

The Scrambler

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Monthly Newsletter of the 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.

Upcoming Chapter Programs

October 16- Please journey via the Larry Cain and Tom Duggan slide show to the Nevada Northern Railway at Ely, Nevada. The program will also include vintage Bob Oswald slides taken in 1988. This will be a chance to learn about this mining railroad without the typical (select one) (a).high desert heat or (b) wind and sandstorms or (c) sudden drops in temperature or (d) all of the above in less than 24 hours.

November 20- Bill Merrifield will do a slide show on the Cumbres & Toltec at Chama, NM. At the time of his April 2003 visit the line had not yet opened for the season. Bill decided to take a series of images that explain how things function on a narrow gauge railroad. It will be a fun and informative program.

December- Dinner Chairperson Tom Scott will be in charge of arrangements with the date to be determined. If you have any restaurant or date preferences please contact Tom at 521-1244 now. The Editor can now report that the restaurant at Yesteryear's Antique Mall in Tontitown, the site of the 2002 banquet, is no longer in operation.

January 15, 2004- Bob Stark and Chuck Girad team up to present a program on the railroad stations of Fort Smith and The Fort Smith & Western Railway. We have had very few, if any, programs on Arkansas' second largest city and this program may end that drought.

Please be sure to contact Bill Merrifield at 751-3163 if you have a program to present.

NRHS Information

The *National Railway Bulletin* is going to undergo major changes to bring it up to date. In addition to the improved printing and color noted in the last issue, future Bulletins will be printed in an 8.5 inch by 11 inch format. Editor Jeff Smith has been seeking suggestions and it sounds as if the changes will be welcome and significant. One thing that has bothered me is the large number of book reviews with some issues having multiple book reviews on one fallen flag line. In addition to a problem of excess coverage I have problems with book reviews that are signed with initials only. To me the name of the reviewer is often as important as the content of

the review itself.

Membership in NRHS overall continues to be stagnant, a condition present for the past three years. One informal survey indicated that more than 70% of members are over 50 which suggest future problems.

The proposed 2004 budget, to be voted on at the October Director's meeting, envisages a small deficit in common with recent years. The cost of sending a student to Railcamp will be \$750 in 2004 unless registration takes place prior to February 2004.

Arkansas & Missouri Railroad

The 2003 Labor Day weekend is likely one that management and employees of the A & M would prefer to forget. The area had heavy rains and the yard located north of Randall Wobbe Lane in Springdale was the site of a two car derailment. Chapter member Larry Cain was first to note the overturned cars on Saturday, August 30. The two loaded covered hopper cars with probable BNSF reporting marks sank into the ground at two separate locations. The cause appeared to be a derailment caused by lack of ballast to support the tracks. The railroad then dispatched work crews to repair the roadbed, track and right the cars. Trucks then entered the yard to retrieve the grain.

Earlier that same day Chapter member Bill Ussery passed by the A & M depot at about 9:30 AM. Bill noticed a number of passengers standing around. This seemed odd as the passenger train leaves the depot at 8:00 AM. Bill then passed the depot at 10:00 AM and noted both passengers and their cars were gone.

The source of the odd situation was an accident involving the passenger train of two cars and an engine and another A & M train. The accident happened at about 8:15 AM near Robinson Avenue (US Highway 412) in the southern part of Springdale. The track curves to the east and buildings are on either side of the right of way. Railroad Police Chief Ron Sparks was quoted as saying that no passengers were injured but three

train men had minor injuries. KURM Radio in Rogers later that day had a news broadcast that said one of the crew men had a head laceration.

The site of the accident is within yard limits where a 20 mph speed limit prevails. How two trains came to occupy the same track will be a matter of concern to railroad management. This incident is the first that the Editor can recall involving the passenger train and another train. Obviously an accident involving a passenger train has the potential of claims for injury. The A & M, like many tourist train operators, is partially self insured so any claims would first be paid by the railroad before insurers would pay under their liability policies.

The coverage of this article by area newspapers warrants comment. The *Morning News of Northwest Arkansas* usually has better coverage than the Northwest Arkansas edition the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*. However the *News* had no coverage whatsoever while the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* ran the article deep inside on page three of the Northwest Arkansas section. However the Little Rock edition ran an article on page one of the Arkansas section. The Editor's guess is that the Springdale office of the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette* learned of the accident by listening to the Springdale Police dispatch frequency as a 911 call was made from the scene of the accident.

