



# ARKANSAS RAILROADER



EXTRA -- This is a typical front cover

LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY



ROCK ISLAND No. 94 passing Fordyce Tower in Fordyce, Arkansas in the 1940s. It is here where the Rock Island (now Fordyce & Princeton) crosses the busy east-west main of the Cotton Belt. (Photo by former SSW employee P.B. Wooldridge)

## AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB

### HISTORY

The Arkansas Railroad Club was formed in 1969 as a non-profit organization by a group of rail enthusiasts in the Little Rock area whose purpose, as defined by the Articles of Incorporation, were and are, "to preserve the historical materials of railway transportation of all kinds; to acquire by purchase, lease or otherwise, real or personal property and to mortgage, sell, deed, lease, or otherwise manage same in the manner appropriate to the purposes mentioned herein; to establish and maintain facilities for the storing, rehabilitation, preservation and exhibition of data, equipment, materials and items of any and every nature, pertaining to all aspects of railroading, past, present and future; (and) to support, maintain, promote and disseminate to the public, historical and educational aspects of railroading, past, present and future."

At the outset, the group of around 24 persons - men and women - chose to be aligned with the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) whose goals and purposes are similar to the Club. Thus, at the founding of the Arkansas Railroad Club, the Little Rock Chapter of the NRHS was also formed. All members of the Little Rock Chapter are, thus, members of the Arkansas Railroad Club and the President serves as President of both. All members of the Arkansas Railroad Club are not members of the Chapter, since this is optional.

The Club's first meeting place was the Missouri Pacific Passenger Station (Union Station) in Little Rock until space limitations required its move. Through the years, the club has met in several locations until settling in the Community Room of the Twin City Bank in North Little Rock. During this time, the club distinguished itself with having the first woman for a President of any NRHS Chapter.

### PROJECTS

As a part of its goals, the Club contributed to the restoration of Cotton Belt steam locomotive #819 in Pine Bluff, funded the State History Commission to microfilm Arkansas Railroad History, and, most recently, contributed toward the funding of "Tracks Ahead", a thirteen part series on railroading and model railroading on the Arkansas Educational Television Network (AETN). Other projects are pending.

### EXCURSIONS

Over the years the Club has gone, as a group, on several excursions and participated in several activities including picnics and the riding of trains of the International Shoe Co. in Malvern, the Scott & Bearskin Lake RR and the Reader Railroad. The Club has also made trips over the Eureka Springs & North Arkansas, Fordyce & Princeton, Arkansas & Missouri and with the Boston Mountains Chapter over the same line as well as trips on the 819.

### SPECIAL MEETINGS

The Club has, in addition to its regular meetings, held special meetings from time to time including a meeting in Pine Bluff at the site of the restoration of the 819; and the Union Pacific Dispatch Center in North Little Rock before it was moved to Omaha. The Club, in December of each year, holds a Christmas Dinner at which time the new officers are installed for the coming year.

The Club also holds two bonus meetings each year...on January 1st and the Monday observance of Memorial Day. These all day-sessions are a "come-and-go-as-you-wish", "participate-as-you'd-like-to" meeting. The informal gathering begins at 8 and goes until 5 PM with various members bringing their slides and videos and other items they'd like to show the club.

### CHASE THAT TRAIN!

Occasionally thru the years, and more frequently since the beginning of 1991, those of the club who have the time and wish to, have participated in the following of a particular railroad or group of railroads. Some of these trips have included excursions into the North Central part of Arkansas thru Batesville, Hardy, Mammoth Springs and along the Hoxie Subdivision; following the KCS from Texarkana to Fort Smith; chasing the Cotton Belt from Pine Bluff to Memphis; following the Little Rock Western; and, following the path of the old Missouri and North Arkansas.

### SHOW AND SALE

The major fund-raising event of each year is our annual Railroad Antiques and Collectibles Show and Sale. The formal approach of the event began in 1981 with several members bringing their items of interest together for other members to view. Soon the trading and selling began. Thru the years, before and since, the Club has participated in the sale of items at other events in Fordyce and the 2nd Annual Convention of the Missouri Pacific Historical Society which was held in Little Rock in 1983.

