



The Mid-South Flyer

March 2013



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

Mid-South Chapter to host Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society spring gathering

The Historic Leeds Depot will be the site of the annual Spring Meeting of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society (CGRHS), it has been announced by CGRHS president Allen Tuten.

Set for Saturday, April 20 and co-hosted by the Mid-South Chapter, the day-long gathering will feature historical presentations and driving tours of the former Central of Georgia's operations in the Birmingham district. The meeting will open with a slide presentation on Central's operations by Mid-South members Marvin Clemons and Dale Burns, followed by a panel discussion by retired Central of Georgia employees from the Birmingham District. A special attraction will be an entertaining and informative video presentation by retired Central trainman Jamie Williams detailing his years switching between Leeds and Winburn and operating over the former Margaret Branch.



Roaring through Irondale, CofG #709, a 2-10-2 Class "CT" heads up the Winburn Turn on September 5, 1948. Frank Ardrey photo, Marvin Clemons collection.

After the morning session, attendees will board vans for a driving tour of existing and abandoned Central of Georgia sites between Irondale and Winburn. The planned itinerary includes photo stops (weather and safety permitting) at Weems, McCombs (site of the connection with the CofGa's Cahaba District), Margaret Junction (site of the connection with the CofGa's Margaret District), Henry Ellen (between Leeds and Margaret Junction), Winburn Yard, and Oak Mountain Tunnel. Special emphasis will be given to locations mentioned in the article "**Operations Around Winburn, Alabama**" featured in recent issue of *The Right Way*, the CGRHS magazine. The article was authored by NS engineer Tom Holley, whose father O.R. Holley Jr. also ran on the Birmingham District. (*Editor's note: Tom's excellent article is reprinted in this issue of the Flyer, beginning on page 6.*)

A lunch stop (individual settlement) will be made at the Irondale Café of "Friend Green Tomatoes" fame, offering almost continuous views of NS main line action at Norris Yard.

The morning session at Leeds Depot is open and free of charge to all Mid-South members and their guests. Registration for the van tours is \$18.00 per person for all attendees. Payment can be made by check (payable to "CGRHS") and mailed to Eddie Shaw, 1271 Burnt Tree Drive East, Mobile AL 36695, or register at the CGRHS website at www.cofga.org. Deadline for registration is April 15 and early registration is strongly advised due to limited seating for the van tour.

Mid-South Chapter News & Views

March meeting highlight

Railfanning Japan brings delights both old and new

A country slightly smaller than California, but with 40% of the United States' population. A country where rail passenger-miles exceed air travel by almost four times. A country which sees about 26,000 trains per day, the majority of them passenger trains. A country where you can walk into almost any bookstore and purchase the equivalent of our Official Guide for about ten dollars, over 1000 pages long and mostly passenger train schedules. One of its stations is the busiest train station in the world. Punctuality averages within 10 seconds of scheduled arrival times.

That country is Japan. In 1964 Japan pioneered the first trains in the world to routinely reach 130 miles per hour, today approaching 200. In the 49 years since there has not been one passenger fatality, even in the midst of earthquakes and tsunamis. A new Maglev line is now in the planning stage which is expected to routinely reach speeds of 310 mph.

At our Saturday, March 9 chapter meeting Mid-South member Lamont Downs will present a report on Japan's railways today as well as provide a historical background, illustrated with videos taken by him and spouse Pat last October. You'll ride one of the famous bullet trains, see some of the incredible rail commuter service, watch trains in some of the busiest stations in the world, ride a scenic line along the Pacific Ocean and visit one of Japan's largest steam locomotive museums. Welcome to passenger train paradise!



Something old, something new — There are 18 steam locomotives on display at the Umekoji Steam Locomotive Museum, including this one which provides 10-minute rides for all museum visitors. Below, a Japanese shinkansen prepares to leave Shinjuku station for its 168 mph run to Kyoto



The Mid-South Flyer March 2013

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, and the chapter's e-newsletter, The Mid-South Flyer. Membership applications are available on the Internet at www.rlhs.org.

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

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Renewal Reminder!

If you haven't yet renewed your R&LHS membership and wish to continue receiving this newsletter, Society publications and other member benefits, now's the time. The quickest and simplest method is to renew on line with a credit card at the R&LHS website at www.rlhs.org, or download the renewal form and submit with payment to the address provided on the website. Annual membership is \$47, which includes your chapter dues. When you renew, make sure you indicate you are renewing for the **Mid-South Chapter**.

2013 Mid-South Meeting & Events Schedule Update

- March 9 — Chapter meeting
- April 20 — Central of Georgia Historical Society Spring meet
- May 11 — Chapter Cookout
- July 13 — Chapter meeting
- September 14 — Chapter meeting
- September 21-22 — Leeds Festival & John Henry Celebration
- November 9 — Chapter meeting
- December — Holiday Social TBA



By the Board

Minutes from the January 2013 board meeting

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Mid-South Chapter was called to order by John Browning on February 23, 2013, at 10:14 a.m. at the Leeds Depot, Leeds, Alabama. Board members present were John Browning, Marvin Clemons, Lamont Downs, Larry Kelpke, James Lowery, Lee Singletary, Tim Smith, and John Stewart. A quorum was present for the meeting.

