

News from Houston N'Crowd



September/October 2019

THE ORDERBOARD

Two photos by Tom Marsh



Ferromex on the BC&G



Where in the world is Gordo?



T-TRAK first run

Photo by Mauricio Varon

Coming soon to a railroad near you!



Photo by Samuel Townsel II



Photo by Hugh Boyd

Tracking the Transcon with Hugh Boyd: Part 4

"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

This is important - please read!

Trouble on the BC&G leads to a new layout policy: On Saturday, Sept. 7, the scratchbuilt water tower on the club layout in Bennett was damaged when it apparently was knocked over, landing on another structure and causing damage to various fences in the same area. It appears that after the tower was knocked over, it was stood back up, but it was not put back in place on its base and the dislocation and related damage were fairly obvious.

The damage in and of itself is not so bad that it cannot be repaired, but the "how" of this incident needs to be addressed. While we don't know exactly what happened (the damage was reported at the end of the day as the store was closing), it could only have happened if the plexiglass panels protecting Bennett were removed. This may have been done in order to deal with one of several derailments that apparently occurred that day at Bennett.

Since no member reported there had been an accident, we are assuming that the tower was knocked over by someone other than a member while the plexiglass panels were removed and whoever removed the panels had left the area unattended. **Therefore, effective immediately, whenever any of the plexiglass panels at Bennett are removed, one member must remain in the area with a clear view of Bennett for the entire time the panels are out of place.** If you have any questions about this new policy, please feel free to contact me.

New BC&G running days begin in September: Papa Ben's owner Allyn Pearlman has approved our proposal to open the layout for members to run trains on selected Sundays, and Board Member Randy Ollet has agreed to organize the sessions. These will take place on the Sunday after the monthly membership meeting in September and October.

Then, beginning Saturday, Nov. 2, Papa Ben's and the BC&G will be open to the public on both Saturdays and Sundays for the holiday season through the end of the year. The weekend of Nov. 2-3 is also our official open day for the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club's annual fall layout tours. We will be listed with the "West" layouts in the tour schedule.

During the holiday season it is important that store customers can get into the layout room and are greeted when they do so. To keep the room from getting too crowded during the holiday season, we will, as we have in the past, limit the number of members operating trains to three. In addition, to ensure we have coverage for all of the days we are committed to run trains, we will also ask for at least two volunteers to commit to specific days and times to run trains. Operating trains during holiday season business hours is part of our agreement with Papa Ben's that lets us have the space for no charge. Your assistance is important!

As always, please let me know if you have any questions or comments. In the meantime, happy railroading!

Tom

Houston N'Crowd 2019 Officers and Volunteers: **Nominations for 2020 Officers Now Open**

President Tom Marsh
Vice President Joe Kingsberry
Secretary Bill Busch
Treasurer Eddie Aycock
Board Member (2019) Allan Melton

Board Member (2020) Samuel Townsell II
Board Member (2021) Randy Ollet
Immediate Past President Samuel Townsell II
Layout Master Joe Kingsberry
Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh



N'Crowd Wednesday **Membership Meetings:** **September 18 / October 16 / November 20**

Meetings start at 7 p.m. at Papa Ben's Train Place, 4007-E Bellaire Blvd. and are open to all.

N'Crowd Test & Tune Sessions: First Wednesday of odd-numbered months. 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Papa Ben's.

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

T-TRAK Division news

T-TRAK Division first run

N'Crowd's new T-TRAK Division had its first run at the August 21 membership meeting. The layout was set up on a small table and consisted of two club-owned corner modules, four small single modules and an end cap. The corner modules were assembled by club volunteers Mauricio Varon and Phil Poirier, the end cap was built by Bill Busch, and the four singles were put together by your president. Other members brought in modules to show, and it appears we are off to a good start on this new model railroading venture.

