The Derail

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

October 2025 Volume 56 Issue 10

Thoughts From the President

By Chuck Lind MMR

At our September meeting, I was not in attendance since I was attending the National Narrow Gauge Convention in Collinsville, Illinois (across the river from St. Louis).

At the September meeting, you had the opportunity to celebrate the 90th anniversary of the founding of the NMRA. The NMRA was founded Labor Day in 1935. Thanks to Steve Sandifer for bringing the cake for the celebration. I want to also thank David Paul for running the meeting since Bob and myself were out of town.

This year's Narrow Gauge Convention was the 45th convention and had all the normal activities, vendor room, clinics, and home layout tours. It is also my time to get together with old friends that I have met over the years although we are at the age where we lose a couple each year. I have always said the contest room at the convention has some of the finest models built in the country and this year was no exception. Our own Lourdes McCleary took home a First Place, Maintenance of Way, with her D&RGW Pile Driver OB. Since she was not there at the closing ceremonies Don picked up her award, and I have included a photo of the award (blank space will have her name and model description) and her model below.

Layout tours are just a month away get the layouts ready and contact Craig so he can add you to the list.

Chuck

A Modeler's Toolbox – Materials

By Pete Leach MMR

As most of you heard at my clinic during the September San Jac meeting, I am moving to San Diego. In fact, I will be gone by the time you read this.

Figure 1 - The end of the line for my time in Houston

Moving to San Diego will give my wife and I a chance to enjoy all the outdoor activities we love: hiking, birding, camping, stargazing, and walking on the beach. These are difficult most of the year here in Houston.

My time at San Jac has been short (9 years) but fun! I felt welcome from my first meeting through the last. I shared my stories through the 7 clinics and 66 Derail articles. I enjoyed visiting many of your home layouts during the fall layout tours. I had the opportunity to attend Op Sessions at several layouts. I met so many great people along the way and will miss the conversations during our breaks! I will also miss the cookies and punch!

I am planning a new layout that will include many new projects. I plan to share my progress with you in the Derail. Until then, fare thee well, but not goodbye!

Modeling with a Purpose – Ch. 2

By Bob Barnett MMR

The Livingston Model Railroad

Most folks reading this will be from Texas, the Houston area in particular, and may think I didn't know there was a model railroad club up in Livingston. Well, sort of. This is not Livingston, Texas about 80 miles north of Houston but Livingston, Montana about 2,300 miles north of Houston.

The basement of the old boiler room at the Northen Pacific's Livingston, Montana depot houses the Livingston Model Railroad Club. The club was formed in 1994 and has held open houses for the citizens of the Livingston area for many years in addition to being a tourist attraction. Livingston was the major shop town for the Northen Pacific in the days of steam and was the junction point for the Gardner Branch, the line that served the tourist trade to Yellowstone National Park. The Gardner Branch extended 55 miles to the south from the NP Main line at Livingston to the town of Gardner at the boundary of Yellowstone National Park. Yellowstone was America's first National Park and service to the park was an early example that would be followed by several western railroads that served the area of other national parks.

The Livingston club like several other well-known clubs, doubles as a model railroad club and a museum/ history center for the area where it is located. Member Sylvia Ympa and her husband Dewey have made a mission of accurately modeling the Yellowstone Gateway in Gardner. They have carefully modeled several buildings in Gardner from visits and from old photographs. In fact, Sylvia modeled the famed Gateway Arch twice in order to get the more accurate hand laid stone look. Many of the buildings modeled in the scene still exist including the Gateway Arch. The cornerstone of the Gateway Arch was dedicated by Theodore Roosevelt in 1903 during a three week visit to the park by the President. Even though the entry road has been diverted a few feet away due the arch's restricted width, today thousands of tourists each year get their pictures made at the arch just as Teddy Roosevelt did in 1903. Other members who contributed to the Gardner scene were Ferris Jackson, Warren Case and George Brockleehurst. (And in similar fashion to my recent article on SAMRA, I am sure I left other modelers off this list and apologize to those whose names were omitted.)

