

**BUYING SPREE: SHORT LINES CHANGE HANDS** p. 10

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**THE magazine of railroading**

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## From the Editor



### Carl Swanson

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**I**n an ideal universe, the 45-car carnival train currently parked on spur tracks near the headquarters of the James E. Strates Shows in Taft, Fla., would be getting ready for another season on the rails.

But the train isn't going anywhere. Barring a last-minute agreement with host railroad CSX, the carnival train, a Strates tradition, will remain behind and the show will hit the road in a fleet of trucks.

What's going on? Bill Stephens explains the considerations behind moving a tightly scheduled private train in his article starting on page 36.

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*Trains Magazine* (issn 0041-0934, usps 529-850) is published monthly by Kalmbach Media Co., 21027 Crossroads Circle, P.O. Box 1612, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612. Periodicals postage paid at Waukesha, Wis., and at additional offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *Trains*, P.O. Box 850, Lincolnshire, IL 60069. Canada Publication Mail Agreement #40010760.



**Sunset on the Railfan Road: Nebraska's U.S. Route 30 finds a long Union Pacific freight charging down the main.** Kevin Gilliam

## Hot Spots: New series hits the ground running

**WHETHER YOU ARE INTERESTED** in train-watching hot spots or tips on railfanning with kids (and/or dogs), you can find a few hidden gems in the Hot Spots section on Trains.com.

Railfan Road is a new digital-first series written by a 30-year veteran rail manager. In each piece, contributor John Friedmann shares his passion for traveling and railroads.

"For me, getting there is at least half and sometimes all of the fun," Friedmann says. "But when I'm on a trip, I hate to miss something interesting, so I've spent half a lifetime gathering information about railroad networks and operations, and wanted to share my travels and information with *Trains* readers."

He continues, "I've been surprised, though, about how much more I've learned writing about these roads even in places that I thought I knew very well."

There are roughly a dozen of these articles in motion, and they won't generally be about Interstate highways, so make sure to check out the first, on Nebraska's U.S. Route 30.

"I've found that U.S. or state highways are more likely to follow

the tracks, and I hope readers can use these guides to plan their own trips off the expressways."

To locate this section, click on the *Trains* tab and then on Railroads & Locomotives. — *Nastassia Putz, production editor*



**As the author notes, Union Pacific's triple-track main is a heck of a show for motorists on Nebraska's U.S. Route 30.** Kevin Gilliam

**Plus**

## Trains LIVE

**FOR MORE IN-DEPTH DISCUSSION** of all things trains, be sure to watch Trains LIVE on Trains.com. In each episode, host Bob Lettenberger, *Trains* associate editor, along with guest appearances from Bryson Sleppy, *Model Railroader* associate editor, take you behind the scenes to talk trains with guests from across the country. Recently Bob and Bryson talked with Ryan Gerhardt of the Black River & Western Steam

Trust, about what is required to complete the FRA 15-year inspection on BR&W No. 60. Also, follow Bob and Bryson through the Mad City Model Railroad Show. New video episodes of Trains LIVE are available every other Friday at 2 p.m. on Trains.com.

Bonus: Mikados, the next DVD in the *Great American Steam Locomotives* series, is now available at [Kalmbachhobbystore.com](http://Kalmbachhobbystore.com). Watch this episode of Trains LIVE for a sneak preview and conversation about this popular locomotive class with *Trains* Video Producer Kevin Gilliam.



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## Baltimore bridge disaster hits port, rail service

Collapse of Francis Scott Key Bridge to have long-term impact

▲ The cargo ship *Dali* remains entangled in the collapsed Francis Scott Key bridge after striking the bridge on March 26, 2024. The bridge collapse cut off the Port of Baltimore from shipping traffic. Sol S. Tucker

**THE TRAGIC COLLAPSE** of the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore after a March 26 ship allision closed the port indefinitely, prompting CSX and Norfolk Southern to help their coal, automotive, and international intermodal customers find other ways to and from tidewater.

Debris from the collapsed bridge blocked the Patapsco River ship channel that provides marine access to and from most of the Port of Baltimore's terminals. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers said it was aiming to fully restore port access by the end of May.

Baltimore is the top U.S. port for import and export of autos and farm and construction machinery, with rail playing an important role in both. The Tradepoint Atlantic terminal downstream from the bridge was unaffected and was handling some auto traffic diverted from blocked terminals. Some automakers detoured shipments to other East Coast ports.

Baltimore ranks No. 2 on the East Coast in coal export

tonnage. It largely handles coal mined in West Virginia and Pennsylvania, with CSX hauling coal to its Curtis Bay Piers and Norfolk Southern serving the Consol terminal. The bridge collapse prevents ships from reaching both facilities.

CSX initially said it had capacity to add to the coal stockpile at Curtis Bay. But the railroad was working with customers to shift coal exports to the Kinder Morgan Pier IX and Dominion Terminal Associates terminal in Newport News, Va. CSX CEO Joe Hinrichs, Chief Commercial Officer Kevin Boone, and Senior Vice President of Network Operations and Service Design Casey Albright visited the Newport News terminals and CSX port facilities just days after the bridge collapse.

"Given the tragedy in Baltimore, we are going to need to move more coal trains through Newport News ... and we wanted to make sure we connected with our team on the ground there to see how we can help," Hinrichs says.

NS on April 3 delivered its first coal train diverted from Baltimore to its Lambert's Point terminal in Norfolk, Va., and said it was helping its break bulk and roll-on/roll-off customers find alternatives, too.

Baltimore is not a major player in international intermodal traffic for CSX or NS. But less than a week after the collapse, CSX helped its steamship container line partners detour traffic, launching dedicated intermodal service linking Baltimore and the Port of New York and New Jersey. NS followed suit a few days later.

Short line Canton Railroad also serves the port. Paul Barnes, CEO of parent Canton Development, says the closure of port facilities will have a major impact on its rail traffic. "This will adversely impact the Canton Railroad specifically and Baltimore rail operations generally at least until the Port reopens," Barnes says. The railroad continues to interchange with CSX and NS for traffic bound to and from its domestic customers. — *Bill Stephens*



# FRA rule to require two-person crews

Unions cite safety in supporting new regulation; industry calls move unnecessary

**REACTIONS WERE BOTH** strong and predictable on April 2 when the Federal Railroad Administration issued a long-pending rule requiring two-person crews for most freight trains: Unions supported the new rule and, like the FRA, cited safety considerations. The rail industry's group, the Association of American Railroads, decried the move as unnecessary, saying there was no evidence two-person crews were safer than single-person operation.

"Common sense tells us that large freight trains, some of which can be over 3 miles long, should have at least two crew members on board — and now there's a federal regulation in place to ensure trains are safely staffed," Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg said in announcing the regulation. Eddie Hall, president of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen, had a similar reaction: "As trains, many carrying hazardous materials, have grown longer, crews should not be getting smaller."

The AAR, on the other hand, said the rule "has no proven connection to rail safety," and cited the industry training and investments in technology and infrastructure

as leading to a decrease in employee casualties (63%) and in train accidents (27%) since 2000. The organization also noted the FRA had dropped plans for a similar rule in 2019. The FRA Administrator at the time, Ron Batory, cited a study (paid for by the AAR) that found no conclusive proof that trains with two-person crews were safer than those with just one.

The FRA rule arrives in an environment where railroad safety remains under scrutiny following the February 2023 East Palestine derailment and hazardous chemical release. While federal legislation introduced in the wake of that incident remains in limbo, states have increasingly passed legislation addressing crew size, train length, and other aspects of rail operation. The ability of such state laws to withstand legal scrutiny, given federal primacy over matters of interstate commerce, remains to be seen.

The economic considerations for the two sides were, at best, inferred. For the unions, two-person crews protect jobs — or as the SMART-TD union put it, the rule "solidifies the role of freight conductors in



A BNSF Railway crewman boards an intermodal train during a crew change on the Chillicothe Subdivision in Chicago, Ill., on March 3, 2024. The FRA announced a new two-person crew rule in April. David Lassen

this country." Railroads, some of which have sought to experiment with ground-based conductors, face a new limitation on their ability to reduce labor costs — or, in the AAR's words, "the FRA's overreach ... will diminish the importance of collective bargaining by inserting the regulator between the parties." — *David Lassen*

# NS names new COO as proxy fight continues

Activist investors set goal of 57% operating ratio, plan full-fledged PSR approach

**WITH A MAY 9 SHAREHOLDER VOTE** looming, Norfolk Southern and activist investor Ancora Holdings sought to win support for their dueling visions of the railroad's future.

Ancora has been critical of the railroad's lagging financial and operational performance, as well as its response to the Feb. 3, 2023, hazardous materials wreck in East Palestine, Ohio. Cleveland-based Ancora wants to gain control of the NS board, replace CEO Alan Shaw with former UPS executive Jim Barber Jr., and name former CSX operations boss Jamie Boychuk as chief operating officer.

In a March letter to shareholders, Ancora said its plan to fully implement the low-cost Precision Scheduled Railroading operating model at NS would cut costs, focus on the most profitable merchandise traffic, and produce a 57% operating ratio within three

years. That would be a 10.4-point improvement over NS's 2023 operating ratio.

NS on March 20 named Canadian Pacific Kansas City Operations Executive John Orr as its chief operating officer. Orr brings Precision Scheduled Railroading operating experience, something that's coveted on Wall Street. He previously served as senior vice president and chief transportation officer at Canadian National.

In a bid to shore up investor support, NS in April pruned its intermodal network and made the operating ratio a key component of its executive compensation plans. NS eliminated 53 low-volume intermodal lanes — or 15% of its intermodal network — that had limited growth prospects. The railroad did not say how much volume would be lost. The railroad aims for a sub-60% operating ratio within three or four years.



Norfolk Southern SD40-2 No. 3333 powers a maintenance-of-way train at Farm, W.Va., on June 27, 2016. Daniel W. Troy

Analysts expected NS and Ancora to reach a settlement before the annual meeting. — *Bill Stephens*



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**MORE HERITAGE:** CSX Transportation and Metro-North each released new units in their ongoing series of heritage locomotives honoring predecessor operators. The CSX locomotive, first revealed by CEO Joe Hinrichs on social media, honors the Family Lines System, the amalgamation of Seaboard Coast Line, Clinchfield, and L&N that existed from 1972 to 1982. It is the 11th locomotive in the CSX series. Metro-North's fourth heritage locomotive, P32AC-DM No. 217, displays a Penn Central scheme worn by FL9 units in the 1970s. The departure from the black of other Penn Central diesels was at the request of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority, which asked that rehabilitated equipment wear the colors of New York State. It joins units wrapped for Conrail, New York Central, and the original Metro-North paint scheme. Above, CSX Transportation; left, MTA Metro-North Railroad

## NEWS BRIEFS

### State legislation calls for privatization of Alaska Railroad

A state legislator has introduced a bill calling for privatization of the **ALASKA RAILROAD**, although sponsor Jesse Sumner (R-Wasilla) says it is as much about inspiring discussion as a potential sale. State House Transportation Committee Chair Kevin McCabe (R-Big Lake) said the railroad "has not built one single mile of track" since it was transferred to state ownership in 1985 and that resource development has been stifled as a result, although he admitted fault might be with the legislature, as well as the railroad. McCabe subsequently introduced legislation to allow the Alaska Railroad Corp. to issue bonds for a 32-mile spur to reach **PORT MACKENZIE**, a deepwater facility near Anchorage.

A proposal by contract operator **KEOLIS** would introduce battery-electric commuter trains on the **MASSACHUSETTS BAY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY's** Fairmount line, a nine-station, 9.2-mile route. The proposal calls for the equipment to be in service by the end of 2027, and for service to be increased to 20-minute frequencies on weekdays and 30 on weekends, up from the current 45-minute headways on weekdays and 90 on weekends. Under the proposal,

Keolis would develop specifications for the equipment and choose a manufacturer.

The **STADLER RAIL** hydrogen-powered trainset bound for commuter use in Southern California set a record by covering 1,741.7 miles on a single tank of fuel at the loop at the **TRANSPORTATION TECHNOLOGY CENTER** in Pueblo, Colo. The run, certified by the Guinness World Records team, took more than 46 hours, using the FLIRT H2 trainset built for the **SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY's** **ARROW** service between San Bernardino and Redlands, Calif.

**BRIGHTLINE** announced it would build two new intermediate stations on its Orlando extension. The company chose Stuart, Fla., from five candidates for a stop in the "Treasure Coast" area of Martin and St. Lucie counties, and said it would build a station in Cocoa, Fla., near the spot where trains leave the **FLORIDA EAST COAST RAILWAY** main line for the 120-mph passenger-only route to Orlando. A document for refinancing of company bonds also confirmed that 10 additional coaches are due to be delivered from **SIEMENS** later this year.

Amtrak's **PACIFIC SURFLINER** and **METRO-LINK** commuter rail service through San Clemente, Calif., resumed on March 25 after a two-month disruption because of a landslide — the latest in a series of slide-related issues that have plagued service since September 2022. The **ORANGE COUNTY TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY** constructed a temporary 200-foot-long catchment wall at the site of the latest slide. The OCTA is also considering a proposal for a half-mile-long wall as a long-term solution as well as an additional three-quarters of a mile of revetment, or a armoring material, for the San Clemente bluffs. San Clemente residents have expressed reservations, preferring more sand to build up the beach as a protective move.

The **EAST BROAD TOP** in March began the first steps toward restoring the 20-mile route south of Rockhill Furnace, Pa., to Robertsdale that has not seen trains since 1956, beginning work on the right-of-way about a mile south of the railroad's headquarters. Brush has been cleared on the right-of-way as far as Pogue, about 3 miles away; a longer-term goal is to reach Saltillo, another 5 miles south.



