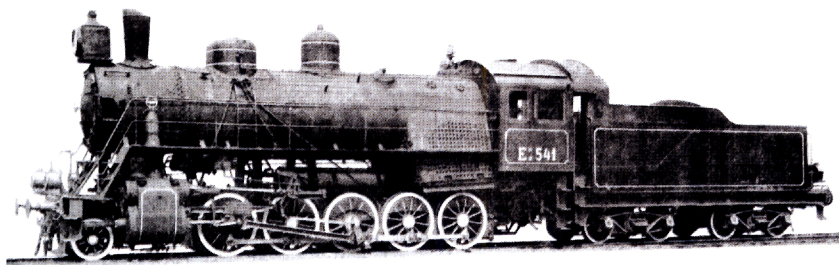

FROM

RUSSIAN ORPHAN

TO

AMERICAN ★ CITIZEN ★

BY JEFF TERRY/PHOTOS AS NOTED



FRISCO 2-10-0 No. 1630 IS ONE OF the signature pieces at the Illinois Railway Museum in Union, Ill. Restored in the mid-1970s, it's a crowd favorite and frequently pulls trains on the museum's five-mile mainline. You may think it seems out of place heading up a string of day coaches, and with its ten drive wheels, tall steam dome, and pilot-mounted air compressor you wouldn't be far off the mark; it certainly appears more like a utilitarian workhorse than a passenger engine. But looks can be deceiving. "Frisco, like many American railroads, used this locomotive to haul passengers as well as freight," an IRM conductor told a group of visitors, myself included, last summer. He pointed out that while Frisco often utilized the 1630 and its sisters to pull branchline freights, the

coach train it hauls today is reminiscent of the consists it wheeled in the early 1950s when it worked between Kansas City and Springfield, Mo.

If plans had gone as intended, the 1630 never would have pulled trains on American soil. It sports two Baldwin builder's plates, one in English, the other in Cyrillic. That's because 1630 is deeply rooted to a country halfway around the globe — Russia. It and other members of its class were built in the U.S. for the Imperial Russian State Railways, but many never made the trip overseas; the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 left 200 stranded stateside. Not willing to let perfectly good locomotives sit idle once the U.S. entered World War I, they were appropriated by the government and leased to power-short railroads. They gave excellent service, and

many continued in use for 30 years or more before being retired.

Railways of Russia

At the beginning of 1915, Russia's railroads were in a state of crisis. The previous year Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand had been assassinated in Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist, and by August 1914 much of Europe had been plunged into the "Great War," which pitted Austria-Hungary, Germany, and the Ottoman Empire against Serbia and its allies Russia, France, and Great Britain.

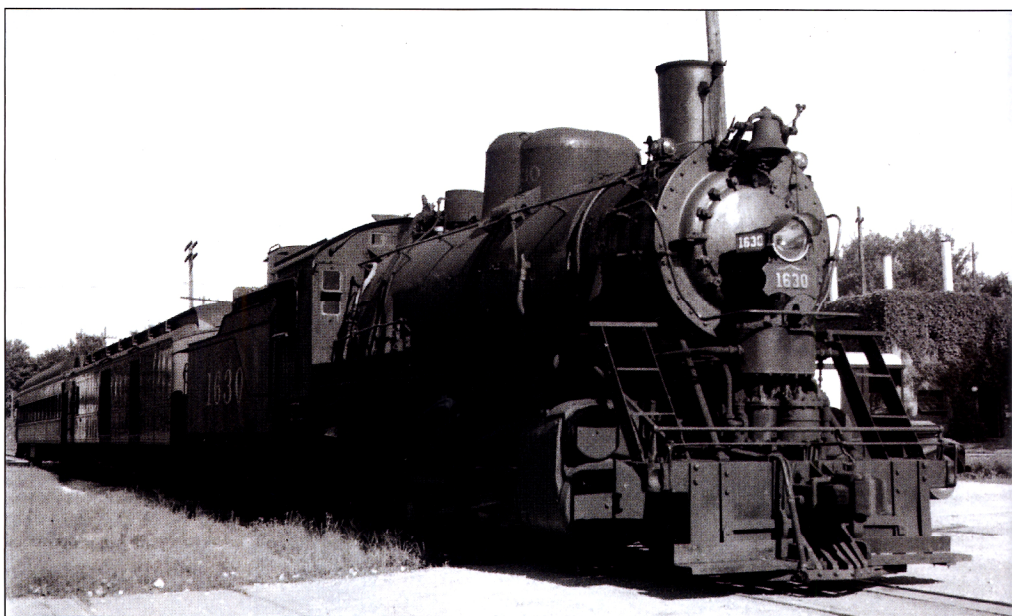
When the war began, Russia was ruled by the tsar. The country boasted an extensive railway system with nearly 44,000 miles of track, the majority of it five-foot-gauge, but much of its infrastructure was in disrepair. During the previous decade several private rail

