

PENNYRAIL

NOVEMBER 1999

VOLUME 3 NUMBER 11

The official publication
of the Western Kentucky
Chapter, NRHS.

NRHS National News



Chapter

NOVEMBER MEETING

MADISONVILLE, KENTUCKY

Monday, November 22

7:00 PM

L&N DEPOT

PROGRAM

Wally Watts will present the program with refreshments courtesy Ricky Bivins. It should be a great evening. Ya'all come - and bring a friend!!

OCTOBER MEETING

Twenty-three people were on hand for the October meeting in Madisonville. It was nice to see Tom Beumel and Bob Vittitow from Owensboro with us. Guys, it is great to see both of you feeling better and able to attend a meeting with us. Louie Hicks from Hopkinsville was at the meeting also. Louie is recovering from back surgery earlier this year. Great to see you out and able to attend a meeting with us again. Hope to see all three of you back with us in November.

Ricky Bivins had the program at the meeting. He

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Western Kentucky
Chapter, NRHS

111 Reed Place
Madisonville, KY 42431

* * * * *

President
Bob McCracken

Vice President
Ricky Bivins

Sect. Treas.
Wally Watts

National Director
Chuck Hinrichs

"PENNYRAIL" is the official publication of the Western Kentucky Chapter, NRHS. Send news notes, historical notes and other rail information to:

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ALCO PHOTOS

It is likely that the subject of the Alco Photos Collection will come before the Board at the November meeting. The Alco Photo subject seems to appear like the Loch Ness Monster and, based on information I have received about as hard to deal with as old "Nessie." The material is in three groups and is presently in the custody of the custody of the Mohawk & Hudson Chapter. The National organization does not have custody of any of the material but has some loosely defined liability for the



care of the material.

I assume that the NRHS wishes to void it's liability as it has no direct control of the material. If that is the case I would support such action.

Chapter News

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showed three short vintage railroad videos to the members. Good job and thanks. Chuck Hinrichs provided the refreshments for the meeting. He had a cake in honor of his first year of life after open heart surgery last October. Great job with the refreshments and great to still have you with us!

CSX provided only one train during the meeting. It was southbound manifest train Q597 with a dog's lunch of a motive power pulling the train. On the point, CSX B23-7, still in Family Lines paint, followed by a Conrail GP38-2, a CSX GP40-2, a leased CN GP40-2W and a Conrail SW1500. One train with five different locomotive models painted in four color schemes. Like we have said, just who owns the tracks through Madisonville anymore?

NOMINATIONS

All incumbent Chapter officers were nominated for another one year term. The election will be finalized at the November 22, 1999 Chapter meeting.

NEW MEMBER

Paul Bethel from Greenville joined our chapter at The October meeting. Paul is a friend of another new member, Buddy Ashby, of Greenville. Great to have you in our Chapter Paul!

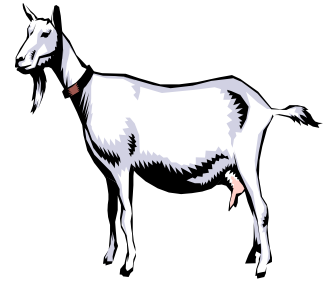
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MEMBERSHIP

National and Chapter - includes 11 issues of "Pennyrail" and 6 issues of the NRHS Bulletin	\$25.00 per year.
Family membership	\$27.00 per year.

TRACKSIDE WITH THE OLD GOAT

Dennis Carnal



Greetings from The Official Old Goat of the New Millennium. Let me be the first person to wish you, your family and friends a Happy Thanksgiving, a Merry Christmas and a very Happy New Year. It's here! A brand New Millennium!!! I hope this Holiday Season brings much joy and peace to everyone. May the coming New Year bring only happiness and good fortune to you.

As in past years, we will not print a newsletter in December. Also remember that our chapter will not have a regular chapter during the month of December. Make your plans on attending two special chapter events during the coming weeks. First, the Annual Open House at Don Clayton's home at 7:00 pm on Saturday, November 20th, and then, the Western Kentucky Chapter Christmas Party. The Christmas party will again be held at Bartholomew's Restaurant on South Main street in downtown Madisonville on Monday evening, December 13th. Happy hour is at 6:00 pm with dinner at 7:00 pm. As we did last year, we will not have a program at this meeting, only a night of fellowship and fun. Be sure to attend and bring your wife or girlfriend or both with you. Let's have a large turnout for both events.

