

# Classic Trains

Winter 2016

THE GOLDEN YEARS OF RAILROADING

## Life and times of "Mr. L&N"

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Tireless advocate  
for Louisville's  
own railroad p. 20

NEW COLUMN  
by former  
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Kevin Keefe p. 8



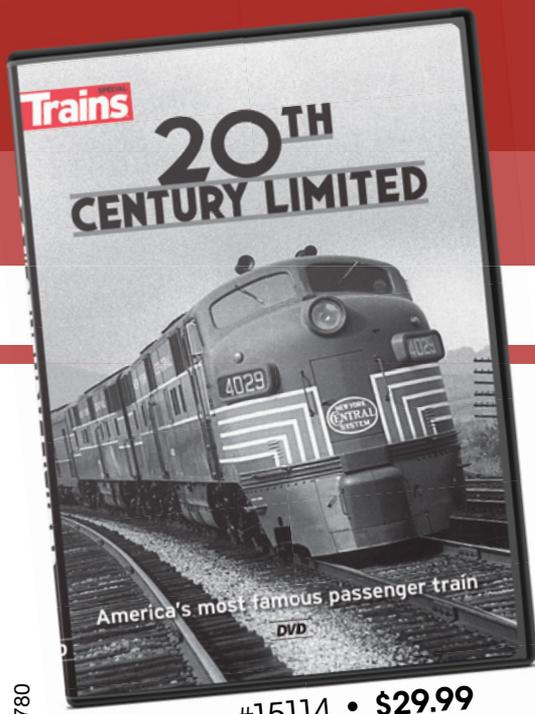
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# Living the classic era

**T**his issue's cover story, which begins on page 20, is something of a departure for us. It's not about a railroad, a type of locomotive, or a passenger train. Nor is it about a railfan's trip, a railroader's career, or a famous historical figure — but it *is* about a person.

Charlie Castner may not be a household name even in rail circles, but for more than 80 years his boundless passion for and deep knowledge of railroading has touched the lives of untold numbers of railfans, railroaders, and the general public. Charlie's lifetime as a student, employee, and keeper-of-the-flame of the late, great Louisville & Nashville Railroad is legendary among L&N followers.

Moreover, Charlie was witness to nearly the entire "classic era" to which this magazine is devoted, the six decades spanning from the end of World War I to the deregulation of the rail industry in 1980. Born in 1928, he remembers the time before streamlined trains, before road diesels, before the troubles that brought much of the industry to its knees and pushed it from the center of American consciousness.

In his quarter century with L&N's public relations office, Charlie worked to keep a bright, positive light on railroading. In that role he had plenty of company, as Kevin P. Keefe explains on page 8 in the first installment of his column with us, "Mileposts." In each issue, Kevin will offer commentary based on his lifetime of train-watching and career as a railroad journalist. Before he retired, Kevin's name last appeared on our masthead in the Spring 2016 issue as "Vice President, Editorial." We are delighted to have it back again.

*Robert S. McGonigal*  
 Editor



**Charlie Castner's first assignment with L&N's news bureau entailed a visit to a coal mine at Glenbrook, Ky., in 1961. His lifetime of rail enthusiasm has been an asset on and off the job.**

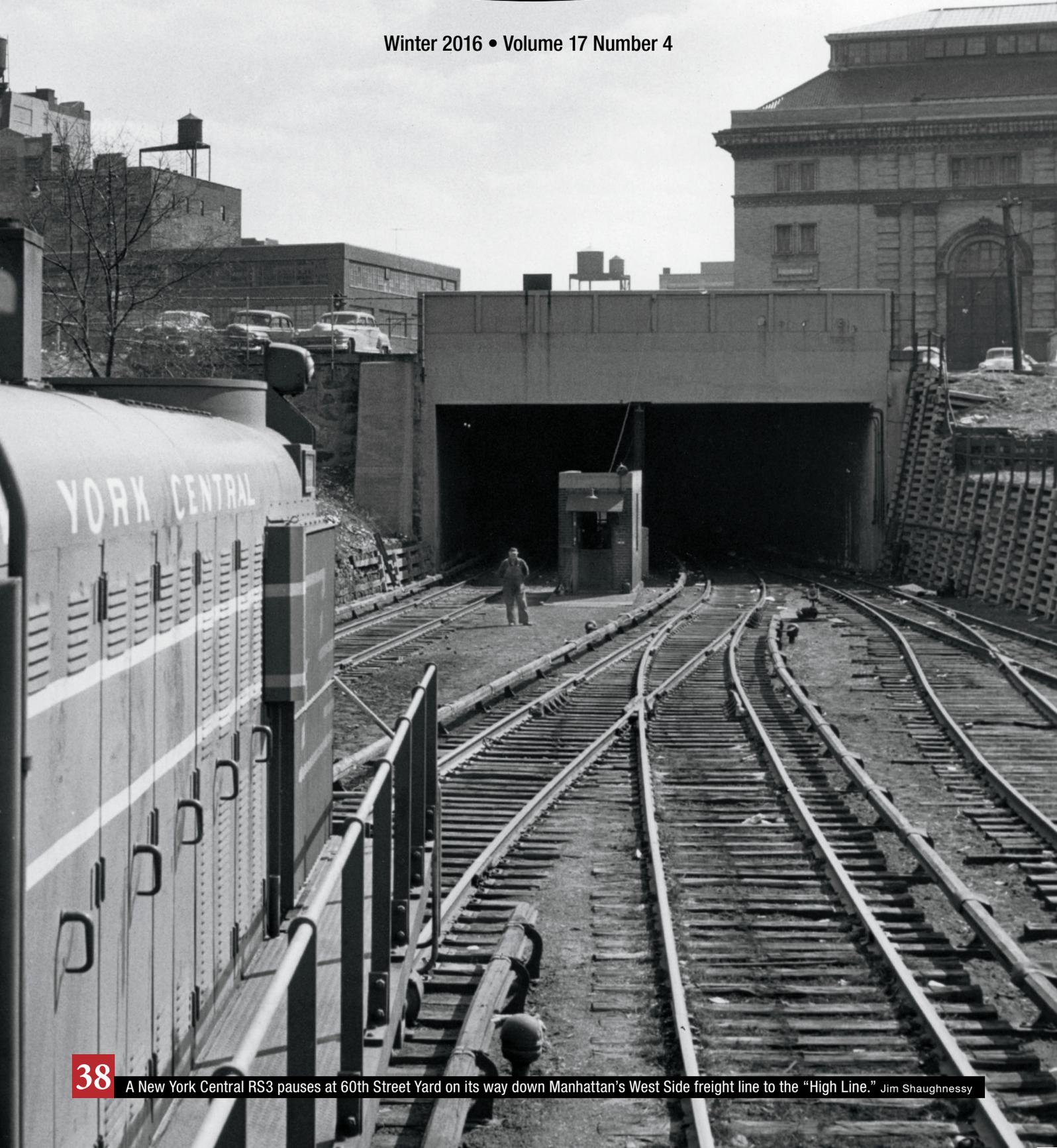
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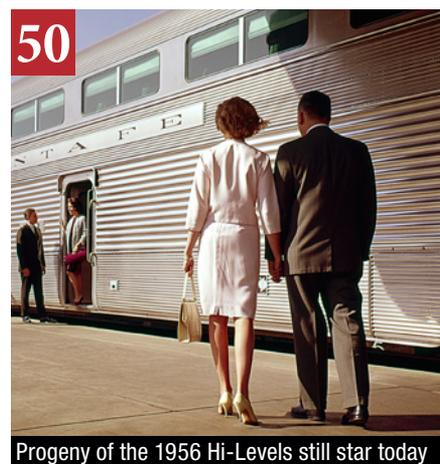
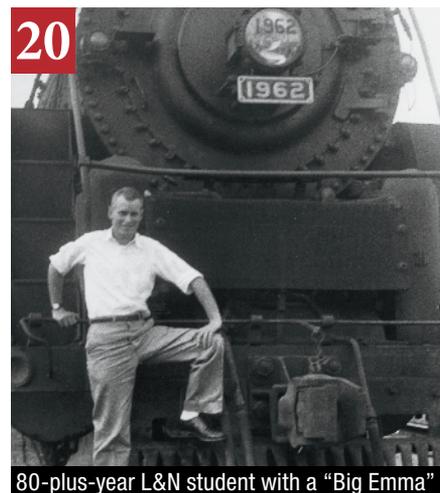
THE GOLDEN YEARS OF RAILROADING

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**On the cover:** Louisville & Nashville F7 1828, formerly Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis 828 and later L&N 860, leaves Appalachia, Va., in a May 1965 Ron Flanary photo (see page 20).

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# Oil train, 1940s-style

World War II shipments foreshadowed the current traffic boom

**The sudden rise** in “CBR” (crude by rail) traffic that began less than a decade ago, occasioned by a spike in domestic production and lack of pipeline capacity (and now somewhat subsided), was not without precedent. In the early 1940s, with German submarines menacing traditional Southwest-Northeast coastal shipping routes, oil took to the rails. Much of it went to Boston in trains like this one on the Boston & Maine in western Massachusetts.



Bob Krone

## 4-8-4s are on the march

**UP 844** is back after an overhaul. Santa Fe 2926, dormant since the 1950s, is close to running at Albuquerque. Reading T-1 excursion stars are being worked on in Ohio (No. 2100) and Pennsylvania (2102). And Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis 576, the only survivor of the road’s 25 Dixie types, is being prepped for a comeback at its long-time display site in Nashville’s Centennial Park, where it is pictured in November 1957.

### Legendary limiteds

**Our latest** special edition, GREAT TRAINS EAST, spotlights the legendary limiteds that served the busy territory east of the Mississippi River, including the *Century*, *Broadway*, *Royal Blue*, *Crescent*, *Silver Meteor* and others. Also still available: GREAT TRAINS WEST.



### Obituary

**Harold O. “Hal” Lewis Jr.** died August 27, 2016, at age 85. Born in Washington, D.C., he attended Purdue University, had a career in aerospace, and lived more than 50 years in San Jose, Calif. A lifelong fan of railroads, especially steam locomotives, he was a leading figure in the Central California Chapter, National Railway Historical Society. His many contributions to rail publications included two feature articles in CLASSIC TRAINS.



Boston & Maine



Shelby Lowe

## Pacific far from home

**Atlantic Coast Line** was a big 4-6-2 fan, purchasing a total of 345 high- and low-driven examples between 1911 and 1926. ACL inherited 13 more when it absorbed the Atlanta, Birmingham & Coast in 1945. The AB&C Pacifics were already secondhanders, 11 coming from Florida East Coast, and 2, via dealer Georgia Car & Locomotive, from faraway Great Northern. The GN engines (Lima, 1914) were originally numbered 1466 and 1478, then AB&C 153 and 175, and finally ACL 7153 and 7175. Shortly before it left the roster in April 1949, No. 7153 — still with GN-style headlight, firebox, and tender — leads one of ACL's own 4-6-2s toward Atlanta.

### ON THE WEB

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### Videos, photos, stories, and more

Check out the collection of vintage videos, photos, stories from railfans and railroaders, equipment rosters, locomotive profiles, and more on our website. Plus, follow us on Facebook to see what we're up to.



## Depot rebirth in Roanoke

**Roanoke, Va.**, birthplace and home of N&W 4-8-4 No. 611, has witnessed another remarkable rebirth. In July 2016, the NRHS's Roanoke Chapter completed a 15-year restoration of the city's 1909 Virginian Railway depot. After the last VGN passenger train left in 1956, the station was used for offices and storage by successor N&W, then leased to a feed and seed business. In January 2001, a fire nearly destroyed the

building. Rebuilding work began five weeks later. In 2005, Norfolk Southern donated the depot and land to the Chapter, which led the effort in partnership with Roanoke Valley Preservation Foundation. The \$2 million project brought the station back to near-original condition. The Chapter plans to use the baggage/express building as its office, with historical displays, and to lease out the passenger portion.



Two photos, Roanoke Chapter, NRHS

# The men behind the curtain

Railroad public-relations officers fill an important role for journalists and train-watchers alike

Even though we might be hesitant to say it, most of us lucky enough to write about railroads love seeing our byline. It's immensely satisfying. But we never do the work alone. Editors and designers hold our hand every step of the way. And when it comes to knowing the railroad business, we often depend on public-relations professionals to escort us behind the curtain.

Consider Charlie Castner, the Louisville & Nashville p.r. legend profiled on pages 20–31. Castner is gracious to a fault but a company man through and through. There was never any doubt he was an advocate for the L&N, yet he artfully straddled the needs of his company and those of its constituency groups.

Fortunately, the railroad business has had plenty more like Charlie.

Today's corporate public relations is rooted in railroading. The profession's widely acknowledged pioneer, Ivy Lee,

spent years representing the Pennsylvania Railroad. He is credited with inventing the press release after a 1906 wreck at Atlantic City, N.J., killed 53 people. Lee wrote the release to help the company get ahead of the story, before rumor and hearsay could swamp the truth.

In 1906, Lee devised his "Declaration of Principles," the first generally accepted theory of corporate public relations. Among other things, Lee held that his office was "not a secret press bureau. All our work is done in the open. We aim to supply news." A bold philosophy in an era when railroads were cavalier about the public interest.

As you might expect, some of the best railroad p.r. men were in Chicago. (In an earlier era, they were virtually always men.) One of my favorites was the late Chris Knapton, a tough, chain-smoking character right out of Ben Hecht. He cut his teeth on the Rock Island but by the

time I encountered him in the 1980s he was the public face of Metra. Knapton skillfully handled Chicago's news media, but his greatest contribution was Metra's witty, irreverent, and always informative newsletter, *On the Bi-Level*. How many company newsletters does anyone really read? Knapton's broke the mold.

In 1987, I interviewed Knapton about star-crossed Grand Trunk Western 4-6-2 5629, owned by Dick Jensen. By this time it had bounced around Chicago for years, the victim of its owner's various financial troubles. Now it was sitting in Metra's yard at Blue Island, rusting away and getting on the railroad's nerves. In what is a long story for another day, a judge ended years of legal wrangling by allowing Metra to scrap the 5629. Which it did, unceremoniously, right on the spot.

I asked Knapton how Metra could turn that gorgeous excursion engine into paper clips. What followed was a torrent

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of rage: about Jensen, about Metra's legal rights, about whining railfans, you name it. So I backed off. But to this day I believe Knapton protested too much, that he knew how sad it all was. You could hear it in his voice.

Another Chicago hall of famer is in the sixth decade of his career. Anyone who has worked with Pete Briggs has graduated from Better Public Relations 101. Briggs runs his own shop in the Twin Cities, representing short lines and regionals. But he learned his trade on the Burlington in the heyday of Harry C. Murphy, *Zephyrs*, and steam excursions.

Briggs had a fine mentor in Al Rung, himself a railroad p.r. legend. After a 1940s stint at TRAINS, Rung went to the CB&Q, working his way up to v.p. of corporate communications at successor Burlington Northern. Briggs calls Rung "one of the all-time great impresarios," crediting him with the gold paint temporarily applied to the Q's two excursion engines in 1963-64. To this day, Briggs, who started out as a laborer on the Erie, says he lives by the mantra he learned from Rung: "To really be successful at

## SOME OF THE BEST RAILROAD P.R. MEN WERE IN CHICAGO

this, you can't underestimate the importance of knowing the railroad business."

Santa Fe's Bob Gehrt followed the same principle. His railroad always appealed to reporters, but it wasn't just Warbonnet glitz. Gehrt played it straight, says TRAINS columnist and one-time *Chicago Sun-Times* staffer Fred Frailey: "If he couldn't give me an official answer to a question, he would pause on the phone and say, 'Now this didn't come from anybody, but here's what happened . . . ' and proceed to answer my question. He could do this because he knew the Santa Fe, inside and out."

There have been so many others like Gehrt, including Don Piedmont at Norfolk & Western, Cliff Black at Amtrak, and John Bromley at Union Pacific. One of the best had no compunctions about calling himself a fan. Wally Abbey, long-time Soo Line communications guru, originated his employer's bold SOO image of the 1960s, which he recalled in his classic 1984 memoir *The Little Jewel*. Writing about railroaders who disdained

enthusiasts, Abbey said, "I was reminded of the church's 'soured saints,' those unfortunate individuals too pious to enjoy sin but too sinful to enjoy piety."

Of course, railfans could try a railroad's patience. My colleague Dave Ingles recalls a 1972 encounter with Milt Dollinger of Chessie System. "Dollinger called one day to tell [Editor] Dave Morgan about a big press unveiling, something we'd already heard through our moles at the railroad," Ingles said. "You mean the new blue-and-yellow Chessie System image?" asked Morgan. 'Damn railfans,' exclaimed Dollinger, 'you always know everything before we do!'"

Well, not always. Our unsung p.r. partners are more appreciated than they probably realize. We couldn't do our job without them. ■

KEVIN P. KEEFE joined the *TRAINS* staff in 1987, became editor in 1992, and retired in March 2016 as *Kalmbach Publishing Co.*'s vice president, editorial.



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**SP's late Bay Area steam**

Bob Trennert's and Gordon Glattenberg's "Second Chance at Steam" [page 20, Fall CLASSIC TRAINS] was special to me, as I grew up in the East Bay and saw a lot of Southern Pacific steam. My grandfather, Elmer Snyder, worked for SP out of the Oakland/Alameda yard for 42 years, and was an engineer on the cab-forwards.

*James Snyder, Greeneville, Tenn.*

In 1956 I was age 6, living in Tracy, Calif. My father, Robert Firth, and his father were both SP carmen. Dad took the photo at right of me sitting on a baggage cart at Lathrop, waiting for the *Daylight*. His dad, D. W. Firth, was working the *San Joaquin Daylight* switching job, which entailed coupling cars from Sacramento onto No. 52 for Los Angeles.

No one at that time was thinking about what would happen when steam was gone, but a year later, SP reduced the Tracy shop force and many families, ours included, were forced to move. Today Tracy is just a bedroom town for Silicon Valley, served by Stockton-San Jose ACE commuter trains on the former Western Pacific over Altamont, where SP's line has been pulled up.

*David Firth, Fresno, Calif.*

I was firing on SP's Coast and Western (Stockton) divisions in 1956, and offer two points. Engine 3208 (pages 3 and 31) was probably on one of the daily rock trains from Oakland or Bayshore to Livermore (Radum). Also, at least three westbounds from Tracy, usually pulled by cab-forwards, were destined for Bayshore, not just San Jose and Oakland.

*Barry Anderson, Port Townsend, Wash.*

Allow a clarification for the caption on the top photo on page 29 of SP Pacific 2477 leaving the City on train 132. This was the "Los Gatos commute," which left the Peninsula main at California Avenue to run on the Mayfield Cutoff to Vasona Junction, then on the Los Gatos Branch into that town. After the passengers had unloaded, the engine would run around and operate tender first as an equipment deadhead move to San Jose. The process was reversed in the morning. The train was dieselized shortly after that photo and in 1959 was cut back to Vasona Junction. The north (railroad west) portion of the Mayfield Cutoff was removed in 1964, but the line from San Jose to the Permanente Cement plant near Simla,



**In 1956, a 6-year-old waits on a baggage cart for *Daylight* switching to begin at Lathrop, Calif.**  
Robert Firth, David Firth collection

via Vasona Junction, remains in service for the Union Pacific.

*Earl Richmond, Leander, Texas*

**CN's island isolation**

My employment often took me to Prince Edward Island during the final years of Canadian National's railway there, and as did author Jim Shaughnessy ["Splendid Isolation," page 68], the P.E.I. lines often reminded me of one huge garden railway layout. Does anyone else remember radio station CFCY in Charlottetown and its regular daily reports on the progress of the Borden boat train? No smartphone apps in those days — just tune your AM radio to 630!

*Doug Shaffner, Annapolis Royal, Nova Scotia*

I was more than pleased to see Jim Shaughnessy's article on P.E.I. railroading, particularly as it brought to mind one of the first TRAINS magazines I bought as a teenager, the September 1963 issue with his P.E.I. piece. My family lived far from the Island and I had no connections with the Mar-

itimes, but I never forgot that article, especially the striking cover shot of the interior of the Charlottetown shop.

*David Miller, Chester, Nova Scotia*

**Rare Penn Station photos**

I commuted into New York City via Penn Station in the late 1960s, so I really enjoyed Ira Silverman's "Penn Station Playground" in your Fall issue [page 56], especially the afternoon departures list on page 59. In early 1960s summers I could see all 15 of the westbounds, as I lived with my great-grandmother in Morrisville, Pa., and her house faced Pennsy's four-track main line just west of the Trenton Cutoff split, near where the Reading's line to U.S. Steel's Fairless Works bridged over the PRR.

*Lonnie Jeffries, Henderson, Nev.*

Color photos of Penn Station's interior and concourse in its final days are rare, and Silverman's camera brings the station to life again. I remember the crowds waiting for the gate to open just before the track number was announced. Also, thanks to Semaphore



Records and CLASSIC TRAINS for bringing us the sounds of history on your website. To hear, after half a century, an ethereal voice call out the great departing trains and track numbers, echoing through the great rooms, was a nice surprise. More important are the background sounds. Listen closely and you will hear what Thomas Wolfe described, "... the voice of time ... aloof and unperturbed, a drowsy and eternal murmur below the immense and distant roof."

As a child I was lucky to experience this, as train trips to Penn Station with my uncle were an annual occurrence, usually on the 8:08 a.m. "Clocker" from New Brunswick, N.J., in early November from 1963 until adolescence. We went to meet my grandparents, coming in on the Long Island Rail Road to board either the *East Coast Champion* or *Silver Meteor* to their winter home in Florida.

Victor Pinonzek, Monmouth Jct., N.J.

### C&NW F7 before and after

I did a double-take when I got to the photo entitled "Commuter Crossroads" on page 84 in "The Way It Was," showing a Chicago & North Western bi-level train led by F7 416. On July 31, 2010, I was in Walled Lake, Mich., viewing one of the last Coe Rail freights on what had been Grand Trunk Western's Michigan Air Line from Pontiac to Jackson, Mich., and saw this same unit among other equipment.

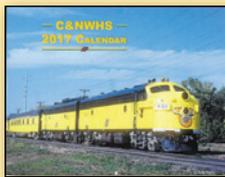
Coe Rail had hosted the "Michigan Star Clipper" dinner train. The F7, built as C&NW 4077A, was retired in 1983 from Chicago's RTA still as C&NW 416. In 1985, it had been sold by a dealer to the short line Cedar Valley to serve on the "Iowa Star Clipper" dinner train, later moving to its counterpart based out of Walled Lake. It had been painted in Erie Lackawanna colors to match another F



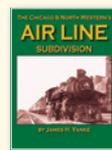
Onetime C&NW passenger F7 416 meets its demise at Walled Lake, Mich., in fall 2010.

Sam Crowl, courtesy Bruce D. Quinn

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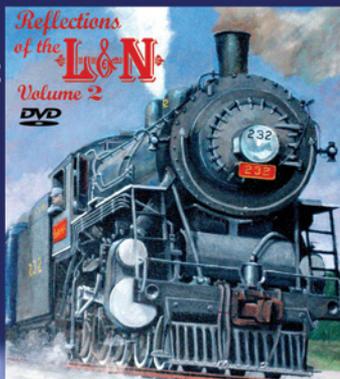
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An N&W office car train arrives in Granite City from Decatur to inspect the road's new ITC lines.

John Beirne

unit that powered the dinner train.

The cost to get her to run again was too much for the owner, so while the other dinner train equipment was sold and scattered, 416 — as the photo, taken by a former engineer on the line, shows — had a sad end. That portion of the line now is a recreation trail, I understand.

*Bruce D. Quinn, Grand Rapids, Mich.*

## N&W looks at its new IT

Mike Schafer's "Fallen Flags Remembered" entry [page 16] on the Illinois Terminal was very good. I was Chief Engineer of ITC when Norfolk & Western acquired it, and the next day I was appointed Assistant Division Engineer at St. Louis. In October 1981 N&W operated an office car special so officials could inspect their new property. The train had the first and last of ITC's final bought-new diesels, GP38-2s 2001 and 2004, an N&W caboose, and four office cars, with glass-ended theater car *Altavista* on the rear. The OCS ran from Decatur, Ill., to St. Louis on the former Wabash main.

After reversing near Granite City, it went north on the ITC to Wood River and Alton, Ill., making back-up moves at the Tri Cities Port near Granite City and to the Shell Oil Refinery at Roxana. This industrial area was N&W's primary interest in the ITC and is still a key for NS. The OCS then exercised the ITC trackage rights on Illinois Central Gulf's ex-GM&O main from Wood River to home rails at Springfield to return to Decatur.

During the trip, I was told to have our maintenance-of-way employees flag road crossings when the OCS was making the back-up moves. The operation went well until our track supervisor drove up hurriedly to one crossing, turned his truck too soon, and got stranded in the middle

of the main, with one wheel suspended off the road. We were just out of sight of the officials on the *Altavista*, and thanks to a section gang shadowing the train, eight of us were able to lift the truck just enough for the supervisor to gain traction; he moved into the clear as if nothing had happened. I am grateful to have continued my employment until retirement as NS's Manager, Track Inspection.

*John Beirne, Roanoke, Va.*

## "Flying" on the L&N

I enjoyed Dave Ingles' "Southern Exposure" [page 38] about his time during 1965-66 in Knoxville, Tenn. My mother and I rode through Knoxville on Louisville & Nashville's *Southland* on November 12, 1952, en route to Bradenton, Fla., my first train ride, when I was a sick 7-year-old. My pediatrician had suggested Mom take me to Florida because the

salt air would help cure my bronchitis. The story's Knoxville-area map resurrected memories of me putting down my Howdy Doody puppets and asking a man across the aisle what the big buildings nearby were. His reply: "The University of Tennessee." I remember the back-up move into L&N's station, especially when I looked down as we were ready to move off of the Tennessee River bridge, for I saw no bridge structure below! It seemed to me like we were flying over water. That trip led to a lifelong love of railroads.

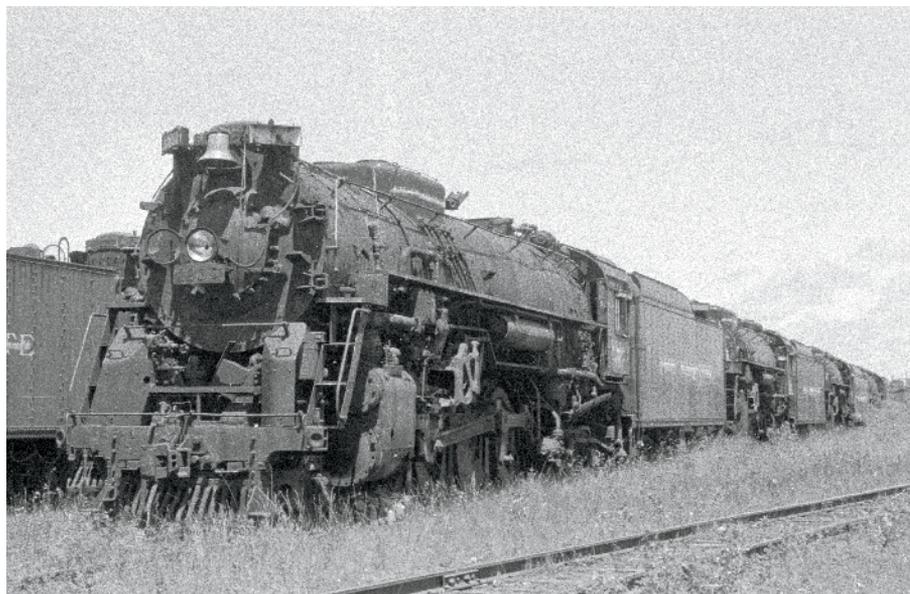
*Bob Withers, Huntington, W.Va.*

## Coal-country vagabonds

I never knew that 11 PM 2-8-4s went south to coal country on the Chesapeake & Ohio until I read Kevin Keefe's "Vagabonds of the Pere Marquette" [page 64]. The photo below shows two storage lines of the 2-8-4s that "stayed home," at New Buffalo, Mich., on June 17, 1960. No. 1239 is ahead of three other PM 2-8-4s, while at the left on an adjacent track, 1238, behind us, is fronting a line of eight others.

*Ralph Back, Eagan, Minn.*

This past June my son treated me to a steam excursion train ride for Father's Day. We drove from our Toledo-area home up into Michigan, where the train was headed by Pere Marquette 2-8-4 1225. I had always considered 2-8-4s as belonging around the Toledo area, and having only seen photos, I'd wondered how this Berkshire came to be back in steam in central Michigan. Thanks to



Trust agreements kept Pere Marquette 2-8-4s on the property in 1960, long after daily use.

Ralph Back



RGS 4-6-0 No. 20, standing at Durango in 1948, is preserved at the Colorado Railroad Museum.  
C. James Taylor

Mr. Keefe and CLASSIC TRAINS for making the connection for me.

*Jon Lee, Perrysburg, Ohio*

### Narrow gauge, broad appeal

The photos of Rio Grande Southern 4-6-0 No. 20 in John Gruber's story ["Beebe and Clegg Ride the RGS," page 32] brought back memories of my trips in 1948 on Denver & Rio Grande Western's *San Juan* between Alamosa and Durango and an RGS "Galloping Goose" between Dolores and Ridgway. I was able to photograph No. 20 in the Durango yard [above] and again, light-engine, approaching a river bridge in Dolores.

*C. James Taylor, Gold Canyon, Ariz.*

The Beebe-Clegg piece was great, but in the big lead photo, I see an extra arm besides Clegg's at the left. Could this be a ninth man hidden behind Clegg? Perhaps the newsman Pocky Marranzino? No matter, it's a fine article! Your broad coverage of the railroading of my youth makes CLASSIC TRAINS the one railroad magazine I must have!

*Lou Jaquith, Lexington, Ky.*

¶ Yes, there is a ninth person hidden behind Charles Clegg, but alas, he remains unidentified. — R.S.M.

### D&H: Worth reading again

I felt as though I was in the cab with Delaware & Hudson fireman Bernie O'Brien in his wonderful "Tough Trip from Oneonta" [page 48]. I just finished reading it for the third time, and it gets more exciting each time!

*Frank Elliott, Beverly, Mass.*

I had the privilege and honor to know "Bern" for over 25 years, including the

"gift" of riding with him on Steamtown's locomotives when he was its senior engineer at Scranton, Pa. In 1988 when the National Park Service was taking over Steamtown, I was returning home in upstate New York from visiting relatives in Baltimore, and with my wife's permission I made a "sales call" in Scranton to NPS's office in the old Lackawanna station, now the fine Radisson Lackawanna Station Hotel.

I am half owner of an industrial water treatment firm and knew they were going to need a program for their boilers, so I asked to meet the person responsible for maintenance. He told me they had a supplier but would keep my information in case of a problem. I then said I was willing to provide all required product at cost, and he asked, "Why would you do that?" My answer: "I will service your program once a month, but I get to ride those engines for the entire trip on the Saturday I come." He smiled, shook my hand, and that was the beginning of, to me, the best sale I ever made. I met Bern on my first trip, which began a lasting friendship between our two families.

His "steam stories" were fascinating and instructive. Bernie O'Brien didn't run locomotives, he finessed them. All of us involved in D&H history and with Steamtown greatly miss him.

