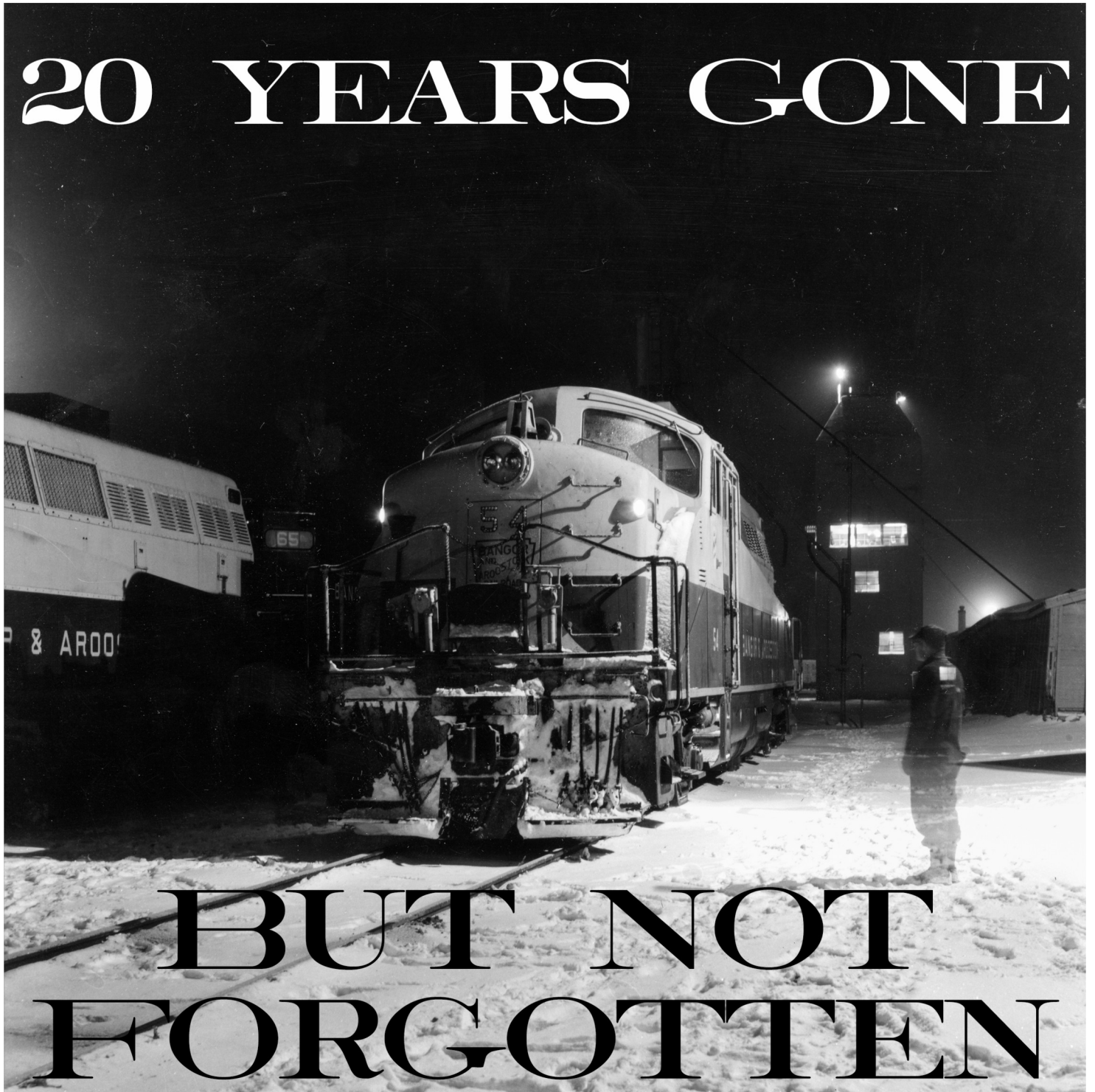


# MAINE LINE

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

## 20 YEARS GONE



# Talking It Over

Time. From titles and lyrics of songs to movie quotes – time seems to be the constant topic of the human condition. The day this issue is released – January 8, 2023 – represents the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the last day of operations on the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad. It is truly sobering to realize how much time has passed – how the world has changed and how much Maine railroading has changed. With this somewhat humbling milestone reached, the challenge to get the stories of those who worked for the Bangor and Aroostook written down becomes ever harder.

20 years ago today was a watershed moment for me personally – it was the first (and last) time I ever got a cab ride on the Bangor and Aroostook. More on that in this issue.

