



# The Mid-South Flyer

Summer 2015



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

## July Meeting

# Woodward Iron RR to be featured at July meeting

The Woodward Iron Company Railroad was unique in being a keystone in one of the most complete vertically integrated industrial companies in the United States. Over four generations of the Woodward family operated a company that was synonymous with Birmingham as a producer of “merchant iron” from 1881 to 1973 – the actual beginnings of the Woodward Company predate the beginning of the City of Birmingham.

The Woodward Company and its leaders were a strong part of Birmingham’s business community, and its building occupied one street corner of the “heaviest corner on Earth.” Third generation A. H. “Rick” Woodward was perhaps one of the most colorful business leaders in Birmingham, including his owning the Birmingham Barons Baseball team, being the builder of Rickwood Field, and being a “millionaire” locomotive engineer.

Mid-South member John Stewart has made a study of the Woodward family’s contribution to Birmingham’s industrial development, and John will present his research in a narrated slide program at our July 18 chapter meeting. For the benefit of those not familiar with Woodward, John has provided the following preview of his presentation:

### ***Don't forget the barbeque!***

The annual Mid-South Chapter Covered Dish BBQ will be held at **Noon on Saturday, July 18**, prior to the chapter meeting at 2:00. Everyone is invited for food and fellowship. Fresh barbeque and drinks will be provided by the chapter. If you can bring a dish, please contact James Lowery at [jlowery2@gmail.com](mailto:jlowery2@gmail.com).



*Woodward #35 with hot metal cars at Woodward Iron Furnace circa 1959 (Tom Lawson collection)*

Before there was a Birmingham in 1871, the Woodward family began land acquisition in 1869 that would lead to a company that produced “merchant iron” in Birmingham for over 90 years. This company would be run by four generations of Woodward’s; by far the most colorful family member was A. H. “Rick” Woodward: General Superintendent in 1899, Chairman in 1915 and President in 1932.

The company was founded in 1881, and a railroad was needed for construction. But the Woodward’s were deliberate in their planning. They had waited 12 years to start the company after purchasing land, and this deliberate planning included a railroad that would reach and deliver nearly all their raw material needs of red ore, coal and limestone. They would have only limited dependence on another railroad for the making of iron. Initially this was for brown ore resources in Tuscaloosa County.

On the other hand, the company carefully selected their land acquisition and plant site to take advantage not only of their private railroad, but secured connections along the private railroad to nearly all of the “trunk” line railroads in their part of the emerging Birmingham District near Bessemer.

## Woodward Iron *(continued from page 1)*

Initially 6 miles of mainline and 2 miles of sidings and spurs, the Woodward Iron Company's Railroad would grow to include over 50 miles of track, yet the mainline never exceeded about 14 miles. In addition the Woodward company utilized close relationships with other railroads, particularly the Atlanta, Birmingham and Atlantic (AB&A) to reach company property with trackage rights operations. This careful attention to managing and controlling their raw material transportation led to a highly successful company with low production costs, even in an area known for low production costs due to the proximity of raw materials. Equipment ranged from narrow gauge "dinkys" to large 2-10-2 locos.

Woodward Iron Company's history includes successes, false starts and failures. Early development didn't begin until 1881 after carefully watching the developments of the Birmingham District's earliest iron makers. First the successful Eureka Experiment (Oxmoor) in 1876 proved that local coal could be used to successfully make "coke fueled" iron rather than charcoal iron. But it was not till the success of the Alice Furnace Company in 1880 that the Woodward family decided to move forward. In 1912 the company began an expansion plan that increased raw material holdings, particularly coal, and led to the acquisition of Birmingham Coal & Iron's Vanderbilt Furnaces, Mulga coal mine plus additional coal lands and other resources. They also built and expanded a "modern" Koppers coke and by-products plant.

In the 1920's the Woodward's embarked on two more expansion projects, the Crockard Coal mine including a 4.5 mile rail spur near Mulga and the Vance brown ore mine in the Russellville District of north Alabama. Both of these projects were completed and opened, but quickly idled or abandoned in the face of the softening business climate that preceded the Great Depression. The Great Depression hit all Birmingham industry very hard, and Woodward was no exception. The company went into reorganization under Federal bankruptcy laws. Like many companies Woodward rebounded strongly during WW II, and blew in a fourth blast furnace in 1951. But in spite of subsequent diversification, the overall iron market did not support merchant iron makers in the 1960's. Woodward was purchased by Mead Corporation in 1968 and subsequently blew out its furnaces in 1973.

