

THE MARKER LIGHT

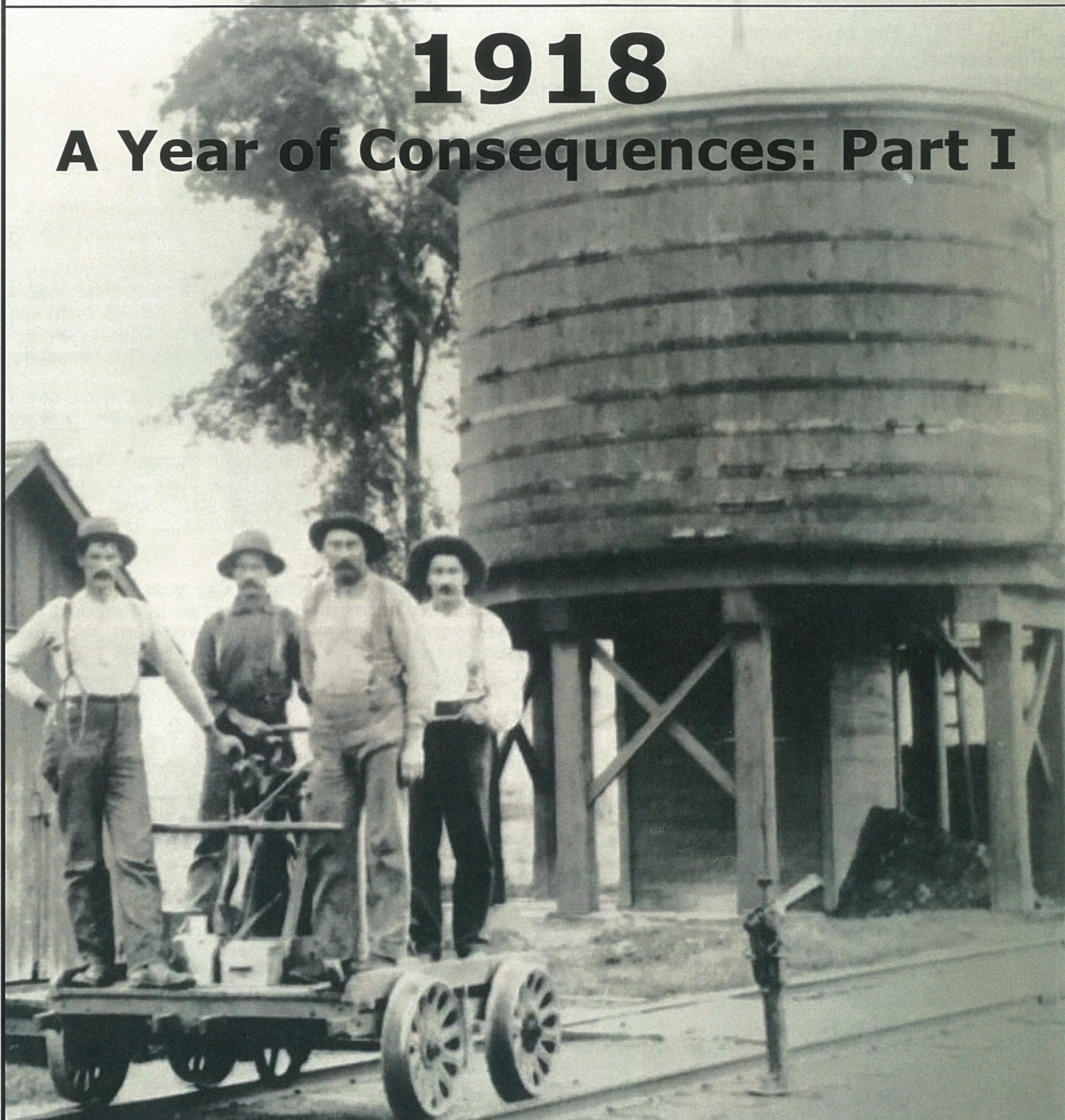
NUMBER 40

FOR FANS & MODELERS OF THE PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD

SPRING 2020

1918

A Year of Consequences: Part I



Book Review: *Inside Railroading & Other Stories*

Rare DBC&W Switch Lock & Key

Propane Tank Cars Interchanged in 1974

Matching the Prototype: NATX 35118

A Section Crew pauses next to the St. Clair yard water plug (Photo: Duffy Collection)

Cover: A Section Gang poses next to the St. Clair yard plug before resuming their work.

