



**Volume 23
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April, 2010

BANTRAK Newsletter

The Engineer's Cab

Alan Del Gaudio



Hello BANTRAK.

The April show schedule is upon us with 3 shows. We've covered these in the past, and there is a separate column elsewhere describing the events. Let me say that the nasty winter we had was especially cruel to the GSTMS and B&O. Significant losses of revenue were incurred. What more can we do, aside from our layout? Be the best ambassadors to model railroading and railfans we can be! Check out the calendar!

At our recent meetings, a number of us expressed interest in reevaluating the lift bridge and yard. There are some alternative designs to be considered. Committees have been formed to present their findings and propose options.

As far as the bridge, one point I wish to stress is that without the most stable abutting modules, the bridge will only be as good as what's backing it. Whatever your thoughts are about oNeTrak, our 1T modules, when coupled together, are mechanically very rigid. We have twice as many legs as we need. There are practical reasons why we have so many, but the point is, they are braced in the XZ and YZ planes (oh crud there he goes with the math stuff again) and this is what provides the rigid support. I'd like to see some kind of brace system employed with a few of our modules that would be the abutments for whatever moveable bridge we use. Maybe I can do one of mine in April but probably after the GSMTS.

At the meetings, many topics are raised and if I appear impatient, it's because I'm trying to keep the topic alive long enough for a committee to be formed, then not beat it to death in the meeting. It's a fine line between appearing dismissive and not dwelling too long on a topic. Then several options can be presented to the club at large. The intent is to see if there is enough merit to the discussion to vote on it, table it for future discussion or form an action committee.

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Next meeting...

April 11, 2010
2:30 pm

GSMTS in Timonium

On the web...

News, information, and
forums are all at:

<http://www.bantrak.net/>

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Travel Town

Railroad Museum in Los Angeles, California

Jack Walsh



I would like to meet the guy who said, "It never rains in sunny southern California." When we landed in Los Angeles on Thursday, January 21st, they were in their fifth day of heavy rains. There were reports of flooded streets, mud slides in east LA and sinkholes on Sunset Boulevard. So, on Friday, with it still raining as hard as ever, why not go to an outdoor railroad museum? Travel Town is part of Griffith Park and run by the city. Since it was raining, neither the live steam train nor the full size train (which is located in different part of the park) were operating that day, and even the store was closed. As a matter of fact, we saw only one person on the grounds – and he was leaving.

The museum consists of three buildings: an Exhibit Hall with offices and a few exhibits indoors, a Gallery building with a display of photos, and the small building housing the gift shop & store. About half of the equipment on



Western Pacific #26



Boxcar #1

the property is under a pavilion. Their collection includes about a dozen steam engines, three diesels, an electric motor, about a dozen freight cars, and nine passenger cars. An interesting thing to note is that on the third Saturday of the month they have a tour through their passenger cars.

The oldest equipment on the grounds were Southern Pacific's box car #1 (built 1890) and Stock Car #163 (built 1890) in the Exhibit Hall and Stockton Terminal & Eastern #1, a 4-4-0 steam engine built 1864, and Southern Pacific #20, a 0-4-0 switcher built in 1880 (both displayed under the pavilion).

The steam engines included:

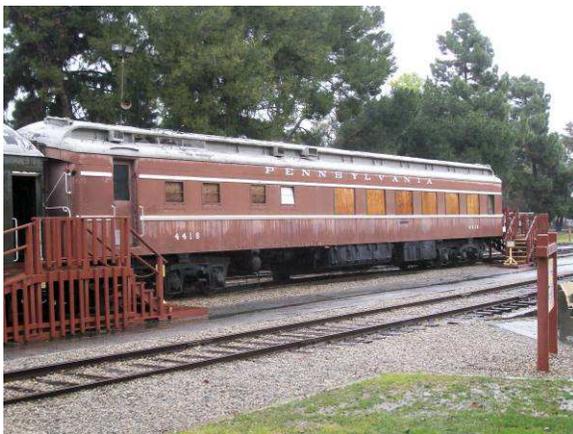
- SF #664, a 2-8-0 built by Baldwin in 1899
- Santa Maria Valley #1000, a 2-8-2 built by American Locomotive Company in 1920
- Sharp & Fellows RR #7, a 2-6-2 built by American Locomotive Company in 1902
- Southern Pacific #3025, A 4-4-2 built by American Locomotive Company in 1904
- Western Pacific #26, a 2-8-0 built by American Locomotive Company in 1909.

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Other interesting pieces included:

- Pennsylvania Dining Car #4418, a heavyweight built by the PRR in 1925
- Three pieces of Oahu Railway and Land – caboose #1, coach #1, and combine #36
- Union Pacific Dining Car #3669, Dorm/Club Car #701, Sleeping Car “Hunters Point”, and Sleeping Car “Rose Bowl”, all in UP yellow
- Pickering Lumber Co #2, a three-truck Heisler
- Camino-Placerville & Lake Tahoe #2, a three-truck Shay.

