

REGIONALS IN REVIEW: GENESEE & WYOMING TODAY



The Kiamichi Railroad story

New life for an almost-forgotten corner of the Frisco

BOB THOMPSON

I SOUTHEASTERN Oklahoma is a land of beautiful lakes, pine forests, abundant wildlife, and rugged hills. Although pretty, this land—home of the Choctaw Nation Indian tribe since the 1830's—in recent years has provided little economic opportunity for its people other than for raising cattle or cutting down the trees for lumber and pulpwood. But the area, known to some as "Little Dixie," now is the location of a new regional railroad, the Kiamichi (Ki-ah-MEE-shee). The name is taken from both the Kiamichi River, about 100 miles long, which begins near Rich Mountain along the Arkansas border and flows west and south into the Red River, and the Kiamichi Mountains, south of the upstream portion of the river.

The Kiamichi Railroad, reporting marks KRR, is a 227½-mile Class 3 carrier that extends from southeastern Oklahoma into northeastern Texas and southwestern Arkansas. Like such other new roads as Arkansas & Missouri, Otter Tail Valley, Red River Valley & Western, and Washington Central, the KRR was created as part of Burlington Northern's policy of selling unprofitable or marginally profitable lines. All Kiamichi track is former St. Louis-San Francisco (Frisco); it consists of two lines, the 185.3-mile east-west segment between Lakeside, Okla., and Hope, Ark., and a 42.2-mile north-south segment between Antlers, Okla., and Paris, Tex. The lines intersect at Hugo, Okla., where Kiamichi's headquarters is located.

The Antlers-Paris line is the southern remnant of a railroad that had its start in 1886, when the Fort Smith & Southern Railway was incorporated to build from Fort Smith, Ark., south through Indian Territory to the Red River, 153 miles. Owned and financed by the Frisco, the line went through Jenson Tunnel (Oklahoma's only railroad tunnel), the Winding Stair Mountains, and down the Kiamichi valley, reaching the Red River in 1887. The remaining 16 miles south to Paris was built by the Paris & Great Northern in 1888. Both lines served as Frisco's Arthur Subdivision, providing SLSF with its first route into Texas, from Monett, Mo. After a better line was built from Tulsa to the Dallas/Fort Worth area,



NAMED for a river, with a distinctive logo.

bypassing the rugged Ozarks, the combination of too little traffic and too much vertical terrain eventually led Frisco to abandon the early route between Wister, at the crossing of the Rock Island's Choctaw Route, and Antlers. After BN acquired the Frisco in 1980, it abandoned the 37-mile portion between Fort Smith and Wister, but the northerly 28 miles were purchased by the Kansas City Southern, which had used it by trackage rights from Poteau, Okla., to serve Fort Smith.

The remaining Antlers-Paris trackage became BN's 12th (later 8th) Subdivision of the Tulsa Division (later Fort Worth Division). While the Hugo-Paris segment remained busy with customers at Paris, the Hugo-Antlers line just barely hung on with only a weekly pulpwood train over its decrepit track.

The east-west line had its beginning in Arkansas in 1895 with the incorporation of the Arkansas & Choctaw, which constructed 24 miles of railroad between Ashdown and Arkin-da. In 1902 the Frisco bought the little road, changed its name to the St. Louis, San Francisco & New Orleans, and commenced construction east to Hope, Ark., and west to Ardmore, Indian Territory (which became Oklahoma, the

46th state, in 1907). Frisco operated it as the Ardmore & Arkin-da Subdivision right up to the BN merger.

The west end of the line underwent some change. The creation of Lake Texoma had forced a line relocation between Durant and Madill, on the Tulsa-Dallas line; west of Durant, the new line bent southwest to the new junction of Lakeside. The line into Ardmore from Madill was abandoned by BN in 1982. Traffic on the rest of the west end declined to the point where a train leaving from Hugo on alternating days was sufficient. This line, the Seventh Subdivision, as well as the Antlers-Hugo-Paris line, soon became candidates for sale or abandonment.

ENTER Jack Hadley, a 37-year veteran of shortline railroading. Hadley started his railroad career in 1951 with Jones & Laughlin Steel's railroad division, which at that time operated the Monongahela Connecting (Mon Con) in Pittsburgh, the Aliquippa & Southern in nearby Aliquippa, Pa., and the Cuyahoga Valley in Cleveland, O. Rising through the ranks, he became vice president of the division in 1966 and president in 1982, by which time J&L had merged into LTV Steel and owned seven railroads.

As president, Hadley was instrumental in the formation and operation of two new LTV railroads, the Mahoning Valley in Youngstown, O., and the Midland Terminal in Midland, Pa. Both roads were, and still are to some extent, unique in that traditional craft distinctions were discarded. While all employees are members of the United Steelworkers Union, they are all classified as "railroaders." This means that any employees can do anything for which they are qualified, whether it be operating locomotives, repairing cars, or performing trackwork. Even while the steel mill served by the Mahoning Valley was shut down due to a domestic steel slump, the absence of craft barriers enabled many railroad employees to keep busy repairing rolling stock, performing track work, and occasionally grabbing a locomotive for switching chores.

LTV filed for bankruptcy in 1986, but its railroad division stayed solvent. Hadley retired in April 1987 from LTV,



Both photos, J. Parker Lamb.

LATE on a March 1989 afternoon, the Idabel turn is ready to leave the siding at Valliant, Okla., to return to Hugo. Diamond is TO&E crossing.

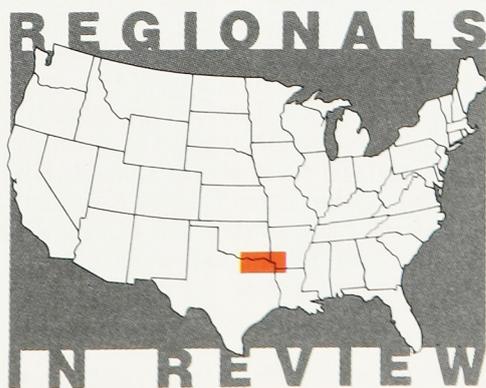
but he wasn't about to quit railroading. He had begun a search for a good property in early 1986. Negotiations with BN led him to conclude a transaction in March 1987 on the 228 miles of underutilized track in southeastern Oklahoma.

Why "Kiamichi Country," of all places? Why choose a railroad in an area of high unemployment (up to 17 percent) where the local shippers were leaving the railroad, where two former Class 1 systems had failed to make a go of it? Instead of focusing on the negative points, Hadley instead saw great potential. He felt that with shippers and railroaders working together, the Kiamichi could be made into a profitable venture.

Almost immediately after the BN's announcement of the impending sale to Hadley, opposition began to mount. Local representatives of the United Transportation Union and the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers saw the sale as a union-busting tactic by BN. Hugo's city council and chamber of commerce heard that only 40 railroaders were to be hired by Hadley and objected on the basis of lost jobs; at one time under Frisco control, 230 people were employed at Hugo, but the total had fallen over the

years to fewer than 81. Oklahoma's attorney general also got into the act, expressing concern over the possible deterioration or loss of service should the new railroad fail.

When Hadley faced an overflow crowd at Hugo's Agriplex arena at a fact-finding meeting called by the unions and attended by state and local officials and townfolk in early July 1987, the would-be owner fielded some hostile questions. He survived, however, filed a Notice of Exemption to the ICC on July 10, and—despite last-minute efforts by local BN employees to convince the ICC to stop the sale—got ICC approval to commence operations.



At 12:01 a.m., July 22, 1987, the 7th and 8th Subdivisions of BN's Fort Worth Division ceased to exist. In their place was the Kiamichi Railroad.

HOME base for the Kiamichi is Hugo, a city of 7200 and seat of Choctaw County. KRR's administrative offices were initially in the Hugo Federal Building down the hall from the Post Office, but in January 1988 they were relocated to a former clothing store in the downtown area. Offices for operations, traffic, and mechanical departments are located at the yard southwest of downtown, in a metal building first used by the Frisco to replace the roundhouse (demolished) and a two-story brick depot (now a museum). The yard office is also the location of the dispatcher's desk, crew lounge, and locker room. Locomotive servicing is done on a two-track service pad, partially covered by a 200-foot shop that extends over inspection pits and both tracks. Built by the Kiamichi, the shop is painted in the railroad's own shade of burgundy, as is the yard office.

All Kiamichi trains are operated as turns and—except for one whose crew is based in Ashdown—work out of Hugo. Thanks mainly to aggressive mar-

keting, train frequency is up from occasional locals to almost daily departures from Hugo. Kiamichi's trains employ two-man crews, with a third added when train length might block vehicular traffic.

The Antlers line has service two or three times a week; the sole source of business is the Nekoosa Paper pulpwood loading yard in Antlers, 17.4 miles north of Hugo. Twenty to 25 cars per train are moved from this wood lot south to Hugo and then east to Ashdown, all in 50-foot wood racks built by the Frisco and now owned by the Kiamichi. KRR also has leased 20 ex-KCS 50-foot pulpwood flats for increased Nekoosa pulpwood business. Nekoosa also is developing an 80-acre site just south of Antlers, which could increase shipments to Ashdown by 50 percent.

Paris is served every day except Sunday by a turn nicknamed the "Soup Job" by local rails because of the large Campbell Soup plant there. Other customers include Merico Incorporated's Earth Grains bakery, a Big Tex grain elevator, and Valley Feed Mills. Interchange is made with Santa Fe's former Gulf, Colorado & Santa Fe line from Dallas and Union Pacific's ex-Texas & Pacific line from Texarkana to Whitesboro, Tex. The Kiamichi uses a yard owned jointly with Santa Fe west of downtown Paris, but KRR's local office and operating yard are next to Campbell Soup north of town, 2.6 miles from the ex-Santa Fe/Frisco depot at a rail point named Betner. KRR and Santa Fe may work out a deal whereby the Kiamichi would become the premier switching carrier in Paris.

The line east of Hugo at times sees up to three trains a day. The Valliant Turn runs 25 miles to Valliant, Okla., site of a Weyerhaeuser paper mill and interchange with Weyerhaeuser's Texas, Oklahoma & Eastern. Empty 50-foot box cars and tank cars loaded with chemicals for papermaking are shoved into a receiving track east of town, while outbound cars loaded with paper and lumber from various Weyerhaeuser plants are picked up and taken back to Hugo's yard.

Ashdown is served by a train leaving Hugo four times a week. It takes all cars destined for Arkansas and delivers them to Ashdown for ultimate placement by the Ashdown crew. These are empties for the cement plants in Foreman, Ark., and on a connecting shortline, Ideal Cement's Graysonia, Nashville & Ashdown Railroad; grain for the GN&A; Nekoosa-bound pulpwood from Antlers and Fort Towson; and traffic destined for interchange. The turn likewise picks up the train assembled by the Ashdown crew for the 90-mile return trip to Hugo. It may also work Foreman if the switcher has been un-



SIMPLE, modern two-stall shop building at Hugo takes care of Kiamichi's mechanical needs.

able to get there, and—if necessary and time permits—the Valliant paper mill, in either direction. Westbound traffic consists of cement from Foreman, paper from Nekoosa and Weyerhaeuser, empty pulpwood flats, and, occasionally, fiberboard from southern Arkansas.

The Ashdown crew is responsible for handling all Kiamichi customers in Arkansas. Daily except Sunday, the crew goes west from Ashdown to Foreman to work the cement plant, takes pulpwood over KCS trackage rights to the Nekoosa Paper Mill, does local Ashdown work (including a reload facility for British Columbia and local lumber, and interchange with the GN&A), and interchanges as needed at Hope, 32 miles east, with Union Pacific's ex-Mo-Pac Little Rock-Texarkana main line and the Louisiana & Arkansas (KCS) branch from Minden, La. No Kiamichi shippers exist between Ashdown and Hope, nor are any industries switched at Hope.

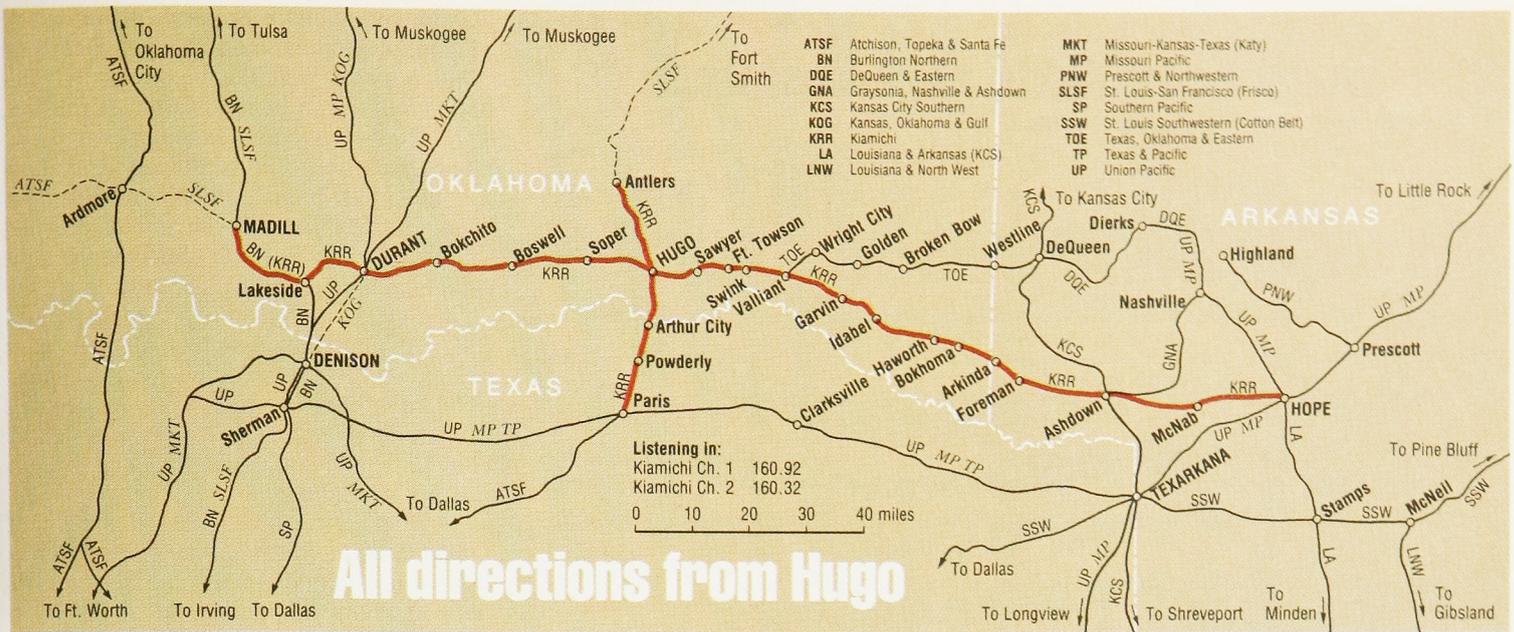
The big train by Kiamichi standards is the daily run west to Madill, where the BN interchange is the outlet for most Kiamichi traffic (BN considers Kiamichi and its other spinoffs to be "affiliated lines"). Kiamichi runs on its own tracks 65 miles to Lakeside, then 17 miles north to Madill on trackage rights on the ex-Frisco Tulsa-Dallas line. In between Hugo and Lakeside is Durant, the peanut center of the region and site of some interchange with UP; both the former Kansas, Oklahoma & Gulf and the Katy served Durant. Kiamichi also has some Durant customers, including a beer distributor and plastics and animal feed manufacturers.

A switch crew is also based in Hugo to work the yard, serve Antlers and Valliant as needed, handle local customers, and take hoppers and gondo-

las to the Boorhem-Fields rock loader 2 miles east of town. Here, loading of crushed limestone is being done on the main line as an experiment to determine savings to the shipper. So far, it seems to be a success, as rock from this loader, which is brought in by truck from a quarry 6 miles north, is becoming more competitive in distant Texas markets. For instance, several carloads went to east Texas to be used in the four-laning of U.S 59 from Texarkana to Houston, business that Boorhem-Fields could not garner with just its fleet of gravel trucks. Another quarry operation, Oklahoma Stone, is new, and it is also interested in shipping rock on the Kiamichi. Hugo Railcar, a tank-car repair facility, draws its cars from all connections onto the Kiamichi.

Two other train movements also take place. East of Hugo, the Western Farmers Electric Cooperative has a large electric power plant, kept running by coal shipped from Wyoming's Powder River Basin over BN to Madill. BN and Kiamichi crews trade places there, and the two KRR men take the train 100 miles east to the plant, between Fort Towson and Sawyer. The train is unloaded, stops in Hugo for inspection by KRR carmen for defects and repairs, and then is returned to Madill. Three trainsets of 110 black Thrall rotary gondolas with WFCX reporting marks keep the plant supplied; motive power is usually five big BN GE and/or EMD six-axle units. These coal trains, Kiamichi's biggest revenue source, usually appear on the KRR three to four times a week. Occasionally, one will have a BN caboose; otherwise, Kiamichi trains employ end-of-train boxes exclusively.

There is also a Kiamichi train whose existence is owed to chickens. Tyson Foods, which operates distribu-



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tion centers near Idabel and Broken Bow, blends feed grain for chickens raised on surrounding farms. About once a week, 50 to 60 cars of chicken feed grain move as a unit east from Madill to Valliant, where the train is turned over to the TO&E for the last leg to a feed-mill facility in Craig. On occasion, grain cars are also given to the GN&A at Ashdown for shipment to distribution facilities at Nashville, Ark. A similar move could be in the offing for hungry pigs as the pork industry blossoms in the area.

WHEN Hadley took over, he inherited a railroad suffering from deferred maintenance. Although BN had laid down 115-lb. welded rail from Madill to Fort Towson for the coal trains, the rest of the line was left with 90-lb. steel, held up by crossties in dire need of replacement. The Antlers line, home to a Fort Smith-Paris passenger train in old Frisco days, had deteriorated to a 10-

mph railroad prone to derailments. Indeed, a Kiamichi pulpwood train derailed on this line in October 1987, when a rail punctured the fuel tank of one of the locomotives.

A track program, paid from the railroad's own pockets, was immediately begun. Oradd, an outside contractor specializing in such work, was hired by the Kiamichi to start repairing the line to Antlers; the contract stipulated use of local labor. First, every third tie was to be replaced, and the railroad plans to go back later and replace more than half of the rest and reballast the track to try and bring it up to FRA Class 2 standards. Former Frisco 40-foot pulpwood flats were used to carry the ties to the track gang, while leased hopper cars were used to haul ballast.

The yards at Hugo and Paris also had bad track. It wasn't uncommon for the Soup Job to have cars derail in the Paris yard, and more than once crews were called out to relay rails that had

turned over. Contractor crews, again hired locally, replaced virtually every tie and reballasted each track. Half of Hugo yard—the half that is used the most—has received this treatment, and the Paris yard also underwent a tie and reballasting program.

Track speed limit is generally 25 mph on the 90-lb. jointed rail east of Fort Towson. West of there, speed limits range from 25 to 40 mph, with a 10-mph order over the Blue River bridge east of Durant. Kiamichi hopes ultimately to replace this bridge with a culvert and fill. Trains to Paris are held to 25 mph over 90-lb. jointed rail. Seventy-five to 90-lb. iron can be found on the Antlers line and in the Hugo yard, but Kiamichi is in the process of replacing the light rail with good relay 90-lb.

THE Frisco's southeastern Oklahoma lines have been light-engine territory since the days of steam. Diesels have ranged from 44-ton center-cab switch-



LOADED with Nekoosa logs, Antlers turn is ready to head for Hugo.



PARIS switcher heads out of Hugo behind a secondhand GP7.

All photos these two pages, J. Parker Lamb.

IRON PONIES OF THE KIAMICHI

Road No.	Model	H.P.	Year	Heritage, remarks
273	GP9	1750	1954	TXNW 273, LS&BC 273, nee UP 273; leased from XTRA, Inc., still painted for previous railroad
617	GP7	1500	1952	Farmrail 617 <i>Kiowa</i> , nee FEC 617; leased from XTRA, Inc., still painted for previous railroad
701	GP7	1500	1953	TXNW 100, LS&BC 100, UP 100, nee UP 700; leased from XTRA, Inc., painted Kiamichi
702	GP7	1500	1952	Farmrail 620 <i>Caddo</i> , nee FEC 620; leased from XTRA, Inc., painted Kiamichi
901	GP9	1750	1957	C&O 6210; leased, then purchased, from Wilson Railway Supply; refurbished, chop-nosed, and painted by Wilson
902	GP9	1750	1958	BN 1941, nee NP 362; leased, then purchased, from Wilson Railway Supply; refurbished, chop-nosed, and painted by Wilson
903	GP9	1750	1955	WM 5933, nee C&O 5933; leased, then purchased, from Wilson Railway Supply; refurbished, chop-nosed, and painted by Wilson
3801	GP35M	2000	1964	Ex-MP 2600, MP 2008, MP 2007 (1st), MP 2501, nee T&P 601; delivered as GP35; among 18 converted by MP, 1974-1980; turbocharger removed, 645 power assembly installed, rewired, derated to 2000 h.p.; leased from Wilson
3802	GP35M	2000	1964	Ex-MP 2604, MP 2506, nee T&P 606, converted same as 3801; leased from Wilson
3803	GP35M	2000	1964	Ex-MP 2607, MP 2513, nee T&P 614 (2nd); converted same as 3801; leased from Wilson
3804	GP35M	2000	1964	Ex-MP 2617, MP 2500, nee T&P 600; converted same as 3801; returned to Wilson owing to frame damage

Notes:

All units built by Electro-Motive Division, General Motors; all units B-B wheel arrangement.

Units on Kiamichi property not on roster: Iowa Northern GP7's 609-610, nee FEC same, owned by XTRA, Inc.

Key to initials: BN, Burlington Northern; C&O, Chesapeake & Ohio; FEC, Florida East Coast; LS&BC, La Salle & Bureau County; MP, Missouri Pacific; NP, Northern Pacific; T&P, Texas & Pacific; TXNW, Texas & Northwestern; UP, Union Pacific; WM, Western Maryland

Roster accurate as of April 4, 1989; sources: Kiamichi; Wilson Railway Supply, *Extra 2200 South*.—B.T.

ers at Paris to GP7's, GP15-1's, and GP38's on the road (this writer has also seen an ex-Frisco GP40-2 hauling pulpwood from Antlers). The only six-axle units hereabouts are on the WFEC coal trains.

Kiamichi's roster seems plain-Jane at first glance: four-axle nonturbocharged EMD's from 1500 to 2000 h.p. However, the ancestry of each unit is interesting [see roster above]. Three GP9's and four GP35M's, leased originally from Wilson Railway Supply of Des Moines, Ia., have Chessie, BN, and MoPac ancestries. The GP9's were given chopped-noses and their dynamic braking was disconnected. Kiamichi's 3800's, all former Texas & Pacific GP35's built in 1964 and rebuilt by MoPac to 2000 h.p. units with 645 power assemblies, were also reconditioned by Wilson; they're classified as GP38's. All seven units were painted in a color both the railroad and Sherwin Williams call "Kiamichi Burgundy," with off-white lettering and nose and frame striping and a logo resembling an Indian shield on each side of the cab.

The diesels have not performed up to expectations. On the first day of operation, as the very first Valliant Turn was leaving Hugo yard, 903 burned out a traction motor on the rear truck. Since no servicing facilities other than fueling racks existed then, a crane was rented to lift 903's rear end while a new traction motor was installed. For the first two months, BN units supplemented Kiamichi power.

About six weeks after startup, a crack was discovered on 3804's main frame near the rear bolster. Repairs to the frame proved unsatisfactory, and the unit—after serving as a parts

source—was ultimately returned to the leasing company.

