

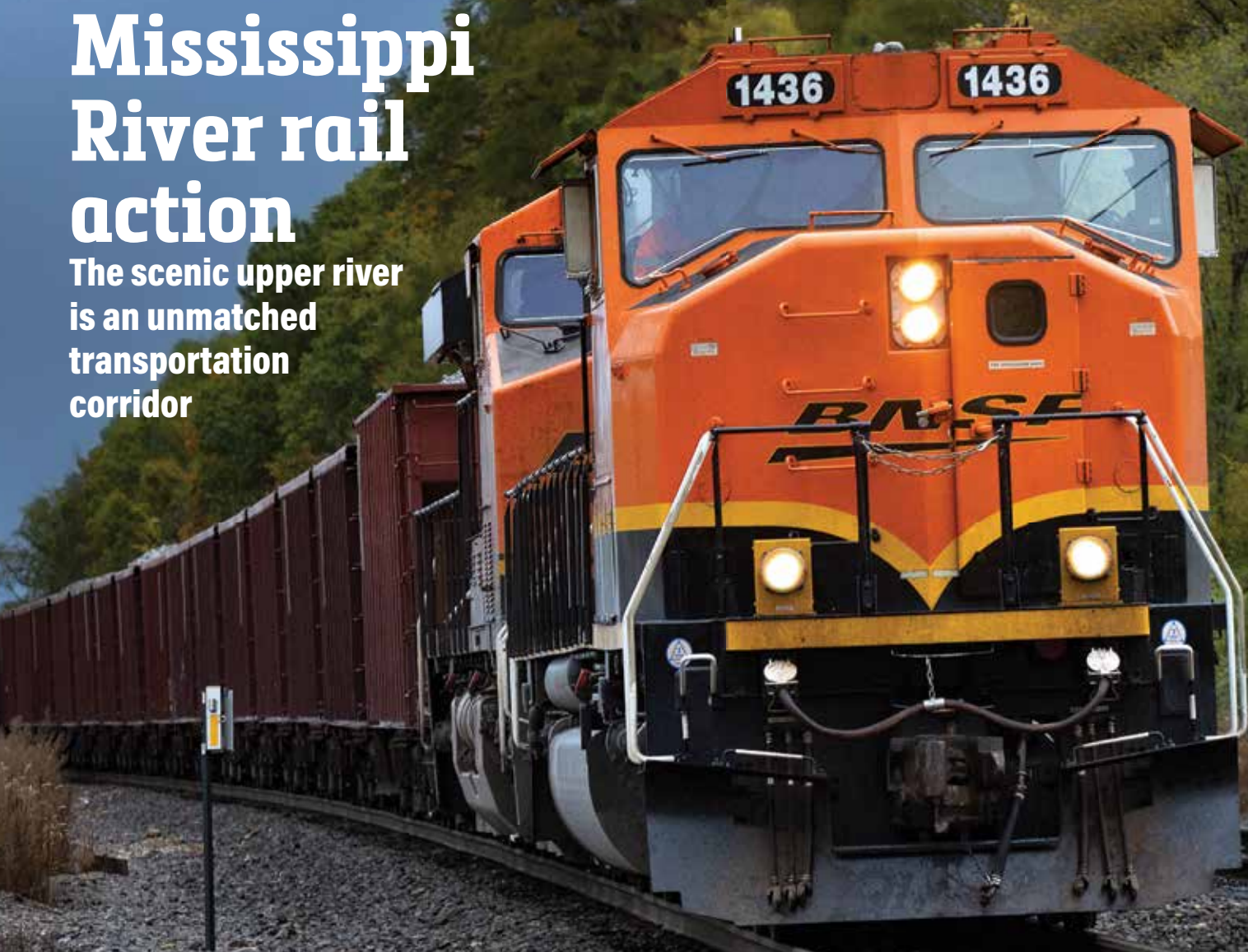
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From the Editor



Carl Swanson

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The slow pace of California's high-speed rail system frustrates many observers. While progress continues to be made on the initial 171-mile section between the Central Valley cities of Merced and Bakersfield (and environmental approval has been completed for the Los Angeles to San Francisco route), the project is years behind schedule and is costing far more than predicted.

Bill Buchanan interviewed Rod Diridon, Sr., former chair of the California High-Speed Rail Authority Board and currently co-chair of the U.S. High Speed Rail Coalition to discuss the massive program.

Turn to page 30 to read Diridon's case for high speed rail, which is, he says, the state's only choice for improving transportation.

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Getting the shot

Plus

Ride with the best!

IN EARLY October, Editor Carl Swanson hosted *Trains Magazine's* "New England Fall Colors by Rail," one of four tour packages offered in 2024. The week-long tour covered the premiere heritage rail operations in New Hampshire and Maine.

We take pride in offering exceptional rail-themed travel. As an example, here's just one day of our Fall Colors Tour. On Oct. 6th, we spent the day at the Conway Scenic RR. We rode two trains, first an hour-long ride through the Conway Valley and then a 5-hour round trip through the mountains to Crawford Notch. The morning ride included a private car for our group and the train paused to give us a private photo runby. The afternoon ride to Crawford Notch featured reserved dome car seating. On our return, we toured the historic roundhouse.

For information on our upcoming trips, visit our travel partner, specialinteresttours.com.



BNSF GE ES44C4 No. 3274 leads an eastbound crosstie train by the Santa Fe T-2 semaphores at east end of Colmor siding near Colmor, N.M., in September 2020. Kyle Yunker

'GETTING THE SHOT' is a new series on Trains.com highlighting the travels of railroad photographers that go above and beyond to capture great railroad images — safely, of course.

Have you ever hiked a great distance for one photo or driven hundreds of miles in search of the perfect shot? If you have a good story or experience about what it took to seize that awe-inspiring image, *Trains* readers want to hear about it.

Atlanta-based photographer Kyle Yunker recently shared his story about a 17-hour detour to catch freight on Raton Pass in New Mexico. Pennsylvania photographer Ian Hapsias takes readers to Southern California on the last freight-hauling narrow gauge railroad (United States Gypsum Corp.). What's your story? What did it take to get a great shot?

Each month, *Trains* Contributor Chase Gunnoe will take readers on a behind-the-scenes journey of what it took to get that image.

Through his in-depth interviewing and profiling, each individual's story will be explored. You can find this series on Trains.com under the Railroads & Locomotives tab. Just scroll down to Photography Tips.

If you have had a similar experience trackside and wish to share your story, please send it to chase.gunnoe@outlook.com.

Please be sure your story includes photographing trains from a safe distance and does not involve trespassing on railroad property. — *Nastassia Putz, Trains.com Production Editor*

The Fish Creek Mountains create a stark contrast over the Anza Borrego Desert as US Gypsum Bombardier DL535E No. 111 leads a loaded train headed to the dumper and plant at Plaster City, Calif., on April 16, 2024. Ian Hapsias



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Nicole McGuire
Chief Operations Officer
Date: October 1, 2024

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CSX, Norfolk Southern hit hard by Hurricane Helene

Line repairs on both railroads expected to extend into 2025

▲ The Spruce Pine Yard on CSX's former Clinchfield route in Spruce Pine, N.C., shows the effects of flooding from the adjacent North Toe River following Hurricane Helene. Hunter Levi

CSX TRANSPORTATION and Norfolk Southern both took major hits from September's Hurricane Helene, which devastated portions of Tennessee and North Carolina. Both railroads said the storm had the greatest impact on their networks since Hurricane Katrina, the 2005 event that devastated New Orleans and much of the Gulf Coast.

More than 20 inches of rain fell in western North Carolina and eastern Tennessee in a week, leaving widespread damage. Much of the city of Asheville, N.C., was without running water for more than two weeks; Interstate 40 between Tennessee and North Carolina remained closed more than a month later; I-26 traffic remained limited.

For CSX, flooding laid waste to more than 40 miles of the Blue Ridge Subdivision, the former Clinchfield Railroad. Between Erwin, Tenn., and Spruce Pine, N.C., tracks suffered widespread damage, including the complete loss of a 375-foot bridge crossing the Nolichucky River at Poplar, N.C. Only the

bridge piers remained after the flood waters receded.

On the railroad's earnings call in mid-October, Chief Financial Officer Sean Pelkey said the railroad was still evaluating the scale and timing of the capital expenditures that would be required to fully recover from the storm, but that rebuilding costs would exceed \$200 million, and the reconstruction efforts would extend into 2025. Pelkey estimated lost revenue from Helene and Hurricane Milton, which followed just days later, would be between \$60 million and \$65 million.

Hardest hit for Norfolk Southern was the AS Line from Morristown, Tenn., to Salisbury, N.C. Well after the storm, the railroad determined the segment between Asheville, N.C., and Newport, Tenn., would be closed until at least the end of January, but had still not been able to fully assess the rugged section between Asheville and Old Fort, N.C. Damage to the route included approximately 21,500 feet of track that was washed out,

more than 50,000 feet damaged by scour, and another 15,000 feet of fill failure and slides.

NS said its cleanup efforts included clearing more than 15,000 downed trees, deploying more than 400 generators to deal with more than 1,000 locations without commercial electrical power, and repairing more than 50 damaged slide fences. Five bridges were damaged. During recovery efforts, railroaders responding to repair efforts led two lifesaving civilian rescues, Chief Operating Officer John Orr said during the company's quarterly earnings call. "Our recovery demonstrates the grit and capability of our team," Orr said. New CEO Mark George said the railroad recovered far more quickly than it might have in the past, in part because of operating moves that have created more network fluidity.

"A year ago, some of the events we saw in the quarter would have set us back three months," George said. "But we were back within a week." — *David Lassen and Chase Gunnoe*

Regulators approve deal for Meridian & Bigbee

Acquisition will create new direct connection for CPKC and CSX in Alabama

CANADIAN PACIFIC KANSAS CITY and CSX in October won regulatory approval for their plans to acquire Genesee & Wyoming short line Meridian & Bigbee, to be used to create a shortcut interchange route linking the Southeast with Texas and Mexico via Myrtlewood, Ala.

The 168-mile Meridian & Bigbee is the missing link between CPKC at Meridian, Miss., and CSX at Burkville, Ala., just west of Montgomery. CPKC has acquired the 52-mile segment between Meridian and Myrtlewood that was owned by MNBR. CSX, meanwhile, takes over operations of the line it leased to MNBR east of Myrtlewood. MNBR will continue to provide local service to customers between Meridian and Myrtlewood.

“With this new east-west Class I route, we are creating competition, providing a service that will take more trucks off the road, and growing rail transportation by expanding markets across the southern U.S., from Dallas to Atlanta and beyond,” CPKC CEO Keith Creel said.

CPKC and CSX will interchange one 70-car train per day in each direction and estimate that they will interchange 24,280 carloads per year by 2029 — primarily consisting of intermodal, automotive, and forest products.

By next year four new auto plants will



“Once complete, the interchange will help drive long-term business growth allowing customers to have greater connectivity and efficiency to reach key markets in Texas, Mexico, and the U.S. Southeast — all while providing safe and reliable service,” CSX CEO Joe Hinrichs says.

The route will offer competition for existing CPKC-Norfolk Southern interline service over their Meridian Speedway joint venture. The interchange will siphon some traffic away from existing CPKC-CSX gateways at New Orleans, Memphis, and

night when the daily high temperature is above 95 degrees.

CPKC also will invest \$9 million in five years to improve 31 bridges on the line, most of which are more than 85 years old. CPKC intends to spend more than \$100 million on the route’s bridges as part of a multi-year bridge rehabilitation and replacement program. In the future, CPKC may make the investments necessary to raise track speeds to 40 mph and ultimately to 60 mph if warranted.

CSX is making similar track, wayside detector, and bridge investments so that trains can operate at 25 mph.

The CPKC-CSX deal brings to fruition a concept that former Kansas City Southern CEO Mike Haverty first proposed more than two decades ago. CSX and KCS held talks about purchasing the Meridian & Bigbee but nothing came of them at the time.

The STB’s decisions authorizing the deals were issued more than six months past the board’s statutory deadline — a fact that was not lost on Republican members Patrick Fuchs and Michelle Schulz, who wrote separate concurring notes.

“The Board cannot reasonably expect to hold stakeholders accountable to Board rules if we do not hold ourselves to the same standard. The Board must prioritize issuing its decisions in a timelier manner,” Schultz wrote. — *Bill Stephens*

“WE ARE CREATING COMPETITION, PROVIDING A SERVICE THAT WILL TAKE MORE TRUCKS OFF THE ROAD, AND GROWING RAIL TRANSPORTATION.”

— CPKC CEO KEITH CREEL

join those CSX already serves in the Southeast and Midsouth, which will create an opportunity for the railroads to participate in automotive supply chains linking parts and assembly plants in the U.S. and Mexico, where CPKC de Mexico serves 16 assembly plants. Intermodal customer Schneider National relies on CPKC for its cross-border Mexico traffic and partners with CSX in the East, so the expectation is auto parts would move in intermodal service over the MNBR gateway.

East St. Louis. It also offers the potential to divert finished vehicle shipments from Mexico to the Southeast that currently move by ship.

CPKC is investing \$46 million to bring the MNBR up to 25 mph standards from the current 10 mph, add wayside detectors, and to make track improvements that enable the line to be operated during the day when temperatures exceed 95 degrees. To avoid heat-related track issues, Meridian & Bigbee has operated only at

NEWS BRIEFS

Investigation says MBTA train was speeding, ran signal before derailling

A MASSACHUSETTS BAY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY Green Line train was going 36 mph in a 10-mph zone and ran through a stop signal immediately before derailling in an Oct. 1 incident in Cambridge, Mass., the **NATIONAL TRANSPORTATION SAFETY BOARD** said in a preliminary investigation report. The train reached a switch that was aligning for its intended route while the switch was still moving, sending the lead truck straight and the two trailing trucks onto the intended route before the two-car light rail trainset derailed. Seven people required hospitalization for minor injuries. The MBTA said the train's operator remains out of service while its own investigation continues.

PROSPER PORTLAND, the organization formerly known as the Portland (Ore.) Development Commission, has placed **PORTLAND UNION STATION** up for sale. The 1896 rail landmark, part of the National Register of Historic Places, is in need of at least \$250 million in track and facility work. **AMTRAK** had been in discussions about purchasing the property, a Prosper Portland representative said, but concerns about preservation costs ended those talks before they reached agreement on a price.

Canada's **FEDERAL COURT OF APPEALS** gave the go-ahead for development of a **CANADIAN NATIONAL** intermodal facility near Toronto, overturning a lower-court decision that said the federal government had failed to consider the adverse impacts of diesel exhaust from locomotives and trucks. The Milton, Ontario, Logistics Hub was approved by the Canadian government with 325 environmental conditions attached, but local governments appealed, saying the project put residents' health at risk.

A groundbreaking ceremony in Mobile, Ala., on Oct. 22 for an **AMTRAK** passenger platform and layover track marked the latest step in the long-running effort to launch passenger service between Mobile and New Orleans. The projects at the site of the former Mobile depot, destroyed by Hurricane Katrina, must be completed before the two daily round trips on the Gulf Coast route can begin.



Quebec City-bound VIA Rail Canada train No. 22 arrives at Dorval, Que., on Oct. 1, 2024. Canadian National has imposed speed restrictions on VIA's Venture trainsets. Bob Johnston

CN places limits on VIA's Venture corridor operations

Railroad imposes speed restriction at crossings

VIA RAIL CANADA is facing new limitations for the Siemens Venture equipment in Ontario-Quebec corridor service after Canadian National Railway imposed axle limits or speed restrictions for new trainsets, citing issues that can lead to problems in triggering grade-crossing warning devices.

CN notified VIA on Oct. 11 — the Friday of Canada's Thanksgiving holiday weekend — that Venture trainsets of fewer than 32 axles could not operate at track speed (160 kilometers per hour, or 99 mph) at crossings with Grade Crossing Predictors, which activate crossing gates based on train speed. Since VIA's Venture trainsets — a locomotive, cab-car coach, three regular coaches, and a business-class car — have 24 axles, they must slow to a speed allowing engineers to visually confirm gates are operating. An official for regulator Transport Canada told broadcaster CTV that means 72 kph, or about 45 mph. VIA is advising passengers to expect delays of 15 to 45 minutes, but chose not to update schedules.

A VIA spokesman tells *Trains*, "No incidents or issues at level crossings have been reported to VIA Rail since the Venture trains have been in operation." The trainsets were tested on all routes to the satisfaction of Transport Canada and host railroads before VIA's acceptance in 2021, and have operated in revenue service since Nov. 8, 2022, "with CN's collaboration and approval."

Canadian National spokeswoman Ashley Michnowski says, "We advised VIA very early on in the process (October 2021) that operating at a 24-axle count could create issues." This was confirmed, she says, in March 2024. "We immediately notified VIA and took necessary measures to protect the public by reverting to CN's 32-axle minimum requirement or imposing

restrictions on the designated routes that VIA was operating this fleet on."

