The DERAIL

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

September 2025 **Volume 56 Issue 9**

Thoughts From the President

By Chuck Lind MMR

Thanks to Craig for a great presentation last month. It covered several great ideas that need to be taken into consideration when building your model railroad, along with a few things to avoid. Craig is also our November Layout Tour coordinator. If you want to have your railroad on tour this year please contact him ASAP so he can get you on the tour. For those of us that have been on the tour in the past, update your layout description and get the railroad ready for the open house.

I will not be at the September meeting, since it is the same time as the National Narrow Gauge Convention in Collinsville, Illinois. Since Bob will also miss the meeting David Paul will be leading the meeting. September is also the election of officers and Robert Ashcraft will be handling that.

Labor Day weekend 1935 was when the NMRA was formed. So our September meeting will be close to the date 90 years ago this great organization was formed. So come to our meeting on September 2 and help us celebrate.

Have a great Labor Day weekend, and I will see everyone in October.

SanJac Club Shirts

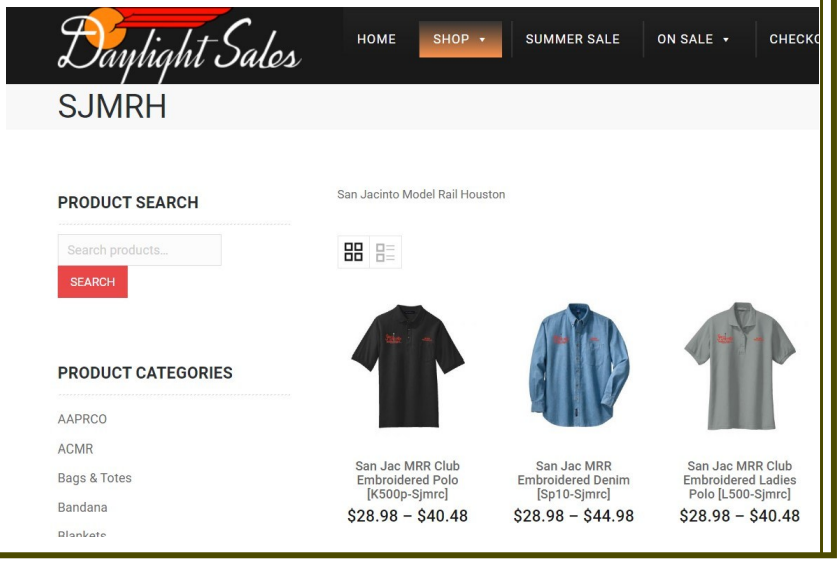
By Chuck Lind MMR

Daylights Sales is the company that produces our club shirts. They have everything on file for different kinds of shirts.

To get to our San Jac order page, click on the picture on the right or:

- Go to www.daylightsales.net
- Click on Shop
- Then NMRA
- Then SJMRH

It will allow you to personalize with your name and railroad.



Modeling with a Purpose – Ch. 1

By Bob Barnett MMR

The San Antonio Model Railroad Association

Models and layouts are designed and built for various purposes. Occasionally one will visit a layout that is so focused on time and place it puts the visitor right into the scene in the location, era and season that was intended by the model creator. For the purpose of this article, we will call that "modeling with a purpose". One of the best examples of this and one that is easily accessible to other modelers and the public is the San Antonio Model Railroad Association's beautiful San Antonio Northen Railroad. What is remarkable about the SAMRA layout is how well it accomplishes several purposes:

- As an Educational Charity the layout is set up as a historical display showing the farms, ranches, towns and local industries that were characteristic of Central Texas in the mid-Twentieth Century.
- As a model railroad club, the layout is set up as an excellent operations-based railroad and operating sessions are held regularly.
- As a model railroad club SAMRA also hosts regular "Fun Run Days" where modelers bring their own equipment and can run prototype length trains of their preferred era independent of the set operations-based theme.
- And to serve all these purposes the layout serves as a showcase for a host of scratch-built buildings, towns and industries that "Set the Scene" for the passing trains.

