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Central Region*

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Editor: Louis Granato III

THE PILOT

March/April 2001

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Top Photo: "The Pilot" of 4-6-2 #2417 Canadian Pacific at Steamtown in Scranton, PA. Lower photo: Amtrak's *Southwest Chief* passing the Mendota, IL station/museum.
-Photos by Louis Granato III



Contributions:

The Pilot depends mostly on its readers for material. All railroading and model railroading related articles, drawings, cartoons and photographs are welcome.

Feature Articles:

The Pilot needs feature articles the most. They should be between one and three pages long, typed (not in columns) and possibly accompanied by a drawing or photograph. Feature articles can be on any number of topics such as:

- Members' layouts
- Railroad news
- Railfan trips
- Modeling projects, etc.

Columns:

Columns are needed! Please contact the Editor to contribute your own column.

Photographs and Drawings:

Photographs of railroads and model railroads are needed! You can submit black & white and/or color prints, in any size. Drawings, cartoons and artwork should be well done, in black ink, and on white paper (no lines). Photographs and drawings will be returned to the submitter if he/she supplies a SASE.

Send All Articles To:

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Or Email Articles To:

centralregion@tamr.org

Editorial

Message From the Central Region Rep.

HELLO TO TEEN MODEL RAILROADERS, one and all!

I am happy to report that there have been quite a few new TAMR members, not only in the Central Region but in all the regions! Thanks to everyone for making this possible. An organization cannot survive without the help of its members - and we have had plenty of it!

The Central Region is now very healthy due to the help of its members. I have been helping Chris Burchett with the planning of the Ohio State Limited 2001 convention, and it has been coming along very nicely. I would like to make you aware that we will be visiting some other places during the convention, in addition to the previous plans. One new stop is Davis Trains, the largest model railroading store in the world! Jim Barrett, well known for his train fixing knowledge, will show us around the Cincinnati store, which has all scales from Z to G! We will also be visiting Jim Sicking's layout, which is modeled after the railroads in and around Cincinnati during earlier years. It is sure going to be one great trip! Please visit the OSL's website at <http://www.tamr.org/osl01>.

Also, I am thinking about holding a mini-convention near my house, and I would like some feedback, so let me know if you like the idea!

Happy Railroading!



Louis Granato III
Central Region Rep. for the
Teen Association of Model Railroaders

Railfanning

BY ANDY INSERRA

HI EVERYONE! The purpose of this new series is to help people with their railfanning a little bit more through some of my own experiences. Living in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St Paul gives me a chance to see lots of action without traveling very far.

This month I'm featuring a shortline in the Twin Cities, the Minnesota Commercial. As I've always lived in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St Paul, I feel I must feature our own Alco-loyal railroad (Alco holds the title as my favorite builder!). Originally, the Minnesota Commercial (MNNR) started life as the Minnesota Transfer. On February 10, 1987 the line was sold to what is today the Minnesota Commercial and has since developed into a shortline empire here. Originally they inherited four SW1500's (numbered between 300-10, not all numbers used) from the Minnesota Transfer, later buying two GP7's (#400-1, ex-BAR, another, #66, sits dead near the roundhouse), two SW1200's (#110, #200), a CF7 (#484, ex AT+SF) and a NW2 (#100). Only the NW2, CF7 and both SW1200s remain on today's roster.

In late 1992 they picked up their first two Alcos, C424m's #62 and #63 from Genesee and Wyoming. Soon the Minnesota Commercial took advantage of the numerous Alcos for sale. When Alco stronghold Green Bay and Western was taken over by Wisconsin Central in 1993, GB&W Alco C424s #311, #313, and #314; RS27s (the last two in existence) #316 and #318; and RS20 #307 all found new homes on the Minnesota Commercial. The units kept their old numbers on the MNNR. The MNNR added even more units to their Alco roster when CP Rail retired its MLWs. Seven ex-CP Rail units have found their way to the MNNR. They are S11 #1(ex-3779); RS23 #80 (ex- #8031); M630 #73



