UNION PACIFIC #4015, a 4-8-8-4, taken in Green River Wyoming in the 1950s by R. O. Hale. From the M. D. McCarter collection.
Union Station in Houston, Texas, as seen in November 1992 looking from downtown. It is used for office space today.

Only a single track remains of what was once many more. Santa Fe, Missouri Pacific and others once used this station... even Amtrak in the early 1970's. Trains would back into the station.

This was the concourse where thousands of people used to enter the station from the covered tracks, including yours truly. This is where I boarded the Missouri Pacific's Valley Eagle in the late 50's with my grandfather for the Rio Grande Valley of Texas (near Harlingen) as well as de-boarding from Santa Fe's unnamed early morning train from Brenham.

A Santa Fe freight southbound through Norman, Oklahoma on October 9, 1992. These same Santa Fe tracks wound up at the station in Houston, Texas (above), where Texas Chief passengers would get off and either board other trains or spend time in Houston. Lots of memories are associated with this line... the thoughts of far away places always coming to mind. (Ken Ziegenbein photos)
The Wreck of the SEMINOLE

BY JOHN MARTIN  (Also typed by John Martin)


Those testifying totalled 16 people and an additional 10 people were present. The investigation took place at the Superintendent's Office, Illinois Central Railroad, Jackson, Tennessee, February 11, 1958.

The train consisted of two units and sixteen cars enroute from Birmingham the evening of January 24th, 1958 with the following cars:

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<td>IC</td>
<td>4002</td>
<td>Diner</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pullman Clover Chalet</td>
<td>Sleeper</td>
<td>Chicago</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pullman Brigstock Tower</td>
<td>Sleeper</td>
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The testimony begins with Conductor O.L. Robertson, I.C.R.R., giving a summary of the trip up to the time of the derailment:

"We departed from Birmingham at 7:05 p.m., arrived Pratt City at 7:25 p.m., stopped there having struck an automobile on the crossing at 7:25 p.m., killing one negro and injuring another and turning the car over."
"We departed Pratt City, Alabama at 8:10 p.m. We did not have any more trouble until we arrived at Ramer, Tennessee and derailed. We made seven stops, arriving at Ramer about 12:50 a.m. I was riding in coach IC 2857, third coach from the head end, back seat on the right side (south end). Train Porter Mac Suggs was sitting with me."

"The first thing I knew it was whirling me around in the seat. It seemed to go right and I could tell where were on the ground. I remained in my seat holding on, realizing that we were on the ground. The rear of the car was on the main line and the front end of the car behind us was coming up the main and the rear end of the 2817 or rear trucks were in the siding, as best as I remember."

Superintendent Osterdock asked, "Were any members of your crew killed?"

"Yes, the flagman was killed, the baggageman was cut up and bruised up and one of the porters was injured. Some of the passengers were injured and went to the hospital."

"In connection with the siding at Ramer, where did the derailment occur so far as your know and where was the baggageman and flagman riding?"

"The derailment occurred just right at the switch, I consider, the track was torn out except the points were still there. I did not now at the time where the flagman and baggageman were riding. We picked up orders at Ruslor Junction, the baggageman picked them up and carried them back to the flagman and they were in the diner. They met in the diner and read the orders, so I was told, when the accident happened. That was the last time I saw the baggageman when he brought the orders to me."

"What were the conditions and authorized speed for this track?"

"It was cold, cloudy and there was quite a bit of snow on the ground. This is on the GM&O railroad tracks from Ruslor Jct. to Perry (50 1/2 miles) and the authorized speed is 70 m.p.h.

GM&O Superintendent Forlines questions; "What time did you leave Ruslor Junction and what did the orders contain?"

"We left the Junction at 12:33 or 12:34, I believe. We just had an order that in case we used a siding to see that the points fit up properly before and after use due to snow. And we got a clearance card."

"You state that you struck an automobile at Pratt City, did you inspect your train to see if anything was hanging loose after the accident and were you familiar with the road over which you operate?"

