

A Railfan Guide to the Texas Panhandle

For the Santa Fe Railway Historical and Modeling Society

26th Annual Convention

Amarillo, Texas • July 20 - 23, 2006

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In addition to the Tour bus listing that is being handed out, these locations are of interest to railfans attending the Amarillo convention.

Amarillo is a snapshot of the BNSF merger with the former ATSF Transcon main line with all the intermodal trains that it runs crossing the former BN line that became a primary coal line. The crossing of the two was at East Tower where also the Santa Fe had the secondary Boise City Sub join the Transcon. Since the merger, the Boise City and the BN north of Amarillo have become a directional running pair of railroads between Amarillo and Pueblo. This part of the railroad handles coal, grain and manifest traffic with the ATSF Boise City sub being the southbound track and the BN Dalhart sub being the northbound track. Southeast of Amarillo on the former BN, it has gained much traffic since the merger with intermodal traffic running west of Fort Worth to the west coast. Using the former Rock Island mainline in Amarillo and the Million Dollar Connection and a new connection established at West Tower, these intermodal trains now pass through Amarillo without changing crews. Those crews run from Clovis to Childress and are trains that were moved from the Slaton and Sweetwater subs. The former ATSF line that was heavily loaded with intermodal traffic with a healthy mix of automobiles and manifest traffic, now is getting a healthy load of grain traffic. Much of that terminates in the Texas Panhandle for feedlots. Kansas City and Fort Worth are the only other places on the BNSF that have a similar traffic mix that Amarillo does. It is not unusual for the BNSF to run 100 trains per day through Amarillo, so there are plenty of trains for the railfan to see.

Amarillo Proper

Zone 9

Zone 9 is the area located north of NE 3rd street, south of Amarillo Blvd, west of Grand Street and East

of Ross Street. DeBruce Grain is the former Continental Grain that is located off the Boise City sub West leg of wye and the ex Rock Island Liberal line. The large grain elevators are located between NE Third Street and Amarillo Blvd (old Route 66). DeBruce has two Geeps for elevator power that they use to load and unload cars. The Union Pacific brings most of the grain in to the elevator and their power can be seen on the old Power Plant spur. There are actually two large grain elevators here that are both owned by DeBruce Grain, one was Continental and the other was Producers. Located next to this, is the ATSF Grand Street Team track, a cement plant and a scrap yard, all still served by BNSF and the UP. For those listening in to the BNSF or UP, you will hear the crews talking about coming out on the West leg of the wye or out of Zone 9, or possibly even 901 track.

Amarillo Stock Yards

The Amarillo Stock Yards is located very near the elevators east of town. It is located between the former FW&D and Rock Island lines and also had a spur off the Santa Fe that now serves a scrap yard. Of course the stock yards no longer ships cattle by rail but is still in the original location and there is a feed elevator located off the Rock Island tracks (north of the stock yard). The Amarillo Livestock Auction has a good café inside of it that is open during lunch and breakfast. The auction, established in 1940, remains the largest livestock auction in the world.

Santa Fe Depot

Located on East 3rd and Grant streets is the original 1910 ATSF depot. It is now an upscale antique shop and auction gallery. The REA Express building sits directly south of the depot. The old freight house tracks located south of the depot were recently torn up when the third main track was added between West Tower and Washington. Best place to photograph the depot is at the corner of E. 4th and Garfield of a morning.

Fort Worth & Denver Depot

The FW&D depot is in use by the BNSF and sits under the Pierce Street overpass. It serves as the North Yard (ex BN) yard office and crew change point and houses the Terminal staff. This depot was also built about 1910. It was originally constructed with a red tile roof complete with an ornate tower. It received a flat roof when the Pierce Street overpass was built over it.

FW&D Roundhouse

The old roundhouse is still standing as a storage building east of the ATSF/BN crossing on Philadelphia Street at SE 3rd. It is not much to see, but still exists none the less.

Rock Island Engine House

Located in the former Rock Island yard that is now part of BNSF North yard, this metal two stall building is still standing and used as a Maintenance of Way shed. This is north and east of the FW&D depot.

