



## January Meeting

The January 2022 Meeting of the Heart of the Heartlands was cancelled. As the Covid numbers have increased everywhere in the four state area, we felt that it was probably best to not have the January meeting.

This newsletter, although it does not have minutes from a meeting included, does include some other material.

## Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Heart of the Heartlands will be held on February 9, 2022 at 7:00 pm at the Webb Center.

## Heartlands - YouTube

Check out our YouTube channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMIkqWyCxftDlf\\_ezgw3UyQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCMIkqWyCxftDlf_ezgw3UyQ)

## Watco Christmas Express Ride

The annual Watco Christmas Express Train Ride was held on December 10, 2021. The first and second grade classes of St. Mary's Elementary and the special needs class of USD 250 enjoyed the train ride. More on this ride in next month's newsletter.

## Calwell Collection

The cataloging and packing of the Calwell collection is nearing completion. Dave will keep us posted on his schedule and plans in regards to the move.

## Peyton Orr Visit

Heartland member Peyton Orr, visited the Carona museum recently to find out information on the NEO. Peyton, from North Carolina, formerly from Joplin, spent a couple of days at the museum. John Chambers, Larry Spahn and Brian Carlson met with Peyton with John spending most of the time helping Peyton gather information that he was searching for. Peyton was impressed with his visit and left a nice donation to the club.

## Train Rides for 2022

As of now, we are looking at possibly having a train ride out of Carona on June 11. This would coincide with Big Brutus Inc. hosting of the Big Iron Overland Rally that weekend. We would have a ride at 10:30 am and another at 2:30 pm. Planning is in the early stages so we will see how things develop.

### Back in Time?

This section is about railroad lines that may have since been abandoned. Where did they go? A brief history of some forgotten places.

# Where Did They Go?

## St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Parsons Subdivision

- Brian Carlson

The Parsons subdivision of the St. Louis & San Francisco Railroad company (Frisco) ran from Arcadia, KS running south to Mulberry, KS then went southeast to Minden, MO before heading southwest to Pittsburg, KS. The line left Pittsburg heading southwesterly towards Cherokee, KS on it's way to Parsons, KS. About half way between Cherokee and Parsons, it passed through McCune, KS before crossing the Neosho River east of Parsons. From Parsons, the route left in a northwesterly direction passing through Dennis, KS before turning southwest to finish the 73.3 mile route in Cherryvale, KS.

The section of the line from Cherokee to Parsons began as a narrow gauge rail line owned and built by the Memphis, Kansas & Colorado Railway. The section of line was operated by the M.K. & C. from 1877 to 1880. Construction began on April 10, 1878 in Cherokee where the line crossed the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Gulf Railway. Construction proceeded quickly as the work moved west of Cherokee. The workers building the track reached the Neosho River in late June of 1878. Bad weather then entered the picture, the river flooded,

Crossing of Frisco with MOP outside Minden



Missouri Pacific is the track crossing the Frisco. Looking northeast on its way to Mulberry.

- Photo courtesy of Richard Napper collection

Frisco and KCS crossing - Pittsburg



Frisco track crossing they KCS in Pittsburg.

- Photo courtesy of Richard Napper

damaging some of the work that had been done and delaying the construction of the bridge across the Neosho River. By July 1st, the track from Cherokee to the Neosho River was in pretty good shape to handle trains but the rest of the line to Parsons was not in shape for regular travel nor was the bridge over the river completed.

The line was completed to Parsons later in 1878. Once that was done, plans were drawn up to extend the line to Weir City to reach the coal fields around Weir. After reaching Weir, the plan was to extend the line to the

## St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Parsons Subdivision

Frisco running from Carthage, MO to Columbus, KS (and beyond). Weir City was founded in 1872 and was always a coal town. The line to Weir City passed through Lea Walk in Cherokee county which later became known as Daisy Hill. With the completion of the route in August of 1878, the M.K. & C. became the first railroad in Weir City.

