



# The Mid-South Flyer

Summer 2011



*The Tutwiler Hotel, site of the 2012 R&LHS Annual Meeting*

## September program

### Chapter meeting to feature photo calendar contest

Among the many talents within the Mid-South Chapter, perhaps the most prolific is an eye for photography. It's no surprise that most of our members take pictures of trains, so it would seem only natural to showcase our talent. And what better showcase than a photo calendar featuring the best of our members' photography.

After a lengthy solicitation of entries, selection of the winning photographs in our calendar contest will take place at the September 10th chapter meeting, which is also the deadline for entries. According to contest coordinator Dan Ferris, the photos will be displayed and each member will be given 13 votes to cast for their favorite images. The photos garnering the most votes will be digitally scanned and edited for submission to the printer. The chapter calendar will feature a winning member photo for each month, along with a cover photo.

Plans call for having the first Mid-South Chapter all-color calendar published and ready for sale in time for the holiday season. Put several on your gift list now!

## Historic Tutwiler Hotel to host 2012 R&LHS Birmingham meeting

The Tutwiler Hotel, one of Birmingham's most historic namesake properties, has been chosen as headquarters for the 2012 Annual Meeting of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society (R&LHS).

Birmingham will host the convention on May 17-20, 2012. Sponsored by the Mid-South Chapter, the meeting will feature tours of both historic and contemporary railroad and industrial sites. Expected venues will include an 1882 blast furnace, the Birmingham district's first modern rail hump yard, and a tour of the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum. featuring an excursion over a portion of the former L&N Railroad's Alabama Mineral Division.

In addition to tours of historic venues, the anticipated program will offer presentations by subject-matter experts on an appealing variety of historical topics, including Red Mountain's iron ore "Mineral Lines," the Birmingham Electric Company's extensive streetcar system, and Birmingham Rail & Locomotive Works.

Located in the heart of Birmingham's business district, the Tutwiler is convenient to all modes of transportation and is less than a mile from the Amtrak station served by the New York-New Orleans "Crescent." The hotel is within walking distance of several of the area's most popular attractions, including the world class Birmingham Museum of Art, the McWane Science Center, the Alabama Sports Hall of Fame, and Civil Rights Museum.

The Annual Meeting is open to all current R&LHS members. Meeting registration and hotel reservations will open in late fall 2011 or early winter 2012. An attractive hotel rate, including free valet parking and full breakfasts, will be offered. Look for details in the Winter 2011 issue of the R&LHS *Quarterly* and on the Society's website at [www.rlhs.org](http://www.rlhs.org).

## Mid-South Chapter News and Views



**An Award and a Donation** — There were smiles all around at the May meeting as charter member Eddie Cook was awarded a plaque in recognition of his service to the Mid-South Chapter board of directors. In the photo at left, chapter vice-president Dan Ferris presents the award to Eddie. At the same meeting, Eddie's guest Ray Pelham (seen at right), placed an authentic Regulator wall clock in the Agent's Office on long-term loan to the chapter.



**Mid-South Members Honored with Book Award** — The July meeting brought more smiles and recognition as Mid-South members Lyle Key and Marvin Clemons were awarded the R&LHS **Hilton Book Award** for their book **Birmingham Rails**. R&LHS awards chairman Mark Entrop (at right) and David Lester (at left), awards committee member, made the presentation on behalf of the Society.



## Mid-South Chapter News and Views



**Pre-Civil War Depot Dedicated** — The Scottsboro Depot, one of only three surviving Alabama railroad depots from the pre-Civil War era, has been restored by the Jackson County Historical Society. On Sunday, July 31, a standing-room only crowd of Scottsboro residents, historians, and rail buffs filled the former Memphis & Charleston freight house for the dedication. Jackson County Historical President Ken Goodowens (left) presided at the ceremony. Representing the Mid-South Chapter, Marvin Clemons (right) presented two vintage public timetables for display at the depot.



**Aiken Depot Receives Ardrey Donation** — Another restored Southern Railway depot was in the news when Mid-South member Carl Ardrey, shown holding the framed document, presented a rare 1855 rate chart to the Aikens, SC depot. The document was donated in honor of Frank Ardrey Sr., Carl's grandfather, who served as station-master at Aiken for 32 years. Carl's father and Mid-South member, Frank Ardrey Jr., has also donated a ticket cabinet to the Leeds Depot for the restored agent's office.



