

Meat Trains

data collected with the help of many by Douglas Harding doug.harding@iowacentralrr.org

Copyright © 2006 by Douglas Harding, all publishing rights retained by the author.

DMX - Decker Meat trains (Decker meat out of Mason City, Ia)

Decker meat trains left Mason City each night at 6:30pm. Most meat reefers were interchanged with the Illinois Central at Ackley. A few cars went to Marshalltown for CGW. Train usually left with about 25 reefers. Only 1 or 2 went to CGW. (M&StL engineer said they typically set out 15 cars at Ackley). Some meat would go north to Manly for exchange with the Rock Island. Not all meat went out on the DMX.

The meat from Mason City was picked up by the IC's "Ackley Turn" which was actually a job called at Waterloo about 5 PM and did the local work west to Iowa Falls, quite a bit of work there, and then headed back, waiting for the Mason City meat at Ackley if necessary.

Illinois Central Meat Trains

Best known was train No. 76, symbol CC-6, a Council Bluffs-Chicago train. It was pretty much the hottest on the Iowa Division. Followed eastbound Land O' Corn, train 14 about 90 minutes later. It was always laden with Armour and Wilson reefers.

IC had meat trains from Sioux City (Cudahy Swift & Armour} Sioux Falls (Morrell) Omaha (Wilson) Ft Dodge (Tobin) and Storm Lake (Hy-Grade)

In the 50s at least, the IC in Iowa was the leading carrier of PHP's (Packing House Products). This was due to the IC's key locations such as Omaha, Sioux City and Sioux Falls all being packing house centers. Loadings out of South Omaha were divided up to the roads running east out of Omaha/Council Bluffs. IE: IC on Mondays, Milw on Tuesdays, CNW on Wednesdays, CGW on Thursdays etc.

All trains were classified in Waterloo, although the loading from Sioux Falls (SFC6) - picked up at Cherokee and added to the Sioux City (SCF6) - would be blocked by destination. And at Ft Dodge the yard crew would add their block to CC-6 from Co Bluffs.

At Broadview IC backed the meat trains down to the IHB connection. Their "cut-off" to make connections with Eastern connections was 130 PM, so every effort was made to get the last one there by then. And on the Freeport Dist. we had #14, the Land o' Corn, (Waterloo to Chgo) and No. 27 (Chgo to Freeport) to contend with plus a couple freights. But to make the 100 miles in less than 100 mins, as was done sometimes even with "steam," the passenger trains were ordered to yield.

Rath Packing of Waterloo, operations from the IC point of view. When an empty reefer arrived Waterloo yard it would be lined up by the yard for the run to Mather car (now GE Railcar) located just East of the Rath plant. Mather inspected and cleaned all the empties before, making sure they were road worthy before OK'ing them for meat loading. A load of meat set out en route because of a mechanical defect in many cases meant a spoiled load of meat so car preparation was very important. Mather in Waterloo anyway had the capability to do running repairs up to and including complete rebuilding of their reefers. After the cars were cleaned to federal specs and road ready Mather would OK the cars for the IC Rath job to pull and spot to Rath for loading. Icing the car would be done first, then the actual loading. IC man said when you saw meat reefers going by in a train it looked like a chorus line because of the hanging meat swaying in the cars. The meat trains were hard on the right of way, especially metal bridges, because of the brine dripping from the cars.

IC once ran as many as 13 meat trains out of Waterloo, more normal was no more than 7 in one day.

The most PHP we ever received from Rath Pkg in Waterloo in one day was 126 cars! Some of these cars which were received in the late afternoon were added to AC-2 (Albert Lea, MN - Chgo) unless AC-2 was late in which case we ran the Rath PHP ahead, filling the train out with general merchandise.

Meat trains were the hottest trains on the division. Even passenger trains took siding for the meat trains. If a train dispatcher delayed a meat train, even by just giving them just a yellow block, the chief train dispatcher would send you a torpedo asking why you delayed the meat train. In those days the speed limit for freight trains between Fort Dodge and Broadview, IL was 60 MPH and in some places the meat trains were known to exceed that.

