

The BN

Expediter

Volume 24, Number 2

April 2016



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

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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 FOBNR is not supported by, nor affiliated in any way with, the BNSF Railway, 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 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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**2016 FOBNR Convention
Glendive, Montana
June 8-11**

It isn't long before our annual convention in Glendive, so make your hotel reservations ASAP and send in your registration. The photo to the right is the old NP depot in Glendive, which is still being used by BNSF to serve this important division point along this line and will be toured.

In This Issue

Right of Way: BNSF on ex-MILW Trackage. 4
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We hope you enjoy this all-right-of-way issue!

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Information/Photos Needed

July, 2016

Action at Fairview Avenue. An article about two hours of constant commuter train activity at Fairview Avenue on Chicago's busy 3-track racetrack. Locals terminating and reversing, expresses flying through or crossing over to become locals, the choreography of the evening Dinky rush is quite amazing. If you have any information about the planning that went into this "dance", please let us know.

BN Pacific Days, 1974-79. Another great article from Dave Burns about his experiences as Division Superintendent of the Pacific Division. Photos from that area during that time period would be appreciated.

Check the FOBNR web page for more information.

Cover Photo: Old-style grain elevator and BNSF hopper at Tunis on the Ft. Benton Subdivision. The elevator is currently owned and used by a local farmer in the Carter area. January 30, 2016. Photo by Michael Ridout.



2017 All-BN Calendar Call for Photos

The **Friends of the Burlington Northern Railroad** is soliciting photo contributions for its third all-BN calendar. If your photo is used we'll send you 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. The deadline is July 31st. 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.

Sustaining Members

On behalf of our members, the **FOBNR** Board of Directors would like to thank our sustaining members for 2016. Their generous contributions have helped us to continue furthering the goals of our organization.

John Adams	Mark Herrick	Richard Rink
Tom Bentley	Steve Koberstein	Kim Saign
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Roger Field	Dave Poplawski	John Tenerowicz
Wade Griffis	T. Michael Power	Aric Van de Vord
Bill Harvey	Emery Rahm	Ken Versteeg
Jeff Hendricks	Richard Rehn	Don Winn

Financial Statement December 31, 2015

Balance on Hand, January 1, 2015	\$8,686.36
Revenue	10,254.31
Expenses	10,839.71
Balance on Hand, December 31, 2015	8,100.96

Revenue

Dues	6,395.00
Donations	471.59
Company Store Sales	722.00
Calendars	188.00
Convention	2,406.74
Miscellaneous	170.98
Total	10,254.31

Expenses

Expediter

Printing	4,594.84
Postage	1,451.13
Honorarium	800.00
Miscellaneous	246.00

General

Printing	120.84
Postage	399.59
PO Box Rent	92.00
Supplies	173.77
Company Store	194.79
Election	26.40
Convention	1,951.28
Calendar	582.40
PayPal Fees	98.79
Website Provider	107.88

Total	10,839.71
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Assets

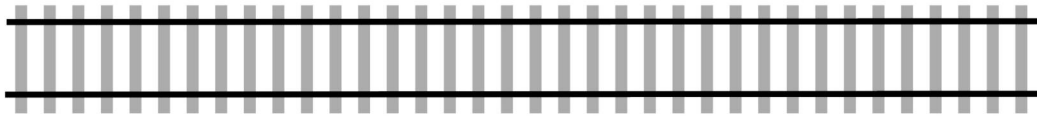
Cash	10,583.83
Office Equipment	243.64
Prepaid 2016 Expenses	44.89

Liabilities

Unearned 2016 Dues	2,200.00
Unearned 2017 Dues	500.00
Unearned 2018 Dues	100.00

Net Worth	8,072.36
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Right of Way



BNSF on the Ex-MILW in South Dakota: Ortley to Mobridge on the Appleton and Mobridge Subs by Peter D. Ferch, photos by the author unless otherwise indicated

As a member of this historical society, I feel it is in our best interest to document the trackage that the Burlington Northern / BNSF has used in its lifetime. Now, I am not saying go out and take a picture of the track every 100 yards, but maybe just the major points along the line, towns, stations, junctions, bridges and other points of interest. We already have the maps of the major yards and the timetable scans provide the names of towns/places along the various routes, we just need to “fill in the blanks”. As an example, on my way out to the convention in Gillette in 2011, I tried to cover two of the lines the BNSF currently uses, the Brown’s Valley Sub and the Mobridge Sub.

