

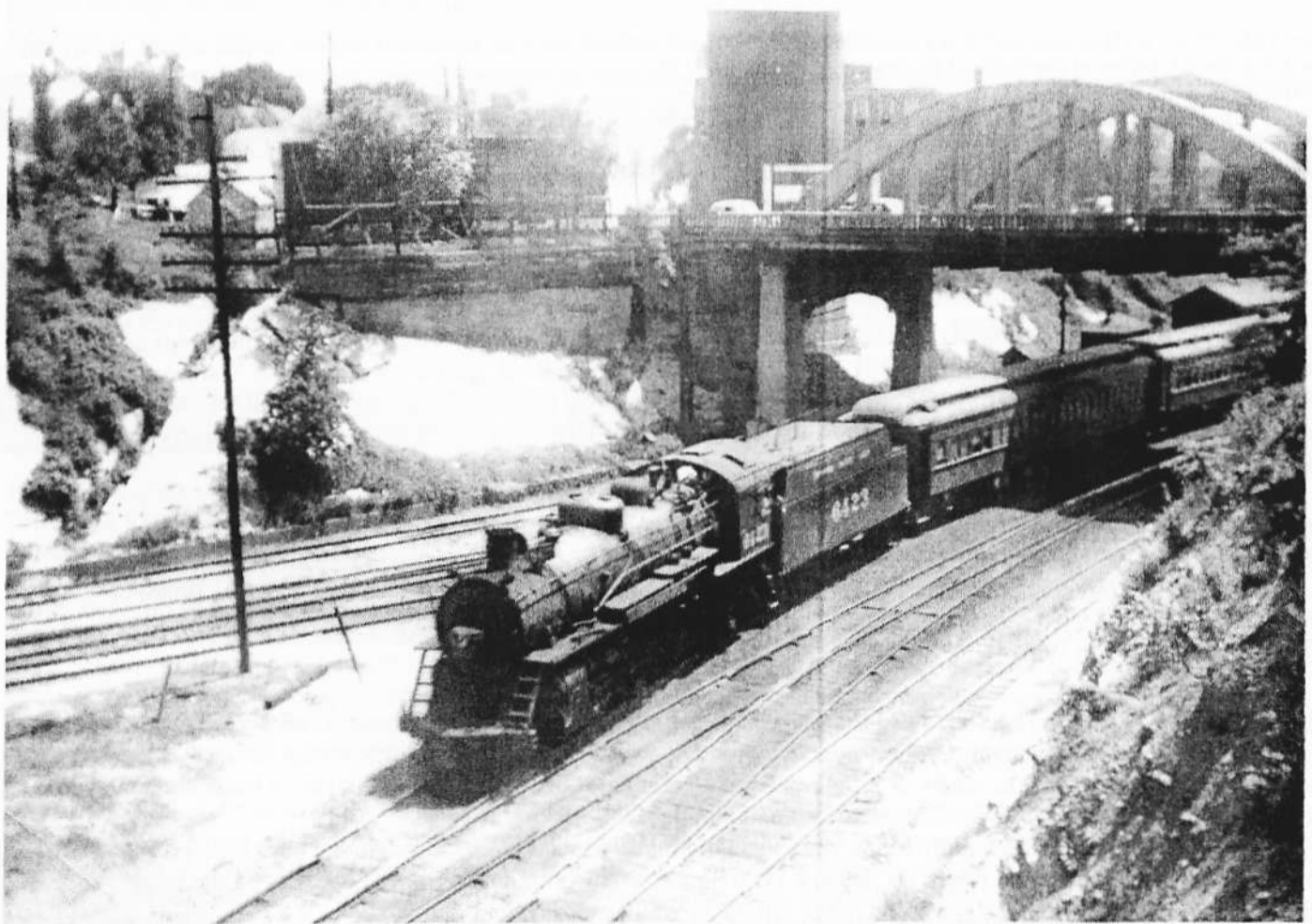


ARKANSAS RAILROADER



Little Rock Chapter
NRHS

VOLUME 34 NUMBER 1 JANUARY 2003



Train #220, the *Memphis Limited*, with Pacific 4-6-2 #6423 in charge, passes under the Lincoln Avenue viaduct in 1947. The dead-head T&P heavyweight coaches (3 cars) on the head end will return from Memphis tonight with a troop movement on Train No. 201, headed for a training camp in Texas. (*John Mills photo*)

2003 OFFICERS/POSITIONS OF THE ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB

PRESIDENT - Ron Esserman, 326 Esserman Ln, Dover AR 72837-7754 (479-331-2030), shay473@cei.net
V-PRESIDENT - Russell Tedder, 5019 Timber Creek Cir, N Little Rock AR 72116-6432 (501-771-9040), srtedder@arkansas.net
TREASURER - Walter B. Walker, 8423 Linda Ln, Little Rock AR 72227-5983 (501-225-0826), wwalker@aristotle.net
SECRETARY - Jackie Roach, 4023 S Shackelford #142, Little Rock AR 72204 (501-225-6818)
EDITOR - Ken Ziegenbein, 1023 Claycut Cir, N Little Rock AR 72116-3728 (501-758-1340), ken@trainweather.com
NRHS DIRECTOR - Tom Shook, 1716 Alberta Dr, Little Rock AR 72227-3902 (501-225-8955)
PHOTOGRAPHER - John C. Jones, 117 Cottonwood, Sherwood AR 72120-4011 (501-835-3729), johnphotonut@aristotle.net
HISTORIAN - Gene Hull, 3507 E Washington Ave #31, N Little Rock AR 72114 (501-945-7386)
BOARD '03 - Robin Thomas, 10980 Rivercrest Dr #26, Little Rock AR 72212-1412 (501-225-1952)
BOARD '04 - Stanley Wozencraft, 108 N Palm St, Little Rock AR 72205-3827 (501-664-3301)
BOARD '05 - Leonard Thalmueller, 21 Hanover Dr, Little Rock AR 72209-2159 (501-562-8231)
BOARD '06 - Jim Wakefield, 316 Auburn Dr, Little Rock AR 72205-2769 (501-664-0232)
BOARD '07 - Fred Fillers, 29009 Bandy Rd, Little Rock AR 72223-9720 (501-821-2026), ccfillers@aol.com

The ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB is a non-profit organization of railroad and train enthusiasts that was formed in 1969. We are also the Little Rock Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. We meet on the second Sundays of most months at 2 p.m. Anyone interested in trains is welcome!

