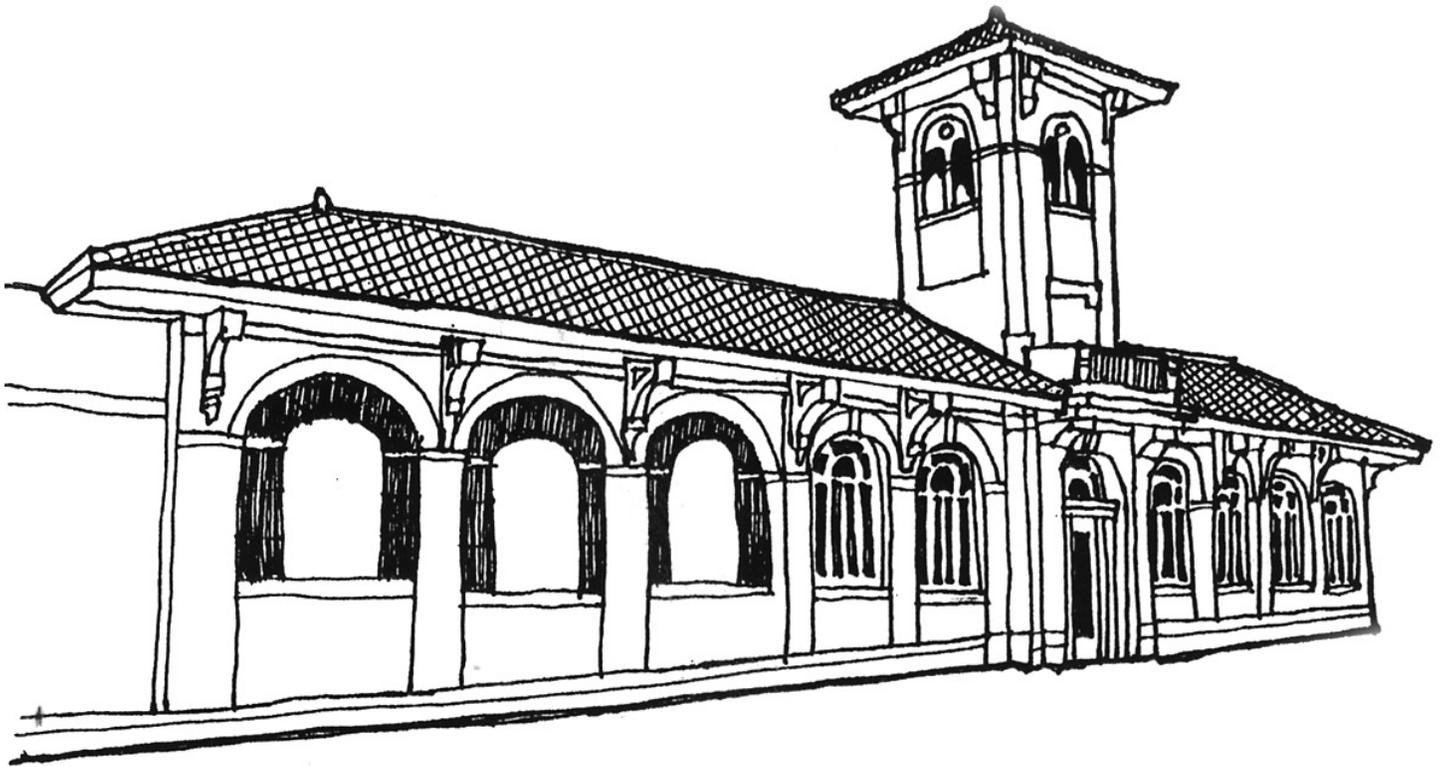


Historic Railroad Depots of Arkansas, 1870-1940

By William D. Baker



*Missouri-Pacific Depot
Hot Springs
Garland County, Arkansas*

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A Historic Context Written and Researched
By William D. Baker

Cover illustration by Cynthia Haas

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I. Introduction

In 1850 and 1851, Captain Joshua Barney was ordered to Arkansas by the Secretary of War and the Chief Engineer of the War Department to make a survey of the most feasible "route of a line of railroad from St. Louis to the Big Bend of the Red River."¹ Thus began the railroad age in Arkansas. Two years later, the Arkansas General Assembly chartered the Cairo & Fulton and the Memphis & Little Rock railway companies, and construction of the first rail lines began before the end of the decade. The growth and expansion that followed would irrevocably alter transportation patterns and the course of the state's development over the next century. The most tangible structural symbol of the railroad was the depot building, the physical manifestation of the impact the railroad was having on both Arkansas and the nation as a whole.

The railroad and railroad depots were to have profound implications for the state's development and population patterns. Historic river towns, such as Napoleon and Davidsonville, bypassed by the railroads, slowly lost their economic vitality and eventually ceased to function as viable communities. At the same time, new communities developed around the depot points established by the railroads, communities wholly dependent on the railroad's traffic for their economic existence. The institution of the railroad has had an indelible impact on the built environment of Arkansas; many of the state's major communities began as depot points, while others that pre-existed the railroads had their development patterns significantly altered as a result of the institution. The railroad depots that survive from this "golden age" of Arkansas's railroad development, 1870 to 1940, represent important physical reminders of this pivotal period in the state's transportation history, and as such are deserving of recognition and preservation as endangered and irreplaceable facets of the state's cultural history.

II. Nineteenth Century Railroad Development in Arkansas

A. Pre-1870 Development

The history of railroad development in Arkansas is primarily a product of the post-Civil War period; at the time of secession in 1861, the only line operating in the state was a 38-mile stretch between Hopefield (present-day West Memphis) on the Mississippi and Madison on the St. Francis River. This stretch had fallen into disrepair and was virtually unusable by the end of the war. However, Reconstruction and the return of investment capital to the state brought renewed interest on the part of both state government and private interests in railroad development and the potential profits to be made.

