

# *The BN Expediter*

Volume 18, Number 3

July 2010



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

# BN Time Tracks

text on page 6



*top photo by John Hill, bottom photo by Kristopher Johnson*



# Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad

PO Box 271, West Bend, WI 53095-0271

[www.fobnr.org](http://www.fobnr.org)

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

The Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad (FOBNR) was formed to gather, preserve, and share information about the history, current operations, and future development of the Burlington Northern Railroad and its successors. It follows the evolution of the railroad from its inception in 1970 with the merger of the Great Northern; Northern Pacific; Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy; and the Spokane Portland and Seattle Railroads, along with the 1980 acquisition of the Frisco. We are a 501c(3) non-profit corporation.

The purpose of the FOBNR is educational. We wish to perpetuate the history of the Burlington Northern Railroad and its successors. We seek to collect and preserve any materials which help establish or illustrate the life, conditions, events, and activities of the railroad. We will disseminate this information through the publication of a newsletter, establishment of a web site, by maintaining an archive, and by conducting an annual convention somewhere along the lines operated by the railroad. We may also publish information in other media and may restore and operate historical railway equipment.

## Directors

John Adams, MD; John McKenzie; Kent Charles;  
David Poplawski; Gary Seymour

## Officers

President.....John Adams, MD  
Vice President.....Dave Poplawski  
Secretary.....Gary Seymour  
Treasurer.....Jeff Hendricks

## Editor

Kristopher Johnson

Regular membership is \$25.00/year; Sustaining membership is \$50.00/year; Junior membership (16 and under) is \$10.00/year. The Membership year is from January 1 to December 31. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the address above for more information.

*The FOBNR is not supported by, nor affiliated in any way with, the BNSF Railway Co., its subsidiaries or affiliates.*

## 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.

Send material for publication to:

*The BN Expediter*

PO Box 898

Duvall, WA 98019-0898

[kristopherandlori@msn.com](mailto:kristopherandlori@msn.com)

Copyright 2010 by the **Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad**. All rights reserved.

## Feature Articles Needed

The *BN Expediter* is currently looking for articles for future issues. I know you have seen this request before, but this 12-page issue, and the 12-page April issue should be the clear signal that the *Expediter* needs more material to publish. I would like to keep each issue at 20 pages.

All members are encouraged to write articles and share their experience about the Burlington Northern railroad.

All types of articles are needed covering all aspects of the Burlington Northern railroad from modeling to rolling stock to locomotives, from the merger to the present. If you have any question or needs any ideas, you can contact me at the address below.

-Editor

## Call for Photos

The *Expediter* currently needs photos from the PRB. If you have photos from the 1970s thru 1990s with helpers and fuel tenders or SD70MACs, I'd love to publish them.

-Editor

## New Members

No new members to report

## In This Issue

BN Time Tracks	2,6
Steven Pass Traffic Increases	4
Model Report	6
Book Reviews	6
Convention Report	8
BN Cables Locomotives	10

# Stevens Pass traffic increases

On March 27, 2010 a westbound S-CHCTAC emerges from the Cascade Tunnel on Stevens Pass (cover photo). In the background an eastbound empty grain train waits in the siding at Scenic. A year ago the traffic on Stevens Pass was so light you would be lucky to see one train.

Last summer when the FOBNR convention came to the Puget Sound area, it wouldn't have been worth burning up a tank of gas to go up on the pass. Traffic patterns were way down and maintenance windows made for disappointing trips to the pass. This year it's a different story. On this March day I saw eight trains before noon.

In March of this year, BNSF began running westbound loaded grain trains over Stevens Pass; about three or four per day running. These monster trains top out around 15,000-17,000 tons and run in a 3 X 3 X 2 configuration, with the mid-train DPUs being ACs and the rear being a pair of DCs. They usually carry the symbol G-SMNTAC. Catching one of these monster trains on Stevens Pass has become a favorite with the local railfans here in the Seattle area. BNSF has been running empty grain trains eastbound over the pass for a couple of years now.

The last time Stevens Pass saw loaded grain trains was back in the early to mid-1980s. From the mid-1980s and all through the 1990s, Burlington Northern used Stevens Pass primarily as an intermodal route. In 1989 Burlington Northern installed concrete ties on Stevens Pass and rerouted all non-intermodal traffic through the Columbia River Gorge.

