

# THE NEWSLETTER OF THE RED RIVER VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC.

September, 2011

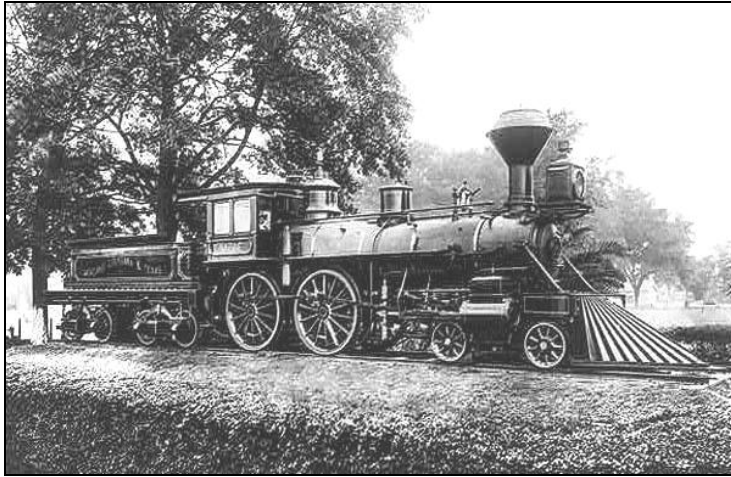
SHREVEPORT, LA

Our 30<sup>th</sup> Year

## The Time a Locomotive Rode Red River

*The Shreveport Times* - Sunday, July 28, 1957

By Harold K. Vollrath



The *Sabine*, sister of the *Louisiana*



Author Harold K. Vollrath (McEachern)

“That she blows, around the bend!” The crowd on the dock at the foot of Texas Avenue let out a cheer. The date was July 29, 1857, one hundred years ago tomorrow, and the occasion was the arrival of the first locomotive in Shreveport. (*Editor’s note: this article was published in 1957 on the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the event.*)

She did not come upon rails of iron for they were not yet to be laid into our town; instead she rode upon a specially built barge plying the milk-chocolate current of the Red River, her charge was the steamer *Alida*.

Locomotives were colorful in those days. Her bright red driving wheels shone brilliantly in the afternoon sun, her boiler was a jacket of apple green encircled with brass bands; a large funnel-like smokestack, polished bell and long pointed cowcatcher gave her a mark of distinction. On both sides of her cab she proudly bore her name, *Louisiana*.

Built in 1854, she was a master product of Richard A. Anderson and his famous Tredegar Iron Works of Richmond, Va., and one of the largest engines to be constructed up to that time. She boasted of five-foot-high driving wheels, 16 by 22 inch cylinders and a boiler pressure of 150 pounds of steam per square inch ó power enough to haul any train of the day.

A good 25 tons she weighed, too large for her original owners, the New Orleans, Opelousas and Great Western; their track could not support such a heavy engine, so she was acquired from them by the newly-formed Southern Pacific.

Railroad fever had gripped the young community of Shreveport and the surrounding Ark-La-Tex. True, the river afforded a grand avenue of commerce after Capt. Henry Shreve cleared the Great Raft about 1840, but traffic was restricted to the towns bordering its shores and the whims of the river. Great things were in the making.

Dreams of a transcontinental railroad to the magic land of California and the Pacific Ocean were being heard in more than one direction. Early in 1852, these dreams began to take concrete form. Two railroads were chartered, the Vicksburg, Shreveport and Texas and the Texas Western. Both were to follow the 32<sup>nd</sup> degree parallel route across North Louisiana and on to the Pacific shores. Initial plans called for a direct line from Shreveport to Marshall, Texas with a junction of the two railroads at a point near the present town of Waskom.

But raising funds to begin actual construction was a difficult matter, so not until 1857 was any trackage laid. The charter for the Texas Western was amended a year earlier and the name changed to Southern Pacific (not to be confused with the Southern Pacific of today, which is a different company). The new company had only until June 1857 to place at least 25 miles of railroad in operation and retain its franchise. Iron rails were received in March that year on the steamer *Fusillier* but difficulty in securing a locomotive made it necessary to employ oxen to pull three-car trains over the line and aid in its building.

While the Southern Pacific was thus engaged, the Vicksburg, Shreveport and Texas was clearing a right-of-way from Shreveport towards the Texas state line. Work progressed very slowly, however, and the year 1861 found only a few miles of grading done west of Shreveport and approximately four miles of trackage to Jewella.