An explosion of railroad activity took place in the years that followed. Powell Clayton, Arkansas's Republican governor during Reconstruction, was a leading advocate of railroad development during this period, and often used his influence and the powers of his office to approve or deny particular railroad projects. By 1871, 86 railroad companies had been chartered in the state; many existed only on paper and most were controlled by fewer than 20 prominent politicians and their allies, attracted by the tremendous

profits to be realized through railroad development.ⁱⁱ By 1880, 822 miles of track were in use, and by the end of the century there were more than 2,750 miles of operating rail lines in Arkansas.ⁱⁱⁱ

Federal railroad grants had been so prevalent in the years prior to the Civil War that, together, the Cairo & Fulton, Memphis & Little Rock, and Little Rock & Fort Smith railroads came into possession of 2.6 million acres of Arkansas land, about one-twelfth of the entire area of the state. Following the war, most of these railroad lands were sold in small tracts to individual owners, but the railroad companies retained considerable acreage for their own use.^{iv}

In 1866, the United States Congress renewed the former land grants it had used to spur railroad development and allocated 396,000 additional acres for the construction of the Cairo & Fulton and its branches, bringing the total of Cairo & Fulton land grants to 1.1 million acres. The following year, the Arkansas General Assembly overrode Governor Isaac Murphy's veto to issue state bonds for the construction of railroads. The same legislative session saw the incorporation of the Iron Mountain & Helena; the Arkansas, Louisiana, & Texas; the Little Rock & Fort Towson; the Pine Bluff, Princeton, & Arkadelphia; and the Little Rock City railway company. Over the next three years, the General Assembly issued a total of \$5.35 million in state bonds for the construction of the Memphis & Little Rock, the Pine Bluff & New Orleans, and the Ouachita & Red River railroads. By the close of the Murphy administration in 1868, the state's bonded debt had risen to \$11,643,000.^v

Shortly after taking office in July of 1868, Reconstruction Governor Powell Clayton approved a bill granting \$1,000 per railroad mile in state bonds, payable in 30 years at seven percent interest per annum, to railroads in need of financial assistance. Those railroad companies that had not already received federal grants were eligible to receive \$15,000 per railroad mile for construction and financing purposes. In applying with the secretary of state, each railroad company was required to issue a map of the proposed line showing the territory to be covered and the terminal points, an affidavit from the company's president and chief engineer showing the estimated cost to grade the first 100 miles of the line, another affidavit to the effect that ten miles had been graded and set up for actual use, and to furnish the administrative branch with other information as needed. The new act also provided for the establishment of a railroad commission, to include the governor and the secretary of state. In the 1868 general election, the state's voters approved state aid to railroads by a margin of five-to-one, with only Arkansas, Union, and White counties disapproving.^{vi}

A number of railroad companies took advantage of this offer of state aid. Both the Memphis & Little Rock and the Little Rock, Pine Bluff, & New Orleans received \$1.2 million, while the Arkansas Central received \$1.35 million. The Mississippi, Ouachita, and Red River Railroad received more than any other company, \$1.95 million, while the Cairo & Fulton, the Little Rock & Helena, and a few other companies refused the offer of state aid. In all, the state issued a total of \$5.35 million in railroad bonds.^{*vii}

R. C. Brinkley, for whom the eastern Arkansas city is named, became the president of the Memphis & Little Rock Railroad after the Civil War, and immediately initiated a program to rehabilitate and complete the whole line from the Mississippi to the Arkansas River. Most of what had existed prior to the war had deteriorated and the line had to be almost totally rebuilt. While in Great Britain to negotiate the purchase of

*The \$5.35 million in railroad bonds were issued and disposed of at very low evaluations, and were never much of a factor in railroad development or construction.

iron to make rails, Brinkley obtained the backing of George Peabody, a London financier. In appreciation, Brinkley later had a hotel in Memphis named in Peabody's honor.^{viii}

In May of 1869, representatives of Pulaski, Drew, Ashley, Prairie, and Jefferson counties met in Pine Bluff to discuss a proposed branch line of the Memphis & Little Rock from DeValls Bluff to connect the Arkansas River Valley with the eastern portion of the state. DeValls Bluff, which had been laid out on the west bank of the White River in 1866 on land owned by the Memphis & Little Rock Railroad Company, at the time was the eastern terminus of the line from Little Rock toward Memphis and had been expected to become one of Arkansas's leading cities. Soon afterward, a dispute began among the Memphis & Little Rock's stockholders over who should be director of the company.^{ix}

Most railroad controversies and dissensions during this period started because of over-anxiety to complete the roads quickly. Many of the state bonds found their way to the New York market where they were sold cheaply, further damaging the state's reputation in the nation's financial markets. Many of Arkansas's early railroad companies went under, including the Little Rock, Pine Bluff, & New Orleans, and the Mississippi, Ouachita, & Red River.^x

B. Reconstruction and Railroad Development

1. Arkansas Railroad Development in the 1870s

In 1871 there were a total of 86 chartered railway companies in Arkansas, all controlled by fewer than 20 powerful politicians and their allies. The state had a bonded indebtedness of \$6.9 million, and yet had only 271 miles of railroad track to show for it.^{xi} However, the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern had obvious designs on Arkansas as it sought to extend its line from St. Louis as far as Texas. The Missouri-based railroad bought out the Cairo & Fulton line, which had secured numerous rights-of-way in Arkansas prior to the Civil War, then began construction of what would become the first railroad to cross the entire state. The Iron Mountain line paralleled the old Southwest Trail, from northeast Arkansas through Little Rock to Fulton on the Red River. Meanwhile, the Little Rock & Fort Smith Railroad began construction of a line to parallel the Little Rock and Fort Smith road.^{xii}

Amid concern over the generally slow pace of railroad construction, the General Assembly on March 28, 1871, passed a measure demanding that all railroads that had received state aid and were presently under construction should complete one-quarter of their lines within two years, and one-half of their lines within three years. That same month, Acting Governor Ozro A. Hardley approved the Levee Act, giving railroads the opportunity to collect state aid ranging from \$10,000 to \$15,000 per mile in swampy areas needing levees. The Levee Act was to ensure that each railroad had sufficient finances to complete its line by the deadline in the March 28 act.^{xiii**}

In 1873, a railroad bill was introduced to release the railroad companies from their indebtedness to the state and allow the taxpayers to pay the interest on the railroad bonds. Governor Elisha Baxter

**The 1871 Levee Act duplicated a similar measure passed by the General Assembly in 1868. Some railroads collected the state aid twice for the same mileage, some levees were authorized to be built that were of no practical value, and some were built and then abandoned.

vigorously opposed the bill, much to the chagrin of some of his Republican supporters.^{xiv} This incident led to a falling out between Governor Baxter and the political machine of former Governor Powell Clayton, a break which eventually led to the Brooks-Baxter War of 1874.

