

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, the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway, and the BNSF Railway.

Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad

PO Box 271, West Bend, WI 53095-0271

www.fobnr.org

A 501(c)3 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.

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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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 welcome for publication. Articles are compensated at \$25/page of text; contributors of photos will receive one free copy if an **FOBNR** member, two if not.

Anything published in *The BN Expediter* (including the classifieds), must be focused on the Burlington Northern Railroad and its successors, from the 1970 merger on. Information and/or pictures that give historical perspective or context are acceptable (e.g., premerger 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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Late January 2016 issue of The BN Expediter?

The January issue may be delayed a bit, but should arrive no later than early February because the editor expects a very busy personal schedule during November and December.

Membership Renewal Time

It's membership renewal time again. If your membership expires this year you will receive reminder via US Mail sometime in early November..

Starting with this issue, your highest year you have signed up for will be shown right after your name and membership number on the address label on the package this issue arrived in. For example:

John Q. Public 97-034 **2015**
123 Main Street
Anytown, Yourstate 99999

2015 means that **this** is your last year of membership and that you'll have to renew for 2016. Anything larger means your membership is good for at least one more year.

FYI, 97-034 means you first joined in 1997 and you were the 34th person to sign up that year.

BNSF 3-Bay Covered Hopper Car Article Correction

The caption for the bottom photo on page 19 of the July 2015 issue of *The BN Expediter* was incorrect. It said the car, BNSF 450618, was manufactured by Johnstown America, but in fact it was manufactured by Trinity Industries. Thanks to Dave Casdorff for pointing out the error.

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Cover Photo: The Spring Hill Local arrives in Spring Hill to do some work at a couple of industries in town. July 13, 2015. Photo by Mark Steenwyk.

2016 Convention Glendive, Montana June 8-11

More information in the January issue of
The BN Expediter

2016 All-BN Calendar Call for Photos

The **Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad** is soliciting photo contributions for its second all-BN calendar. If you send in a photo and it is used in print you will get a free calendar.

Submit a high resolution scan of one or more of your favorite Burlington Northern photos (sorry, no BNSF) to Kent Charles at kdcharles@q.com. A committee of members will review the submissions and make a final selection of photos for publication. Photos of the BN in scenic locals, action photos, structures or unusual equipment are welcome. Photos taken between March 2, 1970 and December 31, 1996 are preferred. Submit a photo to help your society and see yourself in print. Have a question? Send Kent an email or give him a call at 303-589-9146.

All sustaining members who renew for 2016 will get a free calendar. All other members may purchase one at a reduced price. Ordering information will appear in the October issue of *The BN Expediter* and on the 2016 membership renewal form.

Sustaining Members

On behalf of all our members, the **FOBNR** Board of Directors would like to take this opportunity to thank our sustaining members for 2015. Their generous contributions to the finances of the **FOBNR** has helped us to continue furthering the goals of our organization.

John Adams	Bill Harvey	Kim Saign
Doug Andreason	Mark Herrick	Bob Sanchez
Jim Archer	Jesper Kaae	Harlan Schmidt
Joseph Beasley	Bruce Kane	Gary Seymour
Tom Bentley	Steve Koberstein	Brian Shedd
William Brown	James Koretsky	Dennis Shogren
Jay Burkgart	James Kreger	Patrick Slater
David Burns	Devyn Kukowski	Bryan Smith
Kent Charles	Dennis Lutz	David Smith
Gayle Christen	Alan Matchett	Charles Sted
Kenneth Cocherell	Alan Meyer	Mark Steenwyk
Craig Connell	William Miotek	Lawrence Stephens
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Daniel Donahue	David Obetz	Thomas Synovec
Mark Dennis	Dennis Popish	Charles Taylor Jr.
Duane Durr	Dave Poplawski	John Tenerowicz
Micheal Farley	T. Michael Power	Galen Thomaier
Peter Ferch	Emery Rahm	Aric Van de Vord
Roger Field	Richard Rehn	Gary Wlodarczyk
Wade Griffis	Richard Rink	

Information and Photos Needed

Then and Now

Do you have a photo of someplace on the BN or BNSF from many years ago, and over time that place has changed. Then go out and take another photo of the same place from the same vantage point, and send us both along with any information you can give us about the change (e.g., why the change, or what happens differently there now versus then). We'll publish it as a "Then and Now" article.

Right Of Way

In the January 2015 issue, Peter Ferch encouraged us to document the current status of various BNSF lines in his Right of Way article about the Browns Valley Subdivision in western Minnesota. Is there subdivision near you that you could take a few hours to shoot the existing trackage and rail-related industries? If so, get out there and shoot, then do a short write-up and send it in. We can provide associated information, like a timetable page, a schematic drawing, etc. to round out the article.

In addition, here's what's planned for upcoming issues and what we could use to improve the articles:

January, 2016

Rocky Mountain Division succession. Earl Currie took over for Dave Burns when Dave was transferred west, and in this article Earl chronicles his experiences from 1974 to 1975. We're looking for photos of the BN during that time in this area to accompany the article.

Sweetgrass Subdivision. Mark Demaline documents the trackage and especially the many grain elevators along the line. If you have any information or photos between Great Falls to Sweetgrass, Montana, please send 'em in.

Mobridge Sub. Another "Right of Way" article by Peter Ferch. We have plenty of photos, but any interesting information about the line or its use would be appreciated.

April, 2016

BN Bridges. An article about the construction of bridges on the BN and how to model them. Photos of all sorts of bridges are requested.

The **FOBNR** web page now has a link to all the articles that are in progress for future issues of *The BN Expediter*. Check it at www.fobnr.org and contribute if you are able.

New Members

Robert Learmont 15-014
117 S Sargent Ave #7
Glendive, MT 59330

Walter Anno 15-015
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Vancouver, WA 98682

Gary Nelson 15-016
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Andover, MN 55304-2821

Christopher Bandel 15-017
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Pine Island, MN 55962

Christopher Dunbar 15-018
(address withheld by request)

Daniel Donahue 15-019
(address withheld by request)

Reto Schumm 15-020
(address withheld by request)

Gary Seymour

In 2016, Gary Seymour will have served on the Board of Directors and as **FOBNR** secretary for 20 years. He has decided to step away from those positions and will not run for the Board in 2016. He intends to stay active and will remain as the web site contact. He will also continue to maintain the **FOBNR** mailing address in West Bend.

Given Gary's long and meritorious service to the **FOBNR**, we thought you might like to know a little bit about him. Herein is a short biography of someone whose efforts we will surely miss.

Gary was born in 1942 and grew up in Madison, Wisconsin. He graduated from Madison Central High School and then attended the Madison campus of the University of Wisconsin. He had three years of Army ROTC training before joining the Army Reserve in June of 1964, where he served until June of 1970 attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant.

At the University of Wisconsin Gary earned a BA in History in 1967 and a MS in Curriculum and Instruction in 1969. While attending the university, he met Jane, the love of his life, and they married in 1967. They have a son and a daughter.

After earning his degrees, he was hired as a social studies teacher in the West Bend, WI school district and began a 38 year teaching career at East High School. Initially he taught U. S. History and several electives, but in the last twenty years of his career, he taught economics with an emphasis on consumer economics. He was engaged in numerous district and social studies department initiatives for the improvement of student learning and was chair of the social studies department for 14 years. In 1998 he received the Teacher of the Year award from the district. In 2007, at age 65, Gary retired from his teaching career in West Bend.

Gary quickly became very active in the West Bend teachers union and for 36 years, pursued what he calls a "parallel career" as a union leader, advocate, and officer at the local, regional, and state levels. He served terms as president, negotiator, and grievance chair for the West Bend Education Association. In 1973 he was one of the founders of the regional union organization, Cedar Lake United Educators (CLUE), and served as its vice-president in the 1970's. He also served a term on the Board of Directors of the Wisconsin Education Association Council (WEAC). In the 1980's and 90's he served as CLUE treasurer, among other duties. CLUE honored him with a Teacher of the Year award in 1998. Upon retirement from his teaching career in 2007, and in recognition of his dedication to teachers and students, the Wisconsin Education Association Council presented him with a Presidential Award for Lifetime Achievement.

In 1978 Gary began a model railroading hobby in HO scale with his son, Andy (then age 5), who also showed an



interest in trains. Some substantial basement remodeling in the 1980's led to a shift to an N scale emphasis. The NTRAK modular railroading concept greatly appealed to him for its educational and social emphasis, so that is what he has been modeling ever since. He is a member of two NTRAK clubs, but appears mostly with the Capital City "N" Gineers of Madison, WI. He has built, scenicked, and detailed seven modules in autumn colors and currently exhibits with his clubs at nine shows a year. He is also managing an HO layout in an independent living apartment complex in West Bend.

Following the lead of his wife, Jane, Gary also developed an interest in gardening. They have a one-quarter acre, shady, suburban lot and they became interested in hosta plants. They began gardening in earnest and they now have over 450 different varieties of hosta plants in their yard ranging in size from large to miniature. They have twice {1990 and 2010} won the Mayor's Beautification Award for front yard beauty in their district. In addition, the American Hosta Society (AHS) chose their garden as a tour garden when the AHS national convention was held in Milwaukee in 2013. A write-up of the garden appeared in a 2013 issue of *The Hosta Journal*. In these gardening endeavors, Jane is the "Chief Horticulturalist" and Gary is the "Superintendent of Grounds".