Treasurer's Report

James Lowery provided the Treasurer's report, which the Board of Directors received as presented. We have received a check from the Friends of R&LHS to the amount of \$1930. The current balance is \$2363.75 as of today, not including the Friends check. The Dollar a Month balance is \$85.63. James is preparing an updated spreadsheet breaking down finances into General Fund, Project Expenses, Current Balances, Membership Dues, etc. It will provide a more project-oriented presentation, and facilitate transfers between funds.

Secretary's Report

Lamont Downs reported that as of an informal tally today we have 51 members (8 new and 43 renewing). This does not include members currently delinquent in paying dues.

Minutes Approval and Minutes Matters

The Board agreed to dispense with the reading of the previous meeting's minutes. Lee Singletary moved that the minutes be approved, and the motion was passed.

Old Business

Friends of R&LHS Solicitation. The check has arrived. John Browning briefly discussed some other preservation projects. Vacancies on the Board were discussed. Larry mentioned a possible candidate who is trying to get a railroad viewing platform set up. John Stewart will try to contact Natasha Bettis, as Marvin Clemons has been unable to reach her.

Update on Master Plan for Depot Exhibit. John Stewart reported that the Committee on Exhibit Master Plan met on February 9 at his home, and has sent the Board members notes of the discussion. The main committee suggestion is for the Board to identify and adopt a list of key projects with timelines; after that efforts will be made to get the membership to adopt one or more projects. Four different venues were considered

1. Depot grounds
2. Outreach to other organizations
3. Potential projects not at the Depot to sponsor, for example, setting up historical markers and/or other signage for the Birmingham Mineral Line. James suggested some possible formats and inclusion of R&LHS information at the same time. Marvin suggested starting with Leeds and spreading out from there, such as creating an R&LHS archive in the Leeds Public Library. Ownership and research issues were discussed.
4. The virtual track; i.e. internet presence. This could make up for the limitations on our physical space, as well as encourage visitors to the Depot. Smart phones could be incorporated into the project.

The need to maximize physical resources versus the lack of control over our site (the Depot) was discussed. There is a lack of focus on a specific message to communicate. Phillip Ratliffe from Vulcan Park has reviewed the Depot resources with John Stewart and provided input on a possible process.

Marvin announced that Mid-South/the Depot will be appearing in the *Trains Tourist Guide* in April. Staffing needs for telephone response were considered. We could start with very limited days and hours. Adding an answering machine and/or voice mail as a stopgap was discussed. John B. will look into available services. We are already paying for the phone line into the Depot.

Tim Smith reported that the national R&LHS website has links to our Facebook and YouTube pages. Marvin felt that the Ardrey exhibit should be our top priority since we have the funds for it. Tim raised traffic issues within the building and brought up the need for a door between the two waiting rooms. Associated difficulties with ownership issues were discussed since the Depot serves several organizations. Marvin stated that we need to show the newly elected Leeds community officials what we are doing here.

Update on Caboose Repairs. Larry announced that the Leeds Historical Society has agreed to have the steps built using the lumber already stored in the caboose. He is looking into how to repair the windows. Tim mentioned the need to have openings sealed to keep out insects, particularly wasps. There were serious code issues associated with the previous Leeds administration; the new administration appears to be much easier to work with.

Relating to previous business, James moved that Lee Singletary and Phillip Ratliffe be made members of the Committee on Exhibit Master Plan. The motion was seconded and passed.

John B. suggested that MSC invite the mayor to meet the chapter and tour the facilities. Marvin suggested a reception would be appropriate. James suggested signage be placed around town directing visitors to the Depot and publicizing the MSC.

Various local projects not associated with Mid-South were informally discussed. The library archive suggestion was further considered. Marvin is working on a brochure for the Depot for the Chamber of Commerce. James is finishing up an inventory of chapter property. Marvin suggested aiming for May for having a voice mail/answering system in place.

Marvin moved that John B. be given authority to negotiate for voice mail and internet service. The motion was seconded and passed.

The role of volunteers was considered for regular staffing hours at the Depot, beginning with 1 day per month. This proposal will be presented at the March meeting, with a possible target date of May.

John Stewart left at this time due to other commitments.

Other Old Business: None.

New Business

Proposed By-Laws Change. The proposed changes would clarify the separate roles of Secretary and Treasurer. Lee moved that the board adopt the changes and approve submission to the membership at the March 9 meeting. The motion was seconded and passed. If the changes are approved they will be submitted to National. Marvin will include information on these proposed changes in the newsletter.