To replace the departed 3804 as well as to handle increasing traffic, Kiamichi turned to XTRA, Inc., another leasing firm, in November 1987. Two units of Union Pacific ancestry—GP7 100 and GP9 273—arrived in December and January from the Texas North Western, operator of ex-Rock Island trackage in the Texas panhandle, and were put into service on the Soup Train to Paris. In early 1988, two GP7's from Farmrail arrived. Both are ex-Florida East Coast, 617 *Kiowa* and 620 *Caddo*; they had not seen service on Farmrail, a western Oklahoma line on ex-Rock tracks, for some time, and needed work. The 617 was put in service in the spring, while 620, in need of more repair, sat beside the shop until July before it was repaired, stripped of its Farmrail paint, and placed inside to be repainted into Kiamichi colors as No. 702. Kiamichi plans to rebuild all its units, and if business continues to increase, it will probably need additional locomotives.

ON July 22, 1988, Kiamichi celebrated its first year in business, and local feelings have turned around. State and local chamber of commerce officials, at first fiercely opposed to the BN sale, have become supporters of the Kiamichi. Although some former BN employees still may grumble, the Kiamichi's customers seem to be genuinely pleased with the service the railroad gives. Kiamichi employment has increased to 52 people, and carloadings have gone up from a low of 18,000 during the BN's last year of operation to 32,000 cars for 1988. The WFEC coal

trains also have increased in frequency. Originally contracted to haul 1 million tons a year, WFEC's trainsets by mid-1988 were on a pace to total 1.4 million.

Buoyed by the Texas highway business, Boorhem-Fields reopened a quarry at Good, 3 miles north of Hugo on the Antlers line, to ship out crushed limestone by rail. It had been shut down in spring 1988. KRR put in a two-track spur at the end of last year, and the first train moved out in February 1989, west to Madill for points south. The cars in this trade, 100-ton hoppers built by Portec and Ortner, carry TRAX reporting marks and operate on an eight-day cycle.

Another new customer, a shipper of woodchips at Idabel, caused the Kiamichi to acquire 25 ex-MoPac 95-ton Ortner woodchip hoppers, repaired and restenciled KRR at Hugo.

All Hadley's philosophy and all the promises of better service would be worthless were it not for the dedicated men and women who work for the Kiamichi. Skeptical at first, some former BN employees applied and were hired by the new railroad. Although their pay was lower, they got an almost guaranteed 40-hour work week with time-and-a-half for overtime, and a bonus that paid 10 percent on top of their 1987 wages. The yard office, which was in bedraggled condition, was remodeled and refurbished. Hadley wanted Kiamichi employees to have pride in their new company and a dedication to make the railroad work, and so far they have responded. Kiamichi is nonunion.

Ever seeking new business, Kiamichi in May 1988 purchased a former canning factory and is converting it into a warehouse. Negotiations are under way with Campbell Soup and others to store inbound materials and outbound products. With three truck bays plus rail service, warehouse customers will have transportation options.

The warehouse will also be home to a rail maintenance company, a recently started Kiamichi affiliate formed to perform track maintenance, repair, and construction for local industries. Six people are employed by this new outfit, which also will manage the warehouse operation.

Besides the 100 ex-Frisco pulpwood flat cars purchased by Kiamichi for the traffic out of Antlers, KRR's freight-car fleet includes 21 50-foot box cars (with XTRA markings), 10 former Texas & Northern hopper cars for ballast service, and 120 cement cars.

ONE footnote to expanded Kiamichi operations is passenger trains. The last Frisco varnish departed Hugo on February 6, 1958: Monett (Mo.)-Paris (Tex.) trains 709 and 704, whose treks were cut back to Fort Smith, Ark. The last



J. Parker Lamb.



John A. Arbuckle.

CLOCKWISE from above: With leased Farmrail Geep trailing, an Idabel turn bridges the railroad's namesake Kiamichi River in March 1989. At Madill, five-unit Kiamichi train shares the yard with its creator and biggest interchange partner, BN. At Durant, a westbound Madill Turn passes the old tower and former Frisco depot at the Katy crossing.



Bob Thompson.

east-west run, a Hope (Ark.)-Ardmore (Okla.) gas-electric "doodlebug," quit on September 6, 1951.

When Kiamichi celebrated its formal opening in October 1987, it operated two passenger specials. Now, there is a weekend excursion operation, run by Cimarron River Valley Scenic Railway, owned by Tom and Catherine Woodward, proprietors of a hobby shop in Oklahoma City. The train departs from the former Frisco depot in Hugo [page 17], which is on the Antlers line. A rented Kiamichi unit pulls five ex-Santa Fe cars, four coaches and a dormitory-lounge. The train's destination is determined by KRR freight traffic on the particular weekend. So far, the *Scout*, as it is called, has gone west to Boswell, Okla., and south to Paris, Tex., both roughly 25 miles from Hugo. The train takes about 3 hours to go out and back.

Why the Cimarron River in Kiamichi country? The Woodward had wanted to run their cars on the Cimarron

River Valley out of Cushing, Okla., a former Santa Fe line. But track was not up to par for passenger trains, so they had to look elsewhere, contacting Kiamichi and the Hugo Chamber of Commerce in 1988. The cars were moved in December, and the first run was made on January 28, 1989, to Boswell. The *Scout* made its official debut March 18.

The Hugo depot from which the *Scout* departs was donated to, and is now occupied by, the Choctaw County Historical Society. A former Frisco mail car, later used in maintenance-of-way service, has been restored and repainted for the group as a display. Volunteers staff the Frisco Depot Museum, and Howard Harrison, a retired Frisco man, rides the train impeccably attired in a Frisco conductor's uniform. Several women work in the restored Harvey House Restaurant in the depot, wearing black dresses and white aprons like those of the original Harvey Girls. The newsstand is now a souvenir shop, and

an operating model railroad and miniature five-ring circus (in honor of the many circuses that have wintered in Hugo over the years) are in the north end of the depot.

Although all is going well for the Kiamichi, Jack Hadley and his employees will not be resting on their laurels. The little railroad in Little Dixie will continue what it has been doing—serving the customers by providing effective service at competitive prices, benefiting everyone concerned. **I**

BOB THOMPSON, 32, a lab technologist in Paris, Tex., resides with his wife, Beth, in Hugo. A native Nebraskan, he has lived in several Midwestern locations, and earned a B.S. in 1979 at Oklahoma State University. He thanks Beth and these Kiamichi employees for assistance: Jack Hadley, president; Ken Hadley, master mechanic; Al Backus, director of marketing; and Delphine Luna, secretary.



Central Vermont . . .

Innovations help it hang on where many railroads have failed

I AMERICAN railroads have experienced great change in the past 40 years, when mergers and abandonments have drastically altered the nation's rail map. Even in New England, a region long known for its steady habits, major changes have occurred. The Rutland went out of business in the 1960's, although much of its trackage was picked up by new short lines. The New Haven, which was force-fed into Penn Central in 1969, has been sold piecemeal, with the remaining portions now run by 16 different operators. The Boston & Maine and Maine Central were purchased by Guilford Transportation Industries in the 1980's, and both have endured large-scale cutbacks. Public authorities now own the trains and the tracks of former New Haven, B&M, and New York Central routes out of Boston and New York. The list goes on and on.

Among the few New England railroads to survive these tumultuous decades is the Central Vermont Railway. This 325-mile carrier runs from the Canadian border to Long Island Sound by way of Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. Under the Interstate Commerce Commission's def-

SCOTT HARTLEY

inition (currently, a threshold of \$92 million annual revenue), the CV has not been a Class 1 carrier for a number of years, rather now is among the 30 roads classed as "Regional." As an indication of the ever-changing railroad scene, several other Northeastern regionals (*e.g.*, Providence & Worcester and New York, Susquehanna & Western) operate more route-miles than CV.

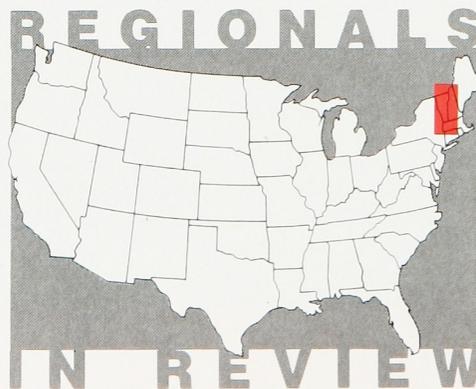
To most railroad enthusiasts outside the Northeast, mention of the Central Vermont evokes mental images of

Phil Hastings and Jim Shaughnessy photographs of chunky 2-8-0's and impressive 2-10-4's hustling long strings of box cars along scenic, single-track iron. Younger fans will think of solid sets of first-generation EMD GP9's and Alco RS11's still handling tonnage into the late 1980's.

These perceptions are fairly accurate. Today's CV remains a mostly un-signalized, single-track railroad through rural New England scenery, and some of those original steam-vanquishing GP9's indeed continue to work in road service.

But the Central Vermont is more than just another quaint New England line. Being a railroad in its region is no easy task, as demonstrated by the bankruptcies of Rutland, New Haven, and Boston & Maine in the past 30 years. To have survived in an area surrounded by parallel highways and other railroads, the CV has had to work hard.

During the past decade, the Central Vermont instituted a variety of piggyback and unit-train operations in efforts to attract new business. Currently, CV hauls wood chips for an on-line electric generating plant, runs a mini TankTrain unit train, handles Am-





a survivor

DIESELS from CV itself, parent Grand Trunk, and GT parent Canadian National grace CV train 444 at Roxbury, Vt., May 30, 1987. Scott Hartley photo.

trak's *Montrealer*, and is working to reduce its costs and improve service to attract additional interchange and overhead traffic. Negotiations which could lead to a resumption of intermodal service are under way. The final chapters of CV's story are yet to be written, but with a new general manager at the helm, CV is still surviving.

A Vermont empire

Like many of the Northeast's rail systems, the Central Vermont began as part of a grand scheme to connect an Atlantic seaport with the Great Lakes. Dozens of similar plans to link Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, Boston, and Portland to interior regions and the Great Lakes were developed, and many of these railroads actually were built in the mid-19th century. Railroad proponents believed that the commerce generated by the westward expansion of the United States would make such lines extremely profitable. And the citizens of the many towns and cities between the ocean and the lakes felt it was essential that these new railroads serve their communities, so they could share in the wealth. Even residents of rural Vermont wanted to be included in this transportation revolution, and even as early as 1830, prominent citizens of the state's capital of Montpelier formed

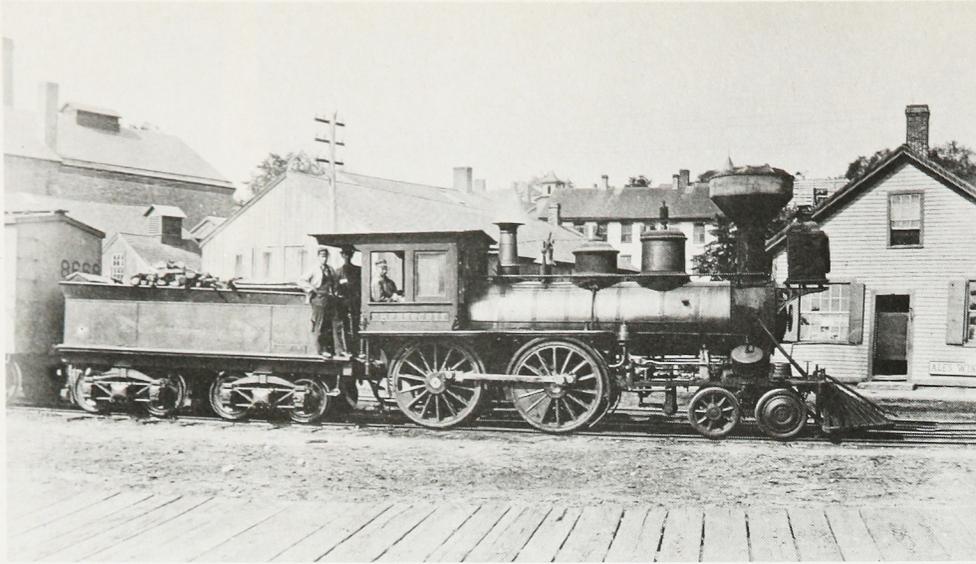
a committee to examine the subject.

In 1835, organizers chartered the Vermont Central Railroad Company, with the purpose of building a railroad from the banks of the Connecticut River to Lake Champlain. Several surveys were undertaken, and naturally, the many potential investors urged for a routing that would include their respective hometowns. Ultimately, VC incorporator Charles Paine would prevail in his wishes, and the selected routing would pass through his ample real estate holdings in the town of Northfield, while bypassing the more important municipalities of Barre (Bear-ree) and Montpelier. Although both towns would be served by a branch off VC's main line, investors from these areas were displeased, and many defaulted on their stock subscriptions. Nevertheless, Paine had his way. The new railroad would run from Windsor 14 miles north to White River Junction, then northwesterly across the state 100 miles to Lake Champlain at Burlington. Ground was broken in 1845, and the route was completed in five years. Most work was performed by Irish laborers, who had left their homeland following the widespread famine caused by the failure of the nation's potato crop. Paine, who also would be elected governor of Vermont while serving as president of the

VC, established the road's headquarters in Northfield, and sold and leased much of his personal real estate to the railroad.

Meanwhile, a prominent resident of the town of St. Albans named John Smith was building his Vermont & Canada Railroad from Essex Junction (outside Burlington) to the Canadian border, and across the northern reaches of Lake Champlain to Rouses Point, N.Y. At Rouses Point, V&C connected with new Northern Railroad of New York, a 118-mile line west to the St. Lawrence River town of Ogdensburg. Utilizing Vermont Central connection Sullivan Railroad to reach the Cheshire Railroad (both later Boston & Maine lines), through Boston-Ogdensburg service over VC and V&C became a reality in 1850.

Despite these grand beginnings, the two roads found themselves running at losses, and both VC and V&C operations were directed by trustees beginning in 1853. VC's Paine and V&C's Smith had earlier entered into a lease agreement wherein VC would operate V&C. Although most of the terms seemed to favor VC, the lease also provided that V&C would gain control of VC if the larger road defaulted on its lease payments. During the lean years of the early 1850's, Vermont Central



R.K. Smith collection, from Carl W. Larson.

INSIDE-CONNECTED woodburning 4-4-0 No. 9, F.R. Prescott, of CV predecessor New London Northern is ready to leave its namesake Connecticut seaside city on July 20, 1886.

did just that, and Smith quickly moved to take over the VC.

This was the beginning of the Smith dynasty on Vermont's railroads, which would last for three generations and into the 1900's. John Smith died in 1858 and was succeeded by his son J. Gregory Smith, who remained in control until his death in 1891, when he in turn was followed by his son Edward Curtis Smith, who served as president of the railroad until 1932. Both J. Gregory and Edward were elected to terms as governor of Vermont during their tenures as VC president, a clear indication of the prestige associated with the railroad position.

The Smith years are associated with rapid expansion of the VC/V&C properties. During the 1860's, headquarters for the combined system were centralized in the family's hometown of St. Albans, where extensive brick locomotive and car shops were built at the time. Many of these structures still stand, although long since converted to nonrailroad purposes. A large three-story HQ/passenger station, complete with a 350-foot-long, four-track trainshed, was constructed in 1866. The shed was removed in 1963, but the station building survives today as Central Vermont's general office building. Also, by the 1860's, the railroad had become St. Albans' largest employer, and remained so for the next century.

L. Gregory Smith sought access to Montreal, and through the last 40 years of the 19th century Vermont Central built several lines extending from the Green Mountain State into the province of Quebec. The American carrier operated more than 100 miles of trackage in Canada before the turn of the century, although most of this would later be sold or leased to Canadian National or Canadian Pacific because of duty charges and high operat-

ing costs. The most important route was the St. Armand Subdivision, which left the Vermont & Canada main line at Fonda Junction, 5.6 miles north of St. Albans, and ran to St. John, Que., and using further trackage rights allowed VC trains to operate to St. Lambert, just across the St. Lawrence from Montreal. This line remained as Central Vermont's main route to and from Montreal until 1946, when freight and passenger trains began to use the Canadian National north of East Alburgh.

With the Montreal route added to its Rouses Point connection, VC had two primary northern interchanges. A new shorter route to Boston, the Northern Railroad of New Hampshire, connected with VC at White River Junction.

At the same time, VC was expanding to the south. Beginning in 1861, it leased the Sullivan Railroad south of Windsor, the Vermont Valley from Bellows Falls to Brattleboro, and later a portion of the Vermont & Massachusetts to extend its reach to Millers Falls, Mass., where a connection was made with the New London Northern, a line that originated on Long Island Sound at New London, Conn. VC soon had control of NLN, and with this, Smith had assembled a through Montreal-New London rail route (with New York City connections via the NLN's steamships).

Not content with this, Smith soon leased the 118-mile Ogdensburg & Lake Champlain (formerly the Northern Railroad of New York) and along with it, a fleet of eight steamers serving the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes as far as Chicago. And just to help guarantee success, VC also leased competitor Rutland, in 1871.

In 1873, the Harlem Extension Railroad, from Chatham, N.Y., up to Rutland, which later became the south

end of the Rutland Railroad, was leased to the VC, although the lease would be dropped only four years later.

Numerous branches were added as well. In 1870, VC leased the 27.4-mile Missisquoi Railroad from St. Albans to Richford; in 1875, the Montpelier & White River Railroad Company, 6.2 miles from Montpelier to Barre; and in 1888, 8.4 miles of additional trackage from Barre to Williamstown. In 1889, Smith leased the Burlington & Lamoille Railroad, which connected Burlington to Cambridge Junction, although VC only operated the portion north of Essex Junction. The 35.7-mile West River Railroad, a former narrow-gauge line from Brattleboro to South Londonderry, also came under Smith's control.

The earliest harbinger of Canadian ownership of Vermont's railroads came in the 1850's. At the time, VC, Grand Trunk Railway, and Michigan Central Railroad operated a joint "National Dispatch Line" fast freight service between New England and the Midwest, via Canada. In 1863, VC found itself unable to pay its share of costs, and instead pledged bonds to the Grand Trunk, giving that Canadian company an interest in the New England road.

The financial panic that gripped the nation in the early 1870's resulted in the creation of the Central Vermont Railroad Company in 1873. A decade later, further dealings created the Consolidated Railroad Company of Vermont, which bought all stock of the Vermont & Canada as well as the Vermont Central, and leased all of the properties to the Central Vermont Railroad for 99 years.

The recession of 1893 resulted in some downsizing of the Central Vermont, and the railroad found itself in bankruptcy in 1896. CV surrendered its lease of the Rutland that same year, and of the Ogdensburg & Lake Champlain a year later. In 1898, the Central Vermont Railroad reorganized as the Central Vermont Railway. New stock was issued, and Grand Trunk ended up owning two-thirds of the new railroad.

In 1876, VC dropped its leases of the Sullivan County and the Vermont Valley, the lines that provided a link between the Vermont trackage and the New London Northern, and instead obtained running rights on the Connecticut River Railroad (later Boston & Maine's Connecticut River line). In 1900, CV and B&M would enter into a joint trackage agreement between East Northfield, Mass., and White River Junction, an arrangement that would last until 1988.

Expansion, and retrenchment

A whole new era of Central Vermont expansion began in the early



Wayne Brumbaugh.

AT Palmer, Mass., now a hot CV-Conrail interchange, CV 2-8-0 454, with a Coffin feedwater heater on its brow, passed the Boston & Albany tower with a southbound local in the 1940's (above). CV innovation in 1920's included replacing steam on locals with Brill railcars. In 1938, train 320—motor 149 with trailers 151-150—paused at Montpelier Junction (below).



Elwin K. Heath.

years of this century. A new subsidiary, the Southern New England Railway, financed by CV with Grand Trunk backing, began building a 55-mile line southeast from Palmer, Mass., in an attempt to reach the deepwater port of Providence, R.I. Also on the drawing boards was the Southern Vermont Railway, between Windsor and Brattleboro, which would have eliminated CV's use of B&M trackage between those points. Both plans were the ideas of Grand Trunk President Charles M. Hays, but they died with him when he was among the victims of the sinking of the *Titanic* in 1912.

Central Vermont became a stepchild of the government of Canada in 1922, when Canadian National Railways was created to operate the Canadian Northern, National Transcontinental, Grand Trunk, Grand Trunk Pacific, and Intercolonial. All of these railways had come under control of the Canadian government because of various financial problems, and the new CN would merge them together as a 22,000-mile government-owned system. Because of Grand Trunk's controlling interest in CV, the American line would become part of the CN family, and with this change, it would lose

more of its operating independence.

The latter half of the 1920's saw the CV's last new steam locomotive acquisitions (0-8-0's, 2-8-0's, 4-8-2's, and 2-10-4's, all from Alco), and purchases of little Brill railcars to replace conventional consists on lightly patronized trains.

A disastrous flood that killed 55 people and 15,000 cattle in Vermont in November 1927 also nearly caused the demise of the Central Vermont, virtually wiping it out all the way from Essex Junction to White River Junction. Faced with what amounted to building a brand-new railroad, CV looked to a doubtful future, but Canadian National gave approval to rebuild and funded the \$3 million project, which was completed during the winter in an impressive 92 days.

Central Vermont went into receivership in 1927, and emerged in 1929 as the Central Vermont Railway Inc. The 1920's and 1930's were times of cutbacks on the CV as they were on most American railroads. The Brattleboro-South Londonderry branch had been badly damaged by the 1927 flood, and was abandoned. During the '30's, the Essex Junction-Cambridge Junction and Barre-Williamstown branches were shut down. And the Smith dynasty finally came to an end when E.C. Smith resigned as CV president in 1932.

The war years of the early 1940's were busy for the CV, with frequent troop movements as well as the passage of trainloads of German prisoners of



Philip R. Hastings.

"MENTION of the Central Vermont evokes images of Phil Hastings or Jim Shaughnessy photos of 2-10-4's and 2-8-0's . . ." Extra 703 South (above) is on B&M double iron north of Brattleboro in December 1952, by which time the 2-10-4's, New England's largest engines, were only in standby duty. On September 28, 1955 (below), 2-8-0 474 crosses Lake Champlain with the daily local en route to D&H and Rutland interchange at Rouses Point, N.Y.

Jim Shaughnessy.



war en route to camps in Canada. The railway's first diesels, two Alco-GE S2 switchers, arrived in 1941. Following the war, CV's service to and from Montreal was taken off the St. Armand Sub and rerouted over the CN north of East Alburgh. Most of the St. Armand line was abandoned nine years later. A New York stevedores' strike in 1946 resulted in the discontinuance of CV's New London-New York boat service, and the three ferries were scrapped two years later. Steam locomotives began to vanish also, as all through freights began running with CN diesels starting in 1953. The end of steam came in 1957.

Other branches were abandoned or sold off. In 1958, trackage from Montpelier Junction through Montpelier to Barre was sold to shortline entrepreneur Samuel Pinsly, and emerged as the Montpelier & Barre. (The line became the Washington County in 1981.) In 1962, CV abandoned 8.3 miles from East Alburgh to Rouses Point, but continued to serve the latter place by utilizing 15 miles of CN trackage rights via Cantic, Que. In 1966, the remaining 2.9-mile stub of the St. Armand Sub, from Fonda Junction to East Swanton,

was sold to the St. Johnsbury & La-moille County, allowing the short line to abandon an old three-span covered bridge at Swanton and make its CV interchange at Fonda Junction.

The 1960's and 1970's were also rough for the CV, as tonnage and earnings continued to drop. In 1965, the Post Office began trucking mail, a change that resulted in the abolishment of CV's local passenger trains on the northern end. One year later, the end would come for all CV varnish as through Washington-Montreal service ended. New Interstate highways that paralleled the railroad for much of its length permitted the truckers an opportunity to siphon away more freight.

