

The Scrambler

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August 2000

Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

Opinions expressed in the *Scrambler* are those of the Editor and contributors. They do not represent the official view of the Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, its members, officers or directors or the National Railway Historical Society, Inc. unless otherwise stated.

Minutes of the July meeting will be read by Secretary Allen at the August 17th Meeting.



Amtrak's California Zephyr is supposed to stop at the Mount Pleasant depot. Owing to track repairs, we never did see it. This 104-car BNSF freight thundered through on the two track mainline while we were waiting. The suction created by this fast train was both awesome and frightening. Many people park at the depot just to see the evening train.

Observations of the President

I've been having a great time since the last *Scrambler*, taking train slides and travelling in Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa. If you'd like to see what "I've been up to", come to our meeting on August 17. I'll be showing a variety of slides, including those of our

chapter's trip to Mt. Pleasant. Don't forget the Frisco festival on August 26. Fred will be showing off his G scale trains again for all to see. We'll need help staffing the display and also the Roger's Museum's caboose. See you Thursday, August 1

FRISCO Festival

The Chapter has been assigned space immediately in front of the Frisco (Santa Fe) caboose pursuant to our request. The location is close to the restrooms as well. We will have a high visibility location with ample opportunity to promote our Chapter. We will have two 10 by 10 spaces. One will be used from Fred's G scale train setup while the other will be covered by our canopy.

The Frisco Festival managers have established the following schedules for participants:

Set up- 6:30 AM to 9:00 AM. All vehicles must be removed from the setup area by 8:30 AM.

The booth must be ready to open at 9:00AM and must remain open until 6:00 PM. Failure to remain open until 6:00 PM will result in a forfeit of our booth rental fee. The Frisco Festival will not provide any spaces for

participants. This may cause a problem as the most available parking spaces are some distance away.

We will likely need a minimum of three Chapter volunteers at all times during the Festival. One person will work the caboose and explain the use and setup of the Rogers Historical Museum Frisco caboose. The Chapter received some nice publicity from the Rogers Historical Museum newsletter concerning our involvement with their caboose. We will need one individual to operate the G scale trains and an assistant to spell Fred and keep an eye on the canopy. We need to decide what, if anything, the Chapter wishes to sell at the Festival.

Chapter members are requested to wear railroad-type garb. Railroad artifacts are welcome. It may be hot so please bring electric fans and of course, seats.

Northwest Arkansas Railway Post Office History

The Editor recently did a RPO program for a Rogers Kiwanis club. I casually mentioned that I had never been able to speak with anyone who worked on the Monett- Paris RPO that served Rogers, Springdale and Fayetteville until 1965. I later received an e-mail and made a few telephone calls and finally located someone who had.

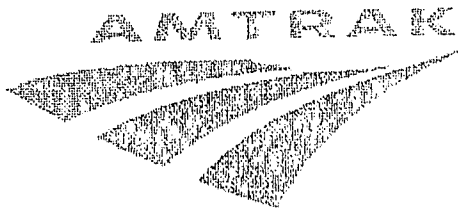
Raymond Coleman, born in May 1916, now lives in Springfield, MO. He worked as a RPO clerk from 1945 to 1965. He worked on the Monett-Paris RPO as a regular substitute clerk between 1945 and 1954. He said the RPO had a 30- foot compartment with a Clerk in Charge, a clerk and a clerk

who worked mail from Monett to Fayetteville only. The most important points were Fayetteville, Fort Smith and Paris, TX. He mentioned that the train was an all stops local and that the catcher was used for mail pickups south of Fort Smith. The clerks arrived in Paris and slept during the day at Miss Lilly's, a boarding house used by RPO clerks for many years. The rooms cost 50 cents. He also mentioned that Monett was a large crew base for RPO clerks.

Coleman's recollections confirmed my belief that the Monett-Paris RPO, like the passenger train, was a minor operation.

AMTRAK

Amtrak has announced the establishment of a new logo to replace the familiar logo used since 1971. The new logo is intended to help with the process of creating a new image for Amtrak.