T-TRAK confirmed for 2020 show

San Jacinto Model Railroad Club, organizer of the annual Greater Houston Train Show (GHTS) and co-sponsor of the 2020 NMRA Lone Star Region Sunset Limited Convention, has confirmed that space will be available for a T-TRAK layout during the February show. The group had earlier said no space would be available for T-TRAK as 2020 convention-related activities had displaced some of the usual train show activities. For 2020, the T-Trak layout will be set up in the foyer of the Stafford Centre, home of the GHTS. N'Crowd will coordinate the T-TRAK layout with our friends from the Northwest Crossing Operating Model Railroad Club. The show takes place Saturday, Feb. 15, 2020.

T-TRAK standards updated

The NTRAK Modular Railroading Society, Inc., the governing body for T-TRAK in the U.S., approved new official T-TRAK module standards and recommended



N'Crowd members look over new T-TRAK modules during the August 21 membership meeting. Two caboose hops made the first runs on the new modules.

practices on Sept. 7. Work on the updated standards began three years ago. The primary goal of the new standards is to ensure that T-TRAK modules built by different people or organizations will fit together and function mechanically and electrically. N'Crowd's

T-TRAK Division has been working from a preliminary set of standards based mostly on the new document, so we are already in compliance. The new standards document can be accessed from the T-Trak Division page at www.houstonNcrowd.org.

N'Crowd visits Hearne Depot for “Trains at the Crossroads”



The restored Hearne Depot, relocated a long block away from its original location, was built in 1901 by Southern Pacific. It served as a “Union Station” for SP and Missouri Pacific subsidiary International-Great Northern. Photo by Tom Marsh

Houston N'Crowd members visited the Hearne Depot Museum on a hot August 18th for “Trains at the Crossroads”. In addition to the museum’s usual displays, the AustNTrak group set up NTRAK and

T-TRAK layouts. AustNTrak is a long-established N-scale club with members from the Austin area and other parts of Texas, and it’s always an inspiration to see their handiwork.



An effective scenic treatment for a T-TRAK end cap module. Photo by Randy Ollet

At Hearne, the NTRAK layout was set up in a dark wing of the depot that was not conducive to photography. The T-TRAK layout was in a well lighted space on the sunny side of the building. As a result, all of our photos show the T-TRAK layout.

This overview of the T-TRAK layout illustrates the variety of scenes that can be modeled in a small space..
Photo by Tom Marsh



Nicely done models of the mission style Santa Fe station at Albuquerque, N.M., and the modern T&P station at Shreveport, La. Photos by Tom Marsh



A compact T-TRAK engine servicing facility. Photo by Randy Ollet



Below right, a little rail-fanning took place during the day as well. At Hearne, a lease unit waits for its next duties. This EMD GP38-2 was originally built for Penn Central in 1972, carrying the PC road number 8019. Photo by Tom Marsh



At bottom, the answer to the question on the front cover: Member Gordon Bliss snaps a photo of a UP light engine move near Hearne during the N'Crowd's visit to "Trains at the Crossroads". Photo by Tom Marsh



Chasing History

story and photos by Samuel Townsel II



"Big Boy" No. 4014 departs Laramie in a cloud of steam on Sunday, May 19, 2019.

The month of May was met with excitement by railroad enthusiasts thanks to Union Pacific's celebration of the 150th anniversary of the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad. The main attraction was not only Union Pacific's workhorse steam locomotive No. 844, but debut of the completely rebuilt No. 4014, the "Big Boy".

Although I was not able to attend the celebration in Ogden, Utah, I made it a point to go west as soon as possible to see the largest steam locomotive ever built on her home rails again. After a few months of planning, I decided that I would make a weekend out of the trip and enjoy the mountain west along with some excellent railfanning.

I flew to Denver on a Friday morning and visited Denver's Union Station where I happened to catch the California Zephyr arriving into the station. It was interesting to see sleeping cars at the rear and front of the train instead of their normal placement behind the locomotives like on most of Amtrak's other long distance trains. It was a great catch.

