



The Mid-South Flyer

November 2013



A Publication of the Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc

November program

Ore mining historian really digs Red Mountain

Some lucky folks really “dig” their jobs and enjoy “getting below the surface” of things. One such fellow is Eric McFerrin, who as park ranger for Red Mountain Park daily enjoys researching and documenting the history of iron ore mining along and beneath Birmingham’s fabled “red” mountain.

Eric’s involvement with Red Mountain Park was sparked by his interest in the rich history of Birmingham and Red Mountain. A proponent of historic preservation and a confirmed “urban adventurer,” Eric was familiar with much of the park site long before becoming its first Park Ranger, and his knowledge of both the site and the history of the iron and steel industry in Birmingham has been invaluable to the process of identifying and documenting historic places and structures within the park’s confines.



Eric McFerrin stands along a recovered portion of abandoned Birmingham Mineral track atop Red Mountain (Photo courtesy of Red Mountain Press)



Eric is no stranger to R&LHS, having previously presented an introduction to Red Mountain Park at a Mid-South Chapter meeting in 2011. Eric’s extensive knowledge and insight into the history of iron ore mining in the Birmingham district earned him a spot as featured speaker at the 2012 Birmingham convention of the R&LHS hosted by the Mid-South Chapter. Entitled “Railroads, Red Ore and Red Hot Metal,” Eric’s program was recognized as a highlight of the three-day event. The narrated PowerPoint presentation includes a virtual tour of Red Mountain iron ore mines in the early 1950s and a “then and now” tour of select red ore mines and the Tennessee Coal & Iron Company’s Ensley works.

Recognizing Eric’s popularity as a speaker and as a noted authority on the subject of iron ore mining and related rail operations in the Birmingham District, we are delighted that he has offered to reprise his program to the Mid-South Chapter at the November meeting. Those who missed his presentation at the R&LHS convention will appreciate the opportunity to see and hear Eric’s comprehensive program on the fascinating history of iron ore mining on Red Mountain. Mark your calendar and make plans to attend the next chapter meeting on Saturday, November 9 at 2:00PM, and remember to invite a friend.

A reminder that R&LHS and chapter dues are due!

Look for your renewal notice in the coming issue of Railroad History or renew on-line



By the Board

Minutes from the September 2013 Board of Directors Meeting

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Mid-South Chapter was called to order by John Browning on September 7, 2013, at 10:10 a.m. at the Leeds Depot, Leeds, Alabama. The meeting was held in the agent's office due to the baggage room being in use for an outside event.

Board of Directors members present: John Browning, Marvin Clemons, Lamont Downs, Larry Kelpke, James Lowery, Dr. Carl Marbury, Lee Singletary, Tim Smith, John Stewart.

Board of Directors members absent: Natasha Bettis, Hal Holley

Guests (non-voting): David Coombs, Pat Honsa

Quorum: A quorum was present for the meeting.

Treasurer's Report: James Lowery distributed the Treasurer's report for transactions covering the period January 1-August 17, 2013. Lowery stated that we have not received any dues from National this year. Lee Singletary moved the report be accepted by the Board. The motion was seconded and approved.

Secretary's Report: The Board agreed to dispense with the reading of the June 29 meeting's minutes. Marvin Clemons moved that the minutes be approved. The motion was seconded and passed.

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The Mid-South Flyer is published bi-monthly by the Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society (R&LHS), Inc. The R&LHS is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to the study and preservation of railroad history. National and chapter dues are \$47 and include subscriptions to the Society's twice-yearly magazine Railroad History and quarterly newsletter, The Mid-South Flyer. Membership applications for R&LHS and the Mid-South Chapter are available on the Internet at www.rlhs.org.

News, articles, photos, and comments are invited and should be emailed to:

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Old Business

Update on Caboose Repairs. Larry Kelpke reported that the new caboose stairs have been built and windows replaced with Plexiglass. Wasps may still be a problem. The doors are rusting badly along the bottom and will need repair or replacement. The possibility of getting replacement doors from Norfolk Southern was considered. Someone made the point that the back side of the front and back caboose platforms were "open" and that there might be the danger of a child accidentally walking off that part of the platforms. Lowery suggested that some of the pieces of lumber left over from building the steps could be pulled from the trash pile (preferably today before it gets hauled away) and two or three pieces of that wood could be installed across each of those open spots using U-bolts to attach them to the existing vertical metal hand rails. He pointed out that that could be done immediately even before a more permanent solution is installed. Dr. Carl Marbury said that the Leeds Historical Society will take care of that within the next month, hopefully before the festival.

