



# The DERAIL

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

February 2017

Volume 48, Issue 2

## The Greater Houston Train Show

It is less than a month until OUR train show at the Stafford Center. The show goes on because of those of you who make it happen. I want to thank our committee chairmen:

- Vendor Table Sales (sold out): Robert Ashcraft
- Clinics (still needs one): David Currey
- San Jacinto Sales Table: Tom Bailey (Westside)
- Registration Table: Dick Louvet
- Switching Layout: Dave Shafer
- Advance Publicity: Bob Werre
- Post Card Mail Out: Ed Dibble
- Club Modular Layouts: Bob Barnett
- Contest Room: Chuck Lind

At our January meeting Robert Ashcraft, Bob Barnett, Daren Carter, Chuck Clark, David Currey, Ed Dibble, Gilbert Freitag, Don Formanek, Spence Gaskin, Dick Louvet, Denny McGonigle, Walter Pasciak, Rex Ritz, Dianne Robinson, Kelly Russell, Bob Sabol, Greg Slutz, Bob Werre, and Bill Wright filled in 50 of the time slots. Thank you!

We still need assistance at the club sales table, switching layout, and registration table, Kelly Russell who had volunteered to be a clinic leader all day has moved to the contest room, so we need clinic leaders as well contest room assistance. 46 spaces remain.

Tom Bailey will have club sales table forms at the February meeting, but basically you need to provide a price label with your initials on it on each item you want to sell along with a 8 ½ x 11 inventory sheet of those items so that when a sale is made you can receive the credit. The club charges 10% commission to help you sell your surplus. If you have a large amount of items, don't plan on putting it all out at the first, as we need to make room for other folks.

Volunteers get in free, so sign up at the February meeting or by calling Steve Sandifer, 713-376-0684.

## Notes From the Observation Car

By Don Formanek

While traveling from Dublin, Ireland to Belfast, Northern Ireland in September 2016, I was reading their in house train magazine and they talked about an improvement in freight hauling capabilities. The article said that their maximum of 18 cars was being increased to a 27 car maximum. Rail freight service had been declining. Container freight was 35 containers on three trains per day, which works out to about 12 containers per train. That confirms my thoughts that the US has a great railroad freight system but a poor passenger system, and most of Europe has great passenger service and poor freight service. I had also run across this video where they say the longest freight train in the UK is 33 cars long.

<http://mrv.trains.com/series/mr-insider/2016/08/mr-insider-charlies-trackside-conversation-with-richard-foster-editor-of-model-rail>

In this episode of the series we are going to take a look at the topic of “High Wide Railroad Loads”. Most of you are familiar with the movement of large pieces of equipment over our roads, especially in a city such as Houston. Railroads also move these types of shipments, especially items that due to weight alone simply cannot be moved over the road. Every day railroads transport transformers, large pressure vessels, aircraft fuselages, mining equipment, and large structural steel shapes.

Depending on the size and/or weight of the shipment, these loads are moved on the head end of regular freight trains, in local freight train service, or in special train service with only a “high wide” shipment in the train. Due to clearance restrictions in terms of the height or width of the object being transported or the weight of the item being moved, ‘high wide loads’ must sometimes move at restricted speeds, may not be allowed to pass other trains, or may be limited to daylight movement only.

Equipment used to handle “high wide loads” include General and Special Purpose Flat Cars (FM), Depressed Center Flat Cars (FD), Well Cars (FW), and Schnabel Cars (LS). While the first three are self-explanatory, Schnabel Cars are designed where the load becomes an integral part of the car (car splits in half with the load in the middle). Schnabel cars have been imported in brass by Overland. Models of heavy duty, depressed center and well cars have been imported primarily in brass by Railworks and E&P. Plastic models of general purpose and some heavy duty cars have been marketed by Athearn, Red Caboose/Intermountain and Walthers.

