

FEB 78

**THE TRAINMASTER**

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800 N. W. 6th Ave.  
Portland, Oregon 97209

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PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
(An Oregon Non-Profit Corporation)

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pacific northwest chapter

# THE TRAINMASTER

February 1978

Number 210

## PNW CHAPTER TIMETABLE

Friday REGULAR MONTHLY MEETING

February 17

8 PM

The second regular meeting of 1978 for PNW Chapter will be held in the Burlington Northern Safety Assembly Room. This is located on the right hand side of what would be N W 11th Avenue extended, about two city blocks north of its intersection with N W Hoyt Street. Contact one of the Chapter officers listed inside the front cover of this issue if more detailed directions are required.

The February program will consist of two movies: The first is a film on Traction in the 1940's from the NRHS library. The second is RARE - A REAL FIND: 16 mm movies taken by the City of Portland in the 1930' and 1940's of traffic, including street-cars, at a number of busy intersections.

Refreshments, arranged for by Cora Jackson, will be served between the business session and the program. A "kitty" will be present to receive donations to help offset the costs of the refreshments.

Friday  
March 17

Regular monthly meeting for March. The program theme for March will be Railroading in the Mid-West. Plan to attend.

## PROGRAMS FOR 1978

- March - Railroading in the Mid-West
- April - Steam Railroading in South America
- May - Enter, The Diesel Age

PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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SUMMARY OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING, JANUARY 20, 1978

The meeting was called to order by President Bill Bain at 8 PM.

Bill Bain announced that Chapter members are welcome to attend Board meetings and then advised the meeting of the following action taken at the January board meeting: 1) The Board will prepare the Chapter budget by the February meeting. All budget requests should be given to a Chapter officer at once. 2) The Chapter will be preparing a tape-slide program on the rebuilding and operation of the 4449 for the NRHS library. 3) The Chapter will be developing and acquisition program for its library and an estate planning program designed, in part, to encourage contributions to the library. 4) Jim Gilmore has been appointed as Chapter Librarian and will be assisted by John Labbe and John Swarner. 5) The Chapter is negotiating with Northwest Sound to obtain a power connection to charge the batteries on the Chapter's car Mount Hood.

President Bain reported that 21 of the 24 springs needed to repair the car Mount Hood can be had from the Union Pacific, cost not known at this time. The cost and availability of the remaining three springs are not now known.

Bill Bain advised the membership that the Chapter board had met with two members of the board of the Transportation and Logging Museum on Jan. 11. Several misunderstandings were cleared up and the two groups agreed that they should work together to obtain and develop a museum site.

The original copy of the resolution by the Portland City Council in 1958 accepting locomotive 4449 has been presented to the Chapter by the city.

Excursion Director Roger Phillips asked for ideas for trips for 1978. A trip by bus to ride the trolleys in Yakima was suggested. A one long day trip to Yakima appeared to be favored on a show of hands.

Chapter Mechanical Supt. Bob Slover reported that the start of work on the car Mount Hood has been held up until the needed springs are purchased. Bob asked volunteers who would like to work on the car to contact him.

Bill Bain asked the membership not to bother the Union Pacific about seeing locomotive 4449. The locomotive is not available for viewing at present and requests to see it may result in the UP's asking that it be removed from their property.

Ed Immel reported on the 1978 convention. Convention costs are not yet put together due to missing figures from British Columbia on the steam double-header. Ed advised that he hopes to have the price breakdown in time for the Feb. issue of The Trainmaster. A special package will be available for Portland residents who cannot get off for the daytime activities on Thursday and Friday of the convention weekend. The Yakima trip during the convention is likely to be in short supply. Ads for the convention will be placed in Trains and Pacific News. The Overland and Lakeshore Chapters will be running special trains to the convention. The LRC train may be used for The Dalles Dam trip if the train is out here by convention-time.

Ed Berntsen reported that the Tacoma Chapter is working on the possibility of a 1978 Railcon to be held in Tacoma during May or June.

Dave Stimac donated two shares of Western Pacific common stock to the Chapter.

