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# The Scrambler

Volume 12, Number 6-5

January 1999

## Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

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### MINUTES OF MEETING NOVEMBER 19, 1998

The Chapter met for its regular scheduled monthly meeting at the Shiloh Museum's "Old General Store" on the 19th of November at 7:00 PA. Scrambler Editor Tom Duggan was substituting for Chapter President George Alison, who is vacationing in Europe.

There were two guests present, they were given the opportunity to introduce themselves and to tell about their interest in railroading.

The minutes of the October meeting as published in the November Scrambler were amended to correct a spelling error. The minutes were approved by acclamation after the correction.

Under old business the floor was opened for nominations for officers, there were no nominations.

In the report from officers, National Chairman/ Membership Director Bob Oswald reported on the Fall 1998, National Board of Director's meeting in Lenexa, Kansas. Among the items covered was the re-election of officers, the success of the Railcamp at Steamtown.

The Lancaster, PA Chapter has withdrawn its request to host the 2000 convention in Pittsburgh. The Western Connecticut chapter of Stamford, CT will host instead. The 2001 convention is scheduled for St Louis.

Bob also announced that the Spring 1999 Board of Directors meeting will be in Chicago and the Fall 1999 meeting will be in Scranton, PA. The Spring 2000 meeting is scheduled for Atlanta. He also passed out to the officers amended by-laws for the National Railway Historical Society, Inc. Bob also has the calendars ordered earlier.

Ray Toler announced that Bob Oswald had presented two programs on the Arkansas and Missouri Railroad

Vice-president Bill Merrifield reminded everyone that there would be no formal program at next month's meeting. He will report later on future programs.

Treasurer Bill Ussery gave the treasurer's report. A copy of the report is on file with the secretary's records. Bill also read a letter from the Fort Smith Trolley Museum thanking the Chapter for the \$1000 donation for help in moving the steam engine Frisco No. 4003.

Under new business there was an explanation of the Arkansas & Missouri special train runs added for this Fall.

The business meeting was adjourned, Bill Merrifield presented an interesting and informative program on railroad music

Ron Allen,  
Secretary

## AMTRAK

Here follows a selection of AMTRAK trip reports from "Friends of AMTRAK"

### **Amtrak Trip Report by Brendan Delay**

Two weeks ago I took the new Pennsylvanian between Cleveland and Pittsburgh, daylight departure and return. It left almost on time. It arrived half an hour early because Conrail was giving it the rails as a high priority train. It arrived in Cleveland half an hour early. It was not crowded and could comfortably use some more passengers. The train was clean and well kept with a friendly snack bar attendant. This is a superior way for the business person to travel between the two cities since one can do work on the train. There was portable digital phone coverage for most of the route, meaning a business person or lawyer can squeeze in calls along the route. Friends of Amtrak should promote the route since it could benefit from more ridership.

### **Amtrak Trip Report by Ted Blishak**

Dec 4, 1998. No 14 [Coast Starlight] reported to be on time, but arrived 35 minutes late, which we consider to be on time here in Klamath Falls since UP took over the SP.

The Pacific Parlour Car and dining care were nicely decorated for the Christmas season. On board service at its usual high standard with one glaring exception.

After dinner we entered the Pacific Parlour Car on our way back to our compartment, and found that the bar was closed and that every light was turned off as if there had been a complete power failure. Inching our way down the aisle, we noticed that a full moon was rising over Mt Ranier, and decided to sit down to enjoy the sight, still being one hour out of Seattle. No sooner had my wife lowered herself into one of the easy chairs than a voice boomed over the PA system, "The Pacific Parlour Car is closed and you will have to leave!" Sylvia left for our

compartment, and I found my way to the bar, where I found the car attendant standing in the dark talking with the Chief of on-board services. I suggested that the bar should be illuminated and open to serve passengers as well as to bring in some incremental income to Amtrak. But she insisted that she was required to close the car an hour and a half out of Seattle to "cleanup," and if I were unhappy about that, there was a passenger complaint card in my room that I could fill out and send to Brian Rosenwald.

