

POTLATCH LUMBER CO. THE WI&M, AND THE MILWAUKEE

By Thomas E. Burg

In the early years of the 20th Century, the Weyerhaeuser interests, seeing the end of logging in the upper Middle West looked west for more stands of Timber. Large stands were found in Idaho, leading to the formation of the Potlatch Lumber Co. and its purchase of existing mills at Palouse and Colfax, Washington. Huge stands of timber were owned in the Potlatch River drainage, Elk Creek basin, and further South along the North Fork of the Clearwater (These were owned by the closely associated Clearwater Timber Co. which would eventually be combined into Potlatch Forests Inc., in 1931.). In addition, they held timber rights to like quantities of public lands in these areas. There was a definite sense of urgency, as Idaho state law required that the timber on these lands be cut in 20 years. This was prize white pine, the most sought after commercial species, and the North Idaho stand was the largest remaining stand of virgin white pine on the North American Continent at that time.

A railroad was needed to reach this timber. The Northern Pacific (NP), which passed through Palouse enroute Lewiston, Idaho was approached, but declined. Potlatch Lumber Company's decision to build its own railroad gave birth to the Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway (WI&M), and to the town of Potlatch, Idaho where the company's sawmill was to be constructed.

The WI&M was planned to haul out this timber. Various surveys were done projecting the WI&M into the Elk Creek Basin and even on east to the North Fork of the Clearwater. The choice of the WI&M's name was made to distinguish it from a strictly industrial road, and though no survey ever reached Montana, newspaper articles of the time speculated that the WI&M was headed toward Lolo Pass. There was much discussion in the press of the time of a "Missoula cutoff" road from the Clearwater Valley to Missoula, providing a much more direct route from the East to Portland. This ultimately proved to be impossible, as no pass existed which would be suitable for such a railroad.

In the final survey of the WI&M, (now in the collection of the Latah County Historical Society. Moscow, Idaho), it turned north at the Potlatch River, (the actual namesake of the company due to the extensive timber ownership in this river's drainage), and went only as far as Collins, Idaho slightly north of the present town of Bovill, Idaho. This was in the heart of the timber owned by the company. A Milwaukee Road connection may already have been in mind and may have shaped this final location of the WI&M.

Potlatch's relationship with the Milwaukee began early, even before the completion of the WI&M, Potlatch,

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and the huge mill. On December 3, 1906, at Palouse, Washington (where the lumber company was first headquartered), they entered into an agreement for Potlatch to provide the Milwaukee with 262,000 crossties. Delivery was to commence July 1, 1907, and continue at the rate of 50,000 per month or more. At the accepted rate of 3,000 ties to the mile of mainline track, this calculates to over 87 miles of track.

Potlatch's town, mill, and railroad were completed in early 1907. In its publicity booklet of that year the company was already predicting of the coming of the Milwaukee Road's branch to Bovill. During the last two weeks of June, 1907, a number of dignitaries visited Potlatch to see the village, mill and facilities, and railroad. The most significant were Frederick, Charles, Rudolph, and Fred Weyerhaeuser, William, P.M., and Cliff Musser, and Frederick Denckmann. All were delighted with the results of their investments. Howard Elliott, President of the NP, accompanied by an impressive NP delegation, joined them in a special train to Potlatch. Allison Laird's (Assistant General Manager of the Potlatch Lumber Co. and the WI&M) description in a letter to Frank Thatcher (WI&M President) was, "The NP party left about 9 o'clock without buying the road and I think if they had attempted it they would have had to bid high considering the very probable connection of the Milwaukee Road. All seemed pleased over that." Laird urged Thatcher to "come out soon and make up your mind where you desire to make this connection."

On 9/3/07, Hugh Bovill, namesake of the town, wrote to William Deary, (General Manager of both the lumber company and the WI&M), offering him land if needed for additional yards in Bovill in connection with the possibility of the Milwaukee Road's coming.

