

ARKANSAS RAILROADER
The Arkansas Railroad Club Newsletter
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From the President's Desk:

It seemed to me that our get together at Scott on April 9th was a success. I saw lots of dirty faces, but they all had a smile on them. Bob Dortch, Righard Grigsby and I wish to thank all those who contributed of their time and efforts to make the day possible. But this is only the beginning! If we all will work together, we can soon have an operating tourist pike. Even with the cast on, I got in some hours helping move the caboos across the road. It was work, but it was fun and gave me a good feeling to have helped in one small accomplishment.

I got my cast off on Wednesday the 19th, just in time to make the trip to Chattanooga for the 4501 trip to Huntsville. I went over Thursday and scouted the route and was all prepared. Frank Clodfelter of Asheville, N. C. came over and chased with me. He carries about six or eight cameras (from 4x5 to 16mm movie) and he said he never got so many pictures in one day before. We chased it both Saturday and Sunday. I shot about 500 ft. and if lucky will have a show for the meeting.

J. H. Wilson

OUR SCOTT STEAM-IN WAS A SUCCESS as Jim Wilson said above. Both No. 1 and No. 201 were fired up and operated. No. 1 and caboos 214 both sported new paint and lettering. We even did a little switching using our one-loco-long spur (which had been spiked down about an hour before the 1:00 P.M. starting.) Bob Voll of KTHV shot quite a bit of 16mm film and gave us some very nice coverage on Channel 11 News. He says he will try to show us all of the film at some future meeting.

When Jim Wilson mentioned moving the caboos ACROSS the road, he meant that literally. It was pulled across a rail-less gap of about 150 feet. Jim's railroad experience was extremely helpful in coaxing the wheels over a yard or so to line up with the rail on the other side. Thanks to Bob and Richard and all the others who helped make the day possible.

HIGH BRIDGES AND HARD ROCK TUNNELS
By W. M. "Mike" Adams

A trip over the middle section of the old White River Division of the Iron Mountain between Cotter, Arkansas and Crane, Missouri some 60 odd years ago must have been as close to flying as was possible in those unenlightened and untroubled days. In the 96.3 mile section between those two terminals there was a total of 57 wooden trestles, the longest of which was nearly 1900 feet and the highest 122 feet. Some of them contained as much as 500,000 board feet of lumber and altogether they totaled over 10,000,000 board feet of lumber spanning a distance of over four miles. To dampen the illusion of flight for the imaginative passenger, however, there were also five tunnels driven through the higher ridges with a combined length of 10,502 feet. This heavy construction, costing the Gould interests as much as \$100,000 a mile, was necessary due to the rugged nature of the Ozark Mountains bisected by the line. In this section of the division the White River is crossed twice, James River once and Crooked Creek twice; Georges Creek, Sugar Orchard Creek, Cheatham Creek, Walnut Creek, Bear Creek and Roark Creek all had to be contended with as well as numerous

branches running out of the many ravines and "hollers". The line was finally completed with maximum grades of 1% and with a maximum curvature of 6 degrees but the timber industry as well as the principal supplier of hard rock explosives must have profited greatly in the endeavor.

In 1873 the Cairo and Fulton was completed between Poplar Bluff, Missouri and Argenta, Arkansas and advertised through passenger service. In 1874 this line was consolidated with the St. Louis and Iron Mountain to form the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern. In 1882 a branch was built off the main line at Diaz, 2.3 miles north of Newport through Paroquet, Newark and Sulphur Rock to Batesville and Cushman. Batesville was an old river town and had been cultural and marketing center for the White River valley for over 50 years. There were vast mineral deposits and untold timber reserves in the mountains to the north and west, especially in Marion and Boone Counties. Also in the early 1880's a branch line called the Lexington and Southern was built from the Missouri Pacific main line at Pleasant Hill, Missouri, 35 miles southeast of Kansas City, to Joplin, heart of the extensive tri-state lead and zinc mining region. This line, soon to be allied with the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern through manipulations of Jay Gould, was completed to Carthage, 115 miles south of Pleasant Hill, in 1881. There was much speculation in railroad development in Southwest Missouri at that time and several lines were projected into the rugged Ozark Plateau to tap the rich resources. Most of them fizzled out - this is extremely rough country to spike down rails through. The Frisco did build a branch south out of Springfield as far as Chadwick while the St. Louis and North Arkansas amid many trials and tribulations, changes in name and other reorganizations, finally built through from Seligman, Missouri via Harrison and Marshall to Helena. So much for that, this story has been told well by Hull and Fair, let us return to the White River Railroad for so it was known by all the old timers around Carthage and Aurora, Missouri. In fact, old Colonel Ward Schrantz, long-time publisher and editor of the Carthage Evening Press until his retirement long after World War II, always referred to this division as the White River Railroad - he probably had stock certificates in his folio of some defunct predecessor with that name!

