

THE MIDWEST CHALLENGER SPECIAL

Sunday, November 8, 1992

St. Louis

De Soto

Ironton

Poplar Bluff

Sponsored by the St. Louis Chapter, National Railway Historical Society
In Cooperation with Union Pacific Railroad

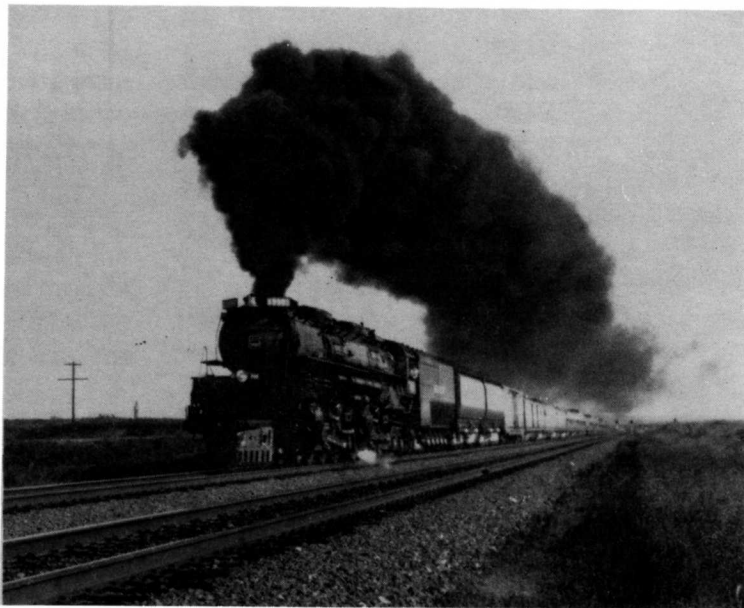
Welcome Aboard!

Your hosts in the St. Louis Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS), along with the members of the St. Louis Steam Train Association, and Union Pacific Railroad, welcome you aboard this special steam-powered excursion train.

Today's excursion is powered by the world's largest operating steam locomotive, Union Pacific 3985. Built in 1942 by the American Locomotive Company of Schenectady, N.Y. for the Union Pacific, the 3985 was a powerful workhorse pulling freight trains across the railroad's rugged territory in the West.

Our trip today is also part of the 1992 Union Pacific Steam Excursion Program, the nation's oldest continuous program of steam-powered rail passenger excursions. Of all American railroads, only Union Pacific never fully retired its entire steam locomotive roster, maintaining its big Northern-type locomotive no. 844 (formerly 8444) in service without retirement to the present day. Later, the 3985, the world's only operating Challenger-type, was returned to service through restoration.

We are pleased and privileged to host this unusual late autumn steam excursion, made possible as the 3985 heads east onto the CSX system to pull the 50th anniversary trip of the **Santa Claus Special** on the former Clinchfield Railroad in Kentucky, Virginia and Tennessee. Sincere thanks to Union Pacific Railroad for its generous cooperation in making this very special excursion possible.



Union Pacific 3985 with a special excursion for the Union Pacific Historical Society convention earlier this year. Photo courtesy Union Pacific Historical Museum.

For Your Safety and Comfort

Safety First! These are the two most important words on the railroad, and they should be your two most important words today, too. For safety's sake:

- * **Always watch your step!** Be especially careful...
- * Getting on or off the train, or
- * When walking about the train or between cars.

- * At stops, watch your footing on uneven ground, gravel, and track ballast stone.
- * Always step **over**, *never* on top of, a rail.
- * Always **walk**, *never* run.
- * Keep your head, hands and arms fully inside the train at all times!

