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W. A. "BILL" MERCK EDITOR

EDITOR'S ADDRESS: 5007 HAWTHORNE RD. LITTLE ROCK, AR 72207



APRIL MEETING & PROGRAM: Our meeting for this month will be held on Sunday, the 12th starting at 2 PM at the Missouri Pacific office building in North Little Rock. Program will be given by Mr. Fernandez (do not know his initials) who is a sales representative for the Electro Motive Division of General Motors. Mr. Fernandez at the present time is assigned to Missouri Pacific territory and he will address the club on sales of diesel locomotives to that road. This should be an interesting program and fits right in the program variety for this year. Our attendance so far this year has been wonderful so, lets fill up our meeting rooms for this program and bring those visitors.

A couple of coming events in our fair state are of special interest to all rail fans. The first one is a spring festival to be known as "Fordyce On The Cotton Belt", which will be held at Fordyce, Arkansas April 8th thru the 12th. Railfan interest will center around a 3500-horsepower diesel locomotive to be displayed by the Cotton Belt and tours of Cotton Belt Superintendent Bill Reed's business car. Meals on the car will be served to various dignitaries while it is at Fordyce. Also, there will be various railroad antiques on display and train rides on the Fordyce & Princeton Railroad which, as you know is a short line owned and operated by the Georgia-Pacific Corporation. The rides will be provided at a nominal fee. Do not know what the fee will be nor where the train will actually run. It may be down a stretch of the abandoned Rock Island toward Crossett.

The second big event will take place on May 28th celebrating the city of Rogers, Arkansas' 100th-birthday. In fact, celebrations will take place all this year but for rail fans May 28th is the big day. On this date the Burlington Northern (formerly Frisco) will set up a railroad display and a caboose donated to the City by the Frisco in November of last year will be used as the centennial headquarters. This is a steel caboose and is still in fine condition. The railroad display will be set up earlier than the 28th but this is the big day in the celebration.

ADDITIONAL COMPETITION: Did you catch Richard Allin's column in the Gazette on March 18th? Richard comments on the fact of some excitement on the possibility of the Santa Fe coming to Arkansas to operate over that part of the ex-Rock Island from Memphis thru Little Rock to Amarillo, Texas. He also commented on the fact that if the Santa Fe does come to Arkansas that the state will have the benefit of three strong lines. These would be in addition to Santa Fe the Missouri Pacific and the Cotton Belt (S.P.) Richard left out one; how about the Burlington Northern (Frisco) which is now the longest railroad in these United States and has considerable trackage in Arkansas. As to competition; am sure that the Santa Fe would be welcomed by industry freight shippers and receivers and the general public but possibly would not be welcomed by MOP, SSW or BN. Add Santa Fe to the Memphis Gateway and you will have 4 lines competing for traffic to the west. As they say however, "Competition is what makes the wheels go round". The Santa Fe has been trying for many years to get into Memphis as well as St. Louis. A merger with the Katy (MK&T) is a possibility which would then get the Santa Fe into St. Louis.

GENERAL NEWS ITEMS FROM HERE AND THERE

Just to sweeten up the railroad scene, the Bangor & Arcostock can claim kinship with Fanny Farmer Candies, via merger recently announced between Fanny Farmer Candy Shops., Inc., owner of the down-east line. Will we ever see a Candy BAR? (From NEW Hope CHAPTER, NRHS, Penns Park, Pa)

S.P. #99 and SSW SAN JOSE, business cars, were seen in North Little Rock on Friday, March 6th.. Both cars were spotted by the Cotton Belt yard office in North Little Rock.

The Scott & Bearskin Lake Railroad, a tourist favorite at Scott, Arkansas for the last several years, is gone-gone-gone. It is being moved piece by piece from Scott until most of it emerges as The Eureka Springs and North Arkansas Railway in Carroll County north of Eureka Springs. First engine to be moved was No. 1, the 68-ton wood-burner. To follow No. 1 will be oil burning No. 201. Robert L. (Bob) Dortch Jr. who started the S&BL in 1974 and operated it until 1979 will also be the president of the new railroad at Eureka Springs. The S&BL never showed a profit. Assisting Dortch will be Alex Huff, a member of the Board of Directors for the short-line Michigan Northern Railroad who will be general manager and John Tyson, police chief at Eureka Springs who will be the trainmaster. Track laying has already begun with 700 feet of cross ties and rail laid but not yet fastened. The route eventually will cover 2.1 miles alongside scenic Leatherwood Creek, climb 2 per cent grades, cross four 1883-vintage trestles now being rebuilt and whip around some breath-taking curves. It will be the first rail service Carroll County has seen since a bridge washed out at Beaver, Arkansas on the former Arkansas & Ozarks Railroad in 1961. In addition it will be the first passenger train there since 1946. Rolling stock for the new line will include three open vintage passenger cars from the S&BL and four 82-foot former Rock Island steel coaches to be brought by rail from El Reno, Oklahoma to Rogers, thence trucked to Eureka Springs. The part of the state to be covered by this line is all explained in detail in James R. Fair Jr.'s book (now out of print) THE NORTH ARKANSAS LINE, published by Howell North Books. We wish friend Bob Dortch the best of luck with his new tourist line. We will vouch for that wonderful scenery that the tourist will have the opportunity to see. And, we remember with pleasure many happy days that members of our club spent down at Scott riding on the S&BL, the picnics, etc. We need to support Bob in his new venture as much as possible. We all remember the old M&NA/M&A.

