



News from Houston N'Crowd



# THE ORDERBOARD

March/April 2017



## Trees, Pearland, and Georgia On My Mind

# "GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

*by Samuel Townsel II, President*

## Howdy N'Crowd Partners!

This is the month of March and in Houston, the rodeo is in town. The city is festive and so are things in the N'Crowd! There are some initiatives that were started last year that have taken hold within the club and we are now the better for it.

We now have a Code of Conduct that outlines the expectations for both club members and our visitors to the layout room. In addition, the new procedure for identifying and logging the maintenance issues on the layout are in place. This effort helps our maintenance team immensely in dealing with not only short-term maintenance problems but also results in long-term proactive recommendations. The maintenance team has been known to reward club members who adhere to the procedures with rolling stock, so keep it up N'Crowders!

I hope that you were able to attend the Greater Houston Train Show in February. The annual show is sponsored by the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club, and they had a great turnout again. If you were lucky, you found some great deals as well as that rare item that you were looking for! Several of our club members were there selling some of their extra stuff and hopefully they were able to give you a special discount. Thank you club members that showed up to

man the N'Crowd tables and help the patrons check out their new equipment on our test track.

One of the things that we are trying to do this year is organize some club trips and outings for members. We have formed a committee that will handle this effort and we are looking forward to hearing some of their recommendations in the very near future. If you have ideas or suggestions, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Our newsletter sometimes finds its way into the hands of folks outside the club. If you are a first-time reader and are interested in joining the hobby, especially in N scale, becoming a member of the N'Crowd is the thing for you! Trust me, the price of admission is outweighed by far by the wealth of knowledge and camaraderie we have here. Come and check us out on any Saturday at Papa Ben's. See you there!

*Samuel*

N'Crowd new member/renewal applications are available in the layout room at Papa Ben's or from the N'Crowd website: [www.houstonNcrowd.org](http://www.houstonNcrowd.org)

### Houston N'Crowd 2017 Officers and Volunteers

President ..... Samuel Townsel II  
Vice President ..... Richard Bartlett  
Secretary ..... James C. Senneff, Jr.  
Treasurer ..... Eddie Aycock  
Board Member (2017) ..... Scott Gordon

Board Member (2018) ..... Joe Kingsberry  
Board Member (2019) ..... Allan Melton  
Layout Master ..... Al Hague  
Editor & Webmaster ..... Tom Marsh



**N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:**  
March 15 / April 19 / May 17 / June 21 / July 19

**N'Crowd Operating Sessions:** First Sunday of even-numbered months. Watch your email for information.

Most activities take place at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. Our monthly membership meetings start at 7 p.m. and are open to all. Operating sessions take place at various locations.



# Bright spot on a gloomy day

by Tom Marsh



“BrightPink”, the second of five new trainsets being built for Florida’s new Brightline passenger service, passed through Houston on an overcast March 10 on its way from Sacramento, California, to West Palm Beach, Florida. The first train, dubbed “BrightBlue” by Brightline officials, passed through Houston on its way to Florida in January.

Siemens Mobility is building the five initial Brightline trains in Sacramento. Each train is powered by two Siemens

“Charger” diesel-electric locomotives that “top and tail” a four-car, stainless steel trainset. Each set’s coaches will be painted in a distinctive color; the locomotives will all carry the same paint scheme seen below on No. 105.

Brightline service begins between West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale in July, with service to Miami to follow in August. The trains are 100 percent Buy America compliant, using components from more than 40 U.S. suppliers.







*Above and front cover: A variety of trees enhance the scene on Hugh Boyd's home layout.*

## Trees for the N-scale modeler by Hugh Boyd

Those of you who visited my former model railroad layout during my participation in the annual open-house sessions know I'm not too heavy on the scenery scene. In my modeling, I prefer to focus on the rail alignment, the remote operability of my layout and the portrayal of my version of contemporary North American railroading. However, I do plant trees.

Before I became interested in model railroading, I used to spend many of my weekends touring the local countryside photographing trees. Now I'm morphing that interest into my model railroading.

I see beauty in the many trees I find around this area of Texas. I particularly like trees that are not fully cloaked with leaves so I can appreciate the underlying branch pattern. These are the trees I attempt to replicate.

As in reality, I like to diversify my forest, but I like to stay with trees similar to those growing in this part of the world. I have to remind myself I'm in N-scale and thus the requirement to limit tree height to about three inches. In building terms, that's about third floor height. As I install my trees I try to set them vertically. Often, I'm not so successful. My only consolation is that when I drive down Gessner, I

notice that of the many trees growing along the median, only a few are truly vertical.

