

## Ft. Smith Area Railroads - History Timeline

Compiled by Mike Syputt (msyputt@hotmail.com) *updated July 2007*

1879	January 30	<b>Little Rock &amp; Ft. Smith Railway</b> enters Van Buren (1876?)
1882	November	<b>St. Louis &amp; San Francisco Railway Company ("Frisco")</b> arrives in Van Buren – uses the Little Rock & Ft. Smith's transfer boat <i>Harold B.</i> (double ended side wheeler) to cross the Arkansas River until 1886
		Jay Gould acquires the <b>St. Louis, Iron Mountain &amp; Southern Railway</b>
1883	January 2	Through service begins on Frisco – Monett, MO to Ft. Smith, AR
		<b>Ft. Smith Railway Company</b> began – mule drawn rail cars
1885	March 23	Frisco's Ft. Smith and Van Buren Bridge Company created
1886	February	Arkansas River Bridge at Van Buren opens for rail traffic
	February 13	Frisco's <b>Ft. Smith and Southern Railway Company</b> incorporates to build to Jenson and points south (controlled by SLSF)
1887	March 28	Frisco's <b>Little Rock and Texas Railway Company</b> incorporates to build line from Jenson to Mansfield, AR (SLSF controlled) – is projected to Little Rock perhaps to ward off competitors
		Ft. Smith and Southern Railway conveys to SLSF ownership
1887	May 14	SLSF completes line to Paris, TX at 11:45am – last gap located 27 miles south of Ft. Smith between Cameron and Poteau.
	November 1	Frisco's Little Rock & Texas Railway begins operations to Mansfield
1889		St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern's Greenwood Branch completed
1891		St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern's Helen Gould Bridge opens across the Arkansas River at Ft. Smith
1893		<b>Ft. Smith &amp; Van Buren Electric St. Railway Light &amp; Power Co.</b> begins
1896		Frisco reorganizes as <b>St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad</b>
1897	April 29	<b>Arkansas Central Railroad</b> incorporates – Ft. Smith to Paris, AR (47 miles)
		Arkansas Central Garrison Avenue passenger station built – also used by IM
1898		<b>Kansas City Pittsburg and Gulf Railroad Company</b> enters Ft. Smith
		Major tornado hits area
1899	January 25	<b>Ft. Smith and Western Railroad Company</b> charters (217 miles)
		FS&W builds passenger station at 10 <sup>th</sup> and Garrison Streets
	February 9	Arkansas Central now controlled by Iron Mountain (1901?)
1900	May 1	Iron Mountain's Arkansas Central completes line to Paris, AR
		KCP&G becomes the <b>Kansas City Southern Railway Company</b>
1901		Frisco completes additional line to Texas (Sapulpa, IT to Denison, TX)
1903		<b>Ft. Smith Light &amp; Traction Company</b> forms
	April	<b>Ft. Smith Suburban Railway Company</b> begins construction (controlled by Iron Mountain)
	May 4	Iron Mountain purchases Ft. Smith Suburban
	June 4	<b>Midland Valley Railroad</b> incorporates – to Wichita, KS (364 miles) - Ingersoll
		Midland Valley depot built
	December 9	Frisco Garrison Avenue station and Central Division headquarters opens - used for Frisco passenger trains until 1912
1906		<b>St. Louis Iron Mountain and Southern Railway</b> absorbs the Little Rock & Ft. Smith Railway
1907	April 30	Frisco absorbs the Little Rock & Texas Railway

	July 17	Frisco absorbs the Ft. Smith and Van Buren Bridge Company
	November 16	Indian Territory joins existing State of Oklahoma
1910	April 9	<b>Ft. Smith &amp; Van Buren Railway Company</b> incorporates
1911		Construction begins on Ft. Smith Union Depot
1912	May 1	Ft. Smith Union Depot opens by KCS and SLSF on Rogers Avenue - Frisco passenger trains begin using Union Station until 1948
1916		Frisco reorganizes as <b>St. Louis-San Francisco Railway Company</b>
1917	March 4	SLSF and MKT begin joint St. Louis to Texas passenger service via Vinita, OK
	June	<b>Missouri Pacific Railroad Company</b> absorbs the Iron Mountain
	December 28	USRA assumes control of most US railroads to expedite WWI traffic – ends 1922
1921	January 10	FSW changes name to <b>Fort Smith &amp; Western Railway Company</b>
1922	May 11	Million Dollar Free Bridge opens Garrison Avenue to Oklahoma
1923	February	Oklahoma Gas & Electric purchases the Ft. Smith Light & Traction
1927	January 22	Frisco ends through St. Louis to Paris, TX passenger service
		Major flood disrupts rail service along the Arkansas River
1928		Ft. Smith Light and Traction renamed <b>Ft. Smith Traction Company</b>
		Frisco introduces passenger trains 709/710 – Monett, MO to Paris, TX
1929	May	Ft. Smith Traction service ends on South Ft. Smith line
1932		Ft. S & W builds new brick depot at South A and South 11th Streets at the rear of the freight depot.
1933	March 13	Frisco discontinues trains 707/712 “Ozark Limited” and “St. Louis Express” – now only 2 passenger trains on Central Division
	November 15	Ft. Smith Traction Company dissolves
1934	October	Midland Valley ends passenger service – Ft. Smith to Pawhuska, OK (mixed service continues to MP control)
1939	January 19	Ft. Smith and Western Railway Company ceases operations
	August 17	Ft. Smith and Western Railway Company abandons
	September 30	MP begins operations on former FS&W tracks in Ft. Smith
		KCS forms the Fort Smith and Van Buren Railway Company to operate the former FS&W Coal Creek to McCurtain branch and Ft. Smith trackage
1941	August 31	Last KCS passenger train to Ft. Smith departs Union Station
1943	May 11	Great flood - KCS abandons the Spiro to Ft. Smith line obtains trackage rights from SLSF to operate between Poteau and Ft. Smith. Utilizes connecting bus service from Ft. Smith to Sallisaw, OK until end of passenger service in November 1969
	November	MV abandons Hartford Branch (Excelsior to Hartford, Jct.)
1947	March 16	Frisco discontinues St. Louis to Paris, TX sleeper service
1948	June 30	Frisco moves passenger trains back to Garrison St. Station until 1965
1951		Last steam on Frisco Central Division
1952		Tornado damages umbrella sheds at Union Station
1958	August 29	Ft. Smith to Greenwood, AR MP line abandoned
1958	February 1	Last SLSF passenger train south of Ft. Smith
1960	March 27	Last MP passenger train in Ft. Smith
1963	June 29	Frisco discontinues St. Louis to Ft. Smith sleeper service
1964	September 25	Midland Valley sold to MP’s <b>Texas &amp; Pacific Railway</b>
1965	September 18	Last SLSF passenger train in Ft. Smith – 709/710 “Meteorite” connection to the Meteor at Monett, MO

