

DANVILLE FLYER

A PUBLICATION OF THE DANVILLE JUNCTION CHAPTER, INC. NRHS

The *DANVILLE FLYER* is published monthly by the **DANVILLE JUNCTION CHAPTER** of the **NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY** for its members and other interested persons.

The **DANVILLE JUNCTION CHAPTER, NRHS**, is a not-for-profit corporation organized to preserve the history of railroading in Eastern Illinois and Western Indiana and operates a museum located in the former Chicago and Eastern Illinois Railroad depot on East Benton Street in Rossville, Illinois. The museum is open weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day and features many railroad displays plus a large operating HO model railroad.

Membership in the Chapter is open to anyone having an interest in any aspect of railroading. Dues per year are \$17.00 for Chapter membership in addition to \$20.00 for NRHS membership. Meetings are held on the third (3rd) Sunday of each month (except June, July, August and December) at the Pizza Inn Restaurant, Gilbert Street (Illinois Route 1) and Williams Street, next to CSX, in Danville, Il. with lunch beginning at 1:00 PM Central Time followed by meeting and program.

OFFICERS FOR 2004 - Our 36th Year

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Visit our Chapter WWW Home Page On-Line - <http://www.prairienet.org/djc-nrhs/>



In a virtual world you can create any scene you desire. Here, we see a northbound Monon SW-1200 with a short train of boxcars on the siding at Orleans IN, about ready to diverge onto the branch to French Lick. The simulation has working semaphores, rotating switch stands and other amazing details. See the article on Sim railroading within.

Coming Events

January 18, 2004

Danville, IL Next regular monthly chapter meeting at Pizza Inn, 1:00 PM, Gilbert and Williams Street next to CSX.

February 15, 2004

Monthly meeting in Danville

February 21 & 22, 2004

Mattoon, IL - Cross County Mall and Coryville Station Model Railroad Days, Sat 10-9, Sun noon to 5, free

February 22, 2004

Peoria, IL Trainfair at Illinois Central College, East Peoria Campus 11-3, \$2.

March 27 & 28, 2004

Urbana, IL - Annual Train Show and Swap Session, 10-6 PM, 11-5 PM, Admission Free

Operating Sessions - see listing to the right

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be January 18, 2004 at the Pizza Inn. As usual, we will order off the menu and then begin the meeting around 1:45.

Dues for 2004 are due now. You recently received your 2004 dues renewal notice. Please return the form with your check to Allen Cooke as soon as possible. Remember, March is when all dues for the chapter and museum are due.

Last months photo - did you identify the photo furnished by Wade Fransch? This is the former Chicago and Eastern Illinois, later Chicago, Attica and Southern depot that stands in Pine Village, Indiana. We assume all of you C&EI and CA&S fans got this right away.

Our new member Richard Brazda will be

giving the program in January. He will present a slide program on trip to El Salvador in 1974. This should be very interesting, something that I don't believe other members have had the chance to visit. The meeting in February will be presented by Rick Schroeder. This will be a computer presentation on the Chicago Plan showing the planned upgrade to the Chicago rail system and addition of grade seperated streets.

Operating Sessions

Grafton Davis & Mt. Storm Ry

309 Dale, Rossville, 12:00 PM

Saturday, January 24, 2004

Saturday, February 28, 2004*

Chicago, Illinois and Eastern

Depot Railroad Museum, 1:00 PM

Saturday, January 10, 2004 *

Saturday, February 7, 2004

Saturday, March 6, 2004

Danville and Western Railroad

1819 Coventry Drive, Champaign, IL
1-3 PM

Saturday, January 31, 2004*

Sunday, February 22, 2004 *

Sunday, March 14, 2004*

* Note change in date

HO Sale Items

Former member Pete Gossett has moved back to the Rossville. Some of you may know Pete, his father Leon Gossett was a member and created the cover page of our brochure. Leon passed away several years ago and Pete, now married, has returned to Rossville. At one time he and his dad had a hobby shop setup in the downtown store in Rossville. Pete is selling his collection with members having first choice. There are some 30 boxes of items in the museum that you may go through. Some have "junk" as Pete notes and others have equipment still in the boxes. If interested, put the items you want aside and contact Pete at 217-748-6662 or at home, 316 McKibben Street.

