The DERAIL

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

January 2015 Volume 46, Issue 1

Amtrak Notes From Rex

By Rex Ritz

Here is a compilation of my notes from June 1998 through September 2000 wherein I was following the AMTRAK Operations.

TEXAS EAGLE CONSIST

Texas Eagle Train No. 21
06/12/98 Fort Worth
Saw the train at the Fort Worth station heading west bound from Chicago to Los Angeles with Amtrak motive power Genesis No. 326 lead and No. 330.

SUNSET LIMITED CONSISTS

Sunset Limited Train No. 2
03/16/00 Houston: Thursday
scheduled arrival 9:35am, scheduled departure 9:53am
AR 9:35am, DP 11:11am

Lead GE/Dash 8-40BP/Genesis GE SN47305 Amtrak	No. 837 (Nov 93 build date)
4000 HP Genesis GE SN47294	No. 826 (Oct 93 build date)
Baggage, single door	No. 1708
Transition Sleeper	No. 39013 sideboard #0210
Sleeping Car	No. 32046 sideboard #0229
Dining Car	No. 38059
Sleeping Car (95% probability: the "Indiana")	No. 32082
Sleeping Car	No. 32054 sideboard #0230
Dining Car	No. 38038
Sightseeing Lounge	No. 33035
Coach	No. 31520 sideboard #213
Coach	No. 34008 sideboard #0212

Notes: The one hour and 18 minutes delay was due to absence of locomotive crew. The crew changed ("died") at Houston and for some reason the new crew was not present for boarding. Amtrak flew in a fresh replacement crew from New Orleans, which did not arrive at the station until 11:05am. The crew quickly boarding and the engineer gave a short horn and a long horn and then she hit the throttle. Yes, the engineer was a woman. The crew also included a conductor, a supervisor, several attendants, a galley staff, and what looked to be an inspector. The conductor and the supervisor shared management responsibilities.

Sunset Limited Train No. 2
03/21/00 Houston: Tuesday
scheduled arrival 9:35am, scheduled departure 9:53am
AR 11:45am, DP 12:00 Noon * the entire train is a different consist.

Lead GE/Dash 8-40BP/Genesis Amtrak	No. 843 (damaged port bow)
4000 HP Genesis GE SN47301	No. 833 (Oct 93 build date)
Baggage, two door	No. 1229
Transition Sleeper	No. 39026 sideboard # 0210
Sleeping Car	No. 32049 sideboard # 0231
Sleeping Car	No. 32045 sideboard # 0230
Dining Car	No. 38004
Sight Seeing Lounge	No. 33000
Coach, Smoking	No. 31514 sideboard # 0213
Coach	No. 34064 sideboard # 0212

Sunset Limited Train No. 2
03/23/00 Houston: Thursday
scheduled arrival 9:35am, scheduled departure 9:53am
AR 9:35am, DP 11:33am

Lead GE/Dash 8-40BP/Genesis GE SN47305 Amtrak	No. 837 (Nov 93 build date)
4000 HP Genesis GE SN47294	No. 826 (Oct 93 build date)
Baggage, single door	No. 1708
Transition Sleeper	No. 39013 sideboard #0210
Sleeping Car	No. 32046 sideboard #0229
Dining Car	*No. 38039
Sleeping Car	*No. 32002 sideboard #0231
Sleeping Car	No. 32054 sideboard #0230

(Continued on page 2)

Amtrak Notes (Cont.)

By Rex Ritz

(Continued from page 1)

Dining Car	No. 38038
Sightseeing Lounge	No. 33035
Coach	No. 31520 sideboard #213
Coach	No. 34008 sideboard #0212

Notes: The cab crew originated in San Antonio and ended in Houston. The delay was again due to waiting on the fresh cab crew. The train left with a third crew cab member, a Union Pacific engineer riding from Houston to Lafayette observing Amtrak operations. The crew believes the "Indiana" is probably in Los Angeles for servicing.

OPERATIONS INFORMATION

The "Genesis" motive power is a General Electric Diesel Electric Passenger Locomotive made in Erie, Pennsylvania USA. The four-capped connections on the front are for the communications (blue cap) and the (MU) multiple units (black cap). The crew advised that it is normal for the consist to vary on each train.

The cab crew consists of an Amtrak engineer and fireman. The cars, except baggage, are all two levels. Each occupied car carries its own attendant who has a separate sleeping cabin. The transition sleeper car is for the crew not assigned to passenger cars (i.e. dining and sightseeing lounge cars) and has separate sleeping quarters and a lounge area. The conductor brings meals to the cab crew at station stops. Amtrak attendant pay scale is from $11/hour up to $17/hour and includes food and lodging. Work schedule is 7 days on and 6 days off.

