

# **ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER**

**NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Chapter No. 188 founded in 1987



## **2007 DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS**

<b>President</b>	<b>Gary McCullah</b>
<b>Vice President</b>	<b>Mitch Marmel</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Clare McCullah</b>
<b>Treasurer</b>	<b>Katherine Mindoro</b>
<b>Editor</b>	<b>Bill Merrifield</b>
<b>National Director</b>	<b>Chuck Girard</b>
<b>Board Director</b>	<b>Mike Sypult</b>

**NRHS Chapter Meets 7:00 PM Thursday, August 16, 2007 at the Shiloh Museum's General Store.**

**This month's program on rail history will be presented by Tom Duggan**

**ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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# The Scrambler

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August 2007

## Monthly News letter of the Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

### CHAPTER MINUTES July 19, 2007

The regular scheduled meeting of the Arkansas-Boston Mountain Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society was called to order at 7:00 p.m. on July 19, 2007 by President Gary McCullah at the Shiloh Museum General Store in Springdale, AR. There were 19 members with 2 guests, Ron Lewis (younger brother of Fred Lewis) from Oak Park, CA, and Dallas Hale, from Goshen, AR present.

Secretary, Clare McCullah's minutes from the June 2007 meeting were approved as stated in the *Scrambler* dated July 2007. Mrs. McCullah reminded everyone of the need for pictures for 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary party in November.

National Director, Chuck Girard, stated changes have been made at the National Level. The amount of the National dues has been increased. He stated the dues for the chapter would increase substantially due to the National increase. At the present time, the local Chapter's due are \$15.00 plus zero for family members. Tom Duggan proposed a motion to reduce the local amount to \$12.00 to offset the raise in National dues. Ray Toler seconded the motion. Mr. Girard stated a third party company will handle all of membership information for the National NRHS. Mr. Girard is going to Chattanooga, TN in August and will vote on behalf of our local Chapter. The \$7.00 raise in the National costs is to be spent on dues records. The other \$4.00 sent to National is to assist with the funding needed to make them more solvent. Tom Duggan reminded everyone that the National dues process has been a nightmare for years. He expressed concern about the ongoing loss in national membership. Changes at the National level are a first steps to save the organization. Mr. Girard stated membership materials would be out to the local Chapter members by September 2007 from the new company handling the account. Mr. Girard wanted to know if he should vote against the change. The new change in dues would be \$45.00 for a single member plus \$4.00 for each family member. Mr. Girard was instructed by a show of hand to vote for the proposal to *raise* the dues at National level after some discussion.

*Scrambler* Editor, Bill Merrifield, was not present for tonight's meeting. He and his family are vacationing in Colorado.

Treasurer, Katherine Mindoro, was not present. She is still recovering from surgery. President McCullah read the Quad Chapter's income and expense report to the local members. The report was approved as read. Mrs. McCullah thanked Tom Duggan and Al Kaepfel for all of their hard work to make the Quad Chapter's meet a success.

Special Events Chairman, Al Kaepfel, stated the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary party will be held at the Clarion Inn in Fayetteville, on Saturday, November 10, 2007 at 5:30 p.m. with the club paying for the total cost. Everyone is invited. The members are encouraged to attend and bring their spouses or significant others along with them. This should be a night of fun for all. Actual date the local Chapter started was November 8, 1987. Each member will receive an invitation with RSVP. Please respond as quickly as possible so planning could be made for the food.

Frisco Fest will be held on August 25, 2007 from 8:00 to 4:30. Mr. Kaepfel requested the need to have volunteers sign up tonight since the next meeting is August 16<sup>th</sup> and just before Frisco Fest.

Al Kaepfel displayed a G scale engine from the LGB line of equipment from Ray Getty. Tom Duggan and Al Kaepfel are classifying the equipment now to see what was donated. It was suggested by Ron Lewis, that information from the internet may be useful to obtain pricing information.

Programs and Activities Chairman, Mitch Marmel, due to health concerns wasn't able to attend tonight's meeting. Mr. Kaepfel stated he thought Mitch had programs booked for the rest of the year. Bob Stark was to provide August's program but he has a conflict and Tom Duggan will present instead. Bill Merrifield is scheduled to present September's program.

Archivist, Al Kaepfel, stated Ron Allen sent an old folder of items of interest to the Chapter to the archives. The folder contained the original certificate of incorporation in 1990 and the amendment to the certificate from 1991.

Map Committee Chairman, Travis Walls, stated there wasn't much call for his maps right now, but they would be available for the Sugar Creek show next spring.

