

RAIL REPORT

December 2018

No. 699



Rocky Mountain Railroad Club • Rocky Mountain Railroad Historical Foundation

Annual Business Meeting and Program Remembering Milwaukee Road's Coast Division: Scenes from a Dying Transcontinental

By Blair Kooistra

December 11, 2018 • 7:30 PM

Blair put this program together in March of 2018 for the 40th anniversary of the legendary Winterail Railroad Photography Exposition. For him, it served as the bookend to an all-color presentation he gave in 1978 at the very first Winterail on the Milwaukee Road, which at the time had just declared bankruptcy for the third and final time and had a little over a year to live before abandoning the railroad west of the Dakotas. At the time he was a punk teenager who only had a couple of years of serious rail photography under his belt.

Please join us for an enjoyable, educational evening at Christ Church at 2950 South University Boulevard (University Boulevard at Bates Avenue) where there is plenty of off street parking at the rear of the complex. Please bring a guest. **All programs are intended to provide an educational experience on railroading. The general public is welcome to attend. There is no charge for this meeting.**

RMRRC 2019 Calendar

January 8: Meeting and Program, "Mines, Mears, and the Railroads of Silverton" by Bill Jones.

Due to circumstances beyond our control, programs and dates are subject to change without notice. Please contact Dave Schaaf with program ideas at ds5280@comcast.net or 303 988-3456.

Remembering Milwaukee Road's Coast Division



“The Snow Kings,” Cedar Falls, Washington, 1979. – Photo © 1979 Blair Kooistra.

The show is a tribute to the railroad and—more importantly—the railroaders, as photographed in glorious black and white. In recent years I have tracked down the men I photographed nearly 40-years ago to photograph and interview them today about their experiences on the Milwaukee Road and life after the railroad shut down. Eventually, these photos and interviews will find themselves into a book about my short time photographing its final days.

The Milwaukee Road photographs were some of my earliest attempts at

railroad photojournalism, a journey that has now lasted into its fifth decade. I was a high school student at the time, with ambition to someday work as a newspaper photographer. I eventually fulfilled that goal, and after 10-years in the business, got the wild hair that being a train dispatcher would be my next calling. I hired out with Burlington Northern at their Seattle office in late 1994, and am now approaching my 25th year delaying trains for BNSF in Fort Worth, Texas. I'm anxiously anticipating retirement, which unfortunately won't happen for another six years or so.

For Rail Report 699, celebrating the Club's 80th Anniversary, the masthead again features Kennecott Copper Corporation #80 at McGill, Nevada, in September 1965. – Photo from the Tom Klinger Collection.

