



# The Mid-South Flyer

Summer 2012



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

## August meeting highlight

### Dr. Carl Marbury to bring historical talk at August meeting

When it comes to the history of Leeds, only a handful of living residents have ancestry that dates back to the town's beginning. And fewer still can claim roots that actually predate the city's founding in 1887.

One such individual is Mid-South Chapter member Dr. Carl Marbury. "Doctor Carl," as he is affectionately known to his many friends, is related not only to one of the earliest Leeds families, but also to one of the first men to help build both predecessor railroads into Leeds.

For our August meeting, Dr. Marbury will discuss his family's relationship to Leeds and its railroads in a talk he has entitled "*Railroads, Leeds, and Ciscero Davis.*" He will speak about his grandfather, Ciscero Davis. Ciscero and his wife, Melissa Hood Davis, were the first black settlers in Leeds. Originally from Atlanta, Davis worked his way east laying track for the Georgia Pacific Railroad into Birmingham. He later married and settled his family in Leeds, later helping with construction of the Central of Georgia through Leeds into Birmingham. Another family member connected to the railroads was Dr. Marbury's great-grandfather, Robert Hood, who owned timber land in nearby Vandiver and supplied cross-ties for construction of the Central of Georgia into Leeds.



*Dr. Carl Marbury*

### **Mid-South Chapter to co-host railroad symposium during September festival**

As part of our annual Open House during the annual Leeds Folk Festival on September 15 & 16, the Mid-South Chapter will co-host a two-day educational and cultural symposium focusing on local legend John Henry and the cultural arts related to railroads.

The first John Henry symposium in Leeds was held in 2007, one year before the first Leeds Folk Festival and John Henry Celebration. This second symposium will be an integral part of this year's festival, and will be held every fifth year in conjunction with the festival.

The 2012 symposium will focus on recent research supporting the local legend of John Henry by historian John Garth. Other educational presentations will include a program by chapter member John Stewart on the development of the railroads in the Birmingham district.

Cultural components of the symposium include presentation on the roots of the traditional American railroad folk music of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, including a performance of "The Ballad of John Henry" by local musician Ron Dometrovich, a concert of 19<sup>th</sup> century American railroad folk music by the Alabama Bluegrass Music Association, and a theatrical performance of "It's Gonna Be the Death of Me," written and performed by actress Donna Thornton telling of John Henry's life and death through song and stories. A detailed agenda will be distributed prior to the festival.

After helping to build the railroads into Leeds, Ciscero became the first janitor and caretaker to work at the newly constructed Georgia Pacific depot, which we know today as the Historic Leeds Depot and home of the Mid-South Chapter. In a real sense, Dr. Marbury has carried on the "family tradition" by personally landscaping and maintaining the depot grounds, just as his grandfather did a century before him.

In addition to his volunteer work at the depot and service to the boards of the Mid-South Chapter and Leeds Historical Society, Dr. Marbury is involved in numerous civic, historical, and charitable causes. His lifetime of community service earned him recognition as 2012 Citizen of the Year by the Leeds Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Marbury is a life-long educator and learner, having received degrees from Alabama A&M (B.S.), Oberlin College (M.A. and B.Div.), Harvard University (Ph.D) and Vanderbilt University (M. Div). He has served on faculty at numerous universities, including Alabama A&M where he also served as president.

The Mid-South Chapter is delighted to have Dr. Marbury as our guest speaker. Please join us and bring a guest to hear his informative and educational talk on Saturday, August 25 at 2 p.m.

*See you at the depot!*

## Chapter Meeting Report

# ***Birmingham railroad entrepreneur Shane Boatright highlights March meeting***

The Spring meeting of the Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society was held on March 10, 2012 at the historic Leeds depot. We had 38 members and guests in attendance. President Marvin Clemons called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Stan Burnett gave the Secretary/Treasurer's Report. He reported that the balance in the Mid-South Chapter's checking account is \$1625.42 and that the membership stands at 63. Stan also mentioned that March 31<sup>st</sup> is the deadline for 2012 membership renewal.

Under Old Business, Marvin gave a brief report on the May R&LHS Convention. The deadline for registration for the Convention is April 15<sup>th</sup>. Larry Kelpke reported that the City of Leeds is to pay for the painting of the depot and the replacement of the two doors, with repairs hopefully finished in time for the R&LHS reception.

