

News from Houston N'Crowd



THE ORDERBOARD

January/February 2021



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"GREEN EYE" - CLEAR BLOCK

by Tom Marsh, President

Happy New Year (and goodbye to 2020)

Thanks to everyone who volunteered to man the layout room during the holiday season! Papa Ben's boss Allyn Pearlman and I both appreciate your efforts to provide store visitors with an enhanced experience.

Speaking of Allyn, due to the ongoing unpleasantness this year we did not present Allyn with the usual gift card in recognition of his support of the N'Crowd. Instead, N'Crowd Treasurer Eddie Aycock slipped him some greenbacks with our best wishes.

Volunteers needed for BC&G Saturday running sessions to continue: Several members asked that we continue the Saturday BC&G public running sessions and re-start the Sunday closed-store sessions now that the holiday season has passed, and Allyn has agreed we can do this. However, **we need volunteers to commit in advance to run trains on Saturdays** under the COVID-19 safety guidelines, which have been distributed to members by email and are also posted in the layout room.

Per our original agreement with Papa Ben's, the layout room will open on Saturdays at least from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m., although the hours can be ex-

tended within the store's business hours on days that volunteers are available and willing to man the room before 11 a.m. and after 3 p.m. If you want to volunteer, please email tom@houstonncrowd.org with dates and times that you might be available. Sunday closed-store sessions have re-started. We will continue to email weekly notices about the BC&G weekend running sessions.

Greater Houston Train Show rescheduled: The San Jacinto Model Railroad Club has rescheduled the annual Greater Houston Train Show for Saturday, August 14. If the show takes place it will be under health and safety requirements imposed by the venue, Stafford Centre. At this time it has not been determined whether or not clubs and other organizations will be able to set up in the foyer as usual. However, I think we should be optimistic and plan to have our usual test track and information tables, and work with the NW Crossing folks to set up a T-TRAK layout.

As always, please let me know if you have any questions or comments. Until next time, stay safe, healthy and happy!

Tom

Houston N'Crowd 2021 Officers and Volunteers

President Tom Marsh
Vice President John Sweigart
Secretary Bill Busch
Treasurer Eddie Aycock
Board Member (2021) Randy Ollett

Board Member (2022) Allan Melton
Board Member (2023) Ray Byer
Immediate Past President Samuel Townsell II
Layout Master Randy Ollett
Editor & Webmaster Tom Marsh



N'Crowd monthly Membership Meetings: To be held virtually until further notice. Members will receive meeting details via email.

N'Crowd monthly Test & Tune Sessions: CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

N'Crowd Even-Month Ops Sessions: CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE. Saturday and Sunday BC&G running sessions are ongoing. Members will receive session details via email.

