

MAINE LINE



**SPECIAL
REPORT**

Talking It Over



Hard to believe that more than 20 years after the B&A met its demise we have some breaking news for you!

It is without a doubt the dedication of non-profit organizations and volunteers that keep so much of our railroad heritage alive around the world. The US is no exception to this and the folks at the Hoosier Valley Scenic are returning locomotive 52 to service – after overhauling it at their shops.

Decades after this locomotive left Northern Maine Junction for the last time, she has found the good life in Indiana – with a group of devoted volunteers who are pouring blood, sweat, tears and the occasional blow to the head (ever try to stand up inside the hood of a BL-2?) into 52 and we, fans of the B&A are all the better for it. Thank you Hoosier Valley!

-”Joey” Kelley, Editor

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About the Cover

Go West Young BL-2!

Boomer BL-2s

From New York to Indiana

IT LIVES

About the Rear Cover:

Shot back on August 12, 2012

52 is leading this train on the

Saratoga and North Creek.

Joey Kelley, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com

Collection

<http://mainelinemagazine.joeykelleyphoto.com>

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ABOUT THE COVER

Shawn Duren captured the image used to create this cover on August 12, 2012. Shawn and I were out looking for 52 on the relatively short lived (as it turned out) Saratoga and North Creek in upstate New York. A truly awesome trip involving some great turns of fortune, some great timing and the scenery of upstate New York.

Obviously re-worked for the purposes of the cover – the color (slightly cropped) version of the original is below. Thanks Shawn – not only for the image, but the great trip!





Above: 52 in Toronto, Ontario, Canada on CN. November 26, 1990, Gary R. Zuters photo, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com collection

GO WEST YOUNG BL-2!

Young might be a bit of a stretch, but as photographed above, 52 was in transit from Northern Maine Junction to Janesville, Wisconsin in November of 1990. Already 51 years old, 52 is entering her second career after having been sold to Glenn Monhart.

Mr. Monhart passed at the age of 51 after being involved in an automobile accident. His obituary ran in the Chicago Tribune on October 20, 1998. Although the details of exactly how he became aware of 52 and 56, from halfway across the country are, unfortunately, unable to be determined. It is known that Mr. Monhart was an employee of EMD. A true railroad preservationist, Mr. Monhart had accumulated a collection of his own locomotives and helped with the

preservation of at least one other for non-profit railroad organizations.

Although purely conjecture – it is likely that Mr. Monhart simply wanted a BL-2, one of the rarest EMD models ever produced for his collection. They do hold a distinction as one of those locomotives that you either love or hate. Whatever his motivation, we owe Mr. Monhart a sincere thank you for preserving a pair of these rare locomotives and Bangor and Aroostook ones to boot!

After Mr. Monhart's death, 52 and 56 would wander around for a bit, including a stint at the National Railroad Museum before falling under the ownership of Iowa Pacific.

Below: 52 at the National Railroad Museum in Green Bay, Wisconsin, April 26, 2004 – photo by Sean Lamb – found on Wikimedia -

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Janesville>

[%26_Southeastern_BL2_at_NRM_Green_Bay_20040426.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Janesville_%26_Southeastern_BL2_at_NRM_Green_Bay_20040426.jpg) – Used under a Creative Commons License



BOOMER BL-2S

Editor's Note: This Article originally appeared in the Winter 2019 Maine Line. It appears here again as background for how 52 wound up in Indiana – more on that later in the issue!

An informal definition of the word 'Boomer' is 'a wandering or migratory worker'. This applies quite well to 52 and 56.



52 and 56 are tarped at Northern Maine Junction on June 2, 1980, Richard B. "Dick" Gassett photo, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection



One could be forgiven for thinking this was a shot from the 1970s at the end of a B&A branch line. In fact, this is February 2nd, 1991 and 52's new owner is performing an inspection at the former Milwaukee Road roundhouse in Janesville, Wisconsin. Photo by Sam Carlson

Glenn Monhart bought B&A BL-2's numbers 52 and 56 from the B&A. He transported them to Wisconsin where 52 was painted in a one-off paint scheme, lettered for the Janesville and Southeastern. This line did not exist, outside of Mr. Monhart's leasing company and 52 spent most of her time working on the Wisconsin and Calumet (reporting marks WICT) even after Mr. Monhart's death. It was then passed through at least one other owner before landing under the ownership of Iowa Pacific Holdings and being shipped to New York for the Saratoga and North Creek.