Diversity is returning to Stevens Pass, besides grain trains, empty coal trains are running east over the pass; about two or more per week. It has been rumored that BNSF will start running loaded coal trains over Stevens Pass. If that happens it will defiantly bring a new era to the former Burlington Northern line where only intermodal trains were allowed to travel.

*-Kristopher Johnson (thanks to Jason Babila and PNWhogger for their assistance)*

*(page 5, top) Just after sunrise on March 27, 2010, an eastbound Z trains waits in the siding at Skykomish as a westbound "monster" grain train goes by on the main.*

*(page 5, bottom) A year earlier on May 16, 2009, after a six hour wait from the last train, a westbound two-car Boeing train passes through Skykomish. -Kristopher Johnson photos.*

*Back on August 20, 1983 eastbound train #198 (6509/2715/6645/6636/6641/66xx) is at Scenic, WA about to go into Cascade Tunnel. This photos was taken from the US 2 overpass. Scenes like this before the intermodal revolution took place were common on Stevens Pass. The main line still has jointed-rail and wooden ties. -Brian Ambrose photo.*





# BN Time Tracks

This addition of "BN Time Tracks" is from Seattle again, this time from King Street Station. In January 1976 John Hill traveled to Seattle on the Empire Builder. After getting off the train he captured an extraordinary image.

In his photo is Amtrak train No. 793, the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL. The train arrived in Seattle at 11:20am and connected with the Coast Starlight which departed for Las Angeles at 11:50am.

The Amtrak power has already gone to Interbay for servicing, and now a BN switcher is taking the train to the Hoyt Street Coach yard. The cars will be turned at the wye two miles south of the coach yard, washed, serviced and restocked for the northbound trip as train No. 794. To the right is the Kingdome which is about to open for the first time on March 27, 1976; the Kingdome was imploded on March 26, 2000.

The last car on the train is of interest. It is former CB&Q car 361—SILVER VISTA. This car was a dome parlor-observation car, and it had been assigned to Burlington Route's VISTA DOME TWIN CITIES ZEPHYRS between Chicago and the Twin Cities prior to 1970. When Amtrak acquired it from Burlington Northern its interior was refurbished and its stainless-steel exterior had Amtrak's "Broken Arrow" logo added.

Its main floor interior was remodeled totally with lounge table seating and a snack bar installed under its dome. The 24-seats in its dome were retained. The interior's new color scheme was garnish, unfortunately, since someone in the Amtrak's car shops must have liked various shades of purple. The main floor furnishings (tables and chairs) were dark purple and its walls were a lighter purple in color.

Amtrak did retain this car's name, however, as SILVER VISTA, but renumbered it Amtrak Car 9301. The SILVER VISTA's dome, as well as the dome on the first coach in this group of cars, were wonderful places to ride as the PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL traveled between Seattle and Vancouver, BC. Also, its snack car provided adequate food and beverage service while en-route.

The second photo was taken 34 years later in March 2010. The large structure in the background is Safco Field. In July 1999 Safco Field became the new home for the Seattle Mariners. In 2002 the Seattle Seahawks played their first game in their new stadium that replaced the Kingdome.

In 2008 BNSF sold King Street Station to the City of Seattle for \$10. In June 2008 the new alignment of the BNSF Seattle Subdivision opened. King Street Station handles many more passenger trains than it did in 1976. The old stainless-steel Amtrak trains with dome seating have been replaced with new sleek high-speed, pendulum tilting technology passenger trains.

*A special thanks to John Hill for sharing his photo, and to John F. Strauss, Jr. for providing information. -Editor*

# O Scale Report

by Mike Kohl

Here is a list of recent announcements from Atlas O: 3-Rail # 2-Rail#

Atlas Trainman 50ft 6in Boxcar 2001005, BN all green w/ large logo above reporting marks 2001066

2001012, BNSF Mineral Red w/ small circle logo 2001062. \$42.95, two road numbers per road name \$45.95. July 2010 estimated release.

Number 6376, PS-4427 Low Side Covered Hopper 7376, BN w/ large logo and road name, \$64.95 \$69.95. Four road numbers per road name. July 2010 release.

Trainman 3-Bay Covered Hopper 0831A BN all green w/ large logo and road name in white 0881A, \$42.95 and \$45.95. Two road numbers per road name. August 2010 release.