# By the Board

## Highlights from the Mid-South Chapter Board Meeting

The Mid-South Chapter Board of Directors met Saturday June 25, 2011 at the home of Larry Kelpke. Prior to the meeting, each board member had been emailed a copy of the meeting agenda, the minutes from the last board meeting (5/14/2011), a draft agenda for next year's National Convention, a copy of the press release about the Birmingham Rails Hilton Book Award, and a copy of directions to Larry's home.

The Board Meeting started at 10:00 with greetings to all by Marvin Clemons. We had a quorum for the meeting with Marvin, Dan Ferris, Stan Burnett, Larry Kelpke, John Browning, Lee Singletary, Tim Smith, James Lowery, and Jeff Johnson in attendance.

The minutes from the last board were approved, with the motion for approval by Dan and seconded by Lee. Stan reported that paid membership is 50, with the checking account at \$877.73 and the dollar-a-month fund at \$68.33. We discussed the 2012 Convention at length, with a First Draft of the proposed convention agenda being one of the email attachments sent to each board member. Each item on the draft was covered as follows:

- Thursday May 17, 2012 - The MSC will staff registration at the Tutwiler. It will be in the Parlor off of the Lobby. Convention attendees will be given a name badge. The R&LHS National Board Meeting will take place Thursday evening.
- Friday May 18, 2012 - A complimentary hot breakfast will be served. Basically our convention is the only event going on at the Tutwiler during the weekend. During Orientation, we will have maps available for each attendee and possibly a PowerPoint presentation will be given during Orientation. Keep in mind that

everyone attending the Convention will be given an info packet. The Tutwiler may host the Wine and Cheese reception at Leeds. This is not set up at this time. The Sloss Furnace tour will be as a group and will be guided. The CSX tour may be unavailable, which will also save time on Friday's schedule. We discussed the options for lunch, at the Irondale Café or catered at Norris Yard.

- Saturday May 19, 2012 - We did not add many "explanations" or additional info to what was listed on the first draft for Saturday. We basically covered each Saturday item as listed.
- Sunday May 20, 2012 - As with Saturday, we did not add additional comments for the Sunday first draft.

Marvin gave each board member a copy of the Convention Task List. We covered each item on the Convention Task List. The info below is regarding the Convention Task List:

- The Contract with the Tutwiler is "done". We have a 30-room guarantee. It includes complimentary breakfast. Local members attending the convention will pay a one-time fee for valet parking.
- Under food service, the contract includes complimentary breakfast. The banquet dinner will probably be a buffet. The banquet buffet and the Sunday Membership breakfast buffet will be included with the registration fee.

*(Continued on next page)*

### *The Mid-South Flyer*

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## *By the Board (continued)*

### *Highlights from the Mid-South Chapter Board Meeting*

- We discussed the program agenda for the banquet buffet and the Sunday breakfast. Lyle Key has offered to present a program at the Sunday breakfast.
- We are working on finalizing registration fees and options. This may be completed by the August 27 Board Meeting.
- Marvin will submit an announcement and photos to the “Quarterly” regarding the convention announcement.
- John will get info and handle transportation regarding the buses for Friday and Saturday.
- Jeff will handle coordination regarding the RR historical society displays.
- We will need a volunteer to coordinate audio-visual support for speaker programs.
- Jeff will talk to someone about the spouse activities, and who will handle and coordinate such activities as visits to the art museum, shopping, etc.
- Lee has tentatively agreed to handle on-site registration for attendees.
- We need an Editor for the 2012 Convention Guide. Marvin will discuss with Ron Mele.
- Tim will handle the name badges.

