



The DERAIL

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

August 2014

Volume 45, Issue 8

Two Edged Sword

Richard Louvet

A flurry of emails after the July meeting got me thinking again about the impact of the internet on our hobby in general and San Jac in particular.

I don't think anyone can argue that the ability to sit down at a computer screen and instantly do what used to take much more time and travel is transforming how we shop, learn and communicate. As with all successful new technologies, the internet poses a threat to established norms, but presents an opportunity as well. It's a two edged sword.

On the plus side:

- The club has started to make good use of the new resources. I routinely get feedback and inquiries from the website which makes me think the number of visits is larger than we realize.
- The Derail is distributed easily and cheaply. Having the Derail on the website increases readership far beyond just the membership.
- The SJMRRC Yahoo Group is as yet an underutilized resource.
- The mailing list is routinely used to get information to club members in a timely and inexpensive manner.
- Discussion of ideas can be extended beyond the Tuesday meetings via email.

On a more personal level, the internet has changed the way I interact with the hobby community.

- My product browsing now includes manufacturers and e-commerce sites as well as local hobby shops and craft stores.

- Those boxes and boxes of old but still useful magazines have been replaced by space on my hard drive. My iPad now has several months of Model Railroader, Trains, Classic Trains and Model Railroad Hobbyist.

- I can get (with some searching) tips and tricks from all over the world.
- There is a wealth of easily accessed prototype information. I can find info on my prototype New York Central, even from Santa Fe territory.
- Finally, the array of photographs covering all aspects of models and prototypes is limitless.

On the minus side:

- Perhaps the most visible negative effect is the reduction of local hobby shops. Even the well run businesses are seeing the effects of a much larger competitive market.
- The hobby historically has had many individual modelers who never considered joining a club. I think the internet can reinforce this "Lone Wolf" mentality. There is a feeling out there that we may be trading personal interaction for a keyboard and a screen.
- As in any open source system, some the advice out there is less than helpful. I could say the same for hobby purchases, but my experience has been uniformly good.

The question is: Do we grab the handle of this two edged sword or just stay out of the way? My own feeling is that we cannot escape the inevitable but that we ought to use it to our advantage.

It's not been in the news much, but Houston's light rail expansion has been proceeding at full force. Impressively, Houston is doing construction on three rail lines at the same time. John Murdock and I went out Thursday, December 20, 2012 to have a look at the progress being made.

One of them is the East End Line. It extends from the northwest side of downtown out Harrisburg to the Magnolia Transit Center. It is mostly in the street, but as in the original line, there are short portions that are on its own right-of-way. While I say "in the street", there are buttons that separate the rail line from the lanes for vehicles. The track portion is also usually raised an additional few inches above the traffic lanes.

Where the line crosses the existing Main Street line, there is a connecting track, which enables the equipment to get to and from the barn down near where Astroworld used to be. I didn't think such a connection would be possible in the tight confines of a downtown intersection, but the northeast corner here is a parking lot, and they ran the connecting track close to the corner curb.

The East End line runs by the George R. Brown Convention Center and within a block of Minute Maid Park. Once the track gets on Harrisburg, it goes by the Dynamo's new stadium. Other stops or endpoints include Smith, Louisiana, York, Lockwood, Altic, and Cesar Chavez.

Other interesting locations are where the line crosses under a rail line just east of Dynamo Stadium. Also, at a railroad line between the Altic and Cesar Chavez stops, no construction at all has been done on the light rail for several blocks. John and I came to the conclusion that an overpass for the light rail will probably be constructed there. An underpass could be dug out, but since that has to contend with water, sewer, gas, communication, and other lines below ground level, we think the overpass solution is probably the best alternative.

Most construction is similar to what was done on the original Main Street line, with the stations being in the middle of the street. Crossovers are constructed at

regular intervals. While catenary posts were installed at many locations, no wire has been strung yet.

The Southeast Line is concurrent with the East End Line in downtown, but just past the Dynamo Stadium, the line diverges to the south. This line has stops at Leeland, Elgin, Robertson Stadium, Wheeler/MLK, MacGregor Park, and the Palm Center. The Palm Center is a shopping center which has a large percentage of non-retail shops, such as libraries and other government agencies.

One interesting spot along here is where the line parallels the old HB&T for a short distance. At another, on Martin Luther King, an existing boulevard bridge had just enough space between the northbound and southbound lanes for the construction of the two-track light rail bridge in between.

We lunched at a barbecue place on Harrisburg close to downtown called Texas Barbecue. I found it to be quite good. The barbecue was so tender, you could cut it with your finger. The potato salad was also superb. I found the brisket's barbecue style to be very similar to the Beef and Bun Barbecue on Long Point. Though this was my first visit, I'd have to rank it as among my favorite barbecue places in Houston.