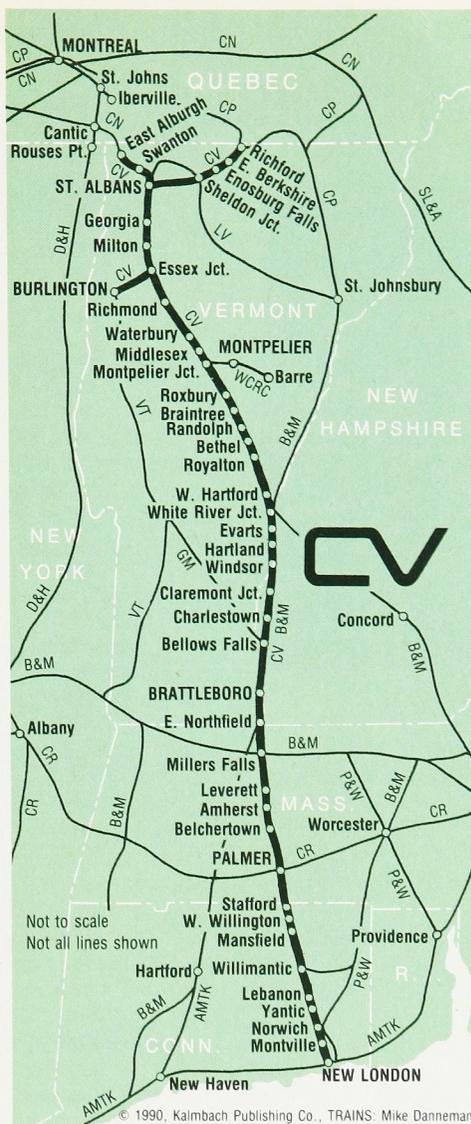
The 1969 inclusion of the New Haven into the Penn Central also hurt CV, as much traffic previously interchanged with the New Haven at New London began to move over other routings. However, as a positive note, remaining CV-PC (ex-NH) interchange was moved from New London to Palmer (on PC's Boston & Albany line) in 1972, resulting in 65 miles less line haul for CV but no reduction in revenues.

The railroad built an automobile unloading terminal at Sharon, Vt., in 1969, but closed it just six years later. The property would later become a lumber distribution center.

A 1971 restructuring of Canadian National's American subsidiaries put CV, Grand Trunk Western, and Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific under the auspices of the Grand Trunk Corporation, headquartered in Detroit. The CV lost more and more of its independence as most of its officer positions were held by GT Corporation executives. Similarly, many CV management and operational functions were moved away from St. Albans. Even the railroad's dispatching was handled out of Montreal from 1969 to 1976.

Some local control began to return by 1974, when the positions of executive vice president and comptroller-treasurer were restored at St. Albans. The line's train dispatching functions returned in 1976, and the St. Albans shop reestablished a program for major locomotive overhauls in 1979. Some functions are better handled on a system basis, however, and Central Vermont track equipment and materials and stores still are provided by GT Corp. All heavy locomotive work is done at GTW's Battle Creek (Mich.) shop, a classic steam-era backshop facility, and CV support functions and information gathering are centralized in Detroit. CV is also considering having GTW handle its billing.

In 1977 Philip C. Larson, formerly general manager of the DW&P, came to CV as its new general manager, a



position in which he would remain for 12 years. Larson had hired out as a carman apprentice on the Nickel Plate and had worked his way up on the NKP, its successor Norfolk & Western, and DW&P. During his years on CV, the railway implemented many innovations in service and operations in an attempt to reverse a continuing decline in freight traffic.

In late 1989, Larson left CV, and soon afterward became general manager of a big new regional railroad spun off by Norfolk Southern, the Wheeling & Lake Erie ["Rebirth of the Wheeling," pages 18B-20, June 1990 TRAINS]. Replacing him as CV's top local official was General Manager Chris Burger, a former vice president of the Chicago & North Western.

Burger immediately faced several major challenges. The company was ending the year with an operating loss of \$3.7 million and a net loss of \$1.7 million; traffic was down; much of CV's traditional interchange received from parent Canadian National at Montreal was finding itself on competitors' rails; and labor costs were consuming 52 cents of each revenue dollar.

Burger believes that Central Ver-

mont cannot continue to rely upon "one-time items" such as land sales to help offset its operating losses, nor can employees think that the railroad will continue to be subsidized by its parents. "One day, perhaps sooner than later, we will run out of assets to sell," Burger says. "No one who is following what is happening in Canada, with railroad deficits and cuts in VIA Rail, can really believe that Canadian National is interested in, or able to subsidize, a money-losing subsidiary. This is our railroad, and we have to make money from operating it. We must put back into it in order to remain strong and so that we can pay a return on investment to our owners." Burger feels that new attitudes by all CV's employees is very essential to the railroad's survival [see page 36].

Today's CV, south to north

Let's examine today's Central Vermont from south to north. At New London, CV's southernmost track is an interchange switch which cuts off Amtrak's Northeast Corridor adjacent to Union Station. This track is utilized by Amtrak's *Montrealer* and for CV interchange with Providence & Worcester, which provides freight service on this portion of the Corridor. CV's area facilities are 1.1 miles north, at East New London, and include a small yard plus a mostly unused roundhouse and turntable. All operating, office, and management functions previously based at New London are performed at Palmer.

The line follows the west bank of the Thames River (pronounced as it is spelled, not Tems, like the one in London), passing the U.S. Coast Guard Academy on its way north. The track passes through a short tunnel just north of Norwich. Willimantic was at one time a major Central Vermont/New Haven junction, but today, P&W's former NH line from Plainfield into the city is out of service. In 1989, however, the Connecticut Valley Railroad Museum entered into a lease agreement to move its collection from Essex to a new site adjacent to the CV track in Willimantic. CVRM has several operable diesel and steam locomotives, and hopes eventually to work out operating arrangements with both CV and P&W.

Central Vermont continues north through rural eastern Connecticut, and it is this portion that has seen the most growth in recent years, with many new customers (grain, feed, fertilizer, and lumber operations) receiving rail service. At State Line siding, 56 miles from New London, CV crosses into Massachusetts, and just 9 miles farther, arrives at Palmer, base of operations for the south end ["TRAINS Hot Spots," pages 76-77, December 1990]. Central Vermont, which crosses Conrail's busy

"We must start thinking like a short line"



Scott Hartley.

NEW General Manager Chris Burger is counting on CV people.

I THE top local official on the Central Vermont is General Manager C.J. ("Chris") Burger. He reports directly to Grand Trunk Corporation President Gerald L. Maas in Detroit, who also serves as president of CV, Grand Trunk Western, and Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific. Interestingly, Maas and Burger worked together on the New York Central in the mid-1960's.

Burger, 50, is a native of New York and a 1963 graduate of Providence College in Rhode Island. He worked for the NYC during summer vacations and entered the system's management training program upon graduation from college. After a hitch in the U.S. Army Railway Operating Unit at Fort Eustis, Va., he returned to the Central, this time as a locomotive fireman. He was appointed general yardmaster at NYC's Collinwood Yard in Cleveland in 1965 and served in several management positions until December 1967, when he left to join Chicago & North Western. He began his C&NW career as trainmaster at Madison, Wis., and rose through the ranks to vice president, corporate communications and finally assistant vice president transportation/general manager, the title he held when he left C&NW in August 1989.

Chris Burger is also an admitted railroad enthusiast. An active member of the Mid-Continent Railway Museum in North Freedom, Wis., he was the moving force in arranging for the operation of the museum's ex-C&NW R-1 class 4-6-0 1385 on North Western main lines during the 1980's.

Burger is frank about the future of the Central Vermont. He points out that CV has less mileage than many new regional railroads, and that his company is really a big short line, both in terms of mileage and traffic. "But in some ways, we still think as if we are a Class 1," he says. "Our operating structure and our labor agreements are like those of Class 1 lines. We must start thinking like a short line."

He acknowledges that CV's traffic levels are low, and that "we spend too much time switching the cars we haul." CV carries 30,000 to 35,000 cars a year, but Burger points out that this averages out to fewer than 100 a day. His plan is to "look at everything . . . look at how we do business." Burger hopes to reduce labor costs, which account for 52 percent CV's total expenses, through what he describes as more realistic labor agreements and by finding more efficient ways to operate.

Non-labor issues are receiving closer examination, too. Retirement of unnecessary track has reduced maintenance expense and generated cash from scrap sales. Relocation of functions, especially at St. Albans, has enabled CV to make entire buildings available for rent or sale, and reduce the cost of heat (a big item in Vermont) and lighting. The number of locomotives needed to operate CV has been reduced from 29 to 23 since January 1990. Burger expects 1990 expenses to be reduced more than \$1 million from 1989.

Despite his no-nonsense approach to cutting costs, Burger brought a personal touch to Central Vermont management. One of his first actions upon arrival in St. Albans in December 1989 was to set up a Christmas tree in the railroad's headquarters building—a decoration that had been lacking in previous years. Employee picnics were resumed at St. Albans and Palmer in 1990. Burger emphasizes open communications with employees. "Employees want to do a good job. Tell them what you want, and chances are you'll get it." Burger says that CV people must be aware of the serious challenges facing their company, why the railroad has lost business to both trucks and other railroads, and most important, what their part is in the plan to reverse negative trends. To this end, he established a new employee newsletter, "The Ambassador," which includes coverage of railroad activities, features on employees, and hard facts about the railroad's survival.

At a series of employee meetings in July 1990, Burger outlined CV's "game plan," covering such topics as "Operate the Safest Railroad Possible," "Focus on Quality," "Grow the Business," "Improve Productivity," "Increase Other (non-operating) Income," and "Improve Communications and Morale."

The meetings emphasized what management is doing and how individual employees can contribute to achieving these goals. "More than 50 percent of CV's employees attended the meetings, and the response was excellent," says Burger. "Everyone felt we should have similar meetings regularly, which we will do. There was good feedback, as well as several suggestions which are being implemented.

"Many employees expected a doom and gloom presentation from me, but I started each one by stating that I don't see the CV that way. We do a lot more things right than we do wrong. We need to capitalize on this, and recognize our problem areas.

"Concern over the environment, air quality, and deteriorating highways is increasing daily," Burger says. "Railroads can be part of the solution and gain not only business but public support, if we are smart enough and work hard enough. The future is not gloom and doom unless we make it so."—*Scott Hartley.*

former Boston & Albany route on a diamond just north of CV's offices, does brisk interchange business with Conrail here, and CV's tiny yard tests the creative switching abilities of train crews every day. Actual interchange is made in Conrail's yard about a mile east of the diamond. CV also connects with short line Massachusetts Central, operator of former Conrail trackage, just north of the CR diamond.

To the north, CV passes through Belchertown and Amherst, home of the University of Massachusetts and now

an Amtrak stop. Just south of Millers Falls, milepost 99.6, CV crosses a trestle over Boston & Maine's east-west main line, and then the two railroads run side by side for about a mile. An interchange track still exists, although cars are rarely exchanged here. CV then leaps across the Millers River on a spindly high trestle just north of town. At East Northfield, CV crosses to the west side of the Connecticut River and makes a connection with B&M's Connecticut River line ("Conn River") up from Springfield, Mass. Until 1988, CV

and B&M trains utilized portions of each other's lines from East Northfield to White River Junction. B&M dispatched all operations over the 74-mile route, under an agreement dating to 1900, but ownership alternated: CV owned from East Northfield to Brattleboro (10 miles) and Windsor to White River Junction (14 miles), while B&M owned the middle 50 miles between Brattleboro and Windsor. Each railroad was responsible for track maintenance of the sections it owned.

By the mid-1980's, B&M's owner

Guilford had badly neglected its trackage on this route, resulting in extensive delays to its own trains as well as to CV freights and Amtrak's *Montrealer*. Finally, track speeds resulted in the cancellation of the passenger train in 1987. Utilizing condemnation powers granted in its enabling legislation, Amtrak took title to the 50 miles of B&M, paying Guilford \$2.37 million, and immediately resold the line to CV for the same price. Three months of frantic rebuilding by CV forces resulted in the entire line being restored to 40 mph freight and 59 mph passenger track speeds, and permitted restoration of the *Montrealer* in July 1989 [see page 26, October 1989 TRAINS].

The status of the Conn River line remains unclear. On August 10, 1990, in response to several petitions for review, a federal appellate court ruled that the ICC had exceeded its authority when it permitted Amtrak to convey B&M's trackage to a freight competitor. CV continues to operate and dispatch the line pending further action. Since Guilford had identified the line as an abandonment candidate, many observers predict CV will ultimately possess the line but GTI will be awarded a higher sale price.

With the change in ownership, dispatching responsibilities for the East Northfield-White River Junction segment were transferred to the CV at St. Albans. Centralized Traffic Control had long existed over the length of the B&M/CV joint trackage, and with the dispatching move, CV acquired its first CTC trackage. The remainder of CV's system operates under Manual Block System rules. A computer-assisted MBS system replaced the road's train order/timetable dispatching in 1989.

Just north of East Northfield, the Conn River line enters Vermont and follows the west bank of the river northward, through Brattleboro and Bellows Falls, both Amtrak stops. At the latter, a connection is made with the Green Mountain Railroad, operator of the 50-mile former Rutland line between Bellows Falls and Rutland. CV crosses to the New Hampshire side of the Connecticut, passing through Claremont Junction, an Amtrak stop since 1989, and a connection with short line Claremont & Concord. North of Claremont Junction, CV crosses a high trestle over the Sugar River, and a few miles farther north, crosses back to the Vermont side of the river at Windsor. Fourteen miles north is White River Junction, where B&M's track continues north along the river another 40 miles to a CP Rail connection at Wells River, while CV's original Vermont Central line strikes northwest across the state to reach Lake Champlain.

CV follows the White River and its



Collection of J. David Ingles.

TRIO of GP9's at Bellows Falls in 1963 showed post-steam CV image: CN green and gold.

Third Branch all the way to Roxbury, crossing these waterways several times on impressive steel trestles. The line passes through several small Vermont towns, all appearing like Currier & Ives prints, before reaching the top of the Green Mountains grade at Roxbury. From here, the railroad drops downgrade through the former VC headquarters town of Northfield to Montpelier Junction, where a small wooden CV station handles Amtrak's business. This is the interchange with short line Washington County, whose Alco S1's bring out finished products from Bombardier's passenger-car plant at Barre.

Central Vermont then follows the Winooski River as it continues northwest, encountering more photogenic trestles along the way. As CV approaches the outskirts of Burlington, at 38,000 Vermont's largest city, the line swings northward to Essex Junction. The original VC turned southwesterly here to reach Burlington's Lake Champlain waterfront, by way of a short tunnel outside town. Today this line is CV's 8-mile Winooski Subdivision (or simply, the Burlington branch), which produces a healthy amount of on-line freight and Vermont Railway interchange (VTR took over the greater portion of the old Rutland). Meanwhile, CV continues northward on the original Vermont & Canada line to St. Albans. At Georgia, the line crosses the Lamoille River on the Georgia High Bridge, a photographers' favorite.

Entering CV's headquarters, the line first passes the makeshift piggy-back yard in the south end of town. Just north of the Lake Street grade crossing is CV's general office building, and beyond that a two-story brick building that serves as Amtrak's station. CV's shops and roundhouse are next. The Richford Spur, a 27-mile

branch to a CP Rail connection at Richford, cuts off the main at St. Albans. This scenic line is severed in the middle by a damaged bridge at Sheldon Junction, and although Lamoille Valley (operator of the old St. Johnsbury & Lamoille County) briefly leased the Sheldon Junction-Richford portion in 1988, much of the branch is inactive and CV has received permission to abandon it between St. Albans and Sheldon Junction.

CV's major classification facility, Italy Yard, is located just north of St. Albans. The road's dispatchers were housed in the Italy Yard office until 1990, when they moved downtown to the headquarters building. North of Italy is Fonda Junction, where CV's former St. Armand Sub, which now belongs to LVRC, cuts off to the northeast. Due to lack of business, the short line rarely ventures over its west end, and interchange here is virtually nonexistent.

The CV continues north through Swanton and on to East Alburgh. The line swings west and tiptoes over a lengthy wood pile trestle across an outlet of Lake Champlain. The original Vermont & Canada main continued through Alburgh and across an even longer second trestle to reach Rouses Point. The costly trestle and CV's track west of East Alburgh were abandoned in 1962, in favor of utilizing CN north of East Alburgh; officially, CV ends and CN begins on the international border just north of East Alburgh, although CV dispatches the line an additional 9.8 miles to Cantic, Que. From East Alburgh, Montreal is just 52 miles away.

Always trying

During General Manager Larson's tenure, Central Vermont introduced a wide variety of services in hopes that it



Scott Hartley.

ALCOS, including last S4 and ex-DW&P RS11's, gathered at White River Junction in 1983.

Diesels of the Central Vermont

Nos.	Builder, Year	Model	H.P.	Remarks
1500-1502	EMD, 1955	SW1200	1200	Originally GTW 1505, 1507-1508; to 1200, 1202-1203 in 1956; to 1500-1502 in 1957; to CV in 1963; to GTW in 1968
1509-1510	EMD, 1957	SW1200	1200	Flexicoil trucks; originally GTW 1269-1270; to 1509-1510 in 1958; to CV in 1963; to GTW in 1989
1511	EMD, 1960	SW1200	1200	Flexicoil trucks; originally GTW, to CV, 1963; to GTW, 1989
3041-3042	Alco, 1954	RS3	1600	Originally GT 1861-1862; to CV in March 1957; to CN in December 1957; retired in 1968
3600-3614	Alco, 1956	RS11	1800	Originally DW&P; 3609-3614 to CV in 1965, to DW&P in 1968; 3600-3605, 3609, 3611-3612, 3614 to CV in 1977; 3608, 3610, 3613 to CV in 1983; 3606, 3611 leased to Quaboag Transfer, 1985-1988; 3600, 3603-3604 sold to Genesee Valley Leasing Associates in 1988; 3605, 3606, 3611 sold to Winchester & Western in 1988, 3606 resold to Massachusetts Central in 1990; 3608, 3612 to Lamoille Valley in 1988; 3602, 3609-3610, 3613-3614 scrapped
3602 (2nd)	EMD, 1961	GP18	1800	Ex-CRI&P 1345, acquired in 1984
3609 (2nd)	Alco, 1958	RS11	1800	Ex-N&W 367, acquired as wreck replacement in 1979; to Winchester & Western in 1988, resold in 1990
3614 (2nd)	EMD, 1960	GP18	1800	Ex-CRI&P 1334, acquired in 1984
3900-3901	Alco, 1954	RS3	1600	Originally CV 1859-1860; to 3900-3901 in April 1957; to CN 3900-3901 in January 1958, retired in 1973, 1968
4138	EMD, 1958	GP9	1750	Originally GTW; to CV in 1988
4442-4450	EMD, 1956	GP9	1750	Originally GT; to CV in 1963; 4442, 4445, 4447-4448, 4450 sold to St. Lawrence & Atlantic in 1989; others to GTW from 1977 to 1989
4542	EMD, 1957	GP9	1750	Originally GTW; to CV in 1990
4547-4551	EMD, 1957	GP9	1750	All to GTW from 1977 to 1989
4552-4557	EMD, 1957	GP9	1750	To GTW in 1965
4558-4559	EMD, 1957	GP9	1750	Originally GT; to CV in 1963; 4558 to GTW in 1988
4605-4608	EMD, 1957	GP9R	1750	Originally CV 4551, GTW 4914, CV 4550, CV 4556, rebuilt by GTW 1989-1990; to CV in 1990 (next in series, 4609-4610, ex-4925, 4904, also planned to go to CV)
4902-4906	EMD, 1956	GP9	1750	Originally GT, steam-generator-equipped; to CV in 1963; all to GTW by 1983
4923-4929	EMD, 1957	GP9	1750	Steam-generator-equipped; 4923-4925, 4927-4928 to GTW in 1990; 4929 wrecked, scrapped in 1972
4929 (2nd)	EMD, 1955	GP9	1750	Ex-BN 1855, nee NP 229; to GTW in 1988; to FRVR in 1989
5800-5804, 5807-5812	EMD, 1971	GP38AC	2000	Originally GTW; 5803-5804, 5807-5809 damaged on CV at Sharon, Vt., in August 1990, and returned to GTW
8027	Alco, 1953	S4	1000	To GTW in 1969; retired
8080-8081	Alco, 1955	S4	1000	8080 to GTW in 1977; 8081 sold to K&L Feeds in 1988
8093	Alco, 1941	S2	1000	Originally GTW 7917; to CV in 1948; to CV 8093 in 1956; to GTW in 1967; retired
8094-8095	Alco, 1941	S2	1000	Originally 7918-7919; to 8094-8085 in 1956; to GTW in 1967; retired
8162	Alco, 1951	S4	1000	Originally 8015; to 8162 in 1956; to GTW in 1968; retired
8205	Alco, 1956	S4	1000	Originally GT 8205 (Rouses Point); to CV in 1963; to GTW in 1964; retired

Notes:

All units B-B wheel arrangement.

Central Vermont customarily has leased most units from parents Canadian National or Grand Trunk Western, now Grand Trunk Corporation, and reassignments or swaps among CN's U.S. subsidiaries have been common. All units currently on CV belong to GTC. GTW units used on CV in recent years on short-term basis include GP9's 4135-4137, 4139, 4441, 4557, 4917-4918, 4921-4922.

Units assigned to CV as of October 11, 1990: CV GP9's 4138, 4542 (blue), 4559 (green), 4926 (green); GP18's 3602 (green), 3614 (green); and GP38AC 5800 (blue), all lettered CV; GTW units (lettered GT) GP9's 4134, 4139, 4917-4918, 4920-4921, GP9R's 4605-4608, GP38AC's 5801-5802, 5810-5811, 6209, 6217 (ex-DT&I 209, 217)—23 units total. When damaged 5800's are repaired and returned to CV, 4100's will go back to GTW.

Key to initials: CN, Canadian National; CV, Central Vermont; DT&I, Detroit, Toledo & Ironton; DW&P, Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific; GT, Grand Trunk (New England: Island Pond, Vt.-Portland, Me.); GTW, Grand Trunk Western. BN, Burlington Northern; CRI&P, Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific; FRVR, Fox River Valley; NP, Northern Pacific; N&W, Norfolk & Western.

Roster accurate as of November 1, 1990. Sources: Robert Harmon, Central Vermont; Don Gezon, GTW; EMD Product Reference Data, *Railroad Magazine*.—Scott Hartley.

could retain its traffic levels. Despite these efforts, CV could not be considered really healthy, and about half of the years saw the railway posting losses. At one low point in 1983, parent Grand Trunk Corporation announced that CV was for sale, but revoked the offer shortly thereafter. Quite simply, New England is not a good business environment in which to operate a railroad. Nevertheless, many of Larson's projects were innovative.

In 1978, for example, CV attempted to attract new traffic with the introduction of a Montreal-Palmer piggyback hotshot, the *Rocket*. With the blessing of CV's unions, just an engineer and conductor staffed these trains, which were to consist of no more than 15 cars, without caboose, between St. Albans and Palmer. (Full crews were used north of St. Albans, where Canadian National rules still applied.) Employing the name of a B&M/CV/CN Boston-Chicago freight service of the 1930's, the *Rocket* carried trailers between CN's Turcot Yard in Montreal and Palmer, just an hour from Boston via I-90, the Massachusetts Turnpike. Although CV's employees were eager to contribute to the success of the new operation, Montreal area truckers' unions were much less enthusiastic and threatened to picket CN because of it. As a result, the train's northern terminus was cut back to St. Albans, where CV constructed a small intermodal yard south of town.

