

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



*(above) A loaded coal train heads south along Donkey Creek.
(bottom) A dump truck at Eagle Butte Mine.
both photos by Kent Charles*



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 (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.

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

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Vice President.....Dave Poplawski
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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 Burlington Northern Santa Fe 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

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Call for Photos

The *BN Expediter* is currently looking for photographs for the following projects:

1. New bridge built over Latah Creek in Spokane in 1972.
2. New connection built in Sandpoint at about the same time.
3. A good view of the new hump yard in Mpls. (Northtown).
4. Gavin Yard in Minot.
5. The Joint Line in the Powder River Basin in Wyoming.
6. Engineering schematics of line changes made on the former GN main line.
7. Photos of Mr. Robert Downing.
8. BN passenger trains.
9. BN dining cars, and other food service cars. Interior photos needed as well.

Board of Directors Election Request for Nominations

The current terms of office of Dave Poplawski, John McKenzie and Kent Charles on the FOBNR Board of Directors will expire at the annual meeting this summer.

In accordance with the bylaws of the FOBNR and Board policy, nominations are hereby solicited by March 1, 2011, for candidates for these positions. All positions are for two years.

Any FOBNR member can nominate him or herself, or be nominated by another person (the nominee will be contacted and must then accept the nomination). All nominees will be asked to write a short autobiography and a statement of why they should be elected.

A list of nominees, their supporting information, and a ballot will be sent via a special mailing in early June. Voting will take place by mail.

All details of the election will be handled by Lawrence Stephens. Send nominations, or names, addresses and supporting information to him at:

613 Mooreland Place

Elmira, NY 14904-1622

Lawrence must receive all nominations by March 1, 2011.

Cover Photo

On August 3, 1998, a loaded coal train is climbing Logan Hill at Wyoming State Highway 59.

-Joe Snider photo

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Locomotive Happenings



(above) In September 2009, the 9336 is at Aberdeen, SD. This unit was part of the second order (9330-9369) of SD70ACe delivered in the summer 2006. These units have the headlights mounted in the nose. -Jeff Hendricks photo



(center) On August 9, 2010, the 2768 sits at Creston, IA, with a string of Oakway units. The 2768 is a GP39-2R, it has a GP30 carbody and a GP39 cab. Built in October 1963 as Southern GP302591, the "R" designates a 16-cylinder engine instead of the standard 12-cylinder engine. -Patrick Lana photo

(bottom) In April 1994, four brand new SD70MACs were loaned to Southern Pacific for testing. The SP wanted to see how they performed on coal trains on the Moffet Route.

Here the units are westbound and about to enter Tunnel 1 on the Moffet Sub. -Joe Snider photo



Substaining Members

The Board of Directors would like to take this opportunity to thank our Sustaining Members for 2010. Their extra contributions to the finances of the FOBNR has helped us to continue bringing you the quality and quantity of BN/BNSF related information.

John G. Adams, John M. Baker, Joseph N. Beasley, Tom Bentley, Paul Bernath, R.L. Blaisdell, Joe Boeltl, Jay Burkgart, Ken Caddick, Bill Chapple, Kent Charles, Gayle Christen, Craig Connell, Earl J. Currie, William A. Davey, Charles E. Davis, Rodney Dunshea, Duane Durr, Peter Ferch, John R. Flodin, Wade B. Griffis, Gerald Grossman, David Hannah III, Thomas G. Hawley, Mark J. Herrick, Lorna Hunter, Kristopher Johnson, Jesper Kaae, Steve Koberstein, James Kreger, Mark Lembersky, William McCafferty, Donald G. McKenzie, John McPhee, Alan Meyer, William B. Miotek, Allen Moore, Gary Muehlius, David Obetz, Jerry J. Pitts, Dave Poplawski, Emery Rahm, Anthony P. Raimondi, Richard H. Rehn, Kim Saign, Gary Seymour, Patrick Slater, Bryan K. Smith, David Smith, Joe Snider, Martin Spindler, Lawrence Stephens, Aric Van de Vord, Konstantin Wacker, Anthony Wassell, Gary Wlodarczyk

New Book

The Ramsey County Historical Society (RCHS) has published a new book that is of great appeal to those interested in railroad history titled *The Dutiful Son: Louis W. Hill, Life in the Shadow of the Empire Builder*, James J. Hill.

The book launch party was on Saturday, November 13, 2010, at the Landmark Center in St. Paul. You can learn more about the book by visiting the Ramsey County Historical Society Web site at www.RCHS.com.

The book, published by the Ramsey County Historical Society, is available for sale by calling 651-222-0701 or visiting www.RCHS.com. The books price is \$36.95 plus tax and handling.

Models For Sales

Three mint condition Overland Models GP-50's, one each of the first two deliveries and one of the extended cab versions. All unpainted, mint condition, never run, original boxes.

I would like to sell all three as a group and not split them, \$1200 for the 3.

Overland No., model and road numbers:

OMI-5126 BN GP-50 3100-3109

Phase I (Frisco ordered-BN delivered)

OMI-5143 BN GP-50 3110-3157

OMI-5144 BN GP-50 3158-3162

(5-man crew cab.)

