



ARKANSAS RAILROADER



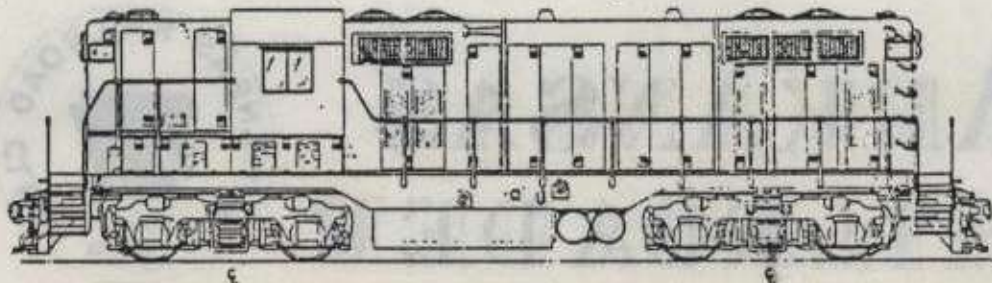
LITTLE ROCK CHAPTER
NATIONAL RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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In a Christmas dream setting, a Missouri Pacific Jet charges up Iron Mountain Hill in the late 1940's. It's nose splashed with the white stuff, the A & B set leads a string of refrigerator cars. (Collection of John Martin).



GENERAL NEWS

EVER CHANGING LITTLE ROCK - The new Little Rock Western connection, consisting of MoP/UP's upgrading of what was the Vinegar Spur, is now completed and went into service the week of November 6, 1984, upon completion of a new bridge spanning the bayou near Union Station. This allowed the removal of the two crossings of the old Rock Island main track at HH Tower, Monday and Tuesday, the 5th and 6th of November. Yet another bit of the old Rock Island is gone...

ALSO GONE - If you haven't visited old Biddle Yards recently you're in for a big surprise... not much is left...The old oil house and storeroom are now demolished and all the rail that comprised the old rip track area is gone...in preparation for the moving of MoPac railweld and panel yard facilities there at Biddle.

SOUNDS OF THE PAST - If you keep hearing the Locust Street Operator calling a "Switch Tender", you haven't been transported into the Twilight Zone...a new position, although temporary, has been placed in service to throw a total of four switches in the old Bottleneck area. In the re-arrangement of the Bottleneck, all leads and the Central Division Mail Track are attached to the West Main Track under Main Street in North Little Rock, pending the installation of new switch machines, to be controlled by the new board at NS Tower. The Switch Tender lines all movements to and from the Central Division.

NEW CAMERAS GO UP - If you've been seeing new shanties springing up around the North Little Rock Yards, it's to save a mudhop from having to fulfill his nickname. New TV cameras will allow clerks high and dry to perform a visual inspection and check of car numbers on all inbound trains from all directions. Ain't that fancy!

STORAGE AT PINE BLUFF - A check of the Cotton Belt's Gravity Yard at Pine Bluff revealed the following locomotives awaiting disposition 11/16/84 - a total of 27 locomotives:

8603	U33C	5003	GP-30	8751	U33C
8604	U33C	8972	SD45	8745	U33C
8678	U33C	8609	U33C	2892	GP-9
5010	GP-30	2255	SW1200	1321	SW1200
2252	SW1200	1311	SW1200	1307	SW1200
2258	SW1200	5012	GP-30	5004	GP-30
3871	GP-9	5013	GP-30	3648	GP-9
2518	SW1500	6509	GP-40	8699	U33C
4116	GP-20	3762	GP-9	4109	GP-20 (fresh paint)

HERO - The real-life hero locomotive engineer of the Cotton Belt who saved the lives of four youngsters playing on a trestle from an oncoming train in May of 1984 was honored recently as "Employee of the Month" and "Employee of the Quarter" by the Individual Performance Awards Committee of the Cotton Belt. The engineer's name was Jerry Ashcraft. Don Craig is chairman of the Awards Committee and Buddy Gaines is the secretary. Engineer Ashcraft was also honored by letter from President Reagan.

