



THE ORDERBOARD

News from Houston N'Crowd



November/December 2011



Steve Lancaster unveils the rejuvenated Union Station model. Photo by Tom Marsh

Extreme makeover

by Steve Lancaster

I recently undertook the challenging task of restoring Loren Neufeld's remarkable model of Houston Union Station. This iconic structure has served several incarnations of the BC&G for the better part of three decades. As a result of old age

and a life spent on the road, the old girl was in desperate need of a makeover.

I began by separating the building from the foundation and the train shed, or I should say I

*See **Extreme makeover** page 7*

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Ted Davis, President

Wrapping up 2011

Hello and welcome to the latest issue of *The Orderboard*!

Officers for 2012 have been elected, and they are: Ted Davis, president; Steve Lancaster, vice president; Eddie Aycock, treasurer; Richard Bartlett, secretary, Steve Redd, board member to 2012; Robert Moore, board member to 2013; Joe Kingsberry, board member to 2014.

Volunteers for 2012 include: Charlie Aselin, layout master; Eddie Aycock and Gordon Bliss, operating session coordinators; Tom Marsh, editor and webmaster. Volunteers for the 2013 35th Anniversary Celebration Committee at present are Ted Davis, Richard Bartlett, Tom Marsh, Ray Byer, Terry Hooks and Gordon Bliss.

Some exciting things have taken place since the last issue of *The Orderboard*. Let me name my three favorites.

At No. 1 is Houston Railroad Museum's Big Texas Train Show. We had three tables where we displayed a portable layout constructed by Steve Lancaster. We sold club and members' surplus rolling stock. Our commission from sales was estimated to be \$300.00. I would like to once again thank the members who volunteered especially those who worked their scheduled shift!

At No. 2, I have enjoyed going on some open house tours which are taking place this month as part of the San Jacinto Model RR Club's National Model Railroad Month open house season. Don't forget to volunteer to help with the N'Crowd's own open house, coming up Dec. 3-4.

At No. 3...ah ??? ah, oh, well, I guess the pressure must have got to me!

We are still working (hardly working? or is it hard at work?) on the layout. Some sections have new "owners" so we went through a bit of "unbuilding" as the new crews have made adjustments more to their liking. The new and improved versions are starting to shape up.

On another note, Steve Lancaster and I brought the last 10 boxes of the club library to the layout room. Now we can see exactly how much space it takes up under the benchwork. More importantly, it makes room in my train room where the stuff was stored for four years!

Be sure to check out the latest update to the web site. The BC&G Construction Zone and the Events Calendar have been updated, and the new 2012 Bayou City & Gulf photo calendar is available to download. It's all at www.houstonNcrowd.org.

Also, we wish Marty Giesecke and Vince Walker happy November birthdays, and Tom Marsh happy December birthday!

This is the last *Orderboard* for 2011, so we want to take this opportunity to remind you about our upcoming Holiday Bash and Combat Gift Exchange on Sunday, Dec. 11, at the Golden Corral Restaurant, 610 South Loop and S. Main St. The party starts at 6:30 p.m. - see you there!

And in keeping with the spirit of the season, happy holidays and a happy new year to you!



Next BC&G Operating Session:
7 p.m., Saturday, December 3

Next N'Crowd Meeting:
7 p.m., Wednesday, December 21

Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd.
Come and check out progress on the BC&G!

**Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
Sept. 21, 2011
Prepared by Richard Bartlett, Secretary**

President Ted Davis opened the meeting at 7:15 p.m. after a brief board meeting to determine the value of various surplus rolling stock and scenic materials. Four door prizes were offered and the first was a boxcar won by Steve Lancaster, the second was a second boxcar won by Doc Moore who also received a Big Texas Train Show (BTTS) pass, the third was a pass to the BTTS for Dan Gutierrez, and the fourth was a 1950s New York Central metal train logo cereal prize offered by Richard Bartlett. The winner, Barry Miles, had his choice from 28 different logos.

Missing member call was to Conrad Baum, who didn't answer because he was recovering from surgery.

President's Report: Ted threw down the gauntlet to members to remember to wear their blue N'Crowd shirts for the next meeting to pose for a group photo.

