

WHY RAILROAD EMPLOYMENT DECLINED

IN the first three months of 1930 there was an average of 1,550,672 employes on the Class I railways in the United States. This figure was the lowest reported for the corresponding period in any year since 1919, which is as far back as these monthly figures are obtainable. It represented a decline of approximately 59,000, or of 3.7 per cent, below the number employed in the first quarter of 1929, and a reduction of 443,000, or of 22.2 per cent, below the peak employment figures reported for 1920.

Why has employment on the railroads been declining?

A number of factors determine just how many people are employed by the railways. Chief among these, of course, is the amount of traffic, both freight and passenger, which is offered to the railways for transportation. Other influences which affect railroad employment are the introduction of improved operating methods and labor-saving machinery.

Before we discuss at any length the influence exerted by these factors within recent years, let us see just what the tendency has been for forty years with respect to the number of people working for our railroad companies. Yearly figures prepared by the Interstate Commerce Commission are available as far back as 1890. They show that in that year the number of railway employes was 749,301. By 1900 this total had increased to 1,017,653; in 1910 it was 1,699,420, and in 1920 it reached the peak of 2,022,832 employes on the Class I lines. In 1929 the average number of persons employed on these roads was 1,662,463. Within the last forty years, then, we have had a period from 1890 to 1920 in which employment on the railways was increasing, and another period from 1920 to the present time in which employment has been decreasing.

What has been the cause of this change?

Some railway employes will probably answer that improved machinery is responsible; that the introduction of new locomotives, for instance, so powerful that one engine can replace two or three of the type in use not so long ago, has cut down the number of jobs; that the use of tractors in freight handling, of faster and more efficient machines in the shops, of automatic tabulating machines in the accounting department, has thrown men and women out of work.

Falling Off in Business and Not "Technological Unemployment" Responsible, Rail Economist Says

By SAMUEL O. DUNN
(Editor of *The Railway Age*.)

For the last few years Frisco employes, like the employes of other rail lines in America, have done a great deal of talking about the constant encroachment of the motor buses and trucks upon railroad earnings. Particularly at meetings of the employes clubs has this been true. Some earnest effort to hold traffic to Frisco Lines as opposed to bus and truck companies has been put forth by employes, and it has been productive, too.

In the final analysis, however, it seems fair to say that railroad employes as a whole, have reacted toward the bus and truck competition much like Mark Twain once said the American people reacted toward the weather—"talk a powerful lot about it, but don't do anything to change it."

In the accompanying article by America's foremost railroad economist, Mr. Samuel O. Dunn, readers of this magazine will find the facts in the case. Mr. Dunn does not deal in rumor or guess work. He has the figures and from them he has drawn the facts and presented them in this article.

To the Frisco man who likes his job and wants to keep it, and to the Frisco man's wife who is interested in the future of her husband's occupation, we commend this article for careful and thoughtful reading.

—W. L. H., Jr.

In some and perhaps many cases this is true.

This replacing of men by machinery is known as "technological unemployment." But this is an influence that does not effect employment on the railroads alone. It is seen in almost every industry. In practically every line of production, methods have been improved, new machinery has been designed and installed, so that now one man can do in a day the same amount of work that required two or three, or perhaps ten men, twenty or thirty years ago. Nor does this necessarily mean that the man of today has to work any harder than d'd each man in 1910 or 1900.

A man with an electric saw, for example, can probably turn out five or ten times as much finished product with less actual labor than a man with a hand saw. In agriculture the number of tractors on farms has increased from 246,000 in 1920 to 853,000 in 1929, while the number of horses and mules has dropped, in the same time, from 25,200,000 to 19,500,000. The tractor and highly specialized farm implements, according to recent estimates, are saving close to one and one-half billion man-days of labor in the production of eight of the principal crops.

With the cradle used by our grandfathers, three men ordinarily could harvest two acres of wheat in one day. With a modern combine harvester, three men can harvest, thresh and deliver to the grain elevator 45 acres of wheat in a single day. According to estimates of the U. S. Department of Labor, three hours and three minutes of human labor were required to produce a bushel of wheat by hand methods; in some sections of the country this has been reduced to ten minutes.