Dues to join the ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB are currently \$20 a year, which includes the monthly *Arkansas Railroader* newsletter. If you'd like to join the NRHS through our club (thus being a member of the Little Rock Chapter NRHS and national NRHS), you must pay \$20 a year more, bringing the total to \$40 a year for both. Dues are always payable on January 1st of each year, but you may pay at any time (membership will extend through the following year).

To join or renew, send your name, address and phone number plus dues to the ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB, PO BOX 9151, NORTH LITTLE ROCK AR 72119. Call 501-758-1340 for information. The newsletter editor's email address is: trains@trainweather.com The Arkansas Railroader is put on the Web monthly, and that address is: <http://www.trainweather.com>

THE NEXT MEETING of the Arkansas Railroad Club will be Sunday, January 12, 2002 at 2 p.m. at our usual site, Pulaski Heights Presbyterian Church, 4401 Woodlawn Drive in Little Rock (just a few blocks off Markham Street). The January program will be presented by **Dan Pennington**, railroad modeler from North Little Rock, who will present scenes from the Rock Island, Missouri Pacific and Cotton Belt from the Paul Moon collection. As always, there will be snacks and drinks available.

OFFICERS FOR 2003 - Here are the four 2003 officers for our club: **PRESIDENT**: Ron Esserman; **VICE PRESIDENT**: Russell Tedder; **TREASURER**: Walter B. Walker; **SECRETARY**: Jackie Roach. The other positions are: **EDITOR**: Ken Ziegenbein; **NRHS DIRECTOR**: Tom Shook; **HISTORIAN**: Gene Hull. The five Board of Director members, elected by the membership, are: 2003-Robin Thomas; 2004-Stanley Wozencraft; 2005-Leonard Thalmueller; 2006-Jim Wakefield; 2007-Fred Fillers.

2003 DUES ARE DUE - The 2003 dues for the Arkansas Railroad Club are due January 1 (all NRHS chapters have dues becoming due on January 1, by the way). They remain at \$20 a year for local dues, which includes the *Arkansas Railroader*, and if you want to renew or join the national National Railway Historical Society at the same time, you need to send in \$20 more (\$40 for both local and national dues).

If you originally paid in the middle of the year, I usually made you a member through that year PLUS the year after so that you could renew in the future on January 1. So please renew on January 1 if you can. Check the labels to see when your membership expires and if it's in the NRHS as well as local. Thanks.

JAMES L. McGRIFF – DIED SEPTEMBER 10, 2002

Mr. McGriff was once mayor of Fordyce, Arkansas and was mayor there when the Cotton Belt 819 ran excursions to Fordyce in the 1980s

ROBERT LEAKE DORTCH JR., age 72, died on Nov. 25, 2002. He was born in Little Rock, Ark., July 26, 1930, to Robert Leake **Dortch** and Katherine Morton **Dortch**. Both grandparents on his paternal side were pioneers who had plantations in Lonoke and Pulaski Counties, the one well-known Marlsgate. He attended grade school in Little Rock and Culver Military Academy in Culver, Ind., where he was Officer in charge of artillery. **Dortch** received his Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture in 1953 at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. He served as Cadet Colonel of Army R.O.T.C., President of Scabbard and Blade and Chaplain of Sigma Alpha Epsilon Fraternity.

In 1953, he married Mary Jane Watkins. He joined his father in a large farming operation, seed company, cotton gin, and dryer in Scott, Ark. A devout Christian, his family attended Christ Episcopal Church of Little Rock, Ark., where he served on the vestry. In 1980, the family moved to Eureka Springs, Ark., and built a tourist railroad, the E.S. and N.A. Railway.

He is survived by his wife; one daughter, Nancy McKinley of DeWitt, Ark.; three sons, Robert of Eureka Springs, David of Phoenix, Ariz., and John of Fayetteville, Ark.; also a granddaughter, Mary Katherine; and grandson, Edward McKinley of De-Witt; five sisters, Roberta Fulkerson, Polly Davis, Virginia Dorazio, Floride Rebsamen, King Dobbins; and one brother, George **Dortch**. Donations may be made to your favorite charity or a memorial fund for a plaque through the Bank of Eureka Springs. (*Mr Dortch and his son Bob were well-known by many in the Arkansas Railroad Club via their tourist railroad operations, both in Eureka Springs and Scott, Arkansas*)

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 - Remember that The Arkansas Railroad Club has the following books for sale: Reprint of GeneHull's classic *Shortline Railroads of Arkansas*, hardbound for \$24.95 plus \$5 shipping and the club's 120-page book *Railroad Stations and Trains Through Arkansas and the Southwest*, for \$29.95 plus \$4.50 shipping. Order through White River Productions, 24632 Anchor Ave, Bucklin MO 64631, 877-787-2467. We have a few left locally as well.

