



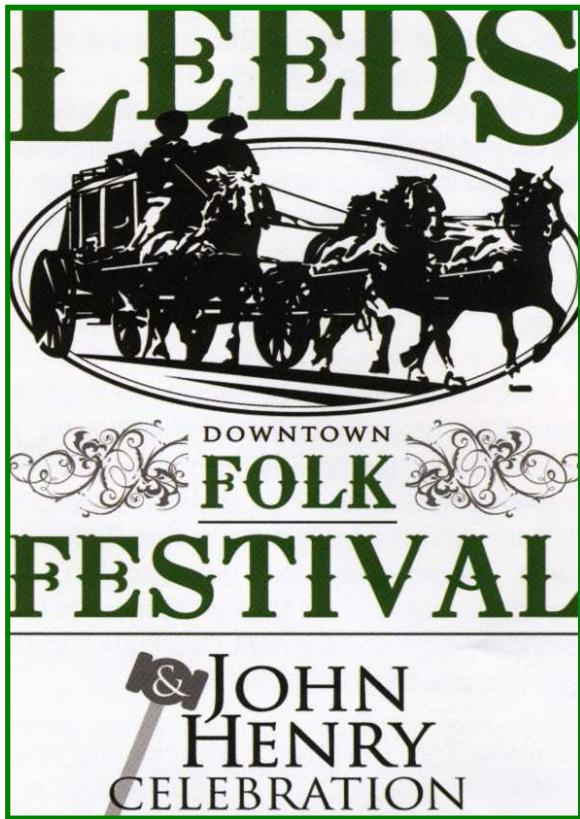
# The Mid-South Flyer

Special John Henry Days Edition  
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## Mid-South Chapter to celebrate John Henry Days with open house, train show



The Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society (R&LHS) will host an open house and train show at Leeds Historic Depot on Saturday, Sept. 18, and Sunday, Sept. 19, as part of the Leeds Downtown Folk Festival & John Henry Days celebration.

The depot, located at 8335 Thornton Avenue, will be open for tours from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday and from Noon to 6 p.m. Sunday. Visitors can view the ongoing restoration of an operating telephone and telegraph system similar to that used by the railroad in the early 1900s, along with vintage railroad artifacts from the Leeds area and the Birmingham railroad district. Also on display will be diagrams of an educational railroad exhibit to be housed in the depot's former waiting room.

A train show will feature railroad artifacts, collectibles and model trains exhibited by chapter members, as well as historic railroad items for sale at the chapter's **Company Store**. The train show will take place directly across the street from the depot at "**The Livery**," formerly a horse livery converted to an event and exhibit center. Admission to both the open house and train show is free and open to the public.

Built in 1888, the Leeds Depot is the last existing small-town railroad depot in the Birmingham railroad district. The depot was restored in 1988 and donated to the City of Leeds by Norfolk Southern Railroad. Managed by the Leeds Historical Society, the depot is home to the Mid-South Chapter, the only chapter of the R&LHS located in the middle Southern states. The chapter is currently restoring the agent-operator's office and developing a permanent railroad exhibit featuring local railroad artifacts and folklore, including a tribute to local railroad legend John Henry.

## July program highlight

# Veteran railroaders recount memories of steam engines whistling through Leeds

By Karmen Payne

The LeedsNews

(Editor's note: The following article appeared in *The Leeds News* on July 19, 2010)

Trains have moved through Leeds before it became a city. The depot was built in 1884. Three years later the city was incorporated.

Residents of the area tell stories of great steam engines rolling through town.

"You could hear them long before you ever saw them coming. People had time to finish what they were doing and go gather for the train to come into town," said James Webb. "The sound traveled well in advance of the train through the valley."

The trains brought passengers, transported goods and delivered weary travelers to Leeds for a night's stay or a meal. The steel rails helped a town to grow from a settlement.

"Everyone gathered around the tracks when I was a child," said Van Minor. "We would watch that huge steam engine roll through town and people would line the track as it went by. Those were wonderful memories. One of my boyhood pastimes was watching the ingoing and outgoing mail be passed from the depot window on those hooks."

