



The DERAIL

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

December 2014

Volume 45, Issue 12

Note from Rex

Rex Ritz

We now have a San Jac banner in our club for use at public events including the annual Greater Houston Train Show at the Stafford Center. The banner has been designed as a better way to advertise the club and promote the hobby to potential new members and curious bystanders who are not aware of who we are.

Our new banner only came to realization by the efforts of the producers, photographers and volunteers that made it a reality. This is a new concept for the San Jacinto Model Railroad Club to the best of my knowledge. I want to recognize the members who put forth the effort and brought this great idea into reality and have an archive record for our club.

The idea originated with the NMRA magazine advertisement offering a club banner for sale in a plain generic display.

This concept was brought to the club's attention by

Robert Ashcraft so I want to attribute him with the recognition of first coming up with idea. Our Vice President, Chuck Lind MMR, took it from here and volunteered to make a San Jacinto Model Railroad Club specific banner using his skills and production resources available from his career as manager of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension unit. The banner has photography from various club layouts and gatherings done by Bob Werre and Steve Sandifer. The final product came in cheaper than what either the NMRA or any outside commercial shop could offer.

A draft version was prepared and presented by Chuck in the early fall and slight alterations were made. The official inauguration of the finish product was presented at our November 2014 monthly meeting.

Congratulations to all.

What if?

By Mark Couvillion

“What if?” can be two of the most unsettling words in model railroading. After you have spent a couple of years building your dream layout, not to mention spent a small fortune on the track, rolling stock and all of the accessories, you are ready for the railroad to “earn its keep”. So you begin to operate. With the advent of DCC, more trains can operate on your railroad at the same time, just like the 1:1 prototypes. But as you start trying to build and operate trains, and try to switch out cars, and get out of the way of other trains on the main, you find out that your dream layout is a nightmare. Not what you expected when you started laying track – without a

well-thought-out plan! Without the benefit of the experience of some of the “old hands” in the local club or the real engineer or conductor from your circle of friends! Nope, you had to lay the track out “your way”, as you saw it in your mind's eye. Laying track is simple. Anybody can do it. You just connect the ends and hook up the power, and it runs. Or so you thought!

When you get to the point of actually trying to run your railroad, you are probably going to find that

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your first pass, and possibly your second pass, is not as “operational” as you had imagined. As you quietly gripe to yourself about how this is not working like you planned, or you just can’t do what you wanted with that existing track arrangement, you might just want to consider “What if?”.

Now you have done it! You have opened the door, ever so slightly, to suggestions from other folks who might have an idea that is a little different from yours. It may build on your original one, or it may suggest a complete change to the way you had intended, but it is potentially more operational, or more scenic, or more forgiving, or just plain better! The first “What if?” leads to another, then another, and before you know it, the entire track plan has evolved before your eyes. You still haven’t changed a thing, but you can see in your mind’s eye that the ideas presented by “What if?” have changed the way you are thinking about your railroad. You like the sum of the ideas and can see how they would be more fun to implement, to make your own. You take the plunge and, dare we say it, you start ripping up track, possibly even changing the bench work! Sacrilege!!! You have so much time and effort in your previous work.

Case History #1

The first time we encountered “What if?” was just after the introduction of DCC. An early Digitrax system was installed on one of the cabs of a large conventional layout and a few engines had the early decoders installed. The trains were running by themselves and before too long there was a cornfield meet, as the trains were running in opposite directions on what was in some places a single-track main!. We had never before been able to run trains at the same time in opposite directions on the same track, so it did not occur to us that you could have this problem. Fortunately, the brass engines suffered no damage!

The owner invited several guys over for his first real operating session shortly there-after. He had been

working on his layout for over 15 years and had never gotten it anywhere near close to fully operational. He set up the engines, built the trains, and gave us the switching orders of what we were to do with each train. After a couple of frustrating hours trying to get everything to run, and when it did run, of trying to do the “work” we were assigned, it became obvious to the operators that it just wasn’t working out. Then the suggestions started.