Behind-the-scenes discussions began between the Milwaukee and the PLCo/WI&M management with the Milwaukee's aim to become the recipient of PLCo's

outbound lumber traffic. The Potlatch mill, when built, was the largest in the world. Lines from the Milwaukee's transcontinental mainline were surveyed from Tekoa to Potlatch, Plummer to Potlatch, St. Maries to Bovill, and from St. Maries up the St. Maries River and Emerald Creek to reach the WI&M near Harvard. The St. Maries to Bovill line was selected early on, but not publicly announced so that right-of-way land values would not become excessively inflated. On 8/7/08, Deary wrote to F. E. Weyerhaeuser, (4th son of Frederick), stating that he had just had a long interview with Mr. A. J. Earling, President of the Milwaukee Railroad. They discussed a connection with the WI&M from a branch out of St. Maries. Connection would either be at Harvard or Bovill.

The NP, which had originally declined to build the branch into the timber and had been a problem for the WI&M by unwillingness to establish joint rates or provide adequate empty freight cars for the Potlatch mill's output, now became concerned. On April 11, 1908, J. M. Hannaford, Chief Engineer of the NP, traveled over the 47 miles of the WI&M from Palouse to Bovill and reported its condition by letter to Elliott. On 8/12/08 Frederick Weyerhaeuser wrote to Deary that the NP was making an offer to purchase the WI&M for the cost of its construction plus a bonus of \$250,000, all in cash, and included trackage agreements for the WI&M, (as the lumber company's plant subsidiary), for its mills on-line, as well as providing Spokane rates for the shipment of PLCo. lumber. Weyerhaeuser asked Deary for his opinion of entertaining such offer. In a note two days later, Weyerhaeuser noted that he was tempted by the offer. Deary wrote back that he would prefer to come to St. Paul to confer directly with Weyerhaeuser and explain his views. Deary mustered the support of the other owners of the WI&M and PLCo., Thatcher, F. S. Bell, the Lairds and the Nortons, all of whom shared his opinion that the sale should be opposed. One of their concerns was against becoming too dependent upon a single railroad. The sale did not occur, and the WI&M-NP relationship would remain strained for years to come. Joint rates were not established until 1922 and several rate battles occurred before the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC).

Though lumbering had begun in earnest, the WI&M and PLCo. continued to experience the freight car shortages, with little incentive for the NP to improve. After meeting on 11/4/08 with James J. Hill and Louis Hill of the Great Northern, Howard Elliott of the NP, and a Mr. Harrison of the Burlington, Deary wrote to Thatcher, "I am inclined to believe they will not do much for us until such time as the Milwaukee Road is connected to us."

This connection was being predicted in "The Deary Enterprise", newspaper of the small town of Deary, Idaho, on the WI&M, in its initial edition on September 18, 1908. On December 28, 1908, Earling in a one hour conference with Bell and Thatcher, agreed to make the Bovill connection.

Representatives of the Milwaukee and PLCo. met at St. Paul and on 1/11/09 reached an agreement. Those

present were Earling and E. D. Sewall, Vice-president, for the Milwaukee, and Frederick Weyerhaeuser, his son Charles (President of PLCo.). C. R. Musser and F. S. Bell for the lumber company. The agreement specified that the CM&PS would construct and operate a line from Bovill, Idaho to Trumbull, Idaho, where the PLCo. would erect a three-band sawmill plant and operate for at least twenty years. Rates from Trumbull, (to the East), would be the same as from Spokane. The CM&PS would also establish through rates from Trumbull to points on the Union Pacific and its subsidiaries, (OR&N and OSL). The CM&PS also agreed to at all times supply enough cars sufficient to handle the product of the mill. In case of fire or other total loss of the mill, it was agreed that timber would be hauled to the Potlatch mill over the CM&PS and WI&M, and outgoing shipments would use the CM&PS via Bovill, Idaho.

On the same day the WI&M, represented by its president F. H. Thatcher, entered into an agreement for the CM&PS to construct the branch line from St. Maries to Bovill, Idaho to connect there with the WI&M. Joint tariffs would be published and maintained, for passenger business, lumber, and freight except lumber, with interchange at Bovill.

Use of the CM&PS line by WI&M engines for hauling logs onto the WI&M at Bovill was agreed upon from a point at the divide about ten miles north of Collins to Trumbull, and for similar use at the mill at Trumbull. Switches, sidings, and connections were agreed upon.

By letter of 1/23/09 Sewall provided copies of the memoranda of agreement to Thatcher, emphasizing the need for confidentiality. The contract signings came later, in May, with Charles A. Weyerhaeuser signing for the WI&M/PLCo.

