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First in Arkansas Railroading

Over the next few months we will be reprinting articles from the Arkansas Gazette and its predecessors which document some of the historical high points in Arkansas railroad history. This month’s article is not complete as a considerable portion was too dark to read.

Little Rock, Mississippi River & Texas Completed

Between Little Rock and Pine Bluff

Daily Arkansas Gazette, February 26, 1881

Joined At Last

The Last Spike Driven and Little Rock and Pine Bluff United.

A Railroad That Means Business and Will Open Up Southeast Arkansas.

The Little Rock, Mississippi River and Texas railroad was completed yesterday morning. As was stated in yesterday’s issue, arrangements were made in Little Rock and Pine Bluff for a number of invited guests to go out to the place where the last rail of the road was rested and help drive the last spike.

At 10 o’clock quite a number of Little Rock people, interested in seeing the spike driven, mounted the train that was waiting at the foot of Cumberland street. The morning was bright and clear, and the whole party was in fine trim for the trip. Among those on board, when the train pulled out and moved past the (section illegible) and the freight depot of the road in the flat county east of the city, were: President J.E. Redfield, Col. J.A. Woodson, superintendent, Mayor John G. Fletcher, Col. Zeb Ward, Gen. J.F. Fagan, and Senators Whittington, Thornton, Hill, ?, ?, ?, and Duncan.


The journey was a short one, and before those on board had fairly time to experience the novel sensation of gliding through that part of Arkansas on real railroad cars, instead of having their latest style carriage to the indomitable energy of Mr. Redfield and Mr. Woodson. This is an era in the history of the state. Simply the beginning of a network of railroads through the whole state.

He concluded by shaking hands with Mayor J.G. Fletcher, who said:

Mayor Fletcher.

Little Rock extends a cordial hand to every citizens of Pine Bluff and southeast Arkansas today. Great interest is felt in an event long expected -- the last nail driven in the road which connects Pine Bluff with Little Rock. We meet today to say we are in favor of railroads. The actions of our senators and representatives is a guarantee that every capitalist can put his money in railroads and be protected. We have taken another step forward. Only time, and Arkansas will be happy and prosperous, and (become one) of the great states of the union. Little Rock is friendly to railroads. This road opens up a new highway not only to Pine Bluff but to the Mississippi river.

Senator Whittington

Made an eloquent and stirring speech on the happy occasion. He congratulated the people. Let us persevere in this work.

Zebedee

Col. Ward said he was a worker, not a talker, but he had made a speech before, which the Maine men said was a good one, and he would repeat it, “Let’s take a drink.” [Applause]

H.King White

Made an eloquent and stirring speech on the happy occasion. He congratulated the people, and said let them consider every spike one step further towards the civilization of Arkansas.

Judge Sam W. Williamson

Made a few remarks. He said that he had had thirty years of railroad experience, and this was the proudest day of his life, and that the successful completion of this enterprise was due to the liberality of the legislators. They ought not to discriminate against railroads.

Hon. W. Porter Grace

Made a neat and pleasant speech, speaking of the joy it gave him, even though, as an old man, with not many years more to live, to see this advancement and progress in the development of the state.

President Redfield

Said that he had never made a speech in his life. That he had come to Arkansas six years ago, as (an) agent of the parties holding the bonds of the road, and that he belonged as much to Arkansas now as to the United States. He had spoken by works, not words, and invited the guests to partake of refreshments. [Long and continued applause.]

The Speeches

Hon. H. King White introduced Judge Silverman of Pine Bluff, who said that he, on the part of Pine Bluff, desired to extend the right hand of fellowship to Little Rock (and that) Pine Bluff rejoices for the first time in her existence in being connected with the civilization of the world by railroad. He said that Pine Bluff can now meet the citizens of Little Rock by railroad, and instead of the old stage ride of all day, in three hours they can now perform this journey. He referred in eloquent and appropriate language to the indomitable energy of Mr. Redfield and Mr. Woodson. This is an era in the history of the state. Simply the beginning of a network of railroads through the whole state.

Finding the Missouri & Arkansas at Shirley, Arkansas.

The ceremonies over, the party entered the cars and were soon whirled back to Little Rock. The even will never be forgotten.

The following telegrams explains themselves:

To end of track, February 25, 1881.

To His Excellency, T.J. Churchill, governor of Arkansas:

The last spike completing the track of the Little Rock, Mississippi River and Texas railroad is now, at 12 m. (sic p.m. ?), being driven. It gives me great pleasure to announce to your excellency that the capital of our state is now connected with rail with Pine Bluff, the Mississippi river at Arkansas City, and Monticello. J.A. Woodson, General Superintendent.

State of Arkansas Executive Office.

Little Rock, February 25, 1881.

Mr. J.A. Woodson, Superintendent L.R.M.R. and T.R.R.

Together with the citizens of Little Rock, I congratulate you upon the completion of your great work. It is only another evidence of the growing greatness and prosperity of our state. Monticello and Fort Smith can shake hands with no jealousies for the future.