Before mechanical refrigerator cars came into being, any necessary icing was done in Waterloo. It generally took between 1.25" to 1.5" to ice a car depending how close in the train the icers were together. In hot summer days, icing took a bit longer. The advent of mechanical refgrs was great in many ways and much better for train dispatchers trying to figure how long the train would be in Waterloo.

meat trains didn't stop between terminals to do any picking up because they were on such tight schedules. Also, if the locals took the PHP to the next terminal it would be properly classified with the other PHP for forwarding on the meat trains there.

The one exception to not having the meat trains pickup or set out on line occurred during feeder cattle season. We would receive feeder cattle from the UP at Omaha/CoBluffs for points like Cleghorn, Larrabee, Aurelia, Alta and Webster City and because of the 36 hour limit for cattle to be in a car without unloading for feed, water and rest, we sometimes had the meat trains set it out at the destination. The only place we could FW&R (feed water & rest) cattle west of Waterloo was at FtDodge where there was room for only 5 carloads in the pens and one carload in the drive to the pens. It was touchy trying to handle this livestock without serious delay to the meat trains.

You probably know that by a federal law from the 1800's, riverboats of any kind had priority over trains. IC trains were sometime delayed at Dubuque while the bridge over the Mississippi River was opened to let river traffic pass. IC had absolutely no control over this.

#662 handled the Hygrade PHP Storm Lake to FtDodge where it was added to either SCF-6 (SuCity) or CC-6 (Omaha). Sioux City and Omaha meat trains did NO work on line other than during feeder cattle season I mentioned earlier. The only place SCF-6 was worked on between SuCity and Broadview was at Cherokee and the yards at FtDodge and Waterloo. The only place CC-6 was worked on was at FtDodge and Waterloo. And SCF-6 and CC-6 were NEVER consolidated at FtDodge.

IC engineer said that, with hot traffic, craft distinctions went out the window by voluntary agreement of the men in the engine crew, because, to make schedule, everybody needed to take a turn firing. Even the engineer took his turn, even though he would have had the right to refuse if a supervisor had directly asked him to fire. He was talking particularly about the 2800 class 2-10-2's. These engines were equipped with auxillary water tanks (cars) for the meat trains on the Dubuque District (Waterloo to Freeport, IL) to prevent these trains from stopping for water enroute. They could travel the 161 miles on the Dubuque District without taking coal.

CNW #258 CoB - Chicago "The Packer" was mostly meat from Omaha/Co. Bluffs. Picked up meat in Cedar Rapids from Wilsons and from Armour at Galt (Sterling).

#126 was commonly known as the "Hawkeye" It left Huron around 4:00 PM with meat from Armour in Huron and Swift in Watertown. It had a long ways to go and a short time to get there. It had to make a connection at Belle Plaine with #256, the Calumet. When either 126 or 256 fell down, and at the risk of delaying one or the other by making the Belle Plaine connection, a crew would be deadheaded out of Clinton to take 126's connection to Clinton for furtherance to Chicago. CNW Iowa TT 124 of April 24, 1949, shows it scheduled to leave Belle Plaine at 115pm and arrive Clinton at 615pm. When traffic was light, they'd sometimes consolidate train 126 at Belle Plaine with train 258 "the Packer", that was scheduled to run just ahead of 126 out of Belle Plaine.

#45 Sioux City to Missouri Valley. Connected at Mo Valley with Ia Div #256, 252, 254 and Ne Div #51 & #117

MILW

CoB 64 usually was a solid meat train on certain days of the week with a second section running from Cedar Rapids east. #260 on the IM&D often ran in two sections on meat days.

