

ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER

NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chapter No. 188 founded in 1987



2010 DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS

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Our website address is www.arkrailfan.com

NRHS Chapter meets at 7:00 PM, January 17, 2013 at the Shiloh Museum Store.

The Scrambler

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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 in the Parlor car of the Arkansas & Missouri Railroad. Meeting was called to order at 6:46PM by the President, Bob Stark. The minutes of the November meeting were approved.

Clare McCullah said that she understood that the officers from 2012 would serve in 2013. No objections or alternate nominations were heard, so motion passed.

The Archivist, Al Kaepfel, said that the Children's Train sponsored by J.B. Hunt on Saturday, December 1, was very successful. A large amount of money was raised for several children's charities.

The meal was excellent. The Chapter extends its thanks to the A&M RR and especially Brenda Rouse and the parlor car staff who went to great lengths to welcome us.

The Secret Santa game was spirited, with several gifts being "stolen" multiple times.
Malcolm K. Cleaveland, Secretary

LOCALLY ON THE BEAM

Get ready for a significant announcement concerning our chapter and the NRHS at our next meeting!

We are happy to note that Chapter members Ray Toler and Bill Ussery have made good recoveries from their recent surgeries.

The December 1st Children's Train

Oh, did the kids, parents, grand parents, guardians and our chapter ever have fun with the train and trolley boards during the Children's Christmas Train sponsored by Hunts Transportation and the A&M Railroad!! Thank you members for your contribution to its success and the children's charities.



It was hard to tell who was having more fun: the kids, their parents, or us!



However, this photo leaves no doubt as to who was having the most fun at this moment!

Photos taken by Tom Duggan

TRAINS THROUGH MEMORY

Last Train to Paris, Arkansas

The Southeast Oklahoman, Hugo, Oklahoma, February 6, 1958

Submitted by Tom Duggan

There was standing room only on the last south bound Frisco passenger train to be operated out of Hugo. Forty tickets sold for the last run comprised the largest single day's ticket sales in an estimated 20 years. A total of 57 passengers boarded the train at Hugo, most of them bound for Paris, but a few planning to disembark at intermediate points.

Trainmen estimated between 25 and 30 passengers rode various distances between Ft. Smith and Hugo. These included Y.C. Reed, a Negro woman living at Speer, who rode the last east-west Frisco passenger run out of Bennington a few years ago.

Around 200 years of Frisco service was represented in the last run crew. Some of the men will retire before very long and others will be assigned to other runs. Bill Stewart and W.E. Coleman, both of Ft. Smith, were engineer and fireman respectively. H.E. Spirgen, brakeman, and B.J. Mooney, conductor, both live at Monett, Mo. Julius Hill, the train's porter, is a Paris, Tex., resident.

Largest single party was from Grant. Mrs. Dean Gooding, Mrs. B.L. Murray, Mrs. Ruby Grimes, and Mrs. Luke Benton were the adults. Larry Nelson, Wilbur Gene Wilkins, Alvie Nelson, Bruce Gooding, Kay Slaton, Sharon Wilkins, Lois Ann Gooding, Kim Wyatt, Peggy Dean Gooding, Linda Murray, Sherry Benton and Rebecca Benton were the younger ones in the party. Riding with them as far as Grant, where her parents Mr. and Mrs. Gene Babb live, were Mrs. Edwin [Golden ⁴] and her small son, Stan, of Hugo.

Dr. E.A. Johnson, Choctaw county's oldest practicing medical doctor, took time out from his duties to accompany his sister's grandchild, Betsy Hixon, and her grandmother, Mrs. Guy Hixson, on the trip along with his office nurse, Mrs. Elmer Verner, whose father was an early day railroad employee here.

From Ft. Towson Carl Gibson came to ride the last Frisco passenger car out of Hugo. And from Hugo were Miss Fannie Glenn, Deputy U.S. Marshall W.A. (Bill) White, who boarded the car carrying a traveling bag as if he were going on a long trip; W.H. King, a one time Frisco employee who has been in the insurance business many years, and his brother-in-law, W.H. Helsaple, of Prairie du Chien, Wis. Two sturdy grandsons flanked Mrs. Joe Wolff, Mike Lawrence and Jack Lawrence, Little Rock, Ark. She was assisted in keeping up with them by Miss Bill Sweat and Miss Emma Sweat, the latter a Frisco employee.