Gary's interest in history and model railroading, particularly in the history of the Great Northern Railway, led him to become interested in the Burlington Northern as the successor railroad. Some friends also were BN fans and photographers, so Gary picked up on their interest too. He joined **The Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad** in 1993, just one year after its founding. In 1996 he joined the Board of Directors and was elected as secretary of the organization. Since 2007, he has also served as the **FOBNR** web site contact for questions, research, comments, new member greetings, and other concerns related to the **FOBNR**. He has attended most of the **FOBNR** conventions.

Forsyth, Montana

Crew Change Modifications

For months, rumors concerning the possible elimination of Forsyth, Montana as a crew change point between Glendive and Billings (Laurel) circulated among BNSF employees and the local citizens of Forsyth.

On June 25, 2015, BNSF announced they would be implementing operational changes on the Forsyth Subdivision. These changes were negotiated with the unions, and BNSF advised it would result in the relocation of approximately 45 BNSF employees to Laurel. Also, ten other employees from Glendive MT will also be relocated to Laurel.

BNSF Public Affairs Director Matthew Jones advised "We negotiated with the employees' unions to reach the terms of these changes, that allow us to retain jobs and improve our ability to meet the rail service needs of customers in Montana and the Northern Tier of the BNSF network."

Thus, on July 15, 2015, 45 BNSF train employees reported for duty in Laurel MT. Besides Glendive-Laurel runs, former Sheridan-Forsyth crews will now run between Sheridan and Laurel. However, of the 45 affected employees, about 24 live in Forsyth. The remainder actually live in the Laurel-Billings area or Glendive. There will still be a few local crews based at Forsyth.

Both Forsyth Mayor Kopitzke and Montana Governor Bullock are working on options to minimize the potential negative economic impact to the Forsyth area, and BNSF officials have also said they will do what they could to help find a solution.

Thanks to Chaun Scott of the Independent Press in Forsyth for providing information used in this article.



Two photos of the Forsyth depot by Mark Demaline. Above taken on October 2, 2006, below taken on October 5, 2003.



Rocky Mountain Days 1972-74

by David Burns

BURLINGTON NORTHERN INC.

BILLINGS REGION

MONTANA, YELLOWSTONE AND
ROCKY MOUNTAIN DIVISIONS

TIME TABLE 6

To be used in conjunction with
Special Instructions currently in effect

IN EFFECT AT 12:01 A.M.

CENTRAL STANDARD TIME — JAMESTOWN-MANDAN

MOUNTAIN STANDARD TIME { MANDAN-PARADISE
BAINVILLE-CONKELLEY

PACIFIC STANDARD TIME — PARADISE-SANDPOINT

Sunday, June 11, 1972

Including National Railroad Passenger Corporation (NRPC) Trains

Asst. Vice President
Transportation

R. G. JOHNSON

Superintendent
Montana Division
J. G. EDWARDS

Superintendent
Yellowstone Division
R. V. JABENS

Asst. Vice President
Operations

W. L. ARNTZEN

Superintendent
Rocky Mountain Division
D. H. BURNS

The April 2013 issue of **The BN Expediter** contained an excellent article by John Adams on the current operations of the MRL (Montana Rail Link) which had leased most of the BN Rocky Mountain Division in 1987 for 60 years. This caught most BN field people by complete surprise and not just a little baffled why we would even consider such a transaction. Adams covered the negotiations that led to it, and my purpose here is not to deliberate a done deal. But I'm not alone in awaiting the day this transcontinental spine again wears BNSF colors.

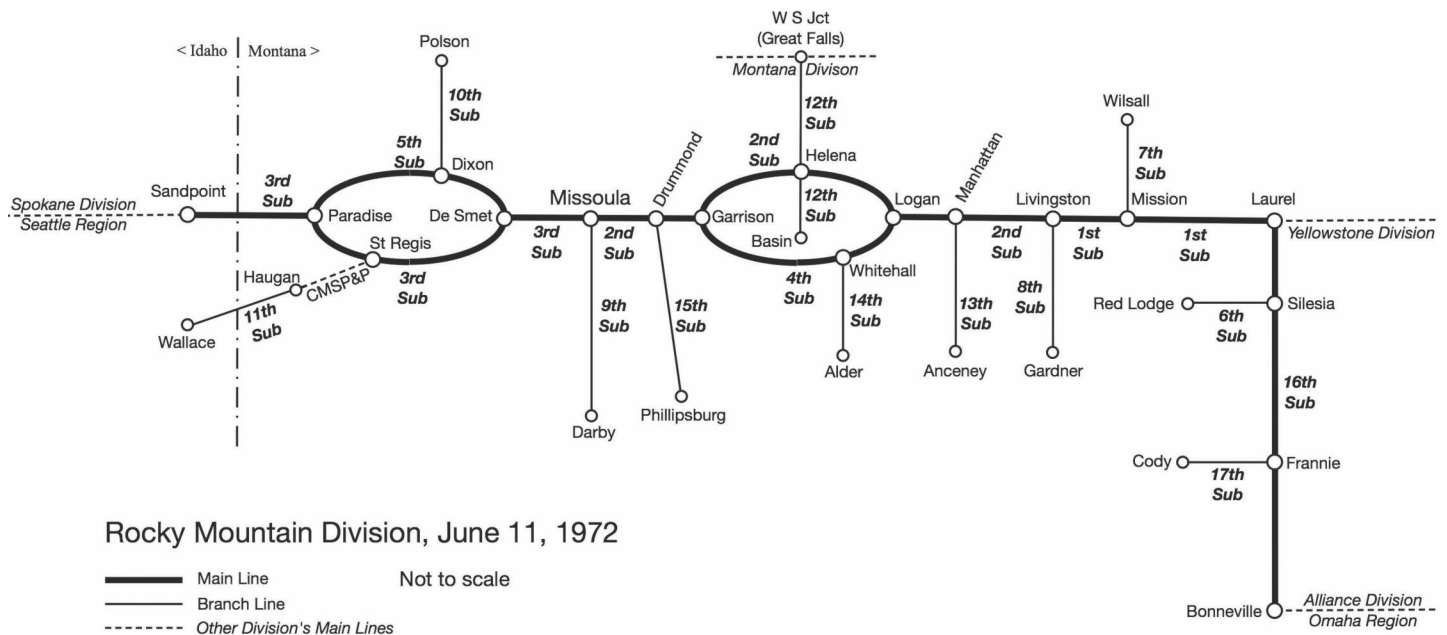
What I related to most in the article were the pictures and the description of the physical challenges the operation over this division presented. They bring back the initial impressions I experienced on my arrival February 13, 1972 as Division Superintendent in the cab of Amtrak #9, the North Coast Hiawatha.

First of all, the breathtaking scenery. My student officer days on the GN (1963-64) were spent on the Cascade Division, so it was again nice to see and traverse such picturesque vistas. Too, I was relieved to see the stable and sound track, critical to operation in tough terrain. The former NP had maintained the physical plant to A-1 standards. This division simply looked good and felt good. The magnificent Livingston depot (Gateway to Yellowstone Park) and the handsome Missoula depot and division offices (both built from bricks used as ballast on clipper ships) epitomized for me a proud division with a proud history operated by proud people.

Pleasant Discoveries

Once again, my department heads were all seasoned veterans, all former NP. They might have resented not just a "foreigner" in their midst, but now having to report to one who had not earned that coveted position through seniority. To their credit (and my relief) they did not. Instead, in them I found not just highly competent supervisors but fellow activists at heart who had been waiting for a like-minded leader to help get done some long overdue self-help improvements.

One example involved working conditions (after 41 years it is probably safe to make some confessions!). At that time we could spend only up to \$750 without formal budget authorization. We found creative ways to "stretch" that amount of money to completely remodel the 3rd floor of the division headquarters (see photo on page 14), creating a decent work space for Division Engineering, MWS, B&B, Signal and Communications who previously had been jammed



together in what was mostly a sweltering attic. We installed sound baffles around the dispatcher stations to reduce noise. We made some long overdue improvements in the division office to be more efficient. But then we painted the entire interior, all 3 floors. The depot waiting room emerged with three walls a neutral creme and the 4th a gold-orange. Striking! The rest of the building emerged a clean white, with light gray wainscoting to minimize smudging. The regional vice president, John Davies, later made a number of critical comments, but stopped short of firing us! However, the impact on morale and performance was heartwarming. Thus we continued similar self help projects at other work locations. Amazing what even just a fresh paint job can generate in pride and morale, both of which I believe contribute greatly to safety.

The assistant superintendent was Les Wollschlager, division roadmaster Bill Carlson, B&B Supervisor Pike Presthus, division engineer Bill Johnson, and master mechanic Harold Bell (headquartered at Livingston on account of the shops being there). It is not possible to name all the other supervisory talent, but suffice it to say this division was blessed with bright, energetic, creative and competent people. The majority of the union personnel were also of similar caliber, proven by the fact we rarely had to hold formal investigations for poor performance. Indeed, this was a group of proud people, dedicated rails at all levels, who made my stay among them so rewarding and memorable.