As my previous article on the Brown’s Valley Sub promised, my next article would be on the Mobridge Sub. That is partially true. After following the Brown’s Valley Sub, I drove due south to pick up the Appleton Sub near the town of Summit, South Dakota, followed it to its westernmost point in Aberdeen, then picked up and followed the Mobridge Sub to the town of Mobridge—so named because of the bridges over the Missouri River just west of town—then left the subdivision and headed southwest toward Gillette.

The Appleton and Mobridge Subs were “inherited” from the Milwaukee Road, which was part of their “western expansion” that was completed 1909. Due to the Milwaukee’s poor financial condition in the ‘70s, the western portion was sold off in 1980 to cut costs and get them back in the (orange and) black.

I did not have a track chart handy when following this line, so I had to research the route for about 3 months over my lunch time at work, mainly using a Delorme Atlas of South Dakota to determine where the railroad went and where the connecting roads follow the tracks (by the way these are excellent maps and I use them for every convention to follow the tracks – wait tell I get to the story of my trip to the Tulsa convention !)

According to the map and the timetable, the following towns/places would be encountered – Ortley, Waubey, Webster, Holmquist, Bristol, Andover, Groton, Bath, Aberdeen, Mina, Craven, Ipswich, Beebe, Roscoe, Bowdie, Java, Selby, Glenham, and finally Mobridge.

WEST WARD ↓	Length of Siding (Feet)	Station Nos.	Mile Post	Appleton Subdivision MAIN LINE STATIONS	Rule 4.3	Type of Oper. Rule 6.28	Line Segment	Miles to Next Stn.	EAST WARD ↑
		03123	0.0	BENSON	JT		200	7.1	
		54007	7.1	DANVERS				7.9	
		54015	15.0	HOLLOWAY		TWC		6.4	
		54021	21.4 577.9	APPLETON	gJ			1.4	
			579.0	WEST APPLETON			2004	14.8	
		08194	593.8	ODESSA				6.2	
8,384		08200	600.0	ORTONVILLE		TWC ABS		0.7	
		08201	600.7	STATE LINE				1.5	
		08202	602.2	BIG STONE	M			8.9	
14,880		08211	611.1	MILBANK	JT			22.1	
10,559		08233	633.2	SUMMIT		CTC		24.0	
8,312		08257	657.2	WEBSTER			2005	11.3	
12,142		08568	668.5	BRISTOL				9.6	
9,302		08278	678.1	ANDOVER		TWC ABS		9.8	
7,910		08288	687.9	GROTON				14.4	
		08302	702.3	GREBNER				3.7	
			706.0	ABERDEEN EAST				1.0	
		54721	707.0	ABERDEEN	BJT	Rule 6.28		150.6	

WEST WARD ↓	Length of Siding (Feet)	Station Nos.	Mile Post	Mobridge Subdivision MAIN LINE STATIONS	Rule 4.3	Type of Oper. Rule 6.28	Line Segment	Miles to Next Stn.	EAST WARD ↑
		54721	707.0	ABERDEEN	JTB			2.2	
			709.2	ABERDEEN WEST	M			10.9	
9,446		08320	720.1	MINA				8.1	
		08328	728.2	CRAVEN				5.1	
		08333	733.3	IPSWICH			2005	8.3	
7,834		08341	741.6	BEEBE		ABS TWC		7.0	
		08349	748.6	ROSCOE				8.6	
7,758		08357	757.2	GRETNA				19.4	
		08377	776.6	JAVA JCT				7.6	
7,673		08384	784.2	SELBY				12.1	
7,970		08396	796.3	GLENHAM		CTC		8.8	
		08405	805.1	MOBRIDGE	T			11.9	
7,552		08417	817.0	WAKPALA				18.4	
9,643		08435	835.4	McLAUGHLIN	B			28.2	
7,735		08464	863.6	McINTOSH		ABS		19.5	

Ortley was my first stop, and upon reviewing the map, Ortley had an elevator that was serviced by what looked like the timesaver switching puzzle trackage! Imagine my disappointment when I got there and found the elevator abandoned and the trackage remove (below).



