

COLLECTING THE PAST

People have often asked me how I became so interested in trains. No, I never worked for a railroad, nor did my dad nor his father before him. (I did have a distant uncle and some cousins who worked for the railroad in East Texas – more about that in a minute.) But trains have been in my blood since I was a kid, watching them go by my grandparent's home in Grayburg, Texas – near Beaumont on the Missouri Pacific main line between New Orleans and Houston.

I've known several men who worked for various railroads, and many of them simply don't understand the attraction for railfans. To them, it's a job – period. But to me, and other lovers of all things rail-related, it's a passion.

One part of the hobby I enjoy (like many of you as well) is collecting railroad memorabilia, or as it is sometimes called, *railroadiana*. Like any form of collecting, there are different ways to enjoy this hobby. Some collectors get all they can of certain items, from any railroad – dining car China, for example, or time-tables. Others collect items from certain railroads, and that's where I fall into this obsession. My chosen favorites are the Texas & Pacific and its corporate big brother, the Missouri Pacific. I mean, if I can't own the railroad, I can at least own a few pieces of it, right?



This charger plate from the 1920s was used on Texas-based passenger train dining cars of the Missouri Pacific / Texas & Pacific Lines.

One of my most prized pieces is this charger plate from the Missouri Pacific / Texas & Pacific. Back in the day, when you were seated in the diner, there would be a fancy plate at each seat – not for food, but just as a placeholder. When the waiter brought your order, he would remove the charger and replace it with

the plate that had your meal on it. In the 1920s, the MP/T&P had a series of plates made for their crack “Sunshine Special” passenger trains, with the state flowers of every state those rail lines served. Most of the plates had the Missouri state flower at the top position, but for the trains in Texas, the bluebonnet held that place of honor.

Do you remember when milk came in a small glass bottle instead of the waxed cardboard cartons they use now? When you were having breakfast on a dining car, your milk would be served in a little half-pint bottle with the railroad's name, as well as the name of the dairy that produced it. I have one for the Missouri Pacific RR from Sunnymede Farm of Bismarck, Missouri.

If you were traveling first class in the Pullman car, you might want something stronger than milk to help you sleep in the evening. If so, the porter would bring you a little bottle of bourbon. It held 1/10th of a pint of 100 proof whiskey – roughly equivalent to the 50mL “shooter” bottles you get nowadays. I have a little brown bottle that once held Old Forester bourbon. The bottle is about 2 ½ inches wide and 3 ½ inches tall, and has the Old Forester label on one side, and the Pullman Sleeping Car logo on the other. You can still buy Old Forester bourbon today, but I bet it was never finer than when enjoyed while “rocking of gentle beat” of your private Pullman compartment.

One last piece I want to tell you about is a cuspidor, AKA a spittoon. It has been in my family for a century now, and my grandmother Sallie McMillan gave it to me. How did she get it? Well, the story, as she told it, went like this: Her uncle – so that's my great, GREAT-uncle – was a railroad brakeman in East Texas, near Palestine. One of his sons was also a brakeman, back in the days when those guys had to walk on top of moving cars to set the brakes. The son was killed one day when he was thrown off the roof of a moving car that stopped violently.

Anyway, when my grandmother's uncle retired in the 1920s, as he was leaving the caboose for the last time, he announced, “This railroad has taken a lot from me over the years; now I'm going to take a piece of it!” He reached down and picked up the cuspidor and headed home.

It doesn't have any markings on it to prove that it came from the RR, or out of a caboose, but that was his story, and I'm sticking to it.

Dusty

(Please see inside, page 3, for more photos.)