The *Rocket* was a mostly nighttime operation for the next six years, appearing as a second-class scheduled train in CV's employee timetable. The usual assigned power was dual-control-equipped RS11 3609 (a former Norfolk & Western unit) or GP9 4924, which CV modified with engineer controls on both sides of the cab. The operation expanded during the early 1980's, when Boston and New Haven sections were added, via the Boston & Maine. These were added and cut off the *Rocket* at Brattleboro. But despite the early optimism for this train, it was suspended in 1984 owing to insufficient revenues.

An unusual unit-train concept emerged on CV in 1984. Burlington Electric, which operates a woodchip-fired generating plant in Burlington, contracted with the railway to haul the fuel from a gathering point at East Swanton to Burlington, 37 miles. Using 22 shipper-owned giant open hoppers, the "Chip Train" makes two or three round trips a week, usually in the consist of a St. Albans-based wayfreight. During winter and other peak electricity periods, chip traffic will increase in frequency, and the train sometimes operates as a dedicated unit train.

The chips are loaded at East Swanton, a short distance from Fonda Junc-



Gary Knapp.

MIX of two each of CV's own GP9's and ex-DW&P Alco RS11's livened up consist powering train 444 at West Braintree on July 9, 1983.

tion on trackage that was once part of CV's St. Armand Sub, and is now owned by the Lamoille Valley. The chip train concept won a 1985 "Golden Freight Car Award" from the trade magazine *Modern Railroads*.

Another unit-train experiment began on the St. Albans-Palmer route in 1985. Quaboag Transfer contracted with CV to operate a dedicated train consisting of building products on flat cars and trailers of lumber riding on flat cars. Virtually all loads were southbound, received by Quaboag from Canadian sources at St. Albans. Quaboag Transfer even leased a pair of Central Vermont RS11's, repainted in a metallic green scheme, to ensure available power. (A Providence & Worcester GP9 in the same colors handled switching duties at Quaboag's facility just north of Palmer.) Later, a pair of blue ex-Conrail GP38's supplemented the trouble-prone Alcos. The trains made three round trips a week. Although Quaboag remains one of CV's major customers, the downturn in the region's building trade resulted in the cancellation of the unit train in 1988. Once again, though, the railroad was recognized for its efforts when it received *Modern Railroads'* Distinguished Marketing Award in 1986.

A more recent innovation came in 1988, when CV started hauling oil for a St. Albans dealer over its entire 302-mile main line. R.L. Vallee utilizes large storage tanks on CV property at New London to hold oil delivered by barge from a variety of sources. CV forwards the oil to Vallee's headquarters in St. Albans, utilizing two three-car TankTrain sets and three single cars, all owned by GATX. The tankers travel in regular CV freights, usually making the round trip in seven days, including

loading and unloading, which while slow is sufficient for the customer's needs.

The vast majority of CV's tonnage is received from CN via Montreal; in 1989, CN delivered 23,000 loads to CV. Interestingly, CN does not give preference to its subsidiaries when interchanging U.S.-bound traffic. Only about 40 percent of CN's southbound freight out of Montreal is turned over to CV. Delaware & Hudson receives about 20 percent, and Conrail the remaining 40. In recent years, Conrail has underpriced CV, and has taken a lot of business away from the smaller railway. D&H interchange from CN may drop, assuming CP Rail's control of it is approved.

Conrail, though, is also CV's second-most provider of interchange, turning over 5200 cars at Palmer in 1989. Vermont Railway delivered 900, and Boston & Maine and Green Mountain each accounted for 600. Another 2000 cars originated on-line.

An important change in recent years has been the diminishing importance of CV's historic role as a bridge line (where the railroad hauls products from eastern Canada and forwards them to other U.S. railroads). Today, more than 60 percent of CV's carloads terminate on-line. In 1989, the remaining cars were turned over to Conrail (6000), CN (1400), B&M (2300), and VTR (500).

Forest products make up the overwhelming majority of the Central Vermont's cargoes, accounting for 59.1 percent of its annual operating revenues. Next important are agricultural products and ores and metals (8.6 percent each), followed by construction materials and fuels and chemicals (7.2 each).

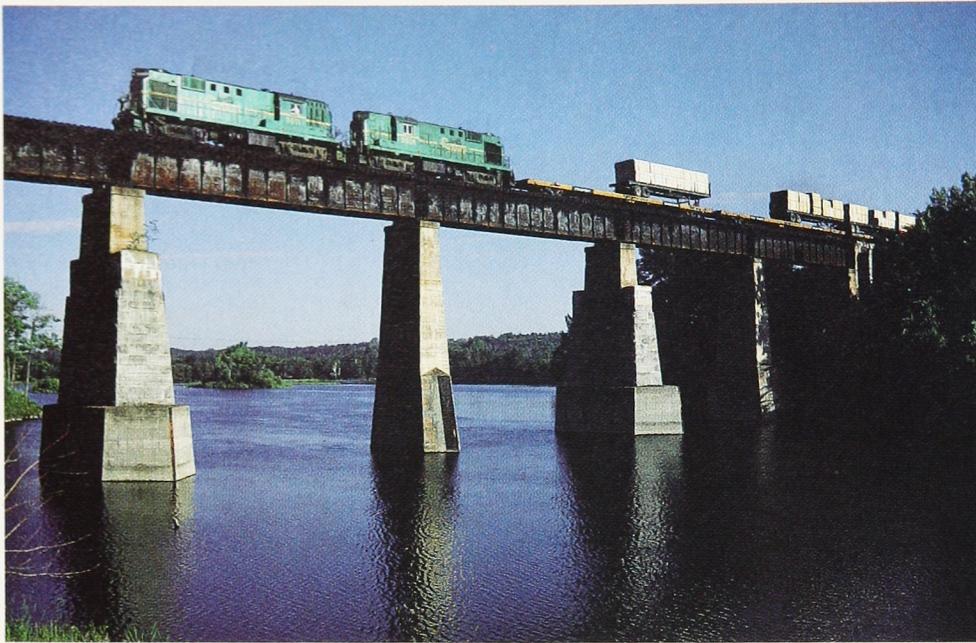
CV's big shippers are spread along

the length of the line. The company's largest customer is Burlington Electric, which receives 3300 cars, virtually all woodchips, a year. Other important consignees in Vermont include PMI Lumber in Sharon (occupant of the former 1960's auto-rack facility), which receives 1200 cars annually, and Agway at St. Albans, which accounts for 500 inbound and outbound cars each year.

In Massachusetts, Maple Leaf Distributors at Palmer accounts for 1800 carloads of newsprint a year, while Northeast Warehouse in Monson receives 1800 cars of paper, Western Massachusetts Transfer at Monson gets 1300 cars of lumber products, and Independent Cement at Belchertown takes 1000 cars. And even though it no longer contracts with CV for its own train, Quaboag Transfer just north of Palmer receives about 1500 cars a year.

In Connecticut, Phelps-Dodge at Norwich is CV's largest customer, receiving 1700 cars of copper products annually. C.C. Lounsbury, a lumber reload facility at North Willimantic, receives 1200 cars a year. Two feed and grain distributors, K&L Feed and Koffkoff, both between Norwich and Willimantic, each account for 1000 cars. K&L operates its own plant switcher, former CV S4 8081, which was CV's last Alco switcher. Recently, CV has been hauling about 50 carloads of fly ash weekly from a large cogeneration plant at Montville, Conn., cars destined for disposal in the South. They move over a roundabout CV-Green Mountain-Vermont Railway-Delaware & Hudson-CSX routing.

Central Vermont's other major customer is Amtrak. Each night, Amtrak trains 60 and 61 (carrying numbers 623 and 624, respectively, in CV's employee timetable) run over the entire CV be-



Scott Hartley.

SHIPPER Quaboag Transfer's own RS11's cross the Georgia bridge with *Rocket* in 1986.



Scott Hartley.

RICHFORD branch, now disused, hosted SW1200 on local at East Berkshire May 25, 1984.



Scott Hartley.

CHIP TRAIN for Burlington Electric is on the move at Fonda Junction February 13, 1987.

tween New London and East Alburgh as part of their Washington-Montreal journey. CV had not been part of the original Amtrak network in 1971, but public support and political lobbying resulted in the restoration of Montreal passenger service in September 1972. Since then, the *Montrealer* has provided welcome revenue to lightly utilized CV.

Today's operations

Despite the immaculate appearance of CV's white-ballasted main line, most of the railroad is underutilized, seeing just one or two freights, plus Amtrak, in each direction daily. CV's most important freights are southbound 444 and northbound 447, which run between CN's Taschereau Yard near Montreal, and Palmer. Between Montreal and St. Albans, CN GP40-2W's are the regularly assigned power, and CN and CV crews split the work. South of St. Albans, 444 and 447 usually rate sets of four to six GP38AC's, on lease from CV parent Grand Trunk Western, although CV and GTW GP9's still show up regularly. Generally, one crew handles 444 or 447 between St. Albans and Brattleboro one day, working home on the next train after their mandatory 8-hour rest. A Brattleboro-based crew usually makes a Brattleboro-Palmer turn as a 444/447 round trip in one working day. Train 444 terminates and 447 originates at Palmer partially because so much of CV's traffic is Conrail interchange.

Interestingly, the south end of CV was an isolated operation for a six-year period beginning in 1976. At that time, Central Vermont entered into an agreement with Boston & Maine for the latter to handle all CV's Conrail interchange freight between White River Junction and Springfield, Mass., as part of a new run-through freight between St. Albans and Springfield. The roads pooled motive power on these trains. Cars to and from southern CV points were dropped or picked up at Brattleboro by the B&M through freights. The CV/CR interchange was returned to Palmer in 1982, as CV restored its own through freights south of White River Junction.

Southbound wayfreight 554 and its northbound counterpart 555 take care of most local switching on their daytime runs between Palmer and New London.

In addition to these trains, a St. Albans-based wayfreight covers the main line between Swanton and Montpelier Junction, as well as the branch to Burlington. This job usually handles the Burlington Electric wood chips as well, but sometimes an extra is called to perform this work. A New London-based wayfreight covers the south end, switching several of the large custom-

ers there. A local crew handles interchange and train makeup at Palmer, as well as road-switching in the area. Trains 554/555 and the wayfreights usually rate sets of GP9's and/or recently arrived Battle Creek-rebuilt GP9's (EMD GP9's labeled "GP9R's" that have been upgraded to GP38-2 standards and reconfigured with lowered short hoods).

Only trains 444 and 447 regularly operate with cabooses, usually Canadian National international pool vans. CV has no electronic defect detectors along its lines, and CV's labor agreements do not permit further caboose reductions, but General Manager Burger says he hopes to reach agreement soon to eliminate the cars.

In recent years, the south end of the CV, particularly Connecticut, has experienced healthy growth, with many small and medium-sized customers locating along the line. Most of these businesses deal in lumber, building supplies, chemicals, grain, feed, and fertilizer. As a result, the daily New London-Palmer trains have plenty of local switching. Meanwhile, the north end has witnessed serious decline in local consignees. At most times, trains 444 and 447 take care of the small amounts of switching left between Essex Junction and Brattleboro, eliminating the need for wayfreights.

CV's financial picture has been



Scott Hartley.

MINI unit TankTrain heads under I-95 leaving New London behind Geeps in February 1989.

rather bleak for much of the past decade. During seven of the 10 years, CV posted losses from its rail operations, but nonrail income has been sufficient to allow the railway to show a net loss in only three of the years.

The results for 1989 were particularly dismal. Railway operating losses were \$3.7 million, a big jump from the previous year's \$900,000 loss. The sale of real estate in New London for \$1 million, plus other nonrail gains, cut the net loss to \$1.7 million, compared with 1988's loss of only \$100,000.

Much of the recent drop in performance may be explained by the overall poor economy in New England. CV's carload count decreased 7.8 percent in 1989, due in large part to a major decline in construction activity. Lumber and cement traffic dropped accordingly. In addition, CV continued to lose newspaper traffic as Conrail offered shippers better rates and one-carrier service. Gains in traffic were from additional distribution terminals for fuels, chemicals, and metals located along CV lines.

Similarly, employment levels on



Gary Knapp.

NORTH of St. Albans, CN power and crews are the norm. Three CN wide-nose GP40's head 444 on trestle at East Alburgh August 2, 1990.

CV have continued a downward trend. CV listed 240 employees at the beginning of 1990, down from 412 a decade earlier. Of the current ranks, 21 are management, with the remainder represented by a variety of unions.

Diesels, from green to blue

Central Vermont has long been a favorite of locomotive fans, due in no small part to its unusual and often antiquated roster. CV was the last major New England railroad to dieselize. It did so in 1957, with 18 EMD GP9's (divided between freight-only and dual-service units) set up, as per CN custom, to run long-hood-forward. These Geeps were purchased at the same time that CV's neighbors New Haven and Boston & Maine were replacing their initial World War II vintage diesels with new road-switchers. Remarkably, several of CV's first-generation units continue to run even today [see "Happy 30th," pages 22-23, September 1987 TRAINS].

CV was not a late buyer of steam, with the aforementioned group from Alco in the 1920's being the final acquisitions: 8 0-8-0's, 16 2-8-0's, 4 4-8-2's, and 10 low-drivered 2-10-4's. Although CV bought several Alco-GE switchers and RS3's during the late 1940's and early 1950's, steam continued to be an attraction on CV long after the fires had been put out on most other area lines. Most through freight service was dieselized in 1953, utilizing an interesting assortment of leased CN Canadian-built Montreal Locomotive Works FA's, GMD F7's, and Canadian Locomotive Co. C-Liners. Into 1957, however, CV still rostered 1 Mountain, 1 Texas, 3 0-8-0's, and 14 Consolidations. The end

came on April 8, 1957, when 2-8-0 451 tied up in Brattleboro after handling a wayfreight up from New London.

For the next two decades, CV operations remained mostly in the hands of the GP9's. Other units from CN family roads appeared periodically—notably American-built GP9's assigned to and lettered for Grand Trunk (CN's Montreal to Portland, Me., line), which were exchanged regularly for CV units since St. Albans maintained them. In 1963, these engines were officially assigned to the CV, although they continued to carry GT lettering until the late 1970's. CV continued to provide motive power for GT local freights until CN sold the line to the new St. Lawrence & Atlantic in 1989. Some GTW EMD SW1200's turned up on CV (in exchange for freight GP9's, easily spotted on GTW by their dynamic braking grids), as well as a small number of 1000 h.p. Alco switchers. Other visitors included a half dozen of Duluth, Winnipeg & Pacific's 15 Alco RS11's, which worked in New England from 1965 to 1968.

The Minnesota Alcos began to return again in 1977, and over the following six years, all 15 were transferred to CV in a three-way deal which saw more CV GP9's go to GTW and GTW SD40's go to DW&P. The mid-1980's were rough times for CV's operating personnel as the tired Alcos outnumbered the road's own GP9's and moving large trains over the Green Mountains became a daily adventure.

Central Vermont power historically has carried Canadian National colors with CV lettering. The Geeps were delivered in CN's olive green and gold, and most later were repainted in the

newer black, red, and white, complete with a CV version of CN's "wet noodle" logo. The DW&P RS11's brought five (!) additional paint schemes and added a great deal of color to CV diesel consists.

In 1977, CV began to display an independent image, repainting units in an attractive green and yellow scheme designed by conductor George Mumley. By 1981, all of CV's roster (GP9's, RS11's, SW1200's, and the last S4, 8081) carried these colors. The final DW&P Alcos arrived a couple of years later, and they also were repainted into CV green and yellow.

But CV's rolling museum fleet was wearing out. Several of the RS11's were retired, and CV parent GTW began replacing these units with its own blue, red, and white GP9's. Some of these soon had CV logos applied over the big white "GT" on their flanks. The last Alcos survived into 1988, when the 8081 and the last RS11's were sold.

Larger power finally arrived in the late 1980's, in the form of several GTW GP38AC's. Although these 2000 h.p. units currently are pushing 20 years old, they were quickly dubbed the "big engines" by CV crews long accustomed to elderly Geeps and Alcos of 1800 h.p. and less. The latest new assignments to CV have been the Grand Trunk Western's "GP9R" units. Additional CV GP9's have been returned to GTW in exchange for the rebuilds, and five Geeps were sold to the new St. Lawrence & Atlantic in 1989. Due to these transfers, most of CV's current fleet wears GTW blue, with just four units still in the green "independence" scheme. And with Battle Creek now handling all major CV locomotive repair, the green can be expected to disappear.

THE Central Vermont Railway is just one of many once-major American railroads that have become marginal businesses in these years of mega-mergers and large-scale abandonments. Many of these companies have survived and even succeeded by tailoring their operations to meet changing markets. Chris Burger believes that CV's declining fortunes can be turned around, and he is confident that the railroad's employees will work to reach that goal. The successes of new regional lines in the Northeast prove that cost-effective, customer-oriented railroads will work. Burger wants to see the CV follow these other railroads' resurgences. **I**

SCOTT HARTLEY, a Connecticut native and resident, is a frequent contributor to TRAINS on motive power and other facets of Northeastern railroading. He acknowledges Robert C. Jones' six-volume history The Central Vermont Railway (Sundance Books, 1981) in preparation of this article.



Gary Knapp.

RELETTERED CV, ex-GTW GP38 leads five sisters past CV St. Albans HQ January 28, 1990.

Yankee



Regionals in Review



IF YOU think of the modern regional railroad as a new concept, consider that today's Providence & Worcester, perhaps the first of the "recent" ones, has come of age. Yes, the modern P&W celebrated its 21st anniversary of independent operation on February 3, 1994. It now operates on 406 route-miles in Rhode Island, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, most of it former New Haven Railroad, with some ex-Boston & Maine trackage.

Unlike most other modern regionals, which are new organizations established to operate trackage cast off by

larger systems, Providence & Worcester has existed continuously since the 1840's, owning the 43-mile line that connects its namesake cities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts plus a 6-mile branch to East Providence. Today's P&W still runs those lines, and owns an additional 131 route-miles in the three states. P&W also provides freight service to customers on 151 miles of essentially passenger lines—Amtrak's Northeast Corridor between Providence and New Haven, and two Connecticut branches of Metro-North Commuter (MNCR). P&W also utilizes overhead trackage rights on Metro-North,

independence

How Providence & Worcester grew from being an obscure branch of the New Haven into today's 400-mile regional

BY SCOTT HARTLEY

PHOTOS BY THE AUTHOR



Conrail, and Danbury Terminal Railroad Company, a new subsidiary of another, smaller new regional, Housatonic Railroad in Connecticut.

Over its 150 years, Providence & Worcester evolved from one of hundreds of small New England railroads. After operating independently for its first 40 years, P&W was leased to larger railroads and became part of the New York, New Haven & Hartford in 1893.

Most of the New Haven's rail acquisitions were made through merger or purchase, but NH acquired only 28 percent of P&W's stock. This was what would allow

today's regional to re-emerge in 1973. Providence & Worcester became part of the growing New Haven system through a 99-year lease. From 1893 onward, P&W was operated as a New Haven line, and NH paid P&W's property taxes, maintenance costs, and an annual rental of \$350,000. This lease income was distributed to P&W stockholders each year as a \$10-per-share dividend.

New Haven's eagerness to control everything that moved by rail in its region resulted in a system of duplicative lines. While leased to the New Haven, the Providence & Worcester was never more than a branch line,

P&W has the freight rights on Amtrak's Northeast Corridor between Providence and New Haven. Locals NR-2 and NH-1 meet and exchange cars at Old Saybrook, Conn., on September 24, 1993.

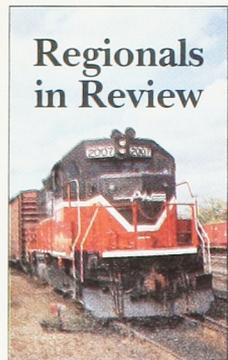


Nowhere else in the U.S. could you find GM/GE/MLW consists like this, on NR-2 along the Thames at Gales Ferry, Conn., May 18, 1992.

although the many factories along it yielded revenues until they began to close after World War II. The route was a link for freight moving to and from Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts, connecting with New York Central (Boston & Albany) and Boston & Maine at Worcester. Passenger service ended in the 1950's.

The New Haven entered its second bankruptcy in 1961, and in 1969 the railroad was forced upon the new Penn Central, the creation of the previous year's merger of the Pennsylvania Railroad and the New York Central. PC continued the lease payments to the P&W corporation until declaring bankruptcy in June 1970. At that time, Penn Central announced plans to abandon much of the P&W. Diesels wearing PC's emblem apparently would not ply the line.

P&W had not operated its railroad since 1888, but some stockholders remained very interested in how their property was being used by its tenants. In the early 1960's, Robert H. Eder had led a group of dissident stockholders in a successful proxy fight, and Eder became P&W's new president.



Eder suggested P&W might resume independent operation. Remember that this was at a time when large rail mergers were occurring with regularity. Spin-offs were uncommon, and the idea of

a resurrected P&W seemed quite ridiculous.

Penn Central wasn't eager to give back all of the P&W. The giant railroad wanted to keep serving the large customers at either end of the line, and PC also coveted P&W's valuable real estate holdings, particularly in downtown Providence. With PC the largest single owner of P&W stock, it appeared the little railroad's chances were slim.

However, a curious voting clause in the corporation's original 1844 charter saved the P&W. The clause apparently had been designed to limit the clout of large stockholders. Even though PC owned 28 percent of P&W stock, PC's voting power amounted to only 3 percent.

PC challenged the voting clause in court and petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission regarding the unilateral breaking of the 99-year operating lease. Providence & Worcester ultimately prevailed on both issues.

Independence and innovation

Meanwhile, P&W had begun independent operation on Sunday, February 3, 1973. It had leased five Alco RS3 diesels and five wooden cabooses from Delaware & Hudson, all painted in a new and attractive cream, orange, and chocolate livery.

The railroad consisted of the Worcester-Providence main line and the Valley Falls-East Providence branch. P&W also handled two PC branches that had become isolated: the 3-mile Slatersville branch at Woonsocket, R.I., and the 1-mile remnant of the Wrentham (Mass.) branch at Valley Falls. P&W set up its maintenance base in the old New Haven enginehouse in Worcester, with business headquarters at East Providence.

Not gracious in defeat, Penn Central

clearly was not eager to help the new line succeed. Delays and difficulties in interchange plagued P&W for the first few months, and the railroad returned to the ICC to seek relief from PC's tactics.

P&W quickly realized that its future success depended upon having more than one connecting railroad. The only other large road in the area was Boston & Maine, whose east-west main line ran parallel to, and north of, PC's Boston & Albany line. To gain efficient access, in October 1974 P&W purchased B&M's little-used 21-mile branch between Barber (Worcester) and Gardner, Mass., on the main. Included were 3 miles of B&M trackage rights in Worcester. This gave P&W a 68-mile through route between Providence and Gardner.

Soon after independence, P&W began shopping for its own new motive power. Strangely, it eschewed America's two remaining builders, General Motors' Electro-Motive Division and General Electric, and instead chose Canada's Montreal Locomotive Works, which was trying to break into the U.S. market following the exit from the business in 1969 by its American affiliate, Alco. P&W ordered five MLW M420R's, to be built to the same specifications as 80 units being constructed for Canadian National. These 2000 h.p., four-motor (B-B) road-switchers, P&W 2001-2005, came with "safety cabs," a new feature that has since become common on new American and Canadian units. The M420R's also introduced a new color scheme, a mostly orange body accented by a large white parallelogram on the hood and yellow frame stripes.

