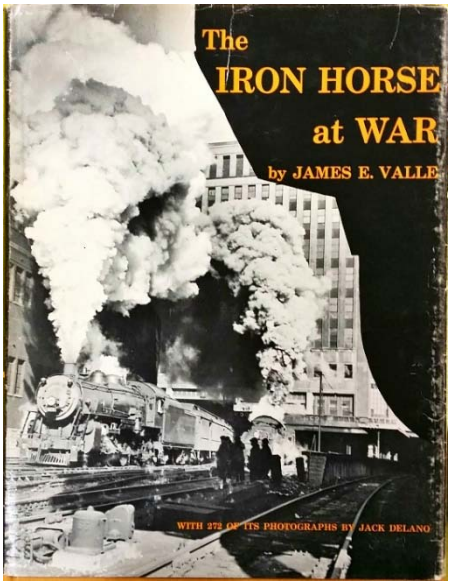
Collecting Brass Engines By the Book

By: Henry Kramer

(Henry Kramer and Jim Valle are members of the First State Model Railroad Club located at 1282 McKee Road, Dover DE 19904. The FSMRRC is an HO modular club that holds work sessions most Thursday nights. If you wish to contact Henry, Jim or find out more about the club you can e-mail us at FSMRRC@gmail.com or leave us a voice mail at 302-307-6002.)



It's Thursday, the night is hot and muggy; too hot to work on trains. I am at one of the Thursday work sessions of the First State Model Railroad Club (FSMRRC) in Dover DE. Along with several other members I am in the air conditioned meeting room and we are talking about trains. Jim Valle is there and I ask him about the book he wrote years earlier on steam engines during the Second World War. It turns out that the book Jim wrote chronicles the contribution that American railroads made to our participation in the Second World War. As many modelers know, this time period was truly the Golden Age of steam engines. The tremendous surge of traffic pushed the steam engine to its very limits at the time when Diesel power was just starting to be introduced. Jim's book titled *The Iron Horse at War* (copyright 1977) traces O.W.I. photographer Jack Delano's trek from Chicago to Los Angeles as he records the enormous surge in railroad activity on the Santa Fe Railroad; one of the largest and busiest railroads of the period. The book has 309 photographs, 272 of these are by Jack Delano.

This may be very interesting but what does it have to do with collecting brass engines? It turns out that Jim has also been collecting HO scale brass engines that appeared in his book. He started collecting brass engines back in 2002. Jack Ryan, a longtime member of the FSMRRC had passed away and his wife gave his train collect to one of our club members. This member brought some of Jack's items to a meeting to give away to other club members who wanted them. Among these items were two brass locomotives that were in poor condition. As it happened they were both Santa Fe Railroad engines and pictures of these locomotives appeared in Jim's book. That is when Jim caught the "brass engine collecting" bug. From then on Jim has been combing through train shows, the internet, estate sales, and even yard sales in search of HO brass locomotives that had appeared in his book. He currently has nine brass steam engines and two Diesels and was kind enough to show them to me.

The two locomotives that got Jim started collecting brass were a 4-8-2 class 3700 Mountain and a 4-6-4 class 3460 Hudson. The HO brass 4-8-2 Mountain was made by Samhongsa and carries road number Santa Fe 3749. The actual engine went into passenger service around 1922 and operated throughout the Santa Fe system. The same class engine (road number 3736) can be seen in Jim's book on page 209 heading east with a troop train in tow near Dennison AZ. Road number 3733 can be seen on page 192 undergoing Class 5 repairs at the Santa Fe's Albuquerque NM shops.

The 4-6-4 class 3460 Hudson that Jim obtained carried road number Santa Fe 3463 markings. This engine class entered service in 1937 and worked passenger service east of La Junta CO. As can be seen on page 135 in Jim's book the Shopton Passenger Work Record Board is dominated by 3400 class Pacifics and 3460 series Hudsons. Page 137 shows engine number 3438 waiting for a road assignment at the Shopton IA Roundhouse. When Jim received this model engine it had been dropped and required major body work. As you can see, Jim did a marvelous job restoring it to its original condition.