BIRTHDAY WISHES - Retired Cotton Belt President Harold McKenzie was surprised recently on his 80th birthday by 200 well-wishers near Tyler, Texas. The October 11th surprise occurred on a rainy, dreary day, but still the crowds came. Mr. McKenzie retired in 1969.

ABANDONMENT - The Missouri Pacific's former line from El Dorado, Arkansas to Natchez, Miss. through Bastrop, Rayville and Winnsboro has been abandoned from Felsenthal to just north of Bastrop and from Collinston to Clayton Jct. Other parts of the line are up for abandonment. (SE TEXAS CHAPTER)

RAIL SPIKE PLANT - A factory employing 42 people in making railroad spikes is to be built on a site in the Pine Bluff, Arkansas Jefferson Industrial Park, according to an official there. (THE DISPATCHER).

NO LONGER INTERESTED - The Missouri-Kansas-Texas (MKT - KATY) Railroad is no longer interested in obtaining the abandoned Rock Island trackage from McAlester, Oklahoma to Memphis, Tennessee, according to Bill Pollard, who was called by the Arkansas Governor's office November 13th. Gov. Clinton called the President of the Katy back to ask if any type of financial incentives would change their mind, but their President stated that "internal financial difficulties" made further consideration of the purchase impossible. The MKT did say, however, that if someone else would purchase the line, they would be happy to operate it.

Any other possibilities? According to Dr. Pollard, everything looks pretty bleak at this time. He tried contacting several interested parties, such as Chamber of Commerce groups. It seems it would be a very uphill battle to get state funds at this time, although the 2.5 to 3 million purchase price would hardly make a dent in the projected Arkansas state surplus. (See related story on the "ROCK" elsewhere).



PART HISTORY OF THE SUNBELT ROUTE

(from the Rock Island Lines NEWS DIGEST, Oct., 1952 -
loaned to your editor by L. T. Walker)

"In 1894, the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad Company took over the Choctaw Coal and Railway Company and immediately launched a large scale expansion program. The owners of the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad Company were prominent and experienced businessmen of Philadelphia, PA, and had control of ample capital. The gap in the line between McAlester and Oklahoma City was closed in October, 1895. The El Reno to Weatherford extension was completed in 1898.

The builders of the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad had now become acquainted with the country and were greatly impressed with its future possibilities. They decided to buy the Little Rock and Memphis Railroad.

The Memphis and Little Rock Railroad Company was organized by Special Act of the Arkansas General Assembly, approved January 11, 1853. The new road was strongly backed by Memphis businessmen and the city itself issued \$350,000 of its bonds to assist the new enterprise.

The entire line was surveyed and plans were laid to begin construction by the end of 1854. By 1858 the line was completed to Madison, Arkansas, about 45 miles west of Memphis. The next 40 miles to DeVall's Bluff, including the great bridge across the White River, were not completed until 1871 due to the difficulties and cost of construction. However, soon after 1858, through service to Little Rock was provided to Madison, stagecoach to Clarendon, riverboat to DeVall's Bluff and stagecoach or railroad to Little Rock. Shortly after 1858 the railroad was completed between DeVall's Bluff and Little Rock. After the war all unfinished gaps were completed, the new bridge built across the White River, and the entire line put in good condition under the leadership of General Robert C. Brinkley of Memphis, its President. In 1871, through rail service was placed in effect between Memphis and Little Rock.

In 1898, the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf decided to buy the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad, then known as the Little Rock and Memphis Railroad. Accordingly, they incorporated Choctaw and Memphis Railroad in Arkansas, to acquire the property of the Little Rock and Memphis Railroad, and construct a railroad from Little Rock to the Arkansas-Indian Territory boundary line.

The Choctaw completed the Little Rock-Indian Territory line, 151 miles long, including the bridge across the Arkansas River, between late 1898 and early 1900. The Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf then extended its Oklahoma lines to connect with the Little Rock line.

In June 1900, Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf took over the Choctaw and Memphis Railroad. By the end of 1900, Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf had a straight through main line under one management from Memphis, Tennessee to Weatherford, Oklahoma, 563 miles in length.

Weatherford to Elk City mileage was completed by Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf in October 1901.

Elk City to Oklahoma-Texas State Line was built in 1901-1902 by Western Oklahoma Railroad Company, a Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf subsidiary. This line was practically completed by May 1, 1902.

