



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
N.R.H.S.

ARKANSAS RAILROADER



VOLUME 29 NUMBER 2 FEBRUARY 1998



A cold, snowy day in Hazen, Arkansas in this heartwarming scene from the early 1950s. You can see the smoke coming from the chimney of the Rock Island depot. The depot is still standing and used as a museum in 1998, and a small section of track remains in front of it, even though this line has been abandoned and rail taken up elsewhere. *(This photo is part of a collection of Rock Island accident investigation pictures given to L. T. Walker recently).*



When the Little Rock & Fort Smith R.R. laid rails into the area south of Cadron Ridge, the town of Conway, Arkansas was established in 1870 and a small depot was built and the next year it was enlarged a wee bit. The LR&FS became part of the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern in 1906, and in 1912 the company announced a new brick depot would be built for the growing town.

The 40-year old wood depot was placed on rollers and 25 workers pushed it across the main line westward, where it became a freight house. The new brick depot, 25 feet wide and 180 feet long, was built on the site of the old one at a cost of \$40,000. It was opened for business 1 April 1914.

During the early 1940s, there was a steady flow of troop trains for World War II in addition to two daily regular passenger trains. The last passenger train through Conway ran 28 March 1960. (*Gene Hull photo in June 1960*). (Unfortunately, this depot was demolished - date unknown - for a parking lot. - Editor)

THE OLD TRAIN STATION

by: John Hogan

I see the old train station,
Its platform filled with carts,
Where once old friends and neighbors stood,
Expectant joy in their hearts.

It seems I hear the laughter
That filled the waiting room
I could swear I see bright faces
Still shining through the gloom.

How many joyous greetings there,
How many sad farewells
Were muffled in the hiss of steam
Or the clamer of the bells.

All too many institutions
Such as this are fading fast,
These new modern innovations
Are blotting out the past.

But memory still gives to me,
A most welcome invitation
To journey to a bygone day
When I see an old train station.

(Sent in by Kathleen Barnes of Batesville, Arkansas)

1998 OFFICERS/POSITIONS OF THE ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB

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BOARD '00 - Gene Hull, 3507 E Washington #31, North Little Rock AR 72114-6455 (501-945-7386)
BOARD '01 - Tom Shook, 1716 Alberta Dr. Little Rock AR 72227-3902 (501-225-8955)
BOARD '02 - Bill Bailey, 8318 Reymere Dr, Little Rock AR 72227-3944 (501-224-6828)

NEXT MEETING/PROGRAM

The next meeting of the Arkansas Railroad Club, Little Rock Chapter NRHS, will be on Sunday, February 8 on the third floor of the Mercantile Bank in North Little Rock (on Main Street, just across the street from the Riverfront Hilton). The program will be a slide show by Barton Jennings, showing us some of his many railroad pictures from his many foreign and domestic trips.

The regular business meeting will begin at 2 p.m., but you may come at 1 p.m. for some Bart's slides. He will give his regular program following the business meeting. Refreshments will be served.

Speaking of Bart, is this the very same Bart Jennings that will have an article in the April *Railfan Magazine* on the KCS?

The February issue is slated to be mailed around January 28, give or take a couple of days. **Deadline** for the March issue is **February 15**.

DUES TIME! - Look on your mailing label. If it says "98DEC" then you are current. If it says "97DEC" then your dues are due. Local dues are \$20 and NRHS national dues are \$17. Send in \$37 for both or \$20 for local. They (and most other NRHS chapter dues across the country) are due January 1 of each year. Send to PO Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119.

OUR SYMPATHIES go out to former President **Tom Shook**, who lost his wife on January 9.

Betty Rice Shook was born in Blytheville, Arkansas on January 1, 1926. She was Associate Professor Emeritus in the Department of Medical Technology of the College of Health Related Professions at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS). She began her career at UAMS in 1952 as chief technologist and instructor in Medical Technology. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Medical Technology from UAMS in 1961 and a Master of Education degree from the University of Arkansas in 1983. She was honored as Medical Technologist of the year and Educator of the Year by the Arkansas Society of Medical Technology. She was chairman of the department on her retirement in 1988. Tom's address is: 1716 Alberta Dr, Little Rock AR 72227-3902, 501-225-8955.

FORMER MEMBER DIES - Famous photographer of bridges and railroads, and former Arkansas Railroad Club member **Johnnie Gray** died January 9 at the age of 81. He was born on May 20, 1916 in Guin, Alabama. He was a retired photographer for the Arkansas Highway Department and took many photos of trains in Arkansas over the years. He retired in 1986. His daughter, Barbara Crosswell, said he was known for using large-format still cameras to take pictures and also filmed annual progress movies for the state. Gray was the son of a railroad man, who was killed when Johnnie was young. Since his mother's health didn't allow her to care for him, he was eventually placed in an

orphanage. While there, he worked for the Dothan, Alabama *Eagle* newspaper as photographer. He came to Arkansas in 1953.

MEMBER NEWS - Member and former board member **Tom Shircliff** went into Baptist Hospital in Little Rock in early January for surgery. Hopefully, everything will be fine. His home address is: 129 Jessica Dr, Sherwood AR 72120-3429, 501-834-4914. *** Member and former secretary **Polly Hamilton** is having heart problems and misses our company at the meetings. Her address is: 2725 Valley Forge Dr, Benton AR 72015-2781, 501-776-3722. *** Member **Bill Church** is staying the same. He is in a convalescent center in Lonoke, Arkansas. His home address is: 5619 Bel Caro Pl, North Little Rock AR 72118-3665, 501-753-4582. *** Member **R. W. McGuire** is now at home, having spent time in St. Vincent Hospital. His address is: 114 Rice St, Little Rock AR 72205-1738, 501-375-1738.

AMTRAK INAUGURAL - Members **John Jones, Ken Ziegenbein, Bill Eldridge** and **Bill Pollard**, and others I haven't heard about, will board Amtrak's new Chicago-Los Angeles train (making four trains a week) on Saturday, February 7 for various destinations. None will be back for the February 8 meeting (so if you have news or photos for the newsletter, please mail them to the club). John Jones's itinerary includes San Antonio, El Paso, Tucson, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Denver, Chicago then back to Little Rock. Sounds like fun.

A&M SPECIAL TRIP - The Arkansas & Missouri Railroad will have a Railfan Special on March 28, 1998, a one-time event. This special will depart the railroad's Springdale, Arkansas depot and run all the way to Fort Smith, stopping at the old Frisco Depot right in the Fort Smith Historic District, next to the Trolley Museum. This will be the first and probably last time a passenger train will go over the Arkansas River Bridge into historic Fort Smith.

The train leaves Springdale at 8:00 a.m. and returns about 5:00 p.m. Several photo runbys are planned in spots not easily reached. A lunch stop will be made at the Frisco Depot in Van Buren, where there are a number of restaurants close at hand.

John Jones said that the trip will use two F1 Alcos, Nos. 22 and 20. It may be the last trip for No. 22.

Price for this trip is \$45.00 per person, round trip only. Reservations must be made by March 20th by calling 1-800-687-8600 or by mail to Arkansas & Missouri Railroad, 306 East Emma, Springdale AR 72764. Credit cards are accepted. E-mail address: arkmo@ipa.net

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS: This month we welcome **W. H. Spurgeon**, #3 Painted Daisy Place, Amarillo TX 79106; **Bruce E. Stair**, 491 Heber Springs RD W., Heber Springs AR 72543 (501-362-6454); **Van L. Phillips**, PO Box 7, Concord AR 72523 (870-668-3423); **Dave E. Newton**, 4760 Spike Ridge Trail, Greenwood AR 72936 (501-996-2536); **Lyman E. Holler**, 6155 Bethesda Ln, Batesville AR 72501 (870-698-2868).

