

# ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER

## NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chapter No. 188 founded in 1987



### 2010 DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS

President	Bob Stark
Vice President	David McDonald
Secretary	Malcolm Cleaveland
Treasurer	Bill Longston
Program Director	David McDonald
National Director	Chuck Girard
Board Director	Larry Cain
Editor	Bill Merrifield



Our website address is [www.arkrailfan.com](http://www.arkrailfan.com)

NRHS Chapter meets at 7:00 PM, April 19, 2012 at the Shiloh Museum Store.

Our programs have been exceptionally good! Great activities are in the works and we need your input!

Make plans to be at our next meeting Thursday.

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

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April, 2012

Monthly Newsletter of the  
Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

## CHAPTER MINUTES

Meeting of the Arkansas Boston Mountains Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society at the Shiloh Museum was held March 15, 2012

Meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm. 22 members and two guests (Gale Hall and Craig Heinrich) were present.

Treasurer Bill Longston reported that the money market account has \$12,969.86. Checking account has \$1,878.29 and \$203 was deposited from the Great NW Arkansas Train Show.

Bill Merrifield, *Scrambler* editor, reported electronic dissemination working well. The *Scrambler* was posted electronically today, but the paper copies will be mailed out in the next day or two. Bill suffered a computer failure that slowed things down.

### OLD BUSINESS

Train Show worked out well and more than 200 Train Engineer certificates were issued to children.

### NEW BUSINESS

Mike Sypult and Dick Hovey were asked by our president, Bob Stark, to put together a digital presentation about our Chapter that can be used to promote our activities at various venues for membership recruiting.

There are several train shows coming up. There is a show in Joplin on March 31. Frisco Fest will be in August.

Steve Tharp won \$250 in a railroad photo contest.

Malcolm Cleaveland will teach an Osher Lifelong Living course on "Railroads in the 21st Century" at the Global Campus (Continuing Education) Building at 2 Center St. in Fayetteville at 9:30-11:30 AM on April 10.

TRAIN TALK: Discussion of switch heaters; UP 844 steam will be in Memphis March 28, North Little Rock March 30 and New Orleans April 30 and May 1; Best place to watch trains: Ft. Smith and Neosho, MO.

Rose Hofer provided refreshments.

Meeting adjourned at 7:30 for the presentation, "Memories of the Frisco, Rogers, Arkansas 1974-1977" by Mike Sypult. All the photography was his. Mike started at a young age with a Kodak Instamatic.

Malcolm K. Cleaveland, Secretary

## **LOCALLY ON THE BEAM**

We are saddened to report that one of our long-term and faithful Chapter members, Cleo Matter, has past away. You may recall that several months ago that she was so seriously ill that she had entered hospice care only to make a remarkable recovery turnabout. She was then moved by her daughter to Indiana where at last we heard she was doing better. Unfortunately, for her family and her friends, she slipped away from us.

Most NRHS chapters have far fewer women members than men. It takes a special kind of women to be interested in trains and their history. Cleo was one such lady and we shall miss her dearly! Editor

## **BRASS POUNDING DOWN THE LINE**

### **Metrolink trams delayed - by ducks on the track at Chorlton**

April 13, 2012

The Mallard used to be the fastest thing on the tracks – these days it just causes delays. A family of mallard ducks – mum and her brood of eight little chicks – had to be rescued by Metrolink staff and members of the public after they got on to the line at the Chorlton stop.

It was a far cry from the days when The Mallard steam train set a world record when it reached 126 mph on the East Coast Main Line way back in 1938.

Trams in both directions were delayed by around 15 minutes while the rescue took place with all nine ducks passed safely on to the platform and sent on their way.

At one stage, a southbound tram to St Werburgh's Road had to reverse carefully after a tiny duckling ran under it as a Metrolink worker tried to collect it – but fortunately the baby bird was unharmed. The ducks were then seen happily waddling off by the crowd of around 30 commuters who gathered on the platform.

Edwin Mitson, from Albany Road, Chorlton, who was catching the tram to his job at the BBC in Salford Quays, took pictures of the rescue on his camera phone. He said: "The tram was delayed for a short time, but no-one seemed to mind. The ducks did seem quite distressed at one stage because there were around eight people on the tracks trying to round them up. It was certainly the best reason I have ever heard for a tram being delayed."

The ducks returned to the line at about 9 pm that night. Quick-thinking staff put them in a box and took them to nearby Sale Water Park.

Transport for Greater Manchester's director of customer services Susan Wildman said: "Dealing with ducks on the line is not something we'd put in the training manual but our Metrolink colleagues did a fantastic rescue job. Mum and family are now in a much safer place and I'd like to thank passengers for their patience while we sorted out the problem."

From Tom Brooks-Pollock of Manchester via Edward B. Havens of Tucson via Mitch Marmel of Springdale.

## **AOK Bridge track Due This Summer**

Wilburton, Oklahoma – Arkansas-Oklahoma Railroad Company is expected to complete Bridge track over the North Canadian River this summer to re-establish a dormant section of the railroad between McAlester and Shawnee this summer.

The AOK, based in Wilburton, is a family-owned short line railroad that operates a route along a 118 mile corridor between McAlester and Howe at the eastern state line. The company also has a long-term lease to use track owned by Union Pacific Railroad that extends west from McAlester to Shawnee, and that links to more line into Oklahoma City.

Lately, the connection at McAlester has been inoperative because of a bridge that hasn't stood up well to the rain-swollen river. The AOK has repeatedly tried to shore up the banks since the mid-1980s, but erosion keeps causing problems.