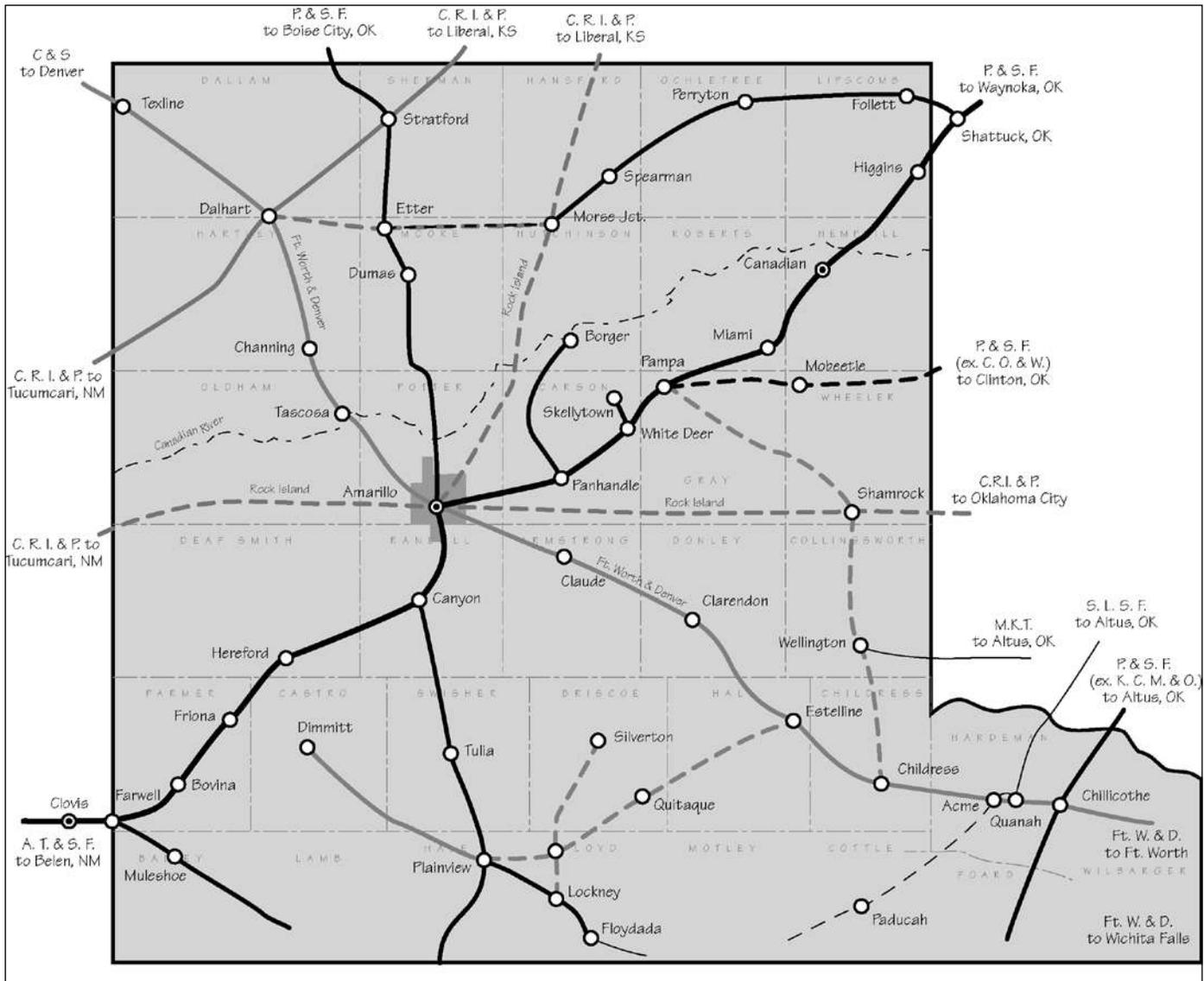
Rock Island Main line

The Rock Island main Memphis to Tucumcari main line passed through Amarillo on an almost East to West alignment. The BN took over a few miles of the line from east of town near the Progress Rail Car shops to 15 miles west of Amarillo at Bushland to serve an elevator and helium plant. The two story depot used to sit near Polk Street crossing but was torn down after the BN took over the line. The Rock Island crossed over the BN just west of the depots on a grade separation. This overpass is still in service near 3rd & Hughes Streets. The Rock Island has a bridge over 6th street that still has the Rock Island Logo on it. West of 6th street the Rock Island is abandoned and is a walking trail.

Amarillo & North

Rocla Tie Plant

The Rocla plant is located near NE 24th street on the former ATSF Boise City sub. Rocla ships out many concrete ties via rail. They ship for both BNSF, and UP. Most of the ties



This map shows the railroads of the Texas Panhandle prior to the big mergers. Most of the old Rock Island has been abandoned but much of the others remain.

for the current 2nd main track expansion on the Panhandle Sub have come from the Rocla plant in Amarillo. Rocla was also the location of a wooden tie recycling center that took in the used ties and shipped them back out to various power plants for a fuel source.