Remembering Milwaukee Road's Coast Division



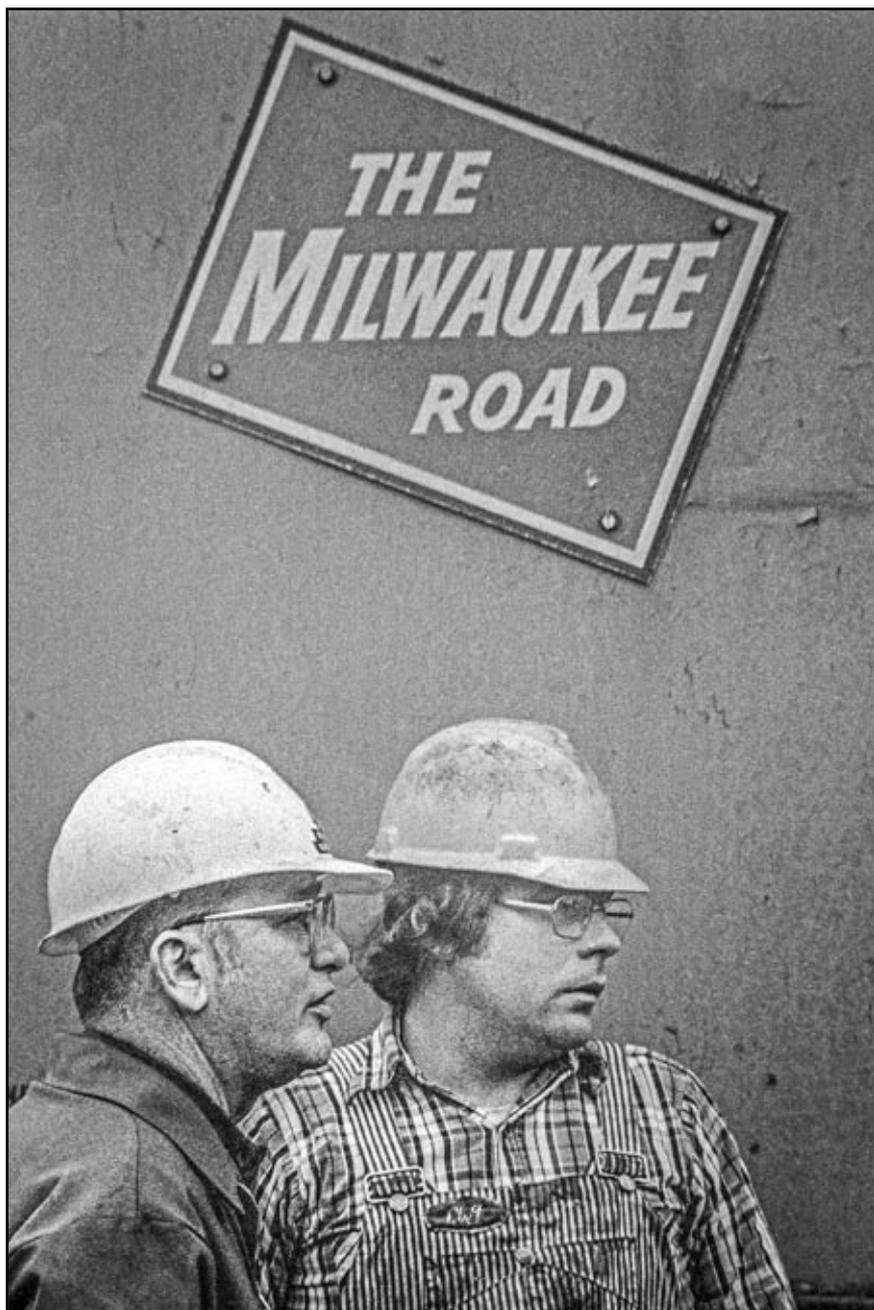
"Train 201, Change Creek Bridge," 1979. – Photo © 1979 Blair Kooistra.

Remembering Milwaukee Road's Coast Division



“Engineer Ed Leen, Bellingham, Washington, 1980.” – Photo © 1980 Blair Kooistra.

Remembering Milwaukee Road's Coast Division



"Hardhats," Tacoma Tideflats yard, 1977. – Photo © 1977 Blair Kooistra.

President's Report

By Steve Mason

We had a huge turn out for *Journey to Promontory* and a few members brought guests. Rich Luckin told the story you would expect, but he added side bars on the Denver Pacific and Kansas Pacific. This all tied into the main story. You can buy this DVD from Kalmbach if you missed the presentation. Rich and his crew did a wonderful job. Dave Schaaf did a nice job lining this up.

In December we will have a program on the Milwaukee Road's Pacific Extension. I have seen this program and it is another home run. Please come to our annual meeting for a good program, punch, cake and cookies. Board member Debbie is making her special train confections. And, oh yes, we will have our official annual meeting and election of new people to vacancies.

Back in the early 1970s I worked for an importer of ceramic tile in the Chicago area. Our main warehouse was in Harvey. We used the Milwaukee Road and we were really high on them. They could get us tile from Seattle to our dock in 5-1/2 days every time – ship to dock. We thought that was excellent service.

That freight came on the Pacific Extension. The Milwaukee had an esprit de corps that was very evident. We shipped under COFC Plan 2-1/2. (100,000#)

Ending on a personal note, I wish to thank all the members and boards I have served on these last 20 some years for the honor. I have learned a lot. I learned how to publish books, produce DVDs, run trips, run banquets, run meetings, and run board meetings by Robert's Rules of Order. It was fun! I would like to single out and lift up a tremendous and long effort by Bruce Nall who not only produces the *Rail Report*, but is also the Club memory at Board meetings. Thank you Bruce!

Board meetings are usually held the first Monday after a regular monthly meeting. I personally urge any of you to attend and tell us what we need to address or tell us what we have done that pleases you. You are always welcome! If any member has any question or concern on events or would like to go to a Board meeting to see what kind of fun we have or any other concern, call me at 720-371-8536 or stevemason647@gmail.com.

A Call For Nominations For The Rocky Mountain Railroad Club and The Rocky Mountain Railroad Historical Foundation

The committee has nominated current secretary, Dennis Leonard, as 2019 President and current director, Andy Dell, to replace Denny as Secretary.

