

Take the Last Train to Clarksville:  
Arkansas's Historic Depots and Railroad History  
Learning from local and statewide historic places



*Missouri-Pacific Depot Railroad, Hot Springs, 1917*



**ARKANSAS HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION PROGRAM**

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# Instructional Information

## Grade Levels

7-12

## Grade 7–8 Arkansas History

G.2.AH.7-8.1 Analyze the impact of geography on settlement and movement patterns over time using geographic representations and a variety of primary and secondary sources (e.g., railroad expansion, westward movement, voluntary and involuntary migration and immigration).

## Grade 8 Social Studies

Era4.1.8.4 Analyze purposes, implementation, and effects of public policies (e.g., railroad expansion).

## Grades 9-12 Arkansas History

Era2.2.AH.9-12.5 Evaluate reasons for and impact of human settlement on various regions (e.g., railroad).

## Grades 9-12 U.S. History Since 1890

Era10.7.US.2 Analyze effects of domestic policies on Americans in various social and economic groups (e.g., transportation policy).

## Lesson Objective

Students will examine primary and secondary sources to learn how the railroad contributed to Arkansas culturally, historically, economically.

## Materials/Resources

- Copies of “A Short Summary of the Railroad in Arkansas” and “Why Are Historic Depots Important?”
- Enlarged copies of Pine Bluff Press Eagle announcement and Railroad Employee Paperwork
- Copies of Memoirs of a Rock Island Railroad Employee
- Copies of Making a Railroad Empire and Map of Arkansas with Historic Depot Locations
- Copies of Hobo Hieroglyphics Activity (optional)

## Introduction

The railroad had a great impact on many Arkansas communities. As the railroad developed in Arkansas, the population of the state increased as did tourism opportunities. The popularity of the railroad led to economic opportunities that created new businesses in many Arkansas towns. The purpose of this lesson plan is to instill a historic preservation ethic in young Arkansans by helping them understand the importance of the railroad in Arkansas’s history and community development. Students will examine primary and secondary source documents and participate in railroad-related activities to help them understand how the railroad was built and various ways people utilized the railroad.

## Instructional Strategies

1. If your students need more information about the railroad, have students read “A Short Summary of the Railroad in Arkansas” and “Why are Historic Depots Important?” and answer the questions.
2. Explain the difference between primary and secondary sources. For each part of this lesson plan you use, have students determine whether it is a primary or secondary source.
3. Have students read Tom Foster’s memoirs of being an employee of the Rock Island Line. Discuss the questions on page 9, and have them examine and do the Railroad Employee Paperwork activity.
4. Instruct students to create their own railroad empire using the activity on page 17. Incorporate the 1893 Pine Bluff Press Eagle ticket-fare announcement.
5. Use the map on page 27 to locate Arkansas’s remaining historic depots. Students can build their map skills by filling in Arkansas’s major cities and locating the historic depot closest to them.

### **Enrichment/Differentiation**

1. Read the Great Depression context and simulate hobo life and travel with the Hobo Hieroglyphics.
2. Have students study the Railroad Glossary and assign terms to students individually or in groups to locate visual examples of each term. Students may take pictures or draw terms assigned to them.

### **Resources**

1. Arkansas Railroad Museum <http://arkansasrailroadmuseum.org/>
2. Anglin-Timon Railroad Memorial, Cotter, Arkansas. Website has railroad links, railroad history on that area of the state and photographs of the railroad and trains. <http://www.railroadworkersmemorial.com/>
3. The National Archives offers lesson plans and documents on Anti-Rail propaganda from the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/anti-rail/>
4. The National Education Association offers lesson plans on railroads for younger students. <http://www.nea.org/tools/lessons/transcontinental-telegraph-and-railroad-grades-k-5.html>
5. Historic Railroad Maps from the Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/collection/railroad-maps-1828-to-1900/about-this-collection/>
6. The Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania offers lesson plans and activities for students related to railroad history. <http://www.rrmuseumpa.org/education/index.shtml#resources>
7. *Riding the Rails*. A PBS documentary on the thousands of teenagers who were living on the road during the Great Depression. <http://www.pbs.org/wqbh/americanexperience/films/rails/>
8. The Fort Smith Trolley Museum. <http://www.fstm.org/>

# A Short Summary of the Railroad in Arkansas <sup>1</sup>

The first railroad in the United States, built in 1825, ran from Quincy, Massachusetts, to the Massachusetts Bay. With cars drawn by horses and a three-mile-long track, the train transported granite from the Quincy quarries to the barges headed for Boston. Only three years later, on July 4, 1828, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad began operating the first passenger train in the United States.

The national excitement over railroads spread to Arkansas as early as the mid-1830s, but it wouldn't be until another 30 or so years that the railroad would weave its way through the state. The age of the railroad in Arkansas began in 1850 and 1851 when Captain Joshua Barney was ordered to Arkansas by the Secretary of War and the Chief Engineer of the War Department and directed to make a survey of the most feasible route for a railroad line from St. Louis to the Big Bend in the Red River. Two years later, the Arkansas General Assembly chartered the Cairo & Fulton and the Memphis & Little Rock railway companies, and construction of the first rail lines began before the end of the decade.

Not everyone was interested in the development of the railroad. There was opposition to the railroad across the United States. Some people saw the train as unsafe transportation, while others thought it to be intruding on already crowded cities. While Arkansans were interested in the advantages of railroad transportation, progress was slow. There was controversy in Arkansas over the corruption and fraud that was associated with many of the early railroad companies. Many Arkansans did not want to bring it to the state. Railroad construction within Arkansas was hindered for several years by financial problems, illness among workers, fires and floods.

The first railroad line to be constructed in Arkansas was the Mississippi, Ouachita & Red River Railroad. It received its land charter on April 12, 1852. It and the Memphis & Little Rock Railroad were the only railroad construction completed before the Civil War (1861-1865).

By the end of the war, the 38-mile long railroad line had fallen into disrepair and was unusable. However, Reconstruction and the return to investment capital to the state brought new interest in the railroad.

Powell Clayton, Arkansas's Republican governor during Reconstruction, was a leading advocate of the railroad, and he often used his influence to approve or deny railroad projects. By 1871, 86 railroad companies had been chartered in the state, all controlled by fewer than

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<sup>1</sup> Much of this summary was based on National Register of Historic Places contexts, *Railroad Era Resources of Southwest Arkansas, 1870-1945 and Historic Railroad Depots of Arkansas, 1870-1940*. <http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/News-and-Events/publications>

20 powerful politicians and their allies. Within 11 years, 822 miles of track were in use, and by the end of the century there were over 2,750 miles of operating railroad lines in Arkansas.