Convention Steam News

Mainline Steam in 2004 - A very early forecast none of the major independent operators have yet published a comprehensive schedule of the Year 2004 activities. Bits and pieces of the schedule do exist however, for UnionPacific and other railroads.

The NRHS Convention at Minneapolis in June 2004 is expected to feature excursions by the Milwaukee Road #261 and perhaps other steamers as well. Steve Sandberg teases us with the comment (on the www.261.com website)that The 261 has just completed an agreement to operate 14 excursions next summer from June 20th thru July 4th.

The excursions will be in Minneapolis, Milwaukee, Chicago and the Quad Cities. Look for a schedule and ticket info in the coming weeks." What this suggests is that the 261 excursions will be running on Canadian Pacific's ex- Milwaukee Road tracks (how else would #261 get in and out of Milwaukee?) and under the railroad's aegis, thus bypassing the liability insur-



ance roadblock. If so, this represents a stunning breakthrough for Steve and the "Friends of the 261", and puts the 4-8-4 back on its old home rails. Can you imagine the scene in Milwaukee when the native daughter returns? And dare we hope for a departure out of the north end (the former Milwaukee Road end) of Chicago's Union Station ? This might entail some help from Amtrak. We'll have to wait and see -the details on all this should be released soon. Probably too much to hope for.

Coupled with the NRHS convention trips will be the Great Excursion operations on rail as well as water - see paragraphs below. Up in Canada, the Canadian Pacific has approved some excursions with their very own 4-6-4 #2816 for this April, 16 between; Calgary and Vancouver, While in the Pacific Northwest, it is possible that former SP 4-8-4 #4449 will power some excursions in the fall over Montana Rail Link, similar to those run by the SP&S 9700 last year. More info on these and other steam operations as the year progresses.

The Grand Excursion - and the NRHS Convention: The biggest public event in the Upper Mississippi Valley in 2004 will be The Grand Excursion, a flotilla of big river "steam boats" such as the paddle-wheeler Deft Queen, which will sail from the Quad Cities (Davenport, Iowa and Rock Island, Moline and East Moline, Illinois) about 400 miles up river to the Twin Cities, Minneapolis and St Paul, Minnesota with leisurely stops enroute at various river towns in Iowa, Wisconsin and Minnesota.

The Grand Excursion celebrates the bicentennial of the commencement of first commercial steam powered boats plying the waters of the Upper Mississippi back in 1804. This Grand Flotilla of river boats will depart Rock Island on Sunday, June 27 and arrive at Minneapolis on Monday, July 5th . But the official kick-off for the Grand Excursion program will be a rail event - ceremonies on Friday, June 25th with coming the arrival in Rock Island of a very special steam powered train from Minneapolis. Steve Sandberg's remark about operations out of the Quad Cities suggests this train will have his #261 as the motive power and that it will be a public

excursion, if not on BNSF then on Canadian Pacific, which was impressed with #261's performance and handling on the Winona excursions last October. No details on any of these activities have yet been released. A host of special river and rail activities besides the flotilla are being planned.

The 2004 National Convention of the National Railway Historical Society is scheduled to run in the Twin Cities area from Sunday, June 27 through Sunday July 4th. Typically three mainline steam excursions can be expected plus special operation on the local area pikes, such as the Minnesota Transportation Museum. According to the website of the Northstar Chapter, the convention hosts, no details can be made public yet, but the NRHS events will be running concurrently with Grand Excursion events.

Via Don Clark, Dayton Ties and Tracks

Kansas City Southern

The KCS will begin a renumbering plan for their fleet. In late November the KCS 6083 (an SD40-3) appeared and

it is the first indication that the KCS loco fleet will soon be undergoing a renumbering plan. The new plan basically has the locos divided up by horsepower rating. The 1500-class will be the SW1500/MP15ACs, the 2000-class will be GP38s, and the 3000-class will be GP40s, all four-axle power.

