

The Mainstreeter

Northern Pacific Railway Historical Association
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**Warren McGee and
the Stilson Wrench
Mcfarlane's Gamble**



PRICE \$7

NPRHA GRANTS

Three preservation grants have been issued for Northern Pacific Railway-related projects for 2017.

The first grant for \$4,000 was made to The Minnesota Transportation Museum in St. Paul, Minnesota, www.transportationmuseum.org. The purpose of the grant is to fund the restoration of the Rutledge, Minnesota, Northern Pacific depot at the Jackson Street Roundhouse. The work includes replacing the roof, rotted siding and door sills, and painting the exterior of the building. The work will protect the interior of the depot and help the MTM open it up for public display. The depot was built by the Northern Pacific in 1937 to replace a previous depot that had burned. Rutledge is a small town along the NP's Skally line, and was adequately served by the 12-foot by 34-foot structure. The depot served for many years, but fell into despair. It was moved to the Jackson Street Roundhouse in the 1990s and moved to its current location in 2001.

The second grant of \$5,000 was made to The Friends of the Elkhorn Tank in Missoula, Montana. The purpose of this grant is to fund the Phase II repair and rehabilitation of the Northern Pacific Railway 48,000-gallon water tank at Elkhorn, Montana. A \$2,000 grant was awarded in 2013 for Phase I of this project to stabilize the tank. The work was completed in 2014.

Built by the NP in 1890 to service loco-



Bill Taylor with the stabilized Elkhorn water tank

motives at the engine facility at Elkhorn, the water tank was left standing when the railroad

abandoned the last 4 miles of the branch in 1914. All railroad facilities in Elkhorn were removed at that time except the tank. In 1914 ownership of the tank was transferred to the town of Elkhorn since it was linked to the town's water system.

Elkhorn is the highest elevation ever reached by the NP (6,600 feet). Little remains of the railroad south of Helena, Montana, all of which was removed by 1932. The tank remains relatively intact. It is the last known survivor of that era—more importantly it is in its original location.

Additional project support includes:

- Montana History Foundation—Helena
- Jefferson County Genealogy and Heritage Corp.—Boulder, Montana
- Elkhorn Landowners Protective Association



The Rutledge depot

- Elkhorn Cemetery Board
- Elkhorn Goldfields Inc.—Jefferson City, Montana

The third grant for \$5,000 was made to the Paradise Elementary School Preservation Committee (aka The Paradise Center) in Paradise, Montana, www.paradisecentermt.org. The purpose of this grant is part of the center's exhibit master plan for a foundational exhibit, "When the Whistle Blew," preserving the story of the Northern Pacific Railway in Paradise. The exhibit will explore the 135-year legacy of the railroad that became the region's central socioeconomic feature. It will honor deceased and living railroad workers, educate tourists about life and work in a railroad company town, and pass this heritage to future generations.

Community volunteers are working (under a renewable 10-year lease from Sanders County) to repurpose the now-closed, 107-year-old Paradise elementary school (built on land donated by NP) as The Paradise Center for community, visitors and the arts. In 2016, they completed an exhibit master plan including as one of five major themes, "When the Whistle Blew," the story of the Northern Pacific Railway's founding of and presence in Paradise. Using one of the historic classrooms, they are developing a quality and informative railroad exhibit to attract area residents and visitors to the center. Paradise had many features important to the Northern Pacific's operations: a division point for the exchange of crews and equipment, a large roundhouse and turntable for steam engine repair and service, and one of two tie plants on the entire line. These and other community features will be displayed on an animated 3-D table model using models of the steam and diesel eras. The legacy also suggests a series of subthemes for the exhibit to be set forth on accompanying panel displays and supplemental exhibits: (a) how and why the Northern Pacific became located in Paradise; (b) Chinese workers and their camps; (c) from tree to treated tie (overview of the manufacturing process); (d) the work of day laborers and "tie buckers;" (e) the sounds of the railroad; (f) life in a company town; and (g) the story of the railroad's withdrawal from Paradise and the legacy.

Questions about grants and grant applications can be submitted to Grants@NPRHA.org.

—Harold Shannon 🍷



NP MYSTERY PHOTO

Train: NP No. 4, the eastbound *Alaskan*.

Engine: Class A-3 no. 2662.

Location: Yellowstone Division, Second Subdivision, 1 mile west of Medora, near Milepost 150.

Date: August 1945.

Photograph by Edgell, collection of Gary Wildung.

The unmistakable and unique features of the North Dakota Badlands, noted for the area's weird-shaped buttes and red "scoria" rock, make the general setting of this photo obvious to anyone who has seen that area either in person or in photo. That territory encompassed only about 23 miles of track—essentially from Milepost 139 east of Sully Springs to about Milepost 162 west of DeMores—so only a few stations are included in that stretch of track. Pinpointing the location of this photo, therefore, isn't all that difficult, provided one is careful with assumptions. For example, it would be easy to assume the track next to the photographer is a siding. But is it? The track itself certainly looks like it could be a siding, particularly during the time frame of this photo. Yet something is missing. More than

two decades before this photo was taken, the entire Yellowstone Division's main line, including the segment that traversed the Badlands, was equipped with an Automatic Block System. Standard practice on the NP in single-track territory was to place a pair of ABS signals—semaphores—at the switches of each siding, except in some cases where other tracks and switches (a house track, for example) were in close proximity to a siding switch. In this photo no other switches or auxiliary tracks are in view, and yet there are no block signals at or anywhere near the switch under the first two cars. This should raise suspicion that this is perhaps not a siding.

It was a siding at one time, however. Many years before this photo was taken in 1945, this was a siding at a station known as "Little Missouri" and it was located about 1 mile west of Medora. Between the two stations a single-track bridge spanned the Little Missouri River. Long before World War II the NP eliminated the station and east end of Little Missouri siding, leaving a spur about 3,000 feet long and known thereafter as "Little Missouri Spur" even though it wasn't shown as a station in time tables.