

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

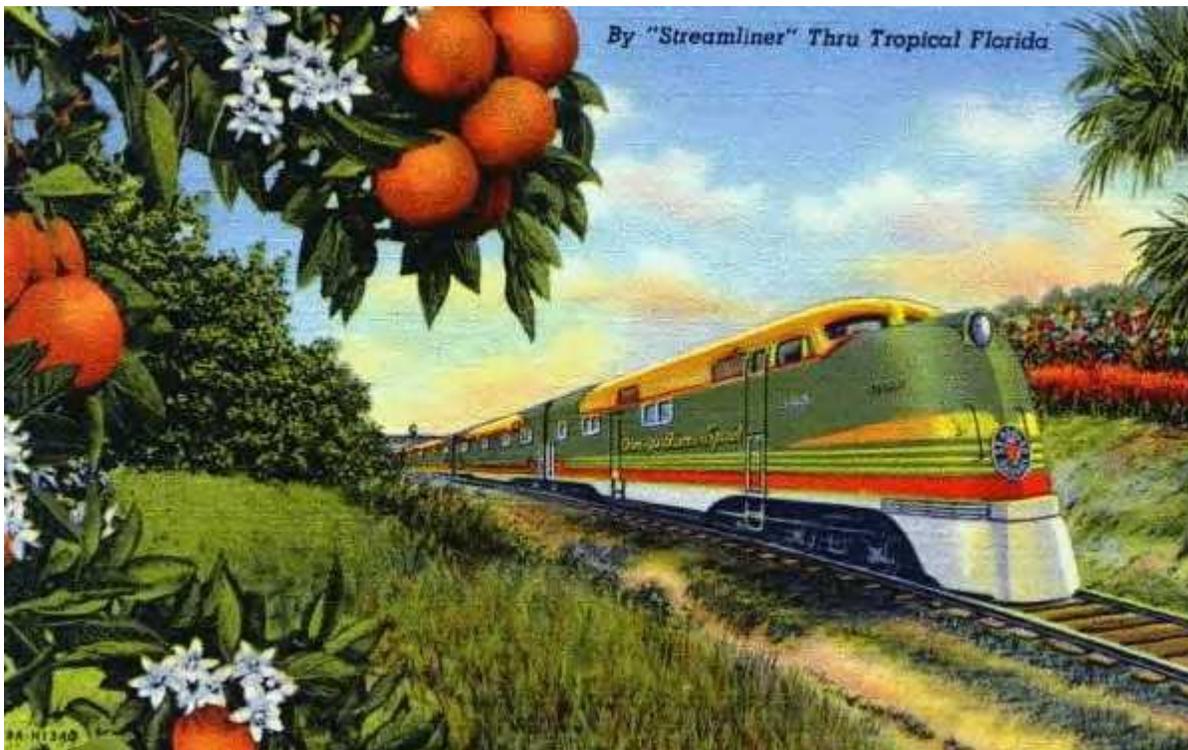
OCTOBER, 2010

SHREVEPORT, LA

OUR 29<sup>TH</sup> YEAR

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## “Air Line” Railroads ?



Over the years I have seen references to railroads with “air line” in their names. For example: Kansas City and Independence Air Line Railroad, Kansas City Air Line Railway Company and Seaboard Air Line Railroad. Note Seaboard’s logo above, plus a post card image of one of their

streamliners. Most of these railroads were formed and named long before airplanes were even in use. So what did their name imply? An air-line railroad was a railroad that was relatively flat and straight, choosing a shorter route over an easier route. In their heyday, which was prior to aviation, they were often referred to simply as "air lines." For example, a 1903 novel indicates a character's success by noting his position as "superintendent of passenger traffic of the New York and Chicago Air Line." Webster's 1913 dictionary gives the definition "Air line": a straight line; a bee line. Air line railroads began to be built in the mid-nineteenth century. Following is information about a few of the "air lines".

**Kansas City and Independence Air Line Railroad** (part of the Kansas City Southern Railway)

**January 23, 1891** Arthur Stilwell, et. al, incorporated the Kansas City and Independence Air Line Railway Company, running east from the Blue River to Independence, MO.

**March 18, 1892** The Air Line to Independence opened.

**May 1893** Fairmount Amusement Park opened in Independence, built by Stilwell to boost revenue for the fledgling Air Line. There is an interesting history of Fairmount Park at [www.oldfairmountpark.com](http://www.oldfairmountpark.com)

According to the *Manual of the Railroads of the United States*, Vol. 27 by Henry Varnum Poor:

KANSAS CITY AND INDEPENDENCE AIR LINE.-Air Line to Independence, Mo., 5.6 m.; Kansas City to Air Line, (trackage, K. C. & B. RR.). 5 m.—total, 10.6 miles; Gauge, 4 ft. ,8 1/2 in. Rail (steel), 65 lbs. Chartered, Jan. 23, 1891 : opened Mar. 1, 1892. The company leases the terminals of the Kansas City Suburban Belt RR. Co. in Kansas City. Locomotives owned 4, leased 1. Cars (passenger) owned 6, leased 6, freight (box), 1—total, 18.

Operations, year ending June 30, 1893.—Passengers carried, 581,868. Earnings (passenger, \$52,471 ; freight, \$6,027 ; other, \$365), \$58,863. Operating expenses, \$46,852. Net earnings, \$12,011. Paid rentals and taxes, \$15,592. Deficit, \$3,581.

Directors (elected Aug. 4, 1893.)—A. A. Mosher, E. L. Martin, A. E. Stillwell. J. McD. Trimble. R B. Cone, A. L. Howe, Kansas City, Mo.; Wm. S. Taylor, William Waterall, William H. Lucas, W. D. Black. Philadelphia, Pa.: E. P. Merwin, New York, N. Y.