Vice President's Report: Charlie had no report. (Again... Charlie, aren't you you're supposed to be presiding over the Club's Vice!)

Treasurer's Report: Tom Marsh reported that the beginning balance was \$12,029.57 and after deposits and expenditures, the ending balance was \$12,081.21.

Secretary's Report: We had 19 members signed in for this meeting, up from the previous meeting's attendance of 15 members. Members present were Ted Davis, Charlie Aselin, Tom Marsh, Richard Bartlett, Eddie Aycock, Robert "Doc" Moore, Gordon Bliss, Steve Lancaster, Ray Byers, Justin Coder, Dejan Suskavcevic, Harvey Stalarow, Joe Kingsberry, Dan Gutierrez, Dominic Valdez, Tom Wayburn, Barry Miles, and two members returning after a long absence - Al Hague and Corbett Legg.

Layout Master's Report: Charlie indicated that the industrial area between the freight and passenger yards could use a volunteer to work on it. Tom Wayburn is going to finish the refinery that Terry Hooks is unable to complete. Harvey has taken on completion of the engine facility. Charlie is working on the street layouts for downtown Bayou City. Gordon asked about the placement of street-lights in the freight area and stressed that they should not be near any turnouts nor between the fascia edge and any areas of the yard which one would be reaching across to couple and uncouple cars. Gordon suggested that lights should be back towards the wall to make certain that OP sessions don't knock them down. Thus, the suggested area for lights would have to be restricted to the strips between the two back pass-through lines and the wall.

Op session Report: The Op Session leaders, Eddie and Gordon, both reported that the Sept. 7 OP session was a much greater success than the previous two OP sessions. Members with previous OP session experience were moved to yard control and several newer OP folks such as Dejan, Harvey, Joe and Justin were assigned operating trains. Most of Justin's time was spent operating Austin yard. (Baptism by fire!) Due to the planning, this session was smoother and a lot of trains were run. In fact, of 14 planned trains, all ran except one. Eddie indicated that the next session, on Oct. 5, will be "dialed up a bit." Eddie repeated his call for members to attend who have not been previously. He stated that these sessions are both educational and fun. Dejan commented that these sessions have helped him design his own layout. This club officer would like to thank Eddie and Gordon for

these sessions. They make layout operations more realistic and enjoyable, and I plan to continue to participate!

Planning for 2011 Holiday party: Ted broached the subject of having a holiday party and received a consensus of approval from members present. Members agreed that Dec. 10 would be the best date, and Richard and Harvey volunteered to locate an appropriate place that all would enjoy other than the Silver Palace, where the two previous parties were held.

Officer Election: Ted introduced the upcoming officers election. Members were polled as to who would be on the next slate for officers. The complete slate will be offered before the November meeting. During the month of October additional suggestion for the slate can be made. Please contact Ted to make the suggestions. Ted would like to have a minimum of two members running per position. At present we have:

President: Joe Kingsberry and Ted Davis
Vice President: Tom Wayburn and Steve Lancaster
Treasurer: Eddie Aycock
Secretary: Richard Bartlett
Board Member: Joe Kingsberry, Harvey Stalarow, and Dominic Valdez (seat vacated by Eddie Aycock)

Old/New Business: Ted confirmed that the N'Crowd will use one of their three tables at the Big Texas Train Show (BTTS) for the test track. He suggested that it would be prudent to test this well before the Oct. 8 show. He targeted testing to be accomplished by Sept. 24-25 so either repairs or a replacement could be confirmed for the BTTS.

The rolling stock and scenics discussed at today's board meeting were offered for sale to members. The BC&G cars were a hit as were various scenic items. The remaining items are slated for sale at the BTTS.

BC&G Decals: Tom stated that Rail Graphics had the artwork, but had some difficulty with the passenger lettering being too small. He will follow up to get this completed.

Eddie suggested that we use the remaining gift card money to purchase a couple of switch engines for the layout so that OP sessions might run smoother.

