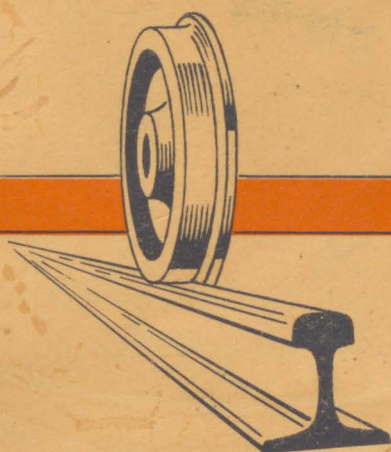


Rail Oddities

ODD and
INTERESTING FACTS
about the
RAILROADS



Rail Oddities

Odd and Interesting
FACTS
About the Railroads

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN RAILROADS
TRANSPORTATION BUILDING • WASHINGTON, D. C.

DECEMBER, 1954

cleaner



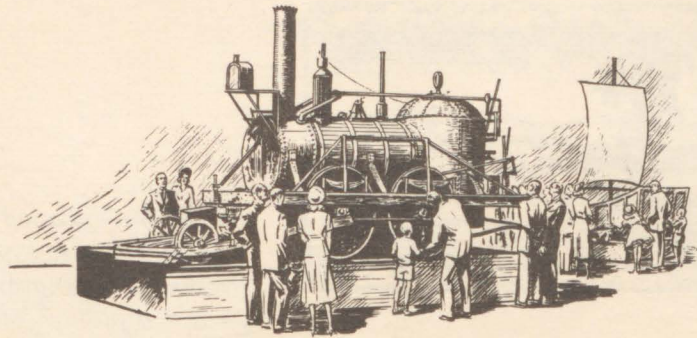
In 1855 a railroad president commissioned a poor but promising young artist to paint a picture of the company's new round-house. It was to be used as an advertisement and the price paid was \$75.00.



Years later — by an almost incredible coincidence — the artist himself ran across the picture in a second hand shop in Mexico City, and he bought it back.



The painting, "The Lackawanna Valley" now hangs in the National Gallery of Art in Washington. It is admired as one of the finest early works of the renowned artist, George Inness (1825-1894).



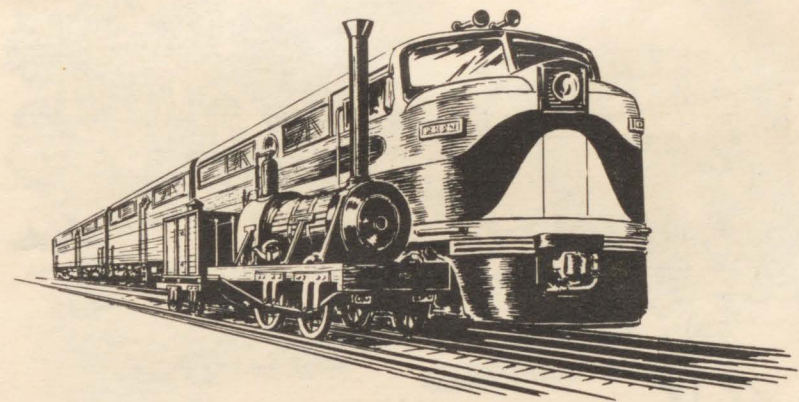
Every year more than a million persons visit the fascinating railroad museum at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D. C.



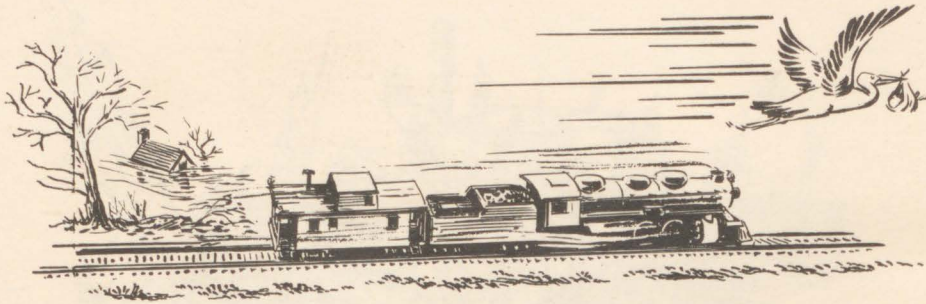
At a Public Utilities Commission hearing on a railroad's petition to discontinue unprofitable train service, a farmer appeared to voice his protest. His reason: he liked to hear the whistle blow.



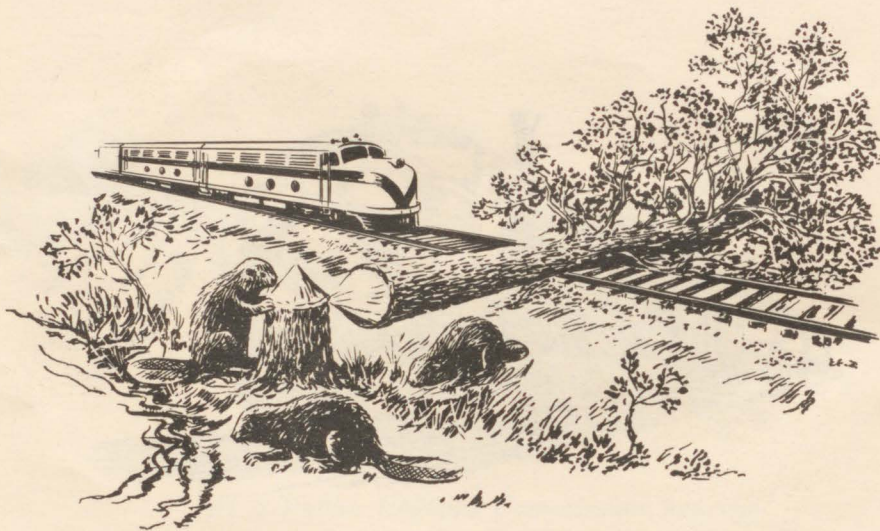
While dismantling the old railroad depot in the fabulous gold-rush town of Deadwood, S. D. — workmen discovered \$1,200 in twenty dollar bills cached away in the attic.



"Old Ironsides," the first steam locomotive built by Matthias Baldwin, cost \$3,500. A modern 3-unit diesel-electric locomotive today costs about \$500,000.



In a remote western sawmill town, largely isolated by floods and storms, a railroad crew made up an emergency special train (engine and caboose) and rushed a mother-to-be toward the nearest hospital — 45 miles. But the baby insisted on being born en route . . . in the caboose . . . conductor assisting.



Trains were delayed on one of the big railroads a little while ago when beavers felled a tree across the track.



A railroad dining car, equipped for a round trip, starts out with a stock of 240 tablecloths, 800 napkins, 500 dishes, 700 pieces of silverware and 200 pieces of glassware . . . plus towels, pantry and kitchenware and food.



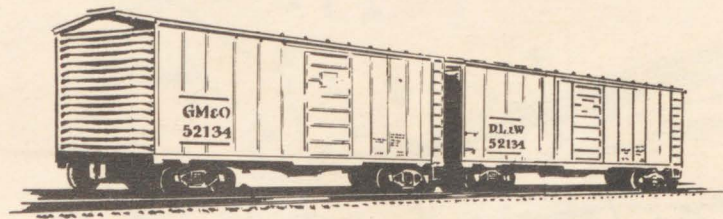
Sixty years ago an accommodating engineer would often stop his train to let off anglers at a favorite fishing spot . . . sometimes wait around awhile to see what luck they had.



An early line in Florida was known as the heavenly railroad. It ran between the towns of Jupiter and Juno.



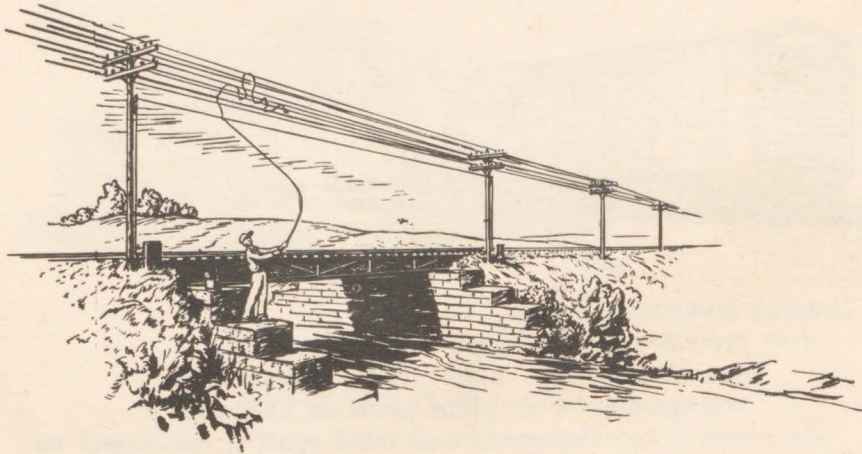
When the conductor of a famous passenger train recently made his final run, after 42 years of railroading, his four sons made up the crew . . . engineer, fireman, brakeman and flagman. Two other sons, both railroad men, went along as passengers.