The M420R's were delivered in 1974 and 1975, and the RS3's were returned to D&H. MLW, however, did not attract any more

American customers, and until their expected 1994 retirement (2002 and 2004 were still in use in March), they remained the only Montreal units built new for a U.S. railroad.

Providence & Worcester also was early to the party of reduced crew size. At a time when union work-rules forced larger railroads to staff freight trains with four, five, or even six employees, P&W utilized crews of three: an engineer, conductor, and brakeman. "We trained all of our people," recalls P&W President Orville R. Harrold. Each employee was qualified to serve as either engineer or conductor, so assignments were rotated. Today, two- and three-person crews are the norm on P&W and most other railroads as well. Except for the brief period of Teamsters involvement, the United Transportation Union (UTU) has represented P&W train-crew members throughout the railroad's independent existence.

Profiting from the PC wreckage

By the mid-1970's, bankrupt Penn Central had more important matters to be concerned with than its little skirmishes with the P&W. The federal government's solution to the Northeast rail problem—Conrail—occurred in 1976. Many PC lines were not included in Conrail, and P&W looked at some for possible expansion.

On April 1, 1976, the day Conrail began, P&W added 93 miles of former PC/New Haven trackage, acquiring outright four lines, the "Norwich & Worcester" between Worcester and Plainfield, Conn. (42.8 miles) and three branches: Plainfield-Versailles, Conn. (9.6); Webster-Southbridge, Mass. (11); and Cranston-Pontiac (4.7). P&W also officially took title to the active portions of the Slatersville and Wrentham branches, and became designated operator of two sections of state-owned trackage: Versailles-Willimantic, Conn. (13.6 miles), and East Providence-Bristol, R.I. (12).

Where PC had lost money, P&W operated each of these lines profitably. Further, it plowed revenues back into physical-plant improvements, reversing years of deferred maintenance. P&W also took advantage of federal and state funding to assist in this work. P&W began a policy of keeping its lines maintained for a maximum 40-mph freight speed, a practice it still follows.

Soon, government and business turned to P&W to operate more trackage. At the State of Connecticut's urging in 1980, the U.S. Department of Transportation ordered P&W to acquire from Conrail the remainder of the 28-mile Norwich & Worcester

between Plainfield and the Amtrak junction at Groton, plus a 3-mile branch south of Amtrak into Groton proper. This trackage has several big customers, and DOT's willingness to award it to P&W in the face of objection from Conrail said a lot about the small system's growing credibility. One reason: P&W has been very visible in the area's centers of government, and P&W officials regularly attend legislative and agency sessions pertaining to transportation issues.

P&W also acquired two tiny Rhode Island carriers in the early 1980's: the 0.9-mile Warwick Railway, essentially a spur off Amtrak's Northeast Corridor in Cranston; and the 2-mile Moshassuck Valley, between Pawtucket and Saylesville, just north of Providence. Both lines were worked by local freights based at Valley Falls. (Warwick Railway may be familiar from "WRWK" reporting marks on some P&W boxcars and gondolas. P&W also uses "PW" marks.)

The 1980's marked the beginning of American railroad deregulation, and many large systems began to abandon and sell marginal lines. Much of Conrail's former New Haven branchline network long had been unprofitable, and in 1982, P&W picked up all Conrail services remaining in Rhode Island. These included the Providence-Coventry "Washington Secondary" (16 miles), the Rhode Island portion of CR's ex-NH East Junction industrial track in East Providence (3), and the branch from Newport, R.I., to the Massachusetts state line near Fall River (16.2). P&W was granted trackage rights over Conrail lines in Massachusetts to reach the latter, but instead chose to contract with Conrail to handle the occasional traffic there. The state of Rhode Island now owns this line, and it is out of service.

P&W also became operator of the 3-mile Harbor Junction industrial track, a city-owned line connecting the Amtrak main at Cranston with the busy Port of Providence

harbor district. Further, P&W acquired trackage rights over 87 miles of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor to handle former Conrail freight customers from the Massachusetts-Rhode Island state line to Westbrook, Conn.

P&W also filled a couple of small but strategic gaps in its route map in 1983 when it bought the 3 miles of B&M trackage that connected the Gardner branch with the rest of the P&W system in Worcester, plus 1 mile of it at Gardner. Interestingly, this purchase required P&W to give up its stock in the Vermont & Massachusetts, a 19th century company that officially owned a portion of B&M's main line between Fitchburg and Greenfield, Mass. With the small acquisition, Providence & Worcester had full control of its through routes from Gardner to Providence and Groton. Also during the mid-1980's, P&W briefly handled switching for Boston & Maine on 18 miles of trackage from Worcester north to Lancaster.

Interest from Conrail

Most of Providence & Worcester's expansion has been possible because of Conrail's eagerness to shed marginal services. But even as P&W was growing, in 1989 Conrail expressed interest in acquiring the entire P&W! Harrold recalls that his company was willing to entertain any serious proposals from Conrail, which was especially interested in P&W's deepwater port site in East Providence. With tracks leading right to the water, P&W's Wilkesbarre Pier seemed to offer a better ship-to-rail intermodal site than Conrail had available in Boston. Conrail made brief mention of its actions in a quarterly report to stockholders, but never made an acquisition offer.

In 1991 P&W expanded again, moving farther west in picking up Conrail's freight rights over 31 miles of Amtrak's main line between Westbrook and New Haven. P&W



A P&W Tilcon traprock train makes a pretty sight under Metro-North catenary at West Haven, Conn., at sunset on June 16, 1993.



© 1994, Kalmbach Publishing Co., TRAINS; Robert Wegner Not all lines shown

also purchased CR's Belle Dock industrial track in the city of New Haven. A Conrail interchange was added at CR's large Cedar Hill Yard in North Haven.

P&W's most recent expansion occurred in March 1993 when it added 104 route-miles, although it owns only 10 of them. Purchased was a short segment of Conrail's line between North Haven and Middlefield, but included in the deal were 3 miles of trackage rights between North Haven and New Haven, as well

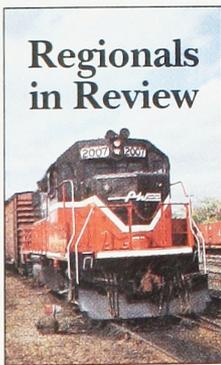
as on Metro-North's portion of the Northeast Corridor between New Haven and South Norwalk (31.2), Devon and Derby Junction (8.3), and South Norwalk and Danbury Terminal between Derby Junction and Danbury (27.9 miles); this is the easterly portion of the former New Haven Maybrook Line.

Overhead rights on Conrail, Metro-North, and Danbury Terminal permit P&W to move trains of aggregate to an asphalt plant at Danbury. The only new customers for P&W were two small shippers on Metro-North's Danbury Branch. P&W also is responsible for freight on the Devon-Derby Junction segment, although there are no rail customers on it at the moment. Conrail

continues to serve customers between New Haven and South Norwalk, and of course Housatonic switches customers on the DT.

A more recent P&W expansion effort did not come to pass. In October 1993, CN North America told of its intent to sell its 325-mile Central Vermont Railway. P&W was one of several bidders, offering \$20.6 million in P&W stock and job-protection payments for displaced CV workers, but P&W was not among the four finalists CNNA announced in late February 1994.

P&W's two decades of growth have not been without losses. Several lines have proven to be money-losers, and P&W has abandoned them: Cranston-Pontiac; Providence-Washington; Tiverton-Newport; the Wrentham branch spur; the state-owned



Regionals in Review

At a glance . . .

Name: Providence & Worcester Railroad.
Headquarters address: 75 Hammond St.,
 P.O. Box 16551, Worcester, MA 01601.
 (508) 755-4000.

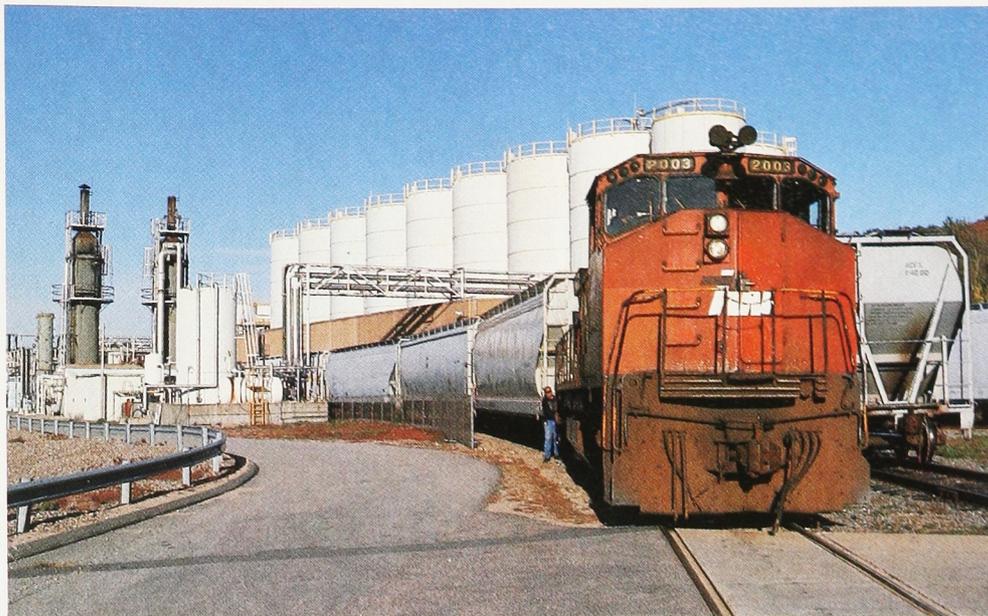
SIG: New Haven Railroad Historical &
 Technical Association, P.O. Box 122,
 Wallingford, CT 06492.

Radio Frequencies: P&W Ch. 1, 160.650
 AAR 36 (road and dispatcher); Ch. 2,
 161.100 AAR 66 (yard); Ch. 3, 160.890
 AAR 52; Conrail Ch. 2, 161.070 AAR 64;
 Metro-North Ch. 3, 160.545 AAR 29;
 Amtrak road, 160.920, AAR 54;
 Housatonic, 160.395 AAR 19.

Top track speed: 40 mph; 30 daylight, 50
 night allowed on Amtrak Northeast Corridor.

Daily average train frequency: Two
 road trains per day on the two Worcester
 routes, plus daily locals elsewhere.

Major traffic: Chemicals, plastics, paper
 products, food materials, traprock,
 intermodal.



ger trains at speeds of up to 150 mph. P&W is concerned about attempting to mix its freights with this faster operation, and is studying the situation.

Although P&W believes that the high-speed passenger project is commendable, "no one [involved in it] is thinking about freight service or industrial development," says Ronald D. Klein, P&W's director of sales and marketing. The best solution is a dedicated freight track alongside the passenger tracks, he says. In some places, a third track already exists, although much of it is in poor condition. Klein suggests that the federal government should be responsible for the funding that will become necessary because of the Amtrak upgrading.

As with many other sizeable railroads, a holding company called Capital Properties, Inc., owned P&W for much of its recent history. CPI owned all shares of Providence & Worcester Railroad until 1988, when the railroad became independent again. Under a recapitalization plan, all railroad shares were distributed to Capital Properties stockholders. CP itself owns real estate at several locations, including downtown Providence, and had a petroleum storage facility in East Providence. Robert Eder, the original leader of P&W's move for independence, owns about 51 percent each of Capital Properties and P&W Railroad. He serves as chairman of the railroad. Providence & Worcester stock is traded over the counter, listed by the National Association of Securities Dealers.

Orville Harrold, 61, has been P&W president since 1980. He has been with the railroad since its 1973 independence, starting as its first chief engineer. A native of Brooklyn, N.Y., and a Marine veteran, he worked for Westinghouse Air Brake Company before joining the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1960. He was assistant regional mechanical superintendent for Penn Central's Metropolitan

On October 11, 1993, train NR-3 worked the Dow Chemical plant at Allyns Point, Conn. M420R 2003 was in its last autumn on P&W.

Region in New York in 1972 when he met Eder. When P&W broke away from PC the following year, Harrold went with the new firm. He became general manager in 1975, and succeeded Eder as president in 1980.

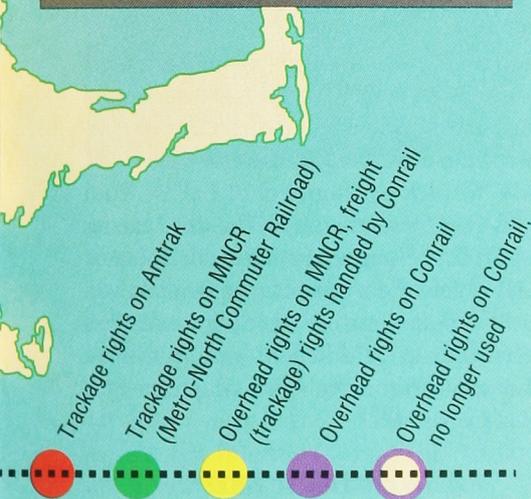
Providence & Worcester has 133 employees, 98 represented by three unions: UTU, Brotherhood of Railway Signalmen, and the Transportation Communications Union. The company has a deferred profit-sharing plan for its unionized employees, based on contributions in years when P&W has income from railroad operations.

Worcester is the hub

Worcester (Wooss-ter) has always been P&W's operations hub. The locomotive shop and only large yard are in South Worcester beside the Worcester-Providence main. From the upper end of the yard, the Norwich & Worcester line heads south toward Groton, and tracks at the south end connecting the two routes form a large wye.

The old New Haven Railroad crew room serves as P&W's dispatcher offices. In 1989, P&W bought a brick factory building between the N&W tracks and Conrail's Boston Line that overlooks the yard. P&W renovated the building for corporate headquarters.

Since 90 percent of P&W's interchange is with Conrail, most P&W freight business passes through Worcester, although there is some CR interchange at Cedar Hill, Conn. About 6 percent of P&W interchange is with Guilford Transportation Industries' Boston & Maine at Gardner, and 4 percent with Central Vermont at New London. For several years, Conrail ran a dedicated pair of trains, symbolized SEPW and PWSE, between its big yard at Selkirk, N.Y., near Albany, and



OWNED BY P&W:

Warwick RR - .9 mile branch at Cranston
 Moshassuck Valley - Pawtucket/Saylesville
 Manufacturers RR - New Haven industrial tracks

OPERATED BY P&W:

Harbor Junction industrial tracks - Port of
 Providence harbor district at Cranston

East Providence-Bristol line; and much of the former Moshassuck Valley. Trackage between Webster and Southbridge, Mass., and the Connecticut-owned Versailles-Wilimantic branch are not officially out of service but are rarely used. And although P&W has rights over Amtrak to New Haven, a large segment in western Rhode Island and eastern Connecticut rarely sees freight trains.

The passenger problem

As freight-service provider on most of the Boston-New Haven portion of the Northeast Corridor, Providence & Worcester will be affected by Amtrak's high-speed electrification project now under way there. Overhead catenary will restrict freight-car height, and Amtrak plans to operate passen-



As Conrail train TV-6 thunders by overhead, P&W 1702, its only GP9, returns from CR's East Worcester Yard with container cars.

ed bridge, which the railroad shares with busy U.S. Route 1.

The other daytime crew makes the run up the Middlefield line to bring out trainloads of stone from the Reeds Gap quarry. Some traprock is for use as ballast by Metro-North, and P&W will deliver these cars in New Haven or South Norwalk. A night job using Metro-North and Danbury Terminal rights moves stone to Tilcon's asphalt plant at Danbury. This train usually operates via Devon and Derby Junction, although P&W also has rights to reach Danbury via South Norwalk. When needed, this crew switches customers on MNCR's South Norwalk-Danbury line.

The Middlefield line is interesting because three freight railroads use the same trackage. Conrail retained ownership of the southern portion to serve two big customers north of Cedar Hill Yard. P&W trains need to use this segment to reach their own portion of the line, and CR also has rights over P&W to pick up hoppers of ballast from Reeds Gap for its own use. The third carrier is short line Connecticut Central, operator of 20 miles of ex-New Haven branches in the Middletown area, which interchanges with P&W at Middlefield and runs over P&W and Conrail rights to swap cars with CR at Cedar Hill.

A customer mix

New England has suffered from a loss of rail freight in general over the past decades, but Providence & Worcester retains a nucleus of big customers whose products represent a mix. The biggest ones receive or ship chemicals, plastics, paper products, food materials, and minerals. Major chemical consignees include Dow at Allyns Point, Pfizer in Groton, George Mann at the Port of Providence, and Getty Oil at East Providence. Plastic products are received by Nymman Manufacturing at East Providence, Hasbro Industries at Central Falls, R.I., and Toray Plastics at Davisville. Mid-States Packaging in Worcester receives plastic pellets by rail for distribution throughout New England.

Paper customers include International Paper at Putnam, Federal Paperboard at Versailles, R.R. Donnelly at Old Saybrook, and the *Providence Journal* newspaper at Providence. Coffax receives vegetable oil at Pawtucket. Tilcon is P&W's primary mineral customer, operating five on-line quarries and processing plants, and Anchor Glass receives materials at Dayville, Conn.

Intermodal freight normally is associat-

Worcester, but P&W traffic currently moves in CR's Boston freights.

P&W has two symbol road freight of its own which make turns into Worcester and back: NRWO/WONR from Plainfield and PRWO/WOPR from Valley Falls. They run Sunday through Thursday nights. Two weekday crews and a regular Sunday extra crew work the Worcester yard and at P&W's two local intermodal facilities. With B&M interchange down, service on the Gardner line is handled by a Worcester switcher or one of the road freights.

Two weekday locals run out of Valley Falls during the day, utilizing the road freight's locomotives. One mostly covers the East Providence branch and its many industries, while the other handles Providence, plus customers on the Northeast Corridor. This job also interchanges with Seaview Transportation Company at Davisville. Seaview provides contract switching service over 23 track-miles inside the former Quonset Point naval base, now the Rhode Island Department of Economic Development's Quonset-Davisville Industrial Park. P&W exchanges 800-plus cars a year with Seaview.

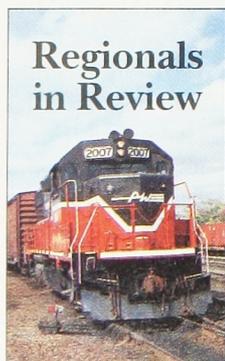
Train WONR's road power is broken up to operate two weekday locals out of Plainfield. One works the Norwich & Worcester line north to Putnam and then goes south to serve the large Dow Chemical plant at Allyns Point. The other covers the Amtrak main line as far west as Old Saybrook, and P&W's Old Main branch in

Groton, to serve Pfizer Pharmaceuticals and General Dynamics' Electric Boat Division (builder of U.S. Navy nuclear submarines).

Probably the most scenic portion of the P&W is the N&W line between Jewett City and Groton, which runs alongside the Quinebaug and Thames Rivers, through a tunnel at Taftville, and through the U.S. Navy Submarine Base at Groton. The Plainfield-Versailles branch is handled by one of the locals or the night freight.

West of Old Saybrook, much of P&W's business depends on the operation of Tilcon Connecticut, a large traprock producer. P&W serves Tilcon quarries at Wauregan (Plainfield), Pin Orchard (Branford), and Reeds Gap (Middlefield), and processing plants at Old Saybrook and Danbury. Traprock work is seasonal, with business increasing in the warmer months.

Except in winter, when two jobs are typical, P&W usually runs three weekday trains out of New Haven. The crews are based, and trains made up, on P&W's Belle Dock branch trackage. One daytime train covers the Amtrak Shore Line east to Old Saybrook, connecting with the train out of Plainfield, and picking up traprock at Tilcon's Pine Orchard quarry. Because P&W shares this busy two-track line with Amtrak expresses and Connecticut DOT's Shore Line East commuter runs, this train often operates "pull-pull" (with a locomotive at either end) to expedite switching moves. This job will also deliver cars to New Haven Terminal, which operates in the Port of New Haven at the end of the Belle Dock branch. P&W sometimes uses a rubber-tired Trackmobile, painted in the road's brown and orange locomotive scheme, to move cars on this tight trackage and over a weight-restrict-





ed with large railroads, where long high-speed hauls can make carrying containers and trailers competitive with highway transportation. But P&W has proved that a smaller railroad can make money in the intermodal business too, and its container service is a big producer of revenue.

The two intermodal yards in Worcester are operated by Intransit Container, Inc. Greenwood Yard, owned by ICI, is about 2 miles southeast of P&W's main yard on the Providence line. At Southbridge Street Yard, adjacent to P&W's shops, ICI leases eight

acres of P&W property. Both are U.S. Customs bonded; no container can leave or be unloaded without first being cleared by customs agents. Most containers carry consumer goods from the Far East. They are received on double-stack cars from Conrail, after transcontinental trips originating at West Coast ports. Following a very modest start in 1987, when P&W moved just 600 containers, the road handled more than 47,000 in 1992, and the railroad was awarded *Modern Railroads* magazine's 1989 "Golden Freight Car" award for excellence

New England pastoral: GE's 2204 and 2201 lead CT-1 past a venerable stone house in East Wallingford, Conn., on October 25, 1993.

in railroad marketing for developing its container business.

Continued intermodal growth seems likely, and additional property is available next to Greenwood Yard if needed. P&W had been concerned about a state-funded project to make the Port of Boston a major intermodal center ("Massachusetts Sees Stacks in its Future," September 1993 TRAINS). The initial \$158 million pricetag to improve clearances on Conrail, Guilford's Boston & Maine, Central Vermont, and P&W had risen to \$200 million, and although Klein had been worried that his company's privately established container route might be harmed by Guilford and its new intermodal partner CP Rail running on a taxpayer-supported line, the bonding issue died in committee early this year.

Promise for a port

A project that could provide more opportunities is Wilkesbarre Pier in East Providence, a potential deepwater port on Narragansett Bay owned by the railroad. Since 1976, P&W has been working on the development of a major rail/ship facility there. An essential part of the plan is the reclamation and filling of 45 acres of tidal land, and delays in receiving necessary permits, plus a lawsuit by the city of East Providence, have slowed the project. Issues with the city have

Providence & Worcester locomotives

No.	Builder	Model	Year	Remarks
8	GE	45-ton	1950	Moshassuck Valley; sold to W.R. Jones, Short-Rail Enterprises (N.C.)
9	GE	65-ton	1943	Moshassuck Valley; sold to Pennsylvania Power & Light
51	EMD	Power car	1954	Head-end power car, with Caterpillar engine/gen. 275 kw system; ex-Amtrak power car 668, ex-1918; ex-E9B 456, <i>nee</i> Union Pacific 952B; A1A-A1A.
104	Atlas	50-ton	1940	Warwick Railway, side-rod unit; ex-U.S. Navy; scrapped
150	GE	25-ton	1945	Ex-New Haven Terminal, acquired 1992; being rebuilt by P&W; 4-wheel
161-165	Alco	RS3	1952	Delaware & Hudson 4071, 4075, 4078, 4082, 4084; leased 1973-75
1201-1202	EMD	SW7	1950	Ex-Conrail, Penn Central, New York Central 8845, 8851; purchased 1991
1501	Alco	RS2	1949	Ex-Maine Central 553, purchased 1977; scrapped 1982
1601-1602	Alco	RS3	1951	Ex-Southern 2132, 2141; purchased 1976, sold to Lamoille Valley 1982
1701-1702	EMD	GP9	1957	Ex-Conrail, Penn Central, Pennsylvania 7189, 7205; purchased from EMD 1982; 1701 sold to Quaboag Transfer (Palmer, Mass.) 1984
1801	GE	U18B	1976	Acquired new
2001-2002	MLW	M420R	1974	Acquired new; retired 1994
2003-2005	MLW	M420R	1975	Acquired new; retired 1994
2006-2008	EMD	GP38-2	1980	Acquired new
2009	EMD	GP38-2	1982	Acquired new
2010-2011	EMD	GP38	1969	Ex-Conrail, PC 7794, 7808; acquired from Helm 1984
2201	GE	B23-7	1978	Acquired new
2202-2208	GE	U23B	1977	Ex-Conrail 2792, '98, '95, '90, '97, '96, '94; purchased 1993 (3), 1994 (4)

Notes: Unless noted, all B-B wheel arrangement. Source: R.E. Baumuller, P&W; effective March 1, 1994.—Scott Hartley.



