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OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER of the Military Railroad Society

theRAILHEAD

Any opinions expressed herein are those of author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Military Railroad Society



Welcome to The Railhead

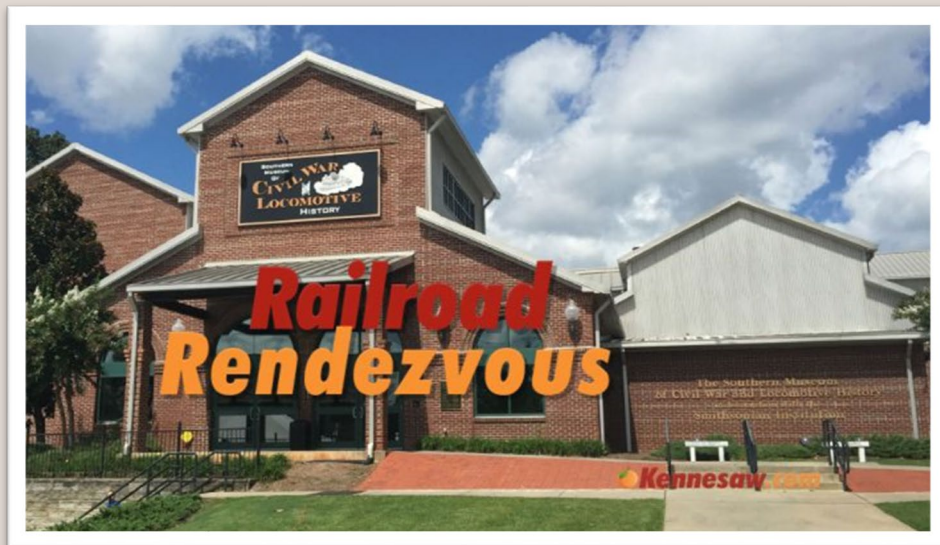
Hello to all our members, and welcome to the
Winter Edition, Issue 9 of the Railhead.

If you would like to contribute to future issues,
please let us know by the 10th of the month
before the next edition. We would love to have
some help with production of The Railhead.
You can contact us, or send articles/submission
ideas to info@armysteam.com.

Happy Reading!



UPCOMING EVENT



In addition to the day's special events, visitors can explore the Museum's permanent exhibits to learn about the Great Locomotive Chase, one of the Civil War's most thrilling episodes. The Museum also includes a full-scale replica of The Glover Machine Works, a locomotive factory in nearby Marietta that helped rebuild the South after the war.

The Museum is located at 2829 Cherokee Street in downtown Kennesaw (exit 273 on Interstate 75).

Date:

Saturday, July 25, 2026 from 9:30 am to 5 pm.

Address:

Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History
2829 Cherokee Street
Kennesaw, GA 30144

For more information, please call 770-427-2117 (ext.) 3058 or visit southernmuseum.org

M.R.S. TREASURY REPORT

The donations to the M.R.S. is truly fantastic, seeing to all-in-one place. We believe it will prepare us to meet our goals being discussed within the organization. It is important to remember supporting Non-Profits is crucial! They play an important roll in our community and solid backing can greatly increase the efforts in preserving our Military history.

Our main goal has always been to preserve, protect and educate on all items Military Rail.

Our hope is to keep these items form being thrown away or damaged beyond repair. Many still have a lot of use, they just need to be rescued. By taking the time to restore and preserve these artifacts, we can ensure that they are not only saved

from becoming scrap, but can also be enjoyed and appreciated for generations to come. Bringing a piece of the past back to use, allows us to learn, appreciate and celebrate our shared history of our Military.

We have many exciting plans for the future, some of which cannot be shared just yet. However, we want you to know that we will always keep looking for artifacts that need assistance. Out fundraising efforts are becoming more organized and campaigns will be created. Together, we can make a real difference in preserving and protecting important pieces of history. Thank you for being a part of this journey with us! You are making a great impact! Cheers to the Future!