Getting Started

The first week was spent getting a better handle on the operation. We established a 7 AM staff meeting (outlying points via conference call). The first item was always a

safety briefing (perhaps contributing to the division's winning the coveted BN Safest Division Award in both 1973 and 1974). We revived the previous 24 hour performance report, discussed ways to improve, and what was coming up in the next 24 hours. Then I or Les would have a similar discussion with the Billings Region. Often these involve Assistant Vice President for Operations Wayne Arntzen, who I had met earlier in Chicago when he was division superintendent of the Chicago Division. Wayne was one of the best supervisors I ever worked with and for, one of my role models for motivational rather than dictatorial leadership.

My diary indicates next came a Weekend Duty Team Roster. Each supervisor was thereby assured of every other weekend free from call. The duty teams were constituted such that the division was fully protected at all times. I alternated with the Assistant Superintendent. As a matter of fact, the duty teams were rarely called out—I recall only four significant derailments during my entire two years there. But the first of them came on my very first weekend I was there, and my duty team was on deck.

About 11 PM Friday, February 18th westbound Train 85 derailed 15 cars on the high and long Greenhorn Trestle, on the 2.2 degree ascending grade just before entering the Mullan Pass tunnel. It turned out a knuckle had broken near the head end. The immediate emergency air brake application was rapidly stopping the head end before it reached and shut off the helpers pushing at the rear. While the track was sound, circumstances were just right that 15 empty cars behind the broken knuckle were squeezed off the rails. Fortunately none had jackknifed, and all had remained in line along the rails. I assumed we would be in for a long night of rerailling one car, taking it down to the nearest set out track, returning the power to reraill the next car, and on and

on. Imagine my delighted surprise when the car foreman and the roadmaster came up with a creative placement of the rerailing frogs that enabled us simultaneously to slowly pull all 15 cars back on the track without having to uncouple them and rerail each separately. This is a good illustration of what I alluded to earlier about creative and competent people! After another 30 minutes of thorough track inspections and a few minor repairs, Train 85 was on its way again, minus the 15 empties for further inspection.

The worst event of the evening occurred on the drive back down the narrow, snow covered mountain access road leading back to the highway. I misjudged how narrow the road was and wound up at a 40 degree angle in the ditch, protected from further danger by the immense amount of snow drifts there. We all exited the driver's side doors, and I took a lot of ribbing about trying to kill off part of my duty team to speed up the integration process. The embarrassment was made worse by it taking over four hours to get a tow truck to winch us out. Fortunately there was no damage, except to my pride.

Digging into Budgets and Planning

This division already had an excellent grasp of the capital budget process. The entire Maintenance of Way and Structures (MWS) team had a solid five-year plan, and knew how to fight intelligently to achieve it. The operating budget (RESBU - ReESonsible BUdgeting system) was also in pretty good shape due to the interest and initiative of Bob Bospflug, the superintendent's steno (a holdover from the days the superintendents had their own business cars, a strictly male-only environment). Bob had taken it upon himself to become the point man for the division, and even showed me a few opportunities for creative accounting. That left me pretty much free to focus on Managerial Action Planning (MAP), which had always stuck me as an excellent vehicle to push the railroad into functioning more horizontally than vertically, working toward a greater common good than the more traditional department self interest. Here too I found a number of junior but highly promotable supervisors eager to become involved. This helped the division mightily, but also enhanced their hands-on knowledge and belief in the formal action planning processes.

Division Meetings (Communication, Collaboration, Cooperation)

Most divisions had at least occasional safety meetings, but BN put these on a more frequent, formal basis. For example, the Rocky Mountain Division had employee safety committees at each of our three home terminals: Missoula, Livingston and Greybull, Wyoming. We met every two months. Sometime the meetings were mostly gripes about irksome working conditions, but we started laying the

groundwork for ever more focus on safety attitudes—if it isn't safe, don't do it. But at that time all railroads had traditional work practices that we came to see over time contributed to back, knee and ankle injuries. One was getting on and off moving equipment. There was even a certain pride on just who could routinely swing up or swing off equipment moving pretty fast. Another was switch throw lever design that if rushed into throwing over time could lead to back strain. My generation, not to our credit, took such practices and designs as just the way you railroaded. I bring this up because later, in the late 1980's, BN management committed to a reinvigorated and more formal safety improvement continuous campaign. Fortuitously, Jack Chain and Roger Nelson were chosen to lead it. These two were the drivers in a sweeping revision of work practices, conditions, attitudes and procedures that would move BN from too often at the lower end of the safety spectrum to vying for the top position. This also led directly to improved pride, morale and profitability. Injuries are costly in ways often overlooked.

In 1972 Tom DeButts (Vice President Labor Relations) and Al Chesser (General Chairman of the United Transportation Union) were collaborating on ways to bridge the traditional gulf and antagonism between "management" and "labor". We were asked to establish some system of regular contact between division supervisors and union local chairmen. To my knowledge, BN was the only major railroad to undertake this on a system-wide basis. It met with acceptance on a few divisions, but a more grudging and perfunctory effort on most, referring to them as "Love-Ins". Because this type of cooperation and collaboration had always made great sense to me, the Rocky Mountain Division embraced them (if not wholeheartedly, at least straight on). We scheduled them every two months to immediately follow the safety committee meetings at Missoula, Livingston and Greybull. The initial meetings were not always productive and mutual suspicion was evident. But over time the very regularity of them and the ensuing greater familiarity did lead to a thawing in the mistrust and even to some mutually beneficial outcomes. Any organization runs better when the emphasis can shift more toward the fits than the fights.

But there was a third set of meetings I felt it important to conduct—division-wide supervisory staff meetings. We started doing this every six months. These, in my opinion, were helpful in the push to broaden perspective and loyalty beyond ones own department to division, region and system objectives. But I especially appreciated them for the opportunity to do "Good News Sharing", highlighting successes and recognizing people. Some thought it was just hoopla, but I thought it contributed to teamwork pride and morale. I have long thought one of the critical functions of a leader is to help subordinates find purpose and meaning in their jobs. Unleash some of that and stand back!

Our Own Fire Warden and Fire Fighters

One surprise for sure was a phone call I received from Virgil Fite in early May 1972, my first spring there. He introduced himself as the Billings Region Fire Warden, and wanted to schedule a high-rail trip to formulate plans for the summer fire protection plan. Seeing that I was completely baffled, he patiently explained why.

Much of the Billings Region, and most of the Rocky Mountain Division, ran through federal and state owned lands managed by such entities as the National Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and others. The usually hot, dry and often windy summers made forest and rangeland fires a real threat. Diesel engines could throw sparks, especially when accelerating after idling. Iron brake shoes could throw off sparks during heavy braking operations. Thus we were expected to keep our side of the street as fire free as possible.

We made the inspection trip during which Virgil's keen eye, long experience and forecasting abilities identified a number of locations we need to do some more brush clearing and reduce other potential fire hazards. I also learned our fueling stations would be including an anti-spark additive starting in June. But most of all I was surprised to learn we operated fire patrols behind trains in certain areas at certain times. These usually consisted of a motor-car track patrolman pulling a trailer with fire suppression equipment, including a big water tank. The timing was critical—too soon after train passage and you might miss incipient sparks; too long after and a fire might have started beyond the ability of the fire patrolman to extinguish it. God forbid, should that ever occur, he had quick access to the dispatcher who had a contact list of both railroad and public agencies to get into action. Fortunately we never had any incidents the fire patrol couldn't handle, but we did have another fascinating episode (at least to me) involving fires in a volatile climate.

Burn Baby Burn

Depending on a number of factors, railroad ties can last from 20 to 40 years before needing replacement. To avoid having them all "expire" at the same time, tie replacement programs are usually made in ten-year cycles, renewing about 25% of the ties on each pass.

There are usually only two ways I know of to extract the old tie. You can pull it out whole from one side or the other, or saw it in the middle and simultaneously pull out the two pieces from both sides. Both methods disturb the side (shoulder) ballast, as well as disturbing the surface and line. The tie saw method was generally viewed as being the less disruptive, but in either case you had to dispose of the used ties or tie butts. This was time consuming and costly.

If the ties had been removed whole, and there was any

sort of road access, often landscaping firms would contract to gather and remove them for use as berms and liners. But the half ties from the saw method were of little or no use. Thus they, and any whole ties from inaccessible areas, required lots of railroad equipment and labor to gather up. Sometimes they were left in place for a while, but no one liked to do that for obvious reasons.

Traditionally once gathered into piles the ties would be burned. But EPA regulations were making that difficult, and in any event the fire danger on our division made that virtually impossible for most of the year.

Virgil had contractors working on various ideas to create smoke-free fires of creosoted ties that could not spread. The most promising was called the Air Curtain. I saw a test demo in June 1972 between Missoula and Paradise where we had gathered up hundreds of discarded tie butts from previous replacements. A rectangular trench had been dug, 20 feet deep, maybe 30 by 40 feet across in which we had thrown old ties. Once set on fire, big fans blew a curtain of air across the entire face of the pit. This kept the flames and smoke recirculating in on the pit, which created an intense heat. Everyone was impressed, including the government agencies in attendance.

The problem remained, however, of the amount of equipment and labor required to gather up the old ties, and then finding suitable areas to dig the trenches and rent the air fans. Since everyone was impressed at the intense heat and clean fire being created, we proposed another idea.

