



LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Arkansas Railroader



VOLUME 6 NUMBER 8

OCTOBER 1975

OCTOBER MEETING: Regular monthly business meeting will be held on Sunday October 12, 1975 at 2:00 p.m. in the lounge of the Missouri Pacific Office Building, 1000 west 4th Street, North Little Rock.

SEPTEMBER MEETING: The September meeting was the regular annual swap meet. Quite a bit of trading took place prior to the meeting. As a program, Jack See showed a slide presentation that he has prepared for showing to other groups depicting our museum operation. Stan Wozencraft reported on the proposed fan trip in South Arkansas (see related item). Naomi Hull reported on the success of her Museum Sales Committee and advised that additional patches and jewelry items had been ordered.

FAN TRIP: Stan Wozencraft, Chairman of the Fan Trip Committee reports that he has been successful in making the arrangements for a trip over The Ashley, Drew & Northern Railway. Through the good offices of Mr. E. Austin Temple, President and Mr. Phillip H. Schueth, General Manager the trip will be run as a contribution to the club.

The train will depart Crossett, Arkansas at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, October 26th and run to Monticello, Arkansas and return. The duration of the trip will be approximately 5 hours. Space is limited by the capacity of the car to approximately 60 passengers. Advance reservations will be necessary. A reservation fee of \$3.00 for adult members, \$4.00 for adult non-members and \$1.00 for children will be charged. It will also be necessary to sign waivers at the time of boarding. Reservations are on a first come basis and may be made with Chairman Wozencraft. More details will be provided at the October meeting.

It will be advisable to bring a box lunch. Provisions will be made to make soft drinks available.

ARKANSAS'S "GOLDEN SPIKE" CEREMONY

BY

CLIFTON E. HULL

From the time to the completion of the first railroad to join the east and west coasts of the United States on May 10, 1869, at Promontory, Utah, it has been customary to celebrate the completion of a railroad by holding a spike-driving ceremony. The spike was referred to as "Golden" whether the precious metal was present or not.

Railroad construction in Arkansas had generally been completed for many years when the last such ceremony was conducted early in 1957. This occasion was not the completion of a great rail line. It was the deliberate extension of two rail systems and a physical connection between the two. A sort of "Marriage of the rails".

Several facets of this incident were different and may be of interest. The occasion was the joining of a 45 mile prosperous short line with an 11,000 mile wealthy giant in the world of railroads. A prosperous shortline railroad is rather unusual, even though we do have four or five in Arkansas.

Two spikes were used in the ceremony and both were actually gold-plated, so the "Golden Spike" no enclature was very appropriate and authentic.

The even occurred in the dense pine forest of Southwest Arkansas, but it was destined to receive nationwide coverage by the press wire services and Business Week, a national business publication.

It was a cold and cloudy morning of January 19, 1957, when the chilled steel rails of the DeQueen & Eastern Railroad were united to the equally cold ones of the Missouri Pacific. The cold dampness in the small opening of the forest produced feathery condensed breath plumes from the 300 spectators.

The little DeQueen & Eastern had laid its rails 26 miles eastward from the town of De Queen to a point in the virgin pine forest of Howard County in 1905 where the town of Dierks was built. The Arkansas & Louisiana Railway completed its road from Hope to Nashville in 1884. The St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern bought the A&L and assumed complete control in 1910. The Iron Mountain was absorbed by the Missouri Pacific in 1917. Thus in 1917 about 20 miles of forest separated the Missouri Pacific at Nashville, and the DeQueen & Eastern at Dierks.

The DQ&E was begun in September, 1900 by Hans Dierks to supply his sawmill at DeQueen with a steady stream of logs. The rails extended from his many logging camps in the forest to the big mill and on to a connection with the Kansas City Southern. At successive termini in the woods, small towns were begun to serve the many loggers and their families. The towns of Lockesburg and Dierks were products of the railroad. The latter was well established by 1905.

The lumber business of Hans Dierks and his three brothers, Henry, Herman and Peter prospered. Many hundreds of thousands of acres of forest lands were purchased in southeastern Indian Territory, now Oklahoma, and a new railroad was built to serve the new mills in the area. The Texas, Oklahoma & Eastern. The two lumber roads were joined at West Line Arkansas, January 5, 1921 on the Arkansas-Oklahoma Border.

The large mill at DeQueen fell victim to the dreaded specter of all timbermen--fire. So, a new one was built at Dierks in 1918. This mill, with the two large ones in Oklahoma put the company on the road to an expanding success. About 90 percent of the railroad traffic was originated at the logging camps and mills, but other shippers in the area availed themselves of its services. Passengers and mail were a minor segment of the traffic until discontinued in 1948. A new lumber treating and preserving plant was built in 1948 about two miles west of DeQueen. Here a new town was born, Process City. This plant almost doubled the amount of business on the DeQueen & Eastern.

Ambitious plans of the Dierks Forests, Inc., became a reality in 1957. A huge \$15 million kraft paper mill was built near the Arkansas River at Pine Bluff on 1,480 acres. Great quantities of water were required, and this was the most suitable site. A great disadvantage was the fact that there was no ready access to the mill with trainloads of pulp wood and wood chips from the lumber mills. Freight interchange was required from the DQ&E to the Kansas City Southern from DeQueen to Texarkana then another exchange to the Missouri Pacific which served the mill at Pine Bluff. A more direct connection was needed between the DQ&E and the MoPac. A study of a railroad map revealed that only about ten miles of forest land separated the two roads. Efforts to solve this problem were begun in October 1955 when the two roads filed an application with the Interstate Commerce Commission for permission to join the roads. The Commission granted the request on February 27, 1956, with the provision that construction begin by April 5, 1956 and be completed by February 15, 1957.