EB Milw fleet coming through Savanna, IL. #62 from CoB with all its meat traffic, train from the KC line, and the IM&D train coming in with the meat from Rapid City/Sioux Falls/Sioux City/Spencer/Mason City/Austin/Dubuque (the biggest reefer block of the three trains, perhaps big enough in the early years to split into two trains) Dubuque division added meat from its home town plant, the meat trains always got a large fill there. Every day except Monday we had two morning meat trains, First and Second 62, and an evening meat train, No. 68. Occasionally we ran a Third 62 and a Second 68. Method of operation was single track Manual Block, timetable and train order, with small segments of double track Automatic Block and some CTC.

NYC MEAT Train

LIRR Rockaway Beach Branch – Heavy through freight (until the late 1940s) consisted of solid trains of meat reefers. They were "hot" items – coming off the New Haven at Fresh Pond, down to Glendale Junction, then go south (eastbound) on the Rockaway Branch to Ozone Park; there the trains would reverse and head for the packing plants located the Flatbush Avenue.

The Central dominated the NY City market because most of the meat packers were on Manhattan's west side, and were directly accessed by it's West Side freight line.

D&RGW Meat train

Train No. 75 via Denver & Salt Lake

Due out of Denver 8:00 p.m. arrives in Bond at 4:45 a.m. and connects with CRI&P No. 91 and CB&Q No. 61. This train also has a connection one day a week with No. 68 from Pueblo, to handle meat from Nuckolls Packing Company for Salt Lake.

Train No. 68 via Denver & Rio Grande Western

This train, leaving Pueblo at 1:15 p.m. and arriving in Denver at 7:00 p.m., handles business into Pueblo on Missouri Pacific train No. 61. It connects with trains handling perishable business from San Luis Valley, and also makes connection with Rio Grande No. 75 at Denver to move Nuckolls Packing Company meat for Salt Lake one day each week.

Nickel Plate Meat Trains dubbed "The Meat Express Line.

#MB-98 E St Louis – Buffalo

#CB-12 Chicago – Buffalo

Chicago, St Louis, Peoria and Cleveland were all big meat packing areas. was so much time sensitive reefer traffic on some divisions that solid trains could be assembled without needing to add extra cars. On some divisions, like the Peoria Division, there was lots of seasonal reefer traffic, but nowhere near as constant. When there were only a few reefers available for the first train of the day, tonnage was added with whatever needed to head East, including gons and hoppers.

Dressed meat traveled out of Peoria (mostly East) and through it from Iowa and KC. Peoria made lots of bacon and wieners.

The CB&Q Operating Data Sheets from 1967-1969 lists some Peoria-bound Q meat and perishable traffic as being handed off to "NKP" (N&W) PB-14 (Peoria to Bellevue, OH at the time). This traffic came out of Ottumwa, Iowa (Morrell Meats) and St. Joseph, Missouri (Armour). One could make a good case that this traffic had been routed CBQ (PPU) NKP for many years. When P&PU no longer had any icing facilities, TP&W replaced P&PU as intermediate switching carrier (their icing facilities existed until 1974).

Wilson's meat packing cars were frequent travelers on CB-12 and OB-2, the Nickel Plate's 2 premier freight trains that got their start on the Chicago Division.

CGW Meat Trains

The IHB cutoff time of 1:30 pm was a dedicated time that was followed for any interchange heading to eastern connections out of Chicago. If the trains arrived at the IHB, in Bellwood, the cars could be effectively interchanged, sent to eastern departure yards and reshuffled into trains heading east that evening. On the CGW, the daytime "hot train", was #192. #192 was usually off duty at Chicago Transfer by early afternoon. That train left Oelwein I believe after midnight or early morning and had to be east of the single track at Elmhurst prior to 143's arrival from Chicago. The CGW had a long standing 1:30 cut off at Bellwood to drop off any meat or high priority freight that had to head east. 192 usually had a lot of work at Bellwood and the meat traffic was usually on the head end to facilitate easy switching out of these cars. So if 192 had to be in Elmhurst by 1:30 pm, I assume since I used to work on the railroad, (BNSF), and know that train crews generally had 16 hours Hour of Service, back then and the trains traveled on at least two divisions, I expect the trains that connected at Oelwein from KC, Minneapolis, and Omaha had to depart after midnight the previous day, of any particular train seen at Bellwood.

