



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
N.R.H.S.

ARKANSAS RAILROADER



VOLUME 26 NUMBER 4 APRIL 1995



UNION PACIFIC #3985 heads a string of U.P. streamlined passenger cars on one of its famous excursions. The Arkansas Railroad Club will sponsor just such a trip on June 6, 1995 from Little Rock to Monroe, Louisiana. **JOIN US!** See inside for information on how to obtain tickets.
(Union Pacific photo)

AMATEUR BANDITS ON THE LITTLE ROCK & FT. SMITH

by: Gene Hull

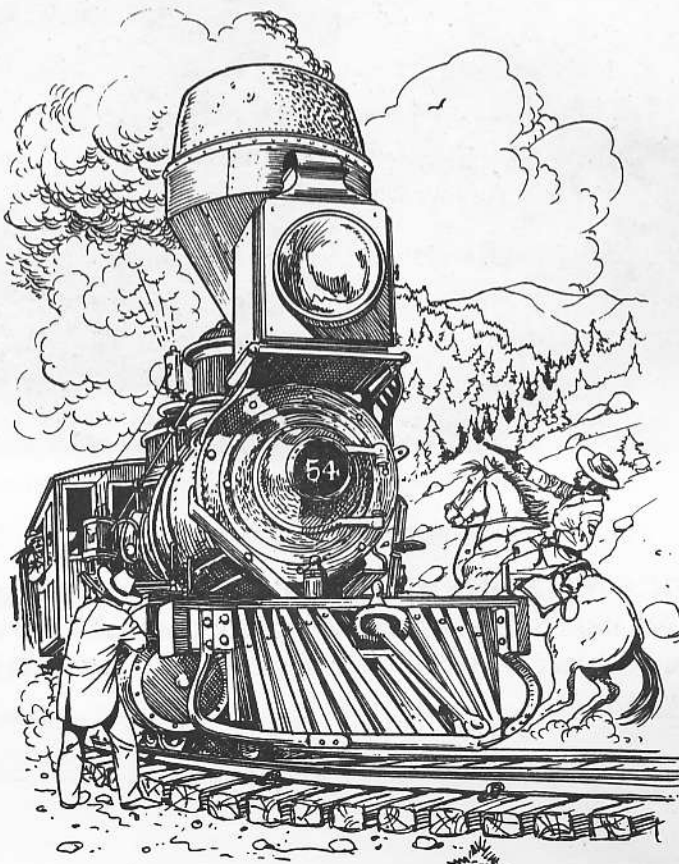
It was a chilly spring day as a abbreviated passenger train clanked to a stop at the little wooden depot at Mulberry, Arkansas, on the Little Rock & Ft. Smith Railway. The diamond-stack 4-4-0 and a combination mail-express-passenger car were westbound as Train No. 1, the time was 4:35 p.m., the date was 7 March 1883, and the train was 140.2 miles west of Argenta, and only 18 miles from Van Buren.

The shadows of evening were steadily marching eastward, soaking up the remaining puddles of daylight. Ahead of the train the rails were a pair of glistening streaks of light reaching into the darkening forest. The brakeman had stepped down with lantern in hand. Up ahead the oilburning headlamp of the engine cast a feint yellowish glow against the right-of-way. There was a sharp, metallic clatter as a few empty cream cans were unloaded, and a sack of mail was tossed out to the waiting agent. Conductor John Cain carefully examined tickets as four gentlemen passengers climbed aboard.

Two shrill blasts of the engine whistle were quickly muted by the surrounding timber. Brakeman Lester hauled his lantern onto the rear platform of the combine. Number 1 rattled away into the gathering darkness.

About five miles down the road the mellow glow of the headlamp revealed several long stacks of wood beside the track. The hogger brought the train to a stop. Fuel for the hungry firebox was running low, and it was time to "wood up."

The four fellows who boarded the train at Mulberry jumped to their feet.



"Ever'body git yore hands in th' air!"

