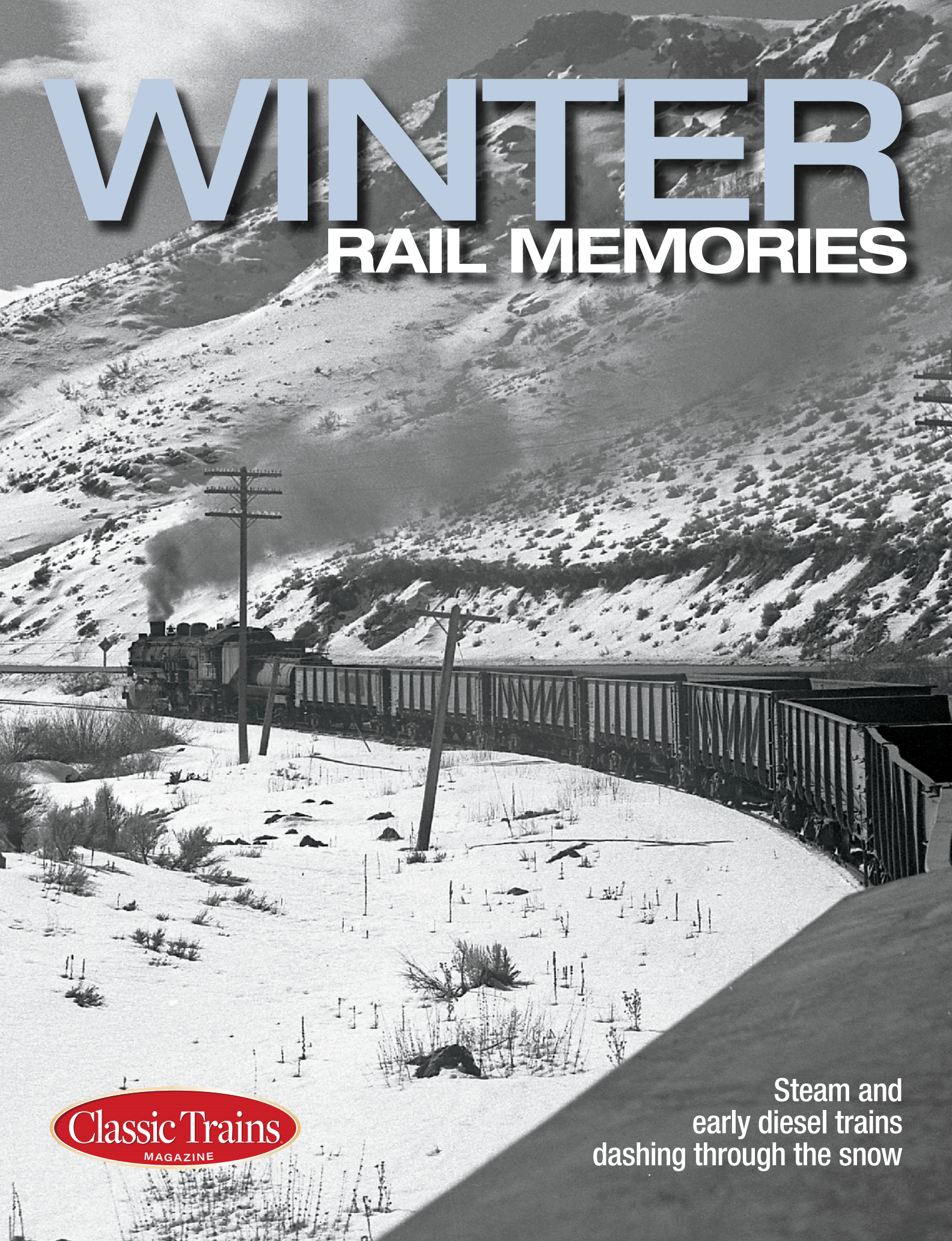


WINTER

RAIL MEMORIES



Classic Trains
MAGAZINE

Steam and
early diesel trains
dashing through the snow



LONG WAY HOME for Christmas

Riding from east Tennessee to Detroit — via St. Louis — in 1965
gave evidence of the passenger train's decline

By J. David Ingles • Photos by the author

A long Louisville & Nashville *Georgian*, looking like the one I rode into St. Louis six days before except for having E7s and not Fs, rolls past Union Station December 19, 1965, prior to backing into a track under the trainshed.

Normally, most college students heading home for Christmas would take the fastest, most direct way back to their parents' place, right? Free food and accessible laundry facilities, hometown friends, and all that. This was not the case for me in 1965. After my graduation from MacMurray College in central Illinois that June, I enrolled for one year in the University of Tennessee's transportation program for graduate work, and I spent the 1965–66 school year in Knoxville. My Bachelor of Science degree in Business-Economics at a small liberal-arts college had few specialty courses, so at U.T., I



My three-week Christmastime 1965 odyssey began December 12 on Southern 41, the *Pelican*, at Knoxville. I couldn't both get a photo and climb aboard, so subbing for the FP7/E7A up front on that drab Sunday is this FP7/E7B tandem four weeks later, on January 8, 1966.



Worthy of remark was dining on the *Georgian* in Duncan Hines. The diner, pictured in Louisville in 1968, was scrapped, but an ex-SP car honors it at the Bowling Green (Ky.) railroad museum.

Tom Smart photo, author's collection

took more senior-level transportation courses than graduate classes. Academic benefits aside, my nine months in Knoxville acquainted me with many new railroads and locations in the Southeast, and I made several new friends, some of whom I remain in touch with today.

U.T. was on the quarter system, which meant a three-week "Christmas vacation" after the fall term. My 1961 black Ford Galaxie had been acting up, so after visiting the Southern Railway station to buy train tickets for a triangle trip home to Detroit (via St. Louis and Chicago), I parked it for the duration on Highland Avenue opposite the home in which I rented a room. The rail odyssey would take me back to central Illinois to visit friends, then to my parents' home in

Dearborn, Mich., and back to Knoxville for the winter 1966 quarter. I would patronize five railroads and ride six trains. A "trip report" I wrote at the time began, "Spurning the airlines on the theory that I can try them when the trains are gone in a few years, all vacation travel was once again by rail." That observation was a logical one, the way passenger service was going, especially in the South.

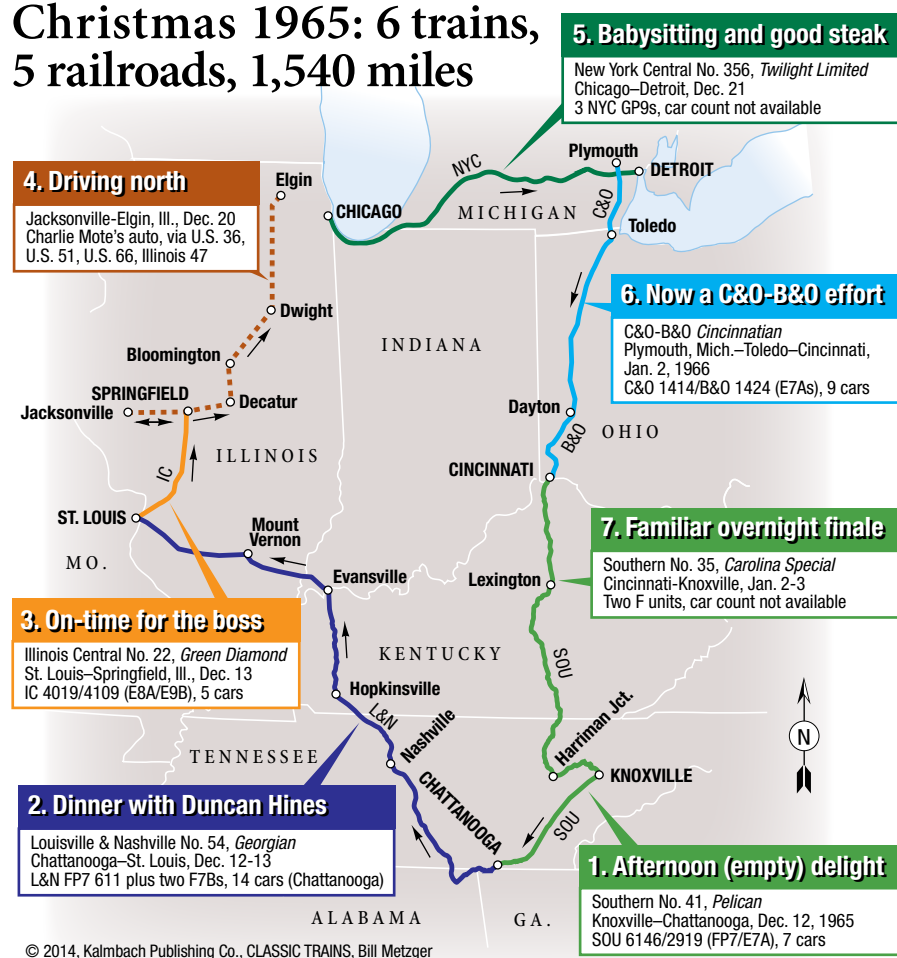
I left Knoxville on the rainy afternoon of Sunday, December 12, on Southern train 41, the *Pelican*, a Washington–New Orleans secondary run that, along with the *Birmingham Special* and *Tennessean* (which went to Memphis), operated over the Norfolk & Western via Lynchburg and Bristol, Va. I'd photographed the *Pelican* numerous times during the



