



The Mid-South Flyer

November/December 2014



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

The State of the Railroad Hobby, 2014

Commentary by David Lester (Part 2)

(Editor's note:: This is the second and final installment of Contributing Editor David Lester's commentary on the current status and future prospects for what he terms the "railroad hobby," to include railroad modeling, photography, publishing, the World Wide Web, and railroad enthusiast and historical organizations like R&LHS. An editorial response to David's commentary will appear in the next issue of "The Mid-South Flyer").

Another benchmark that people use to claim that interest in railroads is waning is the number of hobby shops we're losing on an annual basis. I don't have any statistics, but my guess is that hobby shops see about 20 percent of their support coming from non-modeling rail enthusiasts, and 80 percent model railroaders. And, believe me, no one enjoys a good hobby shop more than I do. I worked at a hobby shop in Atlanta during summer vacations and the holiday season while in college, and it was one of the neatest jobs I've ever had. While I'm not really a model railroader, I do enjoy displaying models and trainsets in my study at home, and I've found that N scale is the best for me. The opportunity to have a train made up of two NS SD70ACes followed by thirty loaded "top gon" coal cars will quicken the pulse of any rail enthusiast or modeler.

My own belief, though, is that the decline in hobby shops over the years is the result of changes in retailing, rather than a declining interest in railroads. With a few exceptions, good hobby shops for the serious modeler are "mom and pop" stores. And, how many "mom and pop" stores do you see in other lines of retailing? The local office supply store, the local pharmacy, and the local hardware store have all suffered from the impact of big box retailers, as well as internet retailing.

I think it's important to support your local hobby shop whenever you can, and I hope that good hobby shops are with us for a long time. I don't know this for an absolute fact, but it seems that the business models for hobby shops today is the same as it was forty years ago, except that some offer internet sales. This is not being critical, but is likely a business reality for hobby shop operation. For example, if you go into a hobby shop looking for something specific, chances are that the shop will not have what you want. They may be able to order it, but they'll need to check with their distributor first. If they don't have it, they may be able to order it directly from the vendor. No matter who has it, though, if it can even be found through this system, it will likely take days or weeks before you can get it. There are some exceptions, of course, but I think this is a pretty fair timetable for special ordering items through a hobby shop. An important note, too, is that hobby shops cannot afford to carry a ton of inventory. Inventory carrying costs are high, and poor management of this variable can put a hobby



November Meeting Cancelled

The regular chapter meeting scheduled for Saturday, November 8 has been cancelled due to the unavailability of a program speaker. On a related note, Mid-South President John Browning offers his views on the challenges facing the chapter and his concerns for the future in this edition's "Observation Platform" found on the last page of this newsletter.

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shop out of business very quickly.

If you need the item you're looking for more quickly, the internet offers attractive opportunities, and chances are, you'll have a greater likelihood of actually finding it. For example, many, if not most, vendors sell on line directly to the customer. Order it today, and it will arrive in your home in a day or two if you choose priority shipping. If the vendor is out, you can check the myriad of hobby shops that offer on-line ordering, and may be able to find it there, and have it shipped quickly. Third, if no one seems to have it, you can head to eBay. Many dealers have an eBay store, and offer new merchandise that you can't find anywhere else. In addition, you can find used equipment in excellent condition.

Another point to consider around hobby shops is that high-volume retailers and direct-from-the-manufacturer-websites have aided in the rise of limited-run paint schemes. Thirty years ago, you could always find a locomotive decorated for Santa Fe and Union Pacific, but beyond that, the selection got pretty thin. Modelers with factory-painted Florida East Coast E-units can thank the new retail model.

Today's railfans are a mix of young and old, yet all age groups tend to be very devoted to the hobby. I know of several young railfans (under 30) who have taken railroad photography to a new level. Instead of trading and selling black & white negatives and color slides, today's young railfans show and sell their work on railpictures.net, Flickr, and other internet venues. Some even have their own web pages. This certainly doesn't reflect a drop in enthusiasm for rail photography, but a change in the way it is practiced and celebrated. And, the fewer



Railfans connect through the Internet

paint schemes and locomotive types that exist today mean that all photographers, including young ones, must work harder and be more creative to produce quality images. Moreover, today's power shortages and run-through power means that people in Alabama get to see Union Pacific engines, and folks in Minnesota see Norfolk Southern. Those of us who were around during the mid-70s enjoyed the variety of their youth, but if they wanted to see another railroad's locomotives, they had to go to that other railroad. Now, it comes to us.

