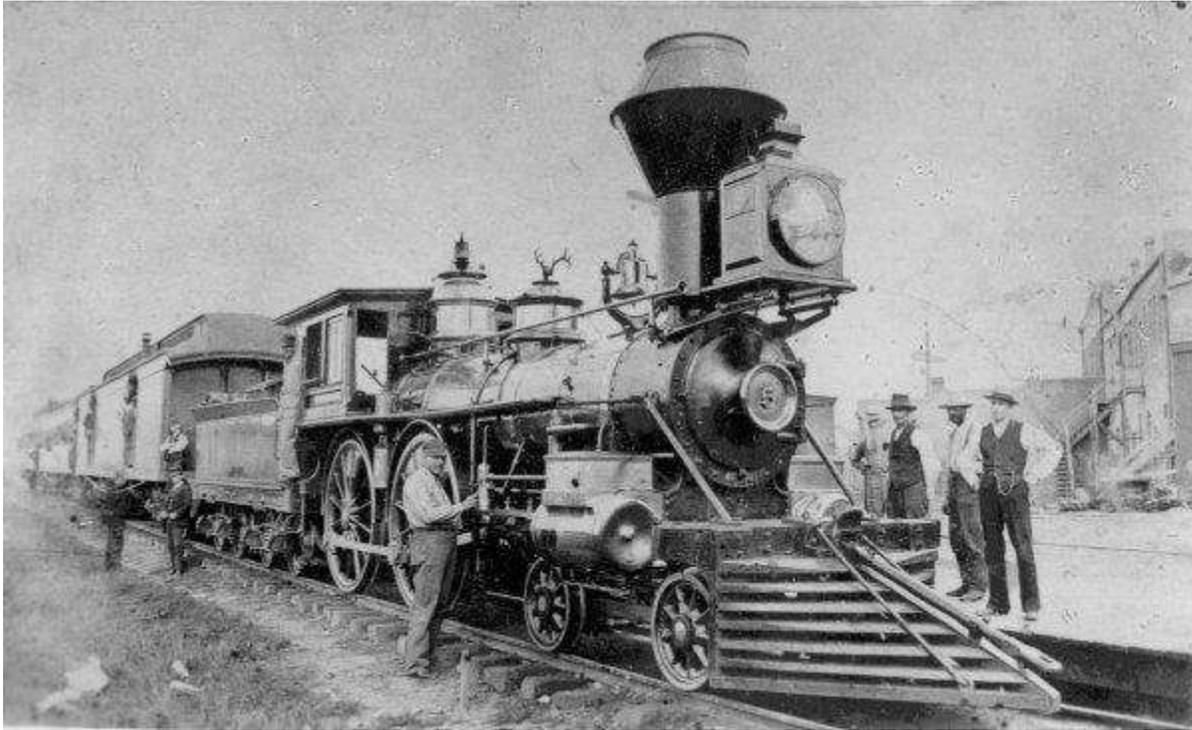


The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer

Howard Branch: Moline

Updated 10/30/03

The first train arrived in Moline on the Howard Branch in 1879.

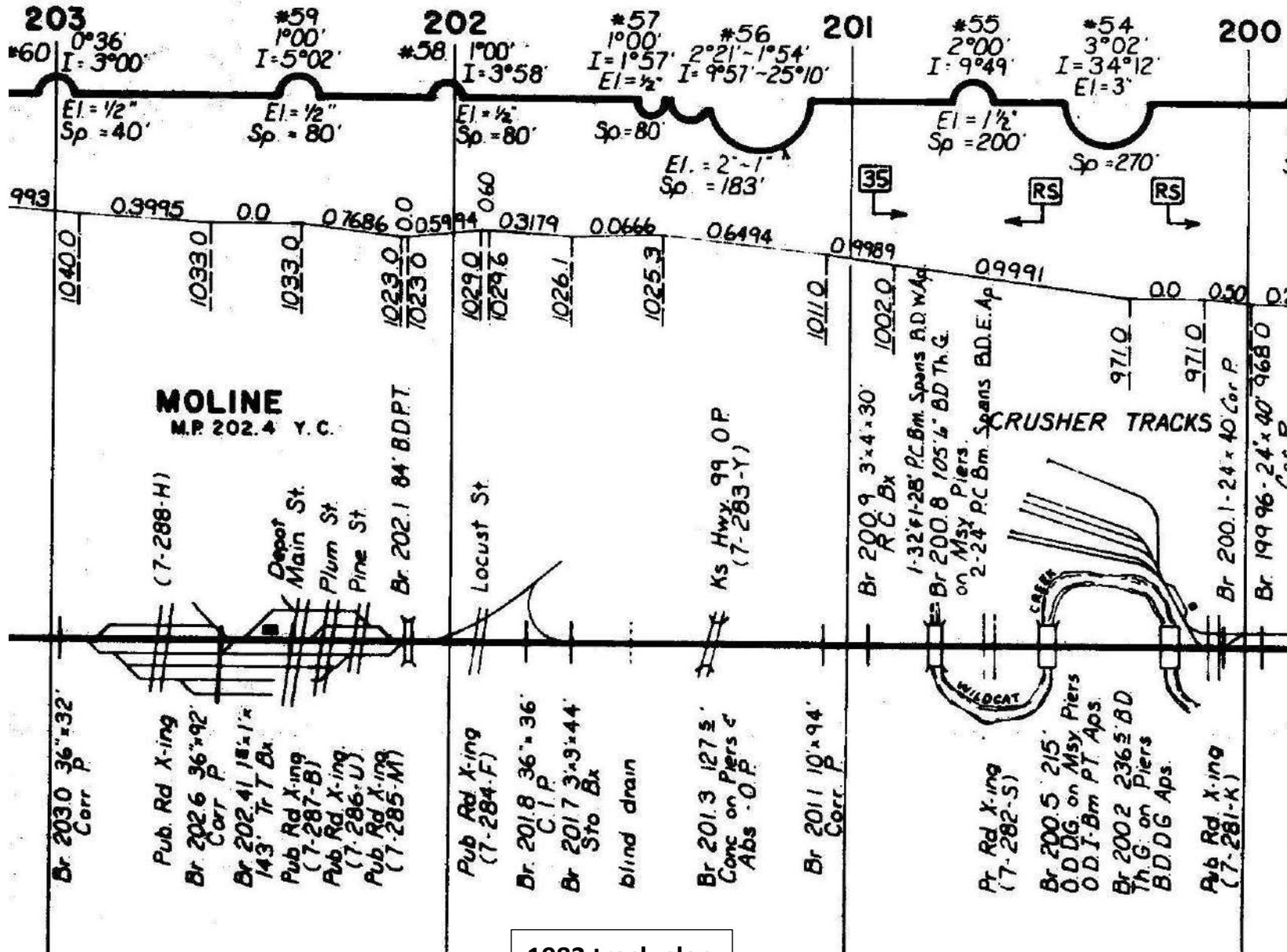


Moline was the end of the line, or maybe it would be better to say the beginning of the line. From the early 50s when the 95/96 started running on alternate days, crews on the Howard District worked out of Moline. That was one factor in explaining the difficulty the railroad often had in getting crews to desire this assignment.

The Howard Branch entered through a wye on the east side of town. The main business of the area and a creator of much traffic was the limestone quarry known as "Crusher" to the railroad and Solvay to the locals. Of course, the Howard had the least traffic. The line from Chanute to Winfield for Wellington and Newton was by far more significant and much of it remains today as the South Kansas and Oklahoma Railroad.

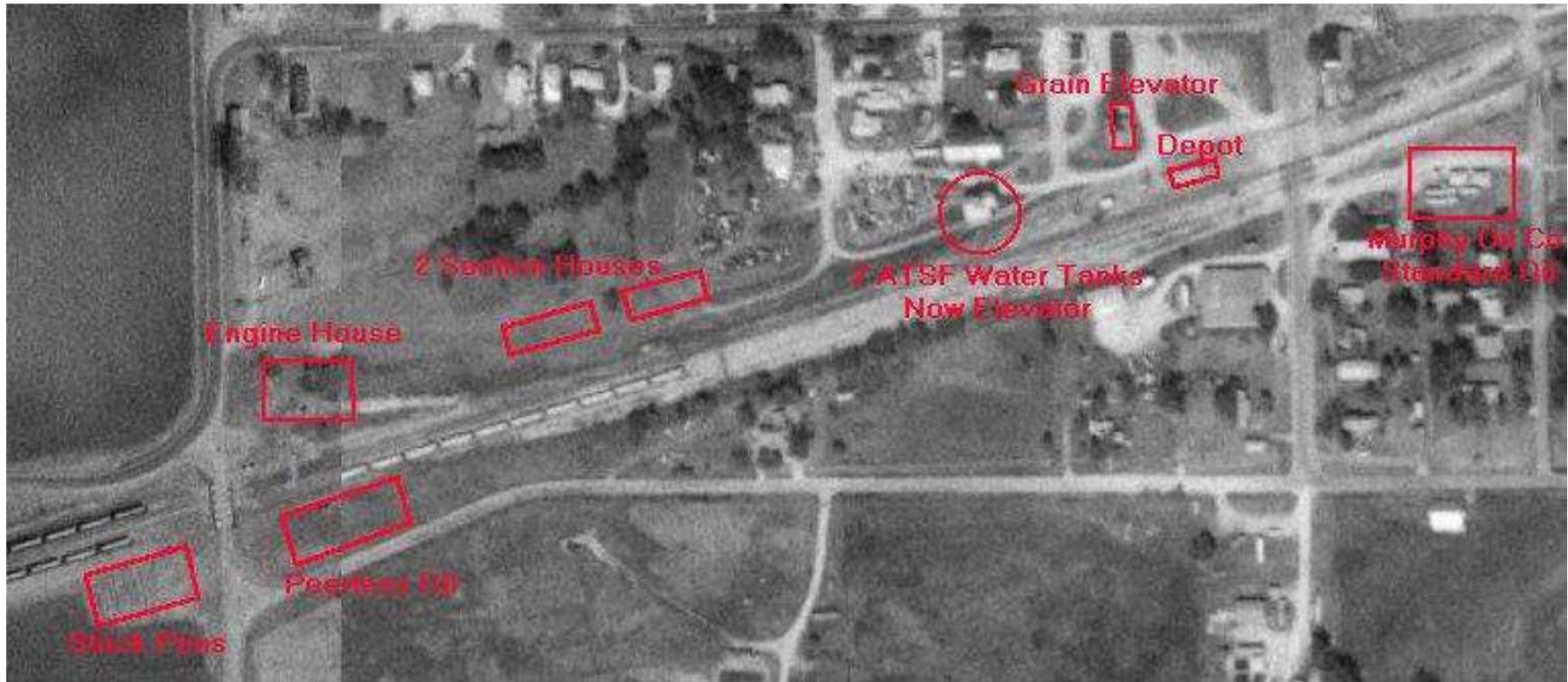
The author ran across an SKOL freight here on Nov. 11, 2002. It had four units on the front followed by 83 cars: CEBX 100 Schnabel, 47 covered hoppers, 24 tanks, 8 boxes, 2 open hoppers, and 1 bulkhead flat.

The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer



1983 track plan

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By Steve Sandifer*



1991 image via TerraServer

Early photo, showing an early grain elevator, 1921, from the Shaffer Museum in Moline.

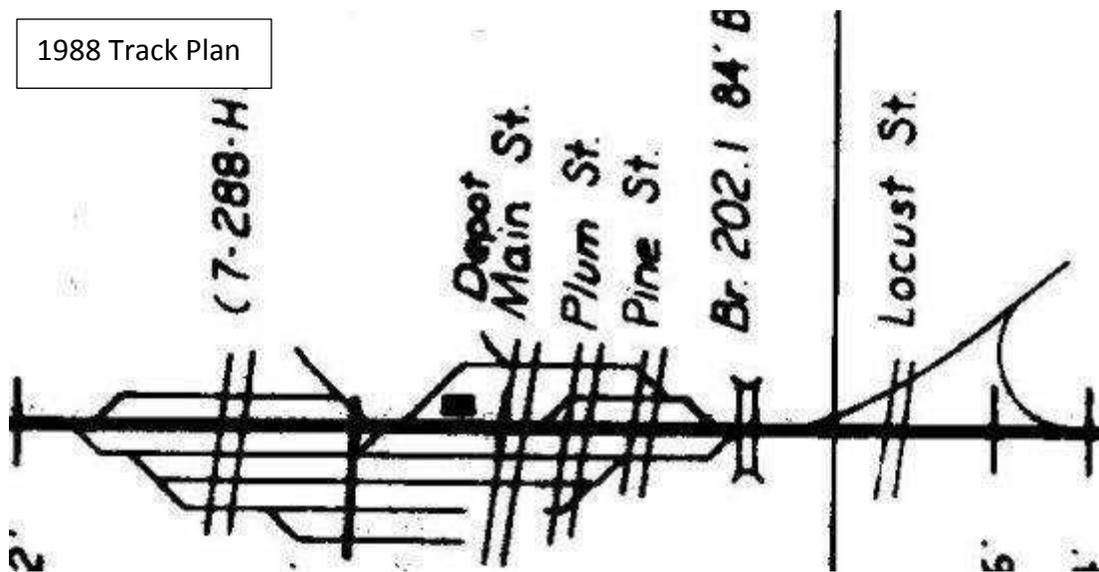


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This photo is from the mid-20s, before the elevator burned down in 1927. In the first photo above the depot is painted brown, but it has been repainted into the yellow and green scheme in the lower photo.