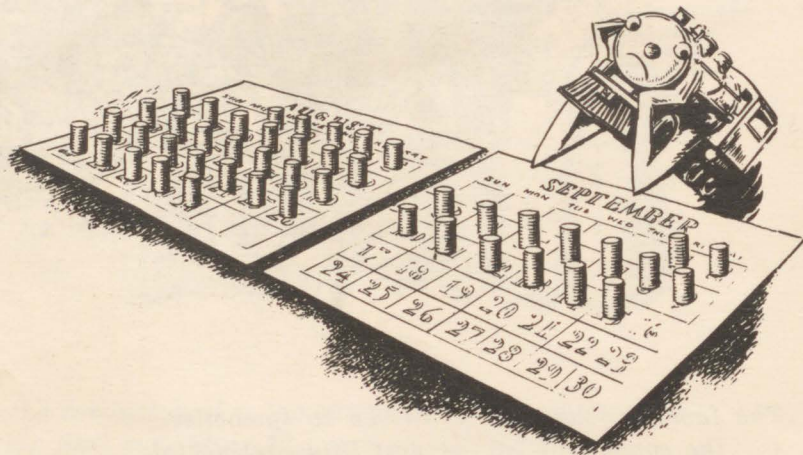
Bearing identical numbers . . . two freight cars of different railroads — one from Chicago, the other from Baltimore — arrived in a Virginia town on the same morning and were spotted end-to-end on a consignee's siding. The chances of such an occurrence are about a million to one.



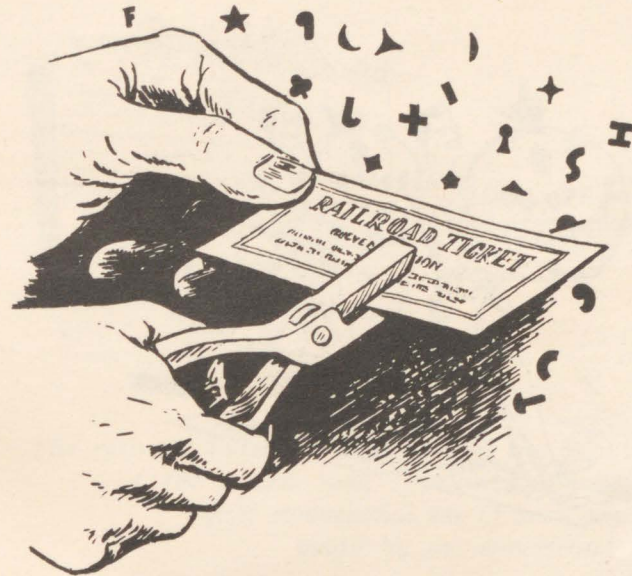
The famous golden spike, driven to symbolize the completion of the first transcontinental rail route (1869), was presented to Stanford University and is now in the Wells Fargo Bank in San Francisco for safe keeping.



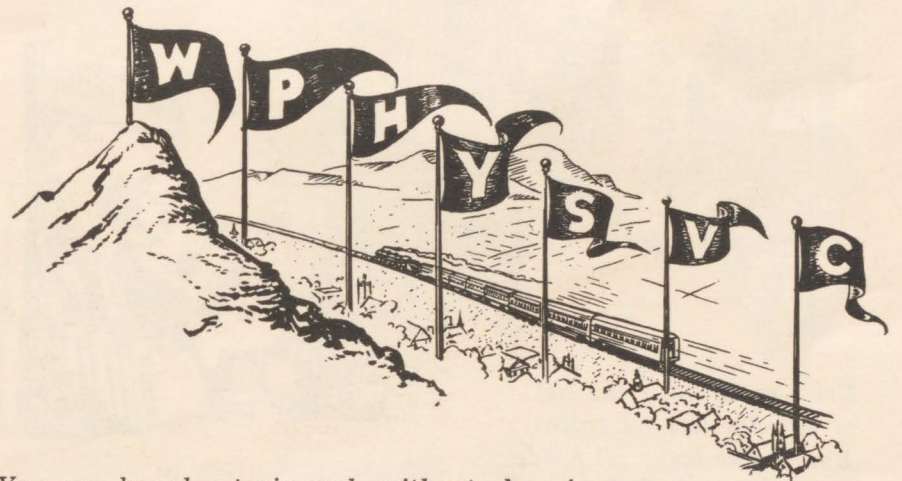
Seventeen trains on 107 miles of track were stopped for two hours when a man fishing from a railroad bridge in Kansas got his line tangled in the wires of the railroad's automatic signal system.



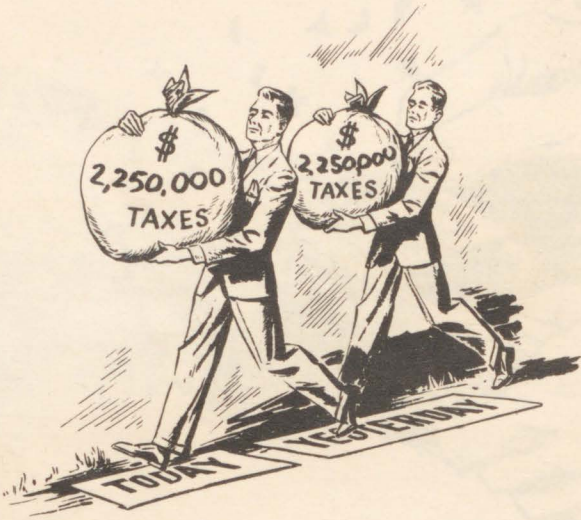
Taxes paid by railroads in a recent year took the total revenues derived from 46 days of operation.



Among all the ticket punches used by over 10,000 railroad conductors in the United States, no two of the punches make a hole of the same shape.



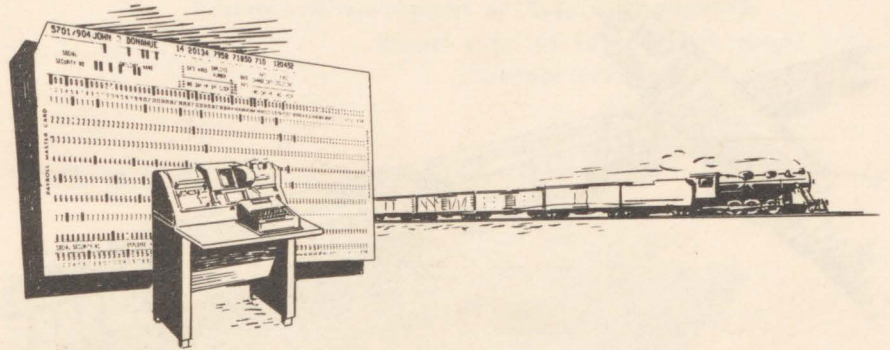
You can board a train and, without changing cars, travel from Cornell to Vassar, Stanford, Yale, Harvard, Princeton and Wellesley on the 50-mile Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway.



*Since this time yesterday,
the American railroads
paid over \$2¼ million in
taxes . . . the daily
average all through the year.*



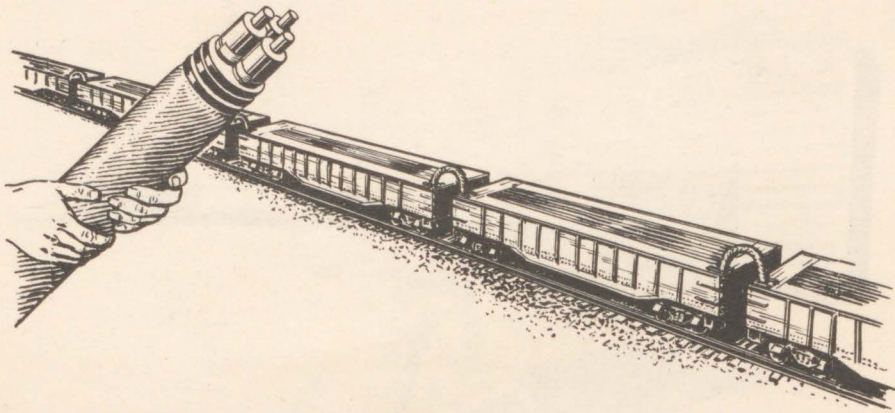
*Brief cases head the list
of articles left on trains.
But people leave all kinds
of things including wallets,
watches, golf clubs, canary birds and homing pigeons.
One lady left a bag containing jewels worth \$125,000—
safely returned by the Pullman Company.*



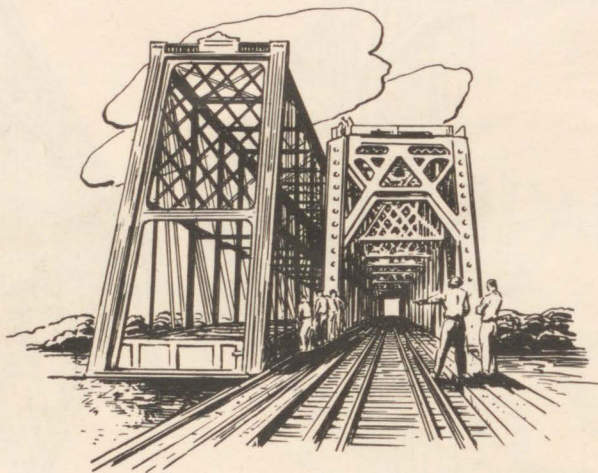
*The railroad industry pioneered in the adoption
of the punch card tabulating machine. The
first commercial use of such a machine was
made by an American railroad in 1896.*



