

THE MARKER LIGHT

NUMBER 41

FOR FANS & MODELERS OF THE PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD

SUMMER 2020

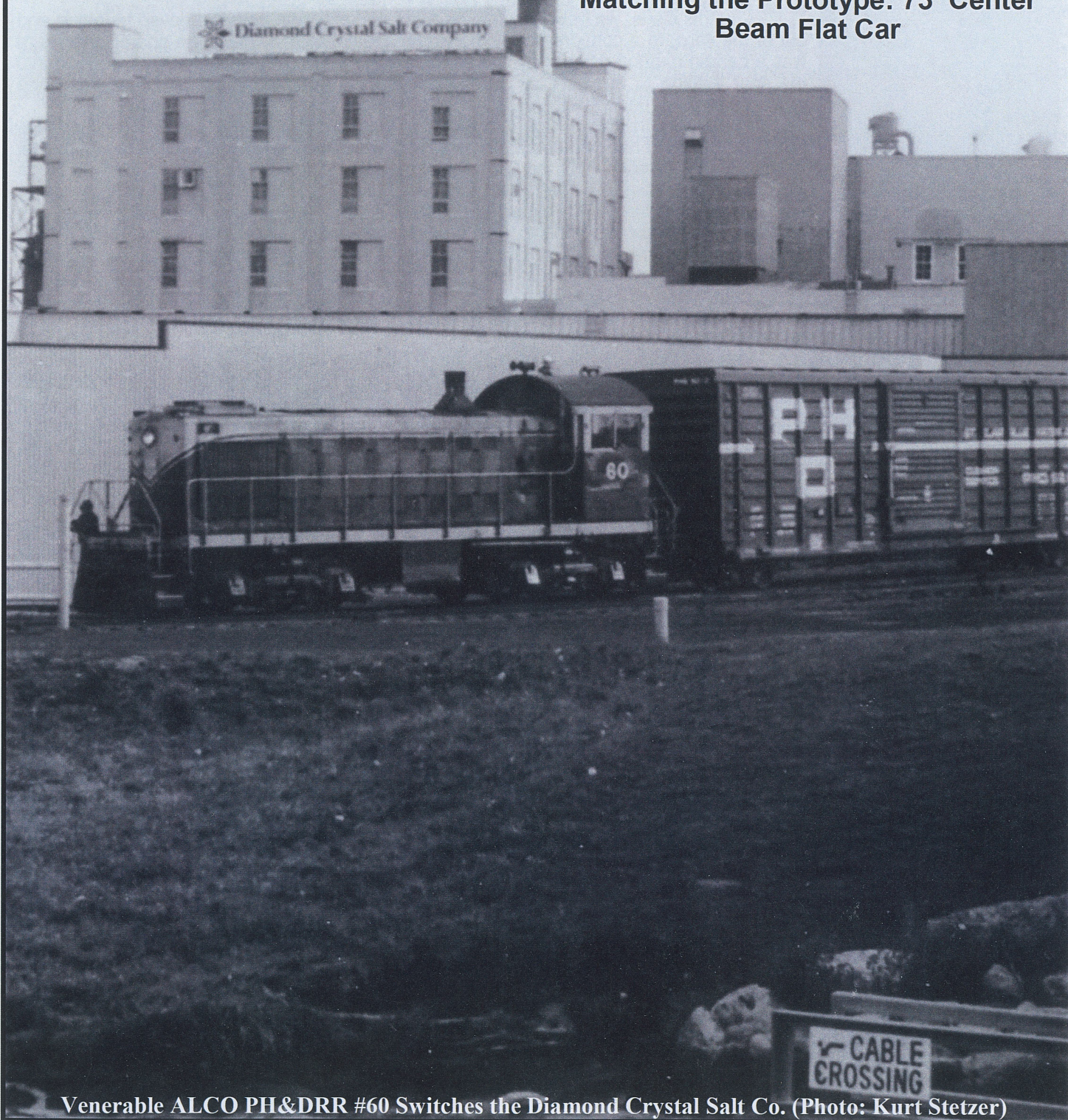
1918

A Year of Consequences: Part II

Book Review:
2nd Edition Stetzer Book

Switching St. Clair

Matching the Prototype: 73' Center
Beam Flat Car



Venerable ALCO PH&DRR #60 Switches the Diamond Crystal Salt Co. (Photo: Kurt Stetzer)

Cover: It's near the end in the summer of 1984 as a classic PH&D S1 switched the Diamond Crystal Salt Co.

PG. 2: From Where I Sit; Book Review: Kurt Stetzer's Second Edition

PG. 3: 1918: A Year of Consequences: Part Two

PG. 4: (Cont.)