In its race to meet the charter requirements, the Southern Pacific had to pick a navigable outlet for receipt of its supplies and equipment. Thus it was that the *Louisiana* was unloaded at Swanson's Landing on Caddo Lake instead of Shreveport as originally destined. She was used between there and Marshall to haul trains over the Southern Pacific's tracks. Plans were made to connect the two railroads at the earliest possible date and provide rail service to Shreveport, but suddenly! WAR!

Our heroine had to be content in plying her trade several miles west of Shreveport serving the great cause as best she could. A ray of hope came in 1864 when Gen. Magruder, in command, ordered the tracks torn up between Swanson's Landing and Jonesville and relaid in the direction of Waskom. This line eventually became part of the present Texas and Pacific Railway. But the *Louisiana* fell to the fate of many of her sisters ó dismemberment to provide needed parts for the other war-torn locomotives to carry on the fight.

It is fitting and proper that we mark this year as the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first locomotive in Shreveport, especially with the arrival of another engine, Dardanelle and Russellville No. 10, which is being displayed at Ford Park. It was secured through the efforts of the Civitan Club of Shreveport and the donations of hundreds of people who wish to remember this little engine and cars that did so much to build this community into what it is today. (*Editor's note: Dardanelle and Russellville No. 10 still resides at Ford Park on Cross Lake but will eventually be moved to a planned Red River Valley Railroad Historical Society museum site.*)

(*The Shreveport Times* article and Harold K. Vollrath photo courtesy of LSU Shreveport Noel Memorial Library Archives & Special Collections)

## Upcoming Events

- September 16 RRVRHS Meeting at the Glen ó 7 p.m.
- September 24 õShreveport: Birth of a Cityö ó a talk on Shreveport history by Dr. Gary Joiner ó sponsored by the Shreveport Historic Preservation Society - 10:30 a.m. at Holy Cross Episcopal Church ó free
- October 11 õA Brief History of the Vicksburg, Shreveport & Pacific Railwayö by Larry Davis ó 6:00 p.m. at the T&P Depot Museum, Marshall ó free
- October 29 RRVRHS Fish Fry at the McNeill Street Pumping Station

### Next RRVRHS Meeting on September 16 at the Glen

The meeting will be held on Friday, **September 16 at 7 p.m.** in the library at the Glen Retirement Village, 403 East Flournoy Lucas Road. **Please be on time** for the beginning of the meeting so you won't miss anything. The Glen Retirement Village is located on the south side of Flournoy Lucas Road between Ellerbe Road and Youree Drive (Highway 1). For information or directions call Dave Bland at (318) 470-5933.

### McNeill Street Pumping Station (Shreveport Water Works Museum)

Due to state budget cutbacks, they have had to reduce their operating schedule. If you would like to be trained as a volunteer tour guide, call Dale Ward at (318) 221-3388.

## **RED RIVER VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY, INC. Shreveport, LA**

Russell Pedro ó President      Kelly Jo Brunettin ó Vice President  
Gary Fox ó Secretary      Bill Hasheider ó Treasurer  
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### **Have you paid your Annual Dues ?**

Please send a check or money order for \$16.50 with this membership form to Bill Hasheider at 6813 Despot Road, Shreveport, LA 71108

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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## The President's Message – September 2011

### A Railfan's Railfan

When I was a growing up one of my favorite things to look forward to and do was to go to the Louisiana State Fair every October. In one of the exhibit buildings was a HO scale model railroad. Everyone, youngsters and adults alike, would stand for long periods of time looking at it. There were some older gentlemen running the exhibit.

In 1956 I met a younger man there running the train. He was in college and he knew everything about trains; models and real ones. He was very friendly and would take time to share his knowledge with a young boy. I would ride my bicycle to the fair and spend all day on the weekends with him at the KCS exhibit. He would even let me run the trains when the older men were not around. As I grew older and went off to college myself I lost track of this man and did not see him again until 1968 when I was teaching at Captain Shreve High School, where he was also a teacher. He was also running a hobby shop at Ockley and Youree Drive. His name was Llewellyn Cook and we became reacquainted all over again.

We all called him Lew. Lew closed his shop on Ockley and opened a new shop on Youree Drive at Pennsylvania Ave. I called Lew a "Railfan's Railfan" because he knew more about trains of all kinds and road names than anyone I know. I would be in his store and see a new locomotive or railcar and make a comment about it and Lew could give you a complete history of it. All of us model railroaders would spend hours in his store looking at trains and talking to Lew. He also liked to spend time chasing trains and taking pictures, and he was a regular at the "First Friday" group. Lew was a model railroader, railfan, railroad historian, member of the RRVRHS and a good friend. We all miss him.

Happy Railroading!  
Russell



**Llewellyn Cook in 1985**