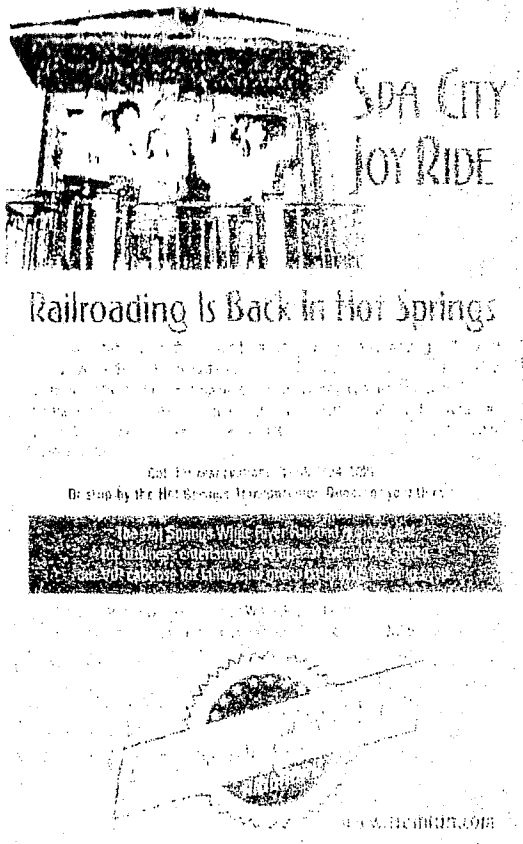
The New Amtrak logo

Attention Tom Scott- Amtrak is in discussion with Idaho and Oregon concerning the re-establishment of the *Pioneer*.

The Northeast Acela trainsets encountered truck mechanical problems in mid-June. The start date for service is unknown.

The *Texas Eagle* has seen a 44 % increase in June 2000 revenues (compared to June 1999) since the train went to daily service on May 21. On time performance has suffered from the UP's directional plan. Southbound the train stops at Gilmer, TX and receives customers bussed some 90 miles from Marshall & Longview, TX. Northbound the same situation exists for riders wishing to detrain at Gilmer.

White River Scenic Railroad



The ad to the left (reduced in size) appeared in an early August issue of the Arkansas Democrat Gazette. The black segment did not print well in the paper. It says the Hot Springs White River RR will soon have a VIP caboose available for special events and parties. It was unclear if the VIP caboose will operate on the White River segment or the Hot Springs segment. As of press time, Sean Reed had not returned a call to the Editor.

The White River Scenic RR web site is quite complete as it has details on the locomotive and cars used on the White River Scenic RR. The sole engine, an ALCO MRS1, was built in 1953 for U.S. Army use overseas as it could operate on adjustable gauges. The 1000 HP C-C unit had only about 2,000 service miles when obtained by the White River Scenic RR. The web site is worth a visit.

Arkansas & Missouri Railroad Company

Brenda Brown, Passenger Traffic Manager, reports that the passenger traffic count is down. Rain on five operating days in June is the culprit. They are making good progress in overcoming the down period. The A & M has an active special excursion schedule summarized as follows:

July 28- Veteran Celebration Ride operated at mid-day round trip between Springdale and Fayetteville with a 2 hour 15 minute layover in Fayetteville. Adults could purchase one ticket at full fare and the second at a 50% discount.

August 3 and 4- The Albert Brumley Gospel Singing festival will operate Springdale to Chester trips that leave Springdale at 8:00 AM and return at noon after a 45 minute layover in Chester. Both of these trips are sold out. In prior years the Brumley special operated north to Purdy, MO and made a stop (but no visit) at the birthplace of Albert Brumley.

August 11- This Operation Lifesaver special leaves Rogers at 10:00 AM and arrives in Fayetteville at noon and returns to Rogers at 2:30 PM and Springdale at 3:15. Round trip fare from Rogers is \$20.00 or \$10.00 from Springdale.

August 25-Frisco Festival VIP Bash- This train will operate two trips between Springdale and Rogers starting at 5:00 PM. Earlier that day the railroad will have a Frisco Festival Street Dance train that will operate on a shuttle basis serving Fayetteville, Springdale and Rogers. Tickets for the VIP train are \$5.00 while the Street Dance Train will cost \$10.00 from Fayetteville and \$5.00 from Springdale.

August 26-Frisco Festival in Rogers-Shuttle service from Springdale north to Rogers starts at 10:00 AM with the last shuttle leaving Rogers at 5:45 PM. The roundtrip is \$5.00 with children under three going free.

On Friday, July 28 a delegation from Costa Rica's national rail authority (INCOFER) was in Springdale to visit the A & M. INCO-

FER is charged with finding the capital (estimated at \$100-\$150 million) to rehabilitate Costa Rica's run down meter gauge railway system. A subsidiary of Canadian Pacific has done a survey and the US Government has provided \$400,000 for a report. Most of important rail lines, originally built to carry bananas produced by United Fruit Company, suffered severe damage in an April 1991 earthquake. The important diesel hauled line from the capital of San Jose to the banana ports on the Atlantic side was heavily damaged. Through service still has not been restored. The remaining lines, principally an electrified line from San Jose to the Pacific, and a small commuter service in San Jose, were shut down on June 27, 1995. At the time the railroad was shut down it was stated that INCOFER would never make a profit. Now five years later INCOFER is trying to interest foreign parties in obtaining a concession to rehabilitate and operate a vastly improved rail system. The stated deadline for granting the concession is March 2001.