Waubey was my next stop, a typical small town—elevator, warehouse, and missing depot, looking east (below).



They had built a new elevator east of town to handle unit trains of covered hoppers. I guess 40ft boxcars weren't being used anymore (above).

The trackage actually went north of town so these shots (below and right) looking East and West from County Road 15 (New Main St N) show mostly wide-open spaces.



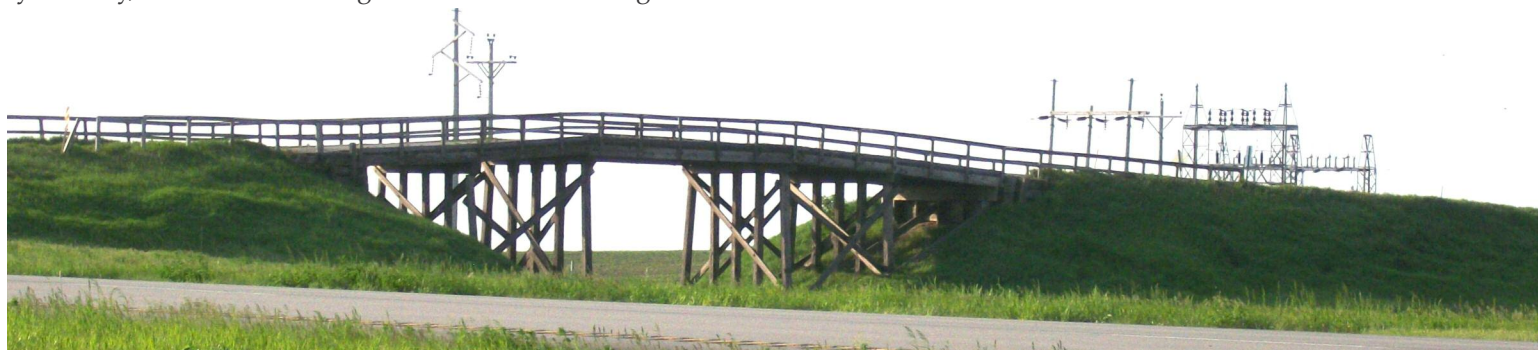
Webster had a couple more industries than Waubey, including a long passing track/industry lead (below and right).



Holmquist didn't have much business at the elevator, especially since the track wasn't connected (below and right).



Just before I got to Bristol, another trackage heartbreak by the way, was this interesting one lane wooden bridge.





According to Delorme, Bristol had some very promising trackage—a large yard! a wye! What do mean it's all gone? Aw shucks, just another town with an elevator, a water tower that looks railroad oriented, and a special toy surprise in the box (above and right—westward, both below—eastward).



The toy surprise in town—an ex-Santa Fe CF7 that had spent time on the TC&W and RRV&W.





West of Bristol the MILW had a grade of 1.2 % as westbound trains drop down off of the Coteau des Prairies. A large loop was built in 1911, bending down to the south to give eastbounds a grade of 0.5% compensated. The original alignment was removed in 1959 and is now used by Highway 12. These views are right after the railroad has taken a left hand turn and this is the crossing of the loop. The road actually goes straight through, but is marked "No Trespassing." I guess some of the locals didn't like going around because there is a gate about ½ way through (above).

Groton is the next town encountered, again a typical elevator and warehouse (above right and right), and on the western edge of town, running 90 degrees from the mainline, is another elevator (below).



On the east end of Aberdeen the Dakota, Missouri Valley and Western Railroad has junction with the BNSF (right, February 27, 2016 photo by Jeff Hendricks).