In addition to the Idaho twenty-year law, another reason for urgency to get the line into Trumbull and the mill constructed was outlined in a Deary letter of 11/20/08. Wind storms in the Elk Basin in 1908 had blown down about ten million feet of Potlatch timber, mostly all white pine of very good quality. It was felt that this timber could be saved if reached within the next couple of years.

The "Enterprise" on 1/19/09 announced that "The Milwaukee will complete its coast extension and have it in working order by July 1st. The company will build feeders and branch lines to all parts of the northwest and build up the greatest transcontinental railroad system of all." The Milwaukee would open up eastern markets to Deary, "Hub of the upper Potlatch".

The "Enterprise", 3/5/09 reflected that Milwaukee surveyors had finished locating a line from Tekoa to a junction with the WI&M at Potlatch, and were leaving for Bovill to "survey a branch logging road for the WI&M."

The Milwaukee's rails had first reached St. Maries on August 8, 1908, but it was announced that no branch line work would be contracted out prior to completion of the main line to the coast. This line was completed during the first week in April, 1909, and the first "transcontinental train" traveled the line during the third

week in April.

On March 26, 1909, the "Enterprise" announced the building of the St. Maries to Bovill branch in a front page article headlined. "St. Maries to Bovill by August". The contract for the grading of the branch had been let to Henry and McPhee, who had worked on the mainline. Headquarters for the construction was to be St. Maries, though engineers and equipment were also passing through Deary, (on the WI&M), daily to push the work from both ends of the line. On 4/23/09, William Deary wrote that the Milwaukee had 30 camps on the construction of the branch between St. Maries and Bovill. In April, 1909, Deary met in St. Paul with Max Wilkinson, who had constructed the Potlatch mill, and arranged for the construction of the Trumbull mill during the next Winter, (1909-10). The railroad was definitely needed before the mill could be completed. as the wagon road from Bovill to Trumbull was not sufficient to bring in the necessary machinery, etc.

Much of the year 1909 was spent locating the line from Bovill to Trumbull. The WI&M provided its profile of where it had projected to reach Trumbull. To continue the secrecy, in dispatching the above- mentioned crew to locate the line, H.R. Williams, President of the CM&PS, gave them the impression that they were locating the line for the WI&M. The deception was so complete that when Allison Laird met the Milwaukee's right-of-way man on the train on 3/1/09, he found that the man apparently knew nothing of the Elk Creek extension., though he was buying right-of-way from Clarkia over the divide into Collins and Bovill. Laird chose to say nothing about the extension. At this time the Plummer-Potlatch and Emerald Creek routes were still under discussion.

By June, 1909, the Milwaukee locating crew had just about completed its work locating into Trumbull, and sought from Deary the plan for layout of the mill and yards. Though Deary was slow to provide this, he still hoped for completion of the line during 1909, and on August 17, Williams assured him that this could still be accomplished before Winter. On 9/4/09 Deary advised Williams that PLCo. had a large force of men at work preparing the millsite, (The Elk River mill foundation had to be constructed on cedar pilings as the entire site foundation was a swamp), but complained that he felt the Milwaukee's contractors were short of men. He felt that the extension could be completed by January 1, 1910.

By September, however, Williams began to realize that this could not be fully completed, even if the track could be laid before winter it would be too late to do any ballasting. He also inquired if a rotary snow plow would be necessary to keep the line open.

Progress of the entire branch from St. Maries had been slowed by spring rains, but in June Deary estimated that they had 2,000 men at work on the project. Never one to miss a chance at business, Deary offered to Williams for PLCo. To supply lumber for all the Milwaukee's buildings and company needs at a very low rate.

The August prediction of the "Enterprise" for completion came and passed, the July 30 prediction was

revised to November 1.