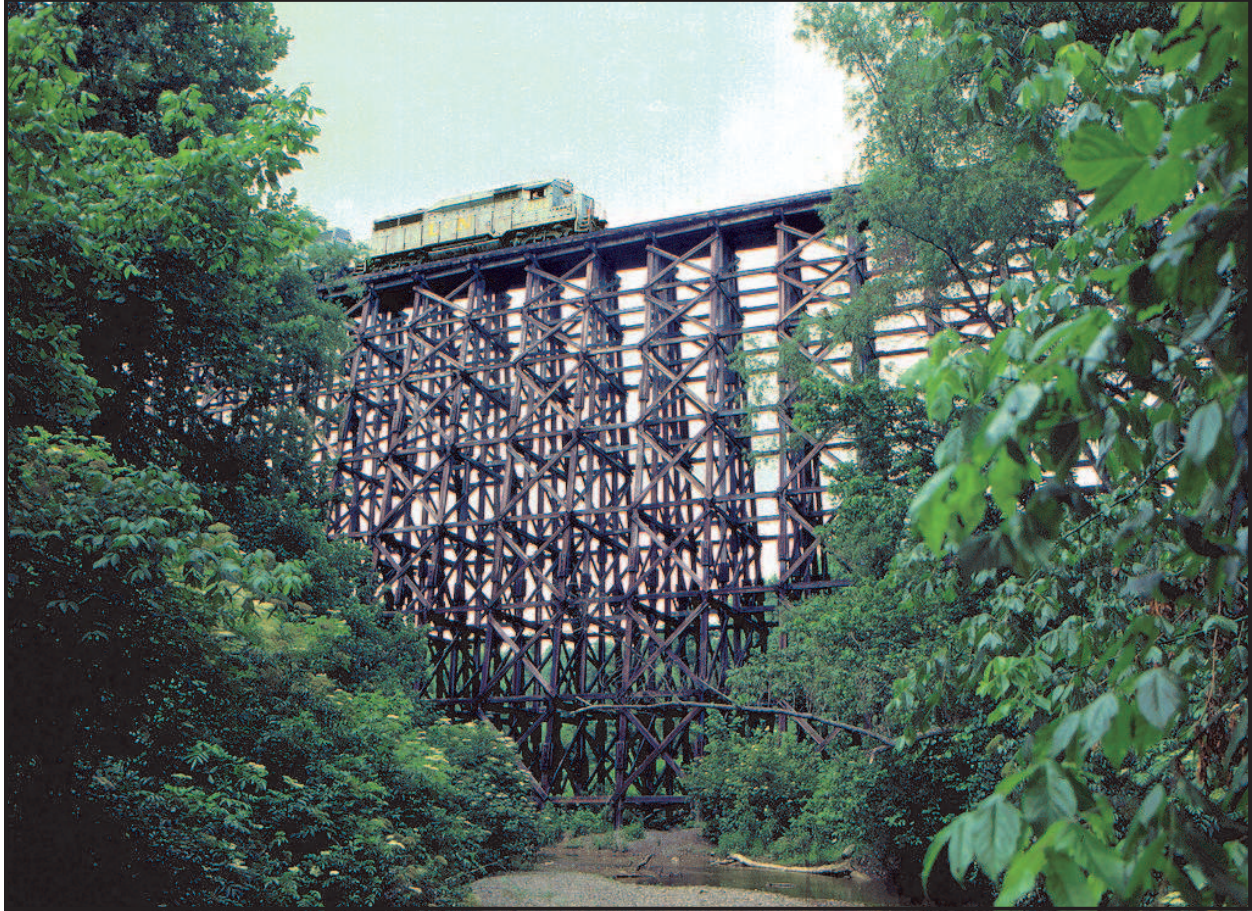
After discussing the 2012 convention, the board turned its attention to other matters:

- Larry reported that depot restoration and maintenance are on hold pending talks with the Leeds Historical Society.
- Jeff has given info to the Leeds newspaper regarding the last chapter program. He is working on making contact with the various local newspapers, etc. Marvin gave him the contact for the *Birmingham News*.
- Regarding regular chapter meeting programs, John does not have any programs setup at this time. The July Program is set and the September program will evolve around the John Henry Festival. The November program has not been decided.
- Lee still needs new material for the Company Store. The store will be open during the Leeds Festival.
- Dan reported that our new member campaign will begin in the fall with MSC attendance at rail shows. Everyone is encouraged to tell someone that you know about the MSC-R&LHS.
- James reported that the revised by-laws have been approved by the R&LHS Board.
- Marvin reported on member communications and the Newsletter.
- We have a deadline by the September Chapter meeting for submitting photos for the MSC 2012 Calendar. It will be all color. The general membership will vote on the photos with the top 12 photos (plus one for the cover) going into the 2012 calendar.
- Alan Maples is being considered for the open board vacancy.
- We will have an open house at the Leeds John Henry Festival, but no RR Show.
- The next Board Meeting will be Saturday August 27, time and location TBA.