The last time I visited this museum was in 1977 when everything was outside with no cover over anything. Hopefully, in the next thirty years they will be able to put everything under cover.



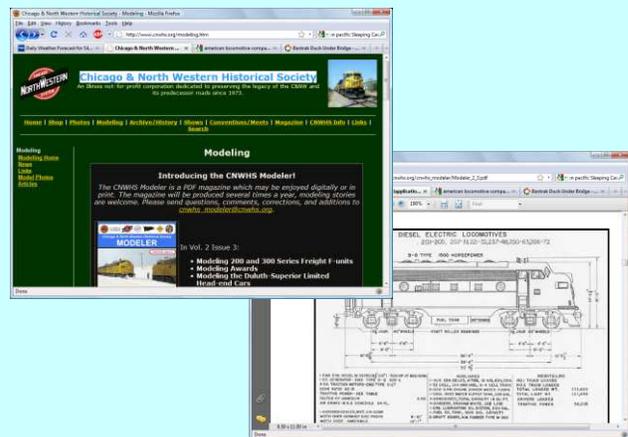
Pennsylvania Dining Car #4418

Site of the Month: Chicago & North Western Historical Society

Matthew Davis

As with many railroad historical societies, the Chicago & North Western Historical Society produces a magazine for modelers. It's chock full of data, photos, and technical diagrams, without being a massive tome. At around 30 pages (a 2 megabyte PDF download), these magazines are very accessible.

Point your browser to <http://www.cnwhs.org/modeling.htm> today, and see what it takes to give your CNW rolling stock prototypical details!



The Engineer's Cab (continued)

One such topic is the website. So what do we want it to do? Think it over. Let me know.

To me, we need some face to the world (newsletters, pictures) and schedules. I'd like to see product reviews in a forum and discussion of modeling and RR-related topics. We seem to disseminate information internally well through e-mail, but we should parallel some on the website. Okay, my opinion. We do need a web site champion. The champion doesn't need to know it all, just take an interest in keeping the content up-to-date.

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Railfanning Cincinnati

Union Terminal and Tower A

Tim Nixon



I grew up in southwestern Ohio in the area between Cincinnati and Dayton. My parents still live there, and when I go to visit them I always try to get in some railfanning, since Cincinnati is a major rail hub.

On a recent trip, I spent a day railfanning Cincinnati Union Terminal and Tower A. I took off the day after Christmas to head “downtown” to see if I could find any rail action. Cincinnati is home to the third largest yard in the CSX system (Queensgate) as well as the Norfolk Southern Guest Street yard. The best place to get a view of either of these yards is from Union Terminal, specifically the old Tower A which controlled all the tracks into the old station. Tower A is now operated by the Cincinnati Railroad Club, and is open to the public free of charge on weekends.

All traffic through Cincinnati Union Terminal (CUT) was controlled from Tower A, a two-story structure at the base of the dome above the main concourse. The tower controlled all the switches in the yard via an electro-pneumatic interlocking machine. As installed, the machine had 187 working control levers, with a capacity of 231 operating levers; at the time of its installation it was the largest of its type in the world and was 49 feet in length. It was the first such installation of this type of machine, which allowed all the switches and signals of not only the 16 station tracks, but also the north and south throats to be controlled by one machine. In conjunction with the switch machine, there was also a track diagram board on the east wall of the tower that was 5'

tall, 42' long, and originally had 682 indicator lights (with more added over the years).

I drove down I-75 into Cincinnati, and trains were immediately in evidence, as I-75 parallels the joint CSX-NS tracks (and the Mill Creek) north of the city. Union Terminal is easily accessed off of I-75, and has two large parking lots. Walking up to the terminal is like walking back in history; the city has maintained most of the original art deco era signs and fixtures. Entering the large half-dome rotunda, the eyes are immediately drawn to two enormous murals on the dome depicting the history of Cincinnati. 14 similar small murals and a world map adorned the original concourse which was torn down in 1974 by the Southern Railway to make way for its container yard. The small murals were moved to Greater Cincinnati Airport, but the world map was too large to move and was destroyed with the concourse.

A kiosk just inside the doors sells passes to the various museums and the theater, but no ticket is necessary to visit Tower A. To reach Tower A, you head straight back into what is

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One of the two murals

left of the original concourse, and take an elevator up to the third floor. On exiting the elevator, you'll find yourself in a hallway with a large window looking north toward the old post office and the CSX container yard. To get to the Tower itself, you have to climb two additional flights of stairs.