If interested contact Dennis Popish,
gchooch@aol.com

Powder River Basin

story & photos by Kent Charles

FOBNR 2011 Convention - Gillette, WY - 2011 June 8 – June 11, 2011

The Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad is holding its annual convention in Gillette, Wyoming, the heart of the largest coal producing basin in the United States. Over 432 million tons of low sulfur coal was produced by Wyoming coal mines in 2009. The vast majority of that coal was transported to users by rail. BNSF loads approximately 45 to 50 coal trains a day and up to 65 to 75 trains a day can be loaded during the busy summer months. Add to this all the empty trains returning for reload and you easily have over 100 trains a day moving in northern Wyoming. These numbers don't include the BNSF manifest trains and Union Pacific coal trains found in the southern Powder River Basin. Gillette is the hub of a huge flow of trains that will provide a constant stream of rail activity during our convention.

Gillette is also a nucleus for a great family vacation. Located on Interstate 80, Gillette is about 1 hour and 60 miles from Devils Tower National Park; 3 hours and 190 miles from Badlands National Park and Minuteman Missile National Historic Site; 2½ hours and 135 miles from Mt. Rushmore National Park (Jewel Cave National Monument is also on this route); and for a real family treat, 8 hours and 450 miles from Yellowstone National Park. We will base the convention at the Best Western Tower West Lodge, 109 N US Highway 14-16, Gillette, WY, 82716-3360, 307-686-2210. A special rate of \$69.99 for the guest rooms that are normally \$139.99 has been negotiated. Registration forms will follow in the next edition of The Expediter. We will have the use of a separate room for display and slide/video presentations by members.

Gillette yard from the overhead walkway



Two loaded trains near Garner Lake Road.



We have a series of activities designed to provide our members with a close-up view of the history and current activities of the BNSF in the Gillette area. On Thursday, June 9, we will carpool to Hill City, South Dakota <http://www.1880train.com/index.php> to ride the 1880's train. This former CB&Q and BN branch line was built in the late 1800s between Hill City and Keystone. Our ride will cover a portion of the original line and provide a glimpse of what railroads were like in the days of the steam engine. The 2¼ hour round trip will pass thru the beautiful Black Hills of South Dakota. Families will really enjoy this ride. Our 1pm departure from Hill City will allow time to drive between our convention hotel in Gillette and Hill City, with time to visit Jewel Cave and Mt. Rushmore. The driving route to Hill City follows the BNSF to Newcastle along US 16 offering morning light for photography. Expect to see several trains along this BNSF route to Alliance, Nebraska. After the train ride we will visit the South Dakota State Railroad Museum. Rich Mills, the Executive Director, will provide a slide presentation on the Burlington Northern in the Black Hills and construction of the Coal Lines in Wyoming and South

Dakota. Rick has a large collection of historic slides that should present an informative view of this Burlington Northern action.

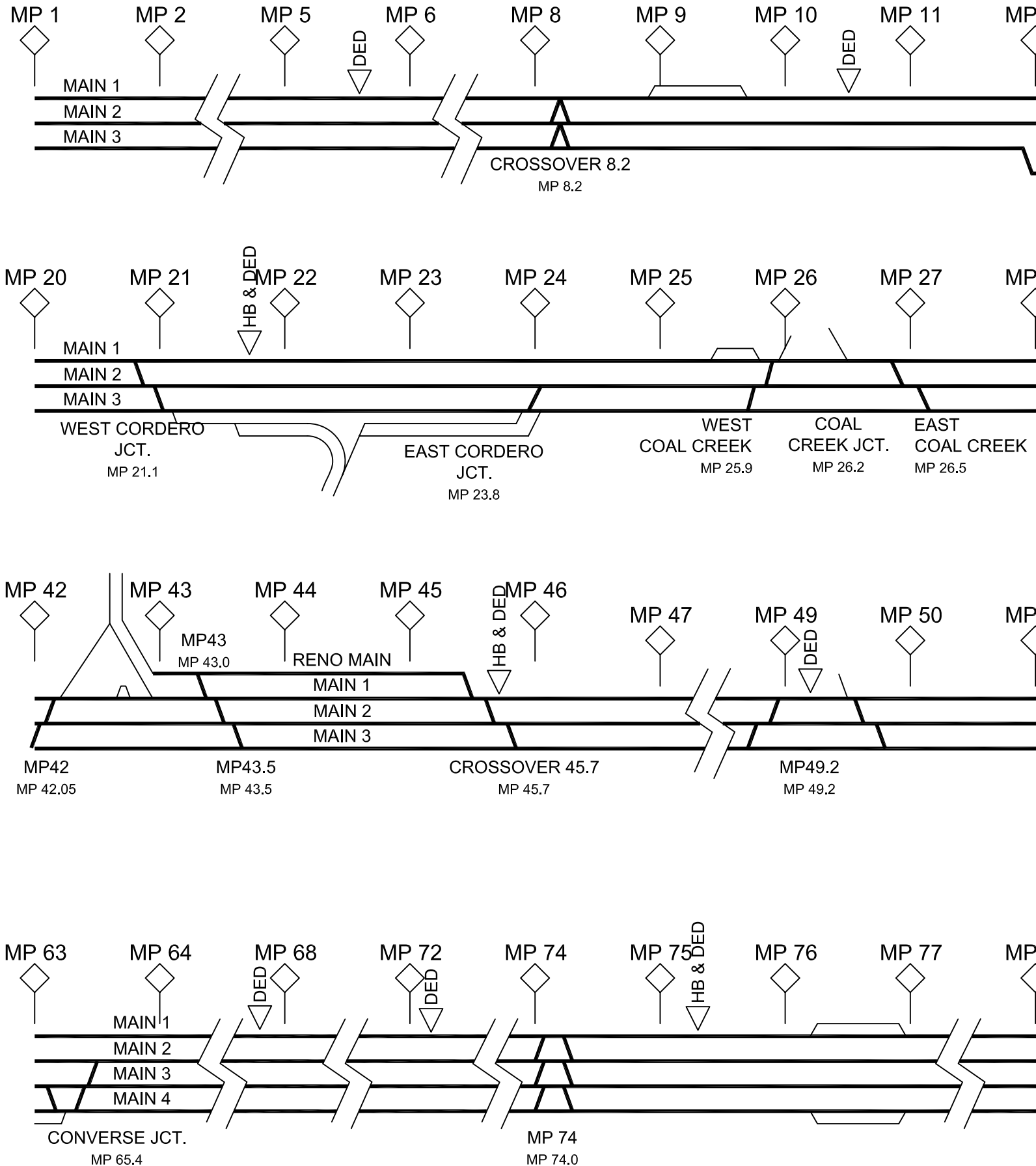
On Friday, June 10, we will explore coal production and loading. Our first trip will be via carpool to Black Thunder Mine, located about 45 miles south of Gillette. Black Thunder is one of the largest mines in the region, producing over 81 million tons of coal per year. This is a special opportunity as Black Thunder does not normally give public tours. After our tour we will return to Gillette for lunch and then meet for an afternoon tour of Alpha's Eagle Butte Mine. If we are lucky, we will get to observe close up the loading of a unit coal train and the application of surfactant to the load as a dust control measure. After the tour Operation Lifesaver will provide a safety presentation. Darrell Real, the state coordinator has promised a local BNSF Trainmaster for the program and to answer our questions about local operations.

