



The DERAIL

June Meeting

The next meeting will be on June 1st, 2010. At Bayland Park Community Center.
The Meeting starts at 7:00 pm.
Program - "Sawdust, It's Not Trash" by Craig Brantley



The C&IG owner, Roy Pickard loves to build crossings. When he laid the track for the Rabbit, he built 5 crossings so the Rabbit could cross the C&IG West Yard. The Rabbit Local needs to get permission from the West Yardmaster before it can cross the tracks at West Yard. Engineer Rick White, conductor Randall Wilson, and railroad official Peter Bryan are bringing up the rear of the Rabbit Local as it crosses West Yard under the watchful eyes of the yardmaster in the orange hat.

Relations between the Rabbit Local and the West Yardmaster were not the best on this day. It seems that the Rabbit Local tried to sneak across the yard without permission early in the day. The entire yard crew were at the other end of the yard so it looked like it should have been OK!



Brakeman Cecil Stewart and Engineer Norman Beveridge drop a C&IG express reefer from the Rabbit local.

The Rabbit is the nickname for the Houston East and West Texas Railroad (Hell Either Way you Take it).

Operation on the Comanche & Indian Gap

Photos by Bill Wright



This is the front end of the Rabbit local with engineer Norman Beveridge, brakeman Cecil Stewart, ready to depart Longstreet.



Peter Bryan overseeing switching by the Rabbit local at Mexican Hat by Rick White, engineer, Randall Wilson, conductor, and Cecil Stewart, brakeman.

The (unnamed) dispatcher cleared Ed Rain's eastward train through Mexican Hat to Maximillian while the Rabbit local was working Mexican Hat. How do you spell "cornfield meet"?

Art Houston's Grande Pacific - Houma, LA Benchwork Completed

provided by Tom Cobb



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Summertime, summertime, sum...sum...Summertime...OK, so I can't sing, but as I look out the window I see summer is fast approaching. That means more outdoor activities and less indoor modeling time. It also means convention time is near. The LSR Convention will be held in San Antonio, June 2-6 and the National NMRA convention is slated for Milwaukee, July 11-17. If you have never attended a convention, you should consider it. The LSR is a good place to meet fellow modelers from across the state. Exchanging ideas and stories is a big part of a convention along with the clinics and tours that are made available. Each time I've attended an LSR convention, the acquaintances I made in the past have now become friends, and it's always a good thing to see old friends. It also gets my modeling juices flowing again, especially after you make a tour of the contest room and see what these guys are doing.

Other outdoor activities have already taken place. Division 8 held its second annual Chili Cook-off at the Alvin Depot. The weather cooperated, the chili was good and HOT and trains made an appearance. Division 8 will also be conducting monthly clinics at the Railroad Museum on Mesa Rd. Hals is into its regular monthly public open house on the third Saturday of each month. They will also be hosting their annual Southwest Live Steam Memorial Weekend Meet, May 27-29th, with live steamers from across the country in attendance. SJMRR club members are welcome. Peter Bryan says that the most action will be on Friday and Saturday. So there are a lot of things to do outside besides cut the grass.

Until next time, remember to keep oil in your lamps and a full head of steam in your boiler.

Robert Ashcraft
President



*San Antonio, TX
June 2nd - 6th, 2010
for more information, go to
<http://alamorails.org>*



DCC SOUND - #2

As a kid of 11, my late father had a large (to me, anyway), DC layout built for me in a spare room in our house in South Africa. It was my pride and joy – Fleischmann trains all running off of a 12-volt transformer, which in turn got its power from the regular 220 volt house outlet. (Yes, 220 volts is the norm there not 110, and believe me, you never forget the experience of getting a 200 volt shock through your system!)

Years went by – I married, had kids, and when they moved out, it was time for my own layout. Like most novices, I started building it without adequate planning or knowledge, but with trepidation and a desire to at long last, be able to ‘run trains again’. It wasn’t very long into the building stage however, that the issue of DC or DCC arose.

I had never been exposed to the concept of DCC nor had I ever seen a DCC layout in operation, and so I had no idea as to what the differences were or what I should choose. The decision was equivalent to asking a computer novice to choose between a RAID 0, 1, 5 or 10 Disk Array! How could I make a decision when I did not even know what DCC stood for?

Our local train store was my only source of knowledge at the time, and it was there that I was told “You have to go DCC – you have no choice. In 5 years time, DC will be like 8-track car cassettes!” Separately, I was also quietly told that it would cost me a lot of money and that all of my locomotives would have to be modified and fitted with DCC chips. I went home that day with a DCC transformer, two DCC chips, and a saying that I have never forgotten - “There are only two types of DCC model railroaders. Those who have already burnt out a DCC chip and those who are still going to.”

After I got home, I carried out my first ‘transplant’. (My wife was on Christiaan Barnard’s heart team when he did the world’s first heart transplant, and when I cut the wires from my precious loco to attach to the DCC chip, I knew the dread that he must have had when he cut the heart out of Louis Washkansky’s body.) Success! I now had a loco that ran digitally but soon, that was not enough because sound had entered the stage.

There are innumerable problems with sound however, and although I have some incredible steam and diesel sound loco’s, getting them to this stage is not always easy.