Dr. Marbury provided a written accounting of funds expended on the steps reconstruction and requested reimbursement of \$346 covering personal expenses and a donation made in the name of the chapter. He also reported on the need for planting of grass and repair of tables. Clemons moved that the chapter donate \$200 toward the construction of the ca-



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boose steps. Lamont Downs moved to amend Clemons' motion to reimburse Dr. Marbury for the amount of \$346. The amendment was seconded and approved. The original motion as amended was then seconded and approved.

Digitized Newsletter Archive Update. Clemons reported that the newsletters have been digitized, but the resulting file was too large for the site to handle. They are going to re-index the files to make each individual issue separately searchable. Downs expressed concerns about the impaired functionality that would result. Browning suggested a searchable index. John Stewart suggested that once the individual issues are posted a regular web search should be able to access the contents.

Status of Ardrey Exhibit. Stewart distributed handouts containing specifications for a multimedia player and a detailed recommendation for setup and use. The player is available from vendor Team Kingsley LLC for under \$300 and would be programmed from an external computer and loaded with an SD card, at which time it would operate in a standalone mode via a digital television or monitor. Playback could be started via a pushbutton, and the player mounted on the underside of a table if desired.

Downs raised the issue of resolution (high-definition versus DVD resolution). Stewart will look into the detailed specifications for the product. Discussion ensued as to the difference between the two resolutions and their importance. Downs volunteered to burn a test Blu-Ray slide show which could be viewed by the board through a high-definition display for evaluation. Security of a Blu-Ray player versus the multimedia was discussed. Downs will download the multimedia player's manual and review the specifications.

Stewart moved that the Board authorize an expenditure not to exceed \$300 pending a followup report by Stewart via email and a positive vote via email by the Board. The motion was seconded and approved.

Archive Committee Report. Clemons welcomed the members of the Archive Committee, consisting of David Coombs, Dr. Carl Marbury and himself. Dr. Marbury previously agreed to take the proposal to the Leeds Library Board and the City of Leeds. He reported that space is limited in the current library. A new library is being built with more space and would be part of the new city hall; our archives would remain in the old library but with more available space. The Leeds Library said they would welcome our associating with them, and the City is also in favor of our proposal as it would bring more people downtown. The date of the new library's construction is currently unclear. No decision has been made as to when we could set up our archives in the current building; Dr. Marbury hopes to have more information by our next meeting.

Clemons asked if it was too soon for us to present a proposal. Dr. Marbury said that the sooner the better. We would not be the only occupant of the old library after the move as other archives are also a possibility. We will need to create an estimate of space needed. Clemons emphasized the need for future expansion, as our archives would very likely expand rapidly once a secure location is available.

Coombs described the library facilities at the Heart of Dixie Museum's library.

Downs asked about staffing. Dr. Marbury said that the library would still provide a staff person after the move as a service of the City. Browning asked about the extent of the current archives; Clemons said they consist of several boxes and some books. Clemons recommended the creation of a proposal and a meeting of the Com-



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mittee with library representatives. Dr. Marbury discussed the increasing interest in trains by school groups and emphasized that increasing public interest means greater potential financial support.

Report on Chapter Roster and Dues. Browning reported on the current status of National R&LHS membership management. Downs reported 69 paid up members as of the most recent roster, received at the end of last month and updated with corrections from the new management firm in early September. Stewart asked how R&LHS membership nationwide compares to the National Railway Historical Society; the consensus was that NRHS is larger.

Coombs asked about the non-current members. Downs sent out reminder letters on July 12, and included membership renewal forms. Several members' status was updated as a result. Lowery again stated that he has not received any dues monies from National for this year. Clemons asked about corrections to the information on our web page, some of which is out of date. Tim Smith said that we have to work through National to do these for us. Smith will ask John Gruber, R&LHS webmaster, to remove the link ("Midsouth.rlhs.org") from the new Facebook page until our inside pages can be updated.

Other Old Business: None.

New Business

Leeds Festival September 21st and 22nd. Browning reported that volunteers are needed for the festival, especially at opening and closing time.