By the time the State Aid Bill was repealed in May 1874 by Democrats in the post-Reconstruction General Assembly, 440 miles of railroad had been built. About 700 miles of railroad were built during the five years of Reconstruction and Republican rule in Arkansas. R. C. Brinkley, owner of the Memphis & Little Rock Railroad Company, later told Governor Powell Clayton that his railroad could not have been built without this state aid, due to the expenses incurred through the frequent overflows of the Cache, St. Francis, and Mississippi Rivers.^{xv} In June 1877, the Arkansas Supreme Court ruled that the railroad aid and levee bonds had been illegally issued and were therefore void. The state was relieved of all responsibility for the bonded debt which, with principal and interest, amounted to \$7,135,298.^{xvi}

The opening of the Memphis & Little Rock line on August 21, 1871, ushered in a period of prosperity for the two cities that would last a generation. The line advertised through-service between Memphis and Argenta (present-day North Little Rock; the Memphis & Little Rock depot was on the north side of the river, "opposite the Point of Rocks at the foot of Rock Street.") Because there was no bridge over the White River, 17 miles of road between DeValls Bluff and Brinkley were unused for many years. Passengers were forced to disembark and proceed between Clarendon and DeValls Bluff by boat or stage (16 miles by stage, 35 miles by boat) to rejoin the rail line. The two portions of the line were made complete when the White River was bridged later in the decade.^{xvii}

In April 1873, the Baring Cross Bridge Company was incorporated in order to build a bridge across the Arkansas River from Argenta to Little Rock.^{***} The bridge was built and leased to the Cairo & Fulton Railroad Company, and the first train crossed it December 22, 1873.^{xviii} The city of Little Rock built its first mule-drawn street car in 1876, and track was laid from Second and Louisiana streets to the southeastern part of the city. This line was in operation by 1888; the round trip took one hour. Later, the City Electric Street Railway Company obtained a charter and electric street cars began to appear. The mule-drawn cars disappeared in 1895 when the company declared bankruptcy.^{xix}

The Cairo & Fulton line, controlled by Stephen F. Dorsey and his associates, was responsible for the development of Walnut Ridge, Newport, Malvern, Emmett, Prescott, and Hope.^{xx} By January 1874, the Cairo & Fulton had traversed the state, from the Missouri line north of Corning southwestward to Texarkana, where it linked with the International Railway of Texas to make a great trunk line. The terminal at the Texas border grew rapidly as trains began running from St. Louis to Texarkana and points beyond. In May of that year, the Cairo & Fulton consolidated with the St. Louis & Iron Mountain Railroad Company of Missouri to form the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad Company.^{xxi}

The western reaches of the state were incorporated into the network with the completion of the Little Rock & Fort Smith line in 1876. Heavily promoted by Charles G. Scott, a Van Buren merchant, the Little Rock & Fort Smith was responsible for the development of Conway, Morrilton, Russellville, and Atkins. The road was eventually taken into the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern network.^{xxii}

^{***}The company was named in honor of the primary financiers, the Baring brothers of London, England.

Later in the decade, Missouri and Kansas interests financed the development of the Missouri & Arkansas, which ran north from Helena through Forrest City, Wynne, Paragould, and Piggott to the Missouri state line. The Santa Fe Railroad used this stretch for a number of years in connecting the Atlantic and Pacific coasts. Other Arkansas railway companies that had their inceptions in the 1870s included the Little Rock, Mississippi, & Texas; the Little Rock & Arkansas Valley; and the Little Rock, Mississippi River & Texas.^{xxiii} Nationwide recessions in 1873 and 1878-79 practically stopped railroad development for a while, but by the early 1880s British and northern capitalists had returned to invest heavily in railroad development in Arkansas and other southern states.^{xxiv}

2. The Searcy Branch Railroad

The importance of the new railroad development to the economic future of a community was evident early on. In October of 1870, the Iron Mountain announced that it would complete the Cairo & Fulton line north to the Missouri border. In an attempt to persuade the railroad to direct the line through their community, the Searcy (White County) town council met with Cairo & Fulton executives in Little Rock to formulate an agreement to survey the route. If the route proved feasible, the city agreed to pay the difference between the two routes, plus pay the railroad a bonus, payable in 20-year U.S. bonds at eight percent interest. The Searcy town council appointed I. M. Moore as their special agent to serve as a liaison to the Cairo & Fulton executives and to ascertain the approximate cost of locating the railroad line and a depot within a half mile of the White County Courthouse.^{xxv}

In April of 1871, Searcy voters voted 109-1 in favor of extending \$20,000 in credit to connect Searcy with the main line at the nearest possible point. The hills located between Searcy and Bald Knob made construction of the line difficult, and controversies soon arose as to the amounts of the bonuses that Searcy should pay the Cairo & Fulton. By July of 1872, several prominent disgruntled citizens formed the rival Searcy Branch Railroad Company, with I. M. Moore as their president. Arrangements were made to construct their own branch as far as the Little Red River, near the head of low-water navigation.^{xxvi}