Non-Monetary Donation Form and Gift Acceptance Policy. James submitted a proposed form to be filled out by persons donating physical items to the Chapter. This is needed for IRS purposes if materials are auctioned off. The Donor would have to assign a fair market value. Discussion ensued on this point. Intellectual property issues were considered. It was agreed that James would continue work on refining the form.

Proposed Meeting Dates for 2013 were reviewed.

Train Show in Helena on March 2nd. Lee announced that we have paid for 2 tables and will also receive 1 free table; in addition, several members will also have tables. We will be selling the Mid-South 2013 calendars and will have membership forms available. A reasonable sale price was discussed, and \$6 was tentatively agreed upon. Solicitation of photos for next year's calendar was considered with entries to be submitted in time for the July membership meeting.

Newsletter Electronic Archive by R&LHS. Marvin announced that National R&LHS is digitizing their library, and has offered to digitize all chapter newsletters and post them on their web site without charge. These will all be searchable.

Central of Georgia Railroad Historical Society Leeds meeting, April 20, 2013. Marvin reported that we will co-host their meeting at the Depot; they will give us a donation in return. An itinerary has been developed, including a van tour, videos and historical information. The meeting should last 4-5 hours and 30-35 attendees are expected. The meeting will be open to our members at no charge, except a small head charge will be made for the van ride. Information will be sent out in the chapter newsletter or a separate mailing.

Other new business. Larry called attention to several Leeds downtown revitalization proposals. One is building a train viewing platform somewhere along the NS mainline, and one suggested location is just west of the Depot, in this block or the next. Implications for the John Henry Festival and the Depot were discussed. Possible damage to the trees and loss of shade was considered; James suggested that the platform could be built around the trees. Marvin and Larry also suggested rebuilding the existing platform as an alternative. The need was expressed for the Board to communicate with city officials and the revitalization group. Members of the revitalization committee would like to attend our next board meeting. It was agreed that we could hold our next meeting (April) at 9 am if necessary to accommodate their schedule.

John B. expressed his thanks to the previous officers and his optimism for the organization's future, and presented Marvin Clemons with a framed drawing of Birmingham Terminal Station.

Adjournment. The meeting was adjourned at 12:23 pm.

(Draft minutes submitted by Lamont Downs, Secretary, subject to approval by the Board of Directors)

Operations Around Winburn, Alabama

by Tom Holley

(Author's note: This article is dedicated to my father, O. R. Holley, Jr., who was an engineer on the Central of Georgia. Of all the jobs he worked during his 48 years with the Central of Georgia, the Leeds switch engine was his favorite. I grew up hearing tales of the job, and when we went to Birmingham to see family, my dad always had time to detour to Leeds and Winburn.)

Although the Central of Georgia was never considered to be a coal carrier, coal traffic was "good business" for the railroad. In 1921, coal shipments accounted for 27% of the total tonnage handled by the CofGa! Much of this coal came from mines in the mountainous areas near Birmingham, providing the CofGa with the bulk of its locomotive fuel (as well as coal for the ships of the Ocean Steamship Company) and coal for local distribution and export.

The Margaret District

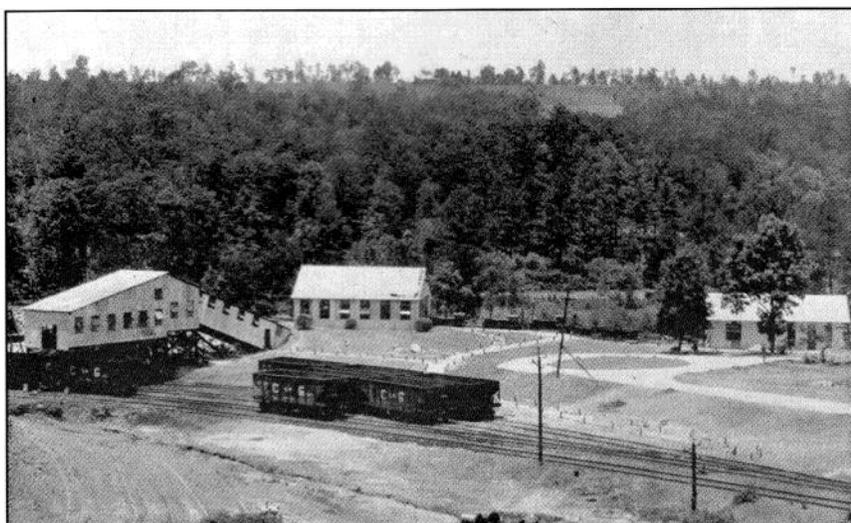
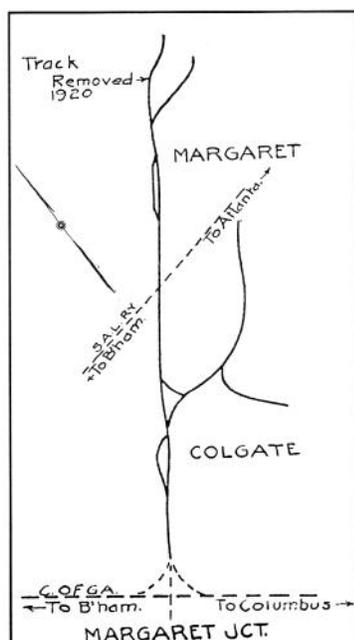
The Cahaba Coal Fields, southeast of Birmingham, were a major source of coal on the Central of Georgia. The Upper Cahaba coal field was served by the CofGa's Margaret District, which ran from Margaret Junction (MP P-427, near Henry Ellen) north to Colgate where



