The BN Expediter

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The official publication of the **FRIENDS OF THE BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD,** the historical society focused on the BURLINGTON NORTHERN RAILROAD and the BURLINGTON NORTHERN SANTA FE RAILWAY

(top) October 31, 1979 helpers 1772/849/1795 are at the west end of Skykomish.

(center) November 15, 1979 #88 at Berne with the 6905/ 1791 for helpers.

(bottom) June 25, 1979 train #88 exits Cascade Tunnel with helpers 6900 & 6399.

Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad

PO Box 271, West Bend, WI 53095-0271
www.fobnr.org

A Not-For-Profit Corporation
Registered in the State of Idaho

The *Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad* was formed to gather, preserve and share information about the history and current operations of the Burlington Northern Railroad. It follows the development of the railroad from its inception in 1970 as the merger of the Great Northern, Northern Pacific, Chicago, Burlington and Quincy and the Spokane, Portland & Seattle Railroads, up to the present and into the future.

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The BN Expediter

The BN Expediter is published four times a year and is included with membership in the **Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad.** Manuscripts, photographs and information are welcomed for publication. Materials are submitted with the understanding that no monetary compensation will be paid upon publication. Items will be returned only if requested. Otherwise they will go into the archives.

Anything published in *The BN Expediter* (including the classifieds), must be **focused** on the Burlington Northern Railroad, from the 1970 merger on. Information and/or pictures that give historical perspective or context are acceptable (e.g., pre-merger road numbers). The disposition of a locomotive, other piece of equipment or property is also acceptable. Further information is available from the Editor.

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Front Cover

On July 9, 1983, F45 6641 and 6636 help train #129 over Stevens Pass. Clouds of smoke from the brake shoes were a common sight on trains descending the hill.

Here the helpers are crossing the Foss River bridge at MP 1728.2

-Brian Ambrose photo

Rear Cover

On August 20, 1983 westbound grain train GC2 (8058/8179/6403/1755) has just emerged from Cascade Tunnel. SD40-2 7867 and 8076 are the mid train helpers.

-Brian Ambrose photos

In This Issue

" 'ROUND THE HORN: A VALUABLE PIECE OF RAILROAD"

by Earl Currie

Some of the most important strategic, long-term decisions made by railway companies are which of two or more alternate routes should be designated the "preferred route" for its operation. Such decisions are a fundamental part of the planning that must be done for mergers where duplicate or parallel lines will result. A railway company must also conduct rationalization studies to answer questions as to which of its alternate lines has the lowest operating cost and will require the least amount of capital to maintain it to a desired standard. In recent times, such studies have had to be conducted to determine what amount of capital is required to provide the capacity to handle increasing amounts of business.

Decisions on which alternate route is to be retained, or at least maintained to main line standards are never clear-cut. Even after a detail study has been made covering all aspects of the question, the answer often is a 60-40 call. Most often, the decision will be based on the view the senior management has as to the long-term potential for growth of traffic on that corridor. A large part of history's judgment of a railway CEO might be based on what decisions were made on the company's route structure. Years after such decisions are made, it still can be difficult to produce a set of facts that would establish beyond doubt whether good decisions were made. Succeeding generations of railway people at all levels, and from many departments, will rehash those decisions. They become part of the company's legacy, tradition and folklore.

Following Burlington Northern's formation in 1970, it made decisions as to which alternate routes it would retain on several major corridors, among them Spokane-Pasco, Laurel-Sandpoint, and on its crossings of the Cascade Mountains. What drove these decisions was the objective not to maintain duplicate lines between major terminals and junctions.

One such case involves the decision made to abandon a lesser known secondary line in north central Illinois most commonly known as "the Mendota-Denrock line." It provided a link between the Aurora-Galesburg main line and the Galesburg-Savanna line. Together, these two main line segments, with the Mendota-Denrock line, provided an alternate route to the Aurora-Savanna line (commonly referred to as the "C&I," for Chicago and Iowa, the company that built the portion of the line between Aurora and Oregon, Illinois).

History and background

The Mendota-Denrock line was used for two purposes, first, as a link between Chicago and the Rock Island-Moline-Davenport-Bettendorf industrial complex that contained large farm machinery manufacturing plants, an Alcoa aluminum plant, and large agri-business companies. A six-day local train was run west from Mendota at about 7:00 P.M., doing local work to Denrock. It then ran south to Barstow, a yard on the Galesburg-Savanna line, with its cars for the Quad Cities. The same crew turned back from Barstow, with most of its train containing cars destined to the connecting lines in Chicago. At Mendota, these cars were picked up by an eastbound train operating from Galesburg to Cicero (Chicago). The round trip was 150 miles. A single SD7 or SD9 type locomotive was used.

The second function of the Mendota-Denrock line was that of an alternate route for trains moving between Aurora and Savanna. Having this alternate route in the network in effect provided double track capability. No "through freight" type trains were scheduled to run on this line. Instead, it was used on an "as-needed" basis, at the discretion of the Chief Dispatcher. Following are examples of how the Mendota-Denrock line was used as an alternate to the C&I:

1. eastbound unit trains of taconite and potash
2. for second sections of regular eastbound trains, mainly
   No. 88
3. westbound trains of empty cars being returned to loading points
   west of the Twin Cities.

Dispatchers and train crews referred to operation via Mendota as "going 'round the horn."

Prior to the start-up of Amtrak in 1971, six daily passenger trains were operated on the C&I (eight per day prior to 1968 and 10 per day before about 1964). Four of these

trains were "bunched" in the early afternoon. No. 97 (a Chicago-Twin Cities train carrying forwarder merchandise to connect with Great Northern and Northern Pacific trains) was often run via Mendota to relieve congestion until the early 1960's, when its schedule had to be tightened for competitive reasons. From then on, No. 97 was operated only on the C&I.

Heavy tonnage eastbound trains were normally operated via Mendota-Denrock to get them out of the way of the priority trains scheduled to run on the C&I. While the maximum grade was 0.8 per cent on both lines, the overall grade profile was much more favorable on the Mendota-Denrock route. A look at the profile for the C&I shows grades of 0.8 per cent at several locations, but only at one location on the Mendota-Denrock line. Most of the heavy eastbound trains were not given enough power to get over the 0.8 per cent grades without having to "double the hill." With the practice of not operating more than one train at a time between Mendota and Denrock, having the main track tied up from one to two hours for doubling would not delay other trains, or cause congestion on the line.

During Ralph Budd's time as President of the Burlington in the 1930's, line changes were made on the C&I to reduce curvature. These improvements were needed to allow higher speeds of 90 and 100 MPH for the new Zephyr passenger trains put in service at that time. However, no programs for grade reduction or to take out the numerous sags between Stratford and Savanna were undertaken. From his experience on the Great Northern Railway, Mr. Budd would have been familiar with the benefits from such improvements, e.g., the line improvements made on the GN's Willmar line and the Minot-Williston line, both of which had characteristics quite similar to the west end of the C&I. With the alternate route via Mendota being available for heavy freight trains, it may be that improving the C&I for the operation of freight trains was not considered a priority at that time.

Since these trains operated on a water level grade for the entire 265 miles from St. Paul to Savanna, it would have been uneconomic to add power to these trains at Savanna, to get over the 0.8 per cent grades on the C&I without doubling. For example, a taconite or potash train of about 12,000 tons would be powered with three GP30, 35 or 40-type units, with total horsepower of about 7500, a ratio of only about 0.65. By running such trains on the Mendota-Denrock line, that favorable, low-cost operation could be maintained east of Savanna.