Since we had to gather up the old ties anyway, we proposed a location between the railroad and the Clark Fork River where fire danger was minimal. The railroad was 20 feet above the river at this site, and a good 400 feet from the river, creating quite a "hole" in between. We proposed filling it in with the many hundreds of tie butts, applying liberal amounts of accelerants, and lighting it on a day when conditions were optimal. We agreed to have ample fire suppression personnel in attendance and were grudgingly given permission to try it.

The day came, the accelerant liberally applied, and the fire ignited simultaneously all around the huge pile. The resulting intense heat created an encouragingly clean fire! But it also quickly became apparent such a hot fire so close to the track would pose a real danger to passing trains. This fire, and the subsequent heat, was a sight to behold! We started holding trains, and when it became apparent that this fire was going to burn into the night, we detoured trains over the Evaro Hill line even though we had to add pushers. But by dawn, the old ties were no more.

My mind and diary are both blank as to whether we did this elsewhere, but we had at least cleaned up the old ties between Missoula and Paradise on the river line, and done so with a fire for the record books.

Mountain Railroad in Bitter Cold

I had seen cold weather before. My first supervisory job, Assistant B&B Supervisor on GN's Minot Division in 1964, saw lots of sub-zero temperatures, but I was not then personally involved in actual train operation. I sure was on my next one, though, as Assistant Trainmaster at Shelby, Montana, on GN's Butte Division. There I learned firsthand how sub-zero weather causes diesel fuel to wax up, the loss of air brake line pressure as train length increases (called taper) which leads to all sorts of brake problems, and also just how cold engine cabs and cabooses got in those days. Additionally, actually being out with the crews doing switching and local work taught me what real cold felt like.

I'll never forget one memorable night in the Havre yard trying to get enough air pressure to the caboose to conduct the prescribed brake test required before departure. The Operating Department goal, of course, was to keep the caboose as far from the engines as possible, and over zealous yardmasters, trying to keep their terminals fluid, would occasionally push this even further. On this night we were trying to get air through 80 car trains. The veteran carman I was working with was showing me how to change out gladhand washers (which the cold had constricted, and were now leaking train-line air). But, of course, it didn't take long for any replacements to similarly constrict and start leaking. Meanwhile, I was freezing, wondering what it was going to take. One crew had already been on duty for four hours waiting for enough air to conduct the test, making it likely they would have to be relieved on-line due to expiration of the hours-of-service law. To the railroad's credit these air brake tests were taken seriously as lives depended on them.

The old carman turned to me and said: "Dave we can do one of two things here. I can spray water on the glad hands, which will seal up the leaks enough to make the test. But when the train gets rolling, the leaks will reappear, and then the crew is going to have to start setting out cars to keep from sticking brakes. Or we can just reduce the train size to 50 cars here and now. Take your pick." It sounded better to me to do the latter. The yardmaster wasn't happy with me, but we promptly got enough pressure to conduct the test and whistle off into the bitter cold night, around 30 below zero.

Now Missoula itself could and did get down to zero, but Mullen Pass (between Missoula and Helena) was another matter. My diary reveals a cold snap in December 1972, with temperatures at Mullen Pass not just 30 below but 40 below. It being a balmy zero in Missoula, we could pump air through 80 cars. But I did not want to send a crew out into virtually certain air brake problems on mountain grades. Sure, they could have set out cars as problems arose, but then what? Plus I shuddered at the thought of unattended cars left on a mountain grade siding. Remembering the old carman's advice, we limited train length to 40 cars. This

forced us to run a following section of 40 cars, for which it was difficult to scrape up power. There was one night we had to "borrow" local train engines and dead head them back, delaying the next day's locals. It stayed below zero up there for a week, with the lowest temperatures reaching 45 below. We caught some heat for our cautious approach, as well as the additional costs, but we didn't have any air brake problems on the mountain.

Double Your Run and Double Your Money

The basic pay structure for train and engine crews was still based on 100 miles constituting a day's pay. A myriad of additives had crept in over the past century, all of which added up to the most complex pay system you can imagine. In fact, there were entire offices of timekeepers who went through each pay claim form, often cutting out certain payments claimed as not being applicable to the circumstances. This, of course, created lots of disputes for Labor Relations and the unions to settle, either through bargaining or arbitration. Clearly this situation was ripe for modernization, starting with 100 miles constituting a day's pay. Many crews could run that in a matter of hours, then be stuck away from home for a day or more awaiting the next return train. This was boring and irritating to the crews, and costly to the railroad. Thus it was that BN took a leadership role in pursuing interdivisional runs across longer miles and different crew seniority districts. The Rocky Mountain Division was picked for one of the earlier ones in concert with the neighboring Spokane Division.

At that time Spokane crews operated trains to Paradise where Missoula crews took over for the leg to Missoula. The Spokane crew district was about 170 miles, and the Missoula district just over 110. One crew running both would be some 280 miles. Even that doesn't sound like much, but remember crews had to conduct initial air tests prior to departure, then work their way out of sometimes congested terminals, plus meet trains en route (the northern lines were primarily single track railroads). Trains could also get delayed by slow orders along with other unforeseen events. One thing I learned early on about railroading was that Murphy's Law was alive and well.

But the Spokane-Missoula route was strong, CTC controlled for the most part, and river grade territory, making 12 hour runs reliably most of the time. The crews got close to two days pay plus more time off at home. The railroad saved duplicate sets of away from home expenses plus fewer people overall to operate.

Division personnel and local chairmen were on board to try it. The rub was how to divide up the number of crews each district would be allotted in the run-through pool. Since Spokane crews had the preponderance of miles, they wanted the preponderance of assignments. Then came the issue of who would stand "first out" to return, the next available

Missoula crew or the next available Spokane crew. Needless to say there were a number of heated discussions, but in April 1973 it was up and running. No more laying over at Paradise, a wide spot in the road with no end of mischief to get into while waiting around. No more double lodging and meal expense. No more crew change delay.

BN continued to pursue other run-throughs elsewhere. In fact, by 2013, crew districts average nearly 300 miles, with some approaching 400 miles. And the end is not yet in sight as BNSF continues the relentless push for velocity improvement. The early run throughs also paved the way for a drastically simplified pay system, to everyone's benefit.

A Memorable Derailment and a Memorable Fix

On Monday, May 3, 1974 westbound train 85 derailed 2 units and 21 cars 40 miles east of Missoula. It was made worse by the structural steel damage to the through girder bridge on which it occurred. We immediately began detouring over the adjacent Milwaukee Road line, as this was going to take some time to get reopened. While we got the cars and engines cleared in 30 hours, the bridge itself was not serviceable. The B&B crew miraculously built a temporary timber bridge around it (called a shoofly) in 72 continuous hours, permitting us to again operate over our line with a 10 MPH slow order. Everyone assumed it would take weeks to fabricate and then replace the damaged structural components to restore the bridge to normal use and speed.

But one experience from my student days flashed into my mind. A similar bridge had been similarly damaged on the Cascade Division. The division engineer had heard of a local welder and his son who were experts in a new process of heating structural steel components just enough to bend them back into shape using a complicated set of special hydraulic jacks, then gradually cooling them. This, of course, flew in the face of conventional thinking that reheated structural steel would lose its strength. But it was tried and it worked. In our case, Billings Region Engineering, while dubious, contacted their Seattle Region counterparts where, fortunately, a few reputable folks were still around and could and did vouch for it. Long story short, the old man and his son were willing to come, believed they could do the same thing here, and did so within seven days. All subsequent tests indicated the bridge was again sound and so far as I know is still in service 40 years later. One in the eye of the doubters!

Maybe Hump Yards Aren't the Answer

The Missoula terminal had its very own hump yard. While small, it was modern, well laid out and did everything the bigger ones could do. The concept made so much sense. One switch crew could push an entire train over the hump where cars were uncoupled and gravity would roll

them down into tracks for the same destination. Retarders slowed them to a safe coupling speed, then defined as four MPH or less. Another crew would pull cars out of the other end and assemble them into a train perfectly blocked for subsequent set out at destinations as they were reached. There was one problem—for a number of reasons some cars would exit the retarders too fast for a safe coupling. All too often you would hear the “boom” when this would occur.

At the time, rarely did line operating officers routinely come face-to-face with customers. That was the job of the sales department. While sales would pass on customer complaints to us, rarely were we personally confronted by the lading damage caused by overspeed couplings or other rough handling. That changed fast for me at Missoula, for two reasons.

We had a small sales office right in the division headquarters. Sales Manager Dick Roth and Bill Barker were both believers in operating officers getting to know customers personally. This was accomplished by our going along on not just complaint calls, but routine sales calls. These contracts broadened out perspective considerably on just who we were really working for.

But at Missoula I had formed a personal friendship with John Talbot, the publisher of the *Daily Missoulian*. John would occasionally grouse about incoming rolls of newsprint paper that would have received some impact damage which caused problems in reliable passage through the high speed printing presses. One day he called me down to the plant to show me an example. He had left the boxcar as it had arrived so I could see first hand the hell for stout blocking and bracing these huge rolls of paper had been given at origin. He showed me how some of the rolls had been dislodged enough to make what appeared to me to be “minor” creases. But he assured me these “creases” made the rolls unfit for high speed presses, that the load would be rejected and replacement obtained. I assured him the Claims Department would make up the dollar loss, and that's when I got my eyes opened. “Hell, Dave, it's not the money. It's that I'm now short on paper, feverishly calling around to find an emergency supply by truck, and sweating out what I do if I run out. What do I do then about publishing my newspaper? That's the problem, not just the money. Can't you guys see that?”