RAILFANNING THE UNION PACIFIC CHESTER SUB

Saturday, September 25th was the date for The Old Goat's next railfan trip. Leaving Madisonville at 7:00 am, the

Goat along with Bob McCracken, Bill Heaton and Jim Pearson were on the way to Marion to meet David Frazer and Ron Stubblefield. Ron waiting outside with his Jeep already warmed-up for the trip to Illinois. As soon as the equipment was loaded, Ron burned rubber leaving Marion. It was like he had never been railfanning before! David Frazer and Bill Heaton were riding with Ron, while Bob and Jim were riding in the Goat's Blazer. After a very quick run to the Ohio River ferry at Cave-In-Rock, Illinois. Ron rolled out of the Ohio River Valley like a female poodle with a gang of pit bulls on it's tail. Poor David and Bill, they were in for the ride of their lives. The plan was to meet Chuck Hinrichs and Wallace Henderson at Ware, Illinois along the Union Pacific tracks between 10:30 and 11:00 am. We arrived at Ware before Chuck and Wallace. Surprise Surprise! I had made a promise that we would see a Union Pacific train within ten minutes of getting trackside or the tour group would get their money back. Well folks, The Old Goat came through with flying colors. The first train sighted was a westbound auto parts train with a pair of Canadian National locomotives. Smiles from everyone, even Bill Heaton. Five minutes later, another westbound auto parts train rolled through Ware, with a UP C40-8, an SP GP60 and a UP SD40-2 for power.

At 11 Chuck and Wallace showed up, but no more trains. Chuck was happy, he

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THE OLD GOAT

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was eating bluegill filets from a store in Anna. After Chuck finished eating, we headed for Missouri and Cotton Belt country. On the way we missed an eastbound UP manifest train between Ware and Potts. UP crews don't call lineside signals and the dispatchers talk very little to crews on the double track line. No other trains were heard passing the detectors near the Thebes Bridge, so on to Scott City we go. At Scott City, we stopped for lunch. The signals were dead, so we headed further west toward the BNSF/UP crossing at Rockview. We were in luck as a northbound BNSF manifest train was making a pickup at the yard in Chaffee. A few minutes later, we heard the UP dispatcher telling a westbound UP train that it would be meeting an eastbound a few miles to our west at Delta. Heading back to the diamond, we saw the westbound UP train crossing ahead of us. Power on this manifest train was a Conrail SD50 and one Norfolk Southern SD40-2. A few minutes later, the northbound BNSF manifest train got a green signal to cross the diamond. This train crept by with a good mix of power, BN SD40-2, BNSF C44-9W in "Warpumpkin" paint and UP SD40-2 crossing home rails.

Twenty minutes later, the UP eastbound from the meet at Delta passed through Rockview. This manifest had two UP GP50s, one CSX SD40-2 and one UP SD40-2. Next, twenty-five minutes later, a hot UP "Z" train made up of COFC and TOFC rolled through Rockview. Power on this westbound piggyback was a UP SD50 and a UP (ex-SP) B40-8.

Time to change locations

again. Heading west into Missouri we saw no more trains for over two hours. We waited at Stubbie's curve in Perkins, but no action. The four Chester Sub "Rookie Railfans" did get to see some new railfanning locations, so the trip wasn't all bad. A few miles west of Scott City, or Illmo on the railroad, we heard a westbound train crossing the Thebes Bridge. We made it to a favorite photo location at the east end of Quarry Siding named "Jim Boyd Curve" by The Old Goat a few years ago while railfanning the line after the St. Louis N.R.H.S. Convention in 1990. I had the pleasure of meeting Mr. Boyd at this location while shooting the Cotton Belt steam locomotive, # 819, on it's trip back to Pine Bluff. The short wait for this train was worth it, it was a loaded unit coal train from Wyoming with two Union Pacific AC44-9Ws pulling this 135 car train



with another UP AC44-9W pushing it in DPU mode. This DPU set-up is now standard practice for most UP coal trains systemwide. This train was meeting an eastbound "Z train" at Delta. We decided to hold our location for this eastbound train. After about twenty minutes, a pair of UP units rolled by our location. The SD60 and SD50 had the mostly APL doublestack train rolling off the miles toward the Thebes Bridge.