Illinois Central's *Green Diamond*, train 22, is ready to pull out from under the St. Louis Union Station trainshed in December 1966, a year after my trip. Up front is E8 4027, whose lower area of orange paint was, with the exception of one B unit, deeper than on all other IC E units.

Walt Peters photo, author's collection

Christmas 1965: 6 trains, 5 railroads, 1,540 miles



On my December '65 ride on 22, IC business car No. 1 (pictured in 1963) was on the rear.

autumn. On this day, we left Knoxville 35 minutes late at 2:45 p.m. with a typical consist: FP7 and E7 for power (6146 and 2919), four mail or express cars, two coaches, and New York-Chattanooga 14-roomette/4-double-bedroom sleeper *Shenandoah Valley*. The train's interior was clean but mostly empty of passengers. We arrived at Chattanooga Terminal Station (now the "Choo Choo" hotel and conference complex) on time at 5:30.

Why go southwest first? My initial destination was Springfield, Ill., and while I could have gone north to Cincinnati and then west to St. Louis, I'd ridden Knoxville-Cincinnati several times and I'd also ridden B&O's Cincinnati-St. Louis line. (Always seeking a new train or route, I would try Louisville & Nashville's coach-only overnight former *Flamingo* to Cincinnati once, in the spring.)

My "something new" for this trek was L&N's Atlanta-St. Louis *Georgian*, due out of Chattanooga a little before 9 p.m. Since my layover was three-hours-plus, I first went to L&N's Union Station on 9th Street and made sure the *Georgian's* dining car still would be open after departure. It would be. I checked my luggage, then walked a few blocks north to take in a movie. Don't ask me what film it was.

Returning to Union Station, I found the previously deserted and tomb-like head house alive with patrons. Notably absent, of course, was Western & Atlantic 4-4-0 No. 3, the *General*, whisked from its display platform under the cover of darkness in 1959 by W&A successor L&N for restoration and return to service for a tour marking the Civil War's centennial. (Probably some Chattanoogaans have never forgiven the railroad for swiping the locomotive; the city lost a custody lawsuit in 1970, and the railroad eventually deeded the *General* to the state of Georgia. Today it's displayed at a museum in Kennesaw.)

I joined the crowd at the depot to await the arrival of the finest of the three passenger trains still plying the east end

of the old Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis, by this time part of L&N for eight years. Train 54's 12-minute dwell time was sufficient for me to note the consist. Behind FP7 611 and two F7Bs were 14 cars: four various head-end; a dorm-combine; Chicago & Eastern Illinois sleeper *Florida Flowers*, with 4 sections, 4 roomettes, 1 compartment, and 5 double bedrooms, for Chicago (C&EI handled the Chicago section north of Evansville, Ind.); three Chicago coaches (one C&EI); a diner; lounge *Cincinnati Club*; coach 3264 for St. Louis; and two 6-section/6-roomette/4-double-bedroom sleepers, *Plantation Pine* and *Georgia Pine*. My roomette was in *Plantation Pine*; the car behind it, for Louisville, would come off at Nashville in L&N's great pre-midnight car exchange with the New Orleans-Cincinnati *Humming Bird*, for which 35 minutes were allotted.

Dinner in the diner was not of the "nothing could be finer" category — even, ironically, out of Chattanooga. The food and service were good, but it was a lonely experience, as I was the only patron to answer "last call." Perhaps the meal's best aspect was the 48-seat car itself: 2799 *Duncan Hines*, ACF-built in 1946 for the *Georgian* and named for the pioneer in rating restaurants for travelers.

Hines (1880-1959) was a native of Bowling Green, Ky., on L&N's Nashville-Louisville-Cincinnati route. His ratings work came from the inconsistent food he'd had as a traveling salesman, and he added a lodging guide and became nationally known through a newspaper column. Today a dining car with that name is part of a four-car display at the restored L&N station and Railpark Museum in Bowling Green, but it's not the real thing. The car I dined in was cut up, and the museum displays an ex-Southern Pacific car.

After dinner I relaxed in the half-full lounge car for a bit, but I was in my roomette and asleep before our 11 p.m. arrival in Nashville, although I awakened long enough to note the time. I awoke briefly again, in Madisonville, Ky., as we pulled out at 1:45, on time, but I'd missed Hopkinsville, Ky., at 1 o'clock, where some distant family members on my dad's side are buried. I also stayed completely zonked out through the 15-minute stop (3:45-4:00) and car-shuffling in Evansville.

I woke up for good about 6:15 Central Time as we departed Mount Vernon, Ill. Breakfast in a heavyweight L&N diner added at Evansville was tasty and rea-



Our December 19 St. Louis photography included these subjects from the 21st Street bridge: MoPac Second No. 2, the south Texas section of the *Texas Eagle*, arrives (top) as N&W's *City of Kansas City*, at right, heads west. Before that, N&W's *Wabash Cannon Ball* (center) departs, again, as a week before, separate from the *Blue Bird* and again with ex-Wabash E8 3815. Next, N&W's mixed 214 from Council Bluffs, Iowa (above), due at 8:15 and having shed most of its freight cars, comes in as the long L&N *Georgian* (at right) prepares to back into Union Station.

sonably priced, and as we curved toward East St. Louis I saw that our train had added more mail and express cars up front, likely at Nashville. We stopped in East St. Louis's Relay Station 27 minutes late at 8:20, but by the time we backed into St. Louis Union Station, we were 45 minutes down! I don't know why.

ILLINOIS INTERLUDE

I allowed myself to miss Gulf, Mobile & Ohio's *Abraham Lincoln* departure at 8:58, for it was better that I spent the morning in St. Louis so I'd arrive in Springfield after my host, friend Dick Wallin, would be off work. After checking out Frisco's *Oklahoman*, ready to go



After driving from central Illinois to Elgin on December 20, Charlie Mote and I took night photos at Elgin's Milwaukee Road station. E9 No. 37A, one of six built in 1961 with head-end power for commuter trains (and which survives at Illinois Railway Museum), is ready to push a one-car "scoot" into Chicago, and E7 19B is on the Omaha-bound *Arrow*, now coach-only. One-car scoots are long since history owing to signal-activation needs and more patronage.

at 8:55 behind red E8s 2017 and 2016 (named *Pensive* and *Citation*, respectively), I inspected what was at the time Norfolk & Western's only repainted ex-Wabash E8, No. 3815, on the outbound *Wabash Cannon Ball* for Detroit at 9:10. (N&W would repaint four more.) Owing to extra head-end cars during the pre-holiday rush, the *Cannon Ball* and *Blue Bird* for Chicago, normally combined to Decatur, Ill., were operating separately.

