

# *THE SETOFF*

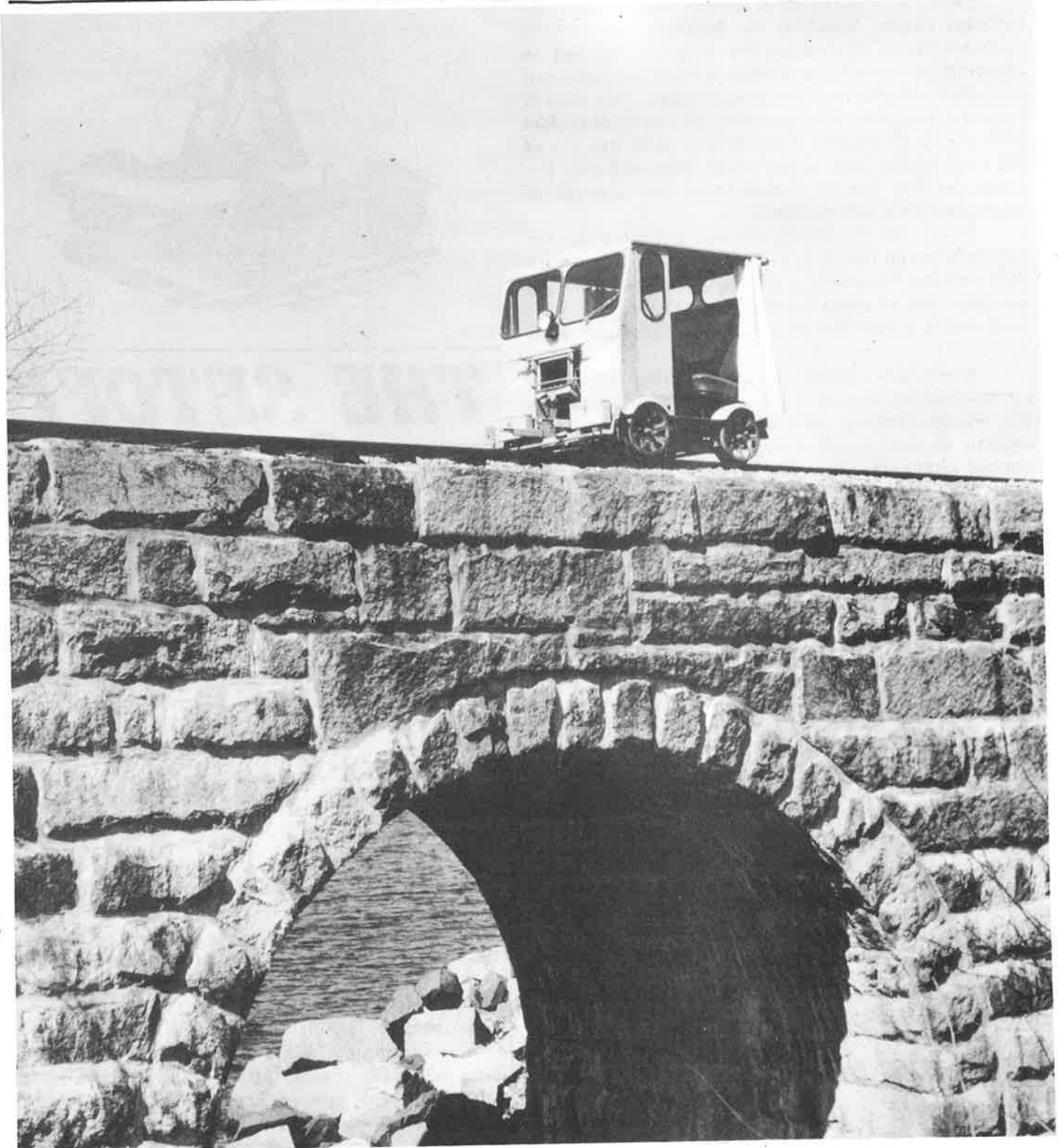
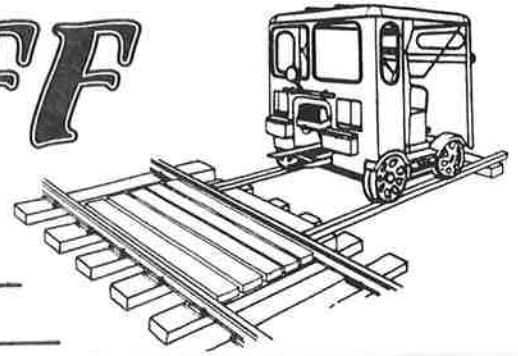
---

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

---

*SPRING 1989*

---



## WHY DO WE HAVE A NARCOA ROSTER?

When NARCOA track car enthusiasts are asked to contribute information about their cars for the NARCOA roster, this is done for two primary reasons.

First, is to preserve to history of each car...this includes engine number, car number, accessories, former owners (including the original railroad to where the car was shipped when built, if possible), and any other information that is applicable. This data is kept in a computer file by our roster coordinator, Joel Williams, of Greendell, New Jersey. Joel was one of the original founders of our association, and over the years he has really streamlined the process of managing this information.