"Yes, there was no damage to our train or anything hanging loose. The General Car Foreman came and inspected the train before we left. I operate regular on The Seminole, Trains 9 and 10, between Jackson, Tennessee and Birmingham for some time therefore I was familiar with the road. We were running late on No. 10’s schedule."

"What was your estimation of speed at the time of the derailment and did your brakes operate properly on your train?"

"Yes, we had a brake test at Birmingham. The best I could tell we were going about 65 m.p.h.

It was night and I had no way of telling exactly."

The Engineer, S. C. Howell, is now called to testify. "It is a fact that your train struck an automobile after leaving Birmingham in the vicinity of Pratt City and did you make a thorough inspection afterward?"

"Yes, we struck the car at the first crossing south of the depot. Afterward I inspected the engine and seven cars behind the engine back to the crossing. The only thing that happened was the hoses were knocked out of the hanger and the hose on the front end of the engine and they were replaced."

"Did you make several stops between Pratt City and Corinth, Mississippi and did you pass an open telegraph office at Ruslor Junction?"

"Yes, we sure did. I did not have any trouble with the brakes on my train at any time after leaving Pratt City. We made the station stop at Corinth and passed the open office at Ruslor Jct., where we enter the GM&O
tracks. We derailed at Ramer, Tenn., at 12:47 a.m., I know because I looked at my watch when we stopped. We were 1 hour and 25 minutes late on schedule."

"What was the maximum speed between Ruslor Jct. and Ramer and what was your speed at the point of the accident?"

"The maximum speed was 70 m.p.h. and we were going 70 m.p.h. when the wreck occurred. The engine stopped south of mile post 340. Our headlight shone on that number while we had it on - I would say some 300 feet south of the MP 340 and first crossing north of the south switch."

"Did your train go into emergency when the accident happened and did you notice anything unusual?"

"We got several unusual jerks or lurches and it didn’t; ’t quit at that. I saw in the rear-view mirror flashes that looked like lightening and I went into emergency, but the speed was being reduced all the time. I put the brakes in emergency. The train lurched, something like a run-out. I was working the engine in the third notch and we had a jerk that was very unusual at that point. I couldn’t tell exactly how much air we lost but the gauge was down, when I put the train in emergency the sanders went on and the red mars-light went on."

GM&O Superintendent Forlines questions:

"To my knowledge you have been operating over this joint trackage between Perry and Ruslor Jct. for many years. What was the indication of the block signal at the south end of Ramer? Did you strike any stock at any point of this trip or make any irregular stops?"

"I’ve been firing and running over this track since 1908. The block signal was clear at Ramer and we made only regular station stops and the stop for the car accident before the derailment."

The representative of the I.C.C., Mr. M. B. Knight questions next.

"Approaching the south switch at Ramer do you recall seeing the points of the switch before passing over them and did you make an inspection of your train after the derailment?"

"It would be difficult to investigate or observe point running at this speed but had there been a break I think I would have noticed it. The target on the switch was right and the block was clear. I walked the entire train south of the south switch and block at Ramer afterward. All the cars were north of the south switch and I found the connecting rod broke – only the top corner showed a new break. The switch was set and locked for the main track but the points were set for the siding. The rod was lying down between the switch and ties and there was a gap between them a distance of about 6 to 8 inches. This was about 15 minutes after the accident. I had to go back to the engine to reset the PC switch so the engine wouldn’t die."

"Do you know what time you passed Ruslor Jct.?"

"Yes, at 12:33 a.m."

"Then you consumed 14 minutes between Ruslor Jct. and the point of the accident?"

"Yes, there’s quite a bit of this that is upgrade."

"When you went back did you see any evidence of dragging?"

"No, and we were looking for the flagman’s tracks too."

Superintendent Osterdock now questions Baggage man R. C. Haynes.

"How long have you been employed by the company and are you a promoted man?"

