



# THE WHISTLE

The official publication of:  
**THE BRITISH COLUMBIA SOCIETY OF MODEL ENGINEERS (BCSME)**  
Operators of BURNABY CENTRAL RAILWAY Vol 56; Issue 2 – March/April 2026



## Track Work on the East Junction



Photograph Courtesy of Brian Ruebottom

### **BCSME Member Meetings**

**General Meeting on April 1st & May 6st**  
In-person and on Zoom 7pm

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### **BCSME Address & Track Site**

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120 North Willingdon Avenue  
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V5C-6K1  
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### **Editor of The Whistle**

Brian Ruebottom  
E-mail: [whistleeditor@bcsme.org](mailto:whistleeditor@bcsme.org)

### **Submissions & Deadline**

The editor's role is to assemble and publish the newsletter, but it truly serves as a platform for members to share their BCSME stories with one another. Your contributions make The Whistle vibrant and meaningful.

If a BCSME member has any articles or photos that they'd like to submit for publication, please send them to the editor as an attachment in an e-mail.

Please add the words "The Whistle" in the e-mail's subject line. The more submissions made by members of the Society the better this newsletter will be.

The deadline for any submissions is one week prior to an issue being published. New issues are published every second month, starting at the beginning of January.

### **Means of Publication**

I use Apache's OpenOffice suite on a PC to create this newsletter. OpenOffice can open almost any Microsoft document file.

Photos are handled using GIMP. Any digital pictures being submitted for publication should be in as high a resolution .jpeg format as possible. 200 DPI is a good value.

## **The BCSME Directors**

President .....Peter Berry  
Vice-president.....More McCormack  
Secretary.....Tom Carr  
Treasurer.....Brian Carlson  
Business Director.....Gord Tilley  
Site Director.....Matthew Berry  
Operations Director.....Bruce Wilson  
Shop Director.....Chuck Laws  
Communications Director .....Marie Rogers

## **Officers**

Financial Review.....Bill McKenzie  
Privacy.....Bill McKenzie  
Security Access.....More McCormack and Dennis Bosa  
Garden Railway Project Manager.....Dennis Bosa  
Boiler Inspector.....Steve Harvey  
Archivist.....**Vacant Position**  
Librarian.....**Vacant Position**  
The Whistle Editor.....Brian Ruebottom  
Comm. Chair, Garden Railway.....Brian Ruebottom  
Comm. Chair, Raised Track.....Doug Bach  
Trainers/Examiners.....Doug Bach and Bruce Wilson  
Steam Instructor.....John Ostler  
Shop Frm.....Bruce Johnston (M) and Phil MacGregor (C)  
Social Media Manager.....John Roberts  
New Steam Loc. Project Mgr.....Chuck Laws  
Comm. Chair, 100<sup>th</sup> Ann...Tom Carr and Kent Cavaghan

## **CALENDAR OF EVENTS**

*Also check: [www.bcsme.org](http://www.bcsme.org)*

**Opening Weekend: Easter Long Weekend**

**Good Friday – April 3**

**Members Easter Dinner, Saturday – April 4**

**Easter Sunday – April 5**

**Easter Monday – April 6**

**Sea to Sky Model Train Show and Hobby  
Railway Museum of British Columbia, Squamish B.C.  
Saturday March 21, 10:00 am – 5:00 pm  
Sunday March 22, 10:00 am – 4:00 pm**

### **Contact for BCSME Concession and Bookings**

**Gord Tilley:** [concession@bcsme.org](mailto:concession@bcsme.org) / **Bruce Wilson:** [bookings@bcsme.org](mailto:bookings@bcsme.org)

## President's Message

We are excited to announce that Rainbow Station Park will open for the 2026 season on Good Friday, April 3rd. We are anticipating another busy year and are keeping our fingers crossed for great weather! A huge thank you goes out to our volunteers and staff in advance: you are the ones who make this such a successful and happy place for our guests.

Since closing last October, we have been busy with a major project: replacing the entire East Junction trackage. This massive undertaking involved extensive excavation, the import of several tons of gravel, and the custom fabrication of new switches and diamonds by a local steel fabricator.

