

Midwest Central Railroad

ORDER BOARD

Distributed to Friends and Members of the MCRR

December 2004

IOWA CABOOSE FINDS NEW HOME AT MIDWEST CENTRAL

by Jesse VanWinkle

The Midwest Central RR has added a new piece of rolling stock to its collection. Bellevue and Cascade caboose 055 is now sitting at home in our shop. This is a genuine Iowa narrow gauge car. Built by Ohio Falls Car Co. around 1880 it served on the Bellevue and Cascade in NE Iowa until the line closed in 1936. It was their only caboose. After the

B&C shut down one of its engineers bought the caboose and kept it on his property as storage. It sat outside rotting away for decades before being moved to Maquoketa in the 60s. By this time its condition was very bad.



Around 1980 Jim Schroeder purchased what was left of the car and got to work on what became a very complete and impressive restoration. He meticulously replaced all the rotten wood creating an exact copy of each piece. He reused what hardware he could but nearly all the wood is new. When finished he used the car as sort of a guesthouse.

Phil Borleske contacted the Schroeder family some time ago and got the ball rolling on this project. Mrs. Schroeder was moving this fall and the family needed to find a home for the caboose. Right after the reunion Matt Crull and Jesse VanWinkle drove to Bellevue to talk to the family and look the

caboose over. The family felt the MCRR would provide a good home for the car and plans were started on transporting it. This would be the hard part. Hiring an outfit to truck it would be very expensive because of its size and the location it sat in – up a steep driveway with trees around it. After much brainstorming Matt came up with a combine

head trailer that could be rented. It was nearly the right length with the wheels at the body bolsters of the car and it sat low enough that height would not be a problem. Mounts that bolted to the trailer were

fabricated as soon as Ghost Train was over.

In November Matt and Marvin Crull, Jerry Crouch, Larry Raid, Dan Hagist, Dave Osier, and Jesse VanWinkle headed to Bellevue and loaded up the car. Mark Crull provided the trucks to pull the trailers, and all the tools. The caboose was jacked up, and the trucks rolled out and loaded. The mounts for the trailer were then finished and the trailer rolled underneath. This took most of Saturday; Sunday was spent on the road. We took it slow and everything went very well. We pulled into Mt. Pleasant Sunday afternoon. The move was a big success.

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The Order Board is a newsletter of the Midwest Central Railroad. Photos and articles may be submitted to the Midwest Central Railroad office or to the Editor. The Order Board reserves the right to edit for length and clarity. Any opinions expressed are those of the author and may or may not reflect the opinion of the Board of Directors.

The Midwest Central Railroad was incorporated in 1960 as a non-profit educational organization, dedicated to the preservation and operation of narrow gauge steam powered railroad equipment. Donations of cash or materials are welcomed and are tax-deductible under section 501(c)3 of the federal tax code.

**If you have articles,
 photographs, or story
 ideas for the next issue
 of the Order Board,
 please send them to the
 Editor or to MCRR at
 P.O. Box 102,
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**FROM THE SHOP — “STEAM RULES!”
 by Greg Roth**

For most of you stating that steam rules is simply a known fact that you have supported for many years but steam recently “lived-on” at MCRR. The North Pole Express provided many volunteers with a new opportunity this last December, the chance to run steam in the cold.

The first night of the North Pole Express saw very clear skies and very cool temperatures. The #9 grudgingly gave in to being pulled out into the cold but was very temperamental. The oil took on a thicker consistency and almost refused to leave the fuel bunker, the boiler had a frosty chill to the touch, and the water almost appeared slushy. Of course these are slight exaggerations, except the oil, but they all provide a way to visualize what had not happened before.

As the #9 slowly, very very slowly heated to the point of making steam, President Crull climbed into the cab to talk about this run. He laid out how the train was going to operate and then provided a piece of historical significance that, at first, did not register its importance. He told me that prior to this date, the MCRR had never run steam in December. It was another first for the railroad, another growth of sorts. Of course the idea of running a train in December is not new but it had previously been pulled by a diesel switcher. For all of us involved it was an exciting experience. And then the true excitement came to life.

