



News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

November/December 2020



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Fact vs. Fiction
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COVID Road
Trip Part 1
More Eagle
Route 3
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Trainspotting
...and more!

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

Annual general meeting and more

Thanks to the pandemic, my hands unfortunately are consuming more alcohol than my mouth, and I've learned that despite my past claims, lack of time apparently is NOT the reason I haven't started serious work on my layout. But we must forge ahead.

N'Crowd Annual General Meeting: The annual general meeting of the N'Crowd Model Railroad Society, Inc. will take place virtually beginning at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, Nov. 18. The virtual platform for the meeting will be Zoom, as Zoom meetings are easily accessed either online by computer or smartphone, or by regular telephone. We will send out a meeting invitation with detailed instructions on how to join the meeting a few days before Nov. 18.

The main business to be conducted is the election of 2021 officers and board member. The call for nominations and preliminary agenda for the annual general meeting were sent to all members by email on Oct. 26. All elected incumbent officers received nominations, with no other nominations received. One person was nominated for the Board Member (2023) position. The candidates are:

President: Tom Marsh

Vice President: John Sweigart

Secretary: Bill Busch

Treasurer: Eddie Aycock

Board Member (through 2023): Ted Davis

Nominations also will be taken from the floor prior to the voting. Per the by-laws, for uncontested open positions we will proceed with election by voice vote. For any contested positions, members will be

asked to vote by email to tom@houstonNcrowd.org within two hours after the meeting is adjourned. Ballots will be kept secret, and results will be sent to members via email.

During the meeting we will also discuss whether or not the layout will be open to the public on weekends during the holiday season as we usually do. In an Oct. 30 email to all members, I asked for opinions on this and most of the responses were in favor of keeping the layout closed through the holidays.

BC&G running sessions update: Trains will be running again on the BC&G. Member-only running sessions will take place on designated Fridays from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. Papa Ben's Train Place will not be open for retail transactions and only three persons - one road foreman of engines and two engineers - will be allowed in the shop during these running sessions. An email was sent to members Nov. 9 with information on how to sign up for the sessions.

The proposed running sessions may not take place every Friday due to planned layout electrical work. Ray Byer hopes to address several issues, such as problems with mainline crossovers and a few dead spots that have cropped up in yards and sidings.

As always, contact me if you have any questions.

Happy - and safe - railroading!

Tom



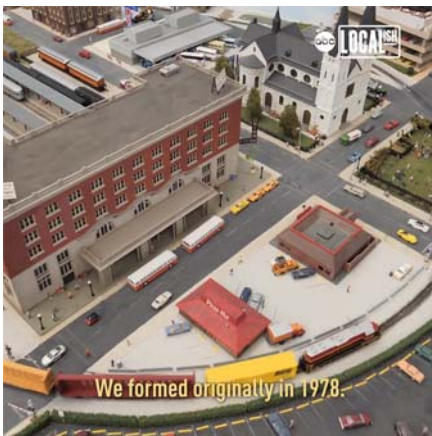
N'Crowd monthly Membership Meetings: Virtual Annual General Meeting, Nov. 18. See "Green Eye" above for more information.

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.

Papa Ben's, BC&G featured on TV

ABC13 KTRK-TV in Houston recently aired a story in their "Localish" series featuring Papa Ben's Train Place, and our own Bayou City & Gulf Railroad figured prominently in the visuals that accompanied the story. Some screenshots from the show are shown here. You can view the program on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/255718204943568/videos/269568621118074>. As this is a commercial Facebook page, you do not need a Facebook account to view the program when using this link.



Above, Papa Ben's owner Allyn Pearlman on ABC13 KTRK-TV's "Localish" show; Allyn's godchildren Sofia and Gavin were also interviewed. The interviews took place in the N'Crowd layout room.

Left, right and below, some familiar scenes on the BC&G. were highlighted in the program.



