

# Roundhouse Notes

Paducah Chapter  
National Railway Historical Society  
May 2016



*A Marion electric shovel loads coal in the foreground while in the background a larger crane strips away the overburden. 1959, Cliff Downey collection*



*Coal at River Queen was shipped out via rail on the IC, and via river barges on the Green River (Peabody operated a rail line between the tippel and coal barge. 1959, Cliff Downey collection.*

Cliff Downey shared these Peabody Coal Co. photos from the River Queen Mine near Central City on his facebook page.

Cliff reported the following: “Peabody Energy, the nation's largest coal producer, filed for bankruptcy on Wednesday, April 13, 2016. Although it's operations have been scaled way back in recent decades, Peabody historically was the dominant coal company in the west

Kentucky and southern Illinois coal fields. Peabody supplied the IC and other Midwest railroads with countless carloads of black diamond over the decades. These photos were taken at Peabody's River Queen mine near Central City, KY. The River Queen mine has been shut down for nearly 30 years, but hopefully Peabody can survive.”



*Once mined, coal at River Queen was hauled to the tippel to be washed, screened, and readied for shipped. In 1959 one of the haulers has arrived at Peabody's River Queen tippel with another load of west Kentucky coal. Cliff Downey collection.*

# NEWS AND VIEWS

*Bob Johnston*

**CORRECTION:** In the April "News and Views," I incorrectly reported the routing of the P&L Bluegrass I Business Car on its trip to Frankfort for the Kentucky General Assembly reception. At Louisville it was given to CSX who then delivered it to R. J. Corman for handling to Lexington and then Frankfort. The P&L does not have direct connection to RJC. I apologize for the error.

**P&L's Generous Offer:** As reported briefly in last month's "News and Views," we had an unexpected and generous offer from P&L Railway to give the museum their office building (formerly IC KY Division Hdqrs.) at 1500 Kentucky Ave for use as a museum. Our four directors and several interested members including John Deming toured the building a few days later. We were also accompanied by Nick Warren, a local retired architect who graciously agreed to give us advice. Although the building is well built and historic, it would be difficult to use as museum as it now stands, because of no entries for heavy equipment, no handicapped access from outside or to the second floor, many small rooms, and the bathrooms have previously been rebuilt with new floors over old plumbing necessitating a step up to access them. There are a number of different HVAC units in various locations, many different large breaker boxes and other equipment which with the size of the building would necessitate a trained person on hand for maintenance. The utilities would, of course, be con-

siderable higher than we are now paying. Renting part of the building to produce income was considered, but would involve complications compartmentalizing space and utilities, parking, and, of course, no elevator to the second floor. Also, being further from the river, down-town, and other museums and attractions would mean, at least at first, we would have difficulty in attracting enough more visitors to pay for the additional expenses.

Of course if we had a much larger chapter of younger, energetic people with vision (and money) there would be many possibilities but the sad fact is that as of now we do not. Therefore we had to regretfully and respectfully decline the offer at this time. This decision while difficult to accept seems pragmatic and unavoidable this time, but if something unexpected changes, the offer will perhaps still be available.

## **CN MICOWAVE TOWER:**

While looking at the P&L office building, most noticed the large microwave tower adjacent to the rear of the building. The first tower was built by the I.C. in the late 1960's, and was part of the first and most sophisticated railroad communication systems at the time. Of course, the IC is now CN and they lease the location from P&L who bought the property from I.C. Apparently the location is still an essential and integral part of the system.

The original tower was 250 feet high and will be taken down, and

the new tower is 308 feet; it provides microwave/radio communication and will also have added Positive Train Control equipment which all major railroads must have in the near future. (Thanks to Mike Favre for this information).

**NRE/VMV:** Still not a lot of obvious unusual activity visible from the parking lot. Behind the tank shop and the fence I just saw a red, silver, and blue RailAmerica GP 40. It appears to be (or have been) operated by short line AGR (Alabama Gulf Coast).

RailAmerica was a holding company for short line railroads which in 2013 was purchased and absorbed by Genesee & Wyoming,

**REXALL DRUG TRAIN:** In the Jan-March ROUNDHOUSE NOTES, Editor Charles Gibbons included a picture taken in the 1930's of the Rexall Drug Train, which the insert said was visiting 10,000 Rexall Drug stores in 147 cities in the U.S. The multi-car passenger train contained displays of all the products made and sold by Rexall. The picture was of particular interest to this writer because as a 5 year old I remember being taken by my parents to tour the train which was spotted between Broadway and Kentucky on the tracks at 11<sup>th</sup> Street. At that time there were two Rexall Drug Stores in Paducah, both operated by Gilbert-Bennett Company, one at the northwest corner of 4<sup>th</sup> & Broadway, and the other on the northwest corner of 6<sup>th</sup> & Broadway. Believe it or not we have

small file on the Rexall train in the museum if you are interested or a visitor happens to ask. Who says the Paducah RR museum is not comprehensive?