The first “What if?” was to reposition a station and house track on one of the upper levels. It was not easy to switch, did not have a proper track length for the house track, and the main line ran on a narrow elevated section of bench work that was essentially just under the arm of the operator trying to switch the station. Remember, I mentioned brass engines? The trip to the floor was a good 4-1/2 feet and there was no warning when a train came by on the main. It was very easy to be focused on the job at hand and knock a passing train off the rails! As we started discussing this first “What if?” about how to re-do the station, house track, and main line, another fellow chimed in and said “Well, if you are going to consider that, “What if” you do this to the mainline curve just after the station. He wanted to change the sweep of the curve to give a better radius and connection to the track on the peninsula. “What if?”s started flying then. The railroad’s owner listened intently and nodded a lot in assent. We left thinking the discussion would continue the next week.

When we returned the following week, we immediately realized that the owner had ripped up half – HALF!! – of the existing track during the previous 7 days! Holy cow! He was serious! Now the gloves were off. We started critically looking at what was left of the rest of the layout and making suggestions, especially in how to tie the new track work that was needed with the existing track work. After another busy evening, we left thinking it would be a while before things started to change. The next week, half

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of what had been left was missing! Only about 25% of the original track was still on the bench work! We all agreed to help re-lay the track and rebuild the layout. Over the next couple of months the railroad morphed into something that became a joy to operate. But the owner still grimaces at anyone who mentions “What if?” when in the train room!

Case History #2

The second example of “What if?” occurred after seeing a fellow new to the hobby build his first layout. In a large outbuilding / shop, with enough room and tools to build whatever he wanted, the layout just didn’t satisfy him. The track radii were too tight, limiting him to 4-axle diesels and mostly 40-foot cars. There were too few straight sections of track and no place to cut in turnouts for industries. Some of the curves had been “forced” to make the rail connections, resulting in kinks that the trains reminded him of every time they passed. It was becoming operational, but it wasn’t. He was finding it fought him all the time and he just wasn’t happy with it. When asked why he kept building on it if he wasn’t happy with it, he answered that he did not want to “waste” the time, money, and effort already put into the railroad. We sat down to discuss “What if?”.

After a couple of hours tossing around a few general ideas, and following the natural progression of where they led, he made the decision to make changes. He was reminded of several experienced modelers whom

he knew, and who lived in the area - the same guys who had worked on the first layout (See Case History #1) to make it run like it should. After some “back and forth” with them, a new track plan was developed and drawn up that used as much of the existing bench work as possible. Rights to additional right of way were negotiated from the “landlord” and an additional area was secured to allow turning the trains at one end of the layout room. Track work was soon underway and the owner was thrilled beyond words with the outcome. Suggestions for operation were mentioned by each person who visited and worked on the railroad.

Conclusions

“What if?” can result in a major change, a movement from a static, hesitant position to one of activity toward something more positive. The results seen in the above Case Histories have been very rewarding, especially when the overall investment of the layout in time, treasure, and ultimate enjoyment are considered. Making a change because of “What if?” can be a positive experience, though initially it is usually met with heavy resistance.

Railroad owners, be wary of anyone suggesting “What if?”!!!

Written as a reminder of the good fun and fellowship that was enjoyed by certain members of an East Texas model railroading group over a number of years. (You know who you are!)

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. 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! We’re still looking for that special someone to be the first featured modeler. Will it be you? We can’t do this without you. Please contact Chris now.

Humble, Texas Train Disaster

By Randall Wilson

Dec 13, 1922. Southern Pacific's passenger train No. 28 departed Houston on time at 9:15pm on its way to Shreveport, Louisiana. The passenger train was small, consisting of one steam locomotive, a combination baggage and mail car, two coaches and one Pullman sleeping car.

By 9:50pm train No. 28 had traveled 17 miles and was approaching Humble. A low fog made it difficult to see the track ahead but the engineer could dimly see the train order signal at the Humble station. The train order signal indicated –stop- so he began applying the brakes and slowed the train to about 20 mph. As he approached the Humble station, he spotted another steam locomotive on an adjacent track creeping onto the mainline!

The engineer of the passenger train shoved the brakes into emergency and the train slid to a stop. Unfortunately the passenger train was unable to stop before it clipped the side of the adjacent locomotive. (Locomotive 439) According to the Interstate Commerce Commission's later report "The left boiler check valve of engine 439 located on the side of the boiler over the front driving wheel was broken off and the first coach of the train No. 28 came to a stop with the forward window directly opposite the broken off boiler check valve, live steam entering the car at

boiler pressure." Upon hearing of the disaster Southern Pacific sent a special relief train from Houston with doctors and nurses from Southern Pacific's Sunset Hospital. Several injured passengers that were taken to Southern Pacific's hospital would not survive. The superheated live steam entering the coach caused the death of 19 passengers, 1 news agent and 2 railroad employees.

