

## The Crossroads and the Compass

7 April 2012

We don't ride as much as we used to.

That's not a good thing, but it's just the way it's been for the last few years.

We've been focused on adjusting to being back here in the U.S. and other aspects of life.

So, we haven't been riding as much as we used to.

But, Saturday, Steph was up for a ride.

There are not many who would turn that down, and I am not among them.



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## The Crossroads and the Compass

If we learned nothing else from our travels, each part of the world, each country, each area, has interesting roads—you just need to go and find them.



Sometimes, those roads even force you to make big decisions about your life, such as whether to take the high road or the low road.





## The Crossroads and the Compass

Those roads can lead you to many places, many destinations, many things.

Some small.



Some famous.



Some that can be nothing but an oxymoron





## The Crossroads and the Compass

Some wonders of the season



And some wonders of life, such as this restored Rock Island caboose in a back yard in Texas.



How did a perfectly restored, sheltered and lovingly cared for caboose from an obscure railroad that ran through my grandparents' farm in Iowa ever end up in a back yard in a small town in Texas?

## The Crossroads and the Compass

Life is like that sometimes.

It brings you things that are both significant and mysterious.

It's often a question of balancing the significance and the mystery.

For instance, this is a very unusual railroad station.



The reason it is significant is that the station sits diagonally to the railroad tracks.

Almost every train station in the U.S. is oriented parallel to the tracks, but not this one.

The reason this station is diagonal is because two mainline railroads cross at 90 degrees in front of it.

That is the significance.



## The Crossroads and the Compass

It is a true crossroads.

Two mainline tracks meet there.

Both tracks come from and head away to faraway destinations.

Both tracks come from and head away to the four corners of the compass.



There was a 90 degree railroad junction like that in Grinnell, Iowa, where I lived until the age of 10.

My friend, Marty Canfield, and I would venture down there and marvel at the trains, the tracks and the places that were out there, somewhere, far away, along those tracks, at the four corners of the compass.

That is the mystery.

## The Crossroads and the Compass

I've spent quite a bit of my life out there exploring those places, the places far away, the places at the four corners of the compass.



One thing I learned on that journey is that it's not so much the road you're on, it's your perspective while you're on it.



## The Crossroads and the Compass

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Douglas and Stephanie Hackney have explored 43 countries over six continents.

They currently reside in Austin, Texas, USA

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While Texas' best known wildflower is the Bluebonnet, the wildflowers in the photo are the White Prickly Poppy.

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The unusual diagonal railroad station is located in Elgin, Texas.

Elgin, TX is pronounced with a hard "g" as in go.

\* \* \* \* \*

The two railroads that crossed at Elgin, Texas were the Southern Pacific and the Missouri, Kansas & Texas, better known as the "Katy."

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Grinnell, Iowa was founded by J.B. Grinnell, who was the young man Horace Greeley famously advised to "Go West young man, go West."

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The train station in Grinnell is not diagonal to the tracks at the junction.

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The two railroads that crossed in Grinnell were the Minneapolis & St. Louis and the Rock Island.



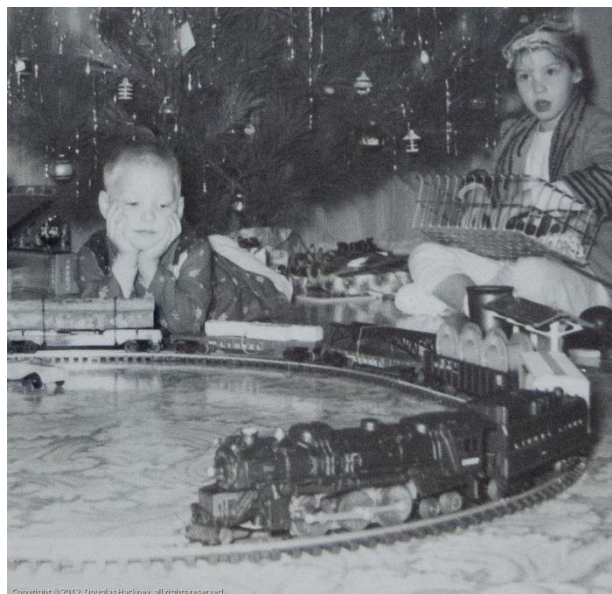
## The Crossroads and the Compass

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The Rock Island Railroad was, of course, the most important minor railroad in the history of the world.



Counting the cars on a passing Rock Island freight train on my grandparents' farm.



Dreaming of my own Rock Island railroad empire.

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