

Roundhouse Notes

Paducah Chapter
National Railway Historical Society
May 2017

Pictures from Paducah's railroad past..

From the Illinois Central Scrapbook Facebook page we have a few selections from Paducah's past.

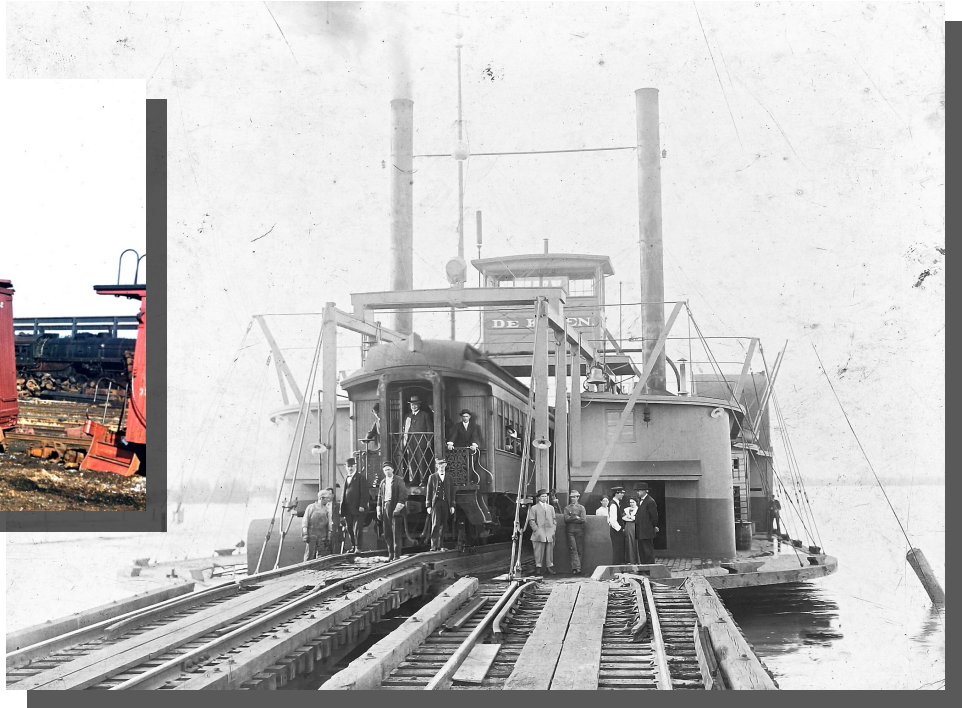


In 1914 the IC established a scrap yard in Paducah, KY, behind the locomotive shops. Located off 16th Street, the yard received condemned locomotives, freight and passenger cars, cabooses, and all types of scrap metal from the southern half of the system. At Paducah the locomotives and cars were scrapped and the metal was sorted for shipment by the carload to scrap dealers. (Paducah was not the only place on the railroad where cars and locomotives were scrapped, but it was definitely the busiest on the southern half of the railroad).

The scrap yard created jobs, but neighbors probably weren't always happy. When a wooden freight car or caboose arrived for scrapping, the carbody was lifted off the trucks and set on the ground. Then the carbody was set on fire. After the wood had burned away and the ashes had cooled, crews moved in to salvage the metal parts. This process continued well into the 1950s as demonstrated by this slide taken by an unknown photographer on Dec. 6, 1955. Camp car X1342 is partly engulfed in flames, while a wooden caboose barely visible to the right waits its turn.

In addition to burning the wooden cars, there were plenty of other activities at the Paducah scrap yard to concern 1950's environmentalists. When a steam locomotive was scrapped, the asbestos insulation around the boiler was thrown onto the ground. Once there was a big enough pile of asbestos it was loaded into a gondola and hauled off as trash. Steam locomotive drivers, with their hundreds of pounds of lead weight, were cut off the axle and then placed into a gas-fired furnace. There, the lead melted and was poured into ingots that were resold. Of course, this was many years ago before the environmental dangers were fully understood or there was as much concern for the environment.

The Paducah shops are now owned by NRE and remain busy. But as for the site of the former scrap yard in the backlot, well, only a few weeds grow there



IC ferry "DeKoven", photographed at Paducah, KY, circa 1905. At the time the "DeKoven" was assigned to the Paducah-Brookport, IL, ferry run. But over the years the boat served at other locations, including Henderson, KY-Evansville, IN, and Helena, AR. Cliff Downey collection. Cliff Downey Collection



IC's "depo." (as it was labeled on this real photo postcard) at Brookport, IL, was photographed circa 1910. Although Brookport has always been a small town, its location at the end of an IC line stretching south from Marion, IL (plus the Brookport-Paducah ferry) meant the town had some notable railroad facilities. Barely visible in the background is a two-track engine shed. Cliff Downey Collection.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Charlie G

Positive Train Control equipment arrives on the P&I:

CN workers have recently completed work, which included replacing the signals and installing radio equipment, at Central Ave along the P & I. This included a new switch heater fueled by propane, a new control shack and a new radio antenna at the site. It appears that a radio tower is placed at every signal. There is also a new tower at CR Junction.