There are some nice model trees available. I prefer those with stranded wire armatures over the plastic variety. But as you would expect, the wire variety is much more expensive than the plastic. The wire trees generally are made from stranded hard steel wire. The wire is often very stiff, making it difficult to reshape the branches and certainly they are a problem to cut. The plastic trees are much easier to reshape, but they tend to creep back to their original shape over time. Adhesion of the leaves can be an issue with either type, but I find the wire trees perform better in this department, perhaps because the trees I model have fewer leaves anyway.

I really like the local trees around the end of the year when many take on glorious colors and later drop their leaves and thus make their branch pattern more apparent. However, in my modeling I'm somewhat conservative and stay with normal summertime leaf hues. For the more adventurous among us, there are lots of readily available models of bare trees, fall colored trees, snow cloaked trees and even fruit laden trees. I keep away from these and stay with regular green foliage trees. If I were to plant a dense forest, I

would not concern myself so much about individual tree detail, but rather the shape of the forest canopy. And likely I would save a buck or two, because I would concentrate on the cheaper plastic tree rather than the wire variety. We'll see.

Several manufacturers have models that are good representations of specific tree species, including nice umbrella shaped trees. I particularly like the models of ash, live oak and Scots pine trees made by JTT, but many other manufacturers are in the field,

including Bachmann, Busch, Woodland Scenics and Walthers (see editor's sidebar below).

I get a lot of contentment from my little model railroad layout and adding trees heightens that experience. Model trees add interest to what otherwise would be bare spaces on my layout, but alas, interesting model trees don't make my trains run any better. I don't have any illusions that my 90-tree forest represents "landscaping" in the customary sense, but I'm happy with it. And whose railroad is it, anyway?

## Joyce Kilmer got it right with his famous poem "Trees", but he was not considering model railroading.

A quick search of the Walthers website turned up 29 makers of trees with 1,212 individual products. What price greenery? Prices range from \$2.95 for a package of five Plastruct tree trunks to \$569.99 for the 204-piece Busch mixed tree bulk pack. The latter price averages out to a fairly reasonable \$2.79 per tree.

Products sold by Walthers can be purchased through our host store, Papa Ben's Train Place.



Our own Bayou City & Gulf layout makes good use of a variety of trees.

## Trees

by Joyce Kilmer (1886-1918)

I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.

A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;

A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;

A tree that may in Summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;

Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.

Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.

*"Trees" was originally published in Trees and Other Poems. Joyce Kilmer. New York: George H. Doran Company, 1914.*

Manufacturer	Walthers Listings
Accurate Dimensionals	1
Architectural Model Supply Inc	34
B.T.S.	4
Bachmann Industries	52
Bar Mills Scale Model Works	1
Busch Gmbh & Co Kg	139
Faller Gmbh	107
Grand Central Gems inc.	50
Heki/Mini Forest	9
Herpa Models	1
JMD Plastics	28
JTT Miniature Tree	171
JV Models	4
Life-Like Products	1
Micro Trains Line	1
Midwest Products Co Inc	3
Model Power	3
Model Railstuff	3
Neal's N-Gauging Trains	5
Noch Gmbh & Co	122
Plastruct Inc	89
Preiser Kg	1
Scale Structures	5
Scenic Express	7
The N Scale Architect	28
Timberline Scenery Co. LLC	160
TomyTec Co LTD	5
Walthers SceneMaster	18
Woodland Scenics Co	160
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,212</b>



# Central of Georgia Railway lives on in Savannah

by Allan Melton

On a recent visit to Savannah, Georgia, I had the pleasure of stumbling across the Georgia State Railroad Museum at the former Central of Georgia Railway Savannah Shops and Terminal Facilities. The highlight of my visit was a personal tour of the roundhouse guided by one of the museum volunteers. He knew the history of every piece of equipment at the museum.