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

Fact vs. fiction on my layout journey: Coincidence?

by Bob Folser

When I started my layout, I knew four things. I had an 11-ft. by 11-ft. room to work with, and I wanted a town setting, a river or stream with a water fall and a castle on a hill. The room was perfect for a “C” or “G” shaped layout with the entrance crossed by a twin track bridge, hinged at one side. This provided an opportunity to have the castle on one side, the town on the other and the river in-between; I added a stream running from the castle to the river.

Being from New York, I wanted to model the New York Central, and loving steam engines, I decided to model the late 1930s to early 1940s. Having decided on the layout’s particulars (another story altogether), I went looking for a town name.

The internet supplied me with an 1855 map of the New York Central System’s routes. Upstate in the mountains provided the best chance of elevation so I followed the rails from Albany to Buffalo, which today parallels the New York State Thruway, and found a town called Little Falls. Little Falls happens to be on the north side of the Mohawk River. The falls aren’t dramatic in any way, but the Erie Canal had seven original locks in a one-mile stretch to get around them. These were later replaced with two larger locks in a wider canal on the opposite side of the river, with the NYC acquiring the original canal right-of-way.

Between the New York Central System Historical Society and the Library of Congress, I acquired a large amount of information about Little Falls, the Erie Canal and the railroad. This information included maps and pictures from the 1860s onward.

I had already decided on the track plan and had all of the track in place before I started the name and history research. The more I learned, the more coincidences I found



Little Falls on N’Crowd member Bob Folser’s layout. The actual town is shown below. Prototype photo courtesy of Library of Congress



between my layout and the actual town. First, as already noted, it’s on the Mohawk River, and there are falls involved.

Second, Little Falls was on the Central’s New York to Chicago “Water Level Route” and the railroad had four lines running thru Little Falls, as does my layout. (I actually have a fifth line but it bypasses the town.)

Third, there is a curve in the line entering the town both on the prototype and my layout. The significance of that is noted below.

Finally, Little Falls has an actual castle outside of town. Construction of Beardslee Castle was started by Lavinia Beardslee in 1790. Her son, Augustus, is credited with much of the building but her grandson, Capt. Guy Beardslee, completed it in 1860. Beardslee Castle was copied after an old

Irish castle and craftsmen from Europe were hired to build it. It stayed in the family until the 1980s and is in use today as an event venue.

There is some additional, though tragic, history of the New York Central and Little Falls. The “Gulf Curve Wreck” on April 19, 1940 killed 31 people and, fortunately, was the last major wreck for the NYC. The Gulf Curve at Little Falls had a 7.5 degree of curvature in 856 feet, the sharpest on the entire NYC system, and a mandatory speed limit of 45 mph.

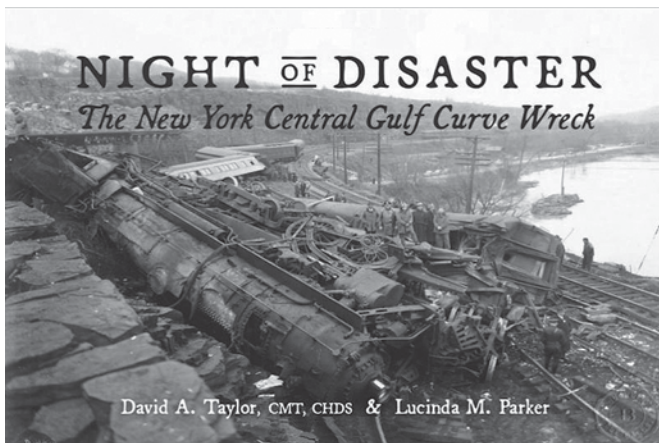
The wreck involved the *Lake Shore Limited*. The

engine, a J class Hudson, was assigned to the train without its scheduled throttle calibration check. At 11:33 p.m., pulling a fifteen car consist with 200 passengers and crew, ten cars and the engine left the track at 59 mph with the engine coming to rest 397 feet from where it derailed.

Between 1945 and 1950, the railroad flattened the curve to 1.5 degrees by literally moving the Mohawk River to the south and filling in the north bank, no mean feat since the rails are 30 feet above the river.



Below, the book “Night of Disaster” details the NYC’s last major accident, which took place at Little Falls.



