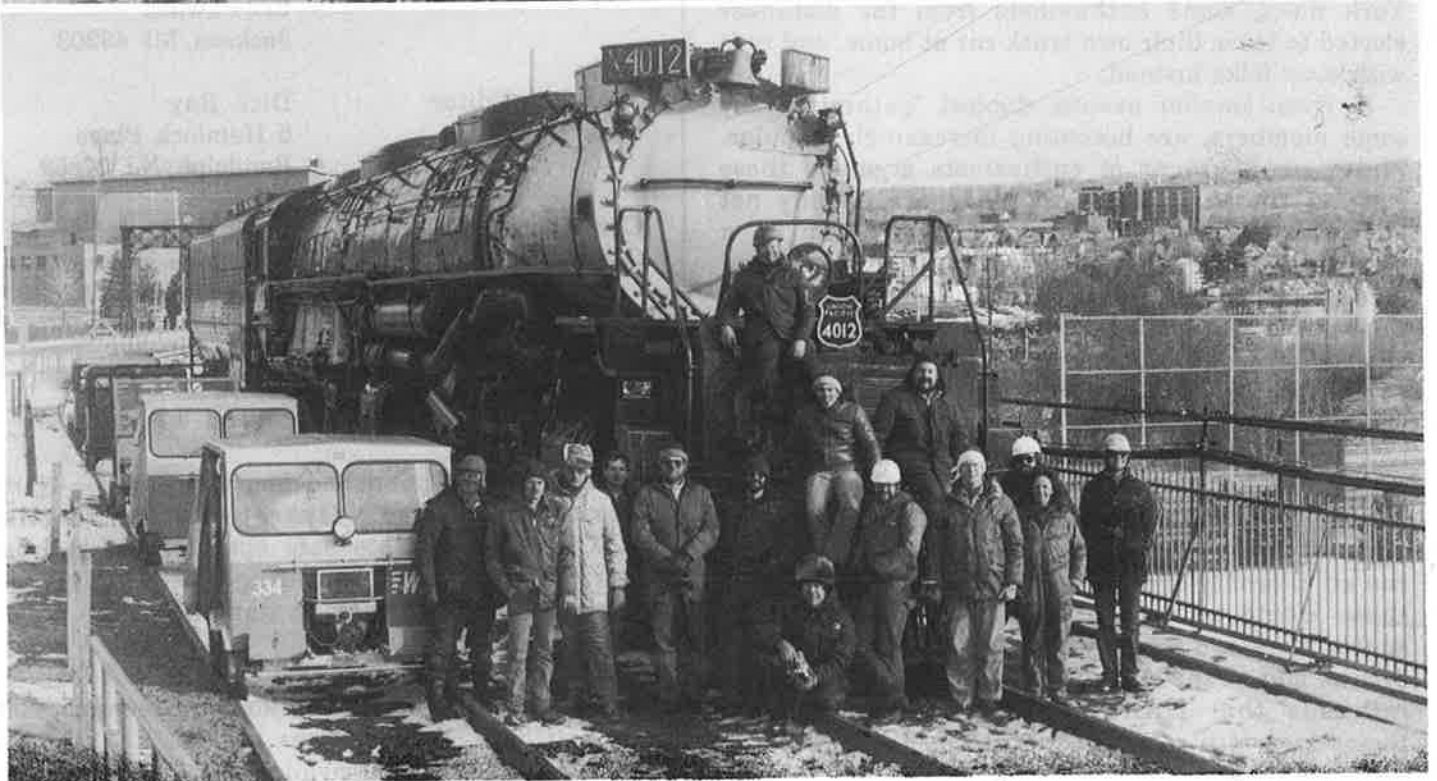
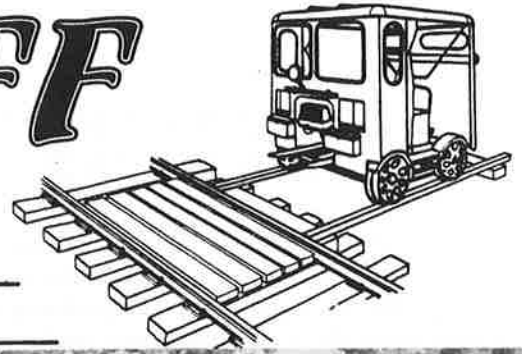


Dick Ray

# THE SETOFF

OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE NORTH AMERICAN  
RAILCAR OPERATORS ASSOCIATION (NARCOA)

Spring, 1988



## CONVENTIONS, MEETS, AND GATHERINGS

The social aspect of our hobby has rapidly evolved over the last few years. Some owners up until recently thought that they, and perhaps a few nearby friends were the only track car enthusiasts around. They are now discovering that they are not alone; there are several hundred other track car enthusiasts scattered around the country.

Prior to the first NARCOA track car convention in 1985, on the Southern Michigan Railroad (SMR) in Clinton, Michigan, few opportunities existed for enthusiasts to meet each other. This event, plus two other succeeding conventions proved that a large organized get-together for track car operations, plus socializing over a long weekend is extremely popular. The SMR location proved to be a fine location with enough trackage to run, plus facilities for social functions.

