



The Mid-South Flyer

Summer 2016



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

July Meeting Highlight

A visit to a country “garden” like no other

by Marvin Clemons

Mid-South Chapter member Billy Thomason has lived his whole life in rural St. Clair County, Alabama, just east of Birmingham. Like many of his neighbors, Billy enjoys raising a garden of home-grown tomatoes, squash, okra, and.....*signals*.

Yes, *signals*, as in railroad signals. And not just any signals, mind you, but the distinctive variety once found along the former Seaboard Air Line Railroad's right of way near Billy's boyhood home. You see, Billy has harvested and planted these former SAL signals, mast and all, in his large yard near Ashville. But unlike the familiar red, yellow, and green varieties of bell peppers grown by his neighbors, Billy's "variety" show off their bright colors, both day *and* night!

Billy's fascination with railroad signals began as a young schoolboy, when his grandfather would take him down to the tracks at nearby Ragland to watch the then-SCL local freight switching the large cement plant and brick yard. As the engine switched back and forth, Billy became enthralled watching the changing signal indications controlled by the centralized traffic control (CTC) dispatcher at distant Howells Yard in Atlanta. Billy's interest led him to research the Seaboard's signal system, revealing that the CTC signaling was installed over a four-year period between 1949 and 1953. For two decades, the three-color light signals safely watched over the daily passing of



An all-clear signal welcomes visitors

Seaboard's proud *Silver Comet* and local passenger trains, and countless fast freights with distinctive names like *The Iron Master* and *The Capital*.

With the changing fortunes of railroads in the 1970s and 80s, operational change came to the Seaboard's Birmingham District, beginning with the lengthening of many sidings to accommodate longer trains, and the retirement of a number of shorter sidings along with their signaling. In 1985, a major restructuring under the newly formed Seaboard System, and later CSX, resulted in the in removal of many more sidings and signals, followed in 1988 by abandonment of the line between Rockmart and Powder Springs, GA, and Wellington, AL and Cedartown, GA. The remaining CTC system remained operational until January 4, 1990, when CSX retired all of the signals, except for a few serving as rock slide indicators.



An approach signal protects the driveway

The surviving rail segment between Birmingham and Wellington, along with its handful of signals was eventually leased to shortline Alabama & Tennessee River Railroad (ATN), which only recently removed the remaining signals. All would have gone to scrap, had not Billy persuaded the ATN signal maintainer to let him "transplant" a few to his property. Today, Billy's "signal garden" is a living legacy of the once thriving Seaboard Air Line linking Birmingham and Atlanta. Billy will share the secret of "how his garden grows" at the July 30 Mid-South Chapter meeting.

Meeting Reminder! The next meeting of the MidSouth Chapter, R&LHS, will be held Saturday, July 30 beginning at 2PM at the Historic Leeds Depot.



Mid-South Chapter Update

by James Lowery, Chapter President

PRESIDENT'S MID-YEAR REPORT

Departing from the usual quarterly recap of chapter activities, I would like to take this opportunity to list the Chapter's accomplishments for the year to date, along with plans and projects to be accomplished by the end of this year. Please inform me or any of our other officers or directors of any other projects or activities you would like for your Chapter to pursue, or if there are any you would like to undertake.

What Your Chapter Has Accomplished Thus Far This Year

- Had two Chapter Program meetings.
- Had a Picnic for members and their guests.
- Painted the Baggage Room walls of the Leeds Historic Depot.
- Determined historic photographs to be produced in large format for installing on walls of the Depot.
- Installed Birmingham Terminal Station restored baggage cart in the Leeds Historic Depot and held a "dedication ceremony."
- Worked to create a "digital archive history of Alabama railroads" in conjunction with the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum.
- Received donations of artifacts such as a locomotive bell (mounted and suitable for ringing) and Southern Railway items.
- Received donations of historic photographs, digitized them, and made them available online.

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- Completed scanning of Frank Ardrey Photograph Collection.
- Provided online access to scanned Frank Ardrey photographs.
- Maintained, and kept current, the Chapter website.
- Endorsed the Findley Roundhouse preservation effort.
- Installed the 99th sign in the Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project.
- Continued to raise funds for the Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project.
- Maintained, and kept current, the educational website for the Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project.

What We Plan To Accomplish In The Next Six Months

- Have two more Chapter Program meetings.
- Print, frame, and install large format photographs on the Baggage Room walls of the Leeds Historic Depot.
- Complete the room in the Depot featuring the Frank Ardrey Photograph Collection.
- Continue to work on creating a "digital archive history of Alabama railroads" in conjunction with the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum.
- Continue to receive donations of artifacts, especially as relates to Southern Railway.
- Continue to receive donations of historic photographs.
- Continue the Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project and celebrate installation of the 100th sign.