I then killed several hours by riding the Hodiament streetcar line, St. Louis's last such operation. I rode PCC 1641 outbound, passing four others in covering the route, and car 1616 back. Why not photograph trains around Union Station? I'd done that many times, and on this day the weather was very dark.

My next train was another old friend from my MacMurray years, Illinois Cen-

tral's *Green Diamond* for Chicago, which was one car heftier than the normal four cars, as business car No. 1 trailed coach 2502, diner 4112 (ex-C&EI), and combine 1850, all behind two units, E8A 4019 and E9B 4109.

At the "suburban" stop of Madison, Ill. — in reality a small IC building underneath a highway overpass and sandwiched in between Chicago & North Western (ex-Litchfield & Madison) and N&W (former Nickel Plate) yards — IC President Wayne Johnston and two aides boarded the business car. With such "brass" on board, the *Green Diamond's* performance was, as one would expect, spot on-time, out of St. Louis at 2:40 p.m. and backing from Avenue Tower into the Springfield depot precisely at 4:45. Perhaps the officials' presence explained the second E unit, one more than usual.

I spent the next four days visiting in Springfield and at MacMurray, 30 miles west in Jacksonville, where my railfan buddy Charlie Mote was in his senior year. Charlie, Dick, and I drove over to Decatur for N&W photography on Saturday the 18th, and on Sunday went south 90 miles back to St. Louis, where at Union Station we picked up Detroit friend Norm Herbert for the day, just in off the second section of Missouri Pacific's *Texas Eagle*, from south Texas. (Norm, an Active Reservist in the Army, was returning from a two-week class at Fort Sam Houston in San Antonio. He would resume his journey home that evening on N&W's overnight *Detroit Limited*.)

It was a busy day as we photographed a dozen passenger trains of five roads, several freights, and numerous diesels, including transient Mississippi Export NW5 62; Marianna & Blountstown GE 70-tonner 75; and Elgin, Joliet & Eastern SW1 235, all property of Whistler Equipment Co. and parked at Alton & Southern's old shop in deepest East St. Louis.

On Monday the 20th I rode with Charlie in his car up to his home in Elgin, Ill., northwest of Chicago, with a late-morning stop in Decatur for more N&W action. We finished the day taking night shots at the Milwaukee Road depot in Elgin (left). The next day, after photo stops in Chicago's north suburbs that included a Soo Line RS27/F7B/GP30 consist at Schiller Park, Charlie dropped me off to grab a Milwaukee Road "scoot" (suburban train) to Chicago Union Station in time to get over to La Salle Street Station to board NYC's *Twilight Limited* to Detroit, scheduled out at 4:15 p.m.

It wasn't the observation-car-equipped "Twilight" of old ["A Train for CEOs," Fall 2012 CLASSIC TRAINS], having a sleeper-lounge in use as a parlor car and three GP9s as power instead of the usual two E units. Nevertheless, with the holidays approaching, the train was standing-room-only, the crowd and the early darkness precluding my jotting down a car consist or trying any photography. A Great Lakes Naval Base sailor and I helped baby-sit four well-behaved kids most of the trip, but we did take time out to enjoy the Central's famous steaks in the dining car. After running on-time across Michigan and through Dearborn (no station stop scheduled), we sat at Livernois Yard near the West Detroit junction for over an hour before pulling into Michigan Central Station well after the 10:40 scheduled arrival.

SOUTHWARD HO

In Dearborn and environs, I contented myself with spending the holiday break "properly," mainly visiting family and friends. OK, some of those friends and I did get out for some rail photography on a day or two between Christmas and New Year's Day 1966, before it was time for me to head back to Knoxville.

On Sunday, January 2, my parents drove me up to suburban Plymouth, Mich., to board the *Cincinnatian*. The B&O streamliner had switched its Detroit origin point from MC Station to Fort Street Union Depot, of which new (1963) ally Chesapeake & Ohio was a part owner. Although Plymouth was only 20 minutes out of Fort Street by rail, the train didn't arrive until after 11:30, 45 minutes late! Regardless, the two E7As — C&O 1414 (renumbered from 4512, originally Pere Marquette 105), and B&O 1424, got us into Cincinnati Union Terminal on-time at 5:15 p.m.

The *Cincinnatian*, like most trains by then, wasn't what it had been, but better than what it would become as Amtrak (and oblivion) approached. The B&O food-bar coach running ahead of a C&O coach and two B&O coaches served what my trip report termed "average fare" for lunch. (By early 1971, the train would be one E unit and a single B&O Strata-Dome coach with a "food bar" below the dome. Other than C&O's Chicago-Grand Rapids *Pere Marquette*, which briefly carried bought-for-*Chessie* dome cars later sold to the Rio Grande, this might have been the only regular dome-car assignment, ever, in the state of Michigan, although Wabash's made it in on football specials and the like.)

After supper at CUT and cabbie into downtown Cincinnati to catch a movie, I hopped a taxi back to the Terminal, and when Southern's *Carolina Special* loaded, I went straight to the sleeper and pulled down my roomette bed just before our 9:30 p.m. departure. I'd ridden this train enough in the past four months to not bother taking notes, so I cannot report anything about its consist or performance. The attendant had to rouse me as we pulled into Knoxville at 6:30 a.m., 20 minutes early. It was still pitch dark outside, so I took a taxi back to my second-floor abode.

It was good to be home, especially after a circuitous, 1,540-mile series of six train rides through nine states. The long way home? Hey, as a Wisconsin friend said recently, train-riding is "always good for the soul." ■



This late winter 1964 scene of New York Central's westbound train 355, the *Michigan*, behind an E8/E7 duo, whipping past Town Line cabin in Dearborn, Mich., substitutes for a shot of the *Twilight Limited* I rode eastbound, which was powered by Geeps and mostly in darkness.

H. G. "Hank" Goerke photo, author's collection



Behind a pair of E7s, the *Cincinnatian* (middle) squeals to a stop on the C&O at Plymouth, Mich., on January 2, 1966, to carry me to Toledo, thence onto the B&O to the Queen City. I arrived back in Knoxville on Southern's overnight *Carolina Special* before dawn, but this late 1965 early-morning depot view of the train (above) nicely evokes the mood of the day.

Arizona aftermath



Santa Fe rotary plow 199361 creates its own snowstorm as it clears the yard tracks at Williams on December 24, four days after the blizzard had subsided.



A southern Californian got a rare look at winter railroading when he headed east on the Santa Fe main line after a blizzard

By Gordon Glattenberg • Photos by the author

On Christmas Day, 1967, six units—an SD40, SD24, RSD15 “Alligator,” and three GP30’s—are just east of Flagstaff with an eastbound freight heading down-grade toward Canyon Diablo.



Snowstorms are not unusual in northern Arizona. The elevation in the area around Flagstaff, Williams, and the Grand Canyon's South Rim averages 7000 feet, and every winter brings cold and some snow, but usually nothing like the depths typical of Donner Pass or the Cascades.

However, in early December 1967 a winter storm formed in the Gulf of Alaska and followed the Pacific coast to southern California, where it dumped heavy rain. It then headed east, and for 10 days the snowfall across northern Arizona, New Mexico, and west Texas was unrelenting. Thirty-nine deaths were reported, and the Hopi and Navajo reservations were isolated, requiring rescue missions by Air Force helicopters, which also dropped feed for livestock.

Most transportation in the area was paralyzed, with Interstate 40 and most other roads closed throughout the storm. The

Santa Fe Railway's main line across the Arizona Divide (what BNSF now calls the "Transcon") was also shut down for a time, but the use of two rotary snowplows kept trains moving the rest of the time, albeit with delays.

The storms subsided around December 20, and my employer shut down for the holidays at about the same time, so I headed east from my home in San Gabriel, Calif., on the 23rd to see what I might find in Arizona. Crossing the Mojave Desert between Barstow and Needles, Calif., I noticed snow on many relatively low hills. At Needles, train

Delayed by the snow to the east, Second 17, the Los Angeles-bound El Capitan, makes an unusual daylight appearance just west of Needles, Calif., on December 23. Behind the last Hi-Level car (one of the two tapered-side prototypes built in 1954), a pair of GP30's helps the A-B-B-A F units up front recover some time on the grade out of the Colorado River valley.



