

GREAT PLAINS DISPATCH

The Official Newsletter of the Great Plains Transportation Museum
and the Wichita Chapter National Railway Historical Society

March 2010

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LOOKING BACK

By Michael M. Bartels



30 YEARS AGO

The bankrupt Rock Island shut down for liquidation on March 31, 1980. It had been operated by the Kansas City Terminal Railway under an Interstate Commerce Commission Directed Service Order since September 1979. Now railroads could ask to operate individual segments pending sale of the property. Southern Pacific's St. Louis Southwestern subsidiary began operation of the Golden State Route March 24, 1980.

50 YEARS AGO

Missouri Pacific trains Nos. 221 and 231 between Pleasant Hill, Mo., and Newport, Ark., over the scenic White River Division, made their last runs March 21, 1960. Nos. 125 and 126 between Kansas City and Little Rock, Ark., via Coffeyville, Kan., made their last runs March 29, 1960. ("Route of the Eagles," by Greg Stout)

70 YEARS AGO

Delinquent Arkansas Valley Interurban taxes for 1938 of \$4,094.65 were paid to the

county March 30, 1940, following notification the ICC had approved its proposed reorganization. (Wichita Eagle, March 31, 1940)

80 YEARS AGO

A Frisco freight crew was credited with saving Stewart Lightle, 11, of Neal, Kan. He suffered a ruptured appendix Jan. 22, 1930, and was being driven to a hospital in Chanute but got only to Fredonia due to deep snow and sleet. The crew learned of his plight while switching there and rushed him to a hospital in Neodesha in the caboose behind engine No. 518. (Frisco Employee's Magazine, March 1930)

A new AVI schedule March 16th reduces the two hours between Wichita and Hutchinson 10 minutes westbound and 15 minutes eastbound. Beginning March 11th, AVI stations will sell tickets over Transcontinental Air Transport's coast-to-coast route and Wichita's TAT office will sell AVI tickets. (Wichita Eagle, March 8, 11, 1930)

A motorman was held up

March 9, 1930, as he brought his car to a stop at the Orient loop. (Wichita Eagle, March 10, 1930)

The March 19, 1930, Wichita Eagle had reminiscences of an early Santa Fe clerk about heavy wheat shipments in July 1878. He said the single passenger train arrived at 8 p.m. and delivered its passengers to the ornate Root omnibus. It left for the north at 5 a.m.

90 YEARS AGO

Wichita has seen the last of Wonderland Park. The 24 acres of Ackerman's Island on which it is located were leased Feb. 28, 1920, for 99 years to the Interurban Improvement Co. AVI intends to build its shops, barns and storage tracks on the northern end of the island. To do this, a bridge will be built across the dry channel of the Arkansas on the west side. Most park buildings will be torn down and material used to build a modern car shop and barns. The large building near the park entrance at Second Street will not be torn down but a track will be constructed into it and it will

be used for storage. The new lease will not interfere with the lease on the baseball park at the south part of the island, which runs two years yet and will probably be renewed. AVI hoped to begin work on its new depots by March 20th. (Wichita Beacon, March 1, 1920; Wichita Eagle, March 3, 5, 1920)

The backing up of streetcars on South Main while pavement is being completed will be improved by rewiring three cars so the motorman can operate them from either end. It was thought dangerous to manage the car from the rear end. (Wichita Eagle, March 5, 1920)

The offices of the Kansas City, Mexico & Orient that were moved from San Angelo, Texas, to Wichita more than a year ago and are located at 223 N. Market will be moved back to San Angelo. Mr. A. DeBernardi, general manager, will remain in Wichita. It also hopes to begin construction of a 164-mile extension from San Angelo to Del Rio, Texas, on the Mexican border. (Wichita Beacon, March 13, 1920)



**THE MISSION OF
THE GREAT PLAINS
TRANSPORTATION
MUSEUM**

To be *THE* Railroad Museum
Of Kansas.

Dedicated to record and exhibit the importance of railroad transportation in the human, agricultural, commercial and industrial heritage of Wichita, Kansas and the Great Plains.

To showcase that heritage with an "Action Display" of rail equipment operation. Giving visitors an exciting learning experience through motion, set in an unique, historic and scenic urban location.

To enhance the action display with significant and appropriate railroad locomotives, rolling stock, equipment and structures; through interpretive displays, dioramas, exhibits and media; and educational and community programs.



The GREAT PLAINS DISPATCHER is the official monthly newsletter of the Wichita Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, Inc. and the Great Plains Transportation Museum, Inc. Members receive the DISPATCHER as part of their membership. All material submitted for publication should be submitted by the 25th of the month for publication in the next months DISPATCHER. Submissions may be sent to the editor at: editor@gptm.us, 316-744-7259 or 700 E. Douglas, Wichita, KS 67202-3506

**MARCH
NRHS MEETING**

The March NRHS meeting will be D&SNG Winter Trains and on the C&TS, presented by Jim McKeel.