"Employed for 21 years, since November 1936, and promoted in 1945. I am the regular assigned baggageman on Trains #9 and #10."

"Were you in the baggage car when you picked up the orders at Ruslor Junction?"

"Yes, I was in the baggage door when I got the orders. That is the usual procedure and then walked back through the coaches and gave a copy to Conductor Robertson. I then went on and met the flagman in the south end of the ACL coach when I entered it. He saw me coming and turned and went to the rear of the train to the diner. I overtook him middle-ways of the diner because he stopped to wait for me. We both sat down and were talking about when we should be in Jackson when the train derailed. When the train came to rest I was still in the diner but could not tell you where. I did not find flagman Whitt. I tried to get to my feet and there was mud and water in the diner and I slipped and fell several times. I finally made my way to the south end of the diner. I came out to the walkway of the diner on the side to the kitchen and called to the flagman but could not find him. There was enough light from somewhere that I could see the ground at the north end of the diner and I jumped to the ground. I realized that I was hurt, but I didn’t know how bad. I was close to the ACL coach which was sitting upright the best I remember. There was no one hollering in the car and I thought that all the people were hurt and unable to call out."

"I made my way around and beside this coach and more or less got in a sitting position and slid down the bank and then climbed up the road bed and stumbled along to the head end to notify the other members of the crew that there were people hurt. I made no inspection of the track, but I do know that it was pretty well torn up."
Looking North at the derailed cafe-lounge IC 4002 and coach ACL 1040 at Ramer, Tn., 8:00 a.m. 1/25/58. All Photos by Lt. G F Carter Spl. Agent ICRR, Collection of John Martin.

Below, the culprit! A broken bridgal bar causing the points to gap open and the train to thereby split the witch is discovered as the cause.

Looking south showing Pullman cars Clover Chalet and Brigstock Tower. Men are standing on what is left of passing track with main line farthest away.
“You and the flagman were sitting in the dining car near the south or north end?”

“We were in the open section closer to the south end fo the diner at the time of the accident. I was sitting on the right-hand side, normally called the East side and the flagman was sitting on the left-hand side or West side moving in a northward direction. When this happened, tables and chairs were swapping places in the air and I was being thrown around like chaff in a high wind. When the brakes went into emergency you just have a natural instinct after riding trains for a period of time to grab to get something solid or get down on the floor. After contacting the porter and the fireman I saw the express messenger looking around with his flashlight and then met Conductor Robertson who was taken up with his many other duties. I was then taken up the side of the train and put in the second coach from the head end and put in the smoking lounge of one of these cars and stayed there until I was taken to the hospital at Corinth, Mississippi.”

Now questioning passes to Engineer C. T. Lindsey who was deadheading on the train from his home in Haileyville, Alabama, to Jackson for his regular run. He was also the regular engineer on trains 9 and 10 between Jackson and Birmingham.

“Where were you riding and give us an account of the derailment?”

“I boarded at Haileyville and road as a passenger in the Central of Georgia coach, the head coach. After the train stopped I got on the ground and went back to the rear of the second coach car, or fourth car that stayed with the train and about that time Conductor Robertson came along and the air was blowing out the air and signal hose. I got under the car and closed the angle cock to both hoses. Then after that I went to the rear of the train and called for the flagman, Mr. Whitt. and some of the passengers were already out and they knew that the flagman was missing and tried to help find him. There was a red light still sitting up in the rear end of the Pullman, in the vestibule, and I took the lantern and happened to notice that some of the other people noticed the block signal was red, and told them no to worry about it, that I would go back and flag the train in case they did come over there. The block stayed red for about five or ten minutes then it went clear again. In the meantime when I came back from flagging this train, two passengers came down to the switch, they were railroad men from Bloomington, Illinois, but I didn’t get their names. One said that he had found the trouble and he showed me the switch rod broken and the switch lined for the main line and locked and the switch points lined for the passing track. The switch rod was open about five inches.”

Now questioning to the Division Engineer, N. R. Forbes, I.C.R.R.

