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October 2024

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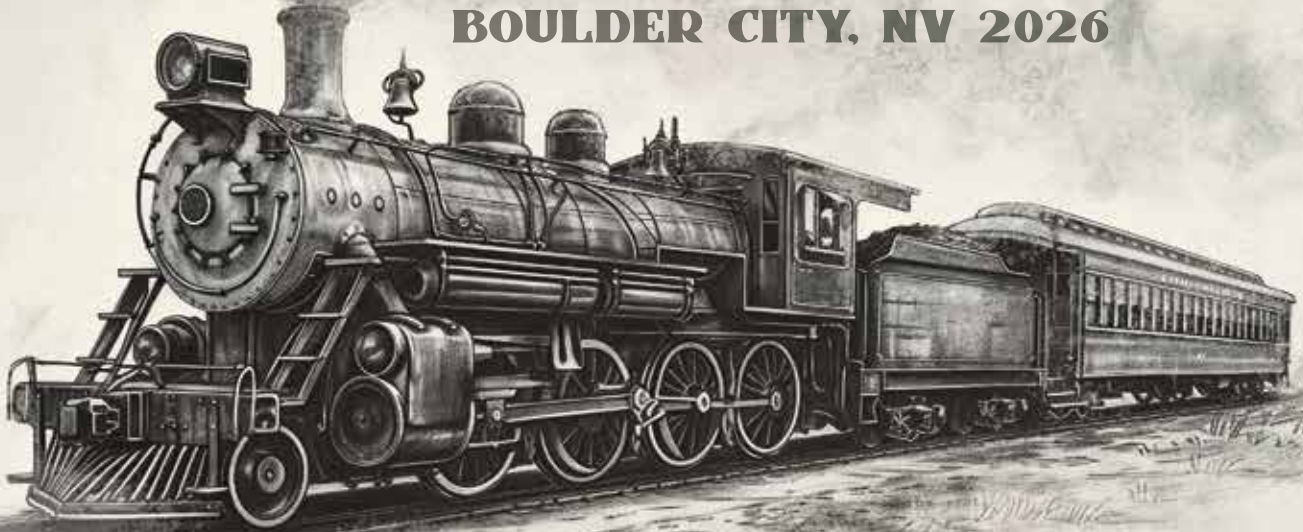
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## From the Editor



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measured in land area, Connecticut is a small state.

How small? Four Connecticut would fit within a single National Park — Alaska's Wrangell-St. Elias — and the park would still have 1,099 square miles to spare.

But when it comes to colorful and varied railroading, Connecticut looms large, with 13 rail operations and a number of museums and heritage rail groups. As *Trains* Correspondent Scott A. Hartley notes in his story (page 10), the state's diverse rail scene came about relatively recently. Back in 1959, there were just two listings in the state's railroad atlas.

Public investment is a key to Connecticut's success, and it's one other states might do well to emulate.

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*Trains* (ISSN 0041-0934, USPS 529-850) is published monthly by Firecrown Media Inc., 605 Chestnut Street, Suite 800, Chattanooga, TN 37450. Periodicals postage paid at Chattanooga, TN and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Trains*, PO Box 850, Lincolnshire, IL 60069.





As the first to be featured for the *Young Guns in Preservation* series, Mark Huber wears multiple hats at the Colorado Railroad Museum while also producing videos about all things railroading on his "Hyce" YouTube channel. David Smith

## 'Young Guns in Preservation' series

**YOUNG GUNS IN PRESERVATION** is a series of Trains.com articles highlighting the efforts of some amazing individuals in today's organizations. Erik G. Ledbetter's "Steam's young guns" from *Trains*' May 2006 issue serves as the catalyst for the passion behind this project. There is also a personal connection for this humble staff writer. Reading his piece nearly 20 years ago inspired me to pave my own path in the world of rail preservation by being a Swiss Army Knife-type volunteer for the Steam Railroading Institute in Owosso, Mich., before ultimately joining the Trains.com team.

Today, the ongoing *Young Guns in Preservation* series of Q&A-style articles shares the stories of these folks and their contributions — ranging from mechanics to managers to filmmakers — while providing insight into an industry they serve and support.

Like Ledbetter's article, it's looking at the big picture and discovering who are today's "Young Guns," keeping the history and technology of rail preservation alive for the next generation. Examples of individuals featured since 2023 include Mark Huber ("Hyce" on You-

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**Pennsylvania Trolley Museum's Kristen Fredriksen tells stories that evokes nostalgia through rail preservation.** Paul Grether

Tube), Colorado Railroad Museum employee; Andrew Nawn, Baltimore Streetcar Museum beautification committee leader; Nick Ozorak, freelance filmmaker; Kristen Fredriksen, Pennsylvania Trolley Museum public programs and outreach manager; and Kyle Colley, California Western Railroad steam specialist.  
— Lucas Iverson, staff writer

Watch

## 'Classic Trains' Film Archive

**LOOK BACK AT HOW RAILROADING** was in the late 20th century. See the colorful railroad world through the camera (sans audio) of former *Trains* and *Classic Trains* Senior Editor J. David Ingles. Watch for updates as we dive into this archive treasure with valuable insights for historians and modelers alike. And please leave comments online, including the location name, train and/or railroad ID, and the video timecode. Exclusively on Trains.com Video! — Brian Schmidt, *Classic Trains* editor



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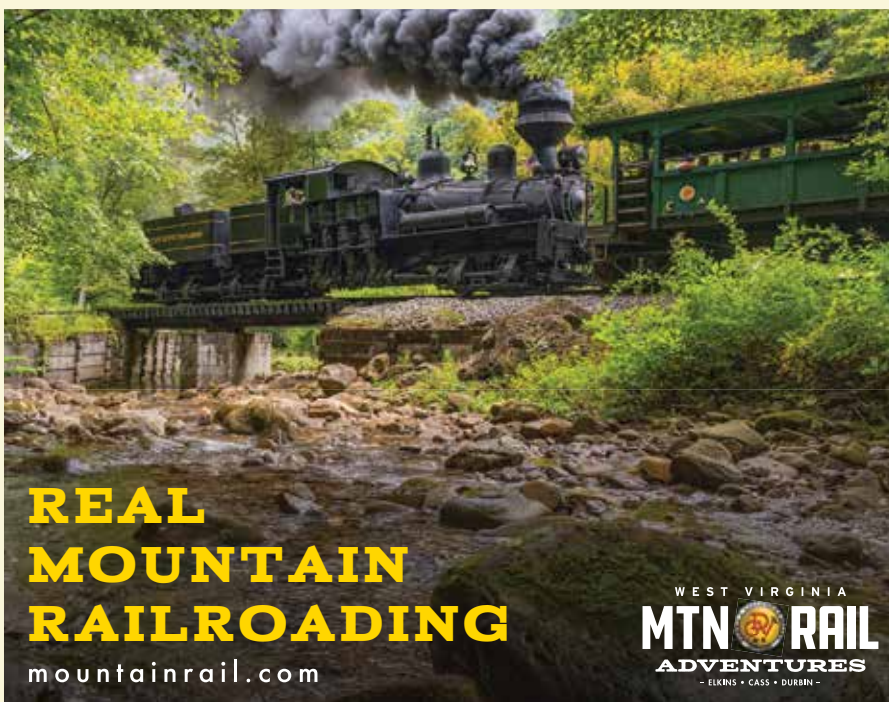


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## First Siemens café car debuts in Midwest service

New car, first of 17 to enter operation, offers no table seating for diners

▲ The first Siemens coach-café in Amtrak Midwest service arrives in Chicago on *Lincoln Service* train No. 300 on July 6, 2024. Half the car is coach seating; half is a snack bar, although with no table seating. Three photos, Bob Johnston

**THE FIRST SIEMENS VENTURE** food service car in Amtrak state-supported service, a coach-café for Midwest trains, made its long-awaited debut in daily Chicago-St. Louis *Lincoln Service* operation in July, with *Trains* sampling the new equipment on a trip from Chicago to Bloomington-Normal, Ill.

Illinois and California transportation departments, not Amtrak, managed the procurement

of single-level Venture cars and Charger locomotives. Though they agreed on aisle width and the same type of coach seat, the agencies differed on how their respective rolling stock was to be configured. The Midwest cafés went through a variety of changes from what was initially envisioned as a standardized design; California opted for vending-machine cars that have yet to debut on the *San Joaquins*.

Illinois DOT spokesman Scott Speegle tells *Trains* that as the 17 Midwest café cars receive final acceptance by the agency and Amtrak, they will first fill out the *Lincoln Service* lineup of four round trips before being deployed to other Midwest routes.

*Trains* tried out the new car July 9 on train No. 305, a 5:20 p.m. departure. The all-Venture, five-car train waiting on Chicago Union Station's track 18 had its coach-café immediately behind the locomotive, followed by three coaches and a busi-

ness-class car on the rear. Some of the cars are meant to operate as semi-permanently coupled pairs, and the original plan was to run the coach-café and business-class cars together, since business-class passengers get a free non-alcoholic beverage on Midwest trains. Another reason the two cars were to be paired is that the business-class car, with one seat on one side of the aisle and two on the other, has a built-in wheelchair lift for passengers with disabilities.

Speegle says, "While final consist decisions are made by Amtrak, we have requested that the business class car is at one end of the consist to give those customers greater privacy. Ideally, we would like the café car placed in the middle of the consist to give all customers easier access to the café."

*Trains* bought a coach ticket and used an Amtrak Guest Rewards upgrade coupon to sit in business class, whose passengers received priority boarding on



The brightly lit snack counter has double-stacked microwaves and wide refrigerators to facilitate service.



what conductors said was a sold-out train.

On this trip, the overhead passenger information display system and automated announcements weren't operational. Following the obligatory safety and no-smoking advisories after an on-time departure, a conductor added, "We have a new café car; it's at the front of the train. There are no seats to eat your food. If you make a purchase, you must take the food back to your seat."

A walk forward between the Summit and Joliet stops showed only a smattering of single seats unoccupied. This included the café car's coach section, which has six rows of double seats on one side of the wide aisle and eight rows on the other. The section is roughly comparable in size to the business-class section of Amfleet I and Horizon café cars, but Illinois opted to increase business-class capacity by making it a separate car.

The café's snack bar serves the same variety of fresh deli sandwiches, jumbo hot dogs, cheeseburgers, chips, soft drinks, and alcoholic beverages, including domestic and imported beers, available on all Midwest café cars. As currently positioned, everyone lines up while waiting to be served at the snack bar in a hallway with large windows on one side, reminiscent of views experienced on Talgo cafe cars.

The counter itself is inviting. Challenges occur, however, when a passenger returns with food from the condiment table on the other side of the snack counter.

This is not unlike any Amtrak café cars, but in other cases there is more maneuvering room directly across from where people are served. Also, anyone in a wheelchair



**A passenger who has just purchased food (wearing headphones) tries to get past those waiting to be served.**

would have trouble passing the service area to access the spacious room on the other side of the snack bar designed for those with disabilities. It is outfitted with electrical portals on low-level counters. This might be a place where passengers could congregate, albeit without any seating, but travelers are told they must return to their seats after purchasing food, so "hanging out" in the relatively sterile room isn't an option. This may change if the business-class car is positioned next to the coach-café.

When Amtrak introduced Amfleet I food service cars in the 1970s, "Amcafés" had coach seats on both sides of a snack bar; "Amclubs" had a first-class "club" section on one side and coach seats on the

other; and "Amdinettes" had booth seating on one side and coach seats on the other. Eventually, by popular demand, coach seating was eliminated in all of these configurations. Business class two-and-one seating was retained along the lines of the Amclub design, though all of those cars now have tables on the other side of the snack bar. Amfleet cafés on virtually all *Northeast Regional* trains offer table seating on both sides of the snack bar, a feature extremely popular with laptop-toting customers.

So it is puzzling why tables aren't offered as a place to congregate away from coach seating on the new cafés. When people board at intermediate stops and can't find seats together, café seating offers an opportunity unique to train travel for travelers to spread out, and, of course, spend some money. There are a number of table-facing seats in both coach and business class, but these are the first to be snapped up when travelers board at departure stations.

The only table in the café car is a small desk opposite where passengers line up for the snack bar. Labeled as "crew seating," during the trip a conductor usually was found there.

Of note, however, is that returning to Chicago from Bloomington-Normal the same evening at about 8:30 p.m. on *Lincoln Service* No. 306, virtually no one on a crowded train visited the Horizon café-business-class car, despite the attendant regularly announcing he was open. Perhaps it was the late hour. Or maybe today's Amtrak clientele are simply content to stay in their seats with their phones. — *Bob Johnston*

## NEWS PHOTOS



**A SALUTE** Metro-North Railroad's latest wrap of a P32AC-DM as part of its 40th anniversary honors workers, using images of past and present employees to create a photo mosaic of system landmarks. Two photos, MTA/Emily Moser





An NJ Transit commuter train and New York-bound Amtrak Northeast Regional meet at Elizabeth, N.J. The operators will work together to address Northeast Corridor issues. David Lassen

## Amtrak deals with bumpy summer on Northeast Corridor

### Passenger carrier pledges to work with NJ Transit

**AMTRAK AND NJ TRANSIT** have pledged to work together to address operational issues plaguing both services on the Northeast Corridor, but aging infrastructure has complicated operations on the heavily used passenger route, and not just on the 58 miles those two services share between New York City and Trenton, N.J.

The Amtrak-NJ Transit commitment came after officials from both organizations were called together by New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy. The two sides had begun blaming each other for a series of problems on the corridor, with NJ Transit pointing to catenary while Amtrak blamed NJ Transit equipment. NJ.com reported that on eight occasions between April and that June 27 meetings, Amtrak wires became tangled with NJ Transit pantographs. Amtrak board chair Anthony Coscia said the operators recently “discovered an issue in the interface between Amtrak’s infrastructure and NJ Transit’s trains that have caused these issues to occur.”

After the meeting, Amtrak said the joint effort “will be a holistic effort focused on both Amtrak infrastructure ... and NJ Transit equipment.”