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS - Here are the birthdays you sent in with your dues. If you didn't use the official application/renewal form, I have no way of knowing your birthday, so you won't be listed unless you tell me personally.

EDWARD L. BUBNIAK (2/01); GEORGE H. CLIPPERT (2/02); GEORGE D. BELL (2/03); FRANK A. BROOKS, JR (2/07); WILLIAM A. TREADWAY III (2/07); A. B. SIMPKINS (2/08); PAUL E. OTTENS (2/10); ROBERT C. OSWALD (2/12); GLORIA GOSS (2/15); GARY McCULLAH (2/17); FAY JEAN ROYCE (2/21); CARL W. LANCASTER (2/27). - *May you always sneeze outward.*

CALENDARS FOR 1998 are almost sold out. If you want one, send in your money now. They contain 14 black & white photos of various railroads in Arkansas. As you know, the price is \$7 each.

OUR SHOW & SALE - The Board of Directors met on January 11 and gave approval of a Show & Sale this year, tentatively set for June 27 if there are no conflicts.

LIKED MOPAC STORY - Joel Boucher, who's lived with Missouri Pacific/Union Pacific from 1950 to present and is current editor of Camerail's *Mixed Train*, liked Gene Hull's story on the "New Missouri Pacific" in January's *Railroader*. He said the article was a heart warmer of the past.

AFRICA TRIP - Wings of the World, Inc (416-482-1223) will be offering a three week air and steam powered rail trip across Africa from July 13 through August 2, 1998. This trip leaves from Toronto, Canada via British Airways. In Africa, the steam powered luxury train (Rovos Rail) will go through the countries of Tanzania, Zambia, Zimbabwe, and South Africa (over 3,000 miles). Cost is \$14,792 per person. (I put this in to show that there are still chances to ride luxury trains in the world, although definitely out of most people's price range).

CABOOSE SOCIETY - Yes, there is a group that devotes itself to the railroad caboose. It's called the American Railway Caboose Historical Educational Society, Inc (ARCHES). Voting membership is \$25 a year (\$20 a year 60 or over). They put out a newsletter called *Caboose News* occasionally and have a national convention. A future goal is to have a museum devoted to the caboose. To join, send membership fees to: ARCHES, PO Box 2772, St. Louis MO 63116 or call 314-752-3148. "Don't let ... the end ... end! Now is when ... the end, justifies the means to preserve it!"

SILVER MEDAL RECEIVED - *Arkansas Railroader* editor (yours truly) **Ken Ziegenbein** and his supervisor Allen B. Lee went to Washington D.C. December 2, 1997 to accept the U.S. Department of Commerce's Silver Medal for the weather warnings they (and others at the National Weather Service in North Little Rock) put out during the March 1, 1997 Arkansas tornadoes. An independent survey after the storms showed that people were warned about the tornadoes 15 to 38 minutes before they hit and that many lives were saved because of these advanced warnings. This is the first time the office in Arkansas received a Silver Medal, which is rarely given. (I was the doppler weather radar operator that day and hope such storms never happen again. After seeing some of the damage firsthand days later, it's amazing how fast someone's life can be changed by an act of God. One should NOT take life for granted.)

REGARDING TROOP SLEEPERS - Member **Mike Adams** (3609 Lakeshore Drive, North Little Rock AR 72116-9035) had the following to say about the use or non-use of troop sleepers referred to in the December 1997 *Railroader*. I was wondering what happened to all those that were built in the 1940s just before WWII ended and why not many were built during WWI. Mike's letter:

"Compared to World War II, the first conflict was short and sweet. It was a European war and the bulk of the activity was on the east coast - ports of embarkation - staging camps, etc. Most of the training camps were in the south and southwest. The railroads at that time had lots of passenger equipment, albeit lots of it was wooden and a lot still sported open platforms but they would still carry "troops." Also, the government was running the railroads during WWI and while they did come up with some regular freight cars and locomotives - no troop sleepers.

World War II was about four times larger and longer than Number One and was truly a World War and we had training camps, staging areas all over the country and ports of embarkation on all coasts. Many troop movements might be from near the east coast to a west coast port and could and would tie up equipment, Pullmans say, for up to 10 days. Construction of anything was strictly controlled by the War Production Board and they would allow NO construction of passenger equipment. They did allow carefully controlled construction of freight equipment and some roads got some locomotives. The MoPac got 15 giant 4-8-4's in 1943.

Then the Defense Plant Corporation was given permission to construct 1200 troop sleepers and 400 kitchen cars of a new design. Started in 1942, delivery was made in 1943. Several hundred "hospital" cars were developed, ordered and placed in service to take care of dases being brought back from Africa, Sicily, Italy and then France and Germany as well as the Pacific theater. Later, in 1945, a like group of sleepers were ordered and received just in time to help deliver close to home returning troops.

So far as I know, most of these cars were sold to various railroads and converted into maintenance of way bunk and kitchen and possibly some other types of cars. I am sure the government kept some but have no figures. I was in Fort Eustis, Virginia in 1954 and it was the rail transportation school but saw no such equipment around. Step over to the James River and you would see hundreds of Liberty and Victory ships in mothballs.

I am afraid after reading this you are still wondering. (*Thanks, Mike. You've answered many of my questions*)

Member **Thomas S. Duggan** (15225 Lakewood Dr, Lowell AR 72745-9222) believes there were no passenger cars built in 1918-1919 because of Federal control of virtually all U.S. railroads by the United States Railroad Administration. The USRA did authorize production of locomotives with a number of USRA locomotives seeing service until about the end of steam power.

Mr. Duggan also remembers that the Kansas City Southern ordered ten passenger cars that were delivered in 1965.

Apparently the traffic on the KCS help up better than some lines, although KCS ended all passenger service only four years later in November 1969. The KCS coaches ended up with New Jersey Transit, where they still may carry commuters to New York City.

1999 CALENDAR SURVEY - For the 1999 calendar, I'd like to know if you want the cover picture to be included inside the calendar as well as on the cover or just put it on the cover. In 1997, I put the cover photo inside as well, but in previous years and in 1998 I only put it on the cover and did not repeat it. Let me know as soon as you can.

Speaking of the 1999 calendar, it will be published in time for the June Show and Sale, so must be sent to the printer by the last week in March. So, if you have any photos (B&W or color, prints 3 x 5 or larger), they must be in my hands by then. All photos must be of railroads in Arkansas, any time. Send to the Arkansas Railroad Club, PO Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119.

EDITOR'S NEW ADDRESS - My home address had changed to 1023 Claycut Cir, North Little Rock AR 72116-3728. Send personal correspondence to this address, but you may continue to send newsletter submissions to our club's address: PO Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119. My phone number will stay the same, as will my E-mail address. Thanks. (Ken Ziegenbein)

WANTED : FOR SALE OR 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. We reserve the right to refuse listings if deemed inappropriate. The Arkansas Railroad Club is not responsible for misleading ads.

FOR SALE - Annual Passes 1915-1952 AT&SF, CB&Q, C&NW, C&S, FW&DC, MKT, Pullman, RI and UP. Also various membership cards Order of RR Telegraphers and American Train Dispatchers Association 1909-1933. SASE for list to: Russell Tedder, 1401 Cedar Street, Crossett, AR 71635.