Southern Pacific steam-powered rotary plow SPMW 208, borrowed by the Santa Fe to fight the Arizona blizzard, is seen at Kingman, Ariz., on December 23. Its AT&SF work done, the plow is being hauled back to Roseville, Calif., to await a call to duty in its usual bailiwick: Donner Pass.



The final task in Arizona for Albuquerque-based plow 199361 (built in 1959 from a 4-8-4 tender and an 1892 Cooke rotary) was to clear the yard tracks at Williams on December 24. Propelled by a GP30 and two GP35's, the rotary put on a dramatic show for photographer Glattenberg, who found himself on the receiving end of the plow's efforts at one point (right). The plow took a break as eight EMD's rolled by the depot with a train from Phoenix (above right). Today, BNSF freights pass here, sharing the scene with Grand Canyon Railway passenger trains.



17, the *El Capitan*, was leaving in mid-morning instead of its scheduled 2:05 a.m.—8 hours late. Two GP30 helpers pushed on the rear to make up some time on the 30 miles of 1.5 percent grade to Goffs.

The next surprise was waiting at Kingman, Ariz., where a westbound extra with SPMW No. 208 was halted in front of the station. This was Southern Pacific's last steam-powered rotary, on its way back to Roseville, Calif., after helping to open Santa Fe's main line! I have since wondered whether anyone photographed it crossing the Tehachapis.

Up into snow country

Going east across Arizona, the highway and railroad climb steadily for 220 miles, from desert at an elevation of 400 feet at the Colorado River to pine-covered mountains at 7000 feet at Riordan, just west of Flagstaff. From that summit they descend to desert at Winslow, 4850 feet above sea level. I first found snow just east of Kingman, and the ground was fully snow-covered from Seligman eastward, with the depths increasing to the summit. The official snow depth at Flag-

staff was 89 inches, and I expected it to diminish on the descent toward Winslow. But there was yet another surprise: As I headed east, the snow continued to get deeper, with drifts towering above my car near Canyon Diablo. On my arrival at Winslow around noon on a sunny day, the temperature was 21 degrees F., the coldest daytime temperature of my trip.

Road conditions didn't lend themselves to chasing trains, so my photography consisted of driving to scenic spots and waiting for a train, which rarely took long. Fortunately for this spoiled Californian, the picture-taking conditions were surprisingly good, with no clouds and little wind.

By December 24, trains were mostly operating on time, although a 45-minute maintenance window backed up five eastbounds just west of Flagstaff. The line was busy back then, but its freight traffic didn't compare with the intermodal volume, or train frequency, of today's Transcon. One distinctive operation at the time was a daily unit coal train for Kaiser Steel that ran from the mine at York Canyon, N.Mex., to the mill at Fontana, Calif., using mid-train helpers most of the way.



In addition, there was still a respectable amount of passenger traffic. Albuquerque Division Timetable No. 10 showed five trains scheduled in each direction on the main line: the *Fast Mail/Express*, *Grand Canyon*, *Chief*, *San Francisco Chief*, and *Super Chief/El Capitan*. The latter train ran as two sections during the summer and Christmas holiday seasons, and it was one of those sections that I'd seen leaving Needles. There were also daily trains on the branches from Phoenix and Grand Canyon that connected with mainline trains at Williams Junction. The *Super/El Cap* schedules survived to become today's Amtrak trains 3 and 4, the *Southwest Chief*.

A few blue-and-yellow F units were still in use on work trains, and Alco road power was still in evidence, hauling both freight and passenger trains. However, the vast majority of locomotives on the through trains were EMD's, with Warbonnet F's on most passenger trains and fairly new SD45's at the top of the freight-power food chain.

When I arrived on December 23, the mainline tracks were open and the railroad was cleaning up around the edges, with sec-

tion gangs still busy and an occasional Jordan spreader in evidence. That evening, while warming up in the station at Williams Junction, I heard a crew planning their final cleanup job: Clearing snow out of the yard at Williams (now the southern terminal of the Grand Canyon Railway).

Front row for the rotary show

The next morning was bright and sunny, and Santa Fe rotary snowplow 199361 was sitting in the Williams yard on the point of three units, two GP35's and a GP30. This plow was normally based in Albuquerque, since Jordan spreaders and a wedge plow usually were able to deal with the snow in Arizona.

There were a half-dozen tracks to clear, and as the plow began working, the only noise was the diesels that pushed it and also supplied the electric power to drive the rotor. While the sound was ordinary, the sight of the huge plume of snow was spectacular. I stayed on the sunny side while taking pictures, as the snow was blown away from me. Eventually, though, I was in a

In a feast for the eyes and ears, seven Alco RSD15's roar toward Flagstaff at the head of a unit coal train on December 24; partway back in the consist, three more "Alligators" and a lone EMD SD24 lend a hand as mid-train helpers. The daily train is bound from Kaiser Steel's mine at York Canyon, N.Mex., to the company's mill at Fontana, Calif. York Canyon supplied power plant coal for years after Fontana shut down, but closed recently.



Although F7 230C and its mate appear to be snow-bound at Flagstaff, they're in fact switching cars on a siding. The two main tracks, dirty from the passage of trains, are in the foreground. This local and four other eastbounds were held west of town for a time on December 24 while maintenance crews cleared the tracks.

By Christmas Day, the railroad's operations across Arizona were nearly back to normal. Coming and going views from a bridge east of Flagstaff show four Warbonnet F7's with train 1, the Chicago-Amarillo-Oakland San Francisco Chief, racing toward the Bay Area.



plowed-out slot with the rotary approaching and blowing snow to my side! There was nothing to do but take the pictures and then crouch down and let the plow pass by. As it did, the fireman leaned out of the first diesel cab and said, "Wet, isn't it!"

My car at the time was a 1966 Dodge Coronet, with a 318-cubic-inch V-8, three-speed manual transmission, and a limited slip dif-

ferential. Despite a scary moment trying to climb a motel driveway, I never had to put chains on the tires.

By the time I'd arrived in Arizona, snow was melting during the days and freezing at night, so the car's wheels would be frozen to the ground each morning. On starting, I would let out the clutch, and the wheels would break free with a nasty crunch. Other cars without a limited slip could be seen with one wheel spinning wildly.

One morning in Williams, I backed out of the parking space with the usual crunch, but the car wouldn't move forward. Investigation revealed ice frozen around the parking-brake cable. A few minutes' chipping had me under way for the day's adventures.

On December 26 I headed for home, with a detour through Las Vegas. Upon reaching Seligman, I found the snow had already turned to slush, and in Las Vegas I marveled at how comfortable it was to walk on dry sidewalks!

As I returned home, I was filled with memories of the deep snow and the first rotary snowplow I'd seen in operation (to this day, still the only one). In retrospect, though, witnessing Santa Fe's passenger fleet just 3½ years before Amtrak started, as well as seeing the parade of freights behind blue-and-yellow diesels, were equally memorable. ■

Three SD45's, the top freight power on the Santa Fe in 1967, roll boxcars east across the desert at Sun-shine, Ariz., on December 25. Because of the storm, airlifts were required to drop hay to feed sheep and cattle on the Navajo reservation in this area.



THREE DAYS *in December*

Steering clear of the “grunt buggies” on Canadian National’s Stratford Division during steam’s last big winter in Ontario

By James A. Brown • Photos by the author

How does one explain the love of trains? For me, my first recollection was one of horror at the age of three, standing trackside with my father as a doubleheaded Canadian Pacific freight bore down on us. Still, a seed must have been sown that day, for I developed a true fondness for anything that rolled on steel rails.

In 1956 I took a summer job, which lasted through my university years, as a relief leverman for Canadian Pacific. This new view “from the inside” revealed the realities of railway operations and the inevitability of the changes that would come, starting with the replacement of my beloved steam locomotives by diesels.

By 1958 my employer was largely dieselized in southern Ontario. Happily this was not the case on Canadian National, whose lines invariably crossed CPR’s at my interlocking towers. CNR steam power was still plentiful on the main lines, and reigned almost supreme on the many branches across southwestern Ontario. Even so, it was apparent that steam was on borrowed time.