The meeting will be held Fri., March 19, at the *Great Plains Transportation Museum*, 700 E. Douglas, Wichita. Meeting time is 7:30 pm.

**FUTURE NRHS
PROGRAMS**

April - - Topeka Chapter exchange program. The History of the Railroads of Doniphan County, KS. By Robert Chitwood

May - - Depots, Bay Windows, and Cupolas by J. H. Koehn

June - - Annual Picnic

July - - Annual platform meeting; Location TBA.

September - - Annual banquet

October - - Kansas City Chapter exchange program.

November - - Lee Swanson will present the program with an Ohio setting.

December - - The traditional slide-free-for all again.

OTHER EVENTS

Mar. 27 – Joplin Museum Complex Model Railroad Show, Schifferdecker Park, 9:00-3:00. Information: Rick Gardner, rickgardner@sofnet.com

Apr. 17 – Ozark Model Railroad Association, Springfield Catholic High School. Information: Ron Williams, 417-883-5350

Apr. 17-18 - Cowley County Railroad Heritage Days. Paris Park, Arkansas City. Events include Family Fun Days, Railroader's Reunion and Train Show. 620-442-6750

Apr. 23-25 - KRHS Convention, Sedalia, MO. www.katyrailroad.org

May 28-30 - Katy Days Festival, Forest Park, Parsons. www.katydays.com

Apr. 24-25 – Western Heritage Division Train Show, Burke High, Omaha, Sat. 9:00-5:00, Sun. 10:00-4:00. blundquist@cox.net, whdnmra.info

June 4-6, 11-13 - Thomas the Tank Engine, Midland Railway, Baldwin City, KS. www.midland-ry.org

June 22-26 - NRHS Convention, Scranton, PA
www.endlessmountainrails.com

July 21-25 - SFRH&MS Convention, Denver, CO. www.atsfr.com

July 28-31 - UPHS Convention, Boise, ID. www.uphs.org

Oct. 16-17 – Two Depot Train Show, Kingman Co. Activity Center, Sat. 9:00-5:00, Sun. noon-4:00. Displays also at Santa Fe Depot and MoPac Depot. sfdepot@sbcglobal.net or 620-532-2142

**MOPAC ROUNDHOUSE
FIRE**

By Sam Andrews

This fire took place 50 years this past January. From a historical standpoint, the blaze was one of the biggest in Wichita history and one of the most talked about railroad events in city history that some still talk about to this day.

About 9:PM on January 25, 1960, a roundhouse employee discovered a fire inside the Missouri Pacific shop building at the 25th street yard. Major structure damage took place in addition to three locomotives, two cabooses and a wreck crane also were damaged. The blaze took over three hours to put under control with over \$1,000,000 of damage. No one sustained injuries and firemen from Wichita, Sedgwick County and Boeing were called to the scene.

RAILROADING IN WICHITA**MARCH 1910**

By Fred Tefft

March 1

The pilot of Rock Island engine No. 1436 pulling a southbound freight train was torn off at the Douglas avenue crossing yesterday when it struck an elevated crossing frog. Pieces of wood from the pilot were hurled in all directions.

Further discussion of possible Orient shops street car lines. West Side residents now suggest line south on Osage from Douglas, thence west on Dayton to Martinson, thence south to McCormick.

Superintendent Morrison promises double street car tracks on South Main as far as Bayley in time for the opening of the baseball season provided the paving company makes the necessary excavation. The steel has been ordered several weeks ago and is to be shipped not later than the middle of the month. With a double track to Bayley and several switches between that point and the baseball park, the company will be able to handle the crowds without difficulty.

March 2

It is reported that the street car company will double track its South Main line to Bayley street, twelve blocks south of Douglas. Steel has been ordered and is expected to arrive late in March. The object is to improve handling of the crowds to the ball park. Several additional switches will be put in between Bayley street and the ball park.

March 3

The Wichita Street Railway company will finish the track construction on West Douglas from Seneca to Elizabeth today. The construction gang will then move to Waco avenue, where they will lay the new track from 9th to 13th. A large shipment of rails to be

used in construction of fourteen miles of tracks this year will leave the mill on March 15. These are heavier and more modern than the old ones.

March 4

Contract let in Hutchinson yesterday for construction of the Wichita, Kinsley, Scott City and Denver Air Line Railway. Grading is to begin May 1 at Turon and will proceed east towards Wichita and west toward Kinsley.

