

News from Houston N'Crowd



May/June 2012

# THE ORDERBOARD



## Have you visited the BC&G lately?

A lot has been happening on the N'Crowd's Bayou City & Gulf Railroad. A new siding at Austin is going in to facilitate operating sessions (above), while the BC&G's night shop forces, and the railroad's public profile, have benefited from the installation of new lighting on the main shop building (below). Operating sessions have revealed a few trackwork flaws (right), but the nearby track gang working on the new siding was dispatched to the scene in short order. Drop by Papa Ben's and check out your BC&G! *Photo above by Ted Davis, at right by Rick Gonzalez, below by Tom Marsh*



# "GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Ted Davis, President

## Club fun, and other things

For this column I once again "whupped out" my trusty copy of Webster's dictionary. This time I was in search of the nutshell definition of what a "club" is.

What I found was as follows: A heavy stick used as a weapon (could be useful at a meeting) or used in a game, for example a golf club. Also, a club is defined as a group of people associated for a common purpose.

Although there is a more formal definition of our purpose in our bylaws, I will leave it to you to look that up if you are so inclined. For our discussion here I would define our club's purpose as having fun with our hobby. (Please note the segue from my last column.)

Being a club member has its highs and lows, as discussed below, and it may not always be fun. It is a bit like a family as you become dependent on the other members and in some ways attached to the people who make up the club.

One year ago we drove the golden spike on the BC&G! Two years ago we toured Rick Townsend and Gordon Bliss's fine layouts as part of a private showing. Also two years ago, Gordon's "Santa Fe All the Way" was featured in *N Scale Railroading* magazine. Fun!

Our special run car inventory is diminishing. We even sold some to an NWX visitor, who also informed us that their club has moved again. They're still in the mall, but at a different location.

For a number of reasons, the BC&G Ops

Sessions have been suspended. This is partly due to one of the coordinators being out of town, the upcoming LSR convention and a couple of track problems. But they will resume shortly and with a twist. The next one will be on the first Saturday of June. Fun!

ExactRail announced that they are discontinuing their dealer network and will do direct sales only. In what to me seemed a bad joke they said dealers could order at the same price as any other customer! I hope this is not the wave of the future, as this business model could put an end to the hobby shop industry. Not fun!

I want to mention the demise of some local layouts. Papa Ben's layout is now completely demolished. Hugh Boyd just took down his beautifully engineered layout as he will be listing his townhouse for sale, and Gary Simon of the Papa Ben's staff had to tear down his train room because of an error in a pipeline survey. Not fun!

Since our last posting, Tom Cobb of Papa Ben's has had surgery, so send him your get well wishes. Also, Layout Master Charlie Aselin has had shoulder surgery. No more golf for him? We all miss his bright shining face. I bet he won't recognize the layout when he gets back, although he may recognize the article on page 3.

This issue also sees news flashes about the BC&G, Joe Kingberry's latest "Waste not..." article, and multiple meeting minutes as the editor tries to catch up. Fun!



**N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:**  
June 20 / July 18 / August 15

**BC&G Operating Session:**  
June 2, 5 p.m.

Meetings start at 7 p.m. at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. Come and check out progress on the BC&G!

# Woodworking tools assist track work

by Charles Aselin

How would you like to lay track with no more hammer hitting your fingers or having to hold the track nail with tweezers or needle-nosed pliers?

One of my good friends and N'Crowd member Ray Byer showed me something he found at Harbor Freight Co. for track work. It is the "5 Piece Deluxe Woodcrafter Set" from Spring Tools by Noxon, which is used by furniture and cabinet makers. The tools come in different sizes and types for different applications.