While Father was not a “railfan,” he did have a more than passing interest in trains. So when I proposed that he and I take a few days in August 1958 to hunt for steam, he readily agreed. Two days into our journey, we arrived at St. Marys, Ont., on CNR’s Stratford–London secondary line. We went

into the station to inquire what might be running. There we met the day operator, Bob Buck. Bob, it quickly developed, was utterly passionate about steam locomotives.

Bob was an entirely engaging person, small in stature but brimming with knowledge of what was happening on CNR in the area and willing—nay, anxious—to share it all with us. He told us all about the status of CNR steam in the area, and laid out a plan of places we should visit and trains we should be on the lookout for in the next couple of days. We finally parted with profuse thanks, and a promise to keep in touch. Little did I realize that this chance meeting would develop into a long friendship.

Father and I thoroughly enjoyed the next few days, savoring the pleasures of steam locomotives, large and small, working in freight and passenger service, with scarcely a diesel to be seen. But the lines of dead engines at Stratford’s “Big Shop” and other locations were mute evidence that elsewhere on CNR all was not well for steam.

As 1958 wore on, I photographed steam around Toronto as time allowed. I also yearned for another trip to the Stratford Division, and in one of my letters to Bob I floated the idea of a St. Marys visit between Christmas and New Years. Bob had always offered to play host, and so I arrived in St. Marys on Sunday-only CNR train 141, sharp on time at 8:23 p.m., December 28.

Bob was bursting with news from the moment I stepped from the overheated 5200-series coach into a true winter wonderland; it was bitterly cold, and snow had drifted everywhere. We toiled the several blocks to the Bucks’ modest home, catching up as we went, and making plans for the morrow. Bob and his wife Marilyn were gracious hosts, and we visited long into the night. My temporary bedroom was their living room, where I slept soundly save for when the wall-mounted space heater periodically ignited with an explosive *whump*.

First order of business was St. Marys station, where we boarded local No. 168, from London. It was still dark when we arrived in Stratford at 7:05 a.m. The train was scheduled to carry on to Palmerston at 7:30, but for a few moments it posed very nicely adjacent to train 28, due out at 7:17. A job for the tripod. That done, we trooped upstairs in the station to chat with the day-shift dispatcher. Bob seemed to know *everyone* connected with the CNR in Stratford, and visiting was the order of the day until No. 29 rolled in from Toronto.

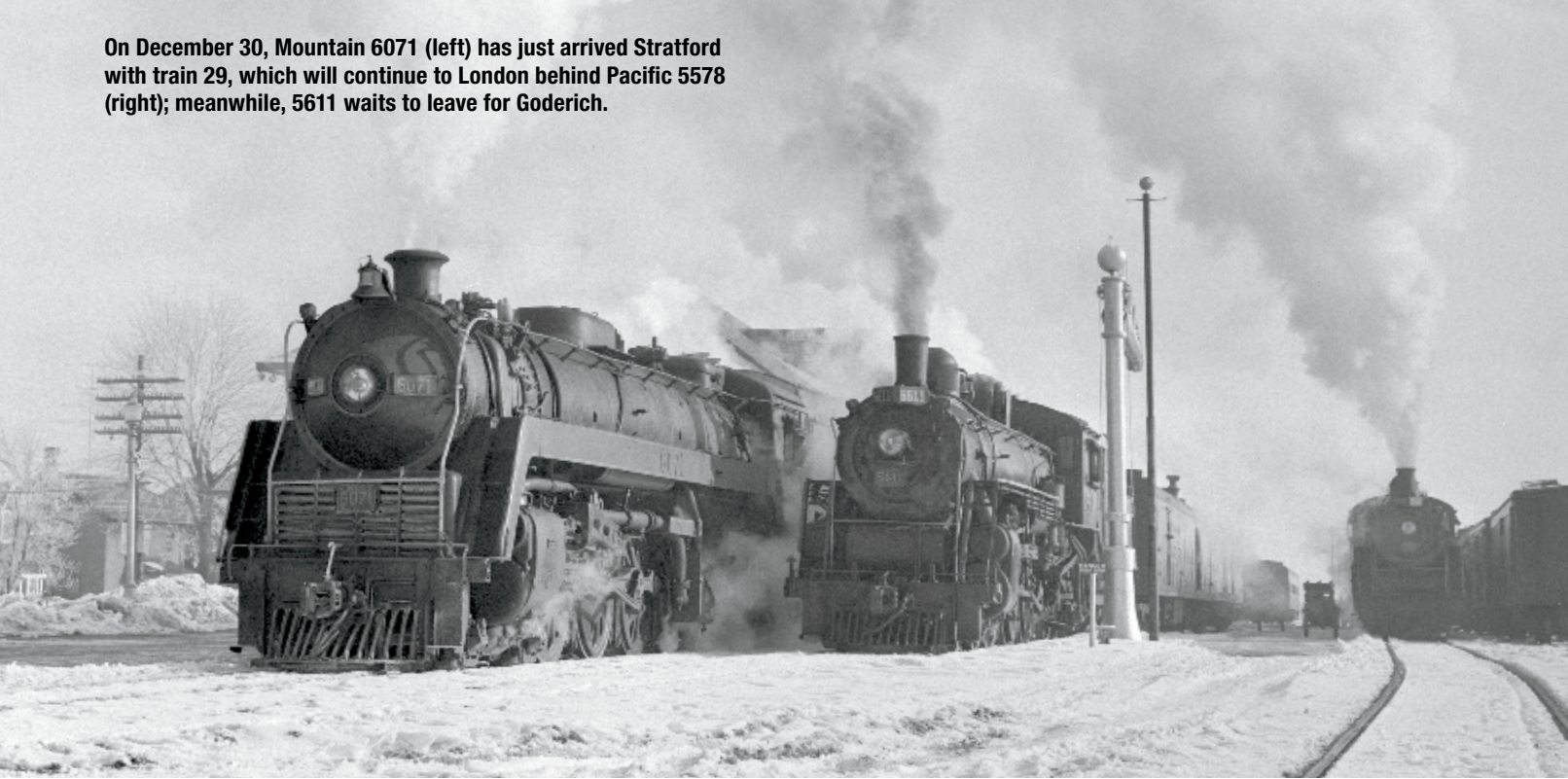
This train handled the “LONDON & PALM” mail car whose imprint was found on so many of my letters from Bob. We looked on as the RPO (from Palmerston) was switched into 29’s consist, and the 4-8-2 that had brought 29 from Toronto was replaced by a 4-6-2, then boarded for an hour-long ride to London. The desperate cold of the night before

Early on December 29, 1958, Pacific 5600 and Mountain 6024 are ready to leave Stratford with Nos. 28 to Toronto, 168 to Palmerston.



“Big Engine” 6214 stands impassively at St. Marys for a portrait that we nearly ruined through clumsiness, poor planning, and haste.

On December 30, Mountain 6071 (left) has just arrived Stratford with train 29, which will continue to London behind Pacific 5578 (right); meanwhile, 5611 waits to leave for Goderich.



had moderated slightly thanks to a brilliant sun, and the passing countryside glistened white under a deep blue sky.

We were on time into London. A good thing too, because my tour guide hustled me half a dozen blocks west of the station to an excellent vantage point for photos of Northern 6215 and Pacific 5609, on the Windsor section of the *Inter-City Limited* and local train 621 for Sarnia, respectively. The Grand Trunk Western GP9's on the Sarnia section of the *Inter-City* barely rated a glance, much less a photo. Steam was dying before our eyes, and these “grunt buggies,” as Bob called them, were the usurpers. Bah!

After lunch it was off to CNR's roundhouse, on Rectory Street. Sadly, many of the stalls were empty and a number more housed dead steamers, likely awaiting a call that was never to come. We *did* find Pacific 5609, Hudson 5700, and Northern 6204 in steam, so our visit wasn't in vain.

