



The DERAIL

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

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HELP

Ed Dibble

Advertising for the 2014 Greater Houston Train Show depends on mailing postcards to past train show attendees. Our database contains the names of over 700 past attendees. We plan to send a postcard to these attendees telling them about this year's show.

return address labels and stamps to the 2014 Greater Houston Train Show postcard announcement. Ed Dibble is setting up in the lunchroom with the supplies and is asking for your help doing this project. See you at 6:30 pm at the January 7th meeting

Thanks!

Now we need your help in attaching address labels,

Christmas Party Pictures

Thank you to everyone who attended the 2013 Annual SJMRC Christmas Dinner Party. A good time was had by all. Thank you to the hosts, Gil and Virginia Freitag. Thank you to Ed Dibble for the pictures.



Christmas Party Pictures



This article will not attempt to discuss all railroad personnel—only those on a train crew, and those that a train crew would be likely to have contact with, even if only by radio, phone, or sight, during their work-related activities. This might be useful in helping a model railroader to come up with jobs for his model railroad, and in better understanding how real railroads operate. The parts of this article on the distinctions between head end brakemen and rear end brakemen might help in live steam operations, as these usually run with a four-man crew. Often times, the brakemen in live steam operations don't understand their duties. They shouldn't feel bad about this. On the Missouri Pacific, it took me about six months before I fully understood the brakeman's duties. As usual, I've peppered the text with occasional little recollections from my days on the MP's Kingsville Division, strictly for Rick White's enjoyment.

Engineer – He is in charge of the engine, and runs it. He is not in charge of the train. He is equal in status and responsibility to the conductor, but takes orders from the conductor on how to run the train. The conductor cannot tell the engineer, though, how to run his engine. In the absence of the conductor, the engineer is in charge of the train, and can instruct the head brakeman and fireman what to do on headend matters, such as talking to the dispatcher on the phone, etc. It might seem that having two crew members of equal status “in charge” of things pertaining to the operation of a train might lead to conflicts, quarrels, and various levels of friction, but in practice it works quite beautifully. Few engineers try to usurp the conductor's responsibility. One good reason might be they don't want to have to shoulder any of the blame when something goes wrong, and vice versa with the conductor. I can hear the trainmaster now talking to the conductor after he tried to tell the engineer how to run his engine and something went wrong: “What makes you think you know how to run the engine. Are you trained in locomotive matters?” The engineer normally handles all radio communication with the dispatcher, as he is on the headend and more current with what is actually happening

up there. He also keeps his own time slip. If he has a fireman, he records his name on the time slip as well.

Conductor – The conductor is in charge of the train, but cannot tell the engineer how to run his engine. The conductor instructs the brakemen during any switching operations. A conductor on a yard job visits with the trainmaster or yardmaster in order to get switch lists and instructions. Sometimes, the actual dispensing of the switch lists might be done by a clerk, especially at stations where no train master is on duty. The conductor takes care of the time slip for the crew except for the engineer. The conductor and brakemen all get paid for the same things basically. For example, if air pay is to happen, the conductor and brakemen all get the air pay. Engineers get paid for different things, such as wye work, etc, that the other crew members don't get. The conductor handles any radio communications that have to do with the train's cars, setouts, pickups, etc.

Head Brakeman – The head brakeman is normally the low man on the totem pole on a train crew. The oldest (seniority-wise) brakeman gets to choose whether he wants to work the head end (locomotive) or the rear end (caboose). Since the head brakeman's job is usually a little more strenuous, most senior brakemen choose the rear end. However, if a brakeman is buddies with the engineer, he might decide to work the head end. The exception is that the regular brakeman picks his spot over any extra brakeman on the crew, regardless of how long the extra brakeman's whiskers are. The head brakeman takes instructions from everybody on the crew—even the rear brakeman in certain circumstances. His duties involve lining switches, uncoupling cars, lacing the air (coupling up air hoses), bleeding air off cars, cutting in the air, walking train inspections, tying down handbrakes, and just about anything else he might be instructed to do. If there's a 104C rule to be followed (checking a power switch to make sure it is lined properly), the head brakeman will be the one