MNNR M630 #73

(ex-#4573); RS18s #81, #82, and #83(ex-#1812, #1839 & #1837); and M636 #71(ex-#4711). You may recognize the last two RS18s; they were the last two to work for CP Rail. They were retired in July 1998. M636 #4711 is also well known. It was the last big Alco to operate on a Class 1 railroad in the USA and Canada (retired in late May or early June 1998). It is also the Cat-powered MLW that worked out of Montreal for years. S11 #1 worked at one of CP's shops as their switcher and was repowered in Canada with a Cummins engine. It is remote controlled with control stands located in the opposite stairwells. The cab windows were painted over and it has yet to be repainted from its faded yellow and white paint scheme. Also in 1998, the MNNR purchased two RS3s, #1608 and #1604. Both are ex-LS&I and served a short time in Wisconsin on a shortline there before coming to the Minnesota Commercial. Currently #1608 is stored out of service and #1604 has been converted to a booster unit. #1608 is now #1B; the only major changes to the unit came when it had its windows painted over. #1B is now in bright MNNR red and still contains its 244 prime mover. In the last half of 2000 the Minnesota Commercial bought RS3 #1108

from the Wand Corp. The Oliver Iron Mining Railroad in northern Minnesota originally employed #1108. Today it wears a weathered coat of yellow and green paint. It has a unique fan shield added by Oliver and somewhere along the line it lost its short hood and now has steps from the cab to the flat frame. The shop forces at the MNNR plan to create another booster unit out of #1108.

They also have a fleet of GE's that they have been recently acquiring. These include ex-CR (and NS) B23-7's #4073 (now #40), 1983, 1971, 1978, ex-Santa Fe SF30C (U36C with new electronics) #50, and ex-BN B30-7 #5487 and C30-7 #5509. One really special GE is on the fleet. It is their #5059. This big C36-7 has recently come all of the way from Australia where it served Hamersly Iron for many years in ore service. The MNNR plans on renumbering it to #59. It is named Crocodile GE and still wears its original reptile green paint. One more GE, more or less, is also on the roster. It is slug T1; it seems to have been a GE at one point in time. Today it is in MNNR red and is known as Sluggo.

If you're looking to see the MNNR in action, there are many possibilities. They serve most yards in the Minneapolis/St Paul area like Northtown (BNSF), Dayton's Bluff (BNSF), Union (BNSF), South Saint Paul (Union Pacific) and Pig's Eye (CP Rail/Soo). They also have their own yards, New Brighton yard, which connects to the Wisconsin Central, and Midway yard, which can see trains from Canadian Pacific, BNSF, Union Pacific, and the Twin Cities and Western Railway. In addition, the MNNR

has a long-term contract with CP to switch the Hiawatha Avenue grain elevator district in South Minneapolis. Currently, one to two trains run daily to this area, usually rating a pair of RS18s or C424s. They also operate a line to Bayport and another to Hugo. Their own Midway yard switch jobs often start just after Amtrak's eastbound Empire Builder passes by their roundhouse, which, if it is on time, occurs around 7:40 AM. It is the MNNR's job to switch the mail and express cars for Amtrak, a job that usually rates an Alco. The MNNR's engines are serviced at their rare 1891 12-stall roundhouse on Cleveland Ave. in St. Paul, which is a mile south of their Midway yard. Because they have well over 12 units they can often be found on the tracks outside the roundhouse. Recently Minnesota Commercial has been buying more GE's because there are no Alcos in their horsepower range for sale, but they say they will continue to rebuild all of their Alcos. So that's the Minnesota Commercial, one of the America's Alco strongholds for the 21st century.

This wraps it up for the first edition of Railfanning; I hope you enjoyed it. If you have comments or questions about the trains in the Twin Cities or will be in the area and want more information on the best places to railfan, please feel free to email me at:

Andy_Insera@tamr.org

Or snail mail me at:

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Till next time, see you trackside!



MNNR RS23 #80

Conducted by: Peter Maurath
Improving Vehicles
Part 1 1/3

SO EASY TO USE, no wonder it's LOASSB! Welcome to a new year of fresh-baked Shoestring Budget articles. In this issue we kick-off a new series on improving those cheap, flimsy vehicles you've got roaming the highways of your layout (mostly applies to N scalers out there).

Most vehicles can be broken down into two major groups: the cheap ones, and the expensive ones. The cheap vehicles are the most common, and are offered through most model train manufacturers. The big plus for them is their availability, and cost. The negatives being, the cheap appearance, and, unless your layout is set in 1975, look too old. The expensive vehicles' big plus is better quality, and more modern vehicles available. The negative, you have to rob a bank to afford enough to fill a layout.

What this series will cover will be improvements you can make to those cheaper vehicles to make them easier to live with, and as the column title states, on a "shoestring budget." This will cover improvements made to N scale vehicles, though most of the applications can also apply to other scales.

START YOUR ENGINES

We start off with a popular set available from Bachmann. The vehicles are sold in different sets of eight or less, and vary from trucks to Corvettes. Retail price is usually \$6-10. Aside from being poorly assembled, they're biggest problem is the choice of colors (how many canary yellow Caddy's do you see?). These vehicles are a perfect example of the power of paint.

