

# *The Ste. Genevieve Special*

*St. Louis to Ste. Genevieve, Missouri and Return*

Saturday and Sunday, November 1 and 2, 2003

Sponsored by the St. Louis Chapter, National Railway Historical Society  
In Cooperation the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad and Amtrak



## Welcome Aboard!

Your hosts in the St. Louis Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS) along with Amtrak welcome you aboard this special excursion train over the line of the former St. Louis - San Francisco Railway, or Frisco Lines.

Our train will journey from St. Louis, heading through the South County suburbs of Affton and Oakville to the Meramec River. After crossing the river we will wind our way through the Mississippi River bluffs of Jefferson County for some 22 miles to Crystal City, where we enter the Mississippi River Valley. From there our train follows the Father of Waters for the final 23 miles to Ste. Genevieve.

This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of our route. The rail line was built from Memphis to St. Louis by the St. Louis, Memphis and Southeastern Railroad and was completed in 1903, in time for the 1904 Worlds Fair. The Frisco acquired it soon after completion and owned it until it merged with the Burlington Northern Railroad in 1980. Today the line is owned by the Burlington Northern & Santa Fe Railroad, formed by the merger of the Burlington Northern and the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe, better known as the Santa Fe Railway, in 1995.

Today's excursion is operated by Amtrak using a train set of privately-owned rail cars. The Amtrak locomotives pulling our train are the latest in passenger train technology, built in the late 1990s, while our train is made up of cars from the streamlined era of railroading. The oldest cars were built in 1948 while the newest was built in 1964. All have been extensive rebuilt mechanically to Amtrak standards while the interiors are still reflective of railroading in the 1940s through 60s.



Photo by David G. Graham

## For Your Safety and Comfort

***Safety First!*** These are the two most important words on the railroad, and they should be your two most important words today, too. For Safety's sake:

- ***Always watch your step!*** Be especially careful...
  - Getting on or off the train
  - When walking about the train or passing between cars
- At stops, watch your footing on uneven ground, gravel and track ballast stone.
- Always step over, never on top of, the rail.
- Always walk, never run.
- Please *always* follow the instructions of your car host or other NRHS or railroad crew member. They are there to assist you, and to assure that you and your fellow passengers will have a safe and enjoyable experience.

### ***Other Information:***

- There is a medical team on board. **For medical assistance, contact any crew member.**
- Children should not play in the aisles.
- Packages, camera bags, backpacks, etc., must be kept out of the aisles and off the seats. Please use the overhead baggage racks where available.
- No sandals, thongs or bare feet are permitted. We reserve the right to insist on appropriate, safe footwear.
- If you have a scanner radio, AM/FM radio or tape/CD player, please use an earphone or headphones out of consideration for your fellow passengers.
- **Alcoholic beverages may not be brought aboard or consumed on the train, nor anywhere else on railroad property.**

# New Orleans or Bust!

## *The History of the Rail Line for Today's Trip, The Frisco River Division*



The railroad we will travel over today was built as the middle link of a proposed Chicago to New Orleans main

line, which never made it to Crescent City. Named the St. Louis, Memphis & Southeastern Railroad it was incorporated on January 8, 1902 in Missouri by capitalists and bankers who were associated with the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad.

As originally projected, the road would begin at Crystal City, Mo., and run 30 miles southward, or about five miles beyond Ste. Genevieve, Mo. The new railroad planned to take over several short lines that were already completed or under construction. Newman Erb, along with F. H. Prince and Co. of Boston organized the Missouri and Southeastern Construction Company to acquire and construct property for the new railroad.

The Chicago – New Orleans main line was the brainchild of the Frisco's ambitious, empire-building president, Benjamin Franklin Yoakum, who was born in Texas in 1859. He was elected vice-president in 1897, a year after it had emerged from receivership. In 1900 he was elected president.

Yoakum began his railroad career as a rod man and chain bearer of a railroad surveying gang. He was promoted to boss and surveyed new routes all over the West. Later, he became an immigration agent for Jay Gould's railroad lines. By age 25, he was traffic manager of the San Antonio & Arkansas Pass Railway.