Aberdeen is a division point as evidenced by a large depot (see the back cover of this issue), a turntable/roundhouse (above), and a yard (right, photo by Jeff Hendricks). OK, the depot isn't used by BNSF, the turntable is gone, the roundhouse has more vehicle traffic in it than railroad traffic, and the yard is more like passing sidings now, but still very interesting to see. When I was there, they were moving a crane around, and just south of the roundhouse were two snowplows.

West of Aberdeen is the Advanced BioEnergy plant that produces 53 million gallons of denatured ethanol, 160,000 tons of distiller's dried grains and 5,000 tons of non-food grade corn oil per year. It has a large loop track for storing cars (below and below right, photos by Jeff Hendricks)



A little farther west is the Concord Grain facility (photo by Jeff Hendricks).



Here are a couple of the bridges just west of town (below and right).



Craven (above) is another example of one of your small towns along the line, the elevator in town has been replaced by a larger, more modern one just west of town (below looking east, right looking west)





Ipswich is a two elevator town, I'm not sure if it's because of different commodities, or because the original elevator owners had a disagreement with the farmers.



Beebe is a town that grew with the times, they expanded their original elevator and now load cars by the unit train concept (below and right).



This is a bridge just before Java (below).



Java was going to be another interesting town, as the 'town' was about one mile south of the mainline and serviced via a left hand switch. So I get to the town, find the elevator, the business warehouses, but no tracks, again I am years too late in doing this. All I found was this stub of the track in this farmers field(below). The mainline is on the horizon, and the sign is just painted red on the other side.





Selby is another 'big player' in the grain game having this massive elevator (below), with their own unit for moving cars. The railroad also has a small maintenance base here (above and right). Oh yeah, and just across the bridge is an ice cream shop.



And finally Mobridge. No railroad industries, the depot is gone, just a 'run-through' town, only two very nice bridges (below) to make it interesting for us railfans.

Yes, I had followed the line for about 4 hours and saw no trains. So I went west of town, crossing over the Missouri to get shots of the bridges and then to continue on my way. Suddenly I hear a familiar sound—here comes two Dash 9's with a Herzog ballast train. Earlier I had seen this little viaduct in town, so I'm going to have to race back to catch the train there. I am in a little pull-off area on the west side of the Missouri and need to get back on the little two lane highway to get back to this viaduct on the east side. I look to the left, there are cars coming, look to the right, there are cars coming that way too. Luckily the train wasn't going to fast. Finally, a break in the traffic, but I lose the race to the 'good' side and all I got was this crappy back-lit shot.



Along the Sweetgrass Subdivision

Part 2 - The Branch Lines

by Mark Demaline

(photos by the author unless otherwise indicated)

In Part One we toured the mainline of the Sweetgrass Subdivision between Great Falls and Sweetgrass, Montana. We now continue with a look at the five Subdivisions which come off of the Sweetgrass: the Valier, Choteau, Fairfield, Helena, and Fort Benton Subs.

Again, special thanks to Michael Ridout and his friend Simon Apperloo who took the time and effort to fill in so many gaps in our photo coverage as well as provide answers and information to make this series of articles more complete for our members and readers.



Length of Siding (Feet)	Station Nos.	Mile Post	Valier Subdivision BRANCH LINE STATIONS		Rule 4.3	Type of Oper.	Line Segment	Miles to Next Stn.
			WESTWARD	EASTWARD				
	32847	0.0	VALIER JCT	J	TWC	361	17.3	
	61717	17.3	VALIER				17.3	

BN purchased this line from the Montana Western shortly after the merger in 1970. It mainly serves a few agricultural related industries in town as can be seen in the pictures on these two pages, all of which were taken by Michael Ridout on October 17, 2015. The switchstand shown on the far right is just 200 feet from the end of the line in the middle of a field.

About half way between Valier JCT and Valier is the "location" known as Williams, along with a very lightly travelled road and crossing (bottom right).