This map, circa 1930, shows the CofGa's Columbus Division from Columbus to Birmingham, including the Margaret District from Margaret Junction (near Henry Ellen) to Margaret and Acmar, and the Cahaba District from McCombs to Overton. Winburn Yard was located between Sterretts and Leeds. (Collection of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society)

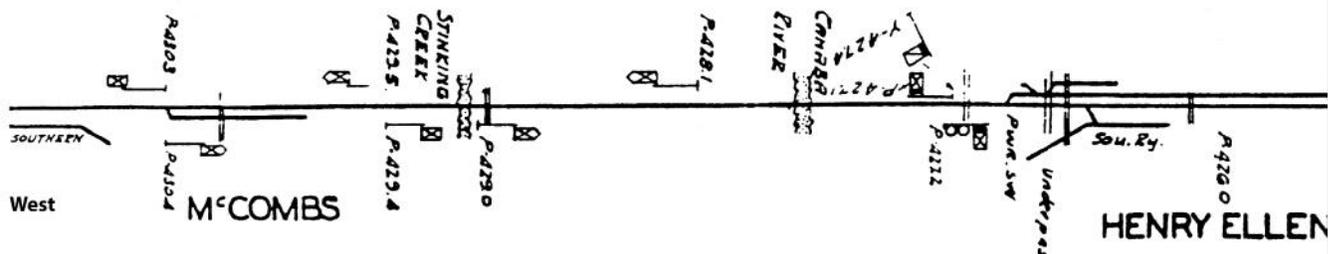
the line split, with one track running to Margaret and the other running to Acmar. Mines were served on both lines. Milepost numbers on the line from Colgate to Margaret had a "Y" prefix, while those on the Acmar line had a "Z" prefix.

The Margaret District was built in 1906 by



(above) A new steel tippie for the mine at Margaret in 1936. (Central of Georgia Railway photograph, Collection of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society)

(left) Sketch of the CofGa's Margaret District compiled from a CofGa Valuation Section Map circa 1930s. (Collection of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society)



to serve mines operated by the Shades Valley Coal Company (having the same ownership as the Alabama Fuel & Iron Company). A coal washer was also located at Overton.

At the time of the construction of the Cahaba District, it was estimated that the mines would supply 19 million tons of coal, a sufficient amount to last 32 years!

(above) This schematic, based on a CofGa condensed profile circa 1960, shows the trackage between McCombs and Winburn Yard. The Margaret District connected at Margaret Junction, just west of Henry Ellen, and went north. The Cahaba District connected at McCombs and went south. (See the maps of both districts on the previous pages.) (Collection of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society)

those points. So, in order to reduce the enormous expense of regrading, the line between Sterretts and Birmingham was not changed. A new yard, however, was planned near Dunavant.

Population.	Car Capacity Tracks	Telegraph Call	Class of Station	Number of Station	STATION	AGENT
				Oper-ating Audit		
MARGARET DISTRICT						
		H K		Y	Henry Ellen	
	154		F	430	New Acton #6	
	131		F	431	Aemar #6	
500	700		F	482	Colgate	Chas. Crowson.
	267		F	438	Margaret	
	116		N	433	Seam #2	
			F	438	New Acton	
			F	434	Commissary	
	1		F	435	Aemar	
	152		F	436	S—Opening	
	83		F	436		
CAHABA DISTRICT						
			F	PA433	McCombs	
	7		F	PA435	Grants	
1,000	118		F	PA435	Overton	

(above) Stations on the Margaret District and Cahaba District from a 1931 CofGa Official List. (Collection of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society)