KEEPING TRACK

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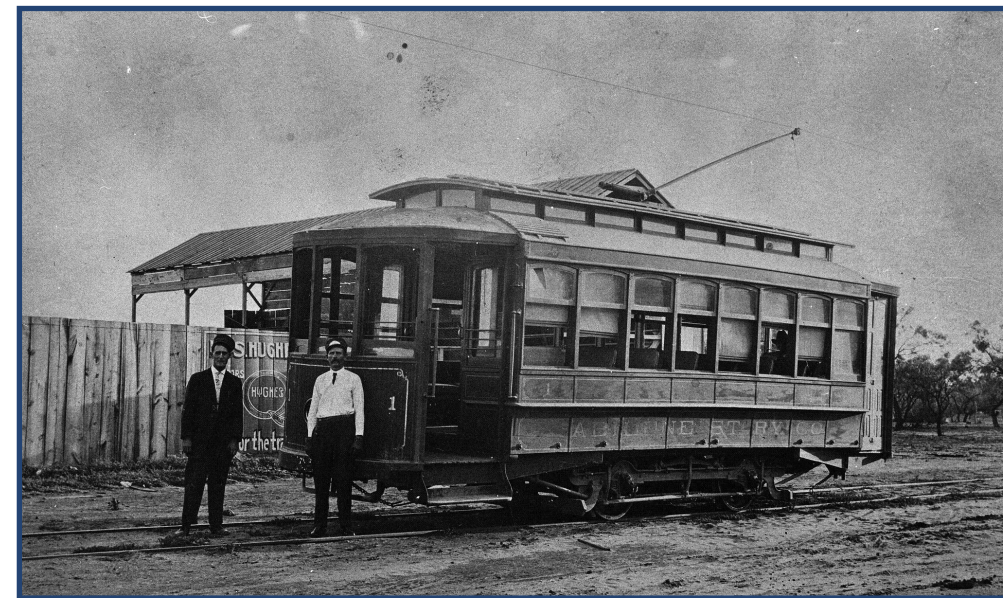
April 2025

Editor: Dusty Garrison

The Abilene Street Railway Company

Did you know that Abilene once had its very own neighborhood trolley system? The Abilene Street Railway Company operated between 1908 and 1931 from Hardin-Simmons University (then known as Simmons College), south to downtown Abilene. It continued south down Chestnut Street before turning west on South 7th, then south again on Grand to McMurry.

Dusty Garrison, with research assistance from Corrender Taylor, will present a program on this fascinating chapter in Abilene rail history, immediately following the ASMR business meeting, on Saturday, April 5.



The Word from The Prez

Ramblings from Your Prez

In just over a month, we will be participating in our first *Abilene Gives Day*. I and others will be attending training sessions to help us be better prepared. We are approved to participate as a non-profit in the Abilene area, but some of the work that can help us interest people and organizations that want to donate to ASMR still needs to be fleshed out on the Abilene Gives / Non-profit Compass / GiveGab websites. Anyone that receives this newsletter and would like to help, please contact me. The online giving begins April 28th – May 5th with the “Big 12 Hour Giving Day” on May 6th, from 8:00 am – 8:00 pm that day. All giving is online, by going to AbileneGives.org.

The main reason for getting this out now is for all of you to spread the word to friends, acquaintances and family that the Abilene Society of Model Railroaders is now able to be included in their Day of Giving. FULL DISCLOSURE - People and Organizations are free to contribute directly to us at any time, without going through Abilene Gives as there is a small fee that Give-Gab charges when they donate through Abilene Gives. Those that donate through AG are eligible for prizes and gifts that are given out to those donors on Gives Day.



As has been discussed at previous meetings, some of our financial needs are for building improvements, railroad-related current / historical presentations, and outreach to the community about the importance of railroads in the development of Abilene and the Big Country.

As you plan your summer, if you haven't been to Baton Rouge, Louisiana, in a while (or ever), you might want to look into the NMRA Lone Star Region's “Blues Express” June 26-29, 2025, in Baton Rouge. The link is bluesexpress2025.com for information and registration for this event. There will be a model contest, clinics, prototype tours in the local area, dinner, and plenty of time to visit with like-minded railroad enthusiasts.

See you at the club!

