



THE Lantern

April 2008

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Meeting Entrance

April 15th Meeting: at the OLD Tallahassee Antique Car Museum

The OLD Tallahassee Antique Car Museum is located on Mahan Drive just east of the intersection of Capital Circle and Mahan Drive. The meeting will begin with a catered dinner at 6:45 and continue with a regular meeting at 7:30.

Menu: Spaghetti, green beans, salad, bread, and a drink and desert, all for \$6.50 per person.

We need as good a body count as possible, so please RSVP to me (John Sullenberger) by Monday, March 14th: I can be reached by telephone at (850) 562-5137 (h) or (850) 544-1870 (c) or via e-mail at sullyjws@aol.com.

HO Division Meeting: Sam has requested an HO Division meeting at 7 pm on Tuesday, April 15th.

ED OLSON

Ed Olson passed away Wednesday, April 9th at 12:50 am. The Olson family will greet friends from 2 to 4 pm Saturday, April 12th at Abby-Riposta Funeral Home, 4037 North Monroe Street. The funeral service will be at 4 pm, followed by burial at the cemetery next door. In lieu of flowers, Ed requests donations to the Big Bend Hospice of Tallahassee.

I got to see him yesterday at Hospice House. Some of you may have gone out as well in the last couple of days and he obviously was weakening. I know a lot of club members did visit Ed over the last couple of weeks when he was in a better condition, either at Tallahassee Memorial or Hospice. He was very appreciative.

Minutes of March 2008 BBMRA Membership Meeting

The March 18, 2008 Membership Meeting was called to order by Vice President John Sullenberger at 7:50 p.m. in the Banquet Room of the old Antique Car Museum. Forty-four members and guests were present.

Minutes: Minutes of the February 2008 meeting, as published in The Lantern, were accepted.

Treasurer's Report: Bill Boyle reported a balance of \$2,724.00 in the checking account as of this date. There are some members who still have not paid their dues. No pays will be dropped on April 1, 2008. Dan King suggested these people be contacted. John Sullenberger has already attempted contacting these people.

Division Reports:

Small Scale: Garth Easton reported there would be a work party Saturday at 10:00 at the museum.

HO Scale: Sam Miller reported there will be Saturday workdays until the layout is completed. We may not have a workday on the 5th of April due to Trainfest.

Large Scale: Randy Lombardo reported they were looking into replacing a Thomas piece that is broke. They had gone to Jacksonville and hoped to go back on May 3rd 2008.

Veteran's Memorial – Bristol: John Anthamatten sent the following via E-Mail to include in the minutes: The children's playground and play equipment is completed. The paved walking/jogging path with 20 exercise stations and a 300 foot bridge through the "swamp" is complete except for night lighting. The railroad trestle has piling in the ground but further construction is on hold due to high water. We would go to Plan B on this project if we had a Plan B. The station/museum floor slab is complete (some very dedicated people worked until 3 a.m. on a Wednesday morning to get it completed). Wall construction is under way.

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An official park dedication was held on March 15th. In attendance were Liberty county officials along with a number of the VMRR volunteers and Liberty County Arts council members. Dedication included the new concession stands at the ball fields and the items mentioned above. VMRR web page is www.veteransmemorialrailroad.org. VMRR wishes Harold Odom a speedy recovery and trip home soon. Our thanks to Harold for his architectural assistance on the station/museum building.

Switching Layout: Joe Haley had nothing to report.

Train Show: John Sullenberger reported the show will be on the 21st of June, 2008 at Building 4 of the fairgrounds. Not a lot of vendors have responded but it is still a while before the show.

Good of the Group Comments, Etc.:

Dan King brought to the attention of the group that the web site needed to be corrected because there are two references to our show listing a date of 21 June and 21 July. The July reference is incorrect (This has been corrected on the web site. Editor). He also reminded everyone that the annual Folkston Trainfest is scheduled for April 5th, 2008.

On March 1st, 2008, it was reported that 5 Boy Scouts completed their model railroading merit badge. The club was thanked for their contributions to this.

Program: Jim McGill presented a video on Sand Patch.