Columbus Division Improvements

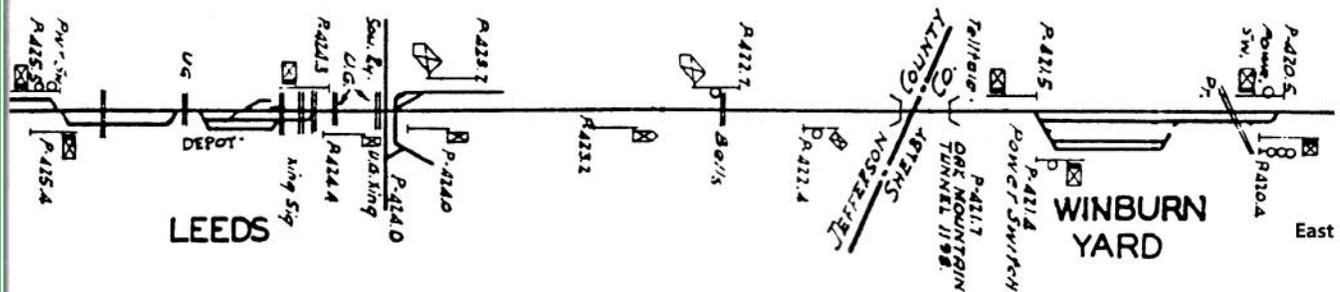
In May of 1924, the Central of Georgia Railway began making significant improvements to the line between Columbus, Georgia, and Birmingham, Alabama. This included reduction of grades, elimination of curves, and construction of new bridges, costing approximately six million dollars. Early studies had indicated that reducing the grade between Sterretts (MP P-415) and Birmingham (MP P-445) would have been about 50% of the estimated cost. However, the CofGa's Engineering Department determined that traffic between Dunavant (MP P-420) and Henry Ellen (MP P-427), mostly coal from the Margaret and Cahaba Districts, could be handled by transfer runs between

Winburn Yard

Winburn Yard, located at about MP P-421, was built about 1926 as part of the improvements on the Columbus Division, not as a switching yard, but as a location for distributing empty coal cars and for collecting cars loaded at the mines on the Margaret and Cahaba Districts that served the Upper and Lower Cahaba coal fields. The new yard was named in honor of William A. Winburn, who had been president of the Central of Georgia from April 1914–June 1918, Federal Manager from June 1918–March 1920 (while under federal control), and was again president from March 1920 until his untimely death in January 1924.

Winburn Yard had a fairly simple layout, with a mainline, a siding, and three storage tracks off the siding. There was a wye at the east end of the yard. An operator's office, also near the east end, completed the facilities.

Concentrating the coal at Winburn Yard allowed eastbound trains to leave East Thomas Yard in Birmingham with the maximum tonnage allowed over the grades to Winburn. Since the allowed tonnage was doubled from Winburn east to Columbus, loaded coal cars could be added at Winburn for eastbound trains. For instance, in the 1940s, a 700-class 2-10-2 was rated at 2000 tons from Birmingham to Winburn, and 4000 tons from Winburn to Columbus. (This was, of course, based on a pusher out of Sylacauga up Trammels Hill.) Westbound trains, headed to Birmingham, could set out empty coal cars at Winburn. The original plans would



also allow westbound coal-only trains to take empty hoppers from Columbus to Winburn, and then return eastbound to Columbus with loaded cars.

Operations in the 1940s

Due to a reduction in the market for coal in the mid 1930s, coal production was concentrated in the mines on the Margaret District. In 1940, the Cahaba District (7.3 miles) was abandoned, leaving only the Margaret District as a source of coal on the Columbus Division.

In the 1940s, the Margaret District was switched by the CofGa's Colgate switch engine. This job worked the mines at Acmar and Margaret, as well as the coal washer at Colgate. Power was usually a 600-class 2-8-2. Water was available at Colgate and the locomotive was fueled by backing the tank under the washer for a load of coal. (The majority of coal sold by Alabama Fuel & Iron Company was for use by railroads, and the Central of Georgia was the largest single customer of coal from Alabama Fuel & Iron Company.)

The Leeds switch engine handled the coal from the washer at Colgate to Winburn, and also did the local switching in and around Leeds (about 4 miles west of Winburn). At Leeds, the CofGa switched a large cement plant, a chair factory, a washout track, a house/dray track, M&B Metals, and a rock wool (insulation) plant. This job also made three trips a day to the washer at Colgate and moved the eastbound coal from there to Winburn. Like the Colgate switcher, this job also used a 600-class 2-8-2.

(right) CofGa 2-8-2 No. 635 moves loaded hoppers to the coal washer at Margaret, Alabama, circa 1948. The trainman on the second car is giving hand signals to the engineer. (Central of Georgia Railway photograph, Collection of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society)

A Day on the Leeds Switcher

A typical day on the Leeds switcher in the 1940s began with the crew getting their engine from the chair factory lead, and performing all the local work. The job then made the trip to Winburn to line up any eastbound cars. If any of No. 29's sections were heavy, empty hoppers would have been set out at Vincent (MP P-408). Those cars would then have been moved to Winburn or to the long storage track at Henry Ellen by one of the Mary Lee switch jobs. Next came the three trips to the coal washer at Colgate (either from Winburn or Henry Ellen) to swap empty hoppers for loaded hoppers.

Tonnage with a 600-class 2-8-2 was limited to 18 loads on the drags from the Colgate washer. Based on three trips a day, 54 cars went to Winburn and then to points east daily. When pulling and shoving cars around the curves into the yards at Winburn and Colgate, a trainman's hand signals weren't always visible—this operation long predated train radios. However, the engineers knew that four hoppers would fit between two telegraph poles. If an engineer did stop short, the trainman riding the cut of hoppers would open the



(left) The operator's office at Winburn Yard was located near the east end of the yard. The signal beside the motor car is a train order signal at about MP P-420.8. There was a wye located to the left rear of the photographer. This view faces west, toward Birmingham. (Central of Georgia Railway photograph, Collection of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society)



anglecock with his foot, and let the train line air seep out until the train was clear. Then he'd close the anglecock and the engineer would stop.