After about an hour's drive north I arrived at Cheyenne, Wyoming, home of the Union Pacific Steam Shops. During my visit to the Cheyenne Depot Museum, I was informed that 4014's sister 4-8-8-4 locomotive 4004, which is on display in a Cheyenne park, was open to the public with access to the cab, and there was a local train show taking place. So I naturally made the short drive to the park and I am glad I did. I was able to get a vial of sand taken from 4004 during her 2018 cosmetic restoration. While I was there, I spoke with some Union Pacific employees about which route they would take back and where I should plan to go for my chase. After I received some classified intel, I made my way to Laramie where 4014 was staying overnight prior to a Saturday morning departure.

Anticipating a large crowd would be present to send 4014 on her way from the Laramie station, I arrived there at 6 a.m. to find a crowd of only about 30 people who braved the 34 degree weather.

Watching 4014 teamed with 4-8-4 844 go through their start-up sequence was one of the best things I have

witnessed over my years of chasing trains. Once the train left the depot, I was able to chase the locomotives along I-80 into Cheyenne, with only the occasional run-in with the Wyoming Highway Patrol kindly asking us to leave when we were on private property. When I arrived in Cheyenne, I witnessed 4014 and 844 welcomed with a fantastic homecoming with people lining the streets and the bridge crossing the yard.

As promised, Union Pacific is taking their latest achievement across the system throughout 2019. If you have not seen this massive machine operate on the mainline, I strongly encourage you to seek her out when she comes to Texas!

All I need now is get wind that Ed Dickens and the UP Steam Crew will next turn to getting Challenger 4-6-6-4 No. 3985 operational, then I will be able to take the mainline steam trifecta. Thanks to Union Pacific and the entire steam crew for taking this project on and making it possible for thousands of rail enthusiasts to see the world's largest steam locomotive in action! Great job Uncle Pete!



No. 844 struts her stuff on departure from Laramie.



Union Pacific's steam duo storms across the Laramie Plains.