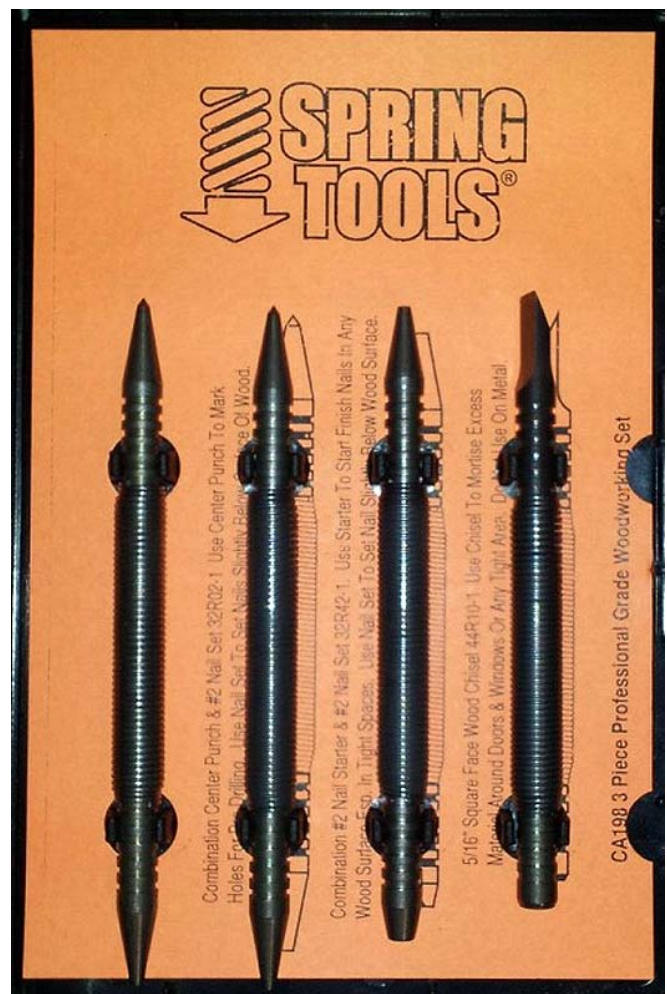
The small nail set is what I use for nailing track on cork roadbed on both the club's BC&G layout and my home layout. The nail set can also be used to adjust track to the side a little if it isn't straight enough.

Use of the tool is straightforward. First, push a track nail through the hole in the track and into the roadbed material just enough to hold the nail upright. Next, place the nail set end of the tool on the nail. While holding the lower part of the nail set end, pull back with the other hand on the upper part of the spring tool.

A little bit of spring force is enough to set the nail, so be gentle. Several hits are best; don't try to set the nail all the way with one hit. If the nail goes in a little crooked, tilt the tool to the side of the nail a little to set it straighter.

If you have a little wiggle in the line of track you have laid, you can straighten the track with this tool. Place the nail set on the outside of the railroad tie that has the nail a little out of place and bump the tie and nail into alignment.

Harbor Freight has six locations in the Houston area. More information about Spring Tools is available online at [www.springtools.com](http://www.springtools.com).



# Waste not, want not...

## Woodchips made easy

by Joe Kingsberry

I have always been impressed by the long strings of tall 60-ft. long gondolas that ran on the Southern Pacific on their way to paper mills and wood products manufacturers. In this installment of “Waste not, want not...” we’ll discuss a very simple project to simulate woodchip loads.

It all began with a lumber cutting project in the garage. I was about to sweep the sawdust for disposal, when it hit me... woodchips!

Items needed are a woodchip gondola, styrene base slightly smaller than the gondola open-

ing, wood color paint, white glue, an eye dropper, water and sawdust.

First cut and fit the styrene base just below the top of the gondola. Paint the base with the wood color paint and allow to dry. Spread white glue over the styrene then sprinkle sawdust over the wet glue. Continue to build up the load with sawdust, glue and water, allowing the layers to dry to proper height.

Finally, enjoy those long strings of woodchip gondolas on their way to your layout’s processors!



Above, Joe’s finished woodchip load in an SP gondola. Below, a string of woodchip cars tries out some recently paved street trackage on the N’Crowd’s Bayou City & Gulf Railroad. Deluxe Innovations has offered N-scale woodchip cars in three styles: deep rib, shallow rib and smooth side. Photos by Ted Davis



# Trainwatchers rewarded at Rosenberg Rail Fest

Rosenberg Railroad Museum's annual Rail Fest featured a hobo camp and a "24 Hours of Rosenberg Rail" train watching event on April 20-21. Kansas City Southern, Union Pacific and BNSF obliged with just over 60 train movements past the museum over the 24 hour period from 7 p.m. to 7 p.m. *Photo by Tom Marsh*




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**Houston N'Crowd  
Membership Meeting Report  
March 21, 2012  
Prepared by Richard Bartlett, Secretary**

President Ted Davis called the meeting to order at 7:13 p.m. March 21, 2012, with a ringing bell.

## President's Report

- Doc mentioned that he had lost his badge and Richard indicated that he had lost his as well. Ted said that replacement badges were \$10. So, Richard and Doc need new stinkin' badges.
- Steve Redd won a convention badge and Virginian boxcar, Joe Kingsberry won a Golden West Box car and Astroworld pen, and Tom Wayburn won a 1972 calendar and an Astroworld pen.

