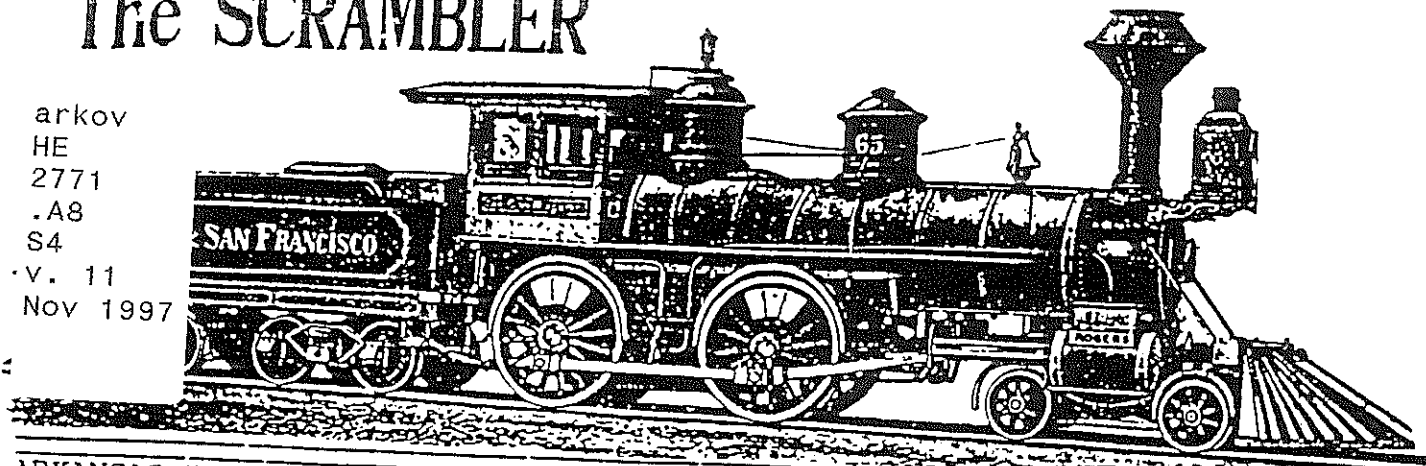


The SCRAMBLER

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ARKANSAS BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER, NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
VOLUME 11 NUMBER 3
NOVEMBER 1997



MINUTES OF MEETING September 18, 1997

On September 18 the chapter met at the Shiloh Museum for the regular monthly meeting. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM and the members and guests were welcomed by President Tom Duggan.

The minutes of the August meeting were approved as published in the Scrambler.

In the report from officers National Director Bob Oswald announced that he would be taking orders for calendars at next month's meeting.

The treasurer's report was read by treasurer Bill Ussery.

Scrambler editor George Alison reminded everyone to keep the material for the Scrambler coming in.

In special committees, Ray Toler had some pictures of the "Manitou" after the fire. He also reported that the Manitou has not been cut up for scrap as of this date.

President Duggan announced that the chapter's meetings will be held in the museum meeting room for the next few months until the work is completed on the Old General Store. The October meeting will be a joint meeting with the Kansas City chapter in Eureka Springs on the 25th of October. The regular meeting scheduled for Thursday night October 16th will not be held.

Betty Bowling gave a report on her early interest in railroading in Huttig, Arkansas.

Tom Scott gave a report on member Erv. Lewis. Erv is improving but is not able to be out to attend meetings as of yet.

Under new business members were signed up to work the booth at Octoberfest in Fayetteville on October 10th, 11th and 12th.

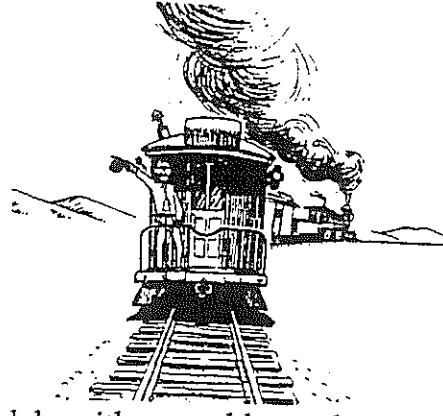
There was no further business and the business meeting was adjourned.