Possibly the biggest event for 1981 for rail fans will be RAILFAIR-CALIFORNIA STATE RAILROAD MUSEUM, which will be held at Sacramento, California, May 2-10. This will be the grand opening of the California State Railroad Museum. The \$14 million museum will house 21 historic locomotives and cars including the "Rocket" from England, the "John Bull" from the Smithsonian and "The Best Friend of Charleston" to be sent by the Southern Railroad. Big engines on display will be SP's 4-8-4 No. 4449 restored to her Daylight Colors and operated to and from Sacramento from Portland in public excursions, UP's 4-8-4 No. 8444 doubleheading to Sacramento over the WP with 4-6-6-4 No. 3985. Understand the museum will house several ex-private cars including the GOLD COAST, Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg's ex-CofG private car.

Don't forget the steam powered excursion (No. 4501) and consist, over the historic Southern Railway from Memphis to Corinth, Miss. and return on Saturday, May 2 and Sunday, May 3. Round trip coach fare is \$25.00 and understand train will contain a dome car, the usual tape-recording car and rear end open car with observation platform. Feel sure many of you will want to make this trip. With the Family Lines-Chessie System operating steam excursions they need to get on the ball with a steam excursion out of Memphis to some point and return that could be made in a day similar to the Southern's. What a crowd getter this would be.

AMTRAK COMMENTS: With the budget cuts now taking place by the Reagan Administration, what's going to happen to Arkansas' only passenger train, the INTER-AMERICAN? One of two things for sure--either it will be discontinued entirely, or it will be cut back to three days per week service and will terminate on the southerly end at San Antonio, Texas instead of Laredo as is now the case. It seems that our present congressional delegation does not have the "clout" that it once had when our late Senator, John L. McClellan headed our delegation. He was mostly responsible for Arkansas ever getting the Inter-American. Our new Secretary of Transportation seems to be all for dismantling Amtrak with the exception of the northeast corridos. Also understand he has made statements to the effect that since airlines and busses pay taxes these are the methods of transportation that should be used. As to taxes, we all know about the taxes the railroads pay and other forms of transportation do not pay anything in taxes that the railroads pay. We do not intend to get this news-letter into politics; but its sad indeed that Amtrak and Conrail are nothing but a political football. Speaking of Conrail, its future is also in doubt. There is no doubt but what we are going to see some drastic changes in both the rail passenger and freight scenes in the coming months and years. Lets hope for the best.

It seems that more and more of the fairer sex are becoming associated with the railroad industry. Many railroads now have some lady brakemen, lady engineers, lady firemen, lady traffic representatives, etc. Also, did you know that the Little Rock Port Authority Railroad's top official is a lady? Yes, and a very capable one we might add. She does an excellent job in operating the little switching line at the Port Of Little Rock. (Ladies in our club-WE LOVE YOU)

Although I do not have the details, there is now on track at the spur track by the clubhouse on River Road in North Little Rock, an ex-Cotton Belt wooden caboose complete with Cotton Belt logo (gin saw). You may want to go out and take a look at it as well as the club's other two cars. The caboose, we understand, is owned by a private individual who is leasing space to store it at the club site.

Lets give some thought to the field trip suggestion by your editor at the March meeting. We need to do something like this during the current year; something out of the ordinary so to speak. And, our good associate member, Bruce Nelson down at El Dorado is still anxious for the club to come down and have an outing in his ex-Rock Island car PIKES PEAK. Any suggestions for a trip are welcome; and lets try and do it during the summer months when we have plenty of daylight.

If any of you go down to Fordyce for the "Fordyce On The Cotton Belt" spring festival don 't fail to take your camera or tape recorder, or both. This is a chance to get some photos and sound on the busy Cotton Belt St.Louis-Texas main line.

Don't forget, if ybu have a rail collectable or collectables that you would like the membership to see, bring it along to the meeting. We need to share these items with others; its not doing anybody any good by only sitting on the shelf.

THE ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB IS A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION. REGULAR MEETINGS ARE HELD ON THE SECOND SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH (WITH SOME EXCEPTIONS) REFRESHMENTS ARE MOST ALWAYS AVAILABLE AND VISITORS ARE WELCOME. SEND ALL NEWS ITEMS AND EXCHANGE NEWSLETTERS TO EDITOR.

Will see all of you at the April meeting as well as some of you, I am sure down at Fordyce. Adios Amigos.

Hope all of you have pa id your dues by now. If not get them in without fail.