



News from Houston N'Crowd



May/June 2018

THE ORDERBOARD



Photo by Gordon Bliss

Spring Fling on the Comanche & Indian Gap

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

Our year continues

Our 40th Anniversary Year events continue this month with the May 26 trip to the Texas State Railroad, organized by N'Crowd Vice President Richard Bartlett. The deadline for reservations has passed, and unfortunately I will be out of town, but I expect everyone who is going will have a great time. Someone please be sure to take a photo or two for the newsletter; I know the editor would appreciate it!

Our next event (other than the June operating session and membership meeting) will be a visit to the Tomball Depot Museum on Sunday, June 24. We'll discuss the details at our May and June meetings, but the general plan is to meet in Tomball for lunch then tour the depot museum and caboose. In addition to items related to Tomball's history, the museum includes three model railroads in different scales. The BNSF's former B-RI mainline runs alongside the depot, so maybe we'll get lucky and see 1:1 scale trains as well.

We'll let everyone know a more definitive schedule as the date approaches.

In other activities, member Barry Miles has started touching up scenery on our Bayou City & Gulf Railroad. Ted Davis has donated some leftover building parts and I've started scrounging through our scrap box for things to

use as backdrop flats behind Union Station and the main yard. Allan Melton is reviving the refinery construction project and Gordon Bliss will start work on realigning the Union Station yard throat later in the year. We have other projects that YOU can help with as well. Step up at the next meeting!

Until then, Happy Railroading!

Tom



View from the platform at the Tomball Depot Museum.

Houston N'Crowd 2018 Officers and Volunteers

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Board Member (2019) Allan Melton
 Board Member (2020) Samuel Townsell II
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 Layout Master Joe Kingsberry
 Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh



N'Crowd Wednesday Membership Meetings:
 May 16 / June 20 / July 18 / August 15 / September 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.

Trackwork: Mixing Kato and Tomix

by Hugh Boyd

I have a small N-scale layout built on a hollow-core door. It has 19 Kato turnouts and four Tomix. The latest switch I installed is Tomix item 1246, a double slip switch, replacing a Kato 15 degree crossing.

The Kato 15 degree crossing main line track is 186 mm long and the cross track is 193 mm long. The Tomix main line track is 145 mm and the cross track is 140 mm. To install the Tomix double slip switch, I cut four pieces of Tomix straight track with the regular Tomix connector on one end of each piece, two pieces 26.5 mm long and two pieces 20.5 mm long. On the cut ends, I made slots under the rails to accept Atlas metal rail joiners.

I joined the four Tomix extension straight tracks onto the Tomix double slip switch with the regular Tomix connectors. I then slid Atlas rail joiners onto the rails at the cut ends of the Tomix

track. Next, I connected the Kato continuation tracks with regular Kato Unitrack joiners.

I mounted all the Tomix pieces on a single 1 mm thick self-adhesive cork sheet, which I had previously sprayed with matching paint. I connected the Tomix double slip actuation wire to the alignment switches in my control panel in the same manner previously done with other Kato turnouts.

The whole exercise is a little tricky and takes some time to accomplish, but this way I get a remote-operated double slip switch that is not available in the Kato turnout collection. And with my method, I do not modify the expensive turnout, but rather cut the inexpensive straight track pieces.

Kato and Tomix sales literature say the two types of track are not compatible. They should say “not readily compatible” as a determined modeler can make them work together.

N' Crowd member Hugh Boyd recently undertook an effort to make the incompatible compatible. Hugh replaced a Kato 15 degree crossing with a Tomix double slip switch without having to modify the expensive Tomix track piece.

At right, a closeup of the extension tracks Hugh made for the Tomix double slip switch.

Below, the Tomix double slip switch in service on Hugh's layout.



The Comanche & Indian Gap Railroad Spring Fling

by Gordon Bliss



A hot intermodal train heads west out of Maximilian on the Comanche & Indian Gap Railroad.