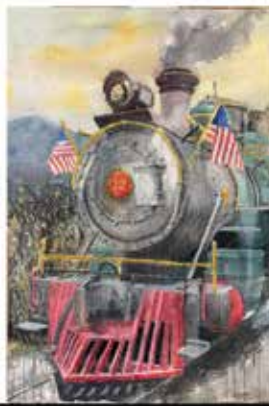
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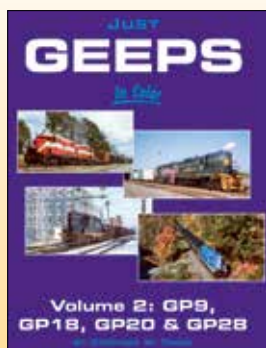
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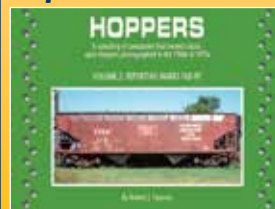
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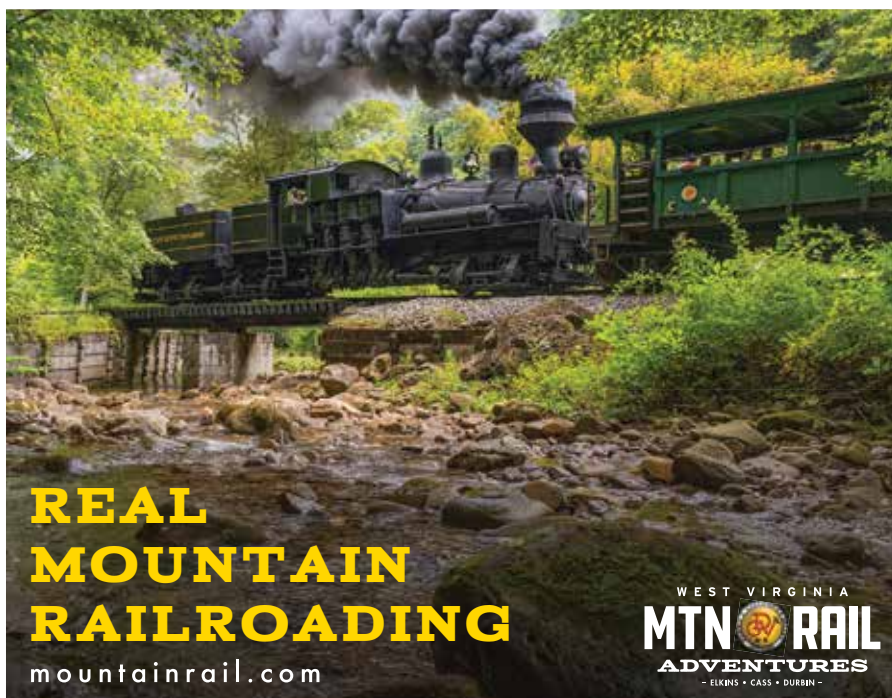


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# Now in vogue: Class I roads buying short lines

Seven recent transactions reverse long-term spinoff trend



**Bill Stephens**

bybillstephens@gmail.com

Analysis: Trains.com

**I**t's hard to say when a trend becomes a trend. But Canadian National's proposed acquisition of the 218-mile Iowa Northern Railway suggests that short lines and regionals getting gobbled up by Class I railroads is now a thing.

Since 2020, Class I railroads have reached seven deals with short lines and regional railroads. The transactions include Canadian Pacific + Central Maine & Quebec, 2020; CSX + Pan Am Railways, 2022; BNSF Railway + Montana Rail Link, 2024; Canadian Pacific Kansas City and CSX + Meridian & Bigbee, 2024; CN takes stake in Cape Breton & Central Nova Scotia Railway, 2023; CN + Iowa Northern, 2024; Grupo Mexico takes stake in CG Railways alongside Genesee & Wyoming, 2024.

Two of those deals — the CMQ and MRL — were made to correct Class I spinoff mistakes.

CP sold off its trackage east of Montreal in the mid 1990s, including its line to Saint John, New Brunswick. CP paid \$130 million to reacquire the CMQ portion of its historic shortcut to the Atlantic in what turned out to be a highly successful bid to gain international intermodal and automotive business from an expanding Port Saint John. The surprise: Growth in carload traffic, including propane and lumber. CP proved that a Class I can buy a short line as a through route and still pay attention to local traffic.

You could say that CSX's \$600 million acquisition of New England regional Pan Am amounts to a rescue. PAR was a sham-ble thanks to deferred maintenance as the railroad's lifeblood — Maine paper and forest products traffic, plus coal bound for New Hampshire and Massachusetts power plants — declined or dried up. With CSX rebuilding Pan Am's main and yards, there's hope the \$100 million in physical plant improvements will lead to more reliable service and, in turn, growth.

Down South, CSX and CPKC will acquire G&W short line Meridian & Bigbee to create a new through route for intermodal, automotive, and forest products moving between the Southeast and Texas and Mexico. Yet local traffic won't be ignored. In a twist, Meridian & Bigbee will continue to provide local service on the 50.4 miles of trackage that CPKC will acquire west of Myrtlewood, Ala.

CN was thinking long term when it took a stake in G&W's 145-mile Cape Breton & Central Nova Scotia Railway. CN now manages interline shipments, while G&W continues to provide local service. CN sees the potential for carload commodity export opportunities down the road.

From a network strategy perspective, CN's 2001 acquisition of Wisconsin Central was a home run. The WC is the U.S. backbone of CN's Winnipeg-Chicago main. But shippers on WC branch lines say the deal was a disaster because CN's inflexible service drove away business. Ultimately it took CN two decades to dispose of branches it never wanted. In one of the few recent Class I spinoffs, Watco in 2022 took over 471.12 miles of former WC track in Wisconsin and Michigan.

Which brings us back to the Iowa Northern. Like the WC, the railroad is one of those short line rags-to-riches stories. When the current ownership group took over in 1994, the 10-mph Iowa Northern handled 15,000 cars per year. Today the Iowa Northern is in a state of good repair and handles more than 60,000 carloads.

More growth is coming from biodiesel production, which meshes nicely with origins and destinations on CN's network. Plus, CN says the acquisition will divert 14,619 truck shipments to rail.

With its \$230 million purchase of Iowa Northern, CN seems intent on not repeating the mistakes it made with the WC's local traffic. "We are confident that, as part of CN, IANR will be able to continue to provide reliable first- and last-mile service to our local customers while providing them access to a much broader network and market," IANR Chairman Dan Sabin said.

The Staggers Act of 1980 led to a shortline boom by making it easier for Class I railroads to spin off U.S. trackage. Now the pendulum has swung the other way, with Class I lines snapping up short lines. This new trend is fine — so long as the common thread is service and growth. **I**



Northbound coal empties roll along Iowa Northern's Manly Subdivision, north of Greene, Iowa, on the return trip from Cedar Falls utilities. GP38-2 No. 3809 is in the lead in this scene from Sept. 2, 2007. Craig Williams



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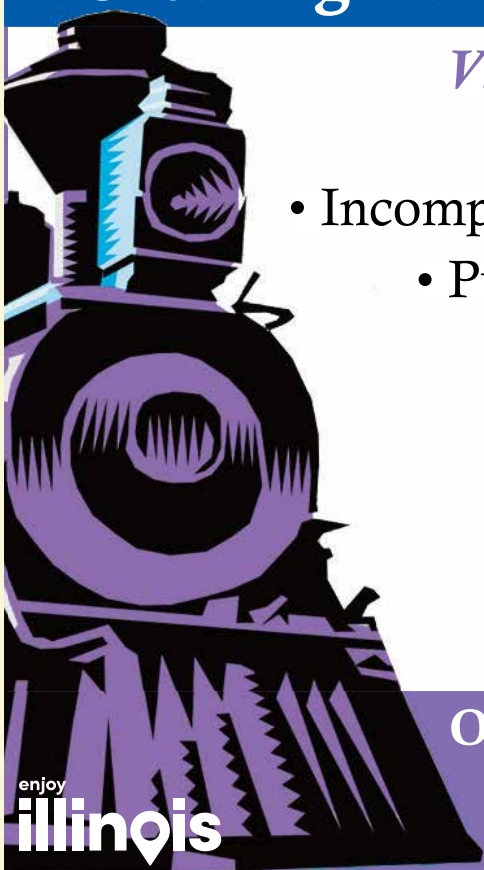
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A Family Railroad Fun Guide



# Riding the **Trona**

CAUTION  
WATCH OUT  
FOR MOVING  
EQUIPMENT

A 1973 trip to the Trona Railway in California's remote Searles Valley resulted in memorable photographs and a cab ride aboard the line's Baldwin diesels. Two photos, David Lustig





A Trona Railway train of covered hoppers rolls across the remote California desert on its 30-mile journey to the railway's interchange with the outside world.

## A Baldwin cab ride across the California desert

by David Lustig

**T**he California desert is different from the rest of the state. Remote, vast, and lonely, it is a world apart from the California coast or California north. Punctuated by cactus, brush, and fast-moving little creatures, it is seemingly geographically flat, yet is actually a series of undulating ups and downs that can create optical illusions and mirages.

Only the strongest survive here. It can be blazingly hot or bitterly cold, intensely sunny or violently stormy — sometimes all in the same day.

The Trona Railway, a creature of this desert, plods 30 miles between its namesake town and a remote interchange with Union Pacific (formerly Southern Pacific) at a wide spot in the road called Searles.

The unincorporated town of Trona, part of the Searles Valley, is not hard to find if you know where to look on a map. Locate State Highway 14 south of Lone Pine and find where Highway 178 intersects. Then

follow your finger to the northeast and there it is, literally the middle of nowhere. Not exactly a vacation destination. Nonetheless Trona and the surrounding area provide important minerals for modern life.

For the newbies to the area, it can be a rude awakening. This is a California they don't write about in the tourist pamphlets. Unless you like trains. Then the weather, the winds, and the false belief there is nothing here all becomes worth it.

It was one of those types of days I first encountered the railway's small fleet of center-cab Baldwin diesels. Through scorching summers and bone-chilling winters, the slow-churning De La Vergne engines took the worst Mother Nature could toss at them in stride.

Today, their EMD replacements follow in the same tradition, but the uniqueness of the motive power, once a drawing card for enthusiasts everywhere, is long gone. It's still a hard railroad to operate, perhaps just not as unusual.



The shop in Trona tended to the railroad's small fleet of Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton road switchers and center-cabs. David Lustig



## Fifty-one years ago

It was 1973 and the Trona Railway was new and unexplored territory for me. Along with Don Sims and Denis Dunning, I trekked 170 miles northeast from Los Angeles, past the railroad town of Mojave and into the seemingly unknown to Trona, a dusty, odorous unincorporated company town in the far reaches of San Bernardino County, Calif.

With a population of less than 2,000, it sits on the western edge of Searles Lake, itself a dry lakebed southwest of Death Val-

ley. It's named for the mineral that's the reason for the railroad's existence.

The trona harvested from the nearby dry lakebed is processed into soda ash or sodium carbonate, an important ingredient in the production of a variety of products ranging from textiles to toothpaste. That box of baking soda in your kitchen? Trona.

My first encounter with the Trona Baldwins — the railway rostered three road switchers and two center-cabs not including various plant switchers — took me back a little. Its road switchers were some-

thing I was used to; the Southern Pacific had plenty of almost identical units, in fact one of the Trona road switchers came secondhand from SP. But the center-cabs, combined with that utilitarian black with silver ends paint scheme they wore, created an aura all their own. Big slab-sided bruisers sitting on unforgiving trucks with giant cabs, adorned with slightly faded silver logos that included a black silhouette of mountains and a red and black palm tree.

We inquired about one of us getting a cab ride. I won. Sims would parallel the



Trona's modern caboose was a fixture on its trains. The removal of the mandatory caboose law threw it out of work. Don Sims



solid train of covered hoppers on his off-road motorcycle, camera strapped tight to his body. Dunning paced with a car.

Today's train had Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton road switcher AS616 No. 53 on the point with the two DT-6-6-2000 center-cabs, Nos. 50 and 51, following obediently behind for a total of 6,400 hp to move 30-plus cars upgrade to the interchange. I was in the cab of the lead Baldwin when Engineer A.L. Anders, already made aware he had a rider today, arrived, greeted me with a perfunctory hello, sat down, checked to

make sure everything was according to Hoyle, and began notching out the throttle.

## The ride

I read somewhere that Baldwin's long-wheelbase trucks made for a rough ride at higher speeds. I wouldn't know, as we never topped 35 mph. Still, considering the track appeared to be in good shape, we bounced back and forth with great alacrity.

For Engineer Anders this was just another workday of many years at the throttle, and he accomplished his job with precision









**Left: The diesel shop. Above: The long hood end of one of the Baldwin road-switchers sports a top oscillating headlight as well as high-mounted pneumatic m.u. hoses. Two photos, David Lustig**

and professionalism. He didn't have to worry about lineside signals, there were none. Nor were there any other trains on the line. But that didn't mean, as we jostled along, he wasn't constantly checking his speed, performing a very nice whistle blowing at grade crossings, looking for potential hazards including track conditions, inspecting his train whenever possible, and watching out for some guy chasing his train on a motorcycle.

He didn't even mind his visitor bouncing around the cab, looking out the windows and taking photos without any attempt to hide his enthusiasm.

With his permission, I made my way back to the first center-cab to see what the train looked like from there. That cab was gigantic! You could seemingly hold a tennis match in there. It made for a great photo platform.

Heading back up front to the road switcher, I sat down in the vacant fireman's seat and continued my bumpy but pleasant ride when Anders looked at me and said, "I'm going back to the second unit to go to the head. It's better than the one in this unit. Be right back."

I looked at him stunned. He's going to leave me alone in the cab of a moving train. By myself! What?

