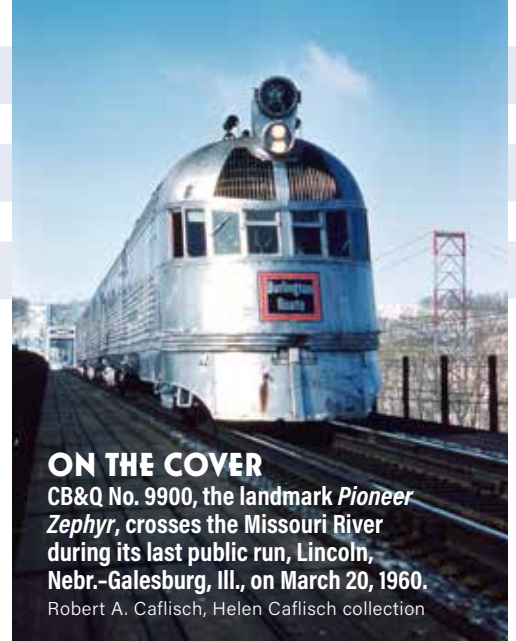


BURLINGTON'S ZEPHYRS



ON THE COVER

CB&Q No. 9900, the landmark *Pioneer Zephyr*, crosses the Missouri River during its last public run, Lincoln, Nebr.-Galesburg, Ill., on March 20, 1960.

Robert A. Caflisch, Helen Caflisch collection

Contents

- 6 Burlington: Road of Passenger Progress**
BY WILLARD V. ANDERSON
“The Way of the *Zephyrs*” found a winning rail-travel formula in the 1930s and '40s
- 16 The Budd Company: Transportation Innovator for 75 Years**
BY KEVIN J. HOLLAND
The builder of the *Zephyrs* made vehicles for road, rail, and air travel
- 24 Electro-Motive: Young Giant**
BY DAVID P. MORGAN
How a company went from founding to world's largest locomotive builder in 25 years
- 34 The Train that Sparked an Era**
BY WALLACE W. ABBEY
As the first diesel streamliner, the *Pioneer Zephyr* was a revolutionary force in railroading
- 44 Hollywood's Zephyr Ride**
BY LES HAMMER
The Burlington's breakthrough train played the title role in RKO's 1934 thriller, *The Silver Streak*
- 50 The Original Zephyrs**
BY ROBERT S. MCGONIGAL
Profiles of all nine Burlington Route shovel-nose trains, plus their New England cousin
- 62 The Ultimate Zephyr**
BY KARL ZIMMERMANN
The *California Zephyr* was scheduled for scenery, and had the equipment to showcase it
- 70 Ways of the Zephyrs**
An all-time map of the routes of the Burlington's family of streamliners
- 72 Zephyr Photo Gallery**
Rare images of *Zephyrs* at work from Chicago to Texas to Colorado to California — including steam!
- 84 Silver Survivor**
BY ROBERT S. MCGONIGAL
The *Nebraska Zephyr* captivates thousands of people each year at the Illinois Railway Museum
- 92 21st Century Zephyr**
BY STEVE SMEDLEY
After six decades of uncertainty, the *Mark Twain Zephyr* is being reborn for a new life of luxury