1988 Track Plan



"Moline Kansas at the south end of the Howard Branch was a busy little railroad town on the Southern Kansas Division's second district. The Howard Branch train often pulled in alongside the westbound second district local which worked Chanute to Winfield through Fredonia toward Wellington. I was frequently in town at noon. A "through freight" ran each way by night between Chanute and Wellington thru Independence and the Elk River Valley below Longton. A "doodlebug" passenger train each way each day tied remote Coffeyville to Wichita and Newton and paused in its passing at Moline for cream cans, mail, and an occasional passenger."

The Howard Kansas Branch

By Steve Sandifer

"West of the depot stood a two-stall engine house where lived the Moline Helper." No photos of this "roundhouse" have been found, and it was gone by 1960. The highway turn at that location is still known as the "roundhouse corner."

"Most westbound freights needed help to get up the Flint Hills grade to Grand Summit - even the short legged 1667 (2-10-2) - typical power for the rock train. She'd come down the hill alone in the evening with miscellaneous merchandise and "MTs" (empties). (Grand Summit was 15 miles west. There was a continuous 1.5% grade for 4.5 miles leading to the crest.)

"In addition to the regular 2nd District trains, there was a 6 day a week rock train which worked the crusher and round tripped to Winfield. It's regular power during my time (1947-52) was the 1667. There were also frequent extras on this line and occasional mainline detours from Ottawa to Wellington."

"For years the 3102 (2-8-2) was the Moline Helper, helping several westbound freights each day up the Flint Hills from Moline to Grand Summit. In this service she was equipped with a small low tender adequate for her relatively short runs and providing good back up visibility. She routinely returned rear first to Moline and though there was a wye at the top of the hill, there was no turntable at Moline, and the wye there was inconveniently out east."

"She shared the two stall Moline engine house with the Howard Branch engine and so was conveniently available to make the run to Emporia in case the branch engine woke up sick. Westbounds would simply set out tonnage. She'd take it to Winfield when she got back. She was also ready to grab a caboose and run up the branch to load cattle as an extra when the local was too busy." *James Burke*

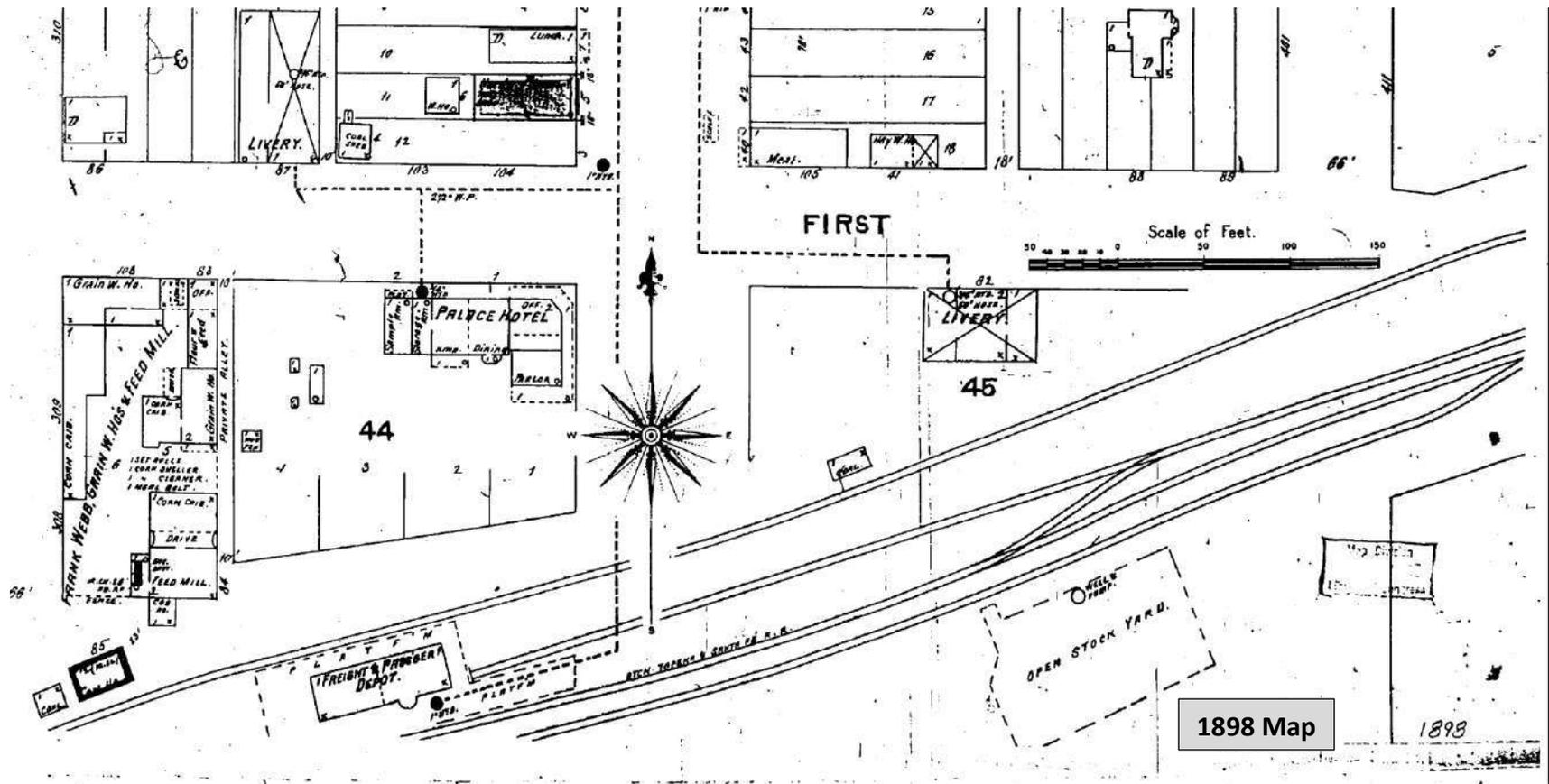
The engine house was corrugated metal and had no windows. Locomotives primarily received their oil at Winfield, Emporia, or Chanute. For example, 95-96 would be serviced in Emporia and have sufficient oil to make the round trip to Moline. However, a company tank car was parked on the track by the engine house (track 6) and was used as when the engines were running low. Water for the Howard Branch was available at Moline, Eureka, Madison, and Emporia.

Between the engine house and the water tanks were two brick non-standard section houses for Santa Fe workers. There was no city street to the section houses; workers had to use the right-of-way to get home. In the 1921 photo above, those houses had not been built but 5 box cars had been converted into housing.

Moline had 1200 inhabitants in 1950. In 2000, Moline it had dwindled to 473 residents.

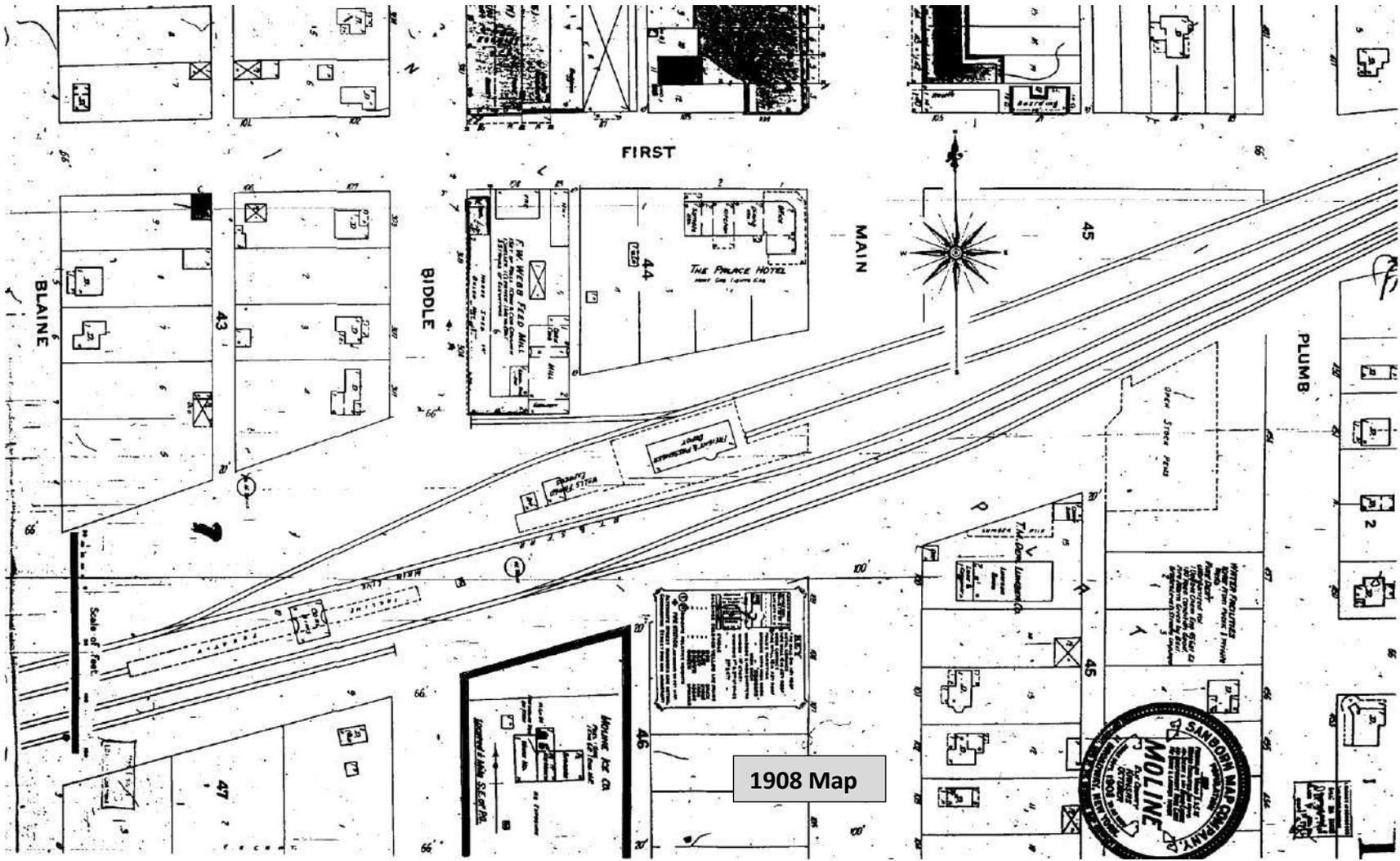
The Howard Kansas Branch By Steve Sandifer

Sanborn maps reveal an evolution of track plans in Moline. The **1898 map** shows a coal bin east of the depot and an open stock yard across the tracks from it. The depot has always stood just west of Main St. The elevator was the Frank Webb Grain Warehouse and Feed Mill but had no spur to serve it.



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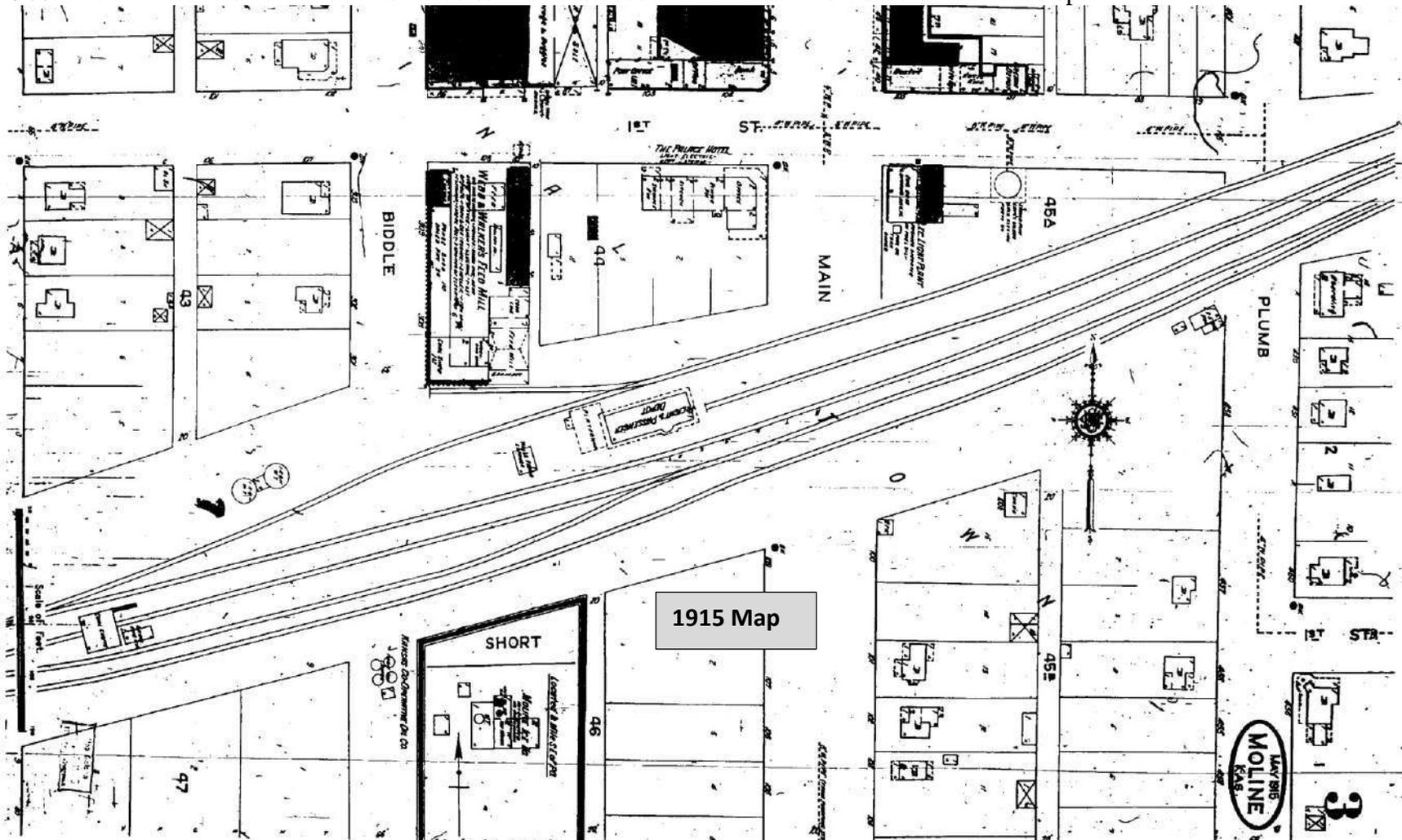
By 1908, the coal bin east of the depot was gone, but the stock yard remained. Moline Canning had become Moline Ice Company. The water tank and coal bins between the tracks remained, but a second water tank is shown where two would eventually be located north of the coaling tower. The elevator was now the F. W. Webb Feed Mill and had its own spur. A Wells Fargo Express building was added on the platform just west of the depot.