SAMRA has been blessed with an active membership that includes many fine modelers including several Master Model Railroaders who have contributed to the quality of the layout. John Lowrance, MMR presented a clinic titled "Setting the Scene" for several years. I prevailed on John to dust it off and present it one more time for our 2024 LSR Convention because I believe the attention to detail he discusses in his presentation is key to creating the "thoroughly believable" scenes shown below. Many of the prototype structures on the SAMRA were built by the late Doyle Bond, MMR. Doyle was a fixture in the Lone Star Region Contest Room for years specializing in railroad stations and prototypical industries. MMR's Al Boos and Tom Crosthwait have also contributed to the structures, scenery and prototype feel of the layout. There are undoubtedly other modelers who have contributed to this work of art that I have failed to mention here. I encourage SAMRA members to contact me with further details on the structures and scenes on the layout.

Several other model railroads around the Lone Star Region have been faithful to creating a specified time and place, and we will visit them in coming months. But for now, enjoy a visit the SA&N and the prototypically faithful scenes featured there.

The Southern Pacific Station in San Antonio as modeled by the late Doyle Bond, MMR.

Modeling with a Purpose – Ch. 1

By Bob Barnett MMR

An arch-typical Texas Industry — the Cotton Gin.
These structures dotted Texas from East Texas to the Hill Country.

Perhaps San Antonio's most famous industry — The Pearl Brewery

Modeling with a Purpose – Ch. 1

By Bob Barnett MMR

The Missouri Pacific station in New Braunfels is now a museum.

A rock bottom stream, low water bridge, and Cypress trees along the banks are icons of the Texas Hill Country.

Modeling with a Purpose – Ch. 1

By Bob Barnett MMR

Dittlinger Mill in Dittlinger, Texas (Now part of New Braunfels)
This Mill was also modeled on Gil Freitag's Stony Creek & Western.

Hollywood comes to Texas. This house was used in the 2003 movie "Second Hand Lions" starring Robert Duval and Michael Caine. The Movie was shot on location in Coupland, Texas near Austin. Doyle Bond located the house and modeled it for the SAMRA layout.

A Modeler's Toolbox – Materials

By Pete Leach MMR

I know what you're thinking: Materials are not tools. Well, you're right. But the tools we choose for a particular modeling project will depend on the materials we plan to use. This month I will cover the 2 most common materials we use in model building.

Wood

Wood has been a modeling material for a very long time. And the most common wood we use is basswood. It can be cut or slit easily with an XACTO® knife with a No. 11 blade or single edge razor blade.

Most of the models I build represent wooden structures or rolling stock. I have found the best way to get the look of wood is with wood. I buy my wood in strips, sheets, and dowels.

One of the first things I built on my WW&F layout was the 5-foot-long wood trestle across the waterfront. I used nearly 900 individual pieces of wood. The trestle piers were ¼" oak dowels while the rest was basswood strips.

Figure 1 – This is an early construction photo of the waterfront on the WW&F layout.
A 5-foot-long trestle was part of the signature scene. It is all wood, except the rails, spikes and NBWs.

A common siding material in New England is clapboard. Fortunately, basswood sheets are available with clapboards milled onto one side. To give them a more realistic look, simply cut a few seams into some of the boards. Use a single edge razor blade to peel up some of the bottoms of the boards for a real weathered look.

Figure 2 - Wood clapboards were milled into the basswood sheet by the manufacturer. I added some seams and lifted a few boards for a more realistic effect on this engine house.

Another common siding material in New England is wood shingles. There are several companies that offer shingles in wood and paper in various scales. But since I needed a lot, I made strips of shingles using 1/64" thick plywood. I bundled a few together and cut halfway through them with a razor saw. (I had a photo of this process in the August Derail.) Once installed, some alcohol washes were applied to give the shingles a weathered look.

Figure 3 - Once installed, the shingles are weathered with alcohol-based stains. A few of the shingles were removed and replaced with raw wood to represent repairs.

The best way I've found to get a heavily weathered wood look is to pre-stain the wood before assembly. This prevents the spots and defects caused by excess glue when applying stain after assembly. When complete, dry brush the finished color over the stained wood to give the look of peeling or faded paint.

Figure 4 - To achieve this weather wood look, the stripwood was pre-stained before assembly. Then the finished color was dry brushed on. A few stained but unpainted boards represent repairs to areas of "rot."

Styrene

The other common material used for model building is polystyrene. It makes great modeling material for representing metal. Evergreen Scale Models is one of the companies that supply it in strips, sheets, rods, and tubes. It can be cut, sawed, or scored and snapped.

I use styrene when I need strength and stability for thin-walled models. One example was on a scratch-built cab for a locomotive kitbash. Sheet and strip styrene joined with solvent resulted in a robust model that can hold up better than thin wood.

