

FIRST CLASS MAIL

"THE DANVILLE FLYER"

DANVILLE IL 61834-1013

P.O. BOX 1013

NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DANVILLE JUNCTION CHAPTER



The Chapter's Wabash Caboose was acquired in 1988, repainted and dedicated in 1990, and then partially repainted in 1992 for the dedication of the Monticello Railway Museum's F-7 #1189. Since then, it has seen regular service at Monticello, and is starting to show the wear. Join us this year in rejuvenating both the exterior and interior. 8-15-1992 photo by Rick Schroeder.

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 \$15.00 for Chapter membership in addition to \$17.00 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 Conrail, in Danville, IL, with lunch beginning at 1:00 PM Central Time followed by meeting and program.

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Volume 31

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Number 3

Coming Events

March 14, 1999

MARCH MEETING FOR CHAPTER. MOVED DUE TO CONFLICT WITH URBANASHOW.

March 20 & 21, 1999

Urbana, Illinois - Annual Model Train Show and Swap meet at Lincoln Square Mall, downtown Urbana. 10 AM - 6 PM on Saturday, 11 AM - 5 PM on Sunday, admission free.

April 17, 1999

Chicago and Eastern Illinois Historical Society meeting, Danville — tours of area, swap meet, meeting and slide shows. Contact Bob McQuown.

April 24 & 25, 1999

Monticello, IL - Photographers Specials, Wabash F7 1189 with freight train and CNR FPA 6789 with passenger runs. Early to late.

June 26 & 27, 1999

Galesburg, Illinois - Annual Railroad Days - swap show, displays, rides.

July 28 - August 1, 1999

Chicago Area Garden Railroad Society, Garden Railway Convention, check your magazines for details.

August 14 & 15, 1999

Monticello, Illinois - Annual Caboose Trains

Next Meeting

*The next meeting will be Sunday, **March 14, 1998**, at the Pizza Inn Restaurant, Gilbert Street (Illinois Rt. 1) and Williams Street.*

MEETING - This month we will discuss final plans for the Urbana Train Show at Lincoln Square Mall, is the third weekend this year. We look forward to having you attend the show, either day, and assist at the sales area.

CABOOSE - Last month we discussed restoration of the Wabash caboose, #2824, located at the Monticello Railway Museum. The caboose is in need of



painting, both inside and out. The caboose is inside at the present time and we need to get repairs completed prior to April 24. Doug Butzow and Bill Pearson have looked into the roof and step repairs. Some welding will be needed on both locations. We will be setting up work days at this meeting, probably on Saturday, so everyone can attend.

PROGRAM — Last month we had a Conrail program. In addition, Larry brought slides of the early construction of the layout at the depot. Brought back a lot of memories of layout construction with people that are no longer with us. This month we invite you to bring some slides you want to show the group - any subject will do. Rick will bring the projector, stack loader and screen. You supply the slides.

NEW MEMBERS - We have a new member this month. Wayne Stump joins the group after checking out the home page. Wayne will be retiring soon from Northwest Airlines and wants to begin construction of a layout in his Minnesota home. He lives at 13000 Hershey Way in Apple Valley, apparently near our other "north country" member, Randy Rippy. Wayne is formally from Moweaqua, Illinois, just south of Decatur. Glad to see Wayne is getting "out of the sky and back on the ground" with trains. Our other "new" member is Allen's son Ned. Ned has been a museum member for years and is now joining the NRHS. Ned resides in the Chicago land area in Bensonville.

Latta Laments Special Spring Hill Tower Closing Edition

The Last Levers on the Soo

By Mike Dettmers

I awoke the morning of Thursday, January 21 to the sound of thunder and the beating of rain against my bedroom window. This is the kind of sleeping weather I really enjoy. I managed to crack open one eye and locate the alarm clock. The time was 5:10 AM. I laid there for a while pondering

the verities of life, when I reluctantly recalled that this would be the big day. All of the neckties from Minneapolis would be coming to oversee the coming of a new age: the closing of Spring Hill tower.

