

DANVILLE FLYER

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February Meeting at Jocko's

The February meeting will be at Jocko's Pizza on West Williams Street —date is Sunday the 18th. Lunch will be around 1:00 PM with meeting and program will follow. Unless there is a major snow storm, say over 6 inches of snow, high wind and blizzard conditions, we will hold the meeting as planned. Safe travel is more important than the meeting.

Dick Brazda will present the program on the Algoma Central.

Young Volunteers at Silvis Shop

SILVIS, Ill. — The stereotype of a worker or volunteer restoring a steam locomotive today is a group of grizzled mechanics of retirement age who recalled steam in their youth, and now want to get their favorite machines back on the road. But that stereotype is crashing down at the Silvis shop of Railroading Heritage of Midwest America, where the group is rebuilding Union Pacific 2-10-2 No. 5511 and 4-6-6-4 "Challenger" No. 3985 for service. There a group of employees and volunteers are hard at work, and at least six of them are under 30 — and some are as young as 18.

This "youth movement" is born out of both circumstance and necessity. RRHMA has managed to attract young people who grew up with trains — many trace that interest back to the Thomas the Tank Engine television series — and the fact that many of those grizzled mechanics have been swept up in other steam projects and are unavailable.

Case in point is RRHMA's newest employee, Aspen Welker, an outgoing 19-year-old with an infectious enthusiasm for steam. Welker began volunteering at his hometown heritage railroad, the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern in Jackson, Mo., when he was 5 years old. His previous experience had been working with diesel locomotives, but in July 2023 he visited Little America amusement park in Marshall, Wis., where the Whiskey River Railway live steam railroad operates.

He spent a few days with their mechanics, then on his trip back home, Welker stopped in Silvis for a volunteer weekend with RRHMA Shop Superintendent Alex Beems. Beems had worked several years at Whiskey River and encouraged Welker to volunteer at Silvis.

Welker began making weekend trips to the facility and later became a full-time volunteer. He also travels around the area visiting steam operations to further his "steam knowledge" as much as possible. This month he was hired on as a full-time employee.

Part of RRHMA's mission, according to President and Chief Operating Officer Steve Sand-

(Continued on page 2)

SUNDAY 18TH, MEETING AT JOCKO'S PIZZA AT 1:00 PM. PROGRAM BY DICK BRAZDA

OPERATING SESSION MARCH 2ND WEATHER DEPENDENT.

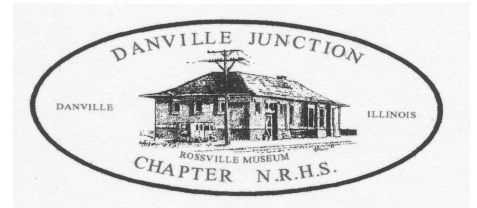
URBANA IL LINCOLN SQUARE TRAIN SHOW MARCH 23RD (10 AM TO 6 PM) AND 24TH (11 AM TO 4 PM).

C&EI HS ANNUAL MEETING WILL BE APRIL 13TH AT THE MONTICELLO RAILWAY MUSEUM.

About Us

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

railroading. Dues per year are \$30.00 for Chapter membership in addition to \$50.00 for NRHS membership. Rossville Depot Museum membership is \$30 per year. Meetings are held on the third (3rd) Sunday of each month (except June, July, August and December) at the Jocko's Depot Restaurant, Gilbert Street (Illinois Route 1) and Williams Street, next to CSX (former Conrail), in Danville, Il with lunch beginning at 1:00 PM Central Time followed by meeting and program.



Officers for 2024—our 56th Year

Henry Schmitt – President
Doug Butzow – Vice President
Dick Brazda– Secretary
Doug Nipper– Treasurer
Dave Sherrill – Programs
– Historian
Bob Gallippi – Museum Director
Rick Schroeder – Editor & NRHS rep
Doug Nipper - Publisher & Distributor

NRHS and Local 2024 Dues Payment.

It is that time of year again, Dues for the following year. We appreciate the donations that have been added to the 2023 dues check, it will be put to good use at the depot. NRHS members should be receiving their statement this month and online payment method will be offered again, or direct mail your check. Welcome to another year.

