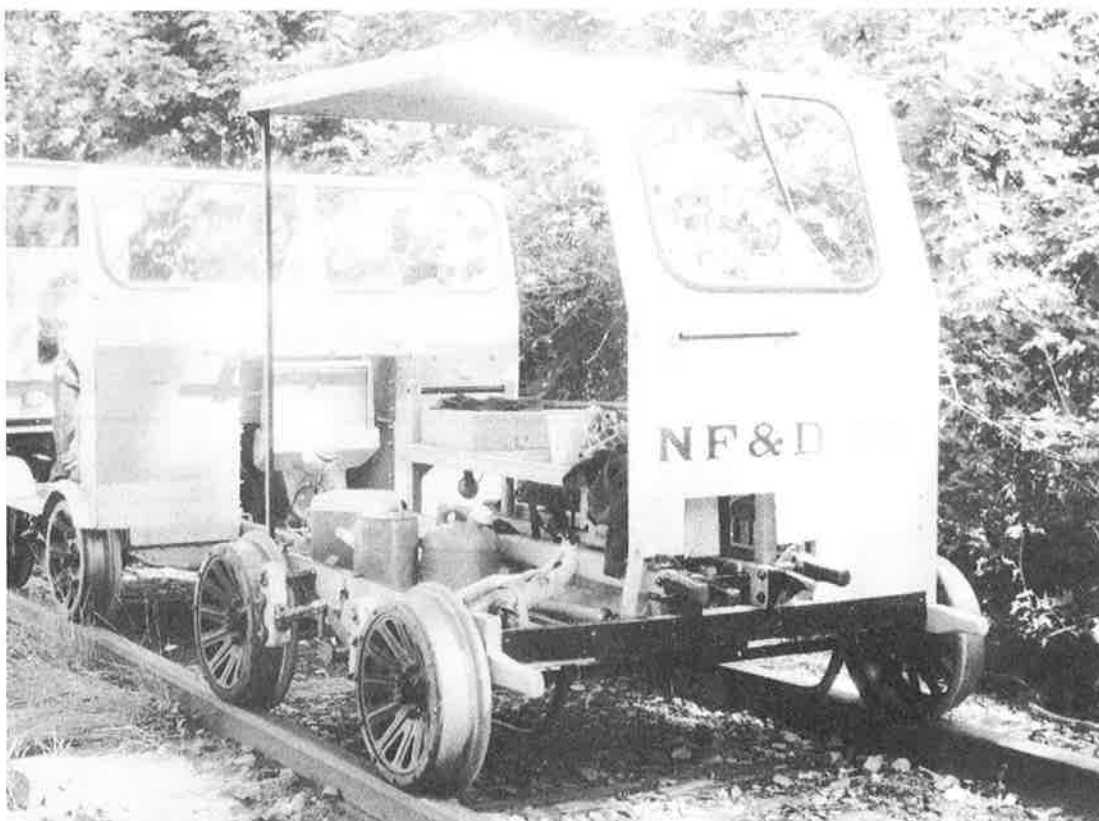
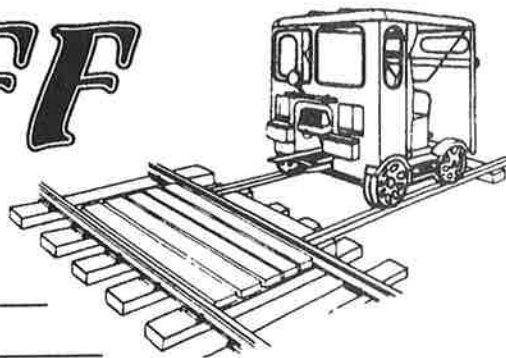


THE SETOFF

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

Fall, 1990



*At left, Sheffield
lineman's car, be-
lieved to be from
1910, at Berwick, PA,
on the North Shore
Railroad September
8, 1990. The car's
owner is Kevin Page
of Chester, VA.*

*Below, NARCOA
members getting
ready to resume
return run to North-
umberland after a
stop east of Blooms-
burg, PA, on the
North Shore Rail-
road. Car 43 is a
Fairmont M19F oper-
ated by Bud and Peg
Barnes of Arkville,
NY.*

Photos taken by
George Legler



EDITORIAL

By Gene Tucker

In late November, Joel Williams and Dick Ray asked me if I would become the editor of *THE SETOFF*. I agreed to do so, and my sister Deanna also said she would be willing to assist me. When we agreed to undertake the editing of *THE SETOFF*, we did so because a need was there to fill the void left by Doug Leffler's decision not to continue with the excellent publication and the high level of editing he'd established over the years.

We felt that the best way Doug's efforts at establishing such a fine record with *THE SETOFF* could be recognized would be to continue his work as best we could.

However, to do that, we need your help.

We have experience in editing the newsletter for the Maryland & Pennsylvania Railroad Preservation Society, but we can't do it without material from that organization's members. Nor can we do *THE SETOFF* without news articles, technical articles, photos, and reports of upcoming events from you.

So, send us anything you can, and we'll print it. NARCOA and *THE SETOFF* will be better off as a result!