That hardly brought an end to the NEC issues, however. Twice in July, Amtrak suspended all operations northeast of New York because of problems on its Hell Gate line between Penn Station and New Rochelle, N.Y. On July 6, trains between New York and Boston were shut down for almost 12 hours because of an electrical issue blamed on a lightning strike. And July 22,

service between New York and New Haven, Conn., was halted for more than 5 hours while a broken rail was repaired. The July 22 problem came just a day after a 2-hour suspension of Amtrak and NJ Transit service on the corridor because of wire issues near Rahway, N.J.

The plan to address the corridor issues, as outlined by Amtrak, includes:

- Additional “extensive and frequent” catenary and track inspections between New York and Trenton.
- Visual pantograph inspections by NJ Transit with Amtrak assistance at key stations, along with NJ Transit installation of cameras to inspect pantographs.
- Reviews with industry experts to assist analysis of root problem causes and development of solutions.
- Expansion of a program of catenary inspection by helicopter, used to identify priority items for repair.
- A joint review of delays and “items impacting reliability,” to develop priorities for projects to address chronic delays.
- Longer-term actions including additional resources for testing substation transformers; pursuing grants to replace elements of the electrical system and support capital renewal; and seeking ways to expand overnight work windows to accelerate repairs.

Amtrak also pointed to ongoing major projects such as the Portal North Bridge as longer-term solutions, since they will include new electric-system infrastructure replacing some of the current aging catenary and superstructure. — David Lassen

## NEWS BRIEFS

### FTA orders SEPTA to address safety issues

The **FEDERAL TRANSIT ADMINISTRATION** issued directives to the **SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY** to address its “deteriorating safety record” following a six-month safety assessment sparked by a flurry of incidents in July 2023, including five — one fatal — in a single week. The total of 16 findings and 24 required actions covered three areas — transit worker safety; the ability to ensure safe operations; and specific findings from incidents. Issues include not fully addressing assaults on transit workers, staffing shortages in key positions, and inadequate management and training of new operators. SEPTA must present plans to address the issues to the FTA for approval in 30 to 120 days. Not included: SEPTA’s commuter-rail system, under **FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION** jurisdiction.



The **JAMES E. STRATES SHOWS** carnival train, sidelined since 2019, made a final trip on Aug. 1, delivering midway attractions to the Erie County Fair in Hamburg, N.Y., via short line **BUFFALO SOUTHERN**. The event marked the 100th anniversary of Strates’ agreement with the Erie County Fair. It was made possible when Strates and **CSX TRANSPORTATION** reached a deal to move the carnival company’s equipment from its home in Florida to Buffalo in regular manifest service, allowing the operation of the ceremonial nine-car train. Tyler Doran

**PATRICK OTTENSMEYER**, who as CEO of **KANSAS CITY SOUTHERN** led the railroad’s financial turnaround and its merger with **CANADIAN PACIFIC**, died July 26. He was 67. Ottensmeyer began his career in investment banking, spent time with **SANTA FE** and **BNSF**, and joined KCS in 2006 as chief financial officer. He became the railroad’s president in 2016 and its CEO the following year.



# Railroads should copy NS shortline project

Closely monitoring interchange  
leads to carload growth



**Bill Stephens**

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🐦 @bybillstephens

Analysis: Trains.com

**T**hroughout their history, railroads have been under the spell of the Not Invented Here Syndrome. If a rival railroad — or, worse still, an industry outsider — found a better way to do something, railroads would heap scorn on the idea. “Why, fill-in-the-blank would never work on our railroad!”

Actually, it probably would. And examples abound. Norfolk & Western and Nickel Plate Road clung to steam long after other big railroads had converted to diesel. Most railroads were initially skeptical of the double-stack well car, which eventually became an intermodal game-changer. And Canadian National and Norfolk Southern were late to the AC traction party, despite years of proof that the locomotives were superior to their DC brethren.

One idea that should not suffer delayed widespread adoption is Norfolk Southern’s Short Line Performance Project. In fact, the other Class I systems should shamelessly copy the NS program that has produced outsized growth in carload traffic.

Unpredictable interchange between short lines and Class I railroads has been an intractable problem. The Class I might skip a scheduled interchange entirely, show up late after the short line’s

crews have gone home for the day, or deliver the wrong cars. It doesn’t happen everywhere, and it doesn’t happen all the time. But talk to any shortline leader and they’ll tell you that interchange problems are a headache that occurs all too often. And they’re a carload killer.

Stefan Loeb, NS vice president of business development and first and final mile markets, knows about this from firsthand experience. Before joining NS last year, he was the chief commercial officer at shortline holding company Watco.

One of the things he brought with him to Atlanta — besides the can-do attitude that’s part of every shortline railroader’s DNA — was a simple idea about how to smooth interchange with Norfolk Southern’s shortline connections. “If you can put visibility and data and communication around interchanges to improve their effectiveness and performance, you’re going to grow with your shortline partners,” Loeb says.

First, NS and 40 participating short lines use a spreadsheet to track interchange performance. Both give their views on prior day’s interchange. If the views don’t match, it gets flagged for attention. Second, the NS First and Final Mile Markets group and shortline partners chat through Microsoft Teams to quickly resolve and prevent service issues.

The results have been impressive so far. While NS’s overall shortline interchange volume was up 4.3% from March through June, volume for railroads participating in the Short Line Performance Project grew 6.5%. Some participating short lines have seen traffic grow by more than 20% after NS interchange reliability topped 80%.

You could conclude that this is a low-cost way for a Class I railroad to produce carload volume growth — all while letting the short line do the hard work of courting customers and providing local service.

Shortline executives from Genesee & Wyoming, OmniTRAX, and Watco praise the NS program, which they say is unique among the Class I systems. The NS First and Final Mile Markets team plans a similar program for some of the railroad’s largest and highest-growth carload customers.

It would be easy for any other Class I railroad to steal this idea and make it their own. There’s no patent, no proprietary technology, no artificial intelligence wizardry. It just takes three ingredients: The will to improve interchange, people to monitor shortline handoffs, and Microsoft Office (or an equivalent). Oh, and a fourth: The ability to forget it was Not Invented Here. **I**



Norfolk Southern local train H76, led by SD40-2 No. 3423, clears the Lehigh Line main in Three Bridges, N.J., with a delivery to the Black River & Western interchange on Aug. 6, 2021. Jerry Dziedzic









Once the domain of just two railroads, Connecticut today is home to 13 operators

# BIG CHANGES IN A SMALL STATE

Story and photos by Scott A. Hartley

A Connecticut Department of Transportation CTrail Hartford Line train crosses Amtrak's Farmington River Viaduct at Windsor, Conn., on Sept. 20, 2023.

When it was published in 1959, *Hammond's Family World Atlas, New Revised Edition*, included rail lines on each of the 50 state maps. That atlas shows 5,500-square-mile Connecticut with just two railroads: The New York, New Haven & Hartford (better known simply as "the New Haven") and Canadian National subsidiary Central Vermont Railway.

Connecticut, which had its first railroad in 1837, has been called The Land of Steady Habits. But that may not hold true for the state's railroads. Sixty-five years after that atlas was printed, Connecticut is the same size, but the state's list of railroad operations has grown to 13, which operate a total of 628 route-miles. Bankruptcies, mergers, abandonments, new short lines, and the creation of state and federal railroad operators all led to

this expanded directory. Interestingly, 428 of those route miles are publicly owned.

In 1959, New Haven dominated the map, with its Boston-New York Shore Line running east-west along Long Island Sound, numerous north-south lines connecting with the main at various points, and interconnecting branches heading in all directions. The Central Vermont was much simpler — a north-south line starting at the Quebec border, running south through Vermont, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Connecticut to reach tidewater at New London. The quiet single-track line through rural eastern Connecticut saw just one or two symbol freights in each direction, plus locals. CV's passenger service through Connecticut had ended in 1947. New Haven was much busier, with freights running on all its



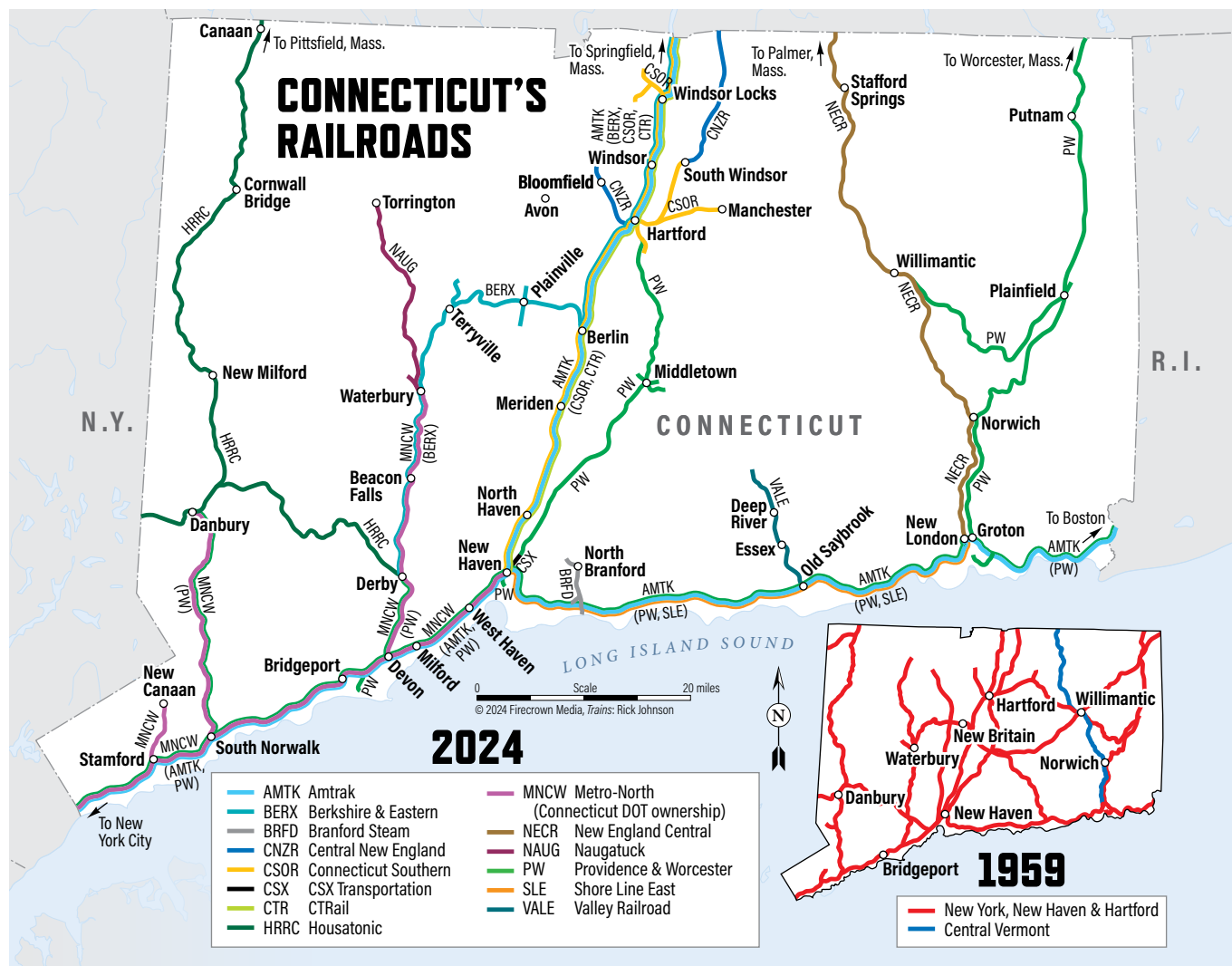
**New Haven operated diesels from six builders, including 37 units from Fairbanks-Morse. Two H16-44s lead a train just south of Avon, Conn., on New Haven's Canal Line in June 1953.** Barclay Robinson Jr.

Connecticut routes, and passenger trains covering main lines and branches.

Even with all those trains, New Haven was not healthy. With short freight hauls, money-losing passenger services, and newly built highways par-

allel to its main lines, the railroad found itself in bankruptcy in 1961. It was included in the ill-fated merger of the Pennsylvania Railroad and New York Central 8 years later.

Almost immediately, Penn Central made major cuts to







**A Boston-Washington Amtrak *Acela* leans into a 90-mph curve at Old Saybrook, on the former New Haven Shore Line, in 2023. Electrification of the Northeast Corridor beyond New Haven wasn't completed until 1999; the *Acelas* debuted the following year.**

NH's intercity passenger service and severed branches. But, 17 months after New Haven was absorbed, that new giant railroad itself sought bankruptcy protection. Substantial relief came in 1970 as Connecticut and New York leased (and later purchased) the New York City commuter lines and funded operations. And in May 1971, the new national passenger railroad Amtrak assumed responsibility for intercity rail.

Meanwhile, other Northeastern railroads were joining Penn Central in bankruptcy, and the federal government sought a solution to prevent a national economic crisis if rail freight service through the region ground to a halt. The answer was the Consolidated Rail Corporation, or Conrail: a government-owned railroad that brought all of these troubled properties together in 1976.

The heavily subsidized Conrail was mandated to shed light-density and unprofitable branches. Deregulation of the rail industry in 1980 accelerated the process. Connecticut

saw Conrail quit many lines, which in many cases were saved by other carriers intending to make them viable. Today, Conrail's Class I successor CSX is barely a speck on the Connecticut rail map. And the story of how Connecticut's roster of rail operations grew from two to 13 is a complicated one. Let's take a look at each of today's railroads.

#### AMTRAK

Amtrak was not on anyone's mind when that atlas was published in 1959. Penn Central's bankruptcy in 1970 was just one of many rail industry maladies that prompted the federal government's creation of America's passenger railroad in 1971. Five years later, Amtrak took ownership of the Northeast Corridor, including the

Boston-to-New Haven main line in Connecticut and the 62-mile New Haven-Springfield, Mass., line. Today Amtrak owns the most route-miles in the state.