- * If you get a wind-blown particle in your eye in a vestibule area or while in the baggage car, do not rub the eye. Let the eye's natural watering action remove the particle.
- * A medical team is on board. **For medical assistance, contact any crew member.**
- * Children should not play in the aisles.
- * Packages, camera bags, suitcases etc. must be kept out of aisles and off seats. Please use the overhead baggage racks.
- * Union Pacific does not permit coolers to be brought aboard the train. Your cooperation is appreciated.
- * Please always follow the instructions of your car host or other NRHS or railroad crew members, especially at photo stops.
- * No sandals, thongs or bare feet permitted. We reserve the right to insist on appropriate, safe footwear.
- * **Alcoholic beverages may not be brought aboard or consumed on the train, nor anywhere on railroad property.**

THE HISTORIC IRON MOUNTAIN ROUTE



1909 logo

Your trip today on the Union Pacific's De Soto Subdivision summons many reminders of the history of railroading in Missouri. The route you will traverse was built in the mid-19th century as one of the oldest railroads in Missouri and the trans-Mississippi West, the St. Louis & Iron Mountain Railroad, more commonly known as "The

Iron Mountain." One of the most significant predecessors of the well-known Missouri Pacific Railroad, the former Iron Mountain route today plays an important role in the Union Pacific system.

Early Plans and Predecessors

The mineral wealth of the Ozark region of Missouri has been known since the early part of the 18th century. Lead, the most abundant of the deposits, was not fully exploited until after the Civil War, but during the 1830s the most valuable mineral known to exist in the region was iron. The largest deposits of iron ore were at Iron Mountain and Pilot Knob, some 80 miles south of St. Louis. Add to the minerals the vast forests of pine and hardwood, and it was easy to see that any railroad that could build into the region could experience enormous profit in supplying the growing city of St. Louis and other business centers as well.

The first railroad to attempt to reach this wealth was the St. Louis & Bellevue. Its charter in January of 1837 directed builders to follow the nearest and best route between St. Louis and the Iron Mountain region. In 1839 William H. Morell proposed a route west to the Big River, then south over the hills west of the river, eventually reaching the Iron Mountain deposits after 110 miles of steep grades. The route was too long and expensive to build, and after a few years the St. Louis & Bellevue faded from existence without ever laying a rail.

The St. Louis & Iron Mountain

In 1849 Capt. Joshua Barney completed a survey from St. Louis to Fulton, Arkansas for the federal

government, which was interested in establishing overland communication with Texas. The result was renewed interest in building a railroad south from St. Louis. In 1851 the Missouri Legislature chartered the St. Louis & Iron Mountain Railroad. The charter stated that the railroad should run southward from any point on the newly constructed Pacific Railroad, which had built west from St. Louis toward Kansas City with heavy state and local government aid. The Pacific was the first railroad west of the Mississippi, and earliest predecessor of the Missouri Pacific.

The goal of the new St. Louis & Iron Mountain was the general vicinity of Pilot Knob and Iron Mountain, with no specific southern terminus mentioned. Therefore the railroad was free to build beyond Iron Mountain to any part of southern Missouri.

The line was to be built at a gauge of 5 feet 6 inches to match that of the Pacific Railroad, deemed the official track gauge for all railroads built within Missouri. This wide gauge was adopted for two reasons: the perceived ability to build larger cars and thus haul heavier loads; and the opinion of James Kirkwood, chief engineer for the Pacific Railroad. Mr. Kirkwood, who strongly favored the wider gauge, also believed that the Mississippi River would never be bridged. Thus rolling stock would never be interchanged between what were then considered "narrow gauge" 4' 8½" lines of the East and the wider gauge proposed for the West.

Construction Begins

Construction of the St. Louis & Iron Mountain began in October 1853 at Mile Post 0, just south of Plum Street (near today's Poplar Street Bridge) in St. Louis. Progress soon slowed after Secretary of War Jefferson Davis prohibited the railroad from building through the St. Louis Arsenal and Jefferson Barracks, both on the line's route along the river. Davis' concern was with errant sparks from the road's steam locomotives passing close to magazines full of explosives. After two and one half years, the controversy was settled with the Iron Mountain required to use horse power for its trains "when the Government expects to receive, or intends to ship gunpowder at the magazine landing." It is not known whether the horses were ever used.

