



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Arkansas Railroader



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HAPPY NEW YEAR. Here we go starting another year of news writing for the Arkansas Railroader. 1977 was a great year for our club, we have added several new members and the big event of course was our antiques and artifacts showing at the Worthen Bank and Trust Company. The showing ran from November 7th thru December 16th. In fact, the bank asked us to stay two weeks longer than we had originally had it scheduled. They have asked that we come back in 1978 for another showing which will feature Railroads Of America. In addition the Arkansas Valley Model Railroad Club will join our club in the showing. This will take up additional room in the lobby of the bank and this showing should be even greater than our recent one. Most of the credit for the showing should be given Bill Bailey who with untiring efforts arranged all details with the bank. Bill did a real job and the club extends to him our thanks. Date for our 1978 showing has not yet been set but from latest reports it will probably be either in April or May.

Enough of our board members have now been contacted which insured the election of our new officers for 1978 and they will take office at our January meeting. These officers are, in case you do not already know, are President, Bill B. Bailey, Vice President and News Editor, W.A. (Bill) Merck, Secretary, George R. Holt, Treasurer, C.R. Byrd and NRHS Director, C.E. (Gene) Hull. These new officers can only do a great job for our club with your support and feel sure all of you will stand behind them. The outgoing officers did an outstanding job in 1977; in fact our outgoing Prez-Walter Walker, had the office for two terms. Believe you will agree that 1976 and 1977 have possibly been the most outstanding years for this club since its founding in 1969.

Our January meeting will be held on Sunday the 8th starting at 2:00 PM at the Missouri Pacific Office Building, 1000 West 4th Avenue in North Little Rock. Our program will be an address by Sargeant C. F. Rose of the Missouri Pacific Railroad police force. Sargeant Rose will talk on "The Role Of The Special Agent". This should prove very interesting and will give the club another insight into a very special function of the total railroad picture. Trust we will have a good attendance for our first meeting of the new year and be sure and invite your friends. As we always state a visitor is a prospective new member. We need them and they need us if they are interested in railroading.

AMTRAK'S INTER-AMERICAN - WILL WE KEEP IT OR LOSE IT ??

The above could very well be the sixty four thousand dollar question. Amtrak announced in December that it would await Congressional and U.S. Transportation Department review before any further consideration is given to the discontinuance of this as well as several other Amtrak routes. Something definite should be forthcoming sometime this spring. (Below is your editor's opinion only but am inclined to believe it is shared by others as well). The Inter-American is without a doubt the step-child of the entire Amtrak System. You are familiar I am sure that the train is again operating on a tri-weekly schedule. Observe carefully the times of arrival at our capitol city; No. 21 arrives at 12:20 AM and No. 22 at 12:10 AM. The greatest potential for passengers is at Little Rock on the entire route thru Arkansas but look what they give us. The ticket office is now open only from 11:00 PM to 7:00 AM. Do you want to go down to the ticket office at that hour of the night to get any information or see the train come in? The company does no advertising in Arkansas and does not maintain decent facilities for passengers. The Missouri Pacific station once a city in itself in the hey-day of Missouri Pacific passenger service, is now cold and barren. We understand the heating system was removed and one night we observed several passengers huddled around an electric heater in the cold waiting room. We may very well ask the age old question--Is this any way to run a railroad? We do not think it is. At the start of Amtrak service at Little Rock the company announced they might construct their own station which we are sure would have been a modern one. What have they done? NOTHING. They not only act like they want no passenger business at Little Rock; in fact they are doing every thing they can to discourage it. We learn that Senator Bumpers is behind the efforts to keep the train in operation. We reserve our opinion of this until something definite is forthcoming. The sad part of it all is that the train now carries new Amfleet equipment and an agreement has been reached with the Missouri Pacific to increase its speed over its lines. It runs over super-duper roadbeds all the way from St. Louis to Laredo; MOP-KATY and SANTA FE. Good equipment train, super roadbeds; poor station facilities in Arkansas, no advertising. Something is wrong somewhere. We are waiting, not patiently, but waiting, the answer to it all. We speak not altogether from the rail-fan's viewpoint in naturally wanting passenger service in Arkansas but mainly for the potential rail passenger. It could be done if they only would do it. Thousands of people are anxious to ride passenger trains. With another energy crunch it may become a necessity.)