Today, the Leeds Historical Society maintains the old depot building. It is often used for special events and meetings of organizations around town. For the past year and a half the old depot has served the railways in a new way.

The Railway and Locomotive Historical Society's Mid-South Chapter has held their monthly meeting there on the second Saturday of the month at 2 p.m. People in Leeds share stories of the importance and the nostalgia of the tracks, the trains, the visitors and the business opportunities the railways have provided Leeds.

Now, the old depot is giving the men and women who gave their careers to make those things happen in small towns along the rails a place to connect and share memories.



*Still ridin' the rails, veteran Central of Georgia railroader Jamie Williams rides behind a home-made locomotive traveling along the narrow-gauge railroad he constructed on his property near West Point, Georgia. (Photo courtesy of Bernie Feltman)*

# Veteran railroaders share memories (continued)

This month Jamie Williams of Columbus, Ga. addressed the group of around 60 gathered rail workers and train lovers.

"I started to work on the railroad in 1945. I made \$4.65 per day," Williams said laughing. "It was good money back then and I was proud of it."

Williams served the railroad throughout his working years on the Central of Georgia line between Birmingham and Columbus and all the tributaries between.

"Those steam engines were big and they were scary," he added. "But no one on the crew I worked with was ever injured. I do believe in the Lord though. I've seen accidents that should have hurt someone and everyone walked away."

Williams told the audience of hours on the rails, incidents the crew faced and pranks they played on each other to pass the time together at stops or along rides.

"That crew is your family many days," Williams said. "You have to rest and stay alert while you're at your job. Everyone's safety depends on each person doing their job."

Williams retired but continues to speak and be active with railroad organizations. He brought his scrapbook to share memories of the years he spent on the rails. Williams took questions from the audience as well.

"They paid me a retirement check to leave," he told the audience. "I still keep a bag packed in case they change their minds."

Williams married after he retired from the railroad. "A railroad wife has a hard life. She gets to do all the 'honey do's,'" he said. "I didn't want that. So, I waited and found a lovely wife when that was over."

Williams is a representative of the men and women who have served this town and many like it through the years as workers on the rails. Small towns were vital to the railroad's needs at the time. The trains took on water, picked up and dropped loads and the men had a chance to rest sometimes. The towns wouldn't have sprouted up without the railroad connecting them to the larger cities quite so easily. It is only natural for the town to attract a historical railroad society.

The Legend of John Henry, the echoing memory of the steam engine whistle, and the daily traffic of trains along the Norfolk-Southern and the old Central of Georgia tracks keep modern Leeds rooted in its railroad past.



*In this magnificent scene from 1948, Central of Georgia #709 roars through Irondale racing for Leeds with a local freight. (Frank E. Ardrey, Jr. photo)*

# Chapter News and Events



On a fine Saturday in June, Mid-South members gathered at the depot for an enjoyable summer social and cookout. Sporting their new chapter polos (with one abstention) are, left to right, Bryan Schaffer, Lee Singletary, Dale Burns and Marvin Clemons. A steady parade of trains provided afternoon delight for old and young alike. (*Photos by Tim Smith*)

## Kennesaw Museum acquires Salter, Ardrey collections

KENNESAW, Ga. The late rail photographer David Salter's collection will be archived at the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History, the museum has announced. The Denver-based photographer died earlier this year.

The collection focuses on the railroads of the Southeast, where Salter grew up. Salter both took photos and acquired photographs from others who captured the railroads of the South in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s.

"We are very fortunate to have obtained this wonderful collection of Southeastern railroad photography for the Southern museum," said Jeff Drobney, the museum's director. "This collection will be invaluable to railroad historians, enthusiasts, and other scholars studying Southeastern railroading during the mid-20th century."

The museum has now begun raising funds to create a research library, to be known as the Center for Southeastern Railroad Research. The Norfolk Southern Foundation has granted funds to the planned library, and the museum plans to break ground next year.