## Vice-President's Report

No report.

## Treasurer's Report

- Ending balance was \$12,224.30 and a CD worth \$4,804.08. Check for amount owed to Papa Ben's since 1 Jan for over \$300.00 to pay for decoders for PA engines and car storage boxes for the OP sessions, etc.
- Money in totaled \$329.72 of which donations accounted for \$103.00, car sales for \$172.00 and shirt sales of \$24.00.

## Secretary's Report

- Sixteen members attending included: Richard Bartlett, Al Hague, Steve Reed, Dan Gutierrez, Tom Wayburn, Joe Kingsberry, Gordon Bliss, Doc Moore, Harvey Stalarow, Leslie, Mike and Lindsey Bodak, Dejan Suskavcevic, Tom Marsh, Steve Lancaster and Eddie Aycock.

## Layout Master's Report

- Charlie was out so no report. Richard did mention that the Engine Service Facility work continues, but he needs additional corrugated roofing material to finish.

## Operators Report

- Gordon and Eddie said the layout and OP session went well. Eddie and Gordon indicated that the bare minimum number of members showed for the session and suggested that he would notify members of the next OP Session meeting in advance of the planned date of April 4, 2012.
- Gordon and Eddie suggested they would like to create a passing track in the Austin area out of the existing parallel track, which joins the main show loop behind the farm house. This could be accomplished by inserting a curved left turnout behind the Kato Switch house at the programming track, and just removing the right-hand switch in the show loop. Members were mostly in favor of this. Only Tom Marsh had an objection as he indicated that he used that track.
- (Later on Saturday 21 March, Harvey suggested adding

the curved turnout and an additional right turnout to join the curved to make the passing track. Thus the other switch could remain, but the passing track in Austin would still be created. Certainly the reversing loop and appropriate insulating joiners will need to be taken into account to insure no shorts are created.)

### Quartermaster's Report

- Six Waco, Austin & Brazos boxcars and two San Antonio & Aransas Pass Cars sold on eBay. None of the seven N'Crowd tank cars sold.
- Ted announced we would sell club members the tank cars that were not selling on eBay. These were offered at \$10 each and Richard bought one each of the two styles, Gordon bought two of the older style and Eddie bought one of the older style, while Dejan and Harvey bought the remaining two newer style cars.

### New Business

No new business.

### Old Business

- Gordon and Eddie requested that the club purchase couplers for the new BC&G *Bluebonnet* passenger cars and three BC&G engines that needed Micro-Trains couplers. Total cost would be less than \$100.00, and the purchase was unanimously approved by the members present.
- Richard reported that the roundhouse needed additional roofing material. He requested additional authority to order/obtain the remaining amount. This request was approved, as it along with the rest of the roofing materials totaled less than \$100. Ted pointed out to the members that Richard had donated all the materials for the walls and superstructure.
- A report on an earlier meeting among interested members to discuss the refinery area was made by Al Hague. Work will continue on a scaled-down version of the refinery.
- The next meeting of the 35th Anniversary Convention Committee will take place on April 4, 2012, at 6:00 p.m. before the scheduled operating session.
- Dejan offered a show and tell video of his new layout.
- Gordon pointed out that the cake Lindsey Bodak baked for the members was appropriate as six days ago on the Ides of March was the N'Crowd's 34th anniversary. Members all thanked Lindsey for her offering. Gordon re-iterated that the first meeting was on the Ides of March, 1979, when he was a freshman in high school. An extended session of memorable events was then presented by Gordon, Al Hague and others regarding the antics of Ben and the original members who Gordon quickly listed (and I will only attempt to begin to try). Original members included: Greg Johnson, Ron Miller, Ben Pearlman, Tom Marsh, Gene Richardson, George Koronis, and Gordon and his father. First meeting was held at 707 Michigan Street at Greg's business. Additional early members included Loren Neufeld and Greg Fontineaux. The early modules were filled with Con-Cor U50 and PA engines; they were quite loud compared to today's offerings. More reminiscing continued until 8:30 or so when the meeting was adjourned by consensus.