Spring Hill tower isn't really a remarkable tower by any means. More like a plain Jane box on a high foundation, it is really a classic piece of understatement. But as I lay there in bed I couldn't help but think that one more piece of history would fall silent. A working tower is really a sight to behold. There is always activity, from the ringing of the phone to the chatter of the radio to the banter of the block phone. And in days past, to the clicking of the Underwood as Form 19's were issued. Those unwieldy levers would also see their last use on this day as well.

So I finally managed to prepare myself for work, all the time wondering what this whole adventure would be like. I have never been a party to the closing of a tower, and there was a certain amount of anxiety involved in this as well. I drove over to the tower and prepared myself for a new adventure, although in reality the adventure had begun the previous Monday. Communications and Signal forces had been busily preparing for the Thursday cut over by working ahead on the existing radios and manual interlockings at Blackhawk, Beehunter, and Elnora. This involves cutting in a parallel line, activating it, and then at the time of cut over, deactivating the lines from Spring Hill. It sounds simple, but the reality is that all the little glitches and foo-foo's are found at that time. And while all of that preparation went fairly well, the remote activation of Belt Junction and Spring Hill was far from fluid. Belt Junction, it was hoped, could be activated and tested on Monday with Spring Hill coming on Tuesday. Neither of those activation dates were met. Problems with installing, adjusting, and activating the power switches as well as the track circuits put both of those dates out of the picture. So it was decided to proceed with the cut over and fix those plants as time would permit. In the case of the CSX, they went with suspended signals and block authority in both interlockings. This meant all mainline movements had to obtain the blocks, in this case the Belt and Spring blocks, before moving through the

interlockings. They then had to regard all signal aspects as the most restrictive signal they could give, and obtain permission from us to go past them in compliance with the rules. Sounds easy enough, but in practice it was a continual headache. We would be trying to give track warrants while the CSX trains were continually trying to get permission.

So as I pulled up to the tower, the C&S forces were all in place awaiting their 15 minutes of fame. As I unfolded from my car I happened to notice that the outside light was still on. We normally left it on so nobody would trip on the steps leading to the tower door. These steps were fashioned from ties and had a tendency to become slippery in all but the driest of weather. And irony hit me that I would be the last one to turn that light off for the last time. Man, talk about feeling the weight of history! So anyhow, I make the stratospheric climb up to the heights of this old tower and already I can tell it will be interesting. The neckties are on the phone and the 3rd trick guy is giving me the look of pity. So I go through the turn over procedure as always and prepare to take on this challenge head on.

The first course of action is to get all mainline movements off the main. In this case there is the XL working back to Latta, so once he clears up at Latta things will be ready. So I fiddle about, and when he finally does clear up the show is then ready to begin. Now the neckties all begin to coordinate, and this really scares me. So the instructions are given: transfer all pertinent train data to the chief at Latta so he can begin a duplicate train sheet. OK, so we do this until he has a mirror copy of the sheet I have in front of me. Next chore is to transfer all CTWC authorities in the brain box to Latta so he can make a mirror image of the CTWC. Once this is done, the C&S gurus bring the circuits at Latta on line and take down the ones at Spring Hill. So the CTC goes down, the CTWC is shut down, and finally the radios go silent. After about 20 minutes the word is given: mission accomplished. The neckties all congratulate each other, hop in their planes, and zoom back to the cities. We, however, are stuck with a few minor problems. The Spring Hill radio is dead. The interlockings at Spring Hill and the Belt still don't work,

TOY TRUNK RAILROAD *by Erik Sansom*



and the new phone lines for voice communications have yet to be cut over by GTE. And my instructions are to remain at Spring Hill until told to go home or until my hours expire, whichever comes first. So now I have no authority to issue any kind of warrants, and my primary function is now to act as an operator and flag trains through the interlockings. OK, I can handle that. But wait. I have no radio capable of communicating with the C&S forces to alert them that a CSX train is coming. I call the super chief at Latta and make this minor detail known, and offer to get my own portable. This is deemed acceptable and the day is saved.

Meanwhile, once the tower is officially done, the B&B forces sweep in and begin dismantling all that they wish to save. So now I have to flag CSX trains with hammers and power drills running in the background. So as I flag those big CSX trains across, I am once again an operator and for one brief moment there is a touch of happiness. However, it is short lived as the phone begins to ring with calls I cannot answer or help the caller with. INRD trains looking for a warrant, pool crews looking for orders, and the like. So I attempt to help as best I can knowing most of what I do today will be of little consequence, other than the flagging.