‘Big Boy’ headed to Texas

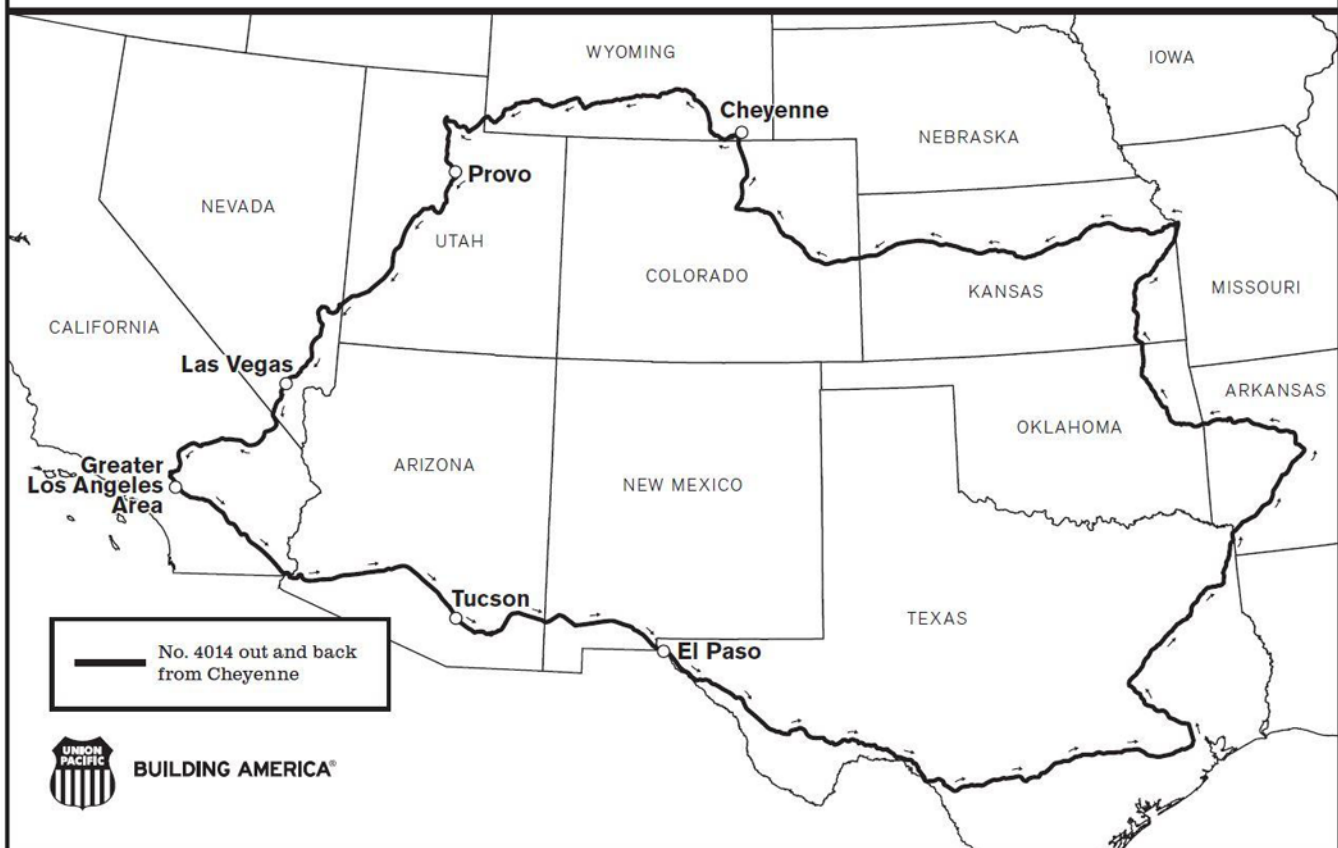


“Big Boy” No. 4014 will visit the Lone Star State in November. Photo courtesy Union Pacific

Union Pacific is bringing “Big Boy” No. 4014 to Texas at the end of October as part of a tour that begins Sept. 27. The 4-8-8-4 is scheduled to arrive in El Paso at 4 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 20. The locomotive will be on public display on Monday, Oct. 21, and Tuesday, Oct. 22, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Mountain Time.

According to a Union Pacific posting at www.up.com/heritage/steam/schedule/index.htm, No. 4014 will travel through Texas, Arkansas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Colorado in November before returning to Cheyenne. The railroad expects to post the schedule for the November moves before the tour begins Sept. 27.

The Great Race Across the Southwest Union Pacific’s No. 4014



Walker Shops releases another *Eagle*

N'Crowd Past President and MoPac superfan Vincent Walker has completed another MP Eagle passenger car kitbash project. Here are a few photos of his latest work, as well as a picture of the prototype car that is still in existence in Texas. Vincent writes:

Here is my Budd Missouri Pacific 10-6 sleeper which started from the body of an Atlas/Rivarossi smooth side sleeping car mated with a Con-Cor Budd sleeper roof.

This is a good point to remind everyone of why they should attend train shows. If you know you are going to do a model train kitbashing project and you are looking for old things to cut, paint and glue, a train show is the venue you need. You will find items like body shells for your project at low cost vs. buying something new to cut up. Another note: Get two of the same item if possible because sometimes the project may not go the way you want, but you can learn from that. The second time you will know what not to do.

My model of the Budd 10-6 sleeper is not perfect but now I have one and I love it. My car is the *Eagle View*.

Budd built six of these cars for MoPac and they were unusual in that they were originally equipped with six-wheel trucks. You can find a photo of the car with the original trucks on the web at www.northeast.railfan.net/images/mp621.jpg.

My N-scale six-wheel trucks came from Kato and the underbody detail parts are from a kit by The Marshall Shops. Couplers are from Micro-Trains, the end gate is from Rapido Trains and some plastic strips and the diaphragm are by Kato. You can order a lot of these detail items from Papa Ben's Train Place here in Houston.

Stripping an old car and adding your details sometimes doesn't work out, so you have to accept the results or make a change. I had to make a change: I tried to simulate the slab panels on the side of the car and they did not come out the way I wanted so I removed them and refinished the car side the best I could with filler putty and sanding. To me it all worked out, and I have that second set of body parts to do it more cleanly if I want. But my next project will be a MoPac E-7 with portholes!

