



# The DERAIL

The Official Monthly Publication of the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club, Inc

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## President's Message

Richard Louvet

As model railroaders we have one thing in common. Whether we have a large operating empire, a bare plywood precursor of things to come, or an armchair dream of the future, we all have a collection of books and magazines to match our years in the hobby.

In my case, both wall space and under layout space were full of old issues of magazines dating back to college days.

The recent introduction of DVD's covering all those dates and more was a godsend. Now I could have even more room for those boxes of yet to be built kits and excess rolling stock. I jumped at buying my own disks.

The use of DVD's is only a small portion of the digital revolution that is remaking Model Railroading.

While I was an early adopter of digital media, I don't pretend to have a grasp of the possible impacts that the digital revolution is having on the hobby.

People tend to shy away from the new or unknown. In our case this may mean missing some potential improvements to our enjoyment of our hobby.

I'm asking the members to share their use of technologies that were unavailable to us just a few years ago.

The list of topics for a clinic or Derail article could include:

- Automated record keeping
- Auxiliary decoders
- C/MRI or computer integration
- Closed circuit TV
- Computer switch lists, car cards, time tables
- JMRI applications
- Layout Design
- Lighting, Sound for the layout
- LocoNet or the new NMRA control bus
- RFID or barcode readers
- Signaling
- Train Detection

Keep in mind that some of the best presentations are first hand experiences - missteps and all. No matter what the level of expertise of the presenter or the reader/listener, we all learn something new.



David Hannah pulling into Sumrall with a passenger train. HALS OPS Day Saturday January 26

*Photo courtesy of Rick White*

# The 2013 Greater Houston Train Show

## February 16, 2013

It's almost here, and with all of the effort many of our members put into the 2012 Lone Star Region Convention it has kind of "snuck up" on us this year. It is hard to believe but come February 16, we will have produced two Greater Houston Train Shows and a Lone Star Region Convention in a little less than 12 months. But with the group we have in the San Jac we can put on our usual outstanding Train Show-and we are in the home stretch. To make matters more interesting our friends at Train Expo are coming back to town-exactly one week before our show.

***SO: I give you Six Good Reasons to attend the 2013 GHTS:***

You get a **REAL** Convention, complete with a model contest, full slate of clinics, and home layout tour to go along with excellent vendor tables.

**We won't be undersold!!** Our Admissions is about 25% under the "Other Guys".

**We don't charge for Parking.** For the price to Park at the "Other Guy's Show" you can pick up a boxcar or small structure kit at our show.

**We support Local Model Railroading and Railfans.** We are a non-profit club. We retain enough profit to sponsor next year's show and pay the printing on the Fall Layout Tour. We have traditionally been very generous with our sister clubs and organizations that bring layouts and displays, supporting the hobby locally.

**We are not a Fly-by-Night operation.** We have sponsored the Greater Houston Train Show/San Jacinto Model Railroad Club Jamboree since 1972. That's 42 years of shows. Counting the years we did not put on a Jamboree because we were sponsoring an LSR Convention, **that is still 38 Train Shows!!**

**If you don't come and participate, you'll miss out on a great time- and we'll miss you.**

***We have an excellent cast heading up the various tasks:***

**Robert Ashcraft** is chairing the vendor table sales and he has sold out of tables-- twice.

**Don Bozman** has prepared the floor plans so we know just where to place the display layouts and vendor tables.

**Tracy Mitchell** is chairing the Contest Room and assembling a great group of judges.

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The Kingsville Division's Brownsville Subdivision ran from Houston to Brownsville, and had several secondary lines branching off of it. Angleton was probably the most important and busiest yard on the entire Kingsville division. It was going 24 hours a day. It meant long hours switching and lots of trains.

There weren't many local industries in Angleton itself, but one was very significant: the Richmond Tank Car Company. Tank cars and hopper cars went into or out of this repair facility just about every day. Mop switching crews often went into the plant during the wee hours to pull or deposit cars. Occasionally, Richmond Tank's little industrial switcher would be seen easing out towards the H&BV side of Angleton's yard. It seems like every time I was on a crew that went into Richmond Tank, it was on a foggy night. On one occasion, the conductor kicked a car we didn't need very slowly down one of the tracks, and it disappeared in the fog. We didn't need it, but later the conductor walked down to check on it. He came back about ten minutes later and said, "I don't know where that car went. I couldn't find it."

