



# The DERAIL

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

November 2014

Volume 45, Issue 11

## Note from Rex

Rex Ritz

We have a talented and dedicated set of Officers for the New Year but there is one more position that needs recognition in the composition of the five San Jacinto Board of Directors:

### **Board of Directors:**

**President:** Rex Ritz

**Vice-President:** Chuck Lind

**Secretary/Treasurer:** Gilbert Freitag

**Director at Large:** Denny McGonigle

**Past President:** Richard Louvet

Dick was elected de facto at the September 2014 meeting to his current position as Past President.

“The Board of Directors will formulate and maintain By-Laws which conform to the Articles of Incorporation and any State laws governing the Corporation” according to the Constitution adopted by vote of the membership on June 5, 1990.

**Board of  
Directors**

## Fake Wood

David N. Currey

*Note: I've heard the complaints that the Derail should contain more articles on model railroading instead of the prototype. I think these are valid complaints. What I will do is this: I will make an effort to write more articles on modeling. I am not all that accomplished a modeler, as I have not built or wired a layout, nor do I know that much about DCC systems and things—knowledge of the prototype is more my bag. In support of this, I am submitting this article on modeling to the Derail. In the future, I will do what I can. To the complainers, as valid though your complaints may be, how about writing an article on modeling for the Derail?*

One of the more fun things in this hobby in the realm of scratchbuilding is taking one construction medium and making it appear like a different substance. One of the more enjoyable such things for me is to make styrene plastic look like wood. I wouldn't say it's easy, but it's not that hard, and it certainly is fun. I've scratchbuilt railroad trestles in both wood and styrene, and both turned out excellent in the looking-like-wood department.

The most important thing in making plastic look like wood is how you paint it. If you paint a piece of plastic with paint described as being the color “barn wood”, what you'll wind up with is a piece of plastic that looks nothing like barn wood, or any kind of wood for that matter. The problem is that wood is not one color. Neither is concrete, for that matter. Paint a piece of plastic in the color “concrete”, and you'll also wind up with a piece of plastic that looks nothing like concrete.

The secret in making plastic look like wood is you have to use more than one color, but before you do that, you need to take a Zona saw or comparable saw and scrape it sideways along the plastic to give it simulated wood grain. The best way to do this is not to scrape the saw the full length of the plastic. You will need to scrape the same piece of plastic multiple times, and if you do it the full length of the plastic, what happens is by midway down the piece of plastic, the saw teeth will begin following the ruts from the previous pass of the saw, so that towards the end of the piece, you have a bunch of evenly spaced

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deep ruts, which of course will look more like wood about to split into pieces than good solid wood. Make many short swipes of no more than a couple of inches long with the Zona saw up and down the piece of plastic. You can also take a dental pick or some similar tool, and scribe curves and ovals in the wood if you like to simulate such patterns found in real wood.

For painting, you need to use multiple colors. If you use two colors of paint, it's a fair improvement. For instance if you use barn wood with dirt, you will wind up with a piece of plastic with those two colors, and shade combinations of those two colors. This is still not like real wood, though it is better than using the one color.

I've come up with a "recipe" for wood that I've used on several plastic models. It involves four colors. Some of these are craft paints you can get at Hobby Lobby or Michaels. Here's my four colors:

- Grimy Black
- Barn wood
- Parchment
- Dirt

By using the four colors in varying amounts, you can simulate just about any type of weathered wood you might want. I usually start with the Grimy Black, and apply it to the white plastic using a bit of old rag, and I don't even worry about getting a good cover coat. If it's thin here and there, that's fine, because you can cover those spots with other colors.

For the remaining colors, use a dry brush technique. When the previous coat is dry, I apply the barn wood. Here, and on all succeeding colors, you definitely don't want to cover everything, as you want some of the previous color showing through. Then I apply the Parchment color. This one I do very sparingly—just the merest hint of the color. Finally, I add the Dirt color. This color might best be thought of as weathering what you have already done.

The end result is almost an infinite variety of color

combinations, similar to what a real piece of wood has. You will also have weathered the simulated wood as well. This type of plastic painting can be used to simulate wood fences, wood shingle roofs, unpainted farm buildings such as barns and chicken coops, wood trestles, and many other structures.

For wood trestles, you will probably want go heavier on the black to simulate the creosote that trestle lumber is soaked in. It's a matter of preference, but to my mind, wood trestles are a blacker color than what I sometimes see in trestle models, but of course, an older trestle might indeed be more of a brown than black. The best way to know how to paint and weather your trestles is to look at photos of trestles, or actually look at the real thing.