Any member wanting to volunteer or nominate another member for either an officer or director position should

contact the nominating committee, Debbie MacDonald or Pat Mauro at the December Club meeting or contact them through the Club website or by mail to:

Rocky Mountain Railroad Club
PO Box 2391
Denver, CO 80201-2391



A huge rotary snowplow is photographed near Riner, Wyoming, a siding about 20 miles west of Rawlins. The Union Pacific suffered two blockades in 1949. The first started on January 2nd and covered a territory east of Sherman Hill into central and eastern Nebraska. This blockade trapped passenger trains at various locations between Sidney and Cheyenne. The line from Julesburg through Sterling was opened first, and trains were detoured to La Salle, and then north to Cheyenne where they continued to their destinations. It took nearly a week for the resumption of traffic between Sidney and Cheyenne.

– UP Photo from the James L. Ehernberger Collection.

The 1949 Blizzard

By James Ehernberger

Old timers recall THE BLIZZARD OF THE CENTURY that occurred in 1949. On January 2nd, strong winds accompanied with snow, and freezing conditions, struck east of Sherman Hill and continued during the following days until it cleared on the morning of January 5th. Railroads were unprepared. Weather reports did not predict such a storm. The winter of 1948 and 1949 were tough anyhow, as in November a blizzard struck eastern Colorado and western Kansas, then moved northeast-

ward into central Nebraska. The City of St. Louis was unable to proceed, and eventually was returned to Denver, and detoured through Nebraska and operated into Kansas via the Gibbon Cut-off line. Many farmers and ranchers in the stricken area were plowing snow into the Thanksgiving holiday.

The January 2nd storm completely tied up the Union Pacific between Cheyenne and North Platte. The line was opened west of North Platte to Julesburg, and

The 1949 Blizzard



The City of Portland is rounding the curve at Coal Creek on the Moffat line. The 15 car train was making 25 mph at 12:07 PM on February 19, 1949. The snow blockade in Wyoming was lifted on this date, and perhaps this was the final detoured passenger operation over the Rio Grande between Salt Lake City and Denver. – R. H. Kindig photo from the James L. Ehernberger Collection.

trains were detoured via Sterling to La Salle, and then northward toward Cheyenne. The Sherman Hill line was opened first, so traffic could continue to westward destinations.

In other parts of the country, winter conditions caused serious problems, including freezing of citrus crops in the Los Angeles basin. Union Pacific's Idaho branch lines were snowbound as well. Most of the main lines were opened, however, branch lines were a different story. The Sterling to Cheyenne Burlington line saw their last train on January 1st, and their Jull snowplow worked around the clock for nearly a week during late January to finally reach Cheyenne, and then it blew shut, and

additional attempts finally succeeded in opening the line on February 13th, a total of 43 days!

In Colorado, the Great Western line was plugged and they borrowed a wedge snowplow from the Union Pacific. The Colorado and Southern Denver to Billings passenger train was stuck in a huge drift between Wellington and the Wyoming state line, requiring a rotary snowplow to rescue it.

Weather conditions moderated somewhat, although it was a winter with a lot of wind and drifting.

Another storm struck the Laramie Plains on February 6th, and the UP

The 1949 Blizzard



With the Wyoming main line snowbound, it was necessary for UP trains to detour over the Rio Grande and the Santa Fe. This rare image shows two UP Challenger locomotives at Colorado Springs. The northwest traffic detoured over the Moffat line, while the Los Angeles traffic detoured south of Denver and over the Santa Fe via Raton Pass. Club member and photographer Ernie Peyton was attending college in Colorado Springs at that time.

– Ernie Peyton photo from the James L. Ehernberger Collection.

was again tied up between Laramie and Green River. Unfortunately a snowplow derailed west of Rock River causing engine 3947 to derail and foul both tracks. The strong winds and bitter cold weather prevented getting the line open resulting in trains tied up at various locations. One newspaper report indicated as many as 20 passenger trains were waiting at Green River for the tracks to be cleared. After a while these trains were detoured over other railroad routes.

Battling the conditions in this territory

resulted in borrowing a rotary snowplow from the Santa Fe, and bringing in every piece of snow fighting equipment available. Private contractors were hired, and finally on February 19th, the weather moderated and the line was opened. The first eastward train consisted of coal as that product was needed badly with people still using coal for heating purposes. The first westward train consisted of hay for the livestock.

