

ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER

NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Chapter No. 188 founded in 1987



2013 DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS

President	Bob Stark
Vice President	Al Kaepfel
Secretary	Malcolm Cleaveland
Treasurer	Tom Duggan
Program Director	open
National Director	Ken Eddy
Board Director	Larry Cain
Editor	Bill Merrifield



Our website address is www.arkrailfan.com

NRHS Chapter meets at 7:00 PM, September 18, 2014 at the Shiloh Museum Store.

The Scrambler

Volume 28, No. 1

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

CHAPTER MINUTES

Minutes: Meeting of the Arkansas-Boston Mtn. Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society at the Shiloh Museum, Springdale, AR. August 21, 2014. Meeting was called to order at 7:07 PM by the President, Bob Stark. The Treasurer, Tom Duggan, is traveling. 20 members were present and no guests. Minutes of the July meeting were approved. The meeting was held *al fresco* because the treasurer has the key to the meeting building.

Ken Eddy, the National Representative, said the election results will be certified tomorrow.

Chuck Girard, local membership, was not present, also Tom Duggan, the Treasurer, was not present. There was no Treasurer report.

Bill Merrifield, the *Scrambler* editor, said that J. Randall Houpp is searching for information on a RR that went through a number of name changes, mergers, etc. The Gurdon & Ft. Smith RR --> Southwestern Ark. & Indian Territory RR --> Arkansas Southwestern RR --> Womble (Norman) Branch --> Pike City Branch --> Delight Branch --> Caddo Valley RR --> and in 1909 merged with MoPac. He wishes to present info at a conference of the Historical Society in April 2015.

Old Business: Essentially none.

New Business: The V-P, Al Kaepfel, said that we need a better turnout for the Xmas Train this year. Last year's low turnout was an embarrassment.

The President called for nominations for our Annual Preservation Award, which included: the St. Joe Depot; Ft. Smith Trolley Museum; Van Buren Depot; Hugo, OK Depot; Wheaton, MO Depot; Clarksville Frisco Depot, a large brick building that has been nicely restored (previous nomination by Steve Tharp with photos); Mammoth Springs Depot (far eastern Arkansas). He hopes people will give a spirited presentation in defense of the nominations at our next meeting September 18.

Programs: The scheduled program by Bob Stark was postponed for lack of electricity and A-V equipment, a disadvantage of meeting outdoors. September: Dick Hovey, "Anatomy of a Train Wreck"; October: Bill Merrifield, "The History of

Track Control Systems"; November: Show and Tell; December: Saturday, December, 6: Children's Christmas Train, Thursday, December 18 our Christmas Dinner Train.

Train Talk: Ray Toler said that ties, ballast, rails and spikes had been delivered for the GE 25-ton locomotive at Tired Iron and the 23d annual show will occur Sept. 5-7 (Fri and Sat 8-5, Sun 8-3) at the Tired Iron grounds N of Siloam Springs, 13344 Taylor Orchard Rd, Gentry, AR 72734. He also said that Ricky Ray Newman (murdered a female hobo in Ft. Smith) had been granted a new trial. Mike Sypult said that there was a new Facebook group, ArkansasRailroadHistory. Someone reported that Booneville wanted the rail line extended from Danville so Rockline Industry could have rail access. There was discussion of rolling stock storage precipitated by loss of per diem payments for "foreign" RR rolling stock. Steve Tharp said that two British gentlemen attending the Convention had hospitably invited him to visit the rail museum in York for a personal guided tour. Malcolm Cleaveland said that he had visited a very nice exhibition of Orient Express rolling stock in Paris, including a nicely restored steam engine and sleeping cars. Adjourned 7:40 PM. Malcolm K. Cleaveland, Secretary

LOCALLY ON THE BEAM

Chapter members on the mend:

Chapter member, Rose Anne Hofer has decided to transfer her husband Bob to their home to complete his recovery from a broken hip on Sunday, September 14; but, she does not know when he will be out and about.

