



# The Mid-South Flyer

March 2012



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## Railfan-turned-entrepreneur Shane Boatright to bring March program

How does a young rail fan from Hueytown, Alabama build a thriving railroad services conglomerate?

One successful company at a time. That's how Birmingham entrepreneur Shane Boatright, founder and CEO of Boatright Companies, leveraged his love for railroads into a multi-faceted rail services business with 350 employees and offices in four states.



After graduating from the University of Alabama in 1989, Boatright launched his career with one hi-rail truck spraying weeds along railroad right-of-way. "I was one man and a truck long before there were two men in a truck," he jokes. One opportunity led to another, and today Boatright Companies serves the railroad industry in 26 states providing vegetation management, equipment sales, crosstie production, and railcar repair.

Boatright attributes his success to a combination of entrepreneurial vision, a sense of humor, and great employees. "Leadership for me is to keep it simple and humorous," he says. "I like to look at my people and let them know, folks, we may be lost but we are way ahead of schedule."



While enjoying unprecedented success in the railroad services industry, Boatright hails his greatest accomplishment as the day he became owner of his own railroad. His lifelong passion was realized in 2007 with the purchase of St. Mary's Railroad. The Georgia short line, which has been in continuous operation since 1865, operates from Kingsland to St. Mary's, Georgia, where it interchanges with CSX Railroad. The line's primary shippers include Georgia-Pacific and the Kings Bay Naval Base, home port for nuclear submarines.

In addition to his numerous business pursuits, Boatright is an active supporter of civic and cultural organizations. He generously contributes to local schools, churches, and fire fighters in the communities served by Boatright Companies. He's also a staunch supporter of railroad historical preservation groups such as the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum in Calera, Alabama,

Summing up his career, Boatright told Birmingham's *B Metro Magazine*, "I am half-business man, half-entertainer, pro-railroad all the way. My passion is seeing other people succeed. I am just a redneck from Alabama who had a passion and a dream, and I am living it."

The Mid-South Chapter is delighted to have Shane Boatright as guest speaker for our March program on Saturday, March 10 at 2:00 p.m. We invite everyone to attend and bring a guest to hear his informative and entertaining talk on the railroad business. The depot will open at 1:30. Seating is limited, so come early for a good seat.



# Minutes from the January Annual Membership Meeting

The Mid-South Chapter Annual Membership Meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. on January 21, 2012, Marvin Clemons, chapter president, presiding. Twenty members and guests were in attendance, including new member Frank Orona and guests Vernon Stidham and Dalton Leopard,

Marvin proposed a motion to suspend the reading of the Minutes of the November meeting. The motion was made by Tim Smith and seconded by Lee Singletary.

Under Old Business, Marvin gave an update on plans for the 2012 R&LHS Annual Meeting. Marvin discussed venues, programs, and the April 15<sup>th</sup> registration cut-off date. Also under the same heading of old business, we discussed the December Smokey City Rail Show netting \$296.00 in company store sales and two new members.

Company Store manager Lee Singletary reported that the Leeds Depot print is available unframed for \$30.00 and framed for \$85.00. The Birmingham Terminal framed print is available for \$85.00 and a set of both framed prints is available for \$150. Dan reported that the Chapter calendar is “on hold” due to the cost. We will look at the calendar again after the Convention and after Frank Crowe has been fully paid for his commission.

Under New Business we discussed acquiring a sound (PA) system for meetings. The Board will look into the models and costs of a portable system. This is being considered as a project to be done by this summer. Tim Smith also discussed the chapter’s new Facebook page.

Marvin Clemons gave the President’s Report. The Chapter had a good year in 2011 and looks forward to another good year in 2012. We had 54 members at the end of 2011 and now have 62 members, based on year-end roster plus 8 new members. The Annual cook-out social has become one of our most popular events and is planned again for 2012. The Chapter may add other social events as the year progresses.

Stan Burnett gave the Secretary/Treasurer’s Report and passed out copies of the report. The report showed \$1,694.17 in the checking account and \$213.33 in the Dollar-A-Month fund. The Chapter owes Frank Crowe \$715.00 on his commission.

Dan Ferris gave the Membership Report. Dan wants more feedback from the members to encourage and retain membership. We are planning a trip to Kennesaw to see the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History. An auction of railroad items is being considered as a fund-raising event and to attract new member interest.

John Browning reported on Chapter Programs. He summarized the list of outstanding programs in 2011 and extended thanks to all who presented. Our planned program for the next chapter meeting is speaker Shane Boatright from the Boatright Companies. The companies are involved in various aspects of railroad maintenance work.