The only other industries in town were two beer houses and one on the north side which received an occasional gondola through a door in the building. This spur was installed while I was on the division, but I don't remember what kind of industry it was. Possibly the business received car loads of coiled metal, but I don't remember. It's gone now. There was a team track, but I recall going into the team track only once.

In the accompanying diagram, nothing is to scale. The yard tracks are a lot longer than indicated. The longest ones are about 6,000 feet long. The diagram was drawn from memory and with the aid of Google Maps, but I think it's relatively accurate. The team track was up the house track a block or so. I don't know how far the track went north, as it was overgrown in weeds, and I only went up that track a couple of times. The last time I did took about a half hour to go one city block and back. The conductor told the engineer to tread gently as the tracks were bad. He responded by going about 1 mph the whole time. The house track is gone now, but back then it was used as the engine track. Yard tracks 11 through 13 were installed about 1981.

The New Main, which once came into the Old Main just after the south Pass switch, was lengthened about 1981 as well to merge much further south, thus creating a lead for the south end switcher. I don't remember the exact configuration of the crossovers south of the yard, but they

were in a different location from the single crossover shown by Google today. The north end switcher often used the south leg of the wye as a lead. Track 13, the shortest track and the last track in the yard, was used to store maintenance-of-way equipment, and sometimes cars of ballast or ties for the maintenance-of-way work trains. The H&BV tracks come back together further south (not shown on drawing). A yard shack (not shown) on the north end was added about 1983 about 40 feet south (southwest) of the depot.

The branch to Freeport, called the Freeport Industrial Lead, diverged from Angleton southward as the crow flies down the H&BV main. The Mop did not use the term "branch". Rail lines were either "mainlines", "industrial leads", or "industrial spurs". Mainlines sometimes were downgraded to "industrial lead" status. An industrial lead might be quite a few miles long.

Because of all the chemical traffic coming out of Freeport, and all the chemical traffic generated on the "North End" of the Kingsville Division (between Vanderbilt and Brownie) and further south, Angleton was the obvious spot where all this stuff was marshaled in and out of trains. During the busiest times, when things were really booming, Angleton Yard had switcher jobs working round the clock at both ends of the yard. At the beginning of the eighties, there were four jobs there, each one working twelve hours a day, seven days a week. (That is not a typo. These jobs had no off day. Typically, trainmen on these jobs would work two to four weeks straight, and then lay off for a few days or even a week or more.) I can recall switcher crews being just thrilled to death when they could get off Saturday evening after only eleven hours on the job.

About my second or third year on the railroad, about 1980 or 81, they changed this to six 8-hour jobs. It certainly cut down on overtime when they did that, and these jobs became much less desired by many trainmen. With little prospect of overtime, it didn't take quite as much seniority to hold down these jobs.

Technically, Angleton was not a yard. If it had been designated a Yard, it would have had to have been run by yardmasters, who get higher pay. Because it was not a Yard, it was run by trainmasters, who received lower pay. A lot of trainmasters learned their craft in Angleton. I believe there were usually four assigned to Angleton.

North and south locals also worked out of Angleton. The North Local basically took the cars going out to the Mon-

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## **FROM MY GARRATT**

**Henri Morris**

### **ANNUS HORRIBILIS**

"1992 is not a year I shall look back on with undiluted pleasure. In the words of one of my more sympathetic correspondents, it has turned out to be an Annus Horribilis."

20 years ago, these words were spoken at year-end by Queen Elizabeth. Despite it being the 40th anniversary of her ascension to the throne, it had been a 'horrible year' for her, with deaths, scandals in the royal family, and the devastating fire at Windsor Hall. I have the same feelings about 2012.