The Oklahoma-Texas State Line to Yarnall, Texas (about 17 miles east of Amarillo) mileage was built by Choctaw, Oklahoma and Texas Railroad Company, a Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf subsidiary, during 1901 and 1902. The line to and including Yarnall was officially opened July 6, 1902. Choctaw, Oklahoma and Texas Railroad was sold to Chicago, Rock Island and Gulf Railway Company, September 25, 1903.

By agreement of May 1, 1902, providing for purchase of all the capital stock of Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf Railroad; agreement of March 24, 1904, whereby the Choctaw leased all of its railroad mileage to the Rock Island for operation, reserving coal lands and Land Grant Lands in Arkansas; and agreement of April 1, 1904, covering all other investments of the Choctaw in other Companies, the Choctaw, Oklahoma and Gulf and practically all of its property became the property of the Rock Island System, subject only to the making of the payments required by the contracts.

In July, 1902, the Choctaw completed their line to Yarnall, Texas, 17 miles east of Amarillo, and entered the latter city over trackage rights. When the Rock Island acquired control of the Choctaw, they built their own line and entered Amarillo over their own rails in November, 1903.

Construction of the Amarillo-Tucumcari mileage, 113 miles in length, was begun in 1903 and completed May 9, 1910, thereby establishing a new through route via Memphis, Amarillo and Tucumcari to the Pacific Coast."

As you know from reading the article about the MKT Railroad no longer being interested in getting the Sunbelt Track through Arkansas, this historic line may be about to become a part of railroad lore. Memories never die.

THE CAIRO AND FULTON SILVER MINES

by Leonard Sherman

In the spring of 1909, Little Rock's then new Union Depot stood nearly complete, but mostly unusable because the tracks under the planned elevated "midway" were not in place. Before the tracks could be laid, five to six feet of fill was required to bring the ground up to match the design level for the new platforms. Unfortunately, the old freight house was still in use at the lower level, close to and facing the new building, preventing progress on filling and track construction. How to move railroad business to the new depot without access to tracks presented a dilemma and delayed the work until summer. In spite of the problem, sanity prevailed and by early August the trackwork had begun.

The fill job turned out to be bigger than anybody really thought: nearly a million cubic yards--all hauled by wagons and mules. During preparations for the fill, a deep hole was found not far from the freight house. Workers estimated it was about 150 feet to the bottom, though mostly filled with water. Remnants of rotted timber bespoke a mine shaft rather than a well. When asked, longtime residents said they had heard of several old shafts on railroad property, and that they were dug in search of silver ore before the Cairo and Fulton came through in the early 1870's.

Although silver has been storied, rumored and promoted in central Arkansas beyond memory, the first actual discovery should be credited to one Benjamin Kellogg, sometime in the late 1830's. Other genuine discoveries of silver bearing lead ores came in 1840 and 1842 in Sevier County and in 1871-73 in Hot Spring, Garland and Montgomery counties. Kellogg's mine was brought to production and abandoned several times, beginning in 1848 and until about 1890. Each decade brought a new set of eager investors, long on cash and short on experience. Each time the mine was newly developed, the efforts were well publicized, and generated a flurry of prospecting and promotion in the local area, sometimes statewide. Spurts of activity at the other mines had a similar effect. During these times, silver and gold bonanzas were reported widely and sometimes wildly, but most were without any basis. Some reports came from strange places: Camden, near Clinton, west of Grandglaise, in Desha county, even at Napoleon!

It was during one of those flurries of interest that the mine shaft rediscovered in 1909 was originally dug. The following quotes are from the Arkansas Gazette of 1873:

March 29: "The discovery of the vein of silver on the lands adjoining the Cairo and Fulton railroad...is creating considerable excitement." "Yesterday about six hundred pounds of ore was taken out, containing quantities of gold, silver and lead. Numbers of citizens were there, and interesting developments are expected."

April 2: "The silver mine excitement still continues. The mine is situated on the grounds now being prepared for the erection of the Cairo and Fulton railroad buildings, and men are working it under charge of that company. A considerable amount of ore has already been excavated. The mine is...on railroad ground, very near the road-bed. Every day large numbers of spectators visit the grounds, and speculation is rife as to whether a vein will be reached so that it will pay to work the mine. One man predicts that in less than two years, all the streets on the bluff will be a first-class mining field."