Ron Allen
Secretary

University of Arkansas
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The Scrambler



THE PRESIDENT'S OBSERVATION



On October 2, I saw a southbound A & M train in Springdale with two older style open hopper cars. The cars bore huge white block letters "Northern Pacific" on a faded black paint finish. The Great Northern ceased to exist when it, the Northern Pacific, and Burlington merged in March 1970 to form the Burlington Northern. Thus this pair of cars has been wearing the same paint job for 27 years. Has anyone seen any older fallen flag road cars of this vintage recently?

The financial press has been rife with rumors concerning the Kansas City Southern Railway. It appears that Kansas Southern Industries, the KCS parent company, will spin off the Kansas City Southern Railway to Kansas City Industries shareholders. This will enable the parent company to focus on its mutual fund business (Janus and Berger mutual funds) and the DST financial services subsidiary. Only a year ago the financial press was reporting that Kansas City Industries was thinking of spinning off the non-railroad business so as to focus on the railroad.

Damage to the Steele General Store has become more evident as the process of restoration continues. We will not be having our **November 20** meeting in the Steele General Store but rather in the Shiloh Museum itself. The Steele building holds a fascinating place in Springdale's history. Chapter member Bob Besom has some information available on the building's history and the type of construction used.

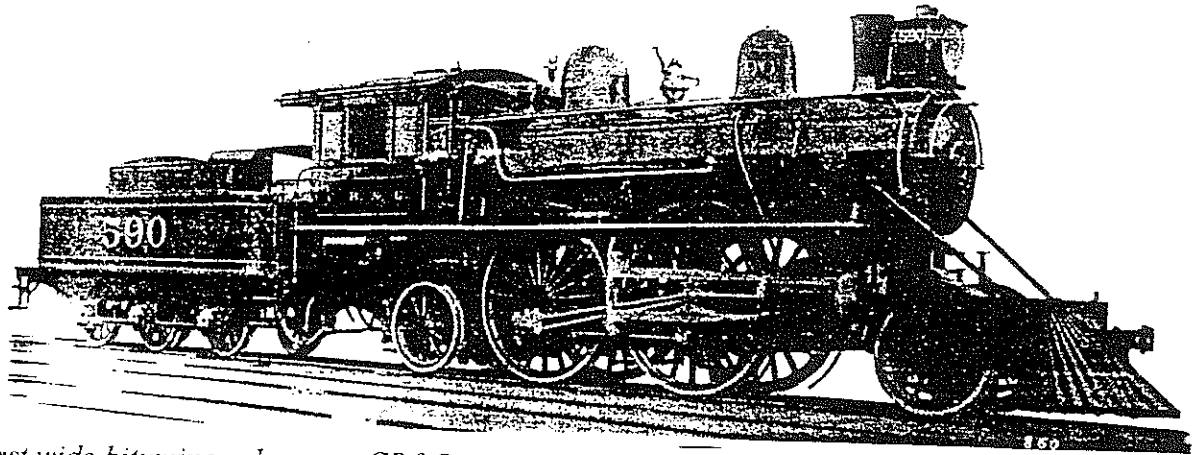
We had a place at the October 11 segment of the Autumnfest in Fayetteville but did not participate on Sunday (October 12) due to bad weather. We had some problems with the high winds that took the top off our shelter and repeatedly blew our merchandise off the shelves. The Saturday crowds were much better than last year. We only did \$91 in sales which means we covered the \$35 rental fee with about \$10 to spare. We also had donations of about \$10 and gave out several application forms. Thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Bob Stark, Mr. & Mrs. Rob Hofer, Mr. & Mrs. Ray Toler and Marion Duggan. Special thanks, too, to Ron Allen and George Alison for volunteering to work the Sunday segment.

