

Motor Car 1 was resplendent in a color scheme of rich maroon with silver trim and lettering (later changed to gold) when it emerged from the Union Pacific shops in Omaha in early 1905. The little car would blaze the trail

for internal combustion power on the nation's railroads.

- Above and opposite page, Union Pacific Railroad



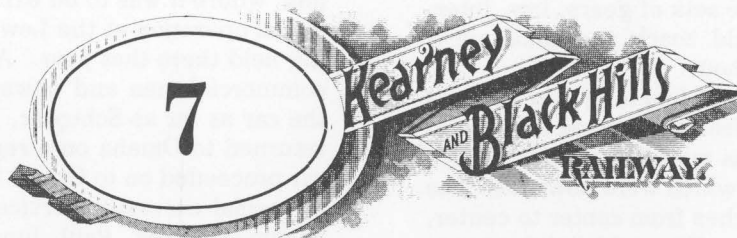
Motor Car Service.
Daily to Callaway and Return.
 Leave Kearney at 7:10 a. m. Arrive Callaway at 10:30 a. m.
 Leave Callaway at 12:25 p. m. Arrive Kearney " 3:25 p. m.
Via Union Pacific
 For Information Inquire of
 E. M. WELLMAN, Agent.

The success of Union Pacific's early motor car experiments was such that, by early 1908, the railroad began to place newspaper ads which extolled the virtues



MOTOR
CARS
 Offer speed, Comfort and convenience
 to passengers.
 Leave Kearney at 7:10 a. m.
 Arrive Callaway at 10:30 a. m.
 RETURNING SAME DAY.
 Leave Callaway at 12:25 p. m.
 Arrive Kearney at 3:25 p. m.
 VIA
UNION PACIFIC
 Inquire of
 E. M. WELLMAN, Agt.

of motor car service. The ad at above left appeared in the Callaway Courier-Tribune on January 24, 1908, while the one at above right appeared February 7, 1908.



Here Comes the "Potato Bug!"

Strange things were happening in the north end of the Union Pacific erecting shop at Omaha in the early part of 1905. Had an uninformed stranger walked into the building at that time, he might have wondered if the U.P. was going into the ship-building business. Taking form was a peculiar-looking vehicle which looked for all the world like an upside-down boat. Odd-looking forgings and sections of frames were being brought over from the company blacksmith shops, and parts which obviously had no relationship to steam locomotives were being turned out by the machine shops and added to the boat-like contraption, the body of which had previously been assembled in the car shops.



W.R. McKeen

Overseeing the entire sequence of construction of the vehicle was its inventor and designer, bearded, dapper, cigar-smoking, Indiana-born William Riley McKeen, Jr., the Union Pacific's Superintendent of Motive Power and Machinery. The redoubtable, often-intractable Irishman, the son of a wealthy Hoosier banker, was educated at Rose Polytechnic Institute in Terre Haute, Indiana, Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, and the University of Berlin, Germany. He entered railroad service in 1891 as a special apprentice of the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis at Columbus, Ohio, after which he served, consecutively, as Master Car Builder, and General Foreman of the Terre Haute & Indianapolis at Indianapolis, Ind. From December 1898, until May 1901, he was District Foreman of the Union Pacific at North Platte, and from the latter date until June 1902, he was Master Mechanic of the U.P. at Cheyenne. He was then appointed to the top U.P. mechanical post in Omaha.

Previous electric railway speed tests and experiments had convinced McKeen that the sharply-pointed "prow"

and rounded rear end, or elongated teardrop design, was the best for "splitting the breeze" and achieving high speeds, although later studies in aerodynamics and streamlining would prove just the opposite to be the case. Although the automobile was still in its infancy and, as yet, no threat to the passenger train, railroads had been searching for some time for a successful type of self-propelled railway passenger car which could cut the operational and maintenance costs of conventional passenger trains and be particularly adaptable to short runs, such as branch line and commuter service. Accordingly, the U.P. had given McKeen the green light for developing such a conveyance for use on its lines. The result, now taking shape, was Motor Car Number 1, a unique and odd-looking little vehicle, which would set the stage for the legendary motor cars, bearing the inventor's name, which were to follow it.

The nautical atmosphere surrounding assembly operations was further accentuated by the arrival of Motor Car 1's motive power, a 100-horsepower, marine-type engine, one of the most powerful gasoline engines of the day, from the Standard Motor Works of Jersey City, New Jersey. One individual who was destined to have an intimate association with this engine, often to his sorrow, was Floyd Schultz, then an employee in the Union Pacific shops at Omaha. Thirty years later, when the U.P.'s first *Streamliner* was making its bow, Schultz, then in retirement, was to describe his experiences as a mechanic aboard the early motor cars, in an article written for his home town newspaper, *The Clay Center (Kans.) Times*, in its issue of March 28, 1935. Referring to the engine of Motor Number 1, he stated, in part, that:

... this very same motor with all its polished brass and shining steel was later to become the "pink monkeys" in my dreams, also cause me to often ask, "Oh Death, where is thy sting?"

The engine had six cylinders, divided into two blocks, with three cylinders to each block and raised twenty-four inches above the engine bed on twelve stanchions. The cylinders had an 8-inch bore and a 10-inch stroke, rated to develop 100 horsepower at 350 revolutions per minute. The ignition system was of the "make and break" spark variety and the engine was started by compressed air, carried in tanks beneath the carbody. The cam shaft, which had two sets of cams, was shifted so that three of the cylinders were operated by compressed air via valves operated from the cam shaft. As soon as one of the cylinders in the other block fired, the cam shaft was shifted to running position and this cut all six cylinders into gasoline-burning operation. The engine was reversed by shifting the cam shaft, one set of cams being for forward operation and the other for

reverse. Number 1 had three sets of gears, low, intermediate and high, and could reach and maintain a speed of 40 to 45 miles per hour.

The tiny car itself was only 31 feet long over the sills and had a total length of 33 feet, 6½ inches from point of pilot to rear coupler. It was mounted on four 42-inch wheels, only the front two of which were powered. The axles were only 16 feet, 6 inches from center to center, giving the car a very short wheelbase which did not contribute favorably toward the riding qualities of the vehicle. The operating weight of the car was 38,550 pounds and it had a seating capacity of 23 passengers. The wooden, but waterproof body was painted a showy maroon with silver lettering and striping, later changed to gold, while the trucks were a jet black. A cast iron eagle was mounted on top of the front end of the car, adding further to its jaunty air. Floyd Schultz, in his colorful and informative article in the *Clay Center* (Kans.) *Times* thirty years later, commented:

Standing before and viewing this new creation, in wonderment, it never occurred that this nice little car, this pretty little car, was to place many, many a silver thread among the gold of my forelocks.

The interior woodwork of the car was of ash, in a natural finish. Newstyle Cottier ventilators inducted fresh air at the front of the vehicle and exhausted it through the roof. Heating was provided by hot water from the engine's cooling system, although this later proved inadequate for winter operation and it became necessary to install an ordinary coal-burning heating stove. A unique lighting system featured opalescent panels between the windows, above the level of the passengers' shoulders, which gave strong but indirect lighting. Both the interior light fixtures and the headlight utilized acetylene gas which was stored in tanks under the car. The door to the passenger compartment was opened and closed by air from the brake cylinder, actuated by a foot treadle.

On March 7, 1905, Number 1 made its first trial run, a 52-mile round trip over the main line between Omaha and Valley, Nebraska. Clarence M. Beard, who with Floyd Schultz was later to become part of a two-man operating team on the car in regular service between Kearney and Callaway, was at the controls in the capacity of "motorman," as motor car operators eventually became generally known. A little over a month later, on April 16, 1905, Motor Car Number 1 bravely set forth on the first leg of a long journey to Portland, Ore-

gon, where it was to be exhibited and demonstrated in actual operation at the Lewis and Clark Exposition being held there that year. A party of railroad officials, commercial men and newspaper representatives rode the car as far as Schuyler, Nebraska, from where they returned to Omaha on a regular passenger train. The car proceeded on to Grand Island, where it was placed in special excursion service for a full week, operating northward to St. Paul, junction point of the Ord and Loup City branches. Two daily round trips were provided each morning and evening, with a fare of one dollar for the round trip, the car proving to be a popular attraction during this brief interlude. On April 23rd, Number 1 resumed its journey to Portland and, although the intention was to operate the car under its own power all the way, later reports indicated that because of breakdowns, it was towed behind freight trains on more than one occasion. After being displayed at the exposition and operated in further tests out of Portland throughout the spring and most of the summer, Number 1 was returned to Grand Island for a minor overhauling before being placed in scheduled service.

By this time, residents along the Kearney branch had become aware of the fact that their line had been chosen as the first along the entire Union Pacific system to be assigned the new motor car service. As early as March 2, 1905, the *Kearney Hub* had raised the idea:

The first of the new gasoline motor cars has just been turned out from the Union Pacific shops at Omaha and will be used on one of the branch lines of the company. The best place for it is on the run between Kearney and Callaway.

Again, on April 11th, the newspaper had suggested:

The recent tests of the Union Pacific Railroad Company's new motor car have been very satisfactory and it is not improbable that this type of car, furnishing its own power, will be used on many small branch lines. There is an opportunity to use one to advantage right away on the K.&B.H. between Kearney and Callaway.

By August 3rd, the *Loup Valley Queen* at Callaway, although somewhat confused as to the car's method of propulsion, was already anticipating its first run up the line and disappointedly reported to its readers that:

We have been straining our eyes all week for the electric car which was to have been added to our train service this week, but for reasons best known to the railroad company we are yet without a sight of same.

Two weeks later, the newspaper again lamented:

We haven't seen the electric car yet. Has it left the track and got lost in the hills?"

However, the August 18th edition of the rival *Callaway Courier-Tribune*, which had been created earlier that year by a merger of the *Courier* with the *Tribune*, reported that:

Official notice has been received by Agent Grimes that the motor car will commence running next Monday. It is not known here what schedule it will run on.

On the warm Sunday morning of August 20, 1905, Motor Car 1 left Grand Island for Kearney, with an engine crew consisting of motorman Clarence Beard and mechanic Floyd Schultz. The latter was later to

STANDARD MOTOR

NO. 3 3 7

MANUFACTURED BY

THE STANDARD MOTOR CONSTRUCTION CO.

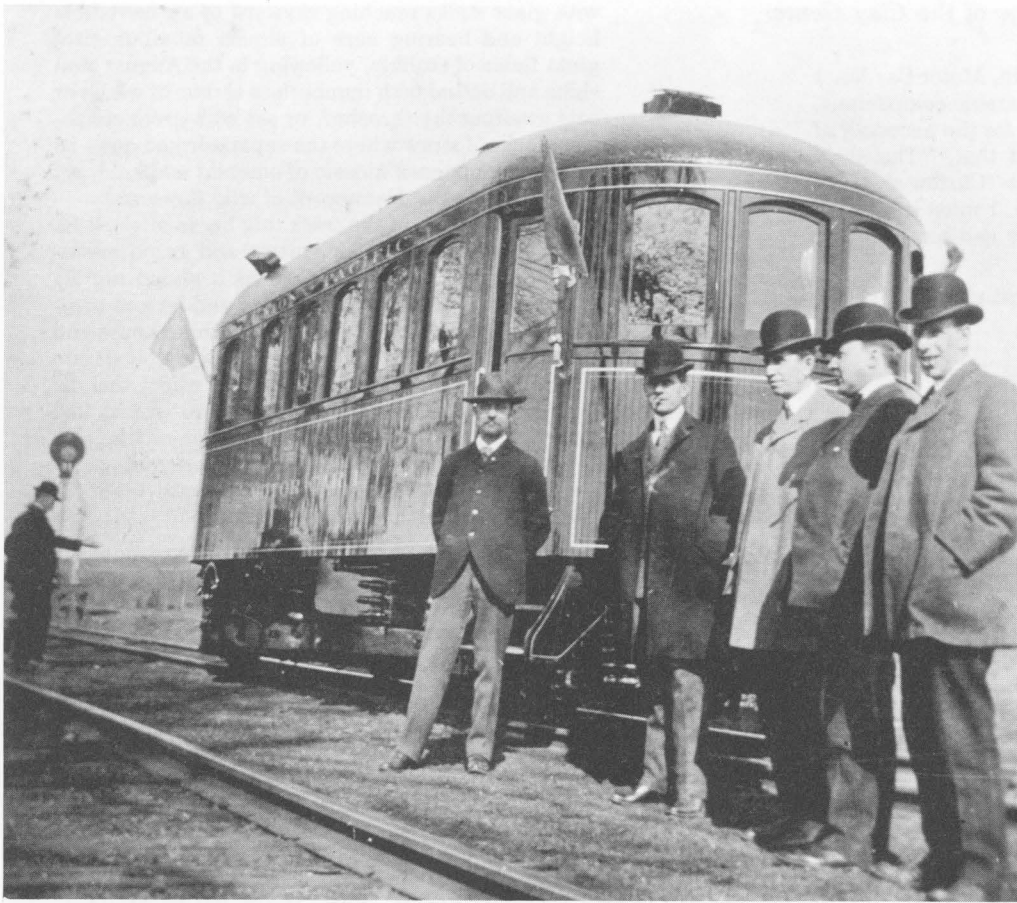
JERSEY CITY, N. J.

PATENTED

1899 · 1900 1901 1902 1903 · 1904

This engine plate was attached to the motor of Motor Car 1. The serial number denotes that this engine was the 337th motor manufactured by the Standard Motor Construction Company.

- Union Pacific Railroad



On March 7, 1905, Motor Car 1 was on a trial run westward out of Omaha, prior to its departure for Portland, Oregon. Union Pacific officials have posed beside the rear of the little car, which one wag described as looking like "a northbound tear drop going south."

- Author's Collection,
courtesy of Paul F. Bischeld



Motor Car 1 rests at the end of her run, at Callaway, shortly after being placed in service in 1905. Standing beside the car are motorman/engineer Clarence M.

Beard, at left, and mechanic Floyd Schultz, at right.
- Author's Collection

state, in the aforementioned issue of the *Clay Center* (Kans.) *Times*:

From that time on, Clarence Beard, Motor Car No. 1 and myself were to become inseparable companions, not so much for the love of it, but for the necessity of it. That necessity which meant that, "The show must go on." It wasn't for us that "Curfew shall not ring tonight," but Motor Car No. 1 must run in the morning, and it did, whether we had any sleep or not.

Schultz went on to describe his first ride on the car that memorable August day:

The trip from Grand Island to Kearney was an uneventful one but to me rather impressive. We were traveling up the Platte Valley, one of the most beautiful and productive agricultural valleys in the United States; also operating the first gasoline railway motor car to be placed into service. Watching this motor do its stuff was a revelation to me, and by the way, this most interesting motor never revealed, that afternoon, any of its one hundred and one tricks that it had up its sleeve.

Shortly after the arrival of Number 1 in Kearney, a U.P. switchman, who had been giving the motor a careful scrutiny, stepped back and exclaimed: "Look at the potato bug!" His reference to the car's resemblance to the soft-shelled variety of the insect pest was inspired by its maroon color and stubbornness. This nickname was to stick with the car as long as it ran on the Kearney branch, although it was also known in some circles as "The Red Flash," and some less-complimentary and often-unprintable sobriquets were also attached to the car later, as its peculiarities and shortcomings became better known.

After a brief stopover in Kearney, Motor Car Number 1 set out for Callaway in order to make its initial revenue run down the branch from there the next morning. Reporter F. M. Green of the *Kearney Hub* was on board to record his lucid observations for the August 21, 1905 edition of the newspaper:

The trip to Callaway Sunday afternoon was one of the most enjoyable within the memory of the writer. The motor car left the Union Pacific roundhouse in this city at 1:08 in the afternoon, carrying Assistant Superintendent H. E. Cox, Agent W. D. Clifton and the *Hub* representative. It was in charge of the train crew which will have charge of it in the future, consisting of Conductor J. W. Amick, an old main line man, and Motorman C. M. Beard, who has been with the car ever since it was constructed and who took it to Portland and back. An extra machinist was on board.

The trip up the Wood River Valley was a revelation and delight and as the car whizzed past the thriving towns and villages along the line, with their numerous new buildings and other evidences of progress and prosperity which are to be seen on every side, one became forcibly impressed with the idea that the same bountiful Hand which had placed this rich and fertile valley in the midst of the "Great American Desert" had likewise sent forth to develop it men and women who were rich in that thrift and industry and enterprise which alone can accomplish great things, no matter what the environment.

And such crops! Immense expanses of alfalfa undulating in the summer breezes like the billows of a green and purple sea; vast stretches of corn land,

with giant stalks reaching skyward to an incredible height and bearing ears of almost fabulous size; great fields of stubble, yellowing in the August sunshine and dotted with numberless shocks of wheat or oats awaiting the thresher, or set with great shapeless stacks of straw where the separator had done its work -- an immense mosaic of emerald and gold, set in a multi-colored framework of wild flowers!

On either side of the track, big herds of sleek fat cattle browsed in the rich grasses and gazed in stupid wonder at the new monster as it glided rapidly past them. Everything looked rich and fat and prosperous and when an old Nebraskan, three hours and twenty minutes after leaving Kearney, rolled into Callaway, his former opinion, to the effect that he lived in the greatest state in the entire Union, had been confirmed to his entire satisfaction and he also knew that no part of the state contributed more toward making it a banner commonwealth than the Wood River Valley.

Early the next morning, Motor Car Number 1 made its historic first scheduled run, the very first trip by a self-contained, internal combustion-powered railway passenger car in regularly scheduled service, anywhere in the United States. The *Hub* reporter who had ridden up to Callaway on the deadhead trip the previous afternoon, chronicled the details of the first revenue run for posterity in the same day's issue of the newspaper:

MOTOR IS IN SERVICE

Makes First Regular Trip From Callaway to Kearney and Return On Monday

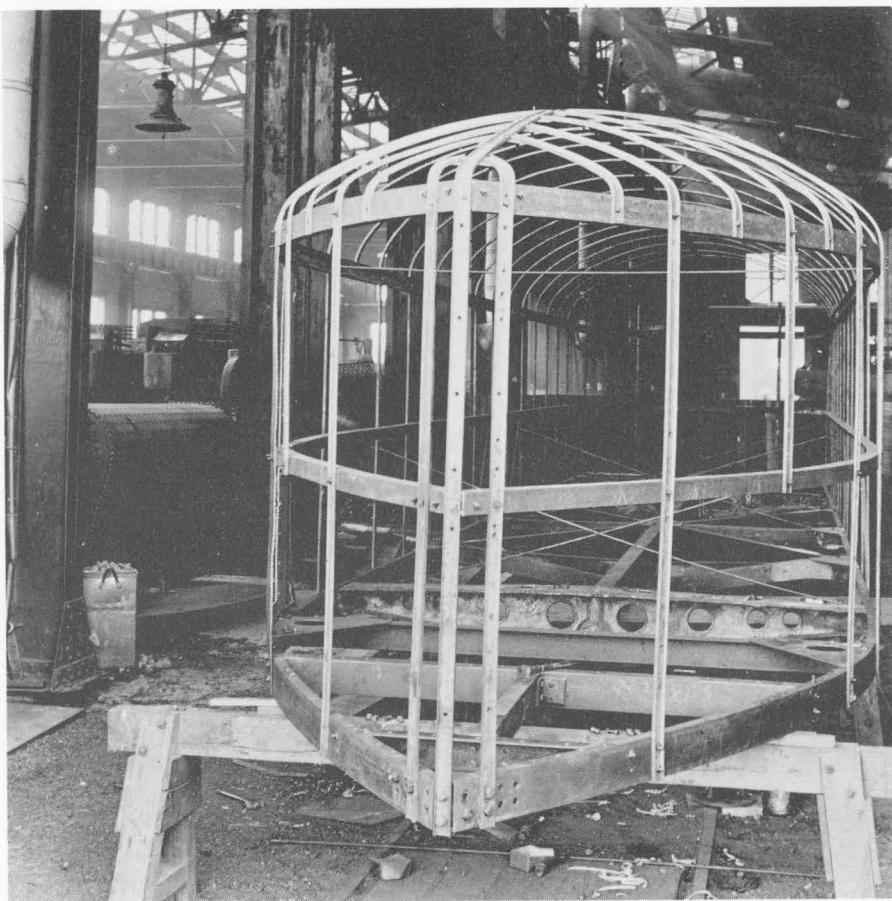
The motor car service which went into effect on the Callaway branch of the Union Pacific Monday morning is absolutely certain to prove an unqualified success. The first trip made and the expressions from the people along the line show that it will prove a paying venture for the company. It will vastly accommodate the residents of the territory traversed by the branch, and it will be a good thing for the business interest of Kearney. The trip from Kearney to Callaway Sunday and return Monday morning demonstrated the fact that the motor can easily make the time scheduled. On the first regular trip from Callaway to Kearney, there were twenty-four passengers carried, eighteen of them coming to this city.

"All aboard!"

It was Conductor J. W. Amick who uttered the words at exactly 6 o'clock Monday morning. He stood amidst a group of men and boys on the depot platform at Callaway, and a moment later Union Pacific Motor Car No. 1 had started upon its first regular trip. Ten men were aboard besides the train crew, seven of them being paid passengers, five of whom were bound for Kearney, two railroad men and a newspaper man. After the preliminary chug-chug, the car started up the grade toward Lodi at a capital clip, and kept it up until the last station was reached. There was never a slip and never an indication that the motor wasn't having an altogether easy time of it, though this is one of the worst grades on the line.

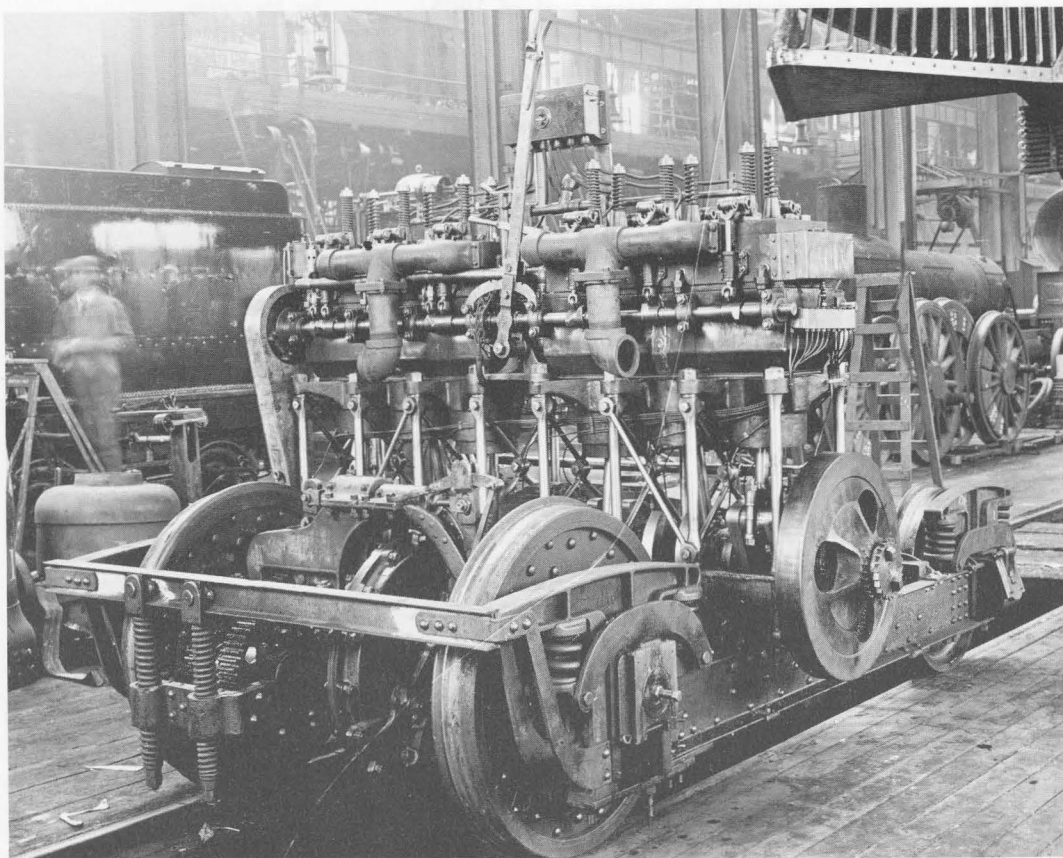
Lodi was reached a little ahead of schedule time, and though the hour was early there were many people there to see the car and a passenger for Eddyville was taken aboard. Oconto was the next stop, and here, too, there was a big crowd at the depot and another passenger was picked up.

At Eddyville the depot platform was crowded and two passengers came aboard. Sumner was the best



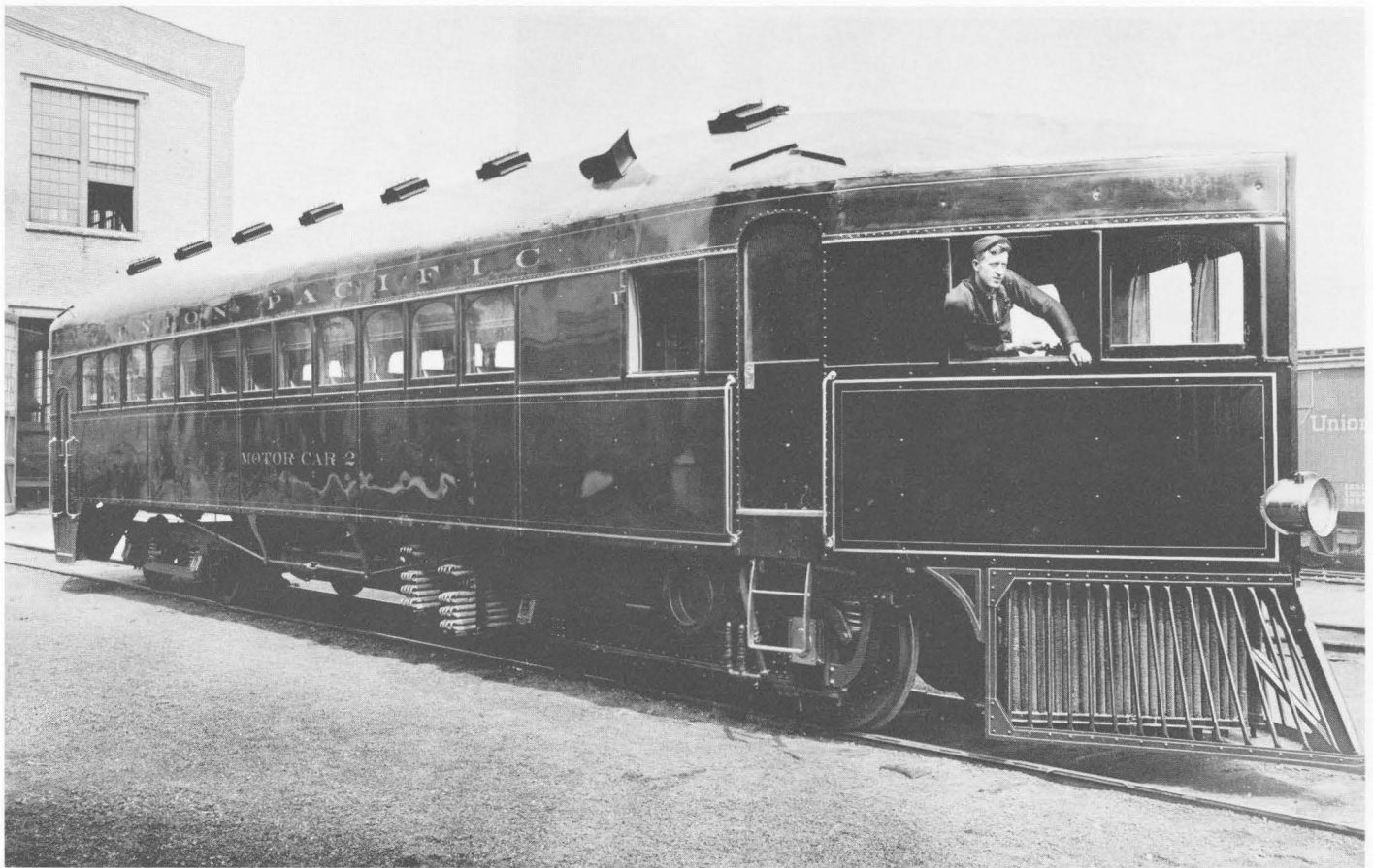
Motor Car 2 was under construction in Omaha on July 7, 1905. This view of the car's frame vividly emphasizes the "upside down boat" image of the McKen cars.

- Union Pacific Railroad



This is the 200 horsepower McKen engine and power truck which, after some experimentation and modification, was installed on McKen motor cars which followed Motor Car 1, until the advent of the 300-horsepower engine. The lever on the sliding cam shaft was the means by which the car was reversed.

- Union Pacific Railroad



Motor Car 2 made an impressive sight when it emerged from the erecting shop during the latter part of 1905. It was placed in service on the Kearney-Callaway run on

October 6th of that year and was dubbed "the battleship" by its crew.

- Union Pacific Railroad



Early in its career, Motor Car 2 makes a station stop at Amherst one evening in 1905 while heading up the branch.

- Edward G. Otto Photo, Author's Collection

point for passengers, except Callaway, six joining the party at that place, three of them bound for Kearney. Miller turned out in good shape to see the car and two passengers got aboard for the county seat. Amherst and Riverdale also furnished large crowds of sightseers, two passengers coming from the former place and three from the latter.

The trip down was a most enjoyable and exhilarating one. The cool morning air laden with the fragrance from the fields was most refreshing. The absence of smoke and cinders which must inevitably accompany travel behind a locomotive was a great relief and was freely commented upon by the delighted passengers. Five ladies were among those who will in the future have the privilege of saying that they rode in the motor upon its first regular trip and they appeared to enjoy it immensely.

All the way down the car was on time, or approximately so, and just to show what could be done if it became necessary, Motorman C. M. Beard on one or two occasions cut things loose and lined her out for a few miles at a thirty-five or forty mile gait.

The time card adopted for the new motor service featured an early morning departure from Callaway at 6 a.m., with arrival in Kearney at 9:10. On the return trip, the car left Kearney at 3:35 p.m. and arrived back in Callaway at 6:55. The motor immediately attracted more than its share of passengers and it became readily apparent that its small size would be something of a handicap, as indicated by subsequent accounts in the *Kearney Hub*:

August 22, 1905:

Motor Car No. 1 left for Callaway on schedule time Monday afternoon, carrying sixteen passengers and reaching its destination without mishap. The schedule time was easily maintained. When it arrived in this city Tuesday morning, standing room was at a premium and there were thirty passengers aboard.

August 23, 1905:

The motor car was crowded when it left for Callaway Tuesday afternoon and when it came in Wednesday morning there were thirty-seven passengers aboard. It seems certain that the car that is now in use is entirely too small for the purpose and that the large one will have to be put on this run as soon as it is completed.

August 24, 1905:

The motor car was again crowded to capacity when it started out Thursday afternoon and some who intended going out on it were compelled to remain in Kearney on account of lack of room.

Callaway's two newspapers had widely differing viewpoints on the new mode of rail travel. The *Courier-Tribune*, reporting on the inaugural run, had the following brief but optimistic statement in its issue of August 25th:

On its first trip out of Callaway the motor carried eleven passengers. There is no doubt but that it will become a popular mode of travel.

The *Loup Valley Queen*, on the other hand, was considerably less than enthusiastic about the little "potato bug" and reiterated a desire for conventional passenger service in its issue of August 24th:

KEARNEY BRANCH. BETWEEN KEARNEY AND CALLAWAY.									
Mixed No. 95 B	No. 93 Motor B	Miles	STATIONS		Elev.	Miles	No. 94 Motor B	Mixed No. 96 B	
5.00 AM	3.35 PM	0	Lv. Kearney.....	Neb. Ar.	2146	65	9.10 AM	3.00 PM	
6.15 AM	4.25 PM	17	Lv. Amherst.....	" Lv.	2233	49	8.16 AM	1.45 PM	
7.20 AM	5.12 PM	32	Lv. Sumner.....	" Lv.	2371	33	7.30 AM	12.38 PM	
7.53 AM	5.36 PM	40	Lv. Eddyville.....	" Lv.	2444	25	7.06 AM	12.10 PM	
8.15 AM	5.53 PM	46	Lv. Lomax.....	" Lv.	2498	19	6.51 AM	11.54 AM	
8.50 AM	6.12 PM	52	Lv. Oconto.....	" Lv.	2531	13	6.35 AM	11.35 AM	
9.15 AM	6.33 PM	59	Lv. Lodi.....	" Lv.	2651	6	6.16 AM	11.15 AM	
10.00 AM	6.55 PM	65	Ar. Callaway.....	" Lv.	2555	0	6.00 AM	11.00 AM	

The first U.P. public timetable schedule showing motor car service on the Kearney Branch in 1906 was unique since this was then the only motor service on the entire system. "B" indicates the train operated daily except Sunday.

The motor car came up on Sunday evening and started on its regular run between this place and Kearney Monday morning. While it has since been well patronized, it has made poor time, and is not a great success. It carries no mail nor express and can accommodate but about 30 passengers. It may eventually bring us a regular passenger train, which is what we need and want.

The *Hub* took due note of the *Queen's* disenchantment with Motor Number 1 and offered a few words of solace in its issue of August 28th:

The Callaway *Queen* is not greatly in love with the new motor car. The *Queen* admits that the car is well patronized "but has made poor time and is not a great success." But possibly these sour grapes will be sweeter after they have been touched by an early frost.

By this time, however, the *Courier-Tribune* had joined its rival in disillusionment with the motor in particular and with service on the branch line in general and went on record as one of the early proponents of railroad nationalization in its issue of September 1, 1905:

The grasshopper is the name now given the motor car and if it does not improve there will be no necessity of any name being attached to it. The other night it arrived about ten o'clock and in the morning trying to start, after several hours it was declared a "dead bird" by the conductor, and about twenty passengers laid over for the freight. At times this car is unable to carry all the passengers and yet the railroad company does not seem to care much for the comfort or convenience of those who do travel, and there is not so much as a water closet on the car. It is enough to drive one to government ownership for anyone can see how different it is with the mail service that the Government does control and it looks as though if the Government had control of the railroads there would not only be comforts and conveniences provided for the passengers on the stub line but the stub line would be extended far enough up the river to reach all the patrons of the line.

