

The Scrambler

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Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

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Minutes of Meeting

July 19, 2001

This meeting was hosted by President Bob Stark and son Tom Stark at their Fayetteville home. Retired Treasurer Bill Ussery filled in for Treasurer Bob Hofer and read the Treasurer's Report. A copy is on file with the Secretary and available for inspection.

Vice President Bill Merrifield noted the September meeting lacked a speaker. Please think about stepping up and helping Bill with this task. Bill also recounted a call he received after a lavish spread in the *Morning News of Northwest Arkansas*. The large July 15, 2001 spread featured Bill Merrifield and his Moffat Tunnel programs. The caller provided Bill with an interesting story of a 1972 trip in a Buick over the roadbed made redundant by the opening of the Moffat Tunnel in 1927. It sounded like a death-defying trip especially when the family had to cross a trestle. The trip included a ride through one tunnel (recently collapsed according to Fred Lewis). Once the family Buick entered the roadbed, which still had ties, there was no way to exit for many, many miles.

Editor Tom Duggan confirmed that all is in order for the Chapter's participation at the Rogers, AR Frisco Festival on Saturday, August 25. The theme of this year's Festival is the Railroad Train. The Chapter will again supervise the Rogers Historical Museum Frisco Caboose. We will also assist the Arkansas & Missouri Railroad again by selling tickets to the shuttle excursion train between Rogers and Springdale. Chapter member Fred Lewis advised he will be out of town on

August 25. We will need to develop an alternative as Fred has been the primary operator of the well received G Scale model train setup. George Alison suggested that we make a live exhibit of a hand operated rail saw from his collection. It was agreed the Editor would check with Larry Bouchet concerning a piece of rail.

The eighteen people present than had a chance to digest the great meal (the brisket was outstanding) as Tom Stark did a program on his March 2001 Amtrak journey from Little Rock to Philadelphia. The week long trip involved the *Texas Eagle* to and from Chicago, the *Cardinal* from Chicago to Washington, DC, *Metroliner* from Washington, DC to Philadelphia. The return trip involved the *Three Rivers* to Chicago and thence the *Texas Eagle*. All of the trips except Washington-Philadelphia involved sleeping cars of modern vintage and in one case the infamous roomette on a Heritage car. Tom, who was accompanied by Chapter President Bob Stark and a seven year old grandson, noted that virtually every train-except the Metroliner- was late. Even the Texas Eagle originating in Chicago was delayed two hours by a mechanical problem. Tom characterized the Amtrak food as good but expensive for individuals not holding sleeping space (meals included). The most enjoyable segment was the Chicago-Washington *Cardinal* that takes a southerly route that involved views of famous West Virginia rail towns. The food and crew were outstanding according to Tom.

Tom Duggan-Editor

The Arkansas & Missouri Railroad Company

Your Editor had an interesting conversation with A & M CEO Larry Bouchet. He was under the impression that the Chapter was supposed to respond to him concerning the conversion of the MOPAC baggage into a railroad museum. Bouchet wants to see if the Chapter will assist in the renovation of the car that would then be moved to the south end of the Springdale depot parking lot. I was a bit surprised at Bouchet's understanding of the matter. He mentioned that the railroad would be prepared to assist the Chapter financially with restoration-related expenses.

Personally speaking, I think a restoration project would be a useful activity for the Chapter. We would be doing something tangible to preserve rail history. It would provide good exposure for the Chapter and provide the many A & M passengers, including the large numbers of schoolchildren who attend Operation Lifesaver programs, the opportunity to learn more about railroad history in this area. We need to discuss this matter at the August 16th meeting so that we can respond to the railroad.

The 1899 B & M combine (Car 102) and one of the Alco RS-1 engines- I think it may be No 20- have been measured for the move to the National Museum of Transport in St. Louis. Larry Bouchet said they will be gone within a month. The Editor assumes the

units will move by truck due to the fragile nature of car and engine.

The A & M is looking for additional passenger cars. The loss of the combine means the railroad will have a three-car passenger fleet. This will create problem when the railroad operates the numerous special event shuttles that have become very common in the past two years. The Springdale-Van Buren run normally takes two cars so there will be but one car available for shuttle duty on days when the Van Buren train operates.

Bouchet would like to add dining car service to the existing product mix. He is especially interested in a deal where someone might own and operate the car under lease to the A & M. The railroad has also looked at the ex Rock Island cars at Hickory Creek. They are lightweight postwar cars that I recall as being poor condition. They came to Hickory Creek many years ago for a restaurant project that never materialized.

Brenda Brown, Passenger Train Manager, said that traffic this year has been better than it was last year. Of course, it does not hurt that the passenger train service appears to be more effectively promoted than was the case three years ago.