We are continually concerned for long time members Ernestine and Bill Ussery. Bill has been Ernestine's primary care giver and must stay close to her. Let us hope that both can attend our meetings soon. We have really have missed them and need to remember them in prayer.

Marion Duggan was able to come home this past weekend. Tom will be traveling this week and will miss the September meeting.

We need to keep these folks in our prayers. Dispatcher Bob

Railroad Historical Societies Joint Convention: The joint meeting of Frisco.org and the Missouri Pacific Historical Society will be held in Joplin, MO, on October 9 - 12.

Registration: To attend all days of the event, the cost is \$40.00. Friday only or Saturday only will be \$20.00. The bus tour on Sunday morning will be \$15.00 in advance or \$20.00 after the convention starts. Space will be limited, so reserve your spot, now. Kevin Love, 2014 Convention Host email: president@mopac.org 888 N. Dade 177 Dadeville, MO 65635-8131 phone: (417) 995-2812 (home) or (816) 591-0147 (cell). Also check the website for Frisco.org for registration information.

Some of our depot signs have taken a beating: Over the weekend, Chuck Girard noticed that several of the depot signs we installed are now either destroyed or faded to the point they are almost unreadable. The question is whether it is worth replacing them. Doing so might be a good use of expending our funds since other issues are at stake. Think about it and let him know.

Folks; I would like to see us keep the sign project going, and maybe in the future expend the concept. Let's replace or repaint them. Also, I don't think we need to just give the hard earned funds away. Let's think about our railroad history interview projects. Should we go ahead and buy our own equipment and do we need proper storage for the recordings and record keeping. This is a very exciting project I do believe we can get some great interaction from those outside our chapter. Also we need to record our own members'

relevant NWA railroad history presentations. We have missed some very fine ones. Being an old Guy, I didn't see the need for the digital projection system that our younger more technical members suggested. But how wonderfully successful has this been! I am sure the same members can come up with a good equipment list to carry this project to great heights. Dispatcher Bob

Well-regarded rail historian and preservationist, Hankey, submitted the following “white paper” concerning issues within serious problems the NRHS is facing. Submitted by Tom Duggan

Not to put too fine a point on things, but the national organization of the NRHS is in a pretty tight spot. Whether the National Railway Historical Society survives through the end of the year is in serious doubt. Their own newsletter mentions serious financial and organizational challenges, while otherwise cheerily describing business as usual. The NRHS membership has legitimate grounds to wonder just what is going on and what version of the several "truths" flying around they should heed.

And the most painful question remains: Does it really matter? If the NRHS goes away, will anyone actually notice? The recent — and critical — election for president of the national NRHS was decided by a margin of 548 votes out of 3,190 cast. The total number of NRHS members eligible to vote for president of the national organization was roughly 12,000.

Even the NRHS membership itself either didn't care or did so without a full understanding of who the candidates were, what they stood for, or what the consequences might really be.

In future posts, I'll explain why these questions matter, and why we need a new, robust, forward-looking NRHS —or something in its place. But for the moment, we ought to be mildly shocked and truly concerned. How did things get to this point? And why didn't anyone notice until it was almost too late?

To begin with, national NRHS recently completed a major organizational overhaul, which is always traumatic. It is enduring what can only be described as a significant insurgency from within the ranks — again, traumatic. There is an ongoing (but badly framed and poorly managed) internal debate about the very nature of the NRHS. Genuine goodwill and a spirit of shared purpose seem to be in short supply.

The NRHS is an intensely traditional organization still resolutely adhering to a mid-20th century model of a fraternal organization. A few chapters have a more modern outlook. But for the most part, the NRHS and its constituent chapters have maintained an inward-looking, club-like special interest orientation. There is absolutely nothing wrong with that, assuming the resources are available to permit that luxury. But the national NRHS is essentially insolvent, and the resources of most chapters are thin at best.