First, disassemble the vehicles, removing the one-piece bottoms (or chassis') with the wheels, and if possible the glass (for ease of painting). Choose colors typically seen on prototype vehicles. The most popular are white, black, silver, red, maroon, beige, dark green, and dark blue. Metallic paints are also very popular, but optional for our small-scale versions. Paint each vehicle, taking care to avoid the windows if, they're still installed; let dry. While the bodies dry, you can add details to the chassis' with some hubcaps. Dilute with thinner (oil-based) or water (acrylic), a small amount of silver or gray paint. Using a fine-tip brush (Q-tip in a pinch), dab paint in the center of each wheel, letting it fill out the hubcap area. Repeat with each wheel; let dry.

AND NOW THE PAYOFF

Now that our vehicle bodies are dry, using that same brush, add details to each vehicle. This includes white for headlights, and reverse lights, red for tail and rear marker lights, and orange for front parking lamps. Silver can then be added for chrome bumpers and trim on the sides. Even a vinyl top can be added with some black or beige added to the roof. Reassemble the vehicles (you may need to bend the chassis' slightly to get the right height) with a little super glue and your ready to run the layouts highways with your Vettes and Cadillacs! That's all the room for this issue. Join me next time when we apply much the same technique to some Model Power Mercedes'.

Railroading in the Haute

BY DAVE HONAN

FIRST, I'd like to congratulate Louis Granato III on winning at the polls! It may be tough for him to transition to the CR Rep. post (especially when he has to deal with columnists, such as myself, who procrastinate eternally when it comes to writing their column), but I am sure that he will ably fill the shoes of Chris B. Welcome on board, Louis!

I began this column at the beginning of January, so most of the three foci I have are somewhat dated material. However, I've been busy with my schoolwork as of late and haven't had much time to listen to my scanner as much as I'd like. But anyway, let's get this land barge moving.

As I promised last time, I will go into more detail on the Haley Tower Historical & Technical Society. Next, I will cover the fun CSX and CP had on December 17. My third topic will break the rules I set for the column (shame on me!) as I describe the troubles CSX had in the Albany, NY area on Dec 28. Lastly are a few "shorts" that I heard on the scanner in the last third of January.

Haley Tower, on North 14th Street in Terre Haute, was built in 1904 to protect the grade crossing of the Chicago & Eastern Illinois and the Big Four (the Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago, & St. Louis RR). As the "merger tree" grew through the years, the C&EI line became CSX property, and the Big Four line fell under Conrail ownership. Conrail and CSX set up an agreement that effectively split ownership of the tower, assuring that trains of one railroad would not receive priority over trains of the other. This situation of local, independent control over the interlocking proved successful over the years.

As I pointed out last time, CSX assumed ownership of Conrail's St. Louis Line after the merger in 1998, and it determined that local control of Haley no longer suited their needs. As part of the reconstruction of the interlocking (also described last time), Haley was taken out of service and was to be demolished. However, through the efforts of a number of area residents who had ties to Haley Tower reaching back to

their childhoods, sufficient funds were raised to purchase the tower from CSX, purchase property adjacent to the tower's original site, and hire a firm to move the tower to its current position, less than 100 yards from its original location.

Haley Tower is merely the centerpiece of the Wabash Valley Railroaders' Museum, an organization founded by the HTH&TS, which will eventually be located on the property Haley currently occupies. The society's current project is preparing Spring Hill Tower for movement up to the WVRM site. Spring Hill is located just south of Spring Hill Road in southern Terre Haute, at the former grade crossing of (don't hold your breath) the C&EI, the Milwaukee Road's Latta Sub, and the NYC E&I coal branch. Since I still have much to share in this column, I'll put some words down about Spring Hill next time. Also, I plan to write a feature article for the *Hotbox* to describe the movement of the tower; the move is scheduled to begin April 30. If anyone is interested in visiting Terre Haute to witness the spectacle, please contact me at David.Honan@Rose-Hulman.edu or (812) 877-8687.

Okay, on to my next topic. On December 16-17, 2000, the Terre Haute area was hammered by a nasty ice storm, which caused Interstate 70 and numerous other roads to be closed for more than a day. The railroads were not immune from the storm, as the events that transpired would prove.

At 0055 on the 17th, the St. Louis Line Dispatcher (henceforth, "SLDS") informed westbound Q281 that CSX had declared a Snow Emergency Level Two for the Terre Haute area. He also mentioned that an intermittent track occupancy signal was coming on at CP-92, and if the signal "drops in your face, come to a nice, easy stop" and call in.