The alternate route via Mendota was also used for westbound trains of empty cars being returned to loading points west of the Twin Cities. Often, a single GP30, 35 or 40 locomotive was used on a train of 100 to as many as 180 empties. This practice kept such slow-moving trains off the C&I, and avoided the problem of sidings being too short for such long trains to meet opposing trains on a single-track line.

Operating post-merger (1970)

Soon after the 1970 merger, traffic increased significantly between the Twin Cities and Chicago. As more and more trains were run over the light rail between Mendota and Denrock, the need to upgrade the line became apparent. In addition to the need to relay the line with heavier rail, the tie condition was marginal, with a gravel ballast section. A program was needed for installation of second-hand 112-lb. or heavier welded rail, tie renewal (about 1,000 ties per mile), and a granite ballast section. In the late 1970's, this work could have been completed for about $7 million. While it was agreed by the division and the system engineering staff that this work should be done, it could not compete with the overriding priority to put all available resources into upgrading the primary corridors experiencing major increases in unit coal train tonnage.

Comparison of Line Characteristics (as of 1985)

Distance

C&I (main line, Aurora-Savanna), 105 miles
Aurora-Savanna via Mendota-Denrock

Aurora-Mendota	45 miles
Mendota-Denrock	49 miles
Denrock-Savanna	30 miles
Total: 124 miles	

Grades (maximum)

C&I: 0.8% (at numerous locations)
Aurora-Mendota: 0.4% (ascending westbound)
Mendota-Denrock: 0.8% (ascending eastbound), 1.0% (ascending westbound)
Denrock-Savanna: 0.3% (in both directions)

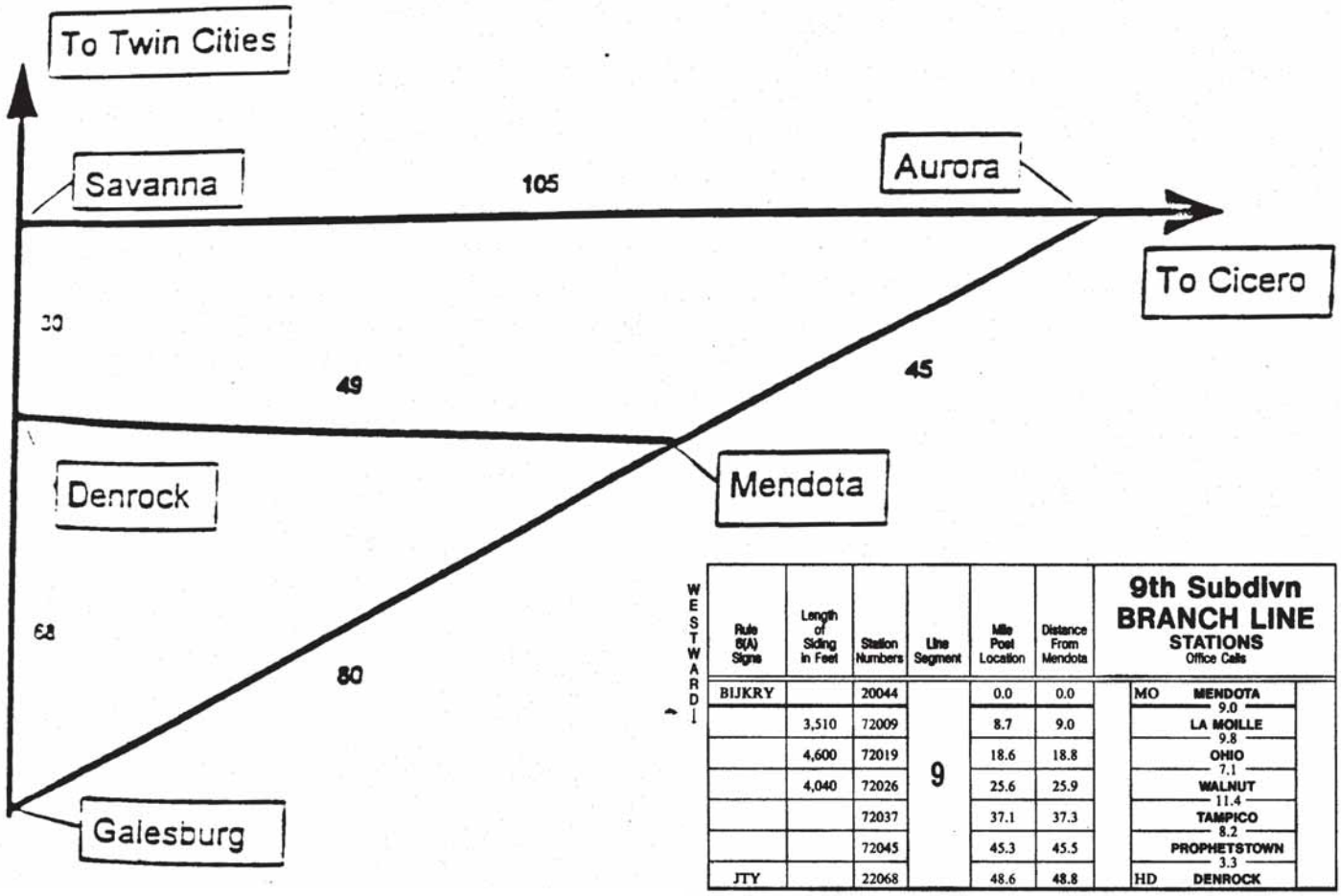
Speed Restrictions (freight trains)

C&I : 60 MPH for priority trains; 50 MPH for regular trains; 30 MPH for loaded coal, potash and taconite trains.
Aurora-Mendota: same as on C&I, except 40 MPH for loaded unit trains.
Mendota-Denrock: 40 MPH, except 30 MPH for unit trains.
Denrock-Savanna: 49 MPH, except 30 MPH for unit trains.

Rail

C&I: 129-lb. and heavier
Aurora-Mendota: 129-lb. and heavier
Mendota-Denrock: 85, 90, 100 and 110-lb.
Denrock-Savanna: 100 and 110-lb.

Burlington Northern – Northern Illinois
(no. of miles between junction points)



WESTWARD ↓

Rule 6(A) Signs	Length of Siding in Feet	Station Numbers	Line Segment	Mile Post Location	Distance From Mendota	9th Subdivn BRANCH LINE STATIONS Office Calls
BIJKRY		20044	9	0.0	0.0	MO MENDOTA
						9.0
	3,510	72009		8.7	9.0	LA MOILLE
						9.8
	4,600	72019		18.6	18.8	OHIO
						7.1
	4,040	72026		25.6	25.9	WALNUT
						11.4
		72037		37.1	37.3	TAMPICO
						8.2
		72045		45.3	45.5	PROPHETSTOWN
						3.3
JTY		22068		48.6	48.8	HD DENROCK

↑ EASTWARD

CHICAGO DIVISION
(Mendota to Denrock)

NINTH SUBDIVISION

1. **Speed Restrictions—**
   Zone—Between **Maximum Speeds Permitted**
   Mendota and Denrock . . . . . 30 MPH.
   Item 1A, All Subdivisions, applies except between MP 18.0 and MP 27.0.
2. **Bridge, Engine and Heavy Car Restrictions—**
   Item 5d not permitted.
3. **Train Register Exceptions**—None.
4. **Clearance Provisions and Exceptions Rule 83(B)—**
   Mendota—Trains must receive clearance when operator on duty. When operator not on duty clearance received at Cicero, Eola, Aurora Tower, or Galesburg clears train at Mendota.
   Denrock—Trains must receive clearance when operator on duty. When operator not on duty clearance received at North LaCrosse, Savanna, Barstow, or Galesburg clears train at Denrock.
5. **Rule 99**—When flagging is required, distance will be 1.5 mile.
6. **Denrock**—Normal position of junction switch Denrock-Agnew Line is for Ninth Subdivision.
7. **Automatic Interlocking not Indicated at Station—**
   C&NW Crossing 3.5 miles west of Walnut.

