

BILL HARMAN ANSWERS QUESTIONS ON N&W PROTOCOLS, 1981

AN INTRODUCTION

In 1981, I was contemplating making a tape recording simulating the Radford Division Train Dispatcher's Telegraph Wire for a 24 hour period. The goal was to use an actual Time Table from the 1890-1906 time period, take all OS's from open telegraph offices, and issue all Train Orders and Clearance Cards necessary for the movement of trains. Some trains would have been operated in sections, and actual tonnage ratings of the engines in use during that time period would have been used. I went so far as to determine the light weights of freight cars then typically in use, and their typical capacities.

Like most overly ambitious projects in life, this one never came to fruition. One relocation, two transfers from one territory to another, a promotion to the Superintendent's staff and then to a Region job, plus the raising of three children meant the 24 hour telegraph tape was never made.

During my research for the simulation, it was necessary to consult William M. Harman, a 1940-hire N&W Radford Division telegrapher, about certain procedural items, specifically the format for OS's used on the N&W in telegraph days, the N&W practices on "middle orders," and the N&W practices on "the clearing of trains" (i.e. issuing Clearance Cards to trains for which there were and were not Train Orders for delivery, etc.) I sent 12 typewritten questions to Bill, and he responded to ten of them. Bill's father had also been a Radford Division telegrapher and he acquired a great deal of information from him concerning the earlier history of the railroad.

Recently I ran across Bill Harman's responses, written in June 1981. They were written in pencil, so the scans had to be cleaned up quite a bit to make them legible. One of his answers (Question 8 on page 3) was continued on the back side of the paper.

I offer this little file to the community of those interested in the history of the Norfolk & Western Ry.

Abram Burnett
April 5, 2013

Answers by Bill Hamman 6/1981.

- 1.) WHEN DO YOU THINK THE DOUBLE TRACK WAS INSTALLED FROM ROANOKE TO CHBG? FROM CHBG TO WALTON?

1911 or 1912 - FRANK STAFFORD WAS GRANDMASTER AT ARTHUR WHEN THIS WAS GOING ON COMPLETED ABOUT 1917 OR 1918.

- 2.) BEFORE THE LOW GRADE LINE VIA PEPPER WAS BUILT, DID VK VICKER BLOCK DIRECTLY WITH CN RADFORD, OR WAS THERE AN OFS AT WALTON OR MAYBE PLUMB CREEK?

BLOCKED WITH EAST RADFORD, CN, WEST RADFORD HAD A STATION LIKE SALEM MADE OUT OF STONE, THEN BLOCK OFFICE AT "JC" WEST END DOUBLE TRACK

- 3.) WHEN THE RR WAS SINGLE TRACK, WHERE WERE THE PASSING SIDINGS?

AT THE LITTLE TELEGRAPH OFFICES USUALLY HOLD TEN OR 12 CARS

- 4.) WAS THERE EVER A STATION AT MONTGOMERY ("BIG TUNNEL")? IF SO, WHAT WAS ITS CALL, AND WHEN WAS IT CLOSED? EVER A PASSING SIDING THERE?

YES, SIR A STATION AT MONTGOMERY FOR MONTGOMERY WHITE SULPHUR SPRINGS LOCATED ABOUT A MILE NORTH FROM STATION WAS IN OPERATION DURING THE BIG MALARIA EPIDEMIC, IN 1890, WHEN EVERY ONE THAT

5.) WHO DID ADA BLOCK WITH ON THE WEST?

EAST Bluefield yard Don't know the call, Bat
The block of c. at West Rocks WAS WB North Road
WAS NR. EAST Road was Bonsack + JK got the South
After VGN Built in 1912

6.) WAS THERE EVER A STATION AT BLAKE?

NO only A Tower put in Around 1903 Armstrong
Levers A Middle Crossover West end + East end
held about 50 cars each, then gradually lengthened

7.) IN THE DAYS BEFORE AUTOMATIC SIGNALS, WHEN THE N&W WAS A
"TIMETABLE AND TRAIN ORDER" OPERATION, WERE THE SIGNALS AT
STATIONS KEPT NORMALLY CLEAR OR NORMALLY STOP? DID THE N&W
LET AN OPR CLEAR TRAINS AS THEY CAME BY WITHOUT CALLING THE
DS FOR CLEARANCE, OR DID HE HAVE TO CALL THE DS FOR CLEARANCE
ON EVERY TRAIN?

Kept clear but at Terminals like DO + CN
you would give DS to Dispr CN Short Run Extra
462 White + Wright for Bluefield Called 11pm Both
Ends - 10 Loads 8 mtgs 600 Tons - Then Dispr
would say Copy 19 for him or CC clearance
care no mgs - + Ring Pepper who blocked thru
Pepper Tunnel with Belspring "KU" Belspring
would say stop displayed East, Pepper would
say stop displayed West, order would read
CLEARANCE

At 11:05 pm All EAST bound TRAINS have
ARRIVED Pepper. OPR Belspring Hold All EASTWARD TRAINS
until Extra 462 west Arrives Belspring
W.O.F. Sapt

- 8.) QUESTION ON "MIDDLE ORDERS". SUPPOSE THE DS IS PUTTING OUT A MEET AT VICKER, AND THE ORDERS GO TO THE TRAINS AT WALTON AND MONTAGUE'S CUT. HE TELLS WALTON "19 EAST COPY 3", AND HE TELLS MONTAGUE'S CUT "19 WEST COPY 3". WHAT DOES HE TELL OPR AT VICKERS? ~~XXX~~ HOW DOES VICKER KNOW WHICH RED SIGNAL TO PUT OUT, OR WHETHER TO PUT OUT BOTH? SOME OF THE GUYS HERE TELL ME THE DS SAYS TO VICKER "19 E & W", BUT I'D RATHER HAVE IT FROM YOU, BILL.