The popularity of the NARCOA conventions led to the organizing of a number of regional "mini conventions", (or perhaps more properly defined as "meets") on other railroads. These meets have typically been one- or two-day affairs, widely advertised in the region, and attended mostly by area enthusiasts. In 1987, meets were held in Georgia, California, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, and New York. Some owners have attended meets from as far away as a distance of 800 miles. At the Arkville, New York meet, some enthusiasts from far distances elected to leave their own track car at home, and rode with area folks instead.

Even smaller events, dubbed "gatherings" by some members, are becoming increasingly popular. These small groups of enthusiasts organize these runs at the local level, and they are usually not advertised. Typically, 2-10 track cars run on a shortline railroad where permission has been arranged by someone in the group. In many cases the thrust of these smaller meets is to associate the host shortline railroad with the concept of motor car meets, so that perhaps a larger group can be organized (and advertised) at a later date.

While the original concept of a national track car convention was worthwhile, the NARCOA organization is emphasizing the growing trend towards regional meets, to give track car owners a chance to run on a variety of different railroads. We hope that these meets in diverse locations will eventually enable more and more owners to participate in these events, and at the same time prove to host shortline railroads that NARCOA members can conduct themselves in a safe and mature manner, while on their railroad.

## A NOTABLE QUOTE FROM "THE TRACK INSPECTOR"

"I ran out of gas on our last New Years Day run...I won't do that again this year...I have a full tank of gas!"

## COVER PHOTOS

*This issue of THE SETOFF shows extreme contrasts in wintertime motor car trips. In the top photo, a warm February sun is the rule on a Valentines Day outing over the Sonora-Baja California Railway near Valle Redondo, in Mexico's Baja Peninsula. The trip was organized by Pacific Southwest Railway Museum founder Terry Durkin and SETOFF contributing editor Brett Tallman.*

*The lower photo shows the opposite extreme in wintertime railroading; this is evident with cold temperatures and snow, as several NARCOA members conduct a New Years Day brush cutting and clean-up outing on the former Lackawanna Railroad*

# THE SETOFF

Volume 2

Number 1

Editor

Doug Leffler  
622 Pawnee  
Jackson, MI 49203

Associate Editor  
(East Coast)

Dick Ray  
5 Hemlock Place  
Randolph, NJ 07869

Contributing Editor  
(West Coast)

Brett Tallman  
3354 Fuchsia Street  
Costa Mesa, CA 92626

NARCOA Roster  
Coordinator

Joel Williams  
Box 82  
Greendell, NJ 07839

THE SETOFF is published quarterly by the North American Railcar Operators Association (NARCOA), to promote safe operation of railroad motor cars, and to encourage fellowship and exchange of information among motor car enthusiasts.

Additional information about NARCOA can be obtained from Joel Williams, Box 82, Greendell, New Jersey 07839. Subscriptions to THE SETOFF are \$10.00 per year, and are available from Doug Leffler, 622 Pawnee, Jackson, Michigan 49203

## SPRING TRACK CAR EVENTS

The Toledo, Lake Erie & Western R.R. is sponsoring a one-day meet on April 30th, based out of Waterville, Ohio. Two runs will be made over the railroad to Grand Rapids, Ohio. For more information contact: Victor Geckle, TLE&W R.R., P.O. Box 168, Waterville, OH 43566 (419) 596-3522.

NARCOA roster coordinator Joel Williams has organized a Spring track car meet on May 21st on the trackage of the Naval Weapons Station, at Colts Neck, New Jersey. Celebrate Armed Forces Day, with NARCOA and the U.S. Navy! The base has over 200 miles of trackage, including a 3-mile rail pier into Sandy Hook Bay. For more information, contact: Joel Williams, Box 82, Greendell, NJ 07839 (201) 852-6294

The Southern Michigan Railroad Society, Inc., of Clinton, Michigan, is sponsoring a Spring motor car convention May 27-30, on the Southern Michigan Railroad. The SMR was the site for the past three NARCOA conventions. The convention will feature day and night runs over 11.5 miles of ex NYC trackage, a buffet dinner, and a slide and video program. For more information, contact: Jeffery Dobek, SMRS, P.O. Box 434, Clinton, MI 49236

The Sweet Line Railroad of Carson City, Michigan will host a track car meet on June 11, on its line in central Michigan. For more information, contact: Dean Helwig, 10255 Cleveland, Carson City, MI, 48811.