From this file, future owners can trace the car history through previous owners. It is for this reason that we would appreciate updates from you owners if you buy, sell, or scrap (or cannibalize) a car. Simply send Joel a postcard with any revised information on it.

A secondary reason for maintaining this file is for traceability in case a track car is ever stolen. A file on all existing cars will make it difficult for anyone to ever resell a car not acquired through normal channels. Any non-stock details unique to your car, such as aluminum floors, welded water jacket, or engraved numbers on the frame should be recorded, and sent to Joel.

NARCOA is pleased to provide this registry service to all of you folks on the roster.



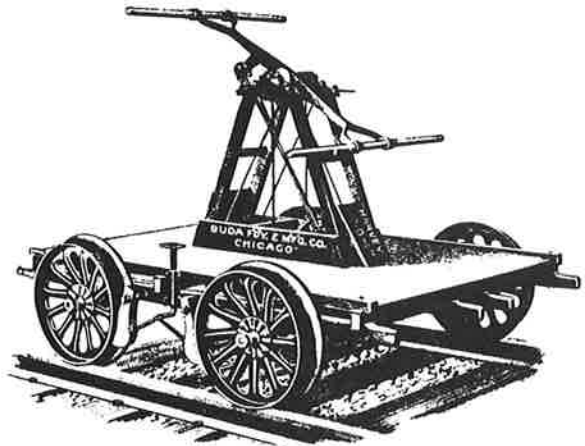
## COVER PHOTO

*Joel Williams' ex Western Maryland, M-19 twin, No. 334 passes over a fascinating stone arch bridge, during an mid March run on the Old Colony & Newport Railroad, near Middletown, Rhode Island.*

*Photo By Geoff Oates*

## A NOTABLE QUOTE FROM "THE TRACK INSPECTOR"

"Happiness is having your Fairmont start on the first crank."



# THE SETOFF

Volume 3

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

## ORGANIZATION NEWS

By Joel Williams  
Western Maryland M-19, No. 334

The following members sent railcar information to the NARCOA central file; Harry Coulter of Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania sent a number of manuals to be added to the files. They include: sales brochures for Fairmont A-5, MM-9, Buda 619, Northwestern 523, 551, and 581-A, Cleveland Motor Car, and the Teetor Rail Bike. John Nolan of Stockton, New Jersey, sent information on Gregg handcars and motor cars. John Stahl sent a copy of motor car information from the 1939 Railway Engineering and Maintenance Cyclopeda. Many thanks to you folks...keep them coming!

If you have received the latest NARCOA roster, you will have noticed that the list of available motor car manuals is included in the back of the roster. The list now includes over 160 manuals. This list will be updated as the roster is updated also. At a later date we will print the list in THE SETOFF also. Our new central file coordinator is Francis Saunders, 46 Clark Street, Moodus, CT 06469. Donations or requests for information should be directed to him. Please be sure to include SSAE's, or postage as appropriate.

New listings in the NARCOA roster include: the Tidewater Chapter, NRHS, of Portsmouth, Virginia, with their ex Beltline Railroad Fairmont MR-19; Fred Fisher of Riverside, New Jersey listed two cars, a Fairmont M-19AA, and an ex Seaboard Coast Line Fairmont M-9; Wayne Johnson of Millville, New Jersey listed an ex B&O Fairmont S-2; Allen Riggins, also of Millville, New Jersey listed a Soo Line M-19AA; Richard Hulme of Delmar, New York sent info on his Seaboard Coast Line M-19; Joe Pollard, of Little Rock, Arkansas, an ex Western Union M-9, and Bill Pollard, of Conway, Arkansas, an ex Missouri Pacific M-9; and John Stahl from Fresno, California, a Soo Line Fairmont MT-19.

On January 9, 1989, NARCOA was incorporated as a non-profit organization in the state of Delaware. This new status will allow the organization to do some things that weren't possible before, such as obtaining a group insurance policy. Directors of the association have also been selected. They are: David Rose of Elmer, New Jersey; Paul Yorkis of Medway, Massachusetts; Doug Leffler of Jackson, Michigan; Mike Woodburn of Minerva, Ohio; Ken Kurd of Wappinger Falls, New York; Stanley Conyer of Columbus, Indiana; Brett Tallman of Costa Mesa, California; Van Workman of Lexington, North

Carolina; and Joel Williams of Greendell, New Jersey.

Additionally, the following members will serve these functions: Dick Ray of Randolph, New Jersey will serve as meet coordinator; John Nolan of Stockton, New Jersey will coordinate the insurance; Francis Saunders of Moodus, Connecticut will be our information archivist (for motor car manuals and other material); and Paul Yorkis of Medway, Massachusetts will oversee training and education. Our incorporation by-laws have been drafted, and they will appear in a later issue of THE SETOFF.