Construction really began in earnest in 1856, heading south along the Mississippi River until the route turned inland at Riverside, near Pevely, Mo. Construction was completed to De Soto in 1857, and proceeded southward from De Soto and northward from Pilot Knob until the two sections met at Blackwell, Mo., on April 2, 1858. The Iron Mountain was finally operating 86 miles of track between Pilot Knob and St. Louis four and one half years after construction began.

The Civil War

Before plans on how to further expand the railroad were completed the Civil War broke out. During the war the Iron Mountain line was used heavily by the Union forces to protect against Confederate approaches to St. Louis from the south. Destruction on the route was extensive, with tracks torn up, bridges burned and some rolling stock destroyed. The tracks and bridges were quickly repaired and the line was never more than temporarily shut down.

Though the railroad was able to continue operations during the war, lost revenues and the high cost of the repairs took their toll. The State of Missouri, the principal bondholder, foreclosed on the road on February 19, 1866. For a few months the line was operated by a Board of State Commissioners as the difficult postwar period of Reconstruction began.

Expansion Under the Cairo & Fulton

On January 7, 1867, the railroad was sold to a group of investors who had also purchased the Cairo & Fulton Railroad of Missouri. In turn they sold the two lines to Thomas Allen, a past president of the Pacific Railroad, and his brother-in-law Henry Marquard. The company was reorganized as The St. Louis & Iron Mountain Railroad Company in July of 1867.

The first extension of the railroad was the Belmont line, the Iron Mountain's attempt to reach the southeast part of the country. It was started in 1865 but, due to the foreclosure of 1866, serious work did not commence until 1868. Starting at Bismarck, the line was built southeast through Knob Lick, Fredericktown and Delta before reaching the Mississippi River at Belmont, Missouri in 1869. A ferry was used to cross the river to Columbus, Ky. and a connection with the Mobile & Ohio Railroad, then projected as a prominent line to the south and southeast. However, this routing never achieved the traffic levels its promoters projected, and gradually became the Belmont Branch, not a main line.

Construction of what actually became the Iron Mountain's main line started in 1870 when the Arkansas Branch of the St. Louis & Iron Mountain Railroad was incorporated to construct a line from Pilot Knob to the Missouri-Arkansas state line. Work began in 1871, and by 1873 it connected with the Cairo & Fulton of Missouri at Poplar Bluff, and the Cairo & Fulton of Arkansas near the Missouri-Arkansas state line. Eventually the road reached Little Rock and Texarkana via the Cairo & Fulton of Arkansas before the three lines were consolidated into the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern in 1874.

Conversion to Standard Gauge

The original Iron Mountain Route to Pilot Knob, constructed to a gauge of 5'6", was later changed to 5 feet. All other lines mentioned previously were constructed at 5 feet. By the late 1870s it was apparent that building to the wide gauge had been a costly mistake. In 1869 the Pacific Railroad converted to the "standard" 4' 8½" gauge. At St. Louis, the Eads Bridge across the Mississippi, opened in July 1874, was built to standard gauge, as was the trackage to the new Union Depot in 1875. Furthermore, the Iron Mountain's connection in Texarkana, the Texas & Pacific, operated on standard gauge track, necessitating the changing of wheels on cars to fit the other road's gauge or transloading to another car.

On June 28, 1879, the Iron Mountain changed its entire main line to standard gauge in one day, starting in Texarkana at 4:00 a.m. and completing the task in St. Louis at 11:30 p.m. that night. All engines were converted at the De Soto shops by simply pushing in each wheel 1 3/4 inches.



1884 Gould System logo

The Gould Era

In 1879 Thomas Allen sold the Missouri Pacific (the Pacific Railway until 1876) to Jay Gould, the great railroad magnate of the late 19th century. Gould, who called himself "the most hated man in America," purchased a controlling interest in the Iron Mountain Route in 1880 and bought the remainder of the stock outright the next year. Gould added the Iron Mountain to his "Gould System" of southwestern railroads, bringing the total mileage of his empire to 9,547 miles. His system of eight railroads controlled much of the rail traffic in the southwestern United States. It was at this time that the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern became a fully-owned subsidiary of Missouri Pacific.

