

**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>David McDonald</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>George Alison</b>

**NRHS Chapter Meets 7:00 PM Thursday, February 21, 2008 at the Shiloh  
Museum's General Store.**

**The program this month is a continuation of Mitch Marmel's excellent January presentation**

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

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February 2008

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

### CHAPTER MINUTES January 17, 2008

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 January 17, 2008 by President Gary McCullah, at the Shiloh Museum General Store in Springdale, AR. There were 16 members present.

Secretary, Clare McCullah's minutes from the October 2007, November 2007 and the December 2007 meetings were approved as stated in the *Scrambler* dated January 2008.

National Director, Chuck Girard, stated couldn't make National meeting in Dallas. He didn't have any news from the National level.

*Scrambler* Editor, Bill Merrifield, passed out a listing of his expenditures for the *Scrambler*. He stated Kinko's were more expensive to use to print and collate the newsletter but they do a far better job on photographs than the less expensive Mailco. A motion by Bob Stark was made to reimburse Mr. Merrifield for his expenses. The motion was seconded by Steve Thorp and approved by the Chapter members.

Treasurer, Katherine Mindoro, read the financial report to the members. The report was approved as read. Chuck Girard and Tom Duggan are to look into Chapter's tax status with the State of Arkansas.

Membership Chairman, Chuck Girard, stated there are 12 members outstanding on dues. He announced a new member, Thomas Hatgood, from Arizona. Mr. Hatgood will be moving to NW Arkansas very soon and hopes to become an active member.

Special Events Chairman, Al Kaepfel, informed us of the February 23, 2008 Sugar Creek Model Railroad Show. The local Chapter has been asked back as guests. Mr. Kaepfel passed around a sign up sheet to have the members volunteer that day. President McCullah stated he was told that all of the vender tables have been sold. Mr. Kaepfel stated he is looking for items from members to be donated to the Chapter for sale at the train show. Bob Oswald has donated 63 or 68 videos to sell at \$1.00 each. If you have items to donate, please bring them to the next meeting or to the show on February 23.

Mr. Kaepfel gave a report on the projects taken on by Tom Duggan and himself over the 2007 membership year. The highlights were the Quad Chapter's meet in June of 2007 and the sale on EBay of the LGB model rolling stock and structures donated by Ray Getty. Both undertakings netted significant funds for Chapter activities.

Ray Toler stated he had heard that Feather Fest has been canceled by the City of Springdale this year due to declining interest. It was suggested by President McCullah that the Chapter may find another project or event to take the place of Feather Fest during the spring and early summer months. Several possible suggestions were given.

The duties of Programs and Activities Chairman have been turned over to David McDonald as part of his duties as vice president. He stated the February 2008 program has been changed. Roseanne Hofer will give the presentation in July of 2008. Mitch Marmel will give an additional presentation on February 2008 as the second part of his presentation tonight.

Al Kaepfel stated his had no news from the Archives. He stated he has lots of items to inventory. He hopes that will be his next project.

Map Committee Chairman, Travis Walls, was not present this evening. The maps will be needed for the Sugar Creek Show.

Sign Committee Chairman, Chuck Girard, stated they still have to put up the backs to several of the signs when the weather gets better.

**Old Business:** Chuck Girard reported the City of Ft. Smith and the Ft. Smith Parks was very pleased with the \$1000.00 donation to the restoration of the locomotive in Ft. Smith. The funds were presented at the City board meeting. Mr. Girard read a letter from the Ft. Smith Park service thanking the Chapter for the funds.

Clare McCullah presented photos of the nine founding members that were taken at the November 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party.

**New Business:** Ray Toler announced on April 18, 19, and 20, the Tired Iron of the Ozarks will have their Spring Crank Up.

Mitch Marmel stated the Ft. Smith Trolley Museum will host an open house on May 3, 2008.

Bill Merrifield displayed an old French railroad lamp that was lit by candle. He stated the lamp is well over 100 years old.

Bob and Roseanne Hofer brought bags of goodies for everyone from the Trump Tour Group advertising rail excursions.

Mitch Marmel gave a short slide show on the Conway Human Development Center in Conway AR. They have a small train they use to entertain their residents that is in need of repairs. Mr. Marmel requested suggestion from the membership as to ways for the Center to repair the track and train. Several suggestions were given including contacting the Arkansas Railroad Club in Little Rock, AR.

The meeting was adjourned by President McCullah.

The presentation for the evening was from: Mitch Marmel on the movie, The Silver Streak.  
Clare McCullah, Secretary ABMC, NRHS

## **FROM THE HEAD END**

The January meeting had a surprisingly good turnout in spite of the weather. We had a good time watching and critiquing the silent movie "Silver Streak". Thank God for "fast forward". Many thanks to Mitch Marmel for the presentation. Mitch also has a video of the restoration of the Zephyr trainset at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. I have no doubt that it was quite an undertaking. We will see it later.

