

# The Scrambler

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Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter, National Railway Historical Society

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## Minutes of the July 15, 1999 Meeting

President George Alison called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. Eighteen members and guest Adolph Towers of Fayetteville were present. Mr. Towers, a friend of Chapter member Bob Stark, spoke of his childhood growing up on the MOPAC line between El Dorado, AR and Monroe, LA.

President Alison read the Secretary's minutes for the past two meetings in the absence of the Secretary. Upon a motion duly made and seconded the reports were approved by the membership.

National Director Bob Oswald reported that the Annual Meeting of NRHS held in connection with the NRHS Convention in Sacramento was routine, devoid of controversy and lasted but ninety minutes. Bob Oswald mentioned that the ninety minute Annual Meeting was likely the shortest in his memory.

Treasurer Bill Ussery discussed the Chapter's current financial position. A printed copy of his report is on file with the Secretary. The Treasure's report was accepted upon a motion duly made and seconded.

Vice President Merrifield reported that Bob Oswald will furnish a program on the Railroads of Switzerland for the August 19 meeting. Uni de la Teja volunteered to provide coffee and cookies for the meeting.

Under old business a brief discussion took place as to whether the Chapter should operate a table at Tired Iron of the Ozarks on Saturday, September 10. It was agreed to defer a decision until the August 19 meeting.

Under new business Tom Duggan suggested that the Chapter consider loaning Chapter ephemera to the A & M Railroad for use in decorating the new museum-gift shop. Upon a motion duly made and seconded it was agreed that the Chapter could lend ephemera to the A & M Railroad provided the Chapter receive recognition for its loan.

Bob Oswald and Martin Post provided a fan's perspective on the Sacramento Convention. Most of the rail excursions operated well behind schedule due to dispatch problems that affected both UP and BNSF. About 15 operating steam engines of all types were present at the convention. The trip on the former WP Feather River Canyon route was done with a diesel as UP 3985 developed a bad steam leak the prior day. The California State Rail Museum was praised as being a world-class museum.

Following the end of the Business meeting and cookies and coffee by Juanita and Ray Toler, Bob Oswald presented a slide show on the Sacramento Convention. Bob's slides certainly documented his claim that the convention had something for every railfan.

Tom Duggan

## Railway Picnic-1915

### Railway Men Visit Sulphur Springs

Families Accompany Them in Crowd over 1200  
Strong.

Good Program Entertains Visitors.

The railroad excursion that visited Sulphur Springs was one of the largest ever. The train was drawn by a big 800 type locomotive. The train consisted of fifteen coaches and two baggage cars. The coaches were all loaded full and some of the crowd rode in the baggage cars.

Immediately after disembarking the splendid K.C.S. band played selections on the platform and on the march to the park. On reaching the park, the crowd began to scatter over it while the band made their way to the bandstand and furnished music. Mayor Wells made a splendid address of welcome at 11:00 a.m. which was ably responded to by W.H. Taylor, inspector of transportation.

At 12 o'clock the park was full of great numbers of picnickers who were spreading lunch under the trees.

At 1 p.m. a program of races began including a boy's 100-yard dash, a foot race, and a ladies 30-yard free for all foot race. Prizes were awarded to all the winners. Boxers Redfern and Hall furnished more entertainment.

At 3 p.m. a baseball game began between the K.C.S. team and Gravette which proved to be one of the most hotly contested games ever played here. Oswalt, who has quite a reputation as a ball-player, pitched the game for Gravette and did splendid work, as did his rival twirler wearing the Pittsburg blue. Indeed most of the game was a pitcher's battle and the bulk of the men never saw first. The game was well played and won by Pittsburg by a score of 6 to 4.

Dancing, boating, bathing and billiards amused the guests while many took hikes over the country and to the caves.

After lunch at 6 o'clock the crowd took their way to the station and began to fill the cars. At 7:00

the train pulled out carrying one of the most happy and contented crowds that ever visited Sulphur Springs.

The K.C.S. shops at Pittsburg were closed down for the day and everyone turned out for a day of solid enjoyment. The families of the railway men were transported free of charge to the Beauty Spot and few failed to take advantage of the opportunity to visit vacation land.

The crowd consisted 1,270 persons and included E.H Holden, General Superintendent and O. Cornelius, Superintendent of the Northern Division.