The joint meeting with the Kansas City Chapter on October 25 was well attended in spite of weather that worsened during the day. Marc Montray's excellent slide show was very well received by the more than 30 attendees. Many people later went on to ride behind steam on the 2.1 mile long Eureka Springs & North Arkansas Railway. The tender was leaking water at a prodigious rate and the holes were stopped by pieces of wood hammered into the leaks. The ES & NA shop crew looks to have a busy winter. I enjoyed speaking with several of the KC members while wandering about the yard and learned a lot about pivots and freight car wheel design.

Mary Bales, a member since 1991 and spouse of Wilbert Bales, has recently undergone quadruple bypass surgery followed by some serious complications. She has been in the intensive care unit at Northwest Medical Center for some three weeks. She is making progress. A call to 501-271-7323 or card (2202 So. East 18th Street, Bentonville, AR, 72712-6956) no doubt would be well received.

Bill Merrifield's program on Thursday, **November 20** will be Part Two of "Everything You Wanted To Know about Steam Engines But Were Afraid To Ask." Hope you can join us for what promises to be interesting and informative program. The Nominating Committee will also submit a slate of 1998 officers for consideration.

Sincerely,



First wide bituminous burner - CB&Q 2-4-2 No. 590, by BLW 1895. (Gene Hull collection)

THE FIRST WIDE BITUMINOUS BURNER

by: Gene Hull

In the latter years of the 19th century, American railroads were making intense efforts to increase the speed of trains, especially their fleets of passenger trains. Improvements in equipment had made this possible with much greater safety. The fast-acting air brake triple valve, and Janney automatic coupler were two very important such improvements.

The higher speeds achieved by the regular passenger trains were not spectacular by later standards. The fastest train on the Burlington between Omaha and Denver averaged 32 miles an hour. Even so, it was faster than the Overland Flyer on the Union Pacific.

In this desire for higher speed, the Burlington had a spectacular opportunity to receive some nationwide publicity. The amount of mail criss-crossing the nation had reached a tremendous volume by 1884. The U.S. Post Office Department decided to run a solid train of mail cars out of New York to San Francisco. A connection was available west from Council Bluff, Iowa, on the Union Pacific. A fast schedule out of Chicago to Council Bluffs was all that was needed. Between the schedule from New York to Chicago, and the train out of Council Bluffs, there was a time of 15 hours and 50 minutes. This would require an average speed of 31.08 m.p.h. over a distance of 492 miles.

Postmaster General Walter L. Gresham made his proposal to two railroads, but the companies wouldn't even consider the challenge. He had better luck with 1st Vice President Thomas J. Potter of the Burlington. These two men negotiated an exclusive contract to run a solid train of mail from Chicago to Council Bluffs every day for six days a week. A train was made ready, and on the morning of 11 March

FROM THE ARKANSAS RAILROADER

1884 the "Fast Mail" roared out of Chicago on the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy.

It was this traditional fast mail service which was responsible for one of the greatest improvements in over-all locomotive design ever made. In 1895 the Burlington asked the Baldwin Locomotive Works to design an experimental engine for high speed service on the Fast Mail. The decision was made to use a 2-4-2 type, which Baldwin had introduced two years earlier. In 1893, Baldwin had built 17 locomotives as an exhibit for the Columbian Exposition in Chicago from May to October. One of these was a 2-4-2 type, consequently called the "Columbian" type.

The new Burlington engine had two trailing wheels mounted in rigid frame pedestals. As an innovative feature, directly above these wheels was mounted a very wide firebox, entirely behind the driving wheels. This allowed the boiler to be constructed much closer to the rails than if the firebox had been above the drivers. The center of gravity of the engine was lower than usual.

The single-expansion cylinders were 19" x 26" with piston valves. The engine had driving wheels 84" in diameter, 200 pounds of boiler pressure, 19,000 pounds of tractive effort, a 4.55 adhesion factor, a firebox 107" by 60", a weight of 138,000 pounds with 86,200 pounds on the driving wheels.

The engine was given number 590 on the Burlington engine roster. The most significant feature was the fact that it was the first locomotive ever built with a deep, wide firebox in this position for burning BITUMINOUS coal.