P&W must use a caboose on its Northeast Corridor trains, and this ex-NYC car was assisting at Old Saybrook in October 1993.

been resolved, and the area now is zoned as a port district.

P&W's hopes for a partner have not been realized, though, so development has been gradual. A 135x1900-foot ship berth area was dredged to 40 feet in 1991 and 1992. A large berm has been constructed, and the 45-acre reclamation area is being filled.

P&W seems most interested in developing Wilkesbarre with other investors or users, but the railroad plans to complete the project alone if necessary, according to Harrold. Providence is the only deepwater port between New Jersey and Nova Scotia with "on-dock" rail service and direct access to the double-stack network, Harrold says. And Providence is a day's less sailing time from Europe than is New Jersey.

Toward some traffic at Wilkesbarre, P&W is getting its railroad ready to handle anticipated traffic growth. In early 1992, 18 structures on the Worcester-Providence line needed to be raised (or tracks lowered under them) to accommodate containers stacked 18 feet from the rail, and about one-third of these locations have been modified. P&W would likely rely on Conrail at Worcester for interchange of double-stack traffic.

Like some of its larger railroad counterparts, Providence & Worcester keeps a corporate business train. The company began to assemble its fleet in 1979 when it acquired an ex-Northern Pacific round-end observation car. P&W named it *New Englander* and soon purchased several ex-Amtrak coaches to accompany it.

Today the train includes the *New Englander*, coaches *Massachusetts* and *Rhode Island*, and dining car *Connecticut*. P&W was an early user of head-end power to heat, cool, and light its cars. For this duty, the road has ade-

powered former Amtrak E9B unit that carries an engine/generator set.

P&W's locomotive roster has always been compact and varied, with a mix of modern and vintage units. The return of the D&H RS3's upon delivery of the five M420R's was not the end of American-built Alcos on the road. In anticipation of acquiring its first Connecticut trackage in 1976, P&W bought two RS3's from Southern Railway. They were repainted in orange and chocolate in a design following their SR lines. A retired Maine Central RS2 acquired as a parts supply was found to be serviceable, so it was used for a while in yard and work-train service before being cannibalized.

As P&W grew, it acquired more new locomotives. General Electric provided the next two, one U18B and one B23-7, both of which were delivered with the orange and white parallelogram. P&W finally turned to General Motors in 1980, and over the following three years bought four brand-new GP38-2's. All but the last example were equipped with dynamic braking.

Since 1982, though, all of P&W's locomotive purchases have been of secondhanders. The first were two former Conrail GP9's, which allowed the retirement of the RS3's. The Geeps introduced the first version of P&W's current color scheme, a brown upper carbody and an orange lower half, separated by a narrow white stripe. Two ex-Conrail GP38's were acquired from Helm Leasing in 1984, and two SW7's were picked up directly from Conrail in 1991. Originally intended for the light-rail branches in the New Haven area, the SW7's instead have spent most of their time working Worcester-area assignments. A tiny GE 25-tonner is being rebuilt by P&W to replace the Trackmobile assigned to New Haven. To handle the 1993 expansion, P&W bought three GE U23B's from Conrail, and in early 1994 acquired four more Conrail "U-Boats" to replace the M420R's.

Most of P&W's fleet has the cab sig-

nal/automatic-train-stop equipment mandated on Amtrak, so just about any unit can be seen on any assignment. The Middlefield line and the trackage-rights route to Danbury over Danbury Terminal have some relatively steep grades, so P&W prefers to assign New Haven-based trains units with dynamic braking, such as the B23-7, the U23B's, and GP38-2's 2006-2008, says R.E. Baumuller, chief mechanical officer.

P&W locomotives and passenger and freight cars all are maintained at South Worcester, where the original two-stall enginehouse was substantially enlarged and modernized during the 1980's. Maintenance equipment and highway vehicles are cared for at a new facility in Plainfield.

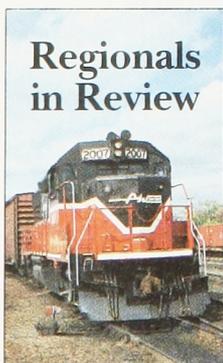
Staying afloat in a tough area

Providence & Worcester has managed to be successful in a region where railroading is a difficult business. Unlike many other railroads that can show profits only by selling off assets, P&W's railroad has usually operated in the black, Harrold emphasizes. The company has weathered the recent recession which continues to hold New England in its grip.

In his report to shareholders for the 1992 business year, Harrold reported that the company's operating revenues exceeded operating expenses by a greater amount than at any time in the previous decade. More than 96 percent of Providence & Worcester's 1993 total revenues came from freight and other operating income (the other 4 percent is largely the result of rental of utility easements). Even with the region's sluggish economy, P&W showed a net income of \$1.1 million in 1993. Having shed some unprofitable lines and expanded in more encouraging areas, P&W looks to a secure future. Conventional freight carloadings increased for the third year in a row, to 26,500 for 1993. And intermodal growth could be substantial.

Where does Providence & Worcester go from here? Unlike some of today's successful shortline firms, P&W has no interest in acquiring more lines in other locales. "Our philosophy is that we will expand only if a new line is contiguous," Harrold says. With that rule in mind, there still are lines in the region belonging to Conrail and other companies where P&W's style of railroading could work successfully. **I**

SCOTT HARTLEY, a TRAINS Special Correspondent, is a Connecticut native who has watched the new P&W for its entire 21 years.



THE THICK MORNING FOG rises from the White River toward the massive bluffs overhead. Near the edge of these pristine waters, a great blue heron—disturbed by a distant rumble approaching from the northwest—takes flight. Soon three red-and-gray locomotives emerge from the haze. Their modest train is the Cotter local, on its way from that old Arkansas railroad community to Mount Olive, where it will meet with a northbound counterpart out of Batesville. The crews will exchange trains before returning to their home bases.

The diesels are headlined MISSOURI & NORTHERN ARKANSAS on their flanks, with the slogan “The White River Route” below the cab. We’re at Calico Rock, Ark., in the heart of Ozark Mountain country.

Forget the notoriety of the waterway’s name from the Clintons’ real-estate case—

this valley is truly scenic, and is indeed being settled more and more by those in search of beauty. This stretch of railroad was considered by many to be the most scenic on the entire 12-state Missouri Pacific system. Nonetheless, the future of this former MP White River Division looked dismal after the merger of the “MoPac” with Union Pacific in 1982. A dwindling traffic base, deteriorating physical plant, and several tunnels inhibiting double-stack container service combined to make the line expendable to UP.

Today the route has a new life thanks to the regional-railroad movement and one of its big players, San Antonio-based RailTex Corp. On November 9, 1992, the UP announced it had agreed to sell or lease 522 miles of trackage in Arkansas, Missouri, and Kansas to RailTex. At the time, the carrier became RailTex’s 20th, and it still ranks as the largest in mileage of the firm’s now

25 new short lines and regionals across the continent. Central to the deal was the 383-mile secondary line UP had come to call the Carthage and Cotter subdivisions, linking Kansas City with the old MoPac main line in northeastern Arkansas.

RailTex chose the name Missouri & Northern Arkansas, which began operations on December 13, 1992. Reporting marks are MNA, and that’s how people usually refer to it. The name, while perfectly descriptive, should not be confused with the old Missouri & North Arkansas, which operated a 365-mile marginal property parallel to, and south of, the White River Route. That line linked Joplin, Mo., with Helena, Ark., on the Mississippi River, via Harrison, Ark., and operated under that name from 1906 to 1935, when it became the Missouri & Arkansas. M&A made marginal profits until a labor strike in 1946 precipitated its abandonment.

OZARK POWER



The remote country served by both M&NA's, in southwestern Missouri and northern Arkansas, was heavily wooded and mountainous. In the 19th century, travel in the area was difficult, restricted to rugged wagon trails and a few navigable rivers, of which the White was the largest and most utilized. Steamboats moved food, cotton, furs, timber, and manufactured products. As commerce increased, Congress in 1899 passed the River and Harbor Bill, which called for locks and dams to be built along the river to permit year-round navigation. As transportation improved, the region was opened up to mining of its silver, limestone, marble, and zinc deposits.

The White River valley and its wealth of natural resources had also captured the attention of rail baron Jay Gould. In 1879, he became president of Missouri Pacific, whose important route was St. Louis-Kansas City. Two years later he gained con-

trol of the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern, "the Iron Mountain," which extended from St. Louis to the Texas border at Texarkana. Gould envisioned a route across northern Arkansas connecting the Iron Mountain to MoPac's Lexington & Southern branch in southwestern Missouri, and moved quickly to build it.

Construction of the "White River extension" of the Iron Mountain began at Diaz, near Newport. The line reached the White River town of Batesville, 30 miles up, in 1883. Initially a mixed train served Newport-Batesville, and business was steady despite the 10-mph pace. On December 29, 1886, a 12-mile branch to the manganese mines at Cushman was completed, and a year later it, too, had passenger service.

Although it was widely recognized that Gould planned to continue construction up the White River, almost a decade after his death passed before the White River

Railway was incorporated to build through the Ozarks. By this time, Jay's son George was in control of the combined Missouri Pacific-Iron Mountain system. Capital from the latter firm was used to finance the White River Railway, and on January 21, 1902, the first spike was driven at Batesville.

In May, passenger service began over 20 miles to Penters Bluff. By November, the line was extended another 25 miles up the north bank to Mount Olive, but no more rail was laid for six months until a roadbed could be blasted from the massive bluffs at Soldiers Rock and Calico Rock. To this day, this stretch through the peaceful valley is among the most striking on the route.

During August 1903, the track was extended to the edge of the river at Lakes Ferry. Here, a new town called Cotter was laid out, named for the popular MoPac manager William Cotter. A turning wye, six-track yard, depot, roundhouse, and

PLAYER



Regionals in review

**Missouri & Northern Arkansas—RailTex's longest railroad—
is a scenic spinoff of Union Pacific**

BY RANDY WOODS



Brightly painted MNA GP40's, assisted by slug 4164, push a coal train out of Kansas City on Union Pacific. Kevin EuDaly photo.



LEONARD OWENS



EUGENE SABIN



BETTY LOVE

The White River Route in “varnish” days (from top): Pacific 6443 leads 5-car local across the James River south of Galena, Mo.; train 232 pauses at Branson September 10, 1947 (the same depot where today’s tourist trains originate); in 1960 on its last run, train 221 behind GP7 4321 makes a special stop emerging from Crest Tunnel, the only curved one on the line.

engine and car repair facilities were built here, as was a bridge over the river.

On the north end, Carthage had been chosen as the point where the White River Railway would join the Lexington & Southern branch. Construction south from Carthage began in January 1904, and nearly 80 miles of track was laid, reaching the James River at Galena in October. Between Galena and Cotter, work proceeded tediously. This segment, the scenic heart—and operational nightmare—of the route, included two crossings of the White River, five tunnels, and numerous other trestles and bridges.

Tragedy struck when a worker was killed and several others trapped or injured while blasting a tunnel through the bluffs across the river from Cotter. Nature also got in the way at the Cotter bridge when rain in spring 1904 caused a 27-foot rise in the river, resulting in an 80-foot girder span collapsing.

Probably the most difficult and expensive construction was the 2700-foot Cricket tunnel near Omaha, Ark. Work here was complicated by rockslides and mudslides, and it was necessary to concrete most of the tunnel, which cost an estimated \$400,000.

Finally, without ceremony, the final spike was driven December 29, 1905, at a remote trestle south of Cricket tunnel.

Inauspicious inauguration

From the outset, the hostile terrain caused operational difficulties. On January 21, 1906, the railroad began through passenger service between Joplin and Batesville. It undoubtedly was one of the most ill-fated inaugurations in the history of railroading.

Heavy rain turned to snow over much of the region, which resulted in loose rock and mud along the track. Northbound train 206 was the first to encounter problems, striking a large boulder near Mount Olive that derailed the engine, tender, and baggage car. Fireman Henry Jones was severely injured when he jumped from the train, but engineer Bob Pennington remained on board and was unharmed. The train was rerailed and proceeded to Cotter, where the passengers were fed and the crew and locomotive changed out. Unfortunately, the trip resumption ended abruptly after just 1 mile when the Cotter tunnel was obstructed. The passengers were put up in the Tremain Hotel and the train annulled until the next morning after the slide was removed.

Despite heavy snowdrifts, the train proceeded without complications until it struck another slide in a rock cut near Aurora. The locomotive was heavily damaged and another fireman injured, prompting the railroad to send a relief train from Carthage. This train fared little better as it became stranded in 8-foot drifts east of Carthage and had to

be dug out. Eventually, the relief train arrived at Joplin a full 24 hours late!

The trip had started out better for southbound 207, which got to within 17 miles of Batesville before its journey, too, was halted by yet another rockslide, derailing the pilot truck of its locomotive. A work crew rerailed the engine, and the train returned to Cotter, where its passengers also spent the night at the Tremain. The next morning, 207 left Cotter and made the trip to Newport a day late but without further incident.

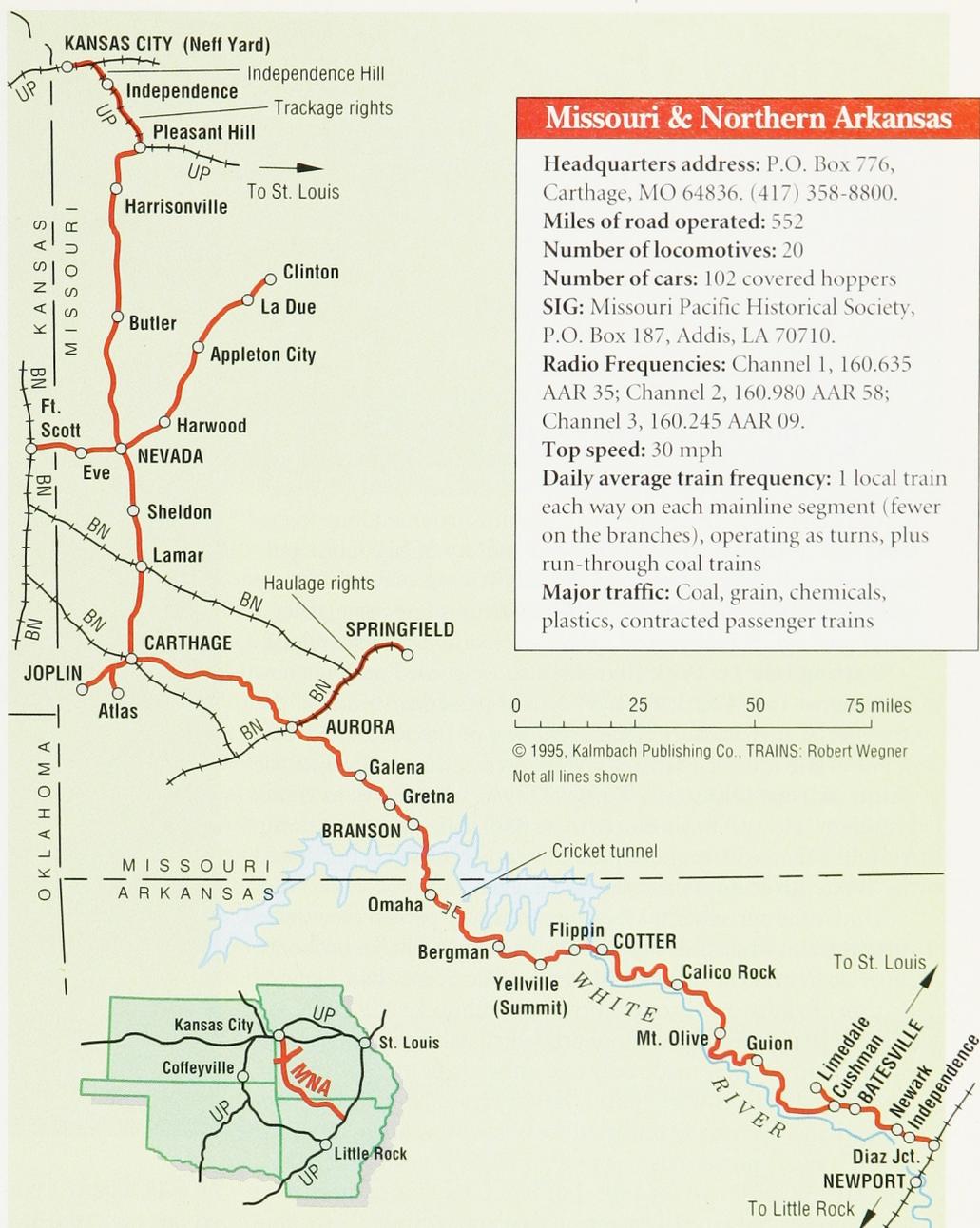
The White River Route continued to be plagued by natural disasters throughout its early history. Floods and rockslides were common, and the railroad had more than its share of derailments, injuries, and other mishaps. The expense in building and maintaining the line was a contributing factor to the collapse of the Gould empire. In an attempt to create a transcontinental system under his control, George Gould had spread his resources too thin, and in August 1915 both the Missouri Pacific and the Iron Mountain went into receivership.

Despite the fall of Gould, the White River line continued to pick up business and by 1915 served 42 industries. Passenger service also had increased as tourists from Kansas City and St. Louis came by rail to visit. In 1917, the Missouri Pacific Railway and the Iron Mountain were consolidated as the Missouri Pacific Railroad.

In 1931, Missouri Pacific announced that the White River Route would be awarded a premier train, the *Southern Scenic*, with first-class service. The train served as a southern connection with the *Scenic Limited* and offered daylight service between Kansas City and Memphis. The train was well received, and patronage over the entire line grew during the 1930's and continued strong during the World War II years. Reflecting the trend nationwide, though, ridership declined during the 1950's, and—citing a \$175,000 annual deficit—MoPac withdrew passenger service from the White River line in 1960.

Meantime, freight levels remained steady and actually increased in the early 1970's when run-through trains from connecting railroads were initiated. A further boost in traffic occurred in the early 1980's when Arkansas Power & Light built a generating plant at Independence, near Newark on the south end of the division. Six-axle locomotives and their heavy Western coal tonnage began to take a physical toll, though, and after UP took over the MoPac, UP found it would be cheaper and just as fast to route the coal via Coffeyville, Kans., and North

As UP operation waned, many passing sidings were removed, evident as local LRS60 approaches Crest Tunnel November 13, 1991.



BOB PLOUGH

Riding the White River Route

WITH ITS HILLS, CURVES, BRIDGES, AND TUNNELS, plus its scores of miles along its namesake waterway through the peaceful but spectacular valley, the White River Route has awaited passenger trains since 1960, when Missouri Pacific's last local quit.

And since the Missouri & Northern Arkansas took over, passenger trains indeed have returned, for MNA leases rights to excursion operators as an additional source of revenue.

A decade ago, Branson, Mo., was a small Ozark village known for its crafts, country music shows, and the nearby theme park Silver Dollar City. Today the town has mushroomed into an entertainment capital that has drawn a variety of big-name performers including Barbara Mandrell, Wayne Newton, Andy Williams, and Kenny Rogers. Branson features fine restaurants, a water park, golf courses, and Lake Taneycomo boat excursions.

Starting July 31, 1993, Branson also welcomed another new attraction—the “Ozark Zephyr” tourist passenger trains of the Branson Scenic Railway. Operating out of the former MoPac depot at the foot of Branson's Main Street, the service was the vision of Tom Johnson, a Kansas Cityan who serves as BSR's president. He and business partners Saul Cass and Alan Kamp from Rail Dome Corporation sought out MNA after it purchased the White River Route and secured a lease.

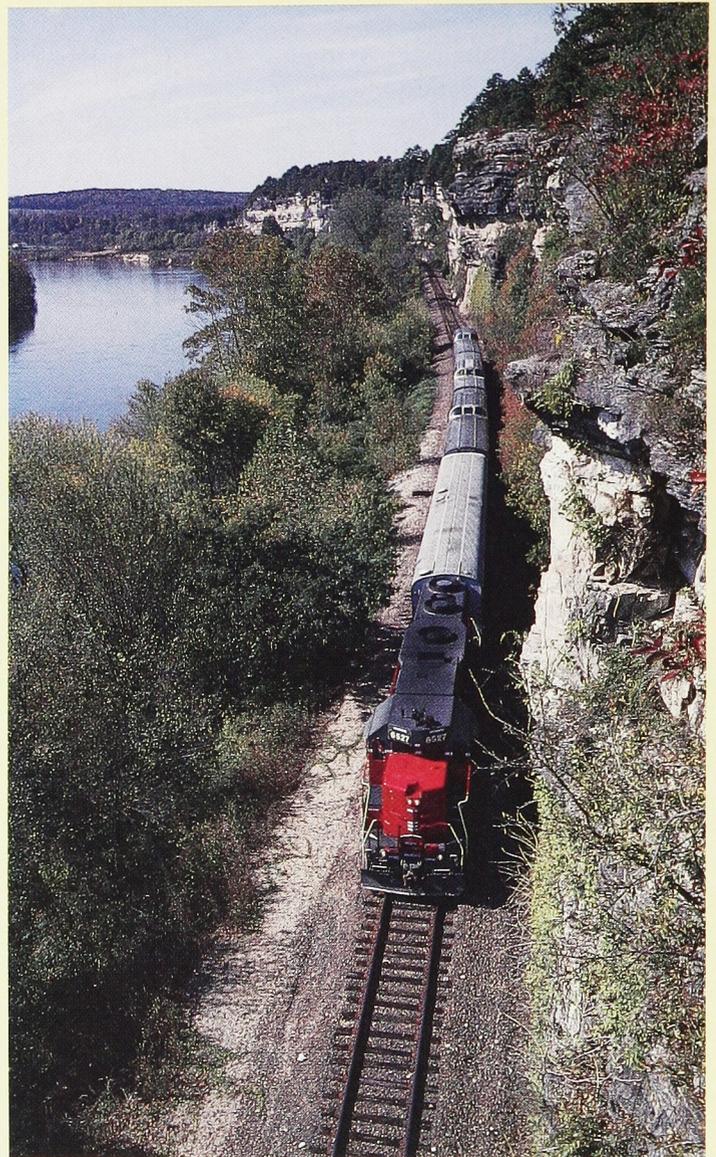
Under the agreement, MNA provides two-person crews who run the train, while BSR supplies the passenger cars, an on-board supervisor, and car hosts or hostesses. The Scenic had planned on using F units, and brought down ex-Milwaukee FP7 96A and F7A 106 owned by Glenn Monhart, which had been on Wisconsin & Calumet. They made only one or two trips on MNA before mechanical defects were found, however, so the F's were sidetracked and eventually returned to Wisconsin. Since then, the Scenic's usual power has been GP35 6527, leased from MNA. Two GP35's are leased for 1995, but BSR is looking at other used F's. “I prefer that type of power on a passenger train,” says Paul Lasky, the Scenic's general manager.

During the peak 1994 fall season, the Ozark Zephyr sported four dome cars including three from the Burlington's “real” Zephyr fleet and *Plaza Santa Fe*, a former Santa Fe *Super Chief* Pleasure Dome lounge. Also on hand: former Texas & Pacific coach 461 and New York Central observation lounge 48.