On open house days you can usually find Sylvia sitting in the Gardner Room of the layout answering questions. One of her favorite stories is when a small child pointed to one of the houses on Gardner and said "that's my house". Of course, she thought "sure kid". However, when his mother came over to look, sure enough they had lived in that house in Gardner when he was younger. The excellent modeling of the stone buildings is so good it caught the attention of some visiting NMRA members. And with the proper write-ups Sylvia was awarded the Master Builder-Structures, Master Builder Scenery, Model Railroad Prototype Modeler and Model Railroad Electrical Engineer. Her husband Dewey was awarded the MB-Structures. Other members hauled dirt from the Gardner area so the scenery colors would be correct. Roaming herds of buffalo and elk are present in the scene just as they are in the real Gardner/Yellowstone Park area.

The Gardner/Yellowstone portion of the layout is featured in the first room the visitor encounters. The main line, mountain scenes, major yard and shop buildings are seen in the next room. The scenes are set in the 1950s but newer rolling stock is seen on the line in accordance with members areas of interest. BNSF unit trains complete with Montana Rail Link "pusher engines" can be seen on open house night and operations. A third viewing room contains an N-Scale layout and large Lionel O-Scale layout. My thanks go to Robert Debrowsky and Mr. Hermes for detailed guide tour this year and to Sylvia Ympes, Ferris Jackson and George Brockleehurst for answering my numerous questions in past years.

Modeling with a Purpose – Ch. 2

By Bob Barnett MMR

The Yellowstone Gateway Arch was constructed in 1903-04.
You can still drive through it today. Modeled by Sylvia Ympa.

The Gardner, Montana Depot. The original curved along the return loop just as shown here.
The second platform on the left was for the Yellowstone Tour busses.
The model was built by Dewey Ympa.

Modeling with a Purpose – Ch. 2

By Bob Barnett MMR

The Gardner General Store. All stone work on these structures is individually placed stone.

Stone warehouse in Gardner. Note the roaming buffalo herd in the background.

Modeling with a Purpose – Ch. 2

By Bob Barnett MMR

Bridge over the Yellowstone River on the Main Line east of Livingston, Montana.

Montana Rail Link helper engines for Bozeman Pass fuel up in Livingston just as the real things did just east of the layout location.

Mark's Minute

By Mark Couvillion

Sequentially Drill Out Plastic Light Fixtures

I install LEDs in older engines and tenders to add realistic illumination to "legacy" models. Sometimes I have to drill out plastic or metal "lenses" to install an LED. I noticed that drilling out is much easier if I start drilling sequentially with a tiny bit and gradually enlarge the bits as I expand the hole. Centering a tiny bit in the middle of the area to be drilled is much more accurate than starting with a larger bit. One tiny slip and your new hole is off-center with a larger bit and there is no correcting it. I often use a pin-vise and new, sharp bits to slowly make these changes to the light fixture lens.

Next Month: Calculating Wattage of Dropping Resistors

A Study of Railway Transportation

Submitted by Mark Couvillion and Brian Jansky

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

Published: 1944

Signals Flash Their Messages

If the men who built and ran the first railroads could return to the scene of their trials and triumphs, doubtless they would be amazed and mystified by many things. They would be astonished by the revolutionary changes which have occurred in the science of railroading.

Perhaps they would be astonished most of all by the remarkable signal systems by which trains on railway tracks are protected, switches are thrown, trains are stopped, slowed down or directed to proceed, and train movements through busy terminals are timed and regulated with split-second precision.

A railway signal is a means of conveying information to the locomotive engineer and other members of the train crew.

There are many kinds of railway signals, but those used for controlling the movement of trains, or "blocking" trains, as it is called, divide themselves into three principal groups: interlocking, block signals, and cab signals.

The first two groups comprise signals that are fixed in location relative to the track which they govern; the last group consists of signals located in the cab of a locomotive and consequently which give a continuous indication to the engineman of conditions ahead.

The interlocking system of signaling is employed largely in terminal areas, at points where two or more railroad lines cross at grade and at other places where tracks cross and routes conflict. The interlocking machine, operated by a signalman, is usually, but not necessarily, located in a tower or room commanding a view of the section of the railroad which it controls.

