

THE MARKER LIGHT

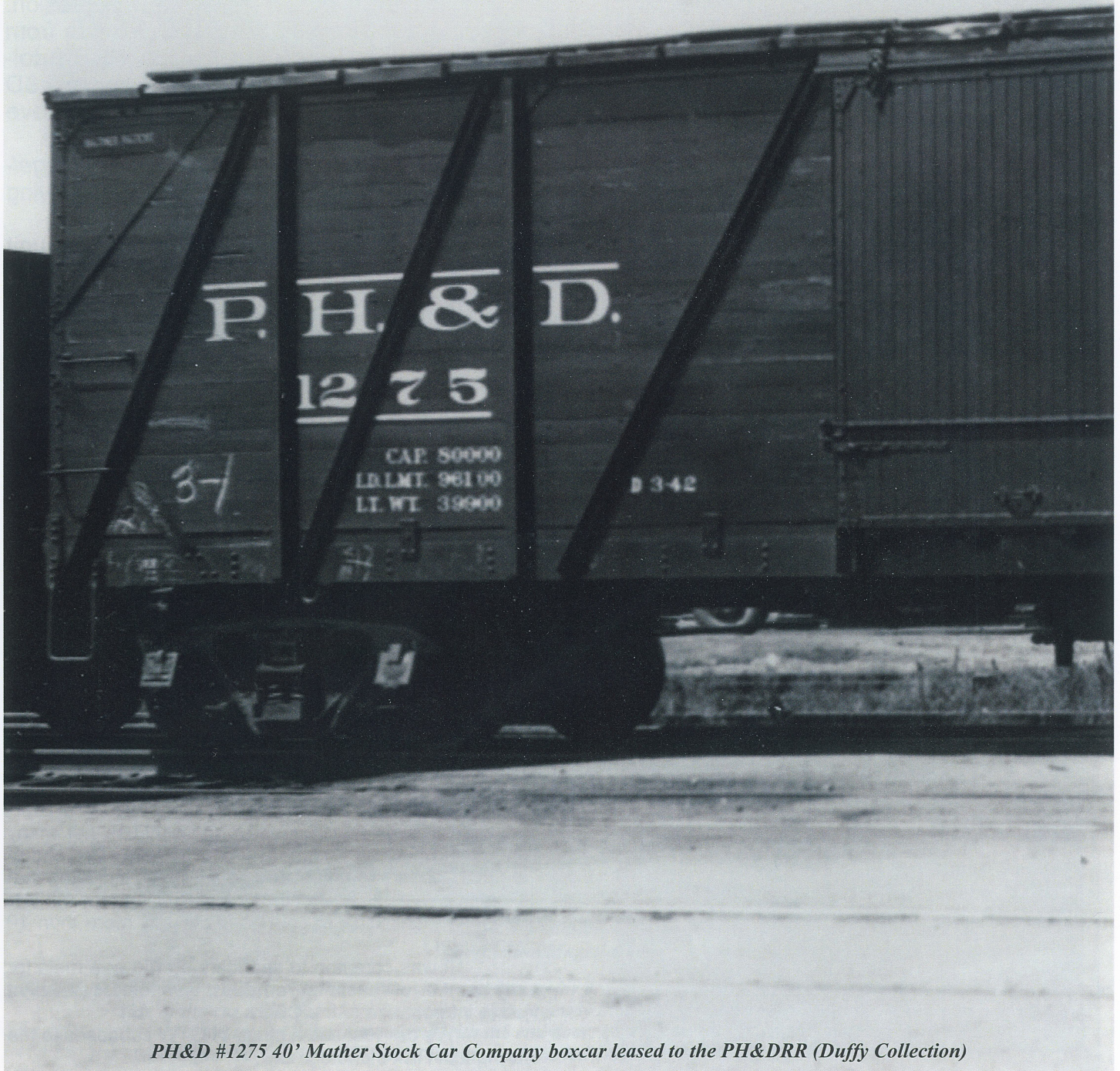
NUMBER 43

FOR FANS & MODELERS OF THE PORT HURON & DETROIT RAILROAD

WINTER 2020

MATHER CARS of the PH&DRR

Borowski at the Wye
Castleblayne vs Ferdinand Magellan
ON the GROUND!
Matching the Prototype: 50' DEEX Coal Cars



PH&D #1275 40' Mather Stock Car Company boxcar leased to the PH&DRR (Duffy Collection)

Cover: PH&D #1275 has returned from repairs at the Mather Stock Car Company shops in Chicago.