I. M. Moore and B. C. Black received the contract to construct a wooden track for one passenger car and one freight car, both horse drawn. The contractors were to receive \$5,000 in currency and \$8,000 in Searcy Branch Railroad bonds in five month installments to begin in September, 1872. The branch line was due to be opened January 1, 1873. B. D. Turner agreed to donate the land to build a depot in Searcy.^{xxvii}

In 1874, the Cairo & Fulton was acquired by the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern system, and in June, 1877 the Searcy Branch Line was purchased by W. A. and A. W. Yarnell. The Yarnell brothers eventually extended the rail line to West Point.^{xxviii}

3. The Hot Springs Railroad

In the early 1870s, Joseph "Diamond Joe" Reynolds travelled to Hot Springs from his native Chicago in order to "take the waters." Train service was available only as far as Malvern, at which point Reynolds' party proceeded onward to Hot Springs by wagon. The wagon broke down halfway to Hot Springs, and Reynolds' party was forced to walk several miles. On reaching his destination, Reynolds began to develop plans for a branch railroad from Hot Springs to Malvern. The Hot Springs Railroad was incorporated and constructed in 1875, but was not converted to standard gauge until 1889.^{xxix}

C. Railroad Development in the 1880s

There were still only 822 miles of operating railroad track in Arkansas in 1880, but railroad development was to accelerate during the course of the decade; by the close of the decade the total had increased to more than 2,000 miles.^{xxx} The steady growth and expansion of railway service and the locomotive coincided with and was responsible for the slow decline and death of steamboat trade after 1880. Shipping by water was too expensive, slow, and uncertain to compete with railroads. Concurrently, people began abandoning river towns in favor of newer communities established along rail lines. The railroads did contribute to the significant population increases Arkansas experienced during this period however, through their sponsorship and encouragement of immigration to the state. The railroad companies had received substantial land grants from the federal government in the 1870s and 1880s, and had an interest in seeing this land settled and cultivated so as to increase trade and shipping. Toward this end, the railroad companies sponsored newspaper tours of the state, and in 1877 the Southern and Western Immigration Convention met in Little Rock to showcase the state's attractiveness as an immigration destination. The St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern employed 300 immigration agents at one time, many of whom were active in Arkansas.^{xxxi}

Railroad development helped to establish the timber and mining industries in Arkansas, but concurrently drove the state's cotton and woolen-cloth industries out of business by importing cheaper cloth from northern and eastern mills. Freight rates in Arkansas and the South tended to be higher than those in other parts of the nation, and most of the major lines were financed and controlled by northern capitalists. Railroad interests came to occupy privileged and powerful positions in Arkansas, paying few taxes, exercising considerable influence in state and county government, and often setting their own rates. Arkansas tended to function as an economic colony of the northern states, providing such raw materials as cotton and timber, but relatively few finished products.^{xxxii}

Popular backlash against the power and perquisites of the railroads helped to foster the growth of Populism as a political movement in Arkansas in the late nineteenth century. In 1883, the General Assembly created a commission to assess the property of the railroads, but many of the larger railroad concerns claimed that their charters exempted them from taxation. The ensuing legal case eventually reached the U.S. Supreme Court, which affirmed the right of the states to tax the railroads. The state then won a suit to collect back taxes from the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railway Company for the period 1874-1883, eventually arriving at a settlement of \$250,000.^{xxxiii}

Wall Street financier Jay Gould acquired the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern for \$2 million in 1882, and visited Arkansas shortly thereafter to inspect his new line and to investigate the possibilities of further expanding his southwestern transportation empire. Later in the year, Gould bought the Little Rock & Fort Smith line and added it to the Iron Mountain system, making it the largest railroad system in Arkansas.^{xxxiv} Gould served as president of the Iron Mountain until his death in 1892.

Railroad workers in Arkansas were among the first laborers to unionize in the state, and in 1885 railroad employees associated with the Knights of Labor organized a successful strike against Jay Gould's railroad system. Subsequent railroad strikes in Little Rock and other cities in 1886 and 1894 resulted in violence however, and Governors Simon P. Hughes and William M. Fishback were forced to call out the state militia to suppress strikers.^{xxxv}

D.The Frisco

Another controversial railroad was the St. Louis & San Francisco, commonly known as the Frisco. In 1853, the St. Louis & San Francisco Railway Company was established to develop a route west to San Francisco across the thirty-fifth parallel, including Arkansas. Although much of the line was completed in the 1870s, the undertaking ultimately failed due to poor administration, faulty timing, fickle public opinion, bad luck, and greed. In 1886, Congress rescinded the Frisco's 1866 land grant, reclaiming all but 14 million of the 40 million acres it had granted to the company for development purposes, and the line was taken over by the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe system. The Panic of 1893 forced the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe into receivership, and in 1896 a reorganized St. Louis & San Francisco bought the eastern portions of the old Frisco line at a foreclosure sale.

The St. Louis & San Francisco line entered the state across from Memphis, then ran northwest through Crittenden, Craighead, Poinsett, Lawrence, Sharp, and Fulton counties before passing into Missouri. The line then re-entered the state near the northeast corner of Benton County and ran south through Rogers, Fayetteville, and Van Buren to Fort Smith. In 1927, the Frisco operated just over 700 miles of track in Arkansas, with an assessed value of almost \$12 million.^{xxxvi}

The Frisco had a noteworthy impact on Arkansas's cultural and built environment. The line was responsible for the Winslow Tunnel through the Boston Mountains as well as the Van Buren railway bridge, and the towns of Winslow and Rogers were both named for Frisco officials (Edward Winslow and Charles W. Rogers). Several lines crossed the northeast corner of the state, providing access to Memphis, and a portion also paralleled the old Butterfield stage route across the northwestern counties to Fort Smith. Additional tracks ran from Hope into southern Oklahoma.^{xxxvii} The Frisco also provided "downstaters" with easy access to the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville.^{xxxviii}