The Iron Mountain line was the first railroad to cross the entire state. The line was parallel to the old Southwest Trail, which was used by the pioneers while settling in Arkansas. It ran from the farthest Northeast corner of Arkansas down to the Southwest corner of the state.

In 1873, a railroad bill was introduced that released the railroad companies from being indebted to the state and allowed the taxpayers to pay the interest on the railroad bonds. Governor Elisha Baxter greatly opposed the bill. This caused a falling out between Baxter and former Governor Clayton, and the break eventually led to the Brooks-Baxter War of 1874.

The steady growth and expansion of the railway service and the locomotive was responsible for the decline of the steamboat trade after 1880. People began leaving river towns for newer communities established along railroad lines. The railroad contributed significantly to the increase in Arkansas's population. The railroad companies encouraged immigration to the state. The companies received large land grants from the government and had an interest in seeing this land settled and cultivated so as to increase trade and shipping. To showcase the state's attractiveness as an immigration destination, the railroad companies sponsored newspaper tours of the state in the late 1800s. At one time, the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern employed 300 immigration agents, many them working in Arkansas.

Railroad development helped to establish the timber and mining industries in Arkansas, but at the same time, it drove the state's cotton and wool-cloth industries out because it enabled many businesses to import cheaper cloth from the Northern and Eastern mills. Arkansas exported a lot of its raw materials, like timber and cotton, to the Northern states. Sawmills and lumbering towns sprang up around the railroad, and by the end of the 19th century, lumbering had become Arkansas's most important industry. Unfortunately, by the 1910s much of the virgin timber resources within the state were consumed, and the timber industry began to lose importance.

In 1882, Wall Street financier Jay Gould acquired the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern for two million dollars. Shortly after making the purchase, he toured sections of his new line in Arkansas. He bought the Little Rock & Fort Smith line and added it to the Iron Mountain system, making it the largest railroad system in Arkansas.

Although the Iron Mountain was the largest railroad line in Arkansas, the Missouri & North Arkansas line was the most expensive to build because of the mountainous route and the poor soil, which kept delaying the construction of the tracks.

Railroad workers in Arkansas were among the first laborers to unionize in the state, and in 1885 railroad employees associated with the Knights of Labor organized a successful strike against Jay Gould's railroad system. Later, railroad strikes in Little Rock and other cities in

1886 and 1894 resulted in violence, and Governor Simon P. Hughes and State Representative William M. Fishback were forced to call out the state militia to control the strikers.

The importance and influence of the railroad industry grew as Arkansas moved into the 20th century. Many of the smaller railroad lines established in the late 19th century, were acquired by larger corporations. As Arkansas was drawn more and more into the railroad network and national markets, important industries dependent on raw materials were able to develop and thrive within Arkansas. The rich agricultural lands of the Delta supplied cotton to the national markets, and the abundant timber resources of southwest Arkansas supplied lumber. The railroad was essential to the development of these industries, transporting products from the cotton gins and sawmills to river ports for shipping.

The Arkansas Railroad Commission was established in 1899 to oversee the development and activities of the railway companies, and to ensure that the railroad would be in the best interest of the state's citizens.

However, with the increasing popularity of the automobile in the 20th century, the importance and influence of the railroad began to fade. In 1941, there were approximately 700 miles of railroad track in Arkansas, but although the railroad was still important to industry and shipping, passenger service began to decline, and the golden age of railroading eventually came to an end in Arkansas.

## **Glossary**

**Advocate:** a person who speaks or writes in support of a cause or another person.

**Agent:** a person that performs a certain task or activity that brings results.

**Allies:** to be united by family, agreement or treaty.

**Bonds:** an interest-culminating certificate given by the government or a business that promises to pay the holder a specific sum of money.

**Brooks-Baxter War of 1874:** In the 1872 governor election, both candidates' (Joseph Brooks and Elisha Baxter) parties were guilty of committing electoral crimes. A conflict between the two groups started that lasted for 30 days, from April 15 until May 15, 1874. More than 200 people died in the several battles.

**Corruption and Fraud:** something that is dishonest in its actions.

**Chartered:** A charter is a written grant by the government specifying certain rights of a person or company.

**Investment Capital:** money that has been invested in a business to purchase assets (equipment or buildings).

**Reconstruction:** A period after the Civil War when the South was being rebuilt physically, economically and politically.

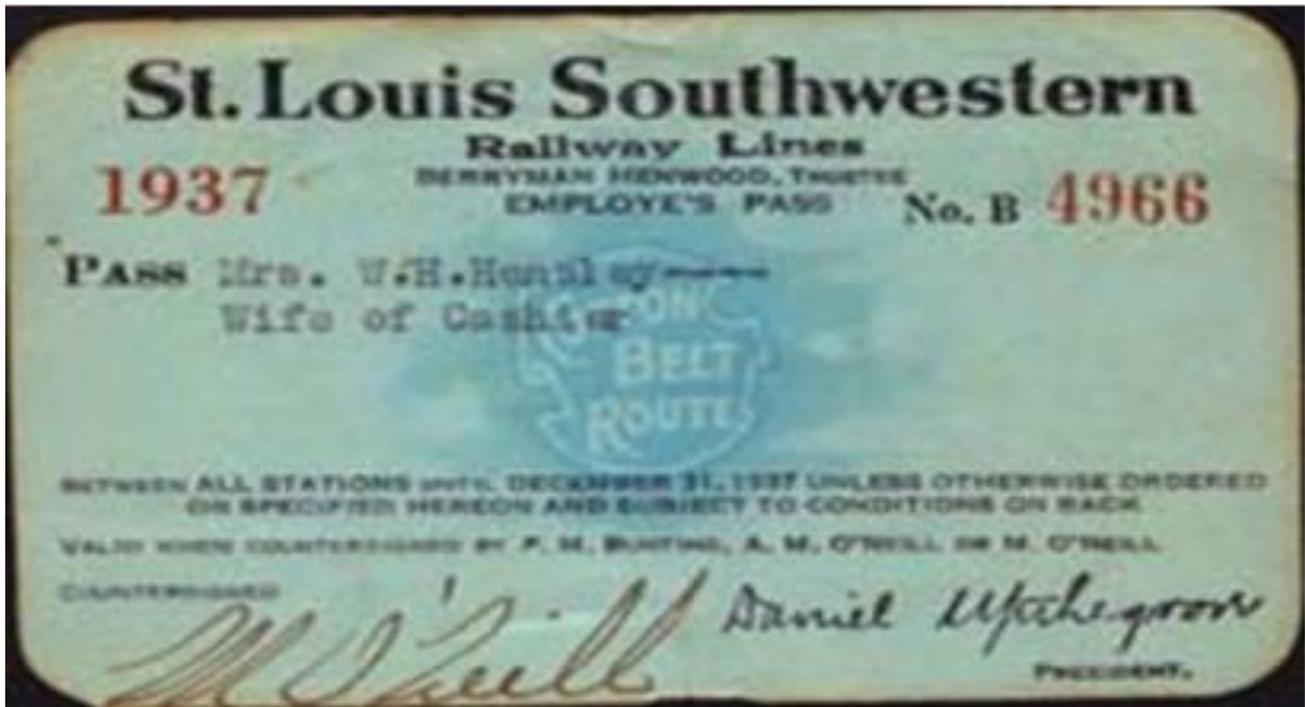
**Strike:** when a group or individual refuses to work until agreements are reached over a contract.

