



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Arkansas Railroader



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NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION EDITOR'S ADDRESS: 5007 HAWTHORNE RD. LITTLE ROCK, AR. 72207
MEETING- COFFEE, COKES AND COOKIES USUALLY AVAILABLE - HOME

APRIL SWAP MEETING

This year we will have two swap meeting instead of one. Our first one will be our April meeting and will be held on Sunday, the 9th, starting at 2 PM at the Missouri Pacific Office Building, 1000 West 4th Avenue, North Little Rock, Ark. So, bring any "Goodies" that you want to swap or sell. Most everyone at these meetings usually takes home something that they want and did not have before. Also, bring those friends and visitors.

Keigh White, Editor of "The Memphis Buff", official newsletter of the Memphis Chapter, NRHS, was a visitor at our March meeting. Keith was on his way back to Memphis after a short vacation and stopped by to visit us. He left us some flyers on the Memphis-Corinth, Mississippi excursion on Saturday, May 6th and Sunday, May 7th. This trip, as you know, will again have Engine No. 4501 on the smoky end and it is advisable if you plan to go to get your tickets now. Trip is sponsored by Sentimental Journey Committee and you can order tickets thru the mail at \$24.95 per person or \$21.20 (15% off) if ordered by April 15th, from Sentimental Journey, Inc. c/o Hobbies Of Balmoral, 6070 Quince Rd., Memphis, TN. 38138 or, Hobbies Of Memphis, 4515 Poplar Avenue, Memphis. Am sure both days will be sold out so get your order in early. Thanks Keith and come see us again. This goes also for all of your members.

Your editor and committee are endeavoring to get the ball rolling on an excursion trip for the club sometime this summer. Will appreciate your coming prepared at the April meeting to tell either Bill Bailey, Walter Walker or myself as to whether or not you are interested. If the response is good your editor intends to write first the P&NW, secondly the AD&N and third possibly the DQ&E. If we are going to make such a trip plans need to start being formulated NOW. As stated in the March newsletter we sounded out the L&NW and were advised that they could not accommodate us.

LAST RUN OF A GRAND OLD LADY??

There is sadness now aboard THE SOUTHERN CRESCENT. That famed train of the south and without a doubt the finest passenger train now rolling in these United States is about to go the way of the rest of our fine passenger trains. It is about to BE DISCONTINUED. The March issue of NRHS NEWS EXTRA contained a copy of a press release from the SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM NEWS about this grand old train. Cannot quote it in full but knowing you are interested let us give you the benefit of a few items in the press release: (Quote) The train is accruing losses for Southern at the rate of \$560,000 per month. Southern will continue to hold open until April 5th as an alternative to discontinuance, the handing over to Amtrak not only the route but equipment which Southern conservatively values at \$4 million, equipment consisting of 17 locomotives and 81 passenger cars used by Southern to maintain the existing service. The management of Amtrak has so far failed to give its

approval, (along with Amtrak's board of directors) to take over the route. Southern's president, Mr. L. Stanley Crane, said that the decision to give up the SOUTHERN CRESCENT was made "only with the greatest reluctance". Since May, 1971, when Amtrak began, he said that Southern had suffered losses on the train totalling \$30 million. The train operates on the average at only about 36 per cent of capacity. (End of quotes). April 6th is the effective date for discontinuance of the train. What a shame that the public will no longer support passenger trains, at least they do not as we knew them in the past. Amtrak will continue to receive the support of all rail oriented organizations, rail fans, rail clubs, etc; however Amtrak will NEVER take the place of the fine trains that once roamed the country which were owned and operated by the nation's railroads. For this train to come off is worse than sadness, its a TRAGEDY. This will leave only one independently operated train left in the country, namely the D&RGW's RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR. From reports we hear this latter train stays booked up all the time and am sure will be for the coming tourist season. If any of you want to try and secure momentos from the SOUTHERN CRESCENT, passenger "Goodies", etc. now is the time to start trying to get them. Almost forgot to mention the Rio Grande's SILVERTON is still operated by that line and it too stays booked up. Reports indicate that Southern may also discontinue their passenger excursion service after the SOUTHERN CRESCENT comes off; however this service has received so much favorable publicity for the management and board of directors of Southern that the line may decide to continue it. It will operate at least this season as many, many trips are already booked and sold.