Vincent's process for kitbashing an N-scale MoPac sleeper includes filling in selected windows, adding end and underbody details and changing trucks when necessary. Photos by Vincent Walker



The finished product awaits its next assignment at Houston Union Station on the N'Crowd's Bayou City & Gulf Railroad. The real Eagle View still exists; it is privately owned and stored in New Braunfels, Texas. The car no longer rides on the original six-wheel trucks. Photos by Tom Marsh



Ferromex and more on the BC&G

Two Ferromex locomotives recently outshopped by N'Crowd member Andrew Monaghan's paint shop were spotted on the BC&G shortly before this issue of *The Orderboard* went to press.

Also rolling on the BC&G were a number of maintenance of way and other vehicles assembled, painted and detailed by Andrew. Here are photos of Andrew's latest work.

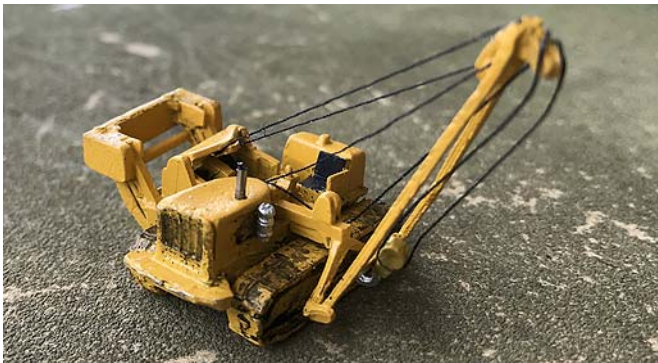


Above, the engine crew was very cooperative with the photographer, jockeying the locomotives into position for photos and even turning one of the units for the shot at right. Below, these BNSF boom trucks sport different paint schemes.





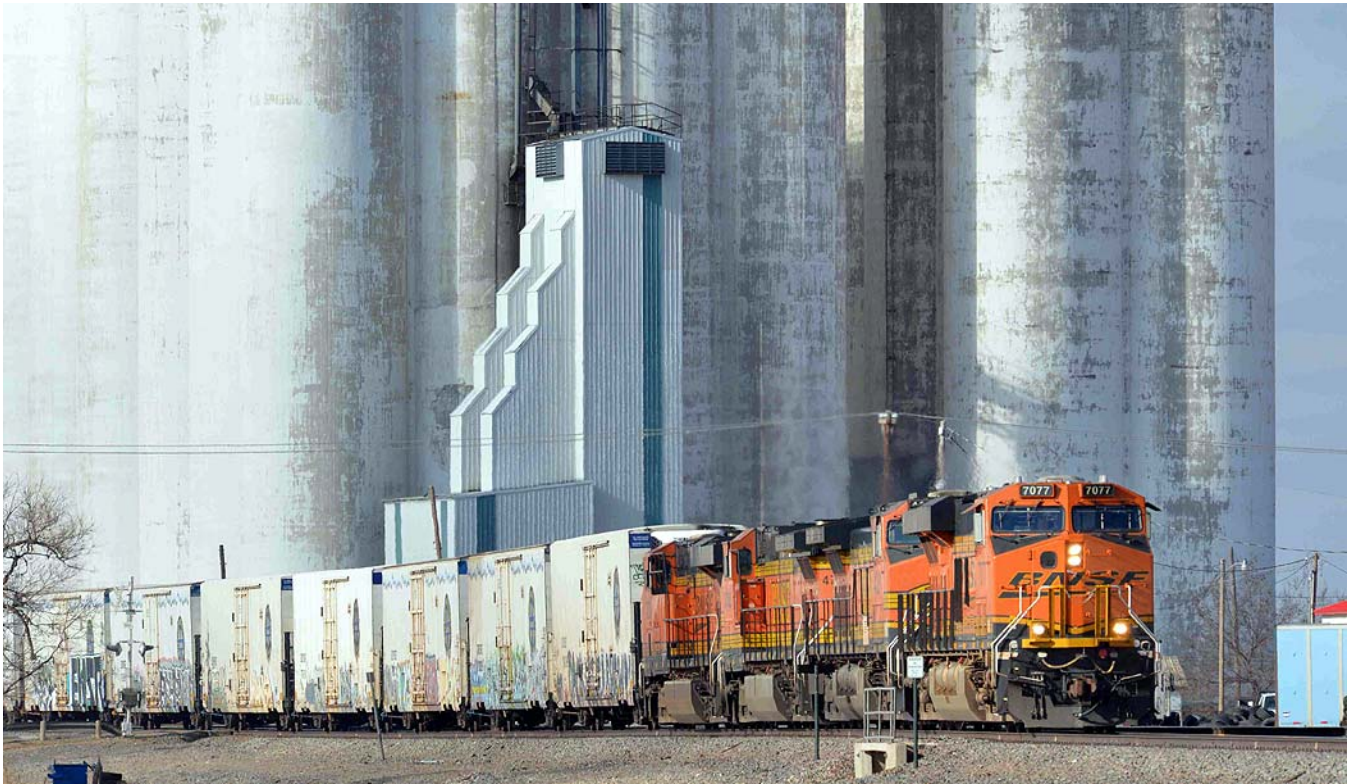
Above, tractors and maintenance trucks gather at Union Station on the BC&G. Photos by Tom Marsh