In 1901 George J. Gould, scion of the Gould family and guiding light of the Missouri Pacific - Iron Mountain, secured a charter to build a 241 mile extension from Batesville, Arkansas to Carthage, Missouri. Incidentally, to this day, the mile posts on the White River Division are based on mileage from St. Louis via Diaz, Arkansas and not around by Pleasant Hill. Construction was started in May, 1901 and was completed December 29, 1905. On January 1, 1906 a special train occupied by Vice-President Clarke made a trip over the newly completed line and on January 21, 1906 through passenger service was inaugurated. History tells us that the first trip from either end failed to reach their destination. The train out of Carthage was stalled in snow drifts while the train from the south end was stopped by a landslide.

Starting at Cushman Junction, just west of Batesville, the line runs right up the north or east bank of White River to Cotter and except for cutting across an occasional bend, hugs the river and is bounded by rock bluffs oftentimes hundreds of feet high. Cotter, named for William Cotter, Manager of the Missouri Pacific-Iron Mountain, was reached in September, 1903 and here were established train yards with a water tank, coal chute and roundhouse. Here the line struck out across White River over a massive turn-span bridge and began the torturous route to Crane. The first tunnel is located just across White

River from Cotter. This tunnel is ruler straight, 1034* feet long and partially sheathed in concrete. Crest tunnel, just south of the Missouri state line, is the longest at 3455 feet and is bored on a curve and through solid rock. Pyatt is a mere 600 feet long while the bore at Cricket is 2657 feet in length and the only one in Missouri, at Reeds Spring, measures 2756 feet from end to end. Cricket tunnel is sheathed almost its entire length in concrete while the others are all through solid rock, albeit quite damp at times. In the old days we clever young train riders always knew when we were approaching the longer tunnels because Paul Brazil or Clarence Irwin, whichever Porter might be officiating that trip, would always come through the car and light every other one of the Pintsch gas lights. If it was summer and the windows up he always lowered them, otherwise the car would fill up with smoke and cinders and, oftentimes, water. You could also tell when you approached one of the high wooden trestles - there was a 10 mph speed restriction on them and the train slowed to a crawl. It was a real thrill to hang your head out the window and look down on those immense wooden affairs and listen to the creaking of the stout timber.

It was recognized upon construction that the service life of a timber bridge is limited, even when the best of available material was used as was the case on the White River. Cost figures developed that the expense of a new steel viaduct was about the same as a compact earth fill with the added feature of an earth fill that it eliminated any future maintenance costs. Accordingly in 1915 a program was started of filling in the trestles and by 1925 a total of 47 of the 57 had been filled. This work was carried out by contractors using steam shovels, locomotives and dump cars. Three train and engine crews were necessary to man the work trains plus company bridge crews to repair the daily damage caused by large rocks in the fill material. To provide drainage through the embankments, box culverts of reinforced concrete were built in advance. Twelve thousand cubic yards of concrete reinforced by 500 tons of steel bars were used in the culverts, the longest of which had a barrel of 378 feet. For the actual filling, 3,400,000 cubic yards of earth was dug from the hills, hauled in trains of dump cars for distances of from one to eleven miles and spilled in place. For those so inclined this would cover an acre of ground to a depth of more than 2,100 feet. Due to settling out and rounding off of the fills a topping out process was used to fill out the shoulders and slopes. In the higher bridges this topping out was repeated making a total of three fills in all. After the last filling had settled the stringers were removed and the tracks placed on the ground and ballasted. The fills would continue to settle, somewhat, for from four to six years but when this was finally through you had a consolidated earth embankment virtually maintenance free.

By 1930 all of the high bridges except five had been filled in. Of these five, four were considered impracticable to fill due to the diminishing ready source of fill material and in some cases difficult rock ledges that prevented the fill from establishing the proper slopes and remaining stable. One bridge, the infamous Bridge 138, was partially filled but the construction company went bankrupt and was pulled off the job and it was completed by company forces. This fill would not stabilize on the north slope but ran right out across the valley, dammed up a creek and crept up the adjacent hillside. It was finally

*In one of my previous articles I stated that the Cotter tunnel was 800 yards long. This should have read 300 yards - this was an estimate and as you can see was actually a little conservative.

necessary to dig a deep trench and build a long, high and expensive retaining wall to contain the slope. Four bridges were left and all were rebuilt to the highest standards with steel and concrete. Bridge 4203 is 842 feet long and 109 feet high, Bridge 4225 is 641 feet long, 76 feet high and partially curved. Bridge 4276 is 913 feet long and 122 feet high while Bridge 4294 is 670 feet long, 113 feet high and completely curved. All of these bridges are located on a 17 mile stretch between Bergman and Cricket. Bridge 4225 is restricted to 35 mph while Bridge 4294 carries a 30 mph restriction, the other two take maximum authorized speed, in this case 49 mph. After years of creeping along over the old timber structures it was quite a jolt to ride old Number 211 out of Aurora heading for Yellville and suddenly find yourself apparently in possession of wings and clipping along at 45 mph over the Barron Fork of Bear Creek!