The Show and Sale has grown each year in the number of dealers participating and the amount of people attending. Over the years, we've outgrown one facility after another, until, in 1991, we moved to the Arkansas Fairgrounds. The event is held the first week-end of May of each year in the Hall of Industry Building at the Howard Street Entrance off Roosevelt Road in Little Rock. In addition to several of our own members having tables of merchandise and show items, and the Club's own tables, we have dealers from across the US and particularly in the neighboring states participate. The show is open to the public and advertised locally bring thousands thru our doors.

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## THE NEW KID ON THE BLOCK RAIL DIESEL CAR

by: Gene Hull

Just before, and immediately following, World War I, automobile manufacturers were struggling to perfect a direct drive connection between the engine and the rear wheels. All the jolts, jars and bumps of the wheels were transmitted to the engine. This was damaging. The railroads solved the problem by using electricity as a transmission. The diesel-electric locomotive was the result. The transmission problem still plagued the development of the small, single unit car.

These self-contained rail car units would mean survival for many light-density passenger routes, which otherwise were economically doomed. The family automobile was destroying rail passenger business following World War II. The rail equipment manufacturers adapted a unique feature of the more modern automobile - the hydraulic transmission. The railroad fellows called it a torque converter. It was the perfect answer when applied to individual unit rail cars.

The Budd Company, Railway Division, of Philadelphia, designed a new railcar using a diesel engine and a torque converter. They called it simply RDC-1, rail diesel car number 1. The company which had introduced the stainless steel passenger car had now brought hope to the less populated areas needing rail service. Cooperating with Budd in the development of the complete power plant and its controls was the General Motors Corporation, which supplied the Allison torque converter and the General Motors Detroit diesels.

In these engines the six cylinders were inclined 20 degrees from horizontal and produced 275 horsepower at 1800 revolutions per minute. The engine and transmission were an integral unit housed in a compartment coated with neoprene synthetic rubber to absorb engine noise. The engines are rubber-mounted at three points to reduce noise and vibration.

Two engines were mounted beneath the car in line with the center sill, one adjacent to each four-wheel truck. A drive shaft connects the engine and torque converter to an enclosed gear box mounted on the inside axle of the truck. The shaft had a flexible universal joint so that the truck was free to pivot as the car passed around curves.

When running at a normal speed of 70 miles an hour the car required only one-third the maximum 550 horsepower. Its maximum speed was 83 m.p.h. The engine-cooling radiators were mounted on the roof. The car was designed for rapid acceleration. During four test runs on the Delmarva Division of the Pennsylvania Railroad it accelerated up to 44 m.p.h. in 60 seconds, 54 m.p.h. in 90 seconds, 62 m.p.h. in 120 seconds, 73 m.p.h. in 180 seconds, and 80 m.p.h. in 240 seconds. There was no vibration and the only noise was a light hum. Fuel consumption was slightly more than three miles per gallon.

Deceleration was rapid and much quieter than the usual train because of disc brakes instead of the normal brake shoes. Emergency stops from 78 m.p.h. were made in 1250 feet, about one-quarter mile.

With all the equipment mounted under the floor, the car would seat 90 passengers, and weighed 112,800 pounds. It was built of stainless steel with the Budd "Shotweld" process, and resembled the conventional Budd passenger car. The car was heated by waste heat from the engines.

The car contained many features of modern passenger cars. It had Budd Rolokron anti-wheel slide devices, a 7-ton Frigidaire electro-mechanical air conditioning system, SKF roller bearings, Monroe shock absorbers, and two 10-kw electric generators.

The Budd Company would manufacture the cars at its Red Lion plant at a cost of \$128,000 each. Four different models were produced. Some for passengers only, some had a space for baggage, and some would carry only mail and baggage. It was found that railroads which used the RDC had an increase in business. Traffic which previously had been lost to highway vehicles returned. A few railroads which had abandoned passenger service in some areas restored it by using the cars. The RDC's were also sold to foreign roads.

