



all aboard

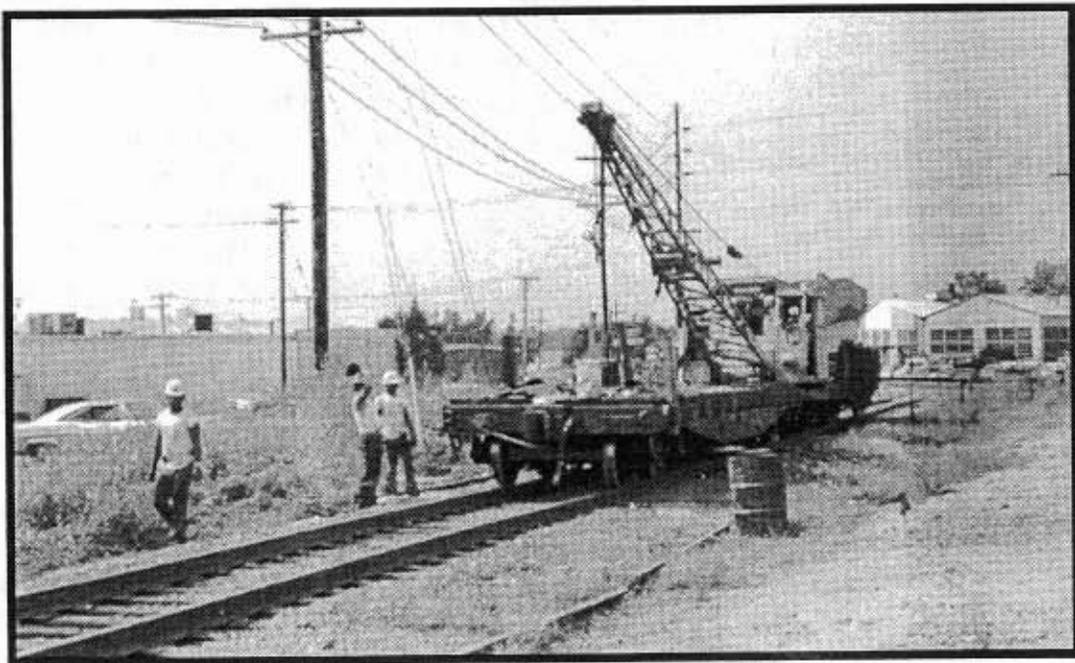


THE FRISCO RAILROAD MUSEUM INC.

MODERNIZATION OF THE OZARK BRANCH



From Gas
To Coal
At The
James
River
Power
Plant



all aboard

VOLUME 14 Summer 2001

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HOURS OF OPERATION

Wednesday - Friday
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.
Saturday
10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

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The *Frisco Folks* is the membership program of The Frisco Railroad Museum Inc. Its purpose is to:

- Preserve the family tradition of the Frisco Railway.
- Provide a means by which the educational mission of the museum can be realized through publication of our *All Aboard* magazine and access to the museum's historical archives.
- To provide a base of financial support for the museum's operation, programs, and services.

Frisco Folk memberships are **\$25.00** per year.

Donna's Chat

Hi everyone, I am very excited about the memberships that have come in, thanks very much and keep them coming.

I am still in need of volunteers to help with manning the museum. If you have some time and would like to help out, please contact me, I would appreciate it.

Thanks to all who have stayed with us. Thanks for the words of encouragement and support. Let's stay connected.
Donna Wagner, President

Editor's Turn

The All Aboard, the newsletter magazine of the Frisco Museum. Supposed to be a 4 times a year publication.....

I can imagine what you are saying to yourself, "hmmm, yup, that is what I signed up for!"

Let me say this, without YOU, there won't be a magazine. "Why, you ask?" Because without YOU, we wouldn't have the funds to print this. Without YOU, why would we print a magazine nobody wants, or reads. Without YOU, we wouldn't have the sharing of knowledge and sharing of stories that fill the pages of this magazine.

Without YOU, we don't have the articles we need to publish this magazine 4 times a year. BUT with YOU, we have the possibility of trying. We need YOU to volunteer to write an article about your experiences as a railroad employee, to write about the research you did to find out about a certain car, engine or building. YOU, have the ability to make us laugh, to remember a time gone by, to say, WOW, those were the good ole days!

Do you need to be a writer, or a novelist to write an article for this publication. No, YOU only need to have lived the adventure, or worked in that department, or enjoyed researching to be able to write an article. If YOU can give us words on a page(s), then we can punctuate, period and paragraph them into an article. And that, YOU can do.

I have 2 articles for the next issue, Scale Test Cars, by Joe Pennington, and Frisco Air Horn's by Ron Chamberlain interviewing Lee Buffington about the Leslie horns the SLSF used. We will also have Rick's Tips, and Frisco Foto's. To put out more publications after that, I will need more articles.

I would like to thank John Sanders and Virgil Johnson for their articles, both well written and interesting. You can get in touch with me at DanBat710@aol.com or call me at 417/863-6402. The editor, Dan Batson

On the cover. Top photo from 11/23/75, SLSF VO-1000 #204 & following engine with a coal delivery for the James River Power Plant. Bottom photo from 06/24/79 SLSF GP35 #763 and GP38 #648 w/loaded coal train on James River bridge at Kissick, photo's by H. Hull.

Frisco Railroader's Son

Written by Virgil T. Johnson Onawa, IA

My father, Walter H. Johnson first experienced railroading in 1919. He was a fireman on the Rock Island Railroad in West Des Moines, Iowa. Valley Junction was his station.

In 1924 our family moved from Albert City, IA to Grandin, MO. Grandin was at the end of the Pea Vine Railroad, 100 miles east and a little south of Willow Springs, MO. My father got a job as engine watchman when trains tied up over night at Grandin. He refueled the tender with coal and water, shook down the fire grates and kept the fire bed level. The train crews stayed in the hotel just across the street from the depot. Their alarm clock was a blast of the steam whistle. Dad really enjoyed blowing that whistle. By the time they ate breakfast and left the hotel, dad would have a full head of steam ready for the morning run back to Willow Springs.

The Pea Vine, a spur off the Frisco main line, served as a commuter train for Hutton Valley, Mountain View, Montier, Birch Tree, Winona, Van Buren, Hunter and Grandin. Normally there was a daily passenger train making a round trip 8 AM to 4 PM.

The baggage car was very interesting, it carried the mail and parcel post, including nails and staples, fence posts and barbed wire. The train would stop at certain crossings and pick up farm products: milk and cream cans, vegetables and poultry crates. The train crews were a bunch of "good ole boys" serving the rural countryside people (wouldn't the UP blow it's stack today!).

The passenger car was treated as a vacation trip, with the conductor and the brakeman serving as tour guides. One such view and point of interest I remember occurred at Birch Tree. The conductor pointed out to mother and me that some oak trees 60 feet tall had sunk into the ground overnight and one could reach out and touch the tops. Limestone underground had dissolved and the rock and soil crust caved in under the trees. The exciting part was that the cave-in was only 100 feet from the track.

Usually there were two freight trains running daily--one departing from Willow Springs and the other departing from Grandin. Midway one freight would take a passing track and let the other through. Each train was a mixed train: box cars, flat cars, coal cars, tank cars, and livestock cars. The train that tied up over night at Grandin was the train dad would tend overnight. He made usual inspection of the cars, checked journal boxes which were packed with waste, and he would oil each box with the old long-nozzled oil can soaking the waste which lubed the journal bearings. He tended the engine and made sure the train was ready to pull out when the crew came. The engine had the engineer, fireman and head brakeman. The caboose had two brakemen.