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### *Editor's Corner*

Welcome, dear reader, to our little corner of the newsletter! As your editor, I look forward to using this space to share views and insights on our chapter, and I invite you to join me in expressing your views as well.

This is just one of several new features we are rolling out as part of the expanded quarterly edition of the *Mid-South Flyer*. In addition, you'll find the latest news and updates on chapter activities in the *Mid-South Chapter Update* and each issue will spotlight a railroad museum, exhibit, or historic attraction of note from within the Mid-South region. We'll continue featuring entertaining and educational articles on railroading from our regular contributors. Beginning with this issue, contributing editor David Lester will pen a new column, *Railroad History in the Making*, focusing on historical developments in railroad technology and their impact on railroading. And you can look forward to more of John Stewart's fascinating revelations on local railroad history and personalities. We also hope to feature more member articles and trip reports, such as John Browning's account of the recent R&LHS convention in Altoona, PA, and Stan Burnett's musings on a bygone era of private rail passenger service. So there's some good stuff happening with your newsletter, and I hope you'll make it even better with your contribution.



*Marvin Clemons, Editor*



# Mid-South Chapter Update

*Reported by James Lowery*

We are excited about the work of the Mid-South Chapter and the progress we are making on our projects and interfaces with other organizations as follows:

**Leeds Historical Society** The Leeds Historic Depot is maintained by the Leeds Historical Society, and our chapter is working more closely with that society concerning the depot and plans for railroad themes, artifacts, and photography in the depot. Representatives of the Mid-South Chapter are attending the meetings of the Leeds Historical Society and are learning a lot from that society. We appreciate all their work in the Leeds area.

**Leeds Redevelopment Authority** The Leeds Redevelopment Authority is working on a master plan for historic areas of downtown Leeds including the railroad areas. We are in discussions with them about that master plan and how our chapter can be involved in downtown developments that center on the railroad and education about the historic nature of railroads in Leeds. We appreciate the authority's plans for the area and its desire to make downtown Leeds a tourist destination.

**Interfaces with Other Railroad History Facilities** The Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum in Calera is an example of a facility in the region covered by the Mid-South Chapter that has a similar educational and historical preservation mission as does the chapter. We plan to work closely with any such facilities in the mid-south region in order to further our chapter's goals and mission.

**eInformation Committee** A new website for the Mid-South Chapter is currently being developed by the eInformation Committee and will become available to members as soon as hosting issues are resolved. The new site will include a revamped home page on the national Railway & Locomotive Historical Society website and a number of subsidiary pages about the Leeds Historic Depot, the Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project, and an "About Us" page. A block of pages will be devoted to an online version of the ***Frank Ardrey Exhibit***, featuring photos by Ardrey and other photographers. Photos will be arranged by location and by railroad, and will not duplicate those on the Chapter's Facebook pages. Once the site is "live" members will receive an email with the new URL. The chapter's other Internet and social media aspects are being maintained and improved by the eInformation Committee. (Committee Members: Lamont Downs, Donnie Strickland, and Tim Smith)

**PROJECT: Frank Ardrey Photography Exhibit** Be sure to view the video portion of the Frank Ardrey Photography Exhibit when you are at the Leeds Historic Depot. Plans are to expand the exhibit with interpretive information and a "wall of photographs" devoted to Leeds and the Birmingham District. (Project Lead: Marvin Clemons)

**PROJECT: Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project** This project of the chapter is moving along nicely, and a total of 21 signs have been installed already with more scheduled for installation soon. The project's website is at Bham-MRR.com. (Project Lead: James Lowery)

**PROJECT: Digital Archives** The Archives Committee, in conjunction with the William Boone Library at the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum, is exploring establishing a permanent archive as part of an Internet portal for accessing historical and contemporary railroad information and photographs from across the state of Alabama. (Project Lead: Donnie Strickland)

**PROJECT: Restoration of Baggage Cart from Birmingham Terminal Station** Board member Larry Kelpke is restoring a baggage cart from the Birmingham Terminal Station, and the Leeds Historical Society has approved the baggage cart being put on permanent display at the Leeds Historic Depot.

## Mid-South Chapter Update *(continued)*

**DONOR RECOGNITION:** The Chapter has received the following artifact donations from our long-time supporter, Mountain Brook Mayor Terry Oden: A Southern Railway wire-frame clear-globe lantern and Southern Railway wine and cordial glasses. *Thank you, Mayor Oden!*

### **2015-2016 RAILFAN EVENTS CALENDAR (updated 7/6/2015)**

This calendar was created for scheduling purposes only, and much of the information is from third-party sources and unverified. Check times and dates with the presenting organization before making plans!