ELECTRO-MOTIVE: YOUNG



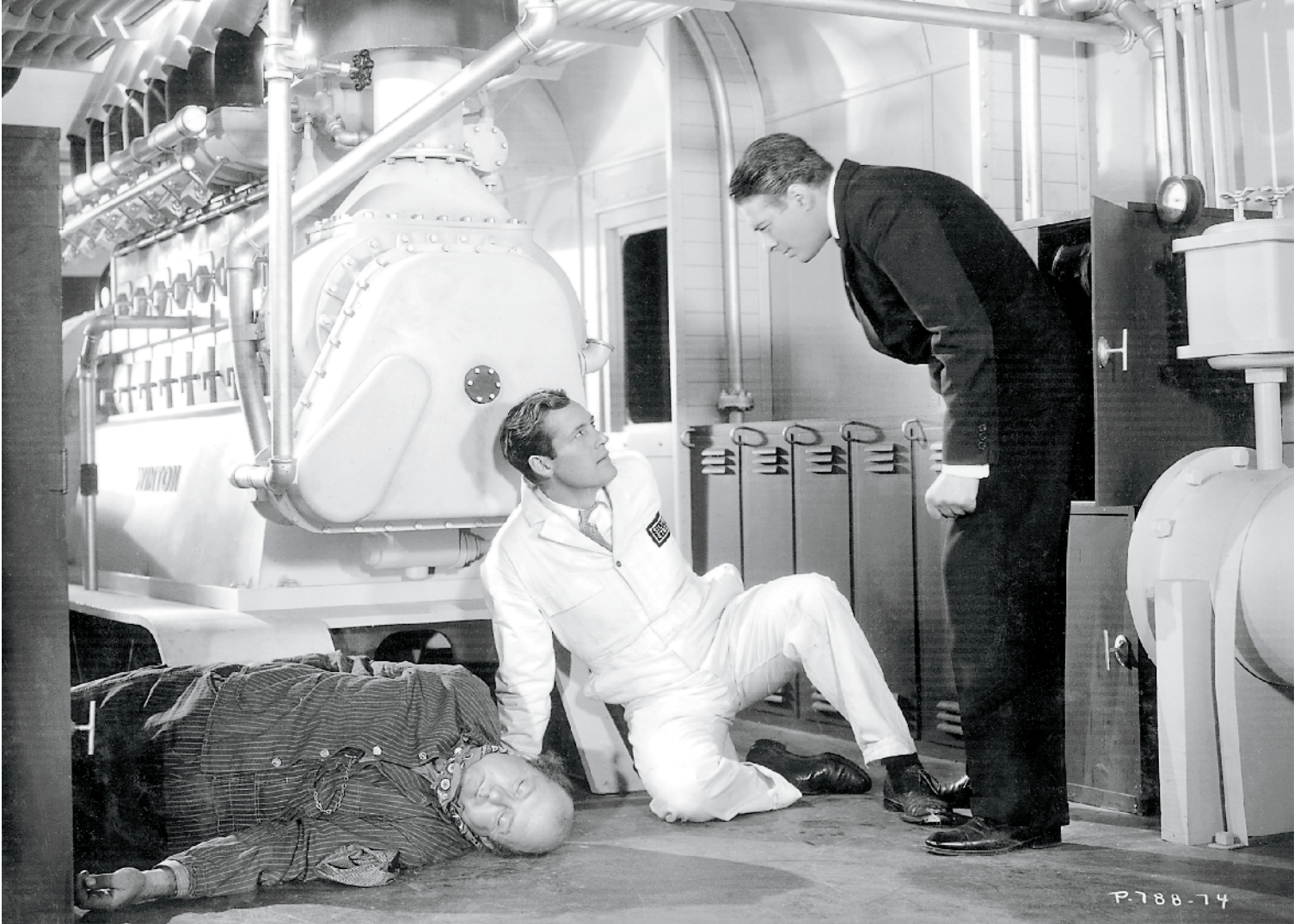
GIANT

The pioneering “infant” of 1922 has 26 years later grown into the world’s largest builder of locomotives

By David P. Morgan



EMD deployed two sets of F3 demonstrator locomotives, one for freight service (shown here), and one for passenger. Both wore dual GM/Electro-Motive identification. Milo M. Schalla



German spy Erdmann Bronte (played by Irving Pichel) confronts Tom Caldwell and pilot engineer Dan O'Brien (Edgar Kennedy) in a scene filmed on a studio mock-up of the *Zephyr's* engineroom that included a representation of a Winton 201A diesel. Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences



struction of a prototype train, dubbed the *Silver Streak*.