The St. Louis and San Francisco was originally organized with transcontinental ambitions. It once controlled the Atlantic & Pacific Railroad; a line chartered by Congress in 1866, and awarded a right of way and millions of acres of government land from the western boundary of Missouri to California. In the 1880s, the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe began buying up blocks of Frisco stock, and by 1890 had majority control. In the meantime, the two lines shared construction costs for the Atlantic & Pacific main line from Albuquerque, N. M., west to the Colorado River. By contract, they were to share the earnings of this extension. However, by 1893, both the Frisco and Santa Fe lines were bankrupt. They had overextended and could not meet the interest payments on their bonded indebtedness. When the Santa Fe was reorganized, its management chose to retain the Atlantic & Pacific, which provided its main line across New Mexico and Arizona, but not the Frisco.

The St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad emerged from its own bankruptcy stripped of its holdings in the Atlantic & Pacific and was never reimbursed for its investment in Atlantic & Pacific construction costs. With its transcontinental ambitions thwarted, Frisco's management, under Yoakum's leadership, refocused its energies and resources on developing viable lines in the Midwest and Southwest, and eventually to the southeast of St. Louis.

The newly reorganized Frisco Railroad came out of receivership in 1896 with 990 miles of lines. By June 30, 1897, this mileage had increased to 1,162 miles. The Frisco then extended lines to Oklahoma City, and from Sapulpa, Okla. to Denison, Tex. It acquired the Kansas City, Clinton & Springfield in 1898, giving it a direct route from Kansas City to Springfield. Its most important acquisition was Kansas City, Fort Scott & Memphis, which Frisco leased in 1901 for 99 years. The KCFS&M extended from Memphis to Birmingham and Bessemer, Ala. The Ft. Scott line and the Birmingham line were connected to Memphis by a bridge built in 1892. Together they comprised 1,117 miles of railroad.

By 1902, Frisco totaled 3,252 miles of railroad, more than 3½ times the mileage it started with in 1896, and was poised for even more dramatic expansion.

### **ON TO NEW ORLEANS**

Yoakum's first goal was to develop a new route from Chicago to New Orleans. He pursued this plan despite the fact the Illinois Central Railroad had been operating a successful Chicago – New Orleans main line for many years. However, much of the railroad development of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries was duplication to the point of redundancy developing new routes between major centers by acquiring and consolidating existing short and medium sized railroads and connecting them with new construction where necessary.

The major building blocks of Frisco's St. Louis, Memphis & Southeastern were the Southern Missouri & Arkansas, the St. Louis & Memphis and the Chester, Perryville & Ste. Genevieve.

The Southern Missouri & Arkansas Railroad was acquired February 1, 1902. It originally had been incorporated in May 1899 by Newman Erb to take over the St. Louis, Cape Girardeau & Ft. Smith Railway, a 93-mile line he had acquired in a foreclosure sale. At the time of its sale to the Southeastern, the Southern Missouri had plans for 175 miles of track of which 125 miles were completed and were in operation. Only the first 8 miles of its line, from Cape Girardeau to Shepley, became part