On September 7th, the *Loup Valley Queen* resumed its criticism:

Many people are curiously desirous of riding on the new motor car, but, as one who rode on it has said, that one ride on it would satisfy the most adventurous soul, for before you reach Kearney, you will discover that the novelty has disappeared and that the reality, with a vengeance, has come. It would be the thing for a tired mother, whose child is unmanageable. The car would attend to it a plenty.

Meanwhile, mechanic Floyd Schultz was probably ready to agree with the two Callaway weeklies. Remi-

niscing in the March 28, 1935 edition of the *Times* of Clay Center, Kansas, he described some of the frustrations involved in the operation of Motor Car No. 1 from the mechanic's standpoint:

Riding Motor Car No. 1 on its scheduled trips during the day and working on it at night was just one experience after another. First it was the valve box gaskets blowing out, then broken stanchions, water pump, cooling systems, clutch, carburetors, intake pipes, drive chain, gear shift, intake valves, hot bearings, and all the other ills that a gasoline motor can be addicted to. All of these just added that many thorns to our would-be-crown of glory.

Not long after the regular run had been established, and we were beginning to believe that this was the life for us, when one morning on our trip from Callaway to Kearney -- all of a sudden there was that clankety-bang-bang noise, which has sent the chills running up and down many a motorist's spine, telling us -- Oh, you connecting rod bearing -- you have done lost your babbitt. Now this was a new, but not what you would call a pleasant adventure, as about every other day the babbitt metal would be burned out of one of the bearings, and taking down a set of these brasses, working under the cramped condition caused by the gasoline tank being located under the engine bed, always covered with a mixture of oil, grasshoppers and dirt, made it just another test whether the mechanic would still remain a Christian. This trouble was soon eliminated by substituting solid bronze bearings with oil holes drilled in them, making it possible to oil with an engineer's hand oiler. This helped to some extent, to make up for the deficiency of the crude oiling system, a part mechanical, part gravity feed arrangement that was anything but dependable at its best.

The oil flowed from a lubricator box through pipes to the cylinders, main bearings and to oil rings connected to the crank shaft which conveyed the oil to the connecting rod bearings -- sometimes, and this sometimes wasn't always as regular as it should be, so the result was very often a hot bearing.

Starting the motor on a frosty morning wasn't one of those pleasures that you cared to look forward to; as there were several factors that didn't contribute anything to easy starting. First, the carburetor was a design that wouldn't take any blue ribbons at a Century of Progress Exposition. Its construction and operation was very simple, but not efficient. It had the usual float control feed to regulate the flow of gasoline from the auxiliary tank, this tank being supplied from a one hundred gallon capacity fuel tank; two spray nozzles for breaking up the fuel so it would properly mix with the air; the flow of air was regulated by a gate, set with a tension spring. The mechanical adjustment of this carburetor was not the type that would give a good mixture of gas. Added to this was the make and break spark system, not as hot as it might have been -- then you only had 3 cylinders cut in on the gas -- with the possibilities of one of these misfiring, so when the compressed air was cut in, the motor would start -- maybe. If she didn't start after using up the reserve of compressed air and all our strength in cranking -- it was then for a switch engine to shove the car around the railroad yards, with the clutch in, until the motor would start.

One morning at Callaway, after exhausting every means of starting the motor, we hit upon the smart idea of hitching a team of horses to the car and pulling it down the track. It worked, the engine started, and before we could cut the team loose, knocked one

horse down, and that was that, so from then on those bright ideas were out.

However, on several other occasions a team of mules was utilized at Callaway to move the motor car, resulting in Number 1 adding "Old Hee Haw" to its rapidly growing collection of monickers. Schultz went on to describe other difficulties with the car:

Very often during our regular trips, at some station, we would often kill the motor, then not being able to get it started, the elevator man would generally recognize a brother in distress, would saunter over and start telling us how his blankety-to-blank engine had the same kind of fits. His advice would be to sit down on the end of a tie and wait until it had its pouting spell out. The elevator man was right, as we soon found out. The engine becoming flooded, it would be necessary to wait awhile before we could crank it, and using this cranking lever was a tiresome and dangerous pastime at the best.

Despite the many headaches and heartaches involved in operating the first Union Pacific motor car, there was an occasional bright moment now and then, as Schultz explained in his article:

In the engine room all wasn't grief, as we had our little pastimes. One of them was to watch one of our conductors (who had about reached retirement age) put on his act in locating all the Mae West curves when he helped the farmer girls to board the car at the road crossings. He finally met his Waterloo later over on the Loup City branch. When helping a perfect 36 on the car one morning, his technique not being up to standard, she back handed him, and about ruined a perfectly good set of false teeth.

After two weeks of service, Motor No. 1 dead-headed back to Kearney on Saturday, September 2, 1905 after completing the westbound trip to Callaway and was dispatched to Grand Island for the remainder of the weekend. Upon completion of a minor tuneup at the division point, it returned to Kearney in time for the regular Monday evening trip up the branch. A few days later, the potential versatility of motor cars was effectively proved, detractors to the contrary, when Motor No. 1 made two trips up the branch the same afternoon as described in the September 9th edition of the *Kearney Hub*:

MOTOR MAKES TWO TRIPS

Excursionists Returning From Denver Render
This Necessary

The advantages of the motor car system for branch line service were demonstrated in this city Saturday. A large number of residents along the line of the Callaway branch came in from Denver on the morning trains and too late to go out on the mixed train. The regular time for the motor to leave is 3:35 p.m., but it was early seen there would be far too many passengers for it to take out at one trip. There is no service on Sunday, so it became manifest that the car would have to make two trips or some of the passengers would have to remain in Kearney until Monday. It was therefore decided to send the car up on an extra trip and it, accordingly, left for Callaway about one o'clock crowded with passengers. It had to return at once to Kearney and then immediately start back to Callaway, there being plenty of passengers to fill it for two trips.

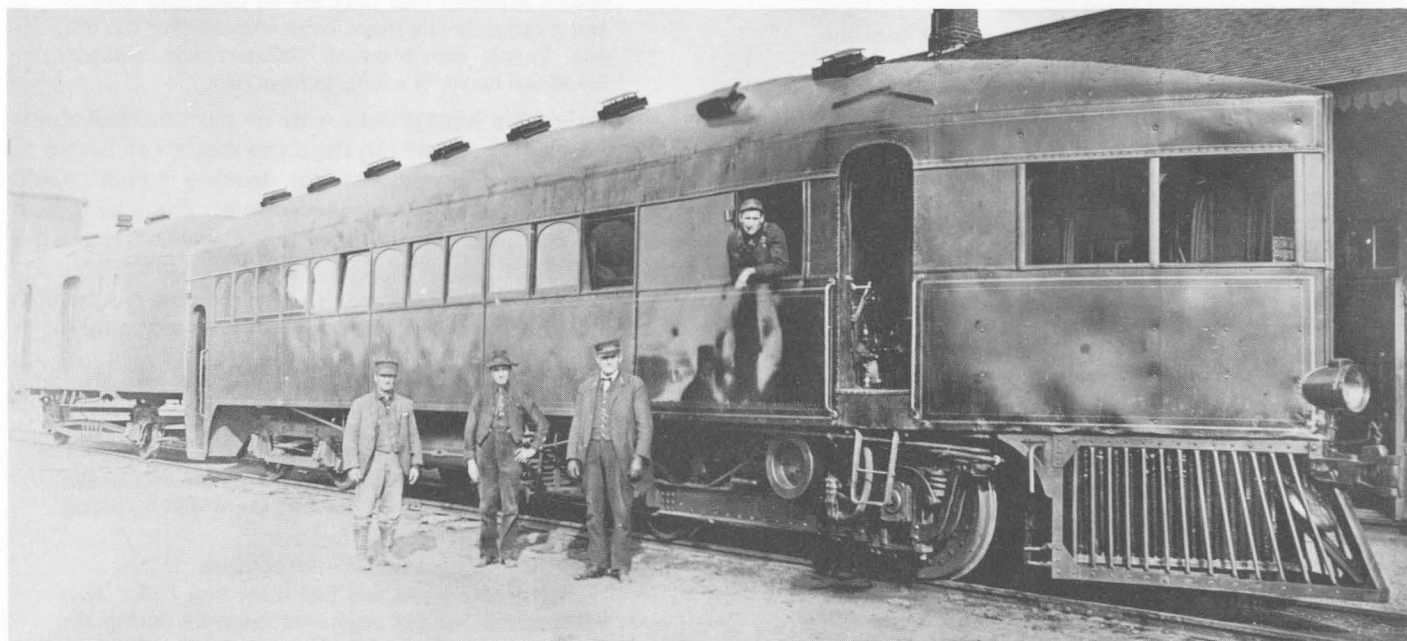
Again on September 14th the oft-maligned "potato bug" performed yeoman service. Immediately after its



A classic souvenir from the early years of the McKeen car era is this photograph, printed from a glass plate negative. Motor Car 2 and its trailer, eastbound as Train 94, arrives at Amherst during the summer of 1906. All of the amenities of the small town station of long ago are

present, including waiting passengers, onlookers, express cart, and baggage truck.

- Edward G. Otto Photo,
Author's Collection



Motor Car 2 prepares to depart from Callaway as Train 94 on a long-forgotten day in 1906. Motorman George Riley leans out from his engine room window, while con-

ductor Lew Hansen poses with two townsmen who have come down to the station to see the train off.

- Author's Collection

arrival in Kearney that morning, it returned to Miller where 64 additional passengers were ferried back to Kearney to attend the Ringling Brothers Circus, then showing in the Midway City. That evening, as soon as the afternoon show was over, the diminutive motor car transported the Miller delegation home, returned to Kearney, and immediately set out on the regular run to Callaway, reaching there about midnight.

On one occasion Motor Number 1 made an unscheduled stop for the accommodation of a careless passenger, as narrated by the *Kearney Hub* on September 27, 1905:

A young man who had been working near Gandy came down on the motor Wednesday morning. He was standing in the door of the car this side of Glenwood, when he pulled out a pocket book containing a check for \$75 and a five dollar bill. The check and money were blown away and the young fellow at once rushed in and informed Conductor Amick of the matter. The car was at once stopped and with the aid of the passengers, the check and bill were soon recovered.

Motor Car Number 2, after having achieved speeds as high as 63 miles per hour during various tests in September, arrived from Omaha and replaced Number 1 on the run to Callaway on October 6, 1905. The new car, nearly twice as long as Number 1, was described at length in that day's issue of the *Kearney Hub*:

THE NEW MOTOR CAR IS PUT INTO SERVICE

Makes First Run to Callaway
Friday Afternoon

Union Pacific Motor Car No. 2 arrived here Thursday evening and made its first regular trip between this city and Callaway Friday afternoon, it was visited and admired by scores of people, for it is one of the most beautiful vehicles that ever ran on wheels.

It is of the same color as No. 1, but the lettering and stripings are in gold instead of aluminum, while the trimmings are of brass.

Motor Car No. 2 is an all-steel car. It is of the same general design as Motor Car No. 1, with the exception that it has two four-wheel trucks, is fifty-five feet long, and has a seating capacity of fifty-seven.

One of the most interesting developments of this car to railroad and practical men is its remarkable strength. The steel sills and bracings, the steel carlings and ribs, with the angle bracing and outside steel shell, convince one at first sight of the absolute safety to passengers traveling in such a car.

Although the car is of all-steel construction it is of wonderfully light design, and a most comfortable car to ride in. The trucks of this car are the strongest, as well as the lightest steel trucks ever built, and mark a decided advance in the design of passenger car trucks. Even the wheels are of special rolled steel design of great strength, yet of limited weight.

The driving wheels of this car are forty-two inches in diameter while the other wheels are thirty-four inches. The exact weight of this car on the scales is 56,000 pounds.

One of the unique features and improvements in this car is the hot water circulation coils, which are housed in the pilot of the car, and so arranged that in the winter time the fresh air supply will be very comfortably warmed by passing over the coils and

thence into the car; these circulating coils thereby serving the double purpose of cooling the gasoline engine, and at the same time furnishing heat for the passenger end of the car.

Motor Car No. 2 is driven with a 100-horsepower, six-cylinder gasoline engine, built after special railroad pattern designed to meet the regular railroad car service requirements, has a "make or break" spark ignition, with a primary battery to start on and a magnet for regular running service.

The metal clutch, operated by long hand levers, which proved so successful on Motor Car No. 1 has been applied to Car No. 2, but operated by air pressure, which is controlled by a very ingeniously designed operating valve. The car is started at a low speed, engine disconnected, or thrown into high speed at will, simply by means of this small operating valve. One distinctive feature of the motor cars as designed by Mr. McKeen, is the use of steel outside shells, No. 2 being the first one thus constructed.

Motor Car No. 1 goes back to Omaha at once and will be overhauled. What disposition will then be made of it is not yet stated.

On the day after Number 2's initial run to Callaway, a party of Union Pacific officials, including W. R. McKeen, interrupted a trip to Salt Lake City long enough to inspect the new motor car at Kearney. The bewhiskered superintendent of motive power took the group four or five miles up the branch and back on the car, before the westward journey was resumed. From time to time thereafter, officials from various railroads around the country appeared in Kearney to inspect and ride this latest innovation in rail travel. Not only was Number 2 the center of attraction for visiting rail functionaries but it achieved instant popularity with the patrons along the line as well, and was soon operating with capacity loads of passengers. The *Callaway Courier-Tribune* reflected the general approval of the new car in its issue of October 13, 1905:

The new motor car is so much better than the people expected that they are all delighted over it and it certainly is a great improvement over the old one. People can come to Callaway now without dread and horror of a long, tedious ride.

Number 2's honeymoon with its patrons was short-lived, however, as within days the motor car began to demonstrate a propensity for trouble which would plague its entire career on the branch. The first indication of the jinx appeared in the *Courier-Tribune* on October 20th:

The motor car refused to move according to schedule this morning. Dingbat was frozen to the thin-gummy, perhaps.

For nearly a month, things went smoothly; then in mid-November, a steady barrage of difficulties developed. On November 14th the *Kearney Hub* reported:

On account of an accident the motor was in the Grand Island shop Tuesday and there was no motor service on the branch.

On November 18th the *Hub* lamented:

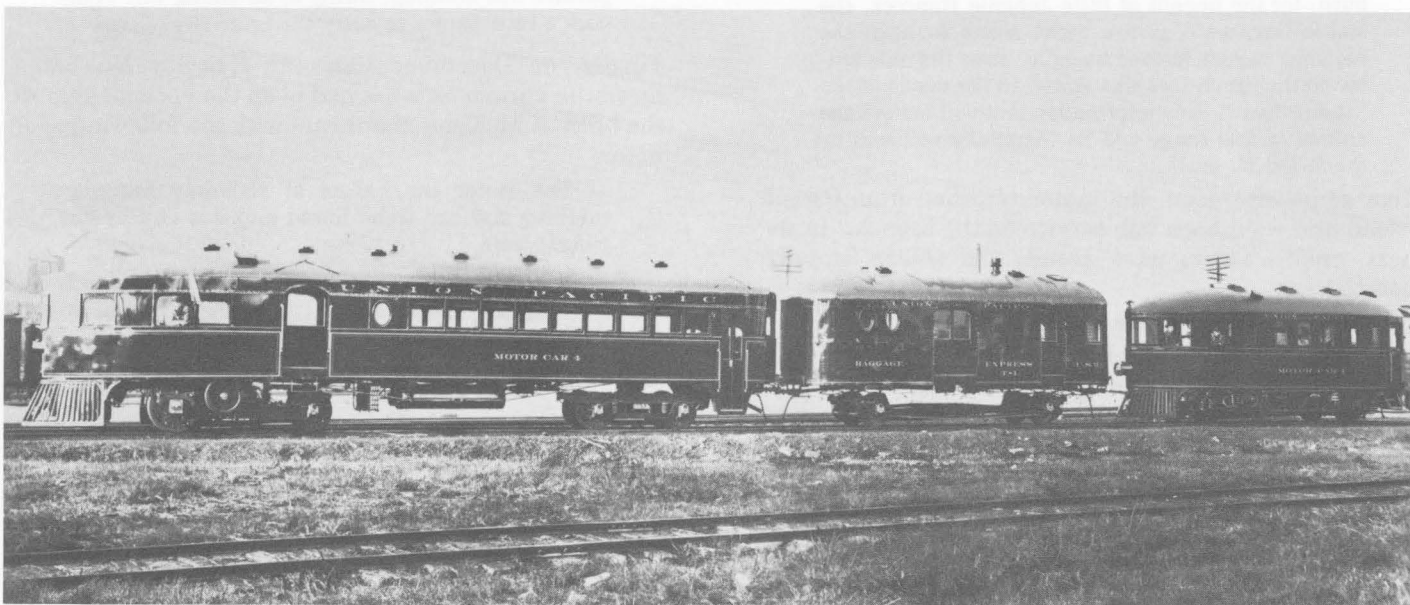
Motor Car No. 2 has had more bad luck. It is necessary to run the engine at intervals during the night to keep it from freezing up. Friday night the watchman broke one of the cylinders and it was necessary to again send the car to Grand Island for repairs.



When Motor Car 4 came off the assembly line early in 1906, it was placed in service on the Chicago & Alton Railroad for a brief "break-in" period, then returned to the Union Pacific and sent to Kearney where it was

photographed with its crew after taking over the run to Callaway.

- Courtesy of Dale and Joann Farmer



The contrast in size, between Motor Car 1 and its successors, is graphically displayed in this view of the tiny car standing behind Motor Car 4 and Trailer T-1. Number

1 appears to be even smaller, at least as far as its height is concerned, than the trailer.

- Union Pacific Railroad

November 28th saw the car suffering still another breakdown at Lomax and after a five-hour wait, it was ignominiously towed to Kearney behind the mixed train and again returned to the Grand Island shops. For more than two weeks thereafter, the branch was without motor car service.

By this time, a small shed for housing the motor at Callaway overnight was nearly completed, which would eliminate the practice of the motor standing outside in all types of weather and the watchman having to start the engine at least once every hour during cold nights. While the new building afforded protection from the elements, it could provide no cure for the various other problems with which the car was saddled. The motor was released from the Grand Island shops on December 11th and set out for Kearney once more but had proceeded no farther than Wood River, a little over sixteen miles, when the engine died and refused to start again. While a disappointed and disgruntled crowd waited vainly at the Kearney depot, expecting to ride the motor up the branch upon its arrival, the luckless car, instead, was on its way back to Grand Island at the rear of an eastbound freight. Three days later, on December 14, 1905, the *Loup Valley Queen* humorously commemorated the temporary demise of motor passenger service with a western-styled "want ad," which included reference to engineer Sullivan and conductor Clapper of the mixed train, and night watchman Hancock:

Lost, Strayed or Stolen

One bright bay motor car, branded "No. 2" on right hip and sweenied in left shoulder. Known by the name of "Potato Bug." When last seen, was being trailed down the line behind Jack Sullivan's old "snorter" and "hazed" by Steve Clapper on the roughest ridin' critter in the herd. This outfit can't offer no great sight of a reward, but ding our sunburn, for the benefit of little Johnnie Hancock, the stable boy, we'd give a right smart to have the bloomin' cayuse fetched back, as 'twas the only critter on the ranch that was suited to the needs of the "tenderfoot." Any information that will restore the animal to this range will be thankfully received by the K.&B.H. outfit.

That same afternoon, the motor returned from Grand Island and went back into service on the branch. In its next week's issue, as a result, the *Queen* smugly boasted:

Our estray notice last week brought the motor car back. Had we known it was so easy, we would have said it several weeks ago.

However, the hoodoo which had been bedeviling Number 2 did not wait long to reappear after the car's return to service. On the evening of December 18, 1905, the acetylene lighting system failed during the westbound trip and the motor car was entirely devoid of lights, except for the conductor's lantern. Four miles east of Oconto, a team and wagon being driven by a farm couple, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Felker, was approaching a grade crossing. With no light visible on Number 2 and the noise of the wagon completely drowning out the sound of the approaching motor, Felker was unaware of impending disaster until his team had started across the track. He frantically attempted to back them off but it was too late -- the

motor car stuck the team, killing one horse outright, severely injuring the other, and completely demolishing the wagon. Mrs. Felker received head injuries from which she was unconscious for a short time, but recovered; her husband sustained only slight injuries, while a yearling calf being transported in the wagon was unhurt. The headlight was completely knocked off the motor by the impact and the pilot was badly bent. The Felkers, nevertheless, were very fortunate to have survived what may well have been the first encounter between a motor car and a highway vehicle. Few participants in future collisions of this type would be so lucky.

Just three days later, on December 21st, Number 2 again suffered the humiliation of being towed into Kearney at the rear of Mixed Train 96 after another breakdown. This time, repairs were made at the Kearney roundhouse, and while the motor was unable to leave for Callaway until the unlikely hour of one o'clock the next morning, it nevertheless managed to return to Kearney on schedule later that forenoon, bringing in a big load of Christmas shoppers from along the line.

Mechanic Clinger, who had been with Motor 2 since its arrival from Omaha in early October, had his turn at being victimized by the hex on December 23rd. Just prior to the car's departure from Callaway that morning, Clinger had crawled beneath it to tighten a bolt when the wrench slipped, striking part of the moving machinery, which flipped the tool back across his forehead with such force as to cut a gash an inch and a half in length, down to the bone. The mechanic was forced to lay off for several days afterwards while recovering from his injury.

Motor Car 2 closed out 1905 in what had unhappily come to be typical fashion for the car. On December 28th the *Loup Valley Queen* reported:

The motor car was slightly late in making its departure this morning, owing to its taking Mr. Hancock a little longer to curry the brute than usual.

Finally, on December 30th, the *Kearney Hub* rang down the curtain on what had been the epochal year of the birth of McKeen motor cars with the following sour note:

The motor car balked at Callaway Saturday morning and had to be towed into this city by the freight train.

During the first few weeks of 1906 Motor Car Number 2 continued in service on the branch, but its steady rash of mishaps, as recorded in the *Kearney Hub*, sounded like something straight out of "The Perils of Pauline":

January 4, 1906:

After being laid up for repairs for several days, the motor car resumed its regular service on the Callaway branch Thursday.

January 11, 1906:

The motor car, which has been laid up for several days while being overhauled, left on schedule time for Callaway Thursday afternoon.

Same issue -- Amherst news:

Lost, strayed or stolen, one motor car, marked No. 2. Finder will please return the same to the

Union Pacific railway company and oblige the people on the Callaway Branch.

January 15, 1906:

The motor car started on its trip to Callaway Saturday, but died before it got out of the yards, and is still out of commission.

January 17, 1906:

The motor car went up the branch Wednesday afternoon for the first time in several days.

January 19, 1906:

The motor car killed a cow on its down trip Friday morning.

January 29, 1906 (Amherst news):

The motor broke down Saturday about a mile east of town. They brought the passengers back to the depot on the hand car.

Meanwhile, at Callaway, the *Loup Valley Queen*, hardly a champion of the motor car concept to begin with, expressed its total displeasure with the situation in its edition of February 1st:

The failure of the motor to run on Wednesday morning disappointed quite a number of people as usual. We are not managing the Union Pacific's business, but if we were, we would certainly have a passenger train on this branch, and one that would run on time and regularly, even though we had to rob the main line of the "Overland Limited!"

Motor Car No. 1 returned from Omaha on January 31, 1906, after having undergone a thorough overhauling, and went back into service on the branch, pulling one of the new motor trailers recently turned out by the U.P. shops. The trailer, exactly the same length over the sills, 31 feet, as Motor Number 1, was divided into two compartments, one for mail and the other for baggage and express. The mail clerk formerly assigned to the mixed train was transferred to the motor run, with only pouched mail carried on the mixed thereafter for a time. This again gave the branch line residents two mail services per day, enabling them to receive daily newspapers on the same day they were printed and saving twelve hours on eastbound mail. In the future, however, trailers would be operated with motor cars more or less at the discretion of the railroad company, often depending upon the size and facilities of the motor cars themselves.

After making only a trip or two, Motor 1 was again replaced by Motor Number 2 but for only a few trips. On February 5th, Motor Car Number 4 took over the run with Number 2 returning to the Omaha shops. The new motor was similar to Motor 2 in most respects, except for the addition of a baggage room. Number 4 lost no time in introducing one of its own little quirks which interrupted the recently-established motor mail service, as described by the *Kearney Hub* on February 9th:

SERVICE IS INTERRUPTED

Motor Trailer Cannot at Present Be Handled

Mail service on the motor has been suspended for the present and the mail clerk has been retransferred to the freight which leaves here at five o'clock in the morning.

Motor No. 4 is now in service here, the others having been sent into the shop for repairs. This motor is equipped with a high gear for speed and a low gear for starting. The low gear is temporarily out of order and it is of course necessary to start the car with the high gear. This is impracticable with the trailer and the car must be started each time with a pinch bar. The trailer has therefore been abandoned until No. 2 shall be turned out of the shop, when the service will be resumed. No. 4 will then be repaired and it also can handle the trailer.

Residents along the branch were highly appreciative of this mail service and will be glad to know that its abandonment is but temporary.

A few days later, however, Number 4, had an opportunity to prove itself under severe winter conditions. The *Hub* of February 14th described the interesting experiment:

UNION PACIFIC MOTOR BUCKS SNOW DRIFTS

Distinguished Railroad Officials Witness
an Interesting Experiment

The Union Pacific motor car was given its first test in snow "bucking" Tuesday afternoon and it was a rather severe test in which the car made a very creditable showing. The test was witnessed by a party of distinguished railroad men who were thoroughly satisfied with the showing made. The party consisted of M. B. Cutter, general manager of the Lehigh Valley Road; R. W. Baxter, superintendent of the Wyoming Division of the same road; W. L. Park, general superintendent of the Union Pacific; and W. R. McKeen, Jr., superintendent of motive power of the Union Pacific and inventor of the motor.

The party came in from the east on train No. 11 in Mr. Cutter's private car. The Lehigh officials had come to Nebraska for the purpose of inspecting the car with a view to purchasing a number of them for service on their road. They arrived just in time to see the new invention put to its severest test.

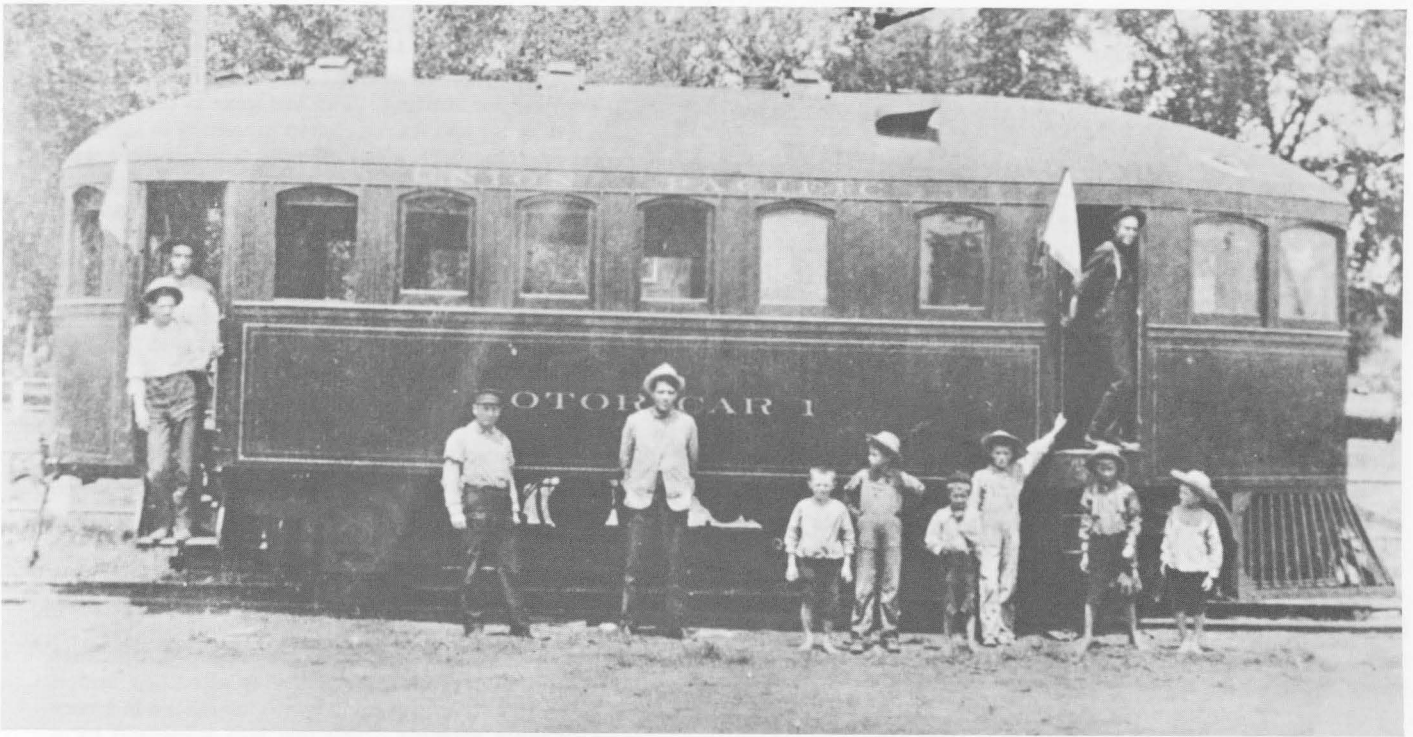
The car had come down in the morning, making schedule time through the cuts and heavy drifts which are characteristic of the branch upon which it plies and was waiting for the visitors when they arrived. It had been decided not to attempt to send it back up on the afternoon trip, as the freight train which had arrived shortly before the regular time for the departure of the motor had had a difficult time in getting in.

The visitors entered the car and started up the branch. Two bad cuts were encountered in the first two miles and the car went through these with an ease which astonished all on board.

Then one of the worst cuts on the line was reached and notwithstanding the fact that the freight engine had had some difficulty in getting through this, Mr. McKeen resolved to tackle it. The car got about halfway through the cut when it stalled, and it was impossible to move it either forward or backward. The switch engine was sent out from the city and pulled it out of the drift, after which it returned to the city.

All the officials were satisfied with the showing made by the car under the most trying circumstances. The party left for Omaha on a special during the evening.

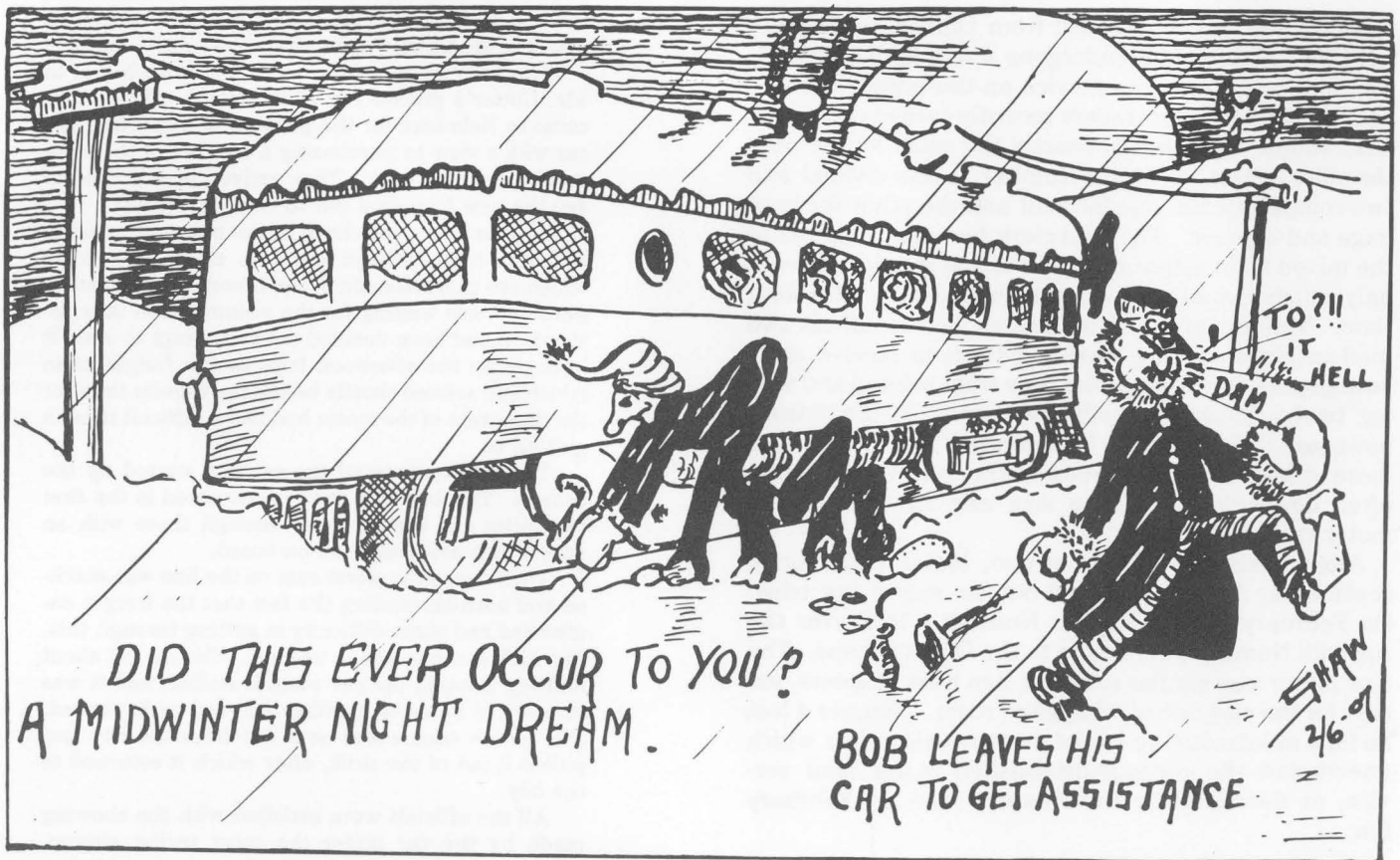
By mid-February the trailer was again handled behind Motor Number 4, although the mail clerk remained on the mixed train for the time being, perhaps be-



After the close of her career on the Kearney Branch, Motor Car 1 was en route back to Omaha and stopped at Schuyler, Nebraska, long enough to be photographed with

a group of young admirers.

