



Christine and the Mongeese

No other road its size (and few larger) can
match Rock Island's diesel diversity

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illustration / COLLECTION OF LOUIS A. MARRE AND GORDON B. MOTT

I THE Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad Company is perhaps one of the least remarked large carriers in the United States. Only lately has it become a topic of conversation because of the amorous designs of both the Union Pacific and the Chicago & North Western. The Rock Island Lines operate a total route-mileage of just under 8000 spread out over 14 states in the center of America—and possibly suffer from inattention because of this location. The “Rock”—in the colloquial—is also rather commonplace in its daily operating habits as it expedites piggyback shipments, hauls box cars over endless miles of prairie branch lines, runs a moderate fleet of long-haul passenger trains, and carries commuters in and out of Chicago—quietly performing all the duties expected of a Midwestern trunk line.

Train-watchers are unlikely to spot anything particularly unusual about the motive power on a passing RI train except for the prosaic mismatch of unit types in any given lashup. An initial glance at the Rock Island diesel locomotive roster discovers few oddities—over 100 Geeps, a smattering of F's, a small fleet of E's for the *Rockets*, and so on. But further investigation reveals RI as possessor of one of the most interesting fleets of diesels in the land.

Repowerings, secondhand purchases, unique models, “firsts” and “lasts” in the diesel world—all are a part of the Rock's roster. Even the giant Pennsy cannot match Rock Island in ownership of unique diesel-electric models; RI has six. Eight builders are represented by Rock die-

sel locomotives—a record which few other railroads can claim.

ROCK ISLAND's first experiences in the “nonsteam”-motive-power category came, naturally enough, with motor cars. The road acquired a 37-foot International railbus in 1925, then delved into the gas-electric area in 1927 with the purchase from St. Louis Car of the first units of a 13-car fleet of 275 h.p. motor cars powered by Electro-Motive engines. In that same year emerged the first of the baggage-car motors, unique little critturs that often were mistaken for shortened conversions of “regular” doodlebugs [page 34].

Five Mack-Cummings cars in the 240-270 h.p. range were built during 1928-1929, two more EMC-St. Louis cars (of 400 h.p. each) in 1929, and a Standard Steel-Sterling-Westinghouse unit of similar power in 1930 to complete the RI's motor-car fleet of 21 units.

Like its granger brothers, Rock Island easily found use for the doodlebugs on lightly trafficked branch lines. The noisy, often undependable beasts prowled the weed lines—hopping between elevator towns alone, with a few freight cars, or possibly an extra coach now and then; plying the Rock's more obscure trackage from South Dakota to Louisiana. By the early 1960's only a handful were left, and all have now been removed from the active roster—although some survive in maintenance service as self-powered weed-control cars.

The successor to the old motor car, Budd's rail diesel car, was later bought by RI and enjoyed unique

treatment in typical Rock Island fashion [page 37].

Following the motor cars and baggage-car motors, a box-cab unit joined the roster in 1930. Numbered 10,000, it was a two-power locomotive built for use around Chicago's La Salle Street Station, where it spent its entire life. The 10,000, outshopped by GE, contained an Ingersoll-Rand 300 h.p. inline six-cylinder engine and was identical to the three-power locomotives built for New York City service except for not having the third-rail pickup apparatus unnecessary in the Windy City. Keeping 10,000 company in Chicago during the





ONLY on the Rock: left to right at Silvis Shop last August we had EMD GP7 1286; GE U25B 210; Alco RS-3 489; EMD F2-A 43; and a little Whitcomb — 75-DE-12c 1011.

'30's and '40's were six siblings: New York Central 1561-1562 and Michigan Central 7530-7533, all two-power locomotives of identical design. The 10,000 came off RI's roster about 1950 and was scrapped.

DIESELIZATION began in earnest on the RI in 1937 when the first standard switchers and some not-so-standard passenger cabs arrived from Electro-Motive. The yard goats were 600 h.p. off-the-shelf Winton-engined units; 11 came in 1937 and 18 more the following year. One of the first batch — the 510 — was assigned to and sub-lettered for RI subsidiary Peoria Ter-

minal, where it served until its re-manufacturing in 1959.

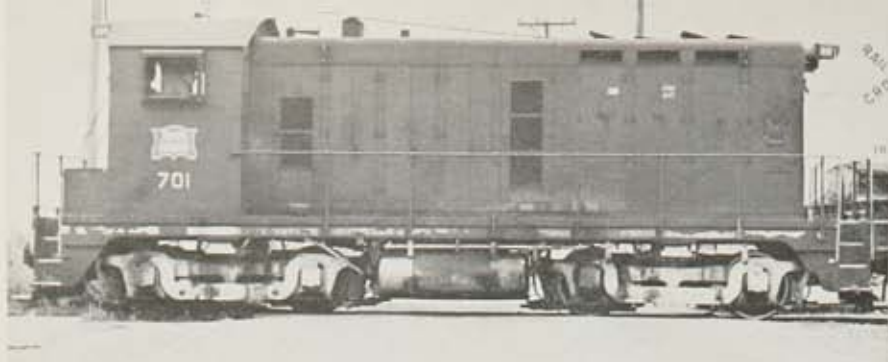
The power units for the new Budd-built *Rockets* that were delivered in 1937 were EMC custom jobs known as model TA's and numbered 601-606. These B-B's, which packed 1200 h.p. through a V-16 Winton engine, lasted until 1958, although they had long been bumped from the *Rockets*.