Most importantly, this work has been fuelled by an incredible amount of volunteer time. A dedicated team of 9 to 11 members has been working tirelessly on this project, and as of Sunday, March 8th, they have logged a total of 1,162 hours. We can finally see the "light at the end of the tunnel," and the team is working hard to ensure everything is ready for Opening Day.

Let's have a great 2026 season!

**Happy Steaming, Peter Berry, President, BCSME**

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## Editor's Message

Unfortunately, I was not able to attend the AGM on Saturday the 28<sup>th</sup> of February. Peter Berry was voted President of the BCSME and his son, Matthew Berry, took over the role as Site Manager.

The Members Easter Dinner is on Saturday April 4th, 5pm. Tickets are \$25 and please purchase them from theconcession stand.

Forgotten railway terminology: Clack valve – A one-way feed water valve; the term faded as injectors standardized.

YouTube channel History of BC posted a video recently on the E&N Railway.  
[History of the E&N Railway](#)

Below links are of a video of a recent Portland and Western train derailment on a wooden trestle in Toledo, Oregon.

[Derailed on a Trestle!](#)

[Back on the Rail \[Toledo Derailment Update\]](#)

Brian Ruebottom  
Editor, The Whistle  
Committee Chair, Garden Railway

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## **JOB JAR**

**Item 1:** Bruce has many small jobs in Operations. Please contact him at [bookings@bcsme.org](mailto:bookings@bcsme.org)

**ITEM 2:** The Track Gang - if you can help, please contact More McCormack at [vicepresident@bcsme.org](mailto:vicepresident@bcsme.org)

**ITEM 3:** The Garden Team is in full swing to get our beautiful park looking its best. Please contact Catherine or come by to help, Saturdays until opening day and Tuesdays through the season. No experience necessary!

February, 2026

Friends of Vancouver Train Expo:

The Organizing Committee for Vancouver Train Expo recently held a meeting to re-start the Vancouver Train Expo for 2026 show. We urgently need your help.

Vancouver Train Expo (VTEX), has grown considerably since the 2015 move from the smaller venue at Cameron Centre. The 44,000 square foot space at the PNE Forum has been full, with waiting lists since the 2017 event, attendance reached 6,400 for the 2019 show, and following the pandemic closures 2020-2022, again reached 6,400, for the 2024 show.

As you know, we were unable to run the 2025 show, as some committee positions are currently unfilled, most crucially, Team Leader.

We, the remaining core of the Organizing Committee are committed to continuing Vancouver Train Expo, - BUT - we need a few more members to join our team, to bring their talents and energy, and to share in the challenges, rewards and camaraderie of putting on this event.

In order to continue, we require the following positions to be filled:

- Team Leader/Manager: Ideally with experience and skills in: project management, leadership, finance, risk (liability & insurance), legal and promotion, but, most importantly motivating a volunteer group. This role could be filled by one or more people.
- Promotion Coordinator: Promotion across various media, Radio, Print, Social Media.
- Volunteer Coordinator
- Creative Manager
- Communications / Social Media Coordinator
- Children's Activity Coordinator
- Assistant Operations Manager - Floor planning and managing event contractors
- Assistant Registrar

Model Railroad knowledge, while an asset, is not required for these positions.

We need your help to fill these crucial positions, perhaps a friend, relative, or business associate may be interested in helping, and if not already, possibly becoming a Model Railroader as well.

We are currently searching for a new venue, there have been requests for a location further east, that will be more central to attendees, vendors and exhibitors. Specific suggestions welcome.

With a new venue, a new date may also be needed, and if much earlier than our historic early November, will increase the urgency of filling the committee positions.

If we are to have a Vancouver Train Expo 2026, we have only about two months to fill the crucial positions and get the committee up and running. Funding is in place. Operations Manager, Brian Dobbin, Registrar, Howard Sommerfield and Business Manager, Don Thicke, are continuing in their current roles. Let us all work to find candidates and fill the crucial positions in order to move forward, and remove the notice on the Vancouver Train Expo 2026 website from "The event will not be held this year", to "Vancouver Train Expo 2026 will be held at . . . . "

Please do not hesitate to forward this email.

