



News from Houston N'Crowd



# THE ORDERBOARD

January/February 2014



*It's a "Santa Fe All The Way" scene on this AustNTrak module at the Oklahoma City Train Show. Conditions outside the Travel & Transportation Building at the Oklahoma State Fairgrounds were not as pleasant, as illustrated by the photo below of the north end of a southbound BNSF train hustling out of the frozen city.*

## The (train) show must go on: OKC shrugs off icy winter storm and earthquake



Despite an icy blast of winter weather that shut down roads, schools and businesses, along with a rafter-rattling earthquake, the annual Oklahoma City Train Show took place as scheduled over the weekend of Dec. 7-8, 2013. For a full report on the show, turn to page 6.

# "GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Vincent Walker, President

## A word from the new president

My interest in trains started as a small boy when my family and I got off the MoPac train here in Houston. Walking down the platform where the train had just backed in at Union Station, the engineer dropped its air, scaring me. I ran down the platform and suddenly stopped for some reason. I looked underneath the passenger car at all the mechanical equipment and the rest is history.

I grew up by the Katy Railroad's Eureka Yard, near N. Shepherd Dr. We later moved to Scott St. where I watched Santa Fe's *Texas Chief* passenger train. This is when Union Station was in decline and the Gulf Coast Chapter - NRHS was just getting started. I was usually around Union Station or somewhere in the area watching the *Texas Chief* come in, but never thought about joining the chapter.

I bought my first N scale boxcars from Micro-Scale at Woolworth in downtown Houston. In later years, I worked at Astroworld as a fireman, and was later promoted to engineer, driving the steam engine around the park. My last days in high school for a drafting class, I had an extra credit project to draw an EMD SD45T-2. To gather more information about trains, other than using a model railroad magazine, I dressed up in my polyester green suit and white patent leather shoes and took the Rapid Transit Lines bus to SP's Hardy Street shops. I got off the bus and walked over to the engines where an SP employee saw me and asked what I was doing there. I told him I had a school project. To make a long story short, he gave me a tour of all the shops and office buildings. (Try and do that now!).

I landed a real job in 1977 with an engineering company. My involvement with the N'Crowd started back when we ran trains at the downtown Foley's department store and I had a head full of hair. I also

volunteered at the Galveston Railroad Museum as a fireman/engineer back when they were running trains. I was also involved with a group that tried to get the public interested in rebuilding T&NO 2-8-2 No. 982 here in Houston. I was involved in the engineering drawings with a group of other folks.

I have always travelled by train and visited tourist lines when I could. I received a train set almost every Christmas, and now I'm on my third home layout, the Eagle Route III. I'm into detailing and custom painting. I model the MoPac from 1955 to the early 1980s.

I have lived in Houston all my life; this is where I met and married my wife, Ingrid. We have one son, Vincent Caleb, who likes trains... so he says. My son and I are both N'Crowd members.

As a long-time member and now president, I look forward to the New Year and help from all the members with my plans and goals for the club, which are to increase membership; encourage members to run trains (yours or the club's) on the club layout; have quarterly running sessions; and host various monthly train clinics.

Vincent Walker

### "Dark Block": A note from the old president

I would like to thank the 2013 officers and members who worked on the layout during the entire year. Remember, this is your club and if you want progress it requires your input and participation.

If you like the newsletter, *The Orderboard* requires articles. Please submit at least one in 2014 and tell us about progress on your railroad, a trip you took or something interesting trackside you saw. Just do it!

Gordon Bliss



**N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:**  
January 15 / February 19 / March 19

**BC&G Operating Sessions:**  
Wednesday, February 5 / Saturday, March 1

Most activities take place at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. Membership meetings start at 7 p.m. Saturday operating sessions start at 5 p.m. Wednesday operating sessions start at 7 p.m.

**Houston N'Crowd  
Membership Meeting Report  
November 20, 2013  
Prepared by Harvey Stalarow - Secretary**

The meeting was called to order at 7:10 p.m.

**New Business:** Joe Kingsberry will paint five hopper cars donated by Vince Walker. They will then be sold to the highest bidder.

Ted Davis needs the combination for the lock on the computer. Does anyone know the combination? Ted also asked about the BC&G cars that are for sale. They will be available after the meeting. Ted is giving away two N-Trak modules.