Ray and others made several announcements of upcoming events:

- 1 - Decaling Clinic at the Houston Railroad Museum. 10:00 am to noon Sept. 24.
- 2 - NMRA LSR Division 8 annual picnic meeting to be held at Zube Park on Oct. 1. Details will be forthcoming regarding time and any needed contributions of food.
- 3 - Big Texas Train Show - George R Brown Convention Center Oct. 8-9, 10 a.m. start
- 4 - Last weekend in October Flatonia holds a mini train show.
- 5 - First weekend in November Flatonia holds a second train show.
- 6 - Bush Library has a train show that same weekend
- 7 - Texas and Pacific Museum also holds a show in Marshall, Texas, the first week of November.

Ray asked what was the status of the Train Cat materials. Ted indicated that since Terry was out for a while that Rick Townsend was going to attempt at least one of these refinery components.

Show and Tell: Richard showed how to protect LogicRail's signal crossing controllers under your layout by modifying the container they are sold in. A drill and Dremel allow strategic placement of openings in the container for wire to run through, and screws are

placed through the board and then the lid. The lid is placed flush against the bottom of the layout and the screws inserted to hold everything in place. Once all wires are connected, then the container is snapped closed and serves to protect the board much the same as when sold. No more dinging the controller board with your head while crawling under the layout!

Richard also indicated that he and his son have prototyped the use of wireless video cameras in both HO and N scale engines which should produce an engineer's view of your layout. These will be shown at the BTTS. To put cameras in different HO engines, Richard purchased a mill for his son to cut back certain areas of the chassis to fit the cameras. Rather than throwing the metal shavings away, he used these for a hopper load. Richard showed the finished product after gluing the shavings in a hopper, which gave the appearance of scrap aluminum.

Dejan briefly described how he can control DCC engines using a voice activated computer controller which interfaces with a Digitrax booster. He tested this on the layout with Charlie on Sept. 17. Charlie was in heaven! ("Hellooo computer..." voice of Scotty in Star Trek IV.)

Finally, Steve proudly showed his restoration work on the Union Station model. Steve reinforced the structure, and added lights underneath the concourse. Moreover, he cleaned and painted various surfaces to produce a like-new appearance. Well done, Steve!

Meeting was adjourned by acclamation at 8:45 p.m.

**Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
Oct. 19, 2011
Prepared by Richard Bartlett, Secretary**

President Ted Davis opened the meeting at 7:10 p.m. and we began with a group photo taken by Tom Marsh. Ted was pleased with the strong showing of blue club shirts worn by the group (18/20). Ted announced the 2012 calendar with all OP sessions and monthly meetings highlighted. Members picked them up after the meeting. Ted provided copies of the current ballot for next month's election of officers for 2012. Only members present at next month's meeting will be eligible to vote. Members may still offer suggestions for candidates between now and Nov. 16, and voting members may even write in their own choices during the vote.

President's Report: Door prizes were won by Harvey Stalarow - a Conrail trailer; Doc Moore - a box car; and Richard Bartlett won the "grand prize" - two left over club cars, and some items left over from the BTTS - papers and a map of the route of the Chicago and Great Western. Ted announced that the club raked in \$201 at the BTTS.

Vice President's Report: Again none...

Treasurer's Report: Beginning balance of \$12,018.21 and ending balance of \$12,177.91. Tom wrote a check to Papa Ben's for over \$300 and a check to Richard Bartlett for \$65 for an MKT GP38 locomotive with decoder for the layout.

Secretary's Report: 20 members were in attendance: Ted Davis, Charlie Aeslin, Tom Marsh, Richard Bartlett, Eddie Aycock, Gordon Bliss, Barry Miles, Doc Moore, Mike Anawaty, Dan Gutierrez, Dejan Suskavcevic, Harvey Stalarow, Joe Kingsberry, Steve Lancaster, Paul Stanaford, DominicValdez, Al Hague, Tom Wayburn, Rick Gonzalez and Terry Hooks.

Layout Master's Report: Dan Gutierrez has worked on the Bayou City industrial area, Harvey has been working on the engine facility with Richard who has helped level the turntable and donated and laid down Z scale cork for the track radiating from the turntable. Tom Wayburn has been making progress with the refinery kitbashing an array of refinery structures.