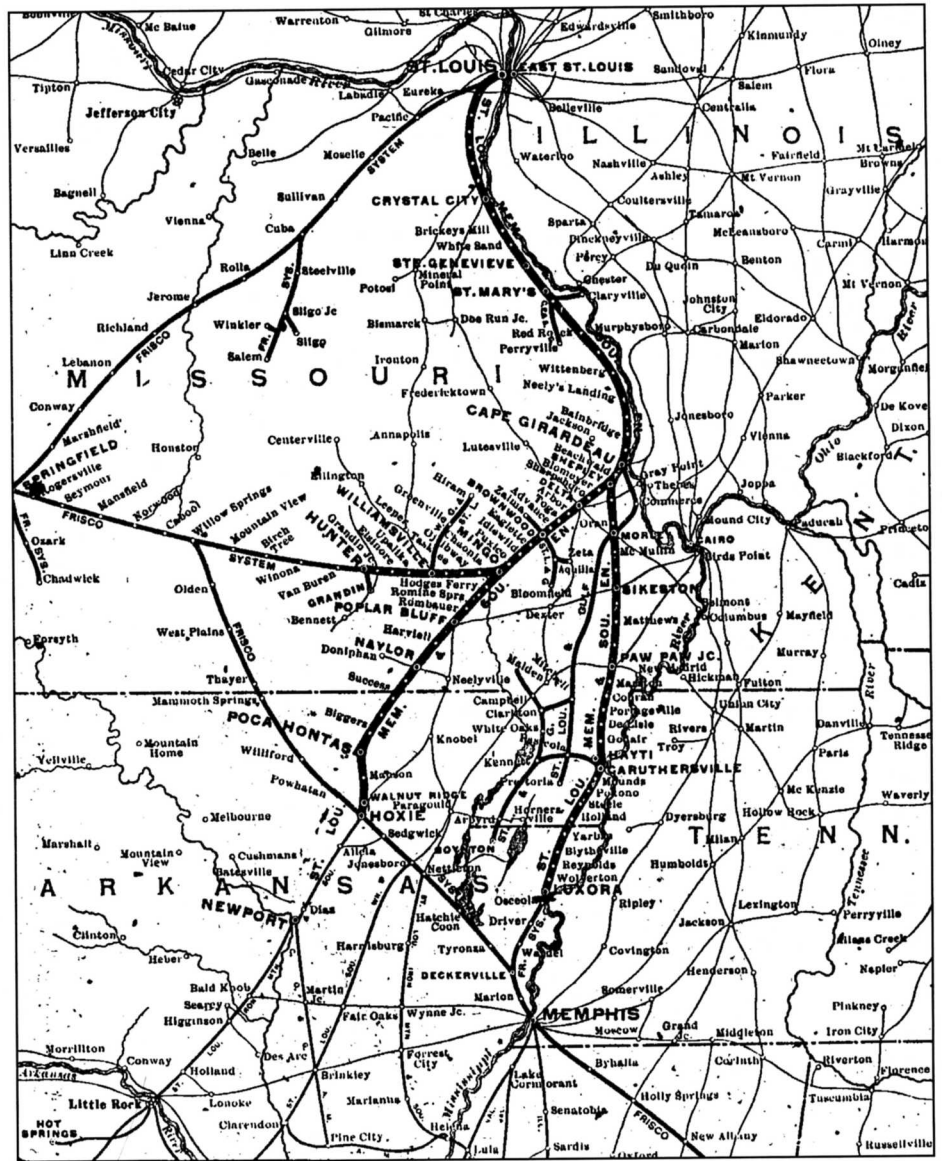
of the main line to Memphis. The remainder of the Southern Missouri main line extended southwest to Mingo, Mo., then westward to Hunter, Mo., where it joined the line of the Current River Railroad. The southwest fork of the Southern Missouri line extended from Mingo, through Poplar Bluff, Mo., and was still under construction at the time of the sale. It was completed to Pochontas, Ark., in April of 1902.

The St. Louis & Memphis Railway was a 74-mile line that represented a consolidation of three short lines. It proceeded southward through Hayti and Caruthersville, Mo., and Blytheville, Ark., to Luxora, where it joined the 28-mile Deckerville-Luxora branch of the Kansas City, Ft. Scott & Memphis Railroad. It was sold to the St.LM&SE for \$648,000, on March 1, 1902.

The St.LM&SE purchased 11 miles of the Chester, Perryville & Ste. Genevieve Railway between Ste. Genevieve and Perryville Junction on February 1, 1902, for \$140,000. Prior to the sale the Perryville road had discontinued operations and removed rails, fastenings, and ties, so the Southeastern had to rebuild the line.

One of the earliest ancestors of the St. Louis Memphis & Southeastern was the Crystal City Railway, incorporated in 1878, and sold two years later to a successor line, the Crystal Railway. These lines were subsidiaries of the Crystal Plate Glass Company, and that company's successor the Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company. The Crystal City Railway was constructed as a narrow gauge line extending from Crystal Station, Mo., on the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railway, to Crystal City, a distance of 3 miles. In late 1880, it was converted to standard gauge (4' 8½" between the rails). Since its charter did not authorize standard gauge operation, it was conveyed to the newly organized Crystal Railway, January 5, 1881. The Pittsburgh Plate Glass Company sold the Crystal Railway to the St. Louis, Memphis & Southeastern on May 1, 1902 for \$60,000.

