

# Roundhouse Notes

Paducah Chapter  
National Railway Historical Society  
March 2014

## Sears and the Railroads

Richard Sears was an agent of the Minneapolis and St. Louis railway station in North Redwood, Minnesota. Sears job as station agent left him plenty of spare time, so he sold lumber and coal to local residents on the side to



Richard W. Sears

make extra money. Later, when he received a shipment of watches - unwanted by a neighboring Redwood Falls jeweler - he was ready. Sears purchased them himself, sold the watches at a nice profit to other station agents up and down the line, and then ordered more for resale.

In 1886 Sears began the R.W. Sears Watch Company in Minneapolis.

The following year, Sears moved his business to Chicago and inserted a classified ad in the Chicago Daily News.

"WANTED: Watchmaker with reference who can furnish tools. State age, experience and salary required. ADDRESS T39, Daily News."

An Indiana lad, Alvah C. Roebuck answered the ad. He told Sears he knew watches and



Alvah C. Roebuck

brought a sample of his work to prove it. Sears hired him. Here began the association of two young men, both still in their twenties, that was to make their names famous. For it was in 1893 that the corporate name of the firm became Sears, Roebuck and Co.

Sears, Roebuck and Co. and other mail-order companies were the answer to farmers' prayers. Thanks to volume buying, to the railroads and post office, and later to rural free delivery and parcel post, they offered a happy alternative to the high-priced rural stores. Years later the company adopted the motto "Shop at Sears and Save." Because farmers could do so in the 1890s, Sears prospered.

While the earliest catalogs featured only watches and jewelry, the new firm by 1895 was producing a 532-page catalog with many other items. This book offered shoes, women's garments and millinery, wagons, fishing tackle, stoves, furniture, china,

musical instruments, saddles, firearms, buggies, bicycles, baby carriages and glassware, in addition to watches and jewelry.

*From the Sears Archives*

## Member Receives 25 Year Pin

Dick Kastas recently received through the Paducah Chapter, his 25 year pin and also certificate for his service to the National Railway Historical Society. Although it would have been more appropriate to have presented it



to him at a regular meeting, since it arrived shortly after the February meeting, we did not want to make him wait and gave it to him at a committee meeting. Dick is a Director of the Chapter.

Late Again:

Weather and work contributed to this newsletter being published late.

# NEWS AND VIEWS

*Bob Johnston*

**RICHARD BINKLEY:** On February 27<sup>th</sup>, Paducah Chapter lost a member and old friend to many of us. Richard Binkley passed away unexpectedly at his home near Kentucky Lake. Richard was one of the early members of the Paducah Chapter, and also spent countless hours in helping set up the museum, including use of his tools, equipment, and truck and trailer. He was a retired rail-roader having worked for the Wabash, Norfolk & Western, and Norfolk Southern. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family.

**DICK KASTAS:** Dick recently received through the Paducah Chapter, his 25 year pin and also certificate for his service to the National Railway Historical Society. Although it would have been more appropriate to have presented it to him at a regular meeting, since it arrived shortly after the February meeting, we did not want to make him wait and gave it to him at a committee meeting. Dick is a Director of the Chapter, and also Program Chairman. Unfortunately he reports that he is having some health issues, and may not be able to be as active for a period. We congratulate him on his recognition and pray for a speedy resolution of his medical problems.

**P&L/VMV:** Nothing new to report, except on February 6<sup>th</sup>, I saw a GP38-2, GMTX 2214, on

hand at VMV painted in red, white, and blue, with the outline of the State of Texas, but no road name.

**ARTIFACT FOUND:** Around a month ago I had a phone call from a Mr. Artis of Paducah who while walking with his son on the river front found a coin with the inscription, "Paducah City Railway," and was curious about what it was. By checking Charles Gibbon's article in the January ROUNDHOUSE NOTES, I was able to tell him it was a street car token from the company that ran the system from 1902-1905. Just one more example for the resource our museum and chapter provides for research.

