



THE DISPATCH

Official Publication of the Philadelphia Division
Mid-Eastern Region
National Model Railroad Association



January 2024

PhillyNMRA.org

Volume 31, No. 1

Jersey to Host Joint January Meet in Sicklerville

On Saturday January 13th, 2024 we join our hosts, the New Jersey Division, for a meet at the St. Charles Borromeo Church, 176 Stagecoach Road, Sicklerville, NJ 08081. The time is 9:00am with doors opening at 8:30am. Directions and maps on page 3. Please note that this is a different location from the usual January joint meet.

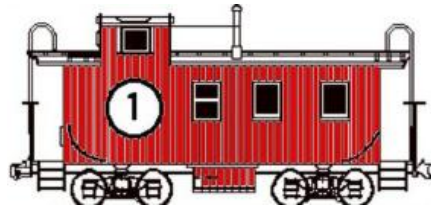
The morning program will begin with New Jersey Division member Gerald Michael who will present a clinic about building a prototype railroad station from photos, specifically the Central of New Jersey station located in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. He is currently building the model for a club layout, so it is a work in progress at this point, however he will describe his approach to the modeling and how he converted the photos to the three-dimensional model. Gerry has been working on it for a number of months. New Jersey member Barry Rosier also presented a clinic on a similar topic a few years ago, so there is a body of knowledge about the process.



Recently renovated Wilkes-Barre Station (nepascene.com)

The second clinic will be presented by Philly Division Superintendent Joe Walters, MMR on scratch building a 55-ton, two-bay hopper.

It's hard to deny that more coal was moved from mines to awaiting customers in the mid-20th century than at any other time in history. For eastern railroads, coal was king, mines were plentiful, and everyone wanted to



make a buck on the black diamond.

In order to move this product to market, carriers needed vast quantities of open-top hoppers. In the late 19th century, they started to manufacture hoppers out of steel, as wood was not suited to carrying large amounts of coal. The two-bay hoppers were rated at 55 tons, using 5-1/2 x 10 friction bearings.

Ultimately, railcar manufacturers started building larger cars, and as a result, the loads became heavier, requiring heavier trucks. Three-bay hoppers were rated at 70 tons requiring 6 x 11 wheels, and finally four-bay cars holding 100 tons were required to have 6 1/2 x 12 wheelsets. Coal has been winding down into the 21st century, but chemical and intermodal traffic have increased car loads for most carriers.



Joe will discuss how he built a two-bay, 55-ton, PRR open-top hopper from styrene and styrene shapes. This is a particularly interesting model to build; he chose the GLD hopper which is different from most hoppers in that the brake piston faces the A end as opposed to the B end.

Our Jersey hosts are always accommodating in supplying plenty of coffee and donuts. In addition, there will be door prizes, a raffle, and swap tables (to reserve contact John Gallagher at njdivsuper@gmail.com). New Jersey always holds a contest at their meets, and the subject matter this time is a model photo (unframed) for anyone wishing to enter.

The afternoon fare consists of several impressive New Jersey layouts to be open to visitation. Hope you all can make it!



From the Editor's Desk

Welcome to an abbreviated edition of *The Dispatcher*. I'd like to wish everyone a happy new year, and hope you all had wonderful holidays. As with last year, I decided to publish a mini-issue to announce the details of the upcoming joint meet with the New Jersey Division, and to provide some more Kevin Feeney reading material for when you're snuggled up in front of the fire (model or prototype). Enjoy, and hope you can make the meet.

Howard

THE DISPATCHER

Submissions: *THE DISPATCHER* welcomes any model railroad- or railroad-related material. Members are encouraged to send in articles, letters to the editor, reviews, etc. The editors reserve the right to, when necessary, paraphrase portions of the text in order to fit the space available.

Next Issue: February 2023. Due out approximately January 25th. Deadline for submissions: January 10th.

Online Subscription: Free. Make sure the clerk has your current email address and that you keep your info updated at nmra.org/members.

Print/Mail Subscription (b&w, 8 pages): \$10.00 per year or \$2.00 per single issue. Send all print subscription applications, renewals, address changes, and payment to the editor. Make checks payable to "Philadelphia Division, NMRA."

EDITORIAL STAFF

Editor

Howard Kaplan
P. O. Box 399
Honey Brook, PA 19344
610-626-4506
howard@phillynmra.org

Contributing Editor

Kevin Feeney

Proofreader

Gail Kaplan



DIVISION OFFICIALS

Superintendent/AP Committee Chair

Joe Walters, MMR
840 N Gwynn Ct.
Bear, DE 19701
302-521-5884
josephfwalters@yahoo.com

Assistant Superintendent/Ops/

Rob Hinkle **Social Media**
1755 Slayton Dr.
Blue Bell, PA 19422
610-279-2394
robhink@gmail.com

Clerk/Membership

Charles Long
227 Locust Rd.
Fort Washington, PA 19034
215-247-1951
prtptc17@navpoint.com

Treasurer/Item Donations

Kevin Feeney
1447 Wheatsheaf Ln.
Abington, PA 19001
203-246-1675
ic4277@yahoo.com

Directors at Large:

Clinics Chair/Door Prizes

Mike Dettinger
972-795-1348
detting@comcast.net

Member Outreach

Steve Wysowski
860-329-2055
swysowski@gmail.com

Venues

Jeff Witt
267-261-3229
jlwitt@yahoo.com

Achievement Program Coordinator

Earl Paine
4325 Wendy Way
Schwenksville, PA 19473
610-831-9466
earlpaine@verizon.net

Layouts/Video - Bill Fagan

215-675-4098
bfagan777@hotmail.com

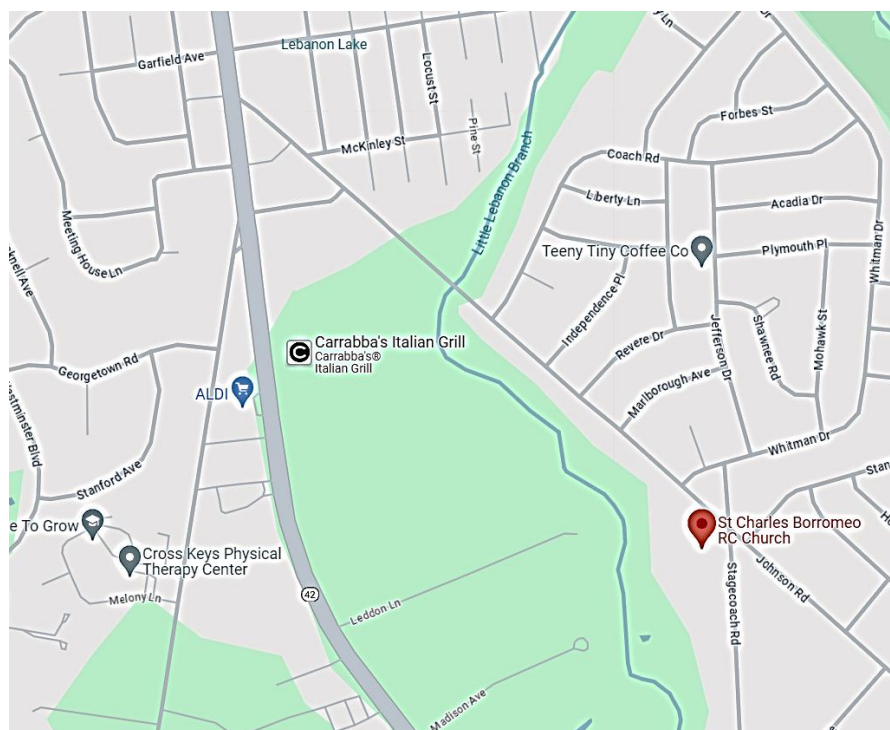
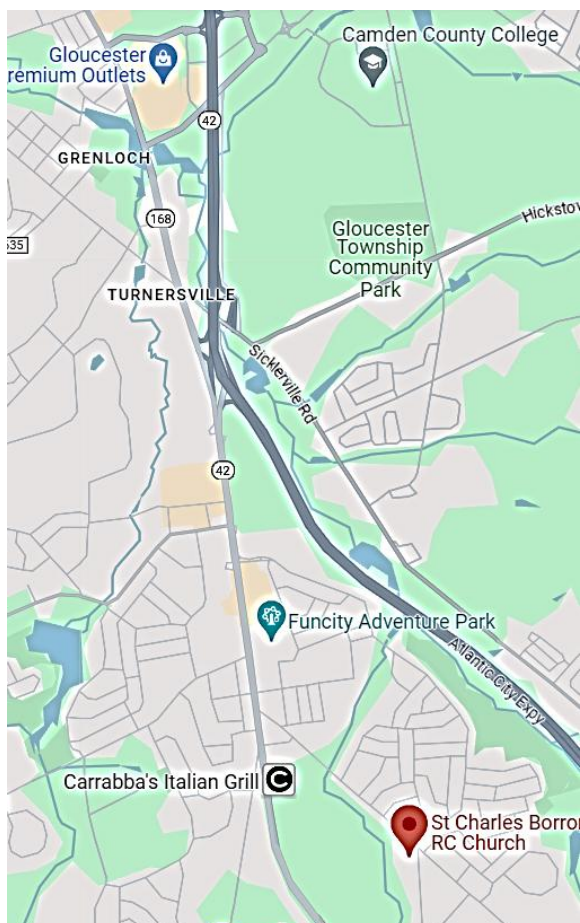
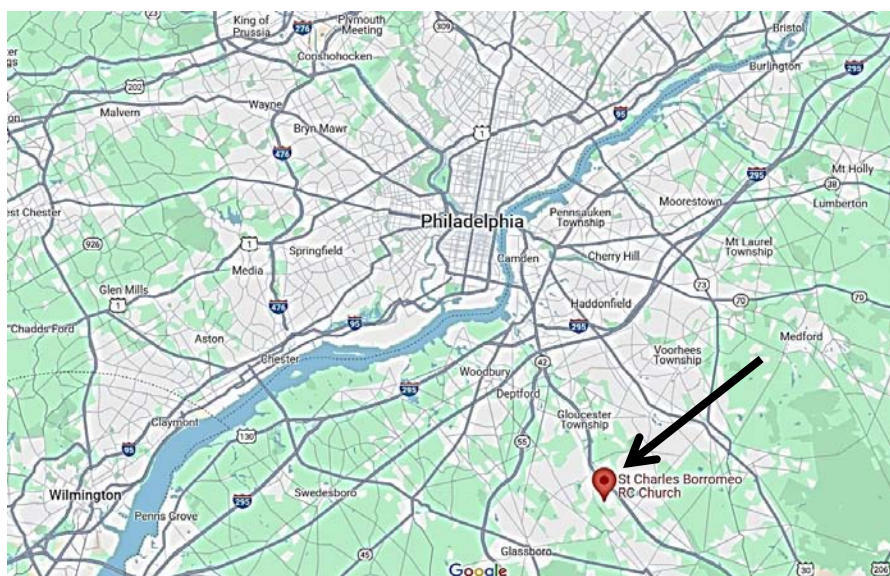
Webmaster - Howard Kaplan