With only two more hours

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of daylight, we left Missouri in the hopes of not missing any trains till we got back trackside at Thebes. Not a train was missed this trip, lucky us? The group got the full tour of the trackage between the Thebes Bridge through Gale through Nile and on to The Old Goat's most favorite photo location, the nice signal bridge between Reynoldsville and Ware, just west of Potts crossovers. A great afternoon photo location with the Mississippi River bluffs to the east. What could be better? A train stupid!, a train! Over two hours had passed since the last train. As the final train of the day hustled by our location you guess what type of locomotive was leading? For the pleasure of this bunch of railfans from Western Kentucky, Uncle Pete ran this train with a CSX locomotive on the point. The train was an eastbound manifest with one CSX B30-7 leading SP SD45 and SP GP60. With all the equipment put away it's 6:30 pm. Only 10 trains in 8 hours trackside. Time to call it a day and head for Kentucky. It should be noted that on this same trackage on May 29th, 1999 The Old Goat, Rick Andrews, Rich Hane and Stubby shot 21 trains between 11:00 am and 6:00 pm. But it seemed like everyone had a good time together and that's what counts when you go railfanning with a great bunch of friends. Hope we see more trains on the next trip to the "busy" Union Pacific Chester Subdivision. Why not come along and see for yourselves next time? Remember, "Rookie Railfans" ride with Stubby.

Well, as the Old Turkey on Thanksgiving Day will say, "Put a fork in me, I'm done." So is The Old Goat for this month, and the year for that matter. With the coming cold and dark days of winter, take a few minutes and write something for the newsletter. It would help both Chuck and I a bunch. We can always use your material. Get

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Wally's Wanderings

Wally Watts

1003 to Trout Lake

August 8, Gladstone, MI. Don Clayton and I boarded the private car 'Caritas' on a 16 car train for the run from Gladstone to Trout Lake in Michigan. After some switching we were on the main and SOO 1003 coupled on to the train and we rolling by 8:30 am. The 2-8-2 handled the heavy train with ease. The route traversed pleasant wooded and lake areas over slightly rough but well maintained Wisconsin Central jointed rail. We stopped at Manistique to take on water - the auxiliary canteen lost half its water due to a leaking fitting.

We arrived at a lakeside park near Trout Lake and a local women's club served box lunches and soft drinks. The train proceeded to Trout Lake to turn on the wye and take on more water. A slow water fill delayed the train by 2 hours and it was 4 pm before we boarded for the return trip.

The return trip was uneventful and we made another short stop in Manistique before arriving back at Gladstone at 8:30 pm on a beautiful cool sunny evening. After good-byes we were headed for US 41 and the long trip home. Another enjoyable trip.

According to public timetables, this line was served by four daily passenger trains as late as 1959. Dresser, a smaller town, had a yellow and brown station used as an office by the Wisconsin Central. Two lines are there and in earlier years had a 2 stall engine house and a tower.

Thanks, Wally, for in interesting trip narrative. We look for more in the future. CFH

EXPRESS: AN EXPRESS HISTORY

Rick Bevins

Express today can be defined as the movement of goods, valuables and money quickly and safely from point to point. Express in this country started in 1835 by brothers L. B. and D. B. Earle between Boston and New York City by carrying messages under their beaver skin hats, for a fee of course. Silas Tyler is also credited with inventing "Express" in 1835 when he ran an express car on a train between Boston and Lowell Massachusetts. However, these ventures did not last nor were they operated as a business on a regular basis.

In 1839, William F. Hamden put an advertisement in a Boston newspaper as an express messenger between that city and New York City. Hamden is considered the father of the express industry. By 1840 Mr. Hamden had a thriving company with many employees, including Henry Wells. Wells wanted to expand west to the Rocky Mountains. Hamden said this would be foolish and would have no part in it. By 1844 Wells had teamed up with William Fargo and in 1845 started this new company steamboat and regular service to customers. In also operating an same western Butterfield and Company. Yet Pomeroy and competed fiercely New York City route to the west. This competition forced the new US Postal Service to lower their rates from 25 cents to 3 cents for a first class letter between Buffalo NY to New York City in 1848.