The Comanche & Indian Gap Railroad was started by Roy Pickard in the late 1970s when he purchased a ranch in central Texas about 100 miles southwest of Fort Worth. At the time, most live-steam railroads were basic loops so the steamers could make continuous runs, but Roy wanted something different. He wanted to create a miniature railroad that would operate like the real thing. Roy wanted to switch cars, and have trains meet and pass under the control of a dispatcher.

His dream came true when the C&IG became the first operating live steam railroad in the country. The C&IG inspired the construction of other operating live steam including our own Houston Area Live Steamers (HALS) at Zube Park. HALS operates about four times a year.

Operations on the C&IG take place over three days each spring and fall. The C&IG has two main yards, Comanche and West, and a smaller yard at Indian Gap. All three yards have turntables and water for steam engines. From Comanche to West Yard the longest route of just over a mile run has 11 (yes, 11!) passing sidings. Each siding has spur tracks or industries for freight operations. A scheduled passenger train can make the one way trip in about 30 minutes with a two minute station stop at Zuni, the midway point.

If this does not sound like enough fun, Roy built a branch line called the Houston East & West Texas Railroad, like the prototype also known as “The Rabbit”. The Rabbit branches off the C&IG at Mexican Hat, where an interchange track oper-

ates like the prototype for exchanging cars between the two railroads. The Rabbit crosses the C&IG three times as it runs to the other end at Indian Gap, crossing West Yard with seven diamonds!

The Rabbit has three passing sidings and five towns with switching, and like most branch lines it is run at reduced speeds. On a normal freight run, the yardmaster clears you on channel 1 to leave Comanche Yard and make the run to the first town of Caddo. At Caddo, you advise the Comanche yardmaster that you have cleared his yard limits and change over to channel 7 to contact the east end dispatcher. Then the east end dispatcher clears you to one of three passing sidings or all the way to the midpoint at Zuni. At Zuni, you advise the east end dispatcher that you are off his railroad and change over to channel 3 to talk to the west end dispatcher. Then the west end dispatcher clears you to one of five passing sidings or all the way to

Yellow Horse, where you clear off his railroad.

At Yellow Horse you change your radio to channel 4 and contact the West Yard yardmaster and ask which arrival track he wants you on. Once cleared into the yard, your train is separated from your power and you and your brakemen take your engine to the turntable.

The engine is turned, and then the yard crew should have your train ready, riding cars on the end, and send you on your way. The same process takes place at Comanche Yard. Both yards have an office for the yard crews and conductor to handle the paperwork.

Now that Roy has passed, these extensive operating sessions could not take place without new operator Danny Click and his crew, who continue to maintain and upgrade the railroad. I hope you enjoy these photos from the 2018 C&IG spring fling.

At right, a freight train crosses the Cowhouse Creek bridge.

Far right, a passenger train coming uphill from Indian Gap meets a freight train at Zuni.

Below, a scheduled passenger train is on time at Summit.



Vintage BC&G locomotive returns to service



Locomotive No. 1471 of the Bayou City & Gulf Railroad has returned to service after an overhaul conducted by Kingsberry Repair Services of Houston. It is the railroad's oldest operating road switcher.

No. 1471 is a model SD9 locomotive built in 1955 by the Electro-Motive Division of General Motors Corporation. The locomotive has been stored out of service for a number of years due to

mechanical issues with its prime mover, traction motors and trucks. Kingsberry Repair Services, a long-time repair contractor to Bayou City & Gulf, inspected and overhauled the vintage locomotive's primary systems, repairing and replacing items as necessary to return the locomotive to service.

No. 1471 has been assigned to local and switching services working out of the Bayou City & Gulf's Houston terminal.

From the “what could have been” department

Wouldn't this have been cool in 1:1 scale? Because it is very cool in 1:160 scale.

N'Crowd member Andrew Monaghan tackled the challenge of turning out a Fox Valley Models N-scale SD70ACe in the green and yellow scheme of the MKT. The Katy was absorbed by Union Pacific in 1988, some 17 years before the SD70ACe entered production, so this was never to be in the real world. But in the world of model railroading, almost anything goes!