These "new kids" proved to be popular and profitable.

- END -

(This is a typical story printed in the ARKANSAS RAILROADER each month. Besides Gene Hull, authors such as Bill Church, John Martin, Mike Adams, James R. Fair, Eakles Hille, L.T. Walker, P.B. Wooldridge and others contribute stories. Many have photos included. STORY CONTRIBUTIONS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME!)

## THE ARKANSAS RAILROADER

The Arkansas Railroader is the official monthly publication of the Arkansas Railroad Club and is generally mailed in time to be received before the monthly meetings. In order to receive this publication, one must be a member of the Club. The Railroader is mailed to all members automatically.

The Arkansas Railroader is generally 18 to 24 pages in length and contains information not available from other sources. Each issue looks like the front of this special issue and is in the 8½ x 14 inch format. Inside The Railroader you'll find a listing of our current officers and how to contact them. This is followed by news of the club and information about future programs and activities.

Each issue contains an article or two by one or more of our members plus general news about club members and Arkansas Rail News plus General Rail News and usually a section of news on Amtrak. Special features abound from items of general interest to pictures and reprints of old Timetables to old advertisements of passenger trains of by-gone days.

The articles in The Railroader are serious, or they can be funny. They'll make you laugh, and even, sometimes, cry. From the serious articles about the Missouri Pacific, Rock Island, Missouri and North Arkansas, Frisco, Cotton Belt and Kansas City Southern Railroads, plus stories on Amtrak and the UP to the tongue-in-cheek quips about organizing a trip to chase trucks or following the "old" Possum Grape & Toad Suck Railway and tricks we've played on each other, the highly acclaimed Arkansas Railroader has something in it for every rail enthusiast.

## MEETINGS

Meetings of the Club are held on the second Sunday of each month (except in May and December) at 2 PM in the Community Room on the 3rd floor of the Twin City Bank on Main Street in North Little Rock. (Our May meeting is held during our annual Show and Sale and our December meeting is the annual Christmas Banquet).

Each meeting begins at 2 PM with a program presented by a club member or outside source. Each program consists of a visual presentation. The programs usually last from 30 minutes to an hour. This is followed by a break in which refreshments are served and then our monthly business meeting.

We welcome visitors to our programs and business meetings!

## MEMBERSHIP

Our membership has grown from the two dozen who formed our Club in the Little Rock area to over 240 scattered thru-out the world. Within our ranks you'll find rail enthusiasts from almost all walks of life - from manual laborers to professionals, from retirees to Railroad Presidents and owners, from wives to school teachers - men and women - whose vocation and/or hobby is rail-roading, past, present and future.

If you want to be part of a group of individuals who enjoy their avocation, who are not a bunch of "stuck-in-the-muds", who enjoy each other and treat each visitor and new member as though they belonged, then we invite you to become a member of the **ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB**.

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### WE LOOK FORWARD TO YOUR MEMBERSHIP

Dues are \$15 for individual members. Membership entitles you to receive the monthly Arkansas Railroader for the term of your membership. Family membership dues are \$20 for the entire family living at the same residence. Only one copy of The Railroader is sent to each residence. You may also join the National Railway Historical Society thru the Club by paying an additional \$14 per year. (The total fee would be \$29 for individual membership, or, \$34 for family membership.) The N.R.H.S. publishes The Bulletin which is sent to all its members 4 times a year.

The Arkansas Railroader is mailed bulk rate, so if you move and don't let us know, your Railroader will not be forwarded by the post office. So, please let us know immediately if you change addresses. Thank You.

Please check: Individual Membership \$15 \_\_\_\_\_ Family Membership \$20 \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR NAME \_\_\_\_\_

YOUR ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_ PLUS \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE NUMBER (In Case We Have A Question) ( \_\_\_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Please make your check out to the "Arkansas Railroad Club" and mail to:

Arkansas Railroad Club  
ATTN: Arkansas Railroader  
P. O. Box 9151  
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