In the early 1930's when the company was trying to fill in Bridge 138, Mr. T. S. Potter was Agent at Cricket, Arkansas. When the Smith Construction Company of Springfield, Missouri went broke they left an 0-4-0 switch engine sitting on a spur track at Cricket and for years I had looked at this little teakettle from the train windows and wished for an opportunity to clamber over it and perhaps make a run. The opportunity came when Mr. Potter took over the agency; I had been friends for years with his two boys and lost no time heading for Cricket. Needless to say we made many "fast" runs on the ancient old hog. On one memorable day, after much tearful pleading, pestering, etc., Mr. Potter and Mr. Merrill, Conductor on the work train filling in Bridge 138, allowed Ted, Jr., Richard and I ride the old bob-tailed caboose of the work train to the bridge and watch them dump the loads of Boone County dirt and rocks. They went south to the next siding to clear the northbound local and we caught the peddler back up the hill and through the tunnel to Cricket. If you are ever driving north of Harrison on Highway 65 keep your eyes open and about 3 or 4 miles south of Omaha you will see in a field on your left the remains of the old Cricket depot. Then, about one mile south of Omaha, a road turns off to the left and runs down a deep ravine that opens out on a large cul-de-sac in the mountainside and ends up at the former sight of the station at Cricket. This gap in the mountain is not natural. This is the remains of an old borrow pit used to obtain much of the dirt used in filling these high bridges and now occupied by a timber treating plant. By driving on down to the tracks and looking back to your right you can see the north portal of the Cricket tunnel.

If you want to see the site of the longest of these former bridges, drive east of Harrison on Highway 62. After crossing Crooked Creek and the railroad southeast of Pyatt you cross a little range of hills and go through a community called Snow and then drop down into the valley of Georges Creek. Georges Creek empties into Crooked Creek just to the south and the Georges Creek "trestle" was nearly 1900 feet long and much higher on the south end than on the north end. Highway 62 crosses Georges Creek right under the middle span of a steel bridge erected when the trestle was filled in. In 1924 Engineer McNabb while running Engine 128 struck a broken rail and turned over on this fill about 200 feet north of the steel girder bridge. He and his fireman were not badly injured but were mighty thankful that the old timber trestle had been filled in. This is the closest to an accident on any of these bridges that I have ever heard of. Not that there hasn't been a wreck or two up on the White River. In April, 1936 Engineer "Rags" Watson and his fireman were killed just north of Myrtle, about mile post 424, when their 1400 hit a broken rail and layed over against a rock ledge

dumping several cars of cattle off a 100 foot cliff. Several years ago one of the redballs struck a large tree that had blown down right at the south end of Bridge 4225 but no real damage was done. The old-time White River railroaders glorified in their nickname of "ridge-runner" and had nothing but scorn for the flatlanders they connected with on either end of the line. Arkansas Division crews running out mileage on the White River were always glad to get back to the cattails, Johnson grass and blackbirds on their home territory. It was a never to be forgotten experience to ride that line and I only wish everyone could have had the opportunity.

THE READER RAILROAD OPERATED A DOUBLE-HEADER SUNDAY, APRIL 30 for the American Association of Railroaders, Inc., a St. Louis based group who came to Arkansas by chartered bus. Prairie 108 led Consolidation 1702 both southbound and northbound. Photo runs were made at Dills Mill and at the Reader depot after the return trip. Bill Pollard, your editor and a sizeable group from Louisiana chased the train in both directions. Between us we should have some good movies and slides for some future Club meeting. As far as your editor knows, this was the first time a double-header had been operated to carry passengers. The only other one was operated several years ago for a recording company.

Anybody interested in trying to schedule one for the Arkansas Railroad Club?

ARKANSAS HAS LOST ANOTHER RAILROAD. Charlie Ost reports that the Illinois Central has applied for abandonment of its trackage in Helena which was reached by a ferry from Mississippi. A trestle burned out between Lula, Mississippi and Trotter's Point, on the east bank of the river opposite Helena. Operation of the trackage in Helena would be assumed by Missouri Pacific. Years ago passenger trains of the Yazoo and Mississippi Valley were ferried across the Mississippi to Helena to connect with those of the MoPac and the Missouri & North Arkansas. The IC operates the former Y&MV trackage under a very long-term lease.

THE NEXT ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB WILL BE SUNDAY MAY 14 at 2:00 p.m. in the Arkansas Valley Model Railroad Clubroom in the basement of the Union Station in Little Rock. Jim Wilson has some film of his recent 4501 trip. Earl Saunders has some slides of our activities at Scott, including one of a novice engineer that is absolutely classic.

SOME MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE STILL DUE. Several people have not yet paid their membership dues for 1972. If the number 1972 is on the upper right corner of your mailing label, your dues have been paid. If the number does Not appear, then the treasurer has not received your dues. Regular dues are \$5.00 per year (for Arkansas residents and employees and officers of Arkansas railroads) and Associate dues are \$3.00 per year (non-Arkansas residents). Payable to C. R. Byrd, 12 Flintwood, Little Rock, Arkansas 72207

The Arkansas Railroader is mailed monthly to Arkansas Railroad Club members. News items, articles or comments for the newsletter should be sent to Jim Wakefield, 316 Auburn, Little Rock, Arkansas 72205