II.Twentieth Century Railroad Development in Arkansas

The importance and influence of the railroad industry grew as Arkansas moved into the twentieth century. Many of the smaller branch lines established in the late nineteenth century were acquired by larger corporations. As more and more of the state was drawn into the railroad network and became linked with national markets, important industries dependent on shipping large cargoes of raw materials were able to develop and thrive in Arkansas. The rich agricultural lands of the Delta supplied cotton to the national markets, and the abundant timber resources of southwest Arkansas began to be tapped. Railroads were essential to the development of these industries for transporting products from the gins and the sawmills to river ports for shipping. Several timber companies even built their own rail lines to provide access to these transportation networks.^{xxxix}

The railroad industry itself became a major factor in the state's economy, as large facilities grew up around the shops and roundhouses in such places as Harrison, McGehee, and Argenta (later to become North Little Rock). In 1910, up to 300 men were employed in the shops at McGehee. By the twentieth century, the railroad had become the social nucleus of many smaller communities, many of which actually owed their inception to the coming of the railroad. Like the county courthouses, post offices, and city halls of the past, the local railroad depot developed as a meeting and gathering place for the community, and the arrivals of passenger trains became major events of the day. Townfolk met, noticed who arrived and departed, helped

unload freight, and picked up mail.^{xi} The standardization of railroad schedules was the impetus for the development of national time zones, and for the first time Arkansas communities abandoned their local systems for the Central Time Zone.

The trains themselves changed; the original wood-burning engines increasingly were replaced with hand-fired coal burners and, later still, stokers. The 1920s saw the advent of the oil-burners, which dominated the railroad industry until the development of diesel engines in the 1940s phased out steam engines altogether. Most of the depots currently found in Arkansas date from this period.^{xli}

A. Railroad Development and the Timber Industry

Railroads were essential to the development of the timber industry in Arkansas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Spur lines were constructed from existing tracks into new virgin timber areas, and sawmill and lumbering towns sprang up along the tracks. Production continued to increase, and by the end of the century lumbering had become Arkansas's most important industry. Much of the state's virgin timber resources had been consumed by the 1910s, and the timber industry began to wane in importance.^{xlii}

One such railroad was the DeQueen and Eastern, established by four brothers, Henry, Herman, Hans, and Peter Dierks. The Dierks brothers came to southwest Arkansas from Nebraska in 1900 and bought a sawmill and several acres of property. They founded their railroad on September 22, 1900, and connected it to the main rail line of the Kansas City Southern, which passed through DeQueen on the way from Kansas City to Texarkana and provided the brothers' company with access to the timber markets of the nation. The railroad lost money almost from its inception, in part because it engaged in the less-profitable transport of passengers and mail.

It was the brothers' policy to build towns where they built lumber mills; in 1902, the DeQueen and Eastern extended her rails eleven miles southeast through heavy forests to reach the town of Lockesburg, and by 1905 the line extended northeast to the newly established town of Dierks.^{****} When the brothers' mill in DeQueen burned in the late 1910s, the company built a new one at Dierks, giving the company three large mills. In January 1921, the Dierks brothers linked their DeQueen and Eastern railroad with their Texas, Oklahoma, and Eastern railroad at West Line on the Arkansas-Oklahoma border.^{xliii}

B. The Missouri-Pacific

In 1917, the Missouri-Pacific Railroad Company incorporated and absorbed the Iron Mountain system, and for many years thereafter "Mo-Pac" was the largest and most important railroad in the state. The Missouri-Pacific shops in North Little Rock were expanded from the original 1874 Cairo & Fulton facilities to include 36 major shops on 160 acres of land, employing about 1,140 men.^{xliv} The railroad's main lines extended to the southwest as far as Mexico, following the old Southwest Trail route of the Cairo &

^{****}The Dierks brothers were also involved in the timber industry in the neighboring Indian Territory (modern-day Oklahoma) and the development of the Texas, Oklahoma & Eastern, which tied into the DeQueen and Eastern at DeQueen and by 1910 extended westward to Valliant, Oklahoma, where it intersected with the Frisco line.

Fulton,^{****} while other principal segments linked Arkansas with Memphis, New Orleans, and Joplin. A comprehensive rail network also criss-crossed the southeastern corner of the state.^{xlv}

In 1927, the Missouri-Pacific operated 1,810 miles of road in Arkansas, more than 35 percent of the state's total mileage, with an assessed value of almost \$39 million.^{xlvi}

C. The Rock Island

The Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, more commonly known as the Rock Island, was established in Argenta in 1904 through the reorganization of the Choctaw & Memphis Railroad, which had earlier taken over the old Memphis & Little Rock Railroad. The new line almost immediately became embroiled in controversy as rumors spread that the city of Little Rock was attempting to lure the Rock Island's maintenance operations away from the old Memphis & Little Rock facilities in Argenta and to relocate them in the Fourche Creek bottoms south of the capital city. This was an especially sensitive issue to community leaders in Argenta, who were concerned that railroad activities in Central Arkansas would become further centralized south of the Arkansas River. When the Rock Island eventually did move its shops in 1910, only the Little Rock & Fort Smith depot west of old Argenta allowed passengers to board north of the river; all other passenger depots were in Little Rock proper. Concern over this trend toward railroad centralization in Little Rock undoubtedly played a role in the construction of the Rock Island-Argenta depot in 1913.^{xlvii}

Rock Island service between Memphis and Little Rock now served Argenta (which became North Little Rock in 1917) directly, and the city became a major railroad center in the years that followed. The main line of the road entered the state at Memphis, then passed through Forrest City, Brinkley, DeValls Bluff, Lonoke, Little Rock, Perryville, Danville, and Booneville; numerous branch lines provided service to Fordyce, El Dorado, Malvern, Camden, Hot Springs, and Dardanelle. In 1927, the Rock Island operated a total of 705.22 miles of track in Arkansas with an assessed valuation of almost \$12 million,^{xlviii} and by the 1930s, the line had extended into Oklahoma, with two branches running south through the timber and oil country of south and southwest Arkansas.^{xlix}