PG. 2: From Where I Sit; July 1976

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FROM WHERE I SIT

Dear Friends of the PH&D,

Can you believe this is the 40th issue? We have come a long way and have accomplished many great goals. All due to terrific donors and our loyal members. I think we have a great organization and we can continue to make progress!

While the current pandemic continues, we must look forward to the day when a vaccine becomes available and we can resume the activities we once enjoyed. We've seen this before though. Over 100 years ago, the Spanish Flu decimated the world and Michigan. It would last for two more years. It hit Michigan in 1918, right at the time the Port Huron & Detroit Railroad was being built! The similarities are exactly what we see today. Newspaper accounts cover the same responses.

Coincidentally, a newly acquired cache of files reveal the woes that came at the end of that construction. It's apparent that it took awhile to get the road useable. Now we know the full story about those pesky clinkers!

We also return to our switch list of 1974, to cover the propane tank cars that were interchanged. These were brought down and spotted at Amoco Oil in St. Clair. As modelers, we certainly need to include these in our consists. However, it's very difficult to locate HO scale models of these cars. But now you'll have a list so you'll know.

We recently obtained a DBC&WRR switch lock and key. These are very rare and don't come up often. It was an expensive effort, but now we have it for the future "DBC&WRR Room".

Finally, a word about the Society and the new direction it may be taking. The Tunnel City "experiment" is over. The board of directors have much to repair. Already, some exploratory efforts are underway, led by President Dan Meinhard. Up-to-date records, agendas, minutes, and financial reports from past years have been from me which I am happy to supply. . We care about our Society and we should support their efforts. Let's hope for a return to transparency, open monthly meetings, and a more convivial atmosphere.

It'll be another few months before we see each other again. In the meantime, stay safe, stay home, and soon perhaps we'll be back out at the wye once more. I would think that calls for a BBQ!

Sandy Duffy



It's a warm, humid summer day in July, 1976, but not in this air-conditioned, westbound Amtrak coach. This was back when they left around noon! Here we see a wonderful representation of all things PH&D!

ACQUISITIONS: Detroit, Bay City & Western RR-Marked Switch Lock & Key



Here we have a recently acquired, rare, DBC&WRR switch lock and key. As the railroad ran passenger trains and freight from Bay City to Port Huron, that might mean a whole lot of switches and switch locks, right? Not exactly. In reality, these don't appear on Ebay very often.

The price was \$200.00. That may seem steep but, considering the rarity and evidence that a switch key alone has fetched \$75-\$100, this was an offer too good to pass up.

The key has the markings of the railroad, but very faintly after the "D" and the "B". The lock stampings are deep and crisp.

Anything marked from this Thumb railroad predecessor is hard to come by. That includes lanterns. Perhaps they're still up there in the Thumb of Michigan in someone's attic or on a fireplace mantle.

I'll be lookin'.



BOOK REVIEW:

Inside Railroading & Other Stories.

Charles H. Geletske, Jr.'s fifth book celebrates the real "meat and potatoes" side of local Michigan railroads. In this volume, there are over 100 "vignettes" taken from personal experiences of the men and women who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make their railroads run. From clerks, to section gangs, to engineers and conductors, these accounts cover much more ground than his previous four books. Stories range from the Colored Trainmen of America, R.P.O.s (Railway Post Offices), the NYC's Train #8, the *Wolverine*, Thumb Michigan railroading (Caseville and Pigeon), and even a classic story about "The Last PC Train to Mackinac City". One of the nicest stories is about Grafitti, which Chuck hates. You'll enjoy reading about that!

