

MAINE LINE

A Publication for the Friends of the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad



TALKING IT OVER



As we enter the Spring season it is a time of coming out from behind the snow shovel and breaking out into the world. It has been a busy quarter since the last issue, some more hard work has been done on a long term project (keep reading for more on that!) and if you are looking for a railroad get-a-way, we have a good option for that in this issue as well. Bits of B&A history are being returned to service and in this issue we even detail how even I have more to learn about the B&A as we detail The Six Mile Gap.

That piece, more than anything else, is a great example of what keeps this magazine going. It has often been said that history is boring and never changes. Quite the opposite I think is true as to borrow an old slogan from the History Channel: "History: Made Every Day". It could not be more true. Just when I think I know something, a little bit more research or some long lost document pops up to prove that I do not know as much as I thought. Humbling? Yes. But I should be getting used to that by now!

It continues to be my honor, privilege and passion to bring these pages to you. To provide a space to let people tell the stories of the Bangor and Aroostook that we remember so fondly. If you have a story, a photograph, an idea that you would like to see in these pages, please reach out, as they say, it takes a village! See you on the rail!

-Joey

"Joey" Kelley, Editor

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ABOUT THE COVER



In this age of Photoshop, one might think a few liberties with reality were being taken with this image. The Bangor and Aroostook and the Belfast and Moosehead Lake in the same place? Never happened right? Except it did. Photographed on February 6, 1979 by Peter J. Coulombe, 33 was on temporary lease to the B&ML. Paired with the B&ML's 52, this view shows the B&ML train working the Maine Central interchange at Burnham Junction, the end of the B&ML line. The B&ML borrowed many units during its time and nearly the entire steam locomotive roster was purchased from the Bangor and Aroostook. Photo from the JoeyKelleyPhoto.com Collection

MAINE LINE REWIND

MAINE LINE

70 years ago in the Maine Line:

March - April 1954 Issue

- Curtis M. Hutchins is President
- Frank R. Shaw brings the Russett Burbank Potato to Maine
- The Cape Jellison Dock Fire of 1924
- Port at Searsport: 50 years
- R. B. "Dick" Baldwin sells surplus equipment to railfans
- Looking at Safety
- Profile of Bill Hay
- In The Family of the B&A
- Facts and figures

The March - April 1954 issue was Volume 2 and Issue number 3. In 1954, the Maine Line was being produced every two months.



March - April, 1954

Bangor and Aroostook Railroad

You can view the Archive of original Maine Line Magazines, including the issue above, on the Maine Line Magazine website
<https://mainelinemagazine.joeykelleyphoto.com/>
Look for the Archive page



RENT-A-BUGGY

Text and Photos by Robin Lamothe

On August 4th, 2018 the Lamothe family purchased the 1946 Bangor and Aroostook Caboose on eBay for \$16,250 from a private owner from New Jersey. The Caboose had been stored at the Naugatuck Railroad in Connecticut for many years and it took about a year to move to Palmer, MA. Howard Pincus, the Director of the Naugatuck Railroad, staff members and the Railroad Club of New England were very accommodating throughout the moving process, allowing us to work on the Caboose while also providing us with assistance and guidance to ensure the Caboose was track worthy and ready for transport to its new home in Palmer, MA.

On its journey, the Caboose had to be inspected by each of the Railroads that were affected by its path of travel up to Palmer, including G & W R.R., Amtrak, PanAm and the Northern New London Railroad. On the final leg to its new home, traveling from Brattleboro, VT and arriving at the Central Vermont RR, the Caboose passed by the former Union Station, which is now the Steaming Tender Restaurant (28 Depot Street, Palmer) and was unloaded on our newly acquired spur, located off the Central Vermont RR line, in between Vail and Dublin Street in the town of Palmer.

In Palmer, preparations were made to accommodate the arrival of the Caboose. The railroad track was laid by DeAngelis Railroad Contractors out of Worcester, MA. We also had to put a road through the neighboring yard, with their permission, leading to the new location. A Swivel Crane, typically used for tractor trailer containers, was used to take the Caboose off the tracks and transport it to its current location at 32 Dublin Street.