- Author's Collection



This cartoon was reproduced from a postcard which appeared in 1907. It immediately proved popular with patrons along the Kearney Branch as hundreds of the cards were sold. It shows the motorman and mechanic attempting to repair a breakdown of the motor, while

unhappy conductor Bob McCaslin leaves to get assistance, liberating some profanity as he departs.

- Author's Collection,
courtesy of Paul F. Bischeld

cause of doubt on the part of management as to how long it might be before another mishap of some sort transpired. However, with the exception of a relatively minor incident at Callaway, as described by the *Hub* on February 22, 1906, Number 4 encountered no further difficulties in its remaining tenure of service on the branch:

Motor Off the Track

The motor car made a start for Arnold Thursday morning but was compelled to give it up before it had proceeded far in the soft earth. Through some mistaken move, the car ran off the end of track at Callaway and it required several hours of hard work to get it back on again. It was after one o'clock when the car reached this city, but it started back on time and there was every reason to believe that it would reach its destination on time as the run down had been made without mishap.

In mid-March, 1906, Motor 2 returned to service on the branch, amid a cloud of euphoria generated by the March 19th edition of the *Hub*:

Motor Is Improved

Motor Car No. 2 returned from the shop in Omaha Saturday and went into regular service again between this city and Callaway Monday. This car is now said to run more satisfactorily than any car yet turned out. It has been equipped with the low gear starting appliances and no more trouble is anticipated in that direction. The car was taken out for a trial trip Sunday and went up the line as far as Riverdale. All of the motormen were delighted with the manner in which the machinery worked and it is thought there is to be no further cause for complaint on account of the motor service. Motor Car No. 4, which has been doing work on this branch will be taken to the shop for overhauling and when again sent out will be taken to Portland, Oregon.

Number 2 lost little time, however, in re-establishing its penchant for deviltry. A running sequence of the continuing comedy of errors was narrated by the *Hub*:

March 23, 1906 (Sumner news):

For the past few days the motor car has not been running, thus making it very inconvenient for our citizens.

March 28, 1906:

Motor Car No. 2 has been laid up for several days on account of having broken a crank shaft. It was necessary to send to Omaha to have the part replaced and it is expected that the car will be ready for duty in a couple of days.

April 2, 1906:

The motor car which has been laid up for several days on account of a broken crank shaft, has been repaired and went into service again Monday. The residents along the line have been very impatient at being deprived of this service which they have come to look upon as almost a necessity.

April 5, 1906 (Sumner news):

The motor car after being in the repair shop for over a week, attempted to make a regular run again on Monday evening, but got stuck between Sumner and Eddyville and had to be pulled back again Tuesday by the freight.

At Callaway, where patience was again wearing very thin, the *Loup Valley Queen* resumed its McKeen car baiting with a vengeance:

The motor car came up on Monday evening for the first time in a week and succeeded in getting within about thirty feet of the car barn, when it went dead and stood out all night. To a man up a tree, the motor car proposition looks like a great big joke.

April 19, 1906:

Everything in Callaway is on the move, except the motor car. It has apparently quit moving.

April 26, 1906:

Even though it is accused of many bad things, it cannot be said that the motor car ever set out a prairie fire, any more than it can be accused of setting the world on fire.

In early April, the night watchman's job at Callaway was eliminated and the motor car stood unattended in the car barn overnight, thereafter.

Motor Car No. 7, the first to feature the typical round "porthole" windows and the center side vestibule which were to become McKeen car trademarks for the next four decades or more, had emerged from the Omaha shops by late March and later made an eastern exhibition tour. Its appearance in the railroad world failed to impress the *Loup Valley Queen* which acidly commented, on April 26th:

Motor Car No. 7 has been sent to New York to be placed on exhibition. If all of them that have been plying on the K.&B.H. line were sent somewhere and placed on exhibition, they would not be missed here in Callaway.

Tribulation continued to haunt Motor Car Number 2 as the spring of 1906 gave way to summer. The May 11th issue of the *Callaway Courier-Tribune* carried the following inspiring item:

The Motor Car No. 2 came up Saturday night, got stuck and had to be hauled back to Kearney on Monday's train.

On May 29th it was the *Kearney Hub*'s turn to report the glad tidings:

Motor Car No. 2 pulled out at 4:30 Monday evening, got as far as Glenwood, and the switch engine pulled it back to Kearney.

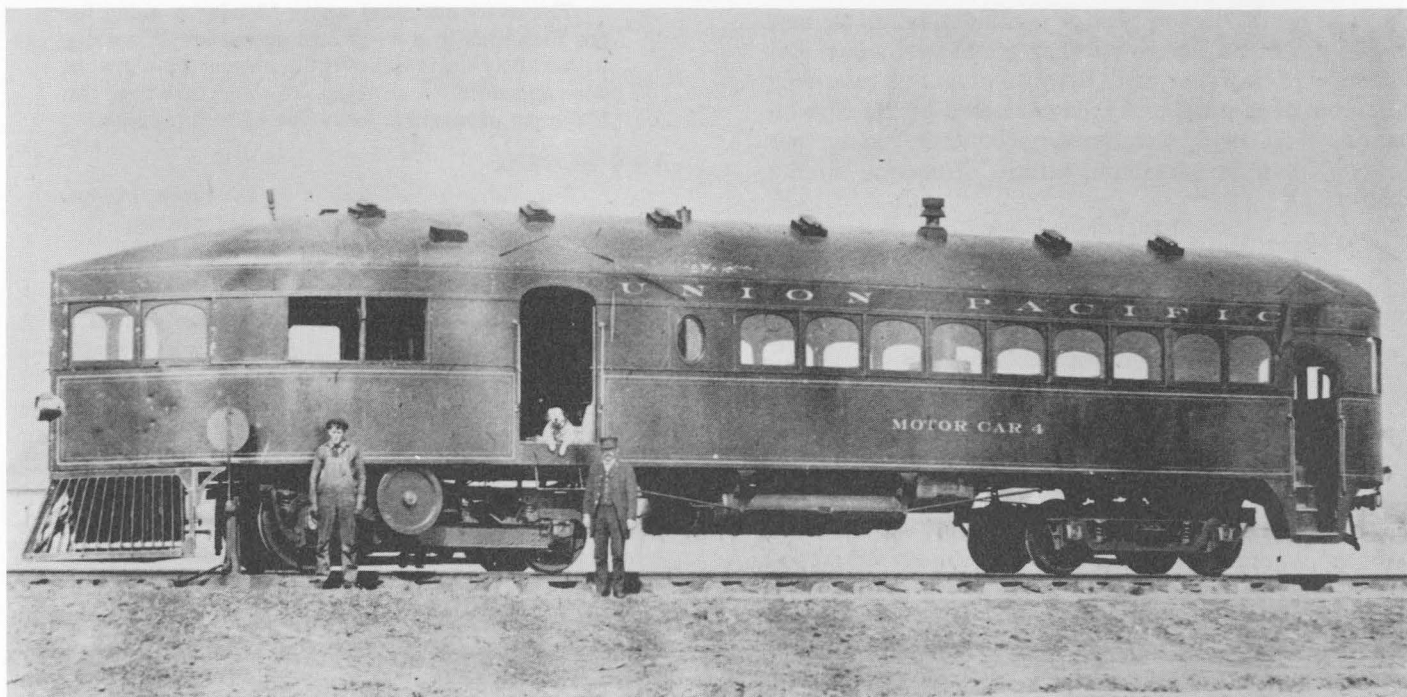
By now, the *Courier-Tribune*, usually more tractable in its attitude toward Mr. McKeen's marvels than its rival weekly, was also losing faith in the internal combustion principle. This adverse commentary appeared on June 22nd:

Motor Car No. 2 has been laid up at Kearney the past week for repairs. The gasoline engine is proving an expensive experiment with the U.P. folks, and to an outsider, and suffering public, looks like a complete "frazzle."

Motor Car Number 1 reappeared for its final curtain call on the branch in early July, 1906 and on the 7th of that month the ever-sanguine *Kearney Hub* exulted:

The motor car made a successful trip up the K.&B.H. branch Friday, returning Saturday morning. It will now run regularly.

After a few trips, Number 1 was placed in standby service for a time, then returned to Omaha where it was placed on an employees run between there and Council Bluffs, Iowa. While on that run, it caught fire and burned, but was rebuilt with a square, box-type body and ultimately disappeared from service, its place in history assured.



Motor Car 4 was photographed at Kearney in 1907, with Motorman George Riley at left, and Conductor Bob McCaslin at right. The Dalmatian, reclining in the doorway, belonged to Riley and was a regular member of the crew until he tragically lost his life one evening, near

Lodi, when he jumped from the car in an attempt to chase a rabbit.

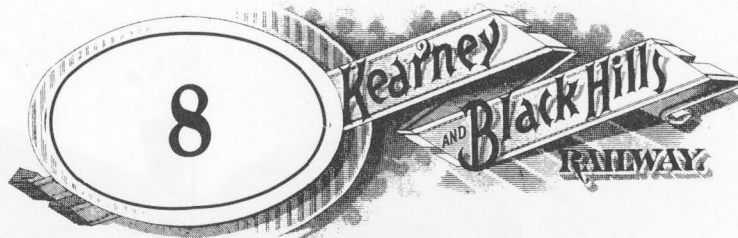
- Author's Collection,
courtesy of Paul F. Bischeld



Motor Car 5 at Callaway, about 1907 or 1908, was initially placed in service in the Los Angeles area before

returning to Nebraska and the Kearney Branch.

- Author's Collection



Those Magnificent Men In Their Flying McKeens

The readers of the *Kearney Hub* must have been immeasurably pleased to learn, in that newspaper's edition of July 13, 1906, that a second motor had arrived and would be available as a standby from now on whenever breakdowns occurred:

ANOTHER MOTOR CAR FOR K.&B.H. LINE

Brought Here From California—Small
Car For Emergencies

Motor Car No. 5, which has been running from Los Angeles, Cal., arrived in the city Thursday evening and will be put on the K.&B.H. branch. It is expected that the first trip on its new route will be made this afternoon though this is not yet certain. The car is apparently as large as a passenger coach, looking even bigger than No. 2, which has been making trips along the branch for some time. This car has now been taken to Omaha, where it will be thoroughly overhauled and put in good shape.

No. 1, the car which is running on that route at the present time, will be taken off and kept here as an emergency car, to be used in case of a necessity, or if No. 5 should get out of order. It now appears as if the people along the K.&B.H. branch would have regular service, all precautions being taken to guard against the service being interfered with through the cars getting out of order.

Motor Number 5, basically identical to Number 2, made its first trip up the branch on the evening of July 16th. By the end of the month, Number 2 had returned from the Omaha shops and was placed in standby service. Operations progressed so smoothly for a time thereafter that on August 24th the *Callaway Courier-Tribune* felt disposed to comment:

The motor car puts in its appearance quite regular of late and the patrons are beginning to depend upon it for transportation and the increased numbers who travel upon it certainly justify good service.

By the close of 1906, Motor Number 4 had returned from the West and was back in service on the branch. After five months of nearly trouble-free operation, a motor car failure in mid-December created an unpleasant incident which the *Courier-Tribune* described in its December 14th edition:

Motor Car Causes Trouble

Tuesday evening the motor car failed to put in its appearance, and Wednesday's train brought in a number of the passengers who had some interesting stories to tell of their experience. It seems that the motor car played out between Eddyville and Sumner and while the engineer did everything in his power to resurrect the engine he was unable to make it go,

and while the passengers had many words of praise for the engineer's earnest efforts to resurrect the car, they were loud in their denunciations of the conductor, who, they claim, would do nothing to relieve them and there were fourteen in the car including three ladies who had to stay out and until nearly noon the next day their tempers were sorely tried. It is said that the conductor promised to go back and telegraph for an engine, but when the engine came up at noon the next day he (engineer) said he had not heard anything of the matter until that morning. The passengers filed a claim for damages in the sum of \$50.00 each.

Number 5 again returned to service and on December 18th handled a unique assignment at Kearney. On this date, corner stone laying ceremonies and a program featuring an address by a national political figure, Nebraska's own William Jennings Bryan, were being held at the site of the new Kearney Military Academy under construction at the northeast edge of town. To accommodate a sizable segment of the populace desiring to attend the ceremonies, Motor 5 operated in a shuttle service between the U.P. station and a point adjacent to the Academy site, making the round trips in a little less than fifteen minutes. Passengers were carried at a fare of twenty cents for the round trip and at the conclusion of the ceremonies, after returning the celebrants to the station, the motor departed on its regular run to Callaway.

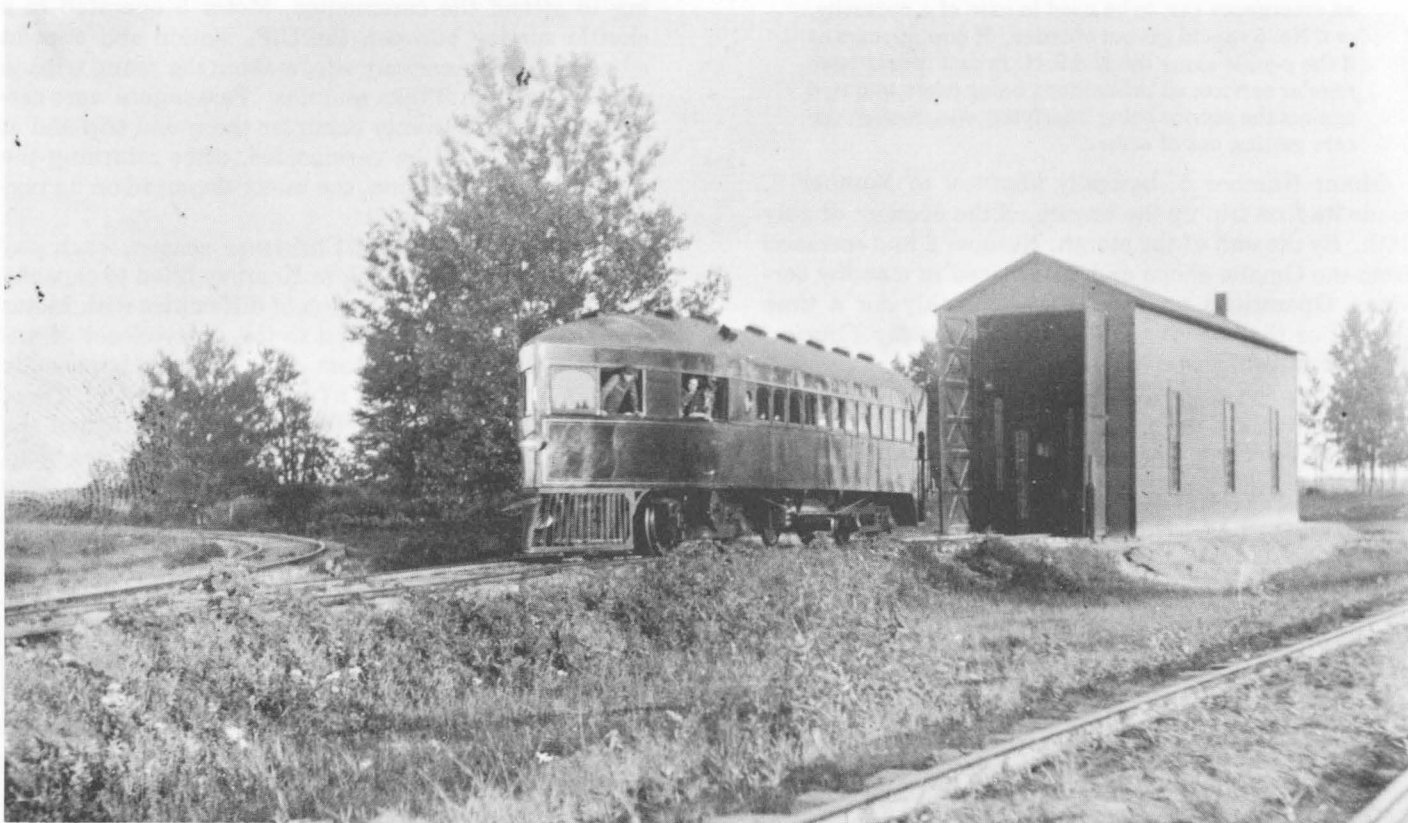
With the approaching Christmas season, each day saw the motor car arriving in Kearney filled to capacity with shoppers. The profusion of difficulties with Motor Car 2 were being relegated to the dusty closet of unhappy memories as Motors 4 and 5 were apparently achieving W. R. McKeen's fondest expectations. Then, on December 22, 1906 a tragic episode tarnished the bright record of the past few months. That evening, Motor Number 4, after a late start from Kearney, was making up time as it neared Eddyville. William Watkinson, a local farmer, was heading for the town in his top buggy, with the intention of purchasing Christmas presents for his wife and two children. Whether Watkinson was attempting to beat the motor car to the grade crossing at the south edge of the town or simply failed to see it, was apparently never known. The beam of the acetylene headlight picked up the approaching horse and buggy only seconds before the impact. Despite an attempt at an emergency stop by the motorman, the car struck the buggy broadside, reducing it to kindling, and hurling it, together with its lone occupant, against a switch stand, the horse escaping uninjured. Watkinson died within minutes, becoming the first



Motor Car 2 and trailer are ready to leave Amherst, eastbound, on the last 17 miles into Kearney, with stops at Riverdale and Glenwood Park still ahead. The year is 1906. One of the features which distinguished Number 2

from its successors was the low placement of the headlight.

- Edward G. Otto Photo,
Author's Collection



On a summer day in 1907 or 1908, Motor Car 5 has emerged from the motor car shed in Callaway and is ready to head for the depot, pick up passengers, and

depart for Kearney. One leg of the wye is visible, curving away at left.

- Author's Collection

fatality involved in the then brief history of motor car service on the Kearney branch. The first full year of motor car operation, after a hectic beginning and a steadily improving second half, had ended on a somber note.

Despite the long chain of adversity, the worst of the growing pains were behind the McKeen motor cars and local animosity toward the motor car concept was lessening somewhat. On February 1, 1907, as an example, the *Callaway Courier-Tribune* stated, rather condescendingly:

Last Tuesday night the motor car broke down about 2 miles out of Lodi. The car has been running quite regular and this is the first breakdown it has had for some time. Although the motorman did all in his power to make the car go, it refused to work. An engine was sent for, at Kearney, which pushed the car on into Callaway.

By the close of that same year, the *Kearney Daily Hub* was to proclaim with some pride, in its issue of December 31st, that:

For the first time in many a moon the motor broke down and was unable to make the usual run on Monday. In order to accommodate the passengers a special train of two coaches and the engine was sent out in its place.

In the interim, an innovation was tried in February of 1907 which conceivably could have lessened the time it took for rescue engines to reach stranded motor cars, to say nothing of eliminating long walks for help on the part of conductors when breakdowns did occur. The novel experiment was mentioned briefly in the *Kearney Hub*:

The motor running on the K.&B.H. has been equipped with a telephone apparatus to be used on the line in case of emergencies.

It seems likely that the portable telephone referred to was similar to those in use in the stations along the branch, a type which utilized the telegraph wire for transmission. Such a phone, when attached to the line, would have enabled the crew to call the nearest depot from the point of breakdown. No further mention was ever made as to the general use or success of the experiment.

The main complaint emanating from patrons along the line by this time was the inadequacy of the motor cars in handling the now-flourishing passenger traffic. Once again the cry went out for a conventional steam passenger train, or at the very least, the restoration of a trailer to the motor, as one had not been carried behind the car in some months. In early June, 1907, the motor schedule was reversed, with the car leaving Kearney in the morning and returning from Callaway in the early afternoon. On August 1st a trailer was again added and mail and express service restored, thereby ending most of the complaints for the time being. Motor Car 5, which had been performing efficiently on the run, returned to Omaha in late May for an overhaul, being replaced by Number 4. The latter car suffered considerable embarrassment one afternoon during its tenure when its brakes failed as it was entering the Kearney roundhouse. In the crash which followed, Number 4's pointed nose knifed through the rear of the building, demolishing part of the brick wall in the process. In early June, Motor Car 9, the last of the "old-style" McKeens to be constructed, arrived from Omaha to take over the branch assignment.



This embarrassing incident occurred in 1907 when the brakes failed on Motor Car 4 as it was entering the Kearney roundhouse, resulting in a new grand opening on the east side of the building. Among other damage, Number 4's "tin can" headlight was demolished in the accident.

- Author's
Collection,
courtesy of
Paul F. Bischeld

When breakdowns were not plaguing the motor crews, livestock on the track could also pose a problem. What could have become a disastrous incident was reported in the Oconto items of the *Custer County Chief*, a Broken Bow weekly, and reprinted in the *Callaway Courier-Tribune* on March 1, 1907:

The passengers on the motor had a narrow escape the other night near Eddyville. A man riding along near the railroad track saw a horse fast in a high bridge across Wood River and the motor near at hand, going a twenty-five mile gait. He jumped off his horse and ran to the track, took off his coat and succeeded in stopping the motor within a few feet of the bridge. The motor carries about sixty gallons of gasoline and an explosion would likely have occurred if it had jumped the track off a thirty-foot bridge.

Less fortunate than either the passengers or the horse was a pig which supposedly attempted to dispute the right-of-way with Motor Number 9 later that year. The *Loup Valley Queen* enlightened its readers as to the results of the dramatic episode:

HE SENT IN HIS CLAIM IN RHYME
And Received Poetic but Unfeeling
Reply From the Railroad People

The claims department of a great railway system is sometimes "up against" some hard propositions, and it would appear that the claims department of the Union Pacific is no exception.

While making the return trip to Kearney a week or so ago, Motor Car No. 9, while about Riverdale, happened to run down a pig that thought he could sail along between the rails as fast as the car could

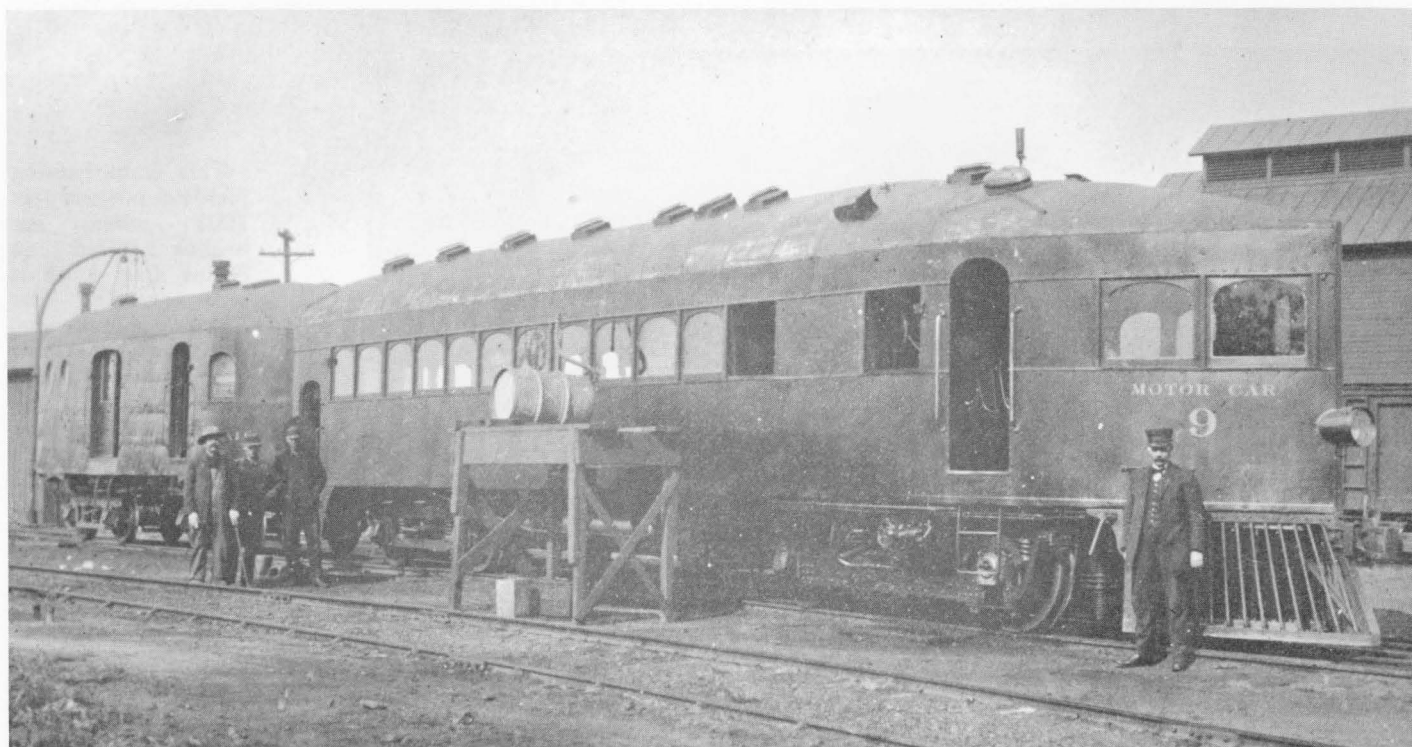
run along on the rails. Motorman Riley slowed down, whistled, and did all he could to make the pig get off the track, but he finally had to bunt him off, and the pig took it so to heart that he died from the effects. The pig's owner was something of a poet, so he penned the following and sent it in to the claims department:

My razor-back strolled down your track
A week ago today,
And Motor Nine came down the line
And snuffed his life away;
You cannot blame the pig, you see
He stole out through the gate,
So kindly pen a check for ten
This debt to liquidate.

Upon reaching the claims department, the request was passed along until it reached the poet of that department, who penned the following and mailed it to the owner of the pig:

Your razor-back strolled down our track
It was no fault of mine,
As pigs should always wary be
Of Motor Number Nine.
And so, you see, we cannot pen
The check for which you pine,
Please bury him, place o'er his head:—
"Here lies a foolish swine."

The potential versatility of motor cars was again effectively proven on July 28, 1907 when Number 9, after completing its regular round trip on the branch, made an extra trip back up the line for the benefit of patrons who had attended a circus in Kearney that day. Because of the motor's scheduled run out of Kearney in



"Motor, Motor Number Nine," the alleged killer of wayward swine, poses innocently for a photograph in Kearney in October of 1911. Conductor Bob McCaslin is standing beside the front of the car. Number 9 was the

last car to be built in the original McKeen style.

— Author's Collection,
courtesy of John Winn

the morning and the mixed train's departure in the early afternoon, the circus fans had no other way of returning home by rail. The *Hub* noted that 136 passengers were packed aboard the car, which had a seating capacity of 57.

Motor 9 remained in service on the Kearney branch for more than 18 months, being replaced, whenever necessary, by Motors 2 or 4. When Number 2 made its first trip up the line in quite some time in late April of 1908, it found its old bugaboo still lying in ambush. The *Callaway Courier-Tribune* reported the dismal situation in its edition of May 1, 1908:

No. 9 motor was sent to Grand Island for repairs this week and the company tried to accommodate the public with the old car No. 2, but it is only a one-hundred horse power car and cannot pull the trailer and make Callaway against a heavy wind; hence it was very late on Tuesday and had to be pulled down to Kearney by the freight engine.

While Number 2 put in another appearance in November of the same year without being afflicted by any further mishaps, Number 9 was less fortunate in an incident in the Kearney yards on May 11th, as described by the *Hub*:

MOTOR CAR HAS ACCIDENT
Collides With Freight Car and Engine
Is Badly Damaged

Union Pacific Motor Car No. 9 met with an accident while pulling out of the local yards this morning on its daily trip to Callaway, and the result was that the passengers had to return to the depot and wait until a train could be fitted up to make the run.

The car was running at a fair rate of speed and was just about to take the switch to the main line when a freight crew which was switching in the yards backed in and did not leave room for the car to pass, tearing the front of the car and bending the feed pipes to the engine. It is considered lucky that the car did not turn over as it was just off the edge of a big ditch. No one was hurt and the passengers went up the line on the special provided to take the place of the motor.

On July 1, 1908 the McKeen Motor Car Company was officially organized in Omaha, with W. R. McKeen resigning from his position with the Union Pacific and assuming the presidency of the new firm. The new company leased an old car shop building from the railroad for its assembly plant. Thereafter, all new McKeen motor cars were constructed by the new company which, however, was a subsidiary of the U.P.

A special order regarding the operation of motor cars was issued by the Union Pacific in mid-summer of 1908 and it would remain in effect, at least unofficially, throughout the many years of motor car service on the Kearney branch until the final trip by a motor car on December 31, 1955. The *Kearney Hub* reprinted the new edict in its issue of July 16, 1908:

To Accommodate the Farmers

W. R. Cahill, assistant superintendent of the Union Pacific Railroad, has notified all conductors and motormen along the Kearney and Callaway branch that they will stop the motor wherever it is convenient to allow passengers to get on and off. The following is the order: "All motor cars on the Nebraska Division will stop, upon flag or request, at all public crossings, at section lines and at other

points convenient for farmers or the traveling public, to receive and dispatch passengers. Conductors will notify passengers accordingly."

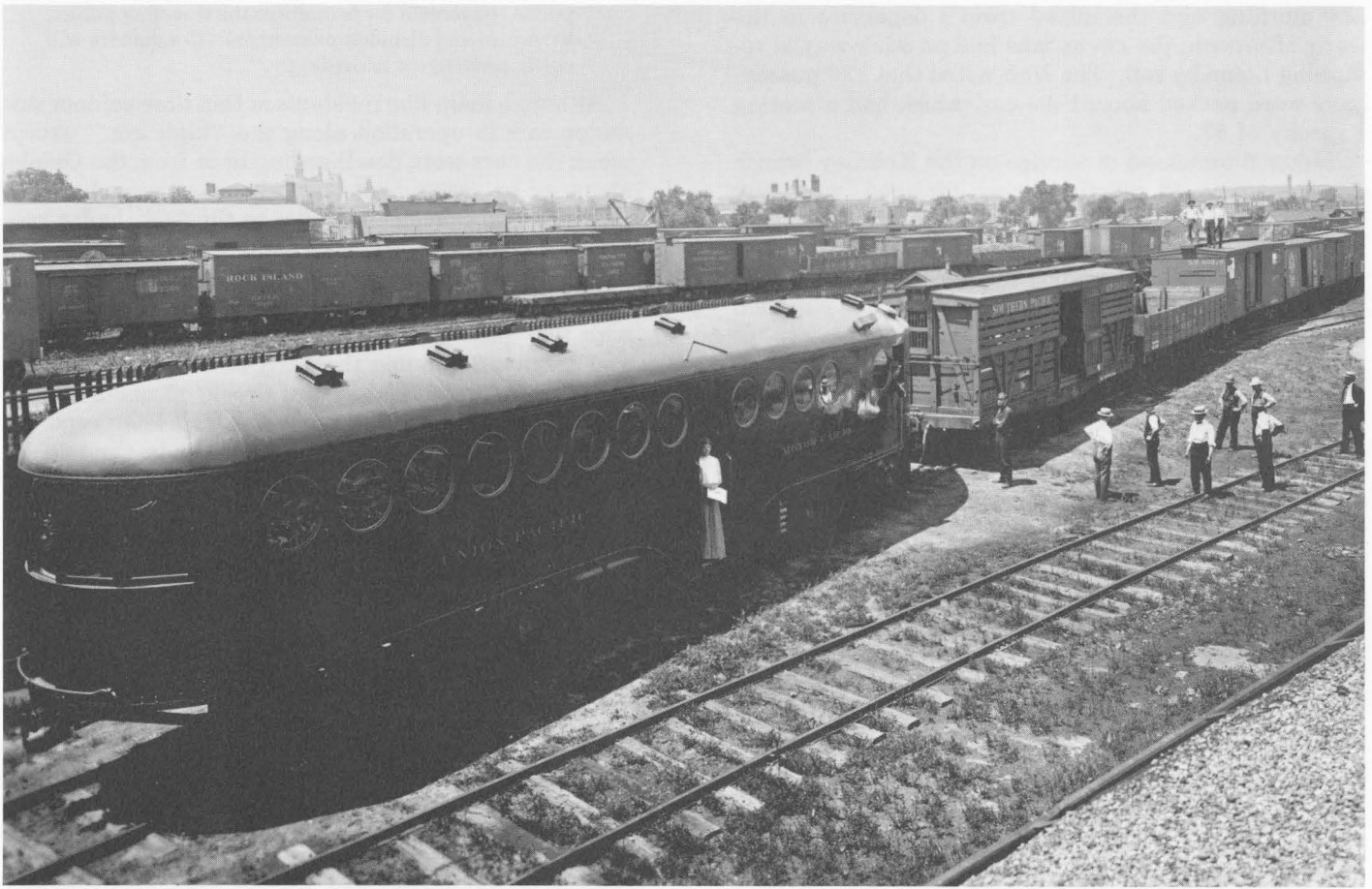
Although main line residents at that time seldom saw motor cars in operation along the "high iron" except when the cars were deadheading to or from the Omaha shops or to assignments elsewhere, citizens between Kearney and Shelton, 19 miles to the east, had a rare opportunity to view Number 9 in action on October 20, 1908. That evening, Kearney Republicans chartered the car for a round trip to a political rally at Shelton, with fifty passengers boarding the motor at Kearney and another 25 joining the party at Gibbon. A similar excursion was planned to Elm Creek, 15 miles west of Kearney, on October 31st but the *Hub* later reported that a steam locomotive and coach made the trip instead. A breakdown on the part of Number 9 at that time probably nullified the intended use of the car. Once again, however, the versatility and economy of motor cars on short runs had been ably demonstrated. More than thirty years later, Motor M-29 would again prove this point by heading eastward out of Kearney along the main line as far as Gibbon during a blizzard to rescue stranded motorists along U.S. Highway 30.

Mid-December, 1908 saw the arrival of Motor Number 10 at Kearney, the first of the round-windowed, center-vestibuled McKeens to see service on the branch, a type which would become a familiar sight to residents along the line for years to come. The third such car of this style to be built, Number 10, which boasted a 200-horsepower engine, was also the first McKeen car to feature electric lights and the cab door on the left side. This car had previously distinguished itself in Omaha by pulling 10 empty freight cars while running in reverse up a gradient of one-half of one per cent, identical to that of the five-mile hill east of Callaway. Prior to its arrival for Kearney branch service, the car had seen service on a Colorado branch line where it had caught fire and burned, after which it was returned to Omaha and rebuilt. Although the 55-foot car had seating accommodations for 54 passengers, it was immediately filled beyond rated capacity on every trip and the *Hub* reported that more than 125 passengers were stuffed aboard the car when it left Kearney the day before Christmas. The *Loup Valley Queen* also noted the crowded conditions on the motor in its issue of December 17th:

The motor out of Kearney every morning has more passengers than it can accommodate, the engine room of the motor being occupied by passengers half way to Callaway in order to come up on same.