*Consisting of more than 350,000 items, the largest
railroad library in America, and probably in the
world, is maintained by the Association of American
Railroads at its headquarters in Washington, D. C.*

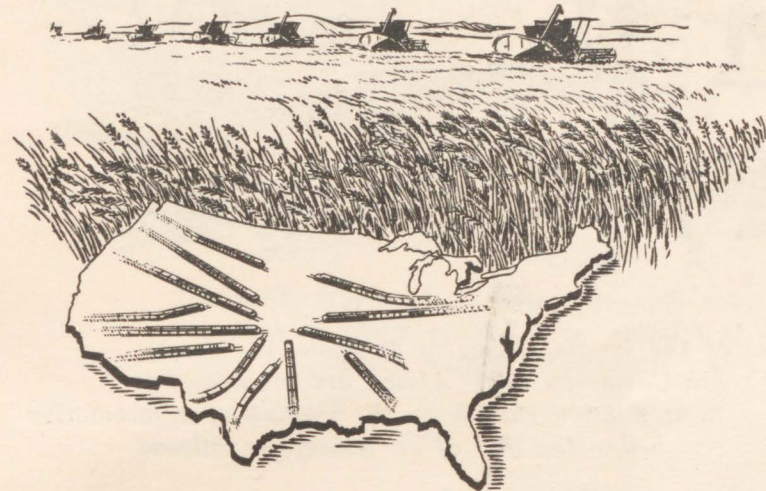


Loaded in nine gondola freight cars, an underwater cable 39,000 feet long was recently shipped from New Jersey to Puget Sound . . . all in one piece. 4½ inches in diameter, the copper cable weighed 700,000 pounds.

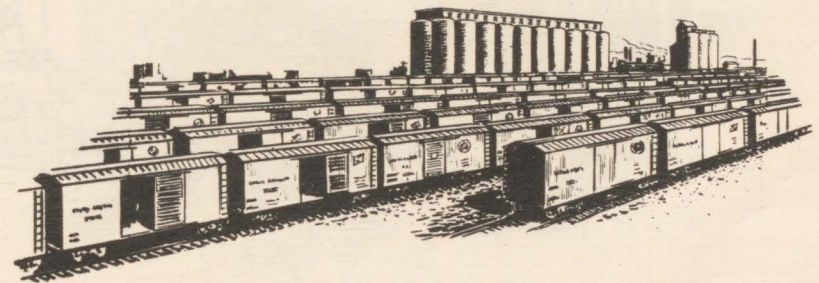


Rebuilding its bridge across the Ohio River, a railroad (1) moved an old span off its piers in 57 minutes; (2) moved a new 518-foot span to the same piers in 75 minutes; (3) hooked up the tracks and resumed full main line operations all within 20 hours.

The annual movement of America's gigantic wheat crop is the biggest single transportation job in the world.



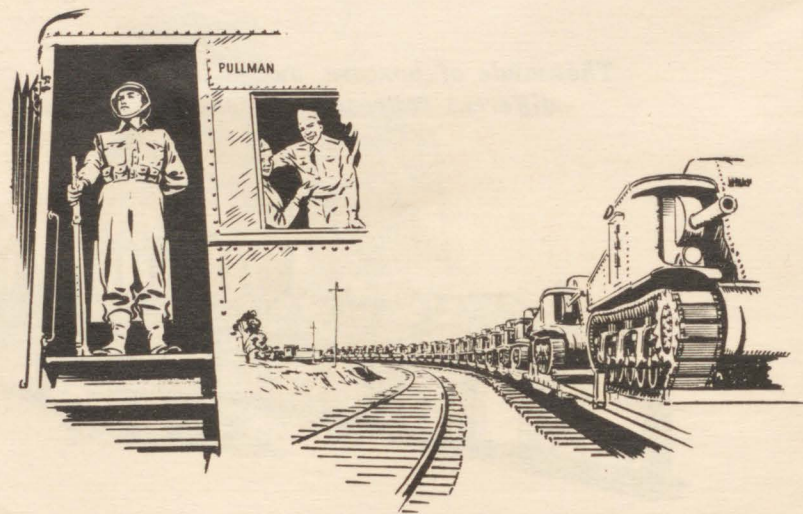
Thousands of boxcars, owned by many different railroads, are concentrated in the wheat belt at harvest time.



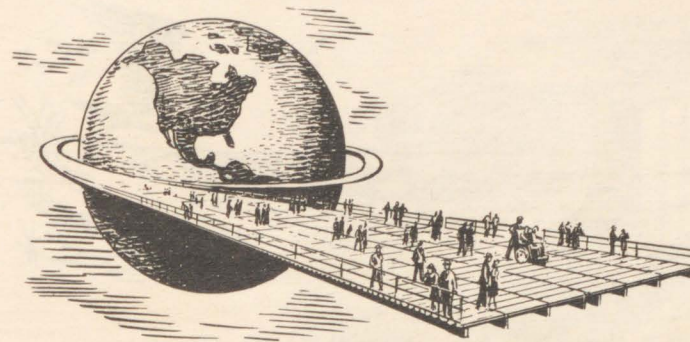
Loaded, emptied and re-loaded time after time, it takes 750,000 carloads of 1,800 bushels each to move the wheat alone. Other grains take another 900,000 carloads.



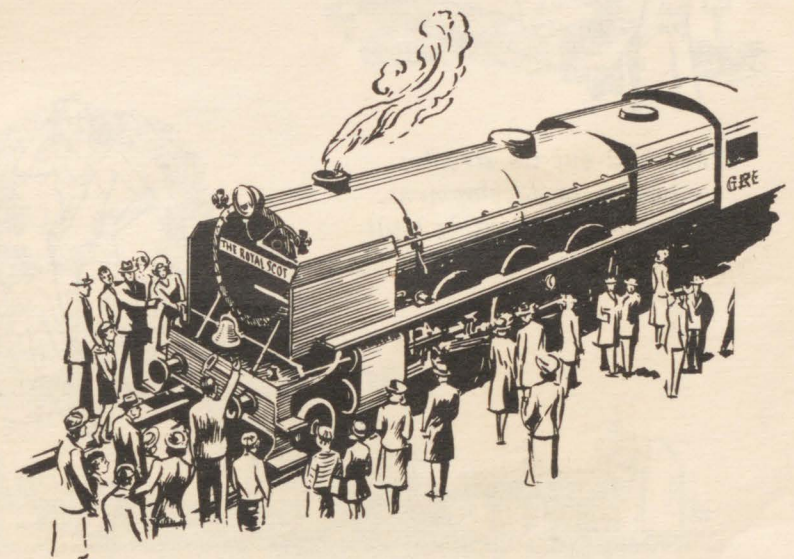
Natives of the jungle village of Mengale, in French Cameroon, West Africa, are summoned to their mission church by the ringing of a locomotive bell — the gift of an American railroad.



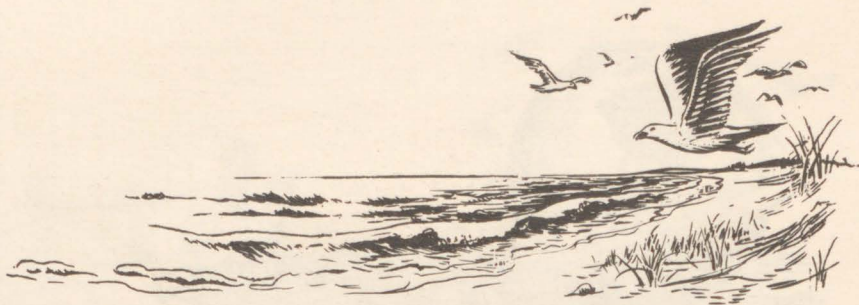
Worth remembering... in World War II railroads handled more than 90 percent of all the war freight and 97 percent of all the organized military travel.



Under the tracks of American railroads are more than a billion cross ties — enough to encircle the earth with a "Boardwalk" fifty feet wide.



British people are fascinated by their two railway locomotives which carry a bell — the only engines in England so equipped. The bells were added for American exhibition tours made by the "Royal Scot" and the "King George V"



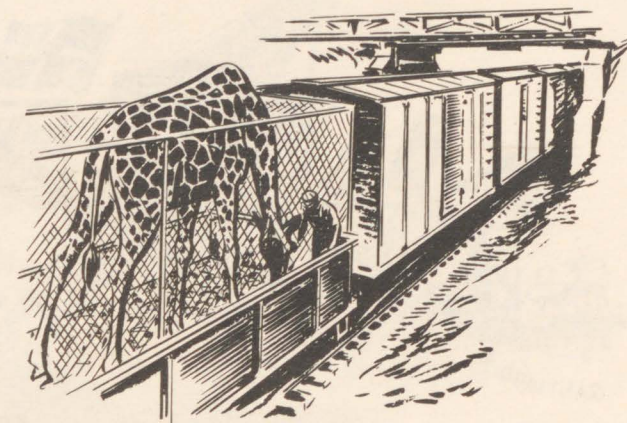
A century ago, on a sandy waste along the New Jersey coast, a world-famous resort — now visited by 16 million people annually — was founded by railroad men.