Mrs. A.E. McLellan, whose husband is a retired Frisco man, accompanied four neighbor children on the trip, the children being Ethel Ann and Mike Shirey and Judy and Dudley Barnes. Mr. and Mrs. Sam Boyce, were passengers along with Mr. and Mrs. Dallas Brewer and daughter, Andrea; T.A. Marbut and W.H. Darrouh Jr.

Retired employees of the Frisco making the sentimental trip included Jim Finney, switch engine foreman; C.S. Flannagan, who plans to retire soon as manager of the Hugo treating plant of American Creosoting Company, and Mrs. Flanagan; E.R. Harvey, agent; B.L. Kimbrough, switchman; Henry German, a Frisco car inspector 31 years; Ben Grady, switchman; T.J. Halkins, a bridge and building foreman 15 years before retirement with a 35 year service record; C.W. Streetman, shop employee and Jack Cook, brakeman.

W.E. Basham, of Paris, Tex., was on the train as was Mrs. C.M. Sasser, of Hugo, who was in route home from a visit in Mississippi but couldn't resist the temptation to continue to Paris and back.

UPRR invented the ski lift -- in Omaha

Submitted by Tom Duggan



Article by Algis J. Laukaitis in the Lincoln Journal Star, Lincoln, Nebraska December 1, 2010

Union Pacific Railroad mechanical engineering employees determine a comfortable speed at which the world's first ski chairlift should operate during a test at the railroad's Omaha railcar and locomotive repair shop complex in the summer of 1936. (Courtesy Union Pacific Railroad)

The next time you sit on a ski lift on the way to the top of a mountain, think of bananas and the Union Pacific Railroad. Credit them with the modern-day chairlift system used by ski resorts around the globe.

Seventy-five years ago, Jim Curran, a structural engineer with U.P., came up with the idea of adapting a system used to load bunches of bananas onto boats into one to move people up steep, snow-covered slopes.

His design called for replacing the hooks for bananas with chairs for skiers to sit on while wearing skis. The chairs would be suspended from a single cable running overhead.

Curran's idea was so out of the box for its day that his co-workers thought it was too dangerous and his boss tried to shelve it.

Fortunately, Charlie Proctor, a consultant brought in by the railroad to help plan the Sun Valley Resort in Idaho, saw Curran's design, which he had slipped in with some approved designs, and thought otherwise. Proctor, a famous skier from Dartmouth College, convinced the railroad's top management to allow Curran to make his idea a reality.

This winter ski season, the Union Pacific and Sun Valley Resort are marking the 75th anniversary of the world's first chairlift operation, which was invented not in the mountains but in the flatlands of Nebraska in Omaha

"From our side ... it's kind of unusual that a railroad would invent a chairlift," U.P. spokesman Mark Davis said. The railroad did so to serve a need, "and it turned out to be groundbreaking for the skiing industry," he said.

During the 1930s, Union Pacific Chairman W.A. Harriman saw Americans beginning to embrace winter sports and knew his railroad operated through some of the most scenic and mountainous territory in the western United States, according to the railroad's history.

Harriman's vision: Develop a world-class winter sports resort served by the Union Pacific. Other railroads were thinking the same way. Harriman enlisted Austrian sportsman Count Felix Schaffgotsch to find land for such a resort. In winter 1935, the count came across the area that would become the world-famous Sun Valley Resort in south-central Idaho, about 100 miles northeast of Boise. "Among the many attractive spots I have visited, this (location) combines more delightful features than any place I have seen in the United States, Switzerland or Austria, for a winter sports resort," Schaffgotsch wrote to Harriman. Based on Schaffgotsch's recommendation, the railroad bought 4,300 acres adjacent to the Sawtooth Mountain National Forest.