Amtrak inherited a long-neglected physical plant, but several improvement projects eventually brought the line up to its best-ever condition. The NYNH&H had pioneered



**Providence & Worcester six-motor units lead a long train of aggregate hoppers en route to Fresh Pond Junction in New York City under Metro-North catenary at West Haven at sunset on June 24, 2022.**





Connecticut Southern train CSO-4 hustles south on Amtrak's Springfield Line at Windsor Locks, Feb. 14, 2024. Born in 1996, the railroad became part of Genesee & Wyoming in 2012.

mainline electrification in the early 20th century, but only made it as far as New Haven. It took until 1999 for the new owner to finish extending overhead wires all the way to Boston. Today, Amtrak's *Acela* is authorized for 110-mph speeds through parts of southeastern Connecticut. Conventional passenger trains are just a bit slower. On the Springfield Line, Amtrak and CTail trains are all diesel-powered.

West of New Haven is the

only section of the Northeast Corridor not controlled by Amtrak. Intercity trains there operate as tenants of Metro-North to New Rochelle, N.Y.

#### PROVIDENCE & WORCESTER

One of four Genesee & Wyoming short lines in Connecticut, the Providence & Worcester operates over the most mileage in the state, although much of that is on Amtrak and state-owned trackage. The original Providence & Worcester was a 44-



Housatonic Railroad GP7U No. 22, carrying the paint scheme of former owner Bangor & Aroostook, passes Cornwall Bridge in 2018. The current version of the railroad began as a tourist line in 1983.

mile line connecting its namesake cities in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and for most of its existence was leased by the New Haven and Penn Central. In 1973, P&W regained independence from PC, and in 1976 tripled in size when it acquired Penn Central trackage not included in the Conrail system, including Connecticut lines east and north of Plainfield. Over the following years, P&W purchased more lines and acquired trackage rights

over Amtrak and Metro-North, increasing its Connecticut mileage and adding New York to its route map. Giving up its independence when purchased by G&W in 2016, P&W's biggest business is hauling aggregate between quarries and processing plants within Connecticut, and moving rock products to Fresh Pond Junction in New York City's borough of Queens, for area customers and for the Long Island Rail Road. Although on-line freight business



A Berkshire & Eastern local, powered by former Pan Am B40-8s, tiptoes over the Pequabuck River at Terryville, Mar. 8, 2024. Connecticut's newest railroad was created as a condition of the CSX purchase of Pan Am Railways.





is sparse along Amtrak Northeast Corridor, there are many local customers on its various branches.

### CONNECTICUT SOUTHERN

Connecticut Southern Railroad was created in 1996, when Conrail sold branch lines in the Hartford area and transferred freight rights over Amtrak between Springfield, Mass., and North Haven to shortline operator RailTex, Inc. Part of the agreement called for the new railroad to move Conrail traffic between the large yard at West Springfield, Mass., and CR's isolated operations in Cedar Hill Yard in North Haven. That would continue following CSX's acquisition of Conrail's Connecticut operations in 1999. RailAmerica purchased RailTex and its properties in 2000, and RailAmerica was acquired by Genesee & Wyoming in 2012. Based in the large yard in Hartford, Connecticut Southern continues to handle CSX's Cedar Hill cars, and serves its own customers on Amtrak's Springfield Line and on the branches it owns.

### BERKSHIRE & EASTERN

Connecticut's newest railroad, Genesee & Wyoming's Berkshire & Eastern, arrived in 2023. B&E assumed operations of the former Pan Am Southern routes now owned by Class I competitors Norfolk Southern and CSX. Berkshire & Eastern in Connecticut uses former New Haven Railroad trackage,



**Central New England Brookville BL06 No. 404, still carrying the lettering of former owner Metro-North, teams up with a GP9 to move stored hoppers at South Windsor, Dec. 23, 2023.**

but the history has many chapters. In 1982, Boston & Maine Railroad purchased Conrail's line from Berlin to Waterbury, branches north and south of Plainville, and north from Waterbury to Torrington. B&M reached these lines over trackage rights on Amtrak's Springfield Line between Springfield, Mass., and Berlin. B&M was purchased in 1983 by the new Guilford Transportation Industries. For the next 40 years, B&M would be a component of Guilford Transportation, Guilford Rail System, Springfield Terminal, and Pan Am Railways — different names, but all controlled by the same principals.

In 2008, Pan Am sold half interest in its lines west of Ayer, Mass. — including those in Connecticut — to Norfolk Southern, calling the new operation Pan Am Southern. CSX's purchase of Pan Am Railways in 2022 made competitors CSX and NS equal partners in Pan Am Southern. G&W's Berkshire & Eastern now operates Pan Am Southern for its owners. Active routes in Connecticut are Berlin to Waterbury, with freight rights over Metro-North south of Waterbury. A highlight of the line is the 3,560-foot long tunnel at Terryville, Connecticut's longest.

B&E purchased numerous locomotives from Pan Am, and for now they are running with simple "patched" paint. Current operations see one weekly

nighttime round trip between Berkshire & Eastern's hub at East Deerfield, Mass., and Plainville, Conn. A daytime local out of Plainville covers all of the Connecticut branches.

### HOUSATONIC

The Housatonic Railroad revived a 19th century name over its original route. The old Housatonic linked southern Connecticut with Pittsfield, Mass. Passenger service survived until the startup of Amtrak in 1971, but Penn Central

mothballed 35 miles in the middle between Canaan and New Milford in 1974. That segment eventually was purchased by the State of Connecticut. Conrail continued to serve both ends starting in 1976, until it sold the north end to Boston & Maine in 1982.

The new Housatonic was chartered in 1983, with owner John Hanlon's plans to reopen the line south from Canaan. Volunteer crews hacked through years of undergrowth, finally allowing tourist trains to run over



**CSX GP40-2 No. 6222 leads a rare daylight run under Metro-North catenary on Sept. 22, 2021. Other than trackage rights, the railroad's footprint in the state is limited to its yard in North Haven.** Adam Twombly





The route of the Central Vermont in Connecticut lives on as the New England Central. Wearing the railroad's original scheme, GP38AC No. 3857 leads a southbound train in downtown Stafford Springs, Aug. 23, 2023.

some of the route. Hanlon later purchased the north end of the line from B&M's new owner Guilford Transportation. With the line opened south to New Milford, the new Housatonic could interchange with Conrail at each end, and ended the tourist trains as it began soliciting freight customers.

In 1992, Housatonic extended its reach by purchasing from Conrail south to Danbury, and east and west on the remains of the New Haven's Maybrook Line. Except for the now-dormant Maybrook Line west of Danbury in New York State, all remaining routes are in service today. Housatonic is based in

Canaan, and serves a large limestone plant there, as well as customers all along its lines. Interchange with Conrail successor CSX is at Pittsfield.

#### CENTRAL NEW ENGLAND

Another historic railroad name was revived in 1995 when railroad contractor A.J. Belli-

veau leased 14 miles of the state-owned former New Haven Armory Branch between South Windsor and the Massachusetts state line. He operates it as the Central New England Railway, taking the name of the original CNE Railroad, which once operated between Hartford and Poughkeepsie, N.Y. Six years lat-



Metro-North and Connecticut DOT Kawasaki M8 electric multiple-unit cars handle most assignments on the New Haven Line. A set is seen at West Haven on Oct. 4, 2023.





er, Belliveau leased 8 miles of actual CNE between Hartford and Bloomfield. Key to today's Central New England's success for two decades was a large Home Depot distribution center at Bloomfield, which kept the railroad busy 5 days a week.

Home Depot shifted its operations to a new facility located on Connecticut Southern in South Windsor in 2021, leaving the Bloomfield line largely dormant right now. Four miles of the Armory Branch remain active, with two customers, and tracks used for car storage.

### CSX TRANSPORTATION

Connecticut's only Class I railroad maintains a low profile in the state. By the time CSX and Norfolk Southern divided Conrail in 1999, Big Blue had cast off most of its remaining lines in Connecticut, leaving just the isolated tracks within the remains of the onetime sprawling Cedar Hill Yard in North Haven. CSX inherited those operations. The Class I has trackage rights over Metro-North's New Haven Line and Amtrak to reach yards in New York City, but instead contracts with Connecticut Southern Railroad to move its cars between Cedar Hill and West Springfield, Mass., over Amtrak.

Two CSX crews normally perform needed work for customers within Cedar Hill, on the adjacent Amtrak Springfield Line, and on Metro-

North as far west as Bridgeport. CSX crews out of Oak Point Yard in the Bronx serve one remaining customer on Metro-North just east of Stamford. CSX trains on Metro-North usually work at night.

### NEW ENGLAND CENTRAL

And what about the Central Vermont, the other Connecticut railroad shown in that 1959 atlas? Virtually all of the former CV is alive and well today, operating as Genesee & Wyoming's New England Central.

The Central Vermont survived 26 years after the demise of the New Haven, and would see a revival of passenger service through eastern Connecticut, when Amtrak's *Montrealer* was routed north from New London in 1989. Canadian National sold the entire railroad from the Canadian border south to New London to Rail-Tex, Inc., in 1995. Shortly thereafter, Amtrak's *Montrealer* became the daytime *Vermont-er*, and the train was shifted off the former CV through eastern Connecticut. In 2000, RailAmerica purchased Rail-Tex, and 12 years later Genesee & Wyoming acquired Rail-America.

Today, New England Central's roster includes locomotives wearing the schemes of all three companies. NECR continues to link CV's former parent Canadian National at the international border with



**Definitely not steam:** Branford Steam Railroad SW1001 No. 7357 leads a loaded stone train on the line serving a quarry at North Branford, Sept. 23, 2013.

## NOT WHAT IT CLAIMS TO BE

**NOT INCLUDED IN OUR BAKER'S DOZEN LIST** of Connecticut rail operations is the Branford Steam Railroad, which is not a tourist railroad nor steam-powered. BSRR is a 7-mile rail line connecting a large quarry at North Branford to a connection with Amtrak's Northeast Corridor and a barge loading pier on Long Island Sound. Dating back more than a century, the operation replaced its last tank locomotives with GE 44-ton diesels in 1960, although the "steam" name remained. Larger locomotives followed over the years, with an EMD SW1001 arriving in 1975. Today's line-haul trains often are handled by a leased GATX GP38-2. — Scott A. Hartley

southern New England and Long Island Sound at New London. Connecticut operations are based in Willimantic, where a daily train makes the trip north to Palmer, Mass., to exchange cars with NECR trains from the north and CSX's Boston Subdivision. The same power works later from Willimantic south to New London.

### THREE STATE COMMUTER OPERATIONS

Connecticut's Department of Transportation offers residents and train-watchers a wide variety of passenger rail, with three separate operations.

West of New Haven, CTDOT contracts with New York's Metropolitan Transportation Authority for that agency's Metro-North Commuter Railroad to run all commuter trains on the main line, as well as branches to Waterbury, Danbury, and New Canaan. The New Haven Line is Metro-North's busiest, with 26.1 million trips reported in 2023. On weekdays, more than 40 trains in each direction run between New Haven and Manhattan, and more originate or terminate at other points closer to New York. More than half of the New Haven-New York City route is in Connecticut, but because the line's anchor is Manhattan's Grand Central

**A Metro-North Brookville BL20GH locomotive leads a Bridgeport-Waterbury train at Beacon Falls, Oct. 31, 2023.**







**Valley Railroad's Chinese-built 2-8-2 No. 3025, modified to resemble a New Haven Alco Mikado, departs Essex on Sept. 10, 2022. Dating to 1971, the Valley is one of the nation's oldest heritage railroads, and has operated steam throughout its history.**

Terminal, the two-state partnership is the logical arrangement. CTDOT and Metro-North collaborate on equipment purchases. Currently, Metro-North's New Haven Line relies on a fleet of 471 Kawasaki M8 electric multiple-unit cars.

The route's electrification, installed by the New Haven Railroad early in the 20th century, relies on AC overhead catenary, but trains entering Grand Central use New York Central's DC third-rail power, so New Haven Line EMU cars and locomotives always have been required to run on both power sources. The Waterbury and Danbury branches are not electrified, with services provided by diesels and Bombardier push-pull coaches. Some Danbury trains run through to and from Grand Central, and use dual-mode diesel/electric General Electric P32AC-DM locomotives. Amtrak operates its Northeast Corridor trains over Metro-North between

New Haven and New Rochelle, N.Y., but do not require third-rail equipment as they use New York City's Penn Station.

Connecticut's Shore Line East commuter service, operated by Amtrak for CTDOT, uses M8 EMUs over the Amtrak Shore Line between New Haven and New London. It was a dieselized service from its beginning in 1990, with all locomotives painted in the 1950s New Haven Railroad "McGinnis" paint scheme. The M8s began to cover the trains in 2022.

The state's newest passenger operation is "Hartford Line" service between Springfield, Mass., and New Haven, over Amtrak's Springfield Line. Inaugurated in 2018, CTrail Hartford Line trains operated under contract by TransitAmerica Services add to Amtrak's schedules on the same line providing frequent service seven days a week. The project also resulted in double-tracking of areas single-tracked by Amtrak in the

1980s, as well as three new stations. Along with this new route, CTDOT began branding its passenger trains as "CTrail." The name and a new black, red, and white image have been applied to both Hartford Line and Shore Line East services, although Connecticut-subsidized commuter trains west of New Haven retain the MTA Metro-North Railroad brand.

#### **VALLEY RAILROAD**

The Valley Railroad at Essex, Conn., is not bashful about its New Haven roots. Its logo features the script used by the New York, New Haven & Hartford for nearly a century. And its primary locomotive is a Chinese-built, SY-class 2-8-2 modified to resemble an NH Mikado. Valley RR, marketed as the Essex Steam Train & Riverboat, operates over the southern section of NH's onetime Hartford-Old Saybrook route, and is one of America's oldest heritage railroads.

Its tracks had been idled by the New Haven shortly before the Penn Central takeover, and PC planned abandonment. Members of the Connecticut Valley Railroad Association (which today is the Railroad Museum of New England) and the Empire State Railway Museum joined private investors to save the line, which was purchased by the state of Connecticut and designated a linear park. The Valley ran its first tourist train in 1971, and has gradually expanded its active tracks northward. Now privately owned, it has operated steam locomotives continuously for 53 years. Key to the railroad's success is its connection to a riverboat at Deep River, as well as an active dinner train schedule, Thomas the Tank Engine events, and Christmas trains.