*They laid out its streets;
planned its development;
raised the capital; built
two railroads to the place.*



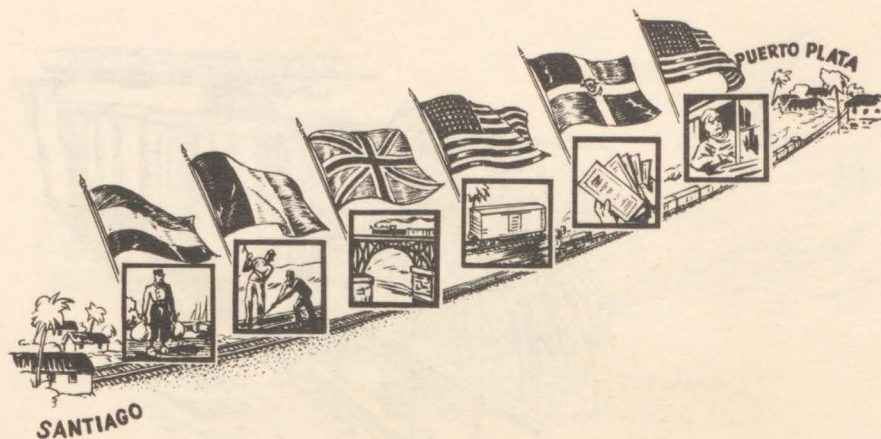
A train conductor, Alex Boardman, conceived the idea of laying boards along the beach because people tracked so much sand into the hotels and railroad coaches — “Boardman’s Walk,” Atlantic City’s fabulous boardwalk.



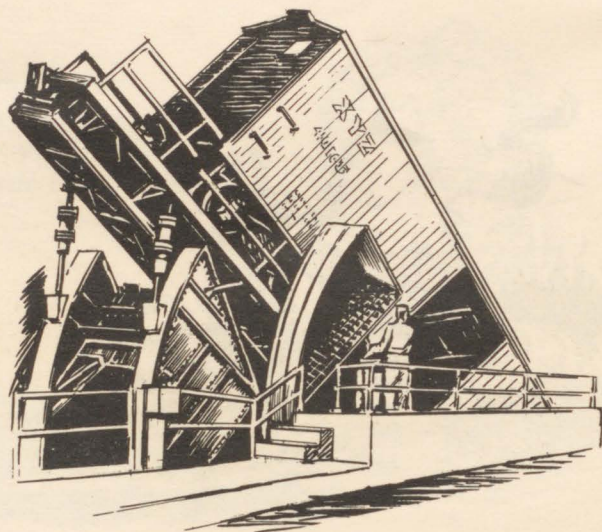
Railroad men in a big quandary over getting a circus giraffe under a low bridge solved the problem by dropping a carrot on the floor of the cage . . . sneaked train under bridge while giraffe’s head was down.



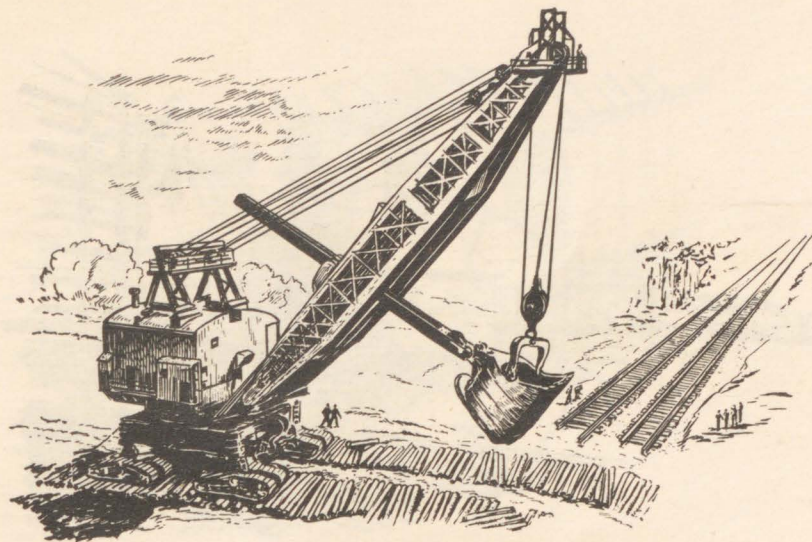
In early days, when a train from one direction was late at a meeting point, a train from the opposite direction could proceed after waiting half an hour but in such cases a trainman had to walk ahead and “flag” his train around each curve.



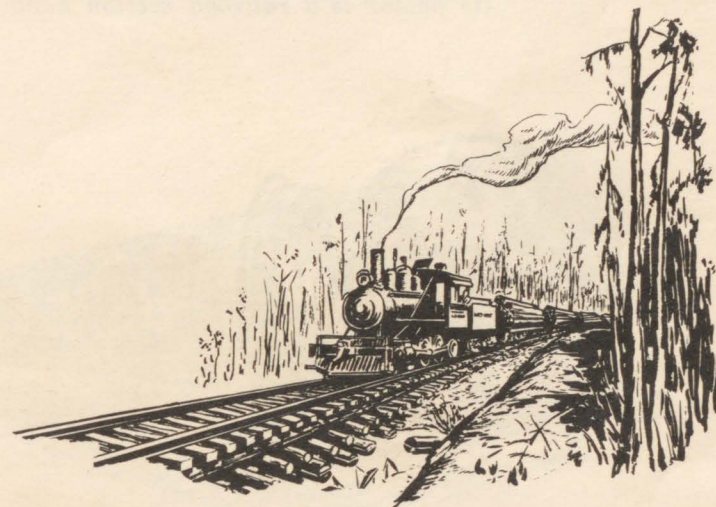
In the Dominican Republic there is a 42-mile railroad that was financed by the Dutch, built by Belgians, has British bridges, U. S. rolling stock. It is owned by the Dominicans and is operated by Americans.



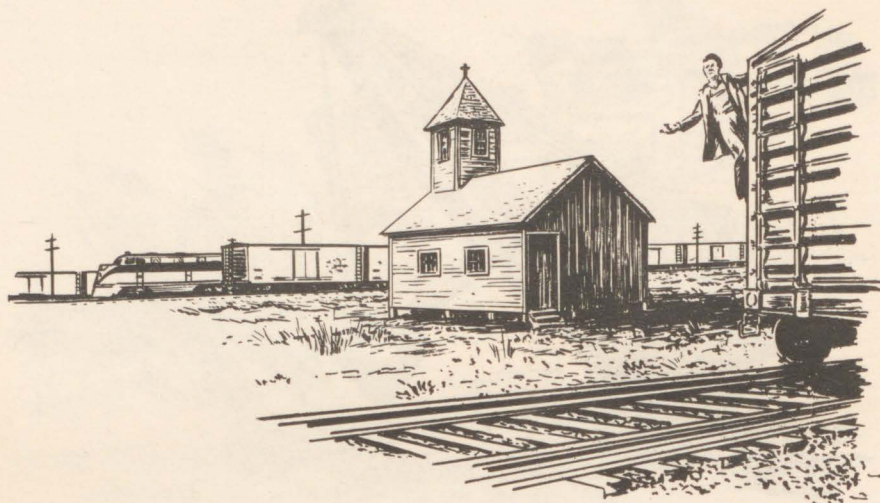
Some large grain elevators are equipped with machinery that lifts, tilts and empties a box car load of wheat (60 tons) in seven minutes.



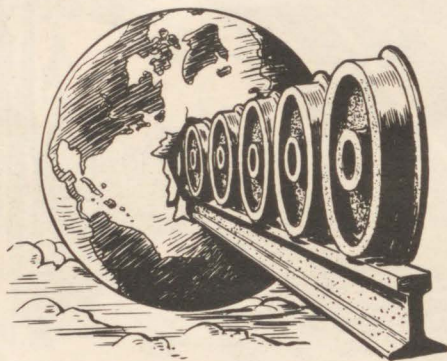
An accommodating railroad took up a section of its track to permit passage of an 1800-ton electric crane moving eleven miles from one coal mine to another.



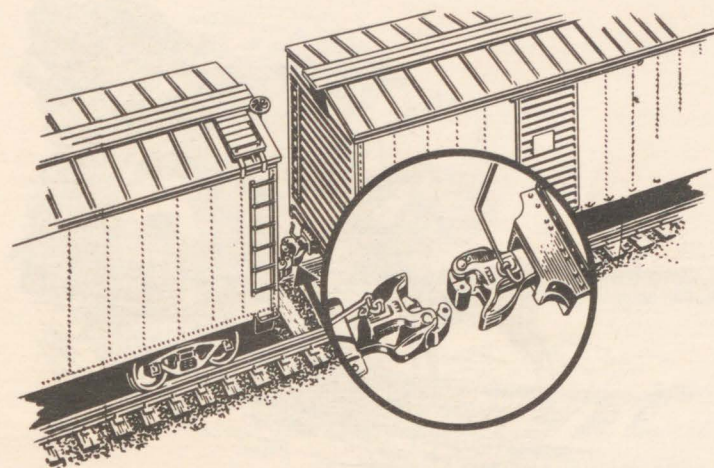
A small railroad in Louisiana is constantly laying temporary track as it goes about its business of gathering and hauling cypress logs. Rails through the swamp are laid on a roadbed built up with five layers of logs.



