
FEVR FLASH

EASTERN NEBRASKA CHAPTER NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1835 N. SOMERS, FREMONT, NE 68025

JUNE, 2002

POINTS OF CONTACT:

Eastern Nebraska Chapter and Fremont and Elkhorn Valley Railroad (FEVR) - (402-727-0615) - 1835 N. Somers, Fremont, NE 68025

Fremont Dinner Train (402-727-8321 or 1-800-942-7245) - 650 N. H St., Fremont, NE 68025

JULY EVENTS:

July 4th:

Enjoy an old- fashioned small town celebration in Hooper- a special train will leave Fremont at 7:30 PM, July 4th, for Hooper to arrive for the annual fireworks display. Return about 11:00 PM.

John C. Fremont Days:

Fremont will celebrate the annual **John C. Fremont Days on July 12, 13, and 14**. The festivities honor the adventurer/explorer of the same name. Many activities, including a large parade, are featured during the event. The Fremont and Elkhorn Valley trains will operate on **special schedules** on all days. All special trains are to Nickerson, Nebraska, about 15 miles round trip and one and one-half hours long. On **Friday, July 12**, the train departs from the depot at 1835 N. Somers at 4 PM. Departures on **Saturday, July 13** are at 9:30 AM, 11:30 AM, 1:30 PM, and 3:30 PM. On **Sunday, July 14**, the special train departs at 10:30 AM. **Reduced fares** for the special trains- \$5 for adults, \$3 for children. The regular fare **Sunday** Hooper bound excursion train leaves the depot at 1:00 PM and departs on the main line at 1:30 PM. Watch local media for detailed event announcements or call the **Chamber of Commerce** at 402-721-2641.

EXCURSION TRAVEL:

Regular excursion travel continues with departures on **Saturdays** and **Sundays**. The Saturday trip to Nickerson is a round trip of about two

and one-half hours with the option of a visit to the Nickerson antique shop. The Sunday trip of about 30 miles is three and one-half hours long with time to visit Hooper's historic main street. Trips board at the depot at **1 PM** and leave on the mainline at **1:30 PM**. Reservations for excursion trips recommended. Charters available- call the depot.

HOOPER SHELTER:

As reported in the previous issue, the new shelter constructed in Hooper, Nebraska, through the efforts of **Benjamin M. Wagner** of Boy Scouts of America Troop 42 was dedicated on **May 26** (see photo of event in this issue). State Senator **Ramon Janssen** provided the keynote address and discussed the history of railroad towns like Hooper. Members and friends of the Eastern Nebraska Chapter were in attendance along with **Larry Ruwe**, mayor of Hooper. The Chapter extends appreciation to Ben and all who helped in adding this convenient facility.

RAIL SCHOOL:

Each issue of this publication features information about railroads. This time the subject is the **automatic car coupler**- which along with the air brake (to be discussed in a later issue) has made modern rail operations possible.

After the development of locomotives around 1830, it became necessary to have a device to couple them and rail cars together. The first development was the **"link and pin"** device. Each rail car was equipped with a metal drawbar protruding from the car frame end. The outermost end of this bar had a **horizontal slot** which was intercepted with a **vertical hole**. When two railcars were to be coupled, an elongated metal ring (the link resembling a chain link) was inserted in the drawbar slot of one car and secured by a metal pin through the vertical hole. As the other car approached, a person

went between the cars and held the link so that it entered the horizontal slot of the approaching unit exactly at the right time when a pin would in turn be dropped to secure the link in the coupled car. This was a **dangerous operation**, leading to loss of life and loss of fingers and hands of the workers. In the days of unorganized, cheap, and plentiful labor this was probably not as great a concern as was the fact that the device was weak as trains grew in size and it took time.

Many worked on a solution, but the ultimate one can be attributed to **Eli Janney**, Civil War veteran and store clerk in Atlanta. He received a patent in **1873** on his unit.

The **working idea** can be envisioned by forming one's hands into fists, holding the knuckles of the fists together, rotating one first 180 degrees, slightly opening the fingers, hooking the fingers together, and then reclosing the fists.

In the **actual coupler**, the movable part (the knuckle) is locked into place by a pin which will fall into place by gravity when coupling (hence automatic) and can be safely lifted to uncouple by a "pin lifter" rod which extends to the side of the car.

If the coupling of the cars is gentle, the pin can be heard to drop (hence the expression **"so quiet you can hear a pin drop"**).

Railroad acceptance was not immediate, but was finalized by the federal **Railroad Safety Appliance Act of 1893**. The construction has been **standardized** so all couplers will connect with all others in use. It has been adopted many places world-wide, but some countries (Europe and some former colonies) use a modification of the link and pin yet. Buffers (like the two protrusions on the front of Thomas) and a turn-buckle arrangement are used.

Although the coupler is very strong, the **knuckles can be broken** with poor train handling.



RAILSCENE: Chapter President Shirley Angermund accepting Hooper Station shelter project from Scout Ben Wagner, May 26, 2002. State Senator Ramon Janssen and Hooper Mayor Larry Ruwe at Left.