*(Editor's note: The Salter collection contains an extensive collection of Mid-South member Frank Ardrey's negatives of Southern and southeastern railroad steam locomotives. The chapter was privileged to assist the Southern Museum with the acquisition of the Salter collection on behalf of the Salter family and Frank Ardrey).*

## Chapter Calendar

Chapter Open House and Train Show—September 18 & 19 @ Leeds Depot

October Field Trip to Historic Machinery Services—Date & Time TBA

Board of Directors Meeting—Saturday, October 30—Time & Location TBA

November Chapter Meeting—2 pm Saturday, November 11 @ Leeds Depot

# Norfolk Southern, TVRM announce plans to revive main-line steam excursions in 2011

NORFOLK, VA. – Norfolk Southern Corporation is in negotiations with the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum with regard to the operation of a limited schedule of steam locomotive event appearances and passenger excursions beginning later this year.

“21st Century Steam” would highlight milestones in rail history and provide an opportunity for audiences to learn about today’s safe and service-oriented freight railroads. The program would feature three venerable coal-powered steam locomotives:



Southern Railway 4501: Built in 1911 by Baldwin Locomotive Works, 4501 served Southern Railway in freight service in Tennessee, Virginia, Kentucky, and Indiana, before being sold to a short line railroad. No. 4501 was retired from revenue service in 1963 and enjoyed a second career in the excursion program operated by Southern Railway and Norfolk Southern from 1966 until 1994. This Ms (Mikado superheated) Class locomotive has 63-inch driving wheels.



Southern Railway 630: Built in 1904 at the Richmond, Va., works of American Locomotive Company, this Consolidation-type locomotive has traveled throughout the Southeast, often in the company of 4501 and sister locomotive 722. An extensive six-year rehabilitation to Federal Railroad Administration standards is being completed at TVRM’s Soule Shops complex in Chattanooga.



Tennessee Valley Railroad 610: Built in 1952 by Baldwin-Lima-Hamilton for the U.S. Army, 610 has been the mainstay of TVRM steam operations since 1990. It also appeared on several Norfolk Southern steam excursions from 1990 to 1993. No. 610, also a Consolidation type, was one of the last steam locomotives built in the U.S.

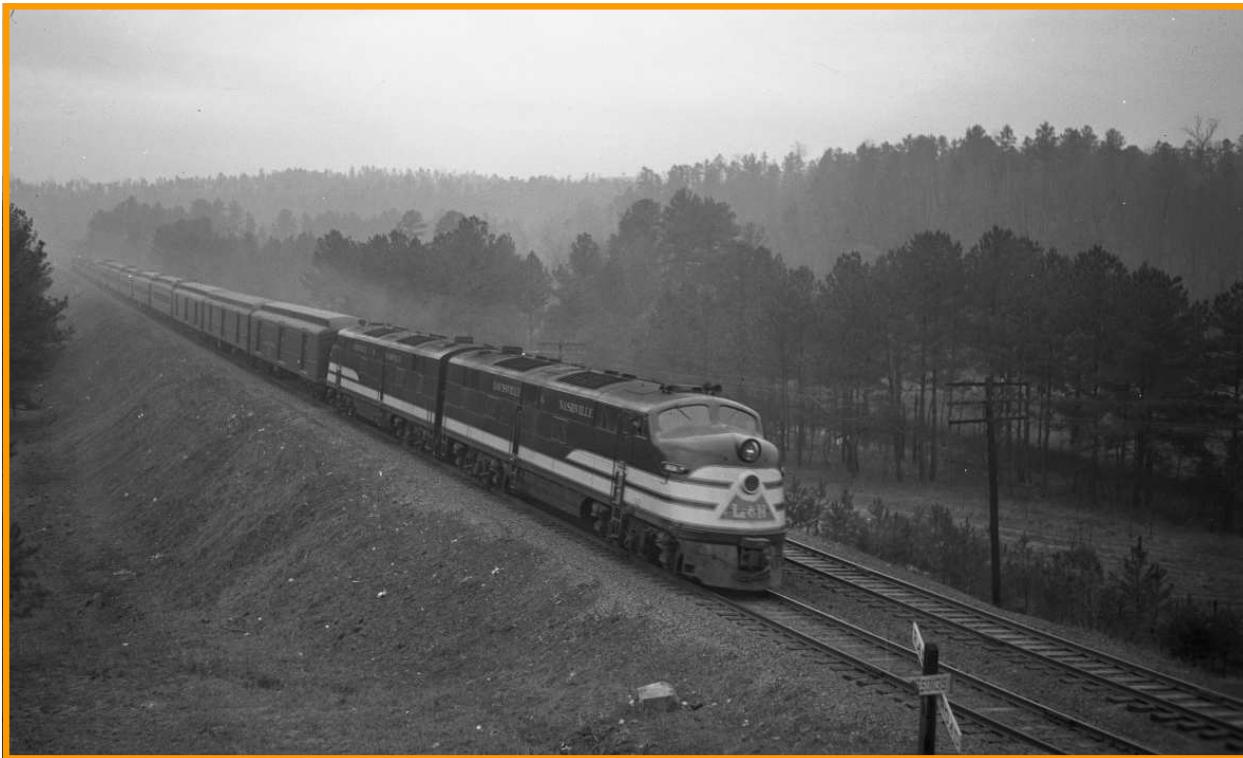
“This is the right time for steam to ride the Norfolk Southern rails,” said CEO Wick Moorman. “We have a fascinating history, and we have a compelling message about how today’s railroads support jobs, competition, and the economy. It is a forward-looking message that resonates with people everywhere.”