Following the meeting, the board enjoyed lunch courtesy of Larry and Charlotte Kelpke. After lunch, Larry gave us a tour of his railroad room and layout. He specializes in American Flyer modeling and the trains, buildings and scenery all contribute to a splendid overall effect of railroading in the Golden Era.

*(Thanks to Stan Burnett for the meeting notes)*





*An L&N mine run crosses over Trestle #10 on the scenic Cain Creek Branch*

## *A Farewell to the Cane Creek Branch*

*Text and Photos by James Sims*

*(Editor's note: This is the second article in a two-part series on the former Louisville & Nashville's Cane Creek branch, considered the most scenic of all of the L&N's extensive Birmingham Mineral lines serving the Warrior (Alabama) coal fields. This final installment describes the abandonment and dismantling of the line in February 2005)*

In the late 1980s, environmental restrictions and foreign competition brought a rapid decline in Birmingham's iron and steel industry and the closing of most of the area's coal mines. The line west of Chitopa was taken out of service and used for car storage. In the late 1990s, a trestle that crossed the "Old Jasper Highway" and Cane Creek burned, prompting the CSX to abandon and take up the rails west of Chitopa. The Cane Creek branch would play out its final chapter with the connecting Jefferson Warrior Railroad – a railroad that many of the area residents still called the "Mary Lee" – the name of the railroad before Jim Walter acquired U.S. Pipe and their Sloss-Sheffield Steel & Iron Company properties. In the late eighties, the Alabama Power Company's Miller Power Generating



Plant at Palos, AL, came on line and the Jefferson Warrior Railroad had a connection with the power plant via an old line to the Palos mine at Palos. Through a long-standing agreement, the two railroads enjoyed reciprocal trackage rights. Coal from the Chitopa, Flat Top, and Bessie mines was delivered to the Miller Power Plant until the late 1990s, when Alabama Power converted the Miller plant to burn Powder River coal. The line was used occasionally for car storage until about 2000. Over the next five years, kudzu and Mimosa trees gradually took over the line.

I guess we all knew this historic piece of railroad could not survive without revenue producing customers. In the years after 1999, the processing facilities at Flat Top and Bessie were dismantled, and in 2003 the dismantling of the Chitopa tipple was finally completed. Also in 2003, the construction of Corridor X, a new Birmingham to Memphis expressway, brought about the abandonment of a one and one-half mile portion of the Jefferson Warrior Railroad from Flat Top road to West Jefferson, where it joined the Cane Creek branch. Then, in September of 2004, we noticed that the Cane Creek branch right of way was being cleared of vegetation. In February of 2005 the end came for the Cane Creek branch as A&K Railroad Materials began



*The last train on the Cane Creek branch, leased CSX locomotives 5870, a B36-7, and 5933, a B40-8, creep toward Fieldstown road with an A&K Railroad Materials rail train as it “pulls” two more 1800-foot sections of rail. The rail train arrived the previous day to begin removing the second train load of rail. This “pull” began just west of Watson, a little over 7 miles east of West Jefferson, where the rail salvaging began. The rail train can load rail from about 7.4 miles of track.*



*At Mineral Springs, the rail for this “pull” is being cut and will be attached to the end of the previous pull that is extending from the rear of the rail train. The hoist, on the end of the car will be used to lift and align the rails. Holes have been burned into the web of the rails so joint bars can be used to join the rails.*



removal of the rail, ties, and hardware – thus writing the final chapter of a very significant piece of the Birmingham district’s railroad history.

Jefferson County had planned to convert 15.5 miles of the right of way into a walking trail and to preserve all bridges and trestles. Unfortunately, the legendary Trestle #10 burned, sometime after the line was abandoned. The cause of the fire was determined to be arson. It is

not clear what will become of the Cane Creek right-of-way into Flat Top. This portion includes a beautiful curved trestle and bridge over Five Mile creek and a tunnel just west the Five Mile creek. Where this plan stands today is unclear. There is so much to tell, and perhaps we can revisit this topic in more detail at another time. But for now, we bid the Cane Creek branch a sad farewell.