#### July

- 18 Railway & Locomotive Historical Society Mid-South Annual Picnic (Noon) and Chapter Meeting (2 pm, Leeds Historic Depot)
- 18 Norfolk Southern Steam (Indiana)
- 25 Norfolk Southern Steam (Ohio)

#### August

- 1 Norfolk Southern Steam (New York)
- 8 49th Atlanta Model Train Show (Atlanta, GA)
- 8 Norfolk Southern Steam (Pennsylvania)
- 15 Norfolk Southern Steam (Pennsylvania-New York)
- 23-29 NMRA National Convention (Portland, OR)

#### September

- 12 R&LS Mid-South Chapter board meeting (Leeds Depot)
- 12 Norfolk Southern Steam (Tennessee)
- 12 Norfolk Southern Steam (Pennsylvania)
- 18-19 Atlanta Railroads Prototype Modelers Meet (Kennesaw, GA)
- 26-27 South West Alabama Railroad Modelers Model Train Show

#### October

- 1-3 Louisville & Nashville Historical Society convention (Birmingham, AL)
- 3 Norfolk Southern Steam (Georgia)
- 9-11? Central of Georgia Historical Society annual Membership Meeting (Savannah, GA)
- 10 Norfolk Southern Steam (Georgia)
- 17 Railway & Locomotive Historical Society Mid-South Chapter meeting (2 pm, Leeds Depot)
- 17 Manchester Railroad Days (Manchester, GA)

#### November

- 21 Smokey City Rails Model Railroad Club show (Helena, AL)
- 21 Mid-South Chapter Board meeting (Leeds Depot)

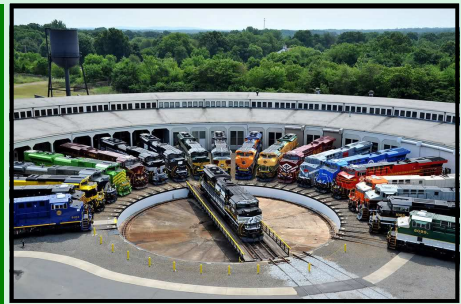
#### January 2016

- 6 Jacksonville Rail Fair (Jacksonville, FL)
- 16 50th Atlanta Model Train Show (Atlanta, GA)
- 23 Mid-South Chapter Annual Membership Meeting and Election (Leeds Depot)

Do you know of upcoming rail-related events in the Mid-South area, or have corrections for the above list? Please notify Lamont Downs at: [deshtiran@gmail.com](mailto:deshtiran@gmail.com). Thanks!

# Mid-South Roundhouse

## *News from around the Mid-South Region*

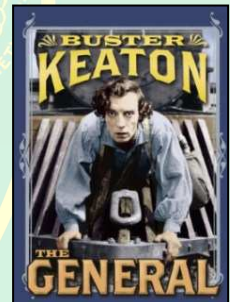


### **Ken Boyd Photography Exhibit, Book Signing at Bessemer Hall of History**

The Bessemer Hall of History in Bessemer, Alabama is hosting an exhibit featuring Ken Boyd, author of "The Art of the Locomotive". Boyd's exhibit, which will reside at The Bessemer Hall of History until mid-October 2015, features many of his fabulous large-format prints, showing everything from small steam engines to behemoth diesels — and each locomotive seems perfectly posed whether at rest or in motion. There are trains at stations, trains on trestles, trains in museums and trains steaming through vast western landscapes. There are trains pulling into the Birmingham Amtrak Station near Morris Avenue and chugging out of town. Boyd's book, "The Art of the Locomotive," focuses on the history and design of the locomotive. Most of the images are of steam-era locomotives with some diesel-electric and electric locomotives. Every detail is scrutinized - bolts and conduits, sheet metal and glass. Boyd digitally edits to enhance luminance, contrast, tonality and color. Boyd will be signing his book at the Bessemer Hall of History on Sunday, July 26, 2015, from 2:00 P.M. till 4:00 P.M. For more info, please call (205) 426-1633 or go on-line to [bessemerhallofhi@bellsouth.net](mailto:bessemerhallofhi@bellsouth.net).