Under Gould, the Iron Mountain continued to expand through construction and acquisitions. After Jay Gould died in 1892, his son, George, took over the Missouri Pacific System, including the Iron Mountain route. The Goulds were especially ambitious for expansion of their railroads, and under their control the Iron Mountain reached such places as Memphis, Tenn., Alexandria, La., and Fort Smith, Arkansas. Other routes through the Ozarks ran from Batesville, Ark. and Carthage, Missouri.

The heavy grades and many curves of the original Iron Mountain route resulted in high operating costs for the many through freight and passenger trains operating on the line. A new route via Illinois following the east bank of the Mississippi from East St. Louis was completed in 1904. The route was jointly operated with the St. Louis Southwestern (Cotton Belt Route), and used the new Thebes Bridge over the river at Thebes, Illinois, just south of Cape Girardeau. The line then continued southwestward to Dexter and the old Cairo & Fulton line to Poplar Bluff. Most freight traffic has been routed down the easier grades of the river line ever since.

Following the Panic of 1907 the Gould system began to fall apart. George Gould's passion to develop a transcontinental railroad system resulted in his empire expanding to some 19,000 miles. Following receiverships and takeover attempts, the younger Gould began to lose power. In the Missouri Pacific and Iron Mountain stockholders' elections of March 1915, George Gould was voted out. By 1918 he was completely out of the railroad business.



1921 logo

Merger Into the Missouri Pacific

On August 19, 1915, the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern, along with the Missouri Pacific, was forced into receivership. The two roads were merged into the Missouri Pacific Railroad through reorganization on May 12, 1917. Under the MoPac, the line continued in importance, especially during the two World Wars when the rails were called upon to transport the war materiel of the nation. Over the years the St. Louis-Poplar Bluff route was improved by reducing grades and curvature through the Ozarks. However, during this century the river line to Poplar Bluff via Thebes Bridge steadily gained importance, while traffic on the old Iron Mountain line declined.

The Van Sweringen Legacy

As the Missouri Pacific had once attracted Jay Gould, in 1930 it lured two equally notable railroad investors of this century, Oris Paxton Van Sweringen and his brother Mantis James Van Sweringen. "The



"A Service Institution"

1929 logo

Vans", as they were known, formed the Alleghany Corp. in 1929 as a holding company for their vast railway interests. In 1930 the brothers bought a controlling interest in the MoPac for \$100 million. But their financial empire, a hollow pyramid supported by increasingly worthless securities as the nation plunged into the Great Depression, soon collapsed. In 1933 the MoPac became the first major railroad to file for bankruptcy under the new Section 77 of the Bankruptcy Act. It did not emerge from receivership until 1956. Even then it was hampered by a difficult division of stock ownership into two classes which would constrain management as the modern era of large-scale mergers began in the 1960s.

But under the capable financial oversight of William Marbury, and the steady management of its president and later chairman, Downing B. Jenks, the MoPac still managed a remarkable turnaround and physical revitalization. In 1974 the troublesome Class "B" stock was bought back, and the MoPac was fully free to seek its destiny with little encumbrance.

The Union Pacific Merger

On April 18, 1980, stockholders of the Missouri Pacific and the Union Pacific approved a merger under which the MoPac would become a wholly owned subsidiary of the Union Pacific Corporation. The merger was approved by the Interstate Commerce Commission on October 20, 1982, and took effect on December 22 of the same year. The former Iron Mountain line, along with the rest of the Missouri Pacific Railroad, became part of the 22,000-mile Union Pacific Railroad. The Missouri Pacific Railroad still exists as a corporate entity today within the Union Pacific's holdings.