C&O Logan Branch update

by Jim Marxen

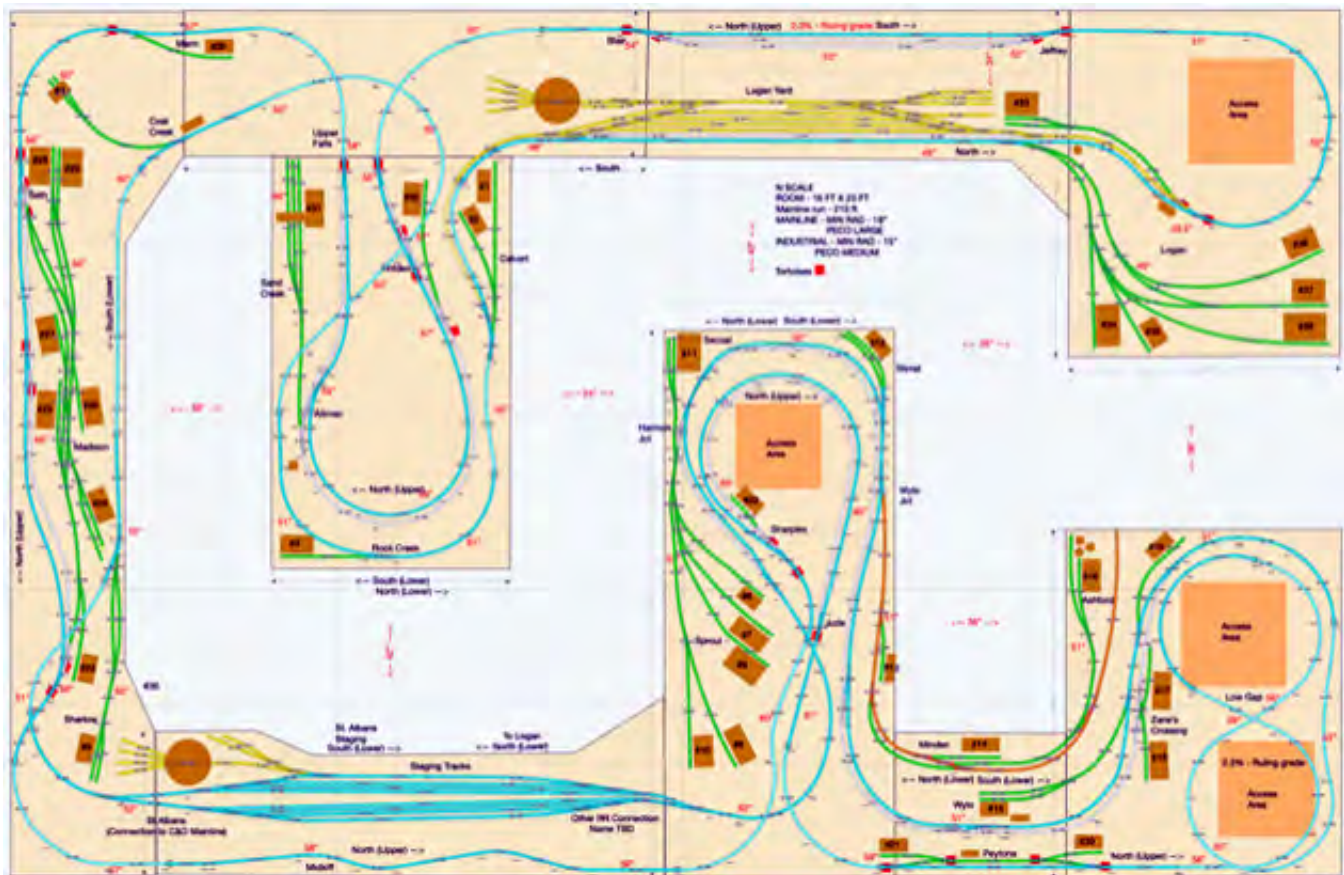
It's been a while since I provided an update on the new layout I introduced in the May/June 2020 issue of *The Orderboard*.

The track plan is very different from what was illustrated previously. I didn't receive any feedback from club members, but I did receive a good amount of feedback from the NMRA-affiliated Layout Design Special Interest Group.

The original plan had a single long peninsula in the middle. I also had far more track with three separate levels within a couple of feet of depth. By the time

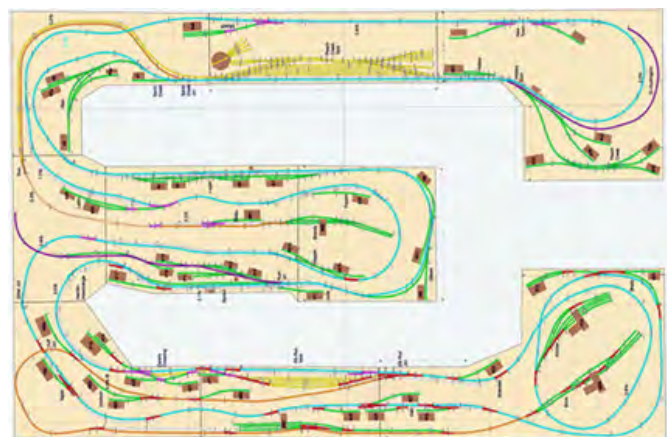
buildings and sidings were added, I essentially had scene on top of scene with hardly any separation. I played with the same plan several times but even leaving the branch lines out, it was too crowded.