It is connected by electric wires or by mechanical means with the switches and signals in the zone of operation.

The interlocker derives its name from the fact that the arrangement of signals and signal appliances are so interconnected that their movements must succeed each other in proper sequence, thus assuring precision and safety of operation. There are several kinds of interlocking devices. Some are mechanical, electro-pneumatic, some electric, some a combination of two or more of these. Some are manually operated, some are operated automatically.

The block signal system is extensively used throughout the country. A block is a length of track of defined limits, the use of which by trains is governed by block signals, cab signals or both. Some blocks are less than a mile in length, others are many miles in length, depending upon traffic conditions and other factors. The block system is a series of consecutive blocks and is used to facilitate train operation. Some block signals are operated manually, some are operated automatically, and some semi-automatically.

Signal indications are given by position, by colored lights, or by both. The movable arm or semaphore, as in the large picture, gives a day indication, by position, and a night indication, by colored light. The position light, as in the small picture, gives an indication by both position and lights.

When a train approaches a wayside block signal, the signal indication conveys to the locomotive engineer, and other members of the train's crew, information concerning the use of the block ahead. Each railroad has rules

that set forth what action, if any, must be taken by the engineman and train crew for each of the signal indications given.

When a train approaches a block signal, its indication tells the locomotive engineer whether he should stop, go slow or proceed. If there is another train ahead and on the same track within the next block, the semaphore arm is in a horizontal position, and/or the light is red. This tells the locomotive engineer of the approaching train to stop and wait for the signal to change before entering the block, or to stop and then enter the block and operate cautiously. After the other train has left the block but while it is in the second block ahead, the semaphore arm swings to a diagonal position, and/or the light is yellow. This tells the engineer to proceed, preparing to stop at the next signal. When the other train has left the second block and the track is clear, the semaphore arm swings to a vertical position, and/or the light is green. This tells the engineer to proceed at regular speed

The position light signal, as its name implies, gives indications by position of the illuminated lights, all of the lights being the same color. This is in contrast to the color light signal and the color position light signal; the first of which gives an indication by color alone, and the latter by both color and position. The color light signal, of some types, is somewhat similar in appearance to stop-and-go signals that regulate automobile and pedestrian traffic at street intersections.

On railroads equipped with cab signals, similar indications are displayed by miniature signals in the cabs of the locomotives. These indications correspond with those of the fixed wayside signals.

Before a signal system is installed on any part of the railroad, the signal engineer and operating officers consider the problems from every angle in their effort to determine the type of signal system best suited for this particular part of the railroad

On railway lines where traffic is heavy, signals make it possible for trains to run faster and closer together than might otherwise be possible.

Signals Flash Their Messages

In the large picture you have a locomotive engineer's view of the tracks and interlocker signals ahead. The overhead structures support the semaphore signals for each track and route, including crossover tracks, and for trains moving in either direction.

A Study of Railway Transportation

Submitted by Mark Couvillion and Brian Jansky

The small picture shows a signal maintainer at work checking, testing or repairing the mechanism of an automatic block signal. The signal is operated by electric impulses caused by a train passing over a certain rail in the track some distance away. This type of signal delivers the information to the engineer by the positions of yellow lights three in a horizontal line for ***stop***, three in a diagonal line for ***proceed preparing to stop at the next signal***, and three in a vertical line for ***proceed***. The three lights below the number are an auxiliary for modifying the signal indication. The signal maintainer has the relay cabinet open. The large concrete box beside the signal foundation contains the batteries.

Signals play a very important part in railway operations. Men are constantly employed to keep them in good condition. The signal maintainer repairs and looks after the signals, making sure that the lights are in good condition, that the roundels are clean, that the track circuit and other control circuits are intact and that the apparatus is in condition to function properly.

Like the train dispatcher, the locomotive engineer, the conductor and many other men who help to run the railroads, the signal maintainer helps to make railway operations dependable, efficient and safe.