After the washer drags were finished, the job again worked the Leeds industries and tied up for the day.

Trains Through Winburn

Columbus Division employee timetable No. 57, dated December 12, 1946, shows 16 regularly scheduled trains (eight each direction) passing through Winburn. During that period, however, there were often three sections of Train No. 29, an extra eastbound train, a Birmingham–Sylacauga turn, the Leeds switcher, and up to three Mary Lee switch engines. Traffic levels were so high that employees were not allowed to use the block signals to protect their train, but had to provide flag protection.

An operator's office was located at the east end of Winburn Yard to control entry into the manual block that began there and extended westward to Weems

(P-433). This was necessary due to the number of trains operating through Winburn, including through trains as well as those stopping to drop off empties or pick up loads. This also allowed the Winburn operator to copy train orders for eastbound trains.

Manual Block Operations

Block stations were located at the train order signals at Winburn, Leeds, and Weems. Manual block operation allowed trains to operate on the mainline between those stations regardless of timetable train superiority and schedule, but still observing the indications of the automatic block signals. Timetable superiority was important only when trains met by train order in manual block territory, thus allowing the superior train to hold the mainline. When meets took

(below) Central of Georgia 4-8-4 No. 458 with eastbound Seminole in March of 1950 passes Winburn Yard. The signals in the distance are P-421.4 (eastbound) and P-421.5 (westbound). Out of sight to the west is Oak Mountain tunnel. (Photograph by Hugh M. Comer, Collection of Jim Goolsby)



place between block stations, trains were admitted to the block after being given a Form C Permissive Card, which established the identity of the train being met and the meeting point.

Trains from Leeds to the Margaret District were operated by manual block from 7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. A clearance card was required from the operator at Leeds and the movement was also governed by automatic block signals from Leeds to Margaret Junction. Upon arriving at Colgate trains reported clear of the block.

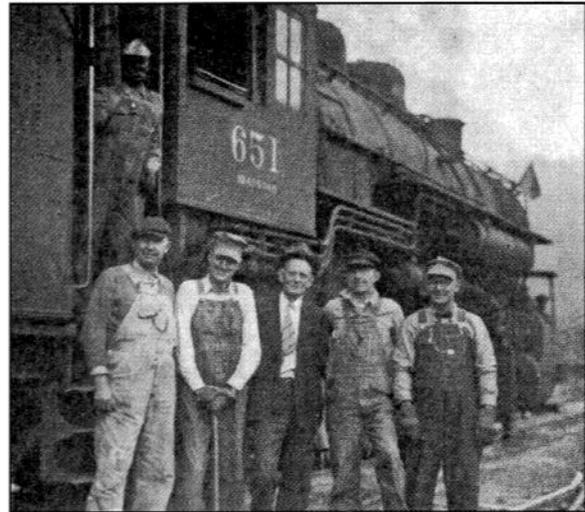
If an operator was not on duty at Colgate when a train returned to Leeds, the conductor was required to contact the operator at Leeds for permission. With the exception of the regularly assigned Colgate Mine switch engine, trains were not allowed west of the yard limit signs at Colgate unless authorized by the trainmaster or agent at Colgate.

The operator at Winburn controlled the power switch and signals at the west end of Winburn Yard, and the signal at the spring switch at the east end. Since the signal governing eastbound movement into the west end of the siding is visible only for a short distance to eastbound trains coming out of Oak Mountain Tunnel, the signal at MP P-422.24 (west of the tunnel) had a green signal light attached to the mast. When the green light was burning and the semaphore above it was in the 45 degree position, trains could approach the signal the west end of the Winburn siding prepared to enter siding not exceeding 10 m.p.h. over the switch.

The Winburn operator also controlled the yellow signal light attached to the mast of the signal at the east end of the siding at Winburn (MP P-420.5). The yellow signal would only be burning when the blade of the signal was in the Stop position and the mainline ahead was occupied. When this light was burning, westbound trains could pass the signal without stopping, but had to remain under full control and be prepared to stop short of a train or other obstruction. This allowed heavy westbound trains to follow another train into the block without stopping and potentially stalling on the side of the mountain.

When a train encountered any of the signals controlled by the operator at Winburn displaying a Stop indication, they could not pass any of those signals without first communicating with the operator at Winburn or the dispatcher for authority to proceed.