On March 4th your editor spotted A&LM No. 14, (NW-2) on trackage by old MOP roundhouse area. Presumably this loco was in the hands of the MOP for some repair work, possibly wheel turning, etc. This was an old model switcher but still looked very good. Do not know for sure but probably A&LM also uses this loco in road service between Monroe, Bastrop, La. etc. to Crossett, Arkansas. (Color photo made of loco)

EX PREZ, Walter Walker, is co-chairman of the committee now working on the meeting of the SOUTHWEST SHIPPERS ADVISORY BOARD to be held in Little Rock at the Camelot Inn during month of June. (Do not know exact dates) You may or may not know that the SWSAB is strictly RAIL, no trucks, no barges, no air lines. These meetings bring together shippers and rail operating personnel who share their problems, and grievances together and endeavor to thrash them out. The meetings are very worth while.

We learn that three Federal Railroad Inspectors will move to Little Rock and open an office in the Blue Cross-Blue Shield Building at 6th & Gaines Streets in our fair city. Do not think they are going to find very much bad track in Arkansas but there are exceptions of course not only in Arkansas but all states. Trust they will make their reports public as we will be interested to know what they find. Even some of our short lines in Arkie Land have excellent track.

Our meetings so far this year have been very well attended which makes us all happy. Lets keep our attendance up. Some things to look forward to this year are: A possible excursion, an excellent picnic, a possible rail sound recording session at our clubhouse and our party at Christmas. Looks like a good year. Oops--nearly forgot, our antiques and artifacts show again at Worthen Bank.

Now folks settle back and read two excellent articles which we know you will enjoy; one by new member Ernie Deane, the other by that gentleman of "Excellencia", Mike Adams. Your editor wishes he could write like these two. They are certainly an asset to our club.

BRING THOSE GOODIES

SEE ALL OF YOU AT THE APRIL SWAP MEETING

SWAP AND SELL

ERA ENDS AS TRAIN MAKES LAST RUN, PINE BLUFF - TEXARKANA

Texarkana

BY: ERNIE DEANE

An era in Arkansas transportation history came to an end on the last day of 1957 and for reasons sentimental and otherwise I was on hand for the finish.

The St. Louis Southwestern Railway Company ran its last passenger train between Pine Bluff and Texarkana.

Engineer Ruben L. (Rube) Miller, veteran of a half century of railroading, was at the throttle as the train rolled into the yards here and tied up at the big depot which straddles the Arkansas-Texas state line.

Fireman Paul Myers was in the cab with him and Conductor F. H. Ragar was back in the passenger coach. Between them they hold a total of 126 years of service on the Cotton Belt Route, as the railroad has been known for generations.

Train No. 7 and also No. 8 its twin which left Texarkana for its final trip to Pine Bluff later in the day had fallen victim to vast changes in the public's preference of travel methods. The automobile primarily, and the highway bus and the airplane too, had cut deeply into passenger revenues since World War II. Where three passenger trains had operated daily for years between Pine Bluff and Texarkana and return, service had been cut to one.

Now that one made its last trip, leaving such towns as Rison, Fordyce, Camden and Lewisville without such service for the first time since track laying across Arkansas was completed by the Texas & St. Louis Railway in 1883. In fact, the coming of the iron horse had brought the birth of a number of towns and the decline of others back in those days.