The death and injuries were horrific, so horrific many may not wish to read the awful details. Newspapers across the U.S. reported about the accident in detail and some of the actual stories can be read at <http://www3.gendisasters.com/texas/721/humble,-tx-train-wreck,-dec-1922?page=0,2> **Just be warned the stories are graphic.**

The full Interstate Commerce Commission's report can be found at [http://specialcollection.dotlibrary.dot.gov/Document?db=DOT-RAILROAD&query=\(select+865\)](http://specialcollection.dotlibrary.dot.gov/Document?db=DOT-RAILROAD&query=(select+865)). This report does not have the graphic details of the newspaper reports.

Southern Pacific's Houston Hospital was built in 1910 at 2015 Taylor Street, just north of downtown Houston. It is now part of the Harris County hospital district.

Midnight Rider Film Crew Train Accident Update

By David N. Currey

It has been several months since my article on the Midnight Rider train accident appeared in the *Derail*. I have been following the developments through the internet news media, and this article will bring the reader up to date. I thank editor Terri Brogoitti for bringing some of the new material to my attention.

The criminal trial date has been set tentatively to start on March 9, 2015 in Georgia's Wayne County Superior Court. With such a large and complicated trial as this one is shaping up to be, the start date will probably get set back several times. A fourth person has been charged with crimes in the case—Hillary Schwartz, an assistant director on the film. She has pleaded not guilty to charges of involuntary man-

slaughter and criminal trespassing—the same as those filed against director Randall Miller and producers Jody Savin and Jay Sedrish.

CSX Corporation has been included as a defendant in the separate civil case. The plaintiffs, which include the parents of Sarah Jones, state that the railroad should have had people out there to insure nobody knew that there would be filming on the adjoining Rayonier property. It will be interesting to see if the railroad is found partially liable. It seems unlikely to me, as the railroad twice refused the film company permission to work on their property. Things are always going on around almost all rail lines. If the

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railroad is found partially responsible, then where does it stop? Railroads would need to have personnel stationed all along every inch of their right-of-ways 24/7.

Breaking news is that the family of Sarah have reached an undisclosed settlement with the film company and the film company defendants in the civil case. The settlement does not include CSX. Rayonier and others were dropped from the case. CSX has also counter-sued the film makers stating it had twice denied (in writing) the film company permission to film on its property.

An interesting and major development, due to the focus on film safety that the accident has spurred, is the release of a free iPhone "Set Safety" app developed after the accident by a group of anonymous production crew members. Funded through a donation campaign, the app is available for Mac and Android, and is awaiting Apple approval. It enables the user to review standard safety protocols and OSHA guidelines, but most importantly, the user can report safety violations anonymously, even within seconds of the infraction. This is big, as producers and directors will now have in the backs of their minds that their production staff can at any time accurately report and download photos of any violations they perpetrate or allow to happen.

Charlie Baxter (on the production staff), a defendant in the civil case, has stated that he was "unable to obtain permission from CSX to conduct filming on the trestle bridge," and that he had "not...planned to film a scene on active railroad tracks." Rayonier has stated that they did not give the film company any advice on track safety or information about train frequencies or schedules on the CSX line. The Jones family claims that at least one film company person was informed that there would be only two trains going by that day. (You will recall from my previous article that I thought two trains a day was ridiculously low, and that I would expect *at least* twenty a day on such a busy line. Amtrak alone runs six a day.) It has occurred to me that, if any Rayonier employee gave the

filmmakers such information, whether officially or unofficially, he may have been referring to trains to the Doctortown facility, not those going by on the CSX line. If this is the case, it still does not relieve the film company from any trespass on CSX, and why they would rely on Rayonier for such critical information *on CSX* is stupefying if true.

A very active "Slates for Sarah" Facebook page has been up and running for quite a while, but I failed to mention it in the previous article. Its primary goal is to enable production personnel to upload photos of "slates" (the clapperboards used to start the film rolling) where the slate person has mounted a visual tribute to Sarah Jones on the slate itself, often nothing more than the initials "SJ" or something, but other photos are posted as well.