D. The Arkansas Railroad Commission and the Missouri & North Arkansas

The Arkansas Railroad Commission was established in 1899 to oversee the development and activities of railway companies in the state, and to ensure that the railroad would be in the best interest of the citizens of the state. The governor, attorney general, state auditor, secretary of state, state treasurer, commissioner of agriculture, and commissioner of state lands constituted a state board of railroad incorporation. The Railroad Commission was required to meet whenever articles for a railroad incorporation were filed at the office of the secretary of state, and to decide whether or not to approve a charter. If a charter was granted, the railroad company was then required to faithfully execute its contracts with the public and to build the road according to its preliminary survey. Failure to complete one-fifth of the road within three years was cause for revocation of the charter, and if the entire road was not completed within six

^{****}The main line of the Missouri-Pacific from St. Louis to Texarkana follows very closely the 1850-51 survey by Captain Joshua Barney. Such a route avoided the most extreme elevations and uplifts of the Ozark and Ouachita mountains, as well as the lower, wetter lands to the southeast.

years could result the uncompleted portion could be forfeited. If the commission felt it to be in the public interest, extensions could be granted for the completion of particular lines.¹

On May 17, 1899, the St. Louis & North Arkansas Railroad was the first to request and be granted a charter by the Arkansas Railroad Commission. The new company's objective was the construction of a line to link the resort community of Eureka Springs with Harrison, the commercial center of Boone County. Farmers and the business community in Harrison were quite committed to the success of the railroad and what it could mean to their isolated region; the community donated \$40,000 toward the construction of the road, and farmers in the area donated rights-of-way on their lands. The local populace came to feel that they had a stake in the success of the railroad, and this sentiment was to play a pivotal role in the 1921 strike.^{li} The line was completed on March 22, 1901, but throughout its early history the fledgling railroad was unable to realize a profit; in 1906 the company lost \$30,000.^{lii}

In August 1906, the St. Louis & North Arkansas reorganized as the Missouri & North Arkansas and almost immediately negotiated a contract with the Allegheny Improvement Company to construct a line south from Harrison to Searcy, and eventually to Helena. Leslie had been the southern terminus of the line since 1903, and construction on the seventy-five mile stretch between Leslie and Pangburn began in February 1907. More than 1,500 laborers worked on this section of the line, which extended southward through the only natural pass in the Boston Range of the Ozark Mountains near Leslie. Construction on the Helena-Brinkley portion of the line began in June of the same year. Real estate speculators began to frantically buy up property between Searcy and Brinkley in anticipation of the linking of the two portions, and land values soared.^{liii}

By early October 1907, the North Arkansas had accumulated 350 boxcars, cattle cars, and flat cars, and boasted 14 locomotives. The tiny mountain village of Leslie had only a handful of homes, one store building, and about fifty inhabitants prior to the arrival of the railroad in 1902. Growth came rapidly after Leslie became the headquarters for the extension of the line to Searcy and Helena. The H. D. Williams Cooperage Company, a manufacturer of wooden barrels, relocated to Leslie from Poplar Bluff, Missouri, in the fall of 1907, and grew to eventually employ virtually everyone in the town. At its height, the Williams Company plant purported to be the largest of its kind in the world. Twenty miles of company railroad covered the nearby mountains, transporting the area's timber to the sprawling plant, onto the main rail line, and to the markets beyond.^{liv}

The Missouri & North Arkansas railroad was perhaps the most expensive ever built in Arkansas. The tremendous engineering difficulties involved in traversing the mountainous terrain added greatly to the construction cost per mile, and the poor soil quality and subsurface water deposits further delayed the project. Several subcontractors realized no profit, and some even lost money. Despite these setbacks, the 359-mile road was completed in March 1909, and regular service began the next month between Helena and Neosho, Missouri.^{lv} Unfortunately, the region could not produce enough on-line business to support a railroad of such proportions, and the Missouri & North Arkansas consistently lost money until it was forced into receivership in 1912.^{lvi}

New management following the Missouri & North Arkansas's reorganization succeeded in delaying the inevitable. However, on August 5, 1914, an M & NA train collided with a Kansas City Southern locomotive south of Joplin, Missouri, killing 38 people. The two railroad companies shared responsibility for the accident, but the compensation to the families of the victims emptied the Missouri & North

Arkansas's treasury, and the small railroad was never able to recover. Management standards and maintenance declined, and throughout the late 1910s and early 1920s the railroad experienced frequent employee strikes and was periodically under federal control. The Missouri & North Arkansas strike of 1921 attracted national attention and was one of the longest railroad strikes in U.S. history. When the strike finally ended in May 1922, it had succeeded in devastating the economy of northern Arkansas and virtually destroying the Missouri & North Arkansas Railway. Continuing labor unrest led to the creation of a "Committee of Twelve" in Harrison in early 1923, a collection of northern Arkansas business leaders concerned about the effects the lingering labor unrest was having on the regional economy. Through a process of intimidation, banishment, and at least one lynching, the Committee succeeded in finally breaking the strike and returning conditions to normal.^{lvii}

The Missouri & North Arkansas was never able to recapture its past glories, however. In the years that followed, the Bureau of Locomotive Inspection, a division of the Interstate Commerce Commission, frequently cited the company for unsafe and defective locomotives, and the rail lines and roadbeds were in chronic disrepair. The expansion and improvement of roads in the Ozarks and the advent of the automobile ultimately signaled the demise of the railway. The line was again in receivership by 1927, and in 1935 the company was foreclosed upon and sold for just \$350,000. The name was changed to the Missouri and Arkansas Railway shortly thereafter to avoid legal complications associated with the old organization.^{lviii}

E. The Cotton Belt

The St. Louis Southwestern Railroad, more commonly known as the Cotton Belt cut a wide swath through the cotton, rice, and timber lands of eastern and southern Arkansas before entering east Texas.^{lix} The line was originally incorporated as the Texas & St. Louis Railway in the early 1880s, providing service between Texarkana, Clarendon, and Jonesboro. Trains began running in early 1884, but by the following year the line had fallen under hard times and went into receivership.^{*****} The company was reorganized as the St. Louis, Arkansas & Texas in 1885, and as the St. Louis Southwestern in 1891. The railroad's main line entered Arkansas from Missouri near the northeast corner of Clay County, then extended southwest through Paragould, Jonesboro, Brinkley, Stuttgart, Pine Bluff, Rison, Fordyce, Camden, and Lewisville before leaving the state in Texarkana.^{lx}