OPPOSITE: The face of Illinois Railway Museum's Frisco 2-10-0 No. 1630. **JEFF TERRY PHOTO** **ABOVE:** This photo of a Baldwin-built Russian 2-10-0 appeared in the October 1917 edition of *Railway Age Gazette*. It illustrates well the appearance of the Decapods before they were stranded in America and rebuilt by the USRA. **AUTHOR'S COLLECTION**



ABOVE: Frisco No. 1626, configured as an oil burner, is at Fort Smith, Ark., on October 2, 1950. In only a year's time all but two SLSF "Bolsheviks" would be cold, but No. 1626 still appears clean and well maintained even at this late date. CHARLES WINTERS PHOTO; DON WIRTH COLLECTION

RIGHT: Frisco 1630 is in charge of the High Line passenger train, No. 21, at Harrisonville, Mo., in the summer of 1951. Train Nos. 20 and 21 ran 195 miles between Kansas City and Springfield on what was SLSF's secondary route between those two cities. By November, the locomotive will be sold to Eagle-Picher Mining and begin a new life in Oklahoma. DON WIRTH COLLECTION



lines, initially backed by the government, had defaulted on their loans. The state had assumed control to keep them running but was forced to cut costs — including regular maintenance — in order to make them profitable.

Stressed by ever-increasing wartime traffic, Russia's railway situation became critical once Germany blocked the allies from using the Baltic Sea. With its shipping lanes cut off, there were food shortages and one of Russia's most needed commodities — coal — had to be hauled some 1,400 miles by rail from the mines in the south to the industrial complex at Petrograd. The existing railway system was not equipped to handle the extra traffic. To make matters worse, Kolomna Locomotive Works, Russia's primary supplier of motive power, was severely hampered by a shortage of raw materials and could not keep up with demand.

To help alleviate this situation, in June 1915, the Russian Railway Mission

was established to obtain rail, locomotives, and rolling stock. It was headed by Alphonse I. Lipetz, chief of the Locomotive Division of the Railway Division of the Russian Ministry on Ways of Communication (the government branch that supervised the operation of Russia's railroads). The first order of business was to obtain new locomotives from companies in North America, as the U.S. was one of the only industrialized nations not yet in the war that had both the ability and the materials to do the job. Baldwin Locomotive Works was eager to secure the work, as it had been operating at a reduced capacity. The company went so far as to send Samuel Vauclain and a contingent to Russia to negotiate with the tsar.

A New Locomotive

When war broke out, the standard Russian freight power was hefty 0-8-0s, supplemented by a fleet of cross-compound 2-8-0s and hulking 0-10-0s. Something bigger was needed; Lipetz's specifications for the country's new "standard fast heavy freight engine" called for one that could haul 1,300 metric tons up a 0.8 percent grade at 8-10 m.p.h., but with a loading not exceeding 35,300 pounds per driving axle.

After much research, the Russian Mission settled upon the 2-10-0 design, although members argued for purchasing additional 0-10-0s, mainly because they were already familiar to Russian train crews. However, Lipetz and his

peers realized that a Decapod, because it spread its weight evenly across ten drive wheels and had a lead truck to better guide it down the rails, had the required power but would tread lightly over rough trackage — certainly preferable due to the deteriorated condition of the Russian rail system. Additionally, Decapods would fit onto existing turntables, and their low axle loading would allow them to use nearly all bridges.

In June 1915, orders for 400 new 2-10-0 locomotives were cabled to North America. Baldwin would supply 250 engines (designated class Еф); Alco's Schenectady Works would build 100 (class Ес); and Canadian Locomotive Company would field 50 (class Ек). Because they were so urgently needed, the design of these 2-10-0s, beyond the basic specifications supplied, was left up to the whims of the manufacturers.

It took four months to design, build, and complete the first Decapods from Alco and Baldwin. "The orders were placed in the latter part of June, and the first of the locomotives were ready for shipment soon after the middle of

August," *Railway Age Gazette* reported in September 1915. What resulted was a machine built along American lines with very little Russian influence. The first group sported U.S.-style bar frames rather than European-style plate frames, but deviated from American practice with the use of copper fireboxes and extended piston rods. Air brakes of Russian design, manufactured by Westinghouse in Petrograd, were added once they arrived in Vladivostok. According to *Railway Mechanical Engineer*, 365 Decapods were completed and shipped by the end of 1915.