610-626-4506
howard@phillynmra.org

Maps to the January Meet

St. Charles Borromeo Church
176 Stagecoach Road (at Johnson Road)
Sicklerville, NJ 08081

Quick directions: NJ-42 expressway south, becomes Black Horse Pike in Turnersville (at NJ-168 and AC Expressway). Continue south on NJ-42/BH Pike, turn left on Johnson Road to church on right at Stagecoach Road.



Planning Ahead – Division Meets & Other Upcoming Events

January 13, 2024

NJ/Philadelphia Division Joint Meet
 St. Charles Borromeo Church
 176 Stagecoach Road (at Johnson Road)
 Sicklerville, NJ 08081

February 17, 2024

Philadelphia/Susquehanna Division Joint Meet
 Southampton Community Center
 913 Willow Street
 Southampton, PA 18966

March 22–24, 2024

RPM–Valley Forge
 Desmond Hotel Malvern
 1 Liberty Boulevard
 Malvern, PA 19355

April 20, 2024

Philadelphia Division Meet
 Trinity Reformed Church
 532 East Main Street
 Collegeville, PA 19426

June 8, 2024

Philadelphia Division Meet/Picnic
 Alverthorpe Park
 Jenkintown Road & Forrest Ave.
 Jenkintown, PA 19046

August 4–11, 2024

NMRA Convention “Surfliner”
 Westin Long Beach
 333 East Ocean Blvd.
 Long Beach, CA

Check <http://www.phillynmra.org/regional-timetable> for links to these and other upcoming events.

Railroad Prototype Modelers- Valley Forge

March 22-24, 2024

Sponsored by a 100% NMRA Club



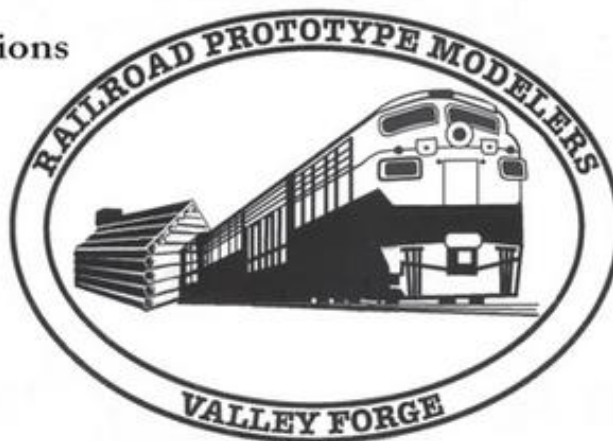
Thursday & Friday Operating Sessions

Many Clinics

Model Displays

Vendor Rooms

Sunday Home Layout Tours



For information and updates
rpmvalleyforge.com

Registrar

Steve Salotti

rpmvfregrar@gmail.com

Clinic Information

Rob Hinkle

robhink@gmail.com

Vendor Information

Drew Marshall

vendorsvfrpm@aol.com

Ops Sessions

Mark Wallace

mwallace665@verizon.net



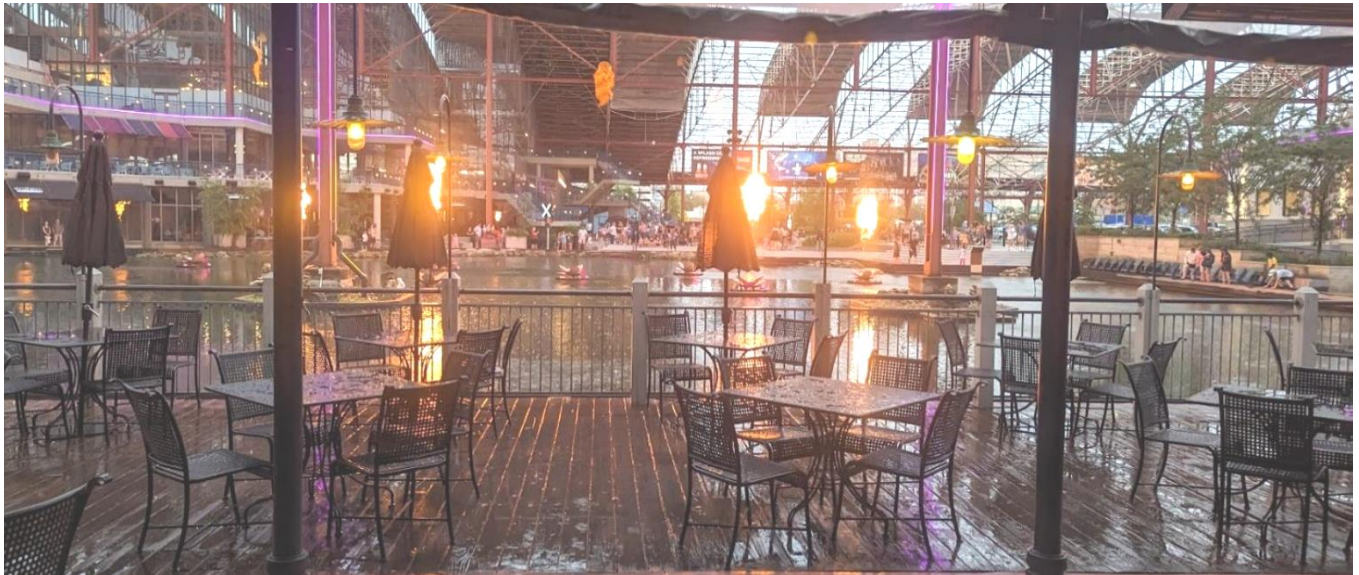
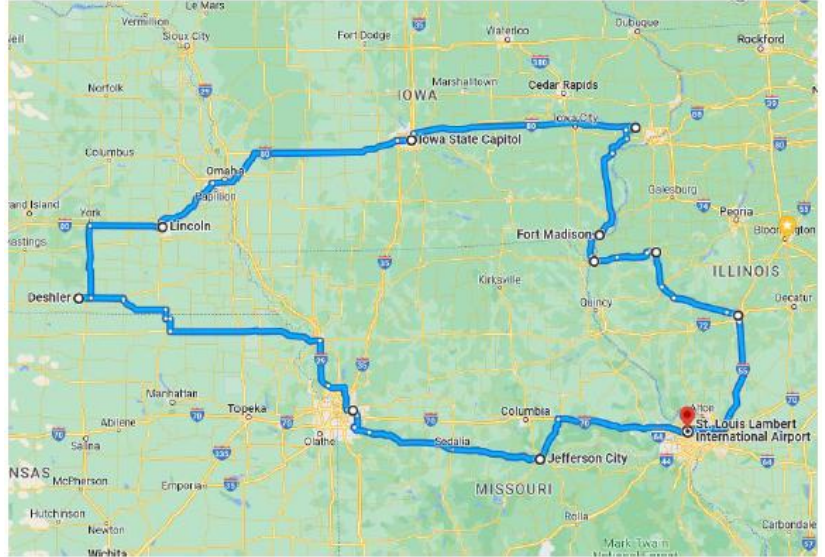
ON THE (RAIL) ROAD WITH KEVIN FEENEY