Respectfully submitted,

James Lowery

A Railfan Remembrance

1976: A Special Year

Text and photos by David Lester
(from David's blog at davidclester.com)



Forty years is a long time. And forty years ago the year was 1976, which was a special year in my life, particularly from the perspective of my interest in the railroad industry. Everyone has one or more really special years in his or her life, and I hope you'll indulge the story of one of mine.

As is the case with many Mid-South Chapter members, my interest in railroading began with Southern Railway, a road which many of us fondly recall. In 1976, Southern was at the pinnacle of its success and popularity as a profitable, well-managed, no-nonsense freight railroad that continued to run passenger service and excite thousands with its popular steam excursion program. Southern had even been profiled in the December 1974 issue of the respected business journal, *Dun's Review*, and named one of the five best-managed companies in the United States in 1974. The other named companies were AT&T, R.J. Reynolds, Merck, and Kerr-McGee.

The mid-1970s, for those not around to recall, were not good years for the U.S. economy. As *Dun's* pointed out in 1974, "What with rampant inflation, roof-busting interest rates, the frustrating scarcities of capital and materials and the vast wasteland that was Wall Street, it was a struggle for many companies to survive, let alone excel. Indeed, it could be said that it was a time when a company had to know not only the skills of management but the skills of survival."

Southern's financial success and celebration of the industry's heritage was even more impressive, since it played out against a backdrop of an industry that was struggling. In addition to the economic duress of this period, the rail industry continued to bear the burden of economic regulation by the Interstate Commerce Commission, an issue that would not be remedied until the passage of the Staggers Act in 1980.



American Freedom Train visitors at Ft. Gillem in Atlanta
admire GS-4 #4449. May 24, 1976.

set of exhibits featuring various aspects of American history, and toured the country from 1975-76 in celebration of the nation's 200th birthday, most often referred to as our Bicentennial year. The train would travel to a city and be on display for a few days, then move on to the next destination.

The AFT was on display at Ft. Gillem, a U.S. Army base on the southern outskirts of Atlanta that was closed in 2011. In addition to hosting thousands of visitors, the layovers provided time to complete any mechanical or cosmetic repairs to the train and locomotive. There were three locomotives that shared AFT duty around the United States,

A young railfan comes of age

I had been following the railroad industry since 1973. Beginning in 1974, I had had the opportunity to work on the commissary car of Southern steam specials operating out of Atlanta, which put me out on the railroad regularly, and it was quite a treat to see the Southern story first hand from the large baggage door opening behind the counter where I worked.

I graduated from high school in 1976 and was headed to college in the fall, having been accepted by the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. These milestones set the tone for the remainder of the year, and several new rail experiences, one of which was totally unexpected, helped make 1976 so memorable for me.

First was the Atlanta visit of the *American Freedom Train (AFT)* in May. This 26-car train was a rolling

but the engine that did most of the work was restored Southern Pacific GS-4 #4449, painted in an attractive red, white, and blue scheme that matched the train set.

If you were around during these years, you'll recall the anticipation surrounding the restoration and travels of this beautiful Lima locomotive. Finally being able to see it in person was a real thrill, and my family and I visited the train twice during the time it was in Atlanta. The American history displays on the train were well done and we enjoyed them, but for me, the locomotive was definitely the highlight of the visit.

Riding the Southern Crescent

The main event for the summer of '76 was a round trip from Atlanta to Washington, D.C. in early August on the *Southern Crescent*, Southern's premier passenger train operating in the age of Amtrak, which Southern opted not to join when the federally-funded agency took over most of the nation's rail passenger business on May 1, 1971.

Although I had ridden the train a few times to visit relatives in Alabama, the overnight trip to Washington offered a first-class travel experience. Our northbound accommodations were in a drawing room on the *Crescent Harbor*, one of four Southern Pullman cars featuring a lounge, two drawing rooms and a master room with a shower. The northbound trip was marvelous, except for a cigar-smoking gentleman who boarded the car in Salisbury, N.C., choking the ventilation system with pungent smoke that took about twenty minutes to finally clear out. With the smoke fumes thus removed, I finally managed to get to sleep and woke up in Virginia the next morning with the train blazing through the countryside at 70+ mph.



AFT Display Car 41 at Ft. Gillem on May 21, 1976



The *Southern Crescent* headed north from Atlanta, crossing Peachtree Creek in fall 1976. Note the red placards on the side of each locomotive. Southern chose to celebrate the Bicentennial by placing one on each of the 17 E8s assigned to the train, to honor the 17 signers of the Declaration of Independence from the Southern colonies.



Southern Railway Ps-4 1401 on display at the Smithsonian Institution in August 1976.