Valier



Valier Subdivision



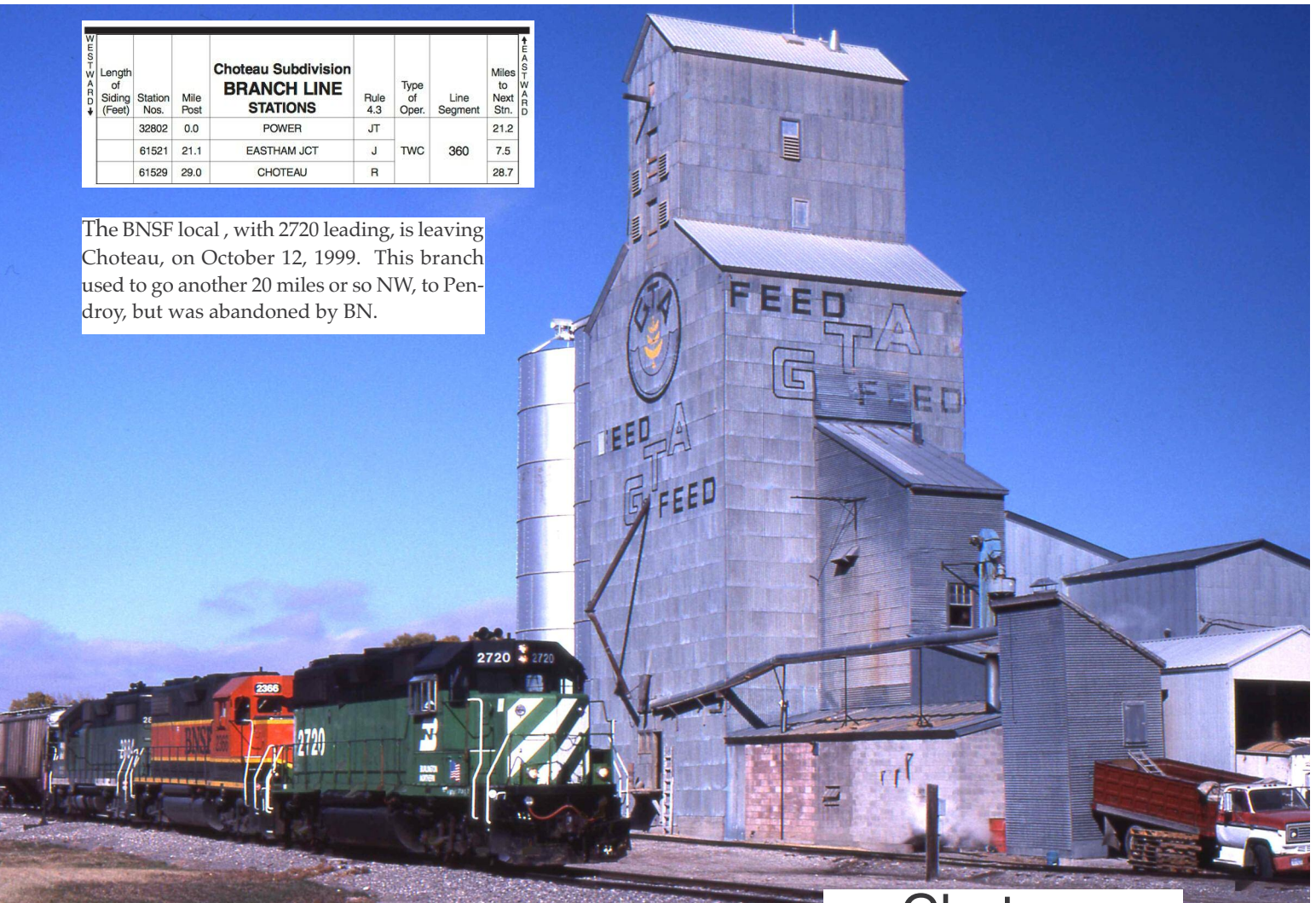
Williams



Choteau Subdivision

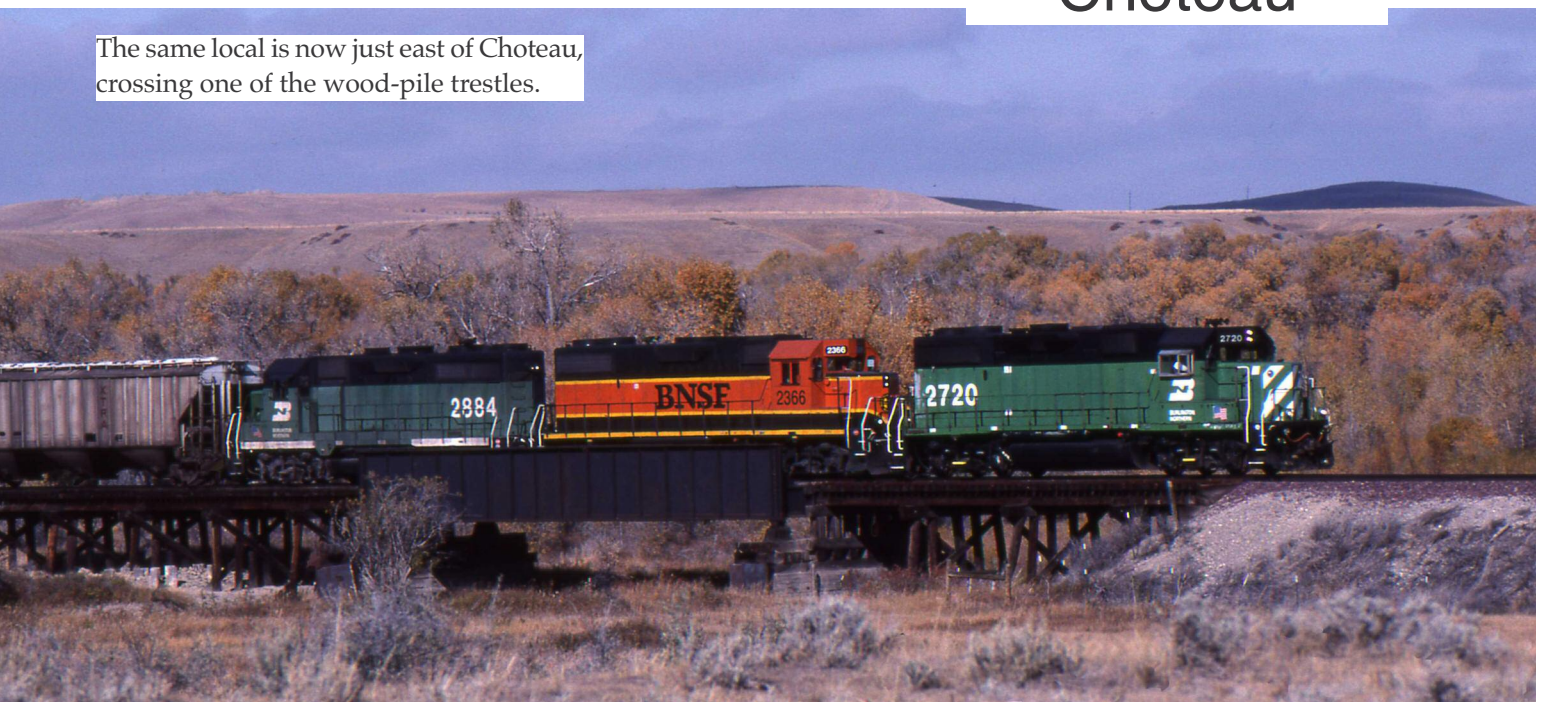
WEST WARD ↓	Length of Siding (Feet)	Station Nos.	Mile Post	Choteau Subdivision BRANCH LINE STATIONS		Rule 4.3	Type of Oper.	Line Segment	Miles to Next Stn.	EAST WARD ↑
		32802	0.0	POWER		JT			21.2	
		61521	21.1	EASTHAM JCT		J	TWC	360	7.5	
		61529	29.0	CHOTEAU		R			28.7	

The BNSF local , with 2720 leading, is leaving Choteau, on October 12, 1999. This branch used to go another 20 miles or so NW, to Pendroy, but was abandoned by BN.



