



# all aboard

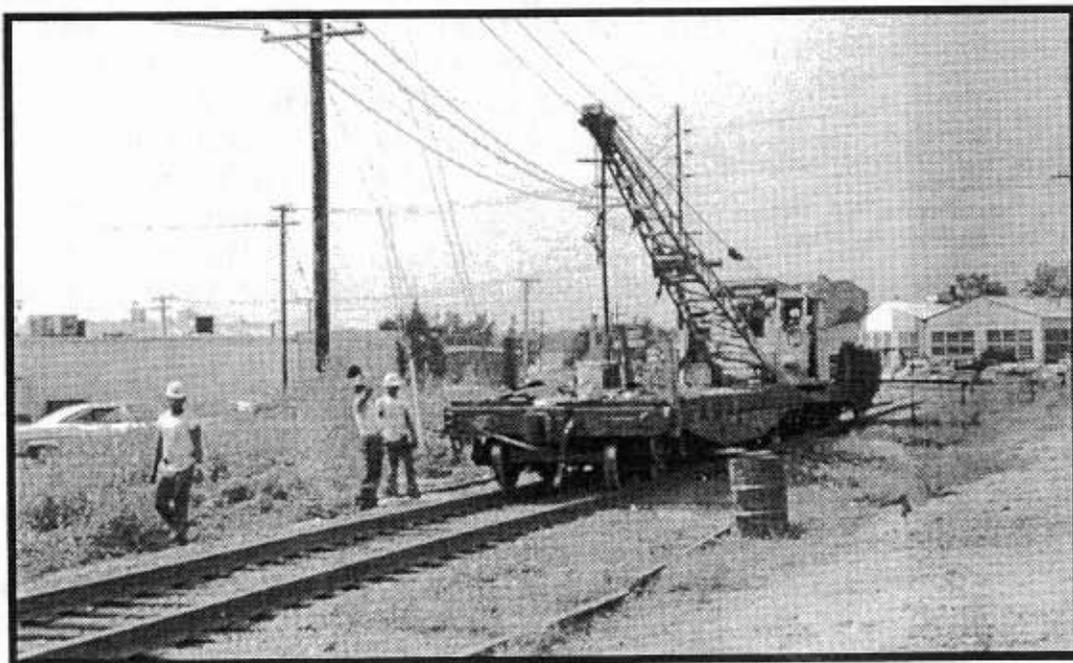


THE FRISCO RAILROAD MUSEUM INC.



## 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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## MUSEUM ADDRESS

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Springfield, MO 65803-2945  
417-866-SLSF (7573)

<http://www.frisco.org/frisco/frisco.html>

## HOURS OF OPERATION

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

## OFFICERS

<b>CEO</b>	<b>President</b>
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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.

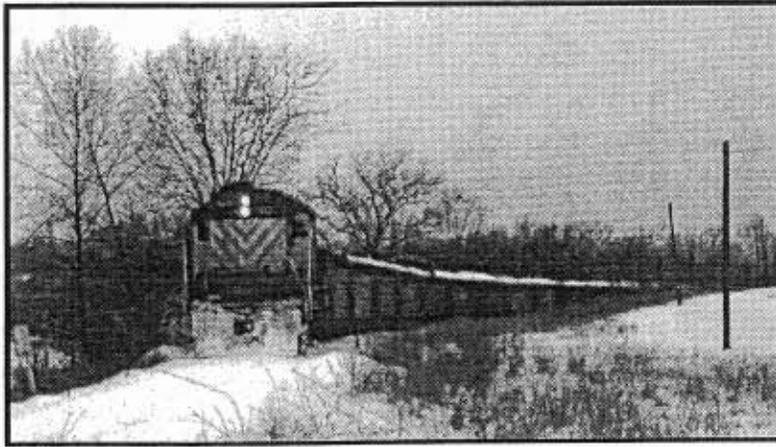
The crewman became well acquainted with my dad and apparently were pleased with his work. They told the foreman at the round house in Willow Springs that he'd better take a look at this guy at Grandin. The foreman was "Red" Brittell. He sent a message with the engineer that he wanted dad to come to Willow 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