Refining the Design

Despite the haste of their construction, the new engines proved more than adequate. "After a series of very thorough tests had been made in Russia with the first lot of locomotives, the type itself was found to be quite satisfactory," Lipetz wrote in the February 1922 issue of *The Railway Engineer*. But even as the 2-10-0s entered service, the total operating locomotives in Russia continued to decline at an alarming rate. Instead

of repairing motive power, railway mechanics were often sent to fight on the front lines. The results were predictable; in 1914, Russia had boasted 20,000 functioning locomotives, but two years later that figure had dropped to 17,000.

In late 1915, Lipetz and members of the Mission were sent to the U.S. to supervise the design and construction of 475 additional 2-10-0s, designated as Class Ел, that were to be fabricated by Baldwin and Alco. Lipetz was an excellent choice to oversee this task; besides being the head of the Ministry's locomotive division, he was also Russia's premiere railway designer. By age 21, he had already designed a locomotive and was a professor at a technical university.

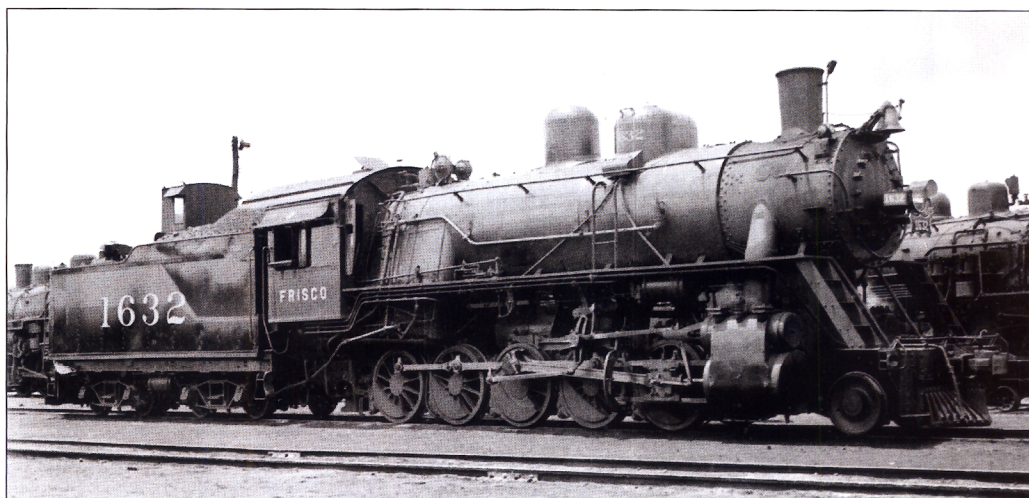
Under Lipetz's guidance the new class Ел 2-10-0s, unlike the first order, were built to strict Russian standards. They weighed 210,000 pounds and were fitted with 25"x28" cylinders and 52" drivers. Certain details were refined to suit the tastes of the Imperial Russian State Railways, but the class also included design elements borrowed from U.S. locomotives, including the bar frames from the first group. However, instead of using copper fireboxes, which had proven problematic, steel fireboxes were specified. (Lipetz investigated using Belpaire fireboxes, as they had been used on other Russian steam locomotives, but found that they added too much weight.) Additionally, while the earlier 2-10-0s had shallow fireboxes, the redesigned 2-10-0s featured a large grate area that was designed to efficiently burn low-grade coal.

An enclosed cab with a tender hood and shelter screen, screw couplers, and European buffers were fitted as standard equipment. The engines came with a Russian-designed steam drier at the throttle valve, which necessitated a tall European steam dome. Also of Russian practice were their power-operated inside-swing firebox doors and Friedman-type injectors (made under contract in the U.S.), as well as their dual



ABOVE: SLSF No. 1632 is at Belton, Mo., on July 30, 2016, on the Belton, Grandview & Kansas City Railroad. The shield over the compressor was added by Eagle-Picher, and protected the pump from flying ore debris when the locomotive was switching cars. JEFF TERRY PHOTO

RIGHT: On the eve of World War II, SLSF No. 1632 is coaled up and ready to go at Birmingham, Ala., on March 23, 1940. Note the road pilot, blind center driver, and the blanked-off ports on the tops of the cylinders where it's Zybaloff bypass valve had been located. It has not yet received a Westinghouse air pump on its pilot deck. CHARLES WINTERS PHOTO; DON WIRTH COLLECTION



pilot-mounted headlights. Their superheated boilers were fitted with Coale safety valves and Okadee blow-down valves, along with special "Draftac" rectangular smokebox netting. For braking, they were outfitted with both La Châtelier water brakes and Russian-Westinghouse air brakes.

Because the 2-10-0s were to be operated by unskilled crews, Zybaloff bypass valves, mounted on the cylinders, prevented damage by allowing steam to escape from the cylinders when the throttle was closed; a Shukaloff drifting valve was used to keep them properly lubricated when this occurred.