I copied a middle order each morning upon opening up at Crockett VA "NV", when you came in cut the phone & wires in you would get on Disprs phone & say Crocketts ON, then the DS would say copy copy middle order, you would say stop displayed EAST & WEST meaning you would put Both Train orders out then when No 14 & 41 order would read No 14 take siding & 14 come in down to station in sight, you would pull in your west bound order Board, or leave it out & Deliver the order to OTE No 41 as it would be faster as you couldn't see 41 =

- 9.) QUESTION ON N&W FORMAT FOR "OS". IF YOU ARE AT RG AND HAVE A TRN TO OS, DO YOU GET ON THE WIRE AND SAY "OS RG", OR "CN RG" (ASSUMING THE DS IS IN CN). I HAVE SEEN SOME RRS WHERE THE OPR JUST SAID "OS RG" AND WAITED UNTIL THE DS WAS READY TO TAKE IT, BUT THE MEN HERE TELL ME ITS MORE PROPER TO ~~XXX~~ CALL THE DS THAN TO BROADCAST "OS". WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES?

Depended on Temperment of Individual Disprs, usually we would say "OS" "BX" No 3 Eng 610 By 820 if it was an Extra as all Fvt Trains were run Extra Then we would use direction, "OS" "BX" Extra 2199 West By 820 on NF Div they would just say OS Farmville No 99 by 300 AM Some Time the Engine number was not discovered wrong until v ovr used it then the Dispr would Have To get it straightened out

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I copied a middle order each morning upon opening
up at 6:00 AM "W", when you came in last
the phone a moment in you would get on 21st floor
I say broadcast on, then the DS would say copy
copy middle order, you would say copy broadcast
I say a West broadcast, you would say broadcast
order a cut then when you in a order would
and you in take siding & in come in down to station
in sight, you would say in sight, you would say
Broadcast, you would say broadcast, you would say

from the office Boy window,

QUESTION ON NEW FORMAT FOR "DS". IF YOU ARE AT RG AND HAVE A
TRN TO DS, DO YOU GET ON THE WIRE AND SAY "DS RG", OR "CN RG"
(ASSUMING THE DS IS IN CN). I HAVE SEEN SOME RRS WHERE THE
OPR JUST SAID "DS RG" AND WAITED UNTIL THE DS WAS READY TO TAKE
IT, BUT THE MEN HERE TELL ME ITS MORE PROPER TO XXX CALL THE
DS THAN TO BROADCAST "DS". WHAT ARE YOUR MEMORIES?

Dependent on improvement of individual rights, security
we would say "DS RG", No 3 End 10 Bu 20 10

Then we would use a variation, "DS RG Extra
21st West 100 210 on the 21st floor world last
2nd, 21st floor, West 100 210 on the 21st floor
21st floor, West 100 210 on the 21st floor
21st floor, West 100 210 on the 21st floor
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- 10.) QUESTION ABOUT ~~XX~~ SPELLING OUT "FIRST" AND "SECOND" IN SECTION ORDERS. I NOTICE IN JEFFRIES' BOOK N&W: GIANT OF STEAM (p.17), THE 31 ORDER COPIED AT DRY BRANCH IN 1897 USES THE NUMERALS "1st" AND "2nd" INSTEAD OF "FIRST" AND "SECOND". HOW DID THE N&W DO IT IN YOUR DAY?

thats my Train order I got it from Robin Long we spelled out every number at the last but didnt until about 1970, But when you worked a Joint Job with Sou at Bristol you had to spell them out all the time, I didnt No there was any other way than ours until I worked extra at BS No 45 forty five Motor 2900 Twenty Nine hundred For instance

- 11.) MORE ON THE "OS". THE MEN HERE TELL ME U SHOULD GIVETHE DS THE DIRECTION U ARE OS'ING FIRST, SO HE CAN MOVE TO THE CORRECT SIDE OF HIS SHEET. THUS, A PROPER OS WOULD BE:

^{No}
"OS EAST NO 12 BY 142 RG"

DO YOU AGREE WITH THIS? IS IT PROPER TO LEAVE OFF "AM" OR "PM", AND DID THE N&W MEN SAY "OS EAST" OR "OS WEST" AT THE BEGINNING OF THE OS?

"OS" "RG" Extra East the Even number would give a passenger Train direction, Even No's East - odd West?

12.) QUESTION ON SIGNING FOR AN ORDER. AFTER AN ORDER IS MADE COMPLETE, EACH OFFICE ACKNOWLEDGES THE COMPLETE. IF THE OPR'S SINE IS "WM" AND HE IS AT "RG", DOES HE SAY, AFTER THE COMPLETE IS GIVEN, "OK WM RG" ??? MY QUESTION REALLY IS THIS: DOES HE GIVE HIS PERSONAL SINE AS WELL AS HIS OFS CALL?

BILL--NOW IF THIS RAFT OF QSNS DOESN'T GIVE YOU HEADACHES, NTG WILL HIHI. BUT TY ARE SERIOUS QSNS I HV RUN UP AGAINST IN TRYING TO PUT TOGETHER A TAPE OF THE TRAIN WIRE. AND SINCE IT IS TO BE AN N&W TRN WIRE, I'D RATHER DO THINGS THE N&W WAY. THANKS FOR YOUR PATIENT LONGSUFFERING, AND UR HELP.

73

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