VIA tells *Trains* slowdowns at crossings were indeed mandated then on portions of the Montreal-Quebec City corridor, but reiterated that CN failed to divulge any specific incident or incidents where the crossing activation issue occurred. CN said, "it was discovered on Oct. 11, 2024, that these Venture trainsets were operating in expanded service with crossings which may experience shunt loss and thus be unprotected, CN took immediate measures to issue the proper instructions to protect the safety of train operations and crossings."

Only CN has imposed speed restriction; the Venture trains continue to operate at maximum speeds on VIA-owned trackage and on hosts CPKC and Toronto-area transit agency Metrolinx. CN also has a restriction for Amtrak, requiring use of Superliner cars on the Chicago-Carbondale, Ill., route because of loss-of-shunt issues.

VIA says it continues to "engage in constructive dialogue with CN to find solutions," while CN says it is "committed to keep working with VIA and all our passenger service partners on this issue to protect safety and allow for the best possible operating conditions." — *Bob Johnston*

Fixes

In the November 2024 issue: On page 28, images of the Port Terminal Railroad Association's locomotives painted to commemorate the centennial of the railroad and the Port of Houston were incorrectly credited. They were taken by Ryan Nicolay.



NEW IN BLUE GP40PH-2B

No. 4208 of NJ Transit models its new paint scheme honoring Conrail, which operated commuter trains in the state from 1976 to 1983 and provided many of the transit agency's original lines, stations, rolling stock, and employees. NJ Transit's heritage fleet also includes GP40PH-2Bs painted for Erie and Central of New Jersey. Russell Sullivan



SUPER FLEET RESTORED

Railroading Heritage of Midwest America unveils its repainted B30-8W, repainted into its original Santa Fe "Super Fleet" Warbonnet paint scheme, at an Oct. 18 event in Silvis, Ill. BNSF donated the unit to the organization earlier this year.

Steve Smedley



A SWEET NEW LOOK GP38-2 No. 3801, shown at Belle Glade, Fla., displays the new paint scheme for U.S. Sugar's more than 300 miles of rail operations in Florida, replacing various yellow-and-gray designs in use since the 1960s. Scott A. Hartley

Railroads can use steam to polish their image



Bill Stephens

bybillstephens@gmail.com

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Analysis: Trains.com

Union Pacific Big Boy No. 4014 proves the enduring allure of steam and its ability to connect with the public

Seemingly every resident of West, Texas — population 2,531 — has turned out to witness a spectacle. Townspeople are lined up on both sides of Union Pacific's Fort Worth Subdivision, which runs smack through the middle of downtown. All eyes are looking to the south, hoping to catch the first glimpse of UP 4-8-8-4 No. 4014. The world's largest steam locomotive is due any minute now.

You can feel the anticipation in the crowd as the Big Boy's headlight pops into view at 1:43 p.m. on this sunny October afternoon. The 1941 Alco makes a grand entrance: Flags flying, bell clanging, whistle blowing, twin stacks talking. Many people raise their cameras and phones to capture the moment. Others plug their ears. And some simply watch, taking in the enormity of the locomotive and the spotless Armour yellow consist that comes to a stop right on schedule at 1:45 p.m.

Ed Dickens, the manager of UP's heritage operations, meets local officials for a brief trackside ceremony designating West as a Train Town USA. Meanwhile, the UP executive team and members of the media climb aboard the *Walter Dean* dome lounge. The smiling crowd outside — now steam admirers, one and all — waves as the Big Boy begins rolling the train toward Fort Worth. On the outskirts of town, the entire student body stands in a trackside field and gets a living history lesson as the 4014 storms past.

The West whistlestop is just one small slice of this year's Big

Boy tours, which have generated an incredible amount of goodwill for Union Pacific. "You can see the draw," CEO Jim Vena says while glancing out the window.

How much of a draw? The Big Boy's 10-state Heartland of America tour and five-state Westward Bound tour attracted more than 305,000 people to display days, plus an uncounted multitude at grade crossings and more than 50 whistlestops like the one at West. Display days also were set aside exclusively for UP employees and their families.

The locomotive has star power on small screens, too. Union Pacific reached more than 9.2 million people through Big Boy posts on social media. And that's not counting the 1.2 million who viewed an hour-long Big Boy episode of "Jay Leno's Garage" on YouTube. The 4014 also gained positive news coverage for the railroad in major media markets like Chicago and Houston. Membership in the railroad's Steam Club, meanwhile, has topped 100,000.

The railroad industry's image has taken a beating over the past few years due to the high-profile hazmat wreck in East Palestine, Ohio; labor upheaval; job cuts; and the service problems that followed the onset of the pandemic. These negative headlines have overshadowed the fact that railroads have a good story to tell, especially when you compare trains and trucks.

As Union Pacific shows, railroads have at their disposal the ultimate public relations tool: The steam locomotive.

Once you have the public's attention — and steam commands attention — it's an opportunity to tell the railroad story. The "Experience the Union Pacific" museum car does just that at Big Boy display events. The car's exhibits spotlight the iconic railroad's history and technology, including an interactive display that lets you try your hand at inspecting wheels — and then humbles you by showing how much faster and more accurately an automated system can spot defects. The exhibits also remind people of the vital work the railroad does, from keeping the lights on and hauling crops to carrying your car from the assembly plant and delivering consumer goods to warehouses.

All this makes you wonder why Union Pacific and Canadian Pacific Kansas City are the only Class I railroads with steam programs. There's no question that it's a massive effort to launch a steam train tour. Or that steam locomotives burn cash. Yet the cost to run UP's heritage program amounts to a rounding error in a company with more than \$22.6 billion in annual revenue.

It's hard to put a price on a railroad's reputation and image, but it's easy to see the benefits of a steam program. Steam has a unique ability to connect railroads with lineside communities, current and retired employees and their families, and a public that has largely lost touch with railroads. "This is the biggest star. It really is," Vena says. **I**



Where Union Pacific's 4-8-8-4 Big Boy goes, crowds are sure to follow. Given steam's ability to connect with the public, why do only two Class I railroads operate steam programs? Jim Allen/Firecrown Media

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Trains and Christmas

Railroads no longer occupy everyday life, but trains still grace the holidays

▲ A seasonal tradition since 1999, the CPKC Holiday Train tours Canada and the U.S., raising money and supporting local food banks along its network. The brightly decorated train is seen at Plattsburg, N.Y., during its 2008 tour. Gary Knapp

THE HOLIDAYS ARE UPON US, and with them enough images of quaint railroad scenes and cartoon versions of locomotives to suggest some longstanding connection. Why? We don't seem to have the same festive feelings for airports or trucks.

The short answer is that trains at Christmas is a cultural artifact, and part of the general shift from religious observance to commercial excess and party time. The so-called holidays we celebrate today were carefully crafted by retail and industrial interests over about 100 years. They now fill in for more traditional observances, such as the end of harvest time, winter solstice, and a rather arbitrary turn of the calendar year. Where there is a buck to be made, someone will find a way to do it.

Even now, long after railroading arguably was at the center of everyday life and travel, trains still grace holiday cards. Children (and adults) who couldn't care less about the romance of steam power or the glamour of streamlined train travel still drag out train sets and visit model railroad open houses, seasonal Christmas gardens, and ride around in circles at malls. A good many railroad heritage organizations earn a sizable chunk of their annual revenue by running special holiday trains and hosting themed events.

In fact, you could argue that the way we fondly associate trains with the winter holidays is downright peculiar. Traditional railroading could be as trying as any mode of travel we endure today. Stations and pas-

senger cars might reek of tobacco smoke, mildew, and the essence of wet dogs. Operations could be erratic. Poor service and delays often rivaled our worst-run airlines. I recall station restrooms that were less inviting than the darkness behind the dumpster out back. For women, children, and the elderly, it could be even worse.

Still, there are reasons why trains continue to occupy a happy place in our collective consciousness. Partly it is a kind of cultural inertia. Creators like Currier & Ives started producing nostalgic, whimsical railroad-themed lithographs and holiday images a century-and-a-half ago, when train travel was arduous but also wondrous and liberating. For many generations, a substantial proportion of the American



In 1803, the United States purchased the vast Louisiana Territory from France and laid claim to the Pacific Northwest. The following year Captain Meriwether Lewis and Lieutenant William Clark set out on their epic Corps of Discovery Expedition from the Mississippi Valley to the Pacific Coast.

At that time, the lives of most rural Americans were like those described by the English political philosopher Thomas Hobbes in 1651: “solitary, nasty, poor, brutish, and short.” Many endured an existence inferior to that of Roman citizens in the year Zero.

It took Lewis and Clark, and their 40-plus men, 17 months to make the trip by keelboat, canoes, and on foot, including a few months in winter camp. These were tough, experienced, and trained explorers with the best available technology, following the most practical route. In 1904 — a mere century later — anyone could travel roughly the same route comfortable by train in about 3 days.

By then, the U.S. was a fully fledged continental nation and world power. Railroads knitted the entire country together and offered mobility unprecedented in human history.

The Wright Brothers had demonstrated powered flight. Henry Ford had begun assembling automobiles. United States Steel, Standard Oil, and Wall Street defined American business prowess.

Not everyone had them yet, but the telephone, indoor plumbing, central heating, refrigeration, electric lights, and mass transit were spreading rapidly throughout the country. We enjoyed crude motion pictures, sound recordings, photography, and a vast landscape of books, newspapers, and publications. Radio was not far in the future.

People had fresh foods in winter and inexpensive, machine-made clothing. Primary education was almost universal. Scientists understood germ theory, were experimenting with X-rays, had perfected anesthesia, and were on the way to more humane and effective

health care. Childhood and maternal mortality were declining and the average life expectancy was rising.

Life in 1803 would be almost unimaginably primitive and intolerable to folks today. Life in 1903 would be different, and certainly less comfortable (air conditioning was not yet common). But it would be familiar in its outlines and almost everyone from today could get by.

At no other time and at no other place in human history have so many people, of so many different backgrounds, settled so vast a continent in so short a time.

“MORE IMPORTANTLY, FOR A LONG TIME TRAINS REPRESENTED FREEDOM — THE FREEDOM TO TRAVEL, THE FREEDOM TO CREATE A NEW LIFE ALMOST ANYWHERE ON THE CONTINENT”

There were bumps in the road, but there has been no other period during which the basic quality of life for an entire population improved so greatly.

This all didn’t happen to everyone at the same time. The U. S. was (and remains) an astonishingly bold political and social experiment.

In the 19th century, we dealt with slavery, the rights of women and minorities, expanding the vote and educational opportunity, and evolving an astonishingly complex economy. There was injustice and inequity. Misguided policies and regrettable impulses had to be contained and dealt with, tasks we still face today.

Yet the U.S. survived and prospered. Within a few decades of its revolutionary beginnings, it attained continental reach. By the time of its Centennial in 1876, a recognizably modern America had coalesced. That

also was the period in which the most miles of railroad were built and the point at which rails connected every region of the country.

Is that a coincidence? I don’t think so.

Maritime mobility made it possible for Europeans to find, and then settle, the so-called “New World.” Inland waterways (rivers, canals, the Great Lakes) offered the possibility of creating a country extending beyond the Appalachian Mountains.

But it was railroad mobility — the kind of fast, efficient, all-weather transportation that could link almost any place with any other — that made it possible first to imagine, and then create, a true continental nation. Without the railroad, North America would have developed more like South America — a collection of disparate cultures and countries. Recall that we had one actual Civil War, and came close a couple more times.

In the 21st Century, whatever awareness Americans once had of the ways railroad mobility shaped their lives has mostly faded. Like so many once-vivid realities, the importance of trains has settled deep into our collective subconscious. I liken that to our continuing fascination with British royalty. Not that long ago, we fought two nasty wars to free ourselves from that very same monarchy.

Our modern ways of life are railroad artifacts. As the industry opens its third century moving people and goods around all corners of the continent, imagine making that long holiday journey home by canoe and on foot. That is what I think of when I see images of trains at Christmas. No matter how cheesy or schmaltzy, they still make me smile.

For a delightful account of how railroad mobility almost literally rewired the American mind and shaped its subsequent development, see Craig Miner’s *A Most Magnificent Machine: America Adopts the Railroad, 1825-1862* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2010). — John Hankey

population did indeed travel by train at Christmas — or wished they could.

More importantly, for a long time trains represented freedom — the freedom to travel, the freedom to create a new life almost anywhere on the continent, the freedom to reinvent themselves. Few of the comforts we enjoy today would have been possible without the kinds of mobility railroads provided over the last two centuries — including the ways we celebrate (and embellish) the holiday season.

In the four decades following the Civil War, bewildering waves of change swept across the continent and quite literally remade American culture and society. Abstract concepts like industrialization, urbanization, immigration, and social evolution only begin to capture the dizzying pace of innovation and opportunity.

The Astrodome's forg



In the early 1970s, a Texas politician and developer acquired a fleet of 86 passenger cars with the goal of turning

The Pullman car hotel that never was

otten passenger fleet



some of them into a stationary hotel complex. Nothing came of the plan, and most of the cars were scrapped.

Story and photos by Steve Patterson



About the time our congressmen were wrangling the details of a national rail passenger service they called “Railpax” (and rebranded Amtrak just before its birth in 1971), a Texas politician had his own idea about what could be done with a glut of sleeping cars.

Roy Hofheinz was born in the spring of 1912. He was an only child, and became his family’s breadwinner after his father was killed in a truck wreck in 1928. Roy became a lawyer at age 19 and one of the state’s youngest legislators when he was 22. He was subsequently elected the youngest county judge in Harris County in 1936 and was popularly known as

“Judge Hofheinz” for most of his life, including the three years he served as Houston’s mayor.

Aside from his law practice, Hofheinz built a network of radio and television stations in the Texas coastal area and developed an administration to care for delinquent and homeless youth instead of treating them as prisoners. It was duplicated around the country.

In 1967, Hofheinz and two entrepreneurial brothers of Russian descent, Israel and Irvin Feld, purchased controlling interest in the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus. The judge became Ringling’s chairman of the board. In 1969, he divided the operation into two touring circus trains, the Red and the Blue.

THE 8TH WONDER OF THE WORLD

Without a doubt, Roy Hofheinz’s crowning achievement is the Houston Astrodome, nicknamed “the 8th wonder of the world,” which he built to house his baseball team, the Astros. He conceived the idea for a round and domed stadium, the first in the U.S., while he and his wife were walking the Coliseum in Rome in 1962.

Construction of the Astrodome started in August 1965 after Harris County issued \$31 million in two separate bond votes. Roy’s Houston Sports Association leased the dome stadium from the county for \$750,000 per annum.

The completed stadium included the “Judge’s Quarters,” a 24-room suite on the sixth floor

of the Astrodome, as well as the six-bedroom “Celestial Suite” on the ninth floor of the nearby Astroworld Hotel. Things were good. The judge, then in his upper 50s, was living the life amid luxurious surroundings.

On May 14, 1970, Hofheinz suffered a debilitating stroke, which left him confined to a wheelchair. He eventually consolidated all his properties around the Astrodome into the Astrodomain Corp., which consisted of four subordinate entities: Astroworld USA Inc., Astroworld Hotel Corp., Astrodome/Astrohall Stadium Corp., and the Houston Sports Association. He and the Feld brothers also sold the Ringling Bros. circus operation to Mattel in 1971.

Fourteen of Roy Hofheinz's passenger cars, stored at Temple, Texas, were subsequently resold to Amtrak, then in its second year of operation.



THE MYSTERIOUS RAILCARS

In the early 1970s, when Amtrak was just 5 months old, I was working for the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe Railway, and assigned to its Southern Division. I soon noticed an interesting fleet of retired passenger cars from the Pennsylvania, New York Central, Rock Island, and Southern Pacific stored on our railroad near Texas City as well as downtown Houston.

The dozens of cars, all built between 1938 to 1959, were stored in what was very nearly a swamp. In addition to being exposed to unrelenting heat and humidity, the cars had been horribly vandalized in the three years they had been there, with broken doors and shattered windows.

Roster of Hofheinz cars

4	Former New York Central sleepers built 1959 converted to Baggage-RPO by Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific. These were age 11 when acquired by Hofheinz and were quickly resold to Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.
6	Southern Pacific three-unit articulated diner-kitchen-dorm cars. Three were built in 1941 and three in 1949. A trio of these cars still operate on the Grapevine Vintage Railroad in Grapevine, Texas.
1	NYC diner No. 444, built in 1941.
3	CRI&P 8-6-4 sleepers built in 1948.
12	CRI&P 6-8 sleepers built in 1954. All sold to Amtrak in 1972; seven of were subsequently sold to Mexico in 1981-82.
3	NYC 12-bedroom Pullman-Standard sleepers, built in 1949, resold to Ringling Bros.
2	Pennsylvania Railroad 10-roomette, 6-bedroom P-S sleepers, built in 1949-50.
2	NYC 10-6 sleepers P-S built in 1949-50, rebuilt with blunt ends in 1953.
17	PRR 12 duplex, 4 bedroom, P-S built in 1949.
10	Pullman Co. 12 duplex/5 bedroom built in 1939-40, sold to PRR in 1945.
10	4-4-2 bedroom/drawing room, built in for SP service in 1941.
2	10-5 bedroom, built in for SP service in 1941.
3	13 bedroom, built in for SP service in 1941.
4	NYC Parlor/observation cars; three were resold to Amtrak in 1972.
5	PRR 2 drawing-1 bedroom lounge/observation, built in 1949
2	SP 10-6 sleeper/observation.
Total: 86 cars (3-unit diners count as one each). Fourteen of the above cars are known to exist today	
Notes: The three SP articulated diners on the Grapevine Vintage RR are the oldest Hofheinz survivors at age 83. The next runner-up in age is Norfolk Southern's/Wick Moorman's ex-NYC <i>Sandy Creek</i> obs at 76.	