AMTRAK NEW ORLEANS DIVISION

The manager of the New Orleans Division gave the ICHS (Illinois Central Historical Society) a presentation at the New Orleans passenger depot on 09/23/00. He explained their concept for managing passenger travel for "The City of New Orleans" as well as the rest of the CNIC fleet. They sell "a bucket of seats" (just like the airlines do) at a set price until the seats are sold out, or until they hit a "resistance" price. Then they reduce the price in another bucket of seats and so on. Coaches have run entirely empty at times so they also kick in a "fire sale' to sell out empty seats (again just like the airlines do).

You saw the "George W. Pullman" sleeper car at the Amtrak facility, New Orleans.

PASSENGER TRAVELERS INFORMATION

A 30 day, two countries Amtrak/VIA North America Rail Pass unrestricted coach ticket is $459 (as of 03/16/00). Sunset Limited round trip basic, standard sleeper with "public" shower, ticket from Houston to Orlando runs about $770 (as of 03/16/00). Rail pass add-on standard sleeper one-way from Houston to Orlando is about + $250 (as of 03/21/00) but you can purchase the add-on ticket portion directly from the conductor after boarding for approximately a 25% discount ($187) for a "miss outs" room. A third way to travel is to purchase the 30 day rail pass and then buy a standard sleeper add-on reservation for each specific night needed one month in advance at the lowest price, or about $162/night for the same Houston-Orlando leg. (As of 03/21/00).

Upon visual inspection of amenities on March 23, 2000 it can be stated that the standard sleeper is typical classic railroad accommodations, the public toilet is equal to a jet airliner, and the public shower is equal to an ocean liner.

The fascinating thing about the above notes, I remember, is that it is quite possible to trace the path of a named Amtrak passenger car such as "The Indiana" on the railway system and this in itself could become a side hobby for very little expense, or in the famous words of Ken Caulking this can become "a save a buck" hobby for model railroaders.

Derail Article Submission Guidelines

We welcome all articles which will be of interest to our readers. If you would like to submit something, we have the following requests.

- Please indicate if the article is an original and if you are the author. If you are not the author, please indicate where you received the information. Before we publish, we need to get the ok from its original source.
- Pictures help add to articles. Please state who the photographer is and if we have permission to include the picture.
- To give you proper author credit, please indicate how you want your name to appear. For example: Is it Robert or Bob? Do you want a middle initial used? Etc.
- Please save your article in Word using Times New Roman size 12 font and make the name of your article the file name.
- Please submit all information to both bsabol@stillmeadow.com and tbrogoitti@stillmeadow.com by the 15th of the month before publication. We will do our best to include your submission in the next issue. Any additional notes to us about the article or publishing requests can be made in the email when you attach your article and pictures.

Standard Pallets (Part 1 of 2)

By David N. Currey

Photo (courtesy of Irvine Wood Recovery, Inc. of Cincinnati, Ohio) of stacked pallets featuring different kinds of pallets, such as the Standard 4-way, Standard 2-way, Block, European, and variations on the Standard, plus pallets showing common damage and wear.

The pallet has been a key ingredient in the transportation of most freight that moves in boxcars and trucks since before the era of the 30s-through-60s that many model railroaders model, and all the way up to the present day. In fact, if it weren't for the lowly pallet, shipping freight would require much more manpower. Everything would take longer to load and unload, there would be more damage, and therefore shipping costs would be higher. If our model railroads theoretically move freight, then we need to have pallets on our model railroads.

Can you model an oil refinery without piping? A freight yard without track? A caboose interior without seats? Certainly not. Likewise, you can't realistically model the movement of freight without having at least a few pallets around: stacked on the dock ready to unload trucks, underneath stacks of boxes on the loading dock, leaning up against a dumpster and missing several boards, sitting loaded inside a boxcar, being hauled on an eighteen wheeler or pickup truck, etc. Pallets can be an interesting thing to model, and you can put them at just about any industry on your model railroad that receives or ships items by boxcars or trucks. Also, a "pallet man" business would be an interesting detail on a layout.