I never forgot that eye opening experience, of suddenly comprehending it from the customer's perspective. I tell you this story because BN would go on to become one of the leaders in creative ways to avoid hump yard switching—in fact, rough handling of all sorts. The best answer of all would emerge when the concept of unit trains then taking hold with the coal expansion. But the other was block swapping between railroads and between trains operating within a single railroad. I sometimes wonder if the *Daily Missoulian* is still being published. If so, I'll bet the presses are running more smoothly!

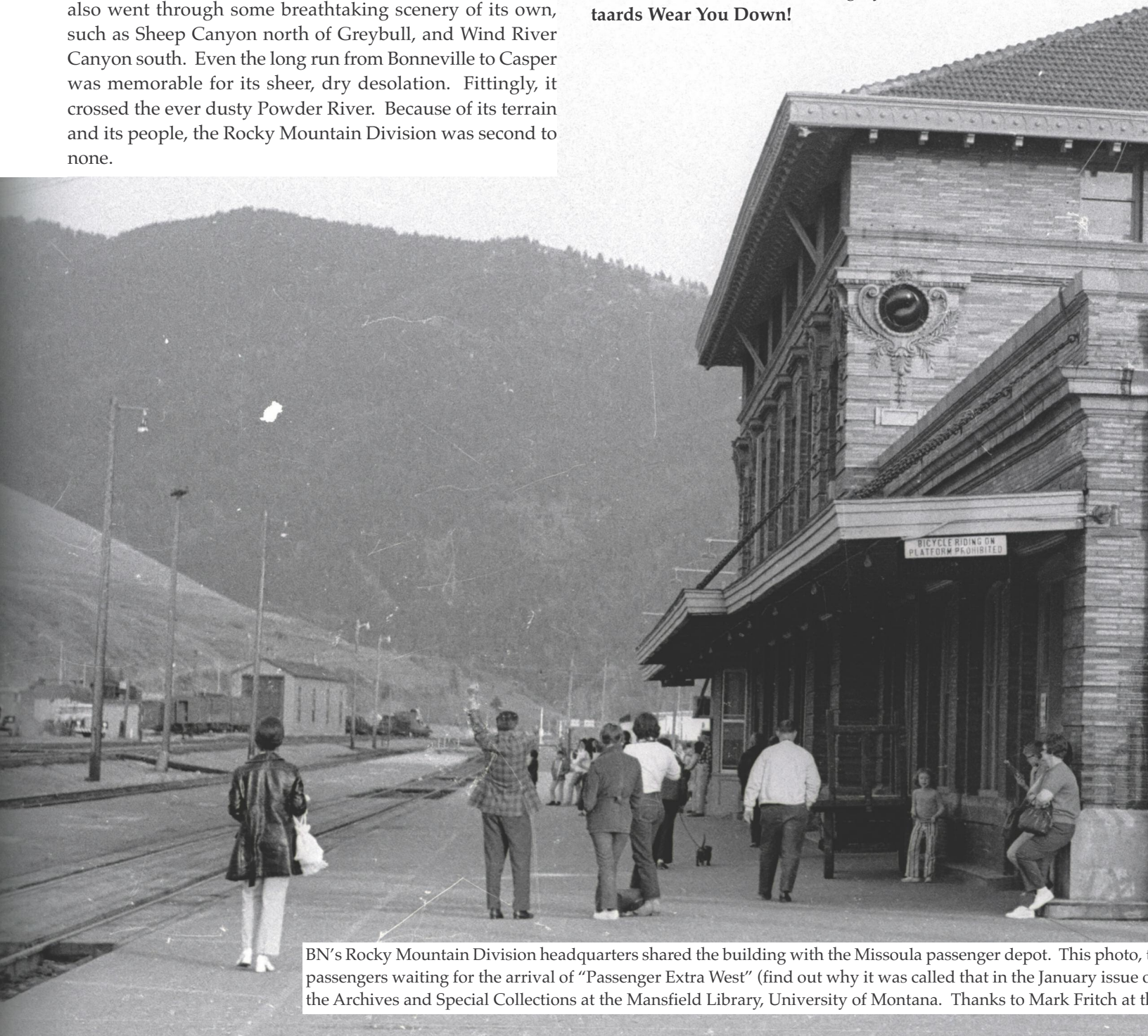
The Rocky Mountain Division Was No Ordinary Division

John Adam's aforementioned article contained details on the major portions of the territory between Sandpoint, Idaho and Laurel, Montana. Not included was the former CB&Q main line from Laurel south and easterly through Greybull to Casper, Wyoming, another 350 miles. Thus the Rocky Mountain Division was a long one, nearly 1000 miles in length. While the former Q trackage was not of the caliber of the E-W main, it did not need to be. It was very adequate for the traffic carried, and was kept in good condition. It also went through some breathtaking scenery of its own, such as Sheep Canyon north of Greybull, and Wind River Canyon south. Even the long run from Bonneville to Casper was memorable for its sheer, dry desolation. Fittingly, it crossed the ever dusty Powder River. Because of its terrain and its people, the Rocky Mountain Division was second to none.

BN Magazine sent out a reporter who toured the division in mid 1973. He wrote a nice article beginning with what we viewed as evidence we were making progress toward pride through involvement and teamwork:

"The unofficial motto of BN's Rocky Mountain Division is **Non Illegitimati Corborundum**, a phrase not found in Latin grammar books, but one that typifies the good spirits and high morale of BN railroaders in what may be the most scenic anywhere, and one that because of its geography one of the most difficult to operate."

Our Latin motto translates roughly into **Don't Let the Bastards Wear You Down!**



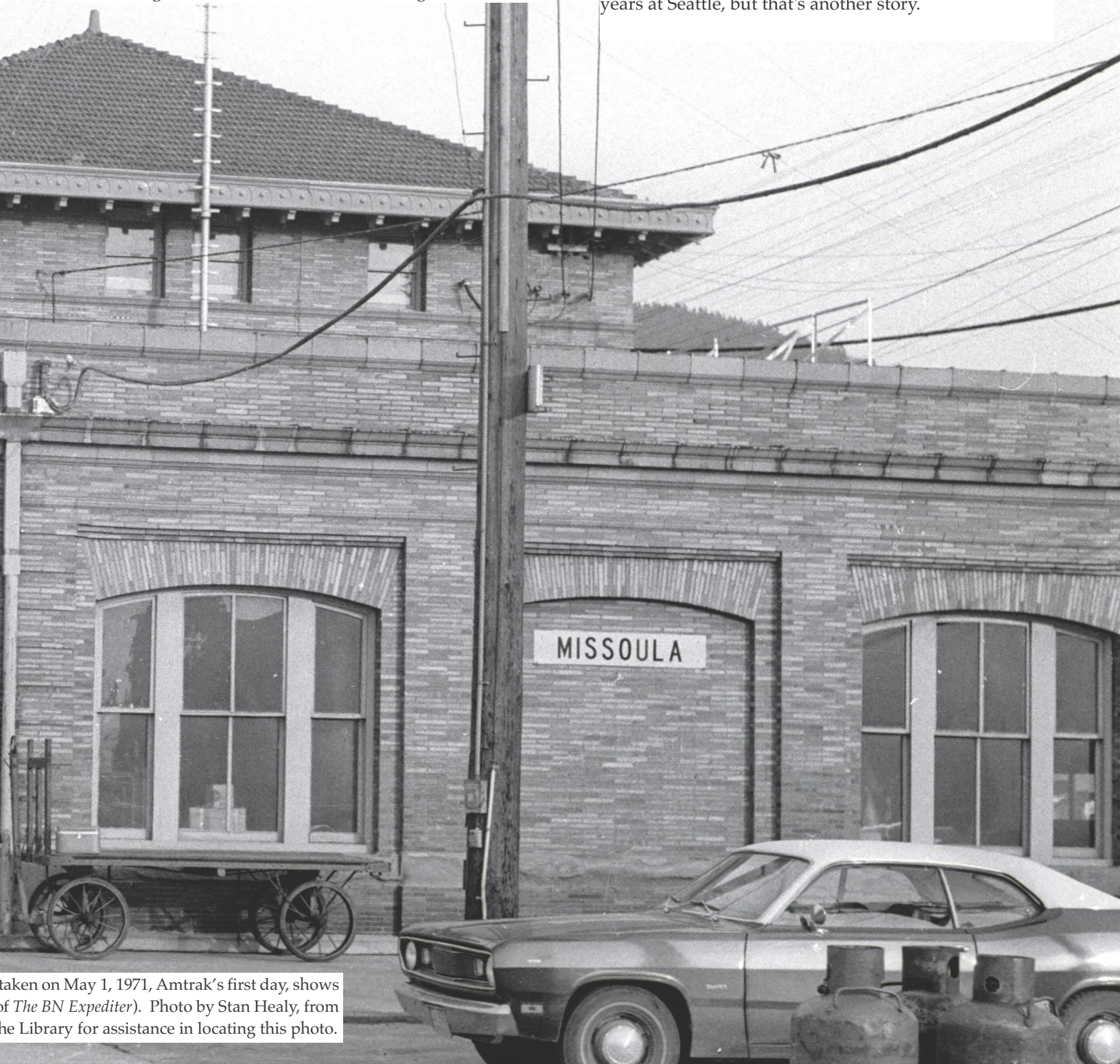
BN's Rocky Mountain Division headquarters shared the building with the Missoula passenger depot. This photo, of passengers waiting for the arrival of "Passenger Extra West" (find out why it was called that in the January issue of the Archives and Special Collections at the Mansfield Library, University of Montana. Thanks to Mark Fritch at the

Another quote that pleased us:

"The division went from 12th place in safety on the system in 1971 to 7th in 1972, and so far in 1973 is in 1st place. Superintendent Burns states this is a good representation of the professionalism and pride of the Rocky Mountain team."