If you enjoy interesting reading and excellent photos don't fail to purchase, beg or borrow a new rail book, namely Joseph A Strapac's COTTON BELT LOCOMOTIVES, 244 pages, 330 photos, hardcover, published by Shade Tree Books, Huntington Beach, California, price \$20.00 (well worth it). The book traces 100 years of SSW narrow gauge, motor cars (including the Tyler-Lufkin Moose) and standard gauge steam and diesels, dozens of diagrams, maps and a complete all-time roster of motive power. The jacket is in color and shows Cotton Belt Bi-Centennial Diesel No. 9389. The book was issued in 1977 which is a fitting tribute to a great railroad's 100th Anniversary. Joe's Hobby Shop in Little Rock ordered several copies which should be available soon. The book was naturally interesting to your editor who, as you know, is a retired Cotton Belter. Son, Bill Merck Jr. gave it to me for my birthday which was in December. It will become a prized possession in my railroad book collection.

Rock Island recently held an auction in Chicago of commissary items including China, menus, tablecloths, napkins, etc. There were several successful bidders and some others who were disappointed in not getting what they wanted.

Should have mentioned in the first part of this newsletter about the wonderful Christmas party in December held at the home of Walter and Annette Walker. The fellowship and food were out of this world. Jim Wilson's slide presentation on the Southern Railway was great. 29 were present and actually 33 reservations were made but four of our members could not make it at the last moment. This often happens during the Christmas rush days. The club's thanks to Walter and Annette for sharing their beautiful home for the club's party; also thanks to the ladies who helped prepare the food and serve it.

Plans are already being formulated for some great programs for the club in 1978. We had some great ones in 1977; 1978 may be even greater. It is your editor's opinion that we need to present a somewhat broader image of the total railroad picture; our January program will be just this with our railroad police officer as the speaker. There are many fields open such as communications, claims, traffic, law, etc. The speakers are available if we can go out and get them. In fact, we have several in our own club who are very authoritative on the above subjects. Also, some plans may be shaping up soon for the club's annual picnic. We can tell you at this time that it will be at another location and should be something outstanding. More on this later. Attendance at the last two or three of our picnics have been nothing but disappointing. This was not due to the location but to the fact that our members would just not support it. If you belong to something for goodness sake please support it or don't belong to it at all. Also, something else our club should give consideration to this year is another field trip or rail excursion. Your editor knows of two short lines that would welcome our club with open arms. A ride of some kind could probably be arranged even the two lines in question have no passenger equipment. In fact one of them would let us ride in their diesels and operate special for us. It is also very possible that arrangements could be made for an inspection trip for the club at electronic gravity yards in North Little Rock (MOP) and Pine Bluff (SSW). Its food for thought but it is your editor's opinion that it could be done. As they say, "Anything can be done if handled in the right manner and with a little work attached". All of us remember I am sure our great trip on the AD&N. Wouldn't you like to make another one like this?

Credit below to BULLETIN BOARD, Trinity Valley R.R. Club, Fort Worth, Texas

The Santa Fe had a new president; Mr. Lawrence Cena and he replaces John Reed who will continue as chairman and chief executive officer of Santa Fe Industries and the Santa Fe Railway.

Casey Jones' son, Charles B. Jones died in November.

Southern Railway has announced that their SOUTHERN CRESCENT will show a deficit this year of 7 million dollars and that that large of a loss will force them to take one of three routes; apply to discontinue the train, join Amtrak or apply for some sort of government assistance. If this takes place there will be but one remaining first class, long distance train that is independently operated; Rio Grande's RIO GRANDE ZEPHYR.

The Arkansas Railroad Club is a non-profit organization. Meetings are held the second Sunday of each month (except June, July and August). at the Missouri Pacific Office Building, 1000 West 4th Avenue, North Little Rock, Ark. Visitors always welcome. Coffee, Cokes and Cookies are usually available. Much conversation and bull sessions are always also available. Please address all news items and send exchange newsletters to the editor; Address 5007 Hawthorne Road, Little Rock, AR. 72207