The new signals are bright LED technology and much brighter than the previous signal set.



New Signals on the P&I at Central Ave

Derailment on the P&L:

On March 30th I was visiting Garrett recycling, selling them some aluminum cans, when I noticed when I went to leave that there were fire trucks and police cars at the crossing on Little Ave. Further investigation revealed that 8 empty lumber cars from the Fulton turn had over turned right at the crossing. Crews were in hand assessing and attempting to upright the cars. No freight was damaged or spilled. Crews hoped to have gotten the line cleared by 9 PM. No cause had been determined at press time.

Traffic increase on the P&I:

It appears as of recent there has been much more traffic on the P&I as of late. Your humble reporter (being a block away) has noticed a slight uptick in coal traffic as well as a shift in the BNSF local and the CN local (Fulton turn). The last week or so (mid April) the Fulton turn has been coming in early in the mornings and leaving Paducah sometime mid afternoon. The train used to come in evenings and leave the next morning.



New switch heater at Central Ave on the P&I at Paducah

Outbound has been two engines running



New PTC control shack on the P&I

long hood forward. BNSF gen merchandise trains have been more frequent and longer as of late.

AAR: Coal, grain, other commodities lead to carload gains in March

U.S. rail traffic was up 7.3 percent during March due to an uptick in coal, crushed stone, gravel, sand, and grain traffic. During the month of March, U.S. railroads handled more than 2.5 million carloads and intermodal units, or 134,363 carloads and intermodal units more than March 2016.

Thirteen of the 20 commodities groups tracked by the AAR saw carload gains compared with March 2016. These included coal, up 19 percent or 63,846 carloads; crushed stone, gravel, and sand, up 12.5 percent or 13,154 carloads; and grain,

up 10.6 percent, or 11,336 carloads.

Motor vehicles and parts were down 5.3 percent, or 4,999 carloads, while petroleum products were down 8.1 percent, or 4,382 carloads. Chemical traffic was also down last month by 1.3 percent, or 2,113 carloads.

Excluding coal, carload traffic was still up 2.7 percent, or about 23,337 carloads, in March 2017 compared to March 2016.

So far this year, U.S. railroads have handled more than 3.3 million carloads of freight, up 5.7 percent or 180,665 carloads from last year, and an additional 3.3 million containers and trailers, up about 1.4 percent, or 47,977 containers and trailers, from last year.

NTSB issues preliminary report on Biloxi train-bus collision

Investigators with the National Transportation Safety Board say the grade crossing where a bus was struck by a CSX freight train in Biloxi, Miss., was equipped with a low ground clearance sign. In a preliminary report issued by the NTSB, investigators confirmed the Main Street grade crossing in downtown Biloxi was equipped with a crossbuck, warning lights, a gate, and a low ground clearance grade crossing warning sign. The bus, with its driver and 49 passengers, was traveling northbound on Main Street on the afternoon of Tuesday, March 7, when it got its chassis caught on a hump in the crossing. As the driver tried to free the bus from the crossing, an eastbound CSX train with three locomotives and 51 cars was approaching the crossing at a speed of 26 mph. Upon seeing the approaching train, the motor coach driver opened the entry door and instructed the passengers to evacuate. While sounding the horn, the train engineer placed the train into emergency about 510 feet west of the

crossing. The train struck the bus at approximately 19 mph and pushed it more than 200 feet before coming to a stop, according to the NTSB report. Four people died and 39 additional passengers sustained serious to minor injuries. The bus driver suffered serious injuries. No injuries were reported to the train crew. Investigators also determined that the motor coach was operating on an alternative route. The tour's normal routing would have been Interstate 10, however the bus driver decided to change to a more scenic route along the Gulf Coast. The tour group was part of a multi-day casino tour that started in Bastrop, Texas. According to the NTSB, the bus driver's toxicology test was negative for alcohol and other drugs. The train crew was not tested nor were they required to be tested, according to the safety board. Federal, state, and local officials are still investigating the incident.

New Shortline In Union City TN –

Twenty-six years after Brent Lee left Union City to go railroading, he is coming home to run his own short line.