**NEW/OLD "LOCAL" RAILROAD:** On February 6<sup>th</sup>, Channel 6 News reported that service had resumed at Herrin, IL on what had been a 5 mile segment of the former Crab Orchard & Egyptian RR, where service had been suspended for three years. The new company is called Progressive Rail and interchanges with BNSF. The original and longer (19) mile section of the CO&E operates out of Marion, and interchanges with UP.

**PUBLIC RAIL PLAN MEETING:** On February 27<sup>th</sup>, a "come and go," public meeting was held at the Pontotoc Center in Fulton, KY to "gather feedback about rail transportation issues and

needs in the state," and to update the Kentucky Statewide Rail Plan. According to the article in the Paducah SUN, the current plan was last updated in 2002, and the plan and the meeting were under the auspices of the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet. I will try to find out more about what transpired at the meeting and report in next month's column.

**FULTON AMTRAK STATION:** On February 27<sup>th</sup>, WPSD News ran a story including interviews with several officials and civic leaders in Fulton regarding their dis-satisfaction with the seedy appearance and bad location of the Fulton Amtrak station which is located in a metal building far out in the yards, and is where passengers board the nightly "City of New Orleans, north & southbound. The station is one of only four Amtrak stations in Kentucky, the other three being in the opposite end of the state at South Shore, Ashland, and Maysville, to serve the "Cardinal." The Fulton station handles the most passengers of the four, 4558, in 2013. Unfortunately, it does not appear anything can be done about the location since it is on the main line through town where the "CONO" runs. The present arrangement, which seems to work, is for the passengers to leave their cars in town and the Fulton Police Department and/or the Fulton Trans-

portation Authority to take them to the train (and pick them up when arriving). Interestingly, this story reminded me of another on WPSD a couple of years ago about a proposal by Bardwell, KY to move the 'CONO' stop to that town where they have a traditional station building on the Main Street. No word that I know of on what happened to that proposal.

**NEW CSX YARD AT HOP-TOWN:** Construction has begun at Pembroke, 10 miles southeast of Hopkinsville, on a new inspection yard on CSX's Henderson Sub. It will extend 5 miles between Pembroke and Cask, consist of 280 acres, and be called the Cask Yard. Trains will be inspected and serviced, and will initially provide 50 on site jobs. Amenities will include a four inspection tracks, three support tracks, a yard office, car repair facility and repair track, a wye for turning locomotives, and 12 foot concrete inspection platforms between the tracks.

**PRESIDENT'S TRANSPORTATION PROPOSAL:** On February 26<sup>th</sup>, at the newly restored St. Paul Union Depot, President Obama a number of new transportation proposals, including \$ 19 Billion in dedicated funding for rail systems, including \$ 5 Billion for passenger rail programs with a focus on improving the connections between key regional city pairs and high traffic corridors. The proposals were well received by rail supporters including the National Association of Railroad Passengers as it would enable both Amtrak and

state supported passenger systems to be strengthened, but most realize these are proposals, and depending on the current Congress to act on innovative programs that involve money are tenuous at best.

**STEAM EXCURSION ON TENN. CENTRAL:** To celebrate its 25th anniversary of operating excursions, the Tennessee Central Railway will operate coal fired steam excursions on May31 -June 1, using No. 75, an 0-4-0 saddle tank owned by Gramling Locomotive Works of Indiana. The trips will be shorter than usual, and of course have fewer cars because of the small size of the engine.

**BNSF INOVATION:** The many proposals for changes in both tank car construction and train handling in the movement of CBR (Crude By Rail) mentioned in the February NEW AND VIEWS continue to be announced, but this month BNSF made rail history by announcing a plan to order 5000 new tank cars meeting the new standards to supply its shippers. Historically, the bulk of the North American tank car fleet has been supplied by leasing companies or the oil companies themselves, not by the railroads.

**MUSEUM:** The museum had a "soft" opening on March 1<sup>st</sup> in preparation for the "grand" opening on March 8<sup>th</sup>, with "Little Obie." At present it is a work in progress and looks very different with displays in different locations from before, and not all previous items are displayed in keeping with Amy's belief that rotating will create more interest.