1974 MP and 1983 UP logos



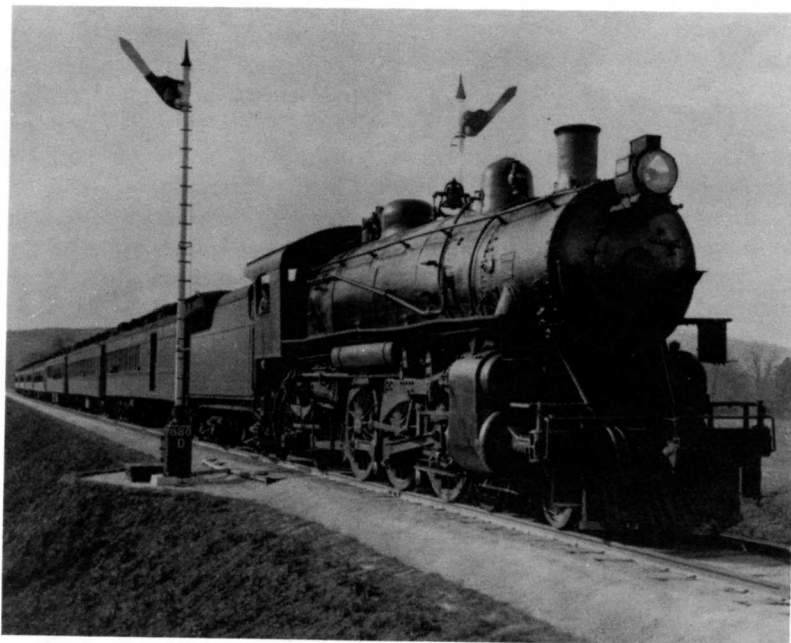
mo-pac

Passenger Traffic on the Iron Mountain

The June 1916 *Official Railway Guide* listed six passenger trains each way on the route between St. Louis and Poplar Bluff with an additional train connecting with the Mississippi River and Bonne Terre at Riverside. By June of 1941 the number was reduced to five each way, and a De Soto – Bismarck and Bismarck – Poplar Bluff mixed train. By the 1960s the number of first class trains was down to three, and when Amtrak assumed control of the nation's passenger trains in 1971 there was but one left.

The route was host to some of the Missouri Pacific's top "name" trains, including the **Sunshine Special**, the premier train to Texas, with **The Texan** and **The Southerner** also operating between St. Louis and Texas points. In the post-World War II period, the **Texas Eagle** was the premier train south from St. Louis on the Iron Mountain. The last pre-Amtrak train was a remnant of the **Texas Eagle** running between St. Louis and Texarkana. Today, Amtrak's version of the **Texas Eagle** between Chicago and Houston/San Antonio traverses the former Iron Mountain line on an overnight schedule between St. Louis and Poplar Bluff. Today's excursion is a unique opportunity to travel this very scenic and historic line during daylight hours.

– Dan Gassen, St. Louis Chapter NRHS



The Sunshine Special, the Iron Mountain's most famous passenger train, posed for this publicity photo in 1917 at MP 88 near Arcadia. Barriger Collection, Mercantile Library.

A Guide to the Route

Union Pacific De Soto Subdivision (St. Louis Division)

Former stations no longer in service indicated by brackets [].
Other non-station locations of interest indicated by asterisk *.

Milepost (MP) and station name or location of interest

Union Pacific Sedalia Subdivision

3.4 Compress Track *

This siding in central St. Louis is named for its location near the site of the former St. Louis Cotton Compress Company. Today's excursion begins here on Union Pacific's ex-Missouri Pacific Sedalia Subdivision, UP's line to Kansas City. From here the train will back up about one mile to the junction at Grand Avenue in order to enter Burlington Northern trackage for the connection to the Union Pacific's De Soto Subdivision, the route for the remainder of the trip.

2.3 Grand Avenue

Junction with the Burlington Northern (ex-St. Louis - San Francisco Railway, or Frisco Lines) and the Terminal Railroad Association of St. Louis, or TRRA. The new Metro Link light rail line, to open in 1993, is visible just to the north (right) of the train following former TRRA and Norfolk & Western (ex-Wabash) right-of-way.

Burlington Northern Springfield Division

Upon completing the backup move, our train moves forward from Grand Avenue, entering Burlington Northern (ex-Frisco) trackage for 1.5 miles to the relocated Iron Mountain Jct.