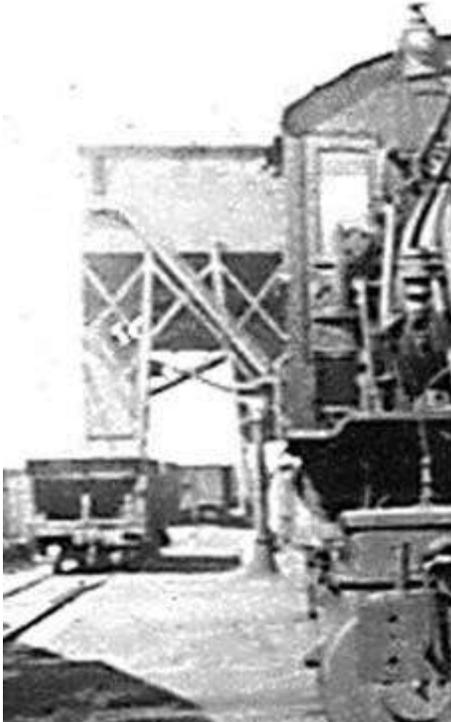
The Howard Kansas Branch

By Steve Sandifer

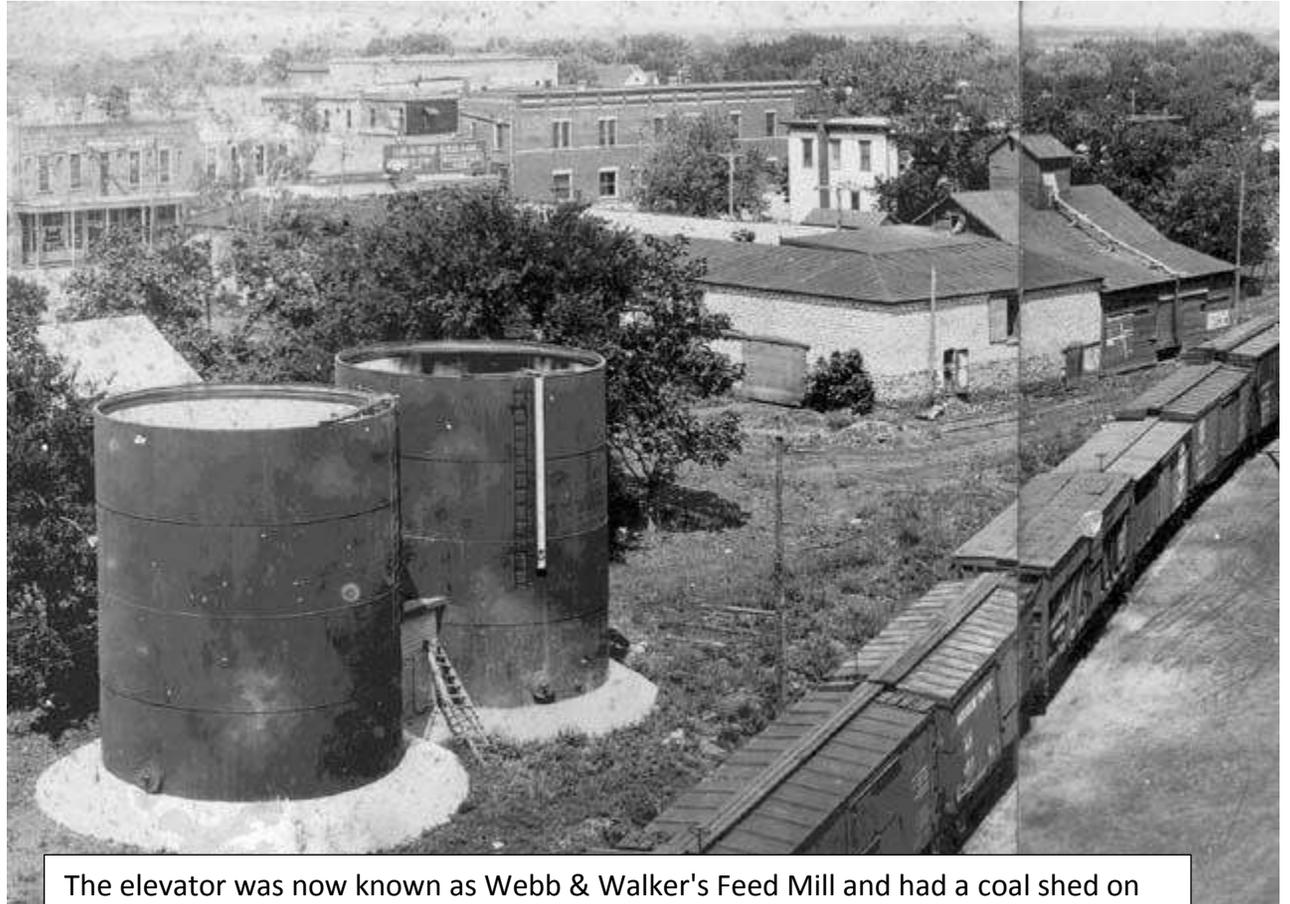
The **1915 map** shows the addition of an electric light plant north of the tracks on Main St. which included a buried fuel oil tank. The stock yard was now gone. Kansas Co-operative Oil Company had installed 4 tanks just west of Moline Ice. The coal tower and trestle had been replaced by a coal chute which straddled a relocated siding and the current two iron water tanks replaced the two tanks of 1908. The elevator was now known as Webb & Walker's Feed Mill and had a coal shed on the Webb spur.



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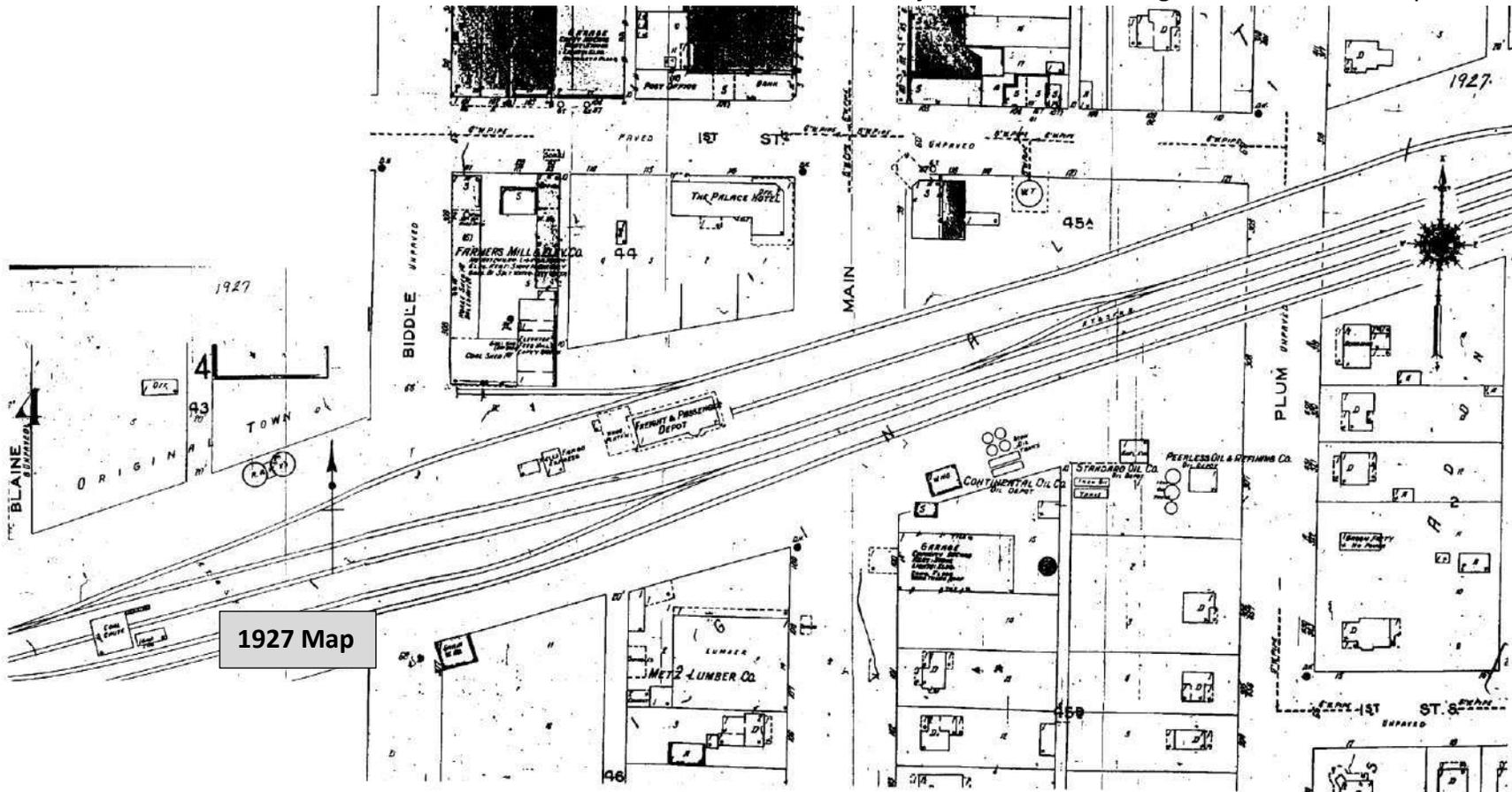
1915 Map - The coal tower and trestle had been replaced by a coal chute which straddled a relocated siding.



The elevator was now known as Webb & Walker's Feed Mill and had a coal shed on the Webb spur.

The Howard Kansas Branch By Steve Sandifer

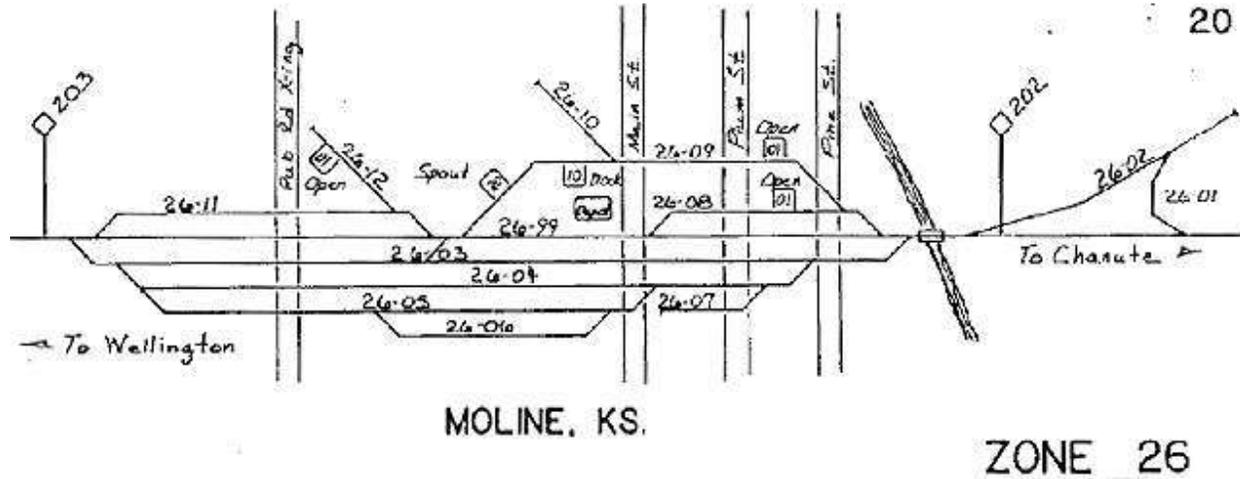
For **1927**, the last Sanborn map located, the light company was gone. Between Main and Plum three bulk oil dealers had been built: Continental, Standard, and Peerless. The Co-Op Oil and Moline Ice were gone. The Coaling and water facilities remained, but the new elevator is shown labeled as Farmer's Mill and Elevator. A new coal shed adjoined the elevator right beside the Webb spur.