Railpictures.net, for example has over 450,000 images on line, with an average of 100 new ones added daily, and has stringent acceptance standards, ensuring that the work is good quality. Does that sound like waning interest to you? And, if you want a print of a spectacular image you've taken, today's high-quality digital cameras provide better resolution than film ever did, and with quality paper, inks and a printer, you can create a print that will last for generations.

The key point here is that rail enthusiasts today have many more choices around how to pursue their hobby. Web cams, train-watching platforms, web venues, digital versions of magazines and books are just a few of the many options that we have today. Speaking of books, despite the popular notion that no one wants to read a hard copy book anymore, and everyone is wedded to Kindle-like applications, hardcover, expensive books continue to be published and purchased. The web offers a great platform for reading news updates, digital versions of magazines, and book excerpts, but is everyone in the future going to read e-books, and

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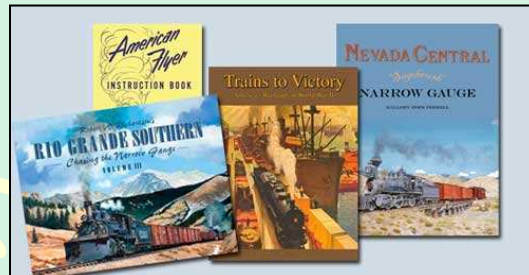
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forget about the traditional hardcovers? No. I've had numerous railfans under thirty tell me that they have a large hardback book collection, and several publishers of hardcover rail books and magazines are doing quite well. There is still a strong appeal for print publications, and like the newspaper and radio, they are not going to be supplanted by electronic and web versions, but will be supplemented by them.

Another point to consider is that electronic versions of publications require an electronic device, such as a tablet, laptop or desktop computer to be read. Sometimes, people just don't want to fool with the software and hardware required just to read a magazine, but simply be able to sit on the porch or in an easy chair and enjoy the magazine or book in print form. Moreover, if you spend your workday staring at a computer screen, you don't necessarily want to come home and do the same thing for your free-time reading. And, what happens when your device goes on the blink? No reading of anything until you get it fixed, unless you have print versions.



Books remain ever popular with railfans

In addition to photography, many young folks are active members of road-specific historical societies, as well as national organizations. For example, the NRHS RailCamp has proven to be a popular program, and what more could a young rail enthusiast ask for? The opportunity for hands-on training and experience with prototype railroading was rare when I was a teenager.

Don't let the challenges faced by some of our revered rail organizations – societies, publishers, and hobby shops – fool you into thinking that these challenges nothing more than the result of waning interest in railroads and railroad history. As I argued earlier, history has shown us that things change, interest levels wax and wane, and we are simply going through a period of change.



The future looks bright for railroading

It is hard to predict what the future will bring, but in many cases, popular notions of the past were way off the mark. For example, during the late 1960s and early 70s, the space program was enjoying its heyday, and many believed that we would have populations on the moon or Mars by the end of the twentieth century. This proved not to be the case, and our space program at the moment is devoted to utilitarian uses and placing telescopes in space for astronomical research. What few people could predict in the 1970s, though, was the impact of the Internet, and the ways in which it would shrink the globe. The Internet has developed into a powerful tool that greatly impacts business, politics, socialization, information sharing, and a world of other applications.

Everyone should also appreciate that the railroad industry is thriving today in ways that it hasn't since World War II. Excessive economic regulation through the Interstate Commerce Commission (now gone, thankfully) nearly killed the railroad industry and brought about nationalization. Thankfully, just before the private rail industry was about to fall into the ashbin of history, the Staggers Act of 1980 set the stage for the railroads to set competitive rates, abandon redundant and un-needed lines, enter into contracts with shippers, and finally earn their cost of capital, and more, to bring us the robust industry we have today.

And, do you think no one is going to be interested in the history of this industry renaissance in fifty years? The railroads are hiring significant numbers of people because the demand for freight transportation is stretching their ability to provide it. A certain percentage of these employees are either currently, or will become, rail historians or enthusiasts just because they enjoy their jobs and find the industry interesting. With freight traffic heavier than it has been in a long time, trackside observers will have plenty to view, photograph and record, providing a strong impetus for growing their interest in the industry.