Well, that just didn't happen, but in 1877, from late June until mid-August, "Col." Anson C. Tichenor sank a shaft near the depot. He obtained a lease on Block 341 of the City of Little Rock, adjoining the Cairo and Fulton Depot property, with option to buy it for \$6000. Tichenor's bonanza, if such there was, quickly ran out, because there were no further reports after Aug. 15, and no purchase was ever recorded. Late the following year, Tichenor was exposed in a million-dollar fraud involving gold on Granite Mountain.

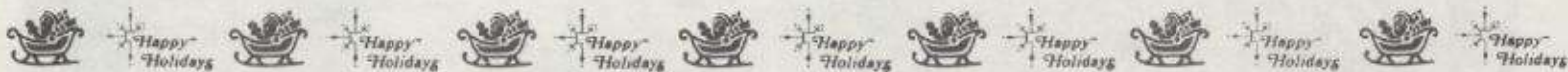
It seems probable that the shaft uncovered in 1909 was the one reported in the spring of 1873, not Tichenor's, and not "before the Cairo and Fulton came through".

After visiting, in 1819, a reputed silver prospect near what is now the abandoned Big Rock quarry at the end of River Road, The botanist, Thomas Nuttall wrote:

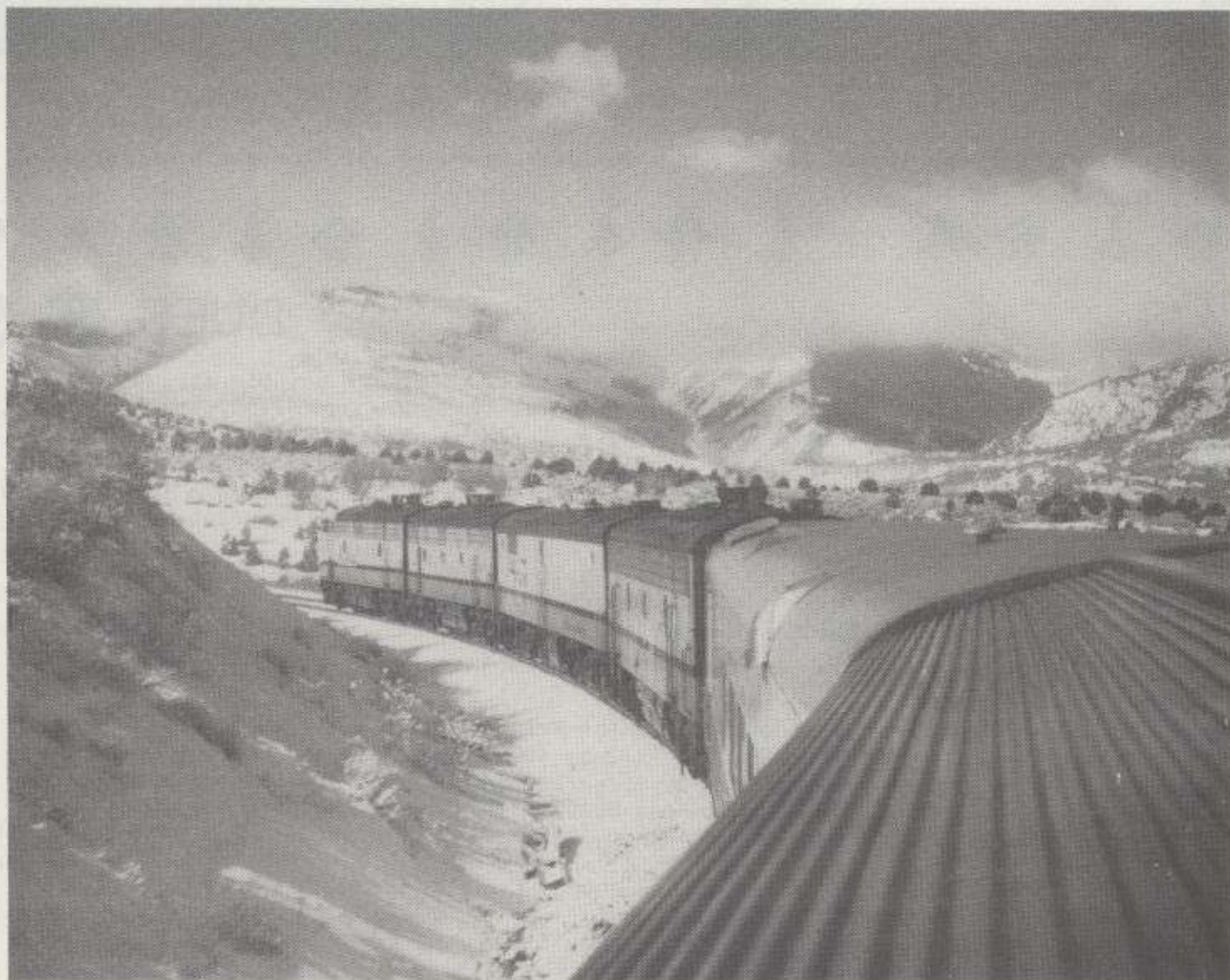
"Upon the whole, I am inclined to believe that some imposition has been practised on the ignorance and credulity or those who were enticed into this undertaking."

