

MAINE LINE

A Publication for the Friends of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad

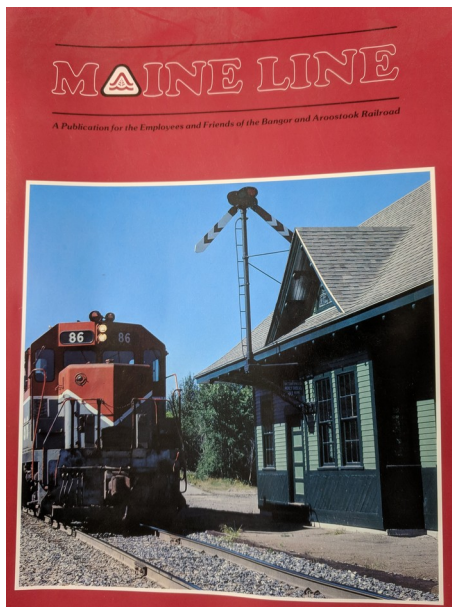


Talking It Over



Twenty-eight years ago, with the Fall 1990 issue of the Maine Line, the Bangor and Aroostook railroad ceased production after 38 years. The catalyst for this was the retirement of the late Richard Sprague, who had edited the magazine for the B&A for 30 years. What is truly amazing to me is the astounding amount of history that happened to the B&A after the fall 1990 issue. Richard Sprague's final issue, a copy of which I am referencing as I write this, does cover the revitalization of the Oakfield Station and the preparations for the upcoming centennial celebrations, but the magazine would not survive to cover the actual events. Most of the issues of the Maine Line were exclusively black and white – with color covers or color highlights. The Fall 1990 issue had its cover done in full color. Bruce Owen Nett contributed a fine photograph, featuring the Oakfield station and locomotive 86 headed Northbound past it. It was a great way to end on a high note – with articles about good things happening around the railroad and the promise of celebration to come. In this issue, we take you back to Oakfield and fill in 28 years worth of accumulated history, in the words of those who today are responsible for keeping this historic part of the B&A's history around for the generations to come.

-Joey Kelley, Editor



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About the Cover:

NB Southern lettered locomotive
8144 charges into the darkness
of Oakfield yard past the station
on the night of May 22, 2018
Joey Kelley, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com

**Creating Oakfield
Historical Society:**

Art Collier

Feature Article:

A Labor of Love: Part Two

The story of the rebirth of
Oakfield station and the creation
of the Oakfield Historical Society

<http://mainelinemagazine.joeykelleyphoto.com>

CREATING OAKFIELD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BY ART COLLIER



1950s Passenger train at Oakfield Station – Photo by Richard Sprague, Collection of Oakfield Historical Society

Bangor and Aroostook passenger train service ended on September 4, 1961. Not long thereafter stations along the 239 miles of track from Bangor to Van Buren began to be dismantled and torn down. Passenger train stations in mid-1930's and 40's numbered approximately 31 along the many miles of rails that wound through villages and hamlets from Bangor's depot on the Penobscot River to Van Buren on the St. John River.



Richard B. "Dick" Gassett shot this picture of Oakfield Station on June 1st, 1980, from an excursion train. JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection

Oakfield station was destined to receive the wrecking ball. It was just a matter of time. In the end it was spared for 20 years as the old depot was used by the railroad's signals crews. The station was in the right location to serve as communications crew headquarters to those workers going in both north and south. Maintenance and upkeep of the building was not a priority for the company.

In 1985 Richard Sprague, Vice President of Marketing/Public Relations,

wrote me a letter advising that the company would be removing the building as they had no more use for it. However, he remembered the conversations he had with Herb Cleaves and me a few years previously about the possible interest to retain the building and conserve it for historical purposes. In his letter he stated that the railroad would also like to see the station preserved for historical purposes as it was one of only a very few still remaining in Maine and was considered to be a classic railroad building. He stated the B & A would give it to the town or a concerned group, such as the members of a historical society, if one were created. The company gave us time to decide if there was local interest and if we could come up with a plan to take the building, restore and maintain it long term.

