

Kansas City, MO/KS
April 1-3, 2005

Friday, April 1, 2005

After picking everyone up, the club got out of Ames at around 4pm and headed south on I-35 towards Kansas City. It was a nonstop trip except for short stops in Osceola for snacks and somewhere north of Kansas City to top off the tank. Upon arriving in KC, the club met up with alumni member Paul Duncan and went out to eat before calling it a night.

Saturday, April 2, 2005

Bright and early Saturday morning, the club headed to BNSF Railway's Argentine Yard for our tour of the facilities, which was the centerpiece of the trip. While at the yard, we were able to tour several facilities. The high tower, which is the 'nerve center' of the yard, was the first stop. The tower offers a commanding view of the surrounding facilities. Next stop was the hump, which is where cars are pushed over a hill and routed to the bowl tracks one by one using gravity for power. At several locations on these tracks retarders slow the cars to ensure a proper coupling speed once the cars reach the existing cuts of cars in the bowl tracks.

After the tours of the classification facilities, the club toured the Argentine diesel shops. It is here where the maintenance crews do all they can to ensure a train gets the locomotives it needs to get out of the yard on time. We saw the covered servicing facility where engines are fueled, sanded and prepared for the road. We were then taken into the shop where regular inspections are carried out and heavier repairs made.

Our tour ended with at the BNSF Argentine Intermodal Facility. Here we got to experience the extreme coordination and skills it takes to get those Z trains out on time. To the outsider it looked like chaos, but it was in fact highly controlled. The degree of computerization the facility had was amazing. Before leaving, we snapped a group shot in front of the intermodal offices.

After leaving Argentine, we grabbed lunch and headed to a local hobby shop, Doc's Caboose. This small, but well stocked store was in an area of town that looked appropriately like a model railroad called West Bottoms. Old multi-story brick warehouses lined the narrow streets. There was evidence of alleyway rail spurs that once fed the industries that were in the area.

When we were done browsing the hobby shop, the group headed off to Santa Fe Junction. A new flyover has been added to the Junction since our last visit, bringing the total number of levels to three. At one point during our stay, there were four separate trains moving at once. Talk about action! The first train was a BNSF coal empty led by BNSF 5636. Next, NS 9026 came over the highest flyover with a long RoadRailer bound for Fort Worth, TX. As the NS run-through was going over the high flyover, a UP coal train came over the lower flyover going the opposite direction. The next train to come through Santa Fe Junction was a BNSF intermodal train which also utilized the highest

flyover. A KCS train was seen moving in the distance at the opposite end of the junction and another BNSF coal empty came through on the ground level tracks.

After the buzz of activity, we decided to move west of Argentine Yard for some trains that were waiting to depart. This area has 4 main tracks; 3 on a low grade and one on a high grade. We learned the high main was built as protection from flooding from the nearby Kansas (Kaw) River. The first train of many was a westbound manifest led by BNSF 4807. Next up was the eastbound BNSF 874. Following on the heels of the 4807 was the BNSF 730 with an 'earthworm' grain train we had seen earlier at SF Jct. The last train before we changed positions was a short manifest led by BNSF 6793. Note the last engine on that train is BNSF 7023, a one-of-a-kind ex-BN SD40-2 wreck rebuild that received an SD45 carbody.

Moving a couple of miles west, the first train the club witnessed was the same RoadRailer that we had seen at Santa Fe Junction. The next notable train was a light power move on the high line that featured four ATSF painted B23-7's, a BNSF GP10 (one of 15), a BNSF GP28 and an NS C40-8. Following the light power, BNSF 4730 led 3 other units on an eastbound stacker. Our last train before heading for dinner was the BNSF 4952 on another eastbound stack train. After dinner, the club decided to head to Kansas City Union Station to look around the magnificent structure. After walking through the interior of the station, the club set up for some night shots of the KCS FP9A #34 that is on display trackside. While there, the last Amtrak St. Louis-Kansas City "Anne Rutledge" for the night dropped off its passengers, left to wye the train and returned to tie up at the station. Meanwhile, the classic 'Western Auto' sign beacons behind the station.

Sunday, April 3, 2005

When we got up on Sunday morning, our first task was to drive to where KCS/ICE's Knoche Yard and UP's Neff Yard are located. We did a drive by of each of the facilities. Next we headed east over towards Birmingham Junction. Birmingham is where the joint UP/ICE trackage crosses the NS (BNSF trackage rights) tracks. When we pulled up there was a southbound UP manifest apparently tied down just north of the junction. After arriving a light NS engine moved west across the plant. Shortly after, more rumbling could be heard in the distance. What appeared was a great lash-up of 2 former ATSF B23-7's and a barely patched BNSF SD40-2. They were hauling a cut of autoracks on a transfer to NS's Voltz Mixing Center. After this train went through, we headed off towards the club's favorite Missouri town: Henrietta.

On the drive towards Henrietta we saw a BNSF coal train on the NS tracks near Missouri City. We ended up missing the turn for the road we usually take into town, so that took us a little farther north along the BNSF Brookfield Sub. There are some amazing cuts along the BNSF that we didn't get to explore. Turning south at Richmond, we arrived in Henrietta with little delay. The first train was an NS led westbound stack train, with white brow 2617 leading. A few of us went up onto the overpass walkway for the next trains. An eastbound BNSF stack train slowed through town. This train set out his Fort Madison block on the siding in town, then got back underway. As the eastbound

was setting out his cars, a westbound was on the horizon over on the NS main. When this train appeared, it turned out to be another BNSF stack train with a decent cut of auto frames on the head end. You can see the stacker setting out in the background. As the stopped train was pumping his air, this westbound Z-train flew through town doing every bit of the track speed. Our last train in Henrietta was an eastbound BNSF auto train with BNSF 6890 on the NS.

On the way back towards Kansas City to head home, we heard a detector go off. We quickly turned around and went to the last road crossing. BNSF 4055 rushed through with 3 sister Dash 9's on a Z-train. High speed intermodal is what the ex-Santa Fe is all about. With that train past, we headed for lunch in town and started the drive back north to Ames. We all agreed that it was a good trip, with lots of variety and action throughout.