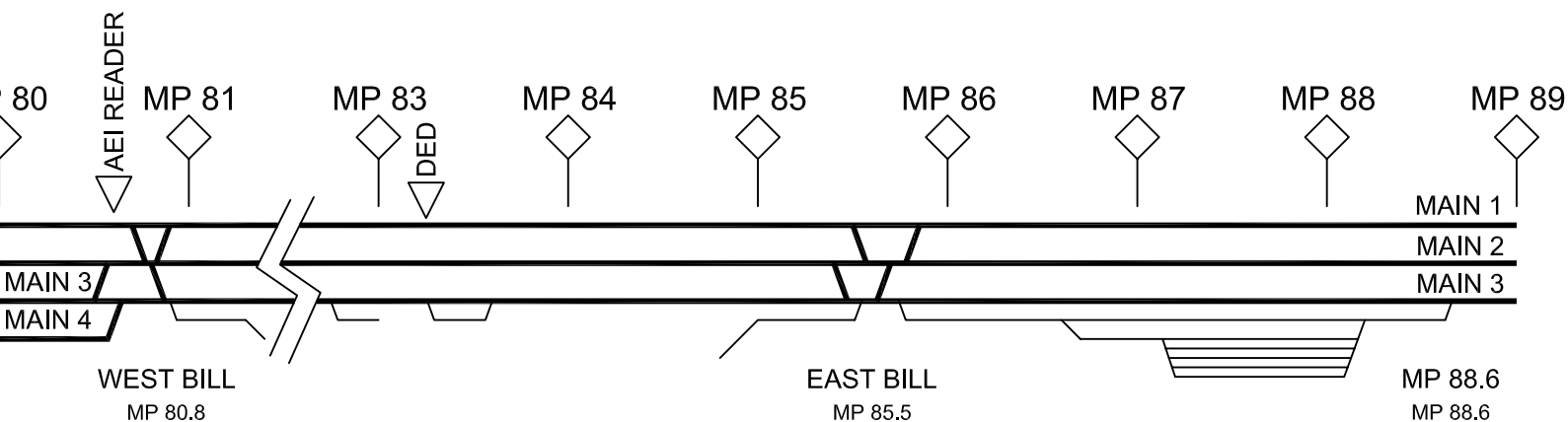
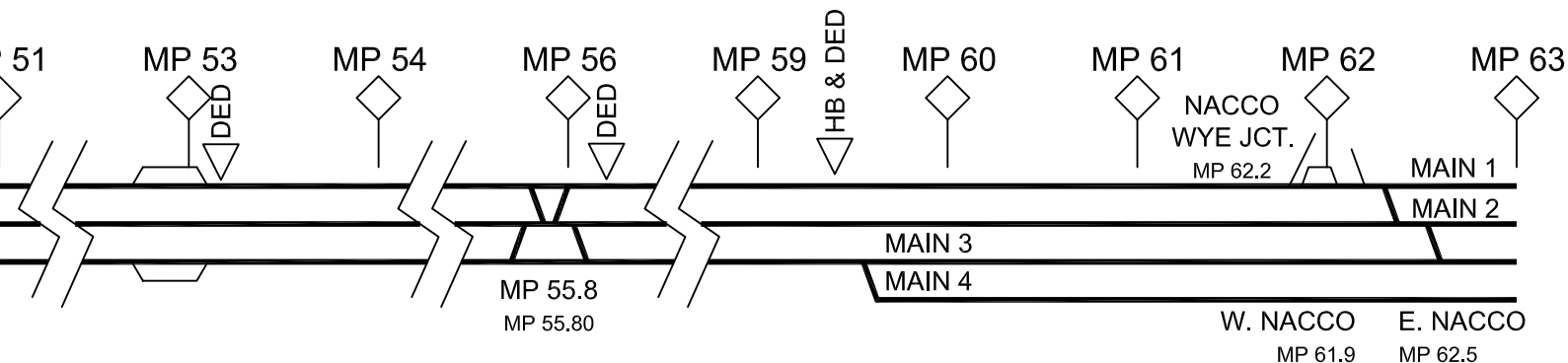
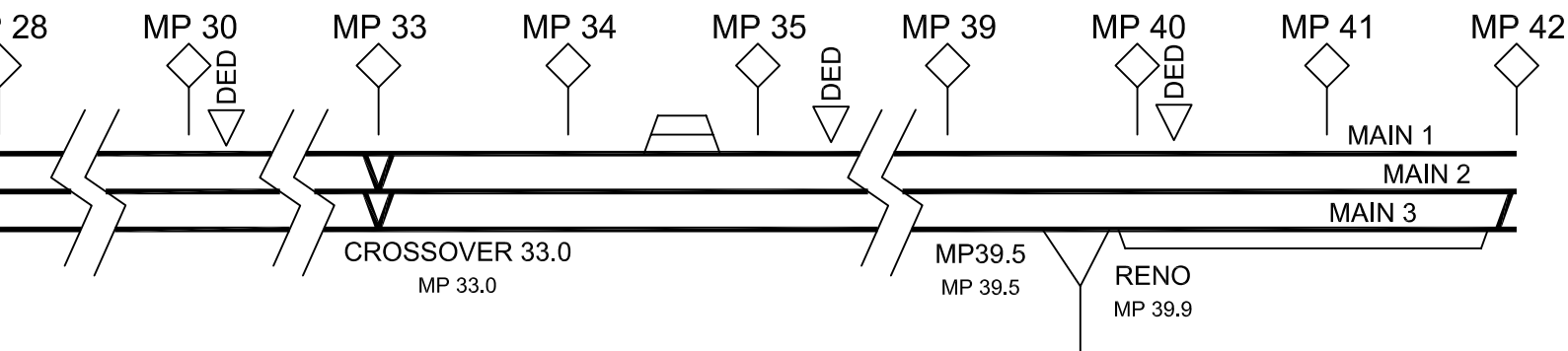
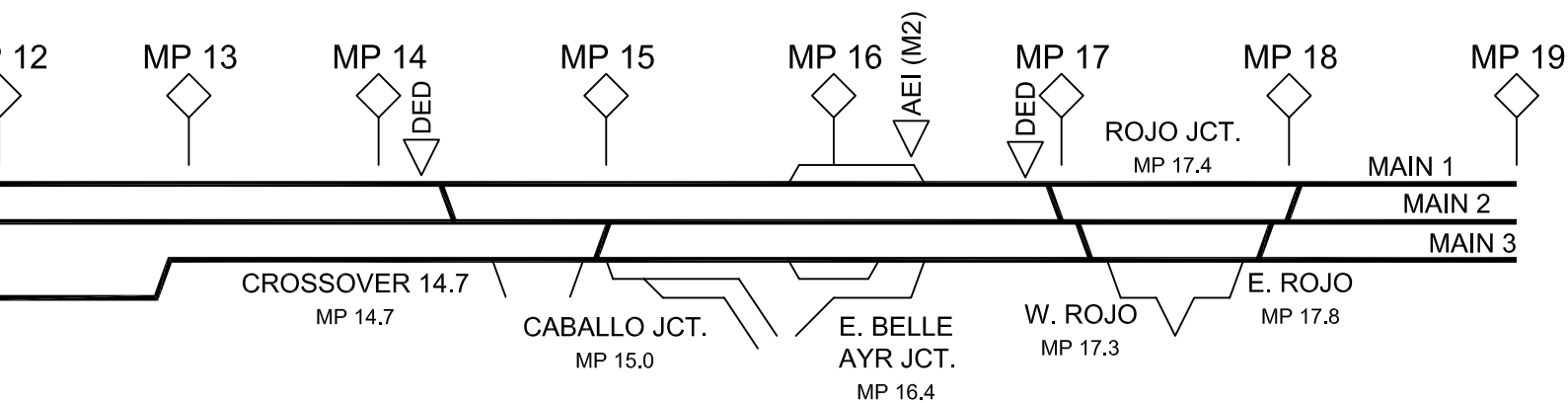
Saturday, June 11, will be a day to explore the region. The Rockpile Museum, located at 900 West 2nd St., in Gillette has a retired BN Caboose and an outside braced