The locomotives were assembled and tested before being broken down for their overseas journey. "Each engine is shipped in 34 packages," stated *Railway Age Gazette* on October 12, 1917. "All the parts are boxed, with the exception of the

boiler, driving wheels, engine truck and tender wheels, and tender truck frame. The heaviest package, apart from the boiler, is the box containing the tender tank and various tender details. This box weighs 29,700 pounds."

Russians Stranded Stateside

The new 2-10-0s were of such a sound design that in 1916 orders were placed for an additional 560 Ems, which were

split between Baldwin and Alco.

The new order was under construction when suddenly everything changed in Russia. Political unrest led to the tsar being overthrown in March 1917, and Alexander Kerensky was tapped to lead a new provisional government. Then came the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 that forced Kerensky out and resulted in a communist regime seizing control with Vladimir Lenin at

RIGHT: Frisco 1630 is making a switch move to tie onto its train on July 3, 2016. Its water canteen is a 1947 steel milk car, General American Pfaudler Corp. No. 1021. No. 1630's tender holds 7,500 gallons of water and the milk car an additional 8,000 gallons, which has eliminated the need for frequent water stops.

JEFF TERRY PHOTO

BELOW: On August 31, 2014, IRM's 1630 crosses Seeman Road southeast of Union, Ill., on the Elgin & Belvidere Electric Railway track operated by the museum. JEFF TERRY PHOTO





ABOVE: Illinois Railway Museum's 2-10-0 No. 1630 is backing up toward Union after making a passenger run to Kishwaukee Grove on July 3, 2016. It took a tremendous amount of work to return the tender to its 1940s appearance; this involved rebuilding the coal bunker after it had been cut down by Eagle-Picher. The doghouse is a faithful replica of the type used on SLSF steam locomotives. JEFF TERRY PHOTO



LEFT: Baldwin builder's plates in both English and Cyrillic are just one of the clues that these locomotives were intended for export duty. JEFF TERRY PHOTO

the helm. Chaos on the Russian railways before and during these turbulent times was magnified due to the pressure of the war's demands as well as the continued neglect of rolling stock, and eventually the railway system collapsed. "[W]hen this strain is extended beyond a reasonable limit, transportation is subjected to a disturbance and later to disorganization," Lipetz told the New York Railroad Club on May 16, 1919. "This happened just before the revolution in March 1917,

and during the revolution, and whatever was saved was later destroyed by the general disorganization and demoralization of the whole economic life of Russia under the Bolshevik regime."

As for the Decapods, only 50 had been shipped when word came to stop production in early 1918, and there were 200 nearly finished locomotives sitting on the factory floor. They were badly needed, as the number of functioning locomotives in the newly formed Soviet

Union continued its downward spiral; only 4,000 remained in service by 1919, according to Lipetz. To his lament, the last of the 2-10-0s would never make the trip; in 1918, Russia's communist government negotiated a peace treaty with Germany, a country at war with the U.S. (which had joined the allies' fight in April 1917), and the engines were embargoed. The peace treaty itself created further turmoil within Russia, and the country plunged into civil war. Lipetz and his family fled to New York, never to return; he would later work as a consultant for Alco.

According to *The Railway Engineer*, of the 1,081 Decapods ordered by Russia, only 881 actually made the journey, a figure which includes eight that sank aboard a ship in the Mediterranean.



ABOVE: Frisco No. 1630 heads for the shop at the end of a long day on August 31, 2014. IRM's Steam Department has a large stockpile of parts that will keep the Decapod in good running condition for years to come. JEFF TERRY PHOTO

Commandeered by USRA

On January 1, 1918, the U.S. government forcibly took control of all Class I railroads and leased them for the duration of World War I; the United States Railway Administration (USRA) was created to operate them. In order to meet the growing demands of wartime traffic, additional motive power was required stateside. The USRA began production of its own standard locomotive designs, but in the meantime old and retired engines were brought out of storage and pressed into service. It was not enough.

One solution was obvious; there were 200 brand-new locomotives with no place to go, the only major issue being that they were of the wrong gauge. After careful study, it was determined that with minimal effort they could be converted from five-foot-gauge (60") to U.S. standard gauge (56.5"). Tender and pilot wheels were changed out, and the driving wheels were fitted with extra-wide 7.5" tires.

While this solved the gauge problem, other modifications were necessary. The locomotive's buffers and screw couplers were replaced with knuckle couplers, and their headlights, handrails, and safety appliances were modified to conform to U.S. practice. Westinghouse air brakes were added along with American-style injectors, and most had their Zybaloff and Shukaloff valves removed.