(Continued from page 1)

berg, is to entice younger generations. “When I began the restoration work on Milwaukee Road 4-8-4 No. 261, I was 25 years old,” Sandberg says. “Now I’m 58. We need to bring younger people in to carry on and learn about steam like I did when I was younger.”

Another way young people and other volunteers can learn is by actually working on a live steam locomotive, but with No. 261 located in Minneapolis with limited opportunities to run, Sandberg says RRHMA is actively pursuing the acquisition of a smaller steam locomotive that can operate on the grounds at Silvis and serve as a teaching tool. It has the additional benefit of allowing the group to offer short rides to visitors as the shop eventually transitions from steam restorations to more of a museum focus.

RRHMA is making significant progress in the restoration of both steam locomotives. No. 3985 has been significantly torn down, and Beems says they hope to lift the locomotive and remove the front engine wheelset in March. Surprisingly, Beems says, No. 5511, which hasn’t turned a wheel since the mid-1950s, is in much better shape than No. 3985 — a well worn locomotive from its

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years of operation.

"When we removed the cab you would not believe what we found under the floor," Beems says. They discovered decades of soot of course, but even an old railroad tie was found along with other waste. The bottom sheets of the cab had rotted away so new sides will have to be fabricated. A new cab floor is being fabricated by the Crawford Company in nearby Rock Island, Ill. The rear flue sheet will soon be removed and a newly built sheet installed to replace it.

While most of the effort is on 3985, No. 5511 is also undergoing work. It has been partially torn down, new staybolt material has been purchased, and staybolt fabrication will soon begin for the 2-10-2 and the Challenger. New flues for 5511 and 3985 have arrived at the shop. Sandberg made a group order that included flues for several other steam operations when he ordered them from a company in Germany — this included the Union Pacific steam restoration, UP 0-6-0 No. 4420, being rebuilt at the ex-UP roundhouse in Evanston, Wyo.

Other work at the shop includes rebuilding the tender from UP Big Boy No. 4014, which is being converted to burn oil. A new oil bunker is being fabricated by a company in St. Louis, and the tender has been sandblasted and primed. Work on the brake rigging and wheels is upcoming. The tender — originally from Big Boy 4015 but swapped when the engines were in regular service (then a common practice) — will be returned to UP when complete, probably next year. No. 3985's tender, now behind No. 4014, will then be moved to Silvis.

Diesels also will be getting work. National Railway Equipment will install new springs in the trucks of DDA40X No. 6936, which is now fully operational. BNSF B40-8W No. 537 will be entering the sandblast booth at Silvis soon in preparation for application of its original Santa Fe red and silver "Warbonnet" colors.

Under contract RRHMA is also repainting former Kansas City Southern business cars for CPKC. The cars are repainted from their original KCS passenger colors to CP maroon, but retaining Kansas City Southern lettering. Recently completed was KCS diner Jackson.

TRAINS ON LINE 1-23-24

BNSF Increased Intermodal from 2022

BNSF Railway Co. in 2023 moved more than 43,000 loads — or about 85 million packages — for its parcel shippers United Parcel Service and FedEx Ground, a 5% increase from 2022's mark, the Class I reported last week.

FedEx volume alone rose 77% year over year, according to BNSF's "Rail Talk" blog. Volume during the busy shipping season between Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Eve typically doubles from the railroad's typical handle.



UPS and FedEx work closely with BNSF to ensure communication lines are open and issues are resolved quickly to make delivery windows ahead of the holiday, according to the blog.

"Every effort is made to prevent delays, but our employees are ready to spring to action and make 'good saves' when these priority trains face the unexpected, like inclement weather, derailments or equipment failures," the blog states.

Noting the FedEx volume increase in 2023, BNSF Vice President of Domestic Intermodal Katie Hower said: "FedEx is leaning heavier into rail and with this successful peak, we have an opportunity to continue to grow through over-the-road conversions."

Also last year, the railroad marked record service achievements for UPS: BNSF's on-time performance reached 96%, which exceeded the contractual commitment.

"Other than three days, every day during peak reported at 97% on-time or higher," the blog states.

Progressive Railroading 1-23-24

Lincoln Square Train Show—Urbana, IL
Saturday March 23rd, 10-5 PM and Sun-
day March 24th, 11 to 4 PM

Need Volunteers for the sale table and popcorn sales.