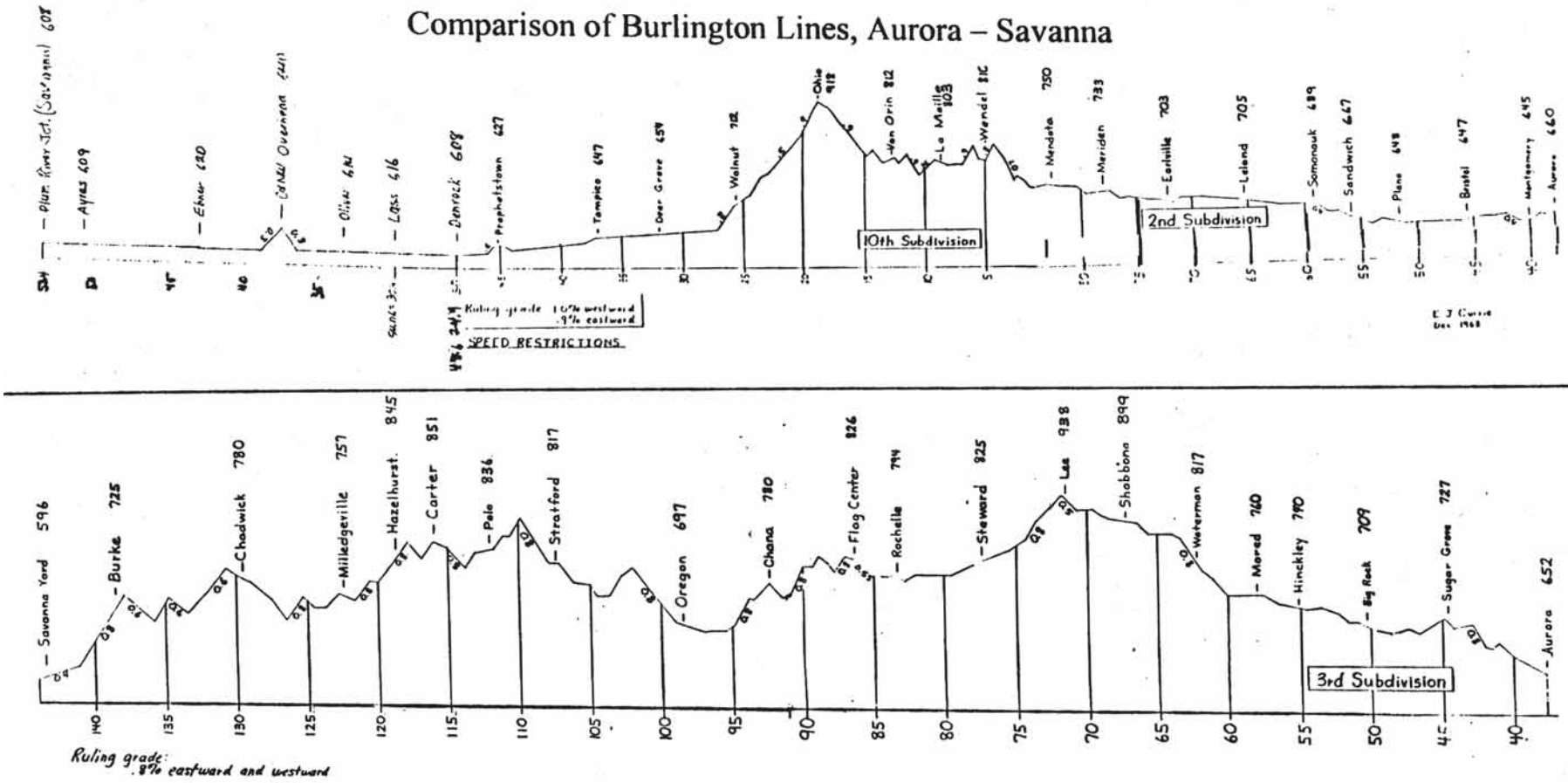
Although the alternate route via Mendota and Denrock was 19 miles longer, the direct route between Aurora and Savanna, it had some advantages in grades for eastbound trains, especially heavy unit trains of iron ore, taconite and potash.

Second sections of regular trains that were "underpowered", would cause delay and congestion if allowed to run on the main route. Most importantly, use of the Mendota-Denrock line formed the near equivalent of double track.

When the decision was made to abandon this line in the late 1980's, it was one of the several "crown jewels" given up in the pursuit of short-sighted cost and asset reduction programs.

Figure No. ___

Comparison of Burlington Lines, Aurora – Savanna



The "C&I" Subdivision (the lower profile) was the main route for passenger trains and priority freight trains operated between St. Paul and Chicago. Unit trains of iron ore and potash, and westbound trains of empty cars were run on the route via Mendota and Denrock (the upper profile), due to its having a heavy grade (0.8 – 0.9 per cent) at only one location. However, that line was 19 miles longer than the C&I. With so many locations with grades of 0.8 per cent, with "hogbacks" and sags, C&I had not been well-engineered for heavy freight trains, nor was any extensive program for grade reduction ever undertaken. The condensed profiles prepared by BNSF for this line show a grade of 1.22 per cent for 0.4 miles eastbound, and 1.20 percent for 0.4 miles westbound at MP 104. However, the profiles prepared by the CB&Q Railroad and BN show grades of 0.82 per cent in both directions at that location. A difference in grade of 0.4 per cent can be significant, even with today's high adhesion locomotives. The apparent "mismatches" on the Aurora-Mendota-Denrock route are due to their being one set of mileposts between Aurora and Mendota, another set on the Mendota-Denrock branch, and two sets on the Denrock-Savanna segment of the "P-Vine" (Galesburg – Savanna line).

Train Control (signal system)
C&I: CTC (with 2-main track CTC for 9.3 miles, Steward Jct.-Flag Center)
Aurora-Mendota: 2-main track CTC
Mendota-Denrock: non-ABS, train order authority
Denrock-Savanna: non-ABS, train order authority (CTC installed in 1980's)

No. of Scheduled Trains Operated (per day in mid 1980's)
C&I: 20-30 trains
Aurora-Mendota: 18-20 freight; 4-Amtrak
Mendota-Denrock: one 6-day turnaround local train
Denrock-Savanna: 4-regular freight plus 4 to 6 loaded and empty unit coal trains.

Sidings
C&I: controlled sidings spaced about every 7 to 8 miles
Aurora-Mendota: 2-main tracks
Mendota-Denrock: one 80-car siding
Denrock-Savanna: 5-locations

Decision to abandon

In the early 1980's, Burlington Northern adopted strategies to reduce its asset base. Part of that effort was to abandon or sell low density, low revenue lines. Wherever there were alternate routes between terminals or major junction points, decisions were to be made as to which line should be taken out of the network. The Mendota-Denrock line could meet neither test. Local business on the line had nearly dried up. Some of the large farm machinery manufacturing plants had closed, thereby reducing the amount of "overhead" business moving on the line. Enough motive power was being provided to get the heavy eastbound trains over the grades and the "hogbacks" on the C&I. Even with the advantages the Mendota-Denrock line had with its more favorable grades, and even though it provided double track capability between Aurora and Savanna, the decision was made to abandon the line in the mid-1980's.