Our own *Port Huron & Detroit Railroad* has a chapter with my account of first working on the section gang with my old friend **Fred Witter**. This is about changing a rail in the Diamond Yard that took place one very warm summer day in 1965. These were the days before hard hats. And on our little railroad, the section gang "did it the old way".

Chuck continues to provide insights and stories about how it was back in the days when working for a railroad was a satisfying experience. Anyone who's interested in Michigan railroading will really enjoy his stories.

If you want endless enjoyment of railroading "in the good old days" in Michigan, be sure to buy all five volumes. They are available on Amazon.

1918: A Year of Consequences: Part One

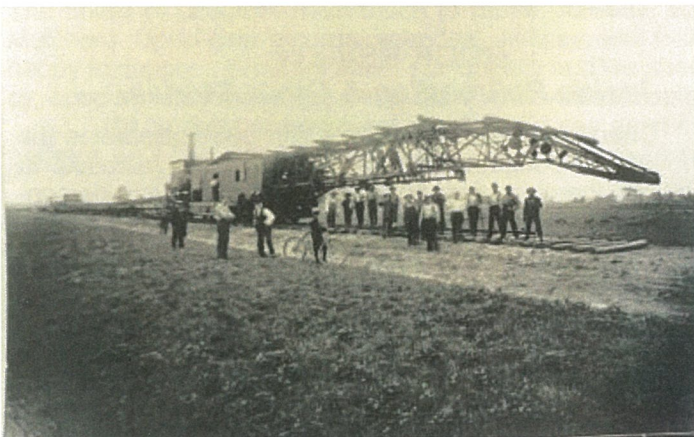
1918 remains perhaps the single most important year in the history of the Port Huron & Detroit Railroad. There are a number of events that had a lasting effect. First, in early April of 1917, the United States entered the first World War. Second, after incorporating the PH&DRR in September of that year, the Handy brothers began to extend the line from South Port Huron to Marine City. Third, when the line was finally constructed in late 1918, a series of problems plagued the finish. And fourth, the Influenza of 1918 occurred, right at the time the line was being built into Marine City.

On April 6, 1917, the United States enters the First World War. The Handy brothers had built the Detroit, Bay City & Western RR east from Bay City to Sandusky. Heading south, it reached the outskirts of Port Huron, crossing the newly completed Mill Creek trestle at Ruby. They had negotiated an agreement with the Pere Marquette Railway to use their line to reach West Tappan, which connected with the Port Huron Southern. The brothers had acquired the Southern from Joy Morton, of Morton Salt. The Handy brothers wanted to capitalize on the beet sugar market and had set their sights on the vacant Michigan Sugar Company beet processing plant down in Marine City. Accordingly, on August 31, 1917, they announce the purchase of this huge plant. This is financed by bonds to the tune of \$125,000 (\$750,000 in today's dollars). (Insert Pix) It's renamed The Independent Sugar Company.

On the following day, September 1, the brothers form and incorporate the Port Huron & Detroit Railroad. Now, a month before, President Thomas Lincoln Handy had directed his Chief Engineer Bill Boyd to conduct a survey south from Morton Salt to Marine City. They needed this to submit to the Michigan Public Utilities Commission to obtain permission to build the line. This was eventually submitted in December. In January of 1918, the Commission approved the construction. The Handys used one of their companies called the Bay County Construction Company to build the line.

After entering the war in April, on May 18, 1917, the Selective Service Act was passed by Congress. A nationwide campaign was begun to recruit young men to serve overseas (to make matters more difficult, in Michigan, Prohibition became law on May 1, 1917!). Seven months later, on December 26, the United States Government takes control of all railroads in the country under the Federal Possession and Control Act. This was the formation of the USRA (*the United States Railroad Administration*).

Beginning in January of 1918, the Handys began to acquire rights of way from Morton Salt south to Marine City. This would take several months. On the 4th of April, 1918, a Port Huron Times Herald headline notes that "Marine City is Making Strides Toward Success" and that the "Independent Sugar Co. Plant Is In Operation and the Railroad is On Its Way". It notes that the newly-acquired beet processing plant, formerly the vacant Michigan Sugar Company, now known as the Independent Sugar Company, is "...making ready for a busy season and at present has thirty men on its payroll."