F. The Kansas City Southern

The Kansas City Southern Railroad straddled the Arkansas-Oklahoma line, crossing and recrossing the border until it entered Texas and ultimately met the Gulf of Mexico in Port Arthur. The KCS passed through the western portion of Benton County from Missouri into Oklahoma, then re-entered the state further south in Scott County. The line then proceeded south through Mena, Vandervoort, DeQueen, Horatio, and Ashdown before leaving the state again in Texarkana.^{lxi} The KCS also controlled the Louisiana & Arkansas, which ran from Hope into New Orleans.^{lxii}

^{*****} Samuel W. Fordyce, vice-president and treasurer of the Texas & St. Louis and namesake for the city of Fordyce, was appointed receiver.

G. The Louisiana & Northwest

The Louisiana & Northwest Railroad was established to link the important timber lands of southern Arkansas with the regional center of Shreveport in northwest Louisiana. In 1927, the line operated only 24.71 miles of track in Arkansas, chiefly the portion from Magnolia south toward the Louisiana border, with an assessed valuation of \$132,800.^{lxiii} The line originated in Chestnut, Louisiana, and entered Columbia County from the south. The line then passed through State Line, Mohawk, Emerson, Brister, Kerlin, and Magnolia before reaching the end of the line in McNeil, where one might connect with the St. Louis Southwestern. One northbound and one southbound mixed train covered the Louisiana & Northwest route daily.^{lxiv}

IV. Conclusion

The increasing popularity of the automobile eventually sounded the death knell for the golden age of railroading. In 1941, there were approximately 4,700 miles of railroad track in Arkansas^{lxv}, but although the industry was still important to industry and shipping, passenger service began to decline and an era seemed to be ending. The historic railroad depots that were once an element of virtually every small town and community in Arkansas have become rarities, fragile reminders of the pivotal role of the railroad in the development of the state and the nation. Many have been lost due to abandonment or neglect; others have been demolished or moved because they seemed somehow alien, too primitive to serve any use in the more progressive age of the automobile and the airplane. Those historic depots that remain intact, relatively unaltered, and in their original locations, represent an increasingly endangered and vanishing element of our state's heritage, inherently valuable and worthy of preservation.

V. Goals, Objectives, and Methodology

In August of 1990, the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (AHPP) initiated a context-driven survey of railway depots built between 1870 and 1930. It was felt that these properties were in danger of insensitive rehabilitation, deterioration or demolition as a result of neglect, poor economic conditions, or population shifts over the past half century. At the initial planning meeting in which the parameters of the project were discussed it was agreed that a number of goals would be pursued with the ultimate objective of calling attention to the importance of these properties. It was hoped that by emphasizing the importance of these properties to the understanding and appreciation of the history of transportation and the impact of railroad development in Arkansas, the AHPP could encourage their continued preservation, protection, use, and adaptive re-use. It was decided that all of the geographic regions of the state, the Ozarks, Ouachitas, Gulf Coastal Plain, and Delta, would be surveyed.

The railroad depot project involved significant interaction and cooperation between the AHPP program areas. The Survey staff agreed to locate properties on United States Geological Survey topographic maps and city maps of the entire state, then schedule survey trips in order to identify, photograph and document those properties that remained extant. At the same time, the agency's Preservation Planner would research and write a historic context study on the subject of transportation and railroad development in Arkansas in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This context would then accompany a multiple-property nomination of eligible properties to the National Register of Historic Places. Throughout the course of the railroad depot project, public input would be sought through press releases to media outlets in those areas

targeted for survey visits.

Any railroad depot or associated building reflective of or associated with this period of Arkansas's transportation history would be considered eligible for inclusion in the context, provided that the property had not been moved and retained at least 51 percent of its original integrity, as determined by the professional historians and architectural historians of the AHPP's Survey and National Register staffs.

The multiple-property listing of railroad depots in Arkansas, 1870-1940, is based on a comprehensive survey of the state between August and November of 1990 by the AHPP Survey and Inventory staff. The survey staff visited the 200 known depot sites and identified approximately 30 depots that had not been previously documented or considered for National Register eligibility. Those properties that had not been moved were recorded, while those that had been moved or destroyed were recorded as archeological sites on site forms provided by the Arkansas Archeological Survey. Twenty-six of these properties were determined to be applicable to the depot context and potentially eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. A total of 55 Arkansas railroad structures were listed on or deemed eligible for the National Register, 28 of which had been surveyed, nominated, or listed prior to this project. Those not recorded were passed over because of alterations that substantially damaged their integrity.

Integrity requirements were based on a knowledge of existing properties and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. For each recorded property locations were noted on USGS topographical and city maps; photographs, both black and white prints and color slides, were taken of several elevations; computerized inventory forms, complete with plan view drawings, were completed; and research, utilizing primary, secondary and oral history sources was conducted. Any information on research, events or issues not adequately covered in this study should be directed to the Preservation Planner at AHPP.

These properties represent significant physical reminders of an important period in Arkansas history, a time in which the state was drawn into the transportation network of the growing nation. By publicly recognizing the importance of these resources to the understanding and appreciation of Arkansas history through this project and the accompanying media campaign, the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program hopes to encourage the preservation, protection, continued use, and adaptive re-use of these properties.

**ARKANSAS DEPOTS LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER
OF HISTORIC PLACES**

BENTON COUNTY

Kansas City-Southern Depot, Decatur, ca. 1920 Plain Traditional-style concrete block building.
Bentonville Train Station, 414 South Main Street, Bentonville, ca. 1925 Frisco Line depot.

BOONE COUNTY

Missouri and North Arkansas Depot, Bellefonte, 1901 Plain Traditional-style depot.