PG. 2: From Where I Sit; Borowski at the Wye

PG. 3: *Castleblayney vs Ferdinand Magellan*

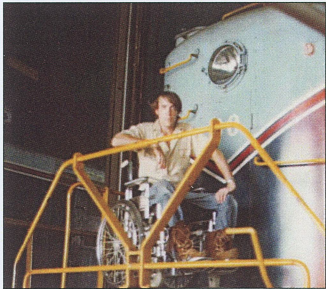
PG. 4: The Mather Cars of the PH&D

PG. 5: (Cont.)

PG. 6: On the Ground!

PG. 7: (Cont.)

PG. 8: Matching the Prototype: DEEX 50' 100 Ton Coal Car



FROM WHERE I SIT

Dear Friends of the PH&D,

In this issue, we examine the outside-braced 40' Mather Stock Car Company boxcar, leased to the PH&DRR. Alonzo Mather lived a long and fruitful life, born in 1848 and passing away in 1941. He was an innovator and a shrewd businessman, profiting even during the Great Depression. Management at the PH&D recognized the benefit of leasing boxcars from the Mather Company, rather than owning, saving them thousands of dollars. Many short lines took advantage of leasing. It's notable that the PH&D was the second largest lessor of Mather cars. In our collection, we have several wonderful photographs of these wooden Mather cars.

Next, we compare two Pullman-built private cars, *Castleblayney* and the *Ferdinand Magellan*. It's been thought that they were "sisters" to each other and there are many similarities, having been built only two years apart. As you'll discover, each was unique and we'll look into that.

Lastly, on an early Wednesday morning, August 18 of 1971, 12 coal cars, in a 100 car unit train bound for the Belle River Power Plant, were derailed. Over 300' of roadbed was torn apart. Apart from two articles in the local Times Herald, no details have ever been revealed as to the cause of the derailment. In our files, we are helped by two sets of photographs of the derailment, one taken on the day it happened, the next set a few days later.

By now, most reasonable souls are hunkering down, awaiting large scale immunization and a brighter new year. Our dark "winter of our discontent" can be productive however. It's a good time to organize in more ways than one. Take heart. This will get better. Stay sequestered. Wear your mask, and exercise daily. By the next issue, the numbers will have begun to fall and many will have received the vaccine.

Have a safe and pleasant holiday.

Sandy Duffy



BOROWSKI AT THE WYE

Rick Borowski was a local rail fan who lived near the Grand Trunk Western yard along Griswold Road. He took pictures of various engines and rolling stock, including the C&O, during the 1960s and 1970s. We are fortunate to have acquired and scanned his more than 100 images which record not only the engines of the Grand Trunk but also the DT&I and the B&O.

Here's one taken on a warm August 1970 afternoon on the PH&D. It's noteworthy because not many photos of an end shot of our cabooses exist. The end of the cab appears to be painted white, which indicated that it's still in the original red/gray livery. The more familiar red, white, and blue wouldn't appear until more than 10 years later.

It was common to spot cars on the wye main for any number of reasons. Perhaps it was left for the night job to interchange to the C&O.

