



## September Meeting

The next meeting will be on September 7th, 2010. At Bayland Park Community Center.  
The Meeting starts at 7:00 pm.  
Program - "Using JMRI Decoder Pro 2.10 with both Loco Buffer II and the Digitrax Pr-3 to program non-sound decoders and sound decoders" by Jim Lemmond

### The Kansas City Southern Railway Station at Port Arthur, Texas

By David N. Currey

On July 20th I was driving back from Louisiana after having visited my dad in Lafayette. Despite having been born and raised in the southern part of the Pelican State, I had no recollection of ever having seen the coast, though my parents had told me I had been to Holly Beach as a young tyke. So instead of taking I-10 back to Houston and being bored out of my gourd, I headed down past Abbeville on US 167 until I couldn't go any further south. I hung a right at Esther onto Louisiana 82, and took it all the way to Texas.

At first, I wasn't too impressed. It looked just like the rest of south Louisiana--mostly rice fields, but gradually the land began to change. By the time I reached Pecan Island (which is not an island), the land had become decidedly low lying and marshy. 82 went along the northern boundary of the Rockefeller State Wildlife Refuge, so I still wasn't in viewing distance of the Gulf of Mexico yet.



After Grand Chenier (I wonder what a not so grand Chenier looks like?), and as I got closer to Oak Grove, I noticed (you guessed it) oak trees. But I noticed something else I had to take a double take of: cactus! Cactus! Prickly pears to be exact. Seemingly the same species that inhabits much of Texas. All up and down the road. Not only that, but Indian Blanket flowers by the thousands--same flower as blankets much of Texas to the northwest of Houston. So remember, if you ever model a marsh, be sure to include the prickly pears.

After about 90 miles into my trip, the highway jogged north a few miles to Creole, and then headed west to Cameron. The unfortunate town of Cameron regularly gets wiped out by hurricanes. It now features the only high school I have ever seen entirely built on stilts 15 feet off the ground, except for the gymnasium.

Further on I passed the site of an elementary school. The grounds were neatly fenced by a modern chain link fence, and the various parts of the school that remained were stored in piles around the property. One pile for brick, one pile for wood, one for plastic, etc.

I was amazed at the industry located in and around Cameron. No wonder the people can't just leave. Somebody's got to work all those jobs. One plant had a decidedly shellfish smell, and had a sign whose company name included the word "Protein". Can't wait to taste their vitamins.

After Cameron, the highway looped north, and I got to ride a ferry across the mouth of Calcasieu Lake. Finally the highway turned right at Holly Beach and paralleled the Gulf just off the beach for the next 15 miles. Some officers in official looking vehicles were driving up and down the beach--something to do with the oil spill I imagine, but there was no evidence of any oil here.

Eventually the highway veered away from the road, or rather vice versa. On into Texas I went, over the bridge and up to Port Arthur. My secondary goal of this trip was to get some photos of the old Kansas City Southern passenger station platform. I'd seen it about 5 years ago, nearly hidden in the weeds. The station building was long gone, having been torn down shortly after the end of KCS passenger service to Port Arthur in the late sixties. The people of Port Arthur wept when that happened.

Alas, as I turned down the street that went in front of the depot site, I saw a new structure on the spot. Danged urban renewal, I thought. I drove past the building and down to where the wye used to be. Found myself in a dead-end parking lot and turned around to head back. As I passed the new building, I couldn't help noticing that it looked a little familiar. Then it dawned on me. It looked something like the old depot. The more I looked at it, the more convinced I became that this was in fact the old depot, or rather, that the city of Port Arthur had rebuilt its passenger station.

I ran into a man doing contract work for the KCS, and he didn't know if it was a copy of the old depot or what, but he said the project had been started a few years ago.

See KCS on pg 3

## RAILS IN ALASKA

by Bob Sabol

Early in June of this year my family (wife, 3 kids, 3 kids spouses, 3 grandkids and myself) were able to make a trip to Alaska. Over the course of 2 weeks we experienced both the Alaska Railroad (viewing only, no rides) and the White Pass & Yukon Route out of Skagway. I would like to share this experience.

### ALASKA RAILROAD

The Alaska Railroad operates between Seward and Fairbanks (with branches to Whittier and Valdez. From the Internet I have obtained some basic information. Alaska Railroad is a Class 2 railroad with 51 Locomotives (all EMD manufactured since 1969) in service, 47 Passenger Cars, and 1,160 Freight Cars (owned & leased). In our travels we viewed many of them either in Anchorage, Whittier or Seward along with some hauling freight or passengers. It was the railroad that was responsible for the city of Anchorage becoming the state's largest city. That area was center of it operations and is the location of its main shop. Today it has yards north of downtown and one can drive close to its operations.



This railroad is an independent corporation operated by the State of Alaska with 467 miles of main line, 54 miles of branch line, and 130 miles of yards and siding. There are about 650 employees. Passenger ridership is 470,786 and I am sure that cruise ship season is responsible for most of this number. Freight tonnage is 6.16 million. We even saw a caboose, which was on a siding but looked to be part of an active siding with other freight cars waiting to be moved. Might need to find an Alaska Railroad caboose to add to my railroad.