CONVENTIONS – SHOWS – TRAVEL

MIDWEST CAPITOL TOUR – July 29–August 5, 2023

This was our third “state capitol” road trip this summer. This one included five states (MO, IL, IA, NE, KS), five capitols, three presidential museums (Lincoln, Hoover, Truman), and two large model train stores. We covered 1,473 mostly agricultural miles in middle America.

The tour started and ended in St. Louis. I flew out from PHL on July 27th by myself to attend the RPM meet which was covered in a separate write-up. Carol flew out on Saturday, July 29th and upon arrival took a leisurely ride on Bi-State’s MetroLink Light Rail Line ending at the former Union Station that has been repurposed as an entertainment/dining complex. Meanwhile, I was about 15 miles to the east in Collinsville, IL as the St. Louis RPM meet was wrapping up. As soon as the door prize drawing ended, I rode with my friend Andy Sisk (member of GM&O HS, IT HS, and the NRHS) back to St. Louis. We joined Carol who was waiting for us at the Landry Restaurant in Union Station. As we ate, we were entertained by the fire show in the lagoon outside of the restaurant.



After we ate, Andy drove us to Hertz at STL so we could pick up our rental car. We got a big Mazda CX5 that was certainly a higher class than what I reserved. Strangely its odometer said 50,963 miles!

From Hertz, it was a 110-mile drive, mostly straight up I-55 in Illinois to our Quality Inn Hotel. I did not pay close attention to where it was when I booked it. It was actually a bit southwest of Springfield proper on I-72. We made one stop in Litchfield, IL en route to see the (closed) famous Route 66 Museum located there. I knew of this from prior trips in the area.



Sunday 7/30



We were up early—too early as it turned out. After a quick breakfast, we headed to the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in downtown Springfield. It was a 15-minute drive and we arrived for what I thought was an 8:00am Mass. NOT—the Mass was at 7:00am. Still, it was a chance for Carol to see the Cathedral, which was built in a Greek Revival style and very different looking from most Catholic churches. I had been to Mass there before on other trips to Springfield. A quick look at the Mass times website, found an 8:30am Mass at the Blessed Sacrament Parish just a few minutes away. Turns out I had been there for Mass once before. When traveling, I often go to different churches to see the architecture, art, etc. After Mass, we stopped at a donut store which is part of a local chain. I bought three of their cake donuts, which

were small—a little bigger than bite-size.

We drove to the current Illinois State Capitol, which was completed in 1888. Because they're old, almost all of the capitols (including this one) we visit are being repaired, remodeled, renovated, etc. We parked in front on what was once Route 66 and then





had to walk around to the other side to enter. The building is actually open to the public on Sunday. Once through security, we had the run of just the first floor but could see up into the dome. There were no tours, and no information was available about the building. FYI this is the tallest, non-skyscraper capitol (Nebraska is the tallest—more on this later) even exceeding the height of the U.S. Capitol. The Illinois and Iowa capitol had the same initial architect and share some design features.



We weren't there for long and then went to see not one, but three train stations in Springfield. Our first stop was the Lincoln Depot, the site of Abe's bittersweet farewell address to the people of Springfield as he left for Washington, DC in 1861 to become president. At that time, the depot was used by the Great Western Railway which later became part of the Wabash. The restored building is now used by a law firm and the tracks behind it are Norfolk Southern.

Our second stop was at the current Amtrak station. This was originally on the Chicago & Alton, later GM&O, ICG, and



now UP tracks. In two years, this line, which is at grade and runs across all of the streets in downtown Springfield, will be abandoned and the station will be replaced by a new transit center a few blocks to the east on what will be joint NS/UP trackage.



The third stop was at the Union Station which was built in 1896, primarily for the former Illinois Central Railroad. It was also used by B&O and two other later defunct Illinois railroads. The station closed on May 1, 1971 when the Governor's Special, the last ICRR passenger train between Springfield and Chicago, was discontinued with the creation of Amtrak. This station is in a complex of buildings that now house the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library & Museum.



We headed to the Lincoln complex, but with a maze of one-way streets first stopped to see Illinois's Old State Capitol which was built in 1837. It served as the capitol until the current one opened in 1888. The old capitol was sold to the local county and served as a courthouse until 1961 when it became an Illinois state historic site. The site includes a block of historic stores that have been restored to look like the mid-1800s. Unfortunately, the capitol was closed earlier this year until further notice for restoration and site improvement projects.



It was time for lunch so we drove to a Steak 'n' Shake. This used to be my favorite hamburger chain but the current CEO of the company is a nut job and has ruined the business. However, the locations in Springfield are run by the company's original franchisee and are still decent. They also serve a unique item that is a local dish.



After lunch, we headed to the Lincoln Library & Museum not knowing anything about it. It seemed an obligatory stop given we were in Abe's adopted hometown. It is not part of the system of more recent presidential museums administered by the National Archives, and so not on any of Carol's bucket lists. It was nicely done. There was an introductory video and then the museum was divided into two parts: his early life, and the years as president which included a lot about the Civil War.

There was a display on his funeral trip that was sponsored by Union Pacific. The special



train left Washington, DC on April 21, 1865 and finally arrived in Springfield on May 3, 1865. The trip covered 1,645 miles and ironically much of it was over the same route that Lincoln took in 1861 to get to Washington, DC. The funeral train passed through over 400 towns and cities so it was viewed by thousands. At the major cities, Lincoln's coffin was removed from the train and taken in a procession to a place where the public could view it.

Finally, it was time to leave Springfield and head to Fort Madison, IA where I booked a hotel for the night. We drove on smaller state highways and local roads for the 144-mile trip, however, we did not end up going the way I originally planned. I expected to cross the Mississippi River at Fort Madison, but the GPS would not let us cross there. It showed two other crossings, Keokuk, or Burlington, IA. I googled the bridge I expected to cross to see if it was closed, and it wasn't. I called the bridge, which also handles trains, too, and opens for barge traffic and got no answer. I even joined a Facebook group about the bridge, but it did not say it was closed. I decided not to risk getting to the bridge and finding it was closed as that would have meant a 60-mile detour. Later that week, I finally figured out what had happened. I am toll averse and Google maps in my phone is set to avoid tolls. There is a toll on the bridge, but it is only collected eastbound, apparently not known by Google.



This (above) was the view for most of that day and for most of the rest of the trip. There were acres after acres of corn and about equal plantings of soybeans. FYI, in 2022, Illinois planted 10.8 million acres of corn yielding almost 2.3 billion bushels. Illinois is the second largest corn-producing state, just behind Iowa.

We passed through Philadelphia, IL—no Wawa there, but as my friend Eric said, probably no crime or filth either.

We crossed the Illinois River in Beardstown where I did an audit in 1977 when I was an internal auditor with Gulf + Western Industries.