This situation would soon revive a barrage of criticism which would make the invectives heaped upon Motor Number 2 in the past seem almost complimentary by comparison. Engine failures were again plaguing the motor crews with all too consistent regularity, with severe winter weather complicating the problem still further. On February 4, 1909, the *Loup Valley Queen* resorted to a bit of poetical satire on the subject:

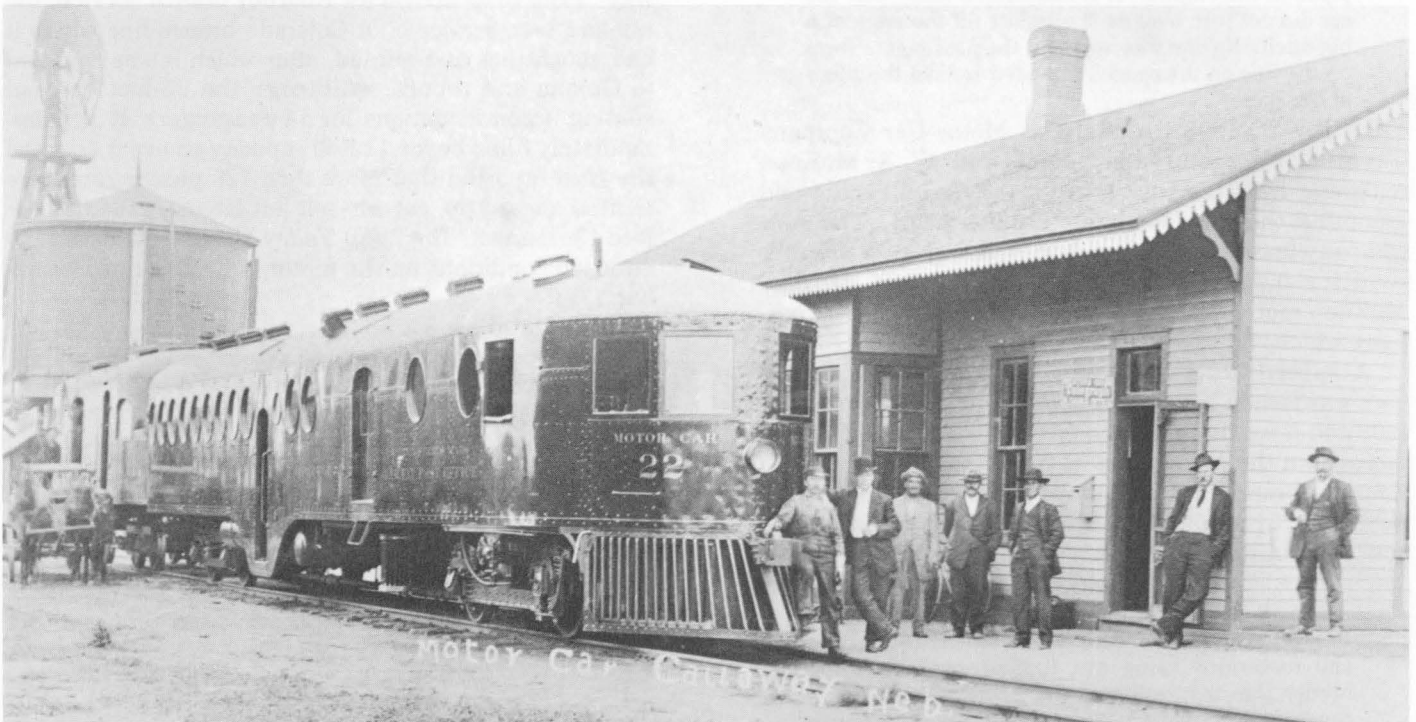
A motor car, a pair of mules
Now which one is the best?
The pipes in one freeze up, by Joe;
The other wants to rest.



When Motor Car 10 emerged from the McKeen shops in 1907, it was put to the test in the U.P.'s Omaha yards by pulling ten empty freight cars up a one-half percent grade while running in reverse. It was then placed in service in Colorado where it caught fire and was damaged. After

having been returned to Omaha and rebuilt, it was sent to the Kearney Branch, the first round-windowed McKeen car to appear on the line.

- Union Pacific Railroad



Motor Car 22 was the first of the 70-foot McKeen cars to put in an appearance on the Kearney Branch. Photographed at Callaway in 1910, with Motorman J.W.

Brown posing on the pilot, the 22 received a favorable reception from patrons along the line.

- Author's Collection

In the same issue, the Callaway newspaper, with tongue in cheek, mused upon the possibilities of a new form of transportation and the long-rumored extension of the branch, as they related to the motor car difficulties:

Arnold people are wondering if it is true, as rumor says, that W. R. McKeen, the motor magnate, plans on manufacturing a flying machine to take the place of a motor car between Callaway and Arnold, until poor old Harriman can "save up" enough money to build a K.&B.H. extension.

Earlier in the winter, petitions for an improvement in passenger service were circulated in the various towns along the branch and dispatched to the Nebraska State Railway Commission in Lincoln. Commenting upon the petition, the *Loup Valley Queen* had stated, in its issue of January 21, 1909, that:

The matter has been brought about by the poor service given by the railroad company during the past several weeks, and more especially during the recent cold weather, when the motor car had a tendency to freeze up and refuse to work properly, making its trip very irregularly, and being decidedly uncomfortable to the passengers, owing to the fact that the car is supposed to be heated by steam, and when the coils freeze up, it cuts off the heat from the passenger compartment of the car, and the passengers are left to the mercy of the weather.

Continuing in the same vein, the Callaway newspaper concluded:

This matter has recently ceased to be a joke with our people, and they are now asking the Commissioners to aid in bringing about a final settlement with the company, by which we may get the benefit of regular train and mail service, and less of the experimental work of the McKeen motor shops.

A hearing on the matter was held before the railway commissioners in Callaway in early February, with various individuals testifying as to the inadequacy of the motor service, while General Superintendent Charles Ware testified in behalf of the Union Pacific. One immediate result of the meeting, prior to any final decision on the part of the Railway Commission, was the announcement by the railroad of a novel plan whereby two motors would be double-headed on the run, with the trailer coupled behind. The mere suggestion of this innovation was enough to cause the *Loup Valley Queen* to rise up in righteous indignation with a scathing denunciation of the entire McKeen car concept in its issue of February 18, 1909:

To Double the Dose

Notwithstanding the fact that Supt. Charles Ware of the Union Pacific, who was in attendance at the hearing of the State Railway Commission, gave that body a verbal spray -- a veritable conversational shower bath -- concerning the love the company felt for K.&B.H. patrons, and notwithstanding the promises made to the Commission to the effect that a more commodious and more sanitary motor service would be installed on the branch, we have noticed that the service has grown worse.

This town was without mail for twenty-four hours in one stretch last week. Of course, Mr. Ware would attribute this state of affairs strictly to the condition of the weather. Be that as it may, it was up to "Smoky" Winn and the "1440" to break the snow

from the track and when the unsightly, gunboat affair, called a motor car, operated as a means of passenger and mail conveyance, could not make the trip, a locomotive was necessarily called into use.

Supt. Ware had promised to couple two motor cars together and put the trailer behind the two, and thus operate a mail and passenger train on this branch. This was very kind of Mr. Ware, but when we appealed to the Commission to take away the horrible nightmare, Mr. Ware shows his undying love for us by doubling up the dose, giving us two instead of one, believing that if a little was good, more would be worse. However, we were favored by the elements, and when Old Man Winter turned loose from the north, and batted the jib-boom of the "red devil" called a passenger train, she yielded to the mighty power, wheezed a couple of dry sobs, and it was up to the crew to wait for the freight or stay in Amherst. Several times since that storm has she tried to push her delicate carcass into this lovely little burg, but each time, but one, she has fallen by the way.

When a company with the power, and a company that receives the consideration of which the Union Pacific can boast, operates street cars upon its branch lines, and tries to dope the people into believing it is a passenger train, it is carrying it too far. It is noticeable that this state of affairs exists principally upon the branches where the company has no competition, showing conclusively that the reason is the fact that there is no alternative for the people.

Another possible reason for the operation of these cars is the fact that it does away with the expense of employing a fireman and brakeman, which would be necessary to operate a properly equipped passenger train, and as more motor cars are brought into service, more men will be dropped from the company pay rolls.

The service given the K.&B.H. branch is, and has been, strictly out of keeping with the volume of business transacted with the company by its patrons, and we are heartily surprised that after the people have made the fact known that they felt they were entitled to better service, yet the company will continue to hand out the lemon in large and aggravating doses.

With a continuation of cold weather, there would be a possibility that the mechanisms of the motor cars would become so used to continuous rest that they would refuse absolutely to work.

Since it looks more like a gunboat than a passenger car, we might call attention to the possibility of placing it upon the South Loup River, and have it ply between Georgetown and Callaway. It should be a dandy for river transportation, because it is a "cinch" it isn't good for anything else.

The Arnold correspondent of the *Queen*, commenting in the March 4th issue of the newspaper about the future of his town and its long-standing rivalry with its sister village to the southeast, took philosophic note of the newspaper's suggestion that the motor cars resembled gunboats and might be more adaptable to river navigation than rail service, and concluded his discourse with this plea:

... The people of Callaway and Arnold, clasp hands and hearts and bridge the gulf between us. Bury the hatchet, then perhaps together we might bring such a pressure to bear on the U.P.R.R. that the motor might take to water and come up to Arnold.

As the winter of 1909 bore down in intensity, meanwhile, trouble continued to mount upon trouble. The *Kearney Hub* narrated the exasperating chain of adversity now transpiring on an almost daily basis:

February 9, 1909:

The motor left here at 9:30. An engine was placed in front of the trailer and the motor behind and with this double power they tried to make the trip to Callaway but became stuck in the drifts this side of Amherst, and a car was sent to bring the passengers back to this city.

February 10, 1909:

The motor started out again this morning with an engine in the lead and the gasoline car pushing from the rear and a round trip or bust was the word.

February 12, 1909:

The motor went to the bad again this morning and an engine with a coach and the regular trailer had to be taken out on the run, leaving here after nine o'clock.

February 13, 1909:

Miller Forum Notes. Miller was without a mail from Monday morning until Wednesday afternoon, on account of the unfavorable weather for the motor to run and an engine even less worthy of being in commission. It's really too bad the people living along the K.&B.H. line must be afflicted with such miserable service.

February 16, 1909:

An engine and coach went out on the K.&B.H. this morning in place of the motor.

As there seemed to be no end to the difficulties plaguing the branch, the *Kearney* newspaper seemed to be moved by compassion and sympathy in describing yet another humiliation on February 23rd:

MORE TROUBLES FOR K.&B.H.
Engine Off Track This Morning Causes
Two Hours Delay

Poor old K.&B.H. Will her troubles never cease? First she gets a slam from one end of the line, than a slam at the other end of the line, and between times she gets stuck in a drift of snow somewhere between the two ends. Even the show troupes are praying for her welfare.

Tuesday morning the motor was not taken out to make the trip to Callaway on account of the light snow and an engine with two coaches and the trailer dragging along behind started from the depot on the motor's scheduled time. The engine succeeded in crossing Central Avenue, one block from the depot, then struck a switch in which ice had lodged, the switch rails spread and the engine was resting comfortably between the rails with power to go neither forward nor back.

At nine o'clock, with the aid of a heavy freight engine, the locomotive was finally placed back on the track, and the belated train pulled out from the station once more and the joyful toot of the whistle at the one-mile post gave warning that the train was safely on its way to "Callaway and intermediate points."

A few days after the hearing at Callaway in early February, the unique double-headed motor car service

was initiated. With no way of moving from one car to the other while they were in motion, the conductor found it necessary to board one car at Kearney and collect tickets, then transfer to the second car at the first stop and do likewise, repeating the process as necessary all the way to Callaway. One car was utilized as a smoking car, while the other was reserved for non-smoking passengers. The *Loup Valley Queen*, expectedly, was no more enthusiastic about the doubleheaded McKeen operation than it had been about the single car version, as an editorial in its issue of February 25, 1909 acidly indicated:

Lemons Still Handed Out

Supt. Chas. Ware, the gentleman who appeared before the Railway Commission here a few weeks ago and promised a better service for the patrons of the K.&B.H. branch, is still long on promise but short on service, and is still handing out the same old lemons in the shape of a double dose of McKeen's luckless invention.

A few inches of snow fell on Monday and on Tuesday, as usual, the double-jointed contraption known as the "double-header motor" failed in its attempt to accommodate the people and a steam engine with real coaches attached had to make the trip.

This motor service is anything but pleasant to the traveling public. It is a smell of gasoline and brimstone from the time one gets on until he is lucky enough to get to his destination. This is, of course, providing the thing don't die in a snowdrift.

The Labor Commissioner has gone over the state and ordered doors on school buildings, hotels, etc., to be hung to swing outwardly to protect the people in case of fire, but the McKeen invention has doors, or rather hog chutes, which swing inwardly, with barely room enough for a portly man or woman to get through, notwithstanding the fact that the thing-abob may blow up at any minute. Should it catch fire, parties on the same would be like rats in a trap.

Another thing, every morning when the motor leaves Kearney, it is overloaded, every seat being occupied, the aisles full of people and even the engine room sometimes being occupied. In loading a stock car with hogs, only a certain number are put in. It is different with the patrons of the motor. There is always room for one more -- or the men in charge of the service seem to think so. The patrons are crowded in so compact that they are trampled on, shoved over each other, and squeezed up tighter than a No. 2 shoe on a No. 6 foot by the conductor as he passes through, doing his duty in taking up the tickets. The patrons of the K.&B.H. are worse than hogs, apparently.

What we want is service, not promises for lemons. We do not want one motor, two motors, nor a dozen motors. We want a real steam engine with coaches sufficient to accommodate the patrons of the branch.

After less than two months of operation the double-headed motor service was discontinued and was replaced by two cars running on independent schedules, thus giving the branch two round trips by motors on a daily except Sunday basis. One car continued on the old schedule while the second left Kearney in the late afternoon, arriving in Callaway in the early evening, and returning to the main line the next morning. The ever-adamant *Loup Valley Queen*, still holding out for a conventional passenger train, greeted the new schedule

with derision and referred to it as "a double dose of McKeen's invention." The *Kearney Hub*, however, proclaimed that the additional service was apparently satisfying most patrons along the line, news which undoubtedly caused Union Pacific officials to heave immense sighs of relief. Motors 2 and 5 handled the dual assignments and operations continued smoothly until the first week in May, 1909, when both cars suffered breakdowns almost simultaneously. Motor 10 returned to take over one run while a steam train substituted for the other car until repairs could be completed. Later that month, according to the *Loup Valley Queen* of May 20th, a steam locomotive came to the timely rescue of one of the motor cars, and another potentially embarrassing episode was averted, with a happy ending for all concerned, except one would-be passenger.

The motor car was unable to get out of town on time last Friday and it was thought an engine would have to be pressed into service; however, when the freight arrived in the evening, and gave the car a start down the road, it was able to continue on its weary way, making such fast time that Art Potter, who missed it by a fractional part of a second, could not catch it, although he sprinted down the track for some little distance.

Throughout most of the rest of 1909, Motors 2, 5 and 10 alternated on the two runs without incident and on Sunday, August 1st, one of the cars made three round trips in extra service between Kearney and Amherst, carrying sports enthusiasts to and from a baseball game at the latter point. The excellent, trouble-free record of several months duration was finally marred on October 13th when Number 10 emulated Motor Car 4's performance of 1907, with some outside assistance, as narrated by the *Kearney Hub*:

MOTOR CAR HAS AN ACCIDENT

And Engine and coach Does the
Business on the Line

Motor Car No. 10 met with an accident on Wednesday morning at the roundhouse and as a result, the passengers far up the branch were compelled to stay in Kearney until about ten o'clock, a delay of three hours, before a train could be secured to take them to their destination.

The roundhouse is the shelter for Motor No. 10 overnight and on cold mornings it is with difficulty that the engine is started, as compressed air does the business and the air gets very low by morning, whereas, while the car has been running, it starts easily. An engine is used to pull the car out of the roundhouse and after a block's run the motor starts easily with the air. Wednesday morning the engine went into the roundhouse a little too fast and shoved the motor through the east end of the building, damaging its engine.

An engine was sent up from Grand Island and a coach was attached to the trailer and the run made.

In late November, 1909, Motor Car 22, the first 70-foot McKeen car to see service on the branch, made its appearance and promptly received a strong taste of central Nebraska winter weather as described by the *Hub* on December 6th:

Both motors on the Kearney-Callaway line went dead Monday before their destination had been reached. The first one out was buffeted by the storm

and forded snow drifts until the engine gave up in despair and after a few feeble snorts it gave up the ghost. The second motor ran into a drift near Miller and the engine soon played out. The snow was drifted too deep and packed too solid for anything but a freight train to win through it. The freight, pushing the first motor, came to the aid of the second, and hauled them both into Kearney late in the day.

Motor 22, nevertheless, elicited unusually kind remarks on December 23, 1909 from no less a McKeen car critic than the *Loup Valley Queen*:

Conductor Hansen, who has charge of Motor Car No. 22, informs us that the car received a severe test at "bucking" snow during the past few weeks and that it was surprising how the new car would plow through the drifts. This car is certainly the finest motor yet turned out of the McKeen shops.

The newspaper's apparent change of heart was destined to be short-lived, however. The severe winter weather which continued on into 1910 caused recurring engine failures on the motor cars, often necessitating the regular branch freight engine or the Kearney switch engine coming to the rescue. At other times locomotives would be assigned to pull or push the motor cars on their regular runs until the weather moderated. The *Queen*, accordingly, renewed its attack on January 6th:

The morning motor, due here from Kearney, has been out of commission again this week, and a steam train had to take its place. Verily, the motor car is not a cold weather bird, and should immigrate to the south with the rest of the birds during the winter months.

And a week later the paper derisively stated:

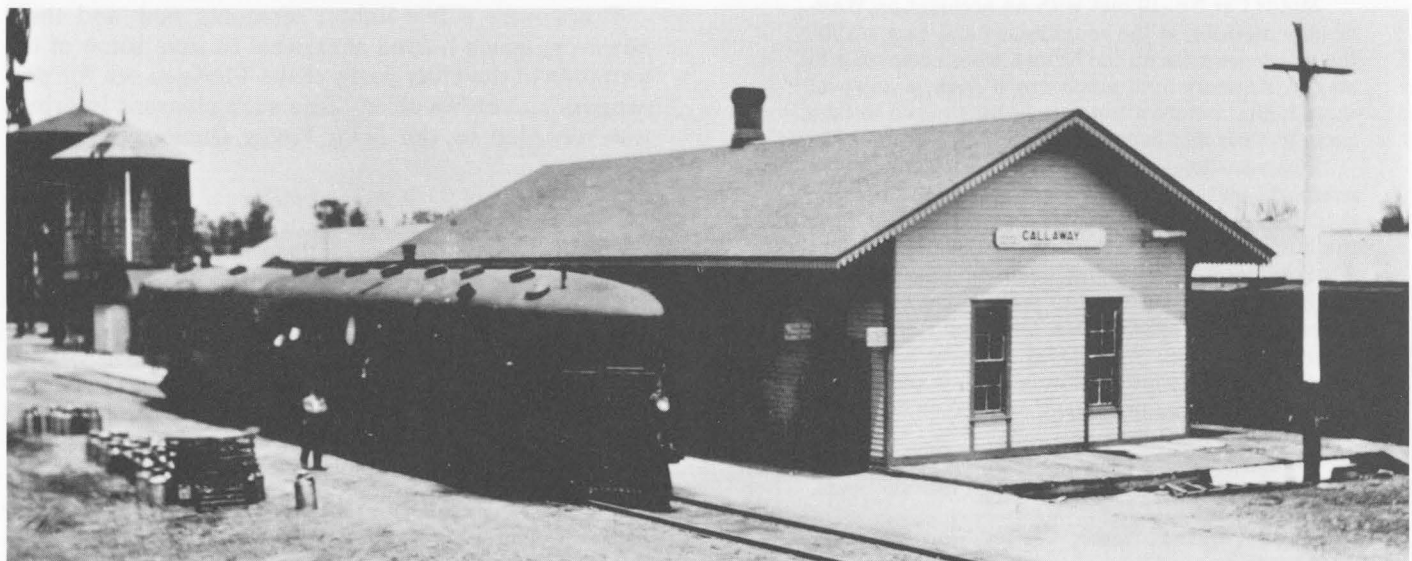
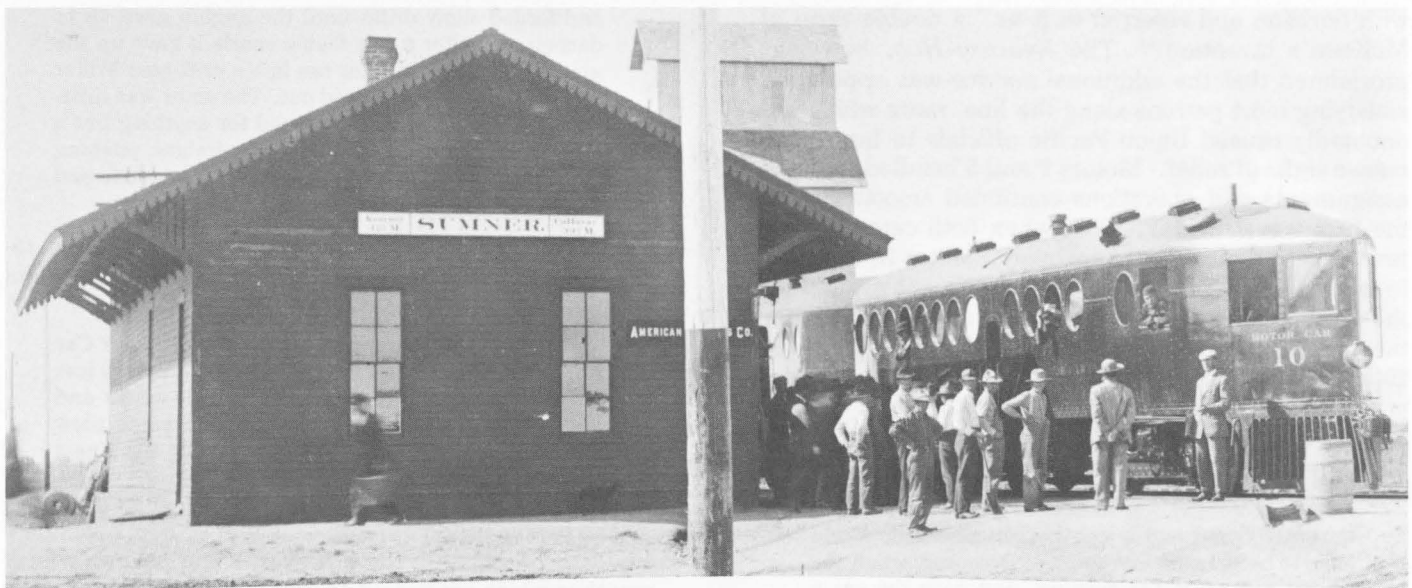
Monday's motor became crippled at the depot just before its return trip, and it was necessary to wire in for an ambulance in the shape of an engine to make the return trip to Kearney. The next time it dies they should bury it for keeps.

There were a few lighter moments now and then, however, which helped somewhat to ease some of the torments of the early years of the McKeen era for passengers and crews alike. One such pleasant interlude was recorded by the *Loup Valley Queen* on April 7, 1910:

A Popular Motor

Conductor L. C. Hansen is certainly making his motor a very popular one these days. Coming up Monday evening, he had the Midway Military Band furnish music for his passengers, which was hugely enjoyed. Before departing Tuesday morning, he induced the band boys to entertain those at the depot, and reports tell us that the passengers for Kearney were entertained all the way down the line, each town furnishing a crowd at their depots. Conductor Hansen believes in treating his patrons right.

Motor cars 2, 5, 10 and 22 alternated in handling passenger assignments on the branch throughout 1910. Early in the year, Number 10 was removed from service for the installation of a second toilet, in compliance with a law requiring all such equipment to be equipped with separate rest room facilities for men and women. Cars 2 and 5 had been previously equipped with the dual facilities and Number 22 had been so fitted when built. As far as motor car service on the branch was concern-



During its tenure on the Kearney Branch, Motor Car 10 drew considerable local interest. A crowd was on hand at Sumner while it was on the eastbound leg of what conceivably could have been its first trip up the branch (top). A contingent of citizens were also present at Oconto when No. 10 arrived there while eastbound, circa 1908-09 (center). When the car arrived at the newly-painted Callaway

depot in 1910, the original K.&B.H. water tank (nearest camera) was being replaced by a larger tank relocated from the main line (bottom).

- Top, courtesy of Susan Triplett
- Center, S.D. Butcher & Son Photo, courtesy of Marie Nicholson
- Bottom, courtesy of Minnie Wilcox



Business was booming at the McKeen Motor Car Company shops in Omaha when this scene was recorded on September 20, 1910. A half-dozen motor cars, destined for various railroads around the country, are standing in

front of the former Union Pacific car shops, erected in 1880-81. The buildings were eventually torn down, about 1935.

- Union Pacific Railroad

ed, the year passed quietly for the most part, except for occasional breakdowns which now seemed to be decreasing in frequency. A fire in a motor trailer at Callaway one evening which was discovered in time to be extinguished with little damage, and the derailment of a motor while turning on the wye at the same point were the only real mishaps occurring during the remainder of the year. Motor 22 handled an unusual baseball excursion from Callaway to Amherst on May 29th, during which benches from the waiting room in the Callaway depot were placed in the trailer and a total of 243 passengers, 40 of them from Callaway, were carried on the round trip. The *Loup Valley Queen* later boasted that "they were handled as nicely as were they on a Pullman train." Once again the adaptability and ready availability of motor cars was effectively demonstrated. On at least one other occasion, a motor car was commandeered for an unauthorized nocturnal excursion. A delegation of young Callaway swains who wanted to attend a dance in Oconto one night, persuaded an affable motor crew, (who probably weren't averse to tripping the light fantastic themselves or allergic to getting better acquainted with some of the Oconto belles), to take them to the festivities. The motor, which had arrived from Kearney a few hours earlier and had "tied up" for the night, was quietly eased out of the Callaway roundhouse and like Cinderella's improvised coach, headed for the ball, 13 miles away, with all lights doused. In the wee hours of the morning, the motor returned to Callaway with its sleepy passengers and crew, after an enjoyable, though highly clandestine outing.

In the fall of 1910 Motor 22 was withdrawn from service on the Kearney branch and sent to Colorado, with

Number 9 again taking over as the replacement. Once again, the *Loup Valley Queen* was bitter in its denunciation of the Union Pacific because of the change, complaining in part, in its issue of October 27th:

A little over a year ago service on this branch became so very rotten that a protest was registered with the Railway Commission in an informal way. The members of the Commission came to Callaway, together with railroad officials, and a compromise was reached in which the patrons of the branch were promised better service. As a consequence, another motor was installed. This motor proved to be a good thing, not only for the patrons, but a paying thing for the company. Passenger patronage became so great that the evening motor was not able to accommodate it. As a result, a more modern and larger car was installed. This new car would accommodate but 78 passengers; however, those who could not get seats would stand, and no complaint was made. A week or so ago some officials came along, and perhaps thinking that the people along the branch were not so good as some in Colorado, ordered this modern motor car taken away from this branch to some point in Colorado, and old No. 9, a car which will accommodate but 48 passengers, installed in its place.

To show how near this car will accommodate the public, we will say that on Tuesday morning going into Kearney, there were 86 passengers, with seating capacity for 48. Coming out of Kearney that evening, there were 81 passengers, with a seating capacity for 48. No. 22, the more modern car taken from us and sent to Colorado, was full on almost every trip both in and out of Kearney, even though it seated 78 persons.

According to the laws of the state, there is a limit to the number of hogs placed in a car for shipment,

yet the company is allowed to pack the human race in a car like sardines in a box. A protest from the patrons of the Callaway branch should go in from every town along the line against the rotten service we are given. Conductor Hansen and Conductor Mallory are both gentlemen and used every effort they can to make things pleasant for their patrons; yet it is utterly impossible for them to handle the number of passengers they do and give them the accommodations they pay for with a car of the size of either No. 9 or 10.

Despite the newspaper's protest, Motor Number 9 continued to hold down one of the branch assignments, occasionally being relieved by "The old and unsightly Motor Car No. 5" as the Callaway weekly referred to it.

On an early spring day in 1911, about the only misadventure which had not previously plagued motors on the branch finally caught up with a car, presumed to be Number 9, as described by the *Loup Valley Queen* on March 23rd:

Motor Catches Fire

On its downward trip last Wednesday morning, and when between Oconto and Eddyville, the morning motor caught fire in some manner in the smoking compartment.

At the time it was discovered by Conductor Hansen, there were several passengers on the car, among which were a number of women and children.

As there was not a sufficient amount of water on the car to put out the fire, Conductor Hansen, in his usual pleasant manner, ran the car to a farm house near the track some quarter of a mile distant, and then pulled the air on Motorman Brown and the car

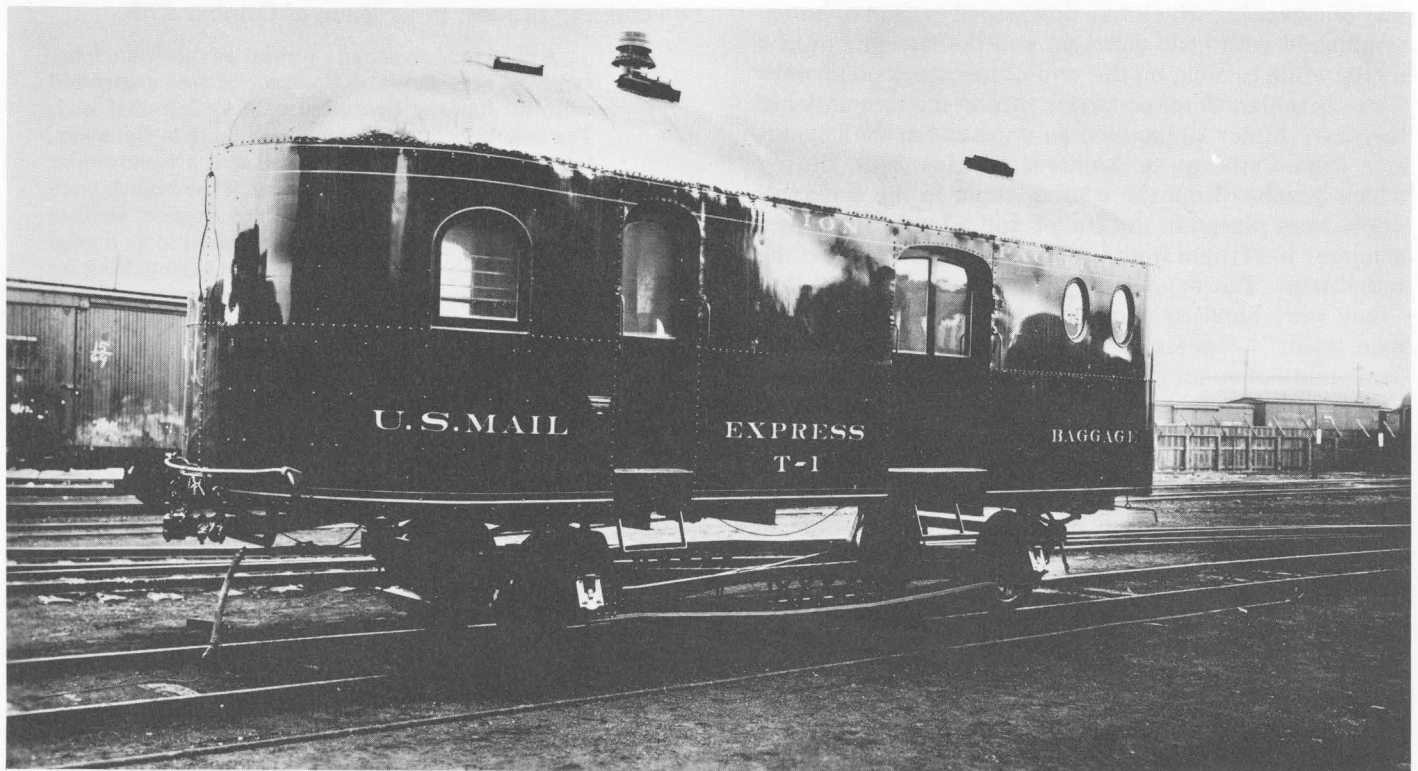
was stopped. The women and children were ordered off the car, and Conductor Hansen drafted all the men passengers into carrying water from the farm house, and in a short time the fire was subdued, with little damage to the car.

Had it not been for the cool head of Conductor Hansen in keeping the passengers from knowing there was anything wrong, there may have been a panic and several people hurt.

Mr. Hansen is one of the company's best employees, and deserves credit for his noble act in this matter.

Just a month later, Motorman J. W. Brown again found himself involved with a potentially disastrous fire. Just prior to the evening motor's departure from the Kearney station, Conductor Hansen called Brown's attention to a nearby bunk car which had somehow caught fire. As the car was standing beneath the coal chute, all the elements for a disastrous blaze were present. Reacting quickly, Brown seized the chemical fire extinguisher with which the motor car's engine room was equipped and within minutes had extinguished the flames. Several years later the motorman would again be involved in a conflagration which would result in the destruction of ill-starred Motor Car Number 2.

The tiny, McKeen-built trailers which bounced along behind the motor cars also played a prominent part in the McKeen legend. The postal clerks and/or baggage men who worked on them had to be adept in handling their jobs and remaining upright at the same time, as a trailer ride under even the best of circumstances was hardly comparable to that of a Pullman car. One E. O. McIntosh, who quite obviously wrote from experience,



T-1 was the first of the little McKeen "T-Bucket" trailers which bounced along behind the motor cars for a number of years. The single four-wheeled truck was later replaced by a pair of conventional four-wheel trucks,

which may have improved the riding qualities of the little cars, at least to some extent.