At the moment, NRHS chapters are seceding, membership is dropping, and there are few interested young people signing on. The folks who remain are old, and getting older (and I am one of them). From what I can tell, at least a considerable share of the membership isn't terribly interested in looking forward. Looking backward and keeping things as they have always been is more important. That can be crippling to any organization.

The NRHS is broke, and in debt. It doesn't have an endowment or an effective long-term fundraising plan in place. There are no major assets, and a nasty lawsuit hangs over everything. For the most part, it is a volunteer organization with little sense of professional not-for-profit management procedure. I don't think the rank-and-file fully trusts the outside firm hired to run the national organization's back office functions. And official communication has been terrible. In fact, I might call it a disaster.

The committee of the national NRHS board recently charged with coming up with a new "business model" has an incredibly difficult task, and not many resources to work with. Think of standing in a swamp, with quicksand, alligators, swarms of mosquitoes, piranha fish for variety, and no apparent way out. And it is getting dark and cold — no matches, no food.

In very broad terms, this is what I think happened. It seems to have been a case of "institutional inversion."

The NRHS originated (and for six decades, operated) in an environment where travel and communication were much more expensive, and life in general was much more decentralized. The NRHS was defined by the work of its chapters, and the national organization was more-or-less a service organization with the several hundred individual chapters as its clients.

The chapters themselves were basically traditional clubs, in the same way that dozens of other organizations with national brands and local chapters prospered as clubs for people with shared views and interests. Some NRHS chapters were outward looking and strove to address a broad railway heritage agenda.

Others were more inward looking and aspired to nothing more than a social agenda and a shared interest in trains. Hovering over all of that was a generally cooperative railroad industry and the ability of even small chapters to do interesting things with excursions, tours, and firsthand involvement in railroading.

As Jim Wrinn observed, for many years the local — or nearest — NRHS chapter was the only place where people interested in trains could get together and explore that interest, outside of actually working for the railroad. And working for a railroad usually was not a place where people could casually share interests in photography, heritage, history, memorabilia, or fan trips.

For decades, NRHS chapters also took the lead in doing things and making things happen. Even smaller chapters could organize fan trips and facilities tours. Railroads were willing to accommodate most reasonable requests — but it was simply easier to say "yes" to an ask from an NRHS chapter (or other railfan organization) than to an individual. For a solid 40 years, NRHS and its chapters were most often in the lead in defining railroad heritage and what it meant to be a railfan and railroad enthusiast.

That changed dramatically in the 1980s and 1990s. The temporary boost to membership generated by the Southern/Norfolk Southern steam program and the last of the industry's real engagement with the public masked the fact that the traditional NRHS structure was growing obsolete and ineffective. The same was true for the Railroadians of America, Railroad Enthusiasts, regional railroad clubs, and thousands of other bowling, fraternal, and special interest entities. Hindsight is always acute. But it now seems apparent that the NRHS needed to begin rethinking its mission and structure twenty-five years ago, and should have been a very different kind of organization as it entered the 21st century.

I mean no disrespect, and do not wish to suggest blame or responsibility. The fundamental nature of railroading changed dramatically and completely between about 1980 and 2000, and almost all of the things the NRHS did, stood for, and assumed changed also. But the national organization didn't seem to notice. Or at least it showed no ability to deal with a rapidly evolving future. That is the point at which the "inversion" became acute.

The chapters continued to look inward, concerned mainly with their local affairs. Instead of recognizing the broader trends in the railroad industry and the changing nature of railroad enthusiasm, heritage, and preservation, the national organization likewise looked inward. Greg Molloy, until recently the long-serving president of the national NRHS, describes everyone as existing comfortably inside their own "silos." It is hard to see the heavy weather blowing in when you are firmly ensconced within a silo.

By 2000, there were few fantrips and little straightforward access to the main line. Visits to railroad facilities became increasingly rare and more restrictive. Traditional railroad public relations activities (and most traditional railroad PR departments) disappeared. Railroads became modern, well-run, Wall Street-driven corporations with scant interest in engaging the public at large, and no interest in outfits like NRHS chapters. I was there. I was part of it from both sides. It was depressing.