Figure 5 - These 2 views of a scratch built locomotive cab show the various styrene pieces used in construction. The pads glued to the bottom will be drilled and tapped for micro screws. The curve on the roof was easy to achieve with thin sheet styrene.

Sometimes the best material to use is both! When I needed to build complex curves on a model wooden snowplow, styrene was the natural choice. The basic framework for the blade was built using strips covering a styrene core.

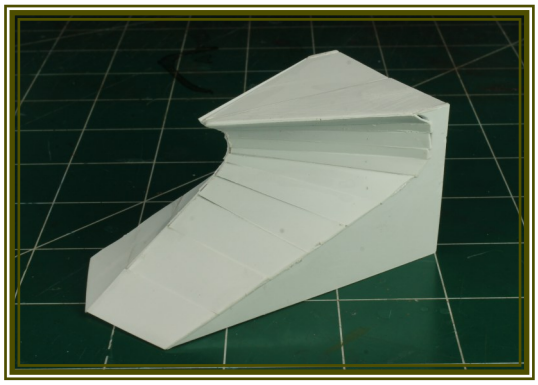


Figure 6 - The complex shape of the plow blade was built up from strips of styrene over a styrene core.

Then it was a matter of laminating pre-stained stripwood with ACC.

Figure 7 - The styrene core was glued to a wood frame with ACC and clad with wood strips.

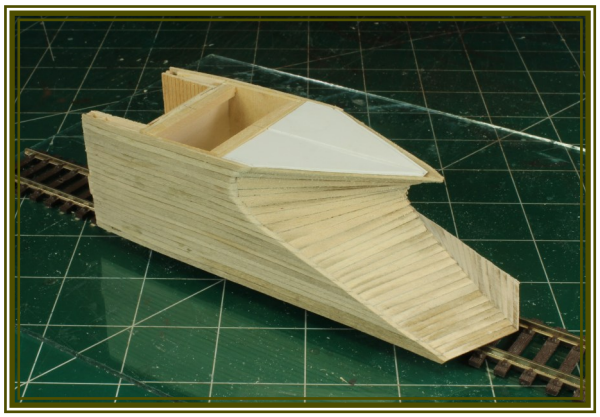


Figure 8 - Cardstock was slit and painted brown to represent metal banding.
The exterior was dry brushed with boxcar red to give the plow a weathered look of wood.

There are a lot of other materials used to build our models, such as brass and cardstock. But wood and styrene are the ones I grab the most often. Grab some yourself and build something from scratch!

A Study of Railway Transportation

Submitted by Mark Couvillion and Brian Jansky

Editor's Note: Please see the September 2024 Derail for detailed background on this series.

Published: 1944

The Track Repairmen at Work

Many thousands of men are employed by the railroads to keep the tracks, bridges, tunnels, buildings telephone and telegraph lines, signal systems and equipment in good condition, so that trains can be operated efficiently and safely.

The job of keeping the railroad tracks, bridges and buildings in good condition is performed by the Maintenance of Way Department. A large railroad is composed of several divisions. Each division is composed of several districts, and each district is composed of several sections. A section may embrace only a few miles of railroad track. To each section is assigned a section foreman. The section foreman must have had years of experience in track work; he must be dependable, and he must know how to handle men. He is in charge of the section crew, or "section gang," as it is sometimes called

The section foreman and his men keep their section of the railroad in repair. The section foreman or one of his assistants inspects the tracks daily. The section crew keeps busy replacing a few ties here, a rail or two there, a spike or bolt here, shifting the ballast there, and performing many other duties all for the purpose of keeping the railroad tracks smooth, strong and safe.

The section foreman reports to the road supervisor, who has charge of several sections, and the road supervisor reports to the roadmaster or to the division engineer, who has general charge of road maintenance on the division. The roadmaster or division engineer usually reports to the division superintendent and also to the chief engineer of maintenance of way for the entire railroad.

When important changes are to be made in the railroad, such as the relaying of large quantities of rail, the straightening or strengthening of track, the construction of new tracks, the renewal of bridges, or other work requiring the use of heavy machinery and large forces of men, a special crew of men, called an "extra gang," and the necessary equipment to perform the work, are assigned to the job.

The Track Repairmen at Work

In this picture we see a crew of men relaying rails on a long stretch of track.