#### **NAUGATUCK RAILROAD**

Today's Naugatuck Railroad operates over 19 miles of state-owned track, part of a route





built by the original Naugatuck in 1849. The New Haven took over the railroad in 1887, and the line had major freight business all along the industrialized Naugatuck River Valley into the mid-20th century. Penn Central operated the line from 1969 until Conrail's formation in 1976. Boston & Maine acquired the route between Waterbury and Torrington in 1982, which later was purchased by the State of Connecticut. B&M and its corporate successors continued to operate the route until the last on-line customer shifted to trucks.

The state leased the line to a newly chartered Naugatuck Railroad, part of the Railroad Museum of New England, which was seeking a railroad on which to operate its growing roster of equipment housed at the Valley Railroad. The new Naugatuck started tourist trains in 1996, and in recent years has expanded its offerings to include a variety of special beverage and entertainment trains, running with historic diesels.

Naugatuck is a common carrier, and has a brisk freight business handling construction and demolition debris and scrap metal.

### **A TRAIN-WATCHING TOURIST DESTINATION?**

Connecticut is America's third-smallest state, and may not offer the variety of larger states that understandably receive much more attention. But spend part of morning rush hour at a station west of New Haven and watch an endless parade of Metro-North and Amtrak passenger trains, and then drive a few miles to catch CTrail or a variety of colorful freight operations. The state also has rail and trolley museums that offer impressive collections and short rides. Connecticut has had many tourism slogans over the years, because the state has a lot to offer. You probably will never see a television add inviting out-of-staters to visit and watch trains. But the trains are here, and with their increasing variety, they will be for a long time to come. **I**



Naugatuck Railroad GP9 No. 859 leads a southbound train along the railroad's namesake river on Oct. 9, 2023. The 19-mile, state-owned route has roots dating to a line built by a railroad of the same name in 1849.





A vintage New York Central observation car  
takes passengers to another era

Story and photos by Luke Sharrett

# Time travel aboard Hickory Cr



Private cars *Hickory Creek* and *Pacific Home* rest in Amtrak's Chicago coach yard on Sept. 21, 2023. Both will join Amtrak's *Lake Shore Limited* for an exclusive journey to New York.



20<sup>TH</sup>  
CENTURY  
LIMITED

*Hickory Creek*, the tail car on the New York Central's *20th Century Limited*, carries the train's drumhead, a symbol of one of America's finest conveyances.

### Nighttime — Chicago — Sept. 21, 2023

Tucked away under the Roosevelt Road overpass in Amtrak's Chicago coach yard, the two vintage passenger cars sat like a pair of diamonds in the rough. The presence of the private varnish punctuated an otherwise uniform sea of aging Phase IV paint-scheme Superliner and Amfleet cars. While the Amtrak trainsets parked on the surrounding tracks had certainly been around the block a time or two, they were still youngsters compared to the two meticulously restored cars sitting in their midst.

reek





The New York Central's classic two-tone gray scheme adorns the *Hickory Creek*.

## Yard royalty

The queen of the yard this evening is undoubtedly a 1948-vintage round-end observation car. Soft, warm light spilled from the panoramic windows that stretched from nearly floor to ceiling. The railcar exuded an unmistakably regal aura. "New York Central" lettering was displayed elegantly along the roofline. A thick lightning bolt of New York Central gray stretched along the car's sleek, streamlined length. The name *Hickory Creek* emblazoned each side just beneath the window line.

Built by the Pullman-Standard Car Manufacturing Co. in the post-World War II boom, *Hickory Creek* was one of two *Creek*-series observation cars — its sister, *Sandy Creek*, is currently owned by Wick Moorman, retired Norfolk Southern CEO — that served on the New York Central's famed *20th Century Limited*. The overnight train provided luxury service between New York's Grand Central Terminal and Chicago's LaSalle Street Station. Commemorating the 1948 delivery of a new consist, General Dwight D. Eisenhower remarked that "to America and to the world, it symbolizes the forward-looking attitude, the daring, and the vision that have characterized our country and its people in all their undertakings."

Chicago fades into the night as Amtrak's *Lakeshore Limited* departs for New York with *Pacific Home*, *Hickory Creek*, and 16 passengers hoping to recreate a time of travel past.



The immaculate consist of new streamlined Pullman equipment certainly lived up to the hype as "The World's Most Famous Train."

## The 'Century' legend

For decades, the *20th Century Limited* was the preferred method of travel for New York and Chicago's cultural and political elite. Celebrities like Frank Sinatra, Lucille Ball, and Bing Crosby were frequent passengers. The train, and *Hickory Creek* specifically, was so well-patronized by the rich and famous that a daily scrum of press photographers crowded the Grand Central platforms with Speed Graphic cameras and flashbulbs in hand. Each was there trying to snap a photo of the biggest stars boarding the train that day. Following nearly two decades on the *20th Century Limited*, the service was discontinued, and *Hickory Creek* was sold in 1968 for use on the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey circus train. Over the years, the car fell into a state

of disrepair. In 1991 *Hickory Creek* was purchased by the United Railroad Historical Society of New Jersey, who then retained rail contractor Star Trak Inc. to complete the restoration work.

## A 'Pacific Home'

Coupled to the blunt end of *Hickory Creek* was NPCR's *Pacific Home*. Built by the Budd Co. in Philadelphia, the 10-6 sleeping car (designated as such because of its 10 roomettes and six bedrooms) was delivered in 1949 to Union Pacific, for which it roamed the West as part of UP's overnight trains for decades. *Pacific Home* would eventually be sold to Amtrak in 1971, where it remained in service for some 30 years. Following a stint as a training aid for a local fire department in New Jersey, *Pacific Home* had its electrical systems rewired and its walls stripped of the carpet Amtrak installed in the early 1970s. Over a handful of years, it was restored to





its former glory. This night, the venerable sleeper sat coupled to an Amtrak Viewliner baggage car on the rear of train No. 48, its shiny, fluted stainless steel sides glinting under the coach yard lights.

## Preparing for time travel

The two cars were laying over in Chicago after arriving a few days earlier on the first leg of the trip. Organized by the URHS, the trip commemorated the 75th anniversary of *Hickory Creek's* inclusion on the *20th Century Limited*. A sold-out train of 16 passengers and four crew escorted the cars west behind Amtrak train No. 49, the *Lake Shore Limited*. Later that evening the same passengers and crew would depart on the return leg of the trip to New York.

With the sun dipping beneath the horizon, the dusk sky turned a shade of deep blue, silhouetting the Willis Tower and the rest of the city's formidable downtown skyline just across the Chicago River from the

yard. On board the two private cars, the crew was busy preparing for the return of their passengers. Laura Stantz, who has since hired on with BNSF as an executive business car chef, occupied *Hickory Creek's* kitchenette. She was preparing plates of homemade snacks — salty, sweet, and savory. “The best part of cooking on a train is that no two days are the same,” Stantz says. “Every trip is a chance to dive into a new adventure.”

The experienced culinary artist personally crafted the trip's menu with inspiration from the *20th Century Limited's* original dining car fare. The breakfast and lunch served on the return trip would rival the quality of many fine-dining restaurants.

Crew members spread crisp, white tablecloths in the dining area. A bouquet of fresh flowers featured prominently in the car's rear window, a throwback to a New York Central tradition. Bartender Paul Cappelloni restocked beer, wine, and



**Chef Laura Stantz**



**Car attendant Paul Cappelloni**

liquor. Glasses and silverware were polished to a shine. With departure time fast approaching, one last pass was made over *Hickory Creek's* carpeted floor with a vacuum. Thanks to a good bit of teamwork, the cars looked good as new and were ready for their return trip to New York City.

A short while later, a member of Amtrak's Chicago yard crew climbed aboard and guided train No. 48's shove back into Chicago Union Station. The pair of private cars successfully traversed the complicated steel jungle of switches, crossovers, and dwarf signals that govern the south entrance of Union Station, before





**Passengers gather in the lounge aboard *Hickory Creek* on Sept. 21, 2023, much as travelers did over 50 years ago.**

slowing to a stop inside. The train was greeted on the platform by 16 conspicuously well-dressed passengers. Their vintage fedoras, three-piece suits, and elegant dresses served as an obvious tipoff that this was not a group of your average Amtrak travelers. The 16 did not wind up there by accident. Due to overwhelming interest in the trip, tickets were distributed by lottery. Those fortunate enough to have been selected were the only ones given the opportunity to experience an overnight trip on *Hickory Creek* in 2023. The car staff sprang into action welcoming the passengers by name, taking care of their luggage, helping them up the steps, and directing them to their bedrooms and roomettes on board these railroad history icons.

## Let the party begin

With all passengers safely inside, vestibule traps were buttoned up and Dutch doors latched securely just in time for the flood of passengers parading by to catch train No. 48. Somehow most of the traveling public seemed to pay little notice to the sleek, round-end observation car



**The 20th Century cocktail — a trip exclusive.**

tacked onto the rear of their train. A rare few, however, did stop to snap a quick photo or two before continuing to their coach seats a half-dozen or so car lengths down the platform.

Wasting no time, the party aboard the

private cars kicked off before train No. 48 left the station. Guests settled into *Hickory Creek*'s plush sofas and easy chairs in the "Lookout Lounge," mimicking the untold thousands of passengers who had done the same over the previous decades. Everyone knew it was a real treat to be aboard such historic rolling stock.

Plates of hors d'oeuvres were served by staff wearing traditional Pullman-style white button-down uniforms with black bow ties. Fresh-baked chocolate chip cookies, pimento cheese balls, and prosciutto-wrapped mozzarella skewers rounded out the evening's menu. The bartender began mixing the trip's signature cocktail — The 20th Century. Inspired, naturally, by the *20th Century Limited* itself, the drink is a delightful mix of dry gin, Lillet Blanc, creme de cacao, and fresh-squeezed lemon juice garnished with an elegant sliver of lemon peel. Laughter and lively conversation filled the car as big band tunes set the mood perfectly. In every respect, this was riding in style.

With activity in full swing aboard the private cars, Amtrak's *Lake Shore Limited* pulled from the station, starting its 959-mile overnight journey to New York City. The



The *Lake Shore Limited* pauses in the Glass City — Toledo, Ohio — around 3 a.m. Passengers have retired to rooms aboard *Pacific Home*.



Chicago skyline shrank from view as the train's locomotives, a pair of GE P42s, quickly throttled up to track speed and sliced through the industrial landscape of Northwest Indiana. As the hulking steel mills and refineries passed by outside, trip manager Lou Capwell, a sought-after jack-of-all-trades in the private car world, regaled passengers with anecdotes about the *20th Century Limited* from his seemingly inexhaustible mental library of railroading facts and trivia. "When the train was late it made the news," Capwell says, "because the train was never late." A historic 60-mph average running speed, beginning to end, attested to this fact.

By the time train No. 48 reached Elkhart, Ind., around midnight, the evening's festivities were winding down. Slowly but surely, guests began to retire to their rooms in *Pacific Home* for the night. As the train approached the Indiana/Ohio state line, we hustled along a stretch of straight track on Norfolk Southern's Chicago Line. Measuring more than 60 miles in length, this straight-as-an-arrow stretch of track runs between Butler, Ind. and Toledo, Ohio. In 1966, the New York Central tested its experimental rocket-powered RDC, the



Breakfast a la *Hickory Creek*: eggs en cocotte, pan-seared sausage links, and flaky croissants.

M-497 "Black Beetle," on this line. While train No. 48 would not come close to matching the Black Beetle's record-breaking speed of 183 mph, the *Lake Shore Limited* managed a respectable 79 mph.

## Glass City nocturne

By the time we reached Toledo, Ohio, around 3 a.m., the observation lounge had emptied for the night, save for the author. During the station stop, a pair of dedicated



*Hickory Creek and Pacific Home rest during the Buffalo, N.Y., station stop.*





railfans, apparently night owls in their own right, scurried about the Amtrak station parking lot, snapping photos of the two private cars not frequently spotted in the Glass City. Somewhere toward the head end of the train, a small group of passengers stepped onto the platform to indulge in a few quick cigarette puffs during the train's brief "fresh air stop."

Thanks to some efficient freight dispatching that allowed us to scoot around a number of high-priority intermodal trains, we were running close to on time. With Amtrak's crew change complete, two blasts from the locomotive's horn signaled our departure. Leaving the station's mid-century modern architecture behind, we crossed the Maumee River for points east, slipping away into the darkness across Northern Ohio. The experience of being lulled to sleep by the gentle rocking of a Pullman car at speed was at once sentimental, romantic, and thoroughly cathartic. There's nothing quite like it.

### Morning like the 'Century'

The next morning, guests awoke to the aroma of eggs en cocotte, pan-seared sausage links, and flaky croissants baking in the kitchenette oven. Steam rose lazily from mugs of coffee freshly brewed by



**Lunch is served as the train nears Utica, N.Y. On the menu, chicken salad sandwiches and homemade Minestrone soup.**

the kitchen staff. We were somewhere between Buffalo and Rochester, N.Y. Throughout the morning, passengers relaxed in the lounge. When not reading books or flipping through magazines, taking in the scenery was the preferred way to pass the time. Upstate New York's rolling hills, lush foliage, and meandering

streams made for prime viewing through *Hickory Creek's* large windows. As the train approached its station stop in Utica, N.Y., a lunch of chicken salad sandwiches and homemade Minestrone soup was served.

At approximately 3 p.m., we arrived at the Albany-Rensselaer station for a 1-hour layover. During our stop, the Boston section of the *Lake Shore* was removed from the head of the train. Ultimately bound for South Station that evening, Amtrak's yard crew wasted no time splitting the train and uncoupling a Viewliner sleeper, cafe car, and two Amfleet coaches from the train. Our section traded diesel engines for a dual-mode P32 more suited for the electrified tunnel running that awaited us in New York City. The red, white, and blue Phase III stripes of the Empire Service locomotive harkened to the days when Amtrak's long-distance network was significantly more robust than in the present day.

### A car made for this

For the next 3 hours we ran along the eastern bank of the picturesque Hudson River. The New York Central's famed Water Level Route never disappoints, and this day was no exception. This stretch of



*Hickory Creek* passengers gather in the lounge as the *Lake Shore Limited* makes its way down the Hudson River past the trip's signature views.