Layout Master Al Hague called for volunteers to work on the back part of the layout.

VP Richard Bartlett proposed a motion to buy a Broadway Limited coder. Motion was passed.

President Gordon Bliss called for people to sign up to run trains during the upcoming open house. Gordon also discussed electrical fixes and suggested that an electrical committee be formed to make sure additions are correct and approved.

**Old Business:** Gordon complimented Editor Tom Marsh on a great issue of *The Orderboard*.

Tom Marsh talked about the overdue website update. He also reported that the Houston Railroad Museum has not moved; maybe in the next 30 days.

Al Hague discussed cleaning the layout next Wednesday to prepare for the open house.

Treasurer Eddie Aycock discussed cleaning under the layout after the open house. Eddie also discussed filing the corporate franchise tax forms.

**Election results for 2013 officer and board positions:** The following people take office in January:

President - Vince Walker  
Vice President - Samuel Townsel  
Treasurer - Eddie Adcock  
Secretary - James Senneff  
Board Member (2016) - Al Hague

The meeting was adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

**Houston N'Crowd  
Membership Meeting Report  
December 18, 2013  
Prepared by Harvey Stalarow - Secretary**

The meeting was called to order at 7:15 p.m.

Ten members in attendance, all 10 won a door prize.

**New Business:** President Gordon Bliss reported that the Houston Railroad Museum equipment move took place over an 11 hour period on Sunday. The problems with the move were discussed. Gordon noted that layout staffing for the weekends has been good. Gordon proposed adding language to membership applications about interaction with the store's customers. Store employees should be the only ones to talk to customers about store stock and business.

Ted Davis proposed keeping only 10 of the club's 50 C-clamps and giving the others to members.

**Old Business:** Ted talked about the club cars that are for sale.

Gordon urged members to present clinics at next year's meetings. He also encouraged everyone to submit articles and photos for *The Orderboard*.

Joe Kingsberry noted he has been running trains and keeping the layout room open almost every day during the Christmas shopping season. Our donation box has been full on multiple occasions.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

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**Houston N'Crowd 2014 Officers  
and Volunteers**

Thanks to the following for stepping forward to support Houston N'Crowd in 2014!

President ..... Vincent Walker  
Vice President ..... Samuel Townsel  
Secretary ..... James Senneff  
Treasurer ..... Eddie Aycock  
Board Member (2014) ..... Ray Byer  
Board Member (2015) ..... Justin Coder  
Board Member (2016) ..... Al Hague  
Editor & Webmaster ..... Tom Marsh



# Yes, we had fun!

For the second year in a row, the Walker family hosted the N'Crowd's annual holiday bash and combat gift exchange, and a good time was had by all once again. Thanks to the Walkers for welcoming us into their home and (over) filling our bellies!

*At right, the "table of plenty" at the 2013 N'Crowd holiday party.*



*Above left, food, fun and friends make for a great holiday combination! At right above, our host and incoming N'Crowd President Vincent Walker showed off progress on his "Eagle Route III" layout. Below, the combat gift exchange proved very lively this year as multiple members chased after several items over the course of the pick or steal rounds.*



## WANTED!

Your contributions to *The Orderboard*.  
As with most aspects of your club, this only works if you participate.



# First run on the newest Union Pacific

by Gordon Bliss

The best part of being in a club is finding help when you need it.