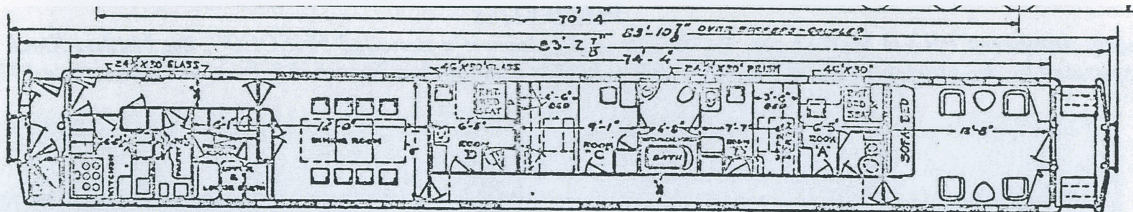
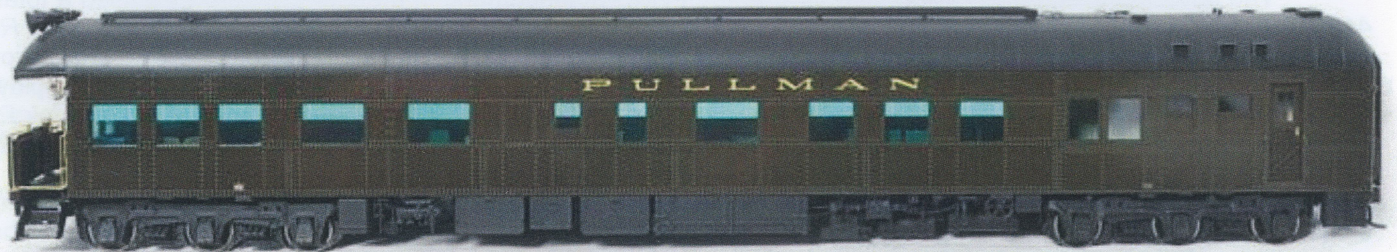
We can just see a string of GTW cabooses to the far right in Rick's photograph.

Castleblayne vs Ferdinand Magellan

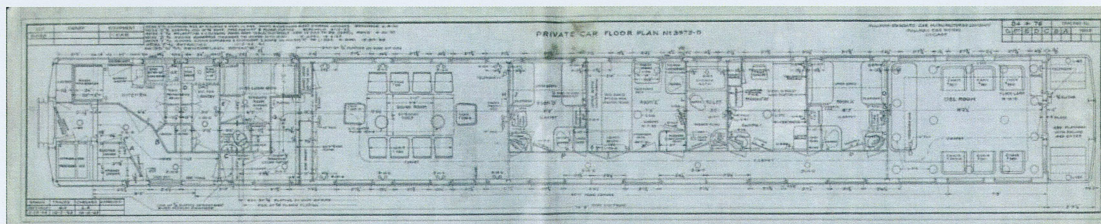
It's been rumored that both of these Pullman-built heavyweight business cars were "sisters" to each other. In this article, we examine the existing documents to reveal the similarities that formed that speculation.

Castleblayne started out as Chesapeake & Ohio Railway's "Richmond", built in 1927. It was Lot #6050, Plan #31393. "Richmond" was the first steel heavyweight Pullman business car built for company president, Mr. W.J. Hara-han. The final owner was the Port Huron & Detroit Railroad. It was donated to the Gold Coast Museum which sold the car to Dewitt Chapel. It was scrapped in 2011.

Ferdinand Magellan was part of a series of six business cars named after famous explorers, built in 1929. It was Lot #6246, Plan #3972b. In 1943, it was acquired by the U.S. Government and converted to the a private car for Presi-dent Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It was presented to him on December 18, 1942 and renamed "U.S. #1. It would be the only private railcar to serve both Roosevelt and later Presidents Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower. It was retired in 1958 and acquired by the Gold Coast Railroad Museum in 1959.



Castleblayne 1927



Ferdinand Magellan 1929

Both layouts are very similar, with four staterooms and dining for 8. Back by the galley, Castleblayne features access along one side of the car while the Magellan utilizes a passageway that begins on the opposite side and curves to the middle of the car, lining up with the end door. Both cars had rooms for two stewards. After acquisition, PH&D management removed one stateroom to enlarge the sitting room.