The "Columbian" type had a tendency to sway at high speed. It was unstable, but this Burlington engine had an influence on the later wheel arrangements, such as the 4-4-2 "Atlantic" type.

The Springdale News

Frisco to Go Back to Old Rate

May 19, 1931

Little Rock, May 15- A request for authority to abandon its two-cent experimental passenger rate in Arkansas and return to the standard rate of 3.6 cents per mile was granted to the Frisco railroad by the Arkansas railroad commission. The change is effective July 1.

The petition for authority to abandon the plan said the plan may not have been a true test "because of the depression" but it was found that the two-cent fare did not increase traffic and the company sustained a substantial loss each month since the lower fare was inaugurated.

The railroad obtained authority from the interstate commerce commission several months ago to apply a two-cent rate to day coach traffic in an effort to stimulate travel by train. The Arkansas commission acquiesced in the in the authority to apply the plan in Arkansas.

Comment: Passenger fares in the ICC's Western district, which included Arkansas, were almost always higher than lines in the East. Many of the eastern lines regularly offered two-cent a mile fares until about 1940 when economic activity increased. The failure of the Frisco's two cent fare in Arkansas exemplifies the tremendous effect of the Depression in a state that was one of the poorest prior to the onset of the Depression.

Submitted by Tom Duggan

Thank You Berry Much

In this era of computers little thought is given to the logistical skills that American railroads employed in their day-to-day operations. The following article, from the *Springdale Semi-Weekly News* of April 30, 1929, shows the skill of the Frisco in dealing with the seasonal rush of Ozark strawberries. Later in the year there were seasonal shipments of apples and grapes from this area of Northwest Arkansas.

Frisco Planning to Handle Berry Crop
Springfield, MO April 25

Arrangements for an expected 2,500 cars of strawberries from the Ozarks, as compared to 2,252 handled last year, are being made by the Frisco railroad it was announced at the general office here Thursday.

Beginning in April the Frisco started to store refrigerator cars at Springfield, Fort Smith, Monett, Joplin and other points near the berry harvest. It was announced Thursday that a total of 1,500 cars had been gathered in this way to protect loadings.

Since the cars cost about \$4,000 apiece it was pointed out that an investment of \$6,000,000 in rolling stock has been tied up for almost a month in preparation and many cars will not be used for another month.

Altogether it was estimated that the Ozark crop to be handled this year in carload lots would amount to 1,250,000 crates, and in addition a large bulk of berries would be handled in less than carload lots. The total crop to be handled by the Frisco was estimated at 2,000,000 to 2,500,000 crates. Total number of crates to be shipped out of the Ozarks was estimated to be about 5,000,000.

Each crate of the Ozark pack will contain 24 quart boxes of strawberries.

The life of the strawberry after ripening and picking is about five days, Berries picked in the Ozarks will be shipped so rapidly that they will appear on the Chicago retail market two days later. It was also said that care in packing and careful government inspection in most cases would make it unnecessary for commission merchants to sort the berries.

Comment: For the 1929 strawberry season Springdale shipped out 283 cars of strawberries, a bad year due to unfavorable weather conditions in early spring. Each refrigerator car could hold 430 crates or about 10,320 quart boxes. Strawberry pickers received 3-4 cents per quart picked. The wholesale price of strawberries varied from \$3.25 per crate for the first berries to \$2.00 per crate at the end of the season. The 283 cars shipped out from Springdale equates to 2,920,560 quarts of strawberries. I recall strawberry picking as hot, back-breaking unpleasant work so I would imagine sales of Doan's liniment skyrocketed during the berry picking season.

With the arrival of the Depression in October 1929, consumer demand for delicacies such as strawberries collapsed. Springdale, historically the major strawberry production point of Northwest Arkansas, continued to cultivate strawberries for a number of years but the volume shipped and prices realized were but a fraction of those prevailing during the mid 1920s boom period. For the Frisco the loss of the strawberry business was yet another adverse development and in 1932 the struggling railroad entered a receivership that would last fifteen years.