Mimicking the original *20th Century Limited*, Lou Capwell (left) and Paul Cappelloni cover the Penn Station platform with a red carpet upon arrival in New York on Sept. 22, 2023.

track is what the *Hickory Creek* was made for. In the author's opinion, it could well be the most scenic route east of the Mississippi River visible from an Amtrak train. The breathtaking views of the Hudson were powerful enough to draw even the most introverted from their roomettes into the Lookout Lounge. As we rocketed around banked curves and punched through double-tracked tunnels blasted from solid rock, an awed hush settled over the car. Every seat was filled. Every eyeball was glued to the panoramic bank of windows that wrapped around the rear of the car. Not even a smartphone could compete with the grandeur the Hudson River Valley offered.

## New York, New York

Much too soon for anyone's liking, our field of vision was blocked by a substantially less scenic view — gridlocked traffic on the Henry Hudson Parkway. The trip was almost over. Leaving behind the majestic Hudson, we descended beneath the streets of West Harlem and into the graffiti-plastered Freedom Tunnel. Fluorescent tunnel lighting guided us into Penn Station. The light emanating from them danced rhythmically through the darkened interior of *Hickory Creek* like some surreal subterranean discotheque.

As our engineer eased the *Lake Shore Limited* to its final stop beneath the new Moynihan Train Hall at Penn Station, two

car attendants hopped out onto the platform with a gigantic roll of red carpet. They unfurled the coil of ruby red runner along the length of the *Hickory Creek* — similar to what was done for the *20th Century Limited* — facilitating a final photo opportunity. The passengers gladly obliged, taking advantage of one last chance to feel like railroad royalty. The next moment they would ascend an escalator to fight hordes of rush-hour commuters traversing the Manhattan sidewalks outside the station on 8th Avenue.

## Back to reality

With the trip complete, the *Hickory Creek* followed train No. 48's now-empty





*Hickory Creek rests in New York's Penn Station, a historically unusual sight, as the 20th Century Limited, a New York Central train, called at Grand Central Terminal.*



consist under the East River, through a wash rack, and around the balloon track into Sunnyside Yard. There the cars sat under the catenary, uncoupled and stationary for the first time in nearly 24 hours, reflecting the glow of the Queens streetlights. Soon an Amtrak switch crew would be along to shove the private cars to a transfer yard in New Jersey.

Kevin Phalon, URHS executive director, reports that the organization offered multiple departures between New York and Chicago in summer 2024 in addition to *Hickory Creek's* normal schedule of nearly 50 day trips between Manhattan and Albany. For 2024's overnight trips, *Hickory Creek* was joined by Adios Rail's

*Pacific Island*, a six-bedroom lounge car converted from a former Union Pacific 10-6 sleeper.

### Days gone by

In a very real way, the 16 passengers and four crew that came together for the trip stepped into a time machine the night before in Chicago. The magic of these beautifully restored cars, the superior service, and imaginative food and beverage offerings served to transport each person back in time. The attention to detail was second to none. New old-stock, Pullman-branded bars of soap were even furnished in each roomette bathroom for the trip. Thanks to this exceptional level of detail,

we were able to follow directly in the footsteps of those who had come before us.

The class, elegance, and functionality of this private varnish was undeniable. Somehow these cars had the power to transcend the boundaries of time and space. For those of us who sometimes might feel that we were born in the wrong era, it was a coveted opportunity to taste what it must have been like to travel in the golden age of railroading. For 19 hours, we were given a gift. It felt like "the good old days." **I**

*For more information on URHS excursions and traveling aboard the Hickory Creek, please visit [hudsonriverrail.com](http://hudsonriverrail.com).*



# In search of rare **FM** swi

A trio of Fairbanks-Morse H12-44s once worked  
at California's Sierra Army Depot

Story and photos by David Lustig






# tchers

On a beautiful day in January 1976, a sparkling clean U.S. Army Fairbanks-Morse H12-44 locomotive, and an accommodating crew combined for an unforgettable visit to the Sierra Army Depot in Herlong, Calif.





A black and white photograph taken from a high vantage point on a train, looking forward along the tracks. In the immediate foreground, the large, rounded side of a cylindrical tank or boiler is visible, with rivets along its seams. A walkway with a metal railing runs alongside it. In the middle ground, the front of a diesel locomotive is visible, featuring a large headlight and a prominent exhaust stack emitting a thick plume of white smoke that rises into the air. The train is moving through a dry, desert-like environment with sparse, low-lying shrubs and gravelly ground. In the background, the tracks curve to the left, and several utility poles are visible against a clear sky. The top of the image is framed by a yellow and black diagonal striped border.

The engineer pulls back on the throttle, creating a burst of diesel smoke from the six-cylinder, 1,200-hp, opposed-piston prime mover.





Looking as if it just rolled out of the erecting bay at Fairbanks-Morse, H12-44 No. 1855 shines in the California sunshine.

**T**he year was 1976. I was in my late 20s, out of the military, back in college, happy with my girlfriend, and working as a writer. I was driving north from my home in Los Angeles to the far northeast part of the state to the tiny hamlet of Herlong to visit the Sierra Army Depot.

Sierra Army Depot is a military ammunition facility. In the 1970s, long trains of boxcars bringing back unused or dated weaponry combined with outbound cars loaded with fresh ammunition and supplies weaved in and out of myriad ordinance bunkers on dozens of miles of track. This amount of traffic meant the motive power needed to be larger than the usual center-cab switchers that then predominated on many military bases.

Informed fans — remember, this was before the internet — said the Army was using Fairbanks-Morse H12-44s at Sierra. I planned my visit for a day, I was assured, the depot would be busy switching an inbound train.

Long a fan of FM switchers, I had previously traveled to San Francisco to see Southern Pacific's fleet of H12-44s running between that city and San Jose. At one time FMs were tasked with switching various cities on the Coast Line and occasionally one would be dead-in-transit to SP's Taylor Yard in Los Angeles for a wheel truing. It whetted my appetite for more.

## A welcome and a disappointment

After spending the night in nearby Susanville, I pulled up to the front gate at first light. I was given directions to the headquarters building where I met my guide, Capt. Larry Kolar. He welcomed me to Sierra with a warm handshake and a genuine smile. Then came the bad news. The expected inbound train — about 80 cars — was delayed and would not be arriving for a couple of days. I couldn't wait that long, but asked if I could see the parked FMs. "Of course," Kolar replied.

After a short drive into the interior of the facility, I was face-to-face with a trio of black FM switchers glistening in the sun. I realize "glistening" can be an overused word, but not in this case. All three looked like they just rolled out of the erection bay in Beloit, Wis. My enthusiasm in photographing the units must have been obvious to the captain, who excused himself to check on something.

He came back a few minutes later and said, "Listen, while we are not running today, the entire railroad crew is here. I spoke to them, and they would be more than happy to put together a train for you and run it around the facility. Would that work?"

Would it? My own fan trip! As if on cue, the crew cranked up No. 1857 and coupled up to the only freight cars in the depot — two captive Department of Defense boxcars and two tank cars.





Sierra Army Depot's railroaders kept the installation's locomotive shop just as meticulously clean as their diesels.

► With nothing else happening the day of the author's visit, the crew put on a demonstration of switching using the only four cars on the base.

Inside the depot, the tracks were set up in the shape of a ladder. The main was one of the verticals, with tracks regularly diverging into what seemed like endless rows of semi-sunken earthen bunkers with concrete ends. In other areas, the main track weaved and bobbed in whichever way necessary to position boxcars parallel to assigned bunkers.

As we made our way through the depot, I asked the crew if I could detrain to get a lineside view. Not only did they agree, they offered to back up and then go forward as if it was a regular workday. My own U.S. Army Fairbanks-Morse H12-44 photo runby!

In 1976, Capt. Kolar said, the Sierra railroad was operating five days a week, from 7:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., shuffling car cuts ranging from two cars to 90 and occasionally, as in my case, none. Both SP and Western Pacific provided interchange at Herlong. When there were no active cuts of cars, the depot roster was the three FMs, and two captive boxcars and two captive tank cars, the latter augmenting the base water supply. Two speeders rounded out the roster.

### The depot today

Sierra Army Depot's primary mission has altered a bit since 1976. Today it is also the End of First Life Center; equipment that is stored for future use or divestiture. For example, the Air Force F22 fighter is no longer in production. But if the military wanted more, all the jigs, plans, and other equipment necessary to make the assembly line active again are carefully stored here. It is a similar story for other frontline military equipment no longer being built.

Today, the interchange partner is Union Pacific. The FMs are gone, replaced, I understand, by



a pair of GP10s, rebuilt and refined EMD first-generation GP9s.

After a distinguished career, Larry Kolar retired as a major and began a second career as a teacher in Barstow, Calif. Sadly, he passed away in 2012.

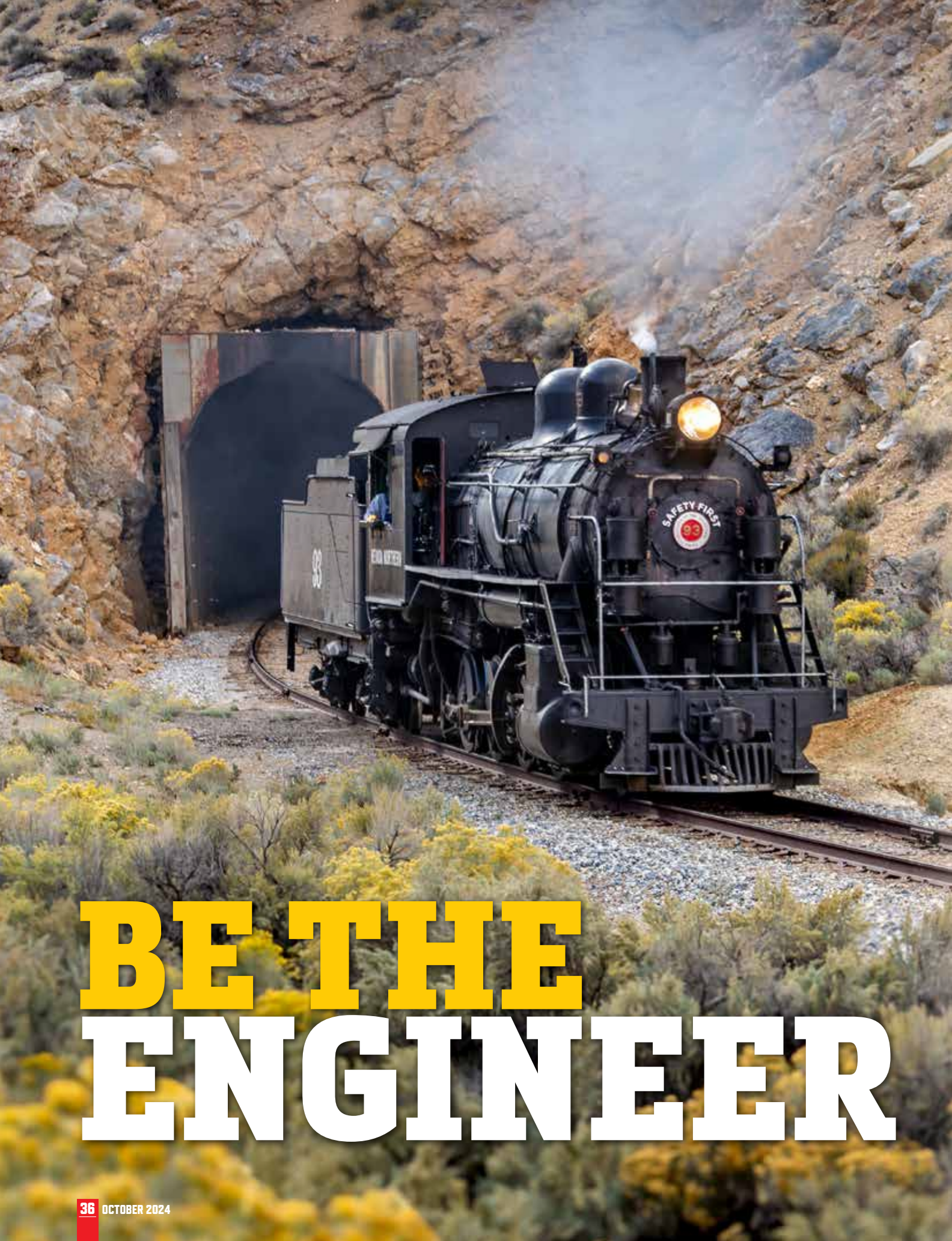
But Sierra Army Depot is still an active military facility. I am sure the personnel are keeping the Geeps just as spic-and-span as a previous generation had maintained the FMs. But somehow, for me, they are just not the same. **I**



The author's host, Capt. Larry Kolar, at left, poses with members of the base rail crew.







# BE THE ENGINEER





The author included steam and diesel in his Engineer for a Day program. Engineer Gary Hansen (at right) and Head Brakeman Chris Burleigh were his diesel instructors. Bob Lovell

## Nevada Northern Railway's 'Be the Engineer' program puts you in the driver's seat

By Bob Lovell

The words "Be the Engineer!" drew my attention to a Nevada Northern Railway ad in a *Trains* magazine.

I'm a veteran train museum patron. I've been to many, from Los Angeles to Scranton, and most are a lot easier to get to than Ely, Nev. Ely is 3 hours, 42 minutes north of Las Vegas, a lonely desert drive with just one rest stop on the way.

As a museum it is unique in two ways. First, there's no big display room with the artifacts or lovingly restored static equipment. Instead, NNRy is a working historic railroad, offering many scheduled and special excursion runs behind its Alco 2-8-0 No. 93 (built 1909), Baldwin 4-6-0 No. 40 (1910), or Electro-Motive Division diesel SD7 No. 204 (1952).

Nevada Northern's museum is all around you — engines, rolling stock, the shop, the waiting room, offices, coaling tower, and everything else needed to operate a working railroad.