With this issue of THE SETOFF, we are instituting a new system for keeping track of subscription expirations. Previously, your mailing label had a number set representing volume and issue number for your expiration date (this issue is 3-1). Henceforth, we will use an alpha/numeric code for month and year, ie: this issue is *SP89*, for Spring, 1989; *SU89* would be Summer, 1989, *FA89*, Fall, 1989, and *WI90*, Winter, 1990. Your mailing label will indicate with this code when your subscription will expire.

## UPCOMING TRACK CAR EVENTS

### SOUTHERN MICHIGAN R.R. TRACK CAR CONVENTION

The Southern Michigan Railroad Society of Clinton, Michigan will be hosting its fifth annual International motor car convention on May 26-28, 1989. The convention will be based out of the SMR headquarters at Clinton, Michigan, and will feature numerous runs over the 13.5 mile Southern Michigan Railroad on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Night runs will be featured on all days, and a Sunday breakfast run is planned.

Saturday will feature a catered meal, and a night run or an optional evening slide and video session. For more information Contact the SMR at P.O. Box 434, Clinton, Michigan 49236.

### TOLEDO, LAKE ERIE & WESTERN MOTOR CAR MEET

The Toledo, Lake Erie & Western Railway will be hosting its third motor car meet on Memorial Day, May 29, 1989. The railroad will provide a morning and afternoon run over the 10 miles of track between Grand Rapids and Waterville, Ohio. An added feature this time will be the option of riding the



TLE&W's "Bluebird" passenger train in between track car runs. This will provide the attendees with a lunchtime break between runs, and a time to socialize while riding the rails on a 1 and 1/2 hour round trip.

Costs for the runs will be \$6.00 for the first run, and \$4.00 for the second run. The \$6.00 fee will also cover the cost of the train ride. For more information contact Victor Geckel, TLE&W Motor Car Meet, RR #2, Box 26, Continental, OH 45831.

### **SWEET LINE RAILROAD MOTOR CAR MEET**

The Sweet Line Railroad, of Carson City, Michigan will be hosting its second motor car meet on June 9-11, 1989, on its trackage between Carson City and Middleton, Michigan.

The meet will feature both day and night runs, plus a Saturday morning breakfast run to Middleton. The meet is being coordinated in conjunction with the Carson City "Frontier Days" festival, which is held every June. Many additional non-rail activities will also be held in Carson City for visitors.

The cost of the meet will be \$10.00. For more information, contact Dean Helwig, Sweet Line Motor Car Meet, 10255 Cleveland Road, Carson City, MI 48811.

### **LITTLE TRAVERSE SCENIC R.R. MOTOR CAR MEET**

The Little Traverse Scenic Railroad of Petosky, Michigan will hold a one day motor car meet June 17, 1989 on a portion of the former Pennsylvania Railroad Mackinac Branch, between Alanson and Petosky, Michigan. The meet will begin at 8:00am at Conway siding, and proceed to Petosky where the motor cars will be on display to promote the railroad to the local citizenry.

There will also be an afternoon run and a night run, scheduled between the runs of the line's passenger train. For more information, contact Hank Brown, MCCA, 622 Oak Street, Cottage Grove, WI 53527.

### **ESCANABA & LAKE SUPERIOR RAILROAD MOTOR CAR MEET**

The Escanaba & Lake Superior Railroad will be hosting its second motor car meet on July 15-16, 1989. The meet will operate on the railroad's trackage between Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Channing, Michigan. Like last year, the motor cars

will run one way over the line each day, beginning at Green Bay, with a "sleep over" at Iron, Mountain, Michigan (Iron Mountain is just south of Channing).

For more information, contact Hank Brown, MCCA, 622 Oak Street, Cottage Grove, WI 53527.

### **NITTANY & BALD EAGLE R.R. TRACK CAR MEET**

Rodman Hall, of Lock Haven, Pennsylvania is setting up a two-day NARCOA track car meet on August 12-13, 1989, on the Nittany & Bald Eagle Railroad, at Bellefonte, Pennsylvania. Details of the meet are incomplete at press time. For an information update, contact Rodman Hall, RD#1, Box 519C Crestmont, Lock Haven, PA 17745

### **SPRING INSPECTION RUN ON THE SIERRA RY. TUOLUMNE BRANCH**

**By Brett Tallman  
AT&SF M-19, No. 184210**

Over a rainy Easter weekend, I paid a visit to the former Sierra Railway Tuolumne Branch, at Tuolumne, California. The Tuolumne Branch is now operated by the Friends of the Sierra Railway (FSR), headed by Bruce Cassasa. The FSR hopes to rehabilitate the line for future railroad excursion use, and is looking for volunteers...including those with track cars to help with brush removal, and other activities.

My initial plans for the inspection run called for meeting up with a couple of other FSR and NARCOA members, however their schedules and mine didn't coincide. Nevertheless, I decided to give my ex AT&SF M-19 a workout on the Tuolumne Branch grades. After arriving in Tuolumne on Friday, and securing permission to operate on the railroad from Bruce Cassasa, I set on outside of town.

Operating on this historic line was very satisfying indeed, regardless of the gloomy overcast weather. Many a motion picture was filmed by Hollywood on this branch, due to the scenic nature of the line. My M-19's wheels squealed sharply on many of the tight radius curves, and the two timber trestles that I passed over were really quite dramatic.