Marvin reported on recent donations to the agent-operator's office restoration. We now have a fine timetable rack for displaying timetables, with thanks to member Eddie Cook for refinishing the woodwork. Larry Kelpke has donated a framed map of the Southern Railway, and Terry Oden has donated a Southern Railway ashtray and a switch lock. Items still needed include a pot-bellied stove, spittoon, bay window shades and overhead lamp for the operator's desk to complete the period appearance of the agent-operator's office.

Marvin announced plans for a Chapter field trip on Saturday March 17 to the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum to ride behind Flagg Coal's steam locomotive. He also reminded members of the annual Chapter Cookout on Saturday April 21, from 10:00AM to 3:00PM. Sam Ferris will coordinate the event.

Following announcements, Program Chair John Browning introduced our speaker, Birmingham entrepreneur Shane Boatright, founder and CEO of Boatright Companies, a multi-faceted rail services business with 350 employees and offices in four states. John also welcomed Boatright Companies staff Alexa Boatright, Lisa O'Daniel, and Michael Rush.

A native of Hueytown, Boatright related that he grew up loving trains. He told how after graduating from the University of Alabama in 1989, he launched his business career with one hi-rail truck spraying weeds along railroad right-of-way. His interests soon evolved into the production of railroad crossties. Boatright eventually acquired the Seaman Timber Company of Montevallo, which greatly expanded the company's sales and distribution of crossties. A new plant at Lomax located in Chilton County, Alabama, is due to open in the fall of 2012 and will employ between 50 and 75 workers. Other railroad-related services provided by Boatright Companies include safety accessories, vegetation control, HiRail equipment, and the repair of coal cars.

In 2007, Boatright fulfilled a life-long dream of owning a railroad when he acquired the 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 summary, Boatright attributed his success to a valued and motivated workforce, saying his greatest achievement has been to help his employees succeed in reaching their goals. Following his presentation, Boatright fielded several questions from the standing-room only crowd, who clearly enjoyed his enthusiasm, humor, and insight into some of the specifics of the railroad industry. In appreciation for his presentation and contribution to Birmingham's railroad legacy, Marvin presented Mr. Boatright with a framed and signed print of "Leeds Passing," a Frank Crowe watercolor depicting a period scene of the Leeds depot from the 1940s.

After adjournment, Boatright and his guests were given a tour of the depot and a briefing on the Mid-South Chapter's plans to create a permanent educational exhibit on the Birmingham railroad district. *(Contributed by Stan Burnett, Secretary)*



*Shane Boatright and staff were our special guests at the March meeting. Pictured left to right are Michael Rush, Shane Boatright, Alexa Boatright, and Lisa O'Daniel (Photo by John Browning)*

# *Our Summer of Great Content*

*The spring and summer of 2012 was a “happening time” for the Mid-South Chapter. Starting with a March outing to the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum to ride behind Flagg Coal steam, the chapter hosted a three-day national R&LHS convention in May, then wrapped up with a visit to the Southern Museum of Civil War & Locomotive History in July. Between events, several Mid-South members attended the historic gathering of Norfolk Southern’s “Heritage” locomotives at Spencer Shops near Salisbury, South Carolina. We’ve captured all of the action in a great bunch of photos presented in this summer edition of “The Mid-South Flyer.” Just take a look and you may be surprised to see what your chapter has been up to lately.*



*Something old, something new, but which is which?*

*Mid-South member Mick Nussbaum captured this colorful scene of the Norfolk Southern (NS) “Central of Georgia” Heritage unit #8101 posed beside Southern E8 #6900 at Spencer Shops at Salisbury, NC. The two-day event on July 3-4 featured all 20 NS “Heritage” units representing all predecessor railroads with lines still active in the NS system. On both days the Heritage units were spotted in the stalls of the massive Spencer roundhouse for “group” photos by company lineage — all Conrail lines, all Norfolk & Western lines, and all Southern Railway lines. Each family of locomotives then “paraded” from the roundhouse one unit at a time to an open area for photos. Mick caught this shot of the Central of Georgia unit as it posed beside the Southern E-8. And to think that these striking colors once passed by daily within sight of the Leeds depot!*