Dr. Marbury has photographs and newspapers for temporary exhibition in the caboose. However, the caboose interior needs cleaning and repainting. Clemons and Kelpke volunteered to do so. Smith offered to re-stencil lettering as needed, Dr. Marbury expressed concerns about any changes that involved historical markings, etc. and asked that anything historical not be disturbed at this time; only cleaning and washing the caboose for the festival should be done. Clemons asked if Dr. Marbury could provide someone to staff the caboose during the festival. Dr. Marbury emphasized that the City and the Leeds Historical Society consider the caboose to be theirs for development and use. Lowery stated that adding safety rails to the caboose would be relatively easy.

Singletary asked about the location of vendors and the John Henry play. Dr. Marbury summarized the current plans.

Chapter Incorporation Possibilities. Browning reported on the chapter Executive Committee meeting held on August 17. National R&LHS will not extend their 501(c)(3) tax-exempt status to the chapters, but we could apply for our own. We are also not currently incorporated in Alabama. Insurance concerns were described. We were not covered by insurance during our field trip to Kennesaw, Georgia, last year except for that provided by the bus company for their part of the trip. Singletary advised against applying for 501(c)(3) status if at all possible, citing the heavy paperwork burden involved. Clemons said that event insurance is expensive, and gave as an example \$1200 for an event with 65 people.

Browning asked how incorporation would affect liability. Lowery said that it would mean individuals are not personally liable, but of course in reality anyone can sue anyone else. Stewart asked about directors and officers insurance (D&O insurance), and the pros and cons were discussed. Lowery advised making sure that D&O



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insurance included court costs and legal fees. Clemons asked Dr. Marbury how the Leeds Historical Society dealt with this, and Dr. Marbury said they are covered by the City of Leeds.

Browning agreed to email Jerry Angiers at National R&LHS, who brokered the insurance for the national organization, about insurance possibilities for the chapter.

Meeting Program Ideas (Trips, Special Programs, etc.). Browning asked for programming ideas that would not involve insurance liability. Some of the ideas submitted included:

A Mid-South Heart of Dixie Day (Smith)

Involving the chapter in future Birmingham Steam excursions (Singletary)

Those with photo collections providing Browning with a list of programs they could present with adequate notice (Downs)

Have Eric McFerrin do his program about Red Mountain (Singletary)

Invite Alan Dismukes to do his program on the Alabama Mineral Line (Stewart)

Programs on railroads we have not yet had programs on, including Southern, Frisco and Gulf, Mobile & Ohio (Clemons)

A program on the Birmingham Belt Railway (Stewart)

Invite Ron Flannery to do a presentation; a travel stipend might be necessary (Singletary)

A program on Swiss Railroads by Chris Shelton (Stewart)

A program by Gary Click of Nortrak on Cuban railroads (Stewart)

A program by John Osborne of Demopolis, whose father worked for the Frisco (Browning)

A program by Larry Goolsby on the AB&C (Stewart)

A program about Birmingham Rail & Locomotive (Stewart)

Vulcan Materials: The Secret Life of Railroad Ballast (Stewart)

Clemons will contact Dan Ferris about a possible January presentation for the membership meeting.

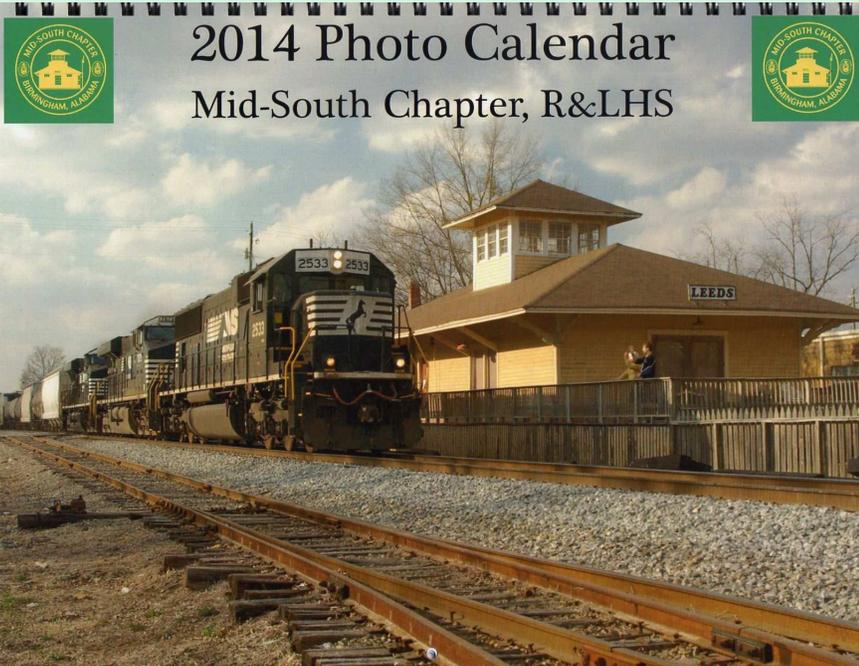
Browning asked that anyone with other ideas email him. Dr. Marbury will ask his niece to research on the internet for a list of persons in the Birmingham area with a knowledge of area railroad history. Lowery suggested that some of the Sloss Furnaces staff might be knowledgeable about the associated railroads.