One fellow had a pistol in each hand, and the others had one each. There was a quick show of hands by the startled passengers. The bandits had a good chance of making a sizeable collection of cash and jewelry. Their actions showed they were familiar with the railroad, and probably with the surrounding country. They knew the train would stop here, and that the crew would be busy "wooding up." After a quick "heist" they could easily disappear into the dark forest. The fickle finger of fate does move in mysterious ways.

For some unknown reason brakeman Lester failed to take his lantern back along the track to protect the rear of his train. Also, neither he nor Conductor Cain were helping to "wood up."

The door between the baggage compartment and the coach opened. Lester and Cain stepped through the door. The amateur bandits panicked and began firing their guns.

The conductor's forehead was shattered as two slugs hit him. He was mortally wounded. The brakeman fell, badly wounded. One of the passengers pulled a gun from under his coat and wounded two of the bandits. There was instant pandemonium. Guns roared. Black-powder smoke billowed in clouds, dimming the already feeble rays of the ceiling-mounted oil lamps. Women screamed. There had been no chance to collect any loot.

The engine crew heard the battle sounds, and quickly scrambled into the engine cab. The engineer jerked the throttle open, the little engine snorted and jumped. In a matter of a few seconds the train would be rolling too fast for any self-respecting bandit to "hit the ballast." The next stop would be a town with a sheriff.

Sans loot, the four bandits dismounted on the run and disappeared into the night-darkened forest.

News of the murder, wounding, and thwarted robbery traveled over the magical "talking wire" to the office of LR&FS superintendent Theo Hartman in Argenta. Company police officer Dave Adams boarded a special train and headed west at a fast pace. At 2:00 a.m. the train reached Mulberry, and Adams was joined by a large posse.

Word was received that a man named Monroe McDonald was in jail at Van Buren, and he had a bullet wound. The one-car special train raced away toward the Indian Nation border. McDonald admitted he participated in the robbery fiasco. The others were on foot somewhere in the Ozark Mountains, and one was wounded.

On a Saturday night a rainstorm was in progress. The vigilant posse received word that Gove Johnson had come to a house asking for food and other provisions. He said his nephew, Jim Johnson, was wounded, and they were about to starve. They were hiding in a cave near Fayetteville, along with J. F. Herndon.

The posse gathered up a pack of hound dogs to search the rugged countryside. The dogs found two men in a thick grove of cedar trees, hiding under a limestone ledge. They were captured without a shot being fired. Herndon was found a short time later, and all three soon were in jail at Fayetteville.



A few days later the prisoners were a Clarksville, in the court of Judge G. H. Cunningham on 15 May. They were sentenced to hang on Friday, 22 June 1883, and were transferred to the state prison at Little Rock. On 4 June an attempt was made to bribe a watchman to let them escape, but to no avail.

On the morning of 22 June another special train left Argenta for Clarksville. On board were the four prisoners, as well as several newspaper reporters and 25 sheriffs and deputies. The train arrived at 12:20 p.m.

Near the little frame depot, at the edge of an old field, a gallows had been erected 10 feet wide, 12 feet long, and 16 feet high. The prisoners were taken off the train and loaded into a wagon. Fifty guards made sure there was no escape. There were no eager lawyers with briefcases filled with technicalities.

After a prayer by Reverend Cagle of Clarksville, sheriff McConnell read the death warrants and led the prisoners up the 13 steps of the gallows. The four men were placed on the trap door, their hands and feet were bound, and black hoods were drawn over their heads. As the noose was put around the neck of 18-year-old Jim Johnson he fainted. The sheriff held him up until he was revived. Grouped around the scaffold were several thousand persons, who had waited several hours to see the killers hanged.

The trap door was opened at 12:45 p.m. ~~1883~~



NEXT MEETING/PROGRAM

The next meeting of the Arkansas Railroad Club will be held on Sunday, April 9 at Twin City Bank in North Little Rock on Main Street at 2 p.m.. PETER SMYKLA will show his railroad slides of 1994. Peter always has great looking slides. Refreshments will be served, as always, and the public is invited.