During this year, a number of our members passed away and even though I was not on a personal basis with all of them, like many of you, I will miss them. We also had some illnesses in our group and I am sure that you all join me in wishing all affected, a speedy and complete recovery.

2012 was also a bad year for passenger rail disasters. There were over 500 reported passenger deaths and over 2,000 passengers injured world-wide, excluding any deaths and injuries that remain unreported from countries such as North Korea, Iran,

Iraq and also excluding any subway accidents.

The very first reported accident occurred on January 13 when a passenger train collided with a herd of cattle on the track on the way to Hamburg in Germany. Regrettably, one passenger died and three were injured.

One of the most devastating accidents occurred on February 22 in Buenos Aires, when a train ploughed into the buffers at a station at the end of the line, killing at least 50 passengers and injuring over 700.



On March 3 in Poland, two passenger trains moving at high speeds, in opposite directions but on the same track, collided head-on, killing 15 people and injuring 54. It was one of Poland's worst train crashes in more than 20 years, but it was not their first rail accident in 2012. By then, a number of rail accidents had already claimed dozens of lives and injured hundreds of people.

In India, an inferno ripped through an over-night express train from New Delhi. 32 people burned to death while they slept and another 26 were injured - two critically. The cause of the accident is believed to have been an electrical short circuit, and comes after two fatal Indian train accidents in May.

Bars on the windows prevented many of passengers from escaping.



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santo and Amoco plants at Chocolate Bayou. (If you've ever seen the bayou, you'll know why it was named that. I wouldn't recommend tasting the water out of it, though.) The north local always stopped at Danbury where cars for these two plants were stored in the old pass. After switching there, it would then proceed to Chocolate Bayou. On occasion, when it had cars to interchange with the Santa Fe, it would go on to Brownie where there was an interchange track at Santa Fe's station of Algoa. After switching Chocolate Bayou, it would take the train down the Monsanto Lead and break it in two for the plant switchers. Two switchers switched those two plants, with the Monsanto job bringing cars from both plants back to Angleton the following morning. When business was slack during the recession, the Amoco job was dropped, and the North Local would switch the plant. (All "switchers" on the North End, Vanderbilt to Houston, were actually traveling switch engines, or TSEs. These jobs had a territory they could work in. For instance, the Monsanto Switcher's territory was from Angleton to Brownie and down the Monsanto Lead.)

The South Local was more like the classic local, as there were several local industries along the way to Bay City--mostly fertilizer places, but an occasional lumber or gravel yard. Some cars would also be spotted at team tracks on occasion. An industry in Bay City received hoppers of plastic pellets, but that was usually switched by the Celanese job at Bay City. Also, there was an interchange track with the ATSF at Bay City. Mostly, the South Local handled the cars to and from the Phillips plant at Old Ocean (Sweeney) and the Celanese plant just south of Bay City.

During the peak period in the early eighties just before the recession, three mainline freights a day were going through Angleton as far as Kingsville, not including the various locals and traveling switch engines that also plied portions of the line. There were also several freights a day that came down from Houston only as far as Angleton that contained mostly cars for either Freeport or the North Ends' chemical plants. An interdivisional run came all the way down from Palestine. All these trains would normally get switched at Angleton. About the only trains that ran through Angleton without getting switched were the occasional grain trains that ran through to Corpus, and the triweekly unit train for the Point Comfort and Northern at Lolita, five miles north of Vanderbilt.

Operationally, mainline freights would arrive and either set out and pick up cars, or turn the train over to the

switcher who would do the work. Having the switcher do it was more efficient time-wise, as the crew could be off eating their meal while the switcher did the work. Otherwise, the crew would spend at least half an hour setting out and picking up, and then have to go eat. Local freights and mainline freights terminating at Angleton would normally just yard their train.

The switchers, when not tending mainline trains, would pull strings of cars out of the various tracks and classify them into other tracks. They would then double tracks together to create pickups for mainline trains or entire trains to depart the yard. A yard crewman's work typically involved 45 minutes to an hour of intense switching, followed by a little "spot time" in the crew shanty while the conductor pic'led the cars to the clerk in the depot and awaited the next switch list to print off on the printer. Once printed, the conductor would write in the tracks he would switch the cars into for the rear brakeman, and mark the blocks so the head brakeman would know where to pull pins. Then it would be another 45 minutes to an hour of switching again.

