



## History of the South Omaha Industrial Spur

### Rock Island Heritage

The SPSF South Omaha Industrial Spur was originally part of the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railroad (Rock Island) mainline between Chicago and Denver, built in 1890. The Rock Island ceased operations in March 1980 after a five-year bankruptcy.

The Missouri Pacific (MP) leased the former Rock Island line from South Omaha to Meadow from the trustee and provided service to the remaining customers. This became a shortcut for the MP between its mainline and existing track at Louisville, serving Ash Grove Cement and Western Sand & Gravel. In 1982, the MP abandoned its own line north of Louisville to Omaha.

In late 1982, the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad (MKT) worked out trackage rights from Kansas City to Omaha and Council Bluffs as part of the Union Pacific (UP) merger. The MKT started using trackage rights into Council Bluffs on January 6, 1983. The agreement included exclusive rights to serve customers on the Meadow spur, as the UP was not interested in providing service on this branch. This increased traffic to and from Omaha for the MKT. Major customers existed in South Omaha, an industrial park in Bellevue, and the Western Sand & Gravel sand pit in Meadow.

### SPSF Merger and a New Era

In 1986, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway merged with the Southern Pacific Railroad to form the SPSF Railway and two years later, the UP merged with the MKT. The ICC directed the UP to choose a new trackage rights partner for service to Omaha and they reached a haulage rights agreement with the SPSF. In August 1988, the SPSF began a five-year lease of the Meadow spur from the Rock Island trustee and set up operations on the branch based in South Omaha, with a connection to their haulage rights trains between Omaha and Kansas City, similar to what the MKT had done. The SPSF worked to develop more business and Lozier built a new store fixture plant in Papillion, opening in 1991.

In 1993, the SPSF purchased the track between South Omaha and Papillion from the Rock Island trustee and abandoned the line between Meadow and Papillion after the Western Sand & Gravel sand pit had largely played out. The line was renamed the South Omaha Industrial Spur. New physical plant investments in the branch included track upgrades and building a new yard and office in South Omaha. In 1996, a bulk transfer facility, BulkWest, began operations next to the old Papillion depot, where a utility customer was located. This facility transports liquid and dry material to local customers that are not directly on the rail line.

SPSF continued track improvements in the mid-1990s to upgrade track to Class 2 on most of the spur. This included new concrete tie track between South Omaha and Bellevue and reinforcing the bridges.

### Major Customers

Customers in South Omaha include Scoular (previously Foxley and Far-Mar-Co before that, a large grain elevator), Omaha Paper Stock, Ready Mixed Concrete, Sutherlands, and Millard Refrigerated.

While the businesses at the Bellevue Industrial Park are in a constant state of flux, and some have already abandoned their spurs, current customers here include the Payless lumberyard, Alter Metal Recycling, and the Standard Distribution warehouse.

Papillion traffic includes Lozier receiving shipments of lumber and steel coils and shipping out store fixtures in boxcars and the BulkWest facility ships a wide variety of dry and liquid bulk products.

### 1990s Operations

The SPSF provides service to the South Omaha Industrial Spur with a local train that serves all customers in South Omaha, Bellevue, and Papillion. The SPSF schedules a daily manifest between Kansas City and Council Bluffs, operated by UP crews, that exchanges cars for the spur at South Omaha, including interchange cars among the other railroads in the Omaha area. This train usually runs with a UP