The second distinguishing feature, though, is a chance to Be the Engineer. This opportunity is a fundraiser for the museum, and costs in excess of \$1,000 for a 2- or 4-hour experience. (Your exact

cost depends on which of several options you choose). The program offers lessons in operating a steam engine, a diesel-electric, or both together as a package. Some of the expense may be tax-deductible as a charitable donation.

### THE LESSONS

So, what's it like to Be the Engineer?

Lessons begin with a test on the rules, based on a manual sent beforehand. Instructions for starting and stopping follow, and finally a run down the tracks of the original copper ore-hauling railroad with you in the engineer's seat.

My instructor-engineer for this run was Earl Koob, a calm, careful, and friendly guy. The safety briefing included a rundown of the controls for "my" engine, No. 93, a bewildering array of valves, gauges, levers, and pull chains. I needed to focus on just five: throttle, brake, Johnson bar (think of it as the gearshift), whistle, and speedometer. Actually, there are two brake systems, but we had no cars behind us so the locomotive's independent brake system was the only one in use. My instructor taught me

◀ Nevada Northern No. 93, a 4-8-0 Consolidation built by Alco in 1909, emerges from a tunnel on its return trip to Ely, Nev., on a 2022 Engineer for a Day run. Carl Swanson





Taking the throttle on a 137,400-pound, 115-year-old steam locomotive starts with a rules exam, followed by hands-on instruction, and finally operation under the watchful eye of a Nevada Northern engineer. Four photos, Bob Lovell

The author dressed for his role, including a Nevada Northern engineer's cap complete with the line's historic "Ely Route" logo and a selection of pins to remember the occasion.



a five-step pattern for starting, a similar pattern for stopping, and away we went!

We stayed at 15 mph on the 2-hour run (5 mph on a stretch of bad track). That's slow by most standards, but plenty fast for me, considering the weight, heat, motion,

and noise of this ancient monster. Needless to say, I loved it!

The fireman does much of the work. He is responsible for coal, water, fire, and steam. No. 93 is hand-fired, meaning shovel after shovel of coal needs to be







**In addition to operating steam and diesel locomotives, for an extra donation visitors can opt for a tour of the main line in the railroad's 1956 Pontiac Chieftain hi-rail station wagon.**

tossed artfully through the gates of hell (butterfly doors opened by a foot pedal). Watching him tend to the fire was part of the fun.

Blowing the whistle was a constantly recurring requirement — two longs, a short, and a long at every grade crossing, with the final long pull ending as the locomotive occupies the crossing.

When we reached the wye at the end of the line, my instructor took over for this more delicate work. This gave me a chance to look over the trackside miniature Old West ghost town built for tourists on the excursion runs. No jackalopes, though.

My afternoon class took place aboard No. 204, built by General Motors' Electro-Motive Division. My instructor was Gary Hansen, another patient and careful man. The diesel was mechanically much simpler than No. 93. Where the throttle for No. 93 was a long ratcheting bar, No. 204 had a short brass handle. Diesels don't need a Johnson bar. Head Brakeman Chris Burleigh had little to do but watch for hazards on his side of the track. Still, I found the diesel engineer experience worthwhile.

In sum, I had a great time. It was a capstone experience for this life-long railfan and well worth the long desert drive. **I**

**The No. 93 is a coal-fired locomotive and its fireman does much of the work of monitoring the supplies of coal and water, and maintaining the fire and boiler pressure.**





# THE FARMER'S FRYING PAN



## It was a heavy-metal incident at an Iowa grade crossing

by Lynn Sass

**FOUR DECADES LATER,** I still chuckle when I think about the grouchy old farmer who jumped on my locomotive at a central Iowa grade crossing, cast iron fry pan in hand, and cussed me out like he was a drunken sailor!

It was summer 1979. I had been a qualified Chicago & North Western Railway engineer for only a couple months, working the extra board out of Boone, Iowa. My crew and I were called to dog-catch trains that could not make it from Clinton to Boone under their hours of service. The Rock Island Railroad had entered bankruptcy in 1975 and was about to call it quits. Much of the Rock Island traffic was being diverted to C&NW's east-

west main line across the Hawkeye state. Those of us on the extra board were working every 10 hours on our rest.

This particular afternoon we were relieving a crew that had died at Colo, Iowa. The inbound engineer overshot the crossing when he stopped, blocking the town's main thoroughfare with the lead locomotive. When our van arrived, there already was an excessive amount of road traffic waiting. We got out of the van and were boarding the train when we were verbally assaulted by an old guy in an old pickup truck sitting at the crossing. Numerous four-letter words were directed at us conveying his displeasure with having to wait for the train to pull by and stop again to pick up our caboose

crew. I boarded the engine, got situated, gave a couple short horn blasts, and started pulling.

This was too much for the old guy. He jumped out of his truck as we started to pull and climbed on my lead locomotive! He did not realize, however, that to enter an EMD SD45 cab from the front, one had to go to the fireman's side. As we started moving, he was standing outside my front windshield pounding on it with a cast iron fry pan, expressing his displeasure in a rather impolite manner.

As we proceeded down the track, I gave the engine another notch. The speed increased and the look on the old guy's face was priceless. He looked at the ground, then looked at me, cussed me out, looked at the

On the EMD SD45, the front cab entrance is on the fireman's side — something our fry pan-wielding farmer did not realize as he took his brief train ride. *Trains collection*

ground, looked at me, and cussed me out again as we started to go faster and faster.

Soon he figured out he might end up in Omaha, Neb., if he didn't bail out. I had no interest in being beamed in the face with a fry pan so I kept notching out the throttle. The last look I got of my fry pan-wielding assailant was him jumping off the engine, almost going head over heels before coming to a stop and starting to hoof it about three-fourths of a mile back to his old truck — still sitting at the crossing. All this with frying pan in hand, and without, I might add, an imprint of it being left on my head!

LYNN SASS worked as a locomotive engineer for 42 years.



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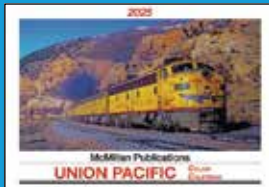
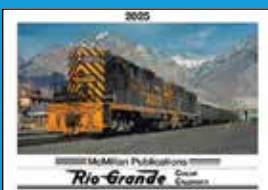
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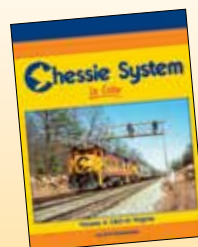
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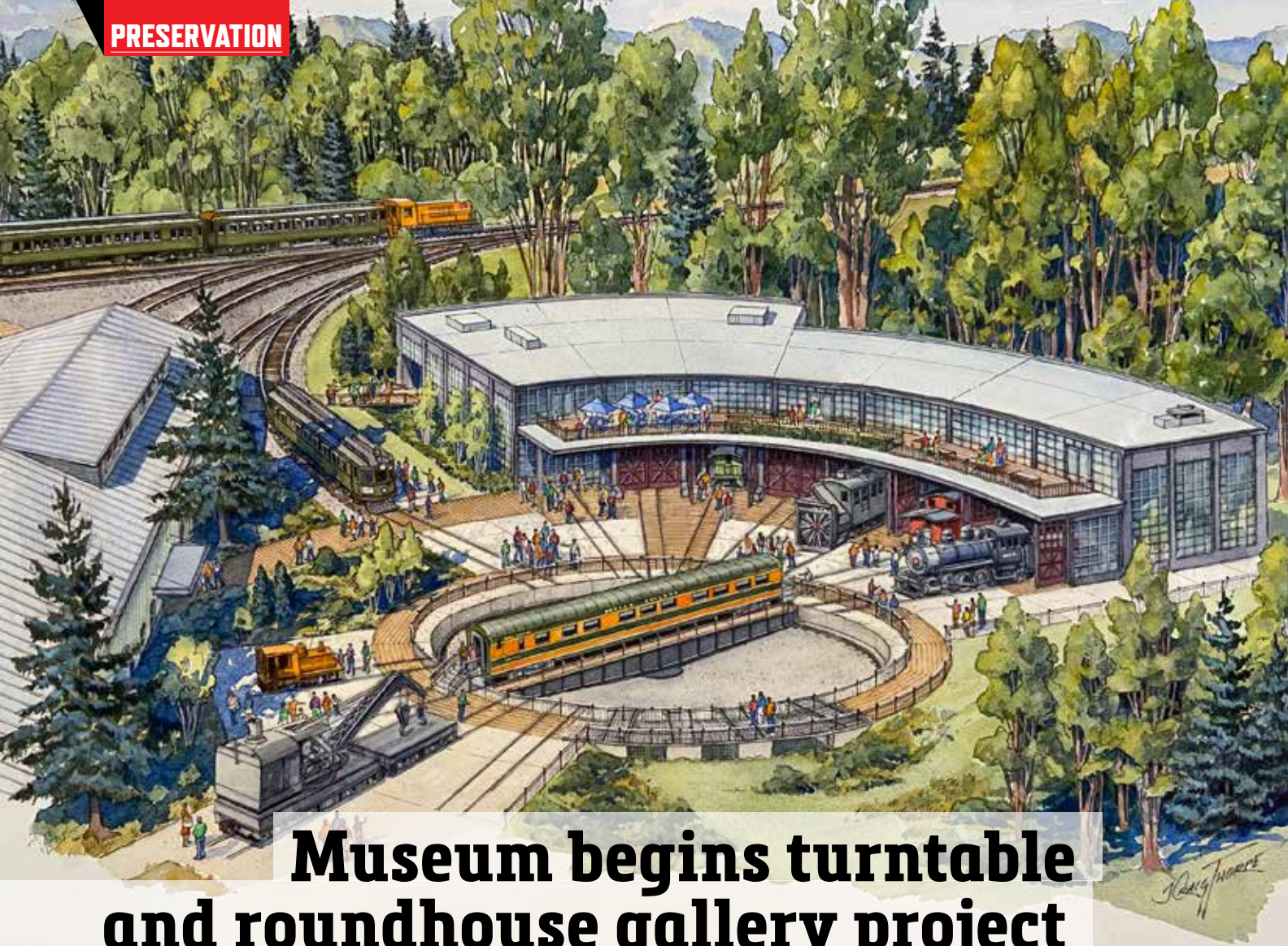


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# Museum begins turntable and roundhouse gallery project

Northwest Railway Museum landmarks to fill new space

▲ A new turntable and 35,000-square-foot roundhouse gallery will be the latest building on the Northwest Railway Museum's Railway History Campus. Artist J. Craig Thorpe illustrates the new facility in this rendering looking across the new turntable. Two images, Northwest Railway Museum.

**A NEW ROUNDHOUSE GALLERY AND TURNTABLE** are in the works at the Northwest Railway Museum in Snoqualmie, Wash. The new facility will house seven significant pieces of rolling stock from the museum's collection. New exhibits will also be presented along with a 5,000-square-foot HO-scale model railroad illustrating, "how railways determined present settlement patterns and opened previously inaccessible regions across Washington State geography," according to a description on the museum's website.

"The roundhouse will be a museum gallery space," says Richard Anderson, Northwest Railway Museum executive director. "This will be a climate-controlled envi-

ronment designed to exhibit and protect our seven King County landmarks."

The 35,000-square-foot facility is the fourth and final structure in the museum's site plan. Work toward fully realizing the plan has been underway for nearly two decades and has thus far brought about a 25,000-square-foot Train Shed Exhibit Hall, the Railway Education Center with a research library and archives, and the 8,200-square-foot Conservation and Restoration Workshop.

The new building will not be a working facility like a traditional roundhouse. The Conservation and Restoration Workshop serves as the museum's space for stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, and reconstruction tasks.

Plans call for preliminary site clearing to begin during fall 2024 with construction moving forward in 2025.

The museum is still discussing one significant aspect of the project: Whether the turntable should be an existing piece relocated to the museum or new construction. Preserving an existing unit, says Anderson, is more costly than fabricating a new turntable. A new turntable would be engineered for the museum specifically. To install an existing table requires everything to be adopted to that unit. This "reverse engineering," coupled with the costs of recovering and relocating a turntable, make this a major question to be addressed.

Rolling stock and artifacts will not merely be preserved in



the roundhouse facility. Each piece will exhibit specific interpretive themes, helping to tell the story of railroading in the Pacific Northwest and how this mode of transportation helped develop the region.

The roundhouse ground floor will feature exhibits around the seven King County landmarks:

- **THE CHAPEL CAR** — American Baptist Publication Society No. 5 — its role in Manifest Destiny and expanding religious movements to “civilize” the West.
- **THE ROTARY SNOWPLOW** — Northern Pacific No. 10 — how it helped connect east and west across the Cascade Mountain, and the consequences of heavy snow and avalanches.
- **THE PULLMAN SLEEPER CAR** — Spokane, Portland & Seattle No. 701 — telling the story of Pullman porters and maids, long-distance travel, and importance of community connections.
- **PLYMOUTH SWITCHER** — Dupont No. 463 — interpreting the railway role in the advent of the atomic age, and its vital role in wartime logistics.
- **THE STEAM CRANE** — SP&S No. X-5 — presenting the story of railway construction and overcoming derailments.
- **STEAM LOCOMOTIVES** — Northern Pacific No. 924 and Great Northern No. 1246 — demonstrating the connections between railroads, the Puget Sound area, and global markets.
- **THE INTERURBAN** — Puget Sound Electric Railway No. 523 — telling the story of electric rail travel, regional urbanization, and the Pacific Northwest’s first mass transit system.

The second floor will hold the HO-scale railroad, classroom and program spaces, a children’s learning area, and exhibit gallery spaces. Additionally, the Talgo Bistro Car No. 7304 will be the center of exhibits interpreting railway art, artists, and design. The car is the only survivor from the Amtrak Cascades Talgo Series VI trainset.

For more information or to support the Northwest Railway Museum, please visit: [trainmuseum.org](http://trainmuseum.org) — Bob Lettenberger



The second floor gallery will be home to a 5,000-square-foot HO-scale model railroad depicting Pacific Northwest development.

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# GREAT RAILFAN ROADS

# MONTANA'S U.S. ROUTE 2

Follow BNSF's former Great Northern Hi-Line

By John Friedmann • Photos by Tom Danneman

## THE FORMER GREAT NORTHERN "HI-LINE"

across Montana is BNSF's primary route to the Pacific Northwest. The BNSF line across Montana is paralleled by U.S. Route 2 instead of an interstate highway and is a boon to the railfan.