When the jobs were 12-hour jobs, they had a third brakeman on the crew. His job was to keep knuckles open and lace up cars. On some south end switcher crews, he also had another unofficial duty—that of tending a barbecue pit which the crew ate from in lieu of going somewhere for lunch.

Once in a while there would be a little change of pace. An out-of-place car might have to be hunted down, or one of the local industries pulled or spotted. Cars from Freeport were often left on the HB&T side, which consisted of a main, a pass, and another track. So occasionally a switcher, usually the north end switcher would go into those tracks. I remember at least one time when Angleton was so busy and congested there was no clear track in the yard, including the New Main. I also remember occasional times when the yard was almost completely empty.

Angleton probably runs a little differently nowadays, but some things never change. Let's tie this thing up.

(Continued from page 4) **From my Garratt**

On June 25, a Union Pacific freight train streaking across the Oklahoma Panhandle failed to pull into a side track, and collided head-on with another UP train approaching from the opposite direction. Three UP Railroad employees were missing after the crash, but it was reported that there was "no survivable space" in the locomotives' cabins following the collision. The collision triggered a diesel-fueled fireball that appeared to weld the locomotives together.

The incident that touched all of our hearts though, occurred on November 15, when a parade float carrying Army and Marine veterans to an event in their honor, was struck by a UP train on a level crossing in Midland. Four veterans, each of whom had evaded gunfire and explosives in tours of duty in Iraq and Afghanistan were killed, and another 16 veterans and civilians were injured. Instead therefore, of being honored for their service to our country, they were tragically killed or injured on US soil.



We salute them all!

Finally, on a personal basis, the 42-year-old daughter of a close friend of mine passed away from ovarian cancer, another close friend contracted lung cancer and my own life was turned completely upside down in February 2012. I can only hope and pray that 2013 will be wonderful year for all concerned.

# **2013 Greater Houston Train Show Clinics**

*(Schedule TBD)*

- . **David Currey- *The "Official Guide"***
- . **Denny McGonigle- *Mountains for Beginners***
- . **Tom Palmer- *The M-K-T in the Post War Period***
- . **Al Partlow- *The Texas & New Orleans in 1950's***
- . **Bob Sabol- *Just Getting Started***
- . **Other clinics to be announced**

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# The 2013 Greater Houston Train Show

## February 16, 2013

**Tom Bailey** is once again chairing the San Jac Sales table. He has done an excellent job at this for several years now.

**Dave Shafer** is heading up the switching layout effort including storing it, hauling it to the show and managing it for the day.

**Dick Louvet and Ed Dibble** are managing the registration and front desk, but still need some help during the rush shifts.

**Craig Brantley** is assembling the layout tour. By the way this is Craig's *FOURTH* tour in a year.

**Ed Dibble** has sent out the reminder cards to all those who registered at the GHTS over the last three years.

**Steve Sandifer** sent out the advance notifications to the hobby publications and area newspapers, many of these were since months ago.

**Gilbert Freitag and Bob Barnett** are handling the clinics and will have a mix of prototype and modeling presentations.

As experienced as the crew listed above are they cannot do all of the work by themselves. There are still a few time slots left on our various sign-up sheets, **so, we need your help.** We'll have the sheets at the February Meeting.

**SO, SEE YOU AT THE SHOW!! - Bob Barnett**

Linked below are photos from Saturdays' HALS OPS day, taken by David Hannah and me. All had a great time running passenger trains on time table, running way freights delivering the goods, and talking to some Harris County area model railroaders interested in operations. There were folks with no other 7.5 inch gauge "ride on railroad" experience, and little operations experience, out learning how to be brakeman and conductors. Sure hope more HALS members come out to learn operations. Day was in the 70's and could not have been better weather for being outside. We had grandparents out with grandchildren as real passengers on our passenger trains, smiles all around!