After a week in Washington seeing the sights, including Southern 1401, the famous green-and-gold Pacific locomotive on display at the Smithsonian, we headed to Union Station to catch the southbound *Southern Crescent*, this time boarding the *Crescent Moon*, the *Crescent Harbor's* sister car. We were pretty tired after trudging around D.C. all week, and after dinner in the diner we retired to our Pullman and to bed. The next morning we rolled into Atlanta's Peachtree Station just after finishing breakfast and gathering up our belongings. Unfortunately, this was my only round trip between Atlanta and Washington before Southern handed the train over to Amtrak on February 1, 1979.

Super Power Steam

After the big trip to Washington, I began preparing for the move to Knoxville to begin classes at the University of Tennessee in September. As for rail adventures, the next items on the calendar were the fall steam trips operated out of Atlanta. Reading the August 1976 issue of *Trains* magazine one evening, I happened to peruse the "Extra Movements" section in the classified ads in the back of the magazine. Trips listed in this section were usually operated in other parts of the country and were therefore unavailable to me, except for an occasional Southern one-way ferry move to get a steam locomotive positioned for its next set of regular trips. As I read through the ads, I came across one that both surprised and delighted me. Southern was planning to run a special trip from Atlanta to Alexandria, Va. behind the *American Freedom Train* locomotive, GS-4 4449! The train would run from Atlanta to Salisbury, N.C. on Saturday, August 28, and from Salisbury to Alexandria on Sunday, August 29.



Extra 4449 North in Doraville on August 28, 1976 . Photo by Michael A. Lester

Being a member of the commissary car team, I immediately called the commissary car manager and made arrangements to work the trip. My schedule would only allow me to work on the Saturday portion of the trip, so I made arrangements to have a roomette on the southbound *Southern Crescent*, which would arrive in Salisbury at 2:30 a.m., arriving back in Atlanta the next morning.

After an unbelievable day riding behind the likes of steam power that I and many other Southerners had not seen before, I enjoyed a nice dinner with some friends, followed by more time to admire the 4449 before boarding the *Southern Crescent* and hitting the sack after a long day. I fell asleep immediately and didn't wake up until we were rolling through Doraville, about 20 minutes north of Peachtree Station, and so missed having breakfast in the diner. Nevertheless, the whole experience was quite a treat, which would likely never come around again, at least not out of Atlanta.



College begins at the University of Tennessee. Ayres Hall, an iconic classroom building at UT, in 1977. Ayres was built in 1921, and received a major renovation in 2008, including the installation of clocks on the bell tower

College and more trains

After a summer of enjoyable rail experiences, September finally arrived, and if memory serves, my first full day as a student at the University of Tennessee was Monday, September 20, 1976. The UT campus offered significant rail activity, with the L&N mainline from Corbin, Kentucky to Atlanta running right next to my dormitory. Although the L&N had a big presence in Atlanta, I had never spent much time around it, so my new proximity to the "Old Reliable" L&N was welcome. A constant parade of coal, piggyback, and merchandise trains came through, with the mainline running through a small yard on the other side of campus and on to a long bridge over the Tennessee River. Southern's mainline to Chattanooga was visible in the distance, but it was not until my second year at UT that I was able to obtain a room that allowed me to see it from the dorm.

Although I've certainly had other meaningful, special, and pivotal years in my life, the year of my high school graduation in 1976 remains one of the best. What was to follow that summer was the best graduation present a young rail enthusiast could have asked for. I felt that way then, just as I do now, 40 years later.

Railroad History

The Birmingham Belt, Part 3

By John Stewart, Contributing Editor



In our last installment, Frisco subsidiary Kansas City, Memphis and Birmingham (KCM&B) had acquired the Belt RR through the mechanism of controlling its stock and guaranteeing its bonds. The value of the million dollar bond issue was backed by a mortgage/deed of trust in favor of the Old Colony Bank and Trust Co. of Boston. One wonders what justified the potential value of the \$1,000,000 in bonds backed by the Frisco/KCM&B RR.

Consider that the original two railroads in Birmingham (L&N and AGS) were through routes in 1871. When the Georgia Pacific (Southern) arrived in 1884, it built from both east and west and so was a through route – its location was carefully negotiated and managed by the Elyton Land Company. When the KCM&B arrived from the northwest in 1887, it terminated at Birmingham. When the Columbus & Western (Central of Georgia) arrived from the east in 1888, it also terminated at Birmingham. This accounts for five of Birmingham's "trunk line" railroads as of 1888.

Now we see the KCM&B (Frisco) has secured the Belt RR as its subsidiary in 1902, and the valuation of the Belt seems as though it might be high. There follows a set of meetings that placed Frisco officers in all the director seats of the Belt RR with the exception of Alex T. London, a prominent Birmingham attorney. (London would be replaced by a Frisco man in April 1903) Of interest is that no less than Benjamin Franklin Yoakum, president of the Frisco, became a director of the Belt RR. By the end of 1902 Old Colony Trust Company of Boston is the official transfer agent of the Belt RR's \$1 million in bonds, which are guaranteed by the Frisco. Apparently this means that none of these bonds were sold to individuals, as the largest stockholder of the Belt RR becomes Mr. Julius Ross Wakefield, a senior officer with Old Colony Trust Co.