John Maxfield says the simulator will be working at opening but not sure about CTC, but it will be soon. There will continue to be rearranging in the rear gallery. The new carpet and lighter painted walls in the front gallery do present a much brighter look, and the Alveys seem to be pleased with the relocated gift shop that gives them more room to move around. As we know, "the only thing certain is change," and hopefully, as work evolves, everyone, including the public, will be pleased.

**LITTLE OBIE:** The annual visit of the popular Canadian National miniature wheeled train will be on Saturday March 8th. The weather forecast is much better that it has been. Advertising has been arranged, and if all goes as planned, we will have good crowds that will also pay to visit the museum. If you receive this before Saturday PLEASE come to the museum and help with the crowd control and myriad other tasks.

## Roundhouse Notes

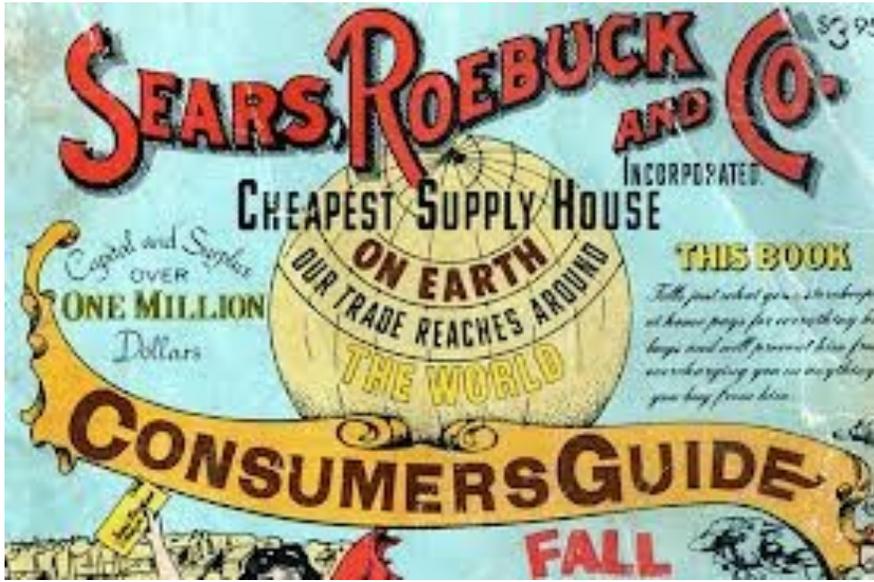


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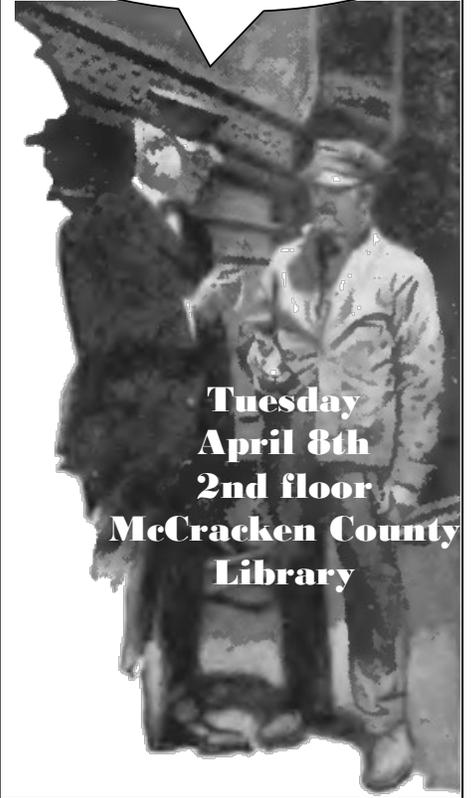
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Early Sears Catalog

Troops

Opps this publication missed the March Meeting. Lets go to April's



**Tuesday  
April 8th  
2nd floor  
McCracken County  
Library**

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