Now, guests step back in time while staying in one of New England's most unique accommodations, our 1946 Bangor and Aroostook Caboose, perched on a hill overlooking the New England Central Railroad Railyard. We have meticulously and authentically restored this gem to ensure that you do not lose sight of the fact that you are in a Caboose. Sit at the original desk and enjoy one of the many books available for your leisure, or sit up in the copula while sipping a fresh cup of coffee and overlook the Railroad hard at work. At night, sit around the fire pit while roasting marshmallows for S'mores and talking about the day's adventure. You can book your stay at the Caboose by going to our website: www.trainmastersinn.com

Editor's Note: A huge thanks to the Lamothe family for this and their other contributions to New England's railroading history. The same family owns and runs the Steaming Tender Restaurant, in the old passenger station in Palmer! To my knowledge this is the only authentic Bangor and Aroostook caboose available to the public to rent. Eat at the Steaming Tender, watch trains on the nearby former Boston and Albany (now CSX) and the New England Central (now owned by G&W) then retire to the caboose to sleep in railroad themed luxury. Now that is a getaway I could get used to!



**NEW LIFE FOR AN
OLD LANTERN**

Photo on the Previous Page from the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Marketing Department collection - date unknown - collection of Matthew Sawyer, the B&A Archives, used with permission

Sometimes things just fall into your lap, or nearly so. Back in February an ad popped up on Facebook Marketplace for a B&A lantern for sale. It was close by, cheap and I was interested. Upon inspection it had been, well, altered. There was a time when these lanterns were nothing more than surplus equipment replaced by electric battery powered units and were being sold off as scrap or little more. (See the article about this in the March - April 1954 Maine Line I mentioned in the 'Rewind' in this issue!) As a result many of the old lanterns were turned into various things, the most obvious being table lamps or railroad themed decor lamps and being electrified in the process. There are several ways to electrify one of these lanterns, ranging from easy to not so easy and depending on your goal, originality may or may not be a factor. Whomever altered this one was not terribly worried about originality and took the easy approach of making a hole in the very bottom of the lantern and replacing its guts with a cord and light bulb socket.

Some time after that, someone else took a long screw, put it through the light socket and affixed a teacandle holder where the light bulb would go, effectively taking the potential fire hazard of an old light socket and replacing it with the actual fire hazard of a flame. The seller did not know much about the history of the piece and had only said it has been in his family for 'decades'. Not being one for teacandles and not trusting the old light socket (the snipped off wire was just one reason) to bring some new life into this old lantern I replaced the existing setup entirely with a USB powered light that I can run off of a cell phone charger or other similar power source. The power wire for this fit (snugly) into the notch below the glass globe which used to be used to raise and lower the wick of the lantern. Currently located near the number boards and headlights mentioned in the last Maine Line, there is a little bit more B&A in my living room!

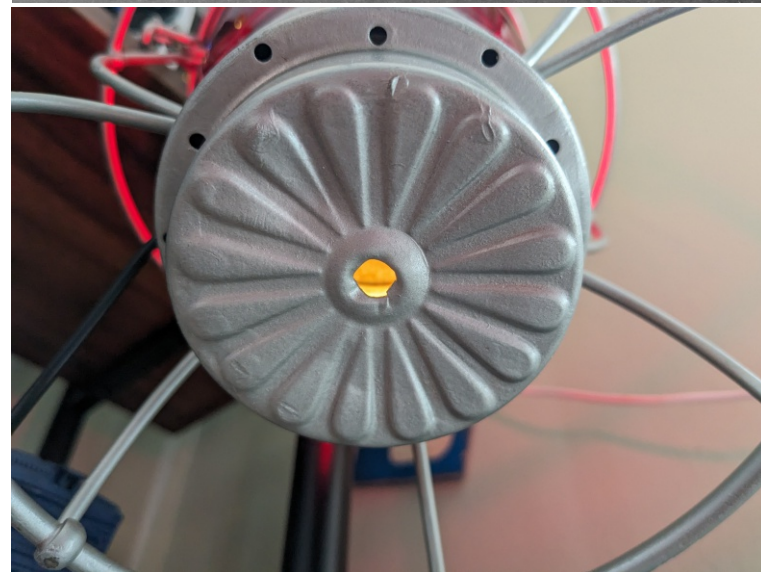


While putting some new life into this old lantern, the image above with the conductor holding a lantern popped into my head. A part of the B&A Archives collection, I had scanned it some time ago and remembered looking at it in detail. Many of you know that I have a passion for night photography and one of the difficult bits in working with lanterns at night is that they are simply not that bright. Compared to a pitch black dark night, yes, but compared to modern lighting, they simply do not throw a lot of light. We do not know when this photo was taken, but it was obviously staged and lit in a professional manner. Looking closely, we see how the lantern was made to be so bright. It has been electrified and the cord is running over the shoulder of the conductor.