(Editor's note-This story was first published in the October 21, 1897 issue of The Springdale News)

"There Was Death on the Rail.

Two Giant Locomotives Meet in a Deadly Embrace Near Springdale

The Result Fearful to Contemplate—Two Dead and Five Injured

The Orders That Would Have Saved the Train Were Never Delivered

Full Particulars of the Dreadful Affair Which Occurred Last Sunday

The hour was shortly after nine o'clock on a beautiful Sabbath Morning in October. The sun was shining brightly: the deep toned church bells in the little town of Springdale were sending forth their call inviting whomever will come and worship, all was peace and contentment. No. 5, the cannon ball, had stopped at the station and deposited a few straggling passengers, taken on as many more and with a roar was speeding away to the Gulf. Second 38, a northbound freight, slowly pulled out from the siding and with every increasing revolution of the big drive wheels was rushing on to destruction. John Allen, the operator, sat at his post in the depot, waiting for the conductor and engineer to come in and receive their orders to remain on the siding. Failing to put in an appearance, Allen stepped out on the depot platform, and to his horror he saw that 38 was on the main line and speeding Northward. He realized that nothing but the divine interposition of providence could prevent death

on the rail. He quickly flew to the key and began calling the operator at Rogers. "R," "r ", "r ", never sounded more quickly than in this instance and the operator was instructed to hold 37 at Rogers. 37 has gone some minutes ago came back the answer. As there was no operator at Lowell he sought to telephone that place and have 37 flagged. After a short time, which seemed ages to him, Allen finally did get Lowell and quickly made known the situation. "37 has just passed," replied the man at the Lowell end of the line and a few moments later came this message: "They have come together: just heard the crash." Every operator on this division who was near his instrument knew that a fatal mistake had been made by someone, and that a collision was unavoidable.

All of the above occurred in less time than it takes to tell it, with the lightning like rapidity the scene in Springdale changes. The news that a head end collision had occurred north of town rapidly spread, and people began flocking to the scene of the disaster, on foot, on horse back and almost every conceivable way possible. A freight train was on the siding here and the engine was quickly uncoupled from all the cars except the caboose, and local physicians were hastily summoned and carried to the wreck.

The Scene of the Wreck

The scene presented was awe inspiring, and one seldom seen and when seen not soon forgotten. The two monster locomotives, weighing probably sixty tons each, were telescoped into each other and were so crushed as to little resemble their original shape. As soon as relief arrived the caring for the dead and wounded was begun. They were all loaded onto the train and brought to Springdale and taken to the Arcade Hotel, and given every possible assistance. Both

trains were making good time, running at the rate of about twenty miles an hour. The woods on each side of the track, together with the curves, made it impossible for the engine to see each other until the trains were almost immediately together. The South bound train consisted of six or seven cars and the North bound some twelve or fifteen. There were three or four cars of coal on the Northbound train, together with other cars of merchandise and some empties, while the South bound train was loaded with merchandise, and possibly one empty car. On the South bound train was a car of oil which, luckily, was so far from the engine that it was uninjured. Had this car bursted [sic] nothing could have prevented the oil from becoming ignited, when the result would have been much worse. Only one engine left the rails and that only partially. Several cars left the track and those nearest the engines were an unrecognizable mass of wood and iron.

Two work trains, one from Monett and the other from Fort Smith, arrived in the afternoon. The debris was pulled from the track and by nine o'clock Sunday night trains could pass over. The engine of the north bound was pulled into the siding at this place and the south bound was taken to Lowell. But little of the track was misplaced and only three or four new rails had to be put in.

The Dead and Injured

The Dead.

Hugh McCall- McCall was head brakeman on the northbound train. He was on the engine at the time of the collision and the engineer says he was standing on the floor of the cab with the time card before him, which he had procured from the engineer only a short time before. This prevented him from seeing the approaching train in time to jump. He was dead when taken from the wreck. A

piece of timber had been driven through his shoulder, penetrating the chest and lungs. Besides this injury his legs were burned to a crisp from having come in contact with the boiler. The force of the explosion threw him high on the boiler and from here is where he was taken. McCall carried with him a traveling shield, issued by Higbee Lodge, No. 150 K. of P, Higbee, Mo. Local K. of P looked after the remains and escorted them to the train Sunday night, and they were taken to his home in Huntington for interment. He was a new man on the road, having taken the place of the brakeman named Walker who was killed in a wreck near Porter a few days ago.