It is of course impossible to talk about the Bangor and Aroostook ending without talking about what came after it: the Montreal, Maine and Atlantic. This has also passed into history and the Central Maine and Quebec which replaced the MM&A is now owned by Canadian Pacific. Traces of the Bangor and Aroostook are still to be found, but with each change, a few more traces are lost. It is increasingly important that we remember the B&A and keep it alive in our hearts – from models of massive locomotives to the preservation of full size structures and Maintenance of Way Equipment – we all do something to preserve the history of this railroad.

Here's to another 20 years of keeping the B&A alive!

- "Joey" Kelley, Editor



## **Maine Line Magazine:**

A Publication of

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## **About the Cover**

**The Last Day**

## **What does the B&A Mean to you?**

**One Last Switcher**

## **Corporate Timeline**

**Last Days Photo Gallery**

## **About the Rear Cover:**

In a scene from days gone by,  
88 is leading a spreader extra  
by some potato houses in Washburn  
on January 25, 1977. Photo by  
George Melvin, Shawn Duren  
collection

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# ABOUT THE COVER

Your editor has a passion for night photography. It is, evidently, something that the folks in the marketing department of the B&A shared. This is a print found in the Marketing Department archives – showing 54 on what looks to be a cold night during the winter in Oakfield. With no notes on year – I can only guess – but with 65 behind 54 in its solid blue paint (which the records I have show happening in October of 1963) and with 54 still in her two-tone paint (according to the same records 54 went all blue in October of 64) I would say we're looking at the winter of 63-64. A moment in time – preserved forever here.

Winter 2023

## MAINE LINE

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

### 20 YEARS GONE

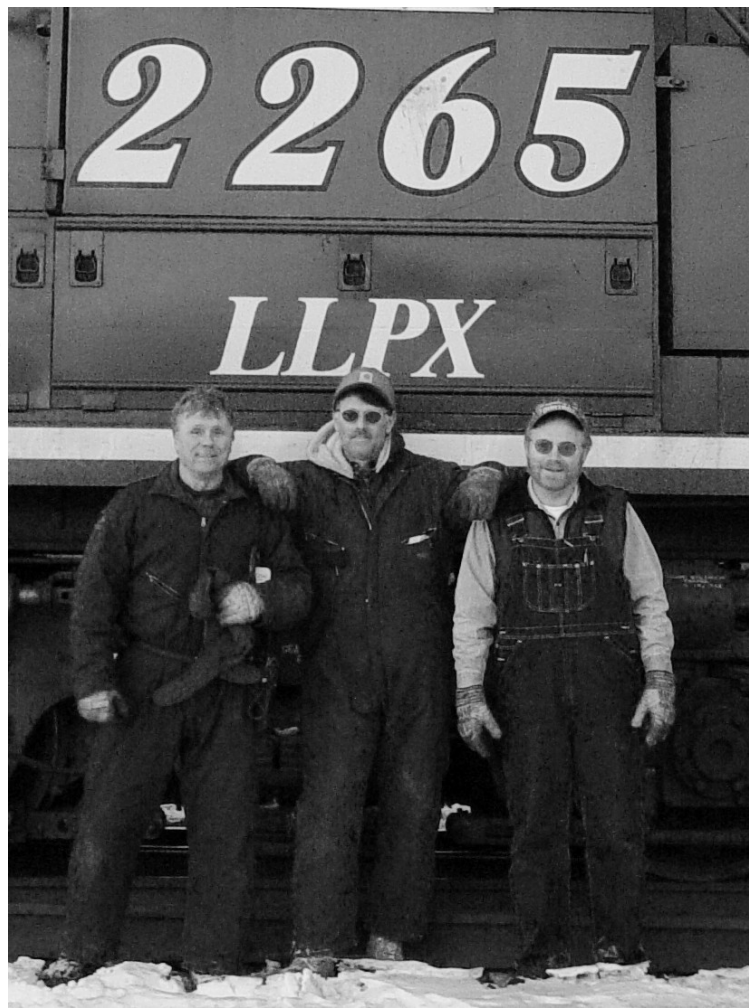


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# THE LAST DAY

January 8th, 2003 dawned like many Maine winter days before it. It was cold and cloudy in Bangor with a couple bursts of light snow in the morning. Throughout the 'Bangor and Aroostook System' as it was known crews went on duty and freight was moved. My favorite haunt at the time was Northern Maine Junction, site of the corporate headquarters of the Bangor and Aroostook for decades. NMJ had at that time three daily jobs - a Southbound to Searsport, a switcher that would occasionally go as far south as the Dead River Propane plant in Hampden and a nightly Northbound that the switcher would put together throughout the day. Knowing that this was the last day, many people turned out to photograph, or just to see the last day of an old friend. At the time I was in the habit of arriving in the afternoon at NMJ and I got to experience the last NMJ switcher. There would not be a nightly train North out of NMJ that night as it would be on the rail as the company changed ownership. In effect, I saw the last B&A train to run at NMJ. Powered by a lone LLPX GP38 locomotive with cab heaters that only marginally worked. Mike and Glenn, the last crew of the last switcher, were both railroaders in the finest tradition of the B&A - hard working and complaining about the cold.