**Unionize:** to organize into a labor union.

**Reading Questions:**

1. When did the age of the railroad begin in Arkansas? How did it begin?
2. What were some of the reasons why people were resistant of the railroad?
3. What was the first railroad line to be constructed in Arkansas? When did it receive its charter?
4. What period brought new interest in the railroad in Arkansas?
5. Which railroad line was the first to cross the entire state? Where did it run?
6. What bill was introduced in 1873? What did it do? What war began shortly after it was introduced?
7. What became of the river towns in Arkansas?
8. What industries did the railroad help to establish?
9. Which railroad line was the most expensive to build? Why?
10. By 1941, how many miles of railroad track were there in Arkansas?

**Courtesy of the Arkansas Railroad Museum, Pine Bluff**



## Why Are Historic Depots Important?

By the 20th century, the railroad depot became a social hub for many small communities. Like the county courthouses, post offices and city halls of the past, the local railroad depot developed as a meeting and gathering place for the community. The arrival of the passenger trains became major events of the day. Townsfolk met, noticed who arrived and departed, helped unload freight and picked up mail.

The trains that arrived at the depots changed over the years just like the style of the depot buildings. The first trains had wood-burning engines that were replaced with hand-fired coal burners and later, by stokers. Eventually the steam locomotives were replaced by diesel locomotives. Most of the depots that still exist today were built during the period of the steam locomotive.



Kansas City Southern 73 D & Caboose, Decatur

The trains ran on standardized railroad schedules. The train schedule was one of the forces behind the development of national time zones. The railroad and the depot schedules are responsible for Arkansas communities abandoning their local systems and adapting the Central Time Zone.

The railroad had a profound impact on Arkansas's development, population and built environment. Although river towns like Davidsonville and Napoleon disappeared with the appearance of the railroad, new communities were developing around the depot points established by the railroad. The railroad depots that survived the golden age of the railroad in Arkansas represent important physical reminders of this pivotal period in the state's transportation history.

### **Reading Questions:**

1. What was the depot to the many small communities?
2. What are some of the things that arrived on the train at the depot?
3. What kind of engine did the first trains have?
4. What was responsible for Arkansas adapting the Central Time Zone?
5. Depots are important physical reminders of what period in Arkansas's history?
6. What do you think the built environment refers to? Give some examples in your town.

## **Examples of Historic Depots**

Study the examples of the historic depots below. Do they all look the same? What are some differences? Is there a depot in your town, if so, does it look like one of the examples?



**Kansas City Southern Depot, Decatur, 1920**



**Frisco Railroad Depot, Fayetteville, 1897**



**Frisco Railroad Depot, Fort Smith, 1910**



Union Station, Little Rock, 1921

## Using Primary Sources to Understand the Railroad in Arkansas

Students can gain a deeper insight into the importance of the railroad in Arkansas's history and community development by examining photographs and reading memoirs and other written documents concerning the railroad. Use the following primary sources to assist your students in their discussion of the railroad in Arkansas.

**Primary source:** Objects that were created in the past, or documents written by people who actually participated in events of the past. Primary sources include diaries, letters, oral histories, maps, photographs, clothing and tools.

**Secondary source:** Written accounts of the past based on primary sources. A textbook is an example of a secondary source.

### Discussion Questions for the Following Three Activities:

#### Pine Bluff Press Eagle

1. Which station do the fares apply to?
2. Are these fares for one-way tickets or round-trip tickets?
3. What day of the week do these fares go into effect?
4. Do you have to return on the same day you left or can you return the next day with your ticket?
5. How much would it cost for a ticket from Pine Bluff to Stuttgart? How about to Brinkley?

Use an Arkansas map to calculate the miles traveled to the various locations, beginning in Pine Bluff.

### **Rock Island Memoir**

1. Where did Tom Foster live in Haskell? What did he usually say about his home's location?
2. Haskell was far as the trains would go from what town in Arkansas?
3. What was the first tragedy in town that Tom Foster remembers?
4. Where in Arkansas did Tom and his friend Roy decide to travel to? What was their transportation?
5. What type of trains did Tom and the people of Haskell enjoy seeing?
6. What was Tom's first job on the railroad? Was it a hard or easy job?

### **Railroad Employee Paperwork**

In this section, students will discuss the various jobs of people who work on the railroad. Have the students consider these questions (some research will be needed):

1. What kind of jobs do people perform while working for the railroad? (Ex: conductor, clerk, engineer and fireman)
2. Discuss the various jobs on the railroad and what each person's job entails.
3. Ask the students about which railroad job they would enjoy working. Why? Have them list the good and bad aspects of each job. (Ex: Tom Foster was proud to be laying railroad track, but it was a very hard, laborious job.)

Use the included railroad employee paperwork as primary sources within this discussion. After discussing the railroad jobs and primary sources, break the students into groups and have them complete the next activity: Making a Railroad Empire

## **Pine Bluff Press Eagle**

*An announcement of Sunday passenger fares printed in the May 16, 1893, edition of the Pine Bluff Press Eagle. Courtesy of the Arkansas Railroad Museum, Pine Bluff.*

## SUNDAY EXCURSIONS

**To Pine Bluff From all Stations on the Cotton Belt.**

Mr. M. Adami, traveling passenger agent of the Cotton Belt, on Saturday last, received the following letter, which was forwarded to him from Cairo:

RATE CIRCULAR NO. 332.

