



The Dispatcher's Log

JULY 2006

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A Word From the President by Ed Weltens

Thanks for the outstanding response on our club work-day. We accomplished a lot in a short amount of time. The only thing left to finish is the two new corners. Track has been purchased but the modules were found to be a few inches shorter than the ones we wanted to duplicate. I will be building a replacement set of corners to the same dimensions as the original new corners. A notice for another work day will be sent out when I build them and when it is time to lay track.

The response to John Eagle's effort to get dues up to date has been outstanding. There are only a few members we need to collect from. It is important to note that dues are by far our primary form of fundraising. We

would not be able to make the improvements in our layout or provide for the future of our club by buying a new trailer without them. Special thanks to those that have decided to take advantage of the lifetime membership option.

The show schedule is shaping up nicely for 2006. We have show coordinators for several shows already, but we need more volunteers who are willing to work as coordinator for a show. We are trying to build relationships with shows by having a repeat coordinator every year. The time commitment to coordinating one show is only a few hours a year. Look at the club website's schedule to see which events need a coordinator and volunteer.

Board meetings have been scheduled for the first Tuesday every month at the Fuddruckers on Anderson Lane and are open to the membership. People usually arrive around 6:45 for a 7:00 meeting start.

The Railyard provides a great place for our club to stay set up between the various train shows we attend. Let's show our appreciation by showing up in force for the Railyard festival on April 22. We will be having a raffle for a starter set at the show. Members are not eligible, but ask your friends if they want to buy some tickets.

Power Monitor by Ira Schneider

I added a power monitor to the layout. This monitor can be mounted on the powered corner and is connected to the main power box using a removable cable.

The panel on the power monitor contains a green light and a voltmeter for each of the four

mainline tracks.

The green light monitors the power directly from the transformer for that track (for track 1, it monitors the output of both transformers). When the transformer is supplying power (for track 1, when either transformer is supplying power) the light is

green. When the circuit breaker on the transformer is tripped (or the power switch for the transformer is turned off), the light is off.

The voltmeter monitors the power being sent to the track..

See Power Monitor on page 2

Power Monitor: continued

For track 1, this is the power being supplied by the TMCC Track Power Controller (TPC). For track 2, this is the power being supplied by the MTH Track Interface Unit (TIU). For tracks 3 and 4, this is the power being supplied by the TMCC PowerMaster. The voltage supplied by the TPC is controlled by the CAB-1 handheld unit. The voltage supplied by the TIU is controlled by the MTH handheld unit. (Note: Since the power to the TIU is supplied by the track 2 TPC, the voltage must be turned up for **both** units (i.e. using the CAB-1 handheld unit for the TPC and the MTH handheld unit for the TIU) before track 2 can receive power.)

To troubleshoot power problems on a track, you can look at the status on the power monitor. If the light is off, you have to reset the circuit breaker for the transformer. If the light is green and the track is not receiving any power, you may have to reset the circuit breaker on the TPC (tracks 1 or 2), turn up the voltage using the CAB-1 controller (all tracks), turn on the power to the TIU (track 2 only), or turn up the voltage using the MTH handheld (track 2 only).

You can monitor the voltage being supplied to the track you are using by looking at the voltmeter. I was very surprised to find out how low the track voltage is when running a power-hungry train (i.e. a train with several engines or many lighted cars). The transformers cannot supply full voltage when they are supplying the heavy current required for our large trains.

You can also use the power monitor to ensure that the track voltage is set to zero when you are putting your train on the track.

When I installed the power monitor I noticed that the voltage on track 4 never goes to zero. I verified with my digital voltmeter that the PowerMaster for track 4 never sets the voltage below approximately 4 volts, even if you press the Aux I-0 sequence on the CAB-1 controller.



The Railfair, June 2006 by Ira Schneider

The 2006 Hill Country Railfair and Festival, sponsored by the Austin Steam Train Association, was held on June 24 and 25 in Burnet, TX.

Our layout was in the Herman Brown Library Annex on Courthouse Square. This building was formerly a hardware store, and has a large, open interior. We had a 24' x 65' area for our layout and raffle.