- Union Pacific Railroad

described a typical trailer ride in verse, as printed in the *Callaway Courier-Tribune* of January 11, 1912:

A REAL "JOY" RIDE

Don't talk to me of joyful rides
On Cog-roads down the mountain sides,
Nor tell me the way your gizzard feels
Looping the loops on Ferris Wheels;
Forget the common aeroplane
And try a whirl on a motor train.
Climb in the trailer at Kearney town,
And be sure your whiskers are fastened down;
If we are leaving late, better kneel and pray
Ere the train pulls out for Callaway.
Now over the switches and broken frogs,
You'll notice the cream cans dancing clogs;
That's only a starter -- a moment more
And the car will look like a "Sheeny store."

Don't think of the past, for it is now too late,
For the track ahead makes a figure 8.
The trailer rolls like a ship at sea,
And reels like a man on a drunken spree;
Bananas, and berries and kegs of beer
Are counter-marching from front to rear.
The broken bottles are smelling strong
And the castings start up an "anvil song."
The baggage man dodges the flying junk,
Sidesteps the coop and the sample trunk
And if he has any kind of luck,
Knows how to bandage his bleeding shins,
And where to hide when the fun begins.
By the blessing of heaven, he may survive,
And reach the end of his route alive.

I've rode on a pit car, down the slope
With the fire boss yelling to "cut the rope."
I've rode on an automobile so fast,
That, seeing the mile-boards as we passed
I thought I was watching a picket fence.
I've rode the bumpers to save expense,
I straddled a Kansas cyclone once,
Done the sailor acts and the cowboy stunts.
I've felt all emotions that man can feel
And there's nothing on earth that is so ideal,
That is so bewitching and so serene
As trailing the scent of gasoline,
Fighting for life like a gladiator
In a cradle attached to a motor car,
And I hereby apply for leave to stay
And continue from Kearney to Callaway.

Needless to say, the first half-dozen years of the McKeen motor car era on the Kearney branch had been difficult and trying ones, to say the least. It was a time of trial and error, of experimentation and innovation, truly a period of ordeal and tribulation, and of learning the hard way; and yet, the motor car concept was slowly but surely proving itself. The gasoline engine was constantly being improved in design and efficiency as were the motor cars themselves. Those magnificent men who operated the McKeens bore the brunt of the struggle, but with a combination of guts, gumption, tenacity, elbow grease (as well as the regular kind) and a generous but often-justified application of profanity in appropriate places, managed to keep the "show" on the road. The motor car had proved itself a viable substitute for the conventional steam-powered passenger train on short runs, despite the occasional breakdowns and overcrowding, such as on July 4, 1911, when Conductor Ben Masters handled a phenomenal total of 477 passengers on his car during the round trip from Callaway to Kearney, 284 on the eastbound trip and 193 on the return. McKeen cars were now in service on most Union Pacific branch lines and finding favor on various other railroads across the country; a few had even journeyed half way around the world to Australia. Ultimately, the electric transmission would prove to be vastly superior to the direct drive principle and W. R. McKeen's stubborn refusal to adopt this improvement for his motor cars would inevitably result in the forfeiture of the market to competitors. Nevertheless, his cars, often "flying," sometimes dying, and always trying, in one sense of the word or another, had not only blazed the trail for the self-contained, self-powered railway passenger car which would become universal in branch line service, but had paved the way for the internal combustion engine in the railroad industry as well. Thanks in large part to McKeen and his cars pioneering the field, the diesel engine would one day power the railroad trains of the nation almost exclusively. As for the Kearney Branch itself, the motor car era had just begun. Although the days of trouble were not yet over, the motors were on their way! The McKeen cars, most of which would ultimately be converted to electric transmission by the U.P., would eventually be joined by newer gas-electric cars from other builders, in writing yet another eventful and colorful chapter in the annals of the K.&B.H. in the days to come.



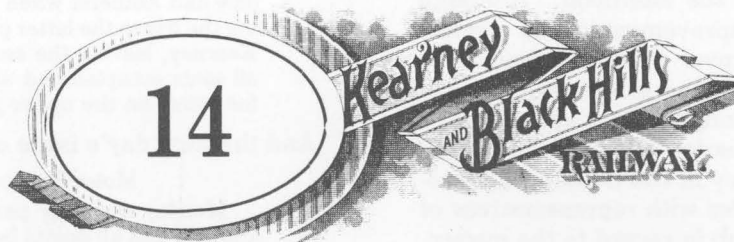
On an autumn morning in 1954, which typified "October's bright blue weather" in all its beauty, M-41 was beginning the ascent of Callaway Hill as Train

518 while upholding all of the colorful traditions of the "Day of the Doodlebug."



On the fiftieth anniversary of Motor Car One's initial trip from Kearney to Callaway, Train 517 has arrived at Stapleton on August 21, 1955. The usual empty cream cans are being unloaded from the M-29 and

after a 30-minute stopover, Number 518 will head out on the return trip to Kearney. Coincidentally, August 21, 1905, also fell on a Sunday.



The Day of the Doodlebug

The long line of descendants of Motor Car Number One came in a variety of sizes and styles, and ranged in color from the early maroon, through deep olive, to the brilliant yellow, red and gray *Streamliner* combination just before the close of their era. Tagged with a wide range of nicknames -- puddle jumpers, Toonervilles, doodlebugs and various other monikers, some of which would not look well in print -- the motor cars were more often the objects of derision than of admiration, especially in the early years. Although they gave less than dependable service at the beginning, they eventually came into their own, fighting a valiant battle to sustain passenger traffic along the Kearney Branch for half a century, before succumbing to the irresistible tide of rapidly improving automobiles and highways. Ultimately, several McKeen cars would be converted from mechanical to electric transmission systems and in the late 1920's the roster would be swelled by new cars from various other manufacturers. By 1929, all U.P. motor cars except the M-11 were utilizing distillate for fuel instead of gasoline although they continued to be designated as gas-electrics. Oddly enough, the diesel-electric motor cars which found generally wide acceptance on other American railroads, never made their way onto the U.P. roster.

Following the initial run of Motor Car One in August of 1905, motor cars handled passenger service on the Kearney Branch until the completion of the extension to Stapleton in 1912, with steam trains serving as substitutes only during motor car breakdowns, severe winter weather, or other emergencies. When scheduled service to Stapleton was inaugurated on May 20, 1912, the two daily-except-Sunday motor runs were supplanted by a single steam train, making only one round trip per weekday. The old adage that "absence makes the heart grow fonder" apparently applied to the newly-extinct motor service, as residents along the branch soon began to complain about the schedule change. At Callaway, the *Loup Valley Queen* sounded the keynote in its issue of July 4, 1912:

ACCOMMODATION TRAIN IS BADLY NEEDED

Mail and Express Service Now Very Unsatisfactory All Along the Line

Since the new train schedule went into effect when the road was completed to Stapleton, time enough has elapsed to thoroughly try out the new schedule.

As it now is, a passenger train and a freight leave Stapleton each morning, arriving in Callaway just about the same time, the freight usually pulling up to the water tank while the passenger is standing in front of the depot. The passenger carries the regular

mail, while the freight carries only pouch mail, thus leaving but a few minutes between the two outgoing mails, and any mail to be answered, or letters to be sent east or west must necessarily stay here until the following morning, making a delay of at least 24 hours.

The freight leaving Kearney each morning brings the pouch mail only. As this is our most important mail of the day the service is very unsatisfactory to patrons along the line. All daily papers and practically all first class mail from east and west is carried on this train. Sometimes it gets into Callaway on time, but more usually it is from one to four hours late, and people in Denver or Chicago are enabled to read the Omaha daily papers before the subscribers along this line can receive their papers, they coming a distance of only about 200 miles.

The passenger service going east is very satisfactory for those who want to get to the main line in the morning, and the evening passenger service going west is satisfactory, but the mail and express service is very unsatisfactory, owing to the irregularity of the westbound freight, which carries the most important mail and express.

We are informed that several petitions have been sent in, asking for relief. After talking to a number of the people of this locality, we learn that no change is asked in the present train schedule, but that another train or motor car being installed would give the necessary relief. This car would be scheduled to leave Kearney each morning, making the round trip and carrying both the mail and passengers who wish to come up the line in the morning, and do not wish to ride the mixed train and wait for the freight crew to do their switching and necessary work at each little station. The daily papers and other mail would reach the people in good time, as would also the morning express.

Passengers who could not board the morning train, or who did not know that it would be necessary for them to make a trip, would then be enabled to return to Kearney on the afternoon motor, thereby making connections with the main line without having to wait until the following morning for the regular train or drive across country to the main line.

The installation of a motor car out of Kearney each morning to make the round trip would be purely an accommodation for all patrons of the line, and the Union Pacific should get busy and put such a car into service. If the company does not, the matter will have to go before the State Railway Commission, because our mail service is too rotten to let matters stand as they now are.

The idea of restoring motor service was bandied about for the rest of the summer of 1912, with no action toward changing passenger schedules taking place until early autumn. Then, on September 23rd, the schedule was reversed, with the branch passenger train leaving Kearney in the morning and returning to the

main line from Stapleton in the afternoon. Although this afforded considerable improvement in mail service, it made it impossible to travel from the branchline towns to Kearney and return the same day. A loud howl promptly went up all along the line, as a result of which General Manager Charles Ware of the Union Pacific made a trip to Kearney in late October to investigate the situation and confer with representatives of the Kearney Commercial Club in regard to the matter. The result of his investigation was not long in making its appearance. On Sunday, November 10, 1912 residents along the Stapleton extension had their first view of a motor car rolling up the South Loup Valley as it deadheaded to the end of the line for the purpose of renewing motor car service the next morning on a 90-day trial basis. Under the new schedule, the motor left Stapleton at 7:00 a.m., arrived in Kearney at 11:45 a.m., and four and one-half hours later, at 4:15 p.m., headed back up the branch, arriving in Stapleton at 9 o'clock that evening. The new service immediately proved popular, as attested to by the *Kearney Hub* of November 11th:

When the motor car arrived in the city Monday forenoon on its initial trip under the renewed service, it was well filled, in fact standing room was at a premium despite the short notice of its being restored.

It left Kearney at 4:15 p.m. on the returning trip and was also well filled.

The *Callaway Courier-Tribune*, in its edition of November 21st, also found a reason to rejoice over the new motor service:

Us men folks do not have to invent excuses to get down town on nights now. The 7:11 motor carries mail.

Patronage of the restored motor train continued to expand as indicated by an article in the *Loup Valley Queen* on December 5th, which was reprinted from an earlier edition of the *Kearney Times*:

Cannot Accommodate
All its Patrons

The motor train between Stapleton and this city came in yesterday forenoon loaded down to the brim, every seat in the car being taken and the aisles and platform filled with those standing and clinging onto "the bell ropes." This condition almost prevailed at Miller and when the train reached Riverdale, there was such a crowd that all could not get on board, and the result was that many who desired to come to Kearney were obliged, owing to being unable to get on the cars, to stay at home.

Those who travel on the motor train state that this has been the condition for several days - that the accommodations are not adequate to the demand for transportation, and the result has been that many have been compelled to forego the trip and wait until another time.

With shoppers once again able to ride to Kearney and return the same day, the Christmas season of 1912 added still more passengers to the already overcrowded motor car. On December 23rd the *Kearney Hub* reported:

MADE TRIP IN INSTALLMENTS

So large was the number of passengers awaiting to board the evening motor car on the K.&B.H. line Saturday evening that two trips were necessary. The car was completely filled with passengers for River-

dale and Amherst when it left at 4:30 o'clock, making the trip to the latter place from which it backed to Kearney, leaving the second time at 6 o'clock with all seats occupied and aisles filled with passengers for points on the upper portion of the line.

And the next day's issue of the *Hub* added:

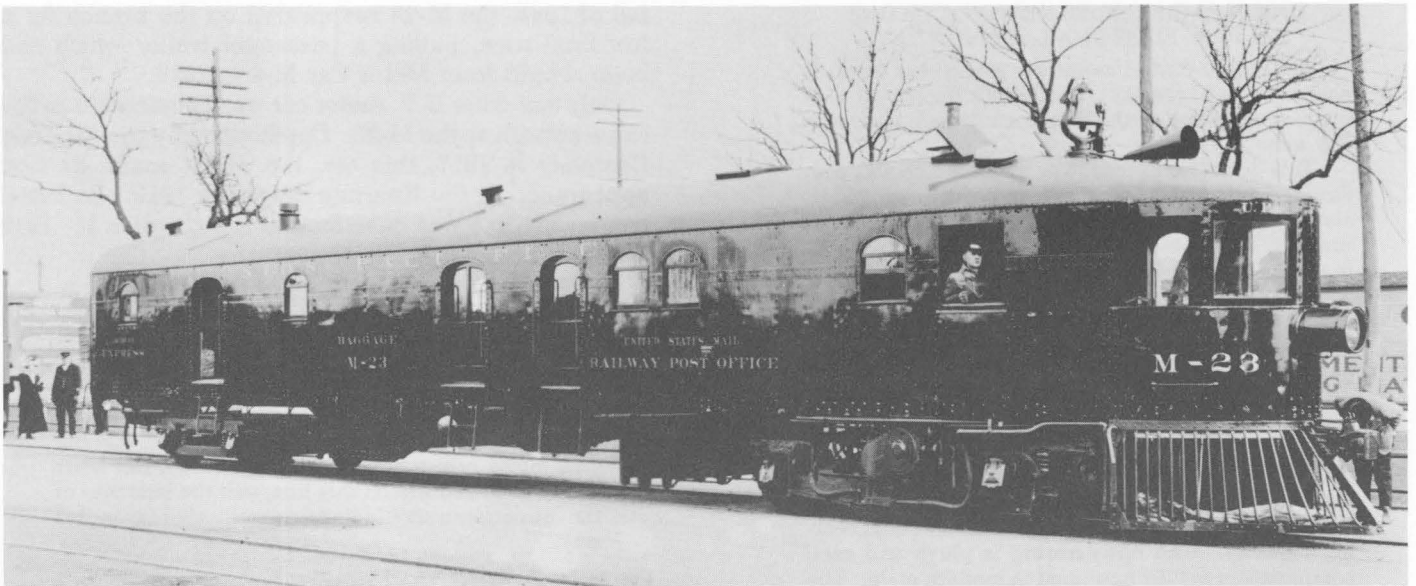
Motor Service is Inadequate

Monday morning passengers to Kearney from Amherst and all points between there and Kearney, were unable to find accommodations on the motor car coming into the city and were accordingly forced to come in on the noon freight train. To take all home in the evening that had made the trips down on the car and the freight, it was necessary to make two trips up the branch; the first load of people composed of Glenwood Park, Riverdale and Amherst people, was taken out at 4 p.m., while some were forced to remain in the city for the morning passenger train when the second trip was begun about 6 p.m. There is more and more agitation on the line for a reversal of the service, having the passenger train make the trip up in the afternoon and down in the morning.

The Union Pacific did not need the full 90-day trial period to get the message. The Doodlebug was back to stay!

In the spring of 1915 a new motor car of novel design emerged from the McKeen Motor Car Company plant in Omaha. Equipped with a 300-horsepower engine and weighing 85,000 pounds, the 70-foot car was the heaviest and most powerful motor turned out thus far by the McKeen works. In a radical departure from the standard McKeen design, this car had no accommodations for passengers. Instead, the first fifteen feet of space behind the engine room was occupied by a railway post office, with a 38-foot baggage and express section in the rear half of the car. Passengers were to be carried in a 70-foot steel coach, also McKeen-built, which would be trailed behind the motor car. The electrically-lighted coach-trailer resembled previous McKeen motor cars to a considerable extent, as it also featured the familiar round "porthole" windows and the center entrance. A telephone-type communication system connected the coach and the other compartments of the motor car with the engine room, enabling the conductor and motorman to be in vocal contact with each other at any time.

Numbered M-23, the new motor, with its passenger trailer, made a trial run between Omaha and Valley, Nebraska in mid-May of 1915, with a party of Union Pacific officials on board. The 28-mile westbound run to Valley was made in forty-five minutes, at an average speed of a little over thirty-seven miles per hour, while on the return trip to Omaha, a speed of fifty-five miles per hour was attained several times. Following this successful debut, the car was placed in temporary service on the Stromsburg Branch in eastern Nebraska. Then, on July 12th, the M-23 went into operation on Trains 53 and 54 between Kearney and Stapleton, replacing the steam train which had previously been running on that schedule. Once again, the Kearney Branch passenger business was being handled exclusively by motor cars. The July 15th edition of the *Stapleton Enterprise* introduced the new motor car to its readers:



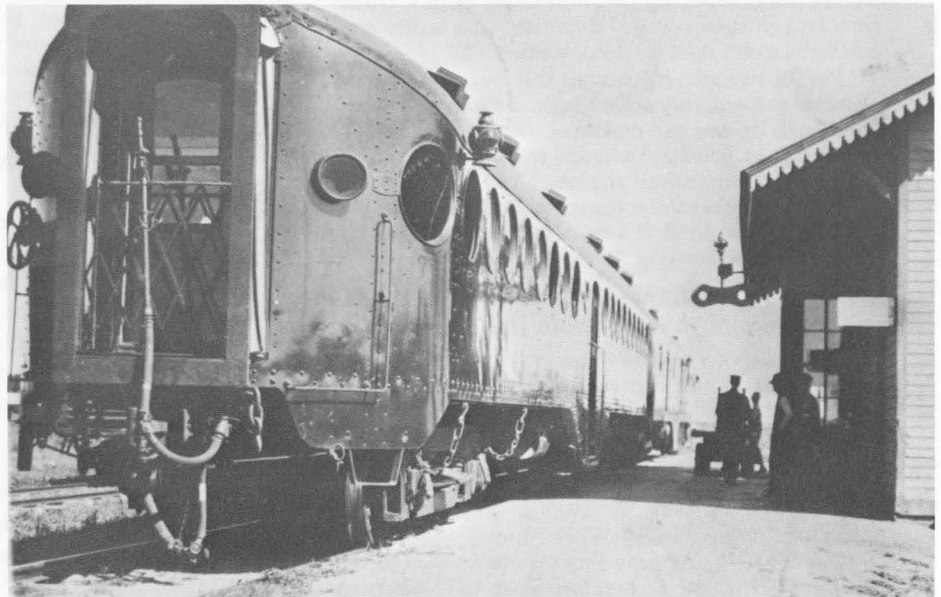
Motor M-23 takes time to pose for a photo on the K.&B.H. spur track at Kearney in the summer of 1915 before the young motorman backs the car onto the stan-

dard coach waiting at the end of the spur. Train 53 would thereafter depart for Stapleton.

- Union Pacific Railroad

During the summer of 1915, soon after being placed in Kearney Branch service, the M-23 and 499, a McKeen coach outshopped eight years earlier, stopped at Eddyville while on the westbound run. The 499 was later replaced by a standard passenger coach.

- Author's Collection



Thirty years later, the M-23 played a brief return engagement on the branch. Eastbound, as Train 518 at Callaway on the morning of November 15, 1945, M-23 showed evidence of modifications in the intervening years. Passenger trailer T-18 had been rebuilt from the body of Motor M-8 in 1929.

UNION PACIFIC PUTS NEW MOTOR CAR ON JOB. FIRST RUN LAST MONDAY.

The long talked-of motor car and trailer coach is now a thing of reality. The Union Pacific placed same in operation on the Stapleton Branch last Monday noon.

This is the 300 horsepower motor which was constructed only a short time ago and which, we understand, was first tried out on the Central City to Lincoln branch, but failed to make the time in pulling the big hills on that particular branch.

The motor car is seventy feet long and is divided into three distinct compartments. First the engine room, then the mail department and lastly, the baggage and express.

The trailer, also seventy feet in length, is a steel coach constructed along the lines of the ordinary motor car with side doors and door openings at each end. This coach is divided into two compartments; the forward end with a seating capacity of 38 is the smoking room, while the rear half has an equal seating capacity. The upholstering is plush and each compartment is fully equipped in modern style. The entire train is electric lighted.

As for this train being equal to the work required of it, Conductor Mallory tells us that it can, very nicely, take care of the passenger end of the business but that it has been found necessary to have the freight train bring up the numerous empty cream cans and chicken crates. However, this is not considered a point against its operation.

For pleasantness in travel, this new train seems ahead of the ordinary steam train, as it is well ventilated, well lighted and devoid of the dust and cinders and is also sufficiently removed from the ill-smelling exhaust of the gasoline engine.

It is hoped that the company will find it profitable to retain this train as it seems to meet with general approval. The evening motor runs as usual.

The same day's issue of the *Arnold Sentinel* had only one mild complaint to offer about the M-23:

The new motor seems to be giving satisfaction in every way except for express service, as that department is too small to accommodate all the express that comes up this line.

The *Kearney Hub* added its praise of the new car on July 24th:

New Motor is Very Popular

The newly inaugurated motor car service of the Union Pacific, in operation over the Kearney Branch, is making a decided hit with highline travelers. The time remains unchanged from that formerly in effect but the traveling is said to be far superior to that of a steam train. The extreme length of the big steel cars causes the least of "rough riding" which was so characteristic of the steam train. The new McKeen Motor is also operated on a more prompt schedule and delays are unknown to the present time.

Except for a hotbox which forced the M-23 back to Kearney shortly after leaving the depot one morning in August, 1915, a broken connecting rod which occurred a month later, and a few minor "bugs" which showed up from time to time, the big motor car had made an auspicious beginning on what would prove to be a successful career. Although steam trains ultimately took over the morning passenger run again, the M-23 continued to see service on the branch from time to time in the ensuing years, later pulling a standard passenger car instead of the McKeen coach. Years later, in the

fall of 1945, the M-23 reappeared on the branch for a few final trips, pulling a passenger trailer which had been rebuilt from Motor Car M-8 in 1929.

Only one other U.P. motor car was constructed in the same pattern as the M-23. Outshopped by the McKeen Company in 1917, this car, the M-24, made its first appearance on the Kearney Branch in 1919. Its initial trip on the line was described in the October 31, 1919 issue of the *Loup Valley Queen*:

Last Saturday, Motor Car No. 24, one of the large type similar to the one which was used on the west-bound morning run before the steam train was put back on, was sent up the line on a tryout trip, and followed the regular passenger back to Kearney Monday morning. That evening it was put on the run and will be a permanent fixture, we understand. The big type motor, which hauls a separate coach, has been a very good success on this line, and the business of the evening run should be fairly well cared for in this way.

On May 21, 1920, the Callaway newspaper made some comparisons between the two cars:

The motor has been off duty this week and a steam train in its place. Motor 23 was fitted with a friction clutch, and a few weeks ago when a new and extra heavy coach was put on for it to pull, the clutch gave out, and No. 23 was taken to Omaha. No. 24, a more powerful car with a different type of clutch will soon be back on the run. No. 24 will make only about 45 miles an hour as against 65 for No. 23, but the former car is fast enough and more powerful.

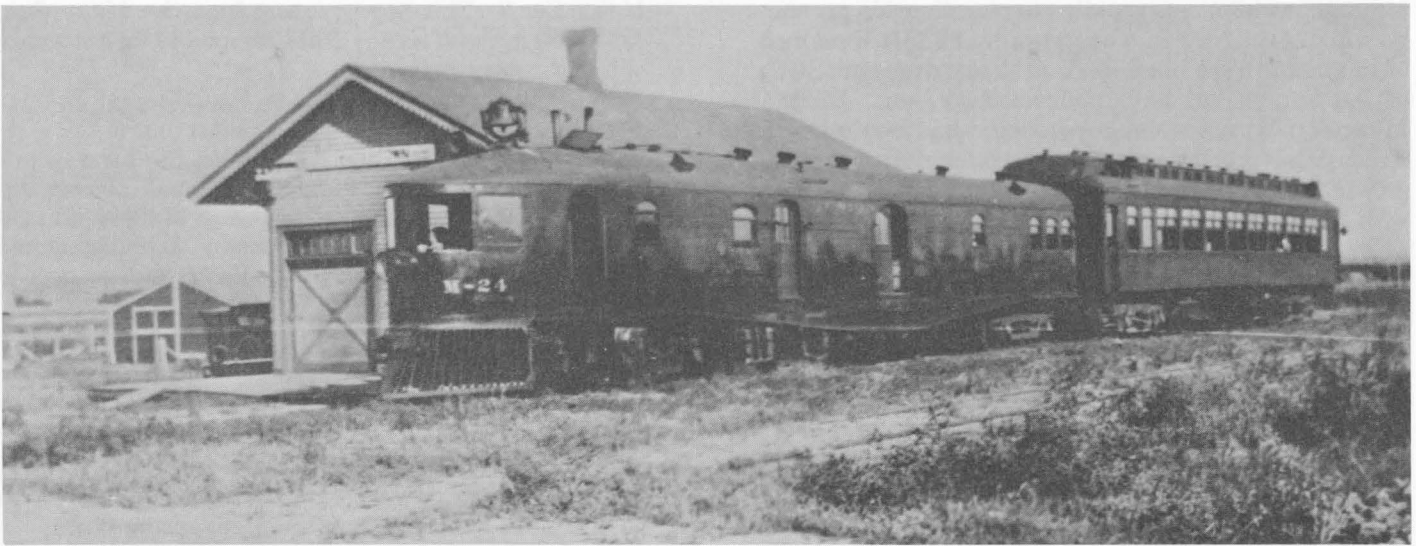
While M-24 may have seen further service on the branch in the following years, no mention was ever made of the car again in the area newspapers.

Although the M-23 and M-24 met with general approval and acclaim along the Kearney Branch, their conventionally-styled contemporaries were not as fortunate. The frequent breakdowns and overcrowding of the cars from time to time were again drawing harsh criticism from newspapers along the line, as in the early years of motor car operation. Such incidents had been referred to with considerable displeasure in the *Kearney Hub* as early as 1911 as "bucking streaks." To add to the problem, the steam locomotives sent out to rescue stranded motor cars often experienced difficulties of their own, further aggravating the situation. One such incident was related in the *Kearney Hub* on February 28, 1913:

The local motor went out of commission yesterday, when on the return trip to Kearney. A steam engine attached, acted up in like manner near Miller, making it in all a troublesome trip for the high line passengers who came down in the afternoon.

Half a year later, on August 7th, the *Callaway Courier-Tribune* expressed its growing impatience with motor car difficulties in two separate items:

Last Friday evening the motor, while making its regular run from Kearney to Stapleton, acted in such a way as to make itself well remembered by those who were unfortunate enough to be passengers on it. It seems that something was the matter with the "confliperator" a good part of the run as it did not arrive at Lodi until about 9:30 p.m., where it broke down completely. An engine arrived from Kearney at about 4:00 a.m. the next morning to haul it the rest of the way, but brought it only as far as Callaway. This was rather a hardship on the many pas-



Motor M-24 makes its station stop at Watertown with Train 517, circa 1919-20, with a standard passenger coach handling the passenger business. The M-24 was a twin of the M-23 except for a reinforced bottom frame

which gave it a decided "fish-belly" appearance. The M-24 was retired in 1949 after colliding with an egg truck while in service on the Kansas Division.

- Buffalo County Historical Society

sengers as they were forced to entertain themselves any way possible during their long wait at Lodi.

The motor broke down again Tuesday evening this side of Lomax and an engine was rushed from Kearney to complete the run. We are of the opinion that it is about time for the railroad company to do something, as these breakdowns and long waits do not add to the comfort of the passengers.

The *Oconto Register* summed up its viewpoints of the situation in its issue of the same week:

The old motor that has been running up this line is about "all-in." She pulled up the grade Tuesday evening as far as Lomax, but went dead there and more than that, stayed dead. A steam train was called out of Kearney which arrived in Oconto about 11:30 p.m. We sure need a new motor or a steam train in its place, as this makes the fourth or fifth occurrence like this within the last few weeks.

A month later, on September 11th, the *Stapleton Enterprise* took its turn at castigating the hapless Doodlebugs:

Almost a Wreck

The motor train last Saturday evening broke down at Miller, and a steam train had to be ordered from Kearney to bring it in. It arrived in Stapleton about three o'clock in the morning, after a rather exciting experience along the line. At Milldale, a couple of horses were foraging on the right of way and ran onto the track as the train approached. The engine struck them with full force, and both were killed, though no serious damage resulted to the train or passengers. The old motor car has caused trouble enough the past few months to make itself memorable; and it is high time, so think the patrons along the line, that the company furnish some more safe and sane means of getting up and down the road.

Nor was Motor Car 2, the patriarch of the Union Pacific's McKeen fleet, immune from the critical pen of the local press. When this car replaced the M-19 in December of 1913, the *Stapleton Enterprise* welcomed it back to the branch with something less than unrestrained enthusiasm:

The new motor that has been running between here and Kearney has been taken off and the old unreliable No. 2 has been reinstated. This will not improve service and the patrons will be glad to see the new one back again.

The apprehension of the Stapleton weekly soon proved to be justified as on January 13, 1914 the *Kearney Hub* reported:

Motor Car No. 2 has been sent into the shops for repairs and a two-coach passenger train made the run up the high line Monday evening.

In the following weeks, the *Hub* continued to publish a running account of the misadventures of the ill-starred Number 2:

January 20, 1914:

A train was sent up to Kearney Tuesday morning from Grand Island and will make the run up the K.& B.H. this evening, the motor having broken down Tuesday coming from Stapleton.

January 27, 1914:

A steam train was run up the K.&B.H. Monday afternoon, the motor car being temporarily disabled again.

February 13, 1914:

Trouble was encountered with the motor on Thursday and a steam train was sent out to make the run up the branch.

Five weeks later, late in the afternoon of March 20, 1914, the relatively brief, calamitous career of Motor Car 2 came to a fiery end. Enroute from Kearney to Stapleton as Train 57, with Motorman J. W. Brown at the throttle and Conductor B. F. Masters in charge of a near-capacity load of passengers, the car had just left Oconto on what had been a routine trip. Suddenly there was a bright flash and a loud explosion in the engine room. Within seconds, the flames were spreading throughout the car. Brown quickly brought the car to a grinding halt and turned his attention to throwing out the mail bags, normally carried in the engine room of Number 2, as the car lacked a mail compartment. Mas-

ters, meanwhile, was rapidly shepherding his passengers out of the car. In a short while, all that remained of the motor were blackened steel remains, consisting of the burned out hull, undercarriage, and trucks. Miraculously, not a single passenger had been injured, although several lost suitcases and other personal property in the conflagration. Conductor Masters escaped with only a few slight burns; Motorman Brown, however, was not so lucky. In his efforts to rescue the U.S. mail, for which he later received a citation from the Post Office Department, Brown sustained severe burns about the face and neck and a badly-burned left hand. Hospitalized for some time thereafter while recovering from his injuries, he must have been wondering what kind of a jinx had been hounding him. Besides having been involved in fighting fires in 1911 aboard a motor car between Oconto and Eddyville and in a bunk car in the Kearney yard, as related in Chapter 7, the motorman had been working only a few months since his recovery from injuries received during the previous summer of 1913. While lubricating motor car gears during a station stop at Milldale, a gauntlet glove on his right hand became entangled in a moving cog wheel, drawing his hand and arm into the machinery with painful and disabling results.

The disastrous fire which destroyed Motor Number 2 apparently started from a leak in the gasoline tank, and the fact that the older-style car had a rear entrance, rather than the center vestibule of the newer McKeens, probably contributed in large part to the safe evacuation of the passengers, who were taken to Callaway in autos to await the next morning's train. A steam passenger train temporarily took over the run until March 30th, when Motor Car 8 arrived on the scene and the *Stapleton Enterprise*, commenting upon the Union Pacific's tribulations with motor cars on the branch, hopefully mused:

... The Company has had a great deal of trouble with their motors and it is hoped that this one will stay in repair and do the service that it is expected to do, for the Company as well as for the many patrons. No further trouble with the service is anticipated at this time of year on account of weather conditions.

For the next few weeks everything went smoothly with Motor Car 8, and patrons along the branch were beginning to forget the disaster which had eliminated

Motor Car 2. This happy report from the *Miller Sun*, reprinted in the *Kearney Hub*, seemed to reflect a new spirit of optimism:

Motor No. 8 is doing excellent work and Conductor Masters is the jolliest man on this run.

However, cold weather was always the bane of primordial gasoline engines and a brief spell of very unseasonably cool weather in mid-May of 1914 created some unforeseen problems for Number 8 which elicited these comments from the *Loup Valley Queen* on the 14th:

The motor car was several hours late on Monday evening, and as a result was quite late on its return trip Tuesday morning. Verily, the motor car is not a cold weather bird.

The motor car may not have been a "cold weather bird," as the Callaway weekly suggested, but it could be, nevertheless, a very handy piece of equipment to have around sometimes. After a late spring downpour on the lower end of the branch caused some damage to the track, the *Kearney Hub* of June 12th carried an item which attested to the utility and versatility of McKeen motor cars in unusual or emergency situations:

... The motor on the Kearney & Black Hills branch was unable to make the run last evening because of the heavy rains received in the vicinity of Miller, Amherst and Riverdale, but instead took a crew of men up the line which put the tracks back in shape so that the regular trip from Stapleton could be made by the passenger train this morning.

Near the close of the year, however, the *Loup Valley Queen*, on December 24th, reiterated its earlier opinion of motor cars with the return of winter weather:

On Monday morning the freight train was compelled to pull the motor car into Kearney, thus causing many passengers to reach Kearney too late to make connections east. And again we wish to repeat "the motor car is not a cold weather bird and should go south during the winter months."

The Sumner correspondent for the *Kearney Hub* took up the cry in the January 16, 1915 issue of that newspaper:

The passenger train is now running in place of the motor which must have gone south for the winter.