Electro-Motive added a second unique model to RI's fleet with the delivery of the two AB-6's in 1940. Built for the Limon-Colorado Springs (Colo.) section of the *Rocky Mountain Rocket*, these units resembled a standard E-type booster but had a

baggage compartment in the rear end and were equipped with an operating cab in the blunted front end ahead of the single engine. Each was an A1A-3.

Common practice was to run the AB's (numbered 750-751) through from Colorado to Chicago in multiple with other passenger units. This led in 1948 to the addition of a second engine in the rear — giving the AB's the full 2000 h.p. rating of a regular E6 or E7—and an accompanying standard A1A rear truck. The AB's were taken off the *Rocket* assignment around 1960, after other E's had front-end M.U. receptacles added; then ran in the regular passenger power pool and

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THE 701 began life as an EMD NW1 switcher, was re-engined in the 1950's at Silvis with an Alco 244-series V-12 lifted from an RS-2 which was itself re-powered with a GM 567!

SOME SAMPLE RE-POWERINGS



SWITCHING at Howe, Okla., is a former Alco 1500 h.p. RS-2, which was re-engined at La Grange and, in the process, fitted with a Geep long hood over its 567-series V-16 engine.



HERE'S Christine, the sole surviving example of Alco's prewar, Otto Kuhler-styled DL-109 passenger unit. She acquired her nickname and peaked roof when re-powered by Electro-Motive. GM 567's also chant away inside Rock Island's only two Fairbanks-Morse units (below) — road-switchers 400 and 401. Twin stacks are sole hint of foreign power plants.



often were seen on the *Golden State*. Early in 1965 they were rebuilt at the Rock's main shop in Silvis, Ill., and outfitted for the Chicago push-pull commuter equipment. (Conversion for push-pull operation includes installation of a small auxiliary diesel for train accessory power in place of the steam generator.) They can be found today on the bi-level trains between Joliet, Blue Island, and the Windy City—the only two of their breed ever built.

In February 1939 the Rock Island recorded a first in dieseldom by putting to work a 44-tonner specifically designed to qualify for one-man operation after the adoption of the "90,000 pound" rule in 1937. Davenport Besler unit 351, the star, entered service on a two-trick industrial switching job at Muscatine, Ia. This 88,000-pound design was developed after the advent of the National Diesel Agreement of 1937 which required a fireman on all locomotives over 45 tons (90,000 pounds). The little center-cab goats later became common on short lines and were found here and there on Class 1 rosters. General Electric made the type famous, but RI forces teamed up with neighbor Davenport to pioneer the concept.

The 351 had two 132 h.p. Caterpillar D-13000 inline six-cylinder engines as prime mover; but unlike the later GE example, 351 drove through single-reduction motors instead of double-reduction. Davenports 361-366 soon followed the 351 (but were equipped with Caterpillar D-17000 series 180 h.p. V-8's), and Rock Island eventually added 11 other 44-tonners to its roster—including 5 from Whitcomb, a Baldwin subsidiary whose plant was located at Rochelle, Ill. Six baby Davenports also were listed on RI's roster—little end-cab jobs of 180 h.p. each that rode on three powered axles. They were purchased in 1940 and 1941 but strongly resembled later Plymouth-built industrial switchers often seen in gravel pits and at mine tipples.

Although the Rock Island eventually had products from eight builders, EMD furnished the bulk of the power and Alco was second. The Schenectady firm's first representation on the RI roster was the 730, a high-hood switcher rated at 900 h.p. About 185 high-hood switchers were built for over 40 roads, but 730 was the only one the Rock ever owned. The hood configuration and builder serial number of No. 730, which was delivered in 1939, suggest that the unit was built in 1937 and sold late.

MUCH MORE glamorous machines than 730—and more notable from a

historical viewpoint — were Rock Island's Alco DL-109 cabs, commonly known as the "Kuhler" units for the designer of their slant nose and streamlined carbodies. Although New Haven got most of them (60 of 74), the first unit of this illustrious design went to — who else? — the Rock. The 624, delivered in 1940, was the first of four on the *Rockets*.

Enter *Christine* in 1941. Brother of 624, the 621 was the last (following 622 and 623) of the DL-109's to come to the RI. The 621 was repowered in 1953 by Electro-Motive and sometime later acquired in both rail-roader and fan circles the obvious name of *Christine*. Real fame came "her" way in 1962 when the 622, last remaining RI brother and last Alco-powered Kuhler cab in operation, was scrapped. This made *Christine* one of a kind, since the slant-nosed Alcos on the other five owner roads had been retired.

To watchers of Rock Island diesels, *Christine* has become something of a *cause célèbre*. Although the true Alco sound is missing, the sight is there. Normally assigned to the Chicago-Des Moines run on No. 5, the westbound *Des Moines Rocket*, and No. 10, the eastbound *Corn Belt Rocket*, *Christine* can be seen today leading one or more of the FP7's and E units with her in the power pool. *Christine* is considered "just another E unit" by RI mechanical men; she presents no special problems and should have a few active years left. Spared from the fate of solid maroon or red paint jobs most E's have suffered, she still sports the old maroon-painted nose and stainless-steel side panels (as do some of the E6's).