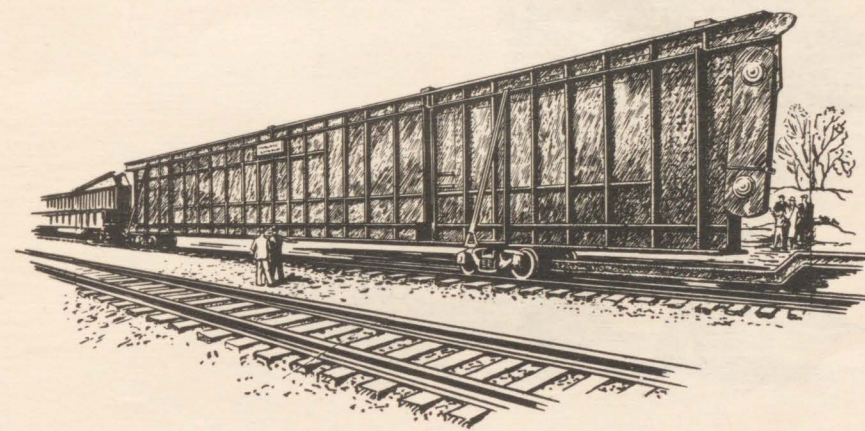
The Live Oak Baptist Church is situated in a railroad freight yard in New Orleans. It is built of lumber from old freight cars; a locomotive bell rings out from its steeple; its pastor is a railroad section hand.



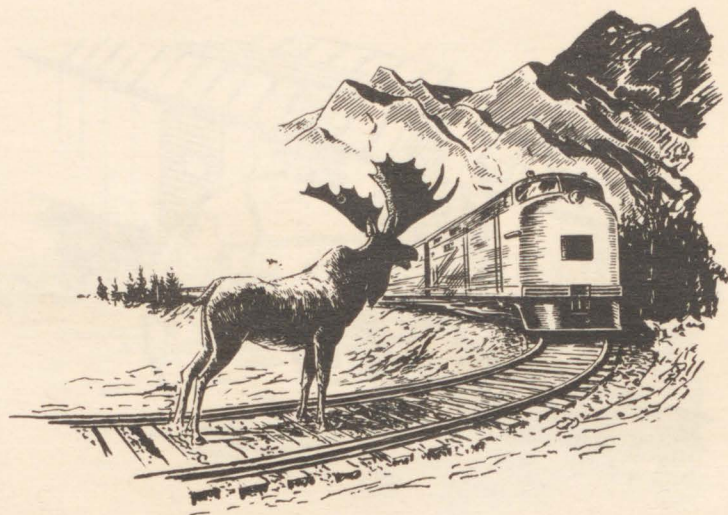
The standard diameter of freight car wheels in the U.S.A. is 33 inches. Placed tread-to-tread, the wheels of the 2 million freight cars in service in this country would reach 8,300 miles — a distance greater than the diameter of the earth.



Any freight car—of any railroad—anywhere in America—can be coupled up with any other freight car by means of the standard coupler. The nation's mass transportation and mass production depend upon the rugged "Universal Grip" which often holds together more than 5000 tons of loaded freight cars in one train.



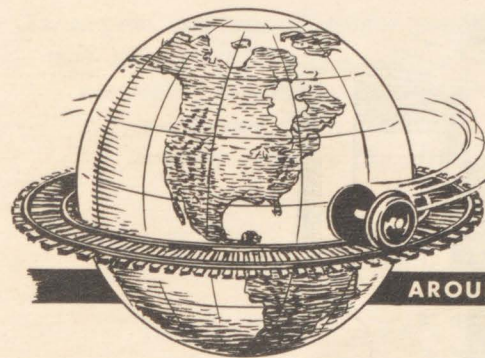
A railroad solved the problem of transporting several 115-ton steel girders, 14 feet high and 125 feet long, by mounting each one on two sets of freight car wheels spaced 90 feet apart.



Railroads in Alaska have moose trouble. The big animals get on the track and sometimes run for miles just ahead of the train. If the engineer sounds his whistle or horn, the moose are likely to turn around and do battle with the engine.

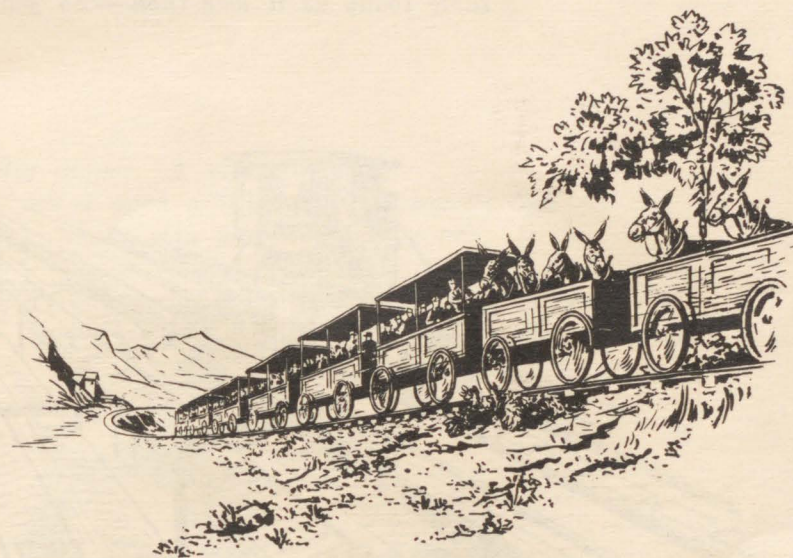


A Florida railroad takes special care of a 75-year-old mulberry tree on the station grounds at Mulberry, Fla., and a Maryland railroad owns an acre of ground on which stands a famous holly tree 65 feet high.



AROUND THE EARTH 24 TIMES

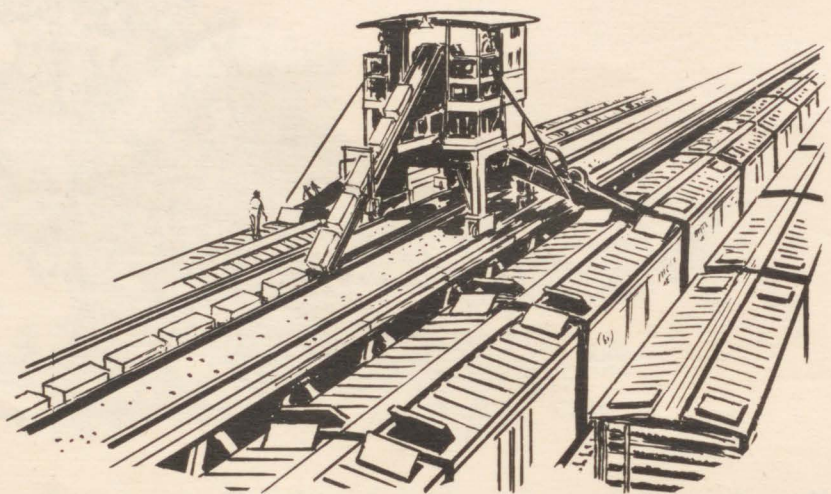
Freight car wheels are rugged. Under normal conditions, they are good for 600,000 miles.



More than 100 years ago, mules furnished the only motive power on a little mining railroad in Pennsylvania. The mules pulled the train nine miles up the stiff grade . . . the train came back down by gravity, carrying the mules along in a special open-top car.

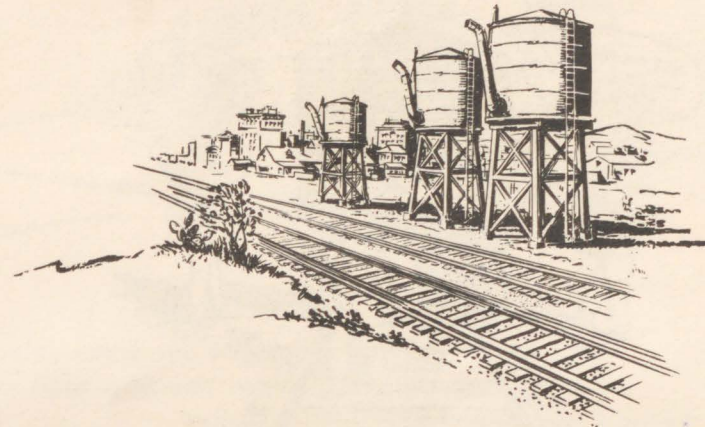


In Pennsylvania, a lady passenger proffered a railroad ticket purchased by her father in 1872, and the conductor honored it without hesitation. The fare for this 90-mile trip is about the same today as it was then — 83 years ago.