*W. W. "Bill" Osborne,  
Bullhead City, Ariz. ■*

### Got a comment?

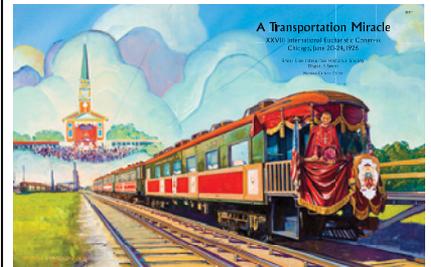
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# Friend of the F unit

**Northern Pacific** did not have the most F units — seven other roads bought more, including rival Great Northern — but NP's 244-member fleet was respectable enough. Indeed, the road tapped Electro-Motive for every F model but two: the briefly produced F2, and the FP9, which no U.S. road bought new. Moreover, NP was the last U.S. operator of the pioneering FT, all its passenger cab units were Fs, and it was the biggest buyer by far of the final model in the series, the F9. Demonstrating NP's affinity for the F, six of the "covered wagons" lead a freight east through Yakima River Canyon between Cle Elum and Ellensburg, Wash., in 1964.

Tom Gildersleeve





# SP&S: The Northwest's Own Railway

Spokane, Portland & Seattle pushed GN and NP into UP and SP territory • By Jerry A. Pinkepank



SP&S is also called the “North Bank Road” for its signature scenes along the Columbia as here, in October 1955, as a 4-8-4 rolls toward Pasco.

Donald Sims

The Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway was the product of sparring during 1905–1909 between “Empire Builder” James J. Hill of the Great Northern and Edward H. Harriman of the Union Pacific and Southern Pacific, by which Hill’s GN, as well as Northern Pacific (which Hill controlled at the time), got much-improved access to Portland, while UP got access to Seattle. The fight continued after Harriman’s death in 1909, with Hill extending SP&S into Oregon to allow GN’s eventual ac-

cess to California by connection to Western Pacific. GN and NP owned the SP&S 50-50 and in the 1920s considered running it as a joint facility with no separate identity, but decided not to because on-line people viewed it as a local enterprise, to be supported instead of “outsider” lines UP and SP — hence its slogan, “The Northwest’s Own Railway.”

The start was the Portland & Seattle Railroad, incorporated in August 1905 by GN and NP to build jointly owned lines from both Seattle and Spokane to

Portland. NP had a Seattle–Portland route but it was inefficient, relying on a carferry across the Columbia River between Kalama, Wash., and Goble, Ore., 39 miles downriver from Portland. UP’s Harriman had 19 percent control of NP stock at the time and was strongly opposed to this, but the NP board outvoted him; Hill had 25 percent of NP’s stock and the support of a majority.

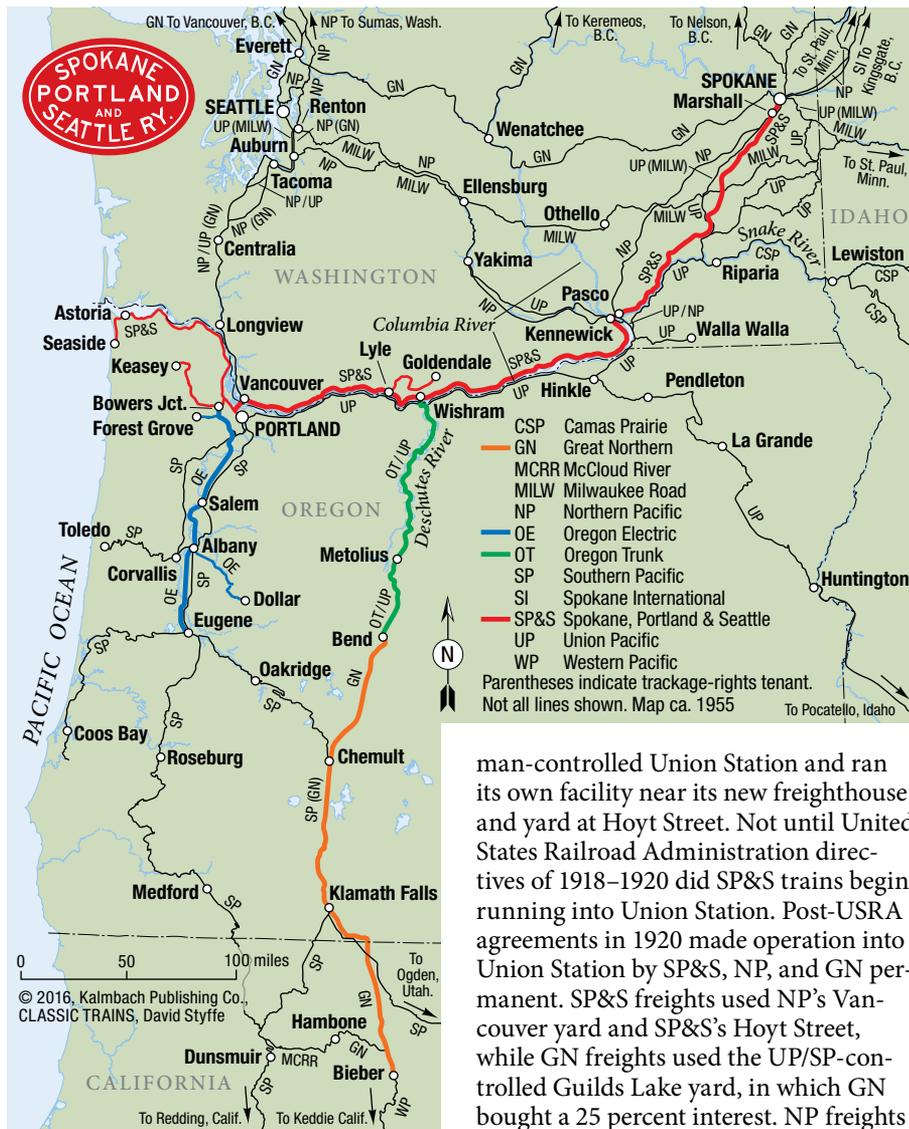
Hill and Harriman, however, worked out a trade in which UP and NP in 1908 jointly built the new line between Tacoma and Portland, including the bridge over the Columbia River at Vancouver, Wash., that eliminated the Kalama ferry. GN was given Seattle–Portland trackage rights over NP and the joint line, while UP built its own line between Tacoma and Seattle. In return, Harriman stopped his efforts to block joint NP-GN Spokane–Portland construction, which was accomplished during 1908–10. The Portland & Seattle was renamed Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway in 1908. The inclusion of “Seattle” reflected the fact that Seattle–Portland issues were still in negotiation.

The new SP&S “North Bank Road”



SP&S’s only E unit, E7 750, and one of its three F3As (it also had three F7As), leave Portland Union Station in 1963 for Spokane with the *Empire Builder/North Coast Limited* connection.

Dan Pope collection



between Pasco, Wash., and Vancouver was a water-level route involving tunnels and rock-filled causeways. The 229-mile line was built in 29 months beginning in October 1905, crews from east and west meeting at Lyle, Wash., on February 22, 1908. This new line included 9 miles of pre-existing UP-controlled road that UP was using as a blocking property but was sold to SP&S. At the Pasco end, SP&S construction began in Kennewick, Wash., across NP's Columbia bridge from Pasco, over which SP&S was given rights and the use of NP's Pasco station and yard. At the west end, the 10 miles between Vancouver and Portland, including big bridges over the Columbia and Willamette [Wil-LAM-it] rivers, were the responsibility of SP&S, a holdover of the intended P&S Seattle-Portland joint line.

SP&S, NP, and GN service to Portland commenced December 17, 1908, but SP&S was denied access to the Harri-

man-controlled Union Station and ran its own facility near its new freight house and yard at Hoyt Street. Not until United States Railroad Administration directives of 1918-1920 did SP&S trains begin running into Union Station. Post-USRA agreements in 1920 made operation into Union Station by SP&S, NP, and GN permanent. SP&S freights used NP's Vancouver yard and SP&S's Hoyt Street, while GN freights used the UP/SP-controlled Guilds Lake yard, in which GN bought a 25 percent interest. NP freights used, in addition to Vancouver yard, one at Willbridge just west of Guild's Lake. SP&S freights passed Willbridge and Guilds Lake en route to Hoyt Street.

East of Pasco, NP had wanted SP&S to use its line to Spokane by trackage rights, but Hill felt the NP line had excessive grades and curves and wanted a water-level line following the Snake River. SP&S built the latter and placed it in service between Pasco (Ainsworth Junction) and Marshall, Wash., in May 1909, using NP for the remaining 9 miles into Spokane. An SP&S-GN connector from the main line at Fort Wright Junction to Marshall opened in 1910. All of this, like the North Bank to Vancouver, was expensive construction, with benching into the columnar basalt along the Snake, and tunnels. This SP&S Snake River line had almost no local business, though, and that, plus concerns about the long-term stability of the benching, eventually doomed it. Successor Burlington North-

ern installed CTC signaling on the parallel former NP and abandoned the old SP&S line in 1987. Today it is owned by the State of Washington, and most of it is a trail.

## The "Inside Gateway"

The Oregon Trunk Railway was incorporated in 1905 to build from the confluence of the Deschutes River with the Columbia, south into Oregon timber country and potentially into California. It came under Hill control in 1908, with Harriman promoting a competing project. Hill's and Harriman's forces conducted legal and physical blocking maneuvers of each other in the Deschutes Canyon until after Harriman died on September 9, 1909. Agreements with the successor UP management were reached in February and May of 1910 that settled things. OT construction could proceed, with UP given trackage rights on the OT where it desired and OT allowed to cross above UP's Columbia's south bank main line where OT would be bridging south into Oregon from Fallbridge, Wash. (now Wishram).

The Wishram bridge was placed in service January 5, 1912, and the OT was completed to Bend, Ore., 152 miles from Wishram, in September 1911. Hill died in 1916, but the idea of reaching California didn't die with him. In 1926, with Southern Pacific newly occupying part of the route into Klamath Falls, GN decided it was time to act. NP at first agreed to be part of the project of extending to Klamath Falls but backed out, so GN acted alone, opening the 144-mile line on May 1, 1928. This included 75 miles of trackage rights on SP between Chemult and Klamath Falls, which SP granted in 1927 to avoid parallel GN construction.

This route, one of the last in modern-day U.S. railroad expansion, was completed in 1931 when Western Pacific built north from Keddie, Calif., to Bieber and met GN building south from Klamath Falls. SP&S operated GN trains from Spokane and/or Portland to Bend, but GN operated Bend to Bieber as an isolated 235-mile division, headquartered at Klamath Falls. This "Inside Gateway" route saw one or two through freights per day, their makeup supplemented by on-line lumber traffic. There was never any through passenger service, but owing to the isolated nature of communities along the Deschutes River, SP&S mixed-train passenger service between Wish-



Ready to leave NP's Pasco yard in fall 1969, and sporting the brighter livery that succeeded the one on the RSs below, are C425 312 (one of 16), C424 301 (one of seven), and FA1 858 (one of 18). A dozen FAs got renumbered to 4100s and served BN; SP&S also had 10 Century 636s.

Keith E. Ardinger

ram and Bend lasted beyond the 1970 BN merger until Amtrak's inception.

### Oregon juice giant

The Oregon Electric Railway began life as a heavy-duty interurban from Portland south up the Willamette valley via Albany to Eugene, but Hill saw it primarily as a source of lumber freight traffic for SP&S, and it was purchased jointly by NP and GN in 1910, with the stock turned over to SP&S in 1911. OE's entry to Portland over city streets was not suitable for future heavy freight operations.

Hill in 1909 had purchased another interurban running west from Portland, United Railways, also with ambitions for future lumber traffic, so a route was put together using an OE branch and the United to allow OE freights to reach the Hoyt Street yards from the west, though it was not until street franchises ended in 1941 that this route, with stiff grades, became the exclusive freight route. OE's

passenger business dwindled rapidly in the 1920s with the coming of parallel paved roads, and the last OE passenger train ran in 1933.

With the coming of six OE Alco RS1s in 1945, the SP&S system's first road diesels, the electrification was discontinued. The long-hoped-for lumber traffic, meantime, had developed slowly, and in 1933 GN and NP had considered letting OE default on its debt and go out of SP&S control, but they decided to hold on. An important step in developing lumber traffic was the 1931 construction of the Santiam branch from Albany to Sweet Home and vicinity (jointly with SP to Lebanon). With this addition to traffic originating in the Eugene area and elsewhere, and with the revival of lumber traffic after the Depression and World War II, daily 100-car freights into Portland became the rule, and in 1969 a west wye was built at the south end of the Willamette bridge, permitting OE trains

to originate and terminate in Vancouver instead of at cramped Hoyt Street.

Today, although BNSF retains ownership of the OE main line, since 2002 all operations on it have been conducted by Genesee & Wyoming's Portland & Western, with P&W running in and out of Vancouver. BNSF and UP sold the Santiam branch to short line Albany & Eastern in 1998, which still feeds traffic for BNSF from several important plywood and lumber mills via the P&W.

### To the Pacific, almost

The SP&S Astoria branch was rooted in the original 39-mile NP line from Portland to the Kalama ferry at Goble. The eastern 3 miles of this line between Portland and what became the station of Willbridge were crucial to SP&S's Portland entry. The rest of the Portland-Goble line became part of SP&S's Astoria branch when a connecting short line linking Seaside, Astoria, and Goble, opened in 1896, was bought for SP&S in 1906 by Hill, fending off a competing offer by Harriman. From then on, NP continued to own Portland-Goble, though only SP&S operated there.

Hill had visions of Astoria becoming a seaport, but the branch never lived up to its promise. Passenger service, once popular in summer for Portland people going to coastal cabins between Astoria and Seaside, ended in 1952. The line between Camp Clatsop and Seaside was abandoned in 1978 and from Astoria to Camp Clatsop in 1982. In the 1970s an export coal terminal at Astoria was talked about, but never built. In 1997 BNSF sold the Portland-Astoria line to the Portland & Western with underlying land going to



Alcos dominated SP&S's diesel roster. The first of six Oregon Electric RS1s, the system's initial road units, brings logs to the Lebanon plywood mill in 1963. RS3 67, one of 29, has parked Oregon Trunk mixed 102's passenger cars at Bend to await the 8 p.m. departure of 103 for Wishram.

Left, Ron Sloan; above, John C. Illman



**SP&S's first diesel, S2 20 of 1941 (one of nine, plus two S1s), works in Vancouver in 1963.**

J. David Ingles collection

the State of Oregon. Except for a tourist trolley in Astoria that uses the track, the line is out of service between United Junction, 10 miles west of Portland, and Astoria. From United Junction to Will-bridge it provides P&W with a connection between BNSF in Vancouver and the old Oregon Electric main line, via pieces of former SP&S, SP, and OE lines around the west side of Portland.

The 42-mile Goldendale branch opened as a short line in May 1903 and operated in connection with affiliated river steamers. NP, concerned that the line and its steamers would be used by UP to tap Yakima valley traffic, acquired it and the steamers in February 1905, later selling it to SP&S. Always light on traffic, it was abandoned by BN in 1993.

Terminal arrangements at Spokane, and trains using either the SP&S Snake River line or the parallel NP varied over the years, but after 1922 no NP trains used SP&S. After 1942, SP&S freights, carrying mainly GN traffic east of Pasco, used GN's Hillyard as their Spokane terminal. Many Spokane industries on NP routed traffic via SP&S rather than NP, so an SP&S crew handled a Scribner turn from NP's Parkwater (Yardley) terminal to connect with Hillyard freights.

Before World War II, SP&S passenger service between Spokane, Pasco, and Portland mostly was just one through train each connecting with GN and NP, and they handled local stops east of Wishram. After the war there were two trains. During the Depression a single connecting train for NP and GN ran on a schedule not suitable for the day local business, so SP&S established the *Columbia River Express*. After the war it ran only between Pasco and Portland, and SP&S bought lightweight cars for it, with

an NP connection relied on for local SP&S passengers east of Pasco. By 1962, SP&S's connectors to GN's *Empire Builder* and NP's *North Coast Limited* were running combined, ditto for GN's *Western Star* and NP's *Mainstreeter*. The *Columbia River Express* came off in 1959.

SP&S's principal classification yard was at Wishram until 1955 when most work was shifted to Pasco to utilize NP's new electronic retarder yard there. In 1958 GN agreed that its Inside Gateway cars could also be switched at Pasco, and Wishram's role was minimized.

SP&S's principal locomotive shop was at Vancouver. Initially a roundhouse, it was supplemented with a four-track, three-level diesel shop in 1949 that replaced the roundhouse after the last steam run on June 23, 1956. Until 1937, SP&S used mainly hand-me-down power from its parents, but in 1937 it received six NP-patterned Alco 4-6-6-4s (two of which were immediately sold to GN for the isolated Klamath Falls line), and two more in 1944. Three Baldwin NP-patterned 4-8-4s were delivered in 1938, one of which, 700, has been restored and runs occasionally out of Portland. In the diesel era, the majority of SP&S's 115 units were Alcos (20 were EMDs and 5 were wartime Baldwin switchers), the parent roads finding their stepchild an easy repository for "minority builder" units. **I**

## SP&S fact file



(comparative figures, which include subsidiaries OE and OT, are for 1938 and 1968)

**Route-miles:** 915; 922

**Locomotives:** 89 steam, 14 electric; 112

**Passenger cars:** 100; 48

**Freight cars:** 627; 3,363

**Headquarters city:** Portland, Ore.

**Special Interest Group:** Spokane Portland & Seattle Railway Historical Society, [www.SPSHS.org](http://www.SPSHS.org)

**Recommended reading:** *North Bank Road*, by John T. Gaertner, Washington State Univ. Press, 1990, 1992; *Spokane Portland & Seattle Railway, The Northwest's Own Railway*, by Charles and Dorothy Wood, Superior Publ., 1974; *SP&S, the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railway*, by Ed Austin and Tom Dill, Pacific Fast Mail, 1996

**Sources:** Books above; ICC and Moody's volumes; *Official Register of Passenger Train Equipment*; on-line sites

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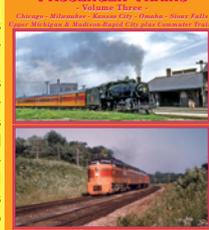


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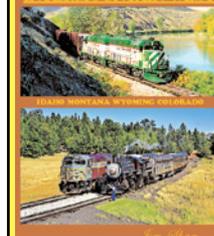
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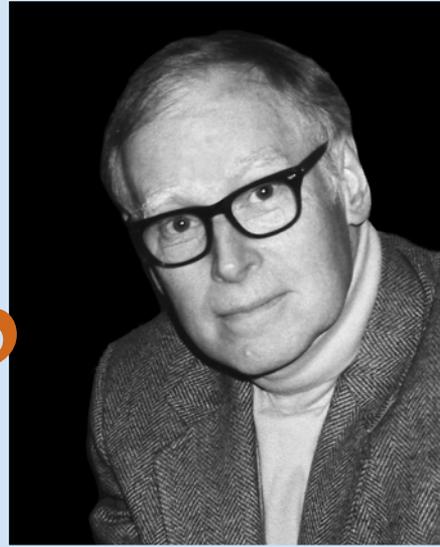


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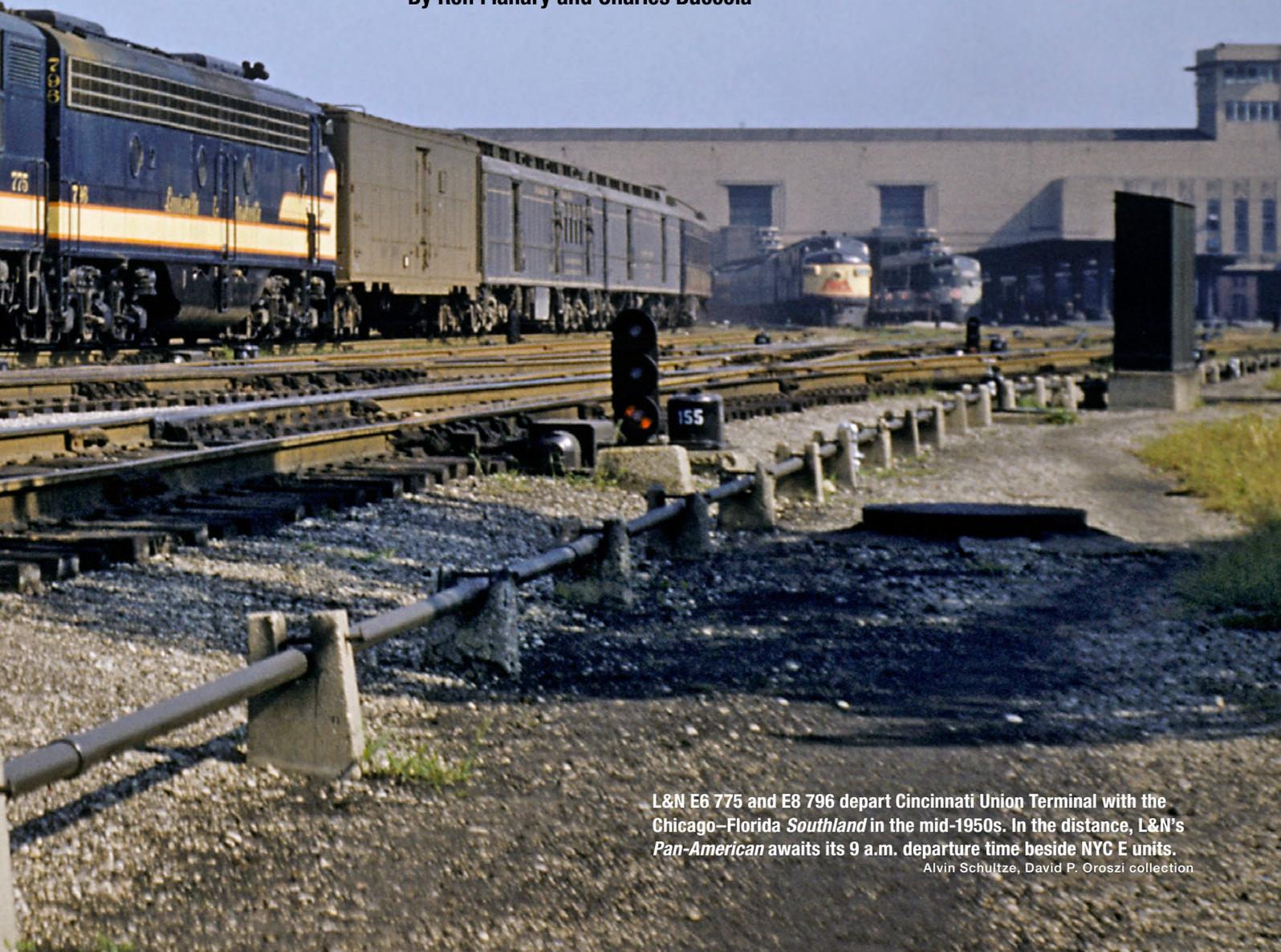
Louisville & Nashville

# “Mr. L&N”



**Charlie Castner** — railfan, photographer, author, preservationist, and railroad professional — has studied and promoted the Louisville & Nashville Railroad for more than 80 years

By Ron Flanary and Charles Buccola



L&N E6 775 and E8 796 depart Cincinnati Union Terminal with the Chicago–Florida *Southland* in the mid-1950s. In the distance, L&N’s *Pan-American* awaits its 9 a.m. departure time beside NYC E units.

Alvin Schultze, David P. Oroszi collection

**T**he 6:45 p.m. departure time for Louisville & Nashville train 5, the *Humming Bird* for New Orleans, was nearing on the rainy night of October 8, 1965, when a figure in a trench coat and brimmed dress hat was silhouetted in the platform lights at Cincinnati Union Terminal. He held an overstuffed leather briefcase in one hand and had a camera bag slung over his shoulder as he walked toward the engine crew standing on the platform. When the lights illuminated the face of

the stranger, the engineer beamed a smile of recognition: “Hey, Charlie — are you ridin’ the head end with us tonight?” Charlie Castner, assistant manager of the L&N News Bureau, was heading home to Louisville, winding up a field assignment with one of his favorite fringe benefits: a cab ride on an L&N passenger train. “I had spent that afternoon at DeCoursey Yard near Covington, Ky., doing a story on a new grocery products car,” Charlie says. “It was about to start its first trip under load to New Orleans. The yardmaster assured me the

car would be in No. 71’s train that evening.” Seventy-one was one of the L&N’s hottest freights, going back to 1938 when it made its debut as the *Silver Bullet*. As Charlie climbed aboard E7 No. 794, he told the crew how he hoped to get a flash photo of the car somewhere between Cincinnati and Louisville when they overtook the freight. “Charlie, we’ll never see 71,” replied the engineer. “He’s long gone, and most nights he’ll beat us to Strawberry [Yard, in Louisville] by the time we’re backing into Union Station.” This night proved to be an exception.



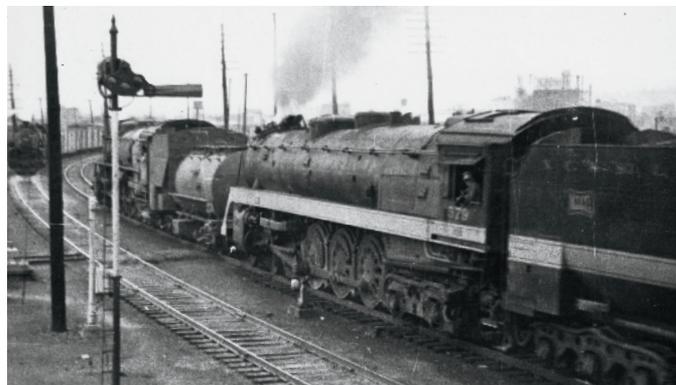
A young Charlie Castner beams from the fireman’s window of L&N 0-6-0 No. 738 at Highland Park, near South Louisville Yard, circa 1942.

Charles B. Castner collection



Pacific 277, streamlined for the *Dixie Flagler*, is near Castner’s boyhood home in Louisville’s Crescent Hill section on train 8 for Cincy in 1949.

Charles B. Castner



Castner photographed this northbound NC&StL doubleheader from East End Tower in 1946, when he was in Chattanooga for high school.

Charles B. Castner

“Near English we encountered a yellow ‘Approach’ signal, and then a second yellow about three miles beyond,” Charlie remembers. “No. 71 was ahead of us, and was obviously having trouble.” The trains were on Campbellsburg Hill, which for southbounds was an 8-mile climb of 1 percent or more, and tonight it was proving to be 71’s undoing.

The 135-car, 5,717-ton freight was pulled by three U25Bs and a GP30. The sanders on the first two U-boats were only working intermittently, so the GEs were slipping badly on the wet rail. An all-out stall would result in 71 having to double its train to the siding at Campbellsburg, which would ensure a major delay to the passenger train.

“Just south of Mill Creek Tunnel,” Charlie recalls, “we encountered a red ‘Restricted Proceed,’ and our engineer brought us to a stop.” The freight was nearly stalled. After some cryptic radio conversations between the two trains, Charlie realized what was going to happen: the *Bird* was going to shove the *Bullet* up Campbellsburg Hill! “These guys were seasoned railroad professionals. They knew what they were doing, and they also understood they were bending the rulebook to the breaking point in order to keep the railroad fluid.”

The *Humming Bird* eased back into motion, and soon the rear platform light on 71’s caboose appeared in the mist. The conductor was on the steps with his lantern and had opened the rear knuckle. Easy . . . easy . . . coupling made! In an instant, four EMD V12s of the passenger train’s E7-E6 duo were ratcheted out to full throttle and the battle for Campbellsburg Hill was joined. Back in the train, waiters were clearing away the tables and serving nightcaps in the diner-lounge, and Pullman porters were turning down beds for the night. Only the conductor and flagman knew what was happening.

After 10 minutes of hard shoving, there was some good news from 71’s head end: they weren’t slipping now, and they had a diverging signal into the siding at Campbellsburg. As the freight crested the summit, 71’s conductor signaled he was pulling the pin. When the couplers parted, the *Bird* braked to an easy stop well short of the north siding switch, and as soon as the caboose cleared the circuit, the power switch reversed, and the signal flashed emerald green. When the E units passed 71’s head end, the radio came to life once more:

“Thanks, guys. You saved our ass tonight!”  
By now No. 5 was almost 40 minutes



The 42 M-1 2-8-4s were L&N’s last and finest steam power. None was saved, but Castner’s 32-page study of them in December 1972 *TRAINS* is a fitting memorial. As a 25-year-old in 1954, he poses with one of the “Big Emmas” assigned to special Kentucky Derby trains.

Charles B. Castner collection

late, but thanks to some spirited running, the passenger train arrived at Louisville Union Station just 20 minutes down — an extraordinary feat in that territory. The drama was but one incident in Charlie Castner’s long life of railroading.

## AN EARLY LOVE OF TRAINS

Charles B. Castner Jr. was born August 3, 1928, in Louisville. His parents noticed he had an affinity for trains — which was easy to understand given his environment. No fewer than eight line-haul railroads and two terminal roads served Louisville when Charlie was a boy. The undeniable giant of the Derby City was the L&N, with its enormous shop at South Louisville, ornate Union Station, and, next door to the depot, 11-floor general office building (universally called the “G.O.B.”) — reputed to be the largest headquarters building in the nation occupied exclusively by a single railroad.

When Charlie was a toddler, his parents would take him over to Gaulbert Avenue to watch trains on the L&N’s

connection from Union Station to the main line to Cincinnati. Easily accessible, and with 20 passenger trains going by each day, it was a prime train-watching spot. Charlie’s older sister recalled that on one occasion when their mother felt the train-watching session had run its course, she started to take him home. He was so incensed that he bit her!

The Castner family later moved to the Crescent Hill neighborhood in the northeastern section of the city. From the house, Charlie could hear trains as they passed on L&N’s busy “Short Line” main to Louisville.

When Charlie reached junior high school, he found a group of friends who shared his interest in railroading. Among them was David P. Morgan, future editor of *TRAINS* magazine, who was a year ahead of Charlie. Morgan’s father, British by birth, was pastor of Crescent Hill Presbyterian Church and had worked for England’s London & North Western Railway as a young man. The senior Morgan’s love for railroading had been passed on to David, who had access



**All-diesel after 1956, L&N leased Illinois Central 4-8-2 2613 for a 1959 trip that included a photo stop at the big trestle near Munfordville, Ky. Castner was aboard, as a radio reporter.**

Louisville & Nashville: C. Norman Beasley

to his father's large collection of railroad books and magazines. "We looked up to David," Charlie recalls. "He would often write letters to the magazines of that time commenting on their articles, or pointing out errors. He was clearly the 'railroad scholar' of our small group of enthusiasts, and we expanded our own universe of railroad knowledge just by hanging around with him." After junior

high, both Charlie and David attended Male High School in Louisville.

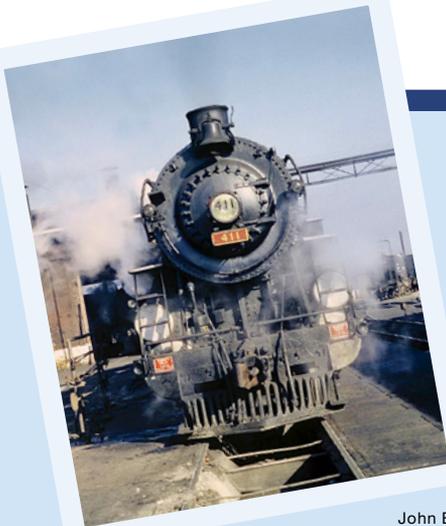
Charlie's circle of Crescent Hill railfan buddies also included Newton C. Shouse and W. Terrell Dickey Jr. "Terrell and I met on December 19, 1940, the day the *South Wind* was inaugurated. My father had arranged for me to miss school that day, and I found I wasn't the only student there to see this event — Dave Morgan had played hooky as well." Dickey would go on to follow in his father's footsteps as a photographer and com-

mercial artist. His series of covers for *L&N Magazine* in the late 1940s and early '50s were exceptional. Charlie (and Morgan) remembered him with a 10-page feature of his photography in the July 1987 issue of *TRAINS*, and his old *L&N Magazine* painting of a man cleaning an M-1 2-8-4's headlight lens was the cover for the December 1972 *TRAINS*.