Frisco Festival

The Frisco Festival at Rogers is on Saturday, August 25. To the best of the Editor's knowledge, we will have the same locations as last year. (The Festival organizers have changed and things seem to take longer this year.) We will monitor the Frisco caboose of the Rogers Historical Museum and provide information and sell tickets for the A & M shuttle train. The theme of this year's Frisco Festival is the train. Your Editor would like us to have an interesting and informative exhibit especially since

Fred Lewis likely will not be available to operate the G scale gauge model railroad setup. However, George Alison's rail saw should attract a lot of interest. The A & M will provide the Chapter with whatever is needed to make the rail saw exhibit operable. We will need to have volunteers to make our participation a success. Please check your calendars before the August 16th meeting as sign up sheets will be circulated.

Department of Shameless Self Promotion

The program for August 16th will be "Interurbans-What Happened?". The interurban railroad exploded across the Midwest prior to 1910. More than 15,000 miles of interurban railroads were constructed and by 1940 nearly all interurbans had gone out of

business. This program, prepared by the Editor, will give attendees a peek at a once great and interesting segment of American rail history. Some attendees will be shocked by what they learn.

Troop Train Travel Fifty Five Years Ago

(Scrambler Editor note: This interesting article was written for the March 2001 Sparks Newsletter of the Topeka, KS Chapter of NRHS. The writer is Father Herman Page, Editor.)

"Back in 1945 and 46, I had several experiences with wartime and military travel. This is long enough so that not many people remain who can recall this kind of experience. Fortunately my father saved all the letters I wrote home during my short (18 month) army time, and I still have several Pullman space stubs from that time. So here are some reminiscences.

It was July 1945, and the war was over in Europe, but Japan remained. At that time, there were no enlistments; everyone possible was called in the draft. I graduated from high school in June of 1945, so I became eligible. I was with my parents at Martha's Vineyard when my induction orders came in early July of 1945, so I had to travel from there to legal residence, Marquette, MN to be sworn in. Even though the European part of WW II was over, trains were mostly very crowded, and space limited.

On July 20th, I left the Vineyard by the steamer, then took the New Haven train from Woods Hole to Boston. I wrote that the train left Woods Hole late, but then made up time and arrived OT just before noon. The Cape Cod trains usually consisted of a baggage car and one or two coaches, one part each from Woods Hole and Hyannis, and were spliced together in Buzzards Bay to run up to Boston, South Station. Steam was used, one locomotive from Woods Hole to Buzzards Bay, the other running through from Hyannis through Buzzards Bay to Boston, all 4-6-2s.

After lunch in South Station (South Station had an excellent dining room and lunch counter), I then took the Boston & Albany/New York Central for the trip to Chicago. It was Train #33, the New England Wolverine, leaving South Station at 3:20 PM. As were most NYC trains of its day, it had all heavyweight cars, except for an occasional lightweight coach, steam powered. I still have the ticket stub for a Pullman space -- Lower 12 in Car 321, on Friday, July 20th (no time listed!) was the accommodation. Despite the war time crowding, my notes recall having no trouble getting the Pullman reservation, nor going into the diner to eat dinner. Even back then, I was fascinated with the old heavyweight Pullman cars, and can still picture the section. (No one was occupying the upper berth!)

Arrival in LaSalle Street Station, Chicago, at 12:45 PM the next day meant a Parmalee Transfer to the Chicago & North Western station, for C&NW Train #209, the Peninsula 400, leaving at 4:10 PM for the trip to Negaunee. This train was very familiar, as I had ridden it going back and forth to school in Indiana. The normal through consist was two F-units (back to back), and all lightweight cars -- baggage-tavern-lunch counter car, four coaches and a parlor car Chicago to Ishpeming, with an additional parlor car, diner, and coaches from Chicago on the south end of the train, put on southbound, and taken off northbound at Green Bay. All of this equipment was newly received in December 1941, just in time for the wartime rush. Someone must have met me to take me the 12 miles to Marquette, since the train was scheduled to arrive in Negaunee at 12:10 AM, VERY early Sunday morning,

My induction was at the Palestra, a large old barn-like building used for hockey games and other large group functions in Marquette. It took place on Tuesday, July 24th. The induction process was slow, more standing in line than doing anything; then after being sworn in, taken down to the South Shore depot for the trip to Chicago. There were six extra cars for inductees added to DSS&A train #7 (Marquette to Duluth), the train's normal consist being three cars (RPO/Bag. coach, and ancient 12-1 sleeper. An RS 1 diesel assisted the 4-6-2 locomotive regularly used. It was a slow trip uphill to Negaunee, 12 miles distant, where the extra cars of inductees were switched over to the C&NW's overnight train #162 to Chicago, since both DSS&A and C&NW used the same depot.

