

More Uses of the Catchy Name Baraboo

Tales of Earlier Days

By Bob Dewel

Our recent story, “What’s in a Name Like Baraboo Anyway”, was incomplete, it seems. A search of my archives and recent discoveries reveals significant additions in which the name of our fair city is memorialized.

Baraboo was once a Division Point in the Northwestern Railroad in its heyday. Attached is a photo used with the permission of its owner, Ray Burmeister. The 1970 Baldwin C&W No 264 locomotive “The Baraboo” had drive wheels 56” in diameter, and the tender carried 2000 gallons of water.

Dick Goddard of the Lake States Railway Historical Association, which has its headquarters in the Baraboo Arts Building at 319 Water Street, made the photo available to us. He states that this view is of the very aged engine during its later life on the Mattoon line. It once had elegant brass fittings, and shiny “Russia iron boiler bracketing”, he says.

The 1870 construction date indicates it was made specifically for the new Northwestern line being constructed then over the Merrimac Bridge and through Devils Lake. It was an indication of the importance of Baraboo to this new line through Wisconsin. There is no indication that Merrimac or Reedsburg received this honor.

The Baraboo Pullman Car

The Baraboo Pullman car, which we featured several years ago, should be mentioned here also, as recognition of the Baraboo division point on the Northwestern Line. It is also pictured in this article, though a less clear photo. Pullmans were the elite sleeping cars, complete with a porter who made up your bunk, upper or lower.

If you left your shoes in a prominent place just under the bunk, they would be shined sometime during the night. Lower bunks were preferred, especially by the ladies, and a little ladder could be attached to the upper bunk for your convenience during the night.

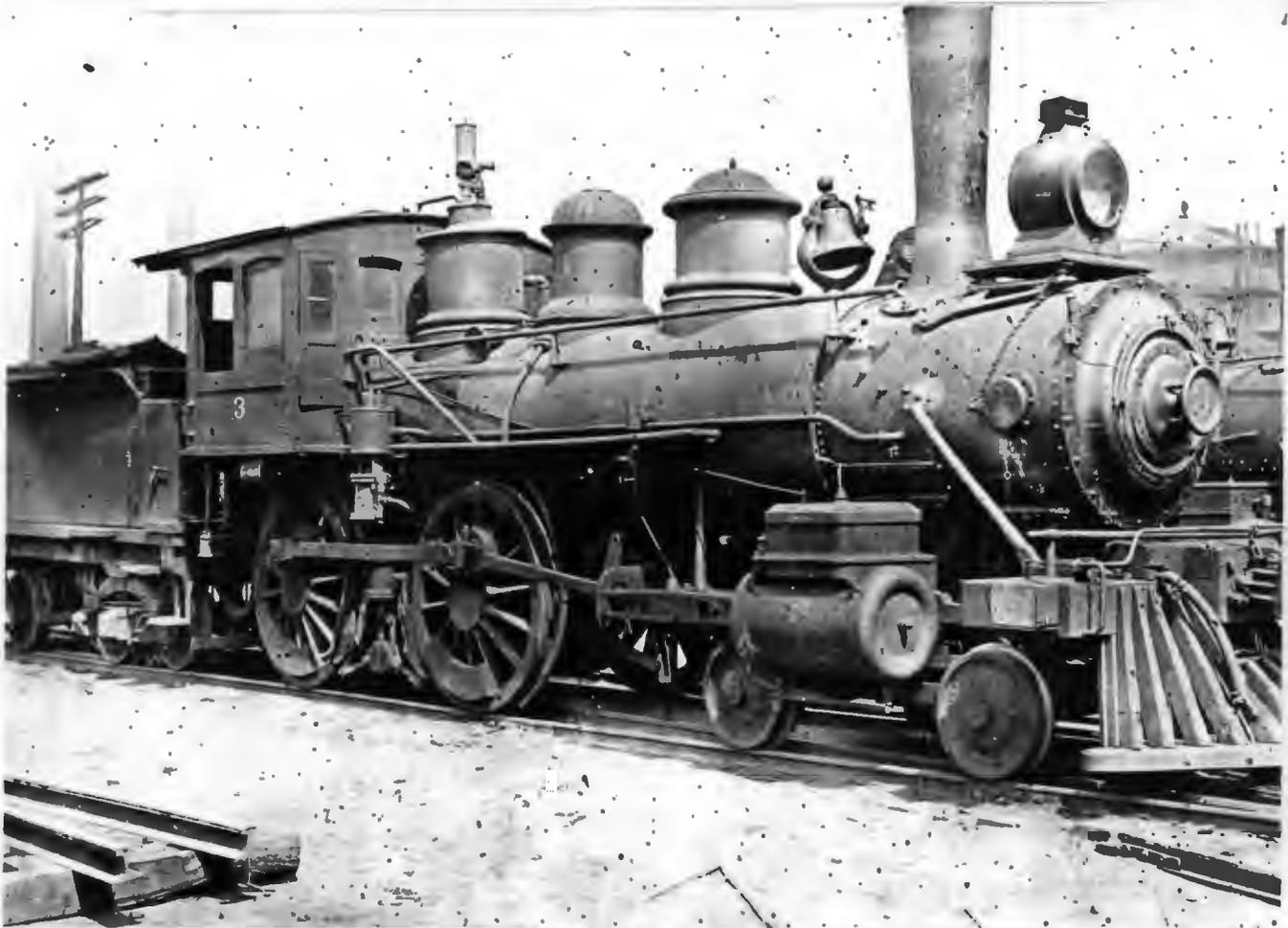
Some cars had compartments, with the same bunks but a tiny closet and a surprisingly small but adequate toilet. This was elegant traveling, for the bunks were easily converted to luxurious padded seating during the day. The Pullman is shown in my recent book, “The Best of Bob”, along with 45 other stories of earlier days.

Pullman cars paled, however, when compared to “private varnish” rail cars, of which the Ringlings and perhaps the Gollmars had several. These were not just for themselves but for their most prized performers. They had dining room tables, also used as conference tables, and even a piano. Earlier articles in my series describe these in detail.



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A Pullman car and an engine, both named "Baraboo"



Other things named Baraboo

There are a few more instances of the use of the Baraboo name. We have a clipping regarding a legal matter during the French fur trading era in 1718, in which people named Barbo, Baribos, Barau and Baribeau are mentioned. There is also an 1820 document by Wisconsin Provisional Governor Doty mentioning the “Riveire a la Barbue”. He seems to translate Barbue to mean “eat fish”.

Clothing has even carried the Baraboo name thanks to a short-lived manufacturer in the city. From 1948 to 1957 the Boreva Clothing Company marketed a line of jackets carrying the name “Baraboo Jac”, of which we have a picture and ad extolling its qualities. There are also several poems written about the turn of the century (1899-1900”, all complimentary to the city.

Baraboo’s unique name has a ring to it that has spawned many uses, several being mentioned in this and previous articles. We’ll keep collecting more examples, as well as speculations as to whether we should be referred to as Barabooites, Baraboobers, Barabooians, (or Baraboobians) or whatever your fancy prefers. In its singular form, Baraboo, it is a popular noun of many uses, and this scribe, for one, is proud to use it.