**SIGHTING:** On April 21<sup>st</sup> Allan Rhodes and I caught the FUPD (Fulton Turn) coming in late at 9:30 p.m. with a long string of cars including eleven cars of lumber, probably for Wyatt-Bell. (Sometimes the P&L also delivers lumber to Dairyman's in Mayfield).

**CP-NS MERGER:** In the March "News and Views," I predicted that CP's proposal seemed to go nowhere. This proved to be true, as on April 11<sup>th</sup> CP issued a news release that said that although they believed consolidation was necessary for North American railroads to meet a growing economy, they were dropping their bid for merger or take-over. This was after the U.S. Justice Department and the U.S. Army opposed CP's unusual plan to put itself in trust and let Hunter Harrison operate the NS while negotiations were going on. Previously many other agencies, industries, and unions had expressed opposition. Interestingly, in the May TRAINS Magazine, railroad columnist and commentator Fred Frailey expressed his support for the need of mergers resulting in a nationwide railroad.

**NORFOLK-SOUTHERN:** The take-over effort by CP has had obvious effects on NS. Since it surfaced it put in a new management team, streamlined operations including reducing expenses and improving service levels, while eliminating unprofitable operations. As a result their just released quarterly report showed a 25% increase in profits. Part of the de-

crease in expenses (probably mostly PR) was a disappointment to rail fans as it resulted in NS's decision to not send their business train to the Masters Golf Tournament in Augusta as they normally do, while CSX and BNSF did so as usual.

**NEW KENTUCKY STEAM RESTORATION:** It was recently reported by TRAINS NEWS WIRE, that a Lexington, KY group, Kentucky Steam Heritage Corp. plans to restore to operating condition Chesapeake & Ohio 2-8-4 #2716. The locomotive is now owned by the Kentucky Railway Museum but will be moved to Lexington later this year. Although the 2716 has been restored twice before in the 1980's by Southern and in 1996 by the Ft. Wayne Historical Society, this restoration is expected to cost between \$ 800,000 and \$ 1.3 million and be completed by 2020. It was not announced where the money was coming from or where the engine would run. At last report R. J. Corman has a Chinese built steam engine in Lexington that is little used.

**BADGER STEAM FERRY:** On February 18<sup>th</sup> it was announced that the National Park Service designated the SS *Badger* steam ferry as a National Historic Landmark. The ship is the last remaining railroad coal fired steam ferry and operates between Ludington, MI and Manitowoc, WI. Built in 1952-53 by the Pere Marquette RR and acquired by C&O, it was once part of a large fleet of Lake Michigan RR ferries. It has been many years since it hauled rail cars, but is still popular for automobiles and passengers looking for a unique experience. In the mid 1990's Ann & I took a bus tour with Price Tours of Paducah (that also included a

rail trip to Agawa Canyon on the Wisconsin Central) that included a trip from Ludington to Manitowoc on the Badger that included a night in one of their staterooms, a unique experience indeed.

**MUSEUM:** We had 412 total visitors in March including "Little Obie." Once again we had a near miss with Obie as rain was predicted, but held off, and we had a good turn-out. Everyone had a good time, and the gift shop did well. The SUN sent a reporter and gave us a good story ahead of time which helped, and WPSD-TV was on hand the day of the event. We had a steady crowd for the quilt show with a total of 126, from all around the world; including Australia.... Walter Bromley is back in town and is working on getting the CTC and Block signals lit again. Thanks to him. The trains are running and Glen continues to work on the scenery on the O Scale Layout. .

## Roundhouse Notes



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

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*In 1959 a new LeTourneau-Westinghouse coal hauler arrives at Peabody's River Queen coal mine near Greenville, KY. Cliff Downey collection.*

*"....Daddy won't you take me back to Muhlenberg County, down by the Green river where Paradise lay... Well I'm Sorry my son but you're too late in asking, Mr Peabody's coal train has hauled it away...." — John Prine, from the song Paradise*

**Meeting \***  
**Tuesday May 10th**  
**7PM**  
**At the**  
**Museum Meeting**  
**Room**

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P.O. Box 1194  
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