



Hoodlum Update

By Tom Parker

Following the publication of the article about the IC's "Hoodlum" in the November 2, 2007, Commercial Appeal and the December, 2007, Buff, I decided to follow the story up with some of my fellow members of the Memphis Chapter of the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees. While most were too young to recall, I did manage to find a couple of members that were able to provide some additional information. The first comment I got was "They used to have some whale of a card games on there!"

According to retired General Yardmaster Charles Dowdy, the "Hoodlum" made its last run on October 31, 1955. He recalls because it was right after he "hired out" on the railroad.

Retired machinist A. J Grandi recalls that before World War II, the "Hoodlum" consisted of a 1000 series 4-6-2 "Pacific" locomotive, a box car equipped with steps at the doorway and benches along the walls for the "passengers" and a caboose. Occasionally an 8000 series 2-8-4 Lima fresh out of the shop following repairs would be road tested on the "Hoodlum" before being released back

into service. The "Hoodlum" ran once an hour between South Yard and Johnston Yard and made stops at Trigg Avenue and Mallory Avenue. Grandi lived in the area around McMamore and Third and would ride his bicycle to South Yard and leave his bike under the McMamore viaduct and catch the "Hoodlum" to Johnston Yard. It was only after WWII that they started using a passenger coach instead of the boxcar, he recalls. The car was an ordinary heavyweight coach painted in typical Pullman green. It was probably only the surplus of passenger equipment after the war that afforded the employees such an upgrade.

The GE 44 Ton 9275 replaced the steam engines in 1947 and was used until the "Hoodlum"'s last run in 1955 and it was used for a time as a "mule" at the Johnston Roundhouse shuffling the steam engines around.

While no one knows for sure, it's probable the "Hoodlum" started running in the early 1900's, almost assuredly by 1914 when the Johnston Roundhouse was built. Johnston Yard was way out in the country back then and there was little or no public transportation. The average person didn't own an automobile and the railroad's pool of skilled shop employees such as machinists, steamfitters, blacksmiths and boilermakers would have all been located within walking distance of the Memphis Roundhouse at South Yard.

Like many other passenger trains, the "Hoodlum" was killed by the automobile. When it was abolished, employees were given an allowance in their paycheck as compensation for driving their cars to work and messengers were provided with company vehicles to handle the company mail.