The six-axle power will be renumbered differently, but there is a sensible pattern. All will have the horsepower rating doubled as such - the SD40s will be 6000-6100 class, the SD40X/SD50s will be 7000 class, the SD45T-2s will be 7200 class, the SD60s will be 7600 class and the GE AC4400CWs will become the new 8800 series. The F-units will retain their numbers.

The KCS is also going to be taking delivery of four rebuilt EMD's in the near future. The three SD40T-2s and one SD45T-2 are ex-SP units and are undergoing rebuilding at Midwest Equipment in East St. Louis. When they emerge in their

new paint, they will be in the 6100 series (the SD40T-2s) and 7200 series (the single SD45T-2).

Via North Western Limited

METRA

Metra began removing with automated fare-collection turnstiles at up to 29 Electric Line stations between the downtown Chicago and University Park in mid November according to the Chicago Tribune. The turnstiles, installed by the Illinois Central Railroad in 1966, were accompanied by ticket-vending machines on each platform, allowing staff reduction on the trains for fare collection on IC's three electrified routes.

As part of the modernization program on what was at the time the nation's 4th-largest commuter system, with 42,000 daily riders, IC's suburban lines in the early 1970s also received 130 new bilevel "Highliner" electric passenger cars funded by the new South Suburban Mass Transit District. The Highliners replaced 270 cars that dated from IC's 1926 electrification of the line.

Metra bought the 4 1/2-mile electric operation, which uses 1500-volt overhead catenary, from Illinois Central in May 1987 for \$28 million. In recent years, the turnstiles began to malfunction more frequently, causing patron congestion and adding to their consternation and frustration that has stemmed from several factors. Many riders came to view the turnstiles as a sign of distrust, since they must show their ticket on board. Delays in the rehabilitation of the Electric Line's downtown Randolph Street terminal have not helped customers' dispositions, either.

With the removal of the turnstiles, conductors began collecting fares aboard trains, just as is done everywhere else on Metra, which said it will hire up to 10 more conductors to collect fares, verify monthly passes, and punch tickets on the Electric Line

Via TRAINS Newswire, 11-14-03

2004 DUES DUE

Norfolk Southern freight train derails

Kendallville, Ind. – A Norfolk Southern freight train derailed 15 of its 130 cars Monday at a grade crossing about 3 a.m., according to a report from the Associated Press. No injuries were reported. The incident is still under investigation. Kendallville is about 25 miles north of Fort Wayne on the Chicago Line linking the Windy City with Toledo and points east. This is the former Conrail (New York Central) route.

Amtrak's westbound *Lake Shore Limited* from New York and Boston, and the *Capitol Limited* from Washington, were detoured around the derailment via CSX from Toledo to Fostoria, Ohio, thence to Chicago, arriving about 9 hours late at 6:44 p.m. on Monday. Their eastbound counterpart trains had passed Kendallville before the mishap

Illinois Central will be 150 years old

From the C-U News Gazette 1-4-04

The big anniversary this year is the sesquicentennial of the IC's arrival in town. There wasn't much of a town on July 24, 1854. According to an account of that historic day, *published 40 years later in the Champaign Daily Gazette, "there was not a house or even the sign of a house on the west side of the track," said David Wolfe. "it was one broad, level prairie, standing high in grass and we then thought it would probably always remain so. There were a few plank houses in what is now the East Side, and probably a little store or two, but in all it amounted to little or nothing.

"I remember that when the road was being constructed the laborers lived in small huts along the right-of-way, made of ties, covered with sod, and as the work progressed they moved their houses along also."

Wolfe said only "a handful of men" gathered to see the train arrive that July day -

the day that a 21-mile stretch of the railroad opened between Ludlow and Urbana. "They had gathered in from all the surrounding country, some coming 15 to 25 miles and they felt well repaid for the trip, as a railroad train was something they didn't see every day. When the train stopped here there was some cheering, but no speech-making, and this was the beginning of the new beautiful and thriving city of Champaign."

At the time of the railroad's arrival, Joseph O. Cunningham, editor of the Urbana Union, took note that some were already anticipating a rivalry between what he called "the Old Town" and "The Depot."