I learned they were owned by Judge Roy Hofheinz, who planned to refurbish those cars with working air-conditioning systems, staff them with porter attendants, and place some of them around or near Houston's Astrodome for convenient and not-too-expensive lodging, similar to what Louisville and its railroads did during the Kentucky Derby and what Chattanooga has with its Chattanooga Choo Choo Hotel.

Perhaps the cars were never contemplated for long-term use since the games were seasonal, but could the Astrodome host other activities?

Nothing in the news archives and public records I've searched explains how Judge Hofheinz amassed dozens and

dozens of retired cars or how he planned to position them around his Astrodome. How did this huge fleet of passenger cars escape the media's notice?

The 86-car fleet was acquired in 1968, a process that must have consumed much of Judge Roy's attention. Eight were apparently never intended for the Astrodome, as they were quickly resold to Ringling Bros.

Hofheinz's remaining railcars included an opulent Central of Georgia business car in pristine condition, which he stored at Houston's Grand Central Station.

Hofheinz took possession of only one dining car, but he owned six former Southern Pacific three-unit articulated diner/kitchen/dorm cars. He

also acquired 11 parlor-observation cars.

If lodging was on his mind, why did he buy the half-dozen three-unit dining cars? He must have had his reasons — the judge absorbed considerable passenger train knowledge from his experience running the circus trains.

DECLINE AND FALL

The passenger car plans may have been pushed into the background by the Astrodome's very public problems.

The illumination of the domed stadium was poorly executed, and players complained of being unable to see fly balls against the blinding glare of the floodlights and skylights. The team itself struggled and it

didn't take long for attendance to drop into a spiral decline. Creditors seized control of all the Astrodome holdings and Hofheinz sold the Astros baseball team in 1979.

Built to withstand hurricane-force winds, the Astrodome still stands, a behemoth Houston landmark and one with no consensus regarding its future. That provoked the *Houston Chronicle* to publish, in April 2015, an article calling the Astrodome, at age 50, an "albatross eyesore."

Roy Hofheinz brought major league baseball to Houston. And by pumping cool air into that 642-foot-diameter dome ceiling during games, he also brought Houston to baseball, said the *Chronicle*.

Built by Budd in 1949, former New York Central *Wingate Brook*, a five-double-bedroom/buffet/observation lounge car, survives to the present day.



THE FLEET MEETS ITS FATE

The judge died of an apparent heart attack at age 70 on Nov. 22, 1982. His 57-inch waist and habit of chomping 25 cigars a day (he didn't smoke them) had possibly taken a toll.

Although his exact reasons for acquiring 86 passenger cars may never be known, Roy Hofheinz was just about right in his timing his car acquisitions. All of this occurred at a pivotal time in American passenger train history — the advent of Amtrak, steam car heat giving way to electrical power supplied by the locomotives, and the changeover to septic retention systems.

Before Amtrak reached its second birthday, the Hofheinz collection had been separated

between stainless steel cars and the smooth-sided, painted steel ones. Amtrak evaluated the stainless cars for its needs, while most of the painted cars would eventually be scrapped.

And it seems he was calling the shots. The fact Amtrak took a look at Roy's collected stainless steel cars leans towards the judge having first dibs on the accumulated cars. Amtrak ultimately obtained 14 cars from Hofheinz in its second year of operation, drawing the curtain on the Judge's grand plan. **I**

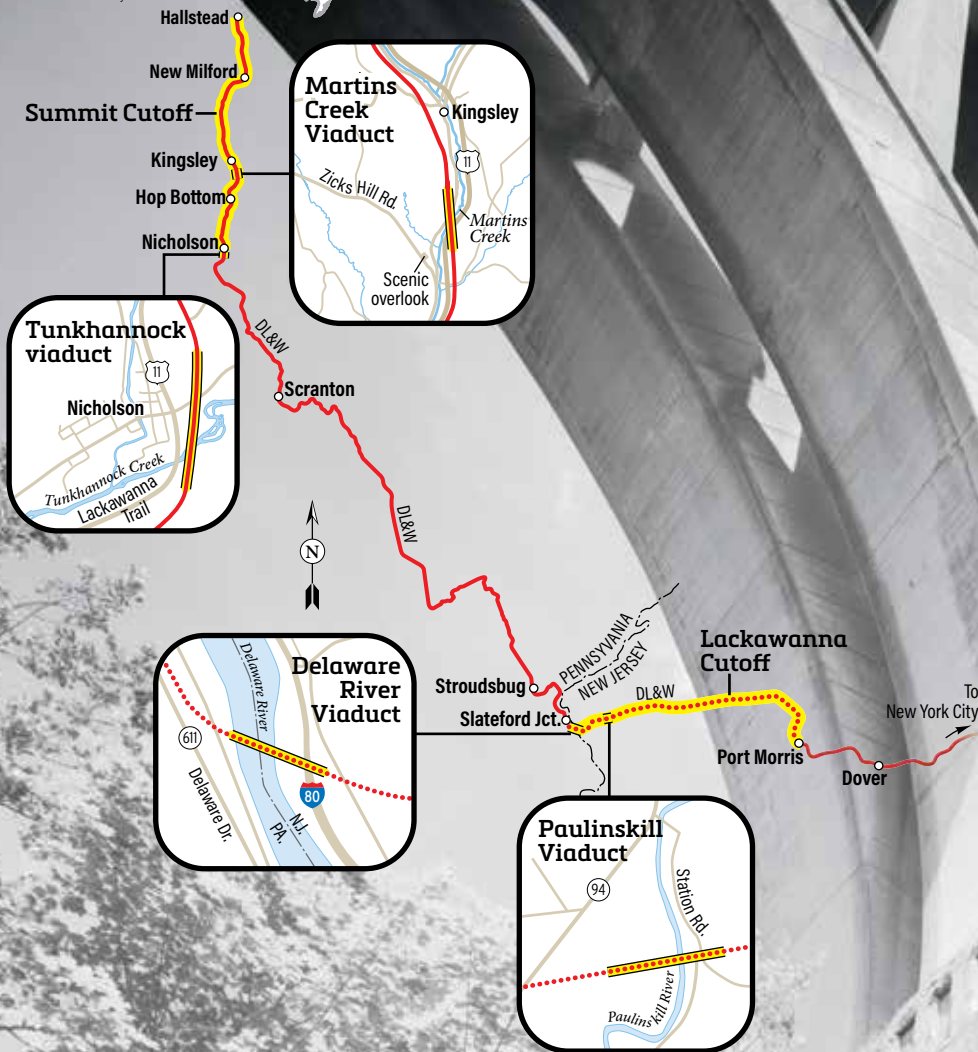
Author Steve Patterson is highly appreciative and would like to thank the following individuals — Wil Hata, Phil Gosney and Tom Kline — for their contributions to this article.



Seven former Pennsylvania Railroad duplex sleepers were stored on the Santa Fe Railway near Texas City, Texas, in the early 1970s.



Aesthetically, the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western viaducts — Tunkhannock shown here — were near pure white, connoting an air of perfection, while the concrete's malleable nature also made architectural ornamentation affordable. Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress.





Concrete giants

Remarkable in design, construction,
four viaducts stand as engineering monuments

by Joseph Brennan

“We were coming around a curve near Nicholson, Pennsylvania,” novelist Theodore Dreiser

writes in his 1916 New York City to Indiana road trip, *A Hoosier Holiday*, “approaching a stream which traversed this great valley, when across it from ridge’s edge to ridge’s edge suddenly appeared a great white stone or concrete viaduct . . . a thing so colossal and impressive . . . These arches! How really beautiful they were, how wide, how high, how noble, how symmetrically planned! And the smaller arches above, for all the actually huge size, how delicate and lightsomely graceful! How could they carry a heavy train so high in the air? But there they were, nearly 240 feet above us from the stream’s surface, as we discovered afterwards, and the whole structure nearly 2,400 feet long.”

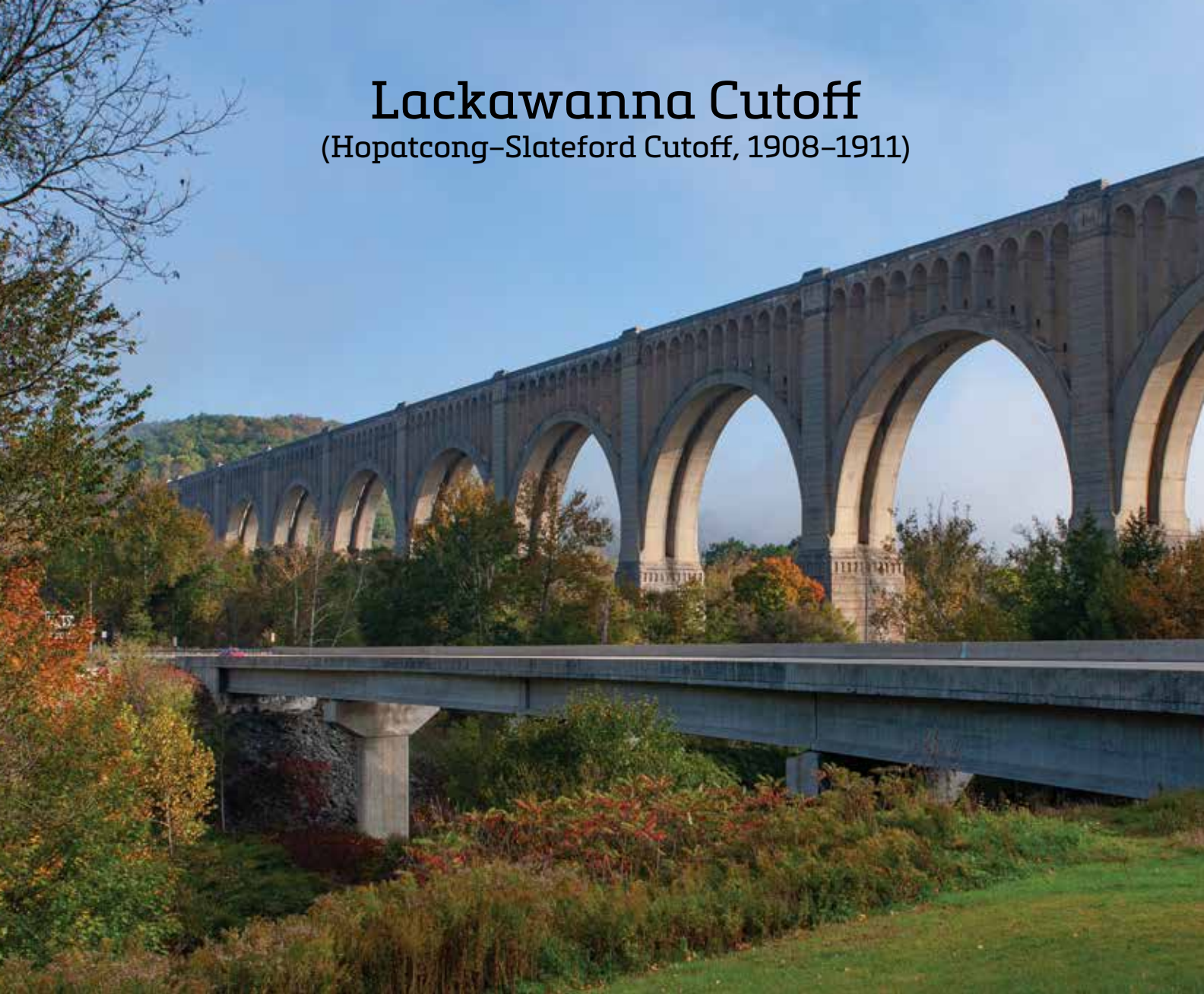
Many readers will recognize this description as tied with the great white grandeur of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad’s Tunkhannock Viaduct, built between 1912 and 1915. What a thrill it must have been for Dreiser to gaze upon it when “builders were still at work on it.” In Dreiser’s words: “It is rather odd to stand in the presence of so great a thing in the making and realize that you are looking at one of the true wonders of the world.”

Unquestionably the most famous of the great concrete viaducts designed by Abraham Burton Cohen for the DL&W, Tunkhannock was also the last. Certainly, it cemented its designer’s place in history as an innovative builder of railway bridges, but its success is one better understood in situ with its sisters and as part of a team of visionaries who created four great structures. In particular, Martins Creek Viaduct rises in the mind, also on the Summit Cutoff, but early triumphs, too; namely the Delaware River and Paulinskill viaducts on the earlier Lackawanna Cutoff.

Here we embark on a trip of our own — on iron roads — building up to a marvelling of Tunkhannock through consideration of three notable concrete giants that came before it. We will learn of these remarkable structures, inclusive of their construction, their productive use of concrete, and even some myths that have swirled around them across the last century. It is a timely tour, for in our current historical moment we are seeing that the great utility, not just awe, of the structures is making itself known more than ever in recent memory, including two who many had discounted as long since abandoned.

Lackawanna Cutoff

(Hopatcong–Slateford Cutoff, 1908–1911)



The largest of the four DL&W viaducts, Tunkhannock rises above the valley floor 240 feet. At 2,375 feet long, it was the world's largest concrete bridge when completed in 1915. Scott A. Hartley

"We learned that it was the work

of a great railroad corporation," Dreiser writes on Tunkhannock, "a part of a scheme for straightening and shortening its line about 3 miles!" The DL&W made pioneering use of reinforced concrete design, while an ample budget enabled it to please an aesthetic criterion too. Though the railroad had the money, there was much practical sense in using concrete, and it is this aspect that would prove most influential to the engineering world.

The architectural ornamentation in which Dreiser and scores of others have since delighted could be embellished into the concrete simply by building detail into the forms —

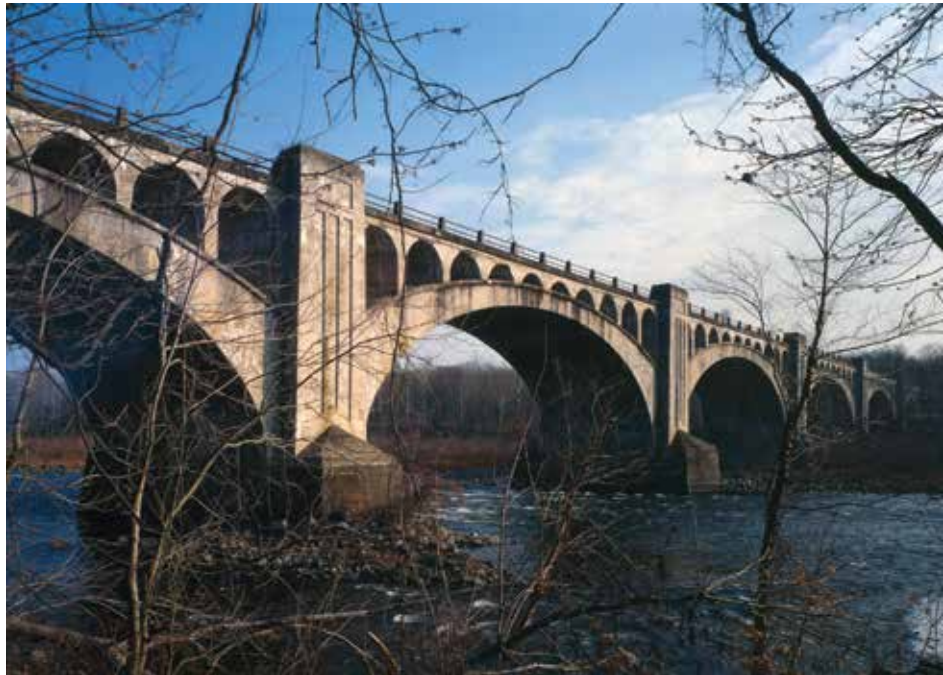
subtle variations in the pier and arch ornamentation across our tour make the viaducts a treat to visit. The economical, low-maintenance nature of concrete meant the structures could be erected without transporting large components to rural sites, resulting "[in] one of the most technologically perfect railroads in the nation," according to historian Richard Saunders.