Guests/New Members:

Visitors: Gary Johnson (a friend of Jim McGill), Gene Tisher from Sarasota (interested in logging railroads) and Tom O'Connell (HO) were introduced.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will be at 7:30 pm, Tuesday, April 15, 2008, in the Banquet Room at the old Antique Car Museum. Dinner will be catered again for \$6.50 at 6:45 pm. Please contact John Sullenberger if you plan to eat dinner so he or Barrett can give the caterer a headcount.

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 pm. Respectfully submitted, Lyn Heath, Secretary (taken and transcribed by David Brazell - Thanks Again!)

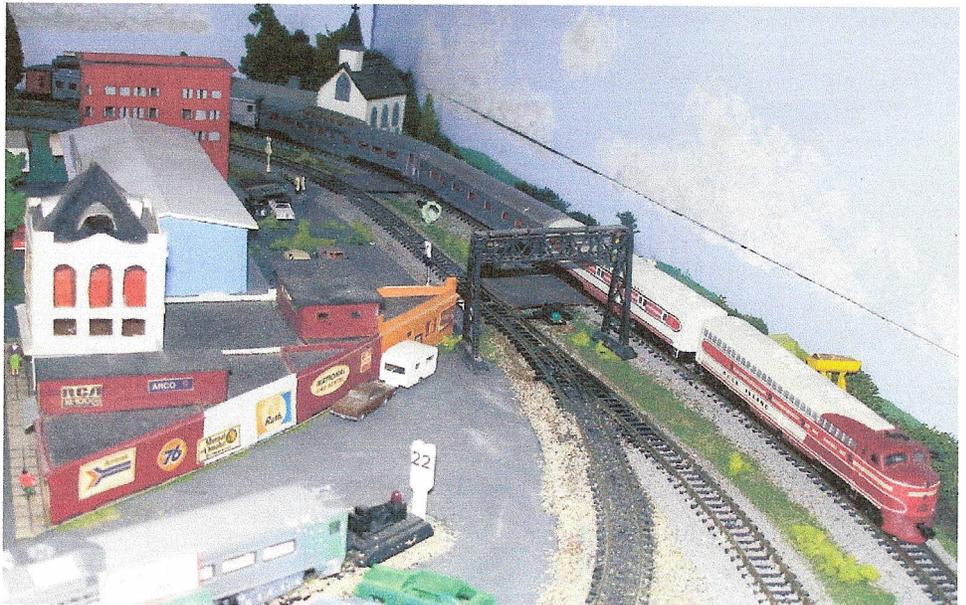
Santa Fe Cars Renamed Rock Island - First in a series by Larry Benson

Some 35 years ago, in 1973, we took our daughters to Atlanta to see Hank Aaron play baseball before he retired in 1976. Unfortunately, we didn't get to see him play because the Braves had just traveled in from the west coast the day before and he never played the next day after traveling. We did see him warm up on the sidelines in front of the Braves' dugout. We were sitting in the fourth or fifth row in the stadium just above their dugout.

While in Atlanta, we dove east a few miles to Decatur where there was a huge hobby store with glass cases full of all kinds of model trains. I was building my first N scale layout, so I bought a Santa Fe "F" diesel, a "B" unit and four Con-Cor passenger cars. The four corrugated aluminum cars consisted of a Pullman, a dome car, day coach and a square-ended observation car. The prices are still sticking on the end of the plastic boxes. They cost \$4.75 each. I've seen N scale passenger cars advertised today at \$28.99. Quite a difference! But remember, in 1973 before the oil embargo, gasoline cost about \$1.20 a gallon.

Anyway, most of you know I don't run Santa Fe locomotives on my present layout - mostly Frisco and Rock Island. So, now I am removing the Santa Fe decals and replacing them with, you guest it, Rock Island.

As you can see in the accompanying photo, I have a Rock Island "E-8" diesel with the matching "B" unit which will provide the motive power for my new passenger operation.



I also have on order a "Mission Style" depot kit with the matching freight house. Although the depot isn't exactly like "the one where the Rock Island stopped in my home town, it's close enough to satisfy my "nostalgia." Watch for further reports in future issues of *The Lantern*.