"Ever since the time of De Soto, reports concerning the discovery of precious metals in this territory have been cherished; we see them marked upon maps, and although the places are easily discoverable, the gold and silver they were said to afford has entirely vanished like a fairy dream."**

- END -



PASSENGER TRAIN OF THE MONTH



The famous "Rio Grande Zephyr" rounds a wintry curve near Soldier Summit, Utah on March 30, 1976. It was being pulled by D&RGW locomotive #5771 (an F9A). (Photo by Mike Condren - this photo was the second place winner in the Arkansas Railroad Club's slide contest in 1980).





Collection of Sam Ryker

"SILENT NIGHT, HOLY NIGHT..." - A Happy Holiday season to all from the staff of the ARKANSAS RAILROADER.



Now that we have you're attention. it's time for **DUES \$ \$**

Annual dues for the Arkansas Railroad Club are payable at any time for 1985...they are \$10/year for Arkansas residents and \$7.50/year out of state. Make checks payable to the "Arkansas Railroad Club" and send them to Treasurer Dick Byrd, 12 Flintwood Dr., Little Rock, AR 72207. You may also join the club at this same address. Dues for membership in the National Railway Historical Society can also be paid through our club, simply add \$9 to the total.

Newsletter editor is Ken Ziegenbein, 905 Valerie Drive, North Little Rock, AR 72118. Any articles or news should be sent to me. Also let me know of any changes in your address. Assistant editor is John Martin.

CHRISTMAS PARTY for the Arkansas Railroad Club will be held Friday night, December 7 at the Coachman's Inn, just off I-30, 6th St exit, in Little Rock, Time is 7PM. Cost is \$9/person and includes a good meal. Contact Dick Byrd (225-7354) or Ross Holt (535-2274, Pine Bluff) if you still haven't made your reservations. **THERE WILL BE A SPECIAL SURPRISE FOR ALL!!**

If you can, please send in your \$9 (check made out to "Arkansas Railroad Club") to Dick at 12 Flintwood Dr., Little Rock, AR 72207.

8444 UPDATE - Randy Tardy, who interviewed the Director of Operations Projects and Services of the Union Pacific recently (Lowell Turner) said that U.P.'s steamer 8444 will not return back home through Arkansas but will instead go the following route: New Orleans (World's Fair)-Baton Rouge-Houston-Palestine-Longview-Dallas-Ft. Worth-Denton-Coffeyville, KS-Kansas City-Omaha. The closest we could view this fine locomotive again would be in Longview. According to Mr. Turner, the date of return was still uncertain as of November 19 but probably won't be for another couple of months.

MR. HILLE NOT TO BLAME!!! - When MoPac Train #67/63 became crippled on its run from Little Rock on December 2, 1966 (November RAILROADER) on its way south, Mr. Hille plainly remembers that he was in Poplar Bluff, Missouri at the time and had nothing to do with the mishap near Gurdon. (Some people have all the luck!)