FOR SALE - The shell (body) of one of the last 12 Budd passenger sleepercoaches built in 1959. It was used on the New York Central then sold to the Northern Pacific as No. 334, later being used by Amtrak and called the *Loch Rannoch*. It was obtained for mechanical parts, but the body would make a good museum with the interior of convertible beds, plumbing, 110v lights and hardware

pretty much complete. Car can be shipped in freight service, with truck returned, or at higher costs can come with trucks and "last turn" wheelsets. For information, contact Chuck Crisler, PO Box 114, Ponchatoula LA70454-0114 or call 504-589-0092.

FOR SALE - M&NA, M&A HO decal sets, black, white, yellow (for gold): \$3.00 and SASE. Rewiring instructions for Spectrum GE 70 tonner (used by A&O) for slower run speed: Free for SASE. Considering A&O decal set IF enough interest. Contact Charles Roth, PO Box 1923, St. Louis MO 63118.

WANTED - Standard gauge hand car. Advise price, condition and location. Peter Smykla, PO Box 1892, Pine Bluff AR 71613 or call 870-535-4724.

FOR SALE - The Arkansas Railroad Club's hardbound, 120-page book called *Railroad Stations and Trains through Arkansas and the Southwest* is ready for mailing. It was

written by Clifton Hull with help from Tom Shook, among other club members. Kevin EuDaly of White River Productions did the graphic design and artwork. You can pick them up at the meeting or order from White River Productions, 24632 Anchor Ave, Bucklin MO 64631. Cost is \$29.95 plus \$4.50 postage and handling (total of \$34.45 if you're having it mailed). To use MasterCard or Visa, you must call White River Productions at 816-695-4433.

FOR SALE - James R. Fair's new book *The Louisiana & Arkansas Railway*. This 176-page clothbound book has 80 black and white illustrations and covers the Louisiana & Arkansas Railway from its beginning to the modern era. Cost is \$47.95 plus \$4.50 postage/handling. Order from Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb IL 60115, 815-753-1075. James Fair is and has been an Arkansas Railroad Club member for years.

RAILROAD ABANDONMENT PROPOSALS

These abandonment proposals have been printed in the Federal Register OR have come directly from the Surface

Transportation Board. They will go in effect unless one of the following occurs: 1) an offer of financial assistance is received; 2) a request for public use of the land is received (for instance, rails-to-trails); 3) petitions to reopen the case is filed. Railroads, before they can file these "notices of exemption under CFR 1152 Subpart F," must certify that 1) no local traffic has moved over the line for at least 2 years; 2) any overhead traffic can be routed over other lines; 3) no formal complaint filed by a user is pending and; 4) environmental reports, historic reports, transmittal letter, newspaper publication, and notice to governmental agencies have been met. For each new abandonment proposal, I'll take off the same number from the top of the list, so the latest will always be on the bottom.

WISCONSIN - WISCONSIN CENTRAL LTD - To abandon the Dresser-Amery Line from m.p. 47.83 in Dresser to m.p. 63.08, the end of the line, in Amery, Wisconsin, a distance of 15.25 miles. Final decision by March 13, 1998. (STB Docket No. AB-303, Sub-No. 18X, decided December 4, 1997, served December 12, 1997)

TEXAS- DALLAS RAPID TRANSIT - To abandon 6.99 miles of line between m.p. D-762.26 near Mockingbird Land and m.p. D-755.27 near the vicinity of the Kansas City Southern bridge overpass. DART acquired this line from the Missouri Pacific in 1990. Effective January 14, 1998. (STB Docket No. AB-439, Sub-No. 3X, decided December 8, 1997, served December 15, 1997)

WEST VIRGINIA - CSX - To abandon that portion of its C&O Business Unit, Jarrolds Valley Subdivision, between m.p. CLP-15.3 at R.O. Junction and m.p. CLP-18.3 at the end of track at Picard, West Virginia, a distance of 3.0 miles. Final decision by March 20, 1998. (STB Docket No. AB-55, Sub-No. 556X, decided December 10, 1997, served December 19, 1997)

WEST VIRGINIA - CSX - To abandon 6.24 miles between m.p. CAR-0.58 at Beckley Junction, West Virginia and m.p. CAR-6.82 at the end of the line at Cranberry, WV. Final decision by March 23, 1998. (STB Docket No. AB-55, Sub-No. 552X, decided December 12, 1997, served December 23, 1997)

SOUTH CAROLINA - SOUTH CAROLINA CENTRAL RAILROAD CO - To abandon 2 segments from m.p. AJK 585.34 in East Greenville, SC to m.p. AJK 588.63 in Greenville and from m.p. 0.0 to m.p. 2.- in Greenville, SC, a distance of 5.29 miles. Final decisions April 1, 1998. (STB Docket No. AB-312, Sub-No. 2X, decided December 22, 1997, served December 31, 1997)

GEORGIA - CSX - To abandon 0.51 miles of line between m.p. AP-617.94 and m.p. AP-618.45 at the end of track in Pearson, Georgia. Effective February 6, 1998. (STB Docket No. AB-55, Sub-No. 557X, decided December 19, 1997, served January 7, 1998)

CONNECTICUT - BOSTON & MAIN CORP./SPRINGFIELD RAILWAY CO - To abandon the Canal Branch extending from m.p. 14.50 in Cheshire, CT to m.p. 24.00 in Southington, CT, a distance of 9.50 miles. On January 8, Dalton Enterprises filed for an oral hearing, which was denied because Dalton gave no reason for the request. Original filing was on November 14, 1997. (STB Docket No. AB-32, Sub No. 83 and STB Docket No. AB-355, Sub No. 23, decided January 12, 1998, served January 13, 1998)

ARKANSAS RAIL NEWS

DEPOT AGREEMENT

(Russellville) - An agreement has been reached between the city of Russellville and Union Pacific Railroad in regards to the Missouri Pacific depot there. Russellville alderman agreed in mid November to build a small maintenance building and close the Glenwood Avenue railroad crossing in exchange for the railroad donating its old depot and surrounding property to the city. Friends of the Depot, an advocacy group, has suggested using the depot for a museum and visitor's center.

As part of the agreement, UP will widen the crossing at Phoenix Avenue after the city closes the Glenwood Avenue crossing. The city will also build a 16 by 30 foot building for railroad personnel north of Jonesboro Avenue. *(The Courier, Russellville, November 14, 1997 via George D. Jones)*

KCS TRAIN DERAILS

(Ashdown) - A minor derailment of a KCS engine occurred November 6 on Highway 71. Apparently, newly laid asphalt caused the train to run off the tracks. It only took a

couple of hours for the engine to be rerailed. *(The Little River News, November 13, 1997 via S. R. Martinez)*

COAL CARS DONATED

(Russellville) - Two coal cars, which used to be used in a coal mine near Paris, Arkansas from the 1880s through the 1940s, were donated to the city of Russellville in mid October by Willeen Hixon. They were found in good shape recently by a state clean-up project at the site of the old mine (the Bernice Mine). They had been sitting there over 50

years. A committee greeted their arrival (at Arkansas Tech University's Museum of History). Eighty-seven year old Duell Kirby, who used to work in the coal mines, reminisced about that job, as did 72-year old Leon Gray..