It was under the administration of William H. Truesdale, DL&W president, that, in the words of historian Thomas T. Taber III, an "almost complete reconstruction" of the route between Hoboken, N.J., and Binghamton, N.Y., was achieved. To make the reconstruction a reality, in 1903 Truesdale hired Lincoln Bush away from the Chicago & North



Delaware River Viaduct

(1908–1911)



Of the four large DL&W concrete viaducts, Delaware River is the only one with a curving, skew alignment. Opened in December 1911, it remained in service through various mergers, until transferred to Conrail in 1976, which subsequently abandoned the line and removed its tracks. Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress

Bush laid out the near straight-line route

between Lake Hopatcong, N.J., and Slateford, Pa., on the west bank of the Delaware River. In 1907, Bush was succeeded as chief engineer by George J. Ray, who supervised construction of this route. On the Delaware River's west bank, engineers were confronted with a steep hill. In tackling this, they continued a curve onto the viaduct. Not only was the entire structure built on a skew alignment, but four of its nine spans were curved. Of the four large concrete viaducts we visit, this is the only one with a curving, skew alignment. Further, at 1,452 feet, it broke a record for

length — a record destined to be shattered.

Bush specified that reinforced concrete be used for the bridging structures throughout this cutoff and Ray continued this policy. The versatility of reinforced concrete, as a material able to take nearly any form into which it is poured, proved a sound solution to the complex geometry of the Delaware River Viaduct. The DL&W's first concrete bridge appeared at Bridgeton, N.J., in 1903. That the railroad carried freight for the cement manufacturing industry — of which the Delaware River valley was renowned — was an incentive to take an interest in adopting the material.

As Taber writes, DL&W's pioneering work with the material

earned it the nickname, the Reinforced Concrete Railroad. The material certainly proved up to the task. The broad, deep river valleys traversed with line straightening proved the ideal platform to demonstrate the mettle of reinforced concrete on a spectacular scale. Aesthetically, the structures were near pure white, connoting an air of perfection, while concrete's malleable nature made architectural ornamentation affordable.

At Delaware River, the piers accommodate safety niches and feature vertical panels, with projecting moulds on each arch, adding to its beauty. It was Benjamin H. Davies, Ray's assistant chief engineer, and Abraham Burton Cohen, engineer of concrete design, who completed the

Western Railway to serve as the DL&W's chief engineer.

The concrete giants on our itinerary came first in New Jersey on the Hopatcong–Slateford (also known as Lackawanna or New Jersey) Cutoff. With the primary purpose of transporting anthracite coal, the first cutoff ran between Slateford, Pa., and Port Morris, N.J., saving around 11 miles, reducing grades, eliminating curves, and cutting travel time by 30 minutes.

It was an expensive undertaking, with its key features being the two reinforced concrete viaducts crossing the Delaware River and Paulinskill, which combined consumed 225,000 cubic yards of concrete. Delaware came first and would set the tone for the structures to follow. In all, 65 bridging structures were built on the cutoff.



The Delaware River Viaduct piers feature vertical panels cast into the concrete, adding to its beauty. Subtle variations in the pier and arch ornamentation across each viaduct make for an interesting exploration of these engineering marvels.

Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress

detailed viaduct design. Cohen is the name everyone remembers in the viaducts game, becoming most associated with DL&W's concrete giants for his later design of Tunkhannock.

Construction commenced in August 1908, with preparations having been underway months prior; contractor Smith & McCormick of Easton, Pa., having set up concrete mixing plants on either bank with a cableway spanning the river. The concrete piers had temporary corbels for arch support. Pittsburgh's McClintic, Marshall & Co. designed, fabricated and erected the steel centering. Arch construction took two years — 1909 to 1910. As a result, the fifth pier from the west end received more reinforcement and a larger footing, ensuring it could resist the thrust of spans completed to the east when work stopped for the winter.

The Delaware River Viaduct opened to traffic in December 1911, shortly after completion, and remained in service through mergers and acquisitions, until transfer to Conrail in 1976. Conrail abandoned the line, removing the viaduct rails. Motorists pass under it on Interstate 80, though commuters may find themselves topside again in the foreseeable future.

Safety niches were cast into the piers of the Delaware River Viaduct. They provided a safe haven for anyone caught on the bridge by a passing train. Historic American Engineering Record, Library of Congress



Paulinskill Viaduct

(Hainesburg; 1908–1910)



With seven spans total, Paulinskill Viaduct at Hainesburg, N.J., is not as long as Delaware River, but many would consider it more visually impressive due to its height — 117 feet compared with 64 feet for the Delaware River. Much myth swirls around Paulinskill Viaduct, with tales of murder and worker entombment. Robert Engelbart

Though not as long as the Delaware River structure,

at 1,100 feet, the Paulinskill Viaduct was taller — 117 feet compared with 64 feet for the Delaware River. Paulinskill is comprised of seven spans — five at 120 feet and two at 100 feet. Its construction history is closely connected with that at Delaware River.

Known for its internal chambers, this viaduct at Hainesburg, N.J., is a favorite among urban explorers and for graffiti activities, otherwise known as heritage crime. Delaware River has also suffered at the hands of trespass, vandalism, and general antisocial behavior; but at Paulinskill, the spectre of superstition is far greater.

Considerable myth swirls around the structure, which could be in part connected with “Kill” in its name. “Kill,” believed to be of Dutch origin, refers to the body of water it spans, though local folklore is fond of tying the origins of Paulinskill with the death of persons with similar names, with tales — such as those connected with the American Revolution — that are sometimes easily refuted by reference to the name in surveys and maps that predate the stories. The viaduct has attracted similar fancy in stories of human horror and tragedy.

In her 2006 book *Railroads of New Jersey*, Lorette Treese draws out some of the yarns that have been spun. “I knew the viaduct was said to be haunted. There are stories of murders and suicides

at this isolated spot, not to mention all the workers who are said to have perished during its construction, including one who supposedly sank into wet concrete and whose remains still constitute part of a pillar. Rumor has it that his ghost can be seen at night haunting this spot. This reputation attracts some ... strange characters who come to practice satanic rituals or other nonsense ...”

Is the entombed-worker tale possible? It could be. A 1914 Scranton newspaper writes of the DL&W Summit Cutoff, the next on our itinerary: “Deaths among the workmen of the Lackawanna Cutoff at Nicholson are frequent.” Though I couldn’t find any record of this particularly gruesome fatality and suspect that the story — like the legend of a horse and cart entombed in the Glenfinnan viaduct on Scotland’s West Highland line (immortalized in the Harry Potter film series) — is more a local legend.

Interestingly, a plaque unveiled in 2008 by the Institution of Civil Engineers and Network Rail at Loch-nan-Uamh Viaduct on the West Highland line claims that the horse and cart belonging to builder Robert “Concrete Bob” McAlpine were finally found in 2001 using radar imaging, not at Glenfinnan but at Loch-nan-Uamh. Though this “finding” makes a good story, it is regarded with suspicion by the archaeological community.

If you dare, Paulinskill Viaduct can be admired as part of the Paulinskill Valley Trail, a 27-mile rail trail in Sussex and Warren counties.

Summit Cutoff

(Nicholson, Clark's Summit–Hallstead Cutoff; 1912–1915)



Paulinskill Viaduct is known today for its internal chambers that have made it a major attraction for urban explorers and those who write graffiti, otherwise known as perpetrators of heritage crimes.

Robert Engelbart

"One of the most striking instances of the endeavor

to straighten out a railway built in a hurry was the DL&W," Frederick A. Talbot writes in his 1913 *Railway Wonders of the World*. "As in the case of other systems . . . , this railway had a modest beginning, but as time progressed it threw out additional tentacles; absorbed short lines that stood in its way; and these threads were welded into a homogenous whole. An intricate network of lines stretching from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic seaboard, and penetrating the rich coal areas of the Eastern States has been woven in this manner."

Riding the success of the 1911 Lackawanna Cutoff, the next year the DL&W commenced work on another little-expense-spared line-strengthening venture. In the case of the DL&W, Talbot notes: "The district threaded is . . . mountainous, and the original engineers ran their lines through the natural cracks in the mountains, paying no regard to the big detours, and troubling little about grades and curves." This would not do, and the DL&W continued its affront on the geological menace of its main line.

As impressive as our first cutoff was, author Karl Zimmermann calls it "just the prologue to an even grander project: the 39.6-mile Clark's Summit–Hallstead Cutoff in Pennsylvania." Costing \$12 million, it has more deep cuts, mighty embankments, the 3,630-foot Nicholson stone tunnel, total excavation of 13,318,000 cubic yards — half rock — and two mighty concrete viaducts.

Martins Creek Viaduct (Kingsley Bridge, 1915)



Three arches and six piers of the Martins Creek Viaduct during construction on Aug. 19, 1913. Steel falsework was used to support the concrete forms. University of Washington

Located just 5 miles west and standing

somewhat in the shadow of the Tunkhannock Bridge is Martins Creek Viaduct near Kingsley, Pa. It deserves recognition as a marvel; at 1,600 feet long and more than 200 feet tall, it was much larger than anything on the Lackawanna cutoff. It has seven arches consisting of three 150-foot center arches, two at 100 feet and two at 50 feet. It was completed 10 months ahead of schedule and the original right-of-way under the bridge is now U.S. Route 11.

The two giants of this cutoff were designed by Cohen, a familiar figure from the Lackawanna Cutoff, with similar construction methods used. Such design oversight had benefits for these later, larger structures. For example, a notable feature of the Delaware River Viaduct was its lack of expansion joints. Cohen states that this was because the DL&W engineers believed they had de-



signed construction procedures that eliminated the need for such joints. Yet following the appearance of transverse cracks in the Delaware River Viaduct's spandrel arches, the decision was made to build expansion joints into the structures of this latest cutoff.

Such is the benefit of experience, teamwork, continuity, and the nature of a somewhat experimental ethos held by the DL&W engineers, who were keen to apply what they had learned earlier. Although the structures look similar across the cutoffs — and certainly a design continuity was one of the trademarks and advantages of using concrete — there are refinements taking place, especially by Cohen, who was active in publishing and advocating for concrete rail bridges. For example, another evolution from Delaware River to Martins Creek was Cohen's use of two or even four separate arch ribs, compared with Delaware where the arches extend for the full width.

Given its early use of concrete, there was a more conservative design approach at Delaware. Its arches were significantly heavier than in later structures, being, in Cohen's words, "so proportioned that no tension resulted at any section." As high-

strength concrete became available, engineers made use of it, and arch dimensions in comparable spans decreased, while the engineers also developed techniques to safeguard the spans, such as precompression to eliminate cracking.

Come Martins Creek, the DL&W had refined its act. And the occasion of its completion spurred much celebration. On Sept. 3, 1914, *The Times-Tribune* ran a story titled "Hundreds dance in the clouds" detailing the more than 200 people dancing atop the soon-to-be-completed viaduct. "Upon arriving at the viaduct, guests boarded a homemade elevator that hoisted them up to the concrete floor of the bridge," the story reads.

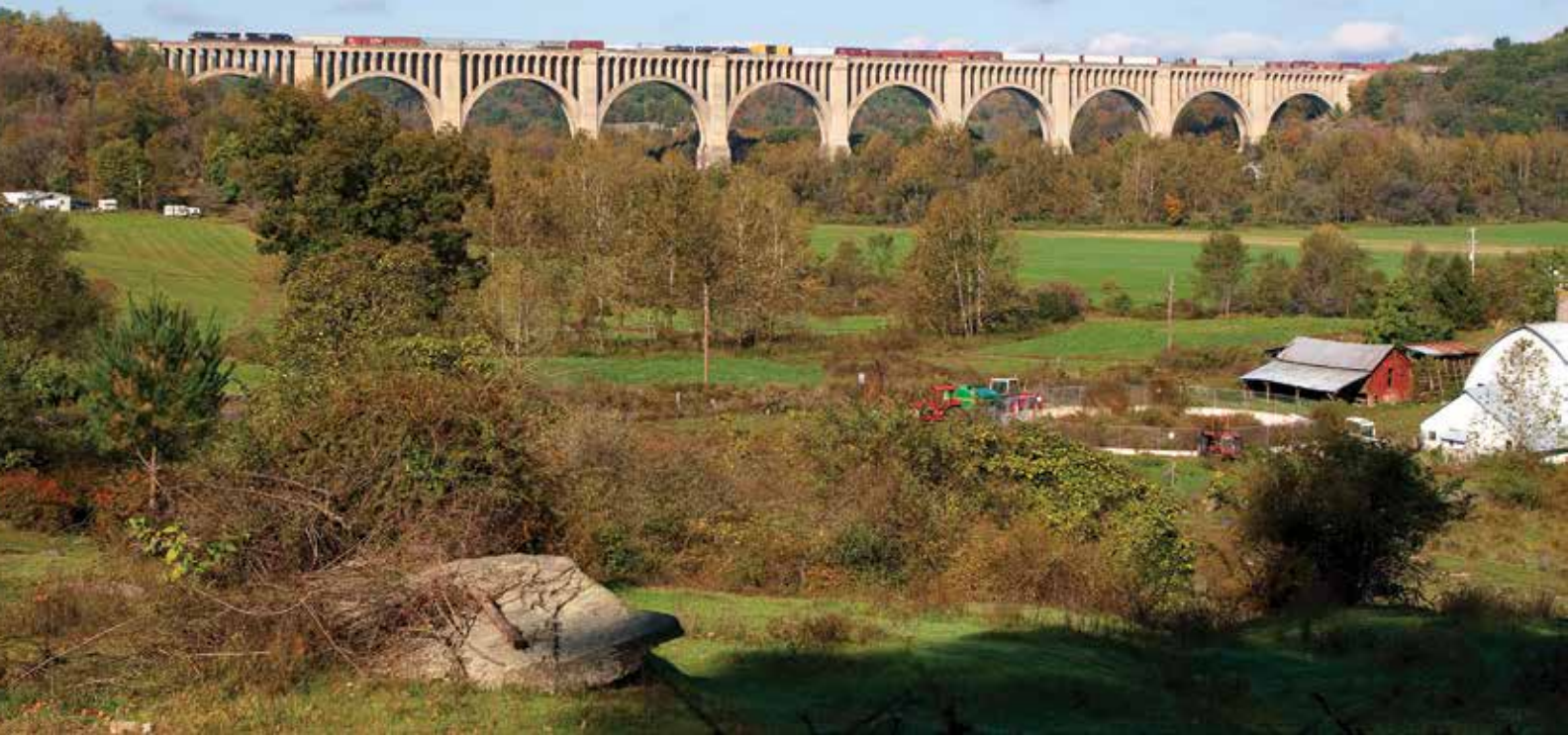
"Guests found the bridge was transformed into a woodland grove with evergreen trees decorated with Japanese lanterns. The dance floor was 100-feet long by 50-feet wide, and Oppenheimer's Orchestra was nestled among the trees." The party was organized by Talbot & Co. of New York, the bridge construction firm, and ran until 12:30 a.m., with trains taking the guests back to Scranton, Pa., and Binghamton, N.Y. The viaduct is still in service today.

And now to the giant of giants.

Southbound Canadian Pacific train No. 258 rolls across the Martins Creek Viaduct at Kingsley, Pa., on May 8, 2010. Located 5 miles west of the Tunkhannock structure, Martins Creek is sometimes overlooked. But it is also a concrete marvel, built with similar construction techniques. Austin MacDougall

Tunkhannock Viaduct

(Nicholson bridge, 1912-1915)



Trains still cross the Tunkhannock Viaduct. A train running on Norfolk Southern's Sunbury Line traverses the bridge on July 10, 2010. Also known as the Nicholson Bridge, the structure is located in Wyoming County, Pa. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977. Scott A. Hartley

In 1977, Tunkhannock Viaduct was included

on the National Register of Historic Places. In its nomination form, the words of William S. Young from his 1967 book *The Great White Bridge* were used to advocate for its inclusion. "It is, in fact, definitive," Young writes. "*Encyclopedia Britannica* considers Tunkhannock an exemplar of its kind. A picture of it serves to illustrate the word 'viaduct' in Webster's New International Dictionary."

In terms of the DL&W cutoffs, it is in Young's words, quite simply "The literal key-stone in the early-20th century modernization of a major railroad ... put up at a time when a reinforced-concrete structure of such size was considered venturesome, and before the perfection of a

number of now commonly accepted techniques in concrete construction."

Erecting the structure would have been quite the spectacle, especially with the giant wooden towers built at its ends and at the center to support an aerial tramway. These towers, 169 feet high at the ends and 300 feet tall at the center, had riding wires for a system of cable cars, transporting concrete, steel falsework, wooden forms, and other construction materials for the arches and piers. Little wonder seeing it nearing completion inspired Dreiser.

At 2,375 feet long and 240 feet high, it was the world's largest concrete bridge when completed in 1915. It contains 13 piers sunk to bedrock. The construction used more than 1,140 tons of steel and 167,000 cubic yards of concrete, containing 1,093 carloads or 89,000 barrels of cement. Its sheer scale is

even more impressive considering the piers come to rest 95 to 138 feet below the surface — close to half the viaduct's bulk is underground.

Erecting a structure at this scale was fraught with challenges. The builders encountered quicksand beneath two pier locations. Special excavation techniques were used to mitigate one, while compressed air addressed the other. The Tunkhannock Viaduct is often compared to the nearly 2,000-year-old Pont du Gard in southern France for its high semicircular main arches and tall proportions, its vertical lines that are broken by its moldings.

The viaduct is also an American Society of Civil Engineers National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, designated in 1976, and is still in service today as part of Norfolk Southern's Sunbury Line.