With a wood trestle, you will want to do all the painting and weathering after it has been built or assembled. For a barn or unpainted wood house, if no interior is to be readily visible, you can paint and weather only one side before you glue and assemble it.

With shingle roofs, I do all the saw scraping and painting before I even cut the sheet into shingles. The first time I did this, I was worried that the shingles on the finished model would have a noticeable shiny white edge where the plastic was cut, but I found that when gluing the shingles to the roof, and being generous with the amount of Testors liquid styrene cement I applied, there were virtually no white edges, as the glue evidently dissolved enough paint to coat the edges of the plastic. After the entire roof had been done, there were only a few spots where I had to go back and touch up where a white edge of plastic was showing through.

I've even used the above paint colors to stain real wood to make it look weathered. If you wanted to simulate some woods that have a red tint to them, like the redwoods, you could probably experiment around with some dark red color added to the recipe. If you wanted to simulate fresh lumber, such as in a new house being framed, you might want to add a paint of some yellowish color to the recipe, go heavier on the parchment, and maybe completely omit the black. I've never attempted that type of wood coloring yet.

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Having put together lots of plastic airplane, tank, and ship kits when I was a kid, I have a natural affinity to working with plastic. So I actually prefer working with plastic rather than wood. To me, a trestle built

out of plastic is stronger than one of wood. However, as I mentioned, I do enjoy working with wood sometimes, and it's nice to have options.

Let's tie this one up before I paint myself into a corner.

### INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE PORT OF HOUSTON RAILROADS Submitted by Cliff Cheeseman

Each year, 700,000 railcars arrive or depart, making Houston one of the busiest rail centers in the country. The Houston region has a rail network of more than 800 miles of rail line and 21 miles of railroad bridges. Additionally, 10 major rail companies serve the Houston region. The region has three class 1 railroads, Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF), Kansas City Southern Railway (KC), and Union Pacific Railroad (UP). Combined, BNSF and UP operate more than 96 percent of the Class 1 track mileage in Texas. The widespread coverage of the two railways allows shippers to connect to most of the major markets statewide.

Shale gas production has been a boom to the energy industry, and the rewards have trickled down to railroad companies, like UP, which have extensive ties to the energy sector. Union Pacific hauls raw steel, finished pipe, fracking sands, stone and drilling fluid commodities to serve the Texas shale boom. The industries that are driving much of the economic growth in Houston have deep ties to Union Pacific, "said Brenda Mainwaring, Vice President of Public Affairs for the Southern Region of Union Pacific Railroad. "Not surprisingly, growth in the Gulf region. As our customers grow, we invest to meet their needs. Union Pacific has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in the Houston area and throughout Texas to add capacity, improve our operations and support customer facilities."

According to Maureen Crocker, Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Rail District, the benefits of Houston's rail system have been highly underrated. "It is ideal for heavy, bulk commodities that would require multiple truckloads and that strain roadways, increasing maintenance requirements," said Crocker. "The Houston-Galveston region has one of the most extensive rail networks in the country. We are lucky to have so much rail to work with in our efforts to sustain our incredible economic and population growth."

SOURCE - *All Access* by Matt Smith

<http://virtualonlineeditions.com/article/All+Access/1810559/0/article.html>

#### CLASS 1 RAILROADS IN HOUSTON

BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE RAILWAY  
KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN RAILWAY  
UNION PACIFIC RAILROAD

#### SWITCHING & TERMINAL RAILROADS

GALVESTON RAILROAD  
PORT TERMINAL RAILROAD  
TEXAS CITY TERMINAL RAILWAY

SOURCE - TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

<http://www.dot.state.tx.us/business/rail/>

## New Derail Feature Coming Soon

Beginning in January 2015, we will highlight different layouts in the Houston area, including general information, 4-6 pictures of the layout, history and information about the builder. Chris Tolley will be putting these monthly articles together. He can be reached at [hct9679@hotmail.com](mailto:hct9679@hotmail.com). We would very much like to have you show your railroad layout to the rest of the world. Contact Chris or he may contact you. This new feature will replace the current Guess the Layout!

## Belgium Firefighters Go Viral

A fire fighter named Tom Bongaerts originally posted this photo on April 5, 2014, and it quickly went viral. It started as a prank played by the fire brigade. He did a follow up post to explain the prank.

*Hey, this past week our funny photo went viral throughout the whole world. Thousands of shares and likes in many different countries! Once and for all: the picture was taken in Belgium, in a small village called Bornem.*

*After a minor intervention, we had some time left near the railway to make this picture. Since there were no trains running at all for a week due to maintenance works, we can state that our joke was a real success! Thanks to our entire team, 2nd sqdn Firefighters Bornem!*

Check out Marcus Wong's blog about it which includes some extra information.