Tramp-Name Unknown- On the North bound train was a tramp bearing his way. He was almost dead when taken from the debris and died shortly after noon. He was never conscious at any time. His injuries consisted of a broken skull and his neck was also probably broken. There was nothing on him by which he might be identified. In his pocket was a tin of smoking tobacco a small memorandum book of a patent medicine house, but with no writing. In it a penny loose and 25 cents wrapped in a piece of paper. There was also found in his shoe \$14.50, consisting of two \$5 bills, two \$1 bills, and \$2.50 in silver. The railroad company ordered that he be given a decent funeral at their expense, which was done, the remains being interred in Bluff Cemetery Monday afternoon. He appeared to be 30 or 35 years old and was six feet tall. He had dark wavy hair, well kept, and dark moustache and was dressed in a dark coat and gray pants and well worn No. 8 tan shoes. On the right side of the nose was a small scar. We call him a "tramp" but who knows but what he was an honest, industrious man. He may have been employed away from home and was returning, adopting this mode of travel to save his meager earnings to provide the necessaries of life for those dear to

husband and father. While he was only a "tramp" perchance there may be somewhere today a loving wife and loving little ones anxiously awaiting husband and father. This evening the little ones may be swinging on the gate watching for papa, and the wife may have prepared an extra dish for the evening meal in honor of the expected arrival, thinking as she did so that he surely will come *this* time. But no. If there be anxious watchers, while the subject of their thoughts lies cold in death in the grave of an unknown.

The Injured.

Joe Kinney- Kinney was engineer on the north bound train, his engine being 244. His right leg was broken above the ankle, and also a number of ribs broken. Kinney was the first to see the approaching train, and as quick as thought, he leaped from the cab window, head first, and fortunately on the side opposite where the debris was piled. He says his only regret is that he didn't have time to tell his fireman and brakeman so they could have jumped. Kinney's home is in Monett and his wife and other relatives have been with him since the disaster. He was taken to a hospital at St. Louis Tuesday evening.

Warren Furry- Furry was fireman for Kinney, and is probably the most seriously injured of any. His skull is fractured, both legs scalded, and he is badly bruised about the face. His home is at Monett, and his wife and other relatives have been with him since the accident. He has a brother who is an operator at Rogers, and another brother who is also in the railroad business.

Jas. Johnston- Johnston was engineer on the South bound train his engine being 238. As soon as he realized a collision was imminent he jumped. He was taken out from under a pile of stoves. He was injured about the head and his right leg badly lacerated. It seems hardly possible for one to be taken

alive from where he was. Johnston's home is at Monett and his wife and her mother were soon present to minister to his wants. He was taken Tuesday evening to St. Louis for treatment.

J.D. Shelton-Shelton was fireman for Johnston. Both his eye bones were broken, several teeth were injured and knocked out. He lives in Fort Smith

Ed Johnson-Johnson was brakeman on the South bound train. He was riding the engine and jumped before the collision came. His shoulder was dislocated and ankle broken.

The Cause of the Collision

Opinions differ as to who is responsible for the collision. It seems likely however, that the operator and train crew on 38 were equally careless. 38 was notified at Fayetteville to look out for orders at Springdale. On arriving they asked for orders but none had arrived for them and they were so informed. They went on the siding for the cannon ball in obedience to previous orders. and while so situated orders came for them to remain on the siding for 37, which was following the cannon ball. The operator turned the "red board" which is a signal for trains to get orders, but the crew on 38 supposed the orders were for 5 which was due, and as soon as that train arrived they pulled out with the results as above told. No blame can be attached to the crew on 37 as they had orders to come to Springdale. The operator here on receiving the orders for 38 promptly O.K'd them, which we understand is never done until the conductor and engineer for whom they are intended have signed for them. The operator seems to have erred in not notifying the train crew in person that he had orders for them, and the crew seems to have been careless in not inquiring more fully into the matter before leaving. Anyway, there seems to be rather a fine point in railroading involved, and the officials are making an investigation of the matter."

(Editor comments- The scene of the accident was north of the Highway 264 crossing in Springdale where the railroad curves to the east beyond T & K Lumber.

The victims were taken to the Arcade Hotel in Springdale for treatment. The hotel stood near the current location of Ryan's Department Store s in downtown Springdale. The hotel operator was J. E. Suttle who had previously worked as fireman on the Frisco.