The American Express Company was formed in March of 1850; Wells and Fargo were leading this new company with an eye to the west. The rival express companies had drastically reduce prices to compete and soon were losing money. Many of these companies agreed to sell to this new firm and their owners became directors in the newly formed American Express. About this time, American Express introduced the Cash on Delivery or C.O.D. The U.S. Post Office Department started a postal money order that could be bought and cashed at any post office. The American Express started their own and it soon became more popular as theirs could be cashed anywhere. In 1891, American Express introduced the travelers check where by the purchaser signed their name at time of issue and again when cashed. Traveler's checks are available and accepted worldwide.

Wells and Fargo wanted to expand west and met stiff opposition from their directors. Therefore they formed a new company; The Wells, Fargo & Company, located first in San Francisco and later in Sacramento, California. In later years, when the railroads began to offer express service, Wells, Fargo & Company did not consider them a threat. A short sightedness that would prove costly. In 1860 the Pony Express would ride its way into American Legend, the history books and financial failure. Only eighteen months later and after losing more than \$200,000 the Pony Express was discontinued. Enter the Camel Express! About 1850

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busy and send us a bit of history, a personal experience or some recent trip reports or train sightings. There is lots of activity in the next few days - Don's Open House, the Chapter Meeting and the Christmas Banquet - so let's have a record turnout for all three events and send 1999 off into space with a bang! I hope that the upcoming holiday season brings much peace and happiness to you and your families. May you enjoy the season to it's fullest!

Happy New Millennium!

Dennis Carnal
704 Choctaw Drive
Madisonville, KY 42431

Phone 270-825-0693

CHAPTER DUES ARE NOW DUE ...
Yes, it's dues time again. But the good news is that the dues are the same as last year. Full chapter membership is \$25/year and Chapter only membership is \$8/year. Family membership is \$27/year. Your dues notices are on the way from Wally.

Please pay ASAP !!!
This way, we don't waste Chapter money sending reminders. So pay your dues today. Thanks.

EXPRESS

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the Army imported Bactrian camels for use in the dry, arid southwest desert. These animals served very well in this harsh climate hauling freight and communications. The Army later discontinued this operation and left the animals to drift about the southwest desert. Some were seen in Arizona as late 1912.

By 1917 there were four major express companies in the U.S. These were Southern, Wells, Fargo & Co., Adams and American Railway Express. On July 1, 1918 these companies merged to form the American Railway Express Co., Inc. In 1929 the name was changed to Railway Express Agency and was soon controlled by the railroads whose trains carried their shipments. Each railroad had a say so in operation in proportioned to the amount of goods carried by that railroad. Later, another reorganization to avoid liquidation by creditors would change the name to REA Inc. By 1975 REA was in financial trouble due to stiff competition from other express firms such as Federal Express, UPS, the US Postal Service and many others. REA filed for bankruptcy in that year. REA is now a leasing company whose holdings can be found in many states under many different names. Virginia Railway Express, Inc. is one example. Watch a piggyback train and one will likely see trailers lettered REAX. This is a former trust company for REA Inc. and has continued to use the railroad identifier on their trucks.

Your vice president-historian, now owns the truck that served Madisonville's REA operations out of the L&N

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station downtown. This is a 1948 IH K-5 one and one half ton unit and at this writing is about one third complete. Any information, parts or help would be greatly appreciated. Contact me, Rick Bivins, at P O Box 931 Madisonville KY 42431, home phone 270 825 8161, work phone 270 821 3453, E-mail rickbivins@hotmail.com

Chapter News

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Welcome!

MEMBER NOTES

Don Clayton and Wally Watts took a weekend trip to Georgia and some 'mileage' train riding. Wallace Henderson is off to Copper Canyon. It looks like our travelers are finishing up the year with a bang. We look forward to hearing, and seeing, about these trips.

Bill Heaton and his wife enjoyed an Amtrak trip to Chicago for some serious sightseeing and a little hobby shop prowling. Sounds like a good way to spend a

NEXT MONTH

How the "OLD GOAT" beat the Y2K jinx and actually made it over the wall to the New Millennium.

Year-end activities at Clayton's Open House and the Chapter Christmas Party.

Your article on your railroad interests.

Insight on regions various model railroad meets.

A report on Chapter historical material preservation initiative.