Once rebuilt, the 2-10-0s were distributed by the USRA under a lease

agreement at \$45 per day. Southern Railway, Reading, Frisco, and Atlantic Coast Line were all allotted Decapods. A large group went to the Pennsylvania, although they didn't see much use, as Pennsy deemed them inferior to their own class I1s 2-10-0s. Additionally, several smaller roads, including Wheeling & Lake Erie and Detroit, Toledo & Ironton, leased Decapods during the war years.

By all accounts the orphaned 2-10-0s — often called "Bolsheviks" by the crews that ran them — gave excellent service. They steamed well and had tremendous pulling power, nearly equal to that of a USRA light 2-8-2. This also proved to be their one major failing — their high tractive effort of 51,500 pounds, a product of their large cylinders and 180 p.s.i. boiler pressure, made them very slippery. Their wide tires also had a tendency to climb the rail on sharp curves and derail on self-guarding frogs. Although many railroads considered them dual-service machines, they excelled at slow speed freight service and were most comfortable at 25-30 m.p.h.

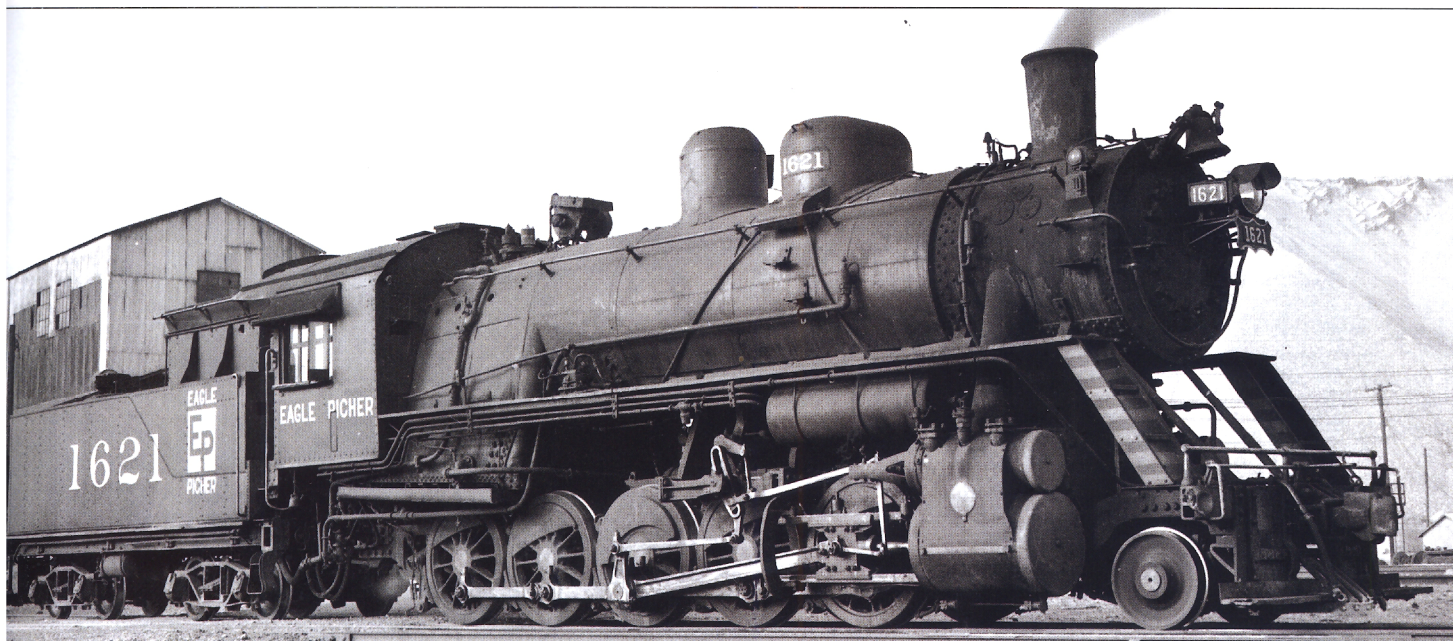
After the fighting ended, they were declared surplus, and in 1920 were sold off by the government. Some were purchased by the railroads that had leased them, but others wound up on lines like Western Maryland, Erie, and Susquehanna. Solidly built and rugged, many lasted into the World War II years, both in the U.S. and the Soviet Union.

They were so well liked in the USSR that after diplomatic relationships improved, an order for 2,000 carbon-copies was placed with Baldwin and Alco under the Lend-Lease Program — in 1943! These were active well into the 1970s on the Trans-Siberian, but in the U.S. most of the World War I-era 2-10-0s were retired by the mid-1950s.