If we look at the bottom of the lantern - we see that the cord is in fact running out of a hole in the center of the bottom of the lantern. To the right is the bottom of the now thrice modified lantern I own. That hole in the center looks shockingly like the one above it. Are we looking at the same lantern? The red globe is not present in the older photos, but, it could have been swapped or even removed to give the maximum amount of light for the photo.

Is it the same lantern? Probably not. Odds are that many people got B&A lanterns and put light sockets into them and putting a cord in the dead center of the bottom certainly makes sense for a table lamp. I have a pair that were used as hanging lanterns that have holes and light sockets in the top center for the same reason.



But maybe- just maybe - I've stumbled onto a unique piece of B&A history. We will never know - but I can hope!



Mission Accomplished ALMOST

TRANSPORTATION
REFORM
NOW

WALKING TALL
AGAIN

Since the last issue of the Maine Line things have changed a bit on the Archive. The last time you saw it mentioned in these pages we were just shy of having the entire Maine Line available online. It gives me great pride to announce that we now have all 166 issues of the original Maine Line - including those produced in Newsprint - available and online.

This has been accomplished through the efforts of Adam Fisher of the State of Maine Archives - who had one copy of each of the newsprint issues. This included a previously unknown issue to myself and the Bushway's who spearheaded this project. Volume 6, 1957-1958 was believed to have only five issues. It turns out there were in fact six. One was done in newsprint and had escaped all but the State of Maine's collection. This brought the total up to 166 issues.

Adam has also been working on a project to convert all of the issues into a searchable format. Although this project is by no means complete - he has made great strides on this front, with over half of the issues now searchable. Eventually, they all will be searchable but for now we remain in a state of progress where some are and some are not. This is a tremendous value addition to the Maine Line and makes finding certain topics much easier when doing research. We all owe Adam a tremendous thank you for this effort - we appreciate it!

I cannot express how happy I am to be able to bring you all the complete run of the original Maine Line Magazine. I might be hosting it and building the web pages, but the folks behind the scenes, Adam, Judi and Rod Bushway were the ones that got this project pushed through. If it had been left up to me this would still be on my to-do list under the heading of 'One day when I have time'. Thank you all!

Ready to check out the archive?

<https://mainelinemagazine.joeykelleyphoto.com/maine-line-magazine-archive/>

Or click on Archive from the Maine Line Magazine website!



THE SIX MILE GAP

Alternative history is a popular writing genre for authors where the author takes an event, changes the outcome and projects forward creating an alternative world. Perhaps the most popular, or at least most well known since its 2015 adaptation into a TV series is Philip K. Dick's *The Man in the High Castle*. Released in and set in 1962 it sets up a world where the Allied powers lost and the Axis powers won World War II. Sound disturbing? It certainly can be. But works like this make us question what would have happened had certain things gone differently.

The Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad, chartered in 1867, is the single railroad in the State of Maine operating under its original name. Along with the Bangor and Aroostook, these two are the only surviving railroads to terminate in Waldo County, Maine. The Bangor and Aroostook's Searsport Branch was completed in 1905, entering Waldo County from the North. The Belfast and Moosehead Lake was built beginning in Belfast and stretching roughly West through Waldo County before connecting to the Maine Central in Burnham Junction. Completed in 1870, operated by the Maine Central from 1871 through 1925, the 33 mile Belfast and Moosehead Lake never fulfilled its original charter to run all the way to the shores of Moosehead Lake. Oddly enough, the Bangor and Aroostook would run to the shores of Moosehead Lake via the Greenville Branch which started out as the Bangor and Piscataquis Railroad. Separated by only six miles by air, Searsport and Belfast are nearly 100 rail miles apart, leaving one to wonder why the two were never connected.

The main line of the Bangor and Aroostook that we remember today was not the original – that took a route roughly Southeast out of South LaGrange towards Old Town. The Northern Maine Seaport Railroad was chartered on December 1, 1904. This company built a line from South LaGrange to Mack's Point (Now known as Mack Point in Searsport) in about 11 months and was leased to the Bangor and Aroostook for 999 years on November 20, 1905.

This line went more Southwest, almost literally the opposite direction of the previous line. Eventually this line would grow to be the Bangor and Aroostook we now remember, from Searsport up through to South LaGrange, with Northern Maine Junction just about in the middle of the two points.