Aimee

Treasurer Protem



Little
Green
Light

Fundraising Totals

Year Month

	2024	2025	2026
Gifts	15 / \$671.36	51 / \$26,957.36	22 / \$1,079.51
In Kind	1 / \$500	3 / \$901.36	0 / \$0
Other Income	0 / \$0	0 / \$0	0 / \$0
Pledges	0 / \$0	0 / \$0	0 / \$0
Installments	0 / \$0	0 / \$0	0 / \$0

Last updated: 2026-07-12 at 01:19 PM

Stewardship Opportunities

Steward: All

Top donors with no gifts or pledges this fiscal year	34 constituents
Top donors with limited stewardship this fiscal year	37 constituents
LYBUNTs (gave last year but not this)	23 constituents
SYBUNTs (gave some year but not this)	32 constituents
Gifts not marked as acknowledged in LGL	3 gifts

Last updated: 2026-07-12 at 05:54 AM

OPERATIONS UPDATE: "MAKING THE SAUSAGE"

Open Board meeting discussion Notes for Members 8 July 2026 7pm est-830pm

Top items being worked on in the Background: The Sausage

- Ft. Eustis: The situation and environment have changing. The new base command has almost completed its analysis of the situation and is open to the re-introduction of the Sgt. Santa train. A meeting with the command team will be scheduled in the very near future & information will be brought to the board at a later date.
- Sgt. Santa Operations at Fort Hood were discussed. Paperwork is still working its way through the system. Board Member Gary Glick has retired from Fort Hood, however is still working on, Sgt Santa. Further discussion to be held at a later date as the paperwork is completed.
- Assuming operations at Fort Lennard Wood and using it for car storage is also "Running the Gauntlet" of paperwork and approvals with the Base Command.
- Sgt. Santa at Bluegrass, paperwork is in progress more to follow.
- Michael Gresham has sent proposals for leasing cars for the 2027 Sgt Santa at Ft's Eustis and Hood. A meeting with the board is set of the weekend of 18/19 July for discussions on the above proposals. It was reported the ODC coach cars 706 & 1006 are still leased to the MRS and are in need of repairs due to vandalism that occurred in the NS Richmond Yard. The ODC has some of the replacement parts but need manpower to do the repairs. It was decided that repair work would be completed in ODC's Hallsboro Yard as all needed equipment is there.
- Additional discussion was held on when and type of work that is required. Work weekends will be decided on after the meeting with Mr. Gresham.
- Discussion was also held on obtaining and stationing cars at different locations around the Country.
- The next board members scheduled meeting is on 12 Aug 2026 at 1900 hours EDT.

Artifact of The Quarter:

Ronson Whirlwind Lighter circa late 1940s early 50s



714th Railway Operating Battalion. "Through at Any Cost"



The 714th Railway Battalion was originally constituted on October 18, 1927. However, its official induction and activation for active duty occurred on February 21, 1941, when it was redesignated as the 714th Engineer Battalion (Railway Operating) due to the impending U.S. entry into World War II.

Creation: Redesignated as the 714th Engineer Railway Operating Battalion (ROB) on April 1, 1942, and trained at Camp Claiborne, Louisiana. **Deployment:** Shipped to Alaska in 1943 to bolster crucial logistical supply lines. **Infrastructure:** Helped construct the Whittier cut-off and 31 miles of branch lines from Fairbanks to nearby airbases. **Operations:** Handled everything from track repair to running rotary snow plows and steam locomotives to ensure troop and cargo movements. **Post-War:** Remained active long after WWII, eventually becoming the last active railway battalion in the US Army until its deactivation in 1972.

THE EVOLUTION OF MILITARY LIGHTERS

- **World War I (Trench Art):** Soldiers began fashioning functional pocket lighters out of spent brass artillery shell casings and discarded trench debris. Brands like IMCO (an Austrian company) also became popular among early soldiers for their windproof designs.
- **World War II (The Zippo Boom):** Seeking a reliable, one-handed lighter, troops adopted the Zippo, which was invented in 1932 by George G. Blaisdell in Bradford, Pennsylvania. When the U.S. entered the war, Zippo dedicated its entire production to the military. Because brass was diverted to the war effort, lighters were made of steel and finished with a durable, textured "black crackle" paint to prevent dangerous light reflections in the dark. These rugged lighters were used for everything from lighting cigarettes to warming cans of rations.
- **The Vietnam War (Custom Canvas):** During the Vietnam War, GIs took personalization to a new level. Soldiers frequently visited local craftsmen to engrave their Zippos with unit crests, map outlines of Vietnam, rock 'n' roll lyrics, and anti-war or dark humor slogans. Some specialized units and flamethrower tanks even earned the nickname "Zippo Squads" and "Zippo Tracks".
- **Everyday Utility:** Beyond starting fires, lighters were essential tactical gear used to heat C-rations, read maps at night, signal fellow soldiers, check for tripwires, and even burn off loose threads on paracord or uniform webbing.