In the early days of railroading, before signal systems were introduced and before telegraph and telephone communication came into use, trains moved from station to station according to prearranged schedules. Nearly all railway lines were of single-track construction. The few double-track lines that existed extended for only short distances in the vicinity of the larger cities. On single-track lines, if two trains were scheduled to meet at a certain station or siding and one of these trains was late, the other train would be compelled to remain there until the late train arrived, regardless of how great the delay might be. Thus one late train might, and frequently did, throw trains traveling in the opposite direction off their schedules. Confusion and inconvenience was the result.

With the development of a coordinated system of signal, telephone and telegraph communications, it became possible for railroads to synchronize their operations and maintain their schedules with far greater dependability and precision than ever before. It goes without saying that these developments have contributed greatly to the safety and efficiency of railway operations.

WESTWARD, RAILS!

Turn back the time for a few years,
And gaze into the Golden West,
To days when hardy pioneers
Put their courage to fearsome test!

Then westward turn our eyes today,
Toward the fulfillment of a dream;
No longer wolf and bison stray
Across the prairie, by the stream.
Instead great cities meet our gaze,
Bound close by bands of glistening steel,
Brought forth - all men's minds to amaze –
By sweat, blood, steam, and turning wheel!

William G. Brown

A Study of Railway Transportation

Submitted by Mark Couvillion and Brian Jansky

A Freight Train on the Road

For every man, woman and child in the United States, the railroads of this country perform the equivalent of transporting 100 pounds of freight a distance of 291 miles each day!

In the United States, we have nearly one-third of the total railway mileage of the world, and our railroads perform about one-half of the world's railway freight service.

The freight train is the vital link between farm, mine, forest and factory, between producer and consumer, between thousands of cities and towns and the great seaports through which our trade extends to all parts of the world.

A Freight Train on the Road

In this picture we see one of the 24,000 freight trains that are operated over the railroads of the United States daily, performing the biggest mass transportation job the world has ever known.

If anything should happen to cause these trains to stop running for even a few days, millions of people in the cities would be deprived of necessary food, thousands of manufacturing plants and other business enterprises would be faced with serious shortages or forced to shut down, our entire business and domestic life would be seriously disturbed, and nearly every individual would be affected in one way or another.

We can better realize how much we depend upon our railroads and how extensively railway transportation enters into our lives if we pause to consider the sources of our every-day requirements, comforts and conveniences. We will find that much of the food we eat, the clothing we wear, the fuel we burn, the materials with which our homes are made, the furnishings of these homes, the books and magazines and newspapers we read, and the numerous tools and materials which we use each day are drawn from widely scattered places, sometimes hundreds or thousands of miles distant, and that many of these things, perhaps most of them, come to us by rail. When we trace these articles back to their original sources, we will find that railway transportation also played an important part in assembling the raw or processed materials from which they were manufactured.

A Study of Railway Transportation

Submitted by Mark Couvillion and Brian Jansky

Railroads transport all commodities and articles of commerce. Nothing is too small or too large for them to handle. Nothing is too fragile or perishable. Whether the shipment be delicate orchids or huge steel girders, whether perishable strawberries or heavy military tanks, whether helium or coal, whether big timbers or heavy coast guns, the railroads are ready and equipped to handle whatever is offered.

Moreover, the railroads, working together, provide continent-wide through freight service without breaking bulk. The carload of paper from northern Maine, the carload of lumber from Oregon or Washington, the carload of citrus fruit from California, Texas or Florida, and the carload of automobiles from Michigan, each can be shipped, on a single bill-of-lading to any part of the country, or to any part of Canada or Mexico where there is a connecting railroad, without being re-handled or rebilled en route.

There are many kinds and types of freight trains, each of which performs a particular service or handles a particular commodity. ***Local Freights*** stop at all stations and sidings between terminals, picking up loaded and empty cars, placing empties where wanted, switching cars for industries when desired, delivering and picking up all sorts of small L. C. L. (less-than-carlot) shipments. ***Time Freights*** run between important shipping centers, stopping only at the larger cities and towns. These trains handle carlots of heavy bulk commodities such as coal, ore, stone, pig iron, and other commodities which call for deliveries at given intervals of time rather than the delivery of a particular car at a particular time.