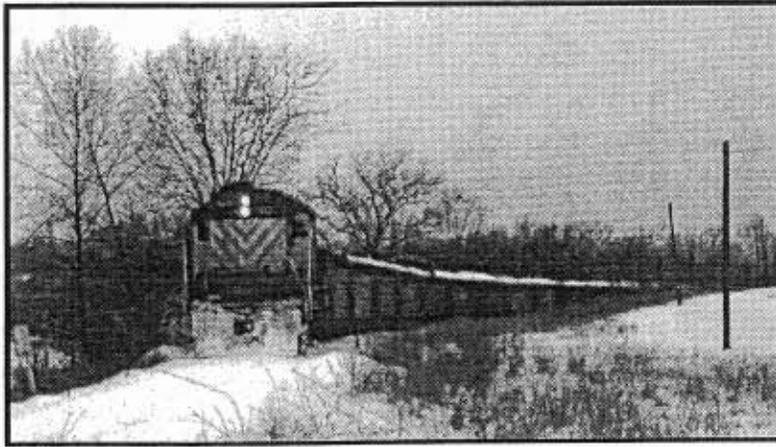
The crewman became well acquainted with my dad and apparently were pleased with his work. They told the foreman at the round house in Willow Springs that he'd better take a look at this guy at Grandin. The foreman was "Red" Brittell. He sent a message with the engineer that he wanted dad to come to Willow Springs for an interview. Dad went up the next day on the passenger train and was hired as master mechanic in the roundhouse January 1928.

The following May, my mother gave up school teaching at Cross Roads School two miles west of Grandin. She taught grades kindergarten through eighth grade. There were no day schools or baby-sitters in those days so I went to school with mother. I am probably the only kid that went to kindergarten for 3 years!

(continued on back cover)

Modernization of the Ozark Branch From Gas to Coal at the James River Power Plant

BY JOHN SANDERS

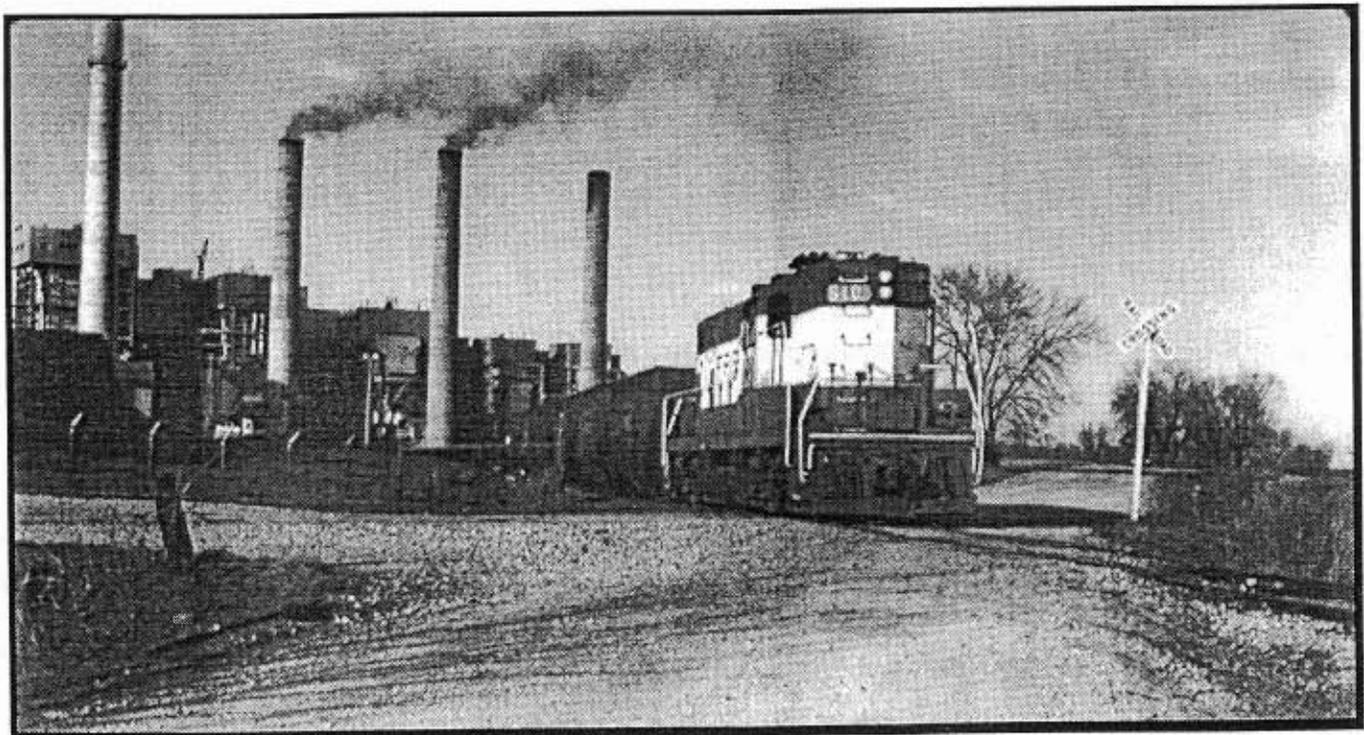


Above: Frisco GP7 #627 delivering coal on a cold, snowy day to the James River Power Plant. At Galloway on 3/10/75

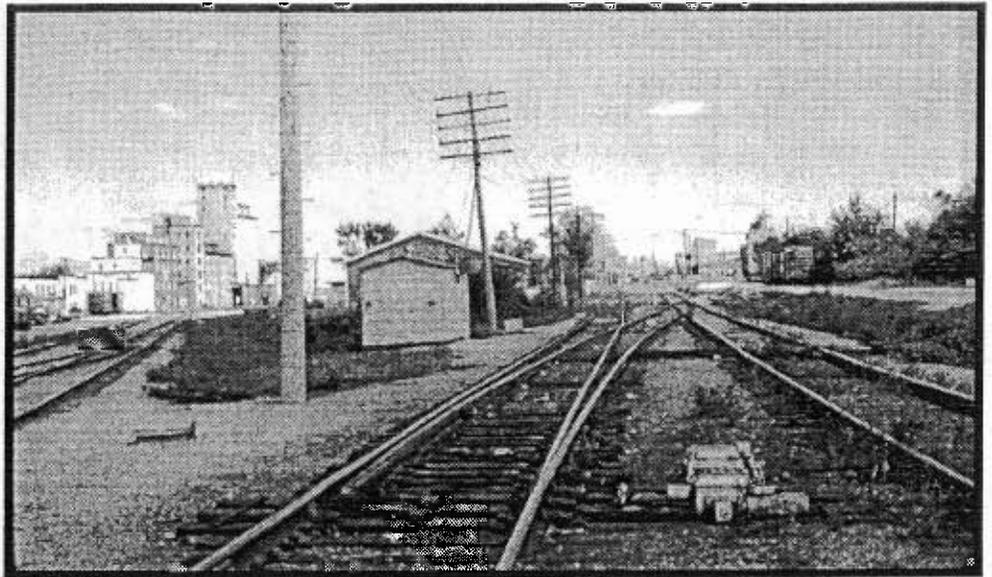
Below: Frisco GP7 #610 delivering coal to the James River Power Plant at Kissick on 3/6/76.