Today, while modern survival matches and electronic ignitions have replaced lighters as official issue equipment, vintage military-engraved lighters remain highly coveted collectibles.

ARTICLE OF INTEREST

Carl Freshour
714th Railway Operating Battalion
1943-1945

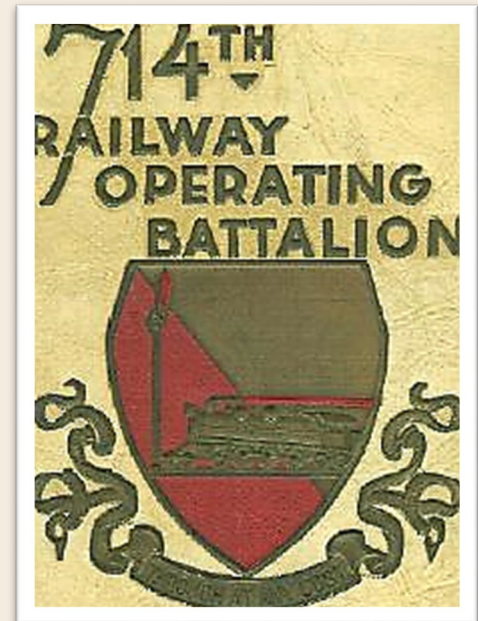
During World War II, the Alaska Railroad was used by the army to transport military personnel, supplies, and construction materials between Seward, Whittier, Anchorage, and Fairbanks. To facilitate these activities and to provide security for railroad operations the 714th Railway Operating Battalion was assigned to operate the railroad in May of 1943 in cooperation with civilian railroad personnel. In addition to its rail activities, the Alaska Railroad also operated a river line between the railhead at Nenana and Marshall on the Lower Yukon, and modernized and operated the Eska Coal Mines north of Anchorage in order to adequately supply the coal needs of the army and the railroad during the war. In addition, the 1,150 men of the Battalion helped construct the Whittier cut-off and 31 miles of branch lines from Fairbanks to nearby air bases. The army operation ended in May, 1945.

Carl Freshour was assigned to the 714th Railway Operating Battalion from March of 1943 until January of 1945. He was stationed at Anchorage for twenty two months and his base was just west of where the old roundhouse was located. He was a conductor, promoted by the Alaska Railroad in 1943. He worked just about every place on the line and also put in many hours on snow plow crews in the winter of 1943/1944. The following is an abbreviated version of his experiences.

Snow Service

"We were three days plowing out the snow with the snow removal train. Counting both the train and engine crews there were two engine crews and two conductor's for the rotary snow plow, four engine crews for the steam engines for power, and two train crews for a total of fourteen. Also there were a few maintenance of way men with us. We each worked 12 hour shifts without stopping. The temperatures were 40 degrees below zero."

"There was a bunk car for sleeping, cook's car (where we ate our meals), two locomotives, a caboose and a rotary snow plow. It was staffed by an engineer, a fireman and a conductor, besides two complete train and engine crews. Sometimes when we hit real hard plowing, we would cut off from the train and just take the two steam engines and rotary to buck out the drifts. In real tough going where it had drifted in real hard, we would back up quite a distance and rev up the rotary wide open with the engines going ahead full force and hit the drifts. It was something like a hydraulic jack slowly coming to a stop and we immediately reversed the engines to get back out before the snow settled in around the rotary and engines. Sometimes we did not get back out of the drifts fast enough and got stuck. Then it was "man the shovels" and dig out by hand."





This image features a **FS Class 835 shunter locomotive** requisitioned by the U.S. Army Military Railway Service.

