
MAINE LINE

A Publication for the Friends of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad



TALKING IT OVER



Fall. A surprisingly fleeting season that envelops Maine with colors and cold that seem all the more shocking compared to the warmth and humidity that the summer brings. These days it is a season to rejoice for those who love all things pumpkin - from coffee to pancakes - its pumpkin time. Historically, the Bangor and Aroostook was less concerned with pumpkins and more concerned about potatoes! The fall meant the harvest season for that crop that gave the railroad its nickname - 'The Potato Road'.

Like all things, fall is a time of old projects finished and new projects started. We tend to retreat indoors to get some refuge from the impending cold and the project list reflects that.

This is a time when the Bangor and Aroostook would pull locomotives back from lease, their horsepower required to pull the trains of the long cold winter ahead.

For our purposes here, you might notice a few changes in this issue of the Maine Line, although hopefully you will all see them for the better! We are trying out a new piece of software for making this magazine - going in a new direction is a bit daunting after over five years but - like the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad - innovation is crucial to survival.

This is a great issue with some historical topics, some new information and a couple of items that are not really classifiable.

Enjoy this issue of the Maine Line and we'll see you all in the New Year with our Winter 2024 issue - which will probably bring a surprise or two as well!

-Joey

"Joey" Kelley, Editor

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ABOUT THE COVER

On October 12, 1982, the Bangor and Aroostook and Maine Central Railroads hosted a special train to help garner attention for the Maine Operation Lifesaver group. This shot is technically in Hampden, with the photographer standing on the Route 202 overpass with the Maine Central's main line underneath. The photographer is unknown - but the photo is striking and has been in the queue to be on the cover of the Maine Line for some time! See the story of this train elsewhere in this issue! Collection of JoeyKelleyPhoto.com



MAINE LINE REWIND



60 years ago in the Maine Line:
Fall 1963 Issue

- W. Jerome Strout is President
- A profile of the Henry Luhrs Seas Skiffs, Inc. the first in a series of Bangor and Aroostook Corporation companies
- A B&A Bus Driver saves a two year old boy
- Sugar Beets being grown in Aroostook County
- A profile of Joel Mills, Railroad Salesman
- A Fisherman's Philosophy and Digestion
- What to do if you are trapped in a submerged vehicle
- How a car service man survived a telephone booth crash
- In The Family of the B&A
- News Briefs

The Fall 1963 issue was Volume 11 and Issue number 4 and 5. In 1963, the Maine Line was being produced every two months, but the July - August and September - October issues were combined.

Be sure to check out the back cover of this issue, for a copy of the rear cover of the Fall 1963 issue!



GETTING CLOSER

For those of you reading this, the fact that I have an ~~interest~~ ~~obsession~~ ~~passion~~ for all things Bangor and Aroostook will not come as much of a surprise. Neither should the comment that like most railroad minded children, I wanted to have my very own full size locomotive in my house. Well, I am getting closer. My living room now features two sets of genuine Bangor and Aroostook number boards, with a locomotive headlight between them. The idea being to resemble the nose of a GP 7 or 9. The headlight casings came from the roundhouse at Northern Maine Junction when it closed.

The bulbs, there are six, one behind each number and one in each 'headlight' are 5 watt USB powered bulbs sold for camping and run off of a large cell phone charger. They create virtually no heat and use very little electricity.

Designed to resemble the top couple of feet of a locomotive painted in the tri-color paint scheme, the semi-gloss black paint makes the lights seem brighter.

Far from a perfect illusion, it does give the effect however and rarely fails to put a smile on my face. The 'reflectors' inside the headlight are not locomotive spec, but are in fact, stainless steel dog bowls from the dollar store!

A huge amount of credit for this goes to Neil MacDonald for putting together such great boxes for the numberboards! Thanks Neil!



Above: Rough outline of the area in discussion, image by Google Maps, Image from 2022

Editor's Note: This article was written using publicly available and publicly filed information in various public sources. Searches were conducted based upon the physical address, 90 Diesel Shop Road, Hermon and some based upon the name of the corporations we will be discussing. None of this information is intended to condemn, insult, defame, mock, belittle or in any way harm the character of any of the parties involved, including owners, officers, agents, customers and anyone else associated with any of the organizations mentioned here. If anyone should take offense at the information below, it has been, to the best of the knowledge of the editor, been presented in a fair, factual and accurate manner and is in the public record for anyone else to verify. -JTK

The Bangor and Aroostook's last day of operation was January 8, 2003. However, the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic did not buy the Bangor and Aroostook as a whole. They bought the railroad operation, track, and very little else. The Bangor and Aroostook continued to exist as a corporation, owning property, for years afterwards.

