

ROCKY MOUNTAIN



RAILROAD CLUB

February 2024

RAIL REPORT

Rocky Mountain Railroad Club

Rocky Mountain Railroad
Historical Foundation

Issue 758

February 13th meeting at Barnes Hall ---



Two photos © by John Crisanti.

February 13th meeting at Barnes Hall ---

We will be presenting Montana Rail Link, the most successful Class II railroad, through the camera lens of John Crisanti in 2022 and 2023. This presentation across Big Sky Country begins in Billings and Laurel, Montana, where first and second-generation diesel locomotives still earn their keep building trains and serving local customers. The railroad heads west along the Yellowstone River to Livingston and over Bozeman Pass, succeeding the footsteps of Lewis and Clark, a daily practice since 1883. The railroad crosses the Rocky Mountains over Mullan Pass and through the breathtaking scenery of Western Montana and Northeast Idaho. The story concludes in Sandpoint, in this colorful presentation of classic, modern mainline railroading across Montana.

We meet in person for a no cost show at 7:30 pm in Barnes Hall, on the south side of the church at 2950 S. University Boulevard Denver, Colorado. Or Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86251105134?pwd=VWRwRUVCbVoyTzhwMWhYbm5scTlqdz09> Meeting ID: 862 5110 5134 Passcode: 496652

Upcoming Events:

March 12, Club program by Bill Jones on NG Consolidations

Amtrak's Winter Park Express started Friday, January 12, 2024. It will run Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays from Denver Union Station to Winter Park Ski Area, Colorado. Last run will be March 31st.

Rocky Mountain Train Show - Spring 2024

National Western Complex 4655 Humboldt St. Denver, CO 80216

April 6th & 7th

Sat 8:00 AM - 9:00 AM - Pre-Registered TCA/NMRA Members

Sat 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM - Public

Sun 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM - Public

May 19, likely date of the annual Club Picnic at the CRRM.

President's Column

I hope everyone enjoyed time with family over the December 2023 break. January has been fairly quiet as we did not have a club meeting due to not having a presenter. I started a new job position and am thankful to still have employment. Retirement is welcome but probably at least 15 years away for me. Please see below for updates on membership, potential picnic and our grant program.

Membership Renewal Update

Our treasurer and I have been working through the monumental task of membership renewal processing. 2023 ended with around 320 members give or take after roughly 7 or 8 members passed away throughout the year. To date there are roughly 65 members who I have not received renewals for. Some may still be waiting to be processed from the P.O. Box by our treasurer but I have recorded all PayPal transactions and checks that have been deposited so far. I would really like to complete resequencing numbers and mail Membership cards in March this year as opposed to April like last year.

If you have not renewed yet, please please renew ASAP to avoid losing your seniority number!!! Either renew via PayPal at: https://www.rockymtnrrclub.org/membersp_24_Renew.htm or send in your form that was mailed out in November along with check payment. If you did not receive a form or misplaced it, you can print a new form at: <https://www.rockymtnrrclub.org/member.htm> Complete it and mail it in with your check, address is on the form.

May Picnic at the CRRM

We are starting to plan some events for 2024. The Colorado Railroad Museum in Golden has set aside the late afternoon of Sunday May 19th for our picnic. We will make every effort to get this date solidified and reserved. I wanted to let you know now so that you can pencil in the date on your calendar. We are thrilled that it is not scheduled on Mother's Day this year as it was in 2023 and hopefully we will get a better turn out this year. As usual we will have a catered lunch and an operating steam locomotive or two for a private club trip around the loop several times! Once we set a time and book a caterer, we will announce more in the Rail Report.

2023 Mini Grant Applications

2024 marks the 10th anniversary of our Mini Grant program. The Rocky Mountain Railroad Historical Foundation sponsored our first Mini Grant program in 2015 and has done so every year since.

Do you know of a railroad history-related project that could use a small grant for this summer? The Rocky Mountain Railroad Historical Foundation is looking for individuals or organizations who have a summer project that could use up to \$1000. Full details and the application form can be found on our website:

www.rockymtnrrclub.org/index.htm

Applications must be received by USPS or email no later than April 30, 2024. The board will review applications at the May board meeting, and the 2024 recipients will be announced in June 2024.

In Memory of

Michael Varney of Torrington, WY passed away May 3rd, 2023. He held seniority number 7 and joined the club in 1960.

Well-known author and photographer Mallory Hope Ferrell passed away on Christmas Day 2023 at the age of 88. He had written more than 20 books, many of them on narrow gauge and short-line railroads. Retired from the Air Force as a Lt. Colonel, he also flew for several airlines.

Often times, we receive emails from family of members who have recently passed away. Other times, the club has mail returned to the P.O. Box saying it is undeliverable. As it is renewal time, I often search the internet for obituaries of members holding a low seniority number that we have not yet received a renewal from. As is the case with Michael Varney, he was the only one in the top 10 that had not renewed by January 1st.

If anyone knows of a member that has recently passed away, please email us at rails@rockymtnrrclub.org and send us any details so that we may recognize them in this column.