PG. 5: (Cont.)

PG. 6: Switching St. Clair

PG. 7: (Cont.)

PG. 8: Matching the Prototype: 72' Center Beam Flat Car; Carry Your Card; The (*Original*) Purpose; \$8000.00?



FROM WHERE I SIT

Dear Friends of the PH&D,

In this issue, we head down to St. Clair and examine how we moved freight in and out of the yard. In a conversation with Former Trainmaster **Schultz**, he shared that there was a certain method using the main as a temporary "set off", while the train went off into the spur leading to the St. Clair yard. Modelers will now know just how that was done which helps them understand the procedures for both the day and night crews.

That one mile extension into St. Clair was constructed after the line reached Marine City. Bill Boyd had secured the right of way which was good news to Diamond Crystal and the Handy brothers. For the Diamond, it meant additional revenue from train car loads in addition to shipping by boat. Chief Engineer Bill Boyd designed a simple passing siding yard which could handle the expected dozen or so cars a day. After the track reached the plant, the Handy brothers constructed a block style station beginning in late 1919. It handled LCL freight and smaller shipments since it was a "REA" (Railway Express Agency) designated depot.

The Biewer Lumber Company was also a valued customer. It sold lumber wholesale and retail and supplied the Port Huron & Detroit Railroad with rail ties throughout its history. There was a separate spur that curved north and paralleled the yard, leading to a "team track", used for offloading onto trucks. These two customers will provide hours of switching enjoyment on a PH&DRR themed layout!

We also come to Part 2 of the year 1918. A recently obtained file had very detailed and interesting documents revealing more about what happened as the line reached Marine City. Boyd had his hands full with a stingy management and substandard materials. Troubles dogged Thomas Handy months after the line was completed. There were reports of southbound trains uncoupling, unsafe roadbed conditions, "floating" joints, and dangerous clearance issues. Boyd had to deal with it daily, even while he was in the middle of extending the line to the salt plant in St. Clair. Correspondence reveals the cost of procrastination, deception and lies and certainly strained the relationships between Tom Handy and the Pere Marquette, as well as the Federal chief out of Detroit. And all this during the height of the Spanish Flu! It wasn't until the Spring of 1919 that the line was sufficiently safe to run trainloads of beets without incident.

I found out how hard it is to "match the prototype" when searching the Internet for an early version of a center beam flat car. Like the 20,000 gallon tank car featured in the last issue, this search is equally challenging. The best we can hope for is to find one on Ebay. I imagine finding a load will be just as difficult!

The Epidemic of 2020 is upon us. Stay safe, social distance, and wear your mask.

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Sandy Duffy

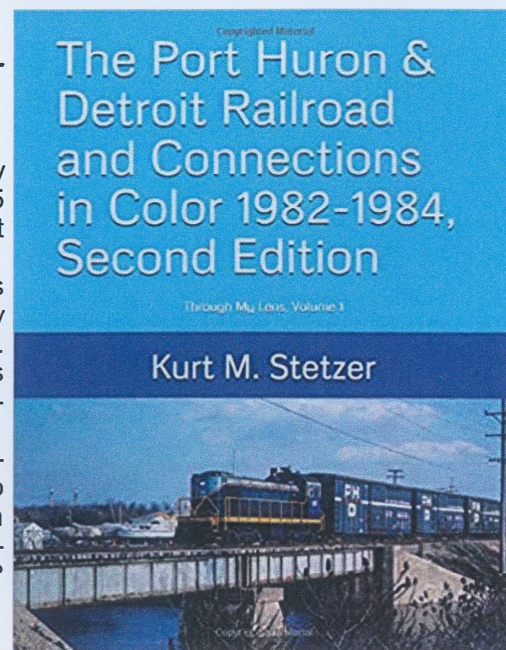
Book Review: Kurt Stetzer's Second Edition of The Port Huron & Detroit Railroad and Connections in Color 1982-1984; Through My Lens, Vol 1

Acclaimed railroad photographer **Kurt Stetzer** is back with a newly updated edition of his original book, which was released in August of 2015 (*now out of print*). Kurt visited the railroad more than once, with his last visit the day the railroad closed in December 1984.

This newest edition is much richer in imagery and comment. He has since obtained newer image scanning equipment and applied these new tools to add to and enhance all the shots he had printed in the earlier book. He also notes that this book was printed with improved paper, which brings more clarity to each color shot. Added are sections pertaining to the connecting roads including "Lake Boats in the St. Clair River".