But even more significant to the railway worker is the fact that figures of the Interstate Commerce Commission indicate that this factor of "technological unemployment" actually has been less important on the railroads in recent years than in earlier periods. The eight-hour working day was substituted for the ten-hour day while the railways were under government control, and in order to obtain a fair picture of the situation it is necessary to compare developments during a period when the ten-hour day was still in effect with developments that have occurred since the eight-hour day has been in effect. Developments during the period 1911-1917, when the ten-hour day was in effect, are fairly comparable with those during the period 1923-1929, when the eight-hour day was in effect.

Railway freight and passenger traffic, of course, is measured in terms of ton-miles and passenger-miles. To combine these two factors in total "traffic units." It is usually considered that one passenger-mile is equivalent to three ton-miles. If, then, we multiply figures of passenger-miles by three and add the product to the total ton-miles of the railways, we will arrive at a figure of total railway traffic units, from which, by division, we

can calculate the number of traffic units handled for each person employed by the railways.

In 1911 the Class I railways produced 275,302 million ton-miles of freight service and 32,371 million passenger-miles of passenger service, or, on the basis explained in the previous paragraph, a total of 372,417 million traffic units. The average number of employees in service was 1,599,854 in 1911, so railway service performed per employe averaged 232,792 traffic units. In 1917 ton-miles rose to 430,319 million and passenger-miles to 39,477 million, equivalent to 548,750 million traffic units. Average number of employes in that year amounted to 1,732,876, giving an average performance in traffic units per employe of 316,670. Thus, in the period from 1911 to 1917 the following increases were shown: number of employes, 8.3 per cent; passenger-miles, 21.9 per cent; net ton-miles, 56.3 per cent; traffic units, 47.3 per cent; traffic units per employe, 36.0 per cent.

What has happened in the last six years? In the year 1929 the freight traffic of the railways was the largest in history, amounting to 492,180 million ton-miles. Passenger-miles, however, showed a reversal of the upward trend prevailing in the first period and totaled only 31,078 million, or less than in 1917. The traffic handled in 1929 therefore totaled only 585,414 million traffic units as compared with 570,108 million in 1923. Average employment was 1,857,674 in 1923, and 1,662,463 in 1929, so traffic units per employe increased from 306,893 in 1923 to 352,137 in 1929. As against the increases from 1911 to 1917 previously shown, 1929 showed the following changes as compared with 1923: number of employes decreased 10.5 per cent; passenger-miles decreased 18.1 per cent; ton-miles increased only 7.9 per cent; total traffic units increased only 2.7 per cent; and traffic units per em-

ploye increased only 14.7 per cent.

It is interesting to note, from the foregoing figures, that because of the shift from the ten-hour day to the eight-hour day, the traffic units handled per railway employe were actually less in 1923 than in 1917. Further, the relative amount of "technological unemployment" that occurred was smaller between 1923 and 1929 than it was between 1911 and 1917, as the increase in traffic units per employe was 36 per cent in the first period and only 14.7 per cent—or relatively less than half as great—in the second period.

It is obvious, then, that "technological unemployment" has not been the fundamental cause of the decline in railway employment that has occurred within recent years.

This brings us to the trend of railway traffic. Figuring on the same basis as before, of combining passenger-miles and ton-miles, from 1890 to 1900 there was an average annual increase in railway business of 7.8 billion traffic units. From 1900 to 1910, the average annual increase was 16.2 billion and from 1910 to 1920, 20.4 billion. From 1920 to 1929, on the other hand, there was actually an average annual decline in railway business of 1.2 billion traffic units. This was due, first, to the actual and very large decline in passenger traffic, and, secondly, to the greatly reduced growth of freight business between 1920 and 1929, and this is the real explanation of the decline in railroad employment within recent years.

What can be done, in this situation? It is obvious, of course, that the change from a rapidly growing traffic before 1920 to a traffic that has not grown similarly since is due in considerable measure to competition from other forms of transportation. The drop in passengers carried one mile from 47 billion in 1920 to 31

billion in 1929 is due to the competition of the motor bus and the private automobile. The failure of freight traffic to show as large increases as formerly is due at least in part to competition from the highways and from inland waterways. How are these competitive forms of transportation treated as compared with the treatment accorded to the railways?