Christine's family was not the only notable group of Rock Island Alcos to be delivered in 1941. Four 1000 h.p. B-B model RS-1 road-switchers (numbered 746-749) arrived and claimed the title of first true road-switchers delivered to an American common carrier. They were designed at the request of RI, but this original quartet was destined to serve on line for only a few months. In early 1942 the Army drafted them for use overseas, and Alco equipped them with C-C trucks before they shipped out. Like those Lima 2-8-0's that went to China, three of these RS-1's "disappeared." The fourth, the 748, became USATC 56008, and after the war was sent north for service on the Alaska Railroad as its 1031. There it later received the noted cab-style shrouding to combat the northern winters. RI received identical units 742-745 as replacements in 1944.

The remaining war years saw the Rock's diesel fleet swell mainly in the switcher department. As on many

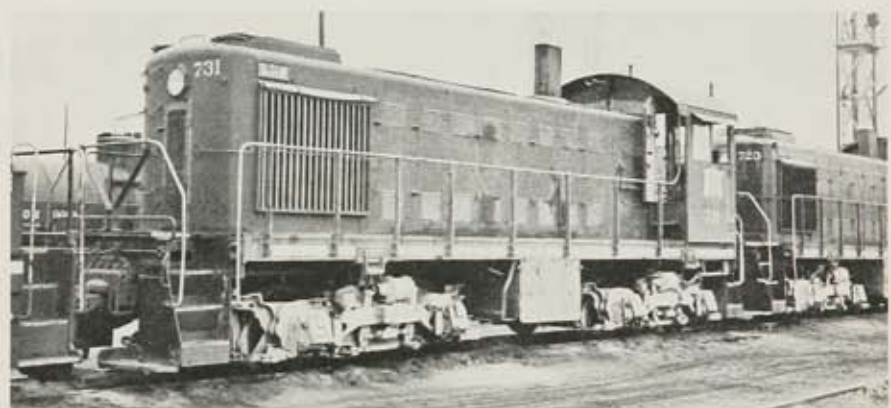


ROCK ISLAND acquired a pair of EMD SW8 yard goats with the purchase of a Texas short line — Wichita Falls & Southern — in 1954. Renumbered 840 switches in WF&S colors.

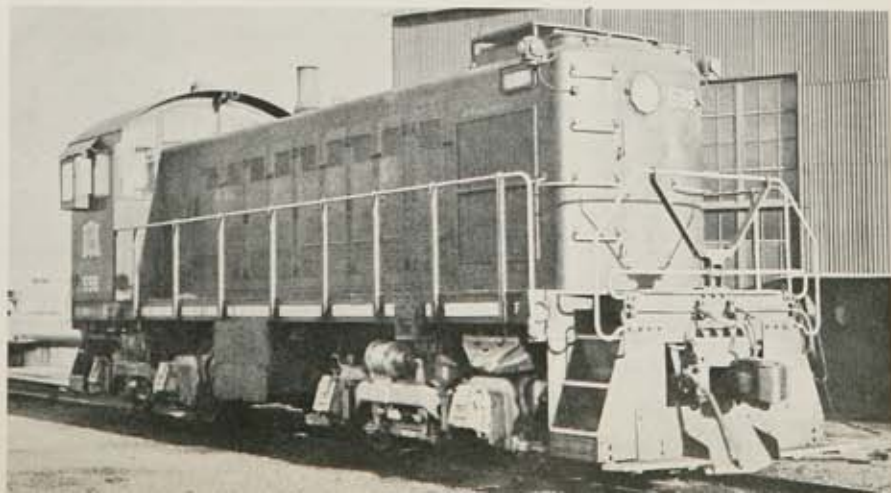
SECONDHANDERS



DEMISE of the New York, Ontario & Western in 1957 placed 1000 h.p. EMD NW2's 795-797 (ex-O&W 111-113) on the Rock Island. Sample 796 leads piggyback over an IC diamond.



IN 1959 the Rock purchased Toledo Terminal Alco S-2's 101-102, renumbered them 731-732, and assigned the pair to the Missouri-Kansas Division — where the 731 awaits a call at the Kansas City engine terminal. Purchase of the Pullman Railway of Chicago in 1949 added two Alco S-1's to RI's diesel diversity. RI 598 (below), ex-Pullman 20, is an example.



railroads, road freight units did not arrive until 1944. The first group was a dozen cab and booster sets of EMD FT's numbered 88-89 A and B; in 1945 eight more cabs and four boosters in the 70 series followed. The Rock's FT's were delivered in a red and black paint scheme that was to become the RI freight standard, and originally were equipped with the regular small indicator boards; but modifications in later years gave many of the FT's deceptive anonymity. They lacked dynamic brakes and their accompanying obvious square roof hatches. When standard F7 number boards, Mars lights, and solid maroon paint were added and the famed four-porthole side panels blanked out, the 1350 h.p. freighters frequently were mistaken for younger F3 or F7 cousins.