Next, at 0238, SLDS tells westbound Q373 that the defect detector at Dupont, IL (MP105.7) has "caught every train tonight," and that the train ahead of Q373 is stopped and the conductor is walking the train to inspect it. SLDS tells Q373 to try to "sneak through" the detector at 30mph

because he suspects the frigid conditions and ice are screwing up the circuitry.

There were various problems with frozen switches and malfunctioning crossing gates in town between 1328 and early evening, but nothing that really slowed the railroads down. And then the fun started.

Y101 got stuck at CP West Haley at 1848 because the switches wouldn't lock, and it took until 1919 before a maintainer could be contacted. Then, at 1923, SLDS tells every train around Terre Haute that's moving to proceed with caution because there's a car on the tracks somewhere. A minute later, the location is reported as Lafayette Ave., and a signal crew radioed that it's probably on Canadian Pacific trackage. It was confirmed at 1928 that there was a "big-'ol minivan sitting smack-dab in the middle of the main line," but the CP Latta Sub DS told the signal crew to take their time clearing the mess because it would be about four hours until the next train was due. (The van would be clear at 1952, and a CPRR maintainer reported that the crossing was in working order at 2144.)

While this was going on, the crossover at West Haley remained broken, and then crossing gates at 1st Street (MP 72.2, St Louis Line) malfunctioned. At 1959 eastbound Q378 was given a Form D to protect the 1st Street crossing, but this was cancelled seven minutes later when SLDS told Q378 to stop short of the crossing because West Haley still hadn't been fixed.

At some point during the following hour, Q378 disappeared completely, and Q282 appeared at 1st Street; he reported at 2109 that once he had stopped the crossing gates had gone up, but the flashing lights remained on. West Haley was still out of service, with the crossover stuck so only north-south traffic on the CE&D Sub could pass through.

At some point Q514 came north off the CE&D, went through the West Haley crossover to St. Louis Line Track 1, and proceeded east towards Indianapolis. After passing over the Burnett, IN defect detector (MP 64.0), the engineer had this to say: "Q514 at Burnett, engine, uhh, whatever.... no defects, out."

At 2143 the crossing gates at 1st Street were reported fixed, and at 2144 Q282 was given permission to move east to make sure the gates were indeed working. (They were.)

The conclusion to this mess played out over the next half-hour at West Haley. The maintainer on the scene reported that the switches were locked in the reverse position, and SLDS requested they be manually aligned so trains could be run through "on the old Conrail." The maintainer did this, but at 2215 SLDS reported that the switches were not "locked up solid" -- in other words, the dispatcher's screen did not show them as being "lined and locked" for the St. Louis Line. The maintainer tried once again to line and lock the switches in the normal position, but to no avail. SLDS then gave the maintainer authority to talk all the waiting trains through West Haley, and at 2225 Y101 (after a three-and-a-half-hour wait!) was on the move, "track one-to-one in the east direction."

CSX experienced major winter-weather related problems in the Albany, NY area on December 28, 2000. This time, the weather did not directly affect the railroad infrastructure.

Because of the extreme cold, a water main in Schenectady cracked a little. Then the little crack became a rather substantial break. So, all this water had to go somewhere, and it flooded the basement of a nearby business. This business goes by the name of Verizon. The service they provide goes through wires. This service is most commonly observed by hearing a dial tone when one picks up the telephone. The water pouring into their basement blew their routers and some 60,000 customers lost service. Including CSX.

There are two radio bases that Hudson DS uses in the Albany area, at Amsterdam and Colonie. They died. That alone wouldn't have been all that big of a deal, except that Hudson DS also lost remote control of CP-169 on the Chicago Line. For those of you not familiar with the Albany area (which, considering this is the Central Region, will probably consist of just about everyone), CP-169 is where CSX's Selkirk Branch, the freight bypass of Albany to Selkirk Yard, branches off. The interlocking hosts upwards of 50 CSX freights and a dozen Amtrak trains daily; needless to say, it's pretty darn important to the fluid operation of the railroad. We'll leave CP-169 for a bit to move west a little ways.

Just a couple miles down the line is CP-172, where there are a pair of crossovers, the east end of a siding, and a small yard on the north side of the tracks. (I should note here that Track 1 is the

north-most main track.) CP-172 was utterly clogged. Eastbound Q232 sat on Track 2, outlawed. On Track 1, eastbound Q110 was setting out a cripple in the yard, fouling the siding. Stopped east of the crossovers was westbound Q281 on Track 1, waiting to move west. Stopped behind Q232 in the town of Amsterdam were an intermodal train and a grain train. Approaching from the west were two more intermodal trains, Amtrak 286, and Amtrak 48 (aka the Lake Shore Limited, aka the Great Silver Snail). To take a quick peek to the east, coming west out of Selkirk were a 3-car local and a sulfur train. And recall that the dispatcher has no radio contact with any of these trains.