My faithful OD engine didn't have any problem at all, lifting my party of four up the stiff grades, and the "David Rose-built" muffler did its job of keeping the exhaust at a respectable level. I had plans of operating my car again on Saturday, but foul weather precluded me from making another run.

The Tuolumne Branch is not particularly long on mileage, but it is very scenic...I would recommend a visit by any of our west coast members. FSR coordinator Bruce Cassasa has indicated that NARCOA members have a standing invitation to lend a hand with track and right-of-way maintenance, on the Tuolumne branch. In return, they may operate their cars in this capacity. For information on how to get involved contact Bruce at P.O. Box 692, Jamestown, CA 95327.

## FRINGE BENEFITS

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

As a track car owner, have you ever considered doing volunteer work for a non-profit railroad museum or non-profit tourist railroad? Not only will the railroad benefit from your helping them out, but you can benefit also, financially, in the form of tax deductions. Keep in mind the key words here are "non-profit". There are several groups out there who use volunteers, and which are profit making enterprises, and the monetary benefits that we will outline here will not apply.

The tax deductions that you would get back from donating your services to the non-profit museum, or tourist railroad will not make you rich, but it will help you pay for your hobby expenses, if you itemize on your tax return. To comply with this deduction, you must obtain a receipt from the museum for your services either on a day-by-day basis, or at the end of the year. Any group that is categorized as a non-profit organization will be happy to issue you your receipt.

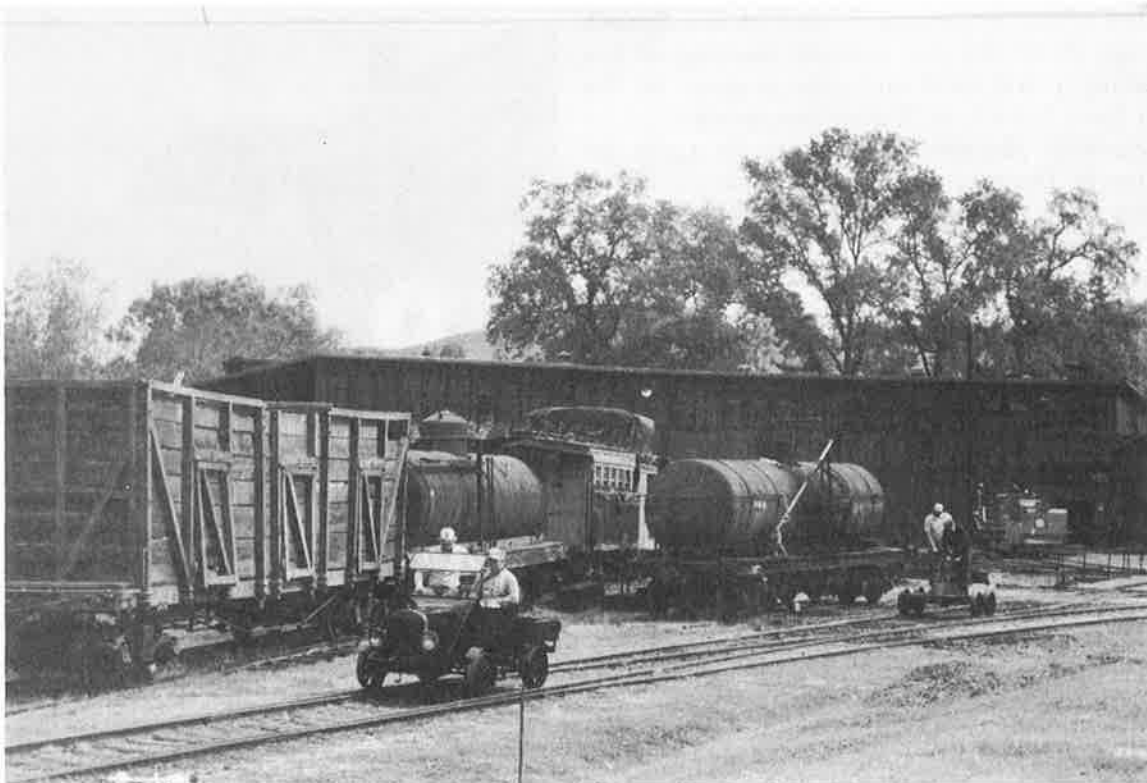
You must keep a detailed log of miles traveled (with your automobile), any tolls that you pay on turnpikes, meals, lodging, and the cost of operating your track car and other equipment, such as a chain saw, etc. You are allowed 12 cents a mile, or direct vehicle operating costs. Tolls are deductible, but meals are deductible at only 80% of the actual cost. You cannot deduct expenses if you go to the railroad simply for a "fun" run. It is only deductible if the railroad calls it a "track inspection". If you stay to work for a second day, your lodging is deductible.

The key to obtaining this deduction is the receipt from the railroad museum...good luck!