This article concerns itself mainly with what is known as the American "standard pallet", which is of the "stringer pallet" type. This type covered about 98% of the pallets I came in contact with during my 6 1/2 years of warehouse work in the grocery and pet supply industries. A less common type of pallet is the "block pallet", which has a different more expensive method of construction, and will not be covered extensively in this article. To cover in-depth all the types of pallets construction-wise and size-wise for various industries would be beyond the scope of a magazine article.

My Experience With Pallets

I recently noticed a photo I had taken of the Sunset Limited years ago at the Lafayette, Louisiana depot before Amtrak. Across four tracks from the passenger depot, part of the old long wooden freight depot was visible. This was near the end of the LCL freight era. All along the trackside platform of the freight shed, pallets were laid out against the wall with boxes on them. Each pallet probably represented a different customer or perhaps town.

Photo courtesy of David N. Currey

At the Safeway Frozen Foods warehouse in Houston in the mid-eighties, I worked mostly at receiving and pulling (selecting) ice cream and related products (sherbet, Popsicles, ice cream sandwiches, etc.). We'd get a truck in every morning, and have to unload it first. Everything was palletized, so unloading was pretty easy. We'd shoot the motorized pallet jack into the pallet, jack it up, and off we'd go into the freezer.

(Continued on page 4)

Standard Pallets (Part 1 of 2– cont.)

By David N. Currey

(Continued from page 3)

After all the ice cream was in the warehouse, we'd separate the product out onto other pallets so that all the Pralines and Cream was on one pallet, and the Chocolate Cherry Cordial was on another. Then we'd get the orders for all the stores, and pull them, i.e., select all the product and quantities that particular store needed, putting it all on pallets.

There was usually a flavor of the month promotion going on for the lower-priced Safeway store brand ice cream--the kind that comes in the rectangular containers, so to start each store, we'd take our motorized pallet jack, and shoot it under a pallet of the F.O.T.M. They'd usually need at least 15 cases, with each case containing 6 cartons of the product. Big stores might take a whole pallet of 90 cases or more.

In my warehouse experience, we seldom entered a four-way pallet from the side with a forklift, though that is sometimes considered the better way since the forks are lifting up on the stringers instead of the floor of the pallet. In our situation, the pallet was originally probably set there by a forklift or pallet jack, and to get at it from the side, there would have to be no pallets stacked for at least two or three rows of pallets on one of the sides. Of course, an experienced forklifter can turn a pallet using the forks, but what would be the purpose? You'd end up entering the pallet from what we considered to be the less favorable side. However, one reason to do so might be to fit a pallet sideways at the rear of a truck trailer when 40" would fit, but 48" would not. Also, since the pallet is only sitting on the forks and not skewered by the forks, it has to be handled more carefully (and slowly), and a shifted load could result in the entire pallet falling off the forks. Another consideration was that pallets with product were often set up in a tall rack with multiple levels up to about 25' off the floor, and pallets could only be placed up in the rack the long (48”) way.

Stacking Boxes On Pallets

Back in the ice cream freezer, if the pallet contained too many cases, we'd just stack off the extra onto a neighboring pallet so it would be ready for the next store needing that approximate number of cases.

The reason we started with the square-packaged ice cream, was that it gave a real stable base for all the other odds and ends to be stacked on it. This F.O.T.M ice cream (and other such regular quality flavors) was stacked 15 to a layer, i.e., three rows of four, and one row of three turned lengthwise across the end of the pallet. The stores usually ordered favor-of-the-month in multiples of 15 cases, especially the larger stores. The circular carton cases were also 6 to a case, with 7 cases per layer. Since these cases contained more air space and were therefore not as heavy, they were only our second choice to be used as a base.

Now comes an integral part of pallet stacking. The next layer was reversed (flipped) or maybe rotated (depending on the box pattern in the layer), so that few internal edges of the boxes lined up with the previous layer. This is hard to explain, so refer to the drawings accompanying this article. This method of stacking product on a pallet is called "tying" or "getting a tie". I'm not sure if that's a universal term, but that's what we called it. This method of stacking was also used in the frozen food freezer, where frozen fruit juice cases, 10 per layer, were the preferred base.

So when we pulled orders for the store, we'd start off with a good solid base—something heavy in sturdy boxes and stacked with a tie. Then we'd stack lighter boxes on top of that. That was where pallet stacking evolved into an art form. Stacking different sized boxes of different weights and quality could be difficult. I remember one puller's pallets sort of resembled a pyramid. The top layer usually only had a few cases on it. I used a different strategy, and tried to make my pallet as wide at the top as it was at the bottom. That way I got my stores on fewer pallets—less trips out to the loading dock.