Other than the railroads, the farmers and ranchers suffered the greatest loss.

Current Railroad Happenings



Locomotive #315, back dated to look like #425, ready to lead the Chili Line mixed freight special on the Cumbres & Toltec Scenic Railroad on September 24, 2018. – Photo © 2018 Michael Tinetti.



Snow clouds parted when UP 1995, the CNW Heritage unit, rolled east on track 2 at Hermosa Siding, Laramie Subdivision, on November 8, 2018. Train M RVNPP-06 Roseville, California, to North Platte, Nebraska. Windy and snow was falling on Sherman Hill. – Photo © 2018 by Chip.

Current Railroad Happenings



BNSF shoving platform lettered Burlington Northern (BN) 12277 was parked next to Grupo Cementos Chihuahua (GCC) at their Irondale Terminal near Commerce City, Colorado, on November 23, 2018. The shadow on the building reminds us how the caboose is just a shadow of railroading today. – Photo © 2018 by Chip.



During the noon hour on November 1, 2018, eastbound RTD 4011 waits at the downtown Arvada station as the eastbound “beer run” passes it on the way into Denver. – Photo © 2018 Dave Schaaf.

Anniversary Memories

By Dave Goss

Since this is an anniversary year for the Club, I thought it might be interesting to reflect on another anniversary, the Club's 25th celebrated in 1963. This was the first time that the Club collected a listing of highlights dating back to 1938. In fact it was this historic listing that prompted us to undertake the Club's more detailed history published in 2005 as *Journeys to Yesteryear*. But in 1963, the year was filled with other events as well.

Clearly one highlight of the year was the Club's Anniversary Dinner held on May 11th at the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs. The menu included filet mignon with all the trimmings and a showing of *Ticket to Tomahawk*, the color movie featuring RGS No. 20 as the "Emma Sweeney." The total round trip cost was \$6.00 per person (about \$49 in 2018 dollars). What a bargain!

Approximately 425 Club members and guests boarded the train at Denver's Union Station at 2:30 PM. Motive power was CB&Q's Mikado No. 4960 which had actually been booked by the NRHS Intermountain Chapter for a trip for their organization. Negotiations between President Jackson Thode of the Club and William Jones of the NRHS Chapter resulted in a mutually agreeable arrangement for the Club to use No. 4960 for the dinner trip. The trip to Colorado Springs was not without incident, however, as described in a letter by President Thode to Major General Robert Warren, Superintendent of the U. S. Air Force Academy:

In celebration of the Club's Silver Anniversary, arrangements were made to operate a special steam-powered excursion train from Denver to Colorado Springs... The 425 passengers aboard the train were eagerly anticipating this event when we learned to our dismay that our locomotive was very low on water, having consumed more than expected while climbing the Palmer Lake Divide enroute south. When we reached the Academy grounds the engineman in charge, vitally concerned for the safety of his passengers and engine, stopped the train near the south end of the Academy and sought the assistance of your people. It is most gratifying to report to you that the response of your Academy personnel was outstanding. A tank truck ... accompanied by a pickup ... took care of the immediate need, while pumper #6 arrived to insure proper handling of the emergency. Consequently, we were enabled to maintain our scheduled activities with a minimum of embarrassment and delay, and this would have been utterly impossible without the good help given by your people... Their promptness and efficiency is certainly to be commended; their actions demonstrated, once again, the readiness and ability of the Air Force to respond to the most unusual type of emergency.

After the excursion Trip Chairman Ed. Haley wrote a letter to H. C. Mur-

Anniversary Memories

phy, President of the Burlington Lines in which he stated:

My purpose in writing is to express the club's appreciation to you for providing this opportunity to ride behind old 4960 – a really fitting form of transportation to and from our twenty-fifth anniversary dinner. We also want to let you know that we would greatly enjoy doing it all over again anytime we have the good fortune to be able to do so.

In 1966, the CB&Q retired No. 4960 and sold it to the Circus World Museum.

It was later leased from the museum to the Bristol & Northwestern Railroad in Virginia. The railroad was unsuccessful and closed in 1984. The next year, No. 4960 was sold to the Grand Canyon Railway. After some uncertain times and changing operations the locomotive was overhauled and inspected over the winter of 2011/2012 and now operates during the summer months. The Club did not have another excursion behind No. 4960, but members still have the opportunity to see her in action.

Despite the large turnout, the Club lost over \$1200, since the train rental and cost of dinner was more than budgeted.