Birmingham District Factoid

Bessemer Plant Made Pullman-Standard's One-Millionth Rail Car

Pullman Standard was a legendary rail car manufacturer and an industrial landmark in the Birmingham District for more than 50 years. The Bessemer plant shut down in the mid-1990s. Various other businesses have set up shop here in the last 20 years, but the old plant site is mostly empty again.

In 1929 Pullman Standard, then one of the nation's largest producers of railway cars, chose Bessemer as the location for its southern plant. The plant was located on the original sites of the Bessemer Furnaces, which were in operation from 1889 to the 1920s, and the Bessemer Rolling Mills, which were operational from 1887 to the 1920s. The Pullman Standard plant acquired machinery and materials from the old Chickasaw Shipbuilding Company, which had been built in conjunction with U.S. Steel's wartime expansions at Fairfield, and formally opened on October 1, 1929. Some of the buildings and equipment were moved there where they formed part of the 16-building complex for the production of various types of freight cars including box, hopper, gondola and flat cars

The facility became the most productive of its kind in the world producing cars that went into service all over the country. Pullman would become Bessemer's largest employer.

By January 1930 the Bessemer plant had built and delivered 600 box cars to National Railways of Mexico. The Southern Railway was another major customer. Southern received the 100,000th box car produced at the Bessemer plant in December of 1951. During WWII bomb casings were added to its product mix.

This plant also shipped railcars to Europe for the war effort in kit form. Other Pullman plants around the country, including its facility in Illinois, made tanks and guns and ships. But by far the most important war materials that Pullman produced were the passenger, troop transport, and freight cars that moved troops, civilian war workers, and war materials in Allied countries around the world.



The One-Millionth rail car houses a model rail-road exhibit at the Bessemer Hall of History

Pullman's Bessemer plant is credited with producing Pullman's one millionth freight car in 1979. It can be seen today across from the Bessemer Hall of History which is located in the old Southern station.

The plant was acquired by Wheelbrator-Frye in 1980. Its operations as Pullman-Standard were closed in 1981. Trinity Industries, which purchased Pullman, is currently operating facilities at the former Pullman-Standard plant. The company continues to make and modify rail cars, but its production is considerably reduced.

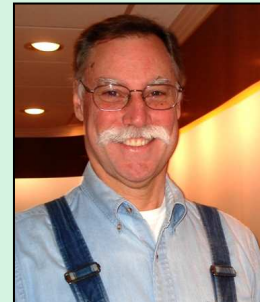
Summit Investment Management LLC of Denver has begun renovations on the existing buildings at Pullman, which is now an industrial park, and is currently cleaning up the brownfield site which is said to be minimal. Summit holds a ground lease from Trinity. The hope is to give the old plant site new life in an 800,000 square foot facility ripe for some new heavy industry. Some 3,500 workers lost their jobs when the plant closed.

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Railroad History

Warrior River Development and the “Lost” Ensley Southern Railroad Bridge

By John Stewart, Contributing Editor



You likely know that Birmingham was called the Magic City due to its phenomenal growth as an industrial workshop town. And you likely know that Birmingham became a railroad hub with the arrival of no less than 8 “trunk line” railroads. Every railroad that could wanted to share in the business that was developing in the Magic City. Thus Birmingham was a city founded not upon a river, but at the junction of two railroads – and the two became eight, plus industrial rail lines.

The “business” of Birmingham from its founding in 1871 was iron and by 1900 that business had become steel. And the making of steel required iron ore, coke made from coal and limestone. Much of the red iron ore was located along a high ridge, called Red Mountain as well as pit mines for brown ore located in the adjacent valley. Limestone was found throughout the valley as well.

The coal that fed the coke ovens of Birmingham was more dispersed, in three major fields – the Warrior, Cahaba and Coosa coal fields. Of these, the Warrior was by far the largest covering west Jefferson County, as well as much of Walker, Tuscaloosa and other counties to the northwest. The Warrior Coal Field is named for the Warrior River system that passes through it.

The railroads that approached Birmingham from the west and northwest were well positioned to take advantage of the coal market west of Birmingham. Those that arrived from other directions were less well positioned and had to extend lines into the coal fields.