On September 2, 1909, Williams informed Deary that on their construction from Bovill to Trumbull they had 815 men, 87 teams, and one steam shovel. There was one tunnel to build, (at Neva, between Bovill and Elk River). Williams also provided the following elevation on the branch:

Summit between Clarkia and Bovill:	3250'
Bovill:	2852'
Summit 1 1/2 miles south of Bovill:	2973'
" 10 " " " " " "	3174'
" 18 " " " " " "	2986'
Trumbull (Elk River)	2835'

For a time Trumbull was not the proposed end of the branch, as surveys went south down Elk Creek into the Clearwater valley. Gold was then being mined at Pierce; an old map published in the Timberman showed this proposed. roundabout route. The September 17 "Enterprise" discussed the Milwaukee's seeking of this Clearwater route through Lewiston and on to the coast, touting Bovill as a railroad center along the line. Credence to this was given on October, 1 with the announcement that the Milwaukee had purchased a quarter section of land near Orofino, Idaho. On November 19 the "Enterprise" further wrote that the line down Elk Creek would reach the Clearwater at Bruce's Eddy, where "one of the big mills of the Clearwater Timber Company would be located." The Clearwater Timber Company and Potlatch Lumber Co. were both owned by almost identical Weyerhaeuser interests.

Whether this Clearwater extension was a possible reality or just newspaper talk is speculation since it was never built. The terrain is such that a suitable route could not be found.

On 11/27/09 the Milwaukee proposed for the CM&PS to use the WI&M main line from where its own line would connect with it about two miles north of Bovill, (Purdue on the WI&M). The CM&PS would use the WI&M tracks at the same rate as the WI&M could use theirs, fifty cents per train mile except for light engines moving over the line for repairs at 25 cents per mile. They would jointly use the station at Bovill, (already constructed by the WI&M). the side tracks, and the wye for turning engines. The Agent and employees at the Bovill depot would also be jointly employed. By letter 12/3/09, Deary agreed.

On 12/27/09 the Milwaukee proposed to connect to Trumbull (Elk River) from the south end of the Bovill yard, and on 1/3/10 Deary proposed that the WI&M would expand the yard slightly to accommodate this. Snow was already deep and when T. P. Jones, PLCo. logging Superintendent walked in from Trumbull. He reported that the tunnel work would take until March to complete and he did not think the Milwaukee could get in with the rails until July. (1910). On 12/24/09 Deary reported on the progress at the Elk River mill site, the mill pond was about completed. The meadow was cleared for the millsite and 20

acres was cleared for the town. Laird wrote on 2/11/10 that the mill and town of Elk River would be built during the coming summer. Snow was five feet deep at Elk River on that date.

The "Enterprise" reported on 1/21/10 that trains were running on the branch as far as Fernwood, and on 2/11/10 that "the steel is now laid within one mile of Clarkia." By June 10 the line was completed to Bovill and as work forces could now be more concentrated, they were pushing on rapidly to Elk River. On 6/24/10 Deary wrote, "We will commence shipping to the new mill site next week."

On July 10, 1910, passenger service on the Milwaukee went into effect out of Bovill, though one-day service to Spokane would have to wait several months until the completion of the Plummer to Spokane extension. On 7/30/10 Milwaukee President H. J. Earling, accompanied by other officials of the Milwaukee Road, made a trip of inspection over the St. Maries, Bovill, and Elk River extensions, and the party visited Potlatch via the WI&M in Mr. Earling's special train.

Almost immediately the "Enterprise" noticed an impact from the Milwaukee's connection with the WI&M. Where it had become commonplace to witness long trains of logs enroute the Potlatch mill, with empties returning to the woods, now long eastbound trains of lumber were observed on the WI&M enroute the Milwaukee and eastern markets.

On 10/7/10 the Potlatch Lumber Company opened the Elk River town site adjacent to the mill, which had a daily capacity of 300,000 board feet. The actual startup of the mill was not until April, 1911. This mill was electrically operated, (in comparison to the boiler and belt operated Potlatch mill), and "the most modern that human capacity has yet produced", according to the "Palouse Republic". The Elk River mill had only about half the capacity of the Potlatch mill and employed 250 men. In comparison to the company town of Potlatch, Elk River was a normal town with privately owned homes and businesses, and little control from the lumber company.

Though the mill ran smoothly from startup, it experienced one unexpected problem, deep snow every winter, causing numerous closings.

Potlatch Lumber Co. railroads radiated in all directions out of Elk River to the various logging camps. Much of the activity was to the North, in the Elk Basin. During the 1930's the long logging branch which left the WI&M at Camp 6 south of Bovill curved around through the Park country and tied into the Milwaukee just out of Elk River. This was locally known as the Munson Pacific after a logging superintendent.