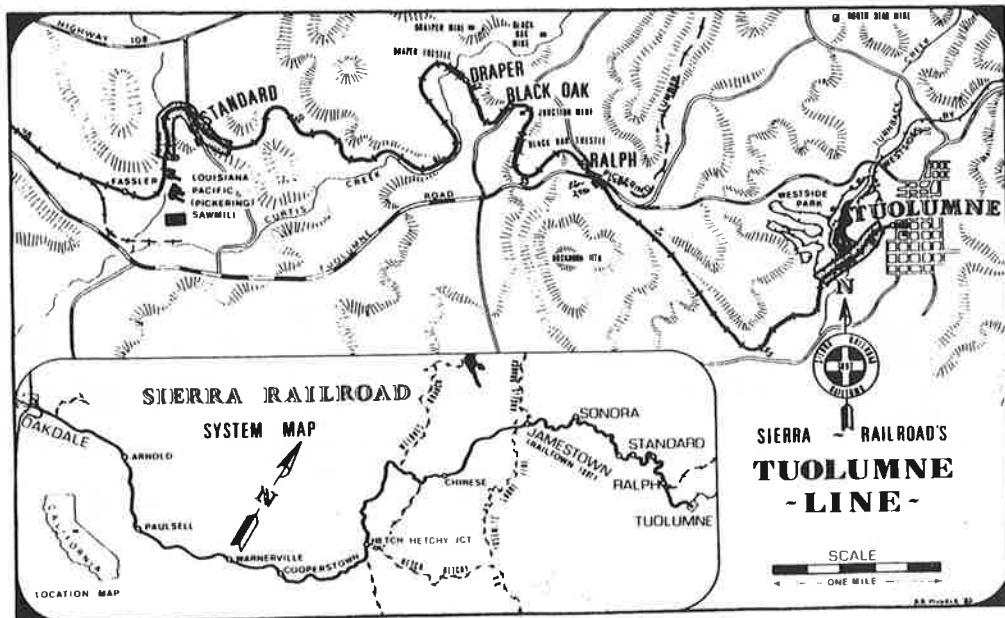
## FRIENDS OF THE SIERRA R.R. REQUESTS VOLUNTEERS TO OFFER TRACK CAR RIDES

By Brett Tallman  
(ATSF M-19)

The Friends of the Sierra Railroad (FSR) is currently seeking volunteers to offer track car rides over a 5.6-mile portion of trackage formerly operated by the Sierra Railroad. The trackage, known as the Tolumne Line is at the easternmost end of northern California's Sierra Railroad, in the Mother Lode region (see map).

The line is one of the most scenic on the entire Sierra Railroad and was used in filming countless motion pictures and television shows. The line was originally built in 1899 to serve the Soulsby mining district, as well as the Standard (Pickering) and West Side Lumber Companies. The Sierra Railroad has not operated the line since 1962, however, the Standard Lumber Company operated its trains over the line until 1967...business to Tolumne ended when the West Side Lumber Company mill burned in 1961.

If any of you fellows would like to operate your track car on the Tolumne Line, for the purpose of providing rides for the public, please contact Mr. Bruce Cassasa, Friends of the Sierra Railroad, P.O. Box 692, Jamestown, CA 95327



## OBTAINING MOTOR CAR OPERATING RIGHTS PART II

By Dick Ray  
(Western Maryland M-9, No. 67)

In my previous article on obtaining trackage rights, I described how the New Jersey NARCOA members arranged for operating privileges over a section of the New York Susquehanna & Western Railroad (NYSW) that was out of service. In this article we will highlight our approach in dealing with an operating railroad...in this case a major excursion railroad.

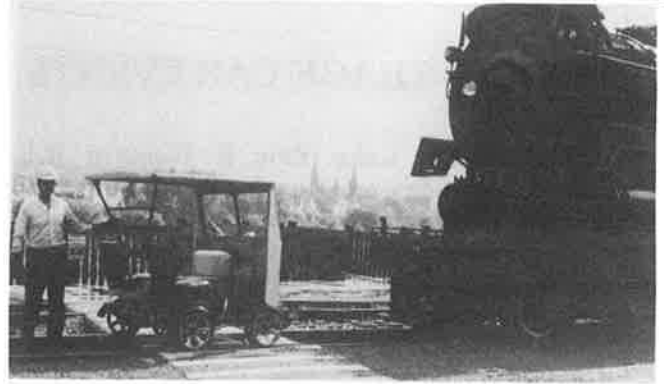
I'm sure that most of you fans have heard of Steamtown, one of the oldest operating rail museums in the northeast. Steamtown was originally formed by F. Nelson Blount, back in the late 1950's. They were headquartered in Bellows Falls, Vermont for many years, however, they relocated on a portion of the old Delaware Lackawanna & Western Railroad (which was being abandoned by Conrail) in Scranton, Pennsylvania a few years ago, (under the guiding hand of rail enthusiast Don Ball) in order to expand their operation.

One weekend last summer, one of our NARCOA members was riding the steam train and learned from a member of the crew that the operation was in need of volunteer help to cut brush along the line and pick up litter. Within days after learning this, I contacted their general manager and offered our services.

We made it clear in our conversations that we would be using our motor cars to perform the work. We acknowledged that this was a privilege to run our cars on their line, and that we would work hard to maintain this privilege. We also explained that we would operate with a variable-sized crew, and at irregular intervals. Within two weeks, an agreement was drawn up and signed, based upon our previous contract that we made with the NYSW.



Great fun this wintertime railroading! The Steamtown crew has its work cut out for them digging out a crossing. Photo By Joel Williams



Dick Ray's ex WM M-9, No. 67 poses in front of Steamtown's ex CPR #2317, during one of the New Jersey NARCOA work sessions on Steamtown's ex DL&W trackage near Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1986. Photo By Joel Williams

The most important consideration when running on an operating railroad is that FRA rules dictate, and that the dispatcher must ALWAYS be contacted before ever setting on the rails. In addition, we are not permitted to be on the rails ahead of any excursion train at any time. Therefore, we work on non-operating days, or after the last excursion train of the day has operated.

The process for obtaining operating rights should be clear by now. Offer a specific service and free labor to the general manager; make it clear that NARCOA members can be trusted not to injure themselves or cause a grade crossing incident; and then do enough work to maintain the relationship.

Give it a try! If you are successful in your negotiations for operating rights, why don't you consider sharing your success through the pages of THE SETOFF.