<https://picasaweb.google.com/111706287434393157719/20130126HALSOPS>

Rick White

President Dick Louvet called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and welcomed all current members and guests.

## Old Business:

Recap of Christmas party. Published treasurers report passed by voice vote.

## New Business:

Vice President Kelly Russell announced that we still have openings for clinics this year. Please volunteer. Kelly then introduced this month's program: Blake Bogs on "modifying Photos using GIMP."

GIMP is a scaled down version of PhotoShop. It is "FREE". When using it and you wish it could do something that PhotoShop can but won't...remember what you paid for it: \$0.00. Blake showed us step by step on how fairly intense changes/ edits to a photo can be made using this program. It does take a lot of patience and a fair amount of time, but the results can be very rewarding.

Next month will be program will be either Chris Tolley & Chris Whitehead on Railroad Radios in Houston OR Bob Barnett on Railroad Architecture. Dave Currey will then present the Official Guide the next month.

Thanks were given for the NMRA donation in remembrance of Don Threlkeld.

Past member, Gordon Lawson passed away on 12/23/2012, please keep his family in your prayers.

Peter Bryan went to a train show in Boston and saw 6 modular layouts. Three of these had sign up slots to operate the layouts.

This allowed the "public" hands on time running trains. This is something we may consider adding to our events.

Gus Freitag is recovering and will be back at G&G this week.

Website: Chris Whitehead - Check website for updates.

Derail: Bob Sabol - Bob's drawer of articles is almost empty. Please submit photos/articles soon to add quality/information for our Derail readers

LSR: Dallas/Fort Worth convention coming this summer with an emphasis on operations.

Marker Lamp now being published online only – major cost saving decision.

NMRA: No report

Division 8: A good time was had by all at attendance at the picnic.

Fall Layout Tours:

All going well. Check the website often for updates/changes.

Barry Bogs brought up that we had coverage in the Thursday Tomball/Spring edition of the Chronical.

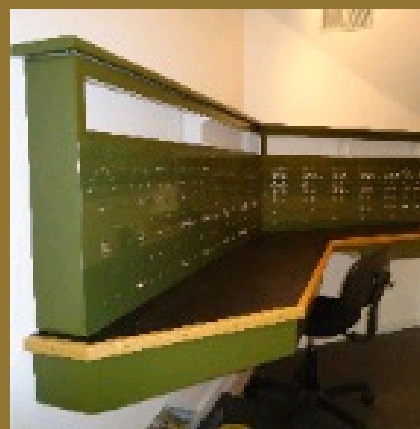
2013 Train Show: 2/16/2013 - Bob Barnett:

Sign up sheets were passed around – we have a few more labor spots to fill.

Sales tables are sold out, clinics slots are filling up.

*(Continued on page 9)*

## Guess the Layout!



**Answer to January's 'Guess the Layout: N Crowd Model Railroad Club**





San Jac RR Club Meetings take place  
the first Tuesday of each month

Bayland Community Center

6400 Bissonnet St. Houston, Tx

[Click here for directions](#)

Visitors are always welcome!



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## Next Meeting

TUESDAY

FEB 5

“Architecture for Model  
Railroaders” will be pre-  
sented by Bob Barnett

*(Continued from page 8)*

Area heads:

Registration: Ed Dibble & Dick Louvet

Contest Room: Tracy Mitchell

SanJac Sales Table: Tom Bailey

Clinics: Bob Barnett & Gilbert Freitag

Sales tables/Vendors: Robert Ashcraft

Layout Tour: Craig Brantley

The show needs a little help from many  
rather than a lot of help from a few.

Please volunteer an hour or two of your  
time somewhere and then we can all en-  
joy a great show.

Refreshments were thanks to Sandi Lou-  
vet. Tom Bailey volunteered to bring the

snacks next month.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$1340.00 remaining balance to Stafford  
Center

\$15.00 bank fee – (balance less than  
\$7,500.00)

Income:

\$435.00 2013 Train Show table sales

\$4647.62 Ending balance

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

-Respectfully submitted, Gilbert Freitag,  
Secretary / Treasurer