## Houston N'Crowd Membership Meeting Report April 18, 2012 Prepared by Richard Bartlett, Secretary

President Ted Davis called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

### President's Report

- Ted admitted to not sending a meeting minder and that may be why we had a small showing. To solve the issue he has requested that VP Steve Lancaster remind him to send a reminder out a week before the meeting.
- Club friend and Papa Ben's employee Tom Cobb was reported to be in the hospital after removal of a spinal tumor. Tom is in good spirits.
- Ted stated that we have not yet received our replacement badges for Doc Moore or Richard Bartlett nor badges for any new members.
- Door prizes: Ray won a yellow boxcar and Dan won an ACF boxcar poster as well.

### Vice President's Report

Steve showed an O-scale water tower he built.

### Secretary's Report

- Twelve members, down from our usual 19 to 20; members present included Richard Bartlett, Ray Byer, Ted Davis, Eddie Aycock, Al Hague, Steve Lancaster, Harvey Stalarow, Dan Gutierrez, Tom Marsh, Leslie and Lindsey Bodak and Joe Kingberry. We also had a visitor from San Antonio, Rolf Schroots.

### Treasurer's Report

- Treasurer Eddie Aycock indicated we have less than \$100.00 in store charges. Eddie also reported the checking account had \$12,234.64, the CD \$4,804.08, and we have gift certificates at \$329.72. In addition, there were \$23.00 in donations.

### Layout Master's Report

- Due to the Layout Master's absence, Ted asked Harvey to talk about the refinery area. Harvey reported having started comparing and checking for possible positioning of available parts.
- Richard described the addition of an engine wash facility next to the Roundhouse.

### Quartermaster's Report

- Harvey reported more cars are up for sale on eBay and three yellow cars have sold.

### Old Business

- Clock kits are now available for order. Tom Marsh showed several designs and asked members to select what they would like ordered.

### Operating Sessions

- Eddie indicated that several problems with the track

operations were found and Ted said he would get together with Harvey to identify where these were.

- Eddie stated that not enough of the crew stay for the whole session. If you are going to commit to coming, show and stay!
- Eddie reiterated that an Austin passing track is needed to improve operations. Dejan and Richard volunteered to take this on after checking with Ray Byer as to what the best arrangement might be.
- A mini-op session was proposed for a Saturday night. Richard suggested that if members wanted to include a train "from home" that Eddie be apprised beforehand so he can set it up in RailOps.
- Steam Engine 844 was to have come to town, but a worn drive wheel had side-lined the engine until the wheel could be repaired by the Texas State Railroad facility. Leslie Bodak noted that there is an iPhone app from UP to keep track of what 844 might be up to at any time.
- Ted brought up the 35th Anniversary Committee meeting. Outcome was to slim down our plans. A proposed plan was to have a swap meeting, cake and self guided tours, some clinics but model contest. Galveston is an alternative venue. Al stated that this may need to be compared to the last meeting. Gordon's place was offered for a swap meet, and the Best Western Deer Park was noted to have a meeting room the size of Papa Ben's, which might house all of the above proposed activities. Because of the Galveston possibility, October was suggested as a target date.

#### **New business**

- Ray and Leslie told of Division 8 events, including the chili-cookoff April 21 at Alvin. Also, there was discussion of the upcoming Lone Star Region Convention June 6-10 in Houston. Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

### **Houston N'Crowd Membership Meeting Report May 16, 2012 Prepared by Richard Bartlett, Secretary**

President Ted Davis called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

#### **President's Report**

- Ted passed around get-well cards for Tom Cobb and Charlie Aselin. Ted delegated job of mailing cards to the secretary.
- Door prizes: Harvey won the UP Big Boy poster and Steve won a car. Steve really wanted the poster, but Harvey wanted no part of a trade for the car.

#### **Vice President's Report**

- Nothing to report: Steve said he had been busy with building two layouts and three models.

#### **Secretary's Report**

- This week we had 16 members in attendance. Members present included: Richard Bartlett, Mike, Leslie and

Lindsey Bodak, Gordon Bliss, Justin Corder, Doc Moore, Joe Kingsberry, Tom Wayburn, Tom Marsh, Ted Davis, Dan Gutierrez, Al Hague, Eddie Aycock, Steve Lancaster and Harvey Stalarow.

#### **Treasurer's Report**

- Eddie made a motion to pay off store charges with Gift certificates. Mike Bodak seconded and the motion passed.

