Yesterday and today at Rochelle

The lines at Rochelle belong to the two Western rail giants: Union Pacific and BNSF Railway. UP's route was the main line of the Chicago & North Western until UP merged C&NW in 1995. Built by a C&NW affiliate, the rails reached Rochelle—then named Hickory Grove—on Jan. 14, 1854. This later became known as part of "the Overland Route," between Chicago and San Francisco. Today, the tracks are part of the Geneva Subdivision of UP's Illinois Division. Rochelle is at UP Milepost 75, measured from downtown Chicago.

BNSF was created by the merger of Burlington Northern and Santa Fe in 1995. The line was part of the BN from 1970 to 1995, and before 1970 it was the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy, popularly known as "the Burlington" or "the Q." Built in 1857, this portion of the Chicago-Twin Cities line is often called "the C&I," for the Chicago & Iowa, an 1869 predecessor company. Today it is the Aurora Subdivision of BNSF's Minnesota Division. Rochelle is at BNSF Milepost 83, also measured from downtown Chicago.

Both lines are under Centralized Traffic Control, or "CTC," controlled by UP dispatchers in Omaha, Neb., and BNSF dispatchers in Fort Worth, Texas. Until 1965, the crossing was controlled by an operator in an interlocking tower. Today the crossing is an "automatic" interlocking, meaning it is "first-come, first-served" for the right-of-way for any approaching train, regardless of railroad or direction.

As many as 120 freight trains every 24 hours bang across the Rochelle diamonds. UP's traffic here is largely coal and intermodal, which is both double-stacked containers and truck trailers riding "piggyback" on flatcars. BNSF's traffic is mostly intermodal. Both roads also haul "vehicle" trains of trilevel auto-rack cars. Rochelle has not been served by regular passenger trains since the inception of Amtrak in 1971.

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See the railroad action at the TRAINS Rochelle Webcam: www.TrainsMag.com

The Rochelle Railroad Park

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For more information on Rochelle and the surrounding area, call the Rochelle Visitor's Center at 815-562-7031

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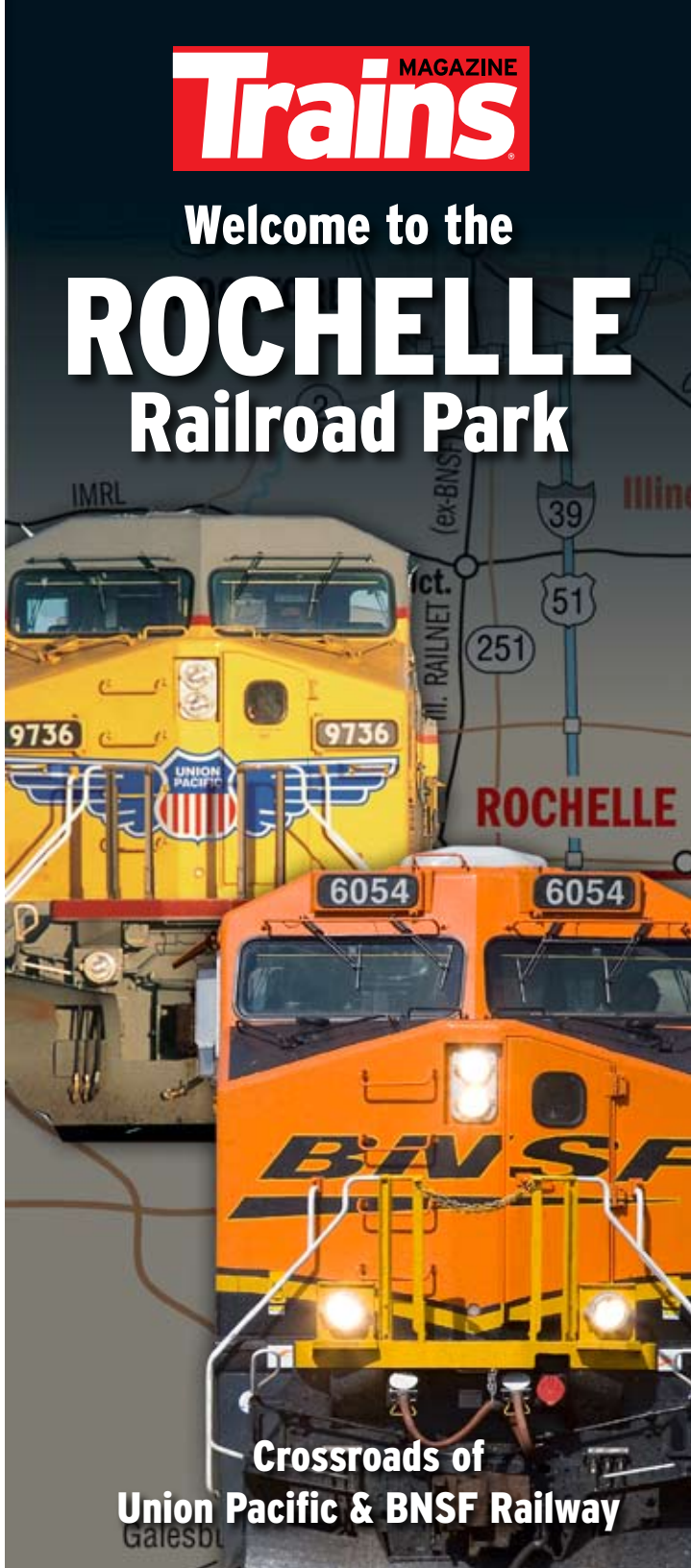
Welcome to the ROCHELLE Railroad Park