RAILROAD ABANDONMENT PROPOSALS

The address of the Surface Transportation Board is: Office of the Secretary, Case Control Unit, 1925 K Street, Washington DC 20423. The STB phone number for abandonment procedures (Office of Public Services) is: 202-565-1592. If you contact them, it would be handy to use the Docket Numbers. Their Web address is: <http://www.stb.dot.gov> if you'd like the complete listings.

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. Even though approval is granted for the railroads to abandon, it may be months or years before track is actually taken up.

NEW YORK - R. J. CORMAN RAILROAD CO - To abandon: (1) The Walden Running Track between approximately milepost 413.90 and approximately milepost 418.50; and (2) the JD Industrial Track between approximately milepost 0.00 and approximately milepost 0.60, a total distance of approximately 5.20 miles in Erie County, NY. Effective on December 11, 2002. (STB Docket No. AB-550 (Sub-No. 2X, decided October 29, served November 8, 2002)

NEW YORK - DELAWARE & HUDSON RAILWAY CO d/b/a CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY - To discontinue trackage rights over a 0.15-mile portion of trackage owned by Canada Southern Railway Company (CSR) from a point on the international railway bridge at Niagara Falls, milepost 0.15, to a point where the trackage joins the CSX Transportation, Inc. trackage, milepost 0.0, in Niagara County, NY. D&H notes that the 0.15-mile trackage rights sought to be discontinued are overhead rights over trackage owned by CSR, for which CSR is seeking **abandonment** authority in Canada Southern Railway Company. Effective on December 10, 2002. (STB Docket No. AB-156 (Sub-No. 22X, decided October 29, served November 8, 2002)

- KANSAS - BNSF** - To abandon and discontinue service over a 0.21-mile line of railroad between milepost 58.05 and milepost 58.26 in Ottawa, Franklin County, KS. Effective on December 14, 2002. (STB Docket No. AB-6 (Sub-No. 396X, decided November 5, served November 14, 2002)
- CALIFORNIA - SANTA MARIA VALLEY RAILROAD CO** - To abandon a 4.87-mile line of railroad between milepost 9.75 at College Drive and milepost 14.62 at Gates Station, in the city of Santa Maria, in Santa Barbara County, CA. Effective on December 14, 2002. (STB Docket No. AB-844X, decided November 5, served November 14, 2002)
- ARIZONA - UNION PACIFIC** - To abandon a 76.61-mile rail line over the Phoenix Subdivision from milepost 782.25 near Roll to milepost 858.86 near Arlington, in Yuma and Maricopa Counties, AZ. Effective on December 24, 2002. (STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 178X, decided November 15, served November 22, 2002)
- CALIFORNIA - UNION PACIFIC** - To abandon the Lakewood Industrial Lead, a 0.85-mile rail line extending from milepost 16.50 near Cover Street, in Lakewood, to milepost 17.35 at the end of the line, south of Wardlow Street, in Long Beach, in Los Angeles County, CA. Effective on December 28, 2002. (STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 196X, decided November 19, served November 27, 2002)
- UTAH - UNION PACIFIC** - To abandon a 2.83-mile portion of the Provo Industrial Lead from milepost 753.27 near Provo, to milepost 756.10 near Gatex, in Utah County, UT. Effective on January 1, 2003. (STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 193X, decided November 25, served December 4, 2002)
- UTAH - UNION PACIFIC** - To abandon a 23.69-mile line of railroad from milepost 754.31 near Valencia, to milepost 778.00 near Ogden, in Davis and Weber Counties, UT. Effective on January 1, 2003. (STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 191X, decided November 25, served December 4, 2002)
- UTAH - UNION PACIFIC** - To abandon a 3.23-mile portion of a line of railroad of the Provo Industrial Lead, from milepost 772.00 near Cutler, to milepost 775.23 near Mount, in Salt Lake and Utah Counties, UT. effective on January 1, 2003. (STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 192X, decided November 25, served December 4, 2002)
- UTAH - UNION PACIFIC** - To abandon a 5.21-mile rail line over the Bingham Industrial Lead from milepost 6.60 near Bagley, to milepost 11.81 near Lead Mine, in Salt Lake County, UT. Effective on January 1, 2003. (STB Docket No. AB-33 (Sub-No. 194X, decided November 25, served December 4, 2002)

ARKANSAS RAIL NEWS

SMALL LRWN DERAILMENT

(Little Rock) – Three boxcars on the Little Rock & Western Railroad derailed late in the day on Monday, December 18, 2002 near Rebsamen Park Road in Little Rock. Little Rock Fire Department's hazardous materials team was called when a hazy dust started seeping from a boxcar, but the railroad cars only carried crushed soybeans used for chicken feed, an employee of Little Rock & Western said. Railroad employees said workers will use a crane to put the cars back on the track

GENERAL RAIL NEWS

SANTA TRAIN NEWS

CSX made its annual Santa Train run through Kentucky and Tennessee November 23. A special Santa made his last run on this trip. After 20 years of portraying Santa Claus aboard the Santa Special, Frank Brogden chose the 60th running of the train to announce his retirement. The train will continue to run, however, like it has for six decades. The annual run goes from Shelbiana, Ky., to Kingsport, Tenn., delivering gifts along the way. It is sponsored by the Kingsport Chamber of Commerce and CSX Transportation, Inc. Mr. Brogden said that back in the 1960s, they had three or four rail cars

and gave out lots of hard candy. Since that time, the Santa Special has grown and now gives out gifts to many poor and needed children along the entire route. He said that the expectation in a child's eye when they wave to the train is unbelievable, and everybody believes in Santa Claus. It's the spirit of loving, giving and sharing and it is what Christmas is all about. He said it just about makes him cry when he thinks of families who are separated and at odds with each other. Christmas is a time of family togetherness and appreciating what loved ones really mean to us, he said

Brogden also said that he has seen those who will never be able to experience all the joys of life, but are wise beyond their years. They know how to cherish the small things that are within their grasp. And he believes if we all could see life through a child's eyes, the world would be a better place. He said the train was also about tradition and has created special memories through several generations. For many adults, the train was something special they saw as a child, and they want their children and grandchildren to experience the same wonder.