Intermodal: 8918 (A,B units) Gunderson Twin Stack BN all green w/ Innovative 9918, \$149.95. Intermodal Service slogan, \$154.95 8919 (C,D, and E units) to go with above set 9919, \$194.95 and \$199.95. Two road numbers per road name. January 2011 delivery.

Hopper: 3001102 Trinity 5161 Cu. Ft. Cov. Hopper 3002102, \$82.95 BNSF "swoosh" Mineral Red w/ large logo, \$87.95. Four road numbers per name. October 2010 delivery.

Here is the latest from MTH 2010 Vol II catalog

## RAILKING LINE 3-rail:

#30-2983-1, BNSF- GP9 w/ Proto sound 2.0 Heritage 1 scheme, \$299.95.

#30-2983-3, Non Powered version \$149.95.

#30-20004-1, BNSF DASH 8 Wide Cab (#939 shown) w/ Proto-Snd 2.0, \$299.95.

#30-20004-3, Non-Powered version \$149.95.

#30-2965-1, CB&Q SW1 (39140 shown) w/ Proto-Sound 2.0, \$299.95.

#30-2958-1, BN ALCO RS3 (#4056 shown) w/ PS 2.0, \$299.95.

#30-2958-3, Non-Powered version \$149.95.

## PREMIER LINE

#20-20082-1, BN SD60M (#9271 shown) w/PS 2.0, \$429.95.

#20-20082-3, Non-powered version \$199.95.

#20-20081-1, BNSF SD60M #9297 w/ PS 2.0, \$429.95.

#20-20081-3, Non-powered version \$199.95.

#20-20069-1, BNSF "swoosh" GP38-2 (Hi-Rail wheels) w/ PS 2.0, \$429.95.

#20-20069-2, BNSF "swoosh" GP38-2 (Scale wheels) w/ PS 2.0, \$449.95.

#20-20069-3, BNSF "swoosh" GP38-2 Non-powered, \$199.95.

# Book Reviews

## BN-Frisco: A Tough Merger

by Earl Currie

This essay describes and brings to light the many happenings that made the merger of Burlington Northern and the Frisco railroad a tough one. It describes and explains many of the actual happenings in the first few years after the merger occurred. Its main focus is on the many changes in operating and maintenance practices that both improved and hurt the performance of the BN in those years.

Earl Currie's essay is an important addition to documentation of the BN history done by others. Everyone who had a part of the GN-NP-CB&Q-SP&S merger of 1970 will be intrigued by its content. Nothing in the way the Frisco merger was carried out was similar to the 1970 merger.

The essay is well-written by an experienced and knowledgeable senior-level person who worked inside Burlington Northern at the time. Earl has written other books and essays on railroad operations using his talent for writing.

A tough merger--indeed it was, and a tough essay to write. Earl has done a tremendous job with this essay.

-Thomas G. Kotnour

*The BN-Frisco: A Tough Merger is a 94-page essay, it includes maps, drawings and black and white photos. It has a soft-cover binding. You can purchase a copy for \$13.00 by contacting Earl Currie at:*

*PO Box 2827*

*Warba, MN 55793*

*or email him at: ejcurrie@hotmail.com*

## Nebraska Division 1975-77 "Challenge and Reward"

This essay covers the years 1975 to 1977 in which the track was upgraded and capacity expanded on Burlington Northern's Nebraska Division (previously named the Lincoln Division). BN had been challenged by the electric power industry to handle unprecedented tonnages of coal moving from the Powder River Basin in Wyoming to power plants throughout the Midwest and into Texas. The demand for the low sulphur coal increased dramatically within a short time after passage of the Clean Air Act of 1970.

After many years of cutting expenditures for track maintenance and reducing the capacity of the network, the 1970's became a time of rapid growth in business resulting in the need to build the railroad up to a high standard of maintenance and to greatly expand its capacity.

This ambitious agenda provided a wonderful opportunity for the people of Burlington Northern and its shareholders. At

the same time it required the teaching and development of new skill sets for carrying out the massive programs of upgrading and capacity expansion, together with operating and managing a railroad with much higher volumes of trains than had ever been experienced anywhere on the BN or its predecessor companies.