Kirby stated, "I got paid 88 cents a ton and our cars held 2,500 pounds of coal. We were each assigned a number, which was attached to the coal car with a metal tag." In 1925, two weeks of hard work in hazardous conditions netted Kirby \$30 when he started working at age 15. Coal miners of Kirby's era worked a small area with a pick ax. Each miner had a covered lunch pail, which might have consisted of a poor miner's meal of whippoorwill peas. Rats living in the mine shafts figured out how to open the pail lids

with their tails.

Some of the larger mines near Russellville were located south of town on both sides of Highway 7. Occasionally nature hikers may stumble onto one of these mines, seeing small bits of shiny black coal litter the ground. Gene Hull and Bill Pollard's book "The Dardanelle & Russellville Railroad" has a chapter on these mines. (*Russellville Courier, October 14, via Mary Cahoon and Gene Hull*)

ARGENTA ROCK ISLAND DEPOT

(*North Little Rock*) - The former Rock Island Argenta (North Little Rock) depot is undergoing renovations. A new roof has been put on, but I hear it leaks. When finished, it should resemble the station when it was first built. Grants to renovate it were partially

obtained by ISTEAM money..

TXK UNION STATION

(*Texarkana*) - According to Vicki Dunbar of Longview, Texas, the old Union Station in Texarkana is now reopened. The main station building is open again and has a new grill and bar operating there. It is called Union Station Bar & Grill. The new owners are not rail folks, but are very nice and you can roam all around this old station. Also, the outside area that faces the big rail yard is open and it is a safe and fun place to watch trains. The Bar & Grill's phone number is 870-773-1154. (*Via the Internet and E-mail*)

GENERAL RAIL NEWS

CHINA RAILWAYS CUTBACK

China's state-run railways plan to shed more than one million workers (a third of the total) as part of a restructuring plan. Apparently, Chinese railways are rapidly losing ground to road, air and water transport (vis-a-vie the U.S. in the 1950s). Chinese railways carried "only" 917 million passengers in 1997, down from 942 million in 1996. They plan to spend \$4.2 billion U.S. dollars on railway construction this year. (*Via the Internet*)

FRISCO STEAM ENGINE MOVED

(*Enid, Oklahoma*) - A 165-ton steam engine, Frisco No. 1519, was moved November 24 through Enid, Oklahoma to the Railroad Museum of Oklahoma, where it will be restored. It was loaded on a flatbed truck. The engine had been sitting in a city park since 1954. It was built in the 1920s. (*The Daily Oklahoman, November 25, 1997 via*

Tom Lewis of Houston, Texas and Jim Johnson of Overland Park, Kansas)

There are 106,264 fewer miles of railroad lines in the U.S. than there were at the end of World War II and 174,808 fewer miles of track. U.S. railroads, however, still operate 136,115 miles of routes - more than triple the U.S. interstate system.

ABANDONED RI TRACKS

(*Lees Summit, Missouri*) - The long-dormant (since 1981) Rock Island tracks that run from near Kansas City (Leeds Junction) through Lees Summit then on to St. Louis, Missouri (Owensville) may yet come back to life. A rail official said January 8 that a deal by General Railway Corp to buy the track from Union Pacific may be done by late February. UP now owns this track, which SP obtained when the RI went bankrupt. SP never used the track, but let the rails stay. In

the meantime, whole new housing subdivisions were built next to these abandoned tracks and residents now are worried about having coal trains running through their backyards. (A railfan's delight!)

LIFESAVER VIDEO

(*Madison, Illinois*) - Students of Madison High School, which sits next to BNSF tracks, made a 12 minute Operation Lifesaver video with the help of BNSF's Bob Brooks. This video didn't cover highway crossings, but rather illegal trespassing by pedestrians and students. The video, called "Byron's Last Day," showed a student taking a short cut across the tracks in front of a stopped train, which started to move before he could get out of the way. The point was not to take risks. It will be shown in schools nationally in 1998. (*Belleville News-Democrat, November 16, 1997 via Jim Johnson*)

AMTRAK NEWS

GUEST EDITORIAL

The following editorial appeared in the January 8 *Journal of Commerce*. Only parts

of it are printed here: "*Despised by conservative Republicans and tolerated by most other members of Congress, the largely*

taxpayer-funded Amtrak has cheated death for 27 years because it is adored by voters - even though most Americans don't ride

Amtrak trains.

Indeed, a recent Gallup Poll shows that, despite wide support for spending cuts and balanced budgets, 69% of Americans favor continued Amtrak subsidies. Thus, politicians of every stripe know that to back the execution of Amtrak is political suicide. — Without a permanent and dedicated trust fund enjoyed by **subsidized highways, airports, harbors, inland waterways and mass transit**, Amtrak must beg for annual congressional grants." (Highlighting was mine).

FOURTH TEXAS EAGLE

On February 6, a fourth *Texas Eagle* will begin service from Chicago. This train will be a direct train from Chicago to Los Angeles, eliminating any changing of cars in San Antonio. Due to exceptionally heavy advance bookings, an additional sleeper has been added to this train. Several club members will ride this train, at least as far as Dallas. Special events along the route and on board are anticipated.

The fourth *Eagle* will enter Little Rock Saturday, February 7. That means that with the regular *Eagle* returning northbound on Sunday, February 8, you can now make weekend trips to Dallas, covering at least Saturday nights and Sunday mornings. Let's hope that Amtrak will add additional days. (Amtrak's Express Car service is one reason for the added frequencies). (Thanks to Bill Pollard for some of the above)

COMPANION FARES

Through February 28, *Texas Eagle* passengers can cut their ticket prices in half by taking a companion along. Under the Companions Fares plan, the first passenger pays regular fare and the companion travels free.

PARANOID SUICIDE

(Near Omaha, Nebraska) - In late November, a couple jumped to their deaths from the emergency exits out of Amtrak's fast-moving *California Zephyr* streamliner as it was nearing Omaha. The 30 and 34 year

old couple from Logan, Ohio was described by other passengers as paranoid and kept saying they had to get off the train. They had boarded in Sacramento, California after attending a relative's funeral.

Amtrak conductor Roger Hardin said he saw the lady backing out of an emergency exit while her male companion was moving out of an adjacent window. Hardin ran to them and grabbed the man's coat, but it ripped. Both fell off the train and were killed.

The train stopped and the bodies were found along the tracks in an industrial park close to Omaha. The man's body was on a trestle in view of motorists driving on the street below and the lady's body was 30 yards away.

AMTRAK'S DOWNS RESIGNS

Thomas M. Downs, Amtrak's President since 1993, resigned December 10 under pressure from Amtrak's Board of Directors. A new director will be appointed soon.

EXCURSIONS/SHOWS/EVENTS OF OTHER CLUBS

PINE BLUFF, ARKANSAS - April 4, 1998 - Cotton Belt Rail Historical Society's Annual Show & Sale at the Railroad Museum of Arkansas off Second Street in Pine Bluff. Contact them at PO Box 2044, Pine Bluff AR 71613-2044.

SPRINGDALE, ARKANSAS - March 28, 1998 - Arkansas & Missouri Railroad Railfan Special, a one-time event. This special will depart the railroad's

Springdale, Arkansas depot and run all the way to Fort Smith, stopping at the old Frisco Depot right in the Fort Smith Historic District, next to the Trolley Museum. This will be the first and probably last time a passenger train will go over the Arkansas River Bridge into historic Fort Smith.

The train leaves Springdale at 8:00 a.m. and returns about 5:00 p.m. Several photo runbys are planned in spots not easily reached. A lunch stop will be made at the

Frisco Depot in Van Buren, where there are a number of restaurants close at hand.