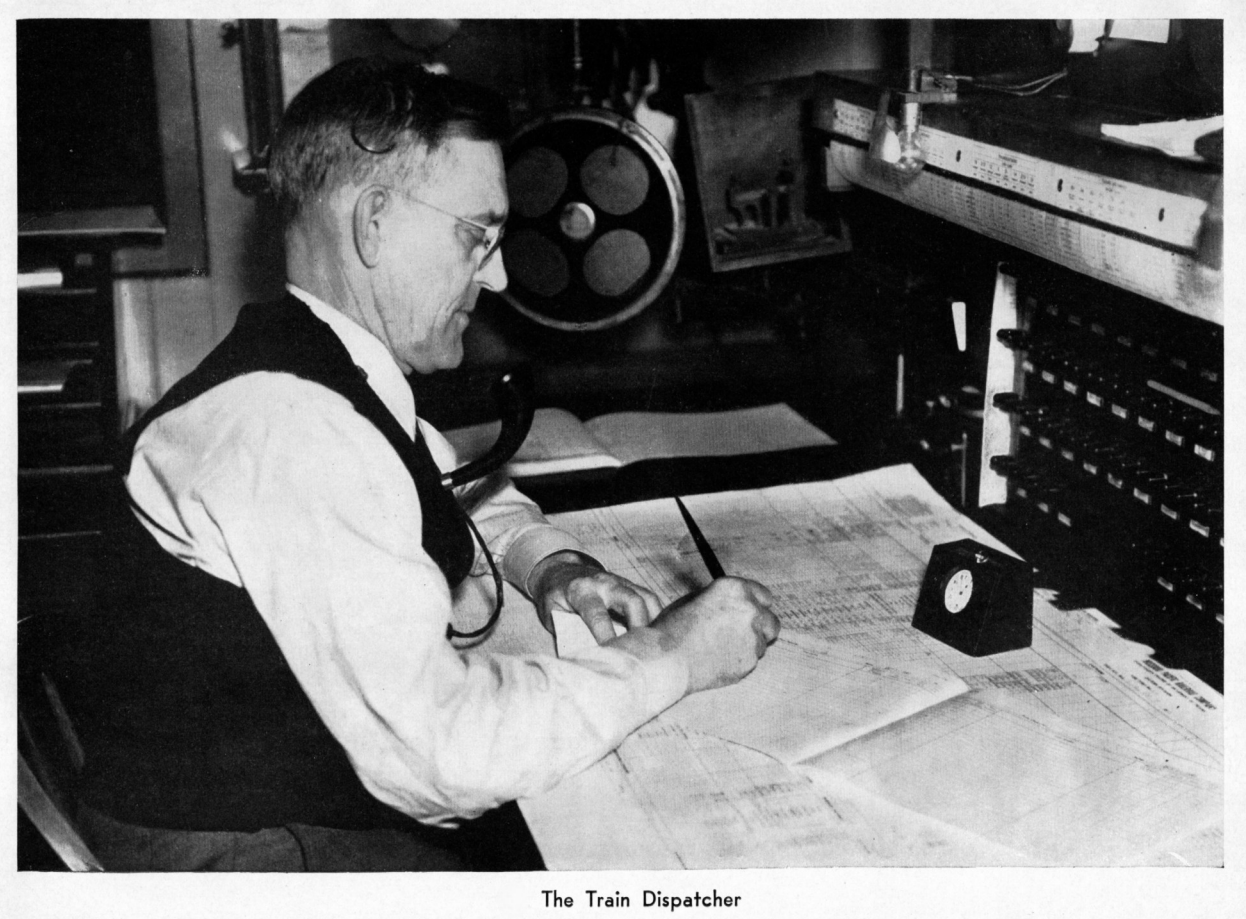
The old rails have been removed, new rails have been placed alongside the tracks, and the locomotive crane is putting them in place on the ties. Behind the crane men are fixing the rails in their exact position, measuring their distance from the outer rail by means of track gauges (note the three gauge bars on the rail behind the crane). Other men with pneumatic hammers, nut fasteners and other tools are driving spikes, fastening bolts and completing the track-laying job. When the crew finishes its work, the track will again be in condition for the passage of trains. Crews like this can lay thousands of feet of rail a day.