Upon arrival, the cars of inductees were added to the rear of the regular C&NW consist (full RPO, baggage, 2 coaches, and Pullman, all heavyweight. The extra car I rode in was an old wooded coach (it DID have closed vestibules !), but had old rattan covered walk-over seats and brass light fixtures. No air conditioning other than to open the windows...and let the mosquitoes in. We rattled along through the night, without many of us sleeping much. In the evening, a few stops at small logging towns meant that a couple of inductees would unload and run across the Street to a tavern and get several six-packs of beer to grease the skids of travel. I recall one stop on a curve near Little Suamico where I could look ahead through the night and see the locomotive taking water! Sleep was fitful, as the car rode very hard, many of the men were noisy, the lights stayed on all night, and the ancient coach creaked and rattled.

The next morning at 6:45, Wednesday, July 25th, we arrived at Fort Sheridan, Illinois, induction center, where we left the train and were herded off for the process of shots, exams, and uniform issue. The post

installation was adjacent to the C&NW main line, and from time to time I could see C&NW commuter trains and occasionally a "400" train. A short week-end pass allowed a trip into Chicago, using the Chicago North Shore & Milwaukee service, but I have little recollection of the North Shore line. (I made up for this lack later on!)

The next week, in a supposed "secret" operation, we were to board a troop train for movement to our training center. The train was about 25 cars long, including several baggage cars, kitchen cars, and Pullman tourist sleeping cars. Most of these were regular tourist sleepers, unairconditioned, in which one man occupied the upper berth, two in the lower. (The officers or non-coms occupied any drawing rooms, etc. on the train.)

Fortunately I was assigned to a car which my letter home identified as an old parlor car converted for troop use. The parlor seats were replaced with triple-deck berths, with the middle berth swinging down to make a back for the seat on the lowest berth for daytime service. For night, the beds were arranged, three high, two adjacent, but each had its own sheet and pillow. Good thing: I didn't have to share a bed! One problem was that, as a former parlor car, there were only two small washrooms, each with only one toilet and one sink. There was no cool water, and the days were hot. The car was air-conditioned only by opening the windows..., and total use of steam power meant lots of soot along with the hot air.

Before boarding, we deposited our duffel bags at a baggage car, just carrying a small bag on the train with us. Meals (!) were provided by the two kitchen cars, the boxy type built for troop train use. To eat, we went through the kitchen car twice..., once through to get plates and utensils; then coming back through to get the food (such as it was), returning to our seats to eat. I

recall the food being skimpy and not very good.

The day was hot, and the train left on the C&NW, then moved slowly over transfer tracks around the city of Chicago to be handed over to the Alton. We stayed in their yard around three hours, waiting for servicing, water, power, etc. The train was so long that it had to be broken up into three parts to fit the yard space. During the wait, I recall several times when the guys paid the Pullman porter to go to a nearby bar and bring them back some beer.

Finally about 9:30 PM (21:30), the train was reassembled and left. I slept somewhat better than I did in the old coach between Marquette and Fort Sheridan. When we got up the next morning, we were crossing a bridge into St. Louis. After an hour stop for servicing the train, we left on the Missouri Pacific, heading for Little Rock. They wouldn't tell us where we were going, and there was much speculation. The porter said we were heading to Little Rock and Camp Joseph T. Robinson, but my letter indicated that we didn't really believe him. It turned out that he really did know!

We had a meal the previous evening around 8:30 (20:30), and the next morning around 08:30. The meals were very small, and we got hungry. The trip was not pleasant. It was hot, humidity increasing as we moved south, with smoke and soot continuing. The time

passed slowly, some men played cards, a few had radios, others shot dice! There would be occasional meets with northbound trains. Finally, we got to little Rock around 5:30 PM (17:30) and after the usual long delay, the train reversed for the trip up to Camp Joseph T. Robinson.

Camp Robinson in North Little Rock was located on a hill, the end of a four-mile spur, off the MP main line to Kansas City. The usual practice was for trains to be hauled up the hill, using switchers from the Union Station. Pictures show a winding track, at present with trees growing over it. Inside the camp, in an area of warehouses, we eventually were able to get off the train and claim our duffel bags from the baggage car. We were then marched about two miles from the camp's rail yard to our temporary location, carrying all our stuff, not too easy for a kid from Lake Michigan. So much for my one and only troop train ride, and I'm glad I didn't have any more.

During my seventeen weeks of basic training, I had no chance to see trains and one didn't take pictures then...still "wartime", plus film was scarce and I didn't have a camera with me. I do recall late at night hearing the whistles on the Missouri Pacific trains passing along the river valley down below...lots of nostalgia there!. They were very beautiful whistles."