#### **Layout Master's Report**

- Due to Charlie's absence, Ted asked members who have been working on the layout to comment on progress. Harvey has been working on the refinery area. A custom mix of gravel has been laid down in the refinery area to outline the footprint of buildings and tanks, and custom pipe bridges have been made to cover the backdrop pass-through. Harvey made a series of pipe connections which are tying together the whole complex nicely.
- Richard reported progress on adding a passing siding in Austin. This is designed to relieve congestion in Austin during operating sessions. Ray Byer indicated that adding a passing siding between the mainline and the front fascia would present the least complicated solution. The final design will add a seven-foot long siding which should be sufficient for most passenger trains. Richard found no underlayment in this area except where the curve is next to the programming track. Richard removed scenery and foam next to the existing plywood underlayment on which the mainline was mounted. He then cut two narrow pieces of plywood to fit next to the existing underlayment to support the passing siding. After adding pocket screw holes, Richard glued and screwed this underlayment extension to the existing mainline support. Spackling was used to level the new roadbed and fill in gaps. Cork roadbed and code 80 flex track were laid to where the turnouts will be spliced into the mainline.
- Richard reported electrifying the roundhouse using a 12V wall wart and a lighted SPST switch to power both the new exterior lights over the sign and the interior "fluorescent" lights over each engine bay.

#### **Quartermaster's Report**

- Harvey reported three more Waco car sets were sold on eBay and an inventory of remaining cars to be sold is forthcoming.

#### **Operating Sessions**

- The next Operating Session may be on Saturday, June 2. Steve is supposed to remind Eddie to send out an email. Richard is supposed to remind Steve to remind Eddie. Eddie emphasized that sessions run best when six people are present for the entire session. He asks that members commit to staying the two hours to accomplish all of the operations.

#### **New Business**

- Eddie moved that the club buy two UT4R throttles. Gordon seconded the motion, which won unanimous support. It was determined that the purchase would be made

with store gift certificates. A club owned DT 300 will be sold on eBay.

- Richard sold an MKT switch engine with factory decoder to the club at his cost to be used during operating sessions.

- Richard reported that he and his sons had made significant progress toward finishing the design of the engine-mounted wireless camera system, and that Jim Lemmond and Gordon had graciously agreed to have their layouts recorded by the respective new HO and N scale engines. These videos will be part of a clinic Richard and his son will present at the NMRA national convention in Grand Rapids, Mich., at the end of July. Richard and his son plan to meet with manufacturers' reps to make the system available to model railroaders everywhere.

- A club-owned display case stored at Tom's office was to be picked up by Richard and moved to his storage unit. Tom proposed that the club donate this unit to Richard and Mike Bodak seconded the motion. Motion was passed without dissent. Ted also brought up some shelving stored at his house from the old store to be given away, but the motion was shelved due to lack of interest. In the same spirit, Ted then brought up some curtains also from the same source stored at his house. These curtains were also proposed for donation, but the motion was not moved.

- Al Hague asked whether we have any other cars that were in the museum case at the old store and Ted indicated that they were all stored at his house. Al suggested we develop display cases for these cars, and Ted challenged him to come up with an inventive way to do that given the limited wall space in the layout room. The club will await any progress with this from Al.

- Justin offered to purchase chargers and rechargeable batteries for the operating session throttles. The club authorized purchase of six batteries and three chargers with a maximum cost of \$100.00.

#### Old Business

- LSR Division 8 Convention coming up 6-12 June, hosted by the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club. Convention website is [www.lonestarregion.com/convention.shtml](http://www.lonestarregion.com/convention.shtml)
- Tom Marsh announced an upcoming be-in at Saginaw Junction near Ft Worth. This is a 24-hour watch to observe the massive number of trains that pass through this central crossing. Tom indicated that more than 48 trains could be seen during a 24 hour period. Gordon commented that he had also observed this same Saginaw crossing site for just a few hours when he had a brief respite while he was in Dallas last month for work, and saw a series of trains including a consist of UP E8/9 units.
- Meeting was adjourned after a motion was made, seconded, and passed by acclamation at 7:58 p.m.



## TIME TABLE

2012

#### June 2

BC&G operating session

#### June 6-10

LSR NMRA 61st Annual Convention, Houston

#### June 19-24

Santa Fe Railway Historical & Modeling Society Annual Convention, Temple

#### June 20

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

#### July TBA

BC&G operating session

#### July 18

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

#### August TBA

BC&G operating session

#### August 15

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

## THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd*

Published fairly regularly for members and friends of N'Crowd Model Railroad Society, Inc., Houston, Texas.

#### Tom Marsh, Editor

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

#### Visit our Web site:

[www.houstonNcrowd.org](http://www.houstonNcrowd.org)

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