I am sorry to have to frame it this way, but the railroad industry took a mildly adversarial position with regards to railroad enthusiasm and railway heritage. With a few exceptions, the industry was delighted to see us fade away. One of the casualties of the reinvention of the railroad industry over the last 30 years was the 100-year long, traditional industry sponsorship of railroad heritage and enthusiast activities. It was a divorce of the most thorough kind. American business is a cold, hard, ruthless place to be a "fan."

At a national level, the NRHS neither saw that coming, nor would have understood how to respond even if it did. The national leadership was firmly turned inward, focused on conventions, publications, and serving the needs of the chapters. There seemed to be little interest in looking outward or forward, or asking the kinds of hard and consequential questions that real leadership understands as its prime function. Apparently, no one thought to approach the AAR or major railroads and ask questions such as "Excuse me, what about this community of supporters and enthusiasts that you have been cultivating for a century or so"? "Can we at least maintain a serious and consequential conversation"?

What needed to happen was for some existing organization with stature, resources, and vision to step up and basically take control of the overall agenda for how folks might engage the railroad industry going forward. We, collectively, needed a respected and established "voice" to talk to the railroad industry and see how we could continue to be involved — with trips, tours, joint programs, and updated versions of the kinds of engagement we've had going back 150 years. NRHS could have been that organization — if its national leadership had been looking outward and not inward. The Railway & Locomotive Historical Society was much smaller, had a different focus, and in any case was going through its own organizational crisis. All of the other "national" railroad organizations had withered by the late 20th century, and no single museum or heritage railroad had the ability or reach to help define what the relationship between railroads and their admirers ought to be going forward.

For all sorts of reasons, the national NRHS organization just could contemplate a broader, more consequential role for itself. Until recently, it had an unwieldy governance structure intensely focused on very small internal issues. It was one of the most self-reflexive, inwardly oriented, rearward-looking organizations I have ever encountered.

And that was exactly where a substantial majority of its members wanted it to be. In a world so rapidly changing in so many nasty and uncomfortable ways, an NRHS that changed very little was a comfortable place. I understand that completely, and sought comfort there myself.

But ironically, to many chapters the national organization did a terrible job of being the traditional national organization. National NRHS was neither very good at "representing" railroad enthusiasm and heritage to the world at large, nor at being an efficient and responsive service provider to its affiliated chapters. Over time, the internal politics of the NRHS grew murky and fraught.

Too late, probably two decades too late, the national NRHS organization went through a structural reorganization that brought it more in line with contemporary not-for-profit administration. For the first time in a long time, it is trying look ahead and trying to figure out what place it has in the world going forward. That should have happened 15 years ago.

The overall problem is that the Big Wide World rushes forward at an accelerating rate, and like it or not (and I do not), organizations like the NRHS need either to keep up with the times, or risk extinction. That has already happened to thousands of once-flourishing fraternal organizations, clubs, societies, and special interest groups. The Internet is only one of many proximate causes. No matter what the others are, I am reminded of the idea that "No matter where you go, there you are."

So we come to this. As it enters its 80th year, the NRHS is on the very edge of extinction. In the next post, I will try to lay out an argument for why the NRHS — or some new national organization — could help define and advance agendas and policies that benefit anyone interested in railroading or its heritage, documentation, and future.