With the private automobile there can be little quarrel. If a man prefers to drive his family in his own car over highways for which he has helped to pay, rather than ride on the railways, that, of course, is his privilege. Perhaps he has not counted the relative costs, comfort and safety of the two means of transportation, but the decision as to how he will travel is absolutely up to him. As regards commercial highway transportation, however, both passenger and freight, bus and truck, further complicating factors enter.

These bus and truck lines are transportation companies, just as the railroads are. Yet while the railways are strictly regulated by the Interstate Commerce Commission (a branch of the federal government), highway transportation companies have no such regulation. While the railways have to maintain their own rights-of-way, pay taxes thereon and earn a return on the money so invested, the highway companies enjoy a right-of-way largely paid for and maintained at the expense of the general public and upon which no return at all has to be earned. In other words, those common carriers operating on the highways are more or less subsidized by the public, and can, in many cases, make lower rates than the railways, attract traffic from them, and reduce the number of jobs for railway men.

The same facts hold true in much greater degree in the case of the water lines. While the highway carriers do have to pay license fees and
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A view of the Frisco's high speed tracks near Pacific, Mo., appears below.



THEY KNEW HIM AS "WHISTLIN' JOE"

HAVE you ever heard of "Whistlin' Joe?" "Whistlin' Joe" once pulled the fastest mail train this side of the Mississippi River, and he was a cautious engineer. He "double-whistled" for all railroad crossings. They say he whistled all the time, and everybody along the right-of-way knew that "Whistlin' Joe" was pulling the mail that day.

"Whistlin' Joe's" other name is Mr. John J. Kenney and he is the oldest engineer, in point of service, in the Monett Yards, and second oldest on the Eastern division. He has piled up a service record of forty-five years, and the total will reach the fifty mark before his retirement.

In 1905 the Frisco Railroad had a mail contract with the Government to operate the fast mail train, consisting of nothing but mail cars, from St. Louis to Vinita, Okla. The mail train made the fastest schedule of any train west of the Mississippi River and made two stops for water, at Newburg and Springfield. The train was known as 1 and 12. Twenty-five mail clerks busily sorted the mail as the train skimmed over the rails.

And at the throttle sat this keen-eyed engineer, alert to the task before him, leaning far out of the cab, searching the track ahead and making the schedule of 165 miles from Newburg to Monett in three hours and twenty minutes!

The mail train had no scheduled stops. All trains took the siding for it as it slipped over the steel rails at the clip of a mile a minute! Engineer Kenney says that he did not touch his brake valve (except for the stop at Springfield) from Newburg to Monett.

In the old days an engineer was called to take a train out on any division, and Mr. Kenney worked over the entire system (with the exception of the Southern), which included such terminals as Springfield, Monett, Rogers, Chester, Ft. Smith, Paris, Sapulpa, Oklahoma City, Sherman, Francis, Pittsburg, Joplin, Neodesha and Wichita.

His father was a section foreman,

Engineer Kenney Earned Nickname In 1905 On Fast Mail Run

and he aided him in laying steel near Rogers, Ark., as a boy. Mr. Kenney has two sons and five daughters. One of them, W. H. Kenney, is now employed as a passenger brakeman from Monett to Wichita. The second son is just out of school. Besides his immediate family, Mr. Kenney has four brothers, three of them in railroad service.

In speaking of the crops handled over Frisco Lines today, Mr. Kenney

Scott; Harry McNair, agent at Fayetteville; Harry Kirk a Frisco conductor; W. G. Furry and Jimmy Johnson, who at one time served the Frisco. Many of the older Frisco men will remember these men who railroaded in the days of the fast mail.

Mr. Kenney takes a great delight in throwing off magazines and newspapers to many of his friends along his route. One family in particular, he has supplied with magazines and papers for a number of years, and has letters from the recipients which he treasures.

Engineer Kenney shuns publicity, but there is one thing which he will discuss at length and that is his garden. He runs the motor car on trains 704-705 out of Monett to Fayetteville, Ark., leaving there at 9:45 a. m. and returning at 3:50 p. m. The time he is in Monett one may find him at his home in his flower and vegetable garden. This garden is one of the most unusual on the division. In the center is a fountain, made of shells and colored rocks, where gold fish abound. Encircling the fountain are many gaily colored flowers of the old-fashioned variety and to the back of the garden, and shielding the plot for vegetables, are climbing vines and a rock garden at the foot. The vegetable garden has flourished. Tomatoes and beans—corn and cucumbers, enough to provide a supply for the

table have been grown there this year, despite the hot weather.