"Some there are," he wrote, who seem to think that all that is needed to build up a town is the immediate presence of a railroad with its necessary buildings; and consequently, as the Depot possesses these requisites, suppose that it must in its growth far eclipse the older portion of town, and that, to their own expression, 'Urbana will soon be a cornfield.' These sentiments, we may add, are held mostly by those whose property is at the Depot."

Urbana partisans "see in the old town the only elements of lasting prosperity, and suppose it will continue to be the principal business point in the county, while the Depot can merely be a place where the Illinois Central R.R. will receive and discharge freight for various points in the county, and that in the meantime, Urbana proper will in the use of its facilities, continue to grow to the dimensions of a city."

Cunningham, who knew his newspaper would depend on readers and advertisers in both the old town and the depot, concluded that both could be successful. And, six years before Champaign had even been incorporated, he pushed for a merger. "Efforts to get up a rivalry between the two points will always be found futile, as their interest is one and ought to be at once incorporated under one charter," he wrote on June 29, 1854, a month before the IC came to town.

The first IC timetables published in the Union showed that there were two northbound and southbound trains each day. The 128-mile ride to Chicago took, according to the schedules, anywhere from 8

hours and 25 minutes to 6 hours and 10 minutes. Among the stations on the way north - often where towns had yet to incorporate - were Rantoul, Pera, Loda, Onarga, Ashkum, Chebanse, Bourbonnais, Manteno, Monee, Rich, Thornton and Calumet. The timetable also noted that railroad passengers in Urbana could catch connecting stage coaches to Danville, Monticello, Peoria, Springfield, Bloomington, Paris and Vincennes, Ind.

And anyone knows that where there are railroads, there also are railroad wrecks. Less than two months after the Illinois Central entered Champaign County, it had its first accident when a train struck an ox two miles north of the Urbana station. The ox was killed, several cars left the tracks but no humans were injured, the Union reported.

Editorial by Tom Kacich is a News-Gazette editor and columnist.

Ballast Issues Concern DOT Officials

Of the four largest Class I carriers, CSX appears to have the most work to do in order to improve its rate of roadway investments, according to a study released this month by Department of Transportation's (DOT) Office of Inspector General (OIG).

The OIG study reviewed the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) oversight of slow orders and track reclassification, and the effects of their use on railroad track safety and service schedules. Slow orders to lower the speed limit for trains are required when tracks either do not meet FRA standards for the designated speeds, are weakened due to construction or maintenance work, or are damaged by accidents.

In addition, the OIG study sought to determine whether slow orders were used to defer maintenance, whether delays were increasing due to reductions in track in-

vestment, and if crossties and rails were replaced at an adequate rate. The conclusion of the study was that the overall levels of roadway investment by the four largest Class I freight railroads, BNSF, CSX, NS and UP, have increased steadily since 1980. Also, the rate of crosstie and rail replacements for the railroads was consistent with the FRA's safety standards, OIG said.

The study raised a few warning flags, however. In particular, the long-term rate of CSX ballast replacement was "significantly lower" than that of the other Class Is, the OIG report said. This "could impact track stability, and over time, track quality," the report said. Two major Amtrak derailments in 2002 occurred on CSX trackage, the report noted.

Between 1983 and 2002, CSX replaced on average a little less than 60 cubic yards of ballast per track mile, compared to about 85 cubic yards for NS, 92 cubic yards for UP, and nearly 110 cubic yards for BNSF "We are concerned the magnitude of this difference could affect track quality, particularly since 1998 FRA safety audits have repeatedly identified system wide deficiencies in the condition of CSX's ballast," the OIG report said. "FRA should work with CSX to determine whether CSX ballast practices represent a safety issue and, if so, resolve them and prevent their recurrence."

CSX officials are reviewing the data they provided for the report, and contend that the carrier's ballast distribution has been consistent with industry norms, said Gary Sease, CSX spokesman. The carrier typically distributes between 2 million and 3 million tons of ballast each year, and will distribute 2.9 million tons this year, he said.