Workers on Andrew's layout have a wide variety of equipment to call on when needed.



Tracking the Transcon *Part 4* story and photos by Hugh Boyd



Above, an eastbound BNSF reefer train glides past the large elevator at Bovina, Texas, on March 8, 2014. Below, colorful double stack action at Friona; the top photo was taken Oct. 23, 2014, while the bottom photo was shot on June 22, 2015.

Headed east on US-60, my first stop in Texas is Bovina. A large elevator on the north side of the tracks provides a good backdrop for photography. The best views are available when a west-bound train rides the normally eastbound track on the south side (right hand running is the usual on this section of the Transcon).

Bovina has a number of cattle feed lots. Recently, a loop track was constructed to accommodate the discharge of feed from former BN coal gondolas that have been converted to feed train service. The trains bring the feed from farms in Kansas and Iowa.

There's a good view of east-bound morning trains with the large elevator and a nice umbrella tree as backdrop from Bester Street on the east side of town. Interesting that Chicago seems to



be happy to have the NBA Bulls, but Bovina (known as Cow Town until the U.S. Postal Service arrived), with all its beef-related business, has the Mustangs for a mascot.

Next on my travels eastbound on US-60 is Friona. On the west side of town the scene includes a large elevator on the south side of the tracks and a couple of oil tanks. On the east side a large grain handling facility poses with yellow chutework pointing to the sky. I've been here lots of times. Excellent morning views of eastbound trains are available from County Road 20 on the east side of town. Afternoon viewing of westbound trains is available from South Main St. The yellow chutework is a little distant from both locations, so this is where I get my 400 mm lens and tripod/monopod into the action.

Across US-60 opposite CR-20 is the small Benger Air Park where pilots often do circuits in small twin-engined planes while practicing their take-offs and landings. Also here is a holding track where trains often wait.

Continuing eastbound on US-60 the next stop is at Black. This is situated on a long tangent track with more elevators and oil tanks that are easily visible from TX-1172 and a dirt road parallel to the



Above, on Nov. 10, 2018, an eastbound BNSF stack train passes stationary power at Black, Texas. Below, on the same day, an eastbound oil train powers through Black. Bottom, a dusty March 18, 2012, sees an eastbound stack train passing the elevators at Black.



RAILFAN SITES ALONG US-60/BNSF TRANSCON IN NM, TX & OK



tracks on the south side. BNSF often drops off surplus power here so there are interesting views of eastbound trains passing the parked locos with the elevator and tanks as backdrops.

Next up is Summerfield with a dual column elevator, then Hereford. Hereford is touted as the Beef Capital of the World. After Hereford, we reach Canyon where US-60 joins I-27 for the short distance to Amarillo. At Amarillo, US-60 joins I-40. On both sides of I-40 many motels vie with each other for the \$50 per night accommodation business. On the north side of Amarillo on Third Avenue

good views of the Transcon and the locomotive refueling facilities can be had. A train always seems to be stopped here. Further east is an interesting elevator where trains often wait.