*Right: LLPX 2265, and Tommy Horton, Glen Karam and Mike Carroll at Northern Maine Junction on December 30, 2002. The same crew would be around a few days later on the last day of the B&A. Photo by Matt Minson, used with permission.*



# WHAT DOES THE BANGOR & AROOSTOOK MEAN TO YOU?

“The Bangor & Aroostook has changed my whole railroad hobby. I have never before been so passionately enthusiastic about any railway company as I am now. There isn't a day that goes by that I don't think about what I could do at my home track or what it will take for you guys to get there in Maine. I feel that I am privileged to have gotten to know you guys there in Maine and I have a job that I want to do with honor.” -Johan Kortman

“A company that cared about its employees and the communities it served.”  
-Matthew Sawyer

“A family.” -Warren Cain

“An introduction to an industry.” -Matt Minson

“Home of the last operating group of ‘Chicken Wire F-3s’” -Rich Jahn

“A link to my childhood – watching them switch Oakfield yard” -Dan Brown

“A company that cared for its employees.” -Mike Carroll

“...We continue the legacy of those who went before us.” -Rob Butler

“Losing the B&A was like watching the death of a family member you looked up to your whole life for inspiration and guidance.” -Shawn Duren





# ONE LAST SWITCHER

20 years ago I went out to Northern Maine Junction with my first digital camera in hand – extra batteries crammed into pockets – fully prepared watch and photograph – when I was graciously offered a ride. Mike Carroll and Glenn Karam became cemented in my memory that day – as the last of the crews that would switch Northern Maine Junction under the Bangor and Aroostook. Like countless crews before them – they would build a train – switch the cars – and do their job while working in Maine’s snow – but the difference was we knew they would be the last.

Despite a tradition of older units on B&A trains, the trains out of NMJ had been and were powered by leased units from LLPX and despite having been rebuilt, the heaters left something to be desired. Officially, the temperature



reached a high of 28 degrees Fahrenheit in Bangor that day. About the best I could say for the heaters in 2259? Warmer than outside.



*Above: Having run around the loop at NMJ, 2259's short hood is now aimed North – providing a decent view of the 'Farm' at NMJ.*

By far, Glenn had the worst of it – I hardly think he stopped moving the entire time – trying to keep warm, despite the insulated coveralls.

Although exactly what we were switching that day has escaped me – the pictures seem to indicate at least a portion of the Southbound from the previous day and probably the interchange tracks with Guilford Rail System. We certainly did run over and switch Pine Tree Propane and also ran over to the Dysart's log loading yard. After that – it was time for the highlight of the trip, for me personally. I got to ride down to Hampden – my home town – on the last B&A NMJ switcher.



Form 3900  
03/2002

## Clearance

1. Clearance No. 117 To WK 2259 Date 1-8-03  
is superseded.

2. Clearance No. \_\_\_\_\_ track.

3. Proceed \_\_\_\_\_ track.  
From \_\_\_\_\_ (location)  
To \_\_\_\_\_ (location)  
Clear \_\_\_\_\_ (clearance)  
Leave (1) \_\_\_\_\_ in reverse position.  
and (2) \_\_\_\_\_ track.  
Work So. CTS No. 25  
Between mile 25 Support Sub  
And \_\_\_\_\_

4. Do not proceed until \_\_\_\_\_ 5. N/A.  
Arrive(s) at \_\_\_\_\_ (location)

6. Approach (1) \_\_\_\_\_ (switch - location)  
(2) \_\_\_\_\_ (switch - location)  
(3) \_\_\_\_\_ (switch - location)  
prepared to restore to normal position.