Why bring up Belfast in this conversation since we know that no line was ever built between Searsport and Belfast? Around 20 years ago your author was in a conversation with another individual who stated quite definitively that there was at one point a plan to build a connector between the two, but could provide no details. It would seem that, although mentioned in the Angier and Cleaves books on the Bangor and Aroostook that a set of plans did exist, no further commentary was made on the subject. In the March-April 1954 Maine Line on page 14 there is a reference to a plan to build to Belfast. The plans were not published and your author was not convinced. It should be mentioned here that your author is also the author of the only book to be published on the Belfast and Moosehead Lake Railroad and can speak about that railroad at length, including the never to be completed plans to build to Greenville.

It came as something of a shock when Matthew Sawyer, the force behind the B&A Archives, announced that he in fact had the proposed plan for the route to Belfast in the Archive. It is impractical to attempt to reproduce a set of plans that is over 14 feet long and about 2 and ½ feet wide in these pages. However, it is confirmed. The Northern Maine Seaport Railroad was originally going to Belfast.



Above: Author's drawing over a current map showing approximately where the Northern Maine Seaport Railroad would have been laid from Searsport - top right - to Belfast - lower left.

Next Page: For the first time this segment of the survey plan, dating from 1904, is being made available to the public. Courtesy of Matthew Sawyer, the B&A Archives

1225°63'3" Q-236
MG. R.R.

1223+04 O.E.C.
89°58'

1213+040 B.C.

N 30° 00' 00" W

PUSKAGASSAWAKEKING RIVER

1220

1204

1210 1209-12.7 E.C.
89°58'

1199-77.9 B.C.

1200

BELFAST

HARBOR

1180

N 52° 58' W

1170

1163+03.6 B.C.
89°58'

1158+76.6 B.C.

1160

N 68° 08' W 1150

1144+09.6 B.L.

1148+25.5 E.C.
89°58'

1139+08.1 B.C.

N 48° 05' W

CLARENCE R.

The plan it seems was to run the tracks more or less parallel to the existing US Route 1, crossing the road multiple times before hugging the coast line to finally cross US 1 once more near the bridge over the Passagasawakeag River only to cross on its own bridge to touch down on the South bank of the river, connecting less than a half mile up river at an unnamed point on the Belfast and Moosehead Lake.

Given the timeline of the Northern Maine Seaport Railroad, it is likely that this proposal dates from 1904, the use of the Maine Central Railroad to describe the Belfast and Moosehead Lake supports this as at that time, the Maine Central was leasing the Belfast and Moosehead Lake. Approximately six miles by air separates the proposed junction point and the approximate location where the line would have left the Searsport branch that exists today. Such a small distance to save a 100 mile routing by rail. It leads one to wonder why this connector was not built. The B&A would have gained a second connection point with the Maine Central, one that would have provided more revenue miles to the B&A for Southbound loads. The Maine Central would have gained more direct access to the port at Searsport and passenger travel to and from Northern Maine from the general Belfast area would have been much simpler. Freight bound to and from the B&ML headed for Aroostook county would have been much easier to route.

All that said, the plan calls for building through multiple parcels of privately held land, the building of a decent sized (although certainly attainable) bridge over a river. The track would have been built near water, probably requiring considerable construction at multiple points to keep the track and water separate. Not impossible, but not easy either.

Traffic patterns on the B&ML seem to indicate that most loads went South while most inbound shipments came from the South. Would this have been different with a direct connection to the Bangor and Aroostook? Who can say. Passenger traffic ebbed and flowed on the B&ML – but – was traditionally within the line. It seemed the folks in that part of Waldo County used the railroad, but did not go any great distance regularly. Would people have traveled between Belfast and Bangor via the B&A? We will never know.

It is worth mentioning that since the Northern Maine Seaport Railroad was building into essentially unclaimed territory, leveraging any existing railroad would have been beneficial to both. Another point to consider, in 1904 Belfast was an established port. The deep water port that we know today at Searsport did not exist. On one hand it would have been considerably cheaper to build six miles of railroad rather than a whole port. The counter argument is that present day Searsport's depth is at least twice as deep as Belfast.

Perhaps the greatest irony is that when the bonds were being sold to finance the Belfast and Moosehead Lake's construction the statement was made that this railroad would haul the products of Maine out of the port at Belfast. Although this was not to be – the Bangor and Aroostook did accomplish this some six miles up the coast in Searsport where everything from coal to potatoes and oil to paper rode the rails of the Bangor and Aroostook.

Unless some additional information comes to light, this 120 year old mystery of a stretch of railroad that never did get built will probably never be solved. But we can speculate and who knows, maybe one day we will get some answers.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Photographer Alan Crossley shot this excellent photo on the bridge in Frankfort in 1984. 76 and 73 headed Northbound with a returning train from Searsport in the long days of August.

