



Arkansas Railroader



VOLUME 9 NUMBER 11
NOVEMBER 1978

W. A. (BILL) MERCK
EDITOR



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NON PROFIT ORGANIZATION. REGULAR MEETINGS HELD SECOND SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH AT MCP OFFICE BLDG. NORTH LITTLE ROCK. REFRESHMENTS USUALLY AVAILABLE AND VISITORS ALWAYS WELCOME. EDITOR'S ADDRESS 5007 HAWTHORNE RD. LITTLE ROCK, ARK. 72207
SEND ALL NEWS ITEMS TO EDITOR AT ABOVE ADDRESS.

NOVEMBER PROGRAM: Mr. Martin M. Pomphrey, Assistant Vice President, Public Relations And Advertising, Frisco Railroad, St. Louis, will be the speaker at our November meeting. As you remember Mr. Pomphrey was to have addressed our club at the September meeting but was unable to be here. The date is November 12th starting at 2 PM at the MCP Office Bldg. in North Little Rock. This should be an interesting program and trust we can have a good attendance. Bring those visitors. While on subject of programs, Tom Shook presented a very interesting talk on the Santa Fe at our October meeting. Mr. W.F. (Bill) Reed, Cotton Belt superintendent at Pine Bluff would probably have been our speaker at this meeting but account recent strike, etc. was tied up elsewhere. We hope to have Bill at a future meeting.

1979 OFFICERS: Nominations for the slate of officers for 1979 will be presented at the November meeting by Chairman of Nominating Committee, Walter Walker. We need to have a very good attendance for this important function.

DECEMBER CHRISTMAS PARTY: Its not too early to get in the spirit of things for our annual Christmas get-together. Our party this year will be held at the Tom Shook's. Tom's address is 1716 Alberta Drive in Little Rock. The date is Saturday evening, December 9th starting at 7:30 PM. Cost is \$4.00 per person, you can pay at the door and reservations are required. Another great big reminder on this will be forthcoming in the December newsletter. This looks good and promises to be an evening of fun and good fellowship. Mark it on your calendar now.

HOGTRAIN, INC: A new corporation, Hogtrain, has been formed to promote tour packages to Razorback football games, utilizing Amtrak. The company's first tour will be a trip to the Uof A-Baylor game at Waco. For \$97.50, each participant will receive round trip rail transportation from Little Rock, game ticket, and overnight's lodging at the Ft. Worth Hilton Inn. Several meals will also be provided. Amtrak has agreed to add three coaches and one Amdinette to train 21 leaving Little Rock on Friday night November 10. The tour group will return to Little Rock aboard train 22 Sunday night. This first tour was sold out within three weeks, and additional tours are now being considered for the UofA-SMU game in Dallas on November 25, and for the Cotton Bowl. Special movements of this type help to introduce many people to the advantages of rail travel, in addition to boosting the revenues of the Inter-American. Any Ark ARP members who might be interested in tickets aboard either of these tours should write to HOGTRAIN, 8615 Chicot Road, Little Rock, Ark. 72209 (From Arkansas Association of Railroad Passengers Newsletter, Aug-Sept. 1978) Editor's Note: Our very good member, Bill Pollard of Conway, is the news-editor of this publication and we wish to congratulate Bill on a fine job.

Amtrak station improvements at Little Rock include refurbished seating to accommodate over 50 passengers, and an answerphone donated by HOGTRAIN which will be installed soon.

WABASH BLUEBIRD - L&A BLUEBIRD---We are all familiar with the famous streamlined dome-liner operated by the former WABASH R.R. which ran on a daily schedule St.Louis-Chicago, Chicago-St.Louis in the glory days of the passenger train. Did you know however, that Arkansas once had a train called THE BLUEBIRD?? It did and it was operated by the old Louisiana & Arkansas RR. and the train made a daily round trip from Minden, La. to Hope, Ark. It was a gas-electric motor train and since I am not familiar with the train and if any of you remember it would like to know some details about it; color scheme, etc. Your ed is familiar with the other name train operated by the L&A--THE SHREVEPORTER. Rode it one time between Hope and Shreveport. Went to Hope on MOP Train 1 arriving there in the wee hours of the morning. After No. 1 whistled off THE SHREVEPORTER backed into the station. As I remember, the equipment consisted of a combination mail-baggage, a coach, a cafe-parlor car and a drawing room sleeper received from MOP Train 1, the car being a daily thru sleeper from St. Louis to Shreveport. At the smoky end was an immaculate looking little oil burner; cannot remember the wheel arrangement but it was either an eight wheeler or a ten wheeler. After loading, the hogger whistled off, rounded a curve south of the station and headed for Stamps, Ark., Springhill, Minden and Shreveport, La. My ride was in the early thirties and generally before the railroads had gotten too much into air-conditioning. I sat by the open window in the coach and watched the little oil burner take the curves on a well ballasted roadbed at some fifty to fifty five miles per hour. My only regret on the ride was that I did not go back into the cafe car and partake of breakfast. While on subject of the L&A, let us go on for a bit---At that time the officer's list on the L&A was impressive in that there were three prominent Arkansans, all now deceased, who held down important chairs with the road. First and foremost was the president, Harvey C. Couch, who had an office in both Shreveport and Pine Bluff, Ark. Couch at the time was also president of the Arkansas Power & Light Company. His assistant at Pine Bluff was R.E. (Bob) Ritchie and the general attorney at Little Rock was C. Hamilton Moses. Both Ritchie and Moses went on in later years to become presidents of AP&L. At the time well known lumberman, E.A. Frost was chairman of the board of the L&A. If my memory is correct Frost was also at one time president of the A&LM. R.R. One reason the L&A was a fine railroad was because it was headed up by Harvey C. Couch. Anything that Couch headed up had to be fine. The line became a "Fallen Flag" many years ago when it was absorbed by the larger KCS System. Couch's former biz car, "Magnolia" now sits at Couchwood, his former estate and home near Hot Springs. This car was described in an earlier edition of the newsletter. Those of us who knew and remember the L&A do so very fondly and just wish it was still around. From my observations of what I saw of the road thought its little oil burners were the prettiest around.