Xcel Energy Harrington Plant

Northeast of Amarillo is the Asarco Spur off of the Boise City sub just north of NE 24th street. The 5 mile spur leads to both the Asarco Smelter and the Harrington Power plant. The power plant receives approximately one trainload of Powder River Basin Coal per day. (Since we had no idea what time the train would be here and the distance from Amarillo, this was not on the tour). Seeing the dumping trestle is a long way from a public road and the speed on the spur is 10 MPH. There are actually

two power plants here, one is gas fired and one is coal fired. This was the Southwestern Public Service Power plant for many years.

Asarco

The Asarco Smelter is a shell of its former self after a recent Asarco strike that shut the plant down for a while. Asarco ships out boxcar loads of copper and gondola loads of copper ingots. The plant used to get in several flat car loads of copper ingots from New Mexico for smelting into refined copper. Asarco had their own SW900 that I believe is still there. The Rock Island also served this plant at one time from the east side of the plant. ATSF served the smelter from the west side. The Rock Island track was part of the Liberal to Amarillo line that was abandoned when Lake Meredith was formed near Fritch, TX.

Canadian River Bridge

Heading north out of Amarillo on US 287, you will encounter an unusual overpass 14 miles north of Amarillo. The old highway which is the northbound lanes goes under the tracks while the new highway which is the southbound lanes goes over the tracks. The old ATSF bridge that goes over the northbound lanes has an ATSF logo on the bridge. At MP 19, the ATSF crosses the Canadian River on one of the largest bridges on the system. The only way to get to it is by driving a sand road up the roadbed of the river where four wheelers often run. A good morning photo, however, can be made of a train crossing the river bridge from the highway. Just to the south of the bridge is an access road that enters open range where a gate is near the highway on the southbound side.

Marsh & Exell

Near MP 27 the ATSF again crosses the highway by going over it near Marsh. Just to the south of this bridge is an access road that goes east back along the tracks for a short distance. The unused ATSF Marsh cattle pens are here plus there is a good view of the Boise City Sub trains from here. Remember that the trains normally only run towards Amarillo from La Junta on the Boise City sub.

Exell is at MP 35 and just south of Exell, the ATSF again crosses the highway on an overpass. Exell was the location of the large helium plant built during WW II that produced many cars of revenue for the ATSF. The plant is no longer in operation. An old GE 65 ton switcher along with a few of the helium cars remain on site. The equipment is behind a fence.

Dumas & Machovec

Dumas is the location that ATSF still has a wooden depot on site. The railroad is not using it now and it is derelict, but still next to the railroad. A road switcher is based at Dumas. North of Dumas is Machovec and the Machovec spur. This long spur connects to the Texas Northwestern Railway and BNSF interchanges with them here. This was the meeting point at one time for many coal trains until in the late 1980s, BNSF had a serious wreck with a switch not lined destroying several locomotives. Usually the empty train backed out on the spur to clear the loaded trains. At Machovec, the ATSF built a short section of Non block - Double track that was a prime meeting place for trains when the ATSF ran trains both directions on the Boise City Sub.

Etter & Cactus

Etter is the ATSF name for this station that produces many loads of revenue for the BNSF. Etter is another interchange point with the TXNW. Etter also has a large elevator that ships unit grain trains. Etter used to be the crossing with the Rock Island line from Spearman to Dalhart. ATSF had trackage rights on the Rock from Spearman to Etter. The Santa Fe engine house still stands. BNSF also delivers a unit grain train to the TXNW at Etter to take to Sherin and spot with the BNSF power. Cactus is the town located adjacent to Etter and was a POW camp during WWII.

Stratford

Stratford is the crossing with the former Rock Island Golden State Route. It is also the interchange with the UP now. The UP was granted trackage rights over the ATSF from Pueblo to Stratford then got back on the Golden State route and ran to Dalhart where they exercised more trackage rights to Amarillo and Fort Worth on the BN. BNSF runs a local from Amarillo to Dalhart over the BN side, then uses the UP trackage rights they have to reach Stratford where the train goes back to Amarillo over the ATSF side. This is part of the directional running that BNSF is using here. Stratford also has a nicely restored ATSF depot moved east of the crossing of the BNSF and UP that is a museum.

