

LOOKING BACK

Missouri Pacific Predecessors

MISSISSIPPI RIVER AND BONNE TERRE RAILWAY COMPANY

The Mississippi River and Bonne Terre Railway Co. was incorporated under the laws of Missouri on May 11, 1888. The incorporators were nominees of the St. Joseph Lead Company, which controlled the railway. The stated purpose of the new corporation was to construct and operate a railroad from Bonne Terre, St. Francois County, Missouri, to a point on the Mississippi River (Riverside) for connection with the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern.

The main line from Bonne Terre to Riverside (29.24 miles) was constructed in the winter of 1889-1890, with operation beginning on March 10, 1890. It was later extended south from Bonne Terre to Doe Run Junction, Missouri (13.9 miles, completed June 1892), and then on to Doe Run, Missouri later that year. The resulting trackage totalled 46.49 miles, originally built as narrow gauge but changed to standard during 1893-1894.

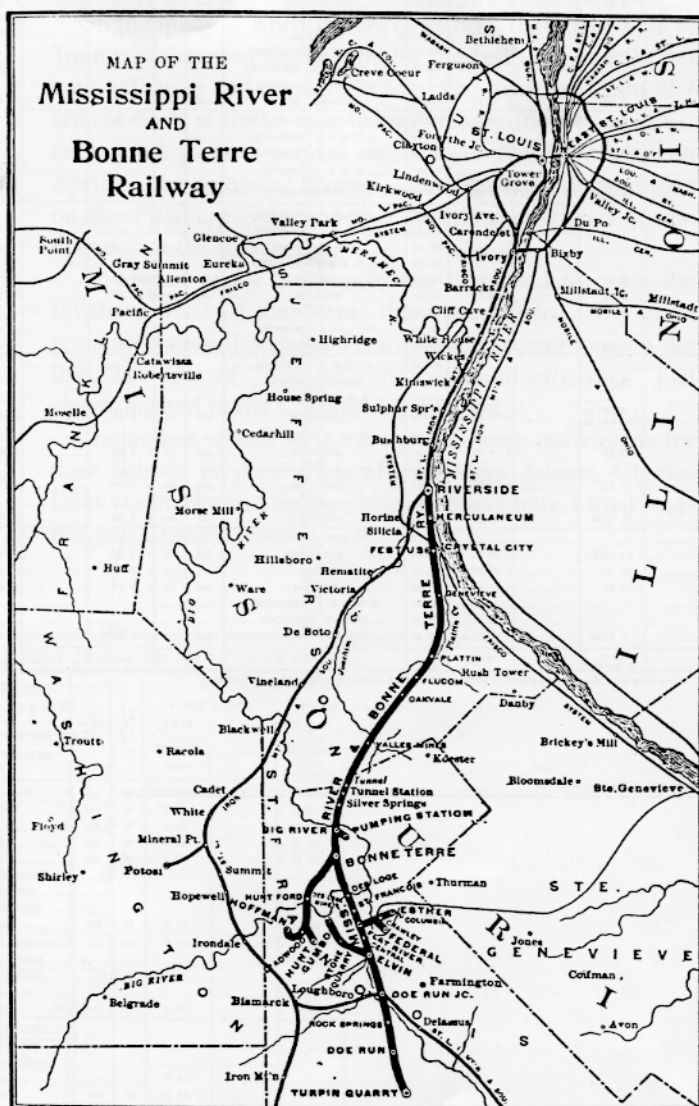
The MR&BT subsequently began construction on four branch lines: (1) the Turpin Branch from Doe Run to Turpin, Mo., 3.0 miles, 1895-1896; (2) the Hoffman Branch from Hoffman Junction to Big River, Mo., 3.18 miles, 1899 (extended to Owl Creek, 3.60 miles, 1902); (3) the Gumbo Branch from Rivermines to Mitchell Junction, Mo., 3.28 miles (built by the St. Joseph Lead Co. in 1898 and purchased by the MR&BT in 1901, extended 1.32 miles, 1906); and the Crawley Branch from Flat River to milepost 1.03, 1.03 miles (built by the St. Joseph Lead Co. in 1893 and purchased by the MR&BT in 1901; extension from milepost 1.03 past Columbia Mill to end-of-track was acquired 1908).

In 1902 the MR&BT constructed 3.50 miles of new main line south of Riverside, retiring 4.17 miles of the original line. Of the old line, 1.96 miles were utilized as siding, 0.55 miles were sold to the St. Joseph Lead Co., and 1.66 miles were abandoned. In 1910 the MR&BT purchased an electric line between Farmington and Flat River, Mo. (built in 1903) and operated it until 1926, whereupon it was sold to a group of businessmen and reorganized as the St. Francois County Railroad Co.

On July 1, 1929, the Missouri Pacific Railroad acquired controlling interest in the Mississippi River and Bonne Terre, incorporating it into the Missouri-Illinois Railroad Company. The M-I operated the MR&BT as a subsidiary until it was conveyed by deed to the M-I: the MR&BT was dissolved on Sept. 25, 1945. The Missouri-Illinois was itself merged into the Missouri Pacific on October 25, 1978.

In addition to several small pieces conveyed back to the Lead Co. around 1913, numerous portions of the old MR&BT have been abandoned over the years: Flat River to Esther, Mo., 1.11 miles, 1933; Rivermines to Gumbo, Mo., 3.28 miles, 1934; Mitchell Junction to Mitchell, Mo., 1.32 miles, 1934; in Flat River, Mo., 0.85 miles, 1934; Hoffman Junction to Leadwood, Mo., 6.90 miles, 1966; and Howe to Bonne Terre, Mo., 21.96 miles, 1969.

This old Missouri Lead Belt line certainly was one of the more colorful portions of the great Missouri Pacific system. Extracted from the MPHS Archives by Dale L. Walker, Archivist.



Poor's Manual of Railroads 1908



ON THE INBOUND

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Lloyd, an MPHS member, is writing a book on Missouri Pacific steam locomotives in Kansas. He pretty much has the information he requires for the text, but is in great need of photographs. PLEASE help Lloyd if you can! (If you have seen his books on the UP and ATSF, the present work will be of a similar format and content. — Ed.)