Bird houses and colored wooden birds have been placed among the trees and flowers, as well as some green stone frogs, white rabbits and a wooden alligator that swims complacently in the fountain.

Mr. Kenney says he has never taken a vacation. He seems to find recreation in the comfort of his delightful home and his special pride, his garden. He gives Mrs. Kenney credit for the flowers, while he takes credit for the vegetables, and the home and garden are visited by many Frisco folks, and Monett citizens feel that it is the show garden of that city.

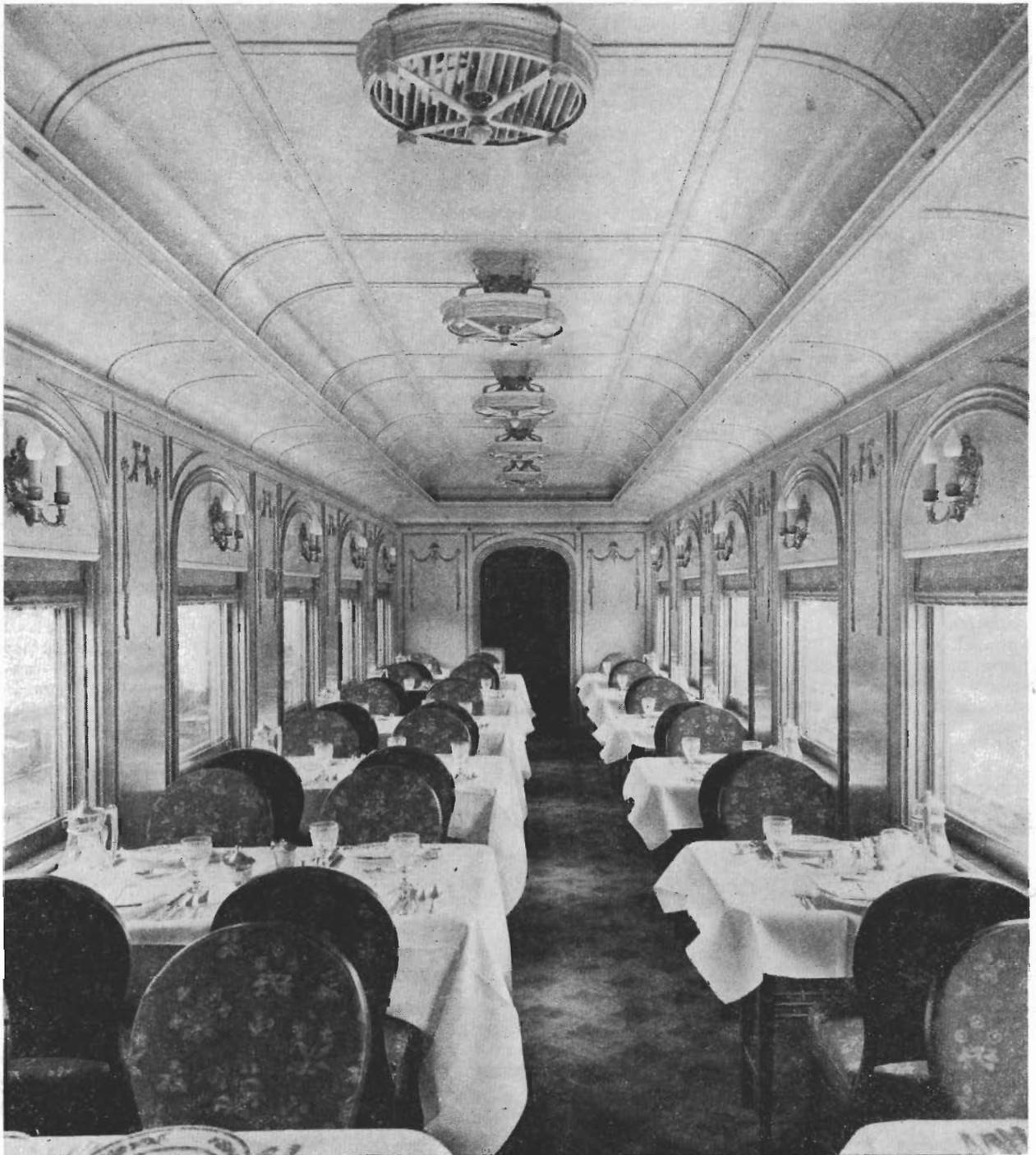


Engineer Kenney appears in the center of the above photograph, with his fireman, Arthur Buckett, and his son, J. J. Kenney, Jr.

remembered when there was at one time a shipment of 1,800 car loads of peaches from the territory around Rogers, Ark. "Andy" O'Hara, one-time general superintendent of Frisco Lines, was at that time handling the switch list in the yard at Rogers.

Among the old timers of Mr. Kenney's acquaintance were Jim Mansfield, conductor, who is now retired and lives next door to Mr. Kenney in Monett; "Link" Coover, retired conductor of Springfield; J. A. Hall, agent at Ft. Smith; Carl Gray, who was at the time Mr. Kenney knew him, operator at Rogers, Ark.; Pat Herd, roadmaster, Northern division; W. H. Bevans, superintendent at Ft.

New Dining Cars Placed in Service August 5



Designed by the motive power department of Frisco Lines, built by the Pullman Company at Chicago, and placed in service August 5 on the Meteor and Texas Special, these dining cars embody every refinement of feature known to modern railroading.

For months the Pullman Company has worked painstakingly to produce the finest dining cars ever placed in service on American railroads. And the product delighted Frisco officials and travelers on Frisco trains.