Remember our mentioning the Columbian Equipment Company and its apparent ties to the East and West RR of Alabama? In 1902 the East and West was purchased by the Seaboard Air Line Railway and made a part of its Atlanta & Birmingham Airline Railway, which wanted to extend its tracks to Birmingham. Apparently Columbian's lawsuit had become the East and West RR's lawsuit.

In the April 27, 1903 board meeting, an executed agreement between the Belt RR and the "Atlanta Airline Ry" [sic] dated February 12, 1903 was presented. This agreement provided for three main items

- Dismissal of all prior litigation between the two parties
- Construction of new tracks in Birmingham by the two parties, called "joint use tracks"
- Joint use of tracks, new and existing as well as certain other tracks

The term of this new agreement was to be for 999 years. Apparently the original litigation by the Columbian Equipment Company had expanded into the state court system as well as the City of Birmingham court system. The nature of this litigation seems to be about rights of way to be granted or being withheld for/from the Seaboard Airline subsidiary, which prevented it from reaching Birmingham.

What had brought about this out-of-court settlement after several years? Why did the two rival railroads, one large and one small, become cooperating entities? The reason may be summed up in the New York Times headline (seen pictured at right) of August 13, 1903.



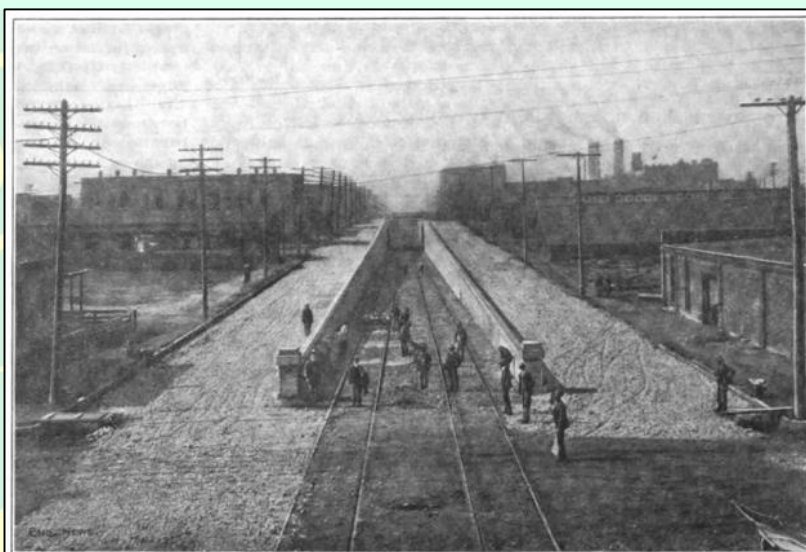
By this time in the Frisco's history, it had become part of a major rail system that included the Rock Island RR and the Frisco RR, known as the Rock Island System. B. F. Yoakum had a major hand in setting up this large regional carrier. Yoakum clearly wanted to get to the coastal ports of both the Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. The deal to get the Seaboard under the Rock Island System was accomplished by stock acquisition, according to the *New York Times*.

It appears that the Seaboard may not have been opposed to the larger merger/acquisition; the Seaboard had major goals under the leadership of John Skelton Williams of Richmond, who had been pursuing the mergers and acquisitions that put the Seaboard Air Line together. This included the line to Birmingham that was about to come to fruition. One result of this deal was that Yoakum got a seat on the Seaboard's board of directors.

"The Cut" and trackage rights

By late 1904, the new "joint use tracks" for freight access had been completed in several parts. Today we know one of these as "The Cut" (which has just been re-purposed as "The Rotary Trail" related to the overall trail system plans in Birmingham, as well as linking Railroad Park along this trail system toward Sloss Furnace National Historic Landmark).

The passenger access for SAL to the Birmingham Union (L&N) Passenger Station was via a connection to the new line constructed as "joint use track" in 32nd Street parallel to the Belt RR's track. This would utilize the "passenger main" along Morris Avenue, which is a story for another day.



COMPLETED TRACK DEPRESSION, LOOKING WEST FROM EAST END AT 24TH ST.

The "joint use track" continued along 32nd Street north to the Belt RR's line in 10th Avenue N where the SAL constructed a second parallel track to Freight Yard Jct where the Frisco (KCM&B RR) entered the downtown area.

