

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RED RIVER VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

APRIL, 2009

SHREVEPORT, LA

OUR 28TH YEAR

Gone But Not Forgotten: The Great Locomotive Chase



We can't leave the subject of Civil War era railroads (February and March Newsletters) without looking at the most famous locomotive chase in U. S. history. This month marks the 147th Anniversary of The Great

Locomotive Chase. Plus, after seeing the Buster Keaton movie “The General” at our last meeting we need to have the historically-correct story!

On the rainy morning of April 12, 1862, twenty Yankee saboteurs daringly seized the *General* during its breakfast stop near the 3000-man Confederate Camp McDonald near Big Shanty (now Kennesaw), Georgia, and steamed north towards Chattanooga over the Western & Atlantic R. R. line.

Led by a civilian, James Andrews, the band intended to leave destruction in its wake. But success was limited by the inclement weather and the unanticipated, heroic pursuit by the *General*'s conductor, William Fuller. Undaunted by the train's head start, Fuller followed first on foot and then by handcar until he finally commandeered the Confederate locomotives *Yonah* and *Texas*. He stayed so close that the Yankees could not risk stopping for much needed fuel.

Eight hours and 87 miles north of where it had been stolen, the *General* lost power and was abandoned. The Yankee raiders were captured, and two months later James Andrews and seven of his men were hung. Many Confederate decorations were pinned on William Fuller, and the Yankee survivors were the first recipients on the Congressional Medal of Honor.

The 4-4-0 American-type locomotive *General*, built by the Rogers Locomotive Works in 1855, was almost completely destroyed by Sherman's troops during the burning of Atlanta in 1864. Rebuilt, converted from wood to coal, and altered, the noble *General* was eventually rescued from the scrap list and restored to its not-so-original look in 1871. In 1926, Buster Keaton was given tentative permission to steam up and use the *General* in his movie, but public sentiment was so strong that permission was withdrawn.

In 1956, noted photographer O. Winston Link chanced upon the *General* in Chattanooga and received permission to do some close-ups. Following publication of his work (“Salute to a General” in the March 1957 Trains), the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railroad had to install a high wire fence around the *General* to protect her from the curious. By 1961, the Louisville & Nashville had absorbed the NC&St.L railroad so it owned the *General*. In preparation for the April 12, 1962 Centennial of the chase, L&N removed the engine (in the middle of the night of June 6, 1961) from the Chattanooga station and took it to their shops in South Louisville, Kentucky to be rebuilt. The *General* was placed under steam and operated for the first time since 1914 on February 7, 1962. On March 28, 1962 the *General* and combine 665 ran from Louisville to Lebanon, with L&N dignitaries, a Trains reporter, and O. Winston Link aboard. Link had his microphones mounted ahead of the stack and between the cylinders to record the sounds for posterity in his 45-rpm release titled “Sounds of Steam Locomotives Vol. 5”. The cover of that record is shown on the first page of this newsletter, thanks to Society member Conway Link. You must see it in color to really appreciate it's beauty, so be watching for it on www.rvrhs.org. The July, 1962 issue of Trains had a great article with lots of pictures, some taken by Mr. Link.

The *General* made its last run from Padukah, Kentucky in 1966. It can be seen at the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History in Kennesaw, Georgia.

As the late Paul Harvey used to say, “Now you know the rest of the story”.

The Bulletin Board - Events and Information for Railroaders

Society Meeting on April 17 at the Glen Retirement Village

The next meeting will be held on Friday, **April 17** at 7 p.m. in the auditorium at the Glen Retirement Village, 403 East Flournoy Lucas Road. The Glen Retirement Village is located on the south side of Flournoy Lucas Road between Ellerbe Road and Youree Drive (Highway 1). (Please do not confuse it with the Live Oak Retirement Home located on the north side of Flournoy Lucas Road.)

We will discuss plans to renovate a building at the McNeill Street Pumping Station (Shreveport Water Works Museum) for display space. Also, we will discuss logistics for going to the Southern Forest Heritage Museum in Longleaf on the following morning (April 18) and the Fish Fry/Operating Day on April 25. A program related to the *General* will also be presented, including listening to O. Winston Link's recording of the locomotive's sounds in 1962. For information or directions call Dave Bland at (318) 470-5933.

Society Trip to Long Leaf on April 18

Last year we had a great trip to the Southern Forest Heritage Museum in Long Leaf so we are looking forward to going again. They have a great collection of railroad equipment, lumber industry artifacts and buildings spread over several acres.

Heritage Day at Long Leaf

Featuring their unique machine shop: a blacksmith, and other machinists IN ACTION.