In this picture we see (1) the right-of-way (the ground occupied by the railroad and its appurtenances), (2) a three-track railroad, (3) two curves, (4) a cross-over track with switches at either end (between the two curves), (5) an embankment (elevation above the natural surface of the ground), (6) a cut (where the track cuts through the ridge or hill in the background), (7) rails, (8) angle bars (holding the rail ends firmly together), (9) tie plates, (10) spikes, (11) crossties, (12) ballast (the white crushed rock surfacing material under the ties), (13) telegraph or telephone poles, (14) two signal towers (supporting signals), and (15) poles for a signal power line (on the far side of the roadway).

Nearly all railway track in North America is built with a space of 4 feet 8½ inches between rails. This is called standard gauge. Uniformity of gauge makes the interchange of cars possible.

The Train Dispatcher

Silently, day and night, signals go up and down, lights flash, switches open and close, and trains roar down the track as if guided by an unseen hand. Search the labyrinth of railroad offices and somewhere you will find the train dispatcher - the guiding spirit of the rolling trains bending over his train sheet like a chess player involved in the intricacies of his game. Conductors and enginemen run the trains, but the dispatcher directs train movements.



The Train Dispatcher

Seated at his telephone, the train dispatcher knows at every moment the location of every train on his division or district. He gives such instructions as will keep the trains moving according to schedule. If extra trains are being operated, he issues specific instructions governing their movements. Trains must proceed, meet, pass and arrive according to his instructions.

Operators located in towers and stations every few miles along the line frequently report to the dispatcher so that he will know how every train is progressing. This information is entered on his train sheet.

Before a train is ready to start, the conductor sends the dispatcher a report of the engine number, names of the members of the crew and the time they reported for duty. When the train is ready, he notifies the dispatcher.

Many railroads are divided into sections of varying lengths called "blocks," each in charge of an operator. The block operator, after obtaining permission to admit a train to the adjacent block, reports to the dispatcher the time of the train's departure, and to the operator in the next block, who prepares to receive the train. Word is sent on down the division thereafter, from block tower to block tower, to clear the way and allow the train to proceed. With the information he has at hand, the dispatcher issues special train movement orders, if necessary, so that each train can make its run smoothly and safely.

Somewhere in the United States a train starts on its run about every two seconds, on the average. In spite of the fact that many trains run long distances, the great majority of them maintain their schedules.

The first train order was transmitted over the wires in 1851. Telephone dispatching was introduced in 1879. Now the telephone is in general use for that purpose. The dispatcher telephones his train order to one of the stations on the line; the operator at that station makes as many copies as are required, reads it back to the dispatcher to make certain it is correct and delivers one copy to the conductor and one to the engineman of the train to which it applies. Train orders are sometimes delivered to the crew of a speeding train. This is done by attaching the message to a hoop which is held alongside the train as it passes the station. A member of the crew leans out and catches the hoop on his arm.

In recent years, signal engineers have developed a system of complete, centralized control of train movements under signal indication without the necessity of written orders. Where such systems are installed, the dispatcher controls the operation of switches and signals alike and is kept constantly informed about train movements, sometimes over many miles of track, by colored electric lights on the board. The position of every train is clearly indicated on a "map" on the board. By the turn of a switch key, the dispatcher can throw a switch and direct a train into a passing track or siding many miles away! He can signal a train anywhere on his division to stop or to proceed.

Directing the movements of trains is by no means all of the dispatcher's duties. He is the adviser of roadmasters, trainmasters, work train conductors, track supervisors, extra gang foremen, signal repairmen and other employes whose work is affected by the movement of trains.

From his intimate knowledge of train movements, the dispatcher is able to furnish these men with accurate information which enables them to perform their tasks safely and efficiently.

The dispatcher must be dependable, efficient and alert. His responsibility is to see that schedules are maintained as nearly as possible and that trains get over the road safely.