*(Ed. Note: Steamtown recently closed down, due to serious financial debt. It is unclear at this writing what the future of the organization will be, and the impact that it will have on the volunteer motor car work crew operators).*



Joel Williams' ex L&HR A-3 No. 61 pauses briefly in front of the old DL&W station at Moscow, Pennsylvania, while on a work detail. Photo By Dick Ray

## HOW I RESTORED MY ADAMS MOTOR CAR

By John Beck  
(Adams No. 3)

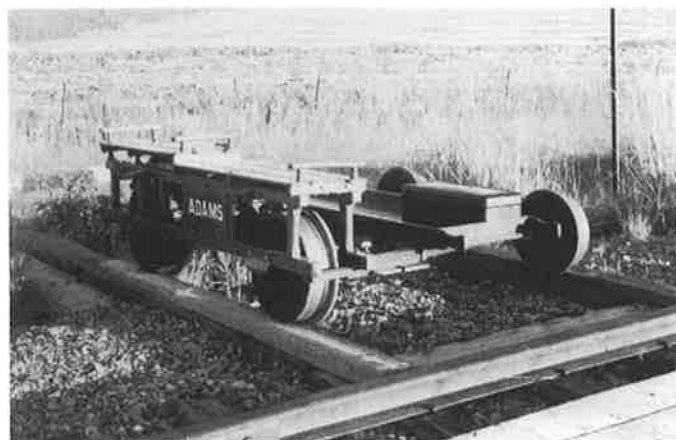
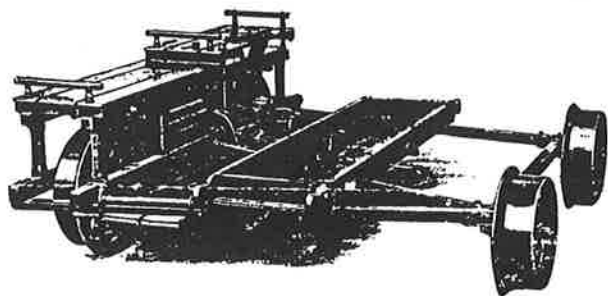
Many NARCOA members have probably never heard of the Adams motor car. Adams, like Fairmont, and a number of other railroad inspection car manufacturers, was one of the pioneering companies in the motorized inspection car business.

My first encounter with an Adams car was in 1977, when I purchased one from a local auctioneer who acquired it from the estate of a retired Soo Line employee from Bismark, North Dakota. The motor car was not in the best condition, and was missing the "outrigger" wheels as well as some wood and metal parts for the outrigger assembly and tool tray.

In an effort to learn more about the Adams Company, I wrote to the Smithsonian Institution, who provided me with information about the Woolery Machine Company of Minneapolis, who bought the Adams Company about 1939 or 1940. Shortly afterwards, I contacted the Woolery Machine Company to see if they could help me out with wheels, and any other parts. I struck out on the availability of parts, since the cars hadn't been produced for years, however they *did* have an old warehouse cart that had original Adams track car wheels on it, and I was able to buy two of them. Mr. L.E. Woolery loaned me an original Adams brochure, with which I was able to use to design and fashion the outrigger frame. The booklet also made the task of determining the configuration of the wood tool tray easier.

### The Adams Motor Car

GUARANTEED FOR LIFE



*This is the early Adams #3 motor car owned by John Beck of Mandon, North Dakota. Note that the car is restored in the Adams "demonstrator" paint scheme. Photo By John Beck*

During my correspondence with Mr. Woolery, he mentioned that Mr. W. Earl Adams, the inventor and founder of the old Adams Company was still active at age 94, travelling the country by rail, and he would periodically visit the Woolery Company during his travels. I wrote Mr. Adams that year (1978), and he mentioned that he was always on the lookout for Adams cars. Unfortunately I didn't keep up with the correspondence, and I never got the chance to meet Mr. Adams in person, and show him my car.

My initial restoration was only to the "cosmetic" level, since I intended on placing the car in a local museum exhibit for display only. After the museum closed in 1982, I decided to rebuild the 2-cycle gas engine. I spent a long time figuring out the spark and throttle controls, since most of the linkage was missing.

The car apparently never had any railroad markings on it, but the word *ADAMS* was still visible on both sides of the battery box. I painted the car green, which is very close to the original color. Last summer I attended a Thresher show at Rollag, Minnesota, where I had the chance to operate my car on their 1-1/4-mile circle of track (which I got to know very well!). Three other cars were at the show also, all of which were Fairmonts.

All in all, I've had a lot of fun restoring my car. I've not only learned a lot about the car itself, but gained an insight on the car's heritage. I'm really looking forward to attending some of the NARCOA meets this year to give my "Number Three" a good workout!

## A MUFFLER FOR YOUR MOTOR CAR

By David Rose  
(Western Maryland M-19, No. 329)

At the end of an enjoyable day on you motor car you are usually tired, dirty, hungry...and your ears ring! If you're like me though, you love that distinctive "putt, putt, putt" sound of the Fairmont (or Sheffield, or whatever other 2-cycle engine your car has). Nevertheless, I set out to find a way to reduce the noise, without "killing" the pleasant sound of the engine.

Obviously, a muffler is the answer. If you have a "regular" M-19, you can use the one available from Fairmont. But my car is equipped with the RK twin-cylinder engine, and Fairmont doesn't have a muffler available for that one. The answer was to design my own. The car doesn't have a whole lot of room under it for such an add on, therefore, the muffler design had to be fairly small.