**Kansas City Air Line Railway Company** - John W. Bunn contributed to the financing and incorporation of the Kansas City Air Line Railway Company, a corporation capitalized initially in 1879 at \$600,000.00, and based in Springfield, Illinois, which served as a western expansion of the preexisting Indianapolis, Decatur & Springfield Railroad Company, and that was intended to connect the Indianapolis, Decatur & Springfield Railroad Company line to the Chicago & Alton Railroad Company line.

**Seaboard Air Line Railroad** (logo and post card on page 1) – The Seaboard Air Line Railroad (reporting mark SAL), which styled itself "The Route of Courteous Service," was an American railroad whose corporate existence extended from April 14, 1900 until July 1, 1967, when it merged with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, its longtime rival, to form the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad. The company was headquartered in Portsmouth, Virginia until 1958, when its main offices were relocated to Richmond, Virginia. Total route mileage circa 1950 was 4,146 miles. The main line of the Seaboard ran from Richmond via Raleigh, North Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia to Jacksonville, Florida, a major interchange point for passenger trains bringing travelers to the Sunshine State. From Jacksonville, Seaboard rails continued to such popular tourist destinations as Tampa, St. Petersburg, West Palm Beach, and Miami.

Other important Seaboard routes included a line from Jacksonville via Tallahassee to a connection with the L&N at Chattahoochee, Florida for through service to New Orleans; a line to Atlanta, Georgia and Birmingham, Alabama connecting with the main line at Hamlet, North Carolina; and a line from the main at Norlina, North Carolina to Portsmouth, Virginia, the earliest route of what became the Seaboard.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Seaboard, along with its main competitors Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, Florida East Coast Railway, and Southern Railway, contributed greatly to the economic development of the Southeastern United States, and particularly to that of Florida. Its primary revenues derived from bringing vacationers to Florida from the Northeast and carrying southern timber, minerals, and produce, especially Florida citrus crops, to the northern states.

*Wikipedia* and other sources were used to gather the above information. *Wikipedia* has a list of 50 railroads with “air-line” in their name !

## **Upcoming Events**

- Oct. 15, etc. Texas State RR “Day Out With Thomas”
- Oct. 16 RRVrHS Fish Fry and Business Meeting – 3 p.m. at Hangar 15
- Oct. 19 Marshall Depot – 7 p.m. - “The T&P Wreck of 1946” – Bob Vernon
- Nov. 6-7 Train Show at the Marshall Civic Center
- Nov. 19 RRVrHS Meeting at the Glen – 7 p.m.

## **Next RRVrHS Meeting and Fish Fry on Saturday October 16 at Hangar 15**

Instead of having our regular meeting on Friday October 15, we will have a meeting and Fish Fry at Mark and Kelly Jo Brunettin’s “Hangar 15” at the Shreveport Downtown Airport on Saturday, October 16. The address is 1550 Airport Drive, which is across the street from the Gateway Tire Warehouse in north Shreveport. We will have fish, shrimp, hush puppies, cole slaw, etc. The time is from 3 to 7 p.m., and we will eat about 5 p.m. The cost is \$5.00 per attendee, and you can pay when you get there. If you would like to bring a dessert or other dish, please call Kelly Jo at (318) 524-2832.

**Bring a friend!**

## **Support Our Friends !**

### **McNeill Street Pumping Station (Shreveport Water Works Museum) in Shreveport**

Take a tour and see the building that has been offered to the RRVrHS for a museum.

Call (318) 221-3388 for hours and information

### **Texas & Pacific Railway Museum at the Marshall Depot**

Call (903) 938-9495 for hours and information

## **See Current and Previous Newsletters in **COLOR** at our website**

(Thanks to Tommy Crenshaw)

[www.rvrhs.org](http://www.rvrhs.org)

## The President's Message – October 2010

Hello Railfans:

It is Sunday after "First Friday" so it is time for me to take pen in hand and write an article for the newsletter.

There is not much happening at the present time on the museum because we have finished the windows and are waiting for the state to process our request for funds to purchase electrical supplies. As soon as we hear from them we can proceed with the electrical work. We will be needing some help with this phase so please keep us in mind as we will be calling on you for help.

Last month we had a very good meeting. Several members brought items for "show & tell" and we had fun trying to figure out what the items were. Conway Link brought a box with items to share with us. He also brought some copies of one of his father's famous photographs to pass out to everyone present. It was the photo of the drive-in theatre with the open convertible, a jet plane on the screen and a Norfolk Western steam engine going by in the background. Conway explained how his father made that picture.

Roger West brought two interesting photos of railroad cars containing electronic testing equipment parked along Hwy 71 next to Barksdale in 1962. Dave Bland brought a framed letter written in 1869 by "Diamond Jim" Fisk, one of the infamous financiers of the Jay Gould era. Yours truly brought a link & pin coupler (the coupler that took many railroaders fingers), a caboose steam whistle and other items.

Also, our special benefactor donated another \$400.00 to the group. Thanks, Bobby !

This month we will be meeting on Saturday at the hangar for our annual Fall Fish Fry. I hope to see all of you there as we usually have lots of food and fellowship. Bring a friend!

Happy Railroading!  
Russell

**RED RIVER VALLEY  
RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.  
Shreveport, LA  
[www.rrvrhs.org](http://www.rrvrhs.org)**

Russell Pedro – President      Dave Bland – Vice President  
Mark Brunettin – Secretary      Bill Hasheider – Treasurer  
Dave Bland – Newsletter Editor – 797-8008 – [DDBland@aol.com](mailto:DDBland@aol.com)

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### **It is time to pay your 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 \_\_\_\_\_