For more on the Vancouver Train Expo: <https://www.vancouvertrainexpo.ca/index.html>

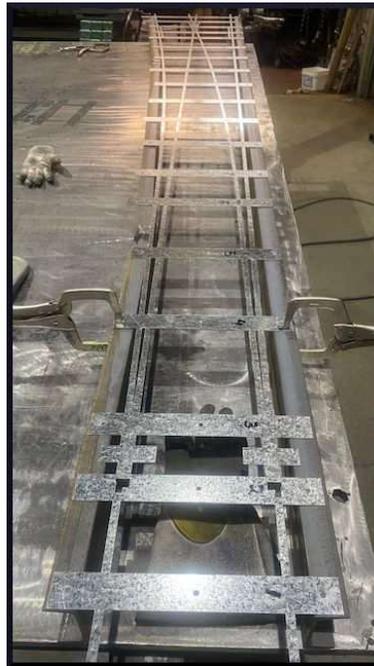
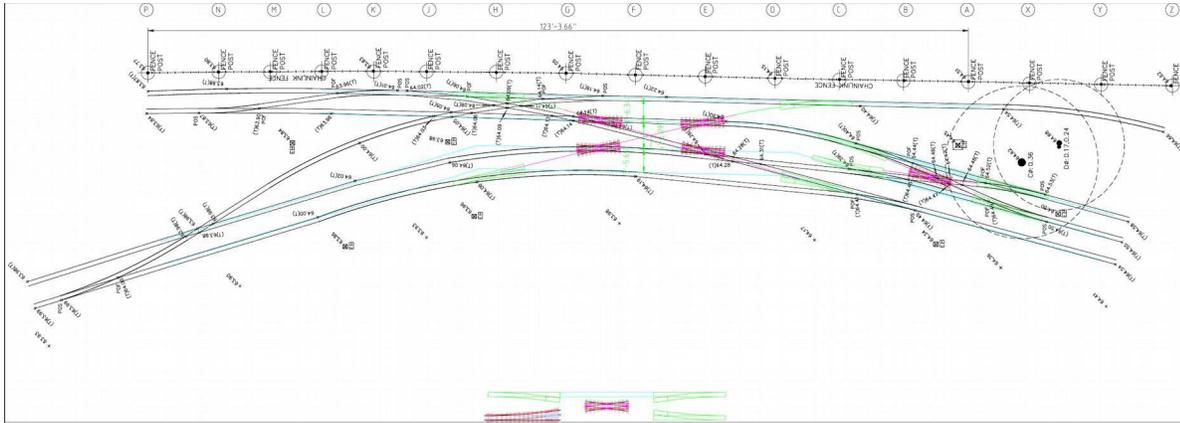
Thank you for your interest. We look forward to seeing you at the next Vancouver Train Expo.

For the Vancouver Train Expo committee,

Howard Sommerfield

Registrar,  
[registrar@vancouvertrainexpo.ca](mailto:registrar@vancouvertrainexpo.ca)

# East Junction



Bottom right photograph courtesy of Brian Ruebottom, all other photographs courtesy of More McCormack

Hargrove Bridge is still at Dennick Engineering; however, a new foundation was created for the bridge.



Top three photographs are courtesy of Peter Berry, and the bottom picture is courtesy of Brian Ruebottom



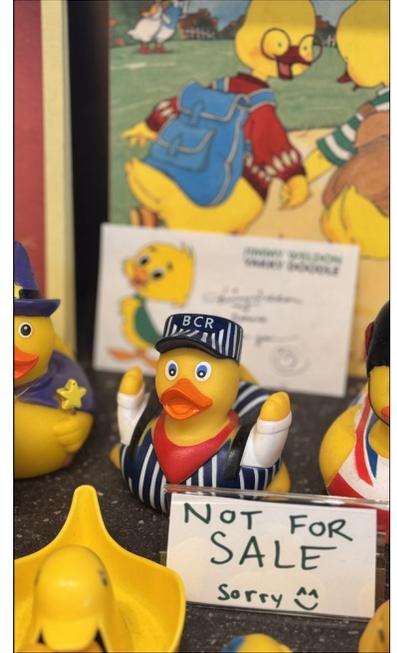
# The Rubber Duck Museum

Author Brian Ruebottom

More McCormack donated a BCR rubber duck to the Rubber Duck Museum during their time in Point Roberts, Washington. Since then, the museum has relocated to the Tsawwassen Mills mall in British Columbia. I brought along a copy of *The Whistle* to add to the collection, intending for it to be displayed alongside our rubber duck. The owner mentioned they are acquiring two more glass cases and will aim to display both items together.