Bob and I returned somewhat disconsolately to London station, there to await the departure of No. 170 back to St. Marys. Train 83 from Toronto had arrived before we got there, and its power was nowhere to be seen. The matter shortly resolved itself as the 6204 appeared from the roundhouse. Bob mused that 83 rarely changed engines at London, but it happened on December 29! Tripod time again.

We were dragging by the time 170 arrived at St. Marys, but we still had one more objective: a rendezvous with train 11. “It's the last train through here that regularly has big engines,” Bob enthused. So we planned our strategy, having regard for the darkness beyond the platform where 11's “big engine” would stop. I've always preferred available light for night photos; to me, turning night into day with multiple flashes is dramatic, but unnatural. That said, desperate people do desperate things, and we unlimbered the tripod and a flash gun borrowed from Father, “just in case.”

No. 11 rolled in sharp at 8:00 p.m., Northern 6214 on the point, and sure enough, it stopped where Bob had predicted. Then there ensued a comedy of errors, the sort of things that happen when you aren't familiar with what you're doing and don't have enough time to do it:

- I adjusted the tripod and tried to focus the Rolleiflex's



In contrast to the near-fiasco with 6214 last evening, our night photo of Pacific 5606 on No. 171 at St. Marys went like clockwork.

ground-glass focusing screen, difficult in the dark with the headlight off;

- Bob checked the flash, which worked! He fumbled to change the bulb, burning his hand in the process;
- No. 11's hogger, surely confused as to what was happening, threw his headlight on bright (we'd heard the two peeps of the communicating whistle);
- Bob waded through the snow to the cab, imploring the engineer to “wait just a minute”;
- I opened the shutter and yelled at Bob to fire the flash—but he couldn't hear me over the hiss of escaping steam;
- Hand in front of the lens, I waved at Bob to fire the flash on the side of the engine;
- Bob took a step to move into position—then tripped

and fell down in the snow;

- When he recovered and got to the proper spot, I uncovered the lens and he fired the flash;
- The 6214 whistled off;
- Bob waved violently at the cab, burned his hand again while changing the bulb, and relocated closer to the camera;
- I uncovered the lens again, brushing against the camera;
- Bob fired the flash one last time, I closed the shutter, and No. 11 stormed off into the night.

Muttering to ourselves about how it *should* have worked, we shuffled home to supper and bed. I don't think I heard the space heater once that night.

Compared to Monday, our Tuesday was simplicity itself: Up to Stratford on 168 again, a beanery breakfast, roaming around the Big Shop, overseeing the comings and goings of the steam passenger trains, and wandering among the lines of dead engines.

Our planned conveyance back to St. Marys at day's end was train 171, at 5:30 p.m. Not surprisingly, Bob knew the conductor and engineer, and before we departed Stratford we had a conference at the cab of our engine, Pacific 5606. Would they give us a few minutes at St. Marys for a night shot? Yes, they would—but just one, OK?

In contrast to the circus of the night before, this effort worked perfectly. We were off the coach before it had stopped, no one fell in the snow as we raced to the head end, the hogger put his headlight on full and then withdrew into the cab. Tripod in place, frame the picture in the camera, a fast guess at the aperture setting, shutter open, steam wreathing the scene—and we were done. Our engineer reappeared, we thanked him, he waved, and 171 left town.

The next morning, December 31, dawned clear, still, and *very* cold. After breakfast Bob called the Stratford dispatcher, and was surprised to learn that the Sarnia way freight was running this day before New Year's. The thermometer outside the front window registered minus 18 degrees F, and the Buck family car wasn't at all happy with the prospect of an outing. Just as he was about to give up, Bob prevailed and we creaked and chugged along the snowy streets to a crossing on the Forest Sub, just west of St. Marys Junction.

With no wind, the sound carried well. We could hear the train whistling some distance before the junction, then easing off while the head brakeman headed for the switch. After a pause, the exhaust quickened, only to ease off again as the tail-end man relined the switch. By now the smoke plume was clearly in sight, the exhaust beats accelerating. Then over a rise it came, steam-shrouded Mikado 3470 in charge, and a toss of the fireman's hand in salute. Splendid!

We met Pacific 5548 on train 29, and then it was time for me to go. After making a tentative plan for a speedy return visit, I clambered aboard a Gray Coach bus. Bob was there at the door, waving, just as he had been those few days earlier as I arrived on train 141. Happy New Year!

Steam prevailed on CNR's Stratford Division for the first three months of 1959. But as Bob Buck's many letters chronicled, diesels were appearing in ever-growing numbers. I managed another visit to Stratford in January, and two more in late March, by which time steam was really winding down.

My March 28 ride back to Toronto on train 34 turned out to be my last on a scheduled steam train. I vividly recall standing in the rear vestibule as we thundered east through Shakespeare. The mileposts raced by at one a minute. The lowering sun gleamed on the rails. The haunting whistle called the crossings up ahead. The white exhaust from the



It may be December 31, but there's no rest for the crew of the Sarnia way freight; the fireman braves the 18-below chill to give us a wave.

locomotive trailed back over the path we'd taken, to infinity. The engine was 6214, the Northern that had been the cause of our antics in the dark at St. Marys three months earlier.

I didn't realize it then, but learned soon afterward, that Easter Weekend 1959 marked the mass withdrawal of steam from all the passenger trains we'd come to know so well over the past several months. Although there were occasional steam operations in southern Ontario for another few months, they were isolated indeed. The last active steamer on CNR's Central Region would be dispatched on July 26.

Pockets of Canadian National steam continued through early 1960, mostly in Manitoba. The end finally came on April 25, 1960, when Mountain 6043 rolled into Winnipeg with train 76 from The Pas. 📷

Steinheimer

rides UP's Park City local

A renowned California photographer savors the relaxed ways of a Utah mixed train in 1953

Photos by Richard Steinheimer
Text by Shirley Burman



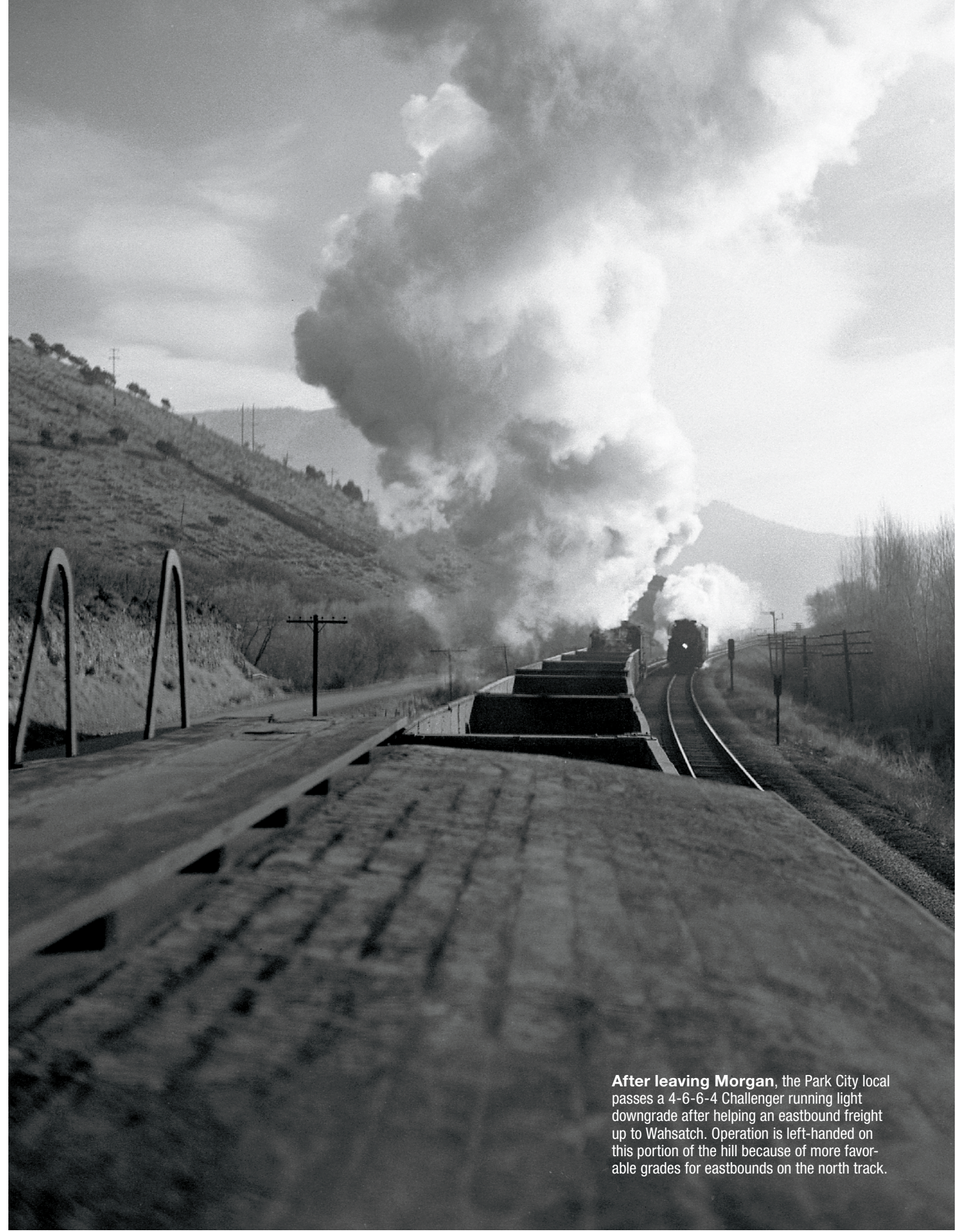
The morning sun over the Wasatch Mountains plays peek-a-boo behind Mikado 2710's exhaust during a stop to exchange cars at Morgan, 24 miles east of Ogden on the main line.