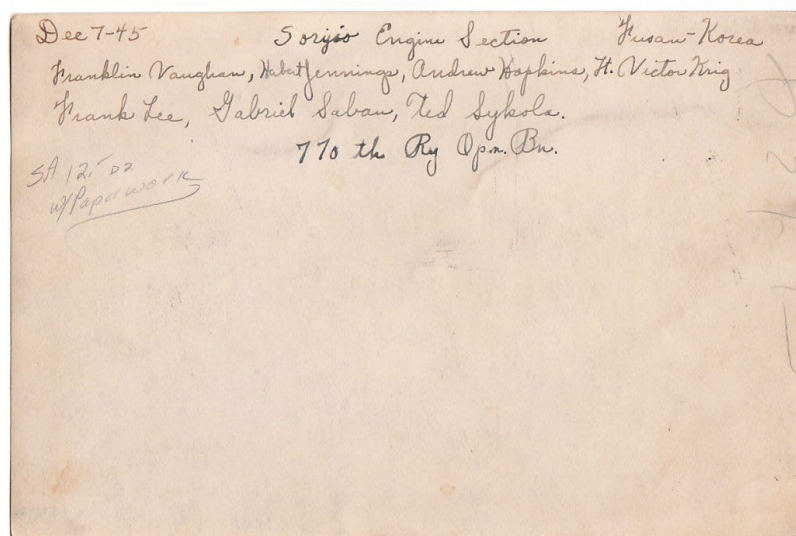
It was nicknamed the "**General Mark Clark Special**" and operated in Italy during 1943.

The train was used for operations in rail yards, specifically noted in Naples in November 1943.

This engine was part of a broader effort to utilize salvaged local Italian equipment for military needs during the war.



770th Railway Operating Battalion
Pusan Korea 1945



NEW MEMBERSHIP BRACKETS Select any of these great options upon renewal as well

Military Railroad Society Memberships

Specialist \$ 3 Every month AKA: E-4 Mafia Select Quarterly Newsletter with M.R.S. Updates Recognition on our Website Donor Page Access Volunteer Opportunities Including Work Weekends	Corporal \$ 5 Every month Now the Battle Begins Select All the Benefits of the Specialist...but more recognition! Work Weekends and Skills Training with Project Leaders Early Access to Our Annual Impact Report	Sergeant \$ 8 Every month Hey Sarge! Select All the Benefits of Corporal...but more! Thank you Certificate From the Board of Directors Access to Semi-Annual Meeting with the BoD	Captain \$ 11 Every month Official Chaos Coordinator Select Same Benefits as Sergeant...but not a Sergeant! Official M.R.S. Coffee Mug (First year only) Voting rights at Virtual Meeting with BoD Special Recognition at our Annual Donor Dinner Exclusive Access to behind the scenes Tour of projects	Major \$ 15 Every month Following the Rules, but with style! Select Same Benefits as Captain...but now you are more awesome! Personalized Certificate of Recognition from the M.R.S. Invitation to a Quarterly Virtual Meeting with the BoD	Colonel \$ 20 Every month Balance is Everything Select All the Benefits of a Captain...but with bragging rights! Exclusive Invitation Strategic Planning Meeting (Annual) Opportunity to Name a Project Initiative	General \$ 25 Every month Things, All the things! Select All the benefits of Colonel, but ALL the bragging rights! VIP Access to all Events Personalized Plaque in Recognition of your Generosity
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Donations can be made at armysteam.com



As you know, Narrow Gauge 595 Engine was donated to Military Railroad Society Spring of '24 and travelled from Wisconsin, making the journey to the new location in Virginia. Summer of '24. Summer was productive with replacement of seats, hydraulic hoses, wiring and fuel lines. However, after some more discovery, a lot more is needed until 595 is ready to roll again. 595 started work in Badger Army Ammunition Plant in Wisconsin. These little engines were used to move large flat cars and other supplies through the yard to prep for loading.

During World War II, Badger was managed by Hercules Powder Company. It produced rocket propellant, smokeless powder, and E.C. powder. Smokeless powder had been patented a decade before World War II by DuPont and Hercules Powder Company had the rights to make it at Badger. E.C. Powder was used in hand grenades, tear gas canisters, and blank cartridges. Badger also produced acid and oleum which are necessary for the production of these forms of ammunition. The acid and oleum produced at Badger were used both on site and at other Army ammunition plants in the area.

On 10 May 1943, the first train load of finished product left Badger; 60,000 pounds of smokeless powder was sent to the Twin Cities Ordnance Plant in Minnesota where it was used in M-1 rifle cartridges.

The Badger Ammunition Plant has been decommissioned. Only a few of these engines still existence today. To be a part of the restoration, we have started a go fund me specifically for this restoration. Visit armysteam.com. Updates will be announced on social media.

MAKE CONTRIBUTIONS

NOW ACCEPTING NOMINATIONS FOR OPEN BOD POSITIONS

- **TREASURER**
- **1 SLOT FOR EXECUTIVE B.O.D.**

If you would like to contribute to the newsletter,
please email us at info@armysteam.com

To support efforts of MRS, visit armysteam.com



techsoup

Contact us at info.armysteam@gmail.com