What this accomplished was essentially a double track rail line between the Frisco and the SAL, with branches to Union Station as well as a freight branch to a new SAL freight house and yard on Avenue A (1st Ave. S) between 18th and 19th Streets. (This building still stands and has been repurposed by ALAGASCO.)

The SAL also received trackage rights on the Frisco line all the way to Bessemer. This brought them in contact with the heavy industrial corridor extending from Birmingham past Ensley some 12 miles to Bessemer, at that time home to five blast furnaces and a rolling mill.

The reciprocal part of this deal is not crystal clear – ostensibly the Frisco gained some operating advantage toward the SAL's port access on the Atlantic. However, in 1903 John Skelton Williams was ousted from the SAL board by Thomas Fortune Ryan, who himself would be ousted before long.

So, it seems that a fairly complex strategy was in place by the Seaboard Air Line interests that predated the Frisco's 1902 acquisition of the Belt RR. This activity apparently went back to at least 1894, when the Columbian Equipment Company made an effort to acquire the Belt RR, leading to a set of legal battles over rights of way utilizing street railway franchises and potential new construction. It also seems clear that the Elyton Land Company was always in the background utilizing their influence, local knowledge and partial control over the location of rail lines in some parts of the City.

It is not clear what happened to the 999 year agreement between the Frisco/Belt and the SAL, but the access trackage rights and the so called "joint use tracks" constructed parallel to the Belt RR's tracks were still in place and show very

clearly on the 1935 Map of the Birmingham Bessemer Terminal Committee (The Blue Map).

Illinois Central Gets Access to Birmingham

The next major deal involving the Belt RR and the parent Frisco occurred before the SAL "joint use tracks" were even completed through "The Cut." In February 1904, the Belt RR's board was presented an agreement between the Belt, the KCM&B, the Illinois Central RR and subsidiary Yazoo City and Mississippi Valley RR Company, bearing the date December 5, 1903. The summary of this IC RR deal is that the Frisco wanted access to the Port of New Orleans, which the Illinois Central could provide. The IC RR in turn wanted access to Birmingham and its growing heavy industry, So, this agreement essentially provided a trade of rail access to these two desirable markets.

The IC RR gained access via trackage rights to, as well as access in and around Birmingham. In Birmingham the IC gained access to Bessemer along the Frisco's line west of Freight Yard Jct., as did the SAL. Further, the IC RR gained trackage rights over the Frisco and Belt RR's tracks east of Freight Yard Jct. A new line was extended south for the IC in 12th Street to 2nd Avenue North, where a freight house and small yard were built by the IC RR

In 1907 work began on East Thomas Yard, a joint use terminal facility that included the Frisco, the IC and the Central of Georgia. The Belt RR tracks were extended to East Thomas via a connection in North Birmingham that dated back to the earliest development of the Belt and the Water Works, whose reservoir and pump station in North Birmingham were served by the Belt. These tracks were paralleled by the Southern, part of the original Georgia Pacific negotiations with the Elyton Land Company in 1883.

The Illinois Central built their own portion of East Thomas Yard, which included extending tracks (east and south) toward downtown paralleling the Belt RR's tracks. This included an agreement for the IC RR to perform a major project which relocated the Southern and Belt's original tracks (1883) to make room for development of the Norwood residential district by the Birmingham Realty Company, successor to The Elyton Land Company. When completed the new single track line paralleling the relocated Southern track was jointly used by the IC, Frisco, Belt and CoG RR's. This project was completed in March, 1911 (referencing an article in the *Illinois Central Magazine* from 1912).



In 1913 the Frisco went into receivership, from which it would emerge in 1916. This does not seem to have had significant impact on the Belt RR in so far as reflected in the Minute Books of the Belt. However, from an historical standpoint, a great benefit is that an atlas of detailed maps of the Belt RR was created, presumably for inventory and valuation of the Belt's properties. These maps are available by appointment in the Birmingham Public Library. (A source close to the library indicates that these will be available online in the near future.)

The next major project impacting the Belt RR was the construction of Finley Yard by the Southern RR, which opened in 1915. The Belt RR had an old line running east to west in North Birmingham which was utilized to create a connection to Finley Yard.

Wrapping up the Belt

This seems to represent the last major project for the Belt RR. By 1919 the Belt reportedly had about 38 miles of track. This length would generally hold until the 1960's, when the Belt's trackage would be impacted by the development of the interstate highway system and the ever increasing truck traffic for freight movement. Track began to be removed, with the line in 5th Avenue South reportedly removed in 1975.

By this time the Frisco has extended tracks south across the L&N and Southern main lines (near 14th St Tower) seemingly to replace the line in 5th Avenue S. A wonderfully illustrated article by Warren Reed describing the Frisco's Belt operations appeared in the October 1991 issue of *Model Railroader*. Entitled "Taking It to the Streets with the Frisco," this article is available on www.bhamrails.info and is used with permission of Kalmbach Publishing Company.