Dispatch Freights, frequently operated over long distances, include perishable shipments, livestock shipments, merchandise shipments and other carload and less-than-carload shipments that require regular movements on fast schedules.

Merchandise Freights, or package-car trains, handle small shipments in less-than-carlots, such as goods in boxes, crates, bundles, bags, barrels, cartons, containers and packages of all kinds. Usually these small shipments are combined to form carloads for various Cities. For instance, a merchandise train leaving St. Louis may have a package car for Little Rock, one for Hot Springs, one for Texarkana, one for Dallas, one for Fort Worth, one for San Antonio, and so on, and all shipments for those cities are loaded accordingly.

In various parts of the country, there are freight trains each handling one commodity only, such as coal trains, oil trains, livestock trains, cotton trains, potato trains, wheat trains, sulphur trains, iron ore trains, gravel trains, phosphate trains, pulpwood trains, lumber trains, paper trains. strawberry trains, pineapple trains, peach trains. orange trains, banana trains, grapefruit trains and many other refrigerator trains containing perishables.

In recent years freight train movements have been speeded up so that average speeds today are more than half again faster than they were a generation ago. Schedules of many dispatch and merchandise freights are now comparable with passenger train schedules of a few years ago. The long freight train in the picture is being pulled by a powerful steam locomotive. It is carrying a variety of commodities, as evidenced by the several types of cars - including refrigerator cars, box cars, automobile cars and gondola cars. Of course, all cars that move in trains are not loaded. Usually coal cars return empty to the mines; refrigerator cars return empty to the fruit and vegetable producing areas; livestock cars return empty to the livestock producing areas, and so on. About two-thirds of the total freight car movement in this country is loaded and one-third is empty.

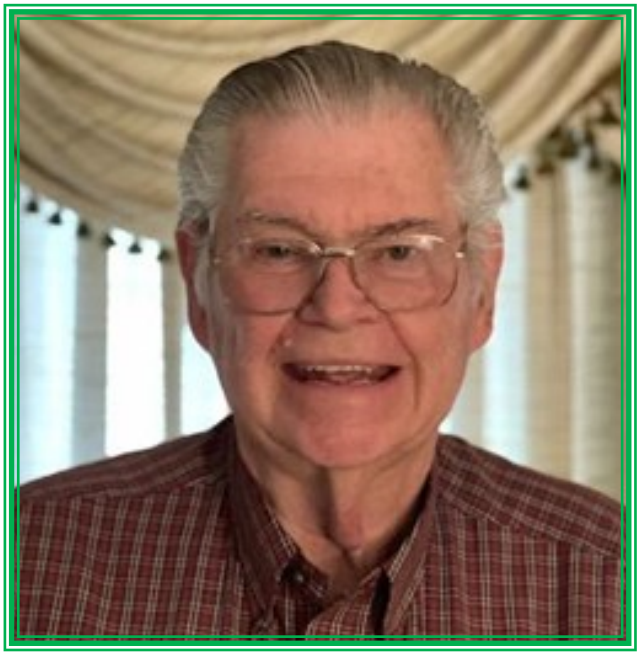
The average load for freight cars varies according to the commodity - bananas averaging 11 tons to the car, and coal averaging about 56 tons to the car. The average for all commodities is about 40 tons.

One of the amazing things about railway freight service is its low cost. Astonishing as it may seem, the railroads transport the average ton of freight one mile for less than a cent!

Happy October Birthdays!

Ronald Burns

(October 20)



David Currey

(October 16) posing with his trombone as a member of the Longhorn Alumni Band.

Divina Gato-Hogno

is celebrating her birthday on October 28. Geoff and Divina's anniversary is the same day. Here they are dressed in traditional Japanese attire in Kanazawa, Japan.

