

Lincoln and Omaha
April 2nd - 4th, 2004

The club left Ames after our Friday afternoon classes were over, which was about 4pm. Just past Ogden, we noted a westbound baretable near the new West Ogden crossovers. Deciding to try and catch it at Beaver, we pulled up to the crossing and waited. There was also an eastbound Z train stopped short of the crossing. After hearing some conversations on the scanner, we found out the switches at the crossover were locked in the diverging positions and would not line straight. Dispatcher 19 gave the crew permission to take manual control of the crossovers, which is a time consuming process, so we decided to continue west on Highway 30. We saw a few more trains as we were on the road, including a manifest with one of the two remaining unpatched SP SD70M's. We pulled into MO Valley and grabbed some McD's. After eating, we made our way down to the Amtrak station in Omaha to meet up with a friend and also with member Lee, who is on an internship there. Lee graciously allowed the rest of the club to crash at his apartment. After seeing a couple trains, we headed to the apartment.

Saturday morning started out by driving south towards Lincoln. Our first rail encounter was checking out the UP Omaha Sub in Elkhorn, NE. We didn't spend any time in the town, but there are a couple nice old elevators to work with. Continuing south, our first train was parked at Ashland, where the BNSF Creston, Omaha, and Sioux City Subdivisions meet. Just a couple miles south, we saw a rail train and pulled off to grab a shot. We passed a Z train that was just starting to pull after stopping for a signal. The club decided to head to the next town of Greenwood to shoot this train. An MRL SD45 was the second unit on the train. Hearing some radio traffic, we knew there were some more trains headed our way. Shortly after, the rail train that we had seen passed us. The next train was an empty coal 1x1 with BN SD70MAC's on both ends. At this point, we headed into Lincoln, checking out a pair of SW15's at the Havelock Car Shops, one an unpatched BN and the other a Pumpkin. Just before noon, the club visited two hobby shops in the area, with almost all of us dropping some money on new toys! After lunch, the clouds were clearing out of the area. We took a peek at the impressive Lincoln Yard and headed out west of town. Our first stop was an overpass just west of the hamlet of Emerald. Our first train was an eastbound coal load, with BN 9568 and BNSF 9647 as the power. As many of you know, 9647 is the so called "Vomit Bonnet". It is a one of a kind engine that was experimentally painted shortly after the merger of the BN and ATSF. The train rolled to a stop at the next crossing, so we took opportunity to head down there and get some roster shots of the rare unit. After heading back to the bridge, we were greeted by a westbound empty that we had passed when we explored Cushman, the west end of the Lincoln Yard. After seeing one more eastbound, we decided to find a new location. We ended up on a gravel road a little southwest of our previous location. This also happened to be one of the local haunts for some of the Lincoln area railfans who maintain websites, so it may look familiar. The next train that appeared was also led by a SD70MAC, BN 9628. These BN 70MAC's are still quite common, a pleasant surprise for club members. We continued to follow the gravel west toward Milford, missing a fair amount of railroad traffic in the process. There was talk of an eastbound on the scanner, so we drove through Milford, got lost a little, but eventually got out of

town, getting to a spot just in time to hop out and get a shot of FURX 7222. We ended up beating him back to town by about the same margin as we had beat him to the previous location. I hopped out and grabbed this shot of him rounding the curve in town. The engineer was waving at us even before we had the opportunity to wave. All of the BNSF crews were very friendly, most throwing the windows open and giving us a wave. Deciding we were far enough west, we guided the van back towards downtown. There is a nice display at the Amtrak station in Lincoln that includes boxcars from every BN predecessor as well as this CB&Q 4-6-0. After the club had browsed the depot, we slowly headed back northward, getting dangerously close to the University of Nebraska! We were in the heart of Husker territory this entire trip, most of us wearing as much ISU paraphernalia as we could put on! We had no problems and actually met a few ISU alums. At Court Street, we found 3 H2 leaders all lined up waiting for crews. A bit farther up, an empty had just stopped awaiting the previously photographed trains departure. As we headed north on Highway 6, we passed 1 or 2 westbound trains, letting them get by, but we did a 180 when we saw an empty being led by 2 Dash 9's. Going back to Greenwood, we set up at the northernmost crossing in town and waited a few minutes for the train to appear in perfect afternoon light. After the train had passed, we continued north back to Ashland, where our day had started. We parked and saw 4 more trains, 3 westbounds and one eastbound. Two of the westbounds were led by BNSF 9776 and BN 9609. After those trains, we headed back into Omaha and grabbed the traditional Pizza Hut dinner.

Sunday morning was beautiful. We started out at the Amtrak station, and took looks at the CNIC and Iowa Interstate yards in Council Bluffs, and the BNSF Gibson yard in Omaha. In the IAIS yard was a Creston, Iowa Coop pink hopper. UP 6936 had just dropped off the passenger cars it had hauled across the country during the night, so all the cars were still outside the Heritage Park facility. Heading back to the Amtrak depot, we walked to the end of the platform and were surprised when a turkey kicked out of some of the brush, ran, and flew away! Remember this is downtown Omaha! On the trip home we saw a few trains along the UP E/W main. UP 5028 leading a Z train westward, UP 3054 on an MPRCB, UP 8091 on an eastbound coal load, and UP 8121 meeting a coal load on the Arcadia Curve near Carroll.

All in all, this trip was one of the most productive trips the club has taken in a while. The weather was gorgeous, something that almost never happens on club trips. The trains were plentiful and I think everyone had a good time. As usual, there may be some extras in the near future as film and slides are developed by fellow members.