Both photos by H. Hall

For someone who likes trains I was fortunate to grow up within sight of the Ozark branch, located from Springfield, to Ozark, MO. From my backyard and bedroom window I could look down Crutcher Ave. and see Springfield Terminal switchers passing by on their way to Glen Block, Cranks Drug, Hermann Lumber, Kraft Foods, Webster Oil, and Ash Grove Lime and Cement properties. I could hear the locomotives slow down for Glenstone Ave. and would have a few moments to run to the back yard and see them pass by. The typical train of that time was pulled by a black and yellow VO-1000, SW-7, or SW-9. Most of those trains were serving industries between MK Junction and the Ash Grove complex at Galloway. One industry that did not generate much rail traffic at that time was City Utilities James River Power Station.



While some coal was occasionally used at the James River Power Plant when new in the late fifties, it was not common until about 15 years later. The switch to coal was a result of the oil embargo in 1973 and a federal government mandate that many industrial users of natural gas, including power plants, were to be converted from natural gas to coal by 1979. The purpose of this ruling was to assure an adequate supply of natural gas for home heating.

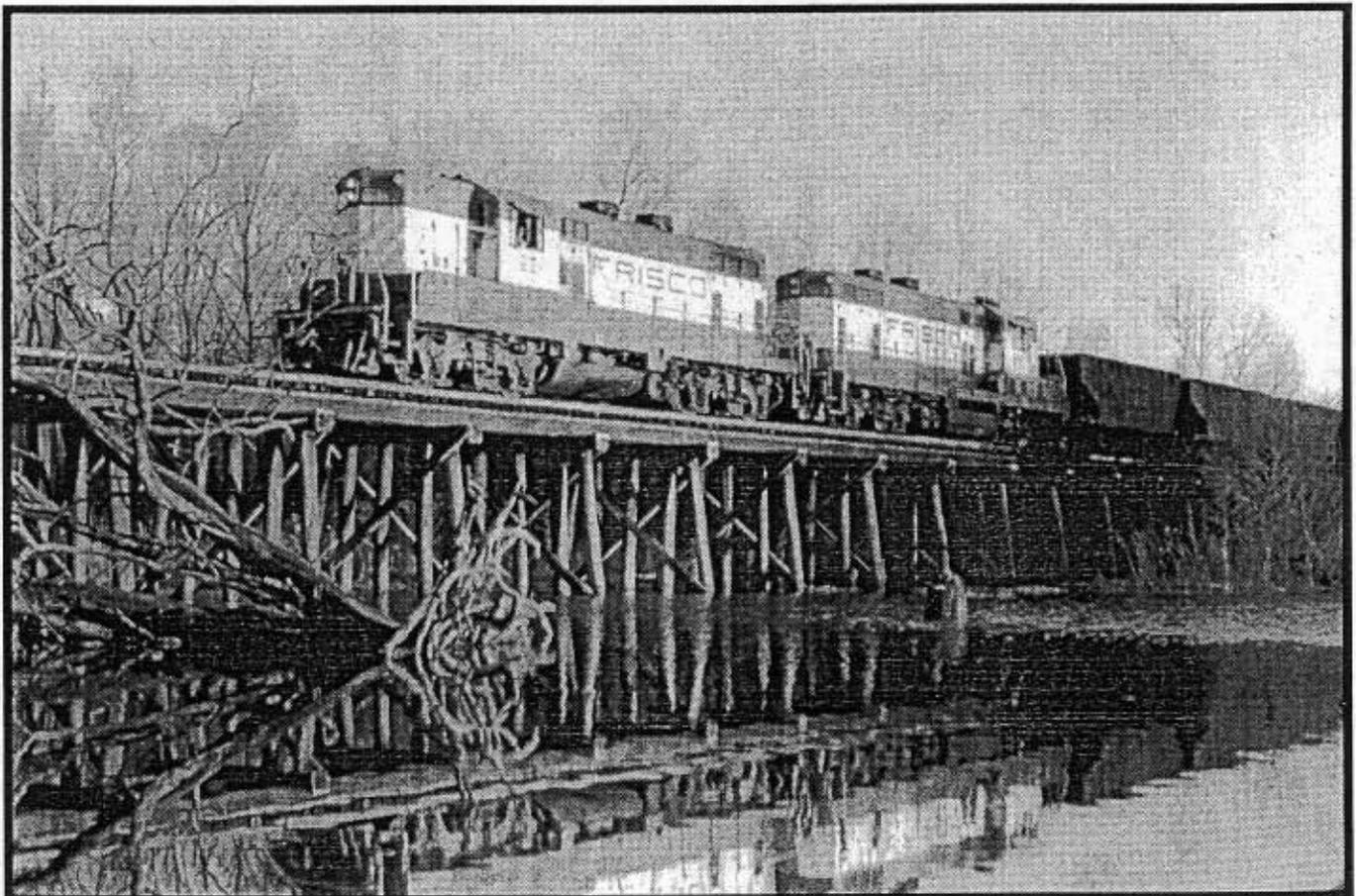


Above: MK Junction looking east to National Avenue in Sept. 1974.

Photo by the author.

This branch line was known as the Ozark Branch in modern times, but was originally called the Chadwick Branch when built in the 1880s. The line was built to Chadwick, MO to carry lumber and ties from and deliver goods to that region. Declining business on the south end of the Chadwick Branch and competition from road transport starting in the teens led the Frisco

Below: On April Fools Day in 1976, H. Hall took this photo of Frisco GP7's #621 & 612 on the James River Bridge with a train of empty coal hoppers



*Right: Frisco GP7 #610 crossing bridge with a coal delivery for James River Power Plant, 3/6/76.
All photos by H.Hall except as noted*

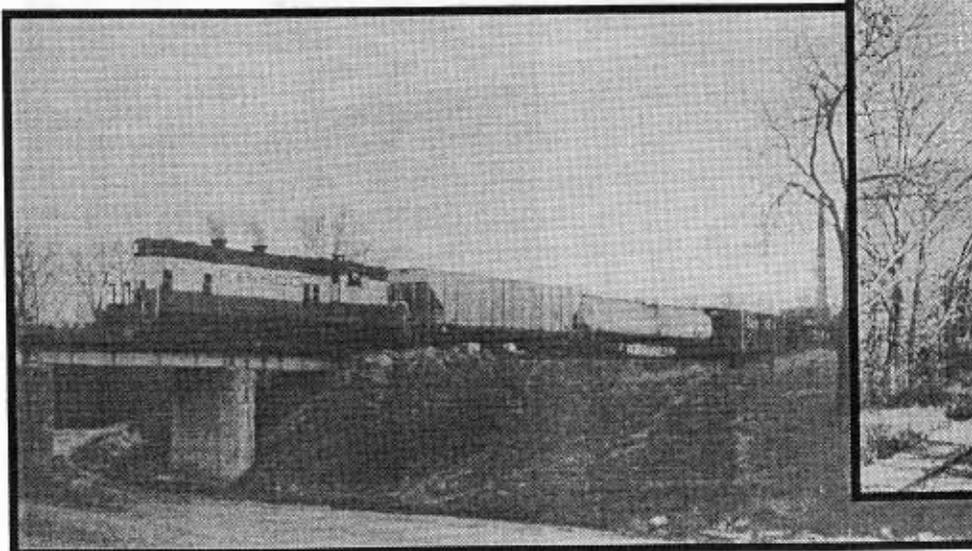
*Upper Left: Frisco GP7 #572 & 565 with a trainman flagging crossing at Cherry & Weller Ave. A 5 mph speed restriction was in effect between MK Junction and Glenstone Ave.
June 1976 Photo by author*

Lower Left: SLSF GP7 # 561 with a mixed train for Ozark and the Power Plant. 2/26/78

Lower Right: SLSF VO-1000 #204 and following engine with a coal delivery for the power plant. 2/26/78



to abandon the segment from Ozark to Chadwick in the mid 1930s. By the 1960s and early 1970s a modest amount of traffic remained in Ozark, but the majority of freight traffic moved from Galloway north to MK Junction. The nature of that traffic started to change in 1974.