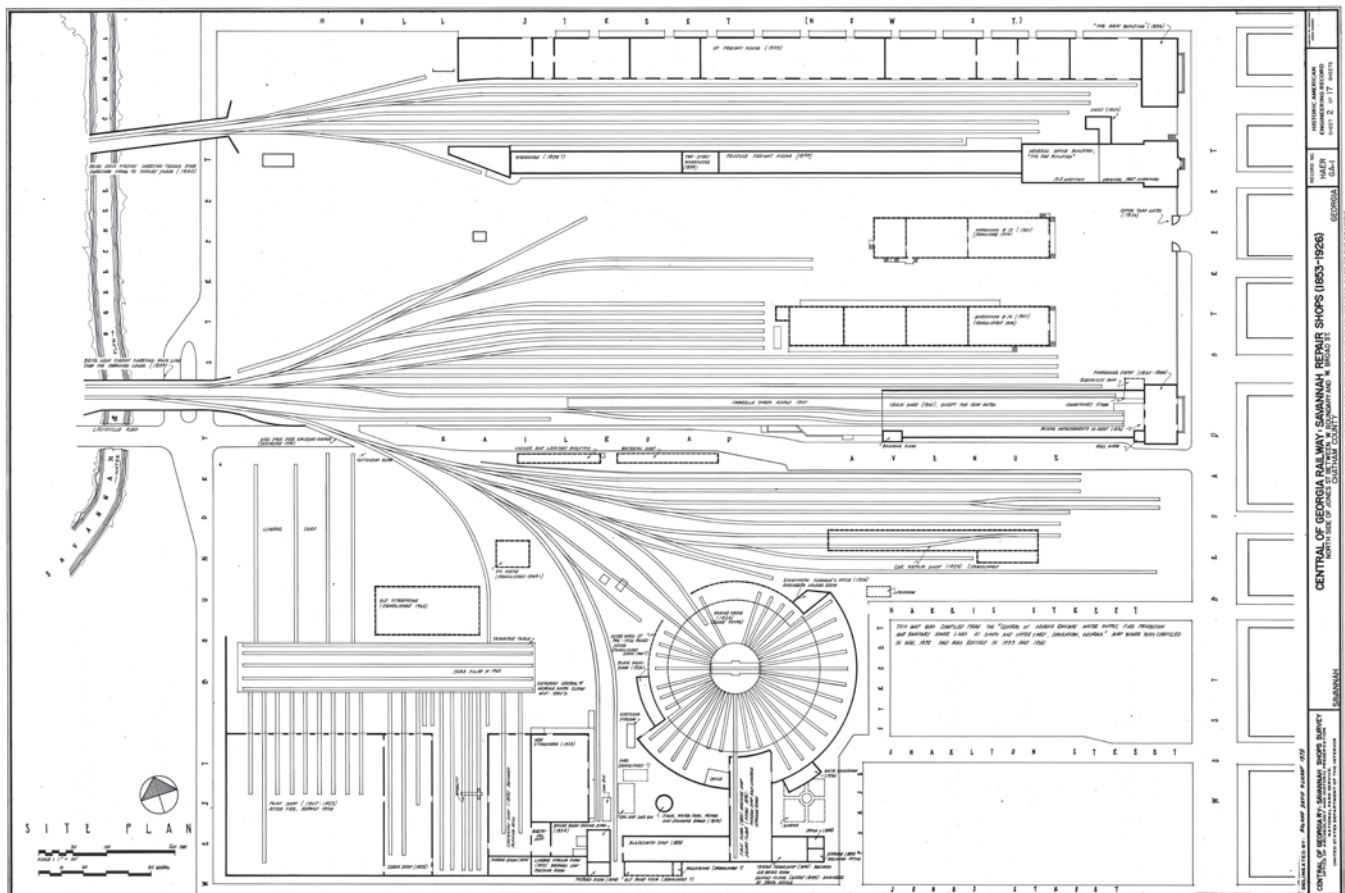
On-site displays include antique shaft driven machinery, locomotives and rolling stock, model train layouts, an operating turntable and the oldest portable steam engine in the United States. Behind the roundhouse, standing as a beacon, is the original smoke stack for the boiler room and foundry. The blacksmith shop had 13 forges; blacksmiths were paid 15 cents/hour. Each forge had an underground flue that exhausted the coal smoke to the central smoke stack. The smoke stack structure consists of

the stack, a water tank with ornate trim and a brick base. The doors in the base open on to small changing rooms for the workers.

Construction of the Central of Georgia facility began in 1850, and today it is considered one of the most intact antebellum industrial sites in the country. The complex has been designated a National Historic Landmark, and the area surrounding it is a designated National Historic Landmark District.

The Central of Georgia Railway became a fully-owned subsidiary of Southern Railway in 1963, and the Savannah shops closed the same year. The complex sat abandoned for years until ownership was transferred to the city; in 1989 the Coastal Heritage Society took over development and management of the complex, leading to its preservation and opening to the public.

*This site plan of the Central of Georgia shops and terminal at Savannah was prepared by the National Park Service in support of the complex's designation as a National Historic Landmark District.*





*Central of Georgia cars on display at the Georgia State Railroad Museum. The second car from the right is the Columbus, a Central of Georgia business car which was owned for many years by Houston-based Gulf Coast Chapter - NRHS.*



*The towering smoke stack incorporates a water tank along with changing rooms and lavatories for shop roundhouse and shop employees.*







*Much of the Central of Georgia shop facility in Savannah is intact, including a large portion of the roundhouse and the blacksmith and machine shops.*







Above, the Coastal Rail Buffs model railroad club has both HO (left) and N scale layouts in the planing and lumber shed.