A nice tribute to the fact these were no ordinary people, and this was no ordinary division. And this was the very best kind of good news worth sharing: The Rocky Mountain Division did go on to finish first in 1973 and again in 1974.

On Friday, May 31, 1974 I was notified of my promotion to Division Superintendent of the Cascade Division, the west end anchor of the railroad. This was where I spent my student officer days 10 years prior. The thought of getting back was exciting, but there was some anxiety about finding myself now leading the very people who had trained me. But in any event, it was with a real sense of loss that I left the Rocky Mountain Division. I was succeeded by Earl Currie, who I believe would say he felt the same way when he left. I would go on to five eventful years at Seattle, but that's another story.



taken on May 1, 1971, Amtrak's first day, shows of *The BN Expediter*). Photo by Stan Healy, from the Library for assistance in locating this photo.

Minneapolis Convention Report

by John Adams

All of us have now returned to our real lives after sharing an enjoyable four days in Minneapolis late last month. Numbers again could improve, but all of us who were there had a great time.

We began on Wednesday with registration in the hotel lobby and a chance to get to greet old friends and meet several new people attending their first **FOBNR** Convention. We then had a great dinner and carpooled out to see the Metro North HO scale Model Railroad Club and their 5,000 sq. ft. layout. Although no trains were running on their work night, we were able to see a huge layout in all stages of construction, from fully scenicked to planned benchwork and track work. The amount of work they have in front of them is certainly daunting, but they seem to have made a great deal of progress and have a plan ahead of them.

Thursday morning we assembled and headed down the line to Maiden Rock, Wisconsin. Our first stop was at the bridge Prescott, where after some patience, we were rewarded with both a westbound and eastbound train coming through the bridge. We then got to see the bridge operate, but with work crews arriving we headed south for Bay City and Maiden Rock, where we had box lunches delivered. We then split up, some heading further south to Alma, the rest back up north to railfan and hit some hobby shops. After dinners, we informally met at the University Avenue railfan turn-off at the south end of Northtown yards where we actually saw as much CP Rail as BNSF.

We then headed back to the Convention meeting room and had our membership meeting. At that meeting we, as usual, discussed upcoming convention possibilities as well as listened to the concerns of the members present. There was a general feeling that the 2014-15 emphasis on updating and improving the *Expediter* had been worthwhile and there seemed to be a consensus that this year we should concentrate on improving the website and doing some advertising to attract potential new members. The idea of an online version of *The BN Expediter* was also discussed with very few of those present feeling they would opt to convert from print to online. All of these issues were subsequently discussed at the Board meeting the following evening.

Friday morning we once again gathered and carpooled to the James J. Hill Mansion in St. Paul. There we were given an excellent tour of his St. Paul home built in the early 1890's. We noted that it had been wired during the construction for electric lighting as well as gas, but also had been wired for a security system, which must have been really cutting edge technology for that time!

After getting some feel of how the really wealthy lived at that time, we opted to come back to today and headed for the St. Paul Union Depot (SPUD). Some opted to drive di-

rectly there, while the rest of us headed to a nearby Sears parking lot and rode the light rail. The light rail was very efficient and enjoyable to ride and dropped us off right at the station.

After a great lunch in the restaurant in the Headhouse of the Depot, we got a very complete tour of the renovated station. Having personally gone through the station as a CB&Q passenger in 1967 & 68 I was impressed by how light and airy it looked. We were told that was the result of scraping off the tar put on the skylights during WWII to black-out the depot! Our tour guide was even able to take us to some areas presently off limits to the public, including a room overlooking the waiting room!

Next it was off to find an open road (it is construction season after all!) to get to the Jackson Street Roundhouse. There we were able to tour an extensive collection of railroad equipment and displays. The Board also got to inspect some space that might be available for storage of the Archives in the future.

Once again on the "open" road, we headed off for dinner and then returned to our meeting room where we were treated to a presentation by Earl Currie. Mr. Currie was the Terminal Superintendent of the Minneapolis terminal in the years just after the merger and was instrumental in consolidating the 11 pre-merger yard facilities and the construction of the Northtown Yard complex. He was able to share the history at the time of the merger and the unique problems of combining the 3 railroads that met in the Minneapolis/St. Paul complex. He described the different cultures that were present in that era before computers and centralized control of the terminal area and how these had to be gently combined to allow the terminal to have the efficient flow that was promised to regulators and investors at the time of the merger.

After his presentation the group split up as the members present were able to watch Andy Koetz show slides from his father Bob's collection. These documented the railroads in the 1960's and 70's in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, some slides of the Denver area and a lot of the railroads of Minnesota of that time period.

The Board had business to conduct at that time and went off to find a quiet meeting area – that is a whole story in itself! Action items from the Board meeting included:

Election of officers for 2015-16:

President: John Adams

Vice-President: Dave Poplawski

Secretary: Gary Seymour

Treasurer: Jeff Hendricks

Review of the upgrades made over the last year to *The BN Expediter*.



At the entrance to the James J. Hill Mansion.

Discussed plans to pilot an on-line version of *The BN Expediter* for 2016-17.

Decision to earmark funds available at this time to upgrade the website and undertake an advertising campaign to attract new members.

Adopted a policy that the organization would continue to collect historical information about the BN and BNSF, but that we would not accept donations of railroad memorabilia.

Agreed to sell some of the memorabilia at our auction and on EBay as the donors had previously agreed to that.

Decided to maintain the Archives for the next year in their present location and thanked John McKenzie for continuing to host the Archives.

Decided on Glendive, Montana for the 2016 Convention. John McKenzie will take the lead in organizing that convention.

Agreed to produce the successful calendar again for 2016. Kent Charles will again spearhead this effort. The calendars will continue to be free to sustaining members, \$8 for other members and \$10 for non-members.

Discussed a request by Kent Charles to develop a photo library on the website but elected to wait on this until we develop a "members only" site on the website.

Discussed the need for new Board members to give new ideas and energy to the Board.

And then we all crashed!

On Saturday morning we all slept in a little but then car-pooled out to Big Lake, MN – the end of the line for the

Northstar commuter service. After railfanning from the platform there, we all got on the train for a great trip into Minneapolis and back out to Big Lake. The trip was smooth, fast and comfortable, with only one very short delay on the return trip.

Arriving back at Big Lake we split up for lunch (a number of us railfanned on to St. Cloud and had lunch at the Depot Restaurant) and then headed out for an afternoon of railfanning, hobby shops, etc.

Our banquet was held that evening with an excellent buffet dinner. Our banquet speaker this year was Mr. Jan Ruby, a BNSF employee who is now the manager of the Northstar commuter service. He gave an excellent presentation (we have yet to have a bad banquet speaker) on the process of establishing the commuter service, the equipment used to start the service and the operation of the service. He was able to relate some of the challenges and successes in transforming freight railroad employees into dealing with passengers on a daily basis. He also talked about his vision for the future, which would include extending service to St. Cloud.

After his presentation we had our annual auction – this time spiced up by donations from the tour guide at SPUD as well as memorabilia that had been donated to the organization with the understanding that they could be sold to benefit the **FOBNR**.

And that brings our 2015 Convention to a close. Please watch *The BN Expediter* and the website for the dates for next year in Glendive and join us there!

Note - for more photos of the convention, go to the **FOBNR** website (www.fobnr.org) and click on the 2015 convention report.

The Spring Hill Local

story and photos by Mark Steenwyk

The Spring Hill Local is a job that works the few remaining industries on the BNSF Ft. Scott Subdivision between Lenexa and La Cygne, Kansas. Once this job worked all the way from Kansas City to Fort Scott, where it laid over and returned the next day. As the number of online industries declined, the need for a local to work the entire distance also declined, eventually being cut back and turned into a daily mainline local.