Two of these railroads were the Southern (SR) and the Louisville & Nashville (L&N). By 1900 they had devised a plan that seemed to be mutually beneficial to extend a line through the coal fields from Ensley to the west and northwest to Parrish in Walker County. This line was called Ensley Southern RR (ES RR) and was jointly owned by the SR and the L&N. Within a couple of years, the L&N apparently thought better of this partnership and pulled out. In the meantime they constructed their own coal field line, the Cain Creek Branch (1903-04) which crossed northern Jefferson County and then turned south through Walker County. Over the years it was extended eventually approaching present day Birmingham from the north, on the north side of the Locust Fork Warrior River at Powhatan Mine.

So, the ES RR reached the “Little” [Locust Fork] Warrior River in 1902 at a location at the mouth of Short Creek that would later become Birmingham. This was a distance of about 18 miles from Ensley. In 1906 it was decided to extend this line about 5 miles across the river to a mine owned by Pratt Consolidated Coal Company at Maxine. You may have read Eric McFerrin’s web posts about the Ensley Southern Tunnel that is part of this extension. By this time, the Ensley Southern was a branch line of the Southern Ry since the L&N had pulled out of the partnership as noted above. A link to McFerrin’s post is:

<http://www.modelrailroadforums.com/forum/showthread.php?22923-Flashback!-Ensley-Southern-RR-Tunnel-circa-1908>

In doing various historical studies and learning about Birmingham, the author was always fascinated by the extension of the ES RR across the river. Part of that curiosity was satisfied by Eric McFerrin’s great field investigations and web posts. But in all of this a picture of the bridge at the “Little” Warrior River had never been found. McFerrin reports that it was a 900 foot steel bridge (total length).

A while back, your author worked for FEMA after the tornadoes of 2011, and part of that work was assisting the team of FEMA folks working at Holt, AL. Part of this work was to investigate the history of Holt and its main industry the

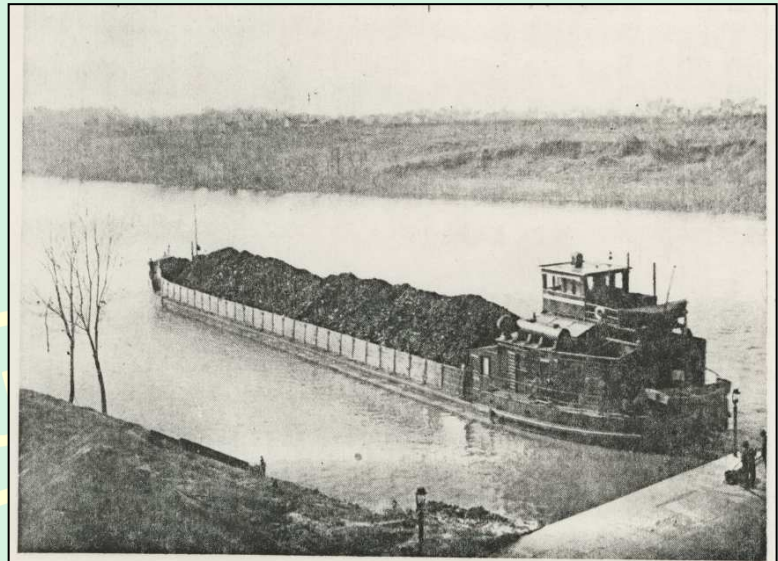
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Central Iron and Coal Company, which developed in 1902 and made cast iron pipe. During that investigation a picture was found of a very interesting boat that operated on the Warrior River hauling coal.

Like many things found in the history hobby, this was set aside as an interesting serendipitous photo.

Fast forward to the last few months, when a friend asked for help in finding out about a mine location called Gilmore. That investigation found the Gilmore mine was located on the Warrior River in Tuscaloosa County, and served by the Warrior Southern Railroad, a branch line of the Mobile and Ohio built to serve Central Iron and Coal's coal mine at Kellerman. My friend said that he recalled that he had been told that there was a coal load out on the river at Gilmore to load barges for transportation to Mobile and New Orleans.



B. SELF-PROPELLING STEEL BARGE NO. 1, LEAVING LOCK 10, BLACK WARRIOR RIVER WITH 735 TONS OF COAL FOR NEW ORLEANS.

In the course of that investigation, your author discovered the Alabama & New Orleans Transportation Company. Started in 1912 this company built "self-propelled barges" to pursue the coal trade down the river and return loaded with other goods to the towns along the river. These interesting boats were modeled after the heavy canal boats of Western Europe.

