

You can go back, but things change...



A coal train passes through University junction during the last week of Summer, 2009. I had seen similar coal trains when I was there over 20 years ago, but back then the locomotives were BN rather than BNSF and the coal cars were built by Bethlehem in Johnstown rather than FreightCar America in Roanoke.



This past September, I combined a visit to archives in Chicago and St. Paul with some trackside photography. I had made several trips to the Minneapolis—St. Paul area over 20 years ago and wanted to revisit my favorite spot just south of where the BNSF and CP mainlines come together. Access from the west is at the end of 27 Ave. NE off University Ave. NE, and from the east, off 6th St. NE between 26th and 27th Ave. NE.

Some things had changed. Two grain elevators are now gone, and two intermodal terminals have been added. This time I tried the Motel 6 in Roseville and found it was conveniently close. There were many restaurants near the motel, and even a camera store which had a replacement battery for my Nikon D50 when I realized the two I took with me weren't going to last until the end of the trip. Fortunately, the rail traffic seemed heavy despite the recession.



I wanted to catch an ore train, but didn't have much hope because of the economy. However, I was lucky and caught three. That's a pusher at the rear of one of the trains. I took enough photos to catch up on all the cars they had gotten since my last trip to Minnesota. I was just as lucky on my very first trip there when I saw a train of their 1950s ore cars which were rapidly disappearing at the time. It seems so long ago.

The archives in St. Paul were open from 12 to 5, so I was able to spend the mornings and evenings photographing a variety of trains. The tracks run north to south, so lighting is generally good, and especially so in the late afternoon when the sunlight becomes nearly horizontal.

Eric A. Neubauer — November, 2009



This train wasn't a total surprise since one of the local railfans had already mentioned they were making test runs in preparation for a new commuter service. I eventually saw this train four times. They had just installed a high speed crossover for the passenger trains here at University and had left behind some troublesome orange cones which kept creeping into my photos.

Like to watch trains? Click here for information on how to get Eric's book:

Train Watcher's Primer