Submitted by Tom Duggan

Slam-Bam

Commuting on British Rail, now partially privatized, was an essential daily element for me when I lived in the London area in 1968 (six months) and 1971-1973 (2 1/2 years). My first commutation stint involved a trip from Croydon to London Bridge station on the south side of the Thames. I then walked across London Bridge to work in the City financial district. The old London bridge had recently been bought by real estate developers and was on its way to Lake Havasu, Arizona.

Croydon, heavily bombed by the Luftwaffe, has been the subject of extensive redevelopment but the station was straight out of the Victorian era. Many longer distance trains to the South Coast stopped at Croydon and so I usually rode in 1950s-1960s coaching stock. The cars were multiple unit self propelled vehicles that drew power from a third rail. The trains had no conductors but relied on a ticket or pass flash system when entering and leaving the platform. En route to London Bridge the train passed through Clapham Junction which was at one time the world's largest railroad junction with scores of trains crossing as they picked their way to the many terminals. In England train spotting is a popular hobby for young men. One could buy a platform pass for one penny. The train spotters would stand out at the end of the platforms and record the numbers, names and types of diesel locomotives. None of the trains had nameboards so actually train spotting should have been called engine spotting.

Freight trains, called goods trains, were pathetic by U.S. standards. The goods wagons were four wheeler cars that had a capacity of about 15 tons each. The cars lacked air brakes so braking by the diesel engine resulted in freight trains of about 15 cars. There were several unit trains that carried Portland cement into London depots. Steam engines ceased operating in 1968 because Britain had ample coal reserves but limited foreign currency resources to pay for dollar-denominated oil imports. Strangely I do not recall seeing a straight electric passenger or freight locomotive.

My second commuting stint involved a fifteen minute run from Roehampton (in southwest London near Wimbledon) to venerable Waterloo station. The electric MU coaching stock was the familiar slam door variety where the car was divided into a series of compartments with two sets of opposite facing seats. The doors had leather belts and one was expected to slam the door shut after climbing a small running board to enter. The compartments were designed to hold six passengers but often carried more as the commuter service resembled a subway in terms of frequency and peak hour crush loads. During my commutation from Roehampton, Britain was paralyzed by a series of coal miner and locomotive driver strikes that caused massive discomfort for millions. The locomotive drivers used "work to rule" which meant doing everything in exact accordance with the rule book. The six-person compartments would often carry fifteen people during labor problems and I encountered the British stoicism that served them well during World War Two.

Waterloo Station was one of the largest terminal and one could see the nightly Golden Arrow to Paris awaiting passengers. At Waterloo I boarded a special purpose subway train that linked Waterloo station to the Bank of England. This train, called the Drain, consisted of old stock built to fit dimensions of a tunnel that was very small. One could barely stand up straight and the bowler-hatted brokers and insurance types could not wear their hats on the Drain. The Drain had no ventilation and woe to one forced to stand next to a garlic aficionado. I can also confirm that not all Brits of twenty-five years ago did not avail themselves that frequently of bathing facilities or dry cleaners.

Submitted by Tom Duggan

PLACE NAMES V

South of the Winslow Tunnel, the railroad descends down the valley of Howard Fork--six miles at an average 2.2 percent grade. The grade eases at SCHABERG. The first station here, in 1882, was FRISCO P. O., soon changed to PORTER after a local doctor. In 1888 John Schaberg was appointed agent and postmaster, and the post office was named after him. But the Frisco continued with Porter until about 1912 when it also began using Schaberg. A lot of timber was moved from Schaberg until the station was abandoned in the 1950s. The late historian Robert G. Winn, source of some of this material, was born at Schaberg.

A little farther south was another timber and fruit shipping point called first WALKERS (around 1905), then ARMADA (1910-1942). The White River Lumber Company headquartered here.

CHESTER was a railroad town, born with the arrival of the Frisco in 1882. It was named for Chester, Iowa, the home town of a Mr. Hepburn, locomotive engineer, who suggested it. For many years it was the base for the helper engines (the Frisco called them "hill engines") for the long push up to Winslow.