Congestion Increasing

The OTG report also noted that while the 20-year trend does not indicate a problem, replacement of crossties and rail by some railroads has declined in recent years, and should be monitored. The DOT considers an annual replacement of 63 crossties per mile to be adequate.

The report also warned that unless actions are taken, the rail industry could

have a hard time keeping up with the necessary investments needed to handle what is expected to be a 50-pct increase in rail tonnage over the next two decades. "Despite the railroads' investments, certain parts of the railroad system have become severely congested and cannot accommodate the conflicting demands of ... rail traffic," the report said.

"Magnifying the congestion from traffic growth are numerous choke points, which are bottleneck points in the overall rail network that adversely constrain the effective use of the rest of the railroad system," the study continued. Key choke points include antiquated and undersized bridges and tunnels, stretches of mainline track with inadequate vertical clearances for double-stack container traffic, inadequate connections between rail lines, and outmoded information and control systems.

NS Bottle Trains

There are now two distinct bottle (hot metal) trains operating to the ISGex-Acme finishing plant in Riverdale, IL. One uses an NS engine and IHB caboose. It loads at the ISG ex-LTV plant in East Chicago and takes the Kankakee Line south to Gibson where it transfers to IHB for the move west to Dolton.

The other one has locomotives at both ends. It loads at the former Bethlehem plant (now I think US Steel) near Burns Harbor, IN. The loaded train then heads east on the NS Chicago Line to Porter Junction, where it reverses and heads west on the ex-MC Porter Branch to Gibson. There, it accesses IHB for the move west to Dolton. The empty train returns using the IHB to Gibson, then takes the Kankakee Line north to Indiana Harbor (CP 502), and then heads east on the Chicago Line through Pine to the Bethlehem plant. The load train uses the Porter Branch because of weight restrictions on some of the Chicago Line bridges.

At Dolton, both trains usually transfer to the short stretch of Panhandle track still in place, although occasionally they will use the CSX main.

The engines used are usually NS GP38-2's or GP15's. Each train makes one round trip a day, and they seem to run on an as-needed basis. Hence catching them at Dolton is pretty much a hit-or-miss proposition.

Thanks go to Ralph Eisenbrandt, who obtained this information from an IHB dispatcher.

Internet via Bill Gustason

Lafayette Belt **Railway**

By Wade Frasch

Railroads Of Indiana (Simons and Parker) gives a short history of the Lafayette Union Railway in chapter 11; Belt Lines and Terminal Railroads: The Belt Railway Land and Improvement Company built a five mile line on the east side of Lafayette to serve industries along the present US 52 Bypass. The group eventually included National Homes Corporation, Aluminum Company of America (ALCOA), Ross Stone Corporation, and Anheuser-Bush. Wabash National Corporation, builder of RoadRailer trailers since 1991, now occupies the National Holmes plant. (28) Lafayette Union began operation on December 1, 1911, and was leased to the Wabash Railway in 1924. (29)

I have asked a friend of mine at Attica to research the background of the Lafayette Belt Railroad for me as follows: The line was built by local interests to connect the Monon, Wabash, and Nickel Plate (Lake, Erie & Western) Railroads. It is/was owned by three Lafayette lawyers and leased/sold to the Wabash, N & W, or Norfolk Southern. (My friend's information is not clear when the title changed)

The last three years that I attended Purdue University (1956-1961) I worked at Schwab Safe Company on Main Street just north of Alcoa. There was an unused spur into Schwab that my drafting office overlooked. Each morning a Wabash EMD SW8 would pass by on the Belt with cars to deliver to

Alcoa. One day while sorting through some old drawings and blueprints I came across a real “blueprint” that was a map of Lafayette showing the railroads as well as streets. I was astonished to see the Belt Railroad running from near the main gate of the Monon Shops along Monon Street curving to the Wabash connection at the south end of North Yard, continuing along its present alignment past Schwab and continuing south toward a connection with the Lake, Erie & Western that I have guessed to be Altamont for the map did not extend that far.