*Top:
Harold Hall shot this photo on
November 23rd, 1975. VO-1000
204 and following engine deliv-
ering coal to the James River
Power Plant. You can see the
smoke coming out of the tall
chimneys of the James River
Power Plant in the background.*



*Middle:
In Feburary of 1975, this SW9
#311 crosses Elm Street with a
flagman and a coal train using
the old Frisco 55-ton coal cars.
Note the roadbed and rail prior
to upgrade project.
Photo by author.*



*Bottom Left:
Frisco VO-1000 #203 is headed
to Ozark and the James River
Power Plant with a mixed train.
The Frisco would take coal cars
to the power plant whenever
they arrived in the yard.
H. Hall photo*

*Bottom Right:
SLSF GP7 #568 has a coal
train using the new coal cars.
H. Hall photo.*





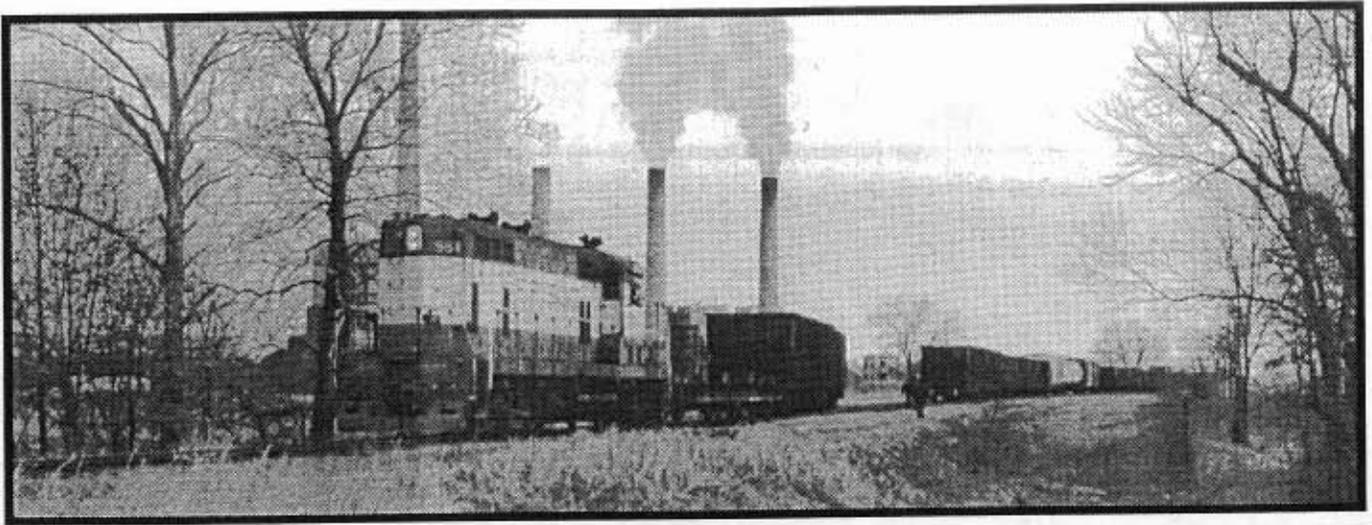
Top: SLSF VO-1000 #202 & 203 switching hoppers on July 23rd, 1976. H. Hall photo

Middle: Frisco GP7's #584 & 594 with new hoppers. Depending on the motive power, grades between MK Jct. and Langston restricted loaded cars to about 10. Trains of 20 cars would be broken at MK Junction and doubled to Langston. 8/21/77 J. Lilly photo

Bottom: SLSF SW9 #311 crosses Elm street with old coal cars. Photo by author

City Utilities (CU) was created in 1945 when the city of Springfield purchased Springfield Gas & Electric from City Services, the parent company. A new power plant was proposed in the late 1940s as a supplement to the elderly (1890 to 1930s) Main Street Power Station. The Main Street Power Station supplied most of Springfield's electric power requirements, but additional power was purchased, as needed, from Empire District Electric. After a long public relations campaign Springfield voters approved a revenue bond for a new power station in 1954. The project was completed and placed in service in 1957. The location on the James River was selected primarily due to the availability of river water for cooling. The proximity of the rail line at that time was of interest mostly for delivering plant equipment and the token loads of coal burned (originally intended to not exceed more than 15% of BTUs needed) as a winter-emergency back up to the primary fuel of natural gas.





Top: Frisco GP7 #561 with mixed freight delivering coal to the power plant on 2/26/78.