This would be the first major railroad construction by the MoPac since 1913, when the cut-off was built between Marianna and Briark, opposite Memphis. Also it was just 100 years since construction had begun on the first operating railroad in Arkansas--the Little Rock & Memphis.

In the dense pine forest of Howard County major railroad building was begun. MoPac crews of "gandy dancers" (track men) commenced work at Nashville, and headed northwest, while the crews of the DeQueen & Eastern proceeded southeastward. This was a noteworthy event because in the realm of railroad building many more miles of railroad had been torn up than built during the preceding years. This indeed was a reversal of the nationwide trend.

The Missouri Pacific would spend more than twice as much money as the DQ&E to build the same length of track. The Dier's company already owned the land across which they were laying rails. It was necessary for the MoP to purchase land from the City of Nashville, E. H. Narthum, R. L. Musgrove, J. A. Sullivan, A. L. Staggs, Ruth Brewer, M. L. Brown, Opal Stuart, Mary Roberson and Dierks Forests.

The MoP received bids from ten companies for the job of grading up the roadbed. The contract was given to the McGeorge Company of Pine Bluff on May 14, 1956. The route had been surveyed and located by MoP engineers George Sowers, Bill Dyer and Harry Cowan. Earlier the clearing of the route was completed to fulfill the ICE Requirement that work should begin by April 15.

As the roadbed was prepared, crews placed crossties and spiked down ribbons of steel rails. Crews of both roads slowly made their way toward each other through the forest.

Finally the notice was given that a public ceremony would be held on January 19, 1957, a Saturday. This was an appropriate day, because the local people would be free from work and could attend. The event was used to achieve the greatest publicity possible for the respective railroads.

Special trains were run on the Missouri Pacific from Nashville, and on the DeQueen & Eastern from Dierks. They met at a point 9.6 miles from Nashville. An interchange track had been constructed on either side of the main track each of which could hold 25 freight cars.

There were about 300 spectators who had braved the cold dampness to witness the unusual occasion. Two diesel locomotives stood facing each other a short distance apart. Between them was a specially built gasoline-powered spike driving machine which had cost \$2,000 and could drive 800 spikes an hour. It symbolized the progress railroading had made since that historic day the final spike was driven by man-powered mauls at Promontory, Utah on May 10, 1869.

The honor of handling this machine was given to Paul J. Neff, President of the Missouri Pacific and Fred H. Dierks, President of the DeQueen & Eastern. As the crowd waited, the two gold plated spikes were placed in position, the machine was rolled in place, the two rail presidents pressed levers and with a sharp, staccato beat the spikes were driven home !

Immediately the spikes were carefully pulled from the crosstie and were given to Mr. Neff and Mr. Dierks, as mementoes of the event. Neff who had begun his railroad career as a rodman on a survey crew said, "spike driving wasn't that easy when I was doing it for a living!"

Beside the completed track a sign was erected on a metal standard set in a foundation of rocks shaped like a cairn, or monument. The sign noted the place was henceforth to be known as PERKINS. This was in honor of a venerable gentleman of 86 years, Charles E. Perkins, who came to the Missouri Pacific from the Kansas City Southern in 1908 and retired in 1941 as chief traffic officer.

The diesel locomotive of the DQ&E now brings a train of pulpwood and chips, pulls it into one of the interchange tracks at Perkins and leaves it there. A MoP diesel couples on to it and wheels it away about 170 miles to the Dierks paper mill at Pine Bluff.

Perkins was only a spot in the forest marked with a sign. The town of Dierks, with a population of nearly 1,300, was only a cleared place in the forest when the rails came. Perhaps one day there will be a similar town at Perkins.

Even if it remains only a sign on a metal standard, it knew a moment of importance which has remained an event of historical significance for Arkansas.

END

NOTICE: Amtrak's Chicago-Houston train, the LONE STAR, is now running to Dallas. At Fort Worth, The LONE STAR will split into two sections, with one going to Houston and the other to Dallas. The southbound run from Chicago to Dallas will take 20 hours and 20 minutes, while the northbound run will be about two hours longer, counting time waiting to make the connection at Fort Worth.

A late change brought about the large deletion in the meeting notice on the front page of this issue. The program will be a film festival. If you have any film or slides that need to be seen by the membership, bring them along.

CHRISTMAS PARTY: Ruby Holt's Christmas Party Committee met recently and made preliminary plans for that event. I hear that things are progressing nicely and we can expect quite a party this year. Plan to attend. We should hear a committee report at the October meeting.

FROM THE PAST: June 15, 22, 29, 1900 The Chicago city council has finally granted the Chicago & Milwaukee & St. Paul the privilege of changing the motive power on its 12-mile suburban line between Chicago and Evanston from steam to electricity, on condition of payment to the city at the rate of \$500 per mile per year. Inasmuch as the company already possessed the right to operate the road by steam and as the change to electricity will be greatly to the benefit of the public, it is not clear why a fine should be placed on the improvement. The proposed change has been held up in the council for some years, but popular demand for it was so strong that the aldermen finally assented by a vote of 54-6.

(July 13, 1900) A new tourist sleeping car service is to be established on September 1, from Chicago to the Pacific Coast, over the Illinois Central Railroad, to Omaha, the Chicago Rock Island & Pacific to Denver, the Denver & Rio Grande and Rio Grande Western to Ogden, and the Southern Pacific to San Francisco, or the Oregon Short Line to the Northwest.

Arkansas Railroad Club is a non profit organization that meets the second Sunday of each month in the Missouri Pacific Office Building, 1000 West 4th Street, North Little Rock., Arkansas/ For information write P. O. Box 5584 Little Rock, Ark. 72205