Prototype examples of “high wide loads” utilizing the above equipment include shippers such as Westinghouse (transformers, generators), General Electric (gas turbines), Babcock & Wilcox (steam generators), Waukesha (transformers), and Harnischfeger (mining equipment).

So how does any of this fit into our model railroad

operations? First, anything out of the ordinary always makes for a more interesting operating session for all involved. The movement of a “high wide load” not only affects the person operating the specific train handling the shipment, but also operators of other trains along the route. Yard operations personnel that encounter the special movement are also involved with the handling of these loads.

Once a route has been established for the “high wide” movement, a Clearance Order needs to be issued to all personnel along the route who will be involved with the movement. Your car forwarding paperwork, whether it is a waybill or some form of computer generated document must also reflect the shipment is in fact a “high wide load”. Any special handling instructions or speed restrictions must be noted on the Clearance Order. The Clearance Order must also indicate any locations along the route where adjacent track must be kept clear or observed by train crew personnel as the load passes.

As you can readily see, this type of movement will really provide a different set of operating parameters for your operating session. Normal operations will have to be adjusted significantly to allow for this type of movement. While the movement of a “high wide load” is not something you want to include in every session, this sort of shipment will definitely make for an interesting change for your operators from time to time.



**Interlocking** – (1) Two or more tracks crossing at grade requiring some kind of rules or signals to allow trains to pass through. Interlockings may be manual (controlled by a tower), or automatic (controlled by signals). (2) Junction tracks requiring some kind of rules or signals to allow trains to pass through. Note: In both definitions, the origin of the term is from the time when these tracks' switches and signal were linked by long sets of interlocked rods and levers, and the operation of hand levers in a tower caused the switch points to move and the signals to change color or indication. The levers were often called “armstrong” levers, and the rods might extend for several hundred or more feet, so you are talking about a lot of weight that has to be moved in addition to the force required to line the switch. (Note: A crossing at grade where there are stop signs is not technically an interlocking, as there are no such controls as described above.)

**Investigation** – An official inquiry called by a railroad to “determine the facts” involving an accident, especially if rules violations are suspected to have played a part in the accident. This procedure is something like a civil or criminal trial, and testimony is given by various witnesses as well as those accused of rules violations.

**Iron** – Rail or track.

**Kick** – To cut off a car in front of the locomotive while it is in motion, allowing the car to coast into the desired track.

**Knuckle** – The part of a coupler that opens and closes. It is held in position by a pin.

**Lace the air** – To couple the airhoses between cars.

**Ladder (track)** – A track from which tracks in a yard diverge.

**Lead (track)** – (1) a long track that enables switch engines to switch a yard or industry without fouling the mainline. (2) Ladder (track).

**Lay-off** – When too many people are on the extra board for the amount of work available, low seniority personnel are removed from the board and are not called for jobs until they have been first called back onto the extra board. They receive railroad unemployment.

**Layover** – Time spent by a trainman at a terminal between runs.

**Lever** – [See “Cut lever”.]

**Lunar indication** – Low speed indication on a block or intermediate signal. (Typically used to control entry onto non-signaled track such as a yard or an uncontrolled siding. Often described as white in color, it is actually more like the color of the moon—hence its name.)

**Main** – [See “Mainline”.]

**Mainline** – The principal track on a railroad which trains move on, as opposed to passing sidings and yard tracks.

**Making Smoke** – When a train is making at or near maximum acceleration, sometimes but not always with the insinuation that the train is under-powered.

**Marker light *or* marker** – Light or flag on the rear of a train marking it as such.

**Meal allotment** – Small amount of reimbursement on mostly road jobs where a trainman is unable to eat a meal at home. Trainmen on switchers could not claim this money.

**Meal period** – Railroad engineers of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers had a one-hour meal agreement with the railroad. The United Transportation Union's agreement was that the conductors and brakemen would eat where the engineers ate. The railroad allowed the entire crew to have a one-hour meal at some time during their tour of duty—sometimes even sending a limo out to a remote location to carry the crew to a relatively nearby restaurant if none were within walking distance.