### **Alabama Theatre to screen Buster Keaton's silent classic "The General"**

"A rare opportunity" is how Mid-South member and theatre organ aficionado John Troulias describes the showing of the silent classic railroad movie, "*The General*" at Birmingham's Alabama Theatre on August 1, for one showing only at 7:00PM. The Alabama Theatre, a classic movie house with a grand Wurlitzer theatre organ, opened in 1927, which coincidentally was the same year the film was released. Noted theatre organist Thomas Helms will appear with an original score of music and sound effects. Tickets are \$14 and are available through [TicketMaster.com](http://TicketMaster.com) now or at the theater beginning one hour prior to show time. Profits go to the maintenance of the Alabama Theatre and the Mighty Wurlitzer. For more information, contact John at 205-434-0949



### **Atlanta Railroads Prototype Modelers Meet — September 15-17, 2015**

The Southern Railway Historical Association will host the 2nd Annual Atlanta Railroads Prototype Modelers Meet at the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History in Kennesaw, GA. The meet welcomes all model railroaders interested in replicating prototype railroad locomotive, rolling stock, structures and locations. The focus is on sharing and learning what modelers are doing and how they're doing it. This meet is not a contest and welcomes models in any scale, finished or under-construction, based on prototype railroad locomotives, rolling stock, structures, and scenes, regardless of the modeler's skill level. This meet is a joint effort of the SRHA, Atlantic Coast Line & Seaboard Airline Railroads Historical Society, Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society, Louisville and Nashville Historical Society, and Nashville Chattanooga & St. Louis Preservation Society.

The Southern Railway archives will be open for an SRHA work session and for researchers to access the collection September 15-17. Model, vendors and manufacturers display areas will be open to attendees during meet hours. One or more modular model railroad layouts will be up and running during the meet. The clinic schedule is being developed and a schedule will be posted before the meet. Meet information, schedule and registration forms will be available online at [www.srha.net](http://www.srha.net).

## Trip Report

# R&LHS 2015 Altoona Convention

*by John Browning*



The 2015 annual meeting of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society was a great experience with many memorable and enjoyable activities. This year's event was held in the Altoona, Pennsylvania area June 4-6 and was planned and coordinated by the Mid-South Chapter's own Alan Maples. Alan and his associates, Jason Lamb and Sophia Vaughn went to great lengths to see that every attendee had a great time. The activities that were planned had something for everyone interested in trains and rail related history.

On Thursday night, the convention was kicked off a welcome reception for all of the attendees who were not participating in the Board of Directors meeting. After dinner, we were treated to three short presentations. The first program was a slide show on the history of Horseshoe Curve by David Seidel. Next up was a presentation on the Huntingdon Broad Top Railroad, followed by a Slide Show on the Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway, which provided trolley service to the Altoona area.

Friday morning, we boarded two buses and headed out to the Juniata Locomotive Shops. This was a very rare opportunity to witness firsthand how Norfolk Southern rebuilds and maintains its huge fleet of locomotives. It was quite overwhelming to realize that we were touring such a historically significant facility that had played such a major role in the operation of the Pennsylvania Railroad, later Penn Central, Conrail and now Norfolk Southern, since the 1800's. This is a facility that every railfan and rail historian has heard about. We were given guided tours and allowed to take photographs of everything except the workers, out of respect for their privacy. The tour included seeing everything from the areas where traction motors are rebuilt, to prime mover overhauls, to complete frame up rehabilitation and upgrading for locomotives.



**Norfolk Southern Executive F Unit 4270 sit on the storage track at Juniata Shops awaiting its next run with the Office Car Special.**

Next, we moved on to Curry Rail Services in Hollidaysburg for a tour of their facilities. Curry has set up a shop to build new freight cars as well as repair older cars in an old Pennsylvania Railroad car shop that opened in 1956. They are also fabricating locomotive frames and cabs for Norfolk Southern to use in its rebuilding program. This is an outstanding operation with many interesting things to see.

Our next two stops after lunch are what I would call prime examples of the old saying "Where there is a will there is a way". First we visited the Allegheny Portage Railroad Historical Site. The Allegheny Portage Railroad was the first railroad built through the Allegheny Mountains of Pennsylvania. It consisted of a series of 10 inclines, with five on each side of the summit of the Allegheny Ridge. It con-

nected canals on each side of the summit. At first, cargo and passengers were off-loaded from boats to railcars to start the series of inclines and declines. The cars were towed up the incline by a stationary steam engine and carried to the next incline via rail by a steam locomotive. Eventually, boats were built in sections that could be loaded directly onto the rail cars for transportation to the other canal. Once the other canal was reached, the boats were unloaded from the railcars, the sections reassembled and the journey continued on the canal. While the Portage Railroad served its purpose, the process was tedious and somewhat dangerous. It only lasted for 23 years, from 1834 until 1857. Once the Pennsylvania Railroad found a way to build a line across the Allegheny Mountains, the Portage Railroad was doomed. Today the National Park Service operates the historical site and has rebuilt engine house number 6 and installed several hundred feet of track so that the public can get a good idea of how this amazing system once worked.