But the real reason to upgrade your collection is the expanded commentary. Five years since his first edition has given Kurt an opportunity to review and improve. Most interesting is the discovery of field notes taken in July of 1984 entitled "Current Ops 7/84". This is a short list tracking the afternoon job from the roundhouse down to St. Clair and back. Very apropos, eh? Further details on these notes will be found at laughingfrogimages.com.

The book is available from Amazon at \$29.99



1918: A Year of Consequences: Part Two

At the start of October, 1918, DBC&WRR President Thomas Handy is most pleased. Construction had ended at Marine City and carloads of beets were coming in from the Thumb beet fields and were being unloaded at the massive Independent Sugar Company. All that remained for the Handy's Bay County Construction Company was to finish the job. "Finishing" would prove to be another matter all together as "T.L." would soon discover.

As we learned in Part One, the month of October began with a catastrophic nation-wide epidemic of the Spanish Flu. In Michigan, all towns and cities are reported growing cases and death rates. By the middle of the month, local health officials were being inundated. On the 15th, 3000 were reported sick in Detroit with over 800 new cases. Two days later, Governor Sleeper considered a state-wide lockdown, with 20,000 cases state-wide being reported. On the 19th, the governor issued closing orders affecting "churches, theaters, moving picture shows, pool, billiard, and lodge rooms, dance halls" and prohibits all "unnecessary public meetings and gatherings".

On the 21st of October, the city of Port Huron adopted the mandate, as do all other towns and cities. City Health Officer Dr. W. J. Duff published a list of "Rules and Regulations" that states "All clerks in all stores are obliged to wear gauze masks while on duty." It further noted that "A good preventative is the use of a disinfectant placed in a basin and set in a room...to consist of equal parts of carbolic acid and a tincture of iodine mixed with water. Special policemen will be used in visiting stores and other places to see that all rules are obeyed."

Similar to today's naysayers, not all people agreed with the governor's orders. Detroit, hardest hit, balked, claiming that the quarantine was an "injustice". But Dr. Inches, the Detroit health officer, assured the governor that the closing orders would be "strictly obeyed".

A day later, Dr. Duff issued another proclamation: "All Stores to Close Early; All Schools Are Dismissed". On the same day, the Bay City Times reported that the epidemic is on the increase in Michigan and that 820 new cases and 107 new deaths were reported. Golf courses closed and, halfway through their schedules, all high school and college football contests, as well. The University of Michigan football team canceled their remaining schedule after 5 games. On the 23rd, the Bay City paper reported 1400 new cases making a total of 6000 new cases since the previous day.

In Port Huron, there were reports of 14 new cases bringing the total to 68. Three days later, local manufacturers, along with the Chamber of Commerce, announced a plan to inoculate "several thousand with serum or anti-toxin at once". In accordance with Dr. Duff, employers will require a worker "to be sent home immediately" if it is learned he came from an infected home and an investigation be "made of the conditions at the home either by the health officer or the plant physician."

Back on the PH&D, Bill Boyd was encountering problems. Handy's decision to put off proper ballasting until later has come back to haunt him. South-bound trains with loads of beets were becoming uncoupled, engines were stalling, and rail joints weren't stabilized. And there were safety concerns down at the sugar factory's yard. It was the beginning of trouble for Tom Handy.

With America still at war, the United States Railway Administration still operated all U.S. rail lines. Since salt and sugar were essential to the war effort, the government allowed the Handy's to build their PH&D extension. However, the Detroit office of the USRA was about to learn that things were not going as planned.

On October 14th, A.L. Grandy, Assistant General Manager of the Pere Marquette, learns about the poor condition of the "finished" roadbed between Morton Salt in Marysville and Marine City. He writes to USRA Federal Manager Frank H. Alfred suggesting that an "...amount between \$50,000 and \$70,000 should be withheld by the Port Huron & Detroit Railroad from payments due to the Bay County Construction Company to insure the completion of this road per contract." He finished by stating that "Mr. Handy concurs..." The Pere Marquette was important since it was the connecting line with the DBC&W/PH&DRR's. If Grandy, representing the connecting line, was concerned, that would be troubling.

The next day, Alfred writes Handy that Grandy has written to him complaining that the line is not "in a completed state, and is not in a condition for operation..." In the first paragraph, he nails the main issue: "There remains to be done a considerable amount of ballasting and surfacing the track." Alfred notes that Grandy will allow trains to and from Marine City to handle beet unloading only, "as best can be done...It will be necessary for you to make haste with the completion of the construction work, in order to have the track in shape for operation this winter." He ends the letter with "The matter is in your hands." It's the middle of October, a major flu epidemic is racing through Michigan, and Tom Handy has raised the interest of the Federal man based in Detroit.