Above, left and two below: Little Falls in miniature and full scale. Vintage bridge photo courtesy of Library of Congress; prototype castle photo courtesy Beardslee Castle



‘All Change’ on the Trans-Siberian Railway

by Hugh Boyd

In June 2000 I rode the Trans-Siberian Railway from Moscow to St. Petersburg and then on to Vladivostok. At Vladivostok, cars were forwarded to Harbin in North-east China. Mine was a tourist journey rather than a railfan trip, so my attention was not so much on the railroad as it would have been today.

My journey from Vladivostok to Harbin involved a change of gauge at the Russia/China border. The pictures show the replacement of the Russian 60-in. broad gauge trucks with the 56 1/2-in. gauge Chinese trucks. The process also involved switching the couplers.

I seem to remember three cars were involved. The whole process took a couple of hours.

There were no passenger facilities at the site on the Russian side of the border, so passengers were allowed to stay in the passenger car. Anywhere else in the world when a gauge change occurs the passengers are required to pick up their bags and walk across the platform.

I believe the passenger cars were specially made for the Vladivostok-Harbin service. All the exterior railroad lettering was in the Cyrillic alphabet, no Chinese. While obviously of Russian manufacture, these cars had the twin buffers not usually found on Russian rolling stock.

Broad gauge 60-in.? Wait, Russia uses the metric system. The Russian railroad system's gauge was selected before the metric system was adopted, when the British Imperial System was the world standard.

Our train departed Vladivostok after dark and arrived at the border around 9:00 a.m. The truck change



Above and below, gauge change on the Trans-Siberian Railway.



took about two hours, then a Chinese diesel took over for the roughly 20-mile journey to a Chinese town where our cars were coupled to the back of the Harbin-bound train.

There was a heavy military presence on the train. Russian passengers were somewhat amazed I could talk with the soldiers (in English of course).

When I arrived in Harbin my contact was not there.

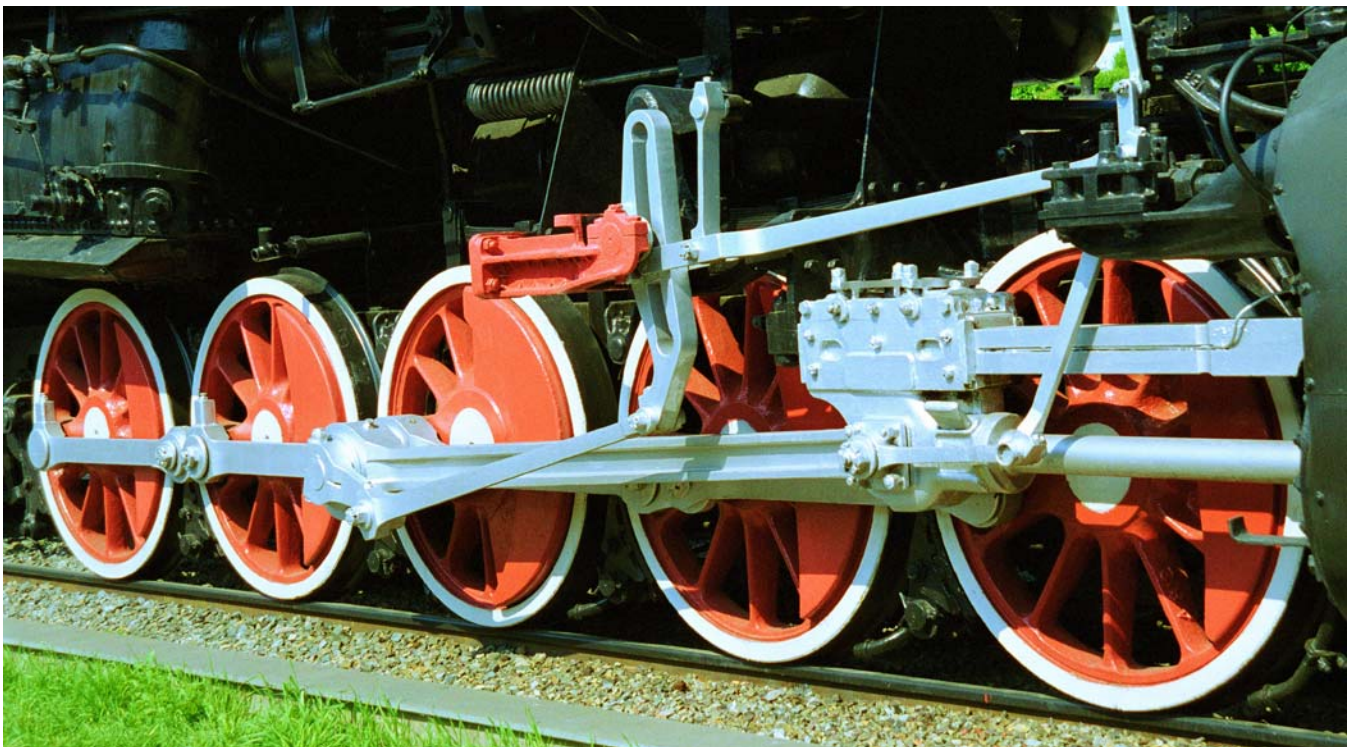
I waited by the locomotive as instructed, but later found there was a platform fee so he waited outside the entrance.