The Sawtooth Mountains, running east and west, would protect the future resort from northern winds. The mountains also surrounded a small basin, with hills and slopes largely free of timber. Snowfall and sunshine were abundant. And natural hot springs would provide outdoor swimming year-round. Schaffgotsch had found the perfect spot for a winter sports resort. Construction of the ski lodge and other facilities began in April 1936.

Meanwhile, nearly 1,200 miles away in Omaha, members of the railroad's engineering department were investigating ways to transport skiers up slopes, including by rope tows, J-bars and cable cars. But those designs were put aside after Curran's chairlift idea was championed by Proctor. Soon prototypes of the lift were being built and tested at the railroad's locomotive and railroad car repair shops, on land that is now home to the Qwest Center Omaha and the new downtown baseball stadium.

To help determine how fast a chairlift should travel up a mountainside, engineers attached one to the side of a truck for tests. Because it was summer and relatively flat in Omaha, engineers wore roller skates to simulate skis running over snow. Their conclusion: 4 to 5 mph would be a comfortable speed to pick up and drop off skiers.

When Union Pacific opened the Sun Valley resort on Dec. 21, 1936, the world's first two chairlifts went into operation. As with anything new, it took skiers awhile to get used to the newfangled invention that changed the sport forever.

The railroad sold the Sun Valley Resort in 1964



The red and green car 700, essentially a street car, was typical of the mainstays for most of the life of the Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad. (1957 photo)

With both a bang and a whimper, the North Shore railroad, half a century ago this month, pulled the plug on a trolley wire that stretched from Chicago to Milwaukee and made the fortunes of towns in between.

Its last southbound train crashed into an automobile stalled on the tracks near Zion, delaying it until a replacement lead car could be hooked up. That same bitterly cold day, a Tribune reporter accompanied Joe May, a conductor with 49 years service, on a train terminating at Mundelein, writing: "End of the line," May called out. "His last passengers shook his hand and a curtain falling on an era was a visible thing — or were there a few teardrops in the frosty atmosphere?"

The interurban railroads — essentially streetcars that ran through the countryside — once were a key ingredient of Americana, economically and psychologically. The passing of the Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee Railway was mourned even by Donald Knepper, whose car was totaled by that ill-fated train No. 427. He told a reporter for the Waukegan News-Sun that he bore no ill will.

"I always liked the electric," Knepper said. "I rode it when I was in service at Fort Sheridan and when I lived in Zion and was courting a Waukegan girl."

Every anniversary of Jan. 21, 1963, brings a lump to the throat of rail fans, intrepid partisans who travel far afield to ride a dying line or photograph abandoned tracks. Under the headline "Pays Triple for Historic Last Ticket," the Tribune told the story of Al Carter, who bought two \$4.50 tickets on the last northbound train of the Chicago, North Shore and Milwaukee Railway. One was to get him aboard; the other he had the ticket agent certify as the last one sold. But when a woman subsequently bought a ticket, Carter went back to the booth for a third one.

"Does anyone realize the fine railroad the North Shore really is?" asked R.A. Johnson in a letter to the editor shortly before it was no more. Johnson noted that the Lake Michigan shoreline from Chicago to Milwaukee was becoming "a suburbia of new homes" — a development for which the North Shore railroad could take credit. As its tracks spread up and down that route in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, homebuilders and buyers soon followed.

The phenomenon was even more dramatic when a second set of tracks further inland opened in 1925, a five-mile bypass from Evanston to Mundelein. North Shore held a contest to name intermediate stops in the largely open countryside of its Skokie Valley route. One winner was Wau-bun. Real estate developers followed, making towns like Skokie and Northfield (nee Wau-bun) the North Shore's permanent legacy.

The Tribune had prophesied phenomena like that in 1907, sending a reporter on a 400-mile trip along the interurban railroads of Illinois. Under the headline "Trolleys Herald New Era in U.S.," the Trib reported, "Country and city are being knitted together" as interurbans shared "with the telephone and the rural free delivery the honor of having revolutionized life in the agricultural districts."

Farmers could get produce to market via trolley lines that also ran freight cars. Rural hamlets received big-city newspapers carried by interurbans. And as a Tribune reporter noted in a 1958 eulogy to the then-vanishing electric railroads: "Many a youngster, waiting at a remote wayside crossing, drew his first thrill from the world of travel when the humming rails and singing trolley wire heralded the approach of the interurban."