In 1945 Morgan left Louisville for the Army, and Charlie transferred to the McCallie School in Chattanooga, Tenn., for his last two years of high school. Weekends found him hanging around East End Tower, where main lines of Southern's CNO&TP, Birmingham, and Knoxville divisions all crossed the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis, an L&N subsidiary that the bigger road would absorb in 1957. "The action there was non-stop, with some 50 train movements each eight-hour shift," Charlie recalls.

After high school, Charlie attended Washington & Lee University at Lexington, Va., graduating in 1952 with a BA and majors in English and Fine Arts. Lexington was in reach of such treats as C&O's huge 2-6-6-6 Allegheny types at Clifton Forge and N&W J-class 4-8-4s at the engine-change point of Monroe. He was drafted in 1951 during the Korean War, but was allowed to finish his senior year. Of the huge group inducted with Charlie, 25 were randomly selected for the Marines. One was Charlie, who became a Leatherneck. Various stateside assignments provided him with train trips to new duty stations such as Camp Lejeune, N.C., and San Diego.

Charlie returned to Louisville after discharge in 1954. He sold pianos and organs for a time before landing a job at radio station WHAS as a writer, and later, producer. His work there brought him into frequent contact with the L&N. Among Charlie's attributes is a genuine interest in connecting with people and maintaining those connections. This



John B. Fravert, L&NHS collection

## The "Great 17-Cent Train Ride"

**When Charlie was in high school**, he and his pals enjoyed what they called the "Great 17-Cent Train Ride." "When school was out," he recalls, "we rushed 10 blocks across town to Union Station, where we bought 17-cent tickets to the Baxter Avenue station in East Louisville." Friendly engine crews would let Charlie, David P. Morgan, and their buddies ride the deck of L-1 Mountains from the nearby 10th Street roundhouse to a coupling with the Cincinnati-bound *Pan-American*, which changed engines at Louisville. "We would then race to the [*Pan's*] first open coach vestibule, where the train crews would let us ride for the next 15 glorious minutes." At Baxter Avenue, the "17-cent commuters" scrambled off to catch a trolley bus home to Crescent Hill. — Ron Flanary



Four months after being hired, Castner found himself as L&N's primary media contact for the observance of the "Great Locomotive Chase" centennial. Here, at Louisville's Central Station in mid-1962, children rush toward the *General*, which the road reactivated for the anniversary.

Charles B. Castner

trait would serve him well throughout his career and private life.

In spring 1956, Charlie's interests turned from trains to romance. He married his wife, Katie. They spent their honeymoon in New Orleans, riding Illinois Central's all-Pullman *Panama Limited* there and back. The Castners would eventually have three children, Charles "Beau" Castner III, Louisa, and Fenner.

## JOINING THE L&N

To celebrate the 100th anniversary of the first train to operate between Louisville and Nashville, the L&N operated a 15-car, 850-passenger special in 1959. The road had retired all its steam power, so it leased IC 4-8-2 No. 2613 for the trip. Charlie was on board to cover the event for WHAS, coordinating with the L&N staff. "By this time I was well acquainted with L&N's public relations department, and particularly [news bureau manager] Edison H. Thomas." In 1961, staff member Kincaid Herr took a leave of absence from L&N's small advertising and p.r. department, so Ed Thomas, already familiar with Charlie's talents and interests, invited him to interview for a job. On December 4, 1961, Charlie reported for work as a staff writer for the L&N.

Since the first issue in 1925, the monthly *L&N Employee's* (sic) *Magazine* (later shortened to *L&N Magazine*) was the company's house organ. It was distributed to nearly 50,000 active and re-

tired employees, customers, civic leaders, and subscribers. Charlie was to join the staff, housed in the northeast corner on the top floor of the General Office Building. Even before Charlie could arrange his desk, he was dispatched on a field trip for a story on a new coal-washing plant at Glenbrook, Ky. The staff was small. "We used nom de plumes to give the impression our staff was larger than it actually was," Charlie notes — although it was nothing more than a tongue-in-cheek exercise. Some examples: R. R. South, Cole Carr, Ray L. Rhodes, M. T. Hopper, C. Ross Tye, and Lou Nash.

The timing of Charlie's arrival was perfect. "I felt fortunate to have started work with the L&N during the '60s," Charlie says. "Just seven months earlier, the L&N had secretly loaded the famed Civil War locomotive *General* from its long-time display spot under the trainshed at Chattanooga, and brought it to South Louisville for evaluation." After the feasibility of rebuilding the engine for operation was confirmed, Ed Thomas was named to head up the *General's* extensive tour schedule.

At the very time the *General* was to begin its tours, Ed Thomas called Charlie to his home. There had been a death in the family of Ed's wife, and he would not be able to make the first trips. But Ed knew Charlie was conversant with the engine and its history. It would be Charlie who handled the press relations dur-



Castner interviews L&N's Norman Hurt about the addition of dome cars to the *South Wind* for WHAS Radio. Soon, as an L&N p.r. man, he was on the other side of the microphone.

Louisville & Nashville

ing the *General's* Atlanta-Chattanooga "Great Locomotive Chase" centennial re-enactment trip on April 14, 1962.

Charlie arranged for Dave Morgan, by then *TRAINS'* editor, to cover a test and break-in run down the Lebanon and Greensburg branches in Kentucky on March 28. His story in July '62 *TRAINS* recalled the events of that day. Famed photographer O. Winston Link was also



Castner describes the features of L&N's new "jumbo" wood-chip hopper cars to a group of foreign rail representatives in 1964, when new equipment was transforming freight service.

Louisville & Nashville

there to take photos and make sound recordings of the Civil War veteran.

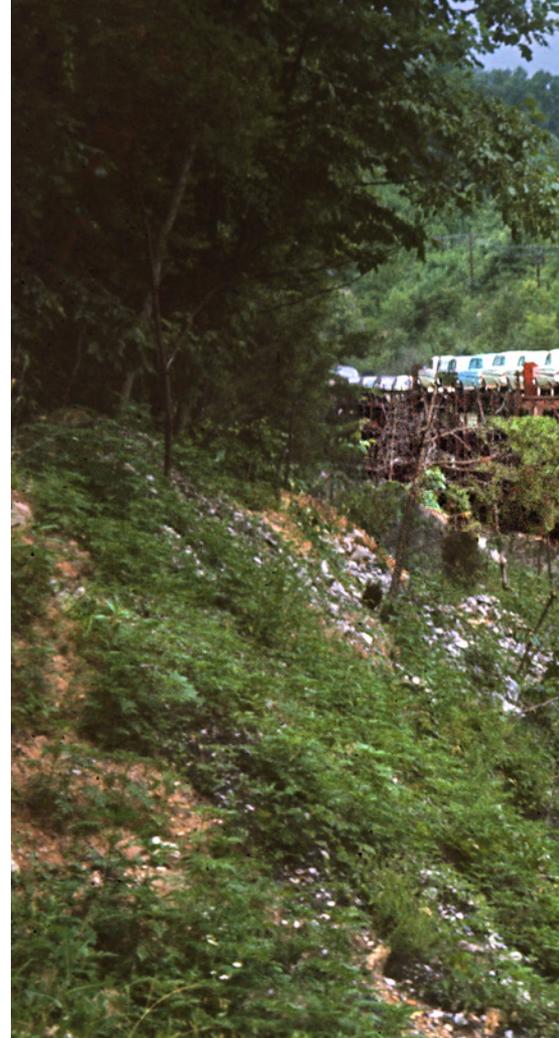
When Charlie began working for the L&N, the railroad industry was in transition. The company still operated 31 daily passenger trains, but it was clear that this traffic was on a downward spiral. On the freight side, L&N was hustling to keep the business it had, and to gain new customers with a diverse fleet of new specialized freight cars to meet those demands. The road's diesel fleet was also ripe for replacement, and it seemed that every month would bring a new wave of shiny gray-and-yellow road-switchers to South Louisville for set-up.

During the early to mid-'60s, the pattern of L&N's coal traffic began shifting from predominantly northbound through Cincinnati to southbound moves destined for power plants in the Southeast. Charlie covered the development of 100-ton hoppers with air-dump doors to speed cycle time between mines and power plants, weigh-in-motion scales versus the old method of weighing cars one at a time, new power plants that

burned L&N-originated coal, and the ascendancy of the unit train. Major infrastructure improvements also were made, such as single track with extra-long sidings and 10-mile stretches of double track, all controlled by CTC.

### PIGGYBACK AND AUTO-RACKS

L&N launched piggyback service in 1955. In a time when every railroad had its own term for carrying truck trailers on flatcars, L&N called it "TOTE," for Trailer on Train Express. One especially lucrative market was Chicago-Atlanta, in conjunction with Chicago & Eastern Illinois. Initially, a TOTE train called the *Piggyback Dixie Flyer* operated behind the *Dixie Flyer* passenger train, running as Second 95. "On the particular trip I was riding the train, we had some delays en route," Charlie recalls. "I had planned on getting off at Chattanooga and riding back to Louisville on the northbound *Georgian* to Nashville, then the *Humming Bird* to Louisville. There was a through Atlanta-Louisville Pullman then, and I had reserved a roomette."



The trainmaster was riding the train, so he arranged with the dispatcher for Charlie to get off at Cowan, Tenn., 64 miles north of Chattanooga. The *Georgian* braked to an unscheduled stop later that evening to pick up its non-revenue passenger. "The next morning, I freshened up and climbed down from the *Pine*-series Pullman left standing under the trainshed at Louisville. After breakfast in the station's Savarin coffee shop, I walked next door to the General Office Building to start writing my story."

More new business was the movement of finished automobiles on tri-level rack cars. Charlie arranged for Dave Morgan to join him as they followed a particular Ford Galaxie 500 built at the Louisville assembly plant from there to a dealership in the Atlanta area. Charlie and other L&N staff photographers covered the run from end to end, and he and Morgan rode one of the locomotives out of Louisville. "Dave was a little unhappy that my version of the story ran in our own magazine a month before his version appeared in *TRAINS*, but he understood I



New GP30s roll tri-level auto-rack cars filled with Mercury Comets at Dossett, Tenn., in July 1964. This is L&N's hot Cincinnati–Atlanta train 45.

Jim Overholser, L&NHS collection

had an obligation to my employer first.”

It wouldn't be the only time Charlie and Morgan differed on an issue involving the L&N. The company wanted to discontinue its Cincinnati–New Orleans *Humming Bird*. The *Bird's* fortunes were closely tied to the Chicago–Atlanta *Georgian*, and the trains exchanged a lot of mail, express, and through cars each night at Nashville. C&EI, however, succeeded in dropping its Chicago–Evansville leg of the *Georgian* in February 1968, depriving the *Humming Bird* of critical connecting traffic. A few months later, L&N began petitioning the Interstate Commerce Commission to discontinue the *Bird*, but court actions delayed the last runs until January 8, 1969.

Early that morning the northbound train terminated as usual at Cincinnati Union Terminal, but the southbound was standing in the station in Birmingham when word came that it would be the train's last run. At that moment, the 14 through passengers were eating breakfast either in the station or on the train's diner. On the recommendation of L&N's legal department, the train was



Another big 1960s freight trend was the rise of piggyback traffic, which L&N initially called “TOTE,” for Trailer on Train Express; the service was 12 years old at the time of this 1967 photo.

Louisville & Nashville: Wm. C. Tayse



In 1965, when school field trips involved visits to railroad facilities or short train rides, Castner talks to a group of kids about the southbound *Pan-American* at Louisville Union Station. In time, the L&N and other roads would lose interest in cultivating the passengers of tomorrow.

Louisville & Nashville



Enacting a yearly ritual, private cars that have come to Louisville for the 1967 Kentucky Derby fill the tracks beside Union Station.

Charles B. Castner

terminated there immediately, and its passengers delivered to their destinations by a chartered Greyhound bus.

While this may have seemed legally expedient, it was a public relations disaster. An editorial in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* blistered the railroad for what it termed “a paradigm of disdain.” Morgan took the L&N to task as well, in a short news item in *TRAINS*. “David and I briefly crossed swords on this issue,”

Charlie remembers, “but I had an obligation to explain the company’s reasoning.” Afterward, Morgan and his wife Margaret were riding the northbound *Pan-American*. Charlie caught the southbound *Pan* out of Louisville to Bowling Green, Ky., where he swapped trains to ride back with the Morgans. The men’s long friendship always trumped professional disagreements.

### CHANGE COMES TO THE L&N

When he wasn’t on the road for *L&N Magazine*, Charlie followed a routine during workdays in Louisville. On most Fridays he would drive to South Louisville Shops to check on new locomotive arrivals or other things that might be of interest. Every Thursday there was lunch at a cafeteria in the Federal Building on 6th and Broadway. This was a “who’s who” of Louisville railfans, including Judge Charles Allen, the first president of the Kentucky Railway Museum; Bill Clark, a long-time friend of Charlie’s who was an exceptional steam-era photographer; E. G. Baker, another photographer and modeler extraordinaire; and others.

In 1970, Seaboard Coast Line Industries began consolidating its railroad in-

terests under a single marketing umbrella called “Family Lines.” Charlie recalls the merger period was especially difficult on L&N employees, particularly the company’s management. “Initially only duplicative departments were to be merged and reduced, but increasingly personnel were expected to move to [SCL headquarters in] Jacksonville. SCL seemed more ‘militaristic’ in its management leadership, since many of them were former military officers.”

Ray Bullard took over the leadership of the combined public relations team, but he saw the benefit of allowing Charlie to remain in Louisville even as many other former L&N functions were being relocated to Florida. Bullard recognized that no one knew that territory better than Charlie, and that he had developed many important contacts over the years.

As the work assignments transitioned from former L&N territory to other places in the larger system, Charlie was asked to cover some things that were actually fun. One of these was the Clinchfield Railroad’s annual Santa Claus Special, which Charlie had ridden for years in an unofficial capacity. On Charlie’s first ride as the railroad’s media representative,

restored Clinchfield Ten-Wheeler No. 1 (plus two F7B diesels) provided the motive power. Before the 1982 run, Charlie had contacted the CBS television network to see if Charles Kuralt's program director might be interested in covering the train. Kuralt's *On the Road* telecast that December did more to promote the operation than anything before.

Railroading is a dangerous business, of course, and Charlie frequently served as the "face" of the company when news was grim. A February 24, 1978, derailment in Waverly, Tenn., turned deadly when, two days later, a car of liquefied petroleum gas exploded during clean-up. Sixteen people perished in the blast, including five from L&N's Nashville wreck crew. A July 8, 1986, derailment at Miamisburg, Ohio, in former B&O territory of what by then was the vast CSX system, that included several cars of phosphorus was Charlie's last field assignment — a two-week stint of feeding information to the media on clean-up efforts.

In 1987 Charlie's boss in the p.r. department, Ray Bullard, announced his retirement. "I really respected Ray Bullard, and he was always kind to me," Charlie emphasizes. However, Bullard's successor pressured Charlie to move to Jacksonville, so Charlie put in for retirement and worked through March 1988. By then, the L&N general office building in Louisville had been leased to the Commonwealth of Kentucky. Charlie was the last L&N employee in the building. Dave Morgan, who himself retired from TRAINS in 1987, took note: "With Charlie's retirement, the last L&N landmark in Louisville will be gone!"



**E7s with the last southbound *Pan-American* idle outside the Union Station trainshed on April 30, 1971 — the day before Amtrak. Beyond No. 779 is another Louisville landmark: L&N's 11-story General Office Building, where Castner worked for more than a quarter century.**

Charles B. Castner

## OFF-THE-CLOCK RAIL WORK

There have been many more aspects to Charlie Castner's railroad life than his work for the L&N. Upon his return from the Marines in 1954, he joined the newly chartered Kentucky Railway Museum, then located in Louisville. The museum's cornerstone piece of equipment was L&N light Pacific 152, donated with the blessing of L&N President John E. Tilford in 1957. The next year, Charlie became secretary of KRM, one his duties being to correspond with area Class I railroads seeking donation of retired steam locomotives. C&O obliged by sending 2-8-4 No. 2716 to the museum. L&N, though, declined to donate an M-1 Berkshire or a J-4 Mikado. Likewise, Illinois Central was unwilling to give 4-8-2 No. 2613, despite its multiple turns on L&N excursion trains. No examples of these important classes survive. "As with many fledgling non-profit groups," Charlie

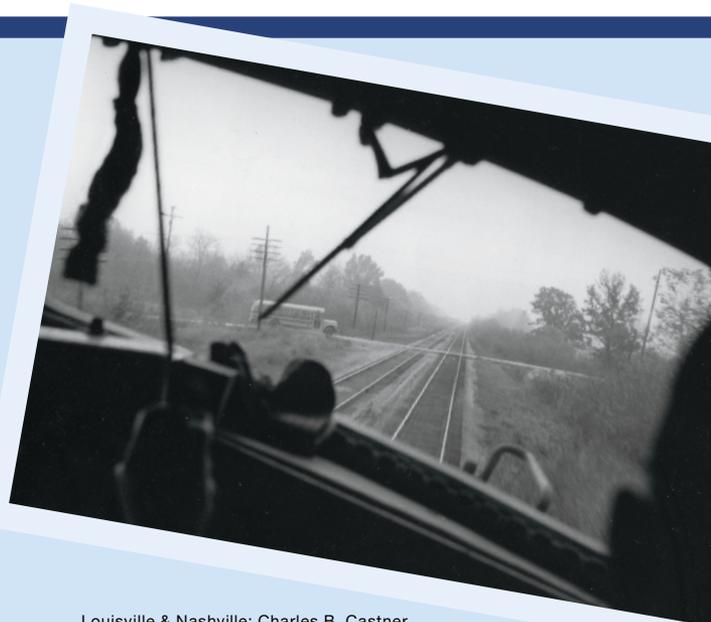
says, "we just didn't have the financial wherewithal to obtain one at the going scrap price at the time."

Charlie also recalls all the strings he had to pull within the company to move a former L&N 0-8-0 from Birmingham to KRM on its own wheels. "L&N 2152 had been sold to Republic Steel in 1950... [It] had been active as late as 1962. After prepping the engine for the trip, it was relayed slowly all the way to Louisville by local freights in November 1965. I know management had many anxious moments until the engine reached Louisville, but at least we were able to save it." The 2152, 152, and 0-8-0 No. 2132, recently repatriated from Georgia to Corbin, Ky., are the only extant L&N steamers.

The name Charles B. Castner appeared in TRAINS magazine many times over the years, as both a photo credit and a feature byline. Charlie treated readers to a number of topics, including a history of

## Heart-stopping moment in the cab

**Authorized cab rides** showed Charlie the horrors faced by engine crews every day at public road crossings. "A long time before Operation Lifesaver," he says, "we arranged for state troopers to ride many of our trains to see these dangers first hand." Charlie recalls a ride on train 95, the southbound *Dixie Flyer*, on November 5, 1964. "We were rolling at 70 mph when we approached a rural grade crossing near Henderson, Ky. A school bus pulled up to the crossing as our engineer was laying down on the horn, and then — to our utter shock — the driver pulled out directly into our path!" The trainmaster and a Kentucky state trooper in the cab were able to get the bus's number and the name of the school system. Charlie remembers that the trooper was so shaken that he didn't want to ride the cab again when the group returned to Evansville on train 94 — but the trainmaster insisted that he do so. — *Ron Flanary*



Louisville & Nashville: Charles B. Castner



**Castner secured the donation to Kentucky Railroad Museum of C&O 2716, seen on a fantrip at Logansport, Ind., in July 1996. The 2-8-4 worked for Southern in the '80s, and is being restored again at KRM.**

Robert W. Lyndall



**Clinchfield 4-6-0 No. 1 leads a Santa Claus Special at Hardwood, Va., in 1976. The amalgamation of CRR, L&N, and other roads under the Family Lines banner made this annual train part of Castner's duties.**

Ron Flanary

Kentucky Railway Museum, the operation of the *General* on the Illinois Central in 1966, the special trains to Louisville for the annual Kentucky Derby, and the resurrection of Pacific 152 in 1985. There was no feature, though, to match the issue-length "Big Emma" opus in December 1972.

"I had initially proposed a story on the 400 steam locomotives the L&N built from scratch at its South Louisville Shops," Charlie recalls, "but when I started making contacts with veteran steam-era retirees, the topic they really wanted to discuss was L&N's 42-engine fleet of M-1 class 2-8-4s."

For L&N faithful, of course, that issue topped all others, but a few readers wrote Morgan complaining about devoting the entire magazine to a single subject. Most readers were pleased, though, including one from California who admitted he knew nothing of the M-1s or even L&N's steam roster until he read the article. Initially Morgan thought the manuscript as submitted was too long, but after he began editing it, he was so taken with the large number of quotes from the men

who designed and operated the M-1s that he decided to devote the issue's entire feature section to the subject.

In addition to articles in *TRAINS*, Charlie has authored or co-authored books on topics including the NC&STL, a general history of the L&N, another on L&N's diesel fleet, and one on the "Old Reliable's" passenger trains. Focusing on the railroad history of his hometown, he co-authored a pair of books featuring photos by long-time friend Jack Fravert. Charlie also wrote articles for other periodicals and contributed photos to even more. He is conversant on just about any railroad topic, and — probably because of his friendship with Morgan — developed a great interest in British railroading.

As the transition through the Family Lines-Seaboard System-CSX era unfolded, it was clear to Charlie that there was little interest within the company in preserving the historic records of the L&N. With the approval of management, "Charlie rounded up company archives from offices throughout headquarters and beyond," recalls Tom Owen of the University of Louisville Archives. "When

company offices moved to Jacksonville as part of CSX," Owen continues, "Charlie worked with me to negotiate the donation of the vast L&N archives to the University of Louisville. Soon thereafter and ever since, he joined us as our 'go-to volunteer' to answer research inquiries about railroad history."

Beginning in the late '70s, the long process of identifying what was worth saving began. Charlie also realized there were many duplicate pieces of ephemera that might be useful if an independent historical society were formed. And that did happen, with a major push from Charlie, in early 1983 when the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Historical Society was founded. Today, L&NHS is one of many such organizations devoted to "fallen flag" railroads, but it is well organized and managed by capable and committed volunteers. L&NHS has established its own archive in Bowling Green, Ky., in conjunction with the Friends of the Depot there. The large station also displays a short L&N "replica" passenger train (some but not all items being ex-L&N), which visitors can tour.



**F units on the 1980 Santa train meet SDs at Boody, Va. As Family Lines became Seaboard System, then CSX, the L&N flag was gradually lowered.**  
Ron Flanary

## MORE THAN TRAINS

Charlie first took piano lessons as a child, and practiced playing through public school and college. His primary musical genre is jazz, in all forms, and he is a virtuoso keyboarder when it comes to anything along those lines, from a Jelly Roll Morton classic to jazz standards from the American songbook. At the 2015 conference of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art in Lake Forest, Ill., Charlie took the stage to join boogie-woogie pianist Axel Zwingenberger on several numbers. “David Morgan wasn’t a musician, but he had a great critical ear and shared my passion for jazz,” Charlie says. “During the ’50s in particular we corresponded about some of the best new contemporary jazz pieces that were coming onto the American music scene.”

Katie Castner, Charlie’s wife of almost 60 years, passed away in 2015, but Charlie still relishes any chance to be track-side or involved in anything related to railroading. He keeps active musically by playing piano for his fellow Rotarians each week, and singing in the choir at his church. “We also have a combo at the retirement village where I now live,” Charlie states proudly, “and my son Beau is our guitarist.”

The exact number of L&N employees Charlie worked with over his career would be staggering. Jim Oaks worked in the old Locomotive Utilization Board at Louisville in the early ’60s, and continued when it morphed into a full system operations center. “Charlie was one of a

kind and was most professional,” Oaks observes, “not to mention the knowledge he possessed of our railroad and so many others all over the U.S.” Oaks would work with Charlie again in 1977 after he took over as superintendent of the Corbin Division.

From David Orr, former superintendent at South Louisville Shops, come these accolades: “At our 75th anniversary open house at the shops in August 1980, Charlie handled the press visitors with ease and intense pride in the facility. Charlie had what I would call ‘quiet professionalism.’ Most of his career was spent dealing with outsiders and executive management of the railroad, but he had a sincere love for the rank-and-file employees as well, and valued his association with them.” Orr adds, with a smile, that Charlie’s help in promoting the South Louisville Shops open house was so effective that “we ran through 5,000 hot dogs in less than two hours.” The final estimate of visitors that day was nearly 25,000.

Charles B. Castner Jr. is far too complex and interesting to capture in a single magazine article. All his hard work has not gone unnoticed. He received the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society’s Gerald M. Best Senior Achievement Award in 2010 for a lifetime of activity in writing, preserving, and interpreting railroad history. More than any other individual, Charlie rose to the occasion to ensure the Louisville & Nashville and its employees would not be forgotten. And



**A lifelong piano player, Castner tickles the ivories in this 2011 photo. He’s still at it, along with various L&N activities, at age 88.**  
Ron Flanary

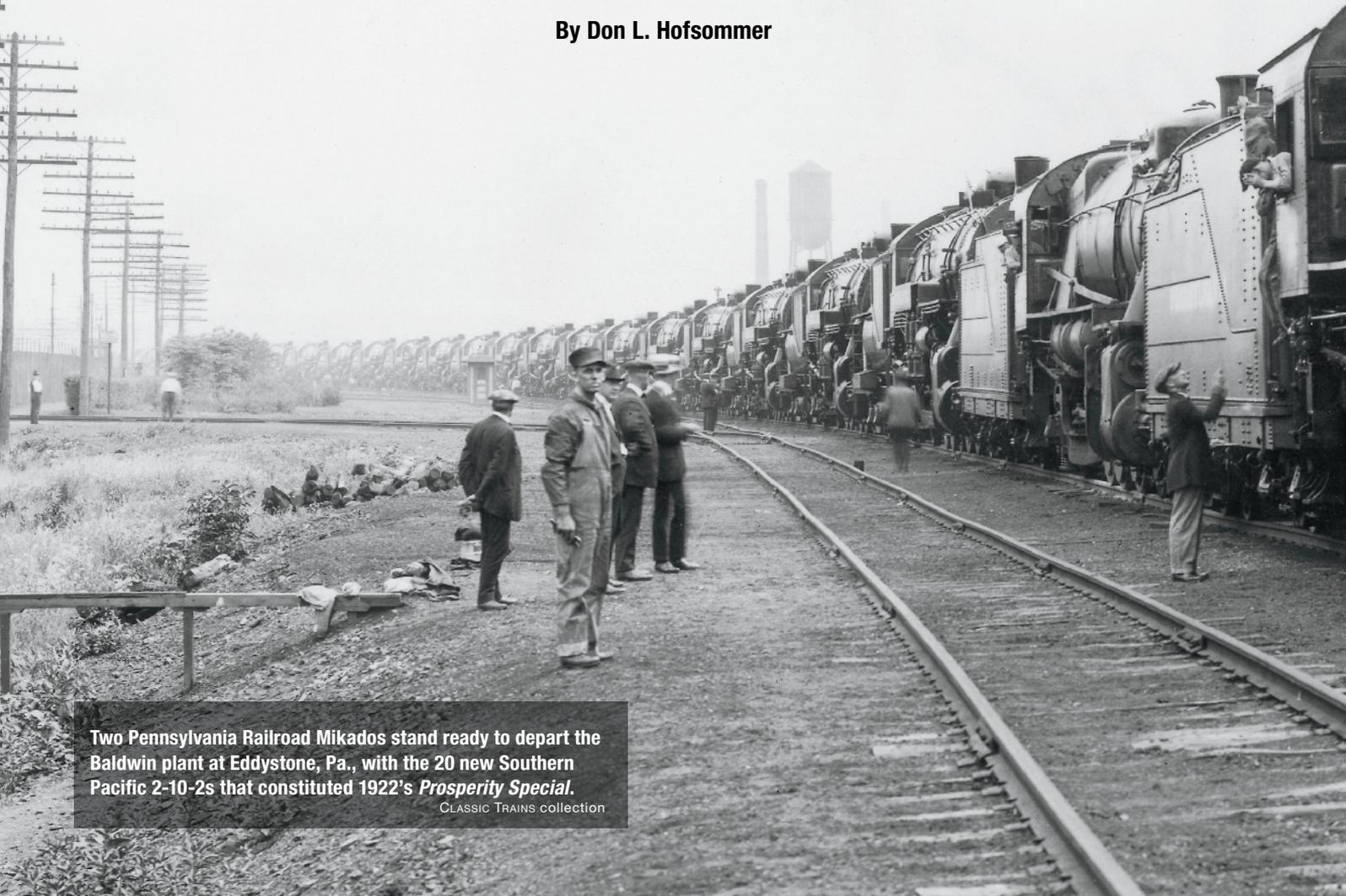
rest assured, Charlie — your old buddy Dave Morgan would be proud of all you’ve done to uphold the grand name of the “Old Reliable” L&N. 🎹

*RON FLANARY, a veteran TRAINS and CLASSIC TRAINS contributor, edits the L&NHS’s L&N Magazine. In 1961, Castner interviewed him about the “railroad museum” the 14-year-old had developed at his grandparents’ rooming house in Loyall, Ky. CHARLES BUCCOLA volunteers on L&N projects at the University of Louisville Archives and is Board Chairman of Kentucky Railway Museum.*

# THE PROSPERITY SPECIAL SYMBOL OF THE 1920s

A mass movement of new Southern Pacific locomotives across the nation captured the public's attention for five weeks in 1922

By Don L. Hofsommer



Two Pennsylvania Railroad Mikados stand ready to depart the Baldwin plant at Eddystone, Pa., with the 20 new Southern Pacific 2-10-2s that constituted 1922's *Prosperity Special*.

CLASSIC TRAINS collection

Perhaps no decade in the American experience has been more romanticized than the 1920s. That 10-year span, the “Roaring ’20s,” was the time of Fords and flappers, of speakeasies and the Charleston, and — above all else — of pleasure and prosperity. Despite such broadly held perceptions, the decade was also filled with confusion and contradiction. Indeed, those hectic years were not uniformly lauded by Americans, many of whom failed to prosper and many of whom were ill at ease with changing social mores.