OP Session Report: The recent operating session (OP4) was held on October 5. Gordon and Eddie reported that it went well. In addition to Gordon and Eddie, present were Justin Corder, Dejan Suskavcevic, Rick Townsend, Harvey Stalarow, Richard Bartlett and Charlie Aeslin. Dejan used his iPhone throttle for most of his operations. It was suggested to reschedule the next OP session because Eddie and Gordon will be out of town. After some discussion, the proposed new date will be Saturday, Nov. 5 from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Ted asked if anyone might be interested in carpooling to Zube Park on Saturday, Oct. 22, in the morning.

New Business: Harvey discussed potential for the holiday party. Nothing has been established as of yet. Escalantes in Meyerland was proposed, but the members didn't feel that there would be enough attendance to warrant the minimum 35 people to reserve their room.

Old Business: Eddie indicated that he would like to purchase the GP38 switcher Richard offered for \$65. Eddie still feels that the club needs two more switch engines for the various yards.

Meeting was closed at 7:55 p.m. by acclamation.

**Houston N'Crowd
Membership Meeting Report
Nov. 16, 2011
Prepared by Richard Bartlett, Secretary**

Dear Members: This report will be incomplete because the file was lost from my computer. Since this is partly from my memory with assistance from other members, some items will not be as detailed as they should be.

Because several members had to leave, the meeting began early at 6:50 p.m. to allow these members to vote for 2012 club officers before leaving at 7:00 p.m. Ballots were passed out to all that were in attendance, and Ray Byer tallied the results.

2012 N Crowd Club Officers

President: Ted Davis

Vice President: Steve Lancaster

Treasurer: Eddie Aycock

Secretary: Richard Bartlett

2013 Board Member: Joe Kingsberry

2014 Board Member: Ray Byer

President's Report: Ted asked about the group photo from last month, and Tom Marsh reported that it came out just fine. When pressed for details by Ted, Tom reported that it had a bunch of chubby guys dressed mostly in blue shirts, and smiling. Door prizes were won by Justin Coder and ???(Barry Miles). Ted reported that the club would be holding an open house Dec. 3 - 4 during store hours. All members were encouraged to participate. Extensive scenery work was in progress to get the layout ready for this event.

Vice President's Report: Charlie Aeslin's final report was "this is my last report and I have nothing to report." :o

Treasurer's Report: Tom Marsh reported a beginning balance of \$12177.91 and an ending balance of ??? Checks were written to cover several items for the layout in the amount of ???

Secretary's Report: We had 16 members in attendance this month, and they were: Vince Walker (who just came to vote), Ted Davis, Charlie Aselin, Tom Marsh, Richard Bartlett, Tom Wayburn, Gordon Bliss, Harvey Stalarow, Joseph Kingsberry, Hugh Boyd, Al Hague, Eddie Aycock, Dan Gutierrez, Steve Lancaster, Steve Redd and Justin Coder. Dominic Valdez arrived fashionably late with his two significant others.

Layout Master's Report: Tom Wayburn and Ted Davis together brought the members up to speed on recent progress with adding scenery to the layout in the newest areas. Tom Wayburn is focusing on the refinery, the engine facility is being worked on by Harvey Stalarow and Richard Bartlett, Bayou City proper is being worked on by Charlie Aselin, and the Bayou City industrial area is being worked on by Dan Gutierrez. Ted then gave several members the opportunity to give more detail.

Tom indicated that extensive additions have been made to the refinery area, the paint scheme has been established, and most of the materiel inherited from previous efforts has been organized. There is a tentative placement of most of the major pieces of equipment. About ten heat exchangers that will be on the platforms are missing. Stairs, ladders, railings and gates are almost all missing. Finally, the most important task of all has barely begun. I refer to the piping, which in a real refinery represents about half of the expense. I expect to take at least as long with the piping as I have put in so far. Some of the piping will run in racks, in particular the feed and return lines to the cooling towers, the fresh crude from ships and on-shore tanks, the product lines to the tank farm, and the waste streams to the incinerator. The columns are close together in keeping with a modest amount of selective compression. I expect the stacks on the two fired heaters will be encased in oil-derrick-like scaffolds such as the small scaffold on the incinerator sitting on the extreme right of the refinery plot on the BC&G. Allyn Pearlman presented the club with three very fine oil tanks that have to find a place on the layout.