It was “crunch time” and we had to move fast. I wrote letters to several people in Oakfield area. Retirees and family members of deceased B & A employees were contacted as well as business people. Much interest was shown and an organizational meeting was held in late September, 1986 at the Oakfield Fire Station. Approximately 20 people attended. We decided to move forward by forming the Oakfield Historical Society which would allow Bangor & Aroostook Railroad to transfer the station and ground area to OHS for \$1.00. The charter was written as a Non-Profit 501(C)3 Corporation dated November 26, 1986. We had an election of officers in May, 1987. Natalie McGraw was our first president. Avis Brannen, vice president, Glenice Bowen, treasurer, Alice Reynolds, secretary, and Connie Bartlett, correspondence secretary. Also present at this meeting were: Clyde Boutilier, Edward Kennedy, William McGraw, Gene Lawlor, Claude Crandall, Perley Malone, James Sholler, Norman Clark, Dennis Small, Evelyn Johnson, Audrey Benn and Pansy Burton, and myself.

Our first objective was to apply to the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (MHPC) in Augusta for grant money to start the renovations. There were many challenges! Before the grant application was approved we had to hire an architect to oversee the project. An architect was recommended to us by Roger Reed, Associate Director of MHPC. Sylvanus Doughty of MAINEFORM Architecture, in Gardiner, ME came up

to survey the project and familiarize us with rules and regulations. It soon became known that the project would require a lot of funds to restore the old building to MHPC requirements and a lot of volunteer man hours. In 1987 all we did was prepare for the project to begin as soon as funds became available. It was estimated that it could take 3-4 years to complete the necessary restoration work.

Herb Cleaves and Kip Swallow were invaluable in helping to write the grant application. The estimated total cost was \$14,000. We needed to raise \$7,000 and the grant would match that. Our fundraising efforts commenced.

Oakfield Historical Society



Courtesy of Bangor & Aroostook Railroad

Photo by Bruce Owen Nett

1988 Heritage Calendar

First Edition

The Cover of the 1988 OHS calendar – Photo by Art Collier

In 1988 we produced our first Oakfield Historical Society Heritage Calendar. An 8"x11" wall calendar. The first calendar was the beginning of a huge and successful fundraising project. We sold a front cover

sponsorship and 12 monthly page sponsorships to businesses for \$100 each. Individual memberships were \$25.00 which included a free calendar. Six hundred calendars were ordered each year for a few years. (2015 calendar was our 27th and last calendar).

Sylvanus Doughty, architect with MAINEFORM Architecture, made numerous trips to Oakfield to outline the restoration work. The opinions of cost were based on all work being done by outside contractors with no volunteer labor involved. Grand total cost was stated to be \$19,957. This grand total figure included the removal of asbestos containing roof shingles from entire roof which had to occur in accordance with federal, state, and local statutes, regulations and ordinances. Also included, was repair sheathing and eave woodwork, and re-sheathing of entire roof in appropriate material. Needless to say, there was about to be a stop-action on our part. Raising that amount of money to hire all outside contractors to do the work was beyond our hopes and expectations.

The project got delayed for about two years while we scurried to raise money and during that time Mr. Doughty became very acquainted with Clyde Boutilier and was able to see his abilities to rip, strip, tear, paint, and repair just about anything. Thus, Clyde and his army of volunteers set out to repair the old station. They were soon recognized to be as qualified to do the restoration work as the more expensive state approved contractors. One exception was for the removal of asbestos shingles by an applicator from Caribou. Clyde and his volunteer team were able to save many thousand dollars.



Volunteers Get it done! Station Restoration photos from the collection of the Oakfield Historical Society

Our hopes and plans to have the “old station” completely restored by May 26, 1991 to be ready for the summer long Bangor & Aroostook Railroad’s 100th anniversary celebration. Our museum was officially opened on that date as the 470 Railroad Club’s excursion train stopped on their way south to Bangor. Two hundred riders and B&A dignitaries were on hand to participate in the celebration. Entertainment was provided by Ted Bither and his “Nuthin Fancy” band and a great time enjoyed by all.