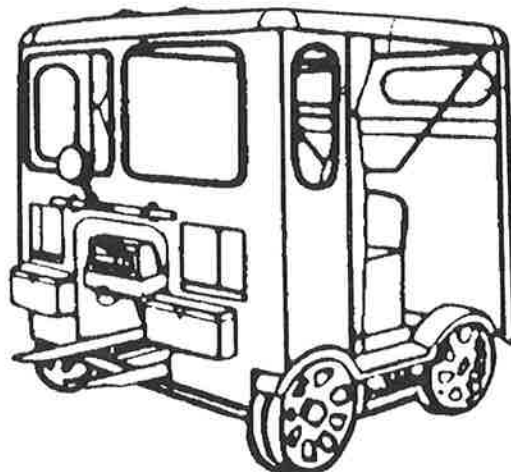
Thanks, and we look forward to hearing from you.

UPCOMING MEETS/EVENTS

(EDITOR'S NOTE: NARCOA encourages its members to organize meets for the membership and to report those events to Dick Ray, 5 Hemlock Place, Randolph, NJ 07869. Dick is the meet coordinator for NARCOA. All events reported will appear here.)

April 19 & 20 - Tioga Central RR, Owego, NY

This is a work/run meet, similar to one held on the Tioga Central RR on November 10 and 11, 1990. The work involved will include brush cutting, etc., on Saturday, and running on Sunday. Contact Dick Ray for details.



THE SETOFF

Volume 4 Number 3

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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. Membership in NARCOA, which includes a subscription to *THE SETOFF*, is \$10.00 per year, and is available from Joel Williams, Box 82, Greendell, NJ 07839.

SECOND ANNUAL HANDCAR MEET ON THE WILMINGTON & WESTERN RAILROAD

By Gene Tucker
Washington & Old Dominion
Handcar No. 3

Complaints were heard from some of the handcar/velocipede owners who attended the second annual handcar only meet on the Wilmington & Western in Delaware. The complaints were about the weather. Why did the meet organizer order such *warm* weather? It was nearly 80 degrees, mind you, and there was hardly a cloud in the sky as a collection of yesterday's track cars gathered at the site of last year's event to run the entire 11-mile length of the railroad on November 3 and 4, 1990.

The line offers plenty of beautiful scenery along the way: ten bridges, numerous rock cuts, and the Red Clay Creek, which carved the valley now occupied by the railroad. The warm and beautiful weather made the journey even more spectacular.

This year's fleet of human powered vehicles included an even split between velocipedes and pumpcars. There was also a railbike, and an A3 was used to carry lunch supplies, extra water, and passengers (if they got tired and needed a rest). Of course, our crews were all quite able bodied and all made the en-

tire trip on their own power as we made our way from the Greenbank station to the end of the line at Hockessin on Saturday. On Sunday, we went only as far as the picnic area at Mt. Cuba, for a total of 29 miles in the two days.

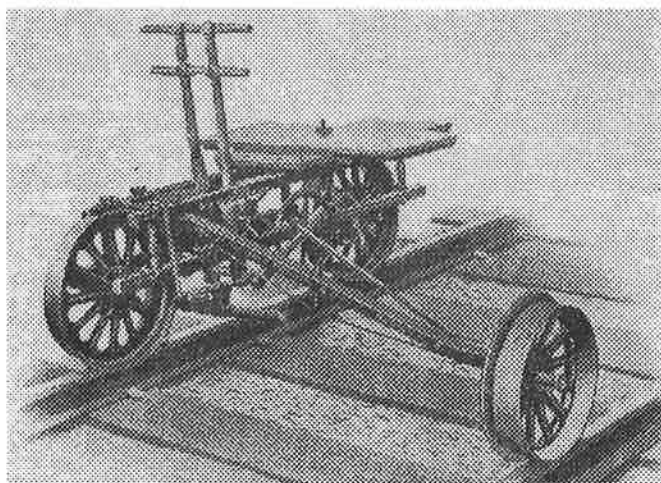
Sunday's run was made a bit more fascinating as we followed a W&W RR work train up the line. This allowed a moderate pace, and plenty of time to stop along the way and chat. When we all arrived at the Mt. Cuba area, the work train crew was fascinated by our vehicles, and some accepted demonstration rides. (Since the railroad and NARCOA have a long standing, close working relationship, there might be the potential for new members.)



In step with both the 1890s and the 1990s, a coed crew heads down the track on a workhouse of the 19th century on the Wilmington & Western Railroad tour November 3-4, 1990.

Photo by Gene Tucker

Three velocipedes made the November trip on the Winchester & Western. The one pictured at left, a Buda No. 4 (circa 1909), manufactured for one or two riders, is nearly identical to the velocipede ridden by Ronnie and Deanna Baird of Woodbridge, VA.



WHY WON'T IT RUN?

PART III

By Dick Ray

Western Maryland M9, No. 67

Your car has stopped running and all of your troubleshooting has failed to find anything wrong with the ignition or the fuel system. Your allotted repair time has run out and you're being towed.