Canals in Europe have been around for a long time, creating a system of inland water way transportation before the railroads. The timing of industrial development in the United States was such that we embraced canals and river improvements about the same time that the railroads began to develop in all parts of the industrialized world. In many cases, the railroads and later highways put the canals out of business.

On the other hand, in many areas that had rail service, the railroads were seen as being greedy and freight rates as being too high – the "robber barons" of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. So, in many parts of the country, river and canal developments were viewed as crucial to the economy, and even after the railroads, were viewed as a crucial means to "keep the railroad's freight rates in check".



FIG. 2.—PRODUCER GAS BARGE UNLOADING AT NEW ORLEANS

River and canal improvements are similar, typically involving the construction of dams to control water level for navigation and locks to enable boats and barges to get around the dams where the water level changes. These improvements are typically expensive projects and it is not surprising that many areas turned to the federal government to develop the improvements to the rivers to enable navigation. Such was the case with the Warrior River system in Alabama. The government over a period of years pro-

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vided funds to build a series of low dams and locks to enable a fairly dependable river transportation system that was more likely to serve traffic year round, given the seasonal fluctuations in water level.

These improvements were often painfully slow and funding painfully small. The railroads continued to develop and in many cases, shippers continued to lobby for an alternate means of freight transportation. The politicians did what they could and often projects dragged on for years.

In the case of the Alabama & New Orleans Transportation Company, private enterprise sought to take advantage of the publicly funded river improvements and provide a private enterprise response to take advantage of the blossoming coal market from central Alabama.

By 1910 construction had started on dams and locks upstream from Tuscaloosa, Holt and Gilmore. This was seen as a boon to enable coal shipments from ever farther upstream. In 1911, the low head dam at Lock 17 was underway when a directive came to the contractor that the dam was to be constructed to a height of 63 feet rather than 21 feet. This dramatic increase in water level would enable navigation all the way to points in Jefferson and Walker County, and seemingly made the A&NO Transportation Company a sure fire success. And it would eliminate the need for Lock 18, 20 miles upstream.

Thus it was that by 1914-15 there were docks and coal load outs proposed as far upstream as Cordova, AL including one at the Ensley Southern's river crossing near today's Birmingham, located at the mouth of Short Creek. Tennessee Coal, Iron and RR Co (TCI) had developed new mines in the Pratt group at Edgewater west of Ensley. There was coal to sell on the open market, and a ready means to haul the coal to the river – the Ensley Southern RR.

This brings us to the image shown below which is entitled *“The First Edgewater Coal Sent Down the River to New Orleans from Southern Ry Bridge” (1915)*. At first glance this image is fascinating because the coal is being loaded into a barge *directly from the railroad bridge!* A metal chute has been attached to the bridge floor and hopper cars are bottom dumped into the chute and onto the barge. Further examination reveals that the “barge” is one of the interesting self-propelled barges being built and operated by the A&NO Transportation Company.

At first it didn't register that this would be the Ensley Southern Railroad Bridge at Short Creek. The caption said “Southern Ry Bridge”. Then it was realized that the Southern owned the Ensley Southern and that the Edgewater Mines were west of Ensley and served directly by the Ensley Southern Railroad.

This photo image actually shows the Ensley Southern Railroad Bridge over the “Little” Warrior Rive at Short Creek.