Reinforcing a legacy

Our tour of the concrete wonders of the DL&W cutoffs is timely,

as the earliest — those of the Lackawanna Cutoff in New Jersey — could again carry passenger service in the foreseeable future. Passenger rail operations ceased on the section with the viaducts in 1970. In the 1980s, the 28 miles of rail from the Delaware River Bridge to Port Morris, N.J., was removed.

In New Jersey, commitment to restoring the first two viaducts of our tour has been gaining steam over the last few years, as part of the Lackawanna Cutoff Restoration Project. A 2019 report estimated rehabilitation costs for the Delaware River and Paulinskill viaducts at \$54 million and \$16 million respectively — close to one quarter of the overall estimated \$288.93 million project budget.

Underwater inspection of the three river piers on Oct. 10, 2019, at Delaware River found them to be in fair condition with no undermining or major deterioration, though repairs were needed. The downstream end of pier three raised concern due to a wide crack, which has a large section of delaminated concrete. The underwater inspectors note that there were no previous known underwater inspection reports for the viaduct.

In 2023, Amtrak said services on a restored Lackawanna Cutoff could begin as early as 2028. A recent study released with the Pennsylvania Northeast Regional Railroad Authority shows strong ridership and economic potential would come from the Scranton, Pa.–New York City corridor.

Potentially returning these two viaducts to service after so many decades is testament to the strength of their construction. They were built to last. In a 1992 photo essay aptly titled “Some North American Survivals,” Ralph Greenhill states that continued use is generally the reason for survival of our engineering and industrial heritage, with historic importance sometimes playing a part too. When it comes to the “spectacular uses of concrete,” Tunkhannock and Martins Creek are used as examples.

Greenhill also notes: “One of the problems with



such huge concrete structures is that they are enormously, if not prohibitively, costly and difficult to demolish when they have outlived their usefulness.” One could also think of it as the Delaware River and Paulinskill viaducts have been standing strong for decades waiting to rise into use again.

Perhaps the strength of reinforced concrete ensured that all four DL&W giants have survived more than a century facing shifts in owner's fortunes and uses for the lines. This longevity may always have been the intention of its creators, as is shown in the aesthetic synergies between these structures, all symbols of the DL&W, one of the most technologically perfect railroads ever executed.

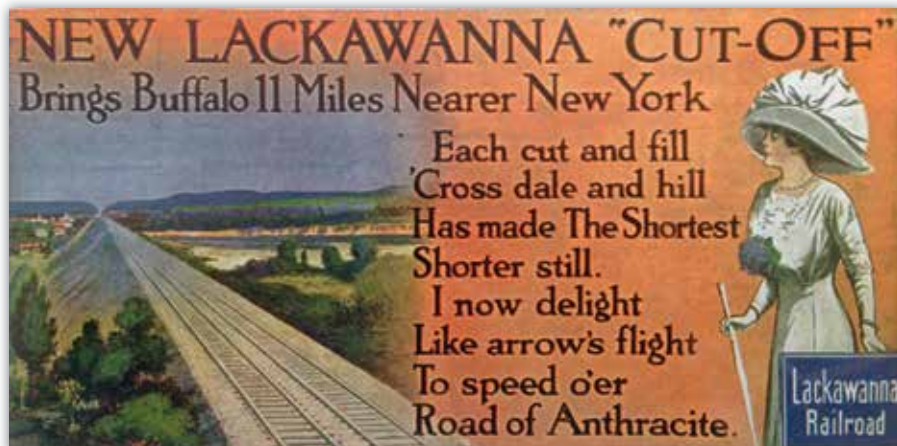
The striking contrast of the light-colored concrete structures in the landscape, like all the great monuments of the past, fits with the ethos of its creators: the company's Phoebe Snow character, for instance, depicted in DL&W advertisements, often in a dress of white, traveling by train with confidence through anthracite coal mine regions. The romance of such travel that may soon be rolling again across these great concrete monuments. **I**


On Oct. 10, 2019, underwater inspection of the three river piers at Delaware River found them to be in fair condition with no undermining or major deterioration. The inspection revealed that repairs were needed before the bridge could again be used for rail traffic.

Wally Columbia

Phoebe Snow, the DL&W fictional ad maiden depicted in a dress of white, praises the Lackawanna Cutoff in a 1912 promotion. Connections have been made between the white concrete beauty of the viaducts and Phoebe's dress — a continuity of the railway's impact on the land via the viaducts.

Trains collection





Eras — and commuter services — meet at San Jose's Diridon Station, with diesel and electric Caltrain trains on hand, along with one on the far track for the Altamont Corridor Express. Elrond Lawrence

CALIFORNIA'S HIGH-SPEED RAIL VISIONARY



Ron Diridon has gone from trainman to having
a passenger station named after him

by Bill Buchanan

ROD DIRIDON SR., 85, a crusader for high speed rail, grew up in the small Northern California railroad town of Dunsmuir. There, he worked for the Southern Pacific during summers and vacations when he was a college student starting in the late 1950s. The steam era was ending, but steam-era technology was still present.

He remembers, for example, watching for hotboxes on cars equipped with the friction bearings that were common at the time. “Every time we stopped, the swing brakeman — and I was the youngest guy so I often was a swing brakeman — would have to walk the train to look at all of the journal boxes to make sure they weren’t glowing red or smoking,” he said. “In my time, I found half a dozen of those that if they hadn’t been set out at the next siding, they would’ve maybe caused a train wreck.”

After college and combat tours as a Navy officer during the Vietnam War, he moved to the city of Santa Clara in California’s Silicon Valley, where voters elected him to the Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors for 20 years starting in 1974. He became an expert on transit and high speed rail. His work was so influential that in 1994, the county renamed the former SP station in San Jose for him.

His career includes many transit-related highlights, including stints as the first executive director of the Mineta Transportation Institute in San Jose, and chair of the California High-Speed Rail Authority board. He is currently co-chair of the U.S. High Speed Rail Coalition. Earlier in his career he worked for Lockheed Corp., and in 1969 he founded the Diridon Research Corp. (later Decision Research Institute), which he sold in 1977.

In summer 2024 we talked with Diridon at his home in Santa Clara about why he is so committed to high speed rail, how he and others persuaded voters to rebuild rail transit in Silicon Valley, the role he sees for Amtrak if it improves its reputation as an operator, and telling his dad Claude Diridon, a longtime SP brakeman in Dunsmuir who was too ill to travel in 1994, about the station renaming ceremony.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

TRAINS: YOU WERE A BRAKEMAN AND FIRE-MAN FOR SOUTHERN PACIFIC IN DUNSMUIR, TO HELP PAY FOR COLLEGE. DID YOU ENJOY THE WORK?

ROD DIRIDON: “Enjoy” is a relative term. I needed the money to go to college. I



Rod Diridon Sr. Bill Buchanan

valued the experience, but I didn’t realize I was enjoying it so much as later when I looked back at those experiences and realized how important they were.

I WOULD THINK YOUR EXPERIENCE WORKING ON A RAILROAD WOULD SET YOU APART FROM PEOPLE WHO SEE RAIL TRAVEL MORE AS A CONCEPT OR A CAUSE RATHER THAN AN INDUSTRY.

I certainly have an understanding of how a railroad works that most people don’t.

But the tracks for high speed rail are built completely differently than for normal 79-mph U.S. rail. They’re managed very differently. When you have trains going 235 mph, as with China now, running 5 minutes apart, you can’t make errors. The construction and the type of train you’re operating, as well as the complicated process of dispatching and managing that kind

of a system, all has to be designed into whatever you’re building.

CALIFORNIA’S HIGH SPEED RAIL PROJECT HAS SECURED ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCES TO BUILD ITS ROUTE FROM SAN FRANCISCO TO LOS ANGELES. BUT THE ESTIMATED COST HAS GROWN WAY PAST THE INITIAL PROJECTIONS. WORK IS TAKING YEARS LONGER THAN PLANNED. THERE’S NO CLEAR SOURCE OF MONEY TO FINISH IT. THE CONSTRUCTION SO FAR IS IN CALIFORNIA’S CENTRAL VALLEY, THE PART OF THE ROUTE WITH THE FEWEST PEOPLE. DO YOU REALLY THINK THE PROJECT WILL GET BUILT?

I’m sure the whole thing will be built. Once the country sees our 171-mile section between Merced and Bakersfield, which is a rapidly growing area, in operation, everybody’s going to want one. Already the demand for high speed rail gets up in the 70s percentage approval range when you survey voters in the nation asking, “Would you like high speed rail?”

WILL THE PUBLIC WANT IT REGARDLESS OF THE COST?

It’s a high cost. The cost of the alternatives and climate change is much greater.

Eighteen other countries have high-speed rail systems. Nearly twice as many are developing one. China has 26,000 miles of 235-mph trains, and they’re beating our behind environmentally and economically because they move their products and people much more efficiently and sustainably than we do.

It’s never going to be less expensive to build than right now, because the real increased cost is construction inflation. In the United States, it has been 5% and recently as high as 15% per year. If you compound that, you double the price every 5 to 7 years. That’s what’s happened to us. The last time we had a projection was to prepare for the 2008 California bond measure adopted by the people of the state — at that time, about \$33 billion. That amount has more than tripled.

They’ve done everything in the world to modify the project to make it less expensive. The cost of construction goes way up with delays.

Britain is extending its high-speed rail system north from London to Birmingham. It’s over two times our costs per mile. They’re going ahead because even at that price, it’s less expensive than building another couple of lanes on your freeways or building more runways on your air-



Ron Diridon grew up in Dunsmuir, Calif., and worked for Southern Pacific as a brakeman and fireman. Two SP trains meet in Dunsmuir on June 10, 1962. John C. Illman

ports, and then requiring people to use cars and airplanes, which are overcrowded and terrible polluters.

Climate change is real, and it's going to become more so. Recent polls show that climate change is the driving issue for young people. High speed rail replaces short-hop airlines, which are the most polluting form of transportation in carbon per seat-mile.

WHERE WILL THE MONEY TO COMPLETE CALIFORNIA'S HIGH SPEED RAIL COME FROM?

We'll have to meet the demands of mobility in the next 50 years. Projections

indicate that we can do that with a high-speed rail system for something in the neighborhood of \$100 billion each for the construction project, maybe \$120 billion maximum, if we build now. If we were to build two more lanes on the freeways up and down the state, and another runway on airports up and down the state, the expense would be multiple times that cost.

But there's no land to build another lane on freeways coming into and out of metropolitan areas, where the congestion is. And they're up against sound walls all over the place, so you can't solve your transportation problems by expanding

highways and airports, even if you wanted to pay that extra cost.

I TAKE YOUR ANSWER TO MEAN —

We have no choice.

SO IN OTHER WORDS, WHATEVER MONEY YOU'D USE TO BUILD THOSE RUNWAYS AND LANES, USE THAT MONEY TO BUILD HIGH SPEED RAIL INSTEAD?

It's got to come from someplace. Part will come from gas taxes. That will dwindle as people shift to electric vehicles. There must be a new mileage tax. Oregon is testing it. It's been studied by the Mineta Institute and others, and they conclude that a mileage fee is fair. All you do is to record your mileage each year when you get your registration at the Department of Motor Vehicles, and pay for the miles traveled.

LIKE A CAR RENTAL, WHEN YOU'RE PAYING FOR MILEAGE?

Yes. And you have some multiplier per mile. Probably less than the gas tax we currently pay. That would be your bill for the transportation system for the state, as part of your DMV expense. You don't have to create a new mechanism. It's all there. Same thing for trucks, only they ought to pay a lot more than they're paying because they cause more wear and tear on the highways.

YOU'VE SAID THAT ONCE THE CENTRAL VALLEY HIGH SPEED RAIL SEGMENT CONNECTS TO THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA —

It can become profitable on operations.



The Hanford Viaduct project for California High Speed Rail in January 2024. Diridon believes completion of the Central Valley segment will spur demand to build out the rest of the system. California High-Speed Rail Authority



A rendering shows California's high-speed rail line (top) passing by the Tehachapi Loop. Construction of this segment is still years away. California High-Speed Rail Authority

BECAUSE IT'LL LET PEOPLE LIVE REMOTELY AND STILL PARTICIPATE ECONOMICALLY IN SILICON VALLEY?

Normally young families create wealth by buying a house. You're not paying rent for somebody else's equity. You own that yourself. Even the relatively highly paid tech workers can't do that in Silicon Valley any more. Housing costs there are very high.

The region is still recruiting, though — the best and brightest from all over the world — to come here and create the next widget and become the next billionaire. The kids are living further and further away in order to reach affordable housing. Now, housing in the Central Valley is much more affordable, but then you're stuck with a commute, you leave before the kids wake up. There's a lot of wear and tear on your car. It's typically gas-powered. You're on a dangerous road coming into Silicon Valley. Nearly 200,000 trips per direction per day are doing that. That's a lot more than 200,000 people. They're getting here frazzled after 2½, 3 hours of commute. They try to do a day's work competing with the world in terms of genius.

And they do it again the next day. That's not a civil life.

The trip on high speed rail from Fresno to the downtown San Jose Diridon station will be less than 60 minutes. You ride comfortably, have breakfast, start work early online, or catch a nap. When you get here, it's another 10 to 20 minutes on commuter shuttles that greet people at the station. Then they reverse that in the evening.

That's the difference that will capture virtually every trip from the Central Valley

into Santa Clara County. At that volume, that system will be profitable on operations.

YOU'VE TALKED ABOUT OTHER U.S. LOCATIONS FOR HIGH SPEED RAIL, SUCH AS CHICAGO, TEXAS, AND THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST. WHAT MAKES THOSE PLACES FAVORABLE?

First, they're focal points of commerce. Chicago is probably one of the greatest commercial centers in the world. Seattle, Portland, and Vancouver are emerging as very large, strong commercial areas. Silicon Valley speaks for itself. The Los Angeles Basin speaks for itself. The Texas Triangle — Dallas, Houston, and Austin — are rapidly evolving commercial centers. Southern Georgia, Georgia to South Carolina, North Carolina, is a corridor. Atlanta is exploding in commercial capacity. Florida is very dynamic.



High-speed rail operations will eventually share the San Jose-San Francisco route with Caltrain commuter service. California High-Speed Rail Authority

Each needs more transportation capacity. Several have very serious pollution problems. High speed rail solves both problems. You compete very favorably against air travel up to about 800 miles, depending on the route.

BRIGHTLINE WEST IS BUILDING A HIGH-SPEED RAIL LINE BETWEEN RANCHO CUCAMONGA NEAR LOS ANGELES, AND LAS VEGAS. IT HAS SEVERAL ADVANTAGES: PRIVATE BUILDER, PRIVATE INVESTORS FOR \$9 BILLION OF THE COST, USE OF AN EXISTING RIGHT OF WAY ALONG INTERSTATE 15. IS BRIGHTLINE WEST A BETTER MODEL FOR FUTURE HIGH-SPEED PROJECTS, MORE THAN THE PUBLICLY FUNDED MODEL?

If you have the same conditions.

HOW SIMILAR DO THOSE CONDITIONS HAVE TO BE FOR IT TO WORK?

They're very rare. You're coming out of Las Vegas and into the high desert, and you've got a virtually straight freeway running through the desert. The state has given them access to that freeway right-of-way. When you have those conditions, use them. That's a very inexpensive way to build a high-speed rail system.

LIKE MANY PLACES, SANTA CLARA COUNTY ABANDONED ITS ELECTRIC RAIL TRANSIT IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY. IN THE 1970S, YOU AND OTHERS HELPED PERSUADE THE PUBLIC TO RE-INSTALL A RAIL TRANSIT SYSTEM IN THE AREA. YOU CREDIT SEVERAL FACTORS — AN INFLUENTIAL ARTICLE CRITICIZING SANTA CLARA VALLEY AND SAN JOSE AS POLLUTED, CROWDED AND EXCEPTIONALLY POORLY PLANNED; A CHANGE IN REGIONAL POLITICS AS THE VALLEY EVOLVED FROM RANCHING TO TECHNOLOGY; INCREASED PUBLIC ATTENTION TO THE



Brightline Founder Wes Edens speaks at the groundbreaking for the Brightline West project in Las Vegas, Nev., on April 22, 2024. David Lassen

ENVIRONMENT; YOU EVEN STILL HAD SOME RIGHTS-OF-WAY OR ACCESS TO PLACES WHERE THE RAILS MAYBE WERE GONE —

Not many places, but in some, yes.

AND THIS PART SEEMS KEY: YOU BUILT A TRANSIT MASTER PLAN THAT STAYED CLOSE TO THE VOTERS.

The way we've always put it is that the voters built the plan. We hired first-rate engineers to design a system. The engineers brought alternatives, and the voters reviewed it and chose the alternatives they wanted. Voters approved the master plan in 1976, along with a permanent half-cent sales tax for transit. The first in the state.