OCTOBER MINUTES SUMMARY

Western Kentucky Chapter, NRHS
 L&N Depot, Madisonville, KY
 Monday, October 25 7:00 pm

President McCracken called the meeting to order and the minutes of the September meeting and the current treasurer's report were approved as corrected.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Opening Balance		1 5 6 6 . 4 4	
<i>Income</i>			
Raffle	12.00		
Total	12.00	1 5 7 8 . 4 4	
<i>Expenses</i>			
Postage	33.00		
Print	16.96		
Total	49.96	1 5 2 8 . 4 8	
Ending Balance		1 5 2 8 . 4 8	

MEMBERSHIP: 72

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Chuck reported all national officers standing for reelection. A deficit budget will be presented for approval. Chuck will vote for the budget. Reported briefly on the B.O.D. meeting and the programs.

OLD BUSINESS: Our Christmas banquet has been tentatively set for December 13. at Bartholomew's with Happy Hour at 6 and dinner 7. Price in the \$16.95 range with a choice of entrees. More information at the November meeting.

NEW BUSINESS: Dennis reported on Lionel Davis, and he appears to be failing rapidly. Our prayers are with him and his family. Jim Pearson requests we look about for any old railroad related photographs, or other items of an historical nature to be preserved in our archives. Billy Byrd volunteered a large scrapbook of old photos, news-paper clippings, etc., for copy. As we presently have no archives nor a place to put an archive a committee was formed to help in the search. Jim Pearson will direct efforts and check into best ways for copy, preservation, etc. All officers were nominated for re-election. Wallace Henderson reported on his Cumberland Maryland excursion.

NEXT MEETING: Monday evening November 22 at 7 pm at the Badgett Center. Program, Chris Dees, and Ricky Bivins refreshments. There will be no meeting in December due to the Holidays.

THOSE IN ATTENDANCE: Wally Watts, Jim Pearson, Wallace Henderson, Rex Easterly, Ron Stubblefield, Bob McCracken, Bud Ashby, Tim Griffey, Ricky Bivins, Louie Hicks, Tom Beumel, Bob Vittitow, Rich Hane, Greg Utley, Chuck Hinrichs, J. D. Farris, Don Clayton, Billy Byrd, Sandy Byrd, Tommy Brown, Keith Kittinger and Dennis Carnal. Paul Bethel was a guest (he joined

VISIT THE CHAPTER WEB SITE AT:

<http://www.threeoaksphoto.com/wknhrs/>

TIMETABLE

Rail Events and Excursions

Tennessee Central Railway Museum (615-781-0262)

Nashville-Lebanon November 20 Victorian Christmas

Nashville-Watertown December 4 Christmas in the Country

GATS November 27-28 Collinsville, IL 11 am 5 pm \$6. Info 630-834-0652

NMRA Cincinnati Div. 7 Model RR Show Covington, KY November 20-21, 9 am 6 pm \$5. Info 606-282-0021

1999 HISTORICAL SOCIETY EVENTS

Don Clayton's Annual Open House

Madisonville, KY Saturday, November 20, 7 pm. Food, fellowship and a great start to the Holiday Season. There may a slide show later in the evening so come prepared for a full evening of railroading.

Western Kentucky Chapter Christmas Party

Bartholomew's on Main Street in downtown Madisonville, KY. Monday Evening December 13. Happy Hour 6 pm, Dinner 7 pm. Tentative date and time will confirm at October meeting.

Owensboro Chapter Christmas Party

Settle Memorial Church Saturday evening, December 11, 6:30 pm. Catered Shady Rest Bar BQ dinner and program by Wallace Henderson. Call Eddie James (270-683-4205) for reservation.

SIGHTINGS AND SUCH!!

Goat Notes

10/23 at Mortons Gap, empty iron ore train K160 northbound with CSX SD60 8706 (one of only ten original CSX SD60s on the roster) followed by three Wisconsin Central SD45s. One of the SD45s, 7551, is painted in a one-of-a-kind paint scheme with the slogan "Customer Minded Employees" on the long hood. The last unit in the consist was a SOO Line SD60. A nice catch for the locomotive fans.

10/21, Ricky Bivins noted a southbound CSX tote train with three BNSF locomotives, all in the new "Warpumpkin" paint scheme, rolling through Madisonville early that morning.