A recent post on the KCS Yahoo group concerned the death of a young adult at a heavily traveled grade-crossing in Bossier City, Louisiana. It was the same old story, the crossing lights were flashing and the train's horn sounded and the driver still didn't stop and was killed. We must support Operation Lifesaver. A presentation at a school program may have save this person's life.

I have recently discovered railroad video snippets on YouTube. There are some that are very good and some that aren't. Also, there are several railroad picture sites. Again, there is some excellent photography and some not so good. Whether you want the A&M, the Nevada Northern, or have another favorite, you are likely to find something to suit your taste. If you have some video that you have shot and would like to share, come ahead. Don't worry if it isn't enough for a full presentation. It may be something that was a once in a lifetime opportunity. Two minutes of something rare or rarely seen may be of great importance to someone.

It may be mentioned elsewhere, but Lloyd Stagner, a member of the Wichita Chapter of the NRHS, died this last week. I met him at the Quad Chapter meet in Wichita when we stopped for lunch at Yoder, Ks. He was a wonderful person and was a great storehouse of information. Just to listen to him was a learning experience. We will all miss him. Gary

## **LOCALLY ON THE BEAM**

**Important Chapter Activity:** The annual Sugar Creek Model Railroaders Train Show is coming soon. It will be on Saturday, February 23, 2008, from 8:00 AM (setup for us) until 4:30 pm (we start take-down). It will be in the same location at the Clarion Inn in Bentonville.

It is a wonderful show; a crowd of people; many model layouts; more than plenty of children to enjoy our layouts; it is a great day for railroaders. Once again our chapter is the guest of the Sugar Creek club.

Our January meeting was not heavily attended. So the signup sheet for members who will help is a little brief. We need more people to help; come to the February meeting and register; or if you cannot make the meeting but will attend the show, please call Al (479-927-3163) or drop him a note.

We have been successful selling items at the show. But, we need saleable items to sell. If you have something(s) to donate please get it to Al, bring it to the February meeting, or bring it to the train show.

If you have historical items that you would like to display (not sell) we welcome them. Please bring them to the show. We will have three tables on which to show these things.

Join us. It is a fun and interesting day. Al Kaepfel

**ABMC NRHS Annual Dues:** for those persons who have not submitted their 2008 dues, please do so as soon as possible! I would like to get the dues situation wrapped up as soon as I can. If someone has questions regarding their status of payment, they can contact me. Chuck Girard, 7510 Westminster Place, Fort Smith, AR 72903

## **HISTORICAL OPERATIONS**

### **New Orleans streetcars collide; 23 injured**

February 12, 2008

NEW ORLEANS - Two streetcars collided today in front of the Regional Transit Authority's headquarters injuring 23 people, including both streetcar operators, the New Orleans Times-Picayune reported. The accident occurred at 8:17 a.m. at Canal and Gayoso.

"They were on separate tracks at an area right at Gayoso in front of the station which has a switch," said RTA spokeswoman Rosalind Cook. "It's where you could move one car to the other track, and that's what we're investigating right now." The switch was locked, and no tampering has been reported. Passengers reported only minor injuries.

### **Southern 2-8-0 bound for New Jersey museum**

February 7, 2008

WHIPPANY, N.J. - Southern 2-8-0 No. 385 has been saved from the scrap yard, the Morris County (N.J.) Daily Record reported. The engine, a tourist hauler prior to its 1978 retirement, will be displayed at the Whippany Railway Museum.

No. 385 hauled tourists on the Morris County Central Railroad from 1965 until its retirement in 1978. It's bounced around through various owners ever since. But it was trucker Joseph Supor Jr. who guided

the engine into safe hands. Supor died last year, but his grandson made the journey to Whippany with the engine - J. Supor & Son Trucking and Rigging donated the time, equipment, and expertise to move it. No.385 will be cosmetically restored for display. However, the cost of running it again is deemed too high.

### **B&O Museum to unveil locomotive damaged in 2003 storm**

January 17, 2008

BALTIMORE - The B&O Railroad Museum will unveil Memnon No. 57, a historically significant locomotive damaged in the devastating 2003 President's Day snowstorm. No. 57 will be the first engine damaged that day to be restored and put back on display.

The New Castle Manufacturing Co. built No. 57 in 1848. Following years of hauling coal over the Alleghany Mountains, it hauled union troops, Confederate prisoners of war, munitions, and supplies during the Civil War. It was retired and became part of the museum's collection in 1892.

