

Lumber and Plywood Traffic on the Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad

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Introduction:

I'm modeling the railroads that served Michigan City, Indiana in the early 1960's. The model railroad prototypically represents the city's railroads operations, industries, and interchanges. The modeling area is an inverted U shape about five miles from end to end encompassing major operations of four of the five railroads serving the city. An effort is being made to identify and accurately model the freight cars and commodities traveling through the modeling area and era. The railroads in Michigan City can be thought of as a Shared Cinematic Universe with each railroad being its own character and having its own story but interacting with other railroads via its interchanges. Previous clinics of my modeling of Michigan City, "Using Layout Design Elements to Model Michigan City, IN circa 1960" and "Monon Train #57, Dec 13, 1963" were given virtually to the Michiana Division of the NMRA and are posted to their YouTube channel.

Railroad serving Michigan City:

New York Central: former Michigan Central mainline between Detroit to Chicago.

Monon: North end of the 60-mile Michigan City Branch that joined the Monon mainline at Monon, Indiana.

Nickle Plate: North end of the 152-mile branch between Indianapolis and Michigan City.

Chicago South Shore & South Bend: a 75-mile former interurban railway that has transformed into an electric passenger and freight railroad. Passenger trains continued another 15 miles from Kensington (115th Street) into downtown Chicago via Illinois Central trackage rights. Michigan City is home to the railroad's headquarters and repair shops.

Chesapeake & Ohio: Former Pere Marquette mainline between Grand Rapids Michigan and Chicago.

Operations Elements:

Following the concept of Layout Design Elements, Operation Elements selects pieces of prototype operations, then uses those pieces of information to develop the model railroad's operating plan. Operating plan includes how/when trains operate on the model railroad, the consists of individual trains, industries and interchanges worked, with knowledge of what the train does/did beyond the model railroad's staging. The type and owners of rolling stock to be used by the trains and commodities hauled also needs to consideration.

CSS&SB Freight Operations:

Carload freight service was initiated in 1916 with the opening of the predecessor railroad. The railroad was purchased and rebuilt by utilities magnate Samuel Insull in 1926. 1960's freight locomotives included 7 "700 Class" C+C motors and 3 "800 Class" 2-D+D-2 motors. Passengers were carried in 1920's era steel MU cars, many were lengthened, airconditioned with picture windows. The CSS had freight connections to all Chicago's railroads via the city's terminal and switching lines as well as connections to most major eastern carriers outside Chicago. Direct connections were had with the BRC, CRI&P, IC, and IHB at Chicago; the B&OCT at Hammond Indiana; IHB at East Chicago; WAB, PRR,

EJ&E and B&O at Gary; NYC, Monon, C&O and NKP at Michigan City; and NYC and GTW at South Bend. Freight traffic from 1926 into the 1930's was 75% coal for Insull owned powerplants. New management in the 1930's opened freight sales offices nationwide. CSS was uniquely situated that freight cars arriving from Chicago connections could be delivered to eastern truck lines the same day saving per diem charges but partaking in a portion of the freight revenue. From the 1930's to the 1970's overhead traffic, freight originating on one railroad traveling over the CSS&SB and terminating on another road constituted most of the freight traffic. Every year through the 1950's loaded freight cars totaled more than 98,000 with peaking in 1956 with 114,476 loaded freight cars handled. Between 1947 and 1963 freight revenue from "Products of Forests" increased by 762%, no doubt dueled by the post WWII building boom.

Freight cars moving via the modeled CSS&SB interchanges:

No car movements from the 1960's of the CSS&SB have surfaced giving an idea of what freight cars would have traveled through the modeled interchanges between the CSS&SB and the NYC, Monon and NKP in Michigan City. Most vintage CSS&SB photos online were taken in Michigan City are from outside of the modeling area on the street running on 10th and 11th Streets or at the railroad's shops. Freight cars in these photos likely did not travel through the modeled interchanges.