Changes made in the handling of "regular" traffic (i.e., other than business moving in unit trains and intermodal trains) in more recent years have mitigated some of the negatives of that decision. With the shut-down of the hump and most of the general switching capability in Cicero to make way for expansion of the intermodal terminal, regular freight moving to and from the direction of the Twin Cities is handled through the modern hump yard at Galesburg. Not much of that type of business moves on the direct route over the C&I.

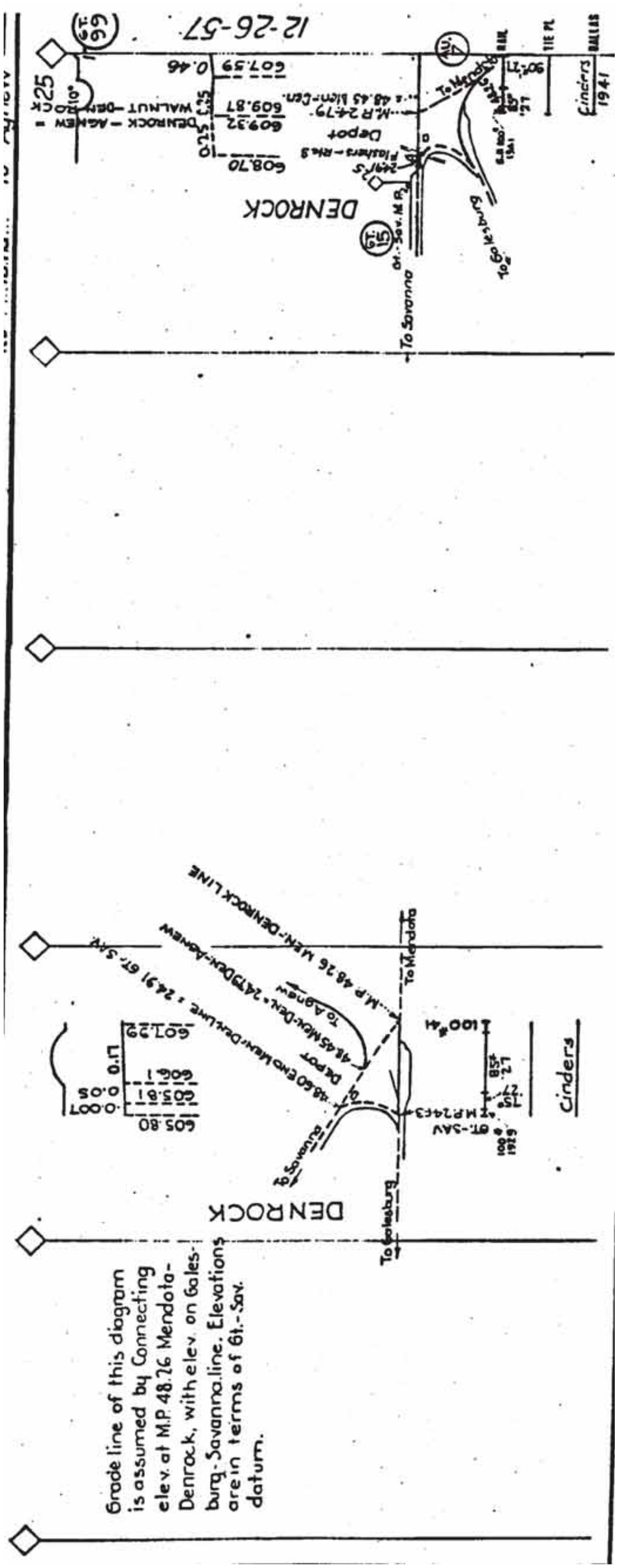
Moving this traffic via Galesburg is longer by 78 miles, and takes several hours longer, but by reducing the number of "regular" trains on the C&I, there is less need for the double track capability the Mendota-Denrock line had provided. The use of distributed power helps overcome some of the problems in train handling on a "roller coaster" line such as the C&I.

The aftermath

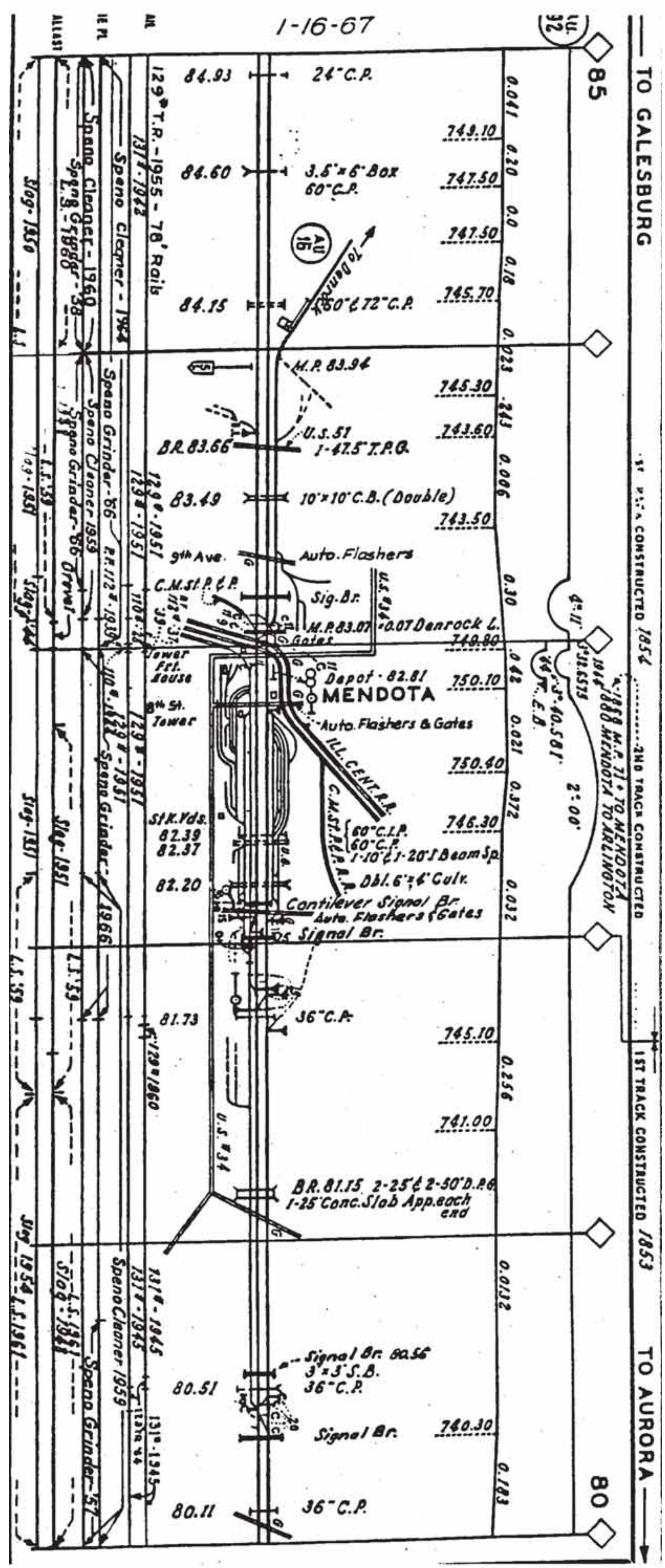
However, with the rapid growth of railway business experienced in the past several years, decisions made in the past to reduce capacity and general operating capability have brought about severe congestion in some corridors. In time, BNSF may have to build a second main track on all or part of the C&I. It would have cost very little to upgrade the Mendota-Denrock line with heavier rail in the 1980's and thereby continue to benefit from the operating capability and additional capacity the line provided. It is a link in the network that should have been retained. It is unfortunate that at the time the decision was made to abandon it, the pressure was on to reduce the asset base and thereby help increase the rate of return on invested capital.

