



Montana Railroad Logo - 1897

Montana Railroad Logo Story

by Dale Jones

The Montana Railroad was indeed a Montana original. The logo above was one of the first corporate logos used in Montana railroading. The “cowshead” logo appeared first in the Lewistown, Montana Fergus County Argus on December 15, 1897. Only the Northern Pacific’s “Monad” logo that originated from the Korean flag at the 1893 Chicago World’s Fair pre-dates the Montana Railroad logo.

The Montana RAILROAD is not to be confused with the Montana RAILWAY which was a non-operating subsidy of the Montana Union Railway that ran mostly from Stuart to Anaconda, which in turn was Union Pacific controlled. On June 30, 1897 the Montana RAILWAY was sold to the Northern Pacific Railway.

Let’s go back the Montana RAILROAD. Richard A. Harlow organized the Montana Railroad on May 26, 1895* to run originally from Lombard [named for the railroad’s chief engineer, A.G. Lombard] on the Missouri River where it connected with the Northern Pacific running approximately 56 miles to Leadboro [Leadborough] in the Castle Mountains which was in the throes of a silver boom. The Depression of 1893 caused the demise of profitable mining in the Castle area and Richard Harlow came up “a day late and a dollar short” when he entered into transportation of ores from the Castles. The Montana Railroad in its early years rarely if ever made a profit so when Mr. Harlow decided in 1899 to extend his rails into the Musselshell Valley and eventually to Lewistown, he had to use much persuasion or “jawboning” to achieve financing. Hence, the moniker “The Jawbone” came to be associated with the Montana Railroad. Tracks reached Merino in June of 1900. A new town was formed here and rail yards constructed which were renamed Harlow after the Montana Railroad’s builder but the United States Post Office required the name be changed as it appeared to close to “Harlem” a town and railway station on the Great Northern Railway in northern Montana. So, to comply, the name was amended to Harlowton, which is what it is today. In its final configuration, the Montana Railroad operated over 157 miles of tracks which was incorporated into the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway system in 1908.

* There seems to be a discrepancy as to the actual incorporation dates of the Montana Railroad. Donald B. Robertson in his very informative volume of railroad information "Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History - Volume II - Mountain States" under the "Montana Railroad" lists the incorporation date as September 4, 1894. Montana resident Don Baker in his 1990 book entitled "The Montana Railroad" on page 23 states the incorporation date for the Montana Railroad as May 26, 1895. It is my opinion that Mr. Baker is probably correct as no contracts or building were initiated before the summer of 1895. Richard Harlow did in fact charter other railways previous to the Montana Railroad including the ill-fated Montana Midland. So, I suppose technically, Mr. Harlow DID start working on the Montana Railroad even though not officially under that title.

SOURCES:

Baker, Don

The Montana Railroad - Alias: the Jawbone

Copyright 1990 by Don Baker - Billings, Montana

Robertson, Donald B.

Encyclopedia of Western Railroad History - Volume II - The Mountain States

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