**Convention attendees watch a Norfolk Southern Freight work uphill around Horseshoe Curve.**

The second stop was the famous Horseshoe Curve built by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1854 as a way to cross the Allegheny Summit at a grade suitable for rail traffic. Once completed, the curve brought a quick demise to the Portage Railroad. The construction of the curve was a massive cut and fill operation that was done entirely by hand by men with hand tools and horses and drags. Today, the curve sees 50 to 60 trains per day, including one Amtrak train in each direction. The curve was named a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark in 2004.

194 steps to the observation area at trackside, or they can choose to ride the funicular to the top. A nice train watching area is provided, but long views of the curve are somewhat obstructed by trees. Our group was fortunate enough to see a light engine move and two freight trains working uphill.

The Horse Shoe Curve Visitors Center is located at approximately the middle of the curve below track level. Visitors can either walk up

After the Horseshoe Curve visit we returned to the hotels and prepared for the annual meeting and banquet. This year's banquet was held at the Casino at Lakemont Park in Altoona. Lakemont Park was first opened as a "Trolley park" in 1894. Everyone enjoyed the banquet and meeting. Our own James Lowery was given the opportunity to share information on his Birmingham Mineral Railroad sign project that has received many donations through the R&LHS Friends Campaign. One of the signs was displayed on the event stage for everyone to see. Our featured speaker for the evening was former Pennsylvania House of Representatives member Rick Geist, who had been very instrumental in getting Pennsylvania Railroad K-4 Pacific 1361 removed from horseshoe curve and restored to operating condition.



**Mid-South Chapter prez James Lowery and wife Peggy taking a break at trainside**

On Saturday morning, we once again boarded the buses to head to our next event. We started the day with a train trip on Alan Maples' Everett Railroad. Alan and his team made everyone feel very wel-



*Everett Railroad excursion train performing a photo run-by for the R&LHS convention attendees*

come and saw to it that everyone enjoyed the train trip. The scenery was beautiful and the weather was very cooperative. The equipment, including a newly restored combine and an observation car was very interesting. The seating was very comfortable. Everyone who wanted to was allowed to detrain for a photo run-by. After the photo stop we re-boarded and traveled on to the town of Roaring Springs where we visited a former Pennsylvania Railroad depot that included a small museum and gift shop. Our trip continued on to the town of Martinsburg, where participants boarded our buses again and headed out for lunch.

When lunch was over, we made our way to Rockhill Furnace, home of the Rockhill Trolley Museum and the now closed East Broad Top Railroad. The visit to the trolley museum had been on the itinerary, but Friday night, it was announced at the banquet that special arrangements had been made for us to tour the East Broad Top roundhouse and shops. Walking into a historic roundhouse with six 2-8-2 narrow gauge steam locomotives and the only known operable Brill gas electric motor car was definitely a trip to the land that time forgot. An interesting fact about the East Broad Top locomotives is that they all spent their working lives on the East Broad Top. This is not a museum collection of locomotives from other railroads. The roundhouse and the shop building were both amazing sites to see. The railroad is currently for sale, and hopefully a buyer can be found to operate this historical treasure once again.

After touring the East Broad Top, we walked next door to the Rockhill Trolley Museum to view their awesome collection of vintage trolleys and take a short ride on their line. They operate over a line that was once a branch of the East Broad Top. At the conclusion of our tour, we boarded our buses and headed to the final event of the convention.

Our last event was a catered buffet dinner and self-guided tour of the Altoona Railroaders Memorial Museum. This museum, located in the former Master Mechanic's shop of the Pennsylvania Railroad's Altoona works is dedicated to recognizing and commemorating the contributions of all railroaders. The museum has installed a turntable and built a roundhouse to house part of its collection, including one of the famous GG1's. The new roundhouse also provides a place for restoration and maintenance of rolling stock. This group is currently working to restore Pennsylvania Railroad K-4 Pacific 1361 to operation.



*Railroader Memorial Museum in Altoona*

At the end of the evening, we once again boarded our busses for the return trip to the convention hotels. This year's annual meeting provided many opportunities to experience railroad history in and around the Altoona area. It appeared that everyone had a great time and took home many great memories.