Tim Smith reported on the Chapter’s exhibits. Much work has been accomplished in the agent/operator’s office. More has to be done in the exhibit room, which is to be named the “Frank Ardrey Exhibit Room” in honor of the late Frank Ardrey. We may be able to obtain financial help from R&LHS for the Exhibit Room. Tim requested help on listing what items are needed for the A/O room and the Exhibit Room, and help on obtaining them.

Lee Singletary reported on the MSC Company Store. Sales last year were over \$500. We are running low on some sales items. Prints and maps are our best selling items, but books and videos contribute also.

Jeff Johnson reported that the chapter website now resides on the R&LHS website. Marvin reported on the chapter’s newsletter, the *Mid-South Flyer* and asked for articles from members.

The next item of business was the Annual Election of Officers and Board Members. A proposed slate was presented by the Board, with Historian John Stewart nominated for Vice President and president-elect. Dan Ferris, the Chapter’s outgoing Vice-president, accepted the board’s nomination for the vacant board position. There being no additional nominations from the floor, John Browning moved that we accept the proposed slate and Lee Singletary seconded. All present voted “yea” and the slate was adopted.

Following a refreshment break, Marvin presented a slideshow featuring some of Frank Ardrey’s better-known photo images, plus some less known photos. At the conclusion of the slideshow, the meeting was adjourned.

# Chapter News and Events



**Mid-South member Bob Smith** proudly displays his recent restoration of three switch lamps for the depot's exhibit room. The lamps received new lenses and a thorough cleaning, and will eventually be lighted and placed on display.

## Agent-Operator's office nears completion; items still needed

Restoration of the Leeds depot's Agent-Operator's office has moved another step closer to completion with the recent addition of a public timetable rack. **Mid-South member Eddie Cook** refigured and refinished the salvaged department store display case into a realistic facsimile of a timetable rack. A standard fixture in small town depots, the five-tiered rack will hold a permanent display of 1940's-era public timetables. Our thanks to Eddie for his latest contribution to the agent-operator's office, which includes several pieces of beautifully restored telephone and telegraph equipment.

The chapter is still seeking several items to complete the office restoration. They include a small **pot-bellied stove**, a **spittoon**, and a **"Y" string train order hoop**. Please contact Tim Smith, exhibit curator, if you have these or any other items to donate or loan for exhibit.

## Chapter rally for Flagg Coal steam

Join with your fellow Mid-South Chapter members at the Heart of Dixie RR Museum for a "day out with Flagg."

Plans are to gather at the museum at 10 a.m. on Saturday, March 17, and spend the morning photographing and riding behind Flagg Coal #75, an operating coal-fired 0-4-0 steam engine built by Vulcan Iron Works in 1930.

This 40-ton saddle tank locomotive was used as a switch engine until 1935 when it was sold and used to push 4-wheel hopper cars from the steam shovel to the crusher at the rock quarry until 1953. The locomotive sat untouched in a museum until 1991, when the Gramlings purchased it and spent ten years painstakingly restoring it to service.

For more information, visit the HOD website at <http://www.hodrrm.org/Events/SteamDays/tabid/95/Default.aspx>



**Mid-South members Martin O'Toole (standing) and Dick Hillman (right)** joined with R&LHS member David Lester at the R&LHS/Mid-South Chapter display at the January Golden Spike Rail Show in Atlanta.

## Mid-South Chapter Calendar

Saturday, March 10 — Mid-South Chapter Meeting @ Leeds Depot—2:00 p.m.  
Guest Speaker: Shane Boatright of Boatright Companies

Saturday, March 17 — Chapter Outing to Heart of Dixie RR Museum—10:00 a.m.  
Event: Flagg Coal Steam Exhibit

Saturday, April 21 — Chapter Cookout & Social — 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 12 — Mid-South Chapter Meeting @ Leeds Depot—2:00 p.m.  
Program: To Be Announced

# Regional Report

## Norfolk Southern to honor predecessor roads with 18 “heritage” locomotive paint schemes

*(excerpted from NS News Release, March 1, 2012)*

Norfolk VA - Norfolk Southern is honoring its predecessor railroads during 2012, its 30th anniversary year, by painting 18 new locomotives in commemorative schemes that reflect the heritage of those predecessors.

Since the 1820s, hundreds of railroad companies were built, merged, reorganized, and consolidated into what eventually became Norfolk Southern, itself created from the consolidation of Southern Railway and Norfolk and Western Railway in 1982. In 1999, Norfolk Southern expanded the scope of its heritage with its acquisition of a portion of Conrail. The heritage locomotives will represent most of the railroads that played significant roles in Norfolk Southern’s history. The first units will be delivered in March, and all units are expected to be riding the rails by June 1, Norfolk Southern’s 30th anniversary date.