Brightline Ridership

After four months of operation between Orlando and Miami, Brightline has dramatically increased patronage and revenue every month, especially for the component it designates as “long distance.” These are passengers who take the train to or from South Florida. A closer look at monthly data shows the company is actively managing the demand-influenced tradeoff between filling seats and raising prices.

The December 2023 Monthly Revenue and Ridership report issued on behalf of Florida Development Finance Corp., for the benefit of private activity bondholders, shows full-route passenger counts are up 45% from October and monthly ticket revenue increased 23% during the quarter.

For all of 2023, Brightline carried 2,053,893 passengers, generating \$87.7 million in revenue, a ridership increase of 67% and revenue jump of 174% from calendar 2022, when the company operated only between West Palm Beach and Miami. Orlando service began Sept. 22, 2023 with six daily round trips and 15 by mid-October [see “Pricing hints at early patterns” *Trains News Wire*, Oct. 18, 2023].

The ridership, revenue, and average fare per passenger tables below, from three months of bondholder reports, reveal trends affecting both Orlando and West Palm Beach-Miami patronage as Brightline ramped up to hourly frequencies. This delivery is compared with the same months in 2022, when only the short-distance trains operated.

With pricing based on demand, each train’s limited capacity of one “Premium” and three “Smart” coaches creates wide fare swings throughout the day, from departures that might be sold out for the southern portion of the route to a bargain \$49 fare on a late-night train to Orlando. Nevertheless, the ridership table shows full-route patronage continued to gain acceptance each month. In part, this appears to have been accomplished with fare deals to fill seats during slack travel periods, such as early to mid-December.

Note that the “average fare per passenger” paid by long-distance patrons dipped in that month as Brightline actively sought new customers by offering fare deals. These have continued into January and early February; current promotions

include children up to age 12 ride free “on select trains” (indicated by an icon on the website booking page) with a paid adult fare.

A survey of Orlando-Miami advance pricing for the week of Feb. 4 shows Smart fares range from \$49 to \$184, with Premium at \$119-\$269 with sporadic sellouts occurring prior to travel days. Passengers attempting to ride the Miami-West Palm segment may find seats “sold out” in either Smart or Premium on departures that are available at higher prices for travelers attempting to book the same train to Orlando.

It is clear that the high-value South Florida-Orlando passengers compete for seats with those traveling south of West Palm, but relative travel demand is likely to vary monthly throughout the year as the mix of customers change. As Brightline moves through the heart of vacation season, this is uncharted territory. But it is also significant that December

pricing manipulations resulted in increased revenue and strong ridership in both customer categories.

Another interesting increase occurred in “ancillary revenue,” which includes food and beverage sales and sponsorships. It has nearly tripled with the extension to Orlando and showed especially strong gains in December.



One category from the report that has remained flat is Brightline+ usage, the option to add door-to-door ride share ticketed connections between the train station and origin and destination. It hovered at around 15% in both December 2022 and 2023.

As noted recently by Bloomberg news, Brightline’s December 2023 report is projecting 5.5 million passengers for 2024 compared to the 7 million forecast earlier in the year. The December bond report also explains that the company remarketed \$190 million in bonds on Jan. 2, 2024, and plans to refinance \$4 billion during this quarter.

Running 16 daily round-trips to Orlando (18 between Miami and West Palm Beach) offers costly convenience if patronage is light at certain times of day. But generating revenue through pricing to match demand is what counts. That’s the challenge Brightline will continue to face throughout the year.

TRAINS 2-5-24

From My Office Window

Before long, I hope, the leaves will be out again and trains “will disappear” with minimal chance to check out the motive power on CN. Over the last few months, I have noted that there is not the pool power that I would have seen last year. The UP train still runs with mostly UP power, northbound around noon to 2 PM. But the NS and CSX power is rare now, a KCS unit snuck in one day last week.. The grain trains usually once a day, loads south and empties north, and sometimes there has been BNSF power on the loaded train. On the 6th of February I noted a northbound empty with all identical hoppers, the taconite train then went south, a shorter CN merchandise north, followed by a CN powered empty train, followed by a southbound merchandise all within about 2 hours. The intermodal is usually southbound after lunch. Oil trains still show up, about every other day. The Champaign to Centralia train still has IC SD70’s for motive power each day, both directions. So, if you pick the right time, usually morning and later in the afternoon, to spend some time at Tolono, you will see 2-3 trains.