That master plan said we had to redo it every 4 years, with public hearings, to adjust the plan and have it back to the voters for re-approval. In the reviews, if the public came up with good ideas, the ideas went into the plan. If an idea wasn't good, we had the responsibility of explaining why. The policymakers, when those meetings



Voters played a major role in shaping the light rail system of the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority in San Jose, Calif., and Santa Clara County. Walter Heinrich

occurred in their districts, were at the hearings. It added a lot to your work, but it also gave you an opportunity of talking to your constituents a whole lot more.

CAN YOUR SCENARIO APPLY IN AREAS WITH DIFFERENT POLITICAL POINTS OF VIEW?

If you set the system up for engineers to identify all the alternatives, and you take those alternatives to your public with a description of what happens in the longer term with each alternative, then most publics, conservative or liberal, will choose an alternative which is affordable and gives you a better future. And that has to be mass transportation in most of our major metropolitan areas, even when they're conservative. Remember, though, that most of the

heavily populated metropolitan areas, even in Texas, are not conservative.

WHAT'S YOUR TAKE ON AMTRAK? HOW WOULD YOU MAKE IT MORE MEANINGFUL TO MORE PEOPLE?

I'll give you this answer with some ambivalence. I wish Amtrak was not committed to traditional rail technology. They're gradually breaking that. They've even developed a high-speed rail department. To be relevant in the future, they've got to commit to building high speed rail throughout the nation. They should work with the Brightline and California high-speed rail contractors to learn how it's built and operated, and how to integrate it with their traditional rail systems.

A Capitol Corridor train approaches the Benicia-Martinez Bridge on Nov. 8, 2023. Fast trains would dramatically expand the area where people could live while working in the Bay Area, compared to current transit options. Alex Gillman





Passengers board a Capitol Corridor train at Martinez, Calif. Diridon would like to see Amtrak become more involved in high speed rail. Bob Johnston

Amtrak ought to work with Brightline to eventually take over those systems because at some point, the Brightline lines being built now — the cash cows — when you extend those into less populated areas, eventually they will lose money on operations and require a subsidy,

AT WHICH POINT, THE SERVICE BECOMES MORE OF A PUBLIC GOOD?

That's right. If we're going to have a national network that serves not just major metropolitan areas but also some smaller communities, then Amtrak has to become involved, because they will need to integrate the system and be a source of funding operating subsidies.

SO, THINKING WAY OUT IN THE FUTURE, DO YOU SEE AMTRAK AS A HIGH-SPEED RAIL OPERATOR?

In ideal situations, Amtrak should run all of the interregional rail systems in the nation. I don't think they're ready to do that. If they tried to do it now, they would be repulsed, dramatically, by local jurisdictions, because they haven't yet earned a reputation as good rail operators. Ideally, you want one rail operator for the nation, and you want to fund that operator liberally so they can compete against the airlines and any other form of transportation. And reduce carbon pollution and highway congestion.

Now, realizing that ideal isn't likely to happen, not in my lifetime and probably not yours either, then we need to have Amtrak beginning to earn the right to be

the nation's rail operator again, by doing a lot better job with their Amtrak responsibilities so that you don't have to expect to be hours and hours late on an inter-regional train on a routine basis. They ought to be able to do that now, because the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law gave them a lot of money. They've got to begin delivering service that would be competitive with the national train service in Germany or France or Britain.

EUROPEAN PASSENGER RAIL SERVICES ARE A MIX. SOME HIGH SPEED RAIL, SOME LOCAL. IS THAT WHAT YOU ENVISION FOR AMTRAK?

San Jose's main station was named for Ron Diridon in December 1994 — a bitter-sweet memory for Diridon because of his father's inability to attend. Elrond Lawrence



Yes. Amtrak should take on the responsibility for long-distance interconnectivity. Long-distance typically is beyond state borders. It should be high speed rail where it makes sense, up to 800 miles, the distance where high speed rail is clearly more convenient than short-hop airlines.

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has warnings about climate change. By the early 2030s, we'll know whether we have a future on Earth. If we don't convert from the combustion of fossil fuels to create energy, then we are not going to have a future. In less than 10 years, my four grandbabies will be young adults. They'll say, "Papa, when you still had time, did you do everything you could do to stop climate change?" I'm going to look at them and say "yes." I guess I have to ask, what will you say to yours?

SAN JOSE'S MAIN TRAIN STATION, WHICH OPENED IN 1935, WAS RENAMED FOR YOU 30 YEARS AGO BECAUSE OF YOUR INFLUENCE SHAPING RAIL TRANSIT IN THE AREA. YOUR DAD CLAUDE DIRIDON WAS A BRAKEMAN FOR THE SP IN DUNSMUIR. WHAT WOULD HE THINK ABOUT YOUR NAME ON THE STATION?

Well, that's a sad story. My dad was in the hospital when they decided to name the station after me. When I told him, he says, "Wow, that's really interesting." He was always understated. We were going to bring him down to the dedication ceremony, Dec. 8, 1994. I was going to introduce him as the real big-dog railroader. The night before the dedication, he got out of his hospital bed, fell, and broke his hip. The doctor had to operate and set the hip and all those things.



A high-speed Intercity Express train of German's Deutsche Bahn arrives in Cologne as a local train departs. Diridon envisions a future in which Amtrak similarly handles many levels of service.
David Lassen



And he couldn't come to the event.

As soon as the ceremony ended, my son and I got up to Mount Shasta, where he was in the hospital, as fast as I could. I got a speeding ticket on the way. We went into his room. He was still barely cognizant. I held up the poster describing the day's events, and he smiled, and he nodded, and half an hour later he was dead.

HE MUST HAVE BEEN PROUD OF YOU.

I think he was. He's a tough old bugger. He didn't show love or pride or those kinds of emotions very much. I think he was.

YOU CAME A LONG WAY FROM YOUR START IN DUNSMUIR AS A BRAKEMAN, TO HAVING YOUR NAME ON A BUSY TRAIN STATION, ONE OF THE BIGGEST IN THE WESTERN U.S., AND POISED TO GET BUSIER.

Raggedy-ass railroad kid. That's what they used to call us, because our jeans were

always frayed in the behind.

NOW YOU'RE A RAGGEDY-ASS RAILROAD KID WITH YOUR NAME ON A STATION IN SAN JOSE. THAT'S A GOOD LEGACY.

I think about that. I try not to think about it too often because I fear becoming complacent. It's a very nice thing to have happen. I've been very lucky to be recognized in that way. I've got to spend every minute of the rest of my life earning that recognition. That's why I'm co-chair of the U.S. High Speed Rail Coalition and I'm giving speeches all over the world by Zoom. I used to take airlines around the world. I'm trying hard to merit that confidence. The rest of my life will be a fight for high speed rail, and against climate change. **I**

Bill Buchanan edited and wrote for newspapers, and worked in university tech communications. He hosts a radio program in Davis, Calif., and is a freelance writer/editor.

400 MILES IN 400 MINUTES

Remembering Chicago & North Western's speed champion

by Carl Swanson





The westbound 400 blasts up the lakefront grade out of Milwaukee in the late afternoon. Earl Ruhland



Crowds flocked to trackside in 1935 for the inaugural run of the 400. Trains collection

MOST USERS OF MILWAUKEE'S OAK LEAF TRAIL running from the Lake Michigan shoreline in downtown Milwaukee northwest through the city are aware, or could easily guess, they are using a former railroad right-of-way. Few realize this was once the route of one of the fastest long-distance passenger trains in the world — the Chicago & North Western Railway's 400, a train named after its scheduled running time of 400 minutes over the 400 miles of track between St. Paul, Minn., and Chicago — including all station stops in between.

In the 1930s, Wisconsin was the world leader in high-speed trains. Back in the depths of the Depression, the Milwaukee Road's steam-powered *Hiawatha* passenger trains between Milwaukee and Chicago routinely cruised at more than 100 mph. You got to Chicago by train in 70 minutes in those days. (Today's Amtrak *Hiawatha* service requires 90 minutes to cover the same route.)

During a 1941 ride between Milwaukee and Chicago, railroad historian Jim Scribins timed the nine-car, steam-powered passenger train he was riding and tallied 31 consecutive miles at 100 mph or better, with a subsequent 100 mph burst for an additional 8 miles. Just another day on the Milwaukee Road.

And then there was the North Western's own speed champion, the 400.

In 1935, when the train made its first runs, there was nothing faster on rails, averaged over such a long distance.

Powered by steam locomotives — Class E2 Pacifics with 79-inch driving wheels, to be precise — the train was governed by a timetable that mandated strict speed limits for junctions and certain curves but, significantly, set no maximum speed limit for the long straightaways across central Wis-

consin. Crews understood the meaning of that plainly enough: they were to run as fast as necessary to stay on schedule. The railway acknowledged 110 mph was common on some stretches.

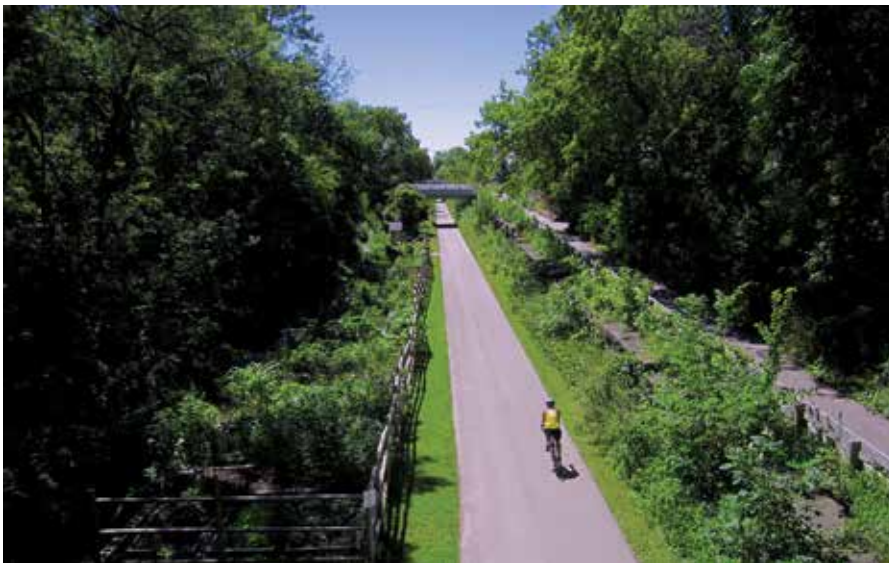
This would have been reckless on almost any other steam-era railroad, but the C&NW prided itself on safety. The year before the 400 debuted, the railway rebuilt much of its main line north of Milwaukee with heavy rail and new ballast, super-elevated the curves for high-speed operation, then inspected every inch of track with a specially fitted rail car able to detect any minute cracks in the rail.

As an added safety measure, the railway added a note to its employee timetable: "Nos. 400 and 401 are superior to all trains. Freight trains, transfer trains, and switch engines must clear the schedule of Nos. 400 and 401 fifteen (15) minutes." In other words, everything else on the railroad stepped aside well before the trains were due and remained tucked away until they were safely past.

The new service was a sensation when launched in 1935. Each evening, when the train departed the lakefront, police officers in the suburban community of Shorewood guarded the Capitol Drive railroad cross-



The 400 kicks up snow as it passes through the northern suburbs of Chicago. Alexander Maxwell



Milwaukee County's Oak Leaf Trail is built on the former Chicago & North Western main line, once the route of one of the fastest passenger trains in the world. Carl Swanson

ing. As many as 50 automobiles would be parked alongside the road there to witness the Chicago & North Western 400 flash past, "their occupants anticipating the Minneapolis-bound streak of black lightning," Scribbins wrote.

Diesel-powered Chicago & North Western 400s arrived in 1939. The name had become so famous that C&NW added "400" to the names of most of its other long-distance trains, giving Wisconsin trains like the *Flambeau 400* and *Peninsula 400*, while the original train was renamed

the *Twin Cities 400*. The name may have changed, but the train itself remained fast and comfortable, with a dining car service famed for excellent meals. Amenities like parlor cars and lunch counter/tavern cars were also present, as well as more personal touches.

In 1936, Chicago railroads held a beauty competition, with each company electing a queen to represent its railroad. Dorothy Whitt, an office worker, was named that year's queen of the C&NW. Soon afterward, Whitt took on a new and

much more challenging assignment. She was one of the first two stewardesses assigned to the 400s.

Railroad stewardesses helped mothers traveling with small children, assisted passengers in making connections, booked seating times in the dining car, sent telegrams, and kept a watchful eye on children traveling without a parent.

In 1961, the C&NW petitioned the Interstate Commerce Committee seeking to discontinue the *Twin Cities 400*, which was losing over \$1 million a year. Times had changed. Airlines were faster, and private automobiles were the choice for most travelers. In 1963, the train made its last run.

Although it travels a different route, Amtrak's daily *Empire Builder* and *Borealis* link Chicago and the Twin Cities by rail. It takes the *Builder* about 8 hours. Sixty years ago, the trip took 6½ hours.

The Oak Leaf Trail is a great place for a bike ride. And if it's haunted at all, the ghosts are whispering, "Pedal faster." I

*This article is excerpted from Carl Swanson's book *Lost Milwaukee*, published by The History Press in 2018 arcadiapublishing.com.*



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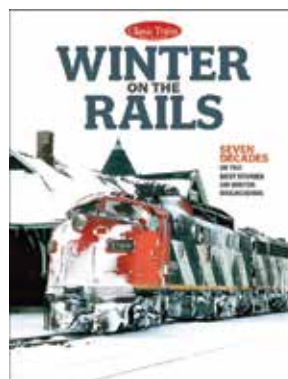


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They call him 'Bear'

Paducah rebuilds, like GP8 No. 7909 and GP10 No. 8275, provided the power for the local in our author's adventure. The Illinois Central was famous for the fleet of EMD GP locomotives it rebuilt at its Paducah, Ky., shop facilities. Two photos, *Trains* collection

The tale of one impressive night on the Illinois Central Gulf

by Paul Turner

IN MY YEARS HANGING AROUND THE NORTH CAIRO, ILL., DEPOT — first Illinois Central, then Illinois Central Gulf — I had many cab-ride opportunities. My first was at age 3 on the GM&O, however. The station access was partially due to the family farm sitting 3 miles outside Cairo, but mostly because my father, Donald J. Turner, was a 42-year railroad employee.

He had to have a nickname — most everyone did — and his large physical presence, jocular nature, and large appetite branded him “Yogi Bear.” It was shortened along the way. The older guys called him “Yogi.” To the newer ones, he was simply “Bear.”

Of all the rides I had, one sticks out. Around 1986 or 1987, I was home from college, and the Bear and I went out on the 11-7 overnight shift, me riding in the lead locomotive of a ubiquitous two-unit set of Paducah Geeps. The job's conductor was in the caboose with a switchman. We headed up the northbound main to Mounds, Ill., a tiny hamlet that was once an important railroad town and crew-change point, the latter designation usurped by Cairo long ago.

Even as Cairo was spiraling downward economically, North Cairo was quite busy in those days with tons of grain business and the presence of two rail-to-river trans-

loading facilities that were booming. A big Bunge soybean processing facility in Cairo did show some promise at the time.

We headed to Mounds to switch out another grain facility, a long-standing elevator off the Chicago-New Orleans main. We pulled off the main into a siding west of the southbound main, facing north just below the switch, at an angle. The engineer and I sat in the cab and waited for Amtrak's No. 59 — the *City of New Orleans* — to pass before we could cross both mains and work the elevator on the east side of the double track.

I had been around trains virtually my whole life, hanging around the depot since I

could walk. There have been times I stood closer to moving freight and passenger trains than was safe. None of that prepared me for the shivers down my spine as from seemingly out of nowhere an F40 came screaming towards us at track speed — or probably better. In those days, 79 mph was more of a suggestion than firmly enforced.

As the bright headlight and all that horsepower roared down the track towards us, it looked like No. 59 was not passing us by, but heading straight toward us. Being face-to-face with a screaming locomotive “picking them up and putting them down,” as the old timers say, with our proximity to the switch and the angle we were sitting gave me a fresh perspective, literally, as to how dangerous railroading could be.

Even though I thought I had seen everything, even though I knew deep down how this was supposed to work, that we were in a siding and No. 59 was charging by on the main, a rush of anxiety filled my being. I couldn’t help but think: What if that switch isn’t lined properly?

The switch was lined correctly, or I wouldn’t be telling this story. I did breathe a sigh of relief as the F40 rushed past with the string of Heritage and Amfleet cars that constituted the train in those days. Internally, I felt a bit ashamed for my sudden loss of faith and momentary panic. I now realize it was a good demonstration of what railroaders see and work around every day, and that one misstep can result in tragedy. I’ll never lose the image of that encounter.

As vivid as that memory is, it is not the most cherished or lasting moment from that beautiful spring night. What I witnessed before No. 59 blew by us was far more personal, and a much happier recollection.

As we were waiting for the *City of New Orleans* in the siding, I was (unusual for me) just sitting silently enjoying the wee nighttime hours and the fresh air outside the fireman’s window. The engineer — I can’t recall his name — sat silently having a smoke. My mind was wandering, reveling in the simplicity of the juncture, when I realized I heard the familiar sound of freight cars banging together.

Wait a second, I thought. There are cars rolling and slamming into each other, and we aren’t moving! What gives?

