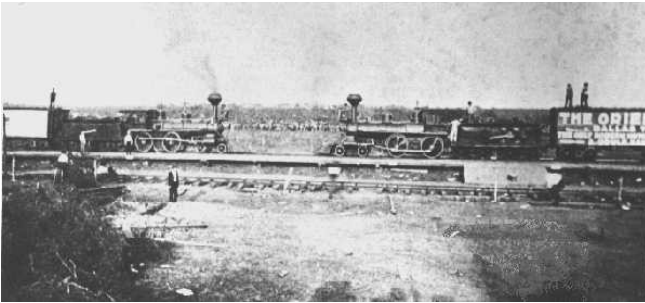


Roundhouse Notes

Paducah Chapter
National Railway Historical Society
October 2014

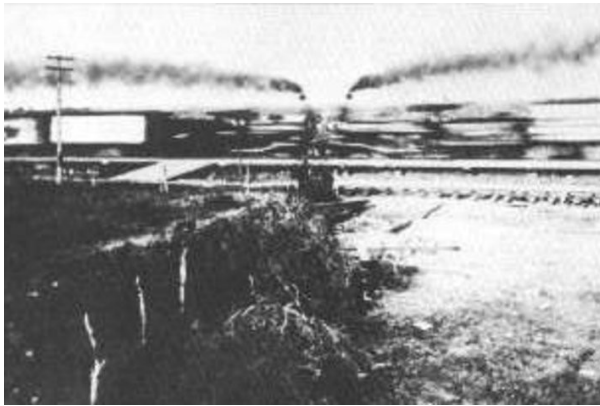
CRASH AT CRUSH. A plaque fifteen miles north of Waco in McLennan County marks the site of the "Crash at Crush." On September 15, 1896, more than 40,000 people flocked to this spot to witness one of the most spectacular publicity stunts of the nineteenth century—a planned train wreck. The man behind this unusual event was William



George Crush, passenger agent for the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad. In 1895 Crush proposed to Katy officials that the company stage a train wreck as an attraction; he planned to advertise the event months in advance, sell tickets to transport

in towns throughout the state. Thousands turned out to look at them.

As the arena for his spectacle, Crush selected a shallow valley just north of Waco, conveniently located close to Katy's Waco-Dallas track. In early September 500 workmen laid four miles of track for the collision run and constructed a grandstand for "honored guests," three speaker's stands, two telegraph offices, a stand for reporters, and a bandstand. A restaurant was set up in a borrowed Ringling Brothers circus tent, and a huge carnival midway with dozens of medicine shows, game booths, and lemonade and soft-drink stands was built. Finally, workmen erected a special depot with a platform 2,100 feet long, and a sign was painted to inform passengers that they had arrived at Crush, Texas.



spectators to and from the site on Katy trains, and then run two old locomotives head-on into each other. The officials agreed.

Throughout the summer of 1896 bulletins and circulars advertising the "Monster Crash" were distributed throughout Texas. Many newspapers in Texas ran daily reports on the preparations, and some papers outside the state carried the story. As Crush had predicted, the Katy offices were flooded with ticket requests. The engines, Old No. 999, painted a bright green, and No. 1001, painted a brilliant red, were displayed

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George Crush told a reporter that he expected a crowd of around 20,000. The first of thirty-three fully loaded excursion trains arrived at daybreak on September 15, and by 3:00 P.M. more than 40,000 people were on the grounds picnicking, listening to political speeches, and waiting for the great crash. Two dollars bought a round-trip ticket from anywhere in the state, and some passengers were obliged

to ride on top of the cars because there was



no room left inside. At 5:00 P.M. engines No. 999 and 1001 squared off at opposite ends of the four-mile

track. Crush appeared riding a white horse and trotted to the center of the track. He raised his white hat and after a pause whipped it sharply down. A great cheer went up from the crowd as they pressed forward for a better view. The locomotives jumped



forward, and with whistles shrieking roared toward each other. Then, in a thunderous, grinding crash, the trains collided. The two locomotives rose up at their meeting and erupted in steam and smoke. Almost simultaneously, both boilers exploded, filling the air with pieces of flying metal. Spectators turned and ran in blind panic. Two young men and a woman were killed. At least six other people were injured seriously by the flying debris.

The Katy wrecker-trains moved in to remove the larger wreckage, and souvenir hunters carried off the rest. People began to leave for home, the tents, stands, and midway booths came down, and by nightfall Crush, Texas, ceased to exist. The Katy quickly settled all damage claims brought against it with cash and lifetime rail passes. As for George Crush, the railroad fired him that evening but relented and rehired him the next day. He continued to work for the Katy until his retirement. Composer [Scott Joplin](#) commemorated the event in his march *Great Crush Collision* which was published just a few weeks after the wreck. It has been surmised that the spectacle drew its huge audience in part because it occurred at a time of economic distress when railroads symbolized to many the evils of the big business "octopus" and were a target of attack for populist politicians.

Allen Lee Hamilton, "CRASH AT CRUSH," *Handbook of Texas Online* (<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/l/c01>), accessed September 18, 2014. Uploaded on June 12, 2010. Modified on February 4, 2014. Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

NEWS AND VIEWS

Bob Johnston

WESLEY ROSS UPDATE:

Wes is reported to be out of the hospital but doing rehab, and his diabetes is under control. He recently attended the board meeting of the Bluegrass RR Museum. He is having to change his life style but is very lucky to be doing so well after a major heart attack and five by-passes.

LOU JACQUITH: I called Paducah Chapter member Lou, who lives in Lexington to get the update on Wes, and learned that Lou also had an unexpected heart attack on September 12th, and had a stent put in to clear a blockage. He was dismissed the next day, and is doing well and trying to “take it easy” on doctor’s orders.