Winter Park Express Started Jan 12th



Amtrak 142, P42DC, led the first 2024 season Winter Park Express 5-car train. Amtrak train number 1105 met BNSF 9592 East with the Valmy, Nevada, to Spring Creek, MT, coal empty at Rocky Siding, CO, January 12, 2024. ©2024 Chip

Amtrak's Winter Park Express was off to a smooth start leaving Denver Union Station, Denver, CO, at 7:00 AM sharp Friday, January 12, 2024. Colorado Governor Polis was aboard the train. All Denver TV News channels carried the first day Amtrak Winter Park Express departure. Some reporters were aboard the train interviewing Amtrak personnel and passengers.

Amtrak provided two P42DC units; 142 and 192. Five Superliner passenger cars were coaches and one lounge car placed in the middle of the train.

The first day saw Amtrak charging \$59 one way to Winter Park Ski Resort and \$49 one way to Denver. The first weekend was the Martin Luther King Monday holiday.

BNSF News 2024



Kansas City Southern 4709, ES44AC, led a loaded 99-car BNSF grain train from Sweetwater, Montana, headed to Penny Newman Milling Company at Guernsey, CA. Train was approaching Palmer Lake, CO, on the Joint Line December 30, 2023. The orange BNSF unit at left was the emergency power stationed there in case of BNSF locomotive issues climbing the grade up to Palmer Lake. ©2023 Chip

There's a lot going on at BNSF as we roll into 2024!

Starting January 1, 2024, BNSF officially resumed the operation and maintenance of Montana Rail Link. Those of us at BNSF couldn't be prouder to have the employees of MRL join team BNSF. We have a very bright future and many opportunities ahead of us.

We are also proud of our new Quantum service with J.B. Hunt, which is in full swing. This breakthrough intermodal service accommodates our customers' most service-sensitive highway freight. Our intermodal service is already strong, but Quantum takes it to another level of premium service by providing 24/7 oversight of every Quantum load.

We are ready for the challenges of the new year and look forward to the opportunities 2024 will bring. (Info courtesy of BNSF Railway)



Kansas City Southern 4709 and Canadian Pacific 8732 led BNSF loaded grain train into Sedalia, CO, December 30, 2023. Train originated in Canada and was headed for California (export grain). ©2023 Chip

South Bragdon I-25 Highway Bridge Replaced in mid-December 2023

On the night of December 18th-19th, 2023 BNSF and Colorado Department of Transportation (CDOT) replaced the railroad bridge over the northbound lanes of Interstate 25 at South Bragdon, CO, north of Pueblo. The railroad bridge that was taken out by a southbound BNSF coal load derailment on October 15, 2023. When the bridge collapsed it fell onto a northbound semi-tractor trailer taking the life of the driver.

The new bridge was brought to the site from Texas. It was assembled on a flat site a few hundred yards south of the location. It was lifted by crane onto a Mammoet self- propelled modular transporter equipped with hydraulic jacks. The transport was driven onto Interstate 25 traveling north to the bridge site where the bridge was lifted and turned and lowered into its final location. The bridge was placed in service the next day. Crews are still cleaning up the surrounding location. The bridge placement all took place in the dark. (Larry Green)

Royal Gorge Route Christmas Eve Snow



The milepost 165.9 Intermediate Signal shines a high green for the block directly beneath Colorado's Royal Gorge Bridge. Taken west of Cañon City, CO, on a clear evening in December 2023. ©2023-2024 Nick Valdez photo.



Fresh snow Dec 24, 2023 in the Royal Gorge along the Arkansas River near the Hanging Bridge in the snow. This was our turn around point just beyond the hanging bridge with the Royal Gorge Bridge lit above the train. It was a magical night indeed! Santa gave me my gift this year - being blessed by giving back to some 1300 riders that evening. ©2023-2024 Bruce Barrett (photo on previous page)

I have heard many times that "it is better to give than receive". For the last three Christmas seasons I have been blessed to be one of the engineers on the Royal Gorge Route's Santa Express trains. It is a magical time taking families for rides through the Grand Canyon of the Arkansas and Royal Gorge to find Santa and the elves. It blesses me to be able to be part of this experience and give a bit to the memories of the families that I get to have aboard my trains.

This year, we ran 126 trains with ridership at 40,700 for the season, with just 7 operating employees providing the crew (engineer, conductor and hrrail operator) this season. I have volunteered each of the last 3 years to run the last two Santa Express trains on Christmas Eve, and I have received such a warm blessing doing this. The families, and the kids, all were so appreciative - especially on Christmas Eve. This year we received the gift of snow - wonderful big-flakes of snow on Christmas Eve which added to the

magical aura of the evening. (The drive home, well, that was a different story-! Bruce Barrett)



Snow was falling in the Royal Gorge just south of the Hanging Bridge Christmas Eve, December 24, 2023. ©2023 Bruce Barrett

Canadian Pacific Veterans Unit CP 7020 on BNSF Grain Train January 2024



Rare Canadian Pacific visitor - CP Veterans Unit #7020 in battleship gray paint scheme led BNSF grain train down the Joint Line January 8, 2024. ©2024 Ben Helsel