Tour their Historic 1910 Sawmill Complex

Rail Motorcar rides all day! Crafts, Activity Booths and Food Concessions

Live Gospel Music - Antique Automobile Display - Antique Tractor Pull & Engine Show

Dr. TC Smith will be there signing his recently released book 'The Tale of Three Sawmill Towns'

Meet at the Home Depot at Bert Kouns and I-49 at 8:00 am on Saturday, April 18 if you want to carpool or travel with the group. It will take about 2 ½ hours for the 140 mile trip. We should be back in Shreveport about 6:30 pm. Call Dave Bland at 470-5933 if you plan to go or have questions.

Operating Day and Fish Fry on April 25 at the Rose Center

On Saturday, April 25 we will have a Live Steam Operating Day and Fish Fry at the American Rose Center on the Jefferson Paige Road. It will begin at 10:00 am, and around noon we will eat fried fish, boiled shrimp, french fries, hushpuppies, cole slaw, etc. followed by more operating until about 4 pm. The cost is \$5.00 per person and can be paid at the event. Some chairs will be available but it would be a good idea to bring your lawn chairs. Call Gary Fox at 631-9164 for information.

We Need Your Email Address

Your email address is needed so that notices and other information can be sent to you quickly. Please send an email to your Editor (Dave Bland) at DDBland@aol.com so you can be added to the RRVrHS email list. If you recently received an email from Dave, no action is necessary unless you want to be removed from the list. Thanks!

New Website Address!

Thanks to Tommy Crenshaw, we have our own website at www.rrvrhs.org containing an intro to our Society, our newsletter in color, and information on how to join. Thanks, Tommy !!

Upcoming Events

April 18 (See above)	Heritage Day at Southern Forest Heritage Museum in Longleaf, LA
April 21	T&P Depot in Marshall – 7 pm – “The Marshall & East Texas Railway”
April 25 (See above)	Fish Fry and Operating Day at the Rose Center
April 25-26	Cotton Belt Historical Society Train Show – Tyler, TX
May 16	TSRR Military Train from Rusk
November 1	Train Show in Marshall
November 8	TSRR Steam Photographers Special from Rusk

Places to Visit

Shreveport Water Works Museum at the McNeill Street Pumping Station

www.mcneillstreet.org

The Historic Jefferson Railway Company recreates the Golden Era of Steam Railroading. The Jefferson and Cypress Bayou is a live steam, narrow gauge railway.

www.jeffersonrailway.com

RED RIVER VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

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Russell Pedro – President Dave Bland – Vice President
Gary Fox – Secretary Bill Hasheider – Treasurer
Dave Bland – Newsletter Editor – 797-8008 – DDBland@aol.com

It is time to pay your 2009 Annual Dues

Please send a check or money order for \$16.50 with this membership form to Bill Hasheider at 6813 Despot Road, Shreveport, LA 71108

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

The President's Message – April 2009

Hello Railfans:

If you missed last month's meeting, you missed a good one. We discussed the offer that was presented by Dale Ward, that the Society use a building at the McNeill Street Pumping Station (Water Works Museum) as a museum site. Dave, Bobby Joe, Lea and myself met at the McNeill Street facility on Saturday after our February meeting and looked over the site. It appears to be a good place for a museum and has room on the grounds for at least D&R #10. We also discussed the possibility of a 7 ½ inch gauge track there. The members present at the March meeting voted to pursue this project as it is our best offer at this time. This does not limit us to this site only if another one comes to light. Dale Ward and Conway Link were present to discuss what we could do to use the space available.

Conway Link brought everyone present an uncut sheet of album covers for one of his father's recordings. It is a very nice souvenir of O. Winston Link's work. Thank you very much Conway! We will treasure these gifts.

Bobby Joe Miller also donated three railroad pocket watches to the Society. All are in working condition and will be a welcome addition to our collection.

Dave Bland, his grandson Jared and your president went to the Longview Train Show last weekend and had a very good time. We learned several things. First, Homer Fleischer has sold most of his inventory to Tom at Trends and Trains and plans to cut back on his business at Homer's Model Rail Shop in Longview. Homer said he is not going to sponsor a train show in Longview next year. Hopefully someone else will step up and sponsor this show. It was a good show this year and there was a good turnout of dealers and visitors.

While at the show I visited the table that Dr. Harvey Carter and his lovely wife had and Harvey informed me that this year was his last to have a table at the train show. He also informed me that the City of Shreveport has purchased the old Wray Ford buildings on Mansfield Road as a shop for the Fire Department. The main showroom building will be used by the Shreveport Firefighter's Museum as their home.

Many thanks to Melinda and Roger West for calling me about a break-in of the baggage car at Central Station. Bill Hashieder, Gary Fox and the Wests put everything inside that been thrown out and locked the car. Also, I would like to thank Roger for cleaning up the brush around the equipment.

Those of you who missed the First Friday show missed a very good one put on by Charles Goodrich.

Well, I have used up enough paper and ink and your time on this article. I am hoping to see all of you at our Spring fish fry and operating day at the Rose Center on April 25th.

Happy Railroading!

Russell