After the completion of the line to Weir City, coal shipments began immediately. From there, the plan was to extend the line southeast of Weir City to Brownsville and a connection with the M. & W. Brownsville, later becoming known as Messer, was located about three miles east of the current US-69, US-160, US-400 junction on the north end of Crestline. Construction of the line to Brownsville began in February of 1879 and was completed in late March. This was the last building project on the line and brought the length of the M.K. & C. to 43 miles.

Prior to 1879, the Missouri River, Fort Scott & Gulf Railroad had track that ran from Kansas City to Ft. Scott to Girard, down to Baxter Springs, KS. In March of 1879, the name was changed to the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Gulf Railroad. This was the line that ran north and south through Cherokee that the M.K. & C. started its narrow gauge line in 1878. By 1880, as with many early railroads, financing and profit were a problem. In January 1880, buyers were being sought for the railroad. The Kansas City, Fort Scott & Gulf Railroad (Gulf) were interested in purchasing the railroad.

Lightning Creek Coal Company



Lightning Creek Coal Company mine located at MP 153 between Cherokee and McCune.

- Photo courtesy of Richard Napper collection



- Photo courtesy of Richard Napper collection

The purchase was completed on February 6, 1880 with the Gulf's first move being the taking up of the line from Weir to Messer. By the end of February, 1880, that portion of the original M.K. & C. was gone. This became one of the first abandonments of rail in Kansas history. From here, the Gulf extended the narrow gauge line from Parsons to Cherryvale later in 1880 using the rails and ties from the M.K. & C. section from Weir City to Messer. Sometime after that the line was converted to standard gauge.

As mining in the area continued to grow and supporting industries increased, the "Gulf" was looking for more access to the mining and smelting operations in the Pittsburg area. In 1882, the "Gulf" completed the section of line that ran from Arcadia, KS south to Mulberry, KS and over to Minden, MO. From Minden the line continued southwest through Pittsburg then continuing to the former M.K. & C. just east of Cherokee. This is the point where the track, leaving Cherokee heading east, turned to go to Weir City. This was the last section of track to be built that later became the Frisco's Parsons Subdivision.

In 1901, an agreement between the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Gulf and the Frisco railroad was made. In this agreement, the Frisco leased the railroad from the Gulf for the next 99 years, but essentially

# St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Parsons Subdivision

became the owner of the KC, FS & G. The Frisco operated the track for the next several decades. Service to the mines and smelters in the area as well as supporting industries lasted for the next 50 years.

Around 1960 the line from Dennis to Cherryvale was abandoned. After flooding and lack of business, the portion from Dennis to Parsons was abandoned in 1976. The Burlington Northern purchased the Frisco in 1980. From 1980 to 1985, the BN abandoned the section on the west side of Parsons, then sold parts of the line from Parsons to McCune. KG&E bought the line from Cherokee to their plant on the west side of the Neosho River so that they would have a way to move large equipment into their plant if need be. Only once was the line used for this purpose. After the issues with the track status and headaches involved, KG&E abandoned the line from their plant to Cherokee around 1987. The section of track from Parsons to KG&E was sold to a scrap metal company using the Crosbyton Railroad name. They never ran a train on the line and pulled the rail a few years later.

In the late 1970's, the Frisco abandoned the portion of the subdivision from Pittsburg through Minden to the KCS crossing southeast of Mulberry. The Frisco, and later the Burlington Northern, used track rights on the KCS to reach the form Frisco line going through Mulberry to Arcadia. Around 1985, the portion of the line from the KCS interchange through Mulberry to Mertz was abandoned. The Mackie-Clemens coal company operated a mine on a spur that was located at Mertz so the section from Arcadia to the spur at Mertz remained open until 1987 when it was abandoned.



- Photo courtesy of Richard Napper collection

from MP 139.2 to Cherokee is leased from the BNSF by the SKOL. This is part of the current Gorilla Subdivision of the SKOL line. This is the only portion, from Pittsburg to Cherokee, of the former Frisco, Parsons Subdivision that is still in operation.