The issue of whether or not a bar should be open did not come up, but I have often noticed, not only on the Coast Starlight, but on all Amtrak trains, the bar stops serving over an hour away from the train's destination. It is also often the case that an Amtrak bar attendant will be on a dinner break during the time which is commonly known in a large part of the population, as 'cocktail hour.' You can check in at any hotel or restaurant to verify for yourself that many people before dinner

actually purchase beverages in cocktail lounges, which are apparently profit centers everywhere except on Amtrak trains.

*(Scrambler Editor's note: Ted Blishak operates Oregon-based Accent On Travel-USA and is a big promoter of AMTRAK travel. Your Editor has had a similar experience with AMTRAK food and drink service. Perhaps Congress ought to remove the five year job protection enjoyed by only AMTRAK employees. This would certainly help the employees to improve their customer focus.)*

### **Amtrak Trip Report - (authorship not for attribution)**

I had the pleasure of taking the Amtrak Auto train this past week. I rode coach on the way down to Sanford Fla. and had a sleeper deluxe room on way back to Lorton Va. Dinner in coach was served on paper plates and 3 choices of entrees. It was still a decent meal as I mostly had stuffed chicken.

On return trip sleeper car gets you first class dining with real plates and silverware and two choices of wine and 5 entrees including Prime rib and Salmon with crabmeat sauce. Several diners really liked the Prime rib as I had Salmon which was tasty.

Train had only minor delays both ways and was 5 minutes late headed south and a half-hour northbound due to an air brake hose breaking en-route.

Employees of company that loads and unloads automobiles were fast as they hustled back and forth to auto carriers. There were over 200 cars southbound (Snowbirds as they call them) and about 90 northbound this time of year.

There were several motorcycles also as this was Biketober Fest week in Daytona. Harley Davidsons were loaded on special Motorcycle pallets and trucked aboard car carrier with a forklift. Bikers seemed real pleased with operation. Overall a nice trip!

### **Amtrak Posts Nationwide System Ridership Gains for Fiscal 1998**

The fiscal year ended September 30, 1998 saw Amtrak ridership increase to 21.5 million, an increase of 4.5% compared to fiscal 1997. The increase of 4.5% was the largest posted by Amtrak in a decade. Passenger revenue for 1998 exceeded \$1 billion for the first time in the 27 year history of Amtrak. On-time performance increased to 78 percent (up four per cent over 1997) and was the highest in 13 years.

Amtrak recently unveiled a Strategic Business Plan (SBU) that will build a market-based network and develop higher corridor speeds. The SBU, intended to help Amtrak attain operating self-sufficiency by 2002 as mandated by Congress, has led to improvements in the first two months of Amtrak's current fiscal year. System ridership increased by 2.9% over the same period in 1997 while on-time performance increased to 80 per cent. (Source-Amtrak Press Release-December 28, 1998)

## Railroad Date Nails

At our Chapter Christmas party Ray Toler distributed railroad date nails provided by National Director Bob Oswald. It soon became apparent that we had relatively little knowledge about this once common railroad item. Your Editor did some research and is happy to share the meager results. The date nail owes its existence to a series of rail accidents that took place about 1899 caused by rotted crossties. Management realized that it had to find a way to determine the age of crossties. The Chicago & Eastern Illinois was thought to be the first railroad to employ datenails. Prior to the introduction of datenails railroads used notches or branding to date crossties. By 1910 nearly all railroads used date nails. Date nails generally were placed on every tenth tie. Date nails dated 29 and 3 1/2 inches or longer are considered to be common. A date nail made of copper or some other non-ferrous metal is considered very desirable. Date nails were also used by telegraph companies on their poles. Some railroads also used code, for example "X", instead of two digit dates.