Amarillo & East

TSTC

Texas State Technical College is located east of Amarillo along US 60 about 9 miles east of downtown Amarillo and south of the ATSF tracks. The current Amarillo Railroad Museum is located here along with a couple of industries. This used to be the location of the Amarillo Air Base. Many of the Air base warehouses were recently torn down. A BNSF yard job switches out here bringing in lumber and chemicals, usually at night while going to the Tyson Meat Packing plant.

Tyson Meats

About 10 miles east of Amarillo is Tyson Meats located north of the ATSF tracks and US 60. It was an Iowa Beef Packing Plant (IBP) for many years but in 2005 became Tyson Meats. The BNSF yard job normally switches the plant at night.

Pantex Plant

Located about 15 miles east of Amarillo, this atomic weapons plant and the trains that used to run in and out of there are the subject of the Bob Roth clinic. At one time, the Rock Island also served the plant from the northwest; of course the tracks are long gone from there now. A few years ago, Pantex decided to quit shipping by rail and do it all by truck. BNSF still has a wye that connects the plant from a long spur to the main line at the station of St. Francis. Pantex has several of the atomic transport cars still on the property along with at least two engines and a couple of passenger cars it used for guard cars. Most of this

collection of equipment has been donated to the Amarillo Railroad Museum that is located along US60 east of town at TSTC.

Warning: Pantex is a high security area patrolled by armed guards who take their jobs (rightfully) extremely seriously. Do not attempt to enter the plant grounds. A public road runs around most of the plant but photography is at your own risk. Play it safe and just "look."

Panhandle & the Panhandle Northern Railway

The City of Panhandle was the West end of the Santa Fe at one time and the location where the Santa Fe ran a short branch line south to Washburn to connect to the FW&D and then run on trackage rights to Amarillo over them.

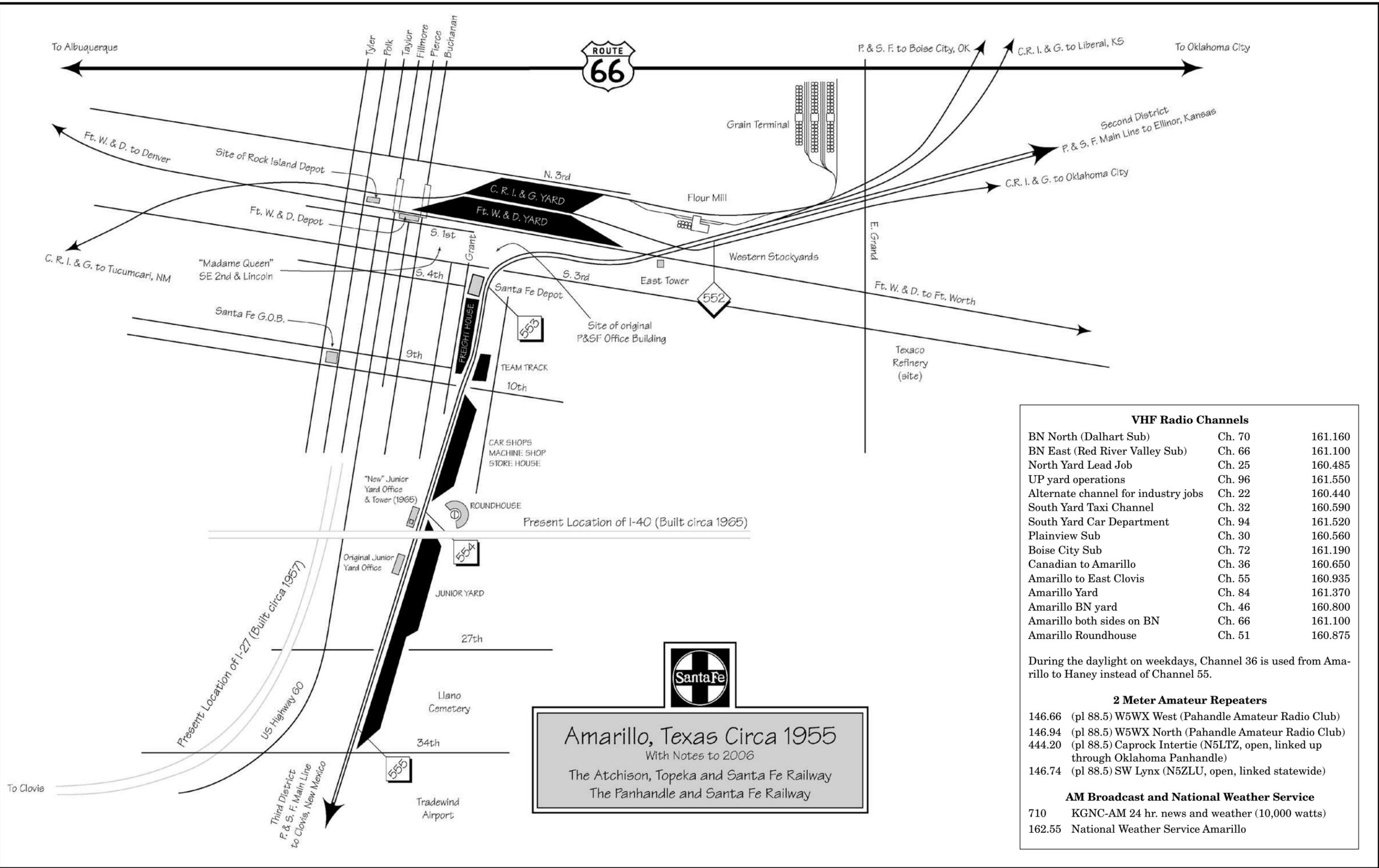
The PNR is the former ATSF Borger Branch that runs 20 miles north from Panhandle to Borger which had the longest ATSF wooden depot on the system and at one time also generated the most revenue of any station on the Santa Fe. Omnitrax owned PNR now runs this line and switches the many petroleum plants in Borger. PNR normally runs the road train at night from Borger to Panhandle to meet the BNSF local from Pampa to Amarillo. On rare occasions, the PNR will make the connection in the daylight, with Sunday being the best chance for this to happen. If the PNR arrives in the daylight, it will usually be in the evening. On real rare occasions, the PNR will be at Panhandle during the early morning. Phillips Petroleum is the largest shipper in Borger, but there are some Carbon Blacks plants that ship many cars as well. The PNR uses a GP39-2, GP35, GP38-2 and a GP40-2W for road power. Other power is stored at Borger for yard jobs. PNR used to store many locomotives for Omnitrax that were mostly out of service. Not sure if they are still there or not.