Near Belle Ayer Mine.



Track Diagram of Orin Subdivision, MP1 to MP89





CB&Q boxcar along with a large collection of Native American artifacts, rifles, vehicles and mining artifacts. Cam-Plex has a large outdoor museum of mining equipment along with a BN U30C that is “stuffed and mounted” in the museum. Rail lines radiate in all four direction from Gillette, west to Sheridan, north to several mines and power plants, east to Alliance, and south to numerous mines of the Power River Basin. We plan to organize car pools for anyone wishing to explore the area. Our final banquet will be held in a separate room at the Best Western Tower West Lodge on Saturday evening. Dinner will be ordered off the regular menu rather than the traditional limited choice provide at many banquets. BNSF will provide a speaker for our evening meal. We know you will find the activities entertaining when you join us in Gillette.

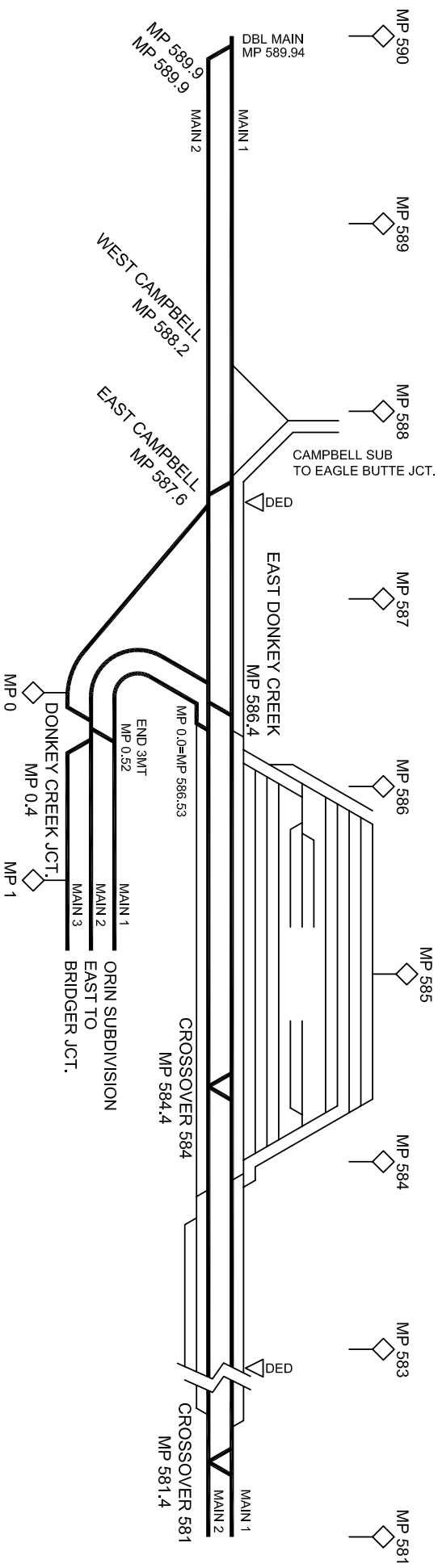
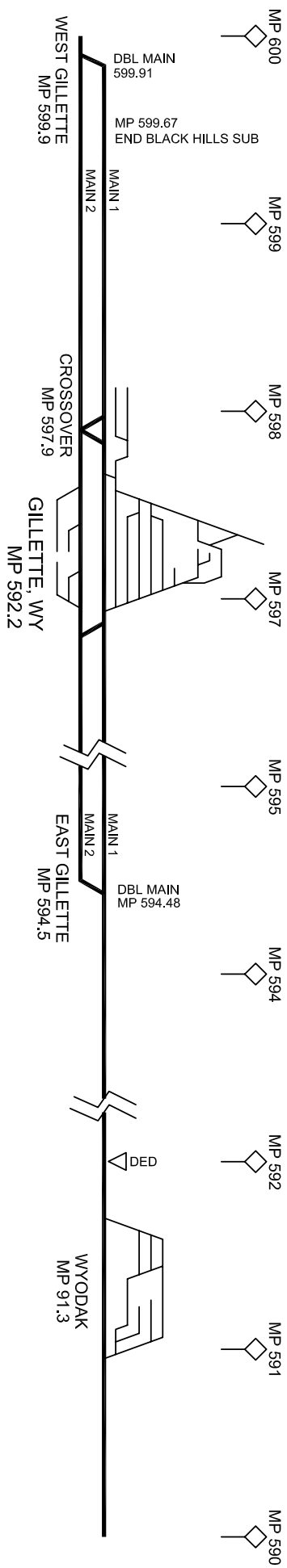
Coal silos at Belle Ayr Mine.



