

1545 North Willow
Lake Forest, Il. 60045
January 15, 1989

Mr. Michael Sol
101 East Broadway
Missoula, MT 59802

Dear Michael:

This will acknowledge your letter of January 5, 1989, concerning the Milwaukee Electrification, and with specific reference to the GE Study to close the " gap " between Othello and Avery.

I thank you for your kind words about my father, who was one of the greats of the era of railroad electrification. Unfortunately that era has now closed, at least if the United States.

I regret to inform you that my copy of the study was thrown out by my Administrative Assistant, after my retirement in June 1985. At that time I had an entire file drawer full of the official Milwaukee Electrification studies made over the last 25 years, which had been sent to me by various officers of the Milwaukee Railroad, as the time for sale to the Soo Line drew near. Not having storage space in my home, I left them at the office when I retired with express instructions that they were to be preserved, until such time as I could arrange for their movement.

When the railroad was acquired by the Soo Line, they issued express instructions to destroy vast amounts of old files, and put a very short time limit on the action., Without advising me, the file drawer of Electrification historical files was consigned to the dump.

I do have all my fathers personal papers and studies, and may someday put them in form for publishing. I did not make them available to Noel Holley as I recognized early on that his real love, and skill in writing, was with regard to motive power. I gave him five or six dictated tapes on otherwise unavailable locomotive data, and furnished other information for his book which was barely acknowledged in his publication.

Mr George Frazier, retired Electrical Engineer, had much of the information that I had, in duplicate form in the Electrification Files at Tacoma. I believe he turned this over to the Tacoma Public library for its archives. You can write him at: 517 Forest Drive, Tacoma, WA 98466. The mechanical department which was headquartered at Milwaukee turned over many of their files to the Milwaukee Public Library. I don't know if their copy of the GE Study was included.

I was privileged to review many of the electrification studies and proposals and made a written report to Mr. C.E. Drippen on the GE study. He was president at the time. The GE proposal was to electrify the gap and supply sufficient electric engines to make the operation feasible. Unfortunately the Milwaukee was slipping into bankruptcy, and we had no funds.

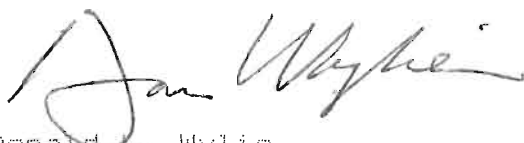
I suggested to Crippen that we allow GE to supply the system, as they were willing to finance it. Once built it would have been captive and available for our use, even tho we might at some future date we might not be able to meet payments on the loan. This idea was considered and rejected.

Actually, the balance of the electrification and locomotives wore out, during the 15 year period from 1960 to 1975 that various schemes, including the GE proposal, were under study. Had it not been for the Joes which my father was able to buy after the war; the diesel boosters, also his idea, and for which he was condemned in many places by "rail fans" who had no real knowledge of the Milwaukee situation or the economics involved, or for that matter practical railroading; and, the boosting of the trolley voltage, the electrification would have probably been abandoned in the 50's.

A am amazed to this day at my fathers ability to keep the system viable for at least 20 years longer than any reasonable man, given the facts, would have predicted.

One thing survives my father. His masters degree thesis, completed at age 29 when he was Assistant Electrical Engineer at Seattle. It is titled "The Electrification of the Milwaukee Railroad". There are 150 pages of single spaced text and 75 pages of pictures and drawings. At some point I may see fit to have this published. It is the definitive work, and an amazing one.

With all good wishes,



Donald L. Wylie
Assistant Chief Engineer-Signals and Communications (Retired)
Milwaukee Road