March 5

Article reports on banquet meeting last night to start campaign to raise \$200,000 in Wichita for the Arkansas Valley Interurban railway. \$50,000 was subscribed in a few minutes. Mr. O. A. Boyle reported that right-of-way, poles, and rails have already been contracted for for [sic] the stretch from Wichita to Sedgwick. The contract for building the line to Sedgwick is for \$20,000 per mile, which is remarkably low because of level terrain and low grades.

The new Santa Fe freight depot, to cost about \$100,000, is under construction and will be completed about May 1. The offices will be in a two story brick building at southeast corner of William and Tremont, with the sheds and docks adjoining this on the south, 450 feet long. Surveyors have placed the grade and center stakes for the seven permanent tracks to the depot, starting from a lead to the south near Kellogg street. Four new house tracks will be laid on the east side of the depot and three tracks on the west side. Of the latter, one will be the automobile track and the other two team tracks. The depot and tracks will have the capacity to handle 60 cars of merchandise daily. The alley east of the depot, the space between the tracks, and Tremont street will be paved with brick from William south to Kellogg.

March 8

Work of grading the line of the Arkansas Valley Interurban Railroad was

commenced yesterday morning. Photograph. The grading camp is situated about six miles north of Wichita. Several hundred yards of grade was finished yesterday.

March 10

The Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railway repair shops at Fairview, Oklahoma were badly damaged by fire last night. The brick round house was saved.

Cars for the Arkansas Valley Interurban Railway company are to be ordered this week. O. A. Boyle, president, left for St. Louis today. Work on the grading was started last Monday. The grading camp is located about five miles north of Wichita.

March 13

The Santa Fe Railroad will relay several lines in Kansas this summer with new 90 pound steel. This includes the line from Newton to Arkansas City. The track through Wichita will also be ballasted to a depth of about twelve inches.

March 16

Wichita Railroad and Light company workmen are running a switch from the Missouri Pacific tracks on Wichita street across Waco avenue to the property of the street car company for use in unloading the new steel being received by the street car company. Eighteen cars of steel are in transit and ten more will be sent soon, for a total of 750 tons.

March 17

The Kansas City, Mexico and Orient Railroad will widen its grade from Wichita to Altus, Oklahoma, 260 miles, from the present fifteen feet by two feet. Portions of the track will also be ballasted. The widening of the grade began yesterday near the site of the new shops in West Wichita and will take about a year to complete.

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March 18

Ground will be broken today on the long stretch of paving on South Main from Lewis to Bailey (sic). Most of the steel for double tracking of the car line over this distance has arrived.

March 19

Street car accident yesterday at 3rd and Topeka killed a man. He got off car No. 209 going south and failed to see car No. 204 coming from the south and walked in front of it.

March 20

The Missouri Pacific railway has started the work of ballasting its Kansas lines, using cinders from the smelters around Iola. Gangs are now working the line from Eldorado to Wichita, 27 miles, and then will commence work on the branch from Kiowa to Wichita, 86 miles.

March 22

Work is to start this week on the double street car tracks on South Main. Superintendent Morrison received word today from the Santa Fe that eight carloads of steel to be used in these tracks will arrive tomorrow. The double tracks will extend from Lewis street to Bayley street and are expected to be ready for the opening of the baseball season. Track layers have been engaged today in putting in a switch on North Waco avenue at 13th street.

March 29

Wichita's galaxy of sand pumps is to have an addition. W. H. Fitch will install one near the Rock Island Railroad bridge across the Arkansas river in South Wichita. The Rock Island will build an 800 foot spur from the railway to the sand pump. Most of this sand will be used for building purposes and shipped to points south of Wichita. One of the most important industries of Wichita is the sand business. About 400 cars of sand are shipped out of Wichita each month by the railways. Sand pumps are now maintained in the city by the Jackson-Walker Coal and Material company, the Orient Sand and Cement company, the Schwartz Lumber and Coal company, and J. H. Turner. All of the pumps are snowed under with orders.

March 30

Grade work for the Arkansas Valley Interurban is progressing rapidly. On the line from Wichita to Sedgwick it has almost been completed to Valley Center. The first shipment of ties is expected to arrive tomorrow. The rails have been contracted for and will soon be here. The company has secured right-of-way through Sedgwick on the first street west of the Santa Fe tracks.

March 31

About four miles of the Arkansas Valley Interurban have been graded from Valley Center toward Wichita. Right-of-way men are obtaining right of way

for the line south from Wichita through Belle Plaine, Oxford, Wellington, Arkansas City, and Gouda [sic] Springs.