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## SUMMARY OF MINUTES OF THE REGULAR BUSINESS MEETING, JANUARY 20, 1978 (continued)

President Bill Bain announced the following appointments: Bryan Leeder, Trainmaster Editor; Jim Schmidt, Trainmaster Publisher; Dave Morris will develop marketing plans for the car Mount Hood; Bill Gano will assemble the tape-slide program on the rebuilding of locomotive 4449 with assistance from Terry Parker and Dave Stimac; Clint Myers, Chapter Activities Photographer; Walt Grande, Chapter Quarterly Editor.

Respectfully submitted,  
Chuck Storz, Secretary.

## ANSWERS TO THE JANUARY MINI QUIZ

In the January issue of The Trainmaster the mini-quiz asked for the locations referred to by Union Pacific operation people in Portland as the "vinegar works" and "Collins". The "vinegar works" is the site, now a parking lot, where a plant which made vinegar was located on the south side of north Albina Ave. between Interstate Ave. and the Union Pacific Tracks. The plant was demolished at least 20 years ago. The location is now notable for the TV cameras which UP uses to verify its trains. "Collins" is the former location of the Collins Concrete Pipe Co. on north Columbia Blvd in north Portland just east of where the Kenton Line tracks come out of the tunnel and cross Columbia Blvd. The location is now used as a terminal for the Mitchell Brothers Truck Lines.

## PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER BULLETIN BOARD

Copies of the Chapter's 1977 financial statement will be available at the February meeting. See one of the officers for a copy.

BOARD MEETINGS: Chapter members are welcome to attend board meetings. It is, however, difficult to publish a schedule of dates and locations in advance. The meeting which was to be held on Feb. 8th had to be cancelled on short notice due to the inability of several officers to be there. For information on Board meetings call Chuck Storz at 289-4529 between 5:30 and 7 PM.

Members having requests to be included in the Chapter's 1978 budget should be sure to contact a Chapter officer not later than the Feb. 17th meeting.

If you have not paid your 1978 dues, please do so as soon as possible.

## NEWS FROM THE SUMPTER VALLEY RAILROAD

The Sumpter Valley RR has been given four miles of track, that included the rails, ties, spikes, etc., from the abandoned\*Vale-Jamison branch. The track material was taken up by a CETA crew hired by Baker County. The Sumpter Valley's track now extends nearly to the Whitney-Tipton cut-off road, a distance of almost two miles. By the Memorial Day weekend opening track is expected to extend even further. The Heisler was used for work chores until cold weather required draining its boiler. It is in the shop now undergoing routine maintenance, cleaning and inspection of the flues and refitting of the sanders which have not been operable since operation began. The Mikes are still sidetracked awaiting completion of work on the Heisler. (\*U.P.)

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PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER  
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BOOK REVIEW: Tragic Train: City of San Francisco by Don De Nevi. Superior Pub. Co.

*EDITOR'S NOTE: Reviews of the Tragic Train have been received from two entirely separate sources. Both are presented here for the reader's information. See also "An End to Potboilers" on page 68 of the Feb. 1978 issue of Trains magazine. Jack Pfeifer is known by the editor to be very knowledgeable about the UP-SP transcontinental route. J. E. Pearson points out a number of errors in references to Chicago and the eastern part of the train's route.*

After reading The Tragic Train one really doesn't know whether to vent his anger on the perpetrators of such a publishing injustice or just sit down and cry over the unbelievably inept production from Mr. DeNevi.

The melodramatic title is typical of the book's presentation of the material and implies the City of San Francisco was beset by many tragedies and difficulties, although none but the one accident are mentioned. This was a tragic accident, but something that could and did occur to other trains over the years.

The word "tragic" is actually more descriptive of the author's efforts than of the train. It is doubtful there has ever been a volume offered to the public so replete with inaccuracies and absolute non-facts. The Southern Pacific is to be commended for making their files available for such a book, but should be ashamed they did not pick someone who could do the job right or proofread the finished product before it was offered to the public. Apparently the author has read through the Southern Pacific file on the accident and then, without any knowledge of railroading, has concocted a melodrama around the official data.

Any railroader or non-railroader with a smattering of knowledge about railroading will cringe as they delve into the story of the "tragic train". Author De Nevi has the same engineer and fireman boarding the train for its departure from Chicago as were in the cab when it derailed over 33 hours later in Nevada. During the trip he has it stopping in Topeka and Salt Lake City and passing the DRGW stations of Grand Valley, Book Cliff and Mack in Colorado, all of which were far removed from the route of the City of San Francisco. Other inaccuracies such as reference to the Missouri landscape and the scenery of western Colorado, plus a station stop at Harney, Nevada (actually west of the scene of the derailment) add to the feeling of disbelief as you read the book.