---

*The FSR hopes to establish a rail museum on the Tuolumne Branch, similar to the Sierra Railroad-based Railtown museum, as shown in this photo, at Jamestown, California.*

*Photo, Collection of Brett Tallman*



## INDIANA RAILWAY MUSEUM HOSTS MOTOR CAR WORK MEET

By Stan Conyer  
Monon M-19, No. 611

The French Lick, West Baden & Southern Railway held its first track car "work meet" March 24-26, 1989, over the Indiana Railway Museum's 16 miles of track, between French Lick, Indiana, and the railroad's connection with Norfolk Southern at Dubois, Indiana. The purpose of the meet was to cut brush and clear crossing flangeways, in preparation for the Indiana Railway Museum's 1989 operating season.

The meet was open to all members of the Indiana Railway Museum (the \$10.00 annual dues also includes the IRM's monthly newsletter, *The Mainline*, edited by fellow track car enthusiast and NARCOA member Stan Conyer).

The track car enthusiasts began arriving on Friday afternoon, and after setting on near the beautiful limestone station in French Lick, preparations were made for an evening run to Cuzco. Following the run to Cuzco, and a leisurely dinner, the members retired to the lounge of the Samuel Rea, the IRM's ex PRR private car, where we watched videos into the evening.

The group headed out in the morning with shovels and chainsaws, working all the crossings, and clearing a considerable amount of brush, before finally calling it quits about 4:00pm. After hitting the showers, the group congregated over at the French Lick Springs Hotel for the annual meeting of the IRM, featuring a fine meal and slide program on the Monon, by Gary Dozall, of *Trains* magazine.

On Sunday, the group hit the rails again for another run to Dubois, and some additional brush cutting, this time at Marshall Lake, to open up the view for the passenger train riders. At the end of the day, the bunch headed for a local pizzeria for some well deserved calories! The beautiful early spring weather in southern Indiana and the hospitality of the IRM certainly added up to a productive weekend on the rails.



## K&WT RY. TRACK CAR CONVENTION

By Fred Furminger  
Fairmont M-9, No. 303

The Kentucky & Western Tennessee Railway played host to the MCCA's national track car convention on April 22-23, 1989 over the railroad's 45 miles of track between Murray, Kentucky, and Bruceton, Tennessee.

The fine spring weekend saw over 60 motor cars participating in the event. Two groups of cars operated out of the railroad's base of operations, Paris, Tennessee, traveling north and south respectively, on Saturday, and then "flip-flopping" the following day. The Saturday evening banquet was held at Murray, Kentucky, and several of the attendees traveled to and from Murray from the convention base at Paris by rail.

One particularly handy aspect of the K&WT convention, was the ease with which the car owners were able to set their cars on the rails, since the K&WT track goes right through the city street in Paris! Additionally, many new track car owners were in attendance at the convention, who hadn't had the opportunity to operate their cars previously, particularly those folks from the south.

The concensus from numerous track car enthusiasts was that the convention was a fine one...many thanks go to convention coordinator Hank Brown, and the K&WT Railway.



*Fred Furminger photographed this lineup of cars, in the streets of Paris, Tennessee, during the K&WT convention on April 22. Over 60 motor cars were present for the meet.*

*The IRM work meet attendees paused on a bridge near Dubois, long enough for Stan Conyer to take this photo.*

## A REAR STORAGE BOX FOR YOUR TRACK CAR

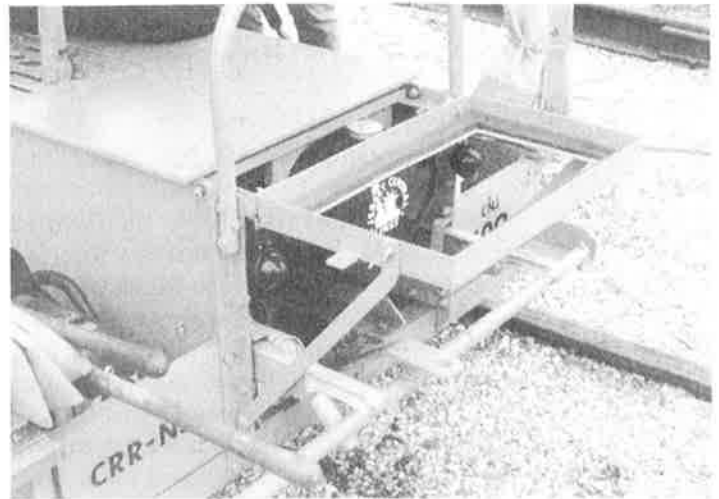
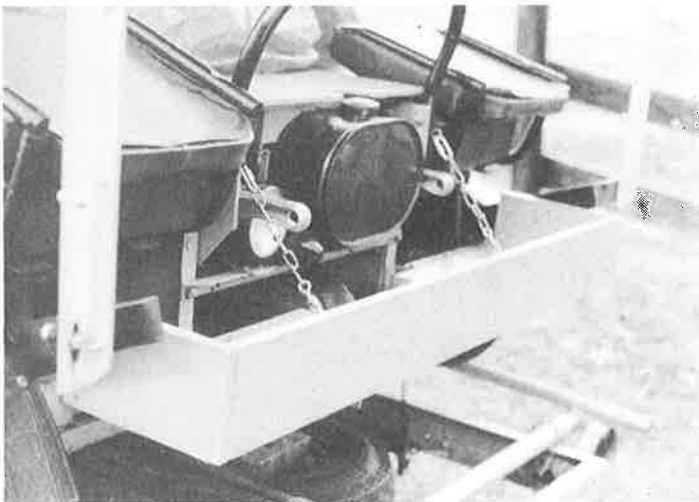
By Dick Ray  
Western Maryland M-9, No. 67