There were people in senior management positions who did not have much faith in the future for railway service. They expected the railroads' share of the market to decline, and went into a "harvest" mode. This view of the world caused a number of short-sighted apathetic decisions to be made to abandon or sell alternate route capability throughout the system. It is fortunate for the railway industry that these attitudes did not prevail.

Still, the debate among railroad people over decisions made on alternate routes and on the operating capability of each route will continue for years to come. It provides good material for discussion during breaks while out on inspection trips, or in the company of others who are "students" of railway operations.



12-26-57
DENROCK
To Savanna
To Galesburg
To Mendota
Depot
Cinders
Grade line of this diagram is assumed by Connecting elev. at M.P. 48.26 Mendota-Denrock, with elev. on Galesburg-Savanna line. Elevations are in terms of Gt.-Sav. datum.



TO GALESBURG
TO AURORA
1-16-67
85
80
MENDOTA
1ST TRACK CONSTRUCTED 1853
2ND TRACK CONSTRUCTED 1854

Book Review

by Micheal Farley

Burlington Northern In Color, Volumn 1: The Urge to Merge by Jim Boyd

Morning Sun Publications
$59.95
Release Date: July 1, 2007

This book is the first of a three volume set covering the Burlington Northern. The title is a little deceiving in that there is only one photo of a Cascade Green locomotive in the book, and it is on the last page in the preview for Volume 2. That photo features the CB&Q GP40 in the experimental "Hockey Stick" scheme. Other than this last-page preview and the introduction, there is little if any mention of the Burlington Northern in and of itself.

The book is divided into four chapters, one for each of the predecessor railroads. Each chapter offers a very brief history of the railroad, followed by a photographic chronology of the road's motive power. The photos start with the final days of steam and ending with the final diesel purchases by the railroad, and showcasing the unique tendencies of each railroad. The exception to this is the CB&Q, who's SD45's and U23C's are not covered. I believe this is because they were delivered in the "Hockey Stick" version of Cascade Green, though they were CB&Q locomotives. Each chapter also contains a map of the railroad and an All-Time Diesel Roster. The photography is outstanding, the bulk being Jim Boyd's personal work. Some, but not many, of the photos have already been published in other works. Morning Sun's color reproduction is also of a very high quality.

Unfortunately, this book also contains some contradictions, and factual & spelling errors:

1. The book states in the Northern Pacific section (page 40) that James J. Hill died in 1920, while in the Great Northern section (page 69) the year given is 1916. Four other sources in my personal collection confirm that 1916 is the correct date.

2. The introduction (page 4) states that 1968 is the year of the first merger proposal, while the Northern Pacific section acknowledges the 1904 Northern Securities, which was the first real attempt at merger by Mr. Hill himself. The Northern Securities was formed in 1901, and struck down in 1904. Merger applications also occurred in 1927, 1961, and 1967.

3. In the Northern Pacific section (pages 38 & 46), the book refers to the NP towns of Bismarck and Mandas South Dakota. They are in North Dakota, and several maps printed in the book verify this. "Bismarck is" also spelled incorrectly.

4. In the Great Northern section (page 83) there is a page dedicated to the first production SD45, Hustle Muscle. A common mistake is made here stating that the locomotive was donated by the BN to the Lake Superior Museum of Transportation in Duluth, MN. It was donated in 1988 to the Great Northern Railway Historical Society, who still owns the locomotive. It resided at LSMT for several years, but now is housed at Minnesota Transportation Museum's Jackson Street Roundhouse facility in St. Paul, MN.

Overall I am happy with this book, but the errors disappoint me especially for the price. There are enough people interested and plenty of information available to prevent such mishaps in a book that will be considered a historical reference.

Those are my two-cents. You can buy a lot for that price, eh?

-Micheal Farley

2007 Convention Report

by John Adams

As I sit writing this report I once again give thanks to the NP group – and to Dave for accepting their scheduling – as I hear that the temperature in Bismarck was a balmy 106 today. Our week in Bismarck on the other hand, was a beautiful 75-80, sunny and incredibly pleasant, as was this year's FOBNR Convention.

This year we did decide to try something different and hold our convention in loose coordination with one of the predecessor societies, namely the NP Historical Society. In this way we were able to do some things that we might not have been able to do ourselves, and we were also able to observe how a closely related historical society runs their convention. While we won't plan to do this every year, the concept did seem a success and may be worth repeating some time in the future depending how we can coordinate our interests.

Arrival this year was on a Wednesday afternoon. As we arrived we found that as usual Dave Poplawski had beat us there, set up the Registration Table, but this year also set up his new portable HO layout. This was a loop of track about 100' in length which allowed people to run some nice HO BN equipment. Not to be outdone, Gary Seymour and I soon set up our N scale 30"x96" layout, a double oval, and after some initial teething problems with ballast, got 2 N scale trains running. We soon adjourned to the Prime Steer for dinner, arriving back at the Hotel to hear welcoming remarks from Cordell Booke, a local resident and engineer on the line through Bismarck/Mandan. He was able to share with us the overall layout of the area, the traffic patterns and the specifics to watch for while railfanning the area. He and Mark Steenwyk, an engineer from the Kansas City area, also provided some lively insights into work on the present railroad, including their comments about working for the railroad and being a fan at the same time. They also shared in the ongoing discussion about their favorite locomotive to run. They did both agree than anything with working air conditioning was better than anything without, but beyond that there were many differences. SD70ACe's did share the surprising problem of not being isolated cabs like most of the 70MAC's, and thus much noisier. Both were hard pressed to say many positives about dispatchers on either line.

After Cordell's comments we held our annual membership meeting. Here the major item of discussion was the purchase of a large set of timetables, which had been well supported by the membership, and the possible purchase of a very large collection of train orders. We also discussed upcoming conventions, as well as general membership concerns. And of course we discussed how to recruit new members to our group.

Thursday morning we continued registration and had 2 clinics. Wade Griffis gave a clinic on building HO scale freight cars, while I gave one on painting BN & BNSF locomotives. Both seemed to be well received. At that point we enjoyed several different activities for the remainder of the afternoon. The convention program had talked about a ride on a restored trolley line to General Custer's Headquarters, but the NP group had decided to go out and visit some previous NP hot spots in the area. Unfortunately, it was about this time we heard that there had been a derailment west of Mandan that had shut down the entire division. Several of us at that point decided to try the trolley anyway, while the rest headed out to find good spots, see stopped trains and maybe find the derailment. I can comment on the trolley ride over an abandoned NP branch, which was an interesting experience, particularly learning we were riding in a previous streetcar turned chicken coop and rehabbed back into a trolley, albeit with Toyota power. The members who went on the NP tour seemed to enjoy themselves also.

Thursday evening found the NP and BN groups at the local Rail Museum for a very nice picnic on the lawn. The museum society really did a nice job of providing food and the museum itself was quite nice. After that many of us headed to a local rail museum with an excellent operating HO scale layout with NP and BN themes.