Leased from the GTW to build the DBC&WRR, Boyd no doubt must have used the same machine to build the PH&D.

Further we learn that the "...engineers have completed the survey of the roadbed and the necessary right of way has been secured from the farmers".

By late Spring, construction had begun. Pile trestles were installed across streams and ditches. Because of World War I, labor was scarce. According to Boyd's *Historical Record of Construction*, the crew consisted of "...men from skid row in Detroit, old men, boys, and cripples." The construction progress was aided by a derrick car, probably the same one rented from the Grand Trunk, which they'd used to build the DBC&W east from Bay City. It had a long boom extending 70 feet out which placed the rails on top of ties which had been carried ahead by the crews. A quarter mile of track was laid each day.

Boyd notes that "ballast was somewhat of a problem" (this, as we shall learn, would become a major problem). Although the Handy brothers owned a gravel pit west of Sandusky which was sixty miles away, that material was sub-standard, "refuse from the pit" as Boyd noted. They decided to upgrade later, after the road became passable. In the meantime, they arranged to use cinder clinkers from the Morton Salt steam power plant (*while on the section gang in the mid 60s, I would regularly encounter these while attempting to tamp beneath ties. These clinkers would tear up track shovels pretty quickly!*).

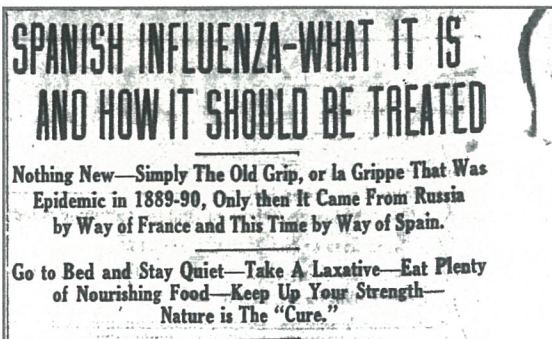
With the right of way graded, they began laying rail. This was the so-called "Russian Rail" and was 67# per yard, pretty light for mainline service. This rail came from a stockpile located on Zug Island in the Detroit River, bound for Russia. Due to the Russian Revolution, it was never shipped. Since the War Industries Board deemed sugar and salt commodities necessary to the war effort, permission was granted to the Handy brothers to build their line to Marine City. It was the only railroad allowed to be built during the war.

All Spring and throughout the Summer and Fall, the work kept up at a furious pace. By October 1918, the line had reached the Independent Sugar Plant in Marine City. The Handy brothers were anxious to start shipping in railcars loaded with sugar beets being harvested from the surrounding counties near Bay City. The plant was up and running and they had begun to encourage local area farmers to begin growing beets the following Spring and even provided beet seed. And then everything in America changed.

Earlier that Spring, on March 14, an outbreak of flu hits the army barracks at Fort Riley, Kansas. It initially infects as many as 500 recruits bound for the front lines in Europe.

In July of 1918, the Bay City Times reports that illnesses in German industrial districts were due to "exhaustion" and "hunger" and not the Spanish Influenza that everyone was beginning to talk about. On July 24, the Port Huron Times Herald reports on a "big epidemic of influenza among the soldiers" in France. By August, the influenza is spreading and reaches America. By September, the National Public Health Service issues warnings and instructions for treatment. On the 18th of September, 4,000 men at the Great Lakes Training Center are reported infected and placed under quarantine. Two days later, it was reported that the Assistant Secretary of the Navy, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, was suffering from "a light attack" of pneumonia which had developed from the Spanish Flu, contracted from a recent trip abroad.

On September 24th, a 27 year old lad at the Great Lakes Training Center near Kalamazoo, dies. He was from Port Huron. Three days later, the Times Herald reports that the flu is "beyond control of local authorities". Further, "While the epidemic heretofore had been prevalent chiefly near the Atlantic Seaboard, the Surgeon General's office said it may be expected to sweep westward with a still greater increase in mortality in the next few weeks." Meanwhile, 142,000 young men were slated for overseas duty that month.