Union Pacific De Soto Subdivision

0.0 Iron Mountain Junction

Beginning of the De Soto Subdivision, Iron Mountain Jct. was originally located on the Sedalia Subdivision line to Kansas City, just to the north (right) of our train, and just west of our Compress Track boarding site. It was relocated onto Burlington Northern in the mid-1980s. Trains entering the De Soto Subdivision at the old junction turned south and soon crossed the

BN at grade where the present junction switch we'll use is located. The *Texas Eagle*, which uses the De Soto Sub on its run from Chicago and St. Louis to Houston and San Antonio, is the only Amtrak train scheduled to run on ex-Frisco trackage in traversing this short section.

The first 6.8 miles of the subdivision was built in 1887 as the St. Louis, Oak Hill & Carondelet, and merged into the Missouri Pacific in 1910. Known as the "Oak Hill Line", it begins its looping route across most of the city's South Side on the west side of Oak Hill, one of the highest points in the city. Dropping down the east side of the hill, the line passes over Chippewa St. and Gravois Ave. before heading southeast to Carondelet Park.

6.4 Broadway Junction

Shortly after passing through the eastern edge of Carondelet Park the track makes a sharp turn to the east (left) as the former Carondelet Subdivision to Kirk Jct. (at Kirkwood) branches to the right. The branch was built by Missouri Pacific predecessor Pacific Railroad in 1872 as an 11-mile connection west from the Carondelet area of South St. Louis. Later it became a connection between the MoPac's Kansas City line at Kirkwood, the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern, and a railroad ferry across the Mississippi at Ivory Street in Carondelet. Except for a short industrial lead at each end, the line is now out of service.

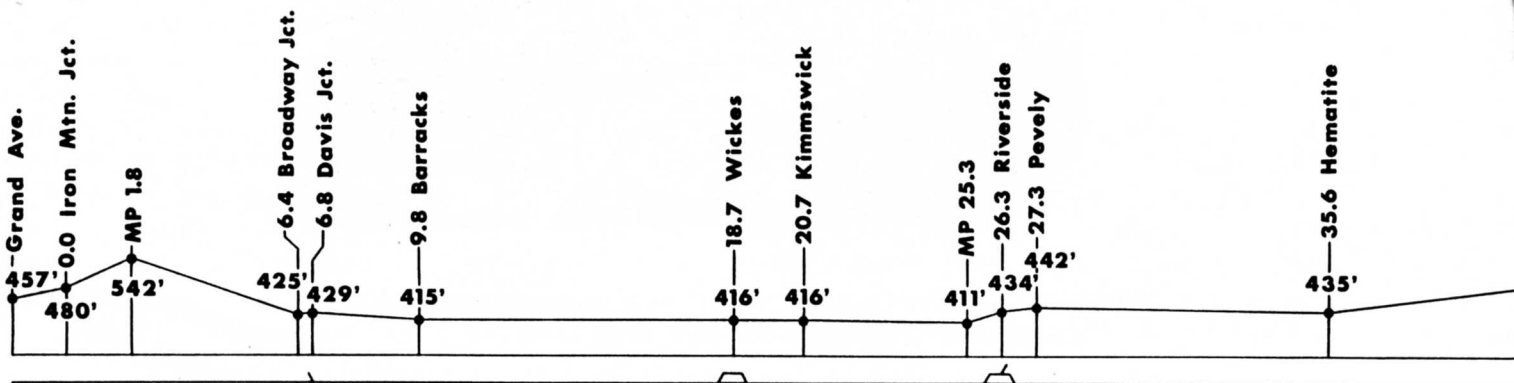
6.8 Davis Junction

Junction with the 6.1 mile Lesperance Industrial Lead northward to UP's Lesperance Street Yard on the riverfront just south of downtown St. Louis. The line, built in 1858 as part of the original St. Louis & Iron Mountain, was known as the Lesperance Subdivision until the mid-1980s. It is here that our train enters the original trackage of the former St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern route southward from St. Louis.