Sign Committee Chairman, Chuck Girard, stated the need to get the rest of the signs completed. The sign at Greenland has been vandalized and will need some repairs. The one at Mountainburg sign hasn't been noticed by Mr. Girard from the train in several weeks. He stated the ground was very soft when they place that sign and he is afraid it has fallen down. Mr. Girard stated he needs to use a weed eater to get rid of the weeds and to complete the repairs on the signs. He also wants to place the backs on the 3 signs that need them.

Old Business: Mitch Marcel went back to work for a week. He had additional chest pains and returned to the hospital. The doctors did further tests, but he is still having problems. Bob Oswald was doing better and improving slowly.

New Business: Ray Toler reminded the membership of the meeting at the Tired Iron of the Ozarks which is coming up on Sept. 7, 8, & 9. He stated that a display of Railroad slide were to be presented at the Leo Jennings, son of Barton Jennings, home at 4379 Carriage Crossing Lane, Springdale, AR 72762. Phone: 479-750-0240. It is to be held on July 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:00 p.m.

The presentation for the evening was from: Dallas Hale on the Frisco RR. Mr. Hale was a station agent and telegrapher usually in a relief capacity.

Clare McCullah, Secretary

### **FROM THE HEAD END**

Summer is winding down and the NRHS National Convention is only weeks away. We, as a chapter supported the increase in national dues and a decrease in local dues. Yes, \$33.00 (\$34.00 for at large) for national is a lot. However, the dues for C&NW Historical Society are \$38.00 per year and the Rock Island Technical Society (RITS) are \$35.00 per year. Some chapter dues are more, some are less. All in all, we are not that excessive.

We received a very nice "Thank you" card from the Fort Smith Trolley Museum for our donation to help defray the cost of the night photo session.

Thanks to those of you who have provided pictures for the history of the chapter. Clare and I both appreciate your efforts and we also appreciate the fact that these are priceless artifacts that can never be recreated or replaced.

It is almost time for chapter elections. We need three volunteers for the nominating committee. Yes, the by-laws say the president is to appoint the committee, but I'd rather have volunteers. I would like to have this committee in place for the September meeting so that we can have a slate of candidates for the November meeting and have the election at the December meeting per Article VIII Section 2 of our bylaws. I apologize for last year. I was not well organized and got a late start. I do not want that to happen this year.

Gary

## LOCALLY ON THE BEAM

### Special Event: Frisco Fest

Frisco Fest is always a popular affair. It attracts a lot of people. We have attended it for a long time, bringing our maps, historical displays and electric trains, and acting as conductors in the caboose. This year the fest falls on Saturday, August 25, 2007 in Rogers, Arkansas. The Fest is a pleasant time to swap yarns with other members, to trade stories with interested members of the public, and entertain and educate lots and lots of girls and boys at our electric trains with our Model Railroad Engineer Certificates.

At our July meeting we had a sign up sheet. We would certainly welcome and use several more members to lighten the load. We particularly need workers at the 8:00 AM setup time. If you can be there, sign up at the August meeting or phone Al (927-3163), or just show up! Come one. Come all!

## BRASS POUNDING DOWN THE LINE

### **NARP future passenger proposals:**

The National Association of Railroad Passengers (NARP) recently released a new map showing an enhanced National Grid and Gateway Passenger Train Network map. NARP proposes a Newton, KS to Oklahoma City rail link (Amtrak did look at this link some years ago), an Oklahoma City-Tulsa- Springfield- St Louis link( The Springfield –St Louis link was recently examined by the Missouri Department of Transportation. They dropped further research as the running time on the BNSF was six hours.), a Tulsa-Fort Smith-Little Rock line and a Neosho, MO- Kansas City line. Given the struggle Amtrak endures every year in obtaining Congressional funding for the current network, it would take some kind of miracle to obtain funding for the new services. Tom Duggan.

### **More on the Raton Pass:**

Perhaps the news we reported last month about BNSF planned discontinuance of freight runs over Raton Pass isn't all bad news. Amtrak will continue to run the Southwest Chief via the pass. The state of New Mexico is deeply involved financially with segments of the line that they hope will eventually develop in a scenic run from Albuquerque to Denver.

## TRAINS THROUGH MEMORY

The June edition of the *Scrambler* featured a new series on what it was like to live in a town at the turn of the last century, where *everything* needed had to be brought in by the railroad and the only *sure* way to come into or leave town was by rail. The following is the recollections of an old friend of my mother's, Dorothy Wither. She was born in Steamboat Springs, Colorado before the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Her father and uncle operated the A & G Wither Mercantile. You could get everything from toothpicks to thrashing machines in that store. Dorothy later opened her own shop selling women's clothing in 1939. As a young child, Dorothy rode the first passenger train from Steamboat Springs to Denver, in January of 1909. She experienced over her lifetime many of the perils so common in early mountain railroading. Dorothy was nearly ninety when she gave this interview in 1985. Editor.