It was a dangerous job, setting out at Bellwood. It was usually a big set out - many TOFC's, many street crossings & no radios. And it was daylight, when fusses are not that easily seen.

Thursday night was meat night on the CGW. Meat from St. Paul and Austin on the north end would arrive at Oelwein some time not long after midnight, likewise with meat from Omaha/Council Bluffs and Fort Dodge on the west end, and from Kansas City, St. Joseph, Des Moines, Marshalltown, and Waterloo on the south end. By the Fifties it would all be combined into one train and had to reach the IHB before the 1:30 p.m. cutoff time for eastward movement. In the days of the Texas type steam engines, the CGW would sometimes make a second section of its train 52- effectively a meat extra.

Back in the Thirties and Forties, the hot train for meat was--I believe--on the CGW Train 52 into Chicago. One engineer related to me that this train often ran in sections, especially on Wednesday or Thursday night. Twin Cities/Council Bluffs passenger train would pick up an extra f unit on Wednesdays. This unit would be used to protect the meat train out of Council Bluffs on Thursdays. When Reidy was the head of the CGW, he would follow the meat train out of Oelwein in an automobile with his assistants. They would make sure everything was ok with the meat train.

RI Meat Train

Meat traffic bound for Chicago coming from John Morrell plants in Sioux Falls, SD and Estherville, IA was combined with meat from the Wilson plant in Albert Lea and traveled east via the old BCR&N line as well. The Morrell packing plant of Estherville shipped all of their beef to Boston, Albany, and New York City. About 8 or 9 Morrell reefers per day on the Rock Island.

DL&W carried lots of meat, almost all bridge traffic. Meat was the fifth most common carload commodity on the railroad in 1954 (7th in 1950). The bulk of this increase in traffic developed as bridge traffic. In Scranton the DL&W served Wilson, Armour distribution plants.

ERIE #98 connected with NKP #98 carried St. Louis meat. Also got meat out of Chicago. Iced at Hornell NY

Meat train Consist

CB&Q 2nd LC70, 21-May-59

Departed Willis Yard IL off Ice House track at 17:45.

55 cars delivered to IHB at Congress Park IL at 21:30.