On the November 23 trip, the train would pass by thousands of people. Young and old alike were not only gathered at scheduled stops along the route, but many also stood beside highways, in yards and on porches. They waved and smiled as the train passed. When the ride was over, about 15 tons of toys, candy and other gifts had been distributed along the route. According to Bob Feagins, director of communications and public relations for the Kingsport chamber of commerce, over \$100,000 worth of donated items were distributed. Donations came in from all across the United States. For instance, one Georgia woman makes dolls during the Atlanta ball games and sends them to the project for distribution. A knitting club in New Mexico works all year making items to distribute during the annual event.

On a sadder note, BNSF canceled its 13-year tradition of a Santa Train through 72 communities in Colorado, Wyoming, Nebraska and South Dakota. It was canceled this year after the railroad informed volunteer train crews, all of whom are railroad employees, that the company wasn't going to pay their salaries or pick up the cost of food and lodging anymore, said railroad spokesman Steve Forsberg. He said it might resume in the future if crews would pay their own expenses. Unlike

the CSX train, however, this BNSF train ran for 11 to 14 days and involved overnight lodging in several towns, which the railroad had paid up to this year. It was just getting too expensive.

And AMTRAK canceled a special 20-minute trip for mostly low-income children from Carbondale to Du Quoin, on Dec. 6. The event was called the "Polar Express," after the story the kids all read. This would have been the fourth year for the increasingly popular trip. Amtrak canceled due to budget restraints, saying the trip didn't warrant the extra cars Amtrak would have to carry up to Chicago after the kids got off in Du Quoin. This was so even though Amtrak had planned to charge the school \$2 per child and \$4 per adult. "We would have loved to do it," an Amtrak spokesman said yesterday, but right now "we're laying off hundreds of people trying to keep the company afloat," and the event would have cost many thousands of dollars.

RAILS-TO-TRAILS RULING

On November 28, 2002, a federal court ruled that the U.S. government must pay \$410,000 to 13 landowners whose property was used to build the KATY 225-mile hiking and biking trail in Missouri. This trail is one of hundreds across the country created under the Rails-To-Trails act, also known as 'railbanking.' The act allows

abandoned railroad property to be turned over to state or local government for use as trails. These lands could conceivably return to railroad use if warranted in the future. An earlier Court of Claims ruling found that landowners were entitled to compensation because under Missouri law, abandoned railroad land reverts to landowners. The state of Missouri operates and maintains the Katy Trail, which was developed along the abandoned Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railroad. The trail runs from St. Charles in eastern Missouri along the Missouri River to Clinton in the western part of the state. (*Sources in St Louis*)

TAMPA-ORLANDO, FL HIGH SPEED LINK

According to the October 11, 2002 *USA Today*, private bids are to take place on the first of several high speed rail lines in Florida in February 2003, the line between Orlando and Tampa, Florida. Voters in 2000 said they wanted trains started in that state of at least 120 mph and this would be the first link. If the bids aren't too high, the first passengers could board the fast line between these two cities in 2006. California is also considering starting such a line between Los Angeles and San Francisco. (*Via Dan Barr*)

AMTRAK NEWS

LATE TRAINS

Amtrak was late nationwide 23 percent of the time last year while many long distance trains averaged being late 42 percent of the time. Amtrak President David Gunn said most of the causes were due to increased freight congestion. Arkansas' *Texas Eagle* was late 78 percent of the time (but I've noticed that it has been on time a lot more often since the summer). In Fiscal Year 2002 (ending September 30), Amtrak offered \$69 million in incentives to the freight lines to run on time, but only paid out \$23 million, half of which went to the BNSF, which runs most of Amtrak's trains on its' lines on time. (*Via Dan Barr*)

END OF EXPRESS?

Received the following email message from David Briggs regarding equipment for sale by Amtrak. It includes 50 Greenbrier 50-ft boxcars, 194 Greenbrier/Trenton Works 60-ft boxcars, 100 Trinity 60-ft boxcars, 71 Wabash National 53-ft Plate Trailers (Roadrailer), 12 Wabash National Roadrailer Couplermates, 33 Wabash National Roadrailer Intermediate Bogies, 111 Ebenezer Refrigerated boxcars. For more information, contact B. A. Hastings, Manager Material Disposal, 215-349-1192, hastinb@amtrak.com

EXCURSIONS/SHOWS/EVENTS OF OTHER CLUBS

ARKANSAS - PINE BLUFF - APRIL 5, 2003 - Annual Railroadiana and Model Train Show at the Arkansas Railroad Museum in Pine Bluff. Admission is \$4.00. If you'd like to rent a table (8-foot, \$15 each), contact Joe McCullough, CBRHS, PO Box 2044, Pine Bluff AR 71613-2044, 870-535-8819.



Kansas City Southern Train #1 taking a siding at Watts, Oklahoma in July 1963. The locomotive is an ex-MEC E7. (Mike Condren photo)

To join/renew membership in the Arkansas Railroad Club (Little Rock Chapter National Railway Historical Society), fill out the form below. **Annual dues are \$20** for local dues (plus **\$20** for the national NRHS dues if you want to join the NRHS through our chapter, a total of \$40 for both local and national dues). Send to: Arkansas Railroad Club, PO Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119.