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

Thanks: Thanks to this month's newsletter contributors, Hugh Boyd and Gordon Bliss. The deadline for the July/August issue of *The Orderboard* is July 6.

40th Anniversary shirts and Safety Ts available again: We're taking orders again for the N'Crowd 40th Anniversary and BC&G Safety T shirts. Prices have changed, going down for the blue polos and up slightly for the Safety Ts.

The updated order form accompanies this newsletter and is also available on the N'Crowd website: www.houstonNcrowd.org. Credit card payments can be accepted on the website. Orders for this batch are due no later than May 18

NMRA clinic series continues at Bayland Park: N'Crowd members are invited to participate in the NMRA LSR Division 8 Clinics. The May clinic is being presented by N'Crowd's own Ray Byer.

Ray will cover basic DCC locomotive decoder installation and programming - bring your own loco and decoder (installed or not) and leave with a better-running model!

The clinic takes place Saturday, May 12, at the Bayland Community Center Library, 6400 Bissonnet, Houston. Ray will start at 9:30 a.m. and wrap up by noon.

Remember, you do not have to be an NMRA member to attend the Division 8 clinics.

And as they say on TV: "But wait, there's more!"

Future Division 8 clinics will cover Smart Phone Throttles (June 9); Make and Take Freight House (in multiple scales, including N, July 14 and Aug. 11); LEDs for Model Railroaders (Sept. 8); Backdrops for Your Layout (Oct. 13); DCC ++Arduino DCC (Nov. 10). Go to <http://www.texasgulfddivision.org/clinics.html> for more information.

Lowell Smith acquires Walthers passenger car tooling: Lowell Smith has purchased the tooling for the N-scale passenger cars produced in recent years by Walthers. The tooling includes sleepers, coaches and baggage cars in both fluted and smooth-side versions. Lowell Smith will produce the cars under a new brand, RailSmith Models, with a target retail price-point of \$49. The first releases are expected this year. RailSmith will also develop additional cars for the line.

Kato wants your opinion: Kato USA is conducting a web poll to gauge interest in a new N-scale named train. Go to <http://www.katousa.com/webpoll.html> to make your voice heard. Choices include:

- CB&Q Domed Twin Cities Zephyr
- Southern Pacific Lark (post-1941 Pullman version)
- Northern Pacific North Coast Limited
- New York Central 20th Century Limited. (1950s version)
- Rock Island Texas Rocket
- Great Northern Empire Builder
- Chicago & North Western 400

As of May 10, the 20th Century Limited was leading the vote. The poll will be open through May 30.



New York Central's 20th Century Limited is leading in a Kato web poll to judge interest in a new N-scale name train model.

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2018 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE**May 12**

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series, Bayland
Community Center, Houston: Basic DCC Programming

May 16

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

June 9

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series,
Bayland Community Center, Houston:
Smart Phone Throttles

June 10 NOTE NEW DATE!

N'Crowd Operating Session, hosted
by Eddie Aycock; watch your email for
more info!

**August 11**

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series, Bayland
Community Center, Houston: Make & Take Building
Session 2 (all scales, including N)

August 15

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

September 8

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series,
Bayland Community Center, Houston:
LEDs for Model Railroaders

September 19

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

June 13-17

NMRA Lone Star Region Convention, Round Rock

October 7

N'Crowd Operating Session

June 20

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

October 13

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series, Bayland
Community Center, Houston: Backdrops

June 24

N'Crowd visit to the Tomball Depot Museum; we'll
discuss carpool and other arrangements at the May
and June membership meetings

October 17

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

October 27-28

9th Annual New Braunfels Fall Train Show

July 14

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series, Bayland
Community Center, Houston: Make & Take Building
Session 1 (all scales, including N)

November 10

LSR NMRA Division 8 Clinic Series, Bayland
Community Center, Houston: DCC++Arduino DCC

July 18

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

November 21

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

August 5

N'Crowd Operating Session

December 2

N'Crowd Operating Session

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

December TBA

N'Crowd 40th Anniversary Holiday Bash

THE ORDERBOARD *from Houston N'Crowd***Tom Marsh, Editor**

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and length.

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