Each paint scheme will be modified to fit contemporary locomotives while staying as true as possible to the original designs. Norfolk Southern employees in Altoona, Pa., and Chattanooga, Tenn., will paint GE ES44AC locomotives, while the EMD SD70ACe units will be painted at Progress Rail Services’ facility in Muncie, Ind. The heritage locomotives will be used to haul freight across Norfolk Southern’s 20,000-mile, 22-state network.

Following are illustrations of the Southern and Central of Georgia, the two predecessor lines representing the Mid-South region. (A complete list of predecessor companies with images of the color schemes are available on [Norfolk Southern’s web site](#)):

- **Southern Railway** (GE) originated as the South Carolina Canal and Rail Road Company in 1827. It put into service the nation’s first regularly scheduled steam passenger service on Christmas Day, 1830, with the locomotive “The Best Friend of Charleston.” The Southern was incorporated in 1894 from the reorganization and consolidation of numerous predecessors and absorbed another 68 railroad companies over the next six years.



- **Central of Georgia Railway** (SR, GE) was formed in 1833 to connect Macon, Ga., with Savannah, completing a rail link between Chattanooga and the port. It was famed for two passenger trains named after prize-winning race horses, the Nancy Hanks and the Man O’ War.



# From the Vault

75

YEARS OF SOUTHERN SERVICE TO:

**WOODWARD IRON COMPANY**



*Blast furnaces of Woodward Iron Company turn out high-grade merchant pig iron for shipment to foundries throughout the country. Plant facilities cover 80,000 acres, served by a 50-mile standard-gauge in-plant railroad (part of which is shown here). Locomotives of the company's all-diesel fleet move cars of raw materials to the furnaces and set out loaded cars of all types on sidings for pickup by connecting railroads.*

*(Editor's note: The following account of the founding and development of Woodward Iron Company first appeared in the January 1951 issue of Southern Railway TIES)*

Pacing the main deck, a West Virginia businessman pulled his outer coat collar tight against the chill of the February wind off the river. Suddenly, wind and cold were forgotten at a few words overheard in the conversation of two Federal soldiers lolling on a nearby bench.

The words "coal" and "iron ore" aroused the immediate interest of Stimson Harvey Woodward an ironmaster and the descendant of a family of ironmasters whose forges flamed in the Massachusetts colony as early as 1654.

He soon learned from the two soldiers that during the recent campaigns against the Confederacy they had noticed deposits of coal, iron ore and limestone lying within a few miles of one another in the northern part of Alabama.

One of the founders and operators of La Belle Iron Works at .Wheeling, W" Va. (predecessor of the present Wheeling Steel Corporation) , Woodward understood the importance of these three essentials to iron manufacture. He made careful mental note of the information, but two years passed before he got around to a personal investigation of the story.

He arrived in what is now greater Birmingham in January, 1869. Much of the region he visited was densely wooded-the domain of Indian hunting parties little more than a generation before. To the Chickasaws, Choctaws, Cherokees and Creeks, the "red rock" so abundant in the area was the source of dyes and war paint. From the "white rock" in the valley the-y carved bowls, dishes and ceremonial pipes.

To the West Virginia ironmaster the "red rock" was iron ore-a mountain of it. (geologists later estimated it to contain more than a billion tons of ore. ) The soft white rock he recognized as limestone-an ideal furnace ingredient for helping turn the ore into molten iron.

One careful look at the brown ore deposits at Shelby and the red ore vein in Jefferson County convinced Woodward. He bought 550 acres of land on Red Mountain, spent \$30,000 on other coal and ore lands and, in addition, purchased a 2,000-acre tract near Woodstock in Tuscaloosa County.

This property, bought in 1869, became the nucleus of the present Woodward Iron Company at Woodward, Ala., served by Southern Railway and one of its predecessor lines-the Alabama Great Southern-for more than 75 years.

S. H. Woodward did not live to see the realization of his ten years of planning. But in 1881 his two sons, I. H. and W. H. Woodward, carried the family tradition of ironmaster ( and \$400,000 in cash) to Alabama. That fall they organized the Woodward Iron Company with W. H. as president and I. H. as secretary-treasurer. Their objective: the manufacture of high-grade merchant pig iron from the abundant raw materials of the area.

(Merchant iron is used by foundries for casting water, soil and sanitary pipe; bathtubs and enamelware; stoves, farm implements and machinery parts. It is also used in diesel engine and compressor parts, piston rings and other auto paints. )

The Woodward's' plans were thorough. They called for a blast furnace; 150 beehive ovens ( coke ovens thus named because they resembled giant beehives); ore and coal mines, and about eight miles of in-plant railroad to serve them.

