



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Arkansas Railroader



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W. A. "BILL" MERCK EDITOR

MAY PROGRAM: Our meeting for May will be held on the 11th starting at 2 PM at the Missouri Pacific office building in North Little Rock. Program will be given by Bill Bailey who will discuss telegraphy in train operations. This should be very interesting and trust we will have another good attendance. In spite of rain, sleet, hail and even snow, our April meeting attendance was very good. Bob Bartholomew of the READER R.R. presented a very interesting slide presentation followed up by another good slide show by Boyd Pyle.

CHANGES AT LITTLE ROCK-NORTH LITTLE ROCK - Since this newsletter last went to press the rail scene at Little Rock-North Little Rock has greatly changed. The once great Rock Island is no longer around and quite a bit of its former Arkansas mileage is now being operated by the Cotton Belt, including Little Rock-Perry, Little Rock-Fordyce, Haskell-Butterfield and Butterfield-Hot Springs. Also, the former Rock's Memphis-Little Rock line is in the Cotton Belt's operating supplement to their Timetable No. 3, but operation on this particular line is limited to Memphis-Brinkley. Cotton Belt is still dispatching tonnage from Little Rock to Memphis over their North Little Rock-Pine Bluff branch which has always been well maintained. At this writing the line in question is the Little Rock-Perry branch. This section is being operated almost wholly for the benefit of the Arkansas Kraft Corporation paper mill at Perry, which mill must, in order to remain in operation, have rail service. Cotton Belt is making a daily round trip to Perry with Train No. 122 northbound, departing Little Rock 1 PM, and Train No. 121 southbound, departing Perry 5 PM. Your ed has seen the train departing Little Rock a couple of times lately with two units of S.P. power, (believe GP9's are being used) Six (6) axle diesel locomotives are prohibited over any part of the former Rock now operated by CottonBelt with the exception of Memphis-Brinkley which has been maintained by CottonBelt for several years and at present allows speeds of 50 MPH. Rumors abound (and they are just that, rumors), as to what will be the final outcome, particularly the Little Rock-Perry line. One rumor is that a bid has been entered by the East Camden And Highland Railroad, an industrial switching line serving the East Camden Industrial Park, formerly the old Naval Ammunition Depot in World War II. Another rumor is that the Missouri Pacific has made a bid for the line; another being that if no one is successful the Arkansas Kraft Corporation will operate the line themselves. What is to happen to the rest of the line west of Perry into Oklahoma is anyone's guess. It stands to reason that with the CottonBelt now operating a large part of the Rock's former trackage in Arkansas, that line will be successful in getting it permanently. A recent visit to the former Rock's Biddle Yard, now known at the Little Rock Yard of the Cotton Belt, displayed a beehive of activity with several switchers operating (SW-1500's), the yard office and freight house force as well as the dispatcher's office all very busy. Having been a long time Cotton Belt employee, I can truthfully say that line is an aggressive railroad and with parent Southern Pacific it is now doubly aggressive. Time will tell what will happen; who will get this, who will get that. Its a very interesting situation.

SOME INTERESTING NEWS ITEMS

Problems with the Colorado PUC and the laws regarding continuation of wages, have given the SILVERTON another season under the Rio Grande's flag. Reservations are being accepted for the ride between May 24 and October 5. (From NRHS NEWS EXTRA APRIL, 1980)

On November 25, 1943, Missouri Pacific passenger train No. 219, operating from Memphis to Hot Springs, had the following consist: (CREDIT MIKE ADAMS)

<u>Engine 6605</u>				
MP 2582	*	*	Mail-Baggage	(Thanks Mike. It was a fine train. I rode it many times with sister train No. 220. I always rode in the parlor car and had one of the rear seats by the obs. end)
" 4227	*	*	Baggage	
M&I 20	*	*	Mail-Baggage	
MP 6556	*	*	Divided Coach	
" 6177	*	*	Coach	
" 6329	*	*	Deluxe Coach	
" 6414	*	*	Grill Coach	
" 10612	*	*	Observation Parlor - 20 Parlor Seats	

The Arkansas Historical Preservation Society, Little Rock, is endeavoring to put the former Cotton Belt passenger depot at Stuttgart into the National Historical Register. It is our understanding the depot and property have been purchased by RICELAND FOODS at Stuttgart and it is not known at this time what the company plans to do with it. It is a fine old depot and is typical of the many fine structures constructed by the Cotton Belt in earlier days.

Although the passenger load on Arkansas' AMTRAK train, the INTER-AMERICAN, continues to increase, improvements to the train as promised by Amtrak president Alan Boyd earlier, have not yet been fulfilled. What is needed on the train more than anything else is full dining car service. Also, new station facilities are badly needed at Little Rock. As we have stated before, facilities at the old MOP passenger depot now being used by Amtrak, are totally unsuitable for Amtrak's operation. It is a known fact what part of the country is favored most by Amtrak while other parts have little or no service at all. Arkansas could most certainly use two or three or more additional routes, particularly at cities like Pine Bluff, Fort Smith, Jonesboro and others.

In July our club plans on presenting a "Farewell To Rock Island program. This is enough advance information so that you can prepare to bring slide/movies and one or two of your favorite RI artifacts to the meeting. This should prove to be very interesting. Will remind you again of it in the June newsletter.

Our Sale-Swap-Display show is now set for September 27th at the Holliday Inn in North Little Rock. Ad will be run in the August and September issues of TRAINS magazine. More on this later. This is surely something to look forward to.

Rumors keep popping up. This one is to the effect that the East Camden and Highland Railroad (mentioned earlier) is interested in purchasing the Dardanelle and Russellville Railroad, one of Arkansas' historic short lines. It seems the rail picture in Arkansas is changing rapidly. BN-FRISCO will probably be next. Am told it's getting close.

A closing note: In addition to Bill Bailey's program in May, Mike Condren will show a 16mm movie of the Arkansas & Ozarks Railroad, which as you know, was the successor to the old M&NA-M&A and operated from Harrison, Ark. to Seligman, Mo. A very scenic and colorful short line operation. Its gone but not forgotten.

The Arkansas Railroad Club is a non profit organization. Regular meetings are held second Sunday of each month except July and September. Visitors always welcome. Send all news items and exchange newsletters to Editor at 5007 Hawthorne Rd. Little Rock, Ark. 72207.

(CREDIT) BILL BAILEY



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