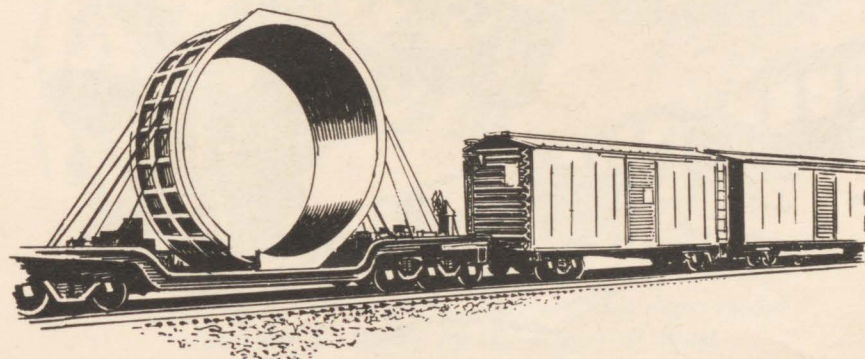


Railroads have developed a machine that can grind up 300-pound cakes of ice and load it into refrigerator cars at a rate of one ton in fifteen seconds.

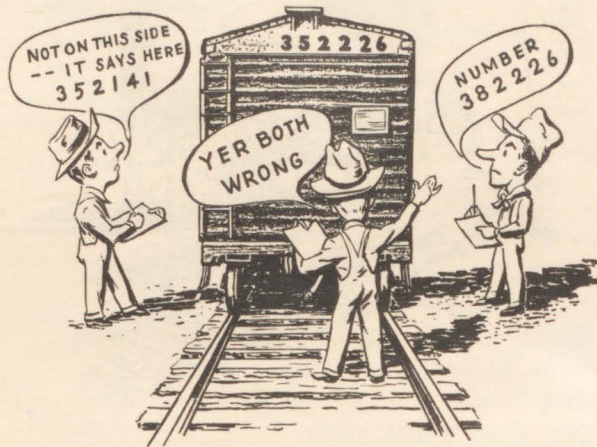
An urgent community water problem was solved when a big railroad, having converted almost wholly from steam to diesel locomotives, presented all of its nearby wells to the city as a gift.



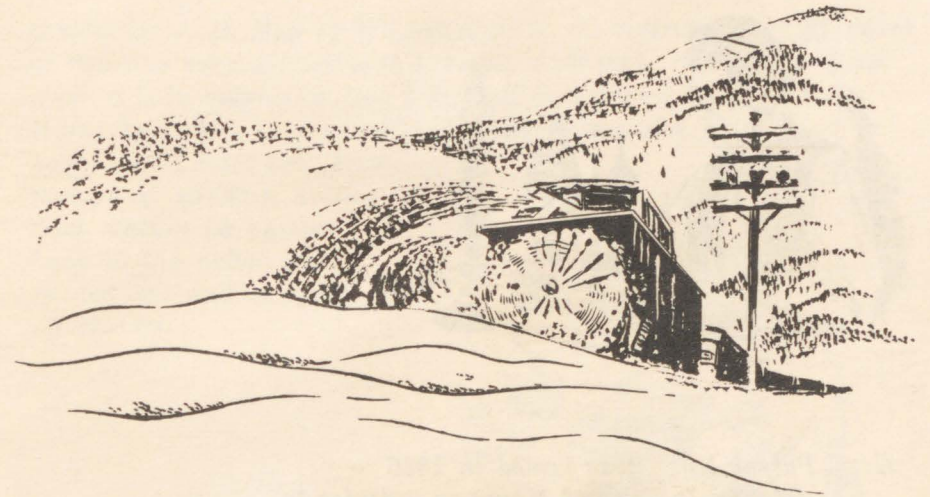
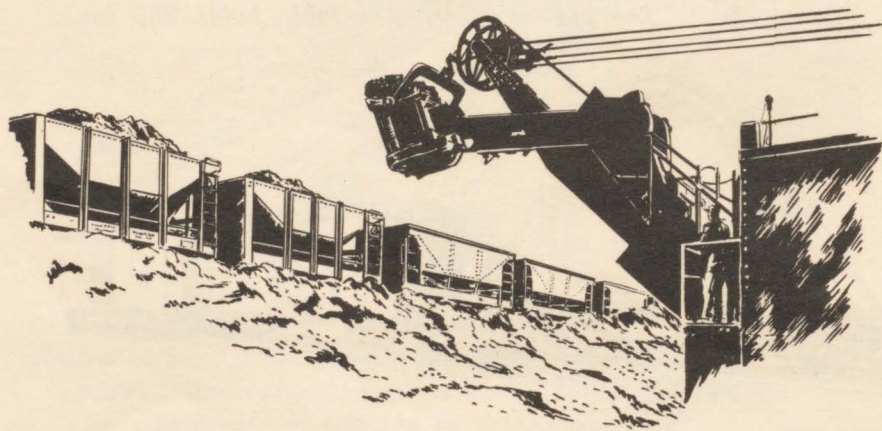
Big dipper. A steel company called upon a railroad to transport this 30-ton side wall of a huge ladle to be used for pouring molten steel. Loaded edgewise, the "package" was 10 feet wide and stood almost 16 feet above the rails. With the bottom added the ladle holds 265 tons.



*This freight car didn't know its own number.
It had different numbers on its two sides
and a third number on one end.*



*In an average year the American railroads handle
about 125 million tons of iron ore from the mines —
an average of 342,000 tons a day.*



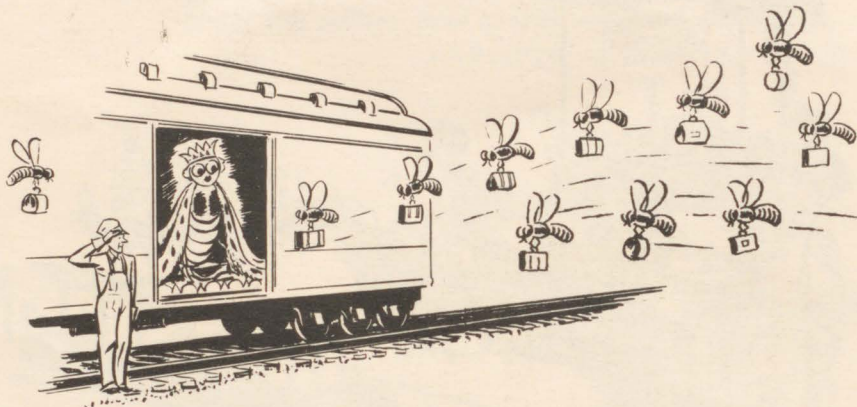
*Removing snow and ice from the tracks — keeping
the lines open and the trains running — costs the
railroads about \$30 million every winter.*



*The recent Soviet-sponsored "World Youth Festival"
in East Berlin turned out to be a flop when thousands
of the Reds hustled over to see an American model
train exhibit set up by the Mayor of West
Berlin as a counter attraction.*



*U. S. Patent No. 1 was issued in 1836
to John Ruggles of Maine on a device to
increase the power of railway locomotives
and to prevent the wheels from sliding.*

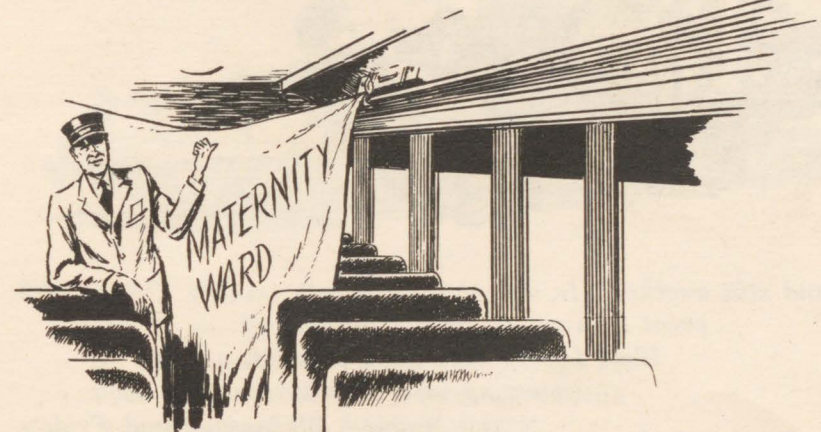


*Railroads transport millions of honey bees — south
in the autumn to escape sub-zero weather . . . back
north in the spring. Special measures are taken
by The Railway Express Agency to protect
this highly perishable commodity en route.*

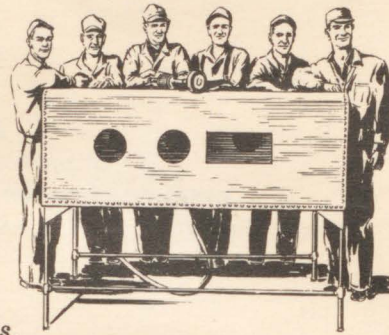
*Conductor J. D. Hay of Washington, N. J., retiring after 51 years
of railroad service (without a single accident), tells of the time
when a lady commuter told him that in a hurry to catch the
train she forgot to turn off the electric iron and feared her
house would catch fire. In a
matter of minutes, at the
next station he phoned
back to the police who
rushed out and switched
off the iron.*



*When another lady-in-a-hurry on her way
to the hospital, told him she thought her baby
might be born before the suburban train reached
Hoboken, he asked all passengers except two matrons
to vacate the car. The lady was right.*



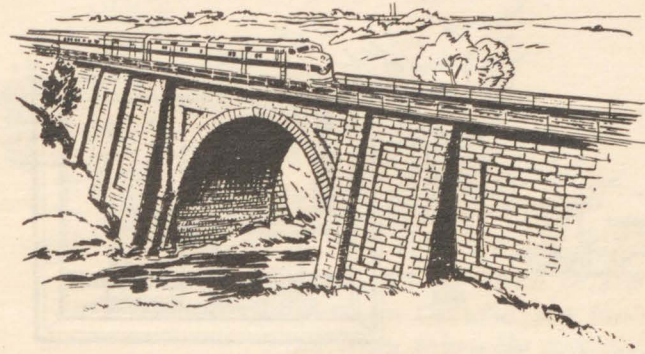
One railroad's roster of locomotive engineers includes eight Indians — members of the Seneca tribe. All have faultless records.