Above, No. 30 was built by Alco in 1913 for Hardaway Contracting Co. The locomotive finished out its career switching coal cars at Georgia Power Co.'s Arkwright plant. This old wood coach looks like a craftsman kit gone awry. This is a major restoration project. Below, a former Central of Georgia Railway Post Office car.





# Group strives to save Pearland station

N’Crowd member Barry Miles forwarded these pictures of the former Santa Fe station in Pearland. The railroad closed the station in 1972, after which the city took possession. The station was moved away from the tracks to a new location adjacent to Pearland’s City Hall in 1980.

The station housed the Pearland Chamber of Commerce for many years until it was damaged during Hurricane Ike in 2008. At present, a grass-roots effort is underway to restore and reopen the station. Search for “Save the Pearland Depot” on Facebook for more information.

Sources vary on the date the station was built. The Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe Railway, which originally bypassed Houston, built a line from Alvin to Houston in 1882/1883, and during this construction a siding known as Mark Belt was built where Pearland would eventually be established. Mark Belt was an area landowner.

The GC&SF became a subsidiary of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe in 1886. According to the Handbook of Texas, a post office was established at Mark Belt in 1893, and at the end of that same year the town was renamed Pearland. As with many Texas towns, Pearland’s development was driven by land speculators, who in this case promoted Pearland as an “agricultural Eden.” However, the 1900 Galveston hurricane wiped out much of the area, slowing growth. It seems that the station was built to a standard GC&SF design shortly after the devastating 1900 storm.

If you model the modern era, Pearland provides an example of how to incorporate a favorite station



model into your layout. Select a location, possibly away from your mainline, add a caboose, oriented in the wrong direction relative to the station, install landscaping to thwart photographers wanting to document the building, and you are good to go!



# LCL

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

**Thanks to this month's contributors:** Thanks to Hugh Boyd, Allan Melton and Barry Miles for their contributions to this month's newsletter. The deadline for the May/June issue is May 5. As always, YOUR contributions are welcome!

**NWX on the move:** Our friends at Northwest Crossing Model Railroad Club apparently have lost their lease and will be leaving their long-time home at Northwest Mall. According to Houston Business Journal, 45 of the 50 stores in the mall will close March 31; the stores that are closing

have no outside entrances and must be accessed via the mall. The mall opened in 1968.

**Another successful show:** San Jacinto Model Railroad Club sponsored another successful Greater Houston Train Show in February and the N'Crowd once again supported the effort, providing our DC test track. Thanks to all of the N'Crowd volunteers who manned our tables, and thanks to the San Jac folks for hosting a great event. See you there next year!



Top, N'Crowd members Samuel Townsell II, Gordon Bliss and Allan Melton man the club tables at the Greater Houston Train show. Above, the main hall was particularly crowded around the noon hour.

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**HOUSTON N'CROWD 2017 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE**

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**March 11**

NMRA LSR Division 8 Clinic Series: Making Trees; go to [www.texasgulfddivision.org](http://www.texasgulfddivision.org) for info.

**March 15**

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

**April 1**

Annual Flatonia Spring Railfan Party at the Flatonia Railfan Pavilion

**April 1**

Arkansas Railroad Museum 19th Annual Railroadiana Show & Sale, Pine Bluff

**April 2**

N'Crowd Operating Session

**April 6-8**

Louisiana Railroad Days Festival, DeQuincy

**April 8**

NMRA LSR Division 8 Clinic Series: Laying Track; go to [www.texasgulfddivision.org](http://www.texasgulfddivision.org) for info.

**April 8**

Rosenberg Railroad Museum Railfest

**April 8-9**

28th Annual New Braunfels Train Show Jamboree, New Braunfels Civic Center

**April 19**

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

**April 29**

IPMS Modelmania Fine Scale Model Show, Stafford Centre

**May 6-7**

Austin Area Train Show, Williamson County Expo Center, Taylor

**May 13**

NMRA LSR Division 8 Clinic Series: Tuning Freight Cars; go to [www.texasgulfddivision.org](http://www.texasgulfddivision.org) for info.

**May 17**

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

**May 26-27**

24 Hours@Saginaw Train Watching Event

**June 4**

N'Crowd Operating Session

**June 7-11**

NMRA Lone Star Region Convention, Hilton Westchase

**June 21**

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

**July 8**

NMRA LSR Division 8 Clinic Series: Scratchbuilding Structures Part 1; go to [www.texasgulfddivision.org](http://www.texasgulfddivision.org) for info.

**July 19**

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

**August 6**

N'Crowd Operating Session

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**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:

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Please note: We reserve the right to edit submissions for clarity and length.

**Visit our Web site:**

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