A subsequent inspection with Alfred's Chief Engineer and Bill Boyd confirms the Grandy's concern. In an un-

All Stores To Close Early-- All Schools Are Dismissed

Additional Rules and Regulations Published By the
Health Officer Pertaining To the Spreading of
the Epidemic of Spanish Influenza

Port Huron, Mich., Oct. 22nd, 1918.

Huron Avenue, Military, Water and other streets of congested travel to be sprinkled continuously during the day time and to be flushed at night.

All stores are to close at four o'clock in the afternoon except on Saturday, when all stores must close not later than six o'clock.

All schools, public, private and parochial will close until further notice.

All parents must insist upon their children remaining in their own yards or enclosures.

The congregating of children for play or any other purpose at any time or place will not be permitted.

All physicians are required to make report to the Health Officer of any cases of influenza no matter how light the attack, such report to give the name of the patient and the age of the patient.

W. J. DUFF,
Health Officer

The order of Health Officer Duff to wear influenza masks applies to clerks in stores but not to customers.

published narrative by Boyd, he referred to this inspection as a “rock and roll” ride.

Two days later, on the 17th, Handy responds to Alfred assuring him that the road is “in fairly good condition” and that “We are maintaining a large force of labor...and will have it in still better shape within the next few days. I will see to it that the Bay County Construction Company continues with the work without interruption.” Subsequent letters in our files indicate otherwise.

DBC&W’s Superintendent, C.S. Ruttle is also worried. He’s in charge of making sure the line is in good shape and that the construction contract with the Bay County Construction Company is being met. He’s also Chief Engineer Bill Boyd’s boss. In a letter dated October 22 to the Pere Marquette’s General Superintendent J.L. Hayes, Ruttle reports that “...we are having considerable trouble with the operation of trains over the tracks south of Port Huron. Mr. Handy has promised me he would endeavor to increase his force and try and get the track up in better shape within the next three or four days.” It was all about rough track, low joints, and poor and non-existent ballast.

On the 23rd, Mr. C.D. Stewart, Superintendent of the Port Huron Southern, writes to Ruttle describing a inspection trip from Tappan to Marine City. “We were delayed about one hour by the train parting, caused from bad track just north of Marysville.” It gets worse. He goes on to note the poor condition of the track and switches inside the sugar company yard. “The switches and track in the Sugar Co. yard are in very bad shape...” He copies this to Hayes. The Port Huron Southern was technically an active entity, even after being bought by the DBC&WRR.

On the 24th, Handy makes an inspection trip downline.

On the 25th, PM’s Grandy writes to Handy describing a report from Ruttle about the trouble moving beet loads down to Marine City: low joints, train uncoupling, and the use of a second engine to complete the assignment. He copies to Alfred.

On the 25th, Handy writes to Grandy on new Port Huron & Detroit Railroad Company letterhead: “I made a special trip over the line yesterday morning with the engine, which had sixteen cars of beets behind it and we made the entire trip without the least trouble, the cars all remaining coupled, so you see there has been a marked improvement in the road bed.” However, he goes on to note locations that remained troublesome. Then he invites Grandy to “make another inspection trip any time convenient.” He ends with “Our sugar factory has been speeded up to full capacity, so



In September of 1917, the Handy brothers took out mortgage bonds to the tune of \$265,000, to buy this beet processing plant. In today’s dollars, adjusted for inflation, this amounts to \$5,870,000. It was a huge gamble. The brothers were already overextended, from the 1916 purchase of the Port Huron Southern, and the construction of the DBC&W into Port Huron. Their debt load would increase in 1918, with the construction of the PH&DRR, which, according to Bill Boyd, would cost \$450,000.

In 1917, there was a sugar shortage and demand was high, due to war time restrictions. With sugar was at .08 a pound, the brothers were betting it all on those car loads of sugar beets from Michigan’s Thumb. It looked good, according to plan.

(Color image courtesy of the Marine City Pride & Heritage Museum.)

things are pretty lively at that end of the road.”

A day later, a suspicious Grandy copies Handy's letter to Ruttle and asks for confirmation that the line is "...in fair shape for operation.”

Regarding the epidemic, it's at its peak in Michigan. Initially, by the 26th, reports indicate that the number of cases and deaths were beginning to fall off from previous daily totals. But current conditions still require following the Governor's mandates. "Health officers throughout the state generally agree that the general closing of public places and the ban on public gatherings has been of great help in checking the disease." In Port Huron however, the headline for the 26th is "Eighteen New Cases of Flue Reported Today". Dr. Duff continues to require a general ban but allows cigar and candy stores to remain open on Sunday. "...police have been instructed not to permit crowds to loiter in any of the above mentioned places.”