My astonishment obviously registered on my face, so Anders added, "Don't worry

about it. There's nothing else on the line and no animal of any size to hit. I'll be back in a few minutes."

I'm sure he was inwardly laughing all the way back to the center-cab. So, I watched the controls and checked the speedometer as if I knew what I was doing, looked out the window, and, probably, scanned the skies for flying saucers. Nothing happened, of course, and when Anders returned, he smiled and said, "See!"

## To Searles

A little over an hour later, a line of freight cars loomed in the distance. We were approaching Searles and the interchange with Southern Pacific. We paralleled the empty hoppers with our train, tied it down and transferred the Baldwins to a waiting set of inbound cars.

After an inspection, Anders and crew would head back home at an easy downhill gait. The cars they just dropped off would sit there until tomorrow when the SP local from Mojave would arrive to take them to civilization. The cars would return empty to start the process all over again.

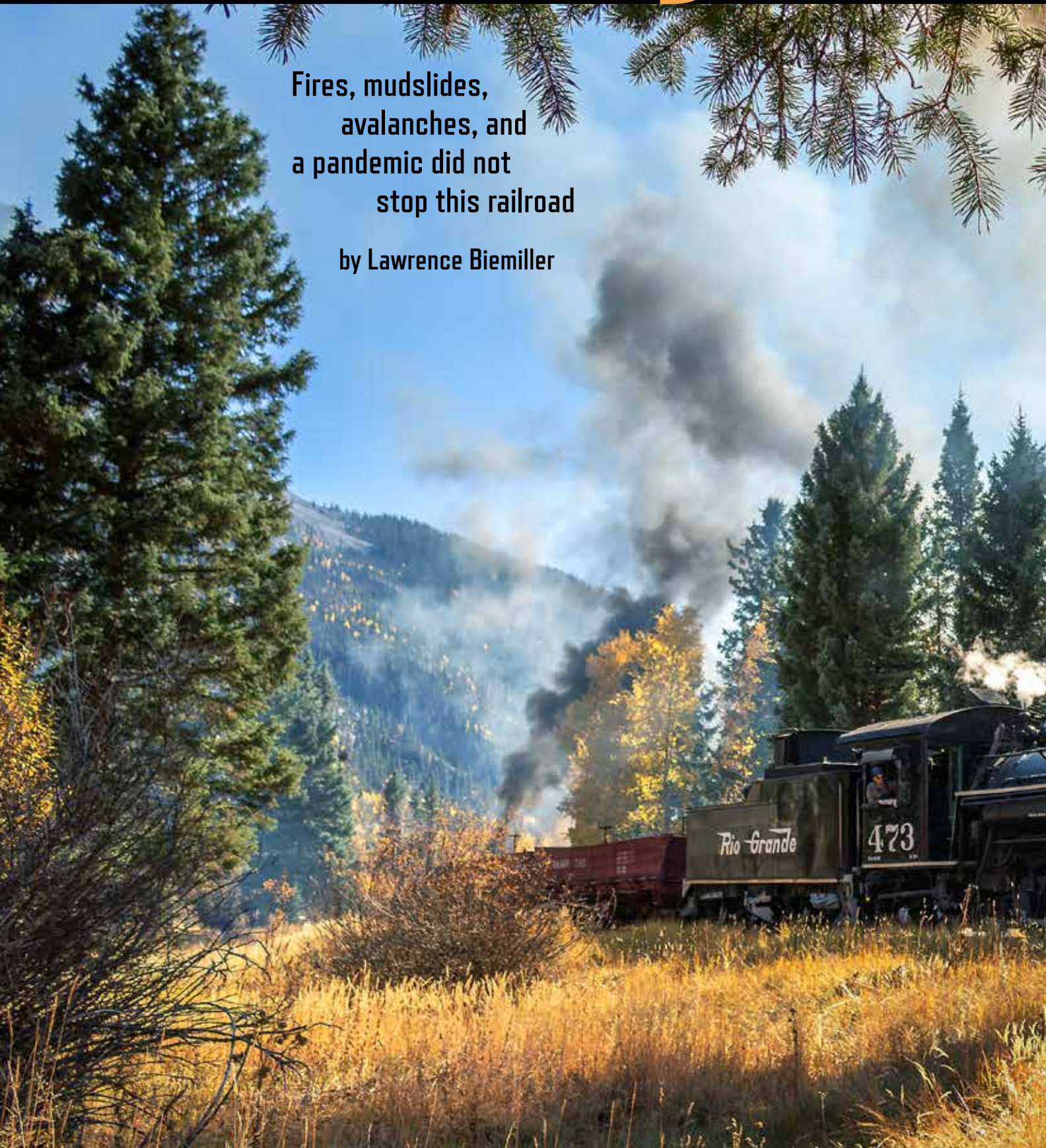
I thanked Anders for the ride and alighted from the Baldwin. Sims, who had photographed the Trona Ry. before but never had a chance to ride it, asked what I thought. My ear-to-ear grin said it all. **I**



# The Durango & Sil

Fires, mudslides,  
avalanches, and  
a pandemic did not  
stop this railroad

by Lawrence Biemiller





# verton battles back



The sunlight plays in exhaust of K28s Nos. 473, leading, and 476, farther back in the train, during an Oct. 16, 2023, photo charter. The train, with both freight and passenger equipment, is northbound at Elk Park siding. Dubbed "Sports Models," Alco built 10 K28s for the Rio Grande in 1923. Carl Swanson





**O**n June 1, 2018, the first in a series of calamities on a Biblical scale struck the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. The “416 Fire” raced up a hillside along the line and ultimately scarred more than 54,000 acres. The fire was followed by two mid-July mudslides, the second trapping trains far from the railroad’s home of Durango, Colo., for weeks. The following year brought avalanches 60 feet deep, along with a lawsuit in which federal prosecutors alleged the railroad was responsible for the 416 Fire and asked for \$25 million to cover firefighting costs.

In 2020 the COVID pandemic prompted a 50% limit on capacity once trains were allowed to run, and a washout at Elk Creek prevented trains from reaching Silverton, Colo., for the whole season.

It’s hard to imagine any other tourist railroad surviving such adversity, but the D&SNG has done more than survive — it has thrived. In 2022 the railroad set a new ridership record, and promptly broke that record in 2023, when it carried some 225,000 riders. It is almost done convert-

**Oil-burning No. 493 heads south at Rockwood on Oct. 15, 2023. The Baldwin K37 was built in 1902 as a standard gauge 2-8-0 and converted to narrow gauge in 1928 by the D&RG. The D&SNG began a coal-fired rebuild in 2018, but turned to oil with the 416 Fire. Carl Swanson**

ing its historic Denver & Rio Grande Western steam locomotives from coal to oil (oil-burners are much less likely to trigger wildfires), and the four late-1960s Montreal Locomotive Works diesels it bought from the White Pass & Yukon Route Railway are in regular service.

The D&SNG is also rapidly expanding its contract-repair business. A new, 10,000-square-foot building will serve as a diesel shop and as added space for contract jobs. In 2024, the railroad is running over a new bridge crossing the Animas River just south of Silverton. Bridge construction was paid for with a \$1.95 million grant through the Federal Railroad Administration’s Consolidated Rail Infrastructure and Safety Improvements program — the first CRISI grant for an excursion line. The bridge replaces a Douglas-fir structure that, as far as anyone can tell, last had major improvements in 1932.



**The D&SNG is diversifying its revenue by expanding contract work, as seen here in the Durango roundhouse. A new enginehouse added capacity. Lawrence Biemiller**





When No. 493 was converted to oil, D&SNG knew it would be converting the fleet and developed a consistent, economical plan based on Southern Pacific research conducted in the late 1940s. Lawrence Biemiller

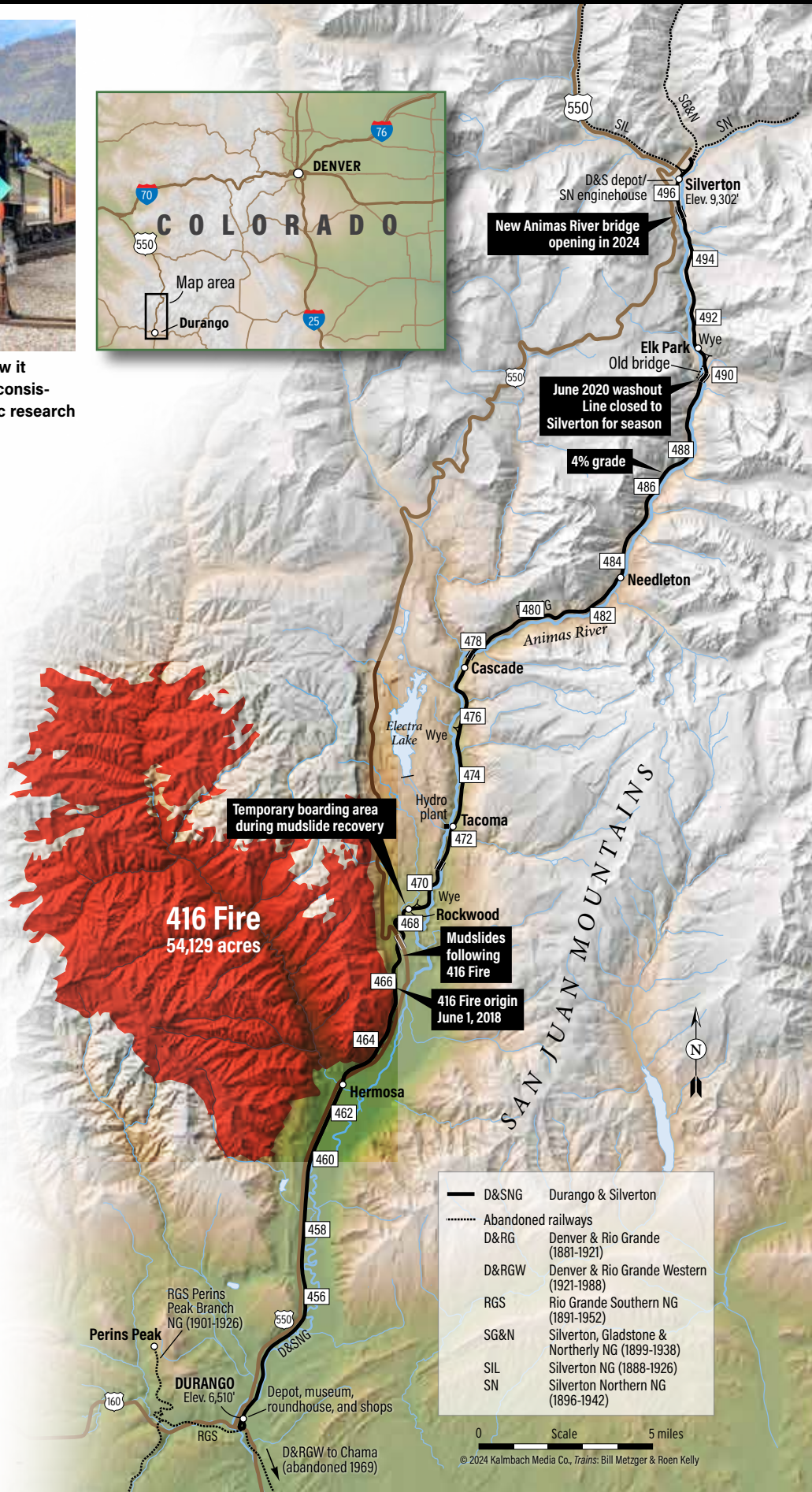
## D&SNG fire fear

What's now the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge opened in 1882 as the Rio Grande's Silverton Branch, a 45-mile miracle of narrow-gauge engineering that clings to cliffs and winds along the Animas River through the glorious scenery in the San Juan National Forest. The Denver & Rio Grande Railroad shut down the rest of its narrow-gauge operations in 1968, but it couldn't make the case that the Silverton branch should be abandoned. To this day it is considered a common carrier.

The line has a history of floods and snowslides, the latter being why the Rio Grande stopped running winter trains in the early 1950s. "We're in wilderness railroading," says Al Harper, CEO of the railroad's parent company, American Heritage Railways, owner of the line for the past quarter-century. "We know those things are going to happen every year. Every year." He adds, "every crisis makes you stronger — over and over, every challenge has made us a better railroad and a better company."

Fires the size of the 416 blaze don't happen every year, but the railroad has a long history of fearing fire. The Rio Grande employed all manner of spark arrestors and developed brush-clearing regimens. More recently the D&SNG has run a MOW speeder with firefighting equipment and trained crew behind nearly every train and has leased a helicopter for fighting fires. John Harper, Al Harper's son and American Heritage Railways general manager, says the D&SNG was spending more than a \$500,000 annually on precautions even before the 416 Fire.

Nonetheless, the fire began on a hillside just above milepost 466, and prosecutors blamed a locomotive cinder, although the accusation was never proved. In early 2022, the railroad and the federal government agreed on a settlement in which the railroad, without admitting fault, would pay







\$20 million and modify its operations, including filing an annual fire-prevention plan with the U.S. Forest Service. At the same time, the railroad settled a civil suit filed by fire-affected residents.

Jeff Johnson, D&SNG general manager, says the railroad now enjoys “a growing, transparent, collaborative relationship with the Forest Service that I think is as good as it’s ever been. It’s enabled us to all sit down and look at the real stuff that we face together” — such as the increasing number of hikers taking the train to remote flag stops in the national forest.

“The fire took some things that were probably still five or 10 years out and made us do them right away,” says Randy Bab-

cock, the railroad’s chief mechanical officer.

Anticipating that it would need an additional locomotive for growing traffic, the railroad had already begun rebuilding Baldwin K37 2-8-2 No. 493, which hadn’t been in service since 1968, but the original plan was to restore it as a coal-burner. “The fire probably wasn’t even out yet when the decision came to go to oil,” says Babcock.