INTERESTINGLY, despite the fact that Rock Island's roster of diesels was sprinkled with over 100 conventional F-type cab and booster units, the most universal and first truly versatile production model—EMD's F3—was absent. Following the acquisition of the three dozen FT's, RI took delivery of 12 1350 h.p. F2's in 1946.

Then RI switched to Alco for its next batch of freight cabs, not to return to Electro-Motive for road power until 1949 for the first of 45 F7's and 10 dual-service FP7's.

Along with taking delivery of the Alco FA's, the Rock made news on other fronts with its diesel purchases of 1948, the first volume buying year for the road. Also from Alco came five RS-2's, 1500 h.p. B-B's that were RI's first higher-horsepower truly multi-purpose road-switchers.

From EMD came the "Mongeeese," five BL2's. Rock Island's group of the pug-nosed, wide-hipped Geep predecessors (numbered 425-429) were standard catalog items except for the steam generators installed for the Chicago suburban service. Standard or not, only 59 BL's were built; and the RI's quintet was notable for its mere existence. There the BL2's were—visible to all visitors to the railroad capital of the nation, daily engaged in hauling commuters (only RI's and B&M's did). They were soon dubbed with a nickname—Mongeeese, a term of strictly fan parlance.

Also in 1948, Fairbanks-Morse made its one and only sale to the Rock Is-

land: a pair of 1500 h.p. B-B road-switchers. The FM's, bought to keep the Mongeeese company in the Chicago suburban zone, were equipped with M.U. controls and steam generators. Electro-Motive re-engined the pair (numbered 400-401) in 1958; the FM's returned from La Grange to Blue Island and continue to haul suburban trains to this day despite the inroads of bi-level Budds powered by various stock EMD's.

Three groups of switch engines that were to become loners in diesel history were sold to the Rock Island by three builders in 1950. Lima-Hamilton built a pair of 800 h.p. units singular in carbody style which were among the few 800 h.p. models sold. The Limas—numbered, naturally enough, 800-801—had an extra rear "step" for the battery box on the cab end, a feature lacking on the only other 800 h.p. group, 21 units owned by NYC's Chicago River & Indiana.

Davenport, following its earlier 44-ton innovation, tried again with a pair of 112-ton center-cabs rated at 1000 h.p. each. These units, numbered 798-799, were as high as a box car and sported two 500 h.p. Caterpillar engines. One remains on the roster,



BAGGAGE-CAR LOCOMOTIVES

Power plant: Electro-Motive Corporation

Body: 9005-9007 — Pullman-Rock Island;
9008-9014 — St. Louis Car Company

Built: 1929

Re-engined: 1940-1951

Engine: 9005, 9007, 9009-9011, 9013 — Hamilton
in-line 6 cyl.; 9006, 9012, 9014 — Caterpillar
V-12 cyl.

Horsepower: 800 (two engines, each 400 h.p.)

Electrical equipment: General Electric

Total weight: 197,300 to 217,400 lbs.

I IN the same year Rock Island ordered its first big doodlebugs—1927—the RI shops at Horton, Kans., converted two 1911 40-foot mail cars to stubby baggage-car locomotives of 550 h.p. rating. Two 275 h.p. six-cylinder distillate engines provided the power. One unit, numbered 9000, was geared for 60 mph passenger service; the other, 9001, for 37 mph freight service. The power plants exactly paralleled those of the gas-electric cars ordered the same year. Likewise, when 400 h.p. gas-electrics came from EMC-St. Louis in 1929, RI took three more baggage cars and equipped them with twin 400 h.p. Electro-Motive power plants to make 800 h.p. units 9005-9007. Later in 1929 the same machinery was installed in seven more units based on all-new St. Louis carbodies instead of old baggage cars. These bore numbers 9008-9014.

The RI motor baggage cars were converted to Hamilton and Caterpillar diesel-powered units during the years 1940-1947, and Hamilton's Electro-Motive Corporation was bought

out by General Motors the year after the Rock Island units were built. The RI baggage-car locomotives were intended for dual service, but as branch-line passenger traffic waned they turned their energies more to local freight hauls.

Car 9008 was the first to leave the roster about 1948; almost a decade later it was joined in retirement by a sister, 9009. By 1960 only 9006, 9013, and 9014 remained, although the body of 9012 was intact as the depot at Ellsworth, Minn. The 9006 and 9014 last operated out of Fairbury, Nebr., in the fall of 1962 on branch runs to Horton, Kans., and Ruskin, Nebr. Then they went to storage at Des Moines and eventually to Silvis.