As noted previously, I have been interested in the Chesapeake & Ohio Railway for a long time. However, instead of trying to model a C&O mainline servicing several branch lines per the original plan, the new plan represents a freelance West Virginia C&O branch using an actual branch name. The branch line connects to the C&O main by using one end of the



Jim's track plan changed significantly after he called on the resources of the Layout Design Special Interest Group, Inc. (LDSIG). LDSIG is an independent, IRS 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization affiliated with the National Model Railroad Association.

The LDSIG website has a lot of free and subscription resources for anyone planning a layout, large or small. Among the free resources available from the LDSIG is the Layout Design Primer, a collection of articles intended to help beginning and intermediate modelers achieve their model railroading goals. Go to www.ldsig.org for more information about the group.



open staging yard as the terminus. The other end of the staging yard represents a connection with another railroad. I integrated the open staging yard into the plan based on a suggestion I received.

The layout room is about 15-ft. by 23-ft. I decided on the benchwork shape with two yard areas as shown in the plan. One of the yards was already built before the new plan was adopted.

With this new plan, I'll have scenes separated by more distance. I've tried to keep the majority of turnouts within two feet of the benchwork, and I'll use Tortoise switch machines for all out-of-reach turnouts.

My focus recently has been to make the track smooth and reliable through construction standards. I have the majority of the track laid, wired and running. I took about 25 cars and ensured they met NMRA standards for coupler height, wheels and weight. By running my standard 15 car train length, I have determined that some track needs to be reworked to provide better operations. In particular, I identified one long stretch of single track where I need to add a passing siding. I've started reworking the track to add the siding to clear the operational chokepoint.

The mainline run is 210 feet with a ruling grade of 2.3 percent along the Loupe Mountain tackage. I'm using Peco track. Branch line track has an 18-in. medium radius and Peco large turnouts. Industrial and branch trackage has a 15-in. minimum radius with Peco medium turnouts.

I've started scenery where I'm not encountering any track operation issues. I've tried several different approaches to the scenery, using cardboard, screen and wadded up paper. Eventually it all becomes hardshell.

The photos show progress to date.

At right, the future town of Logan, West Virginia, serving the purpose many model railroad townsites are put to: a place for a lot of stuff!



Above, a bird's eye view of the C&O Logan Branch. Below, the open staging yard represents two separate mainline connections. The south end is the C&O connection, while the north end represents a connection with another railroad, probably N&W, Virginian or Western Maryland.





Above left and on the cover is Loupe Mountain, with a ruling grade of 2.3 percent, the steepest on his C&O Logan Branch. Jim has been trying multiple scenery methods to recreate a small part of West Virginia in his layout room.

Fresh Paint No. 4

by Tom Marsh



Union Pacific rebuilt EMD GP38-2 No. 570 shows how the railroad's classic Armour Yellow and Harbor Mist Gray paint scheme can brighten the scene when fresh. Seen here on Jan. 14, 2020, No. 570 is backing north at Tower 71 with a four-car consist. The locomotive was delivered in May 1980 as Southern Pacific No. 4806. UP classifies some GP38-2 rebuilds as GP38-N.



This Fresh Paint offers up a “two-fer”, fresh paint and a prototype consist you can approximate easily in N scale. Atlas, Bachmann, Kato, Life-Like and Walthers have offered GP38-2 models, although an online search reveals that only the Atlas and Walthers models have been in the newer “lightning stripe” version of the UP paint scheme as used on No. 570, and only the Atlas 2010 releases are numbered in the UP 500 series. As for the rest of the consist, most modern-era modelers probably have four black tank cars in their collections. Don't forget the red flag and the brakeman earning extra pay for the long backing move to the customer.

Semaphores and wigwags: The COVID trip of 2020

Part 2, by Gordon Bliss

Leaving Amarillo on the morning of day three, we stopped by the BNSF yard to see if anything cool showed up overnight, and found zero. We headed east on US 60 (on old Route 66 for a short distance) on our way to the town of Panhandle. Along the way we saw a parade of westbound double stack trains. This is what the TRANSCON is known for, lots of trains.