The Union City Terminal Railroad is expected to debut in May. The line is an eight-mile stub of the former Gulf, Mobile & Ohio Railroad main line between Union City and Rives, Tenn., where it connects to the Canadian National (former Illinois Central) main line.

"I was born and raised in Union City," Lee says. "I always had the idea if I ever wanted to short line something, it would be that line."

Lee says he spent 24 of his 26 years with the Burlington Northern and BNSF Rail-

way in track maintenance and train service.

Lee is operations vice president for the Indiana Business Railroad of Evansville, Ind., a privately held company composed of railroad veterans in specialties ranging from civil engineering to locomotive and car repair.

"We can survey, engineer, construct a railroad," Lee says. "Operate it and maintain it. Pretty much anything we need to do." The company owns six miles of track between Fort Branch and Owensville, Ind., but Lee says the Union City Terminal is the company's first short line operation.

Lee knows the history: the GM&O crossed the IC at Rives. The Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway crossed the GM&O at Union City. The depot that served both lines still stands in the town.

"Growing up there, it was extremely busy. The GM&O had a local station, but then [business] slowed down a bit," Lee says. "My dream is to bring it back to what it used to be, where we have the Union City switcher back in town, providing service for all the customers for whatever they need."

There are several on-line industries, including a grain elevator, and tire and plastics manufacturing plants. Lee says the line carries about 2,000 carloads per year. Until now, it's been a branch of the Class I railroad. He said he approached CN about leasing the line in February, and CN agreed.

"We're working with all the customers to go over existing business, based on working in partnership with CN," Lee says.

"We're going to increase personalized service. We're able to offer them multiple switches and a terminal operation, so we're their personal short line."

Word is spreading to other businesses in town. Lee says the railroad wants to increase its transloading business,

attention of prospective off-line customers that have never used rail service before.

"That's been exciting. We've had a few new customers pop up wanting to ship by simply approaching them about transloading," Lee says. "I'm having fun. My career's gone full circle, and I'm coming back to do exactly what I wanted to do."

Lee says the railroad is leasing a pair of GP38-2s for motive power.

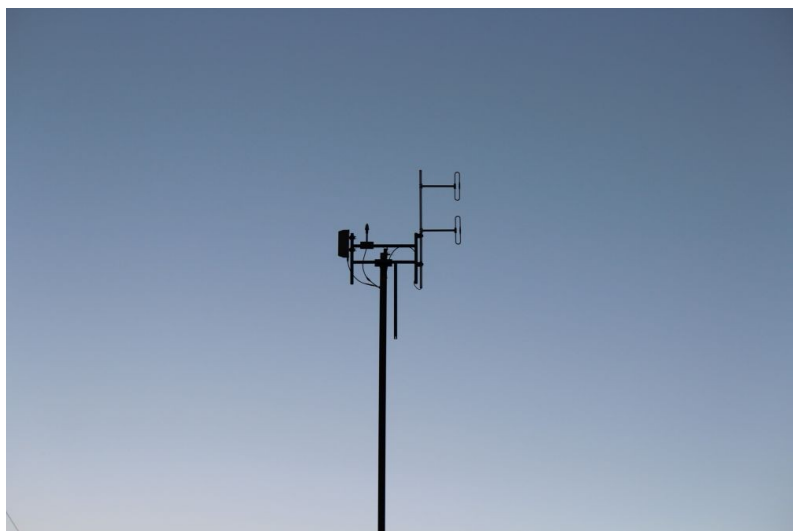
He bows to history again: "If they get painted, it will probably be back to orange and white." That's the traditional Illinois Central color scheme.

Museum: This March opening was quieter than in previous years. CN railroad, which hosts the "Little Obie" safety train, did not make Little Obie available to any entity this year. We suspect it is due to budget cuts due to decreased revenue.

We had 146 visitors at the museum in March. This was down 260 from last year, the decrease is attributed to not having little Little Obie this year.

At our April meeting we met at Italian Village Pizza downtown and had a "supper meeting". Most meetings are held at the museum, we decided to mix it up this past month.

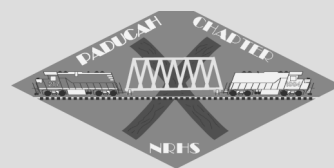
Trains newswire is the source of some of these reports.



New PTC antenna at Central Ave on the P&I

which has drawn the

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On Thursday March 30th 8 empty lumber cars derailed (4 Turning over) at Little Ave in Paducah in front of Garrett Recycling. No one was injured, no freight was spilled. The line was closed until 9PM

**Next Meeting May 9th
7 PM
At the
Railroad Museum
Paducah**

June : 13th