December 6

N'Crowd Even-Month Operating Session **TBC**

December TBC

N'Crowd Holiday Bash and Combat Gift Exchange

December 16

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

December 27

Holiday season BC&G running schedule ends **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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