October 11, 1918 Herald Press St. Joseph

At the start of October, the situation in Michigan grows worse. As Boyd's crew is laying rail into the sugar plant, the Port Huron Times Herald reports an increase of cases out of Toronto. The article assures its readers that "the percentage of deaths remains low" and that "the epidemic is not likely to assume large proportions as in the United States." The same paper reports that Camp Custer is under a strict quarantine, with 557 admitted to the base hospital. Three days later, the headline reads "5,000 now ill at Camp Custer" but still assures its readers that the "situation was improving".

Then the State of Pennsylvania announces that they had closed public places such as saloons, theaters, schools, and churches. The following day, 16 deaths are reported at Camp Custer with over 6,000 hospitalized.

On the 8th, the Port Huron paper announces that 150 new cases had been reported to the State Board of health, with 1200 new cases outside of Camp Custer. Health officials from major Michigan cities schedule a meeting with State Health Secretary Richard Olin to discuss plans to deal with the outbreak. The heading of that article: "Influenza Is Now Spreading In Michigan".

On the tenth, updates from Petoskey, Tawas City, Lansing, Ann Arbor, Flint, and Lapeer all confirm the grim reality. Scheduled exhibitions are post-poned, schools are closed and all funerals are to be held privately.

The next day, Governor Sleeper declares the situation serious and Secretary Olin convenes a special meeting with city mayors and health officials to review statewide recommendations.

On the 12th, the Bay City Times announces that the "Situation in Bay City not very serious." In Detroit, however, the public health director warns the public to adopt "precautionary measures." On the same day, the Port Huron paper expresses skepticism and concern regarding the reporting of cases. In an article entitled "Keep the Public Informed", they write "The Times Herald has attempted to investigate, but can get no satisfactory report on conditions. Health Officer Duff...said he expects doctors to promptly report their cases." The paper goes on: "In Port Huron, we are informed, physicians are not yet reporting cases of Spanish Influenza. Health Officer Duff informs us that he has had no cases reported to him, while, on the other hand, we are told by one of the doctors that the health officer said he didn't want a 'scare' here and that it would not be necessary to report these cases." (*Sound familiar?*)

By the 14th, over 1,000 new cases are reported to the State Board of health. A day later, 1,288 new cases are reported. Secretary Olin advises that "If people will stay out of crowds and use an antiseptic spray for their nose and throat, the possibility of controlling the disease will be greatly improved." The headline of this Bay City Times article reads "Spanish Influenza in State Is Worse."

Outside the state, New York experiences 5,000 deaths in one month. In one day, in the nation's capital, 88 people die with new cases totaling 1,483. On the 16th, the Detroit Health Officer reports 800 new cases and 22 deaths in one day, with over 3000 sick. The Detroit Urban Railway removes two windows in every car to facilitate air flow from a request by the Commissioner. Illinois bans all gatherings. Theaters and public places are closed. And on the 17th, the Bay City Times headlined "20,000 Cases of Influenza in Michigan". It's now the middle of the month of October and getting worse.

Meanwhile, crews of the PH&DRR continue to lay rail and have finished the storage yards into the sugar plant and are preparing to head back up to St. Clair to build the one mile spur into that city.

On the 19th, the governor issues a statewide order to close all churches, theaters, moving picture shows, pool, billiard and lodge rooms, and dance halls following a conference with city mayors and health officers of fifty Michigan cities. All unnecessary public meetings and gatherings are included. It would be up to the local health boards to see that the ordinance is enforced. Later that afternoon, city officials in Port Huron adopt the governor's directive.



PROPANE TANK CARS INTERCHANGED IN 1974

In this issue, we return to the conductor's switch list dated January 27 to March 23, 1974, to review the propane tank cars interchanged by the Grand Trunk Western and the Chesapeake & Ohio Railroads to the Port Huron & Detroit Railroad. Between this time period, there were a total of 161 tank cars. All went to the Amoco Oil Company loading facilities in St. Clair.