“Could you give us a resume of the position of the equipment?”

“The first car derailed at the rear was a Pullman and it was still upright approximately five feet off the right of the East rail of the siding, two-hundred thirty-eight feet north of the switch point. The next car was partially in the ditch about twenty feet from the East rail of the siding and laying on its left side against the dump. This car was also a Pullman. The two Pullmans were jammed up against each other. Then a gap of about 25 feet between the North end of the Pullman and the diner. The diner was cocked over to the right or east side and the front end was raised up some with the back end down in the ditch and it was separated from the A.C.L. coach which was upright but buried in the ditch about 35 feet from the he east rail of the siding. Then there was a distance of 1482 feet to the back of the next coach which was derailed. This was IC 2817. The south end was in the siding, the north was derailed between the siding and the main track. It was still coupled to the next coach which was the IC 2857 and the south end of that car was derailed between the siding and the main line. The north end of that car was derailed but still coupled to the next coach which was still on the rail on the main track. In my opinion the derailment started with the read end of IC 2857.”

Next General Car foreman W. C. Williams, I.C.R.R. gave a rundown of the damages to each car:

“The 2857 was the north car derailed and sustained $8,000 damage. The major damage was underneath the equipment, the steam, water-raising system and electrical systems. Also slight damage to the sills. IC 2817, preliminary figures at $9,000. with damage similar to the 2857 but included some truck damage.”

“ACL coach $40,000. Extensive damage to the underneath equipment and interior damage to the ‘A’ end of the car. The floor was damaged by a rail going through it. IC #4002, a diner damaged $25,000. Underneath damaged and Interior damaged by mud and water on the right side. Extensive truck damage and eighth windows broken. Pullman Clover Chalet major damage to the under parts, total of about $20,000. Pullman Brigstock Tower estimated at $8,000. Major damage underneath.

The investigation concluded with the determination that a broken bridle rod on the switch had occurred under the passing train, allowing the switch points to gap open and the rear cars to split the switch. The Flagman, Mr. Whitt, was killed by flying debris in the diner and was found there later after the accident. He was the only fatality.\(\)
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(Jim Bennett collection)
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The next program of the Arkansas Railroad Club will be held on SUNDAY, APRIL 11 at Twin City Bank in North Little Rock. The program will be given by PETER SMYKLA. It will be on his various rail travels and activities. Refreshments will be served, as usual. Yes, we know it's Easter Sunday, but nobody apparently wanted to change the meeting date.

CORRECTION - The February 16th retirement party of TOM SHOOK, while well-attended, was NOT personally attended by Senator David Pryor, Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker or Congressman Ray Thornton. Instead, each of these sent letters to Tom via a representative.

ARKANSAS_RAILROAD

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APRIL 1993
CALENDAR PHOTOS WANTED - The Arkansas Railroad Club will have a 1994 club calendar for sale and we want YOUR photos in it! This will be a 12-photo (black & white) calendar, one for each month. We will pick the best 12 photos received to be included. Here are the rules:

1) Photos must be 3½" x 5" or 4" x 6" or 5" x 7" or 8" x 10", color or black & white (calendar will be printed in black & white, however)

2) Slides O.K., but we will have to have a print made of the slide before the half-tone can be made and would prefer that you have the print made from the slide yourself.

3) Photos/slides must be taken by yourself or a relative and we must have your permission to use the photo in the calendar. Photos must be taken in Arkansas.

4) Photos can be from any time, current or 50 years ago. Just be sure they're your photos or one taken by a relative (grandfather, etc.). Any railroad subject O.K., diesel or steam, depots, track, etc. Photos must have been taken in Arkansas.

5) BE SURE TO INCLUDE A CAPTION ON EACH PHOTO, including the date it was taken and location and subject. We will not use a photo that has no information on it.

6) Send all photos/slides to the ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB - PHOTOS, PO BOX 9151, NORTH LITTLE ROCK AR 72119-9151. Deadline will be August 15th. Material received will not be returned unless you request it. If you want it returned, remember that it will be September or October before you get it back.