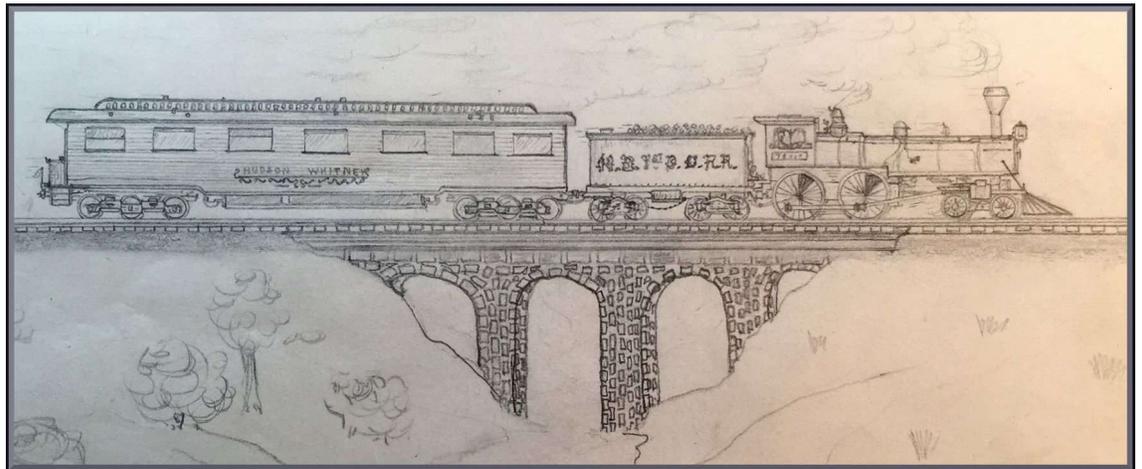


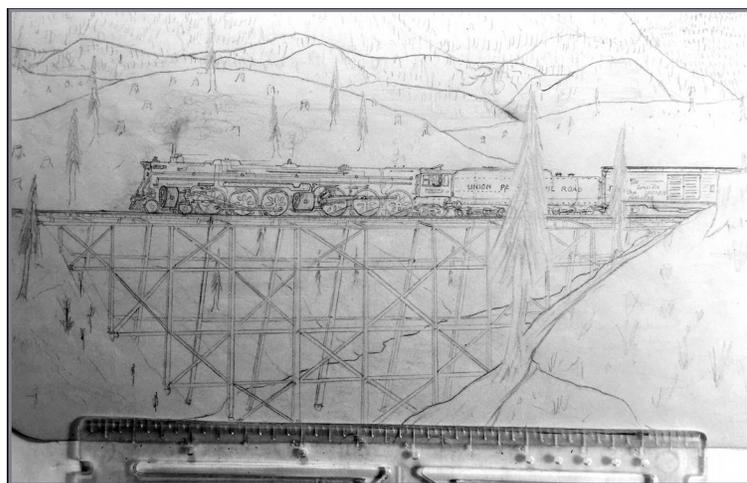
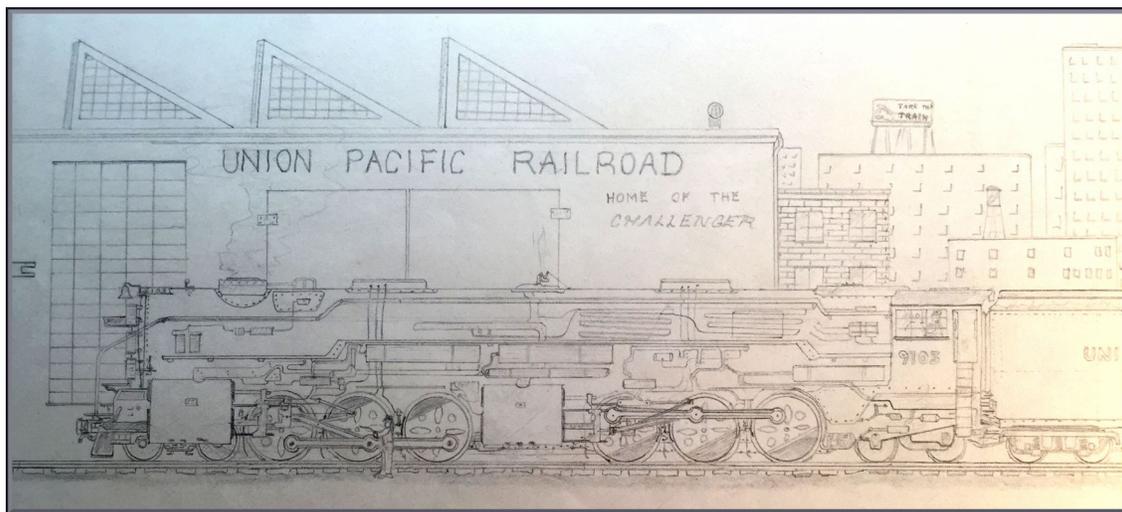
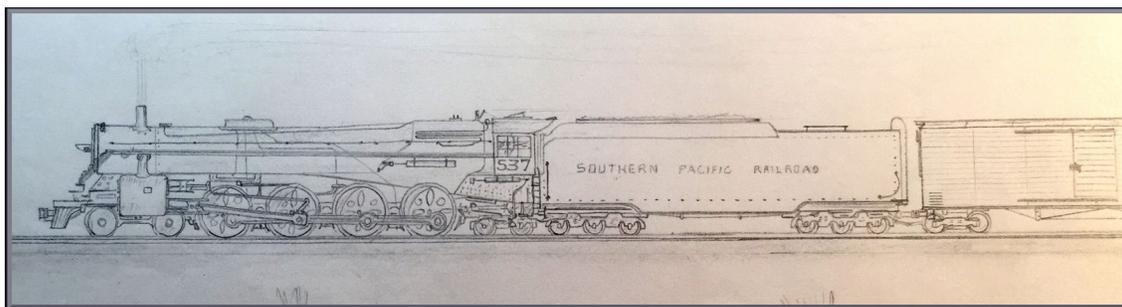
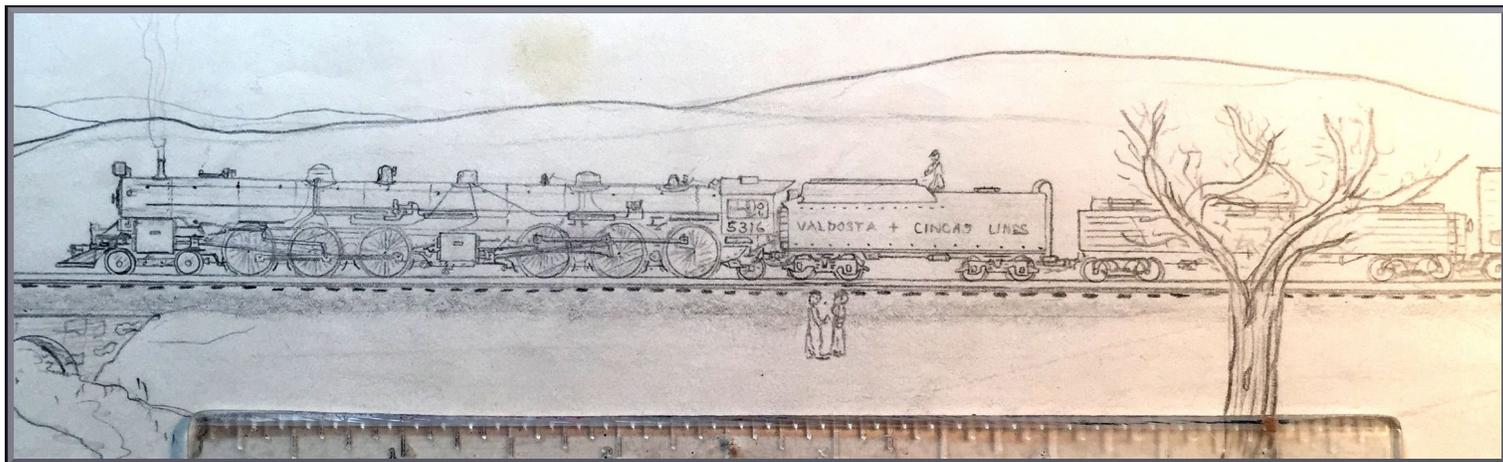
Pictures courtesy of Brian Ruebottom



## Hand Drawn Prints by Paul Ohannesian

These hand-drawn locomotive profiles, drawn with a No. 2 graphite pencil and a plastic "Protractor" instrument, are from Paul Ohannesian when he was a teenager. A book given to him from his uncle in the 1950s inspired him to draw these locomotives. I picked out a few of the images that Paul sent me for this issue, but Paul has other images.