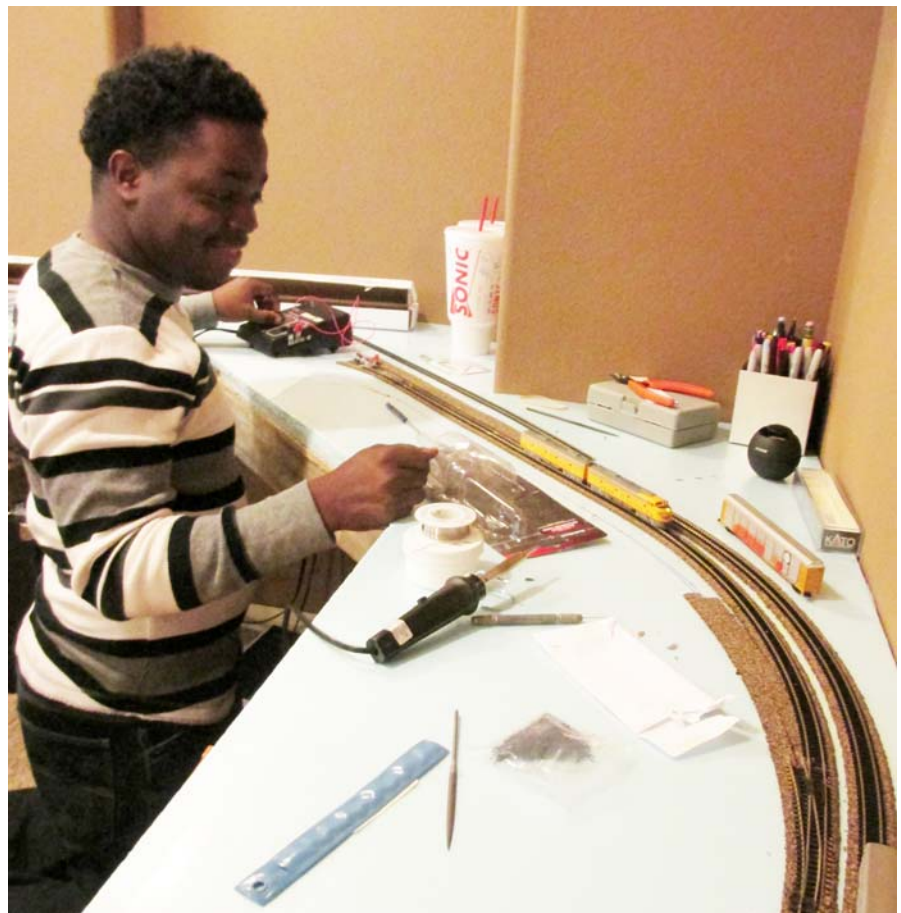
N'Crowd member Samuel Townsel is starting a new home layout and asked some club members for advice. Having a great track plan was the first part, but Sam needed help getting started on benchwork and track.

Steve Lancaster worked on getting the benchwork up and Sam drew the track plan out on the foamboard. Now we were ready for trackwork, so on the Saturday after Christmas, Samuel and I laid about 40 feet of cork roadbed and track.

Then came the reward: Samuel made a successful test run with a set of Union Pacific E9s over the new trackwork. Watch this space for more on the progress of this newest Union Pacific!

*Top, Samuel glues cork roadbed down in preparation for laying the new track.*

*Right, Samuel test runs the first train over the new track!*



## Calling all Empire Builders:

If you are building a layout, why not share the adventure with the club by submitting some pictures and a few words about the project to the newsletter?





*The T-TRAK layout, with its kid-friendly height, was popular as always.*

## Weather has chilling effect on OKC train show

*by Tom Marsh*

A severe winter storm prevented a number of exhibitors from reaching Oklahoma City for the annual Oklahoma City Train Show, and show attendance was affected as well, as the city was blanketed in snow and ice. Everyone who did make it to the Dec. 7-8 show had a good time anyway, and most hardly noticed the minor earthquake that shook the building for a few seconds!

More space than ever was allotted to the T-TRAK layout, but all scales were represented by modular layouts, vendor booths and/or manufacturers' exhibits.

*This T-TRAK module featured a nicely-done drilling rig manufacturing facility with a siding for receiving steel and other components.*





Most of the manufacturers exhibiting at this year's show were not showing anything particularly new in N scale, although Fox Valley Models, exhibiting at OKC for the first time, did have unpainted pre-production test shots of the new EMD SD70Ace model and early production samples of the unique B&O canstock boxcars. The cars will be at your dealer soon.

At right, top, Fox Valley Models' new SD70Ace was shown in pre-production form. Watch for NS Heritage Units coming soon. At right, Athearn showed new roadnames and road numbers on its Pullman-Standard 60-ft. auto parts boxcars, while InterMountain Railway Co. displayed pre-production samples of new paint schemes and road numbers for the CN EMD SD40-2W.

At right below, George Hollwedel's Prototype N Scale Models is now shipping the new, limited-run and very nice Santa Fe BX-48 boxcars from InterMountain. Get yours now!

Below, a Walthers representative said the donut shop kit is likely to appear in N scale in 2014.