Friday morning we got together early and headed north in 2 buses for tours of two local coal related industries. Our group visited the Dakota SynFuels plant, where the local lignite coal is made into natural gas, Ammonia fertilizers and CO2, which is actually sold to oil drilling companies in Canada. The plant was huge, in fact so big that our tour was actually of the plastic model of the plant. That in itself was the size of an average home, and incredibly detailed. The process, and the efficiency of the plant, was truly amazing. Next, it was off to a coal-fired power plant. Once again we were thankful for the weather, as our tour started on the ground @ 78 degrees, and on the 11th floor where we stopped to watch the boiler it was already 112 degrees. It never ceases to amaze the scale at which industry is really set up; the sheer size of everything is quite impressive. After that we had lunch in a park by the rails, then visited an interesting historical site with the NP folks. In 1951 there had been a fatal head on crash of 2 trains on a branch line outside Bismarck, and one of the NP members had really investigated the crash. He also found one of their members, who as a 20-year-old boy had been one of the first

people on the scene. The story they jointly told was quite interesting, particularly in light of what we know now. While the accident was blamed on one of the engineers running past a siding, the actual facts suggest that the real cause was probably crew fatigue.

Friday evening we returned to hear our Convention Speaker Rollin Bredenberg, BNSF VP of Service Design & Performance. Rollin had been scheduled to be our speaker in Fort Worth, but missed the meeting and promised to go anywhere we met in the future to make up for oversleeping on that occasion. His trip to Mandan (unfortunately not by private railcar) was well worth it for our group as he had a number of interesting insights. One of the really amazing themes he presented was the amount of growth in the carload traffic sector of the railroad. While Coal and Intermodal get the publicity, the carload traffic has been growing steadily over the last decade and provides a substantial part of the BNSF's revenue. The challenge he presented was how to move it efficiently and productively. He presented where the railroad's growth is coming from and what the plans are to increase capacity to move the growing traffic. This includes the noted projects of finishing double tracking the Transcon, as well as providing 3rd and even 4th tracks in Wyoming. He also mentioned the ongoing projects to improve intermodal endpoints (logistic parks), as well as the facilities being built to expedite carload traffic. He answered many questions, commenting on the railroad's corporate image (he felt the efforts to develop Heritage I and II schemes may have been given more effort that they were worth), the bypass line through eastern Colorado that had been mentioned at last year's convention (the railroad is all for it if public monies are forthcoming – he felt the real impetus for the plan was the public desire to get the rail tracks out of Denver), and commented on a number of questions about individual projects that the railroad either was or was not going to undertake. His comments as usual for our Convention Speakers were excellent. We finished our evening with another auction and adjourned until Saturday AM.

Saturday AM started with Cordell taking us to Mandan Yard to view activities there and get a sense of what was going to be moving Saturday. By then the derailment to the west had been cleared up (the Steel Gang had been called into the effort and returned to the hotel Friday morning looking pretty exhausted) and there were many trains out there. With a combination of Cordell's knowledge and a number of scanners we learned of the operating challenges of the area. There was one loaded eastbound coal train stranded on the main west of town without a crew, followed by 2 other loads whose crews were almost out of time and several empties filling sidings. With all these trains out there we were able to get to several good photo locations and get some great shots. We also were able to get a sense of the problems the dispatchers had and how, for better or worse, they solved the problems. Most of us were able to be "Monday morning quarterbacks" and figure how we could have done things better without calling 3 crews whose workdays were 28 miles. But it did give us a great chance to see and photograph the railroad at work.

Then it was time to head for home and prepare for next year's convention in Lincoln, Nebraska!

The Forgotten Train

This story was sent to the *Expediter* along time ago. It was sent in by James Pulvermacher, who received it from a friend. This was a memorandum sent to the General Manager's Office in Seattle, from the BN Manager Train Operations back in November 1988. This memo was re-typed as is, note that "Snoqualmie" was misspelled.

To: General Manager's Office, Seattle, WA
From: Manager Train Operations
Date: November 14, 1988
Subject: Equipment left on Snoquamie Pass

Demolition company working on Snoquamie Pass tearing out old Milw. RR tracks called Supts. Office this afternoon stating they found some railroad equipment on a siding and asked us to investigate. Mechanical Department and Trainmaster from Tacoma went to scene and report found what apparently was a Milw. train that died on Hours of Service before the line was shut down and evidently was overlooked, consisting of 2 SD-40 units 24 cars and caboose, on a siding formally known as "Bandera". Engines had run out of diesel fuel, windows all broken out of caboose by vandals and most of freight cars had been opened or pilfered including a tank car of molasses which had spigot opened and gooey substance all over ground underneath with numerous dead birds, squirrels and other animals trapped in it. Other Cars contain full or part loads of furniture with upholstery rotting, spoiled foodstuffs, and laminated beams with glue joints coming apart. Trainmaster says equipment in pretty bad shape but diesels might start if batteries charged and diesel tanks replenished and car dept will have to replace stolen brasses and oil journal boxes before equipment can be moved. However the big problem is, rail has already been removed by demolition company 26 miles east and 18 miles west of this location, which is 3000 feet up on the side of a mtn. about 10 miles from the nearest road or highway. Cannot find any waybills on caboose or engine to identify shippers or consignees. Difficult to ascertain car numbers due to gang graffiti painted on cars plus faded paint on original car numbers. Please advise.

For Sale

35mm Negatives

Over 4400, taken in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s; about 60% are BN, 10% MRL, 10% UP, with the rest from miscellaneous railroads.

Photos were taken all over the US, with the majority were taken in the Dakotas, Minnesota and Montana. $400.00 delivered.

Richard Logan
530 N. Sedona Drive
West Fargo, ND 58078

O Scale Report

by Mike Kohl

Here is the latest from MTH Electric trains in their 2007 Vol II catalog.

RAIL KING: Scale Line GP20 Diesel in BN and BNSF Heritage I schemes. Powered version w/ Proto-Sound 2.0 is $299.95, un-powered version is $129.95 BN SD60 in the Tiger Stripe scheme (#30-2781-1 powered w/ PS-2.0 $299.95/ #30-2781-3 Un-powered $129.95).

PREMIER LINE: AC4400CW in BNSF Heritage II (20-2787-1 3-rail version w/ PS-2.0 at $429.95; 20-2787-2 w/ 2-rail scale wheels $449,95; 20-2787-3 Unpowered $169.95). ES44AC in BNSF "swoosh" scheme (20-2822-1 3-rail version w/ PS-2.0 at $429.95; 20-2822-2 w/ 2-rail scale wheels at $449.95; 20-2822-3 Unpowered at $169.95). BN Coil Steel Car #20-98617 all green w/ COIL CARe and medium size BN logo at $49.95. BNSF Husky Stack #20-95069 all green car w/ yellow BNSF next to circle/cross logo at $59.95. TTAX 2-car Spine Car #20-95065 set w/ BN America /ATSF logo with USA stencil behind red stripe at $99.95.

Atlas O has announced two items. BN GP15-1, BN #1386 or BN #1385 3Rail/TMCC $389.95, 2Rail/DCC $239.95, 3Rail $239.95.

BNSF MP15DC ("Swoosh" logo) BNSF #3702 0r #3704 powered version 3Rail/TMCC $479.95, 2Rail/Gold $479.95, BNSF #3703 unpowered 2Rail or 3Rail $249.95. The MP15DC is new to their O Scale line. Looks good in BNSF.