Other new business. Clemons reported that the newsletter will go out next week. He will then begin laying out the calendar. The number needed was discussed. We still have 30 left out of 100 of this year's. Dr. Marbury expressed willingness to distribute some to the Leeds historical community. The possibility of distributing copies at various rail shows was discussed. Singletary suggested starting with 100. It was agreed that the chapter would give a calendar to each current Mid-South Chapter member who renews by December 31, 2013.

Dr. Marbury requested updated copies of the chapter's membership and depot brochures for the festival. Clemons will provide these.

Adjournment. Clemons moved for adjournment. The motion was seconded and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 12:33 pm.

New 2014 Chapter Calendar now shipping



2014 Photo Calendar
Mid-South Chapter, R&LHS

The 2014 Mid-South Chapter Photo Calendar has arrived from the printer, just in time for holiday gift giving. The all-color calendar features full-page photos contributed and selected by the chapter membership. Printed in 80# matte paper with heavy enameled covers, the calendar contains 13 original member photos of railroading in the Birmingham district and across the Mid-South's four-state region. The calendar sells for \$10 through the Company Store and will be available at the November 9th meeting, or may be mail ordered by sending a check or money order plus \$3 postage to Lee Singletary, 142 Winterhaven Drive, Alabaster AL 35007. New and renewing Mid-South members will receive a complimentary calendar with their 2014 membership.



January



February



March



April



May



June



July



August



September



October



November



December

Logging Railroads in the United States, Part 3:

From Logs to Lumber: Processing Logs After They've Arrived at the Mill

By David Lester, Contributing Editor

In my last three columns, we've discussed logging railroads. In my first column, we reviewed two volumes of a book on logging railroads, entitled "Whistles in the Piney Woods," followed by a three-part series on logging railroads, the first of which provided a brief overview of logging railroads in America. My second entry focused on Shays, Heislors and Climaxes, three of the most popular narrow-gauge locomotives for logging railroads. In my final article on logging and railroads, we'll take a look at the customer for the logs – the sawmill, where logs are "made" into lumber for a variety of uses. The lumber mill operations discussed here generally reflect the state of the art, as it existed in the early part of the twentieth century. Toward the end of the discussion, we'll review how modern mills operate today.

Historically, lumber has been classified based on how it will be used, and there are three key categories of use: yard lumber, factory and shop lumber, and structural lumber. Yard lumber is used for building uses, such as flooring, siding and roofing base. Factory and shop lumber is used for higher-end goods, such as furniture, door frames and other fine work. Structural lumber is used in the building framing process, and is designed for load-bearing use.

Generally speaking, a sawmill, large or small, has four components: the sawmill buildings, a mill pond, railroad tracks that connect the logging railroad and the pond, along with yards and kilns for drying the wood. Logs are stored in a pond when they arrive at the mill because the water prevents the wood from drying out, and also facilitates movement of the logs into the mill. In addition, insects cannot infiltrate the log while it is wet. When logs arrive at the mill, some made use of "dry" storage, instead of storing them in the pond to keep the logs wet. This is particularly true if it's relatively easy to maintain a steady supply of logs, minimizing the storage space needs for logs waiting to be cut, if the sawmill is relatively small, or if the sawmill is primarily processing hardwoods.