On April the 13th, 2005, more than two years after the railroad operations changed hands, the trustee for the bankruptcy of the B&A signed the deed transferring the property at 90 Diesel Shop Road, the engine house, the old fuel tracks, the building built for servicing the 57 foot mechanical refrigerated boxcars and the general area around them to a new company, Bangor Hermon Railyard Inc.

Tax liens were placed on the property by the Town of Hermon in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. These liens were then cleared in 2012. Additional liens were placed on the property in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Then discharged (cleared) in 2015.

Foreclosure documents were filed in 2016 and 2017. Tax liens were also placed on the property by the Town of Hermon in 2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021 and 2022. They were discharged (cleared) in 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Although the filing dates and official copies of the following events do not exactly correspond with the dates mentioned here is the most recent series of events:

- July 31, 2023: Deed for the property at 90 Diesel Shop Road - including the exact wording from the 2005 deed - was transferred from Bangor Hermon Railyard Inc. to a MAVACA, LLC out of Aventura, Florida.
- August 2, 2023: Remaining property tax liens on the property were cleared (discharged) by the town of Hermon.
- August 14, 2023: Machias Savings Bank, mortgage holder on the property, shows that mortgage discharged. (Paid off)

The next logical question would be who, or what, is MAVACA, LLC. As near as can be determined, MAVACA, LLC is a company owned or managed by one Sebastian Panick. The last available annual report, signed electronically by Panick, lists this person as 'manager'. There are no details about what MAVACA does, who this person represents or what the intent is for this property. Neither is there any contact information for the company available. A search of other LLCs by name in Florida revealed some 22 LLCs tied to a Sebastian Panick. Some of those 22 LLCs hint, by name anyway, at real estate or property management interests.

One of the big questions in property purchasing is always 'what was the purchase price'. Based upon the tax maps, when the property was purchased in 2005 the price was \$205,000. According to the auctioneer's website, the purchase price in 2023 for the property was \$675,000. As of yet, no lien has been filed on the property, for this purchase. Based upon the approximate size of 32 acres, that means the property went for a little more than \$21,000 an acre.

As of this time, the future of the property is unknown. We will simply have to see what happens down at the end of Diesel Shop Road!



On May 1, 2021, I brought home this 1949 Fairmont A 5 motorcar for restoration. The B & A bought 2 of this particular model and this one is the only surviving car. When I dragged it out of the farmer's field and loaded it on my trailer for the trip home, I was wondering if I had lost my mind! But I had undertaken worse motorcar restorations over the last several years.

When I was in outside sales, I called on the maintenance shops in the B & A's system. I got to know the guys at the Houlton shop pretty well, particularly Warren Cain. Warren started working for the B & A in 1977. One of his first shop projects was to change out this cars engine block with a new one from Waukesha. He has followed the progress, since the restoration began and has provided me with useful information as well.

BEFORE



These MOW motorcars suffered a lot of damage during their “lives”. This car was hit in both the front and rear. Some of the smaller cars were scrapped as a result of severe damage.

Everything on this car has been disassembled, cleaned, primed and painted. The engine was completely rebuilt with oversized New Old Stock pistons and rings. The transmission and rear end were rebuilt with new bearings, seals and gaskets that I had to make.

Parts were sourced from five states and Canada. All the wiring, electrical components, exhaust, fuel tank, wood, some steel components, windshield glass and moulding is new. Thanks to Ron J., and Ray A. for your assistance and the many vendors I used as well.

AFTER



To make a long story short, as they say, here is the final result after a two and a half year restoration.

Since we were unable to determine which one of the two Fairmont A5's this was, instead of guessing, the car has been numbered OX 1045. This is a thank you to Warren Cain for his help with the project. The OX comes from the Houlton designation from the old B&A internal telephone network and 1045 was Warren's employee number.

If you would like to see a video clip of it running, [click here!](#)

NOW THATS A



TOOL SHED

If you have never heard of the Blanchette Museum, I would not be surprised. In fact, one of the very few references you can find to it online is a mention of the museum in the late owner, Louis P. "Pete" Blanchette's obituary. He was 80 years old at the time of his passing in 2006 and apparently the Museum had very little online presence.

For the life of me - I cannot remember exactly how I heard of this particular, unique, Maine destination. It might have been someone mentioning it to me in person, in some conversation long forgotten. It might have been one of those happy accidents as one drives down a road one hadn't been down before. I also cannot recall exactly when I heard about this museum - making the task of telling how even more difficult.