Soon after its incorporation in January 1902, the St.LM&SE awarded a construction contract for the first 30 miles south of Crystal City to Johnston Brothers Construction Company of St. Elmo, Il. On January 31, 1902, Vice President E. F. Blomeyor announced in *Railway Age* the route of the new line. He said it would begin at a junction with the St. Louis and San Francisco



**Map of the St. Louis, Memphis & Southeastern Railroad from 1904**

*Collection of William McKenzie*

mainline near St. Louis and run 125 miles to Cape Girardeau, passing through Crystal City, Ste. Genevieve, and Wittenberg. He said surveying had been completed from Cape Girardeau north to Wittenberg, 35 miles, and from Ste. Genevieve to Crystal City, 25 miles. Surveying was underway on the rest of the route.

Blomeyer said the line would have a maximum grade of 0.4% and maximum curvature of 4 degrees. It would be laid with steel rails weighing 75 pounds to the yard.

In March 1902, the Southeastern's Board of Directors authorized construction of a line south from Shepley, near Cape Girardeau, to Paw Paw Junction, 47 miles. This route would provide a link between the northern lines then being surveyed, and the St. Louis & Memphis Railroad between Paw Paw and Luxora, Ark., which was largely complete.

## ACQUIRING THE CHICAGO LINK

The next step in Yoakum's grand scheme was to acquire a Chicago connection. He set his sights on the 738-mile Chicago & Eastern Illinois Railroad. In a circular addressed to C&EI stockholders, dated August 7, 1902, the St. Louis and San Francisco offered to purchase their shares at the premium price of \$150 per share for preferred stock and \$250 per share of common. For most of them, it was an offer they couldn't refuse. By December of 1902, Frisco had purchased about 60% of C&EI preferred stock at a cost of \$6,083,850, and 92% of C&EI common stock at a cost of \$16,555,250. However, these securities were not paid for in cash. C&EI stockholders who sold out exchanged their shares for Frisco's preferred and common stock trust certificates.

The C&EI ran from Chicago to Danville, Ill., where one branch split off to Evansville, Ind., and the main line continued southwest to Findlay, and then south through Salem, Mt. Vernon, and Benton to Thebes, Ill., where a great new bridge was under construction just south of Cape Girardeau. While the bridge was being built, C&EI used a transfer boat to ferry its cars across the river and on to Chaffee, Mo., where it interchanged cars with the St. Louis Memphis and Southeastern.

## CONSTRUCTION BEGINS

Johnston Brothers began construction on the 47-mile link between Paw Paw Junction (Lilbourne) and Shepley, Mo., south of Cape Girardeau during the summer of 1902. This territory was relatively flat and presented no unusual construction challenges. There were only 11 curves. Track laying on this section began Oct. 10, and rails were being put down at a rate of two miles a day.

In September 1902, the Southeastern's Board of Directors awarded a contract for construction of the north end of the main line between the St. Louis city limits and Crystal City to McArthur Brothers Construction Company of Chicago. The heaviest and most challenging work would be required for this 33-mile section.

Johnston Brothers and McArthur Brothers did the actual construction work in the field. So what role did the Missouri and Southeastern Construction Company play in the building of the railroad?

The Missouri and Southeastern Construction Company, which was organized by officials of the railroad, was the fundraising arm of the enterprise. The St.LM&SE issued \$12.5 million capital stock and \$8,530,000 first mortgage bonds and delivered these securities to the Missouri and Southeastern Construction Company for building the road. The construction company in turn sold the stocks and bonds to generate a cash flow to finance actual construction. An underwriting syndicate composed of the St. Louis Union Trust Co., of St. Louis, Newman Erb of New York, and F. H. Prince of Boston agreed to pur-

chase \$5 million first mortgage bonds and \$2,500,000 of the capital stock. The parent corporation, the Frisco Railroad also made cash advances to the construction company totaling \$3,708,500.

Stocks and bonds were sold at discounts. While the line was being built, the construction company raised \$8,211,437 from the sale of Frisco, St.LM&SE and subsidiary companies stocks and bonds. The construction company spent \$7,432,601 on the building of new lines and \$708,000 for acquisition of existing lines, for a total investment of \$8,204,438.