I do not think the Alcoa plant existed when the map was drawn. As I recall Brown Rubber was started in the 20’s and there was a previous tire manufacturer before that. National Homes and Alcoa were built during or after WWII, but it is interesting to note that the Lafayette Union Railway connected all of the railroads of Lafayette at one time.

(28) Commemorative Book of Tippecanoe County, 1826-1976, p. 23

(29) Moody’s Transportation Manual, 1978, p. 1919.

Wheel Report

Over a year ago 4 chapter members headed east to photograph NS, CSX and ride the cab of the Western Maryland Scenic Railroad out of Cumberland, Maryland. Since that time progress has been made (if you can call it that) to have a rail train adjacent to the track on the roadbed of the former second track. A fence will be installed between the track and hiking/bike trail for “safety” reasons for almost the entire length of the rail trip. Thus photos of the train will now have not only people beside the train but a fence to block the view. Excursion operator Carl Franz has conducted photo excursions on the line in recent years (see the recent issue of RailFan) and has stated that with the fence in place there will be no more photo excursions on the railroad. This has to be a major loss of income for the WMS line and is sure to cut into some of the summer ridership by true railfans.

Recent spotting by one of our members in the Danville area – Erie Lackawanna 2-bay

Railroad Upkeep Hinders Amtrak Service

Maintenance issues may also be having an effect on Amtrak’s ability to move its trains in a timely fashion, and there appears little that the passenger service can do right now to fix the problem, the Department of Transportation’s (DOT) Office of Inspector General (OIG) report said.

The OIG report stated that the four largest Class Is left tens of millions of dollars on the table, rather than allow Amtrak to provide a higher level of on-time service. Amtrak conducts 70 pct of its operations over tracks owned by freight railroads.

Amtrak attempts to avoid schedule delays by offering incentive payments to its host railroads for providing on-time performance for its trains. However, the incentive payments for were not nearly enough for the Class Is to improve passenger rail operations at the expense of their freight operations, the report said.

In 2002, “one railroad we reviewed received only \$484,000 in incentive payments from Amtrak for on-time performance and passed on the opportunity to earn an additional \$23 million,” DIG said. “Another large railroad we reviewed had also passed up nearly \$14 million in incentive payments, and was penalized about \$100,000 for delays that resulted in Amtrak meeting on time performance less than 70 pct of the time. “

Of Amtrak’s dealings with the four largest Class Is, UP lines accounted for 37 pct of its delays, CSX lines were responsible for 29.9 pct, BNSF 19.4 pct and NIS 13.7 pct. When viewed on a ratio of minutes of delay per total train miles used, UP service ranked worst for Amtrak, followed by NS, CSX and BNSF

However, it may be other, business-focused factors that are having a bigger impact on Amtrak, the IDIG acknowledged. “Given the growing congestion on the entire freight railroad network, the more likely explanation for poor on-time performance may be the difference in corporate priorities between freight carriers and Amtrak and the inability of Amtrak’s incentive payments to promote better on-time performance, “ the report said.

“If it made financial sense for the railroads, they would provide the service to capture these payments,” the report said. “However, according to management at the railroads we interviewed, the scheduling Amtrak requires does not fit their freight transportation operations, and the costs that would be incurred for such scheduling exceed the amount of the incentives.

Without “sufficient slow order data, [the Federal Railroad Administration] cannot determine whether the use of slow orders has a bearing on rail service and congestion or seek the appropriate accommodations from the railroads, “ OIG said.

Via Rail Business

hopper car. These ex-Conrail cars have been used in ballast service.

KBSR - The #704 is on the property and is named “Larry”. Randall Olson, reported that KBS 705 and 706 were seen at Markham today (12/31), facing north. They’re named “Neil” and “Tyler”. They should be delivered the first week of January.

To date we have received over \$300 in donations to the Chapter. The officers and staff want to thank those that have financially supported the Chapter and the

museum. We have several tasks that we want to undertake this spring at the museum and the funds will help make that happen.

For you UP fans, thanks to the Union Pacific legal staff you will be paying more for your models and railroadiana that is marked UP or any predecessor railroad (SP, MoPac, D&RGW, TP, CNW, etc.). More next month.