The Railway men's picnic was perhaps the largest and best conducted excursion that ever came here. The crowd was orderly and well behaved and a nicer lot never came to the city.

(From a copy of the *Sulphur Springs Record*, July 16, 1915 in the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History, Springdale, Arkansas.)

(Editor's comments- Northwest Arkansas is not believed to have had railway bands. They were normally found in towns or cities with large railroad shop facilities such as Pittsburg, KS. A visitor to Pittsburg can still see the extensive yards and shops that once employed hundreds. The tradition of railway sponsored bands peaked in the 1920s. Nearby Kansas was a hotbed for railroad bands. The Katy at Parsons, KS had a nationally known concert band. The Santa Fe band at Topeka, KS lasted until at least 1975. The Frisco at Springfield also had a railroad band. Today no railroad bands are believed to exist.

The KCS picnickers no doubt were stunned to see news of a terrible outing tragedy just a few days after the Sulphur Springs excursion. On July 24, 1915 employees of Western Electric Company, Chicago chartered the SS *Eastland* for a trip on Lake Michigan to Indiana. The ship was still loading at a Chicago River pier when it capsized and took 835 Western Electric workers and family members to their deaths. An investigation revealed overcrowding and failure to ballast the ship as causes of the tragedy. The *Eastland* disaster ranks as the worst employee outing tragedy in U.S. history.)

## Trip Notes

### **The Connecticut Trolley Museum**

In early July we visited central Connecticut. One day we decided to visit the Connecticut Electric Railway located at East Windsor (Warehouse Point), CT. It is located about 20 miles north of Hartford on I-91 that links Hartford and Springfield. We had visited the operation about 15 years ago and recalled the cooling ride on an open-air car.

The museum dates to 1940. Three men purchased some three miles of right-of-way formerly operated by the Hartford and Springfield Street Railway (1906-1926). The line is straight and seems to be like an interurban except that it is really a rural streetcar operation of a type once common in New England.

Our first ride was in car 840. It is a fifteen-bench open-air car built by Brill in 1902. It last ran in New Haven, Connecticut in the fall of 1948. The car is unrestored but seems to function well. The open-air cars were popular at the start of the trolley era. However New England street railways soon realized that they were expensive. They operated from May to September in New England and required storage for the remainder of the year. Some of the open-air cars, also called "breezers", also had curtains that could provide some protection against rain. Many of the breezers ran from populated areas to street railway owned amusement parks. The parks were an early equivalent of theme parks. Even in 1999 some New England amusement parks owe their creation to the street railway companies.

We rode in car 840 twice as the four-year old boy accompanying us seemed interested in repeat rides. The ride, covered by a \$6.00 ticket that permitted unlimited rides, takes place on straight stretch of track through the

cool forest. The benches are reversed and one returns to the starting point of an original trolley shelter.

Our third ride was on a 1922 Perley-Thomas car that operated for New Orleans Public Service (NOPS) until 1960. This car has been painstakingly refurbished down to the original hickory and mahogany once hidden under multiple coats of paint. The advertising signs date from the late 1950s.

Each seat had a special metal mounting for the adjustable sign that separated whites and blacks in the Crescent City. In recent years the streetcars, especially the one that serves Desire, have become tremendously popular with New Orleans tourists. I believe consideration has been given to building replicas of the Perley-Thomas cars.

We missed a chance to ride the Montreal Street Railway Sightseeing car that dated to 1927. The open-air car has seats arranged in tiers so that all may view the sights. It is elaborately decorated. It brought back memories of a 1948 visit to Montreal when we rode a car like No. 4 through the streets of Montreal. The other great discovery in Montreal was room service. My brother and I could not believe our good luck when we learned that a call to room service would cause a milk shake to appear in a few minutes.

The museum also has a large display building that holds a Middle Fork RR Climax engine built in 1910. Also on display was a 1923 Laconia-built Boston Type 5 streetcar. The cream and orange car is in excellent condition operated in the Hub until 1959. I rode cars like this in the mid 1940s with my grandmother when we made trips to the bakery to buy hot bulkie (kaiser) rolls. I remember the mysterious thumping of the compressor and the bright glare of the bulbs as we made our daily trip.