New York Marine, the insurer of the "Midnight Rider" film production, has refused to pay a claim by the film company, in part because of negligence by the film's producers. In a filing with the U.S. District Court in Los Angeles, NYM maintains that the actions of the plaintiff were so reckless and negligent that it contributed to the cause of the accident. The film company is contesting this.

Concerning the circumstances surrounding the incident, I have found out that the speed limit on that part of the rail line is 70 mph, but the train was traveling about 56 or 57 mph at the time of the accident. (I had originally estimated at least 60 mph.) The engineer blew its horn continuously for the last 26 seconds before impact, which probably began as a blowing for the grade crossing and continued as a warning to those on the bridge. The bed was a hospital-type bed, thus it was made out of metal, not wood as I had previously assumed. Such a bed would not splinter and disintegrate when hit, but would probably remain in one or several large pieces. I also found out that members of the film crew (as I suspected) were running along the bridge walkway instead of down the track. If they had not been hit by debris from the props and film equipment, and could have held onto the bridge railings or structure, no one should have been hurt.

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Some of the video links below show excerpts from previous films plus actual discussion by the filmmakers where (1) they let a small child roam unaccompanied in a field of cattle, and (2) dropped a piano down a flight of stairs attached to somebody's home without permission from the owners. Considering the weight of a piano, it is obvious the stunt would have damaged the stairs. Such unconcern for the safety and rights of others is eye opening to say the least, and gives a good look into the souls of these people. The film makers actually admit they don't always get permission. Often times, the film makers use the excuse, "We've got a film to make here," as if that is good enough reason not to require them to follow normal safety practices or to get permission to film somewhere. (I am finding it very difficult to control my anger at this point, as I am trying to remain objective. I'd better conclude this article before I lose it.)

Here are some recent links:

The following link is to an article about the assistant director being charged:

<http://www.thewrap.com/midnight-rider-assistant-director-pleads-not-guilty-to-involuntary-manslaughter/>

The following link is to an article that gives the trial Date of March 29 and describes the FRA and NTSB investigation into the accident:

<http://deadline.com/2014/10/midnight-rider-investigation-sarah-jones-federal-railroad-administration-ntsb-851313/>

The following link is to an article describing a safety app available for cell phones that enables employees on a set to anonymously report unsafe work conditions and excessive hours:

<http://deadline.com/2014/10/sarah-jones-set-safety-app-midnight-rider-845624/>

The following link gives information about the insurance company for Midnight Rider refusing to pay a claim:

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/entertainment/sns-rt-variety-entertainment1vrt1201332941-20141017-story.html>

The following link describes the settling of the civil case with the film makers:

<http://www.latimes.com/entertainment/envelope/cotown/la-et-ct-midnight-rider-20141118-story.html>

The following three links are to a 20/20 broadcast covering the tragedy. Note that some of the bridge scenes are actually of another bridge on a branch many miles away, and not of the Altamaha bridge. Those familiar with the bridge will probably recognize that, especially due to a curve in the track being much closer to the bridge and curving the wrong way compared to the Altamaha bridge. This is not made clear at most points in the video where they are used. Other than that, the 20/20 broadcast is very well done, accurate, factual, and not misleading:

<http://t.co/xOnUTQBCEk>

<http://t.co/3fkBuySmIY>

<http://t.co/wuLxbmWHuI>

The following link shows the camera view on board the CSX locomotive:

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2816922/If-train-comes-60-seconds-track-Shocking-final-moments-camera-assistant-Greg-Allman-film-killed-train-bosses-filmed-scene-without-permission-narrow-bridgee.html>

This month, the Derail is featuring model railroader....???



WANTED

Christmas Party

2014 ANNUAL SJMRC CHRISTMAS DINNER PARTY

AT GIL & VIRGINIA FREITAG'S HOME

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 2nd AT 6PM

If you didn't sign up to bring a food item at the November meeting, please call Virginia to see what is still needed. 713-926-2993 See you there for an evening of lots of fun.

ALSO: DON'T FORGET TO BRING AN EXCHANGE GIFT TO GET IN ON THE FUN!