The next engine Jim showed his by now entranced audience was his 4-8-4 Northern, Santa Fe road number 2918. This engine type entered service around 1938 and with its 80" drivers made some of the longest through runs (only requiring on-line servicing) of any locomotive of its time. When Jim acquired this engine its exterior paint was intact so he did not have the heart to change its number. However, its sister unit (number 3770) engine can be seen on page 227 heading eastbound out of the San Gabriel Valley in route to Kansas City MO where it will make a quick turn and head back west. Another picture,

taken two days later can be seen on page 245 as this engine is just entering the northern yard limits of the San Bernardino yard.

The first Texas type to be added to the Santa Fe fleet was road number 5000. This 2-10-4 engine was put into service in 1930 and was an immediate success. Her crew dubbed her “Madame Queen” in honor of her great size and mechanical excellence. Unfortunately, engine 5000 was a “one-off” engine. The depression years curtailed traffic and further engines were not ordered until 1938 when ten slightly larger sisters were built. Number 5000 however could always be distinguished from the 35 other Texas types (numbers 5001 through 5035) by her large Elesco feedwater heater which sits like a crown atop her smokebox. Engine 5000 makes two appearances in Jim’s book. On page 176 it can be seen at the Clovis NM roundhouse and again on page 179 pulling freight at the coaling dock & water tank at Yeso NM.

Jim has also collected one of the larger Texas sisters. The first ten of these engines were built in 1938; they were equally divided between coal and oil burners and were the largest non-articulated engines ever built. Their Worthington feedwater heaters were smaller than the original number 5000. Although Jim's model carries number 5008 it is identical to number 5006 that can be seen on pages 184-185. All of these engines worked on the subdivision between Belen and Clovis NM. In 1944 a second group of 25 Texas 5000 class engines were added to Santa Fe's roster. These engines were the last major investment in steam motive power that the Santa Fe was to make. As an interesting aside, these engines could haul trains that were so long that the Santa Fe felt constrained to install semaphores atop the cabooses so that the rear end crew could communicate with the engine crew without making a mile-long trip over the swaying car tops. These semaphore equipped cabooses can also be seen on pages 184-185.

After a break, Jim next showed us his 2-8-2 Class 4000 Mike. Jim's model was made by Sunset Model Inc. This classic locomotive with road number 4097 can be found on pages 158-160 and again on pages 161-165 in Jim's book as it gets ready to make its next 100 mile run to Waynoka OK and then onward towards the Texas panhandle. As you can see on page 162, a Division Superintendent's business car was added this train so Mr. Delano could ride in comfort through the Great Plains. However, rather than taking advantage of this perk he opted to ride in the engine cab and take several pictures of the engineer and fireman hard at work at the controls.

The next engine Jim showed his audience was his 4-6-2 Class 3400 Pacific with road number 3414. Jim's model was made by AHM. A picture of this type of locomotive can be found on page 168 as a helper behind a 3750 class Northern making its way from Curtis OK to Pampa TX. Of the total of 1,500 engines built for the Santa Fe, only 250 were coal fired, Jim's model happens to be one of these coal fired engines. By the war years these engines were coming to the end of their useful life and were relegated to running as helpers, although some were assigned to freight service in California's Central Valley where the grades were slight but schedules called for fast running service.

The 2-10-2 Santa Fe road number 3851 was the next engine that Jim showed. His model was made by United-Japan and can be seen on page 222 in Jim's book. Delivered between 1919 and 1927, these 3800 class engines were the main freight power on Santa Fe's Southern California lines. Where the 2-8-2 class 4000 Mikes primarily moved freight east of Clovis NM, the 2-10-2 class 3800 engines primarily moved freight west of Clovis where the grades were steeper and required greater pulling power. On pages 223-225 you can see 2-10-2 3800 class engines moving freight up and over the Cajon pass.

The final brass steam locomotive Jim showed us was an unpainted Chicago and North Western 4-8-4 class “H” Northern. Built by ALCO, this engine class was the largest engine operating on the road between Chicago and Omaha. The crews operating these engine types call them “Zeppelins”. On pages 80-82 in Jim’s book you can see engine 3014 preparing to depart Chicago for Clinton. Additionally, on pages 90-91 engine 3016 can be seen taking on coal on its eastbound trip to Chicago.