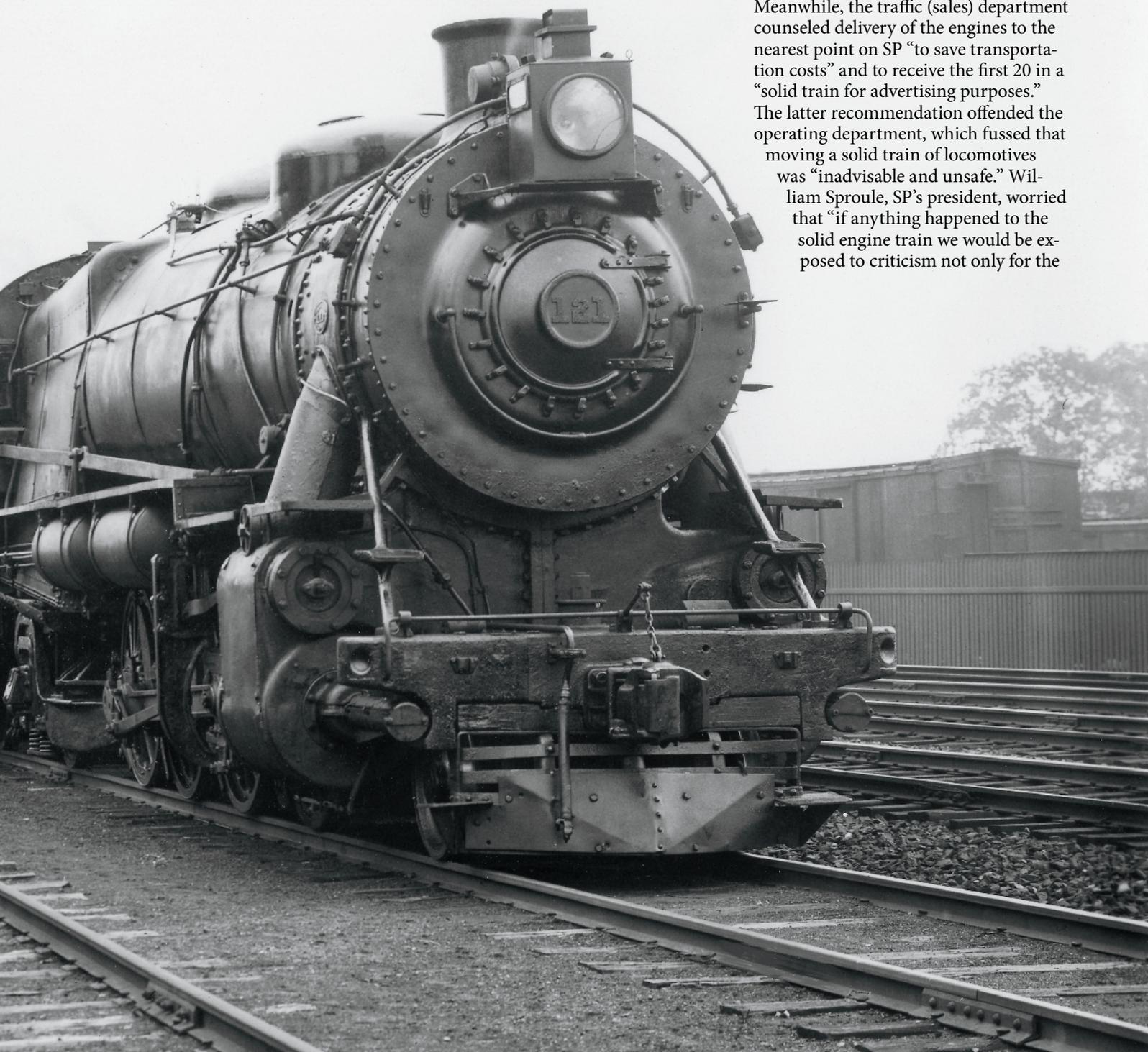
Yet Americans found near-consensus

on that which represented the biggest or the best — Babe Ruth, Lucky Lindy, Miss America, Jack Dempsey. Small wonder, then, that citizens from coast to coast also flocked to trackside for a glimpse of a special train, the likes of which had never been seen before: the *Prosperity Special*. To be sure, the *Prosperity Special*, a solid train of new locomotives, served as a perfect statement of contemporary values — big, powerful, and successful — implying American ascendancy.

The episode began without fanfare late in fall 1921 when Southern Pacific placed an order with Baldwin Locomotive Works for 50 2-10-2 locomotives.

The decision to purchase motive power at this time was made, said Julius Kruttschnitt, SP’s chairman, “to avoid expected increases in steel entering into construction of locomotives.” Such plain talk was typical of Kruttschnitt. For SP’s senior management, the matter was, purely and simply, a business decision. But it would become much more.

Intramural struggles erupted almost immediately within SP. Mechanical department officers urged receipt of the locomotives in small lots as quickly as they could be shipped; company accountants, on the other hand, urged taking acceptance at the latest possible date — and in a block — to save interest payments. Meanwhile, the traffic (sales) department counseled delivery of the engines to the nearest point on SP “to save transportation costs” and to receive the first 20 in a “solid train for advertising purposes.” The latter recommendation offended the operating department, which fussed that moving a solid train of locomotives was “inadvisable and unsafe.” William Sproule, SP’s president, worried that “if anything happened to the solid engine train we would be exposed to criticism not only for the





In an impressive display of latent power, more than two-thirds of SP's 50-engine 2-10-2 order is visible in this view at the Baldwin plant.

CLASSIC TRAINS collection



Another photo at Baldwin shows the builder's president, Samuel Vauclain, standing proudly before a long line of SP 2-10-2s fresh out of his company's shops, ready for shipment west.

CLASSIC TRAINS collection

accident but for having promoted it." Sproule sided with the mechanical and operating staffs.

Nevertheless, Sproule soon experienced pressure from the outside. Samuel M. Vauclain, president of Baldwin, and Samuel Rea, president of the Pennsylvania Railroad — which served the Baldwin works at Eddystone, Pa., near Philadelphia — both "attached the greatest importance to the benefits of the publicity that would be given to the movement of these twenty locomotives in a solid train." Sproule grumped loudly that SP would move the engines west of El Paso in small groups, and without public attention. At the same time, though, W. R. Scott, in charge of SP's operations in Texas and Louisiana, announced that in his territory he would "handle the train intact," and he would allow exhibitions for publicity purposes en route. (Although part of the SP system, the lines east of El Paso retained a degree of autonomy.)

The softening of SP's position was due in part to the continuing efforts of Vau-

clain and Rea and in part reflected the enthusiastic position taken by the St. Louis Southwestern Railway (SSW, popularly the "Cotton Belt Route"), a then-independent but friendly connecting carrier that would handle the engines from East St. Louis, Ill., to the junction with SP's Texas & Louisiana Lines at Corsicana, Texas. Indeed, when offered the chance to participate in this massive movement, SSW President James M. Herbert told Baldwin's W. A. Barrett that the Cotton Belt would "be glad to cooperate with you in every way, advertising and otherwise."

Garrett was dealing in understatement. In fact he was ecstatic to have the opportunity. His road was not a ne'er-do-well, but neither was it awash in profits or in name recognition. Garrett saw in the *Prosperity Special* an opportunity for the Cotton Belt to show its best side and to gain tremendous, free national publicity at the same time. Baldwin's senior management was similarly delighted. Garrett told Herbert that, among other things, he would have descriptive flyers

prepared for distribution by SSW's "operating and publicity people to the newspapers, Board of Trade, State Officials, and School Authorities in the towns through which the Special Train will pass."

### Ballyhooping the big move

Meanwhile, Baldwin and the Pennsylvania missed no opportunity to ballyhoo the entire event. "World's Greatest Train of Locomotives Now Being Moved Across the County," Baldwin announced as the 20-locomotive consignment left Eddystone on May 26, 1922. PRR assigned three locomotives (a doubleheader plus a helper on the rear) to the "half-a-mile train," except in the Allegheny Mountains, where six engines were required. The Pennsylvania announced stops for public inspection at 11 locations en route to East St. Louis, and also advertised "passing times" at many other places. All of it was promoted far and wide; PRR even issued special dining-car menus commemorating the movement.

The nation quickly warmed to the enterprise. Baldwin and PRR officials had anticipated as much, if SP officers had not. The public, largely disillusioned and confused following World War I, had watched the economy turn from general prosperity to a severe depression late in 1920; hard times persisted for another two years. Small wonder that Baldwin wanted to make the most of this large order, that Baldwin and PRR — "the Standard Railroad of the World" — seized upon the name *Prosperity Special*, and that even the President of the United States took special note. "My blessing upon the *Prosperity Special*," wrote Warren G. Harding; "may her speed be steadily maintained and may God grant her a safe arrival." George Wharton Pepper, Senator from Pennsylvania, got closer to

the point. “Many people are still unemployed, but the progress of the Prosperity Special means that the end of our troubles is not far off. That which begins as Prosperity Special,” Senator Pepper predicted, “will end in Prosperity General.”

The spotlight soon would turn to the St. Louis Southwestern. Baldwin’s Garrett was “running 24 hours ahead of the Engine train as far as East St. Louis so that nothing [would] be left undone to show the preparedness of the railroads to take care of conditions.” What Garrett meant by “conditions” was publicity. Along the Cotton Belt, virtually every newspaper carried stories noting the schedule of movements and the locations for display. “Go See Them When They Come,” ordered the editor of the *Illmo* (Missouri) *Timplicute*. The 6,000-ton train was placed on display in East St. Louis after delivery there by the Pennsylvania on June 5. St. Louis business leaders also staged a luncheon at the Missouri Athletic Club in honor of W. A. Garrett, who began his career as an office boy for the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis and eventually became president of the Seaboard Air Line Railway before signing on as Baldwin’s general transportation manager.

The news media waxed elegant. An editorial writer for the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* said that “this train of inert enginery [sic] units” was “an exhibit of what the mind and hand, laboring in unison, can perform.” After all, he continued, these locomotives were “the most magnificent specimens of their kind ever given form . . . [embodying] . . . everything the latest mechanical ingenuity can provide.” Even the German-language *St. Louis Westliche Post* carried a three-column article and illustration.

After being “viewed by thousands of people,” the *Prosperity Special* “left [Terminal Railroad Association] tracks, State Street, E. St. Louis, 7:20 AM, passing Valley Junction 7:45 AM.” Some 125 miles later, “the most remarkable train that ever traveled across the country” moved onto the massive Thebes Bridge over the Mississippi River, the Cotton Belt locomotives powering it “snorting angrily” as the *Special* entered Illmo at dusk. As had been the case at earlier lay-over points [the train ran in daylight only], “a throng of people” came out to view this train of engines — each one “with the potential power of a thousand giants in its wheels,” as an enthusiastic journalist from nearby Cairo, Ill., put it.

On the morrow, the *Special* resumed



The *Prosperity Special* begins its epic journey west from Eddystone on May 26, 1922. A Pennsylvania B6 0-6-0 is ahead of the two L1 Mikados that will take the train as far as Enola, Pa.

Odin Dorr



Somewhere west of Pittsburgh on the PRR, two N1 2-10-2s, assisted by a third engine on the rear, move the *Prosperity Special* toward East St. Louis, where the Cotton Belt will take over.

George B. Ritz

its journey, “whistling triumphantly as she raced farther into the west where each of the great iron steeds for the next decade and longer will pull trains . . . loaded with riches from farm, of mine, of factory, and people along the line will forget the meaning of the word hard-times.” Baldwin’s Garrett had been proved right. The *Prosperity Special* had, indeed, captured to public’s imagination; it was clearly perceived as a symbol of American purpose and power. “The locomotives were made for the West; paid for by the West, to serve the West. Prosperity is right!” concluded one Missouri writer.

The train moved methodically across Arkansas. “Business houses” at Campbell closed on the afternoon of June 8 so that all hands could be trackside when “The Wonder Train of the World” passed through town. Approximately 800 persons viewed the spectacle at Paragould, and “until late at night there were large

numbers of people going to and from the train” at Jonesboro. W. E. McGraw, SSW’s superintendent, whose business car brought up the rear of the train, embellished only slightly when he reported to President Herbert that “the entire population of all towns along the line are out in full force.” A Baldwin representative asserted that the “train has received more notoriety and publicity on the Cotton Belt than it has since departure from Philadelphia.” Because of hilly terrain south of Pine Bluff, the train was broken into four sections, 15 minutes apart. “Monstrous demonstrations at all points along line,” affirmed McGraw.

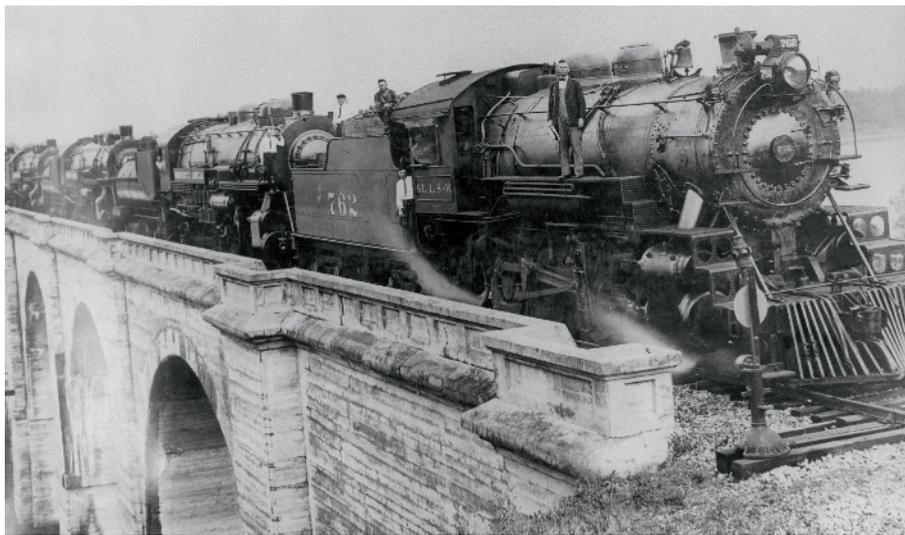
### “Santa Fe” type? Not on the SP!

Attention generated by the *Prosperity Special* astonished SP’s senior management in far-off San Francisco. Fox Film’s “News Weekly” included the story, as did most of the nation’s newspapers. In Texas,



Officials from the Cotton Belt, PRR, and Baldwin, plus local political leaders, pose with the *Prosperity Special* at East St. Louis on June 6, 1922.

Don L. Hofsommer collection



Cotton Belt 2-8-0 No. 762 has stopped the *Special* for a photo at the west end of the giant Thebes Bridge over the Mississippi River on June 10; another engine assisted at mid-train.

Don L. Hofsommer collection

officials of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce urgently wired SP's W. R. Scott in a vain attempt to have the train rerouted through their city. Baldwin's Grafton Greenough could not believe that SP would continue to maintain that "the advertising value of such a train was an unimportant item." Greenough urged that the SP not overlook "a wonderful opportunity . . . to reap the benefit awakened by the unique features of this shipment." President Sproule of the SP squirmed, and then grudgingly authorized minimal advertising, including reprints of broad-

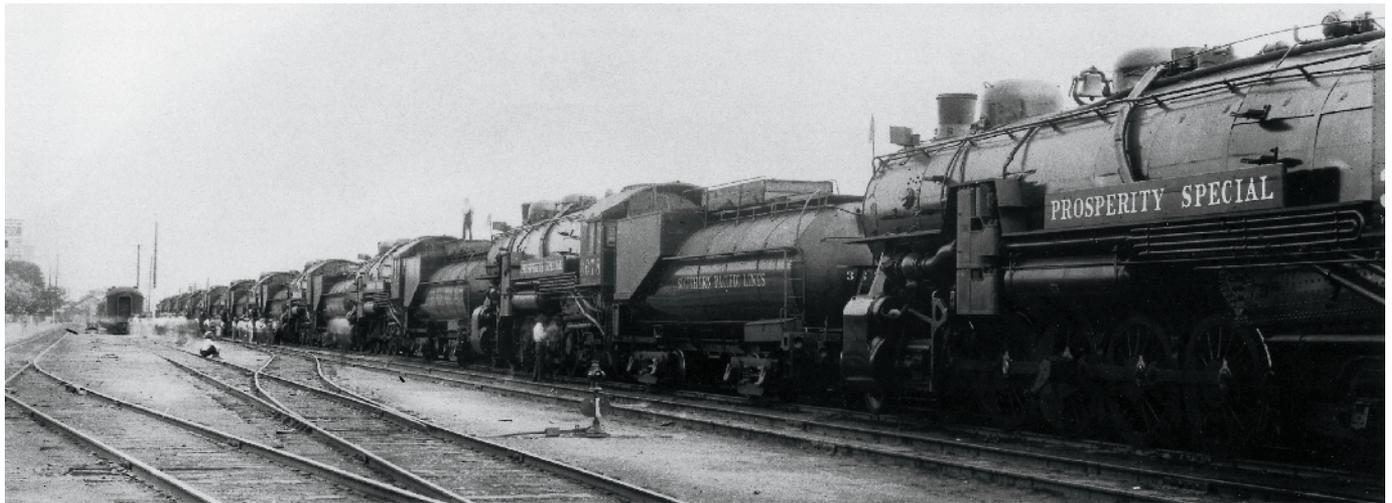
sides supplied by Baldwin — modified, however, to omit reference to "Santa Fe Type" in favor of "2-10-2." SP rival Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe should get no credit from all of this, Sproule growled. "On our line we have no type of locomotives known as the Santa Fe," echoed F. W. Mahl, SP's director of purchases.

All sections of the *Prosperity Special* arrived at Corsicana, Texas, between 2 and 3 p.m. on June 12; all were greeted by an enthusiastic crowd; and all were serenaded by the Odd Fellows Orphans Home Band. That evening the Corsicana

Chamber of Commerce hosted a dinner that was addressed by William McCarroll, a Baldwin representative accompanying the locomotives and by B. S. Hollian of Southern Pacific. J. M. Herbert wired W. A. Garrett: "Prosperity Special arrived Corsicana perfect condition. Engines ran cool and good order entire trip. Bear in mind Cotton Belt is the railroad of the Southwest." Herbert had ample reason to be cheery. His company had played successfully to a national audience, had greatly impressed the much larger Southern Pacific with its efficient and friendly service, and — not incidentally — had earned net in the amount of \$6,816.32.

The *Prosperity Special* was finally on rails of the company that had purchased the locomotives. Stops were arranged at Hearne, Houston, and San Antonio, where the public again turned out in great numbers. William Sproule could do no other than capitulate.

The locomotives left El Paso as a single train, which was greeted by huge crowds at every location — even in New Mexico and Arizona where, Sproule had argued, "our distances are too great and population too far apart for this train to cut much figure with us." The SP band at Tucson joined the mayor of that community in an inspired welcome. Shortly after noon on June 29, the *Special* steamed out of Yuma and into California. It was the heaviest train handled to date over



On home rails, the train stands at SP's Tucson, Ariz., station. Note PROSPERITY SPECIAL signs on the engines and boxes of parts on the tenders. Arizona Historical Society collection

the Los Angeles Division, where three Mikados and three Consolidations were joined by one Mallet locomotive to lift the heavy lading over Beaumont Hill east of Colton.

Entry of the *Prosperity Special* into the Los Angeles Basin was triumphant. "There were mothers with babies in arms, little children, big children, old men and women, young men and women in their every day attire and bare-headed, just as if they had run from the kitchen, garden, or chicken pen," wrote one newspaperman at Pomona in describing what happened at that location when the *Special's* "whistle blew" announcing arrival. At Los Angeles, the Chamber of Commerce staged a gigantic welcome, and in the presence of 5,000 exuberant observers, an attractive young woman broke a bottle of grape juice on the pilot of the lead locomotive in the time-honored, if Prohibition-flavored, christening ceremony. Then the train was spotted for two festive days at Exposition Bank, where thousands more partook of the extravaganza.

### A p.r. bonanza

William Sproule was amazed to receive hundreds of congratulatory telegrams. "The industrial world of the United States, which is soon to enjoy again the fruits of prosperity, owes much to the Southern Pacific for the confidence instilled into the manufacturers, businessmen, and wage-earners the country over," enthused Baldwin's Samuel Vauclain. "This confidence in the future," he went on, "has been contagious today in every part of our great country largely as a result of your Prosperity Special train of locomotives. Industry and business are



A typically large crowd has turned out to see the *Prosperity Special* at Ontario, Calif., on June 30, not long before the train's triumphant entry into Los Angeles, witnessed by thousands. Don L. Hofsommer collection

earnestly and enthusiastically backing up and supporting the President of the United States in his efforts to restore permanent prosperity to all the people." Said Clarence H. Howard, president of Commonwealth Steel: "Nation owes gratitude to men like yourself and Julius Kruttschnitt and Samuel Vauclain who promptly heeded President Harding's appeal for unemployment relief and splendidly expressed in terms of motive power."

If Sproule was embarrassed by this misinterpretation of SP's timing and intent in purchasing the locomotives, or by his own obstinate efforts to subvert the public relations potential of the *Prosperity Special*, he shrewdly camouflaged it. The remaining 30 locomotives trickled in over the next two months, dispatched westward over several roads that SP's traffic department wished to favor; the last four left Baldwin's erecting plant on July 25, 1922. SP paid \$78,215.29 per copy, f.o.b., or \$3,660,765 for the lot.

Southern Pacific had not been swayed by pangs of patriotism and had not been convinced by President Harding to do its bit, as it were, to bring the country out of the postwar depression. SP had simply needed new, modern motive power — especially for mountain grades in California and Oregon — and, as the blunt-spoken Julius Kruttschnitt said, placed the order with Baldwin when it did to simply obtain the best possible price. Nevertheless, the company became an unwitting partner in the boosterism that typified the "Roaring '20s." Indeed, the *Prosperity Special* proved a splendid statement of the time. ■

*DON L. HOFSSOMMER is a Professor of History at Minnesota's St. Cloud State University. An Iowa native, he has written extensively on American railroad history, including major books on the SP, Katy, and Minneapolis & St. Louis. This is his fourth CLASSIC TRAINS byline.*

# West Side,



New York Central RS3 8350 waits on the elevated West Side line after delivering cars to the post office facility at 30th Street in Manhattan. Today this is part of the popular High Line Park.

# East Side

A 1957 Manhattan  
“circle tour” included rides  
down a moribund freight  
line and up a bustling  
passenger artery

By Jim Shaughnessy • Photos by the author

Nearly 60 years ago, I had the privilege of riding into New York City on a fascinating freight-only line. Buried in cuts and tunnels, and raised above street level like a rapid-transit line, it attracted little public notice then. Today, however, it hosts thousands of people every day, riding Amtrak trains or strolling along an urban “linear park.” It was the New York Central’s West Side freight line.

New York’s first railroad, the New York & Harlem, opened in 1837. It ran from 23rd Street north to the Harlem River along what would later become Park Avenue. By 1852 the NY&H had been extended to meet the Western Railroad at Chatham, N.Y., 127 miles north of the city. From Chatham, the Western (later incorporated into the Boston & Albany) reached Boston to the east and Albany to the west.

In 1847, businessmen in Poughkeepsie, N.Y., organized the Hudson River Railroad to build a line along the east bank of the river from Chambers Street in lower Manhattan to a point just across the river from Albany later known as Rensselaer. The west side of Manhattan was chosen because there were ample flat areas along the river allowing development of freight yards, warehouses, and rail-to-water transfer opportunities. This line opened in 1851.

The HRR established freight yards at 145th, 60th, 41st, 30th, and 17th streets, plus a passenger station at 30th Street. Several docks received cars from New Jersey on carfloats.

The two railroads on Manhattan Island were connected in 1853, when the NY&H opened a line along the north bank of the Harlem River that met the HRR at Spuyten Duyvil. This route would be key to the future development of New York’s rail network.

Enter Cornelius “Commodore” Vanderbilt, a 70-year-old steamboat baron who had become enormously wealthy in the water transportation business. Seeing that the future lay with railroads, he began acquiring control of both the NY&H and the HRR. The Commodore really got into the railroad business in 1869 when he managed to consolidate the lines from New

York City to Buffalo into a single system, the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad. In 1871, he opened Grand Central Depot on the former NY&H at 42nd Street. Prior to this, the former HRR’s 30th Street terminal was the city’s main passenger facility, but Grand Central soon assumed that role. The NY&H became primarily a passenger line, while the HRR, although it retained a few suburban trains until shortly after World War I, became primarily a freight line.

As the city expanded, so did the importance of the West Side line. By the 1890s it was Manhattan’s principal all-rail freight route. The line supplied the city with fresh produce and carried manufactured products out to the world. Fresh milk arrived from as far away as northern New York and Vermont on special trains.

The southern portion of the line ran on city streets, and the train traffic added to the incredible congestion already afflicting the area. The small steam locomotives that worked the street trackage — 0-4-0s, 0-6-0s, and, after 1923, Shays — were fitted with coverings so their passing would not spook the mob of horses working in the area. Obviously, it didn’t take much to fool a New York City horse.

Horses, however, did play a part in train movements on the West Side. The congestion that resulted from the flood of people, horse-drawn wagons, and trains was enormous. In 1867 the city required that all trains in streets move at no more than 6 mph and be preceded by a rider on horseback carrying a red flag by day and a red lantern at night. In later years, as horses became less common in the city, the riders became something of a novelty, and were known as “Tenth Avenue Cowboys.”

## Getting the trains off the streets

Business on the West Side continued to prosper in the 1920s, adding to the congestion and confusion, now with automobiles and trucks added to the mix. In 1929 almost 900 freight cars a day rolled in and out of the 60th Street yard on more than 35 trains. After years of outrage by citizens, the city, state, and the



The April 13, 1957, ride began at Harmon; 3 miles south of there, the RS3 on the mail train passes a P-2 electric with a westbound passenger train.



**A couple of miles south of Spuyten Duyvil, the mail train has left the main line and approaches the George Washington Bridge on the West Side line, whose third rail is still in place but seldom used. Today, Amtrak trains from upstate New York pass this way en route to Penn Station.**

railroad proposed a massive reconstruction project that promised to remove tracks from 9th, 10th, and 11th avenues.

The first stage, in late 1929, saw the line from 60th to 30th streets relocated into a new rock cut located between 10th and 11th avenues. A roundhouse and engine servicing facility were built at 60th Street, along with a freight house and a landing for carfloats. This part of the project eliminated 105 grade crossings but required the demolition of 640 buildings, including two schools and a church. Changes were made north of 60th Street too, one of which was the covering of the track with an extension of Riverside Park, adding 32 acres of recreation space.

The next phase, starting about 1931, would raise the tracks south of 30th Street Yard onto a 1.5-mile elevated structure down to the end of the line at a new freight terminal at Spring Street near Greenwich Village.

This project also saw third-rail electrification installed from Spuyten Duyvil to 30th Street in 1934, allowing the removal of all steam locomotives from Manhattan. Class R-2 box-cab electrics brought freight trains down from Harmon to the West Side. Q-class steeple-cab motors handled switching in the yards. Tri-powered box-cab locomotives worked south of 30th Street. Their traction motors were powered by banks of batteries

that were charged by a 300 h.p. diesel engine or by current from the third rail.

The massive 13-mile West Side project was completed and officially opened in 1934. It cost \$150 million, or more than \$2 billion in current numbers.

### **Riding the West Side line**

My longtime friend Roderick Craib (now deceased) was an associate editor at the respected trade journal *Railway Age*. He would call me occasionally to accompany him on assignments to do the photography. In April 1957, Rod was researching NYC's West Side freight line. The line had suffered major traffic losses in recent years, and the railroad was in



**A rearward view from the engine shows the mail train clattering past 60th Street Yard, with the elevated West Side Highway in the background.**

the process of selling unused portions of property for development.

Rod had arranged for us to ride a train out of Harmon down onto the West Side line. On April 13, 1957, we boarded lightning-striped Alco RS3 No. 8350, which was ready to take several baggage cars of mail and express to the Post Office's distribution center near 30th Street. After being introduced to the local trainmaster who would accompany us, we walked over to the waiting train and climbed into the Alco's cab. After two blasts on the horn, we began easing through a maze of tracks, turnouts, and third-rail power runners to reach the four-track line along the Hudson. We rolled along at about 50 mph past several suburban stations, the great wall at Sing Sing prison in the village of Ossining, and other points of interest. At Spuyten Duyvil, instead of following the main line to the left toward Grand Central, we continued straight to cross the swing bridge spanning the mouth of the Harlem River. We were on the West Side line!

Now on double track, we remained right on the riverbank as we rolled under the east end of the George Washington Bridge and through the Riverside Park tunnel. We passed 60th Street yard, then entered the long rock cut with one street



**Below 60th Street, a long rock cut, spanned by dozens of street bridges, replaced the hazardous street trackage on 11th Avenue. Now covered, it seems like a tunnel to Amtrak riders.**



Having dropped its cars at the post office distribution center several blocks west of the Empire State Building, the RS3 idles above the intersection of 11th Avenue and 30th Street. From here, author Shaughnessy and his party took a taxi over to Grand Central Terminal.



Refrigerator cars crowd the tracks at 30th Street Yard, as seen from the "High Line." Today, LIRR trains are stored in a yard here.

overpass after another for as far ahead as you could see. Even though we were traveling through one of the busiest cities in the world, there was a strange sense of quiet — all the urban activity was out of sight above us. Finally we came to the elevated section. The line swung west, then south, then east as it curved around the ground-level 30th Street Yard, which was still busy with refrigerated cars lined up on team tracks. After another 90-degree turn, the elevated tracks continued south toward the St. John's Park terminal.

Reflecting the declining business on the southern end of the line, our trip ended at 30th Street. After spotting the mail cars on the post office tracks, we backed west to the corner of 11th Avenue

and 30th, where there was a stairway off the elevated line to the street. The RS3 would wait there for some cars to take back north after they had been loaded at the post office. We thanked our crew for an interesting ride, said good-bye, and the three of us descended to street level and hailed a cab for Grand Central.

The trainmaster had arranged for our return trip to Harmon on No. 65, the *Advance Commodore Vanderbilt*. Better yet, we would be riding in the cab of the locomotive. We descended into the bowels of Grand Central and made our way to the north end of the platform for Track 21. There sat class P-2 No. 235, one of the former Cleveland Union Terminal electrics the NYC had brought east and

# From “Death Avenue” to “High Line”



In a northward view at New York Central's 30th Street Yard in the 1920s, 11th Avenue is jammed with cars, trucks, and horse-drawn wagons waiting for a northbound freight train to clear the way farther up the avenue. The mixture of traffic types was a recipe for delay and danger, earning the thoroughfare the grim nickname of “Death Avenue.”

New York Central

modified for third-rail operation after the CUT electrification was shut down in 1953. I had time for a few photos before the three of us joined the engineer and fireman in the P-motor's small cab.

Exactly at the time shown in the timetable, 3:30 p.m., the engineer acknowledged the signal given to him by the conductor back at mid-train. The hogger reached out with his left hand to the big controller handle and opened it to the first notch. Almost imperceptibly the big locomotive began moving through the maze of tracks and turnouts and into the 3-mile Park Avenue Tunnel. Ahead, a series of green signals beckoned us onward, and our speed rose to about 40 mph. The light at the end of the tunnel grew larger and larger until we burst into daylight at 97th Street. From there we were on an elevated structure as far as the Harlem



This view from around the time the High Line opened in 1934 looks south at 10th Avenue and 30th Street Yard. The elevated West Side line comes in from the right, then turns to proceed south behind the buildings fronting 10th Avenue. The portion crossing 10th Avenue is the spur to the Post Office facility to which Shaughnessy's train delivered cars.

New York Central



Across town from and many vertical feet below the elevated West Side freight line, P-2 electric 235 waits at Grand Central with train 65, the *Advance Commodore Vanderbilt* for Chicago. Long-distance trains stopped using the terminal when the West Side Connector opened in 1991.



Shaughnessy's P-2 climbs away from the Park Avenue tunnel and onto the viaduct as a T-motor approaches with an inbound train.

River bridge. At 106th Street we passed under NK Tower, a fortress-like building that straddled the four-track line.