Price for this trip is \$45.00 per person, round trip only. Reservations must be made by March 20th by calling 1-800-687-8600 or by mail to Arkansas & Missouri Railroad, 306 East Emma, Springdale AR 72764. Credit cards are accepted. E-mail address: arkmo@ipa.net

THE DAY THE DISPATCHER CAUSED A NEAR HEAD ON COLLISION

by: L. T. Walker, retired Rock Island conductor

In the last days of the steam engine following World War II, all Rock Island trains in Little Rock were steam powered except the "Rocket Trains." Diesel switch engines working in Biddle Yards and all steam engines were 1700 on freight locals, except 1500 on Booneville and Searcy runs. The regular freight was 2300. Passenger trains between Memphis and Los Angeles

could carry 4000, 900 on passing through trains.

There were two locals out of Brinkley, one went to Memphis and back the next day. One switched Brinkley and made a Stuttgart turn. The Stuttgart turn had three brakemen. When we left Brinkley for Stuttgart, one brakeman lined up behind and stayed there, he was called the swing brakeman under the Arkansas full crew law. I caught the Brinkley-Stuttgart run off the extra board, deadheaded to Brinkley on the Rocket train. There I went to work about 8 a.m., then on to Stuttgart, working at Brasfield, Bisco, DeValls Bluff and on to Mesa, then to the Stuttgart main line. On the return trip, we had to get a register check.

The company had put the operations agent on duty at night instead of days. Our conductor, Guy Bailey, had to copy a train order. He copied an order clearing us to go on to Brinkley, "ALL SUPERIOR TRAINS HAVE ARRIVED." This gave us permission to go on to Brinkley.

We left Mesa with about 25 cars, went by the depot in DeValls Bluff, found a red block at the approach to the White River Bridge. We stopped and as the head brakeman, I had to inspect the track to the bridge. I was getting off the engine when I heard a whistle, then saw smoke. The head of a steam engine carrying two white flags was headed for us. The engineer already had released the brake. He put it in reverse as fast as he could. We backed up all the way to Mesa on our own, no flag to go ahead on the siding. The extra came, stopped and told us, "you are all fired." Then we showed him our train orders, they agreed that we were in the right.

The dispatcher by the name of Vance got fired for one year. The company put the operator on days. The conductor didn't have to copy train orders anymore. I have often thought how close we came to a head-on collision and how many people could have been hurt or killed. I know that in my many years of railroading, I have been very lucky and blessed.

L. T. Walker, retired

ANOTHER ROCK ISLAND TALE

I received this letter in early December from Julia Bell, 3715 Victory Cir, Fort Smith AR 72901-6541. Can anyone remember her father, W. J. (Bill) Worsath?

"The flood of 1927 caused the banks of the Arkansas River to cover the tracks of the Rock Island west of Little Rock. My father was an engineer for that railroad running the freights between Little Rock and Booneville where we lived. Due to the floods, trains were halted or held in the Little Rock yards. My father and other crewmen from Booneville asked permission to take a train home. The yard superintendent at first refused, finally gave in and gave the orders. The crew made it through with water lapping the fire box.

As my father had an unusual way of sounding the two longs, two shorts for whistle crossings, all Booneville knew when the crew came home.

When my father died in 1931, one of the floral arrangements was a full size replica of the driving wheel of an engine.

My father: W. J. (Bill) Worsath 1879-1931.

REMEMBERING

by P. B. Wooldridge

We old timers do a lot of reminiscing during our years in retirement. While sitting alone, I just recalled the following incident and decided to go to my typewriter.

It was back in the late 1930s and I was protecting second trick at McNeil, Arkansas. No. 27, a dead freight, a "dog," had just stopped on the main line to set out and pick up. I looked out the window and saw Conductor Duke slowly approach. I knew he had a hard, slow day by the way he walked. Ordinarily a very quiet and mild person, I could tell he was angry.

He strolled into the telegraph office, and threw a big wad of train orders and clearances, everything he had collected between Pine Bluff Shops and McNeil, down on the table and exclaimed: "Tell that Dispatcher to give me orders I can run on, or I'll tie up here on the main line."

I'd only been working a short time, and the last thing I needed was a fight between the Dispatcher and a Conductor. No need to be uneasy, for, to my surprise, the Dispatcher calmly issued several train orders, we cleared No. 27, and I was relieved when Conductor Duke left town.



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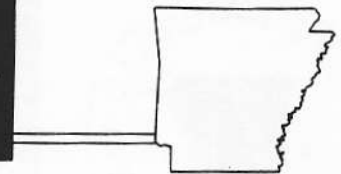
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Alco 81, 82, 95, 96

American Car & Foundry (ACF) 72
American Steel & Wire Company 102
Arkansas Gazette 4
Arkansas Power & Light 106
Austin, Moses 45
Austin, Stephen F. 45

Bankhead, Senator 73

Barney, Joshua 36
Blue Goose 72
Budd 19, 21, 22
Budweiser 13
Buchanan, William 102

Caboosh, Tony 13

Civil War 4
Clayton, Powell 100
Clinton, Bill 44
Colorado Fuel and Iron Company 7
Conway, Elias N. 4
Cotton Belt Rail Historical Society 71
Couch, Harvey 106, 107
Crazy Water Crystals 48
Crossett Lumber Company 15

Deramus, William 107

Diamond Jo Line 12, 13, 15
Dispatcher 49, 51, 115
Dolar Way Road 85
Duncan, W. B. (car ferry) 73
Dutch 102, 107

Eagle of the Rails (SSW) 82

Edenborn, William 102

Fordyce, S. W. 82, 103

Goddard, Jay 48, 59, 82

Great Depression 106
Great Southern Hotel 5

Hattie Green 48

Hotel Marion 5

Interstate Commerce Commission 44

Jim Crow 88

Lincoln, Abraham 7

Locations:

Abilene, TX 70
Adrian, TX 23
Alexandria, LA 16, 40, 60, 61, 102
Amarillo, TX 12, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21-24
Amsterdam, MO 104
Anderson, MO 106
Argentina, AR 8, 37
Argentine, KS 102
Arkadelphia, AR 5
Arkansas City, AR 61
Arkansas River 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 17, 42, 51, 58, 69
Atkins, AR 56
Augusta, AR 36
Baird, TX 49, 55, 59, 70
Baird Hill, TX 49
Bald Knob, AR 36, 50, 51
Baring Cross Bridge (Little Rock) 42
Baton Rouge, LA 107
Bauxite, AR 12

Beaumont, TX 102, 115
Beebe, AR 51
Benton, AR 15, 42, 43, 60
Benzal, AR 63
Biddle Yard, Little Rock, AR (CRI&P) 10, 22, 43, 67