In Panhandle we found the old brick depot, built in 1928, now used as the city hall. We caught a meet right in front of the depot, the westbound a long train with four locos in front, four in the middle, and two on the rear.

Next we continued east to Pampa. As we came into town we heard a horn, and making our way to the center of town we found a local with Santa Fe blue and yellow SD40-2 No. 1609 in the lead. We got out to take pictures and she stopped right in front of the old stucco depot, which is still used by BNSF.

As we prepared to leave town we found a neat military museum with tanks, planes, helicopters and howitzers. We also spotted a Braum's Ice Cream Store and took a picture to send to Eddie Aycock. It's an inside joke, but Eddie loves Braum's, and there are none in Houston!

We headed northwest, passing through Borger on our way to Colorado. At Borger, a branch line runs from the TRANSCON up to the oil fields of Phillips 66. This line has been operated by Panhandle Northern Railway since being purchased from BNSF by Omnitrix in 1993. PNR has a small yard at Borger, where we found a Panhandle Northern caboose on display. We also found a loco lettered for the Kettle Falls International, an Omnitrix shortline operating in the Pacific Northwest in Washington and British Columbia.

Passing through Dalhart, we found two depots, one now part of a lumber yard and the other used by Union Pacific. Leaving town we spotted a Cargill facility with a couple of locomotives. We pulled in to check it out and found the boys from Hulcher there with some side booms; there must have been a derailment inside the plant.

We crossed the Texas-New Mexico state line and found ourselves in Clayton, N.M., along with the town's old depot, which is now



Top to bottom: Panhandle's large brick Santa Fe station, built 1928; At Pampa, BNSF EMD SD45-2 No. 1609, built 1979; At Borger, Panhandle Northern caboose on display and Kettle Falls International EMD GP38-3 No. 2256, rebuilt from SP EMD GP35 No. 7483, built 1964.

a private home. Just west of Clayton we found the abandoned roadbed of the old Colomor cutoff, which was never completed. Santa Fe was going to use the route to bypass the steep grade of Raton, but ultimately went by way of Amarillo and Clovis instead.

We made our way to Raton, N.M. Once Raton had a large yard and engine facilities as base for helper operations over the 3.35 percent Raton Pass grade. Only the beautiful depot from 1903 still stands.

Going over the pass we spotted a couple of the few remaining cantilevered signal bridges and scouted locations for pictures of Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* the next day. On the other side of the pass in Trinidad, Colo., we found several old railroad-related buildings. The freight depot looks like it is about to be revamped.

Next we headed up I-25 to Pueblo and found the Santa Fe turntable still in place, but the roundhouse was gone. Then we found Pueblo Union Depot, an awesome building from 1889. It served the D&RGW, AT&SF, C&S, CB&Q, MP and CRI&P railroads. Alongside the depot is a nice museum with quite a collection of locomotives, passenger cars and freight cars. My favorite and one I wanted to see was ATSF No. 2912, a Baldwin 4-8-4 Northern built in 1944, and it looked like she had just received a fresh coat of paint!

As we were getting ready to depart for La Junta, we checked Waze and found our freeway route was closed. We rerouted to the other side of the river and followed the former D&RGW line. This section appeared to be out of use but was being rehabilitated.

In Boone we found an old depot that looked like a Santa Fe design but was not near the tracks and was in poor shape. We were able to get back on our main road and alongside the BNSF main at the town of Manzanola. We found the town's brick depot, built in 1913, in awesome shape.

We kept rolling and caught up to an eastbound BNSF freight just before Rocky Ford. We photographed the train passing the town's restored 1907 brick depot. We paced the train most of the way to La Junta, and got our final shots of the day at a new signal bridge west of the yard.

Another busy day, and we headed to our hotel to get some sleep. Tomorrow is the big chase day! Amtrak No. 3, the *Southwest Chief*, will run westbound over Raton Pass and through semaphore and wig-wag territory. That will all be in part 3!



Top, Hulcher side booms at work; must have had a derailment! Above, some remains of the never-completed Colomor cutoff.