With steam up on the #9 we hooked onto the train in the south station and headed north. It was clear that this was going into new territory. There was white coming out of the smoke stack and there was still a fire in the firebox. The white clouds out of the stack swirled into two columns with the right column rotating clockwise and the left column rotating counter-clockwise. Behind the tender they parted creating a v-shape that had before not been observed. The water in the tender had to be blown back to keep the injectors working and the fuel had to be agitated to provide a consistent flow. Yes it was December and it was cold.

As we came around the horse buildings you could see the vehicles parked by the north end that had brought the first train of riders and then we were faced with the most pleasant and reinforcing site and reception. As the #9 climbed the hill into the north village the children on the loading platform began to cheer, clap, and jump up and down. The first night started at 6 p.m. and it was getting fairly dark. As we rolled into the north station flash bulbs from many cameras lit the night and it was clear that this was a special run in the hearts of the young and the old alike.

After the #9 had successfully pulled the passengers to the North Pole and back, the train emptied and a bee line made straight for the engine. With every stop, except one when it was raining, children and parents flocked to the engine to get their picture taken and catch a glimpse inside

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the cab. I have always felt that if we are to survive we must introduce the next generation to steam and the fun that can be had by riding a steam train. I was overwhelmed by the response of the kids and parents and we tried to accommodate as many with pictures and tours of the cab as we could before departing once more for the North Pole. Since North Pole Express I have heard statistics about the success of this year's run and one in particular explains much of the passengers' response. I was told that most of the passengers were from out of Mount Pleasant or even out of the state of Iowa. To them this was all new and obviously made a grand first impression.



I know that there has been much discussion about running steam or running the diesel for the North Pole Express and that there are pros and cons for each side. I also know that I have not been part of it since this year due to the fact that I was not checked out to run the switcher. But unless someone can convince me that the diesel switcher was received with cheers of joy and flashing lights of the Christmas season, I say STEAM RULES! To uphold the historical nature of this railroad and its successful future I would like to see steam in December a permanent part of the North Pole Express.

Until next year, with the joy of the children still in my heart, I wish you all a very Merry Christmas.

THE NORTH POLE EXPRESS *by Makenzie Crull*

"All aboard to the North Pole," a conductor said as we were getting ready to leave Mt. Pleasant. We were heading on a long journey, full of fun and excitement.

First off, before we left, all our special guests had to sign in to know which special coach they would be on. All the coaches had names like Rudolph, Candy Cane, and Snowflake. However, my favorite was the Candy Cane coach, we had fun with snowball fights.

When the train started we would sing Christmas Carols such as: Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer, Deck the Halls, I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus, everybody's favorite - Jingle Bells, and much more.

When we arrived at the North Pole we were read The Polar Express by the elves. After that we ventured around the North Pole. You could make elf hats, see Santa, have milk and cookies, and go to the gift shop.

One of my favorites was when Lotty Crull, an elf, said to a little girl that the milk would make her ears grow. After awhile the little girl came back with big elf ears. She told Lotty that the milk really did work.

When you went to see Santa you received a gold bell. He told the boys and girls they would always hear the bell if they believed in him.

"All aboard!" Time to file back to the coaches. We were on our way back to Mt. Pleasant. Of course, on our way back we sang carols.

When we were unloading for everyone to go home, Madysinn Crull said there was a little boy who cried because he didn't want to get back on the train, but didn't want to get off when we were in Mt. Pleasant.

I hope all the kids had a wonderful time, and you too. Merry Christmas!



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CABOOSE FINDS NEW HOME AT MCRR

(Continued from page 1)

It is back on the rails now and should receive work this winter. It will need truck and brake work among other things before being added to our trains. Hopefully next summer will see it in service. The caboose is nearly all that is left of the B&C, or any narrow gauge in Iowa for that matter, so it will make a great addition to our museum. A big thanks to all that were involved.



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