Resist the temptation to beat your car to death with a worn out crank. Maybe it's the coil. Yes, it did make an observed spark when you tested it, but there are no good, quick tests for a coil except substitution of a known good one.

Coils seldom fail suddenly, except for the broken internal connection which happens to the wood-cased Pontiac coil. They usually deteriorate slowly, giving erratic and weak ignition. It is an old axiom that coil problems always seem to be carburetor problems. Hard starting, lots of "plug fouling", and excessive sensitivity to mixture are the most noticeable symptoms.

Testing the coil by watching it fire a plug outside the engine is not a conclusive test. The reason is that the voltage needed for ionizing a 0.030 inch air gap in free air is much less than that needed when the pressure is five or six atmospheres, and a bunch of fuel and oil droplets--all insulators--are present in the air gap.

A good single-cylinder coil should produce a spark across a 1/4- to 3/8-inch gap in free air. This spark length is largely independent of voltage applied. However, the elusive "Fat Blue Spark" containing lots of energy, requires at least five volts at the coil. For convenience, the vibrator point adjustment procedure is repeated below.

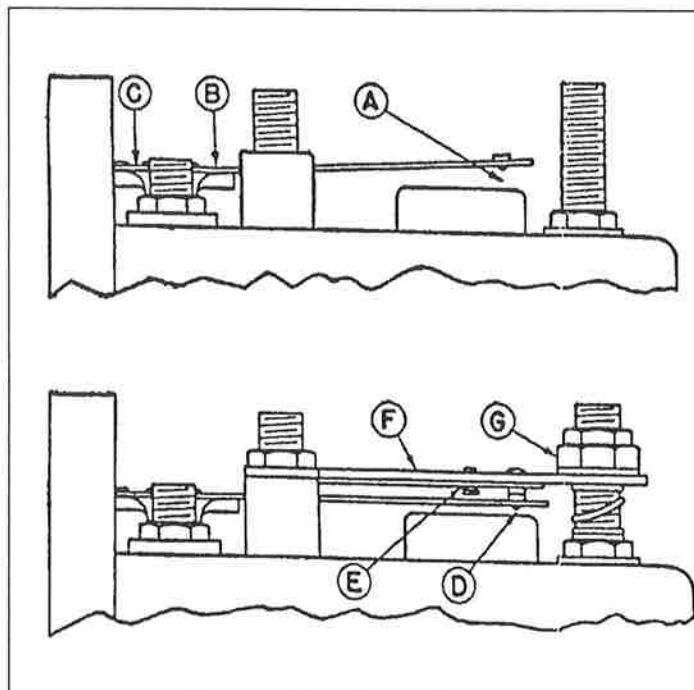
Coils go bad due to broken internal connections or insulation failure. Do not operate a coil without a spark plug in the circuit to absorb the energy. If the points are vibrating, a spark is being generated and will jump somewhere. If it occurs inside the coil, the insulation will be damaged and will eventually leak off energy or arc over, bypassing the plug.

Some coils used to have an intentional air gap inside as a safety measure but the Pontiac coils used on single-cylinder cars do not. They do contain a condenser which helps to increase the spark intensity, just as in automotive ignition systems.

This coil should measure 3,000-4,000 ohms from the PLUG terminal to the COM terminal. If the circuit appears to be open, a spark can still jump across the internal defect, but the wire is being slowly burned up. The coil should be replaced even if it seems to work okay today.

One subtle symptom of weak ignition, possibly due to a bad coil, is that the engine will misfire when the timing is retarded but runs better when the timing is advanced. The reason for this is that the pressure in which the plug must fire is greatest at top dead center. When the timing is advanced, the pressure may be only half as great, allowing the weak coil to fire. Reducing the plug gap to half of the normal setting may help get you home so that you can fix it properly.

The metal-cased, dual-lead coils used on twin-cylinder cars are not made by Pontiac. They also do not have a safety air gap inside. These coils should make a 1/2- to 3/4-inch spark from one plug terminal to the other, and the resistance should be near 10,000 ohms from one plug terminal to the other. These coils don't fire to ground except from one plug to the other through the engine. Arcing to ground inside the case will bypass



Vibrator Point Adjustment Procedure for Fairmont Vibrating Type Spark Cells

Install lower half of vibrator first. Carefully bend mounting bridge by tapping with a hammer and nail set or punch at "B" or "C" to obtain 1/16" gap at "A". Hold punch at "B" to reduce gap, and at "C" to increase it.

Apply upper bridge, and adjust nuts "G" to obtain 1/32" gap at "D". When in this position, there must be some clearance between upper vibrator leaf and rivet head at "E". If there is no clearance at rivet head, tap upper bridge lightly with the punch at "F" until clearance is obtained. Then reset gap at "D" to 1/32". Be sure points match and seat together evenly.

Tighten all electrical connections, then connect Fairmont F7838 low reading ammeter in primary circuit and, if necessary, make further adjustment for .85 to .95 amperes current draw. This should be done by again tapping lower bridge at "B" or "C". Do not change the 1/32" gap on "D". Tighten lock nuts at "G".