After the B&B glacier passes it's just me, my portable, and that tower.

It really is a strange feeling to be in a tower for the last time. All the familiar sights and

sounds are gone, and just the smell remains. As the trains plod by the tower it still shimmies from side to side and the occasional CSX train will give an extra toot but otherwise it's like being in a once important place with only the memories to keep you company. Even the B&B gorillas take time out to give the old place one last examination. Being the last lever tower on the Soo property, those levers and their workings elicits some questions and examination from all in their presence. And now there is no one to answer them.

It's about 1500 now and I inform Latta that the witching hour has arrived and I will be looking to leave shortly. Well, amidst the confusion the edict comes down: stay until 1530, which is the longest I can stay before it becomes an FRA issue. Hey, it's OT and I'm on the gold standard now! Great! I'll gladly flag CSX trains until 1530. At about 1445 I called Haley to inform them that after 1500 nobody will be at the tower and if the CSX trains need to contact the dispatcher they should switch to 44 and dial in 182. Well, at about 1505 the CSX trainmaster calls to inquire about the move, and I tell Dale that we are out of the tower for good after 1530. He is a bit concerned since he claims he knew nothing about this move. Well, the super chief at Latta claims they have been informed all along so I really don't know who to believe. But then he asks if 123 and 127, his hot afternoon tote trains will get through. Of course, I assure him they will and proceed to give them authority. I then call Latta at 1525 to transfer the authorities I have given and

pack up my goodies. At 1530 I grab my bag of tricks and off I go. I say goodbye to the C&S guys working out in the bungalow and in one final act turn out the light at Spring Hill for the last time.

The Beginning of the New Age

So after I sit in the car and ponder the enormity of the deed which has just been done, I drive to Latta to see this new setup in action. I arrive to a scene of unmitigated and absolute railroad chaos. Trains are calling in from all points of the Soo Line globe, the phones (which are now working) are ringing off the hook, and the super chief is "supervising", which is a tactical way of saying butting in and getting in the way. RLK, the afternoon guy, is being clobbered from all sides. You would think that someone would try to keep the traffic to a bare minimum while we make the adjustment but this is not the case. As with any situation, we are not even a part of the equation, and we take the brunt of this philosophy. As it came to be, for the next 4 days we endured the weekend from hell, with not only a veritable plethora of extra moves but also without some of the tools we need most dearly: telephone lists, functioning radios, and working CTC. And I guess the most irritating part of it was that the high priced talent never even considered giving us time to set up office. We essentially went from the tower straight to Latta without any sort of break-in period. And the transition was at a sprint rather than a walk.

It was one of those weekends to forget. It seemed like everything we touched turned to...well, it wasn't gold. And to top things off we were abandoned by anyone who could help. So it became truly miserable. And as in any good catastrophe, the neckties lose all sense of the situation. So when they took a look at the situation they decided to put us on the spot. After all, the whole move was so well organized and executed by those very same managers that any failures have to be because those stupid dispatchers just don't really know anything at all. And the solution really is very simple: just kick those stupid bumpkins a few times until they get off their dead behinds and do something. People sometimes say "Mike, you're just so negative." Yes, when I have to deal with these low-rent clowns my patience runs so very thin indeed. But I digress...

After the Flood

The sub runs itself. We really just insure that things keep moving. And the sub will and does achieve a certain level of equilibrium. After this flood of change has subsided, we have begun to see like return to normal. We finally got our feet back on the ground, which has made the neckties happy. But as I sit at that morphodite desk dealing with a meddling super chief and constant interruptions of the curious, I really miss that old tower.

I guess I just prefer to be alone. I spend almost all of my free time alone anyway, and that old tower was like a friend. Many hectic hours as well as quiet moments were the norm. And while that tower was old and dark and not real comfortable with respect to modern amenities, I miss being alone with my thoughts. Sitting at the desk on a dark and rainy Saturday night, listening to the train drum lightly against the roof and windows I am relaxed. The creaking of the floors and the shuttering of the walls as winds massage the tower. The sounds of crickets and frogs abound on summer evenings with the windows open and the gentle breeze carrying aromas of summer. All of these have been lost.

