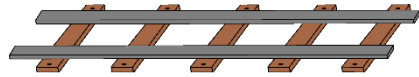


On Track



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If you are receiving this newsletter for the first time, welcome to the fold! We continue to catalog our visitor logs, and your email appeared! If you wish to be taken off our list, just let us know, but we hope that you will stay with us, follow us online, and return to visit us in person sometime soon. **Additional financial support will never be turned down (maintaining and operating a steam locomotive is expensive)!** Previous editions of this newsletter may be found on our [website](#). If you have comments on the newsletter, please send them to nmheritagerail@nmheritagerail.com or to your humble editor, [John Taylor](#).

FROM THE PRESIDENT As we move into the second half of 2026, New Mexico Heritage Rail continues to make remarkable progress toward building a permanent home for railroad preservation, education, and operations at the Albuquerque South Rail Yards.

For many years, our vision for the South Rail Yards existed primarily as a future goal. Today, that vision is becoming reality. With our long-term access agreement now in place, major infrastructure projects moving forward, and increasing support from our partners and volunteers, NMHR is entering one of the most exciting periods in the organization's history.



One of the most significant milestones this summer will be the rehabilitation of Tracks 176 and 177. This project represents the first major railroad infrastructure investment within NMHR's operating area at the South Rail Yards and will provide additional capacity for equipment storage and future railroad activities. It is an important step toward transforming the site into a functional railroad facility that can support our preservation and educational mission for years to come.

Progress also continues on the historic Albuquerque Rail Yards turntable restoration project. Working alongside our project partners, we are helping return one of New Mexico's most iconic railroad structures to operational service. The turntable will play an important role in future locomotive operations and public programming while preserving an important piece of railroad history.

Looking ahead, planning continues for New Mexico Railroad Days on September 26–27, one of NMHR's most important public outreach events. The event will bring together railroad organizations, museums, industry partners, and the public to celebrate New Mexico's rich railroad heritage while supporting National Rail Safety Week activities. Preparations are also underway for several ATSF 2926 operating opportunities later this year, which will continue to showcase the locomotive and support NMHR's preservation, educational, and fundraising mission.

None of this work would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, members, donors, and community partners. Every tie installed, every project completed, every event hosted, and

every opportunity realized begins with people willing to invest their time, talent, and resources into preserving railroad history.

As our activities continue to grow, so does our need for volunteers. Whether your interests are in operations, events, administration, fundraising, education, or project support, there are opportunities for everyone to contribute. Building NMHR's future at the Albuquerque South Rail Yards will require not only track crews and mechanical volunteers, but also members willing to assist behind the scenes with administrative and organizational projects.

One area where we particularly need assistance right now is helping our Financial Records Working Group with data entry and records organization. The team is rebuilding and organizing historical records, and we need additional volunteers to help. You do not need a financial background, accounting experience, or bookkeeping knowledge. If turning wrenches isn't your thing, but you're comfortable working your way around an Excel spreadsheet or Google Sheet and entering information accurately, we can use your help. This work is critical to strengthening NMHR's administrative foundation and helps ensure the organization remains accountable, transparent, and prepared for growth.

If you would like to help, please contact us at CRO@nmheritagerail.com. Even a few hours per month can make a meaningful difference and help move this important project forward.

Over the past year, NMHR has moved beyond simply preserving the past. We are actively building the infrastructure, partnerships, and programs that will allow us to share New Mexico's railroad heritage with future generations.

The work ahead remains substantial, but for the first time in many years, many of our largest strategic objectives are no longer concepts—they are active projects. From developing our permanent home at the Albuquerque South Rail Yards to expanding our operational capabilities and strengthening our organizational foundation, NMHR is positioned better today than at any point in recent history to achieve its mission.

Thank you for your continued support, and I look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming events, work sessions, and volunteer activities.

Respectfully,

—Mathew Casford

President & Chief of Rail Operations

PROFILE OF A MEMBER Did you know that we have our own personal car knocker? I know that this sounds like either an Irish hooligan or perhaps a repo guy with a big tow truck, but it is actually a recognized railroad term for a mechanic who specializes in the maintenance and repair of train cars. Our personal car knocker is Bob Thiele.

Bob is a Michigander, born in the Motor City. He graduated from Utica High School in 1971, where he swam competitively for the Chiefs. This foreshadowed one of his main vocations—coaching swimming at from youth level to the pre-Olympic level.

After a two-year gap spent hitchhiking around the country, he enrolled in Northern Michigan University, matriculating in 1978 with a BS in Biology, Chemistry, and Physics. He managed to escape the draft lottery, but falling victim to a long-term love of flying, he joined the Navy as a helicopter pilot, flying search and rescue missions. He left the Navy in 1990 and moved to Texas where he got a job working construction for a chain of grocery stores.



Tiring of the construction trades, he finally decided to use his hard-earned degree and got a job teaching junior high science and coaching swimming in Flour Bluff, a suburb of Corpus Christi for 10 years. Bob moved from Corpus Christi to Austin where he indulged his second love—trains. He worked at the Austin Steam Train Association, eventually becoming their CMO and acquiring the car knocker skill set that means so much to our 2926 efforts. Bob found out about the 2926 when he came to a Santa Fe Modeling and Historical Society conference in Albuquerque in 2024.