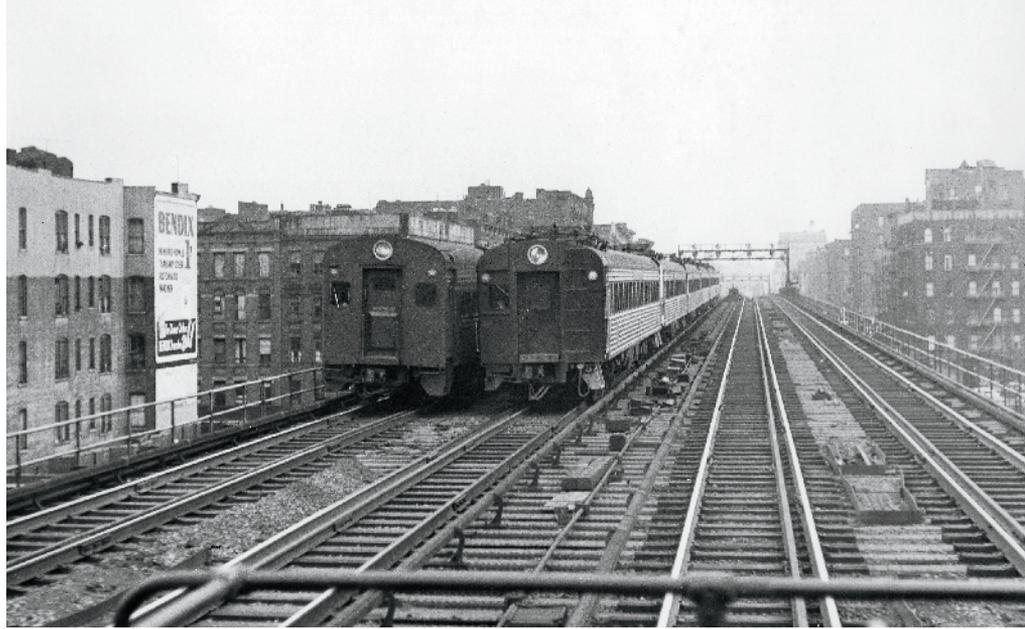
Once around the sharp curve at Spuyten Duyvil, we were beside the Hudson again, retracing our steps from the morning ride, and our speed significantly increased. The locomotive rode smoothly on its 2-C+C-2 running gear. In what seemed like only a few minutes after leaving Grand Central, we were pulling into Harmon. We bade our crew farewell, climbed down to the platform, and watched the big electric locomotive move away from the train. Moments later a pair of E8 diesels coupled on to whisk No. 65 up to Albany and points west.

### Death and rebirth

Less than three decades after NYC had improved the West Side line at tremendous cost, traffic on it had fallen

dramatically. Much of the freight business went to trucks, and much of it left the area altogether as companies vacated Manhattan for roomier, cheaper quarters. Mail and express shipments like the one our train handled also plummeted. With the introduction of diesels, it was no longer necessary to use the electric and tri-power locomotives, and the third rail was switched off in 1959. Road diesels brought freight trains into 60th Street; switchers worked south of there. In 1968 NYC became Penn Central, whose spectacular crash led to the formation of Conrail in 1976. By that time, almost no traffic remained on the West Side line.

In 1979, 30th Street Yard was sold to the Triborough Bridge & Tunnel Authority to build the Jacob Javitz convention center and a coach yard for Long Island Rail Road trains adjacent to Penn Station. As part of the Javitz work, the northern-



Farther up the Park Avenue viaduct, the *Advance Commodore* encounters multiple-unit trains belonging to NYC (left) and New Haven, running side by side toward Grand Central.



most portion of the elevated line was demolished and rebuilt on a slightly different alignment.

The elevated section saw its last train in April 1980, and the portion south of Gansevoort Street was demolished later that year. Conrail abandoned freight service south of 60th Street in 1982. The following year, a barge hit the Spuyten Duyvil swing bridge; in view of the cost of repairs and the lack of potential traffic, Conrail ended service south of that

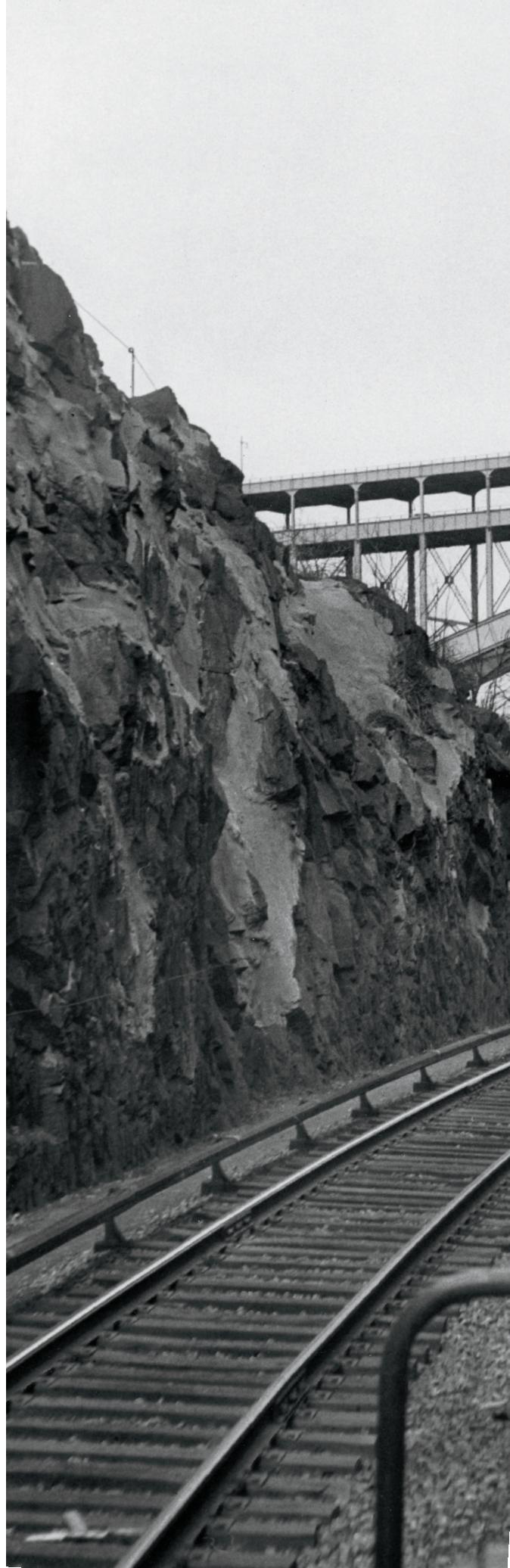
**Engineer John White notches back on the long controller handle to tap the P-motor's 2,900 h.p. in restarting the train after a stop.**



The Central's new Harlem River lift bridge was only about a year old when Shaughnessy's train crossed it on April 13, 1957. It replaced an 1893 swing span.



Still riding the front deck of the P-motor, Shaughnessy photographed H&P Junction, where the Putnam Division continued straight as the main line curved left.



Shaughnessy is about to rejoin the route of his morning train as No. 65 swings through the cut at Spuyten Duyvil. Directly ahead, a mail-and-express train like the one he rode earlier crosses the Harlem River bridge at the north end of the West Side line. Beyond that is the Hudson River; above, the Henry Hudson Parkway.



point. After 132 years of operation, the West Side line appeared to be dead.

Then, in 1990, seeing the line as a way to consolidate all of Amtrak's New York City operations into one terminal — Penn Station — the state and the passenger railroad funded what would be known as the West Side Connector. The Spuyten Duyvil bridge was repaired, and one track south of there was upgraded to allow 60 mph. A new tunnel at 37th Street, equipped with over-running third rail, connected the West Side line to Penn Station. On April 7, 1991, all Amtrak trains from upstate New York moved from Grand Central to Penn Station.

Meanwhile, the remaining elevated section, by then a jungle of weeds, trash, and decaying steel and concrete, was receiving attention. Many adjacent property owners agitated for its removal. Other local residents lobbied for its preservation. A non-profit group, Friends of the High Line, was formed in 1999 to promote its development into an elevated urban park, based on a similar project in Paris. They succeeded, and work began in 2006. High Line Park was a smash hit from the opening of the first segment, Gansevoort Street to 20th Street, in 2009. The final portion, around three sides of the old 30th Street Yard, opened in 2014.

When Rod Craib and I rode the West Side line in 1957, its future seemed bleak. We could hardly have imagined its rebirth decades later as a key passenger route and one of the most popular parks in the nation. ■

*JIM SHAUGHNESSY, one of the top photographers of the "classic era," lives in Troy, N.Y. His "Shaughnessy Files" series began in our Fall 2007 issue.*



Seen from the P-motor's cab, passengers for the *Advance Commodore* wait for the train to stop at Harmon, where diesels will take over.



# ERIE LACKAWANNA

## *reprise*

Three months into Conrail, an old flag still flew high

By Dan McFadden • Photos by the author

If you have ever seen the classic Thornton Wilder play *Our Town*, you may remember the final scene where the main character, in her afterlife, gets her wish to relive an ordinary day that she had once so taken for granted.

So did I, but well before any afterlife that might be in store for me. What made my day was a quite ordinary Erie Lackawanna freight, or so it appeared.

Before the EL came into being, I had discovered the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western and spent many happy hours on it, primarily at the junction of the Boonton and Morris & Essex lines in Denville, N.J. Initially, I got there by bike over a hilly 6- or 7-mile route, many days with a Brownie camera stowed on the

handlebar. In time I got lucky and met the second-trick towerman, Jimmy Morris, and when I got my driver's license, I was able to spend even more time there. My visits there were actually over the top for a while, as I just squeaked through the first two years of college, at which point I adjusted my priorities.

Although the merger of the DL&W with the Erie in October 1960 was somewhat dreaded beforehand, the actual event did have some real benefit to local fans. In addition to DL&W's FM Train Masters, we now would see Alco PAs and RS3s from the Erie on passenger trains. Not that Erie's color scheme was bad, but DL&W's passenger livery won out and was even applied to units that had been basic black on the DL&W, such as Geeps. When the through-line passenger service was rationalized nine months after the merger, the DL&W route via Scranton, Pa., won out. So, the EL turned out pretty well. Early in the life of the EL, we would see treasures such as milk trains with open-vestibule Boonton coaches

**Left: A state-owned GE U34CH commuter-train engine spices up the scene at Dover.**

and RPO cars on the M.U. trains, not to mention substantial through passenger service. One by one these disappeared, but the EL still held its charm for me.

So it was a blue day, literally and figuratively, when EL faded into Conrail. I continued my occasional visits lineside, but Penn Central units seemed to be part of every freight consist I saw, and I was definitely not a Penn Central aficionado!

More than three months after CR began, on July 17, 1976, I was making another desultory visit to Denville when this became my *Our Town* day. Along came Conrail freight CS-9 (Croxtton to Scranton), but it looked the part of an EL train in every respect. The clock had been turned back!

Its power was two ordinary ex-Erie GP7s, the 1241 and 1229, both from the freight pool. The roll of Kodachrome 64 in my camera was all I had along, so it would have to do. First I caught the pair making set-outs and pick-ups by the Denville tower I used to spend so much time in. CS-9 was an all-stops job, so I knew it would be easy to chase.

The next town was Dover, where the suburban electrification ended, as did most diesel commuter trains, which by then were push-pull consists powered by state-owned GE U34CH diesels. A third unit was added here, the 1404, also ex-Erie but from the passenger pool. Like the others, it was still in full EL livery and not renumbered. The U34CHs on hand still had their EL diamond emblems, adding to the “historical accuracy” of the day.

Then it was on to Chester Junction/



**The three GP7s pretend it's old Jersey Central times, “interchanging” cars at Lake Junction.**

Lake Junction, where daily interchange with the Central of New Jersey had last occurred just 100 days before. Now it was essentially Conrail interchanging with Conrail, but it all looked like latter-day EL at its best. Back in my college days, this was another favorite hangout, where CNJ “baby-face” Baldwins ran from Allentown to Green Pond six days a week. I got to ride that freight one day, but that story is for another time.

With bird in hand, I next motored to Lake Hopatcong where I caught the trio coming past the old station. Just beyond it was the formerly important yard in Port Morris, where the Lehigh & Hudson River had provided DL&W an important link to New England. The EL merger soon killed this connection as freight was then routed directly to Maybrook, N.Y., over the ex-Erie main.

I had a fifth and final place to see this ghost of the EL — the great Lackawanna

Cutoff. This mammoth work had opened on Christmas Eve 1911 but now was clearly on borrowed time as “rationalization” was the theme. I had caught freights a few times on the Cutoff in EL days, but it was a big investment to catch a single freight on an uncertain schedule. There is one small tunnel on the Cutoff (Roseville), and just west of this is a massive cut. Yes, this was a Conrail freight, but the pictures tell another story. **1**

*DAN McFADDEN grew up in Brooklyn and spent summers in New Jersey, getting to see DL&W steam just once as a young boy. As a teen, he found that the Morristown & Erie was an easy chase on his bike, also that, with a little more pedaling, Denville Junction was reachable. Now retired, Dan commuted by rail for 35 years to New York City, where he wrote financial risk management software. He lives with wife Barbara in Mountain Lakes, N.J.*



**Conrail is “imaginary” as the Geeps pass the Lake Hopatcong station.**



**On the Cutoff west of Roseville Tunnel comes the reminder of EL days.**



SANTA FE



# Riding High SANTA FE'S BIG MOVE OF 1956

“Hi-Level” cars for *El Capitan* were the last great innovation in private long-distance American passenger railroading

By Karl Zimmermann

Every now and then, even in the conservative American railroad industry, an innovation has proven to have legs, a bright future, and significant impact. Such was the Hi-Level car concept introduced 60 years ago for Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe’s *El Capitan*, the fast, luxurious, extra-fare Chicago–Los Angeles coach train. It was these cars that inspired Amtrak’s Superliners, found today on all Western long-distance trains. Not only that, the *Coast Starlight*’s Pacific Parlour Cars, easily the greatest treat for sleeping-car passengers on Amtrak today, began life as *El Capitan*’s lounge cars.

In 1945, when World War II ended, America’s railroads, stalwart during the conflict, took a deep breath, licked their wounds, and looked ahead. In a move that some in hindsight have deemed a mistake, virtually every railroad helped

flood the major carbuilders — the Budd Company, Pullman-Standard, American Car & Foundry, St. Louis Car — with orders to re-equip their war-weary passenger trains. Streamlining, which began in

1934 with Burlington Route’s *Zephyr* and Union Pacific’s M-10000 and reached maturity in 1937 with Santa Fe’s *Super Chief*, was universally the mode. Although most new cars were just improved versions of pre-war coaches, sleepers, diners,

and lounge cars, there was one brilliant innovation: the dome car. Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, which would become the biggest dome-car operator, got the jump by applying a dome to a pre-war flat-top coach in 1945, before ordering factory-built dome cars from Budd. The dome concept prefigured and inspired Santa Fe’s Hi-Level cars.

Already in the works was General



lounge car

Sensing the p.r. potential of the new Hi-Levels, Santa Fe arranged this “shoot” at Los Angeles Union Passenger Terminal.

ATSF, Kansas State Historical Society collection



Preceding the Hi-Levels were 16 Budd full-length "Big Domes" in 1954 for Santa Fe. In the Amtrak era, some (above) went to Auto-Train Corp. Pullman-Standard



The angled top window panel identifies the middle car as one of the two Hi-Level prototypes in this 1972 photo of Amtrak's *Super-El Cap*. Tom Hoffmann

Motors' four-car, all-dome *Train of Tomorrow*, built by Pullman-Standard and launched on national tour in 1947, intended to demonstrate passenger trains' bright future. Clearances precluded dome-car operations on most Eastern roads, so just 16 North American carriers bought dome cars, which would total 236 in number. Some would find second owners, even before Amtrak, and many operate today in private ownership. Amtrak showcases its only remaining one, an ex-Great Northern full-length dome, on various services, and Budd domes built for Canadian Pacific's *Canadian* in 1955 still serve on VIA Rail's *Canadian* and a few other trains.

The postwar carbuilding boom lasted barely a decade, essentially ending in 1956 when CB&Q re-equipped its *Denver Zephyr* with Budd-built consists that included three domes. Also in 1956, Santa Fe placed in service a new train that would have a far greater impact in the long run: the Hi-Level *El Capitan*, which could be seen as an evolution of the dome concept. In 1964 Santa Fe took delivery of two dozen additional Hi-Level chair cars for the "El Cap," to really write "finis" to the railroads' appetite for new

passenger cars. This last order allowed some of the 1956 Hi-Levels to be transferred to the transcontinental *San Francisco Chief*, from Chicago.

### COACH COMPANION TO THE SUPER

The first *El Capitan*, named for the grand rock-faced mountain in Yosemite National Park, debuted February 22, 1938, the same day the second *Super Chief* consist entered service. Operating on the same fast 39¾-hour Chicago–Los Angeles schedule, the trains were two sides of the same shiny coin — the *Super* was the epitome of all-Pullman luxury, while the *El Cap* was a standout among a growing nationwide crop of deluxe coach trains. (An interesting footnote: When the two new trains were moved from exhibition at Chicago to Los Angeles to be shown there, they operated as a single consist, the five *El Cap* cars ahead of the *Super's* nine. This forecast what would become standard practice two decades hence during off-seasons.) The two original *El Capitan* consists, both built by Budd, allowed twice-weekly service. Each five-car train could accommodate just 192 passengers, so the consists were soon amplified in summer with addi-

tional coaches. In 1948, more new cars resulted in daily service.

By the early 1950s Santa Fe knew it needed more equipment for the *El Cap*, 50 cars minimum, since even two sections in summer and peak holiday periods couldn't keep up with demand. New cars also would enable the potential redeployment of existing *El Cap* equipment to streamline heavyweight secondary trains such as the *Grand Canyon*.

Budd was suggesting a bi-level design for intercity cars as early as 1952, and Santa Fe, with considerable Budd loyalty, was inclined to listen. The Philadelphia firm was the pioneer in bi-level passenger cars, delivering during August 1950–January 1951 30 "gallery"-style coaches to the Burlington for Chicago suburban service. The new car type featured single window seats and an aisle on each side of the upper level, with the center open to the lower level, enabling conductors to lift or check all tickets from the lower floor. Over the next 15 years, Budd built 44 more bi-levels for the CB&Q, as well as similar cars for the Milwaukee Road. St. Louis Car and Pullman-Standard supplied bi-levels to Chicago & North Western, Rock Island, and Southern Pa-





After boarding Hi-Level coaches, passengers climbed stairs to the main seating area (above left), where end doors provided car-to-car access (above right). Luggage shelves were below (right).

Three photos, Santa Fe

cific. (In a sense, Long Island Rail Road had been the pioneer, with so-called “double-deck” coaches as early as 1932, but in these cars passengers stepped up or down to seats from a central aisle, so the cars were not true bi-levels.)

The Santa Fe Hi-Levels’ most immediate ancestors were 16 Budd full-length “Big Domes” acquired in early 1954 for

reaction and confirm operational practicality. Besides more capacity, the railroad no doubt eyed two other potential benefits of Hi-Levels: operational economies and grist for its active and successful public relations department.

“Riding High: Addition of unique passenger cars on El Capitan trial run another ‘Big Dome’ for ‘54,” headlined a story in the *Santa Fe Magazine* house organ for August 1954 that discussed the press, radio, and television unveiling on July 19 of “two experimental streamline ‘Hi-Level’ cars for test on the El Capitan” and described these chair cars in detail. (The “another Big Dome” comment is telling, for it suggests



coach seating

*El Capitan*, *Chicagoan/Kansas City Chief*, and *San Francisco Chief*. But by then, Santa Fe had something much more revolutionary in the works — the Hi-Level *El Capitan* — and the Big Domes went to the *Chief*. In 1952 the Santa Fe turned to Budd for two demonstrator Hi-Levels the road would use to sample passenger

that Santa Fe saw the Hi-Levels, though different in many ways, as somehow evolutionary kin of domes, particularly full-length ones, yet to come.)

### SEATS ABOVE, EQUIPMENT BELOW

The Hi-Levels’ upper deck held only passenger seats — foam rubber covered



in blue needlepoint, with adjustable head rests and leg rests. These would number 67, compared to the 44 to 48 on existing *El Cap* chair cars, to be staffed by the same single coach attendant. The lower deck would hold spacious restrooms, far larger than on traditional cars, and luggage storage, plus “service equipment,” primarily air-conditioning units and diesel generators. End doors for passing between cars were on the upper level — a significant difference from dome cars. The Hi-Levels would be 15 feet 6½ inches tall, about a foot and a half higher than conventional equipment, but the same length, 85 feet. At 8 feet 7 inches above the rails, the upper level was 4 feet 3 inches higher than conventional coach floors. “Being farther from the rails,” the *Santa Fe Magazine* article promised, “passengers will ride with less noise and vibration.”



Color artwork from 1958 Santa Fe fold-out El Capitan brochure



The “dome-type lounge cars” had “the sightseeing advantages of a dome plus the comfort and luxury of a lounge.” The upper level could seat 60 passengers, with a 26-seat lounge below.

Santa Fe

Naturally these cars featured the fluted stainless-steel construction that was Budd’s hallmark and had become the defining aesthetic for Santa Fe streamliners. Doors were at the centers of Hi-Level cars, which had no end vestibules. “Passengers entering the car step directly in from platform level and hand their luggage to a porter, who places it on shelves running along the corridor in the center of the car,” the magazine explained. “A special locking device enables the attendant to keep all baggage under lock and key until it is required.”

Accordingly there were no luggage racks above the seats in the passenger section, and the center aisle was depressed for more headroom, standard practice with dome cars. Another convenience was a separate opening in the side

of the cars for unloading luggage, leaving the vestibules clear for disembarking and boarding passengers. The magazine article spoke of the “row of wide picture windows running near the roof line. They are not dome cars,” it conceded, in spite of the article’s headline, though when the production trains arrived, their lounges would initially be called “dome lounges,” which they did resemble.

The two prototypes, Nos. 526–527, each with an aisle stairway down to the lower level at one end to provide access to single-level cars, would test as a pair on the *El Cap*, with the ends with upper-level passage abutting. Passengers polled were very positive, liking the high-level view, the smooth ride, and the quiet. Santa Fe was sold and authorized Budd to build 35 more Hi-Level chair cars (10

68-seaters with car-end stairs, 25 72-seaters without), 6 Hi-Level diners, and 6 Hi-Level lounges, enough cars for five *El Cap* consists plus a protection diner and lounge. The prototype pair would be part of the *El Cap* pool. In addition, six baggage-dormitory cars were fitted with cowling (basically airfoils, though of more cosmetic than practical value) to become “transition” cars.

There would be some changes from the prototypes to the production cars. One problem — the discomfort of mobility-impaired passengers forced to go down and up stairs to access restrooms — was solved by placing a restroom in the lounge car. Also, the chair cars would have overhead racks above seats for small items. On the other hand, no further mention was made of the ability to lock up luggage.

The decision to go for Hi-Levels was told in the April 1955 *Santa Fe Magazine*. “It has become increasingly evident to us that the trend during the last several years in the railroad passenger business has been toward chair-car travel,” said Santa Fe President Fred G. Gurley. “This new train will have greater customer appeal. The patron will receive more for his travel dollar. At the same time, this improved service will result in increased economy which we have been striving to reach in our passenger operations.”

How would the cars save Santa Fe money? The 12-car Hi-Level train (including existing low-level mail storage, baggage, and dorm cars) provided 496 revenue seats, compared with 350 for the normal 14-car conventional train and 438 for the 16-car summer *El Cap*. The Hi-Level diner seated 80, versus 74 for the two conventional lunch-counter diners it replaced, which meant two to four fewer waiters. All this yielded more seats but fewer cars, thus less weight to haul, not to mention fewer coach attendants and waiters. Budd advertising claimed that “10 of these new cars can do the work of 16 conventional cars” — perhaps a bit of a stretch, but not much of one.

### TRAINS GETS ON BOARD

“The dome-lounge is a first cousin to the full-length dome,” said long-time TRAINS Editor David P. Morgan. He was among the first to sample the train, on a Pittsburgh–Washington press trip over the Baltimore & Ohio on June 16, 1956, then on board the July 7 pre-inaugural runs between Chicago and L.A., highlighted by a double christening when the trains met at Albuquerque.

# Superliners

## AMTRAK'S FLEET WAS Sired BY THE HI-LEVELS

While several Hi-Level lounge cars live on as Amtrak's Pacific Parlour Cars on the *Coast Starlight* [next page], a more significant legacy is the huge fleet of Superliners that operate on all Western long-distance plus a few others. These cars, some now approaching age 40, had a long gestation period.

On July 3, 1973, Roger Lewis, Amtrak's first president, sent a request for proposals to 13 companies — 6 engineering firms, 7 railcar and aerospace companies — for a “totally new rail passenger car.” Coverdale & Colpitts and Louis T. Klauder & Associates were finalists, and Klauder got the nod after preparing a detailed proposal with several floor plans, none of which made it intact beyond this first stage, although the firm was instrumental in other aspects of the planning.

“It was never explicitly stated that the cars were to be bi-level,” Michael R. Weinman, a Klauder subcontractor responsible for some of the design, said recently, “but it was assumed.”

Klauder's 20 suggested floor plans included a lounge car with multiple spaces for a variety of activities: a children's area, card room, and intimate cocktail bar. The dining car in part replicated an old Pullman (a nod to Victoria Station, a popular railroad-themed restaurant chain at the time). Klauder also submitted several sleeping-car designs, including a Slumbercoach configuration, a sleeper-lounge, and a deluxe roomette car with serpentine hallway (patterned after an Australian car) that obviated the need to raise the bed to use the toilet. Inspired in part by Seaboard Air Line's Sun Lounges, Weinman promoted the deep windows and skylights that grace the Sightseer Lounges and were considered for all the cars.

Although no Hi-Level sleepers were built, Budd did draw plans for one in 1957 when Santa Fe was considering re-equipping the *Super Chief*. On the upper level, eight roomy double bedrooms stretched across the car, but this would have required four sets of double-wide steps for access. With just six single rooms on the lower level, the total berth count of 22 would only equal that of the 10-roomette, 6-double bedroom configuration most common on single-level sleepers. The design adopted had 5 deluxe bedrooms (now “bedrooms” to Amtrak), 14 economy bedrooms (“roomettes”), 1 accessible bedroom, and 1 family room — 44 beds in all.

In August 1974 Budd, Pullman-Standard, Rohr, and Boeing attended a bidders' conference; Amtrak chose P-S. The first order comprised 284 cars: 102 coaches, 48 baggage-coaches, 70 sleepers, 39 diners, and 25 Sightseer Lounges (a late add-on). They were delivered during 1979–81. (Initial projections had called for up to 1,000 cars.) The Superliners replaced single-level cars first on the *Empire Builder*, then the

*California Zephyr*, *Southwest Limited*, *Sunset Limited*, *Texas Eagle*, and *Coast Starlight*. Eventually two Western trains added in the late 1970s, the *Pioneer* and *Desert Wind*, also got Superliners, until they were discontinued in 1997.

Beginning in 1993, Amtrak expanded the fleet with orders to Canadian firm Bombardier Transportation for 195 more cars, dubbed “Superliner II” and built in Vermont, which included 38 coaches, 49 sleepers, 30 diners, and 25 lounges. Though small tweaks based on nearly 15 years' experience were made, the Superliners IIs were mostly clones of the originals. However, the order did include new designs: 6 all-deluxe bedroom sleepers to be used on *Auto Train* and 47 transition dorm-sleepers to replace the former *El Capitan* coach dorms previously in use. In addition to *Auto Train*, the



Sleeping car 32009, appropriately named *George M. Pullman*, rides the transfer table as the last Superliner outshopped from the historic South Side Chicago Pullman works, December 23, 1981.

Joshua D. Coran

*Capitol Limited*, *City of New Orleans*, and (for a time) *Cardinal* were converted to Superliners with this order. The additional cars also allowed Amtrak to seasonally assign Superliners to some short-haul trains out of Chicago including the former *International* to Toronto, each consist including a coach with a snack bar on the lower level in place of seats.

Between August 2004 and August '06, Amtrak upgraded 41 Superliner I sleepers, with some bedrooms receiving a larger toilet/shower annex. Between November 2006 and June '08, 17 diners were converted to “Cross Country Cafe” diner-lounges for the *Texas Eagle*, *City of New Orleans*, and *Capitol*. The intent was to offer a casual, anytime service to better fit contemporary tastes, but passenger reception has been mixed at best, and those trains still usually carry a Sightseer Lounge, with only the diner section of the converted cars in use. Other changes, including tables in one end of the Sightseer Lounges' upper level, have been minimal.

It's fortunate that, 60 years ago, Santa Fe had a winning idea with its Hi-Levels. Since no replacements are in the pipeline, the Superliners are likely to serve Amtrak for some time. — Karl Zimmermann



## Amtrak's Pacific Parlour Cars: STILL GOING STRONG

**The story of *El Capitan's* Hi-Level lounges' second career began in January 1995 when Brian Rosenwald was appointed product manager of Amtrak's *Coast Starlight*.**

"It was the first and only time in Amtrak history," Rosenwald has said, "that all decision-making was taken out of corporate headquarters and transferred into the field. If you had an idea that could make a train better, you had a real chance of getting it done. That was exhilarating."

With improving the *Starlight* in mind, Rosenwald was walking through Los Angeles' 8th Street Yard with Lee Bullock, vice president of Amtrak West, to whom he reported.

"We were looking at equipment and brainstorming what we might do to physically upgrade the train," Rosenwald said, "and we walked over to a group of Hi-Level lounges that had recently been bumped from the *Sunset* by Superliner Sightseer Lounges." He asked Bullock about them.

"They're being stored," Bullock said. "Do you think you might want to use them?" Bullock talked to Bob Burk, a friend and Amtrak's Chief Mechanical Officer, who thought it was a great idea, and before long the Pacific Parlour Car was born, just one amenity among many for Rosenwald's re-envisioned *Coast Starlight*. "We did what we could at 8th Street on the cheap," Rosenwald said, "adding some shelves for books and cabinets for board games. We figured if the cars were successful and ridership and revenues were up, then we could send them to Beech Grove for a dramatic overhaul."

All that came to pass, and within a few years the cars emerged from Beech Grove looking much as they still do today, which is great. — K.Z.



**The 96.7-ton Hi-Level diner required six-wheel trucks. Each car sat 80, at 19 tables for 4 plus two pairs. The 36-foot, all-electric kitchen was below, with a dumbwaiter to move the food.**

Pacific Parlour Car (top left), Bob Johnston; above, Santa Fe

The June trip began at the grand Pittsburgh & Lake Erie station, which B&O intercity trains used. After dead-heading from Chicago the night before, the train left at 9:45 a.m., heading east on the B&O to Eckington Yard in Washington, D.C., from where buses took the passengers to the Mayflower Hotel.

Aboard for the July trips were two groups of *TRAINS* readers. "Another BIG Rail Fan trip via Santa Fe" bannered a full-page ad in the May '56 issue. "Here's a dream trip," the ad read, "the once-in-a-lifetime chance to take part in the preview runs of Santa Fe's new-type trains." There would be photo stops in scenic areas, railroad staff on board to describe the new train's special features, along with a courier-nurse and an Indian guide.

Each Hi-Level chair car in which the *TRAINS* groups traveled weighed 79½ tons and the lounge 83, but both rode on four-wheel, swing-hanger trucks. Like a Big Dome, the 96.7-ton diner required six-wheel trucks. Its all-electric kitchen was on the lower level, making the dining room — with 19 tables for four and two pairs, no lunch counter as on the single-level trains — "quieter and more comfortable," Santa Fe claimed. Two "subveyors" (a type of dumbwaiter) brought food up from the 36-foot, full-width kitchen, the largest in any railroad car. Décor throughout the train was "Indian Southwest," typical of Santa Fe, which played out in the diner as a com-

bination of "Zuni Turquoise, frost walnut," and beige. Upholstery was red coral mohair. Deep-pile carpeting in all the cars was Santa Fe "Cactus Leaf."