THE MATHER CARS of the PH&DRR

The Port Huron & Detroit Railroad never owned a fleet of boxcars. Throughout its 67 year history, it always preferred to lease their equipment. It all began with the Mather Stock Car Company.

The Mather Stock Car Company was founded in 1880 by Alonzo Mather. Mather had incorporated a more humane method of transporting livestock which included feeding and watering facilities built into his stock cars. This proved an instant hit, saving thousands of previously lost revenue for shippers. In fact, the American Humane Society awarded him a medal in 1883 for his innovation. By the turn of the century, Mather stock cars were in movement on most major railroads, all produced in his Chicago shops.

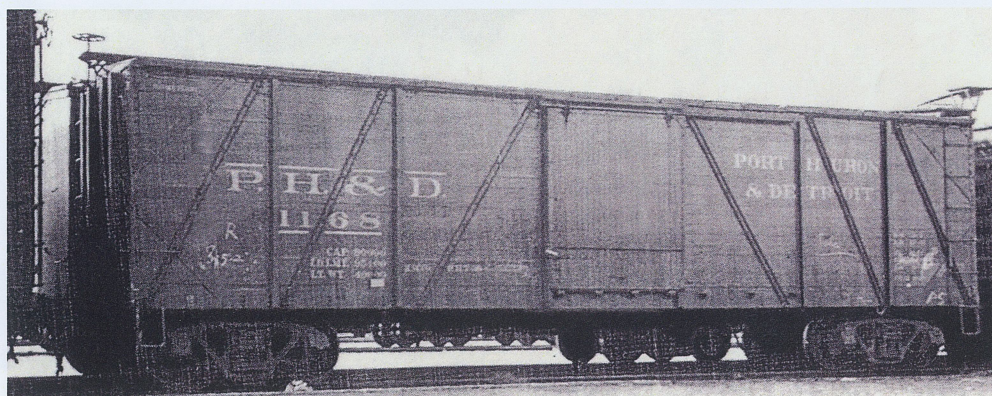
About this same time, Mather came upon an idea that revolutionized the car building industry. He recognized that many smaller roads might prefer leasing rather than buying equipment, reducing operating costs. Accordingly, he began leasing his cars under the lessee's operating marks. It was a perfect arrangement for many short lines which didn't have the capital to buy new. By the first decade of the 1900s, he had expanded his leased fleet from stock cars to 40' outside-braced boxcars. The decision carried the company well through the Great Depression.

The agreement with Mather was attractive to the PH&D management: in the late 1930s, they leased a total of 448 40' wooded boxcars. In fact, the PH&D had the second largest number of Mather cars. In the ORER (*Original Railway Equipment Register*) of 1942, these cars numbered 1006 through 1522. These PH&D lettered cars were brown with beige lettering (Sunset Models contacted me in the early 1980s and inquired about the color. Long time employee Sam Soini (*July 1939*) replied with a grin that it was "shit brown"! A later was model produced by Walthers for their Pro-2000 Series).

The agreement also covered repairs, which were made by Mather in their Chicago shops. The PH&D took advantage of that, as we can see with the photo of a rebuilt PH&D #1275.