The operator at Leeds controlled the following signals: eastbound signals P427.2 (and the yellow and red color light units), P425.4, Y427.4 (on the Margaret District) and the dwarf signal at the west end of the Leeds passing track, westbound signals P423.3, P425.5



(above) The crew of the Leeds "switch local" pose at the Universal Atlas Cement Co. in Leeds in 1938. Left to right are: Z. E. Shipman, conductor; A. H. Nickerson, brakeman; W. L. Ector, yardmaster in charge of Margaret District; R. C. Greene, engineer; W.W. Pryor, flagman. Fireman Jesse Lee is standing on the cab steps. Mr. Ector would later become Superintendent of the Columbus Division. (Central of Georgia Railway photograph, Collection of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society)

(and the associated green and yellow color light units), and P427.1 and the dwarf signal at the west end of the Leeds passing track

At Margaret Junction, trains coming from the Margaret District were governed by signals Y427.8 and Y427.4 into the Leeds passing track and by the dwarf signal at the east end of the Leeds passing track. When this dwarf signal displayed green or yellow, it conveyed authority to enter mainline over the power switch and proceed eastward only to Leeds block office.

Winburn Yard Today

In the early 1950s, as the economy in the south changed, coal became less used as an industrial and home fuel. Dieselization of the railroads also hurt the mines, as steam locomotive fleets, and the need for coal, diminished. Mining on the Margaret District ended in early 1951 and abandonment was approved by the ICC on November 28, 1951. Without coal from the Margaret District, Winburn Yard was no longer needed for its originally intended usage.

Today, there is still a siding at Winburn, along with a storage track used for maintenance of way equipment.

(Author's note: This article could not have been written without the gracious assistance of Jamie Williams, James Deason, and Marvin Clemons.)

Editor's note — Our thanks to author Tom Holley and Allen Tuten, editor of **The Right Way**, for granting permission to reprint Tom's excellent article on the Central of Georgia.. (Copyright 2013. Reprinted by permission of the Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society)

Regional Interest

The Early Years of Southern Railway Steam Excursions

Article & Photographs by David C. Lester, Contributing Editor

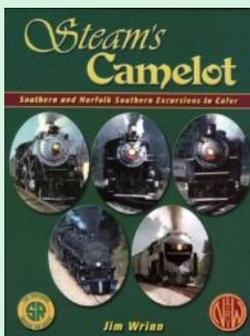
There is a lot of excitement today about the Norfolk Southern 21st-Century steam program. This is the third year, and nearly a dozen trips for 2013 have been announced so far. Southern 630 and Nickel Plate 765 will again be working to fulfill W. Graham Claytor's proclamation at the National Railway Historical Society banquet in Richmond, Virginia in 1966: "The Steam Locomotive Is Here To Stay."

For those old enough to remember original the steam excursion era on Southern, then Norfolk Southern, it's fun to reflect on these magical years. With a modest start in 1964, which saw very limited movements of Savannah & Atlanta 4-6-2 750 and Southern 4501, riding behind steam in the South became a frequent occurrence for the next thirty years. In 1994, NS abruptly silenced mainline steam, citing a variety of business reasons, including the reduction of track capacity stemming from significant increases in freight traffic.

When Southern Railway and Norfolk & Western merged in 1982, big N&W steam took center stage. While 611 and 1218 exceeded everyone's wildest dreams of a railroad-sponsored steam schedule could be, there was something special about the pure Southern years. Relatively small, green or black, locomotives pulling around a dozen cars, the mighty challenges these engines presented to Paul Merriman, Bill Purdie, Jim Bistline and crews, and the opportunity to travel on one of America's most dynamic and prosperous railroads. Trips open to the public ran during the spring and fall from cities throughout the southeast. If you were lucky, the chance to see the railroad's *Southern Crescent*, the road's signature train running between Washington, D.C and New Orleans, maintained to the standards of premier passenger service of the 1950s. All of this in an environment where many of the freight railroads were struggling, and most intercity passenger service had been turned over to Amtrak in 1971.



SR 4501 heads southbound at the Lenox curve in Atlanta, returning from a trip to Toccoa, Georgia on October 17, 1976



These times have been well documented in print and film. In my opinion, the best reference on these thirty years of steam is Jim Wrinn's *Steam's Camelot – Southern and Norfolk Southern Excursions In Color*. The book not only contains a lot of great photographs, but the book reads like an extended news story, and there was, and is, no one better qualified than Jim to tell this story.

For about four years (1974-1978), I worked in the commissary car (ex- Central of Georgia baggage car 405) on nearly all of the trips out of Atlanta as a member of the Atlanta Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. While working in the commissary did not offer the glamour of working as a member of the engine crew, it was a great opportunity that I thoroughly enjoyed. A trip day would begin at 6:00am at the North Avenue Coach

yard, adjacent to the world headquarters campus of the Coca-Cola Company and Georgia Tech. Drinks had to be loaded and iced down, doughnuts and snacks were loaded, and a huge urn of coffee had to be made. The loading and preparation of more serious food, such as hotdogs and sandwiches, was handled by other crew members, and at the opposite end of the car from my station. By the time we started moving toward Peachtree Station, everything was ready, but we didn't have any customers yet, so I was able to enjoy coffee and doughnuts while riding through industrial trackage, breathing in the morning air and listening to the many crossing bells ringing, along with the steam engine and the diesel assigned to move our train to the station.