Big Rock Quarries, AR 43

Big Sandy, TX 82
Big Spring, TX 50, 55
Bigelow, AR 16
Bird's Point, MO 36
Blackville, AR 56
Booneville, AR 11, 17, 18
Boston Mountains 94
Branson, MO 37, 52, 81
Breckenridge, TX 48, 53
Brentwood, AR 94, 97
Brinkley, AR 5, 16, 82
Bryant, AR 42
Butterfield, AR 12, 15
Cache River 4
Caldwell, OK 5
Camden, AR 8, 12, 16, 36, 43, 86
Camp Pike, Little Rock, AR 56, 57
Camp Polk, Leesville, LA 114
Carlisle, AR 5, 6
Carthage, MO 36
Cave Springs, AR 97
Chicago, IL 6, 9, 13, 14, 18, 24
Choctaw, OK 18
Cincinnati, OH 4
Cisco, TX 48, 53, 59
Clarendon, AR 4
Clarksville, AR 40, 58
Clovis, NM 49
Coal Hill, AR 7
Conway, AR 37, 57
Corning, AR 54
Corsicana, TX 82
Coushatta, LA 102
Crossett, AR 14, 15, 16
Dallas, TX 41, 69, 82, 87, 88, 94, 95, 107
Dardanelle, AR 16
De Ridder, LA 114
Dermott, AR 36, 61
DeQueen, AR 111
DeQuincy, LA 115
DeValls Bluff, AR 4, 5
Diaz, AR 36, 52
Drexel, MO 104
Earle, AR 62
East St. Louis, IL 4, 53
Eden, AR 4
El Dorado, AR 10, 14-16, 25, 27, 36, 43, 46
El Paso, TX 46, 50, 53, 55, 70, 82
El Reno, OK 6, 7, 18-21, 65
Elk City, OK 12
Elk River 106
England 4
England, AR 84, 85
Enid, OK 6
Eudora, AR 73
Eunice, LA 16
Eureka Springs, AR 72, 100
Europe 82, 102
Fair Oaks, AR 83
Fayetteville, AR 59, 94-97
Fordyce, AR 15, 71, 84
Forrest City, AR 5, 36, 62, 64
Fort Reno, OK 7
Fort Smith, AR 6, 40, 55, 57, 59, 72, 94-98, 109, 110
Fort Worth, TX 6, 46, 48-50, 53, 55, 59, 70, 87, 88

Fullis, OK 98

Fulton, AR 36, 45
Galveston, TX 5, 47
Gatesville, TX 82
Geary, OK 16
Gentry, AR 107
Grady, AR 60
Grand Prairie (AR) 83
Gravette, AR 107
Greenwood, AR 6
Greenville, TX 88
Gulf of Mexico 102, 103, 115
Gurdon, AR 36, 43, 46
Guthrie, OK 98
Harrell, AR 14
Hartford, AR 6
Hartshome, OK 6, 18
Haskell, AR 16
Hazen, AR 7
Helena, AR 36, 51, 61, 64, 73, 100
Hennessey, OK 6
Herington, KS 5
Hope, AR 40, 44, 46, 102, 113
Hopefield, AR 4
Hot Springs, AR 9, 11-13, 15, 22, 42-44, 49-51, 66
Houston, TX 46, 47, 87
Howe, OK 6, 9
Hoxie, AR 2, 53, 54
Hume, MO 102
Huntersville, AR 4, 8
Hydro, OK 22
Independence, MO 102
Jefferson Barracks, MO 68
Jena, LA 102
Jenkins Ferry, AR 8
Joplin, MO 53, 73, 94, 100, 102, 104
Junction Bridge, AR 42, 43
Junction City, AR/LA 16
Kansas City, KS 102
Kansas City, MO 6, 28, 42, 51, 102-104, 106
Knoble, AR 36, 50, 62
Lake Charles, LA 49, 103, 115
Lake Sebene 103
Lancaster Yard, Fort Worth, TX 55, 70
Laredo, TX 48
Latour, AR 36
Leachville, AR 85
Leesville, LA 114
Lewisville, AR 82, 87
Lexa, AR 36, 73
Little River 102
Little Rock, AR 2, 8-18, 22, 36-38, 40, 41, 43, 45, 46, 49, 51, 53, 55-57, 60, 66, 67, 69, 81
Little Rock Port, AR 43
Longview, TX 44, 46
Lonoke, AR 7
Lubbock, TX 49, 53
Lula, MS 73
Madison, AR 4
Malvern, AR 12, 13, 16
Mansfield, LA 114
Many, LA 114
Maranna, AR 63, 64
Marshall, TX 46
McAlester, OK 6, 7, 18
McGehee, AR 5, 36, 40, 42, 61
McGregor, TX 89
McLean, TX 23
McNeil, AR 86
Memphis, TN 2, 4, 5, 9, 11-13, 15-18, 22-24, 36, 41, 42, 49-51, 62, 65, 66, 69, 82, 83
Mena, AR 110, 111

Mesa, AR 16
Mexico City, Mexico 46, 48
Military Road, AR 4
Minco, OK 6
Mineapolis, MN 28
Mineral Well, TX 48
Mississippi Delta 5
Mississippi River 4, 36, 51, 53, 62, 64, 73, 100, 102
Monette, MO 94, 95, 100
Monroe, LA 43, 61
Monticello, AR 36, 61
Morrilton, AR 56
Mount Pleasant, TX 87
Mountainburg, AR 95
Narrows, AR 72
Nashville, AR 40
Natchez, MS 102
Nechez River 115
Neosho, MO 100, 104
Nettleton, AR 62
New Braunfels, TX 46
New Orleans, LA 4, 42, 46, 60, 107
Newport, AR 16, 36, 52
Noel, MO 106
Norman, AR 43
Norphlet, AR 36, 43
North Little Rock, AR 8, 9, 17, 37, 54-57, 84, 85
Oklahoma City, OK 7, 11, 17-19, 21, 22, 65, 94, 95, 98
Ola, AR 16, 17
Old Chisolm Trail 6
Old Great Southwest Trail 36
Omaha, NE 7
Ouachita River 14
Ozark, AR 40, 58
Ozark Mountains 36, 94
Packton, LA 102
Palestine, TX 46, 47
Paragould, AR 50, 83
Paris, TX 94
Perry, AR 17
Pettigrew, AR 97
Philadelphia, PA 4, 6
Pine Bluff, AR 8, 42, 43, 60, 71, 82, 83, 85, 87, 89
Pittsburg, KS 106
Pond Creek, OK 6
Poplar Bluff, MO 36, 45, 53
Port Arthur, TX 102, 103, 115
Poteau, OK 110
Poyen, AR 14
Prescott, AR 44
Pueblo, CO 7
Ranger, TX 49, 59
Ranger Hill, TX 59
Reader, AR 36
Rich Mountain, AR 110
Rogers, AR 95, 97
Red River 6, 45
Russellville, AR 7, 40, 57, 58
Sallisaw, OK 109
San Angelo, TX 49, 53
San Antonio, TX 46-49, 69
San Francisco, CA 82
Sayre, OK 17, 22
Scott, AR 84
Searcy, AR 16
Seligman, MO 100
Shamrock, TX 22
Sheridan, AR 60
Shreveport, LA 46, 82, 84, 87, 102, 111-113
Siloam Springs, AR 97, 108

Smith Yard (Little Rock) 42
 Spiro, OK 110
 Spring Hill, LA 102
 Springdale, AR 94, 96
 Springfield, MO 95
 St. Francis River 4
 St. Joseph, MO 6
 St. Louis, MO 13, 36, 42, 45, 48, 50, 51, 53, 55, 62, 68-70, 81, 82, 95, 101
 St. Paul, AR 97
 Stamps, AR 102
 Stilwell, OK 109
 Stuttgart, AR 16, 83
 Sulphur Springs, AR 102, 107
 Sulphur Springs, TX 87
 Sweet Home, AR 60
 Sweetwater, TX 49, 53
 Tallulah, LA 63, 73
 Texarkana, AR/TX 36, 44-46, 70, 82, 87, 102, 106, 111, 112
 Thurber, TX 59
 Tinsman, AR 16
 Tioga, LA 106
 Tuckerman, AR 51
 Tucumcari, NM 13, 16, 17, 23, 24
 Tulsa, OK 6, 94
 Tyler, TX 71, 82, 87, 89
 Van Buren, AR 40, 59, 94, 96
 Vidalia, LA 102
 Vivian, LA 111
 Waco, TX 48, 82, 89
 Watts, OK 108
 Waldron, AR 110
 Walnut Ridge, AR 54
 Warren, AR 36, 61
 Washington, AR 40
 Weatherford, OK 7, 12, 48
 White Hall, AR 62
 White River 4, 6, 52, 63, 97
 Wichita, KS 6, 94, 95
 Winnfield, LA 10, 16, 102
 Winslow, AR 94, 96
 Wister, OK 6
 Wolsey, AR 97
 Wynne, AR 36, 50, 62, 63
 Yarnall, TX 12
 Yukon, OK 7