The new diners have an over-all length of 84 feet and seating capacity for 36 diners. They are of all-steel construction, and the inside finish and furniture are of steel, painted and varnished in a three-tone green and decorated in the new Adam design. A Wilton velvet carpet is on the floor, and the chairs are covered with flowered tapestry to harmonize with the color scheme.

Two novel features, attracting great attention from patrons, are the concealed heating system, and the indirect lighting in the ceiling

of the car. The heat comes through brass grills in the window capping, and the temperature of the car is regulated by thermostatic control. None of the customary radiator pipes are in evidence. The lighting is concealed in the ceiling moulding, and 200 lamps illuminate the ceiling of the car with soft light.

One of the new diners was on display in St. Louis, August 5, and another in Oklahoma City on August 6. Hundreds of people viewed the new cars at both points and praised them lavishly.

TWO VETERANS DISCUSS "OLD DAYS"

A ROADMASTER'S job, so Tom Hall and W. I. Elliott of Ft. Scott, Kans., tell you, keeps a fellow on the jump all the time, in and out, inspecting the track, the forces and keeping things in tip-top shape. One Sunday recently, however, they were both in Ft. Scott at the same time and in their office, discussing things that happened forty years ago.

Both are rounding out long service records, their total service being ninety years. Mr. Hall entered the service of Frisco Lines in 1884, and his record totals 46 years, while Mr. Elliott began his service in 1886, and his service totals 44 years.

They have been closely associated in their work for the last twenty years, Mr. Elliott being assigned the territory from Ft. Scott to Rosedale, Kans., and Mr. Hall the territory from Ft. Scott to Nichols, Junction, Mo., and also the Aurora Branch which is thirty-six miles long.

Pension days are approaching for each, and Mr. Elliott's is only a few months off.

"If you hadn't lived to see the improvements made in railroading in the last fifty years, nobody could make you believe that they had taken place," Mr. Elliott remarked.