		KCS builds new Ft. Smith depot for bus passengers and package freight
1966	July	Union Station demolished to make space for new Convention Center
1967	April 1	Midland Valley merges into MP's Texas and Pacific Railroad
1968		Midland Valley formally merges in the Missouri Pacific System
		Excelsior to Panama segment abandoned by MP – former MV
		Union Station demolished – now site of Ft. Smith Convention Center
1970s		Helen Gould bridge removed – McClellan Kerr River Navigation project
1976	October 15	Texas and Pacific Railroad merges into MP
1978		Frisco abandons Midland to Mansfield portion of the Mansfield Branch
1980	November 21	Frisco merges into the <b>Burlington Northern Railroad</b>
1982	December 22	Missouri Pacific merges into the <b>Union Pacific Railroad</b>
1983		Burlington Northern abandons Wister to Antlers, OK line and Midland to Mansfield, AR line
1984	March 15	Last BN train from Ft. Smith to Wister, OK – abandons to Poteau, OK
1985	February 9	Kansas City Southern leases S. Ft. Smith to Poteau line from BN
		BN abandons Jenson to Midland portion of Mansfield Branch
1986	September 1	Burlington Northern leases Central Division to <b>Arkansas and Missouri Railroad</b> – 139 miles
c.1995		Midland Valley depot razed
1989	November 13	KCS purchases Ft. Smith to Poteau, OK line (former SLSF, BN, A&M)
1991	July 7	Union Pacific leases Van Buren to Paris line to <b>Ft. Smith Railroad</b>
1992	July 6	FS&VB Railway Company formally merges into KCS
1994	September 21	KCS files to abandon Panama to Bokoshe line (former MV) 10 miles and abandon Coal Creek to McCurtain line (former FS&W, FS&VB) – 20 miles
1995	August	Ft. Smith Railroad abandons Fort Chaffee to Paris, AR line (33.7 miles)
2001	March 16	Arkansas & Missouri Railroad purchases Monett, MO to Ft. Smith line from BNSF

### Ft. Smith Area Line segments

SLSF Central Division	Monett, MO to Paris, TX
SLSF Mansfield Branch	Jenson, AR to Mansfield, AR
MP Van Buren Subdivision	Little Rock, AR to Coffeyville, KS
MP Paris Subdivision	Ft. Smith, AR to Paris, AR
MP Midland Valley Subdivision	Panama, OK to Pawhuska, OK
MP Greenwood Branch	Ft. Smith, AR to Greenwood, AR
Ft. Smith Suburban	Ft. Smith area
Midland Valley First District	Ft. Smith, AR to Muskogee, OK
Midland Valley Excelsior District	Rock Island, OK to Greenwood, AR
Midland Valley Hartford Branch	Excelsior, AR to Hartford, AR
KCS Spiro Branch	Ft. Smith, AR to Spiro, OK
Ft. Smith Light and Traction	Ft. Smith, AR area
Ft. Smith and Western	Ft. Smith to Guthrie, OK

## Lingering Questions:

When did KCS acquire Panama to Bokoshe from UP?

When did service end from Bokoshe to Muskogee (UP)?

When did service end on Excelsior to Greenwood (MV)?

Modern KCS freight station torn down?

Ft. Smith tornado – SLSF freight station destroyed?

What year was SLSF (BN) roundhouse torn down?

MV depot built?

MV depot torn down?

Helen Gould bridge removed?

Arkansas Central Garrison Avenue passenger station built?

FS&W builds passenger station at 10<sup>th</sup> and Garrison Streets?

What was original Ft. Smith and Van Buren Railway Co. trackage prior to assuming former

FSW trackage?

Last through freight from Ft. Smith to Paris, TX (SLSF)?

## Summary

1879 to 1910, 8 railroads built in Ft. Smith

1. Little Rock and Fort Smith - now UP
2. St. Louis San Francisco - now A&M (Ft. Smith to Monett, MO)
3. Arkansas Central - now Ft. Smith Railroad (abandoned E of Ft. Smith)
4. Kansas City Pittsburg and Gulf - now KCS
5. Fort Smith and Western - abandoned
6. Fort Smith Suburban - abandoned
7. Midland Valley - to MP/TP, now abandoned
8. Ft. Smith and Van Buren - part KCS, rest abandoned

## Other area railroads include:

Ft. Smith and Southern Railway Company	1886-1887
Little Rock and Texas Railway Company	1887-1907
Texas & Pacific Railroad Company	1964-1968
Burlington Northern Railroad Company	1980-1986
Ft. Smith Railroad	1991-present
Arkansas & Missouri Railroad	1986-present

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