

# MAINE LINE

*A Publication for the Friends of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad*



# Talking It Over

The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad was an organization that was very conscious of its public image. From sponsoring children's 'Train Races' in the 1950s to the Turkey Trains that came to be during the Buck Dumaine era and even the numerous excursion trains



run under Iron Road ownership, the public was welcome on the Bangor and Aroostook. Children were welcome on the Bangor and Aroostook – from school groups, to Operation Lifesaver and Scout troops.

It is with great joy that in this issue, we present the first issue of the Maine Line Magazine written primarily by children. Our repeat readers will no doubt recognize the source of the material – the Player Development group on St. Maarten Island.

This group has become quite enamored with the Bangor and Aroostook and “Mr. Joey” has been sending videos, letters and other things down to the “Kids on the Island”.

This issue would not have happened without the enthusiastic support of Coach Tom – the unending energy and enthusiasm of the Players of Player Development and of course, you our readers.

We hope that you will enjoy this issue and your comments and feedback are always appreciated.

-”Joey” Kelley, Editor

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Direct all Correspondence to

[joey@joeykelleyphoto.com](mailto:joey@joeykelleyphoto.com)

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Children gather around a trackmobile at Northern Maine Junction. Date unknown from the Bangor and Aroostook collection

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# ABOUT THE COVER

The Bangor and Aroostook's marketing department photo collection has proven to be an interesting mix of topics surrounding the Bangor and Aroostook. The one thing it is not is a collection of locomotive shots – rather it is a deep, often exclusive archive of photos that were not commonly taken by the general public: events, locations, not open to anyone besides employees or contracted photographers. It is from that somewhat eclectic collection that we find our cover for this issue. It is, like so many of the photos within the collection, undated, with no attached description or caption and attempts to identify the children by their pictures, seem to have fallen flat. Without much to go on – aside from approximate dates based upon the build and trade in dates of the locomotive – plus a few other educated guesses – we simply do not know what is pictured. As a result, this picture was sent to Player Development along with a brief guess on what was going on. The children then used it as a prompt, along with other photos from, we presume, the same day, to construct a story. Look for the result of their efforts elsewhere in this issue!



# ISLAND VIEW

## GUEST EDITORIAL

### BY COACH TOM BURNETT

Pick up just about any train magazine and undoubtedly you will find a letter that states the hobby is full of old men. Interest in railroading is dying - New blood is not being attracted in. These pages are a perfect example. As those who worked for the Bangor and Aroostook age and pass on to the great railroad yard in the sky, it is getting harder to get information about the Bangor and Aroostook.

Decades ago, the B&A had red, white and blue box cars painted with the words State of Maine Potatoes. The word Potatoes was changed to Products. No official source has been found to explain why. This is why it is critical to get the stories that can be told only by those who are still around to tell them written down to answer the questions of future generations.

To encourage youth in railroading the Maine Line is pleased to present an entire issue not only dedicated to the youth but also written by the Children of Player Development in St. Maarten. Yes a Caribbean Island with no trains is the home to a free after school program dedicated to helping at-risk children. The all-volunteer staff teach the children to read, write and do math. The interest in railroading starts with Thomas the Tank Engine books.

Many of the volunteers work for the local paper so they encourage the children to write stories for the paper. Fifty by-lines later the children wanted to try to get published internationally. The children do the research, an adult helps organize the story. The child writes the story and then an adult editor makes it flow, and a bit more readable. The children are shown the changes and they are explained. But ask the child if it is their story and they will tell you, "Of course!" They are proud of the work and if it goes up on social media the children follow the likes. They compare the numbers from the other stories.

The children at Player Development are fortunate. They get letters and videos from real conductors, an engineer, they read the Maine Line and visiting model railroaders bring kits and help the children improve one of the four train



sets they have.

So, sit back and enjoy the read, but when you are done look for a small person you can inspire to take up an interest in railroading.