I decided to cross the Mississippi River at Keokuk, which is below Fort Madison. The original bridge there (pictured below) once handled both highway and rail traffic. Just north of that bridge is Lock & Dam #19, a massive lock, dam, and hydroelectric power plant. At the time of its construction in 1913, it was the longest dam in the world, with the longest transmission line (175 miles) and the highest voltage in the world. The dam actually sent 25 cycle electric power to St. Louis to power the street cars there.



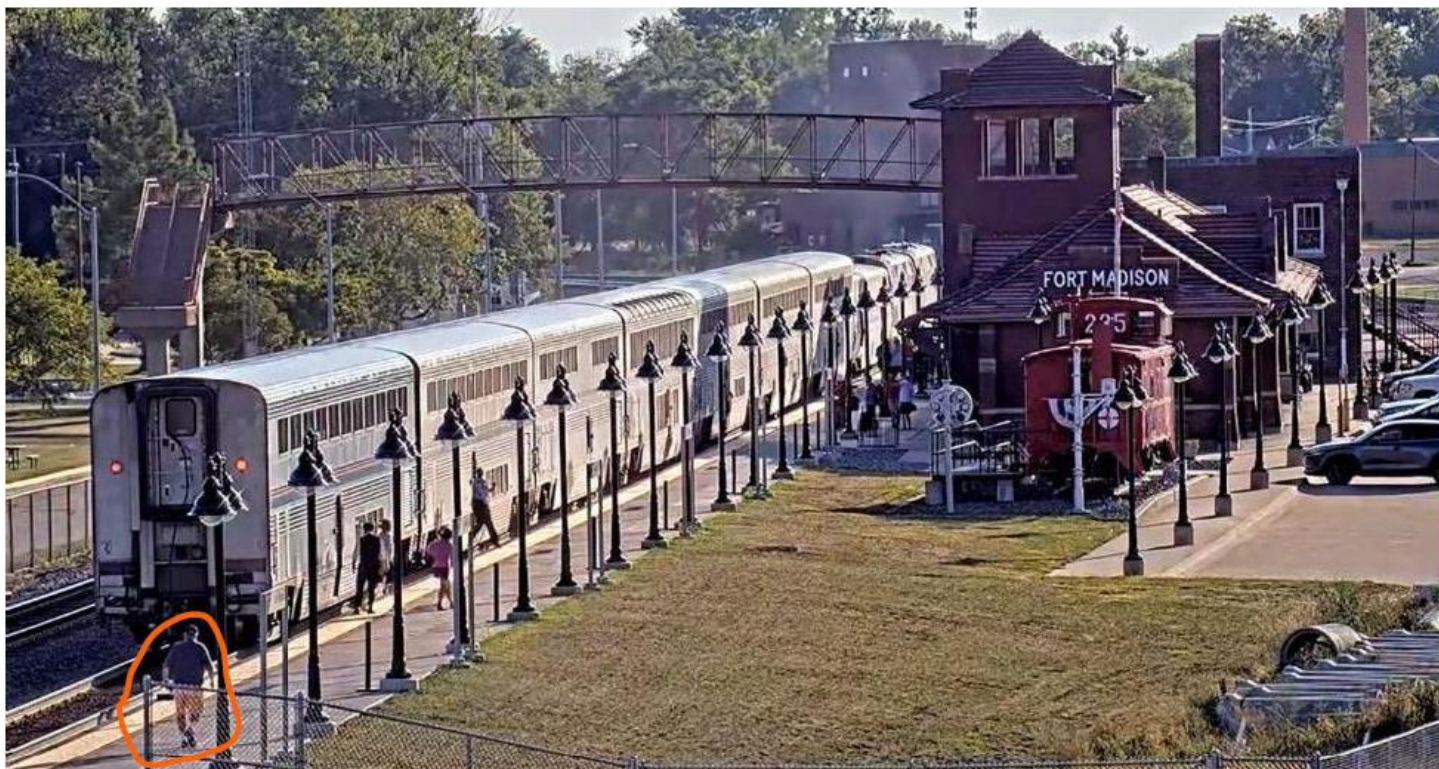
This was my fourth visit to Keokuk. The first two were trips in the early 1970s when I traveled there to visit my cousin Ellen Christian and her family during college. I drove through the area with my family in 1991 en route to the annual NMRA convention in Denver. I called Cousin Ellen that day and she gave me her address, so we drove by the house and took this picture. It certainly looked much better than what I remembered. The other houses in the neighborhood did not look so good with some boarded up and seemingly abandoned. There were also more than a few vacant lots as well.

After a gas and potty stop, we headed north on US Routes 218 and 61 which are part of the Great River Road. This is a collection of state and local roads that follow the course of the Mississippi River from Louisiana to Minneapolis through ten states. Fort Madison was just about 22 miles



away. I was there once in January 1973 during my second visit to see Cousin Ellen in Keokuk. After my visit, she drove me to Fort Madison to catch an early Amtrak (ex-ATSF) train to Chicago so I could participate in a debate tournament at the University of Chicago. This is a picture I took then of the train with my Kodak Instamatic camera. Back then, the Amtrak station was at the end of the freight yard there.

The March 2023 issue of Trains Magazine had an interesting article about railfanning in Fort Madison. It suggested staying at the Kingsley Inn there that faced both the BNSF (ex-ATSF) tracks and the Mississippi River. Mounted on the hotel is a video camera of the Virtual Rail Fan which broadcasts live video on YouTube. This company has similar cameras at key train watching sites across the country. While Carol was settling into our hotel room, I drove to the nearby Amtrak station and told friends Eric and Drew where I was going. They were actually able to see me on VRF and Eric captured this image of me walking down the platform from the VRF website (next page). The train was #3, the Southwest Chief from Chicago to Los Angeles, and it was close to being on time that day. By the way, the Santa Fe Railway built an elaborate three- building complex (mission-style station/REA building/freight house) there in 1910. It has been said that Santa Fe did this because this was its only station in Iowa. The station closed in 1968 and was replaced by a small shed that was built next to the freight yard located a short distance to the west. ATSF later sold the station to the city for \$1. For several years, a local group has operated a railroad museum there. On December 15, 2021 Amtrak resumed stopping at this station after a minor renovation using COVID relief funds.



By 7:30pm on a Sunday evening in a small town in Iowa, there are not a lot of restaurants open. So we ended up eating at Kevin Feeney's Chicken. Back in the hotel, we called it an early night. However, I could hear train after train pass by. Apparently eighty trains a day pass by the hotel, hence the reason the VRF camera is located there, right at the end of the building. Oh, I should mention that the hotel supplied ear-plugs in the room.



Monday 7/31

The hotel had a grab 'n' go breakfast in what used to be a restaurant on the first floor. I took some food and headed across the street to the Virtual Rail Fan. Three long freight trains came by in a very short time. There is very little freight service near Philly, so this was a real treat for me.



We checked out and drove to see the Fort Madison Bridge that I had expected to drive across. When built in 1927 by the ATSF, the it was the longest and largest double-deck, swing-span bridge in the world. Today it is owned by BNSF and the swing part opens about 2000 times a year for marine traffic. Oddly, we saw no barges or any commercial traffic there or by Keokuk. I could not get a good picture of the bridge, just this sign.

Leaving Fort Madison, we headed to Walcott, IA about 90 miles to the north. Part of the ride was on more of the Great River Road. Located in Walcott at Exit 284 on I-80 is the world's biggest truck stop. We read about it in a recent issue of the AAA's World Magazine. The place opened in 1964 and expanded over the years such that it now occupies some 220

BNSF RAILWAY TOLL BRIDGE®	
CLASS OF VEHICLE	TOLL RATES
• Cars & Pickups	\$2.00
• Cars & Pickups w/Trailer	\$3.00
• Buses	\$5.00
• Recreational Vehicle or Pull Campers	\$3.00
• Trucks / Utility Other than tractor trailer combinations	\$3.00 per axle Excludes front axle
• Motorcycles	\$1.00
NO TRACTOR TRAILERS OR SEMIS \$250 FINE	

acres. Though designed for professional drivers of tractor trailer rigs, it is now a major tourist attraction for regular folks like us.

It has gas and diesel pumps, a yuge food court, a sit-down restaurant, a store selling souvenirs, tacky items, and snack food, plus a supermarket-sized store full of truck parts. For truck drivers, it offers a lounge, showers, a dentist, and a chiropractor. We had lunch in the food court.



We started to drive off but saw signs for a truck museum, so we stopped to look at the historic trucks.