That amount was almost equal to the authorized mortgage bond issues of \$8,530,000, reflecting a common trend in financing of new railroad projects throughout the country during the period from 1900 to 1915. Most of them were built with borrowed money. Little of the railroad expansion was financed by risk capital. Certainly, stock was issued and subscribed to by investors. The St.LM&SE authorized capital stock totaling \$12,500,000, but it was largely worthless. It represented little real value, except for control of the property. The heavy reliance on bonded debt placed an increasing burden of interest payments on the carriers. By 1915, many of them, including the Frisco system, were drowning in debt.

On November 17, 1902, the long anticipated sale of the St.LM&SE to the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad was consummated. Earlier the Frisco had been acquiring shares of Southeastern stock on the open market for \$30 per share (\$100 par value). In November, Frisco purchased the remaining shares of the \$12,500,000 stock issue for \$47 per share.

About the same time, the railroads implemented an agreement giving the Southeastern use of the Frisco terminals in St. Louis and Memphis for 50 years. Frisco obtained trackage rights over the completed southern portion of the Southeastern from Luxora, Ark. to Cape Girardeau, Mo., where it would connect with the Chicago & Eastern Illinois line crossing the Mississippi River from Thebes, Ill.

The northern terminus of the line was a point called Southeastern Junction, located at the west end of Frisco's Lindenwood Yard, in southwest St. Louis, about 7 miles from St. Louis Union Station. From Southeastern Junction to Cape Girardeau, the track distance is 124.1 miles. Since it follows almost every bend of the Mississippi River, the alignment is quite irregular, with 317 curves and an aggregate length of 35.2 miles of curved line. Grading began in January 1903.

The first 30 miles from Southeastern Junction traversed rolling and sometimes rugged hills. There were numerous tributary streams to cross, requiring 164 timber trestles. The most important bridge was the crossing of

the Meramec River near Arnold. This structure featured three through steel truss spans, each 150 feet long, mounted on piers containing 3,300 cubic yards of concrete. Completion of this bridge was delayed by spring flooding, which washed away the falsework.

The line followed a saw-tooth profile between Southeastern Junction and Crystal City with ruling grades of 52 feet per mile (1 percent). From Crystal City to the Meramec River, 22.5 miles, earthwork quantities averaged 37,000 cubic yards of excavation, and 46,000 cubic yards of embankment per mile. There were numerous cuts through the hills and bluffs. The largest cut, 4½ miles south of the Meramec River, was a half-mile long and up to 60 feet deep. Some 116,000 cubic yards of material had to be removed, of which 70% was solid rock, and 30% was loose rock and earth. Excavation began in April 1903 and was completed in April 1904.

Track laying began in Cape Girardeau on January 16, 1903, and proceeded northward at the rate of 1,800 feet a day. End of track reached Red Rock Landing, 41 miles by August 16, 1903; Crystal City, 91 miles north, was reached by February 8, 1904. The line was laid with steel rails weighing 75 pounds per yard on white oak ties; averaging 3,100 per mile.

On the northern section, a Holman track-laying machine began laying railroad ties southward from Southeastern Junction. On February 16, the track-laying machine reached the big rock cut, 16 miles south of Southeastern Junction, and there work ceased because the excavation was not yet complete.

The tracklayers working north from Crystal City resumed work in mid-February. The northern and the southern sections of the line were joined at the rock cut on March 17, 1904. The line was no sooner completed than floods on the Mississippi caused extensive damage to the freshly graded embankments. Repairing the flood damage delayed the official opening of the short line to Memphis by several months. Circulars were published July 1, 1904 announcing the St.LM&SE was open for business.

On June 1, 1904, the St.LM&SE purchased a parallel railroad, the St. Louis & Gulf Railroad, which had been acquired in November 1902, by the Frisco. The St.L&G opened a 122-mile main line from Cape Girardeau to Caruthersville, Mo., and various branch lines in the Missouri Bootheel region – a system totaling 257 miles. Its acquisition by the Frisco may have been a defensive purchase to prevent it from falling into the hands of a rival railroad, such as the St. Louis Iron Mountain & Southern. When fully completed, the St.LM&SE totaled 682 miles, of which 509 miles were purchased, and 173 miles were new construction. In 1906, two branches totaling 16 miles were abandoned because they represented dupli-

cate construction by the acquired short lines. The total mileage of the Southeastern was reduced to 666 miles.