HELP NEEDED - We will need help for our May 1st Show & Sale, including setting up tables, selling tickets, etc. If you can help, contact John Hodkin, Jr. at the address on the top of the previous page.

BUSH'S CAMPAIGN TRAIN rosters, by Jim Bennett, which I planned to put in this month's newsletter, will be run in the May issue instead. I have had a family emergency (my brother-in-law was/is in a hospital in Tifton, Georgia suffering kidney failure) and could not get to the April RAILROADER until March 23. Sometimes things just have to wait for circumstances beyond anyone's control.

ARGENTA DEPOT COMMITTEE FORMED - The Board of Directors decided at the March 14 meeting to form a committee to investigate whether or not we as a club can help preserve the old Argenta Depot of the Rock Island. This depot, belonging to the city of North Little Rock, is in decrepit shape, but is the only remaining railroad depot left in North Little Rock and should be preserved, if possible. We may look at getting grant money. Robin Thomas will be in charge of the committee.

NS WHISTLES - While in Tifton, Georgia recently to be with my sick brother-in-law, I heard numerous Norfolk Southern freight trains going through town. Their whistles sound to me like Amtrak's. Does anybody know why? I could have sworn the Eagle was coming through town several times a day.

NEW BOOK COMING - Member JAMES FAIR of Austin, Texas says to look for his new book L & A - The Better Way to come out sometime in the future. He is getting close to having it published and will shortly have copies out to potential publishers. He says it will be published, if he has to do it himself. (Tom Shook relayed his letter)
ARIZONA RAIL NEWS

BN BUILDING NEW $3 MILLION YARD - (Blytheville) - Burlington Northern is building a new $3 million rail car classification yard near Blytheville in northeast Arkansas. BN, which owns 400 miles of line in Arkansas, said it is building the yard after residents of Blytheville were upset over trains blocking city streets too long. Nucor steel mills ship thousands of tons of steel by rail from here, causing an increase in train activities. (Arkansas DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE, February 24 by Larry Young)

SSW 336 UPDATE - As of this writing, Cotton Belt's 336 steam engine was still sitting in a park in Lewisville, awaiting its move to the Arkansas Railroad Museum in Pine Bluff. Bill Bailey said at the March 14 meeting that the smokestack has to be taken off before it can be moved, a complicated feat. The 336 is a Mogul-type 2-6-0. A moving fund has been set up. Write to the Museum at PO Box 2044, Pine Bluff AR 71613.

COTTON BELT GROUP APPLIES TO NRHS - The Cotton Belt Rail Historical Society has applied to become a chapter in the National Railway Historical Society. It would be called the "Cotton Belt Chapter of NRHS."

OZARK MOUNTAIN RAILROAD - (Berryville) - Property owners have united to stop a proposed new railroad through the Ozarks, called the Ozark Mountain Railroad. The proposed line would link northwest Arkansas with Branson, Missouri, a tourist mecca, with 85 miles of new track. At a recent meeting in Berryville, it was learned that BassPro asked the ICC for a proposed spur that will link their Dogwood Canyon project in northern Carroll County and Missouri to the new railroad. It has also been said that BassPro has bought thousands of acres of land in the past 8 months in Carroll County along the proposed route. The organizer of the planned new road, a Mr. Stordahl, said the line would build fences along the entire 85 miles and construct overpasses at all road crossings. (Berryville STAR PROGRESS, January 25 sent in by Leon Enderlin)

GENERAL RAIL NEWS

CASS RAILFAN WEEKEND - BARTON JENNINGS (remember him??) writes to say that the Cass Railfan Weekend will be held May 21-23 this year. Cost is $65, which includes meals and 3 trips. Call 1-800-225-5982 (ask for Cass) for more information.