In addition to the nine brass steam locomotives Jim also showed us two Diesel engines that were featured in his book. Jim devotes an entire chapter (*Diesels Across the Desert*) in his book to Diesels. Diesel engines of this era had significant advantages and disadvantages over their tried and true steam cousins. The transmissions in early Diesel engines were unreliable and could not stand up to the rigors of hauling heavy loads. That is why most early Diesels were assigned to lighter passenger trains rather than heavier freight service. On the other hand, steam engines consumed large quantiles of water. Since the Santa Fe operated in desert areas where water had to be brought in by rail cars this posed a huge challenge. Santa Fe needed to furnish three million gallons of water per day that their thirsty

steam engines required to cross the arid wilderness and climb the steep grades of the Arizona Divide. A picture of a string of typical Santa Fe water cars can be seen on page 211 of Jim's book.

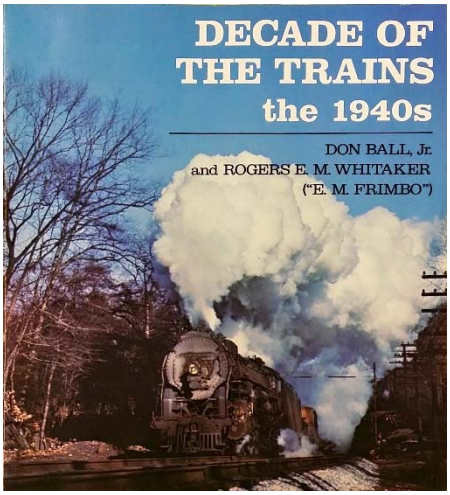
The first Diesel engine Jim showed us was a pair of FT "covered wagons". These engines were painted blue and cream with cream "cat whiskers". The familiar Santa Fe vermilion, yellow and silver "warbonnet" color scheme that was in use on passenger engines was not adopted for freight engines until after these engines entered service. Manufactured by General Motors' EMD division, the original demonstrator, engine number 100, was introduced in 1940. These first of their kind 1,250 HP engines came in "A" and "B" units and could be made up into four-unit A-B-B-A freight "locomotives" totaling 4,500 HP. FT unit number 103 can be seen in Jim's book on pages 146-147 on her way to Emporia KS. These engines proved to be so successful that by the end of 1942, 88 units had been delivered to the Santa Fe. Further, even during the height of the war the Santa Fe continued to receive these engines and by 1943 they managed to acquire a total Diesel fleet of 347 units.

The last engine in Jim's collection is the DL-109 styled Santa Fe Diesel #50. This engine was built in 1940 by ALCO and delivered to the Santa Fe in 1941. At 2,000 HP per unit they had significantly better traction

power than previous Diesel prime movers. Only two of this style units were delivered (50 and 50A), the pair were first assigned to the twice a week Chicago to Los Angles *Super Chief* service. However, it was quickly discovered that they were not up to this demanding transcontinental schedule and were reassigned to lesser trains running between Chicago and Kansas City. A picture of this Diesel can be found on page 139 of Jim's book.

(All of the pictures of Jim's engines were taken on the FSMRRC's layout)

Other Interesting Information



After viewing all of Jim's locomotives he proceeded to tell us about some of the issues he encountered while writing his book. It turns out that at about the same time that Jim was writing his book another author was writing a similar book titled *Decade of the Trains the 1940s* (copyright 1977) by Don Ball, Jr. This book used many of the same Jack Delano pictures Jim used, but it also includes pictures from several other sources. At 287 pages the scope of material covered is much broader than Jim's book, however, the story is mostly told through picture captions and tends to jump around and is difficult to follow.

Finally, Jim showed us a picture he picked up some years ago at a train show (see below). When he got home and examined the picture closely he noticed a "blue spot" on the picture. At first he thought that this "blue spot" was a blemish on the picture, however, after a close examination he saw it was a blue flag that was on the engine. Jim told us that an engine with a "blue flag" on it meant

that the engine was undergoing an inspection and could not be moved. At night, a blue lantern would be used to indicate an ongoing inspection was taking place.

Both these pictures were taken by Jack Delano and were downloaded from the Library of Congress (www.loc.gov). In addition to numerous black & white pictures Mr. Delano also took many color photographs and several are now available for downloading.