About the same time the Southeastern Line was completed, it and the Frisco gained a new direct connection to Chicago. The Cleveland, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railroad (Big Four Route), a subsidiary of the New York Central System, completed a new double-track main line between East St. Louis and Pana, Ill., 85 miles. Under an agreement signed by the Frisco and the C&E

ST. LOUIS, MEMPHIS AND BIRMINGHAM AND THE SOUTHEAST														
		805-105 Mem- phian Daily		807-107 The Sun- land Daily		Miles	TABLE 3				108-808 The Sun- land Daily		106-806 Mem- phian Daily	
		PM	AM	PM	AM		PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM
		11.30	8.45	0.0	0.0	St. Louis, Mo., A, B, I, 4, 5, 11, 13, 15, 20, 25, 28	Ar	5.30	7.30					
		11.39	8.53	3.3	3.3	Tower Grove, A, B, I, 4	Ar	5.17	7.18					
			9.07	11.0	11.0	Gravois	Ar	5.00	p					
			9.30	28.5	28.5	Imperial	Ar	4.38						
			9.33	28.6	28.6	Barnhart	Ar	4.38						
			9.47	39.0	39.0	Festus	Ar	4.18						
		12.36	9.55	40.0	40.0	Crystal City	Ar	4.15	6.15					
			10.05	46.8	46.8	Rush Tower	Ar	3.58						
			10.14	53.2	53.2	Briokley's	Ar	3.48						
		1.13	10.34	65.1	65.1	Sta. Genevieve	Ar	3.29	5.37					
		1.26	10.50	74.3	74.3	St. Marys	Ar	3.15	5.23					
			11.02	80.7	80.7	McBride	Ar	3.04						
			11.14	88.3	88.3	Menfro	Ar	2.54						
			11.24	95.5	95.5	Seventy-Six	Ar	2.42						
			ry	97.8	97.8	Starland	Ar	np.						
873 Sun. only	875 Ex. Sun.		11.35	103.0	103.0	Wittenberg	Ar	2.28					876 Sun. only	874 Sun. only
AM	AM	2.48	12.22	131.5	131.5	Cape Girardeau, B, 13, 15	Ar	1.45	3.53	4.45	3.20	3.20	4.45	3.11
5.00	7.00	2.48	12.22	131.5	131.5	Cape Girardeau, B, 13, 15	Ar	1.45	3.53	4.15	3.11	3.11	4.15	3.11
5.07	7.20			134.1	134.1	Marquette, 15	Ar	1.45	3.53	4.05	3.03	3.03	4.05	3.03
5.17	7.30			139.3	139.3	Naah, 15	Ar	1.45	3.53	4.05	3.03	3.03	4.05	3.03
AM	AM		12.38	141.7	141.7	Rookview	Ar	1.24						
		3.10	12.42	143.8	143.8	Ar Chaffee	Ar	1.20	3.25					
		3.16	12.49	143.8	143.8	Ar Chaffee	Ar	1.10	3.16					
			12.59	150.8	150.8	Oran	Ar	12.99						
			1.11	155.1	155.1	Brooks Junction, 15	Ar	12.49						
			1.18	160.0	160.0	McMullin	Ar	12.43						
		3.51	1.28	165.7	165.7	Sikeston, B	Ar	12.33	2.41					
			1.39	173.8	173.8	Matthews	Ar	12.23						
			1.47	179.8	179.8	Kewanee	Ar	12.13						