On several long trips with my M-9 track car, I found that there was barely enough room for me, a passenger, and all the other things we had to take along, such as: coolers, extra clothing, rain gear, chain saws, oil, water, tow bar, pick and shovel, limb loppers, cameras, and and other items.

Obviously, the answer was to fabricate some sort of storage container. The accompanying photo shows a rear-mounted storage box that I built, using only simple tools and readily available hardware. The bottom is made from a 1 x 12, and the three sides are made from 1 x 6 pieces. Angle brackets and screws inside hold it all together.

While I found that the assembly of the box was relatively easy, the mounting of the unit onto the track car was not. I attached two short aluminum brackets to the middle of the wood blocks at the rear of the tool tray floors. Normally I store my tow bar on these angle pieces. When I use the storage box, I remove the tow bar, and attach the box with bolts through the angle pieces (one bolt per angle). The rear of the box is supported with two short pieces of lightweight chain, which attach from eye bolts on the bottom of the box to eyebolts at the top rear corners of the housing panels.

The mounted position of the box is such that it will not interfere with either the lift handles or the rear taillights. Owners with low-mounted handles would have to cut notches in the corners of the box, to clear the handles. A notch in the floor of the box provides access to my towing bracket.



*Dick Ray's storage box extends all the way across the rear of his M-9. Note the detachable support chain.*

*Photo By Dick Ray*

To preserve the original appearance of my car, I only mount the box when it will be needed for long trips, or "working" runs. Two 1-1/2-gallon cans of fuel, a chain saw, (with its own can of fuel and oil), a folding shovel, and a tow bar all fit nicely into the box.

Other NARCOA track car owners have found similar ways to increase storage space. Fred Furminger has a demountable metal tool box that he built for his ex C&O M-9; Lloyd James has a vertical tool rack on the rear of his C&NW M-19. Lloyd's rack is designed to carry several long-handled tools. Joel Williams has an aluminum tray, mounted above the lift handles, at the rear of the housing panels on his M-19 twin. Walter Matuch carries a large plastic cooler on a welded bracket, which is bolted to the rear of his MT-14.

For those long trips, consider building yourself a storage box. The project will be an easy one for you to work on, and it will help you stash your "necessities" into a convenient, out of the way area on your track car.

*Walt Matuch built this fine looking support frame to hold his cooler.*

*Photo By Dick Ray*

## THE FAIRMONT A-3

By Joel Williams  
Western Maryland M-19, No. 334

Many railcar enthusiasts aren't as familiar with the Fairmont "A" series gang cars as they are with their smaller brothers, such as the M-19, and M-9 series inspection cars. The name gang car is derived from the fact that these cars were designed to haul track gangs, their tools and supplies to the work site.

The companies that produced these cars advertised that they could replace a work train, and thus were cheaper to operate. Not needing a train crew, and being able to clear the track for passing trains were listed as the advantages for gang cars over work trains.

The number of men in a track gang was controlled by the size of the job. Several gang car manufacturers claimed that over a hundred men could be hauled to the job site with by their car (the men rode on trailers hauled by the car). Northwestern made a gang car with seats for 35 men. At least two of these cars have been preserved by NARCOA members.

Fairmont gang cars comprise a series of models from small to large. The main difference between them was the size of the engine, wheels, and axles. The A-3 is considered a small gang car, that could also be used as a section car. The engines used in the A-3 were a 4 cylinder in line, water-cooled industrial engines built by Waukesha, Hercules, or Continental. They were rated at between 15-20 hp. Top speed is generally around 35 mph.

The engine is mated to an automotive-type dry clutch, and drives through a Warner 4-speed manual sliding gear transmission. Sliding gear means that there is no synchromesh. Skill is required when shifting this transmission, to avoid grinding the gears. The short driveshaft connects to a forward/reverse gear differential, however there is no differential action.

The rear axle is one solid piece which passes through the gearbox. Inside the case is a pinion gear and two ring gears. The ring gear slides on splines so that one or the other is in mesh with the pinion gear, permitting forward and reverse. With this arrangement, the car can travel either direction with equal speed. The direction is controlled by a lever that sticks out of the floor near the control panel. The controls consist of a hand brake, hand throttle, and foot clutch, arranged so the operator can sit facing either direction to run the car. That is not to say that it is an easy machine to operate! There's not much room for the operator, and the engine gauges are located on a panel half way between your ankles



*Joel Williams, and Dick Ray's Fairmont A-3 was restored to the original Lehigh & Hudson River Railway paint scheme.*

*Photo By Joel Williams*

and knees. Also, the forward vision can be obstructed easily by passengers.