The "dome-type lounge cars," according to an inauguration press release, "which are probably the most elaborate railroad cars ever built, feature the sight-seeing advantages of a dome car plus the luxury and comfort of a lounge car." The upper level accommodated 60 passengers in banquettes for four, tables for two,



and single easy chairs. At one end was a writing desk under an etched, one-way mirror. Behind it was the service galley, the mirror allowing an attendant to "check the needs of his patrons without being seen by them." On the lower level was a 26-seat lounge. In time, the upper level would be cleverly dubbed the "Top of the Cap Lounge" and the lower level the "Kachina Coffee Shop Lounge" where patrons could "enjoy a 'snack' from early morning until late at night."

As the Hi-Level cars arrived from

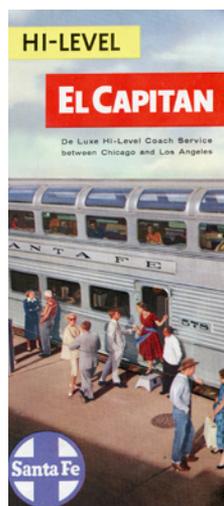


New "Warbonnet" FP45s are in charge of the combined *El Cap-Super Chief* at Glorieta, N.Mex., on June 4, 1968. The former Santa Fe Hi-Levels would carry on during Amtrak's early years.

Two photos, Tom Hoffmann

Budd, Santa Fe's practiced publicity machine was cranked up. Public exhibitions in the second half of June were planned in Washington, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago, and Kansas City. While the train was in Chicago, special guests were invited on a round trip to Streator, Ill., with dinner on board. There were also dinner trips from Washington, with a menu that included Philadelphia pepper pot soup, roast tenderloin of beef with fresh mushroom sauce, au gratin potatoes, and new peas, chestnut salad, and fresh strawberry shortcake with whipped cream. After that the train headed to Los Angeles for exhibition there on July 2 and at other Southern California cities before starting east on July 7, to be part of the double christening the next day in Albuquerque.

On a single track at 2 p.m., the two *El Caps* convened, their "Warbonnet" F units nose to nose, across the speakers' stage in front of the Santa Fe station and Fred Harvey's Alvarado Hotel, where "delegations from both sides of the continent gathered," said the report in the August *Santa Fe Magazine*. This included "several thousand railfans from Southern California." The Santa Fe All-Indian Band from Winslow, Ariz., gave a concert while the crowd gathered, then struck up the "El Capitan March" as the streamliners ap-



proached. President Gurley's wife christened the eastbound train with a bottle of Lake Michigan water, while Albuquerque Mayor Maurice Sanchez's wife doused the westbound with Pacific Ocean water. Since the christening ceremony coincided with Albuquerque's 250th anniversary celebration, the Duke and Duchess de Albuquerque (the original spelling) were on hand from Madrid.

There was a parade, luncheon at the Alvarado, and "Enchantorama," a pageant depicting the city's history. Gurley gave the city a steam locomotive for display in Coronado Park, and Santa Fe's far older 2-8-0, by then dubbed *Cyrus K. Holiday* for its new, ceremonial role, steamed in to reenact the railroad's maiden arrival into the city.

Finally on July 15, all the hoopla over, the Hi-Levels entered regular service. By then the single-level *El Capitans* had logged nearly 18 million miles and hauled 2,338,065 passengers. The train had many miles, many passengers, and many years ahead, though, in its new guise. The 1964 final private railroads' major order for long-distance passenger cars brought 24 new Hi-Levels from Budd for *El Capitan* consists, allowing some earlier Hi-Levels to work on the *San Francisco Chief*. They were suitably introduced with a ceremony on that city's Embarcadero.

The *El Cap* and its cars soldiered on



virtually unchanged for nearly two decades, up to and well past the May 1, 1971, inception of Amtrak. Beginning in 1958, they would run combined with the *Super Chief* in the off-seasons. They performed so well they inspired Amtrak's huge fleet of Superliners, cars that in many ways are clones of the Hi-Levels, with sleeping cars added.

In further testament to the Hi-Levels' significance, the *El Cap* lounges survive today, as the Pacific Parlour Cars, Amtrak's only "non-revenue" cars exclusively for sleeping-car passengers. That these now 60-year-old "Top of the Cap" lounges are the draw they remain is yet further testimony to the wisdom and creativity of Budd and Santa Fe designers six decades ago. The cars are old, and nothing is a given in today's budget-driven Amtrak world, but for now they are wonderful survivors from a largely lost world of railroading. ■

*KARL ZIMMERMANN, a longtime New Jersey resident, is a prolific book and magazine author, specializing in passenger trains and travel. This is his 18th byline in a CLASSIC TRAINS publication.*

# One simple photo

There's much to see in a 1961 view of Chicago Union Station's information desk

By John Garofalo • Photo by T. J. Donahue



A great railroad photo can be dramatic: say, a smoke-belching steam locomotive high-stepping down the main line, or a speeding streamliner behind a new diesel. The late T. J. “Tom” Donahue, New England railroader and photographer, took his share of such photos. Sometimes, though, a simple photo can be just as interesting by telling a story or evoking emotion. Consider this one.

In June 1961, Tom, a third-trick operator for the New Haven at Bridgeport, Conn., headed west on vacation. Central to his trip was the “Journey to Yesterday” excursion that originated in Chicago Union Station on the Burlington Route and went via Denver and the Denver & Rio Grande Western to Alamosa, Colo. There, passengers boarded a special narrow-gauge train for a three-day outing to Silverton. Tom found endless photo opportunities in Colorado.

While in CUS, Tom snapped this photo of the information desk. At first glance, it appears to be a simple photo, but there is a lot going on here.

Union Station opened in 1925. Its monumental headhouse included eight floors of offices built around the waiting room and its barrel-vaulted glass ceiling. PRR’s was the biggest of CUS’s users, and the concourse building had the feel of New York’s Pennsylvania Station, with similar steel columns, some of which are barely visible here. The concourse, alas, was razed in 1969, replaced by an office building.

The private-sector intercity passenger train was entering twilight in 1961, but CUS was still a busy spot in the nation’s rail capital. The lighted train information board shows some flagships of CUS’s three owners, PRR, Burlington, and Milwaukee Road, and its one tenant, Gulf, Mobile & Ohio. Pennsy’s *Broadway Limited* was still all private-room sleeping cars; the *California Zephyr* had five Vista Domes when it left on the CB&Q; Union Pacific’s “City” streamliners that went to Omaha on the Milwaukee reached three Pacific Coast destinations, plus Denver; and you could ride a parlor observation car on GM&O’s *Abraham Lincoln* to meet someone in St. Louis

Squint a little harder at the board to find other interesting trains including the *Golden Triangle*, *Kentuckian*, *Empire Builder*, *Midnight Special*, *The Mail*, *Copper Country Limited*, *Afternoon Hiawatha*, and probably my favorite, *Ak-Sar-Ben Zephyr* (Nebraska spelled backward).

It’s possible Tom just made a “grab shot” here, but more likely, he composed the photo. Shooting behind subjects, Tom saw what they saw and in so doing, he captured the typical goings-on at a big station. Let’s fire up our imagination. The

gentleman in the foreground strolling through the concourse contrasts with the fellow, perhaps a man of the cloth, at far left carrying luggage, whose big strides suggest he’s in a hurry. To the right, a woman seems to have found her train on the Milwaukee Road and points it out to her companions. Along the desk, travelers are figuring out their plans, aided by CUS clerks. The two people at far left appear to be studying timetables. The tall fellow with the big hat waits with his wife, perhaps to ask a question. The clerk next to them might be reassuring the man in the white hat he hasn’t arrived too late and tells him where he can find his train. The clerk at right could be thinking of the best way to route a group of four women to their destination. The photo is of one moment in time that played out repeatedly throughout each day at CUS.

For me, Tom’s photo had greater meaning 20 years after it was taken. During the 1980s, I was Midwest Regional Manager at Amtrak’s Internal Audit Department. Our office was on the fourth floor of CUS, when most of the space on the eight floors was occupied by Amtrak, Conrail, Milwaukee Road, and Chicago Union Station Co. Walking down the hallways, I often wondered how the building must have been during its glory days, especially I when came upon a well-worn PRR keystone still visible on an office door.

When I would ride the elevator down at day’s end, the doors opened opposite the watch inspector’s office, still in business, and I wondered how many Hamilton 992 pocket watches had passed through those doors since 1925. To catch my BN “dinky” home to Downers Grove, I had to go through the old waiting room with its 110-foot-high ceiling and giant statues that symbolized daytime and nighttime. Few patrons would be resting on the long, heavy wooden benches, but it was easy to picture 1940s crowds.

When I look at this one simple photo that Tom Donahue took in 1961, it tells a story and captures a mood, transporting me back in time. I could easily be in that crowd, gazing at the big board. In fact, I think I hear the man on the p.a. announcing the *Ak-Sar-Ben Zephyr*! ■

*JOHN GAROFALO, an accountant, worked 10 years for Amtrak, mostly in Chicago, leaving to return to Connecticut and join his family’s business. He volunteers at the SoNo Switch Tower Museum in Norwalk, Conn., on PC’s old New Haven main, where he worked summers with Tom Donahue.*



# TWIN CITIES

Variety was in vogue on a three-day visit spanning June 1, 1967

By J. David Ingles • Photos by the author

**R**ailroading today in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul, as in most places, lacks the variety that could be found 50 years ago. In the late 1960s, “the Cities,” as natives call the area, had nine Class 1 railroads: the familiar Burlington Route (CB&Q), Chicago & North Western (and subsidiary Omaha Road), Chicago Great Western, Great Northern, Milwaukee Road, Northern Pacific, Rock Island, and Soo Line, plus little Minneapolis, Northfield & Southern and terminal road Minnesota Transfer. As May 1967 turned to June, owing to a quirk in my work schedule, I was able spend almost three days there, and I photographed all 10 roads.

Ten days previous, I’d ridden NP’s *North Coast Limited* into St. Paul Union Depot, then out in a Skytop parlor car seat on Milwaukee’s *Morning Hiawatha* to Chicago, en route home to Springfield, Ill. [“Which Way Home from Denver?” Fall 2001 CLASSIC TRAINS]. “SPUD” itself provided variety, and on that Monday morning of May 22, I photographed GN E7s, Burlington E units, Milwaukee and CGW Baldwin switchers, SPUD’s own GE 44-tonner, and EMD goats of GN and NP. I was no stranger, that being my third SPUD layover, the first two on a July 4, 1961, weekend Chicago–Missabe Road excursion. Then Roger Meade and I spent 6 hours shooting on July 25, 1964 [“Six Hours at SPUD,” Summer 2014 CLASSIC TRAINS]. But on May 22, I saw more activity going through the Cities and thought, *I need to return here.*

That didn’t take long. I was back at work just a few days when my evening work schedule for a morning newspaper unexpectedly gave me three straight evenings off: Wednesday–Friday, May 31–June 2. So with the Cities’ attractions fresh in mind, I booked a roomette to Chicago on GM&O’s *Midnight Special*, which left at 1:52 a.m., soon after work. I was in Chicago by 7 and spent the layover on the Roosevelt Road viaduct, shooting subjects of six roads. By 9:15 I was in a coach dome on CB&Q 21, the *Morning Twin Zephyr*. We arrived SPUD by 4 p.m., and I rented a car and set off on a solo exploration.

Even in 1967 information sources for railfans were sparse, so I had to rely on my memory, tips from friends who’d been in the Cities, a road map, local railroaders, and phone books. I don’t recall seeing any other railfans taking pictures.

The certainty of passenger-train schedules was a reliable guide for being trackside at a given place for a given train. As things turned out, I aimed my Nikons at just a few, instead concentrating on engine terminals and roads I couldn’t or



didn’t often see in Illinois: GN, NP, Soo, CGW, and especially MN&S. I skipped the Cities’ three passenger terminals.

Variety wasn’t just in nine Class 1s but also in diesels. Besides ubiquitous EMDs, I shot Baldwins on four roads, four roads’ Alcos of six types, and a few Fairbanks-Morse switchers. F units still abounded, and newer models such as GP30s and U25Bs also were on hand. I didn’t know about CGW’s Boom Island yard, still home to an ancient Westinghouse center-cab.

The “photo album” samplings here represent mostly oddities as I drove across the Cities four times. My two motel nights were in the western suburb of Golden Valley and in Newport, east of St. Paul. Being a by-mail slide-trader with friends across the land, I went through 15 rolls of 36-exposure Kodachrome, half the images being duplicative “trades,” mostly “roster shots.”

So as the announcer on *The Lone Ranger* radio and TV programs would say, “Return with us now to those thrilling days of yesteryear” as the “lone railfan” rides the streets of the Twin Cities almost 50 years ago.

# TABLEAU



Back-yard find: MN&S was a big attraction on my visit. Near the junction west of the Golden Valley shop on Friday, Baldwin DT-6-6-2000 No. 23 ambles south with a model-railroad-size freight. By this time, sister 24 and newer model (RT-624) 25 were off the roster, and road freights to Northfield were hauled by sets of SW1200s and/or SW1500s.



**First stop:** NP's Mississippi Street facility in St. Paul was my first stop Wednesday, where RS11s 912/911 and GP9 267 rested between Duluth freights.



**Across town:** Near sunset, I saw GN S12 24, one of five, at Lyndale Yard near downtown Minneapolis. In 1971, the Baldwin became Erie Mining 407.



**New colors for "the Louie":** In C&NW yellow but carrying M&STL initials and not renumbered, RS1s 221 and 203 (top) work the south end of Cedar Lake Yard on June 1. Note the neighborhood-friendly yard lights. Also on hand was 1941 Alco 102 S2 riding on RS1 trucks. Two ex-M&STL Geeps, GP9 704 and GP9M 607 (an FT trade-in), were at the shop (above) the evening before.



**Serendipity:** My first sighting of C&NW's four 6-month-old Alco C425s was of 403/404 inside the old Omaha Road roundhouse north of the GN depot in Minneapolis on Friday, June 2.



**Little guys** (from left): Minnesota Transfer, predecessor of today's Minnesota Commercial, was still all-Alco and had S4 105 outside its Midway (Merriam Park) shop when I stopped on June 1, soon after I'd run across Central Warehouse's GE 44-tonner parked on one of many spurs just to the north. The next day, Dewey Portland Cement's little center-cab Whitcomb was busy working just west of Milwaukee's St. Paul Yard roundhouse.

# TWIN CITIES RAILS, 1967



**Future classics:** I stopped at Shoreham Yard on my first foray into Minneapolis on May 31 just as this Soo GP30/F7B/FP7 consist (top) moved toward the roundhouse at the east end of the property. Next day, three of CGW's eight GP30s (left) were laying over at the State Street facility in St. Paul. Soon, at Rock Island's Inver Grove Yard, southernmost point of my visit, I found U25Bs 220/211/U28B 247 at rest (above) and SW1500 935 working.



**In reverse:** Near the wye west of MN&S's shop, Baldwin transfer unit 20 backed up into the small yard briefly on June 2. The 20 would not last until 1968, but sister 21 is at Illinois Railway Museum, the only such unit preserved. MN&S sibling DRS-6-6-1500 15, not cut up until 1981, was at the shop.



**Routine:** CGW 34, one of 10 DS-4-4-1000s, its second-largest (to 17 NW2s) switcher group, worked near the GP30s [previous page] on June 1. Milwaukee had a dozen or more Baldwin switchers in the Twin Cities, and Soo kept its five there.



**Pure Alco:** My Friday visit to Shoreham produced Soo 2380 — the only one of the road's 8 RSC2s and 3s in Wisconsin Central ownership — smoking it up. All had been re-trucked to B-Bs.



**On the table:** The Twin Cities still had at least 10 turntables active in 1967, two in proximity in St. Paul, providing a nice setting on June 1: CB&Q's at Dayton's Bluff with TR2A 9412-B, and Milwaukee Road's with 926, one of its two Baldwin RS12s, built with steam generators for passenger-station duties. Trios of the Q's NW2s — converted early-on from TR2 cow-calf sets into standard-cab goats — were common transfer power in the Cities.



**Rocky's road:** My stumbling onto freight-train action was infrequent, one example being this Great Northern southbound nearing Minneapolis Junction behind SD7 569 and F7A 313C on June 2. Late that afternoon, I discovered GP7 613 (left) at Dale Street Shop in St. Paul, with a newly chopped short hood (GN's Geeps were built long-hood-forward) and in fresh Big Sky Blue, an early GN repaint.



**Minority:** Soo 315, first of its four FM H10-44s, all kept in the Twin Cities, heads south toward the west end of Shoreham Yard in midday Friday. The only other FMs reliably found in the area were MN&S's pair from Minnesota Western, H12 No. 10 and H10 No. 11 (above). The former is displayed in C&NW paint at Milton, Wis.; the latter was sold to Hallett Dock in Duluth and survives at the city's Lake Superior Railroad Museum.



**At last, varnish:** Having seen Geeps on Rock Island's overnight No. 16 from Kansas City when I rode through the Cities on May 22, I staked out its arrival on June 2 at Hoffman Avenue east of SPUD, but it showed up behind FP7 409 and an E7B (top). I then set up south of GN's Westminster Street tower for NP's *Mainstreeter*, due out at 8:40 a.m. It was its usual classy self with an F7A/F9B/F7B trio in charge (middle). Almost 8 hours later, just after 5 p.m., I was near University Avenue in Minneapolis to nab GN No. 11, the *Red River* for Fargo via St. Cloud and Fergus Falls, behind E7 508 (above).



**More variety:** During the next half hour Friday morning near Westminster after NP's *Mainstreeter* left (opposite page), a transfer from C&NW's East St. Paul yard drifted south behind yard slug BU-8, converted in 1964 from SW1 1209, and its mate, SW1200 316. I also saw GN and NP transfers here.



**Finale:** In Friday's fading sunlight, I was east of the SPUD roundhouse when a Milwaukee freight (middle above) behind three F7s rolled west toward Minneapolis, with SW1200 640 in tow. To end a productive three days, my last photo was of a familiar Chicagoland subject, Burlington train 25, the combined *Empire Builder* and *North Coast Limited*, which neared SPUD on time around 7 p.m. behind four Es (above). After turning in my rental car and spending the evening in SPUD, I rode Burlington's overnight *Black Hawk*, in a roomette, to Chicago and then GM&O's *Limited* home to Springfield. 📷

# The *Crescent* westbound from Atlanta, March 27, 1966

Two "Georgia Group" roads were a link in a famous train's journey from New York to New Orleans

Text and color photos by Jerry A. Pinkepank



**These two color photos** were made on track shared by the Atlanta & West Point and Central of Georgia railroads, in the West End neighborhood of Atlanta. The A&WP originally used the main track of a predecessor of CofG for the last 6 miles into Atlanta. In 1889 A&WP built its own track into Atlanta on directly adjacent right of way, in a cooperative arrangement with the CofG. The two lines were then operated as double track, dispatched by CofG, which at the time was half owner of A&WP; Louisville & Nashville controlled the other half. L&N was, in turn, a part of the Atlantic Coast Line system. CofG sold its interest to L&N in 1944 and in 1963 became part of the Southern Railway system, but the joint track arrangement remained the same even though ACL and Southern were competitors. This is common for such practical arrangements between railroads in spite of their commercial rivalries, and federal regulators can require such arrangements to be kept in place.

The *Crescent*, formerly the *Crescent Limited*, was best known as a Southern Railway train. Its through cars started from New York on the Pennsylvania to Washington, and Southern handled the train from there to Atlanta. But to complete the journey to New Orleans, two of the three "Georgia Group" roads handled the through cars 175 miles from Atlanta to Montgomery, Ala., and then L&N took them to New Orleans.

The Georgia Group, controlled by the ACL family including L&N, consisted of the Atlanta & West Point, which hosted the *Crescent* between Atlanta and West Point, Ga., on the Alabama state line; the Western Railway of Alabama, which took the train to Montgomery, Ala.; and the Georgia Railroad, whose Atlanta–Augusta, Ga., main line was not part of the *Crescent's* route. The A&WP and WofA were known together as "The West Point Route." Southern had its own route to New Orleans from Atlanta via Birmingham, 67 miles shorter but not as fast.

Once famous for its two-tone green and gold heavyweight Pullmans, the *Crescent* became a stainless-steel streamliner in 1949. By 1966, the postwar cars had been scattered, but the train,

reduced in size and patchwork in appearance, was still a pleasant experience for passengers, leaving Atlanta with a coach, a diner-lounge, and two 10-roomette/6-double bedroom sleepers. The all-Southern route between Atlanta and New Orleans via Birmingham was later adopted by Southern when it continued the *Crescent* in refurbished form as the *Southern Crescent*, and by Amtrak when it took over operation in 1979.

**1 Westward main track.** Owned by A&WP, used by westward trains of both it and CofG. CofG's *Nancy Hanks II* for Savannah and *Man O' War* for Columbus, Ga., would exit Atlanta on this track in the afternoon, parting company from the A&WP 6 miles out, at the Atlanta suburb of East Point.

**2 Westward running track.** Used by switch engines serving industries and staying out of the way of mainline movements. (Track hidden in shadow.)

**3 Eastward main track.** Owned by CofG and used by eastward trains of both railroads under control of CofG's dispatcher.

**4 Eastward running track.** From which switch engines served industries. The train has just passed a large CofG industry yard.

**5 Stubb industry lead.** There is a large cotton compress out of the picture to the right with spurs running off this track.

**6 Georgia Railroad FP7 1002.** Built by EMD in November 1949; one three FP7s on the Georgia's roster.

**7 Georgia Railroad FP7 1004.** Built February 1950. It was common for both passenger and freight power to be used interchangeably across all three Georgia Group lines.

**8 Georgia Railroad GP7 1031.** Built by EMD, October 1952. Although equipped

with a steam generator equal to the that of the FP7s, it has 62:15 gearing, limiting it to 65 mph. The *Crescent's* schedule from Atlanta to Montgomery averaged a leisurely 41.2 mph (4 hours 15 minutes for 175 miles) so a 65-mph limit was apparently tolerated for what could be a power deadheading move for this dual-service unit. The westbound *Crescent* was scheduled out of Atlanta at 8:25 a.m. Eastern time and into Montgomery at 11:40 a.m. Central time.

**9 Two Railway Express Agency refrigerator cars.** Used for high-value produce and seafood that could afford express rates and needed the fast service because of extreme perishability. A plausible load for these cars would be Gulf Coast seafood to be picked up from fishing ports between Mobile, Ala., and New Orleans.

**10 Two baggage-mail-express cars.** The first one is an L&N car and the second appears to be a Southern car. "Storage Mail" (i.e., mail not worked en route in a Railway Post Office), dry express shipments, baggage, and company mail were handled in such cars, manned by a baggageman and an express messenger.

**11 West Point Route coach.** Originating from Atlanta. While the Georgia Railroad shared Union Station with parent ACL, A&WP used Terminal Station instead, to facilitate exchange of trains with the Southern.

**12 Louisville & Nashville diner-lounge.** Replaced the Southern Railway dining car the train carried between Washington and Atlanta.

**13 Southern Railway sleeper.** 10-roomette/6-double bedroom configuration, through from New York.

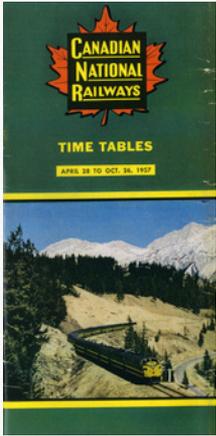
**14 Western Railway of Alabama room car Alabama River,** lettered THE WEST POINT ROUTE. This is one of the cars built for the 1949 streamlining of the *Crescent*, ownership of which was divided among the railroads participating in the route between Washington and New Orleans. This car was added at Washington.



**REA No. 7781 is one of 986 steel, ice-cooled express refrigerator cars built by General American Car for nationwide service in 1958.**

CLASSIC TRAINS collection

# My summer of cab rides



For a 17-year-old in Buffalo, summer 1957 was a time of change, punctuated by a series of rides aboard Canadian National steam locomotives

**By Fred B. Furminger** • Photos by the author



CN Hudson 5701, shown at Fort Erie, pulled this June 24, 1956, fan trip to Toronto, and after his mentor, Harold Beal, arranged for a cab ride on the return leg, the author was hooked.

**O**n December 27, 1956, I celebrated my 17th birthday. I was halfway through my junior year in high school at St. Joseph's Collegiate Institute, a Catholic college prep school for boys founded in 1861 (and still going strong). I was paying \$250 annual tuition from money I earned delivering papers for the past 10 years. I decided, with my parents' approval, that in September I would transfer for my senior year to Kenmore Senior High School, the closest public school to my home in that Buffalo north suburb. I had three reasons: my savings were nearly gone; I'd decided I didn't want to go on to college; and most of my friends went to Kenmore. The fact that KSHS was coed also influenced my decision.

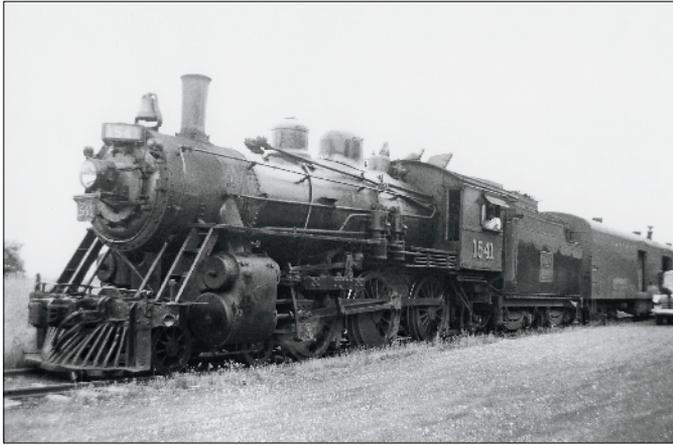
I also decided to join the U.S. Marine Corps Reserve. By January 21, 1957, I was a member of Ma-

rine Fighter Squadron VMF 441 based at Niagara Falls. I had to attend one drill weekend a month, plus two weeks of active duty, each year for eight years. I was also obliged, within 120 days of graduating high school, to take basic training at the USMC Recruit Depot at Parris Island, S.C.

By June my savings were exhausted. I'd had enough of delivering papers, and I needed to make some real money. I got a part-time job at Loblaws market bagging groceries, stocking shelves, unloading trucks, collecting shopping carts from the parking lot, and other miscellaneous duties.

During all these decisions and changes, I was still chasing steam engines on my bicycle to photograph them, but the time had come to leave my bike behind. While going back and forth to school and





**Ten-Wheeler 1541 poses on mixed M238 at Port Rowan July 4, 1957, on the first of two occasions the author would join the crew on board.**

to Marine Corps drill weekends, I perfected the art of hitchhiking — taking a bus was unthinkable! “Thumbing” became my new mode of transport to get to where steam was running.

### Preludes to change

By 1950, North American railfans began to realize that steam’s future was rapidly diminishing, and the number of camera-toting fans following steam engines increased dramatically. Meantime, another phenomenon became prominent among some — garnering a locomotive cab ride. Normally it was against the rules for non-railroaders to be in the cab, although unauthorized individuals had been offered cab rides, usually without permission from railroad officials, from probably the beginning of railroading.

This was true for my first ride, in 1951 when I was 11, which was arranged by a friend of my sister’s whose father was a New York Central conductor. I rode 25 miles from Suspension Bridge to Buffalo in the cab of J-1e Hudson 5328.

By summer 1954 I was biking to Black Rock yard, just off the International Bridge in Buffalo, to take pictures of Grand Trunk 0-6-0 switchers at work. (This yard was a little-remarked presence of the Canadian National system in the U.S., with assigned switchers, later including diesels, lettered for subsidiary GT.) I seemed to have an ability to communicate with the engineers and firemen, as they would regularly invite me up into the cab to ride back and forth with them. These short rides infused me with a desire to do more.

In December ’55 when I turned 16, I joined the Buffalo

Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. During chapter activities I became acquainted with Harold Beal, a fine gentleman who was key in arranging and running the chapter’s excursions. He had a close relationship with the local railroads and was adept at getting cab rides for passengers. I watched him on excursions and saw how he operated. He was smooth and soft-spoken; everyone on the railroads knew and liked him. He was a man I wanted to emulate, and before long Harold and I became good friends.

On June 24, 1956, the chapter sponsored a CN excursion from Fort Erie, Ont., to Toronto behind K-5-a Hudson 5701. During the return leg Harold told me to go up to the engine when we stopped at Welland Junction, as he had arranged a cab ride for me back to Fort Erie. Now I was really hooked!

By June 1957, steam had ended on the New York Central in Ontario’s Niagara Peninsula [“Boyhood Fascination With NYC Steam,” Winter 2008 CLASSIC TRAINS]. Only three roads still ran steam within a reasonable distance of home. Nickel Plate was one, but the NKP police were diligent, and usually I was lucky to get just two or three pictures in the yard or near the roundhouse before being escorted off the property. Most NKP locomotives were filthy by this time, anyway.

My only other options were Canadian National and Canadian Pacific, across the Niagara River in southern Ontario. The closest CP steam was in Hamilton and Toronto, about 100 miles away. CN steam, though, was within 10 miles of my home, so I concentrated on the engines based at Fort Erie and Niagara Falls, Ont. I had to space my steam searches among working at Loblaws, chores around the house, and attending Marine Reserve drill weekends, plus going on active duty during the last two weeks of August.

Although I didn’t have a lot of luck around the Nickel Plate roundhouse, I did better in NKP’s outer yard off Tiffet Street one Saturday afternoon when I was invited up to ride — and was allowed to fire — an 0-8-0 switcher. This experience was a good example of my taking heed of what Harold Beal taught me. I realized that if I was able to get an engine crew’s attention, was polite, and said the right things, they usually were happy to invite me up.