We were there for about an hour and certainly could have stayed longer. We needed to get to our next stop in West Branch, Iowa about 30 miles to the west.

Located there is the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library & Museum.



Seeing these is Carol's other bucket list. This would be the seventh (both Bushes, LBJ, Ike, Carter, and JFK) one of these we have visited this year. I would have to admit that I did not know much about President Hoover.

He was a Quaker and everyone called him Bert. He was NOT related to J. Edgar Hoover, at least closely. As a youngster, he dreamed of being a railroad engineer. He became a mining engineer and a self-made millionaire from working all over the world. Though he had been in the Harding/Coolidge cabinets as Secretary of Commerce, and had headed a relief agency for Belgium at the start of WWI, as well as the US Food Administration once the US was in WWI, the presidential race in 1928 was his first political campaign. He had called for the Fed to take action to reduce stock speculation (you could buy stock on 90% margin) prior to the October 1929 crash. In November, 1932 after he was defeated by FDR, he wanted to take more drastic measures and ran them by FDR, who discouraged him from taking those actions. Well, as soon as FDR was elected, he implemented those same actions. From January 1933 to January 1953, Hoover was the only living ex-president. He was opposed to the New Deal and other programs calling it a move to gigantic socialism and became a staunch critic of FDR. Nevertheless, once WWII started, he resisted FDR's call to head European relief efforts. However, Hoover did get involved with individual relief programs intended to help the Finns and Poles.

After WWII, Hoover befriended President Truman with whom he differed politically, but shared common sense Midwest values. Because of Hoover's prior experience in relief efforts, Truman picked him to work on solving the food needs of occupied Germany and Italy. In 1947, Truman appointed him to head a commission that worked to eliminate waste, fraud, and inefficiency in the federal government, consolidating agencies, and strengthening the White House's control of public policy. Though he had opposed FDR's new policies, Hoover saw the need for a strong presidency then given the rising threat of communism in Europe and Asia. He was appointed to a similar commission by President Eisenhower and even worked with President Kennedy. He died in New York City in 1964 at age 90. At that time, he was the longest living ex-president, a record that was subsequently exceeded by President Carter in 2012. He was buried in West Branch near the museum and the adjacent Herbert Hoover National Historic Site which contains his family home.

We continued our drive about 125 miles west to Des Moines. We ate at Bravo! Italian Kitchen in Jordan Creek on the west side of the city. It is owned by the same company that owns Bertucci, Buca di Peppo, and other Italian restaurants. The entrees were fine but the bread was less than mediocre. For our hotel, I had screwed up and booked two non-refundable reservations at Choice Properties near Des Moines for that night. We stayed at the Econo Lodge in Ankeny, a bit north of Des Moines, which was actually quite nice. We went for a brief swim and then called it an early night.

Tuesday 8/1

We drove to Des Moines to see Iowa's capitol. I don't know why it is located where it is, east of the downtown. Downtown is where the railroads were. The Iowa Capitol was started in 1871 and was not completed until 1886. It was originally designed by John Crombie Cochrane, a prominent Chicago architect who designed the Illinois Capitol about the same time. Cochrane resigned in 1872 when it was found that the building could



not be completed for the allocated \$1.5 million. He was replaced by his assistants, one of whom changed the dimensions of the dome to make it fit better with the rest of the building. We saw this strange sign when entering the building.

We were able to join a tour. The inside of the building was really something. We were told that some of the artwork was originally ordered for the Illinois Capitol, but later deemed unacceptable.



This is a view looking up into the dome. The tour included a law library and a brass model of USS Iowa (BB-61). Downstairs was a nice gift shop and displays about the state. We bought some Iowa gifts for a relative born in Iowa. I did not know that Iowa is the only state bordered by two rivers, the Mississippi and the Missouri.

We left the capitol and drove a few blocks to the downtown area. We passed the corporate headquarters of Athene, an insurance company that issued one of my annuities. I looked for the historic train stations. We found the former Rock



Island tracks, but they ended at the Des Moines River. On the side, we found the ex- RI station that has been repurposed into offices and restaurants. Passenger service there ended in 1970; the adjacent tracks now belong to Iowa Interstate.

We left Des Moines and headed west on I-80. Driving on the highway we kept seeing many of these trucks. It is



a Schnabel-type device that is used to carry heavy or long loads. Later, we saw one going in the other direction loaded with the long metal cylinder which is the tower for a wind turbine. We made a gas pit stop at this convenience store for a snack lunch. To some the name might have other meanings.



We continued driving to Council Bluffs. This city is on the western border of Iowa and has a long history with railroads. We stopped at the home of General Grenville Mellen Dodge who in 1859 met Abraham Lincoln. Their meeting was supposedly the inspiration for the Transcontinental Railroad, which was approved by Congress in 1862. Dodge served in the Union Army and after the Civil War, led the western construction on the UP. His former house is now a nice museum on a bluff in the eastern part of the city with some of its original furnishings.



I didn't have much luck finding any major yards there so we kept driving to Omaha, NE. We had a nice, cheap dinner (Tuesday special) at a Dickey's BBQ there. We continued driving 50 miles to Lincoln, NE, both the state capital and the home of the University of Nebraska.

We stayed at a Comfort Suites, but were concerned upon arrival seeing part of the building had burnt. The guy at the desk told me a compressor caught fire. Otherwise, it was okay for the night.



The Nebraska Capitol is unique. It is a 400-foot-tall prairie skyscraper and can be seen for miles. Building code restrictions in Lincoln ensure that it will always be the tallest building in the city. It was actually the third capitol built on the site. The first two literally fell apart due to faulty construction techniques and the use of poor quality, local limestone. The third capitol was started in 1922 and wasn't finished until 1932. That seems like a long time but it was actually a well-developed, four-phase plan as shown by this graphic. The first phase was to construct the two



red buildings on the edge of the property. Then the governmental functions of the capitol were moved to those buildings, which allowed the second capitol to be torn down so that the high-rise, new capitol and other buildings could be added in its place.

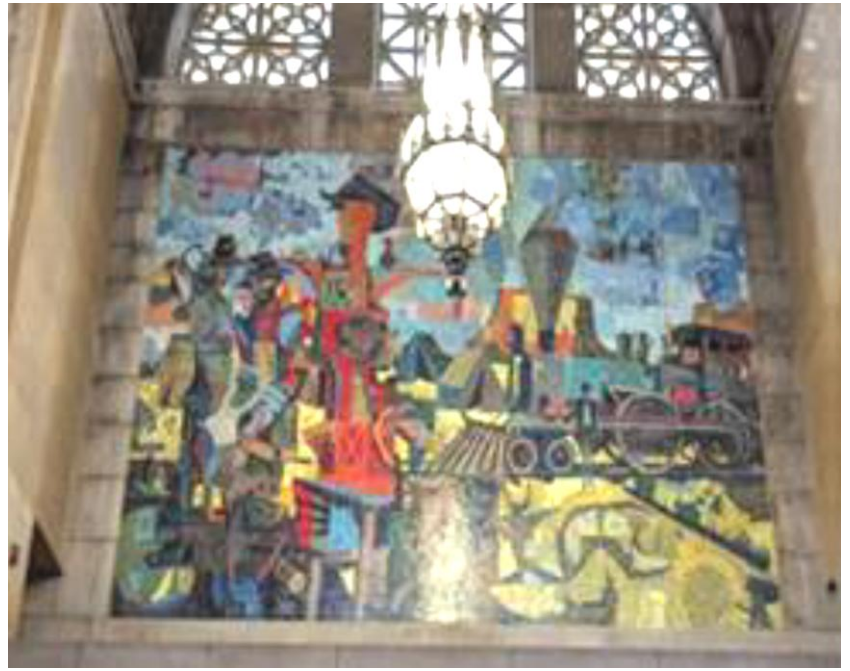


We started in the basement which looked like a church's vault (below). Upstairs was quite something else. There were massive halls lined with mosaic panels on the walls and elaborate tile work on the floor that were best viewed from an upper level (left and next page).





This is one of the side panels about the railroads in the state. I can see why one list has this as the most beautiful state capitol in the country (with Iowa second).



There was a statue of Father Flanagan, the founder of Boys Town in Omaha. Under the center of the tower is a massive dome.

Our tour took us up fifteen floors to the observation deck at the top of the tower. From there we could look in all four directions, but inside there was this massive artwork, like another dome.



Here is the view to the west.



