



# The Twilight of Steam: Great Photography from the Last Days of Steam Locomotives in America

*Brian Solomon*

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Plate 3: Central Vermont No. 467 and a pair of Canadian National Fairbanks-Morse C-Liners lead a northward freight train through a snowy landscape. [View larger](#)

### THE TWILIGHT OF STEAM

FOR AMERICAN RAILROADS, the early 1950s was a time of rapid transition as colorful new diesels quickly displaced steam locomotives. The economics of diesel power were so compelling that once production models had been perfected, the writing was on the wall. Yet many observers often didn't see the writing until it was almost too late. Others were more astute and stayed ahead of the tide of dieselization, making photographs of the last of steam for posterity.

- During its transition from steam to diesel, Central Vermont often mixed motive power on its freights. In this view, a northward freight crosses the Millers Falls high bridge with one of CV's revered 2-8-0s in the lead. Behind it is a pair of Fairbanks-Morse C-Liner diesels borrowed from CV's parent, Canadian National. In the final years of steam operation, when steam and diesels were mixed, the diesels tended to lead. These diesels didn't serve for long on the CV, however. By the late 1950s, the railroad had dieselized with its own fleet of EMD GP9s and Alco switchers.
- Jim Shaughnessy



PLATE 64 Norfolk & Western No. 608 leans into a curve with a passenger train, 1956. John E. Pickett

PLATE 64 Norfolk & Western's streamlined J-class 4-8-4 is an American classic. A product of the railroad's Roanoke Shops, it was known for its great looks and exceptional performance. Norfolk & Western's mainline was equipped with Centralized Traffic Control that allowed dispatchers to run trains on either track in both directions on signal indication. John E. Pickett

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