Potlatch's primary equipment on these lines was its shays, but two rod locomotives were also used. Potlatch #23, a small Alco 2-6-2, was primarily used as track laying power. The most unique Potlatch locomotive was #24, a Baldwin 2-6-6-2T built in 1926 and used initially for the mainline haul from the Elk Basin camps into Elk River. It subsequently also operated out of Bovill. When the de-

pression stilled much of Potlatch's operations, #24 was sold to the Weyerhaeuser Timber Co. at Longview, Washington, where it became WTCO. #108. This locomotive exists today at the museum in Snoqualmie Falls, Washington.

The branch was always heavy with lumber traffic. In addition to the Potlatch Lumber Co., there were a number of other companies with timber holdings and railroad logging operations off the branch. These included:

- Blackwell Lumber Co., headquartered at Coeur D'Alene, with operations at Fernwood.
- McGoldrick Lumber Co.
- Milwaukee Lumber Co., also with operations at Fernwood.
- Edward Rutledge Timber Co., headquartered at Coeur D'Alene, with operations at Clarkia.
- Winton Lumber Co., headquartered at Coeur D'Alene, with operations at Bovill.

Of these, the operations of the Edward Rutledge Timber Co., out of Clarkia in the 1920's was of special note. Rutledge owned some fire damaged timber over a mountain ridge to the east. As time is of the essence in salvaging timber, Rutledge decided to take the most direct route with its railroad to the timber, up and over the ridge, via Idaho's only logging incline.

Most of the lumber companies connecting with the branch operated Shays as their motive power, but Rutledge also had a Climax, acquired used, and a new Willamette.

Most of the logging operations tributary to the branch used Milwaukee Road log flats, though Potlatch Lumber Co. owned a large quantity of its own log flats, as did the WI&M.

Logs for the mills at Coeur D'Alene were hauled to St. Maries and across Lake Coeur D'Alene in huge booms. Potlatch's logs from north of Bovill were hauled south to Bovill, then on to the Potlatch mill via the WI&M.

In 1910, the Milwaukee Road built a hospital at Bovill. This was later taken over by Potlatch. Its primary customers, naturally, were railroaders and woods workers, but its quality was sufficient that in 1919 when Allison Laird, by now having succeeded Deary as PLCo. and WI&M General Manager, sustained a compound fracture of the leg at Potlatch and was taken by WI&M train to Bovill hospital rather than to Moscow or Pullman, both of which were nearer. Also, in 1919, Laird's daughter Elizabeth Ainsworth gave birth to a son in this hospital while her husband was returning from Europe and World War I.

After the cutting of timber from the region through which the WI&M traversed, some of the land became farmland. Various farmers at Princeton, Avon, and Stanford produced milk, and effective 8/15/15 a joint freight tariff went into effect on milk off the WI&M to Spokane, Washington, via the Milwaukee. Cans for the milk shipments were provided by the Fairmount Creamery Co., of Spokane.

This was accomplished on a timely basis after the opening of one-day service between Elk River and Spo-

kane on 9/28/13. The morning train from Spokane connected with the Columbian at Plummer, then continued on to Elk River via St. Maries. Typical schedules in both directions met with the daily WI&M passenger train near midday, which allowed travel connections in all directions.

The typical passenger traffic on the branch consisted of lumberjacks traveling between the camps and mills and Spokane. Often they returned from Spokane broke, and without ticket or money, but the conductor would never throw them off the train. He would be repaid later, and attesting to the logger's scrupulous honesty, stated that he never lost a penny. Another destination of this passenger traffic was Clarkia, which was a bawdy town located just beyond the Latah County line and a hundred miles over two ranges of mountains from its own sheriff and county seat at Wallace. The logging towns dominated by settlers, such as Bovill and Elk River, were quiet compared to Clarkia.

Milwaukee motive power during the steam era changed at Clarkia. The St. Maries to Clarkia portion could be handled by 2-8-0's, but the more mountainous portion from Clarkia to Elk River required 2-6-6-2's.

With the coming of the Depression, the Elk River mill was temporarily closed in 1930. The impact on the town of Elk River was devastating.

In 1931 three struggling Weyerhaeuser companies in North Idaho, the Potlatch Lumber Co., Edward Rutledge Timber Co., and Clearwater Timber Co. combined to form Potlatch Forests, Inc. (PFI). One of the first moves of PFI was to close the Elk River mill permanently. It had just barely survived the twenty years required in the initial agreement with the Milwaukee.