M. Adami, Traveling Passenger Agent, Cairo:

DEAR SIR:—I have issued rates as follows to Pine Bluff and return on account of Sunday excursions:

From—	
Altheimer.....	\$ 40
Wabbaseca.....	50
Humphrey.....	70
Goldman.....	95
Stuttgart.....	1 00
Parham.....	1 00
Ulin.....	1 00
Aurich.....	1 00
Boe.....	1 00
Clarendon.....	1 00
Brinkley.....	1 50
Sherrill.....	65
Tucker.....	70
England.....	95
Keo.....	1 00
Toltec.....	1 00
Scott.....	1 00
Baucum.....	1 00
Grace.....	35
Kedron.....	40
Rison.....	70
Kingsland.....	95
Dry Run.....	1 00
Fordyce.....	1 00
Thornton.....	1 00
Little Bay.....	1 00
Bearden.....	1 00
Eagle Mills.....	1 25
Camden.....	1 50

Date of sale every Sunday until further notice. Tickets good to return the following day.

Yours Truly,  
E. W. LAUKAUX.

The above is the result of an effort on the part of our business men, working through the Board of Trade, to get reduced rates to this place from all points between Brinkley and Camden, to enable merchants, sawmill men and others to come to Pine Bluff on Saturday and transact their business and spend Sundays in this city, where they will have the privilege of attending divine services at the various churches, or spending the day as they see fit. Mr. Adami says that the date of sale of the excursion tickets being placed on Sunday is probably the result of a misunderstanding at the office of the General Passenger agent, and he will endeavor at once to have the date changed to Saturday.

It will be observed that the rates named are less than one fare for the round trip, which will be an inducement to hundreds of people along the line of the Cotton Belt to visit our city once a week.

The officers of the Cotton Belt are doing all things possible to accommodate their patrons and advance the commercial importance of Pine Bluff, and for this last and valuable concession they deserve the unreserved thanks of our business men and citizens generally.

Memoirs of a  
Railroad

Rock Island  
Employee

*The following are excerpts taken from Tom Foster's memoir, 45 Years on the Rock Island Line. He grew up in Haskell, Arkansas, and the selected readings explore his early relationship with the railroad, some of his adventures on the railroad and first work experiences for the Rock Island Railroad in Arkansas.*

Throughout all my time of growing up, I developed a great love for the railroad, especially the Rock Island Lines. The Old Iron Mountain, known today as the Missouri-Pacific, ran from St. Louis, Missouri, to Texarkana, Arkansas. This was called their main line. Haskell was just a place on the map to discharge and pick up passengers. The Rock Island line was a much larger railroad, but their main line was out of Chicago, Illinois. The line running from Memphis, Tennessee, to Hot Springs, Arkansas, was called the main line by us at Haskell.

In the early days, Haskell was as far as the trains from El Dorado would go so the trains would tie up at Haskell, the men would get their rest, then they would go back to El Dorado. Haskell was thus a division point and the hotel and restaurant were needed there to accommodate the men. Our contract was with the Rock Island Lines to take care of their men.

My love of the railroad grew stronger each day. My home was located between the two railroad tracks and about one fourth mile from our front door, these two tracks crossed each other. At the crossing, they had built a tower, a small two-story building. A man was employed around the clock to control the trains as they crossed each other. It's often been said that a person lived across the tracks, but I could always say that I lived between them.



**The Restaurant in Haskell that accommodated the railroad workers. Foster, page 20.**

As I grew older and my knowledge of railroads grew, I began to realize more and more that . . . the way my head and neck leaned toward my right shoulder and was stiff, was a real handicap to me. I guess what helped me not to become bitter about my condition was where we lived and how we lived, for there was something happening all the time. It would be impossible for me to make anyone believe all the things that did happen in that little railroad town.

I will never forget the first tragedy that happened in our town. One of the men who worked as an operator at the tower where the two railroads crossed each other fell dead at the breakfast table where he lived. They said as he started to eat, blood gushed from his mouth across the table. It was an awful thing to happen and everybody seemed so sad about it in many different ways.

If this man had been old enough to retire, the railroad company might have helped them [his family] with a pension, but it would have been very small, nothing like a pension today. In those days, people did not carry insurance and I doubt if there was such a thing. People had to depend on each other to survive.

In school I had a very good friend named Roy. He was from a poor family and lived near the lake about a mile from where I lived. We were together a lot and since he never got to go anywhere, I figured out something that we could do that I thought would help him to be able to go somewhere and see something.

I learned by talking with the Depot Agent that we could catch a freight train in Haskell and go to the town of Tinsman, Arkansas, which was about sixty-four miles away. I figured that if everything went right, we could get there in time to catch another freight back and be home by dark that same evening.

That Sunday morning when the freight train pulled in, there were several boys standing around the Depot including Roy and me.

I said, "Let's hop a box car and ride to Tinsman and back."

Everyone was for the idea so we found an empty box car and all got in. I had some small cards with me and we wrote our names and addresses on them and when we went through the small towns or saw any girls along the way, we threw the cards out, hoping a girl would find them and write us.

We made our connection to Tinsman, but on the other train we could not find an empty box car. All we could find was a car of lumber with the door unsealed. It was one of those really hot days, and I found that I just couldn't take it. So Roy and I decided to get off the next time the train stopped. I told Roy that I knew all the trainmen and if they found us, we would get by.



When the train stopped at a little town called Ellisville, just five miles from Tinsman, Roy and I got off. We found a coal car which was open with no top over us. We could be seen, and to my dismay, the conductor, a man I had known for years, came by and made us get off. We were very frightened and did not know what to do. It was a five mile walk back to Tinsman and the through freight trains rarely stopped at small places like the town of Ellisville. We started walking home about four o' clock in the afternoon. About nine o'clock that evening we got to Fordyce, Arkansas, and rested awhile. However, we were afraid that the law might pick us up, so we started out walking again.

We went through the next little town very late at night, and wanted something to eat and drink so badly that we got up enough nerve to go up to one house and call out, but the dogs ran us off. We drank water from the creek alongside the track. We walked all night, stopping occasionally to rest for a few minutes. Finally, about nine in the morning, we walked into a little town called Leola. We were still twenty-three miles from home and we were still scared, weak, and hungry. I had a little money and we walked to the Depot and sat down on the front steps for a few minutes to rest. We could hardly get up when we tried, but we made it over to a little grocery store and got something to eat and something to drink.