For 557 miles, U.S. 2 is alongside BNSF from Whitefish in the western Montana mountains to Williston, just over Montana's eastern border in North Dakota. BNSF's CTC-equipped main line hosts about 30

daily trains (more when grain is running heavy), providing ample train-watching targets while driving.

Start your trip with the morning arrival of Amtrak's eastbound *Empire Builder* at the ex-Great Northern depot in Whitefish. The Stumptown Historical Society owns Whitefish's 1928 alpine-style depot along with a rare Electro-Motive NW3 in GN colors displayed trackside. BNSF's Whitefish yard is active (including a turntable

and partial roundhouse) and BNSF crews and Amtrak engineers change here. BNSF's "snow coaches" may be in the yard — rebuilt former Santa Fe Hi-Levels used to move crews when roads are impassable.

After leaving Whitefish and picking up U.S. 2, you cross GN's original main line that ran via Kalispell and was bypassed in 1904. Watco leased the branch until 2020, and now BNSF services the line with a daily local. The main line is mostly out of sight





for the next half hour, unless you detour into Columbia Falls to see a lonely Shay locomotive displayed along Railroad Street.

West Glacier boasts both mountain views and adjacent tracks. The left turn under the main line marks the entry to Glacier Park's Going-to-the-Sun Road, but go straight ahead to Amtrak's 1910 West Glacier station (BNSF calls it "Belton"). The railroad has been following the Flathead River uphill since Columbia Falls

and eastbounds face a 0.5% grade.

BNSF and U.S. 2 follow the southern border of Glacier National Park for the next 50 miles, climbing Marias Pass together at railroad grades exceeding 1.8% westbound and crossing the Continental Divide almost a mile above sea level. At Essex, 25 miles east, pause at the railfan-themed Izaak Walton Inn, where guests could stay in cabooses or a GN-painted F45 locomotive in addition to the historic main build-

**An eastbound BNSF grain train rolls across the spectacular bridge over Two Medicine River at East Glacier, Mont. This bridge can be photographed from U.S. Route 2.**

ing. Alas, much of the inn's rail decor was sold at auction as part of a renovations and rebranding to LOGE Glacier Park, but the cabosse and locomotive lodging are still available. If the inn is open, you'll find it a fantastic place to watch trains.





The scenic Java Creek and Sheep Creek tall steel bridges can be seen from U.S. 2, and the grade stiffens as BNSF and road leave the Flathead River valley. The railroad passes through numerous snowsheds as it winds and climbs the next 15 miles to the top of Marias Pass. At aptly-named Summit there's an obelisk to complement incredible views of the Rockies. BNSF has a balloon track at Summit to turn snow-fighting equipment, and look for the Summit Mountain Lodge, a heavily remodeled but still recognizable former GN station moved here in the 1980s.

The scenery changes on the east slope of Marias Pass as mountains fade into foothills. East Glacier's 1912 log depot is a seasonal Amtrak stop, but the main attraction is the prominent GN-built Glacier Park lodge. Just east, Route 2's Two Medicine River bridge becomes a photographer's tripod, providing a postcard-perfect view of BNSF's massive steel bridge over the same river complete with extra-photogenic barn.

Browning features BNSF views from Route 2 overpasses on either side of town,

but otherwise road and rail take different routes through town. East of Browning the railroad and U.S. 2 are side-by-side out on the plains for 10 miles starting at Blackfoot.

Cut Bank, only 30 miles south of the Canadian border, is the next sizable town. Before entering Cut Bank, the railroad crosses the Cut Bank Creek on another imposing steel trestle. A former crew-change point with a small yard, Cut Bank's GN depot is still used by Amtrak. Rail and road run next to each other for 13 miles between Ethridge and Shelby.

While Shelby is about the same size as Cut Bank, there's a lot more going on. The intersection with I-15 means more places to eat and sleep, and Shelby is a junction with the BNSF's Sweet Grass Subdivision to the Canadian border and with the Great Falls sub headed south. BNSF dispatches a daily turn from the Shelby yard to interchange with CP at Sweet Grass and the route also hosts varied but occasional unit trains. The Great Falls Subdivision is usually quiet (a scheduled train pair plus unit

grain trains) but boomed as a detour route when a Montana Rail Link bridge collapsed in 2023. Route 2 nearly runs across the Great Falls/Hi-Line junction switch on Shelby's east side.

Make sure you are fed, watered and fueled before you leave Shelby, because it's a hundred miles of not much to Havre. Fortunately, the "not much" does include a lot of road and rail side-by-side running. Many towns still have old-style grain elevators that add interest to photos in these wide-open spaces. Chester has two unit-train loading loops and Rudyard's miniature-but-cute Sugar Shack Diner is worth a stop.

Havre hosts both crew changes and a locomotive shop and is a hot spot. Ironically, the shop's isolation helped it dodge several closure attempts because its closing would require towing dead locomotives long distances. Havre's Amtrak station is only a block off U.S. 2, although its 1904 construction is hidden by the mid-century vibe from a 1949 remodeling. Check out the James J. Hill statue out front and the well-kept GN 4-8-4 next to the platform. Havre's 7th Street overpass gives good views of the shop and yard, but be careful — no sidewalks!

Havre is a good halfway point for a two-day trip. The appropriately-named Best Western Great Northern Inn is conveniently located on U.S. 2, featuring views of the turntable and engine servicing areas from back-side rooms.

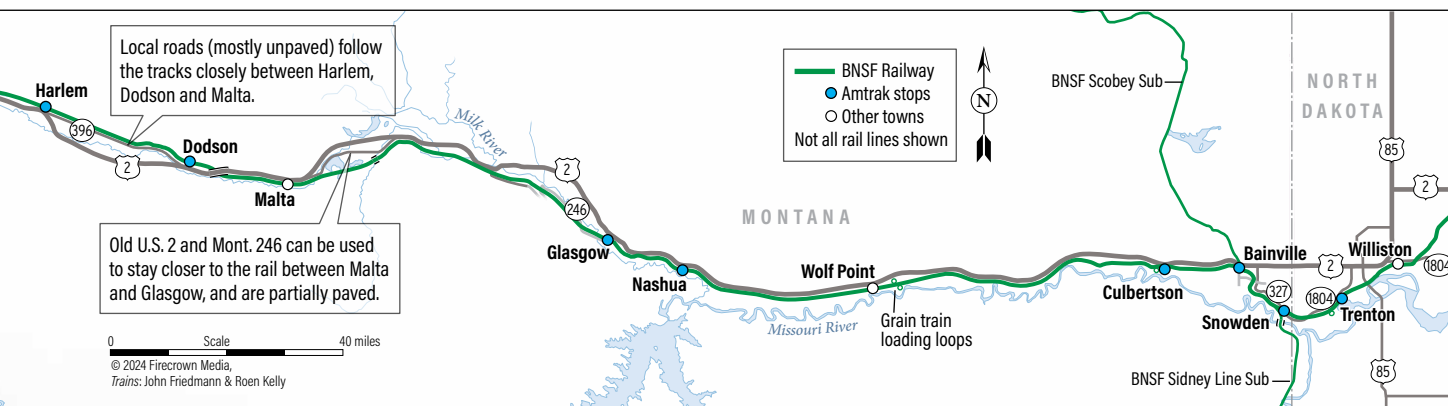
Starting just west of Havre, the Hi-Line and U.S. 2 are in the Milk River valley for the next 175 miles. Rail and road are almost never out of sight of each other for almost 50 miles until Harlem. U.S. 2 picks up the Hi-Line 28 miles later at Dodson, but hardcore fans can instead brave Montana Route 396 right next to the tracks.

Route 2 reconnects with the tracks at Malta, an Amtrak stop with another GN chalet-style wooden depot. Ridership is surprisingly strong at the small towns along the Hi-Line: Malta's annual ridership more than doubles the town's 1,800-person



A westbound grain train traverses Marias Pass and is about to enter one of the snowsheds along the line. U.S. Highway 2 can be seen on the right side of the photo.





**Three BNSF SD40-2s lead a freight west of Summit, Mont. Summit is the crest of the Marias Pass grade, and is the lowest railroad crossing of the Continental Divide in the U.S.**

population, likely due to the paucity of transportation alternatives.

For the best rail access between Malta and Glasgow (70 miles), choose Old U.S. 2 when it splits east of Malta (it will rejoin after 20 miles). Farther east, Montana Route 246 runs next to the railroad into Glasgow.

Glasgow, although an Amtrak stop, is literally the middle of nowhere: it's the 1,000-population town farthest from a metro area of 75,000 or more in the U.S. Book ahead if you are planning to bed down here because the area can be busy during hunting season. Amtrak uses Glasgow's GN station, but the white-



An eastbound stack train crosses the impressive bridge over Java Creek and the Middle Fork of the Flathead River near East Java, Mont.





An eastbound freight negotiates the curves east of Shelby, Mont., during a beautiful prairie sunset. Shelby is a junction with the BNSF's Sweet Grass Subdivision to the Canadian Pacific interchange at the Canadian border, and with BNSF's Great Falls Subdivision to the south.

painted brick renders it less unattractive.

The Milk River joins the Missouri River 20 miles east of Glasgow. A short detour south from Nashua takes you across a dam spillway and to an observation point where William Clark (of Lewis and Clark) climbed to survey the valley on the party's route west. The observation point road turnoff is barely marked — let Google Maps help.

Back on U.S. 2, BNSF is usually in sight to the south, with the meandering Missouri River beyond. Wolf Point's grain elevators provide interesting backdrops, but the depot — although nicely kept — is a charmless 1960s metal building. East of Wolf Point there are two grain train loading loops that may provide extra action. Culbertson has another loading loop and extra spurs for frack sand unloading signal the approach to the Bakken oil fields.

When the Bakken boomed, Bainville was hit fast and hard with explosive growth. BNSF took back the nearby Scobey and Sidney Line Subs from lease operator Watco in 2013 as oil, pipe, and frac sand facilities proliferated. Things have calmed down in the ensuing decade, but the sand distribution facility at Bainville still supports the oil industry. The Scobey sub begins at Bainville, and is a throwback to pre-unit train branch line operations.

At Bainville, divert to the Bainville-Snowden Road and then Montana Route 347 southeast to keep along BNSF as it follows the Missouri River. Snowden has a wye with BNSF's Sidney Line Sub, which

sees local service only, but if upgraded could eventually see more trains as a connector now that BNSF has reabsorbed MRL. Just south on the Sidney Line is the Snowden lift bridge, the longest lift bridge in the world when built in 1913. Although the bridge hasn't been raised in more than 80 years, it did host road traffic until the 1980s. Unfortunately, getting the best views requires a detour through North Dakota.

Montana Route 327 becomes North Dakota Route 1804 at the state line and heads northeast following BNSF's Hi-Line and the Missouri River. The Yellowstone River joins the Missouri soon after the state line, making the Missouri mightier. Route 1804 (also 143rd Ave. NW) crosses the Hi-Line and passes the Savage Services Bakken Petroleum hub at Trenton, N.D. Savage has a full double-loop to load oil trains, stub tracks for tank cars and pipe unloading and several of its own locomotives for switching.

Past Trenton, follow Route 1804 back to U.S. 2 and into downtown Williston and the BNSF depot and yard. Williston was ground-zero for the Bakken boom that began in 2009, with massive construction and "man camps" of trailers to accommodate the influx of workers. BNSF's Williston business keeps the small yard busy while most through trains keep rolling. The brick 1910 Amtrak/BNSF depot is more substantial than those earlier in the trip, and there is a GN 2-8-0 outside. Williston's 20,000-plus population ensures full set of ameni-

ties to rest, eat, or even fly away after the long drive.

#### WORTH STOPPING FOR:

- **EAST GLACIER:** Soak up the ambiance of the magnificent lodge. Step inside to admire the spectacular three-story lobby with columns made from 40-foot logs.

- **HAVRE DEPOT:** Havre's Amtrak 20-minute fuel and crew change is a twice-daily flashback to when the life of small towns revolved around the arrival of passenger trains.

- **MARIAS PASS:** Both the breathtaking scenery on the west side or the more wide-open views on the east side are worth stopping for.

#### IF TIME IS SHORT:

Whitefish to Browning is less than 100 miles, and covers the most scenic part of the trip. You can even double back through Glacier National Park (no trains, but spectacular sights).