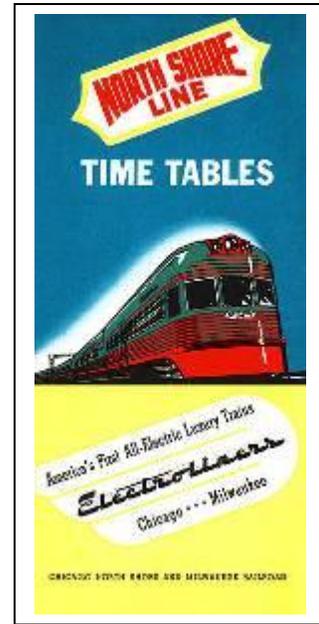
The interurban was a logical extension of the streetcar, as a Tribune reporter once reflected. "It all began in the 1880s, when some industrial-age wizard realized there was no good reason to restrict the then-brand-new electric trolley to city streets," he wrote. "Capable of making jack-rabbit starts, the interurban trolley provided a soot- and cinder-free alternative to the steam-powered commuters."

In their golden age of the 1920s, interurban lines radiated out from many cities. Especially in the Midwest and the East, a traveler could cross considerable distances by hopping from one interurban line to another. Much of that journey could be made in luxury accommodations, like the North Shore's parlor and dining cars. On that line, passengers didn't have to transfer to other transport within Chicago, as they would have if arriving by other rail services. The North Shore came into the city via the "L," with some trains making local stops as far south as 63rd Street. The North Shore's motto was: "Your watch is your timetable." From early morning to late night, its trains left Milwaukee and Chicago each hour on the hour.

Its premier Electroliners could reach speeds of 90 mph. "Our Skokie Valley tracks paralleled U.S. Hwy. 41, and as we were getting up to speed, you'd look over to the highway and see the automobiles falling further and further behind," motorman Al Justen recalled for the Tribune, two decades after the North Shore was abandoned.



Preserved North Shore Line *Electroliner* trainset 801/802 at the Illinois Railway Museum in Union, Illinois



During World War II, business boomed, as gas was rationed and automobile plants were turning out tanks, not cars. Fort Sheridan and Great Lakes Naval Training Base were along the North Shore route. "So as we'd pull into the Milwaukee terminal, we'd always be greeted by a flock of young ladies looking to make new friends from among the blue-jacketed passengers," recalled Rich Taylor, a conductor of that period.

After the war, the interurban's and the automobile's fortunes reversed. New expressways drained ridership from the North Shore, which fell from almost 28 million annually in 1945 to barely 4 million in the 1960s. Another interurban, the Chicago, Aurora & Elgin, was a direct victim of the Congress (later the Eisenhower) Expressway. When the Harrison Street "L," which the CA&E used, was removed during highway construction, the railroad's fate was sealed. Its last passenger trains ran in 1957.

It was followed in death six years later by the North Shore, despite a last-ditch effort by die-hard riders to buy it. When motorman Justen's last run ended in Waukegan, he and fellow trainmen threw down a few drinks at Molinaro's Tavern, which bordered the tracks. "Then when it was finally time to head home for the last time, we all cried a little," he said.

Yet a glimpse of the interurban era can still be had. An Electroliner is preserved in the Illinois Railroad Museum in Union, Ill.; the Skokie Swift runs along the Skokie Valley route between Howard and Dempster Streets; and running south and east from the Loop is the Chicago South Shore and South Bend Railroad — the nation's only remaining interurban.

In Michigan City, its tracks still run down the center of 11th Street. An arriving train first shows itself as a distant light. The headlight gets bigger, the trolley wires sing, the motorman sounds its horn, and finally the air brakes screech. Experience those sights and sounds, and imagine the thrill myriad farm boys and girls once felt knowing tracks like those connected them to a wider world. Editor's note: Thanks to Fred Lonnes of Western Springs for suggesting this Flashback. Edward B. Havens, Tucson, Ariz.