Choteau

The same local is now just east of Choteau, crossing one of the wood-pile trestles.





The local is now passing the old Gallatin Valley elevator around MP 24, Hobson Spur.



Again on October 11, 1999, the local has picked up cars at Eastham Jct, and is now coming off the Choteau Sub, enroute to Fairfield.



Looking East (Railroad ETT West) at Eastham Jct, towards Fairfield. The Eastham Jct- Fairfield line is ex-Milwaukee Road, and is ETT West to Fairfield.

Fairfield Subdivision



(left) On October 12, 1999, we are at Fairfield, looking east, at the Montana Elevator.

(below left) Eleven years later, the local, behind 2106, is at the same location. Note a new office has replaced the storage bin, and the elevator has been renamed.

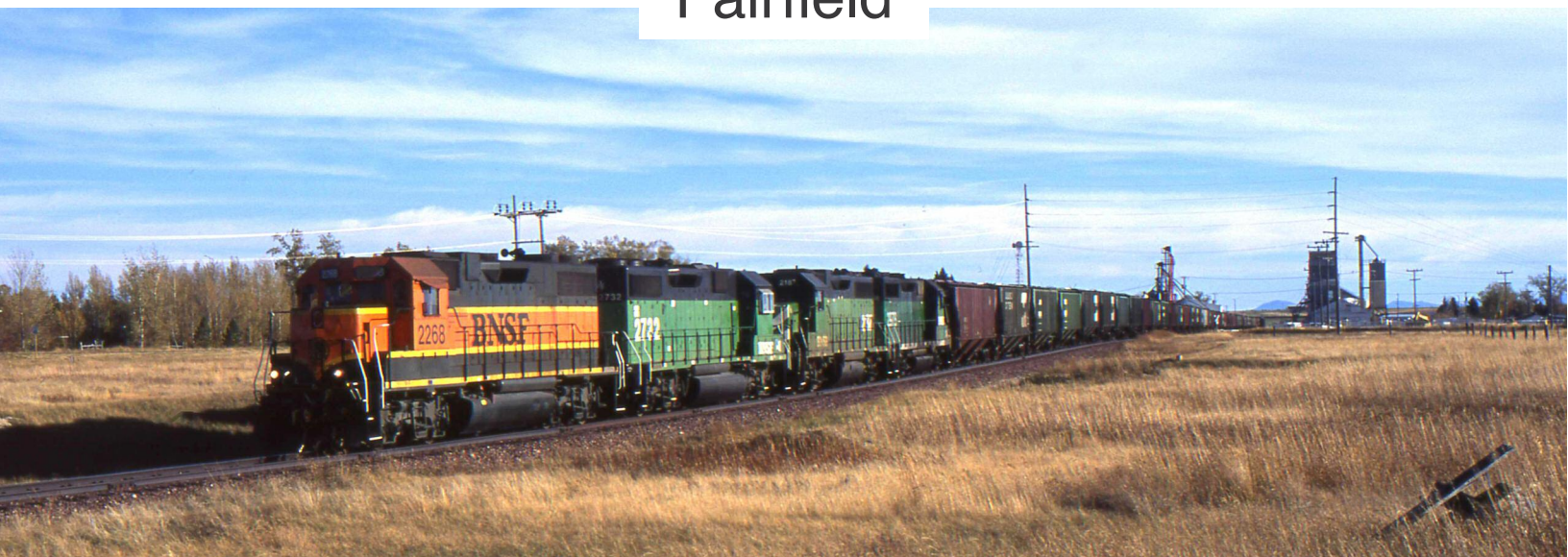
(below right) On October 11, 2010, the local power has now pulled up to the West (RR) end of the branch, at the then-new Anheuser-Busch elevator, waiting to pick up cars.

(bottom) On October 11, 2004, the e/b local, with 2268+3 other units, departs Fairfield with a long train of covered hoppers. Again the train is actually moving west.