P&L: I talked to Tony Reck at the Ribbon Cutting for the new Genova (plastic) Products plant located in the former Infiniti building located at the Olivet Church Road crossing, and he said he expects Genova to continue to receive plastic pellets in covered hoppers as Infiniti did... On a recent trip through the yards I saw 20 or more loaded lumber cars, so guess that business continues good... Passenger cars Bluegrass I & II have been put inside the “motor car” shop to

protect them from the winter elements.

VMV: The September 22nd, TRAINS NEWS WIRE reported that a 3,800 h.p. SD 60, number 9000 with radial trucks will be on its way to New England where it will share tasks with the Providence & Worcester and the Vermont Rail Systems during their respective peak seasons. The locomotive has GMTX reporting marks and is painted in their trademark blue and white paint with the respective railroad marks plus a stylized map of New England. The 9000 was built as EMD demonstrator #3, and later became an Oakway in BNSF service. Although the shop from which it emerged was not named; the accompanying photograph showed clearly it was NRE/VMV, Paducah..... On September 11, saw GMTX 2235 & 2687 coupled to NRTZ (Natchez Ry) 2602. On October 1, John Deming, driving down Kentucky Ave. saw a locomotive on a flat car at VMV on the spur, the next day it was wrapped in bubble wrap behind the tank shop; earlier I had seen one of the rebuilt narrow gauge engines going to Kenya in the paint shop and believe that or a sister must be

the one on the flat car as, of course, they have to go out that way.

PROGRESS RAIL: Progress has been working on a project of 20 SD70Ace-P4’s for BNSF. They will be numbered 8500-8519, and have four traction motors and two idler axels; BNSF believes they will be an equal or better alternative to their SD70m-2 that uses six DC traction motors... Progress has run an ad in the PADUCAH SUN advertising for Full-Time locomotive electricians at its Mayfield, KY facility. Apply at www.progressrail.com/careers

NRHS CHANGES: The NRHS continues plans to reinvent itself. *Tentatively* it basically plans to become primarily a donor based preservation organization that would solicit funds from members and others for preservation and educational efforts such as Most At-Risk list, Railway Heritage Grant program, and RailCamp. The chapter model would be “retired,” and affiliates would enter into a “franchise type agreement” Conventions would continue, but perhaps in a different format. *This is a very brief and incomplete summary.* For more information go

to: admin.nrhs.com/public.
(TRAINS NEW WIRE, September 17th)

ONE PERSON CREW REJECTED: A proposed change in train crew size that would have had far reaching ramifications in the railroad industry has been rejected by rank and file vote. The deal negotiated by the BNSF with the bargaining committee of the Transportation Division of the Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation union (SMART) would have let BNSF replace on-board conductors with a “master conductor,” position in which the master conductor would work multiple trains from a motor vehicle and drive to a train when an engineer needed help.

CN RECORD FINE: Canadian National Railroad has been fined a record \$ 5.2 million dollars by the Federal Communications Commission because the company made hundreds of unauthorized acquisitions and operations of wireless radio facilities in the U, S. over a 20 year span. Under the consent decree, the company will implement a three year plan to ensure its compliance with FCC requirements, plus maintain an internal compliance plan. (This writer does not understand what this is all about, perhaps a reader can explain).
(Through mergers and other business dealings CN did not

have the right to transfer previous owners FCC license to themselves without FCC approval. Absorbed companies had also made this maneuver when they absorbed companies as far back as 1990. Ed.)

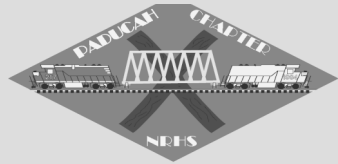
SAFETY AD: The Sunday, September 14th edition of the PADUCAH SUN contained a page wide ad headlined, “Don’t Put Your Life on the Line,” and emphasizing the dangers of riding four-wheeler ATV’s on or near railroad tracks. These ads are probably timed to the opening of the hunting seasons.

CHICAGO-St. LOUIS HIGH SPEED: Illinois and UP have completed tie and rail work for high speed service between the two cities. Much work on Positive Train Control, siding and grade crossing improvements (four quadrant gates, etc.) remain to be done, but it is expected that beginning at the end of 2015 time will be reduced by 30 minutes, and another 30 minutes, by the end of 2017. Today, only 15 miles between Dwight and Pontiac, IL are capable of 110 mph speeds. Illinois is contributing \$ 400 million and the Federal Government \$ 1.2 billion.

MUSEUM: The museum had 350 visitors in September. This is sizable decrease from the 560 last September. Again, I don’t have a comparison of

groups and boats to last year, but, uncountable, the absence of model trains is a factor. In that respect, Glen Pollender has designed an “O” gauge layout in the back gallery, lumber is on hand, and John Deming is getting it cut to specifications; so at least we are making progress. Don Alvey’s name has been added to the memorial plaque. We hope it is the last for a long time! I wish to make a clarification and apology to Carolyn Rudolph whom I complimented in last month’s NEWS & VIEWS for her excellent and dedicated work on the front desk, but in that issue, I inadvertently gave her the wrong last name.

Roundhouse Notes



Published monthly by the Paducah Chapter, National Railway Historical Society. *Send your news, photos to:*

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**Meeting
Tuesday OCT 14th
Paducah Railroad
Museum Meeting
Room
7PM**

Boiler explosion from the Crash at Crush Texas.
(*The Texas Collection, Baylor University*)

Roundhouse Notes
& Charles Gibbons
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