I spoke last month about building a baffle for the speaker, and then having to find sufficient space in either your engine or in a trailing car, to install the DCC sound chip as well as the speaker/s. The problems multiply however, when you have situations similar to the following;

Your loco already has a DCC motor chip installed, but you then decide that you want to add a sound-only DCC chip to it, or

The ‘chuff’ rate of your steam loco is way out of synch with its wheel rotation and therefore with its speed, or

The emanating sounds are either too quiet or too loud, or they are wrong for that type of loco but the directions state that you have options, or

Each time the loco goes over a crossing or set of points, the sound cuts out then restarts.

Many of these are relatively easy fixes – for example, if the sound cuts out at a crossing, there is obviously a power-pick-up problem that can be solved by extending contact wires to other trucks (wheels) on the loco, or else running them to a following car. If the wrong sound emanates from the loco, you may be able to quickly change the setting of one of the CV’s (Configuration Variables), but in this case beware – you may need to buy a power-booster for your Programming track to read the signals from the DCC chip.

A really difficult task was trying to add a second, ‘sound-only’ DCC chip to a loco that came pre-fitted with a motor chip. In order to do so and yet have both chips respond to the same loco CV value, one chip had to be programmed while the other was in a ‘vegetative’ state. This was so that the first chip would not respond to the ‘new’ instructions being given to the second chip.

It also gets a lot more technical and there-fore difficult however, when you have to change one or more individual Bytes within a CV on a chip. Here, a basic knowledge of Binary Code is virtually essential and unless you really know what you are doing, you should not even attempt to start this exercise.

It is here again, that I ask experienced Club Members to please consider offering more hands-on clinics either at our regular monthly meetings or at some other times and locations. I know that there are many of us who today, are somewhat DCC sound-savvy, and yet I know that even we still have much to learn.

In addition to sound though, many of us would welcome clinics on additional DCC topics such as signaling, reverse-loop configurations and/or train detecting!

While we all enjoy the visual slide-shows and general discussions that we have at our meetings, many of us desperately need your expertise to continue growing our hobby! I pledge to make myself available whenever possible, to assist any member who can use whatever expertise and knowledge I may possess. If we all make the same pledge, the club itself and all of us in it, will benefit.

TRIVIA:

Do you know where the term “Deadbeat” comes from?

It is my understanding that in the 1800’s, when railway-men tapped the wheels of freight cars in order to listen for a crack, etc., they quickly discovered that a full freight-car had a different sound than an empty one! Since empty cars brought little or no revenue to the railroad, they then became known as ‘dead-beats’!

Meeting minutes for May 4, 2010

President Robert Ashcraft called the meeting to order at 7:05PM.
We had 1 visitor.

Vice president David Currey introduced the night's clinic: Steve Sandifer's Howard District/Eastern Division of the ATSF.

Steve opened by acknowledging James Burke as one of his prime sources of information. Steve explained how he narrowed the ATSF empire to a area and time frame small enough to model in the space he had available. He chose from Emporia (a town in which all train types passed through) to Moline. The stretch is about 84 miles long and is referred to as the "Howard Branch". Four stations along the route consisted of only a stockpen and one had only an alfalfa mill. Steve chose the towns of Eureka, Small, Climax, Moline, and Emporia to model. He used Google Earth/Terraserver and Sandbourne maps to help in his research. He also talked to and visited the local/county historical societies, former ATSF employees, and internet groups. Steve showed the various industries in the towns along the route on how he has or plans to represent them on his layout. Steve next presented the rosters of the various types of cars and loads that went to each town as recorded for a 10 month period by Mr Burke. Steve also showed the types of locomotive power that were used along the history of the branch. Steve concluded by listing the actual trains that he operates on his layout.

Next month's clinic will be "Sawdust, It Is Not Trash", by Craig Brantley.
Refreshments were thanks to Tom Bailey and Bettye Bozman.
Rex Ritz and David Currey will bring them next month.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$62.77 – GHTS Vendor expense

\$132.06 – Income taxes

\$15.67 – Derail expense

Income:

\$1160.00 – City Stafford – deposit refund

\$20.00 – Rusk trip sales

\$9920.67 Ending balance with all bills paid.

Minutes published for April were missing the discussion of the options for club vests by Phil Stewart.

LSR: Tracy Mitchell

San Antonio Convention, June 2-6, about 119 registered so far.

Division 8: Ray Byer

There will be a picnic at the Alvin station on May 8 and 11AM, bring a lawn chair.

The clinic sessions will start in May, one Saturday a month at the Houston R.R. Museum, 7390 Mesa Road. The next clinic will be on May 22 at 10 AM by Tracy Mitchell on weathering.

NMRA: No report

DeRail: Dave Milton thanked those authors that have contributed to the Derail, especially for the 844 input/photos.

Old Business: -none

New Business:

Doug Milton is setting up a club Facebook page "San Jacinto Model Railroad Club", all spelled out.

Phil Stewart presented a sample vest available for \$45 and for a fee of \$5 each, patches can be transferred onto it from your old vest. It was discussed whether the club would contribute to the cost of the vest. Five people present that night showed interest. Contact Lynn Wright – Monogram Market and More, 713 528 3850 for more info or to purchase a vest.

Jeff announced that the Athern Bigboys and SP 2-8-2's are in the hobby shop as well as sound decoders, among other items.

Meeting adjourned at 8:55PM General comments: 47 people were present at the meeting.

-Respectfully submitted, Gilbert Freitag, Secretary / Treasurer



Meetings are the First Tuesdays of January through December at the Bayland Community Center, 6400 Bissonnet. Meeting time is 7 to 9 pm. Visitors are welcome.

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