

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

Web Site: [WWW.RRVRHS.ORG](http://WWW.RRVRHS.ORG) On Facebook: [Shreveport Railroad Museum](https://www.facebook.com/ShreveportRailroadMuseum)  
Russell Pedro – President W. Conway Link – Vice-President Jeff Cornelius – Secretary  
Bill Hasheider – Treasurer Dave Bland – Newsletter Editor – [DDBland@aol.com](mailto:DDBland@aol.com)

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*January, 2016*

SHREVEPORT, LA

*Our 35<sup>th</sup> Year*

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## **1951 Troop Train and *Southern Belle* Crash Kills 13**



Shortly after 7 a.m. on August 10, 1951 a terrible head-on collision occurred near Lettsworth, Louisiana which is between Alexandria and Baton Rouge. The passenger trains involved were the famous *Southern Belle*, headed south to New Orleans with 6 cars, and a north-bound Louisiana & Arkansas Railway troop train designated Extra 51-A North with 16 cars of Marines. Thirteen people were killed and 82 were injured. The fatalities included 6 passengers on Extra 51-A and 7 railroad employees (the engineer and fireman on the *Southern Belle*, plus the engineer, fireman, conductor, brakeman and a trainmaster on Extra 51-A).

The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) investigation concluded that the accident's cause was Extra 51-A North's occupying the main track at the same time as the *Southern Belle* without flagging or otherwise warning the *Southern Belle*, which had priority. It's the *why* that will forever remain a mystery because all members of the Extra 51-A crew were killed except a flagman. The investigation discovered that the trainmaster, who was riding in the cab of the Extra 51-A, apparently had been using new radio technology to issue train movement orders in violation of the operating rules. Such orders were supposed to be issued in writing by the regular dispatchers at various control points on the railroad. The ICC recommendation was :

*It is recommended that the carrier immediately take the necessary steps to enforce compliance with its operating rules and that it discontinue the practice of arranging unauthorized train movements by the use of the train communication system.*

(Photo by Langston McEachern, courtesy of LSU Shreveport Noel Memorial Library Archives and Special Collections. Text based on Interstate Commerce Commission Report No. 3419 signed October 4, 1951 and other sources. Additional photos will be shown at our next meeting.)

## Upcoming Events

January 15 – RRVHRS Meeting – 7 p.m. - Shreveport Water Works Museum – 142 N. Common St. Call (318) 797-8008 for information.

February 5 - First Friday Railroad Photography Meeting – 7:30 p.m. at the Shreveport Water Works Museum – 142 N. Common St. – Call (318) 797-8008 for information.

## The President's Message

Hello Railfans!

I hope everyone enjoyed the holidays. Several things have been happening since my message last month. Conway had a meeting with Dale Ward to discuss the Railroad Museum and a timeline as to when things should happen. Several people, including Bobby Jelks, are working to secure funds for the project.

Last week, Jim McClure and I wrote 3 letters about securing different sites for the museum in case the Common St. project does not come about. We wrote a letter to Joe Giglio about Central Station as a follow-up to a meeting we had early last year. Another letter was written to the Union Pacific RR about possible donation or lease of the old Cotton Belt turntable area. Finally, a letter was written to the KCS Railway about the old Union Station property. All of these areas would make an ideal place for our museum. I know we are spreading our efforts out in all directions at this time but since nothing is in concrete yet we don't want to pass up a possible site. We will just have to wait and see what kind of responses we get.

I would like to thank everyone for the vote of confidence in me by re-electing me as President. I am getting stronger every day and should soon be able to attend meetings. I would like to welcome our new Secretary, Jeff Cornelius, and am looking forward to meeting him. Thanks for all you have done.

Happy Railroading!  
Russell

## It's Time to Pay Your 2016 Dues

Please send a check or money order for \$20.00 with this membership form to Bill Hasheider at 6813 Despot Road, Shreveport, LA 71108

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

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Red River Valley Railroad Historical Society  
3012 Nottingham Drive  
Shreveport, LA 71115

**Next Meeting**  
**January 15**