Check and clean spark plug regularly, and maintain 1/32" gap at points.

the plug and cannot be determined except by bench testing with two 1/4- to 3/8-inch air gaps, each to the coil case. A weak spark on one side can cause one cylinder of the engine to stop firing or to be erratic. When it is firing sporadically, that plug tends to get all sooty. This in turn causes the owner to install a hotter plug in that cylinder, and to start researching ways to clean the old plugs. By now, you have realized that the coil is at fault, not the spark plugs. An RK engine with a good coil and clean fuel can run all year on one set of D21 or C88 plugs.

Therefore, efforts to clean spark plugs do not solve the fundamental problem. Some of the cleaning procedures can damage the porcelain and cause the plug to fail again. This leads to a new round of plug changing and cleaning. It's lots more fun to fix it properly and then enjoy the scenery.

Don't forget that a good solid-wire plug lead is part of the coil circuit. The high energy in the vibrator spark can quickly open up the resistive wire used on automobiles, and this wire can also be tricky to adapt to our coil connections.

Also, do not use an automotive coil. The Fairmont coil fires when the timer points close, while the auto coil fires when they open. This retards the spark by 36 degrees. If you can get it to run okay forward, it probably won't run at all backward.

ALMOST HEAVEN . . . WEST VIRGINIA MOTORCAR MEET

By Dick Ray

Western Maryland M9, No. 67

August 18, 1990, saw a good turnout of railcars at Moorefield, West Virginia, for the second annual tour of the South Branch Valley Railroad. After unloading at the enginehouse and a short safety talk by John Nolan, we set out north behind the A8 operated by Reggie Clauze, Chief Financial Officer of the SBV.

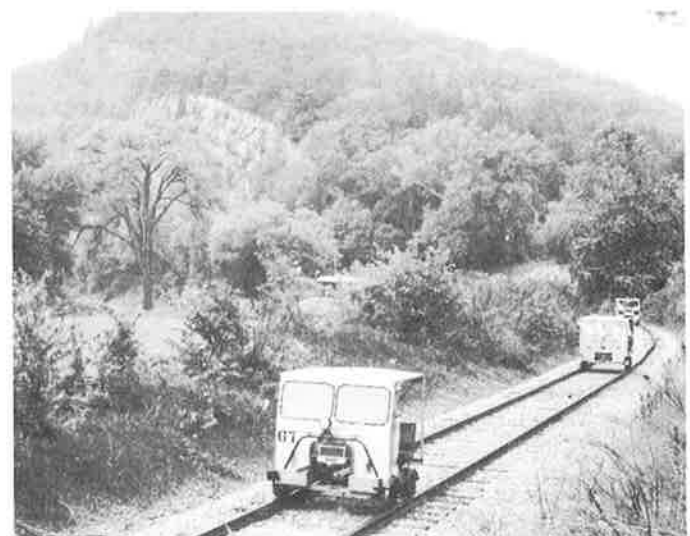
Originally chartered in 1880, the first 16 miles to Rommney from the B&O connection at Green Spring didn't see a train until 1884. It was operated then, as always, by the B&O. The line wasn't finished to Petersburg until 1910. Although an extension was planned, none was ever built and Petersburg remained the southern terminus. With falling revenues the B&O started looking for a way out. In 1978, they donated the entire line to the state of West Virginia, a first in the United States. The railroad is also unique in that it is the only West Virginia line that doesn't carry coal.

In 1985, the entire valley was devastated by the worst flood in its history. All of the water dumped into the valley could escape only through a narrow V-shaped notch in the mountains known as "The Trough". A bridge at the entrance, normally 55 feet above water

level, was completely submerged and swept away. Today, new rail and ballast identify those areas through the canyon where the railroad was destroyed.

The first photo stop on our tour was at Sycamore Bridge, followed by an early lunch at Cathedral Rock. Then on to Green Spring and the CSX connection. At the wye, one leg was getting a new switch following a derailment, so the cars turned at a nearby road crossing. A non-stop run back to Moorefield saw two mechanical casualties, although both arrived under their own power. An MT14 with a loose roof and a Sheffield with a carb flooding problem headed for their trailers while the rest of the group went on south to Petersburg. The return trip after dark was too much for one M9 which fell victim to our most common trouble, dirt and rust in the fuel bowl inlet.

This little-known, extremely scenic railroad is becoming a regular event on our crowded calendar.



Above, two views of Cathedral Rock on the South Branch Valley RR, August 18, 1990.