Mark's Minute

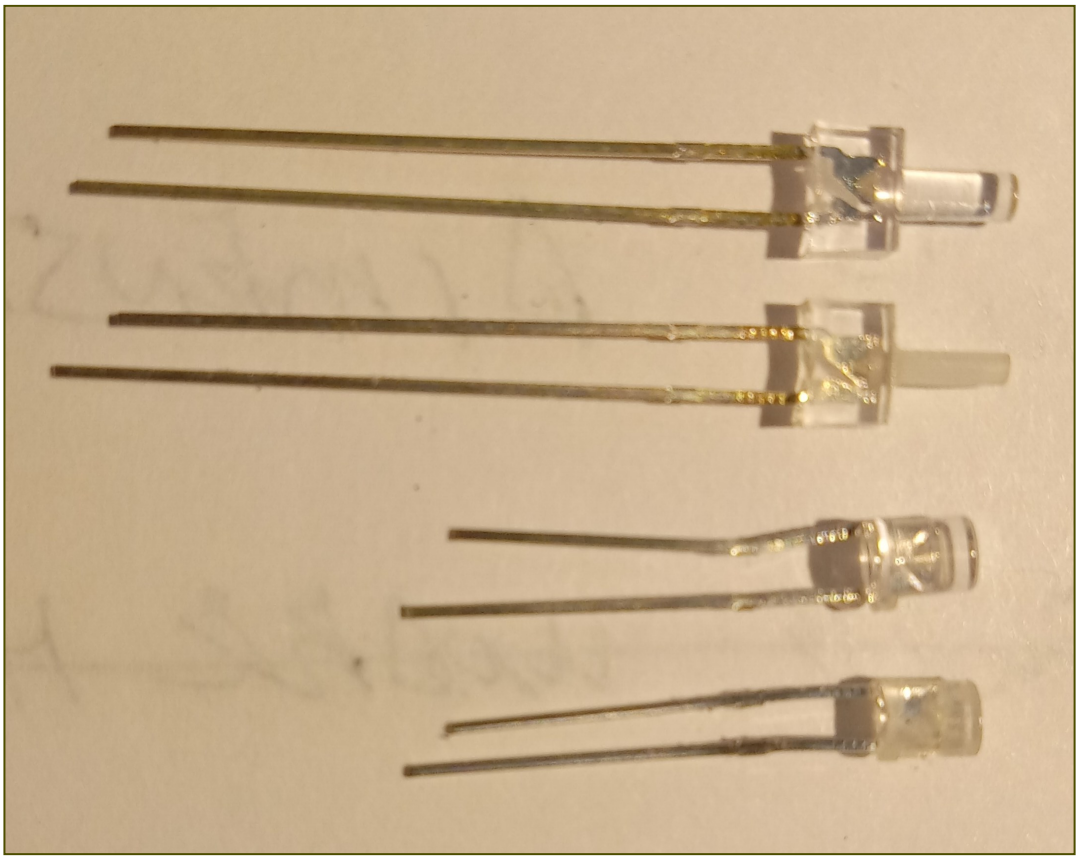
By Mark Couvillion

File LEDs To Fit Light Holes in Shells

I use 2 mm tower LEDs for a lot of older models that have dual lenses on the front and rear of the engines. These LEDs are long enough to fit inside the shell and become the actual light lens on the front of the model. Often, the hole in the shell for the original lens is smaller than the light shaft of the tower LED. The LED is made of a soft plastic that encases the metal electronic components. (I think this is acrylic, as it smells like a nail salon as I file it to shape!) This plastic is easily filed to remove excess material until the tower LED fits into the hole. Just take your time and use a small, flat file. Check often. The tower should fit snugly but not too tightly. I actually assemble the "lighting package" on the outside of the model, making it easier to align and solder the parts together.

Occasionally I have to enlarge the light holes in the model. This is a last resort and often has to do with clearance issues inside the shell or the light hole for the lens not being a uniform diameter. I use sharp new drill bits either in my fingers or a pin vise. Start too small and very gradually take material off. Check after using each size bit.

I also file the ridge around 3mm and 5mm LEDs to help them fit into light holes. The 3mm LEDs fit many engines once the ridge is gone. If the 3mm LED is too small for the hole, try adding a piece of shrink tubing around the outside to shim it in.



Next Month: Sequentially Drill Out Plastic Light Fixtures

Happy September Birthdays!

Randall Wilson

(September 5) dispatching trains on Gil Freitag's Stony Creek and Western.