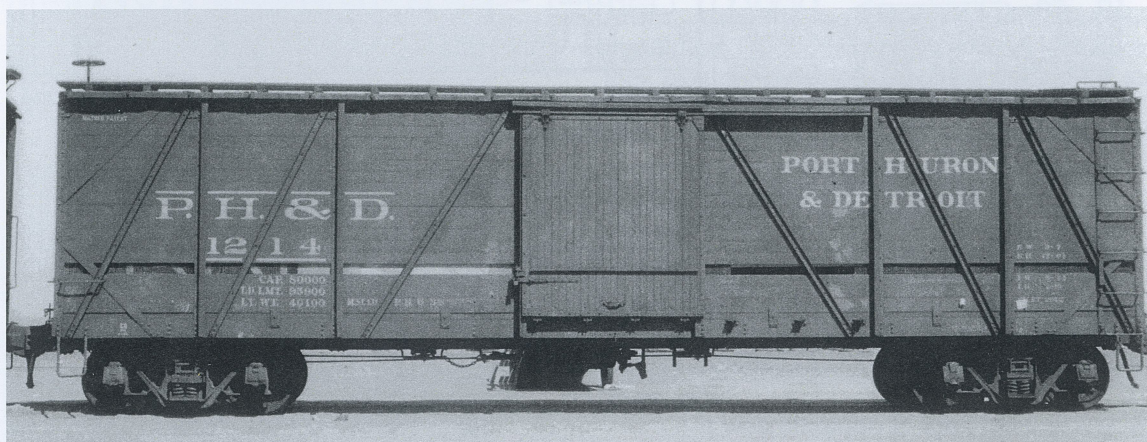
Their lease would carry the road through the war years. Mather's design was simple but ingenious. He used stout oak tongue and groove boards, reinforced with steel cross bracing on the sides. Four vertical steel beams on both ends and two "V" shaped angle braces added additional strength to all four corners. Notable was the all steel roof which overhung the sides.

By 1950, all but 3 were gone. By the following year, all were gone and the PH&D had no more leased equipment.



PH&D #1168

This is an early numbered PH&D Mather car. To the left of the door, it's stenciled "MSCCO", the Mather Stock Car Company. Next, and separated by the outside brace, is the build date which is illegible but is probably from the mid to late 1930s.



PH&D #1214

Here, we can see not only the "MSCCO" but a build date of June of 1938. That missing plank from the side will require a trip back to the Chicago plant for replacement. Mather cars were equipped with Andrews trucks.



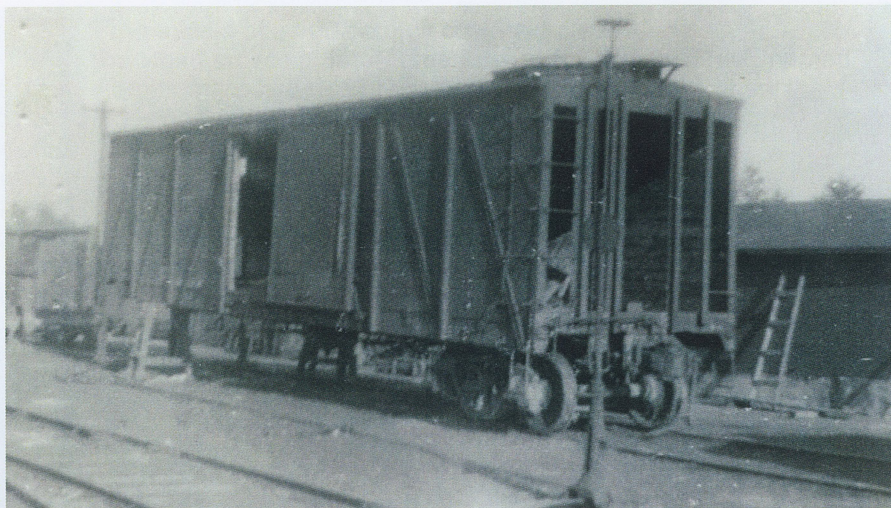
PH&D #1275.

This car has no "MSCCO" stencil, just a "B 3-42". It had been sent back to Mather for repairs, hence the March of 1942. It undoubtedly was in service to answer the demands of the earliest days of World War II. This is a view from the other side, the brake or "B" end on the right.



PH&D #1495.

This later numbered car was built in 1937. It has the stencil "MSCCO". The agreement with the PH&D, allowed for these cars to be sent back for repairs from time to time. Note the "V" bracing on each end.



Here's a Mather Car at the PH&D "R.I.P." track. One side is up on a jack and the wheel/truck set has been removed for repairs. We can see the four vertical end braces on the "B" (brake) end. The car looks to be in pretty good shape with only the end needing wood replacement. Note the high level switch stand in the foreground.

ON the GROUND!