In late February 1953, southern California rail photographer pals Richard Steinheimer and Don Sims loaded into Stein's old 1937 Ford for a two-week trek that took them across Nevada and the Salt Lake Valley, and then on to Wyoming and Montana. After arriving in Utah, they photographed steam and diesel power after dark around Ogden Union Station, then flopped for the night in a local motel.

The next day, Stein boarded Union Pacific train 226, a daily-except-Sunday local freight to Park City, Utah, while Sims and the Ford hung out in Ogden. The train was, in fact, a mixed. Passengers, when there were any, rode with the crew in the caboose, a catbird seat for anyone who loved trains. (*Official Guides* of the time were specific on that, stating: "Local freight; limited space, hand baggage only; caboose for passengers.")

Stein later wrote, "It was cold on that February morning, but clear around Ogden. . . . [M]ost of the places that mixed trains go were somewhat off the main lines of travel and offered a friendly and less commercial attitude." UP 226 certainly fit this description, running 40 miles east on the main line to Echo, Utah, then 28 miles south down a branch line to the mining town of Park City, home to fewer than 2,000 people at the time. (Denver & Rio Grande Western also served Park City, via a branch from Salt Lake City, until shortly after World War II.)

The mixed was scheduled to depart Ogden at 7:35 a.m. Ahead of the caboose were several empty gondolas for the mines and Mikado 2710, a 1917 Lima. Let's climb aboard!



After leaving Morgan, the Park City local passes a 4-6-6-4 Challenger running light downgrade after helping an eastbound freight up to Wahsatch. Operation is left-handed on this portion of the hill because of more favorable grades for eastbounds on the north track.



A brakeman gets out on the caboose platform to prepare for switching to the Park City branch line at Echo. Up ahead, careful firing and cold morning air combine to make the 2-8-2's exhaust a fluffy white cloud.

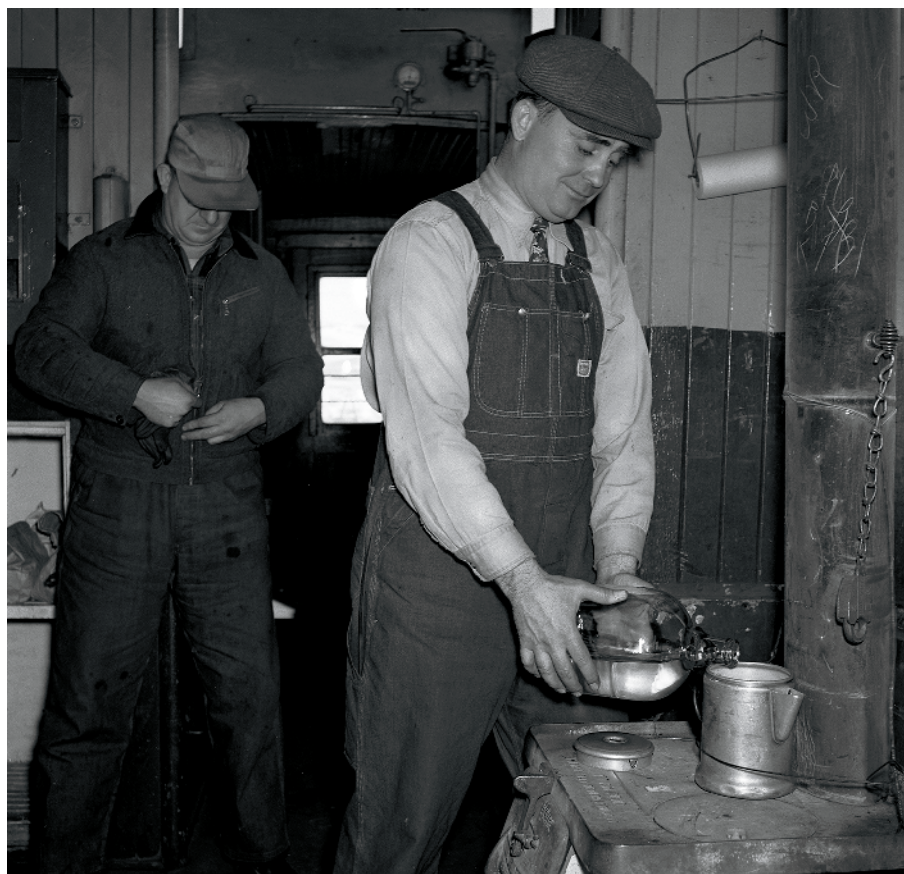


Water cascades down the side of 2710's Vanderbilt tender as the fireman tops off the tank at Echo. Note his precarious perch on the spout—routine in 1953, startling in more safety-conscious 2011.

During the local's stop at Echo, Challenger 3802 ignores the water plugs and coaling tower as it rushes past with a freight for Ogden. The 3802 is from UP's first batch of 4-6-6-4's, built in 1936 as Nos. 3900–3914 but later renumbered to the 3800's.



Out of Echo, the train ventures onto the light rail and sharp curves of the Park City branch. One of the brakemen fills the coffee pot on the caboose's stove with water before the road gets too rough.



Heading up the branch from Echo (elevation 5,700 feet) to Park City (7,000 feet), a view from the caboose cupola shows the Mikado hauling eight empty gons up snow-streaked Silver Creek Canyon. The line is a recreational trail now.

The two brakemen head back to the caboose after a long chat with the operator at Wanship. There was the only train on the branch, so there was no worry about flagging or delays to other trains. Down the line, Stein observed disused livestock pens and loading ramps, a sign of the recent switch of such traffic from rail to trucks.