Otherwise, however, 1915 proved to be an unusually successful year for motor cars on the Kearney branch,



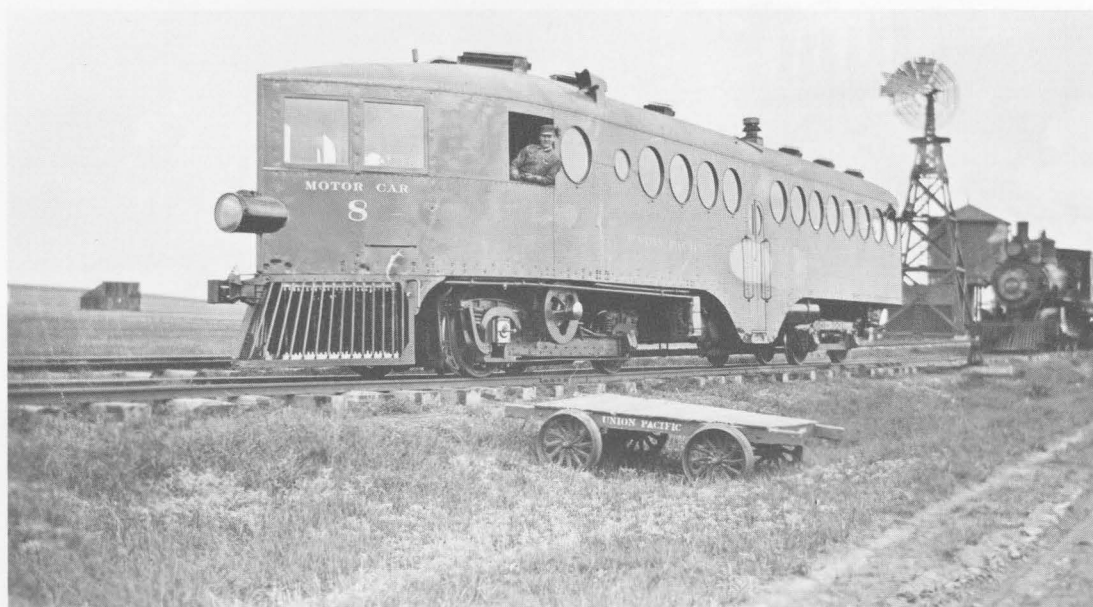
Motor Car 2 and its trailer were preparing to depart Kearney on the branch run in this 1907 view. Seven years later, Number 2's tumultuous career would come to a fiery end while westbound near Oconto.

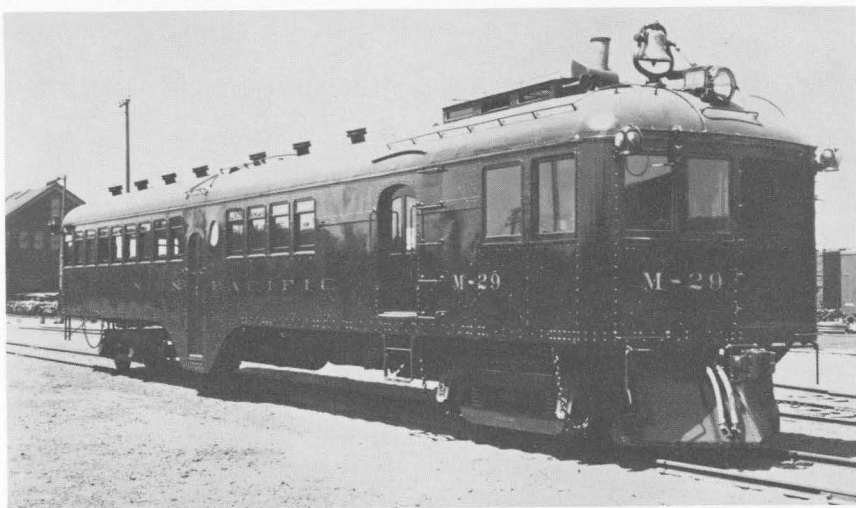
- S.D. Butcher and Son Photo,
Author's Collection



In these views at Lomax, circa 1913-14, Motor Car 8, Train 58, has the main track and runs by eastbound Mixed Train 96 on the siding, powered by Ten-wheeler 1430 (top). Number 96 had departed from Stapleton at 6 a.m. that day, while Number 58 left the branch terminus one hour later. A few minutes later, Motor 8 has joined the mixed on the siding, with both awaiting the arrival of westbound steam-powered passenger train 53 (bottom). Whenever all three trains were on schedule during that era, this three-way meet took place at Lomax each weekday morning, an unusual situation for a little country station!

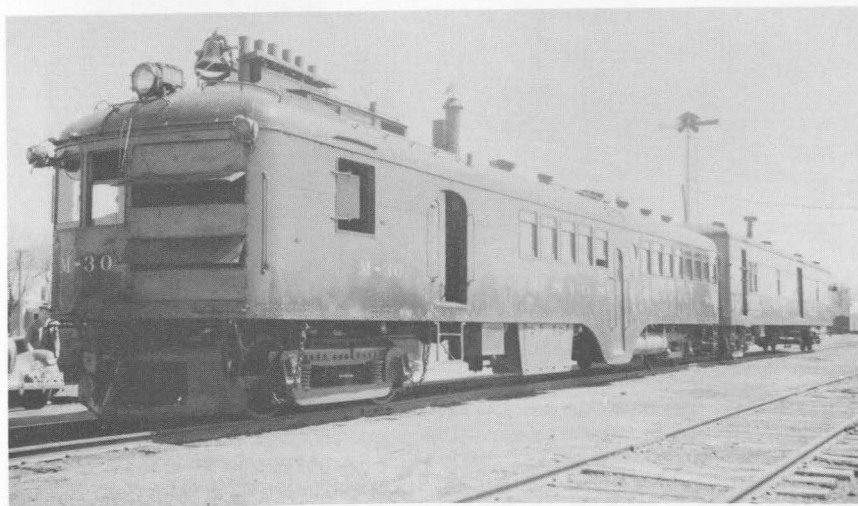
- Both, Anna B. Weaver Photos, Author's Collection



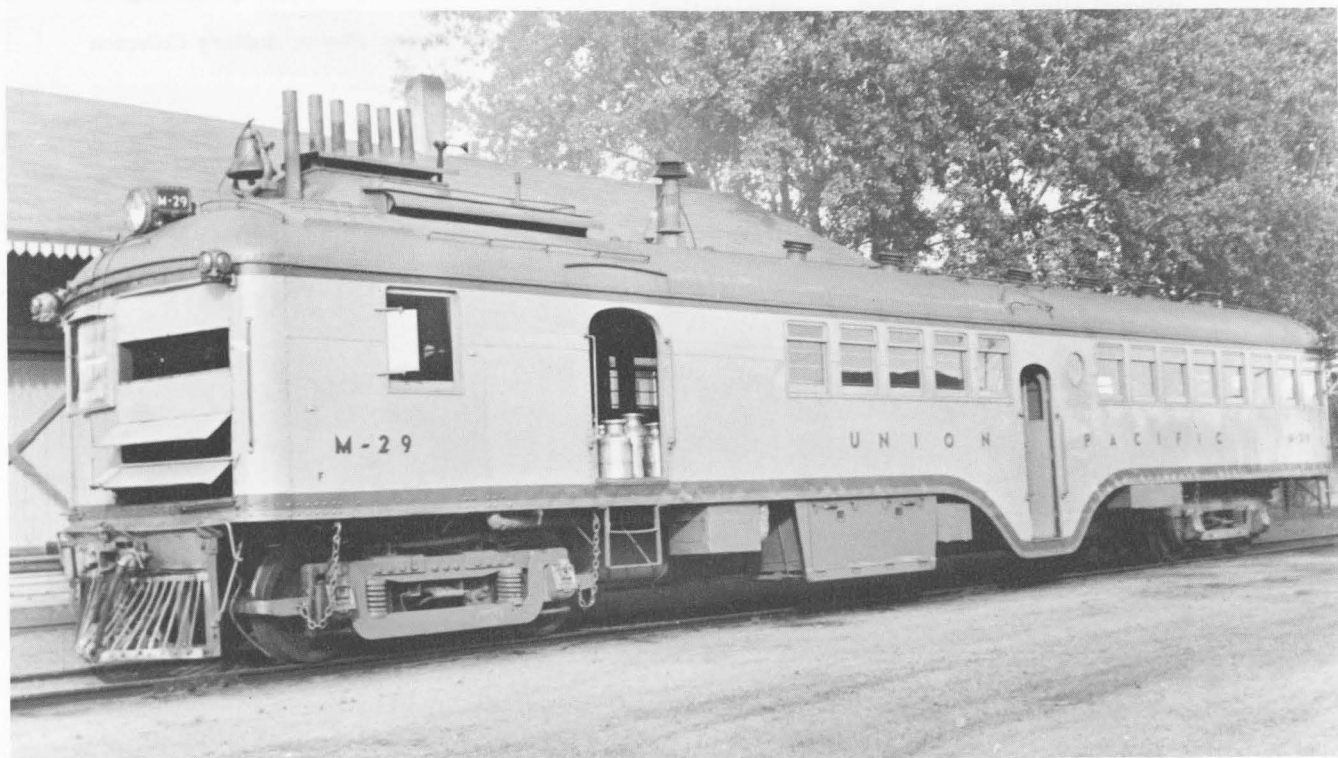


During the half-century of motor car service on the Kearney Branch, no car served the line longer or more efficiently than the versatile M-29. Constructed in the U.P.'s Omaha shops in 1927, along with sister car M-30, from a leftover McKen stockpile, only the center entry remained from the original McKen car configuration. In the top photo, M-29 had just emerged from the erecting shop on July 8, 1927. Although the M-30 preceded the M-29 in Kearney Branch service, its tenure on the line was much briefer than its twin. The M-30 then continued in service on other branch lines in Nebraska and Kansas. At center, it was photographed at Seneca, Kansas, with Train 543 while en route from St. Joseph, Missouri to Grand Island, Nebraska

- Top, Union Pacific Railroad
- Center, William A. Gibson, Sr. Photo



(Below:) During the latter part of 1952, both the M-29 and M-41 reappeared from the company shops resplendent in the Streamliner colors of yellow and gray, with red lettering and striping, the standard decor of U.P. passenger equipment by then. As westbound Train 519 on May 24, 1954, cream can-laden M-29 makes its station stop at Callaway.



with M-23 on the morning westbound and afternoon eastbound runs and a variety of cars handling the other half of the passenger schedule. At any rate, everything apparently went well until near the end of the year when, on December 16th, the *Hub* reported:

Motor Breaks Shaft

The Kearney-Callaway motor met with an accident Wednesday morning and was delayed several hours on its trip to this city. Just as the car arrived on the hill southeast of Callaway, a crankshaft broke. The train was allowed to coast back into Callaway and then it was attached to the freight and trailed to Kearney, arriving here about 2 o'clock.

When Motor Car 8 returned during the latter part of January, 1916, to temporarily replace the M-23, the *Loup Valley Queen* greeted its return with skepticism:

... The motor has been newly painted and overhauled so that it looks almost like new. Its ability to buck snowdrifts probably hasn't been enhanced much, however.

Overcrowding on the motor cars, in an era when the automobile had not yet become a very serious competitor along the K.&B.H. line, continued to pose problems. On September 21, 1916, the *Loup Valley Queen* expounded some caustic commentary on the subject:

A fair demonstration of the shortcomings of our passenger service was in evidence Monday morning when the motor left here with nothing left but standing room and very little of that. It is difficult to imagine what disposition was made of the passengers taken on at the nine stations between here and Kearney, but it is probable that some of them did not go on that train. Of late we have been served on this run by one of the old type of motor cars, dug up, evidently, from some trash heap and not more than half large enough or powerful enough to do the work. All this, besides the looks of the thing!

Later that autumn, a lodge convention at Callaway which further swelled the passenger load, elicited these additional comments in the November 16th issue of the *Queen*:

... When the Rebekah delegates boarded the motor here last Saturday morning there were more passengers than seats, which means that anyone getting on between Callaway and Kearney had to stand up. In winter, when travel requires greater comfort and more certain facilities, a determined effort should be made by the towns along the branch to get a steam train substituted, at least for the night trip. The little motors are absolutely useless bucking the smallest snowdrifts, and have awfully poor luck in cold weather. The amount of traffic on the evening run is easily sufficient to warrant the use of a steam train and by all means we should have one.

When it wasn't engine trouble or lack of seating capacity, some new adversity always managed to come along to bedevil the beleaguered motor car crews, as described in the same issue of the Callaway paper:

Monday night the 6:42 motor arrived here at 9:30 with all the lights in the car out as well as the headlight. Some coal oil was procured at this station and used for the balance of the trip in place of the usual acetylene lights.

The *Loup Valley Queen* never missed an opportunity to lambast the favorite target of its righteous wrath. When the station agent at Oconto was found guilty of an error of omission in the performance of his duties

near the close of 1916, the Callaway weekly rose to his defense with these remarks on December 14th:

The station agent at Oconto on the Hither, Yonder and Elsewhere R. R. has been laid off for two months because he failed, according to the *Oconto Register*, to deliver a train order to the motor. Since when, we ask, has it become necessary for a man to be able to so stretch his imagination that he can make himself believe a motor is a train, in order to hold his job?

A week later the *Queen* fired off another volley in the same vein:

It has been suggested that the patrons of the K. & B.H. road, if the Union Pacific refuses to put on a steam train in the evening, petition the officials to equip the motor with hand straps such as are used in street cars, and install hammocks for the babies, after the fashion of Pullman coaches.

The December 21st issue of the *Queen* also carried a story which underlined the fact that not even a steam train was necessarily a cure-all for motor car ailments:

They Love Us So

For many weeks the patrons of this line have been asking for a steam train in place of the evening motor during the cold weather. For quite a while the thing has been running from one to four or five hours late every night and passengers have been compelled to stand up until the train reached the third or fourth station. Frequently it was difficult for all the ladies to secure seats.

Conductor Dolan reported conditions to headquarters repeatedly and was given very little satisfaction until Tuesday evening when he was supplied with a steam engine and coaches. The engine was such an ancient affair that when it reached Riverdale it refused to continue and it was necessary to wait there for another one. The train arrived here at 2:30 Wednesday morning. Fine service, yes, very fine, indeed.

Wednesday night the performance was repeated with a few extra frills. The train got to Callaway at 3:00 this morning and therefore had to be held at Stapleton until the crew had rested the allotted eight hours.

The morning passenger Wednesday left Kearney before its Omaha connection arrived so the mail was left for last night's motor. It together with what mail regularly came on the night train was taken on to Stapleton and if nothing happens, we should get yesterday morning's mail sometime this afternoon.

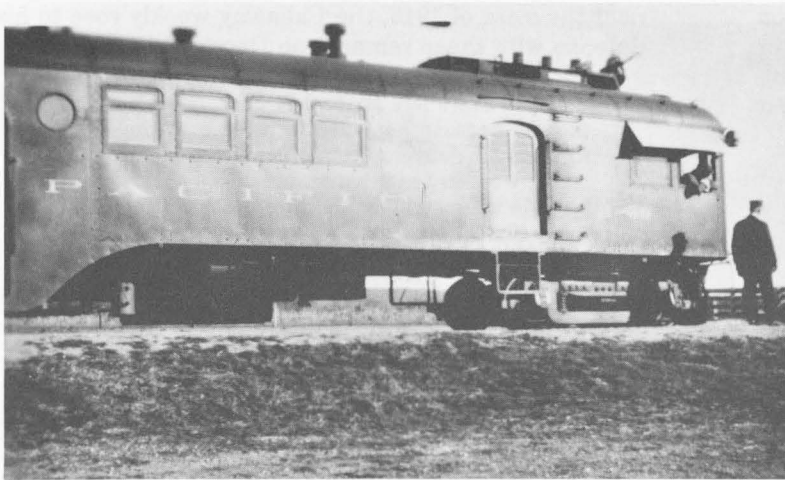
Christmas Day of 1916 proved to be considerably less than merry for the passengers and crew on the morning westbound motor when the car stalled at Arnold and passengers bound for Stapleton and intermediate points did not reach their destination until the day was nearly spent. Problems continued to mount throughout that winter and on into the spring of 1917. On April 12th, the *Loup Valley Queen* lamented:

The evening motor has not arrived in Callaway on time in the past four weeks.

That same week, the *Arnold Sentinel* voiced its unhappiness with the motor situation in an article which was reprinted by the *Stapleton Enterprise* on April 20, 1917:

THE EVENING SNAIL

Yes, or something like it. Sometimes it is called a motor, an imitation of a real railroad train that is held in service for the accommodation of first-class passenger traffic up this line. For the first time in a



Early in its career, during the late 1920s, M-30 was photographed at Lomax while westbound as Train 517. The two-man crew, looking ahead, are apparently awaiting a meet with the eastbound mixed train.

- Courtesy of Donald Bayne

long while this outrageous conveyance was actually on time, Tuesday evening. This motor service is a disgrace to every town on this branch. Time and time again it has left Kearney on time, only to be tied up at some point along the line and caused to remain through the night, or until the difficulty could be remedied or an engine called to haul it to its destination.

Several instances have happened at this point where people have gone to the depot in the evening to meet the motor and were compelled to remain there during the entire night, patiently waiting and expecting every minute to see it pulling in at the station. You ask the agent where the motor is; his reply, "I don't know, it left Kearney on time," or "so much late," as the case may be. The operators are off duty at six o'clock p.m., consequently we receive no report of its whereabouts until its arrival.

T. L. Jones, on his recent return from Omaha with several other Arnold boys, had a "night out" near Oconto. As a result, Mr. Jones was confined to his bed for a couple of weeks with a sickness from exposure on the trip.

How long are the officials of the U.P. going to continue this barbarous and inhuman treatment of their ever-courteous employees, and the people up this line? We are in favor of each town on the branch selecting a representative to take this matter before the Railway Commission, and see if these conditions cannot be remedied. As it is, it's a helluva service.

Motor M-20, after having become the first Union Pacific motor car converted to the use of kerosene for fuel, went into service on the branch on May 2nd. While this innovation promised considerable savings to the railroad in fuel costs, the *Loup Valley Queen*, failing to be impressed, commented:

A new motor car appeared on this branch yesterday evening after we had enjoyed the luxury of a steam train for nearly a week. The new car is M-20, different from the others in that it uses kerosene for fuel, and like them in that it runs behind time beautifully.

A week later, however, the *Queen* admitted that the converted motor did "show great improvement in service" and asserted that it burned "only 60 gallons of low grade coal oil" on the round trip from Kearney to Stapleton, whereas it had previously consumed an average of 105 gallons of gasoline on the run. The M-20 had

evidently won its spurs, and on May 17, 1917 the newspaper acknowledged, if somewhat grudgingly:

Since the advent of the new motor with the kerosene carburetor, the thing has kept pretty close to its schedule, even in the face of late starts from Kearney, and lends hope that perhaps the problem has at least been partially solved.

Unfortunately, the car suffered a temporary setback when it experienced a breakdown at Logan on the evening of Memorial Day and was forced to spend the night there, awaiting the arrival of a steam locomotive which did not come to the rescue until the following morning. Nevertheless, when the M-20 returned to service on the branch later that summer, it received this accolade in the August 16th issue of the *Callaway weekly*:

Motor No. 20, the best and most consistent car that has been used on the local evening run, has been returned here and is giving good service after a series of experiments with a collection of antiquated cars that were more than ready for the trash pile.

The alleged refugees from the "trash pile" were soon back on the run, however, and promptly began to go through a series of misadventures which achieved the dimensions of a comedy of errors. If Kearney Branch motor car crews were having serious thoughts about joining the French Foreign Legion about this time, it was small wonder, after this succession of unhappy incidents, which were described and commented upon in local newspapers over a nine-month period:

Loup Valley Queen, July 5, 1917:

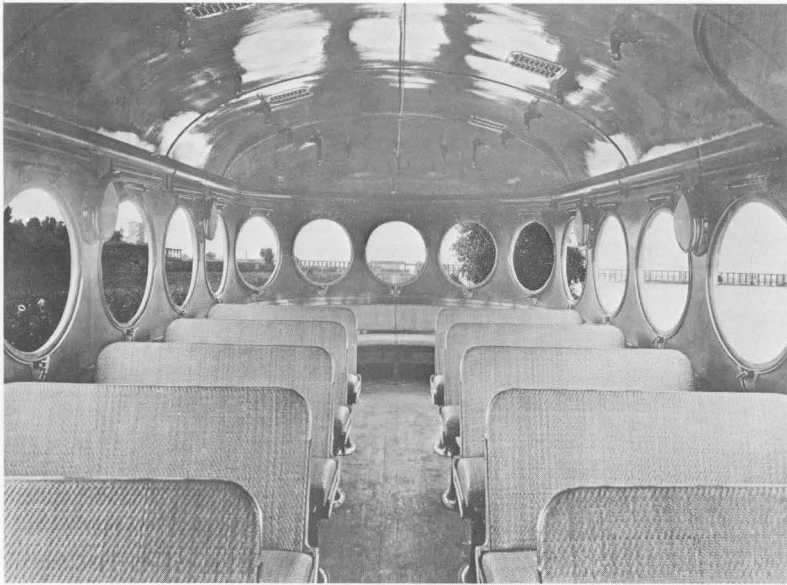
The motor was delayed for twenty minutes at one of the stations down the line Monday evening while the express messenger, assisted by the passengers, retrieved a dog that had escaped from the baggage car.

Loup Valley Queen, October 18, 1917:

The westbound morning motor struck a truck loaded with eggs and cream at the station in Oconto last Monday and scattered them in all directions. The front steps of the passenger coach were demolished.

Stapleton Enterprise, November 8, 1917:

A number of our exchanges from down the line were none too complimentary in their last week's issue about the present train service. And if we are



Passenger compartments of U.P. motor cars varied in styles and design. M-20 (top) featured the typical McKean car "porthole" windows. The M-8 (center) had square rear windows and colorful art glass decor in the center entry. When built, the interiors of the M-29 and M-30 (bottom) presented a more modern appearance, not unlike some of the standard passenger cars of that era.

- Three photos, Union Pacific Railroad



any hand at reading between the lines, the Union Pacific was wished a number of times where we'd like to see Kaiser Bill headed for without a return trip ticket. S'no use boys. The company won't go there in the first place, and if it did, it couldn't take that little junkety stinkety motor, with it. The Devil wouldn't stand for it. He couldn't. For even he has devised more humane ways of torturing his patrons.

Loup Valley Queen, April 18, 1918

Two Swedes, who are driving through the country selling Bibles, attempted to knock the westbound motor off the track near the Sumner depot Tuesday evening and succeeded in smashing the front end of their Ford into a sorry state. The motor beat the Ford to the crossing, and the auto crashed into the front end of the car, tearing off a few small bolts that projected at various places on the motor and partially demolishing the Ford as above stated. When questioned by Conductor Hall, the driver of the car said he was looking in the other direction for a train.

The American entry into the World War in the spring of 1917 and the subsequent establishment of the United States Railroad Administration which took over the operation of the nation's railroads in 1918 ultimately had its effect on the operations of the Kearney Branch. In mid-July of 1918, motor car service was cut in half as part of a nation-wide action in the field of transportation conservation. Number 519, the westbound evening motor, and number 520, the morning eastbound, were removed for the duration. Left intact were the morning westbound and afternoon eastbound motors, with a steam train substituting when necessary, eliciting these remarks from the ever-intractable *Loup Valley Queen* on January 2, 1919:

The motor has been replaced by a steam train during the cold weather, carrying out to travelers on the branch the adage that every cloud has a silver lining.

Five months after the Armistice, on April 8, 1919, motor passenger service on the branch was restored to pre-war schedules under an order from the Nebraska State Railway Commission. Unfortunately, the restored service got off to a rather inauspicious start and the *Loup Valley Queen*, something less than a motor car enthusiast to begin with, found little to cheer about:

The new train service was started Monday, a steam train going to Stapleton Sunday evening. One of the little old "molasses special" motors was started out from Kearney Monday afternoon, and managed to cough and sputter its way to Callaway an hour late, and probably lost some more before reaching Stapleton. It did the same thing Tuesday and when the snow started Wednesday afternoon a steam outfit was put on. Inasmuch as it is necessary to keep a steam train in reserve practically all of the time, it is a puzzle why the railroad sticks to the unsatisfactory-at-its-best motor, and the patrons of the road ought not to be appeased until some decent service is granted.

During the war years, the use of kerosene for motor car fuel had been increased, although in extremely cold weather it proved to be less than satisfactory and a reserve tank of gasoline was carried for starting the engines in cold weather as well as for emergencies. This item, in the December 26, 1918 issue of the *Loup Valley Queen*, illustrated some of the problems encountered in the use of the less-volatile fuel:

The motor coming west in the morning Monday found the temperature too cold to burn kerosene, its usual fuel, and ran out the supply of gasoline at Lodi and had to be brought here by the freight. It filled up with gasoline here and bucked the snowdrifts to Stapleton, arriving there at 3:30. It did not attempt the trip back, and since then a steam train has been making the run.

Snow and cold were not the only elements of nature to frustrate the operation of motor cars. On at least one occasion, in March of 1920, a motor car was unable to buck a furious northwest gale and a steam train had to take its place on the evening westbound run. Nor were motors vulnerable only to the whims of the weather and mechanical problems. In a day and age when only a handful of Union Pacific engineers were familiar with motor cars and qualified to operate them, the cars were totally dependent upon the health and well-being of the individual motormen themselves. One example of this fact is provided by the following item which appeared in the *Stapleton Enterprise* on February 10, 1916:

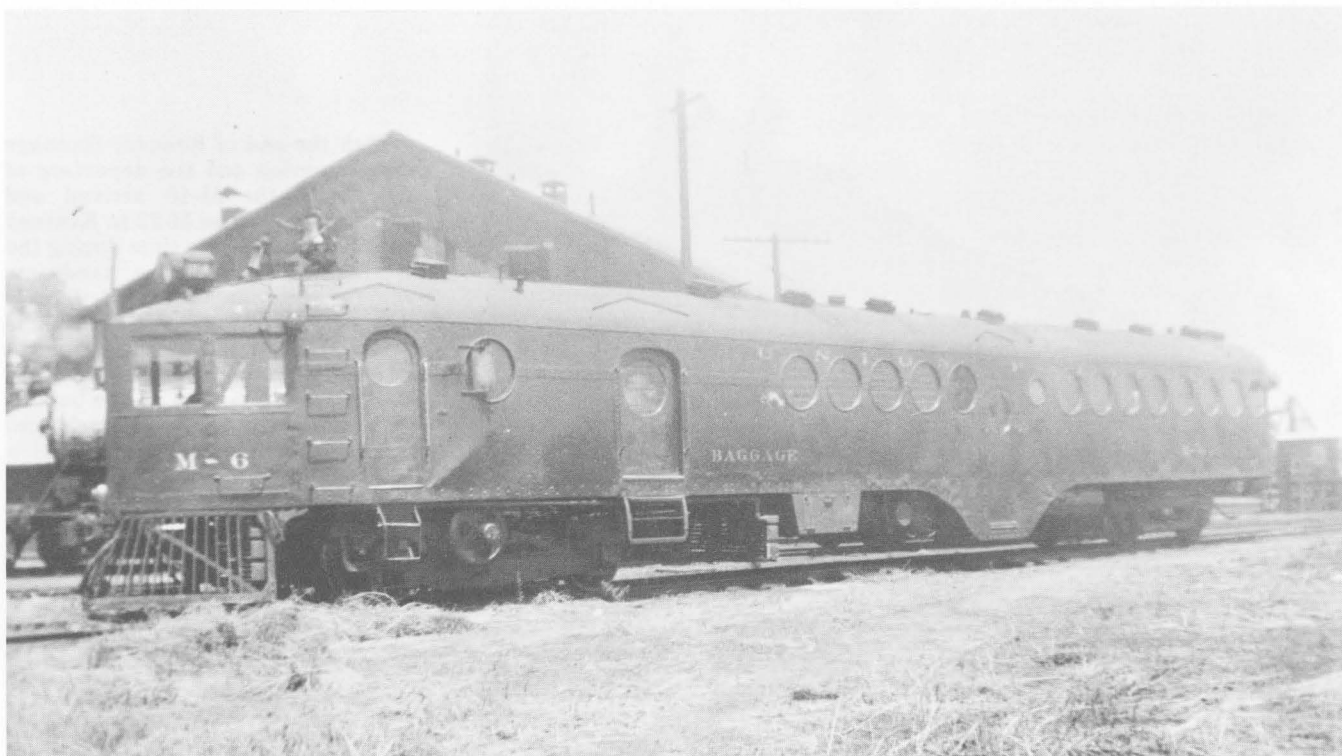
The noon train was two hours late Monday on account of the sudden illness of Motorman Robinson. No one could be found in Kearney who could take out the big motor, so a steam train made the run.

On various other occasions the sudden illness of a motorman while on duty necessitated the borrowing of the steam locomotive from the mixed train or a work train to complete the run. Furthermore, the early day motorist who might awake one morning to find that a thief had drained the fuel tank on his auto or had emptied his gasoline barrel, had nothing on the motor car crews. One morning in February of 1920, the east bound motor ran out of fuel just as it reached the Kearney yard limits and a switch engine had to tow the car the rest of the way to the depot. Later, it was discovered that some conscienceless miscreant had slipped into the Stapleton roundhouse during the previous night and helped himself to about forty gallons of gasoline and kerosene from the motor's fuel tanks.

In the 81-year tenure of passenger service on the Kearney Branch from 1890 to 1971, including the half-century of motor car operation, there was never a passenger fatality. Perhaps the closest call, other than the fiery destruction of Motor Car 2, may have been the following incident, described in the *Stapleton Enterprise* of September 4, 1913:

One evening last week while the motor was coming up, the car was so crowded that some passengers had to stand in the side entrance. One man, we fail to learn his name, was sitting on the lower step and when the conductor came through collecting tickets, he stuck one foot outside the car door. His foot caught in a cattle guard and pulled up the guard and disarranged some of the fence. The conductor refused to give a reporter any information regarding the occurrence. The victim was apparently not seriously injured, as he retained his seat on the step.

An even closer brush with death took place in the cab of the westbound motor one evening in February, 1930 as the car was pulling out of Arnold. A .38-caliber bullet crashed through the right window, narrowly missing Motorman Don Warren by only four or five inches, and hurtled on out through the door on the opposite side. At first, Warren thought some youngster had thrown a rock at the passing motor but closer scrutiny of the win-



According to Callaway's *Loup Valley Queen* newspaper, Motor M-6 distinguished itself by turning in 17 months of continuous, uninterrupted service on the Kearney Branch. This commendable record began during the last week of October 1926, and ended on

June 1, 1928, when the car went to the shops for inspection and overhaul. M-6 later served on eastern Nebraska branch lines, where it was photographed at Columbus on July 14, 1939.

- Jack Pfeifer Photo, Author's Collection



During the late 1930s and early 1940s, M-16 worked the Kearney-Hastings run and also saw some service on the Stapleton run, particularly on weekends. Pictured at Kearney on August 17, 1940, the M-16 later

operated on the Idaho Division and finally on the Kansas Division, where it became the last McKeen motor to operate on the entire U.P. system.

- R.D. Kimmel Photo, Author's Collection



With the end of Kearney-Hastings motor service and the departure of the M-16, the M-40 arrived and alternated with the M-29 in Kearney Branch service for a time during the World War II era. The handsome vehicle was one of two Brill cars that served on the branch, and is pictured at Callaway after arrival from Stapleton as Train 518 on a snowy March 6, 1943. The motorman is being briefed on track conditions ahead by the local section foreman.

dow glass revealed the bullet hole. The fact that the hole in the glass was small seemed to indicate that the shot had been fired at close range. It was first surmised that the bullet was a stray; however, subsequent investigation by Union Pacific special agents and the Custer County sheriff led to the arrest of a 19-year-old local youth who had purchased the gun a short while earlier the same evening of the incident. After undergoing questioning, the young man confessed that he had shot at the headlight of the motor for "sport," with no intention of injuring anyone. As a result of his escapade, nonetheless, the youth was sentenced to the state industrial school for boys at Kearney. Motorman Warren, meanwhile, was no doubt thanking Lady Luck and perhaps wondering what further perils might be lying in wait for U.P. motormen.

The first McKeen car to be converted to a gas-electric transmission system was the M-11, its conversion taking place in 1925, with the M-16 following suit a year later. Meanwhile, in the Union Pacific shops at Omaha, two old McKeen carbodies were being modified and rebuilt into new motor cars with a radically different styling from that of their predecessors. Gone were the familiar porthole windows, replaced by rectangular ones of conventional passenger car style. Gone, too, was the teardrop design, with the pointed ship's-prow nose and the rounded rear end giving way to flatter configurations. Only the drop-center vestibule entrance remained as a clue to the original identity and ancestry of the motor cars. Equipped with powerful new 300-horsepower Hall-Scott engines and an electric transmission system from General Electric, the new motors were modern in every way. Numbered M-29 and M-30, the 62-foot cars featured a 34-passenger compartment to the rear of the center entrance and an 18-seat smoking section to the front, behind the engine room. An Arcola heater and a 32-volt General Electric lighting system provided for the comfort and convenience of the passengers. A door at the rear of the car afforded

access to any trailer or car which might be coupled behind the motor.

Within two weeks of each other, in July of 1927, both cars had emerged from the shops. On the 27th of that month the M-30, with a McKeen trailer, was placed in service on Trains 517 and 518 between Kearney and Stapleton, replacing the steam-powered passenger train which had been working the run. Not since the advent of Motor Car 1 twenty-two years earlier had a motor car attracted so much professional interest. The *Loup Valley Queen*, in the edition of August 5, 1927, reported:

A lot of dignitaries have been riding up and down the line on the new motor since it was put in service last week. The Hall-Scott Company which manufactures the engine is represented by an expert; also the General Electric Company which made the dynamo and motors; the carburetor manufacturers have their man to see how that part of the engine performs, and the Union Pacific's Superintendent of Motive Power and various other officials have been making trips with the new machine occasionally.