1927 Map

**The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer**

Howard Branch: Moline CLIC (1985)



After the arrival of the computer age, the ATSF gave every track a number along with spots along each track. They called these Car Location Identification Codes or Car Location Inventory Control. Both are official ATSF designations. The earliest in my personal collection date from 1980.

The CLIC above dates from 1985. The tracks were designated as follows:

2601	Moline east leg of wye	
2602	Moline west leg of wye	
2603	Moline pass (yard track)	60 Cars
2604	Moline yard track	50 cars
2605	Moline yard track	50 cars
2606	Moline yard track	19 cars
2607	Moline standard spur	
2608	Moline pocket track	
2609	Moline house track	
2610	Moline Webb spur	
2611	Moline yard track	30 cars
2612	Moline roundhouse track	3 cars
2699	Moline main line	

The Howard Kansas Branch

By Steve Sandifer

Moline and Livestock

"Even after the "Big Mikes" (3194, 4003, et. al.) moved into Moline as helpers, the tradition of running up the Howard Branch whenever business demanded was still honored. They sometimes came with just a caboose to pick up cars previously spotted at loading chutes from Howard to Olpe. Other times they came with long fragrant strings of bawling beef from below the Brazos. They might unload the whole lot at Utopia and come backing back through tender first. They might bend back south at Madison Junction from which rails still remained down the Verdigris to Virgil where abandonment of the line from Benedict was aborted because of the cattle business there. At Madison Junction they would turn on the wye for a front-end forward return to Moline and come clattering back through Eureka with empties to be returned to Texas." James Burke, 1949, *Iron Horse and I*.

The livestock business of Moline was different from that of Eureka or Climax. The towns further north on the Howard Branch had the Flint Hills grass which was used for fattening cattle for market. That was not the case with Moline. Moline's pens were primarily used for moving local cattle to market. With the opening of local auctions, that traffic ceased.

The first stock pens, shows in the 1908 Sanborn maps, were located on the south side of the tracks where Peerless Oil would later be built, between Plumb and Main. Later, the pens would be located on the south side of the track at the west side of town, just below the "roundhouse curve."

The Moline Stock Pens had a 22-car capacity, 6 pens, and a 10-ton scale. See *Santa Fe System Standards, Vol. 1*, by Kachina Press for ATSF Standard stock pen plans. Dick Hisle reports that the stock track was double ended and could hold about 20 cars.

"At Moline south bounds went from the branch to the Eastern 4th District up the West Leg of Wye. On trips to Emporia we backed out of Moline and departed on East Leg of Wye. The wye switch was always left lined for east leg."

"Trains on the branch were based out of Moline. They left Moline MWF at 5:00 p.m. (1970s). They would switch "crusher" (Martin Marietta Limestone plant), then return to Moline and head up the branch. Running time for the branch was 3 hours, 20 minutes nonstop. It was not unusual for a crew to spend more time at crusher than on the branch. It was also not unusual for the train to be an engine and caboose only, as the ATSF tried to keep revenue work off of the branch in its last days. The TTS train left Emporia at 10:00 a.m. to head south (west by the timetable)." Rod Riley.

The Howard Kansas Branch

By Steve Sandifer

Oil Dealers

Moline had four oil dealers at various times. The one shown in the TerraServer image above was the Standard Oil dealer, Jim Burnes Oil. He remains today as Murphy Oil Company. They unloaded from a yard track.

Near the stockyards was Peerless Oil. Peerless had a number of oil wells in the area and used their facilities to ship out crude to refineries. Peerless loaded on the track also known as the "stock track." One report is that Peerless went out of business around 1924.

However, the 1927 Sanford map shows three dealers in a row on the south side of the track between Main and Plumb. These were Continental Oil, Standard Oil, and Peerless Oil. The 1918 map shows the Kansas Cooperative Oil company located directly across the tracks from the elevator. It is gone by 1927.

Howard Branch: Moline: Murphy Oil

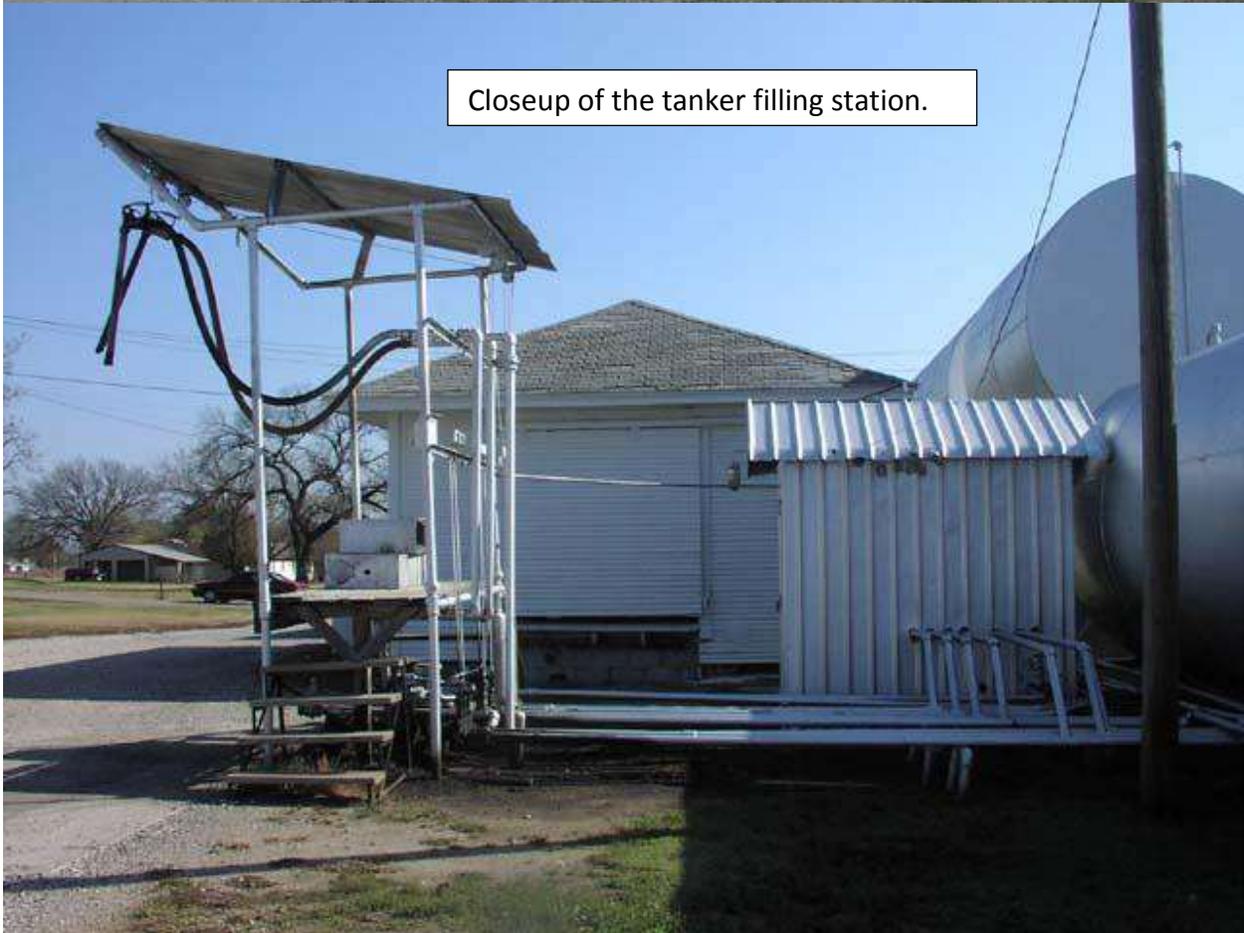


The location, shown in 1921. This photo looks east. The road in the middle of the photo (Main) runs on the east side of the depot. The vertical tanks belong to Peerless Oil while the horizontal tanks are of Standard Oil.

The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer



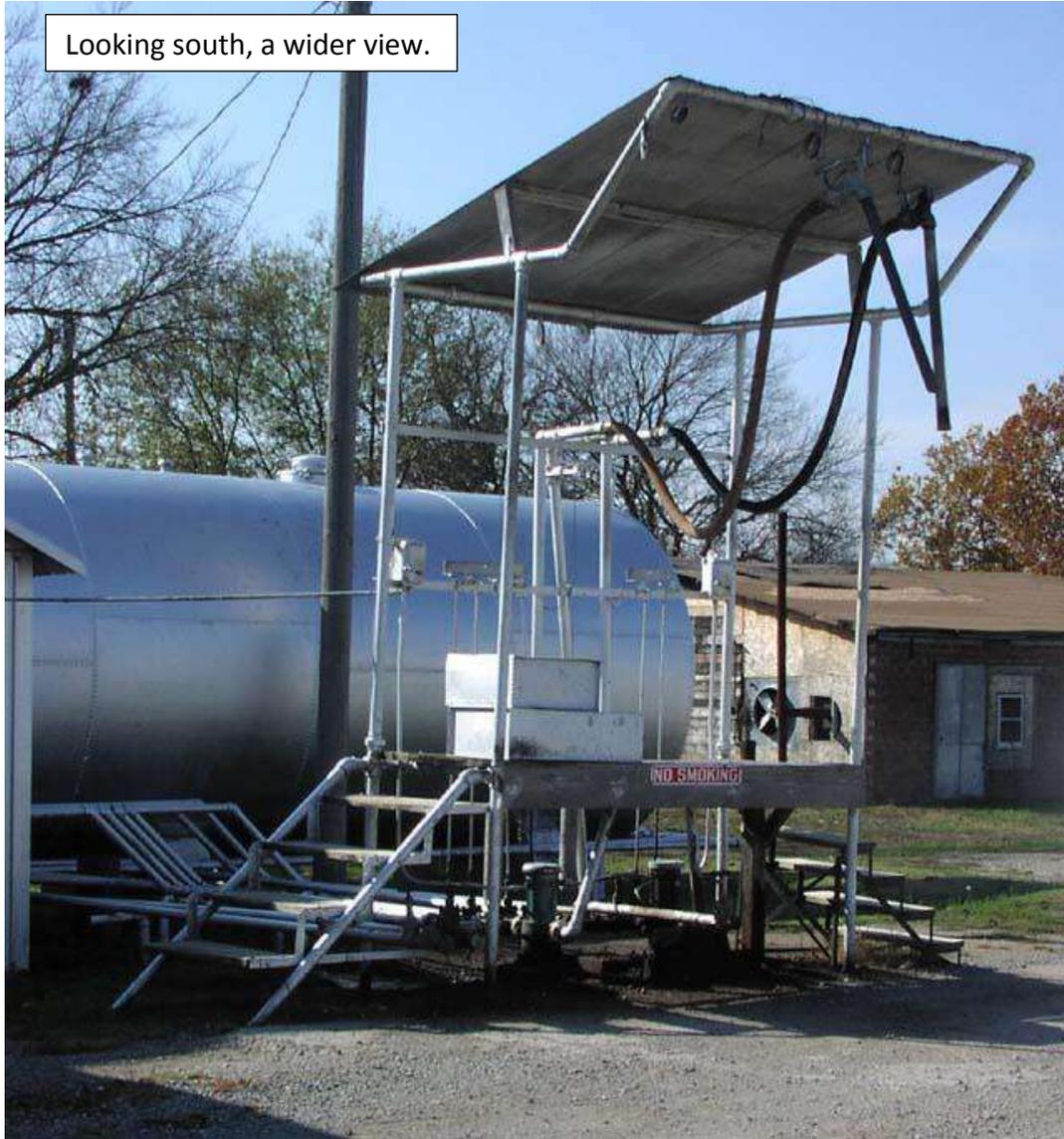
Looking east in 2002



Closeup of the tanker filling station.

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By Steve Sandifer

Looking south, a wider view.