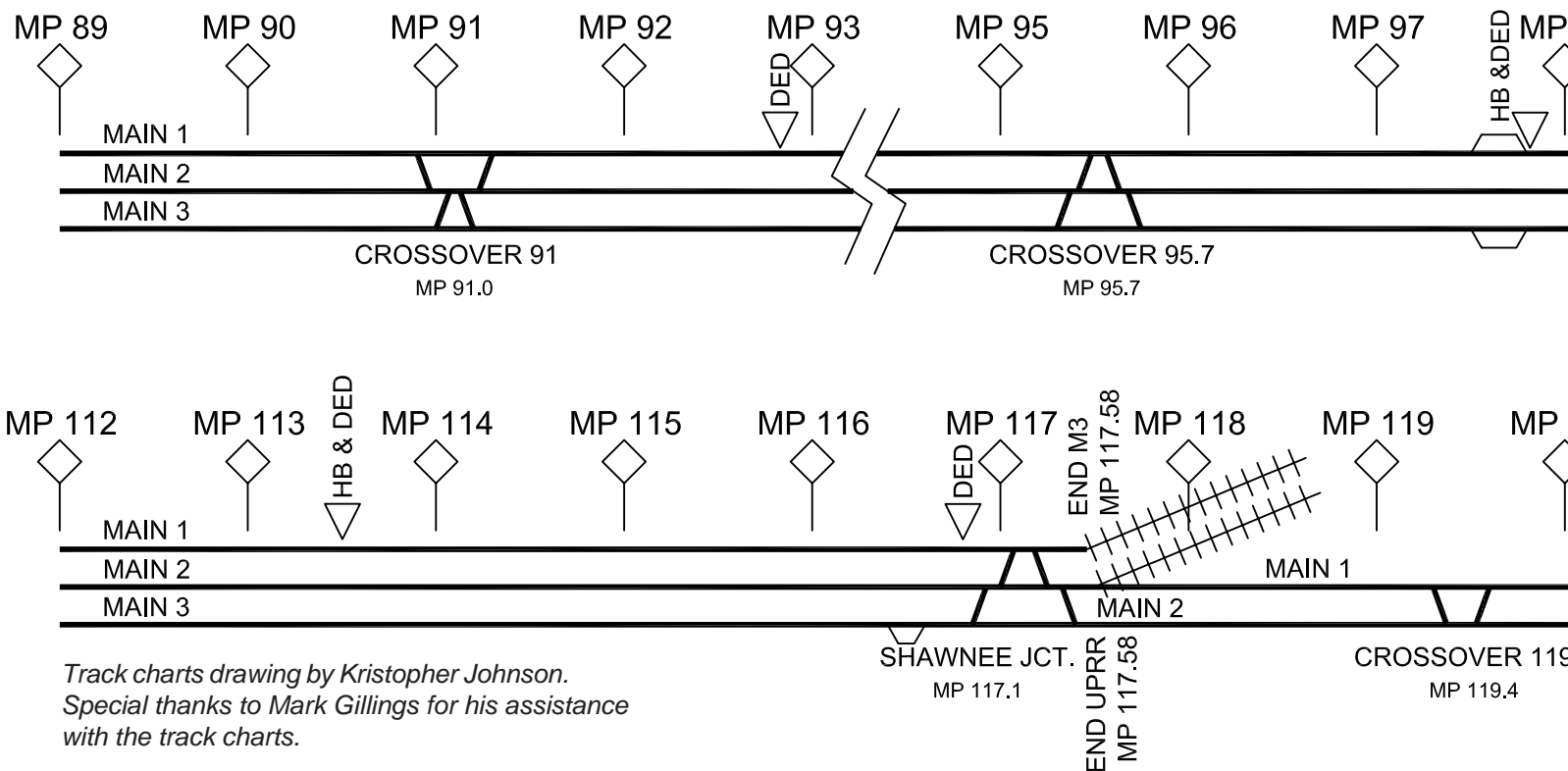
Dust control at Eagle Butte Mine.