The Editor visited Costa Rica in late 1993. The commuter service between San Jose and the National University was in operation. At this time, there was newspaper discussion of extending the service to Cartago, a large city near San Jose. The commuter trains were diesel pulled and used modern stainless steel open-air cars, as the climate in Costa Rica is very mild. The electrified line to the Pacific appeared to be operative as the catenary was in place. The largest business in Costa Rica is now tourism. Until recent years, export of bananas was the largest activity in this stable and democratic nation of 2.9 million people.

An article in the June 25, 2000 issue of San Jose's La Nacion newspaper provided additional information. Two segments of INCOFER are being revived. The 31-mile line between Valle de la Estrella and the Atlantic port of Moin has transported more than three million boxes of bananas in the past six

months. The isolated segment between Siquires and Rio Bravo, a distance of about 20 miles, is being repaired with the intent of establishing freight service in two months. The Standard Fruit Company (a subsidiary of Dole Fruit), not INCOFER, undertook both of these activities. Discussions are also underway with a steel company for freight service between the Pacific port of Caldera and San Jose. This would involve about 66 miles of line that was electrified.

In nearby Panama the KCS has taken an interest in the Panama Railroad. This line has the potential to become a land bridge for maritime shipments. The Costa Rican rail network does not have this advantage. In addition, the line running down from the capital to the Atlantic Coast is difficult to operate even in non-earthquake conditions. It will be interesting to see if a concessionaire can revitalize the rail network. Because the A & M is a bootstrap operation with significant in house skills it might be possible that the A & M plays a role. Your Editor, a

former international banker, was involved in several reconstruction projects over the years. These projects usually move slowly particularly when international financing bodies are involved. I would not hold my breath.

On June 28, 2000, the A & M received a favorable decision from the Surface Transportation Board. The A & M had filed a notice of waiver concerning its intent to lease and operate about 3.2 miles of UP track near the UP yard in Van Buren. Under established rules, the A & M posted required notices of the transaction at the workplace of the affected employees. There was a problem with the timing of the STB filing on this transaction. The STB decided to grant A & M a waiver from the filing rules as the A & M had met the requirement indirectly. The STB found that A & M could be exempted and thus the transaction could take place. The A & M petition indicated the transaction was scheduled to close on June 14, 2000 so it likely was postponed for a time.

Combs, Cass & Eastern Railroad Company



This photo, taken by Uni de la Teja, shows Larry "The Hatchet" Cain at work on the March 18 , 2000 preview excursion. George Alison (right) bends to pick up a diamond for a member of the party while the Editor observes Larry's skill with a dull hatchet. Some of the old CC & E roadbed in the Ozark National Forest is easily passable by a regular auto. The Civilian Conservation Corps was active in the Ozark National Forest in the mid 1930s and perhaps they are responsible for the easy to traverse areas. Unfortunately, there are several areas that are accessible by foot or four wheel drive only.

ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chapter established November 1987

2000 DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

President	BOB HOFER	855-1532	5 Breton Lane, Bella Vista, AR 72715
Vice President	BILL MERRIFIELD	751-7163	5278 Silent Grove Road, Springdale, AR 72762
Secretary	RON ALLEN	751-0761	2718 Jean Street, Springdale, AR 72762
Treasurer	BILL USSERY	751-2873	112 Willella Place, Springdale, AR 72764
National Director	BOB OSWALD	521-9714	2511 Elizabeth Ave., Fayetteville, AR 72703
Director	RAY TOLER	751-7810	P.O. Box 6005, Springdale, AR 72766
Director	LARRY CAIN	751-1949	3413 Butterfield Coach, Springdale, AR 72764
Director	GENE SCHMITZ	443-4097	1645 Wedington Drive, Fayetteville, AR 72703
Editor	TOM DUGGAN	756-1901	15225 Lakewood Drive, Lowell, AR 72745

Meetings... ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS Chapter No. 158 (ABMT) Third Thursday of each month (except December dinner meeting). Meetings are held at the Shiloh Museum's General Store, 118 West Johnson, Springdale, Arkansas at 7:00 PM. Visitors are welcome at all meetings. Annual dues for 2000 remain unchanged at \$29 for individuals and \$39 for a family. Dues are 50% less for members joining between June 1 and September 30. Please call 501-750-8165 for directions to the Shiloh Museum

Bob Hofer hosts the August 17th program entitled "Midwest Rail Odyssey". Bob's slide program will take you to Mt. Pleasant, Iowa, the Quad Cities and the National Railroad Museum at Green Bay, Wisconsin. Can you name the Quad Cities? Attend the meeting at 7:00 PM on Thursday, August 17th to learn the answer!!

**ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
P.O. BOX 1303
SPRINGDALE, AR 72765-1303
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

**See middle of this page for
August 17 Program**