As you can see by the sketch, the design works like most other mufflers, breaking up the "waves" of sound, as the exhaust changes direction. The only difference is that my design doesn't use any baffles to kill the sound entirely, and thereby cutting horsepower, (which is sometimes very much appreciated on those occasional stiff grades).

My "twin" has two exhaust manifolds, with the pipes running out both sides of my car, thereby necessitating two of the home-made mufflers. Both mufflers are identical, and are made with 3-1/2" O.D. pipe for the body (which was "squished" slightly in a vise, to make it oval), 2" O.D. pipe for the inlet, and 2-1/8" O.D. pipe for the outlet pipe.

Both the inlet and outlet pipes were welded into 18-gauge sheetmetal template pieces that I had installed into the ends of the body. I used cotter pins to hold the flex pipe onto the mufflers, and U-clamps to hold the mufflers in the exhaust outlets. After the mufflers were installed on the car, I drilled 3/16" holes at the lowest point, to let any excess oil drain out.

All in all, I am please with the results of the muffler design...they take the sharpness out, without making the car too quiet. For your particular application you may have to design your mufflers with slightly different sized pipes.

If any of you readers would like to consult with me, or would like to have me make them mufflers, please contact me at : RD #4, Box 341B, Elmer, New Jersey, 08318.

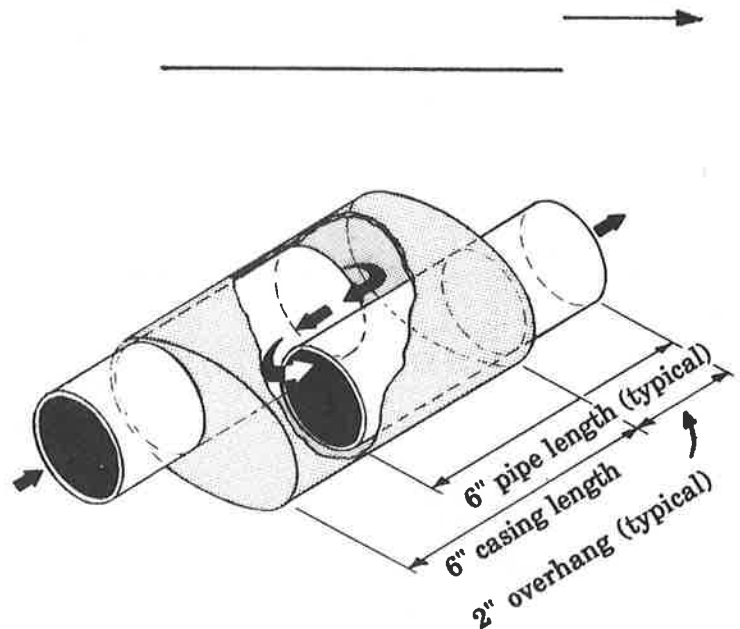
## GOOD TRACKING PART II

### WHEEL ALIGNMENT

By Dick Ray  
(Western Maryland M-9, No. 67)

In my previous article on good tracking, I discussed the aspects of wheel contour, and how it affects the tracking characteristics of a motor car. In this article I will describe how to check and make any necessary corrections to the wheel alignment of your car to further improve the tracking characteristics. The procedure requires four steps, and another person is required to assist.

The first step is to place the car on blocks so the wheels will be free to rotate. As you rotate each wheel, watch for any signs of a bent axle or wheel. A minor flaw is tolerable, but this will make further alignment steps more difficult. During this step, it would be advisable to mark the exact center of each axle, and to carefully measure the wheelbase dimensions on each side of the car, as shown in figure 1 (A). If the dimensions differ by more than 1/16th of an inch, the cause must be found and corrected before going on to the next step.