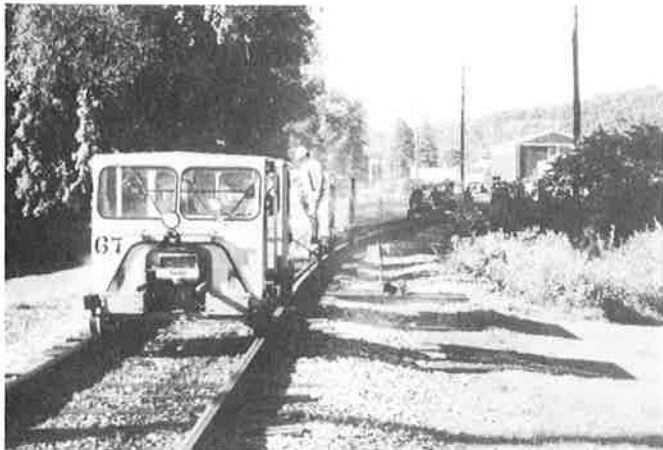
Photos by Dick Ray

NORTH SHORE RAILROAD HOSTS "TOWN" RUN

By Scott W. Cotner
Reading Lines

Fairbanks Morse 40B, No. 244

The North Shore Railroad, a 41-mile short line operating part of the ex-DL&W Bloomsburg branch, based in Northumberland, PA, hosted its first NARCOA track car meet on Saturday, September 8, 1990. Crystal clear blue skies and very comfortable temperatures greeted everyone at the departure site at Orange and Priestley Streets, home of the North Shore Railroad, with offices located in the former Lackawanna Railroad station.



Departing the North Shore Railroad yard at Northumberland, PA, September 8, 1990.

Photo by Dick Ray

After a short orientation meeting, all cars were fired up and running at 9:10 a.m., ten minutes behind schedule. As we came out of the switch to the engine-house tracks, we passed the Joseph Priestley house on the left, where the famous scientist had built his home, and sometime later discovered oxygen. On our right was the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, which we paralleled for the entire trip, being no further than three-quarters of a mile away at any one point. Also, for a portion of the run, the Pennsylvania Canal, North Branch Division, was visible next to the former DL&W right-of-way, with one of the locks still partially intact at Rupert.

We arrived in Danville at ten o'clock, right on schedule! As we once again bunched up to cross numerous crossings through the borough, the lineup passed the Danville Middle School on the right, the former site of the "Big Mill" where the first Iron "T" rails were rolled in 1845.

After getting across Continental Boulevard, a busy four-lane highway, we were met at Mill Street, the main business route, by a very large crowd attending the Danville Revitalization Arts & Crafts Fair. The street

was packed with onlookers as each car passed by the close clearance of the crowd! By the look on their faces, I wondered what was going through their minds! As we paralleled DL&W Avenue, stopping at a later crossing for everyone to catch up, I was asked if this was a parade. Well, I guess it was, in a way, but limited to spectators that were near the tracks!

After clearing the east end of Danville, and passing the ex-Delaware, Lackawanna & Western victorian style station, we were back up to our nice, steady pace where operators could enjoy the scenery and still be able to respond in time to anything happening ahead.

After crossing Route 42, across the river from Catawissa, we made a rest stop just south of Rupert at the point where the ex-Reading Lines' Catawissa Branch crossed overhead. Those tracks were ripped out several years ago. Also in this area is the former canal towpath which was later used as the roadbed for the North Branch Transit Co. trolley operation.

Upon getting underway once more, we climbed the only real grade on the line into Rupert, pausing at the intersection of Reading and Train Streets, for a photo stop over Fishing Creek. The open deck bridge the speeders traveled over allowed excellent photos of the Reading trestle bridge on the left and Rupert covered bridge #56, the longest in the state, on our right!

After videos and many other photos were taken at Rupert, which was the interchange point of the Reading and Lackawanna, the caravan of various Fairmont, Sheffield, Fairbanks-Morse, and Kalamazoo units, to name a few, with the oldest one probably being the Sheffield No. 41 model of 1910 vintage, proceeded east one mile to Bloomsburg.

After crossing Railroad Street, we reached the each end of Bloomsburg, where a one-hour lunch stop was made.

When the socializing with other operators and riders was finished, including a few "locals" who stopped by to ask questions about our operation, we were on our way, eastbound to Berwick, on the second longest tangent of track in Pennsylvania, about 8 3/4 miles.

The cars were then turned at a dirt road crossing on the southeast side of Berwick, six miles short of the end of track, due to track equipment on the line. After a brief rest, everyone headed west. The pack of speeders made their way through Bloomsburg and Rupert, returning to Danville by 5 p.m. After getting through all those street crossings, with a fair share of people still at the craft fair, the group was back to Northumberland by 6 p.m., right on time!

I believe everyone left with a smile, enjoying the 70-mile historical route. There were no major breakdowns, other than a recurring carburetor float level and valve seating problem on my 40B, which caused a couple of short delays. A special thanks to everyone, especially Richard Robey and Wayne Laepple of the North Shore Railroad, for making it all possible!