HISTORICAL OPERATIONS

Memphis Central Station anniversary celebration planned Oct. 3-5 September 12, 2014

MEMPHIS, Tenn. – The public is invited to explore Memphis railroad history and share memories and photos when the Memphis Railroad & Trolley Museum celebrates the 100th anniversary of grand opening of Memphis Central Station on October 4, 2014. There will be an official ceremony at 11 a.m. and free admission for the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The event will be the focus of a weekend of 100th anniversary activity. On October 3, the Amtrak Exhibit Train will arrive and be open for tours by schools and groups at noon to 5 p.m., then be open to the public from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. A Norfolk Southern exhibit car will be on display and will be open on the same schedule as the Amtrak train. In addition, tours of the Canadian National freight locomotive cab will allow visitors to go inside from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday only. BNSF Railway, CSX Transportation, and Union Pacific will also have locomotives on display. For additional information call 901-590-3099 or go to www.mrtm.org. Museum entrance fees will be waived on Saturday only.

Our thanks to TRAINS News-
wire for the above historical
operation item.

TRAINS FROM MEMORY

The Frisco's Chester Hill Engine Facility(1887-1950) By Tom Duggan

Today Chester, AR is a small Crawford County village. It has a long passing track and a small tie track. In 1887 the Frisco established a helper engine facility at Chester to replace a similar facility at Schaberg, AR that caught fire and burned. The terminus of both Chester and Schaberg was the nascent resort town of Winslow, AR in Washington County. Winslow had a turntable where engines were turned for the southbound journey back to Chester.

In the days before mandatory railroad use of air brakes, the Frisco at Winslow maintained a string of empty box cars that were coupled to southbound trains. Brakemen with sturdy clubs walked across the car roofs and tightened the brake wheels as the train headed south.¹ The brakemen worked in rain, snow and ice on rocking cars. At night the brakemen had to carry a lantern while braking. It must have been one of the most dangerous jobs on the railroad. In 1900 the Safety Appliance Act of 1893 became effective. It mandated the use of automatic car couplers (a vast improvement over the dangerous link and pin coupling system) and air brakes on freight trains.²

¹ Lyda Winn Pace, "Early Day Winslow," *Flashback-Washington County Historical Society*, 11, no. 3 (1951): np.

² Middleton, William D., Smerk, George M., and Diehl Roberta L., ed. *Encyclopedia of North American Railroads*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indianan University Press, 2007. s.v. "Safety"

The Winslow turntable was replaced in 1889 and some years later when Frisco officials realized the helper engines, called “hill engines “ on the Frisco, could simply back down the hill to Chester. The Winslow turntable was removed perhaps in connection with the extension of the St. Paul Branch to Pettigrew, AR in 1897. Between 1887 and 1897 Chester was a division point where crews changed. The all-brick Yoes Hotel, which still stands, was a home away from home for the trainmen.

Steam engines consume enormous quantities of water when battling steep grades. The Chester hill engine facility had a well that provided water to the water tank located north of the depot. The pump man kept the boiler for the steam powered pump nourished with coal in addition to keeping an eye on the single hill engine. Chapter member John Furlow, born in Chester in 1928, recalled that in dry periods that well would not produce water. The pumping station operator then ran a line out to a nearby brook to obtain water.

The September 1918 ICC Valuation survey showed a 30 foot by 10 foot coal bin and 10 foot by 9 foot sand house. A section house was also located on the east side of the track. In 1920-22 the Frisco suffered from the effects of repeated United Mine Worker strikes that decimated both coal traffic and steam engine coal supply. The railroad decided that to the maximum extent possible both passenger and freight passenger engines on the Central Division would rely on oil. An oil tank was added to the Chester facility.

In the mid 1930s the northern terminus of the helper district was extended to West Fork where the water tank served engines on the main line and the siding. The helper district northern end later reverted to Winslow at an unknown date.

The grade at Schaberg caused a major reduction in engine hauling power. A 1300 2-8-0 class engine, rated at 1750 tons northbound between Fort Smith and Schaberg, saw its hauling capacity plummet to only 800 tons between Schaberg and Winslow. A helper engine was added to the front of a passenger train for the trip up the grade. Freight trains with steel cabooses normally saw the helper engine cut in behind the caboose. Freights with wooden cabooses required the caboose to be cut out and placed behind the helper engine tender. Between Chester and Schaberg the track was a five-mile tangent so the engine crews focused on building up speed for the 2.67% grade that began at Schaberg.