We left the capitol and headed to the Amtrak station which I expected to be closed, since the only trains--the westbound (#5) and the eastbound (#6) California Zephyrs were scheduled to be there in the early morning. It turned out that the building was open. The agent told me the eastbound Zephyr was running over seven hours late that day.



The Lincoln station is quite new, and the artwork inside the station really surprised me (next page). The adjacent tracks are ex-CB&Q.



We left Lincoln and headed west and southwest to Deshler, Nebraska, once the site of the largest corn broom factory in the country. With Carol driving, I studied the highway and railroad maps and realized I could catch #6 in Fairmont, and did.



This is the view we had most of the time while driving through eastern Nebraska.



When it was time for lunch, we headed to a local chain that has a cult-like following. It serves a unique, hot-pocket sandwich filled with cabbage, meat, and cheese. I passed on its version of a Philly cheese steak. I had it once before; Carol really did not like it.



Near the Runza was this dead locomotive and several cars, but there were no tracks nearby. We continued towards Deshler, about 107 miles from Lincoln, but saw a sign for a train museum so we drove there. The town was a stop on both the Oregon Trail and the Pony Express. A UP freight train went by while there.



We finally arrived in Deshler, which is the home of this business (next page). The owner is a Rock Island fan (note the "R" in "CREEK"). Believe it or not, this is one of the largest dealers of model trains in the country. It does extensive mail order/online business, but also travels the country to attend major shows. In the past year, I have seen them in TX, CO, and MA. It also has its own local show once a year. The store's shelves were packed with model trains, buildings, vehicles, etc. I bought two trucks for Eric. I also ordered the Squealer device that I couldn't purchase at the St. Louis RPM meet and actually picked it up at the National Train Show at the end of the recent NMRA convention in DFW.



We saw this closed-up coffee shop in Deshler. Our next stop would be the Ameristar Casino in Kansas City, MO. Had we driven there directly from Lincoln, it would have been about 195 miles and we could have crossed the Missouri River from Nebraska to Missouri and drove south on I-29. From Deshler, we were 235 miles away and the best way to drive was to head south to Kansas and drive east across it. I had not expected to be in KS and believe it or not, the stop at Spring Creek was not planned at all.

Eastern Kansas, with small hills, was not as flat as Nebraska, but it was still largely agriculture with acres of corn, soybeans, and hay. At one place, we came to



where a yuge wind farm was being built and we could see a tower cylinder that I mentioned previously. Kansas's highway signs reflect its state flower, the sunflower.



We drove through St. Joseph, MO, once was a major center for meat packing. We continued towards Kansas City and had dinner at a Culver near its airport. FYI, the Kansas City Airport (MCI) is located 15 miles northwest of downtown. It was built in 1972 and was once a major base for TWA. Currently it is being totally rebuilt and a new terminal should open later this year. It is one of three airports in the country that use private security in place of TSA. The other two are San Francisco and Rochester, NY.



Our hotel was the Ameristar Casino, owned by Boyd Gambling, which owns second-tier casinos in the midwest, gulf states, and Nevada. I booked it through AA Hotels. We had a very large room. The \$99 rate was below market to get us in to gamble. No thanks.

Thursday 8/3

These are pictures I took of the hotel as we were leaving the area for Independence, MO.



Across the street was a major BNSF line and we saw a train go by. Our first stop was at the Truman Library & Museum. This was our eighth presidential library this year. This one opened in 1957 with former President Hoover in attendance. It was built solely with private donations and was the first one built after the passage of the Presidential Libraries Act of 1955 which allowed the Federal Government to accept and maintain donations of private presidential materials. Until his death in 1972, the former president maintained an office there that was part of our tour. I learned that when his second term was over in 1953, he drove home with his wife. He wasn't broke, but apparently unlike some other politicians, did not get rich while in office. With bipartisan support, Congress passed the first Presidential Pension Act later in 1958.

The gift shop was appropriately named. The museum covered his early life and his start in local Kansas City and Missouri politics. I was not aware of his extensive military service. He joined the Missouri National Guard in 1905, served in the regular Army in WWI as an officer, and later served in the Army reserves where he rose to the rank of colonel, commanding an artillery regiment in 1932. He became a senator and then FDR's vice president, albeit for just eighty-two days! While VP, Truman only met with FDR twice, and he knew nothing about the Manhattan Project or the agreements made with Stalin in February 1945 at the Yalta Conference regarding eastern Europe. When Truman assumed the presidency, there was no vice president. The 25th Amendment, which handles this situation, was not passed until after the JFK assassination. I was not aware that he was a very strong supporter of the creation of Israel as the Jewish State in 1947-1948. There was an interesting display about this.

Truman used the Whistle Stop Express to campaign for his re-election in 1948 when he beat Dewey; it covered some 9,000 miles and 18 states. There was a mock-up of that in the museum. Truman was the first president to fly in a distinctively-decorated presidential airplane which was called the Independence. It was a C-118 Liftmaster, the military designation for the DC-6.





We were there for several hours and then went to downtown Independence for lunch at Square Pizza. Even though this ad appeared four times in their front window, they were not serving slices. Instead, we had mediocre calzones.

Our next stop was at the former Chicago & Alton (later GM&O) depot that has been moved and preserved as a museum. At one time,



the lower level served as the station and freight house while the agent lived upstairs. Luckily, it was open that day. I asked the docent if he was from there and he said eastern Kansas. I asked if he ever met President Truman. Yes, when his high school class toured the Truman Museum, the ex- president came out of his office and talked with the group. The docent advised me to visit the former MOPAC station that was a short distance away. He mentioned a link with Truman

but I don't recall what it was. That station is a current stop on Amtrak and has a former MOPAC caboose in front of it.



We were heading to Jefferson (“Jeff”) City, the capital of Missouri. The fastest way to drive there (149 miles), would be to just head east on I-70. However, we were in no hurry and instead took a leisurely drive on the parallel US-50 and were rewarded with a pleasant surprise. It was Midwest Model Railroad Hobbies, a yuge model railroad store in Independence. I had seen them at one show this year. It was the cleanest and most organized hobby store I have ever seen. In the second picture, on the right is a T-TRAK layout by a local group called T-NUTS. I bought some parts there that are often hard to find. The majority of their business is mail order/internet. There were two employees pulling orders as I walked around the store.



We arrived in Jeff City, which was chosen as the state capital due to its somewhat central location. It is located on the Missouri River, and Lewis and Clark’s expedition stopped there in 1804. Today it is a small city with a population of just 47,000. It once was the home of the state penitentiary.

I headed to a certain restaurant but the GPS took us to a nursing home's parking lot. Turned out this German restaurant was on the other side of the adjacent woods.



The decor was a bit tacky and dated, but the food was good. We also got a free shot of something. I had a jaeger schnitzel but don't recall what Carol had.

Our hotel for the evening, a Best Western, was nearby so we drove there and checked in. I had been texting during the trip with my friend Andy Sisk who lives near STL. He texted me that Amtrak #316 KC-STL due at 7:34pm was running late. So, I left Carol at the hotel and drove to the station in Jeff City. Doing this gave me this nice view of the capitol at night that I would not have otherwise seen. The Amtrak station is actually a trailer located in the parking lot of Jefferson Landing State Historic Site. This was a riverboat landing site starting in the



1850s. There was a small crowd waiting for the train and most were clueless as to the extent of the delay. I repeatedly checked the Amtrak app and called out the delay which got later and later. Oh, and it was raining and the trailer station was actually closed. Instead, folks stood under the overhang of the historic 1855 hotel there. There was a unit coal train sitting there on one track. While everyone waited, freight trains went by in both directions with CN and UP locomotives. Finally, at 10:34pm (three hours late) the Amtrak train pulled into the station.

I took other pictures of the train and headed back to the Best Western. I was wet but not soaked.





Friday 8/4

The Best Western was west of Jeff City and was in very nice condition. The capitol is located on a bluff over the Missouri River. Here is a picture from a lower level. This was actually the third capitol there. The first was outgrown, the second burned in 1911 in a spectacular fire, and this one was built in 1926. Somehow it was built under budget and there was \$1 million left over that the state decided to spend on art and other furnishings. The first floor is perhaps unique among state capitols as it is an official state park telling the history of Missouri from pre-European times to Lewis and Clark, to the Civil War and more modern times. We joined a 45-minute guided tour that had over twenty folks.

This is a scene of the Eads Bridge in St. Louis.