There is good photo coverage of the scene of the derailment, apparently all from Southern Pacific files, plus some irrelevant photos such as those of the SP's Chief Special Agent as a young man 32 years before the accident. If it were not for the good photo coverage of the derailment scene, the many errors in that portion of the story leading up to the derailment would cast serious doubts on Mr. DeNevi's description of the scene in Nevada.

With the information available from the Southern Pacific and some proper research an outstanding book could have been written. As it stands some promising material has been defiled by an inexcusable writing job and the book should be recalled by the publisher before some of the abundance of incorrect data it contains is accepted as fact by the unknowing.

*Jack Pfeifer*

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BOOK REVIEW: Tragic Train: City of San Francisco (continued)

When I first leafed through Don De Nevi's new book, TRAGIC TRAIN: CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO, I was impressed with the data and superb pictures of the sabotage/wreck of the streamliner, and wrote a column rating the book as one of the best to be published by inferior (note the small "i") publishing company in some time.

Fortunately (for me) there wasn't enough space in our last newsletter to permit its use. If the review had appeared, any credibility that my reviews enjoy would have been destroyed; for after reading it I found that the first part of the book is far worse than the "glop" our friend Patrick Dorin grinds out!

An "authors profile" on the dust jacket of the book credits DeNevi with being a teacher of humanities, teaching a course on the "psychology of imagination", creativity, and genius. I feel that he must have taken his own course and "flunked out" on all except imagination, for the first 40-50 pages are nothing but that, and fantasy! Other books have contained errors, but those first pages have more than I would ever believe possible! It is quite possible that errors lurk in the rest of the book; but if they do, they are well hidden in the excellent documents and photographs that were furnished by the Southern Pacific Railroad.

For those of you who choose not to spend your hard-earned \$15 on the book, I have decided to share some of those "laugh-a-minute" errors with you. Please bear with me as I have tried to use DeNevi's overabundant words and descriptions as they appear in the book. Perhaps you will feel as I do, if you decide to read the book, that he must have been paid by the word. He certainly used as many long words as he could, perhaps so that more space would be used. DeNevi goes on many tangents that take him completely away from his subject, the train. If he had stayed with the subject though, TRAGIC TRAIN would have only about 140 pages instead of 188 pages, and DeNevi would have lost money.

OK, here we go, keep those seat belts fastened and a "barf bag" handy, for you will need it!

1. Tony Firpo travels to Chicago via coach, sleeper and coach. (Perhaps he couldn't make up his mind, or found that he could not afford the sleeper).
2. He is entering Chicago on New York Central tracks from "The Big Apple" and goes through a long tunnel of "inderterminable length" in our fair city. (Where is there even a tunnel on the NYC around here?).
3. He also sees the Wainwright Building from his train window. (I think the Wainwright Building is still in St. Louis where it was built in the 1890's by Louis and Sullivan.)
4. He also sees the Auditorium Tower and the Masonic Temple from the same window. (He might have been able to see the A.T., but the Masonic Temple was being torn down, or was already torn down.)
5. As Firpo starts a stroll around the town during a one hour layover, he hears "gongs" on buses and streetcars that are "clanging frantically". (I would love to see and hear a bus with a gong!)
6. When he gets to State and Randolph, he somehow looks to the north and notes that it's ironic that there are no trees on Elm, Oak and Cedar streets even though those streets are named for trees. (There are some trees on those street in 1977, and in 1939 there must have been more, and how could he even dream of seeing those streets from State and Randolph?)

BOOK REVIEW: Tragic Train: City of San Francisco (continued)