One time the assistant manager confided in me that he never saw anybody who could stack a pallet as well as I could. (Notice he didn't say as fast as I could.) The Achilles heel of this beautiful stacking job was that it took me longer to stack pallets than the experienced guys, so it took me longer to pull the order, even with fewer pallets. But there was another positive angle to my good stacking: The truck

(Continued on page 5)

Standard Pallets (Part 1 of 2– cont.)

By David N. Currey

(Continued from page 4)

loaders could get more in the truck with my pallets without having to break down the pallets and stack the boxes on the trucks unpalletized. This meant less damaged product, and saved them time. I always felt good when I'd bring the last pallet out to the truck, and the loader would say, "You have one more pallet coming, right?" I'd proudly say, "Nope. That's the last pallet."

There were all kinds of different "ties" or ways of layering the boxes, depending on the dimensions of the box. I've included diagrams below of most common ones. The key to making a good tie in a layer, was stacking the layer so that the gaps between boxes did not coincide very often with the gaps between boxes in an adjoining layer. Basically, a complete layer's box orientation was reversed, flip-flopped, or rotated from the layer below it. The reason for this is the same reason bricks in a wall are staggered relative to the bricks in a neighboring layer. Also, quality of the box and its size also determined if a tie was good or not. At Safeway, the absolutely worst boxes for stacking on pallets were those containing frozen turkeys. The boxes were already warped and misshapened even before we unloaded the delivery truck into our warehouse. But the product was so heavy, it had to be used as a base on a pallet anyway. Thank goodness for shrink wrap.

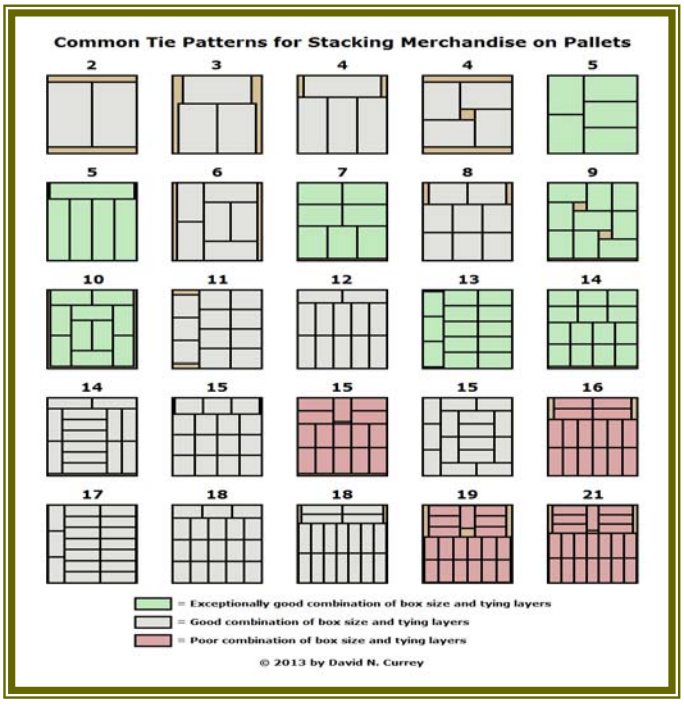

Figure 1

Just in case you were curious, pullers (order selectors) were required to pull 200 cases an hour in the frozen food warehouse. That included reading the order sheet, selecting each case, stacking it on the pallet, shrink-wrapping the pallet, running it out on the loading dock to park by the designated door, and occasionally having to defrost your fingers when you could no longer feel them from the -20 degree temperature in the cooler. It scared me to death the first time that happened, even though I was wearing thick heavy gloves. We'd be working so hard, though, that I normally kept my freezer suit unzipped halfway to keep from sweating too much.

The guys I worked with worked hard in that warehouse, and I was proud of them. Amazingly, the oldest member of the group (in his late fifties), who joined us after they closed down the rail dock at the grocery warehouse, could pull more than 250 cases an hour. I watched him when I could, and he seemed no faster than anybody else. I think his secret was he was super efficient, with no wasted effort or extra moves, and that comes from experience.

I also later worked for B&R Pet Supply in their Houston Warehouse. The main things we received on pallets at B&R were dog and cat food, bird seed, pet bedding, and aquarium gravel. All of this came on the standard pallet described in this article. The other products we received usually arrived in small quantities of less than a pallet, so seldom arrived on a pallet.