On Friday evening Ricky, Ira, Scott, Ed, and Steve set up a 9 x 3 module layout. The layout included Ed's and Rick's bridges, Steve and Adrian's transfer table/industrial scene, Scott's accessories, Ira's carnival rides, and the trolleys. We set up the entire layout within 2 hours.

Several of us completed setting up scenery on Saturday morning. The event was open to the public from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM. We experienced signal problems with TMCC engines all day. When the exhibit closed, we tested the electrical outlet we were using and found that it wasn't grounded. We lo-

cated a grounded outlet nearby, which we used on Sunday.

On Saturday evening, the Austin Steam Train Association sponsored a dinner train ride. Several of our members rode the train and commented that the food was excellent. They highly recommended that more of our members take advantage of this opportunity next year.

On Sunday, the event was open to the public from 10:00 AM until 4:00 PM. The TMCC engines worked better (but not 100% OK) since the layout was plugged into a grounded outlet. We disassembled the layout and packed the trailer in about an hour.

Rick, Ricky, John, Adrian, Ira, Scott, Ed, and Steve ran a mixture of passenger and freight trains on both days. We had several crowd-pleasing wrecks. The main problem, as usual, was trains uncoupling without the operator noticing. When the engine caught up with the end of the train, it was like Gomez Addams running his train set – KABOOM! Fortunately, we

caught most of these problems before the trains crashed. We also had several problems of long trains derailing on the curves due to their own weight. Scott wanted to run a 70 car freight train but had to scale his ambitions back to only 55 cars.

There were many visitors to our layout on both Saturday and Sunday. Lorraine ran our raffle on both days. This was our most successful raffle ever.

You can see pictures of this event in the Photo Album on the TTAT web site home page (www.trainweb.org/ttat).



New Trailer by Ira Schneider



The Board of Directors discussed purchasing a new trailer for several years. This was always a goal “for the future”. The biggest stumbling block was financing.

During the past year, the Board took steps to ensure that we could afford a new trailer. The club dues were raised from \$20 per year to \$50 per year. We also instituted a Lifetime Membership for \$250 to raise money for the trailer. This moved our cash flow from future years to the current year.

These measures worked. We accumulated enough money in the treasury for a substantial down payment for a new trailer. Ira and Scott offered personal loans to cover the balance. The Board accepted Ira’s proposal and borrowed the balance from him.

With the required cash in hand, Scott purchased a trailer for the club. It is a 7’ x 14’ “Continental Cargo” Cargo Trailer model CC714TA2, manufactured by Forest River, Inc. The manufacturer’s specifications for the trailer are:

- Overall Length = 17’ 10”
- Width = 8’ 6”
- Height = 8’
- Interior Length = 14’ 7” (measured 13’ 9” useable)
- Interior Width = 6’ 8” (measured 6’ 9” useable)
- Interior Height = 6’ 4” (measured 6’ 6” useable)
- Rear Door: double width (6’ wide, 5’ 6” high), spring loaded ramp
- Hitch: Weight = 214 lb., height = 18”, ball size = 2-5/16”, platform height = 18”
- Weight: Gross Vehicle Weight Rating (G.V.W.R.) = 7,000 lb., curb weight = 2,140 lb., payload = 4,860 lb., axles (tandem) = 3,500 lb.
- Brakes: Electric (tow vehicle requires a brake controller), emergency brake is battery operated
- Frame: 4” tube
- Floor: 3/4” plywood
- Walls: 3/8” plywood
- Tires: ST205/75R15/C, Wheels: 5 bolt

The new trailer is about 2’ wider and 2’ longer than our old trailer. The interior looks huge, since it is empty. The rear door is light enough that one person can lower or raise the door (it has a coiled spring similar to a garage door opener). The trailer has a side door, which will make loading and unloading the trailer easier. There are also interior lights in the trailer, so we can actually see what we are doing, especially when unloading the trailer at night.

We are currently discussing how to build a framework inside the trailer to hold all of our modules and other equipment. We will schedule a work day to complete this work and move our equipment to the new trailer.

See New Trailer on page 5

New Trailer: continued

Here are a couple more pictures of the new trailer, enjoy.



A Call for Coordinators

We need your help! Picture that well used poster of Uncle Sam pointing at you but this time he is dressed as a train Conductor.