**Your Prez,
Dan**

ASMR Meeting Minutes March 2025

A meeting of the ASMR was opened at approximately 10:00 am, March 1, 2025, by Vice President Kent Stark. The following members were present or arrived after the meeting had started: Ken Riediger, Jon Prestridge, Scott Strickler, Cody Hilliard, Jonathan Scherr, Jeffrey Cowen, Kent Stark, Amanda Leggett, Reed Leggett, Jim Gibson, David Hills, Ted Komorowski, Don Balch.

Minutes

The minutes of the February meeting were read by Secretary Cody Hilliard. A motion to approve the secretary's report was made by Jim Gibson and seconded by Ken Riediger with all members in agreement.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Ken Riediger reported that the balance of the account as of March 1 was \$830.22 with total club assets equaling \$5104.76. A motion to approve the treasurer's report was made by Jim Gibson and seconded by Cody Hilliard with all members in agreement.

Old Business

- Kent started the meeting by mentioning that we had two prior members rejoining.
- Kent asked for any updates on the renovation of the layout. Jon made a motion to form a committee to approve updates to the layout. This was seconded by Jonathan with all members in agreement. Jon, Jonathan, and Jim would be on this committee.
- Jim recommended that we sell merchandise to raise money for the club. The club discussed this and Jim was going to look into it.
- Dan then moved on to past dues. We had 3 members past due for a total of \$230.00.
- Kens operating session would be on Mach 15.
- Ken and Jerry brought some trains that are on sale.
- Dan also reported that we have the calendars and we have 11 copies left.
- The sign issue was tabled.
- Kent asked the club if there were any trips that we should take. This was discussed by the club with several good ideas such as going to the BNSF dispatcher. Several members were going to look into this more.
- Terry reported that he has the helix working with signals.
- Kent reported that the paperwork was submitted for Abilene Gives but we still need to come up with our needs. Ken made a motion to reimburse Dan \$75 for the fee. This was seconded by Cody with all members in agreement.
- Cody reported that the security cable was installed. Waiting to receive the system from Christopher.

Old Business (Continued)

- Dan reminded everyone that we needed to do some maintenance on the ride-on train. Recommended before we need to use it in June.
- Kent reported that Jonathan would be giving his clinic after the meeting. It would be about the Abilene Southern.
- Ken reported that we had several storage lockers for rent.

New Business

- Ken reported that we received an email about a showcase and T&P items that would be temporarily loaned to the club. The club discussed this but some members requesting more information about this.

With no further business the meeting was closed at 10:56 by Vice President Kent Stark.

Respectfully submitted,
Cody Hilliard, Secretary
Abilene Society of Model Railroaders

Seen at the KRBN RR Op Session



KRBN RR March OP Session

The March OP session of the KRBN railroad was held on March 15th. We started the day with eleven trains to run to finish the "day." We ended up with six operators. The crew was Dusty, Cecil, Billy, Jon, Richard and Reed. Now Reed wasn't supposed to be there because of family spring break plans, but I received a text right after noon stating they were heading back from spring break, and would it be okay for Reed to come by at about 2:15. Of course, I said yes. Reed already had to miss the February OP session.

This group of five train crews (Billy worked with Cecil) were able to move seven of the eleven trains while committing only two errors and leaving one switch thrown for a siding. Lonnie texted me that morning he would not make it as he was headed out with a train from Sweetwater to Pecos. He was able to do a make-up session on the 20th in which he ran the remaining four trains to complete the "day." Now the April OP Session will start a new day.

Some of the statistics that RAIL-OP keeps track of when I clear the "day's" information to start a new day: we ran 42 trains, switched 1,228 cars and moved 34,944 tons of freight. Hope to see you next time on the KRBN RR as we start a new "day." See you April 19, 2025, at 1:30 pm.

(Article and photos by Ken Riediger)



Collecting the Past *(Please see story on back page)*

(Top) This milk bottle was used on MoPac dining cars for many years.

(Middle) If you were riding a Pullman car and wanted a little "something," the porter might serve it in a bottle like this.

(Bottom) This spittoon from a MoPac caboose has been in Dusty's family for nearly a hundred years.