With the invention of shrink wrap in the 1960s, the benefits of stacking with a tie are less if the pallet is to be shrink wrapped, and a few pallet stacking sources on the internet nowadays advise against stacking with a tie. I think it depends on the nature of the product and the box it is packaged in whether or not stacking pallets with a tie is advantageous. I know in my warehouse experience in the mid to late 1980s (when shrink wrap was already widely used), almost everything arrived from the manufacturers stacked with a tie. The boxes were sturdy, and stacking with a tie did not damage anything. In fact, it lessened damage because loaded product on pallets was less likely to shift since it was more stable. This

(Continued on page 6)

Standard Pallets (Part 1 of 2– cont.)

By David N. Currey

(Continued from page 5)

included boxed items as well as bagged items. The more expensive items were usually also shrink wrapped.

Before the invention of shrink wrap, palletized product was probably tied with string. I couldn't verify this on the internet anywhere, but it makes logical sense. They had to have done something to keep everything on pallets, otherwise when the truck or box car got where it was going, everything would be shifted onto wrong pallets or fallen off of the pallets. This could also explain where the term “tie” in relation to stacking boxes on a pallet came from.

Suppose we are going to model the manufacturing and shipping of bagged fertilizer. What we need to do is research it and find out what size bags it was shipped in. If we're lucky, we can find photos of it stacked on pallets. If not, and we know the weight and/or size of the bags, we can come up with a reasonable pallet stacking for the product. Most bagged items come packaged in bags of from 20 lbs. to 60 lbs. These are usually stacked from 5 to 8 per layer. Really small bags of product, such as frozen carrots or peas, come packaged in bags that are put in boxes, so then you will have to figure out a tie for the boxes, which could be more than 8 per layer. (You can go to the Home Depot or Lowes outdoor departments and observe how things are stacked on pallets.)

Figure 1 shows many common stacking ties. Remember that each layer is reversed or rotated from the previous layer. Note that some ties do not fill out the pallet front to back. The drawings are meant to be general in nature, and in such cases, a box size slightly larger than indicated would fill out the pallet front to back, and any overhang on the sides would be negligible and okay, as would such overhang on the front or back.

Development of the Pallet

The pallet developed from the skid. A skid in its most basic form was simply a board or something to set product on. In the early days, product would be stacked with a skid between layers to separate product from other products. This helped to minimize damage, and also visually demarcated the product and/or shipment. With the invention of the forklift (in 1917, 1920, or 1921, depending on the internet source), vertical boards were added to the bottom of the skid so that the forks of a forklift could be inserted. This was still basically a skid and not a pallet.

The pallet came into existence when it was decided to put boards perpendicularly across the bottom of the support boards to make them less likely to bend over and come loose from the skid. It also lessened the possibility of damage to the product the skid was resting on. This created the pallet--essentially what is known nowadays as the "two-way pallet". A key feature of the boards across the bottom is that it also makes it less likely for a pallet to fall off the forks of a forklift. Finally, the "two-way pallet" became a "four-way pallet" by cutting notches on the bottoms of the stringers connecting the top and bottom boards so that forks could be inserted from the side. Today, most pallets are four-ways. The downside of the four-way pallet is that the notches make the pallet weaker. One of the more frequent pallet failures is for a stringer to break at one of these notches. Consequently, for really heavy product, two-ways are preferred.

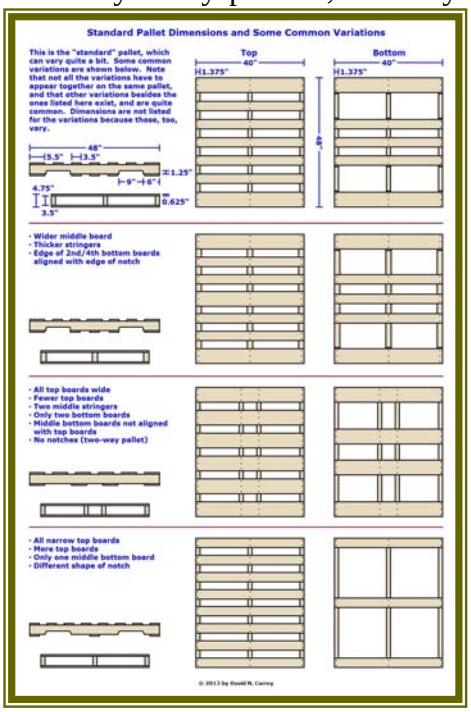

Figure 2

Standard Pallets (Part 2 of 2) is coming up in the February Derail. Stay tuned for the conclusion.