Now that we have the trailer back on the road, there are several Central Texas train shows that the club would consider attending. All we need is show Coordinators. A show Coordinator is a club member who takes on the coordination responsibility for a particular event.

Basically the person will make contact with the train show, get all the details for the show, see if the show would be interested in having us, and work out the details of setup, layout location, reimbursement if any, and then coordinate with the membership for trailer tow and setup crew. It really is easier than it sounds and without a Coordinator we don't attend the show. And you are not alone, the

Board and membership is always there to help you out if you get in a pinch. Just check out the club schedule for events or recommend a event to be added, then let the Board know your interest in Coordinating a event. It can be a Train Show, Layout Tour, Fun Run, Club Social, anything you want.

Annual Club Meeting '06

The Annual Club Meeting for 2006 is right around the corner. This is perhaps the most important meeting of the year for TTAT.

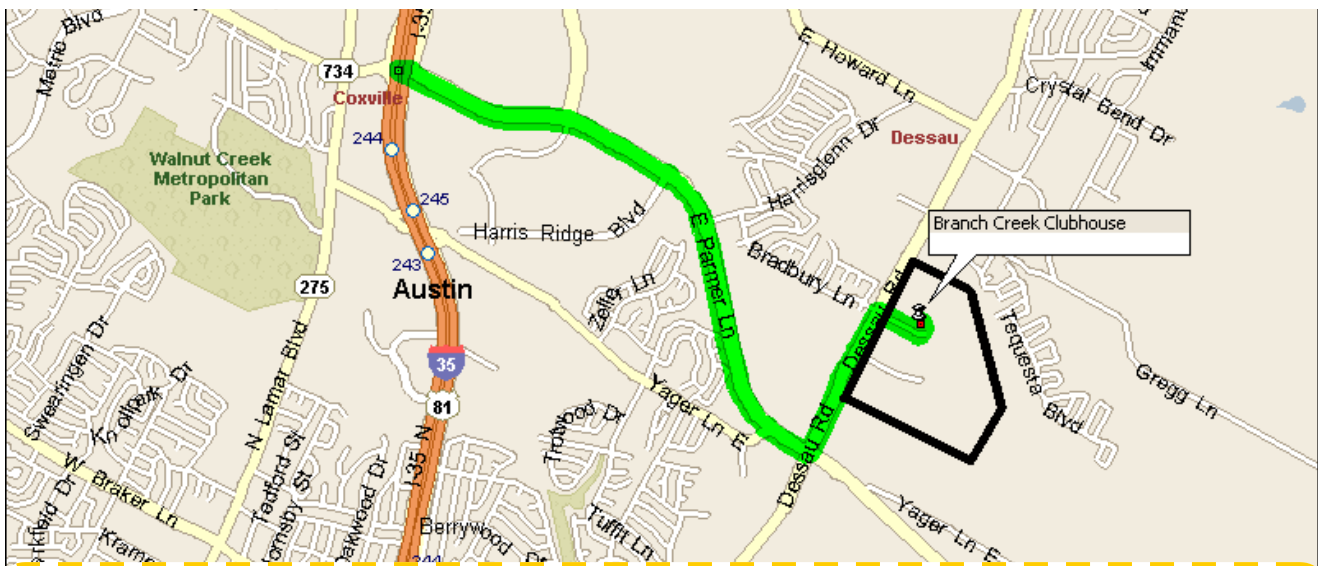
Some of the items covered at the annual meeting are:

- Elect replacement board member(s).
- Choose desired train shows & events to attend.
- Prioritize layout repairs and enhancements.
- Discuss and authorize member projects.

In addition, the club will have a vote on an updated version of the Club By-Laws and Standard Operating Procedure. These documents guide the club in it's ongoing activities.

Review the proposed documents prior to the meeting. They can be found in the Members Section of the web site.

This year the meeting will be held at Branch Creek Estates At 7:00pm on September 7th. A map to the location is provided below.



www.trainweb.org/ttat

ttat-info@aoot.com

The Tinplate Trackers—Austin, Texas is a 3-Rail O-Gauge Model Train Club located in the Austin area. The club participates in a number of model railroading activities and events in Central Texas.

Our club's purpose is to have fun enjoying 3-Rail trains.

Whether your interests are in toy trains or ultra realistic scale trains (or anywhere in-between) you are welcome with us.