Helpers on Stevens Pass

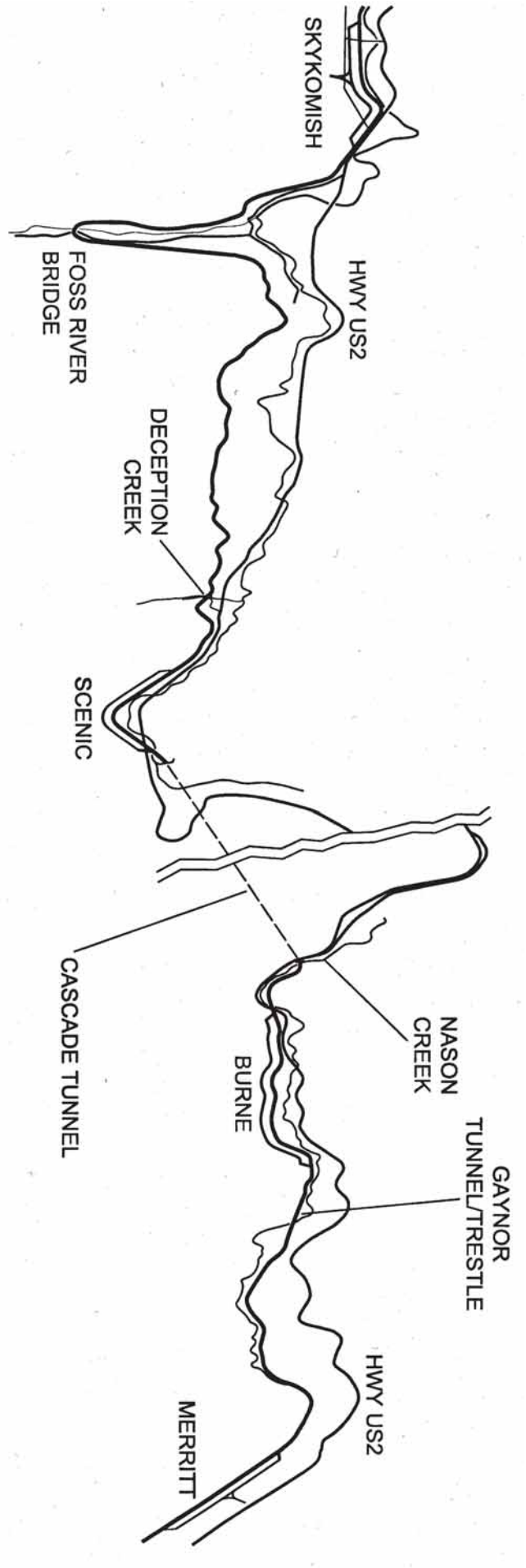
text/photos by Brian Ambrose

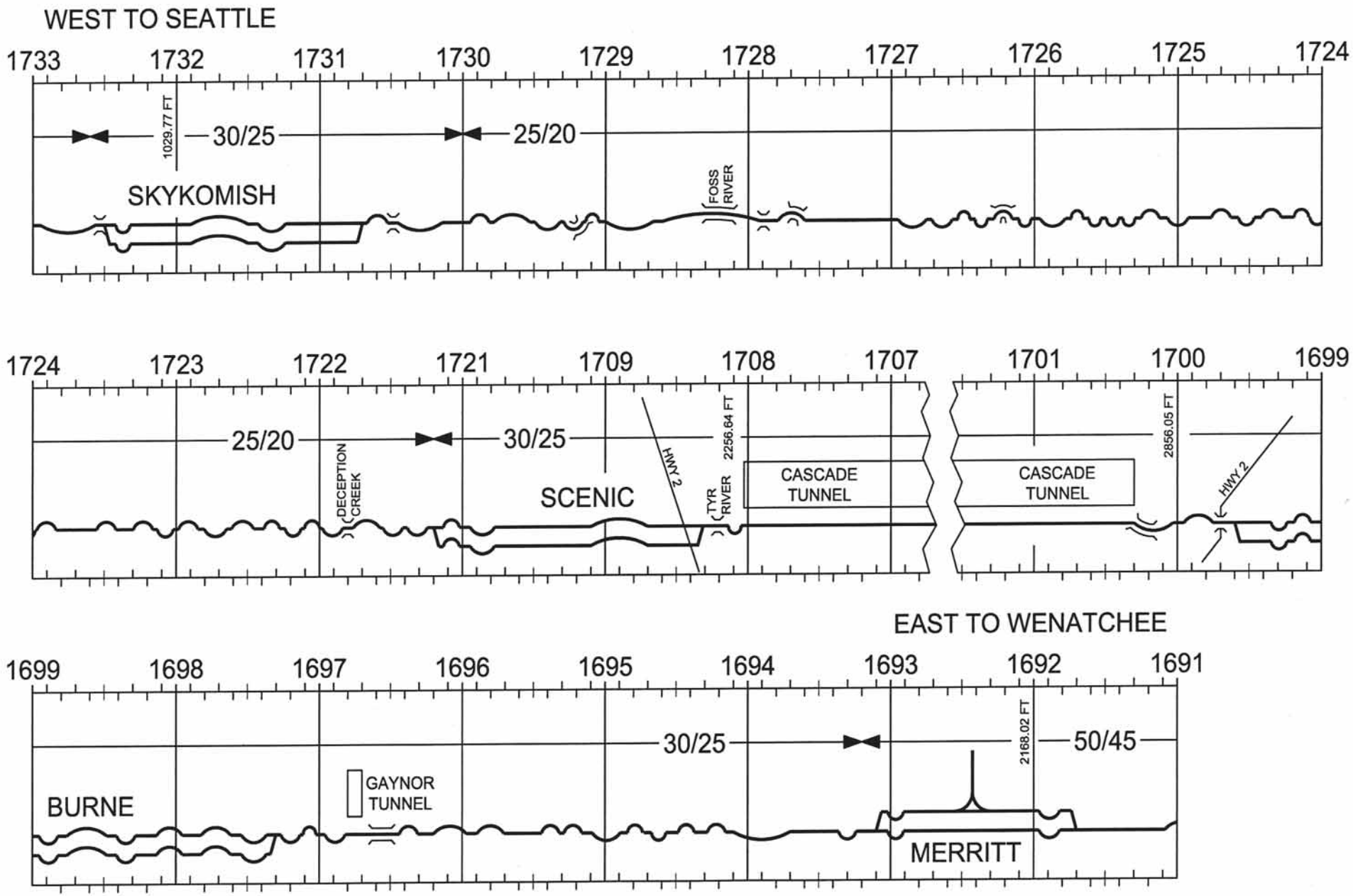
In the late 1960's up to the BN merger in 1970 I spent some time on Stevens Pass and was able to watch Great Northern's helper operations in action. Nearly all trains had helpers which were usually an A-B-B-A set of F-units cut in mid train. In the early 70's after the merger BN kept things pretty much the same on Stevens Pass Helper sets. Still 4 ex-GN F-units but now with BN sublettering. Every once in awhile an ex-NP F-unit would find it's way replacing one of the ex-GN units but for the most part ex-GN F's continued to work the helpers until retirements started seeing many of them being replaced with whatever BN could scrounge up.

By the late 1970's common helper power on Stevens Pass were a pair of any kind of SD combination. F45's, SD45's and SD40-2's were the most common with smaller GP's filling in as well. Sometimes westbounds would come into Skykomish and set out all but the lead unit which would take the train west solo. The power set out would either assist an eastbound that may be short of power arriving at Skykomish or be used as a helper set.

In the early 80's a number of F45's were assigned to Interbay and many of these were put into service in pairs working as helpers over Stevens Pass. Regional west-bound freight #129 could almost always be counted on to have a pair of F45's cut in mid-train surrounded by 40" boxcars. By the end of 1983 SD40-2's pretty much replaced the F45's in Stevens Pass helper service up to the late 1980's when only the occasional westbound grain train need to be assisted by helpers, sometimes local power such as GP9's and GP38-2's out of Wenatchee. Trains over Stevens Pass were now mostly intermodal and much lighter not needing the extra help.