Harvey indicated that the whole engine facility was rebuilt from scratch as the turntable was out of level, and most of the lines coming into it were off-center or out of level. Harvey went on to state that the entire area was covered in a uniform layer of cork after the turntable was completely leveled, and then the track laid using alignment gauges beginning with the bridge on the turntable and working out. The result is three different tracks coming into the turntable from the main layout, three tracks going out to an engine repair facility, a garden track with two spurs, and five tracks to be situated under a future scratch-built engine house. Much of this work has been performed by Richard, but Harvey has had substantial input on the positioning of track and buildings and working with Ted to get approval for all of the changes. (Since the meeting, Richard has dropped leads for all track using separate brass grounding blocks for rail A and rail B).

Charlie has been laying out the streets and curbs for the city proper using a watered-down spackling paste and styrene strips as curbs. Extensive smoothing and subsequent sanding has yielded realistic detail that will be painted with appropriate colors when the work is finished. In addition, this paste has been used to fix the positions for all of the buildings surrounding Union Station. Dan has been laying out the Bayou City industrial area using the club's stock of various factories/office buildings/warehouses. He has also made significant progress towards laying out the streets in this area in a manner similar

to what Charlie has been doing. This work was initiated several weeks ago to try and get the layout ready for the coming Dec. 3-4 Open House.

New Business: Tom Marsh reported several items regarding the recent Big Texas Train Show held at the George R. Brown Convention Center (GRB) in October. The showing of attendees was a disappointment due in part to the economy, parking and the weather. Consequently, the ponsor, Houston Railroad Museum, did not make the targeted return that was hoped for. Moreover, the running of the GRB has changed hands and the cost of the use of one of the Halls will go up by at least two-fold. Tom indicated that the Houston Railroad Museum was looking into changing the venue to the Reliant Stadium complex for future shows. Obviously, this will have potential consequences for our planning of the N-Crowd 35th mini-convention celebration for 2013. Ted indicated that the members of this planning committee should schedule a meeting to discuss this once Tom Marsh can report on the results of the inquiry with Reliant Center.

Our Club Op Sessions organizers, Eddie Aycock and Gordon Bliss, provided a detailed narrative of various layout visits/operating sessions they have attended within the TX/LA/OK area in the last month. While the details have been lost due to loss of my original meeting minutes file, the main point they emphasized was that members would benefit greatly from participating in these events. Members can learn about the various operations possible on a layout (from very simple to as complex as found on the Union Pacific or Southern Pacific railways), and members can see what special features are found on other layouts that they might want to incorporate into their own layouts. Certainly, Eddie and Gordon's enthusiasm for these events was clearly passed on to all that were in attendance!

In that same vein, Ted reminded members that we missed our November operating session, but one was scheduled for the first week in December. Discussion requested that the meeting be moved to the first Saturday. However, it was pointed out that this was also our Open House date. Further discussion came to the conclusion that this should not be a problem as the layout could be set up beforehand as always, but leaving the show loop free for the Open House. So to all members - Our next Operating Session will be from 5:00 p.m. - until on Saturday, Dec. 3, 2011, right after the first day of the Open House.

Old Business: Harvey Stalarow and Richard Bartlett provided details about their progress towards finding a new venue for the annual Christmas Party. Discussion by members provided a consensus for the party to be scheduled at the Golden Corral on the southeast corner of Main St. and the 610 Loop. The N'Crowd will have the party room with a capacity for 50+ members and family, and the date and time are Sunday, Dec. 11 at 6:30 p.m. This restaurant has an extensive buffet that Steve Lancaster and Ted Davis "tested" the week before the November meeting, and gave their hearty approval. Ted further went on to announce that members can also participate in the "combat gift exchange" if they so desired. To do so, just provide a wrapped gift costing no more than \$20.00. Harvey has sent an email to members regarding this event, so please respond to this with your plans of attendance. See you there!

The meeting adjourned at 8:15 pm.

Waste not, want not... with aluminum

by Joe Kingsberry

In this installment of “Waste not, want not...” we will discuss used aluminum cans.