But first the prospective ironmasters had to build houses and a general store for the workmen, and a kiln for manufacturing brick to build an elevator tower for lifting raw materials to the top of the furnace. Also needed: a cast shed, an office and other buildings.

In early spring, 1882, they broke ground for the first Woodward furnace. It measured 75 feet in height and 17 feet in diameter at the base, When this furnace opened on August 17, 1883 ( an ironmaster would say it "went into blast"), the Woodwards were in business.

I. H. Woodward succeeded his brother as president of the company in 1886. During that same year construction of a second furnace was begun, and the following January this stack went into blast. Combined, the two furnaces delivered 165 tons of iron daily.

A second coal mine was then opened and additional beehive coke ovens were constructed to handle the increased consumption of fuel.

Increased demands for their product encouraged the company to construct a third furnace, which was completed in 1905 with a stack reaching upward 85 feet and a base 20 feet in diameter. No.2 furnace was enlarged the following year to the dimension of the new No.3. The combined capacity then rose to 250,000 tons annually.

Looking back to the company's early beginnings, present-day Woodward officials are amazed at the foresight of s. H. Woodward and his two sons. The blast furnaces were located at a convenient central point, with the company's

general offices close by. Approximately eight miles to the north lie the ore mines; the coal mines lie about the same distance to the south.

In 1911, another of the company's giant forward steps resulted, upon completion of its first battery of 60 by-product coke ovens (an additional 80 ovens were built the following year). Where before only coke had been obtained from the old-fashioned beehive ovens, the company could with the new ovens extract and sell coal chemicals such as coke oven tar, ammonium sulphate, toluene, xylene, naphthalene, pyridine, benzol and crude heavy solvent. Later, coke oven gas not used in company operations was sold to neighboring industries.

Woodward Iron Company in 1912 acquired the Birmingham Coal and Iron Company, the most important asset of which was an immense coal reserve.

Most progress thus far had been under the direction of I. H. Woodward, who remained president of the company for 32 years. Upon his death in 1918, he was succeeded by his only son, A. H. "Rick" Woodward who, though he was not the last male member of the Woodward family, has thus far been the last of the Woodwards to hold the title of president. He became chairman of the board around 1920, and died in 1950, having also served at the head of the company for 32 years.

The fourth and latest furnace at Woodward was begun during his tenure. Upon its completion in 1951, rated production capacity was increased considerably and now is rated at about 720,000 net tons annually.

With facilities and operations covering about 80,000 acres, including mineral rights, and employing some 2,500 workers, Woodward today ranks among the largest independent manufacturers of merchant pig iron in the United States. And because of the availability of railroads—a nationwide mass transportation system capable of handling in bulk the heavy tonnage out of Woodward—the market for the company's products extends throughout the country.

Founders of the iron company had railroads in mind when they first organized. Having built their own railroad for hauling the raw products from the mines to the furnaces, they looked to the growing national network of rails to carry their products to consumers. The Alabama Great Southern, successor to Birmingham's first railroad, had been organized four years prior to Woodward's beginning. Its growing lines stood ready to link the new industry with markets north, south, east and west.

The successful growth of Woodward, however, primarily is due to a man with an ear sensitive to two words—ore and coal—who had ability and foresight equal to the challenge that grew out of a casual conversation. Standing today in tribute to Stimson Harvey Woodward are four huge blast furnaces, modernly equipped coal and ore mines, quarries, pig machines, a byproduct plant and about 50 miles of in-plant railroad. And though the company no longer is a family owned corporation, it continues to specialize in merchant pig iron—and to rely on railroads to bring distant markets within reach.

**Woodward "Mike" at work** — Woodward Iron Co. 2-8-0 #35 (Baldwin 1922) has hot metal ladle cars in tow as it backs up the hill from behind the blast furnaces. This photo was taken in May 1959 during a brief revival of steam locomotive use at Woodward.  
*(Photo by Thomas Lawson Jr.)*



## Golden Era Classics



***Out on Leeds Trestle*** — For those old enough to remember, the sights and sounds of a steam locomotive pulling a heavy train will never be forgotten. This evocative scene of C&O 2716 ascending the Central of Georgia's nearly century-old timber Leeds trestle with a Southern steam excursion in November 1981 is just such a cherished memory. *(Photo by Bruce Wilson)*

### **Where are we?**

*We'd really like to know, since someone asked us and we could only guess. Clearly it's the "Seminole," as indicated by the drumhead. The only other hint we were given was that it was taken north of Birmingham around 1948. There is an "indication" (hint!) that it may be taken on the Southern portion of the "Seminole's" route, which if true would place it between Jasper and Haleyville. And that shed on the right is painted in Southern's standard gray. So, where are we?*