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to hop off the engine and walk up to the switch. Whenever flag protection has to be given ahead of the train, the head brakeman is the guy treading the ballast. I remember one time I was regular on a pool crew out of Houston while the senior brakeman was off, and we had an extra brakeman senior to me. Something in his manner, or maybe something he said, led me to believe he thought he would be working the rear end. I handled the situation rather tactfully, I think. We had been limoed from Houston to Angleton to take a train to Houston that was about to hog law. The hand-off between crews was to be at the depot without the train stopping. I simply positioned myself further down the platform in the direction of the train than was the extra brakeman. He fully expected me to step up on the engine. I let the engine go by, then turned in his direction. He seemed kind of stunned, so I said, "You better get on the engine". In the confusion over me not getting on and hearing my words, he only had a couple of seconds to decide what to do, so he got on the engine. Later in Houston, I overheard him asking the conductor about it, and the conductor explained the rule to him. I don't know how he could have been working longer than me and not know that rule, but he did now.

Rear Brakeman— The rear brakeman is normally the senior brakeman on the train crew as mentioned above. His duties can be any of the head brakeman's—even doing a 104C on a backup move. Where his duties differ from the head brakeman's is that he will generally work more closely with the conductor. In switching operations, he will handle the far switches on the lead while the conductor handles the near switches. He'll make long joints (down in the yard tracks), and might be more likely to couple air hoses except involving the engine. In a sense, the two brakemen are like extensions to the conductor's arms, enabling him to reach deep into tracks, line switches a long distance away, uncouple the locomotive, pull pins, and just about any-

thing else during the course of duty. The rear brakeman rides the caboose and watches the train on curves, and occasionally walks out on the rear platform to check for damage to ties caused by dragging equipment. He will also step out on the rear platform to look over trains being met, and to receive a highball or stop signal from the other crew on the ground looking over his train. He radios the engineer with information on brakes kicking off, air pressure on the caboose air gauge, when the train clears a siding, when the caboose starts moving, etc. He'll walk train inspections for the rear of the train.

Foreman — In some designated yards, a switching crew does not necessarily have a conductor, but the senior brakeman on the crew would be called the Foreman, and in all respects would perform the duties of a Conductor. The one restriction is that a Foreman cannot take his switching crew outside of the yard, as he is technically not qualified to serve as conductor. I don't know if modern day railroads have such a position, but on the Kingsville Division, some or all of the switchers down in Brownsville had Foremen. Elsewhere on the division, the yards and pseudo-yards were switched by crews with conductors, as these "switchers" were actually "traveling switchers", and had an assigned territory encompassing the yard and adjoining mainline track up to 100 miles. Since they often went outside of the yard, they required conductors.

Fireman — A fireman nowadays is an engineer in training. Firemen are usually doled out to the more experienced and therefore more senior engineers. This also has the benefit of providing the engineer with a little relief, though when the fireman runs, he is under the direct supervision and guidance of the engineer. A fireman likes to stay in the good graces of the engineer. If he antagonizes the engineer, the engineer might be less likely to let him run. I remember hearing an engineer say to me while the fireman (who had a part-time sales thing going on) was back on the second unit checking on something, "If he talks that soap-selling @\$^, he

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can forget about running this engine.”

Hostler – Hostlers are engineers who don't have enough seniority to hold down engineer jobs, or maybe they are not promoted yet, so they work in yards, unofficial yards, and engine houses—anywhere that light engines might have to be moved around. Their pay may be less when doing that work. (A light engine is a locomotive or set of locomotives without cars or caboose, though a train crew

might refer to a caboose hop as being a light move, as in “We're going to run light to Angleton.”)