# The Evolution of Locomotive Power: The Limitations of the Whyte Notation

**Author: Brian Ruebottom**

Frederick Methvan Whyte introduced a system in 1900 to classify steam locomotives by their wheel arrangement. At the time there were about a dozen different types of locomotives<sup>1</sup>. The Whyte notation describes both powered and non-powered wheels, beginning with the leading wheels (also known as pilot wheels), followed by the driving wheels, and ending with the trailing wheels. This sequence provides a concise snapshot of a locomotive's wheel configuration, offering insight into its structural design but not its performance capabilities. While elegant in its simplicity, the Whyte notation is limited in scope. It is primarily used in North America and the United Kingdom. Outside of these regions, classification methods typically focus on axle count and they are more suited to Diesel-electric or electric locomotives<sup>2</sup>.

The Whyte notation records the number of wheels in three distinct groups: the leading wheels, each set of driving wheels connected to a set of cylinders, and the trailing wheels. These numbers are listed in sequence and separated by hyphens, such as 4-6-2 or 2-8-8-2. Articulated locomotives list each set of driving wheels that corresponds to a set of cylinders, and the implication is that this is articulated. For Garratt locomotives (1909), which have two engine units supporting a central boiler, the notation uses a plus sign to separate the two engines: 4-8-2+2-8-4. Occasionally, nonstandard suffixes or symbols appear, such as letters to indicate tank locomotives or parentheses for tender wheels, but these are not part of the formal Whyte system. The notation is not used for modern locomotives or geared steam locomotives, nor does it describe a locomotive's performance or mechanical complexity<sup>3</sup>. Modern locomotives are classified using systems like the International Union of Railways (UIC) or the Association of American Railroads (AAR), while geared steam locomotives are typically identified by model and truck count.

The Whyte notation efficiently communicates wheel arrangement; however, there are three key limitations: historical ambiguity, lack of operational context, and omission of design evolution. First: it offers no insight into the era, technology, or capability of a locomotive. The 4-4-0 American type is a prime example of historical ambiguity. The 4-4-0 American type was produced and improved upon for more than 80 years. Early models from the 1840s were lightweight and suited to modest loads, while later versions from the 1920s were larger and equipped with advanced features. Yet all are labelled identically by the Whyte notation. In contrast, the Union Pacific 4-8-8-4 Big Boy from the early 1940s was built as a single, standardized design with no significant variation. All we need to know is the characteristics of one Big Boy, and we know every Big Boy locomotive in the class. It simply treats both cases as static entries, masking the dynamic progression of one, and the singularity of the other.

Second: the notation ignores operational context. The 4-4-0 'The General' (1855) and the 4-4-0 William Mason (1856) illustrates this clearly: one was built for passenger service and the other for freight service. This also includes different types: 4-6-2 Pacific and 4-6-4 Hudson were mainly passenger service, while the 2-8-4 Berkshire and 2-10-2 Santa Fe type were mainly freight service. Third: it overlooks the evolution of locomotive design. Improvements in boiler strength allowed for higher PSI. Later additions like feedwater heaters and superheaters enhanced efficiency. Even distinctions between compound locomotives which reuse steam in multiple stages, and simple expansion locomotives which exhaust steam after a single use, are absent.

The Whyte notation, while elegant in its simplicity, is not enough. It serves only as a starting point. To truly understand a locomotive, we must look beyond its wheel arrangement to see its design, function, and historical context.

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<sup>1</sup> Confusion of Type, *American Engineer and Railroad Journal* 74 (December 1900): 374

<sup>2</sup> Whyte Notation | *Trains and Railroads*

<sup>3</sup> Whyte Notation, *The Simple Way We Classify Steam Locomotives* | *Steam Giants*