If you worked for the Bangor and Aroostook, write down your stories and send them in – if not for you, then for the next generation. Not good with pen and paper? Grab a smart phone and make a video. Talk about what it was like in the cab. Talk about any funny adventure you had. Then send the video to the Maine Line. Maybe we can make a connection and write up your story!

*Below: Some of the Players of Player Development, including Wolfie the dog*





# ISAAC MEMORIAL TRAIN LIBRARY

A bit over four years ago, Isaac A. Greenlaw left us – leaving behind a collection of magazines and books. After years in storage – over 600 pounds of magazines and books have been shipped to the island of St. Maarten – forming the core of the Isaac Train Library for the kids of Player Development.

We Still Miss You Isaac!



# NAILING IN THE DATE

**BY ROGER (AGE 10)**

The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad marked their track ties with date nails from 1949 to 1962. The nails were 2 ½ inches long with a ¼ inch shank. The nail head was round and a raised two-digit number denoting the year the tie was installed. That means the 1942 nail had the raised numbers 42 on the head. The nails were made from steel and all but the nails from 1960 were made by the American Steel & Wire Company. American Steel had a nail production plant in Massachusetts. In 1960 Bangor and Aroostook got the nails from the company's Joliet, Illinois plant. Date nails can be made out of copper or steel. So, they will look either silver or gold. The length varied from one to two inches. The heads could be round or square.

The nails are made on high-speed machines able to produce 800 nails a

minute. For BAR a steel wire would be feed into a clamp with just a little wire sticking out the end. The clamp is tightened. Then a hammer like device hits the loose end. The pounder has a reverse imprint of the date called a die. The metal is allowed to fill this gap thus making the raised letter. The machine cuts the nail the right length. It is released from the clamp and the next piece of wire is feed into the clamp automatically.

Some tie manufacturers pounded in the nails for their customers. Other railroads chose to place the nail into the ties after they were laid down. Many people think the nails were used by the railroads to plan routine maintenance. Nope. The date nail's sole job was to report how long the tie lasted under a rail. Few, if any, railroads replaced ties unless they were damaged.

Back when the Bangor and Aroostook first started laying track in 1893, the United States rail system was growing very fast. In the 1880s there were about sixty million ties under railroad tracks. Just 20 years later there were over one hundred million ties in use. Railroads and lumber companies realized too many trees were being cut down too fast. Railroads started looking for ways to treat the ties in an effort to make them last longer. The ties were treated with chemicals, steam and a few other methods were also tried. Creosote, an oil-based preservative, seems to have won out.

As computers had not been invented yet, date nails were used to track when the tie was put under a rail. The first date nails were pounded into ties in 1897 at the Mississippi River and Bonne Terre Railroad. By 1901 several railroads were using date nails in test sections of their lines. By the 1930s there were more than twenty date nail manufacturers.

It takes about 3,000 ties to hold one mile of track. At its peak the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad comprised approximately 800 miles of track resulting in a need for approximately 2,400,000 ties.

BAR suffered more from poor drainage and mud around its ties then it did from tie rot. Cold freezing winters and deep frost lines allowed moisture into the ties, it froze and split the wood. This caused spring maintenance crews huge problems.

In a Special report by Herb Cleaves to the Bangor Daily News, entitled "B&A ends its era after 111 years" it was reported the BAR rail system had been

laid down in a hurry. Tracks were laid in swamp land filled by wheelbarrows full of gravel and “The last 12 miles of rail from Ludlow to Houlton was placed atop the frozen ground and snow.”

In 1955 Maine Line magazine reported, “The solution, of course, is well-ballasted, well drained tracks.” Using a machine called a plow, the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad lifted the tracks and ties nine inches, and re-ballasted. The project worked and the railroad continued raising track in low lying areas.

Date nails have become very collectible. People want a nail with their birth date on it, or the date of some other important life event. They have the choice of a nail with the last two numbers of the year stamped on the head. So “12” would mean the nail was from 1912. But I could use it as 2012 for a 10-year-old. You can buy date nails online. The price for one ranges from about \$1 to \$5.