<http://wongm.com/2014/04/fire-hose-across-railway-tracks/>

Be sure to click on this month's video link on the final page of The Derail for a fun Train vs Hose video.

## October Minutes

Gilbert Freitag

Meeting minutes October 7, 2014

President Dick Louvet called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and welcomed all current members and visitors. We had 3 visitors, including Tony from the United Kingdom.

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:  
Expenses: \$877.99 – club projector  
Income: none  
Ending balance: \$9,621.85

Vice president Rex Ritz introduced this month's program by Gilbert Freitag, "Simple Trackside Signals & Control Panels 101 to 849". This was done with a Power Point presentation, accompanied with a paper handout.

Gilbert opened with a step by step discussion on how

to design and build tri-color LED search light signals at a fraction of the cost of commercially made signals. This included casting the base, making the mast and ladder, installing the LED and target head and wiring methods.

Next, Gilbert showed methods of making simple control panels from a white coated Masonite panel sold in "Big box home improvement stores", striping tape, electrical components, and computer cables. These are meant to be temporary panels that look "OK" until you make your "permanent" panels in the future, which will be much "fancier". Gilbert then discussed the methods he used to make a Union Switch & Signal (US&S) CTC Panel. This is quite an involved project, but "doable" for the average scratch builder. Fabrication of components such as: the cabinet, panel face, indicators, toggle switches, turn levers, and custom push buttons, were discussed. *(Continued on page 5)*

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Gilbert finished by giving an overview of the CMRI control system, developed by Dr. Bruce Chubbs, of Michigan, which includes a DCC compatible train detection system and well as a variety of input/output computer interface devices. Feel free to contact Gilbert at any time for more information on any of the topics discussed.

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

**Narrow Gauge Convention 2015:**

Craig Brantley discussed the up and coming Narrow Gauge Convention in Houston in 2015. Division 8 members will get a discounted registration fee of \$45.

Thanks were given to Dick Louvet for his work in picking and acquiring a projector. We no longer have to borrow member's personal property each month. We do need to get a laser pointer to go with it now.

**Train Show 2015:**

Bob Barnett announced that more volunteers are needed to sign up for work slots for the Feb 21, 2015 show. Robert Ashcraft reported that only 27 out of 124 sales tables are left. \$2085 in checks were turned in today.

**Fall Layout Tour:**

Craig Brantley reported 13 club and 44 home layouts will be on the tour this year. There are about 6 new layouts this year. The tour sheet is ready to be downloaded from the website. The East/Northeast area of town is on the first weekend.

**Division 8:**

Jim Lemmond reported the Bill Hughes railroad sale went well. Buildings from the layout will be offered for sale soon.

Ray Byer was elected by voice vote to represent San Jac in the Division. Ray and Jim will work to get the Division active again.

**Website:**

No report

**Yahoo Group:**

<http://groups.yahoo.com/groups/SJMRRRC>

No report

**LSR:**

Bob Barnett thanked Ray Byer for being Division 8 President.

M&M Hobby's train layout has moved to the railroad museum in Rosenberg, but it is in storage there for now until efforts to reassemble it are ready.

Chuck Lind is looking for meeting programs for next year. Contact Chuck if you have a program or even an idea.

**Old Business:**

Thanks to Steve Sandifer for his many years of bringing his projector to use at our monthly meetings.

Bob Barnett has the San Jac display board and several flyers that he brought home from the Train Show.

**Club Banner:**

Chuck Lind stated that the banner should be ready by next month.

Barry Bogs announced the Petticoat Junction group meets at Spring Creek Barbeque the first Friday of the month, all are welcome.

**NMRA:**

No report

**Derail: Bob Sabol**

The 15th of each month is the deadline for submissions to the Derail. Chris Tolley will be heading a new department highlighting the "layout of the month". This will consist of a few photos and a short write-up on the featured layout. Other articles are always welcomed and encouraged.

Refreshments were thanks to Ed Dibble and Virginia Freitag.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

-Respectfully submitted,

Gilbert Freitag,



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!



## Officers

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## Next Meeting

**TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4**

“Scratch Building HO Freight Cars”

by Steve Barkley

Steve is not only a very experienced scratchbuilder from  
Beaumont, he is also our Lone Star Region President.

Refreshments: Virginia Freitag and Denny McGonigle

## Video Corner

Train vs. Hose

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I0O7DP3i0ao>

## Guess the Layout!



Answer to October's Guess the Layout: Ed Dibble