Editors Note: Art Collier was the Vice President of the Oakfield Historical Society until 2017. He has been an enthusiastic supporter of this new Maine Line Magazine and I particularly thank him for that!

A LABOR OF LOVE, PART TWO

BY DAN BROWN

In the last issue of Maine Line Magazine, Dick Sprague wrote an article, titled "A Labor Of Love". It described how in 1979 Herb Cleaves and Arthur Collier started toying with the idea of saving the historic 1910 Oakfield Depot. We pick up the story where Art's article above left off.



B&A 67, Oakfield Railroad Museum, May 20, 2018, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com

After the Grand Opening the museum received even more donations. A Fairmont Motor Car BAR #67 came from one of the BARCO offices. In 1992, the Bangor and Aroostook donated completely restored caboose C66. C66 was built by the B&A using parts from a refrigerated boxcar around 1948. At the same time, the B&A donated the scale replica Oakfield

Station that had been used as a parade float in 1991. Both were placed on land adjacent to the main line in Oakfield. This land was leased to the Oakfield Historical Society by the B&A and included the removal of the Oakfield piggyback ramp to make room.



C 66 in Oakfield in 1992 not long after being donated. Melvin Brooks Photo – JoeyKelleyPhoto.com collection

On August 20, 2000, the newly enclosed baggage area was officially dedicated the Clyde Boutlier Reading Room and is full of historical photos and other memorabilia. The only bright spot out of the B&A's liquidation in 2003 was a spike in donations of railroad documents and artifacts. Another spike occurred when the former railroad headquarters at Northern Maine Junction had its contents auctioned off in 2015.



Maine Northern's Santa Train calls on Oakfield Station – 11-22-15
JoeyKelleyPhoto.com photo.

As of this writing, a new generation of directors is currently working to maintain the station. In recent years, the museum has hosted the Maine Northern Railway Christmas Trains. We open the station for the passengers to get warm. In May of 2014 the Maine Northern Railway donated a couple of passenger train excursion rides to raise money for the Museum, the first trains in 16 years to do so!

In 2013 the Owen Prince House next door to the station was acquired by the historical society. Determined to be unsafe for restoration, it was torn down. The ground was graded and has left us a lot of room for expansion. We retained the original garage building from the Prince home for conversion to another display area and to also open up a little place to serve ice cream and soda to museum patrons. Setup in a bar style, we have named it the BARR, and hope to be able to open this new addition this fall just before Labor Day 2018.

In 2015 the Oakfield Railroad Museum celebrated its 25 anniversary with a

large cookout with Ted Bither and his band to play some live music, as they did in 1991.



Oakfield Station as it appears today – photo by Arthur Collier

Looking back, the restoration of the Oakfield Depot 27 years ago was indeed an overwhelming success. Recently the Oakfield Historical society is beginning to feel the crunch of the loss of older generations. We rely specifically on donations of both money and labor to maintain the building and its contents. As Vice President of the Oakfield Historical Society, I would like to express my thanks and gratitude for all of the People who have helped in some way with this project over the last 27 years and invite anyone who would like to help out to come and see us. We are open Saturdays and Sundays 1 to 4 pm from Memorial Day to Labor Day.

Editors Note: Dan Brown was elected Vice President of the Oakfield Historical Society in April 2017 and has been on the board of directors since 2012. He is both a lifelong Oakfield Resident and the very first contributor to this reborn magazine. Thank You Dan!

From the Archives



557 Poses by Oakfield Station on an excursion run. June 1, 1980.
Photo by Richard B. "Dick" Gassett – collection of JoeyKelleyPhoto.com

Harvest Time



STATE OF MAINE
RUSSET
POTATOES.

STATE OF MAINE

Potatoes

One of the Nation's
GREATEST CROPS

Grown

in Northern
MAINE

Shipped

TO THE MARKETS OF THE WORLD

Over the lines of the

BANGOR-AROOSTOOK
RAILROAD