Middle: SW9 #308 with mixed train for the power plant and on to Ozark. 5/21/77

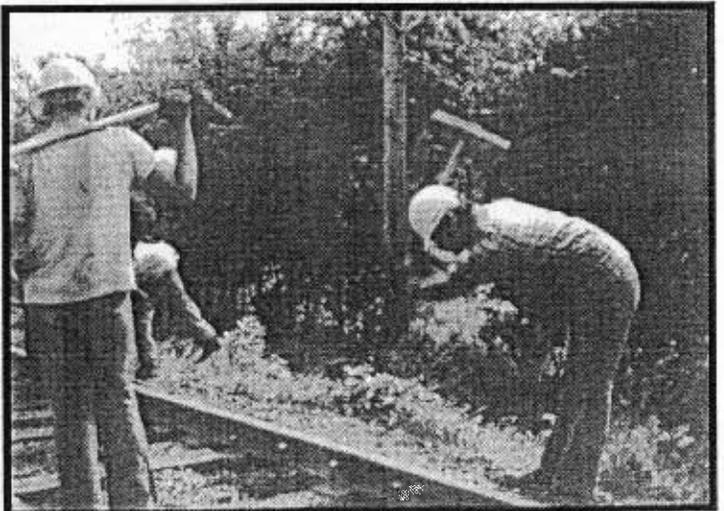
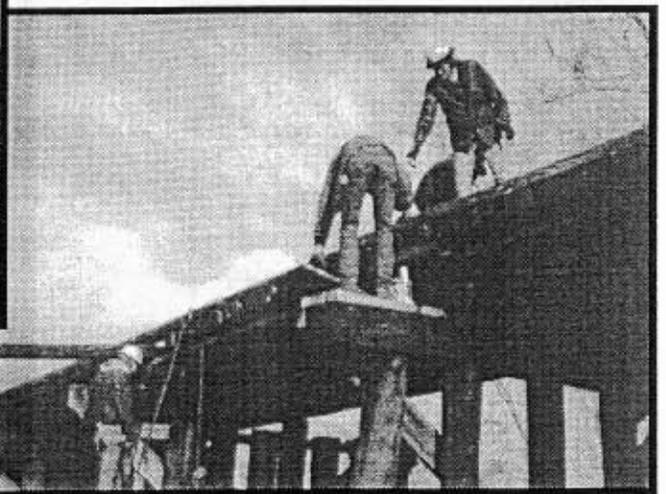
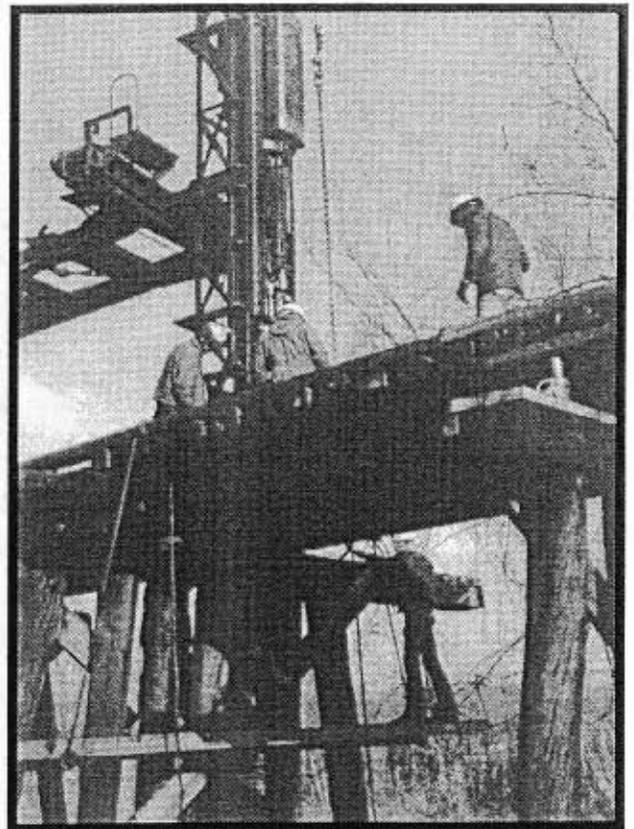
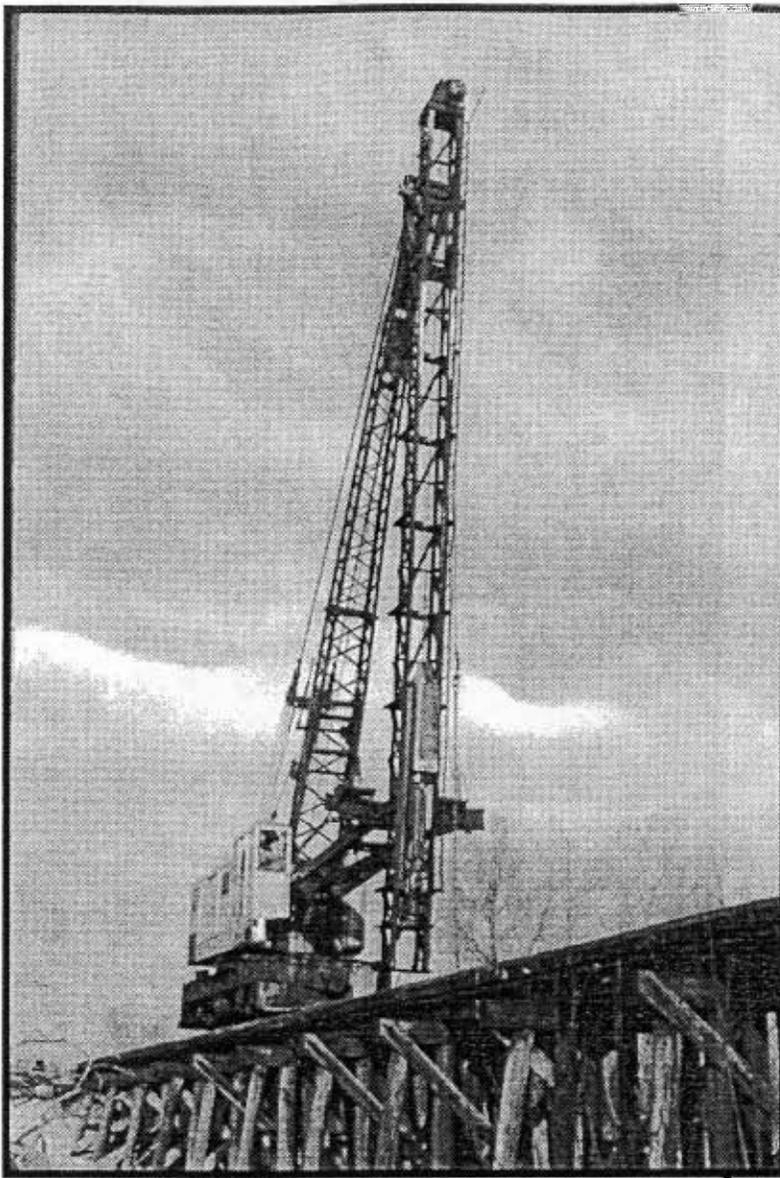
Bottom: SLSF SW9 #308 switching new coal cars at James River Power Plant.

All photos by H. Hall

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Natural gas was the fuel of choice having many advantages over coal including being delivered by pipeline which requires no special handling equipment. Natural gas burns cleanly requiring no cinder and ash disposal. Coal was the last thing CU wanted to burn at the James River Power Plant.

The Federal mandate required that the conversion be complete before 1979, but availability of gas became a problem in the winter of 1974-75 and the next winter (1975-76) 100% of the electricity generated was produced using coal. Inadequate coal-handling equipment at the CU plant was one of several problems that had to



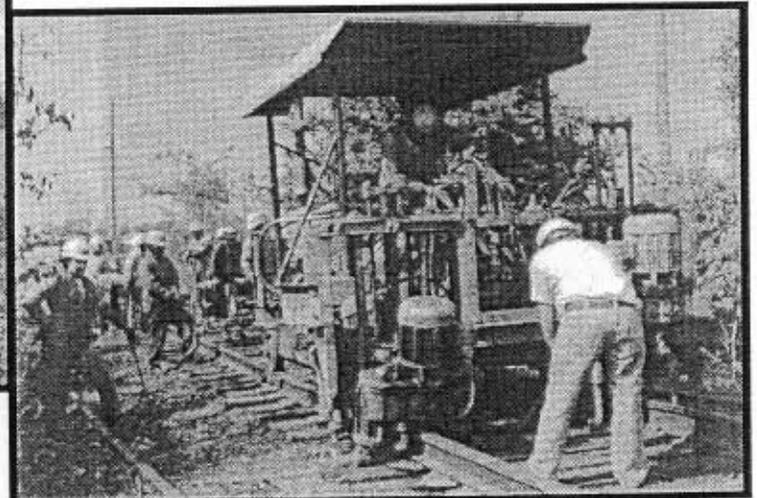
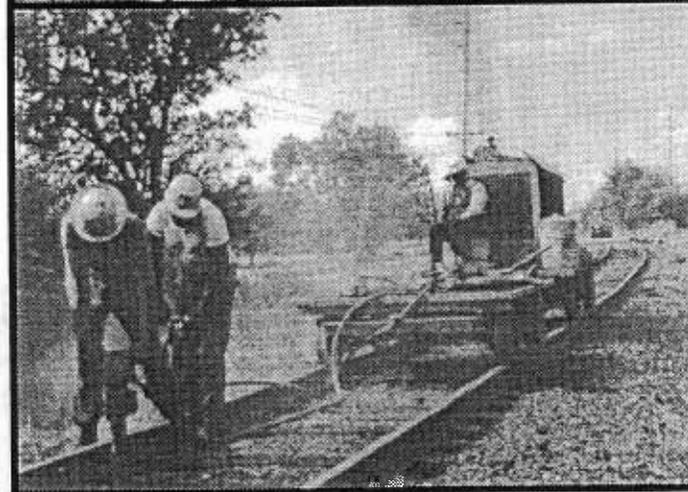
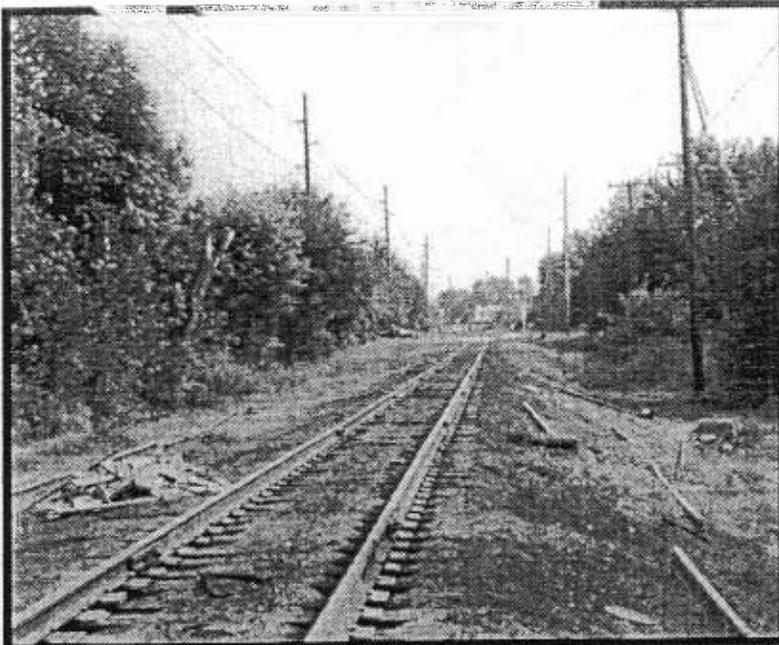


