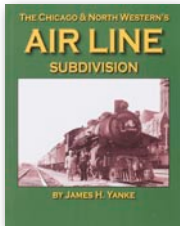


>> BOOKS

**The Chicago & North Western's Air Line Subdivision**

By James H. Yanke. C&NW Historical Society, P.O. Box 1, Ethel, MO 64631; 8½ x 11 in.; hardcover; 256 pages, 300+ photos, maps; \$59.95.

From the 2009 perspective, the historical practice of calling certain railroads "air lines" seems quaint. But as the industry approached the 20<sup>th</sup> century, engineering advances, expanding financial power, and relatively easy land acquisition conspired to make possible new "cutoff" routes that saved travelers and shippers distance and time. The words "air line" made it into the official names of many railroads. Even the Chicago & North Western, the subject of this book, had five predecessor railroads with "Air Line" in their names.



Author James H. Yanke, a retired C&NW and Union Pacific conductor, does a comprehensive job of covering one of North Western's notable such routes, the former Northwestern Union, which in 1872 began building northwest from Milwaukee toward Fond du Lac, Wis. The 62-mile line saved some 25 miles over a previous C&NW route linking these two important Wisconsin cities, and it ultimately became known as the Air Line Subdivision. Although overshadowed by the North Western's more celebrated main lines linking Milwaukee with Green Bay and the Twin Cities, the Air Line Sub was an important link in C&NW's system.

Yanke provides lavish detail as he traces the line northwesterly from Milwaukee, covering each important city in consecutive separate sections. Readers from outside Wisconsin will appreciate the photos of Milwaukee's graceful lakefront depot and the impressive double-track main line at the big city's front door, but the heart of this book is Yanke's coverage of such classic dairyland burghs as Jackson, West Bend, Kewaskum, Campbellsport, and Eden. The book's excellent maps cover each segment of the Air Line, often with details that go beyond track diagrams to include local businesses (modelers, take note). Illustrations include everything from early glass-plate depot scenes and postcard views to more contemporary action views of high-stepping 4-4-2s, 400-fleet streamliners, and latter-day hood units.

The Air Line Sub was chopped up and abandoned in the 1990s as Wisconsin Central Ltd. and, later, Canadian National took over the route. Thus, most of this appealing small-scale Midwestern railroading is gone. But it won't be forgotten, thanks to Yanke's diligence and craft. — *Kevin P. Keefe*

**Tehachapi Today!**

By George and Katherine Melvin. Melvin Photos, 392 Sturtevant Hill Road, Readfield, ME 04355; 207-685-3901; www.melvinphotos.com; 11 x 8½ in.; hardcover; 112 pages, 181 color and one b/w photo, maps on inside covers; \$49.95.

Husband and wife team, George and Katherine Melvin have put together an informative and timely book with their fantastic effort "Tehachapi Today!" Taking the reader from Bakersfield, Calif., on up to the Loop, and over to Mojave, Calif., this book, with its all-color images, provides a splendid look into the current-day exploits of BNSF and Union Pacific in the Tehachapi Mountains.



Its well-thought-out layout, which features a series of superb aerial photos by photographer Roger W. Snyder, brings to life areas of the mountain that the casual Tehachapi observer often misses.

George Melvin's work as a commercial photographer and his life-long employment in the railroad industry become quite evident as you explore each page and the wealth of information each photo caption contains. I found myself wondering how he was able to determine all of the train symbols for each photo featured. His wife's training in the art world unfolds as you search the photo bylines. Not content with just shooting trains, Katherine's photos fill the pages with scenes of mule deer above Tunnel 3 and a red-tailed hawk riding the thermals above Tunnel 1.

The authors cover every single area of interest on this twisting, turning rail line. The photos feature weather conditions from the tule fog syndrome, to the Loop blanketed in snow, to blue-sky conditions and perfect lighting. The photos leap off each page. The authors are quite proud to say that "Tehachapi Today!" their first in what hopes to be an ongoing rail book publishing business, was conceived, published, and printed in the United States.

In the text, George states that on his final visit to the mountain before completing the book, he exclaimed to Katherine, "Every railfan should visit this place at least once!" After pouring through their tribute to this spectacular place of railroad engineering and history, I have to second that motion. I would only add that anyone heading to Tehachapi should bring along a copy of "Tehachapi Today!" As the saying goes, "Don't leave home without it!" — *John Roskoski*

**Durango & Silverton: A Photographic Celebration of America's Favorite Narrow Gauge Train Ride**

By Sam Furukawa. Narrow Gauge Preservation Foundation, 7 South Hijo de Dios, Santa Fe, NM 87508-9133; 505-466-4970; www.bob-hayden.com; 8½ x 11 inches; 176 pages; hardcover; 250 color photos, map; \$49.95.



Colorado's colorful narrow gauge has been drawing photographers ever since the first rails were spiked down almost 130 years ago, and now Sam Furukawa has brought the imagery on one of the most spectacular surviving pieces current with his new book. More than just eye candy, this is a documentary volume that covers all of the iconic locomotives, locations, and people who keep the Denver & Rio Grande's Silverton Branch alive today as the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad. For those who have ridden the high line through the scenic Animas River Gorge, you'll get the sensation of being there all over again for the first time. — *Jim Wrinn*

>> DVD

**The True-Life Adventures of Real Tank Engines**

Golden Rail Video, P.O. Box 10474, Glendale, CA 91209-0474; 888-844-4449; www.GoldenRailVideo.com; 54 minutes; \$19.95.



"The True-Life Adventures of Real Tank Engines" gives kids what they want: an explanation of what things are, what they're for, where they are, and most importantly why they do what they do. The DVD educates children about real steam railroads, while making it fun to learn. Who says Thomas the Tank Engine has the niche market? More than 12 West Coast steam engines are featured. What's more, the DVD also offers a second audio track geared toward adults.

— *Angela Pusztai-Pasternak*

>> Seeking review?

To be considered, send your product, along with publisher, ordering information, page count, video run-time, physical size, number of color and black-and-white photos, maps, or charts. Mail to: New Products, TRAINS Magazine, P.O. Box 1612, Waukesha, WI 53187-1612.