White Deer

White Deer is the former Junction of the Skellytown spur. This spur was abandoned in the late 1960s but the roadbed can still be seen at the west edge of town. The ATSF served several refineries in Skellytown.

Celanese

Celanese is the large chemical plant south of US 60 and the ATSF tracks between White Deer and Pampa located at the ATSF station of Kings-



VHF Radio Channels		
BN North (Dalhart Sub)	Ch. 70	161.160
BN East (Red River Valley Sub)	Ch. 66	161.100
North Yard Lead Job	Ch. 25	160.485
UP yard operations	Ch. 96	161.550
Alternate channel for industry jobs	Ch. 22	160.440
South Yard Taxi Channel	Ch. 32	160.590
South Yard Car Department	Ch. 94	161.520
Plainview Sub	Ch. 30	160.560
Boise City Sub	Ch. 72	161.190
Canadian to Amarillo	Ch. 36	160.650
Amarillo to East Clovis	Ch. 55	160.935
Amarillo Yard	Ch. 84	161.370
Amarillo BN yard	Ch. 46	160.800
Amarillo both sides on BN	Ch. 66	161.100
Amarillo Roundhouse	Ch. 51	160.875

During the daylight on weekdays, Channel 36 is used from Amarillo to Haney instead of Channel 55.

2 Meter Amateur Repeaters	
146.66	(pl 88.5) W5WX West (Pahandle Amateur Radio Club)
146.94	(pl 88.5) W5WX North (Pahandle Amateur Radio Club)
444.20	(pl 88.5) Caprock Intertie (N5LTZ, open, linked up through Oklahoma Panhandle)
146.74	(pl 88.5) SW Lynx (N5ZLU, open, linked statewide)

AM Broadcast and National Weather Service	
710	KGNC-AM 24 hr. news and weather (10,000 watts)
162.55	National Weather Service Amarillo

mill. The west side of this plant has a coal loop that gets coal trains from Colorado. In the early 1970s, the D&RGW started running unit coal trains from west of Denver to this plant. This of course has evolved into using SP power and now UP power. The Celanese plant has some really unusual 6 axle tank cars that serve this plant. Many times the cars can be seen next to US 60 where the Celanese switcher sets them for the BNSF. ATSF used to switch this plant with a yard job out of Pampa until the late 1980s when it was contracted out. A pair of SW1500s reside along the FM road on the east side of the plant.