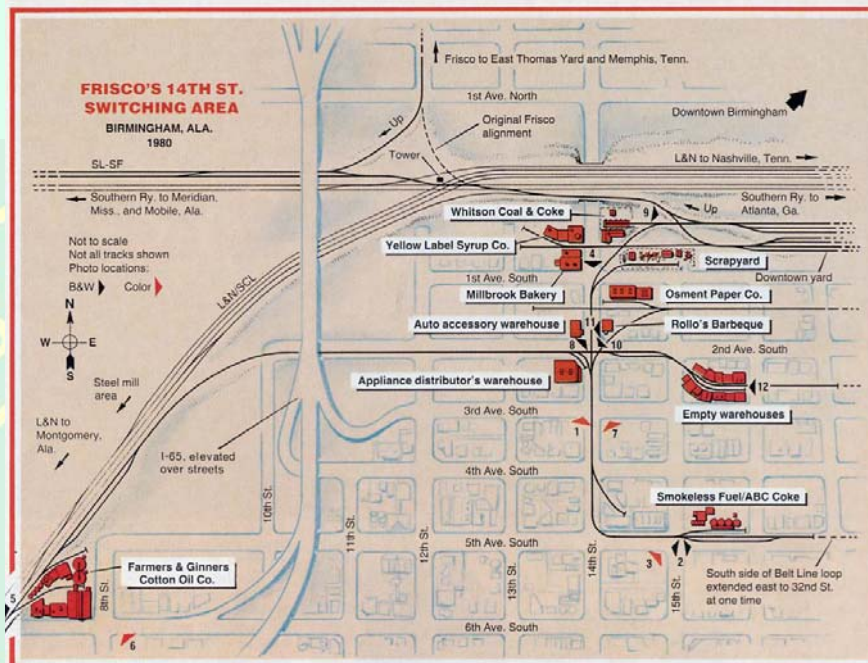
The Belt RR saga turns out to have been more complex than any of the previous references indicate. The Belt RR seems to have been a potentially important link in railroad "empire building" at the end of the age of rail barons and their stock manipulations. It also appears that there may have been earlier efforts to utilize the Belt in the street railway business, with the close ties of Belt leadership to the efforts to consolidate Birmingham's streetcar system. Or this may have simply been related to the local business leaders being so closely involved in a number of major schemes to continue to push the City's growth forward.

The involvement of Henry Atkinson may have also been a street-railway-related effort based on the role that he played in development of Atlanta's streetcars as well as the development of electrical power in Atlanta and the state of Georgia. Or, possibly his involvement in the Belt was part of a long range strategy to have the AB&A RR gain a strategic foothold once it reached Birmingham. Although the AB&A approached the Birmingham District in 1906 and Bessemer in 1908, it didn't arrive in downtown until 1910, and was in receivership by then; Atkinson's leadership in the Belt RR had ended long before.

Based on the evidence in the Minute Books, the most interesting aspect of a larger- than-obvious role for the Belt RR seems to have begun by 1894 with the actions of the enigmatic Columbian Equipment Company with its ties to the developers of the East and West Alabama RR, subsequently the Birmingham & Atlanta Airline and ultimately the SAL.

But it was the Frisco that ultimately "won" the Belt with that achievement coming to fruition in the fall of 1902, but clearly having been in the works for some months if not longer. "Yoakum's Dream" was a very big dream and involved the development of one of the largest regional rail systems of its day, although it was somewhat short-lived. And it seems that "Dream" had a significant component in Birmingham.

While it may not be said that the Belt RR changed the regional rail landscape, it certainly played a key role in connecting the trunk line railroads that arrived in Birmingham after the first boom years of the 1880's. It was never clear how the little Belt RR was going to spend \$1 million, but someone must have had an idea in mind in this period of very big ideas.





R&LHS Convention Trip Report

Report from Moscow (Idaho)

Text and photos by Richard Morris

First, we learned it's pronounced Moss-ko! The natives seemed to think it was important. And this region is not known for raising potatoes, but for grains and lentils.

The theme of the annual meet was "White Pine Rails," which refers to the white pine forests that covered the area, and the railroads that were built to get the logs to the mills, and the lumber from the mills to the markets. This was a joint meeting of the R&LHS and the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway History Preservation Group (WI&MRyHPG)

Since Moscow is somewhat isolated, many attendees flew in or Amtraked to Spokane, ID, and got an early start Wednesday afternoon with a bus trip from there to Moscow with rail sights enroute. When they arrived at our lodgings, the University Inn, those of us who had already arrived in Moscow boarded the bus for a quick ride over to the University of Idaho, where we were welcomed by the Dean of the University of Idaho, who is also a railfan!