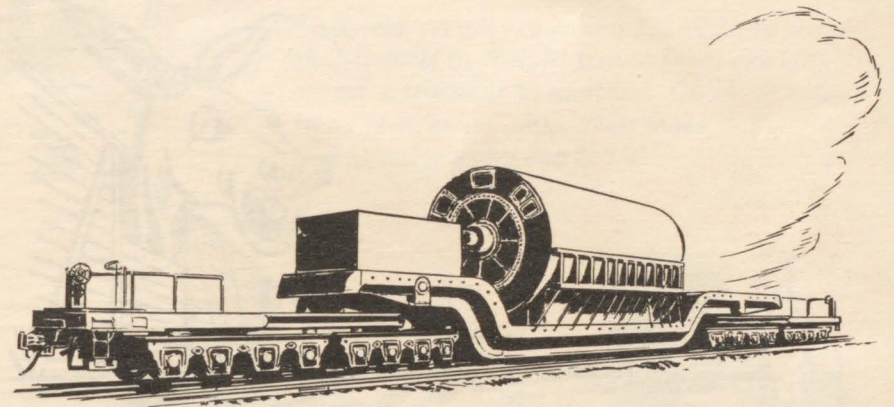
Some more "Good Indians": When a Peoria hospital needed a respirator for the treatment of polio patients, local railroad shop men promptly built an aluminum "Lung" from materials furnished by their company . . . presented it to the hospital as a gift.



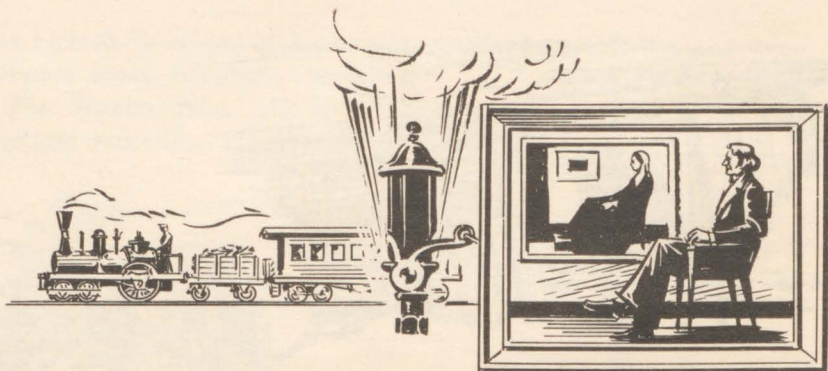
and still another: In one of the nation's great railroad stations a red cap of West Indian parentage conducts prayer meeting in a railway coach at noon every Monday, Wednesday and Friday.



The oldest railroad bridge in America — and perhaps in the world — has been used continuously since 1829 and is still in daily use . . . as good as ever after 125 years.



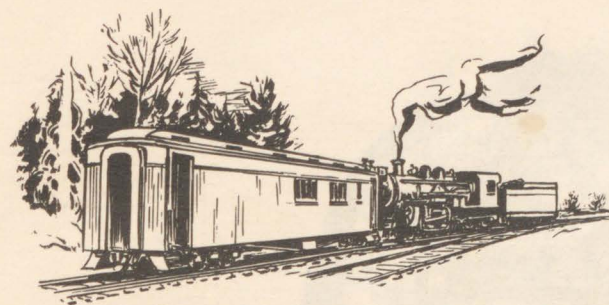
The world's biggest freight car — built by an American railroad in its own shops — is 124 feet long, has 32 wheels and can handle loads up to 500,000 pounds.



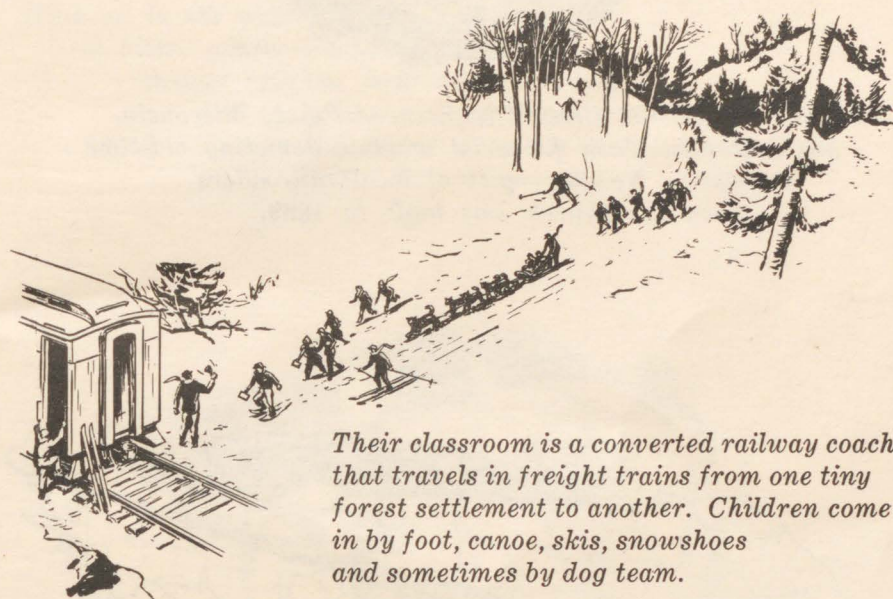
First American locomotive to be equipped with a steam whistle was built (in 1836) by George Washington Whistler — the same man whose wife was immortalized by the famous painting "Whistler's Mother" done by their son.



Back in the 90's when one of the states had a law prohibiting operation of freight trains on Sunday unless they carried livestock, resourceful railroaders would put one mule aboard each Sunday freight.

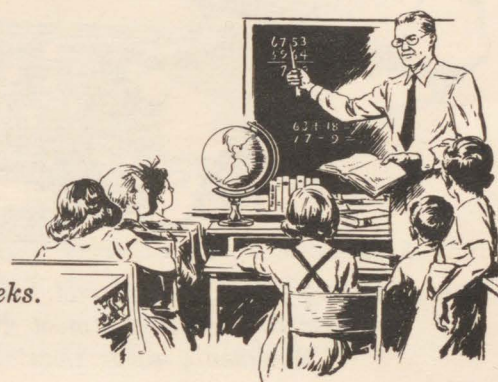


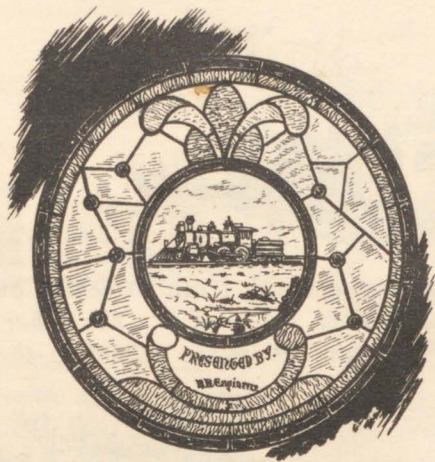
Lots of students take the train to school but, deep in the wilds of Northern Ontario, it's the other way 'round . . . the train takes the school to the students.



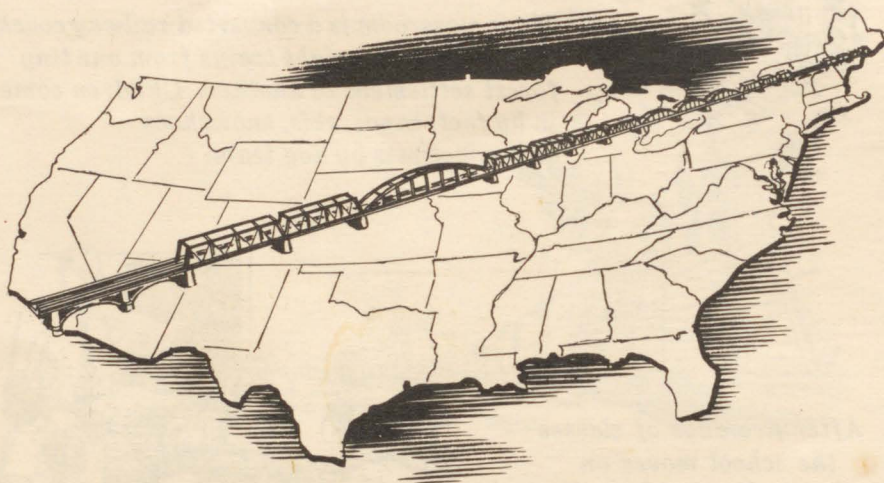
Their classroom is a converted railway coach that travels in freight trains from one tiny forest settlement to another. Children come in by foot, canoe, skis, snowshoes and sometimes by dog team.