The McKeen trailer was used with the new motor car for the first two months of operation, although on Mondays an extra express car had to be added to handle the heavy shipments of cream which had accumulated at stations along the line on Saturday nights, when farm families came to town to do their weekly shopping and socializing. Then, on September 23rd, the *Loup Valley Queen* described a new trailer which had been assigned to the run:

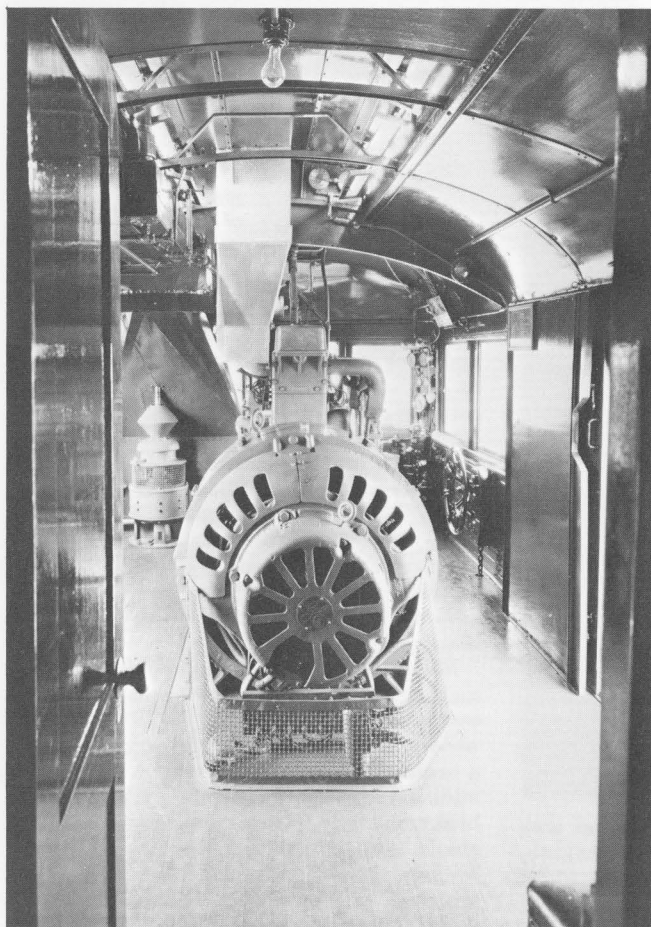
A baggage, mail and express car, especially designed to go with the new motor on this branch was put in service this week. The car is longer than the ordinary baggage car, and is made so that it harmonizes in construction and color with the motor and its passenger compartment.

As is often the case with new mechanical equipment, a few minor defects soon appeared. During mid-autumn of 1927 some difficulty was encountered with

the vacuum fuel feed system on the engine. The motor was returned to the U.P. shops in January of 1928 and was replaced by a steam train. In less than three weeks, however, it was back on the run after having undergone some modifications in the shops, the most notable of which was its conversion to the use of distillate for fuel. On February 24, 1928, two weeks after the motor had returned to service, this intriguing item appeared in the Oconto News section of the *Loup Valley Queen*:

Last Saturday the large motor was up the branch on a speed test, and from the way it passed through town, one would have thought that we were living on the main line.

From the foregoing, one could arrive at several conclusions as to why this rather puzzling "speed test" was made. Possibly the motor regularly assigned to the morning passenger run out of Kearney had suffered another breakdown, and after a trip to the shops, was making a test run before going back into service the following week. Another possibility would be a change in assignments from one of the new motors to the other, with the latter making a shakedown run prior to taking over. The only other assumption remaining would seem to be that both the M-29 and M-30 had seen action on the branch the same day, with one operating on its regular assignment while the other, perhaps, had made a trial run before being placed in service else-



Manufactured by the J.G. Brill Company of Philadelphia in 1928, the M-40, like this Brill car interior view, featured an engine room and cab that were quite roomy.
- Union Pacific Railroad

where. At any rate, both cars were alternately in service on the Kearney Branch in their early years of operation. The M-30 later went to the Kansas Division where it worked in branch line service until the close of its career, while the M-29 virtually became an institution on the Kearney Branch for more than a quarter-century. Thanks largely to these two outstanding cars, the motor car had finally achieved full respectability on the Union Pacific Railroad. Ironically, however, this had come about just as the automobile had become such a formidable competitor that the handwriting was already on the wall, as far as branchline passenger business was concerned.

The veteran McKean cars, meanwhile, were also steadily becoming more dependable, thanks to various refinements and improvements, particularly in the internal combustion engine. By the close of 1927, no less an old, established motor car detractor than the *Loup Valley Queen* was boasting of the achievements of Motor M-6, stating that the car had been in service on the branch for approximately fifteen months without missing a trip. This would also indicate that the motor had turned in more than 73,000 miles during this remarkable performance. When the M-6 finally went to the Omaha shops on June 1, 1928, the Callaway newspaper, in a complete turnabout from bygone days, paid this tribute to the venerable motor in its issue of June 8th:

Give a thought to this, you birds who have been wont to make slighting remarks about the "little" motor that serves the Kearney-Stapleton branch, calling it the "tater bug" and such like; and then trot out the steam locomotive that can make as good a record as told below.

On the afternoon of October 23rd, 1926, Motor Car No. 6 came out of the Omaha shops and was put in service again after being out a few days for an overhauling. The car then made every scheduled trip from Stapleton to Kearney and return until last Friday, June 1st, 1928, when it was taken in again to be overhauled.

By the time the car was taken out of service, it had accumulated a total of 93,000 uninterrupted route-miles. Not overlooking the men who had been at the controls of the car during its outstanding exploit, the *Queen* handed them this plaudit:

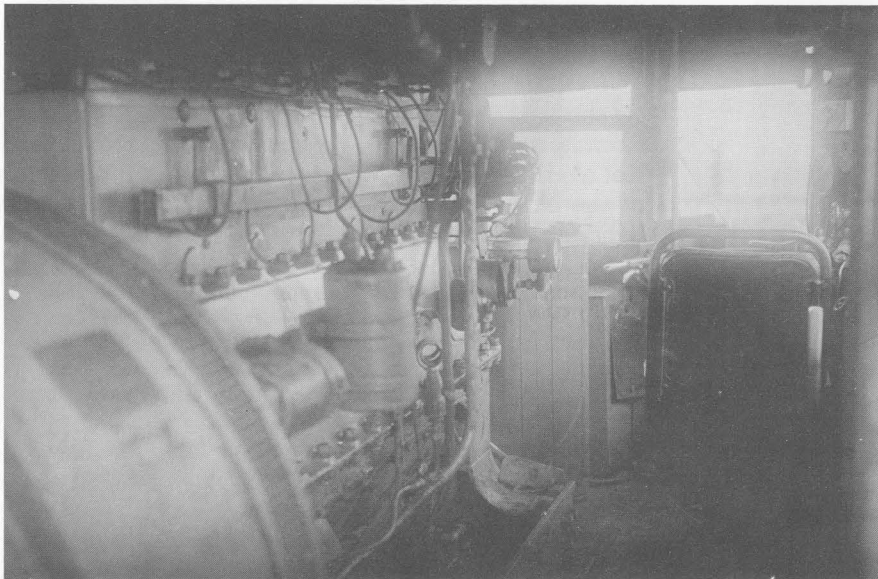
Probably the good hands that the old car has been in have a big lot to do with the excellent service it has given. Motormen Don Warren and Louis Martin have run the car for several years, with the former being on it most of the time the past year, since Martin does the relief turns now on both the motor runs.

When the M-6 returned to service again on July 3rd, the Callaway weekly described some modifications it had received while in the shops:

... The car has had its engine and other mechanism thoroughly overhauled and the body has been remodeled and painted. The smoking room which was formerly located in the front end of the passenger compartment has been moved to the rear of the car, and the space which it formerly took up has been added to the baggage room. This still leaves ample room for passengers and gives needed extra space for baggage, express and mail. Motor No. 6 is the fastest car that has been used on this line and can make up a lot of running time when necessary, if it gets a late start or is otherwise delayed.



The M-29, with Railway Post Office car in tow, had already donned a pilot plow for winter operation when viewed as Train 518 at Callaway on an autumn morning in 1946. The slightly battered nose probably resulted from a previous altercation with a highway vehicle at a grade crossing. The Model A Ford at left, previously modified into a homemade pickup, conveyed the U.S. mail between the trains and the Callaway post office.

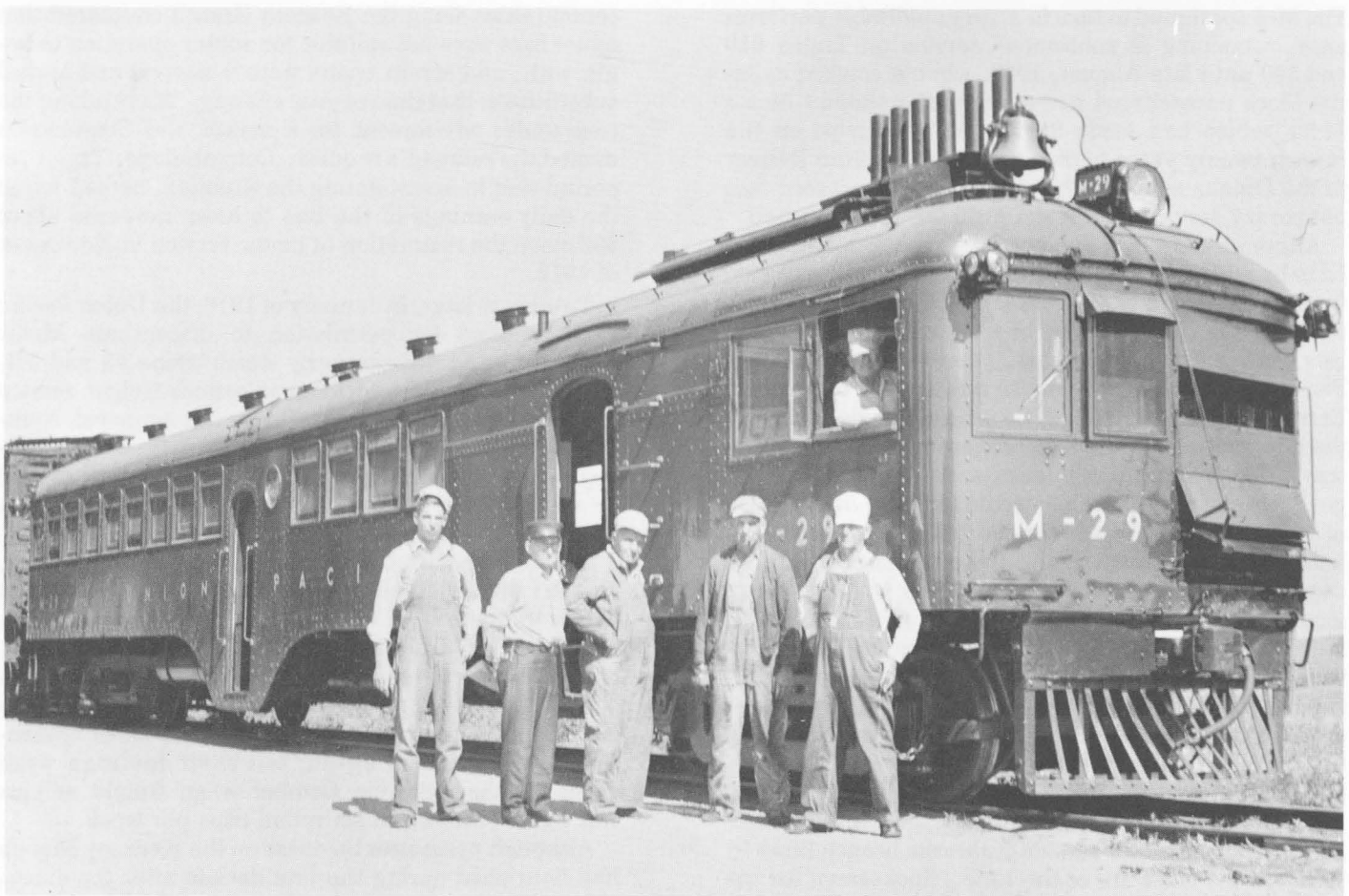


Conditions were crowded for the motorman in the M-29's cab. His seat was just ahead and to the right of the car's 300-horsepower Hall-Scott engine.

- Albert C. Phelps Photo

OPPOSITE PAGE: An idyllic Sunday morning in Stapleton, June 25, 1950, presented an interesting scenario down at the depot. In the top photo, M-29 has just arrived as Train 517, turned on the wye, and backed to the station where it coupled to an ancient box car. The demise of railway mail service on the branch in 1947 eliminated the trailer behind the motor. However, on the eastbound Sunday run, a box car usually handled cream, express and small freight shipments. The car had arrived in Stapleton the previous afternoon on Train 95 and was spotted in front of the depot by the mixed, to await the motor's arrival and trail it back to Kearney.

Meanwhile, on the same day, M-29 was making its first trip up the branch after an overhaul in the shops. As the bottom photo shows, several other employees, including a brakeman, were aboard that morning in addition to the regular two-man crew. A brakeman joined the crew only when livestock was to be picked up along the branch. Posing with M-29 at Stapleton are, left to right: Walt Miller, brakeman; G.D. Condron, conductor; C.W. Pierce, Kearney engine house foreman; Karl Wiesbaum, Stapleton engine house foreman; and Ted Britt, road foreman of engines. In the cab is engineer Or Cummings.





In the spring of 1952, the M-41 joined M-29 in Kearney Branch service after having made the last run by a motor car on the Stromsburg Branch that January. On July 4, 1952, M-41 was proudly displaying American flags while

running as Train 519 west of Callaway. For a number of years, U.P. passenger trains carried Old Glory in their signal flag holders on Independence Day.

The M-6 continued to turn in a very creditable performance, remaining in continuous service on Trains 519 and 520 until late August, 1929, when a cracked cylinder block necessitated its return to the shops. Motor M-22, which had made its first revenue trips on the branch twenty years earlier, was enroute from Denver to the Omaha shops at the time, and was pressed into temporary service on the run until the M-6 returned.

Although the motor car, upon its inception, had proved to be an instant financial, if not mechanical, success, its career on the Kearney branch, with a six-months interruption in 1912, had only been in existence for a little less than eight and one-half years when the Union Pacific made its first attempt to terminate it altogether. Early in 1914 a group of U.P. officials made a trip up the line, calling upon business men in towns along the way and sounding out local sentiment about the possibility of discontinuing motor service. At the close of 1913 the railroad had reduced freight service on the line to a tri-weekly basis and the officials claimed that despite this cut in service, the company was still losing money on the passenger business. On January 23, 1914, a hearing was held before Nebraska State Railway Commissioner H. G. Taylor in Kearney. U.P. representatives claimed that neither the motor car nor the steam passenger train had paid expenses during the previous five months and that a reduction of service was mandatory. The railroad also presented testimony to the effect that during the winter months it was necessary to replace motor cars on Nebraska branch lines by steam trains one-third of the time. Spokesmen for the

communities along the Kearney Branch countered that motor cars were not suitable for winter operation to begin with, and steam trains were a natural and logical substitute at that time of year anyway. After taking the case under advisement for a month, the Commission denied the railroad's request. Commissioner Taylor reported that in investigating the situation, he had found the daily earnings of the line to have increased about \$52 since the restoration of motor service in November of 1912.

Two years later, in January of 1916, the Union Pacific again applied for permission to discontinue Motor Trains 517 and 518 (formerly steam trains 53 and 54), indicating it would be willing to restore freight service to six round trips per week. Under this proposal, Numbers 95 and 96 would be operated as daily-except-Sunday mixed trains, carrying pouch and local mail as well as freight, express and passengers. Once again, a hearing was scheduled to be held in Kearney; however, a few days prior to the scheduled date of the hearing, January 26th, the railroad withdrew its application and began to operate an extra freight train up the branch each Monday, and back to Kearney the following day, thereby giving the branch a total of four freight trains in each direction per week. When the extra freight was discontinued three months later the tempers of branch-line patrons flared again, but their feelings were assuaged the following October when freight service was again restored to six round trips per week.

Although passenger business on the Kearney Branch had flourished during the first decade after the exten-



For several weeks during the summer of 1952, Trailer T-16 replaced the usual box car on Train 518 on Sunday mornings. The T-16 was one of eight 71-foot Railway Post Office-baggage trailers constructed for U.P. by the Pullman Company in 1928. On July 5, 1952, T-16 was deadheading to Stapleton on the tail end of Train 95 (above). The following day, it came rolling back coupled behind the M-41, seen west of Callaway while en route to Kearney (below).



WESTWARD					KEARNEY BRANCH			EASTWARD			
Length of sidings in feet and loca- tion of water, fuel, interlocking plants, turning stations, scales and telephones.	SECOND CLASS	FIRST CLASS		Distance from Kearney	Time-Table No. 134 Oct. 14, 1934			Distance from Stapleton	SECOND CLASS		
	95	519	517		STATIONS				518	96	
	Mixed	Motor Passenger	Motor Passenger						Motor Mixed	Mixed	
	Daily Except Sunday	Daily Except Sunday	Sunday								
WFO	4.30AM	4.00PM	6.30AM	0.0	DN-R	KEARNEY	Kr	102.4	A 10.15AM	A 9.30PM	
1,363	f 4.45	f 4.10	f 6.40	5.5		5.5 GLENWOOD PARK		96.9	f 9.37	f 8.25	
1,036 P	s 4.55	s 4.17	s 6.48	10.1		4.6 RIVERDALE		92.3	s 9.29	s 8.10	
1,354	s 5.20	s 4.28	s 7.00	16.8	D	6.7 AMHERST	Hr	85.6	s 9.17	s 7.50	
654 W	f 5.35	f 4.38	f 7.11	22.7		5.9 WATERTOWN		79.7	f 9.06	f 7.30	
1,621	s 5.50	s 4.45	s 7.18	26.3	D	3.6 MILLER	Mr	76.1	s 8.59	s 7.20	
1,955	s 6.05	s 4.57	s 7.30	32.5	D	6.2 SUMNER	Su	69.9	s 8.47	s 7.00	
1,354	s 6.30	s 5.09	s 7.45	40.4	D	7.9 EDDYVILLE	Vd	62.0	s 8.32	s 6.40	
1,094 W	f 6.41	f 5.17	f 7.55	45.9		5.5 LOMAX		56.5	f 8.22	f 6.15	
2,063	s 7.03	s 5.29	s 8.11	52.1	D	6.2 OCONTO	Bs	50.3	s 8.11	s 6.00	
769	f 7.17	f 5.42	f 8.23	59.1		7.0 LODI		43.3	f 7.58	f 5.42	
594 WFP	s 7.45	s 5.56	s 8.36	65.5	D	6.4 CALLAWAY	Ca	36.9	s 7.45	s 5.25	
1,932 P	s 8.40	f 6.08	s 8.47	73.1		7.6 MILLDALE		29.3	s 7.25	f 5.06	
1,048	f 8.45	f 6.13	f 8.52	75.8		2.7 FINCHVILLE		26.6	f 7.20	f 5.00	
2,049 WP	s 9.45	s 6.26	s 9.04	83.1	D	7.3 ARNOLD	Ad	19.3	s 7.06	s 4.45	
2,053 P	s 10.10	f 6.40	s 9.17	90.6		7.5 LOGAN		11.8	s 6.51	f 4.26	
556	f 10.30	f 6.50	f 9.24	94.6		4.0 HOAGLAND		7.8	f 6.44	f 4.18	
819 P	f 10.50	f 6.59	s 9.32	99.2		4.6 GANDY		3.2	s 6.37	f 4.08	
2,051 WY	A 11.30AM	A 7.10PM	A 9.40AM	102.4	D-R	3.2 STAPLETON	Sn	0.0	6.30AM	4.00PM	
						(102.4)			Daily	Daily Except Saturday	
	(7.00) 14.5	(8.10) 32.3	(8.10) 32.3	Thru Time.....				(3.45) 27.3	(5.30) 18.5	
				Average speed per hour.....						

Westward trains are superior to trains of the same class in the opposite direction—See Rule 72

Except that No. 518 is superior to No. 95.

"Motor Mixed" service, which mainly involved the transportation of cattle to market behind the eastbound motor, was designated as such in U.P. employee

timetables, as shown in this 1934 Nebraska Division schedule.

sion to Stapleton was completed, the automobile was beginning to make inroads. On December 9, 1921 the *Loup Valley Queen* reported:

When the Thursday evening motor left going west, there was but one passenger on it.

And on January 6, 1922 the Callaway paper carried this item:

The motor arrived at Callaway from the west this morning without a single passenger aboard and no one boarded here.

While these were undoubtedly isolated instances, they seemed to indicate a slowly growing trend and the Union Pacific was contending that its branch line passenger traffic in Nebraska was steadily decreasing. Meeting with Kearney business men to discuss the situation that same month, railroad officials claimed that the average number of passengers carried on the branch per day had declined from seventy in 1917 to thirty-one at the end of 1921. According to the *Kearney Hub*, General Manager W. M. Jeffers prophetically stated:

... "The auto has become a great factor competitively. If the railroad of the future can't live in competition with the auto, then it must give way to the new condition."

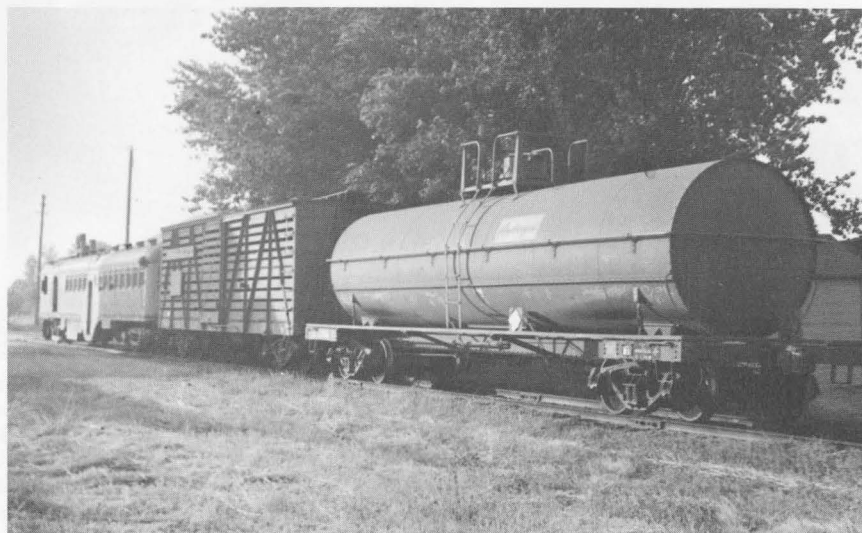
The *Loup Valley Queen*, commenting upon the Kearney conference in its subsequent edition of January 20th, offered this rebuttal:

Without doubt the passenger traffic has fallen off to a considerable extent, and perhaps the railroads deserve some "sympathy," but no more so than does the farmer or any other business man, especially when it is the exorbitant freight and passenger rates which form one of the chief barriers to return of prosperity in other lines. Obviously it is also unfair to compare for such a purpose the travel in 1917 with that at the present time. At that time business in all lines was at the very peak, and in addition, railroad fare was 2 cents a mile, the latter being a highly significant fact. Why compare the number of passengers in 1917 with the number of passengers in 1922, when the rates for the two years are not the same? Is 70 passengers at 2 cents a mile so very much more than half the number of passengers at almost twice the rate per mile?



M-29 prepares to leave Callaway on January 21, 1950, with two cars of cattle picked up at some other point up the line. The "Motor Mixed" service on Train 518 continued in effect through the last motor trip on the branch.

Although Train 519 was not designated as a "Mixed," it occasionally operated in this capacity in late years with "hot" freight on days when the westbound tri-weekly mixed was not scheduled. On August 3, 1955, M-29 arrived at Callaway trailing a car of propane separated from the motor by an empty stock car serving as an idler.



Expressing resentment over the fact that the U.P. officials had met with Kearney representatives but had made no attempt to solicit the views of residents along the branch, the Callaway newspaper continued:

Another thing that the company should be called upon to explain . . . is this: According to the figures presented by them, it costs twice as much to run a steam train as it does to operate a motor car. If this is true, and it probably is, it would cost no more to run two motors than to run one steam train. If it is practical to take off one motor and change the steam train on the motor's time, then it is equally practical to run two motors, simply substituting a motor which they now have idle in the shops for the steam train now in use. This would make the saving that is claimed to be so necessary, without harming the service appreciably.

In response to a formal application by the U.P. for permission to remove the evening westbound motor train, Number 519, and the morning eastbound motor, Number 520, the Nebraska State Railway Commission scheduled a hearing for February 10, 1922 in Kearney. Once again, as in 1914, Commissioner H. G. Taylor presided over the hearing. Railroad officials reiterated their previous statements to Kearney business men concerning the adverse effect the automobile was having on branchline passenger patronage. Taking issue with these claims, the *Loup Valley Queen* scoffed, a week later:

The way to save the Union Pacific Railroad Company from impending ruin has at last been discovered, or at least one would be about justified in thinking so, after reports from the hearing on the branch service at Kearney last Friday have been digested.

The method, in brief, would be about like this: Abolish all automobiles; take all trains, excepting one, off every branch line; raise the rates with the sky the limit; and let the people pay the bill.

Not until five months later, in July of 1922, was a decision forthcoming from the Railway Commission. Rejecting the railroad's application to discontinue the trains, the Commission stated that their removal would inconvenience the citizens along the branch to a considerable extent. Reference was also made to the healthy financial status of the Union Pacific and the fact that freight, express and mail revenues earned by the branch had been considerable. However, in a summation of the case in its Fifteenth Annual Report, the Commission closed with this prediction:

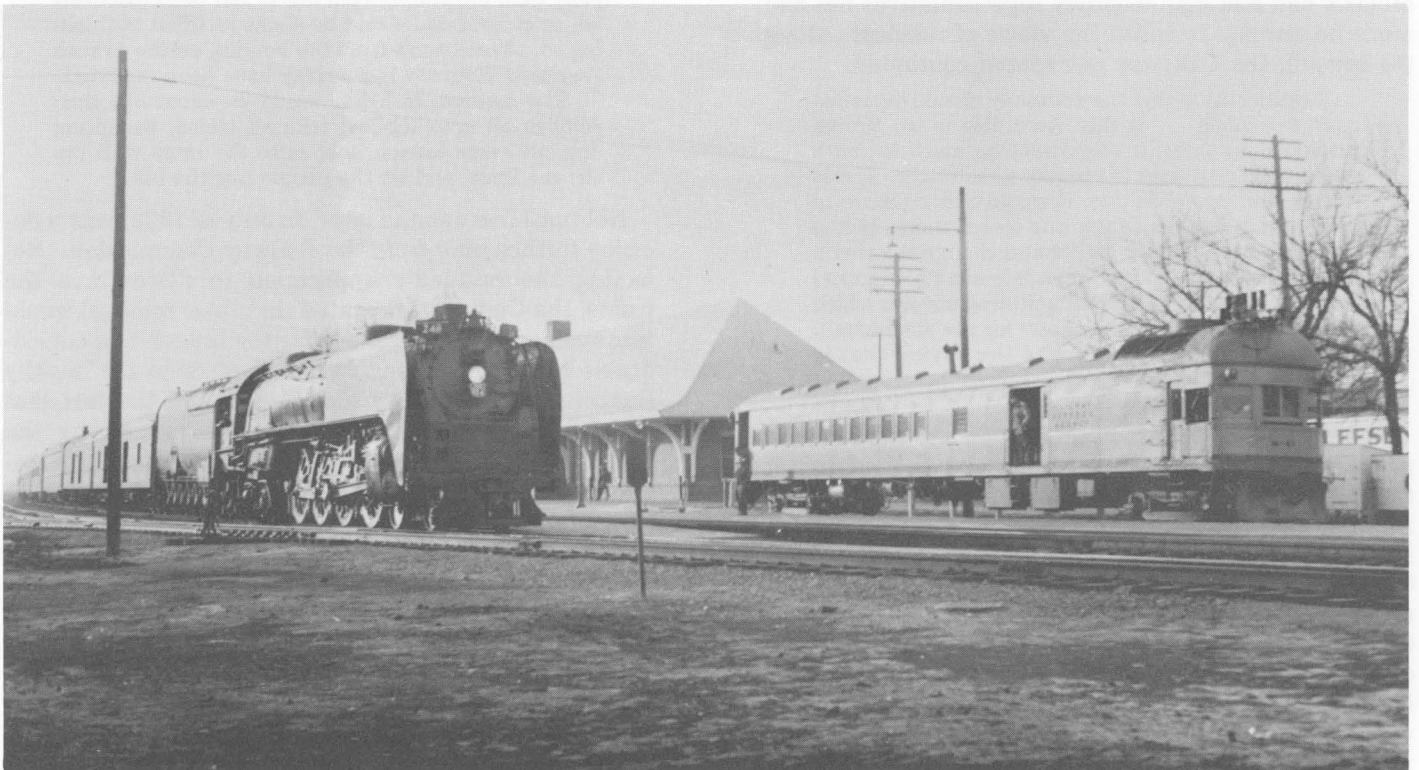
. . . if the use of the automobile continues to expand it will result necessarily in a curtailment of railroad passenger service. It constitutes a menace to short-haul traffic and the public should begin to take it into consideration.

Near the close of 1925, Union Pacific officials held a series of informal meetings with local residents at various points along the entire system to discuss the



The U.P. yard in Kearney was a very busy train-watching site on the afternoon of November 12, 1954. (Above:) As Motor M-41 was backing from the roundhouse to the station on the K.&B.H. spur, prior to departure for Stapleton, 4-12-2 9509 came thundering through town with a westbound main line freight. Meanwhile, yard engine 433, a 2-8-0, was working the house track at the freight depot, in the background.

(Below:) Number 519's connection from the west, Train 24, the *Gold Coast*, soon arrived in Kearney behind the 824, one of the U.P.'s versatile 4-8-4's. Shortly thereafter, both trains would depart simultaneously, one an eastbound, the other westbound, although both would leave the depot headed in the same direction.



possibility of an overall reduction in passenger service. On December 4th one such meeting was held with representatives of the Kearney Branch at Callaway but no concrete action resulted, and not until four years later was another attempt made to reduce service on the line. Early in 1930 an application for permission to curtail freight service on the branch to a tri-weekly basis again was submitted to the Nebraska State Railway Commission but it was withdrawn almost immediately. Instead, on January 23rd, a proposal to discontinue Motor Trains 519 and 520 was submitted. During a subsequent hearing in Callaway on January 22nd, the railroad claimed the trains had been losing \$6,000 per year and revenues had decreased dramatically since 1921. Branchline residents responded to this by stating that the loss of the service would create a considerable hardship and that any financial losses incurred by the trains were more than offset by the overall profits the railroad was realizing from the branch as a whole. During the course of the hearing an interesting counter suggestion was advanced: namely, that the motor service be extended, in fact, from Kearney to Hastings, via the Gibbon cut-off. Once again, the Commission denied the Union Pacific's application for discontinuance, stating:

As has already been shown, the company is operating these motor trains at no direct loss; in fact, they are being operated at a profit, and they are a feeder and necessary adjunct to their main line. The general condition of the company does not call for any drastic economies.

Regarding the steadily increasing competition from highway transportation, the Commission opined:

... In most cases of this kind brought before the Commission, the highly improved gravel roads, the use of the auto, the truck and bus are usually important factors in taking business from the road, but in this case conditions are different. The roads are not highly improved very much of the distance. No trucking of any considerable amount is being done as the towns are located too far from the market for that class of transportation, and while it is true that the automobile has, to some extent, taken passenger business from the road, yet it is a much less degree than is taking place along a good many of the other branch lines.

Apparently, the suggestion raised in the Callaway hearing that motor service be extended from Kearney to Hastings, received a favorable reaction in Union Pacific official circles. An application for permission to initiate such service was filed by the railroad on April 12th, and just two days later the Railway Commission ruled favorably upon the request. That same afternoon, April 14, 1930, Train 518 inaugurated through Stapleton-Hastings motor passenger service, pausing in Kearney for fifty minutes before resuming its journey southeastward to the Adams County seat. With the run terminating in Hastings at 6 p.m., no change was made in the former schedule which called for a 12:05 p.m. departure from Stapleton and arrival in Kearney at 3:55 p.m. Train 517 departed from the new eastern terminus at 6:30 the next morning, arriving in Kearney at 8 o'clock. Interestingly, forty-five minutes were chopped from 517's running time between Kearney and Stapleton, with the train leaving Kearney at 8:15 a.m. instead of 7:30 as on the old schedule, but with the

11:35 a.m. arrival in Stapleton unchanged. Running on a faster schedule, the motor regained all but two of the lost minutes by the time it arrived in Arnold and from Logan to Stapleton the old schedule remained in effect. Considering the twelve scheduled and four flag stops on the 102-mile trip, the running time of four hours and five minutes was most impressive. Hastings residents now had direct connections with U.P. main line passenger trains at Kearney, while patrons along the branch had a through outlet to Hastings. The Hastings-Stapleton service was destined to remain in effect for the better part of a dozen years.

In mid-1931 the Union Pacific once again proposed to cut motor service on the branch in half, this time as part of a general program of passenger service curtailment on most Nebraska branch lines as well as on the main line. By now, the universal use of the automobile and the Great Depression which had descended upon the nation, were having a combined devastating effect upon railroad passenger business across the country. In a hearing held before the State Railway Commission in Kearney on July 1st, U.P. representatives maintained that an annual saving of \$16,000 would be effected by the discontinuation of Trains 519 and 520. During the course of the hearing, however, a compromise was worked out between U.P. officials and representatives of the branch line communities. As a result, Number 517, the westbound morning motor was eliminated as a daily train but was placed on a Sunday-only schedule. The morning eastbound, Number 520, was likewise discontinued, but the afternoon westbound, Number 519, now operated out of Hastings, with only a slight revision in the Kearney-Stapleton schedule. Number 518, the afternoon eastbound, now operated on a daily basis with a slight revision in the Stapleton-Kearney schedule, but with the old schedule between Kearney and Hastings unchanged. Mixed Train Number 95 now left Kearney four hours earlier, at 4:30 a.m., arriving in Stapleton at 11:45 a.m. on a schedule which had been lengthened 15 minutes. The mixed now handled the morning mail and express which had previously been carried on Number 517. The eastbound mixed, Number 96, remained on its old schedule, but the Saturday run was eliminated and, instead, the train now operated on Sunday, on the same schedule. For the first time in its history, the Kearney branch had a regularly scheduled Sunday service and within weeks, Number 517 was handling the mail, replacing a highly unsatisfactory Sunday-only highway star route service which had been in effect for several years. Despite the loss of half the passenger service, the *Stapleton Enterprise*, in its issue of July 2, 1931, expressed approval of the change for the most part, especially the new Sunday morning eastbound mixed train:

... This freight will have passenger and mail accommodations and will connect with the fast freight trains to Omaha and Kansas City, thereby giving the stockmen of this line the opportunity of reaching the Monday markets with their stock, a fact that is much appreciated.

The *Enterprise* also enthusiastically accepted the promises and reassurances of Union Pacific officials at face value in a trusting attitude which was destined to be rudely jolted in years to come:

The railroad officials also promised to put stock yards along the line in A-1 shape and put in water, lights and new unloading chutes where it is requested. The proposed change was put to a vote of those patrons present and it was unanimously agreed upon that it was the best possible solution to the problem.