Half forgotten directions that were unable to be verified brought me to a site that was not exactly how I had pictured it. At some point I know I had a conversation with someone who had been at least by the museum, if not in it. The description was somewhat vague - "two boxcars pushed together."

This past summer however, when work took me to Palmyra - I decided to go and have a look at the old Blanchette Museum. As luck would have it - the current owner's son was around and willing to put up with a camera toting magazine editor's questions.



As you can clearly see from the end view, the 'two boxcars' are certainly not pushed together! For the record, the cars are Bangor and Aroostook 57 foot mechanical refrigerator cars, numbers 103 and 121. 103 appears to have been in gray with a large triangle logo, where 121 appears to have still been orange with the black lettering when they were sold.



If you decide to look for this structure at random in Palmyra on a map, looking straight down on it, you will not find it. The roof makes this look like any ordinary barn or building from the air. Its easy to find though, located on Route 152 in Palmyra between Interstate 95 and US Route 2.

Before you decide to go wandering in, the museum died with its previous owner and the new owners have no intention of being open to the public. Now being used as part tool shed, part welding shop, part garage and I daresay a bit of man-cave thrown in there, this is a private building today. I went in - so you do not have to!



Inside, the structure is quite simple, but no less impressive. The concrete floor is between the two reefer cars. The two cars reside on their own support structures. Meanwhile the impressive trusses and surprisingly effective skylights are even larger in person than one would think! More impressive is that the roof is - essentially - freestanding. Save for the two reefer car roofs - nothing is holding up that impressive amount of wood, metal roofing or snow during the winter months. Not too shabby for a pair of retired reefer cars!

A few touches from the previous owner remain, a few tools and odd collectibles here and there give a nod to the museum heritage. No attempt has been made to restore or preserve the reefer cars, neither has anything been done to hide their heritage. They are re-purposed, living a new life, miles away from any railroad, active or historical.

In reality - how many things can one do with a retired 57 foot mechanical reefer? Build an arcade? (See our Spring 2023 issue!)

DANGOR
AND STOOK
AROO
RAILROAD
Serving
NORTHERN
MAINE



Previous Page: Darts Anyone? Reefer 121's side is now setup as a backboard. One suspects that the effect of missing the dartboard completely is probably not favorable to the dart or anything else in the immediate area!



Inside 103 there are a few more modifications from stock visible, shelving and places where tools were once displayed on the walls. But what is also noticeable is the lack of alterations to the structure or the movable track in the ceiling to allow for multiple partitions inside the reefer car.

Certainly once one of the more unique attractions for the State of Maine - these two reefers now live a retired, obscure life while still showing how you can find a little bit of the Bangor and Aroostook - in some of the most obscure places imaginable.



OPERATION LIFESAVER

COMES TO MAINE

Above: Bruce Owen Nett took the unique opportunity to shoot 42 next to a Maine Central GE at the Bangor engine house of the Maine Central on the night of October 11, 1982, the day before the OLI kickoff train was to run. A different photo from the same night was featured on the cover of the Spring 1983 Maine Line. From the Bangor and Aroostook Collection of JoeyKelleyPhoto.com

In 1972 Operation Lifesaver was formed in Idaho as a joint venture between the Idaho Governor's office, Idaho Peace Officers and the Union Pacific Railroad. The mission then and now was to promote awareness of safety at grade crossings, discourage people from trespassing on tracks and in general educate the public about the dangers of being too close to railroad tracks. Slogans like "any time is train time" and outreach programs to groups from railroad executives to law enforcement and school children have touched so many lives across the United States that it is hard to view Operation Lifesaver as anything but an unmitigated success.

In 1982 the Operation Lifesaver program came to Maine, sponsored by Maine's railroads via the Maine Rail Association. Given that this was a State-wide effort a Operation Lifesaver Express was determined to be the best way to call attention to the new program and garner attention from everyone from the Governor to the general public. The two largest railroads in the state, the Maine Central and Bangor and Aroostook would provide equipment and run the train.