Special Meeting Notice for Chapter Officers & Directors

Officers and Directors are requested to attend a special Board Meeting at 6:30 PM on Thursday, August 16, 2001 . The meeting is called to discuss sending a Northwest Arkansas high school age student to the NRHS Railcamp in Scranton, PA in the summer of 2002.

Some notes on last month's Frisco timetable:

PEIRCE CITY: Named after Andrew Peirce, Jr., one of the incorporators of the South Pacific Railroad Company, a predecessor to the Frisco. A man of somewhat questionable scruples and personal aggrandizement, he formed, among other things, the Peirce City Real Estate Company to sell town lots at the point where the Vinita and Wichita lines split. "Peirce City citizens became so disgusted ... that the town eventually changed its spelling to Pierce City to avoid association with the founder" (H. Craig Miner). Central Division passenger trains continued to use Peirce City as their northern terminus until sometime in the late 1880s or early 1890s.

MONETT; Began as a settlement called Billings, platted in 1870 when the Atlantic and Pacific Railroad Company, another Frisco predecessor, reached that point. It was named for Frederick Billings, one of its incorporators (Billings, Montana, is named for the same man). Nearer to Springfield was Plymouth, which on May 1, 1871, incorporated itself as Billings! So the original Billings adopted the discarded name Plymouth. Finally in 1887 the railroad established shops at Plymouth, and named their station Monett, and the town and post office soon followed. It was named for a close friend of Frisco President Edward F. Winslow, namely Henry Monett, General Passenger Agent of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad.

PURDY: Named for George A. Purdy, a land agent for the railroad. Originally Winslow, for Edward F., a somewhat unpopular railroad man. A petition to incorporate as Purdy was presented to the Barry County Court on September 30, 1881, but not made legal until May 7, 1883.

BUTTERFIELD has no relation to the Butterfield Stage Line which ran several miles to the east and went out of business at the outbreak of the Civil War in 1861. And EXETER, incorporated in 1880 was probably named for the town in England. In the event, both sources are obscure.

WASHBURN: In 1826 Samuel J. Washburn settled about a mile and a half east of the present townsite and called it Washburn Prairie (still called that today). Later in 1840 James and Josiah Keets opened a store on the hill east of present Washburn and ten years later platted a townsite called Keetsville. However the Keets brothers left the area about the time of the Civil War and in 1868 the town petitioned to change its name to Washburn. Then in 1880 when the railroad arrived, it established a station called O'Day, after John O'Day, a railroad attorney with even less scruples than Andrew Peirce. This name lasted only a short time when the town of Washburn moved down the hill and established itself on the railroad.

SELIGMAN: The Roller family settled this area in the early 1830s and many still live there today. The area became known as Roller's Ridge. In April, 1880 one of the Frisco directors, banker Joseph Seligman, died and his widow asked that a station be named in his memory (I think Seligman, Arizona, is also named for him). The railroad was agreeable and on September 27, 1880, the town was platted. However the townsfolk agreed only on condition that the widow of the Jewish banker donate \$500.00 toward the building of a Christian church building. She did and the rest is history. Seligman was also the jumping off point for the rail line that eventually became the Missouri and North Arkansas.

BLANSET: Named for Archibald "Uncle Arch" Blanset who had a store there before the railroad arrived. Following the assassination of President James A. Garfield on September 19, 1881, the town name was changed in his honor. Adding to the confusion, the post office was named Crowell (established on March 11, 1881) for postmaster Sam Crowell. This was not changed to Garfield until March 5, 1887.

AVOCA: The first Avoca was at the site of the present Brightwater. However getting a train started out of the valley of Little Sugar Creek was not easy, so it's leading citizen, Albert Peel, moved the town and its name one and a half miles southward to its present level location. Mrs. Peel chose the name from a line in "The Meeting of the Waters", a poem by Thomas More ("...sweet vale of Avoca").

ROGERS: In 1881 the Frisco established a major construction camp here and named it after its popular General Manager, Capt. C. W. Rogers (he had been captain of the Union iron-clad "Hydrangea" during the Civil War).

LOWELL: This is another name cloaked in obscurity. No one seems to know whether it was named after another town, or the prominent Boston family, or a railroader, or what.

SPRINGDALE: The townsite was platted in 1868 and named for the pre-existing Shiloh Primitive Baptist Church (1848). When the post office was to be established in 1875, it was discovered the name was already in use in Arkansas. Springdale was chosen in recognition of the large spring in the center of town.

JOHNSONS: Not on this timetable, made its first appearance in the 1890s. Probably named for a succession of nearby mills dating from the 1830s. The Frisco always put an "s" on the name.

FAYETTEVILLE: Settled in the late 1820s and named about 1830 for Fayetteville, Lincoln County, Tennessee, home of several of the original settlers.

Over the years at least 14 other stations were named through this stretch, but no substantial towns grew around them.