David Paul

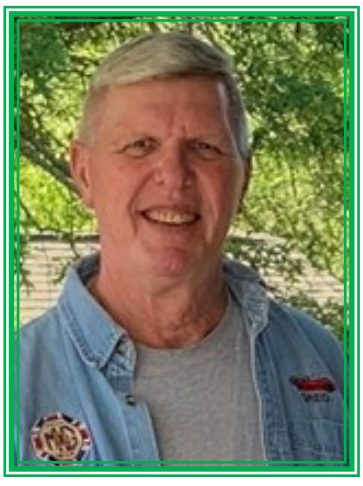
(September 3) with wife, Jan, at Westminster Abbey, Great Britain

Tom Leffler

(September 3)

Greg Fleischer

(September 7)

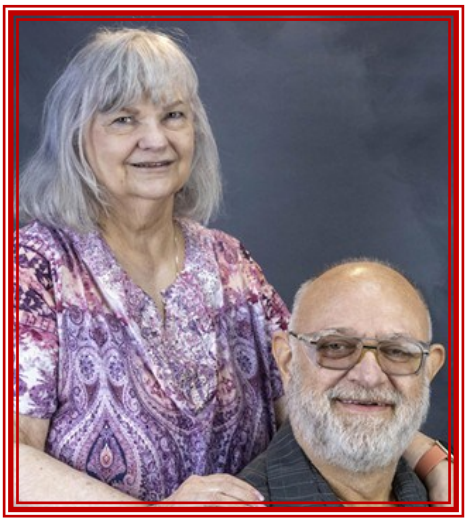


Chris Tolley

(September 6)

Happy September Birthdays!

Norma Brignac
(September 25)
with husband, Mike



Gilbert Freitag
(September 13)
with wife, Emmy

Congratulations!

Dr. Divina Gato-Hogno,
DNP, APRN, FNP-C, CME-DOT
has accepted the position of
Clinical Assistant Professor at the
School of Nursing of
Sam Houston State University in
The Woodlands, Texas.

Divina was also awarded the 2025
Good Samaritan Excellence in
Nursing, Bronze Award.

Congratulations!

NOTE: To share your celebrations (birthdays, anniversaries, graduations, retirements etc.) with your San Jac family, please email d.gatohogno@gmail.com before the 9th of the month to be included in the next Derail edition.

Cash Flow - July

7/1/2025 through 7/31/2025

Category	
OUTFLOWS	
CD Interest	-88.16
Meeting Rental	200.00
Software Adobe Acrobat	21.64
TOTAL OUTFLOWS	**133.48**
OVERALL TOTAL	**-133.48**

Account Balances - As of 7/1/2025

Account	7/1/2025 Balance
Bank Accounts	
Chase Checking	5,350.47
Frost CD	10,363.97
TOTAL Bank Accounts	**15,714.44**
OVERALL TOTAL	**15,714.44**

Account Balances - As of 7/31/2025

Account	
Bank Accounts	
Chase Checking	5,128.83
Frost CD	10,452.13
TOTAL Bank Accounts	**15,580.96**
OVERALL TOTAL	**15,580.96**

August 5, 2025 Minutes

Submitted by David Paul

Craig Brantley led the clinic with a presentation entitled “How Not to Build Your Model Railroad”.

Chuck Lind called the business meeting to order at 8:20.

53 members were present with 13 online. There were no new guests.

A motion was made for the club to donate $100 to the Rosenberg Railroad Museum in memory of Gene Mangum. The motion passed unanimously.

Steve Sandifer proposed an increase in price for the train show admission and will print flyers to include this new information.

Kelly Russell agreed to fill the Past President vacancy left by Gene Mangum’s passing.

Craig Brantley reminded us it is time to prepare for the November Layout Tour. If you want to be on the tour, please send Craig an email at sanjactour@sbcglobal.net. The dates by location are shown below, but you are welcome to open your layout on any weekend. Since we have lost several layouts recently that were normally open Thanksgiving weekend, he is also looking for anyone who will open that weekend as a replacement.

Nov. 1-2: Bryan, College Station, Northwest
Nov. 8-9: North, Northeast
Nov. 15-16: East, South (Train Show)
Nov. 22-23: West, Southwest
Nov. 29-30: Thanksgiving weekend layouts

The meeting adjourned at 8:30. Our next meeting is at the same location on September 2.

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

Now In-Person and ONLINE

Southwest Central Church of Christ
4011 W. Bellfort, Houston, TX 77025

Visitors are always welcome!

www.sanjacmodeltrains.org
Webmaster: Brian Jansky

Next Meeting

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2ND

AT 7:00PM

HYBRID MEETING: ONLINE AND IN-PERSON

‘Downsizing My Railroad’

PRESENTED BY PETE LEACH MMR

Refreshments:

Steve Sandifer

Video Corner

Railroad Yard DETAILS (UP CLOSE)
Perfect for modelers!