It was in the early morning of August 18, 1971. George Duffy was awakened by the ringing of the telephone. On the other line was his Superintendent, Bill Munce. He was calling to report that a major derailment had just occurred at Yankee Road. Twelve cars of a south-bound unit coal train had derailed, dumping tons of coal, and blocking the crossing. Police were already on the scene. Twenty minutes later, both he and his wife were headed to the wreck.

As they turned onto Yankee Road, in the distance, they could see the flashing lights of Sheriff's cars. As they got closer, the magnitude of the scene became more apparent. Coal cars were strewn about everywhere, at odd angles, amidst twisted and mangled rail. They got out of their car to meet with Munce. It was eerily quiet, except for the distant rumbling of the head end power. It was still coupled to an untouched string of DEEX cars. Just south of the crossing, were five overturned cars. It looked as if a giant hand had pushed them over. They were still connected, their contents spilled everywhere. The crossing was blocked by one of the overturned coal cars, its contents of 50 tons of coal on the ground. Also on the scene, were personnel from the Detroit Edison. Amidst the wreckage was a downed 40,000 watt power pole, its wires strewn amidst the coal cars.

After a brief conference with Mr. Duffy, Bill Munce left to put in a call to Hulcher Services, a company out of Toledo that specialized in train car derailments. The priority was to clear and restore the main, clean up the spilled contents of tons of coal, and remove the 12 Detroit Edison coal cars.

The evening's edition of the Times Herald, the headline read "12 Coal-Loaded Cars Derail Near St. Clair".

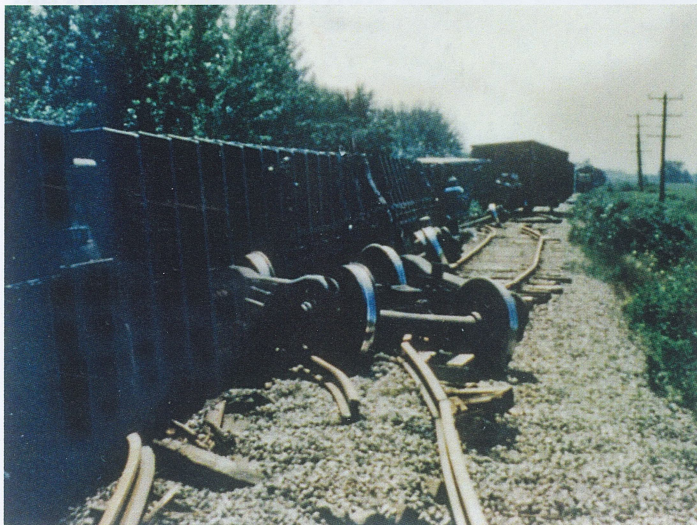
Within a day, cranes, front-end loaders, and empty dump trucks were on the scene, working to restore the main line for operation.



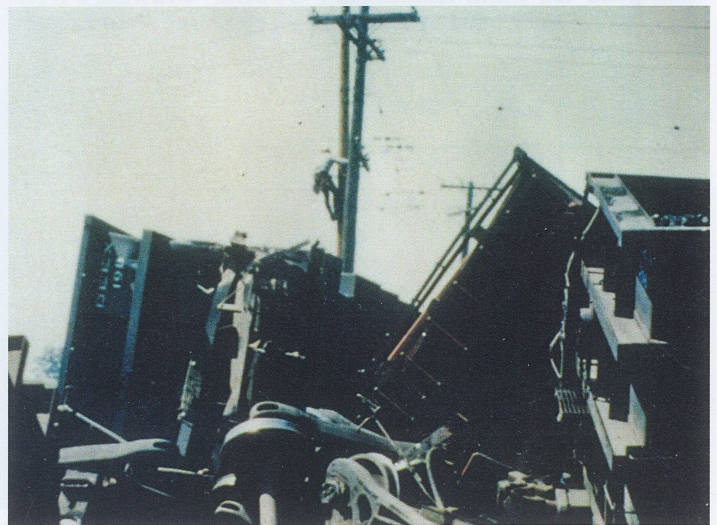
George Redfield confers with a Hulcher official before the cranes begin their delicate removal of the coal cars.