The massive dome is actually a double one.



Like all the capitols we have visited this summer, there were some renovations going on. Here they were replacing stained glass over the stairs.

Below is the governor's public office. We had a nice talk with the secretary there. Here are busts of some famous Missourians.



The six busts are:

Stan "The Man" Musical
Samuel Clemens a.k.a. Mark Twain
James Cash (J.C.) Penney
Walt Disney
Joyce Hall (Hallmark)
Walter Cronkite

As in Iowa, there was a model of the battleship named for Missouri. BB-63 is famous because the agreement to end WWII with Japan was signed on its decks in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945. FYI, this was the last battleship ever built by the U.S. Navy.



Leaving the capitol, we walked out and over to the park between it and the Missouri River which seemed quite high.



Getting there we crossed over several tracks where I stood under the yellow building the night before.



As we were leaving, an eastbound River Runner train stopped at Jeff City.



A short distance away was the former MOPAC station.



We left Jeff City and continued to drive east on US-50 towards St. Louis and later turned off to Herman, MO which was 50 miles away. It was founded by the Deutsche Ansiedlungs-Gesellschaft zu Philadelphia (German Settlement Society of Philadelphia) in 1837. Herman is on the Missouri River and the area is known as Missouri's Rhineland. Prior to Prohibition, MO was the number two producer of wine in the country with most of the grapes grown near here.

We stopped at Stone Hill Winery, which is the biggest in the area. It was started in 1847 (the second oldest in the country) by German immigrants and its award-winning wines used the local Norton grape. During Prohibition, it grew mushrooms in the buildings previously used to hold wine casks for aging. Because of Prohibition and other things, the Norton grape was lost to history until a small planting of vines that dated back to the Civil War were discovered in the 1960s near Herman. From that, the Norton grape and the winery were reestablished. Stone Hill is located on a hill, a bit south of Herman proper, that is off in the distance in the following picture.



We drove into the historic town which is a very popular tourist destination given it is only about 70 miles west of St. Louis. The main street is full of shops, restaurants, craft brewers and distilleries.



The railroad runs along the Missouri River next to the town. When Herman has its Oktoberfest, hundreds of folks ride the train there from St. Louis and Kirkwood. The current Amtrak station is a modern building, but

outside of it stands this caboose. The museum is the inside.



Leaving Herman, we continued a leisurely drive toward St. Louis. We passed through New Haven, MO, but no Pepe's Pizza there. A bit further, we stopped for gas and Carol said, "Look across the street." This caboose was in front of this building, seemingly in the middle of nowhere.



Behind the front building was a huge metal building that had several layouts. The folks inside said they were closing up, so I just looked through their retail area and then we left.



We were heading to Kirkwood, MO, an upscale suburb about 15 miles southwest of the Arch. It has a nice stone station that is a stop for the River Runner trains and sees very frequent freight traffic. I have been there many times on my visits to the St. Louis area as I know that a group of local railfans hang out there on Friday and Sunday evenings.



Carol and I had a quick dinner at a restaurant nearby. After dinner, I walked over to the station to say hi to Andy Sisk (front center) and the other guys while Carol packed up things in the car.



We drove up to the STL airport. We returned the Hertz car just before 8:00pm and checked into the adjacent Choice hotel.

Saturday 8/5

We stayed there overnight but had a 6:31am flight back to PHL. I have stayed at that hotel many times because it is cheap and across from STL airport with a free shuttle. However, it has been nicely updated since my last stay. I am not sure if we got upgraded for the flight. I don't recall anything about the flight back, but it was scheduled to arrive at PHL at 9:41am. We took the bus from the airport to 30th Street because of track work, and then took the SEPTA train from there to our car parked in Jenkintown.

SOUTH FLORIDA - SEPTEMBER 1–5, 2023



This was a trip to the National Railway Historical Society's annual convention. I have been a member of the NRHS since the mid-1980s starting with the Tri-State Chapter in New Jersey, then the West Connecticut Chapter in Connecticut, and most recently the Philadelphia Chapter. I was the president of the Philly Chapter from 2021-

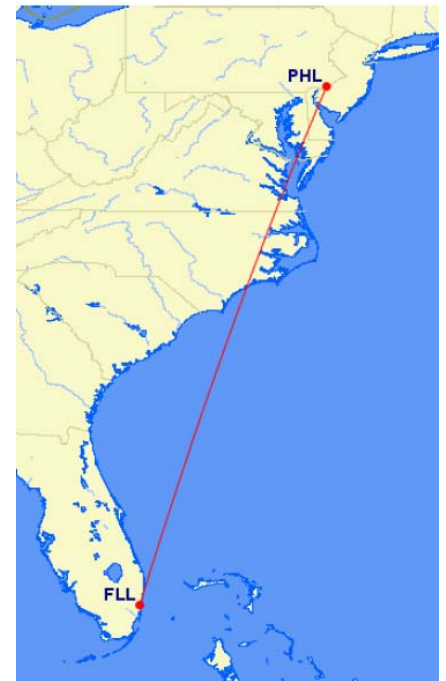
2022 and gave it up to run for the national BOD. I was elected to that in August 2022 and was later named the controller of an affiliated corporation—the NRHS Fund. A volunteer member had been doing the fund's accounting, but she resigned in July. Turns out that was a good thing as she didn't have a clue how to do the accounting. As a result, the five days after I got home (8/27) from the NMRA Convention in DFW, were mostly spent redoing the fund's accounting for calendar 2022 and for 2023 year-to-date (YTD).

Friday 9/1

The convention was in Deerfield Beach, with Fort Lauderdale (FLL) being the closest airport. The airfares were quite reasonable so we paid for the tickets rather than book with miles. We did not need to be there until 7:00pm so for once, we did not have to take an early flight from PHL. Still, we had to take a 7:55am SEPTA train from Jenkintown to PHL. The train station parking is still free. I had checked in the day before and saw the departure gate would be in A West. However, I always check this on the train and saw our flight was moved to the B concourse. We checked in there and went through the short line for TSA PreClear. Thanks to my Executive Platinum status with AA, we were again upgraded. The plane left on schedule (10:35am), but there was a long line to take off. Eventually, we did take off but to the NE meaning we had to make a big loop over South Jersey before heading south. We flew down the Delmarva Peninsula and I could see Tangier Island in the middle of the Chesapeake Bay. I spent the flight writing up part of this trip and the next time I looked out the window, we were over water and east of south Florida. Eventually, we made a turn perpendicular to the FL coast and flew west to the Everglades where the plane made a 180° turn to land to the east at FLL 10 minutes late at 1:32pm. The airport was pretty crowded, which probably meant that a cruise ship or two had recently arrived at the port there. For once we had NOT checked our bags given what we planned to do once we arrived.

Rental cars at airports are very expensive these days, easily costing \$100 a day with all the garbage taxes and fees. Instead, I decided to travel from FLL to Deerfield Beach by rail. The FLL airport has rail lines on both sides of the property. We hurried to get to the free shuttle to the nearby Tri-Rail station. Tri-Rail started in 1989 as a temporary service during major construction on the adjacent I-95. The trial service was well received and was made permanent and extended so that it now runs 73 miles from the MIA airport to just above West Palm Beach (WPB). It uses what was historically SAL/SCL/CSX trackage. Tri-Rail offers free shuttles from the FLL and WPB airports. There was no posted schedule for the shuttle, just a mention on the website that it runs approximately every 15 to 20 minutes. One came at 1:45pm, but we saw the northbound 2:00pm train leave the station as the shuttle crossed the tracks near the airport station. Unfortunately, the next train was not until 3:00pm, but I used the time to walk to a nearby Wendy's and bring back food for lunch. We were theoretically eligible for a senior fare, but I could not find out how to buy it on the TVM. Instead, we bought 3-zone tickets for \$5.00 each.

For passenger cars, Tri-Rail started with a fleet of bi-level cars



that were originally built in Canada for Greater Ontario Transit and in 2012 added similar-style cars from Rotem, a Korean company. All of the cars currently have this colorful wrap but will be redone soon in a new paint scheme. Its locomotives are a mix of rebuilt EMD units and new models from Brookville Equipment, located in western Pennsylvania.