In addition to the very challenging grade engine crews had to cope with the 1,693 foot brick lined Winslow Tunnel that created an oven effect. The engines, regular and helper, would be moving very slowly as they entered the longest tunnel on the Frisco system. Smoke, steam and cinders rained down on the engine crews as the train slowly moved through the tunnel. John Furlow, as a sixteen-year old, took his first and last helper ride through the tunnel. When he climbed up on the engine deck the fireman handed him a ball of cotton waste and told him to wet it with water from the hose. John asked why and the fireman told him he would soon see the purpose. As the engine entered the tunnel the crew placed the waste over their faces to filter the air and reduce the heat. John Furlow learned that on a previous occasion the helper engine became stuck in the tunnel. The heat rose to such levels that the unfortunate engineer suffered severe burns to his ears. Once the helper engine cut off it would wait to receive a train order from the Winslow agent authorizing return to Chester. Although the helper engines had windows and curtains the ride down the hill could be cold in winter weather.

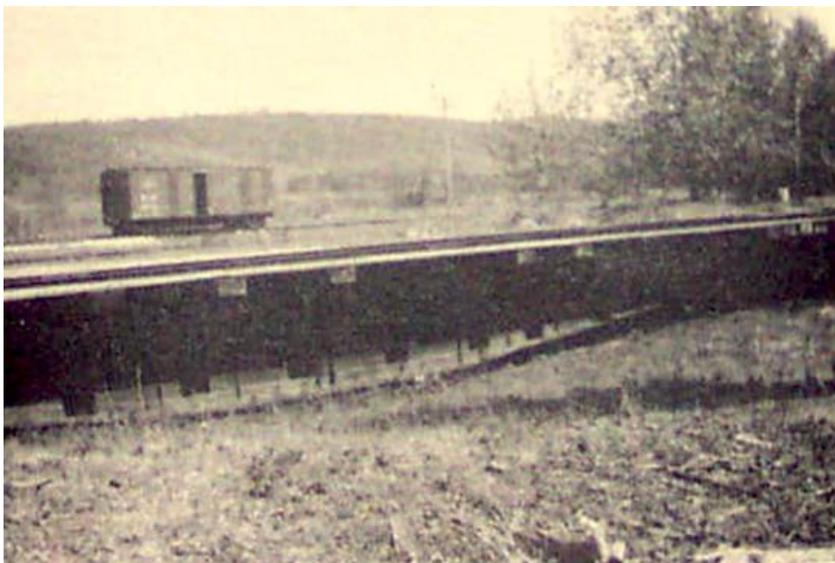
The normal helper engine in the 1930s-1940s was an oil-burning 1300 class 2-8-0³. John Furlow recalls that the 1300s were uncomfortable due to the absence of a trailing truck to dampen the pitching motion. As the Frisco

³ Personal Data Book of S.T Cantrell , Frisco Central Division Superintendent (1927-1936), np at the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Springdale, AR

dieselized in the late 1940s surplus main line coal burners in the 2-8-2 4000 series were assigned to Chester helper service.⁴ The Frisco had retained a depressed track at Chester so that coal could be hand shoveled from a low sided coal car into the tender.



The third and last Chester depot was built in 1907 . It was sold in 1962 and the timber was used to build a home in the Chester area. This photo was taken by John Furlow in May 1957 after a heavy downpour that caused heavy flooding and damage to the Frisco at Chester. A flood in 1934 also devastated the town.



*Armstrong turntable at Chester. Several writers have mentioned that Chester had a roundhouse perhaps assuming that a place with a turntable had a round house. I have been unable to find evidence of a roundhouse.
Image from Eno, Clara B., *History of Crawford County, Arkansas* (Van Buren [AR] *The Press Argus*:nd)*

⁴ Winters, Charles E, *Fort Smith Railway Traffic , 1940-1945*, December 2, 1996, manuscript (source unknown)