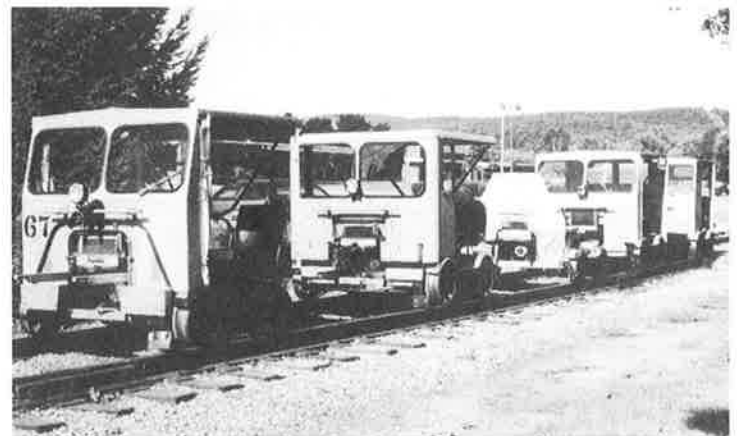
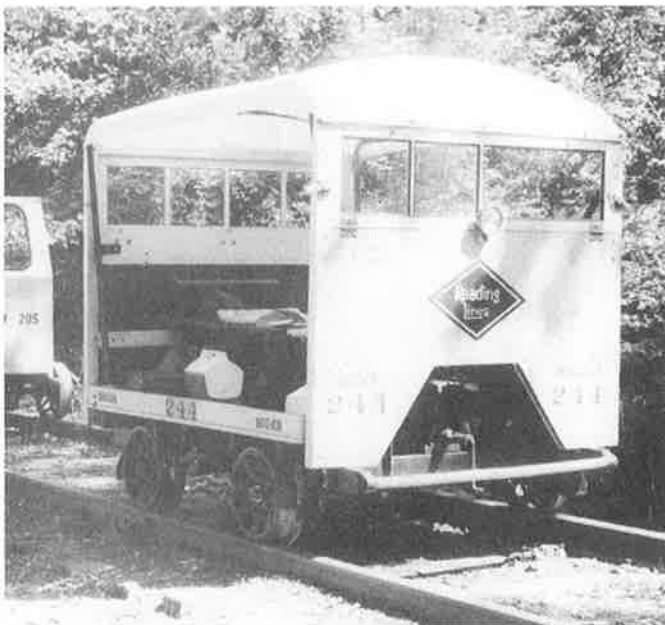


At left, a brief stop east of Bloomsburg, PA, at the North Shore Railroad meet in September.

Photo by George Legler

Below, a fine line-up of cars on the North Shore line.

Photo by Dick Ray



At left, Scott Cotner's ex-Reading No. 244, a Sheffield 40B, on the North Shore RR.

Photo by G. Legler

At right, members await the rest of the cars to arrive at Berwick, PA, for the return trip to Northumberland during the North Shore Railroad's NARCOA meet.

Photo By George Legler



ARKVILLE MEET IS HELD . . . BUT WITHOUT THE HURRICANE

By Gene Tucker

Washington & Old Dominion Fairmont M9G, No. 2

Somebody forgot to order a hurricane and plenty of rain this year, but the memory of that water-soaked weekend of 1989 soon faded in the perfect weather that was on hand as NARCOA hosted its annual Arkville meet on the Delaware & Ulster Railroad in the beautiful Catskill Mountains of New York State.

And, in keeping with tradition, there were plenty of motorcars of all types (including two homebuilts), steamcars, and handcars. There were runs to Roxbury north of town, and to the top of the grade east of town, photos taken of the group at Fleischmann's (on the station platform), and night runs, including one with handcars by lamplight.

There was a Saturday evening banquet offering plenty of first class food to eat. (Many thanks and a tip of the hat to those

who prepared and served such a delightful meal!) Prizes were awarded to Michael Lemech of Gouldsboro, PA, for his restoration of a 1936 Fairmont M19, and to Tom Hauck of Bloomfield, NJ, for his Fairbanks Morse Model 40.

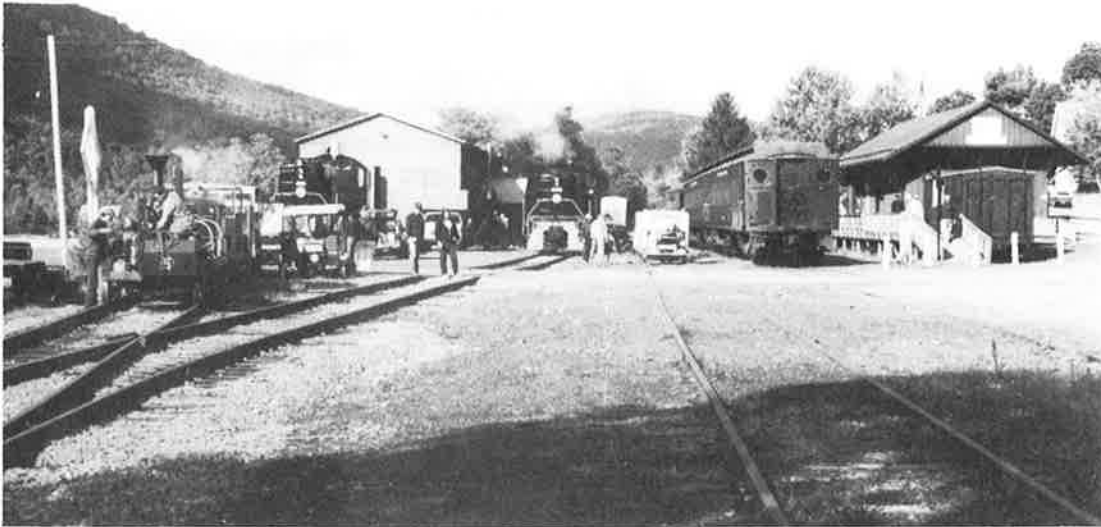
A highlight of the weekend's events (in addition to the great company, food, and riding of the rails) was a trip eastward on the D&U Railroad's 1927 Brill car, the Red Heifer.