Most important, Harold said, was to “Look, dress, and act like you belong on the railroad. Don’t talk too much, and you won’t have a problem.” I always wore railroad-type work clothes and boots. I dirtied up easily, especially after riding engines for the better part of a day. Even though I was only 17, I had a dark beard and could easily pass for 21. In other words, I blended in well. During this summer, I got so good at saying the right things at the right time, and in some cases not saying

## Would you like glass with that coffee?

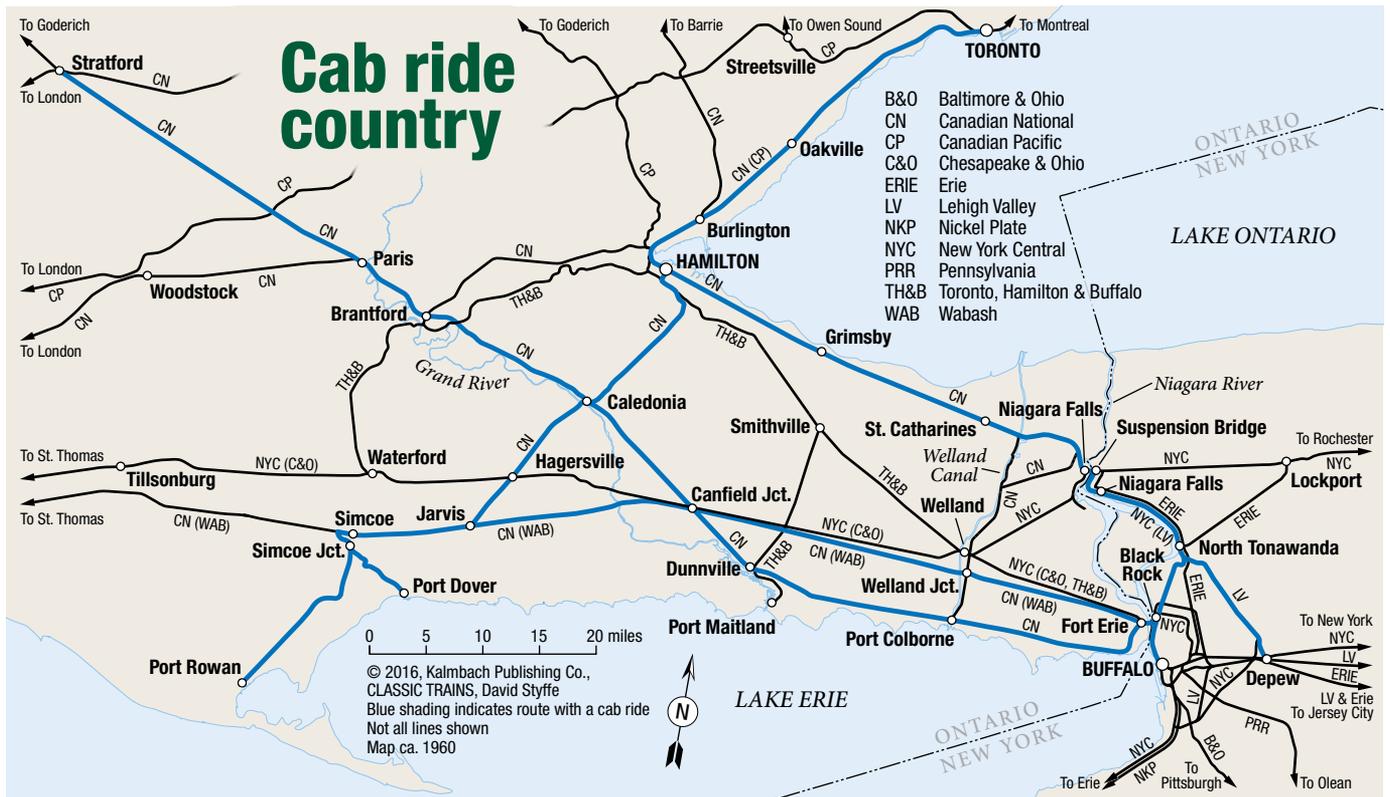
**My July 4, 1957,** ride on Ten-Wheeler 1541 (top) leading mixed train M238 back north to Hamilton from Port Dover is remembered for a moment of surprise. The engine was hand-fired, and I was sitting on the fireman’s seat while the fireman was down on the cab deck heaving coal into the firebox. We were rolling along at a fairly decent speed on the branch, which was not the smooth-

est of track. I’m not sure what the authorized track speed was, but I’m certain we were going a little faster than we were supposed to be.

The fireman had wedged his thermos bottle of coffee between two pipes on the left side of boiler, just to my right. As we moved along, the locomotive hit a dip on the left-hand rail. We lurched hard to the left, then just as fast, we

lurched to the right. The result was like a slow-motion flight right in front of me. The thermos bottle went airborne, sailing right past me. It crashed against the windowsill to my left, then bounced down onto the deck, and the fireman quickly grabbed it.

He opened it up and found nothing inside but a thermos full of coffee-soaked broken glass! — *F.B.F.*



anything at all, that I wound up getting cab rides in seven different Canadian National steam locomotives on four outings.

### Summer successes

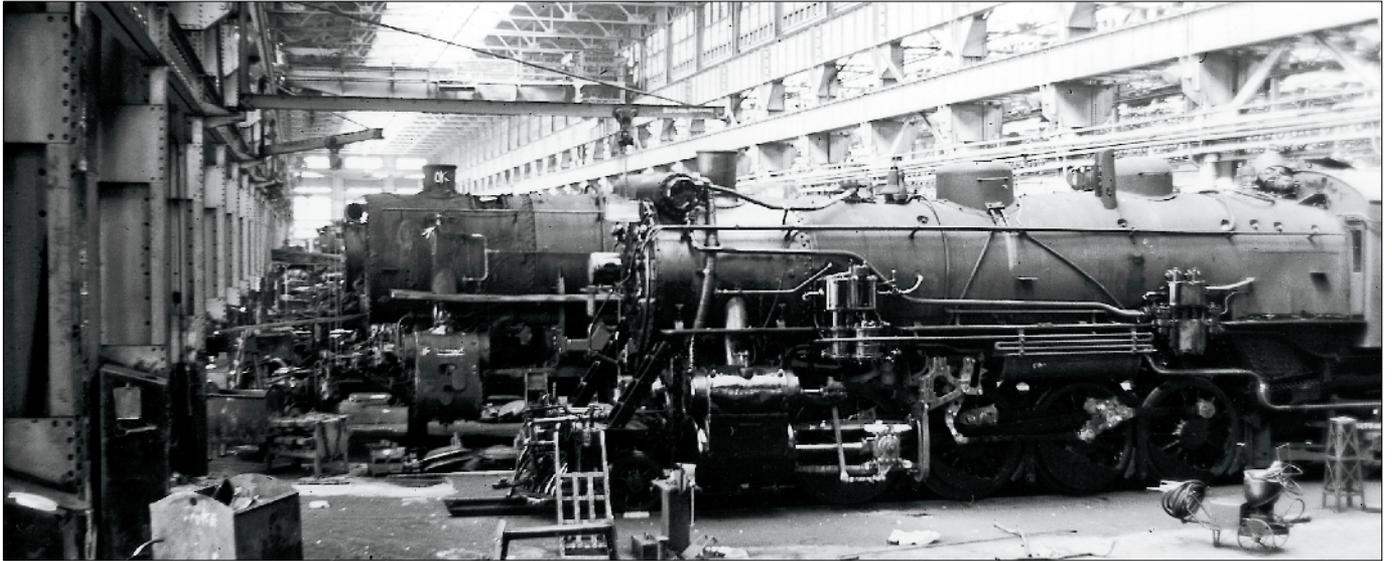
My string of summer '57 CN cab rides began a little more than a year after the one out of Welland Junction that Harold Beal arranged for me on the excursion. July 4th, although a U.S. holiday, was just another weekday in Canada, whose counterpart is July 1st. My plan was to hitchhike to Hamilton, about 75 miles west, in time to catch CN's Hamilton-Port Dover-

Port Rowan mixed train M233, which departed at 9:30 a.m.

I left home at 6:30 with my small grip containing my camera, film, a thermos of cold water, and some peanut butter sandwiches. I hitchhiked to the Peace Bridge in Buffalo, walked across the border, and caught a ride to within a mile of CN's James Street Station in Hamilton, arriving by 9 a.m. I bought a round-trip ticket and then talked the stationmaster into letting me down the stairs to the platform so I could take pictures before the train left. Up front was H-6-d Ten-Wheeler 1541. The train went directly from HAMILTON, via Simcoe, to



The author rode the cab of Northern 6230, shown here at Princeton, Ont., on April 5, 1958, on the *Maple Leaf* out of Hamilton on July 4, 1957.



Buffalo Chapter's July 14, 1957, trip to Stratford had a three-hour layover to view engines inside (2-8-2 3239 is in front) and around the shop.



Among the many locomotives outside at Stratford was 0-9-a 0-6-0 7312 (CLC, 1912), notable today as Strasburg No. 31 in Pennsylvania.

Port Rowan, 63.3 miles south, and it took nearly four hours to get there with numerous stops to do switching, load and unload packages and freight, and load or discharge passengers.

At several stops I managed to get up in the cab of the 1541. The engineer and fireman were willing to let me ride but the conductor, a Mr. White, kept chasing me out, insisting that I had to ride back in the coach. From Port Rowan, as train M238, the train returned north 17.2 miles to Simcoe Town Station, then, with the designations of M236 and M235, made a side trip, 7.5 miles each way, south to Port Dover, on Lake Erie.

Before we left Port Dover for Simcoe and Hamilton, the engineer beckoned me up to the cab and told me to crouch down in front of the fireman's seat until we were under way. I'm sure Conductor White figured out where I was, but after having played cat and mouse with me all day, he finally gave up. I rode the cab all the way back to Hamilton, and we arrived about 10 minutes late at 7:30 p.m. I thanked the engine crew and told them I hoped to see them again before summer's end.

Train 89-90, the *Maple Leaf* from Toronto (it changed directions, hence numbers, at Hamilton's James Street Station), was due in at 8:25 p.m. on its way to Suspension Bridge, N.Y., where it connected with the Lehigh Valley. After climbing down from 1541's cab, I stayed on the platform. When the *Maple Leaf* arrived, I walked to the head end, where 6230, a U-2-g Northern, was in charge. I was wearing an engineer's hat with goggles hanging around my neck, and work gloves were sticking out of

my back pants pocket. After riding on 1541, I was pretty dirty.

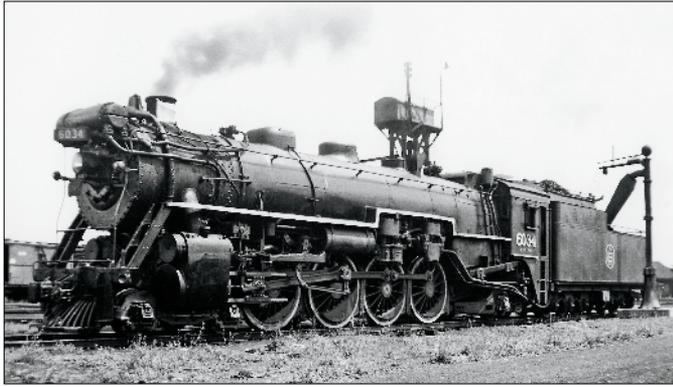
The engineer on 6230 glanced down at me standing there with my grip. He waved me up and asked if I was heading back to Niagara Falls. I said yes, and he, possibly assuming I was a railroader, motioned me over to the jump seat behind the fireman. In a few minutes the conductor signaled he was ready to go. The hogger acknowledged with two short tugs on the whistle cord, activated the air-operated bell, released the brakes, pulled on the throttle, and we were off. The sound of 6230's side rods, bell, and exhaust reverberated off the buildings lining the right of way in Hamilton's manufacturing district as we moved east at restricted speed. We rattled through many switches, adding to the din.

### Opening her up

Owing to a city ordinance, 6230's whistle remained silent as we passed through many gate-protected grade crossings, but the bell was in constant operation. Once we were past the city limits, the engineer began using his whistle and pulling back on the throttle. As we rolled along the Lake Ontario shore, Mother Nature was putting on a spectacular light show to the north out over the lake with an approaching thunderstorm. It wasn't long before we reached our maximum allowable speed of 65 mph. Racing eastward, the noise became one big roar. Then came a deafening rush of air exhausting from the brake stand as the engineer made his reductions in preparation for the station stop at Grimsby.

After Grimsby, we stopped at St. Catharines and Merritton before arriving at Niagara Falls on time at 9:40. I asked the engineer if I could ride across the border to Suspension Bridge. His reply: "Sure." After a few minutes, he got the signal to proceed the last six-tenths of a mile across the bridge to New York Central's Suspension Bridge depot, the end of his run. I shook hands with both the fireman and engineer, thanking them for everything. It was an unforgettable ride!

I could not stay on the *Maple Leaf* and get off near home, as it avoided Buffalo proper, so the last leg of my trip was on New York Central train 686, a *Beeliner* (Central's name for Budd RDC trains), from Suspension Bridge to Buffalo. I got off in North Tonawanda and hitchhiked the final six miles to my house, getting home about 11:45 p.m.



**U-1-b 4-8-2 6034, taking water near the shop on the layover, took the July 14 excursion to Stratford, but U-2-h 4-8-4 6247 led the return run.**

Ten days later, on Sunday, July 14, Buffalo Chapter sponsored another CN steam excursion, a round trip from Fort Erie via Brantford to Stratford, Ont., site of a large locomotive shop. Westbound, we had U-1-b Mountain 6034, and on the return, U-2-h Northern 6247. Along with Harold Beal, I started right out of Fort Erie in 6034's cab. After 58.6 miles to Caledonia, I gave up my seat so another passenger could ride. In Stratford, we had a three-hour layover to tour the roundhouse and shop, where several engines were under repair. The layover afforded me the opportunity to photograph 10 or more CN engines, parked outside, of several types, including 0-6-0s, 0-8-0s, Mikados, Pacifics, Mountains, and Northerns.

### Mixed trains in twilight

In our local railroad circles there was some doubt as to how long CN's southern Ontario mixed trains might keep running, so with my July 4 trip fresh in memory, I decided I should do another one before the mixeds were gone. On Tuesday afternoon, July 30, I hitchhiked across to Fort Erie and had plenty of time to take pictures at the roundhouse before I caught mixed M219 for Stratford at 4:15 p.m. Motive power was S-1-f Mikado 3422. During the station stop at Port Colborne, 19 miles out on the Dunnville Sub, I climbed into the cab and rode the 18.8 miles to Dunnville. I don't recall exactly what I said to the crew, but it worked! They had no problem with me being there.

Out of Dunnville I rode back in the coach another 20 miles to Caledonia before getting off. Caledonia was where the Fort Erie-Brantford-Stratford line crossed the Hamilton-Port Rowan line. M219 was due into Caledonia at 6:33 p.m., and M238, which I'd ridden north to Hamilton on July 4, was carded in at 6:32. Everything worked as planned. Ten-Wheeler 1541 was again pulling M238, with the same engineer and fireman who'd "hidden" me from Conductor White. They motioned me up and let me ride with them the 17 miles to Hamilton. After arriving at James Street Station on schedule at 7:20 p.m., I bid them good-bye and thanked them again for their hospitality. I didn't know it then, but that was the last time I would see them or ride a CN mixed train.

Once again my plan was to ride the *Maple Leaf* from Hamilton to Niagara Falls. The train was due in at 8:25, a little over an hour away. I'd bumped into the assistant stationmaster when I climbed down from the 1541's cab, and he asked me where I was headed. I said, "To the Falls on 90." His reply: "Oh, deadheading, aye." I simply said, "Yup." We chewed the fat a bit until the *Maple Leaf* pulled into the station, led by U-2-g Northern 6234. I immediately grabbed my grip and climbed



**Sixteen days after this July 14, 1957, portrait at Stratford, S-1-f 2-8-2 3422 led mixed M219, on which the author rode the cab 18.8 miles.**

into the cab. I asked the engineer if I could ride with them, and while this was not the same engine crew as on 6230 on July 4, again I was directed to the jump seat behind the fireman.

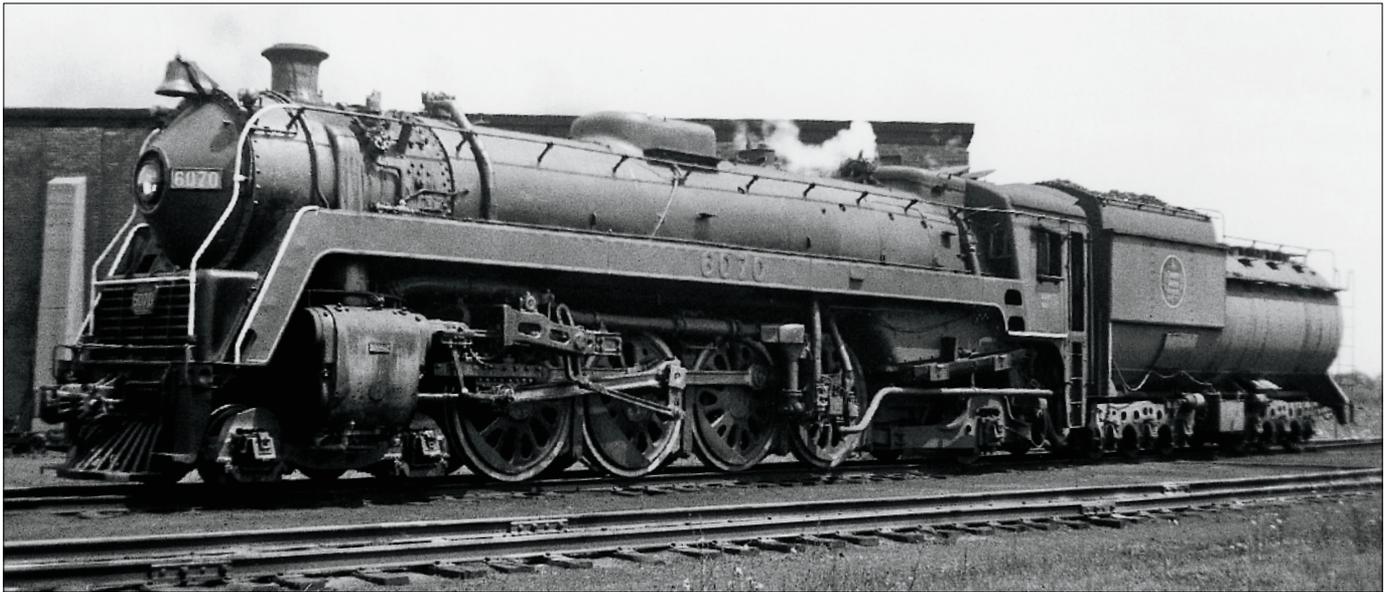
The engineer was reading his orders and the fireman was tending to his fire when the conductor's signal came to go. The engineer wasted no time in getting out of the station, as he was already 10 minutes behind schedule owing to a heavy load of baggage taken on in Hamilton. As before, once out of Hamilton, this engineer let her fly!

Even with the usual station stops, we made up all the lost time, arriving in Niagara Falls on schedule at 9:40 p.m. I thanked the engineer and fireman for the lift and climbed down. I walked the short distance over the Whirlpool Rapids bridge to the American side of the border, easily went through U.S. Customs and Immigration, and then headed for the NYC Suspension Bridge depot.

This time I took Lehigh Valley's *Maple Leaf* connection out of Suspension Bridge to the Valley's Depew station in east suburban Buffalo, where the cars from Toronto off CN were added to the LV consist that originated at Dingens Street station in

## Teenage cab rides

DATE	LOCOMOTIVE	NOTES
1951	NYC 4-6-4 5328	Suspension Bridge, N.Y.—Buffalo (age 11)
1955	GT 0-6-0s	Black Rock Yard, Buffalo
6-24-56	CN 4-6-4 5701	Welland Jct.—Ft. Erie, Toronto excursion
6-57	NKP 0-8-0	Inbound Buffalo Tifft St. yard
7-4-57	CN 4-6-0 1541	M238, Port Dover—Hamilton, northbound
7-4-57	CN 4-8-4 6230	#90 <i>Maple Leaf</i> , Hamilton—Susp. Bridge
7-14-57	CN 4-8-2 6034	Ft. Erie—Caledonia, Stratford excursion
7-30-57	CN 2-8-2 3422	M219 Port Colborne—Dunnville
7-30-57	CN 4-6-0 1541	M238, Caledonia—Hamilton, northbound
7-30-57	CN 4-8-4 6234	#90 <i>Maple Leaf</i> , Hamilton—Niagara Falls, Ont.
8-13-57	CN 4-8-2 6070	#95, Niagara Falls—Grimsby
8-13-57	CN 4-8-4 6233	#89-90, <i>Maple Leaf</i> , Toronto—Niagara Falls, Ont.
8-13-57	NYC Alco RS3	#686, Suspension Br.—N. Tonawanda



After shooting "Bullet-Nosed Betty" 4-8-2 6070 at Niagara Falls roundhouse, the author rode her to the depot and then to Grimsby on train 95.

East Buffalo for the run to Newark and New York City.

Once the sections were combined and No. 8 headed east, the LV diesel and coach I was riding went west to LV's Dingens Street facility, basically to return the crew. En route, I struck up a conversation with a trainman, and he offered me a ride home in his car, dropping me off in Kenmore about 1:30 a.m. It had been a long day, and I was tired, but of course I considered it worthwhile and quite the day to remember.

### A farewell foray

The summer was slipping away. It was already the end of the first week of August, and the last two weeks were spoken for by the Marine Corps, when I'd be on active duty. Because of this, I would miss the 1957 NRHS national convention in Roanoke, Va., and my chance to photograph Norfolk & Western steam. There was still time to make one more foray into Ontario, though, and to get another cab ride. I had to pick a day I didn't have to work at Loblaw's.



Engines, engines, all around at Toronto's Spadina roundhouse. Exemplifying the sometimes crowded conditions the author faced for three hours is P-4-c 0-8-0 8441 (CLC, 1923) on a turntable track.

That turned out to be Tuesday, August 13. I formulated my plans and left home at 7 a.m., wearing my usual railroad garb and carrying my grip. I hitchhiked to the Whirlpool Rapids bridge and checked through Canadian Customs and Immigration in Niagara Falls, Ont., then walked the quarter mile to the CN station and bought a round-trip ticket to Toronto. My plan was to ride train 95, which joined at Hamilton with train 6, the *Inter-City Limited* from Chicago via CN subsidiary Grand Trunk Western. No. 95 was not due out of Niagara Falls until 12:45 p.m., so since it was only 9:30 a.m., I had plenty of time to visit the roundhouse across from the station. I checked in with the foreman, who said, "Take all the pictures you want, just be careful."

I spent a lot of time walking through the whitewashed roundhouse interior, soaking up the sights and sounds of simmering locomotives exuding the odors of coal smoke, hot oil, and steam. Many of you will know what I mean — there's just nothing quite like it. Outside, I photographed several locomotives on the ready tracks, among them 4-8-2 6070, streamlined with a "nose cone" and thus known by the moniker "Bullet-Nosed Betty." She was scheduled to pull my train 95 to Hamilton. When I spoke to the engineer and fireman at the roundhouse, they told me that from Hamilton to Toronto on train 6, I would be pulled by diesels. I was disappointed, but in talking with them I was able to arrange a 27.5-mile cab ride out of Niagara Falls as far as Grimsby. They even invited me to ride with them from the roundhouse to the station.

This would be my only ride on a Bullet-Nosed Betty in regular service. Needless to say it was wonderful. Out of Hamilton, train 6 was pulled by brand-new GTW GP9s 4915 and 4916. We arrived at Toronto Union Station on time at 3:25 p.m. I had almost four hours to take pictures before heading back to Niagara Falls on the *Maple Leaf*, due out at 7:30.

I went over to the nearby CN Spadina Street roundhouse and checked in with the foreman. He had me sign a release, told me where I could and couldn't go, and sent me out the door with the remark, "Get a lot of good pictures and be sure to send me some 8x10s!" So, for the next three hours I photographed every engine I could, well over a dozen and again of six wheel arrangements: 0-8-0, 2-8-0, 4-6-2, 4-6-4, 4-8-2, and 4-8-4. The



The author's last summer of '57 steam cab ride was on 4-8-4 6233 (pictured beforehand at Spadina) on August 13 on the *Maple Leaf* out of Toronto. Being up front, he was able to keep his return ticket (right).

time flew by, and I reluctantly headed back to Union Station. I'd left just enough time to grab something to eat before going out onto the platform to where the engine was being coupled to the *Maple Leaf*. From Toronto to Niagara Falls we'd have U-2-g Northern 6233, which I had photographed earlier at Spadina. I walked along the right side of the engine, climbed up into the cab, and showed my ticket to the engineer. I asked him if it would be OK to ride up front. He talked with his fireman, and they agreed to take me to Niagara Falls with them.

Soon the train was ready to go, and we got under way at 7:30. As usual, I was in the jump seat behind the fireman. Within minutes, we were moving well over 60 mph, but not for long as the engineer began to slow down for the Sunnyside station stop. Next was Oakville, 18 miles out. The passenger-train speed limit here was 80 mph, and this leg had the reputation of being a real racetrack. When we pulled into Hamilton a few minutes early, I went to the engineer and asked him how fast we'd been going. He smiled and said, "Oh, somewhere between 80 and 90, probably closer to 90 a few times."

We were on the move out of Hamilton at 8:35, now on the Grimsby Sub, where the passenger speed limit was 65. We made six station stops before Niagara Falls, and in between some, we'd been running close to 75. I learned this from him when I left the engine at the Falls upon our 9:40 on-time arrival. By the time I disembarked, my ears were ringing. In fact, they did so for the next eight hours. As I was leaving, I shook hands with the engineer and fireman, chatted for a few minutes, thanked them for the great ride and bid them farewell.

As before, I walked the quarter mile to the Whirlpool Rapids bridge, checked through U.S. Customs, then continued the short distance to Suspension Bridge depot to catch NYC *Bee-liner* train 686. To my surprise, though, there sat two Alco RS3s with a couple of baggage cars and some coaches. The Budd car was down for repairs, according to the engineer who

Canadian National Railways  
**BARGAIN EXCURSION**  
 HALF FARE IF PUNCHED HERE ✱  
 Good in COACHES ONLY for one continuous passage on such special or regular trains as may be designated by the company.  
 From **TORONTO, Ont.**  
 To **NIAGARA FALLS, Ont.**  
 NOT VALID TO LEAVE DESTINATION AFTER **AUG 20 1957**  
 RETURN COUPON  
 NOT GOOD IN STANDARD, TOURIST or PARLOR CARS  
 NOT TRANSFERABLE  
 Gen. Pass. Traf. Mgr.

CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS  
 RAILWAY SERVICE TELEGRAM  
 HAMILTON AUG 13TH-57  
 STOP AT BEANSVILLE TO ENTRAIN 2 POURS FOR SASKATOON  
 CANADIAN NATIONAL RAILWAYS  
 GENERAL CLEARANCE FORM B  
 4:44 - 4:52  
 Aug 13th 57

was on the platform by the lead unit. He asked me where I was going and I replied, "North Tonawanda." A little small talk ensued, and he invited me to ride in the cab. We left promptly at 10:29 p.m., made a stop in 1.8 miles at the Niagara Falls station, then went on to North Tonawanda, 12.8 miles from Suspension Bridge, stopping at 10:53.

A strange thing happened as soon we stopped. Before I even could get up off my seat, the engineer and fireman both came over, shook my hand, and thanked me for riding with them!

"No, I'm supposed to thank you," I replied. "You gave me the ride." We all laughed.

I climbed down and waved to them as they pulled out for Buffalo Central Terminal. I hitchhiked home, showered, and was in bed by midnight. As I started to fall asleep, my ears were still ringing, and I realized this would be my last day of cab-riding for this summer. It sure had been a great one, a summer I'll remember for the rest of my life, and even today, although Harold Beal has been gone for many years, I think of him often. I'm forever grateful for him arranging cab rides for me, as well as for the things he taught me that enabled me to do them on my own. ■

*FRED FURMINGER, still a suburban Buffalo resident, retired in 2000 from a career as an advertising sales executive. This is his fifth CLASSIC TRAINS story, beginning with one on 1950s New York Central steam in southern Ontario in Winter 2008.*



# A half-century of Twin Cities preservation

Minnesota Transportation Museum has preserved multiple modes of travel • **By Steve Glischinski**

**W**ith a significant collection of steam, diesel, and passenger equipment and a history dating to 1962, the Minnesota Transportation Museum (MTM) has steadily grown over its 54 years. MTM has two sites: the Jackson Street Roundhouse in St. Paul, and the Osceola & St. Croix Valley tourist railroad, based in Osceola, Wis.

The museum's beginnings trace to the Minnesota Railfan's Association (MRA), which sponsored steam, diesel, and streetcar excursions from the 1940s into the 1960s. In June 1954, the Twin City Rapid Transit Co. (TCRT) donated streetcar No. 1300 to the association. Eight years later, the Minnesota Transportation Museum was founded to find a home for and operate No. 1300.

In 1971, the museum found success when it opened the Como-Harriet Streetcar Line in Minneapolis on a stretch of original TCRT right of way. No. 1300 was the sole car on the line until 1982, when it was joined by Duluth Street Railway 265, restored by museum volunteers after decades serving as a lake cabin in Wisconsin.

As streetcar operations grew, so did the museum's railroad division. In 1976 it leased Northern Pacific 4-6-0 No. 328,

which had been saved by the MRA and placed on display in Stillwater, Minn., in 1955. The locomotive was rebuilt by MTM volunteers and returned to service in 1981. In the 1980s MTM also acquired a portion of the Northern Pacific branch line into Stillwater, Minn., and ran weekend excursion trains that included occasional appearances by No. 328.

Unfortunately, residents who lived near the tracks began to complain about the trains, and convinced the city to place severe limits on MTM operations.

After a long fight, the museum reached an agreement with Wisconsin Central Ltd. and moved its operations to WC's former Soo Line Dresser Subdivision in 1992. From the restored passenger depot in Osceola, Wis., the museum's Osceola & St. Croix Valley Railway offers rides through the scenic St. Croix River valley on tracks now owned by Canadian National Railway.

Over the years MTM's collection of streetcars and railroad equipment expanded, and it even added a boat in



Twin Cities cars 322 and 1300 are pictured on the Minnesota Streetcar Museum's Como-Harriet line in May 2007. PCC 322 went to Newark, N.J., then Cleveland, before returning in 1992.

**Left: Minnesota Transportation Museum's NP 4-6-0 helps celebrate the return to service of the steamboat *Minnehaha*, now run by the Museum of Lake Minnetonka, on May 25, 1996.**

1990. The steamboat *Minnehaha*, built in 1906, was one of a fleet of boats operated by TCRT on Lake Minnetonka (just west of Minneapolis) that connected to streetcar lines. The service ended in 1926, and *Minnehaha* was scuttled in the lake. In 1980 it was discovered and raised from the bottom. Volunteers began restoration work in 1990. Among the most difficult tasks was lowering a vintage steam engine and a modern boiler into place, which combined weighed about 12 tons. After six years of work, the boat was returned to service in 1996 in a gala ceremony that included NP 328 crossing a bridge as the *Minnehaha* passed beneath.

The museum added a second streetcar line in the Lake Minnetonka city of Excelsior, Minn., in 1999. While the *Minnehaha* was under restoration, MTM decided to build a trolley line so passengers could transfer between the streetcar and steamboat as they did decades before, when the boat was part of the TCRT system. The Minneapolis & St. Louis recreation trail passes a short distance from where the *Minnehaha* docked, so planners decided to build a trolley line along the trail. Federal funding was secured, along with permission to use a portion of the right of way. A half-mile of track was laid and a new car barn constructed. Today two streetcars operate on the line, with another under restoration.

To house its growing rail collection and provide a base for restoration work, in 1985 MTM acquired the former Great Northern roundhouse at Jackson Street in St. Paul. It was constructed by GN in 1907 to service passenger locomotives. Closed in 1959, the roundhouse was converted to non-rail use and the tracks removed. The museum reinstalled the tracks and has gradually renovated the building with both public and shop space. One of the highlights was reinstallation of a turntable (the former GN table from Minneapolis Junction, now the home of Milwaukee 4-8-4 No. 261) and new roundhouse doors built to 1906 plans.

## MTM restructures itself

Now with two railroad operations, two streetcar lines, and a steamboat, each with its own devotees, in December 2004 MTM restructured. The museum moved to concentrate on railroading and



**MTM's Jackson Street Roundhouse in St. Paul houses a variety of exhibits, including an ex-RI/C&NW GP7 lettered Soo LINE and numbered 559, one above a group of Soo passenger GP9s.**



**The museum's rare SDP40, built for GN and still painted for BN, heads a train on MTM's Osceola & St Croix Valley tourist line in Wisconsin. At the far end is GN 400, the first SD45.**

“spun off” the streetcar division to the newly created Minnesota Streetcar Museum in 2005. The steamboat went to the Museum of Lake Minnetonka, created to maintain and operate the *Minnehaha*.