We enjoyed a fine buffet dinner back at the Inn, followed by a program featuring Philip Beach, *Railroads of the Palouse*, and Keith Peterson, Idaho State Historian, *North Idaho History*.

Thursday morning we boarded the bus and headed to St Maries, Idaho, passing through the town of Plummer on the way. We toured the yard and shops of the St. Maries River Railroad, which operates a segment of the former Milwaukee RR mainline. We also found that tour buses don't always make tight turns, as we clipped a switch stand turning into the yard. Didn't do much to the switch stand, but did scratch up the bus.

The folks at the railroad treated us to lunch, which we enjoyed in one of the dining cars of the McCloud Railroad that are stored in the yard. The cars are for a possible dinner train operation planned for the area.

Leaving St Maries, we rode to Princeton, ID, and toured the Bennett Lumber Products sawmill, which is the major shipper on the former Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway, now operated by the Washington & Idaho Railway. Bennett used to have their own fleet of light blue all-door boxcars, one of which has been restored by the preservation group.

We had a comprehensive tour of the mill, watching logs enter the mill to get turned into planks or timbers, dried, and turned into 2x4s and other sizes. They had one of the log loaders sitting near the bus, and we realized how big it was when some of our group stood next to a wheel.



Bennet Lumber Products all-door boxcar



Log loader dwarfs a convention goer

Thursday's dinner was back at the Inn, followed by a program on the *Camas Prairie Railroad* by Jim Davis.

Friday morning we headed south to Lewiston, ID, first stopping at an overlook above the town, where we got to appreciate the difficulty the railroads had building lines from the Camas prairie down to the river. In town, we stopped at a park to see a preserved logging engine, a Heisler, No. 92.

Leaving the park, we passed the Potlatch lumber mill on our way to Cottonwood, ID, touring the Camas Prairie RR, ending up at Nezperce, ID, which was the end of the long, gone Nezperce and Idaho RR. We had lunch at the Nezperce Hotel, with a talk by and a Q&A session with Jack Cash, the last general manager of the Nezperce RR.



Heisler No. 92

After a few quick photos of the depot in Nezperce, we returned to Moscow along another branch of the Camas Prairie RR.

Friday evening saw the Annual Meeting and another a buffet dinner, followed by a presentation on the *Washington, Idaho and Montana Railway* by Tom Burg, author of *THE WHITE PINE ROUTE, The History of the Washington, Idaho & Montana Railway*. His presentation primed us with information on the WI&M Ry for our travels on Saturday.

Our first stop Saturday morning was Palouse, Washington, the western end of the WI&M. Stopping at the depot we spotted an old wig-wag signal still protecting a road crossing. Then we followed the track to Potlatch, Idaho, where we toured the restored WI&M depot and railroad headquarters, rolling stock belonging to the WI&MRyHPG, the preserved WI&M 4-6-0 No. 1 and the Princeton depot that had been moved to the park beside the depot. Many of us also wandered through the WI&M yard, filled with stored center-beam flatcars and even some double-stack well cars.



After lunch in the Potlatch depot, we headed out along the WI&M to Bovil, where we traveled down the former Milwaukee line to Elk River, Idaho, the site of another former sawmill. We toured the Elk River Museum, with many pictures of the mill and logging railroads.

Saturday finished up with dinner at the University of Idaho Student Center and a final presentation by Tom Hillebrant on *Modern Shortlines of the Inland Northwest*, which brought us up to the present, railroad-wise.



WI&M 4-6-0 No. 1

Sunday morning the bus loaded up those members that were returning to Spokane, passing through Coeur d'Alene, ID and a 'windshield tour' of the BNSF fueling facility in Hauser, ID. In the meantime, my wife and I loaded up and headed back for the long drive east through Montana, South Dakota, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky and finally home in Tennessee!

Golden Era Classics



“Signals for the *Silver Comet*”

Granted that the above image isn't the best quality reproduction, having been scanned from a photocopy of the original photo. But no one would deny that the subject matter more than makes up for the less than perfect image. In keeping with the theme of our featured article and July chapter program on Seaboard signals, we couldn't find a more fitting illustration than this David Salter shot from April 1965. On this early spring day, David rode the *Silver Comet* to Birmingham for a visit with his long-time friend and fellow photographer, Frank Ardrey. David knew the Birmingham Sub well from previous photo shoots along the line, and knew just the place to capture a perfect combination of train, track, and signals. As the *Comet* departed from Piedmont, Alabama, David took up his position on the rear vestibule of the train's heavy-weight diner. Camera at the ready, David leaned out of the Dutch door to catch a profile of the *Comet's* consist coming out of the curve at the west end of the siding at Maxwellborn, just a mile from crossing with Southern Railway's former Selma, Rome & Dalton Railroad. The high signal mast at the end of the siding, with its double indication and "doll arm," indicates that the signal governs the *Comet's* westward movement on the main line. The short "dwarf" signal, visible below and just to the left of the main line signal, controls movements from the siding onto the main. Taken together, David's composite presents a picture-perfect image of 1960's railroading on the Seaboard Air Line in Alabama. — *Marvin Clemons*