Future programs include: May - Meets May 21 (note this is the third Sunday this month due to Mother's Day being on the second Sunday) at Pine Bluff's Union Station. Elizabeth Gaines will have some unusual railroad stories around Pine Bluff at the turn of the century and Don Puckett will give a talk on Operation Lifesaver. June - JONATHAN ROYCE with Greece Railways slides. August - Bill Bailey will have a slide show.

3985 EXCURSION PLANNED - Our club will sponsor a steam train excursion using Union Pacific's 4-6-6-4 #3985 on JUNE 6, 1995 from Little Rock to Monroe, Louisiana, one-way. Buses will provide return. Cost is \$110 coach and \$140 dome, with a \$20 return bus fee. Lunch will be provided. They'll be more seats on this trip than we had on our 1992 trip (18-19 cars - U.P.'s streamlined consist). Although the train will go through downtown Pine Bluff on its way to Monroe, it will not stop there for passengers.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT. Send in your orders for tickets now, using the form enclosed. Remember, dome seats sell out fast. This will be 3985's last trip in this area until 1999, do don't miss this opportunity. Again, **SUPPORT YOUR HOBBY - BUY SOME TICKETS - HELP THE ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB.**

1996 CALENDAR - We will once again have a calendar next year. Photos are now being accepted of any railroad-related subject, as long as it's in Arkansas. Any time frame will do, any type of train. Our 1995 calendar sold out in early November last year - these have proven very popular. The prints (don't send negatives or slides - have a print made first) can be any size, black and white preferred, but color also O.K. Send them to our address. Deadline will be July 15.

SHOW & SALE - Our annual Arkansas Railroad Club's Show & Sale will be held on Saturday, April 29 at the Hall of Industry, State Fairgrounds, Little Rock, the same place it was held last year. Tables are \$25. Admission is \$4 for adults and \$1 for children. If you'd like to rent a table, write to us at PO Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119 and we'll send you information.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP LIST will be put in the May issue. If you do not want your name, phone number on this list, please let us know.

J611 NEEDS YOU - The Virginia Museum of Transportation is asking us for help in raising money to build a cover to display the J611 steam engine in its museum. The engine is currently being stored in NS facilities and has been winterized. However, it will be moved to the museum in May and a cover is needed. Donations may be sent to the Virginia Museum of Transportation, 303 Norfolk Ave, Roanoke VA 24016 or call 703-342-5670.

RESPONSE TO LETTER IN LAST MONTH'S RAILROADER - A letter last month generally criticizing railroad people for abandoning the old Rock Island drew this response

from George E. Hinds of Woodland Park, Colorado (an old friend of Bill Church):

"...I can't help but feel some frustration (about the letter) -- such a letter will have no effect whatsoever on today's railroad industry, the legislators who influence the future of railroading, or the competition. In a nutshell, the writer is preaching to the congregation... and while it may make one feel better to get the load off one's chest, so what?"

Mr. Hinds instead thinks we as railfans need to mount letter-writing campaigns to support rail freight and passenger service via letters to editors, congressmen, etc.

Mr. Hinds does what he preaches. Here's part of a letter he wrote to Congressman Joel Hefley, R-Colorado: "Dear Congressman: I wrote to you earlier (12/23/94) about heavy trucks, imported truck drivers, highway safety, and the soaring costs of road and bridge damage. The thrust of my letter:

As to road damage and repair costs, Government testing has determined that one heavy truck fully loaded does road damage equal to 9,000+ autos. So a fair tax would mathematically be roughly equal to more than nine thousand times that levied against cars. With thousands of miles of highways and over 240,000 bridges needing repair or building, a budget-conscious Congress must demonstrate the intestinal fortitude to impose fair-share road-use taxes on heavy trucks."

"You replied that, 'I am against raising the cost of doing business...'

"Am I to understand you don't agree with placing the cost of doing business on business? If not, then whom to you intend to place the cost upon in this situation? Me and others with a little one-ton car? Or the non-owner of any vehicle? We have little, if any, responsibility for destroying highways and bridges. Is that the intent behind the 'Contract with America'? -- favor big business and stiff the ordinary Joe? ...