John Harper says discussions about switching fuels had begun before the fire. The D&SNG is “a museum by default,” he says, but to remain successful, the company needs to be flexible. “From an economic perspective, we saw the writing on the wall. Coal rates were increasing anywhere from 8% to 15% per year. Shipping was getting

**Curving around the High Line, one of the signature scenes on the D&SNG, is K28 No. 476. Sister K28 No. 473 is just coming into sight. The combined freight-passenger train was part of a photo special staged on the line during October 2023.** Carl Swanson

more challenging, and there were environmental concerns.”

Once the decision was made to switch, Babcock says the railroad turned to extensive oil-firing research the Southern Pacific had done in the late 1940s. The SP “built a whole lab around an engine to see how efficient they could make steam power. They studied burner and front-end styles.”

“We used that as our standard,” Babcock says. “We never went down the path of





With the move away from coal firing, D&SNG crews needed training on how to “speak oil.” The railroad leased No. 18, a small Southern Pacific locomotive, with equipment similar to what the D&SNG was installing during its locomotive conversions. Two photos, Lawrence Biemiller



Rio Grande Southern Galloping Goose No. 5 paid a visit to the D&SNG in early 2019 for a photo special. Snow slides and ice marred the excursion, however; in an unusual “treat,” passengers got to push the Goose through an ice-packed U.S. Highway 550 grade crossing.

dating half a dozen different oil setups — we got married right away. We designed burners and fire doors so we could do everything in multiples, because we were going to do everything as a fleet.”

### The slow rebuild process

In the meantime, the railroad reopened after the fire as soon as allowed — just in time for the first mudslide, which cascaded across the tracks not far from where the fire had started. Passengers had to be helped up the hillside to the U.S. Highway 550 overpass at milepost 467 to board buses. A week later a second, larger slide came down in the middle of the day, while two trains with four steam locomotives were in Silverton.

To reopen, the railroad determined that it could bus passengers from Durango to its tiny yard in Rockwood, at milepost 469, just south of the famous High Line. Rockwood, normally a flag stop, has a passing siding, a storage track for maintenance equipment, and a wye with a tail long enough for only three cars. To operate from there, the railroad needed an ash pit, engine servicing facilities, a system for removing waste and watering cars, and a plan for restocking concession cars.

“We turned Rockwood into a portable facility in 48 hours,” says John Harper,

“with restroom facilities, concession stands, tents, a parking lot.”

The three-car capacity of the wye was a particular challenge.

“We got creative about the location of the cars in the consist. All of the standard-class cars have seats that can be flipped back and forth. The first-class cars are all table-and-chair seating. The cars that weren’t able to flip, we’d put them on one of the ends, so you could put them in the wye, then grab them and switch them.”

Meanwhile, the railroad’s go-to contractor, Durango-based Bonds Construction,





**No. 493, passing Hermosa, was at one time thought to be junk and not worth rebuilding. By replacing rigid stay bolts with “flexies,” a number of deficiencies were corrected. The K37 is rated for three more cars than the K36s.** Two photos, Lawrence Biemiller

set to work clearing the slide. Its first step? Building a road to get heavy equipment in.

That fall, Babcock also arranged for the railroad to lease a small oil-burner so crews could practice firing. It was a locomotive Babcock knew well because he had helped rebuild it in a tent in a park in Independence, Calif.: Southern Pacific No. 18, a 1911 Baldwin 4-6-0 with a whale-back tender. In early 2019, it starred in a D&SNG weekend photo event beset by snow and slides that prevented trains from reaching the announced destination, Cascade, but turned the weekend into a narrow-gauge fan’s dream: a festival of flanger runs that reminded riders what real mountain railroading is like. The weather even gave participants the rare opportunity to help push visiting Rio Grande Southern Goose No. 5 across the U.S. Highway 550 grade crossing at Hermosa because the flangeways were packed with ice.

The 2019 snowslides were nothing, however, compared with the June 2020 debris slide that collected against the railroad’s bridge at Elk Creek, washing out a considerable length of roadbed. The extent of repairs — again by Bonds — kept trains from reaching Silverton for the whole season. Instead, trains ran as far as the Cascade wye behind the first operational oil-burner, No. 493.

That same year brought the COVID pandemic. “On St. Paddy’s Day,” says John Harper, “we had about 400 people on the platform waiting for a train, and we got a call from the local health office asking whether we were running. We’re like, ‘The train leaves in half an hour.’ They said, ‘We don’t have the authority to shut you down, but we’re recommending that you not operate because of the pandemic.’”

“The Irish band was playing, the people were celebrating, and at 8 a.m. that morning a new restriction had gone into place from the governor,” adds Johnson, railroad general manager. “We sent everyone home.” The city reached out a short time afterward to thank the railroad for its response.

“The first couple of weeks we still had employees showing up every day. It wasn’t until the announcement was made that you couldn’t go to work that we really had to shut down,” Harper says. “It took everything we had to figure out whether we were going to survive.”

“When you have a burn rate of multiple million dollars per month, depending on what you have in your savings, that’s going to run out really quick,” he said. “You were there morning, noon, and night just watching your bank account deplete and looking at financial projections. You’re saying, ‘I’ve got enough money in the bank to pay all my employees, pay all my bills, for the next 120 days. But when that 120 days hits, what are we going to do?’”

“Once we were given some guidelines of how to operate, we went back to business,” he says. “We knew we weren’t going to be

profitable, but if we could at least break even, we could stop the bleed.”

## Everyone’s favorite locomotive

Compared with the railroad’s three K28s, the sleek Alco “Sports Models” that have now been in regular service for just over a century, No. 493 has a history that’s just short of unbelievable.

Built by Baldwin in 1902 as a standard-gauge 2-8-0, it’s one of 10 class members rebuilt as narrow-gauge 2-8-2s in the Rio Grande’s Burnham Shops (Denver) in 1928-30. A sister, No. 497, was the first K37 to run on the Silverton Branch, in the mid-1980s, but suffered so many broken stay bolts that managers decided she was too big for the curves. In 1991, they traded her to the Cumbres & Toltec for K36 No. 482. No. 493, which had last run under the Rio Grande in 1968, was eventually dragged to Silverton and put on display beside the station.

Babcock remembers the decision to rebuild No. 493 was made at the Billy Goat Saloon, in Bayfield, Colo., in 2017. Babcock, then roundhouse foreman, was sitting with Charlie Cross, a longtime D&SNG employee and CMO; John Harper, who has a business-school respect for numbers; and Matt Cunningham, an engineering-school graduate who started as a brakeman in 2014 (“to get it out of my system,” he says) and had become the railroad’s jack-of-all-decision-making-trades. The railroad needed another locomotive. The obvious candidate was No. 478. But No. 493, which another railroad had been interested in, was already in Durango, and Babcock gave it a good look.





“The old guard said they were junk,” Babcock says of the K37s, but he argued that only a few small components had routinely failed on No. 497. He proposed replacing rigid stay bolts on No. 493 with “flexies,” and the foursome started doing some figuring. “We said, ‘The 478 [is] going to be about this amount, the 493 is about this amount. So, worst-case scenario, if the 493 [is] not a success and we only run it 60 days a year, but it’ll pull three extra cars, we still win.’”

“The thing’s a beast,” says Chris Brophy, who took over as roundhouse foreman when Cross retired and Babcock became CMO. “But it rides like a K28,” he says, noting that the K36s can be rough on crews. He’s also seeing less driver wear on No. 493 than on the K36s, even though the K36s are better suited for the line’s tight curves. When

Burnham Shops turned out the K37s, they were fitted with Alco-style trailing trucks. Brophy thinks that’s the secret sauce.

With 2020 pandemic restrictions in place and no way to reach Silverton, No. 493 held down the schedule. But the railroad expected many more riders in 2021 and would need more locomotives that didn’t burn coal — coal not being a summer option.

The oil conversion on K28 No. 473 was complete, and K36 No. 480 was almost ready. Plus, the railroad had by then arranged to buy four 1969 Montreal Locomotive Works diesels from the White Pass.

### By diesel to Silverton

But at the start of 2021, only WP&Y No. 107 was operational, and the Alaska line had reported having lots of trouble with it. In

**To help reduce the risk of fire along the railroad, the D&SNG bought four 1969 Montreal Locomotive Works DL535Es from Alaska’s White Pass & Yukon. While not traditional to the railroad, the diesels have found a useful place in D&SNG operations.** Jerry B. Day

Durango, to everyone’s amazement, No. 107 soldiered on through the entire 2021 season, pulling the first Silverton train daily. The railroad ticketed all hikers making flag stops to that train, which could stay on schedule since it didn’t have to stop for water.

“We do a lot of customer surveys,” Babcock notes. Asked if they prefer steam or diesel, 75% of riders want a steam locomotive and 21% don’t care — and a tiny fraction prefer a diesel. One of the Alco diesels can pull about as much as a K28, he says; any train longer than nine cars gets a pair, but still needs just a single engineer. Fuel-wise, he says, two diesels cost about the same to run as a K28, but maintenance is a different story. “Anyone who thinks four 1969 Alcos are going to replace steam here is crazy,” says Babcock. “It’s easier to maintain 1925 steam engines than 1969 Alcos.”

### Embracing doubleheaders

Adding to the pressure that winter, COVID swept through the roundhouse in late February and early March 2021.

◀ Once uncommon on the D&SNG, doubleheading has been embraced as a means to add capacity and not max out locomotives. During 2021, SP No. 18, seen here with No. 493, led 47 doubleheaded trains.





"Our entire shop crew got sent home," Babcock says. Working from home, he started discussing options. The first Silverton train would run with a diesel and the second with steam. Another steam locomotive would pull a midday Cascade run, a fairly recent, popular summer schedule addition. But could the Silverton steam run add capacity by doubleheading?

"I said, 'Well, I could get the No. 18 back, and we could keep it in our hip pocket as a helper,'" Babcock recalls. A lease was worked out with owner, Carson & Colorado Railway of Independence, Calif., a nonprofit where Babcock is also CMO.

Astonishingly, No. 18 led 47 D&SNG doubleheaders that season. "That's about a half-million dollars of revenue that thing pulled home," Babcock says. Quite an achievement for a locomotive that sat in a park for decades and was rebuilt in a tent.

Mostly, No. 18 was the helper for No. 493 — which could probably have handled most of the runs itself. But the D&SNG, once averse to doubleheaders, now favors them to avoid maxing out its power. Babcock notes that there was a changing of the guard. "The people making decisions were all new. It was no longer, 'The Rio Grande always did this.'"

Instead of running standard consists, the D&SNG now adds cars as needed. "I look at these fixed consists that other people drag around, and I think, 'On the D&S every window has people in it,'" Babcock says. "We're at 90% to 95% capacity on the train."

John Harper echoes that. "We don't send equipment out that isn't full. That isn't creating the margins of profit that you need to create. Every time a wheel turns, whether there's someone in it or not, it costs money, whether it's wear and tear on the flanges or on the brakes. We've set tonnage capacity for safety reasons and for maintenance reasons on all our locomotives. As soon as we get close to tonnage capacity, a second locomotive automatically gets turned on."

"The locomotives love it," says Babcock. "Instead of one locomotive pulling 11 or 12 cars, you're pulling 15 with two." That's notable on a line with a 4% grade just before milepost 488. The other big benefit, he says, is that doubleheading means extra power is already out on the line in case of mechanical issues.

K36 No. 481 made the D&SNG's final coal-burning runs, with the last on March 23, 2024. Babcock notes that the railroad's newer firemen don't know how to fire with coal, and that, as oil burners, the locomotives are cheaper and easier to maintain.

Some fans are, predictably, distraught. But even Al Harper, who promised never to give up coal, sees the wisdom. "I had to



**Foremost, the D&SNG is a museum, says Al Harper, CEO of D&SNG parent American Heritage Railways. Providing a good experience is paramount. Viewing and riding trains, like the one led by No. 473 at The Needles, is what keeps people coming back.** Two photos, Carl Swanson

eat my words," he says. "But that's okay. You've got to adjust to what's going on."

"The best way to preserve history is to make its presentation interesting and exciting," he says. "People will pay a fair price for a great experience. We are in the great-experience business, and that's what I stress to every tourist railroad I talk to. Sell a great experience and you will be self-sustaining."

## Buying the train

Al Harper's background is in real estate, and it was only a series of coincidences that led him to buy the D&SNG in 1998. Not long after, he bought North Carolina's Great Smoky Mountains Railroad. Later, after mounting several Thomas the Tank Engine events and concluding that he could do better, he started shopping around and eventually secured the rights to *The Polar Express Train Ride*. It's now the heart of the third American Heritage business, Rail Events, which served more than 1.5 million riders in 2023, 44,000 in Durango alone. The three businesses contribute about equally to American Heritage's bottom line.

"When I bought the train" — in Durango it's common to refer to the D&S as "the train" — "the first year the gross sales for our company were \$9 million," Al Harper says. "Now Durango alone [is] \$21 million. If you take all of our operations, between our two railroads and Rail Events, our gross sales are far in excess of \$100 million. My son will be mad that I gave out figures, but that's a rough idea."

John Harper, meanwhile, keeps in mind that the company exists in a world "where we're one rockslide, one fire, one pandemic" away from being out of business. "So, what are we going to do that's different? We have to have another revenue stream coming in. That's where the contract work was born."

Now the company has about a two-year, \$2 million backlog of projects from a variety of customers, including amusement parks and other railroads.

That has allowed the company to hire a well-known Alco diesel technician, Brad Wujcik, who is expected to help bring in more contract work. The company is also paying shop employees more, which helps retain good workers. "I'll bet we've increased wages 12% to 15% since COVID," Babcock says. "It's dramatic. We're not fully where we want to be, either."