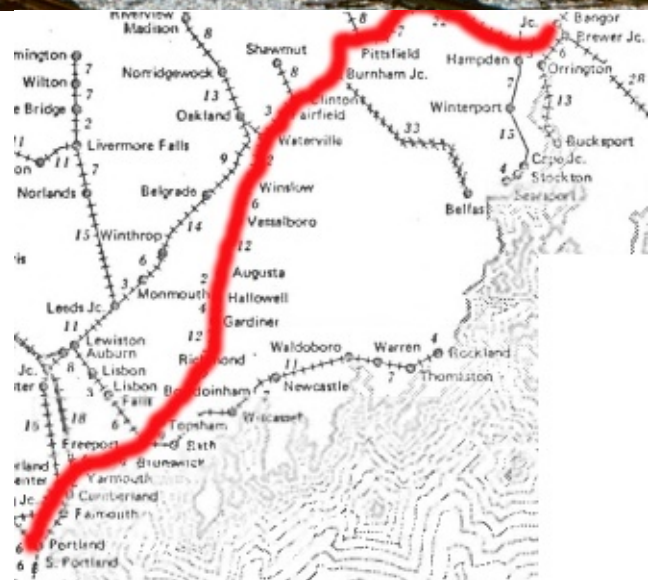


Beginning in Bangor, with the yard tower standing in as a station, 42 and Maine Central 258 lead the charge out of Bangor yard and up the hill in Hampden on the Maine Central main line - yes, the photo on the right is also the one gracing the cover. All of these were taken by an unknown photographer and are in the JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection. All taken on October 12, 1982. A broadside photo from the same location as the one on the right, taken by Bruce Owen Nett was used to illustrate the train in both the Maine Central Messenger and Bangor and Aroostook Maine Line magazines at the time.



Above: Rolling 'west' on the Maine Central (at this point the compass would point more South than west) 42 leads the charge south through Gardiner, having left the State Capital behind. Photographer unknown - JoeyKelleyPhoto.com collection

Right: The route of the 'Operation Lifesaver Express'. Beginning in Bangor, rolling through Waterville, stopping in Augusta, then on through Gardiner, Brunswick and finishing the day in Portland.



The event was covered in the Spring 1983 Maine Line and the Fall 1982 - Winter 1983 Maine Central Messenger.

Among those on board the train were several people whose names should be familiar - Walter E. Travis, President of the Bangor and Aroostook; David Fink, of the Maine Central and later Guilford Rail System; Alan G. Austin, President of the Boston and Maine; Richard Sprague, Maine Line Editor, VP of Public Relations was present in his role as 'Maine Operation Lifesaver Coordinator'. Governor Joseph E. Brennan boarded the train in Augusta, de-trained in Brunswick and was named 'Honorary Conductor'.

Both articles go out of their way to mention two points: The train ran On Time and both locomotives were freshly painted. In the case of 42, this fresh paint created another variation on the tri-color paint scheme that it had already been wearing, with subtle differences in the style of letters and numbers from the previous paint job.

For the Maine Central side of things, this may have been the last Public Relations event before the conversion to Guilford Rail System. As a matter of fact, the cover of the Maine Central Messenger issue in question features a picture of Guilford Rail System's first locomotive in the 'Guilford Gray' paint scheme. That particular issue is also the last issue of the Maine Central Messenger produced. Large changes would come to the Maine Railroad scene in the next several years.



Above: An unknown photographer shot the Operation Lifesaver Express in Brunswick. This spot is nearly unrecognizable today, as the new Amtrak station is located here. JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection

Within a year (June 1983) of this train, the Boston and Maine would be acquired by Guilford Rail System. One wonders what discussions were being had between David Fink and Alan G. Austin in the moments between promoting crossing safety. Perhaps none - perhaps some of the biggest conversations in all of New England railroading.

Despite decades of change coming over a horizon that no one could yet fully see, on this day we see two Maine Railroads coming together in pursuit of a noble cause - that of safety at railroad crossings.



Above: 42, 258 and train are behind the Maine Central's offices in Portland in this final shot from the day. The photographer is unknown, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection

With the final stop in Portland, this once-in-a-lifetime train was concluded. A landmark moment in railroad cooperation, the cause of railroad crossing safety was enough to bring railroad officials, workers and volunteers together to help save lives. Over 40 years later, Maine Operation Lifesaver is still promoting rail safety in the state, outlasting the two railroads that helped kick it off!

FROM THE ARCHIVES



*Photographer David Parker was in Norcross back in June of 1971 and captured 42, 50 and 55 in matching blue paint with a Southbound along the lake.
JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection*



Speaking of David Parker, on February 6, 1965 he shot this lashup of 43, 56 and 50 leading a train through North Bangor. JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection



An unknown photographer caught 72 and 66 switching the North end of Millinocket yard in September of 1981. JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection



*Herman Shaner photographed 94 out back of the Derby Shops some time in 1950.
JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection*

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