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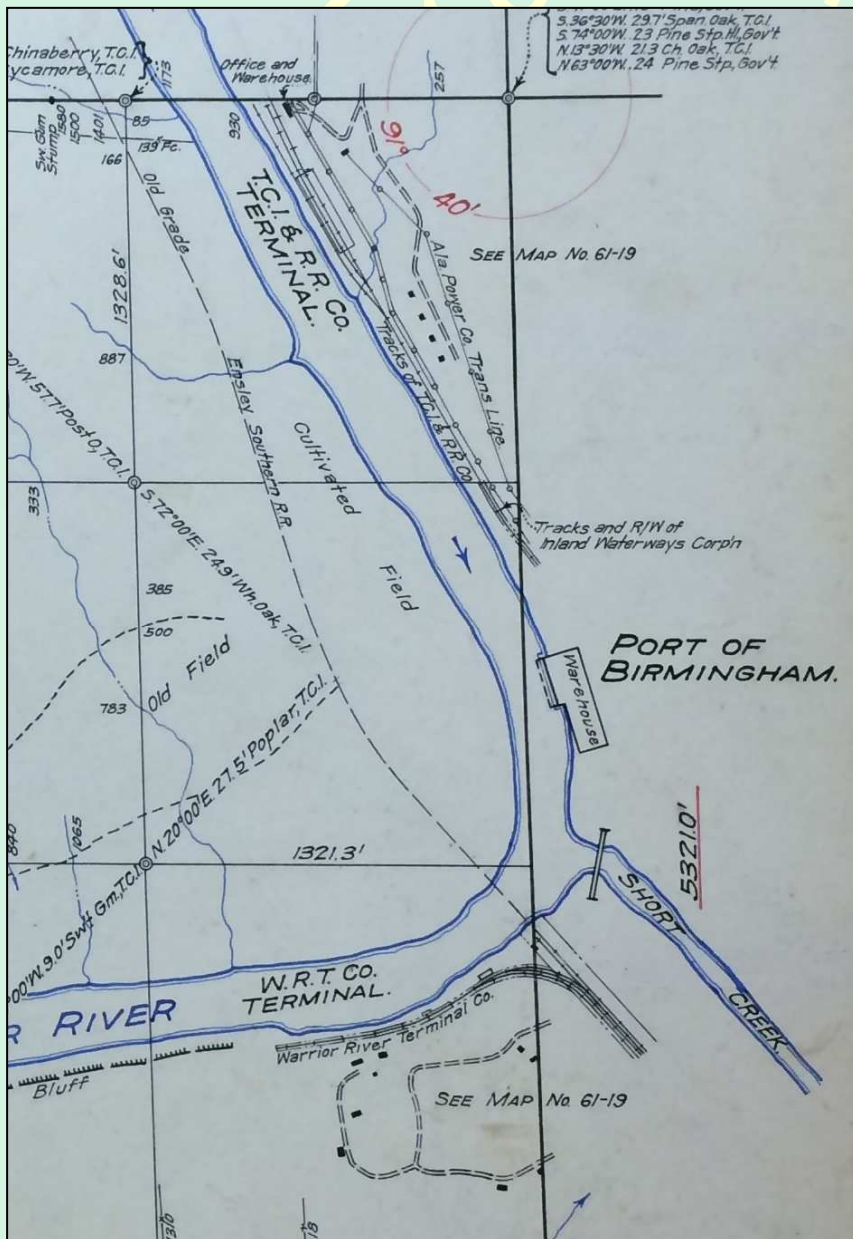
This was pretty exciting stuff to the local rail-industrial history buff – finding that “one and only image” of something that was torn down a long time ago.

You likely know that the Ensley Southern rail line to what is now Birmingham became part of the Birmingham Southern RR (BS RR). The BS RR in turn was purchased a couple of years ago by the operating company WATCO, who have several properties in Alabama.

If you study local rail history you likely know that on maps of a certain era, this Birmingham branch of the BS RR shows up as the Federal Barge Line RR, or in some cases, the Warrior River Terminal RR.

It turns out that the A&NO Transportation Company had a rough time making any money on their river trade. Although coal traffic down the river was available, there didn't seem to be nearly as much up river traffic. It wasn't long before the A&NO Transportation Company was looking for a buyer.

Soon after our interesting picture of the “coal-from-the-bridge” the United States entered WWI. During that terrible war, the federal government nationalized the railroads under the United States Railroad Administration. This was done to improve efficiency to help assure the success of the war effort.



After the war, the government eventually turned the railroads back to their private owners, but one thing was noted. The government believed that the railroads were not capable of handling all the bulk freight traffic that needed to be moved in our bustling economy. This could and should be supplemented by using the inland river waterways for appropriate bulk freight to reduce rail congestion. It would also put pressure on rail freight rates as water transportation can be less expensive than rail.

So, in 1924, the federal government created the Inland Waterway Corporation to provide freight services on the Mississippi and the Warrior River Systems. In regard to Birmingham's position at the head of the southern coal and steel trade, they saw the need to have a rail-to-river connection between the inland waters of the Warrior system and Birmingham's heavy industry in coal and steel.