Sawmill in Erwin, West Virginia circa 1938

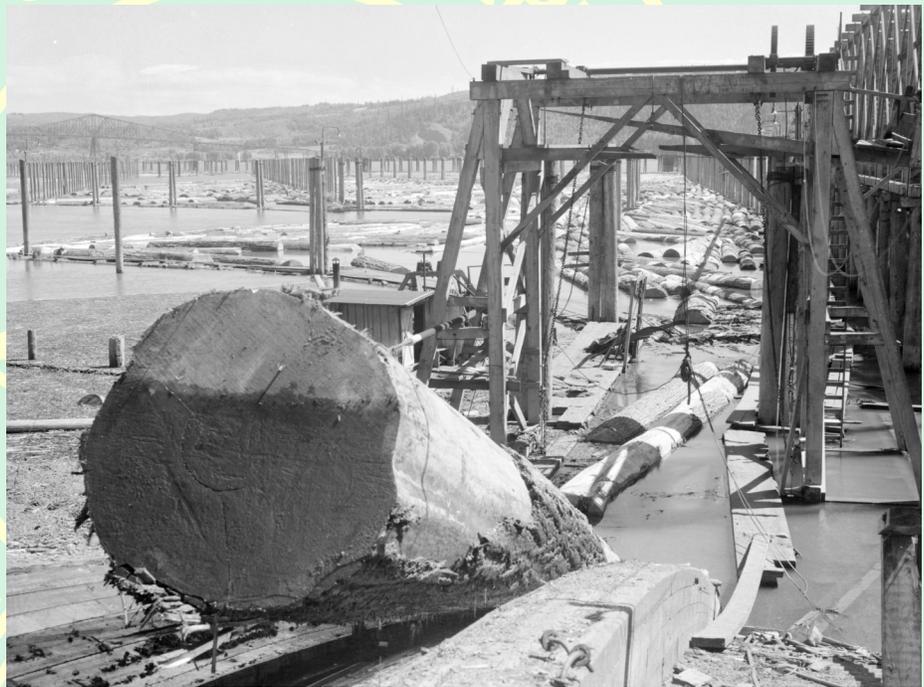
Once logs are cut into lumber boards, they need to dry before shipping. Some sawmills just let them

air dry by placing the lumber boards on special shelving that allowed air to circulate around the entire board. When faster drying time is needed, mills use kilns to heat the lumber, which speeds the drying process. Since the area needed for the drying process is large, particularly at the larger mills, a separate network of tracks is often built to move the logs from the mill to the drying area.

Most sawmills also had a sawdust burner, which was cone-shaped, and looked like a rubber finger tip used for sorting mail or handling money. These burners, often referred to as “wigwam” burners, could still be found in various parts of the country as late as the 1980’s, and some may still be standing today. Air pollution regulations, however, have outlawed their use in most, if not all, areas of the country.

Power needed to operate sawmills has evolved over time. The first small sawmills were operated by water. The production rates of these mills were relatively low, until steam power was introduced. Next, electricity was made available to sawmills, which further enhanced production, and some smaller mills even used gasoline or diesel-powered engines for power.

The manufacture of lumber produces a large quantity of by-products that can be used in various ways. For mills with steam-powered boilers, the refuse can be used for fuel. Some of the waste can be used to make profitable products, like broom handles, pallets, and floor edging. Wood chips can be sold to paper manufacturers for use in their mills. And, sawdust has a variety of uses, including domestic heating, floor covering material for meat packing houses to absorb the liquid waste from those operations, and as packing and insulation material for the shipment of fresh fruits and vegetables.



Logs moving up a conveyor at a Washington State sawmill, circa 1936

One of the classic sawmill towns in the late 19th and early 20th centuries was Laurel, Mississippi, which is in the southeastern portion of the state. Laurel got its start in the early 1880’s, when the New Orleans and Northeastern railroad was built, which provided a route between Meridian, MS and New Orleans. This line today is part of Norfolk Southern’s mainline between Atlanta and New Orleans.

Before the arrival of the railroad, the point that would become Laurel, and the surrounding area, was an almost endless number of yellow pine trees. Only pioneer settlers had populated the area to this point, and the combination of the railroad and the vast timber stands created an opportunity for good

jobs for the people who already lived in Laurel, as well as the thousands who would come there in search of employment and a better way of life.