In St. Clair, the number of cases are reported "at about one hundred." Dr. Thompson, that city's health officer, orders a supply of vaccine to be used "as a preventative on those who wish to avoid getting the disease.”

Statewide, the situation didn't appear to be improving. On the 30th, the Port Huron paper reports 145 deaths in the state in two days with total cases at 2,986. Statewide medical officials urge State Health chief Dr. Olin not to lift restrictions.

Meanwhile in Canada, 10,000 railway workers remained off duty. Shippers sent telegrams to the Canadian Railway War Board to lift the embargo which prevented traffic in and out of Toronto. Canadian General Secretary W. M. Neal responded that "nothing but the abatement of the influenza epidemic could enable the railways to meet all traffic requirements.”

Back on the PH&D, a letter sent to PM's Grandy on the 27th from his boss J.L.Hayes, notes a complaint from Superintendent Steward regarding the poor track conditions between St. Clair and Marine City. Handy writes to Grandy in a quick follow-up letter, dated October 28, to assure Grandy that "We now consider the track in very safe and good operating condition.”

A worried DBC&W's Ruttle makes an inspection of the line on Tuesday the 29th. What he saw was troubling and he sends in a report, dated Wednesday, October 30th, to Grandy. In a four page letter, he contradicts the Handy's letter of October 25 letter, claim by claim. Regarding the uncoupling issue, "This, no doubt is true, that the cars remained coupled, but it is a fact that the condition of the road is very little better than when you went over it." He goes on at length and at great detail. "I personally went over the road yesterday, leaving the (*Morton*) Salt Co. office at 7:35am with 15 cars of beets and one car of coal and, owing to the condition of the track the engine stalled on the grade about 3/4 of a mile south of Marysville." And later, "To be brief, the entire track from the Salt Co. Plant to St. Clair is in very bad condition." He concludes by noting clearance issues with the support poles holding a drainage flume at the sugar company in Marine City. "These are dangerous propositions and should be given immediate attention....Mr. Handy's letter to you would indicate that the track was being put in good condition for operation. The latter attached shows that this is not being done.”

Grandy then writes to Handy on that same day: "Our representatives at Marine City advise that it is very important that we have the use of the additional side tracks which it was proposed to construct at the Independent Sugar Company's plant completed at once in order that we will have the needed track room to handle this business. Also the condition of the existing side tracks in the Sugar Plant are very bad and interfering with the operation." Remember that this was happening in the middle of the Fall beet harvest and Tom Handy didn't want those incoming beet cars to stop.

Ruttle isn't finished. The next day, Thursday, the 31st, he writes to Handy repeating his concerns regarding the flume clearance issue at the sugar plant. "I have several times called your attention to the dangerous condition ...at Marine City, caused by the flume which carries waste water and lime...across the main line and both side tracks near the Sugar Plant." Then Ruttle issues a threat: "...this is to advise you that unless these poles are removed to a proper distance from the rails, I will be compelled to recommend to the management that we decline to perform any service until this has been done. In fact, some arrangement should be made by your company to remove the flume and these obstructions wholly and deposit your wastewater elsewhere." At the bottom of the letter, copies were made to Grandy, C.S. Stewart, and to the Independent Sugar Company, Marine City.

Then, in a letter to Grandy, Ruttle refers to a report compiled by Stewart that "...the track is not being given any attention by the Construction Co. and as Mr. Handy has been out of the city most all of this week, I have been unable to get any work done...”

On the following day, November 1, Ruttle reminds Grandy that all charges incurred by the USRA for "...constructing, repairing, or maintaining the tracks at the Independent Sugar Co. plant should be billed against the Bay County Construction Co." Ruttle believed that the contract with the BCCC hadn't been fulfilled and was intent of holding them to that contract to properly finish the construction.

Then, a day later, all comes to a boil. On that Saturday morning, November 2, Grandy responds to Ruttle's threat regarding the service interruption. Noting the perishable nature of the sugar beets, he writes that "...we cannot undertake an unsafe operation and...I am authorizing you...to suspend the operation for one or more days, or longer until the track can be repaired...”

Then he immediately writes to Handy to apprise him of the risks involved and the order to suspend operations. He goes on to note specifics and then this: "The siding north of Marine City has no angle bars on the rail, that is, the rails are not bolted together." The situation that day worsens when at 10:15am, Handy receives a telegram from the Federal man Alfred, marked "Rush Telegram”.