I am happy to have had the opportunity to work in an interlocking tower and enjoy the quiet solitude of that situation. It has

become increasingly obvious to me that the industry is moving towards a micro-managed way of conducting business, and having these "unsupervised" personnel runs contrary to that way of thinking. So we are to have meddling managers and sloppy supervisors watch our every move and second-guess our every decision. We must tolerate and endure this degradation of our craft from all corners of the industry. We are rapidly becoming set up to take the "hits" and the brunt of their mistakes without the ability to guide our own destiny. To me, that old tower was the last link to those better times when we were allowed to do our job like we should.

In the final analysis, this industry is undergoing change. Some believe for the better, some for the worse. But it is change nonetheless, and towers are victims of this change. Years down the road those towers will be revered for their link to a much simpler time when railroading had integrity and a clearer purpose. With NAFTA, World Economics, and the ever increasing politicization of this world those simpler days have a real powerful appeal. I just hope these days are not soon forgotten.

(Editor: I thought you would enjoy this piece. For many of us it brings back a lot of memories of tower closings, whether you were an operator or railfan. Be it Hoopeston, North Yard, Champaign Tower, Tuscola, Tolono or any tower across the country, the feelings are the same. A friend is gone and no Mike, they won't be soon forgotten. - Rick Schroeder)

Conrail and Holes Creek Bridge Replacement

In March the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers will begin replacement of the existing four-span concrete bridge over Holes Creek in West Carrollton, Ohio. The bridge, constructed in 1906 and 1907, was the second bridge at this site. The original bridge was a single-track structure with the present bridge handling two tracks of

the Conrail mainline from Cincinnati to Columbus, Ohio.

The bridge has been a point of debris pileup during flooding. Water backs up behind the bridge and floods the adjacent properties. For the last 25 years the county and municipalities have wanted to solve the problem. The corps became involved as the design and administrative arm of the project. Last fall a contract was awarded to replace the structure with a new dingle span double track bridge.

WVP Corporation, a division of URS Greiner Woodward Clyde, is providing in office review for Conrail, and later Norfolk Southern, on the project. In addition, we will provide field personnel during the installation of sheeting, piling, cofferdams, and abutment construction and during construction of the new bridge. Utility relocation work has delayed the project, originally scheduled to start January 4th, and with planned starting date now set for around March 15.

The contractor will install sheeting parallel to the track behind the existing abutment to remove the wingwalls, install piling and construct new abutments. On one side of the bridge they will construct a temporary support structure. On this structure they will construct the new steel through-plate girder bridge. At the present time the plans call for dynamiting the existing structure on Labor Day and rolling the new bridge in place. Norfolk Southern will only allow a 24-hour shutdown of the Cincinnati Line, thus requiring bridge removal and roll-in within that period of time.

Delays in start of construction may move that roll-in to Thanksgiving weekend. The progress of construction, once the contractor begins this March, will determine if they can still meet the Labor Day schedule.

BNSF, UP to create three more coordinated train dispatching centers

Burlington Northern Santa Fe and Union Pacific on February 8 confirmed long-rumored plans and jointly announced an agreement to establish three more regional coordinated train-dispatching centers. Touted as “the largest railroad-coordinated dispatching agreement in history,” it is modeled after the one in Spring, Texas, in north-suburban Houston, set up to help UP extricate itself from the post-Southern Pacific traffic-flow meltdown on the Gulf Coast.

The three new centers will cover southern California, the Kansas City area, and the Powder River Basin of Wyoming. The goal of the new agreement, according to UP Chairman and CEO Dick Davidson and BNSF Chairman, President and CEO Robert Krebs, is to improve rail service in three of the country’s busiest rail centers.

“The spectacular success of our joint dispatching center in Spring, Texas, has greatly improved train operations in the Texas Gulf Coast region,” said Dennis Duffy, UP executive vice president-operations, in the joint press release. “It is clear we can use the same approach to overcome difficult operating issues in other areas of the country which have similar unique strategic circumstances.” Translation: Look for more of these.

“The improvements we have seen as a result of the Spring center confirm our belief that in regions where two or more railroads share track and the efficiency of their operations are dependent upon each other, improved cooperation and communication in the dispatching process are keys to enhancing the level of service our customers expect,” said Matt Rose, BNSF senior vice president and chief operations officer.