Tapping into Branson's tourist market is the challenge for BSR, but early results have been promising. During four months of operations in 1993, BSR hauled 38,000 patrons. In 1994, the first full season, 83,000 climbed aboard, 19,000 in October.

Branson Scenic was to begin running in mid-March 1995 and go until the weekend before Christmas. During May-October, it planned to offer four trips a day, Monday-Saturday. This was a change from 1994, said Lasky. “Tuesday was our regular day off, but the passenger census showed Sunday was the slowest day, while Wednesday was the busiest [owing to] more bus tours.”

The Zephyr originates at Branson depot and goes 20 miles out, either north or south, at the direction of the MNA dispatcher. Either direction hits scenic highlights. The northerly journey passes through Reeds Spring Tunnel and over the James River Bridge at Galena before returning. The southerly run crosses Lake Taneycomo soon after leaving the depot, and traverses Cricket and Crest tunnels, the Davis curves, and big trestles.



KEVIN EUDALY

An MNA shipper's special rolls by Calico Rock, where a new tourist line may run. Branson Scenic operates to the north of here.

In a town full of entertainment, Tom Johnson sees marketing as a key to success. In August 1994, Branson Scenic hosted a special train for the American Society of Travel Agents, and it has also begun an on-board survey to consider dinner-train service.

BSR's Zephyr hasn't been the only varnish on Missouri & Northern Arkansas's railroad. In October 1993, High Iron Travel Corp. operated a two-day excursion the length of the main line southbound, and later MNA hosted a regional meeting of the American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners, which met in Branson during a two-day northbound journey.

“American Orient Express,” utilizing Amtrak diesels and cars from the old *American-European Express*, has run two luxury trips from San Antonio, Texas, to Branson, and plans more for 1995. A new tourist carrier, White River Railway, announced its formation and intent to begin in 1995, operating between Flippin and Calico Rock in the valley, with leased MNA diesels.

While not the intercity accommodations of old, today's passenger-train ventures on MNA have a chance to showcase the isolated line's scenic attractions to more tourists.—Randy Woods

For information, write: Branson Scenic Railway, 206 E. Main St., Branson, MO 65616. (800) 287-2562 or (314) 334-6110.



BOB PLOUGH

Little Rock, then up to Newport. Steps were taken to downgrade the White River line.

In 1990, UP rerouted all through traffic off the old White River Division. With only local traffic remaining, its future seemed precarious, and many predicted abandonment for portions of it. But hope returned when RailTex entered the picture.

In the deal, Union Pacific sold to RailTex the middle 102 miles, between Bergman and Guion, Ark., on which there was no on-line originating or terminating business, and leased the outer ends: 228 miles from Pleasant Hill, Mo., on the K.C.-St. Louis main, to Bergman, Ark., and 54 miles from Guion to Diaz Junction. To facilitate interchange work, Missouri & Northern Arkansas has trackage rights on UP from Pleasant Hill 32 miles into Neff Yard in Kansas City, and 3 miles from Diaz Junction into Newport.

Four branch lines are also leased by MNA from UP. The longest is the Clinton line, 78 miles of the former Katy's St. Louis route between Fort Scott, Kans., and Clinton, Mo., which crosses the old Carthage Sub at Nevada, Mo. (Nuh-VAY-duh). The others are the 17-mile Webb City branch from Carthage to Joplin, Mo., and the 7-mile Atlas branch off that line. There is also 6 miles of track at Springfield, Mo., isolated from the rest of MNA. UP had rights on Burlington Northern from Aurora, Mo., to Springfield, but MNA bases a switcher at Springfield and has BN transfer the carloads under a haulage agreement.

Rebirth as a regional

On a cool November 1994 morning at the old MoPac depot in Aurora, dark clouds threaten to bring even more rain to the already saturated soil. However, this has not dampened the curiosity of several local residents who have been attracted by the sight of a three-car passenger train headed by two brightly painted SD20 diesels. Outside leased dome-observation car *Silver Palace*, RailTex and MNA officials greet the passengers as

they climb aboard. The train, dubbed the "Tyson Limited," soon stops at a vacant field. This allows the special visitors on board, representatives of Tyson Foods, to get a trackside view of the site where Tyson will build a new feedmill. This plant, projected to begin production in 1996, should provide MNA with 4000 carloads a year. After the short stop, the train goes on to Bergman, Ark., where Tyson already has a plant served by MNA. The purpose of the special is for Tyson and RailTex officials to become better acquainted. It is this type of new business from old customers which RailTex hopes to cultivate to make MNA a success.

Yard and depot at Cotter, Ark., are relatively quiet as an MNA GP40/slug set lays over during midday on October 21, 1993.

Dan McShane, vice president of sales for RailTex, was instrumental in the decision to purchase the UP package which has become the Missouri & Northern Arkansas. Previously he was district sales manager for UP in Kansas City, and his department covered most of this territory. On board the Tyson special he explained RailTex's criteria for purchasing a railroad.

"Two things we look for are geographical diversity and the potential for traffic

RailTex railroad roundup

Name	Initials	Miles	Diesels	States/Prov.	Acq. from (Ex-)	Start-Up	Cars/Yr.
1. San Diego & Imperial Valley	SDIV	45	5	Calif., Baja C.N.	SDAE	10/15/84	4,622
2. Austin & Northwestern	AUNW	162	10	Texas	SP	8/15/86	7,760
3. North Carolina & Virginia	NCVA	62	3	N.C., Virginia	CSX (SAL)	11/1/87	3,183
4. South Carolina Central	SCRF	56	6	South Carolina	CSX (SAL)	12/1/87	23,689
5. Mid-Michigan	MMRR	63	2	Michigan	CSX (C&O)	12/19/87	7,498
6. Virginia Southern Division	SCRV	74	3	N.C., Virginia	NS (SOU)	11/28/88	5,700
7. Georgia & Alabama Div.	SCRV	74	2	Ga., Alabama	NS (CofG)	6/1/89	3,302
8. Georgia Southwestern Div.	SCRV	288	4	Ga., Alabama	CSX (SAL)	6/5/89	8,937
9. Texas & New Mexico	TNMR	107	1	N.Mex., Texas	UP (T&P)	9/18/89	2,137
10. NE Kans. & Missouri Div.	MM	108	2	Kansas, Mo.	UP	2/26/90	4,196
11. Chesapeake & Albemarle	CA	70	2	Virginia, N.C.	NS (NSRy.)	4/2/90	4,291
12. Texas Northeastern	TNER	174	7	Texas	UP (T&P, MKT)	10/22/90	15,410
13. Carolina Piedmont Div.	SCRV	34	3	South Carolina	CSX (C&WC)	11/5/90	5,843
14. Michigan Shore Div.	MM	10	1	Michigan	CMGN (GTW, PRR)	12/6/90	2,130
15. Georgia Great Sou. Div.	SCRV	22	(GAAB)	Georgia	CSX (SAL)	12/14/90	787
16. New Orleans Lower Coast	NOLR	24	2	Louisiana	UP (MP)	3/5/91	7,506
17. Dallas, Garland & Northeastern	DGNO	67	6	Texas	UP (MKT)	2/9/92	9,971
18. Goderich-Exeter	GEXR	70	3	Ontario	CN	4/3/92	7,176
19. Indiana Southern	ISRR	190	10	Indiana	CR (NYC, PRR)	4/11/92	39,292
20. Missouri & Northern Arkansas	MNA	522	20	Mo., Ark., Kans.	UP (MP)	11/9/92	43,126
21. Salt Lake City Southern	SL	25	1	Utah	UP	4/19/93	1,900
22. Grand Rapids Eastern Div.	MM	40	1	Michigan	CMGN (GTW)	7/12/93	3,500
23. Cape Breton & Central N.S.	CBNS	235	12	Nova Scotia	CN	10/1/93	25,000
24. Central Oregon & Pacific	CORP	439	28	Oregon, Calif.	SP	11/22/94	40,000
25. New England Central	NECR	325	18	Vt., Mass., Conn.	CN (CV)	2/4/95	31,689
Totals		3,286	152	22			308,635

Key to initials: CN, Canadian National; CofG, Central of Georgia; CV, Central Vermont; C&WC, Charleston & Western Carolina; C&O, Chesapeake & Ohio; CMGN, Central Michigan; GTW, Grand Trunk Western; MKT, Missouri-Kansas-Texas; MP, Missouri Pacific; NYC, New York Central; NS, Norfolk Southern Corp.; NSRy, Norfolk Southern Railway; PRR, Pennsylvania; SDAE, San Diego & Arizona Eastern; SAL, Seaboard Air Line; SOU, Southern Railway; SP, Southern Pacific; T&P, Texas & Pacific; UP, Union Pacific.

Sources: RailTex; *The Short Line* magazine; *Extra 2200 South*.



KEVIN EUDALY

This ex-Katy GP40 is on former home rails as it rolls south through Appleton City, Mo., with the Clinton local on February 4, 1994.

New England Central, and Central Oregon & Pacific.

Only time will tell if RailTex's decision on Missouri & Northern Arkansas will bring dividends, but early results show promise. Carloadings have grown in excess of 10 percent, and several new industries now are served. Further, RailTex's passenger-friendly attitude is paying off, with one established excursion operation and other possibilities.

How MNA operates

Headquarters for MNA is in the picturesque former MoPac depot at Carthage, which sits inside a wye on the north side of town. Management and train-dispatching functions emanate from here. Carthage is a primary on-duty point for train crews, and there is a small car and locomotive servicing facility just south of the depot.

Typical of new RailTex roads, MNA's diesel fleet has fluctuated a bit [see roster], with the two SD20's used on the Tyson train, for instance, having relocated to Oregon. MNA depends mostly on GP40's, plus some slugs and one switcher kept at Springfield. Heavy engine repairs are contracted out to Mid-America in Kansas City, but most minor locomotive and car repairs are performed by MNA people.

MNA crews were involved in a big track program that called for 30,000 ties to be replaced in 1994, and they were also busy replacing several sections of curved rail, particularly in the Branson area. Track on the MNA has rail varying from 112-lb. to 136-lb., much of it welded.

Freight trains are limited to 30 mph, some of that by topography. Trains operate on track-warrant authority; the only signals on the line, at the mouths of some of the mountain tunnels, were deactivated by UP.

Currently there are no through trains on Missouri & Northern Arkansas except for coal trains from other carriers. After experimenting with schedules, MNA settled on a series of locals and switchers to distribute traffic along the line. Switch jobs typically have three-person crews, while locals usually operate with two. Locals make round trips, returning crews home each night, except trains to and from Neff Yard in Kansas City, which operate one way and have crews lay over. MNA is a non-union operation.

Dennis McDougal, recently named general manager, says that "probably 98 to 99 percent of our interchange business" is with UP, at Neff Yard and Newport. "The northbound local out of Carthage lays over at Neff and comes out the next night. We have a

growth. We previously didn't have much concentration in the Midwest, and we believe there are lots of opportunities for growth on this line.

"Through my position at Union Pacific I was already familiar with the customer base in this area, and one of the things we like is the diversification of commodities. On the MNA there is coal business, chemicals, and agricultural products, as well as several other types of materials. We felt that even though the length of this package offered by UP was greater than our usual acquisitions, this was a good opportunity to upsize our operation."

McShane spoke of plans to increase traffic on MNA. "We have two full-time marketing directors for this railroad and rely heavily on close customer contacts. This is not restricted to existing customers, though they normally represent the best prospects

for increasing business. We are also working to develop customers beyond our present base. There is a proposed intermodal project in conjunction with UP at Carthage. There is also the potential to upgrade facilities at Cotter, where we have a grain and plastics transloader. These are the types of opportunities RailTex looks for when bidding on a railroad.

"We have a full-time acquisitions staff with four people that go out and knock on doors to meet with customers and develop ideas and information. We end up bidding on less than half the offers we receive, so when the decision is made to go after a railroad, we already have a good idea of what we want to do with it."

Since RailTex acquired what became the MNA, it has added three more "large" (for RailTex) properties [see box on previous page]: Cape Breton & Central Nova Scotia,

Missouri & Northern Arkansas locomotives

Nos.	Qty.	Model	Year	Remarks
20	0	GP9	1956	Ex-CPDR 20, ex-BCLR, nee NH 1210; reassigned
483	0	GP20	1960	Ex-SD&IV 1438, ex-UP 483, nee UP 713; sent to CPDR 2/94, then NEKM
501/515	10	GP40	1968	Nos. 501-05, 507-09, 511, 515; 510 wrecked; ex-UP same, MKT 196/209
632/645	5	GP40	1970	Nos. 632, 636, 640, 642, 645 only; ex-UP same, 632, 642, 642 also ex-MP same; nee RI 4701, 4705, 4709, 4711, 4714
1000-1001	0	SD20	1959	Ex-ICG 2000-2001, rebuilt from UP SD24B's 400B, 409B, acquired 10/94, reassigned to CORP
1229	1	SSB1200	1979	Ex-ATSF 1229, 1429; rebuilt 1979 from SW9 2429; Springfield switcher
3076-3084	0	GP40	1969	Nos. 3075-78, 3080-84; ex-BN same, ex-B&O 3700's via GATX; reassigned
4162	0	Slug	-	Ex-ISRR 4162, L&N 2068, on loan in 1993 until arrival of 4163
4163-4164	2	Slug	-	GP9 bodies; converted from A&NW GP9's 33, 11; nee DRGW 5911, 5952
4202	1	GP35M	1964	Ex-SP GP35, converted to 2000 h.p., no turbocharger
4211, 4217	2	GP40M	1967,69	Ex-CSX GP40's 6711, 6717 (nee SCL 1556, 1562), converted to 2000 h.p., no turbocharger
6527	1	GP35	1964	Ex-SP same; has been leased to Branson Scenic

Notes: RailTex frequently moves units around among its railroads. This roster represents most units to operate on MNA under its auspices. Quantity represents units on MNA at effective roster date. All units built by Electro-Motive Division, General Motors; all units B-B wheel arrangement except SD20's, C-C. Key to initials: A&NW, Austin & Northwestern; ATSF, Santa Fe; B&O, Baltimore & Ohio; BCLR, Bay Colony; BN, Burlington Northern; CPDR, Carolina Piedmont; CORP, Central Oregon & Pacific; DRGW, Denver & Rio Grande Western; ICG Illinois Central Gulf; ISRR, Indiana Southern; KCS, Kansas City Southern; L&N, Louisville & Nashville; MKT, Missouri-Kansas-Texas; MP, Missouri Pacific; NEKM, Northeast Kansas & Missouri; NH, New Haven; RI, Rock Island; SCL, Seaboard Coast Line; SD&IV, San Diego & Imperial Valley; SP, Southern Pacific; UP, Union Pacific. This roster format is copyrighted by *Trains Magazine*, and this roster may not be photocopied or reproduced for commercial distribution, or by nonprofit organizations without written permission.

Sources: Tom Marshall, M&NA; EMD Product Reference Data; *Diesel Era*; *Extra 2200 South*; *The Short Line*; effective March 1, 1995.—*Trains Magazine*: J. David Ingles



RANDY WOODS

switch job which goes on duty at Carthage around 6 a.m. after the arrival of this train. Some of these cars are spotted for the Carthage switcher, some for the Joplin switcher, and the rest continue south to Gretna on a local which leaves around 2 p.m. About the time of departure of the Carthage south job, a northbound leaves Cotter and meets the Carthage train at Gretna. The crews swap trains and return to their respective points of origin.

"The Cotter train ties up overnight and heads south in the early morning, exchanging cars with the north local from Batesville at either Mount Olive or Guion. Batesville is another important point. A manager of train operations and supervisor are located there, and car repairs are done there. We have three jobs that go on duty at Batesville—the local to Guion, the Batesville switcher, and a job that goes to Newport."

MNA's biggest customers are two electric power plants at each end of the system, Kansas City Power & Light's at Clinton, Mo., and Arkansas Power & Light's at Independence, near Newark. McDougal says these operations can be hectic. "In the south, we get coal trains from UP at Newport and run them to Independence where we spot 'em for unloading and then return the empties back to UP. It's only 10 or 12 miles from Independence to Newport, but this stretch can be real busy. One day last week, we had four trains come in while I was there. On

average, we get a couple of trains daily." UP diesels run through on these trains.

On the north end, MNA gets Clinton coal trains in interchange from BN at Fort Scott, Kans. Supplementing the Clinton coal business are trains from UP two or three times each month. These require helper locomotives out of Kansas City because of the steep grades on Independence Hill. BN or UP power runs through on these trains, too, and often MNA units will serve as the helpers. UP freights out of Kansas City usually go via the River Line to Jefferson City, avoiding Independence Hill, but to reach Pleasant Hill, MNA has no choice.

Forging a future

The creation of the Missouri & Northern Arkansas, and its initial success, have meant for an exciting time along the White River Route, once virtually given up for lost. Although the passenger trains spark local interest, freight—especially coal—remains MNA's bread and butter. The railroad is negotiating for the return of through coal trains from Kansas City to the AP&L plant. MNA management feels their lower labor costs and more direct line would be more economical for Union Pacific than the current circuitous route through Little Rock.

Capturing new on-line business is also a vital concern. Besides further development of Cotter Yard and a plan to initiate intermodal service at Carthage, MNA is attempt-

Easily accessible is MNA's White River bridge in Cotter, also home of a picturesque highway bridge. Train is westbound in July 1994.

ing to attract business at the new industrial park in Joplin, where the railroad already serves two customers. Grain loadings on MNA increased dramatically in 1994 after being off-and-on during latter UP days. Some of these gains can be attributed to flooding in 1993 being followed by bumper crops the next year.

Although it is difficult to predict the White River Route's future, the railroad appears secure for the time being. Nonetheless, the line still requires high maintenance and remains susceptible to flooding, washouts, and slides.

RailTex and MNA have adopted an aggressive policy to seek new customers, and it appears to be working. They have developed a management team of individuals who have years of railroad experience, mostly from Class 1's. RailTex has proven elsewhere that it can turn a profit on roads where the previous owner could not. All these factors combine to enhance the chance of success for the Missouri & Northern Arkansas on one of the most beautiful pieces of railroad in the central part of the country. **I**

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Big kid in the Alleghenies

The largest member of the Genesee & Wyoming family is making a go of it in a onetime corner of CSX—and it's growing

BY RYAN R. FISCHER

WITH ITS SECONDHAND LOCOMOTIVES hauling coal and mixed freight between two former industrial capitals, the Buffalo & Pittsburgh may appear, at first glance, a railroad trapped in the past.

But first glances can be deceiving. For while the B&P looks like many an ill-fated railroad from the 1960's, it runs like a regional operator of the 1990's, one that is making a go of it in a region that's not nearly as kind to railroads as in days past.

The product of a major CSX spin-off, B&P came to life in 1988 as a roughly 300-mile-long carrier (excluding branches) between Eidenau, Pa., and Buffalo. As its corporate focus turned south, CSX passed the still-busy route on to railroad holding company Genesee & Wyoming Industries in a lease/purchase transaction. Two years earlier, CSX had sold its Ashford Junction-Rochester (N.Y.) line to GWI, trackage which became the Rochester & Southern Railroad.

The B&P and R&S essentially recreated the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway, whose route formed a "Y" linking its three namesake cities. The two upper branches, from Buffalo and Rochester, met at Ashford Junction, with the trunk proceeding south through the Pennsylvania industrial towns of Bradford, Dubois, Punxsutawney, and Butler. At Eidenau, southwest of Butler, BR&P joined Baltimore & Ohio's ex-Pittsburgh & Western to reach the Steel City via trackage rights.

This historic recreation continues today for the most part, save for ongoing operational changes by both B&P and R&S in New York State. Also, instead of running to Pittsburgh, B&P trains now use trackage rights over

CSX from Eidenau west to New Castle, Pa., their southern terminus.

BR&P to B&O to Chessie to CSX

The B&P has its origins in the Rochester & Pittsburgh Railroad, created in 1881 out of several lines built in the previous decade. By 1883, the line had taken on its "Y" shape, but extending only to Mt. Jewett, Pa., from where it used trackage rights over the Erie Railroad to Johnsonburg. Here, R&P's own tracks resumed, continuing south to a connection with the Allegheny Valley Railroad (later part of the Pennsylvania Railroad) at Dubois. By running over the AV via Brookville and Red Bank, the R&P created a direct line between Rochester and Pittsburgh.

Like other roads reaching south from New York State and the Great Lakes into the mountains of Pennsylvania, R&P was built to haul coal. The Iselin family, who controlled the R&P in the early 1880's, created it to reach coal-rich land south of Brockway at Beechtree. Coal changed the planned route of the R&P in 1883 when the family acquired a second tract of mineable land south of Punxsutawney at Walston. The R&P was supposed to go from Brockway to Brookville to reach the AV (a route that later hosted the Pittsburg & Shawmut), but with the new land, the Iselins instead extended the R&P south through Punxsutawney. This route, the Brockway & Punxsutawney, opened in October 1883, and merged into the BR&P in 1891.

By the mid-1880's, more than 200 carloads of coal moved over the R&P daily on 40-plus trains. By 1905, coal made up 75 percent of the BR&P's traffic. This number dropped somewhat after that, although the commodity still produced more than half of the line's

business into the 1920's and beyond.

In 1887 the Buffalo, Rochester & Pittsburgh Railway officially took over the R&P. The road still ran only as far south as Punxsutawney, utilizing the AV connection to reach Pittsburgh. But in 1899 the controlling interests of the BR&P built the Allegheny & Western Railroad from Punxsutawney southwest through Butler and on to a connection with B&O's Pittsburgh & Western. The BR&P then leased the A&W, and was able to reach Pittsburgh via Butler and the B&O.

Although the dirt and soot of coal kept the BR&P going, the road also developed a polished passenger service, taking advantage of what amounted to a monopoly on Rochester-Pittsburgh service. Service continued between Buffalo and Pittsburgh until 1955.

B&O took over the BR&P, along with the nearby Buffalo & Susquehanna, in 1932, operating the line as its Buffalo Division. B&O successors Chessie System and CSX later ran it as part of their Pennsylvania Division. The joint trackage setup with Erie (and later Erie Lackawanna) continued into 1976, with EL running trains as far south as Brockway. When Conrail was formed, EL's Mt. Jewett-Johnsonburg trackage was transferred to Chessie.

Capable of 40-mph speeds, the line boasted busy interchanges including Buffalo and New Castle, as well as bustling Riker Yard in Punxsutawney. Into the Chessie tenure, the line generally saw one train in each direction between both Buffalo and Rochester and the Pittsburgh area. Two more carried freight to and from western points

Two SD45's and a GP40 lead B&P train BNZ through the hills about six miles south of Bradford, Pa., in March 1996. Terry Chicwak photo.





TERRY CHICWAK

At Ashford Junction, N.Y., SD45's lead train BNZ past the closed AD Tower in February 1996.

between New Castle and either Butler or Riker. There were also coal extras, locals, Butler-New Castle turns, and EL coal trains, which ran until 1976.

The line was particularly important as a coal route, with 800 to 1000 carloadings a week in the early 1980's. This and other traffic declined after 1985, although the line was kept busy with one train in each direction daily, plus coal extras. One of the earliest routes in the East to improve clearances, the line also hosted double-stack trains to and from the Delaware & Hudson in Buffa-

lo from the mid-1980's until 1989.

Going into the takeover, Genesee & Wyoming Industries saw the potential to profit from the line, despite the larger road's disinterest. At startup on July 19, 1988, the B&P acquired a railroad in fairly good condition with a decent amount of bridge and on-line traffic.

There was still demand for service on the route, in part because it is essentially the only alternative to Conrail between Buffalo and the Pittsburgh area. Also, shippers were thriving along the line, while several railroads depended on it to move their coal trains. The on-line business continues to be aided by the fact that two-lane U.S. Route 219

has never been widened, leaving many cites along the B&P with inadequate north-south highway service.