## **BRASS POUNDING DOWN THE LINE**

A former Denver & Rio Grand Western narrow gage, 2-8-0, No. 315, located in Durango, Colorado has completed its test runs successfully after having been restored to full operational status following a multi-year restoration effort by the Durango Railroad Historical Society. It is the first time in 60 years the locomotive has had a fire in the box. We look forward to seeing it in operation on the Durango & Silverton Narrow Gauge Railroad this summer.

## **TRAINS THROUGH MEMORY**

### **The Last Passenger train out of Ft. Smith**

This is the last of the two-serial article by Tom Duggan that first appeared in our brochure for our excursion last year. We wanted a wider readership for this excellent article and thus are reprinting it in the *Scrambler*.

In the summer of 1967, the Post Office decided to discontinue many Railway Post Office runs including all on the KCS. The loss of mail revenues caused passenger train losses to increase to unsustainable levels. To add salt to the wounds much of the mail carried in the RPO would now move as freight at lower rates. The KCS filed to discontinue both the /Southern Belle/ (Kansas City- New Orleans) and the /Flying Crow/ (Kansas City-Port Arthur). The /Flying Crow/ expired in 1968 followed by the /Southern Belle/ in November 1969. Fort Smith was a stop on the Missouri Pacific's 530-mile Little Rock-Kansas City passenger service. Since Fort Smith was not on the main line, passenger trains had to make a cumbersome backup move that required some 20 minutes. The Little Rock-Fort Smith- Kansas City varnish passed through many small towns. Prior to World War 2, one daily roundtrip was adequate. By November 1942, the route swelled to four daily trains that labored to carry men and women at war. After the war, service dropped to two daily round trips. By the 1950s, one daily round trip was adequate.

The MP sought Interstate Commerce Commission approval to discontinue the now unnamed train in 1958. The many small towns on the train's route reacted like a swarm of hornets. The ICC directed the

MP to take steps to revive the anemic ridership. The MP ran newspaper and radio ads, offered special fares and even a café car for a few months. The business stimulation efforts failed. Soon the MP again was asking the ICC to discontinue the train. Meal arrangements returned to 20-minute meal stops at Fort Smith and Coffeyville, KS. In 1958, the train had an average of 13.4 riders per mile. The train required five five-man crews between Little Rock and Kansas City on a train that normally carried a single coach, combine and RPO.

Two hearings took place to receive comments on the train discontinuance. It became evident that most protestants had never ridden the train. Funeral directors were upset about the loss of inexpensive corpse transportation. The Fort Smith Freight Bureau testified in favor of abandonment. They thought ending unprofitable passenger service would reduce pressure to increase freight rates. The ICC authorized discontinuance of trains 126 and 127 on March 18, 1960. The MP rushed to end the train as the last train operated on March 28, 1960.

Although not serving Fort Smith directly after 1910, the Rock Island did offer passenger service from the Rock Island-Frisco served town of Wister, OK some 38 miles south of Fort Smith. The Choctaw Route, (Memphis, Oklahoma City, Amarillo) was a less important route in the Rock Island system. Service in the final years was a Budd rail diesel car that covered the 762 miles between Memphis and Amarillo in 22 hours. It seems unlikely that any passenger, except perhaps for an ardent rail fan, purchased a ticket between the two endpoints. The final /Choctaw Rocket/ stopped at Wister, OK on August 8, 1964.

The last passenger train to serve Fort Smith was the Frisco's /Meteor/stub that operated 134 miles between Fort Smith and Monett, MO with connections for Frisco main-line trains. The stub train ran mainly in the hours of darkness. In 1962, the Frisco explored the use of Budd rail diesel equipment for the run. The unions balked. The next step was the 1963 end of sleeper service. The Frisco in 1965 petitioned the ICC to discontinue all of its 12 passenger train runs including the Monett-Fort Smith train. Ridership on the train was weak with six passengers per train mile on a train that required a crew of five. The ICC could see no reason for maintaining a train that no one used. The final train left Fort Smith on September 18, 1965 on a journey into history.

### **VIEW FROM THE ANGEL'S SEAT**

Soon after assuming the responsibility for the Scrambler last year, I asked our Chapter President to write comments under the heading of "The Head End". I have deeply appreciated his responses and I recalled one of his first in which he reminded us of our role in railroad history preservation. In essence, Gary said that we are the witnesses to what is disappearing at an alarming rate. Sadly, the rate is often diminished by vandals who obviously care little about what they destroy. Last summer, vandals set fire to the historic D&RGW 04990 caboose located in Central Park of my hometown, Boulder, Colorado. Later in the year, someone set fire to the aging Cotton Belt Depot at Coy, Arkansas, which was on the National Historic Register. The building was built about 1910-11 after the Cotton Belt leased the Central Arkansas & Eastern in 1910. The last passenger trains operated through Coy in July 1929. We are the witnesses so keep your cameras on the ready!