# *“Railroads, Red Ore, and Red Hot Metal”*

Mid-South Chapter hosts the Annual R&LHS Meeting in May

For three days in May (17-20), the Mid-South Chapter hosted the Annual Meeting of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society. The gathering was attended by a congenial delegation of 56 R&LHS members representing 21 states and all 10 R&LHS chapters. The theme of the meeting was “Railroads, Red Ore, and Red Hot Metal” and featured field trips to a variety of historical and contemporary venues interspersed with presentations on the history of the Birmingham District’s railroads, mining, and steel and iron industries. The Tutwiler Hotel served as meeting headquarters and proved a perfect venue for the meeting. At the annual banquet, R&LHS President Bob Holzweiss complimented the Mid-South Chapter, saying that “the bar has been raised” for future annual meetings. Our thanks to the convention committee, the Mid-South board and chapter members who contributed their time, talent and attendance to make the 2012 Annual Meeting a notable success. Special thanks to R&LHS members Linda Fike, Larry Goolsby, Crew Heimer, John Browning, Jim Smith and Cliff Vander Yacht for supplying the excellent photos for this spread.



The “Coast Line Twins” Ed Faggart and Larry Goolsby contemplate a BBQ supper



OK, we’ve registered, now what? Dick Hillman, Jim Smith & Ken Marsh await further instructions



Warm smiles from Mid-South hosts Dan & Sam Ferris greeted attendees at registration



Attendees enjoyed a delicious lunch at the Ironton Café of “Fried Green Tomatoes” fame



Vulcan Museum director Phillip Ratliff briefed attendees on the Birmingham Mineral District



Honestly, fellas, isn't it a little early for a bus ride?



Guest Terry Oden received the first Mid-South Chapter’s Historical Preservation award from Chapter VP John Stewart (r)



A bottle of refreshing ice water never tasted so good after a walk in Railroad Park!

# *“Railroads, Red Ore, and Red Hot Metal”*

Mid-South Chapter hosts the Annual R&LHS Meeting in May



Did someone say “time for lunch?!?” A hungry crowd eagerly awaits arrival of the barbecue chuck wagon at the Heart of Dixie Museum



The timeline mural at Railroad Park gets close scrutiny from Paul Gibson



Industrial railroad historian Tom Lawson (seated, left) was a special added attraction



Birmingham mining expert Eric McFerrin (right) brought an excellent keynote presentation

*“I savored the “Birmingham Flavor” with great satisfaction...Thanks for the great experience. I’m much the wiser about Birmingham now, thanks to your comprehensive tours and presentations.” — Ken Marsh, Knoxville, TN*



R&LHS President Bob Holzweiss, presiding



*“Is this really for me?”* Mid-South member Dan Ferris received unexpected recognition at Saturday’s banquet for his service to the Mid-South board of directors



Substituting for an ailing Lyle Key, Mid-South member Larry Goolsby saved the day with an informative program on the Atlantic, Birmingham & Coast Railroad at the Sunday breakfast meeting

# *“Railroads, Red Ore, and Red Hot Metal”*

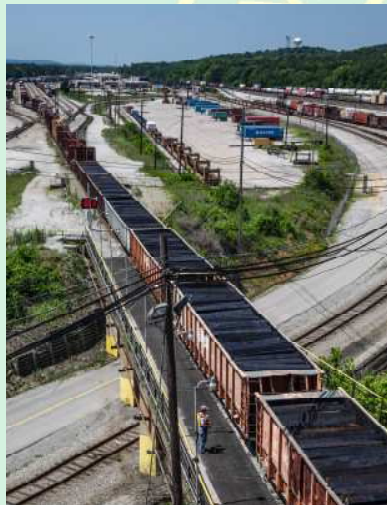
Mid-South Chapter hosts the Annual R&LHS Meeting in May



Gosh, it's a TRAIN! A northbound AGS freight passes by during a visit to the Bessemer Hall of History. As the train gods would have it, only a few main line trains were spotted during the convention tours.



The Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum hosted an excursion over the former L&N Alabama Mineral line from Calera, Alabama



Every day is “hump day” at Norris Yard



NS Birmingham terminal superintendent Jay Traywick (left) provided a briefing on Norris Yard operations

*“I especially found it interesting that we spent as much time on the various industries related to making steel as we did on railroading in the area. That community-wide integration is, I believe, an important component of broadening the appeal of railway heritage for future generations, and for the communities that will sustain some part of their economic wellbeing from railway*



During a driving tour of the Birmingham district, attendees caught a glimpse of the new Birmingham Terminal (formerly Birmingham Southern) yard at Fairfield



What better way to end the day than a gab session in around the agent's desk at Leeds depot, Mid-South HQ

# "Railroads, Red Ore, and Red Hot Metal"

What Our Guests Had To Say

"Boy, what a job you folks did on the conference! You are all to be commended for the obvious detail that went into your planning and execution. I was able to peruse my conference guide over the weekend, and it's now in my library collection." — Dick Hillman, Kennesaw, GA

"I would like to thank you and your committee for a great weekend, of history, railfanning and fellowship. My wife and I had a wonderful time meeting a great bunch on folks, and I hope that I will be able to join up with your group again and continue to enjoy your friendship and fellowship." — Bill Jones, Macon, GA

The Railway  
Historical



& Locomotive  
Society, Inc.

R.F. Holzweiss  
President

"Thank you for hosting a marvelous R&LHS Annual Convention. I believe you have raised the bar on planning and executing a perfect show." Alden Dreyer, Shelburne, MA

Mid-South Chapter R&LHS  
c/o Marvin Clemons  
65 Lee Circle  
Hayden, AL 35079

"The chapter did a superb job of hosting the R&LHS conference in Birmingham last week. You brought the Birmingham-area industrial and rail history—the people as well as the physical facilities—so much to life that I almost felt as if I were stepping into it. Thanks again for a great time and most memorable event." — Dan Gray, Houston, TX

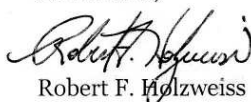
Dear chapter members,

On behalf of the R&LHS board of directors and the membership of the R&LHS, I want to thank you for hosting the 2012 R&LHS Membership Meeting. I also want to compliment you for the superb program, careful planning and attention to detail that made our meeting a smashing success. Having planned a meeting myself, I can appreciate how much effort is involved in executing such a complex event with so many moving parts. Your group did a great job, a fact noted by many of the attendees who pulled me aside to offer their praise on a number of occasions.

Personally, I was impressed with the Leeds depot and the cooperative relationship you have developed with the city. Aside from serving as a fine meeting space close by the tracks, the depot is a symbol of what the R&LHS can do to preserve our railroad heritage. Enclosed, please find a check for \$605.46 to help bring the next project(s) at the depot to fruition. That sum represents 100% of the proceeds from the annual meeting.

Thank you again for hosting the meeting.

All the best,

  
Robert F. Holzweiss

It was a great meeting! You and the other members of the chapter did a superb job. — Bill Howes, Jacksonville, FL

"Just wanted to tell you again that the annual meeting tours and presentations were outstanding! Not sure how the next one will be able to top it (or equal it)." — Richard Morris, Byrdstown, TN

"Just a note to let you know how much I appreciate all the work you and your able colleagues did to plan and execute the R&LHS Annual Meeting. Although I missed the second day of trips and Sunday's Breakfast, Friday's trips were all interesting and worthwhile. The book prepared for the meeting is really well done." — Jeff Mora, Washington, DC



**Follow the Flagg!** — On a warm spring day in March, a happy contingent of Mid-South Chapter members trekked down to Calera and the Heart of Dixie Museum and spent the morning photographing and riding behind for a ride 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. Pictured left to right are *Ken & Tim Smith, Josh & Lee Singletary, Alan Maples, Natasha Bettis, Marv Clemons, John Browning,* and guest *Jack Gillespie*. Thanks to *Kayron Clemons*, who stepped away to take the group photo.



**Mid-South members and guests** gathered in July for an enjoyable day trip to the Southern Museum of Civil War & Locomotive History at Kennesaw, Georgia. As part of their visit, museum curator and Mid-South member *Dick Hillman* arranged for the group to visit the Canton, St. Paul & Pacific live steam railway located at nearby Canton. The pike operates a number of member-owned steam and diesel locomotives, including the quaint American-type pictured above, and over 12 scale miles of track including curved trestles, several tunnels, and active signaling. A video taken by member *Ken Smith* of a ride over the line can be viewed on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fp-z-ilsX9Q>. Thanks to *John Browning* for the group photo.