From October 1975, through February 1977, I served as Division Superintendent on one of the divisions in the center of the action. It was great to experience the challenge of the work, the opportunity to build a railroad for the future, and to raise the spirit of the people working on the Nebraska Division. All of this came from having the resources and the responsibility for completing a number of large projects on a fast schedule. It built a feeling of pride and a strong sense of accomplishment in the officers and in hundreds of employees who developed and applied the skills, talents and hard work needed to get the work done on the infrastructure and to keep the large number of trains moving in the face of interruptions and delays for track, bridge and signal work.

On Burlington Northern, in those years, a Division Superintendent had responsibility not only for the operation of trains and terminals, but also for the management of the roadway maintenance and mechanical (maintenance of equipment) functions. This included responsibility for completion of major capital projects in those years, in addition to day-to-day maintenance work.

In writing this essay, I have provided some detail as to the resources, competence and overall leadership skills needed to manage and complete this massive undertaking, and some description of major projects completed in those years. Similar types of work had to be done on the three divisions of the Chicago Region and on the Fort Worth and Denver Railway, a subsidiary of BN. An even greater amount of upgrading and work to expand the capacity of the railroad had to be done on the Alliance Division, on which most of the coal mines were located. Hopefully, one or more of the officers who worked on the Alliance Division in those years will decide to undertake the writing of a similar essay.

It is important that this significant part of Burlington Northern history be documented by those "who were there" in the years the work was done.

This essay contains 50 pages and several photographs and drawings. It is the most recent of a series of writings I have done on railway operations based on experiences I had during a career of over 40 years as a line officer in operations and maintenance in the rail industry.

*To purchase a copy of this essay for \$15.00 per copy. Contact Earl Currie at:*

*PO Box 2827*

*Warba, MN 55793*

*or email him at: ejcurrie@hotmail.com*

# 2010 Convention Report

by John Adams

The FOBNR 2010 Convention joined our previous conventions as a good experience for all that attended.

We met Wednesday afternoon and were able to watch Peter Ferch set out a display of his recent acquisitions of BN memorabilia. We then headed to a local restaurant by the Galesburg Depot, the Packinghouse, and had dinner among the period motif complete with meat rails hanging from the ceiling. We then had our welcome meeting and were able to watch some excellent slides of the BN.

Thursday morning found us at the Depot bright and early to join a full trainload of railfans (us) and Cub fans for the trip into Chicago. Amtrak and the BNSF did well for us, as the track work was excellent and we arrived spot on time in Chicago Union Station. We then hiked to the Roosevelt Road overpass at the south throat of Union Station and were able to watch Amtrak and Metra go through their morning's work. We then caught Metra and went to the station at the west end of BNSF's Cicero Yard to watch the assorted mid-day traffic on the BNSF main. Arriving back in Union Station (which is a story onto itself) we grabbed sandwiches and headed for Amtrak back to Galesburg, arriving back in Galesburg by late evening. In case you have never been in Union Station at rush hour, be prepared to feel like the salmon we saw in Seattle several conventions ago trying to swim upstream if you try to go against the flow of the commuters.

On Friday we gathered early and car pooled into East Peoria, IL to visit Rail America's TP&W. This was a tour of a property very unlike those we had visited through the years with huge BN/BNSF facilities. The TP&W has a car shop with 3 employees, and 2 employees in the Engine Shop! Despite this they were able to do some excellent work and the railroad was extremely hospitable to us as visitors. We were able to learn some interesting history of the TP&W, as well as information about their present operations, which include their contract to handle all the local traffic on BNSF's Galesburg to Peoria line.

Friday afternoon started with a quick lunch and then a visit to Peoria's local hobby shop to participate in their 40% off Father's Day sale. Then it was back to Galesburg to train and weather watch. We were able to see a lot of rail activity, as well as a squall line move through, complete with driving rain, wind and a little bit of hail. After hiding out for a short time, the storm passed and we were able to join others @ the Cameron connector to watch afternoon activity under full sun again.

Dinner was a quick one, followed by the Annual Membership meeting. Here we discussed our present and future conventions and the continued need to attract more members to the organization. We also discussed the website and the Expediter, and obtained some great input to bring to Saturday's Board Meeting. Larry Anglund, a local Galesburg railfan and one of the guides at the Museum, then showed us multiple trays of slides taken through a number of years of watching trains in Galesburg, and we were able to see slides of 1971-75 in Eola, IL as well.