By special permission of the Cotton Belt management, which now makes its headquarters at Tyler, Tex, I rode the diesel locomotive from Pine Bluff down to Camden when old No. 7 started on its last run to the Texas border. Engineer Miller and Fireman Myers had been friends and fellow railroaders of my father when he was a Cotton Belt engineer before retirement 20 years ago. So had Frank Roberts, now road foreman of engines for the line, who accompanied me as a passenger in the cab. These men have seen some major changes come to railroading since they started shoveling coal into steam locomotive fireboxes in their younger days. One of these, certainly, is the public's near abandonment of the Cotton Belt as a means of travel.

Rube Miller is a huge man with a booming voice and a broad sense of humor. He kept the whistle busy much of the way, tooting at farm people, railroad track workers, and others and waving a last salute as the huge engine and cars swept by. Give 'em a smile and a friendly wave as they see their last Cotton Belt passenger train he seemed to say to himself.

Railroad employes understandably are displeased when management drops trains from its schedules, for this brings changes in jobs, often causes families to have to move to another town. But the three old timers in the cab didn't have much to say in this respect. Management too, dislikes having to cut its service to the public. For one thing such action brings ill will in the towns from which the railroad draws freight business.

My purpose in making the last run of Train No. 7 wasn't to go into this aspect of the matter however.

The Cotton Belt had been handling a daily average of only seven fare paying passengers

between Pine Bluff and Texarkana, the Company's public relations department reported. And continuance of this service could not be economically justified. The end was inevitable.

Time was, of course when a mere rumor of a railroad surveying party in the area was big news. That's the way it was when Capt. Samuel W. Fordyce, then residing in Hot Springs recuperating from illness caused by Civil War wounds was engaged to lay out a route across Arkansas for a railroad.

Fordyce reportedly made his first trip astride a gray mule, taking the greater part of a year to search out favorable river crossings, level stretches of land, potential cotton and other freight-producing areas far away enough from Iron Mountain Railroad trackage to avoid costly competition.

Track laying was started at several locations at the same time and the last connecting link of the St. Louis Southwestern's predecessor was completed in Arkansas in August of 1883. A schedule of that period shows that Train No. 1 was to leave Pine Bluff at 11:05 am and arrive in Texarkana at 8:30 p m.

The equipment included "Pullman Palace Sleeping Cars, Handsome Day Coaches, and Elegant Parlor Cars" according to an advertisement.

Captain Fordyce--later to be president of the Company and addressed as Colonel, had a bookful of experiences and one of them came at the Red River east of Texarkana as he escorted directors on a special tour of the line. The train stopped to await closing of the drawbridge just about dark and a shot rang out. Colonel Fordyce stepped to the platform and came face-to-face with an armed bandit who forced him back into the lighted car. There the colonel recognized the man as an old acquaintance of pre War days, an ex-freight conductor.

Fordyce suggested that the man should be ashamed to hold up a friend and foolish to try to get any money on that railroad when nobody known to have any extra cash ever rode it. "Go over and hold up the Iron Mountain" he also suggested. The bandit apologized, called off his gang and later did hold up an Iron Mountain train--sending the Colonel a keg of whiskey in payment for the tip.

There were no bandits on this ride I made--by locomotive to Camden and by coach on into Texarkana--and no kegs either. Just a feeling of sadness on the part of those of us who have railroading in our blood.

The End

Editor's Note---Understand that this run did not end engineer Rube Miller's time on the road; in fact an almost positive that he ran Cotton Belt Trains 7 and 8 which continued in operation between Pine Bluff and East St. Louis until November 30, 1959, which was the date the Cotton Belt ended all passenger operations.

Your editor's apologies to Mike Adams and all of our members for not being able to run Mike Adams' excellent article in this month's newsletter. Space, budget allotment for printing, postage, etc. will make it necessary to hold this article for the May newsletter. It will be in that issue for sure. So long for now.

Thought I could get it in this one but cannot make it.

Bill Merck
Editor

EXTRA---Bob Dortch's Scott & Bearskin Lake R.R. starts operations again on April 22nd. Bob will also run this year on Thursdays and Fridays 11 am to 3 pm from June 1 thru Sept. 1. Lets all support Bob; he is one of our good members.