Cabot & Irish Pipe

The Cabot Corporation is a carbon blacks plant west of Pampa and north of the tracks and US 60. Cabot gets tank car loads of oil on the west side of the plant and ships out Carbon blacks from the east side. The BNSF Pampa Switcher takes care of switching this plant. West of Cabot is the National Oil Well Supply that at one time was Irish Pipe. This plant gets in a few loads of scrap metal each year to make oil-field pipe.

Pampa

Pampa hosts the current ATSF depot that is used as a crew base for the local road switcher stationed at Pampa and for the MofW forces stationed here. Pampa was an interchange with the FW&D west of the ATSF depot at one time. The FW&D was abandoned into Pampa in the early 1960s. The FW&D depot still sits along the south side of US 60. Another ATSF wooden depot exists in Pampa south of US 60 on Hobart street (TX Highway 70). It is now a duplex apartment. At one time this depot was a section foreman's house moved to Pampa in the late 1890s from west of Pratt, KS. It became the section foreman's house in 1907 and became an antique store by the late 1960s. It was moved to this present location at that same time. Pampa was the junction with the ATSF branch line to Clinton, OK that was built in the 1920s by the Clinton & Oklahoma Western. Much of the C&OW yards was torn up about 15 years ago, but part of it is still in service to serve as a storage yard for Celanese, Cabot and Panhandle. A four mile spur of the C&OW still exists to the east of Pampa of the

C&OW, to reach Halliburton. Except for a small portion of the spur, it is out of service.

Miami

Miami hosts the former ATSF depot along US 60 now as a museum. Miami is also a very scenic spot to watch BNSF trains from. Incidentally, Miami is the only town in Roberts County. About 5 miles west of Miami is a very scenic overlook of the railroad. Trains can be seen leaving Miami and passing the crossovers at Codman before they disappear into the Red Deer Creek Valley behind the cliffs.

Canadian and the River Bridges

Canadian no longer has the County Seat depot that it once had or the Harvey House. It does still have a modern ATSF brick depot used by MofW forces. The biggest draw for Canadian is that it has two large bridges for the BNSF to cross the Canadian River on the east side of town. US 60 also crosses the river just to the south of the two bridges. There is an old wagon bridge that is between the highway and the railroad that is now been converted into a walk bridge. It is a nice scenic walk over the river watching trains go by. Canadian was once a crew change point on the Santa Fe. It was eliminated as a crew change in 1956 when it became one of the first run-throughs on the ATSF. Crew began running from Amarillo to Waynoka in September 1956. Canadian was eliminated as a division point in 1961.

Amarillo West

Canyon - Palo Duro Creek Bridge and the Plainview district.

Follow Washington Street south of I-27. The highway crosses over the double-track main. Proceed south on Washington to Hollywood Road (Loop 335), turn right and cross over the tracks. Proceed west on Hollywood Road and rejoin I-27.

Canyon is 15 miles south of Amarillo on the Transcon (can also be reached by using I-27 directly from Amarillo). On the north side of Canyon, the tracks pass on the east side of the West Texas A&M University Football Stadium and across a high fill then across Palo Duro Creek on a high bridge. This is one of the more scenic spots around Amarillo and photos can be made in either morning or afternoon. The afternoon shots are probably more desired because

the WTAMU horse barn can be included in the shot. Canyon also has a depot that belongs to the city still on site that is a County seat style depot only instead of brick, it is stucco. At the west edge of town, the Plainview sub joins the Hereford Sub. The Plainview sub doesn't have too much traffic on it, but it can be very interesting. Just south of Canyon on the Plainview sub is a couple of scenic spot where trains will climb out of the Palo Duro Creek Valley. Stay on US 60 all the way to Clovis to parallel the ATSF main line.

Umbarger

Umbarger is a small German settlement west of Canyon that has an elevator. Not too scenic, but east of Umbarger is a long hill that takes most train quite a pull to get out of the Palo Duro Creek Valley at Canyon. Train can be seen for several miles coming up this hill.

Hereford

At Hereford the brick county seat depot is used by the BNSF for a road switcher and MofW forces. There was a former Ford Motor Company switcher at the elevator I am not sure if it is still there or at the grain loop on the east edge of town.

The Hereford Sub has several loop tracks for elevators to hold feed for the feed lots. They are located at Hereford, Summerfield and Friona. The Summerfield loop gets two different kinds of grain trains, regular corn trains and a ground corn both for cattle feed. There are many feed lots in the Texas Panhandle. Over 50% of the beef for the United States is raised and fed in the Texas Panhandle.

