



# Arkansas Railroader

DELTA VALLEY & SOUTHERN



COTTON PLANT-FARGO RAILWAY

WARREN & SALINE RIVER

LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



## Amtrak

## DE QUEEN AND EASTERN

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### AMERICAN FREEDOM TRAIN WELCOME TO ARKANSAS

### PROGRAMS

PRESIDENT.....WALTER WALKER  
 VICE-PRESIDENT.....CHARLES OST  
 SECRETARY.....ROSS HOLT  
 TREASURER.....C. R. BYRD  
 MRHS DIRECTOR.....GENE HULL  
 NEWS EDITOR.....HILL MERCK

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#### AMERICAN FREEDOM TRAIN

We welcome the American Freedom Train to our area which will be on display in North Little Rock April 13th thru 15th. The Train will utilize a three block section of spur track at the north edge of Vestal Park. The spur extends to a former rock quarry at the west end of River Road and, as you know, is the site where our clubhouse is located. Tickets to view the Train are now on sale at McDonalds and at the Robinson Auditorium; price \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children 3 to 12 years of age and citizens 65 years or older. School tours will be conducted from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM each day. Tours of the Train will be conducted from 8:00 AM to 10:00 PM. The following is a tentative schedule of the Train from St. Louis to North Little Rock:

Lv. St. Louis Via MOP 2:30 AM 4-12  
 Lv. Piedmont, Mo. " 7:30 AM 4-12  
 Lv. Poplar Bluff " 8:45 AM 4-12  
 Ar. Newport, Ark. " 12 Noon 4-12  
 Ar. No. Little Rock " 2:30 PM 4-12  
 Release to MP 12:01 AM April 16th,  
 Ar. Memphis, Tenn. for interchange to  
 ICG 9:00 AM 4-16.

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We wish to thank Mr Howard Watson of the American Freedom Train and Miss Diana Kirk of the Arkansas Historical Preservation Committee for the fine program they presented at our March meeting. The April program will be presented by Gene Hull who will give a slide presentation (in color) on post cards; history of the post card, etc. This should prove most interesting. Meeting will be at our usual place; the MOP Office Building, 1000 West 4th St. North Little Rock at 2:00 PM on April 11th. Our meeting for May has been changed. More on this later.

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#### THE "JOHNNY CASH SPECIAL"

Saturday, March 20th, was a big day for the folks at Kingsland and Rison, Ark. This was the day that the SP-SSW operated one of the most beautiful passenger trains to be seen in the state in several years.

"JOHNNY CASH SPECIAL" CONTINUED

The honored guest, Johnny Cash, boarded the train at his home town of Kingsland and he and his party, along with other guests, rode to Rison where the townspeople and visitors turned out by the thousands to greet him. The equipment on the train consisted of the following:

- SP Bicentennial Loco No. 3197
- SP Chair Car No. 293
- SP Diner No. 290
- SP Lounge No. 291
- AMTRAK coach No. 4855 (Ex ATSF 2843)
- AMTRAK coach No. 4871 (Ex ATSF 2859)
- AMTRAK coach No. 4886 (Ex ATSF 2814)
- SP BUSINESS CAR "SUNSET"

TOTAL - 7 CARS

Your editor was unable to make the trip to Rison but from all reports brought back from Rison it was a big day in every respect.

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THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH

Ringling Brothers, Barnum and Bailey Circus, "The Greatest Show On Earth", will give 10 performances in Pine Bluff, Ark. June 30th to July 4th, to highlight the official week long opening of the new \$7 Million Pine Bluff Convention Center. This will be the only Arkansas appearance of RBB&B this year. The circus will also lend a hand in the Bicentennial celebration to be held by that city. Not having route schedule do not know at this time where the show will be coming into Pine Bluff from nor its destination after leaving that city. Also, do not know what rail lines will be used. If additional information is received will pass it along in future news letter.

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AMTRAK NEWS

AMTRAK is paying millions of dollars in "incentive" payments to several of the nation's railroads in exchange for on-time performance. Example; \$11.8 million was paid as incentives to 10 railroads between Jan. 1 and Aug. 31, 1975. The MOP which line operates the INTER-AMERICAN and the NATIONAL LIMITED for Amtrak, are receiving no payments at the present time from Amtrak. On time performance has improved greatly on all Amtrak trains, including the INTER-AMERICAN.

It is reported that if President Gerald Ford's budget cuts in government subsidies is allowed to stand, several Amtrak routes will be discontinued, among them the INTER-AMERICAN route thru Arkansas. Amtrak President, Paul H. Reistrup said that \$633.7 million is required to maintain current service.

(Editor's Note)--We need AMTRAK in Arkansas; in fact the state could use several other Amtrak routes. More service would produce more riders.