The AOK has recently spent about \$200,000 to prepare the foundation. Approval for the work is expected shortly from the US Army Corps of Engineers. From Gary McCullah

## **An Interesting Web Site for Machine History Buffs**

<http://www.practicalmachinist.com/vb/antique-machinery-history/images-links-146367/>

From Tom Duggan via Larry Cain

## **Accident Shows Remarkable Stability of Intermodal Units.**

In light of our recent program on Intermodal transport by a J. B. Hunt executive, the following photo of a derailment near Buffalo, New York on March 6, 2012 demonstrates the excellence of the engineering design of such units. From [www.shutterbugstroll.com](http://www.shutterbugstroll.com) via WIVB 4.com via Mitch Marmel.



## **Steam Train Visits North Little Rock, Union Pacific Community Celebration**

Legendary UP steam engine, No. 844, arrived Friday, March 30 and hosted a community celebration in honor of the **Union Pacific Railroad's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

On Saturday, Union Pacific invited families to come out to see No. 844 and get an up-close look at how real crews operate trains by using locomotive simulators. In addition, Union Pacific Railroad employees provided guests with rail safety information, coloring books, special edition Union Pacific Railroad 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary pennants and popcorn. North Little Rock mayor, Patrick Hayes, rode aboard No. 844 into North Little Rock and served as honorary engineer. Union Pacific presented him with a commemorative 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary partner coin.

## **TRAINS THROUGH MEMORY**

### **Women Agent-Telegraphers on the Frisco in Northwest Arkansas**

Women and railroading in most instances were like oil and water. Many of the physical attributes required in the days of steam were simply thought to be beyond the physical capacity of women. Even when World War Two came, women were only allowed into roundhouses to clean and prepare mighty steel engines for operation by male engineers.

The first known Frisco female agent-telegrapher employee was Mittie M. Lea. She worked at the Centerton depot on the Frisco's Bentonville Branch. The 1903 Benton County Plat Map has a poor quality image of Ms. Lea with a notation she worked as the agent at Centerton. She also was the Wells Fargo & Co. express agent. A native of Indiana, she died in 1911 at the early age of 35 following a six week illness.

Frances Warthen started on the Frisco in 1907. She was a qualified telegrapher who spent the late 1920s at the Frisco yard in Fort Smith. At some point she was transferred to Hackett on the Mansfield branch. She never married and liked to take vacations in California. She requested permission to use the Hackett depot as temporary lodging. The Frisco agreed and "Miss Frances" apparently spent several decades in the depot. One of her most important tasks was providing Fort Smith with information on outgoing shipments of coal and the miner's need for coal cars. Tom Porter, Wire Chief at Fort Smith from 1961 to 1982, recalled receiving the daily report that was sent by telegraph. Miss Frances was featured on the cover of a 1957 Frisco employee magazine presumably to mark 50 years of service. After retiring she bought the depot for \$5.00 and removed it from track-side. After her death the depot was used as a rental property. It was sold to woman who restored the depot to much the way it was in service. The depot supposedly was moved to Bonanza, a place where Miss Frances had worked early in her career. I visited the area several years ago and could not find the depot. The small yard at Hackett was readily visible.

The third female agent was Irene Canaday who worked on the Central Division from 1917 to 1957. She was in a unique position to see the peak years of the railroad and years of decline. Her career began at Chester, AR where she was assigned to call crews for the helper engine service. She had learned Morse code as a child in a family with several Frisco telegraphers. The Frisco was short of telegraphers due to World War One. The crews lived in the two-story Yoes Hotel that still stands today in Chester. One dark night on the lobster shift she was told to call a crew which at the time required a written confirmation by each crew member. She entered the dark lobby and was surprised by a sow and her seven piglets that had taken up residence in the lobby. She was almost knocked over as the terrified porkers escaped from the hotel.

Irene as low person on the seniority- based railroad had some of the least enjoyable jobs. One task was checking cars, up to 150 a day, while continuing to work as a telegrapher during a day that lasted twelve hours. As the least senior person she was expected to assist with the loading of hogs into box cars. Canaday refused to do this work as she told her boss that she was hired as a telegrapher, not a cow puncher.

Canaday, who said she was only one of four female agents on the Central Division, struggled through the Depression. Her low seniority and the closing of depots starting in the early 1920s meant that Canaday often had no choice of workplace. The Frisco entered receivership in 1932 and the employees received ten percent of their pay in the form of scrip exchangeable for cash when the Frisco regained profitability. The scrip was never converted to cash even after the Frisco exited receivership in 1947. We know she was working on the Muskogee subdivision in July 1942 when much of the line was expropriated by the War Production Authority. She is quoted in Bob Winn's *Railroads of Northwest Arkansas* as receiving virtually no notice to pack up all depot equipment for a special train coming through in a few hours.

Mrs. Canaday continued to work for the Frisco and most certainly was an asset in World War Two when telegrapher ranks were again depleted by service requirements. She was married to Sam Canaday, a Frisco electrician, who died at an early age. The Canadays had a home in Chester that still stands. In her later years she lived in West Fork.



The Frisco depot at Hackett measured 40 feet by 24 feet. Like several of the Mansfield branch depots it had a cotton loading platform (16 feet by 132 feet), a tool house, a coal house and a two pen stock yard. It's no wonder the windows were open on this hot day.

Hackett was the last open depot on the Mansfield branch after the Frisco abandoned trackage at Mansfield in mid-1958 thus severing a connection to the Rock Island's Memphis -Amarillo line. The Mansfield Branch suffered a series of truncations as the once important coal business faded. The Mansfield lead was finally abandoned in 1983 by the Burlington Northern. The last and only rail customer was an explosives company at Montreal that for obvious reasons needed an empty area.