The final act starring the baggage-car motors came late in 1962 when the 9013 was used on the Bucklin-Dodge City (Kans.) run during the fall harvest rush. By mid-1963 she was in storage at Liberal, Kans., then later in Kansas City. In early 1964 the three remaining units were retired, ending the motor-car era on the Rock Island. **I**

ROCK ISLAND POWER, PAST AND PRESENT

ROAD NO.	BUILDER*	MODEL	H.P.	WHEEL		YEAR	NOTES
				ARR.			
1-3	EMD	LWT12	1200	B-1		1954-56	Off roster.
10-23	EMD	F7-B	1500	B-B		1949-51	Ex 1008-1098, 1208-1238; 1218 scrapped.
28-35	Alco	FB1	1500	B-B		1948-49	Ex 1458-1528; renumbered when repowered by EMD to 1288-1358.
38-49	EMD	F2-A	1350	B-B		1946	38-41, 45-46 scrapped.
70-77,	EMD	FT-A	1350	B-B		1944-45	Scrapped.
88-99							
708-738,	EMD	FT-B	1350	B-B		1944-45	Scrapped.
888-998							
100-127	EMD	F7-A	1500	B-B		1949-51	
128-143	Alco	FA-1	1500	B-B		1948-49	Ex 145-160; renumbered when repowered by EMD.
200-238	GE	U25B	2500	B-B		1963-65	
300-333	EMD	GP35	2500	B-B		1964-65	
345-350	Dav	30-ton	180	C		1940-41	Scrapped.
351	Dav	44-ton	264	B-B		1939	Scrapped.
361-366,	Dav	44-ton	360	B-B		1939-42	363-366 scrapped.
372-377							
367-371	Whitcomb	44-DE-5	360	B-B		1940	369-370 scrapped.
400-401	FM	H15-44	1500	B-B		1948	Repowered by EMD.
402-411	EMD	FP7	1500	B-B		1949	
425-429	EMD	BL2	1500	B-B		1948-49	Scrapped.
430-441	EMD	GP7	1500	B-B		1950	
450-454	Alco	RS-2	1500	B-B		1948	Repowered by EMD.
455-475,	Alco	RS-3	1600	B-B		1950-51	463 wrecked, rebuilt to 475; 456 repowered by EMD; 455, 457-462, 464-469, 475 scrapped.
485-499							Rebuilt to SW900, renumbered.
500-528	EMD	SC	600	B-B		1937-38	
529-546	EMD	SW1	600	B-B		1942-49	
550-563	EMD	SW900	900	B-B		1957-58	Rebuilt from SC's.
598-599	Alco	S-1	660	B-B		1941	Ex Pullman Ry.
601-606	EMD	TA	1200	B-B		1937	Scrapped.
(2nd) 602-604,	EMD	E7-B	2000	A1A-A1A		1946-48	Ex 632B-634B, 637B-642B; 632B scrapped.
607-612							
615-617	EMD	F7-B	1500	B-B		1949	Ex 675B-677B; 676B scrapped.
621-624	Alco	DL-109	2000	A1A-A1A		1940-41	621 repowered by EMD, classified PA-1; 622-624 scrapped.
625-626	EMD	E3-A	2000	A1A-A1A		1939	
627-631	EMD	E6-A	2000	A1A-A1A		1941	627 rebuilt to 656.
632-642	EMD	E7-A	2000	A1A-A1A		1946-48	
643-656	EMD	E8-A	2250	A1A-A1A		1950-53	643 ex EMD 952; 656 rebuilt from 627; 651, 656 scrapped.
675-677	EMD	F7-A	1500	B-B		1949	
700-707	EMD	NW1	900	B-B		1938	702-704 scrapped; others repowered by RI with Alco engines.
716-729	Alco	S-2	1000	B-B		1942-48	
730	Alco	HH-900	900	B-B		1939	Scrapped.
731-732	Alco	S-2	1000	B-B		1946	Ex Toledo Terminal.
735-749	Alco	RS-1	1000	B-B		1941-44	746-749 to U. S. Army, replaced by 742-745.
750-751	EMD	AB6	2000	A1A-A1A		1940	Originally 1000 h.p. A1A-3 wheel arrangement.
758-759	BLH	S-12	1200	B-B		1953	758 sold.
760-764	BLW	VO	1000	B-B		1943	Scrapped.
765-774	EMD	NW2	1000	B-B		1948-49	
775-779	EMD	SW9	1200	B-B		1953	
795-797	EMD	NW2	1000	B-B		1948	Ex NYO&W.
798-799	Dav	112-ton	1000	B-B		1950	798 scrapped.
800-801	L-H	—	800	B-B		1950	Scrapped.
802-806	BLH	S-8	800	B-B		1952	802, 804 scrapped.
811-840	EMD	SW8	800	B-B		1952-53	839-840 ex WF&S.
900-914	EMD	SW900	900	B-B		1959	Rebuilt from SC's.
920-936	EMD	SW1200	1200	B-B		1965	
1000-1016	Whitcomb	75-DE-12c	500	B-B		1950-51	1002, 1016 sold.
1200-1237	EMD	GP7	1500	B-B		1951	
1238-1239	EMD	GP18-M	1500	B-B		1963	Rebuilt from F7-B's 1218, 675B.
1250-1311	EMD	GP7	1500	B-B		1952-53	1301 scrapped.
1312-1332	EMD	GP9	1750	B-B		1957-59	
1333-1353	EMD	GP18	1800	B-B		1960-61	
10000	GE	2-power	300	B-B		1930	Scrapped.

*Dav — Davenport Besler; L-H — Lima-Hamilton; BLH — Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton; BLW — Baldwin Locomotive Works; EMD — Electro-Motive Division, General Motors; Alco — American Locomotive; GE — General Electric; FM — Fairbanks-Morse.