"Another question, sir: you recently had published in the Colorado Springs Gazette Telegraph an article blasting Amtrak and calling for an end to subsidy (which amounts to about \$1 billion annually) to the nation's rail passenger system. You apparently see no problem whatsoever in spending \$21 billion annually subsidizing the interstate highway system and about \$9 billion on aviation? Or did I miss your articles condemning such subsidies? Or will I see them appear soon? ..."

WANTED/FOR SALE-TRADE

The following is for those who want to find certain railroad-related items, information, or want to sell or trade such items with other railfans. Only personal inquiries, NO COMMERCIAL BUSINESS, please. We reserve the right to refuse listings if deemed inappropriate. The Arkansas Railroad Club is not responsible for misleading ads.

WANTED - Pullman stepbox. Will buy outright or trade for an Illinois Central stepbox. BURDENE MULLEN, 4 Warwick Rd, Little Rock AR 72205-1557 or call 501-227-8177.

WANTED - Tall globe Cotton Belt lanterns. DARREL CASON, 501-541-3747 days, 501-536-1229 after 5 p.m.

ARKANSAS RAIL NEWS

NO ROLAND, ARKANSAS CROSSING ACCIDENT - Although the Fort Smith *Southwest Times Record* of January 12, 1995 said a crossing accident occurred at Roland involving loose rail cars, this **WAS NOT** Roland, Arkansas, but was Roland, Oklahoma. The train involved was NOT the Little Rock & Western, but an empty Union Pacific coal train.. Bob Sandage was kind enough to point this out. There hasn't been a train/crossing accident in Roland, Arkansas for many years.



HOBO DAYS - (Bentonville) - On April 7 and 8, Bentonville will celebrate Hobo Days, including a 10K run, Hobo King and Queen contest and a Mulligan Stew cook-off. This was done to raise money to restore Bentonville's Chamber of Commerce caboose. (*Benton County Daily Record, Bentonville, February 13*)

CLOSING CROSSINGS - (Pine Bluff) - The Southern Pacific wants to close several crossings in downtown Pine Bluff, including those at Fifth, Sixth, 10th, 11th and 12th Streets. The Pine Bluff City Council is considering these requests. (*Pine Bluff Commercial, February 8, 1995*)

Untreated cross ties last from 5 to 9 years, while chemically treated ties can last 30 to 40 years. (AAR Quiz on Railroads, 1963 via Wayne Porter)

SOUTHERN PACIFIC SUED - (Forest City) - The family of Sylvia May Mangold has sued SP after she was killed in a crossing accident September 9, 1994 at the County Road 219 crossing at Beck Spur. They claim the track was not free and clear of vegetation to prevent a motorist's view from being obstructed and that there were no crossing warning signs posted. (*Times-Herald, Forest City, February 8*)

CABOOSE FOR CROSSING - (Clarksville) - The Clarksville City Council was offered a Union Pacific caboose if it would close one rail crossing in the city or county. The caboose would sit at the Chamber office at the old depot, with UP installing the needed rails. This offer was made February 13. (*Johnson County Graphic, Clarksville, February 15*)

OLD DEPOT OPENS - (Guion) - The old Guion Depot is open once again. This depot, located on the White River Line of the former Missouri Pacific (now Missouri and Northern Arkansas), will house a store and restaurant, open daily. (*Calico Rock Progress, February 9*)

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION ENDS IN CAMDEN - (Camden) - After nearly 200 years, interstate public transportation in and out of Camden, Arkansas came to a halt December 11, 1994 with the last run of the Kerrville Bus Line. Since the early 1800s, Camden has seen passenger transportation service provided by the stagecoach, the steamboat, the passenger train, the airplane and lastly, the bus.

Stagecoaches were the first public transportation to come to Camden in the late 1820s, although not on a regular schedule. John T. Chidester started a regularly scheduled stagecoach service in 1866. By 1878, stagecoach service was reaching its peak and connections could be made as far west as Fort Yuma, Arizona.

The first steamboat docked in Camden in 1820. At the height of steamboating, as many as 22 would dock at Camden during a season.

