

Bad day at **OLATHE,**



great day at **LAWRENCE**

DERAILMENT DETOURS BRING RARE MOVES
TO A SECONDARY SANTA FE MAIN LINE

BY I. E. QUASTLER • Photos by the author



Detouring train No. 4, the *Fast Mail*, meets a detouring freight at the Lawrence depot on March 15, 1966. The *Fast Mail*'s Alco PAs contrast with the freight's F7 A-B-B set. Note the trailer-on-flatcar load first out.



Author Quastler's first encounter with the detouring train 4 on March 15, 1966, at Lawrence finds the *Fast Mail*, heavy with mail and express traffic, coming into town at an overpass.

he interconnected nature of the rail network can often benefit railfans who long to see something different.

In late summer 1964 I moved to Lawrence, Kans., to attend the University of Kansas. As a railfan, I was eager to photograph the town's railroads. I soon found that Lawrence was served by two lines, Union Pacific's former Kansas Pacific route and Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe's secondary main line west of Kansas City to Emporia via Topeka.

Beyond Topeka, the Santa Fe line turned southwestward away from the Kansas River toward Emporia, where it joined the road's double-track main line from Chicago to the West Coast. This route was about 25 miles south of Lawrence. Normally it handled all the heavy transcontinental freight trains as well as several important long-distance passenger and mail runs. In combination, these two lines formed alternate routes between Kansas City and Emporia.

Late on the morning of March 15,



Typical power on train 12, the *Chicagoan* from Dallas, through Lawrence included E units, such as this E6-E8MB-F7-E6 set on March 18, 1966, and were a favorite of Quastler's.



1966, I got a telephone call from my railfan friend and fellow University of Kansas student, Ross Davidson. He told me there had been an accident on the main line at or near Olathe, and that it was blocking both tracks. As a result, some trains, including No. 4, the *Fast Mail*, would be detouring through Lawrence. Luckily I had some free time to catch some unusual action on film.

My favorite train to photograph at Olathe was No. 4. Its normal power was Alco PAs with their beautiful Warbonnet paint scheme, which I did not normally see in Lawrence. It was scheduled through Ottawa at 1:35 p.m.

I calculated that the earliest that train 4 could come through Lawrence was around 2 p.m. I stationed myself at an elevated spot with a good view of the tracks just northwest of downtown, where I planned to get my first pictures as the train curved into town.

At about 2:45 p.m., train 4 came around the bend. To my delight it was powered by a matched A-B-B-A set of PAs led by No. 70. I took a few photos in quick order and then hurried to the Santa Fe station a few blocks away to try for more shots. When the *Fast Mail* was clear of the main line, it stopped, and one of the crew, perhaps a road foreman of engines, climbed down from the cab and went into the station.

Shortly thereafter, I could see a freight train approaching from the east. I immediately recognized it as a detoured main line freight, as it was powered by three F units, with F7 No. 225, in the lead. I had never seen F7s in Lawrence, and again I took several photos. The freight wasted no time in going through town on the main line without stopping.

Soon the mail train resumed its trek eastward. I took several more pictures, and then it too was gone. I had some responsibilities at school later that afternoon, so I had to return to campus.

In retrospect, it was a great day for me in Lawrence. Not only had I seen my favorite Santa Fe train in a new setting, but I had also witnessed a mainline freight detouring on its way west. This was the only time in my three years in Lawrence that, as far as I'm aware, such detours took place. As I look back to that sunny day in March 1966, I still get considerable joy from the scenes I captured on film. ■

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SANTA FE IN EASTERN KANSAS



Another Alco oddity for Lawrence was RSD15 "Alligator" No. 813 on April 6, 1966, a stark contrast to the bright Warbonnet PAs on the detouring *Fast Mail* spotted just a month earlier!



Two Fairbanks-Morse H16-44 diesels, a common sight in Lawrence in the mid-1960s, handle a local freight west under the shade of some trackside trees in November 1965.