WESTWARD ↓	Length of Siding (Feet)	Station Nos.	Mile Post	Fairfield Subdivision BRANCH LINE STATIONS		Rule 4.3	Type of Oper.	Line Segment	Miles to Next Stn.	EASTWARD ↑
	3,600	61521	0.6	EASTHAM JCT	J		TWC	369	11.0	
		61585	11.0	FAIRFIELD					11.0	



Fairfield



Helena Subdivision



Ulm



Cascade



(top left and right) On October 13, 1999, we were lucky enough to see the westbound Helena Turn, here coming and going at Ulm. Today the Helena Subdivision is out of service and being used for car storage.

(above left and right) Farther West, the same train comes through Cascade and by the ex-GN depot.

(right) And east of Craig, along the Missouri River, the Turn hugs the dramatic rock formations as she approaches a tunnel and then comes under I-15.



WESTWARD	Length of Siding (Feet)	Station Nos.	Mile Post	Helena Subdivision BRANCH LINE STATIONS	Rule 4.3	Type of Oper.	Line Segment	Miles to Next Stn.	EASTWARD
		32777	115.5	GREAT FALLS	BJT			28.8	
	2,211	11148	144.3	CASCADE				22.9	
	6,100	11171	167.2	CRAIG				7.9	
	2,488	11179	175.1	WOLF CREEK		TWC	336	9.3	
	2,276	11188	184.4	SIEBEN				12.1	
	5,112	11200	196.5	SILVER CITY				14.5	
		31082	210.9	HELENA JCT	J			95.4	

Ft Benton Subdivision



The Ft. Benton Sub was part of BN's 3rd Subdivision, a through route between Havre and Great Falls that even had passenger service before Amtrak. In 1983 BN abandoned the middle section between Big Sandy and Ft. Benton due to low traffic and high maintenance costs.

We travel the Sub by crossing the Missouri River in Great Falls (above), then heading northeast where a spur branches off to the Malteurop malt plant (left). Then in Sheffels (below) we find an abandoned elevator still in fairly good shape. Next comes Portage, then Floweree and more abandoned elevators in various stages of decay.

Top photo October 10, 2006 by Mark Demaline, all others by Michael Ridout on February 27, 2016.



Sheffels

WESTWARD ↓	Length of Siding (Feet)	Station Nos.	Mile Post	Ft Benton Subdivision BRANCH LINE STATIONS	Rule 4.3	Type of Oper.	Line Segment	Miles to Next Stn.	EASTWARD ↑
	4,822	11075	74.6	FT BENTON				15.7	
	4,054	11090	90.3	CARTER				12.6	
		11103	102.9	PORTAGE		TWC	353	5.6	
		11109	108.1	SHEFFELS				10.7	
		32777	119.4	GREAT FALLS	BJTR			44.6	



Portage



Floweree





Carter



It's open prairie until Carter, the site of several active elevators, including one with a large loop track capable of loading unit grain trains. The old depot has been moved away from the tracks and, except for a fairly new roof, is in need of some repair (5 photos above).

Next up is Tunis, with another unit grain facility and loop track (left) and an old elevator that still seems to be in service! (below and on the cover)

All photos on these two pages by Michael Ridout on February 27, 2016.



Tunis





Kershaw



Then comes Kershaw with yet another unit grain facility with loop track (left), and just east of town, this neat old bridge over the tracks.

Finally we arrive at Ft. Benton, the site of a very interesting depot (bottom). The washout (below left) is the reason the middle part of the old line along the Missouri River was abandoned. A local entrepenuer in the area has converted a wrecked BN covered hopper to less movable use (below). Then the line ends (inset below) less than a mile past the depot.



Ft. Benton





The ex-MILW depot in Aberdeen, the largest brick passenger depot still standing in South Dakota, is no longer used by BNSF, having been turned into office space. However it is still home to a railroad—four actually. In the basement you'll find 2 HO scale layouts, a Lionel layout and a N scale layout, home to the James Valley Model Railroad Association.