Saturday morning found us on the bus to the BNSF Classification yards in Galesburg. Rick Danielson, the Galesburg Terminal Superintendent first took us on a bus tour of the yard. He was able to show us the next project of continuing the replacement of the retarders in the hump bowl, as well as changing the geometry of the yard to allow cars to more predictably roll to the end of their tracks. He also showed us the RIP track area and the departure yards, where he hopes to add 3 more 9,000+ ft long tracks. We stopped at the Diesel House and saw the work being done on several GE units there and the plans to eventually add 2 new bays to accommodate more motive power repairs. We then got to go up into the Hump Tower and watch the 5 people who manage the yard and all the surrounding trackage use their computers to efficiently route up to 120 trains per day around and through the Terminal area.

After lunch we were able to visit the Galesburg Railroad Museum, now located on the area that previously was the Baggage Room of the old depot. The Museum was also able to move their 2 heavyweight passenger cars to the site, now "coupled" behind the preserved steam locomotive. Their collection of memorabilia was tremendous, enough even to impress Peter Ferch, our ultimate BN memorabilia collector!

Following that we had our annual Board Meeting. At that meeting we re-elected the present slate of officers and discussed the Website, the Expediter and the Archives, as well as conventions, present and future. The Website has really grown, particularly since we have abundant space to grow. Almost all of the timetables are now scanned and uploaded, as well as a number of photographs, and more to come. There was some discussion about making some of the material available to members only, and this will be studied and reported on at our December conference call.

We discussed the change in printers for the Expediter, and everyone seemed comfortable that the quality

was good. We also decided to make it a 20 page magazine each issue, which will require more content, either in the form of written articles or captioned photographs. The moral of the story, please send interesting, or even not so interesting materials to Kristopher Johnson, our Expediter editor. We also decided to plan the October issue each year to be devoted to Convention coverage. The Archives continue to grow, but continue to be manageable, particularly as more material is scanned and available on the website.

The Galesburg Convention was then reviewed, and we particularly discussed the second year of very low attendance. Because of this, we are going to formulate a questionnaire as to the reasons people chose not to come this year, and hopefully obtain some input as to what people would like to see in a convention. We then decided that the 2011 Convention will be in Gillette, Wyoming in the coal fields. We hope to have much more information on that by the January issue of the Expediter. For 2012 we are tentatively looking at Amarillo, Texas.

Following the Board meeting we had our annual Convention Banquet and welcomed Mr. Danielson, the Terminal Superintendent who had provided our tour that morning to talk about the Galesburg Terminal. He was

extremely interesting, and somewhat unusual, in that he has been at Galesburg now for 10 years, much longer than any speaker we had ever had at past conventions. With his tenure in Galesburg he has been able to see some real opportunities to improve the flow through the terminal, and has actually been able to see some projects through to completion. With these projects he hopes to be able to routinely accept, hump and send out over 2,000 mixed freight cars each 24 hours. By avoiding bottlenecks, like cars stalling coming off the hump, or tracks too short to build the trains meant for specific SD70MAC's. Needless to say we did raise some non-dues revenue for the organization.

And with that the Convention ended and we went back to our everyday lives, but with many good memories and a lot of pixels to be reviewed at home. Please stay tuned however, as we will get much more information to you in the next Expediter.



# BN CABLESS LOCOMOTIVES

*Burlington Northern rostered many cableless locomotives, but one of them was a GP38-2. BN 2315 was converted into a B-unit in October 1981 and renumbered to BN 2601, in early 2000 it was renumbered to BNSF 2249.*

*-JR Keers photos, FOBNR collection*





*Burlington Northern rostered three SD40-2B. BN 7221, built in June 1980 was rebuilt in July 1981 as BN 7500. BN 6337 was built in February 1972, and rebuilt in October 1983 as BN 7501. BN 6352 became BN 6812, then in November 1984 was rebuilt to BN 7502.*  
*-JR Keers photos, FOBNR collection.*





*Burlington Northern had five GP9Bs on the roster, four of the units made onto the BNSF roster. BN 601, originally NP323, renumbered BN 1908, rebuilt to BN601, renumbered to BNSF1701.*

*Burlington Northern 602, originally NP326, renumbered BN 1900, rebuilt to BN 602, renumbered to BNSF 1702. All GP9Bs were wreck damaged units rebuilt at West Burlington, Iowa.*

*-JR Keers photos, FOBNR collection*