The first thing I noticed was that to model this railroad and be prototypical all engines and passenger cars look like they just received a new paint job. (Sorry Tracy – no need to age the equipment). On one's railroad these engines should look as they came out of the box. Many of us are familiar with trains through the Colorado Rockies. In Alaska you have the mountains, lots of snow the year around and in many areas track running along long stretches of water. Truly beautiful.

In summer, Alaska has many visitors and the way they and we acted and kept our cameras ready is that this is the first train we have ever seen. I think the color of the engines (blue and yellow) with the magnificent scenery makes the perfect picture. Schedules and time did not permit any of us to ride the rails. I will be adding an Alaska Railroad engine to my layout as a remembrance of our trip to Alaska.

### WHITE PASS & YUKON ROUTE



After several days based in Anchorage we headed to Whittier and boarded our cruise ship for the 7 day trip south to Vancouver BC. After a couple days at sea we hit our first port of Skagway, AK. In April of this year Parade Magazine had an article of the 10 most impressive trains to ride in the US. Both the Alaska Railroad and the White Pass & Yukon Route were listed among the top 10. I immediately booked this train ride as a side trip for our stop in Skagway. Seven of the eleven families members took part in this three-hour trip. How neat to have your ship pull into port and within a few feet of leaving the ship our 13-car train was ready to go up hill. Skagway was originally the starting point for the Klondike Gold Rush of 1898. The railroad was constructed at that time. Today the town of Skagway is definitely a cruise ship tourist town. The brakeman on the train told me that the railroad runs between May and October doing only passenger runs. He said the railroad is looking at restoring freight service in about three years. Freight was a part of the railroad for years until a highway was constructed connecting the town of Skagway and the Yukon Territory. When leaving the cruise ships one has a choice of several train rides including one to the town Carcross, Y.T. The most popular ride was that to White Pass Summit (2,865 ft). You go into British Columbia but do not get off the train. No passport is needed.

General information about the narrow gauge White Pass and Yukon includes 20 diesel locomotives, 2 steam locomotives (seldom used) and 80 passenger cars. The passenger cars average 40 years old. They were purchased from several sources. The oldest car was built in 1883. It looks to me that most of them were extensively restored. That seemed ok since the windows enabled better picture taking. Once outside Skagway city limits one is allowed to ride the platforms on the ends of the cars. I took advantage of this and spent the trip up hill taking pictures. On the edge of town is the yard and shop area. The size and scope of this area reflects the size of the railroad. After the train ride I walked to the shop area (2 miles slightly up hill) and took a number of pictures.

The train ride was all-uphill until the summit of White Pass. The maximum grade was 3.9%. Further up the line the brakeman said there was a 4.1% grade. All the way to the summit the train hugs the side of the mountain. Beautiful mountain peaks covered with snow and a river in the valley really make this a ride to remember. Our trip was 20.4 miles to the summit. At the 18.6-mile mark we passed the world tallest cantilever bridge build in 1901. This bridge was last used in 1969. This bridge is now a national historic site. Looking at the bridge I am glad to see it is no longer used.

About 1/3 the way up the hill I caught a glimpse of an old wreck down in ditch off the side of the tracks. It was a smaller steam engine from years gone by but from the quick glimpse and the age I can't tell you any more. None of the train information made mention of this wreck (probably not a good image).

Is a White Pass engine and caboose in the future of my railroad? Good thing I freelance. May you one-day experience a similar trip.





## CHANGE

So for years and years, you dream and wish, dream and plan, and then dream again, until one day, something ‘clicks’ and you actually start building a model train layout. Maybe it’s a diorama or a small layout on which you can run one or two trains. Or maybe it’s a huge layout that you and some of your fellow model railroaders can operate just like the real-thing. But regardless of its size and its capabilities, it becomes your layout - the culmination of your years-old dream!

In my case, the dream started turning to reality around five years ago. I had no idea about how to build a layout nor any idea of the operational, practical or aesthetic options that I should consider. All I knew was that I wanted to run trains. And so, with a plywood base from Home Depot, the creation of my empire went from this.....



... to this:



I truly enjoyed every minute that I spent constructing my layout and although I made more than my fair share of mistakes, the end-result was more than I could ever have hoped for. I have been able to run my trains as planned, I gained confidence to do things that previously, I would not have done, and a huge, unintended bonus was making great model railroad friends along the way.

But now, ‘Change’ is in the air! I now have different operating ideas and desires, but alas, my current layout cannot be modified in order to achieve my desired changes. It has therefore become apparent that the time for me to tear down my beloved masterpiece and start over, is rapidly approaching.

My questions therefore, to those of you who have previously undergone this painful metamorphosis, are: How do you tear down and discard what was so painstakingly and lovingly built? How do you dismantle the fulfillment of your years-long dreams and abandon it to the dump? And above all, how did you get enough confidence to dismantle a fully operational layout without already having another in its place?

