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10TH ANNIVERSARY

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM: To be announced later in newsletter

Our programs this year have really been tops and know you will agree that our August program given by Jim Bennett on railroad legos was a real gem. It was something different and we offer our congratulations to Jim on this very fine program.

OUT OF THE PAST: Things have a way of pepping up out of the past that we never knew before. Railroads are no exception and found out something a short time ago that I wanted to pass on to you. Back during World War I, the year 1918 to be exact, the Cotton Belt had some name trains even back then. Southbound passenger trains from St. Louis were known as the Texas Express, and northbound trains were known as the St. Louis Express. Westbound trains from Memphis were also known as The Texas Express and eastbound trains were known as the Memphis Express. The Cotton Belt also had a fast northbound Texas-St. Louis freight train known as the Stock Express. This was of course all in the days before the Lone Star and the Blue Streak. Of all the histories I have researched on the Cotton Belt I never found this even faintly mentioned before. Am I the first in print on this? I wonder.

STEAM EXCURSION: Heart Of Dixie Railroad Club, Birmingham, Ala., will sponsor a steam excursion to Selma, Ala. and return on Saturday, Nov. 3rd. Powered by Engine 2839 or 610. Price of Tickets: \$21 for adults and \$20 for children under 12. For further information write to Steam Excursion - P. O. Box 3694, Birmingham, Ala. 35211. A sellout is anticipated so don't get left out. Order your tickets early.

THE MILWAUKEE ROAD: It looks like the long sorrowful saga of the Milwaukee Road is about over. First the Olympian Hiawatha, then the catenary, bankruptcy, government loans and Stanley Hillman tried to make it go; but then disaster struck, another bad winter on the plains, Hillman resigned as trustee due to a serious health problem, and the federal judge ordering the Milwaukee Road to liquidate its 9,500?? mile system. Some of the pieces will be most likely picked up by other railroads and the ones that nobody wants will become nature trails or power company pole line right of ways. Thanks Mr. Hillman for your attempts and goodbye Milwaukee Road, what memories; Hiawathas, Bi-polars, streamlined steam, beaver tail observations, a virtual museum of diesel power in the 1960's and "REDUCE TO 90" - farewell.
From: Blackhawk Chapter, NRHS, SPIKE & TIE.

POSTAGE SAVERS: Our membership accepted a suggestion by your editor at the August meeting that all members send me twelve (12) long self addressed stamped envelopes for use in mailing the newsletter. This might enable me to put out a longer newsletter in the future. Postage and printing amount to a tidy sum each month. Hope all of you will do this and this will also apply to our associate members who live out of state. Just mail them to me at 5007 Hawthorne Rd., Little Rock, Ark. 72207, or hand them to me at future meetings. Thanks. 15¢ postage applies.

A MOST UNUSUAL TRAIN

By: Bill Merck

Editor's Note: Sources of information about the article you are to read below are almost non-existent. To assist me one is from a newsitem in the ARKANSAS GAZETTE, dated October 21, 1933; the other from your editor's memory as a teenager. There will be several quotes from the Gazette article. Hope you like it.

Back during the great depression of the early thirties industrial activity was curtailed to the point where many industries closed their plants altogether and long bread and soup lines were prevalent in many parts of the country, particularly in the heavily industrialized areas of the north and east. The railroads were no exception. The Cotton Belt seeking to cut expenses decided that their passenger train service could be trimmed back and they came up with a brilliant innovation that was most successful.

As a background leading up to the title of this article; the Southwestern Transportation Company, a wholly owned highway subsidiary of the Cotton Belt, sold their highway bus franchise in 1933 to Southwestern Greyhound Lines, and many of the highway buses owned by S.W.T. went to Greyhound in the sale. The Cotton belt however kept a few of the buses and decided on a train that would be called "Eagle Of The Rails". The Cotton Belt had always been noted for new innovations in transportation and in this respect decided to convert some of the former highway buses to rail wheels thus saving expenses in the operation of a steam train.

As to the schedule of such a train and some description of it, will quote from the Gazette article mentioned above; The southbound rail bus will leave Jonesboro at 7:25 AM, arriving at Brinkley at 9:20. Here connections will be made with a Greyhound bus leaving Memphis at 7:10 AM. Continuing south the bus will arrive in Pine Bluff at 11:45, Texarkana at 4:05 P M and Dallas at 9:40. Going north the bus will leave Dallas at 7 AM, arriving Texarkana 12:30 PM, Pine Bluff at 5:10 P M, and Brinkley at 7:10 PM. Here connections will be made with a Greyhound bus that arrives in Memphis at 9:25 PM. Leaving Brinkley at 7:15 the rail bus will arrive in Jonesboro at 9:15 PM.

Continuing quote from Gazette; Five of the large Southwestern Transportation Company highway buses are being converted into rail buses for the new service. They will have triple differentials, four wheel drives, airbrakes, and rubber cushioned wheels to absorb shocks and noise. They will be capable of operating as fast as 64 miles an hour forward and 60 miles an hour backward. They will have a seating capacity of 27 persons. Each bus is equipped with two complete lavatories and the power is furnished by 150 horsepower motors. In addition to these converted highway buses, the "Eagle Of The Rails" service will include an Austro-Diamler rail bus, which will be capable of much higher speed. The program of converting the highway buses into rail buses is being carried out in the shops of the St. Louis Southwestern Transportation Company, a Cotton Belt subsidiary in Texarkana. (End of quotes from Gazette)

We have no timetable information available as to whether or not these rail buses ran from Jonesboro all the way to Dallas. A Cotton Belt public timetable dated July 15, 1934, shows a rail bus making a daily round trip from Texarkana to Pine Bluff. It may have been decided later that this would be the extent of their operations.

These rail buses did not last long on the Cotton Belt and when the great depression began to wane they were removed and replaced with a steam train. At best they were only an experiment and were designed most certainly to save crew expenses, etc. as they operated with a two man crew; namely Engineer (or motorman) and Conductor. Only passengers were carried since they had to room for mail, baggage or express. When they were abandoned the name "Eagle" was removed for all time from a Cotton Belt passenger train. The line at the time had the "Lone Star" and continued