By the time we drove along the route of the Main Street Line's northern extension, we were beginning to tire. A detour of Main Street took us on a serpentine route to finally deposit us north of the UP freight line. Looking back, we could see an overpass over presumably UP railroad tracks, but we did not try to get over there to determine that for certain. The North Line (an extension of the existing line) has stops at the Burnett Transit Center, Quitman, Boundary, Moody Park, Calvacade, Graceland, Melbourne, and the Northline Transit Center (near the old Northline Mall location, which has been totally reconstructed, from what I could see, into Northline Commons).

Later, where the BNSF comes into town, there was a big S-curve concrete light rail bridge over its right-of-way. This was on an order of magnitude that was approximately that of some of the Dallas light rail line's bridges. However, all these new Houston lines are

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Houston Light Rail Construction (Cont.) David N. Currey

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basically street car lines, usually in the middle of the street with numerous grade crossings. It will be interesting to see, when Houston gets around to building lines out to the suburbs, if the lines will be at street level or built like the Dallas lines with overpasses at most cross streets?

All three of the new lines/extensions should be up and running in 2014. If you want to see the construction, you'd better get out there pretty quick. Much of the construction is at an advanced state, and some segments will probably be completed in another six months or less. Those with an eye on the future might be interested to know that future expansion plans include lines to the Galleria, the Northwest Transit Center, and Sugar Land.





The first question one immediately asks when seeing the above picture is what a small caretaker house in the middle of a cemetery has to do with trains. There is actually a model train related story with this building which located in the Bound Brook Cemetery in Bound Brook, NJ. Over the past five or six years I have visited this cemetery about twice a year, not to pay my respects to any of its permanent residents, but to visit the home of the Bound Brook Model Railroad club. You see, this cemetery is part of the local Presbyterian Church. This club has been in existence for 25 years and was located within one of the church buildings across the street. When the church needed more space they made the club an offer they were unable to refuse. It was either to use the basement in the caretaker house located about 100 feet inside the cemetery or disband the club. The cemetery offer won.

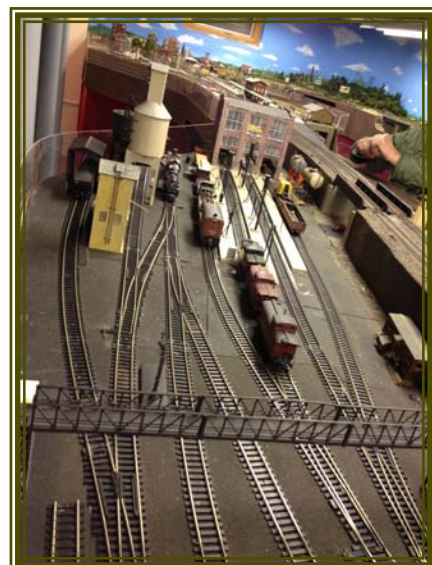
My brother, Tom, lives in a nearby town and is a member of this club which consists of 8-10 members. I visit NJ several times a year and often I go with him on Friday nights to the club. Now I must tell you, if you are afraid of night-time and a dark cemetery, then this is not the place to visit. Once you get past the cemetery thing, you go into a small (about 25' square), brick house that is well maintained and enter the front door and go down to the basement. This takes you into our model railroading world. In that area of the country, most train layouts are located in

the sub-living spaces called basements.

Once inside and in the train room, we find it very typical as far as layouts are concerned. The members have a wide range of backgrounds and are skilled modelers. They meet every Friday night and one night a month is run night. After about two hours, a trip for pizza and beer is in order. This is often followed by sitting (in the dark) at the local train station watching trains.

The Bound Brook train station is very unique. At one time there were four train lines passing this station, which was originally a Central of New Jersey (Jersey Central) station. This station was on the Jersey Central mainline. Today NJ Transit runs over these lines. Two other tracks running parallel to the CNJ are now being used by the Norfolk-Southern and CSX trains which were once the Reading and Lehigh Valley lines. At that time the B & O also had trackage rights when they had the interchange track a nearby plant. The B & O would then run into Jersey City at the CNJ terminal.

At the west end of town the CNJ tracks would eventually wind up in Scranton, PA. The Lehigh Valley line would go to Phillipsburg, NJ while the Reading would go to Philadelphia.



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July Minutes

Gilbert Freitag

Meeting minutes July 1, 2014

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

Due to equipment issues – we started with the business meeting instead of the program.