## The Best of 1998

### **Bart Jennings Slide Show**

At the 1999 NRHS Convention in Sacramento ABMT Chapter members Bob Oswald and Martin Post ran into Bart Jennings. He graciously offered to do a program on "The Best of 1998" as he expected to visit his parents in Springdale. On July 18 we learned that Bart would be in town for a few days. We set the program for Wednesday, July 21, at the Editor's house in Lowell. Some 15 Chapter members showed up at short notice to view the program of some 360 slides.

The first segment dealt with the steam engines used in the sugar mills of Cuba. Bart was able to visit Cuba as he is associated with the University of Tennessee at Knoxville. Department of Treasury regulations concerning visits by academics have been relaxed and Bart took full advantage of his time on the island. The steam engines, nearly 90% of U.S. origin, operate on a still extensive network of mainly narrow gauge lines that serve both passenger and freight needs. The sugar plantation locomotives operate mainly during the cane season. It was surprising that the engines are oil-fired as Cuba's economic situation and foreign currency reserves have deteriorated since the end of massive Soviet Union financial subsidies. The Cuban railway worker, many appear to be females, are experts at improvisation. The shops are not modern in appearance yet appear capable of producing steam locomotive parts as required. Jennings also showed slides of the numerous 1950s American cars that operate daily in Cuba. The bus service appears to be very crowded and the Cubans cleverly re-use old bus chassis that are

hailed by tractors to provide transport. The island has much to offer for tourism and much of the tourism development is sponsored by non-U.S. companies. Life on this beautiful island must be difficult for the average person given the current political and economic situation.

The next segment was a trip through the mountains of Ecuador sponsored by Trains Unlimited. It featured a lot of steam, switchbacks and high altitude running. Some of the views were superb as Bart likes to climb up steep hills to get that special shot. Life in the mountains is hard for the natives and no doubt the railroad provides an important link to coastal cities such as Guayaquil. It may have been the air conditioning but I could almost feel the chill as the trains climbed ever higher.

The remainder of the program consisted of railroading in the Southeast and on the West Coast. Bart has the opportunity to see and participate in many important rail events as he does operation and safety consulting for a number of rail carriers often located near railfan events. He is also associated with the Southern Appalachia Railway Museum that operates excursion trains through the Oak Ridge nuclear facility on track of the Southern Freight Railroad. The trains are checked monthly for radioactivity. The line will operate excursions from September through December using Alco diesels. Both dining and coach service will be available. For further information please contact the Southern Appalachia Railway Museum, P.O. Box 5870, Knoxville, Tennessee, 37928 or call 423-241-2140. Bart showed some great slides of the railroad in fall.

In the back is a massive collection of electric traction equipment. I spoke with Jim Baisley, Maintenance Supervisor, about the collection. Like most museums the Warehouse Point operation has taken advantage of whatever is available. They have a lot of Boston equipment, including the 1950s Pullman-Standard PCC cars I rode to college. Some of the cars are in poor shape while others have been cannibalized for parts. Most surprisingly they have two cars from the Chicago & North Shore line that operated between Chicago and Milwaukee until the 1963 abandonment. One of the cars is a combination observation-dining car that looked very old. Baisley expressed a hope that the C & NS cars could be restored to form an operating train.

The museum is virtually an all-volunteer operation. It has about 400-500 members and some 40 or so who are active. The museum appears to have the basis for a nice collection but there is so much work that needs to be done. I found it a little sad to see so many relics wasting away in the New England weather. On the bright side they have done a good job in expanding the operating fleet to four units. They operate an Illinois Traction Co double-end PCC car that was on break at the time of our visit.

This museum really needs help with its signage. Many of the static displays lack any explanations and those with signs are skimpy to say the least. We should be happy that our chapter's first donation to the Fort Smith Trolley Museum was used to purchase signs. It is so important to explain things so that everyone will understand the heritage represented by a piece of equipment or a photo. The museums' website is [www.ct-trolley.org](http://www.ct-trolley.org)

## AMTRAK

A rail crossing in Maryland has become a popular suicide location according to Montgomery County police. On July 9 a woman was killed by the *Capitol Limited* at about 3:45 PM. Police found that the victim had a pair of binoculars and waited until the train was in range. On June 6 a mother and her small daughter died at the same crossing in a case labeled suicide by the police. In 1996 a man committed suicide at the same crossing by stepping into the path of a MARC commuter train. (*Washington Post* 7-16-99)