## Railroad History in the Making

# Dynamic Braking – *A Haunting Sound in the Night*

by *David Lester*



**A**n important development in the history of the diesel locomotive was the addition of dynamic brakes, which supplement the air brakes on the locomotives and throughout the train.

Dynamic braking is a process whereby the polarity of the electric traction motors on a diesel locomotive is reversed, turning the traction motors into generators, thereby placing a drag on the train's forward motion. When dynamic braking is applied, the kinetic energy of the rolling train is transformed to electricity, which is wasted. Fan-cooled grids dissipate the heat generated by the wasted electricity from the traction motors.

This braking was first used on electric locomotives, and the energy from the traction motors while in dynamic mode was not wasted; rather, it was sent to the overhead catenary to add electricity to the system that could be used by other trains. This is called regenerative braking.

Diesels were first equipped with dynamic braking in the early twentieth century, which was found especially useful on mountainous railroading, where the grades can be pretty severe, and the trains very heavy. Afterward, railroads discovered that dynamic braking was useful for managing train forces on even modest grades. Not only were the buff and draft forces managed more effectively with dynamics, brake shoe wear and wheel stress were minimized, particularly on long stretches of downhill track.

I grew up in Atlanta less than a mile from Southern Railway's main line to Washington, not far from the line's bridge over both Peachtree Creek and the Seaboard Coast Line's track from Atlanta to the Carolinas. The Southern line had a moderate grade that was uphill for northbound trains, and downhill for southbound. The Peachtree Creek Bridge and an on-line cement plant, about a quarter-mile north of the bridge, were separated by a large hill that supported a communications tower. This hill also blocked the view of the train from my home, as I lived west of the tracks.

As northbound trains passed by, engineers had the locomotives working pretty hard to pull their trains uphill. Southbound trains, on the other hand, would roll through without much effort, with their speed dependent on what was ahead, as most were headed to Inman Yard in downtown Atlanta, one of Southern's major hump yards.

When a locomotive is in dynamic braking mode, there is a very distinct whining sound made by the engines. It is not an unpleasant whine, but one that sounds a bit haunting, especially if you're lying in bed in the middle of the night. On cool, rainy or foggy nights, in particular, the sound of dynamic brakes can be heard quite a distance from the tracks, and is louder than one might expect. This depends in part, of course, on the dynamic brake setting in use by the engineer. Nonetheless, just about any level of dynamic braking generates this distinct sound.

I was a teenager in the early 1970's when we lived near the Southern main line, so the engines that generated these memories of listening to dynamic braking at night were second-generation diesels. I haven't done a study of this, but it seems that the dynamic braking sounds on today's diesels are a bit muted compared to those of diesels in the 1970's. Moreover, I moved from my childhood home in the 1980's, and no longer have access to the spot where I enjoyed the symphony of dynamic braking for so many years.

Let's go back to one of those cool, rainy and foggy nights at home. I have just retired for the evening, and after about fifteen minutes I hear a distant whine of the dynamic brakes from a southbound freight. The train is north of the cement plant, about half a mile from the Peachtree Creek bridge. As the train moves south, the sound of the dynamics grows stronger. Then, all of a sudden, the dynamic brake sound disappears as the train passes next to that large hill with the communications tower that I mentioned earlier.



***Southern Railway SD35 leads a southbound rail train in July 1975, approaching Peachtree Creek. This is the area discussed in my story. Notice the hill to the left of the train supporting the communication tower, which provided a temporary shield from the sound of dynamic brakes as trains rolled south. (David Lester photo)***

Next, the train pops out from behind the hill and the sound of dynamic brakes floods the air, no doubt startling many of the residents in the area. As the train continues south toward Armour Yard and Peachtree Station, the sound of the dynamics fades into the night. Finally, the train has passed, the night is quiet, and I fade off to sleep.

I recently had the opportunity to ride for about 100 miles on a Class I railroad in the cab of the second of two locomotives pulling an Atlanta to Detroit auto-rack train. The cab of the second unit contained equipment on the console that monitored the application of brakes and throttle by the engineer during the run. This was a great opportunity to see dynamic brakes being used as the train traveled across undulating terrain. During the entire run while I was aboard, the engineer only used the throttle and dynamics to control the speed of the train. Air was not used except on those occasions where a full stop was required to wait for a signal or to allow me to get off of the train. I was told that over a long run, an engineer should be able to use only throttle and dynamics for most of the trip, and the work of our engineer certainly supported this statement.