Locomotives:

2-8-2 41
 2-10-2 59
 2-10-4 24, 49, 59
 4-4-0 98
 4-4-2 82
 4-6-0 82
 4-6-2 2, 9, 81
 4-8-2 59
 4-8-4 71, 82
 Arkansas 4
 Arkansas Traveler 4
 Camelback 10
 Doodlebugs 21
 E3 2
 E7 38
 FP7 65, 82
 Gas Motor Car 22, 72, 73, 82, 101
 GP7 82
 Madam Queen 54
 PA 82
 Pacific 9
 RDC 9, 22, 23, 65
 TA 19, 21

Lucas No. 1 103

Marion Hotel 64
 Martineau, John L. 101
 Mission Alamo 47

White River Productions
 24632 Anchor Avenue
 Bucklin, MO 64631
 12U

Paramore, President 82
 Philadelphia & Reading Coal and Iron Company 6
 Postal Telegraph 59
 Pullman 9, 14, 21, 24, 45, 46, 48-50, 53, 88, 93, 95
 Pullman Standard 18, 19, 28

Photographers and Collections:

ACF 101
 Bailey, Bill 9, 84, 85, 86, 93, 101-104, 112-114, 117
 Bell, James 57, 58
 Bennett, Jim 10, 21, 54, 63, 89
 Collins, Joe 2, 41, 63, 81
 Conner, H. D. DeGolyer Library 18, 24, 60, 73, 86, 87, 88, 94, 104
 DeGolyer Library 19, 20, 43, 46-50, 53, 88, 89, 101
 Dudley, H. D. 103, 104, 106-115
 Farr, Jim 9, 13, 20
 Handly, Ray 5
 Hile, Steve 13, 28, 29
 Hull, Clifton 6, 7, 8, 12, 15-18, 22, 24, 37, 38, 40-45, 47, 50-52, 54-62, 64, 67, 72, 85, 86, 88, 95-98, 100, 112
 Jones, John C. 71
 Karsten, Robert 63
 Lamb, Parker 2, 81
 Martin, John 5, 15, 37, 84
 Matrow, John 18, 19, 22, 23, 27, 65
 Moon, Paul 30, 79
 Mullins Library, University of Arkansas 5, 6, 12-14, 42, 44, 51-54, 60, 62, 73, 83-85, 94, 98, 107, 110, 113
 Royce, J. F. 66
 Shook, Tom 10, 11, 14, 30, 37, 38, 44, 50, 52, 55, 59, 65-73, 88, 89, 93, 95, 99, 100, 103, 117
 Shook, Tom, Jr. 70
 Tardy, Randy 63, 73
 Tebbetts, Bob 71
 Walker, L. T. 17, 18
 Wooldridge, P. B. 93

Railroads:

Amtrak 53, 54, 69
 Arkansas & Louisiana 40
 Arkansas & Missouri 95, 96
 Arkansas & Southern 94
 Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe (Santa Fe) 24, 88, 89, 94
 Baltimore & Ohio 59, 62
 Cairo & Fulton 36, 37, 45
 Cairo, Arkansas & Texas 36
 Camden & Alexandria 36
 Chicago & Alton 62
 Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific (Rock Island) 4-8, 10-20, 22, 24, 27-29, 43, 64-67, 83, 84
 Chicago, Rock Island and Texas 6
 Choctaw Coal and Railway 6, 7, 18
 Choctaw and Memphis 9
 Choctaw, Oklahoma & Gulf 5, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 15-17, 66
 Cisco & Northeastern 48, 53
 Colorado & Southern 24
 Dallas Area Rapid Transit 69
 Dardanelle & Russellville 7, 57
 DeQueen & Eastern 111
 Eureka Springs Railway 100
 Fayetteville & Little Rock 97
 Fort Smith & Southern 94
 Fort Smith and Western 19, 95, 98, 110

Hot Springs Railroad 13
 Houston, Central Arkansas & Northern 36
 Illinois Central 9, 13, 18, 64, 66, 67, 73, 100
 International Great Northern 44, 46, 47, 69
 Iron Mountain & Helena 36
 Joplin & Pittsburg 106
 Kansas City, Mexico & Orient 53
 Kansas City, Nevada and Fort Smith 102
 Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf 102, 114
 Kansas City Southern 6, 45, 73, 88, 95, 97, 100, 102-104, 106-112,
 Kansas City Suburban Belt 102
 Little Rock & Fort Smith 37, 40, 42, 54-56, 58, 96
 Little Rock and Hot Springs Western 16, 43
 Little Rock and Memphis 9, 16
 Little Rock, Mississippi River & Texas 36
 Little Rock and Western 17
 Louisiana & Arkansas 46, 102, 106, 113
 Memphis, Helena & Louisiana 36
 Memphis & Little Rock 4, 5, 8, 9
 Midland Valley 6, 95
 Minden East & West 102
 Mississippi, Ouachita & Red River 36, 61
 Missouri & Arkansas 72, 100, 101
 Missouri-Kansas-Texas (Katy) 6, 18, 19, 48, 88, 98, 106
 Missouri & North Arkansas 64, 72, 100
 Missouri & Northern Arkansas 52
 Missouri Pacific (MoPac) 2, 5, 7, 8, 12, 17, 36, 37, 42-45, 47-54, 56-64, 66-69, 73, 81, 83, 95, 96, 102, 106, 109, 112, 115
 Pacific Railroad 7
 Panhandle & Santa Fe 53
 Pine Bluff Arkansas River Railway 72
 Shreveport & Red River Valley 102
 Southern Pacific 24, 47, 50, 51, 82, 84, 87, 115
 St. Louis, Arkansas & Texas 94
 St. Louis & Iron Mountain 36, 42, 45, 82
 St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern 36, 37, 40, 58, 68, 69
 St. Louis & North Arkansas 100
 St. Louis San Francisco (Frisco) 6, 19, 53, 59, 72, 94-99, 102, 106, 109, 113
 St. Louis Southwestern (Cotton Belt) 5, 15, 43, 45, 51, 53, 60, 71, 82-89, 93, 112
 St. Louis & Texas 100
 Terminal Railroad Association 51
 Texarkana & Fort Smith 112
 Texarkana, Shreveport and Natchez 45
 Texas Central 48
 Texas & New Orleans 82
 Texas & Pacific 44-46, 48-50, 53, 55, 59, 60, 70, 82, 112
 Texas & St. Louis 82
 Tyler Tap 82
 Union Pacific 17, 43, 44, 51, 53
 U. S. Military Railroad 4, 8
 Washington & Hope 40
 Western Oklahoma Railroad 12
 White River Railway 36
 Wichita Falls, Ranger & Fort Worth 49
 Yazoo & Mississippi Valley 100