SR 630 on a photo-runby at Oakwood, Georgia on October 11, 1975, during a round trip from Atlanta to Toccoa, Georgia

and he said, "Does all of this money [from commissary sales] go to the [Atlanta] Chapter?" I said "yes", and he told me to put his change in the till. I was very impressed that, after all Bill had done for this renaissance of steam, he made sure his change went in the coffers of the Chapter.

Returning to Peachtree Station at the end of the trip, it took about 45 minutes to unload the train and prepare for movement to North Avenue. Sometimes the move to North Avenue was fairly quick, but slow at other times, depending on other traffic on the road. Finally getting off the train at a late hour, everyone wearily headed to their cars, went home for a few hours sleep, and was back at the coach yard at 6:00am for the Sunday trip. An exhausting, but fun weekend. Of course, these long days didn't compare to the schedules for the engine crew, which were even longer.

For a teenager and high school/college student, these were heady times for me, and left me with a lifetime of memories. Graduating from college and beginning my career in 1980, I no longer had time to work on the trips, but occasionally rode the NS trips. Seeing and riding behind the J and the A is another monumental story for later.

Since the steam program meant so much to me, and thousands of others, I hope the younger rail enthusiasts in our ranks will take time to learn about the original Southern Railway program. Back issues of *Trains*, *Railfan & Railroad*, and Jim Wrinn's book are the best places to start. There is also a softcover book entitled *Southern Steam Specials*, published by the railroad in the early seventies, with an updated bicentennial edition in 1976. For those not around in 1976, the celebration of America's first 200 years gripped the nation, and the railroad industry joined the fun with bicentennial paint schemes and the *American Freedom Train*. Southern contributed in a unique way by placing banners honoring each of the seventeen signers of the Declaration of Independence on the seventeen green and gold, E8 locomotives that were assigned to the Southern Crescent.

(Note: This article was adapted from a post on David's blog, www.davidclester.com, from December 2012)

Once we arrived at the station, we would often sit there for a few minutes to wait for the arrival of the *Southern Crescent*, completing its overnight journey from Washington, D.C. Talk about the place for a rail enthusiast to be! SR's two mainline tracks blocked at Peachtree Station, one with a steam train, the other with the *Southern Crescent*. As a beer commercial from years ago, said – "it don't get no better than this!" Boarding began shortly thereafter, followed by a day of serving beverages and snacks, and talking railroading. Members of the engine crew would pass through from time to time for some sustenance. I remember one time when Bill Purdie was taking a break from duties on the front end, and purchased a couple of items without waiting for his change. He was standing across the aisle when I offered him his change,



From the Observation Platform

Commentary by John Browning, Mid-South Chapter President



For those of you who do not know me, I would like to take a second and tell you a little about myself. I grew up in Shelby County, Alabama, where I still reside and operate a computer business. I became interested in trains at a very early age. My dad was rail-fan and I grew up riding, watching and photographing trains. He had a great interest in the history of the various rail lines in this region, and I guess you could say that I inherited that interest.

I am proud to be associated with this chapter and its members. For such a young R&LHS chapter, we have accomplished a great deal. It is amazing to me that a chapter that was less than four years old at the time hosted the 2012 R&LHS national convention. We have had many good programs and a few great chapter sponsored trips. We always have great fellowship at our meetings.

I look forward to serving as your chapter president this year. There many exciting opportunities on the horizon for our chapter to explore and expand upon. As some of you may be aware, we submitted a solicitation for donations under the "Friends of the R&LHS" program to help finance the Frank Ardrey photography exhibit. We have already received over \$2000 in donations. A sub-committee of the board is currently working on a master plan for our museum exhibits. From what I have seen so far, I think we will end up with something that we can all be proud of.

We have a great Board of Directors and officers in place this year. I look forward to working with each of them. Everyone involved is interested in seeing this organization "be all that it can be". Please know that the Board is always interested in any ideas that you might have. Remember that this is YOUR organization. We always need your help and input.

Please be sure and attend our next chapter meeting on March 9th. We will have an interesting program on railroads in Japan presented by our chapter secretary Lamont Downs. Our chapter is also going to help host a Central of Georgia Historical Society meeting here at the Leeds depot on April 20th. Check the chapter web site and Facebook page for more information on upcoming events. I'll see you all at the meeting. Until next time....

Golden Era Classics



The L&N Local takes pause — *Sitting pretty as a picture, L&N K-3 Pacific #200 waits for passengers at Sylacauga, AL en route from Birmingham to Calera via the Alabama Mineral "loop". The circuitous route of the all-day, all-stops local connected small towns in east central Alabama like a string of pearls. Credit this rare circa 1940s photo to the collection of Mid-South member Greg Owings.*