

# Building the Railroad to Fort Leonard Wood

by Van Beydler

It took real men to build the railway from the junction (M.P. 121.5) where the new line joined the Frisco main 2.4 miles west of Newburg to Fort Leonard Wood. The Ozark mountains presented more engineering problems than any other section of the country in the opinion of the men who built the railroad. Even with the obstacles, the job was completed in five and a half months when under normal conditions the job would have required two years.

The first grading began on Dec. 5, 1940, and the first train to make the trip from Bundy Junction, named for the civil engineer who designed and supervised the construction, to the terminus at the Fort was scheduled for early May, 1941.

More than 1,600,000 cubic yards of dirt and rock were moved to complete the 68 cuts and 68 fills with the longest cut being more than 3,100 feet and the longest fill 6,500 feet. The steepest grade was 2.26 percent and the longest grade 6.17 miles. At one place, the Ozarks had been slashed 46 feet for the deepest cut, while hills were leveled in another sector by a fill 60 feet high. Of the 19.85 miles of rail, the longest stretch was only 2,700 feet, while 70 curves were necessary because of the terrain.

Almost as rapidly as the surveyor's stakes were planted, the grading crews went to work. Dirt was borrowed from adjacent hills to fill the valleys and vales, while giant scoops and shovels ate into the sides of the hills to level them. As fast as the dirt was moved into the proper place, grading crews and "bulldogs" leveled the new roadbed. Heavy rollers with cleats followed to pack the dirt, saving weeks of time normally required to settle fills. In back of the graders came work crews with ties and rails and behind them were the work trains shuttling back and forth on the newly laid track to bring up more ties, rail and chat for the roadbed. The rail used was 110 pound type, (rail is rated at pounds per three foot section), the same size used on the Frisco mainline at the time. As fast as the track was spiked to the ties, gangs worked packing the chat and making the roadbed suitable for the loads to come when men and machinery of war began to move into the Fort.

While the roadbed was being built from Bundy Junction to the Fort, warehouses on the reservation were springing up at the rate of a completed warehouse every six days. Along the rows of warehouses, one could watch them being completed. At the side of the first row, the foundations were being dug, at the next concrete was being poured, at the third, the side and framework were shooting skyward, at

the fourth, the roofing was being placed and at the last in the row the electricians and plumbers were hard at work putting in the finishing touches. Alongside these warehouses, the railroad construction gangs were laying track and putting in the switches. As far as one could see, the railroad was growing. A work train puffed along joining in the sound of hammers driving spikes. Despite the speed with which everything moved and the natural hazards of such a big job, and of the adverse weather conditions, the casualties on the spectacular engineering feat were remarkably few.

Two steel bridges were built. One adjacent to Bundy Junction crossing the Little Piney River. The other bridge, with steel spans of 304 feet and trestle approaches of 1,458 feet, cross the Big Piney River near Devil's Elbow. In addition to these bridges, 15 timber trestles were built where fills were impractical.

The railroad was built at a cost of \$2,500,000 with every modern improvement in railroad engineering at the time including its own electrically operated signal system. R.F. Bundy, chief engineer, stated the problems confronted by the over 2,800 employees building the line on this project were comparable to building more than 20 miles in the heart of the Rockies. Bundy called it, "One of the most spectacular engineering feats in the United States. It will probably be rated the greatest engineering project ever completed in Missouri." Major Frank Reed, Jr., construction quartermaster, was in charge of the entire Fort Leonard Wood project. Col. F.G. Jonah, assistant to the trustee and chief engineer for the Frisco Railroad, was consulting engineer of the railroad project.

When placed in operation, the line was operated by the United States Government and traffic was limited to the handling of U.S. troops and government property. Other traffic to the Fort was offered by truck and bus service through the Frisco Transportation Company from the depot in Newburg.



FRISCO TRANSPORTATION COMPANY  
A subsidiary of the Frisco Transportation Company, Inc. provides bus service between Newburg, Mo. and Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo. on the route between Newburg, Mo. and Ft. Leonard Wood, Mo.

ROLLA, NEWBURG AND FT. LEONARD WOOD

Rolla		Newburg		Ft. Leonard Wood	
Day	Night	Day	Night	Day	Night
7:00	8:00	8:00	9:00	9:00	10:00
8:00	9:00	9:00	10:00	10:00	11:00
9:00	10:00	10:00	11:00	11:00	12:00
10:00	11:00	11:00	12:00	12:00	1:00
11:00	12:00	12:00	1:00	1:00	2:00
12:00	1:00	1:00	2:00	2:00	3:00
1:00	2:00	2:00	3:00	3:00	4:00
2:00	3:00	3:00	4:00	4:00	5:00
3:00	4:00	4:00	5:00	5:00	6:00
4:00	5:00	5:00	6:00	6:00	7:00
5:00	6:00	6:00	7:00	7:00	8:00
6:00	7:00	7:00	8:00	8:00	9:00
7:00	8:00	8:00	9:00	9:00	10:00
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6:00	7:00	7:00	8:00	8:00	9:00
7:00	8:00	8:00	9:00	9:00	10:00
8:00	9:00	9:00	10:00	10:00	11:00
9:00	10:00	10:00	11:00	11:00	12:00
10:00	11:00	11:00	12:00	12:00	1:00
11:00	12:00	12:00	1:00	1:00	2:00
12:00	1:00	1:00	2:00	2:00	3:00

F.T.C. Bus Schedule, March, 1942

## THE General Wood

New Passenger Train

between ST. LOUIS and SPRINGFIELD, MO.

Delightful daylight service free from the annoyances and hazards of congested highways.

- In addition to serving the local territory, this train provides convenient daylight service for passengers destined to and from Fort Leonard Wood, new training center of the Seventh Corps Area adjacent to Newburg, Mo., and the proposed O'Reilly Army Hospital at Springfield, Mo.
- The new train has modern air-conditioned coaches, and a comfortable coach-lounge, also air-conditioned. . . . Meals are served in this car at the popular Snack Car prices.
- Service between Rolla, Newburg and Fort Leonard Wood is provided by buses of the Frisco Transportation Company; for schedules, see Table 1, Page 2.

Public Timetable advertisement, Nov. 1941

In May, 1941, in conjunction with the re-opening of Ft. Leonard Wood and the building of the Ft. Leonard Wood Branch, the Frisco inaugurated the General Wood passenger service between St. Louis and Springfield.

When first placed in service, the train operated as No. 5 southbound and No. 6 northbound and featured coach and coach-lounge accommodations. The 240-mile trip took 6 hours and 20 minutes.

In June, 1942, the General Wood service was reduced to daily trains between St. Louis and Newburg. In February, 1945, the Wood's designation was changed to Nos. 11 and 12, and in the fall of 1946, the service was discontinued.

# James L. Thomas

## ATTORNEY AT LAW

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