Track Diagram of Black Hills Subdivision, MP581 to MP600

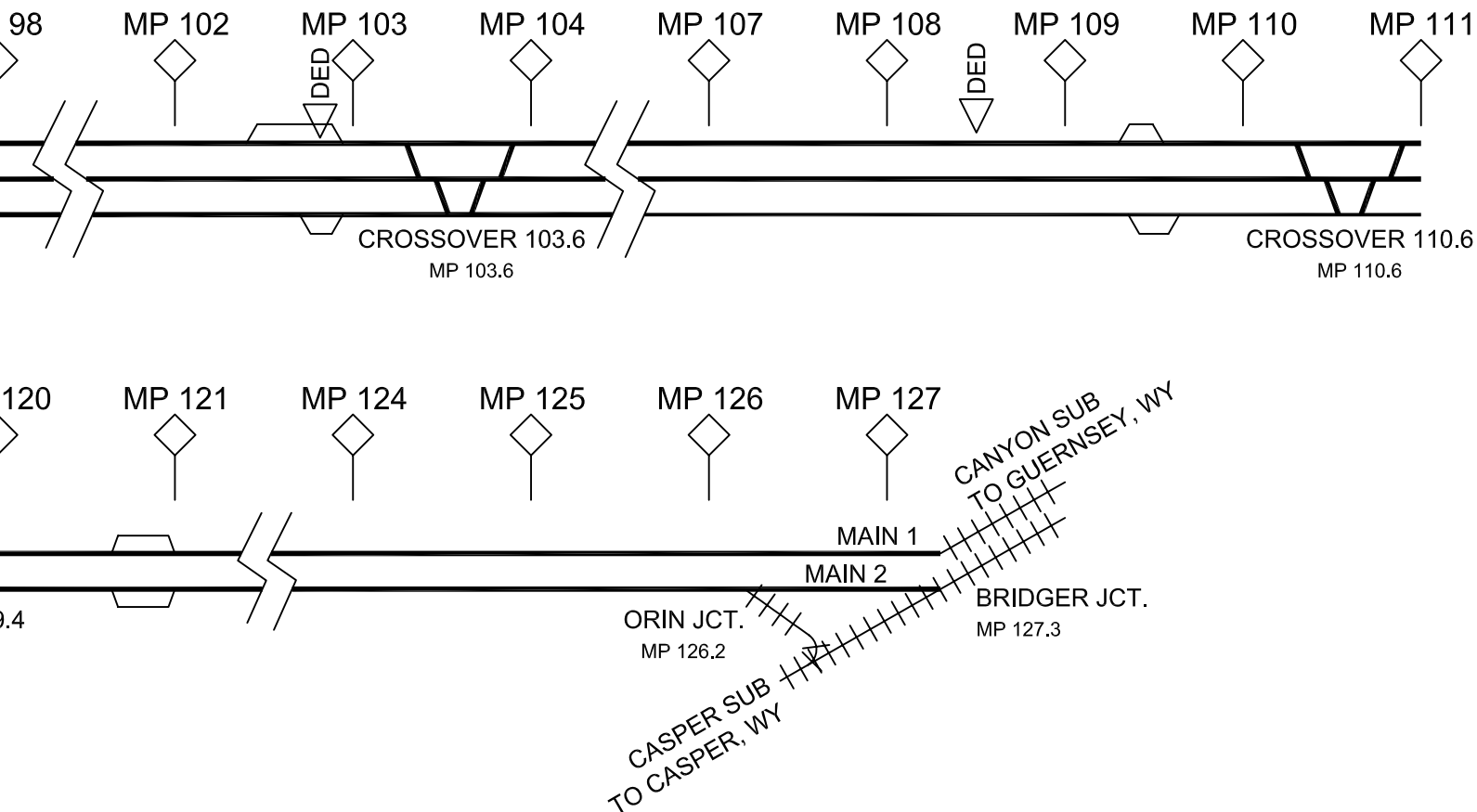


Track Diagram of Orin Subdivision, MP89 to MP127



Helpers at Donkey Creek Jct. with automatic air release couplers.





Safety poster on the Gillette Terminal building.



Unstoppable

by Tom Hackney

We had our own version of the “unstoppable” train, but it was not as far, not as fast, not as big and proved to be “stopable.”

I had been division superintendent at Lincoln, Nebraska, for about one week in the summer of 1977. I was sitting in my office at about 7 P.M., going over some files, like you do on a new job. The phone rang and it was the afternoon chief dispatcher. “I’ve got an off-duty dispatcher on the phone and he says he saw a train going backward over a street crossing in College View (a neighborhood in southeast Lincoln) and it didn’t look like there’s anyone on the train!” I asked the chief to tell him to get on and stop it if he could. The chief came back a moment later. “He says it’s already gone!” I asked the chief to call Lincoln Yard and tell them what was happening. I would take off for the Nebraska City Line in South Lincoln and see if I could stop it.

I headed for South Lincoln with my flashers on without the slightest idea what I was going to do. I got to the intersection of Highway 2 (which parallels the Nebraska City Line) and Highway 77 (which crosses the Nebraska City Line). I was setting there trying to decide what to do, when along came a caboose (waycar in Lincoln parlance), three or four air dumps and an SD7. I drove the car into the ditch and ran like hell. I just caught the last step on the locomotive. (We had just sledged this line recently and running on the embankment next to the engine, the bottom step was about eye level).

I don’t know how fast it was going, but it was faster than I could run. I scrambled up the steps and into the loco cab. With great satisfaction, I dumped the air—and nothing happened. I climbed down onto the footboard and opened the angle cock on the brake line—and nothing happened. I set the hand brake—and nothing happened. I ran to the other end of the locomotive, thinking I would set a hand brake on the air dumps or the caboose and realized I couldn’t even find a handbrake on an air dump! There was no way I could climb over them to the caboose. During this entire time I was going clickety clack down the track!

I ran back to the cab of the SD7 and this was the first it dawned on me that the locomotive was shut down. I grabbed the radio. “Mayday! Mayday! I’m headed for Lincoln Yard and I don’t know if I’m going to get this thing stopped. You better get some switches lined up!” No reply. I thought about starting the engine and plugging the traction motors, but decided it would take too long, so I went back to the hand brake on the locomotive. This time I got four more clicks out of it (thanks to adrenaline). I felt it take hold and after a while I rolled to a stop—thank God! I got down off the locomotive and sat on the ground for a moment—my legs wouldn’t hold me up.

I walked toward the yard and just as I got past the caboose along came a switch engine (obviously intending to catch the runaway train). The crew stopped and I called out to them

“Couple into it and take it to the yard—by the way the hand brake is set on the locomotive.” The switch foreman asked if I stopped the train. I nodded. “Who in the hell are you?” he asked. “I’m your new superintendent.” He looked at me like a deer in the headlights and then blurted out “You’ve got to be shitting me!”

After a while a trainmaster showed up and gave me a ride back to my car, which was still in the ditch, running with the lights on and the door open. I called Wayne Arntzen, my boss in Denver. He could hardly believe what had happened, but said to keep it a low-key as I could. (Burlington Northern was just beginning to run coal trains through parts of Lincoln, which was garnering a lot of adverse reaction.)

The next morning I received a call from a reporter at the *Lincoln Journal*, saying he’d heard a rumor that there had been a runaway train in Lincoln and that I had stopped it. I told him that we had had an incident, but there were no injuries or problems as a result and that the last thing we needed was a big story about it. I asked him to treat it as fairly as he could and I would be available to him for information in the future. That evening there was an article in the paper about two inches long, several pages deep. It talked about the “little train that could” and that the person stopping it wished to remain anonymous.