Month Two of the Renewal Process

The renewal invoices were sent out last month. If you cannot find yours please contact us by sending an email to rails@rockymtnrrclub.org and request a replacement which will be sent to you. If you do not use digital media you can send us a request for a new invoice to the club post box at Rocky Mountain Railroad Club, Renewal, PO Box 2391, Denver, CO 80201-2391.

Each renewal form has spaces provided to correct any errors with your contact information. This includes the spelling of your names and addresses. Members if you have an email account please make sure we have the correct information. We use an email notification service.

You may renew on the home page of our club web site, www.rockymtnrrclub.org. Click on the highlighted **Renew Now** and fill in the information requested. Payment is by Master Card and Visa

only when using the renewal page.

The membership year is January 1st through December 31st of each year. There will be no increase in dues for 2019. To maintain membership in RMRRRC, your dues for the upcoming year should be paid by December 31st.

Multimember households should return each membership form, but a single payment for the household is desired.

The club would greatly appreciate if all of our members renew by the end of year. We do allow for a month grace period in January. The re-sequencing of seniority numbers is performed the first week in February. If you wish to keep your seniority please make sure you have renewed by then.

Membership cards will be mailed out to each household in the first half of March.

Current Railroad Happenings



Union Pacific 1348 GP40-2 (right) and UPY 586, GP15-1 remote control locomotive (RCL), delivered steel coil cars to Rio Grande Company steel fabrication shop next to UP's 4th Street Yard in Denver, on November 23, 2018.

– Photo © 2018 by Chip.

Notice Of Annual Meetings

The annual meetings of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club and the Rocky Mountain Railroad Historical Foundation will be held on Tuesday, December 11, 2018, 7:30 PM at Christ Church, 2950 South University Boulevard, Denver, Colorado. These meetings are called for the purpose of electing Officers and Directors for both organizations. At these meetings the Club or Foundation may conduct any other business as may properly come before these meetings.

Colorado Railroad Museum 2018 Special Events

The Polar Express Train Ride is sold out.

For information call 303-279-4591 or <http://www.coloradorailroadmuseum.org>

Colorado Railroad Museum Admission

Rocky Mountain Railroad Club Members in good standing, and upon presentation of a current membership card, are entitled to free admission. Members are invited to join the Colorado Railroad Museum (a Museum membership provides certain merchandise discounts), and members may participate in restoration or other maintenance programs as volunteers.

Intermountain Chapter, NRHS Events

For information call 303-883-2435 or see <http://www.cozx.com/nrhs>.

Publishers Statement — Rocky Mountain Rail Report

The Rocky Mountain Rail Report (ISSN 1040-9223) is published by the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club and the Rocky Mountain Railroad Historical Foundation.

First class postage paid at Denver, Colorado.

Postmaster, send address changes to:

Rocky Mountain Rail Report, PO Box 2391, Denver, CO 80201-2391

Club Information

Rocky Mountain Railroad Club
PO Box 2391
Denver, CO 80201-2391
Web: <http://www.rockymtnrrclub.org>
Facebook:
www.facebook.com/rockymtnrrclub

Club and Foundation Officers

President	Steve Mason
Vice President	Dave Schaaf
Secretary	Dennis Leonard
Treasurer	Keith Jensen

Club and Foundation Directors

Andy Dell, Nathan Holmes, Ron Keiser, Pat Mauro,
Debbie MacDonald, Steve Subber, Michael Tinetti.

Membership Information

Membership in the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club may be obtained by sending the annual dues to the Club address listed above.

Regular membership dues are \$35.00. Overseas regular membership dues are \$45.00.

Contributing membership is \$50.00. Sustaining membership is \$70.00.

Patron membership is \$100.00. Golden membership is \$500.00.

An associate membership for spouses and children is \$25.00 additional.

Members joining after April may send a payment of \$3.00 for each month remaining in the year. New members who join in-person at a meeting will be given a free copy of the Club history book

Members of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club are also members in the Rocky Mountain Railroad Historical Foundation, the non-profit arm of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club.

Board Meetings

Members are always welcome to attend any board of directors meeting. Please contact any Club officer for the date, time and location.

Newsletter Contributions

Newsletter contributions and items for publication should be sent to:

Bruce Nall, Editor
Rocky Mountain Rail Report
PO Box 620579
Littleton, CO 80162-0579

E-mail: selectimag@aol.com

Items for the January 2019 Rail Report should be sent by December 10th.