In this issue we have the great privilege of seeing some of Alan Crossley's camera work. A great thank you to him for sending in these great images!

Next Page: An angle not often taken - 51 in October of 1985 at Northern Maine Junction.





Alan shot this returning Northbound in Winterport in October, 1985. Unless I miss my guess, he is either standing in the water or on a rock. Certainly worth the effort!



The passenger train The Gull was long gone by the time Alan shot this in Searsport in December of 1992, yet this passenger will probably not be issued a ticket.



The difference five years can make! This shot from October of 1997 shows 357 switching at Northern Maine Junction. This locomotive, prior to rebuilding, was 83. Time waits for no man as they say. Great shot Alan!



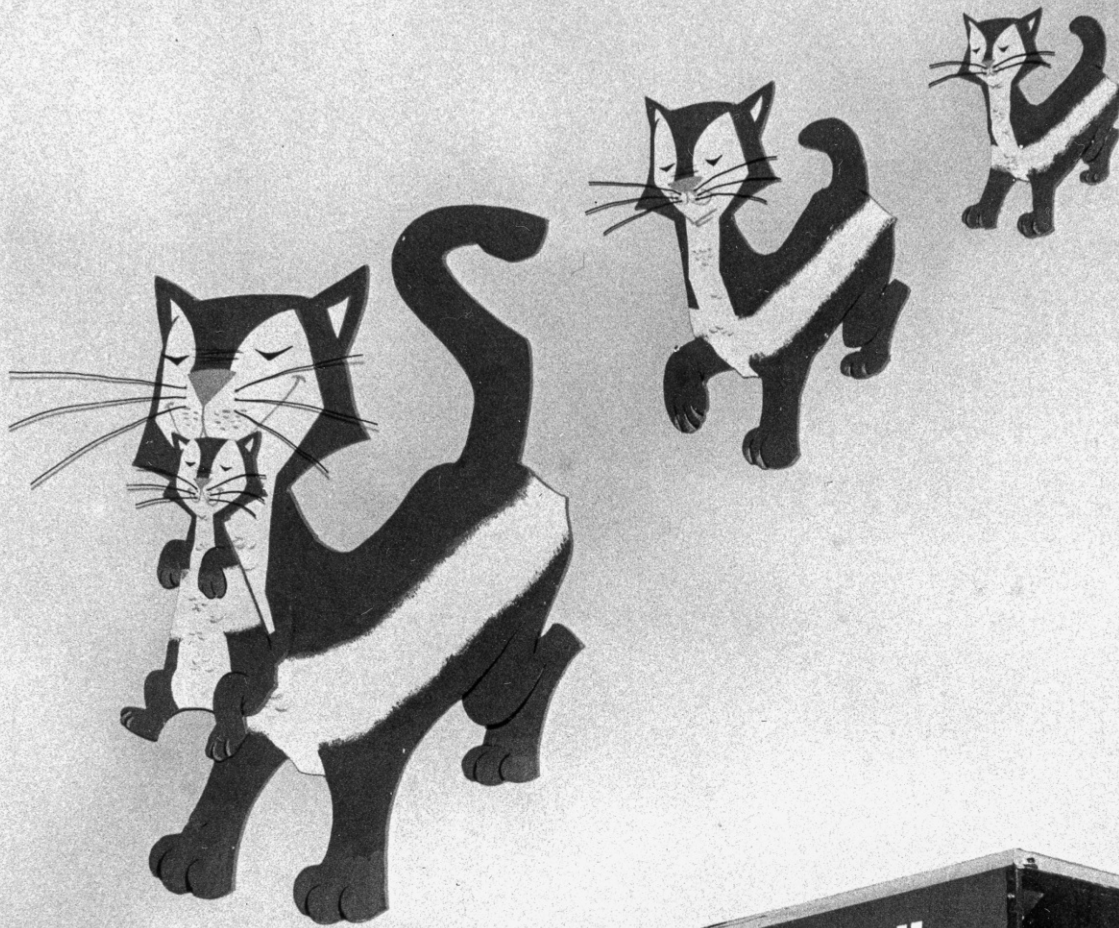
Mosquito Mountain provides the colorful backdrop to this Southbound Searsport Job in October of 1997. Love the colors!



Only one place in the world would you find three BL-2s, in three different paint schemes, on an active freight railroad in 1985. That was the Bangor and Aroostook and these three were at Northern Maine Junction in October of that year.

Thanks again to Alan Crossley for providing these great images!

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