The use of date nails by the large railroads ended in the late 1960s although some smaller lines still use date nails.

Your Editor has seen date nail collections offered for sale at railroadiana shows. They are inexpensive to collect and offer the benefit of good exercise in the open air. However it is important to look for date nails along abandoned lines for obvious reasons.

### New Internet Site for the Kansas City Southern Railway

In early December 1998 KCSI, the parent company of the Kansas City Southern Railway, unveiled a new and improved Internet site. KCS, which now calls itself the NAFTA RAILWAY, publishes the weekly employee newsletter, press releases and a host of other material on the website. Of particular interest for railfans is the schedule for the *Southern Belle* executive train for the coming three months. The site is quite impressive and may be accessed at [www.kcsi.com](http://www.kcsi.com). The company spent a lot of time and money in revamping

their website and you will enjoy the results.

### Frisco depot opens in Fayetteville

Station Agent Mc Nair, with his corps of employees, is now comfortably situated in the new pressed brick building. The building is a modern one in every particular and the most elaborate on the Frisco system. It presents an imposing appearance and will stand as monument to the Frisco and a reflex of the enterprise of the people of Fayetteville who assisted pecuniarily [sic] in securing the elegant structure. (*Fayetteville Sentinel* quoted in *Springdale News* of July 22, 1898.)

**Dues for 1999 are now due and payable. An individual membership costs \$29 while the Family membership is \$31. Please send your check to Bill Ussery, Treasurer or better yet bring your check to the meeting on Thursday, January 21. Bob Stark will present a video on the "History of American Railroading:**

MOVIE OF THE MONTH

WHISPERING SMITH

Paramount, 1948, 88 minutes

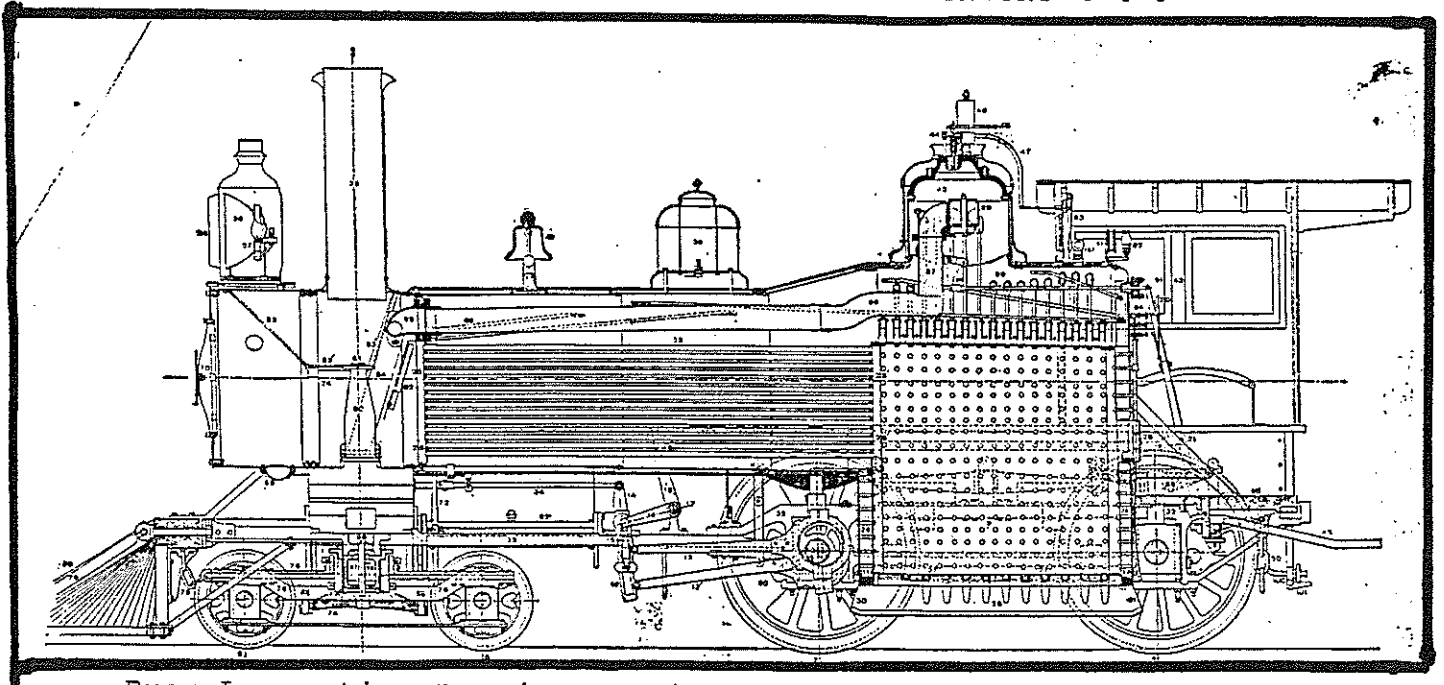
Alan Ladd, Robert Preston, Brenda Marshall, Donald Crisp, William Demarest, Fay Holden, Murvyn Vye, Frank Faylen.