From the early days, coal traffic was a huge factor in rail operations. Servicing the mines and smelters kept the line busy. Despite the freight traffic the line did see passenger service. The M.K. & C. setup its time schedule for passenger trains to align with stops that the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Gulf had in

Pittsburg Frisco Depot - 1895



- Photo courtesy of Richard Napper collection

In 2000, the BNSF sold the section of track from Pittsburg to MP 139.2 to the South Kansas and Oklahoma Line (SKOL). The track

Parsons Frisco Depot



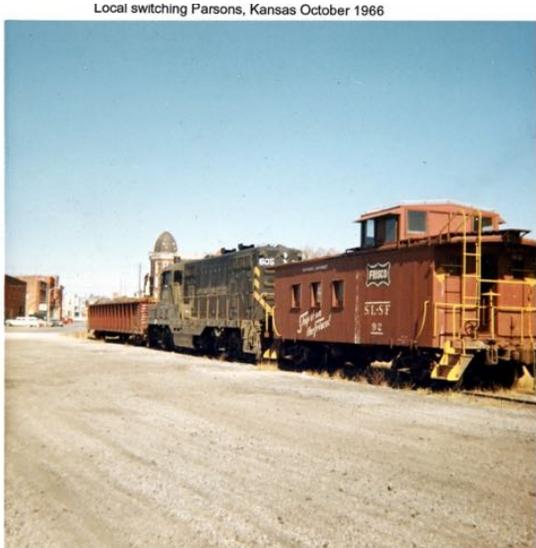
- Photo courtesy of Jeff Cooney (Leon Sapp)

# St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad Parsons Subdivision

Cherokee. In addition to its regular passenger service, the M.K. & C. also had numerous excursions for special occasions. One example in the Parsons Sun from May 10, 1878 talked of a Thursday morning excursion to Messer. The approximately 50 passengers on the train were able to go about two miles to the

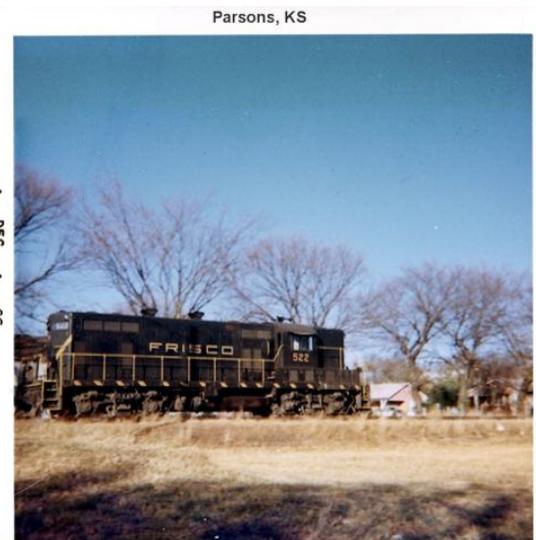
Spring River for a day of fishing. On the return, they stopped in Weir City for seeing the smelting operations. Another excursion, also mentioned in the Parsons Sun, June 28, 1879, advertised an evening bathing train from Parsons to the Neosho River. The round trip fare was 25 cents.

By 1906, when the Frisco was operating the subdivision, the Frisco's May 20, 1906 timetable showed up to 12 freight movements as well as two passenger trains daily. The passenger trains originated in Ft. Scott and traveled the Ash Grove subdivision to Arcadia. From Arcadia the passenger train would travel the Parsons sub to Cherryvale and back to Arcadia then on to Ft. Scott. Southbound passenger 135, would leave Ft. Scott