The 3:00pm train arrived and we boarded the cab car that unfortunately had all reverse facing seats. I do not ride backwards so at the first stop we moved to the next car. It was four stops and about thirty minutes to the Deerfield Beach station, which is also serviced by Amtrak. This is a requirement for NRHS conventions as some members will only ride the train to the convention. The convention hotel, a Hilton Double Tree, was in sight so we walked there pulling our suitcases. En route, we stopped at a Wawa to buy some breakfast food and some sodas for Carol.

We checked in and had a nice room facing east on the seventh floor. Hilton recently eliminated free breakfast and now gives Gold members (like me) and above a \$15.00 per day per person meal credit. We ate at the hotel with dinner costing \$25.00 after the day's credit. At 7:00pm, I attended the BOD meeting for the NRHS Fund where I presented the financial statements that I had prepared. At 9:00pm, I attended a 75-minute, detailed presentation on the Florida East Coast Railway (FEC) given from memory by Seth Branson, the FEC's official historian.



Saturday 9/2

This was a day of official NRHS meetings that took up most of the day. Still, I had time for an afternoon swim in the pool. I left the annual general meeting early so Carol and I could take a LYFT ride to a nearby Catholic church for its 4:30pm Mass. After Mass, we had dinner at an IHOP that was near the church. After another LYFT ride, we were back at the hotel.

Sunday 9/3

This day had the first of scheduled trips during the convention. However, the trip was NOT what it was supposed to be. There is another passenger rail line in southern Florida called Brightline (BL). This is a new private operation that runs on FEC track; its service started between Miami and WPB back in 2018. I rode the line in April 2022. BL's ultimate goal was to run all the way to the Orlando airport (MCO). We saw construction for that part of the line when we were in Cocoa Beach back in January. A few months ago, Brightline announced the service between Miami and MCO would begin on September 1. Our ride that day was supposed to be that trip but two weeks before the convention started, BL delayed the start of the MCO service. (Service ultimately started September 22.) Instead, at 8:30am, we were taken by bus to BL's maintenance facility near WPB for a tour. Except when we got there, no one was expecting us. We sat on the buses for a half hour until that got straightened out. BL has a number of Siemens Venture four-car train sets and Siemens SCB40 locomotives all of which were manufactured near Sacramento, CA. We were able to walk through the open-air maintenance building and next to one of the colorful train sets.





We reboarded the buses for a short ride to the WPB station, which is in the downtown area. The land next to the station has been developed with apartments and stores to help fund the construction costs. We had time at the station which has



separate lounges for the two classes of service, Premier and Smart. Premier customers have free food in the lounge and onboard.

Eventually we went down to board the 11:00am train and were in its MiamiCentral Station at 12:20pm. The MiamiCentral Station is part of a larger real estate development that includes



two office towers and retail space. Our box lunches were waiting for us in the Smart lounge, and while we were eating, small groups of attendees were given a tour of its operation center that operates 24/7 even though the railroad does not.

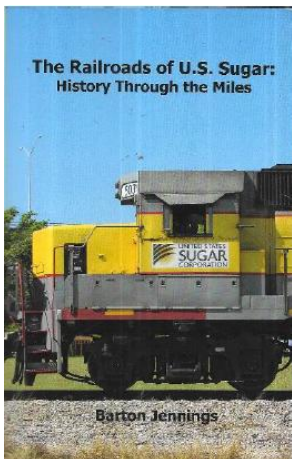


At 1:45pm, we left Miami on a northbound train. Our assigned seats this time were forward facing. On the way down they were rearward facing, so I sat in other seats. Our group had an entire car plus part of another car. We were back in WPB just after 3:00pm; each way the train made three stops en route including Boca and Aventura, both of which opened last December. Back on the buses, we were at the hotel about forty minutes later in time for an afternoon swim. Carol and I had dinner in the hotel again. Our \$76.34 dinner greatly exceeded the \$30 credit.

Monday 9/4 (Labor Day)

Today's trip was the Sugar Express Steam Excursion. We boarded buses by 7:30am for a 90-mile drive to Clewiston, FL, home of U.S. Sugar (USSC). Part of the drive was through the Everglades and another part was along the southern shore of Lake Okeechobee. USSC is a privately-owned agricultural business that farms over 230,000 acres of land in Hendry, Glades, Martin, and Palm Beach counties. It is the largest producer of sugar cane in the United States by volume, and to handle it, USSC has extensive rail operations. One is the South Central Florida Express (SFCX), a short line that operates between Sebring and Fort Pierce, FL on track once owned by the ACL, and other trackage leased from FEC. The other railroad operation is 119 miles of private track that move the sugar cane from the fields to the mill.

Of particular interest to convention attendees is U.S. Sugar 148, (ex-FEC 148), a 4-6-2 steam locomotive built in



April 1920 by ALCO originally for the FEC. FEC sold the locomotive in 1952 to USSC who used it until the late 1960s. It was eventually sold and, among other places, saw service on the Black River & Western in New Jersey. USSC re-acquired the engine in 2016 and after a four-year restoration, it returned to service in 2020. Since then it has been used internally to haul sugar cane, hauling two excursions last year, one for Trains Magazine and the other for the American Association of Private Railroad Car Owners (AAPRCO), which Carol and I chased in April 2022.

To better understand USSC's rail operations and route of that day excursion, I purchased this book that was for sale in the convention's registration room. The book described the history of sugar cane production in south Florida mentioning the South Puerto Rico Sugar Company, whose 90,000 acres of cane fields and refinery were acquired by Gulf +Western Industries in 1967. I worked for G+W from 1976-1979, and while I was on the internal audit staff, my office mate did an audit of the sugar cane operations in south Florida.

We arrived in Clewiston at 9:15am and were told to quickly board the train that had six passenger cars, some of which were recently acquired from the URHS in NJ. While 148 pulled the consist out of the yard, it remained facing south on the end of the train. We were pulled north to Lake Placid by SFCX 310. This locomotive was built in December 1957 by EMD as a GP9 for the ICRR, and later used by ICG as #9330. It was rebuilt as a GP11 in Paducah, KY by the ICG in August 1979 and used by that and the renamed IC until 1988 as #8710. I toured the Paducah facility around 1988 as part of an Illinois Central Historical Society Convention.

We arrived in Lake Placid, FL (about 58 miles north of Clewiston) around noon; it was so named by Dr. Melvil Dewey (inventor of the Dewey Decimal System) from Lake Placid, NY. The organizers of our excursion made special arrangements to have two food trucks at the Lake Placid Station (built by the ACL in 1926) and for the museum in the station to be open that day. We reboarded the train at 1:45pm, now with #148 in the lead. Heading back there were two photo run-bys. The first was at Childs (six miles south of Lake Placid) where a cane loading facility was built in 2018 to eliminate the need to haul sugar cane by truck all the way to Clewiston.





The second run-by was on a curve just north of Clewiston.



Back in Clewiston, we quickly reboarded the buses and returned to Deerfield Beach by the same route, arriving about 6:45pm. Looking to eat elsewhere, Carol and I walked across the highway to have dinner. I had used the \$30 credit for my breakfast that day. Several restaurants we walked by were closed either because it was Labor Day or Monday. We were about to go to a McDonald's there, when we came to Temak House. This was a new place that featured Brazilian sushi fusion. That seemed a bit strange so we asked to see the menu, which was in Portuguese. I am not quite sure of what we ate, but the food came on a number of small plates. It was all good and the bill came to \$49 with tax and tip. Most folks in the place were not speaking English.

Tuesday 9/5

The convention continued through Wednesday afternoon with tours of the Flagler Museum, the Gold Coast Railroad Museum, Miami Transit, and Tri-Rail. There was also a banquet with the president of Brightline as the guest speaker. Nevertheless, we left for home after a quick dip in the pool. We took a LYFT to the Deerfield Beach train station and caught the southbound train at 11:44am. This arrived at the FLL airport stop at 12:17pm. The shuttle came in a few minutes so we were checked in and through TSA before 1:00pm. Our flight was at 2:20pm, but to CLT instead of flying nonstop to PHL. I guess I picked this routing because the fare was less. Under AA's



new loyalty point scheme, there is no longer any reason to fly extra miles as the rewards are solely a function of the ticket price. We arrived in CLT about ten minutes at 4:20pm where I saw this A321 in a retro USAir livery while waiting for our flight to PHL scheduled to depart at 6:09pm and arrive at 7:49pm. I am missing the notes that said when we arrived in PHL, but I don't recall there being any real delays. I forgot to mention that we were upgraded on both flights that day meaning we were 3 for 3 on the trip!