Oklahoma U.S Representative Ernest Istook sees the new Amtrak service between Oklahoma City and Fort Worth as a "costly gamble". The Republican Congressman claims that Amtrak will lose \$228 on each rider. Istook claims that the new service is not an efficient use of taxes. The *Heartland Flyer* service is budgeted at 23,000 riders in year one, 40,000 in year two and 52,000 in year three. Istook said the three year Amtrak operating contract will cost nearly \$16.8 million. Revenue for the first year is estimated at \$485,000, \$908,000 the second year and \$1,200,00 in year three (*Tulsa World*. 6-22-99)

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation is exploring an expansion of *Heartland Flyer* service to Newton, Kansas or Kansas City. In both cases the expanded service would operate through Tulsa. The Newton connection would provide a link to the *Southwest Chief*. The problem with Newton is a middle of the night connection that might not produce good traffic. The Tulsa-Kansas City link would restore passenger service that ended in 1966 when the Santa Fe's *Tulsa* was discontinued.

**Book review**

**Twilight of the Great Trains  
by Fred W. Frailey**

This is a coffee table sized book that warrants serious consideration by both coffee drinking and non-coffee drinking railfans. This book is a well-documented look at the state of passenger train service in the late 1960s. It covers the operations of eleven railroads ranging from the hopeful Kansas City Southern to train killing mentality of the Southern Pacific. Other lines included are UPRR, Santa Fe, M-K-T, MOPAC, BN/GN/NP, Southern, ACL/SCL, B & O/C & O, and NYC/PRR/New Haven. For each railroad there is a consist diagram combined with a summary schedule. This interesting approach enables the railfan to see the intricate interlinking of one train with another. It also shows how the loss of one train, especially one rich in head end revenue, could ripple through a railroad with devastating effects and ultimately kill trains on other railroads as well.

There are many familiar villains here. Management committed to ending passenger service even when the direct costs were covered and the massive shift of Post Office (RPO and closed pouch) business were major factors that led to wholesale passenger service abandonment. Frailey also interviewed a number of surviving executives and passenger service personnel so there is a fresh insight into the demise of passenger service. The book is written in a casual style but seems on the mark to me. The text is supplemented by a large number of well reproduced black and white photos, many by J. Parker Lamb, that capture the feel of the dying passenger services. One point made by Frailey is that many passenger services were covering their direct costs in the mid-1960s and a few even

generated substantial profits. Many railroads played the familiar game of charging passenger service with all costs when in reality many of the costs were attributable to freight service in whole or part. The Interstate Commerce Commission also failed to cover itself with glory in the inconsistent handling of many train off petitions. The book also shows that ridership on most passenger trains began to decline rapidly in the mid-1960s as the impact of the Interstate System and low cost air travel began to be felt. Most railroads took a view that the decline was irreversible and generally took few steps to reverse the decline. Part of the problem was that railroads had been losing market share in both freight and passengers and accordingly a negative approach to dealing with problems was the norm. It took until 1980 when legislation was enacted that began the process of loosening the regulatory constraints that nearly choked the railroad industry to death. By then the industry had a new cast of managers and today's diverse rail arena is the result.

The 192-page book, from Kalmbach Publishing, lists for \$49.95 plus shipping. It is also available on the internet for \$34.95 plus shipping. It would make a wonderful Christmas present for the railfan or transportation buff. Those who rode trains before Amtrak's 1971 birth will enjoy this look back. Younger readers will enjoy this book as it helps to explain the troubled legacy that led to the creation of Amtrak.