# All in a (cold) day's work

by Tom Marsh

Here's a prototype activity you can incorporate into your operating sessions.

On Thursday, Dec. 5, two days prior to the opening of the Oklahoma City Train Show, a major winter storm swept across Oklahoma, northern Texas and the Midwest. According to the National Weather Service, the temperature in OKC dropped from near 50 degrees to below 20 degrees in a matter of hours. Ice and snow accumulation overnight totaled up to five inches in the OKC area.

Friday dawned cold, with high, thin clouds and a hint of sun. Most major thoroughfares had been cleared, but the city left the side streets to thaw, which would not happen for days.

With a blanket of pristine snow on the ground and a little sun, the temptation for a friend and me to get out and photograph trains, even with the temperature hovering in the mid-20s, was too much to resist. After all, when was the last time we saw real snow in any quantity in Houston?

This little excursion afforded a rare (for us) opportunity to see railroaders in action in wintry conditions. Observing the work of one shortline crew, it dawned on us that their activities, affected by the icy conditions, could be incorporated into a model railroad operating session taking place in a simulated winter setting.

The photographs illustrate the story of one small part of this train crew's cold day's work.



*Above: First stop in the cold was Oklahoma City Union Station, home to Frisco and Rock Island trains from 1931 to 1967. It now houses transit agency offices.*



*Above: From Union Station, we spotted a BNSF train headed south out of OKC across the North Canadian River (officially known over the last 10 years as the Oklahoma River within the city since a seven-mile stretch was diverted and transformed into a recreational area). With no time to get set up in a more scenic location, I grabbed some shots on the south side of the river as the train rolled by (the photo on the cover is the other end of the same train at this location). After the train passed, we spotted the tank cars you can see in the background behind the highway overpass.*

*Below: The tank cars turned out to be on a Stillwater Central Railroad (SLWC) train waiting for permission from the BNSF to move onto the mainline to cross the river. The SLWC is a Watco shortline property that operates over 275 miles of track in Oklahoma. To head north across the river, and to get across the BNSF main, SLWC trains work up a relatively steep approach grade on the west side of the BNSF to get on the BNSF bridge to make the river crossing, then they take an equally steep grade back down on the other side of the river, but still on the west side of the BNSF main. The SLWC tracks then swing under the BNSF's former Santa Fe mainline, which continues elevated through downtown OKC on a high fill. (If space allowed, this could be an interesting river/rail crossing to model.) In the photo, the SLWC train has moved up the steep approach and stopped short of the switch leading onto the BNSF main.*





Right: It appears the train may have had a three-man crew due to the weather. Two, including the engineer, hiked up the track to the powered switch and began vigorously sweeping and poking the switch with brooms and broom handles. This went on for about 20 minutes while the two locomotives, both originally Penn Central units, idled. Below: With the switch cleared and a green signal, the engineer slowly pulled the train forward. As the locomotives rolled through the switch, he gestured to the two men on the ground. When the lead truck on the first tank car crossed the switch, the train stopped. The engineer left the cab to take a look.



Below: Apparently satisfied that everything was in order with the track, the crew reboarded and the train headed across the river. The train then pulled through the ex-Frisco yard; the locomotives were cut off and run around the train back to the yard office.





# Museum equipment moves by Tom Marsh

Here's another operation to incorporate into a model railroad operating session. Many months of preparation by Gulf Coast Chapter - National Railway Historical Society volunteers and contractors culminated in the move of three historic locomotives and 14 passenger and freight cars on Sunday, Dec. 15, 2013. The movement of the equipment from its long-time home in the Railwood Industrial Park on Houston's northeast side to a temporary storage location near downtown was undertaken with the invaluable assistance of Union Pacific Railroad, Genesis Worldwide Logistics and the FRA. Here are some "Moving Day" photos with approximate times; this could be a full day's operation on a model railroad!



0815: The UP crew is on site at Railwood with two locomotives and the museum gate is open for the final move out of the facility. After discussion about the move plan and safety issues, the move began.



1114: The crew gets clearance to make the eastbound move from the Railwood spur onto the UP mainline. Per a Federal Railroad Administration order, the train is restricted to 10 mph and at least one stop is to be made to inspect bearings.