Above, Pueblo Union Depot, built in 1889, was served by six railroads. Below, Santa Fe Baldwin 4-8-4 No. 2912, built in 1944, was retired for display in Pueblo only 15 years later. Bottom, Santa Fe depot at Manzanola, Colo., built in 1913.



Eagle Route 3: Variations on a theme



N'Crowd Past President Vincent Walker has been putting the finishing touches on his N scale Missouri Pacific passenger car and SD40 locomotive fleets.

Passenger car projects include variations on a Jenks blue theme. "Jenks blue" is the nickname given to the economical paint scheme MoPac began applying to locomotives and passenger cars in the early 1960s, displacing the company's well-liked *Eagle* multi-color scheme. Also known as dark *Eagle* blue, Jenks blue was a reference to Downing B. Jenks, who became president of the Missouri Pacific in 1961. Jenks was a proponent of standardization and economy in railroad operations.

Vincent recently has completed detailing and painting of passenger cars and locomotives in both the *Eagle* and Jenks blue paint schemes. Vincent's Jenks blue cars include five baggage cars, one RPO, six chair cars and one sleeper. Among the chair cars, Vincent added prototypically-correct fixed steps and applied the standard Jenks blue passenger paint to a pair of Kato cars. Two of the chair cars, which represent equipment MoPac bought second hand, carry variations on the Jenks blue theme; see the photo captions for details.

Vincent is also finishing work on a heavyweight Pullman in full *Eagle* colors. Some heavyweight Pullmans carried full *Eagle* colors into the mid-1960s. Vincent's model incorporates details not usually seen in N scale, including open vestibule dutch doors welcoming passengers aboard and coupler safety chains.



Vincent has recreated three variations of MoPac's "Jenks blue" passenger car paint scheme. The standard overall blue scheme for smoothside cars is shown immediately above. For cars with stainless fluting, such as the former Chesapeake & Ohio and Maine Central cars at top left and right, respectively, stainless steel areas were left unpainted. MoPac acquired a number of lightweight cars from other railroads in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

At right, Vincent added fixed vestibule steps to his smoothside chair cars to reflect MoPac practice. Below, this model of a Pullman 12-section, 1 drawing room sleeper features open vestibule dutch doors and a number of added end details.



On the locomotive side of Vincent's roster, he has recently completed detailing and painting two SD40s and two SD40-2s. These are painted in MoPac's mid-1970s cab logo decal paint scheme featuring the railroad's combined Eagle and Buzzsaw logo. The Dash 2s have dynamic brakes for coal train service.

With his passenger and locomotive projects nearing completion, Vincent is ready to get back to layout construction. Vincent says, "Now the focus will be on the layout even though I still have other painting projects in the future. I will hit hard on getting my helix, downtown area and large bridge completed."



Vincent's MoPac locomotive fleet includes these recently detailed and painted models. The top photo illustrates the difference in frame length of the two models, with the "back porches" of the SD40-2 being about three scale feet longer.

Comrade Stalin's carriage



Above left, Hugh inspects Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin's private railway carriage. At right, Hugh and Joe share a moment at the Joseph Stalin Museum.



N'Crowd member Hugh Boyd continues to sort, digitize and share images from his many travels. His latest offering is these photos taken in 2004 at the Joseph Stalin Museum in Stalin's birthplace, Gori, Georgia.

Stalin's personal railway carriage, which he used starting in 1941, was moved to the museum in 1985, according to various online sources. The green 83-ton, armor-plated car was equipped with bullet-proof glass during its use by Stalin. Among other journeys, Stalin used the car to travel to the Tehran Conference in 1943 and the Yalta Conference in 1945, where he met with President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Prime Minister Winston Churchill to plan the defeat and post-World War II occupation of Germany. In addition to the railway carriage, Hugh reports that the museum has an extensive collection of Stalin artifacts.

Members go trainspotting



Member Charlie Goldmeyer rode Amtrak's *California Zephyr* from Reno to Denver on New Year's Eve. The train is seen here at Reno in the grade separation trench completed in late 2005.

What are the odds?



