

Houston N'Crowd



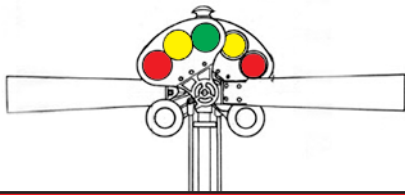
# THE ORDERBOARD

2012 Highlights

## Model railroading is still fun!

This special edition of *The Orderboard* features highlights of our 2012 activities and members' submissions to the newsletter.





# THE ORDERBOARD

March/April 2012



## New BC&G streamliner debuts! *By Gordon Bliss*

Bayou City & Gulf rolled out its new streamliner *The Bluebonnet* at the N'Crowd's March 7 operating session. Fresh out of the BC&G shops were the sleek PA-1 and PB-1 locomotives No. 2201, painted by club member Vincent Walker in the BC&G passenger livery. A set of six lightweight cars also rolled out of the shop, including RPO No. 1121, dormitory-lounge No. 71, sleeper *Galveston*, full dome-lounge *Austin*, sleeper *Texas City* and observation-lounge *Bluebonnet*. The new streamlined cars were painted by member Gordon Bliss.

New member Samuel Townsell was the engineer on the streamliner's maiden run, which departed westbound on time from Bayou City's Union Station as BC&G No. 1. A couple of foaming railfans caught No. 1 departing Austin, and making the station stop in Bennett.

Rumor has it that with the delivery of the new lightweight cars, the original heavyweight equipment has gone into the BC&G shop to be overhauled and emerge as *The Dome Express*.

*Below left, No. 1 speeds through Austin. Above and below right, the new streamlined Bluebonnet at Bennet on the BC&G.*



# Raising the roof on the BC&G

Construction of the BC&G roundhouse at Bayou City Yard is proceeding at a rapid pace under the direction of prime contractor (and N'Crowd secretary) Richard Bartlett.

Check out Richard's progress here from early January to mid-March, and head on over to Papa Ben's soon to see other recent progress on the new Bayou City & Gulf!



*At left, Richard and the roundhouse in early January 2012.*

*At left below, the roundhouse on Jan. 28.*

*At right below, progress as of Feb. 8.*

*Bottom left, Feb. 15 and the electroluminescent wire lights are in place.*

*Bottom right, raising the roof on March 10.*



# The Downe and Owl is Down and Out

by Steve Lancaster

All good things must come to an end. Such has been the case with Ben Pearlman's freelanced N-scale Santa Fe offshoot. Ben's wife Irene had been asking us for some time to disassemble the majority of the layout, leaving only a small portion for posterity's sake. In early February, after the hectic Christmas season had passed, I managed to tear out the doomed real estate over a total of four days.

The original plan was to lay new loops of track at either end of the mountain section so that trains could continue to run the line. However, Irene decided to chuck the whole thing, instead

preferring to repurpose the entire room. The remainder of the layout was removed in two days.