Dr. Edward N. Tihen's Notes from Wichita Newspapers, Special Collections and University Archives, Wichita State University Libraries

FLINT HILLS EXPRESS

Saturday, April 24, 2010

The South Kansas & Oklahoma Railroad and the Heart of the Heartlands Corporation will be hosting the Flint Hills Express on Saturday, April 24, 2010. This train ride will run from Winfield, KS east into the scenic Flint Hills on the SK&O's Moline Subdivision (former Santa Fe lines) to near Moline, KS and then return to Winfield.

Boarding area is on East 5th Avenue just east of Main St. (US 77 / K 15) at the north edge of downtown Winfield. Please be on board no later than 12:50 PM, departure from Winfield promptly at 1:00 PM. Arrive back in Winfield at approx. 5:00 PM

Fare per person - \$25.00, cash or check only, Children 4 years of age or younger ride free. Checks should be made out to "Heart of the Heartlands". Tickets are non-refundable. Seating is limited to 210 passengers. No food or drink can be brought on the train. Bottled water will be available for purchase. The historic passenger cars are not handicapped accessible. There are limited restroom facilities available on the train. Not responsible for changes of equipment, route, schedule, or cancellation (if necessary).

Tickets can be purchased at: Engine House Hobbies, 2718 Boulevard Plaza, Wichita, KS, 67211, (316) 685-6608. Heart of the Heartlands Website: <http://www.heartlandstrainclub.org>



UP 951 leads a special from Council Bluffs to Oklahoma City on March 8. Delays and rain made photography poor in the Wichita area. Photo at Peabody, KS by Lynn Al-drich

DERAILMENT AT TEHACHAPI LOOP

By Jayhawk

BNSF suffered a major service interruption while on the UP at Walong, CA on the evening of February 20th. Train M-BARSTO1-20 (Manifest train from Barstow to Stockton, CA suffered a derailment while passing through the tunnel under the Tehachapi Loop. The train derailed the rear cars at approximately 14 cars ahead of the DP unit, BNSF 7740. The train had four engines on the head end, all BNSF ES44DCs, the 7720, 7718, 7750, & 7738 with 64 cars and the one DP unit on the rear of the train. The total soup on this train was 38 loads and 26 empties weighing 5869 tons and it was only 4147 feet long. The derailment of the train caused a tank car load of denatured alcohol to catch fire and burn out of control. The tank car also managed to catch two other cars on fire, a load of corn meal and a load of plastic pellets ahead of the tank car that was on fire. The fire had to burn itself out before workers could get in and remove the derailed

cars since the fire department could not get in to the tunnel and put the fire out.

The crew ended up cutting the head 49 cars off and going on to Bakersfield with that portion of the train leaving the rear of the train at the tunnel and on fire. Initial reports were that the train had a problem with the DP unit. Apparently the head four engines had gone to idle while the DP unit did not respond and was still shoving hard on the rear of the train. It apparently derailed just in front of the loads on the rear at the first few empty cars in the train. About 7 cars derailed most of them inside the tunnel and just outside of it on the uphill side as the train started into the loop. However, another source says that the cause was a mud hole under the track inside the tunnel. No formal reason has been released at this time.

BNSF was unable to detour many trains due to this derailment. The UP detoured several trains via the former SP coast line but did not allow BNSF to detour any. BNSF held most of the

trains until they could use the line via Tehachapi again. BNSF ran some of the hot UPS traffic to Los Angeles and San Bernardino where it was trucked up the coast to Richmond and North Bay. Some of the eastbound UPS loads were also drayed to Southern California and ran east via rail. There were several UPS failures due to this derailment. BNSF had westbound traffic backed up to Gallup, NM destined for Northern California. The H-EVEBAR1-20 did detour via Laurel, MT; Casper, WY, Denver, CO and Amarillo, TX before it went west to Barstow.

Work crews were able to open the tunnel and get traffic moving again in about 48 hours. This was an amazing feat since the track in the tunnel had to be rebuilt. It was re-laid with track panels allowing traffic to begin moving again in a relatively short time compared to how bad it could have been. In addition to the track, the destroyed tank cars and hopper cars also had to be pulled out of the tunnel and cleared from the area.



The south portal of Tehachapi tunnel on Feb. 22, the morning of the second day after the initial call. The cars have been removed from the tunnel and the fire is under control. Soon the railroad will begin clean-up and replace the track inside the tunnel

Photo courtesy the Kern County Fire Department.

March 2010

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2 Evening Work Session	3	4	5	6 Museum Open Work Day
7	8	9 Evening Work Session	10	11	12	13 Museum Open Work Day
14 Daylight Saving Time Start	15	16 Evening Work Session	17	18	19 NRHS Meeting	20 Museum Open Work Day
21	22	23 Evening Work Session	24	25	26	27 Museum Open Work Day
28	29	30 Evening Work Session	31			

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