Layout of the Month

By Chris Tolley

Layout Owner: Gordon Bliss

Layout Name: Santa Fe "All the Way"

Model Era: 1953 - centered on operations from Chicago to Los Angeles. Emphasis on Argentine Yard and Kansas City Union Station as main hub of traffic with an intermediate yard in Winslow, AZ with helix interchanges with the CB&Q and Apache RR. Includes staging for Galveston, Oklahoma City, and Tulsa.

Scale: N

Started in June 2001.
Mainline completed - 2003.
Operating sessions commenced - 2006.
Can run up to 30 trains in a 4 hour session focusing primarily on passenger movements of the day.

Minimum track radius: 24'

Maximum grade: 2%

Track: Code 80 Flextrack by Atlas and operated by a Digitrax Super Chief system.

Main Operator Jobs: Dispatcher, Yardmasters for Argentine and Winslow, station agent for Union Station, and up to 5 road engineers.

From Our Readers...

From Bill Lane…
I happened upon this movie project http://modelcitizensmovie.com a few months ago. It is a movie about US! Model Railroaders of all kinds shown in a positive setting. Oddly the person behind it all is a woman – Sara Kelly info@modelcitizensmovie.com From the home page at lower left "A Case For Space" is about the San Diego S Gaugers.

From Jim Kindraka (Plymouth, WI)…
Interesting and folksy short film (~15 minutes) on the operation of a grain elevator in Canada circa 1981. Has real railroad content including installing a grain door in a box car and moving the car by hand. Sorry, no toy train content today... https://www.nfb.ca/film/grain_elevator
Most of these elevators are gone now, torn down or abandoned. My understanding is CN and CP currently require elevators to have storage plus railroad siding capacity for 100 cars - and we ain't talking 300 bushel, 40' box cars! Luckily we can thank the folks "up north" who had the foresight to capture many of these majestic structures on film and leave us an excellent photographic record! See: http://www.grainelevators.ca/
On a personal note, my dad's brother was the grain buyer in Mundare, Alberta. He worked for the Alberta grain pool for 50 years without ever taking a sick day. That was years ago, the last of Mundare's nine(!) elevators was torn down early last year after sitting idle for a decade.

Narrow Gauge Convention

The $45.00 reduced registration will end March 1 after that time it will go to the regular convention rate $95.00. If you plan to volunteer the $45.00 registration will be good and you will receive a free T shirt for helping, If you would like to do a clinic or having your layout on the tour please contact Craig Brantley, Chuck Lind or Eddie Carroll.

January's Program Notes

"The Little River Lumber Company and the Little River Railroad" by Don Formanek

Townsend Tennessee was the site of the sawmill, and headquarters of this operation, which logged huge portions of what is now the Great Smoky Mountains National Park, from 1901 until 1939.

- Innovations in motive power
- First 2-4-4-2 Mallet, it was too big and sent back to Baldwin
- Second 2-4-4-2 was smallest standard gauge Mallet
- Smallest standard gauge 4-6-2 Pacific
- Railroad swinging bridge
- Museum
- Shay 2147
- Caboose
- 2 Flat Cars
- Portable Frick steam engine
- "Setoff" House
- Water Tank
- Log Loader
- Walland Depot
- Elkmont Post Office
- Last Train to Elkmont (book)
- Whistles Over the Mountains (book)
- HO model of 2-4-4-2
- Video Whistles Over the Mountains
- www.littleriverrailroad.org

Christmas Party Pictures

Photogapher Bob Werre

Image Courtesy of Amazon

December Minutes

Gilbert Freitag

Meeting minutes December, 2014

Treasurer's report, Gilbert Freitag:
Expenses: none
Income: none
Ending balance: $6,654.30

Club Christmas Party:
The December meeting was the traditional Christmas dinner party at Gil & Virginia Freitag's house. Thanks to all those who brought food and thanks to Gil & Virginia for hosting us again.

Guess the Layout!

The final Guess the Layout! Modeler John Frank is the final answer for December's pictures. Thank you for playing. We hope you enjoy and participate in the new Derail feature "Layout of the Month" that replaced "Guess the Layout!" Please contact Chris Tolley to be included ASAP. hct9679@hotmail.com

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, JANUARY 6

"The Little River Lumber Company and the Little River Railroad"

by Don Formanek

Refreshments:

Virginia Freitag (drinks)

Tom Bailey (cookies)

Video Corner

A Chocolate Train

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Fd2pW0SjWLY

Photo courtesy of www.worldrecordacademy.com