Rhetorical questions? Probably! I don’t really expect anyone to give me answers to these, but they are relevant because change is never easy. My son Geoffrey recently wrote a book about change called “Your Next Move”, and in it he says “It’s not the changes in life that matter; it’s what you do with the changes that make the difference.”

We all constantly experience change – some of it good, some of it bad, but we cannot fear change because it is inevitable. Instead, we need to look ahead positively and like Geoff advises, I personally hope to “make the difference” during next year.

## KCS Continued from pg 1

I grabbed some photos, and when I got home to Houston, I looked it up on the internet. Sure enough, Port Arthur has rebuilt their train station on the same spot, perhaps even on the same foundation. It’s not an exact copy. The central portion of the building



extends back closer to the tracks. The towers seem a little squatter. Some of the windows are a little different. The towers are not open air as they appear to be in the older depot. Also the two slit windows in the larger tower are at the same

level, whereas in the original depot, they were at different heights as if on a staircase.

The new structure serves as an international seafarer’s center. No trains, of course, but who knows what could happen one of these days. One of these long distant days I’m afraid.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENT

Summer is almost over, if only the heat would go away, and my tenure as an officer of San Jac is quickly coming to an end. I have had a lot of fun the past eight years as an officer of the club. I know the next group of guys will continue to serve the club well. The slate of officers for next year are: Bob Werre, President, Don Formanek, Vice-President, Gilbert Freitag, Sec/Tres and Arthur Penny, Director. I hope that all of you along with me will give them our fullest support.

I received an e-mail from Byron Spampinato advising us that it is now time to let him know if you will be participating in this year’s Fall Layout Tour. Aside from our annual Train Show in February, the Layout Tour is our biggest public event we participate in. I’m amazed how much the Tour has expanded over the years to include not only club member layouts but also a large number of non-club member layouts. The Tour is one of the most important ways we have of showcasing and expanding the hobby. So if you haven’t responded to Byron’s request, please do so in the very near future as it takes a lot of Byron’s time to get everything organized and published. And if you have never had your layout open for the Tour, seriously consider opening your layout this year. I can tell you from personal experience that it is a pretty good feeling when others appreciate the effort and time you’ve put into building a model railroad... even if it is only in the plywood stage. I look forward to seeing as many of your layouts this year as I can get to.

Finally, thank you for all the help and support over these many years. I look forward to moving on to other endeavors within the club and I pledge my support and time to our new slate of officers. So remember to keep oil in your lanterns and a full head of steam in the boiler.

Robert Ashcraft  
President

Meeting minutes for August 3, 2010

President Robert Ashcraft called the meeting to order at 7:05PM and welcomed 6 visitors.

Vice president David Currey introduced the night's clinic:

Videos of Houston to Bloomington, by Robert Pierce

Robert is a photographer by trade and gave the club members several tips during his presentation of UP's 844 trip. Robert stated to use a tripod to make good/steady shots. Set it up and then don't touch it. The video started on April 11, 2010 from Navasota to Houston. Many run-by shots were shown. This was followed by shots on April 13th from Houston to Bloomington and April 17 from Bloomington to Houston. Robert's videos are available online at swrails.com. He use Windows Movie Maker to edit and title some of the work. Robert suggested you spend a few dollars on a good microphone wind cap in order to get good sound quality without wind noise.

Next month's clinic will be a DCC clinic on Decoder-pro software, by Jim Lemmond

Refreshments were thanks to David Currey and Virginia Freitag. Ed Dibble volunteered to bring the treats next month.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses: none

Income: none

\$9633.78 Ending balance with all bills paid.

Minutes for July were approved as published.

LSR:

no report

Division 8:

no report

NMRA:

Ron Burns reported that it was a good NMRA National convention. The layouts were good, but Houston has better. The Charter Steel Tour was good and had nice, small tour groups. They make wire/rod from 7/16" to 1-1/2", all from melting scrap metal. The Coal Power Plant Tour allowed people to visit a rotary dump as well as the power plant.

DeRail: Apologized for having the date from the July meeting rather than the August on the cover.

Old Business:

-none

Fall Layout Tours:

Contact Byron Spampinato with the dates/times you wish to open this fall.

New Business:

Lee Milne had a stroke 6-8 weeks ago and is in a rehab center in Conroe. He will be selling his collection at the train show in October. Lee has over 100 locos, over 100 passenger cars, and lots of freight cars. He will be moving to California. Contact Steve Sandifer to volunteer to help.

Club officer elections next month. The present slate is: Bob Werre-President, Don Formanek-Vice-president, Gilbert Freitag-Sec/Tres, Arthur Penny-Director. Candidates from the floor are welcomed/encouraged, right up until voting takes place.

M&M Hobbies has some new T&P and MKT arrivals, as well as having an inventory reduction sale.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35PM

General comments: 45 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.

## OFFICERS

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