Because of an unforeseen mechanical problem, the streamliner fails its trial run. Unwilling to back its development, Dexter turns the *Silver Streak* into a sideshow attraction at the Chicago world's fair. Humiliated, Caldwell quarrels with Ruth, who leaves on the next train for California. Meantime, her brother Allan takes an engineering job at Boulder Dam, where he is stricken with polio. After learning that an iron lung cannot be transported by air, Dexter arranges for a shipment of respirators by train. With Caldwell at the throttle, the *Silver Streak* embarks on a 2,000-mile run from Chicago to Boulder City. En route, a German spy, who is wanted for murder, attempts to sabotage the speeding train, only to be overpowered by the young engineer. In the final reel, the *Silver Streak* reaches its destination, where Tom Caldwell is reunited with his newfound love.

No budget for big stars

With a production budget of \$122,000 — one-fourth of that for the 1930 railroad drama *Danger Lights* ["Thrills and Chills on the Milwaukee Road," Fall 2001 CLASSIC

TRAINS] — Allvine could not afford one bankable star. "If I had been spending my own money," he admitted, "I think I would have spent ten thousand dollars more to buy one well-known actor's name for the exhibitor to put in lights on his marquee."

For the part of Tom Caldwell, the producer originally wanted popular leading man Joel McCrea, but settled for the handsome, rugged actor Charles Starrett, who was soon to make a name for himself as the black-clad, gun-toting Durango Kid. For the role of Ruth Dexter, Allvine cast the beautiful actress Sally Blane, who co-starred in the 1932 railroad thriller *Phantom Express* but whose film career was overshadowed by that of her famous sister, Loretta Young.

Though lacking in star power, the cast included some of Hollywood's best-known character actors. Silent-film star William Farnum played CB&D President Barney Dexter. Actor-director Irving Pichel, best known as the sinister manservant in *Dracula's Daughter* and the sonorous narrator of *How Green Was My Valley*, portrayed the murderous spy Erdmann Bronte. Arthur Lake, fondly remembered as the high-pitched Dagwood Bumstead in the popular series *Blondie*, teamed

with Guinn “Big Boy” Williams to play the garrulous mechanic Crawford and his long-suffering sidekick Higgins. Rounding out the cast were actor-writer Hardie Albright as the ill-fated mechanical engineer Allan Dexter; former Keystone Kop Edgar Kennedy as the bumbling pilot engineer Dan O’Brien; and, notably, Theodor von Eltz, who starred in the silent railroad epic *The Great Mail Robbery*, as locomotive magnate Ed Tyler.

One Burlington Route executive, Warren Fuller, assistant to the vice president of operations, landed a bit part as a railroad director. But the most technically demanding role went to CB&Q engineer Jack Ford, who was required to be at the throttle whenever the *Zephyr* was in motion. Unfortunately, Ford (who handled the train on its Denver-Chicago dash and reportedly had no trouble making it “hit its marks” for the cameras) does not appear on screen — all of his scenes, either as actor or double, wound up on the cutting-room floor.

Prior to filming, the CB&Q removed the rectangular BURLINGTON ROUTE emblem from the train’s nose and replaced it with a SILVER STREAK herald. In Hollywood parlance, the *Zephyr* was ready for its close-up.

Lights, camera, action!

On the morning of September 5, 1934, the RKO Pictures film crew, led by cinematographer J. Roy Hunt, arrived in Chicago to begin what would be two weather-plagued days of shooting RKO 788 — *The Silver Streak* — at the Century of Progress fair. By accident or design, the real Burlington Route received free publicity when one shot, taken at the fair, wound up in the final print.

“[The producers] did their best to eliminate references to the Burlington,” says Hol Wagner, longtime editor of the *Burlington Bulletin* magazine of the railroad’s historical society, “but there is a shot of the Burlington Route herald on a sign above the train.”