“21st Century Steam can help introduce historic and modern railroading to a broad new audience of supporters,” said TVRM President Tim Andrews. “We are pleased to be developing this relationship with Norfolk Southern for the purpose of preserving and interpreting the steam age, and of bringing today’s railroad closer to people young and old, in communities large and small.”

The launch of 21st Century Steam would coincide with key dates. 2011 will be 4501’s 100th birthday and TVRM’s 50th. The year 2012 will mark Norfolk Southern’s 30th anniversary. 21st Century Steam’s initial appearances and runs tentatively could take place in the Chattanooga area this fall, with locomotives 610 and 630. No. 4501 could join the program sometime in 2011, after rehabilitation. Exhibit dates, ticketing, and other details will be announced later.

“The sights and sounds of a steam train are powerful enough to catch the public’s attention in this busy and complex age,” said Jim Wrinn, author of *Steam’s Camelot: Southern and NS Excursions in Color*, and editor of *Trains Magazine*. “A steam train is a living piece of American history that teaches volumes about this exciting industry that has much to offer our country today. Once the door is open with the steam locomotive, you’ve got an opportunity to teach a new generation how railroading is the right transportation solution to so many challenges facing us.

## *Golden Era Classics*



***Coming through the morning dew*** — When not attending to his family's extensive textile business in his native Georgia, Hugh Comer could be found with his large format camera at some of the most picturesque settings imaginable for railroad photography. A protégé of Mid-South member Frank Ardrey, who took primarily roster shots of southeastern steam, Comer was a master at framing dramatic scenes and trains in action against pastoral backdrops. A fine example of his art is this early morning shot of #98, the Louisville & Nashville's northbound *Pan-American*, as two blue-and-cream EMD E6's in back-to-back formation drift through the early morning ground fog near Hayden, Alabama, about 30 miles north of Birmingham. (*Hugh Comer photo, Marvin Clemons collection*)

### **Where are we?**

Once a very recognizable location not far from Birmingham Terminal Station, you'd be hard-put to identify our mystery location from existing landmarks, since train, track and trees are all long-gone. If you can identify the locomotive's owner, you'll at least know where to start looking on an early rail map. One more hint: The photo with caption appears in a local book on Birmingham railroads from the mid-20th century. And the location is: ???