**Milepost** – A post with the designated mile for the location. Most often the “post” was a railroad telephone pole with the mile number on it. On the Brownsville Subdivision, there were thirty poles per mile. The tenth pole had a metallic ring around it, and the twentieth pole had two such rings around it. Due to occasional rerouting of mainlines and such, a “mile” might not necessarily be a mile in length. For instance, with the elimination of the old yard in Brownsville, I seriously doubt if they renumbered the entire Division and replaced the mileposts, which are now actually *not* telephone poles anymore.

Miles – Pay due to the number of miles a train traveled, usually with a minimum of 100 miles. Deadhead miles were for actual mileage with no minimum due. Pay for a day's work was often a complicated mixture of hours, miles, terminal time, and other considerations.

Offline – A diesel locomotive that is idling in a consist of other locomotives, but set to not load up, as opposed to a diesel locomotive in a consist that is not even running (dead).

(Get or got) On the ground – Phrase used to describe a car, locomotive, or caboose that is derailed, but generally still on the roadbed and not laying on its side. Major derailments are usually not referred to by this phrase, except if the user is being facetious are derogatory.

Parade – A usually humorous reference to when a series of at least three trains passes another train while it humbly waits in the same siding.

Pass – Siding or passing track.

Pick up – (1) To add cars to your train from another track. (2) The cars being picked up.

Picl (pronounced “pickle”) - Perpetual inventory and car list. (After switching, the foreman or conductor picls the switch list with a station clerk in order to keep track of where all the cars are in every track in a yard, nowadays computer aided.)

Piggyback – (1) A train of flat cars designed to carry truck trailers. (2) A flat car designed to carry truck trailers. With the advent of containers, pure piggyback trains are seldom seen anymore.

Pike – Railroad.

Pin – The short rod in a coupler that holds the knuckle in the coupler.

Pool crew – Crew that runs only certain types of trains out of a designated terminal, and there are more than one of these on the pool crew board. It is considered a regular job, though the start time is irregular, i.e., when they get called.

Plug it – Apply the emergency brakes. (Probably originated as a shortening of “Unplug it”.)

Pull the pin – Uncouple a car.

Primary – Sometimes used to refer to one of two main tracks in double track.

Pull the pin – (1) Uncouple a car. (2) The actual physical motion of raising the pin on a coupler.

Pumping – When a block or intermediate signal is seen to be changing color indications rapidly. Such a signal must be treated as if it were showing its most restrictive indication.

Rabbit – Of or pertaining to the division on the Southern Pacific Railroad that used to be its own railroad named the “Houston East-West Texas”. (The term probably originated when it was a narrow gauge line, and the track and trains wove up and down and side to side across the landscape like a “rabbit hopping around tree stumps”.)

Rack – A track that goes alongside an ice house or chemical plant loading/unloading rack.

Rates of pay – Different types of trains get different pay rates. Through and local freights are paid by miles, with the local freight rate a few cents higher than the through freight rate. Yard switchers and traveling switchers are paid by the hour, except traveling switchers that go outside their assigned territory get additional pay. There are also other types of remuneration such as initial switching, Belt time, final terminal switching, air pay, meal allotment, tow-in, overtime, and overmiles. Here's a quite typical day's pay for a Houston North End pool crew working a train south to Vanderbilt: 1 hour and 42 minutes Belt time (Settegast Yard to South Yard), 128 miles (South Yard to Vanderbilt, air pay for picking up cars at Blessing, meal allotment, and 48 minutes overtime.

Rear brakeman – The brakeman who handles switching duties mostly involving cars beyond the engine and the farther switches.

Rear end – Rear of a train or locomotive.

Red board – Stop indication on a block or intermediate signal.

Regular man – The person who normally is assigned to a particular job as opposed to an extra board person sent to temporarily relieve him while he is on vacation, sick leave, company schooling, etc.