9.8 Barracks

Formerly called Barracks Junction when it was the end of double track from Iron Mountain Junction. Barracks is the shortened name for Jefferson Barracks, a U.S. Army post dating back to August 1826 when the 1st U.S. Infantry arrived here from Fort

Route profile



Track plan schematic

Bellefontaine, the first army post in the St. Louis area, located on the Missouri River north of the city. Over the years many famous military leaders were assigned here, including (then) Lt. Jefferson Davis, Col. Robert E. Lee, Gen. John C. Fremont, Gen. William T. Sherman and Gen. Ulysses S. Grant. The base was closed in 1946, but an important National Cemetery, Veterans Hospital and a National Guard detachment remain today. The rest of the installation is now a county park, with an interesting historical museum. The red brick station at which thousands of GIs boarded troop trains stood to the right of the track until a few years ago.

Just south of Barracks, the track passes under the award-winning twin steel-arch bridges of I-255, commonly known as the Jefferson Barracks, or "JB", bridge(s). Although suburban south St. Louis County sprawls atop of the bluffs to the west (right), the railroad follows the Mississippi River beneath the bluffs and away from the sprawl for the next 16 miles.

10.8 Triangle Spur

11.0 CF Industries

[12.6 Cliff Cave]

At one time, double track extended to here. Cliff Cave County Park can be seen to the east (left) of the train, opposite the river bluff to the west where the cave is located.

[16.1 White House]

Atop the bluff is the White House, a Jesuit retreat center. During the 1870s there was talk of moving the nation's capital closer to the center of the country, and some St. Louis interests pushed hard for the city to become the new national capital. This location gained its name as a proposed location for the residence of the President.

17.8 Hillcrest

Location of Union Electric's Meramec power plant. This coal-fired plant was once served by rail, as evidenced by the yard tracks to the west (right) of the train. Today the plant receives its coal by barge.

18.1 Meramec River Bridge *

The Meramec - Indian for catfish - rises in the south-central part of Missouri near Salem and winds its way northeasterly to its confluence with the Mississippi here. Jean Baptiste Gomache established the first river ferry in Missouri across the Meramec near here in 1776. The line crosses the river on a 559-foot combination plate girder and through truss bridge.

18.7 Wickes

[20.7 Kimmswick]

Pop. 207. The community traces its origins to Theodore Kimm, who laid out the town in 1857. In early years a river port, it found modest prosperity as a smelting and shipping point for iron mined at Pilot Knob and Iron Mountain until 1882, when the smelter closed. The town became a farming center, and today draws tourists to shop at its many handicraft and gift stores.

26.3 Riverside

Here the line turns inland from the Mississippi River. A wye and several storage tracks on the south (left) mark the junction with the St. Genevieve branch to Herculaneum and Crystal City. It was built by the St. Joe Lead Company as the narrow gauge Mississippi River & Bonne Terre in 1888. The MR&BT originally ran 33 miles from Riverside to Bonne Terre, but in 1893 was extended 14 miles to Doe Run and converted to standard gauge. It hauled lead ore to the company smelter at Herculaneum, and refined lead back to the Iron Mountain connection at Riverside for shipment to market. In 1929 the MoPac bought a controlling interest from St. Joe Lead and merged the MR&BT into the newly acquired Missouri-Illinois Railroad. Today the line still serves the smelter but ends south of Festus. Union Pacific trains reach St. Genevieve via trackage rights on the Burlington Northern (ex-Frisco) from Crystal City.

27.3 Pevely

Pop. 2,732. Here the line passes beneath Interstate 55.

[29.5 Horine]

To the north (right) is Burlington Northern's Memphis Division between St. Louis and Memphis via Cape Girardeau. BN gained this line in its 1980 merger with the Frisco. At one time the MoPac and Frisco had an interchange track here.

[30.6 Munsons]

BN overcrossing as the line enters the Joachim Creek Valley.

[31.9 Silica]

A open pit silica sand mine may be seen near the bluff to the east (left), an outcrop of St. Peter sandstone. It produces molding sand and ground sand for abrasives, glass and pottery.

35.6 Hematite

Pop. 200. The town's name is the geologist's term for iron ore. William Null and a group of American immigrants are said to have settled here on Spanish land grants around 1800.