In 1926, the federal government through their corporation purchased the Ensley Southern line from Ensley to the river and operated it as the Warrior River Terminal Railway Company. This became known as the Federal Barge Line RR to many and shows on maps in this name for a number of years.

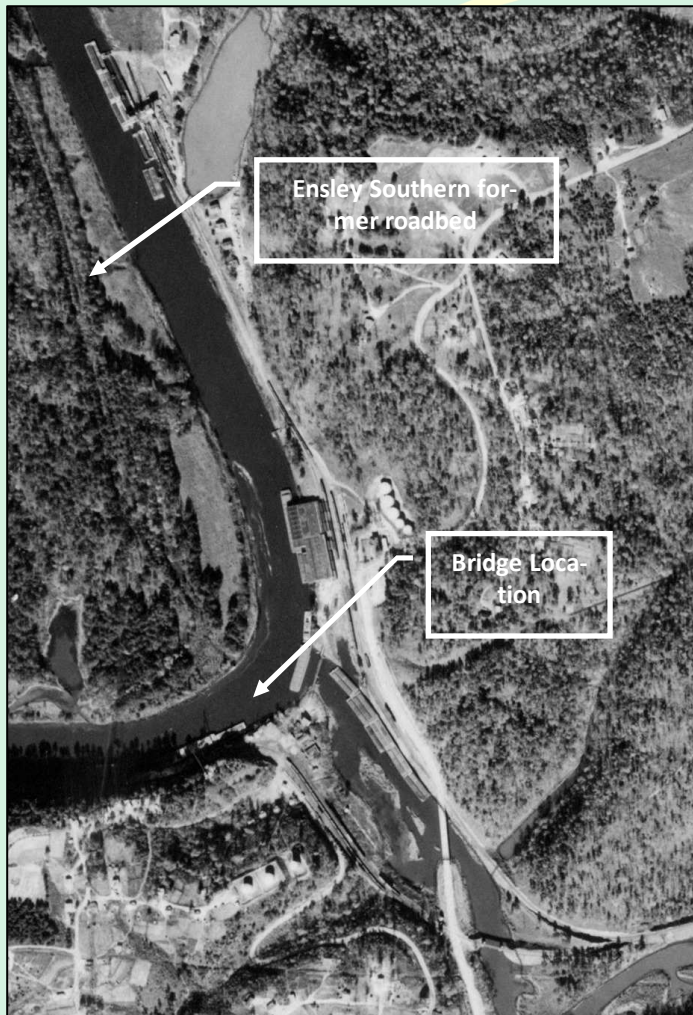
Ultimately no less than three port terminals were built and operated at the mouth of Short Creek. These are shown in the image at the left. The tracks extend off the map to the lower right to reach Ensley.

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These three separate facilities were operated by TCI, a city port authority and the Warrior River Terminal Co of the Inland Waterways Corp.

In 1937, the federal government completed another improvement to the dam at Lock 17, which by now was called Bankhead Lock and Dam after Alabama's Sen. Bankhead. This raised the water level another 12 feet and enabled water navigation all the way to Sipsey, in Walker County. A prominent attendee at the celebration of this river improvement was Henry T. DeBardleben, one of the owners of the Empire Coal Company with extensive mining operations at Sipsey. It is interesting that the Frisco RR had built a nine mile branch line (c. 1913) to serve the mines at Sipsey, including two significant truss bridges over the Warrior River. One of these still stands at Dilworth, and was converted some years ago to a single lane truck bridge to serve a coal load out for trucks. Next to the bridge is a coal load out for barges.



It is not known when the Ensley Southern Bridge truss spans were removed. Documents show that the center pier of the bridge was cited by the Corps of Engineers as a navigation hazard. It was certainly gone by 1940 based on this aerial photograph of the Birminghamport area although the end piers appeared to be standing. A detailed review of this photo shows that the end piers of the truss spans were about 300 feet apart. Study of the 1915 photo of the coal dump on the bridge, considering the length of the hopper cars at about 32 feet, reveals that the truss spans would have been 6 panel trusses of 25 feet per panel for a total length of 150 feet. This would have been a very typical truss span of the period for a small river crossing. This would have provided 2 through truss spans at 150 feet with a center pier right in the middle of the river – of little consequence in 1907, but a hazard to navigation by 1937, if not earlier.