MISCELLANEOUS NOTABLES

WHEN GP9 1321 banged its front end in an accident, EMD supplied a low-nose "kit" and Silvis shops handled the surgery. Other roads with homemade low-nosed units: Green Bay & Western, North Western, Soo, Toledo, Peoria & Western, and WM.



CENTER-CAB 44-tonner 376 is a mate of Davenport 351, the unit that pioneered one-man-operated locomotives before the war.



BELoved by Chicagoland fans were Rock Island's suburban pool of five "Mongeeese" EMD BL2's, since traded in on GP35's.



WOULD you believe it?—the 72 was an FT, disguised by large number boards, Mars light, and absence of portholes.



F249 OR had top headlight removed during a shopping, thus creating a unique variant of Electro-Motive's famous bulldog nose design.

assigned to the Quad City area (East Moline, Moline, Davenport, and Rock Island) within sight of both Silvis shops and its Iowa birthplace.

The third batch of unique 1950-vintage switchers owned by the Rock is a group of end-cab 75-ton Whitcomb units. Strikingly similar to GE's 70-ton version, they were built for Canadian National but proved unsatisfactory and were returned to the United States. Rock Island picked up 17 of the 18, and Washington & Old

Dominion bought the remaining one as its number 55. Two of RI's 75-tonners have been sold to short-line connections and another leased to subsidiary Warren & Ouachita Valley, but the others are still active and are assigned to various light yard jobs.

Yard engines also dominate Rock Island's secondhand purchases, another area of interest on the RI roster. The list includes former demonstrators, units picked up through acquisitions of short lines, and several out-

right purchases from other companies.

Four goats have been added to the RI fleet as a result of short-line absorptions: S-1's 598-599 (the only 660 h.p. Alcos on RI) from the Pullman Railway; and SW8's 839-840, conventional EMD switchers that came with the Wichita Falls & Southern. The Alcos were sent away from their original Chicagoland habitat and are usually assigned to the Arkansas Division, a Schenectady-product domain headquartered in Little Rock. The

WF&S units have not strayed far; they're Southern Division property customarily worked in Oklahoma.

Five yard switchers have been picked up secondhand simply to ease power shortages on the Rock Island. Units 795-797, 1000 h.p. EMD products of 1948, were New York, Ontario & Western switchers 111-113 until their purchase in 1957 by RI. Toledo Terminal was the source for a pair of Alcos built in 1946. Formerly TT 101-102, they became RI 731-732 in 1959. Early 1965 assignment lists show the NYO&W's on the Chicago Division and the TT's on the Missouri-Kansas Division.

One yard engine and one passenger unit owned by RI were former demonstrator units, though builder records do not substantiate the claim for the switcher, Baldwin 759. Since the sale of sister 758 to the Apache Railway in Arizona in 1958, the 759 is at least the sole 1200 h.p. Baldwin unit on the Rock Island. Electro-Motive passenger unit 643 began life in 1949 as E8-A demonstrator 952 and was purchased by the Rock a year later.

The most famous of RI's adopted units were not switchers, however,

and were unique to the Rock when they were owned. These were the LWT12 cabs, the GM power units built for the *Aerotrains* in 1954 and 1955. Under GM ownership they were numbered 1000-1001; they became 3-2 respectively when RI picked up the trainsets in 1958. In the meantime, the road had ordered an identical unit, the *One-Spot*, from GM to power the *Talgo Jet Rocket* between Chicago and Peoria. This unit was delivered in 1956 and was the first of the trio to be retired to serve as parts supplier for 2 and 3. The former demonstrator units remained in suburban service with the lightweight equipment until April of this year, when all were withdrawn in favor of the bi-levels. The trains and the two remaining units are stored at Silvis, awaiting a buyer.

ALONG WITH secondhand units, repowered diesels have given a special flavor to Rock Island's roster. After the famed *Christine* operation on Alco 621 by EMD in 1953, the RI did not participate in any conversions until 1957-1958, when the second round of dieselization was about to get under way. Again EMD was selected.

In 1957 the Alco freight cabs and boosters and the original Alco multi-purpose units, the 1500 h.p. RS-2's, were subjected to EMD repowerings. A single RS-3, the 456, and the two Fairbanks-Morse units were converted in 1958. Since the FA's lacked dynamic brakes and retained the Alco cooling system through the prime-mover replacement, the repowering did not give them a telltale bulge on the roof as it did Katy's EMD-ized FA's. Like the Frisco's, RI's repowered FA's had to be heard to be detected. The RS units kept the Alco cab and short-end hood — as did similar repowered units on Katy and Frisco — and are easily spotted.

The Rock Island RS-2 repowerings had an interesting sequel involving some EMD switchers. During the period from 1957 to 1962 five of the eight EMD NW1-model goats were converted by the RI at Silvis by installing Alco 244 engines taken from the EMD-ized road-switchers. To keep within the limits of the traction motors, the engines were derated to 900 h.p. by reworking the fuel injection systems. Because of clearance problems with the Alco engines, the



RDC'S THAT LOST THEIR ENGINES

Road numbers: 902-904 (ex-9002-9004), 9015-9016
Built: 1953-57
Power: two 275 h.p. GM engines (removed 1964-65)
Model: RDC-3
Wheel arrangement: 1A-A1
Total weight (with engines): 117,000 to 122,700 lbs.