On September 7, the film company (sans actors) boarded the *Zephyr*, still “in costume,” for the 160-mile journey to Galesburg, Ill., a major Burlington terminal. En route, Tommy Atkins and his cameraman filmed parts of the trial run sequence, where a freight train, pulled by CB&Q Mikado 4999, overtakes the *Silver Streak*. In Galesburg, the movie crew shot portions of the record run portion, where the train dashes under a coaling tower in the engine terminal.

“I am afraid we ruined a lot of good railroad men in Galesburg during the two days we ran the *Zephyr* back and forth through the yards,” conceded Glendon Allvine, “as our cameras recorded action violating all the safety regulations they had learned in a lifetime.”

On September 10, the company packed up its equipment and moved 45 miles west to Burlington, Iowa. On a scenic stretch of track, the crew filmed one of the most hair-raising — and improbable — scenes in the record-

run sequence, where the *Silver Streak* races toward an open drawbridge over the Mississippi River. For dramatic impact, special-effects director Vernon Walker took the developed footage and ran it through an optical printer. By the reprinting of every other frame to speed up the action, the swing span appears to close just as the train reaches the bridge. For impressionable movie fans, the cinematic sleight-of-hand worked.

“What they don’t show,” notes Wagner, “is that the sharpest curve on the Burlington main line is just west of the bridge. Normally, nothing goes faster than 20 mph there. Low center of gravity or not, you cannot take that curve at 100 mph.”

Following a stop to inspect and service the

train at CB&Q’s West Burlington Shops on September 12, the RKO company boarded the *Zephyr* for a journey over the Burlington main line to Colorado. On the Denver & Salt Lake, bad weather and mainline trains caused delays. When the skies cleared, the crew resumed the trip to the majestic Royal Gorge, shooting background footage all the way. To his consternation, Roy Hunt discovered that there were few places to mount a camera on a streamlined train, on which the doors were flush and the windows were sealed. By his account, he risked his life to take traveling shots from the front of the speeding train.

“One of the most dangerous yet most thrilling of all the sequences filmed,” Hunt wrote, “was when this writer was precariously



The record run in the movie was inspired by the *Zephyr*’s sensational Denver-Chicago nonstop dash, during which it’s seen passing through Aurora, Ill. CB&Q

Actress Sally Blane chats with Burlington Route executive Warren Fuller, who played a railroad director in *The Silver Streak*. Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences





weight train, with standard Pullmans and chair cars between San Francisco and both Chicago and St. Louis, tourist Pullmans San Francisco–Chicago, and an observation-lounge for Pullman passengers. A diner served “delicious meals” with lower-priced options for coach and Tourist Pullman patrons. Before its replacement by the *California Zephyr*, the *Exposition Flyer* did put a toe in the waters of streamlining. As Budd delivered CZ equipment beginning in early spring 1948, the cars, Vista-Domes especially, began to infiltrate the *Flyer*'s consist, occasionally nearly taking over.

The CZ was the quintessential *Zephyr*, though not the final one. That title belonged to the 1956 *Denver Zephyr*, the last completely new consist (excepting its head-end cars) built — as all the *Zephyrs* were, by the Budd Company — for any train in the country. It was a virtual clone of the CZ, adjusted — three Vista-Domes instead of five, a Vista-Dome buffet-lounge observation with parlor seats rather than sleeping rooms — for a much shorter route with a lower percentage of daytime running. Its observation car, blunt-ended rather than bullet-shaped, probably anticipated mid-train operation though I don't believe that routinely happened in DZ service.

There was definitely cross-fertilization between the two trains, which were route-mates from Chicago to Denver. The *Denver Zephyr*'s mid-train under-dome buffet-lounge was felicitously themed as a Chuck Wagon, with “DZ” brands on the tables, lunch counter, paper napkins, sugar packets, and china created for this service. There were two murals by Mary Lawser and a playful die-cut menu showing a chuck wagon and “DZ” brands on what appears to be a slab of wood.