Finally, a note of praise should go to the crew of the handcar that went 25 miles on Sunday's run all the way to the north end of the track and back, keeping up with, and arriving with, the motorcars. We'll even throw in a belated bottle of linament!

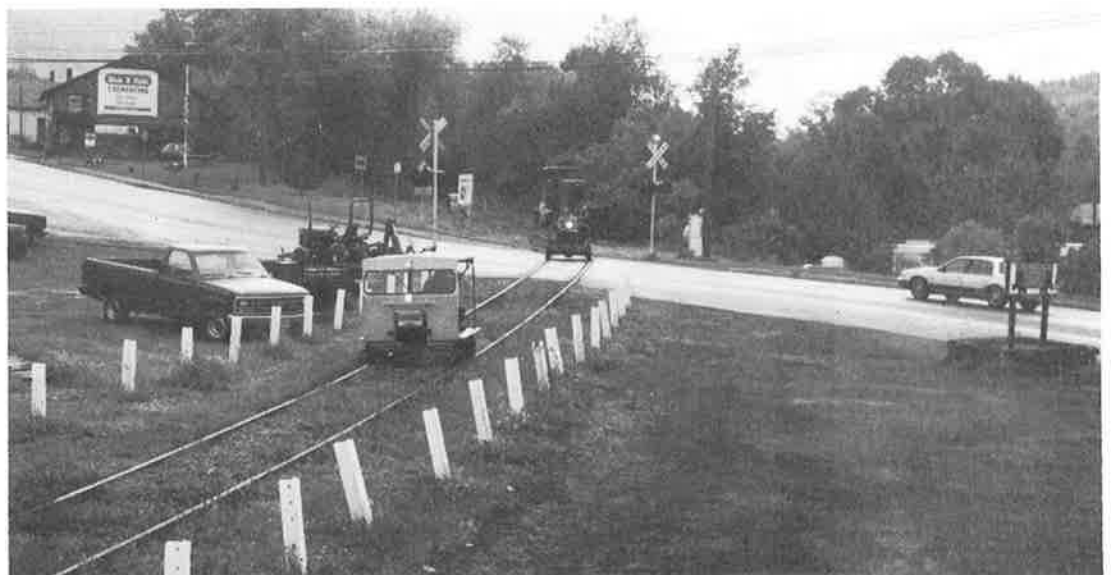
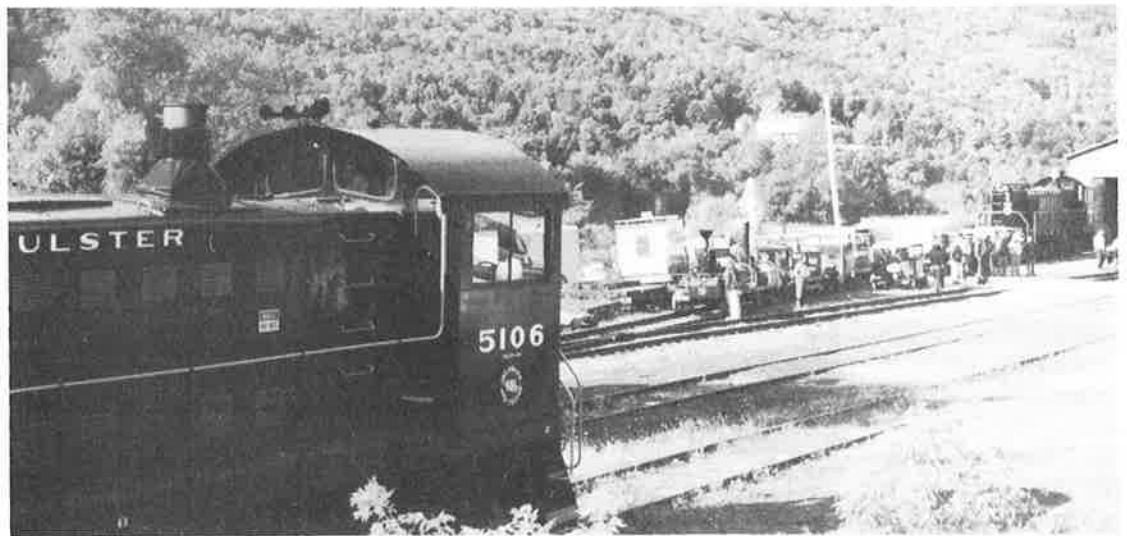


Above, a meet with the 1927 Brill at Hallcottsville, NY, during a September meet at the Delaware & Ulster Railroad.