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE _____ EMAIL _____

MISSOURI PACIFIC UNVEILS NEW MAINLINE IN EAST ARKANSAS

(First published February 21, 1982 by Randy Tardy) (Documents provided by Randy Tardy)

By RANDY TARDY
Democrat Business Writer

In a still-new year already full of chilling economic news, something came down the track in east Arkansas last week to warm the hearts of industrial developers from Jonesboro to McGehee.

The Missouri Pacific Railroad's new multi-million dollar mainline from Chicago to the Gulf Coast - through east Arkansas - officially opened for business.

And Mo-Pac thinks enough of the route's potential in east Arkansas to promote it through advertisements in *The Wall Street Journal* (see illustration) and some industrial development publications.

The 173-mile route was once a heavily-traveled freight and passenger line, especially during World War II. But in the last 20 years or so - with the upgrading of other routes and opening of a new classification yard at North Little Rock - the east Arkansas line became a lightly-used branch route.

Now extensively rebuilt to modern mainline specifications, it is expected to provide improved service to existing shippers and give local industrial developers a new transportation selling tool to use on prospects.

"I think it will further enhance the type of rail industry we already have," said Maylon Rice, president of the McGehee Chamber of Commerce.

McGehee has long been a railro town, and Rice, who is

editor of the *McGehee Times*, said last week that the city now will be even more attractive for "industries who are looking at warehousing along the railroad or looking to locate along the new artery."

John Gatling of Helena, a Phillips County industrial developer, said having a new mainline running nearby is "very important to us. From what they (Missouri Pacific) have told us that we can tell an industrial prospect, you can get a car from Chicago to Phillips County in one day."

Situated along the Mississippi River, Phillips County is "in the proximity to where (the new route) is closest to the river," Gatling said last week. "This has got to be a big plus for us. Missouri Pacific today is the only railroad that is currently serving (both) the Canadian and Mexican markets. I think it is going to be a super part of our total marketing program."

Mainline railroads are nothing new in Jonesboro, according to Henry P. Jones, executive vice president of the Greater Jonesboro Chamber of Commerce. The city is on the Burlington Northern (formerly Frisco) and Cotton Belt mainlines. And Jones said Mo-Pac's new route "puts us on the mainline of a third railroad. It will put 200 acres at our Airport Industrial Park on a main line railroad."

Officially called the "Wynne Subdivision," the new line was built to take some of the congestion off Mo-Pac's North

Mo-Pac's ad in *The Waerstreet Journal*

Little Rock complex which handles between 85 and 90 trains a day.

About eight of those trains are going from the Gulf Coast to St. Louis and Chicago. The new line eventually be routed through east Arkansas, the railroad of Hogan said two trains a day says. And the first - a 109-car freight bound from the St. Louis area to Houston rolled through the eastern part of the state last Monday, according to Hogan.

some time. We'll stay at four trains for quite some time, until business picks back up."

He said railroads feel the effects of an economic slowdown through reduced carloadings: "We still feel that there will be an upturn perhaps late in the second quarter of the year."

Although constructed as a high-speed mainline, Hogan said trains now being run on the Wynne Subdivision "will have a 48-mile-an-hour limit. And they will be using voice control - which is a dispatcher in direct (radio) contact with the engineer. You can do that because there isn't any traffic to worry about."

On other mainline Mo-Pac track, such as the Poplar Bluff-North Little Rock-Texarkana segment, train movements are controlled by red-yellow-green centralized Traffic Control signals operated from the same dispatching office.

Hogan said those signals are going to be installed along the new route. "We have begun some of the work on our CTC installation and we hope to have that in place in 1983."

During January, railroad officials went up and down the new line putting on a safety program called "operation lifesaver."

"We called attention to the public of the fact that there would be mainline train operations in an area that has not had any for years," Hogan said. The train-awareness programs stressed safe driving from a highway-trail crossing angle. Sixteen meetings were held,

attracting several thousand people, Hogan estimated.

As for *The Wall Street Journal* advertising campaign for east Arkansas, "we've already received a million dollar's worth of publicity," Rice said. "That just put McGehee on the industrial map."

Jones added: "That's somebody else selling our area. The advertising that Mo-Pac is already doing in *The Wall Street Journal* and other things they'll be doing for eastern Arkansas through their Industrial Development Department, is of great benefit."

A story about the ad campaign in the December issue of *Mo-Pac News*, an employee publication, said: "The promotional program's emphasis is on the availability of first class transportation service, made possible by Mo-Pac's extensive rehabilitation of its trackage across eastern Arkansas."

In addition to the advertisements, the story said Mo-Pac's industrial development staff "will be working closely with municipal governments, community leaders and chamber of commerce groups in support of their efforts to bring more industry to the area."

For those who enjoy numbers, the 173-mile track rehabilitation project through east Arkansas involved:

Installation of 115-pound (per yard) continuous welded rail laid in individual, quarter-mile-long segments; replacement of more than 150,000 crossties; trackbed stabilization with more than 200,000 tons of crushed stone ballast strengthening bridges; stabilizing embankments; replacing switches; improving nearly 20 street crossings and extending and/or upgrading track siding at Harrisburg, Wynne Caldwell, Marianna, Elaine Snow Lake and Watson.



Scene of newly upgraded Wynne Subdivision in the vicinity of Walnut Corner, Arkansas (Phillips County), taken by Randy Tardy.

The preceding story was first published in the *Arkansas Democrat* February 21, 1982, written by Randy Tardy, Business Writer for the Democrat at that time.