7. Protect against \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ (location)  
(preceding train)

8. (A) Protect against \_\_\_\_\_ (train or foreman)  
Between \_\_\_\_\_ (location)  
And \_\_\_\_\_ (location)  
(B) Protect against \_\_\_\_\_ (train or foreman)  
Between \_\_\_\_\_ (location)  
And \_\_\_\_\_ (location)  
(C) Protect against \_\_\_\_\_ (train or foreman)  
Between \_\_\_\_\_ (location)  
And \_\_\_\_\_ (location)

9. GBO NIL (number(s) or rail)

10. Call RTC 1419 AJS (before time or location)  
11. Complete \_\_\_\_\_ (time) (RTC initial) 12. Clearance No. 117  
is cancelled at \_\_\_\_\_  
Acknowledged by Karam 1419 Acknowledged by McConnell  
(occupation and name) (occupation and name)  
Initials \_\_\_\_\_

“.....Clearance number 117 is complete at 1419 – 1-4-1-9 – AJS - RTC Northern Maine Junction”

How many times had AJS (Andrew J. St. Amant, Rail Traffic Controller) said that? But this would be the last – under the Bangor and Aroostook.



With that – we started for Hampden, load of propane for Dead River in tow.

*Above: Clearance 117*

*Right: Down the long hood – fireman's side of 2259 – approaching Hampden, southbound*





*Left: Glenn works the ground at Dead River Propane in Hampden*

*Below: 2259 pulls back into 'the farm' after returning from Hampden*

With light fading and being a solid decade before I would purchase night photography equipment – that was it for me. I bid Mike, Glenn and 2259 farewell and headed home – bittersweet that I had not only witnessed the last NMJ switcher, but that I would never have that B&A experience again.

Epilogue: Mike, Glenn and 2259 would all go on to work for the Montreal Maine and Atlantic. 2259 went off lease shortly after MM&A's locomotives entered service and is now owned by a shortline in Georgia. Mike and Glenn both retired from the MM&A. Dead River propane in Hampden continues to be serviced by rail. Northern Maine Junction has been changed in various ways, including a relatively recent rebuild that changed the alignment and switch locations of various tracks at 'The Farm' -JTK







*Above: One sign – two railroads. The B&A system sign and the banner placed over it to create the first MM&A sign. Both at Northern Maine Junction, the B&A sign photo was taken by Larry Kemp and the MM&A one taken by Shawn Duren.*

## TALKING THE TRANSITION

It is impossible to discuss the end of the Bangor and Aroostook without talking about the Montreal Maine and Atlantic. The MM&A was a company that was owned by Railworld – an international company with railroad holdings and operations across the globe. Edward Burkhardt started the company while still with the Wisconsin Central. When the Bangor and Aroostook was declared bankrupt, the MM&A was formed to purchase the assets of the B&A and continue



operations. With a track record (pun intended) of taking railroad lines that no one else wanted, locomotives that were cast off from other lines and servicing customers at the Wisconsin Central, there was cautious optimism that this might work and that the MM&A could succeed where Iron Road had failed.

From the outside looking in, this was arguably a good thing, but what was it like from the inside out? From the standpoint of those who worked for the B&A during this time, how did things look? Your *Maine Line* editor sought to find out. Through a series of interviews with people across the B&A, we aim to set the record straight as to how things were. That said, 20 years later, memories fade, impressions are altered by later events and looking back on it – hindsight is always perfect.

Although if had you asked me before beginning this round of interviews I would have thought it unlikely, I was able to locate multiple people who worked for the Bangor and Aroostook under Amoskeag (better known as the Buck Dumaine era) through the Iron Road ownership and into the Montreal Maine and Atlantic. Their impressions are perhaps the most valuable in offering a perspective as to how things were – offering the perspective of decades of service to what was, essentially, three different railroads.

Every person that I spoke with who worked for Amoskeag and Iron Road said the same thing – Amoskeag was a family run business. Buck Dumaine was a joy to work for – he cared about the workers and therefore the workers cared about the company. The same could not be said for Iron Road.

From the outside, looking in, the Iron Road Era was one of passenger excursions, rebuilt and repainted locomotives, expansion into Canada, Vermont and in general, good things seemed to be happening. Raymond C. Nolan once said that “Education is learning the extent of one's own ignorance.” I find that sentiment to be true in this case. With one exception, no one that I spoke with who worked under Iron Road and the MM&A had anything good to say. The comments ranged from the mild – no longer a family atmosphere – to comments regarding the numerous businesses that extended the B&A credit – only to have bills left unpaid and only able to receive pennies on the dollar after the bankruptcy. Tales and rumors spread about gross misuse of company funds, but no evidence of any action being taken has come to light. The one exception to the rather disparaging comments about Iron Road was the statement that – in

contrast to the MM&A – at least the paychecks were never cut or stopped.