After the closing of the Elk River mill, PFI logs came from Elk River to Bovill on the Milwaukee, then on to the Potlatch mill via the WI&M. By the end of the 1930's the main railroad logging operations off the branch had shifted to truck hauling to reloads at Clarkia and Bovill, then mainline hauls to the mills.

A log shuttle ran between Elk River and Bovill, receiving logs off the Potlatch logging railroads at 7:00 AM and meeting the WI&M at Bovill at 10:00, exchanging loads for empties which were then returned to Elk River.

Logs continued to be important traffic on the branch throughout its existence. In 1947 and 1948, log movements came all the way from Avery to Potlatch via both roads, partly to keep the Potlatch mill open, as logging operations were snowbound at Elk River.

In the 1960's log traffic on the branch was carried in the Milwaukee's composite gondolas, some so decrepit that there was little wood siding left making them the equivalent of flatcars with skeleton steel bracing for sides.

Later still, the Milwaukee's skeleton log cars similar to those developed and used on the Tacoma Eastern and Chehalis Western were used on the branch. These are still in operation on the St. Maries River Railroad.

A wide assortment of joint freight rates were established by the WI&M and Milwaukee for all sorts of commodities.

In 1915 the two roads established joint rates on milk and cream shipments from various farmers at Princeton, Avon, and Stanford on the WI&M to Spokane via the Milwaukee.

In 1910, 1918, and 1934 they corresponded over prospective movements of gold ore cars from Harvard and Potlatch to either Kellogg, Idaho, Seattle or Tacoma.

In 1930 rates were established on bulk mica from a mine at Vassar, Idaho, to the north coast for ship loading enroute to San Francisco.

In 1937, the Lehigh Portland Cement Co., Spokane established rates on cement from Metaline Falls, Washington, to Palouse, Washington via the Milwaukee and the WI&M.

Over the years the WI&M shared its traffic with its three connecting lines (in 1910 the Spokane and Inland Empire, later the Great Northern, (Spokane, Coeur D'Alene and Palouse), arrived in Palouse and established a WI&M connection.) By 1933, Potlatch Forests, Inc. traffic originating on the WI&M (the Potlatch mill) was divided as follows:

CMStP&P	25%
SI-CP-SOO	25%
GN	20%
NP	20%
UP	10%

Note that the UP had no direct connection with the WI&M; as it, the SI and the GN were reached via the Spokane and Inland Empire.

On 11/23/31, the CMStP&P applied to the Idaho Public Utilities Commission to reduce passenger traffic from daily mixed train service between St. Maries and Elk River to tri-weekly service. At that time the daily train left St. Maries at 10:15 AM, arriving in Elk River sometime in the afternoon. It then remained there until the next morning, when it left Elk River at 9:30 AM and arrived in St. Maries at 3:30 PM. The application stated that the principle industry of the territory the line traversed was lumbering, and because of economic conditions this business was at a standstill. The effect of the reduction in service would be to cut operating costs in half, by requiring only one train rather than the two now operating. The IPUC denied the petition, but ordered that service be handled on a round-trip daily basis with just one train.

On July 30, 1932, however, the tri-weekly mixed train service was approved by the commission, effective August 1, 1932.

On January 8, 1934, the commission permitted the discontinuance of the agency station at Elk River. The station at Clarkia was approved to be closed on January 8, 1937.

An examination of timetables and Official Guides available to the author reflects that as of 12/29/30 the Milwaukee ran both mixed trains (#191-192) and daily passengers (#103-102) from St. Maries to Elk River and back. By 6/26/38 the passenger train was gone, and #103-102 was mixed from St. Maries to Elk River on alternate days. By 8/29/43 the mixed trains had been cut back

to Bovill, no longer reaching Elk River, but now on daily schedules. With a slight time change this continued as of 6/29/47. The mixed regularly connected at Bovill during the noon hour with the WI&M's daily passenger, which from 1938 on was the Potlatch railcar. The schedule on 1/11/51 reflects, "Mixed trains provide service. Consult agent." This schedule continued in effect in the Official Guide of October, 1955, the month following the WI&M's discontinuance of passenger service, prompted by loss of its mail contract. Exact time of discontinuance of mixed service is not known, but occurred sometime in the late 1950's.