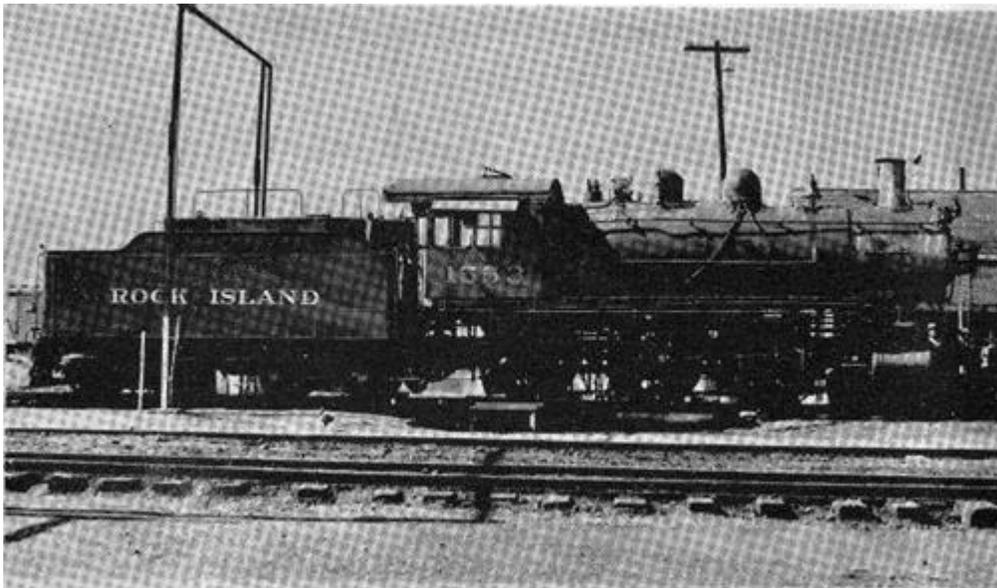
When we returned to the Depot, I asked the agent when there would be another train going to Haskell, and he said he was looking for the El Dorado Local most any time. The agent then asked me if I was Tom Foster and I told him I was. He said my father had been wiring all up and down the line hunting for me. Soon the Local pulled into Leola and the conductor told us to get into the caboose and stay there until we reached Haskell. The conductor bought Roy's and my ticket and said my father would pay him back.

In those days, there were local freight trains which did local work at each station, picking up and bringing freight to merchants or whomever wanted to ship anything. The Local would also haul passengers if they did not mind riding in the caboose. Roy and I got into the caboose and enjoyed the opportunity to rest, but the thought of having to still face our folks was not too comfortable.

When we finally got home, I'll never forget how my father looked. His eyes were so red and he looked so pale. He took me into his office and told me to never go off like that again without telling him. It was several days before I got to see Roy and when I did, he told me he really had to pay for the trip we took. First, he said his father gave him an awful whipping and then forbade his going anyplace for several days.

In the spring of 1917, the United States declared itself in war with Germany and the other Central Powers, and they joined their Allies in Europe. This was Word War I.

The government was looking to the railroad to do everything in its power to build up their tracks and get better and bigger equipment. They needed larger engines and box cars to help get the war materials shipped from place to place across the country. Better passenger trains were needed to carry soldiers from one camp to another.



**Rock Island Railroad 1553 Steam Locomotive.**

The trains that carried soldiers were called Troop Trains. They carried nothing but soldiers and equipment. Before the war, some trains had the right over other trains, for example, a passenger train had the right over all trains, a through freight train had the right over a local freight train. During the war, a troop train or a train hauling war material had the right over any

and all other trains.

As I have always said, I was in the middle of everything. It was no different during the war. I wanted to learn and know everything I could about what was going on concerning the war. Since we did not have telephones, our way of getting news was at the railroad depot and in the newspapers. So I kept very close to the depot when I could.

I tried to never to miss seeing a Troop Train and talking with the soldier boys. Everybody that could seemed to enjoy seeing a Troop Train. Some of the trains did not stop, but we could wave at them and hear the men holler. I don't remember ever seeing any of the soldiers that I knew on the troop trains because soldiers were sent from north to south and east to west and vice versa.

By spring of 1918, the war had created a labor shortage and everyone who was able to work was asked to do so. Many of the men left the farm to seek public work and many of the women helped

to keep the farms going. I still very much wanted to work on the railroad, so I decided I would work at any job that might come up.

One morning I was at the tool house where the Section Crews met to go to work and I heard the Foreman say that he needed more men to work on the track. I asked him to let me work and he said for me to come along. I still don't know how I was able to do the very heavy manual labor, but there was very strong man who let me be his partner and we worked together. If there was something I couldn't do, he did it for me.

...when I got home in the evenings, my back would be blistered all over and I would be so tired I could hardly walk. When I got home my mother would bathe my back in cream. By getting all the rest I could, I would be able to go back to work the next morning.

I worked at this job for two months in the hot summer time between school terms. I was earning more money than I ever had. The section labor wage was \$1.25 for ten hours of work, but since the war had started, this had been raised to \$3.40 for ten hours work. We worked six days a week.

Back then, I never dreamed a man would ever get that much money for a day's work and I began to save for my schooling since I was determined to pay for my own way if I went away to school.

A Section Crew was composed of a Foreman and as many men as he thought he needed to keep up his section of the track. Each crew had its own tool houses and a hand-car, and to shelter the crew in case of rain. Their job was to work on the tracks in their territory and keep them up.

Instead of motor cars such as they use now, these cars were run by hand power. Half of the crew would get on each side of the hand car and by pumping up and down, they would begin to move the car. The faster the men pumped, the faster the car went. We used a pick and shovel....carried a jack all day.

Despite the hard work and a Foreman standing over me all day, my biggest thrill was that I now had a job as a man and that my first pay check was from the railroad!

*Tom Foster went on to be a depot clerk and eventually, become an engine watchman. He serviced many trains that traveled on the Rock Island Railroad line through Arkansas.*

# Railroad Employee Paperwork

Primary Source

This is a locomotive inspection and repair report that would be completed by the train inspector before a train left the depot. The following report was completed by an inspector for the Grissom Air Force Base in Indiana. The train inspected is the USA Air Force Locomotive 1246, which is now located at the Fort Smith Trolley Museum. Have the students examine and discuss this document.

29 MAR



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION  
FEDERAL RAILROAD ADMINISTRATION

**LOCOMOTIVE INSPECTION AND REPAIR RECORD**

In accordance with the Locomotive Inspection Act, 36 Stat. 913, as amended and the regulations issued pursuant to Act, the parts and appurtenances of the locomotive unit have been inspected and all defects disclosed by the inspection have been properly repaired.

