



RUBBER-STAMP ORDER AT TRACY CITY

BY JEFF BENTON

Awhile back I read Lou Adler's article on Page 24 of the October 2021 issue of *The Dispatcher's Office*. On Page 29 he wrote about how "a dispatcher will only write 4 or 5 different (forms of) train orders (TO) during an op session on a specific railroad." I thought, "That's neat; I wonder what ours are?"

To really find out, I tallied the directives (like TOs, Train Orders) from the first two years of dispatching the Tracy City Branch of the Eagle Point Railroad. A full 91% were comprised of only three forms. To my surprise Form H, the work extra order, was one of them. Then I remembered those H Forms were rubber-stamp orders.

A rubber-stamp order is any order issued in the same form for the same situation day after day after day. The idea is that the order is so repetitive that one could almost design a rubber stamp to capture the bulk of it and then just write in a few details such as the current date. How did Form H get to be so prevalent on the Tracy City Branch? No, it is not for maintenance there.

The answer is in the design of the operations. Early on I knew I wanted a passenger train to run up to Tracy City and terminate there. See Figure 1 for a schematic of the branch. In the Tracy City Branch timetable in the January 1910 issue of *The Official Guide of the Railways*, most trains terminate (or originate) in Tracy City. I also thought

this would be a nice change from simply running the branch from end to end and back again... and again.

Each timetable we've run so far has had a train that terminated in Tracy City in both the morning and the afternoon. A late version of this turn is exemplified by No. 216 and No. 217 in Figure 2, a partial timetable. Train No. 216 arrives in Tracy City at 9:54 a.m. The equipment and crew from this train then return as No. 217, leaving Tracy City at 10:04 a.m. I wrote such a turn into an early timetable and considered it done.

Something kept gnawing at me, though. How would the train crew turn the equipment for the run back from Tracy City? Oh yeah, there's a re-

Tracy City continued
it arrives in Tracy City.

Before issuing this work extra directive, I place a Popsicle stick (with magnets) on the dispatcher's panel. This is shown in Figure 6 for a crew turning equipment. Then, if another extra wants to run between Coalmont and Tracy City, this Popsicle stick reminds me to advise them to protect against the work extra in its work limits.

So that is why work-extra directives (or "orders") show up so often in the tally. There are at least two of them every day (one in the morning and another in the afternoon). They are also used for extra trains terminating in Tracy City, before the crew heads back south. While this use of this form may be a little unconventional, experience has shown that it works well for this. **DO**



Figure 6: The Popsicle stick on the board is a reminder to the dispatcher to protect the extra train.

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