

**Ed Henry and Merrill Price Remember**  
**The Tama Tower**



For many years, the Tama Tower stood near Mile Post 133 just west of Tama Iowa protecting our crossing with the Milwaukee Road. All that changed one Sunday when the tower was completely destroyed just before noon at about 11:45 am. The date was February 5, 1978 and a 77 car eastbound Milwaukee Road freight train was approaching. 7 cars derailed and careened into the it, leveling the tower and tearing up the side track and connection with the northern Iowa route to Toledo and Garwin. It appeared that the front trucks of a car containing potash left the tracks, causing that car and the following 6 cars to derail. The potash car was 6 cars behind the engine. **Art Steffler**, the operator, was on the ground inspecting the passing train when suddenly he heard an unusual noise and ran, escaping the falling debris. **Art** moved faster than probably he ever had in the past to get clear of the diamond and the Milwaukee Road tracks. Good thing he did, as confirmed by the photos below. The Milwaukee Road engineer was **Bob Rogers**.

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Here's the Tama Tower on 09/27/76 with a train led by C&NW units passing on the Milwaukee Road tracks. This photo is from **Mark Llanuza**.



This is the tower at about 12:00 noon on 02/05/1978



Here's **Art Steffler** shortly after the accident. **Art** will tell you there is a darn good reason for the rule requiring the operator to be on the ground to inspect passing trains.

The North Western tracks were repaired and back in service by Sunday evening. The Milwaukee took a little longer but they were open for business by Monday morning. Photos are from the collection of **Merrill Price** unless noted.