"We're in such a fantastic place," says John Harper, "between the staff we have on site and the continued expansion of our contract work. We're hopeful that we're able to expand. We're a very entrepreneurial company and we would love to take a couple of additional railroads under our umbrella."

Al Harper says American Heritage is also testing several other possibilities, including handling ticketing and reservations for other railroads. What he's most interested in, though, is a consulting program that's being pioneered with the Abilene & Smoky Valley Railroad in Kansas.

"There are a lot of tiny railroads," he says. "How do we help them? We could go and say, 'Well, if you give me 10 grand a month I'll do A, B, C, and D,' but they can't afford it. So, we're experimenting with bringing our expertise" — mechanical, marketing, and so forth — "for \$4 a ticket. It's a pay-as-you-go, and we're going to show them that we can increase their ridership."

In 2023, with help from American Heritage employees like Babcock and others, the Abilene & Smoky Valley carried 30% more passengers.

"I don't know if we can make this grow, because we won't make any money at it," Al Harper says. "But in the future, they could be big customers. Maybe we can help turn these small railroads into something." **I**

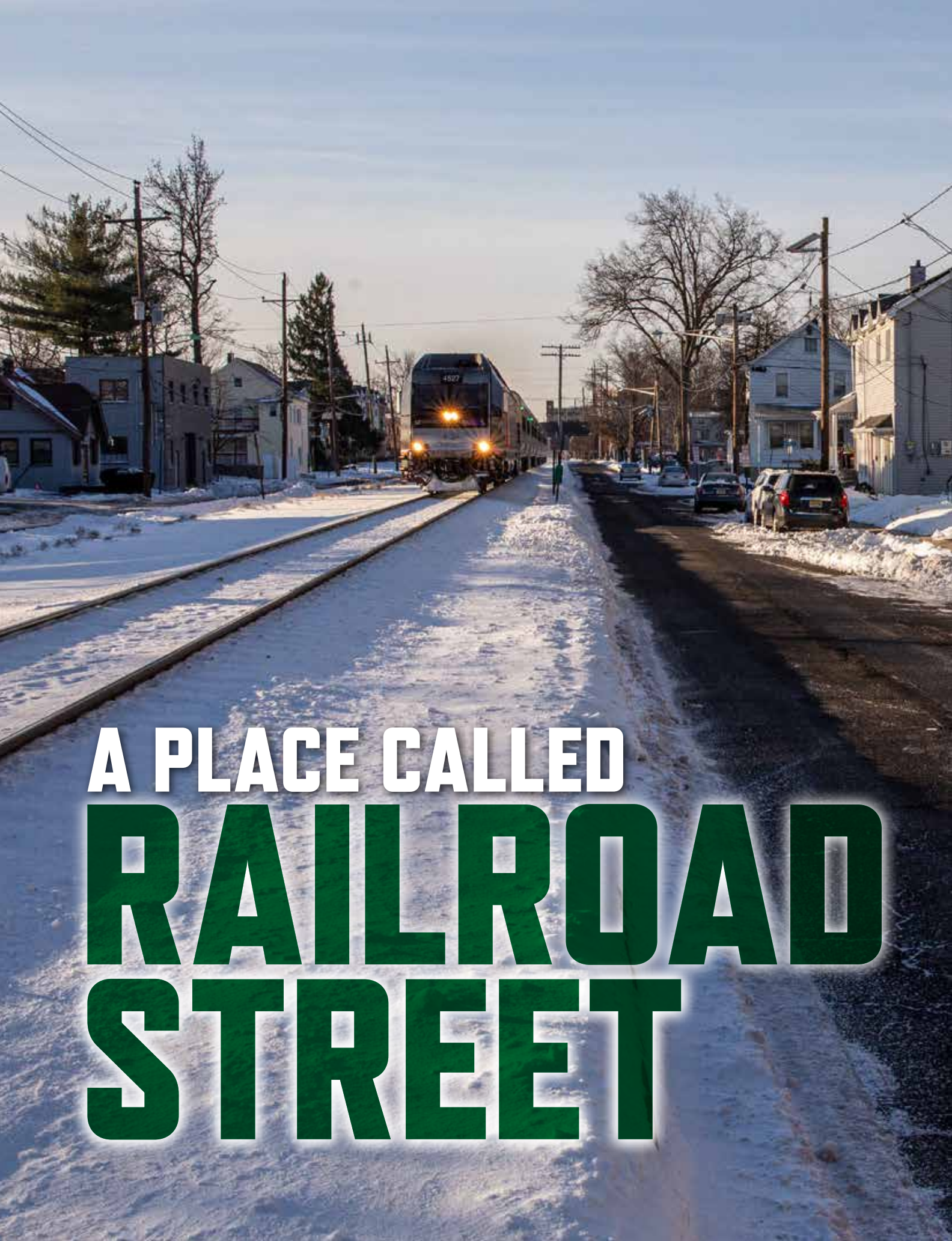




With careful management, neither fires, mudslides, nor avalanches will prevent future generations from enjoying scenes like this in Colorado's San Juan Mountains. No. 473 brings its train through Whitehead Gulch amid the peak of fall color on Oct. 17, 2023.







A PLACE CALLED  
**RAILROAD**  
**STREET**





From a vital corridor to a vestige of its former role — its connection to a community in flux

Story and photos by Eric Williams

Bound for Spring Valley, N.Y., an NJ Transit commuter train out of Hoboken passes through Hackensack, N.J., on Dec. 19, 2020. Having departed Essex Street station, the train heads to its next stop — Anderson Street station — on the opposite end of Railroad Avenue. This former Erie Pascack Valley line splits Railroad Avenue into two one-way streets here, each on opposite sides of the right-of-way. Originally built in 1858, this line was once occupied with industries — long gone today — leaving the route a commuter-only line. These trackside residents take the train's passage in stride, as many are rail commuters themselves.



#### RAILROADS ARE A FASCINATING SUBJECT,

one that opens the door to a broad range of insights into mechanics, geography, economics, labor, culture, and history, among other possibilities. Most of us are initially drawn to that cacophony of rolling steel on steel, but as we immerse ourselves deeper, we find these other paths that deepen our knowledge and bond.

While I'm drawn to many aspects of railroading, it's the imprint on the landscape and history that serve to inform me as a photographer. When I'm exploring a railroad line, I seek the best way to portray the railroad within its context, both from an aesthetic point of view, as well as how to communicate its engagement with the world. Showing this context gives viewers an understanding and meaning as to why a railroad is there, while revealing its economic relationship to the place. This quest leads me to explore each town along a rail line to see what I can uncover. During those travels, I would often find myself on a street called Railroad.

Most often it would be Railroad Street, but could just as well be Railroad Avenue, Railroad Place, Railroad Circle, Railroad Lane, or one of a few other less common designations. These named streets have been demarked since the arrival of the railroad, but it took many trips into the commercial district before I started noticing their frequency and made the connection between named street and railroad.

With 3,853 documented listings of Railroad Street, it should come as no surprise that I would often encounter them. Statistically, according to a 1993 data release by the U.S. Census Bureau, Railroad is the 31st most common street name in the United States. While 31st may not seem that impressive, consider that with all the thousands of name possibilities, only some numerical (First, Second, etc.), nature references (Oak, Park, etc.), and a few former presidents have a higher count — an unmistakable statistic indicating the importance of the railroad to a community.

Railroad Street was at one time the center of commerce, establishing itself as one of the most prominent places in each community that hosted the road. Civic boosters took pride when they could add this name onto their local plat. It meant that their community, big or small, had



**RIGHT:** A westbound Norfolk Southern train has pulled up to Railroad Street in Mifflin, Pa., to await an approaching train on April 20, 2019. Originally named Patterson by town planners in 1849, the Pennsy was built through in 1851 and established yards and a station, which they named Mifflin. The name caused much confusion, leading the town to change its name in 1910 to match the station. That station still exists, and Railroad Street was platted from it to the freight house, which stood at the end of the siding shown here. In addition to the freight house, the spur served the W.S. North Lumber & Coal Co., both are long gone. A few other original buildings remain on Railroad Street including a former hotel and bakery on the left, however, none that require rail service.

**BELOW:** On June 8, 2019, an eastbound Norfolk Southern intermodal train rolls past Railroad Street in Emmaus, Pa. Emmaus was founded in 1859, the same year the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad built eastward through here to Allentown. Railroad Street led from an overpass down to trackside, where the railroad located a freight house and a coal and lumber dealer. The Reading placed its depot across the tracks from the freight house, which is still standing, but no longer recognizable for those without a keen eye. Railroad Street is usually busy with foot traffic, with many heading to the Mercantile Club on the left, and a micro-brewery located where the freight house once stood.



**RIGHT:** Railroad Street in Fonda, N.Y., fronts the former New York Central main line. Always a residential street of single-family homes, it's hard to imagine planners today platting a street that fronted the six tracks that the NYC originally had here. Directly across the tracks stood the depot and freight house. The right-of-way has narrowed to three tracks, but current owner CSX and tenant Amtrak still move a great many trains through here. A westbound CSX manifest train passes the street on Oct. 20, 2022.







access to that all-important connection to the outside world. For it was from Railroad Street where people, goods, mail, parcels, telegrams, and even gossip reached beyond the town limits to the outer world. Here, one generally found the depot and often a separate freight house. With a connection to markets beyond its own, businesses that depended on economical transportation bought land parcels here to gain access to the tracks. Grain elevators, warehouses, mills, lumber yards, coal and oil dealers, and manufacturers of everything imaginable moved onto Railroad Street.

With the passage of over a century and a half since many of these streets were platted, the connectivity and commerce role the railroad once dominated has diminished. But Railroad Street endures, along with the corridor that hosted the tracks and





**BELOW:** The Railroad Avenue sign in Califon, N.J., marks a railroad corridor void of track. During the line's golden era, three tracks paralleled the road here. They served the Central Railroad of New Jersey's freight house, several coal dealers, a milk bottler, and a wood basket factory that supplied packaging for the area's adjacent peach orchards. Much of this fruit was also shipped by rail. The line through Califon was part of CNJ's High Bridge Branch, which reached from its namesake town to the iron ore fields near Wharton and Chester. When the iron and milk business dried up, CNJ continued to serve the remaining businesses up until the advent of Conrail on April 1, 1976, when the line was abandoned by the new railroad as redundant. Over the following decade, track was removed, and the right-of-way converted to a rail trail. Through Califon, the bike trail diverges onto Railroad Avenue, passing the old stone depot which offers a quiet shady spot to take a break.







**LEFT:** Railroad Street in East Liverpool, Ohio, fronts the tracks of the former Pennsylvania Railroad, hosting a mixed neighborhood of business and homes. During its heyday, East Liverpool was considered the pottery capital of the United States, and multiple plants lined the tracks here. The pottery business is long gone, leaving Norfolk Southern little reason to stop here. With the loss of manufacturers on Railroad Street, it's now a mostly quiet residential area, except when the train passes. Aug. 10, 2018.

**ABOVE:** Railroad Street in Hamlet, Ind., runs parallel to the former Pennsylvania Railroad tracks that bisect town. Further down from this corner, the PRR built a depot, and a few other structures to support its business. The depot is long gone, but enough railroad business happens here to warrant current owner Chicago, Ft. Wayne, & Eastern Railroad to build a prefabricated field office. Across the tracks, the Starke County Co-Op founded in 1928 has seen its business and size grow throughout the years. On April 8, 2022, the mill switcher (IBCX 753), leased from Indiana Boxcar Corp., and still wearing the colors of former owner Wisconsin Southern, pulls cars to be loaded.



interdependent businesses. For each of these communities, that corridor is a place in flux. In some, it remains a busy, vital commerce district, with the railroad and its named street in a thriving coexistence. Elsewhere, its meaning is just a vestige of its former role, with the railroad in place, but its connection to the street and community lost and forgotten. In these places, the corridor is a conduit where trains pass through but seldom stop. Then there are the forlorn places where Railroad Street fronts an abandoned right-of-way. If the rails have not already been removed, they soon will be, leaving a hard graded path in its place. Here, the street name serves as a marker to a place disconnected from function, with its heritage lost to most that may encounter it.

Sadly for us railfans, most Railroad Street corridors are now the middle ground — a









**UPPER LEFT:** As the sun sets on Sept. 29, 2018, denizens of Lyons, Pa., that live along South Railroad Street, go about their lives. In 1859, the East Pennsylvania Railroad extended to here from Reading and established a station named Lyon. The stop was named for a railroad official, Charles Lyon. The railroad was soon incorporated into the Reading Railroad, to gain access to Allentown and the booming business opportunities there. There are two railroad streets in Lyons; North Railroad Street and South Railroad Street, which are one-way streets on opposite sides of the tracks. Small businesses and residences line both streets, which are frequently interrupted by Norfolk Southern trains speeding though on the two-track main line.

**ABOVE:** The Norfolk Southern turn from Allentown to Slatford Junction passes the former Delaware, Lackawanna & Western station in Mt. Bethel, Pa., on Oct. 25, 2012. Railroad Avenue takes one from the town center down to the tracks. The depot here was built in 1878 by the Bangor & Portland Railway, which was later incorporated into the DL&W. The depot marked the west end of "Hill Yard," with three tracks that were on top of the grade out of Portland. This yard was used to double and sometimes triple the 3.4% grade from Bangor, in the heart of the slate and cement district. Hill Yard was also an interchange point with the Lehigh & New England Railroad, but not much traffic moved between the two. This depot had seen it all and is now a private residence that sees the occasional Norfolk Southern train.