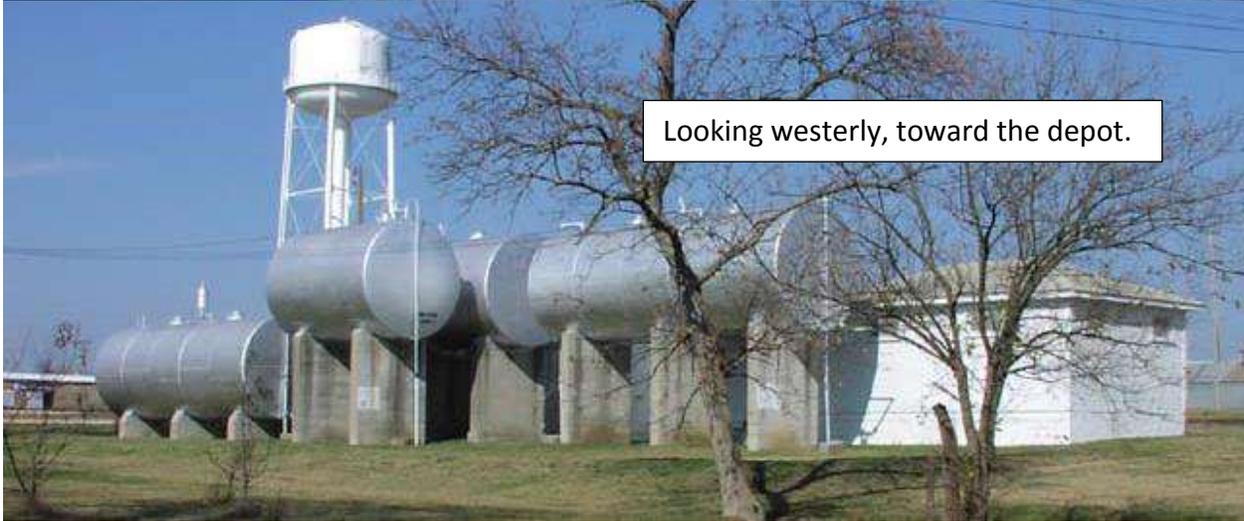
Looking south.



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Looking south, the office



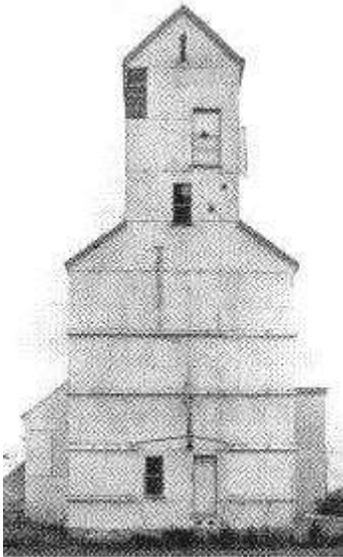
Looking westerly, toward the depot.



Looking north.

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Grain Elevator



Photos courtesy of the Shaffer Museum in Moline. Note the new elevator made circa 1955 from the two ATSF water tanks at the bottom of the picture. See next page for enlargement of the right-hand picture.

A grain elevator was located on the Web spur, off of the house track, north of the depot in Moline. It was a two-car spur. The original elevator shown in the aerial view above was owned by Webb & Walker's Feed Mill, burned down, and was replaced by the more standard design elevator in 1928. In the mid-50s the Santa Fe water tanks were converted into a 21,000-bushel elevator. This wooden elevator was torn down in the late 1990s.

The 1928 elevator was built by Chalmers and Borton Company with 6,000-bushel capacity for Farmer's Mill & Elevator. Jim Wilcoxon of the current company, Borton L. C., of Hutchinson, KS, provided plans of a similar elevator. Mr. Wilcoxon explained that at the time this elevator was built, there were no specific plans made, but generic plans were adapted by craftsmen on the spot. The large horizontal bands shown in the photo were typically 6'6" apart. Measuring the foundations show that the elevator was 25' wide and 19'3" deep plus an additional 12'4" for the unloading hopper. In looking at the two aerial photos, you will an addition to the elevator on the south side which appears in one photo but not the other.

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The plans marked "Proposal Frame Elevator" are very similar in looks to the elevator that was built. The Capacity would also be comparable if the three south bins were removed from the plans. On the top floor there was one window on the east side and one window on the west side plus a door on the south side that was a standard 3' door used to bring equipment through. On the floor at the top of the bins there was a window on each the north and the south. The elevator was a wooden structure and was clad with galvanized corrugated iron. *Harold Sheel, owner.*

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In a good harvest, the water tank elevator would load 30 hoppers of wheat a week at its 3-car track. The elevator also provided fertilizer and feed for the area, bringing in 60-80 car loads a year with a maximum of 3-4 cars a week in season. These were unloaded primarily on the house track. A stone warehouse located just north of the elevator provided storage for these supplies. Harold Sheel reports that in the first half of the 20th Century cattle ruled this area of Kansas and little grain was produced (thus the 6000-bushel elevator). With government subsidies and advances in cattle production, grain production gained a larger share of the local economy.

The elevator was also the provider of coal for the area, primarily for schools. They received about 3 gondolas of coal per year. These had to be unloaded by hand and were usually unloaded into trucks and were delivered immediately.

Howard Branch: Moline: Elevator



1921 photo showing the 1st elevator. Taken from the top of the coal tipple.

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1925 photo of the 1st elevator. Taken from the top of the coal tipple.



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Above - This 1955 photo shows an extension to the west (toward the camera) on the main structure.

Left - 1928 Elevator. Notice long warehouse that extends north.

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Next three pages -

Elevator made from the
ATSF water towers (mid
50s) as it appeared in
2002.



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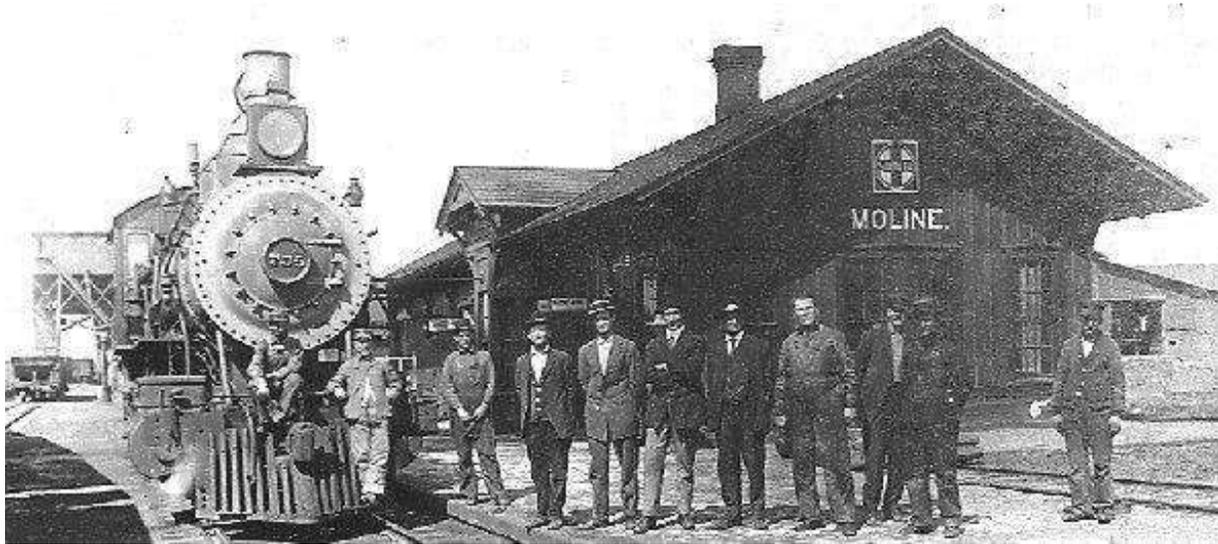
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Depot

The Moline Depot is now at Dexter, KS, as part of a residence. It was similar to a #3 Standard Depot for Branch Lines. The express room end had no windows and the waiting room trackside door and window were reversed. It was modified in the late 40s and indoor toilets were installed.



Pre-1928 photo provided by David Brace

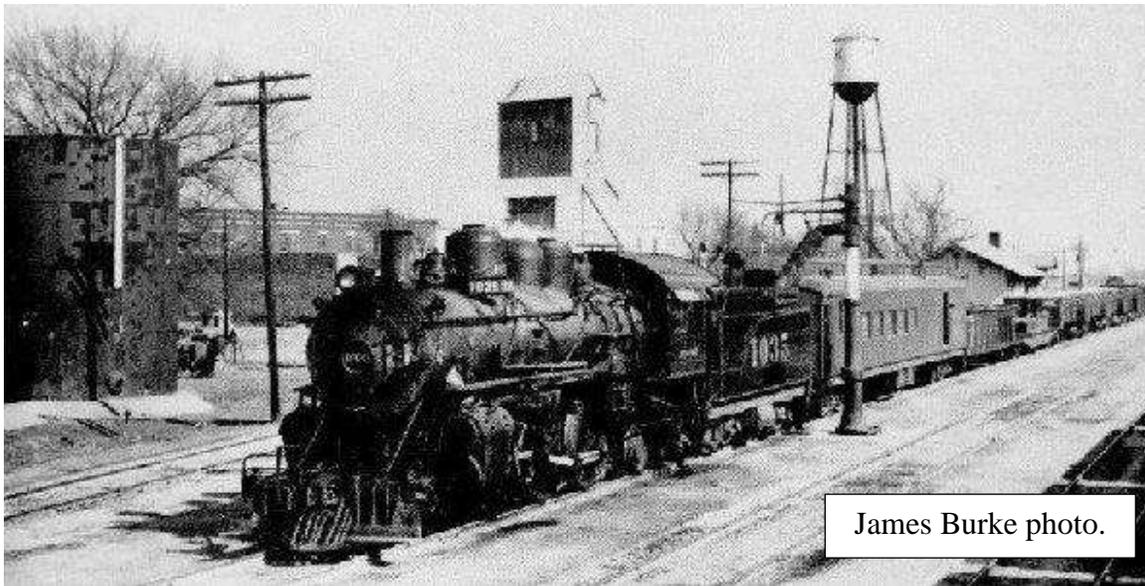
"You will note the mules are standing in the elevator dump located on the north side of the elevator. The floor of the dump pivoted upwards from the west end allowing the grain to slide onto the grill and then the pit under the floor. Mr. Sheel the former owner pointed out that the corn crib with gaps in the siding is located just north of the team. It also has a pit with a cob grinder for making cob chop, a feed product. Note also the coal chute located west of the depot and a little west of the elevator. It allowed the engine tender to take on coal by being positioned under it." David A. Brace. The elevator in this photo is the first one which burned and was replaced in 1928.

Moline was served by motorcar passenger service between Coffeyville and Newton via Wichita. In 1953 the schedule was: #114-13-14 / 13-14-113: 9:42 a.m. / 6:30 p.m.

As of 8/7/1947, M.154 and M.175 were assigned to this service. The M.154 was a 75' full RPO/Baggage unit and has been modeled by Hallmark. It was later moved the Panhandle Division, retired in 1954 in Wichita and scrapped in 1958. M.175 was an 80' unit containing RPO, baggage, smoking and coach areas. It saw service in Missouri in 1954, was retired in 55, and scrapped in 58.

One common item in the express compartment of the doodlebug was cream coming off the 4th District for Jekorsky's cheese plant.

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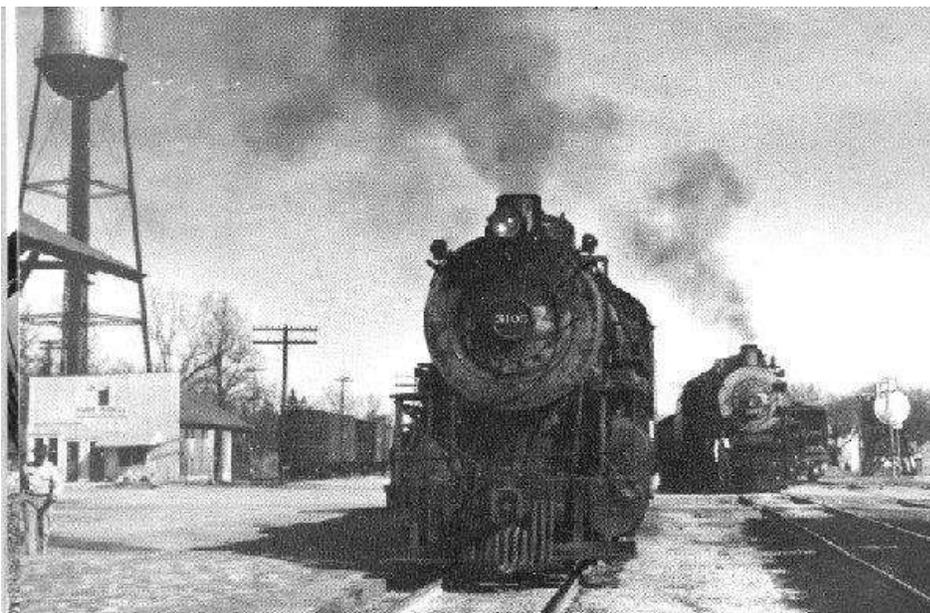


James Burke photo.

"After an engine satisfied her thirst, she backed away to the east shoving the train she had just made up the west leg of the wye at the east edge of town. Uncoupling she came back out on the main and backpedaled down to the east wye switch. She headed up the east leg of the wye and backed down the west leg onto her train. With the air made up she whistled off for Emporia."
James Burke, 1949, *Iron Horse and I*

Santa Fe built a lake 1.5 mile west of Moline and piped the water down the right of way to Moline to provide water. Santa Fe had two tanks next to each other with the pump house located between and connected to them. These tanks remain but have been converted into a grain elevator.