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THE SOUNDS OF STEAM

Two L.P. Stereo/Quad record albums have recently come to the editor's attention; both sold by Mobile Fidelity Records of Burbank, Calif. One is named "Last Train To Waterloo", it has the READER R.R. emblem on the cover. The other is "Steel Rails Under Thundering Skies". The recording artist captures the sounds of steam in actual thunderstorms. You can hear the thunder rumbling and the steam working. Particularly interesting in the latter album is Reader No. 1702 and No. 11 rear helper working at Dills Mill. That whistling is something out of this world. Its music to the ears of the steam fan. The stack talk is great too.

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C&G NOW INDEPENDENT AGAIN

One of the more interesting short-line railroads in our Nation is the Columbus & Greenville. This line is now operating as an independent again, throwing off their ties with the ICG. The line went back into operation with 17 locomotives; however only nine were operable. The running time is so long that the line is now operated in five segments: Greenville-Indianola-Greenwood-Winona-West Point-Columbus. The turnover from ICG to C&G took place on October 29, 1975 and a "whistle blowing party" took place in Columbus. About 30 railfans, employees and friends gathered at the roundhouse to drink champagne and listen to whistle blowing on Engines Nos. 605 and 505 respectively, in the light of fuses, flashbulbs and a TV crew. Good luck C&G. This information courtesy of RAILFAN MAGAZINE,

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Did you know that some years ago the Arkansas Gazette Building in Little Rock contained offices of some 10 or more railroads traffic departments, including the old M&NA. Another one, now gone was the Louisiana Railway & Navigation Company, which is that part of the KCS between Shreveport and New Orleans. At one time thought was given to naming the building "Railway Exchange Building". Only rail line now left in the building is the SOUTHERN RAILWAY who have office on the third floor. Time Marches On.

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If you are out for a drive in the family auto one of these beautiful spring days, drive out to the Little Rock Port and take a look at the Little Rock Port Authority Railroad's diesel loco. It is very beautiful and is numbered No. 1017. The color is I guess what may be termed dark yellow or burnt orange. It does a credible job of switching the industries at the port, the largest being the General Electric Distribution Warehouse. This warehouse contains some four tracks and is the largest carload receiver and shipper in the Port Industrial Park. Its always good to have another railroad in our area, gives our area a real metropolitan look.

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COMING EVENTS

Don't forget the following events for the club:

Museum Show

Picnic - Probable location, Scott

Christmas Party

Plan now to try and make all of them. We need another big turnout for our Museum Show. Date will be announced soon.

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Have news from our good member, Phil Fowledge, that the READER R.R. expects to have a good season as a tourist carrier and should everything go as expected, should get into operation in near future. We wish to congratulate the fellows who helped put this colorful tourist line back into operation; at least part of it is left. The old READER was a world wide tourist attraction and it a sad day when it ran its last train.

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Time to close up the news letter for this time; so settle back and read (in part) an interesting article by our own W. M. "Mike" Adams entitled "THE FAST MAIL". It is reproduced on the next page.

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The ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB IS A non-profit organization that meets the second Sunday of each month in the Missouri Pacific Office Building, 1000 West 4th St. in North Little Rock, Ark. For information write P.O. Box 5584, Little Rock, Ark. 72205.

THE FAST MAIL

By: W. M. "Mike" ADAMS

I suppose that most of the tales of old-time railroading sooner or later get around to fast runs and a large proportion of these ballast scorching stories are built around the legendary "fast mail". The old St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern was no exception. From its origin in Sprawling St. Louis this fascinating line headed down the west bank of the Mississippi for some 30 miles and then struck out across the eastern reaches of the Ozark Mountains at right angles to the streams draining into the Mississippi, running in and out of these river valleys and crossing four summits in the interim, to finally reach more level terrain and intersect the age-old southwest trail at Poplar Bluff, Missouri. From Poplar Bluff to Little Rock the line was relatively straight and level but the 145 miles from Little Rock to the Texas border also involved considerable curvature and gradient, albeit nothing to compare with the 2½% slopes on the Missouri Division. Now incorporated into the Missouri Pacific and enjoying a reputation as one of the best maintained rail lines in the country, it would be remiss to compare the Iron Mountain of the early part of the century with, say, the opulent Lake Shore and Michigan Southern. Nevertheless this historic route was the scene, along with the equally interesting Missouri, Kansas & Texas (Katy) Railroad, of a stirring race for a mail contract that created considerable excitement at the time and is worth re-telling.