Work Sessions at the NEW Antique Car Museum:

HO: Saturday's at 10 am; weekdays if you can, contact Sam Miller (385-7733), Bill Thompson (385-6581) or Roy Mantooth (422-3038) for assignments.

N Scale:

Saturday's at 10 am.



An Invitation from Tony Shoemake

On May 3rd, the Historic Preservation Committee of the City of Blountstown will be having an open house at the M&B Depot. We are just finishing up a 2 year renovation of the Depot. Engine #444 is also getting a new paint job (doing away with the green and yellow) and a headlight that has been missing since it was brought back to Blountstown is now on the engine.

We would like to see if the BBMRA would be interested in setting up a layout or layouts in the Depot to help us celebrate the day. The available area in the warehouse is 24ft x 24ft. The warehouse is only 40ft long and is broken up into one large room and one small room. There is also a smaller area in the waiting room of the depot that is 16x20. If these areas are too small we can set you up outside under a large tent.

The day will start with a run and bike ride along the Blountstown Greenway trail, which runs along the old M&B right of way, it is also part of the Florida Scenic Trail. There will be arts and crafts and food vendors, antique cars, a ribbon cutting to open the Depot and ongoing entertainment through out the day. The scheduled time for the event is from 9 am until 2 pm (Central Time) with setup between 7 am and 8:30 am. We would love to have you attend.

SAM Shortline Special Excursion - Savannah Special

May 24-26, 2008: Memorial Day Weekend - "The Best of Savannah" plus Optional Tour of Historic Charleston

Bring your children, grandchildren, parents or friends and join us for Memorial Day Weekend! This exciting opportunity to ride the SAM Shortline Excursion Train will take you to Savannah, one of Georgia's most historic and enjoyable cities. Leave the driving to the engineer while you relax and enjoy the scenery between Cordele and Savannah. You can spend the day in Savannah relaxing and exploring, or you can select a variety of guided tours. Enjoy the BEST of Savannah - May 24, 25 and 26, 2008 during our Memorial Day Weekend trip.

Package price includes two-nights hotel accommodations in the historic district:

\$631 per person single occupancy

\$475 per person double occupancy

\$408 per person triple occupancy

\$381 per person quadruple occupancy

\$144 per child 12 and under sharing room with parents

\$214 per child 13-18 sharing room with parents

Old Railroads of Tallahassee - Part 1 submitted by Bill Bell

The Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad was one of the first operational railroads in the United States. It was conceived in the early 1830's by wealthy cotton planters as a way to get their crop to mills in Europe and New England. It was formed in 1831 as the Leon Railway Company and was re-chartered as the Leon Railroad Company in 1832, and again as the Tallahassee Railroad in 1834. The Florida Legislature approved the Tallahassee & St. Marks Railroad Company in 1835, with construction starting a month or so later. In 1835 the company also received the first ever Federal Land grant to a railroad.

The railroad was completed and began operation in 1837 as a mule-drawn railroad that connected Tallahassee, Florida, then the territorial Capital, with the Gulf port of St. Marks 22 miles away. Many of the earliest Florida railroads used mules to pull the open cars over the track. In rural areas, men stood in the cars, three on each side, and polled along much as they would if they were moving a flat-bottomed boat through shallow water. By 1838 the railroad had extended three miles further south to Port Leon, which was destroyed in the massive hurricane of 1843.

At first the rails were simply wood but later soft iron strips were nailed on top of the rail. This helped the tracks last longer but presented new problems. When iron strips were added to the tops of wooden rails, the Florida heat caused the strips of iron to curve up where the rails joined. These "snake heads" as they were called caused super bumps as the trains passed over. "If the snake head was only two or three inches, it didn't matter much because the train traveled so slowly anyway," noted railroad

historian H. E. Lagergren recalled. "More bend than that, however, had to be straightened. The rail was taken up and heated over a fire made of old cross ties, hammered straight and replaced."