Harbin is famous for ice statues, but none were to be found when I looked around. Perhaps the 90 degrees Fahrenheit temperature was a factor.

Later, after some effort, I caught the Beijing evening train to continue my journey.



Above, here's a picture I took while on the Trans-Siberian Railway in June 2000. After a long time I came to the conclusion that the driving rod from the piston rod to the third axle is missing. Below, a detail picture of a preserved steam locomotive in the Vladivostok area.



It's not too early to think about renewing your membership! N'Crowd new member/renewal applications are available from the N'Crowd website: www.houstonNcrowd.org. You can also renew online.

Semaphores and wigwags: The COVID trip of 2020

Part 1, by Gordon Bliss

After being locked up for so long and reading an article in a recent magazine about the removal of the last Santa Fe semaphore signals, a plan was formed for an awesome fact-finding mission. After a bit of research and planning, the route was set.

In seven days and 3,528 miles, we found 41 depots, seven Harvey Houses and hotels, eight cabooses, seven steam locomotives, three cantilever signal bridges, three water towers, 22 semaphores, one wigwag, one private car, one motor car, one streetcar, two Warbonnets, one heritage unit, and one blue and yellow locomotive!

Allan Melton and I started our expedition early on a Saturday morning and made our first find, a neat brick depot from 1900, in Lampasas. Next was the wooden depot in Lometa, not in the best of shape, but spared. Also in Lometa we found two old ATSF hopppers mounted in the air.

Next we took a short detour to Priddy for a stop at the live steam Comanche and Indian Gap Railroad for the last day of the annual fall live steam meet. Allan got to ride around the railroad on the Super Chief behind four Santa Fe F-Units! Full-size ATSF caboose No. 999187 on display at the C&IG has received a fresh coat of paint.

Brownwood was next. We saw the restored Santa Fe depot and Harvey House and ATSF 2-6-2 No. 1080. We toured the Lenhis Railroad Museum, which has ATSF superintendent's car No. 408, built by Pullman in 1929, and ATSF caboose No. 999275. The wood ATSF Kress depot is also on the museum property.

Next up was the ATSF depot in Santa Anna, now a visitor center, then the ATSF depot in Tuscola, which most recently was part of the volunteer fire department!

The craziest one we found was the ATSF depot from Lawn, which is now in Abilene as "The Ugly Lime Tequila Bar". It has been heavily modified and incorporates a wide vision caboose! Just outside of Abilene on Hwy 20 we stopped for gas, and getting back on the highway we saw a passenger car with no trucks. "Missouri Pacific Lines" lettering was still visible. Not bad for the first day!



Above, the ATSF Depot in Lampasas, Texas. Below, Allan Melton departs on the Comanche & Indian Gap Railroad's version of the Super Chief.