Eventually the Federal Barge Line's river towing operation was purchased by a private company in 1953. In 1966 the rail line from Ensley to the Warrior River was purchased by United States Steel's captive railroad, the Birmingham Southern. It is operated by WATCO today and continues to serve US Steel and other customers. For more detailed information see Ron Mele's "Birmingham Southern RR Company, the First Century". Today, a rail fan trip to Birminghamport is almost always an interesting trip to make.

In 2013, the Norfolk Southern RR celebrated the opening of a "multimodal facility" at McCalla, Alabama. Although somewhat controversial to the community living nearby, this facility was opened after being funded by a federal TIGER grant of over \$100 million. The purpose of the McCalla Intermodal Facility and a series of others like it on the Norfolk Southern and CSX RR's is to divert truck traffic away from our crowded interstate highway system. So, just like the river transportation system was proposed to be utilized to relieve crowded rail corridors, today we are funding public improvements for private railroad companies to relieve crowding of the interstate highways. It is a seemingly wise "holistic" approach to transportation congestion. Time will tell how well it works.

Golden Era (Fall) Classics



Every season has its special delights, and autumn is a favorite for its crisp weather, brilliant blue skies, fall leaf color, and of course, *football*. We don't have to look far from our door at the Leeds Depot to enjoy the best of autumn, as seen in this pair of photos taken in November 2009 "back in the day" during the Mid-South Chapter's first year at the depot. (*Mid-South Chapter Archives*)





From the Observation Platform

By John Browning, Mid-South Chapter President



Dear friends and fellow Mid-South Chapter members,

I hope that all of you are enjoying this nice fall weather that we are having. I'm sure it will not be long until cold weather comes in for a long winter's visit.

As most of you are aware, over the past year or so we have seen a steady decline in chapter meeting attendance and member participation and involvement, concurrent with fewer program offerings and several conflicting railfan or modeling events. We're not alone, as this also seems to be the trend with other railroad historical groups. Many railfan-related organizations are looking at ways to reorganize in an effort to stay active and relevant to their members. As a local example, the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum recently adopted an optional membership category to allow local participation without joining the National Railway Historical Society.

Closer to home, we have reached the point where the Mid-South Chapter does not have enough available members willing to serve in elected office. The large majority of our members live outside of the Metro Birmingham area and beyond a reasonable commuting distance, making it impractical for them to take on leadership roles and participate regularly at chapter meetings.

That being the case, with the terms of all of our chapter officers and three-fourths of the board expiring, and with no present prospects for ongoing leadership beyond this year, I feel we must look at all available options to keep our group together in some form without the need for a formal board and officers. This is not an easy task.

Since our founding just six short years ago our group has accomplished a great deal. We have managed to set up a fine display in the agent's office, and final plans have been approved to set up a permanent Frank Ardrey exhibit in our display room. In May 2012 we hosted the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society's national convention, becoming the youngest chapter to ever host a national meeting. Last year, we partnered with the Central of Georgia Historical Society to host their regional meeting at the Leeds depot. Along the way, we have produced a variety of interesting and informative programs and sponsored other successful projects and events.

Our chapter has a proud heritage, thanks to the dedicated effort of our board with the support of our membership. But the facts on the ground have significantly changed, and if we are to continue as a group we must adapt to changing circumstances and find a way to move beyond our present limitations.

The board is planning to meet in mid-November and again in January to debate our options, and we will present our recommendations at the January membership meeting. Every member has a stake in our future, and during our deliberations I encourage you to share your ideas for our future course with me or any other board member.

In the meantime, I hope you have a great Thanksgiving and Christmas, and I'll look forward to seeing you in the New Year with a renewed commitment to our group's future.

John Browning

Annual Chapter Meeting and Call for Nominations

The Annual Mid-South Chapter Membership Meeting will be held in January 2015 (date to be announced) for the purpose of receiving reports from the President and the Board of Directors and to elect new officers and board members for the coming year. Nominations of members in good standing (others or self) are invited for the following positions and terms of office: President, Secretary and Treasurer (two years); Vice-President (one year), and six board positions (two years). Nominations may be made by email to Marvin Clemons, Nominations Chair at mclemonsjr@gmail.com, or from the floor at the Annual Meeting.