Now some words about the A-3 suspension system...there isn't any! The axle bearings are solidly mounted to the frame. Some larger Fairmont gang cars, as well as those of other manufacturers had spring-suspended bodies. Track car design usually called for the body to be suspended above the frame, engine and drive train. The object wasn't to lower the amount of unsprung weight, as in automotive practice, but to put as much unsprung weight on the wheels as possible, to keep them on the rails. However, the A-3 was built with economy and simplicity in mind, so no suspension was included. I speculate that railroad management wanted the track gangs to feel the rough spots and bad joints in the track as they rode along.



*Columbus, Ohio track car enthusiast Dennis Laven-  
dar owns this ex N&W A-3.*

*Photo By Jay Boggs*



The A-3 is electrically insulated, so as not to set off track signals (signals are activated by shorting across the rails). This insulation method is accomplished with insulated tapered bushings between the axle and wheel hubs. Wood brake shoe mounting blocks complete the insulation system.

A-3 bodies were built from wood or pressed steel, depending upon the year of manufacture. Body work was optional as with most Fairmont cars. Examples of the body styles can be seen in the accompanying photos. The seats hold eight people, but extra seats can raise the number of workmen to 18. The extra men sit on a seatboard raised several inches from the floor, with their feet on the running boards.

Even though the A-3 weighs about 1500 lbs., it's not hard to handle it on and off the rails. The trick is to have two people stand on the front of the car to counter balance the weight, so that when you turn the car, the lifting effort is minimized.



*Chris Cooper, of Paris, Ohio owns this fine looking ex PRR A-3. The car features a 12-volt electrical system, air horns, and a speedometer.*

*Photo By Joel Williams*



*The distinctive cab on this A-3, formerly owned by the Montour Railroad, sets it apart from the standard A-3 "look". Jay Boggs, of Plain City, Ohio is the proud owner.*

*Photo By Jay Boggs*

During restoration, we discovered that our engine had two problems. Since the engine had sat for about 15 years, the acid in the oil had settled to the bottom of the crankcase and had eaten pinholes in the oilpan. The oilpan then started to leak after we got the car running. Secondly, the valves had developed some rust, and needed some grinding. This is always a good idea on an engine that has been inactive for long periods of time.

Another thing we discovered is that water can seep into the transmission during a rainstorm...it leaks into the transmission by running down the shift lever when the car is not in use. It's amazing how fast this water can accumulate; if it's left in the transmission over the winter, it could conceivably freeze, and cause a cracked transmission case. Loosen the drain plug a little and let the water run out when putting the car away for the winter. Keep a plastic trash bag over the lever to keep water out, when storing the car for long periods of time.

If your car is equipped with oil cups on the axle bearings, consider replacing them with grease fittings. The maintenance is easier, and the bearings will last longer with grease.

So there you have it...the Fairmont A-3 gang car. It's no longer being manufactured, but there are still a few left out there, waiting to be restored and provide service again to NARCOA members.

*Glenn Van Winkle's ex PRR A-3 is used in work service by the Kalamazoo, Lake Shore & Chicago Railway, of Paw Paw, Michigan.*

*Photo By Garrett Vandermeer*

## A COOLING SYSTEM TIP

By Mike Woodburn  
New York Central M-9, No. 124B

The last issue of THE SETOFF contained a fine article by Jay Boggs on maintaining your cooling system. With this short article, I would like to pass on another cooling system tip to those of you who may have to make minor repairs to the condenser on their Fairmont single- or twin-cylinder engines.

Over the last year or so, the gasket between the condenser and water hopper on my 1938, Fairmont, M-9, OD-B single cylinder engine had gradually deteriorated to the point where steam was escaping in great quantities. The car still ran great, but the water deposits at the leak location were gradually leaving a mess on the front of the water hopper. It was time to replace the gasket!

The Fairmont condenser on my M-9 is attached to the water hopper by means of several bolts which fasten onto the base of the condenser housing. Over the years I had heard numerous complaints from several NARCOA members who had twisted off a large percentage of these bolts, in the process of removing the condenser. Even though it is no great problem to drill out broken off bolts, and replace them with new ones, I came up with an idea that would eliminate this problem altogether.

You see, the Fairmont water hopper is made of *aluminum*, which expands and contracts greatly with heat and cold. The idea hit me that if the engine were hot, the bolts would release much easier. So, I fired up the old M-9, and let it heat up to "steaming temperature". The first twist of the wrench proved my theory to be correct...and they came off slicker'n a whistle! After I saw that the bolts would come off easily, I shut the engine down and finished the removal of the remaining ones. Not a single bolt gave me trouble!

After the engine cooled down, I proceeded to flush the hopper and condenser with the garden hose. The only problem I had with this though was that apparently a chipmunk had stashed his winters' supply of chestnuts in my water hopper one winter when I had left my cap off the water hopper! To fix this, I removed the drain cock, and poked the chestnut "chips" out of the bottom of the water hopper with a length of stiff wire.