BRADLEY COUNTY

Warren and Ouachita Valley Railway Station, 325 West Cedar Street, Warren, 1909 frame depot.

CARROLL COUNTY

Missouri and North Arkansas Depot, Highway 23, Eureka Springs, 1912 native-stone depot.

CLARK COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Arkadelphia, ca. 1917 Mediterranean-style depot.
Missouri-Pacific Depot, First Street, Gurdon, ca. 1917 Mediterranean-style structure.

CONWAY COUNTY

Morrilton Railroad Station, Railroad Avenue, Morrilton, ca. 1915 Mediterranean-style depot.

CRAWFORD COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Main Street, Van Buren, ca. 1900 Mediterranean-style structure.

CRITTENDEN COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Main and Commerce Streets, Earle, 1922 freight and passenger depot.

DALLAS COUNTY

Cotton Belt Depot, Main and West First Streets, Fordyce, 1925 Mediterranean/Craftsman structure.
Rock Island Railway Depot, Third Street, Fordyce, ca. 1925 railroad depot.

DESHA COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, McGehee, ca. 1910 Mediterranean/Craftsman-style structure.

FRANKLIN COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, River Street, Ozark, 1910 stone-masonry depot.
Missouri-Pacific Depot, 118 Highway 64, Altus, ca. 1920 Plain Traditional style depot.

FULTON COUNTY

Kansas City, Fort Scott and Memphis Railroad Depot, Mammoth Spring, 1885 Queen Anne-style structure.

GARLAND COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Broadway and Market Streets, Hot Springs, ca. 1917 Italianate/Mediterranean style structure.

HEMPSTEAD COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, East Division and Main Streets, Hope, ca. 1917 Mediterranean-style building.

HOT SPRING COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, First Street, Malvern, ca. 1918 Mediterranean-style building.

HOWARD COUNTY

Memphis, Paris, and Gulf Depot, Mineral Springs, 1908 wood-frame structure.

JACKSON COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Walnut and Front Streets, Newport, ca. 1910 brick-and-stucco depot.

Rock Island Depot, Weldon, ca. 1913 frame Craftsman-style structure.

JEFFERSON COUNTY

Union Station, East Fourth Avenue and State Street, Pine Bluff, 1906 rail depot.

JOHNSON COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Clarksville, ca. 1910 Mediterranean-style structure.

LAWRENCE COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Walnut Ridge, ca. 1910 Mediterranean-style structure.

LEE COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Carolina Street South, Marianna, ca. 1915 Mediterranean-Italianate building.

LITTLE RIVER COUNTY

Memphis, Paris and Gulf Railroad Depot, Whitaker Avenue and Frisco Street, Ashdown, 1908 Plain Traditional-style depot with Folk Victorian details.

LOGAN COUNTY

Rock Island Depot, Booneville, ca. 1900 Spanish Mission style depot.

LONOKE COUNTY

Rock Island Depot, Highway 70 and Center Street, Lonoke, 1912 Jacobethan Revival structure.

Carlisle Rock Island Depot, Main Street and Court Avenue, ca. 1920 Tudor Revival building.

MILLER COUNTY

Texarkana Union Station, State Line and Front Streets, 1928-30 Classical Revival structure.

MISSISSIPPI COUNTY

Blytheville, Leachville and Arkansas Southern Depot, Second and McNamee Streets, Leachville, ca. 1910 Plain Traditional-style building.

Jonesboro, Lake City and Eastern Railroad Depot, South Dewey and Baltimore Streets, Manila, ca. 1910 Plain Traditional-style building.

MONROE COUNTY

Arkansas Midland Depot, 205 Midland, Clarendon, ca. 1910 railroad structure.

Arkansas Midland Depot, Front Street, Holly Grove, 1898 railroad depot.

Brinkley Rock Island/Cotton Belt Depot, Brinkley, ca. 1915 Mediterranean-influenced design.

NEVADA COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, 300 West First Street North, Prescott, 1912 Mediterranean-style depot.

OUACHITA COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Camden, ca. 1917 Mediterranean-style depot.

PHILLIPS COUNTY

Helena Depot (now the Delta Cultural Center), Natchez and Missouri Streets, Helena, ca. 1915 Craftsman depot with Classical Revival influences.

PIKE COUNTY

Iron Mountain Railroad Depot, U.S. Highway 70, Glenwood, ca. 1910 Plain-Traditional structure.

POLK COUNTY

Kansas City-Southern Depot, Mena and Pickering Streets, Mena, 1920 Mediterranean-style structure.

POPE COUNTY

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Atkins, ca. 1920 Plain Traditional-style depot.

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Commerce Street, Russellville, 1910 Mediterranean-style structure.

PRAIRIE COUNTY

Rock Island Depot, Highway 70, Hazen, 1915 structure with Craftsman and Tudor Revival details.

PULASKI COUNTY

Choctaw Route Station, 1010 East Third Street, Little Rock, ca. 1899 depot with elaborate terra cotta details.

PULASKI COUNTY, continued

Mo-Pac Station (Union Station), Markham and Victory Streets, Little Rock, sprawling 1921 train station.

Rock Island Argenta Depot, Fourth and Hazel Streets, North Little Rock, 1913 Mediterranean-style depot.

SEARCY COUNTY

Missouri and North Arkansas Depot, Highway 66, Leslie, ca. 1925 stone-masonry depot.

Missouri and North Arkansas Depot, Highway 65, St. Joe, 1913 wood-frame railroad depot.

SEBASTIAN COUNTY

Frisco Depot, 100 Garrison, Fort Smith, 1910 Classical Revival building.

WASHINGTON COUNTY

Frisco Depot, 550 West Dickson Street, Fayetteville, 1925 Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival-style structure.

WHITE COUNTY

Bald Knob Depot, Market and Ramey Streets, 1915 Colonial Revival-style structure.

Missouri-Pacific Depot, Center Street, Beebe, 1910 railroad depot.

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