In the late 1950's and early 1960's, PFI tired of operating the WI&M, and in late 1961 offered it for sale to all three connecting lines (MILW, GN, NP) for \$460,000. The Milwaukee immediately purchased it.

Under Milwaukee ownership, (the WI&M was always listed as a "wholly owned subsidiary"), the WI&M was operated with its own equipment (Alco S-3 #30 and HH-660 #66) until 1965, and thereafter with equipment furnished by the Milwaukee, typically one or two of the Milwaukee's GP-9's. Separate WI&M crews and operations were retained. Typical WI&M traffic was outbound lumber from the Potlatch mill over the Milwaukee, and agricultural products.

By the 1960's substantial daily traffic was also derived from clay deposits near Stanford to the J. R. Simplot plant for processing, then out over the Milwaukee. The plant was located up a steep extension of the tail of the Bovill wye. Milwaukee Road hoppers in dedicated service handled the traffic. This came to an abrupt end in July, 1969, when a pipeline was placed into operation. In 1968 the WI&M handled 6407 carloads for \$197,733 in revenue.

The WI&M and Milwaukee shared a joint agent at the Bovill depot, which remained almost the same over the many years of its existence. In 1966-67 when visited by the writer, the depot's interior still displayed 1920's era posters of Baby Ruth candy and The Dodge Brothers Car Co., and the telegram from the United States Railway Administration taking over the WI&M during World War I. This depot is unfortunately now gone.

In 1966, the tunnel at Neva, timber lined but located in a land fault, experienced a rock slide which took out approximately 40 feet of tunnel, (total length of the bore was 526 feet). It was determined necessary to "day-light" the tunnel, which was rushed to completion in six weeks. Service was resumed in six weeks. Service was resumed on October 17, 1966.

On the night of June 3, 1974, a 282 foot long trestle on the branch between Lotus and Rover (m.p. 11.7) burned, and the adjacent steel desk truss dropped into the St. Maries River. Damage estimate was \$100,000. because of the traffic over the line, repairs were rushed to completion, and by July 15 trains were passing over the new trestle and raised bridge on slow orders. In the interim, traffic to the isolated portion of the branch used the WI&M.

On 11/26/75, the Milwaukee made application for abandonment of the portion of the branch from Bovill

(m.p. 51.80) to Elk River (m.p. 72.46). The application stated that the present state of maintenance on the line was poor, estimated cost to rehabilitate the line was stated to be \$659,968 over a five year period. Estimated salvage from abandonment was #374,068 (gross), less cost of \$319,180 to recover, for a net of \$54,888.

Present train service was provided by a five man crew working out of St. Maries, only traveling from Bovill to Elk River when traffic necessitated this. This required the crew to overnight at Bovill, as there was insufficient time to return to St. Maries under the Hours in Service Law.

The first three months of 1975, only nine trips were required between Bovill and Elk River. Principal outbound traffic was logs and lumber products; since 1973 the only inbound traffic had been one car of fertilizer.

The source of the log traffic, reloading of Potlatch Corp., and Diamond Match Co. logs, had been moved to either Bovill or Clarkia, and the other source of traffic, a small shake mill, had closed and been dismantled. The abandonment promptly followed.

At the time of the Lines West embargo in 1980, the WI&M trackage was leased for one year, then purchased, by the Burlington Northern, and operates to this day as its "WI&M Branch". The St. Maries to Bovill trackage, along with the Plummer to Avery portion of the mainline, were purchased by, of all people, the Potlatch Corp., and became its St. Maries River Railroad. Just like its predecessors, the STMA is heavy with logs to mill traffic and outbound lumber traffic. Logs again move in both directions; north from a large reload at Clarkia to the plywood plant at St. Maries, and south from Tyson Creek onto the WI&M and on to Everett, Washington, via the BN.

Excellent articles on the St. Maries River Railroad appear in the November, 1986 issue of CTC Board magazine, and July, 1988 Pacific Rail News. - Tom Burg, 1993.

Editor's Note: Since this article was written, the BN has quit using the former WI&M into Bovill, at least beyond Deary, and I believe has offered the line for sale. The STMA is still operating the log reload at Clarkia and hauling logs to St. Maries, but on an infrequent basis. I don't believe they have operated south of Clarkia for some

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