2004 DUES DUE

UP Challenger to make month-long sojourn to Super Bowl

OMAHA, Nebr. - Union Pacific's 4-6-6-4 3985 will make a nine-state, 3500-mile tour beginning January 12 from its home in Cheyenne, Wyo., to Houston, Texas, arriving on January 23, when it will go on public display during Super Bowl XXXVIII activities. No public riders are planned, but en route, the locomotive will be on display in Kansas City and St. Louis, Mo., and Pine Bluff and North Little Rock, Ark. The 3985 will leave Houston February 3 and return to Cheyenne February 12.

The 3985 was built in 1943 for fast freight service. It was retired in 1959 and later put on display by the Cheyenne depot. In 1981, it was restored to running condition by UP employee volunteers for special service.

Thursday, January 15

Depart: 8:00 a.m. Kansas City

Arrive: 11:00 a.m. Marshall - service locomotive
North Columbus St.
Depart: 11:30 a.m.

Arrive: 1:00 p.m. Jefferson City - service
locomotive
UP depot - 301 State St.
Depart: 1:45 p.m.

Arrive: 4:00 p.m. St. Louis -
1200 Central Industrial Ave.,
Between Grand and Vandeventer.

On Public Display Friday and Saturday.

Sunday, January 18

Depart: 8:00 a.m. St. Louis

Arrive: 11:30 a.m. Gorham, Ill. - service locomotive
Depart: 12:01 p.m.

Arrive: 3:00 p.m. Bernie, Mo. -
Drake Street

For the complete month-long schedule and a route map, go to the [Union Pacific website](#).



V-Scale Railroading

Modeling or just faking it?

By Doug Nipper

Since many of our readers are model railroaders, and one of the principal features of our museum is the model railroad, I thought I'd share my recent experiences with a computer simulation program and compare it to conventional modeling. In the title of this article, V-scale stands for virtual scale. Virtual worlds and models created on computers.

Microsoft Train Simulator, hereafter referred to as the program, was released back in 1999. It has since had several minor updates, but the next major release of version 2 has been pushed back from this month to sometime later this year, or possibly in early 2005. Although fans are anxiously awaiting the new version, many people are still hard at work creating new add-ons and enhancements to the original product.

The program would not be where it is today without the efforts of thousands of sim users all over the world. The stock installation gives you seven territories, known as routes, only two of which are in the U.S. But in the four plus years that the program has been out in the hands of users, hundreds of new routes have been created as well as thousands of new cars, locomotives, and scenery and detail items. In fact, without these user-created add-ons and even external programs to enhance the experience, I doubt it would enjoy the popularity that it currently does. This is a bit contrary to Microsoft's normal proprietary software mantra, but here is their own take on it:

An open architecture, and tools that encourage enthusiasts, railroad clubs/historical societies, and third-party developers to customize and extend the product by creating new trains, routes, scenery, and challenges, many of which will be available for download from the Internet.

Now, my own experience began about a year ago when fellow member Allen Cooke got a copy of the program as a gift. I saw the program run on his PC, and borrowed his CD's for an "evaluation" on my own machine. I have since bought my own copy (it's only \$20!) and upgraded to a computer that can make the most of the game. The hardware available today has caught up with what the program is capable of at the best screen resolutions and animation levels.

Like any computer program, there is a bit of a learning curve to be able to operate a simulated train over a given stretch of virtual railroad. Thankfully, there are some simple tutorials that you can use that walk you through each step. Although you can operate most functions by moving the various levers and buttons on the screen with your mouse, the real power comes in learning the keyboard shortcuts. A company called Rail Driver has even come up with a Desktop Train Cab Controller, a mock-up of a modern cab unit's front panel. The levers and buttons interface with the program to give you an even more realistic "feel" of driving a train. (It can also be interfaced with most DCC systems for "real" model railroads.)