Dynamic braking, along with the use of distributed power (i.e., unmanned locomotives placed in different parts of the train that are remotely controlled by the engineer in the lead unit) have enabled railroads to provide smoother rides for freight, which reduces the amount of wear and tear on the equipment, and reduces freight claims. This is standard equipment on the majority of new locomotives, and serves as a tribute to those electrical engineers of the past who perfected this system over the twentieth century.

## Fallen Flag Memories

# SOME THOUGHTS ABOUT THE “PAN AMERICAN”

*Louisville & Nashville’s Passenger Trains No 98 and 99*

*By Stan Burnett*

It has been mentioned that the *Pan American* was the L&N aficionado’s favorite passenger train. That is probably due to several reasons. It was, of course, older than the *Humming Bird* and the *South Wind* and the *Georgian*. I want to add a few other thoughts about the “Pan”, one of my favorite passenger trains. I want to give some reasons why the *Pan American* is (to me) the poster child, the passenger train of choice for identifying the Louisville & Nashville Railroad.

The core area for L&N fans was on the North End of the L&N, approximately Birmingham and north to Nashville, Louisville and on into Cincinnati. For one thing, the two namesake cities were “up there”. I don’t want to get into trouble, so I hasten to add that there were some great fans and great photographers on the “South End” from Birmingham and Montgomery south to New Orleans!!

The *Pan American*, southbound and northbound, was a daylight train from about Birmingham to Cincinnati. The *Hummingbird* was a nighttime train in the same area. When L&N fans wanted to see the railroad, scenery, depots, and yards north of Birmingham, it was normal to ticket on the “Pan”. Photos of the “Bird” in Nashville and Louisville were night exposures and while having great atmosphere in the stations, there was not that much details in the countryside. Trains 99 and 98 made more stops than the *Hummingbird* so you could get more photos of a passenger train stopped in a station by photographing the “Pan”.

The *South Wind* was also a daytime passenger train between (approximately) Decatur and Louisville. Fortunately there are many photos of the *South Wind*, but it left the L&N at Louisville, and technically was not an L&N passenger train. It was a Pennsylvania railroad train running over the L&N. It was a great novelty, a very fast and luxurious train even in its coach-only persona, great to make pictures of. . . . but it wasn’t L&N.

I want to add a thought about the “local” L&N passenger trains numbered 1&4. It was mostly daylight southbound and a night runner northbound. It was also a frequent “stopper”. What was interesting about 1&4 is that it traversed the old main line between Athens Alabama to “almost” Nashville both northbound and southbound. I still regret not having ridden the local from Nashville to Birmingham in the daylight. I could have purchased a ticket from Birmingham to Nashville on the *South Wind* and then explored the old main line on the southbound local. That would have been a real contrast of a train ride!! I could have gotten off the local



*The “Pan” departing Montgomery circa 1950s (David Salter photo)*

southbound in Athens or Decatur and caught the "Pan" to Birmingham to have dinner in the diner. Amazing what you could have done back then!!

Some of my on-board memories of the *Pan American* include the following. I rode 99 and 98 from Birmingham to Nashville with the Heart of Dixie Railroad Club, went from Birmingham to Athens Alabama roundtrip to visit relatives, and rode Birmingham to New Orleans roundtrip on the occasion of the last trips of the "Pan". I when to San Antonio on the L&N connecting to the Southern Pacific in New Orleans on two different occasions. The Southern Pacific *Sunset* was nighttime leaving NO, and afternoon on the return into NO, which necessitated using the Hummingbird one-way going and the "Pan" the other way returning.

I still remember one stormy rainy night northbound on the "Pan" somewhere between Mobile and Montgomery. It may have been Flomaton, Greenville, Evergreen, or Fort Deposit. There was blowing rain, the mail handlers and train personnel had on rain slickers, wet mail bags were piled on a mail cart, steam was curling up from leaking steam lines. What a memorable image of nighttime railroading.

I will add that I've had breakfast, lunch and dinner on the *Pan American*. While the diners were not as polished as those assigned to the *Hummingbird*, while the windows were not as wide, while the ride was not quite as smooth, still yet the food was as good and the crew was as capable. I remember one heavyweight diner on the occasion of the last run of 99 and 98 that was positively ready for the Smithsonian, but that diner is probably gone now and may be part of my Ford pickup truck. Let me tell you, that diner had "History".

The "Pan" carried more front-end equipment than the "Bird" such as mail and express, therefore the ride featured a bit more slack. It may have been a little more trouble to keep your coffee in front of you but a meal on the *Pan American's* diner was always a memorable part of the trip.