		4.17	1.57	185.9	185.9	Lilbourn	Ar	12.03	2.16					
			2.06	191.2	191.2	Marston	Ar	11.52						
			2.10	194.2	194.2	Conran	Ar	11.47						
881 Motor Car Daily	821 Daily		2.18	199.1	199.1	Portageville	Ar	11.38	np.				882 Motor Car Daily	822 Daily
PM	AM	5.01	2.29	206.5	206.5	Swift	Ar	11.27					PM	AM
5.20	AM		2.32	208.1	208.1	Netherlands	Ar	11.23					5.25	AM
5.39	AM		2.40	212.9	212.9	Ar Hayti, 15	Ar	11.15	1.30				6.00	AM
6.00	6.05			212.9	212.9	Ar Hayti, 15	Ar	11.07					6.37	AM
6.10	6.13			217.4	217.4	Ar Cunningham, 15	Ar	10.52					6.30	AM
6.20	6.20			220.3	220.3	Ar Caruthersville, 15	Ar	10.52					6.30	AM
			3.21	218.7	218.7	Ar Grassy Bayou	Ar	10.34						
			3.30	224.6	224.6	Steele	Ar	10.26						
			3.38	227.5	227.5	Holland	Ar	10.22						
				230.9	230.9	Hermondale, Mo.	Ar	10.14						
		5.38	3.43	233.2	233.2	Yarbo, Ark	Ar	10.03	12.52					
			3.53	237.3	237.3	Blytheville, B, 16, 37	Ar	9.55						
			4.03	244.6	244.6	Burdette	Ar	9.48						
			4.10	249.2	249.2	Luxora	Ar	9.38	np.					
			4.20	253.7	253.7	Osceola	Ar	9.30						
			4.28	258.3	258.3	Gridler	Ar	9.26						
			4.30	260.9	260.9	Driver	Ar	9.17	np.					
			4.43	264.6	264.6	Wilson, 19	Ar	9.09						
			4.50	269.7	269.7	Bassett	Ar	9.04						
			4.55	272.0	272.0	Joiner	Ar	8.58						
			5.01	275.5	275.5	Frenchmen's Bayou	Ar	8.45	np.					
			5.15	283.3	283.3	Turrell, 8	Ar	8.45	np.					
			5.21	287.8	287.8	Clarkdale, 8	Ar	8.38						
			5.28	289.2	289.2	Jericho	Ar	8.30						
			5.38	294.6	294.6	Marion, 8	Ar	8.23						
			5.45	302.3	302.3	Bridge Junction, Ark, 8	Ar	8.15						
		7.15	5.55	305.4	305.4	Ar Memphis, Tenn, B, 8, 20	Ar	8.05	11.20					
		8.00	10.45	305.4	305.4	Ar Memphis, Tenn, B, 8, 20	Ar	6.50	7.00					
		2.40	7.00	558.5	558.5	Ar Birmingham, Ala, B, 8	Ar	10.35	12.15					
			8.10	0.0	0.0	Ar Birmingham, (S. A. L.)	Ar	8.38	12.10					
			12.45	166.5	166.5	Ar Atlanta, Ga.	Ar	4.00	7.50					
		3.00	7.15	0.0	0.0	Ar Birmingham, (Sou. Ry.)	Ar	8.18	11.45					
		7.49	11.50	167.6	167.6	Ar Atlanta, Ga., (C.T.)	Ar	3.40	7.10					
		6.05		519.7	519.7	Ar Jacksonville Fla. (E.T.)	Ar	9.05						
		7.30		0.0	0.0	Ar Jacksonville, (F. E. C.)	Ar		6.30					
		3.00		366.0	366.0	Ar Miami	Ar		10.00					
		9.10		0.0	0.0	Ar Jacksonville, (S. A. L.)	Ar	8.10						
		4.00		266.0	266.0	Ar St. Petersburg	Ar	11.05						