While the logging boom began in Laurel in 1880, by 1930, most of the timber in the area had been depleted, and the sawmills were doing very little business. There were four key mills that dominated the lumber industry in Laurel during this time – the Eastman, Gardiner & Company, the Gilchrist-Fordney Company, the Wausau Southern Lumber Company, and the Marathon Lumber Company. The logging boom brought tremendous economic benefits to the owners, who were all northerners, as well as the workers, most of whom had been hired locally in Laurel. The tragedy of this period was that there was no forest management or conservation in place during this time, and once the boom was over, Laurel experienced significant economic decline. Fortunately, other businesses developed in Laurel over the years, and today it's a charming southern town of approximately 20,000 people. And, Laurel is served twice daily by the northbound and southbound Amtrak *Crescent*, which operates between New York and New Orleans, mostly on Norfolk Southern's line between Washington, D.C. and New Orleans.



Sawdust burner near the Columbia River in Washington State

While some sawmills still exist, the large commercial sawmills that operate today are, like many large industries, wonders of technology. Computers play a large role in the operation of these facilities, including telling the sawmill equipment precisely how to cut the wood, instead of having to hand measure it. Today's sawmills are very efficient and productive, and generate tens of millions of board feet of lumber every year. Lumber is then shipped to the customer by truck or on specially built railroad cars, depending on the customer and the size of the load.

One of the great things about studying railroads is the opportunity to study the complex industries that they serve. In many cases, they are fascinating operations, and have long and interesting histories. I hope that this brief look at the lumber industry will motivate you to do further research on the logging and lumber industries, as well as take a look at some of the other industries served by rail, such as coal, automobiles and auto parts, chemicals, and, one of the newer sources of traffic, oil fields in the United States that are producing large quantities of crude oil through a process known as fracking.

Modeling Railroad History

Railroad History and Model Railroading, Part 3

by John Stewart

There are many approaches to modeling railroad history. Some folks do a “freelance” of what they like, some pick a prototype in general, some pick a location or segment of a railroad and some literally model a location and a specific date in history. Any of these approaches is the perfect one for “you”.

I believe we must always remember that the modeler may do as he or she pleases and there is not a “best way” to model your interest in railroads. And it is all “history” whether 100 years ago, or yesterday. My friend Craig Gardner models the Birmingham Southern “the-day-before-WATCO-took-over” and this is his version of “history”. And he has a great layout in progress. He tore down a somewhat complete operating layout because it didn’t represent what he wanted it to.

There are different reasons to model railroad history, or maybe, better stated, different goals to seek to achieve. There is a wonderful model railroad in Birmingham which models the Maryland & Pennsylvania (Ma & Pa) from Baltimore to York, PA. The railroad is called the Delta Central, and the real goal seems to have been to model prototype buildings along the right of way of the Ma & Pa. The owner, Larry Deagon, did this very well working from on-site or historical photos of buildings supplemented by field research. He has done a remarkable job in pursuit of this particular approach with wonderful scratch-built structures. Fortunately this over-30-year-old layout is being refurbished by volunteers as Mr. Deagon is not in good health, but wants to share his work for others to enjoy and operate.