I must mention the *Pan American's* Pullman sleeper cars. The "Pan" normally carried one Pullman from Cincinnati to New Orleans. In the late 50's and throughout the 60's it was usually one of the L&N's excellent light-weight "Pine" series sleepers. These were the same "Pine" series Pullmans usually found on the flashier *Hummingbird*. They were named for actual types of pine trees along the route of the L&N. David Morgan of Trains Magazine once described the *Pine* sleeper cars as some of the finest cars in the USA, versatile and smooth riding. The "Pan" was not a "streamliner" and frequently the Pullman was the only streamlined car in 99 and 98's consist. The cars were a 6-4-6 arrangement, having 6 sections, 4 double bedrooms, and 6 roomettes. Some representative names were the *Alabama Pine*, *Tennessee Pine* and *Whispering Pine*. What better way to spend the night?

Couple of final thoughts. . . why 99 & 98? Why not 97 and 98, or 99 and 100? Usually the odd number (to designate southbound or westbound trains) was given first. Of course three digit numbers were not generally used in the old days for passenger runs so that may be the reason for not using 99 and 100 for train numbers. This question (the use of numbers 99 and 98) is in common with the SP's *Coast Daylight*.

The *Pan American* also shared a name-related cachet in common with the Illinois Central's *Panama Limited*. Ah yes, travel to the South, sunny climes, crossing diverse topography, headed to remote destinations. These two names just looked right on a travel poster. Riding the Southern's *Crescent* implied either riding the crescent shape of the railroad from Washington to New Orleans, and/or implied riding to the "Crescent City". Riding the *Pan American* and the *Panama Limited* implied going a little further, adding a little more spice to your travel experience.

To conclude, for all of the reasons above I reflect back kindly on the L&N's passenger train, the *Pan American*.



Letterhead artwork from the *Pan American's* lounge car stationary

## Along the Mid-South Rail Trail

# The L&N Depot Museum Foley, Alabama

If you're heading for the Alabama coast this summer, you might want to plan a stop-over in the town of Foley. You may be surprised at what you'll find sitting just a block off of the main road.

The L&N Depot Museum at Foley is housed in the town's former Louisville and Nashville railroad station. The first station, built in 1905, burned to the ground. The second station opened in 1909. The railroad was responsible for bringing people to the area to settle. Mr. Foley, for whom the town is named, used some of his own money to bring the railroad to Foley. The tracks ended approximately a mile from the present location as this was a spur line from Bay Minette.



In the very early days of Foley, there was a train that left the town in the morning going to Bay Minette. It made stops along the way in Summerdale, Robertsedale, Loxley, and other little towns along the way. It would make the return trip in the afternoon. This train was a wood burner and was called the "Pine Knot" special.

Foley, at one time, was mainly an agricultural town; therefore, the trains that came to Foley were mostly freight. During the potato shipping season, thousands of box cars would leave Foley, taking the produce to the northern markets. In 1971, the L & N railroad line discontinued its services to Foley and was going to demolish the depot. Mr. John Snook, who owned the telephone company, bought the building for \$1.00 and moved it to Magnolia Springs. He used it as a warehouse until it was deeded to the City of Foley in 1994. The building was returned to its original site. After some renovations, the depot was opened as the City's museum in 1999.

The depot houses a well-done museum collection with an assortment of both railroad and local community artifacts. Modelers will also enjoy the "O" gauge model train exhibit, which features a full quarter-mile of track around a 60-foot long layout. Twelve different railroads are represented in the model train display.



The museum is located in the heart of historic Foley at 125 East Laurel Ave (US 98). The museum's website address is <http://www.foleyrailroadmuseum.com/>.

A short video showing the depot, the various pieces of railroad equipment and the model train layout is available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RoYFipToHaM>

*(Editor's note: Our thanks to James Lowery for contributing information on the Foley museum. If you have a favorite railroad museum or attraction you'd like to see covered in The Flyer, please drop us a line).*

## Golden Era Classics



**Wow, what a train!** Photos of the Seaboard's *Silver Comet* at Birmingham from the late 1950s and '60s are fairly common, but we've seen very few from the train's earlier years of operation. While researching a book on Birmingham's Terminal Station, we were delighted to discover this 1952 view of the *Comet* with three E7s in original "citrus" colors departing Terminal Station with a full consist of heavyweight Pullmans and newer lightweight coaches, trailed by a round-end observation car seen going away in the cropped photo below. Credit photographer Charles Harrington, from the David Price collection.