1522 EXCURSION - (St Louis) - The St Louis chapter will sponsor a trip between St Louis and Centralia, Illinois on both June 5 and 6, roundtrip. Cost is $79 coach, $159 first class. Write to the St Louis Chapter NRHS, 1135 Colonnade Center, Suite 321, Des Peres MO 63131.

DREAMING OF A WHITE SILVERTON - (Silverton, Colorado) - Folks in Silverton are used to having snow, but not as much as this year. Roads were closed for 5 days as of February 25. As of that date, Silverton had received 215 inches of snow. After getting one lane open south of town on Highway 550, the first vehicles to arrive were a beer truck and a propane truck. "We can drink and stay warm," said Don Bachman, an avalanche forecaster in Silverton. (Silverton Daily Sentinel, via Tom Shook)

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AMTRAK NEWS

PIONEER EXTENSION? - Rail Travel News reported that a movement is under way to extend Amtrak's Seattle-Denver's Pioneer from Denver to Dallas via Oklahoma City over the Santa Fe. (The Clearance Card)

DOMES TO THE NORTHEAST? - Amtrak may be considering assigning Auto Trains' heritage dome cars and other equipment to the Empire Builder as soon as Auto Train gets new Superliner equipment. This move could release other equipment for a revival of the North Coast Hiawatha between Chicago and Seattle via southern Montana. (The Clearance Card)

HIGHER SPEEDS - Amtrak and the nation's freight railroads announced in February an agreement that could lead to high-speed (100-150 mph) passenger service on certain freight mainlines. This represents a major change in attitude on the part of some roads, which had felt that high-speed trains would disrupt their freight service. Full costs of any changes would fall to Amtrak, as would any liability. (Cinders, March 1993)

ANOTHER HIGH SPEED TEST is in the offing, this time using Germany's InterCity Express on the Washington-New York corridor for three months beginning this fall. Equipment will arrive this June and will make a national tour of major cities. (NRHS News)

AMTRAK APPEAL DENIED - (Hartford, CT) - After Amtrak put off paying an employee damages a jury awarded her more than a year ago after she was attacked in an unguarded parking lot at the New Haven station, the 2nd U.S. Circuit Court in New York rejected Amtrak's appeal of the verdict, giving the woman $1.75 million. This was the case where deputy sheriffs confiscated two Amtrak engines in lieu of payment a few months ago. The engines have now been returned. Apparently, the deputy also collected $182,819.80 for his work in seizing the engines, since state law allows deputies to charge and keep an extra 10 percent when they seize money or property from the loser in a civil suit. (Hartford Courant, March 6, 1993 sent in by Leon Enderlin, who says the moral of this story is to be a deputy sheriff in the state of Connecticut.)

NEWS UPDATED through March 23. Deadline for May issue April 15.

The Arkansas Railroad Club is a non-profit organization that meets on the second Sunday of the month. This month we will meet on Sunday, APRIL 11 at the Twin City Bank Building on Main Street in North Little Rock. We are a chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. Programs are presented.

The ARKANSAS RAILROADER is the monthly publication of the Arkansas Railroad Club and is generally mailed in time to be received before the monthly meetings. In order to receive this publication, you must be a member of the Club. Current dues are $15/year for Arkansas residents and also $15/year for out-of-state. The RAILROADER is mailed to all members automatically. Family memberships are $20, but only one newsletter sent.

If you would like to join, send your check made out to the "Arkansas Railroad Club" to: ATTN:Treasurer, ARKANSAS RAILROAD CLUB, P.O. Box 9151, North Little Rock AR 72119. You may also join the National Railway Historical Society through our Club by paying $14/year more.

Editor of the ARKANSAS RAILROADER is Ken Zangemein. Everything having to do with the ARKANSAS RAILROADER should be sent to the address below, ATTN:Editor. Please let me know if your address changes, as NEWSLETTERS CANNOT BE FORWARDED.

Arkansas Railroad Club mail should also be sent to the address below.

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ARKANSAS RAILROADER - 12 - APRIL 1993