10/28, Spencer Brewer and I noted a northbound unit gon train passing through Earlington. The train was pulled by a CSX GP40-2 - GP30 mother/slug set. The train was eighty brand new low-sided gons lettered CEFX. The cars were parked on the Earlington storage track and the power went on to Atkinson Yard in Madisonville.

Henderson's Observations

During a recent visit to Paducah, Wallace noted over twenty Union Pacific SD90MACs in the yard behind the shops. The units are all 6,000 HP in the 8500 series and appear to be some of the more recent deliveries. Two units (in fresh UP paint) were being positioned by the plant switcher - the switcher was needed as both the units (including 8550) were missing their 6,000 HP prime movers. No word yet on the purpose for the gathering but problems with the prime mover is likely high on the list.

Chuck's Sightings

10/25 Hopkinsville, Q129, CSX GP40-2 6279 and CSX/CR SD40-2 8856.

10/19 Hopkinsville, n/b manifest CSX C40-8W 7815 and CSX/CR B40-8. Kelly, Q557 CSX C30-7 7059 and CN/RMGX GP40M 9310. Kelly, Q588 SOO (red/white) SD60 and CP (red) SD40-2 760

10/30 Guthrie, L588 CSX SD40-2 8135 and WC SD45 6586. Guthrie, Q597 CSX CW44AC 333 and RMGX/BN C30-7 5587. Guthrie, Corman engine house RJCM GP16s 1603 and 1607. Guthrie, CSX ready track, CSX GP40-2 6010. Casky Q129 CSX/CR C40-8 7341 and CSX C40-8W 7785. Q270 CSX C30-7 7059 and RMGX/CN GP40 9310. G001 CSX GP40-2 6026, NS/CR 8322 and NS/CR 3409

11/1 Casky Q557 CSX C40-8 7544 and HLGX C36-7E 6803. Casky Q120 CSX C40-8W 7777 and NS C36-7 8539. Casky n/b manifest CSX GP40-2 6054, NS C30-7 8072, HLCX (Guilford paint) 5098 and HLCX (blue/maroon) 5072.

The parade of off-line units continues on CSX's Henderson Sub. There are days when it is a rarity to see a CSX unit and a pure CSX consist is a true rarity. With the great fall and winter lighting it's a super time to be trackside. Remember, your editor can use either prints or slides so send in your sighting stuff!!

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IN MEMORIAM



Lionel Davis

Chapter charter member, Lionel Davis, 51, of Boiling Spring, SC, and formerly of Mortons Gap, Ky., died at home on Thursday, Nov. 4, 1999.

He was an engineer for the Bridgestone-Firestone (Tire Company) Tire Plant in Aiken, S.C., and was a member of the Mortons Gap Christian Church. He was a Member of the National Railway Historical Society and was a long time member of the Owensboro Chapter, NRHS as well as the Western Kentucky, Nashville and Louisville Chapters. He was also a pilot in the United States Air Force with the rank of 1st lieutenant.

He is survived by his wife, Charlene, one daughter and two sons. Internment is at Oakwood Cemetery in Earlington.

The West Tennessee Railroad has acquired a third ex-Canadian National M420, No. 3576 with CNAX marks and the designator MR-20C stenciled on the side of the nose.

from the internet

TWENTY YEARS AGO!

Rick Biwins

I can remember twenty years ago when Wally was remembering twenty years ago and was telling us all about it! Wally Watts has a story to tell - lots of stories in fact. I have known Wally for more than 30 years and I have heard many, many stories, some with different outcomes, others, always the same. I never tire of them, which brings me to this point. Do you have a railroad story to tell, one of your own experiences or perhaps a story that a friend or relative has told? If so have you considered putting it on paper for future reference? I have put that very thought to Wally many times. Why? Sadly there will be a day when Wally can't tell those stories again and I am sure our memory is not as good as his. How nice it would be to pull out 'The Wally File' and recall all those great memories. Now Wally is not ready to cash in his chips by a long shot. But if I wait too long to coax him to take the time to write them all down, well you get the point. So Wally get to it, OK? And as for the rest of you, do you have a story to tell er, write?