THE INTER-AMERICAN---Arkansas' only passenger train, The Inter-American, is now operating again on a tri-weekly schedule. Local ticket office hours are 6 PM to 3 AM. Rumors abound that a mail contract is again being negotiated for the train; if it happens this would help to perhaps get the train back on a daily schedule. It seems to be everyone's opinion however that Amtrak is still treating it as their "stepchild", which is probably correct. The up and coming additional equipment to be added for the football crowd might help it some which we hope it will. Understand a recent mishap on MOP put the train on a detour route; namely Cotton Belt and Frisco. This would seemed to have been from Poplar Bluff, Mo. to Dexter Jct., thence Cotton Belt to Jonesboro and thence Frisco to Hoxie and back to MOP. I cannot be certain however about this detour route; knowing the routes available I can only guess. Only thing I know for certain is that I heard it was detoured over C.B. and SLSF. I would be interested in knowing what kind of time the train made on the Cotton Belt. It was certainly running on another smooth rail-heavy ballasted roadbed. Its a certainty that the best roadbeds and heaviest rail in the state are on the MOP-SSW-KCS.

News items stated that the recent rail clerk's strike cost the Cotton Belt One Million per day. This line and the KCS were the hardest hit of any in the state. Am sure all of us were glad to see it come to an end and see those trains rolling again.

A few new railroad books that may be of interest to our membership include the following, all available from the Kansas City Railroad Museum Gift Shop, Kansas City, Mo. (If interested let me know and I will provide price, etc.)

TEXAS & PACIFIC: FROM OX TEAMS TO EAGLES

SOUTHERN RAILWAY PANORAMA

SOUTHERN PACIFIC REVIEW 1977 (Believe this is available at Joe's Hobby Shop)

THE CIRCUS MOVES BY RAIL (Should be very interesting to circus fans)

The above are just a few of the interesting books available from K.C.R.R. Museum.

Please be thinking of what you want to display at our second antiques and artifacts show in lobby of the Worthen Bank, dates are Jan. 8 thru Feb. 2, 1979. Lets make this one bigger than ever. Now understand we will receive lots of TV coverage from possibly Channel 7 and perhaps also from Channel 4 and Channel 11. Please start now to lend your assistance. to Bill Bailey and let him know as soon as possible what you intend to display. Our members have a little of everything that makes for an interesting display. This showing also affords us an opportunity to get some additional members. There are untold numbers of people in Little Rock/North Little Rock and throughout the state who are interested in railroads and we are sure some have collections of items that we know nothing about. We need some more members so lets start right now in trying to get them. NEW MEMBERS DRIVE IN PROGRESS AS OF NOW.

Intended to run another of Mike Adams' fine articles in this edition but looks like space will not permit. Be patient Mike and we will try and run another one in the January, 1979 issue. If funds were available your ed could sit down and type some 10 pages of news items; the material is here; what is needed is one thing and one thing only---that green stuff. We oftentimes become envious of those clubs that can get out a really fine newsletter; they are to be congratulated; some are real fine. Oh well, perhaps some day we can do it. A lot of new members will help. Our attendance of our present members needs a good deal of improvement. We are all guilty. Of course we all take trips, sometime we are ill but when we are in the city on the days of our meetings please, please make every effort to attend the meeting. Nothing is more discouraging to the president or to a program chairman than to look out and see a half empty audience. This club is part of a heritage that is rich in history. Lets keep it that way.

An article in the Nashville Banner 9-6-78 proclaimed that the Tenn. Valley R.R. Museum was scheduled to approach the city park board to remove former NC&STL 4-8-4 from the park, refurbish it, and run excursions with the old girl. According to local reports the park board deferred action until the October 5th meeting.... (Part of Item from NRHS News Extra, October 1978) Ed's Note..Am sure Southern Ry. could use another steam loco for excursion service. Old favorite No. 4501 cannot possibly stay in service too much longer. No. 610 should last indefinitely.

"BEWARE AGAIN" Several newsletters report another reason railroaders may not welcome railfans. It is reported that 'efficiency personnel' of Conrail, using the guise of fans, complete with camera equipment, have been sneaking around rail property to catch employees goofing off". (FROM:--THE TRAINMASTER, PACIFIC NORTHWEST CHAPTER, NRHS, PORTLAND OREGON.)

We reported in our October issue about R.I. Car No. 96212. Now good news--Our club has purchased the car from the Rock Island and plans are to restore it and place it on display on our club property in North Little Rock. Additional details will be supplied by Prez. Bill Bailey at the November meeting.

SO LONG FOR NOW SEE ALL OF YOU AT THE NOVEMBER MEETING
BRING THOSE VISITORS

Bill Merck - Editor
(The Old Grey Fox)