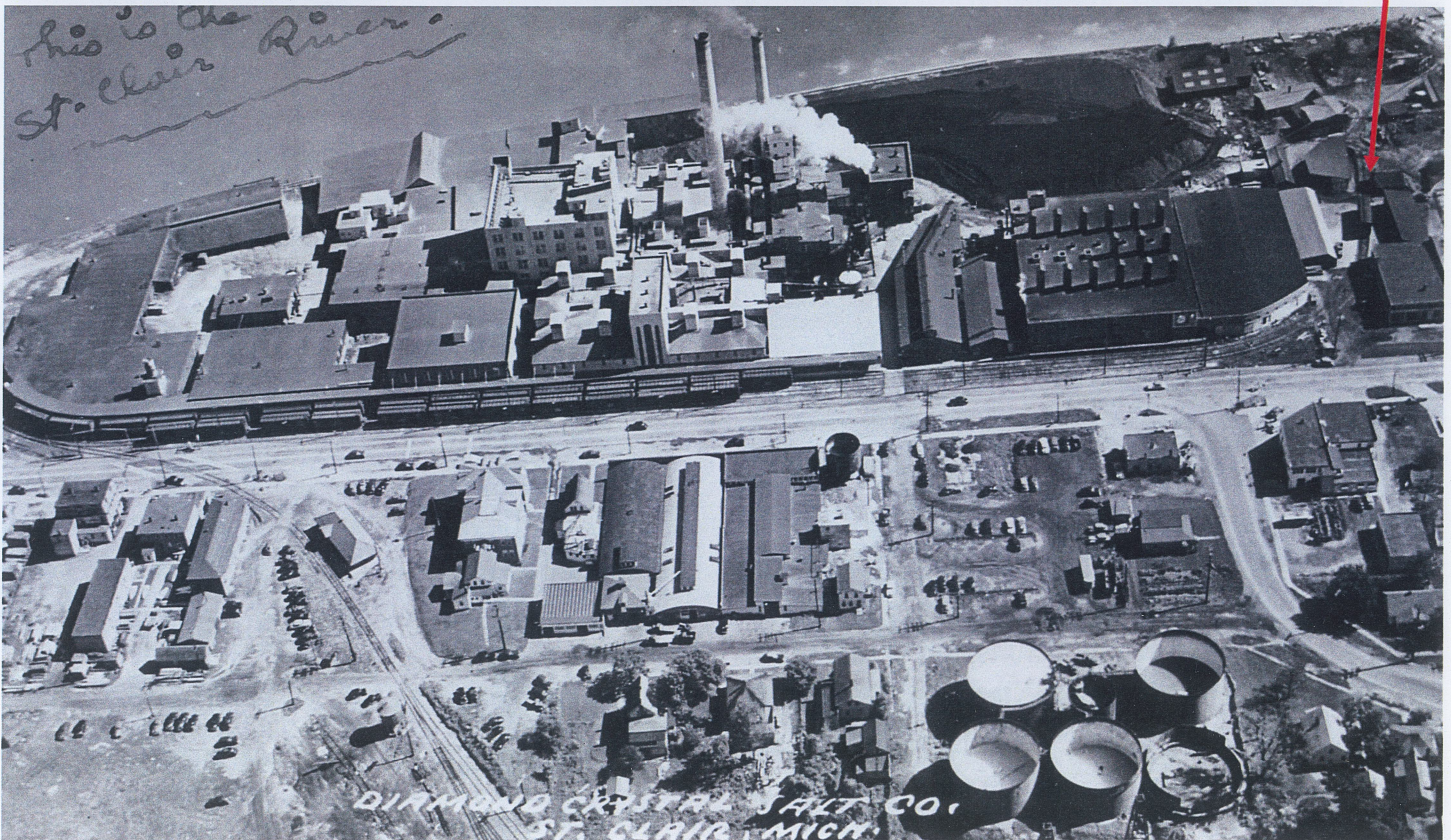
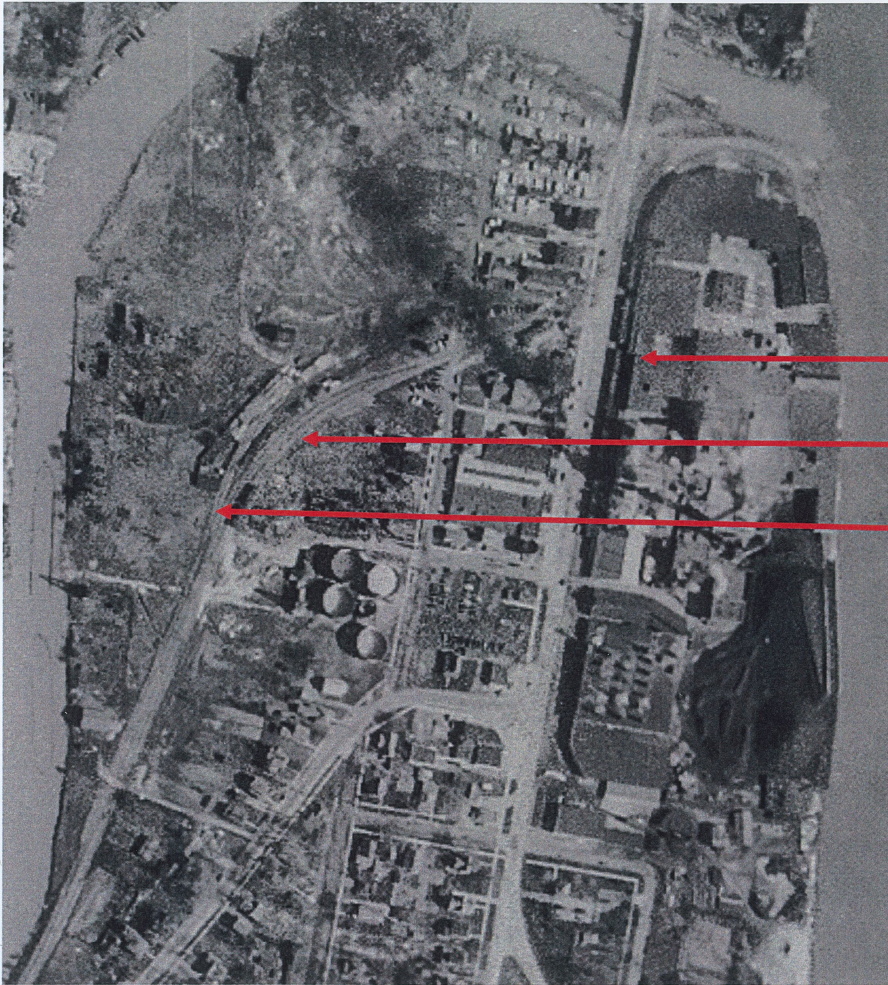
In our next issue, we learn how Tom Handy responded to this crisis!