Vice president Rex Ritz needs some program ideas for next year. Contact Rex to volunteer or make suggestions.

The minutes from last month were approved as published in the Derail.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$2200 Stafford Center train show deposit

Income:

none

\$10,176.40 Ending balance

Fall Layout Tour:

Craig Brantley spoke on this year's upcoming tour. Last year had low attendance. Is 6-7 weeks too long of a window? The method of having layouts in certain regions open at the same time is working well. Google Maps works good, but attendance is still low. Layout tour attendance at the Train Show is also very low. We need to think of ways to increase attendance. Maybe have a table in the main show room to promote the home tours with photos or video. More exposure online or in hobby shop or newspapers could help both tours. Maybe have a clinic explaining the home layout tours. Maybe have a continuous Power-Point video of layouts on tour on display at the Show. Open to any ideas to help attendance.

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Website:
no report

LSR:
Bob Barnett reporting: The annual convention in in Round Rock was a great show. Good clinics, good contest (97 entries), good silent auction. Virginia Freitag added that even the arts & crafts contest had good participation, about 13 entries.

Division 8:
Ron Burns asked what if anything is going on with Division 8. Seems no Waybill or clinics have been out lately. Bob Barnett said they are looking for a place to restart the clinic program. Overall communication with Division 8 is poor.

Derail: Bob Sabol
Bob needs some new layout photos for the "Guess the layout" segment. Send in a couple photos of your layout if you have not been in this segment ever or even if it has been a long time.

Big Texas train Show in September in the GRB. Contact Dick Louvet to help with the club booth.

Fall Elections:
Still open for new officers, please volunteer.
We need to re-instate the welcoming committee.

Robert Ashcraft saw an ad in the NMRA magazine to make a 100% NMRA club sign board for \$200-\$300. This could be used to advertise the club at events. There was a motion to buy one on these but it was then tabled until next month to look future into the details of it. Chuck Lind will look into the possibility of having one made with our own club photos rather than the generic photos by NMRA.

M&M Hobby Shop is going to close its doors for good in August or September.

Yahoo Group:
<http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/SJMRRC>
There can be postings of people wanting to sell/give away RR related items.

NMRA:
no report

Vice president Rex Ritz introduced this month's program by Blake Bogs:
Programing Lok Sound Decoders

Blake opened by stating that LOK Sound has the best diesel sound and the TCS WOW unit has the best steam sound.

You will need a LOK Programmer to customize you LOK Sound Decoders.

In addition you will need: a computer with web downloaded Loc program, a decoder tester – used to check motion, lights, and sound before actual installation, and one of the many LOC decoders, and sound files (download from Wed)

Blake showed s price breakdown of all parts of the Lok sound system.

You can download all the software, decoder templates and sound files.

Blake then showed how to use the software to customize the sound to your exact likings. He had equipment at the meeting producing the sounds for all to hear.

Blake recommends the MRC 1513 as the best speaker to use.

A club member discount is being offered on all this equipment to us by KMJ Hobbies, a home based shop, no storefront at this time.

Contact 303-883-6881 jfbrandtrn@mac.com

Refreshments were thanks to Bettye Bozman and Virginia Freitag.

Don Formanek volunteered to bring them next month.

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 PM

General comments:

-Respectfully submitted,

Gilbert Freitag,
Secretary / Treasurer



San Jac RR Club Meetings take place
the first Tuesday of each month
at 7pm

Bayland Community Center
6400 Bissonnet St. Houston, Tx

[Click here for directions](#)
Visitors are always welcome!



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Next Meeting

TUESDAY, AUGUST 5

Western U.S. Tourist Railroads

by Rick Jones

Refreshments: Don Formanek and Virginia Freitag

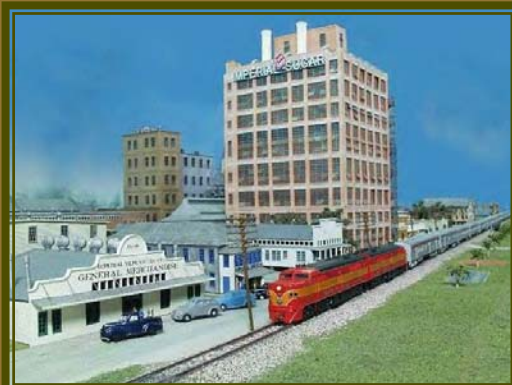
Video Corner

End of Ramadan Rush-Hour in Bangladesh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ySSrG7HgvIQ> and

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mypvXPVAndU>

Guess the Layout!



Answer to July's Guess the Layout: Bryan/College Station Model RR Club