Once you've operated a few trains over the BNSF Marias Pass, and some hotshot passenger jobs on the Northeast Corridor, you'll be asking what else can it do for those who prefer stateside railroading. And this is where the real power of the open architecture comes into play. Log on to www.train-sim.com and just see what's available. It's quite staggering. I recently downloaded the Monon middle and southern divisions route, and it blew me away. Operating semaphores and illuminated switchstands that rotate when you throw the turnout. Working flashers and even wig-wags at some crossings. Vehicles that stop for you and back up traffic until the caboose goes by. And mine branches, sidings and spurs enough to take months to see them all.

The drawback, though, about installing custom routes and other folks' rolling stock is that you have to be pretty proficient with downloading files, unzipping the contents and placing those files into the proper directories. Someone with decent computer skills will do OK, but if you just got your first PC for Christmas then you'd better stick to the stock routes for a while.

The real challenges for advanced users get into three areas, and I'll list them in ascending order of difficulty:

- Activity and consist creation
- Locomotive and rolling stock creation and "skinning" (painting).
- Route creation

If you just use stock equipment and routes, or even custom ones that you downloaded, you can still spend a lot of time creating new "activities" for operation. Place cars at various points on the route, create pickup and setout orders, and define opposing AI (artificial intelligence) trains to give you some meets along your way. The default territories come with some basic activities, many of which don't take much time to complete and use only a fraction of the route's available trackage. But you can go as far as you want, remembering that it can take several hours to complete a 100-mile run (and it really does feel like you've made the trip afterwards).

The next step up is rolling stock. Like most computer 3D graphics, models are created using a so-called wire-frame construction method. Skins are then applied to these frames for the complete look of the model. While it takes special 3D software to create the basic structures, the skins are easily modified with simple paint programs. This means that once someone created an SW1200, you could break it down and extract the skins to re-paint them for your own road. Some designers even provide gray undecorated skins with their model packages just for easy re-painting.

If you're really into self-torture, then the ultimate challenge is creating your own route. You must have or develop good mapping skills and an excellent sense of spatial dynamics. If that isn't enough to scare you off, then I don't know what is. Beware!

The only thing really lacking as opposed to other modern games is multi-player capability. Microsoft's sister program, Flight Simulator, does have this feature. A group of players can connect to a central server over the Internet, and they can see and interact with each other in a virtual airspace. There are some inherent problems doing the same thing for a railroad simulation, like the need for a centralized dispatcher, but I'm sure that these issues will be addressed in future versions. In the model railroad club of the future, you might just sit down at one of several computers that are part of a local area network (LAN). Each player would see his or her part of the virtual world, and interact with other players and the dispatcher as needed.

In summary, this is a very intriguing program that's getting better by the day. Is it modeling? I'm not sure. But most model railroads I've seen don't give you the ability to jump in the cab, operate the controls and hear the engine and whistle noises. In the next instant, you can jump back to a view of the caboose, from the caboose, or even get a lineside railfan's view. This is realism that only V-scale can achieve.

I leave you with a top ten list that puts it all into perspective.

Top ten reasons Microsoft Train Simulator is better than model railroading

By Robert Murphy

10. When the train derails, you can reset Train-Sim without the sickening thud of a \$700 dollar brass locomotive hitting the concrete floor

9. Marias Pass will fit in your computer, it definitely won't fit in your basement.

8. If your run is 34 miles, it takes an hour in a straight line, not 68 laps around the layout.

7. Train-simmers give away their cars and locomotives for free - and keep them for themselves. Thanks guys!!!

6. Your computer can be used for a hundred other things when you're not running trains. And it collects dust just as well as a model railroad.

5. An install of Train-Sim takes 5 minutes, an install of a model railroad takes 5 years.

4. You can shop for new cars and locos without leaving your computer, and if you don't like what you get, it was free to begin with.

3. You can move Train-Sim to the new house in one easy trip.

2. The track is always clean enough to run trains.

And the number one reason Train-Sim is better than a model railroad: It costs \$50, about \$9950 less than a model railroad.

An ex-Model Railroader.

You will note several articles by members of the Chapter. Your editor could always use a story from you to add to the issue. I can scan in typed articles or best if you have a word processor save the article in ASCII text or Word format, that way we can bring it directly into the newsletter. How about some of your memories like Art has been doing over the past few years. Modeling or railroad, I look forward to your participation.

Rick