A guarantee was made by the officials that the noon train will arrive on time, adding that this is demanded by the Government if they are to continue with the mail contract. They were very courteous and willing to cooperate with the patrons in every way.

The representatives present at the meeting feel that the assembly went a long way toward overcoming old prejudices between the patrons and the railroad and believe that this is just the beginning of a new era of good will and understanding between the two.

The *Loup Valley Queen*, however, failed to share the fervor of the Logan County newspaper, having learned through somewhat longer experience that a wide variation can exist between promise and performance. Skepticism was very much in evidence in its edition of July 3, 1931:

We have been checking the freight going west the past few weeks and with but one exception the train has arrived in Callaway from two to more than four hours late each day, and this is no exception, so when the new ruling goes into effect we can figure on getting our morning mail any time from early morning until closing time at night. Especially will this be true at Arnold and Stapleton. From the schedule at hand, the freight that is to carry the mail will leave Kearney at about four o'clock, and on the present schedule we should receive our mail about noon. Also under the new schedule no outgoing freight can be shipped on Saturday, but must lay over and go down on Sunday.

The evening motor, under the guiding hand of Commissioner Hugh Drake, who hails from Kearney, was saved wholly for the business interests of Kearney and will arrive in Callaway at the usual hour.

If by any chance the freight carrying our mail would arrive within two or three hours of schedule time each day, we will not have such a bad schedule after all, and in case of emergency, why write, use the telephone.

After the new schedule went into effect on July 15th, however, the *Queen* softened its attitude somewhat. Expressing approval, in particular, of the westbound Sunday morning motor service, the Callaway paper went on to state:

The new train schedule on this branch went into effect Wednesday, and we believe that most of the people of this community are well pleased with the change, and should the Union Pacific arrange the schedule so that the freight that carries our mail will arrive somewhere near on schedule, we will have no kick coming. The train arrived one hour and twenty-five minutes late yesterday morning.

The troubled 1930's were not only having a disastrous effect upon railroad passenger revenues but they were also a time of adverse weather conditions which were plaguing the farmer, ravaging his crops and curtailing rail freight shipments as a direct result. Although the great drouth of this era did not make itself fully felt until the middle of the decade, the scourge of grasshoppers which had afflicted the area a half-century earlier was beginning to repeat itself. However,

even this adversity had at least some small benefits; if nothing else, it provided the motor car saga with one of its lighter moments, as narrated in the *Loup Valley Queen* on July 17, 1931:

HENS DINE OFF ENGINE

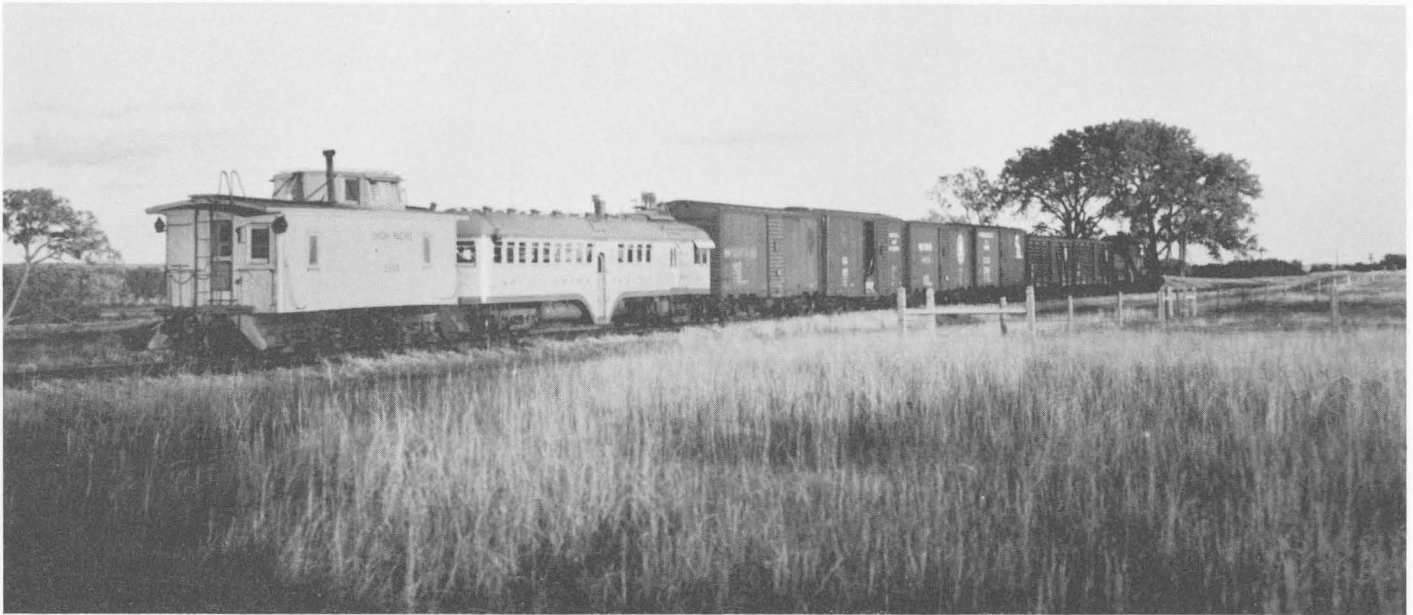
Stapleton.--Every day a flock of chickens goes down to meet the incoming Union Pacific motor train here.

Grasshoppers have become so thick that the radiator of the engine acts as a wholesale trap for them. The chickens have found meals easy by simply meeting the motor and picking the grasshoppers off the screen.

The other day the engineer backed the train into town. The flock of chickens couldn't understand this, and that day went without their meal.

The automobile had long since lured away the traveling salesmen who had provided the branch line trains with a considerable portion of their baggage business in former years. As a result, the baggageman on the motor saw his job eliminated during the fall of 1932 and his duties were thereafter assumed by the conductor. Despite the trend of change and decline, some very interesting years of motor car operation still lay ahead. In mid-April of 1933, a major change was made in the schedules of the eastbound motor and the mixed train. Motor 518 now left Stapleton at 6:00 a.m., arriving in Kearney at 10 o'clock, while Number 96 was placed on an afternoon schedule, leaving Stapleton at 4:00 p.m. and slated for a 9:30 evening arrival in Kearney. More importantly, however, Number 518 was now designated as "Motor Mixed" on employees timetables, as the train would now handle livestock shipments, mainly small, rush consignments. This service proved quite popular with shippers during the remaining twenty-two years of motor car operation and residents along the branch soon became accustomed to the rather incongruous sight of the eastbound motor trailing anywhere from one to four or five stock cars from time to time. A brakeman was added to the crew on days when livestock was to be shipped. When maximum shipments of three to five cars were handled, Callaway area residents, because of the five-mile climb east of town, with a ruling grade of .05%, were treated to a most unusual bit of railroading. On such occasions the motor would stop about a mile west of the station, uncouple the stock cars and leave them, proceed into Callaway to handle the station work, and then back out to the cars again. After recoupling, the motor would come roaring back through town, gathering speed for the run up the hill in a spectacle of sight and sound not easily forgotten!

When the Union Pacific's first streamlined passenger train, with its distillate-burning power unit, the M-10,000, arrived on the system in 1934, the motor car legend received added lustre. Not only was the train a direct descendant of the motor cars, in many respects, even to the point of using the M- prefix for numbering the engine unit, but the first enginemen on this train and its immediate successors came from the ranks of veteran motormen. When the new train was on an exhibition tour of the nation early in 1934, the following article appeared in the *Kearney Daily Hub* on February 15th and was reprinted in the *Stapleton Enterprise* a week later:



Although breakdowns were the bane of McKeen motor car operation in the early years, they became less frequent with later cars. Nevertheless, the malady persisted on occasion. On October 10, 1954, usually-dependable M-29 suffered the ignominy of being towed back to Kearney by Train 96 after an engine failure earlier that day (above). On March 5, 1955, Motor M-41 required a helping hand by Engine 460 on the return trip to Kearney after failing to make it all the way to Stapleton under its own power the previous evening (right).



A lone passenger for Stapleton waits to board Number 519 as M-41 arrives at the Arnold Depot on April 7, 1955. Although patronage of the motors was already virtually extinct, an application to discontinue Trains 517-518-519 would not be filed by U.P. until that October.



In a scene from a long-running drama that was repeated with a variety of actors, Train 519 arrives at Callaway on March 30, 1955, with the mixed, Number 96, waiting on

the passing track. As soon as M-29 clears the switch, Engine 414 with train will head for Kearney, while the motor continues on to Stapleton.

KEARNEY MAN AT THROTTLE OF THE U.P. SPEED TRAIN

When the new Union Pacific streamline train rolls into Kearney on its nation-wide inspection tour, Harry Robinson, of this city, will be at the controls.

Mr. Robinson, who is recognized as somewhat of an authority in motor propelled railway equipment, has seen the streamline speed train in its construction, having been stationed at the manufacturing plant for some time.

When the train started on its first test run he was its engineer and since that time he has been at the throttle. Today the new train makes its run to Washington, President Roosevelt being among the distinguished citizens to inspect the equipment.

This significant postscript was added by the *Enterprise*:

Mr. Robinson is well known in Stapleton, having resided here a number of years ago. He was motorman on the Kearney-Stapleton branch for a long time.

During the final decade of motor service on the Kearney Branch, some innovative modifications were made in the "Motor Mixed" operation. If more than the maximum four or five cars of stock were to be shipped from points west of Callaway, a steam train substituted for the motor, carrying a combination car or caboose for passengers. However, if less than four cars of livestock were to be loaded west of Callaway, but more loads were to be picked up between there and Kearney, the

motor would operate as usual. Meanwhile, a steam locomotive would run light to Callaway, turn on the wye there, and await the motor's arrival from the west. When Number 518 arrived, the locomotive would couple onto the train, the motor car's engine would be stopped, and the motorman could relax in the passenger compartment as the train steamed merrily down the branch. Westbounds 517 and 519 continued to be designated as motor passenger trains, although they, too, became mixed trains on rare occasions. One spring evening in the latter 1930's, Motors M-29 and M-16 doubleheaded up the branch on Number 519 with eight cars of inbound cattle, destined for a feedlot on the upper end of the line. On later occasions, Number 519's consist might include a tank car of propane or gasoline, usually separated from the motor car by an empty stock car serving as an idler.

On the eve of America's entry into World War II, the Union Pacific sought to discontinue most of the motor trains operating on its Nebraska branch lines, including the Hastings-Stapleton run. A hearing before representatives of the Nebraska State Railway Commission in Callaway on October 20, 1941 drew nearly 500 delegates from communities along the line, 178 of whom arrived aboard a special train from Kearney. Interest in the proceedings ran high, with the total crowd at the hearing estimated to be a phenomenal 2,000 people.

However, little or no interest was manifested by residents along the Kearney-Hastings segment and four months later, on February 13, 1942, the Railway Commission granted the U.P. permission to discontinue Trains 517, 518 and 519 between those two points. The application for permission to discontinue motor service between Kearney and Stapleton however, was continued for further study until October 1, 1942, according to the Thirty-Sixth Annual Report of the Commission:

... in order that the record might be more fully developed as to effects on transportation in the communities served as the result of the declaration of war, the critical shortage of rubber, and the ultimate rationing of automobiles, transportation facilities, and a long list of commodities in general.

In April, 1942, an agreement was reached between representatives of the branch line communities and the railroad, whereby the Saturday run of Train 519 was discontinued and Number 518 was eliminated on Monday. This ended the necessity of operating two motor cars over the weekend, with one car making a round trip on Sunday mornings thereafter. On October 28th a second hearing was held in Kearney with the Commission again taking the case under advisement. Surprisingly, however, on March 16, 1943 the Union Pacific filed a request for dismissal of the application which was immediately granted. During the ensuing war years, increased patronage justified the retention of the service, as the rationing of gasoline and auto tires brought many passengers back to the rails. In fact, motor passenger service on the Kearney branch was

destined to survive for a full decade after the war, interrupted only by a cloudburst in June of 1947 and the blizzards of early 1949.

During the latter half of 1946, residents along the upper end of the branch, from Callaway west, began to voice their desire for a reversal of the motor schedule, whereby the train would operate out of Kearney in the morning and back in the afternoon. For some time, Mixed Train 95 had been having difficulty in adhering to anything resembling a schedule, with the mail thus arriving at all hours of the day, irking the patrons on the western portion of the line especially, no end. However, residents of the communities east of Callaway preferred the status quo, mainly because the existing schedule enabled those who still patronized the motor to ride into Kearney and return the same day. A bone of contention which thus began to develop between the two factions on the branch was interrupted in late November when a nation-wide coal strike necessitated a temporary emergency revision in the branch line train schedules. Under this arrangement, which was especially welcomed from Callaway west, the motor left Kearney at 5 a.m., arriving in Stapleton at 8:30 a.m. and departing eastward again at 12 o'clock noon. The mixed train was curtailed to a tri-weekly schedule, operating on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday only, but with an extra freight running west on Saturday and east on Sunday, when needed for cattle shipments. The *Stapleton Enterprise* of November 28, 1946 printed a letter from H. E. Shumway, General Superintendent of Transportation of the Union Pacific, which outlined the railroad's position in this particular situation:



Another Merry Christmas is almost at hand, but the end of motor car service on the Kearney branch is only eight days away as Train 518, Motor M-41, passes through

open countryside and across the South Loup River near Finchville on December 23, 1955.



December 31, 1955: Train 518 bids a final farewell to the Callaway station which, for a half-century, had witnessed the arrival and departure of a long line of motor cars, from Number One to M-41. Several spectators were on hand to pay their respects, two or three cameras were in evidence, and a last can of cream was waiting to be loaded.

(Right:) A solitary spectator, perhaps fondly remembering bygone days, watches as Train 518 departs Oconto for the last time. (Below:) However, somewhat surprisingly, several teenagers are on hand as the M-41 bids farewell to the Miller depot, which would itself be closed and moved away from trackside within four years.



November 22, 1946

Mr. Mentor A. Brown,
Editor, The *Stapleton Enterprise*
Stapleton, Nebraska

Dear Mr. Brown:

Referring to your letter of November 18th and copy of the *Stapleton Enterprise*, issue of November 14th, pertaining to the late arrival of No. 95 at Stapleton.

As you know by now, the present critical situation brought about by the coal miners' strike has left no alternative, other than to make a radical curtailment in service whenever possible. Announcements have been made that Nos. 95-96 are to be operated tri-weekly on the Kearney Branch which, of course, will be for the purpose of giving the patrons the necessary freight service. The motor run is being reversed, leaving Kearney at 5 o'clock in the morning and returning from Stapleton at Noon, which, of course, gives you exactly the kind of mail service that you are requesting.

As you, no doubt, are aware, we have two factors which give us considerable trouble and concern.

First: Your difficulty with the present regular assigned service with late operation of No. 95 you, no doubt, realize, is due to extenuating circumstances, namely, continual rains and muddy and soft track which must be covered by slow orders, making it impossible to maintain the regular schedule and secondly, heavy freight business which slows up the movement at stations. Second: The patrons east of Callaway state they much prefer the present service and they, as well as the Chamber of Commerce at Kearney, protest any change in the motor service, for as you know, certain communities like to be able to go to Kearney to spend a few hours and be able to return home in the evening.

We also have many stock shippers who load their Kansas City and St. Joseph stock for No. 518 on the present schedule, which gives them a fine connection at Kearney and makes proper schedules. This morning I received a long distance call from a prominent stock shipper at Sumner, protesting the present change, even in an emergency.

I found also that No. 96 was doing so much work going eastbound, arriving Kearney with as high as 25 cars of stock, that the arrival at Kearney made it impossible for the crew to get their rest and get No. 95 started back on time. Consequently it was impossible to improve the arrival at Stapleton.

We were, however, working on a proposition to improve the performance of No. 96 and be able to get No. 95 out on time and Superintendent Bailey advised that they had discontinued doing any work with No. 95 that was not absolutely necessary, in an effort to make a more satisfactory arrival at Stapleton.

Of course, as I have previously stated, the strike conditions now have changed the entire picture and while the outlook is rather gloomy, I am sincerely in hopes that as soon as matters adjust themselves, we can compose the entire situation and give you satisfactory arrival of No. 95 at Stapleton.

I might suggest that there would be a possibility of getting the patrons east of Callaway to cooperate and go along with the present service now established in the emergency and see if it would be possible to get the combined approval of everyone on the branch as I am quite sure we would be perfectly willing to cooperate.

However, we could not give consideration to any additional train miles which would be involved, if we should have to operate a motor car twice daily out of Kearney westbound to satisfy all of our patrons.

I would be glad to hear from you if you have any other views or recommendations.

Yours very truly,
H. E. Shumway

By the first week in December of 1946 the coal strike had such a strangle hold on the nation as a whole and the railroads in particular that the Union Pacific announced the discontinuance of all regularly scheduled freight service on the Kearney Branch, with freight trains to be dispatched "only when sufficient tonnage has accumulated to warrant the use of coal-consuming locomotives." However, the strike was over one week later and service on the branch was back to normal, eliciting this reaction from the *Stapleton Enterprise*:

... That means, in effect, that rural mail patrons in the Stapleton area are once more on the customary day late schedule.

Seven months later, the mixed train's schedule would be permanently reduced to a tri-weekly status and the mail would be removed from the branch trains altogether, except for pouch mail on the Sunday morning motor.

Although the halcyon days of the Doodlebug on the Kearney Branch were long past as it entered its final decade of service, and it had seemingly outlived its usefulness, its imprint, nevertheless, was firmly stamped into local folklore. It had even won considerable affection and sympathy from the generation which had, in fact, abandoned it, if for no other reason than its having become part of a local way of life. An older generation still appreciatively remembered the transportation it had provided in an era when highways were virtually nonexistent in the area and the automobile was little more than a rich man's toy. The Toonerville Trolley-like intimacy it had maintained with residents along the line could still occasionally gain local newspaper space, as was the case with this item which appeared in the *Stapleton Enterprise* on February 6, 1947:

A young lady from Callaway whose parents expected her home on the Sunday morning motor, is reported to have slumbered peacefully as the train rumbled on its way past her destination. As a matter of fact, the train was nearing Stapleton by the time she finished her nap. So . . . she remained aboard for the return trip and history records that she finally arrived home.

Some of the tales attributed to the motor cars, on the other hand, were little more than Bunyanesque fables, to be taken with a generous serving of salt. The author overheard one such fabrication one pleasant Sunday morning in the summer of 1950, aboard the M-29 between Callaway and Stapleton. Kearney roundhouse foreman C. W. Pierce, riding the motor on its first trip after an overhaul, was regaling a relief conductor from Omaha, totally unfamiliar with the branch and the surrounding area, with a collection of tall tales about the Doodlebugs. With a straight face, the roundhouse foreman declared that the motor cars were directly responsible for the sparse population along the Kearney Branch. According to Pierce, the rough track and bouncing and bobbing motion of the motor cars made it impossible for mothers to effectively nurse their babies while riding the cars, with the result that many of the

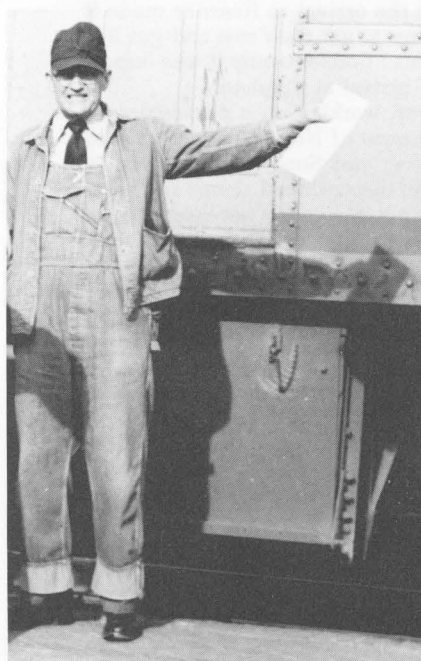
infants succumbed to starvation before reaching their destinations. Later that same morning, on the return trip from Stapleton, where a box car for handling cream and other express shipments had been coupled behind the M-29, the conductor fell victim to a practical joke perpetrated by the jocular roundhouse foreman. The trainman had fallen asleep in one of the rear seats, perhaps dreaming about the sad narrative he had heard a short while earlier, when Pierce stepped to the rear door of the motor and, with an impish grin, yanked it open. The sudden din coming through the open door from the trailing boxcar, bouncing and rattling along behind the motor, was deafening. The conductor, rudely jarred out of his peaceful nap and thinking the motor had derailed, jumped to his feet with a terrified expression on his face and screamed "Jesus Christ! We're on the ground!" The sight of his fellow passengers doubling up with laughter in their seats promptly brought to him the realization that he too had now become a part of the motor car legend.

After the conclusion of World War II in 1945, with rationing of gasoline and auto tires coming to an end and Americans once again returning to the highways in droves, it was becoming all too apparent that the hour of sunset was drawing near for the Day of the Doodlebug. One by one the motor cars disappeared from Union Pacific branch lines until, by the end of the first decade after the war, only two branch lines on the entire system still retained motor service; these being the Plainville Branch on the Kansas Division and the Kearney Branch itself. Thus it came as no great surprise when, on October 19, 1955, the U.P. formally applied to the Nebraska State Railway Commission for permission to discontinue Trains 517, 518 and 519. Alleging that the trains were losing between \$48,000 and \$49,000 annually, the railroad asserted that "for all practical purposes, the public has abandoned the trains in question, depending primarily upon private and

public motor vehicles for transportation of passengers and property." The railroad also maintained that the average passenger load had declined to less than three per trip. While there could be no quarrel with the statement that the private automobile had drained away the branchline passenger business, the reference to public highway transportation, where the Kearney Branch was concerned, was totally erroneous. An attempt by a bus line, P.C.T. Stages of Grand Island, to obtain permission to establish daily round-trip bus service between Kearney and North Platte via the towns along the branch in the summer of 1946 had met with a vigorous protest from both the branch line residents and the Union Pacific, and the request was denied. In 1949, Bickel Bus Lines of North Platte inaugurated bus service between that point and Broken Bow, via Stapleton, Gandy and Arnold, but the service was short lived, as the bus line soon learned, as the railroads had previously, that the motorist could only be lured away from his automobile under the most adverse of weather conditions and then only temporarily.

In contrast to the vociferous and well-organized protests which had greeted all previous train discontinuation proposals in the past, this time only the Arnold Chamber of Commerce filed a formal protest, which was withdrawn a short time later. However, numerous letters of opposition were filed with the Railway Commission by private citizens along the branch. Nevertheless, the Commission deemed it unnecessary to hold a public hearing and on December 16th granted permission for the discontinuation of the trains. Accordingly, the Union Pacific scheduled the final day of operation for Saturday, December 31, 1955.

During the last three years of motor train operation on the branch, only two cars were still available for service on the runs. These were the faithful old M-29, now a veteran of more than half the 50-year tenure of motor cars on the line and the M-41, which had been transfer-



Two veterans of Union Pacific train service comprised the crew of Train 518 on its last trip: Engineer C. R. Morgan, left; and Conductor C. L. Clark, right.



FORM 2843		4-53-3MM
CLEARANCE		
<i>Stapleton</i> Station <i>Dec 31 1955</i> Conductor and Engineer <i>John Collier</i>		
ORDERS FOR YOUR TRAIN ARE	<i>None</i>	
RULE 251 MESSAGES		
<small>(If no orders or messages endorse "NONE" in spaces provided)</small>		
Time <i>8:23</i>	<i>John Collier</i>	Opr.

The clearance form for the final run of Train 518 (left), issued by agent John Collier at Stapleton, indicated there were no orders for the train. (Above:) As M-41 backs to a stop at the Kearney depot, a number of bystanders are on hand, some with cameras. Standing at the end of the K.&B.H. spur behind the motor is the rear end equipment for Train 95, that will head up the branch later that day. Beginning on that trip, a baggage-chair car was added to the mixed to replace the passenger service formerly offered by the motor. (Below:) Prior to departure from Stapleton, someone had inscribed "City of Stapleton" on the side of M-41, a connotation linking the train to the U.P. Streamliners. If any humor was intended, it would seem to have been dampened by the accompanying "Last Trip" inscription.



red from the Stromsburg Branch in 1952 after ending motor service on that line. Maintenance of the two cars during the last years was reduced to a bare minimum and whenever both cars happened to be out of service at the same time, as was often the case, a steam train of austere dimensions, usually consisting of no more than a boxcar and caboose, was operated as a substitute. Diesel-electric locomotives also made occasional appearances on these trains during the final two years of motor service; in fact, the first trip over the branch by a diesel-electric engine had been made on Trains 517 and 518 in December 1953. During the early autumn of 1955 the M-29 unceremoniously made her farewell trip on the branch and was sent to Omaha for eventual dismantling, leaving the field to the M-41.

The final Sunday run of Number 517 took place without fanfare in the early morning darkness and cold of Christmas Day. On the following Friday evening, December 30th, Motor M-41 made a last, uneventful, westbound run as Train 519. The stage was thus set for the fall of the final curtain of the motor car era on the Kearney Branch. December 31, 1955 dawned bright and clear; a mild, pleasant morning, more reminiscent of the autumn just concluded than of the winter season, although scattered patches of snow remained here and there from an early December storm. At the Stapleton depot, Conductor C. L. Clark of Omaha received his clearance slip from station agent John Collier a few minutes before the departure time of Number 518. There were no train orders and the clearance form simply read: "Stapleton. Dec. 31, 1955. Conductor and Engineer No. 518. Orders for your Train are: None. Time 8:23 a.m. Collier, Operator." Clark watched as a few cans of cream were loaded into the baggage compartment and promptly at 8:45, with no passengers having climbed aboard, the conductor waved a "highball" signal to Motorman C. R. Morgan of North Platte, who was looking back from the engine room window. Morgan responded with two blasts from the M-41's air horn and the car slowly began to pick up speed as it left the Logan County terminus for the last time and headed into the winter sunrise. The sidings at Gandy, Hoagland and Logan were passed without stopping and minutes later, majestic old King Hill seemed to brood over the melancholy scene as the motor car era faded forever from the Sandhills and the upper South Loup. Shortly afterwards, Morgan was sounding the air horn for the grade crossings in Arnold and the M-41 was gliding to a stop at the station, on the east side of town, where two small boys were waiting to board the car for Callaway. In a few moments the M-41 was again underway down the peaceful South Loup Valley, with the sound of the air horn echoing and re-echoing off the rugged hills nearby. The signboards at Finchville and Milldale slipped past the motor car windows and several miles down the line the M-41 bade a final farewell to the South Loup River as it rumbled across Bridge 68.09 and rounded the curve east of Milepost 68 where a lone photographer was waiting to record the scene for posterity. As the car braked to a stop in front of the Callaway depot, the two youngsters who had

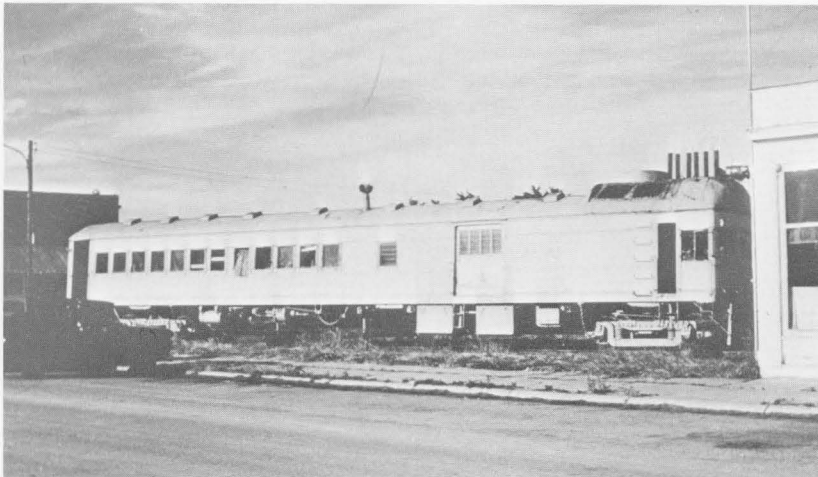
boarded at Arnold scrambled off, little realizing, undoubtedly, the historical significance of their 17-mile ride, which they could one day relate to their own grandchildren. Three passengers took seats at the original terminus of the K.&B.H. and Motorman Morgan opened the throttle wide as the motor rolled across the Sand Creek trestle and headed up the grade. Soon Callaway and the South Loup Valley faded into the distance, M-41 had passed Lodi and entered the upper reaches of the Wood River. Following a brief stop at Oconto, the crew and passengers waved at a small boy who stood beside the track just east of the station for his final glimpse of a vanishing era he would know only as a dim memory of childhood days. Only a short distance farther down the track a lady moved out onto the front steps of her home, camera in hand, to preserve a bit of yesterday for the family album. At a grade crossing near the former site of Lomax, a lone individual hailed the one-car train for one last rural flag stop, re-enacting a once-routine scene of bygone days. Number 518 continued the conclusive journey down the Wood River Valley, with farewell stops at Eddyville and Sumner. At Miller, a group of teen-agers, several among them carrying cameras, came down to the depot to pay their last respects. Surprisingly, there was none of the levity and frivolity one might rightfully expect from a generation which knew the motor car only as an archaic relic of another time. By the time the M-41 had rolled past Watertown and into Amherst, more and more spectators were appearing at trackside here and there, and after the train's departure from Riverdale no empty seats remained. Passengers and conductor were in agreement that similar patronage in the past would have undoubtedly saved the train from extinction.

As the M-41 clattered past the decaying old grain elevator at Glenwood Park and began to swing around the big curve north of Kearney on the last few miles, one might have half expected to discover a full-bearded, dapper Irishman in one of the rear seats, hat cocked to one side and a half-smoked cigar clenched firmly in his teeth as he peered out the window, scowling over the fact that the clean-lined M-41 was closing out the era his stubby, maroon-painted Motor Car 1 had begun a half-century earlier. The car headed out along the east leg of the wye, cleared the switch, and backed along the original K.&B.H. track toward the 55-year old Kearney depot which had witnessed the entire reign of the motor car dynasty. A large crowd of bystanders was on hand, representatives of the press included, with camera shutters clicking and flashbulbs popping, as the motor backed in and ground to a stop. At exactly 11:59 a.m., three hours and fourteen minutes after the last departure from Stapleton, and right on time, the "Kearney Branch Motor" belonged to history. Twelve hours later, church bells would ring out the old year of 1955. For the motor cars, however, M-41's bell had already tolled the final requiem. The long, colorful, momentous Day of the Doodlebug on the Kearney Branch was over, but its rightful place in the annals of the line was assured for posterity.



More than two and one-half years after the end of motor car service on the Kearney Branch, the M-41 made a curtain call. On August 21, 1958, 53 years after Motor Car One's inaugural trip, M-41 was again bound for Stapleton, this time just ahead of the baggage-car on

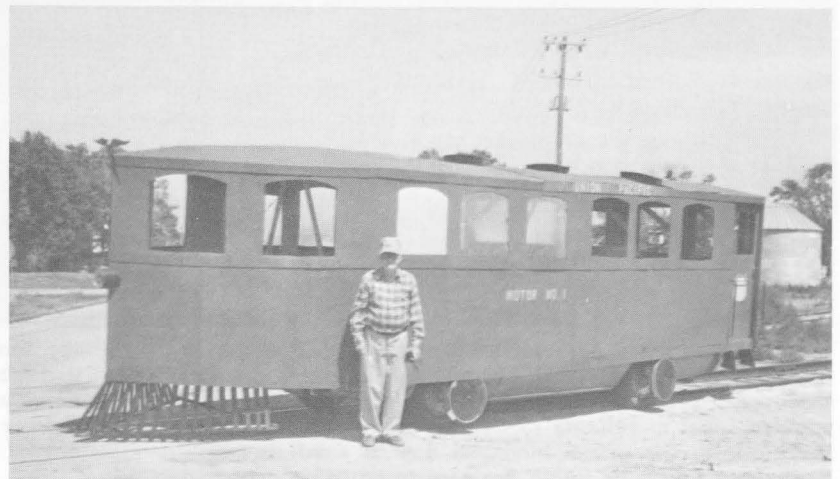
Train 96. Although intended for permanent display in the Logan County terminus, it sadly became the victim of vandalism after being placed on exhibit and was scrapped three years later.



The M-41 on display beside the Logan County Courthouse at Stapleton at an unknown date. It was scrapped on location in the fall of 1961. The courthouse would be destroyed by fire the following year.

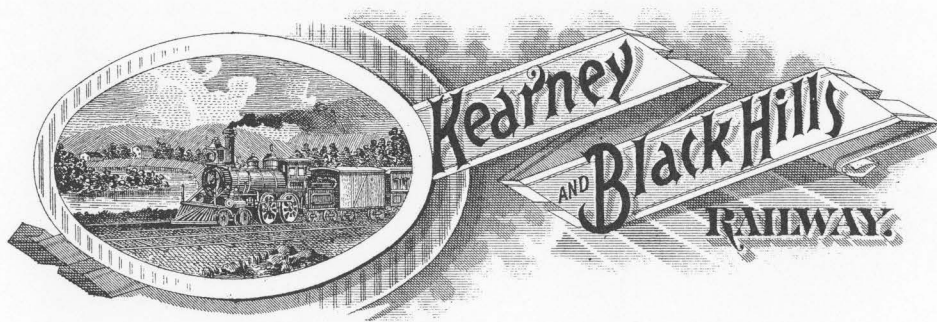
- Author's Collection

Nearly 30 years after the motor car era on the branch had ended, a replica of Motor Car One appeared on the streets of Callaway during the community's Centennial observance parade. Constructed of plywood by Walter Mason of Hastings, the maroon-colored "motor" was mounted on a Chevrolet station wagon, sported a metal eagle atop the prow and included an operable bell and boat horn. Mason, pictured with his car, is the son of Frank Mason, long-time water service foreman on the branch.



KEARNEY & BLACK HILLS

A Historic Branch of
the Union Pacific Railroad



by Francis G. Gschwind

Copyright 1990 by
Francis G. Gschwind
Rt. 1, Box 69
Callaway, Nebr. 68825

All rights reserved.

Published by
South Platte Press
Box 163
David City, Nebr. 68632

ISBN 0-942035-13-5

Printed by
Service Press
Henderson, Nebr. 68371

First Edition

First edition printed May 1990
upon the 100th anniversary of
construction of the Kearney &
Black Hills Railway

1,000 Copies This Edition

Book Number 367