Above, the nicely-restored ATSF depot at Brownwood. Below, Post's concrete depot, the only one of four similar ATSF stations still standing.



The next day we found the ATSF depot at Post. Built in 1910/1911, it is all concrete with art deco accents, and now houses the Post Area Chamber of Commerce. Continuing our journey, we found several wooden depots in the towns of Shallowater, Anton and Muleshoe, and a brick depot in Littlefield, home of Waylon Jennings. As we passed Lone Star Jct. and drove into New Mexico, something we watched for were all the boxcars and refrigerator cars on the ranches; there are hundreds and some are wood!

We looked around the BNSF's Clovis Yard, a crew change on the busy Southern Transcon route. The former Santa Fe division office, depot, Harvey House and a noteworthy Santa Fe neon sign still stand. The depot is being remodeled into a restaurant. A nearby small park has ATSF 0-6-0 No. 9005. We also came across cabooses No. 999771, with its Santa Fe paint intact and no visible BNSF markings. We grabbed some lunch and sat trackside watching trains roll through town.

Heading back into Texas towards Amarillo, we found the former ATSF Bovina depot being used as a home. Heading up the Hereford Sub, our first stop was Friona, where we caught two trains near the grain elevators and then checked out the depot, which has been moved to a park. We found an old centercab switcher near an elevator and caught a train passing the Hereford depot, which is stucco and used by the BNSF MOW department. We saw the ATSF depot at Canyon, then made the short drive to Tulia, home to three ATSF depots! The small stucco Tulia depot is trackside, while the Happy depot resides here in a park. The Rolla, Kan. depot was moved here as well and is now home to Aylin's Cafe.

In Amarillo, the large ATSF depot and Harvey House still stand, but are unused at this time. Nearby is the "Madame Queen", ATSF No. 5000, the first 2-10-4 locomotive. A drive around the yard revealed no old Warbonnet locomotives this year, but we did find a scale car. In the evening, we enjoyed seeing the former Panhandle & Santa Fe General Office building, an art deco Amarillo landmark with a neon Santa Fe sign on top that is lit every night.

Only two days in and we've encountered a treasure trove of railroad items, so we topped it off with a steak at the Big Texan Steakhouse. Neither Allan nor I tackled the famous 72 oz. steak!

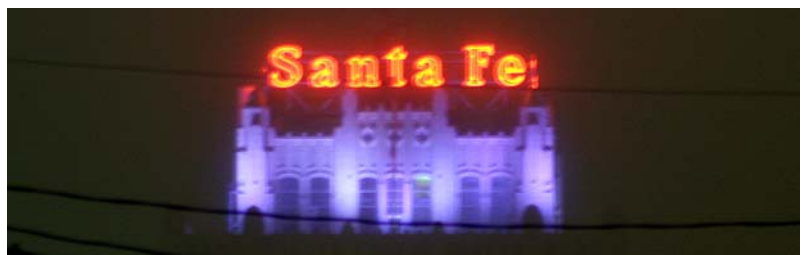
We've many more miles to go; see more in the next *Orderboard*.



Above, ATSF caboose No. 999771 in original paint with no visible BNSF markings. Below, BNSF GE No. 3268 speeds through Friona, Texas.



Above, idle centercab at a grain elevator on BNSF's Hereford Sub. Below, Santa Fe landmarks in Amarillo.



More Eagle Route 3

N'Crowd Past President Vincent Walker shared new photos of progress on his Eagle Route 3 layout. Two, including the photo on this issue's cover, feature some of the many locomotives Vincent has detailed and painted in his favorite "Jenks blue" MoPac paint. The third shows Vincent's completed MoPac maintenance of way train.

The Brownhoist wrecking crane was featured in the last issue of *The Orderboard*.



Members go trainspotting

N'Crowd members David Crawford and Mauricio Varon shared these recent photos.

At right, top to bottom: David spotted the UP No. 1111 "Powered By Our People" locomotive working in town last month. Maurico caught a CSX locomotive with a windmill blade train. He also saw this Ferromex unit at Englewood Yard.

Below, Mauricio found these two tanks cars of interest.