On trips to my favorite aluminum can recycling facility, I observed the finished product: neat, uniform cubed bundles of compressed cans, ready to be loaded for shipment for recycling. Most are loaded onto trailers, but some bundles do end up in boxcars.

To produce these loads, I start with the same 3/8-in. square Plastruct tube used in the last “Waste not...” article to form the waste paper bundles, only for this I use aluminum foil, the thin stuff, not heavy duty. If you choose used foil (the

“better half” might object to unused), be sure to wash it first. A multi-color pack of Sharpie permanent markers is needed to finish the effect.

First, take the aluminum and ball it in hand as tight as possible. This will produce many wrinkles. Undo the ball and tear the aluminum into strips. Jam the strips into the Plastruct tube to produce an aluminum “brick”. Take the markers and randomly dot the brick, giving the look of various colored compressed cans.

Now load the bundles into your boxcars for shipment to the recycling facility.



Joe Kingsberry adapted his technique for making waste paper loads to make scrap aluminum bundles. Joe's story on the waste paper bundles appeared in the September/October issue of The Orderboard. The first “Waste not, want not...” article covered scrap metal loads for gondolas; the article appeared in the April/May 2011 issue.



Extreme makeover *from page 1*

continued the process. I removed the few shed legs that hadn't already been lost. They were wood I beams, which are extremely fragile, so I replaced them with identical styrene pieces and gobbled on the CA.

The front portico was mounted at a scale 17 feet, while the supports holding up the front were 16 feet tall, giving it a noticeable slant. Looking at the old glue scars, I suspect it once broke loose and was reattached too high. Rather than break it loose again and possibly cause more harm than good, I elected to rebuild the front supports at 17 feet.

I scrubbed the building and shed with soapy water and a soft paint brush. I peeled, carved and sanded away a small handful of old glue throughout the project. I repainted the foundation with Floquil concrete, although it should be weathered after final

installation. I also replaced the plastic wrought iron fence protecting the platforms from wayward passengers with Gold Medal Models brass fence.

The only thing I added to the original model, other than a few passengers lined up at a gate, was lighting under the concourse shed. The lights are mounted in short styrene tubes, and two tubes penetrate the back of the shed roof and the building itself, providing conduits for the wiring and strengthening the connection between the two subassemblies.

The station is now clean and strong and ready for installation, but it is far from finished. It will take some light weathering and lots of details to blend it seamlessly into our downtown scene.

Best of luck to whoever gets the job!



The rebuilt Union Station will now be able to serve BC&G passengers for many additional years. Photos by Steve Lancaster





We've got the blues!

The blue shirts, that is! If you don't have yours or you need a new one, be sure to attend an upcoming N'Crowd meeting and place your order.

Check out the calendar at right for upcoming event dates. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. Wednesday operating sessions also begin at 7 p.m., but Saturday operating sessions begin at 5 p.m.

The updated calendar at www.houstonNcrowd.org includes tentative dates for all 2012 meetings and most operating sessions. Some Wednesday operating sessions will be changed to Saturday; we will publish those changes in *The Orderboard* and post the online updates as soon as the information is available.

For more information about the BC&G operating sessions, contact Eddie Aycock by email at efaycock@aol.com.

Operating sessions are low-pressure and a great opportunity to run trains, so don't miss out on the fun!



TIME TABLE

Mark your calendar now for these upcoming events!

December 1-4

Oklahoma N-Rail Southern Plains N-Scale Convention, Oklahoma City

December 3

BC&G operating session

December 3-4

N'Crowd/BC&G open house for National Model Railroad Month

December 3-4

34th Annual Oklahoma City Train Show

December 11

Annual N'Crowd Holiday Bash and Combat Gift Exchange

December 21

N'Crowd Membership Meeting at Papa Ben's Train Place

2012

January 4

BC&G operating session

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

Published as close to monthly (but no promises!) as possible for members and friends of N'Crowd Model Railroad Society, Inc., Houston, Texas.

Tom Marsh, Editor

Send newsletter contributions to: tom@houstonNcrowd.org. We reserve the right to edit submissions for clarity and length.

Visit our Web site:

www.houstonNcrowd.org

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