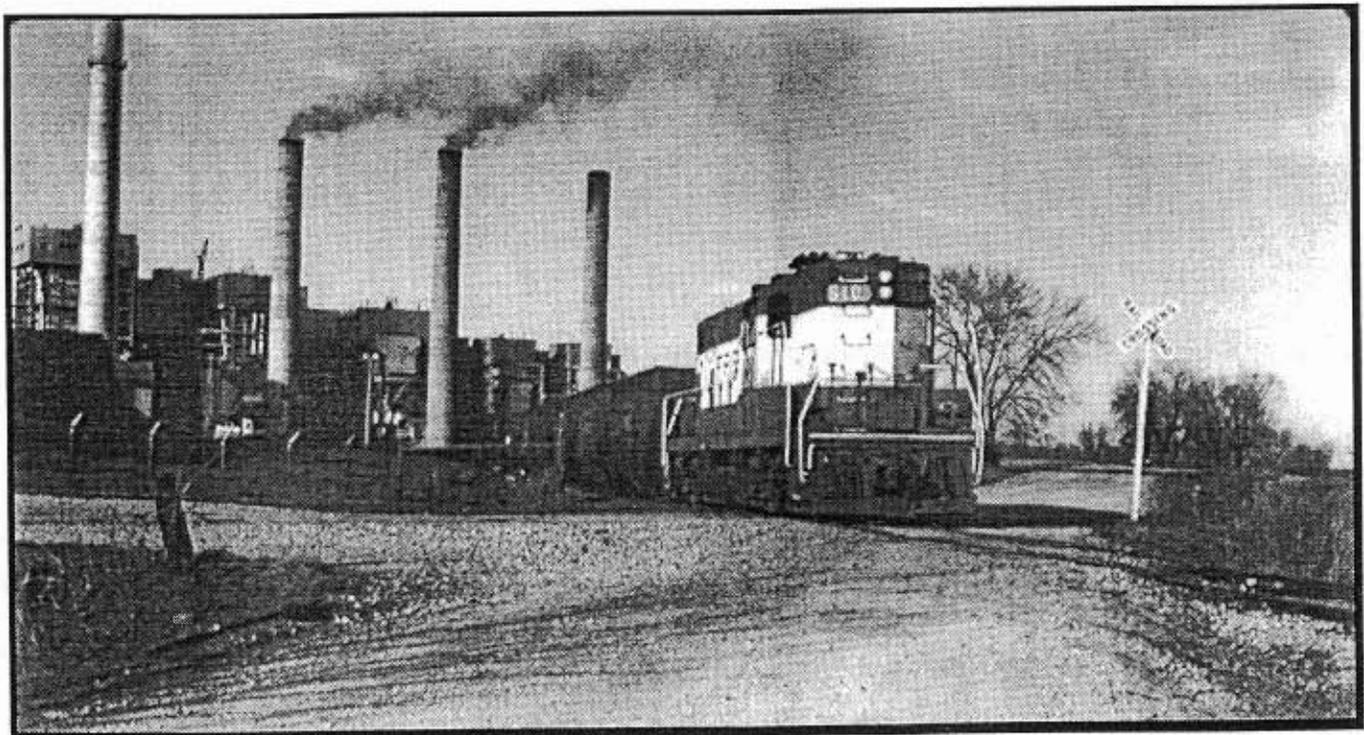


*Above: Frisco GP7 #627 delivering coal on a cold, snowy day to the James River Power Plant. At Galloway on 3/10/75*

*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.