The Cotton Belt Railroad came to Camden in 1883, followed by the Iron Mountain in 1909. A couple of years later, the Chicago & Rock Island came. The Rock Island had two trains a day through Camden, the Cotton Belt six, and the Missouri Pacific four (this is the depot they're trying to restore today). The Missouri Pacific ended passenger service in 1961 and the Cotton Belt in 1962. The Rock Island ended theirs during World War II.

In the mid-1950s, Trans-Texas Airlines opened commuter service in Camden, but couldn't



survive without government aid. It was discontinued. In 1979, JamesAir began service with three daily roundtrips to Dallas and Memphis. It ended in 1981. Since 1981, two other have tried airline service, but none have survived.

The final form of public transportation just ended. From Greyhound through Trailways and concluding with Kerrville, Camden has had regular bus service since at least 1927. In 1934, a modern bus terminal was built at the corner of Madison and Jefferson (now the M&P parking lot). Bus boardings began to fall in the 1980s. Several years ago, Greyhound abandoned its route and Trailways shut down its Little Rock to El Dorado route. Kerrville took over the route from Little Rock to Shreveport in 1990, including Camden. With the final public transportation terminal located at the Town House Motel, on December 11, 1994, Kerrville closed down the line because of declining business and the final bus made its stop in Camden and ended almost 200 years of public transportation in the city. (*Camden News, special to the News by James Bechtelheimer, January 16, 1995*)

Some folks sort of turn up their noses at the mention of railroad history. If it wasn't for yesterday, there would be on today. They seem to think the world was brand new when they "discovered" it.

Gene Hull

DEPOT TASK FORCE - (Camden) - Main Street Camden is forming a task force to help raise funds to restore the old Missouri Pacific depot in Camden on Adams Avenue. They need to raise \$80,000 by November to get matching grants. Main Street's director Jon Chadwell said Main Street will continue to sell engraved bricks and T-shirts supporting the restoration. Bricks cost \$30 and T-shirts \$10-\$14. Depot memberships also available. To made donations, write to Camden Chamber of Commerce, PO Box 734, Camden AR 71701 or call 501-836-6426. (*Camden News, January 19*)

CROSSING TO REMAIN OPEN - (Waldo) - The Walnut Street crossing in Waldo will remain open after the city council voted not to close it. Southern Pacific had offered the city to upgrade three other crossings and install gates at the Hwy. 19 crossing if they closed the Walnut Street crossing for safety reasons. (*Banne-News, Magnolia, January 26*)

GENERAL RAIL NEWS

NS AUCTION - The auction of NS cars and equipment held on February 28 at Birmingham, Alabama, was a true joke, according to Barton Jennings. Apparently there were people and companies there paying way too much for non-collectible items, such as regular street tools you could get from Sears or Wal Mart. Bart said the auction company (Blackmon Auctions, Inc, PO Box 7464, Little Rock AR 72217) must have been laughing all the way to the bank. The NS rail cars, which had a value of \$25,000 or so, went for \$70,000 thanks to two groups bidding against each other.

Some other facts Bart wrote: in 1994, on a budget of \$1.9 million, the steam program turned a \$355,000 profit. A number of customers and stock holders are complaining, but NS



officials refuse to talk to them. - The steam shop at Irondale will be torn down by the end of April (bury the evidence of sanity? - Ed.) - CSX announced that the \$200 million insurance requirement was designed to keep trips from running. When the \$200 million was reached, they canceled all trips anyway.

ANOTHER FALLEN FLAG - (Vermont) - One of the country's oldest existing railroads came to an end on February 4, 1995 as the 122-year old Central Vermont was sold to RailTex, Inc. by the Canadian National for an estimated \$39 million. The CVR was one of the last unmerged railroads remaining (others being Santa Fe, Union Pacific, Florida East Coast and Chicago & Northwestern and Kansas City Southern). RailTex will run the 352-mile line with about half its former employees (currently 161). (*Nashville Flyer, March 1995*)



NEW SP PRESIDENT - Jerry R. Davis has been named new President of CEO of Southern Pacific Rail Corporation, succeeding Edward L. Moyers who stepped down for medical reasons. Davis had been Executive Vice President and CEO of CSX, and was reportedly the main force in deciding to raise the insurance liability to \$200 million at CSX.