Norfolk Southern through Tolono seems to be another issue of train volume. In making trips to Danville, I very seldom see a train. And those that I do see are shorter than they used to be. After the disaster last year in Ohio the railroad has suffered, and car loadings are down. In late January the Wall Street Journal reported that an investor group, led by activist Ancora Holdings Group, LLC, intends to run a proxy fight and replace Norfolk Southern President and CEO Alan Shaw. Ancora has reportedly built a position in NS and would likely try to take control of the Board to enact management and operational changes. NS has made numerous changes, one being that they will no longer lay off crews when business drops so they have the crews that they can call back when business picks up. The activist company wants to cut and raise stock price, something that the railroad does not need. Remember, investor groups are interested in the dollar and know nothing about running companies, especially railroads. The WSJ said they highlighted this as the number one risk in our downgrade earlier this week. NSC was up ~5% (about \$15) after hours.

NS Rail Gangs

Norfolk Southern replaced 556 miles of rail last year, the highest tally since 1990, the railroad said today.

NS’s capital production gangs broke productivity records by laying 35 more track miles of rail than in 2022, while using the same number of rail installation teams.

“The Norfolk Southern Engineering Department truly came together as one team in 2023 to achieve these outstanding results that enhanced our infrastructure system wide,” Ed Boyle, vice president of engineering, said in a statement today (Feb. 7, 2024). “These record accomplishments were made possible through extensive planning, coordination, communication, and teamwork.”

Over the past year, the railroad’s capital production gangs achieved the following results:



- 619 total track miles of rail work was completed, 49 miles more than in 2022.
- The R3 Dual Rail Gang laid 310 track miles, the highest amount on record.
- The R4 and R5 Super Single Rail Gangs completed 181 track miles.
- The R1, R2, R8, and R12 Curve Rail Gangs completed 127 track miles.
- A total of 2,562 miles of track were Tied & Surfaced.
- 2,099,502 rail ties were installed.

An additional 1,745 miles of track were surfaced.

“Our Engineering team worked collaboratively with the Network Operations Center and Transportation in a true Team of Teams effort to safely deliver a very successful year,” said Paul Duncan, Chief Operating Officer. “We look forward to achieving even greater results in the coming year.”

The capital production gang teams include:

- The R3 Dual Rail Gang is the largest production gang and

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the only rail laying team in the industry that installs both rails simultaneously. This operation lays over 300 track miles of rail per year.

- The two Super Single Rail Gangs, R4 & R5, handle shorter rail replacement jobs that cannot be efficiently performed by R3. They replace 180 track miles of rail annually.
- The four Single Side Rail Gangs replace over 100 track miles of targeted curve rail annually.
- The six Super, two Yard, and three Regional Timber and Surfacing (T&S) gangs replace a total of 2.25 million cross ties annually. The 11 T&S gangs install crossties and surface the track system wide. The six Super gangs focus on the mainline and sidings and the five smaller teams work yard tracks and industry tracks.

The two Surfacing Gangs, S2 & S6, and surfacing teams embedded in the rail gangs maintain track stability by tamping/surfacing nearly 2,000 miles annually.

TRAINS On-Line 2-7-24

The Monon Lives Again

JACKSONVILLE, Fla. — On January 22nd CSX has taken the wraps off of its ninth heritage locomotive at the Waycross, Ga., paint shop: CSX's Monon heritage locomotive is numbered 1897 in reference to its founding year. CSX No. 1897 representing the Monon.

"Here is a sneak peek of our ninth ONE CSX Heritage locomotive ... another great job by the team in Waycross," CEO Joe Hinrichs wrote in a LinkedIn post today.

The Monon — officially the Chicago, Indianapolis & Louisville beginning in 1897 — linked its namesake cities and operated almost entirely within the state of Indiana. Now the C&EI fans are waiting for the release of a unit in the black and white, maybe a large number on the hood instead of the cab.



Nebraska Proposed 2-man Crews

A filibuster has halted the Nebraska Legislature's consideration of a proposal requiring two-person train crews within the state, the news site Nebraska Examiner reports.

The filibuster, carried out over parts of three days, stalled the bill when a Friday vote was unable to obtain the 33 votes needed to invoke closure, the motion to end debate. The vote was 24-19 in favor of cloture.