Even though this runs pretty much to form, "Whispering Smith" is one of the better flicks of the railroad-western genre. The title character (Ladd) is a railroad detective/trouble shooter for the Nebraska & Pacific (thinly disguised Union Pacific) to stop a gang of train robbers. He gets this done early in the film, but fails to nab the ranch-owning ring-leader (Crisp). Meanwhile the wreck-boss (Preston) is lining his own coffers with booty salvaged from the wrecks until he is caught and fired. So he ties in with the bad guys until the denouement thirty seconds before "The End". Then there is the ominous, long-haired, slit-eyed killer Frank Faylen (perfect casting), who years later rose to prominence as the TV *Dobie Gillis*' bumbling father!

The railroad scenes are well done and realistic. There never was a Nebraska & Pacific, but there were a Nebraska Railroad, a Nebraska & Western Railroad (both wound up in the C. B. & Q), and Nebraska & Western (later Great Northern).

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THE INNER WORKINGS OF A LATE 19TH CENTURY 4-4-0



From Locomotive Running and Management, Angus Sinclair, John Wiley & Sons, New York, 1885

**ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

Chapter established November 1987

**1999 DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

President	GEORGE ALISON	248-1269	21356 Bur Oak, Springdale, AR 72762
Vice President	BILL MERRIFIELD	751-7163	5278 Silent Grove Road, Springdale, AR 72762
Secretary	RON ALLEN	751-0761	2718 Jean Street, Springdale, AR 72762
Treasurer	BILL USSERY	751-2873	112 Willella Place, Springdale, AR 72764
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Editor	TOM DUGGAN	756-1901	15225 Lakewood Drive, Lowell, AR 72745

**Meetings...** ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS Chapter No. 158 (ABMT) Third Thursday of each month (except December dinner meeting). Meetings are held at the Shiloh Museum's General Store, 118 West Johnson, Springdale, Arkansas at 7:00 PM. Visitors are welcome at all meetings. Annual dues for 1999 are \$29 for individuals and \$31 for a family. 1999 dues are 50% less for members joining between June 1 and September 30. Please call 501-750-8165 for directions to the Shiloh Museum

**Answer to Quiz** What do the following towns have in common? De Queen, AR, Mena, AR, Vandervoort, AR, Bloomburg, TX, Nederland, TX, Hornbeck, LA, De Ridder, LA, Zwolle, LA, Amsterdam, MO, and DeQuincy, LA?

Answer- Each of the above towns is named for a Dutch investor who helped to finance the construction of the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf RR that became the Kansas City Southern Railway in 1900.

ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
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**Please mark your calendar now for the  
Chapter meeting on Thursday,  
January 21 at 7:00 PM**