OPERATION LIFESAVER - Operation Lifesaver implemented a new program last November called "Trucker on the Train" in which truckers will travel on Amtrak between Cleveland and Toledo, Ohio to see firsthand how many trucks try to beat the train. (*Trainline, February 1995 via Jim Johnson*)



OPERATION TOSSED SALAD - In September, Union Pacific operated an Operation Lifesaver special north of Denver. Leading the train was UP Centennial EMD DD-40X #6936. The special hit a semi load of cabbages, carrots and other produce near Greeley, Colorado. The DD-40X received minor damage, but was covered with a major sized tossed salad. The DD-40X was sent to North Little Rock for repairs, expected to be back in service this spring. (*Trainline, February 1995 via the Intermountain Chapter newsletter*)

RECORD YEAR - Union Pacific earned a record net income of \$754 million in 1994, up \$85 million from 1993. UP also set nine other all-time records, including: revenues exceeded \$5 billion for the first time; 4.99 million carloadings; lowest fuel consumption rate ever.

AMTRAK NEWS

DARK DAYS AHEAD?? - Lots of people think Amtrak will be on its last legs by this Fall, at least as a national carrier. The National Association of Railroad Passengers has a new "Save Our Trains" brochure it is asking its members to display at Amtrak stations, citing the increase in ridership over the past decade, lower subsidy than airlines, etc. However, surprisingly, some key



Republicans in Congress and the U.S. Senate, including the Chairman of the House Committee on Transportation Bud Shuster, are Amtrak advocates and want to save the program. No doubt, there will be some major cuts in funds, but there'll probably be a nationwide system of some sort left after the smoke clears. Hoping, anyway.

EXCURSIONS/SHOWS/EVENTS OF OTHER CLUBS

☞ ...note...these are listed sequentially by dates, earliest dates being first...

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS-BRANSON, MISSOURI - Beginning April 19, 1995 - *The Branson Limited* will begin its American Orient Express runs again from San Antonio through Arkansas to Branson. Five-day packages, including shows at Branson and hotels, start at \$1,225 per person. Trains leave San Antonio Wednesday mornings, arriving Branson Thursday mornings, returning from Branson on Saturdays. Call 1-800-AOE-0389 or write American Orient Express, PO Box 460707, San Antonio TX 78246-0707 for more information.

CHATTANOOGA, TENNESSEE - April 22, 23, 1995 - The North Georgia Rambler diesel powered excursions running over 67 miles of the old Central of Georgia and Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia lines (now the Chattooga and Chickamauga Railroad) - Leaves Chattanooga 8:30 a.m., returns 4:00 p.m. each day. Price: \$110 for both days, including lunch. Ticket orders to Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum, 4119 Cromwell Rd, Chattanooga TN 37421, call 615-894-8028. TVRM also runs regular excursions throughout the year, some with steam engine 4501. Write for a brochure.

WARREN, ARKANSAS - Mid-May - Spring meeting of the Arkansas Rail Carrier/Shipper Educational Committee. Exact date to be announced. Contact Thomas York, PO Box 390, Warren AR 71671 or call 501-226-6717.

SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS - August 5, 1995 - 16th Annual Meeting and Railroadiana Show of the Illinois Central Railroad Historical Society, Holiday Inn East, Springfield IL, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Admission is \$1.00/person or \$2.00/family. Dealer tables are \$20. - Contact Mark L. Miller, 1204A West Central, Marion IL 62959-1022 or call 618-997-5788 evenings.