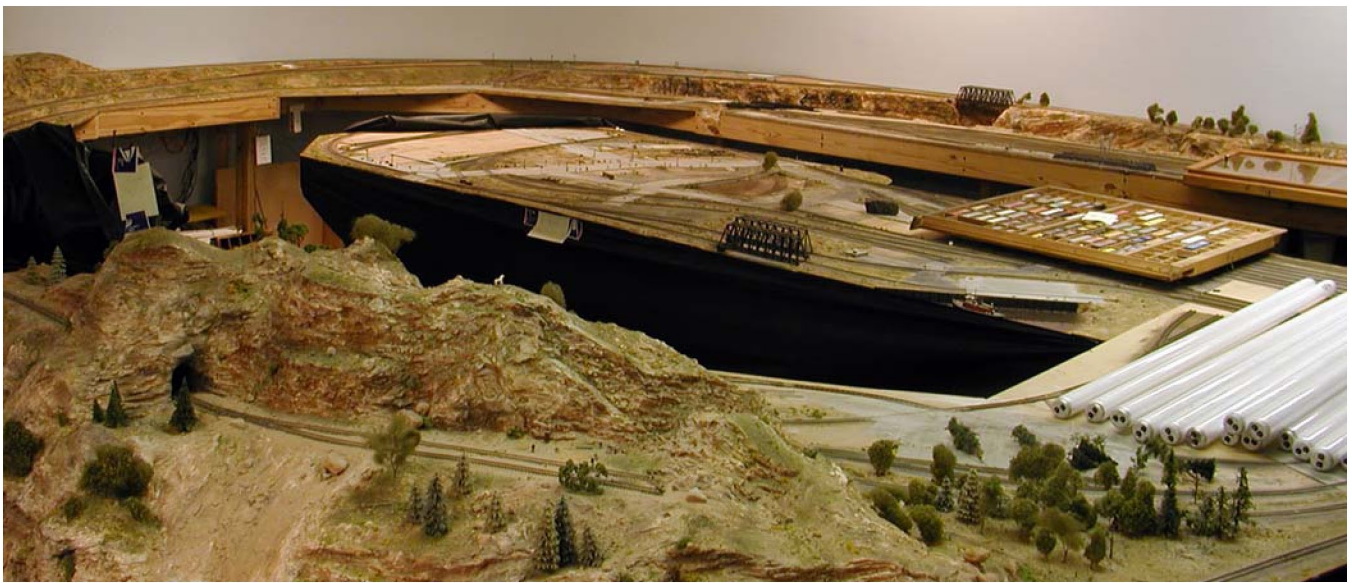
If there is a positive side to this, it is that all of the rolling stock, buildings, Digitrax equipment, and hundreds of detail parts have been saved and consigned to Papa Ben's for sale, ensuring that they will go on to grace many a layout for decades to come.

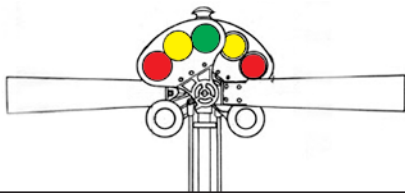
Irene was adamant that the mountains be spared, if possible, because they were built by Gil Freitag. I'm happy to report that most of the pieces have found new homes.



*This page and next: end of the line, before, during and after.*







News from Houston N'Crowd

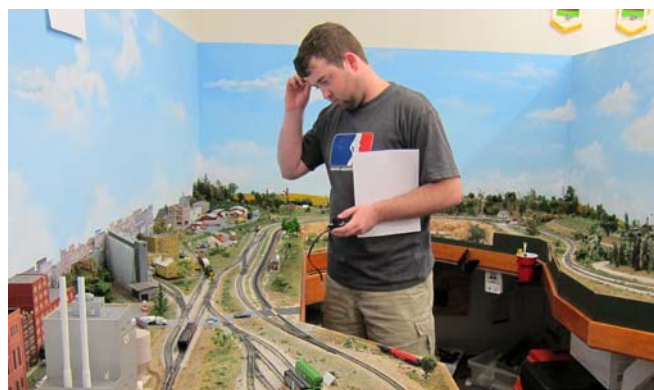


# THE ORDERBOARD

September/October 2012



**We have a throttle for you at a BC&G operating session!**





*N'Crowd member Gordon Bliss recently hosted the HOOTERS group on his Santa Fe All the Way. Photo by Tom Marsh*

## Local railroaders host HOOTERS

*by Gordon Bliss*

*Editors note: Groups of operating enthusiasts from Houston, Dallas and Tulsa meet once each year in one of the cities to run trains. The Houston event is known as HOOTERS (Houston Operators of Tiny Electric Railway Systems). Gordon Bliss reports on this year's event.*

Over the first weekend of November, Houston layout owners hosted the HOOTERS operating sessions with operating groups from Dallas and Tulsa. Sixteen layouts hosted sessions on Friday, two on Saturday with dinner and one on Sunday morning before guests returned home.