Friona & Parmerton

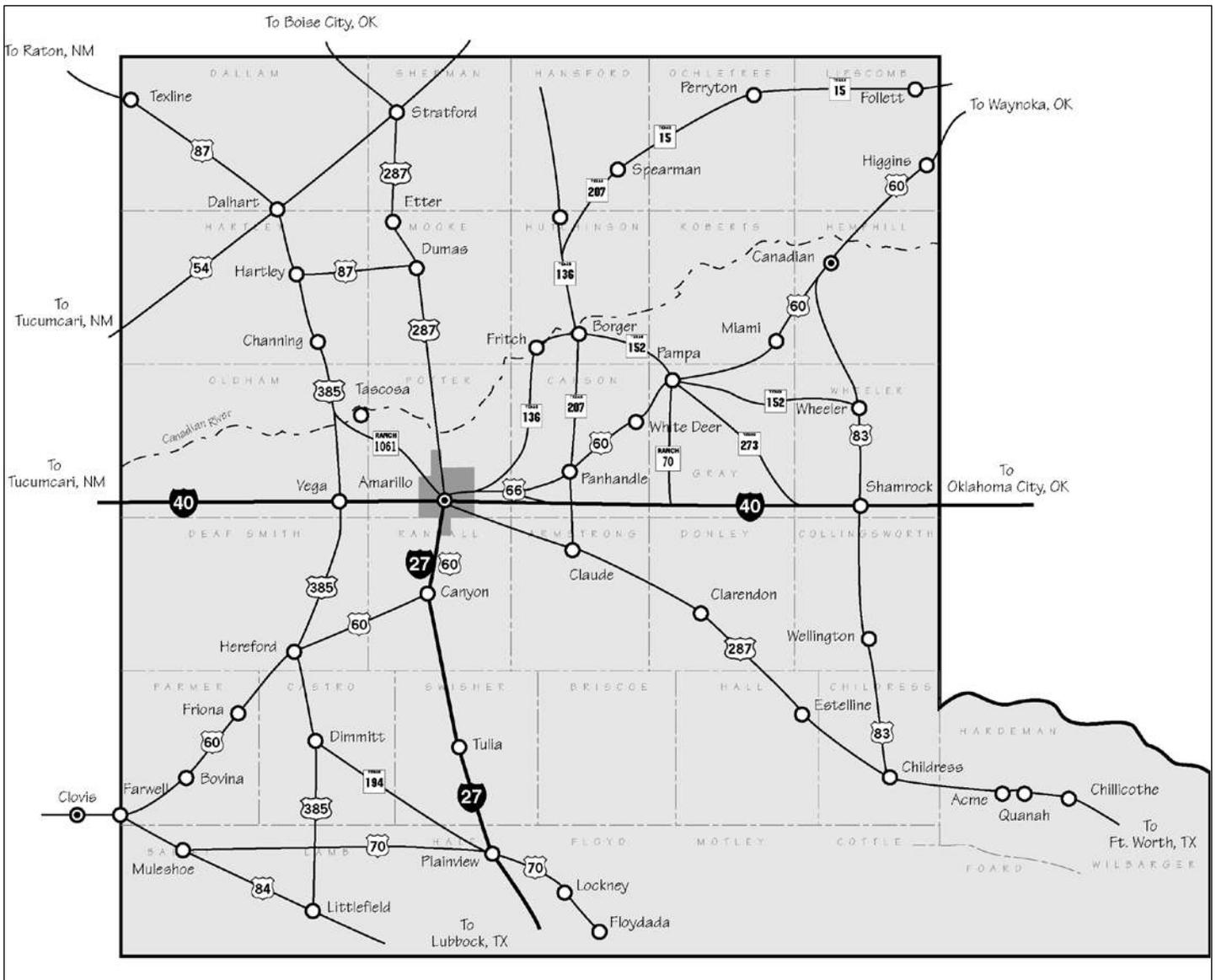
Friona has a nicely restored wooden ATSF depot in the park north of the tracks. It was moved from Friona and restored about 15 or so years ago. Parmerton just west of Friona, has an Excel Beef Packing plant that still ships via rail.

Bovina

Bovina is the location of some large elevators and the locations of the cover shot of the Joe McMillan book "Warbonnets & Bluebonnets". That is a shot of a westbound leaving Bovina. It is also the birthplace of Joe's lovely wife Nikki!