Reporting year 19 84 Check if new loco.  If loco. renumbered give previous no.

1. OPERATED BY <u>Grissom Air Force Base</u>		RR CODE		2. OWNED BY (Railroad) <u>Us Air Force Base</u>		RR CODE	
3. MODEL NO. <u>D-12000</u>	4. LOCO. NO. <u>USA1246</u>	5. YR. BUILT <u>1953</u>	6. PROPELLED BY <u>D.E.</u>	7. HORSEPOWER <u>380</u>	8. TYPE OF SERVICE: PASSENGER <input type="checkbox"/> ROAD <input type="checkbox"/> YARD <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER <input type="checkbox"/>		
9. STEAM GEN.	GEN. #1.	Working Pressure		GEN. #2.	Working Pressure		
10. MAXIMUM PISTON TRAVEL <u>3 inches</u>		11. OUT OF USE CREDIT					
12. LAST PERIODIC INSPECTION DATE <u>27 June 83</u>				PLACE <u>NTG/RSD</u>			
PERIODIC INSPECTIONS							
13. DATE MO DAY YR	14. PLACE	15.* ITEMS	16. PERSON CONDUCTING	15.* ITEMS	16. PERSON CONDUCTING	17. CERTIFIED BY	
<u>18 Jan. 84</u>	<u>Grissom AFB.</u>	<u>1&amp;2</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>3&amp;4</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>J.W. Holden</u>	
<u>18 Jan. 83</u>	<u>Grissom AFB.</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>J.W. Holden</u>	
<u>29 Mar 84</u>	<u>Grissom AFB.</u>	<u>1,2,3,4,5,7</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>				
<u>2 Jul 84</u>	<u>Grissom AFB</u>	<u>1,2,3,4,5,7</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>				
15.* ITEM CODE: <input type="checkbox"/> BRAKES <input type="checkbox"/> RUNNING GEAR <input type="checkbox"/> CAB EQUIP. <input type="checkbox"/> MECH. EQUIP. <input type="checkbox"/> ELECT. EQUIP. <input type="checkbox"/> STEAM GEN. <input type="checkbox"/> SAFETY APPL							
TESTS		18. H&H TEST PRESSURE	19. WAIVER PART-229		20. WAIVER-OTHER		
TYPE	INTERVAL NOT MORE THAN	21. PERSON CONDUCTING	22. TEST DATE AND PLACE	23. CERTIFIED BY	24. PREVIOUS TEST DATE AND PLACE		
METER	368 calendar days	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>18 Jan. 84 Grissom AFB, IND.</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>27 June 83 NTG/RSD</u>		
HAMMER AND HYDRO	736 calendar days				<u>27 June 83 NTG/RSD</u>		
AIRBRAKE 229.27	368 calendar days	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>18 Jan. 84 Grissom AFB, IND.</u>	<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>27 June 83 NTG/RSD</u>		
AIRBRAKE 229.29	736 calendar days						

*Have the students look at this example of the locomotive inspection and repair report from the Rock Island Line. What are the differences between this report and the completed one? Does it ask for the same information?*



# Making a Railroad Empire\*

*Building a railroad empire was not an easy task in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Many people were leery of the railroad creating new passage ways through cities and into unexplored wilderness. A lot of money and man-power went into the construction of the railroad and its empire. Within this activity, students will explore the steps that were taken to develop the early railroad.*

1. Have the students develop a list of the steps they think would be required to build a railroad. Students need to consider the order of each step: seeking investors and money sources comes before the location of the potential railroad is mapped out, as well as selection of the most suitable route and then the survey of that area; hiring of labor to clear the route and cut trees to be used for rails, preparation of roadbed, construction of bridges and tunnels before the track is laid, connecting of the rails, and finally, ballast the track. When discussing railroad investors, have the students consider the Railroad Barons and their roles in the monopolization of the early railroad. A definition of a *baron* and the *Big Three* is located within the Railroad Glossary.
2. Use a local, county or state map to have students consider the steps it took to build a railroad between towns. Ask the students about how they would get the funding to build this new railroad. What kind of challenges might the engineers encounter when designing the new railroad? A challenge would be the landscape. Is the route mountainous? Is it thick forest land? What kind of challenges would the track workers face?
3. Have students create a poster or brochure advertising the new railroad. Also, students can create a timetable and ticket fares for the new railroad. Use the Pine Bluff Press Eagle announcement as an example of ticket fares.
4. Divide students into two groups for a mock debate set in the 1830s. Have the students debate pros and cons of the coming of the steam railroad. One group of students will be in support of the railroad, and the other group in opposition of the railroad. Give groups sufficient time to brainstorm and write down their group's perspective. Either have a teacher or another student preside as the debate's moderator.



**Texarkana Union Station**

*Courtesy of the Arkansas Railroad Museum, Pine Bluff*

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\* This activity was adapted from material prepared by the Education Department of the Railroad Museum in Pennsylvania, [www.rrmuseumpa.org/education](http://www.rrmuseumpa.org/education).

# The Great Depression and the Hobo<sup>\*</sup>

During the 1920s, many people purchased stocks with borrowed money and then used these stocks as collateral for purchasing more stocks. The stock market experienced a boom, but it was unreliable because it was based on borrowed money, which created false optimism. Eventually, the investors lost confidence in the possibilities of the stock market.

Another factor that contributed to the instability of the American economy was the short-sighted government economic policies. The majority of politicians at this time believed that business, any type of business, was key to the advancement of the United States. The



Al Capone's free soup kitchen,  
Chicago Historical Society

government didn't try to prevent unwise investment. Congress passed high taxes that protected American businesses, but harmed farmers and international trade. National wealth was not distributed evenly. The wealth was kept by those who were able to save or invest, instead of spending their money on American goods. The demand for goods was greater than the supply. The cost of goods skyrocketed, and majority of Americans weren't able to pay the high prices. Some people profited, but mostly, people were hurt by the economic extortion, especially the

farmers and middle-class workers.

And then on October 29, 1929, known as Black Tuesday, the economic structure of the United States was thrown into turmoil for more than a decade. Five days previous to the notorious Black Tuesday, 12.9 million shares were traded on that Thursday, causing stock prices to drop. Those Americans who had investments in the market began to panic, which led to everyone pulling out their money at once. On October 29, 16.4 million shares were sold, the largest number in American stock market history. The Great Market Crash of 1929 marked the end of the Roaring 20s in the United States and the beginning of the Great Depression. It took 22 years for the stock market to completely recover.