Top Left: Frisco "American" pile driver #98001 was used to replace and add pilings to the north end of the James River bridge. An Eastern Division TT lists the bridge ratings from MK Jct. to Kissick as 53.6. Presumably the bridge ratings were brought up to the 70.4 rating of the main lines. Sept. 1976

Top Right and Middle photos: Bridge gang at the James River bridge approach adding pilings and stringers. Nov. 1976

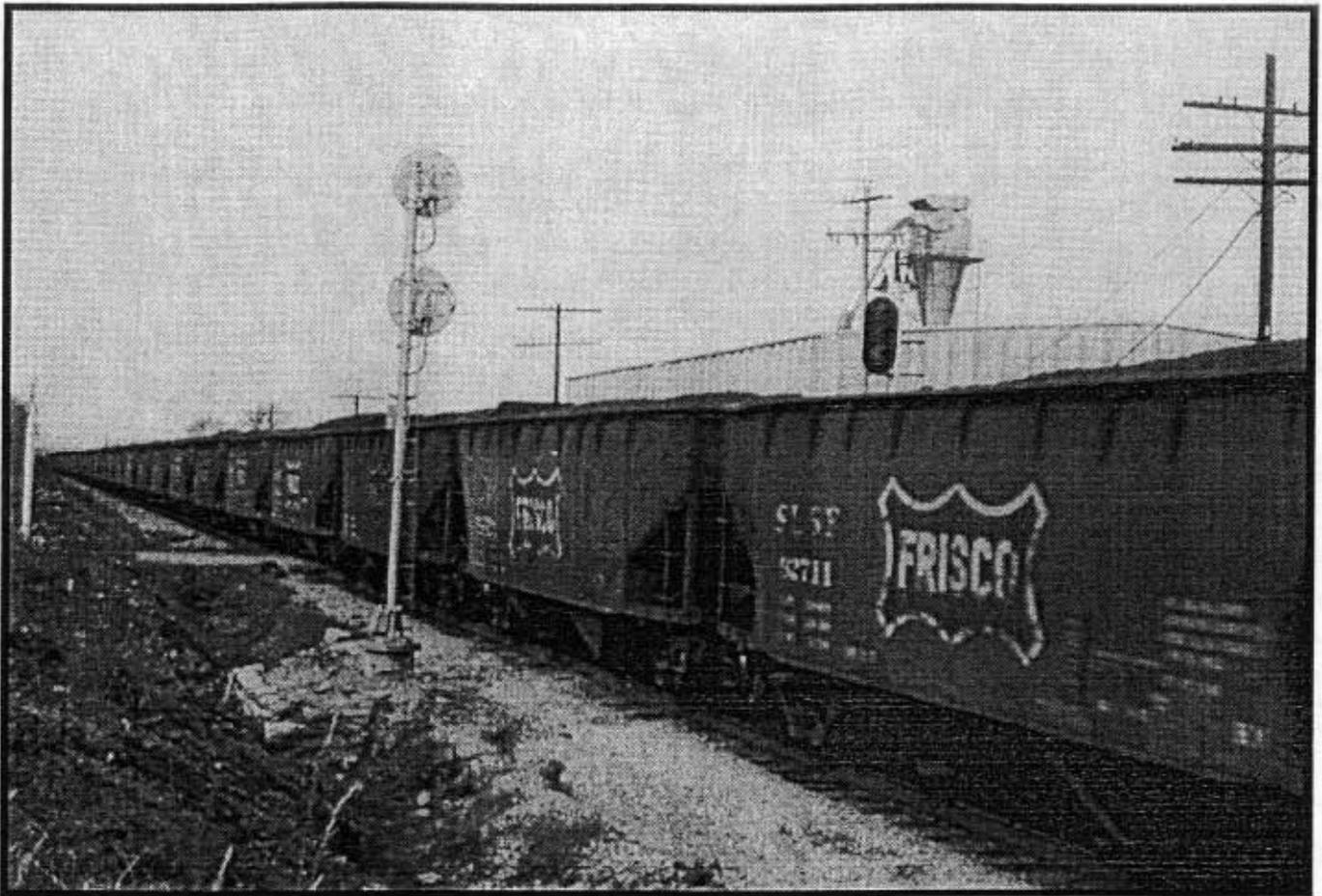
Bottom: Frisco Trackman Brian DeSpain setting spikes for the air spikers following near the Southern Hills development. Sept. 1976

Photos by the author.



be overcome. Frisco was largely unprepared to handle coal shipments. Track, roadbed and bridges on the Ozark branch dated from an earlier time and were maintained for traffic of a light nature. This restricted the cars that could be moved over that track and also restricted the class of locomotives to the same faithful, but tired VOs and SWs that had worked the line for many years. Most of the Frisco coal hopper fleet consisted of a relatively small number of worn-out two-bay 55-ton cars from the late 40s and early 50s. That first winter of coal burning was a nightmare of unpredictable coal deliveries due to car shortages and problems at the mines in Kansas and Oklahoma due to the severe cold weather. Early on there were no unit trains, or barely blocks of coal hoppers, and cars would trickle to the mine and back. Delivery of coal became such an issue that if a handful of coal loads made it to the west yards the cars would be immediately brought to the plant. A June 1, 1976 article from the News & Leader described unloading coal the previous winter and the difficulty CU people had breaking up coal frozen in the cars. Power plant crews were required to use sledgehammers and long rods to free the coal. Demurrage charges for frozen hoppers became a point of contention between CU and Frisco and experimental truck deliveries were made which illustrated CU's displeasure with the situation.