Fresh Paint No. 3

by Tom Marsh



The reflective graphics on Union Pacific No. 5533 and No. 7397 are lit up by camera flash at dusk.

This installment of Fresh Paint highlights fresh reflective graphics more than the paint. The camera flash has lit the bright yellow frame stripes, which meet federal safety requirements for equipment visibility at night; the rest of the gleaming graphics are all for show.

The photo was taken in fortuitous lighting conditions during the May 2009 “24 Hours @ Saginaw” event sponsored by the North Texas Chapter of the National

Railway Historical Society. Also fortuitous: The locomotives were clean. Saginaw is a busy railroad junction about eight miles north of Fort Worth.

According to an online roster published by The Diesel Shop, the lead unit, UP No. 5533, is a GE ES44AC built in 2005. UP classifies it as an AC45CCTE. Trailing is UP No. 7397, a GE ES44AC built in 2009. Note that the unit numbers on the back of No. 7397 are also reflective.

The rest of the story...

by Tom Marsh

Those of you who read the emails I send out may recognize this photo as having been included in my Nov. 9



“Train Pix Fix” note. The photo shows Amtrak 40th anniversary GE P42DC No. 156 leading the *Sunset Limited* into Houston on election Tuesday, Nov. 3. Two days after I sent the email, I learned that later on Nov. 3 the train struck a tractor/trailer rig at a grade crossing just west of Lafayette, La. The train did not derail, but No. 156 sustained enough damage that it was removed from the train at Lafayette. The train proceeded (very late) to New Orleans. Amtrak sent three locomotives from New Orleans to rescue No. 156 on Nov. 9.

LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Happy Holidays!: As we will have no holiday party this year, and this is the last issue of *The Orderboard* for 2020 (aka Annus Horribilis), AND I have already seen Christmas decorations for sale and festooning some store fronts, I want to take this opportunity to wish you and yours a very happy holiday season. With faith, optimism and a little luck, we will have a much better, or at least more normal, 2021, with much of the current unpleasantness behind us.

Past prez presses for new bus: N'Crowd Past President Vincent Walker wants to enlist your support in encouraging Trainworx to produce a model of an intercity bus to the same high standard as their tractor-trailer models. Vincent has contacted Trainworx CEO Pat Sanders and says he seemed interested and wanted more information. Vincent gave him suggestions for busses that he believes modelers are looking for in N

scale, including the Super Scenicruiser PD-4501, Scenicruiser PD-4104 and single-decker PD-4106. You can make your suggestions known to Trainworx via the "Contact Us" link www.train-worx.com.

Train shows returning in 2021: I hope to attend some of these 2021 train shows: Dallas Area Train Show, Plano Centre, Jan. 16-17; Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre, April 10 (T-TRAK anyone?); New Braunfels Spring Train Show, April 24-25; and also, Austin Train Show, Palmer Events Center, Aug. 28-29. See you there?

Thanks to our contributors: Thanks to all of you who sent in photos and articles for this issue of *The Orderboard*. Your efforts are truly appreciated! Deadline for the January/February 2021 issue is Friday, Jan. 1. Let's hear from YOU!

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2020/2021 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

BC&G Running Sessions will take place designated Fridays from 6 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. through December under terms agreed with Allyn Pearlman of Papa Ben's Train Place. Notice of each week's session will be sent to members by email several days before the event.

November 4
N'Crowd Test & Tune **CANCELLED**

November 18
N'Crowd Annual Corporate Meeting will be held virtually starting at 7 p.m. Details will be sent to members via email.

December 5-6
Crossroads Train Show, Crossroads Mall, Oklahoma City. Sponsored by Oklahoma Railway Museum and Oklahoma N-Rail.

December 6
N'Crowd Operating Session **CANCELLED**

December
N'Crowd Holiday Bash and Combat Gift Exchange **CANCELLED**

December 16
N'Crowd Membership Meeting **CANCELLED**

2021

January 6
N'Crowd Test & Tune **TBC**

January 16-17
Dallas Area Train Show, Plano Centre

THE ORDERBOARD

News from Houston N'Crowd

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

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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