A little over 20 years later, this very roadbed was dedicated (October 25, 2002) as the Delta Heritage State Park, part of the national Rails To Trails conversion programs. The new trail will eventually extend 73 miles from Lexa to Cypress Bend, Arkansas. It is already being used by many hikers and bikers. Union Pacific donated the entire 73 mile line to the state on December 23, 1992. There are a total of 58 bridges along the route, including ones over the White and Arkansas Rivers. It runs next to the White River National Wildlife Refuge in the Delta area of eastern Arkansas. (Taken from the October 23, 2002 Phillips County Progress via Randy Tardy)

The following story was first published in the October 1982 *Rural Arkansas*. It was written by Gene Hull and continues the saga of the upgrading-then-abandoning of the former Missouri Pacific line through eastern Arkansas.

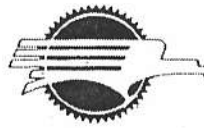
Old railroad is rescued

By Clifton E. Hull

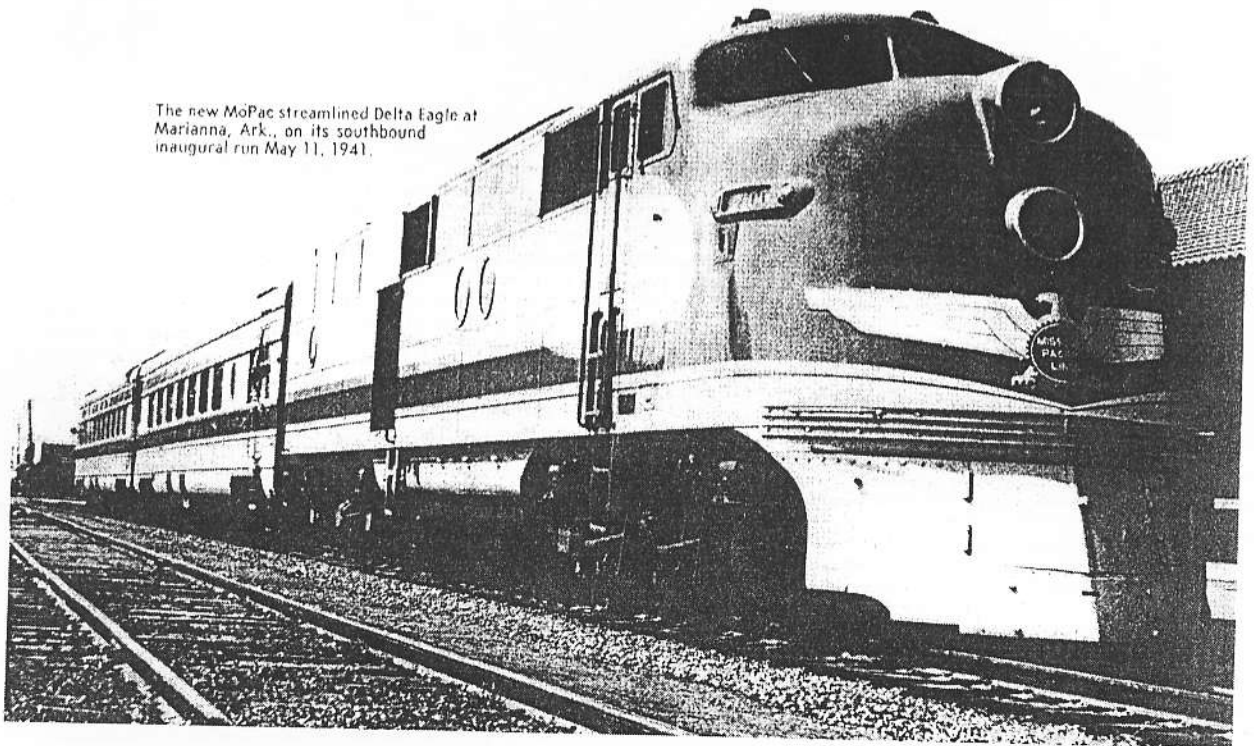
Across the lush Mississippi River delta land of eastern Arkansas an old railroad has been rescued from oblivion. The likes of such activity has never been seen in this area. The rescue involved 173 miles of a secondary line of Missouri Pacific between Jonesboro and McGehee, known as the Division.

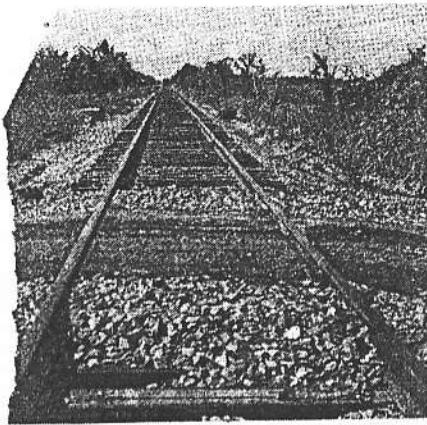
A branch line has been made into a modern first-class main line to relieve congestion at the North Little Rock yards. It provides improved service for shippers of this area, and is an attraction for new industry. Several millions of dollars were spent to bring the old road up to main-line standards, including installation of Centralized Traffic Control, an automatic electronic signal system of colored lights—red, yellow, and green—to provide safe handling for high speed trains.

This line becomes a second main line to handle the ever increasing number of trains coming north out of Texas and Louisiana heading for St. Louis. Much of the new traffic is re-routed chemical trains, which have been rolling over the line through Texarkana, Little Rock, and Poplar

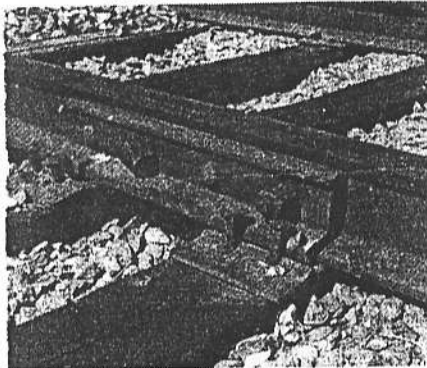


The new MoPac streamlined Delta Eagle at Marianna, Ark., on its southbound inaugural run May 11, 1941.