I SINCE Rock Island had so much experience with motor cars of various designs, it followed that the road should sample the Budd diesel car also. RI bought two of the RDC-3 versions in 1953. These units, containing a coach section, baggage compartment, and small R.P.O. room, were normally used by the Rock on lightly patronized local passenger runs which required only a single car. Subsequently, the baggage compartment was eliminated in favor of a longer R.P.O.

The RI eventually wound up with five of the RDC-3's, after buying the third one in 1955 and two more in 1957. The units rarely strayed north of Kansas City and usually were assigned to runs in Kansas and on the Choctaw route from Memphis west through Arkansas and Oklahoma to Amarillo, Tex. On the latter route the cars went by the nickname "Choctaw Rockette."

Several points concerning RI's RDC operation were notable. During past years it was common to see an RDC leave Kansas City buried back in the consist of a southbound train (the Budds came north this way also), waiting to be dropped at a

division point where it could take off on its own. A similar situation existed on the Choctaw run during Christmas seasons, when mail swelled the train's consist. A steam-equipped Geep would be used to pull the extra head-end cars, and the Budd car would run at the rear as an ordinary coach.

When the last RDC run on the Rock Island was discontinued in 1964, the GM engines were removed from the units. However, the cars are still carried on the roster as R.P.O.-coaches; and in fact, three (ex-9002-9004, now 902-904) see service as the regularly assigned passenger-carrying cars on the remaining train between Memphis and Tucumcari.

Rock Island's "Choctaw Rockettes" claimed title to being the longest RDC runs in the nation for about three years — from the time Western Pacific discontinued its 917-mile Oakland-Salt Lake City *Zephyrette* RDC service until the RI runs were pulled off. The Memphis-Amarillo rail distance is 762 miles. NYC's Boston & Albany Beeliner run of 200 miles held the United States long-distance RDC title until killed September 26, although NP's international run to Winnipeg is somewhat longer. **I**

UNITS UNIQUE TO THE ROCK



EX-AEROTRAIN 1001 departs La Salle Street Station (left) as RI No. 2. One of only two 112-ton Davenport's ever built, No. 799 (below) has always been assigned to her Quad City home.



hoods of the NW's were raised to a position nearly flush with the cab roofs. The Alco-ized switchers putter around resembling maroon piano crates. This is believed to be the only group of EMD units repowered with Alco prime movers, although a few Baldwin units have received the same treatment. The converted NW1's (700, 701, and 705-707) can be found working in Silvis yards and around the Quad City area. The remaining units in the series which were not repowered went to scrap in the early months of 1965.

Not shown on the ownership lists of Rock Island but contributing considerably to the uncommon features of RI motive power is a group of varying yearly membership known as "Units Leased." The Rock adds flavor to its operating roster even in its borrowing habits. During the late 1950's the pride of the Des Moines and Western divisions were the New York Central's Baldwin shark-nosed freight units that appeared annually, released from their drag duties throughout Indiana and Ohio to help get the harvest west of the Mississippi to market.

The sharks were followed regularly by aged Great Northern FT sets, itinerant laborers from the north which in their twilight years also traveled to the Colorado & Southern and Missabe Road to fill in during power shortages. To complete the RI image, Alcos made the Iowa scene in the early 1960's, as Union Pacific FA-1's — sometimes en route to or from stints in Canada — were leased to help bridge the power

gap until new units arrived from La Grange.

A look at the early 1965 list of leased units shows a new trend to yard power rather than road freight power in RI's borrowing — but with nothing lost in novelty. This trend no doubt is a reflection of the appearance of new Rock road freight units. With delivery of the new switcher order, such borrowing may not continue; but it is worth savoring while it lasts.

Reading from the top of the list numerically, Alco switchers 20-21 lead off. These 1000 h.p. goats are the property of the Galveston, Houston & Henderson, a Texas switching road, and sport black paint with heralds of GH&H owners Katy and MoPac adorning the cabs. RI assigned them to the Southern Division.

Two Kansas City Terminal units are next — another pair of black Alcos numbered 57-58. RI used them on the "Mo-Kan" Division and kept them within coupling distance of home rails in Kansas City.

A pair of road engines sneak in, SD9's from the DM&IR assigned to the Rock Island Division. The seasonal nature and declining volume of the Missabe Road's business have resulted in a scattering of its polished maroon C-C hoods. The DM&IR "Seeds" (GP — Geep; SD — Seed) are newcomers to the RI, but they have been leased in recent years by such varied companies as Norfolk & Western, Pennsy, and Canadian National, and some have been sold to U. S. Steel cousin B&LE.

Almost inexplicably, one Baldwin

C-C road-switcher from Soo Line is listed. Soo 384, assigned to the Rock Island Division and used alone because of M.U. problems, is a burbling white monster that originally belonged to the Duluth, South Shore & Atlantic. Almost as startling is the presence of Missouri Pacific 1023, assigned to RI's Southern Division. The 1023, known to MoPac fans as the "Blue Piano Crate," is a rebuilt EMD switcher that looks much akin to the RI 700's, even though it contains an EMD prime mover. Five Alco switchers from the 1100 class of aspiring parent Union Pacific complete the April 1965 roster of visitors.