Canadian Pacific 7020, SD70ACe, on BNSF 100-car loaded export grain train Sweetwater, MT, to Modesto, California, train at the USAF Academy north of Colo Springs, CO, January 8, 2024. Power on the train CP 7020, BNSF 8094, CP 8849, BNSF 5124, and BNSF 6385 100 loads, 14,128 tons 5,725 feet - Thanks to ©2024 Ben Helsel

George Washington Lounge Car Ordeal



Norfolk Southern switching incident resulted in a loaded covered hopper car smashing into unoccupied private varnish (PV) George Washington ex-Pennsylvania RR Budd built square end lounge car at Decatur, Illinois, August 2022. (Unknown photographer)



Private Varnish (PV) George Washington lounge area after loaded covered hopper car collided with stationary car in the Decatur, IL, rail yard August 2022. (No photographer credit - Special to The Rail Report)



Pennsylvania George Washington in the 1950's on the Penn Congressional Train courtesy Keith Kirby.

Historic Budd Parlor/Lounge named George Washington that ran on the Penn Congressional Train starting in 1952 was headed to Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad in January 2024.

The historic Parlor/ Lounge had been lovingly restored by the late William Wherely before his death about 12 years ago (2012). After a lengthy rest in the Southern Arizona Desert, the surviving family sold the car to its new owner, Andy Muller Jr/ Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad. Members of the Arizona Railroad museum helped prepare the car for its move via Union Pacific to Kansas City and then on to NS for the remainder of the trip.

About two years ago (August 2022), while Norfolk Southern was doing a crew change in Decatur, IL, a loose loaded plastics hopper car was kicked into the rear of the George Washington RBMN 563. The car derailed and suffered significant damage to draft gear, coupler pockets and exterior skin and some frame damages. The car was no longer able to move in a regular consist and it's taken a significant amount of time to resolve. Fortunately, The George Washington is going home at last.

Yet another historic railroad car has been purchased by Reading Blue Mountain & Northern Railroad and expectations are high that they will make the repairs and have the car back in service with their popular tourist

trains soon. Details of the settlement are unknown by this writer but, it appears that the George Washington (RBMN 563) will run again. (Shared by the Pirate)

The PV George Washington was delivered to the new owner, Andy Muller, in Reading, Pennsylvania, in mid-January 2024.

According to an article in the December 1959 issue of *Trains* magazine, while on the Pennsylvania, the *George Washington* was the rear car on the special train that Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev rode between Washington DC and New York on September 17, 1959.



Kyle RR used Utah Railway lettered 5006, MK50-3, and Kyle 3319 plowed open the Goodland, Kansas, to Burlington, CO, line January 12, 2024. Train stalled plowing some wind-blown drifts but was freed by the Kyle RR crews. Train was at Peconic, CO, east of Burlington, CO, when photographer found train stuck in the snow. ©2024 Daren Genau

Winter Cancels Amtrak Long Distance Trains

Operating on a Modified Schedule Due to Winter Storm Gerri Impacting Northwest and Central Regions

January 10, 2024 07:30 PM

Long Distance Service

Empire Builder:

- Trains 7/27 January 11,12,13, canceled in its entirety Chicago to Seattle/Portland
- Trains 8/28 January 11,12,13, canceled in its entirety Seattle/Portland to Chicago

Zephyr 5 / 6:

- Train 5 Friday, January 12, canceled between Chicago and Denver
- Train 6 Thursday, January 11, canceled Denver to Chicago

Southwest Chef 3 / 4:

- Train 3 Friday, January 12, canceled in its entirety Chicago to Los Angeles
- Train 4 Thursday, January 11, canceled in its entirety Los Angeles to Chicago

Coast Starlight:

- Train 14 January 10, 11, 12, canceled between Oakland Jack London Square and Seattle
- Train 11 Thursday, January 11, canceled between Seattle and Oakland Jack London Square
- Train 11 January 12 & 13 canceled in its entirety

Rocky Mountain Railroad Club Information

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Membership Information

Membership in the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club may be obtained online at www.rockymtnrrclub.org or by sending the annual dues to the Club address:

Rocky Mountain Railroad Club
Membership
PO Box 2391
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Regular membership dues are \$35.00 with email delivery of the Rail Report or \$50 if a printed, mailed *Rail Report* is desired.

Contributing membership is \$55.00.

Sustaining membership is \$75.00.

Patron membership is \$100.00.

An associate membership for spouses and children is \$20.00 additional.

Members joining after June may send a payment for half of the dues level they wish to join at for the remainder of the year. Members of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Club are also members of the Rocky Mountain Railroad Historical Foundation, a tax exempt 501(c)(3) organization.

Board Meetings

Members are always welcome to attend any board of directors meeting. Please contact any Club officer for the date, time and Zoom meeting information.

Newsletter contributions and items for publication should be sent to:

Chip Sherman, Editor

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Rocky Mountain Railroad Club

Rail Report

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