Aroused from my drowsy thoughts, I looked puzzlingly at the engineer. Before I could say a word, he saw the confusion on my face; exhaling a cloud of nicotine smoke, he smiled wryly, “That’s your old man switching cars without an engine again.”

I turned my head so fast I’m surprised I didn’t get whiplash. The Hudson Elevator tracks jutted out to the west, perpendicular to the double-track mains. Again, our angle at the switch gave me a perfect vantage point looking out the left-side cab window.



Amtrak’s No. 59, the *City of New Orleans*, running from Chicago to its namesake city, races along the lower portion of its route in daylight. One can see the dust kicked up by the fast-moving train. Imagine our author’s experience encountering the train in the dark of night.

Hearing was the first sense rewarded with the familiar crunch of a big man walking on ballast. Then my sight adjusted to the darkness, and there he was, silhouetted by the moon and the elevator’s lights, back to us, an unmistakable outline.

It was the body I inherited, all his height in his trunk, massive shoulders, back and chest, made even more impressive by short

legs for a six-foot-tall man, striding along, switch list in left hand.

He paused at a Pullman-Standard 100-ton covered hopper and spun the brake wheel as easily as whirling a roulette wheel, then with a quick hard shove with only that same right hand, the hopper was on its way, down the yard track, where it collided violently with its brethren.

I know it’s easier to move a freight car by hand than most people think, but I don’t think I can emphasize enough how simple my father was making it look that long ago night in Mounds. I sat there and watched as he continued working the little yard by himself, glancing at the switch list and organizing loads and empties. Nothing was going to get between D.J. Turner and an early quit.

The same smile that had crossed the engineer’s face moments before filled mine, but even broader. That’s right, I thought, that IS my old man. There’s a reason they call him “Bear.” **I**

**“As the bright headlight
and all that horsepower
roared down the track
towards us, it looked like
No. 59 was not passing us
by, but heading straight
toward us.”**

GREAT RAILFAN ROADS **ACROSS THE** **MISSISSIPPI RIVER**

Chasing trains “where nature smiles 300 miles”

Story by John Friedmann • Photos by Steve Glischinski

THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER'S SCENIC BEAUTY

rated a slogan from the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy: "Where nature smiles 300 miles," enticing passengers to Burlington Route passenger trains along the east bank of the river. Milwaukee Road's *Hiawathas* (slogan: "Nothing Faster on Rails") competed for Chicago-Twin Cities business using its own route on the river's west shores.

Today, the scenery endures, *Hiawathas'* successors still roll (including a new train inaugurated in 2024!) and freight — run by successors BNSF and CPKC — makes for busy routes on both sides of the river. Scenery combined with good road access makes the river valley a great place to shoot trains.

There are train-friendly roads on both the CPKC and BNSF sides of the river, but you aren't locked in to only one side — there are eight road bridges across the Mississippi in the 175 miles between Hastings, Minn. and Prairie du Chien, Wis., so you can bounce back and forth. The roads here have already been designated as "great" — part of the Great River Road, a multi-state initiative to highlight the best roads paralleling the Mississippi River. Look for the Great River Road signs with the distinctive boat pilot-wheel design, or research online at ExperienceMississippiRiver.com.

ST. PAUL SOUTHBOUND

Begin at St. Croix, Minn., where paired BNSF and CPKC mainlines out of St. Paul

separate to opposite sides of the river. BNSF's St. Croix Subdivision stays on the eastern bank and soon crosses into Wisconsin, while CPKC's aptly named River Subdivision crosses the Mississippi into Hastings and hugs the western bank. BNSF's average of about 35 trains per day makes it the busier route, while CPKC runs approximately 15 trains per day on its line, plus four Amtrak trains.

U.S. Route 61 takes you into Hastings, where you'll find an ex-Milwaukee Road brick depot still in use by CPKC (but not by Amtrak) just a block south of CPKC's lift bridge. The bridge is very accessible (1st Street actually goes under the bridge approach) and you may find a local unit tied up at the depot to service Ardent Milling on a former branch line in Hastings' south end. BNSF has a lift span of its own on the Wisconsin side where the St. Croix River flows into the Mississippi. The BNSF bridge is comparatively modern (1984) and is easily viewable from adjacent state Route 10.

In the first 25 miles south to Red Wing, Minn. (Hager City on the Wisconsin side), there is only partial road access to both railroads. Wisconsin Route 35 starts away from the BNSF but runs parallel into Hager City, while CPKC is right next to stretches of county Routes 54 and 18, but not for the entire distance.

Red Wing, Minn. is worth a stop regardless of which side of the river you are on (U.S. 63 bridges the Mississippi

here). Amtrak stops four times per day at the interesting Milwaukee Road depot (check out the railroad ephemera in the waiting room), while the nearby two-story former Chicago Great Western depot is trackless but home to Caribou Coffee. Keep your eyes peeled for an ex-Illinois Central SW14 working the nearby ADM plant. And yes, Red Wing Shoes does have a store in the company's hometown.

It's just over 30 miles south through some of the best scenery of the trip to Wabasha, Minn., site of the next bridge across the river. Through this stretch, the Mississippi includes Lake Pepin, a broad, naturally formed lake that is a recreation hub (and the birthplace of water-skiing). While roads parallel both railroads on this stretch, the CPKC side has clearer views from parallel U.S. 61, although both road and rail are inland from the river for a few miles south of Red Wing. If you are looking for a pause, the Reads Landing Brewing Company just north of Wabasha advertises its unobstructed patio views of both CPKC and the river. Reads Landing was also the site of a Milwaukee Road pontoon bridge across the river. It was abandoned in 1951. Fans of history may want to visit the Anderson House Hotel in Wabasha, Minnesota's oldest (1856) operating hotel.

THE ROAD TO WINONA

For some reason, there seem to be more trees between Wisconsin Route 35 and



Seeing the westbound *Empire Builder* in daylight west of La Crosse is only possible on the longest days of the year. On June 20, 2017, the *Builder* reflects the setting sun.

BNSF on the other side of the river, and the road is often higher up on the bluff than the railroad. There are several scenic overlooks in the Maiden Rock area, including good views of Lake Pepin. Just south of Wabasha on the Wisconsin side, BNSF serves the Dairyland Power Co-op's Madgett coal-fired power plant, which receives trains from the Powder River Basin. The plant is visible from Route 35. For the rest of the way to Winona, Minn., road and rail play tag with one another, and BNSF's right-of-way is often next to the Route 35 shoulder.

On the other side of the river, CPKC's Waseca Subdivision from Tracy, Minn., joins the River sub at Minnesota City. The Waseca sub is a former Chicago & North Western line that came to the CPKC family via CP's 2008 purchase of the Dakota, Minnesota & Eastern.

Just south of the junction in Minnesota City, exit off U.S. 61 to explore Winona, Minn. To railroad historians, Winona is best known as the namesake for the Winona Bridge Railway Co., the proprietor of an otherwise unremarkable railroad bridge across the Mississippi that served as the shell company for a failed Burlington Northern end-run around labor agreements in the 1980s. Alco-powered short line Green Bay & Western used the Winona Bridge until it was closed in 1985 — GB&W successor Canadian National terminates in nearby East Winona, Wis.

The Chicago & North Western had its own railroad bridge at Winona, and disconnected spans still stand adjacent to the road bridge. C&NW successor Union Pacific maintains an "island" presence in Winona, serving a cluster of riverside customers via trackage rights over CPKC from Tunnel City, Wis. A C&NW predecessor's 1883 freight house survives at Center Street next to the UP tracks. Winona's 1888 Milwaukee Road depot is used by CPKC and Amtrak, and a decaying wooden freight house is next door — you can see the outline of where the Milwaukee's distinctive



For decades Amtrak's eastbound *Empire Builder* has rolled along the former Milwaukee Road each morning. In October 2010 the train is near Donehower, Minn.



BNSF train U-DPKWTR7-02A rolls past the old Burlington Northern sign at Maiden Rock, Wis., behind an ex-Santa Fe SD75M. This was once the route of the Burlington Route *Twin Zephyrs*.

logo was mounted on the building's end.

Because the North Western had claimed the best route alongside the river from East Winona to Trempealeau, the Burlington was forced to build its line on a 5-mile causeway in the river. Trempealeau is a good site for views of trains with the river and Lock and Dam No. 6 in the background. Heading south, wetlands force Route 35 inland, away from BNSF's route.

On the west side, U.S. 61 parallels CPKC very closely from just south of Winona to River Junction, almost to La Crosse, Wis. The four-lane highway makes it easy to keep up with trains, or turn around and catch up if needed. Interstate 90 shares the road with U.S. 61 for 5 miles and crosses the river just north of La Crosse, providing a quick way to the east side of the river. If you are looking for a small-town break, pause in Dakota, Minn., where I-90 heads west away from the river. Dakota has built a pleasant shaded train-watching platform along River Street that provides unobstructed views of CPKC and river traffic.

CPKC PICKS UP STEAM

At River Junction West, the CPKC main line changes from the River Sub to the Tomah Subdivision, and just a few miles south in La Crescent, Minn. The Marquette Sub continues CPKC's route down the Mississippi. This previously underutilized route is gaining new importance from the CP-KCS merger, providing the direct route from Canada to Kansas City and onward toward Texas and Mexico. La Crescent is across the river from La Crosse, and trackage through the town is arranged as a pair of nested wyes, allowing CPKC traffic to go north, south, or east. CPKC also has a six-track yard at La Crescent, so look for trains picking up or setting out. For close-up views of CPKC's Mississippi crossing, follow Main Street eastward to Shore Acres Road.

CHEESELAND HOT SPOT

La Crosse is Wisconsin's hottest rail spot because the CPKC and BNSF Chicago-Twin Cities main lines cross here at appropriately named Grand Crossing (which also once saw lines of C&NW and GB&W). CPKC maintains a small yard just west of the diamonds, while BNSF's more substantial North La Crosse yards are to the north. BNSF trains change crews in La Crosse and the line designation changes from the St. Croix Sub to the Aurora Sub. La Crosse's Amtrak station on CPKC dates from 1927 and is worth a visit. While the two-story station was restored in 2001, further improvements are coming as part of the agreement to add Amtrak's Chicago-Twin Cities *Borealis* to the *Empire Builder* on the CPKC route. Nearby, CB&Q 4-6-4 No. 4000 (once streamlined and named *Aeolus*), a caboose and the interlocking tower from Grand Crossing are displayed in Copeland Park. Farther downtown, you can find the world's largest six-pack — storage tanks painted to celebrate hometown brew Old Style. You may find BNSF switching the plant.

South of La Crosse, the rail action advantage tilts further towards BNSF. BNSF's Aurora Sub is a double-track, CTC-controlled speedway designed to handle high train volumes with velocity.

Wisconsin Route 35 again matches up with BNSF on the south side of La Crosse, and stays with it for 60 miles to Prairie du Chien, Wis., and beyond. This section has both some of the best scenery of the route and is easily accessible, although trying to keep up with BNSF trains at speed is likely a fool's errand. Some interesting spots worth checking out are the scenic overlook next to the tracks north of Stoddard; Lock

CPKC offers a parade of freight trains on the west bank of the Mississippi between La Crosse and St. Paul. On May 15, 2020, SD70ACU 7049 is at Maple Springs, Minn.

and Dam No. 8 near Genoa and No. 9 near Lynxville; the Route 82 overpass south of DeSoto (this will also get you across the river to Lansing, Iowa, on the CPKC); and the Leitner Creek overlook, near Lynxville.

SLOW, SLEEPY, AND UNSIGNALLED

By contrast, CPKC's Marquette Sub is a caterpillar — a slow and sleepy non-signalized route — poised to become a butterfly as part of CPKC's merger makeover. Train volumes are projected to jump from about five to 11 trains per day based on merger-related and organic traffic gains. CPKC is investing in three 10,000-foot-plus sidings and 72 miles of CTC south of Marquette, Iowa, to handle the growth, along with other upgrading and renewal of the track structure.

Minnesota state Route 26 runs along the CPKC south from La Crescent, first alongside the river and then further inland away from the main channel. Twenty-four miles along, Minnesota Route 26 turns into Iowa Route 26 at New Albin, Iowa. The scenic overlook at Lansing yields broad panoramas that include CPKC running through town. Lansing also has the only bridge across the Mississippi in the 60 miles between La Crosse and Prairie du Chien, Wis. South of Lansing, CPKC stays by the river, but the closest road heads inland — following the Great River Road signs will reunite you with the rail at Harpers Ferry. Follow the Great River Road signs to Iowa Route 76, which will put you shoulder-to-shoulder with CPKC for the last 3 miles to Marquette.

Marquette is the junction with CPKC's Mason City Subdivision, a grain- and ethanol-rich line running west across the northern tier of Iowa. The former Milwaukee Road line was part of the first rail route between Chicago and the Twin Cities in 1867 and used to cross the Mississippi between Marquette and Prairie du Chien on a pontoon bridge like the one further north in Reads Landing. The pontoon bridge was abandoned in 1961, but CPKC still keeps a small yard in Marquette along

the Mason City sub west of the wye.

PRAIRIE DU CHIEN INTERLUDE

Prairie du Chien is across the river from Marquette, easily accessible by the U.S. 18 bridge across the river.

BNSF is the dominant railroad in Prairie du Chien, but regional railroad Wisconsin & Southern (WSOR) keeps the Milwaukee Road legacy alive as part of its Southern Division. WSOR crosses the BNSF on a diamond at Crawford on the south side of town and you can look for it on St. Feriole Island, west of downtown. The island has an interesting mix of active rail customers, a former depot and historic railroad hotel, and even some stored rail equipment at the north end of the island (please respect private property and look from a distance).

The final scenic highlight is the Point Lookout at Wisconsin's Wyalusing State Park, south of Prairie du Chien. The lookout provides sweeping views of the river valley and BNSF tracks crossing the mouth of the Wisconsin River. The views are worth the drive, and you probably won't have to wait long for a train.

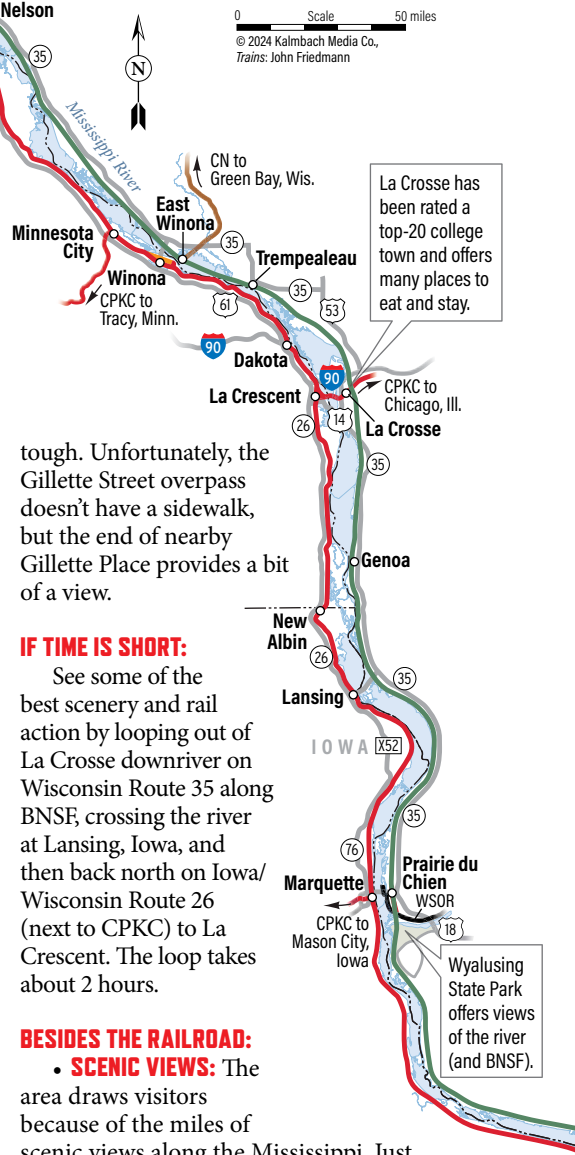
WORTH STOPPING FOR:

- **RED WING DEPOT:** Catch one of the four daily Amtrak stops at this elegant old depot, with an adjacent riverside park, historic downtown and rail-served industry.
- **WINONA:** Winona's riverside industrial area isn't pretty in the conventional sense, but it's a throwback to a time when railroads made their living switching city industrial districts like this.
- **LA CROSSE'S GRAND CROSSING:** Access to Wisconsin's hottest rail spot is

The film "Grumpy Old Men" was set in Wabasha and the town hosts an annual Grumpy Old Men Festival.

— BNSF BNSF Railway
— CN Canadian National
— CPKC Canadian Pacific Kansas City
— UP Union Pacific
— WSOR Wisconsin and Southern
— BNSF-CPKC joint trackage

0 Scale 50 miles
© 2024 Kalmbach Media Co.
Trains: John Friedmann



tough. Unfortunately, the Gillette Street overpass doesn't have a sidewalk, but the end of nearby Gillette Place provides a bit of a view.