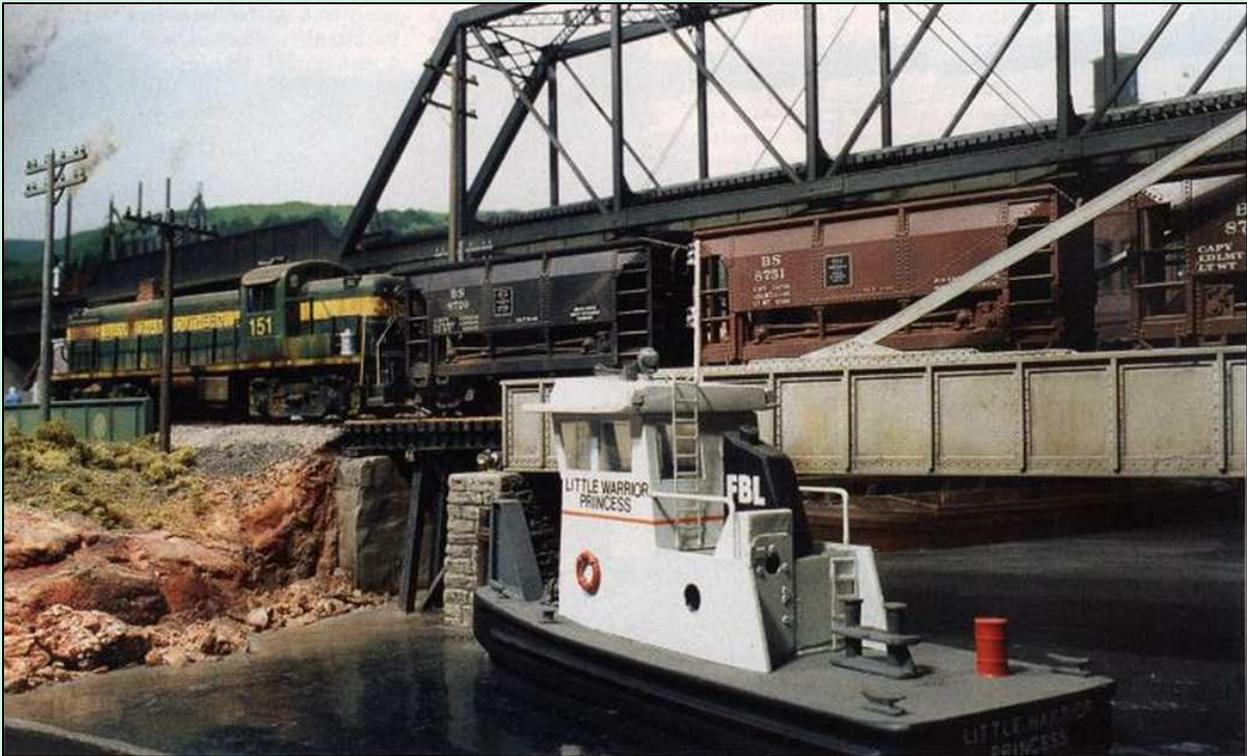


I suggest an approach called “characterization” which I have mentioned before. A wonderful version of this approach is a layout of Birmingham built by Ken McElreath and featured in Railroad Model Craftsman (RMC) in November, 2003. This railroad was started in 1985 and began operating sessions in 1993. The full article [Birmingham, 1950](#) is posted with permission from RMC on my website (www.bhamrails.info/ModelRailroading.html), see link four lines from bottom of page).

Ken states that he decided to model Birmingham before he had ever visited the location! But he had figured out that the locale would provide the type of railroading that he wanted to model, as well as operating opportunities that he wanted to replicate. I want to say that I use the term “characterization” for Ken’s wonderful work because although it looks like Birmingham, and catches the flavor of our area’s heavy industrial railroading, many of the scenes really can’t be found. And I think that is very much OK.

Ken was good enough to email me last summer to say that he was monitoring progress on my railroad via

the internet. And he said that he and his wife had moved and started a new railroad in 2009. A photo of his great modeling is shown here. I could say that this deck girder "sort of" reminds me of Linn's Crossing on the L&N's Cane/Cain Creek Branch, but not quite. And that's OK. I hope you will take time to enjoy Ken's work in the article with the link above.



The scene above certainly captures the flavor of Birmingham's industrial activity at the Warrior River, one assumes near Birmingham, with the Federal Barge Line's towboat and the Birmingham Southern ore train. But you won't find that scene exactly, but it looks wonderful and does its job so well - I love it.

Planning a model railroad is quite an undertaking, and unfortunately is all that some folks ever do. Robert Schuller (among others) called this "the paralysis of analysis", and I don't recommend it. I do believe a model railroad should be well planned, just don't get stuck in the process - build your dream.

On the other hand, I don't support the notion of "build some benchwork and then start laying track". Some folks are clever enough to get away with that, but not many. I suggest a happy medium of planning and design followed by construction AND operations. I believe that one must begin to run trains early on with an eye toward operating the layout to find out if it does what you want it to do. I believe that the layout's flavor includes the ability to represent model railroading and not just a model.

I realize that some folks build the layout itself as a "model" and all the models on the layout are part of the "model". That is fine for some folks. We have fine modelers hereabouts who do this so well.

I like to play with my trains and many (including my wife) worry that I don't have scenery (I say - yet). She is right, but I find that when operating the layout my imagination supplies a lot of the missing scenery. But I suspect many folks visiting are disappointed that they aren't seeing a miniature world. Fortunately most are too kind to say so. I figure I have the rest of my life to build scenery, but I want to run the railroad in the meantime - that's my approach. This is because my railroad represents the movement of raw materials to make iron and steel - does it work?

So, what I am recommending is that you consider picking a theme, and a railroad or two (at least) and then you have a locale (somewhere along the mainline) and even pick an era. Your theme might be as general as

“heavy industry”, or “Colorado Mountains”, or “coal mining” or “big city” but even these broad categories give you something to hang your hat on. It seems to me that this will help you a great deal because it develops a focus for the line(s) to model and for buying locomotives and rolling stock. It helps define your scenery as big city or high mountains. And it may help you decide to have steam era, or diesels or the wonderful compromise of “transition era”. These choices add realism to your dream.