Frisco Bolsheviks

St. Louis-San Francisco (Frisco) was a big user of Russian 2-10-0s, having leased and then purchased ten in 1918 followed by another ten in 1921. Numbered 1613-1632, they were of mixed lineage, having been built by Baldwin as well as Alco's Brooks, Schenectady, and Richmond Works. After a brief period on the mainline, they spent the majority of their careers on Frisco's lighter-rail branches, mainly in Missouri and Oklahoma. They were also used in passenger service, such as on SLSF's "Mud Line" in Mississippi and Alabama and on the "Leaky Roof" into Kansas City. Nos. 1617 and 1628 were assigned to Frisco's Texas subsidiary Quanah, Acme & Pacific.

All of Frisco's Bolsheviks initially burned coal, and many were fitted with stokers; at least 12 were rebuilt as oil burners. In an effort to improve adhesion, all but four had their cylinder bores reduced from 25 to 24 inches, which lowered their tractive effort to 47,500 pounds but made them more sure-footed.



ABOVE: Eagle-Picher No. 1621 is seen rods-down at Commerce, Okla., on March 8, 1957. Note the raised headlight and modified clear-vision tender coal bunker. In less than a year it will be set aside, never to run again. In 1961, it will be donated to the National Museum of Transportation and placed on display in Kirkwood, Mo. JEFF TERRY COLLECTION



LEFT: Stored outdoors, Frisco No. 1621 is seen in repose at the National Museum of Transportation. JEFF TERRY PHOTO

Six had their New York air compressors upgraded to larger Westinghouse compressors that were mounted on the pilot beam. To improve boiler circulation, SLSF fitted them with a single Nicholson thermic syphon, and all were given tender doghouses for the head brakeman.

By fall 1951, Frisco steam was on its way out, and only two 2-10-0s remained in service. That November, five were leased (and subsequently purchased) by the Eagle-Picher Mining Company of Picher, Okla., which used them in road service hauling carloads of lead and zinc ore from mine to mill. The mining company raised their headlights and rebuilt their tenders to allow for better rearward visibility, but kept the distinctive SLSF "coonskin" number plates.

In 1957, Eagle-Picher began reducing its operations and subsequently shut down its Picher concentrating plant. The

Decapods were mothballed in 1958 and stored on a siding at Cardin. Although the Central Mill eventually reopened, E-P switched over to diesel power.

Russian Decapod Survivors

A large number of U.S.-built 2-10-0s exist in Russia, including eight dating from World War I. Nicknamed "Amerikanki" (Американки or "girls from America"), two are of the 1915 Ec design and six are 1916-17 Ел's. One of the best-preserved examples is Alco-built Ел No. 534, which is exhibited at the Central Museum of Railway Transport in St. Petersburg.

Of the 200 Russian Decapods that were stranded in the U.S., six were saved from the scrapper's torch, including one from Seaboard Air Line and all five owned by Eagle-Picher, whose management recognized the educational value

of steam. The former Frisco engines are listed in order of donation.

Frisco 1621 — No. 1621 was donated by Eagle-Picher to the National Museum of Transportation, Kirkwood, Mo., in July 1961. Built by Baldwin in April 1918 (C/N 48420), it was diverted as USRA No. 1195 and was leased to the Southern as its 8029. Records show it was transferred to Katy before the end of World War I, then went to Fort Smith, Subiaco & Rock Island of Paris, Ark., which numbered it 101. Frisco acquired it in 1925 to replace its original Richmond-built No. 1621 that had been destroyed in a dynamite explosion at Waterville, Miss. "Second" No. 1621 worked the remainder of its career as a coal burner in the south before being sold to Eagle-Picher. It was in the middle of an overhaul when it was set aside in 1958, and today has no tubes or flues in its boiler. It's interesting to note that it has blanked-off ports on its cylinders where its Zybaloff bypass valves were once located.

No. 1621 has been returned to its 1940s Frisco livery, although it retains its cut-down clear tender coal bunker. In the 1980s, Don Wirth of the St. Louis Steam Train Association, the group that restored Frisco No. 1522, lowered its headlight using the holes that were

RIGHT: Frisco 1615 spends its days on display at Missile Park in rural Altus, Okla., as seen here on July 16, 2015. Its paint scheme is accurate for the way it appeared in the mid-1950s when it switched cars of lead ore for Eagle-Picher, which was known for applying liberal amounts of "Safety Yellow" to its motive power. JEFF TERRY PHOTO

BELOW RIGHT: Seaboard Air Line 544 is displayed inside the Bob Julian Roundhouse at the North Carolina Transportation Museum, seen here on May 6, 2016. After World War I ended, it worked for Wheeling & Lake Erie before being sold to SAL during the Great Depression. It arrived at NCTM in terrible condition, and it took a great deal of work to return it to its 1948 SAL appearance. JEFF TERRY PHOTO

plugged by E-P when they moved the headlight above center. Additionally, a doghouse that was removed from No. 1522 was repainted and mounted on No. 1621's tender.