7. When strolling about Chicago, he sees a man wearing a "Double Knit" suit. (This is real fantasy for clothing people tell me that men's double knit suits came out around 1970.)
8. He returns to LaSalle Street Station to board the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO after his one hour lay-over. (I always thought it left from Northwestern Station and ran over C&NW trackage until they decided to discontinue their part in its operation around 1956.)
9. While inside the station he credits it with having two levels (Wow Don! What were you drinking?). One level is used for "suburban and commuter trains", the other for "long-distance and transcontinental" trains. (DeNevi must have visited Grand Central or Pennsylvania Station in New York by mistake! Oh well, at least he made some money using those big, new, long words!)
10. DeNevi cannot decide if the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO started running on January 2, 1938 or 1939. (Both dates are given in the book---If you ever do decide, let us know please.)
11. As we leave Tony Firpo, he is still going to board the COSF at LaSalle Street Station where it will depart at 9:55 PM on August 12, 1939. (Remember that time and date.) The C&NW people wanted me to again remind you, Don, that the CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO left from.....Station.(They probably feel left out!)
12. Ed Hecox (engineer of the COSF) gets ready to back the train into the station. Windy; the fireman, gives the "bell rope" a pull, and with the streamliners "connecting rods" beginning to "clank", and her "seventy-six inch drivers" banging over the rattling switches, she starts backing into the station! (Really, Don, since when does a diesel locomotive have drivers?---sure hope you all had your "barf bags" ready for that one!)
13. DeNevi has Hecox (a Southern Pacific engineer) running the train over what should be C&NW trackage. (Why can't C&NW crews operate on their own railroad?)
14. The COSF departs Chicago and journeys through cities on the route of the Rock Island's "Golden State Limited". (Please check your route maps Don, the COSF did not go to Topeka!)
15. Ed Hecox must have been "Superman" as DeNevi infers that he is the only engineer to operate the train from Chicago to the site of the wreck near Harney, Nev. (You cannot wear out an SP man!)
16. DeNevi has the COSF making record time on the run from Chicago to the wreck site near Harney, Nevada, going 1000 plus miles in about four (4) hours! (COSF SUPERTRAIN)

If I had the space I could go on and on as the errors seem to be endless in this DeNevi Fantasy! If TRAGIC TRAIN was his first book a few errors would be expected, but he has authored many others so there is no excuse for this tripe! One of his earlier books, WESTERN TRAIN ROBBERIES, was filled with the same type of glaring errors. He seems to have learned nothing and regressed to the kindergarten level with his latest.

The SP documents, maps and photos detailing the wreck are excellent, and it is a shame that DeNevi was the one author that Espee allowed to use them! Arthur Dubin and George Hilton have long been renowned for the painstaking research that they put into a book, and their finished product would have been a credit to the Southern Pacific and any book publisher. Since Superior (oops, change that to inferior) was the publisher, I guess it does not really matter though, for TRAGIC TRAIN is no different than any of their publications---schlocky! (*J. E. Pearson writing in The Railroad Capital*)



Note: This is the first in a series of articles that will highlight the activities of the 1978 convention to be held in the Pacific Northwest over Labor Day Weekend.

Thursday, August 31, 1978 (pre-Convention activity)

Today we will ride on Amtrak through one of the most scenic areas of the Northwest, the Columbia River Gorge. Our destination will be The Dalles Dam, 95 miles east of Portland.

Our departure will be from Portland's Union Station, an historic landmark opened in 1896. Its imposing clock tower is a familiar sight to most people in Portland. Once the station had 12 run-through tracks but today only five are in use. In addition to the steam trains the station once had electric trains departing from tracks 1 and 2, the Southern Pacific's "Red Electrics". If one looks closely there are still rail bonds to be found on the tracks.

Some of the most famous trains in the Northwest left from this station: City of Portland, Portland Rose, Idahoan, Cascade, Shasta Daylight, Rogue River, Empire Builder, North Coast Limited (via the SP&S). Today, we will be leaving on one of Amtrak's newest trains, The Pioneer. Exiting south out of the station we will cross the Willamette River over a unique double lift span bridge, the lower deck for trains, the upper level for automobile traffic. The Steel Bridge was opened in 1912 and replaced another double deck bridge which lay to the north of the present structure.

At the east end of the bridge is a wye, with the left leg leading to the Union Pacific's Albina yard, while the right leg continues on to the SP's mainline to California and the UP's Sullivan's Gulch line. The right leg of the wye is, at  $17\frac{1}{2}^\circ$ , the sharpest mainline curve on the SP system which caused many a steam engine to creak and groan going through the curve.

Our first 15.6 miles will be up the Union Pacific's "Sullivan's Gulch" (Graham) Line to Troutdale where we will join their other mainline from Albina Yard that runs 22 miles via Kenton. All of this track from Portland to The Dalles is part of the railroad's Fourth Sub-Division. The line is virtually gradeless, rising only 60 feet in the 85.8 miles from Portland to The Dalles. Constructed in 1882 by the Oregon Railway and Navigation Company, the line has seen considerable relocation because of the construction of Bonneville Dam (1938-41) and Interstate 80N (1952).