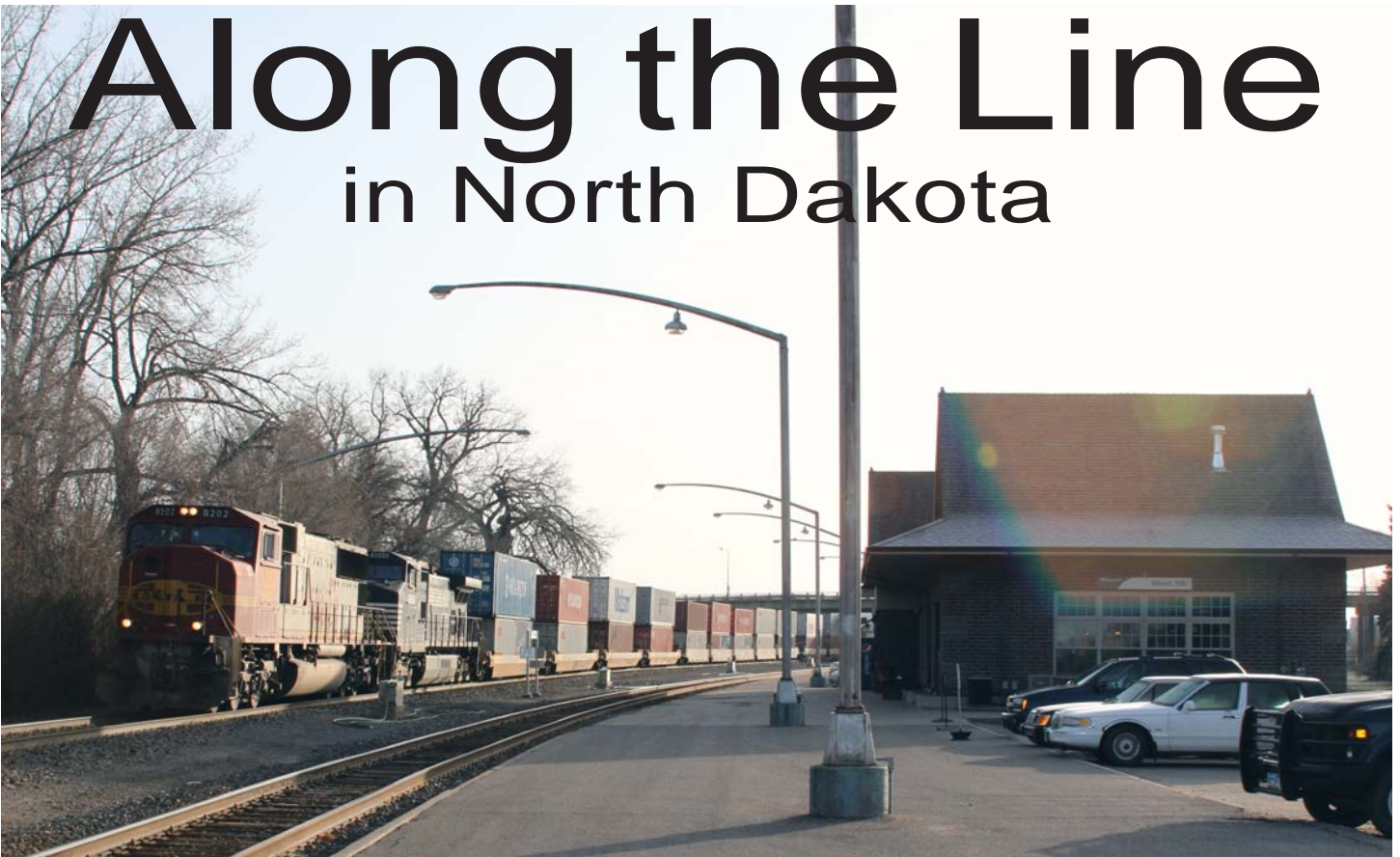
During the investigation, we learned that it had been a work train, bank widening with the air dumps on the Nebraska City Line. (Prior to the advent of coal trains to a power plant, south of Nebraska City.) The crew tied-up on an industry track at College View, southeast of Lincoln with damage to the automatic blow down valve on the main reservoir—it was blowing constantly. The engineer radioed the diesel shop about it and the diesel shop told them to shut down the engine so they wouldn’t burn up the compressor. The diesel shop intended to send a repair crew out later that evening.

The Nebraska City Line has a steep eastbound grade after leaving the Table Rock main line in South Lincoln. The industry track at College View (with a switch on the west end) also has an eastbound grade, but to a lesser extent than the main. When standing at the switch to the industry track looking east, the industry track looks like it goes downhill and thus there would be no way the train could roll out on the main line. A trap! The crew left their train but failed to set a hand brake or the derail. The engine brake was set, but when the air leaked off hours later the train took off through the switch and onto the main. The train had run through the trailing point switch where the Nebraska City Branch joined the Table Rock main and on through the interlocking at the UP main crossing. It was headed for downtown Lincoln when I got it stopped in an area known as Russian Bottoms, just short of the yard.

I haven’t shared this story with many over the years, but discussions about the “unstoppable train” brought this “stopable train” story to mind. Now you know “the rest of the story.”

-Tom Hackney

Along the Line in North Dakota



*A westbound stack trains passes by the Amtrak station in Minot, North Dakota.
-Al Christianson photos*

On the former Burlington Northern 1st Subdivision, the 3126 West goes in the hole at Sanborn to meet an eastbound loaded coal train.





White Earth, North Dakota is located in the middle of the state on the former Burlington Northern (ex-GN) Glasgow Subdivision about 73 miles west of Minot.

In the top photo a westbound stack train is entering the siding. In the bottom photo the BNSF 4145 East is holding the siding as the 5193 West rolls by on the main.

-photos by Al Christianson

