
FEVR FLASH

EASTERN NEBRASKA CHAPTER NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1835 N. SOMERS, FREMONT, NE 68025

SEPTEMBER, 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

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.

NOTE: The **regular** excursion travel season is scheduled to close at the end of **October**. Any extension will depend upon the conditions of Nebraska's weather. **BUT-** if your plans include an excursion train experience, it should be planned for no later than October.

CHARTER SERVICES:

There have been **29** charter events this operating season up to the current date. **Twelve** trips were school events and on one trip the entire train was reserved for a group. Caboose charters can accommodate **22** persons while the excursion cars can accommodate a total of **164**. Charters which occur coincident with the regular excursion schedules during the operating season are the most easily arranged and **one week's** reservation notice can generally be sufficient. For charters at other times, at least **two week's** reservation notice is required since such a trip will involve calling a special operating crew from the volunteers who may ordinarily have conflicting commitments. A **50% advance deposit** is normally required on

charter reservations. As previously announced, it is planned to offer caboose charters which will operate with the scheduled dinner train trips. The **Fremont Dinner Train** maintains a trip schedule **all year** with the exception of a two week period in January. Fares for charters vary, so inquiry should be made by contacting the railroad office at 402-727-0625.

TIE MACHINE:

The cross ties upon which the rails of the railroad are laid require periodic replacement because of wear and deterioration caused by the elements. A future issue of the **FEVRFLASH** will provide information on the ties themselves.

Replacement of these ties is one of the most time consuming, difficult, and strenuous tasks confronting **Maintenance of Way (MOW)** crews when performed "the old fashioned way"- with hand labor. On large railroads, this task is performed by automated machinery which small railroads like the FEVR cannot afford. Such machines can cost **\$15000-\$100000** even on the used market.

When inventor and master machinist **B.H. Hesemann** of Orleans, Nebraska, offered the use of his tie replacement machine, the offer was met with understandable enthusiasm. The unit, which is **50 years old**, has been delivered to the FEVR, and has gone through work trials. (See photograph on outside of this issue.) This unit, built at a small fraction of the cost of large commercial units, could be replicated today at a cost a small railroad could afford. Mr. Hesemann's consideration is **very much appreciated-** watch for updates!

RAIL SCHOOL:

Each issue of this publication features information about railroads. Previous issues discussed Westinghouse's **1869** air brake invention and subsequent improvements to the system. Since the

operation of the conventional freight train brakes depends upon a pressure reduction in the train brake pipe, any **obstruction** in the line preventing the reduction signal from propagating from the locomotive to the end of the train will result in partial braking- possibly leading to a severe accident. (A train crew lost their lives some years ago in Nebraska when a train line froze after departure).

When occupied cabooses traveled with trains, the **crew** there could verify line pressure conditions and, if necessary, apply train brakes from there. When the caboose disappeared, it was replaced by a **portable device** inserted in the coupler of the last train car- the unit that provides the flashing red light on the end of the train. This unit originally provided a **pressure reading** by radio to the locomotive, but later improvements made it possible for the end unit to **apply** brakes by radio command from the locomotive- thus preventing the type of accident mentioned.

The newest development in freight train braking is the **electronic control** of brake application. Although compressed air still provides the force to apply brakes, the application is controlled by **electrical signals**. All train brakes are applied at the same time, preventing possible damage and derailment. Since the air line pressure is not reduced, **recharge** of stored air in car reservoirs can continue even when brakes are applied- not possible under usual systems. Trains can be stopped in as little as **one-third** of the distance possible with conventional brakes. In addition to the safety benefits, trains can be run faster and closer together, expediting traffic.

The electronic systems require **electrical power** to each car, provided either by cable connection from the locomotive or by car generators. In addition, cable or wireless electrical **control systems** must be provided and so application has been limited. Different systems are not interoperable, either.



RAILSCENE: Mr. B. H. Hesemann operating the tie replacing unit. As the new tie is pushed under the track (right side of photo), the old tie is forced out (seen emerging from under track left side of photo).