**LEFT:** Crossing Main Street in Cambridge, N.Y., the Batten Kill Railroad will parallel Railroad Avenue for several blocks on rails that once belonged to the Delaware & Hudson Railway. At one time that railroad served a lumber dealer, coal pocket, and a dairy that fronted the avenue, but the Batten Kill doesn't stop as it brings a single empty car down to the interchange at Eagle Bridge on Feb. 5, 2021.



conduit where trains run through without stopping, void of any economic connection to the road name that celebrated its coming. Most often, the businesses that once fronted the railroad have either quit shipping by rail, moved to a more expansive location, or been shuttered. When the railroad lost its commerce connection to the community, it packed up, demolished its infrastructure to save taxes and potential liability, and left a foundation in a vacant lot as an indicator of its past presence. In many rural towns, these lots are never repurposed — a visible sign of the community's economic transition.

Railroad Street can be found in communities coast to coast, but it's in the small farm communities in our country's interior where the road has left its strongest imprint and still has relevance.

In these hamlets and villages of barely a dozen streets, Railroad Street still serves the role town boosters intended when they named their street with pride. While the depot and other railroad infrastructure may be long gone, a feed mill, elevator, fertilizer, or implement dealer are still vital. In these communities, the railroad corridor still shows us the character of place. Here, with a resilient and steady economy, many lineside businesses have endured with remarkably little change. Forget Main Street — it is Railroad Street that holds the heartbeat here. During planting and harvest seasons, we can see the community come alive with commerce and observe the economic vitality of Railroad Street.

In every community with a Railroad Street, a corridor was created that defines a place. With the passage of time, that place has evolved and reflects the changing economic relationship of the community to the railroad. In some places, that connection prospers, while in others, the railroad corridor is just a conduit to somewhere else.

Whether that connection is vital or not, Railroad Street still has the power to spark the imagination. Each street I uncover leads me to an internet search for old Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps and postcards to see what they reveal. Through these, I can discover what the original railroad was like, and how the street evolved over time in its route. There's a good chance that a Railroad Street still exists in your own community, and if not, one can't be too far away.

Seek it out, walk down the street, and discover its connection and history to the railroad. **I**



The James E. Strates Shows train heads east through Elk Mills, Md., on CSX's Philadelphia Subdivision on May 3, 2016. The train has not run since the pandemic. Michael S. Murray





# DIRE STRATES

James E. Strates carnival train, sidelined since 2019,  
tries to find its way back to the rails

by Bill Stephens





**T**he James E. Strates Shows carnival train — which has hauled midway attractions to fairs up and down the East Coast since 1934 — may have unceremoniously made its last trip.

When the 45-car train was spotted on the two spurs adjacent to the Strates headquarters in Taft, Fla., on Nov. 22, 2019, the family-run company had every intention of taking the show to the rails again in the spring. But no one anticipated the COVID-19 pandemic, which wiped out the annual fair schedule when mass gatherings were banned in 2020. And the train has been parked since the end of the 2019 season.

Fairs returned in 2021, but were scaled back due to pandemic-related capacity limits. The attendance caps upended the railroad economics for Strates. With smaller fairs and midways, it didn't make sense to use the train and its ability to haul everything in the Strates inventory. The show hit the road in 2021, using trucks to reach fairs from Florida to Vermont, instead of CSX, Norfolk Southern, and a few short lines.

Since then, Strates and CSX have been unable to reach a contract agreement. CSX's rates are now more expensive than trucking, Strates says, which makes it increasingly unlikely that the last carnival train will make its annual seasonal loop up the East Coast in the spring and return home in the fall.

"We have found ways to change our business model to an over-the-road show, just like we were back in the late 1920s and early 1930s," Strates spokesman Marty Biniasz says. "But the train does mean so much to our heritage and our branding and also to our fair partners. Last year we celebrated our 100th anniversary in operation. This year an even bigger milestone in the industry is that we're celebrating 100 years under the same contract banner with the Erie County Fair in Hamburg, N.Y."

The third generation of the Strates — Senior Show Manager James E. "Jimmy" Strates, Director of Operations John Strates, Director of Finance Jay Strates, and Senior Administrator Susan Strates Magid — would love nothing more than to deliver the midway's nearly 150 rides, games, and concessions to the Buffalo-area fairgrounds by train.

The train's arrival near the fairgrounds on short line Buffalo Southern attracts a crowd that often numbers in the thousands. "We're trying to do everything we can to at least get the train to Hamburg for the 100th anniversary of the Erie County Fair," Jay Strates told *Trains* in February.

They may get their chance. Strates says a March meeting with top CSX executives went well. CSX agreed to haul the empty



**The fair committee rides Buffalo Southern's Erie County Fair Train, delivering the Strates Shows train, in July 2019. Efforts continue to have one last train to the fair in Hamburg, N.Y. Jackson Glozer**

flatcars from Taft to Buffalo in regular manifest service. Once in Buffalo, they would be fully loaded with midway equipment before the Buffalo Southern delivers them to Hamburg in what would be the last carnival show move. At press time, however, a final agreement between CSX and the Strates had yet to be nailed down.

The Strates are proud of the family history and their role in keeping a slice of Americana alive. But they're also shrewd businesspeople: Price trumps tradition. And aside from the potential last-hurrah move to Buffalo, the show will remain on the road to reach the fairs and carnivals on the regular Strates circuit.

CSX's contract rate quotes for the Strates train have gone up more than 25% overall since the pandemic. Strates asked for tariff rates. They were more expensive than contract rates, which is not uncommon. The deal killer, though, was for the final two legs of the trip back to Orlando. The rate for moving from Augusta, Ga., to Tallahassee, Fla., via CSX, and jumping from there to Orlando via a combination of Florida Gulf & Atlantic and CSX, more than doubled, making rail four times more expensive than trucking.

"It's important to understand that the choice here is not even terribly close," Jimmy Strates says of moving by truck instead of train.

Train crew costs, a major component of the rate for a special unit-train move, rose sharply under the national contract Congress imposed in 2022. It provided an immediate 14% pay bump, retroactive to 2020. And engineer and conductor pay will rise 24% over the life of the five-year contract.

"CSX has a long history of working with the James E. Strates Shows and we appreciate the nostalgia of the carnival train in American culture. We have worked diligently to accommodate their transportation needs and we have offered them fair pricing for the dedicated, special train service they requested," railroad spokeswoman Sheriee Bowman says.

The service requirements for the Strates train are tight. After a fair winds down on a Sunday, the loaded train must depart by late Monday night or in the wee hours of Tuesday morning in order to make it to its next destination in time to allow for unloading and midway setup for a Friday fair opening. "If we're one day off from going from point A to point B, and we don't



make opening, we're talking about a major financial loss not just for us, but for our fair and festival partner," Biniasz says.

Based on those requirements, the Strates train would be the hottest train on the railroad — even rating above a CSX priority intermodal train that carries UPS traffic.

"We understand that Strates Shows has unique scheduling needs, but we cannot move their train at a loss or to the detriment of our other customers. We remain ready to work with them to find a solution, such as moving their cars in our merchandise or manifest service," Bowman says.

CSX has often provided free or reduced-cost transportation for nonprofit organizations, Bowman adds, but Strates is a for-profit business. "As is the case with all our customers, we value their business and are committed to working collaboratively to find solutions," she says.

Shifting from a special unit train into regular merchandise service was a non-starter for the Strates. It would simply be too slow and unreliable.

The fact is that trucks are easier, faster, and more flexible for the carnival company. "Life could not be easier setting up a carnival without the train," Jimmy Strates says.

Yet he hates the fact that two things out of his control — first COVID, then rising rail rates — have sidelined the train. "If nothing else, I want to send it off the proper way if we're never going to do it again," he said in February.

He says it's no mystery why a special, highly service-sensitive seasonal train would not fit into CSX's business plan.

"I can understand how economy of scale plays into a company's decision. And if you're moving coal out of West Virginia or you're moving Tropicana orange juice, there's a financial incentive based on economy of scale that Strates Shows doesn't offer," he says. "However, there's the external equity factor that they can't avoid. And that is that if I can move my heavy stuff cheaper by truck, so can everybody else."

Some of Strates' rides cannot move over the highway. The Top Spin, a popular thrill ride that whips riders through a series of flips, spins, and turns, weighs in at 185,000 pounds. The maximum gross load for a truck is 80,000 pounds, and it's not practical to disassemble the Top Spin into truck-friendly pieces. It's not going anywhere anytime soon.

The seeds of Strates' shift to trucks were planted decades ago. In January 1994, the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus train derailed on CSX near Lakeland, Fla., killing an elephant trainer and a clown.

That prompted CSX to require that Strates carry an unattainable \$200 million insurance policy. The prior requirement

## STRATES SHOWS TRAIN SCHEDULE, 2019

May 5	Dpt. Winter quarters, Taft, Fla. (CSX); 4,016 feet, 45 cars.
May 7	Emporia, Va.
May 8	Aberdeen, Md; Lawndale, Pa.; Oxford Valley, Pa.
May 9	East Rutherford, N.J.; Secaucus, N.J.; (NS)
May-June: Show trucked to fairs in Union Dale, Medford, East Rutherford	
July 11	Dpt. Meadowlands, NS Southern Tier Line, for Buffalo
July:	Show trucked to small county fairs in Batavia, Angelica, Oswego, and Elmira, N.Y.
July 16	Dpt. Binghamton, N.Y. (NS); Horseheads, N.Y.; Arkport, N.Y.
July 17	Buffalo, N.Y. (NS to Buffalo Southern); cars to Eden, N.Y. for storage
July 31	Hamburg, N.Y. (BSOR); Erie County Fair, Aug. 7-18
Aug. 20	Dpt. Hamburg (BSOR to CSX)
Aug. 21	Arr. Burlington, Vt., for Champlain Valley Fair (Aug. 21-Sept. 1)
Sept. 3	Dpt. Burlington, Vt. (Vermont Rail)
Sept. 5	Port Crane, N.Y.; Riverside, Pa. (NS)
Sept. 6	Wilda, Va (NS)
Sept. 7	Roanoke, Va. (NS)
Sept. 8	Arr. Danville, Va., for Danville Fair (Sept. 9-21)
Sept. 22	Load at Danville, Va.
Sept. 24	Arr. Winston-Salem, N.C., for Carolina Classic Fair (Oct. 4-13)
Oct. 14	Load at Winston-Salem
Oct. 15	Fort Mill, S.C.; Cornwell, S.C.; Columbia, S.C. (NS)
Oct. 16	Arr. Augusta, Ga., for Georgia-Carolina State Fair (Oct. 18-27)
Note: Train did not go to Albany, Ga., fair	
Oct. 30	Arrive Tallahassee, Fla., for North Florida Fair (Nov. 7-17)
Nov. 19	Depart Tallahassee (CSX)
Nov. 22-23	Arr., unload at winter quarters, Taft, Fla.
Source: Strates Shows	



The Strates train passes through Shenandoah Junction, W.Va., on Sept. 10, 2011. Passenger cars were unoccupied during train moves, but served as housing near fair locations. Alex Mayes

was for \$2 million in coverage. Strates raised a political ruckus in New York state, CSX relented, and the train continued to roll, but without passengers aboard. Instead, Strates began to bus its workers from fair to fair. The passenger equipment served as lodging near fair locations.

But it was a wakeup call for Jimmy Strates. "If our business is reliant upon someone that can be this unreasonable, then they are an existential threat to our company," he says. "I initiated a five-year plan to make us not dependent on the rail."

Strates had already been using trucks to reach fairs in the Sunshine State. Eventually Strates began to use the train as a hub.

From a base in Middletown, N.Y., for example, Strates would use trucks to reach fairs in the Hudson Valley, in Connecticut, and out on Long Island.

Strates stopped using its passenger equipment in 2013, making the train a freight-only consist of flatcars with ramps that permit circus-style loading.

The hub experience helped Strates shift entirely to trucking in 2021, bringing the curtain down on the last regular carnival train. (The Ringling Bros. train expired when the circus itself shut down in 2017, although Ringling Bros. was revived, without animal acts, in 2023.)

"Looking back, we are the strongest





**TOP:** In Anderson, S.C., a man and child watch the 50-car Strates Shows train depart on the Southern Railway, bound for Winston-Salem, N.C., on Sept. 25, 1983. Jim Wrinn **ABOVE LEFT:** Classic heavyweight cars bring up the rear of the Strates train in Danville, Va., in 1962. Curt Tillotson Jr. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The Strates train, behind Seaboard Coast Line U-boats, meets Amtrak's *Champion* at Sanford, Fla., on June 4, 1976. Joseph L. Oates

family in the sense that we are the last carnival and circus train that made it," John Strates says. "There's nobody else running around putting up with all the headaches. And I do believe that ... we just did everything we had to do as hard as we could to stay on the rails as long as we could."

The family business traces its roots to its patriarch, Greek immigrant James E. Strates. He came to the United States in 1909 at age 15 and eventually settled in Endicott, N.Y., where he learned to wrestle at the YMCA. In 1919, he joined a carnival athletic show as a wrestler who would take on all challengers. James E. Strates acquired Southern Tier Shows in 1923 and changed its name to James E. Strates Shows in 1932.

The 1927 version of the carnival featured 11 acts. Among them: A contortionist, a dog and pony show, a sharpshooter and knife-throwing act, a ventriloquist,

trained bears, a 35-inch tall woman, and one who weighed 382 pounds. James E. Strates continued to build and manage the carnival until his death in 1959.

Three years ago, Strates put its JESX flatcar fleet up for sale through Ozark Mountain Railcar. It found no takers. These days, John Strates looks out the window at Strates headquarters, sees the light blue flatcars parked, and waxes nostalgic.

"I have very fond memories of growing up and living in a rail yard. We had a Pullman family car. Each of us had our staterooms or shared staterooms," he says.

"It was a great place to be. You spent your summers and you were at the fairs, but when you left the fairgrounds, you always went to your own rail yard. And some of 'em were on the fairgrounds, very few, two or three on our whole route. But growing up

on the train was great. And I miss traveling by train and living on the train," he adds.