“When the Denver and Salt Lake Railroad came to our high mountain town every one knew how very important it would become. We knew we were going to be made overnight! We also knew that we were going to have many tourists. The hot mineral springs promised health to people who did not have the modern medicines we have today. Before the railroad, there was no way people could get into the Yampa Valley except on the horse

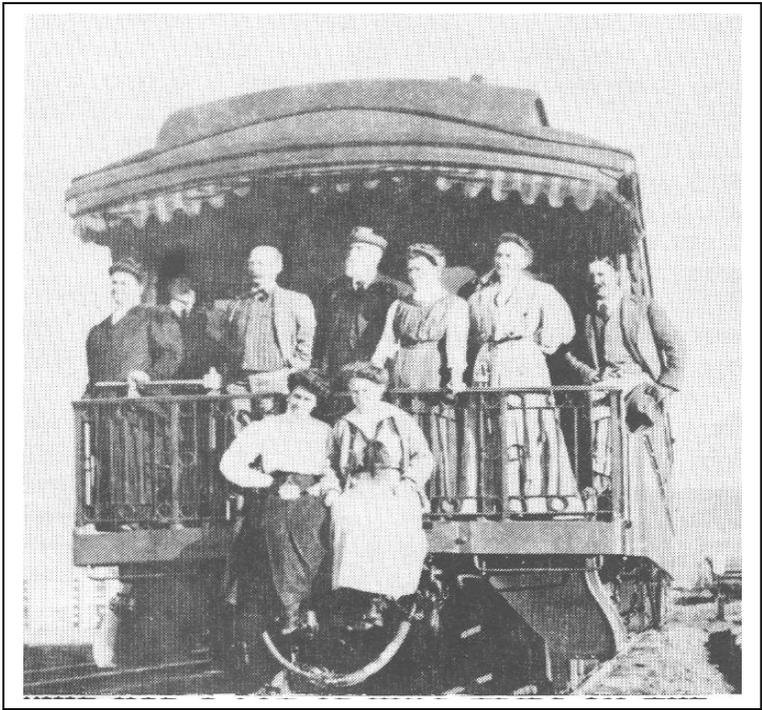
drawn stages over two very high mountain ranges. Even then you could only bring eight or ten people in on a stage. Other people wanted to search for natural resources while others saw a lush valley for raising livestock.

“At first, the town’s business people thought that the depot was going to be in the middle of town right across from where the present courthouse is. My dad and uncle owned some property up there so they built the big store mid-town because the depot was to be there. But the men that were in on that depot location were politicians out of Denver and they had some property down where the depot is now. There was quite a bit of friction between locals and outsiders [This helped me understand why my fellow town’s people were so cool to outsiders even into the thirties, forties and fifties. Editor]. Everybody thought the depot was going to be downtown; however, the outsiders located the depot at the west end of town where they had property and built the famous Cabin Hotel next to the hot springs.

“The railroad figured prominently in our family’s business and in my social life as a young girl. In one instance while I was in high school, my father had ordered the patent leather slippers for many of the girls to wear at our school prom. But a tunnel cave-in occurred and we didn’t have a train for five days. All the girls had made their prom dresses and everybody was waiting for their slippers to come. They did arrive but at noon on Prom Day. I remember my dad calling everybody who had ordered the slippers [Local telephone calls were expensive in those days. Editor]. He was upset and excited because the girls didn’t have their slippers. He had to do something to help them.

“Riding the trains in the summers could be quite pleasant and the crew could be quite accommodating. We knew everybody on the railroads particularly all the conductors. We knew them just like they were friends. If you wanted to get out and pick some flowers, they would stop the train, you could pick the flowers, and get back on the train, It didn’t take very long. We often had coffee and they would bring us some rolls. I traveled so much that they knew me and I knew all of them. So we thought nothing of it. It was just the way we did things. They wouldn’t let you do that now.

Passengers and Conductors became well known to each other. Stopping for a photograph in the summer and picking flowers was common practice. Dorothy Wither is thought to be the young woman on the lower left.