Ride a handbrake – A car cut off in motion may

sometimes be stopped when it is in the clear by a trainman who rides the car and does so via the handbrake.

Ride the point – Ride the end car on a shoving move either forward or backward.

Riprap – Large stones placed along the roadbed to prevent erosion by water, typically near bridges over creeks and rivers and along fills.

Road – Referencing the mainline as opposed to a yard. Through and local freights are “road jobs”, but not switchers or traveling switchers.

Road job – [See “Road”].

Roll-by – (1) [See “Roll-by inspection”]. (2) When a train is rolled slowly by someone who is making a manual list of the cars in the train.

Roll-by inspection – A valid inspection in place of a walking inspection where the train is rolled at low speed by inspecting railroad personnel on the ground (often another train crew, or else a track or bridge gang). [See also “Inspection”].

Run-around (track) – A track sort of like a passing track, but used in a switching situation to allow the engine to be placed against the other end of the car (s). A run-around track is usually shorter than a siding, though of course, a siding can be used as a run-around track.

Run around – (1) When a crew is passed by another crew from the same pool crew between its home or away terminal, the crew that “runs around” the other one in effect gets more pay, because they go on the crew list at the terminal before the other crew. There is no restitution for this. (2) Can happen within a terminal if a crew is not rested and a crew further down the crew caller's ready list is called out ahead of the non-rested crew. Train crews are always up tight about this happening, unless they are the crew doing the run-around.

Runaway – a car that has lost its air brakes or handbrake, and has rolled away.

Sausage – Of or pertaining to that part of the Kingsville Subdivision that used to be an independent railroad named the “San Antonio, Uvalde, and Gulf”.

Secondary – Sometimes used to refer to one of two main tracks in double track.

Seniority (system) – The system by which railroad personnel are awarded jobs, either by bid or bump.

Set out – (1) To place a car or cars from a train on a track somewhere. (2) The car or cars being set out.

Set the handbrake – Set the chain operated manual brake on a freight car or caboose by turning a wheel, or sometimes by working a ratcheting mechanism.

Set you out *or* set him out – Threat by an engineer or possibly a conductor to throw or set a fireman or brakeman off a train, usually for being annoying.

Shipper – A car to be picked up at a loading location alongside or inside an industry, in particular a chemical plant, as opposed to a car that is picked up in a siding or yard.

Short flagging – A trainman who does not flag his train for at least the prescribed minimum distance. (Historical note: Short flagging was probably a contributing factor in the Casey Jones wreck, though Casey *was* speeding.)

Sit on the spot – (1) Switcher crew has done all available work and is awaiting instructions. (2) Mainline train is held up by signal, track gang, or other reasons beyond their control.

Slack – The several inches to a few feet that cars can move relative to each other when coupled together.

Slack action – The running in and/or out of slack.

Slow order – A train order that informs a train's crew what the maximum speed is over a certain section of track (most likely due to repair work going on).

Smash board – A gate at certain railroad grade crossings that is swung across one of the tracks, and thereby allows a train to pass through one of the routes of the crossing. It usually has a red sign or red stop sign on it. It usually has a “normal” setting so that the more important route does not have to open or close the gate. A train has to get permission from the dispatcher to open the gate. The removal of cabooses has spelled the end of most of these types of interlockings, as there is nobody on the rear of the train to restore the gate to the normal position.

Spot – (1) To place a car at its loading or unloading position. (2) The place where a car is loaded or unloaded.

Spot time – [See “Sit on the spot”.]

Spotter – A car to be spotted at a loading location alongside or inside an industry, such as a chemical plant.

Spring switch – A switch usually only found on mainlines where a car or engine going completely through the switch in a trailing motion can line the switch by the wheels going through the switch. The points return to the normal position. The Kingsville Division once had spring switches on each leg of the wye at the south end of Brownsville Yard, which enabled the passenger trains to never have to line a wye switch. Spring switches require a lot of maintenance.