The Great Depression greatly affected the way of life in the United States. It didn't just have an impact on the economy, but also a psychological impact on the nation. Many Americans, especially men, were in fear of losing their jobs and many did. This uncertainty in the future

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<sup>\*</sup> Much of this summary was based on information from *An Ambition to be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943* written by Holly Hope, special projects historian for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, and from <http://www.bergen.org/AAST/Projects/depression/>.

created anxiety, and many became depressed. The suicide level rose dramatically during this period.

Thousands of people went hungry. Soup kitchens were created to feed the many urban residents who could no longer afford to buy food.

Businesses tried to keep as many employees as possible, but at lower wages. However, a lot of Americans were unemployed and homeless. Many of the unemployed were men. During the Great Depression, there was an influx of homeless people who wandered from one place to another in search of work. The choice of transportation for many of these people was the freight-train because it was a free way to travel the country.



**Travelers during the Great Depression,  
Dorothea Lange**

These people were referred to as hobos. Although hobos have been around since the end of the Civil War, which marked the expansion of railroad lines across the United States, the population of homeless, displaced people grew during the nation's period of economic trouble.

The origin of the word hobo is unclear. Some claim that the word is a derivative of the Latin homo bonus or good man, while others say that it was initially used by returning Civil War soldiers who, when asked where they were going, would reply "homeward bound."<sup>2</sup>

There have been several notable hobos in American history. The writers Jack London and Jack Kerouac once traveled the country by train, as well as *Gone with the Wind* actor Clark Gable.<sup>3</sup>

Many of the homeless of the Great Depression lived in makeshift towns called "Hooverville," named after United States President Herbert Hoover (1929-1933). These towns were usually located close to the train yards.

To assist each other through their travels, the hobos developed their own language. It consisted of different signs and symbols that were drawn in chalk on sign posts, sidewalks, trees and fences. The purpose of the hobo hieroglyphics (a system of writing using symbols) was to inform the next hobo passing through of what to expect in a town or neighborhood.

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<sup>2</sup> Roger Burns, *Knights of the Road: A Hobo History* (New York: Methuen Inc., 1980) 12.

<sup>3</sup> Roger Burns, *Knights of the Road: A Hobo History* (New York: Methuen Inc., 1980) 16.

## Hobo Hieroglyphics Activity

First, have each student create a character profile of his or her hobo. Each student will select a certain town or region of the state he or she is originally from. After choosing their locations, the students will research the effects of the Great Depression on that town or area. For example, the Arkansas Delta was hit hard during the Great Depression. The eastern region of the state had barely recovered from the 1927 flood when the Great Depression began. Many farmers weren't able to afford the upkeep of their farms and had to sell their land and migrate out west in search of work. Some brought their families, others traveled on their own by road or train.

One of your students could be a displaced Arkansas Delta farmer, traveling by freight train to California in hopes of getting work on a vineyard, picking grapes.

After all students have completed their character profiles, have them introduce themselves to the class. When this is finished, divide the students into pairs. Try to have the "hobos" paired with someone who has a similar profile. The students will simulate hobo travel from town to town by using hobo hieroglyphics.

Examples of hobo symbols are supplied within this lesson plan, but encourage your students to come up with their own. Each pair will choose a location within the room for the "town" from which they will start. Decide on a name for the town, create a sign identifying the town and post the sign for all students to see.

A blank map has been included within this lesson plan for reproduction for each pair. On the map, draw the symbol for the town to mark its location and write its name beside it. When the maps are ready, each pair chooses one of the message cards with information about that particular town. The information written on the card is to be translated into hobo hieroglyphics. When the message has been completely translated, the card should be put somewhere the next pair traveling through can't see it. However, the hobo hieroglyphics should be left in plain view in the town.

When the train whistle blows, all hobos are to move on to the next town. They are to read the signs left behind by the previous hobos and decide if the town is safe, so-so or stay-away. It is marked on the map according to the pair's decision. This activity continues until all pairs of hobos have gone through all the towns.

When the group travels are complete, have all the students regroup to compare maps. Have the students consider these questions when examining each others' maps:

Were the signs clear?

Did each pair read the signs similarly?

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\* The activity was adapted from a similar activity given to Arkansas Historic Preservation Program's Education Outreach Program by Linda Lambert, Gifted Talented Coordinator for Harrisburg Middle School.

What effect would it have on the hobos if they weren't able to understand the signs?  
Which towns would be safest to stay for several days?  
Which ones wouldn't? Why?

Some discussion questions about hobos might be:

What is a hobo?  
Why would a person become a hobo?  
What would life be like for a hobo?  
Are all hobos men?  
Why do they only write in signs?  
Why would some people not like hobos?

**Three rules for playing the simulation:**

**No talking between pairs.**

**All messages must use pictures and not words.**

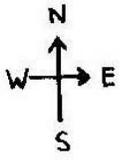
**All hobos must move on to a new town when the train whistle blows.**

*Please, when involving students in this activity, discuss the historical background of the appearance of the hobo and its relation to the railroad. This activity is not meant to encourage students to travel by freight train or "train hop." Train-hopping is illegal and dangerous.*

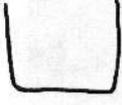
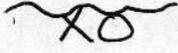
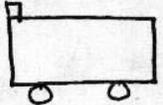
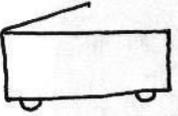
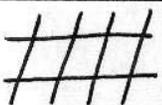
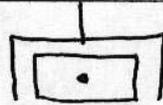
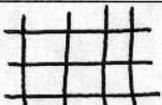
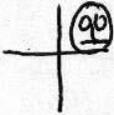
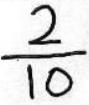
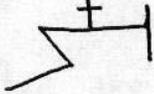
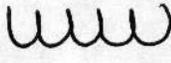
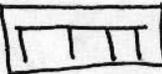
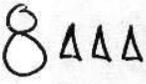
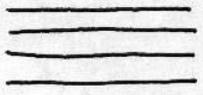
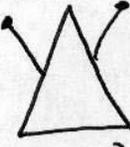
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hobo Message Card</b></p> <p>You can get food by working</p> <p>You can camp here</p> <p>Help if you are sick</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hobo Message Card</b></p> <p>Mean dog lives here</p> <p>Police watch for hobos</p> <p>No handouts</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hobo Message Card</b></p> <p>Can sleep in barn</p> <p>Tell a hard luck story</p> <p>Good water</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hobo Message Card</b></p> <p>Lots of vegetable gardens</p> <p>Dangerous neighborhood</p> <p>There are thieves here</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hobo Message Card</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Hobo Message Card</b></p>