At milepost 15.7 we cross the Sandy River and enter the spectacular Columbia River Gorge. This natural gash cuts through the Cascade Mountains and enables the railroad a flat travel route while other routes to the north and south (except the SP&S) require going up over 6,000 foot passes. Waterfalls can be seen spilling down from the surrounding cliffs on both sides of the river.

The town of Bridal Veil is passed at milepost 26.6. It was once the site of one of the first logging railroads in the area and thousands of car loads of lumber once left the mill for destinations all over the nation. Soon after passing Bridal Veil, on the right side of the train, we will see 620 foot high Multnomah Falls. At milepost 38.7 Bonneville Dam will appear on the left side of the train. Constructed between 1938 and 1941, the dam is the last of a series of massive hydro-electric projects that have tamed the once free flowing Columbia River. Soon after leaving the dam we will go under the Bridge of the Gods. At this point the Columbia will be at its narrowest and the former SP&S (BN) mainline can be easily seen on the north-bank of the river.

Thursday, August 31, 1978 (pre-Convention activity) (continued)

Cascade Locks (mp 43.0) displays the historic Oregon Pony. This tiny (9,700 lbs) geared engine was constructed by the Vulcan Iron Works (San Francisco) in 1858 and was the first steam locomotive in the Northwest. The engine was used to operate the Oregon Portage Railroad, a five foot gauge operation that by-passed the rapids in the Columbia at Cascade Locks. Purchased by Colonel Joe Ruckel for \$4,000, the Pony could haul about 200 tons of freight a day with its 800 pounds of tractive effort. The engine made its last trip at the Cascades on April 20, 1863 and was then transferred to the Oregon Steam Navigation Company's other portage railway at The Dalles. It was later used to construct the street railway in San Francisco before being returned to Portland's Lewis and Clark Fair in 1905. For many years it sat in front of Portland Union Station and, in 1970, was moved to Cascade Locks where the locomotive is now on display.

Across the Columbia River on the north bank near milepost 52 can be seen a long trestle. This trestle is in reality the last operating lumber flume in the United States. The seven mile long flume connects the Broughton Lumber Company's rough cut mill in the mountains with their finishing mill at Underwood, Washington.

The Mount Hood Railroad once called Hood River its home (mp 62.8) but today it is operated by the Union Pacific as a branchline up the scenic Hood River Valley to Parkdale (22 miles). At milepost 83 is the huge Harvey Aluminum Plant. If luck holds out a glimpse may be had of their two locomotives.

Soon after passing the aluminum plant our train will arrive at The Dalles. Once an army post, the present city was founded in 1857. Up to 1920 a connection could be made with the 45 mile Great Southern Railroad to such metropolises as Dufur and Tygh Valley. But today only the old station is left and all remains are pretty well buried.

Our buses will be waiting for the short trip to The Dalles Dam. Arriving at Seufert Park we will transfer to the dam's own railroad for our tour of the facility. The tiny industrial locomotive pulls a train that includes a former Portland Traction Company caboose.

The Dalles Dam is an enormous 8,700 foot long hydro-electric power project. The 2,089 foot long power house contains 22 main generating units, 2 auxiliaries, and 2 station service units, having a total capacity of 1,807,000 kw. Lake Celilo, behind the dam, is a 9,400 acre reservoir, 24 miles long. The navigation lock is 86 x 675 feet and each of its 107 foot tall gates weighs 350 tons. Also to be seen is the 1,800 foot fish ladder where migrating fish can find their way around the dam to upstream spawning grounds.

We will return to Portland aboard Amtrak's Pioneer, retracing our way through some of the most historical and scenic country in the Northwest. On tap this evening will be beer and food at the hospitality room of the Blitz Weinhard Company. Founded in 1856, the brewery is the West's oldest. Before the Blitz get together convention goers can enjoy dinner in one of many excellent restaurants in downtown Portland. Travel is eased in the area since all bus service in the downtown section is free.

After an exciting pre-convention day the soft beds of the Hilton Hotel will be mighty inviting. Friday will come early and with it our day of short-line steam operations.