So other than having an old nail laying around your house, what can you do with them? You could make jewelry. Yes, date nails have been made into cuff links and tie tacks for men and pendants for ladies.

Or if you have a model railroad you can paint date nails on your ties for added realism. At Player Development we got a bottle of gold paint and put a dot on each tie of our four train sets. (See Photo below)

If your ties do not have the dots you can go online, search for “Date Nails and Railroad Tie Preservation” by Jeff Oaks. In the three -volume publication he tries to list every railroad in the United States that used date nails and the material the nails were made from. <https://www.rta.org/date-nails>





Built by  
MAGOR CAR CORPORATION  
NEW YORK

W-2104-2

*Above: Builder's photo of BAR 2000, colorized by R. H. Foss – Memories in Color – original photo from the B&A Marketing Department Collection, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com collection*

# POTATOES & PRODUCTS BY ROGER (AGE 10)

Today we are on the case of the great Maine Potato Cover up. Let's go back in time. Our story begins after World War II. The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad decides it needs more boxcars. Some will have heaters. Some will have



*Above: 10 of the 2500 series State of Maine Products cars at Oakfield, on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1979. James P. Marcus photo, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection*

ice chests. Most will carry potatoes and other produce, but some will be carrying paper. What should they do? They upgraded older cars and ordered new.

Some of the wooden cars were painted red, white and blue. Three big horizontal stripes: one blue across the top, the white in the middle and red across the base. Painted in big bold letters on the blue line were the words, "STATE OF MAINE." In the white stripe, across the middle part were the words, "BANGOR AND AROOSTOOK RAILROAD." In bottom stripe, across the red was just one word, "POTATOES" in all caps. We do not know how many were painted like this, when they started or when they stopped.

Mr. Joey provided us with a builder's photo of BAR 2000 from October of 1950. The word Railroad had been dropped from the Bangor and Aroostook line in the white stripe. And the word "Potatoes" was replaced with the word, "Products." How suspicious. No official source has been found to verify why this was changed. If it wasn't for toy trains, we might not ever have known about the original potato boxcars.

Toy companies made models of the real red, white and blue boxcars from Bangor and Aroostook Railroad. Over the years more toy companies made State of Maine cars. Models were made of both the Potato car and the Products car. We wondered how accurate were the models?



*Above: George Melvin shot this VERY long line of State of Maine Products cars in Oakfield, September, 1976. JoeyKelleyPhoto.com collection*

We found a model of a wooden boxcar labeled potatoes and numbered 61572. We found an N scale car 61585 that had both the potato and railroad on it. We found an HO scale car that had already dropped the word railroad but still said potatoes! We also noticed some of the models replaced the word “and” with the “&.” The print font also varied from manufacturer to manufacturer. Thus, not a reliable source.

Leaving the world of toys, we went online to find out more. Several photographs remain from the 1950s that show Red White and Blue boxcars. Our online investigation found one photo that said, POTATOES – number 10045.

Why was Railroad dropped from the white line? More importantly, why the change from Potatoes to Products? Well, currently there are four theories as what led to the great Maine Potato Cover up.

Theory number one: The Association of American Railroads (AAR) Rule 84. This rule came about in the early 1930s because the Labor Unions, and shipping company workers did not like having to load up a boxcar that had another company's advertisement on it. It started as a dispute between rival meat packing plants. Rule 84 was designed to save railroads embarrassment and prevent the expensive cost of shipping empty cars around until the next advertised shipment was ready for hauling.