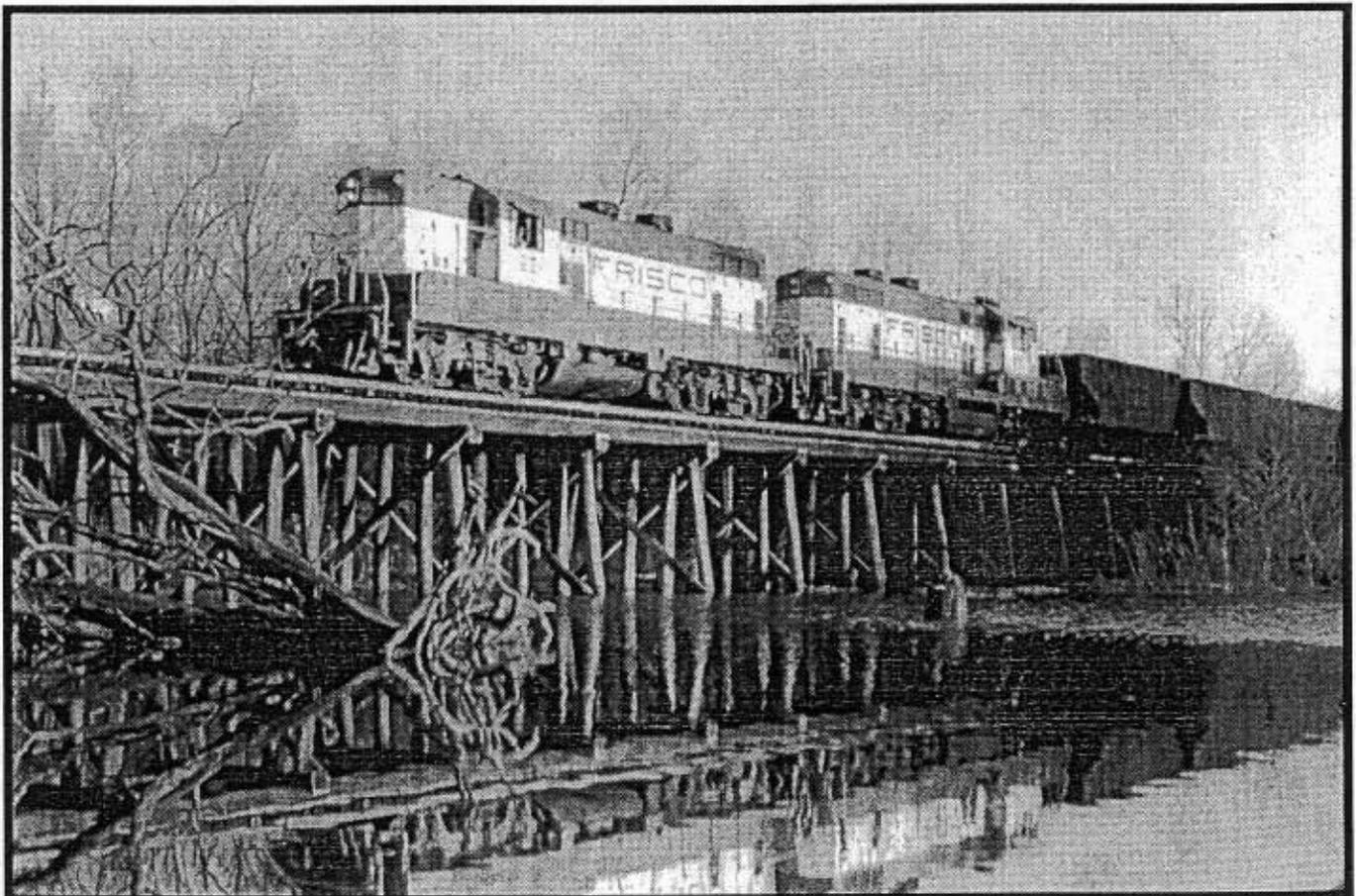


*Above: MK Junction looking east to National Avenue in Sept. 1974.*

*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*



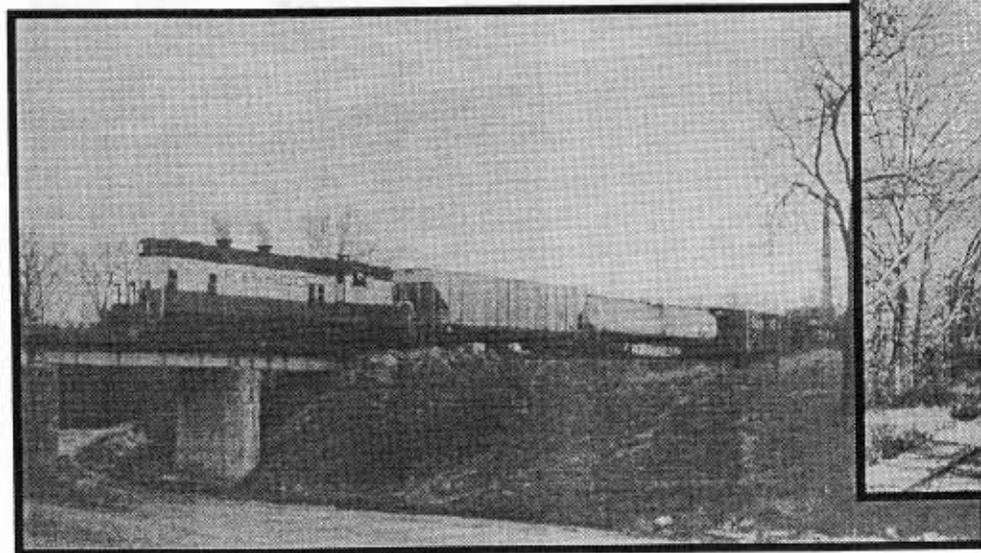
*Upper Left: Frisco GP7 #572 & 565 with a trainman flagging crossing at Cherry & Weller Ave. A 5 mph speed restriction was in effect between MK Junction and Glenstone Ave. June 1976 Photo by author*

*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.