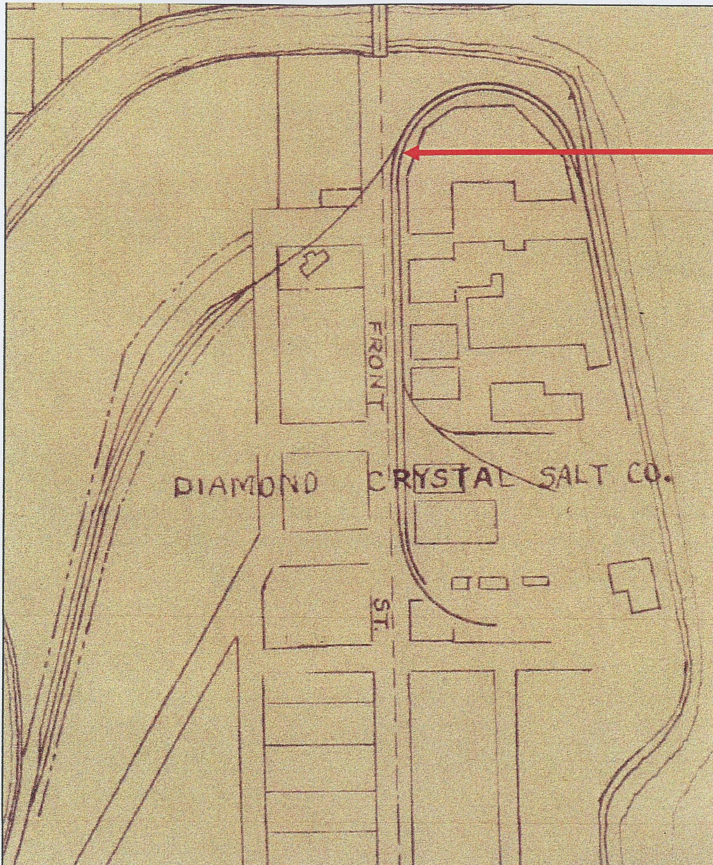
SWITCHING ST. CLAIR

In the last issue, we learned about the switching procedure used to serve the two loading tracks at Amoco Oil, leaving the string of empty boxcars on the main, destined for the Diamond Crystal Salt Company. Now we learn what went on when the crew went into the yard at St. Clair.