Top: Upgraded rail, new ties and resurfaced ballast between Elm & Walnut St.. Middle: Left side has been upgraded, right side still has the old rail. Lower Left: The Southern Region Rail Gang drives spikes with air hammers using an Ingersoll-Rand compressor. Right: A Jackson Tamper is used to bring the unspiked ties, on the left, up to the base of the rail so spikes can be set. Photos by author. August-September 1976



I had photographed coal shipments heading for the power plant as early as 1974, but all of that was on fragile track using elderly rolling stock. An improvement program began in the summer of 1976 to modernize the track. A rail gang from the Southern Region, a bridge gang and local MOW people spent most of the summer and fall of 1976 replacing ties, rail and reconditioning bridges from MK Junction to just beyond Kissick near the county line. Recent conversations with former employees suggest 115-pound relay-rail replaced 90-pound rail. The existing ballast, mostly lead-mine chat, was resurfaced and grade crossings rebuilt. The bridge gang used an "American" pile driver to replace and add pilings, replace caps and add stringers. An odd choice was made by the Missouri Highway department to not separate the crossing at US 60. Some unused sidings near St. Louis Street were removed, but for the most part the majority of industrial sidings and team tracks were improved with 115-pound turnouts. The traffic to Ozark was so light that no money was spent improving that portion of the line and derailments continued to be common below Kissick until the line was abandoned in the 1980s.

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Top: A train of old hoppers loaded eastbound at Nichols Junction. CU initially bought coal from Bill Patch (later Cherokee Coal) of Garland, KS. Cost of the coal was \$20.68 a ton, and \$4.32 for delivery by rail (Nov. 76). Right: Hopper 91072 built almost 30 years before was typical of the tired fleet of cars Frisco used the first few seasons to supply CU. It is in the west yards ready to head to Kissick in Dec 1976. Photos by the author.



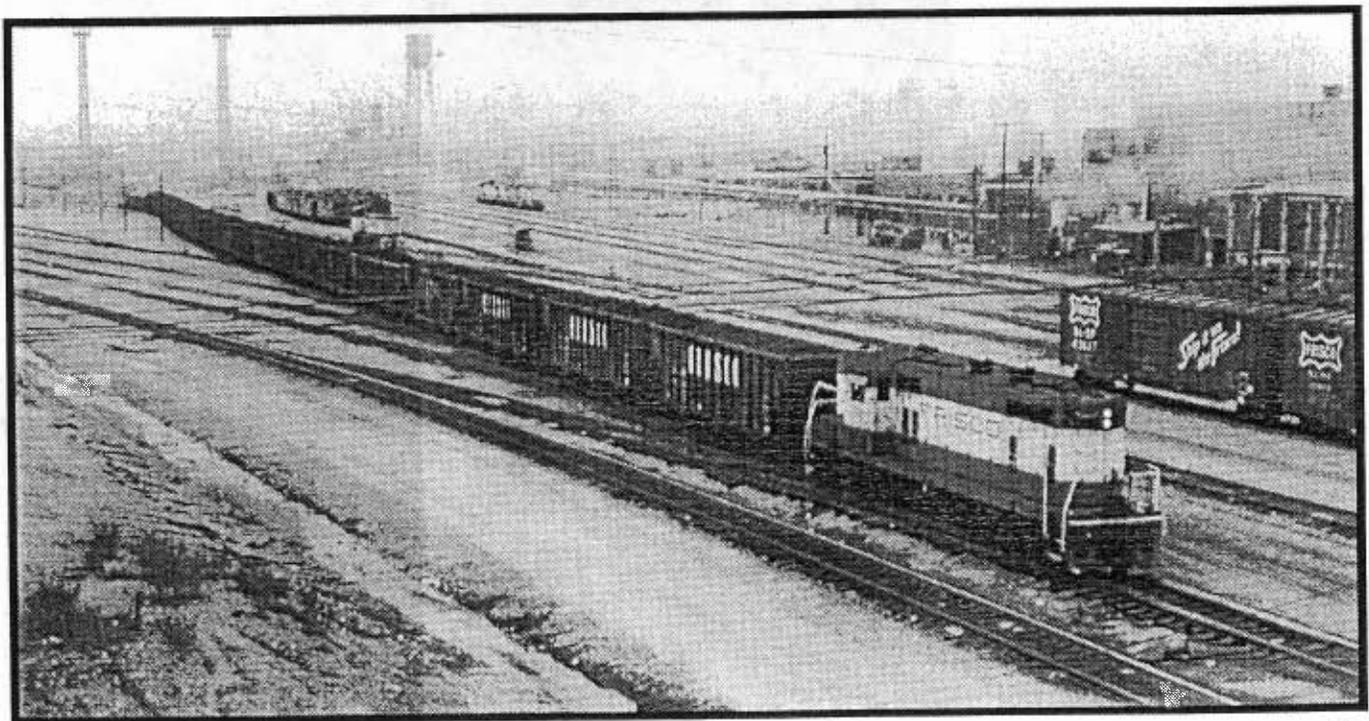
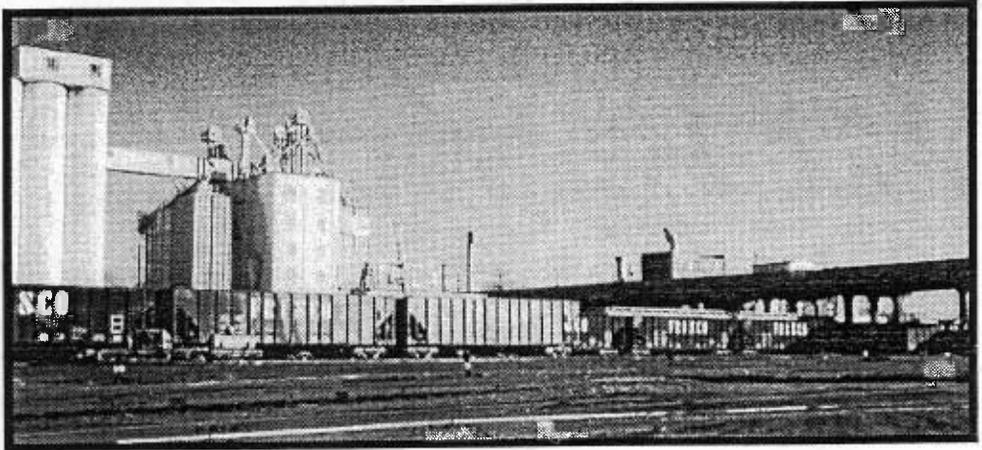
Top: The south yards did not have enough storage tracks for the new hoppers and so the old north yards were also used to store the cars, in this case car #87827. Dec 76 Photo by author



Middle: New SLSF hoppers in the 87000 to 88000 series in storage in the south yards. These cars were built in the Springfield West Shops and delivery predated track and facility improvements which required use of the old cars for some time. Dec 76 Photo by author

Below: Frisco GP7 #521 in west yard with train of new coal cars. 11/06/77 H. Hall photo

At the same time track was being improved, the Springfield car shops began construction of new 100-ton hoppers to replace the 25 to 30 year-old hoppers. Oddly, the new cars immediately went into storage until the unloading and track





Top: SLSF GP38 #675 and following unit with empty hoppers at Langston. This image summarized the goal of the track improvement project. Better coal handling conveyors at the power plant and improvements at the coal mines made the shipping of coal a routine process. Quite a change from the chaos of the winters of 1974 thru 76. 10/06/80



*Right: Frisco GP38 #648 & GP35 #763 with an empty coal train on James River Bridge. 6/24/79
Both photos by H. Hall*

improvements were complete that winter. Lines of new-unused cars piled up in the old North and South yards. Old locomotives and cars continued to be used for some time after the track was reconditioned, but road units such as GP38s with new hopper cars began to be the norm after the winter of 1976/77. Both City Utilities and Frisco became proficient in handling coal and deliveries were spread out year round to reduce the headache of coal frozen in the winter months.

