

Lines West – Buckeye Region Newsletter



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**In this Issue: Chapter Meeting at Dennison Depot
Two Bangors Still Live**

Chapter Meeting at Dennison September 16

Our next chapter meeting will be held SUNDAY, September 16 in the Red Room of the Dennison Railroad Museum in Dennison, Ohio. This Museum is in the former PRR station on the Panhandle Division halfway between Pittsburgh and Columbus. It was widely known for the Servicemen's Canteen providing refreshments to troop trains during World War II. It was also the site of 40 acres of railroad shops, including a large roundhouse, now gone.

The meeting will be from 11 to 4 p.m., including a luncheon from the restaurant in the museum at 11:30 and a guided tour at 1:30. There are now some passenger cars open to the public at the Museum.

Members are encouraged to bring models and railroad artifacts for display at the meeting. We should share our collections with other members interested in the Pennsylvania Railroad.

From US 250, take Dennison exit and turn right on to Second Street. Follow Second Street until you reach the tracks, then turn left and go 2 blocks and parking is on your left.

Two Bangors Still Live by Gene Stebbins

A recent article in TRAINS (February 2007) featured the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic Railroad in Maine. This modern shortline has acquired trackage from several New England entities, among them, the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad (BAR). The BAR was chartered in 1891, and was known for shipping forest products and potatoes south from the fields of Maine. In the 1990's demand for Maine's potatoes dropped drastically, and combined with an Air Force Base closing in northern Maine, spelled disaster for the BAR. It went through several owners before being incorporated into the present MMA shortline operation.

In the 1950's, the Pennsylvania Railroad was looking for additional diesel power. The BAR had four F7B units it considered surplus, and the PRR agreed to buy the units. During the discussions leading to the sale, Bangor execs commented on the seasonal nature of their business—few potatoes were hauled during the summer, but when the crop was harvested in late fall, the demand for motive power was high. Pennsy execs sympathized, saying their problems were just the opposite—coal and ore flowed from ports at Erie and Cleveland during the summer, but demand was nil once the lakes froze over. A natural agreement was evident—BAR would buy the motive power it needed during the winter months, and lease it to Pennsy during the summer.

Beginning in 1951 ten GP-7 locomotives were leased from BAR to the Pennsylvania for the summer months, April to November, and worked the Pennsylvania ore docks at Erie, the PRR paying \$35 per day. Pennsy trainmen affectionately called the blue and white BAR locomotives “the Bangors.”



BAR 78 on the Erie docks, August 1958 (W. D. Volkmer photograph)

In 1955, the agreement was modified to provide 15 locomotives, at \$42 per day for GP-7's and \$51 per day for GP-9's. The number of leased locomotives stayed constant at 15 each summer through 1961, and possibly longer. It is not clear from records at Lewistown how many locomotives were involved after 1961, and the agreement was terminated by Penn Central in 1968.

Locomotives involved were BAR GP-7 numbers 61 through 75 and BAR GP-9 numbers 76 through 80. Not all locomotives in these series made the trip each year, but a total of 15 units

consistently worked PRR assignments each summer. In the early years, they were used only on the Erie docks, but later they appeared on Ashtabula and Cleveland docks and records show two were used on the Sandusky docks in 1963.

The TRAINS article lists BAR units 68 and 79 as still active on the MMA roster, with 79 keeping its original number and 68 being renumbered MMA 100. During a visit to Bangor in 2005, I had observed and photographed several units from leased sequence in dead storage at the former BAR roundhouse, but I was unaware that any were still in active service.



BAR locomotives on the dead track, April 2005. (Photograph by Gene Stebbins)

So, I went back to Bangor in June of 2007 to look for the active units. Sure enough, MMA unit 100 was at work each night, switching at Brownsville Junction yards, and returning to the Derby shops each day. I was assured MMA 79 was making a daily turn on the track between Squa Pan and Presque Isle far to the North. I passed on the 200-mile trip north to see 79, but I was able to photograph ex-BAR 68 at Derby.



MMA 100 (ex-BAR68) at Derby, Maine, June 2007 (Photograph by Gene Stebbins)

After receiving permission from the MMA offices, I went to Derby to see` MMA 100. I found it on the ready track by the sand tower, idling away, beside a sand car. One of the yard workers was good enough to move it 40 feet down the track so I could get an unobstructed shot of the veteran locomotive, now more than fifty years old. He assured me the locomotive still ran fine, although he said several years earlier the generator had been replaced with one from another locomotive from the dead tracks in Bangor. And in the meantime, the roundhouse and dead tracks in Bangor had been sold, the turntable removed, and the locomotives on the dead track had been scrapped.



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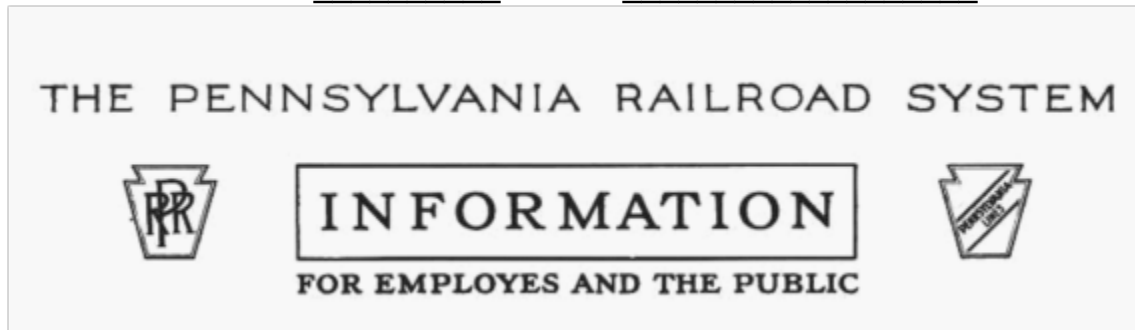
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