If you take this approach, and I believe that is what Ken McElreath did, then you can begin to gather information about the railroad you are going to characterize. Remember, Ken said that he selected Birmingham’s industrial area before he had even been here, and then he and his wife made trips to take photos, do research and get the feel and flavor that are reflected so very well in the layout. And note in the article that it took 8 years to get from start of construction to starting formal operations which then continued for years more till it was time to move and start over (fortunately). Now I don’t feel so bad.

If you are reading this article and are considering building a layout I would be glad to provide a sounding board for your dreams. I can also offer some solid reference material. One of the very best references is John Armstrong’s Track Planning for Realistic Operation, first printed by Kalmbach publishing in 1963. Armstrong is considered by many to be the dean of model railroad planning and design. My copy dates from 1973 and still has the \$3.50 price sticker on it. If you have only one book this is the one to have.

Another wonderful reference is Frank Ellison’s set of articles The Art of Model Railroading which were published in Model Railroading magazine years ago. These six are but a few of his many published articles. Ellison also wrote a book on Model Railroading which I have never found but would like to have. While Armstrong helps with “data oriented” planning and design, as well as component planning (yards or mines for example), Ellison I think is the best at helping capture the “flavor or theme” of model railroad planning that helps one see the fun in creating a miniature world. This may be because Ellison’s first career was in vaudeville traveling the country by train in the golden years of railroading and remembering everything he saw. Model Railroader reprinted ‘The Art’ in recent years and the 75 Years of Model Railroader DVD is worth its price for Ellison’s articles alone - a great Christmas gift – for \$200.

So, let’s say that you have a dream in mind and you want to start planning your model railroad. There is one key ingredient missing and I think it is likely the most important. That is right-of-way!

It is ok to dream and plan but until you try to fit that dream into a space with walls, floor and ceiling, you are only dreaming. I believe that the skill in building a model railroad is to be able to capture your dream in a space with all the limitations that go with it. Imagination (yours and visitor’s) and modeling tricks can make that space seem larger, and like a good magician, you may never reveal your secrets, but ultimately it comes down to “how in the world do I put my dream into the space I have available”?



To be continued...



From the Observation Platform

Commentary by John Browning, Mid-South Chapter President

Dear friends and fellow Mid-South Chapter members,

It certainly does seem like this year has flown by. I hope that each of you are doing well and have had a good year. Hopefully you have had some free time to enjoy a little railfanning or other train related activities.

Our chapter has had a great year so far. At our March meeting we had a great presentation on the railroads of Japan from our own Lamont Downs. In April, we helped host the spring meeting of the Central of Georgia Historical Society. The Central of Georgia group graciously made all of their activities available to our chapter members. Many of us had a great time visiting several historical C of G sites in this area and learning more about the history of this great railroad. After a weather delay in May, we held our annual chapter picnic in July. I think that everyone enjoyed the food and fellowship. After lunch, we had an awesome photo presentation from Marvin Clemons and then we held our annual calendar photo contest. The new calendar is ready and will be available at our November meeting.

We now officially have an archive committee that is being headed up by Marvin Clemons. This is the first step in establishing a permanent archive of rail history related material that comes into the possession of the chapter. This committee will be working on procedures and policies for handling collections of material that might be donated to the chapter in the future, as well as the handling of our existing materials and artifacts.

Our November meeting is one that you will not want to miss. Eric McFerrin from Red Mountain Park will be presenting a spectacular program on the history of the iron and steel industry in the Birmingham area and how it related to the development of many of our areas railroads. Make plans now to be there!

The Mid-South Chapter is made up of a group of individuals with a variety of back grounds. Some of our members are former railroad employees and some are railfans who just have a deep interest in trains. Some of our members are interested in the rail history of certain areas while others are interested in the current day to day operations of the area's railroads. I believe that this wide variety of individuals makes our chapter unique. We all seem to have a good time together and really enjoy the fellowship. I know that I learn something new every time I have a conversation with one of you. My hope is that we will continue to grow as a chapter and be able to offer more benefits to our members.

I feel like we have had a great year and I am looking forward to 2014. I hope to see each of you at the November meeting. Until next time....

John Browning