The agreement actually establishes only two new coordinated dispatching centers, in San Bernardino, Calif., and Kansas City, Mo. UP dispatchers supporting the

UP line from North Platte, Nebr., into the Powder River Basin will move from the Harriman Dispatching Center in Omaha to join BNSF dispatchers at BNSF’s counterpart Network Operations Center in Fort Worth, Texas.

Other railroads, both commuter and freight, operating within the territories that will be dispatched by the new centers will be extended an invitation to participate in the coordinated operations. When Spring was established in March 1998, Kansas City Southern was invited to participate, but declined. The Spring center controls UP and BNSF trains between Houston and New Orleans over more than 340 miles of track, as well as track in the Houston area. Supervised by a neutral officer, the facility includes a consolidated UP/BNSF operation where dispatchers from each railroad control their respective lines along the entire Gulf Coast region.

The San Bernardino center, scheduled to be launched in May, will coordinate UP and BNSF train operations in the Los Angeles area as well as the Cajon and Tehachapi mountain passes in California. BNSF currently dispatches trains over Cajon Pass, which provides access to southern California from the east. Tehachapi Pass, between Mojave and Bakersfield, a key north-south route, is controlled by UP with BNSF trains running on trackage rights. The UP agreement to use Santa Fe over Cajon Pass began in 1905, while SP’s Tehachapi line was opened to Santa Fe in 1899.

The Kansas City dispatching center, to be housed at BNSF’s former Santa Fe facility at Argentine Yard in Kansas City, Kans., is expected to become operational during the third quarter of 1999. It will control train traffic in the K.C. metropolitan area, the nation’s second busiest rail center with lines from BNSF, UP, and other railroads converging from all points of the compass. BNSF and UP each have major switching yards in the K.C. area, and their main lines alone radiate from a dozen directions. K.C. is also served by Norfolk Southern, Kansas City Southern, and

three regional carriers.

Wyoming’s Powder River Basin is the nation’s largest source of low-sulfur coal. The two railroads began sharing trackage in the basin in 1984. BNSF controls the jointly used Orin Line, which gives UP access to the basin from the south (BNSF accesses it from both north and south). Record amounts of capital have been spent in recent years to add track capacity on the busy Orin Line, which now is all double track with some triple track. It is expected the new agreement will help both railroads meet anticipated growth demands. UP is already adding personnel in the Fort Worth center.

The Spring center has proved the coordinated approach can work, and by almost any measure, Spring has been a success, say the two railroads. For example, blocked sidings between Houston and New Orleans were reduced from a daily average of 6 to 0 within the first 60 days of the center’s opening, leading to increased velocity and improved schedule adherence. Trains going “dead on the law,” meaning those whose crews have reached the maximum number of 12 continuous hours worked under the federal Hours of Service Act and, therefore, must stop until the crews are relieved, have been

drastically reduced from a high of 64 per month in May 1998 to a total of 15 in January 1999.

TRAINS On-Line posted 2/10/99

Amtrak to support CN/IC merger

WASHINGTON, MONTREAL and CHICAGO, Feb. 5, 1999 - Amtrak, the Canadian National Railway Company (CN) and Illinois Central Corporation (IC) announced today that they have reached an agreement regarding on-time handling of Amtrak trains on CN/IC tracks, making way for Amtrak’s support of the CN and IC merger.

February 28, 1827: The first U.S. railroad chartered to carry passengers and freight, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Company, was incorporated.

The agreement provides for improved communication between Amtrak and CN/IC and the two freight railroads' commitment to continuously improve the on-time performance of Amtrak passenger trains on their lines in the U.S.

"The objective of this agreement is to assure consistent on-time performance of Amtrak's trains on CN/IC," said Travis C. Hinton, chief operating officer of Amtrak Intercity, the business unit that operates most of Amtrak's long-distance trains, as well as short- and medium-distance trains emanating from Chicago. "Operating on schedule is a key component of good customer service, and we believe this agreement will help us improve in that area. It is on this basis that Amtrak supports the merger."