David Rose's Muffler Design

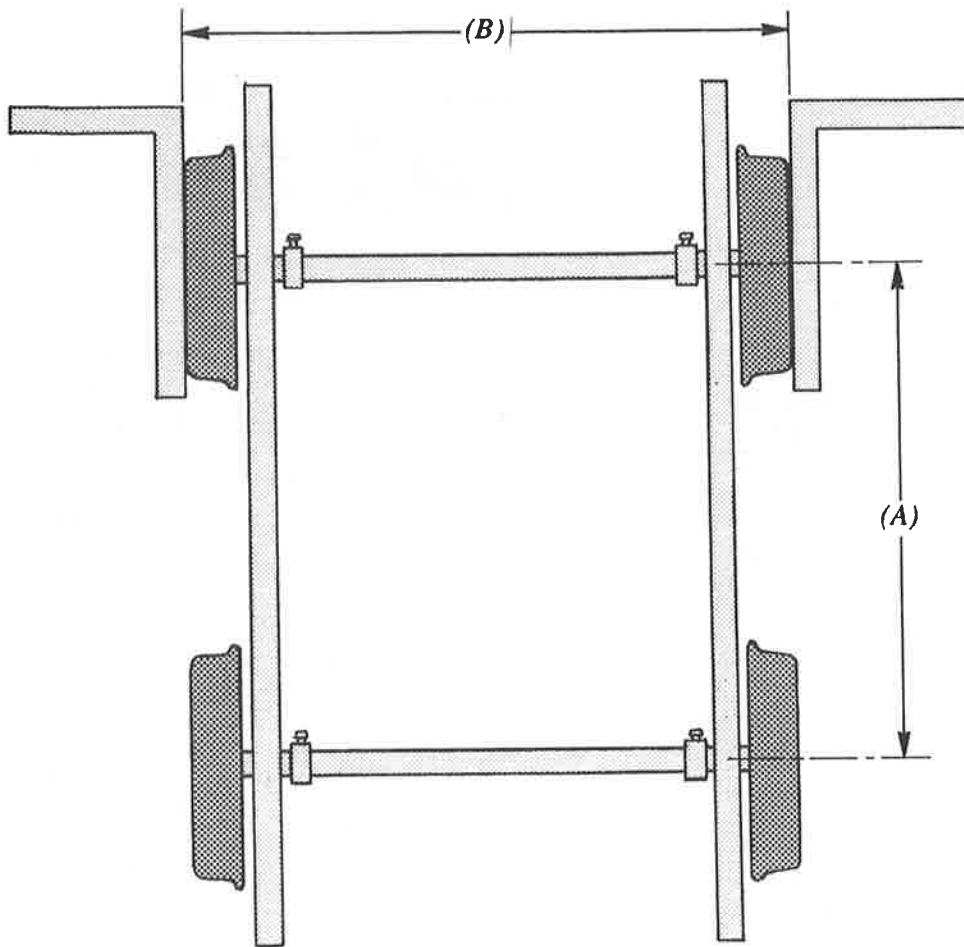


Figure 1

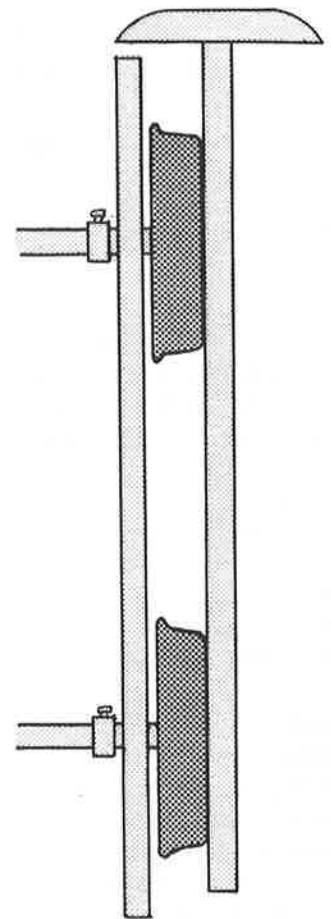


Figure 2

The second alignment step is to measure across the wheel outer faces at each end of the car, as shown in figure 1 (B). Hold a straightedge across each wheel face and measure the distance between the straightedges. The Fairmont instruction manual says the distance should be 62-13/16 inches for cars with 14-inch wheels, or 62-15/16 inches for cars with 16-inch wheels. One can assume that the tolerances are similar for other makes of motor cars. Keep in mind that minor deviations from these tolerances are allowable, but major ones should be corrected.

After pulling the hub with a wheel puller, you can add a layer of package sealing tape to widen the distance, or sand the insulation to narrow the distance. Ideally, both ends of the car should measure the same.

The next step is to adjust the axle thrust collars, so that all slack is removed and the wheels are equally spaced from the frame. The collars should be tightened at this point, but not wired, because they may have to be moved.

All of the proceeding adjustments are in preparation for the final check, which is the most important one for good tracking. This check begins by placing a long straightedge across both wheels on one side, as shown in figure 2. The straightedge should touch the two wheels in four places (as you rotate the wheels). This should be done several times to assure accuracy with all wheels, in four different positions. It is very important that both sides of the car are even. Adjust the axle thrust collars to achieve this, then tighten and wire the set screws.

I have been through this process with two cars that had tracking problems, and the results following these procedures was well worth the effort. Both cars track *much* better now. Perhaps this procedure might help make *your* car track better also.



## NARCOA WINTER MEET ON THE SONORA-BAJA CALIFORNIA RY

By Joel Williams and Bret Tallman  
(WM M-19, No, 334 & ATSF M-19)

With the air temperature hovering in the 70's, and a cloudless sky, another NARCOA "mini-meet" was about to take place, as several folks from the southern California area, (and a few travellers from Arizona, and as far away as New Jersey) prepared to cross the California/Mexican border for a Valentines Day ride on the Sonora-Baja California Railway's Tijuana & Tecate line in northern Baja, California (Mexico).

The trip was organized by Terry Durkin and Brett Tallman after several individuals expressed an interest in running the line after seeing an article by Brett about a previous trip on the line in the Summer, 1988 issue of THE SETOFF.

Nine motor cars made the trip over the line, with fourteen riders, including southern California organizers Terry Durkin and Brett Tallman; Joel Williams, Dick Ray, and Dave Rose, from New Jersey; southern Californians Bob Mahan, Ken Garges, Jim Britten, Bill Kaminsky, Jack Sessoms, Skip Davis, Lars Tendas, and Andrew Hoskins; and Dudley Newman of Phoenix, Arizona.



*Westbound at Rodriguez Dam, the cars pass over the smaller of two viaducts. Rodriguez Dam is between Mattanucca and Garcia. Photo By Brett Tallman*

Our hats go off to Terry Durkin who did most of the work convincing Mexican Customs officials that we were running privately-owned track cars on a Mexican railroad "just for fun"...they were sure that we were up to no good! The officials were more accomodating after we paid them 273,990 Pesos (\$231.68)!