NARROWS was settled at least as early as 1846. Evidently the name was changed to MOUNTAINBURG before the railroad came, as that is the only name they ever used on their timetables. Appropriately, it is surrounded by the Boston Mountains.

Then begins a series a mostly obscure and long forgotten stations. Four miles south of Mountainburg was AMRITA. This served a weekend retreat for the members of Amrita Grotto, a Masonic organization in Ft. Smith. Trains stopped only on weekends and the station (no depot) lasted only a few years (roughly 1929-1933). Only a mile beyond was LANCASTER (from the city in Pennsylvania), a scheduled passenger stop until 1942. Little remains of this community. Then came BERRY SWITCH (a fruit shipping point?) in 1905, later to become STEWART (gone before 1920).

The community of KENTON changed its name to RUDY when the railroad arrived in 1882. George Rudy had deeded the land to the Frisco and was rewarded with a station name. For reasons known only to the railroad management, they removed the siding in about 1965 in favor of a long passing siding only a half mile south called BALL (1950, shortened but still in service). It was named after A. M. Ball, Assistant Superintendent of Transportation at the Frisco headquarters in Springfield, Missouri.

A little farther south was MEADOWS, formerly MEADORS SWITCH (a local family name), which was a passenger flag stop between 1910 and 1942. A siding grade is quite evident, but no community exists any more. Then came LILLIE (or maybe LILLY), named for Lillie Cate, the daughter of the postmaster. The post office was ZENOBIA, Lillie having been preempted. Lillie was the Frisco's effort to capture some of the cotton shipping business held by the Iron Mountain (SLIM&S RR). The effort went for naught and the station lasted only five years beginning in 1883. FURRY, where State Highway²⁸² crosses the tracks, was named for P. W. Furry, station agent at Van Buren in 1897, Springdale in 1902, and Bentonville around 1930. SMELTZER'S (the only name with an apostrophe) was located at the point about where Interstate Route 40 now passes over the rails. It was on the Frank Smeltzer farm and was used seasonally for shipping fruit.

COPP, probably named for a Frisco official, came into existence in about 1950. Originally a storage siding, it has been upgraded by the A&MRR to an interchange point between the main line freight trains and the Ft. Smith switching service. It is within the corporate limits of VAN BUREN, of which more next month.

RCO

Connecticut Commuter

From 1976 to 1994 I commuted to New York City from Connecticut on the former New Haven main line. The trip ranged between 45 and 47 miles depending on the station used and took about 50 minutes when conditions were favorable. The line had been part of the New Haven's main line to New York and subsequently came under Penn Central control in 1969 followed by Conrail operation until 1983 when Metro North Commuter Railroad took over. It will be recalled that the New Haven was a bankrupt entity while Penn Central itself failed in June 1970. Conrail was formed to operate freight service on the more viable portions of the bankrupt railroads that littered the northeast railscape. This cavalcade of ever changing owners spelled trouble for New Haven line commuters in the form of deferred maintenance.

The New Haven line was one of the first high volume lines to be electrified. The railroad opted for an unusual 13,000 volt AC, 50 cycle, system using a spider web of graceful catenary to support the lines. Most of the New Haven's traffic terminated at the New York Central owned Grand Central Terminal of 1913 vintage in midtown Manhattan. The New York Central had electrified much of its New York commuter network using the then conventional 650 volt DC underrunning third rail covered by wooden boards. The City of New York banned steam or diesel engines in Manhattan so the New Haven had to use equipment capable of operating on both AC and DC. To provide the 50 cycle power for the New Haven line the railroad operated coal fired generating plants at New Haven and Old Greenwich, CT. By the late 1970s the Old Greenwich plant was belching enormous quantities of dense coal smoke over some of the wealthiest towns in America as it tried to provide power. Aging generators broke down and one winter the General Electric built M-1 and M-2 MU units had to be pulled by Conrail engines. The overhead lines could only provide limited lighting but no heat. Once the trains reached New York Central territory the helpers were removed and full power operation resumed.