Reviewed by Tom Duggan  
July 1999

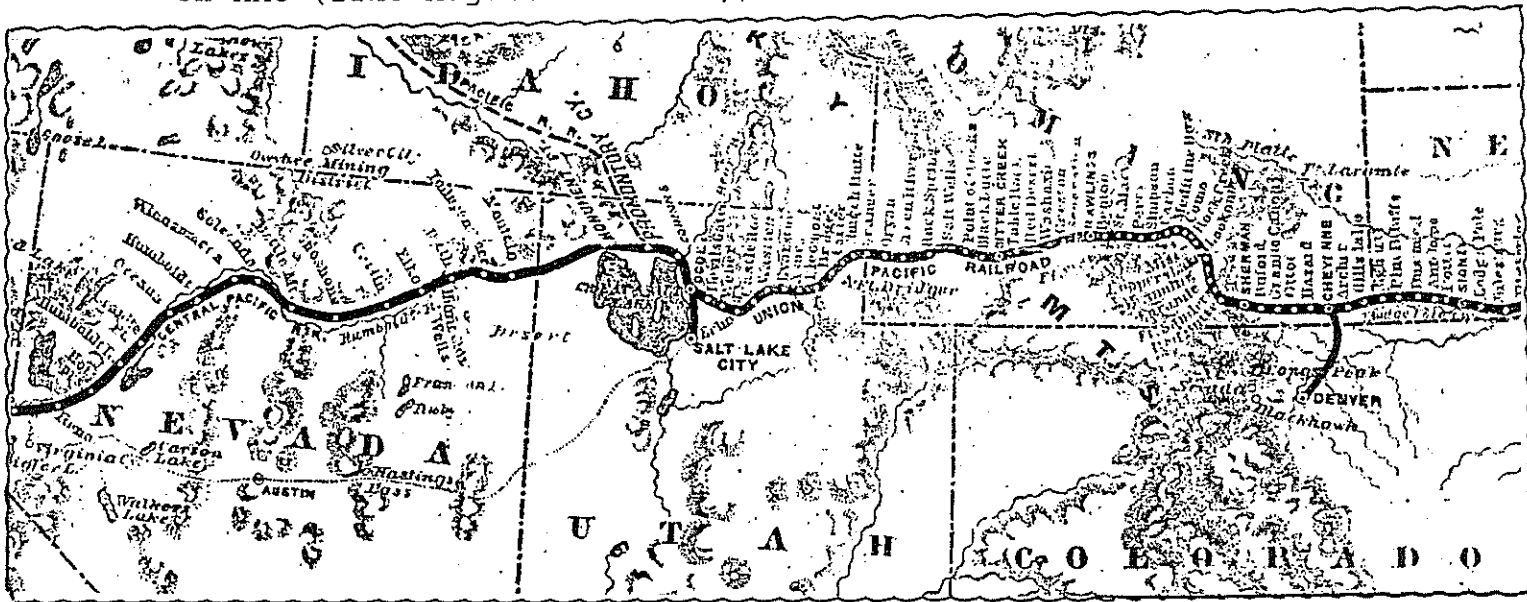
MOVIE OF THE MONTH

THE IRON HORSE

Fox 1924 119 minutes (silent)

George O'Brian, Madge Bellamy, Cyril Chadwick, Fred Kohler, Gladys Hulette, James Marcus.

John Ford had been directing a series of undistinguished westerns since 1917, but this was his first real epic ("with a cast of thousands"). The hero proves himself to be an adept railroad builder for the Union Pacific, but after killing the murderer of his father, prudently moves west to work for the Central Pacific. Predictably (and symbolically) he and the girl are reunited at Promontory. Woven into the tapestry of this drama are some pretty good scenes of railroad building with a lot of antique equipment (the producers claim the "Jupiter" and "119" are the originals, and the "C. P. Huntington" probably is.) Having to rely only on the visual image (and appropriate piano background) to convey the spectrum of emotions might turn off some viewers, but this old-timer finds the over-acting both quaint and delightful. Two of the lesser characters really look like the old photos: Abraham Lincoln, complete with the wart on his right cheek, and Gen. Grenville Dodge, short of stature, bearded, and with a derby hat. N. B.: One of the "thousands" is supposed to be a budding actor named Clark Gable, but I never found him. This movie airs occasionally on AMC (like August 6th last); Look for it and watch it.



SP's Lucin Cutoff over Great Salt Lake was opened to traffic in 1904 and the Promontory line was relegated to branch service until it was finally taken up for scrap in 1942. A small portion has been rebuilt as a National Historic Site.

RCO

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

Chapter established November 1987

**1999 DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

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Editor	<b>TOM DUGGAN</b>	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

A new member application has been received from David Allen Denman of Rogers. It is a family membership that includes his spouse Sarah. Bill Ussery, Treasurer, advises that the Arkansas-Boston Mountains Chapter has 31 family memberships. We hope that David and Sarah will be able to attend the August 19 meeting.

**ARKANSAS-BOSTON MOUNTAINS CHAPTER  
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
P.O. BOX 1303  
SPRINGDALE, AR 72765-1303  
ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

**The August Meeting takes place on  
Thursday, August 19 at 7:00 PM.  
Bob Oswald will present a program  
on the "Railroads of Switzerland".**

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