Dispatcher – The dispatcher has perhaps the most responsibility from a safety viewpoint of any position on the railroad. He facilitates the safe movement of trains on his territory in accordance to the rules. His job is to get the trains over his division(s) in a safe and fast manner. He works with the train crews so that they can get their work done by assigning areas (track and time) to a crew so they don't have to worry about protecting against other trains, which would slow down the work or make it impossible. He phones train orders to clerks at stations along the line, who then hoop up the orders to trains going by. Sometimes he transmits orders directly to the train via radio. Often times, conflicts arise between two trains where both need to be at the same place at the same time. That's when delays sneak in to the machinery. Dispatchers help keep these delays to a minimum.

Yardmaster – The yardmaster is in charge of an official yard, i.e., a set of tracks designated as a yard. Unofficial yards are run by trainmasters. The yardmaster makes all the ultimate decisions about what tracks should be used for marshalling what trains and cars. He instructs clerks as well in the performance of their duties. The yardmasters, trainmasters, and dispatchers are probably the main personnel who really know what is going on at the day-to-day operational level of a railroad. They receive

instructions from up the ladder, and disseminate it to the train crews. On occasion, a yardmaster might have a rather mundane duty, such as passing out a paycheck when no clerks are on duty.

Trainmaster – The trainmaster is in charge of a non-official yard, and/or a section of track. Usually stationed at a yard or unofficial yard, they can perform much the same duties as a yardmaster, but also instruct crews about what to do along the line—pickups, setouts, etc. I believe yardmasters and trainmasters come from the same pool of employees (I might be wrong about this), but yardmasters are the more senior.

Clerk – A clerk is kind of the depot or yard office version of a brakeman. He follows instructions of yardmasters and trainmasters. A clerk might have to walk tracks to make lists of cars and trains. He might have to make this list while standing at the depot when a train rolls by. They don't come under the authority of the conductors and engineers, but often work with them—especially the conductors—for instance, when PICLing the tracks. (“PICLing” is the process of entering into the computer what track every car went into after a round of switching. Not sure what PICL stands for, but it might be “Put In Computer List” or “Perpetual Inventory of Cars List” or something.)

Carman – Carmen (Car—men, not Carmen the opera) are found in yards and unofficial yards. When a train is ready to go, they give it an air test and walk the entire train to make sure brakes are releasing and setting properly. The last official duty by the carman before the train leaves the yard is to inform the engineer that the brakes are kicking off on the caboose or rear end and how much air pressure he has on the rear end. Train line air pressure is usually not constant from headend to rear end due to air leaks in the hoses, pipes, and apparatus. Leaks are more prevalent in winter since the rubber gaskets in the hoses stiffen up and won't sit as well, thereby leaking more air.

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Signal maintainer – A signal maintainer does just what his job title indicates—he keeps the electronic signals in working order on the division. A signal maintainer is assigned a section of track. He will keep crossing signals, block signals, interlocking signals, power switches, phone lines, and any electronic synchronization equipment in good repair.

Superintendent – The Superintendent is in charge of an entire division. He normally does not have day-to-day contact with train crews, but on occasion he might venture out on the property. Sometimes, he's on the office car bringing up the rear of a freight train.

Assistant Superintendent – The Assistant Superintendent is second to the Superintendent on a division. He's more likely to come in contact with train crews. I remember one time in Angleton the Assistant Superintendent walked up to me, called me by name, and gave me instructions on where to set out a car somewhere. I was a little taken aback because I tried to maintain a low profile. I had been told that if they don't know who you are, they can't want to fire you. The circumventing of the chain of command (i.e., the conductor) caused an issue later in the trip that is best left unstated, at least until another 15 years have rolled by or so, at which time I might recount this story using fictitious names.

Road Foreman of Engines – I'm not really sure what this guy's duties are. He is somehow in charge of all the engineers under his jurisdiction. I suspect he is responsible for educating the engineers on new models of locomotives, new locomotive equipment, and such. Some engineers hope to become Road Foremen, as it means more pay and better working hours. It is a management position.

Towerman – The towerman is in a tower at an interlocking. He lines switches and can thereby affect the aspects displayed of interlocking signals. There are much fewer of these guys nowadays.