Jack T. McBain, CN's executive vice-president, operations, said: "Amtrak is an important customer of ours and we are keenly aware of the importance Amtrak places on on-time performance. This agreement should benefit both Amtrak and CN/IC."

Ed Harris, vice-president, operations, at Illinois Central, said: "IC looks forward to continuing its already good relationship with Amtrak following the merger of CN and IC."

In recognition of the settlement agreement among the carriers, Amtrak has agreed to support the CN/IC merger transaction and withdraw its submission to the U.S. Surface Transportation Board (STB). Amtrak had asked the STB to impose certain conditions on its approval of the transaction.

Amtrak News Release



THIS IS YOUR LAST ISSUE OF THE "DANVILLE FLYER" IF YOU HAVE NOT RENEWED FOR 1999. WE WILL MISS YOU.

NARP Favors Stepped-Up Investment In Midwest Intercity Passenger Rail Corridors

Washington—The National Association of Railroad Passengers strongly supports aggressive investment to improve frequencies, speeds and comfort levels for intercity rail travelers in the Midwest. We applaud the \$25 million commitment Amtrak announced today as a vital early step. This includes \$5 million for a South Chicago rail connection giving Carbondale/New Orleans trains direct access to Chicago's Union Station (ending a circuitous back-up move), and a total of \$5 million for important station work in St. Louis, Kansas City and Milwaukee. That improvements are so badly needed is largely a reflection of the fact that the federal government provides a generous share of funding—usually 80%—for major state highway and aviation projects but does not do this for rail projects.

Indeed, Congress repeatedly has refused to allow states to use flexible surface transportation funds for intercity passenger rail, although these funds can be used for most other types of surface transportation, including hiker-biker trails. The one "crack in the wall" is that Vermont gained full flexibility to use these funds for intercity passenger rail in the omnibus law Congress passed late last year.

The "base" of federal funding from which we must build includes winning these key items in the FY 2000 transportation appropriations bill:

* Full funding of Amtrak's \$571 million request;

* Full funding of the federal nationwide high speed rail program at \$89 million (including \$34 million authorized for Fiscal 1998 and 1999 but never appropriated).

The high speed funding is divided into three categories: planning, hazard-elimination work and technology improvements.

The President will announce his Fiscal 2000 budget request in early February. Full funding for both Amtrak and high

speed rail would make it more likely that Midwestern rail travelers will see visible improvements in the near future and would encourage states to provide more funds.

The American people repeatedly have indicated their strong support for modern passenger trains. The public will be well served if today's event leads to concerted action by Amtrak, the federal government and the states to create a system that will command the ridership forecast in the Midwest Regional Rail Initiative's report.

From NARP - January 28, 1999

Amtrak, USPS team up on display train

Amtrak has painted P42 GE "Genesis" diesel No. 100 in a special scheme for the United States Postal Service, to haul the "Celebrate the Century" advertising-campaign train commemorating postal service during the 20th century. There is no mistaking the unit, painted a bright yellow and decorated with huge cancellation marks and stamps.

Amtrak workforces at the shop in Bear, Del., did the work. Private shops similarly repainted two Amtrak cars, a baggage car and an Amfleet coach, to accompany the train, which also has an ex-Southern Railway Post Office car [last week's "News Wire"], still painted in traditional Pullman green.

Although USPS has yet to release any official information on the train, it is known to have kicked off its tour in Savannah, Ga., and USPS officials are reported to have said the colors were to resemble a manila envelope complete with postmarks and stamps.

TRAINS On-Line - posted 2/10/99

Kansas short lines to combine under one banner

Central Kansas Railway (CKRY) and Kansas Southwestern Railway (KSW), OmniTrax railroads based in Wichita, soon will be combining operations under the CKRY banner, according to the Wichita Business Journal. Although five consecutive good wheat harvests beginning in fall 1996 should have helped traffic, near record-low wheat prices prevented that.

Despite the paradox, OmniTrax sees promise in the two lines, and major physical-plant improvements are on the way, according to Bill Frederick, president of both CKRY and KSW.

As part of the city-spawned rerouting of train traffic through downtown Wichita, the two short lines will spend \$1.2 million in installing a new concrete bridge to replace that one that spans the Arkansas River near Lincoln Street and lay about 7 miles of new track.