Comprised of two jobs, the train symbols are L-NEB6911 and L-NEB6921, which are referred to as the 6911 job and the 6921 job respectively. Although these jobs have been through quite a few changes operationally, the current setup is as follows:

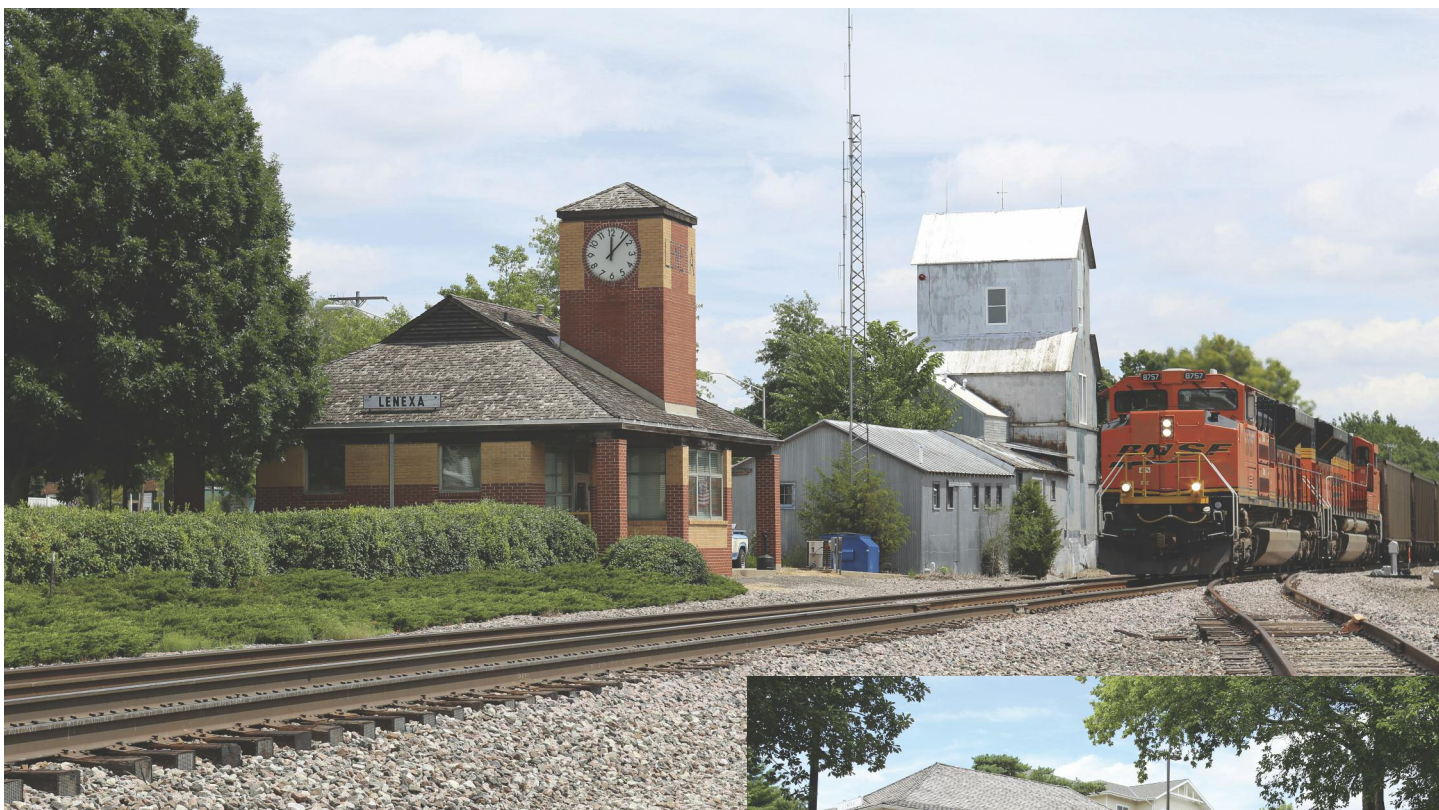
The 6911 job works out of the Murray Yard in North Kansas City, Missouri. On duty at 17:59 Saturday through Wednesday, this train leaves the yard with cars for the Lenexa Roadswitcher (which will spot those cars in industries in Merriam, Lenexa and Olathe), followed by the cars for the 6921 job. Upon arrival in Lenexa the crew sets out those cars, then continues to Moss Siding (MP 25.1), just south of Olathe and near the control point of Bonita (MP 26.5) where the line goes from two mains to single track. This center siding is unique in the fact that the north end access is off of Main 2 and the south access is off of Main 1 (below, where the KCKTUL and other SB trains wait for the 6921 job to finish working farther south, with the siding and hand-throw switch visible between the mains).



Leaving the entire train at Moss, the crew taxis back to either the North end of Moss siding or back to Lenexa where the Northbound train will be waiting for them. Once on this set they will pick up the cars from the Lenexa area and head back north to Murray Yard.

The 6921 job goes on duty at the Lenexa Depot (next page, top, with SB C-WTMMHS) at 07:00 Tuesday through Saturday. After gathering their paperwork, they taxi out to the train that was left for them the night before at Moss Siding by the 6911 job. When the Ustick Dispatcher is kind enough to let them out on to the mainline, they take the main south for about four miles to start work in Spring Hill.





A spiffy new Lenexa depot (above) replaced the old Frisco depot in 1987. The old depot was moved about three miles away from its original location along the tracks and restored (right).



Spring Hill, located at milepost 29, is home to two major industries off the single track mainline. One is AGC, a manufacture of glass products (below). Although all outbound shipping of their products is done by trucks, they do still receive inbound sand in covered hoppers. These covered hoppers used to be either Southern or Norfolk Southern cars that would be shipped in from the St. Louis area and inter-

changed to the BNSF Railway at Kansas City. It now appears that the shipper has changed to a source out of Boron, California, and is using DGHX cars. Usually seeing from 8 to 10 cars a week, this industry is switched 3 or 4 times a week.





The second industry at Spring Hill is A&M Products Manufacturing. This company manufactures and markets cat litter under brand names Scoop Away and Ever Clean. Using many car loads of bentonite clay from the Greybull, Wyoming area, they make lots of kitty litter. Again this industry does all of its shipping of finished product by truck. Once having only 2 tracks able to hold 4 cars each, this industry has thrived, with five more tracks being built between the industry and the mainline, each able to hold 13 cars (above, with the local working the ladder).

Used as storage, the industry has the ability to respot the unloading tracks with their trackmobiles, even when the local isn't around (below). It also means the local is no longer required to store extra cars at the Moss Siding, nor does it have to spend hours switching around cars that were

ordered in. In previous times the Local would switch out the cars needed to spot between Main 1 and the Moss Siding, and since there is a fair hill at this location it took quite some time to make the required moves.

The bentonite arrives in a mixture of covered hoppers from NAHX, BN, ATSF, BNSF or the unique privately owned CATX cars. These CATX cars are very easily identified with a cat paw in the upper corner of a light blue painted car (next page, top) With increased capacity, A&M normally sees anywhere from 25 to 30 cars daily. Spotting loaded cars and pulling empties from these two industries halts all mainline traffic for approximately two hours each day.

In April of 2015 a Utility Employee Job was assigned to Spring Hill in an effort to reduce the amount of time this local spends at the Spring Hill industries. The employee goes on duty at the same time as the 6921 job, with one purpose—to have the FRA Class 1 air test completed on the 25 to 30 empty cars at A&M. Using a generator and air compressor, the employee utilizes a machine that acts as an air brake control valve that allows the air brakes on the cars to be set. This machine also has an option to set a timer that will automatically release the air brakes and charge the cars again after the timer has run down. This allows the worker to walk of both sides of the cars—along one side while the brakes are set and the other side while the brakes are released, which meets all the requirements for a Class 1 air test.

This new position initially caused some controversy, as it was being created at the same time that there was serious talk of having one-man operation of mainline trains. However in this specific case, having the air test done and cars





ready to go allows the local to hopefully finish their work in a timely manner. BNSF is also starting track work which, when complete, will convert this eleven miles of railroad from a single-track main into a double-track mainline by the end of 2015. This should take pressure off the local, as BNSF will then be able to run trains past them while they are working.

Continuing south, the 6921 job runs to serve U.S. Minerals in La Cygne at milepost 61. This trip is only made if there are empty cars to spot or loaded cars that require pick up. If there is no work to be performed at La Cygne the job will utilize the two main tracks at Hillsdale or the siding at Henson to run around their train and head back north. In previous times when it was allowed, they would perform a gravity switch right at Spring Hill, allowing the empty cars to roll past the engines.

If the trip to La Cygne is required, the normal operation is to leave the empty cars from the glass and kitty litter plants in the siding at Henson (MP 48.3). This is to make the work at La Cygne go a little easier as there is no easy way to run around everything there. The industry track at La Cygne is located off one of the original grain elevator tracks, so all the work can be done clear of mainline traffic.

U.S. Minerals in La Cygne (below) is a company that

ships out fly ash that is trucked over from the KCPL power plant at Amsterdam, Missouri. The fly ash is loaded into two-bay covered hoppers or even some open top triple-bay hoppers. This work was fairly simple the last time I worked it, with only two tracks at the industry, one for storage and one for loading. Upon a recent visit to this location it appears this industry has also increased its production as there are now two load out spots, one on each of the tracks. Far from the old days where a station agent would have contacted the industry and had a switch list waiting for the crew as they rolled into town, industry work is now normally found on a single piece of computer paper found in a mailbox on the property. Showing the cars that are ready to be pulled, requested to be spotted, or left on the storage track, this list is fairly simple to read.

Once this industry work is finished and the train is arranged to head back north, access to the mainline is the next challenge to overcome. With normal operations of the Ft. Scott Sub seeing 25 to 30 trains daily, this local can sometimes become very low priority. Once it has departed La Cygne and picked up the cars that were left at Henson, there is no more industry work to be performed. The train is stored at Moss siding or taken over by the 6911 crew for its trip back to Murray Yard.