For complete schedules of trains between Memphis and Birmingham see Table 2.  
Reference Notes for Tables 3 and 4  
f Stops on signal. m Mixed train. v Motor Car.  
k Stops to take on or let off passengers for or from points north of Turrell.  
n Stops on signal to take on revenue passengers for St. Louis.  
p Stops to let off revenue passengers from Memphis.  
r Stops on signal to take on revenue passengers for Memphis.  
y Stops to let off revenue passengers from St. Louis.

Passenger timetable for the Frisco's River Subdivision from 1938  
Collection of Tony Marchiando

railroads in 1902, these railroads would have trackage rights over the new Big Four main line for 999 years. In January 1904, the C&EI began construction of a 20-mile link between Findlay and Pana.

The Southeastern lasted only three more years. On June 30, 1907, the corporation was dissolved and consolidated with the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad. During the three years it operated as a separate subsidiary, the Southeastern was not profitable. Perhaps the failure to complete the third link in the Chicago-New Orleans route was part of the problem.

### **TO NEW ORLEANS AND MEXICO**

Several scenarios had been floated for closing the gap between Memphis and New Orleans. The preferred option was for the Frisco to build its own line, and indeed it surveyed a route between Marion, Ark., about 11 miles west of Memphis, to Baton Rouge, down the west bank of the Mississippi River, a distance of 365 miles.

On December 30, 1904, the Frisco announced that it would operate freight service over the Mobile & Ohio Railroad from Tupelo, Miss., and over the New Orleans & Northeastern at the southern end of the route, beginning in January 1905. Frisco and the Southern Railway were developing a terminal operation in New Orleans through the 16-mile New Orleans Terminal Railway, which they jointly owned.

The Mobile & Ohio trackage rights arrangements were considered a temporary arrangement until the Frisco could build its own line. That never happened. Instead, the Frisco leapfrogged the New Orleans gap and began building a new system of subsidiaries in Louisiana and Texas. First was the New Orleans, Texas & Mexico, operating from New Orleans via Baton Rouge and Eunice, La. to Beaumont, Tex. Next was the Beaumont, Sour Lake & Western, from Beaumont to Houston. The St. Louis, Brownsville & Mexico ran from Houston to Brownsville, on the Mexican border. It had branches to Victoria, Austwell, Port O'Connor, Port Isabel, and Corpus Cristi, and a Rio Grande Valley branch serving rich agricultural regions around Edinburg, Harlingen, and San Fordyce. Collectively, these lines from New Orleans south to the border were known as the Gulf Coast Lines, and they eventually totaled 977 miles.

During the period from 1903 to 1909, the Frisco was controlled by the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad through majority stock ownership. However, it still retained its separate identity. At its peak, the Rock Island - Frisco system controlled 17,000 miles of railroad.

This arrangement was not to last. Both the Frisco and Rock Island were over extended with debt. They came to a parting of the ways. The Rock Island sold its interests in the Frisco to a group headed by Yoakum and Edwin Hawley.

The crunch came in 1912, when the Frisco System reported only \$177,398 net income. There was nothing to pay dividends to the stockholders. However, even this figure was inaccurate, because it did not reflect the earnings and expenses of the New Orleans, Texas & Mexico, which were carried in a separate account.

That subsidiary's total income of \$904,244 was about half of what was required to pay its fixed charges: interest, track rentals, and equipment rentals. This deficit was charged to the profit and loss account of the Frisco System. In 1913, the deficit increased to \$1,219,293.

The year 1912 was marred by devastating floods in the Mississippi River valley. The water was five feet above previous flood levels. It broke levees near Portageville, Mo., about 67 miles south of Cape Girardeau, on March 24. Subsequent breaks between there and Memphis put 153 miles of line in Missouri and Arkansas out of commission. All train service between St. Louis and Memphis and Kansas City and Memphis was shut down until May 10. Repair costs totaled \$274,008 and loss of earnings during the flood exceeded \$500,000.

The Frisco had no sooner repaired its lines in Missouri and Arkansas than floods topped levees in Louisiana, interrupting traffic on the New Orleans, Texas & Mexico, and submerging 46 miles of its tracks.

The Gulf Coast Lines were projected in the hope of developing a lucrative freight interchange with the Mexican railroads. A series of revolutions in Mexico after 1910 destroyed the tracks south of the border and cut interchange to a trickle.

### **FINANCIAL MELTDOWN**

In May 27, 1913, the Frisco went into receivership. The Chicago & Eastern Illinois followed soon afterward.

The Frisco's reorganization committee decided to spin off the C&EI, the New Orleans Texas and Mexico, and the Gulf Coast Lines. Frisco's financial problems were attributed to the failure of the C&EI and the NOT&M to earn their fixed charges, which Frisco assumed when it took over these companies. The Gulf Coast Lines were eventually acquired by the Missouri Pacific.

The Interstate Commerce Commission had another take on the cause of the Frisco's collapse: It attributed Frisco's failure to the purchase of unprofitable mileage in the Southwest, the payment of extravagant commissions to banks and bankers, and to the unjustified payment of dividends upon preferred stock issues at a time when standards of maintenance of the road and of equipment were being reduced. Construction companies in which Yoakum and other prominent officials of the railroad were deeply involved built most of the Frisco's mileage. These lines were sold to the Frisco at greatly enhanced values. Nine of these roads were sold to the Frisco for