Bridge Tender – The Bridge Tender works at a lift or swing or some other kind of movable bridge. He has a routine to follow whenever the bridge has to be opened for boat or ship traffic. A bridge has an interlocking mechanism somewhat like that at a railroad junction. Sometimes, a train waiting at a red signal for the bridge will see the bridge tender out on the bridge setting the mechanical and electrical locks. The bridge tender also looks over all trains that go by. I never had reason to speak to one of these, except one time at the San Bernard River bridge. I think I remember the signal would not clear us over the bridge, and we received permission to cross the bridge. I had to walk over the bridge preceding the train and check for something not set properly. On the other side I think I said hello to the bridge man.

Crew Callers – Crew Callers call crews that are on the extra board or on pooled mainline jobs that do not have regular start times. Normal crew call time when I was on the railroad was 2 hours. I've heard that some railroads only give 1 1/2 hour calls now. The railroad allowed us to have beepers, but the beeper was no excuse for a missed call. While on the railroad, my beeper went off on only three occasions—two of those were wrong numbers. On another occasion, my beeper did *not* go off. I was always so paranoid about missing a call, that I always called in anyway every couple of hours if I was away from home. I called in and the Crew Caller said, “Currey. Where've you been? We've been trying to get hold of you.” I showed up for work on time.

Track Gang Foreman – The Track Gang Foreman (not sure if this is the proper term on the Mopac) is in charge of a track gang repairing a section of track. Sometimes the work is of such consequence that train orders are issued that require trains to stop short of the section being maintained and not to proceed until verbal instructions are received from the foreman permitting the train to proceed, usually at a

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much reduced speed of 10 to 20 mph.

Track Gang Members – Track Gang members work on the track gang under the supervision of the foreman. They will look over any trains that pass by them during the course of their work. Usually the members will be one side, and the foreman on the other. This is good for a roll-by train inspection if it falls within an inspection zone.

Bridge Gang Foreman – Bridge Gang Foremen supervise repairs or new construction of bridges. Bridges are heavy maintenance items, and usually on the Kingsville division there was always somewhere where a bridge was being repaired or rebuilt. We had a major installation done on the approaches to the Colorado River Bridge south of Bay City near Buckeye when I was on the division. The main truss span over the river was left alone. The southern approaches had been a long curved wooden trestle, probably about a quarter of a mile long. Most of this was replaced with a large fill and several culverts, which must have involved the emptying of thousands of hopper cars of fill material. On the northern approach, a new concrete bridge was installed. It never ceased to amaze me that a bridge could be installed on the same track alignment with minimal interference in the operation of trains over the same track. A stop board would be placed before such construction with train orders specifying their location, and trains would not be allowed to proceed over the track until authorized by the foreman.

Bridge Gang Members – Bridge Gang members worked under the supervision of the foreman. There were probably a multitude of job titles. Usually a pile driver would be used at these bridge locations. If a train arrived while a pile is being driven, it might be a while before the train can proceed.

Rail Gang Foreman – The Rail Gang Foreman is in charge of (you guessed it) a rail gang. See Rail Gangs below.

Rail Gang Members – Rail gangs install new sections of welded rail on the division. Their work involves a pass over the section of track that is to have its rail replaced, and the new rail is laid out along the side of the track. Then later, the rail is moved into position and the old rail set off to the side. Finally, the old rail is picked up by the rail train. I think that sometimes, when rail has gotten worn, they swap rails so that the other side of the rail gets the wear. Old rail that is picked up might still be good for industrial spur tracks and such that see much lighter and slower rail action. Being the extra train crew on a rail gang was easy but boring work. You got the engine out of the house track somewhere, coupled onto the rail train, and then that was about it. The engineer would move forward slowly when instructed while the rest of the train crew sat.

In addition to the above railroad employees, there would sometimes occasionally be non-railroad employees that a train crew might come into at least visual contact with.