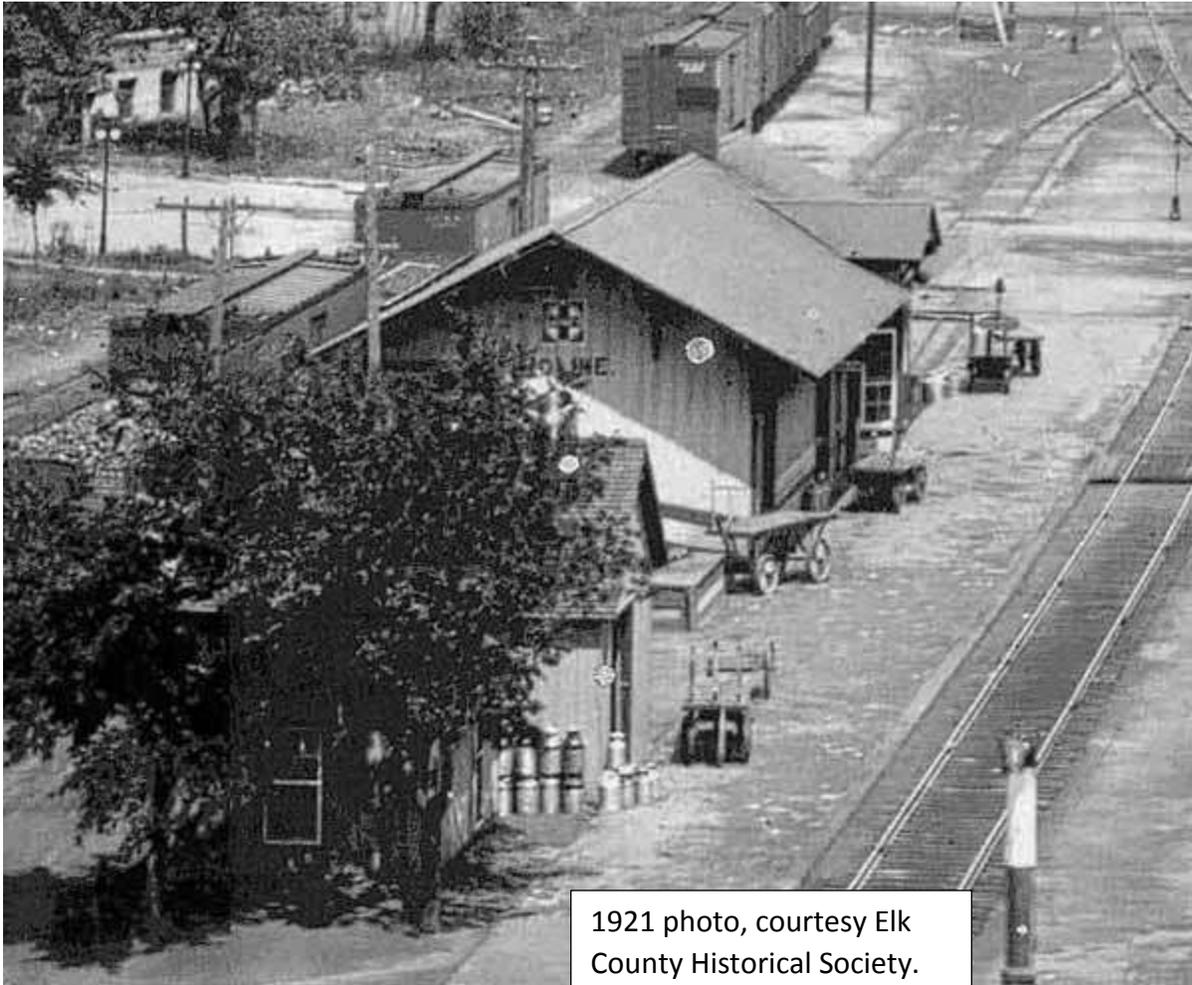
Santa Fe System Standards, Vol. 3, by Kachina Press contains plans for ATSF water tanks and water cranes.



3109 in front of the depot having arrived from Emporia. Note the bulk oil dealer on the right for your UTLX cars.

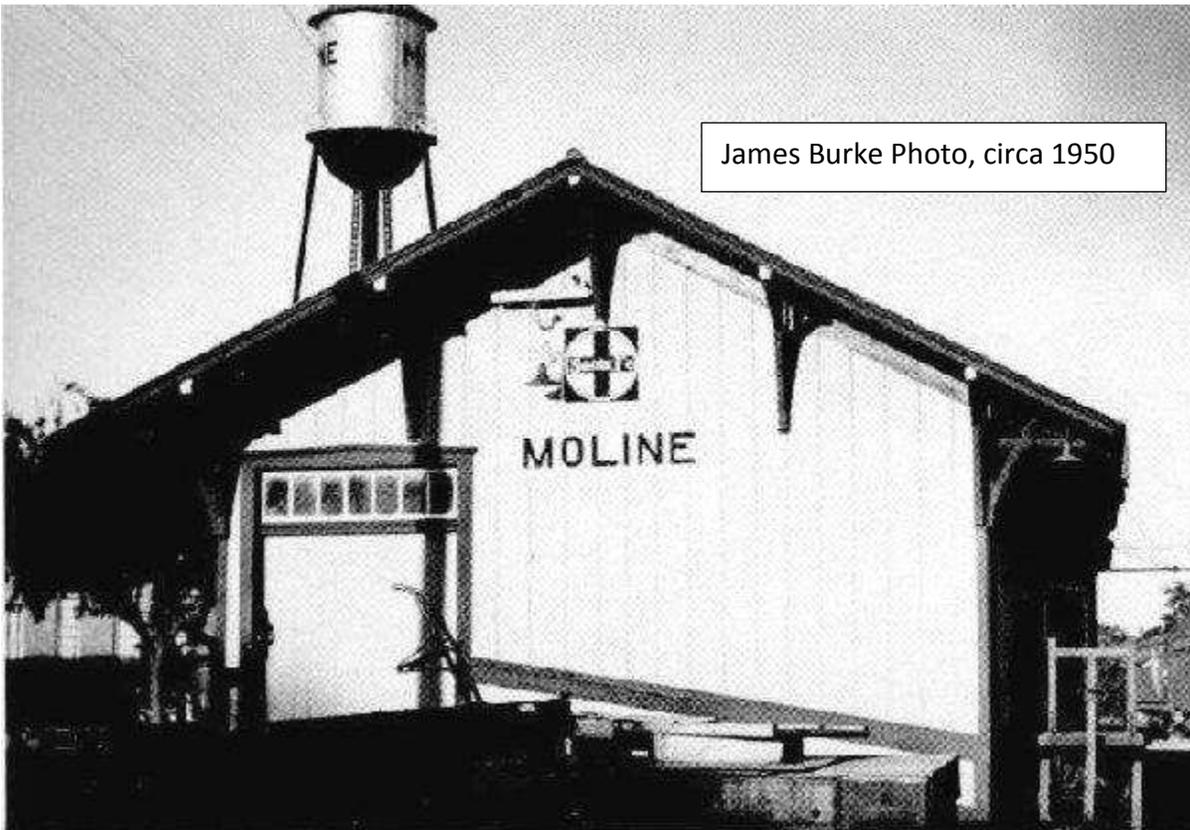
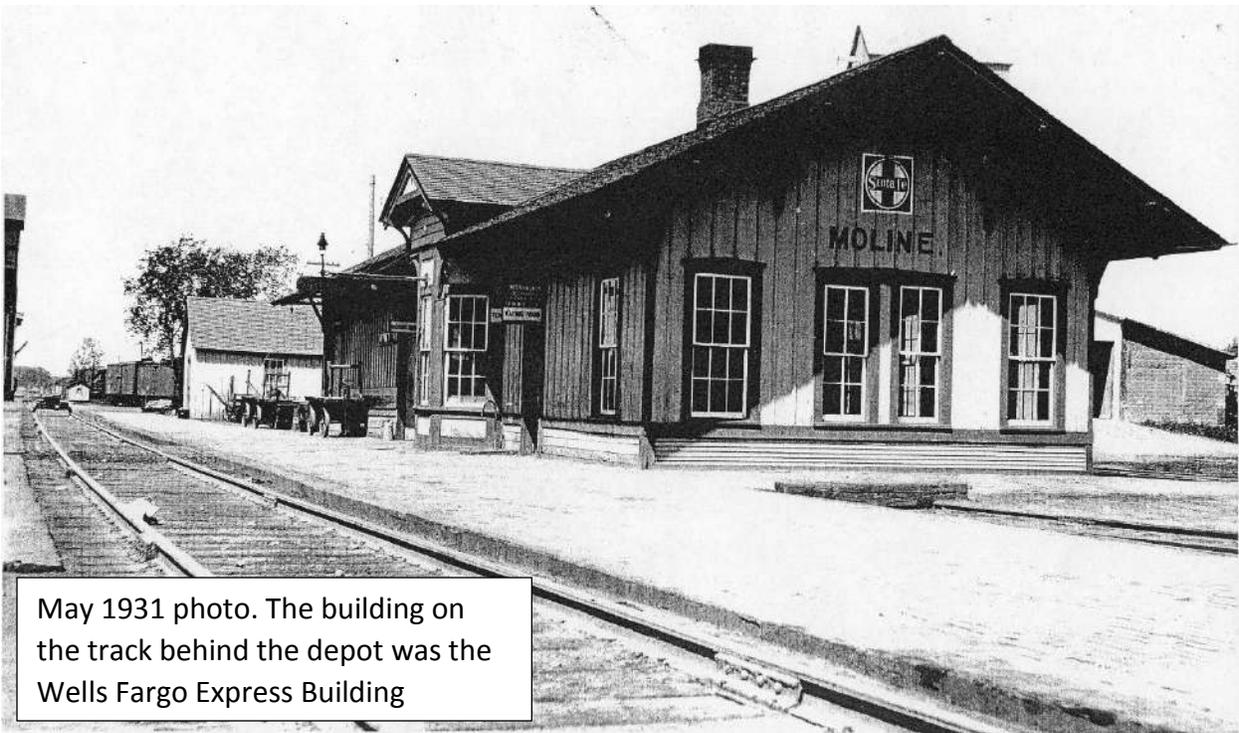
The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer

Howard Branch: Moline: Depot



1921 photo, courtesy Elk County Historical Society.

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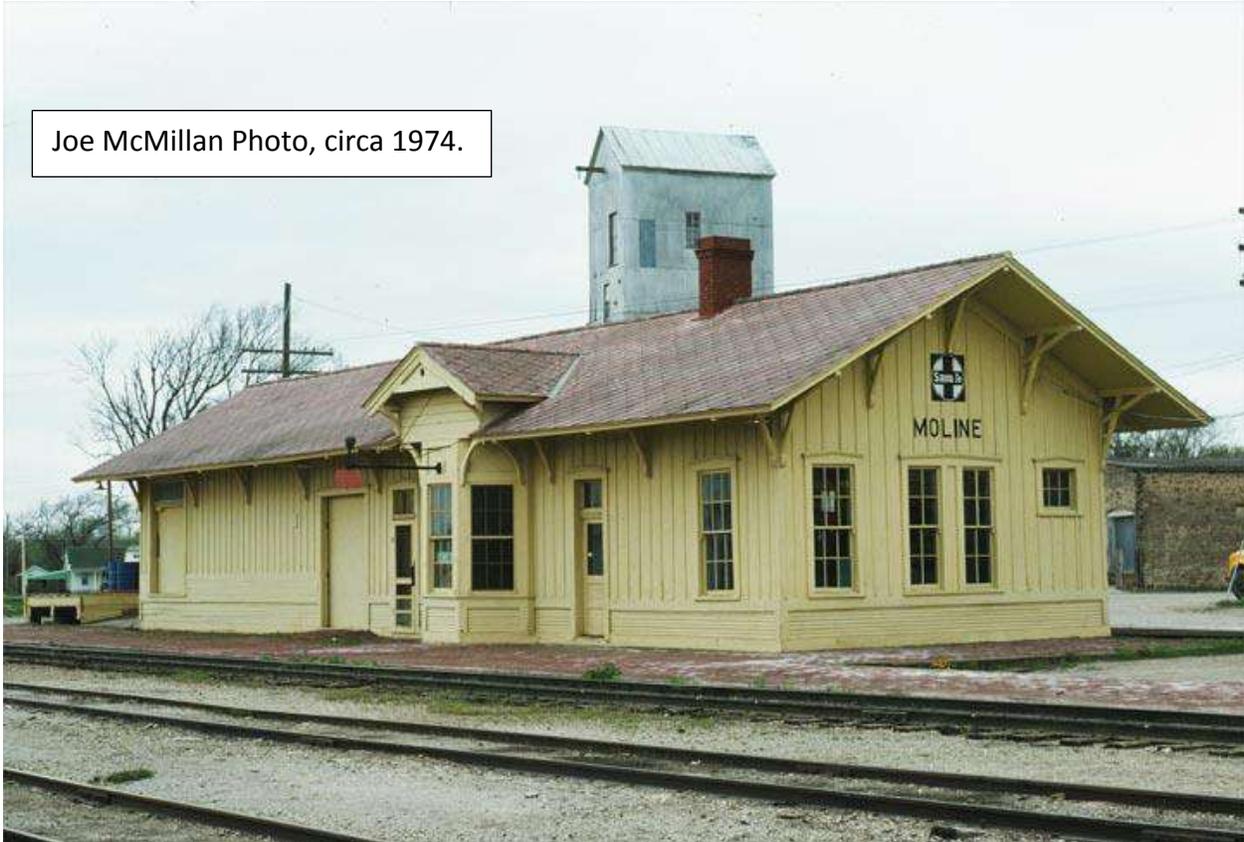


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D. K. Spencer Photo



Joe McMillan Photo, circa 1974.