Photo by Richard Hanna



Photo by Mauricio Varon

I received these two photos in early December from N'Crowd members Richard Hanna and Mauricio Varon. In a city the size of Houston, what are the odds that two N'Crowd members would be out and about with their cameras and catch the exact same lashup in two different locations?

For the record, CN No. 3846 is a GE ES44AC built in 2019. UP No. 5120 is an EMD SD70M built in 2002.



Mauricio Varon also took these two pictures in December. Above, he's captured two Port Terminal Railroad Association MP1500D locomotives in the company of a number of BNSF road units. Below, the light was just right for Mauricio's sunny portrait of UP No. 4818, an EMD SD70M built in 2002.



Below, January 13 proved to be a lucky day for your editor, as he came across this lineup of BNSF units at the railroad's Milby Street Roundhouse near downtown. From left to right, we have: No. 3177, an EMD GP50 built in 1981 as Santa Fe No. 3824; No. 2678, now designated a GP39-3, but built originally by EMD in 1964 as Santa Fe GP35 No. 1348; No. 2749, an EMD GP30 originally built for Nickel Plate in 1962 and now with a new cab and other upgrades, designated a GP39E; and finally, partially obscured No. 1861, an EMD SD40-2 built in 1973 as BN No. 6928.



LCL

Less than Car Load: a few notes from your editor

Welcome to 2021: Welcome to the first *Orderboard* of 2021, and thanks to everyone who contributed to this issue. Why don't you let us hear from you in our next issue? The deadline for submissions is March 1.

NTRAK changes name: The NTRAK organization, the umbrella group for NTRAK and T-TRAK modular railroading, has changed its name to NRail, Inc.

In announcing the change, NRail President John Wallis noted that the organization's focus has expanded beyond just NTRAK and T-TRAK to include "promoting N scale in all forms including home layouts and supporting N scale activities including Free-moN and giving N Scale clinics at major shows."

According to Wallis, the NTRAK board of directors "approved NRail as a more appropriate name to match our goals and our ongoing evolution as an organization. NRail will continue to focus primarily on the two most popular standards, NTRAK and T-TRAK, but we will also continue to expand and increase attention to the other aspects such as Free-moN, clubs and home layouts. And

NRail will continue to expand and enhance our relationship with the various N Scale manufacturers."

Newsletter photo guidelines: It's been a while since we published technical guidelines for photo submissions to *The Orderboard*. Following the guidelines will ensure the best results for publication of your photos.

For images to span the full 7 inches of an *Orderboard* page layout, the best starting point is the equivalent of at least 8 inches long on the longest edge at 300 pixels per inch (ppi). An "equivalent" example would be 34 inches wide at 72 ppi. The smallest image we can practically use is the equivalent of 4 inches long on the longest edge at 150 ppi. An example of "equivalent" would be a minimum 8.5 inches long on the longest edge at 72 ppi. This is an absolute minimum standard for publishing a photo 4 inches long on its longest edge in *The Orderboard*. However, images this small allow little or no cropping and precludes use at full page width, so bigger is better. Finally, image files should be sent as attachments, not embedded in an email, or word processing, PDF or other documents. I am happy to assist with image formatting.

HOUSTON N'CROWD 2021 TIME TABLE - SUBJECT TO CHANGE

TBC = To Be Confirmed

January 6

N'Crowd Test & Tune **CANCELLED**

January 16-17

Dallas Area Train Show, Plano Centre

January 20

N'Crowd Membership Meeting will be held virtually starting at 7 p.m. Details will be sent to members via email.

February 7

N'Crowd Operating Session **CANCELLED**

February 17

N'Crowd Membership Meeting will be held virtually starting at 7 p.m. Details will be sent to members via email.

March 3

N'Crowd Test & Tune **CANCELLED**

March 17

N'Crowd Membership Meeting will be held virtually starting at 7 p.m. Details will be sent to members via email.

April 4

N'Crowd Operating Session **CANCELLED**

THE ORDERBOARD

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N'Crowd Model Railroad Society, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit educational organization incorporated in the State of Texas.

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

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