The Tallahassee Railroad seems to have enjoyed a very good business but didn't waste profits on trivial things like maintenance. This is probably best illustrated by Ernest Melvern, a disgruntled passenger, who recounted his experience in the 13 March 1855 *Florida Sentinel*:

I understood that I was to start by railway, and at eight o'clock in the morning. In due time a car about as large as a large omnibus was pushed up, and I was asked to get into it. I did so. Two horses were attached to it, and we started. The depot is on the border of a swamp where there is not a building to be seen. I inquired if so much precaution was necessary in leaving the city, and if locomotives were dangerous to the inhabitants of the forest that stretched away interminably before us. "No," said the man, who performed all of the responsible functions of engineer, conductor and brakeman, "but we go all the way with horses. We have no locomotive. They once had such a thing, but it ran away one day, nobody could stop it. It went straight to St. Marks, and, roaring and hissing, it dashed plumb into the bay; and since that they have never dared to try one."

I soon found that I had little reason to regret the absence of the locomotive. For on looking down a long line of the road, it appeared as undulating as the sea. The flat "snake head" rails had originally been laid on timbers without any cross ties. As these timbers rested on the sand, they had separated so far that the wheels on one side of the car must run off the track. Now we found a sleeper with no rail, now a rail with no sleeper, and sometimes both were gone. The rails were often fastened by a single bolt in the middle, and both ends were curved in the air, like the ends of a broken hoop. The wags say that a Negro used to go ahead of the car to hold down one end of the rail till the car came to it, then he nailed down the other. A fire in the forest had in one place communicated to the sleepers and for two miles they were more or less in flames. But on we hurried like salamanders. No effort was made by the driver to save his railroad from Destruction! For, he declared, that with all his honors he was not a fireman. I was philosophically cogitating on the numerous advantages of this mode of railway traveling, when suddenly the omnibus trot of our charges was arrested. I was aroused from my reveries when, on looking around, I found that a long freight train was before us, and, what was worse, that it was likely to be so for an indefinite time. It was off the track, and there was no alternative but to help the Negroes get it on again. In spite of a long delay, I worked eagerly, with the hope that we could soon pass them at a switch, But, on inquiry, I learned that there was but one switch on the road, and we had passed that already. So we must patiently follow on as we could. For the benefit of all travelers who shall wish to follow in by footsteps, let me say that such delay as this is of almost daily occurrence here...

My patience diminished quite rapidly, and hearing that we were within three miles of a town called Newport, I resolved to walk there thinking I could make the detour and reach St. Marks before our train.

The Snake heads and wooden rails on the Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad were replaced in 1856 with new iron T-rail from England and the horses by two 4-4-0 steam locomotives from Baldwin, the H.L. Rutger and the Gen. Bailey when the Pensacola and Georgia Railroad acquired the Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad, but that's another month's story.

During the Civil War, the Confederates used the railroad extensively to move troops, artillery and supplies in defense of Tallahassee. In March 1865, the railroad achieved its utmost military significance when it was used to deploy Confederate troops quickly south from Tallahassee in the face of an advance by Union troops. The railroad enabled Generals' Samuel Jones and William Miller to put enough men into place to rout Union General John Newton at the Battle of Natural Bridge on March 6, 1865.

Around 1880, the railroad began transporting naval stores to shipping at St. Marks and hauling timber for Leon County's growing logging industry.

In 1983, the Seaboard Systems Railroad filed to have the railroad line abandoned between Capital Circle in Tallahassee and St. Marks. It is probably no coincidence that the U.S. Government had just run out of the old single base nitrocellulose powder it had been shipping to the St. Marks Powder Plant to be remanufactured into modern double base powder. The Tallahassee-St. Marks had the distinction of being the longest operating railroad in Florida and served the area for 147 years, but it never outlived the label hung on it by an unknown traveler **"the worst that has yet been built in the entire world."**

For more information see *Tap lines* at <http://taplines.net/> , Wikipedia, Tallahassee-St. Marks Railroad at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tallahassee-St._Marks_Railroad or "*Through the Hart of the South*" by Robert Wayne Johnson.

TALLAHASSEE MODEL RAILROAD SHOW & SALE

Saturday, June 21st, 2008 -- North Florida Fairgrounds, Building #4 -- 10 am to 5 pm

Admission: Adults & children 13 and older: \$5 -- Children 12 and younger are Free -- Free Parking