Crushed stone and asphalt are used to upgrade crossings of farm access roads. Safety is a prime consideration of the rehabilitation program.



The "clickety-clack of the railroad track" is being eliminated by lengths of welded rail.

Bluff. David Dwerlkotte, the MoPac trainmaster at McGehee, said the new road takes care of chemical trains on the way to Chicago, as well as the Chicago traffic of empty chemical cars going south.

The new route serves two purposes. It is several miles shorter, therefore being more economical in time and operating expenses. The time into Chicago is reduced by 24 hours. Also, the trains of potentially dangerous chemicals are running through mainly agricultural territory with a relatively sparse population. The trains were traversing the busy Arkansas Division, which has the most densely populated cities of the state, including the capital city of Little Rock-North Little Rock. The North Little Rock yard handled about 80 trains in a 24-hour period, about half of which passed over the gravity hump. Anything to reduce the congestion at this yard is a welcome relief.

The Wynne Subdivision is a "dark" railroad. That is, all train movements are controlled by train orders. Between Jonesboro Junction and Paragould Junction there is a 13.6-mile segment of CTC (Centralized Traffic Control). The MoPac has trackage rights over the St. Louis-Southwestern (Cotton Belt) between Jonesboro Junction and Thebes, Mo., then it's back on the MoPac to Dupou yard in East St. Louis.

Initial plans call for two trains of chemicals each day in addition to the general "Duke's Mixture" of freights. Traffic will be built up from that.

Texas now is one of the country's prime sources of chemical shipments, and the Missouri Pacific was on the scene in the developmental period. In the early 1920's, as Texas began its industrial age, the MoPac embraced about a third of the 18 railroads serving Houston. The policy of the MoPac was to insure an ample freight hauling capacity in advance of the demand. The railroad became very active in research and development of geology and agriculture. The movement of fresh fruit and vegetables from the Rio Grande Valley to the markets of the east and north was principally over the MoPac.

To further improve the service from Texas through Arkansas, in October 1927, the MoPac completed installation of one of the most complete privately owned telephone systems in the world. The line between Houston, Texas, and St. Louis cost \$225,000 and used 3,000 miles of wires.

The annual report of the industrial development department of the MoPac for 1929 revealed the southwest area was enjoying a more rapid and economically sound industrial growth than any other section of the country. In that one year there were 529 new industries located along the railroad. One of the giants in the field was the oil industry dealing in petroleum and natural gas. The chemical industry was growing every year, and investments in new plants for 1929 totaled one-half million dollars.

To emphasize the development of chemical trade along the MoPac, the company went to the chemical industry exposition in New York in 1931. Two miniature freight trains were set up to haul actual samples of chemicals moved over their rails from Texas to Louisiana.

The movement of sulphur on the MoPac through Arkansas was increasing rapidly. The corrosive action was playing havoc with the 55-ton covered hoppers. To counteract the problem, liquid aluminum was sprayed on the inside of the hoppers.

1/32 inch. That was the end of the corrosion problem.

At the time of World War I, Dow Chemical Company was the only producer of magnesium in the U. S. They were extracting it from water taken from brine wells in Michigan. A better source than the wells was needed. Experiments showed an inexhaustible supply was in sea water. A Dow plant was built at Freeport, Texas, and produced the first bar of solid magnesium on Jan. 21, 1941. The output in 1941 was 14 times over that of the year before.

Since establishment of the original plants, the major chemical companies were in almost continuous expansion. Early in 1957 a survey of the southwest area served by MoPac revealed 126 chemical plants with a total investment of \$2 billion, and planned expansion of \$150 million. Value of chemical products from the coastal area of Texas and Louisiana exceeded \$1.5 billion a year.

In 1977, MoPac was the railroad industry's largest carrier of petrochemicals. It also was the first road to develop and use a computer-based emergency information system, providing on board a train the pertinent details of all potentially hazardous cargoes in the train.

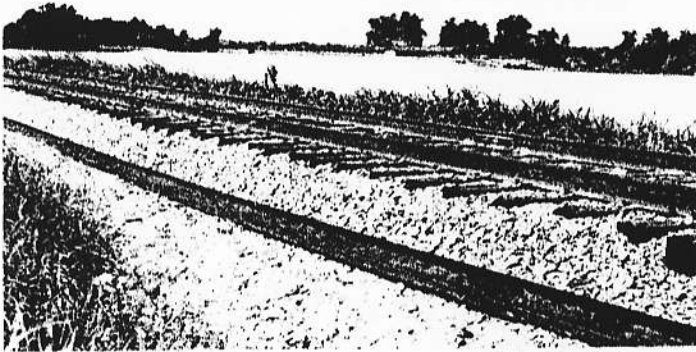
This route certainly isn't a new one. It had its beginning under the reign of George J. Gould, who was a son of the famous (or infamous) Jay Gould. George was president of the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern (predecessor of the MoPac in Arkansas) from May 9, 1893, till May 1, 1911. He and his father had a long-lived desire for a route between St. Louis and New Orleans to give competition to the Illinois Central east of the Mississippi River.

The beginning of the realization of this dream was the formation of two separate railroads, which were really one. They were the Memphis, Helena & Louisiana Railway in Arkansas and the Memphis, Helena & Louisiana Railroad in Louisiana. The proposed road was granted a charter on November 7, 1901. The road was organized and owned by the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern. It was to operate from the Arkansas-Louisiana border northeastward to New Latour station on the Knobel to Helena branch of the ST.LIM&S.