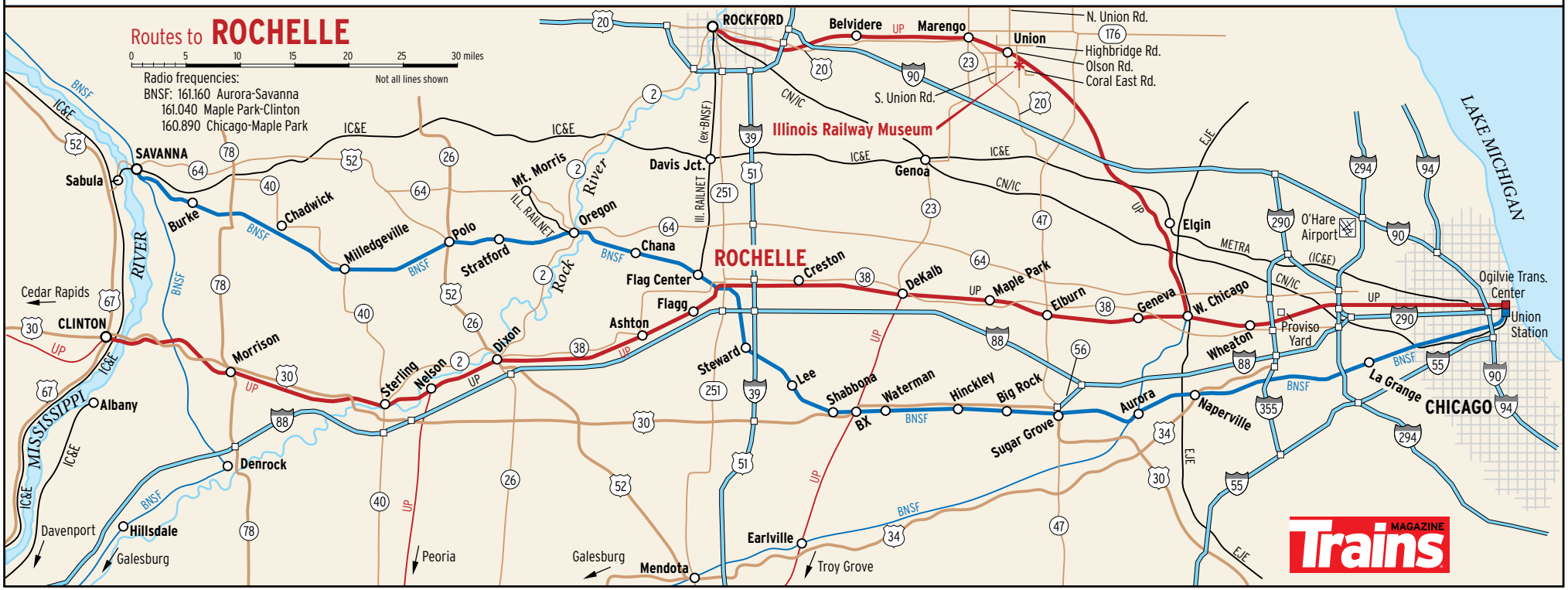
Crossroads of Union Pacific & BNSF Railway

>> Crossroads of Union Pacific and BNSF Railway

TRAINS magazine welcomes you to Rochelle, home of the Railroad Park

Rochelle is one of several spots an hour or so from Chicago where main rail lines cross as they head from the Windy City to all points of the compass. Other examples include Galesburg and Joliet, Ill.; South Bend and Wellsboro, Ind.; and Duplainville, Wis., near Milwaukee. Rochelle is one of the few points in the country, however, where such a junction boasts two double tracks crossing each other at grade, forming four "diamonds" (so called for the shape of the rails at the crossing).

See the railroad action at the TRAINS Rochelle Webcam: www.TrainsMag.com

The Rochelle Railroad Park

J. David Ingles