In the late '50s, when the CZ received its “New Look” sprucing up, the success of the DZ's Chuck Wagon led to the creation of the Cable Car Room beneath the dome of the mid-train buffet lounge. Themed after San Francisco's most famous conveyances, the room had photo-murals of views framed by cable-car windows, a pair of glass-encased models of the cars, and a carpet woven to resemble cobblestones and tracks. It's this version of the space that I remember.

A personal connection

It's impossible for me to cover the *California Zephyr* entirely in the third person, so entwined has the train been with my life for most of its septuagenarian length. It was the subject of my first book. Most summers of my childhood and youth included a trip with my mother from New Jersey to Salt Lake City to visit her mother, her siblings, and my cousins. We sometimes rode the *Zephyr*, although the blur of memory as often puts us on the Union Pacific's *City of Los Angeles*. However, one family CZ memory, of the last Salt Lake City train trip with either parent, is crystal clear.

With my parents I'd flown to Salt Lake to



Clockwise from top: Passengers look ahead from the CZ's rear dome. A Zephyrette makes an announcement from the communications room. Dad and daughter enjoy the view from a 16-roomette sleeper. CLASSIC TRAINS collection; State Historical Society of Colorado collection; Hedrich-Blessing for CB&Q

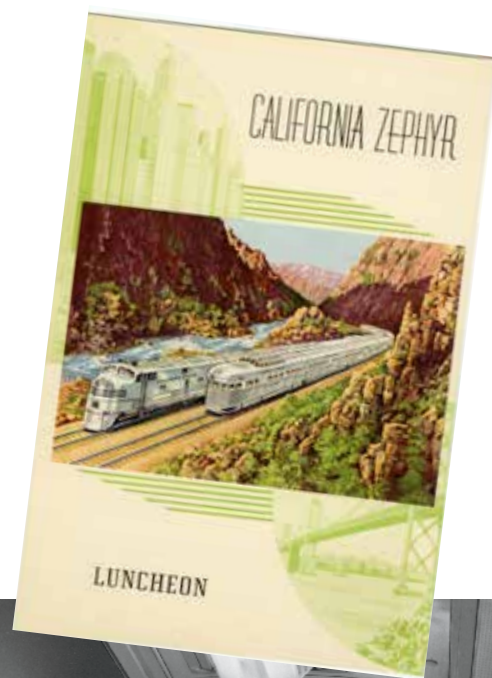
spend Thanksgiving with my aging grandmother and the rest of the family. It was 1965, I was just a few months into my career teaching English in New Jersey, and Dad was still working. The plan had been to fly back home, but when news of a heavy snowstorm reached us, our thoughts turned railward, since passenger trains then retained their reputation as an all-weather travel alternative. In retrospect, I think for my father and me the allure of a train trip together was as operative as blizzard fright, though for a new teacher not showing up for class would have been a bad idea.

While my memory is generally spotty, in that continuum of personal history there are occasional random pools of light. I see Dad and me sitting in the oversize, rear-facing “railfan seats” in the Vista-Dome buffet-

lounge-observation. Dad was wearing a dark suit, I a sport jacket, for that was the custom of the times. I had a paperback — *Anglo-Saxon Attitudes*, a novel by Angus Wilson — in my lap.

“Why are you reading instead of looking at the scenery?” Dad asked — a good question since we were in the midst of a multi-canyon passage along the Colorado River. Sheepishly, I set Mr. Wilson aside for another time.

That evening, with the train stopped in Denver Union Station to trade Rio Grande F units for Burlington Es, we climbed down from our sleeper to get a breath of air before dinner — just as we’d done in August 1960. That time my mother was traveling from Salt Lake with Dad. My friend and neighbor Roger Cook and I had boarded at Grand



The 11-car CZ symphony ended on a high note: a dome-sleeper-buffet-lounge-observation, occupied in this publicity photo by passengers and a Zephyrette. Hedrich-Blessing for CB&Q

An early menu cover (inset) depicted CZ consists meeting on D&RGW in the Rockies — but powered by CB&Q E units. Karl Zimmermann collection