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The depot as rebuilt into a house, near Dexter, KS.

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Other

The Moline track was Class A, Class 2, 8' ties, 90 pound or less rail. The Howard Branch was Class B, Class 2, 8' ties (softwood acceptable), 90 pound or less rail.

Ice service was provided by Moline Ice and Storage which had no dock or spur. This industry shows on the maps for 1908 and 1915 but has disappeared by 1927.

The 1915 map shows the Electric Light Plant located across Main St. from the Depot. It burned fuel oil which would have come in by rail via the house track. It was gone by 1927.

Between the elevator and the roundhouse were two single story brick non-standard section houses.

An old wood truss rod Box car is used as a storage building in suburban Moline (below).

A special thanks goes to historian David Brace, Dick Hisel (former Agent) and Harold Sheels (former elevator owner) who provided some of the above information. Dick sadly died on October 5, 2005.

This old wood truss rod box car is on the ground at Moline. I hope some of the ATSF freight car pros can identify it for us. If you want to see the car for yourself, it is at Kansas 99 and 5 RD, 1/2 mile south of the US 160 intersection with Kansas 99.



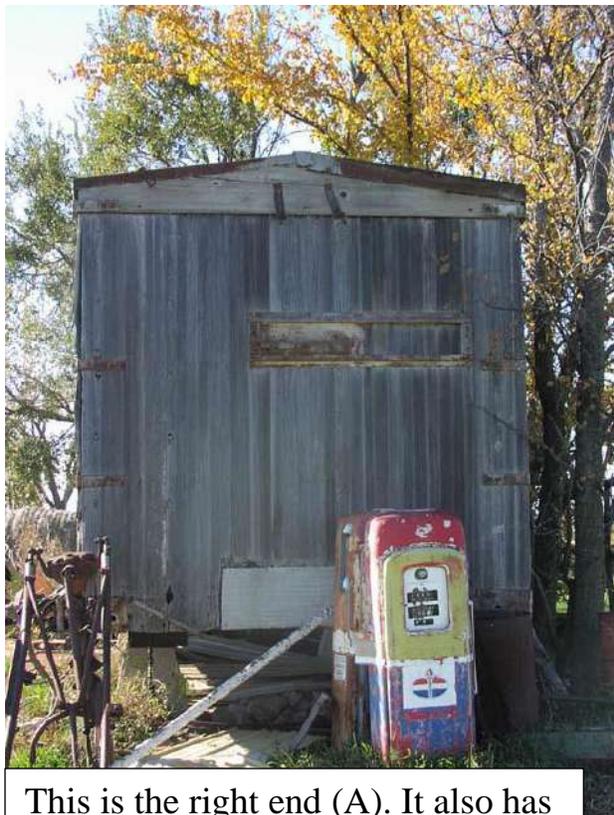
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The interior, looking to the "B" end.

The Howard Kansas Branch

By Steve Sandifer



This is the right end (A). It also has a door, but it slides horizontally. This style was commonly called a "lumber" door.



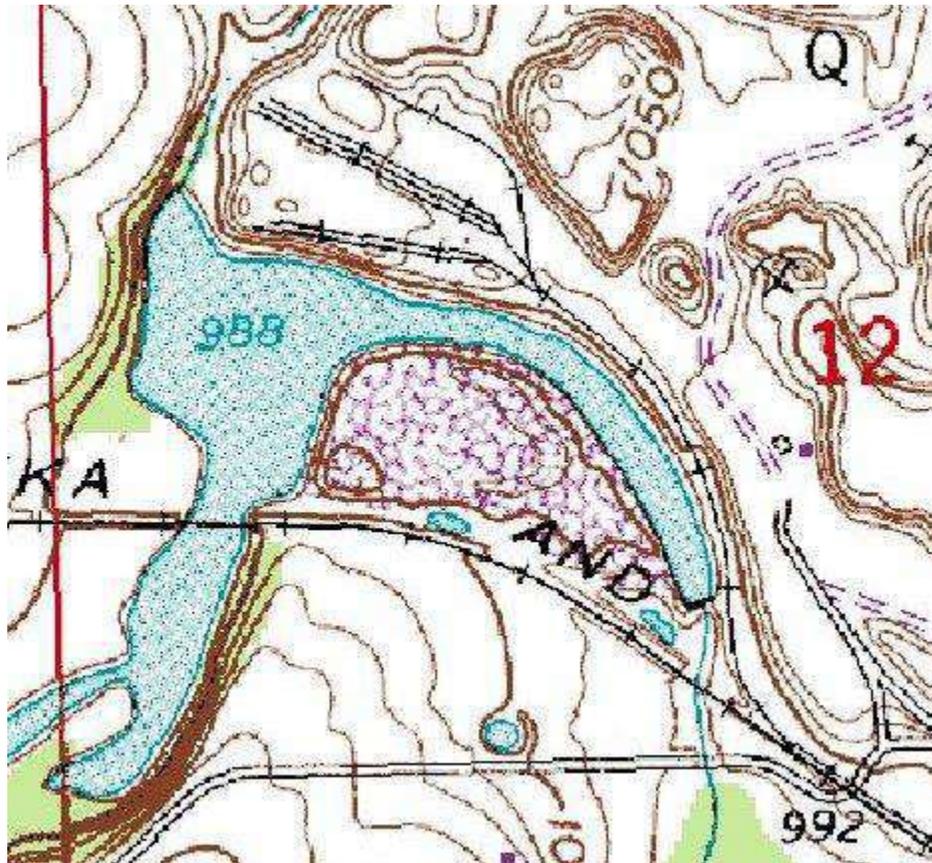
B end view. Notice the small door which slides up and down. This matches the Bx-M and Bx-P cars shown in the ATSF Box car book, however they did not have a door on both ends. The Bx-K had vertically sliding doors on both ends



The underbody. This view shows no sign of a steel center sill. This rules out the Bx-W - Bx-Z classes, along with a number of others.

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By Steve Sandifer

Howard Branch: Crusher



The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer



1991 TerraServer images



The Howard Kansas Branch

By Steve Sandifer

Just east of town (Moline) was a large limestone quarry which daily produced trainloads of rock and lime.

The limestone plant was first a limestone kiln around 1900. Solvay Process Company operated it at the beginning of the 20th century. Before WW2, Concrete Materials Co. leased it and operated as a gravel pit. Then Martin Marietta bought Concrete Materials Co. Martin Marietta operated it in the early 70s. It closed down in 2001 but has been reopened by Kansas Quality Stone. They supply all the ballast for the South Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad.

A rock train switched the quarry every morning (40s - 50s) and later took a heavy string to Winfield for forwarding to the west and north and south. Fireman Roscoe Morton reported that the crusher produced on average 50 cars a day. The vast majority were gondolas or air-dump company cars. The entire rail operation was built on a slight incline. The engine would spot the empties on an upward grade and brakes would be set. As the cars were loaded, they would roll by gravity through the loading units. The crusher never had a switcher of their own but used dump trucks to pull cars around as needed with cables or chains.

Rod Riley reported concerning the 1970s, that the major work for crews on the Howard Branch was the Martin Marietta limestone quarry. The crusher would not work below 32 degrees resulting in dead times in the winter and overtime work in the summers. The most cars pulled in one day in the early '70s was 99 gondolas. The engine could not cross the scale track at crusher, therefore idler cars were used to spot cars on the opposite side from the engine. These were usually 7 old bulkhead flats (1970s). They always stayed with the engine and returned to Moline after switching. A couple of old stock cars also were stored at the quarry to hold plywood and supplies for repairing the composite gondolas when holes appeared in the sides. Empty gondolas often went south (west) on the branch from Emporia to the quarry, however full (revenue) cars primarily did not return on the branch. The full cars were blocked in Moline for forwarding to Wichita, Winfield, Medicine Lodge, and Newton. When they did go on the branch, 13-14 gondolas were all one GP could handle.

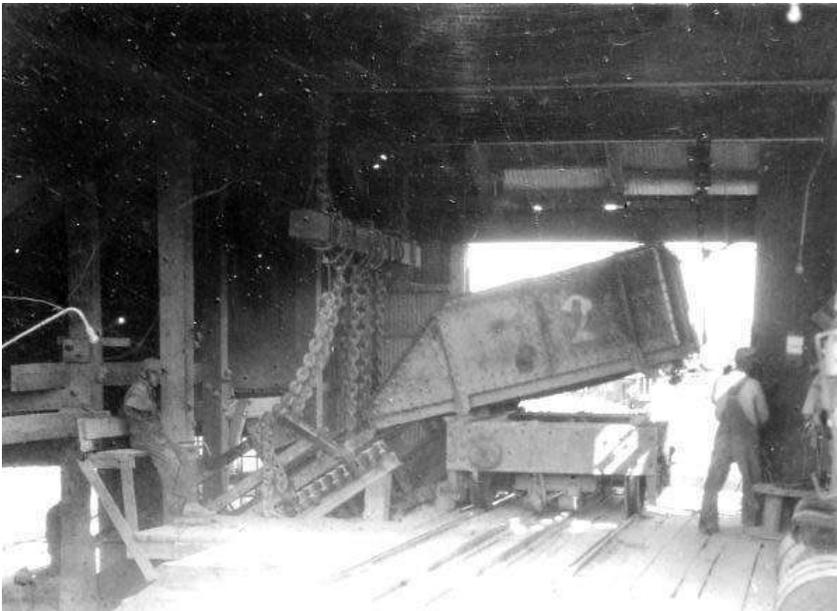
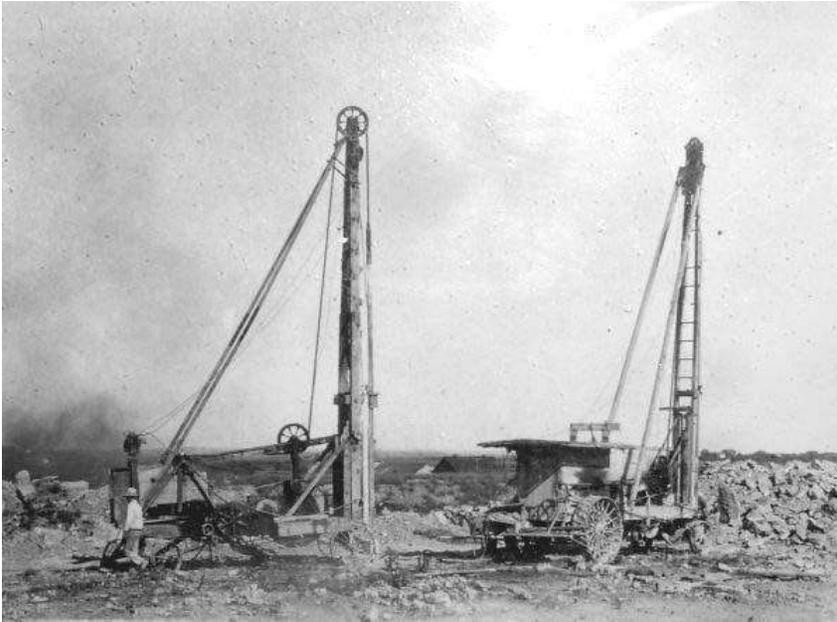
Many gondolas of limestone were shipped out to be used in agriculture and construction. Most cars used at crusher were ATSF. This is an excellent place for those war emergency gondolas (Tichy) and Caswell gondolas (Westerfield). However, in one shortage during the '70s, C&O coal hoppers were brought in. At another time, MKT side dump hoppers were secured to keep up with demand.