Bettye Bozman

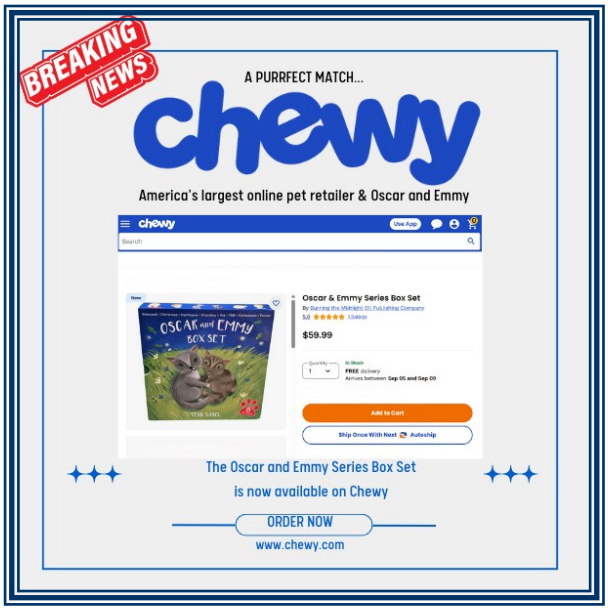
turns 86 on October 5. Bettye is a longtime supporter of the NMRA, LSR, and San Jacinto Model Railroad Club. She is the wife of Lifetime NMRA Member Don Bozman.

Happy Anniversary!

Becky and Tom Bailey

will be celebrating their anniversary on October 11.

Congratulations!



Terri Sabol has a new collaboration with Chewy to sell her *Oscar and Emmy Box Set*.

Terri has also released 2 more books in *The Know It Owl Series*.

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.

August's Treasurer's Report

By Richard Louvet

Cash Flow - Last month

8/1/2025 through 8/31/2025

Category	
OUTFLOWS	
Mangum Memorial to Rosenberg Museum	100.00
Meeting Rental	200.00
Adobe Acrobat	21.64
Train Show Expense	
Handouts for GHTS 2026	210.00
TOTAL Train Show Expense	210.00
TOTAL OUTFLOWS	**531.64**
OVERALL TOTAL	**-531.64**

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**

Account Balances - As of 8/31/2025

Account	Balance
Bank Accounts	
Chase Checking	4,597.19
Frost CD	10,452.13
TOTAL Bank Accounts	**15,049.32**
OVERALL TOTAL	**15,049.32**

September 2, 2025 Minutes

Submitted by David Paul

Pete Leach led the clinic with a presentation entitled “Downsizing My Layout”.

David Paul called the business meeting to order at 8:26.

47 members were present with 5 online. There were no new guests.

The Christmas Party will be held on December 2. Bob Sabol mentioned he is accepting donations of items to be used as door prizes.

We had a special cake tonight celebrating the 90th birthday of the NMRA, which was founded over Labor Day weekend in 1935. Steve Sandifer bought the cake, and Dick Louvet will reimburse him for it.

Robert Ashcraft conducted the process to elect officers for the next year. All current officers agreed to serve again and no one stepped up to challenge for any positions, so the current slate of officers was extended for another year by acclamation.

Gilbert Freitag mentioned the Comanche and Indian Gap Railroad will operate in mid-October, from October 14-18. If anyone is interested in operating this 1.5 inch gauge outdoor layout, please contact Gilbert. The operating sessions are technically by invitation only, but Gilbert can get you in.

Phil Stewart thanked David Paul and Dennis Grigassy for opening their layouts to operators in Division 8.

Robert Ashcraft has mailed out the forms for vendor tables for the February show. If you need a table, you should hurry since they fill up quickly.

Craig Brantley was unable to attend tonight’s meeting due to a health issue, but here are the weekends for the November Open House. Contact Craig if you want your layout on the tour.

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 8:34. Our next meeting is at the same location on October 7.

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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, OCTOBER 7TH

AT 7:00PM

HYBRID MEETING: ONLINE AND IN-PERSON

‘Considerations for Power Point Presentations’

PRESENTED BY STEVE SANDIFER MMR

Refreshments:

Chuck Lind

Video Corner

Great American Model Railroads - UTAH BELT and BNSF Fall River Division in HO