Two aerials showcase the set-up: In the first, a 1949 view, we can see a string of cars spotted alongside the salt plant. The Diamond Crystal was powered by coal and we can see that huge mound. The two passing tracks of the yard make for a simple and efficient method of moving empties in and loads out. Looking closer, there's a separate spur leading off to the northwest just before the south entry to the yard. This was the "team track" for Biewer Lumber. A lumber flat or boxcar would be shoved into this track and spotted so that it could be unloaded by a crew from Biewers.

The bottom photo is a postcard dated to the mid-60s. It shows not only an impressive string of over two dozen cars next to the plant, but, if we follow the track south, we see it curves east into another business. In fact, there is a boxcar spotted at this customer. Sources have indicated that, among others, it was another Biewer Lumber operation.





In the latest volume *Inside Railroading and Other Railroad Stories* by Charles H. Geletzke Jr., I detail in a short story what it took to replace an outside rail inside the Diamond Crystal Company gate. That location is just south of the first switch next to the Front Street (M-29) entrance. It was the sharpest curve on the PH&DRR and required frequent replacement.

On this map, we can see both loading tracks, as well as the curving end to the Biewer Lumber Company building. Note that, given the tight parameters, moving cars was somewhat arduous. In fact, to spot cars into the spur next to the plant, the move had to go all the way around and past that switch located along the river. The Biewer operation used the outside track and required that it be clear of salt cars to spot a lumber load.

The two split spurs midway were most likely used to spot carloads of coal, since the coal pile (see *aerials*) was right nearby.

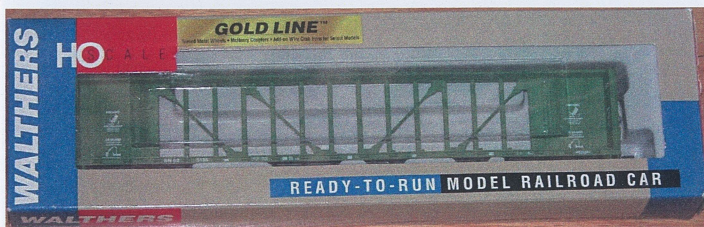
The other Biewer unloading spur is drawn following the St. Clair yard, although it actually begins before the yard switch and not midway as shown.

In terms of operation, the Diamond was switched twice a day. Loads were removed by the night job and empties were spotted during the day. Trainmaster Schultz was made aware in his morning call to plant Superintendent Ed Huffmaster.



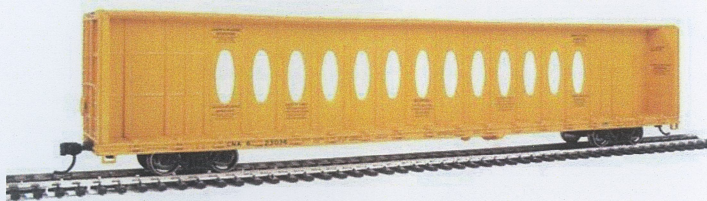
Engine #60 is handling an empty BN center beam flat car which was unloaded by the Biewer crew. These cars are virtually impossible to find in HO scale. Note the rare view looking at the west side of the St. Clair station.

Matching the Prototype: Center Beam Thrall 73' Flat Car with "opera window" cut outs.



BN 62516 Series Center Beam 73' Flat Car
Walther's Gold Line
Ebay \$74.99

Finding these Center Beam Thrall flat cars is nearly impossible. I was able to locate a Burlington Northern 62516 but this one lacks the "opera window" cutouts. The best example came from Exact Rail offered in 2013. Checking their website revealed all sold out. I next went to Ebay and found this example. It is a Burlington Northern but lacks the matching "opera window" cutouts. I'll keep looking.



CN 623036 Series Center Beam 72' Flat Car
Walther's Mainline #910-4826
Ebay \$24.99
RtR-Trains

Here's the correct "opera window" Thrall version. I opted for a CN road designation since it was closer to home. Although it's not the road I want, it'll do when I bring it down to the St. Clair yard for Biewer. Now I have to locate a load!

CARRY YOUR CARD

While the Society is "reorganizing", your membership card should still allow you to access the property to watch trains and attend Society events and meetings. Just stay west of the faded yellow line.

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&DRRHS 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.

Tunnel City treasurer Harvey allegedly removed over \$8000.00 from a restricted donor savings account? What happened to that money?

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 to uphold these purposes and remain true to the history and legacy of the PH&DRR.

**The Purpose 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.

It's been almost 6 months since the Tunnel City officers departed. Why haven't we been informed about the missing \$8000.00?