With such a lack-luster opinion of the Iron Road era, not the least of which was the fact that the B&A did go into bankruptcy under their ownership, it is somewhat unsurprising to hear that the MM&A was looked upon, initially, as a chance for the railroad to bounce back. To rise like a phoenix from the ashes of its own bankruptcy. In direct contrast to what one might think, the consensus of those I interviewed was that the name of the B&A had been so destroyed by Iron Road's ownership that the 'death' of the name was not actually as big of a sore spot as one might think. Those that came from multi-generational railroad families felt the loss more strongly – the B&A was a tradition, a family, in their cases literally – but the overwhelming feeling was actually not loss.

The MM&A brought in management consultants to evaluate how things were being done and what jobs were both critical and required and what people and jobs could be eliminated to save on costs. Not everyone that worked for the B&A at the time of the transition was hired by the MM&A – but what was more dramatic was when they were told if they were hired or not. Officially the MM&A was incorporated in late 2002 – the time between then and the takeover of operations was negotiations, hiring, restructuring and coming up with a plan to run 745 miles of railroad.

Of those I spoke to, when they were told they had a job with the new railroad ranged widely. Some were told nearly immediately after the MM&A was brought in – others were only told a handful of days before the transition. The uncertainty of that, then the relief when each found out they were hired gave the people I spoke to hope for the future. Wages and salaries were reduced, compared to Iron Road, but at least they had employment.

The hope for the future was largely dashed when about 16 hours after the MM&A took over operations, the largest customer on the entire railroad, Great Northern Paper Company filed for bankruptcy. Although the Montreal Maine and Atlantic would eventually follow the B&A into bankruptcy, the overwhelming feeling on January 8, 2003, was one of relief at still having a job tomorrow.

# CORPORATE TIMELINE

**February 13, 1891** – Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company incorporates as a State of Maine Company

**February 28 and March 5, 1891** – Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company is given the right by special act to purchase or lease the Bangor and Piscataquis Railroad Company and the Katahdin Iron Work Railway Company

**March 14, 1891** – Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company organizes

**April 1, 1899** – Bangor and Piscataquis Railroad Company is sold to Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company

**November 6, 1901** – Bangor and Katahdin Iron Works Railway Company is sold to Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company

**December 27, 1901** – Patten and Sherman Railroad Company is sold to Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company

**December 31, 1901** – Aroostook Northern Railroad Company is sold to Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company

**November 18, 1903** – Fish River Railroad Company is sold to Bangor and Aroostook Company

**November 20, 1905** - Northern Maine Seaport Railroad Company railroad, franchise, and all other property are leased to the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company for a period of 999 years.

**July 26, 1907** – Schoodic Stream Railroad is sold to Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company

**January 30, 1913** – Van Buren Bridge Company incorporates under the private and special laws of the State of Maine, effective July 11, 1913

**June 6, 1913** – Van Buren Bridge Company is given authority by the Canadian Government for the construction of a bridge, through transfer of the right of the Restigouche and Western Railway Company to build and maintain a bridge across the St. John River between Grand Falls and Edmunston, New Brunswick

**July 12, 1913** – Van Buren Bridge Company organizes

**1961** – Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company incorporates The Bangor and Aroostook Corporation and ownership of the railroad is transferred to the new holding company

**October 2, 1969** – Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company is acquired by Amoskeag Company

**December 2, 1988** – BAR Merger Corporation incorporates in the State of Maine

**January 25, 1989** – BAR Merger Corporation merges into Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company

**December 30, 1994** – Canadian American Railroad Company incorporates in the State of Maine

**March 17, 1995** – Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company is acquired by Iron Road Railways, Inc.

**December 30, 2007** – Logistics Management Systems, Inc., Van Buren Bridge Company, and Canadian American Railroad Company merge into Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company

**December 30, 2007** – Bangor and Aroostook Railroad Company is renamed to Bangor & Aroostook Holdings, Inc.

[Compiled by Matthew D. Cosgro – NashuaCityStation.org](http://NashuaCityStation.org)



# LAST DAYS GALLERY



*January 1, 2003 – LLPX 2239 and LLPX 2260 underneath the coal tower at Northern Maine Junction*



*Evening of January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003 – the 'Tube' under the old Maine Central main line.*





*Previous page: Sunset over NMJ – January 5, 2003*



*With the Mechanical Refrigerator maintenance building behind me – this was the scene at Northern Maine Junction on January 8, 2003*





*2262 was the Searsport Local on January 8, 2003 – shown here crossing Coldbrook Road in Hermon, Southbound*





*January 8, 2003 – 2262 and 2259 Southbound in Hudson, Maine for the last time under the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad name – Photo by Shawn Duren*



