

Piggyback Trucks' Deal Paying Off for NH Firms

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The high price of diesel fuel and the 55 mph national speed limit coupled with stringent new federal driving rules are crippling and slowly killing the long haul trucking industry nationally, truckers complain.

But this is currently working to the advantage of New Hampshire industry and commerce, according to experts in the freight field. "An ace up their sleeve," because of a long-standing tie-in with the railroads, they suddenly have a new "competitive edge" in lower shipping costs.

Twenty years later, a pioneering rail "piggyback trucks" concept of the N.H. Shippers Cooperative, when it was being founded, is now paying off for the mushrooming membership of the cooperative, the struggling Boston and Maine Railroad, and even college students trying to help pay for their educations.

Vincent Murphy, general manager and a founder of the N.H. Shippers Cooperative, told the Sunday News the "little guys" members shipping "LTL" — that is less than truck loads — are currently realizing savings of \$2 to \$35 per hundred pounds on long distance shipments.

Even more dramatic savings of \$500 to \$900 per full trailer-loads are being enjoyed by New Hampshire firms shipping to the West Coast, he stressed.

Using the coop and piggyback, a member can save \$123 ramp to ramp between Manchester and Chicago, he added, pointing out the coop gets a special two trailer rate from the railroads.

And Manchester is competitive with Boston. One can ship piggyback from here to Chicago or the West Coast for the same price and less hassle than from Boston, according to Murphy.

Built in 1962, the Manchester ramp to load and off load flat-bed rail cars with tractors, was pretty much of a "white elephant" for most of its 17 years, he conceded. Now business is booming in piggyback hauling and the B & M considers Manchester one of its top ramps, he quickly pointed out.

A simultaneous success story has been the dramatic growth of the N.H. Shippers Cooperative, which started out with six members. Today, it has 260 members not only throughout all New Hampshire but Maine, Vermont, and Massachusetts as well — with members all the way down to Route 128 and below, Murphy declared enthusiastically.

Now a gigantic regional shippers cooperative operating out of Manchester, it proudly retains its original "New Hampshire" name. Rapidly expanding, it has taken over virtually all of the B & M freighthouse.

However, the N.H. Shippers Cooperative in its fast expansion has added few full time employees because "we really don't need many permanent people," Murphy explained. "We employ part time college help for a few hours as needed to consolidate loads."

Manchester has an abundance of college students ready, willing and able to work a few hours to do what has to be done to pick up some money to help defray the cost of their educations, he continued. This is a boon to college students seeking lucrative parttime employment but at the same time helps the coop to keep its overhead relatively low.

Long distance over the highway trucking in a few years will be but a memory. Murphy said he feels The New Hampshire Shippers Cooperative, which prepared two decades ago, has got the jump in piggyback shipping, which he predicts will become a way of life



MANIFEST preparation for trailer to be sent on rail flatbed car "piggyback" is being completed by Vincent Murphy, general manager of the N.H. Shippers Cooperative. He is assisted by his secretary, Mrs. Dorothy Fillean. Twenty years ago when he was founding the coop, he incorporated the capability of shipping "piggyback." It is now paying dividends for the membership which has grown from six to 260 throughout not only New Hampshire but Maine, Vermont and Northern Massachusetts. (Staff Photos by Maurice McQuillen)

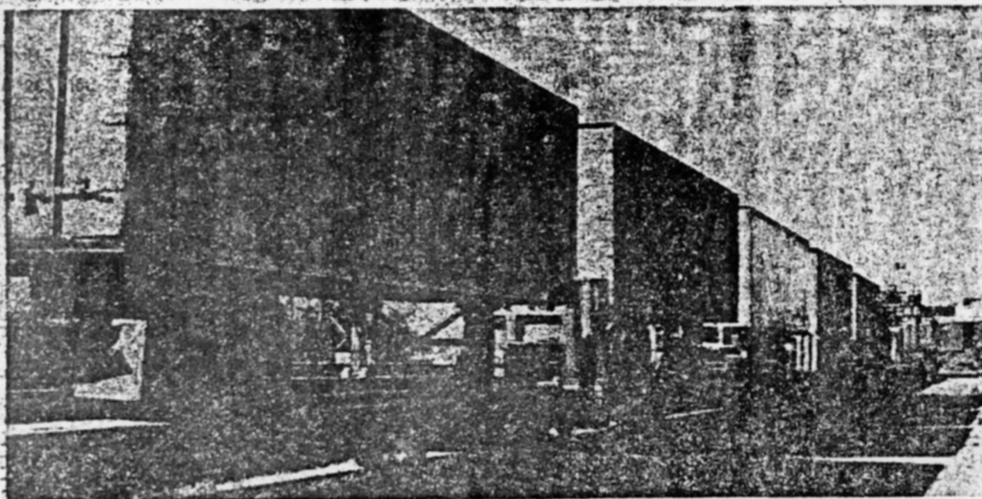
in this country.

To support his argument that railroads will stage a comeback and long haul freight will be moved piggyback, Murphy pointed out a tractor-trailer rig moving over the highway gets four and a fraction miles per gallon of diesel fuel. A diesel locomotive gets the identical mileage pulling 50 flatbed rail cars with 100 loaded trailers aboard.

"These economic facts of life will force a full scale shift to piggyback for the long haul," Murphy asserted. He said there is another economic advantage to this system of shipping in that since the railroad furnishes trailers, owners do not have to tie up their trailers for long periods of time — sometimes non-productive empty on the highway.

The argument "over the highway is faster than piggyback on a rail car" is weakening constantly, he insisted. Using the B & M's rehabilitated connection to Conrail at Springfield, Mass. or Rotterdam Junction, N.Y., New Hampshire shippers via piggyback loaded at Manchester will have their freight on the ground by 6:30 or 7 a.m. in Chicago in three days and on the West Coast on the sixth day.

"By pushing day and night, the long haul people used to be able to give faster service. But they have been slowed down by the 55 mph speed limit and ICC rules on how long a man can stay behind the wheel. Rail service is constantly improving as more and more through trains are added," Murphy concluded.



MANCHESTER'S piggyback ramp was for 17 years a "white elephant," but its time has come because of the high cost of diesel fuel, the 55 mph speed limit, and ICC

driving rules hamstringing long haul trucking. It was a busy place Friday afternoon with these trailers being loaded aboard flatbed rail cars,

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