After the cleanup and flush, I applied a new gasket to the head of the water hopper, and reinstalled the condenser. Now my M-9 is ready to hit the high iron again!

## MAINTAINING FAIRMONT IGNITION SYSTEMS

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

The Fairmont vibrator-type ignition system has been firing spark plugs in track motor cars for over seventy years. The system works well for two-cycle engines, because it provides a good hot spark to the plug on each revolution of the flywheel. The key to assuring that the system will continue to work well is based on proper maintenance.

The condition and adjustment of the ignition system electrical components is perhaps the most vital aspect of reliable operation. I have found that following Fairmont's adjustment instructions for both the timer and vibrator points is the best advice that one can follow.

Good electrical connections are vital. In the vibrator, connections to the points are made through the mounting studs and the brass nuts. Cleaning all of the mating surfaces when new points are installed will insure a good spark. Be careful not to allow any of the studs on the coil to turn when tightening the nuts or installing the wires. If the studs turn, the internal connections could possibly break. If this does occur by accident, a jumper wire can be added from the "BAT" terminal to the "pan" (moving) point terminals, thereby bypassing the internal connection. This method saves buying a new coil.

The timer points do not need to be serviced as often as the vibrator points. When doing so, remove the entire timer assembly for cleaning, addition of new parts, and cleaning. Occasionally dress down the points with a fine file, and polish with crocus cloth or fine emery. Don't "push" the limit of the points though, the cost of new ones is not worth being stuck out along the rails. An extra set of points kept in a sealed plastic bag in the motor car tool box is a good investment also.

One often overlooked part of the ignition system is the high tension lead. Occasionally old insulation will crack, causing the spark to jump to another surface, causing shorts and misfiring. Periodically, inspect your lead, and if replacement is necessary, use solid core wire.

When storing the car for the winter, it is advisable to bring the coil into the house. The wooden coils are not sealed quite as well as the newer automotive coils, and moisture can sometimes cause problems to the internal connections. Another cause of internal problems is "buzzing" the coil without



*Red Richardson was busy at work, welding rail on the B&O, at milepost 26.17, in 1964, when this photo was taken. Note the B&O M-19, number 1020 in the background.*

*Photo, Collection of R. W. Richardson*



*Red's "new" number 1020 is an ex Illinois Central M-19, formerly used by a signal maintainer.*

*Photo By Stan Conyer*

grounding the high tension lead to either the car or spark plug lying on the frame. When testing the coil after adjustments and the addition of new parts, *always* ground the high tension lead.

Finally, the ignition system check should include the ignition switch and all connecting wires. Any problems with these are usually easy to find, and replace if they are in bad shape. However, a bad ground connection to the frame can be difficult to find. The electrolysis action between the copper lug and an aluminum frame member can create an insulating barrier. An extra wire connecting the ignition system ground to the battery ground can be added insurance.

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

F. W. "Red" Richardson  
349 Gilbert Street  
North Vernon, IN 47265

"I have 44 years in on the B&O"...so says F.W. "Red" Richardson, a dedicated railroader, who has an impressive M-19 motor car mileage record on the Baltimore & Ohio's Louisville Subdivision. You see, Red is a B&O track welder, responsible for over 85 miles of railroad. To perform his duties over the line, Red used to use B&O #1020, a Fairmont M-19, motor car, which he ran 5 days-a-week, year round. From 1950-1964 the mileage "racked up" to such an extent that Red had to replace the M-19's single cylinder engine three times!

"In 1964 the B&O loaded a bunch of motor cars in gondolas, including my old #1020, and they were sent to Baltimore, presumably to be scrapped." The railroad then gave me a 1/2 ton GMC HyRail truck to replace my motor car." "Last year I met Stan Conyer at the North Vernon Railroad Days, and we talked about track cars and NARCOA." "I made an attempt to buy a car from my own railroad, (which is now owned by CSX Corp.), but I didn't have any luck."

"Stan then contacted me about some cars that were available from the P&L Railroad in Paducah." "The P&L is a fairly new regional railroad that took over trackage from the Illinois Central." On 10/28/88, Stan and I drove over to Paducah and I purchased an ex Illinois Central M-19." "I figured that the car must have been a signal maintainers car, since it was in remarkable condition." "Very little effort was required to get her running again." "In memory of my many years with the faithful #1020 on the B&O, I numbered my "new" car #1020, and added a B&O logo to the front panel."

"My first motor car meet with the "new" #1020 was at French Lick, Indiana, on the French Lick, West Baden & Southern Railroad, during their late March track car work meet." My wife, daughter and I also attended the MCCA convention at Paris, Tennessee." "I look forward to many more enjoyable miles with my second #1020, and meeting new NARCOA friends."





---

*Terry Durkin of San Diego, California is the owner of this beautifully restored (with the help of Brett Tallman) ex Conrail Chevy suburban HyRail truck. The photos were taken by Terry and Brett, while on a run in southern California. The licence plate reads: "HyRail-1".*

---



# **THE SETOFF**

**622 Pawnee**

**Jackson, Michigan 49203**

POSTMASTER: IF UNDELIVERABLE, PLEASE RETURN TO SENDER.