In Memoriam

Remembering Mick Nussbaum



On Sunday, June 5th, I received the sad news that long-time MidSouth Chapter member Matthew “Mick” Nussbaum had passed away. I regret that I personally didn’t know Mick as well as I would have liked, but I did get to know him through our membership in the MidSouth Chapter, well enough to appreciate his dry sense of humor and forceful, yet accommodating personality. Beyond the bluster, Mick was a bear of a man with a warm, soft center and an unwavering love for railroad history and photography, particularly that of his “home roads” in Meridian, Mississippi.

Mick’s contribution to preserving and promoting Meridian’s railroad heritage is generally well known. While serving as president of the Queen & Crescent Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society, Mick became founder and curator of the Meridian Railroad Museum located in the he beautifully restored Meridian depot. The Museum is noted for its exhibits of local and regional railroad history told through photographs (including many of Mick’s own), artifacts, and a model railroad, and has become a main Meridian tourist attraction.

Among Mick’s many contributions to the local railroad scene, most noteworthy is the annual Meridian Rail Fest sponsored by the Museum. Held on the first weekend in November, the Rail Fest has become a major regional event drawing thousands of visitors to its displays and activities. Over the years Mick forged many fruitful relationships with railroad executives, such as now retired Norfolk Southern’s chief executive Wick Moorman, himself a native of nearby Hattiesburg, Mississippi. Through his personal contacts with Moorman and others, Mick arranged to attract displays of the latest in railroad locomotives and equipment from Norfolk Southern, Kansas City Southern, and Amtrak.



**Mick Nussbaum and Wick Moorman
at the Meridian Rail Fest**



A prolific railroad photographer, Mick had a keen appreciation for photography and provided a venue for other photographers and creative artists to display and sell their work at the annual Rail Fest. Such was the case in 2007 when Mick invited me to sign a new book on Birmingham railroads, “*Birmingham Rails*” co-authored and published with Lyle Key. Noted railroad photographer Parker Lamb had just released a book on diesel locomotives, and I was honored to join Parker, who had also contributed to our book, for a joint book signing.

Over the years, Mick would occasionally make the three-hour drive up from Meridian for a MidSouth Chapter meeting, usually to catch a program of interest, and usually taking the podium to promote the Meridian Rail Museum. On one occasion, Mick suggested that the Chapter sponsor a photo calendar contest, naturally hoping that one of his many excellent photographs might be included. Board mem-

ber Dan Ferris also promoted the calendar idea, and agreed to organize a contest to allow members to vote on their favorite member photos. More than three dozen photos were submitted, and after the vote was counted neither of Mick's photos were selected. I dreaded telling Mick the news, but to my surprised relief he simply replied, "Oh, well, I'm sure there were plenty of other good photos to choose from." Such was his modesty.

In recent years, Mick continued to support the Chapter with his membership, though his trips to Leeds became less frequent. But he never felt far away, and continued to make his presence known with a steady stream of current railroad photography posted to the Internet for all to enjoy.

The last time I saw Mick was in January of this year at the annual Chapter membership meeting in Leeds. I was sitting in the agent's office signing copies of my new book on Birmingham Terminal Station, when I looked up to see Mick standing silently against the wall waiting for a chance to speak. He did not look well, and I later learned that Mick had been battling cancer for some time. But he still had enough strength and force of personality to give a hearty hello and handshake, and I was both honored and humbled that Mick would make such a show of support for my efforts.

My sincerest regret is that I missed a last opportunity to see Mick "in his element" and in good spirits. It was the occasion of the first passenger excursion over the Grenada Railway out of Batesville, Mississippi, featuring a vintage Illinois Central-themed consist including E-8 locomotives in original IC colors. This was a dream come true for IC and Mississippi rail fans, and it's hard to imagine a more suitable last photo opportunity for Mick.

Saturday, January 30, dawned as a remarkably crystal clear, blue-sky winter's day across the deep South. The weather couldn't have been finer, or the lighting more inviting for photography as Mick joined the merry band of long-time friends and fellow photographers for a day of train chasing. Among the many photos stops made that day, one of the best camera angles was of the through-truss bridge crossing north of Pope, Mississippi. While other photographers took a perch above the rails for a long view of the approaching train, Mick chose a cleared corn field for a shot strangely evocative of an early *City of New Orleans* postcard view. The resulting photo speaks for itself.

And so, happy rails, Mick, and thanks for the lasting memories. - *Marvin Clemons*