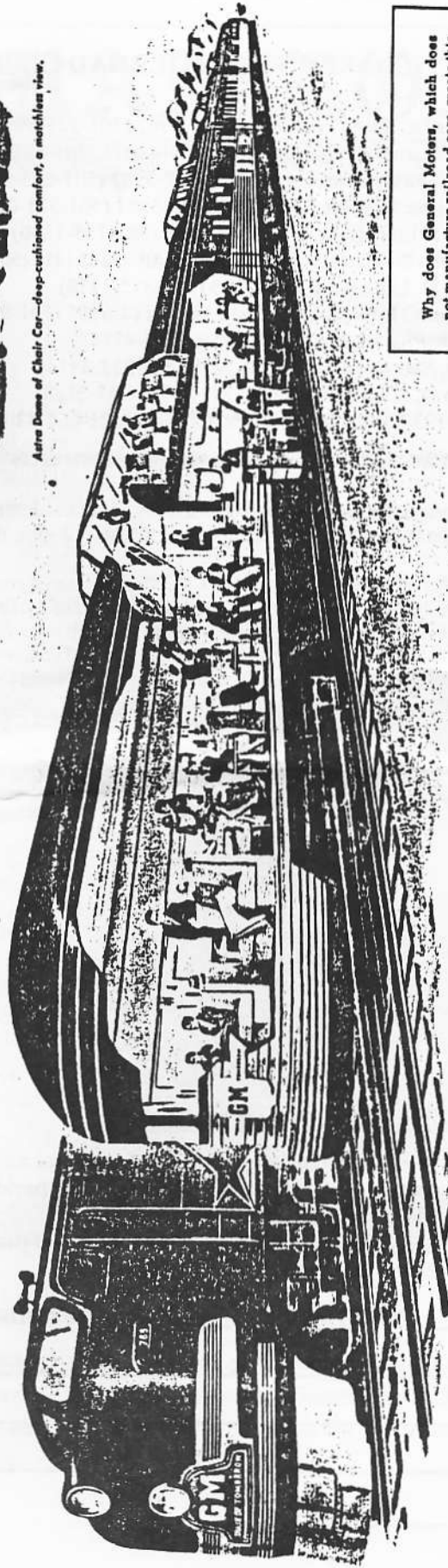
ROCK ISLAND GROUP meets about twice a year. They met February 18 in North Little Rock (sorry I missed getting this in the newsletter). Contact David Crotts, 8828 S Graphic Dr, Alma AR 72921. Another group, the Rock Island retired group also meets, about once monthly, at various locations. Contact L. T. Walker, 3520 Lakeview Rd, North Little Rock AR 72116 for information on this organization.



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BOARD '98 - John Hodkin, Jr., 506 Gordon St, N Little Rock AR 72117 (501-945-2128)
BOARD '99 - Stanley Wozencraft, PO Box 1938. Little Rock AR 72203-1938 (501-664-3301)

The Arkansas Railroad Club is a non-profit organization that meets on the second Sunday of the month. This month we will meet on Sunday, APRIL 9 at the Twin City Bank Building on Main Street in North Little Rock. We are a chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. Programs are presented.

The **ARKANSAS RAILROADER** is the 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, you must be a member of the Club. Current dues are \$20/year for Arkansas residents and also \$20/year for out-of-state. The **RAILROADER** is mailed to all members automatically.

If you would like to join, send your check made out to the "Arkansas Railroad Club" to: ATTN:Treasurer, ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB, P.O. Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119. You may also join the National Railway Historical Society through our Club by paying \$14/year more, or \$34/year.

Editor of the **ARKANSAS RAILROADER** is Ken Ziegenbein. Everything having to do with the **ARKANSAS RAILROADER** should be sent to the address below, ATTN:Editor. Please let me know if your address changes, as **NEWSLETTERS CANNOT BE FORWARDED**.

Arkansas Railroad Club mail should also be sent to the address below.



**ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB
P. O. BOX 9151
NORTH LITTLE ROCK AR 72119**

Newsletter and FAX phone: (501)-758-1340
(Leave message on recorder if I'm not there)

JOIN THE ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB

Dues are \$20/year per individual. Dues are always due JANUARY 1ST of each year and apply to the calendar year. You may also join the National Historical Railway Society through our club by paying \$14/year more (total payment for both club membership and NRHS membership would be \$34 per year).

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