Federal Railroad Inspector – These employees of the Federal Railroad Administration showed up semi-regularly but unexpectedly to check out railroad operations and equipment. On occasion, they might instruct that a car be removed from a train. They did not personally instruct a train crew to do this, but worked through the trainmaster or yardmaster.

Sperry Rail Car Crew – I would guess that the Sperry rail car would either be engineered by a division engineer, or have a division engineer on it as a pilot. I only saw one of these once, and never worked on a crew associated with them, so I don't really know how they operated.

Rail Grinder Crew – This would probably be handled similarly to the Sperry car.

And as an honorable mention (since they are not re-

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not really employees), there are railfans. Railfans like to take pictures and video of trains. (No kidding!) Since the Kingsville Division was a working division instead of a glory division, we seldom saw them. However, I remember a time down at Alvin where a railfan was out in front of the Santa Fe depot filming our train as it went by bound for Houston. I thought it would have been funny if I had had a movie camera with me, and had leaned out the fireman's side and filmed the railfan as we went by. Ha!

Some of the above personnel often found in model railroad operations are engineers and/or conductors, yardmasters, dispatchers, and on live steam railroads, brakemen. Occasionally found are towermen. Ones that are rarely or never found that might could be utilized on model railroads would be hostlers, trainmasters, superintendents, and signal maintainers.

Live steam operations usually have what is called a Trainmaster, but his duties are different from a real railroad's trainmasters. Instead of overseeing main-line operations and handling Yardmaster-like tasks, the live steam Trainmaster assigns personnel to crews and sees to it that all jobs on the railroad are protected with crews. On an indoor model railroad, his title could be utilized by changing the title of some Yardmasters to Trainmaster, especially if he

were actually given some kind of decision making authority outside of the yard.

Hostlers might be useful on a large model railroad, as his job would be to move engines to and from the engine terminals, thus relieving the Yardmaster or train crews from having to do this. While not prototypical, his duties might further be amplified by having him move made-up freight trains from the classification yard to the departure tracks, or from the arrival tracks to the classification tracks, and possibly moving passenger trains between the depot and the coach yard. However, if the passenger movements are his main work, it would probably be better to call him the Depot Switcher or something. If his duties interfere with the Yardmaster, it might be better to just let the Yardmaster do these, though having a Hostler could give the Yardmaster a break once in a while.

Often times, the owner of the model railroad does not operate, but instead functions almost as a Signal Maintainer—trouble shooting why electrical power or DCC signals have been interrupted, or why switches won't throw properly. Perhaps he could formally be given this title. As owner, though, perhaps he should better be thought of as the Superintendent, but it's hard to imagine on a real railroad, or even a model railroad, a superintendent crawling into tight spaces with a fist full of tools to fix electronics.

December Minutes

Gilbert Freitag

Meeting minutes December 3, 2013

Annual Xmas party at Gil & Virginia Freitag's home.

No minutes taken.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$19.80 club brochure printing sales tax

Income:

\$270.00 Train show table sales

\$9,020.00 Ending balance

-Respectfully submitted,

Gilbert Freitag,

Secretary / Treasurer



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!



Officers

President: Richard Louvet
rlouvet@att.net

Vice-President: Rex Ritz
icrex@yahoo.com

Secretary/Treasurer: Gilbert Freitag
gilbertfreitag@att.net

Director: Robert Ashcraft
crash8473@comcast.net

Derail Staff

Editor: Bob Sabol
bsabol@stillmeadow.com

Production: Terri Brogoitti
tbrogioitti@stillmeaow.com

Regular Contributors:
David Currey
texasandlouisiana@msn.com

sanjac.leoslair.com

Do Not Use www.

Webmaster: Brian Jansky

Next Meeting

TUESDAY, JANUARY 7

**Cass Scenic Railroad by Chuck Lind
with Don Formanek and Craig Brantley**

Refreshments: Bob Barnett and Virginia Freitag

Video Corner

Unique way to ride the rails

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ShbC5yVqOdI>

Guess the Layout!



Answer to December's Guess the Layout: Robert Barnett