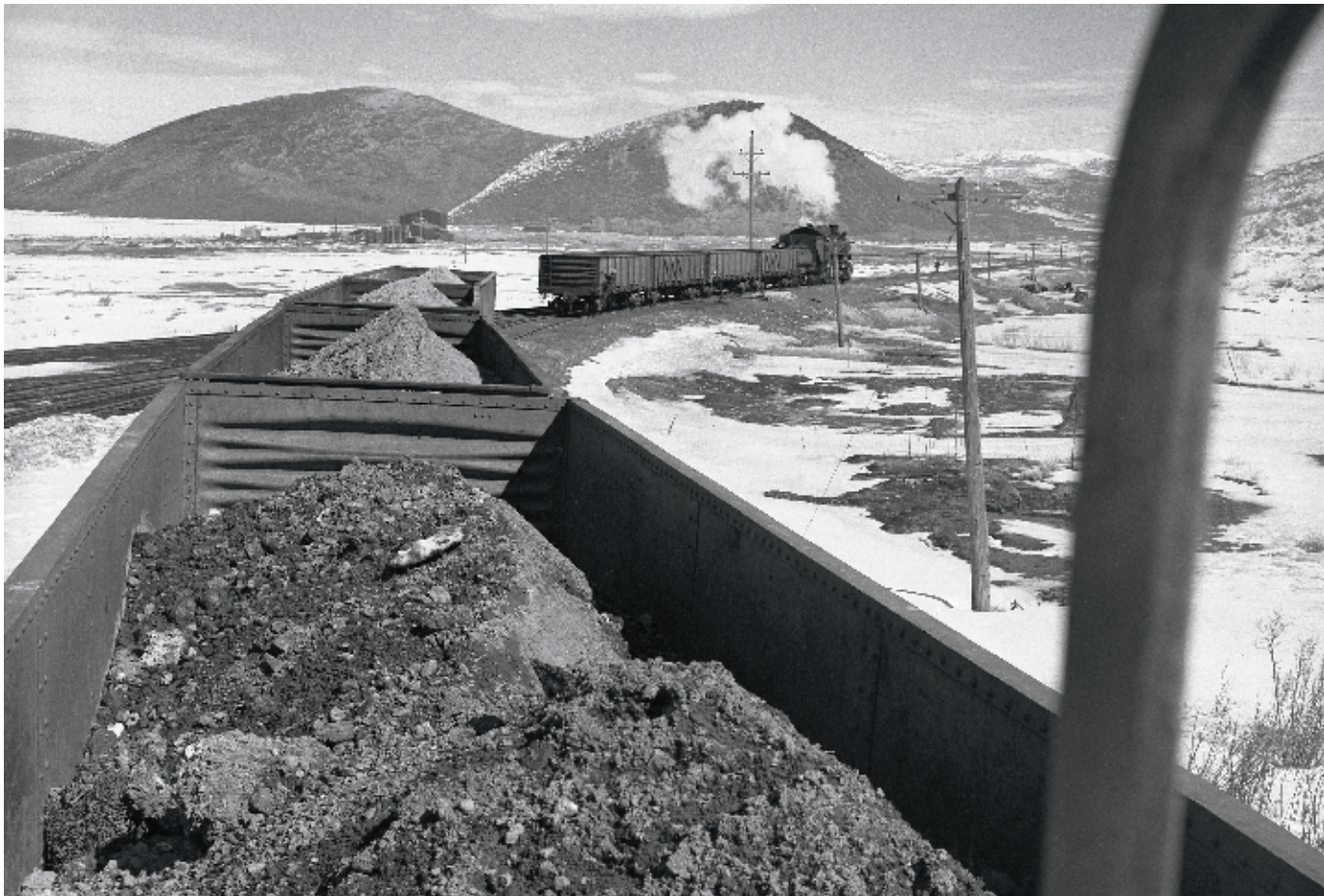
The mixed was due to arrive in Park City at 11:30 a.m., then depart as train 225 at 12:01, although the amount of freight work en route could greatly affect these times. Today this area near the UP depot is filled with houses and shopping malls.



Crewmen lounge in their caboose before heading for the mines east of Park City. Stein commented, “There was a kindly sense of maturity around this crew and to their considered and open views about the things and people that surrounded them.”

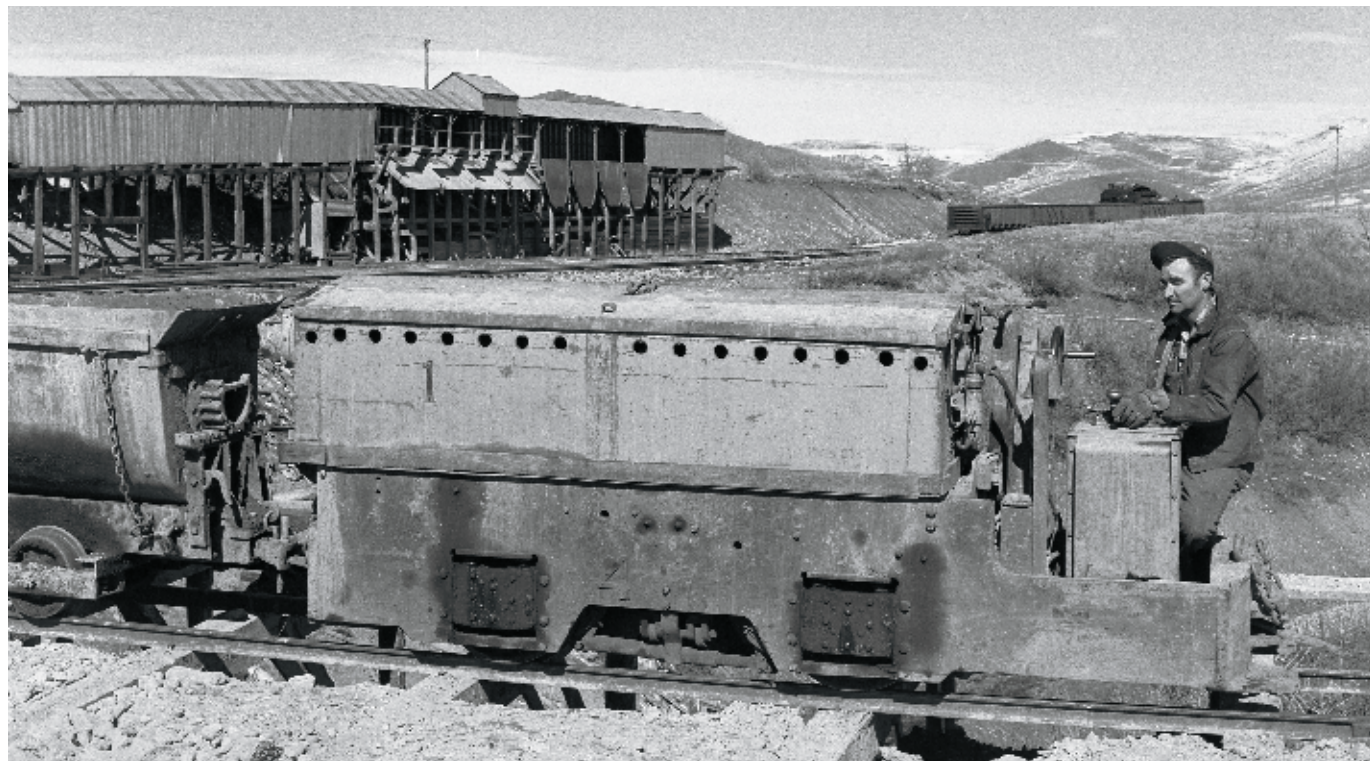


Miners' kids at Park City ham it up for the lanky photographer from out of town. He was a far more unusual sight than the train from Ogden, whose 2-8-2 and caboose stand by the station in the background.



On the spur to Keetley, No. 2710 backs onto its train after picking up four loads; the four empties with the engine are destined for a mine farther down the line. The ore looks like mere dirt, but was actually rich in silver, zinc, and lead.

The local's conductor, probably close to retirement, still had a smile and a wave for the young photographer, who had to quickly reboard before the train left town.



At Keetley, the operator of a battery-powered mine-railway locomotive is set to return to the mines with empty ore cars. In the distance, the local backs empty gons up to the ore chutes to be loaded for the haul back to Ogden.



A brakeman in one of the gons enjoys the sun as the local heads back up to Keetley Junction, Echo, and Ogden with loads from the mines. The crew saw that Stein knew his way around the railroad, and let him ride wherever he wanted.

Dick Steinheimer rode the train back as far as Echo, where Sims picked him up so the two could continue on north. Today the UP's Park City mixed is only a distant memory. The train stopped accepting passengers in 1956. The Keetley mine closed in the 1960s, but the railroad remained in operation as far as Phoston until July 5, 1986.

After abandonment, the Echo-Park City right of way was developed into a recreational trail, opening in 1992. By this time, Park City had become an upscale ski resort, very different from the hardscrabble mining town Stein visited on a steam-powered mixed train in 1953. ■