Further, meeting truck competition through better service is obliging the lines to also begin the task of refurbishing their 48 secondhand GP7 and GP9 diesels. "If we've had a boom [in business], then the trucking industry has had an explosion," Frederick told the Business Journal. "We're talking two or three percentage points [gain for railroads] in a market that has almost doubled in the last 10 years," he added.

The locomotive work will cover everything from exterior appearance to traction motors. Refurbishing costs are expected to near \$3 million, small vs. about \$1.4 million for a new unit. Gone will be the red-white-and blue colors of KSW, as well as the red with white lettering scheme of CKRY, in favor of a Newport blue body paint and lettering, with a center white stripe and red reflective striping.

CKRY also will spend another \$800,000 to \$900,000 to add to its fleet of 300 grain cars. By having upgraded locomotives and additional freight and grain cars, Frederick believes, the ability of his company to meet periods of high-demand will be in-

creased.

In 1998, it wasn't so much the lack of equipment for hauling grain as it was the high demand for it. Combined, CKRY and KSW hauled roughly 40,000 hopper cars, or 4 million tons, of grain, in 1998. Though grain accounts for 40 percent of its business, CKRY isn't solely dependent on the volatile commodity. CKRY, founded in January 1993 by OmniTRAX, also hauls milo, salt, liquid petroleum gas, and building products, while KSW, purchased by OmniTRAX from Union Pacific in 1992, hauls many of the same products as well as chemicals. The companies' biggest customers include Farmland Industries, Vulcan Chemicals, Koch Industries Inc., and Weyerhaeuser Recycling.

Despite the relatively good times, KSW keeps an eye out on things, and as a result of poor business, has filed to abandon two portions of railroad totaling 64 miles, 20 miles of its Iuka Branch between Olcott and Iuka, and 44 miles of its Stafford Branch between Olcott and Radium.

TRAINS On-Line, posted 1/7/99

Amtrak plans four-day transcontinental reefer service

As railroads have been exiting the refrigerated boxcar business in favor of refrigerated truck trailers carried piggyback, or refrigerated containers, Amtrak is bucking the trend by investing in it, reports Traffic World. Taking advantage of its fast, scheduled passenger service, Amtrak's Mail & Express business unit is hooking up with shipper Sunkist Growers Inc.

Amtrak will offer an express four-day, cross-country service for perishable goods with the purchase of a fleet of eight refrigerated boxcars, or "reefers," from an undetermined supplier. Bids are being finalized, according to an Amtrak spokesman.

Sunkist has signed up for five of the cars and will start testing the service in May when Amtrak expects to take delivery of

the cars. Amtrak entered the temperature-sensitive commodities arena a year ago when it purchased eight ReeferRailer refrigerated Railvan trailers from Wabash National Corp. Since then, "the service has gained the overwhelming support of numerous temperature-controlled shippers who view it as offering a clear-cut advantage over trucking schedules and prices in many lanes," Amtrak told TW.

The 70-ton reefers will be rebuilt to allow them to be used on Amtrak's high-speed passenger trains, which are approved for speeds up to 90 mph on some routes. Improvements include high-speed trucks, upgraded braking system, tight-lock couplers, and state-of-the-art refrigeration units.

One reason Amtrak is going with reefers, instead of truck trailers, is that it is limited in the number of cars it can attach to its passenger trains. Doing so enables Amtrak to haul three times the capacity of comparable freight via TOFC.

Sunkist will use two passenger trains to move citrus products to the East, the Southwest Chief from Los Angeles to Chicago, with connections to Philadelphia, and the Sunset Limited from L.A. to Jacksonville, Fla.

A desire to increase its transportation options prompted Sunkist to test the new service. "Trucks get into seasonal shortages, and are a favorite whipping boy of legislators," Sunkist transportation manager Bob Smith told TW. "Not to mention that, even though fuel prices are low right now, they can jump up at the blink of an eye. We ship a lot of product, so the more ways we can move it, the better. We'll try it for a couple of months to see how it goes."

If all goes according to plan, Amtrak should be truck-competitive with four-day transit times and five-day availability. "We figure six-day availability with intermodal, and if we make the cutoffs here in California and again in Chicago, it will frequently make it to the customer in five days. So intermodal service is pretty good too," said Smith.

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