The early 1990's saw some experiments in using helpers on heavy double stack trains but that did not last very long. By the time of the BNSF merger the use of manned helper sets on Stevens Pass was pretty much over.

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DECEPTION CREEK
SCENIC
HWY 2
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TYR RIVER
CASCADE TUNNEL
CASCADE TUNNEL
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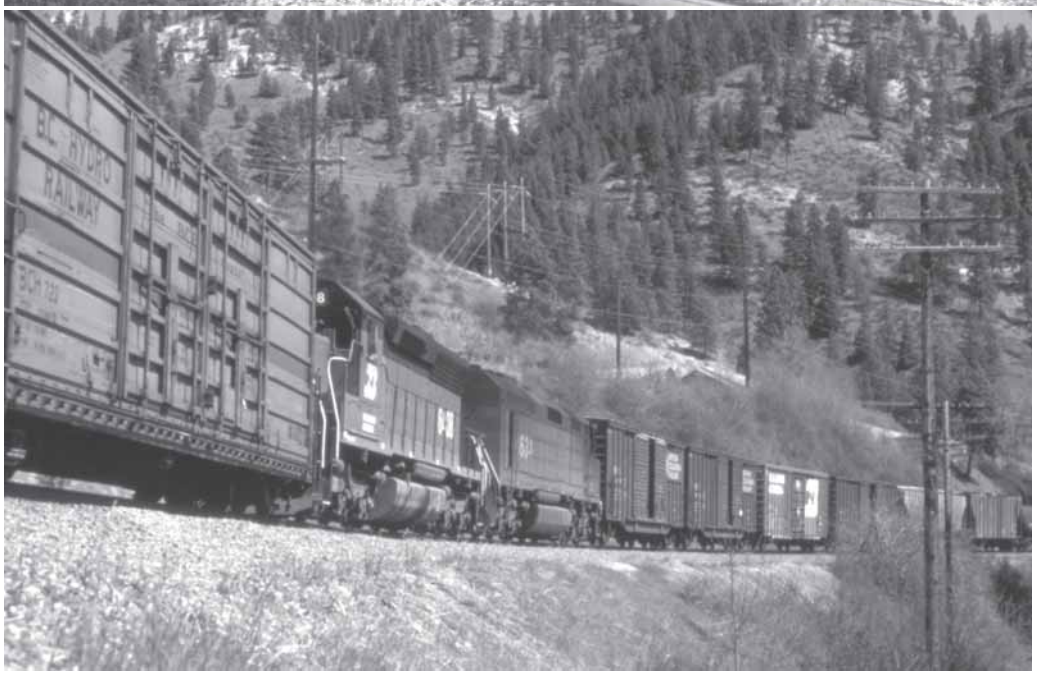
BURNE
GAYNOR TUNNEL
MERRITT

On July 18, 1979, the 6411/6602 smoke it up at Skykomish as they get ready to help eastbound train #88 over the pass. After getting cut-in, the train departs Skykomish.

Westbound train #129 is leaving Wenatchee on July 9, 1983 with the 6645/7272/6643/6634/6902/6639 up front. You can see the exhaust from the helpers in the background by the crossing signals. The 6641/6636 are helping out mid-train.



(top) Eastbound train #74 at Skykomish in October 1979. Helper units are 6328/2208/ 6536/6650.

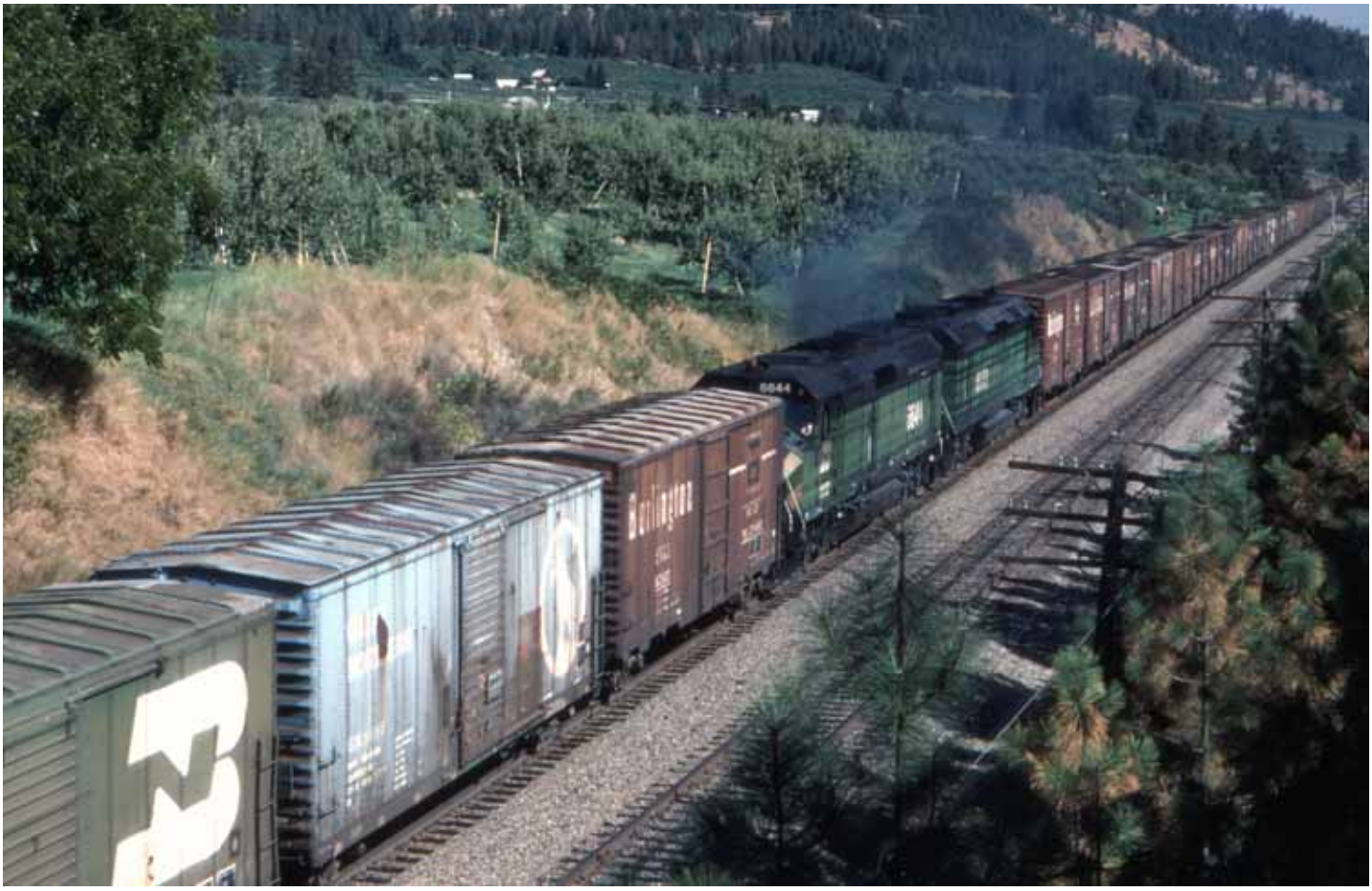
(center) April 1984, helpers 6408/6634 are westbound at Peshastin (MP 1669.2).

(bottom) February 1980, train #88 leaves Skykomish with 6530/6555 as helpers.

(top) Westbound train #179 is at Leavenworth, WA (MP 1672) on August 14, 1983 making a run for Stevens Pass.

An SD40-2, SD45 and two F45s (7903/6497/6634/6641) are up front with two helpers mid-train.

(below) F45s 6644 and 6633 are pushing hard on train #179.

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