The giant track diagram

Climbing the last of the stairs, I emerged in Tower A behind the track diagram board. The windows on three sides of the tower provide an excellent view of both the CSX and NS yards to the north and west, and a view of the approach viaducts and bridges to the south. The Cincinnati Railroad Club has a number of displays set up, with volunteers manning the Tower to answer questions. They maintain a library and gift shop as well. The tower has been restored as much as possible, and according to the volunteers it was a real mess when they took it over in 1991. It had been vacant since 1972 and, with many broken windows, had suffered significant water



A CSX auto rack train arrives

damage. It had also served as a temporary home to a large flock of pigeons, and so needed extensive "decontamination" as well. The original 49' switch machine is gone, but its location is marked on the floor by black tiles to give you a sense of its size.

I spent about 3 hours in the Tower, watching trains and talking to the volunteers. In that time I saw a dozen trains come through the two yards: six NS trains, five CSX trains, and one Indiana & Ohio Railway local. The most common were auto rack trains; three on CSX and two NS, with most of the rest of the trains being miscellaneous freight. Most of the trains were run-throughs, stopping only briefly to change crews, if at all. One NS intermodal train actually terminated in the container yard right beyond the terminal, and I got to watch the

crews unload the trailers from the cars. In addition, there was a NS engine (a Dash 9-40CW) switching the yard, and that engine also later doubled as a pusher, hooking onto the rear of a

southbound NS train headed across the Southern Railway bridge into Kentucky.

By then it was getting late in the day, and not only were my feet tired but I was also getting hungry, so I made my way back downstairs to the car. On the way, I made a donation to the club to help maintain the tower. Next time I find myself in Cincinnati on a weekend with some free time, I'm sure I'll make a return trip.



Overview of the container yard

I've Been Working on the Railroad...



Renovating the BANTRAK Duck-under Bridge

Eric Payne

On Saturday, March 27th Ken Greenhorn and Al Del Gaudio came over for a brief and effective work session to address some track issues on the club's green duck-under bridge. The primary issue was that the ends of the track were coming loose and in some cases floating. This was impacting the track gauge as well as the vertical level of the connector tracks (since the rails on the bridge were loose). Set-up at shows was becoming an issue and with a flurry of BANTRAK on the April/early May calendar, now was the right time to do it.

The project was a simple "rip out and replace" and we addressed both ends of the bridge, leaving the track in the middle portion of the bridge alone. First we removed the old rails from the ends of each track and prepared the surface for the new re-railers, then we spiked in the track, ballasted it up, and called it a day. Testing was done on Sunday to ensure a smooth, ballast free ride across the ol' duck-under bridge!

Visit <http://picasaweb.google.com/SeussCaboose/BantrakDuckUnderBridge?feat=directlink> for more photos.



Before...



... and after



Ken Greenhorn fits new track on the bridge.



Eric Payne applies glue to the new ballast.

The Engineer's Cab (continued)

I've been following some other model RR forums and was intrigued by a couple of threads. One is: what is the best track to use in N-scale? To me, none are perfect. Some are great looking but flimsy and make block obsolescence or renovation of existing rolling stock necessary. Others that look prototypical don't offer a wide selection of turnouts and the more reliable stuff doesn't look prototypical. This is poignantly interesting to me because after I have my HO layout done, I need to move onto the N-scale level and make some decisions. Like most things, one person's best option is not the next person's. One thing that will help is my N-scale layout will be about 54 inches high [maybe 55 or 56] so some viewing perspectives will be less of a worry.

Another thread was claiming that there is too much unreliability and poor quality and the hobby is heading downhill. My comment is/was "we're spoiled". Many of today's N-scale or HO locomotives have DCC and maybe sound. So they are far more complex than the DC locos of 1990. The more complex, the more the chances there are for failures. Maybe these capabilities are not your cup of tea, but most manufacturers have excellent DC performance. The level of detail out of the box is terrific. My other point is that a model railroad is more than a locomotive and track. It's a diorama with a purpose. With this aspect in mind, the selection of buildings and scenic elements has to be far greater than the state of the art 15 years ago. I'd say that while not perfect, the state of the hobby is on the upswing!

See you April 9!

Alan

BANTRAK was founded in 1983 as the **Greater Baltimore N-Scale Associates**. Begun as a "round robin" group to share skills and experiences, we have expanded our focus to include participation in many diverse activities to promote model railroading in general and N-Scale model railroading in particular. Activities include participation in local, regional and national shows, meets and conventions. **BANTRAK membership includes membership in the national NTRAK organization.**

President

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Treasurer

Tim Nixon (410) 757-5045

Membership

Al Palewicz (410) 426-0339



BANTRAK Calendar

4/9-11— Great Scale Model Train Show, Timonium (Club meeting 4/11 at show)

4/16-17— Small layout at NMRA Columbia

4/22-25 & 4/30-5/2— B&O Museum's "Day Out With Thomas" show (setup 4/22)

The **BANTRAK** Newsletter is the official publication of the Baltimore Area N-TRAK organization.

This is your newsletter! Please send articles, photos, and suggestions to matthew@houseofflameandglass.com.

Editor: Matthew Davis