"As far as the way it evolved, and we didn't have coaches anymore, and it all morphed slowly over my whole career to where we are now," John Strates says.

Jimmy Strates laments the way railroads have changed over the years, with an increasing focus on profits while becoming less capable of handling special moves.

"It'd be nice if everyone just would recognize that yes, we don't have the capabilities in our personnel that we had 20 years ago, and that's why we don't want to do it because we can't do it. And really, I think it's a statement of America," he says.

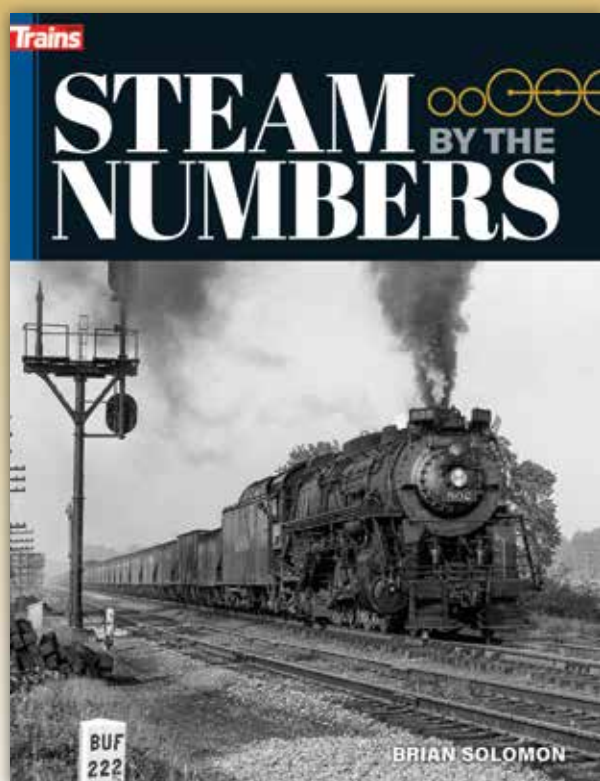
Not being able or willing to accommodate a special seasonal train, he says, would be like the U.S. Postal Service saying it can't handle Christmas cards anymore. **I**







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A Southern Railway hotshot piggyback/automobile train rumbles through Danville, Ky., in June 1976. SD40-2 No. 3239 is “backing up,” putting the engineer on the left side. It was a similar train that our author guided through the Rat Hole a year or so later. Gary Dolzall

# What track are you on?

A late-night meeting — almost by accident

By Brainard Cooper

**THE RADIO COMES ALIVE:** It's a transmission about another engineer. We'll call him Mike Smith. “Mike Smith, what track are you on at Harriman Junction?”

I'm northbound on Norfolk Southern train No. 216, a hot-shot piggybacker on the Kentucky Division — the Cincinnati,

New Orleans & Texas Pacific Railway, the Rat Hole — between Chattanooga, Tenn., and Danville, Ky. It's shortly after 3 a.m. and I'm meeting a southbound that's waiting in the siding at Sale Creek. I know that Jimmy Leon, the southbound's conductor, has made this call, just as he has for

over 20 years every time we meet on the line of road during the hours of darkness.

Allow me to explain. This takes me back to a night in 1976 or 1977 when Leon was my brakeman on Southern Railway train No. 124. We were on the way to Oakdale, Tenn., (about an hour west of



Knoxville, Tenn.) from Chattanooga in the wee hours of a morning.

Train No. 124 was called every night no later than 11:55 p.m. at Chattanooga's DeButts Yard — whether the yard crews had the train together or not. On this night, however, we got away without too much delay. The train was about 1¾ miles long with three SDs on the point and another SD working as a DPU two-thirds of the way back. The lead unit was an SD45 backing up, which in Southern Railway terminology meant the short, high hood leading, putting the engineer's control stand on the left side of the cab.

Our train is coming down Rockwood Hill on single track toward Emory Gap somewhere between 2 and 3 a.m. We hear some radio chit-chat that we know is going to affect us. A Knoxville-bound train had just come down the mountains into Oakdale, where a Knoxville crew was taking over from the Danville crew. And there's signal trouble, which we think will likely delay us getting into Oakdale and off duty. We hear the dispatcher giving the Knoxville train permission to depart: "Train 127 has permission to pass the stop signal on No. 1 Track at Oakdale to single track to No. 1 Track at 26 Tunnel."

By this time Leon and I are a mile and a half away from double track at EG Tower and have a yellow over green (approach diverging) signal. We know we are going to the No. 2 Track, and I have to hang onto the dynamic brake to hold our train to 40 mph as we hit the switch at EG Tower.

No. 127's conductor repeats the order (quite loudly since he's using the big radio in the Oakdale Yard Office).

Now, we're at the EG Tower switch and I'll run our locomotives hard up and over the hill before going into dynamic braking again as we drop down into Harriman Junction.

No. 127's engineer repeats the order.

Up over the hill we go, maintaining 40 mph, and start down New Grade toward Harriman Junction. The distant signal to Harriman Junction is clear. Maybe the Knoxville man will make it onto the double track before we get to the Junction. If so, we'll be off in 10 minutes or so. And, in bed in 30.

As I start blowing for the crossing at milepost 259, just about a mile from the next signal at the Junction, I hear C.B. Hoff, the dispatcher, call, "Mike Smith, what track are you on at Harriman Junction?"

Without conscious thought I punched the brake application button on the radio remote control panel, making a full-service brake application with one hand and going to full dynamic braking with the other. I clearly remember thinking that



Running the Rat Hole with a hotshot piggyback on Sept. 2, 1973. Mike Iczkowski

we'd better find out what was happening before we went by the signal at the Junction, but that was while the air from the brake application was still exhausting in the cab. We were now less than a mile from the signal, coming down a .75% grade with the DPU locomotive just topping the hill behind us.

And now we hear: "Well C.B. When we come out of the tunnel the light on No. 1 Track was a-flashin', so we hand-threwed [sic] the switch and we're starting by No. 4 Storage [Track]." That flashing yellow signal (approach slow) is the proper signal for a train on No. 1 Track, if it is going to be diverted off the route to Chattanooga onto the Knoxville main.

So, with no authority, Smith has put his train southbound on No. 2 Main, and Leon and I are northbound on the same track going 40 mph. Perhaps a mile and a quarter separate us. Maybe a mile and a half, if we were lucky.

We are fortunate to have a DPU as it will shorten the time it takes for the brake application to have any effect. Even so it seems like an exceedingly long time before the brakes start to take hold.

No. 4 Storage Track is about a half-mile long and parallels No. 2 Track. No. 127 is a maybe half mile from Harriman Junction, milepost 258.1 according to the timetable.

When Leon and I came in sight of the signals at Harriman Junction they were all red, stop indication on both tracks. We had about 1,000 feet to go, but we could feel the brakes taking hold. I kept the heel of my left hand on the large red "Big Hole"

knob on the radio control panel as we crossed over the Emory River bridge. My plan, such as it was, was to make the emergency application the instant we got off the bridge, but in the end it wasn't necessary. We stopped about 3 feet from the signal.

After stopping and taking a breath, when we again spoke, it's to comment on Mike Smith's heritage — in a less than complimentary manner.

Within a minute or two, here comes No. 127 easing around a curve up to the southbound stop signal on our track — the one on which we had been moving along at 40 mph until just a few minutes earlier. When the time delay finished running (about 5 minutes), Smith got a restricted signal and slowly dragged No. 127 off toward Knoxville. Leon and I got into bed some time later than we planned. Sleep did not come easily.

"You know," Leon said on our southbound trip later that day, "if we'd had a head-on [collision] they'd have blamed us." No doubt. That's how it works, I guess.

I don't know what happened to Mike Smith, but I never heard him on the radio again. Leon and I were never called to an investigation; the dispatcher never called us on the radio; it was like it never happened.

But for the next 25 years, every time I met Leon on that stretch of track in the wee hours of the morning, I could always count on, "Mike Smith, what track are you on at Harriman Junction?"

I hear you, Jimmy Leon. I hear you. I





# CPKC announces schedule for steam tour

4-6-4 No. 2816 will lead train through Canada, U.S., Mexico

▲ The 4-6-4 Hudson now known as CPKC No. 2816 has pulled numerous excursion trains since its 1960 retirement. Here it heads east across the Saint Lawrence River bridge in Kahnawake, Quebec, on June 11, 2004. This year No. 2816 will lead the CPKC Final Spike Anniversary Tour through Canada, the United States, and Mexico. David Thomas

## THE FINAL SPIKE ANNIVERSARY TOUR

, marking the merger of Canadian Pacific Railway with the Kansas City Southern, is under way. The three-nation journey began at CPKC's headquarters in Calgary, Alberta, on April 24. Stops are planned in Canada and the United States before the train heads to Mexico City, where the tour concludes on June 4.

The schedule, announced on the CPKC website, includes display stops in:

### APRIL 28 — MOOSE JAW, SASKATCHEWAN

12:00 – 4:00 p.m. MT  
CPKC parking lot,  
3 Manitoba St., East

### APRIL 30 — MINOT, N.D.

4:00 – 7:00 p.m. CT  
North Main Street crossing

### MAY 3 — SAINT PAUL, MINN.

3:00 – 8:00 p.m. CT  
Union Depot, 214 4th St., East

### MAY 8 — FRANKLIN PARK, ILL.

3:00 – 8:00 p.m. CT  
Franklin Park, 9748 Franklin Ave.

### MAY 10 — DAVENPORT, IOWA

2:00 – 5:00 p.m. CT  
Quinlan Court, 101 E. River Drive

### MAY 18 — KANSAS CITY, MO.

12:00 – 5:00 p.m. CT  
Union Station (Haverty Family  
Yards), 30 W. Pershing Road

### MAY 24 — SHREVEPORT, LA.

4:00 – 8:00 p.m. CT  
CPKC Shreveport Tower  
Office parking lot,  
4540 N. Lakeshore Drive

### MAY 28 — LAREDO, TEXAS

4:00 – 8:00 p.m. CT  
CPKC Laredo Yard,  
604 Serrano Road

Previously, CPKC indicated a stop was planned in Monterrey, Mexico, on May 31. At the time the full schedule was posted, no mention was made of this stop on either the English- or Spanish-language CPKC websites.

At the scheduled display stops, visitors will have the opportunity to view No. 2816 close up. Additionally, an exhibit detailing the railroad's his-

tory will be presented during the scheduled stops. The CPKC announcement indicates rides aboard the locomotive or train are not being offered as part of this trip.

The Final Spike Anniversary Tour will be led by No. 2816, a 4-6-4 Hudson, built by the Montreal Locomotive Works in 1930. From 2021 to 2023, the *Empress*, as the locomotive is called, underwent rebuilding at CPKC's Ogden Shops in Calgary. In addition to the usual requirements of a steam locomotive rebuild, No. 2816 was fitted with positive train control, but in a unique fashion. No. 2816 is the first steam locomotive to have "stand alone" PTC, meaning the monitoring system will function without the support of a trailing diesel locomotive.

For additional information on the tour and locomotive, visit the CPKC website: [cpkcr.com](http://cpkcr.com) — *Trains staff*



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# London calling

Exploring one of the greatest urban rail networks

▲ Paddington was the terminal station for Isambard K. Brunel's broad-gauge Great Western Railway (built with tracks just over 7 feet wide). Opened in 1854 to replace an earlier station, its great shed was inspired by Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace of 1851. Today, the historic station serves Great Western Railway and Heathrow Express trains.

Three photos, Brian Solomon

**AS ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREAT CITIES,** London is a popular destination for American travelers, and one of the planet's most railroad-intensive places.

It is populated by amazing Victorian stations blending the finest examples of 19th century railroad architecture with the latest in modern rail transport. The city is connected by overlapping networks of urban passenger railways that could take years to thoroughly explore. There are countless ways to approach London and endless paths to explore it.

On this visit my wife Kris and I arrived by plane at Heathrow — the largest of London's airports. Three rail options connect Heathrow to central London. The Underground's Piccadilly Line is the cheapest and slowest, offering direct access to myriad locations in the city, including popular stations such as Leicester Square, and

connections with other Underground routes.

The most recent rail link offers a more economical option. A branch of the Elizabeth Line — named for Queen Elizabeth II — uses the same rail link to Heathrow while serving the new Crossrail route reaching stations on the way from the airport in central London and points east.

We chose the third option, the Heathrow Express. This train runs directly from Heathrow Terminal 5 to Paddington Station. This option minimized the difficulties of navigating the Underground system at rush hour with heavy luggage. From Paddington, we took a taxi to the Clermont Hotel at Charing Cross Station.

This hotel is located at the heart of Central London and close to many attractions, like the West End theatre district. Charing Cross serves a variety of mainline rail services on the

old Southern Region, including frequent service to Hastings. This proved convenient as we took a journey outside London to the lovely historic town Tunbridge Wells, where we traveled on the preserved Spa Valley Railway.

Charing Cross is also served by the Northern and Bakerloo Underground lines. Nearby are the gardens and Thames River walk at Victoria Embankment — also the location of the busy Underground station serving District and Circle lines. The river itself is served by a variety of boat services, including Uber Boats by Thames Clippers that connect two dozen piers in the city. We were a short walk from Trafalgar Square, location of the National Gallery.

Admission is free and its world-class collection of art includes my favorite railway painting: *Rain, Steam and Speed* by J.W.M. Turner.



## UNDERGROUND ORIGINS

The precursors to the London Underground began operation in the 1860s using steam locomotives. Electrification began in the 1890s. The network gradually expanded and evolved, and today it is among the most extensive, busiest, and fascinating rail-transit systems in the world, carrying as many as 4 million passengers daily.