Over the past 8½ years, the B&P has focused on the business it inherited, carving out a niche as an important regional carrier and bridge line with solid on-line shippers to boot. Central to the line's success have been its role in the growing GWI system, a diversified customer base, and simple, efficient operations focused on these customers.

Big brother, bridge line, and more

GWI is one of several firms expanding its holdings of regional and short-line railroads (others are RailTex, R.J. Corman, Iron Road Railways, Kyle, OmniTrax, Pioneer Railcorp., and Rail America). It has also built a significant system in its native western New York/Pennsylvania area. Along with G&W (a salt-hauling line incorporated in 1899), R&S, and B&P, GWI has recently added Allegheny & Eastern and coal-hauler Pittsburg & Shawmut. In June 1996, GWI completed its initial public stock offering on the NASDAQ market.

The B&P is the big brother of the family, with the most mileage, locomotives, and traffic, if not seniority. Self-sufficient in many operating areas, the B&P reaps some of the benefits of a larger system while still maintaining the independence of a small operation. This is the case with business func-



RICHARD J. COOK

B&O F7's roll a northbound coal train high above the Allegheny River in September 1954.

THE GWI FAMILY

SINCE acquiring the upstate New York short line from which it drew its name, Genesee & Wyoming Industries, Inc., has grown to a 13-railroad, 1380-mile, 6-state empire. GWI is based at 71 Lewis St., Greenwich, CT 06830; phone (203) 629-3722. Here's the GWI family:

Railroad	Headquarters	Miles	Former operator	Acquired by GWI
Allegheny & Eastern Railroad	Punxsutawney, Pa.	149	Allegheny Railroad (PRR, CR)	November 1992
Bradford Industrial Rail	Punxsutawney, Pa.	4	Conrail (Erie)	May 1993
Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad	Leicester, N.Y.	369	CSX (B&O)	July 1988
Dansville & Mt. Morris Railroad	Leicester, N.Y.	8	D&MM	July 1985
Finger Lakes Railway (with Farmrail)	Geneva, N.Y.	118	Conrail (NYC)	July 1995
Genesee & Wyoming Railroad	Retsof, N.Y.	47	-	June 1982
GWI Switching Services	Dayton, Texas	10	Southern Pacific	April 1994
Illinois & Midland Railroad	Springfield, Ill.	121	Chicago & Illinois Midland	February 1996
Louisiana & Delta Railroad	New Iberia, La.	77	SP	March 1987
Pittsburg & Shawmut Railroad	Punxsutawney, Pa.	88	P&S	April 1996
Portland & Western Railroad	Albany, Ore.	114	SP, BN (Oregon Electric)	September 1995
Rochester & Southern Railroad	Rochester, N.Y.	50	CSX (B&O)	July 1986
Willamette & Pacific Railroad	Albany, Ore.	230	SP	February 1993

tions, such as marketing and accounting, which are handled jointly for all GWI roads in Leicester, N.Y.

B&P worked closely with the R&S until fall 1991, when that road was severed between Machias and Silver Springs, N.Y., because of deteriorating track. R&S freight now reaches Buffalo and the B&P via a connection with CP Rail's former D&H (running on Conrail's Southern Tier) at Silver Springs.

Today, B&P, A&E, and P&S operate almost as one railroad, with shared customer service and dispatching tasks out of Punxsutawney, pooled power, and cooperation on train operations. B&P also interchanges mixed freight with the A&E at Johnsonburg and coal traffic with the P&S at Mosgrove and Falls Creek. The P&S north of Brookville (including the interchange at Dellwood) has been idled since the GWI takeover, with a B&P crew out of Dubois now working the customers on the line in the Brockway area.

B&P also has proven an efficient bridge line for larger roads at its endpoints, primarily CSX. More than 35 percent of the B&P's traffic is overhead, with levels reaching twice that at times, according to B&P Manager of Operations Larry Ross. "We are definitely a bridge carrier," Ross says.

At New Castle, B&P picks up a considerable amount of CSX freight for connections in Buffalo. There, B&P connects with Conrail, CP's former D&H, Norfolk Southern, and Canadian National, which also carries freight from CSX from Michigan through Canada. In addition to grain and paper traffic from CP, the B&P picks up auto-rack bridge traffic here from CN/CSX.

Beyond bridge traffic, B&P has a di-

versified on-line customer base of some 25 major shippers, including a number of chemical-, petroleum-, and paper-related industries. It also gains business from on-line rail connections, including the GWI roads and Bessemer & Lake Erie, which GWI has expressed interest in buying. The most common coal movements on the B&P are to and from CSX in New Castle to the B&LE interchange at Butler Junction.

Overall, coal is about 40 percent of B&P's business, with chemicals taking 15 to 25 percent and mixed freight making up the rest, according to Ross.

BNZ, BUB, and the Zig-zags

Operations on the B&P are simple and efficient, similar to those under CSX, though a recent upturn in traffic has led to more trains. One road freight in each direction covers the line daily, up from six days a week. Meanwhile, the main line is fed by 10 locals and yard jobs, 4 more than in past years.

The southbound train, BNZ, usually leaves Buffalo in the predawn hours with cars from interchanges in the city. En route, it stops to change crews (at East Salamanca and Punxsutawney) and switch cars left by locals. After arriving Butler during early evening, the self-titled "Zig-zag" crew takes the train and new power on to New Castle, usually arriving about 24 hours after departing Buffalo. The turn then heads back for Butler with cars from CSX.

The northbound freight, BUB, leaves Butler during late evening with cars from the Zig-zag and other locally generated traffic. BUB usually makes the trip to Buffalo by late evening the next day, also with stops for new crews, as well as to swap cars with locals. BUB

typically meets its southbound counterpart in early-afternoon on the double track near Mt. Jewett, or in Dubois.

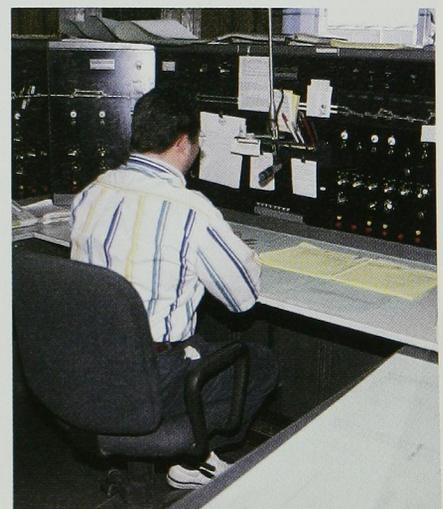
Coal extras on the B&P include moves to and from the P&S and B&LE, and Conrail trains destined for Sheloceta, Pa., using trackage rights. The B&P has also handled coal trains to and from New England between CP in Buffalo and CSX in New Castle. There are crushed-stone extras too, reaching a quarry in Machias via Ashford Junction and the isolated R&S south end.

B&P relies heavily on several locals. The Bradford local works weekdays serving various industries, including Witco Corp., producer of Kendall Motor Oil and B&P's largest on-line shipper. It also works GWI's Bradford Industrial Rail trackage, which serves a Georgia-Pacific plant. In Johnsonburg, a B&P local works seven days a week to serve the Willamette paper facility there, as well as the A&E interchange.

Three locals work five days a week out of Dubois, serving area customers, P&S track near Brockway, and the P&S interchange at Falls Creek. They also work Willamette plants on the short Wharton Subdivision (the last remnant of the Buffalo & Susquehanna), which leaves the main just south of Dubois.

The southernmost B&P local works weekdays serving chemical companies near Petrolia, Pa. The job ferries a substantial amount of traffic over the 17.5-mile Northern Subdivision, which joins the main line at WS Tower, just east of Butler. Built as the Pittsburgh & Western, this line once went north through Petrolia to a connection with what is now the B&P at Mt. Jewett. Part of the line north of Bruin has been gone for decades; another segment is run by the

First trick dispatcher Roger Baranchik keeps things moving from B&P's Punxsutawney office.



TERRY CHICWAK



DAVID BAER

At New Castle, Pa., a Zig-zag with newly arrived SD45's heads for Butler over CSX trackage.

Knox & Kane, a local tourist railroad.

Switchers work five days a week in Butler and Buffalo, sites of B&P's major yards. At Butler, an early-morning job switches the yard, the B&LE interchange, and local customers.

The early morning and evening jobs in Buffalo work out of the ex-CSX Buffalo Creek Yard, located south of the city beside Conrail's Chicago Line and NS's route into Buffalo. In addition to switching the 14-track yard and making up road trains, the jobs work B&P's interchanges in the city. The majority of traffic in Buffalo comes from Conrail

and CN (CSX). B&P also interchanges with CP at that road's SK Yard, and NS, short line Buffalo Southern, and Bethlehem Steel's industrial common carrier South Buffalo at Buffalo Creek.

Pruning the branches

Of the numerous branches which once left what's now the B&P main line, the road operates only the Northern and Wharton subdivisions. Many of the coal spurs were abandoned years ago, but since 1988, the B&P has further streamlined the property.

Gone is the Clearfield Sub, built in 1893 to provide an east-west outlet for the north-south BR&P. In conjunction with the PRR's Allegheny Valley, it also

allowed New York Central trains to move between their home trackage in Brookville and Clearfield, Pa. NYC coal trains used this route until the 1960's. The first 17 miles of the 26-mile line, which left the main line just south of Dubois, are abandoned, while Conrail operated the final 9 miles into Clearfield until selling its Clearfield cluster of lines to R.J. Corman in late 1995.

In February 1994 the B&P also discontinued service on the Indiana and Ridge subdivisions, which were leased from CSX. Cutting southeast off the main line just above Punxsutawney, the Indiana branch (and the Ridge Sub which runs off it) once generated large amounts of coal traffic.

In 1996, the B&P again began using a short stretch of the Indiana line because of revived coal loadings around Cloe. But in an odd twist in late 1994, Conrail leased most of the Indiana line from CSX and purchased the Ridge line. Within months, Conrail was running coal trains down the lines to a power plant at Shelocta. These trains run off Conrail's Conemaugh Line onto the P&S at Freeport, Pa., then onto the B&P at Mosgrove, using trackage rights on both roads.

The main line, once primarily double-track, is now mostly single, thanks largely to CSX. What remains is well-maintained, with B&P employing a few



MARK LEPPERT

A GP35 still in Allegheny Railroad colors and a GP9 ease a local over one of the Northern Sub's timber trestles near Chicora in October 1995.

AT A GLANCE

Name: Buffalo & Pittsburgh Railroad, Inc.

General offices: 3 Parkway, P.O. Box 247, Leicester, NY 14481.

Operating office: 201 N. Penn St., Punxsutawney, PA 15767.

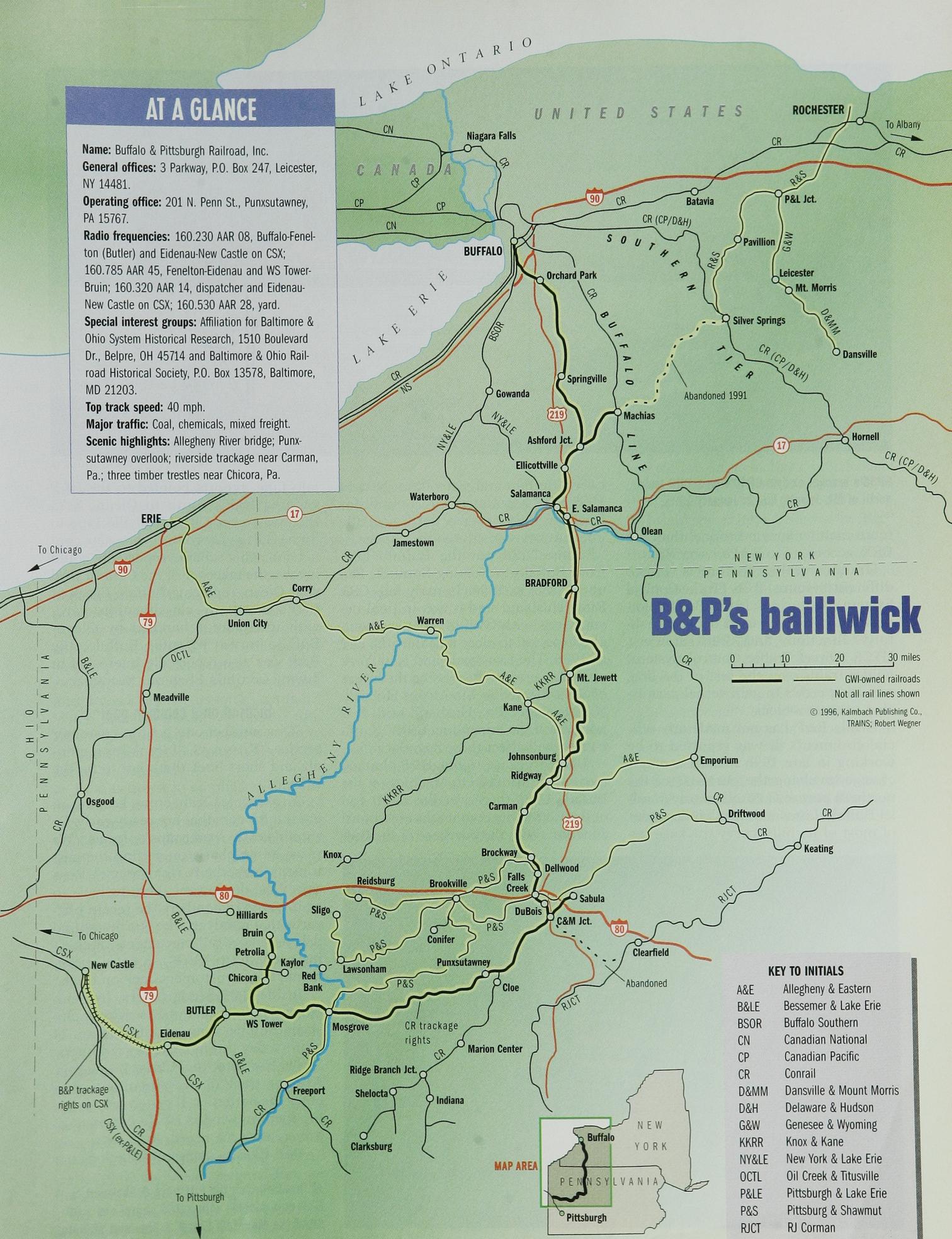
Radio frequencies: 160.230 AAR 08, Buffalo-Fenelton (Butler) and Eidenau-New Castle on CSX; 160.785 AAR 45, Fenelton-Eidenau and WS Tower-Bruin; 160.320 AAR 14, dispatcher and Eidenau-New Castle on CSX; 160.530 AAR 28, yard.

Special interest groups: Affiliation for Baltimore & Ohio System Historical Research, 1510 Boulevard Dr., Belpre, OH 45714 and Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Historical Society, P.O. Box 13578, Baltimore, MD 21203.

Top track speed: 40 mph.

Major traffic: Coal, chemicals, mixed freight.

Scenic highlights: Allegheny River bridge; Punxsutawney overlook; riverside trackage near Carman, Pa.; three timber trestles near Chicora, Pa.



B&P's bailiwick

0 10 20 30 miles
 GWI-owned railroads
 Not all rail lines shown
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KEY TO INITIALS

A&E	Allegheny & Eastern
B&LE	Bessemer & Lake Erie
BSOR	Buffalo Southern
CN	Canadian National
CP	Canadian Pacific
CR	Conrail
D&MM	Dansville & Mount Morris
D&H	Delaware & Hudson
G&W	Genesee & Wyoming
KKRR	Knox & Kane
NY&LE	New York & Lake Erie
OCTL	Oil Creek & Titusville
P&LE	Pittsburgh & Lake Erie
P&S	Pittsburg & Shawmut
RJCT	RJ Corman
R&S	Rochester & Southern



TERRY CHICWAK

GP38's bracket ex-Kyle GP40's on a BUB train north of Mt. Jewett, Pa., in January 1995.

more maintenance personnel than did CSX, according to B&P's Larry Ross.

Train control on the line is via two different systems. TCS (Train Control System), featuring classic B&O color-position signals, is used between Ashford Junction and Punxsutawney. DTCS (Direct Traffic Control System) guides trains over the rest of the line, requiring crews to gain verbal permission to enter a block.

While B&P has not made any official comments, it was reported to be working in late 1996 toward a major change involving the purchase of the northern part of Conrail's nearly parallel Buffalo Line, and the abandonment of most of its hilly, curvy trackage be-

tween Buffalo and Carrollton, N.Y. In 1995 B&P negotiated with Conrail for trackage rights over a portion of the line, but never instituted the change.

Conrail did put the Buffalo Line from Buffalo to Keating Summit, Pa., up for sale in 1996. In early fall, CR's Rudy Husband said it was in final negotiations with GWI for that segment, and expected to close a deal by the end of 1996. The two roads and New York officials were also discussing the future of CR's Meadville Line from Hornell, N.Y., to Corry, Pa., Husband said. It is not clear if the impending CSX-Conrail merger will affect these negotiations.

Using trackage rights, B&P planned to run from Buffalo to Machias on the Buffalo Line, then over the south end of the R&S to its own tracks at Ashford Junction. With the purchase of the Buf-

falo Line, reports pointed to the B&P running trains south to Olean, N.Y., then west over CR's Meadville Line to home rails at Carrollton via a new connection. This scheme reportedly could involve the takeover of the Conrail yard near Olean, replacing Buffalo Creek as B&P's northern classification yard, with interchange handled by Olean-Buffalo turns. To enter Buffalo, the B&P was also reportedly interested in buying Conrail's Ebenezer Secondary.

Focused on a common goal

"Our number-one goal is customer service," Ross says. "I think for regionals and short lines that's got to be the priority."

An example? Train crews keeping an eye out for cars that are ready early. Or running extra road trains or locals. "We place an emphasis on getting the customer's cars there right away," Ross says. "We don't want them to have to wait." Ross remembers the recent blizzards that paralyzed the Northeast and delayed many rail movements. Following each storm, B&P ran extra movements to get customers back on track.

Inside B&P headquarters, five employees handle customer service exclusively. Shippers can get information 24 hours a day through B&P's computers, which tie into the Class 1 systems. Keeping track of cars the minute they enter the nation's rail system and keeping them moving is B&P's biggest customer-service concern, Ross says.

Dan Ekas, a veteran of the logistics



RYAN R. FISCHER

At Brookville, on the Pittsburg & Shawmut, a B&P unit mingles with a P&S shovel and a GP-10 of the Mountain Laurel, a Shawmut affiliate.

BUFFALO & PITTSBURGH DIESELS

Nos.	Qty.	Model	Year	Remarks
200-209	8	GP9	1955-56	Ex-CSX (B&O, C&O); all to be retired late 1996
450-457	8	SD45E	1966-71	Ex-Southern Pacific; rebuilt
626, 874, 879, 886, 887	5	GP9	1958-59	Ex-NS (N&W); 879 leased to Finger Lakes Railway
922, 926	2	GP18	1960	Ex-Norfolk Southern (Norfolk & Western)
2000-2003	4	GP38	1967-71	Ex-CSX
3000-3001	2	GP40	1971, 65	Ex-CSX
3100, 3102, 3106, 3107, 3111, 3119	6	GP40	1967-68	Ex-Kyle Railroad (New York Central)
6673	1	GP40	1966	Ex-CSX (Seaboard Coast Line)
7803, 7822	2	GP38	1969	Ex-Conrail (Penn Central)

Other GWI power found on B&P:

50-51	2	GP38	1969	Genesee & Wyoming; ex-CR (PC)
101-106	6	GP40	1968	Rochester & Southern; ex-NYC
301-302	2	GP40	1968	Allegheny & Eastern; ex-CR (PC)
305-306	2	GP35	1964	A&E; ex-Union Pacific

Notes: All units built by Electro-Motive Division, General Motors; all units B-B except SD45, C-C.

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Sources: B&P, "American Shortline Railway Guide," EMD Product Reference Data; effective September 1996.—R.R.F.

department at Witco Corp., said CSX provided good service on the line, and that his company didn't know what to expect from the B&P. But, Ekas says, "My experience with them has been excellent. They're a smaller railroad, and there's more personal contact." Witco receives about 20 cars a day, Ekas says (although a pending sale to oil giant Sun Co. has put the Bradford facility in jeopardy).

Ross is quick to emphasize that the success of the B&P depends on road's 165 employees, many of whom are CSX veterans. (B&P President Chuck Chabot was v.p.-marketing for the larger road, while Ross has served in various positions for B&O/Chessie/CSX.) "The people are really what makes the Buffalo & Pittsburgh," Ross says. "We have a lot of good people and a lot of experienced people on this line."

Good, used horses

Like most regionals, B&P relies on secondhand locomotives. It started with 19 leased CSX units, which were returned within six months, in addition to 9 units bought prior to startup. With other purchases, the B&P built up a roster of about 30 older-model GP's. It also made regular use of R&S and A&E power, as well as leased units. Road trains typically were assigned four or five GP40's; locals used GP9's.

In 1994 B&P began to upgrade its power, starting with four rebuilt GP38's

for road service. The changeover continued into late 1995, when the road bought eight rebuilt SD45's from Helm Leasing, its first six-axle power. With the 45's as its premier road power, the B&P moved the GP38's into yard service and began retiring the GP9's.

There may be more purchases to come, Ross says, especially with the added P&S trackage to serve. (B&P units have become the sole power on the P&S, as that road's red-white-and-blue SW9's and Geeps are being sold.)

Diesels are maintained at B&P's Butler engine facility, which the road built in 1989 and expanded in '96. Featuring a six-bay enginehouse, it handles fueling and all repairs and painting.

The B&P's locomotives have also made it popular with train-watchers. In addition to its liberal use of older power, paint schemes on the B&P are always a surprise. In the road's first few years, B&P units in former owners' liveries mingled with CSX holdovers and leasers. Soon after, power in B&P's attractive orange-and-black livery (the GWI standard) appeared, adding to the variety. Today more engines wear B&P colors, although there's still variety with R&S and A&E units, plus others still in former owners' paint and run-through power on some coal moves.

A look ahead

As it heads towards its 10th anniversary, B&P continues to see steady re-

sults. One good measure is carloadings. Despite rough times for railroads in the early '90's, B&P managed about 50,000 carloadings in 1992. By 1995 it passed CSX's norm of 60,000 in the late 1980's.

Expanded business may come from almost anywhere, Ross says, adding "We are very active in working with all our customers and the Class 1's to explore a number of possibilities."

The pending CSX-Conrail merger may hurt B&P somewhat, as CSX will now have plenty of access to Buffalo for bridge traffic. This will likely make the health of on-line shippers and parent GWI—as well as coordination with other carriers like CP or even Susquehanna—more important for the B&P.

However, B&P may find new sources of bridge traffic on either the Buffalo or Meadville lines, if those purchases take place. Also, the merger could lead to the acquisition of new lines or trackage rights, perhaps giving direct access to Pittsburgh over CSX's P&W Sub.

In any case, Ross believes the B&P has built a solid groundwork early in the decade, and is on track for the future. "Our business is very stable right now, and we think it will do nothing but grow." I

RYAN R. FISCHER, 26, is a native of Jamestown, N.Y. He now lives near Philadelphia, where he works as a newspaper reporter. He thanks the B&P's employees, especially Larry Ross; GWI Treasurer Mark Hastings; and historian Paul Pietrak. This is his first TRAINS byline.

Led by CSX and GATX units, a coal train leaves the B&P and enters CSX trackage at Eidenau; a westbound CSX train waits in the distance.



RYAN R. FISCHER