The article noted that the Springdale operator, John Allen., had resigned from the Frisco immediately after the accident. The Springdale agent, J.W. TenyEck, also resigned and was replaced by F.M. Richardson, formerly of the Eureka Springs Railway

The March 3, 1899 issue of the *Springdale News* reported Warren Furrey, the badly injured fireman on 244, had visited his brother who was Frisco agent at Winslow. Furrey spent one year and four months at the Frisco Hospital in St. Louis recovering from his injuries.)



This Springdale wreck image was furnished to the Editor by Chapter member Marilyn Cain. She had found it on a genealogy page and thought it was interesting because of its local connection. Chapter member Bill Ussery had first alerted me to the 1897 Springdale wreck and I assumed this was an image of the Springdale wreck. However, if you look closely you will see the Frisco engine No 1107 which is quite different from Engines 238 and 244 involved in the 1897 wreck. Frisco No 1107 was a ten wheeler built by Schenectady in 1907. I checked my files for Springdale wrecks after 1907 and could find nothing about Frisco wrecks in Springdale after 1907.

n.e.c not elsewhere classified

All 737,500 pounds of Cotton Belt engine 819 are now listed in the National Register of Historic Places according to an article in the August 25, 2003 edition of the *Pine Bluff Commercial*. The article mentioned that 17,000 to 18,000 people annually visit the Arkansas Railroad Museum and Cotton Belt 819. The Pine Bluff built 1942 engine is housed in the former Cotton Belt shop complex. The Museum recently signed a 99 year lease for the facility with UP. The Cotton Belt Historical Society would like to see more local visitors as most are out of town. The 819 currently is partially dismantled. The

volunteers hope to have it operable within two years. (*Thanks to Ray Toler*)

The Editor attended the Rock Island Technical Society meeting held in Oklahoma City for four days in mid October. It was pleasant and informative. I had little knowledge of the Rock prior to the meeting. I was impressed with the number of Rock Island depots in Oklahoma that had been saved and preserved especially in smaller towns where the depot occupied a more prominent role in the community life. I took a lot of slides and readers will have a chance to see them in future *Scrambler* issues.

Baggage Car Update

Work continues on the former International & Great Northern baggage-express car owned by Chapter Member Arkansas & Missouri Railroad. The tongue and groove flooring has been removed from the center section. There was a tremendous accumulation of dark dirt (brake dust?) and those working on the task looked like coal miners by end of work.

The plywood flooring near both sets of doors has been removed. The north door area has several areas of significant damage where the wood has been destroyed by years of water leaks from the door. Ray Toler has suggested that we use mortar to deal with the leaks. The under floor in both the central section and the south door area are in good condition. The car was built with three layers of wood and we are working with only the top layer.

Bob Stark is developing working drawings that will enable him to replicate

the baggage agent's desk shown in the builders photos. It looks to be a challenge but Chapter President Stark is confident he can re-create the desk. Work also continues on the numerous holes that require special screws obtained by Chapter member Al Kaepfel. Al's friend from Chicago recently visited the car to see the screws he had obtained for Al's use in the car...

Brenda Brown, Passenger Train Manager, offered the pot bellied stove that sits in the Springdale depot. The stove is marked SLSF (railroad marked stove are very uncommon) that is about 50% larger than the one shown in the builders photo. It is a great item that will make a marvelous addition to the car once we get closer to installing artifacts.

Now that the weather has changed it is even more enjoyable to work on the car. Those members subject to heat exhaustion should feel free to help.

ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chapter No. 188 founded November 1987

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The Chapter meets the third Thursday of each month (except December dinner meeting) at 7:00 PM. Meetings are held at the Shiloh Museum's General Store, 118 West Johnson, Springdale, Arkansas. Visitors are welcome at all meetings. Annual dues for 2003 are \$35.00 for individuals and \$38.00 for a family. Please call 479-750-8165 for directions to the Shiloh Museum General Store.

James Fair, author of the North Arkansas Line, will be the featured speaker at the Boone County History & Railroad Museum Railroad Day on Saturday, October 11 in Harrison, AR. The Museum, located in a former school, is off the east side of the Harrison square. The Museum will be open at 1:00 PM and Dr. Fair will speak at 2:00 PM. This will be a program sure to interest those interested in the Missouri & North Arkansas.

ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER
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The Thursday, October 16 program
is devoted to the Nevada Northern RR
of Ely, Nevada. Please join us for this
high desert rail odyssey.