Stop order – A train order that requires a train crew to stop their train before going over a certain section of track (commonly due to bridge work going on or new rail being laid).

Stop (sign) – A hand or lantern signal that instructs an engineer to stop. If swung slowly, it means that everything is going smoothly. If swung fast, it means that the engineer is going way too fast, or something has happened (such as a vehicle not stopping at a crossing the crew is switching over), and he should stop immediately.

Stop sign – A red colored sign on a post or gate at a grade crossing that is not protected by an interlocking.

Switch *or* turnout – A track that branches off from another track, and has a movable set of points, though really old switches actually moved an entire piece of rail. (American trainmen don't usually use the term “turnout”, it being more of a British and model railroading term.)

That'll do – Phrase said by a trainman over the radio (or by a brakeman or fireman in the cab who is verbally relaying signals to the engineer) to indicate that the engineer should stop. This is the normal phrase used to tell an engineer to stop a train during switching, etc., and implies that everything is going fine. “Stop” implies that something is wrong, or about to go wrong, and to stop as quickly as possible, so is

hardly ever used, except when such is desired, or, for example, when the cars are moving really slowly while spotting cars at a rack. Sometimes, an engineer will “educate” a brakeman (who constantly gives stop signs by fast hand or lantern signal) by immediately stopping too quickly. The brakeman will usually wise up from this and learn to use slow “stop” signals.

Tie up – Go off duty.

Tie-up – (1) The act of tying up. (2) [See “Tie-up time”.]

Tie-up time – The exact time a train crew ties up—sometimes a little different between the head end and rear end crews, as the head brakeman might have to accompany the engine to the roundhouse.

Tie 'em *or* it down – Set the handbrakes.

Timeslip – [See “Claim”.]

Tow-in – Time spent returning or forwarding a crew (usually by road transportation, but sometimes rail) to its final terminal for tie-up.

Train – A locomotive with or without cars and/or caboose that has markers delineating it as a train.

Train order *or* order – Orders, usually on flimsy paper, that authorize a train to move from one station to another on a mainline, or give notice of certain conditions to watch out for, such as slow track due to repairs, high water, etc.

Train order board – A signal that when red indicates that a train needs to obtain train orders at that station.

Trainman – A railroad employee employed directly in the movement of trains (and who rides on the trains) such as conductor, engineer, brakeman, foreman, etc.

Trestle – A long bridge that is made up of a sequence of smaller bridges. Wooden trestles are so described because each of the twelve to fifteen foot beams between support members is technically a beam bridge. A large bridge might be a series of deck trusses leading up to a large through truss span roughly in the middle.

Uncontrolled siding – A siding where the signal system is non-operative, and block occupancy can therefore not be determined by the signal system.

## Railroad Terminology (Cont.)

By David N. Currey

Walk the train – Do an inspection of the train by physically walking its entire length.

Washout – (1) A section of track or a bridge that has been torn out by rushing water. (2) An emergency or rapid hand or lantern signal to stop a train or engine.

Watch the shove – Watching as a train pushes cars into a track with nobody riding on the point. If the yardmaster or trainmaster tells the crew the track is empty, nobody is required to ride the point.

Waybill – A bill of lading, usually for a single rail car, but sometimes for a block of cars.

Whiskers – A person who has a lot of seniority, or the characteristic of having that seniority.

Whistle post – A sign along the right-of-way (with an “X” on the MP, or a “W” on the ATSF) that means a crossing is coming up and the engineer should blow his horn.

Wye – A set of tracks forming a “wye” with another track on which trains or locomotives can be turned (reversed).

Yard – A Set of usually parallel tracks where railroad cars are switched or stored.

Yard goat – Engine used in switcher service.

Yellow board – Caution indication (to prepare to stop at next signal) on a block or intermediate signal.

## January Minutes

By Richard Louvet

President Bob Barnett called the meeting to order at 6:58pm.