The propane came from Canada via a pipeline beneath the St. Clair River and was stored in caverns below the city. Trainmaster **Bill Schultz** describes the procedure:

ML: How were propane cars handled on the PH&D?

BS: *In the morning, I would go up in the yard to record the numbers of tanks interchanged from the C&O and Grand Trunk. They'd have been interchanged the night before. Then after walking both interchange yards, I'd come back and call Tom Banning, the manager down at Amoco, to tell him the numbers of the empty tanks we'd received.*

ML: So then you'd schedule a delivery with him?

BS: *Right. We'd coordinate where each car was to be delivered and spotted down in their yard. Then I'd make up my switch list for the afternoon job which included these cars, as well as all the others. There'd be times when I would be writing it up and Norm Warsinski would be standing next to me waiting, like he'd be almost nervous, making me nervous as well! I tell you Sandy, when I had to go up there in the middle of winter, going through the yard in deep snow, it took me awhile to check both interchanges. I was kinda under the gun, 'cause I had to get back in the office and make all these calls and then the switch lists for the one o'clock job!*

ML: Reading this conductor's book indicates that these tanks came back for refills on a regular basis.

BS: *Yep. On the average, they'd be gone maybe a month before we saw 'em again. There was no stenciling instructions like "Return to St. Clair, Michigan." I guess Tom handled that.*

ML: According to the waybills, they went all over the country.

BS: *They did.*

ML: We made good money off each car. On the average, each car costs over \$2000 to ship and we'd get our "cut" which was around \$200. I imagine those were busy times.

BS: *That switch book you have shows a lot of tanks being interchanged. That was because of the peak season of heating use so that kept us pretty busy.*

ML: How were cars spotted into the loading facility?

BS: *So we had a train with cars for both Amoco and the Diamond Crystal. The cars that were for the Diamond were ahead of the cabooses. Heading south, we'd cut them off and leave 'em up on Whiting Street on the main. Then we'd head further south with the tanks. At the approach into Amoco, I'd cut off the air to the tanks and Ray would head along and bleed off all the tanks except for the two closest to the engine. Then I'd uncouple the engine leaving the string of tanks. The engine would head south alone say two car lengths past the Amoco switch. Ray would then line the switch into Amoco. Then he'd head back to the tanks and bleed off those last two tanks. Without air, the whole string would roll into Amoco, because there was a gradual hill they'd be coming off of. Ray would be riding the lead car to apply the hand brake. This brought all the cars to a stop just before they got to the gate. Since this track was on a curve, he couldn't see when he'd cleared the main. So by radio, he'd ask me to let him know when we'd clear the main.*

ML: How did you guys spot Amoco?

BS: *After unlocking and opening the gate, with the engine in back of the string, the crew would push cars into either one or two spurs. These were separated by a raised loading platform which was level with the center loading domes of each car. Each siding held 6 tank cars. Now either Norm or Ray (Warsinski) would radio back to tell the engineer when to spot the car even with the loading platform. Not all cars would line up, so they'd have to cut a tank and then signal to pull back a few feet so the next car would line up. They had to do this with all twelve empties.*

ML: Were those the only tracks in?

BS: *Nope. There was one other that was to the west. It was sort of a holding track. Banning would tell me which cars he wanted held and then I'd have those cars listed on the conductor's switch card.*

ML: How did you handle the loads that had to be pulled?

BS: *Any loads were switched out and brought up to the Clinton Ave siding. That could hold about 20 cars.*

ML: So during spotting these empties, you still have the main blocked with the Diamond cars.

BS: *Well, after we'd pushed the empty tanks into the two sidings, we'd head back north to hook up to the Diamond cars that we'd left and head south across the Pine River to that switch and head in to go switch the salt plant.*

ML: Thanks Bill for sitting down and telling us all about how we handled propane tank cars on the PH&D!