Most commuter stock consisted of married pairs of self propelled cars built by General Electric in the early 1970s. Later a Japanese company supplied a group of triple MU cars. The MU cars had fixed seats and thick Lexan sealed windows to provide protection when passing through areas such as Harlem (a New Haven conductor was shot to death in 1968 while deboarding passengers at the 125 th Street Station in Harlem) and the Bronx. In Harlem there was immense area of burned out or disused buildings that reminded me of the bombed out areas in the Midlands of England. Mayor Ed Koch solved the problem in part by having the buildings boarded up with silhouettes painted on the window coverings. Near New Rochelle, NY the power changeover took place. The most feared noise was a pantograph that had become entangled in the catenary. There would be a lot of banging noises similar to a ship docking followed by darkness, and then a collective sigh from the stoic commuters. They realized they would be late to work or home. The cars carried poles designed to deal with pantograph problems but most times a wire train had to be called out. In time the transition problem became more practiced and switchover problems were reduced.

The New Haven cars, which operated in trains as long as 10-12 cars, were unusual in that they still carried bar cars. The bar cars, dense with smoke, were heavily patronized on homeward runs. For non-smoker it was not that pleasant as a trip through the bar car left your suit reeking of smoke. Most of the bar car riders were regulars and did not mind standing as they chugged liter after liter of Foster's Australian lager. By the early 1990s Metro North, operator of the commuter lines since 1983, began to enforce a non-smoking policy on its trains. The bar cars were a bastion of resistance and numerous hard core smokers were arrested by railroad police for smoking.

(Continued on the back page)

ARKANSAS BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER, NRHS, OFFICERS

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72745-LOWELL; 72701, 72703-FAYETTEVILLE; 72762, 72764, 72766-SPRINGDALE

Fairly early in my commuting career I realized that the MU cars were uncomfortable. I began to ride on a branch line train hauled by ex- New Haven FL-9 diesels. The engines had been built in the late 1950s and were unique in that they operated as a straight diesel electric when in overhead wire territory and then converted to electric when on New York Central electrified territory. When the power plant problems surfaced, the aging FL-9s got a new lease on life. They furnished steam heat to a mixed lot of aging passenger cars. We rode in tired cars from the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority, ex PRR stainless steel cars from the defunct Detroit regional transit authority and ex-New Haven mainline cars. The New Haven cars, built for the postwar passenger traffic revival at the Pullman-Standard plant in Worcester ,MA, had long passed their prime. In some windows water had leaked in between the panes so you could gauge acceleration by looking at the window. Some of the cars had fluorescent lighting but some did not. They used odd voltage incandescent bulbs that burned out over time and could not be replaced. This resulted in smaller and smaller pools of light as the bulbs burned out. The cars were steam heated and as one would expect the steam lines froze up often in winter. Huge clouds of steam would come from the connections but unfortunately the steam clouds were strictly ornamental. In later years the passenger stock was replaced with head end power equipped cars made by the Canadian firm Bombardier. These cars were clean, well lit and climate controlled. They were a welcome change. They were pulled or pushed by the venerable FL-9s which had undergone major improvements to extend their service life.

Monthly commutation tickets cost \$165 when I began and had increased to \$220 by 1994. The service was heavily subsidized as the roads in the New York area were heavily travelled. In 1987 there was a union strike that lasted for six weeks. This meant that I had to drive in at 5:30 AM and leave my car in a garage that charged \$16.00 a day. I left work at 3:30 PM but unfortunately so did thousands of other rail deprived commuters. I was so happy when commuter service resumed as the alternative was so unpleasant.

Submitted by Tom Duggan

Meetings...ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS Chapter No. 158 (ABMT) 3rd Thursday of each month (except December dinner meeting). Meetings are held at the Shiloh Museum's General Store, 118 West Johnson, Springdale, AR at 7:00 PM. Visitors are welcome at all meetings. Annual dues of the Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter effective January 1, 1997 are \$29 (individual) or \$31 (family)

ARKANSAS BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER
 NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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