Railroad Passenger Cars:

Amarillo (CRI&P) 19
 American Flyer (SSW) 88
 Cherokee Strip (CRI&P) 21
 Chisolm Trail (CRI&P) 21
 Cimarron River (CRI&P) 21
 Fair Lane (SSW) 89
 Little Rock (CRI&P) 19
 Lone Star (CRI&P) 21
 Memphis (CRI&P) 19
 Minnesota (CRI&P) 9, 22, 28
 Oklahoma City (CRI&P) 19, 28
 Seminole (CRI&P) 19, 28

Sooner State (CRI&P) 21
 Sunflower State (CRI&P) 11
 Wewaka (CRI&P) 19, 28

Reynolds, Joseph 13

Railway Express 40, 108
 Railway Post Office (RPO) 18, 19, 21-23, 40, 106
 Rogers, C. W. 95
 Roosevelt, Theodore 57
 Shamrock Oil Refinery 22
 Southwestern Bell 106
 Spaghetti Warehouse 66
 Spindletop 103
 Steel, General Frederick 4, 8
 Stilwell, Arthur E. 102, 109, 115
 Sunbelt Line 23
 Taylor, John M. 72

Trains:

1 (MoPac) 46, 55
 1 (SSW) 82
 2 (MoPac) 55
 2 (SSW) 82
 3 (MoPac) 2, 55
 4 (MoPac) 55
 5 (T&P) 53
 6 (T&P) 53
 8 (SSW) 89
 21 (CRI&P) 23
 22 (CRI&P) 23
 23 (CRI&P) 22
 24 (CRI&P) 22
 32 (MoPac) 46
 41 (CRI&P) 17
 42 (CRI&P) 17
 51 (CRI&P) 17, 19, 21, 22
 52 (CRI&P) 17, 19, 21, 22
 111 (CRI&P) 17, 24, 28
 112 (CRI&P) 17, 24, 28
 151 (CRI&P) 22
 152 (CRI&P) 22
 220 (MoPac) 2
 266 (MoPac) 49
 Aztec Eagle (MoPac) 46, 48
 Blue Streak (SSW) 82
 Californian (CRI&P-SP) 24
 Choctaw Rocket (CRI&P) 9, 18, 19, 28
 Choctaw Rocket (CRI&P) 22
 Cotton Belter (SSW) 82
 Delta Eagle (MoPac) 63, 64
 Eagle (MoPac) 38, 41, 45, 46, 48, 51, 68, 69, 70
 Flying Crow (KCS) 110
 Golden State (CRI&P-SP) 24
 Hot Springs Limited (CRI&P) 9, 11, 21
 Hot Springs Special (CRI&P) 13, 14, 18
 Hot Springs Special (MoPac) 46
 Lone Star (SSW) 82
 Lone Star Limited (SSW) 88
 Louisiana Eagle (MoPac) 46
 Memphis-Californian (CRI&P) 20
 Morning Star (SSW) 82
 Southern Belle (KCS) 107, 112
 Southern Scenic (MoPac) 81
 Southerner (MoPac) 81
 Sunshine (MoPac) 46-48, 62, 69, 70
 Sunshine Special (MoPac) 45, 55
 Texas Eagle (MoPac) 46, 47
 Texas Rocket (CRI&P) 21
 Valley Eagle (MoPac) 46
 Western Union 59, 108
 Whitcomb, H. F. 67
 Whitehouse Hotel 57
 Witch of Wall Street 48
 Woodruff, William E., Sr. 4
 Wooldridge, P. B. 87
 WWI 56, 97
 WWII 12, 59, 84, 86, 114



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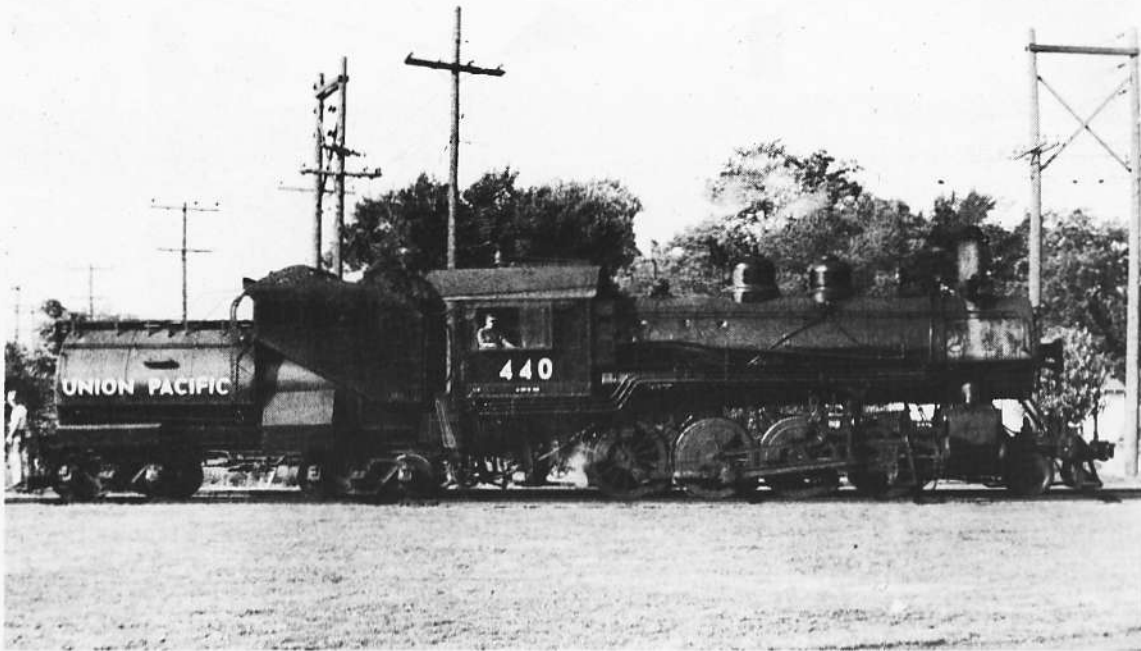
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TOP - Union Pacific congestion? This was the scene at UP's main yards in North Little Rock on January 2, 1998. Not a train or car to be seen. The photo was taken from the Locust Street overpass looking north. (*John Jones photo*). **BOTTOM** - Union Pacific southbound "Directional Special" through Pine Bluff, Arkansas, January 10, 1998. (*John Jones photo*)



TOP - Missouri & North Arkansas depot, now used as a residence, in Bellefonte, Arkansas on October 29, 1988 looking at the south end. (*Bernie Harville, Jr collection*). **BOTTOM** - Little Rock & Western RR is building a line on a "new" grade, which will connect with the Union Pacific in front of Union Station in Little Rock (a half mile or so past the trees in the center). This "new" grade happens to be on the exact right of way the old Rock Island Sunbelt Route used. The route currently used was bought and will be used for office buildings. (*John Jones photo, late December 1997*)



TOP - Union Pacific 2-8-0 #440 in Topeka, Kansas in February 1953. (*Shelby Cambell photo, Fred Rick collection*). **BOTTOM** - Arkansas Railroad Club Board members and officers for 1998, left to right: Gene Hull (board '00), Stanley Wozencraft (board '99), Bill Bailey (board '02), Tom Shook (board '01), Robin Thomas (board '98), Leonard Thalmueller (President), John Hodkin, Jr. (Vice-President), Carole Sue Schafer (Secretary) and Walter Walker (Treasurer). (*John Jones photo at the annual Christmas party*).