MTM's rail collection continues to grow. BNSF Railway donated former GN SDP40 325, one of only 20 ever built, to the museum in 2009. The EMD passenger diesel is painted in Burlington Northern's Cascade green scheme, but plans are to repaint it in GN's “Big Sky blue” when funding becomes available. In addition to No. 325, Osceola & St. Croix Valley trains are pulled by BN SD9 6234 or GN 400 *Hustle Muscle*, EMD's first production SD45, now owned by the Great Northern Railway Historical Society. MTM also owns a former Rock Island/Chicago & North Western GP7 painted in Soo Line's maroon and gold, but it is currently out of service.

By far the most significant artifact preserved by MTM, however, is Dan Patch Line No. 100. Built by General Electric in 1913, it is generally considered the first commercially successful internal combustion-electric locomotive in the



**Built in 1913 as a gas-electric and now MTM's premier artifact, Dan Patch Line 100 stands in the Jackson Street shop in October 2016.**

All photos, Steve Glischinski

United States. Donated to the museum by GN in 1967, No. 100 is the “great granddaddy” of today's diesel locomotives. It can be seen today at the Jackson Street roundhouse, as its descendants rumble by on the BNSF main line outside. ■

*STEVE GLISCHINSKI is a veteran rail author and photographer based in the Twin Cities.*



Doubleheaded B&O Mikados out of Keyser, W.Va., blast through Piedmont, where Seventeen Mile Grade begins in earnest, with a troop train in July 1949. Each night, the *National Limited* enacted a similar drama.

Walter Thrall

# Steam drama at Keyser

The *National Limited's* nightly assault on B&O's Seventeen Mile Grade was the biggest show in Keyser, W.Va.

In fall 1948 I took a leave of absence from my job as an extra-board fireman on the Baltimore & Ohio to enroll in the Potomac State School of West Virginia University, a two-year prep school in Keyser, W.Va. Located at the base of the Allegheny Mountains 23 miles southwest of Cumberland, Md., Keyser [KEE-zur] had little to offer most students. But for me, the area was a wonder-house of railroad lore, history, and beautiful mountain scenery.

The Potomac River valley is steeped in transportation history. At Keyser, within a few hundred yards of each side were two states, two highways, and two rail lines. On the upper side was Western Maryland's single-track, predominantly coal-hauling line from Cumberland, Md., to Elkins, W.Va. On the lower side was the B&O's original main line to the Ohio River, then part of the road's Baltimore–St. Louis route.

Keyser was probably B&O's busiest terminal in West Virginia. Eight passenger trains were scheduled to stop there daily, and all westbound passenger trains needed a helper for the 2.2 percent Seventeen Mile Grade to Altamont, Md. Freight traffic was brisk, with legions of loaded and empty coal hoppers passing through each day. The continual movement of passenger and freight trains over the mountains was a constant struggle for crews and officials.

I once heard this claim made in a restaurant near the Keyser station: "Boys, if you can railroad over the Third Division [Keyser to Grafton, W.Va.], then you can railroad anywhere on the B&O!"

Long freight trains arrived and departed often. World War II was over, but traffic was still high, and much of the motive power was old and weary. Old 2-8-8-0 Mallets powered trains headed across the mountains to Grafton. Eastbound freights occasionally got one of the big new EM-1 2-8-8-4s.

Keyser was home to many Q-class 2-8-2s, used for helpers, local freights, work trains, and wreck trains.

Pacifics powered the passenger trains, the longer ones getting the big 5300-series engines that had once carried the names of U.S. Presidents. Westbound trains had helpers, with the heavier Mikados helping the more important trains.

Several evenings a week, a friend and I would cross the campus and stand at the edge of a street above the B&O yards and station. Both were out of sight beyond the tops of trees and houses, but the sounds made up for this. We were there to listen to a nightly drama.

Near 10 p.m., the *National Limited* for St. Louis would roar in from Cumberland. Slowly losing speed and whistling for street crossings, it would come to an easy stop at the station.

The long train usually carried an express car, baggage cars, mail cars, coaches, a dining car, and Pullmans. The train would be at the station for 10 or 15 minutes. During that time express, mail, baggage, and passengers were exchanged.

While this was being done, in the lights of the station platform another bit of action was taking place at the head of the train. A heavy 2-8-2 would back out of a side track and couple onto the big Pacific road engine. Usually there was little sound involved even when the coupling was made.

When all the activity had ceased along the train,

the conductor would give the signal to depart. The helper engine would whistle off . . . slowly take the slack out . . . and start the long train. After a hundred yards or so the big Pacific would open up . . . and the race would begin.

By the time they were halfway through the yards they would be doing 25 or 30 mph.

As they passed the Upper Yards they were making 35 or 40. Then they really opened up for the 1,800-foot climb up Seventeen Mile Grade.

My friend and I would stand enthralled by the sounds of those two locomotives gaining speed as they neared Piedmont, 5 miles to the west, where the grade stiffened from 0.5 percent to 1.3. It was easy to tell when the train got to Piedmont. There was just one street crossing there, and the helper engineer "tied down" the whistle cord as he drew near town. The meaning was clear: "Keep out of our way!"

If the weather conditions were right, we could hear the locomotives beyond Piedmont, faintly at first. But as they climbed the side of the mountain the sounds would sometimes become a bit louder. And on rare occasions we could even hear the change in tone and rhythm when speeds decreased a bit as the engineers dropped their Johnson bars down a notch or two to claim more power.

The doubleheader's sounds gradually faded away as the train climbed higher and higher . . . with an occasional low tone from the locomotives drifting back down the valley to our location.

Many people today end the evening with the 10 o'clock news. We were fortunate 70 years ago to listen to more dramatic — yet peaceful — sounds on the land. — *Borgon Tanner*

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**THE WAY IT WAS**

# Working out of Waverly

A PRR flagman in New Jersey learns his way around a cabin car



The trusty N6b cabin was a familiar sight all across the PRR; this one is at Little Creek, Va.

H. Reid

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After working as a Pennsylvania Railroad brakeman in northern New Jersey for a couple of weeks in mid-1966, I took the examination on Rule 99 to become a qualified flagman.

One night, while working the Extra List in Waverly Yard in Newark, I was assigned to a crew that was to take a freight from Waverly east across Newark Bay to Greenville Yard. The train was complete with an old wooden cabin car on the end, and I was to be the flagman. The conductor rode up in the locomotive with the engineman and head brakeman, so I was alone in the "cab." (Where I worked, the crew car at the end of the train was usually called the "cab," sometimes the "hack," rarely the official PRR term "cabin car," and never the "caboose." The cupola was the "gig top.")

Cabin cars were not only the conductor's office, but also a rolling supply shed. Stored under the seats and in the various lockers were spare knuckles; air hoses; rubber gaskets for the air-hose glad hands; a supply of flags, fusees, and torpedoes; marker lamps; and a solid one-size-fits-all wrench called an "alligator" for changing air hoses (about 2 feet long, in profile it looked like an open-jawed

'gator with serrations for teeth).

With the train put together, the air up in the train line, and the terminal air test done, we were ready to go to Greenville. Being a Jersey Shore boy and not a local, I had no idea where we were going, how far it was, or what we'd do when we got there. We left Waverly after dark and crossed the long Newark Bay bridge. At the east end of bridge was Greenville's five-track receiving yard. We pulled in on one of the tracks and stopped. The cab was sitting on an overpass, a through-type girder bridge with an open deck. Looking down between the ties, I could see cars zipping by on the street underneath. Alone in the cab, I decided to stay on the back platform until we got moving again, no matter what Rule 99 said about "going back a sufficient distance" to protect against following movements.

Then I saw a headlight coming at me on the same track. I debated whether or not to pop a fusee. Fortunately I did not. The light was from my own engine, which had run around the train and was coming back to pick up me and the cab. If I had popped a fusee, forever after I would have been known as "the guy who flagged his train against his own engine."

Such things do have a way of sticking.

One night a couple of years later, I was the conductor on a run from Waverly to Greenville with about 40 cars. I was back in the cab when the train line parted and the air brakes suddenly went on. The first thing to do was walk the train and find the problem. The second was to fix it. About 20 cars up, I found a car with a broken knuckle. Changing a knuckle is simple, but they are very heavy. I have a theory that the weight of the knuckle increases in proportion to the distance you have to carry it.

To change a knuckle, you have to pull the cut lever up, open the coupler, remove the hinge pin, pull the old knuckle out, let it drop (being careful that it doesn't fall on your foot), put the new one in place, insert the pin, open and close it a few times, couple up, and pump the air back up. The broken knuckle usually ends up in the weeds. I never heard of anyone carrying the old one back to the cab, to later be put in a company scrap bin.

A less taxing job was cutting the hack off while the train was moving. In the locker there was a steel rod with a twist on the end, a tool with which a crewman could reach across to the car ahead and close the angle cock. The pin could then be pulled from the cab's front platform by means of a chain extending from the railing to the cut lever on the cab (much safer than standing on the bottom step and bending down to reach the cut lever). Once the pin was pulled, the air hoses separated and the air brake stopped the hack while the train continued on.

The cabins, cabooses, buggies, cabs, crummies, hacks, way cars, or whatever you want to call them, are gone now, although a few remain as "showing platforms" with no interior facilities. Many tourist lines operate cabs, often charging extra for the privilege of riding in them. Many of the folks aboard them have never seen a cabin in regular service. I'm reminded of a model railroad friend who once asked me, "Is it necessary to turn the caboose at the end of a run?" I told him that you could turn it, but it was much simpler to take the marker lamps off one end and put them on the other.

I am glad I went railroading when I did, at the tail end of a great era. The companies finally won out, though. They got rid of the caboose and the men who rode in them. Now there is a flashing rear-end device — a "FRED." Is it better? Maybe, but I like the old way. — *Bill Nesbitt*

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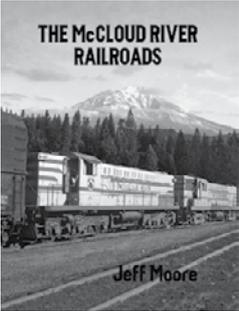
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# B&M under catenary — again

Leased diesels on the New Haven in 1959 recall an earlier era

**W**hat are these Boston & Maine diesels doing in electric territory in 1959, far from home on the New Haven Railroad at Danbury, Conn.? Tugboats are the answer to this question: The New Haven received much of its inbound freight traffic via tugs bringing carfloats across New York Harbor from New Jersey. When a tugboat-operators' strike in 1959 suddenly stopped New York Harbor's car-floating operations, the New Haven's Poughkeepsie Bridge freight route from Maybrook, N.Y., suddenly got busy indeed. The NH diesel situation was already stretched thin due to the closing of the road's shop at Readville, Mass., and there just weren't enough serviceable units to handle the extra freight that was now coming in over the Maybrook Line's sawtooth profile. So, the New Haven turned to the B&M for leased power to help fill the gap.

This resulted in the incongruous sight of B&M RS3 1514 leading three B&M GP7s on a westbound Maybrook freight through Danbury, Conn., past New Haven EP-3 electric No. 358 on June 21, 1959. The electrified Danbury branch saw mostly New York City commuter traffic by this date, although a few passenger trains did continue north to Pittsfield, Mass., with diesel power. June 21 was a Sunday, so the EP-3 is laying over for the weekend, along with another electric and a multiple-unit car for the shuttle service from Danbury to Norwalk on the New York-Boston main line.

Electric locomotives were unknown on the B&M in 1959, but the road did once have an electrified section. In 1911, when steam locomotive smoke had become intolerable in the Hoosac Tunnel, B&M strung catenary through the 5-mile



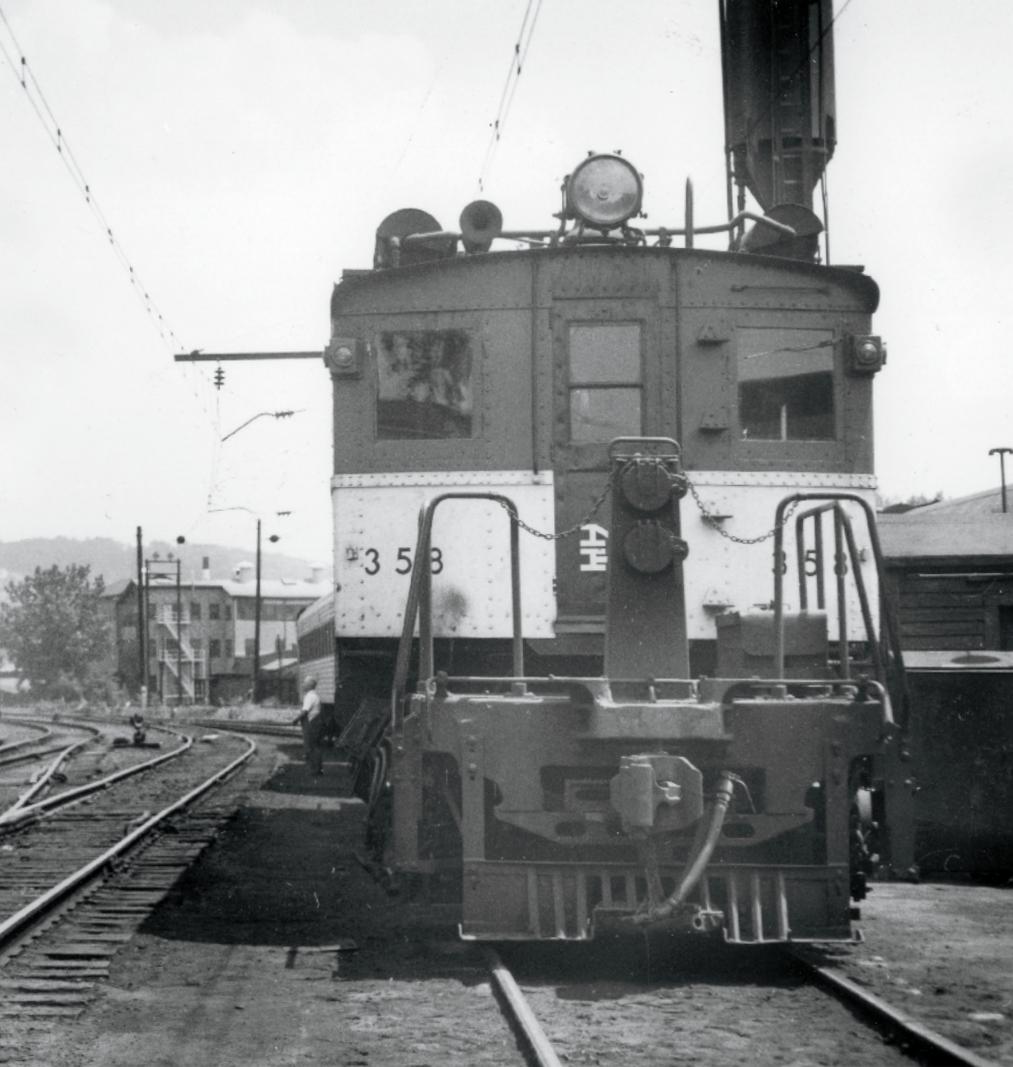
bore. Electrics towed passenger and freight trains through the tunnel, the steam locomotives tagging right along with their trains and continuing on their way once out of the tunnel. Although successful, the tunnel electrification was an expensive operational bottleneck, and as soon as the B&M was able to talk the War Production Board into letting it buy FT freight diesels in 1943 and '44, the tunnel's electrics were on thin ice. E7s began arriving in 1945 to eliminate Hoosac passenger steam, and the wire was de-energized for good in 1946.

There is even more *déjà vu* to the 1959 Danbury photo. The 11,000-volt A.C. New Haven catenary is of the same type the B&M's was, because the Hoosac Tunnel electrification was an NH-designed project dating from the era of NH control of the B&M. The box-cab Hoosac locomotives were copies of an NH experimental electric from 1910, and B&M electric crews even went to Stamford, Conn., for training on the NH. The New Haven EP-3 in the 1959 photo is also a box-cab, but it has been adorned with the flashy red/white/black livery that was adopted during the few years when Patrick

McGinnis was the road's president. By 1959 McGinnis had moved on to become president of the B&M, completing yet another circle.

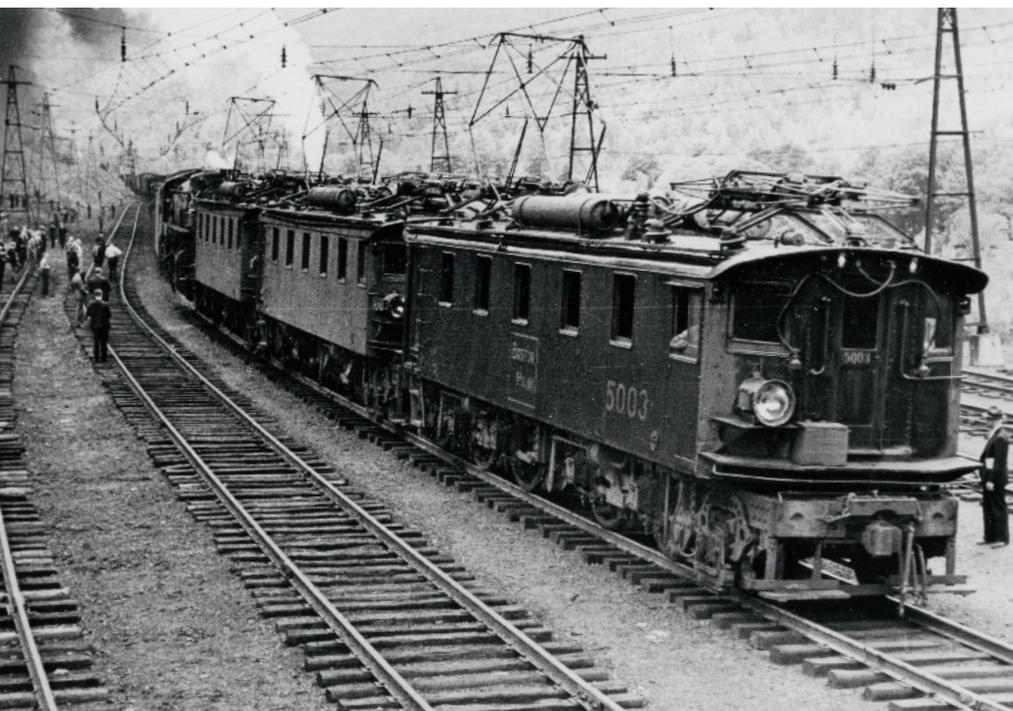
The New Haven's Danbury branch catenary survived for 36 years, only a year longer than the B&M electrification. Wired in 1925, the branch was de-energized in 1961 in favor of dual-power FL9 units. But, unlike the money-saving B&M tunnel dieselization, de-electrifying the Danbury branch resulted in today's more expensive operation of GE P32-DM dual-power locomotives to Danbury, instead of the multiple-unit cars that carry the vast majority of Metro-North's commuters elsewhere. Yet talk of re-electrifying the branch has led nowhere so far.

And what of the once-busy Maybrook freight gateway? It is gone forever, severed by the 1974 Poughkeepsie Bridge fire and partially torn up. The leased B&M diesels of 1959 were just bit players in a cast of thousands over the decades, part of an endless potpourri of steam and diesel power that muscled heavy tonnage to and from Maybrook — but B&M 1514 and its friends did add some extra spice to that potpourri. — J. W. Swanberg ■



Boston & Maine diesels and electrified trackage share the scene again as leased B&M units on a New Haven Maybrook Line freight pass an NH EP-3 at Danbury, Conn., on June 21, 1959.

J. W. Swanberg



B&M's short electrified section, based on New Haven designs, operated 1911-46 to get trains through Hoosac Tunnel. Here, three motors haul a westbound freight at East Portal in May '38.

Charles A. Brown, J. W. Swanberg collection

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# Lone Star interurban



**The Texas Electric Railway** was created by the 1917 merger of the Texas Traction and Southern Traction companies. Its 250-mile interurban system, the largest in the Lone Star State, consisted of three lines out of Dallas running north to Denison and south to Waco and Corsicana. In addition, there were streetcar operations at Denison, Sherman, McKinney, Corsicana, Waxahachie, and Waco; most were casualties of the company's 1931 bankruptcy, with one Waco line lasting until the end of TE rail passenger

operations. Interchange freight service began in 1928, and in the 1930s freight accounted for half the system's revenues. Even during lean times, TE was known for the excellent condition of its cars and stations. The Corsicana line closed in 1941, just before the boom years of World War II. Declining traffic and a series of wrecks culminating in an April 3, 1948, head-on collision took their toll, and the last cars ran on December 31, 1948. Three photos made on the first day of a July 3 and 4, 1948, Central Elec-

tric Railfans Association excursion show the Texas Electric six months before the end. Above, car 308 (built by St. Louis Car Co. in 1913 for Southern Traction) running as Waco Division southbound train 223 moves through Italy. At top right, No. 328 (St. Louis, 1920) on the CERA trip poses on the trestle south of downtown Waxahachie. At bottom right, the 320 (also from the 1913 ST group) displays green flags for a following southbound section as it approaches the Southern Pacific crossing in Waxahachie.



Opposite, B. L. Stone; this page, George Krambles; all, Krambles-Peterson Archive

## In the next issue

Spring 2017 Edition



### Sunset Years for B&O Steam in Ohio

J. Parker Lamb, on an Air Force assignment to Dayton during 1955–57, documented some of the last B&O steam action in Ohio

### North America's First Radio Network

Canadian National's 1920s in-house communication system was the basis for Canada's national radio network

### What's in a Photograph?

C&NW at Sioux City, Iowa

### Boomer Engineer

Adventures in engine cabs on the Rock Island and Burlington Northern in the mid-1970s

### Climax Branch in Color

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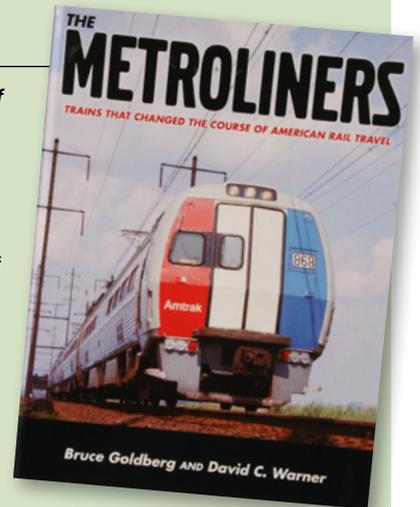
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## FIRST OUT

### *The Metroliners: Trains That Changed the Course of American Rail Travel*

By Bruce Goldberg and David C. Warner. White River Productions, P.O. Box 48, Bucklin, MO 64631; www.shop.whiteriverproductions.com; 8½ x 11 inches; hardcover; 124 pages. \$59.95.

**The challenge** in producing a definitive history of the Budd Company speedsters that transformed Northeast Corridor rail travel is deciding how to weave in anecdotes, illustrations, and personal accounts without letting meaty details bog down a chronological narrative. Happily, Goldberg and Warner showcase equipment rosters, mechanical specifications, running time, frequencies, ridership, and fares in timeline tables at the back of the book. Yet the authors aren't afraid to provide ancillary background by tracing the impact of early government funding efforts that, in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Railroad, produced the first self-propelled cars for a 1969 Penn Central inaugural run; recounting the transition to Amtrak; explaining the multiple-unit cars' mechanical maladies that led to Amfleet substitution; noting the ebb and flow of airline shuttle competition challenges; and revealing why the *Metroliner* brand staged a last-gasp comeback in 2006. Interviews and high-quality historical photos help tell the story, but numerous newspaper ads and timetable art also add spice. Insight from Goldberg's extensive time in Amtrak's marketing department and Warner's engineering knowledge contribute credibility to the story of how the *Metroliners* pioneered the concept of branding a higher class of service differentiated by premium equipment and price that wound up paving the way for today's *Acela Express*. — *Bob Johnston*

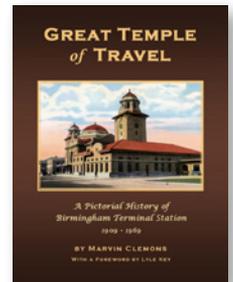


### *Great Temple of Travel:*

#### *A Pictorial History of Birmingham Terminal Station*

By Marvin Clemons. MidSouth Media LLC, 65 Lee Circle, Hayden, AL 35079-5948. 8½ x 11 inches; hardcover; 127 pages. \$59

**Once upon a time**, Birmingham, Ala., had one of America's grandiose passenger stations, a Byzantine-style downtown landmark serving Southern, Central of Georgia, Frisco, Illinois Central, and Seaboard. The building was designed by noted Southern Railway architect Thornton Marye and was distinguished by its great dome flanked by a pair of minarets. This detailed and affectionate portrait of the station is packed with postcards, diagrams, timetables, drawings, and photos covering the terminal from its dedication in 1909 through the steam and diesel eras to its sudden and rather pointless destruction in 1969. Many of the images are in color, including diesel-era slides and colored versions of black-and-white prints. — *Kevin P. Keefe*

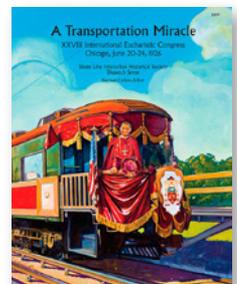


### *A Transportation Miracle:*

#### *XXVIII International Eucharistic Congress*

By Norman Carlson. Shore Line Interurban Historical Society, Inc., P.O. Box 425, Lake Forest, IL 60045. 8½ x 11 inches; softcover; 100 pages. \$25.

**Don't let the title fool you:** the story of Chicago's Eucharistic Congress of 1926 has appeal far beyond the Catholic community. In fact, the Congress was an unprecedented event that drew 1 million pilgrims and involved perhaps every passenger carrier in the railroad capital. The book shows how numerous railroads — notably the North Shore Line — moved all these people around the metro area, culminating in services for 800,000 at a seminary in Mundelein. Along the way you'll learn about NYC's exclusive "Red Train" from New York, North Shore's "Cardinals Special," and expanded lake steamer service to Navy Pier. Included are several atmospheric action photos by the great A. W. Johnson and original paintings by Mitch Markovitz. — *K.P.K.*



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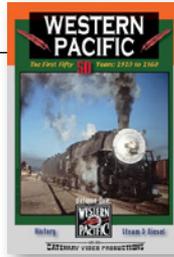
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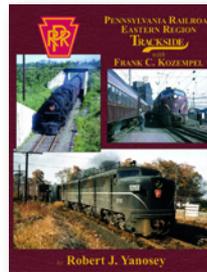
**The Western Pacific** was completed late enough that motion picture footage spanning its entire life is available. In this well-organized, highly produced presentation, some early-1910s scenes show railroading in the days of “wooden cars and iron men.” Rich color segments cover the 1940s–’50s heyday of big steam and early diesels. There’s also footage of the 1931 construction and opening of the line to Bieber, Calif. Marine operations on San Francisco Bay are covered, as are the *Feather River Express* and *Exposition Flyer* (the CZ gets scant attention, but it will be the sole focus of a second volume.) The original edition of this program was released, on VHS, in 1992 by Don Olsen. This new DVD version is not only technically superior, being set in a wide-screen format with stereo sound, but it also includes some new material, such as the colorful reminiscences of a former employee and a look at preserved WP locomotives. — *Robert S. McGonigal*



**Pennsylvania Railroad Eastern Region:**  
**Trackside with Frank C. Kozempel**

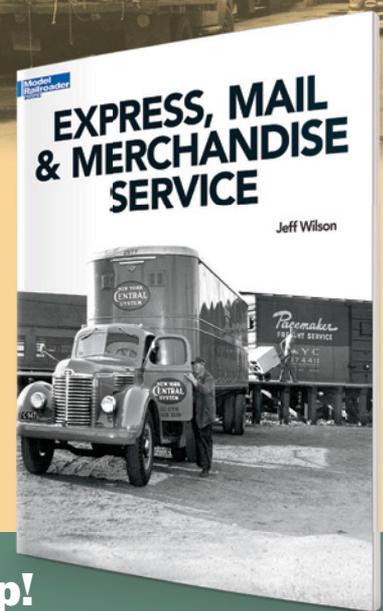
By Robert J. Yanosey. Morning Sun Books, Inc., 9 Pheasant Dr., Scotch Plains, NJ 07076; www.morningsunbooks.com. 8½ x 11 inches; hardcover; 128 pages. \$59.95.

**The late Frank Kozempel** photographically covered the PRR (and PRSL) lines of his native New Jersey and eastern Pennsylvania like a blanket throughout the 1950s and ’60s. His excellent color work is shown to good advantage in this album. Augmenting the photos are detailed captions, plus maps and other graphics. A number of Kozempel’s photos have been published before, and some of those are here, but author Yanosey has emphasized unseen or unusual images including plenty of PRR steam, diesel, and electric gems. Perhaps most arresting are seven shots from Kozempel’s collection made in 1942 by an unknown photographer of the Army’s narrow-gauge Fort Dix Railroad. — *R.S.M.*



**Express, Mail & Merchandise Service** provides a historical account of when railroad personnel handled packages and mail – everything from baby chicks and cornflakes to money and machinery – and delivered them to their final destination. Written for railfans and history buffs alike, this book gives a behind-the-scenes look at how railroads operated as major delivery carriers from the 1900s through the 1960s.

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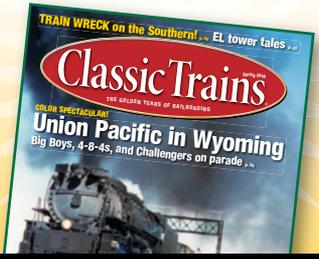
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Chicago &amp; North Western

## Milwaukee's lost lakefront landmark

**The Blizzard of 1947** is remembered as the greatest snowstorm ever to hit Milwaukee. During January 28–30, a total of 18 inches fell, whipped by 60-mph winds into 10-foot drifts. The city was paralyzed, and it took more than a month to dig out. Standing tall amid the swirling snow at 4 p.m. on January 30, 1947, is the Chicago & North Western's passenger station, built in 1889 to the plans of architect Charles Sumner Frost, who designed numerous notable depots large and small in the upper Midwest. Al-

though C&NW played second fiddle to the Milwaukee Road in the Cream City, its depot stood on a premier site at the foot of Wisconsin Avenue, the city's principal east-west street, with Lake Michigan sparkling beyond the trainshed and Romanesque Revival head building. Well, not sparkling this day. The North Western's lakefront landmark survived the Blizzard of '47, but it was no match for the twin 1960s storms of passenger-train retrenchment and highway expansion. In 1966, with municipal

planners eyeing the depot site for freeway and park use, C&NW abandoned its line along the lakefront and relocated its few remaining trains to a new Milwaukee Road station on the south edge of downtown. Some voices were raised in the old building's defense, but the view of the county supervisor who called it "an ugly monstrosity" prevailed, and it was razed in 1968. The freeway was never built, and nothing as distinguished as the North Western depot has graced this location since. ■



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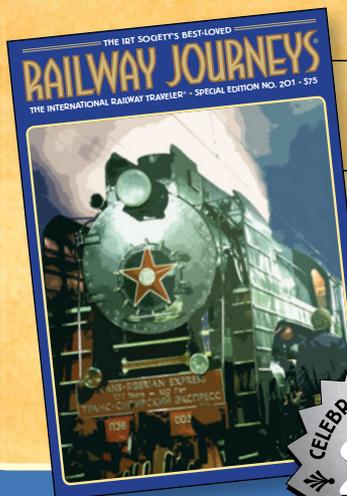
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