Looking Beyond the Modeling area Wilders, Indiana

Loaded car interchange reports from Monon's Michigan City Branch at Wilders (Erie Lackawanna New York-Chicago mainline) 31 miles south of Michigan City and San Piere (NYC South Bend-Kankakee Branch) 35 miles south of Michigan City from 5/13/1963 to 5/31/1963 were provided by John Fuller. 208 cars were interchanged between the two stations across the 19 days. 106 from the Monon to the EL at Wilders, 102 to/from the NYC at San Piere. All the San Piere cars went/came from the south and did not transverse the modeling area. However, all 106 of the cars interchanged at Wilders came from the north and did travel through my modeling area. All cars listed moved from the Monon to the Erie, no listed cars moved from the Erie to the Monon. 33 of the 106 cars were deliveries of new cars in the N&W 56300-56499 series from Pullman's Michigan City plant which was served by the Monon. Of the remaining 73 cars, 50 were loads of lumber originating in California (4), Idaho (5), Montana (5), Oregon (9), Washington (3) and British Columbia (24). In addition, four loads of plywood from Oregon. All these cars moved via various routes to Chicago, then over the CSS&SB to Michigan City, interchanged to the Monon and moved to Wilders and interchanged to the Erie Lackawanna for delivery in Connecticut, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. These cars could have been interchanged to the Erie Lackawanna in Chicago. But were "short hauled" by the CSS&SB and the Monon. The CSS&SB and the EL did not have a direct interchange, so the cars took a 31-mile ride on the Monon to get to the EL. Most of the British Columbia loads were in Canadian National and Canadian Pacific 40-foot boxcars with 6-foot doors. Several Milwaukee Road 40-foot boxcars with 15-foot door openings were included. The remaining lumber moved in 40-foot boxcars with 6-foot doors although some 7-foot and 8-foot door from roads across the country. Two surprising cars showed at the interchange, one a CN 36-foot Fowler boxcar and a CB&Q XM-31 outside braced boxcar.

Looking Beyond the Modeling area Wilmar, Minnesota

Wheel reports, or a listing of cars in a train from the Great Northern at Wilmar, Minnesota are posted to the files section of Ry-ops-industrialSIG.io group and Great Northern Historical Society website in an Excel spreadsheet. 57 trains from 1968 and 1970 totaling more than 6000 individual car records are

recorded. More than 4300 cars are eastbound, with 1160 loads of lumber and 295 loads of plywood. These records do not show origins, but destination is listed. Most of the routing information is only to where the cars leave the GN, but some cars show continuing railroad routing. Seven cars show a GN Willmar to CB&Q to CSS&SB to either the NYC or the B&O to their eastern destinations. These cars were mostly 40-foot boxcars with 6-, 8- and 12-foot door openings, with one 52-foot flat. Great Northern cars obviously appeared the most with Erie, NJI&I and FtDDM&S and EJ&E also in the mix.

CSS&SB Lumber “Rollers”

In the Autumn 2023 issue of First & Fastest, a publication of the Shore Line Interurban Historical Society, Norm Carlson wrote “Another source of revenue (for the CSS&SB) was “roller lumber”. This lumber was shipped east from the lumber mills in the Pacific Northwest. There was no buyer at the time of shipment. The carload was consigned for delivery (on the CSS&SB) at Gary. The lumber companies hoped to sell the lumber while it was in transit. If sold, the carload would be redirected in transit. If not sold it was held until sold...This was a very application of storage in transit...The concept was to get the product closer to the customers for a prompt delivery.” The CSS&SB was uniquely situated for this type of operation. It was a small railroad with connections from all western and eastern carriers. Loads coming onto the railroad could be sorted and forwarded to the connecting roads the same day. The lumberyards get their load sometimes weeks sooner, the railroad gets a cut of the revenue in the move from the west to the east. Going back to the Willmar wheel reports, filtering the cars with a destination of Gary, Indiana, 31 cars show up. Two cars carrying zinc, three empty gondolas all for the US Steel mill in town. The remaining 26 cars are all either lumber or plywood, obviously “rollers”. Here again Great Northern cars were the most prevalent. 40-foot boxcars with 6-foot, 12-foot, 12-foot 8-inch and 15-foot doors all appeared. 50-foot cars with 9-, 12- and 15-foot door openings and a 60-foot bulkhead flat. 50-foot PS-1 double door boxcars from the B&O and N&W, a NYC lot-992B “Stretched” 50-foot double door box, 40-foot 6-foot door boxes from the Rock Island and SP&S and a UP BC-40-10 combo door 40-foot boxcar all appeared.

Learning Points:

I need to add more Canadian 40-foot boxcars with 6-foot doors and UP/NP/GN large door opening boxcars to my modeled freight car fleet.

Each piece of information, no matter how small, is a piece in a 1,000,000+ piece jigsaw puzzle.

Look beyond your modeled area for info, sometimes the key to unlock your area is located 1000 miles away.