T.J. Churchill

Congratulatory telegrams were received last evening from many parties in the state, rejoicing at the completion of the road.
BNSF Railway coal train passes the former St. Louis-San Francisco depot at Mammoth Spring, Arkansas. Photographed February 20, 2010, by Glenn Mosenthin.
Kansas City Southern Holiday Express Schedule for 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>City</th>
<th>Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 26</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Shreveport, LA</td>
<td>Festival Plaza</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 27</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Monroe, LA</td>
<td>212 Walnut Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nov. 28</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Vidalia, MS</td>
<td>Levee Street Station, 1000 Levee Street at the Foot of Grove Street</td>
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<td>Nov. 29</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Pearl, MS</td>
<td>KCS Yard, 201 Industrial Park Road</td>
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<td>Nov. 30</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Meridian, MS</td>
<td>Union Station, 1901 Front Street</td>
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<td>Dec. 1</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Newton, MS</td>
<td>KCS Yard, 127 North Main Street</td>
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<td>Dec. 2</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Wylie, TX</td>
<td>Oak Street</td>
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<td>Dec. 3</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Jefferson, TX</td>
<td>Downtown between East Austin Street and Lafayette</td>
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<td>Dec. 4</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Leesville, LA</td>
<td>KCS Yard, 901 South Third Street</td>
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<td>Dec. 5</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Beaumont, TX</td>
<td>KCS Yard, 4058 South Martin Luther King, Jr. Parkway</td>
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<td>Dec. 6</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>DeQuincy, LA</td>
<td>DeQuincy Railroad Museum</td>
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<td>Dec. 8</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Texarkana, TX</td>
<td>KCS Yard, 1000 West Seventh Street</td>
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<td>Dec. 9</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Ashdown, AR</td>
<td>Main and U.S. Highway 71</td>
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<td>Dec. 10</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>De Queen, AR</td>
<td>KCS Yard, 124 North Port Arthur</td>
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<td>Dec. 11</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Mena, AR</td>
<td>524 Sherwood Avenue</td>
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<td>Dec. 12</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Heavener, OK</td>
<td>KCS Yard, 403 West First Street</td>
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<td>Dec. 13</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Stilwell, OK</td>
<td>Old KCS Depot</td>
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<td>Dec. 14</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Noel, MO</td>
<td>Old KCS Depot</td>
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<td>Dec. 15</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Neosho, MO</td>
<td>211 East Color</td>
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<td>Dec. 16</td>
<td>4PM</td>
<td>Pittsburg, KS</td>
<td>Monroe and Elm Streets</td>
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<td>Dec. 17</td>
<td>9:30AM-7PM</td>
<td>Kansas City, MO</td>
<td>Union Station</td>
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<td>Dec. 18</td>
<td>9:30AM-5PM</td>
<td>Kansas City, MO</td>
<td>Union Station</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec. 19</td>
<td>9:30AM-5PM</td>
<td>Kansas City, MO</td>
<td>Union Station</td>
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Missouri Pacific Bridge on the Ouachita River

Arkansas Railroad Club member Russ Harrison submitted this photo and also has a question.

“I’m sending a few photos which me and my two boys took on a fishing trip to Felsenthal, Arkansas some years back.

These photos show the piers for the old Missouri Pacific bridge over the Ouachita River before the Corps of Engineers built the present lock and dam. This line was taken out and the steel swing drawbridge removed back in the 60’s I believe.

We also drove back into the old town of Felsenthal, not much left, but you can still see where some of the tracks were.

You can almost see the ghosts of 2638 and 2649 which ran the Hurttip District to Monroe and some of the little 2300’s which ran the old New Orleans and Northwestern down to Ferriday, Louisiana. All were 10 wheelers.

Also I am curious about the photo of the Arkansas and Southeastern locomotive on page 10 of the September 2010 Arkansas Railroader. This road was owned by a large sawmill at Randolph, Louisiana, on the Rock Island. According to the S.P.V. Railroad Atlas of the Southern States, this road operated from about 1902 until 1916 and ran, for a while at least, all the way to West Monroe with a short branch to the Ouachita River. Wonder what would have been the purpose of that, maybe a log dump?

At about that time there was good bit of log rafting on the rivers. The location looks like it would have been about where Port Union was in later years. I used to work up in this area before I retired. I know some of the old timers but I have been unable to find out much about this road. I’ve always been interested in the little branch lines and short line railroads and the mills and the industries they served. Maybe someone in the club can help me.”

You can contact Russ Harrison at 726 Lakeshore Drive, Monroe, Louisiana, 71203.

Rock Island Shuttle Service

Member Gerald Hook found an interesting tidbit from the August 18, 1928, Railway Age. Between July 2 and July 9, 1928, the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific moved 1,360 automobiles and 2,623 passengers on a shuttle train between Brinkley and DeVall’s Bluff, Arkansas. The shuttle was started due to flooding of the highway. The railroad, which was unaffected by the flooding, used ten flatcars to operate the shuttle. Special platforms were built at Brinkley and DeVall’s Bluff to load the cars.

Granite Mountain Quarry has purchased 105 A-gons. The gondolas will be used to haul aggregate material. Here GMQX 001 is seen in Shreveport, Louisiana, on the Union Pacific. Photographed August 29, 2010, by David Hoge.
1969 passenger timetable for the Kansas City Southern's Southern Belle. Collection of Phil Moseley.
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The Arkansas Railroad Club is selling 2011 Union Pacific calendars as a fund raiser. Cost is $10 per calendar. Add $3 shipping per calendar. Send orders to the Club’s address.