*Eastbound at Mattanucca, the group passes several bulkhead flatcars, loaded with lumber. This siding was recently installed by the railroad to service a local lumber company. Photo By Brett Tallman*

After arriving in Tecate (Tuh-cah'-tay), we checked in with the operator to get our lineup over the line. Even though the portion of line that we would operate over sees no regular train service, the railroad maintains the trackage on a regular basis, and an operator is stationed at Tecate. The track workers regularly operate Fairmont motor cars, and they keep the trackage and flangeways in a very good operating condition.

The terrain traversed by the railroad is rugged, requiring a twisting path to avoid excessive grades. Nowhere is this more evident than at Valle Redondo (round valley), where two loops were built to ease the railroad's descent into the valley.

February seems to be about the best time of year to run the line, since most of the rainfall for the year occurs at this time of year, and everything in the high desert country turns green. At the various stops along the way, everyone brought out their photo albums to show photos of their other trips to one another.

A safe and interesting trip was enjoyed by all, and thanks go to the NARCOA organizers, and the hospitality of the officials of the Sonora-Baja California Railway for permitting us to operate on their line.





## NEGOTIATING SELDOM USED GRADE CROSSINGS

By Dick Ray  
(Western Maryland M-9, No. 67)

One of the greatest tests of a motor car operator's skill is that of negotiating a seldom used grade crossing. These types of crossings are typically on shortline spurs, or museum trackage that sees infrequent rail usage. Here are some tips to help you cross these seldom used crossings safely, and with less difficulty.

1) With two-cycle engines, make sure that the engine timing is retarded. This avoids accidentally reversing the engine in the middle of the crossing and having to push the car across.

2) When travelling with several other cars, the lead car should wait for the last cars to pull up on the near side of the crossing before starting the crossing process. Lookouts and flagmen can then be posted for the entire group crossing.

3) Before crossing, wait for the car ahead to get completely across, and make sure there is room for your car on the other side of the crossing. It is very embarrassing and dangerous to be "hung up" in the middle of the highway, if the car ahead stalls.

4) On belt-driven cars, don't latch up the belt lever in the control plate, while negotiating the crossing. This helps to prevent accidental engine reversing, and allows the car to roll slowly onto the rails again at the far side of the crossing. Most derailments, due to dirt and debris in crossing flangeways, occur on the far side of the crossing; this can be prevented with extra care.

5) Never attempt to roll across a crossing that is paved over, or totally covered with dirt. This is not only dangerous to the riders, but very hard on the car. This situation calls for unloading the passengers, and shoving the car across empty.

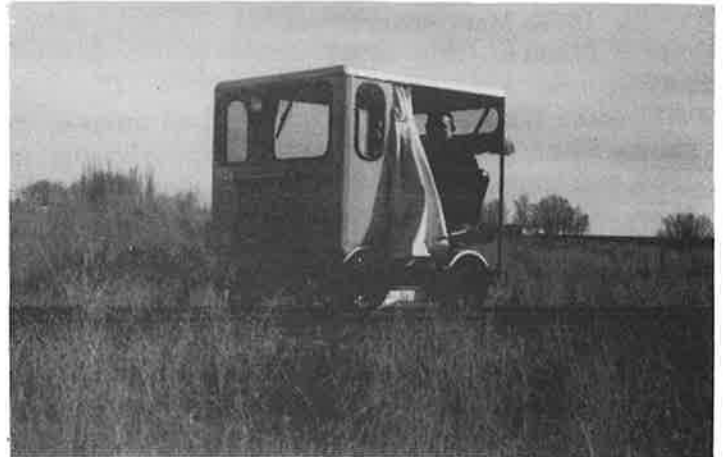
6) When pushing is necessary, be sure to shove only on the push handles. Pushing on the cab is not recommended by Fairmont (and probably all other car builders), and it may cause the car to "skew" sideways, out of alignment with the rails.

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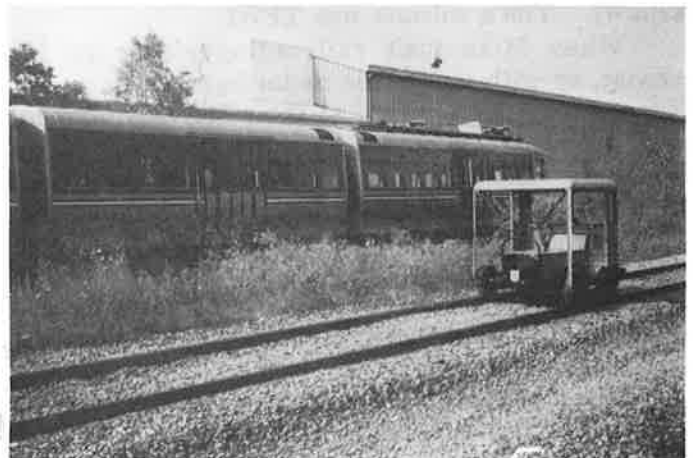
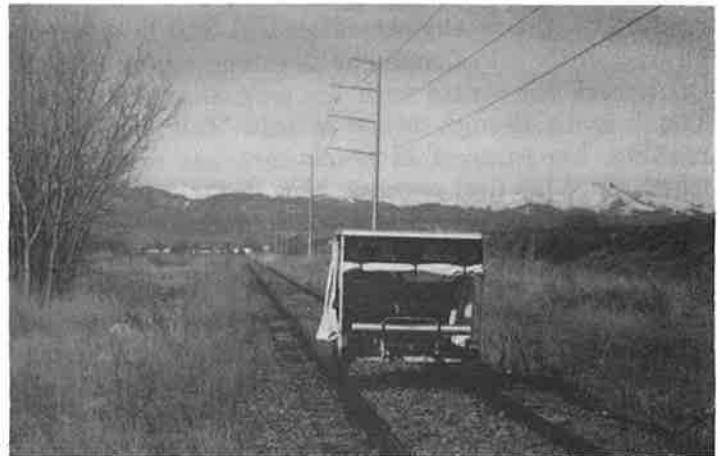
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*NARCOA member Garrett Vandermeer's ex N&W M-19 pauses beside a couple of ex METRO cars, in of all places Ashley Hudson, Indiana, on the Hillsdale County Railroad! The cars were purchased from the transit authority by a local railfan. Garrett lives in Battle Creek, Michigan, and is a retired engineer from the Grand Trunk Western Railroad. Photo By Garrett Vandermeer*