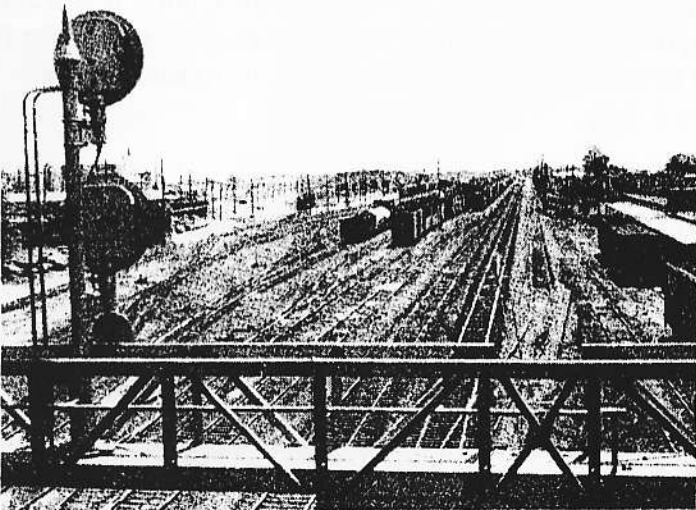
The southernmost 38 miles were built first, being completed on July 1, 1903, between Halley Station on the ST.LIM&S to the Louisiana line north of Lake Providence. At the state line, connection was made with the MH&L in Louisiana. From Halley Station the



On the south end of the rehabilitation effort is the village of Watson, served by C & L with several homes, small recreation hall, and couple of general merchandise stores.



The new main line from McGehee to Paragould traverses a land of family farms and plantations, unfettered by time-consuming towns. The line enters Arkansas from the south, crossing areas served by Ashley-Chicot, C & L, Riceland, Woodruff, Craighead and Clay County Electric before entering Missouri.



Time-consuming trips through North Little Rock yard are eliminated with the new main line in eastern Arkansas.

ST.LIM&S existing track ran northward nine miles to McGehee. By September 1904, rails had been laid from McGehee 21 miles northeast to Watson. The 61 miles of rails from Watson to New Latour were in place by March 1906. Thus it was that in 1906 the ST.LIM&S had rails laid and trains in operation on what is now the Wynne Subdivision of the MoPac, the same old road that is being upgraded to mainline standards.

In its day this stretch of railroad did see quite a bit of action, especially in the days of World War II. In that time of national rail congestion there were often as many as 70-75 trains in a 24-hour period.

It was along these rails that several trainloads of Japanese-Americans were brought from the west coast to the relocation center at Rohwer, Ark. When the air force of Japan struck Pearl Harbor, there was a concentration of Japanese living along the west coastal area. Our government had its hands full with defending America, and did not have time to determine if these people were a source of subversion. In a move of expediency they all were relocated to inland areas far removed from the military and industrial installations along the coast. All that remains today of this sprawling retention area is a Japanese cemetery. It is now surrounded by agricultural lands.

The Mississippi delta area of Arkansas had an opportunity in May 1941 to view something never seen there before. It was on May 11 that the three-unit streamlined, diesel powered Delta Eagle train made her maiden run between Memphis and Tallulah, La., over the Wynne-Lake Providence Subdivisions. It was discontinued late 1950 or early 1951.

The importance of the Wynne Subdivision began to wane in 1961. Plans had been made to build a gravity hump yard at McGehee at a cost of \$6.5 million. A lot of work had been done by the local people to expedite the acquisition of property, and the installation of water and sewer lines. This yard would be a real boost to the local economy, and would certainly speed up train movements. Then came the chilling news that the yard would be constructed at North Little Rock instead of McGehee. When the classification yard was ready for use, most of the traffic from Texas and Louisiana was re-routed over the Arkansas Division to take advantage of the facility.

It is interesting to speculate what the town of McGehee, population 5,500, would look like today if the hump yard had been built there 20 years ago.

RURAL ARKANSAS, OCTOBER, 1982


SHOULD THE RAILROAD LIVE OR DIE?

by: Gene Hull

The osteopathic surgeon didn't know what to do with his railroad. It was not a class-one railroad - in 1951 the net revenue was \$147.82 and it was only nine miles long. As of 1957 it did not serve a booming metropolitan area - the terminals were Farmington and Hurveyville, Missouri, with the town of Delassus lying between.

Dr. L. M. Stanfield said that 1951 was the only prosperous year for the road. The city of Farmington constructed a sewage disposal plant and had to import 80 carloads of limestone, providing a profit of \$147.82.

The power roster included two second-hand diesel locomotives. The rolling stock consisted of two freight cars, but they had been sold for junk. The little railroad had been struggling several years and finally the stockholders asked the Missouri Public Service Commission and the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to abandon the entire railroad.


Thus, in 1957 the St. Francis County Railroad ceased operation. 

CENTRAL ARKANSAS & EASTERN

by: Gene Hull

On 16 June 1937, the U.S. District Judge, Charles B. Davis, gave the Cotton Belt Railroad authority to abandon service on 26 miles of its subsidiary Central Arkansas & Eastern Railroad between England and Stuttgart and between Rice Junction and Hazen, Arkansas. The abandonment was to be complete by 1 July.

The CA&E was incorporated 18 May 1901 to build a railroad between England and Ryan, nine miles eastward. The original charter was amended to extend the rails to Stuttgart and from Rice Junction to Hazen.

Track was laid between England and Ryan when, on 1 July 1910 it was leased by the Cotton Belt, which completed the road to Stuttgart and built the Hazen branch. It all was in operation by 22 October 1911. A single locomotive was adequate to haul the traffic of rice, lumber and hay. 

ARKANSAS RAILROADER – January 2003