There were two visitors: Greg Luegering and Tom Bailey

### Clinic

David Currey introduced Spencer Gaskin for a clinic on his work experience on the Galveston Railroad. Spence’s first hand experiences with both his photos and many historical shots were very entertaining and educational.

Pete Leach will give the February clinic on Maine narrow gauge.

David Currey is still looking for more clinicians for the rest of the year.

### Refreshments

Virginia Freitag and Jim Hinds handled cookies and punch for the meeting.

Bob Barnett got a request for help from a new N scale modeler. It was decided to refer him to the N-Crowd.

### Treasurer’s Report

The December 30 bank balance was \$13,866.94.

There was one income item for Train Show table sales.

Expenditure included a name badge carry case, MS Office subscription, NMRA insurance, signs for the train show, and advertising for the Train Show.

The club had a net cash increase of \$2,648.74 for 2016 so we will have a tax bill in April.

The November minutes were approved as published.

### Fall Layout Tour

Craig Brantley reported that the Fall Layout Tour was a success.

### Train Show

Steve Sandifer reported that committee chairmen were in place and working as follows:

Robert Ashcraft	Vendor Tables
David Currey	Clinics
Tom Bailey	Club Sales Table
Dick Louvet	Registration
Dave Shafer	Switching Layout
Bob Werre	Publicity
Ed Dibble	Post Card Mailouts
Bob Barnett	Guest Layouts
Chuck Lind	Contest Room

*(To be continued on page (8))*

Steve had several hundred small flyers printed and distributed to local hobby shops. More were distributed at the meeting for addition shops.

Steve passed around signup sheets for the various committees.

Stafford Centre has new position of “Compliance Officer” that may make show administration more difficult.

## **Lone Star Region/Division 8**

Jim Lemmond is looking for volunteers for the Division 8/LSR table at the show. He will bring a signup sheet to the February meeting. The table will have NMRA information and materials.

The LSR Board Meeting will be February 21 at the Bayland Center (before these minutes are published). Board meetings are open and can be entertaining.

Division 8 clinics continue and can be found at:

[www.texasgulfdivision.org/clinics.html](http://www.texasgulfdivision.org/clinics.html)

Chuck Lind’s grandson has been nominated for the LSR youth award. The LSR needs a youth chairman – a critical position to attract younger members into the hobby.

## **LSR Convention**

Robert Ashcraft reported on the June 7-11, 2017 Bayou City Limited.

Two prototype tours are set. One the GBW Rail Services and a second to Metrorail.

Non-rail tours include the Thompson’s Antique Center, the Lanier Theological Library and the Brookwood Community.

The convention will be held at the Westchase Hilton with a special room rate of \$99 per night. Full registration is \$80.

The website ([bayoucitylimited.org](http://bayoucitylimited.org)) will be fully operational about January 15.

## **Derail**

Bob Sabol thanked everyone who contributed to the December Derail.

Virginia Freitag relayed how much she and Gil enjoyed reading the entire newsletter together. She could not express her gratitude in words.

## **Old Business**

Steve Sandifer said that Cliff Cheeseman is in the Paramount Rehab and Healthcare center behind the Bayshore Medical Center in Pasadena. He has no close family left and needs some conversation and support. Give him a call or visit.

Craig Brantley reminded the group of Eddie Carroll’s birthday party on January 7 (before these minutes are published).

## **New Business**

A motion was offered and passed to recognize the Derail publisher and editor for their excellent work on the December Special Issue.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:54.

Respectively submitted,

Dick Louvet  
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!



### Officers

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## Next Meeting

# TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 7

## “Wiscasset, Waterville, and Farmington Railway”

by Pete Leach

### Refreshments:

Virginia Freitag (drinks)

Bob Barnett (cookies)



## Video Corner

Only Known Footage of  
Union Station Opening  
(shot by Ward Kimball)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OmOo9oKrijLI>





# The DERAIL