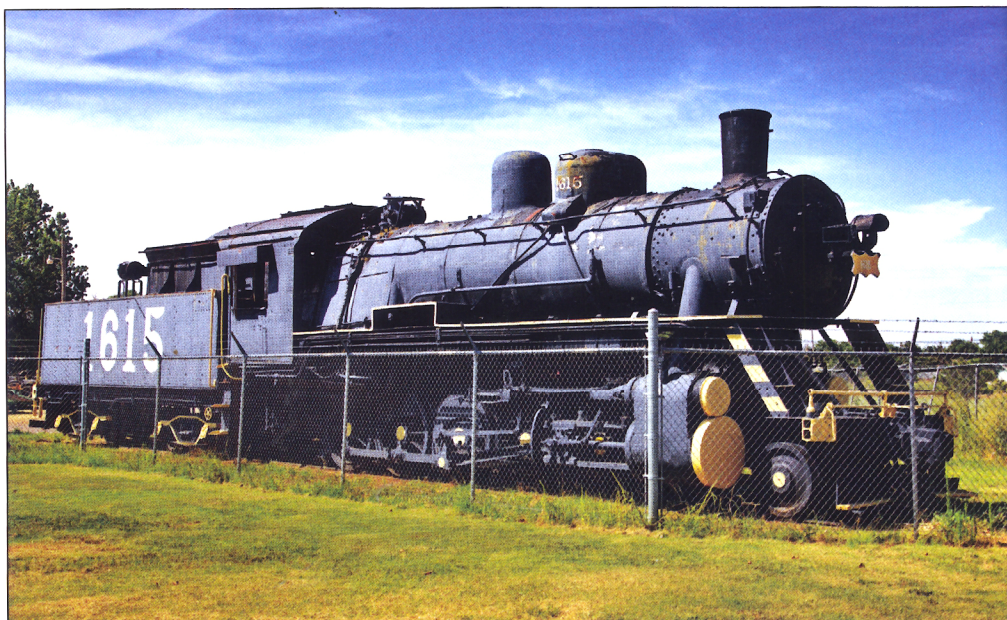
Frisco 1625 — No. 1625 came from Alco's Schenectady Works in March 1918 (C/N 58903) and was to have become Imperial Russian State Railways No. E1199. Under USRA ownership it was numbered 1099, and was sold to SLSF in 1920. A coal burner, photos show that it operated mainly in the southern states, including Alabama and Florida, and at one point was fitted with an extra sand dome. It was the lone Schenectady-built Bolshevik on SLSF.

In September 1964, Eagle-Picher donated No. 1625 to the Texas State Fair Association for its Age of Steam exhibit at Dallas' Fair Park. In 2008, the collection, which is now known as the Museum of the American Railroad, began a move to a new home in Frisco, Texas; No. 1625 made the trip aboard a flatcar in March 2013. Today it's been repainted into its 1940s SLSF livery and is in excellent cosmetic condition.

Frisco 1632 — One of the places that Russian 2-10-0s operated in regular service was SLSF's Clinton Subdivision between Kansas City and Osceola, Mo., which was known as the "High Line." Fittingly, No. 1632 has been preserved on a five-mile stretch that's now used as a tourist railroad by the Smoky Hill Railroad & Historical Society.

No. 1632 was built by Baldwin in 1918 (C/N 48522) and assigned USRA No. 1199. It went to the Southern as No. 8033 before being sold in November 1920 to SLSF. It burned both coal and oil during its long career, operating on Frisco trackage in Missouri, Mississippi, Alabama, and Kansas.

After retirement, No. 1632 was donated to Smoky Hill in summer 1965, and was first exhibited at the Old Depot Museum in Ottawa, Kan., arriving there via its own wheels on December 28, 1965. Cosmetically restored in 1966, six years later there were hopes



that it might steam again on Santa Fe's abandoned Alma-Burlingame (Kansas) line, but instead the rails were pulled up. In May 1992, it was moved aboard a flatcar to Belton, Mo., and placed on static display at the Belton, Grandview & Kansas City Railroad. Today it's one of two surviving SLSF Decapods with a pilot-mounted compressor, and still sports the compressor shield added by Eagle-Picher that protected its air pump from debris.

Frisco 1630 — No. 1630 was built by Baldwin in March 1918 (C/N 47953) and became USRA No. 1147. Assigned to the Pennsylvania's western lines, it operated in Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois until being sold to SLSF in 1920. During its lifetime it worked across the Frisco system, which included frequent use on passenger trains Nos. 58 and 59 between Kansas City and Clinton, Mo. In July 1933, it pulled a 14-car veterans'

passenger special from Springfield, Mo., to Pensacola, Fla. It last steamed for Eagle-Picher in April 1958.