* * * * *

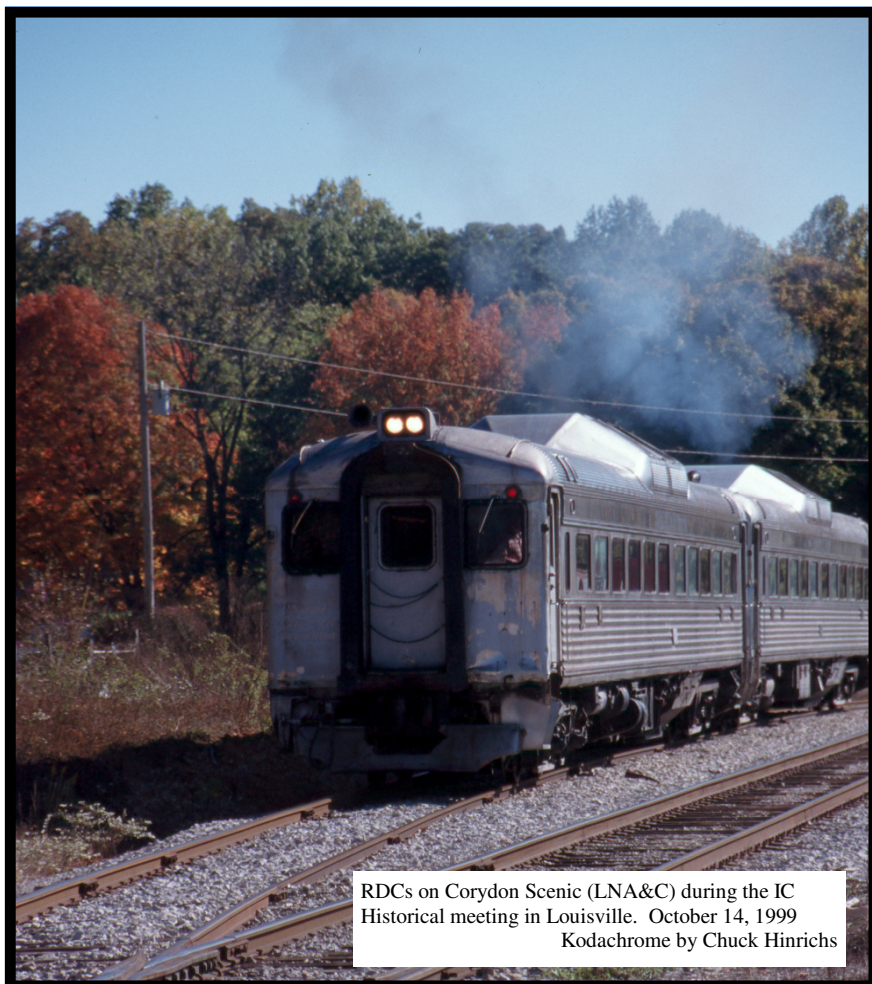
HAPPY HOLIDAYS

As this is the last "Pennyrail" before the Holidays the Officers of the West Kentucky Chapter wish the best to each of you and your families for a most joyous Holiday Season

PHOTO SECTION



KRM's ex L&N Pacific #152 pulling IC Historical excursion. New Haven, KY October 15, 1999. Kodachrome by Chuck Hinrichs



RDCs on Corydon Scenic (LNA&C) during the IC Historical meeting in Louisville. October 14, 1999 Kodachrome by Chuck Hinrichs

WEST END SAND PATCH “MOUNTAIN THUNDER”

Cumberland, Sand Patch, the West End of the old Baltimore & Ohio. I began reading Railroad Magazine at age eight and soon was familiar with all these places: the stumping grounds of the B&O's largest steam locomotives, the EM-1 2-8-8-4 and the low drivered 2-8-8-0 articulated pushers. But I had never been there.

Then I saw an advertisement for one of Mr. Carl Franz's photo freights on the Western Maryland Scenic RR from Cumberland to Frostburg. It was Cumberland Railfest Weekend, too, so it was time to "do" Cumberland at last.

I arrived in Grafton, the end of the "West End" from Cumberland late in the afternoon and managed an hour of photography before dark. The locomotive servicing facilities were full of power, and empty coal train came into town and an SD45-2 was switching the yard. Dominating the skyline of this small town is the now closed "D" Tower, the large, ornate, 3 story ex B&O passenger station and the adjoining seven story Willard Hotel - long closed but now undergoing restoration.