Odd combination - The locomotive is Bangor and Aroostook, wearing the paint of the Janesville and Southeastern, the Depot is Milwaukee Road, the tracks are owned by the state of Wisconsin and operated by the Wisconsin and Calumet. Sam Carlson's shot on January 20, 1992 captured this scene in Monroe, Wisconsin. As of this writing, nothing of this scene is still present. 52 has moved on, the track is gone and the depot has either been relocated or torn down.



Wig-Wag over Wisconsin: Sam Carlson found 52 switching in Monroe on January 20, 1992. At this time, the Wisconsin and Calumet was running trains as needed to Monroe. Today, although Monroe does have rail service, this particular crossing and its wig-wag signal are no longer there.



Not potatoes – but dairy cows. Crawling through an unlit crossing at the ponderous pace dictated by track conditions, 52 is wrapping up her day on January 20, 1992, returning from Monroe, Wisconsin. 52 looks right at home in the snow and cold. Photo by Sam Carlson.



May of 1998 found Mr. Monhart's locomotives stored next to the roundhouse in Janesville, Wisconsin, 52 and 56 among them. By this time, the Wisconsin and Southern had taken over the operations on this line. The TP&W caboose remains in Wisconsin, everything else has found new homes. Photo by Sam Carlson



Previous Page: 52 – wearing Saratoga and North Creek colors is just minutes away from returning to the station in North Creek, New York on August 12, 2012. Joey Kelley, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Photo

The story does not end here – although the Saratoga and North Creek has shut down operations, both #52 and #56 have been moved off the property. They are still controlled by Iowa Pacific Holdings and who knows where they will pop up next! One thing is for sure – this pair of BL-2s still has a lot of roaming to do.



Setting sun over Saratoga Springs: 52 will overnight here with her train as 8524 runs back to North Creek for the night. August 12, 2012, Joey Kelley, JoeyKelleyPhoto.com

FROM NEW YORK TO INDIANA

Although the line was called the Saratoga and North Creek, 52 and 56 were actually owned by Iowa Pacific Holdings. The S&NC was a subsidiary corporation in operation from 2011 to 2018. After the S&NC ceased operations 52 and 56 were moved off the line and stored at the Batten Kill Railroad.

During this time, your editor actually was in contact with the company which owned the locomotives, having repossessed them as collateral for loans taken out by Iowa Pacific. The purpose was to potentially purchase the locomotives and bring them back to Maine. However, the advertised price was unobtainable and a plan could not be put together.

Someone else did however have a plan and eventually 52 and 56 would be inspected, purchased and shipped to Indiana – specifically the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum. Although they are not owned by HVRM – the intent is to operate them there.

Below: 52 inside the shop at HVRM – November 2021. Kyle Flanigan photo.





Above: 52 outside the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum Shops on May 5, 2023 – Kyle Flanigan photo

“IT LIVES”

Two words that sent a shock of joy to your editor’s heart!

The entire volunteer base at the Hoosier Valley Railroad Museum have been working on 52, almost since it arrived at HVRM.

Last in service in 2018 on the Saratoga and North Creek and only test fired in July of 2021 not long after it arrived at the HVRM, less than two years later, 52 has been test fired again. She is not operational, yet, requiring her braking system to be re-assembled, the front pilot, some additional work in the cooling system and testing remain to be completed. Although that sounds like a lot, 52

has had an overhaul since it arrived and what really remains are the final pieces of this multi-year effort to return this locomotive to the rails.

So many of the railroad preservation efforts in this country owe their successful conclusions to the blood, sweat, tears, hours and dedication of volunteers. To that end – if you're ever in North Judson, Indiana – look up HVRM - <https://www.hoosiervalley.org/> - I think this is one organization we all owe a thank you to!

Check out their Facebook Page for a video of 52 starting up!
<https://www.facebook.com/hoosiervalley/videos/630767011844099>

Editor's Note: I would like to thank Todd and Kyle Flanigan for keeping me in the loop on 52's progress, particularly Kyle for providing so many photographs of the process. A huge thanks to both of you and the rest of the HVRM volunteers!

Below: 52 mid-restoration – November 2021, Kyle Flanigan photo