RAILS: Put your name inside the wrapped gift and mark the scale on the Outside (approx. \$15 value)

NON-RAILS: Put your name inside the wrapped gift (approx. \$15 value)

DIRECTIONS:

I45 South to exit #42 (Wayside) or I45 Northbound to exit #41B (Wayside)

Southbound: turn LEFT onto Wayside or Northbound turn RIGHT onto Wayside

Proceed 0.7mi to LAWNDALE Turn RIGHT onto LAWNDALE

Proceed 0.7mi to ALTA VISTA ST. Turn LEFT onto ALTA VISTA ST.

Proceed 1 ½ blocks to 1835 (2 story on right)



November Minutes

Gilbert Freitag

Meeting minutes November 4, 2014

President Rex Ritz called the meeting to order at 7:00PM and welcomed all current members. We had one visitor, Cathy, who has a 13 year old son, both of which are very enthusiastic about the hobby.

Vice president Chuck Lind passed around a sign-up sheet for refreshments and program volunteers for 2015.

Chuck then introduced this month's program by Steve Barclay: "Scratch Building HO Freight Cars"

Why build cars from scratch?

-counts towards your Master Model Railroader Certificate

-build equipment not commercially produced

-cheaper

-many hours of enjoyment

-show and tell (brag) what you have built

Why styrene?

-cheap, easy to work with, consistent quality

-not affected by moisture, easy to paint

-durable, lots of shapes available

First you need a plan to build to. This can come from books, magazines, historical societies, photos, and even other kit plans.

Use small squares to keep things straight and square. Steve likes Tenax as a solvent/adhesive. Use a fiber brush to smooth out any craze from glue runs.

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Painting:

Don't add different color details until the base body color is painted. Wash the completed model with mild soap and water to remove dirt and body oils from handling. Spray the paint on the body. This can be from cans or from an airbrush. Make sure to use a respirator to protect your lungs. True-Color is a good paint choice. There is no substitute for a good airbrush. Paint the model with glossy paint to provide a good base for applying decals. Use plenty of decal setting solution when applying decals. Wash model again to remove and decal residue. Clear coat everything with a 50/50 flat and gloss mix, thinned 50/50 with solvent.

Final assembly:

Weight car to NMRA standards.

Weather with Bragdon powders/chalks and paint oversprays.

Steve finished up with several photos of cars he has built over the years.

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

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:

Expenses:

\$100 – Bayland Center deposit

\$252.44 Fall layout tour printing

\$5340.00 Stafford Center payment (not reported at meeting time)

Income: \$2085 + \$620 Train Show table sales

Ending balance: \$6,654.30

Train Show 2015:

Bob Barnett announced that more volunteers are needed to sign up for work slots for the Feb 21, 2015 show. A clinic chairman is a main role that is also needed.

Fall Layout Tour:

Craig Brantley reported the fall tour is in full swing. Check the website for weekly updates.

LSR/Division 8:

The 2015 LSR convention will be in Beaumont in

July 2015.

Derail:

Bob Sabol announced the "feature your layout" column will start in January 2015. Contact Chris Tolley to enroll your layout in this feature. Bob is still in need of more articles. The 15th is the deadline for submissions to the Derail.

Club Christmas Party:

The December meeting will be the traditional Christmas dinner party at Gil & Virginia Freitag's house. A signup sheet was passed around for what food item you would like to bring. Call Virginia at 713 926 2993 if you have not had a chance to sign up for an item yet. We need some photos from the party to publish in the Derail. Bob Werre will try to assist in this area.

Website:

Brian Jansky reported things seem to be running smooth.

Old Business:

Chuck Lind showed the new club banner and it looks great.

New Business:

Bob Barnett reported on the "shrinking pie" of railroad hobbyist. The magazine publishers realize this and are slowly disappearing too.

Bob Werre reported S Scaler Jack Troxell has passed away.

Van Vanderwilt, Harry Bean, and Mike Koch have also passed away. These are all railroad icons that will be greatly missed by all.

Yahoo Group:

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

Refreshments were thanks to Denny McGonigle and Virginia Freitag.

Meeting adjourned at 8:45 PM

-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, DECEMBER 2

2014 ANNUAL SJMRC

CHRISTMAS DINNER PARTY

AT GIL & VIRGINIA FREITAG'S HOME

AT 6:00PM

Video Corner

A Christmas Train

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nNGmCvw57JE>

Guess the Layout!



Answer to November's Guess the Layout: Marc Vandendriessche