The bill, proposed by state Sen. Mike Jacobson (R-North Platte) had advanced out of committee earlier in the week [see "Two-person crew bill advances ...," Trains News Wire, Feb. 1, 2024]. Jacobson argued that LB 31 would increase safety, but the Examiner reports opponents argued there is no proof two-man crews increase safety, that the legislation interfered with a matter for labor negotiations, and that it interfered with interstate commerce.

Trains 2-2-24

Editor: As you may be aware, several states are proposing laws that would require the railroads to have 2-person crews in the cabs for safety. Today, Amtrak operates with one-person in the cab and the conductor in the train. Most of the accidents that Amtrak has had would not have made a difference if a second person was sitting in the left hand seat. The Class 1's operate with 2-man crews except in yards where a remote is used and then there are at least 2 persons on the ground most of the time. A high percentage of accidents that have occurred where two trains hit had 2-person crews.

Positive Train Control is probably, when working properly, prevented many accidents that involve 2-man crews and would do the same if one person was in the cab. The biggest issue and need for 2-persons is the length of the trains today and how the help of another person when a train breaks in two, has a hot bearing and need for setout, and other train issues that would, under a one-person crew, require someone from an adjacent terminal to get to the site, many being remote, and keep the train moving.

Some short lines use one person in the cab and the conductor taking the pickup truck to assist any switching point along the route. The final word, I assume, will come from the Federal Government as the railroads fall under the FRA.

January Meeting Minutes

The January 21, 2024, meeting opened at 1254 at Jockos.

The secretary's minutes were accepted as printed.

The treasurer's report included CSX depot rent, PO box rent, and a supply of checks totaling \$948.01. Dues, donations, and some miscellaneous revenue was \$265.75 for a closing balance of \$8917.11. Doug B. moved that \$5000 be invested in a CD for a higher rate of return, seconded by Dick. It would be done at Iroquois for a year. The motion was approved.

No old business.

Dick agreed to provide the February program on the Algoma Central.

Henry plans to take Danville Jct. and C&EIHS sales material to Lebanon train show on 1/28. The Urbana train show will be the end of March. The chapter will have 2 tables. The Springfield show is scheduled for 3/10.

The December operating session had some electrical issues. Doug N. deduced the problem is in the command bus and will work on corrections. The next operating session is scheduled for February 3.

The meeting was adjourned at 1305.

Dave presented a video of steam power on the L&N and C&EI in the 1940-50s.

C&EI HS Annual Meeting—April 13th

The Annual Meeting will be held at the Monticello Railway Museum Wabash Center (behind the Wabash Depot), 200 E. Livingston St., Monticello, IL. Note: This is the facility in downtown Monticello, not at the Museum proper.

When: Saturday, April 13th, 2024, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Cost: Train excursion in former C&EI diner 505, \$15 general fare, \$12 senior citizen. Cost: Museum admission: Included with ticket price.

Schedule of Events

8:00 – 9:00 Building is open for visiting and setup for the day.

9:00 - 10:00 Meet and greet fellow members and friends of the society. Bring items to sell or display. Modelers are encouraged to display models. Contact David Forbes at altamontc_ei@yahoo.com to reserve a table. 10:30 – 12:00 Board the Illinois Central 4112, former C&EI dining car 505 Shakamak Inn, for a ride to the Monticello Railway Museum. Ticket must be purchased separately at the

Wabash Depot. Enjoy a brief stop at the museum with a presentation and explanation of the C&EI water column donated to the museum. Board the train for a return trip to downtown Monticello.

12:00-1:00 Lunch on your own. Visit www.mrym.org/downtown-monticello to see available options.

1:00 – 1:30 Continued meet at greet and swap meet.

1:30 – 2:00 C&EI Annual Meeting and election of officers.

2:00 – 3:00 Presentation on the history and mission of the Monticello Railway Museum by ... 3:00 – 5:00 Private tour of museum grounds, facilities and equipment after the presentation.



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We're on the Web!
www.danvillejct.org

Photo of the Month



It is 1987 and the Lincoln Square Train Show was in its 3rd year of filling the mall with dealers and trains. The Chapter and the C&EI HS combined in this display. The information board is still in use and thanks to Henry and Skylar for updating it each year.