“Riding the trans in mid-winter was another matter and I had some wild winter trips on that railroad! I had just finished college at Colorado State in Ft. Collins in the late winter of 1924 three years before the Moffat Tunnel was finished. My mother had telephoned me that I should take the train home as soon as possible since the weather across Rollins Pass was so bad that the railroad considered closing the line. There was another student from Craig, Colorado and her mother called her and made arrangements for a cousin to take us to Denver. We arrived at our hotel at one o’clock in the morning, slept for about two hours and then we got up and went down to the station. We didn’t think to eat any breakfast and left on the train at 7:30.

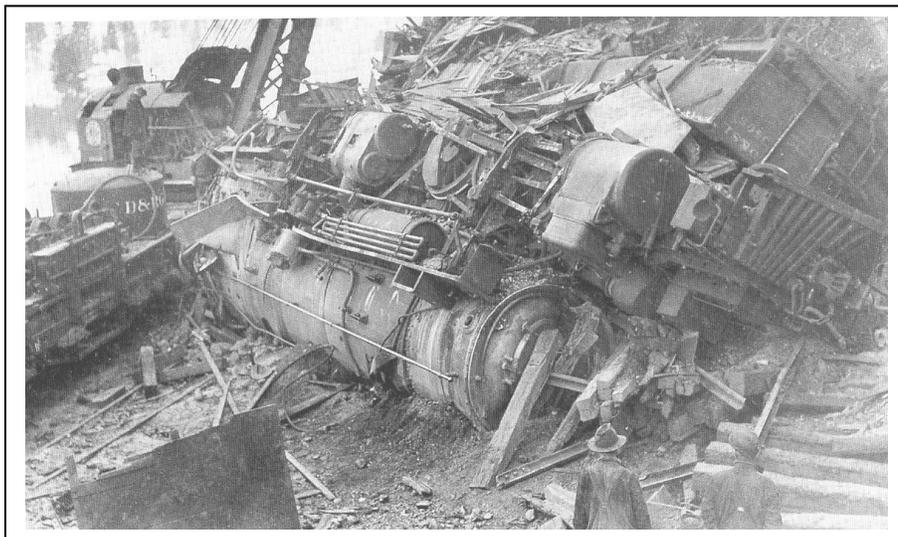
“We were making headway up Rollins Pass when something happened that caused the train to stop. The train started to back down the grade, came to a halt and there we sat until one o’clock that afternoon. They would not let us off the train. When we finally got underway, the snow was so bad that the train could only just crawl over the pass. We traveled all that day, the whole night, the whole next day, and the whole next night. Finally, they gave us something to eat. We were famished and needed water and we were all black with soot and sick from that awful gas in the snow sheds. The next afternoon, at four o’clock, we got home! The trip normally should have taken 8 to 9 hours to complete.



When Dorothy Wither rode the Denver and Salt Lake trains over Rollins Pass this scene was common to her and fellow passengers. There always existed the peril of being stranded on this pass in white-out blizzards and sub-zero temperatures.

“Once again, while riding on the Moffat Road in mid-winter, we were stopped again at the top of Rollins Pass by a huge snow drift. We were stranded there for quite some time while the blizzard raged outside. The conductor came through and told us to brace ourselves since engineer was going to back up and try to break our way through the drift. What happened next made us think we were all going to die! When the locomotive plowed into the snow bank, it wasn’t there! The wind blew it away and they couldn’t stop the train. Just

beyond the missing snow bank was a sharp curve. Every thing on the racks over the seats flew on to the passengers and into the aisle. Panic ensued! Ladies that had their babies were going to throw them out the window to save them! Oh! It was a terrifying situation! The engineer and crew did manage to get the train stopped. It seemed like it took them an hour or two but I am sure it wasn't anymore than twenty minutes or half an hour. After a while, the conductor came back and explained what had happened. He said they came as near as they ever had to overturning a train.