We are indebted to the late William Alonzo Anderson for preserving these details of steam railroading in its most fascinating era--still young enough to be adventurous, old enough to enjoy what we might term modern refinements and withall operated with a more devil-may-care spirit than now enjoyed. Mr. Anderson was a long-time train dispatcher and at his retirement, Division Trainmaster of the White River Division of the Missouri Pacific at Aurora, Missouri, where my father was his general factotum. At the time of the great race for the mails, "Andy" was Night Chief Dispatcher of the Arkansas Division of the Iron Mountain at Little Rock and while he saw the humorous side of every situation he was still an experienced railroad official and knew how to seek out and get the truth. According to Andy it was the great desire of our neighbors in Texas, most of them he maintained were just learning to read, to receive their seed packets and mail-order catalogs more promptly that caused the Post Office Department to offer a lucrative mail contract to the railroad that could consistently offer the fastest and most reliable service between St. Louis and Ft. Worth. It was stipulated that 15 test trips would be run off and the winner would receive the honor of carrying the mails and the financial rewards, no small factor, that went with it.

The Iron Mountain strung a newschedule departing St. Louis at 2:30 AM as Train No. 7 and made superior to all other trains. First class trains were required to clear her time five minutes and all other trains and yard engines cleared her ten minutes. The Katy set up a similar schedule, both being required to connect with the New York mail off the Vandalia Line No. 11 arriving St. Louis at 1:00 AM and Chicago & Alton No. 79 due from the Windy City at 1:30 AM. The Iron Mountain had a slight advantage in distance, 738 miles against 767 for the Katy. Neither road made any special preparations or used anything but regular

THE FAST MAIL - CONTINUED

equipment and no time was spent improving track or bridges. The first run on the schedule left St. Louis at 2:30 AM, January 24, 1906. The train consisted of trim Pacific type locomotive No. 6521 with Engineer Christopher at the throttle and pulling one R.P. O. car, two storage mail cars and one baggage car loaded with express. All were of wooden construction being 60 foot vestibule cars.

Misfortune dogged the Iron Mountain's initial effort for at Tower Grove, three miles out of Union Station, a wash-out plug blew out of the boiler and engine died on the main track. There was a delay of one hour and ten minutes getting the 7503, a Brooks ten-wheeler, out to Tower Grove. Engineer Christopher was unable to make up any time over the heavy grades of the Missouri Division and the train was one hour and ten minutes late into Poplar Bluff. Here a sister engine of the 7503, the 7513, was coupled on and in charge of Engineer T. P. Homard and Fireman B.F. Fitzhugh, left for Little Rock, with Homard determined to make up at least 45 minutes of the lost time and leave only 25 minutes for the crew south of Little Rock. Doing around the first curve south of Harviell at 60 miles per hour the engine passed over a bad swing. Only by grasping the brake staff did Fireman Fitzhugh save himself from sliding out of the gangway. Fitzhugh was an extra board fireman and a good one but this was his first and only trip on No. 7. He consistently layed off to dodge this run and finally resigned and became one of the leading Baptist ministers of Little Rock. Through some un-imaginative dispatching by the third-trick man at Little Rock, Homard was saddled with wait orders that curbed his efforts and when finally all were fulfilled at Higginson he ran the last 46 miles into Little Rock including two miles of reduced speed through the freight terminal and over Baring Cross Bridge in just 42 minutes, arriving 40 minutes late. No. 7 was given only three minutes standing time in Little Rock but twenty-three were consumed in handling mail and express and the train left one hour late. Word from Nevada, Missouri revealed that the Katy had passed there dead on time. Steve Mullen at the throttle of the 7514 blasted up the hill out of Little Rock determined to go to Texas on time. Steve was a comical little Irishman - one who never cared how fast he was running just so long as he was going someplace. He stopped for water at Gardon and pulled into Texarkana at 2:10 PM, just 15 minutes late, having run the 145 miles in two hours and thirty-nine minutes, averaging nearly 60 miles per hour including the stop at Gardon. The connecting Texas & Pacific put the train into Fort Worth on time but then so did the Katy and the score was even.

On the second day, January 25, 1906, No. 7 was thirty minutes late out of the Mound City, delayed account holding for the Alton connection. Engineer Johnny Rabbit was called for the train and at the throttle of Engine 6510 lived up to his name making up twenty-five minutes between St. Louis and Gads Hill, the train crew insisting he touched only the intervening high spots. Gads Hill was probably the scene of more dishearting incidents on the old Iron Mountain than any other spot. Anything that could happen did happen here. About thirty minutes before No. 7 was due to arrive a northward freight halfway up the south side of the mountain had an air hose burst and the resulting application of brakes pulled out the drawbars on two cars. Ironically, one of them was an MK&T box car. It took more than an hour to chain up the cripples and limp into the siding. This threw No. 7 one hour and ten minutes late but Rabbit ran off ten minutes to reach Poplar Bluff just one hour late.

\*To be continued in the next news letter\*

NEWS FLASH - PLEASE READ CAREFULLY - All members who paid their dues by the time of the March meeting should have their membership cards. If you have not received yours please get in touch with Ross Holt.