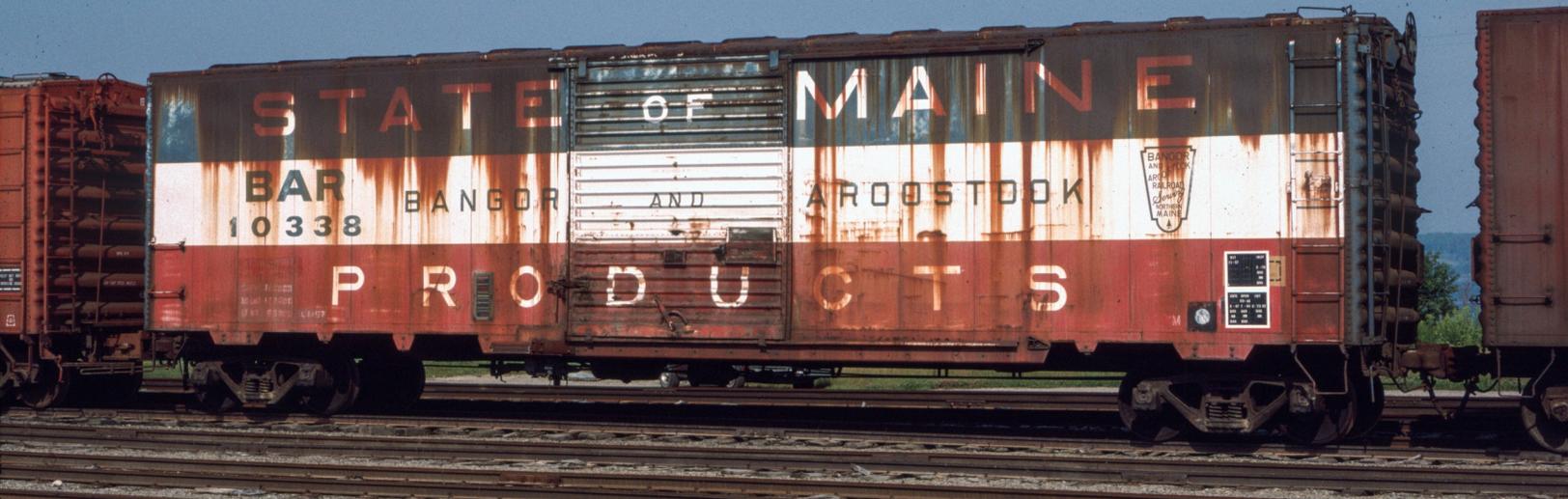
Comment: This is an interesting theory, but the red, white and blue State of Maine Products cars were sent throughout North America with no complaints.



*Above: 6155 in Rigby Yard, South Portland, Maine – October 25, 1974. Photo by Richard B. “Dick” Gassett – JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection*

Theory number two: In 1937 the ICC stepped in. Rule 201 regulated the size of letters on the side of boxcars. It regulated what railroad owned equipment could have on the sides and forbid discounts to a company that put an ad on the railroad’s car. The law allowed private companies to paint their cars with logos or ads as long as they conformed to the standard reporting marks and weight carrying rules. The BAR shipped hundreds of thousands of pounds of potatoes each year. But the railroad provided the cars – meaning the railroad owned them. Why would farmers buy a box car and paint it with their farm name? Worse yet, what would the privately owned boxcar do once the harvest was done. Sit for months?

Comment: The State of Maine Potatoes branding was not owned by the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad. Therefore it would not be allowed on a railroad’s cars.



*Above: 10338, rust streaks and all, in Searsport Maine, August 3, 1988, George Melvin photo, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection*

Theory three was conceived just a few years ago by railroad freight expert Larry Gross. Mr. Gross weighed in on the subject during an on-line chat. He claims only a very few red, white and blue State of Maine cars were labeled "Potatoes," beginning in 1950. He believes the reason for the change was a simple matter that the cars were designed for dual use, so the generic Products just seemed the best idea.

Comment: The 2000 series cars were built beginning in October 1950 and were delivered in State of Maine Products paint. The railroad knew the cars would be dual use. It would seem unlikely that the railroad would have just discovered dual use cars AFTER painting some with Potatoes.

Theory four looks at a different legal angle, copyright infringement. The State of Maine department of agriculture had a red, white and blue logo for their grade A potatoes (and later other locally grown produce.) It gets a little complicated. Basically, only inspected and approved potatoes were allowed to advertise themselves grade A State of Maine Potatoes.