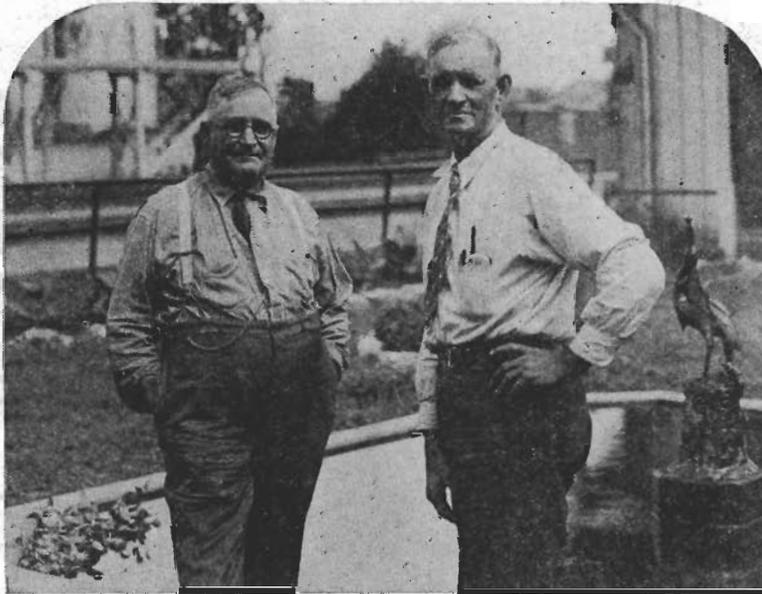
"Remember that little old engine with all the brass trimmings that old Captain Rogers used to have pull his special car over the road?" Mr. Hall asked of Mr. Elliott. "That little engine was covered with brass trimmings and when Captain Rogers started out over the line, you could see your reflection in most any part of it," he continued.

"But the runs weren't long ones," remarked Mr. Elliott. "I know the longest run in the old days was a freight run from Kansas City to Springfield and the boys used to wonder how the engines made it without a change. Look at the distances they make today."

Tom Hall and Bill Elliott of Ft. Scott Reminisce About a Youthful Frisco

"You started as a section laborer, didn't you, Tom?" Mr. Elliott asked.

"Yep, in 1884, and I was promoted to a section foreman in 1885 at Springfield yards. I served at various points, at Lockwood, Kenoma, South Greenfield, Ft. Scott and was appointed roadmaster of the Ash Grove Sub on April 1, 1915. I served in that capacity until I was sent to the Kansas City Sub and then back to the Ash Grove Sub in 1923. Haven't lost any time since I started," he said.



Tom Hall (left), and Bill Elliott, widely known veteran roadmasters, left a Sunday meeting of the railroad Sunday school to pose for the picture above.

"I started as a section laborer at Mulberry, in 1886," Mr. Elliott said, "and was promoted to section foreman in 1890. I worked at Pawnee Station (Anna), Mulberry, Parsons, Weir and at several points between Weir and Kramer Junction. I was promoted to the position of roadmaster in 1909 on the Afton subdivision and to the Kansas City subdivision in 1910. I returned to the Afton sub in 1917 and to the Kansas City sub in 1923."

"While I was at Pawnee," Mr. Elliott continued, "I remember I saw

my first electric headlight. It lit the whole sky, and when the engineer turned the curve, you could see the spikes in the rail for a mile and a half. Of course now they have them regulated so that they are not so bright, but then they would just put your eyes out."

"Do you remember the little old 28,000 pound coal cars?" Mr. Hall asked his partner.

"Sure," replied Mr. Elliott, "and I remember when they got the 40,000 capacity coal cars, the boys made the remark that they were never going to be able to get them filled."

"Ft. Scott was a big division point when we first started, Bill," Mr. Hall said. "You know twelve cars in those days was a big train, and they were little fellows, too, and the engines had the old pepperbox stacks. But railroading in those days was a real pleasure. Of course there is much of it that I wouldn't trade for railroading today, but when I look at the reports we have to make out now, and remember that when we were section foremen, all we had to do was to keep a time book, and worry about how to spend our \$45.00 a month. We got our section house free, if the railroad had one erected at that point.

"I remember I used to have a gang of men building fences, and I paid them \$1.00 a day and board. I worked six men and where we boarded they threw in my board for bringing them the six men boarders. The board for those men cost me \$1.50 a week, and the cooking was good, too."

"Yes, the section foreman didn't get much in those days, nor the section man," Mr. Elliott said. "I have worked mine many a day for ten hours at 11½ cents an hour. Their check for the month would run around \$29.90. We didn't know what overtime was."

"Overtime?" interrupted Mr. Hall. "Say, if I got overtime retroactive to (Now turn to Page 11, please)