

##### Omaha and Lincoln Area #####

April 4-6, 2008

**Friday, April 4th, 2008**

Shortly after the 4:00PM last-class “bell”, the Iowa State Railroad Club was on the road for our annual spring trip. We headed west toward Omaha where we would meet up with an alumni member for a weekend of railfanning around the Lincoln-Omaha area. We were graciously offered us the use of his living room floor for sleeping and we would also have the opportunity to “play trains” on his new HO scale DCC switching layout.

We decided to travel west along U.S. Highway 30 which parallels the Union Pacific mainline for the entire length of western Iowa. Shortly before reaching Grand Junction, we came upon our first train, an eastbound with UP 3300 trailing. We managed a quick shot as the train went flying past us in the opposite direction. UP 3300 is dressed in a fancy red, white and blue paint scheme, and is the only locomotive like it on the UP roster. Just east of Missouri Valley, we caught UP 5077 leading an eastbound stacker. After grabbing something to eat in town, we continued across the river to Omaha. From there, we decided to drive downtown and sit at the depot for some evening train watching. We had hoped to catch Amtrak, however, after waiting for over an hour, we learned that Amtrak had lost considerable time and would not arrive for at least another 40 minutes. With that disappointing news, the group decided to call it a day, and head back where we spent the remainder of the evening testing out the new layout.

**Saturday, April 5th, 2008**

After grabbing breakfast at McDonald’s, our group proceeded west to the small town of Greenwood where we spotted our first train of the day led by BNSF 4845. We caught a few other trains here including a westbound coal empty led by BNSF9988, the highlight of the morning was a westbound coal led by BN 9403, one of the very few remaining Burlington Northern locomotives that have yet to be patched to BNSF. Moving a short distance west, we caught Amtrak’s eastbound California Zephyr headed toward Omaha. From here, we headed into Lincoln, and visited two of the local hobby shops where everyone opened their wallets to purchase some new toys. After grabbing lunch, we continued west to the overpass at Emerald. Shortly after arriving, we again spotted BN 9403 continuing its westbound journey. Being that the BN units are disappearing fast, we could not resist taking additional pictures of this locomotive. A short while later we spotted eastbound BNSF 5691 leading a short cut of ethanol tanks. After seeing three more trains from this location, all of them loaded coal; we heard some chatter on the scanner that alerted us to a westbound being led by a brand new locomotive. On our return to downtown Lincoln, we took a quick spin past the Havelock Shops before stopping at a trackside parking lot. We didn’t have to wait long before we saw a coal empty being led by BNSF 9148, a very fresh SD70ACe. Not long afterwards, we were greeted with another coal empty, being led by a brand new SD70ACe. From Lincoln, we decided to head north toward Fremont, but on the way out of town we immediately spotted an oncoming coal empty with a BNSF Warbonnet leading. Too late to get photos,

we turned around and headed back to Lincoln hoping to grab a shot of this leader. After a lengthy wait and seeing nothing, we followed the tracks back through town and discovered the Warbonnet parked downtown near the university. Since it was getting late, we decided that it was probably time to start heading back to Omaha, but first we decided that a stop in Ashland was in order. Not long after arriving, we saw an eastbound coal, again with two new SD70ACes leading and BNSF 9888 carrying out its duties as a DPU. After returning to Omaha, we all went out for a nice supper before returning to do some more operating on the switching layout.

### **Sunday, April 6th, 2008**

We awoke to cloudy skies, and so decided to see what we could find around the Omaha area. Our first stop was Gibson yard, where we spotted these Geeps switching a long cut of cars. The club then continued to the other side of the river to the BNSF Council Bluffs subdivision where we caught our next train led by BNSF 2808. Just a few miles down the road, we caught a solid grain train pulled by a one-unit-wonder with BNSF 684 doing the honors. Continuing on, we found what we had heard on the radio earlier in the day, a KCS leader with a solid unit of freshly painted KCS hoppers. We were all impressed with the amount of traffic this BNSF line had to offer in such a short period of time, being that it was single track and on a Sunday. From there, we checked out the Iowa Interstate yard, being greeted with the usual IAIS power idling outside the building. After lunch, we bid our friend farewell and began our return trip to Ames, following U.S. Highway 30 the entire way. The first westbound train we encountered was a coal empty led by UP 6037. Just past Denison we caught UP 5422 passing an eastbound auto train. Everyone agreed this was a good trip, offering a wide variety of operation activity, motive power and photo opportunities.