Comments: Did BAR find themselves at odds with the Agriculture Department if they hauled non inspected or non-grade A potatoes in a car that appeared to have the Departments seal of approval? You see, I told you, it's complicated.

Through it all, though, people continue to love and collect the red, white and blue BAR boxcars in model form. According to Chad Pelletier, director of the Fort Kent Historical Society, "They quickly became recognized nationally." In a presentation to the St. John Valley Senior College Class on September 4, 2016,

he holds up a model BAR boxcar painted red, white and blue. “In the late 1950s they (BAR) painted 2,500 box cars like this.” BAR boxcars weren’t just eye-catching, they were smart. The company did not want their boxcars just sitting around collecting dust during the off-season. So, some cars were heated for the winter, and others carried ice for warmer climates. BAR then sent the cars out to the western states to carry produce there. Once it was potato time the cars returned home.

Children of course would get in on the collecting, too. In the 1950s, Marx, Lionel and American Flyer offered model toy State of Maine trains for their train sets. One or more variants of this unique and iconic paint scheme have been produced in every major model railroad scale almost since they were produced in real life. Both new and used the red, white and blue boxcars with either the potato or the products are still available today, nearly 70 years after the Great Maine Potato cover up.

*Below: One example of a State of Maine Products car in Z, N, HO, S, O and G scales (This was the cover of the Winter 2020 Maine Line if it looks familiar)*





# CARIBOU TURNTABLE MOVED!

**BY JOEY KELLEY (AGE UNDISCLOSED)**

Back on October 19, 2021, the Dead River Company donated the turntable from the Caribou engine house to the Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad. 11 months later – on September 16, 2022 – the turntable was moved via truck from Caribou to Unity.

The previous turntable, from Limestone, was sold by the previous owners of the B&ML's assets, leaving in 2013 along with the Swedish steam locomotive. However the turntable pit was left intact – perfectly sized for a 75 foot Bangor and Aroostook turntable. Thus, the search for one of the proper length began. A crew from the B&ML along with a heavy haul truck driver and a pair of cranes arrived on the morning of the 16<sup>th</sup>, lifting, flipping and loading the turntable in Caribou.



*Above: The fastest turntable in the state! Rolling down I-95, as shot from the Medway / Millinocket exit overpass.*

It was quite a sight! It is not every day one sees a 75 foot long steel turntable rolling at highway speed down I-95.

After the trip down I-95, the turntable rolled down Route 9 to Unity, arriving not far from the pit that it will eventually occupy. The cranes arrived not too long after that and by about 7:30 PM – the turntable was on blocking at its new home.

The turntable needs a lot of work and expense yet – the cranes will have to be brought back in to flip it over and set it over the pit – so it will be some time before we see this piece of Bangor and Aroostook history working again. If you would like to help, the Belfast and Moosehead Lake is always looking for volunteers and you can donate to the B&ML's general fund on their website. Lets all keep this piece of history in use!

[Donate to the B&ML's General Fund](#)



*Above: Arrival at Unity, next to the pit that it will eventually occupy*

*Below: TOUCHDOWN! Ready for restoration, the turntable rests in Unity*





*Above: 43 on the turntable at Northern Maine Junction – B&A Marketing Department collection – JoeyKelleyPhoto.com collection*

# 43 AND THE SCOUTS

A CREATIVE WRITING CHALLENGE



*Above: Two views of 43 and the unidentified group at Northern Maine Junction, B&A Marketing Department Collection, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection*

*Editor's Note: In the process of trying to identify locations, people and dates for the various photographs in the B&A's marketing department collection, some photos have proved more difficult than others. A series of four photos (two above, one on the previous page and one on the back cover of this issue) from the collection all seem to feature the same group of children (all boys it appears) at Northern Maine Junction – arriving on a Bangor and Aroostook bus. Aside from bus 523, locomotive 43 and trackmobile X-131, no other equipment is identifiable. A reasonable guess is that this was a Boy Scout troop taking a tour of Northern Maine Junction. However, attempts to identify the individuals have come to nil. In the spirit of historical fiction writing, the children of Player Development were given the photos and told to research what they could about the locomotive, bus, equipment and then use that information to tell the story that the photographs were documenting. The story you are about to read has, probably, very little to do with the reality but is rather entertaining. If you recognize yourself or the events in the photos and would care to identify what was really going on, it would be lovely to hear from you. -JTK*