## TRACK CAR PHOTO LINEUP PHOTOS OF MEMBER'S CARS



*NARCOA member Cliff Judson has permission to operate his Fairmont MT-19 (above) on a rather scenic portion of track (below), near his home in Longmont, Colorado. Cliff is an ex Burlington employee. Photos By Cliff Judson*



## WE'D LIKE YOU TO MEET THIS NARCOA MEMBER...

Mike Woodburn  
16495 Marvindale Street  
Minerva, Ohio 44657

Mike Woodburn has always had an interest in railroading. Born in Franklin, Pennsylvania, in 1950, and transplanted to the Buckeye state at the age of 10, Mike has made the usual "steps" in his railroad hobby...including model railroading, collecting railroad artifacts, (such as lanterns, switchlocks, and other hardware), and of course, railroad track cars.

Unlike the majority of us though, Mike has taken his hobby a step or two further. In addition to his motor car hobby, Mike is half owner (along with fellow NARCOA member John Barnett) of a full size, ex PRR N-5 caboose (restored to its original PRR paint scheme), which he operates regularly on the locally operated Piney Fork line of Ohi-Rail Corporation. You see, Mike is a volunteer brakeman on weekends for the Piney Fork line.

Even though Mike spends a lot of time railroading on the weekends as an Ohi-Rail brakeman, he frequently takes time out to attend various NARCOA track car meets with his wife Sharon and son Tim. Even though Mike is into "full size" railroading, his interest in track cars has not diminished, since his first encounters with them in the late 70's. These initial trips were frequently run with fellow NARCOA members and nearby friends Chris Cooper and Bob Bixler.

Mike currently rosters two operable motor cars; an ex B&O Fairmont M-19 "open" car, and an ex New York Central (Big Four) Fairmont M-9, with full aluminum cab. He also has a couple of other cars, obtained from the N&W, that he hopes to rework into another operable car for his son Tim. The car will be painted with a Toledo Peoria & Western Logo (TP&W). Tim's initials are TPW!

When Mike isn't railroading either on his caboose, or with one of his motor cars, he earns his keep working for Conrail, at their MofW equipment shop in Canton, Ohio. Mike's skills as an equipment expert are well known among several of his friends in the Northeast and Midwest. His expertise in designing airhorn systems for motor cars is second-to-none (several NARCOA members had the opportunity to see his handywork on his M-9, in the form of a 3-chime Nathan airhorn setup, at the Arkville, New York meet last year).

If you ever get the chance to meet Mike, on the rails, take a few minutes to chat with him...I'm sure he will be more than happy to talk railroading with you.



*Mike, Sharon, and Tim Woodburn have just crossed Sutton Road, on the Southern Michigan Railroad, near Tecumseh, Michigan. The photo was taken by Gerald Grossman, during the 1987 NARCOA convention.*



*This is a photo of Mike's ex PRR N-5 caboose, which regularly accompanies the Ohi-Rail train, during its runs on the Piney Fork line of Ohi-Rail Corporation. Photo By Mike Woodburn*

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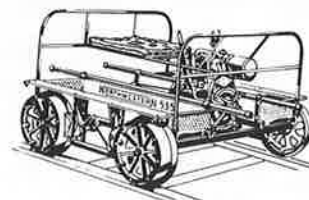
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*Top- Descending the "Great Loop" above Valle Redondo, during the February run on the S-BC Railway. The car in the lead is Terry Durkin's M-19, operated by Joel Williams, Dick Ray, and Dave Rose,. Photo By Brett Tallman*



**Middle-**

*Greg Brahms poses for the camera timer, next to his ex Western Pacific M-19, number M2163 on the Northwestern Pacific Railroad, in northern California. The line features over 150 miles of some of the most scenic railroad in the U.S., with bridges and tunnels at nearly every turn.*



*John Kirchanski's ex Western Pacific M-9, No. M-2020, leads a group of cars past the Robert Mondavi Winery, on the Napa Valley Railroad in California. The trip was organized by NARCOA member Greg Brahms Photo By Greg Brahms*

## **THE SETOFF**

622 Pawnee  
Jackson, Michigan 49203

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