After five days of classes the school moves on — leaving homework for the next four weeks.

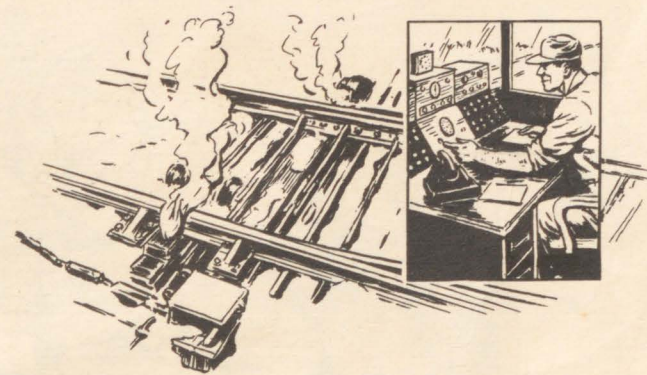




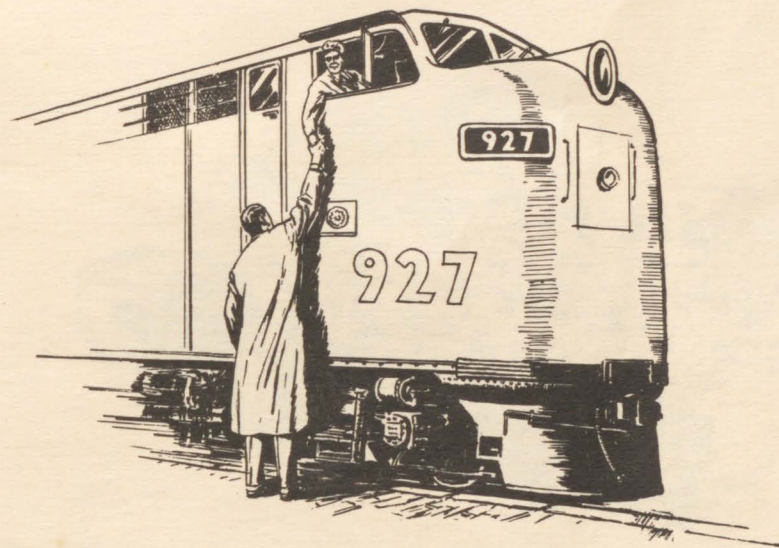
St. Paul's Methodist Church in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, has a stained glass memorial window depicting old-time locomotive No. 28 — gift of local railroaders when the church was built in 1889.



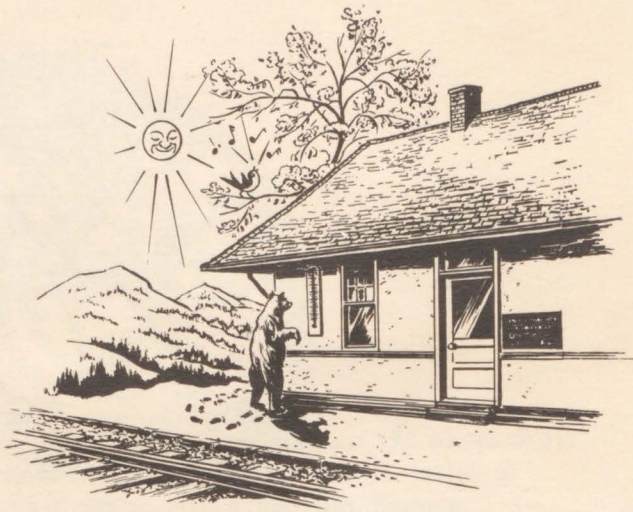
The combined length of railroad bridges in the United States is almost 4000 miles — a distance greater than the width of this continent.



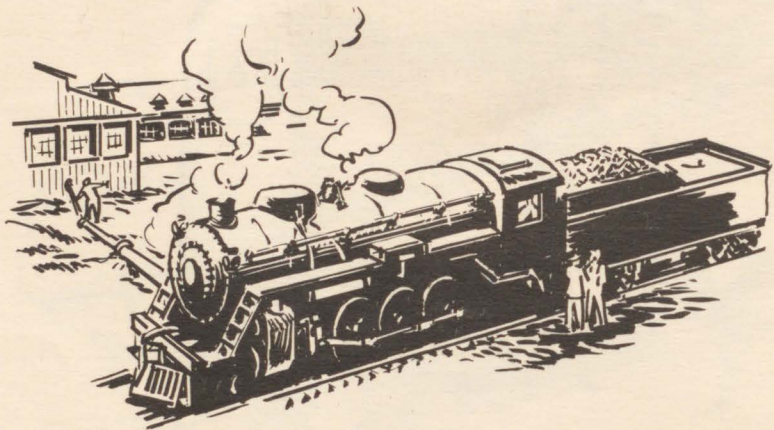
High up in the western mountains, in bitter winter weather, ice and snow around railroad switches are melted by jets of flame from gas burners ignited by the flip of a switch in the dispatcher's office 200 miles away.



When the Oregon State College basketball team traveled to Ohio, a western railroad had one of its Pullman cars altered to provide special berths nine feet long for these boys whose average height was 6'8" (the tallest one was 7'3".)



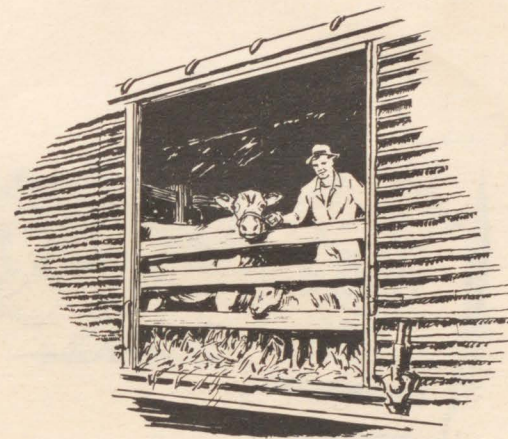
A well-known character in a town in western Canada is Brother Joe — a black bear that hibernates every winter under the platform at the railroad station.



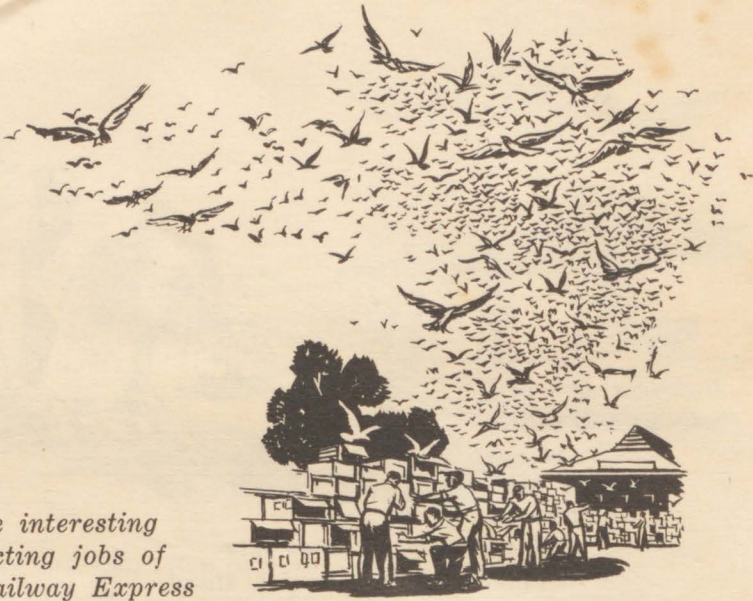
When a busted boiler threatened to stop production in a spaghetti and ravioli factory in a midwest town, an accommodating railroad saved the day by piping steam to the plant from one of its old locomotives.



Beesness as usual. George Wallace, a railroad switchman, throws his switch, undaunted by the fact that a swarm of bees has taken over the switch stand.



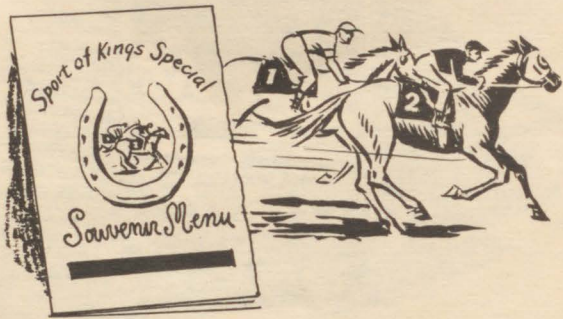
Guernsey Express. Railroads joined in providing de luxe freight service to move one of the nation's top herds of dairy cattle 3,000 miles from Oregon to Pennsylvania. Fed and milked en route, the 113 purebred cows made the trip as smooth as butter . . . increased in number by one calf born as the train sped through Nebraska.



*One of the interesting
and exacting jobs of
the Railway Express*

Agency is transporting

*large numbers of carrier racing pigeons from any
section of the country to any designated point
and releasing them simultaneously at the precise
minute and second specified by the owners.*



*Sharp-eyed diners aboard a special train
carrying race fans from Texas to Louisville for the
1954 Kentucky Derby might have noticed that the
menu was decorated with a race picture
showing No. 2 in first place and No. 1 in
second — exactly the way they finished.*