CB&Q	134D		
CB&Q	134C		
CB&Q	128B		
CB&Q	128A		
CB&Q	52812	Cattle	IHB-NYC
CB&Q	52127	Cattle	IHB-NYC
SRLX	2702	Meat	IHB-PM
SRLX	5529	Meat	IHB-PM
SRLX	4646	Meat	IHB-PM
SRLX	3306	Meat	IHB-PM
SRLX	5415	Meat	IHB-PM
SRLX	15994	Meat	IHB-PM
SRLX	15772	Meat	IHB-PM
SRLX	15622	Meat	IHB-PM
TRAX	12536	Meat	IHB-B&O
MNX	2078	Meat	IHB-NKP
MNX	2461	Meat	IHB-NYC
KGNX	3519	Meat	IHB-NYC
KGNX	3570	Meat	IHB-NKP
KGNX	3527	Meat	IHB-NYC
KGNX	3567	Meat	IHB-NKP
KGNX	3511	Meat	IHB-NYC
MNX	2463	Meat	IHB-NYC
MNX	2140	Meat	IHB-IC
ARLX	1269	Meat	IHB-NYC
ARLX	1748	Meat	IHB-C&O
ARLX	1648	Meat	IHB-C&O
NX	3643	Meat	IHB-NYC
NX	3639	Meat	IHB-GTW
ARLX	191	Meat	IHB-PM
ARLX	223	Meat	IHB-B&O
SRLX	15746	Meat	IHB-PM
SRLX	2840	Meat	IHB-PM
TRAX	12388	Meat	IHB-GTW
MNX	1983	Meat	IHB-NKP
NX	3188	Meat	IHB-NYC
MNX	2173	Meat	IHB-NYC
SRLX	7625	Meat	IHB-PM
SRLX	15722	Meat	IHB-NKP
MNX	2441	Meat	IHB-NYC
MNX	1986	Meat	IHB-NKP
MNX	2118	Meat	IHB-NKP
FGEX	1412	FznFoods	IHB-PRR
SFRD	17634	Oranges	IHB-PRR
WCLX	2390	Meat	IHB-NYC
WCLX	2011	Meat	IHB-B&O
WCLX	2451	Meat	IHB-NKP
WCLX	2500	Meat	IHB-NYC
WCLX	2019	Meat	IHB-NYC
WCLX	2337	Meat	IHB-PRR
WCLX	2545	Meat	IHB-PRR
WFEX	804	Vegts	IHB-WAB
NADX	981	Meat	IHB-GTW
FGEX	1420	Poultry	IHB-C&O
NX	3462	Meat	IHB-ERIE
MNX	1954	Meat	IHB-NKP
MNX	2111	Meat	IHB-NKP
MNX	1949	Meat	IHB-ERIE
FGEX	1507	CndGoods	IHB-NYC
SRLX	15080	Meat	Chgo
NATX	6714	Lard	Chgo
NATX	3687	Lard	Chgo
NATX	1772	Lard	Chgo
TTX	475085	5631	Chgo-PRR (Meat)
TTX	475037	6188	Chgo-PRR (Meat)
CB&Q	52101	Cattle	Clyde (FWR)
CB&Q	52846	Cattle	Clyde (FWR)
CB&Q	52042	Cattle	Clyde (FWR)
CB&Q	52047	Cattle	Clyde (FWR)
CB&Q	52003	Cattle	Clyde (FWR)
CB&Q	52651	Cattle	Clyde (FWR)
CB&Q	52921	Cattle	Clyde (FWR)
CB&Q	52053	Cattle	Clyde (FWR)
CB&Q	52073	Cattle	Clyde (FWR)

MEAT TRAINS

(data compiled by John Greedy & Jim Singer)

IC	CC-6 (#76) and sections of CC-2 (#78)
CBQ	LC, 70, 74A, 74, LPB
CNW	45, 84, 126, 2S6, & 258
MILW	62(262)
ERIE	72, 78, 98, NE-98
NKP	PB-12, PB-2, CB-12, OB-2, CB-2
B&O	92, 96, & (89 empty WB)
PRR	CP-8, SW-8, PH-10, VL-6, C6-8, CNY-2, NW-88, NW-82
NYC	CB-2, CB-4, NY-2, NY-4
C&O	#92



DISPATCH FREIGHT TRAINS

(data compiled by John Greedy & Jim Singer)

EASTBOUND (SUPERIOR)

- (#76) CC-6. Its specialty is the fast handling of meat and livestock from S. Omaha and Council Bluffs to Chicago for Eastern and Southern markets. Early PM delivery in Chicago area.
8 hours Waterloo - Chicago (1951).
- SCF-6/SFC-6 These are the fast meat trains out of Sioux City and Sioux Falls. At Fort Dodge these trains and CC-6 are skillfully sorted into 50-car trains to insure swift movement to and through Chicago.
- (#72) AC-2 Nicknamed "The Apple(s)", an important train out of Minneapolis via friendly connection M&STL at Albert Lea. Pacific Northwest products arrive at Albert Lea around noon. Additional carloads of meat added at Waterloo with arrival in Chicago during the early hours the next AM.
10 ½ hours Waterloo - Chicago (1951).
- (#74) CC-4. West Coast fruit and vegetable train off the U.P. at Council Bluffs for delivery to CPT and Eastern connections.
11 hours Waterloo - Chicago (1951).
- (#78) CC-2. Mid-day departure from Council Bluffs with early AM arrival in Chicago for connections. Deliveries from the West to Iowa Division cities.
13 hours Waterloo - Chicago (1951).