The Bangor and Aroostook Railroad did not like to spend money. Wikipedia says BAR kept their engines so long when they retired them they went straight to museums. Although not absolutely true, 44, 46 and 557 all went straight into preservation. However 43 was built in October 1947 and was traded into General Motors' Electro-Motive Division in 1967 for a newer engine.

You can see in one of the pictures the Trackmobile appears to have broken down and engine 43 was stuck on the turn table. BAR turned to the Boy Scouts, they bused in the Scouts on the BAR GM built (yes the same GM that made EMD locomotives) bus 523 that was built in 1957. Everyone knows the Boy Scout motto is "Be Prepared." "Let's push this train," shouted someone. WRONG SIR! The boys cannot push the train! But the boys brought their big ropes and knowledge of knots.

Scoutmaster Joey said, "the boys will be using their 2-inch-thick rope. They will tie the king of all knots the Bowline to the engine. They will run the line to the bus and tie another bowline. The bus will be used to pull the engine off the turn table." The bowline was chosen as it can handle the load and when finished can still be untied. Many knots jam and have to be cut apart.

The scouts were not in uniform as moving an engine seemed like it might be dirty work. The troop carefully laid out the thick rope normally used to make their Monkey bridge.

The rope was attached to the engine and bus. The engineer was signaled to release the brakes. He gave a thumbs up.

The bus driver started the bus. Put the bus in gear and slowly took up the slack. The engine slowly started to move. In no time it was off the turn table.

Everyone cheered. The bus stopped pulling and backed up a little and the scouts untied the big rope.

Everyone was happy.

The engineer came over and thanked the boys. As the boys headed to the bus, the engineer stopped the scoutmaster.

"That was a fine piece of work," said the engineer. "But it was the tractor that was broken. The engine is fine I just could not leave the table as the trackmobile was blocking me."

The two men laughed. Suddenly the trackmobile belched a cloud of smoke and started running and was moved out of the way.

"I will wait till the bus is out of sight before starting 43 and crossing over the turn table and into the shed for maintenance."



*Above: Roger Pinta and friends caught 65 and 71 on the Searsport branch in 1983. Seen here along US Route 1.*

# **FROM ILLINOIS TO MAINE IN 1983 BY MALIK (AGE 14)**

Roger Pinta is a Railfan. He started fanning in 1968 and took his first color slide July 1969. In 1983 Mr. Roger and two friends Bob and Tom Lambrecht, aka the Blodge Brothers, took a two-week trip to the East Coast from his home in Illinois to railfan. They started in Maine, fanned through New York and into New Jersey before going home to get the film processed.

“It was a great trip,” remembers Mr. Roger. He saw Bangor and Aroostook BL2s in three different paint schemes and a few F units in Maine.” He paused

then smiled, "Went South of New York City and saw the GG1s. The large electrics were running commuter trains on NJ tracks." He shakes his head, ' They are now retired. Can't take pictures of them operating anymore."

I met Mr. Roger in St. Maarten. He was visiting the free after-school program for at-risk children called Player Development. He was teaching us about trains and helping us make a building for our layout.

"One of my favorites was in Kearny, NJ. I saw a Tropicana 70 tonner. The switcher was painted orange and had the Tropicana logo on it. It was switching the frozen juice concentrate cars that came up from Florida." He laughed and continued, "Then we saw a rare General Motors Model 40 diesel hydraulic switcher of which only 11 were built. Truly a rare unit." He joked that it was so small it would almost fit on the Player Development's O scale train set.

The conversation turned back to Maine. He explained he saw the BL 2s in a train yard with several other blue and yellow engines.