Below, the group poses for a photo at Fleischmann's train station along the route.



Dick Ray snapped these photos in the yard at Arkville, NY, while motorcars were readied for a beautiful autumn run on the Delaware & Ulster Railroad.



*The group heads east out of Arkville on the Delaware & Ulster line.
Photo by Dick Ray*

NITTANY & BALD EAGLE MEET SEPTEMBER 29, 1990

By Dick Ray

Western Maryland M9, No. 67

The second annual Nittany and Bald Eagle tour brought a good turnout of cars to the Center Oil Co. siding at Bellefonte, PA. Some were unloaded on Friday night and stored inside the secure property. The Bellefonte Historical Society M19 was stored there, ready to go.

At 9:30 a.m., we set off to run two legs of this Y-shaped line, heading first two miles up to Milesburg and then 30 miles southwest to Vail, near Tyrone. The line follows US220 all the way and was once the busiest secondary track in the United States. An ex-Pennsylvania line, its huge 132-pound rail, welded in some spots, was the locale of some K4 Pacific running several years ago.

Our group travelled slower, through Julian and later, with a pause at Port Matilda, to the Conrail connection just outside Tyrone. After lunch and turning, we departed for the other end of the line at Mill Hall, 49 miles northeast.

On the way back, we paused at Glider Port to watch the other weird people watch us. After a rest stop at Milesburg, we were off again for a 20-mile, non-stop

run to Mill Hall. Another turn on a farmer's crossing faced us toward Milesburg again where we eased through the switch leading us the last two miles to Bellefonte in the dark.

We still have not run the branch to State College, but maybe next year!

The photographs below were taken by Dick Ray at the Nittany & Bald Eagle meet. At top, a pause at the Glider Port near Port Matilda. Below, after lunch and turning at Vail, the excursion is ready to proceed to Mill Hall, 49 miles east.



MEET THE OWNER . . .



The car shown above is the Winchester & Western Railroad No. 101. It's a Fairmont S2-E-4 section car owned by Vaughn Rockney of Delray, West Virginia. The "Kalamazoo" cab is typical of the B&O cars in the area where Vaughn lives, and the papers on the car indicate that it was originally delivered to the B&O at Brunswick,

MD, in 1946. Vaughn bought the car from the Winchester & Western in 1989. The setting for the picture is the Winchester & Western main line between Gore, Virginia, and Winchester, Virginia. The photo was taken during the July 1, 1990, Winchester & Western NARCOA meet by Doug Hayes.

**F7614 CRANKSHAFT SEAL
(RO-C, ETC., ENGINES)**

By Doug Heinmuller

(EDITOR'S NOTE: We welcome as a new contributor of technical articles Mr. Doug Heinmuller, who was founder of the Western Maryland Historical Society, and who now lives in Bar Harbor, Maine. He is currently restoring a Fairmont M19, and Contributing Editor Dick Ray feels that his advice would apply to RK and other big single engines, as well.)

F7614 O.E.M. Oil Seal: Currently supplied by National as #450268, although equivalents are also available.

The OEM seal must be 1/2" wide to allow for a heavier and wider (3/16" wide) sealing surface. Most replacement seals interchanging with the above National numbers are narrower--usually 5/

16" wide--and should NOT be used in Fairmont engines because the sealing surface is only 1/8" or 1/16" wide. This will "blow out" under crankcase pressure, especially rapid slow-down of engine speed, or quick engine reversing. The 1/2" wide seal must be used.

THE TRACK INSPECTOR SEZ:



**"YOU KNOW
YOU ARE ON A
BAD RAILROAD
WHEN YOU
HAVE TO MOW
THE GRASS ON
THE BRIDGES!"**

ORGANIZATION NEWS

Future SETOFF Publication Dates

As you may have noticed, this issue of THE SETOFF is labeled Fall, 1990, but it appeared in your mailbox in January, 1991. Due to the change of editors and other factors, the publication date has slipped.

In order to correct this situation, we're going to publish the next couple of issues on a shortened schedule, so send any materials you have for publication to the editor by the following dates:

- Winter issue: February 15, 1991
- Spring issue: April 15, 1991

THE SETOFF will be published shortly afterward.

Track Car Manuals Wanted/Needed

Do you have any old track car manuals or sales materials? Do you need copies of any of these?

If you do, the NARCOA Track Car Manual Coordinator is Francis Saunders, 46 Clark Gates Road, Moodus, CT 06469. Telephone (203) 873-8346.

NARCOA Insurance Plan Available

Many NARCOA members (over 60 last year) participated in the organization's insurance program. This program permits operation of a motor-car (as few as one or as many as several) over a host railroad to be covered by an insurance policy providing as much as \$1,000,000 in coverage. This coverage is available at a cost of \$105.00 per year.

If interested, the enrollment is open now for the program. Contact John Nolan, NARCOA Insurance Coordinator, RD #2, Box 575, Stockton, NJ 08559. Telephone (201) 996-3733.

THE SETOFF

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