While in the Amarillo area it's convenient to drive a few miles east on US-287 to Washburn where the BNSF line to Fort Worth passes an interesting elevator. On the east side of Amarillo US-60 and I-40 part ways, with US-60 more or less running parallel to the Transcon on its northeast path to Panhandle, Pampa and Canadian.

This is oil patch country with

many nodding pumpjacks and the scent of oil in the air. In Pampa there is a petroleum related facility that processes well production. This provides good views as the orange locomotives pass by. Northeast from Pampa is the small community of Hoover where trains making their westbound ascent to Amarillo are readily viewable from a local street as they transit the curves in and out of town. At Canadian the railroad crosses the Canadian River on a long, double-track bridge. Now I am getting close to Oklahoma and red dirt country, which we'll explore in the next installment.



Above, three trains are visible in this view from 3rd Ave. in Amarillo on May 6, 2008.

At right, a GE locomotive still in Santa Fe warbonnet paint leads an eastbound BNSF tank train past an idle coal train on the east side of Amarillo on March 10, 2009.





Left, a colorful visitor: KCS power waits with a coal train on the east side of Amarillo on Oct. 23, 2014. Below left, on May 6, 2008, distributed power assists a BNSF coal train eastwards towards Fort Worth past the elevator at Washburn. Below right, an eastbound autorack train rolls through Washburn on March 10, 2009.

Middle left below, an eastbound BNSF train passes an isolated elevator south of Panhandle on March 7, 2008. Middle right below, an eastbound double stack train rolls past the same elevator on July 11, 2011. Bottom left, an eastbound BNSF grain train passes a disused elevator in Canadian on May 8, 2008. Bottom right, on the same day a double stack train passes oilfield infrastructure in Pampa.



LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Thanks and keep it up: Thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue of *The Orderboard*! The mix of model and prototype stories made it an enjoyable issue for me to put together.

Our newsletter is better when YOU contribute. So keep your camera handy, take a few pictures and notes when you do something of interest to the club, and send them on in! The deadline for the November/December issue is Friday, Nov. 1, and I look forward to YOUR contribution.

4014 for *The Orderboard*: Speaking of newsletter contributions, I suspect that everyone who can will head out to catch their own unique pictures and videos of the “Big Boy” in Texas. Please share some of your

best photographic efforts with *The Orderboard*. We’ll feature N’Crowd members’ photos of the big steamer in the January/February 2020 issue.

T-TRAK, too: Sticking with the subject of newsletter contributions, I encourage those of you who have decided to build T-TRAK modules to send in photos of your progress or bring your modules to a meeting or other activity at Papa Ben’s and we can photograph them at the store. Seeing other people’s progress can inspire those of us who tend to procrastinate.

Remember, our goal is to have a variety of modules scenically and operationally ready to use in the T-TRAK layout at the 2020 Greater Houston Train Show in February. Feb. 15 will be here sooner than you think!

HOUSTON N’CROWD 2019 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

September 4

N’Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben’s Train Place, 6 p.m.

September 14

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park

September 18

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

September 21-22

37th Annual Temple Model Train Show, Mayborn Civic & Convention Center.

September 28

NMRA LSR Div 8 Annual Meeting, Zube Park

October 6

N’Crowd Operating Session

October 16

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

October 26

N’Crowd carpool to Galveston Railroad Museum and Texas City Train Festival

October 26-27

10th Annual New Braunfels Fall Train Show, New Braunfels Civic Center

November 2

Flatonia Fall Railfan Party, Flatonia Photo Pavilion

November 6

N’Crowd Test & Tune, Papa Ben’s Train Place, 6 p.m.

November 20

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

December 1

N’Crowd Operating Session

December 14

NMRA LSR Div 8 Clinic, Bayland Park

THE ORDERBOARD

News from Houston N’Crowd

Tom Marsh, Editor

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tom@houstonNcrowd.org.

Please note: We reserve the right

to edit submissions for clarity

and length.

Visit our Web site:

www.houstonNcrowd.org

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