*Below: 54 (and 49) in 1983 on the yard tracks at Northern Maine Junction in 1983. Roger Pinta photograph*



“We also saw Alco switchers on the Maine Central and more F units on the Boston and Maine.”

In 1947 and 1948 Bangor and Aroostook had purchased eight EMD F3As. Five were still on the BAR roster in 1983. In 1949, the Bangor and Aroostook acquired eight BL 2s. They were numbered 550 to 557 and later changed to 50 to 57. One BL 1 and 58 BL2s were built by General Motors Electro-Motive Division (EMD) between 1947 and 1949. The BL 2 was not very popular. The car hood design was ok for main line and long hauls but not for switching. The BL 2 had a longer high snout. It was even harder to see over.



*Above: Still proudly wearing her American Railfan name and paint, 557 was in the yard at Northern Maine Junction during Roger Pinta's visit in 1983*

The BL 2s led to the development of the popular EMD GP 7 with side walkways and front and rear platforms. The sevens were the start of the GP series of engines. Designers realized there was a lot of empty space inside the engine body of the BL 2. The sides were moved in to create a walk around, that

aided the crew in switching. The BL 2s continued in service for Bangor and Aroostook for years. Only one was reported out of service when Mr. Roger visited Maine. In his 1983 trip Mr. Roger saw 54 in the tri-color paint job, 51 in the blue with yellow letters and 557 renumbered and named American Railfan. He also saw 42 in tri-color and 44 in blue with yellow letters. Big R (Mr. Roger) and the Blodge Brothers chased a pair of GP 7s on the Searsport job for a whole day. The first BAR BL 2 was wrecked in 1972 and three more were scrapped in 1984. The Bangor and Aroostook would get 12 GP 7s in 1950 and number them 60 to 72. Mr. Roger's first color slide taken in July 1969 was of a GP 7. "It was a Chesapeake and Ohio GP 7. It was running light. No cars or a caboose. It was passing F tower in Fostoria, Ohio."

He closed saying, "Well I have taken a lot of fanning trips by myself, but it is always more fun when you get with friends. I think my best railfan trip ever was September 1976 from Chicago to Green Bay Wisconsin." He continued, "It was the first trip in my new van, with four of my closest friends including one of the Bodge Brothers and the infamous R. R. Conway, perfect weather, fall colors, and many, many, many Alcos."

Mr. Roger is a member of the RR Conway Railfan Club. The group used to meet in a member's house once a month and show slides to the early hours of the morning. Now the shows are done on Zoom. The shows are recorded so the children on St. Maarten can see the pictures, too.

*Below: 42 at NMJ in 1983 – Roger Pinta Photograph*



# FROM NORMAN BATEMAN'S LENS

Recently, 2135 slides (16 trays) of Norman Bateman's railroad slides were made available to the Maine Line. The majority of these were not on the Bangor and Aroostook as Mr. Bateman's primary interest (at least by volume) was the Maine Central. That said, 182 slides is nothing to sneeze at! Here are a few from Mr. Bateman's lens. -JTK



*BAR 48, yes, they actually had a 48, but it wasn't a locomotive, is this all door boxcar loaded with Pinkham Lumber was captured in September of 1980.*

*129 was captured at Northern Maine Junction in April of 1975*



*Hard to get more Bangor and Aroostook than this – wood on bulkhead flatcars over a Bangor and Aroostook bridge. April, 1975.*



*Bus 554 was proudly displaying the See Scenic Northern Maine slogan in this shot from February 1986*



*One of the interesting details that I'm sure some have forgotten since 1991, is that the Eastern Maine Model Railroad Club was responsible for re-painting caboose C-66 – which went on display near the station / museum at Northern Maine Junction. It now resides at Oakfield – but here are a couple of EMMRC members painting C-66 at NMJ in 1991.*



*March of 1974 found 77 in Millinocket, complete with the then new tri-color paint scheme*



*C-10 in blue! April of 1975 found this view of C-10 in front of Norman's lens – complete with bay window.*