**Hobo Message Card**

# Hobo Tour Map



## Examples of Hobo symbols

- |                               |                                 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Camp here                  | 20. Food for work               |
| 2. Safe camp                  | 21. Dogs                        |
| 3. Bad water                  | 22. Bad dog                     |
| 4. Good water                 | 23. Can sleep in barn           |
| 5. Police active              | 24. Tell a hard luck story here |
| 6. Railroad                   | 25. Kind woman                  |
| 7. Trolley                    | 26. Housewife feeds for chores  |
| 8. At crossroads, go this way | 27. Good for a handout          |
| 9. Straight ahead             | 28. Man with a gun              |
| 10. Turn right here           | 29. Fake illness here           |
| 11. Turn left here            | 30. No one home                 |
| 12. Good road to follow       |                                 |
| 13. Unsafe place              |                                 |
| 14. Get out fast              |                                 |
| 15. Dangerous neighborhood    |                                 |
| 16. Jail                      |                                 |
| 17. Hobos arrested on sight   |                                 |
| 18. Doctor, no charge         |                                 |
| 19. There are thieves here    |                                 |

# Railroad Glossary

**Articulation:** the connection of two or more parts of the otherwise rigid frame using pivots, to increase flexibility and allow the locomotive to take sharper curves.

**Axle loading:** the weight imposed on the track by the locomotive's heaviest pair of wheels.

**Baggage car:** a car for passenger's luggage, packages and other small parcels. During early railroads, people were hired to handle the baggage from the car, but now, most of the work is mechanized.

**Ballast:** usually crushed stone underlying and supporting the track.

**Bar-frame:** a structure of girders, instead of steel plates, on which the wheels and boiler are mounted.

**Baron:** business men who purchased and financed the construction, implementation and consolidation of the United States railways during the 1800s-early 1900s.

**Big Three:** Baldwin, Alco and Lima, the three principal builders of locomotives in America.

**Bogie:** a set of four wheels fitted under a locomotive or freight car to help it turn on a curved track.

**Boiler:** the large metal drum on the steam locomotive, where the water is turned into steam for power.

**Brakeman:** a person that couples and uncouples cars, throws switches, inspects the brakes and protects the train.

**Caboose:** a car on the end of the train, which is the sleeping and eating quarters for some of the train crew. Caboose are also referred to as "crummies." They are no longer used.

**Caprotti valve-gear:** a locomotive valve-gear for regulating the intake and emission of steam. It uses two pairs of valves operated by cams whose angles can be varied to adjust the cut-off (the point in the piston stroke at which the admission of steam is stopped).

**Car:** the coaches that carry the passengers on a train.

**Car inspectors:** they walk the train, checking the brakes and other equipment before departure using hotbox detectors and other electronic equipment, but they must still visually check the train in all types of weather and times of day.

**Class:** a category of locomotives built to a specific design.

**Coach:** a passenger car with seats.

**Coke:** a type of coal used as fuel for early steam locomotives.

**Conductor:** a person who assists in the routine of the trains by overseeing the train schedule, collecting passengers' tickets and meeting their needs and is in charge of the train and its crew.

**Connecting rod:** a metal rod that links the piston to the driving wheels of a steam locomotive.

**Consist:** the contents or equipment of a train.

**Coupler:** the device on the end of a car which connects the cars on a train.

**Coupling rod:** the metal rod that links a pair of driving wheels together.

**Cylinder:** the metal tube in which steam or gas under pressure pushes the piston to drive the wheels.

**Diesel-electric engine:** a locomotive that burns diesel fuel to produce electric power in operating the engine.

**Dinning car:** a car with a restaurant on board complete with a kitchen.

**Driving wheels:** the main wheels that are connected to a power supply and move a locomotive.

**Electric engine:** a locomotive powered by electricity picked up from an electric cable or third rail.

**Engineer:** the person who runs the locomotive, which pulls the train.

**Firebox:** the metal box behind a steam locomotive's boiler, where the fuel is burned.

**Fireman:** the person who stokes the locomotive's fire with wood or coal.

**Foot plate:** the driver's cab on a steam engine.

**Freight car (train):** a train vehicle that carries raw materials, manufactured goods and other products.

**Gandy Dancer:** a track laborer; the name may have originated from the Gandy Manufacturing Company that produced the tools used by railroad workers.

**Gauge:** the size of the track, measured between the insides of the rails.

**Gondola:** a rail car that has low sides that can carry anything and is unloaded from the top.

**Hopper:** a rail car that can carry dry goods and coal that can be unloaded by doors located underneath the car.

**Locomotive:** a self-propelled engine that pulls or pushes freight or passenger cars.

**Observation car:** a rail car used for viewing scenery and that is located on or near the end of the train.

**Pantograph:** a metal frame on top of an electric locomotive that picks up electricity from cables hanging above the track.

**Passenger train:** a train carrying people to various destinations.

**Pilot (cowcatcher):** the sloping structure located on the front of the steam engine.

**Piston rod:** the moving rod inside a cylinder that helps to turn a locomotive's driving wheels.

**Porter:** mostly employed by the Pullman Company, they assisted passengers with their baggage and locating their seats on the trains.

**Power car:** a diesel or electric locomotive permanently joined to a set of passenger carriages.

**Pullman car:** railroad sleeping cars which were manufactured and used on most U.S. railroads by the Pullman Company, founded by George Pullman.

**Rail:** the parallel lengths of steel, iron or wood upon which the train's wheels roll.

**Railroad shops:** a place where locomotives, cars and other equipment can be made or repaired.

**Railway post office car:** a post office on wheels.

**Reefer:** a refrigerator car.

**Roundhouse:** a building where light repair and maintenance of locomotives is done.

**Sleeper:** a passenger car that had seats that can be converted into beds.

**Station Master:** a person who is in charge of a passenger station, sees that trains are properly made up and dispatched at the proper time, and may sell tickets.

**Steam engine:** a locomotive that burns wood, coal or oil, that when introduced with water will produce steam, propelling the engine forward.

**Tender:** the vehicle behind the steam locomotive for carrying fuel and water.

**Ties:** the crosspieces to which rails are spiked for their support.

**Third rail:** a rail on the ground that supplies electricity to some electric trains.

**Track:** the fixed path along which trains run, consisting of roadbed, ties and rail.

**Train:** a string of connected railroad cars with a locomotive.