- Photo courtesy of Richard Napper collection

at 6:00 am and reach Arcadia at 6:39 am. At 6:50 am the train would leave the station, arriving in Pittsburg at 7:48 am then leaving at 8:00. It was scheduled to arrive in Cherokee at 8:30 am, McCune at 8:56 am and Parsons at 9:30. After a five minute station stop in Parsons, it was on its way to Cherryvale arriving at 10:25 am. Northbound passenger train #136 departed Cherryvale at 6:00 pm reaching Parsons at 6:40 pm, Cherokee at 7:45 pm, Pittsburg at 8:20 pm, reaching Arcadia at 9:30 pm. The train would depart Arcadia at 9:43 pm headed to Ft. Scott with an arrival time of 10:20 pm. According to the timetable, both passenger trains averaged about 23 mph.



- Photo courtesy of Richard Napper collection

The Frisco made use of the section of track that connected Cherokee to Weir. They added a section of track from Weir to the southwest that tied back into the Afton subdivision just north of Scammon. In 1906, Passenger trains on the Afton sub would come to Cherokee and take the track to Weir. At the time, Weir was a large city, with the railroad wanting to make sure that they were serviced by passenger trains between Ft. Scott and stops further south. After leaving Weir it would take the track that left Weir and joined the Afton sub just north of Scammon.

In 1936, traffic needs had changed in the 30 years. There were four daily freights with most of the freight traffic going from the Cherokee yard to Cherryvale. Many of those freights originated in Ft. Scott on the Afton Subdivision. Once they reached Cherokee they would then get on the Parsons Subdivision to Cherryvale. Some of them would then get on the Carthage Subdivision at Cherryvale and go to Neodesha.

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Then the traffic would return via the same route back to Ft. Scott. Freight between Pittsburg and Arcadia was handled when needed.

Passenger service by 1936 had been reduced to doodlebug service. Number 179 would leave Arcadia daily at 12:50 pm arriving in Pittsburg at 1:40 pm. With a daily 6:20 am departure from Pittsburg, #177 would head for Cherryvale arriving in Cherokee at 6:50 am, Parsons at 7:50 am and Cherryvale at 8:35 am. At Cherryvale, the doodlebug would head back towards Pittsburg and would become #178. It would leave Cherryvale at 8:45 am heading east. After stopping at Parsons at 9:30 am, it would stop at Cherokee at 10:40 am and arrive in Pittsburg at 11:20 am. The crew would

Frisco freight crossing US-160 (US-400) at Strauss



- Photo courtesy of Heart of the Heartlands

break for lunch before departing Pittsburg at 11:50 am, arriving in Arcadia at 12:45 pm. According to a 1946 Frisco timetable, all passenger service had ended on the line. By 1954, freight was down to two trains daily from Pittsburg to Cherryvale. One eastbound the other westbound. The section from Pittsburg to Arcadia was handled by extras.

Today, there is still one section of the former Frisco - Northern Division - Parsons Subdivision that is still in service. The section from the KCS interchange in Pittsburg to the former Missouri Pacific interchange on the east side of Cherokee remains in service. It is operated by the South

No Longer Here



Today, looking east of K-7 where the Frisco - Parsons Sub crossed K-7 on the north side of Cherokee.

- photo courtesy of Brian Carlson

Frisco - MOP Interlocker



Modern day looking east along the former Frisco - Parsons Sub line where it crossed the MOP on the east side of Cherokee. The line from the top of the picture curving to the right is currently in use by the SKOL.

- photo courtesy of Brian Carlson

Kansas and Oklahoma line as part of its Gorilla Subdivision. The rest of the former Parsons sub is now gone. Including the connection between Cherokee and Weir City. All that is left is the memories of once was a very active stretch of track.

### Credits:

- Information about the Memphis, Kansas & Colorado courtesy of a history paper written by John Chambers.
- More information available in the library at the Webb Center - Heart of the Heartlands, Carona, KS.
- Heartlands' member Dick Rauniker's father was a track foreman on this line.
- Heartlands' member Dave Parker was an engineer for the Frisco, then the BN on this line