The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer

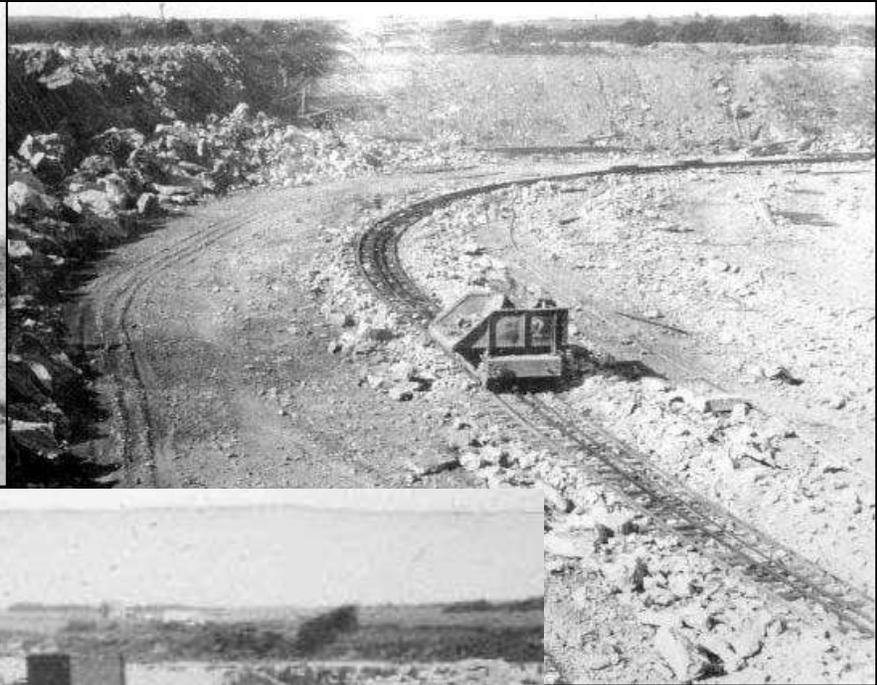
Howard Branch: Crusher Photos



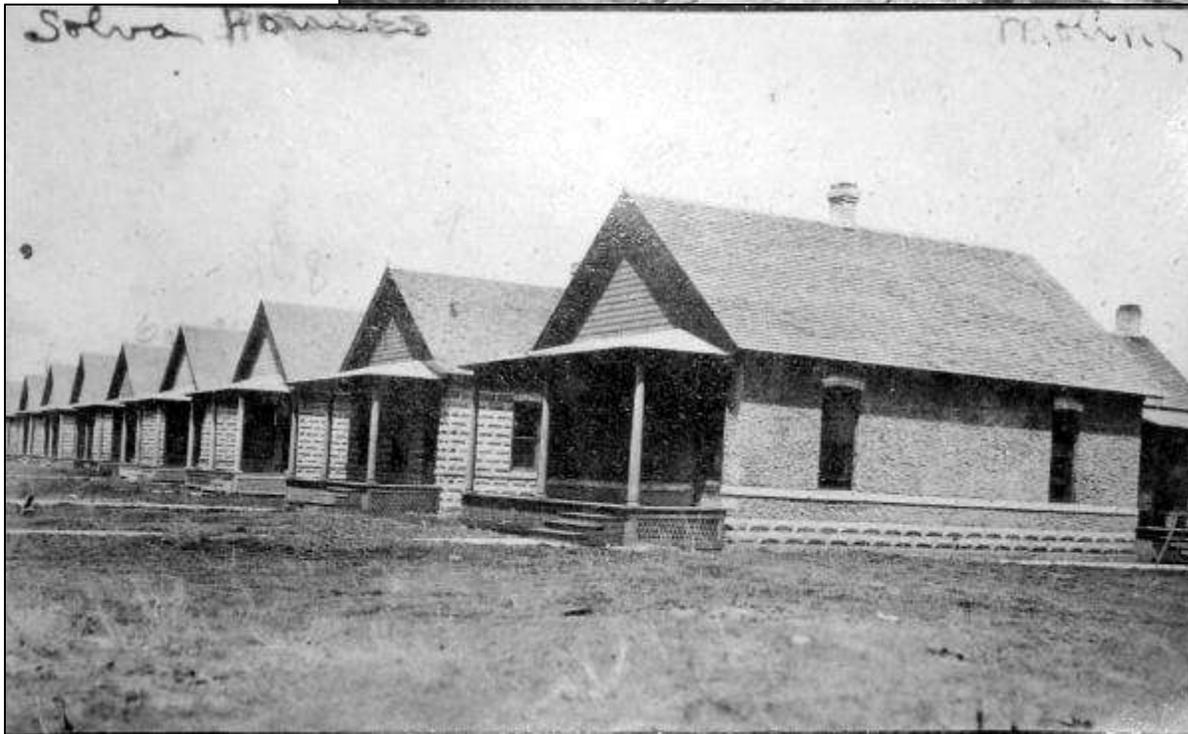
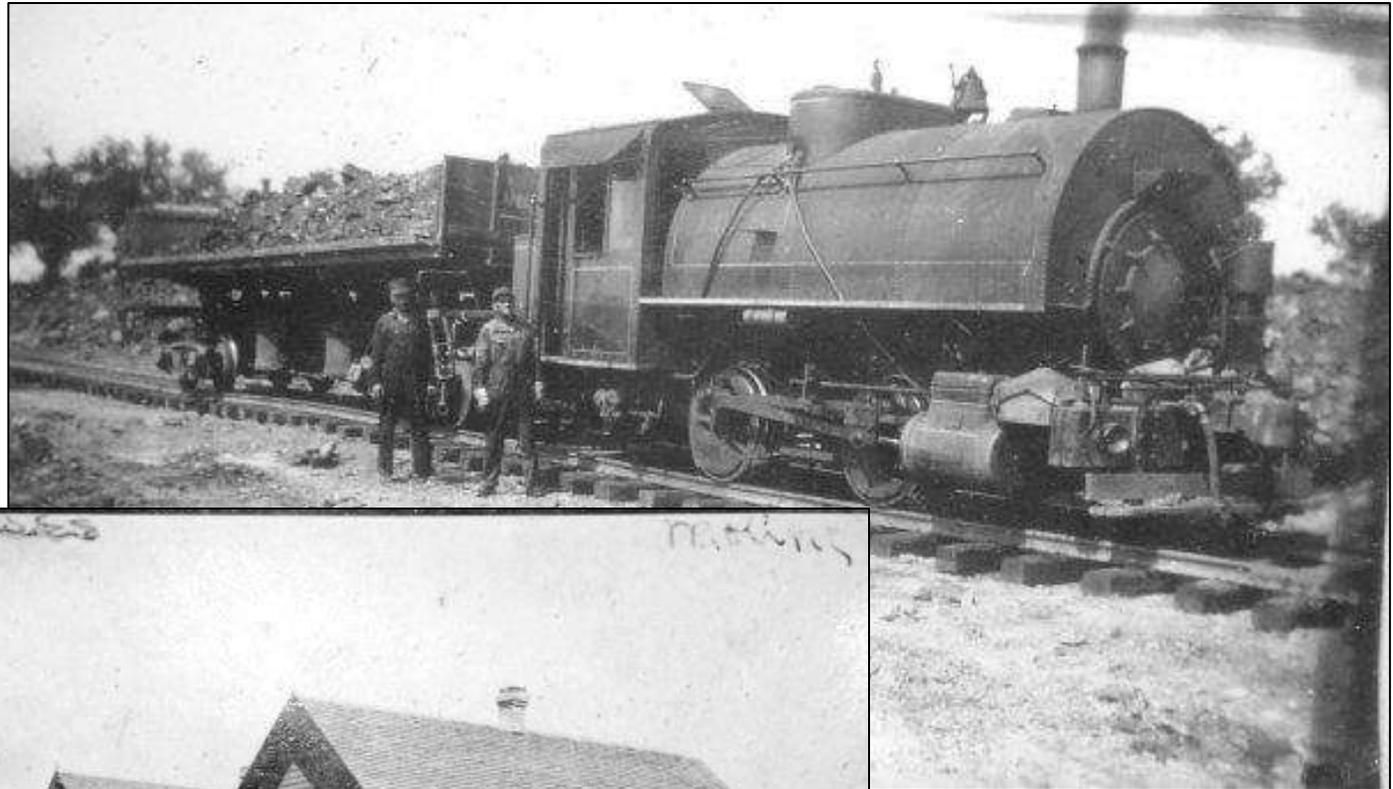
*The Howard Kansas Branch
By Steve Sandifer*



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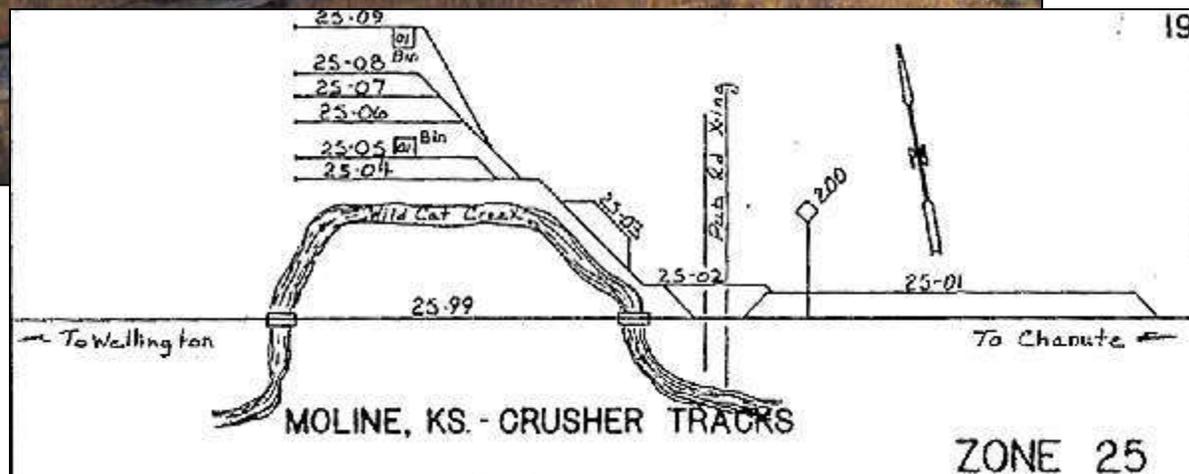
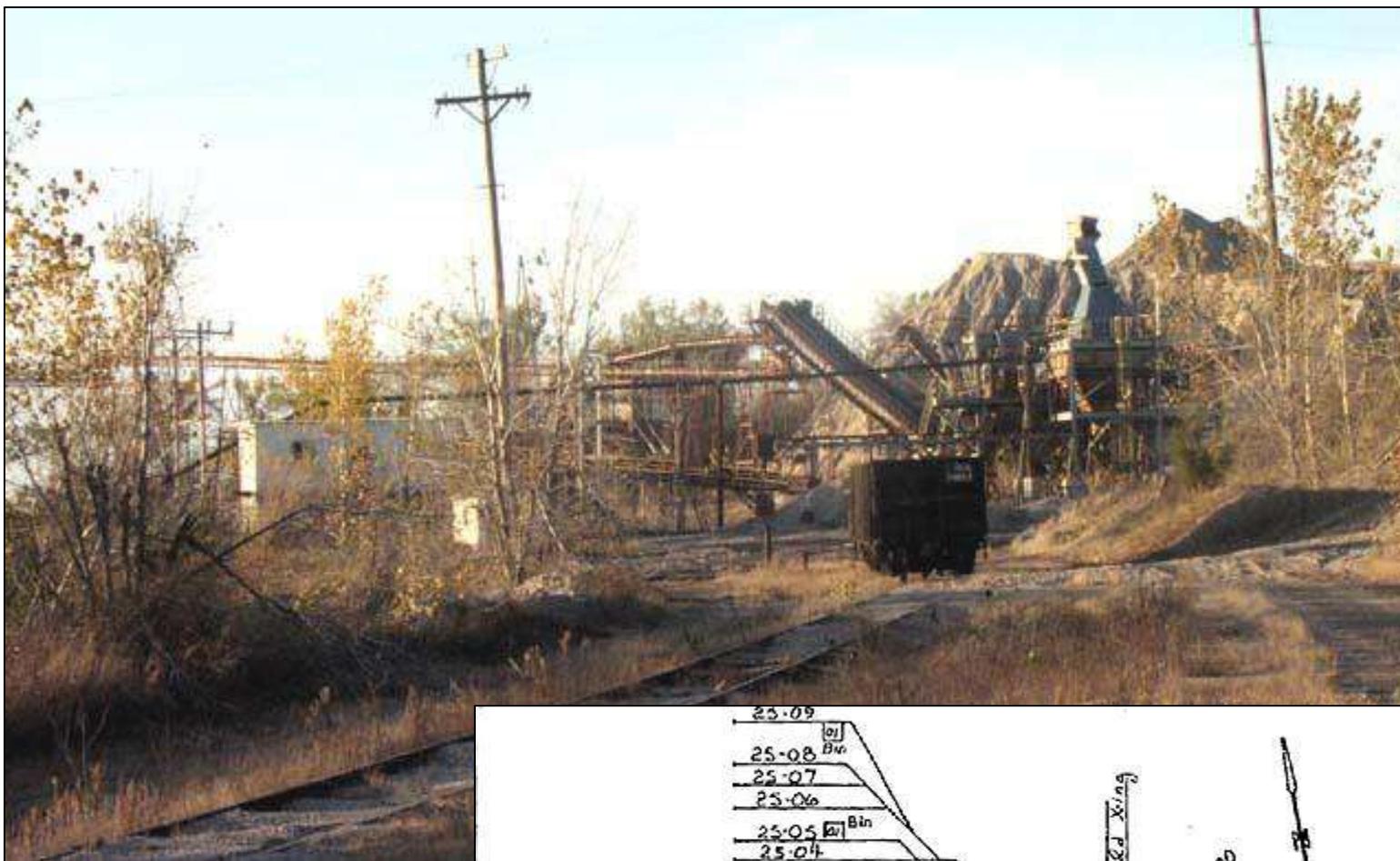
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By Steve Sandifer*



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By Steve Sandifer

Howard Branch: Hilltop



Hilltop was another stock pen location. It had 7 car capacity, 6 pens, well, and a 5-ton scale. Nothing remains today.

Howard Branch: Virgil

There is not much to Virgil anymore. Population 113.

The stock pens had a 15-car capacity, 7 pens, pump, holding pen for 11 cars, and a 5-ton scale.