Here's how the scenario played out: Two maintainers were buzzing around CP-169; for a while one was helping Q110 to set out its cripple. The other was manually throwing switches so trains could pass through the interlocking and, using his cell phone, acting as a relay between the trains and the dispatcher. The dispatcher ran the two intermodals down Track 1 to CP-172, where they crossed over to Track 2, proceeded to CP-169, and got permission past the red signal and up the Selkirk Branch. Amtrak's 286 and 48 performed the same maneuver to get to CP-169, where they were talked through to the Chicago Line to Schenectady and Albany. Q281 could finally move west, followed by the westbound sulfur train and the local. Q232 got his recrew and came east (with four Guilford GP40s trailing a CSX SD40-2), followed by Q110. All in all, a rather exciting two and a half hours!

Before I finish for the month, I have a few miscellaneous tidbits that I heard on the scanner during January to share...

At 1032 on January 22, the SB DS (formerly CE&D Sub DS) said to someone, "You got a bad radio there? You better throw it out the window and find a good one"

On the 29th at 1120, Q645-28 dropped off the face of the earth for five minutes somewhere around Terre Haute; it's nearly impossible that he was out of radio range because there's a very powerful transmitter in town.

This event occurred on the 26th. At 1048, IB DS (formerly St. Louis Line DS) told Q115 that the crossover he was lined through was not supposed to be used; DS had just found a written note left by the 2nd-trick DS saying not to use the crossover, but the note had no explanation attached. Within five minutes the dispatching center contacted the 2nd-trick DS, who explained that it was a note to himself for earlier in the day when the crossover was being repaired, and that he'd forgotten to remove the note at the end of his shift. IB DS then told Q115: "I'm gonna go take a heart pill and settle down.... I'm gonna throw the note away.... I sure didn't like reading it when I saw it"

That's it for this time. True, this column isn't so much a column as a feature article, but I've never heard a TAMR editor complaining of too much material. Please don't hesitate to contact me with any questions or comments: David.Honan@rose-hulman.edu or 812-877-8687 or Dave Honan, CM 1536, 5500 Wabash Ave, Terre Haute, IN 47803. Also, photos of some of the locations and events I described can be found on my website at <http://davehonan.50megs.com>. Until next time: Think safety!

Top Seven Rejected Acela Train Slogans

Dug out of a cereal box by: PETER MAURATH

- #7. "Acela, trains now faster than the average city bus."
 - #6. "It's electric, boogie, oogie, oogie"
 - #5. "Acela, the wannabe TGV."
 - #4. "Acela, for the roller coaster enthusiast in all of us."
 - #3. "Unlike a plane, if you crash in the Acela, it's not from 30,000 feet."
 - #2. "Enjoy the view of urban decay at 120 mph."
 - #1. "Acela, the train with the kicking wing logo."
-

Ode to a Starter Set

BY TODD HINES

Upon my own front porch today I found a great big box.
It had a small dent in the corner - some damage from the docks.
But when I opened up my prize the shippers were forgiven,
For what was there shrink-wrapped inside? A gift from Highest Heaven!

My one and only Starter Set for which I'd paid small price -
I'd coveted more pricey ones, on paper twice as nice.
But when I pulled the pieces out and placed them on the track,
And cranked the cheap transformer up - there was no turning back!

The lights came on, the whistle blew, and chills went up my spine!
"Kids, come see the train we got!" Their eyes began to shine.
They got a kick from jumping over the train as it went 'round,
And liked to press the button so it would make the whistling sound.

A little extra wire from the basement did the trick
When I tried to set up special track that did a special trick:
The cars - they come apart if you can time the button right,
Although I must next back right up and re-couple them up tight.
A turnout is required, I think, to have a place to rest
The rolling stock I wish to place aside at my behest.

And although this train is not as noisy as some others I have heard,
A louder one might be more fun - a loco that says words.
An engine that starts chuffing as I turn the dial right,
That synchronizes with the smoke emitting from the pipe.

Yes, I believe there's work to do to and dollars to be spent
To bring this layout more in line with my "artistic bent".
So maybe I can float a loan and bring things up to speed -
Until then My New Starter Set will have to fill the need!



THE PILOT

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