161 Propane Tank Cars Appearing Online Between Jan through March 1974

(Numbers spotted)	(GAL/LBS)	(ORER Range)
ACFX 17001-17625	163,000-154,000lbs	17000-17680
ACFX 18630	172,000lbs	18625-18676
ACFX 18834-18927	200,000lbs	18826-18927
ACFX 19955-19972	176,000lbs	19950-19984
ACFX 80142-80157	200,000lbs	80075-80242
ACSX 932113-932183	32,000/156,000lbs	932000-932184
ACSX 933019-933033	33,000/165,000lbs	933000-933074
AMOX 33502-33597	34,000/200,000lbs	33500-33599
CGTX 63873-63899	200,000lbs	63800-63899
CGTX 63901-63996	200,000lbs	63900-63999
NATX 34348-34382	200,000lbs	33800-35088
RTMX 4108-4132	34,000/175,000lbs	4100-4154
UTLX 38002-38954	100,000lbs	25800-42999
UTLX 80619-80883	200,000lbs	80500-80999
UTLX 81443-81681	100,000lbs	81165-82999
UTLX 83007-83132	200,000lbs	83000-83199
UTLX 83621-83648	200,000lbs	83500-83698
UTLX 88098-99289	100,000lbs	87700-99999

Unfortunately, 33,000 gal tank cars for this year range (1974) aren't available. I was able to locate two tank cars which not only fall into our correct date range and car type, but one matches exactly a car that was spotted on March 3, 1974! I'm advising to buy both car numbers.

The ACFX series tank cars (*Shippers Car Line Division of ACF Industries*) were designated "TM" in the Association of American Railroad code listings. There were a total of 125 made covering this number range (17001-17625) according to the ORER (*The Official Railway Equipment Register*).

The ORER doesn't list capacities in gallons, only weights, which in the case of these two ACFX examples, is 163,000 lbs. Walthers advertises these as 33,000 gallon cars.

It's a shame we don't have more sources. There were a slew of these tanks produced and we sure saw a lot of 'em come online. It's wise to keep an active search on Ebay. There are some dealers listing these two cars and all are in reserve for delivery in the second quarter of this year.



ACFX 17067 (#150-50005363), 17069 (#150-50005364) 33,000 Gal Tank Walthers (Avail June 2020; Pre-order) \$34.95
 #17069 spotted into Amoco March 3, 1974
 Number range: #17001-17625
 Walthers lists two car numbers. Order both.

Matching the Prototype: NATX 35118



Trouble. Looks like someone's split the switch! NATX 35118 remains between the rails unlike the two ribbed side PH&D cars. The tank car is close to our 1974 date range (33800-35008) in this photograph taken 6-8 years later.

CARRY YOUR CARD

With the Society presumably restored, your membership card should still allow access the property to watch trains and attend future Society events and meetings.

PH	PORT HURON and DETROIT RAILROAD CO. - St. Clair Blue Water Route -
D	PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY
MEMBERSHIP CARD	
NAME: _____	
JOINED: _____ / _____ MO/YEAR	

Regulations covering access to U.S. rail yards are in effect, administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and enforced by local enforcement agencies. Those with PH&DRHS membership cards must, if requested, present their cards to authorized personnel from either CN, CSX, Homeland Security, or St. Clair County Sheriff's Department officers. When visiting, please stay on the west side of the yellow line. Do not enter the roundhouse since it remains dangerous and injury is possible.

The PH&DRR Historical Society was formed in 2008 to honor and remember this unique Michigan short line. The Society was incorporated as a State and Federal non profit organization with three purposes in mind.

It's important to keep honoring these original purposes. Each paragraph is meaningful and specific.

The Marker Light will continue uphold these purposes and remain true to the history and legacy of the PH&DRR.

**The Purposes of
The Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Historical Society :**

To collect, archive, preserve, and present, all for the education of the community, historical documents, photographs, drawings, artifacts and equipment relating to The Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Company and its predecessors, The Port Huron Southern Railway and The Detroit Bay City & Western Railroad, as well as the Grand Trunk Western/Canadian National, and the Pere Marquette/ Chesapeake and Ohio.

To obtain, restore and maintain the roundhouse at 32nd Street for use as a museum, as well as other structures, artifacts, and rolling stock, as they may become available;

To accumulate, conserve, and index all data relating to the above-named railroads for the use of scholars, rail fans and scale modelers.