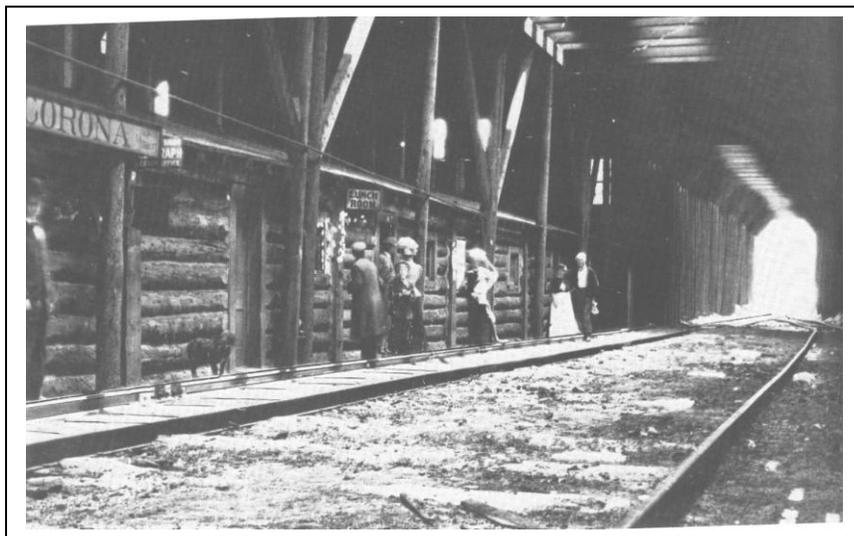


This freight wreck was a runaway near to the summit of Rollins Pass where Dorothy Wither had experienced her "wild winter trip" on a Rollins Pass passenger runaway.

"The railroad helped create the strawberry boom around Steamboat Springs, but by the time the strawberries went through the delays on the railroad too many of them spoiled. I don't think they had refrigerated cars back then. If they did, I was not old enough to remember. But I can remember what an occasion it was when the trains brought in bananas. If you got a banana you thought it much more desirable than candy.

"Going through the 55 tunnels and snow sheds was hard on passengers, crews, and livestock. The largest snow shed was on top of the divide. It was built of logs and lumber. Inside they had this place where they changed crews. The gas in the shed was terrible. It was so hard on man and livestock. If the line got shut down we would have to wait in the shed with all that gas. You came out of it just black. Your face would be black!

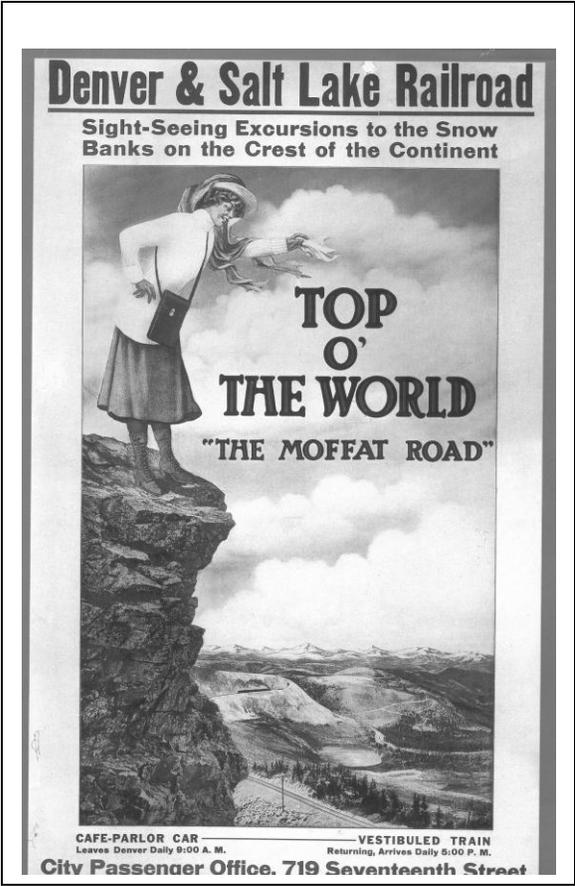
The snow shed at the top of Rollins Pass was infamous for its acrid and sooty air. Sheds like this also had a tendency to catch on fire as this one did. Dorothy had particularly bad memories of this shed at Corona.



“The passenger train stopped coming to Steamboat Springs in April 1968. We held a lot of hearings in an effort to keep it on. We even sent people to New York and Washington to plead our case but in the end it did no good. It wasn’t a big change to our town when the passenger train stopped pulling into town because everybody had cars by then and the tourists weren’t using the train anymore.

At right is a copy of the D&SL RR advertising poster for the trip over Rollins Pass. Tourism was very much a part of early Colorado railroading.

Most of the material for this article was an interview by Rod Herman, a Steamboat Springs high school student in 1985. By that time Dorothy was nearly ninety and, although still strong in mind and spirit, she left out details and order of events needed for clarity. These I have added to the text. Editor.



**SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT RAILROADING?**

**Question:** We all know of towns that were created by railroads, but do you know the name of the state in the Union that was created almost solely by railroad activity?

**VIEW FROM THE ANGEL’S SEAT**

Having brought to our readers the personal railroad memoirs of Dorothy Wither, I can’t resist retelling the joke that Dorothy must have heard dozens of times while riding the D&SL.

Lady to conductor, “Can’t the train go any faster? I’m about to have a baby.”

Conductor, “You shouldn’t have gotten on in such a condition.”

Lady, “I wasn’t in this condition when I got on.”