1002: Gulf Coast Chapter - NRHS volunteers watch as the last cars are pulled from the Railwood sidings to make up the special train. Railwood has been the museum's home since 1978.



1140: The train heads west on the main towards Englewood Yard. The locomotive that had been leading out of Railwood is now trailing the train.



1027: After coupling the second locomotive to the end of the train and testing the brakes, the special museum train headed through "Railwood Canyon" to the mainline.



1152: The train enters Englewood Yard headed towards downtown Houston and the junction at Tower 26. The special was expedited through Englewood with no delays.





1215: On its way out of Englewood Yard, the museum special passes a waiting double-stack train.



1344: After a delay at Tower 26 for a red signal and then an issue with the trailing UP locomotive's brakes, the train is on the move again, crossing Buffalo Bayou near downtown.



1400: After arriving at Congress Yard and cutting off the trailing locomotive, the UP crew shoves the museum train onto the Genesis Worldwide Logistics transfer track. Genesis leases the former MP industrial branch for a transload operation.



1405: The UP crew prepares to cut off their locomotive and clear the siding so the ex-Lehigh Valley Genesis locomotive can couple up to the museum train for the move down Commerce St. to Navigation Siding.



1415: The equipment heads down Commerce St. near downtown Houston on its way to the storage siding. This is the last significant length of street-running track in the city; automobile traffic was moving on either side of the train during this part of the move.



1500: The Genesis crew graciously agreed to do some switching at the storage siding to line up the cars in the desired order.



1709: With most of the switching done, the cars move into the protected siding alongside a light industrial warehouse.



1734: It's almost over! SARX 1202 has shoved the last car into the siding; the crew will spot two cars a short distance away before returning to the transload yard. Everything is tied down on the storage siding by 1800.

# LCL

*Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor*

**Happy New Year!** Welcome to the first 2014 issue of *The Orderboard*. Now is the time where I remind you that this is your newsletter, and contributions make it happen! You can email your submissions to me at tom@houstonNcrowd.org, pass them on to me at a membership meeting, or mail them to my attention at Papa Ben's, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd., Houston TX 77025.

**Run some trains:** Our agreement with Papa Ben's Train Place is that we will run trains on the BC&G every Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. This is your opportunity to drag out some of that stuff you have kept in a box for years and give it some exercise! Or, you can run any of the club's freight or passenger equipment, or both. In addition, you can practice your switching techniques in the yard or the industrial area at Austin. What are you waiting for?

**It's show time!** Three major train shows are planned for Houston in 2014 and N'Crowd will have tables at the shows for distributing club information and applications. If you can volunteer a couple of hours to man the tables at any of these shows, please let us know:

World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, George R. Brown Convention Center, Jan. 11-12; info at: <http://www.wghshow.com/houston.html>

San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre, Feb. 15; info at: <http://sanjac.leoslair.com/styled-2/>

Gulf Coast Chapter - NRHS Big Texas Train Show, George R. Brown Convention Center, Sep. 6-7; info at: <http://www.bigtexastrainshow.com/>

**Web site update:** The N'Crowd website has been updated, including the BC&G Construction Zone and the calendar pages. In addition, the 2014 Photo Calendar featuring the modern look of the BC&G is available for download as a PDF. Printed calendars will be available at Papa Ben's.

**Membership forms:** The 2014 N'Crowd membership application/renewal form is available on the website ([www.houstonNcrowd.org](http://www.houstonNcrowd.org)) or at Papa Ben's.

## HOUSTON N'CROWD 2014 TIME TABLE

### January 11-12, 2014

World's Greatest Hobby on Tour, George R. Brown Convention Center. **N'Crowd will have a table, please volunteer to help.**

### January 15

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

### January 18-19

29th Annual Dallas Area Train Show, Plano Centre

### January 25-26

38th Annual SAMRA Model Railroad Jamboree, Carmack Event Center, San Antonio

### February 5

Wednesday BC&G Operating Session, 7 p.m.

### February 15

Greater Houston Train Show, Stafford Centre. **N'Crowd will have a table, please volunteer to help.**

### February 19

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

### March 1

Saturday BC&G Operating Session, 5 p.m.

### March 19

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

### April 2

Wednesday BC&G Operating Session, 7 p.m.

## THE ORDERBOARD *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](http://www.houstonNcrowd.org)**

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