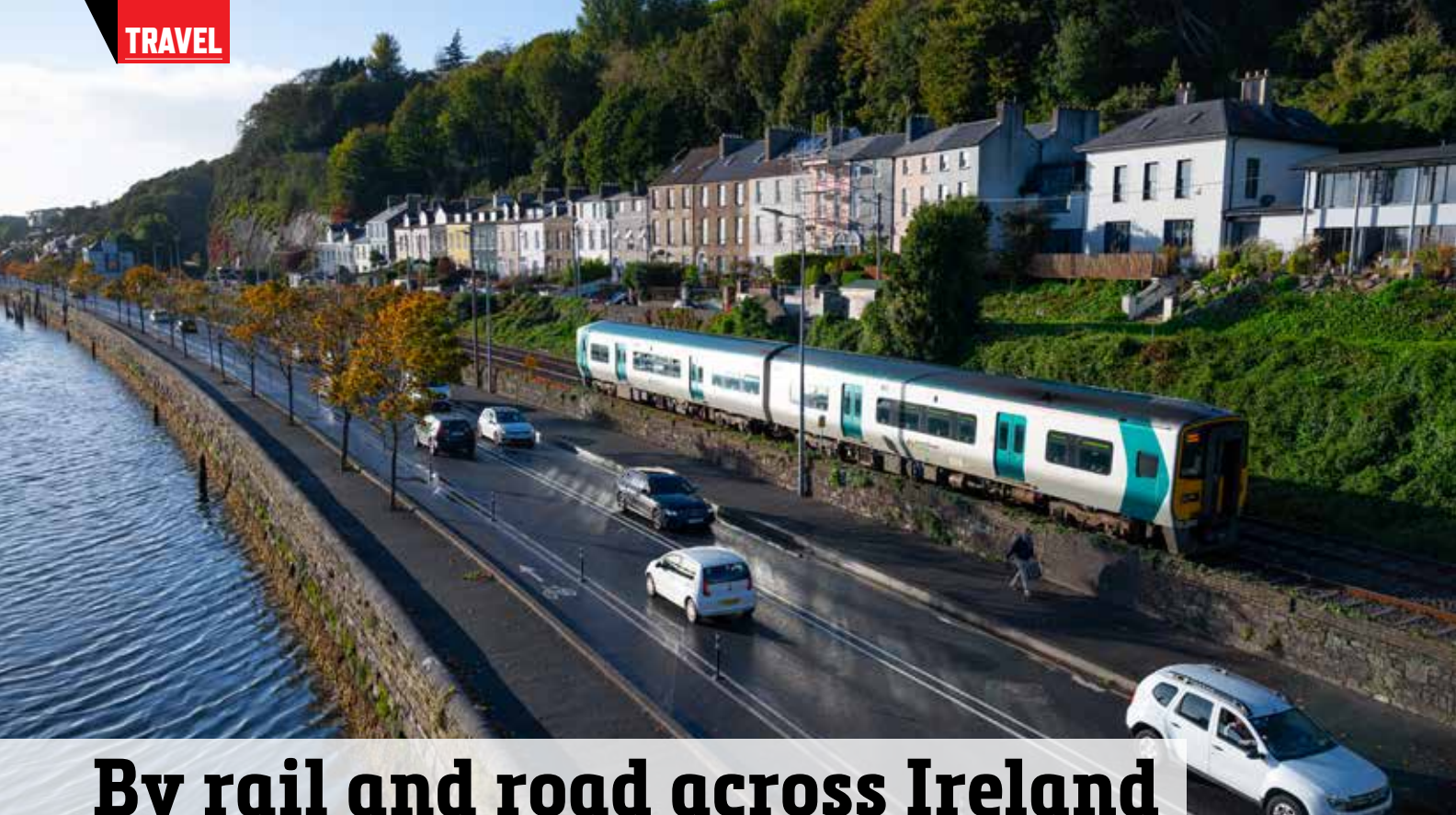
#### BESIDES THE RAILROAD:

- **GLACIER NATIONAL PARK:** One of America's most scenic natural parks, but crowded at peak times.

- **HAVRE BENEATH THE STREETS:** An underground slice of the Old West in Havre is a good family diversion while you're scoping out the diesel shop.

- **WHITEFISH:** A logging-turned-resort community with an attractive downtown, great scenery, and all-season sports. **I**





# By rail and road across Ireland

Short hops on a rail-themed Emerald Isle

▲ A two-car suburban service based out of Cork's busy Kent Station rolls along the scenic Cobh Branch. The 2600-class diesel railcars were built in 1994 by Japan's Toyku Car Corp.

Two photos, Brian Solomon

**I LIKE RELATIVELY SHORT** rail journeys — trips of less than 3 hours or hops where multiple short trips are combined. I've also made all-rail escapades that have gone on for weeks. To make the most of our recent rail-themed trip to Ireland, my wife Kris and I mixed it up; we traveled both by train and by road where necessary to see the sights and make railroad photos.

Driving in Irish cities is an acquired taste, so our urban journeys were largely rail-based, except for trips to and from Dublin airport, which has no rail connection. We traveled by train between Dublin and Cork via the fast but crowded Irish Rail InterCity service [see "Irish lessons in train travel," "Commentary," February 2023].

Cork's Kent Station is a regional hub, serving as the terminus for Intercity services from Dublin and Tralee and the primary focus of suburban services from Cobh (pronounced 'cove') and Middleton.

Kent is an interesting station. Tracks enter from the Dublin-end via a tunnel. The

main tracks are protected by a curved train shed that serves Dublin and Tralee services as well as a handful of through trains running between Cobh and Mallow. Most Cobh and Middleton suburban trains depart from the opposite end of the station and run every half-hour weekdays from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., hourly at other times.

Irish Rail's 2600-series diesel railcars built in 1994 by Japan's Toyku Car Corp. and similar 2800-series cars built in 2000 handle suburban services.

I'm fond of the Cobh Branch. This double-track line makes several stops as it island hops to the historic station at Cobh. At Glounthaune (Cobh Junction) the line splits from



Cork's Kent Station is a regional hub. The station with its distinctive curved train shed is a modern take on Victorian-era architecture. It is the terminus for InterCity services from Dublin and Tralee and the focus of suburban services radiating outward to Cobh and Middleton.



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## TRAVEL

the Midleton route. The iron footbridge is a nice photo vantage point.

Cobh is a pretty town spectacularly situated on hillsides rising up from the harbor, with a magnificent cathedral soaring high above all other buildings.

In season, ferries connect Cobh with Spike Island. Located in Cork Harbour, this prison island is an Irish equivalent to San Francisco Bay's Alcatraz.

Vantage points to photograph Irish Rail's suburban trains against the backdrop of the harbor, can be found by following the elevated road above the tracks back toward Cork City when exiting the station.

Killarney is another destination popular with American visitors. I've traveled to Killarney by rail on previous trips. For this trip, however, we rented a car in Cork.

Killarney Station features a modest stub-end train shed over the main platform. Content to leave our rented car behind, we took short train trips to Tralee and Mallow.

Our Irish holiday continued with more rail trips as part of the adventure. The final highlight was Railway Preservation Society of Ireland's seasonal steam trips between Dublin's Connolly Station and Maynooth. For information, visit steamtrainsireland.com. For information on Irish Rail visit irishrail.ie/en-ie. — *Brian Solomon*



## In the November issue



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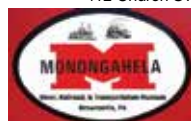
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**OCTOBER 20, 2024:** 33rd Annual Chicago Railroadiana and Model Train Show. Sunday, 10:00am-3:00pm. Kane County Fairgrounds, 525 South Randall Rd., St. Charles, IL. Admission: \$6.00 w/tax. Tables starting at \$65.00. Information: 847-358-1185, [RussFierce@aol.com](mailto:RussFierce@aol.com) or [www.RRShows.com](http://www.RRShows.com)

All listed events were confirmed as active at the time of press. Please contact event sponsor for current status of the event.

**LODGING**

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**BOOKS AND MAGAZINES**

**CAN DAN AND HIS CLUB SAVE** their favorite engine from the scrap yard? Read the *Deltic Disaster* and *Other Tales*, and the sequel, *That Which Was Lost, Deltic Disaster Part Two*, available at Barnes & Noble.

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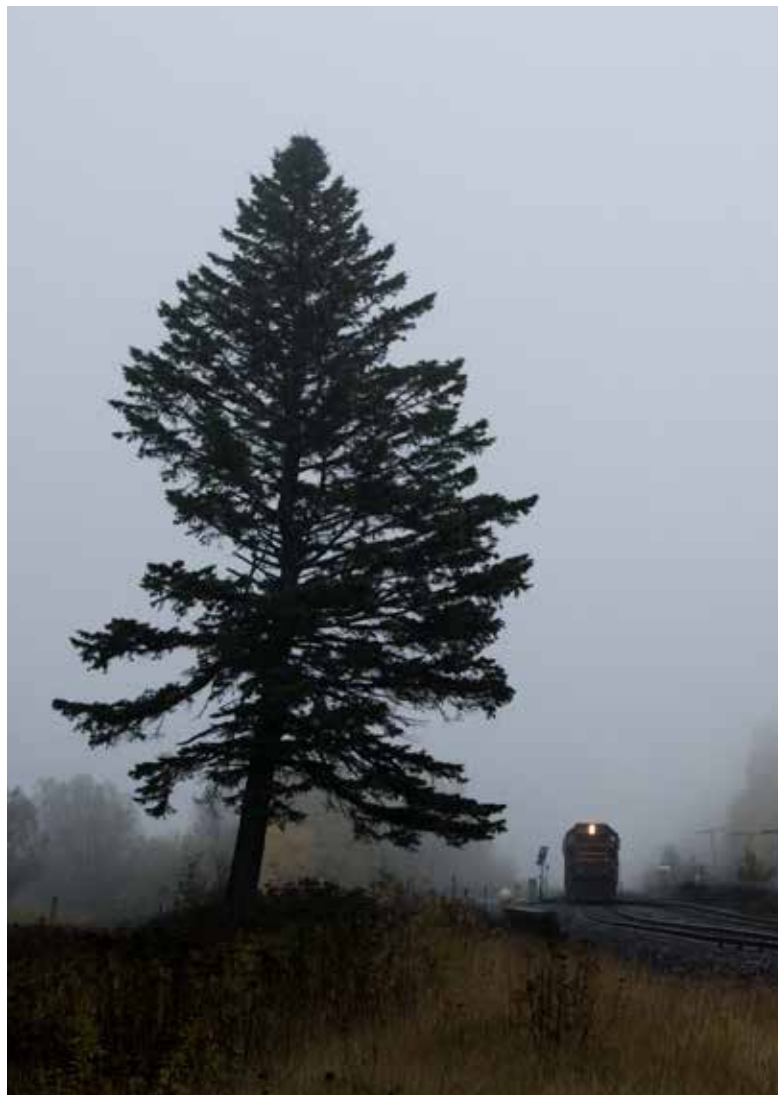
## Soon to be gone

Just like the leaves on the autumn trees, these former Pennsylvania Railroad position lights will soon fall. About a month after this 2019 nocturnal exposure in Portage, Pa., the signals were replaced by current owner Norfolk Southern. Kevin Sadowski









## Autumnal hues, blues

A pair of Conrail C40-8Ws, Nos. 6215 and 6055, lead double-stack train TV204Y down the Hudson River's west shore at Fort Montgomery, N.Y., in October 1993. The train is crossing the low trestle at the mouth of Popolopen Creek.

Howard Ande

## Fall on the DM&IR

A lone evergreen is silhouetted against the gray outside of the former Duluth, Missabe & Iron Range yard in Proctor, Minn., on Oct. 12, 2008. The dim headlight belongs to SD38-2 No. 211. Canadian National took over the DM&IR in 2004. Travis Dewitz





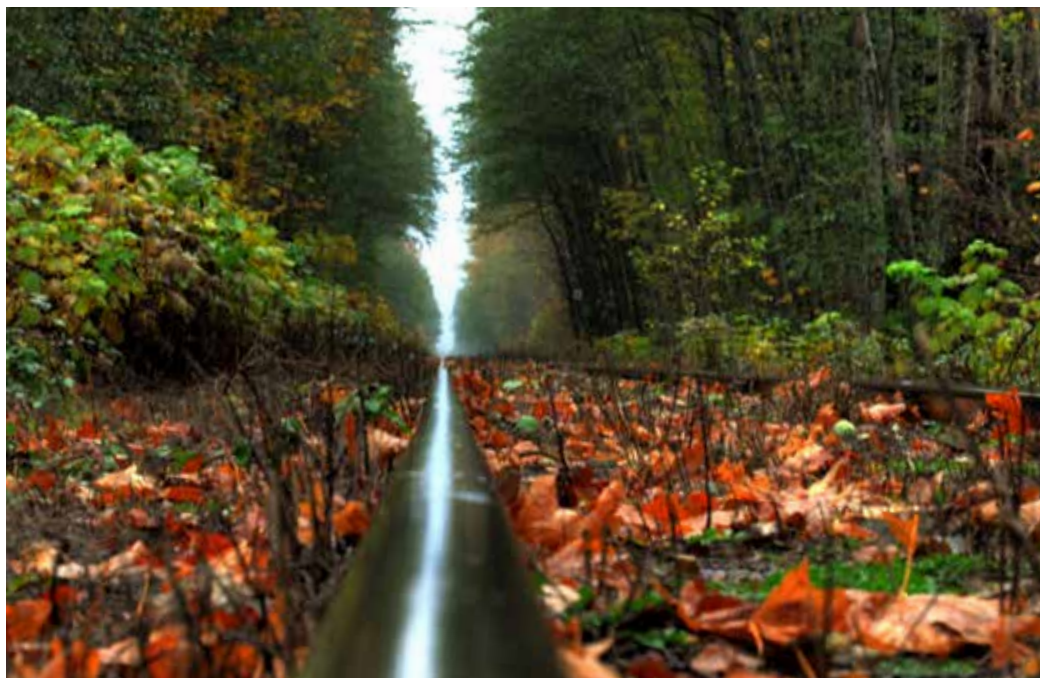
## Pick the perfect one

The Cambria (Wis.) job — No. L593 — pulls out the Horicon, Wis., yard on a sunny October 2013 afternoon. Wisconsin & Southern No. 3809, a GP38-2, leads the train past a field of perfect orange spheres — a sure sign of fall. James Guest

## Seasonal reflections

The old rail line parts the trees as it passes through the October forest scene. The greens, yellows, and reds of the fall season focus our view on the shiny rail, reflecting even the gray of an overcast sky.

Mark Teasdale







## Appalachian autumn

A pair of Norfolk Southern units still wearing Southern Railway paint work upgrade on the Dixiana Branch, near its namesake town, on a dreary fall day, Oct. 15, 1985. We are deep in western Virginia coal country. Ron Flanary



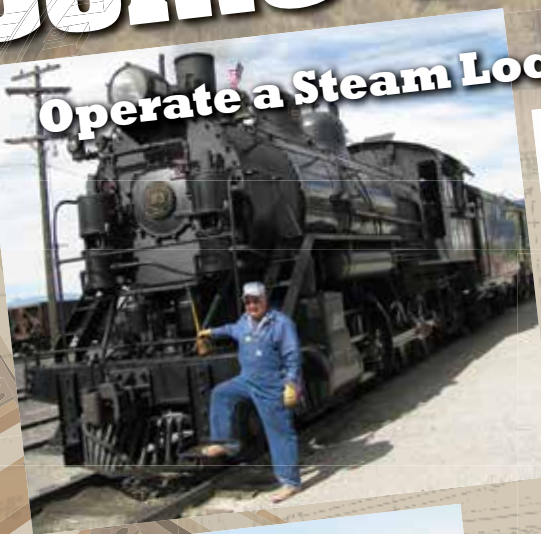
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