In addition to London's countless rail tunnels, there are networks of subterranean foot passages that permit transfer between routes and grade separated below-street connections. The Underground was famously used as an air-raid shelter during the world wars.

One of my favorite routes is the Circle Line, which makes a complete loop through Central London. We traveled clockwise from Embankment to South Kensington to visit the Victoria & Albert, Natural History, and Science museums — reached by direct passages from the Underground station.

The museums are popular and admission is free. Advance booking is recommended to avoid long lines. For industrial interest, I recommend visiting the Science Museum's Energy Hall, where a variety of early stationary engines are displayed. Locomotive enthusiasts should visit the museum's "Making the Modern World" displays that feature significant early steam locomotives and a variety of antique, hand-crafted railroad models, including a scale broad gauge Erie Railroad 4-4-0.

## TRAIN-WATCHING TIPS

Among my favorite London train-watching locations is the busy station at Clapham Junction (reachable using direct services from Victoria and Waterloo stations). If you want to see diesel-hauled freights on the move, consider a visit to Kensington (Olympia) station which is reachable both via the Overground circular suburban rail network and a branch of the Underground.

## JOURNEY PLANNING

Fare information can be found at Transport For Lon-



Today's Great Western Railway franchise operates high-speed, dual-mode trains over Brunel's historic GWR route. The scene is at Paddington Station in February 2024.



London's Circle and District lines are among the oldest Underground routes and share tracks at South Kensington Station. This is the best way to reach several of London's most popular museums. The Underground can be extremely busy at rush hour, but is easier to navigate during other times of day.

don's website: [tfl.gov.uk](https://tfl.gov.uk). A traveler could easily make a hobby comparing fare payment options. In the past, I've bought paper Day Travel Cards or invested in an Oyster Card (electronic fare storage card using

tap-on/tap off), but on this trip, we found it best to use our Visa Card with tap card function. Remember each passenger should carry their own card, use that same card for each 24-hour period, and both tap on when en-

tering and tap off when exiting Underground stations. — *Brian Solomon*

*Special thanks to Hassard Stacpoole for providing help with London travels.*



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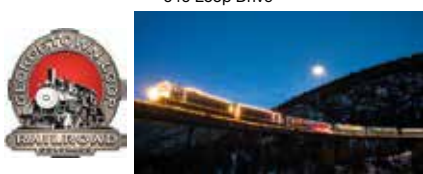
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[www.wfrm.org](http://www.wfrm.org)

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**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](http://carsonrailroadmuseum.org).

[carsonrailroadmuseum.org](http://carsonrailroadmuseum.org)

775-687-6953

**TEXAS Rosenberg**

**ROSENBERG RAILROAD MUSEUM**

1921 Avenue F, Rosenberg, TX 77471

The Rosenberg Railroad Museum is dedicated to preservation and education of railroading history and its impact on Fort Bend County. Exhibits include 1970's Caboose, 1903 Tower 17, 1879 passenger car, Garden Railroad, model train layouts, and more! Open Wed-Fri. 10-3pm, Sat. 10-4pm, & Sunday 1-4 pm.

[www.RosenbergRRMuseum.org](http://www.RosenbergRRMuseum.org)

(281)633-2846

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INTERPRETIVE CABOOSE**

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[www.facebook.com/theoldhotelothello](https://www.facebook.com/theoldhotelothello) 509-488-5936

**WISCONSIN East Troy**

**EAST TROY RAILROAD MUSEUM**  
2002 Church Street



RAILFAN Day is June 22nd! All cars and equipment on display. Railfan-friendly activities. 14-mile round trip from East Troy depot to Indianhead Park in Mukwonago. Stop at Elegant Farmer store and deli. Mix of classic trolleys and interurbans. Regular trains Fri-Sat-Sun June, July, August. Sat-Sun only Sept. & October. See schedules at

[www.easttroyrr.org](http://www.easttroyrr.org) 262.642.3263

**When visiting these  
attractions,  
mention you saw  
their ad in *Trains*!**

**WISCONSIN Green Bay**

**NATIONAL RAILROAD MUSEUM**  
2285 South Broadway



Explore dozens of historic trains and engaging exhibits at the National Railroad Museum, which is open year-round. Among our popular attractions are: the General Motors Aerotrain, Union Pacific "Big Boy" #4017, Pennsylvania Railroad GG-1 electric locomotive #4890, the Dwight D. Eisenhower A4 locomotive, and the world's largest collection of drumheads. Train rides are offered daily May-September (weekends in October).

[www.nationalrrmuseum.org](http://www.nationalrrmuseum.org) 920-437-7623

**WISCONSIN North Freedom**

**MID-CONTINENT RAILWAY MUSEUM**  
E8948 Museum Road



MCRM is home to one of the nation's largest collections of restored wooden passenger cars. Take a 55-minute, 7-mile round-trip ride aboard 1915-era coach cars. Open weekends May-Oct, daily except Mondays mid-June-Labor Day. Join us for our Stars & Stripes event for shop tours on July 4-6!

[www.midcontinent.org](http://www.midcontinent.org) 800-930-1385

**WISCONSIN Osceola**

**OSCEOLA & ST. CROIX VALLEY RAILWAY**  
114 Depot Road, Osceola, WI 54020



Join us for a scenic and memorable trip through the St. Croix Valley. Come for the 1920's-1950's passenger rail experience, the awesome scenery, or special events such as pizza or wine tasting trains, fall color train rides and the popular Pumpkin Express.

Individual, family and group tickets available. Also, be sure to visit the Minnesota Transportation Museum in Saint Paul to experience railroading history.

[www.trainride.org](http://www.trainride.org) 651-500-1822

**WISCONSIN Trego**

**WISCONSIN GREAT NORTHERN RAILROAD**  
N6639 Dilly Lake Road



**America's Only Moving  
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The train departs Tuesday through Saturday evening at 5:30 May through December. The train features a queen bed, toilet, sink and shower in each sleeper deluxe suite. Enjoy cocktails in the lounge and then move to the diner for a scrumptious 4-course chef prepared meal from our onboard kitchen. When the train returns to the station, view the starlit sky while trading railroad tales with other passengers around our gas fire on the patio. Wake up to a hot breakfast in the diner. See the world famous *Mark Twain Zephyr* at Trego Depot!

[www.spoonertrainride.com](http://www.spoonertrainride.com) 715-635-3200

# Trains Photo Contest



**2022 Grand Prize,  
Adam Horgan —  
Still soldiering on**

**Power is the 2024 theme**  
**Sponsored by the National Railway Historical Society**  
**NRHS**

Submit up to three of your railroad photographs that illustrate the theme to: [trainscontest@nrhs.com](mailto:trainscontest@nrhs.com) by June 1, 2024.

Prizes include cash, Trains products, and NRHS memberships.

For more information visit: [trains.com/trn/photocontest](https://trains.com/trn/photocontest)



## CLASSIFIEDS

**Word Rate:** per issue: 1 insertion — \$1.57 per word, 6 insertions — \$1.47 per word, 12 insertions — \$1.37 per word. \$35.00 MINIMUM per ad. Payment must accompany ad. To receive the discount you must order and prepay for all ads at one time. Count all initials, single numbers, groups of numbers, names, address number, street number or name, city, state, zip, phone numbers each as one word. Example: Paul P. Potter, 2102 Pacific St., Waukesha, WI 53202 would count as 9 words.

**All Copy:** Set in standard 6 point type. First several words only set in bold face. If possible, ads should be sent typewritten and categorized to ensure accuracy.

**CLOSING DATES:** August 2024 closes May 20, Sept closes June 24, Oct closes July 23, Nov Closes Aug. 20.

For TRAINS' private records, please furnish: a telephone number and when using a P.O. Box in your ad, a street address.

**Send your ads to:** Trains magazine – Classified Advertising  
21027 Crossroads Circle, P.O. Box 1612 Waukesha, WI  
53187-1612 Toll-free (888) 558-1544 Ext. 551  
E-mail: classads@kalmbach.com

## RAIL SHOWS AND EVENTS

**JUNE 9, 2024:** 48th Annual Kane County Railroadiana and Model Train Show. Kane County Fairgrounds, 525 South Randall Rd., St. Charles, IL. Sunday, 10:00am-3:00pm. Admission: \$6.00 w/tax. Tables starting at \$65.00. Information: 847-358-1185, RussFierce@aol.com or www.RRShows.com

**JULY 13, 2024:** Rail Fair, Copeland Park, Rose & Clinton Streets, La Crosse, WI. 10am-4pm. Admission \$5.00, under 12 free w/adult. Railroad Show–Flea Market–Swap Meet. Model, Toy & Antique Trains, Memorabilia, Railroad Exhibits & Displays. 608-781-9383, 608-498-9522. www.4000foundation.org

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

## LODGING

**INN ON THE RIVER:** Book your stay for a relaxing getaway overlooking the beautiful Mississippi! Guests are minutes from quaint restaurants, stores and many outdoor opportunities. Each room has a balcony for stunning views of the Mississippi River and the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe Rail Line. Reservations: 608-534-7784 www.innontheriverwi.com or email: innontheriverwi@gmail.com

## BOOKS AND MAGAZINES

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

**DONATING** what I believe to be an entire Trains Magazine collection (Nov. 1940 on) to a legitimate 501(c)(3). Must pick up in Chicago west suburbs or pre-pay shipping. Send qualifications of organization and proposed uses to: TrainsMagDonation@aol.com

## COLLECTIBLES

**TOP DOLLAR PAID** for steam/diesel or electric builder plates. mr\_slides@hotmail.com Telephone: 216-321-8446

**TOP PRICES PAID** for original steam, diesel and electric builder's and number plates. Have some quality plates for trade as well. rjmdowdne@comcast.net – 609-397-0293.

## PHOTOS, PRINTS AND SLIDES

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## RAILROAD ART

**THE ESTATE OF WELL-KNOWN RAILROAD ARTIST, ANDREW HARMANTAS,** is selling all remaining paintings from his collection. Paintings are of various railroads, steam, diesel, and various sizes. Majority are framed. Inquiries, visit www.andrewharmantasart.com

## MISCELLANEOUS

**RAILROAD PATCHES:** Engineer caps with insignia, 1,000 designs. Catalog \$5.00. Patch King, Box 145, York Harbor, ME 03911.

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**LOOKING TO PURCHASE 1947 FREEDOM TRAIN:** Collections, Photos, Scrapbooks, Pins, Footage and Pennants, Slides, Toys. G.R. Barker, 2191 Cook Rd., Ballston Lake, NY 12019 or E-mail: freedomtrain47@hotmail.com

**PRR LW PULLMAN CAR** Cast-iron door nameplates, 1938-1950. J.H. STEVENSON, Rocky River, OH 440-333-1092 jhstevenson8445@gmail.com

## AUCTIONS

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## In the July issue



## Superliner solution

In the mid-1990s, Amtrak figured out a better way to utilize its **SUPERLINER FLEET**. The former President-Amtrak Intercity explains how it worked — and why it might point the way forward today. The **COLEBROOKDALE RAILROAD** is growing a successful tourist carrier. A Congressional representative visits **WAR-TORN UKRAINE** by passenger train.

**On sale June 11, 2024**







## Rockin'

Among the twists and turns of the Feather River Canyon near Poe, Calif., a pair of Union Pacific SD70Ms, Nos. 4958 and 4556, handle an eastbound ballast train late in the day on May 16, 2008.





## **Siding sunset**

Burlington Northern Santa Fe train Z-SBDWSP5-10A, behind former Santa Fe SD40-2 No. 5137, holds Sais siding near Abo Canyon, N.M., as the sun sets on April 11, 1999.







## Good morning

Deep in the Appalachian Mountains near Fairhope, Pa., about 100 miles south-east of Pittsburgh, Amtrak P42DC No. 66, dressed in the 40th anniversary Phase II paint scheme, winds its train along CSX tracks, catching the morning sun on Jan. 6, 2012.



## LV in Va.

Norfolk Southern's Lehigh Valley heritage unit, ES44AC No. 8104, leads a coal train past the Appalachian Power generating station at Glen Lyn, Va., on May 17, 2013.







## Around the loops

Part way up the former  
Denver & Rio Grande,  
Western Craig Branch, in  
remote north-central  
Colorado, a Union Pacific  
coal train snakes east-  
bound through the Crater  
Loops. UP C44AC No. 6554  
is the rear DPU as sunlight  
fades on May, 21, 2011.







## Mid-morning mountains

It's 10:35 a.m. on May 22, 2010. Canadian Pacific AC4400CW No. 8602 is working as the rear DPU on a westbound sulfur train at Morant's Curve, Alberta, Canada.

## Tunnelfest

A trio of tunnel motors — Southern Pacific SD40T-2 No. 8568, SD45T-2 No. 9286, and St. Louis Southwestern SD45T-2 No. 9393 — haul a string of auto racks along Southern Pacific rails near Thompson, Utah, on Aug. 22, 1996.



Daniel Troy is a Hulmeville, Pa., commercial photographer specializing in advertising photography. Dan's interest in railroading is not surprising considering he grew up in Catawissa, Pa., a town with a rich rail heritage, as well as having railroading in his family. "Railroad photography has a different set of challenges than my studio work. I have complete control in the studio and little control when shooting trains. My approach is to create a dramatic image rather than a record shot. I have to find the drama in what I'm given; it could be the landscape, weather, light, or equipment."



## Cool freight

A cold, crisp Feb. 13, 2010, finds Strasburg Rail Road 2-8-0 No. 475 — painted as Norfolk & Western No. 382 — leading a freight special along the line near Strasburg, Pa.

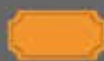




# Galesburg Railroad Days

June 28 – 30, 2024 • Galesburg, IL

Frequent, convenient Amtrak service



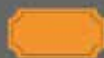
## Rail Yard Tours

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