IF TIME IS SHORT:

See some of the best scenery and rail action by looping out of La Crosse downriver on Wisconsin Route 35 along BNSF, crossing the river at Lansing, Iowa, and then back north on Iowa/Wisconsin Route 26 (next to CPKC) to La Crescent. The loop takes about 2 hours.

BESIDES THE RAILROAD:

- **SCENIC VIEWS:** The area draws visitors because of the miles of scenic views along the Mississippi. Just relax and enjoy. **I**





Genesis legacy

Preserving an icon of American rail travel

▲ Amtrak Genesis P40 No. 833 was less than a year old when I photographed it on Jan. 23, 1994, at Pica, Ariz., descending Santa Fe's Yampai Summit with the *Southwest Chief* bound for Chicago. Today, this locomotive is on the Connecticut DOT roster and is assigned to commuter service. Other examples remain in Amtrak's active fleet. Brian Solomon

SINCE 1993, Amtrak's iconic Genesis diesels have hauled countless millions of passengers across its network. From *Sunset Limited* to *Downeaster*, the Genesis has been the locomotive for generations of Amtrak travelers. While the Genesis models remain among the most common locomotives for long distance passenger service, the writing is on the wall for this American classic as new Siemens Chargers have been supplanting them in revenue service. In a few more years the locomotive that has been the face of Amtrak will have been fully replaced.

Preservation is fickle. We have many stunning examples of steam, diesels, and electrics at museums around the continent. Some are beautifully preserved in operating condition. But many significant and iconic machines are totally extinct.

Unique, bold trains like Union Pacific's famed streamliner *M10000* — one of the most recognizable trains of the 1930s — passed into history decades ago. Likewise, New York Central's 4-6-4 Hudsons, which for more than quarter century hauled the railroad's Great Steel Fleet carrying millions of travelers, were all scrapped.

In other situations, the shell of a great machine has been

preserved but in a neutered form without the defining technology inside. What is a locomotive without its ability to deliver power?

The Genesis is a landmark design of the late 20th century and was the first all-new, mass-produced American passenger diesel designed from the wheels up in four decades. It incorporated significant technical innovations developed by German manufacturer Krupp, notably its integral monocoque body shell and modern bolster-less flexicoil-style fabricated trucks. Amtrak's Chief Designer, César Vergara, designed the distinctive carbody, locomotive cab, and the graphics for the first paint scheme, including the fade-effect of the striping toward the back of the body.

The time is ripe to preserve a Genesis diesel. Rather than wait to pluck a derelict stripped ruin from a scrap line, I would like to see one of the 1993-built 800-series Genesis 1 P40s preserved in full working order and restored to its original appearance. To make this effort sustainable, the locomotive will need spare parts, including the vital electronics, necessary to ensure its continued operation long into the future.

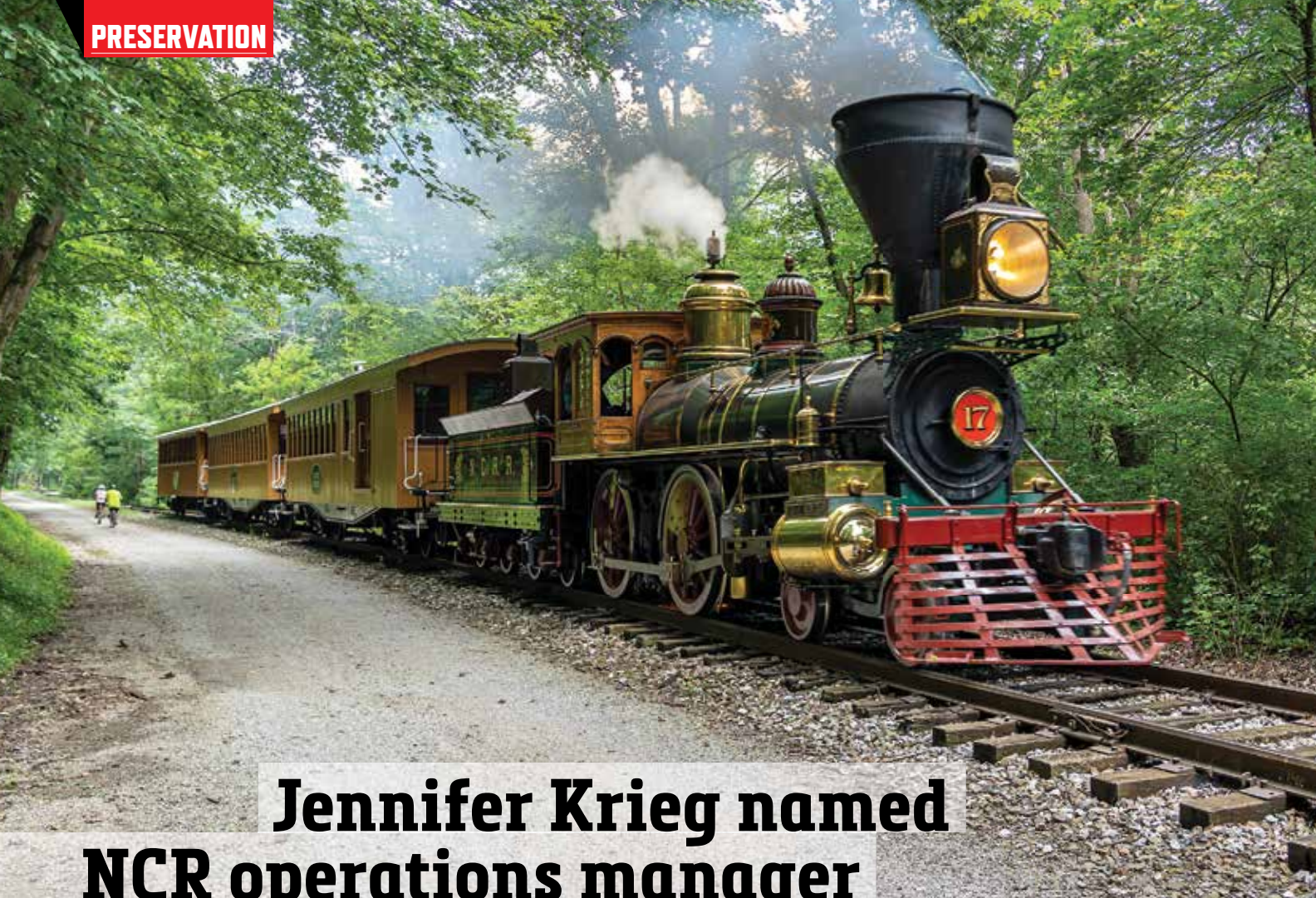
I communicated with

Vergara, who supported my idea, saying this is an important project preserving the history of locomotive design. I also reached out to Patrick C. Morrison, Museum Director at the Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, who was delighted by the suggestion and offered further insight. The RRMPA is home to historic Amtrak electrics from GG1 to AEM7.

"Genesis would give us something beyond the rainbow era. This would bridge a gap in our history and technology, [which is important because] railroad history didn't end at fixed point in time, and this would give us the opportunity to showcase a locomotive built in Pennsylvania that continues the story. Many members of [today's] visiting public have experienced the Genesis diesel and this allows the museum to maintain relevance with the public."

Preserving a fully operational P40 will engage today's generations and help make railroads and railroad history more relevant. This will benefit the industry, Amtrak, passenger travel, and railroad preservation as a whole.

I hope to continue this discussion, and help set into motion the wheels of preservation. — Brian Solomon



Jennifer Krieg named NCR operations manager

Pennsylvania tourist line now mostly female-managed

JENNIFER KRIEG IS THE NEW SUPERINTENDENT OPERATIONS MANAGER for the Northern Central Railway of York. The non-profit tourist excursion line, based in New Freedom, Pa., is now predominantly female-led.

Krieg, who joined the railway as a fireman on the line's replica 1860s-era steam locomotive, will be responsible for overseeing and maintaining that locomotive, two diesels, and eight passenger cars.

"I am excited to step into this new role and leverage my expertise and industry experience to help Northern Central Railway ... keep its beloved trains and passenger cars in strong, working order," Krieg says. "The crew at NCR is great and I enjoy working alongside them to help the organization continue to provide fantastic experiences for our community

members and tourists."

Among the stars of the Northern Central Railway roster is an accurate, operational replica of an 1869 Rogers Locomotive Works 4-4-0. This type of locomotive would have run on the line during its original incarnation. The railroad also rosters GP9 No. 6076, which is former Pennsylvania Railroad No. 7249, built in 1957. An 80-ton GE locomotive is also part of the railway's collection.

Krieg's appointment is significant as it means the Northern Central Railway now has women in its key positions for the first time in its history. The railway's board of directors is chaired by Jody Anderson Leighty. Of the 10 directors, three are female. Ashley Zimmerman is the railway's executive director. The "Meet Our Staff" tab on its website shows four of five positions



Jennifer Krieg, the NCR's new superintendent, sits in the cab of 4-4-0 No. 17. She worked as a fireman on this locomotive when starting at the railway.

filled by women.

"It is a thrilling time at Northern Central Railway of York, and I am eager to

▲ No. 17, an operating replica of an 1869 Rogers Locomotive Works engine, leads a Northern Central Railway train along the line's Pennsylvania route. Jennifer Krieg, the new superintendent, will be caring for this and other equipment on the railway's roster. Two photos, NCR

"I AM EXCITED TO STEP INTO THIS NEW ROLE AND LEVERAGE MY EXPERTISE AND INDUSTRY EXPERIENCE TO HELP NORTHERN CENTRAL RAILWAY OF YORK ..."

— JENNIFER KRIEG, SUPERINTENDENT OPERATIONS MANAGER

work alongside Jennifer to continue creating memorable, rail-based experiences that educate, entertain, and enlighten guests," says Zimmerman. "I am certain Jennifer's strong work ethic, knowledge of NCR's trains and passenger cars, and passion for the railroad industry will enable her to make positive contributions to our organization."

Although today's Northern Central Railway has existed for just 11 years, the roots of its line can be traced to the U.S. Civil War. Branded as Steam Into History until 2019, the original rail line played a vital role in moving troops to and from the Battle of Gettysburg during July 1863. In November that year, President Abraham Lincoln traveled the line on his way to dedicate the Soldiers' National Cemetery, giving his well-known Gettysburg Address. The railroad had a final moment with Lincoln when the funeral train bearing his body passed over it in 1865 on the way to Springfield, Ill.

Today, the tourist line is a year-round operation offering both regularly scheduled excursions and special events. For more information on the Northern Central Railway of York, please visit: www.northerncentral-railway.com — *Trains staff*

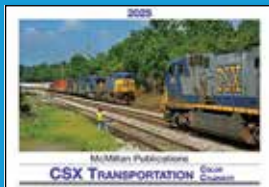
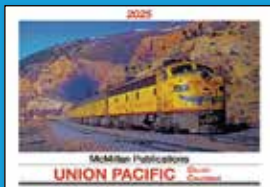
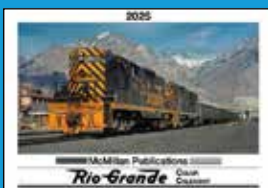


CELEBRATING HISTORY "Union Pacific has built on our history, and I think our history needs to be celebrated," UP CEO Jim Vena said in an October 2023 interview with Bill Stephens, *Trains* business analyst. "And that Big Boy locomotive? I love it." During 2024, the UP celebrated its history by sending No. 4014 through 14 of the 23 states served by the railroad. Big Boy returned to California making a run over Donner Pass during its Westward Bound Tour in June and July. From late August through October, No. 4014 rolled into the Midwest and South on its Heartland of America Tour. On Sept. 9, 2024, Big Boy passed the California Ridge Wind Farm traveling southbound outside Dailey, Ill. Steve Smedley



PRAIRIE DOG CENTRAL NO. 3, Canada's oldest operating steam locomotive at 142 years old, remains down for major repairs pending fundraising for the project. While much of the work is being completed by volunteers, \$150,000 is needed to contract for services the railroad cannot complete in-house. For more information on the project, visit pdcrailway.com. Mark Perry

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PRESERVATION BRIEFS

Sioux City Railroad Museum gets flood grant

THE SIOUX CITY RAILROAD MUSEUM received a \$115,000 grant from the **MISSOURI RIVER HISTORIC DISTRICT** for flood cleanup. The museum remains closed after a devastating flood June 23-24, 2024. A separate \$25,000 grant was presented to **TOLERANCE WEEK INC.**, which sponsors the **HOLOCAUST RAILS: DESPERATE PASSAGE** exhibit at the rail museum. The exhibit, part of regional school educational programs, was also heavily damaged. Although not yet fully recovered from the flood, the museum continues to engage the public through events. Additional community financial and volunteer support has helped move the recovery along. No reopening date has been set.

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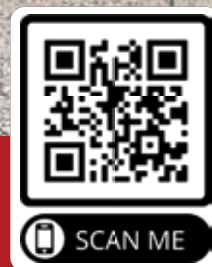
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www.historicrailpark.com 270-745-7317

NEVADA Boulder City

NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

601 Yucca Street, Boulder City 89005



The Nevada State Railroad Museum, Boulder City, is a showcase of the regional railroad lines that built Hoover Dam and other indelible parts of Southern Nevada. Visitors can experience railroading through train rides, exhibits, and learning opportunities. For more information, visit boulderrailroadmuseum.org.

702-486-5933

NEVADA Carson City

NEVADA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM

2180 South Carson Street, Carson City 89701



The Nevada State Railroad Museum, Carson City, is a cultural resource dedicated to educating the community about Nevada railroad history. The museum contains an extensive collection of significant locomotives, rolling stock, artifacts, photographs, and memorabilia. In addition to static exhibits, select pieces of equipment in the collection are restored and operated throughout the year to demonstrate steam and early gasoline technology and provide visitors with an immersive experience. For more information, visit carsonrailroadmuseum.org.

775-687-6953

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CLOSING DATES: February 2025 closes Nov 18, Mar closes Dec 13, April closes Jan 22, May closes Feb 19.

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RAIL SHOWS AND EVENTS

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FEBRUARY 1-2, 2025: Monticello 2025 Train Show. Saturday 10am-4pm and Sunday 9am-2pm. Berndes Center, 766 N. Maple St., Monticello, IA 52310. Tables \$30. Admission: \$5, children under 12 free w/paid adult. Monticello RR Club, PO Box 169, Monticello IA 52310 or email Ron Ackermann: rack6@gmail.com

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

MISCELLANEOUS

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In the February issue



End of the line for RoadRailer

Norfolk Southern's **ROADRAILER INTERMODAL SERVICE** has made its final run. Bill Stephens describes its invention, growth, contraction, and ultimate failure. In 1966, demand for coal for **CALIFORNIA'S KAISER STEEL** spurred a new unit train. Plus a guide to **OPERATING STEAM LOCOMOTIVES IN 2025.**

On sale January 14, 2024

The 'Builder' in blue

Amtrak train No. 28, the eastbound Portland section of the *Empire Builder*, rolls along the Columbia River at Cape Horn, Wash., about 25 miles out of Portland. This 2007 photo was taken from the Oregon side of the Columbia Gorge.







Black and white Chessie

Wearing Chessie System colors, Chesapeake & Ohio GP40-2 No. 4271 heads westbound on the approach trestle to the C&O Bridge over the Ohio River in Cincinnati in 1982. The second locomotive has yet to receive its yellow, blue, and vermillion Chessie System paint.





What once was is no more

With Riverfront Stadium looming in the distance, an eastbound Norfolk & Western freight rumbles along Merhring Way in Cincinnati. Since the time of this 1982 image, both the stadium and railroad have disappeared — the N&W and the Southern Railway merged that same year, while Riverfront was demolished in 2002.

B&O in the Motor City

Detroit Union Station was the gathering point for C&O, B&O, Pennsylvania and Norfolk & Western (former Wabash). Here, in 1965, B&O E8A No. 1451 has just arrived with a train from Chicago.

TOFCs and transfers

A hot B&O TOFC train led by a pair of GP40s rolls off the Ohio Division at Winton Place in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1981. The intermodal meets a northbound Southern Railway transfer running from Gest Street Yard to interchange with Conrail at Sharonville, Ohio.



Not Great Northern

The well-traveled former Espee glamour girl, No. 4449, from Portland, Ore., put in some time on the ex-Great Northern Cascade Sub during Washington State's Centennial celebrations in 1989. Here the very un-GN celebrity heads west near Cashmere, Wash.



Jon Bentz began taking train photos in 1963 with a Brownie Starmite camera received for his 14th birthday. Not only did this spark an interest in photography but a passion for photographing railroads. Similar to many in this hobby, his interest in trains extends into his hazy childhood memories of Columbus, Ohio, and two early family moves in the mid-1950s to Wichita, Kan., and Colorado Springs, Colo. Those memories include mainline steam and a virtual parade of different cameras. An early switch to digital in 2003 opened a new world of creative possibilities for Jon.

Lumber hauler

The Northwest Museum's
U.S. Plywood No. 11 — a
Baldwin Locomotive Works
2-6-6-2T — crosses a trestle
on the former Northern
Pacific branch at North
Bend, Wash., during a
1987 excursion.



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