## Golden Era Classics



The annotation reads simply *"The Gap", Gate City, Alabama*, but this early photo conveys a wealth of information about one of Birmingham's most recognizable railroad locations. Also known as Red Gap, it's the site where four of Birmingham's eight major rail lines made their entrance into the district. The undated photo shows, from right to left, the "C&WRR" (the Columbus & Western, predecessor to the Central of Georgia); the "G.P. RR (Georgia Pacific, predecessor to the Southern Railway; the "AGS RR" for the Alabama Great Southern, the "L&N R.R." for the L&N's Ruffner Branch, and finally the "BM&M RR", which we can only surmise stood for some combination of Birmingham, mining and mineral. Most interestingly, the photo shows neither the Seaboard nor the L&N's Red Gap branch, which would date it before the Red Gap Branch construction sometime around 1889, and just one year after the Central of Georgia arrived in Birmingham. Historic, indeed.

### Where are we?

Among the many photos we've seen of historic railroad sites in the Birmingham district, for some reason only a few of this location can be found. That's hard to understand, considering its close proximity to one of the most photographed locations in town. It may not have been the most glamorous, but it was easily accessible and the railroad (known for its courtesies) was usually accommodating to rail fans and photographers. Not surprisingly, today nothing remains of this scene captured in 1959 by local photographer Jim Thorington., although a nearby condominium is named for the location. So, fans, *where are we?*



# From the Observation Platform

*Marvin Clemons, Mid-South Chapter President*

What a summer, and for that matter, what a *year* it has been for the Mid-South Chapter! After kicking things off at the March meeting with a standing-only crowd to hear railroad entrepreneur Shane Boatright as our guest speaker, we jumped right in to final preparations and hosting the R&LHS annual meeting in May. As evidenced by the attendee feedback presented elsewhere in this issue, we succeeded in providing the Society with both an educational and entertaining convention. In the process we created some very good will for Birmingham among attendees representing 21 states. My thanks again to the board and the membership for helping pull together such a great event.



Following the May convention, the chapter hosted our first long-distance outing with a day trip to the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History in Kennesaw, with a side trip to the Canton, St. Paul & Pacific line steam operation in nearby Canton, Georgia. Although chapter turnout was less than expected, those who went had a great time and made some new friends among local rail fans and modelers who joined us for the trip.

Because of all of the extracurricular activity during the spring and summer, we suspended our usual July meeting which made for a very dry spell this summer. While I was glad to see as many members who could participate in both the convention and our July outing, I think most would agree that four months is a long wait between meetings. One of my “lessons learned” is that to the extent possible we should try to keep with our bi-monthly meeting schedule and work in trips and other activities in the “off” months.

I did say “to the extent possible,” because unforeseen circumstances may still arise that will cause us to deviate from our usual routine. And indeed, one such circumstance has necessitated moving our usual September meeting up into August. As you may have heard, Norfolk Southern is operating a series of steam excursions in conjunction with the railroad’s 30th anniversary. The first and perhaps only steam trip to Birmingham is scheduled to take place on Saturday, September 8, which also happens to be our regular meeting date. Consequently, the board decided to switch meeting dates so we can all get out and enjoy some main line steam action. I have a feeling we may see even more of each other out chasing than we would meeting at the depot, but we’ll see!

Which brings us to the present and plans for our next meeting on Saturday, August 25. As we’ve already seen, our chapter members possess considerable knowledge and have many interesting stories to share. At our next meeting, our own “Dr. Carl” Marbury will bring a very special story regarding his pioneering ancestors who helped build the railroads into Leeds. Dr. Carl will also brief us on plans for a railroad symposium as part of the John Henry Days Celebration during the Leeds Folk Festival and our open house on September 15 & 16.

Speaking of the open house, if you haven’t been by the depot this summer, wait till you see what a fresh coat of paint and new doors has done for the place. Our special thanks to the Leeds Historical Society, the city of Leeds, and members Larry Kelkpe and Carl Marbury for getting the job done in time for our convention and open house visitors.

## Mid-South Chapter Calendar

Saturday, August 25 — Mid-South Board Meeting @ Leeds Depot — 11:00 (working lunch)

Saturday, August 25— Mid-South Chapter Meeting @ Leeds Depot—2:00 p.m.  
Guest Speaker: Dr. Carl Marbury

Saturday, September 15 — Leeds Festival & Depot Open House — 9:00 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Sunday, September 16 — Leeds Festival & Depot Open House — Noon to 5 p.m.

Saturday, October 27 — Mid-South Board Meeting @ Leeds Depot — 10 a.m.

Saturday, November 10 — Mid-South Chapter Meeting @ Leeds Depot — 2 p.m.  
Program TBA