In the years since, under BN and BNSF, delivery has been further improved with larger bathtub gondolas, better rail and crushed-rock ballast, and the latest and largest AC traction locomotives. City Utilities has improved the conveyor systems used for moving coal around the property and has enlarged the yards and storage tracks allowing for longer trains. An employee, or railfan from 1975 would be impressed by the changes.

Thanks must go to several people who supplied information and photos. Harold Hall supplied many photos of trains at Galloway and Kissick. Brian DeSpain worked on the track improvements, Dave Fraley of City Utilities provided background information for the James River Power Station Ray Wells helped with research and J. Lilly provided a much needed and appreciated photo.

Frisco Railroader's Son

(Continued)

Mother, my six-month old brother Walter Jr., and I moved on the Pea Vine to Willow Springs. My dad had rented a farm located on a high hill southwest of Willow Springs. Our farm was adjacent to the main Frisco Railroad line. Our home overlooked the valley and town of Willow Springs.

The next three years were exciting for the Johnson clan. Dad's work schedule was from 11:00 pm to 8:00 am, seven days a week. He was home by 9:00 am, ate the meal mom would have ready for him and then off to bed. Quiet time! That was almost impossible for two growing boys. We had our chores to do. Mom milked the cow, Daisy. I fed her, cleaned the barn and helped with chicken chores. My main duty was to ride herd on my little brother who by now had become mobile and wouldn't stay in one place for any length of time. Oh yeah, in October 1929, we boys became brothers to a baby sister named Violet Mae. She was a neat plaything.

Mother churned sweet cream butter and sold it to the country club. They also bought the buttermilk. I walked and delivered the butter and buttermilk. Mother let me have the money from the buttermilk. My first sales commission. WOW!

The most exciting experience for me was my walks to school. I started to school at 7:45 am and arrived at school at 8:45 am. My daily tour took me down our hill to the Frisco tracks along a small creek that ran through "Hobo Jungle". The hobos kept a neat camp. They always cleaned up the cans and containers, turned them upside down and placed a rock on top so they would be ready for the next bunch.

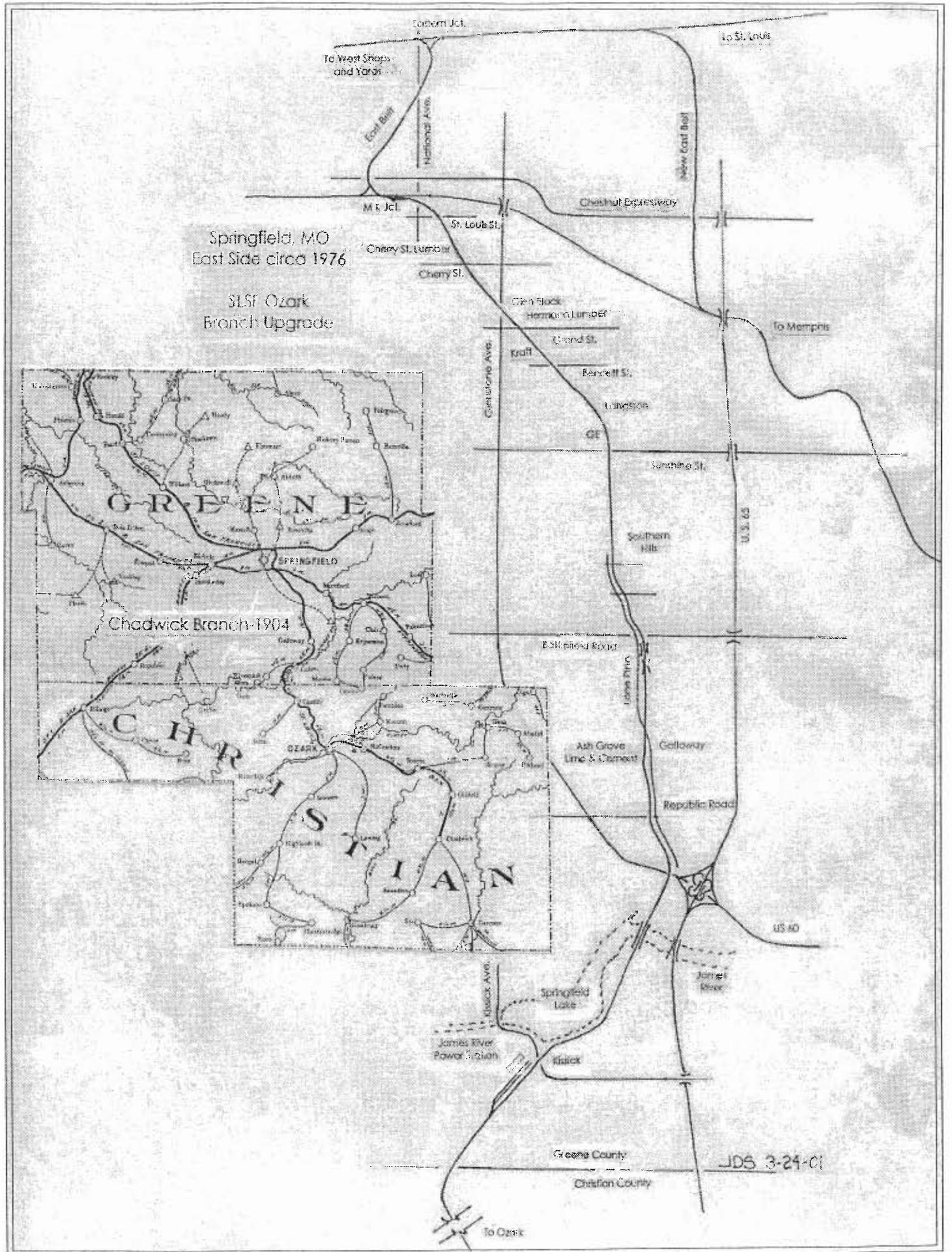
From there I would cross the tracks and approach the roundhouse. By this time dad would have the passenger engine fueled with coal and water, ready for the train crew to leave on their daily schedule on the Pea Vine line to Grandin. I don't remember for sure what the number was on the locomotive, I think it was 509. I do remember my dad calling it his "6 cup percolator". It had 2 drivers on each side so you know it was a small engine. It looked like a tremendous smoke-belching, steam-hissing beast to a seven year old Frisco Railroader's son!

In the year of 1929 the nation experienced a financial hiccup. The latter part of 1929 the Frisco Railroad decided to phase out the roundhouse at Willow Springs. Eventually everything was moved to the Springfield, MO terminal. Dad's boss could not guarantee what would happen with employment in Springfield, as a result in March 1931 my parents moved to Guthrie Center, IA and started farming.

This was a closing chapter in the history of steam railroading in many men's lives. However there are lasting memories, resulting in story telling that will live on forever.

Springfield, MO
East Side circa 1976

SLSF Ozark
Branch Upgrade



JDS 3-24-01