The next morning there was more activity in the yard and then I heard an eastbound coal train with a pair of SD70MACs making ready to depart so I scurried around to find a good photo location to catch the action. CSX has concentrated their SD70MACs, plus the ones from Conrail, on the West End, but there are still many GE AC44CWs around. I had the R&R's '97 article "CSX's Cumberland Coal Business Unit" with me and it provided fairly detailed directions on how to follow the line. The West End consists of four steep mountain grades, two eastbound - Newberg and Cranberry - and two westbound - Cheat River and 17 Mile, and only one of the four, Cheat River, is inaccessible. With that one exception it is fairly easy to follow the tracks. The best photo spot is at the top of the famous 2.74% Cranberry Grade at Terra Alta, WV, where the tracks seem to just drop off down the mountain. From Terra Alta, there is about 20 miles of undulating track to Altamont, where famed 17 Mile Grade drops down to Keyser, WV, then it's along the Potomac River to Cumberland. For the day I shot four eastbound coal trains, helper movements by two helper sets and one westbound coal empty exiting Kingwood Tunnel on Newberg Grade.

I spent almost a week in Cumberland and the

first day I was off to find and explore Sand Patch. Easier said than done! Although there is a highway that takes you to the summit (Sand Patch Tower) it does not follow the tracks. I got semi-lost but finally found the horseshoe Mance Curve near the top of the grade. It was a slow day (Thursday) with only seven freights and the **Capitol Limited**. I did, however, find out how to follow the tracks back down hill to Cumberland. There is one stretch, however, where the tracks are in the valley and the roads climb up and around the mountain. These are mostly State and County roads - some paved and some not - that are fun to explore.

On Friday I rode the **Potomac Eagle** tourist train through the beautiful South Branch Valley of the Potomac River on an ex B&O branch line now operated by the State of West Virginia. I rode first class in an ex Chessie streamlined lounge car and was served one of the best meals I have ever had on any train anywhere. We saw four eagles, one of which was perched in a tree alongside the track. The trip takes most of the afternoon but there was time back in Cumberland to tour the Postal System's **Celebrate the Century Express**. The train was parked at the Western Maryland station and included a heavyweight former Southern Railway RPO car now owned by Jim Bistline.

Saturday morning found me headed back to Sand Patch and on this day the trains were running. The tally for the day, fifteen trains including one with a brand new BNSF C44-9W on the point. The mountains were magnificent in full fall colors. I came across many railfans out photographing during the whole trip and they all shared information on trains running and good photo spots.

On Sunday I rode the **RAILFEST MARC SPECIAL** up 17 Mile Grade to Oakland, MD. It was an interesting ride up the famous grade in nice single level commuter coaches with with a pair of diesels on one end and one on the other for push-pull operation. In the evening Mr. Franz had a night photo session conducted by Steve Barry (Editor, R&R Magazine) at the Western Maryland depot in Cumberland. Featured was Western Maryland Scenic's ex LS&I 2-8-0 #284 (Renumbered to one above WMs last 2-8-0. We moved to the yard for more night shots and then photographed the **Celebrate the Century Express** now on the interchange track.

The next day was the big day for the Photo Freight, pulled by 734, and it is aptly named "Mountain Thunder" as it puts on a fine show; loud with plenty of smoke! And nature did her part, too, with another sunny day and magnificent fall color. This was an all day show with lunch in the Frostburg depot and close to 30 photo run-bys for the day! The most unusual photo opportunity was



“Mountain Thunder” hammers past Helmstetter’s curve on ex Western Maryland trackage during the Franz Photo freight run from Cumberland, MD to Frostburg. Western Maryland Scenic’s ex LS&I 2-8-0 #734 is doing the honors. October 18, 1999. Color print by Wallace Henderson

at Brush Tunnel where we stood inside the tunnel and shot the train coming in towards us! Outstanding! Again, Steve Barry was helping with the photo runs and that night he conducted another night photo session. This time we rode the train (in the dark and listening the “Mountain Thunder” tackling the mountain grades) back to Brush Tunnel for the photos.

It was a great week!

Long suppressed desires were satiated. “Mountain Thunder” performed worthy of her name. The West End was explored and it was g r e a t f u n ! ! ! !
WH

Editors note. Be sure and see Wallace’s photographs from this trip. He got some spectacular shots in equally spectacular surroundings. He will