These four overturned cars are south of the crossing. They're still connected.



In the distance, a north-bound set of engines awaits, returned from the Belle River Power plant.



A Detroit Edison lineman is climbing the 40,000 watt pole to turn off the power above a tangled mess of twisted steel.



This was taken a few days later at the crossing. Note the fresh ballast and the brand new ties.



Looking north. The priority was to first remove the cars, then get the main clear for revenue operation.



Hulcher has removed the hoppers and their wheelsets to allow the section to restore service. Note fresh ballast.



DEEX cars have been moved away from the PH&D main.

So, how did 12 cars in the middle of a 100 car unit coal train derail?

Just south of the Busha Road crossing, is an area known as "Windmill Hill", named for a nearby farmer's old windmill. From the crossing, there is a gradual rise to the summit. All train crews knew that trains reaching the summit would gain speed once on the downhill run. A 30 car train is one thing. Having a 100 unit coal train behind you is quite another. As more loaded coal cars crested and begin a downhill run, more weight is pushing on their drawbars. This added weight would in effect "push" the train as it heads downhill toward the Yankee Road crossing. According to Bruce Sawdon, who has run his share of large road engines pulling coal "drags", there are two ways to slow a train: 1). Use the air brakes, and 2). Use the traction motors. The first is more drastic and involves utilizing the entire train's air pressure effectively triggering the brakes on every car. Using the traction motors is a more gradual application.

In the Times Herald article, it's stated "...that the train was going about 10 miles per hour." Perhaps the energy behind, loaded on the drawbars, might have been sufficient to force a car within the string to buckle under pressure and trigger a domino, with other cars to follow.

I ran this by our venerable expert from the Grand Trunk Western, Charles Geletzke, Jr. Here's his opinion:

"My guess is that your engineer probably set a light brake on the train as the headend came over the hill, then one of two things happened. He either had a "kicker", putting the entire train into Emergency. Or, he may have set a brake on the train and then tried to release them and he may have pulled the train in-two! Over time, we learned that with long heavy trains, generally, it is better to bring the train to a stop, then release the brakes, then go on your way. Because that train would have had all ABD brakes, and the fact that the derailment occurred in August, I am going to guess that my first possibility is more likely."

So was the train picking up too much speed and panicked the operator? We'll never know for sure, unless I run across a report from the FRA. Thankfully, we restored the main back to operating condition in a few days.

Matching the Prototype: DEEX 50' 100 Ton Coal Hopper



DEEX 145/173/184 50' Thrall Coal Gondola

Roundhouse: Ebay

Plastic with Metal Wheelsets & Kadee Couplers

\$66.00 (Make Offer)

"This Thrall gondola was initially conceived as a unit train coal car with the optimal strength, clean interior, and ability to withstand high-mileage service. Designed for unit train rotary dump service, the all-welded car has external steel framework to provide uniform load carrying support with 12 external vertical stiffeners and 2 sets of horizontal wrap-around stiffeners on each end. The B-end has a high mounted brake with a small brake step and a rotary A-end." RRMods

These are the models that match the DEEX three-numbered units that were part of the unit trains that came to the PH&D.

Roundhouse rolling stock is no longer available. Ebay was the only source and even that resource was limited.

The seller said some parts were missing, such as ladders and under chassis details. I offered \$50.00 and paid \$58.00. Not a bad deal for these rare and discontinued Detroit Edison coal cars (these three cars appear to be different sizes, but that's due to the seller's failure to properly size these images).

According to an ORER of July, 1972, these three units were 52' long with a capacity of 100 tons. Total numbers in these three series was 177.

These cars were designed to be emptied using a rotary dump system enclosed in a building on the Detroit Edison Belle River Power Plant property south of St. Clair.

SPECIAL THANKS!

Like to thank GTW retiree Charles Geletzke Jr. for his thoughts on the unit train derailment. Also, to our own Bruce Sawdon, who ran many a unit train south!

Your ad here?