Our car knocker moved from Texas (where the air is too thick to breathe and too thin to plow) to New Mexico in 2025 to improve his sinus issues and to build a new home. To no one's surprise, the house is right on the BNSF mainline in Tierra Grande, southeast of Belen, where he can marvel at the 100 trains a day along the TransCon and where he can assist in the restoration of the M-190 commuter locomotive.

Bob's hobbies include model railroading (one-inch-to-the-foot on the 2926 and the M-190, and HO at home) and woodworking—he is a finish carpenter and cabinet maker. So we have a real prize in Bob Thiele—car knocker, educator, swimming coach, and cabinet maker. When you see him crawling around our dorm cars—take advantage of this incredible set of skills!

A SHORT HISTORICAL NOTE: As you all are now aware, NMHR will soon have access to a diesel-electric locomotive. The particular unit will be a GE Dash-8-40BW manufactured in the early 1990s by General Electric. Deciphering this GE nomenclature goes as follows: Dash-8 signifies the generation of locomotives by its design year, in this case the late 1980s; The 40 indicates the horsepower, in this case 4,000 hp; the B signifies the axle arrangement, in this case two trucks with two axles per truck; and the W signifies the wide-cab design (also known as a comfort or safety cab).

Eighty-four Dash-8-40BW's were built for the AT&SF's super fleet service, and they were passed along to BNSF when the BN-ATSF merger took place in December 1996. Some were also sold to other railroads.

Some of the specifications for this diesel-electric locomotive are as follows:

- Prime mover—GE 4,000 hp/3,000 kw, V-16 engine with generator
- Weight—280,000 pounds
- Maximum speed—70 mph
- Tractive effort—68,000 pounds

Our particular locomotive is still in the paint shop receiving its classic Warbonnet paint job. It is the ex-BNSF 534 and will carry the nomenclature BUGX 534. It should be arriving here later this summer!



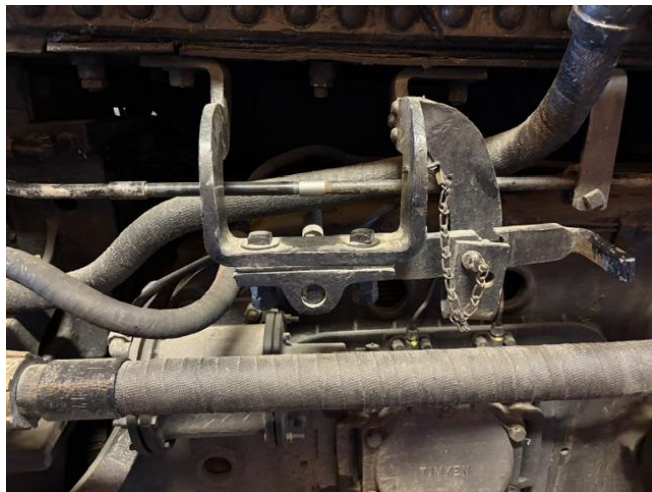
HOW DOES IT WORK: We spend time talking about the 2926 fuel system, but a fire requires both fuel and oxygen. So, where does the oxygen come from to make our fire burn effectively? There are two basic ways to provide oxygen to the fire. The first is a set of ventilators (sometimes referred to as “orange juice cans”) that are installed on both sides of the firebox below and slightly forward of the cab. These are direct openings from the outside into the firebox and provide sufficient air for most of the operations that we currently undertake. Because they are open to the outside, they have a cover plate with several inches of standoff to prevent introduction of dust, dirt, and other miscellaneous material into the firebox.

However, when we are moving with a heavy load or going at higher speeds, we will need more air to provide the right fuel-air mixture for ideal combustion. In this case, the fireman can open a damper located in the back of the firebox between the two “orange juice can” panels. A mechanism on the outside of the engineer’s side of the cab selects the default position of the damper in the firebox.

The fireman can adjust the exact position of the damper using the black-handled lever (circled in the image below right) just below the firing valve lever. The lever moves the damper in the firebox back and forth with a pivot joint that is located immediately below the firebox door inside the cab.



Direct “orange-juice” ventilators on each side with the damper inlet in the center



Baseline damper adjusgtment mechanism



Damper adjust handle in cab

WHAT’S NEW IN THE STORE: Two new items for your consideration (AND PURCHASE!): Route 66 stickers which combine 2926 and the Mother Road and some Alton Railroad passenger timetables for the discerning collector.



How you can help and other tidbits: If you are interested in donating to our cause (because operating a steam locomotive is expensive!) go to our [GoFundMe](#) and [Venmo](#) links! Be sure to check out our [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [Instagram](#) pages as well! Other potential sites of interest: our friends at the [Wheels Museum](#), [Rio Metro](#), and activities at the [Albuquerque Railyards](#). Please see our Membership page to discover our other volunteer opportunities.

Happy 250th Independence Day