Track Measurement Car BNSF 80

The *Rio Grande River*

A model by Markus Zöschg

The Prototype:

BNSF 80 began life as Southern Pacific #3700, a bilevel passenger car built for commuter service in the San Francisco Bay area. It was sold in 1991 to Transisco Tours, where it was repainted and named the "Sacramento". In 1993 Burlington Northern acquired it and five other bilevel cars (Colorado River, Flathead River, Fox River, Skagit River, Powder River) for use in its business car fleet, whereupon it was renamed the "Rio Grande River" and numbered BNA 39. After the merger with the Santa Fe, it was repainted and redesignated BNSF 43.

This car, along with the Skagit River, were pulled from the business fleet in 2003 and rebuilt as a track measurement car, with the Rio Grande River redesignated BNSF 80 and the Skagit River becoming BNSF 87. They received a large window and theater style seating at one end. Equipment was installed in the cars to provide precise laser measurements of track geometry, including surface, cross-level, elevation, alignment, and gauge.

The Model:

I was able to start this modelling project once I discovered that Union Station Products made the correct sides for this car. The starting point was a Walther's bilevel commuter car, of which I used the floor, end and roof. For the seats I acquired parts from Palace Car and the rest was built with Evergreen plastic parts. I was striving to model the interior

as accurately as possible, with theater style seating and large end window. I also had to modify some passenger trucks from Walther's with metal wheel sets.

The entire car was primed and then painted with Floquil colors (a mix of bright silver and a few drops of SP lettering gray to tone down the shine). Studying the various pictures I was able to plan and order the correct custom decals. All was sealed with Floquil flat finish.

After six months of work I was able to finish an interesting piece for my maintenance of way collection. I now plan to build the BNSF 81, which serves as the support car for the Rio Grande River.

The real Rio Grande River (above), BNSF 80, and its support car BNSF 81 (below), were photographed at Donkey Creek, Wyoming on September 29, 2007 by Mark Demaline.

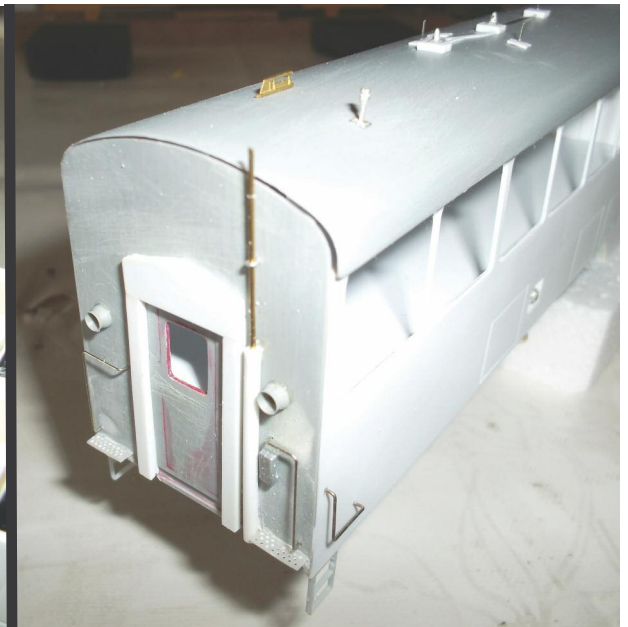
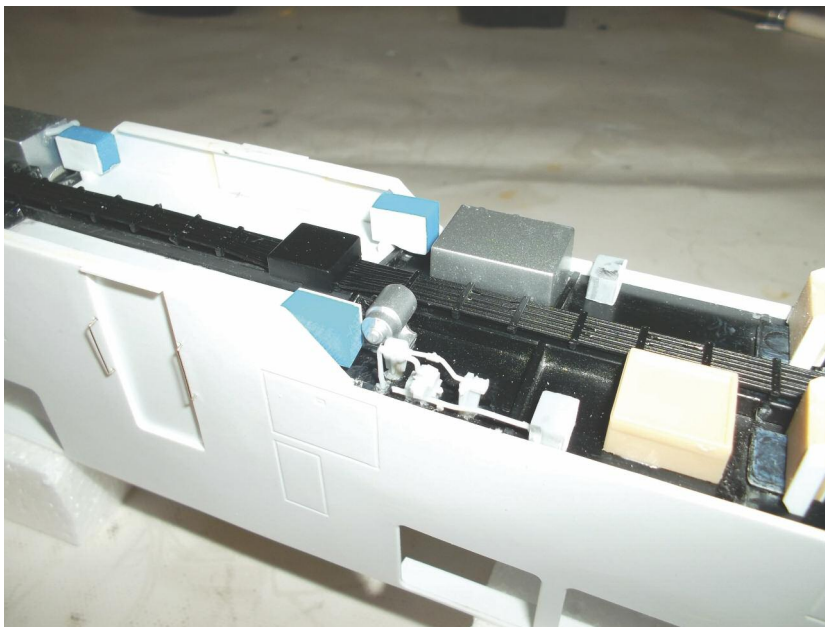




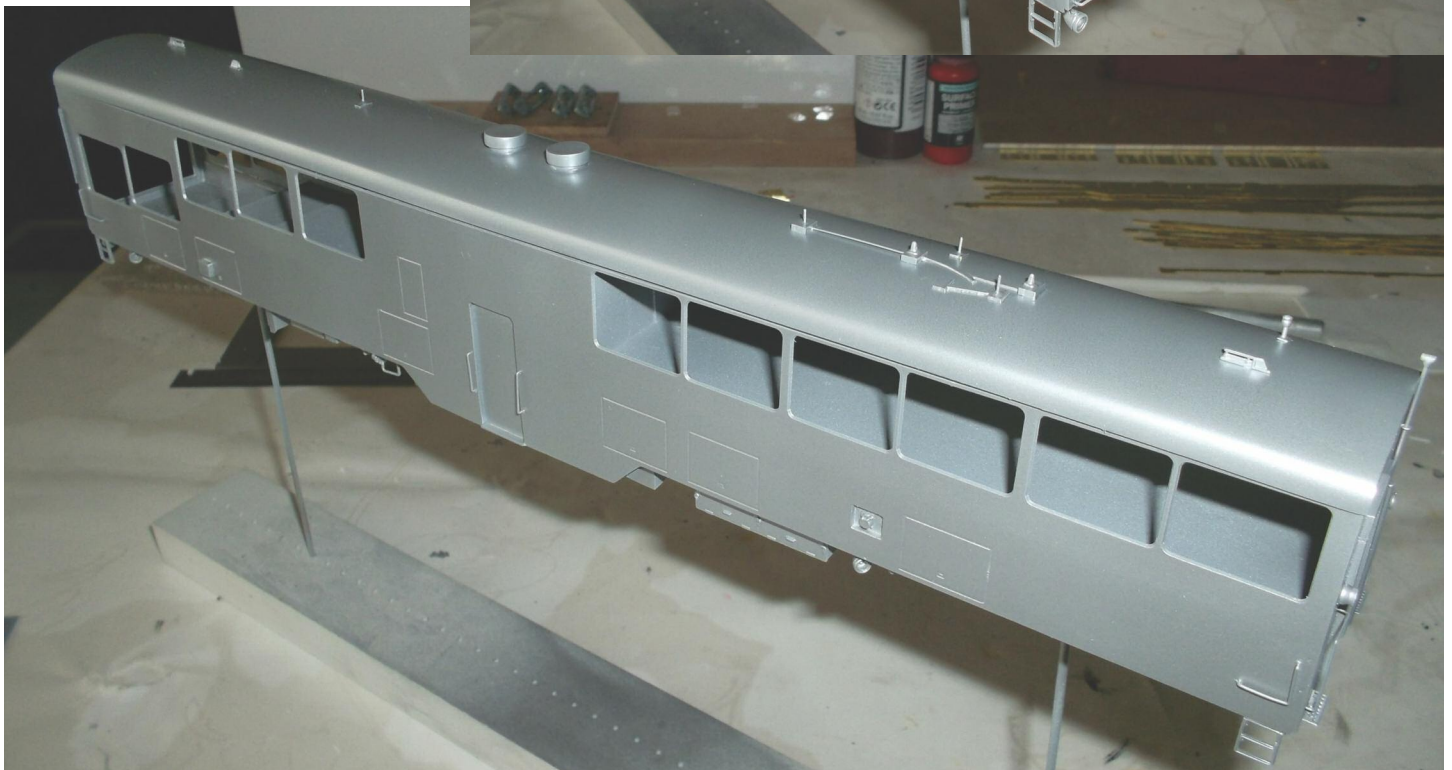
The laser cut sides were mounted on the modified Walthers floor. Walthers end parts were used to modify the end with the large cut-out window. The theater style interior was installed using Evergreen parts. The roof was test fit. The two round air vents are scratch built using different size of Evergreen tubes.

All model photos by the author.





Many underfloor details were mounted and the end sides received superdetailing, including marker lights, measurement tubes, many spot lights and mirrors. A lot of different style antennas were mounted on the roof over the years according to available pictures. The car is primed and painted in the silver / grey livery.





Here you see the lettering and detail work. Custom printed decals were made for this model. A rubber style diaphragm and red lenses were installed. Brown tinted windows were installed, and some figures were placed in the car.





Markus Zöschg's HO scale model of BNSF 80, a track measurement car.

Using a combination of parts from various manufacturers, custom shaped parts from styrene, and custom decals, six months of work produced this very accurate representation of the real thing.