Farwell & Texico

This is the town that is situated on the Texas & New Mexico state line. For the Santa Fe, the freight facili-



Major roads in the Panhandle. Not all secondary roads are shown so get a good highway map as a backup or you might wind up in someone's pasture!

ties were in Farwell, Texas while the passenger station was in Texico, New Mexico. At Farwell is a wye track that connects with the Slaton sub. The tracks make an "S" curve through town, but other than that it is not much to see. The Bovina depot is located west of Texico on the north side of US 60 as a private residence and has been modified some, but is still recognizable to ATSF depot fans. The coal trains that go to Mill, TX on the Slaton Sub east of Texico use the wye at Farwell to turn and head east. They typically run every day to the Tolk Generating station.

Plainview Sub-Canyon south Tulia

Tulia has a large grain complex at the west edge of town. The Tulia depot also sits along the tracks at the west edge of town. In a small park at the southeast edge of town, the Happy, TX depot can be found. Just south of Tulia, there is a small dip in the landscape that makes for a nice scenic shot of trains coming north towards Tulia.

Plainview

Some interesting things can be found in Plainview. The ATSF brick County Seat depot is located here where the tracks make a bend and go from north - south alignment to a brief east - west alignment. Plainview has a road switcher that works here. North of Plainview is DeBruce Grain that has a grain loading loop along with three locomotives. A red Indiana Railroad SD20, a yellow Alco S2 and a former CRIP SW1 still in CRIP paint. East of town off of the Floydada district wye is Scouler Grain that also has a grain loop.



**SANTA
SAFETY** **FE
FIRST**



Railfanning the old FW&D

The Fort Worth and Denver main line from its namesake cities bisects the Panhandle at nearly a 45-degree angle. From Childress in the southeast to Texline in the northwest, this stretch of the modern BNSF now carries a lot of coal traffic.

Following the railroad up to Dallas-Ft. Worth is easy as it parallels US-287 all the way. Very few artifacts exist but the depots at Wichita Falls and Quanah (Depot Restaurant east side of town is good) are worth a look. KCM&O depot at Chillicothe is still standing south of US-287. At Amarillo, exit I-40/US-287 at SE 3rd street and follow it into town.

North of Amarillo, locate the Cal Farley Road (Ranch Road 1061) off of W. Amarillo Blvd (old Route 66) and 9th Street (near the Medical Center). This winding ranch road will take you through the "Canadian Breaks" where some of the richest natural gas fields in the world are located. This is cattle and ranch country and the scenery can be beautiful... a big change from the *Llano Estacado* south of Amarillo. You won't pick up the railroad for 15 miles or so as it is winding its way through the "Breaks" on your right. The highway parallels the railroad just before you reach US-385. The railroad has a

long siding here named "Tascosa." The original site of this storied wild-west town is across the Canadian River and is the location of Cal Farley's Boys Ranch.

Turn right on US-385 toward Channing. The highway crosses over the BNSF and then the Canadian River. While the highway runs almost due north, the railroad continues west for several miles before crossing the river upstream. You will not see the railroad again until you reach Channing. From Channing to Dalhart you will parallel the railroad.

As you drive toward Dalhart, note how the land has again flattened out. Many enormous wheat and grain fields, a band of oil wells and thousands of head of beef cattle illustrate why this is truly, the Golden Spread. The old FW&D never capitalized on this line but the BNSF has upgraded the track, installed a form of CTC and now runs a goodly number of trains.

At Dalhart, the BNSF crosses the old Rock Island "Golden State Route" at grade. This is a crew change point for the UP on the "Cotton Rock."

Continue north on US-87 toward Texline. Just past the town, you cross into New Mexico. Right on the border is a station on the railroad named "Sixela." At this point, the

FW&D became the Colorado and Southern for the remainder of its trip to Denver. The remains of an old engine house are visible.

The highway continues to Clayton and on through some gorgeous but virtually empty country to Raton (watch for antelope). The railroad parallels the highway to Des Moines where it disappears from view. One can follow it as far as Folsom, NM on state road 325.

In 1925, the Santa Fe began a line from Boise City to Clayton with the idea of an alternative route (the "Colmor Cut-Off") to the mainline avoiding Raton Pass. At Clayton, the Santa Fe obtained trackage rights over the C&S to Mount Dora where they got on their own line across northern New Mexico. Originally surveyed to Colmor, NM, the line made it only to Farley before it was abandoned around 1943. Sharp-eyed railfans will see the grade just to the south of the highway north of Mount Dora.

The Santa Fe depot at Clayton still exists at its original location (as a private residence) off of Santa Fe avenue on the west side of town.

At Raton, of course, one picks up the Santa Fe mainline over the pass. Most of the action is, however, on the old C&S/FW&D north of Trinidad.