In 1965, the Illinois Railway Museum began searching for a large steam locomotive that could be rebuilt for service. Its public relations director contacted Eagle-Picher and asked if any of the 2-10-0s were available. "Their polite response indicated that they would be pleased to let us inspect the three remaining engines [1615, 1630, and 1632]," he stated in the November-December 1965 issue of *Rail & Wire*, the museum's newsletter. Members drafted a proposal for the donation of No. 1615, with 1632 being their second choice. However, they doubted IRM would be selected, as a museum of similar size had been turned down.

In December 1965, Eagle-Picher wrote, "Since our last correspondence, we have donated another of our steam locomotives



ABOVE: Frisco 1630 is making time out of Union on July 3, 2016, with a passenger run to Kishwaukee Grove. Although the Russian Decapods excelled at slow-speed freight service, Frisco and other railroads occasionally used them to pull passenger trains. JEFF TERRY PHOTO

[1632] to a historical society for preservation, but we still have two units remaining — one being No. 1615, and the other No. 1630. After examining the information you sent me, we have decided that we will be willing to donate one of these remaining locomotives to your organization since we believe that you will be able to preserve it in good order... either one that you want."

No. 1630 was found to be in the best condition of the pair, its tubes having been replaced in 1956. Arrangements were made with area railroads to ship it free of charge to Illinois, the only cost being the removal of self-guarded frogs along the route. It arrived in Union in July 1967, and volunteers soon began working to return it to service, aided by some 50 tons of donated tools and spare parts. Under the direction of J. David Conrad, more than 13,000 man-hours were put into its rebuild; it was first steam-tested in 1972 and entered regular service in July 1975.

During winter shop work in the 1970s and '80s, the 1630 was gradually returned to its postwar appearance. With help from Frisco historian Don Wirth, IRM volunteers rebuilt 1630's tender coal boards and added a replica doghouse. Its headlight was lowered back to its original position, and a new coonskin number plate was fabricated.

After operating at IRM for nearly three decades, 1630 was taken out of service in 2004 for its 1,472-day inspection,

and after much work was returned to steam in October 2013. The quality of the work done by IRM volunteers was shown off on May 29, 2016, when 1630 handled 135 empty coal cars — stored at IRM over the winter — unassisted. It is planned to be under steam a number of times in 2017.

Eagle-Picher 1615 — No. 1615 is the oldest Russian Decapod in the U.S., having been built by Richmond in 1917 (C/N 58829), and the only one preserved in Eagle-Picher livery.

Assigned as USRA No. 1015, it was leased to Frisco in March 1918 and worked across Oklahoma and into Kansas City, burning both coal and oil. As an experiment, its boiler pressure was increased from 180 p.s.i. to 190 p.s.i., which increased its tractive effort to 54,350 pounds and gave it more power than Frisco's 4-8-2s. However, this further increased drive wheel slippage and was considered unsuccessful; the 1615 eventually had its boiler pressure reduced.

In November 1967, the 1615 was donated to the city of Altus, and was hauled nearly 300 miles across Oklahoma by SLSF after repairs had been made to make it roadworthy. It was initially exhibited in South City Park, but was later moved onto the grounds of the Altus Parks & Recreation Department's storage yard at Missile Park where it can be seen today.

Seaboard 544 — No. 544 is the only

preserved Russian Decapod on the east coast, and the only survivor that's equipped with an Elvin Mechanical Stoker. It was built by Alco's Brooks Works in March 1918 (C/N 58902) as Russian State Railways E1198. Diverted as USRA No. 1088, it worked for W&LE during the war and afterward for DT&I. In 1935, it was acquired by Seaboard Air Line and numbered 544, one of 37 "Russians" — as SAL crews called them — on the roster. After World War II, the 544 went to SAL's Georgia subsidiary Macon, Dublin & Savannah, and then was sold to Gainesville Midland in the early 1950s. Renumbered GM No. 206, it was often used to pull coal trains out of Cartersville, Ga.

In 1959, No. 206 was donated to the State of Georgia, which gifted it to the Atlanta Chapter NRHS six years later. In the late 1970s, it was displayed at the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum before being sold to North Carolina Transportation Museum, which moved it on its own wheels to Spencer in 1980. During 1995, volunteers completed a thorough cosmetic restoration which returned it to its appearance as SAL 544. Today, as the largest steam locomotive in the NCTM collection, it's normally exhibited inside the museum's Bob Julian Roundhouse. ■

Thanks to Don Wirth and Parker Wilson for their assistance with this article.



1630

1630