From Tulsa, N-scalers Dave Salamon, Richard Dixon and Steve Gillett made it for the sessions. Richard and Steve ran on my Santa Fe All the Way layout on Saturday. N'Crowd member Justin Coder was my helper; his dad flew in so we had Rick out as well. In addition, about two months ago N-scaler Dirk Warvel from Germany emailed to say he would be in town for a business trip on the same weekend: What a deal!

Later, I took Dirk to Gil Freitag's layout and then we drove by a couple of rail yards on the way home. A lot of trains were run and a great time was had by all!

# An embarrassment of railfan riches!

October and November found many N'Crowd members chasing - or riding - prototype instead of model trains, as specials were run over local BNSF and Union Pacific lines.

## UP 844

*Gordon Bliss reports on the late October visit of UP 4-8-4 No. 844:*

Union Pacific sent steam locomotive No. 844 on a wide-ranging tour to celebrate the railroad's 150th anniversary. Jason Smith, Jeff Clodfelter, Brandon Bliss and I drove to Livingston to chase the locomotive to Houston. The day was cloudy and cool, and hoping for no rain we caught the 844 just north of Livingston and followed the train into town for its stop. At Cleveland the rain caught up with us, and here Jason somehow talked his way into a cab ride to Humble!

At Humble, local television news icon Dave Ward boarded for the trip into Houston. We caught

up with 844 at Tower 26, where it met Amtrak's eastbound *Sunset Limited* at the diamonds.

844 crossed I-45 and I-10 and backed into the Amtrak station, where it was on display for two days with the railroad's Missouri Pacific, Southern Pacific and Katy heritage engines.

On Monday, "the crew" was able to "ride" the train to Hearne, and Scott Delaney and myself chased the train up US 290. The only stop was Navasota. The train rolled through Bryan/College Station and then ran on the former MoPac line thru Mumford, site of a planned new hump yard for the Union Pacific.

After the train arrived at Hearne, we talked our way into the cab for some photos before we headed home.



Above, 844 rumbles over the diamond at Houston's Eureka Jct. Below left, Gordon Bliss gets up close while pacing 844. At right, Gordon's looking the part in 844's cab. Photos above and below left by Gordon Bliss, below right by Scott Delaney





## Galveston Chief

*While others rode, your editor chased the Galveston Railroad Museum's special Galveston Chief, a task that proved easier said than done:*

To celebrate its official post-Hurricane Ike grand reopening, the Galveston Railroad Museum operated a special passenger train from New Orleans to Houston and Galveston on November 9-10. The purpose was two-fold: In addition to marking the reopening of the museum, the special brought five new pieces of equipment to the museum, two former SP F-units decked out in Santa Fe's famous Warbonnet scheme, and three passenger cars set up for possible excursion service.

The Saturday *Galveston Chief* run was a round trip from Houston's Amtrak station to the Galveston museum's facility in Santa Fe's former Galveston Union Station, and tickets were sold to the public for this train.

The consist included the two "new" F-units, Amtrak P40 No. 18, Amtrak Amfleet coach No. 25066, the museum's three newly-acquired Budd cars (two coaches and a diner), two private cars owned by Creative Charters, Amfleet cafe No. 43347 and BNSF business car No. 7 *Santa Fe*.

As many chasers found out, the train ran at a fast clip on much of the route, making it difficult to catch.

## UP Heritage Units

*Three UP heritage locos and a three-car train were in the area for Operation Lifesaver duties in late October.*

N'Crowd's own Richard Bartlett checked out the UP heritage units at the Houston Amtrak station on Oct. 21. The UP Boy Scouts engine was on the house track at the station as well.

Gordon Bliss caught the train in action earlier in the week, and sent out some photos in memory of Tom Cobb, who could be counted on to spread the word about special train movements in the area (see page 8).



*Above, the Galveston Chief awaiting the next day's departure from Houston's Amtrak station. Below, the train accelerates past the Alvin Santa Fe station. Above, Gordon Bliss; below, Tom Marsh*



*Above, Richard Bartlett compares N-scale and the real thing. Below, Gordon Bliss captured this view of the heritage units heading out with an Operation Lifesaver train.*