ROCK ISLAND yards may be dotted with oddities, but *Christine* is about the only unusual creature to grace the head end of the present *Rocket* fleet. Straight EMD products, from the two E3's to the dozen active E8's, represent the rest of the regular road passenger power pool. A few steam-equipped Geeps fill in occasionally as alternates. But to find the familiar RI unorthodoxy, one need only return to Chicago and check the commuter trains.

Perhaps even more than through train service, a commuter operation reflects a railroad's image. Admittedly the Rock Island was a bit tardy in applying the polish; but the bi-levels have arrived, and at least a portion of Blue Island and Beverly Hills dwellers can be content and comfortable riding to work in the fashionable Chicago push-pull style.



ONE of Rock Island's unique 1200 h.p. B-B EMD TA's speeds across Oklahoma with the Choctaw Rocket (above). Ex-Canadian National Whitcomb 1002 wears a protective shield while on lease to Big Rock Gravel at Little Rock. Firm later purchased the 75-ton Dominion diesel unit.



ONE of only two Lima 800 h.p. switchers built with a rear "step" containing battery box (above), the 801 was traded in on a GP35 this year. Ex-Rocky Mountain Rocket 751 (below) now rolls commuters in bi-level Budds.



The motive power end of RI's commuter operation takes the prize for all Chicagoland. The old commuter roster was classic enough. The 15 RS-3's with dual controls and train-lighting equipment formed the bulwark of the old commuter power fleet. Add to these the two FM's, the *Aerotrains*, the *Mongeeese*, and a couple of conventional FP7 cabs, and you had the picture — until the Budds arrived early this year.

The new line-up has lost little color. Only a small portion of the commuter operation was taken over by the bi-levels. As a result, only the lightweights and the *Mongeeese* have been replaced to date (the FM's and most of the Alcos are still busy). The new trains are powered by several recent conversions of former road power, and these units present an illustrious group. First unit to be converted for push-pull operation (and star of the initial publicity glossies) was the 630 — one of the four remaining long-nosed EMD E6's. Chicagoland fans have added an eagle ornament which now adorns the top of her front headlight, and she still sports the stainless-steel side panels and maroon paint only on her nose.

Not satisfied with a mere E6, Rock Island next converted the roster's only three straight F7's equipped for passenger work — Nos. 675-677 — and then added to the fleet the only two AB6's in the world for good measure. If all this does not put every other Chicago push-pull operation in the shade, nothing will.

Although the Rock Island's early diesel acquisitions are studded with rare items and variations on the conventional, the standardization of the second generation of diesel locomotives has somewhat eclipsed RI's pursuit of the unusual.

After the acquisition of the *Mongeeese*, RI had placed an order for 12 "straight vanilla" GP7's which came in August 1950, placing the Rock among the earliest Geep purchasers. From that point on, the RI was a solid EMD customer for new road power until 1963 (with the exception of an order of RS-3's from Alco in 1951, including the commuter engines).

1953 ended the first round of dieselization of the Rock Island, and 1961 marked the initiation of the second. In that year 10 FT trade-ins went to La Grange on an order for GP18's.* At first RI stuck with normally aspirated road-switchers, following through with the model change from GP9 to GP18 and declining to sample turbocharged power. The low-nose option was shunned too. But in 1963 the Rock joined the horsepower race with an order for a dozen General Electric U25B's built with the standard chopped short hood and (as always on RI) without dynamic brakes. This was the first non-EMD order since 1951.

In 1964 the trade-in arrangements on a second order of the popular "U-boats," as RI men tab the GE's, added

*Between the post-dieselization years of 1957 and 1960, RI added 32 GP9's and GP18's, but no older units were traded in or scrapped in favor of these new engines.

a touch of the old Rock atmosphere. No units were traded in directly on this batch of U25B's. The remainder of the aged EMD FT's were cut up at Silvis and the trucks saved. These were placed under certain of the Alco FA-1's whose trucks went to Erie to retain the compatibility of GE traction motors on GE locomotives. Thus some of the EMD-engined Alco cabs were mongrelized even further and retained as original only the Alco carbody and some interior components.

THE year 1965, well into the second round of dieselization, may mark the beginning of the end for the unique flavor of RI's diesel fleet. An initial order for 20 EMD GP35's early this year resulted in the retirement of some of Rock Island's true gems, including the original 44-tonner 351, high-hood Alco switcher 730, and the *Mongeeese*. A second GP35 order comprised 9 units bought new and 5 on trade-ins of a like number of F2 cabs; a third U-boat order at the same time sent in 14 of the freight service RS-3's on a 1-for-1 basis.

The saddest order of all in the eyes of RI diesel fans was one for 17 SW1200's which will undoubtedly result in the retirement of more of the older, odd yard-switchers. Economics make sense, but those who mourned the passage of steam should understand the loss felt by the modernists as one of the most fascinating fleets of diesels in the land begins to disintegrate under the wheels of progress. I