*It's 3:15 Sunday afternoon as CSX #5870 leads the final pull of the day as it crosses a small stream at Black Creek park in Fulntondale.*



*The rail removal is complete. More than seven miles of the Cane Creek branch has been loaded on the rail train as it sits on the remaining rail of this historic branch, at a place once called Humoro. Humoro was a train order station when the Mary Lee Railroad interchanged with the Cane Creek branch. The station was named in honor of Hugh Morrow, the President of Sloss-Sheffield Steel & Iron Company, and later, U.S. Pipe & Foundry.*



## Golden Era Classics



**“IC on the Frisco”** — Among the half-dozen railroads operating passenger trains through Birmingham during the Golden Era, the Illinois Central had the most unique routing of all. Whereas the Southern, Seaboard, Frisco, Central of Georgia and L&N operated their trains over home rails, the IC relied on three other railroads to gain access into Birmingham. From Chicago, the IC’s *Seminole* and *City of Miami* ran over IC track to Jackson, TN, where they switched over to GM&O track to Corinth, MS. From Corinth to Haleyville, AL, trains returned to IC rails for the next 80 miles. South of Haleyville, IC trains operated 41 miles over the Southern’s North Alabama District to Jasper, AL, where they were picked up by Frisco for the final 42-mile lap into Birmingham. That’s 220 miles over four different railroads, each with their own dispatcher and priority trains. Yet, in an testament to operating efficiency, IC passenger trains consistently operated into Birmingham “on time.” On one such occasion nearly 50 years ago, we see the southbound *Seminole* on an early summer’s morning drifting downhill over Frisco trackage en route to Birmingham. Two cars behind the engine, a Railway Post Office clerk has finished his last sort and leans out for a breath of morning air. Refreshing, indeed! (*Phil Gosney collection*)

### Mid-South Chapter Calendar of Events

**Saturday, August 27 — Mid-South Chapter Board of Directors @ Leeds Depot—10 a.m.**

**Saturday, September 10 — Mid-South Chapter Meeting @ Leeds Depot—2 p.m.**

**Saturday, September 17—Leeds Festival and Depot Open House—9 a.m. to 5 p.m.**

**Sunday, September 18—Leeds Festival and Depot Open House—Noon to 5 p.m.**

**Saturday, October 8 & 22 — Work Days at the Depot — Details TBA**

**Saturday, November 12—Mid-South Chapter Meeting @ Leeds Depot—2 p.m.**

## From the Observation Platform by Marvin Clemons, President

As often happens, the greatest reward from a job well done doesn't appear until long after the task is completed. I was recently reminded of that truth when fellow Mid-South Chapter member Lyle Key and myself were awarded the R&LHS **Hilton Book Award** for our book ***Birmingham Rails***. Coming almost four years after the book was published, the coveted award was both a surprise and an honor. We were especially pleased to share the occasion with our Mid-South colleagues, friends, and family, and many of those who contributed to the book. Receiving the award was a memorable event, but what I value most are the many new and rekindled friendships that followed the book's publication. First among them would be Lyle Key, an acquaintance from our early years in the Heart of Dixie Railroad Club. During four years of almost daily collaboration on ***Birmingham Rails***, Lyle and I became and remain good friends. Other new found friends would include Frank Ardrey and Jim Thorington, also acquaintances from the Heart of Dixie Railroad Club. Still others, like David Salter and Parker Lamb, were boyhood heroes whom I never thought I would come to know personally. Not least among these valued relationships is the Mid-South Chapter, which began as a simple gathering of local book fans sharing a love for railroads. Four years later, we're still sharing our passion for trains and working together to preserve our railroad heritage at the Leeds depot. And to think this all started with an idea for a book on Birmingham railroads. My, what a pleasant surprise!



## Where are we?

*You've probably already guessed, but are you sure? The scene looks familiar, though much has changed since this slide was taken in 1964 of Southern #48, the eastbound "Southerner." The pig iron is gone, along with the foundry that produced it—well, mostly gone, anyway. The track and signaling have changed from hand-throw switches to remote interlocking. And those lovely tuxedo E8's have since gone to scrap. Otherwise, this is still one of Birmingham's hottest rail sites. So, **where are we?***



**What?** The Mid-South Chapter Meeting

**When?** Saturday, September 10 at 2 pm

**Where?** Historic Leeds Depot

**Question:** Which two major parks in Birmingham are on properties that were originally sites on the old Birmingham Mineral Division railroad? Come to the meeting and you'll find out!