



The Mid-South Flyer

May-June 2014



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

Chapter Picnic Moved to July

Mid-South Chapter invited to participate in inaugural Alabama Railfan Conference

The first ever gathering of diverse rail fan groups from across Alabama will feature a program on the Mid-South Chapter and a keynote presentation by Mid-South member and Birmingham railroad historian John Stewart.

The *Alabama Railfan Conference 2014* will be held on National Train Day, May 10th, at the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum in Calera, Alabama. Activities will include briefings by representatives from various railroad museums, historical societies, model railroad clubs, and social media groups, and a group ride behind Flagg Coal #75 steam locomotive.

According to event organizer Jimmy Summers, the main purpose of the conference is to gather together various rail related groups in order to learn what rail fan opportunities are available in the state and current projects in the Alabama rail fan community.

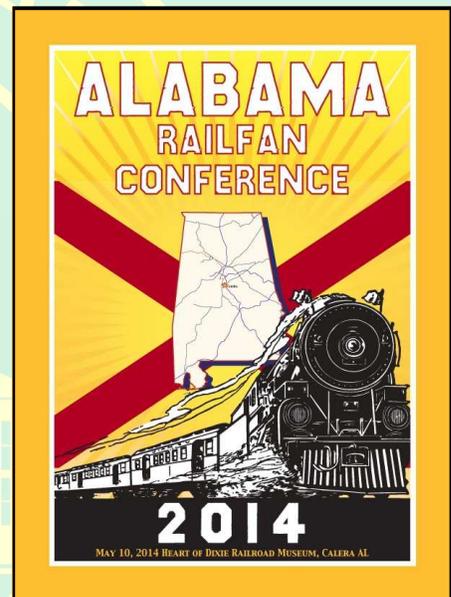
Mid-South President John Browning will represent the chapter and provide a briefing to conference attendees. Board member John Stewart will present a program on the development of Birmingham's industrial railroads, which has received wide acclaim from both rail enthusiasts and historians.

Due to restricted venue space at the museum, the half-day conference will be limited to 35 participants. Depending on the response to this year's program, the museum hopes to expand the conference into an annual event with more program offerings and activities.

Although participation in the conference is restricted, Mid-South members are encouraged to participate in other available museum activities in honor of National Train Day.

Tickets to the conference are \$25 and can be reserved on the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum website at www.hodrrm.org. The fee includes a sandwich box lunch and a ride behind John and Barney Gramling's Flagg Coal #75 steam locomotive complete with a photo run by. A complete program agenda is available at the museum's website.

Since the May 10 event coincides with the Chapter's regular meeting date, the annual chapter picnic at the Leeds Depot has been rescheduled for Saturday, July 12. Further details will be forthcoming.





Railfan Wedding Vows

Dearly Beloved, we are gathered here today in accordance with the FRA, AAR, ICC and other regulatory bodies to unite these two units in M.U. service. If anyone takes exception, file your grievance or get in the clear.

(Groom's name), do you take this woman to be your trailing unit, tying down your pin lifter forever, and permanently restricting yourself from interchange service, even with newer, freshly-painted units, remaining coupled despite flat wheels, sticking brakes, even unto bad orders and major derailments, until you are both rendered unto scrap? If so, signify by sounding your whistle as prescribed by GCOR Rule 5.8.2, example 4.

And, (Groom's name), do you promise to pull this unit up ruling grade, using throttle and brake wisely to prevent rough train handling, broken knuckles, and pulled drawbars, applying sand as necessary to prevent wheel slip, so that you both crest the hill together, regardless of the trailing tonnage? If so, signify by sounding your whistle as prescribed by GCOR Rule 5.8.2, example 4.

And do you also promise not to cut away from your trailing unit, even when her side sheets have rusted through, and her paint job has faded? If so, signify by sounding your whistle as prescribed by GCOR Rule 5.8.2, example 4.

Now, (Bride's name), do you take this man to be your lead unit, tying down your pin-lifter forever, and permanently removing yourself from interchange service, even with newer series, high-adhesion, high-horsepower units, remaining coupled despite flat wheels, sticking brakes, even unto bad orders and major derailments, until you are both rendered unto scrap? If so, signify by sounding your whistle as prescribed by GCOR Rule 5.8.2, example 4.

And do you promise to respond promptly to throttle and brake commands from your lead unit, handling your share of the tonnage, and helping your lead unit up ruling grade when necessary, being ever cautious to avoid unnecessary drawbar buff? If so, signify by sounding your whistle as prescribed by GCOR Rule 5.8.2, example 4.

Do you also promise to remain coupled to your lead unit, even when he has a couple of traction motors cut out, and can no longer develop full horsepower? If so, signify by sounding your whistle as prescribed by GCOR Rule 5.8.2, example 4.

Now, (Bride and Groom), as a token of your intent to M.U., make the joint and stretch the slack.: By the power vested in me by the General Manager, Superintendent of Operations, and the Road Foreman of Engines, I now pronounce you permanently coupled.

You may now cut in the air.

The Mid-South Flyer January-February 2014

The Mid-South Flyer is published bi-monthly by the Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society (R&LHS), Inc. The R&LHS is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to the study and preservation of railroad history. National and chapter dues are \$47 and include subscriptions to the Society's twice-yearly magazine Railroad History and quarterly newsletter, and the chapter's e-newsletter, The Mid-South Flyer. Membership applications for R&LHS and the Mid-South Chapter are available on the Internet at www.rlhs.org.

News, articles, photos, and comments are invited and should be emailed to:

*Marvin Clemons, Editor
Email: mclemonsjr@gmail.com*

*David Lester, Contributing Editor
Email: davidclester@comcast.net*

*Jim Sims, Contributing Editor
Email: jimsims@hiwaay.net*

Regional Feature

Atlanta Union Station: A Second Gateway to the South

By David Lester, Contributing Editor



In previous issues of the *Mid-South Flyer*, we have covered two of Atlanta's four railroad passenger stations – Peachtree Station, a “suburban” station built in 1918 so wealthy travelers who occupied posh homes on Peachtree Street (an area which is now fully urban) could avoid the three-mile ride to Terminal Station downtown. Terminal Station, the major passenger station constructed by the Atlanta Terminal Company and Southern Railway, which opened in 1905. And, we've lightly covered the original Atlanta passenger station, Union Depot, which was built before the Civil War, destroyed during that war, and rebuilt afterward in the same location in 1871, which was in the heart of downtown.



We're going to focus now on Union Station that was constructed under the auspices of the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis and the Louisville and Nashville, and opened in 1930. Union Station was two blocks from Terminal Station, and their close proximity created a massive trackage behind both Terminal and Union, and travelers arriving at one station, but departing at the other, would walk or take a taxi to the other station. During the majority of the twentieth century, three stations – Terminal, Union and Peachtree – were the major passenger terminals that served Atlanta during a tumultuous and defining century for the United States.



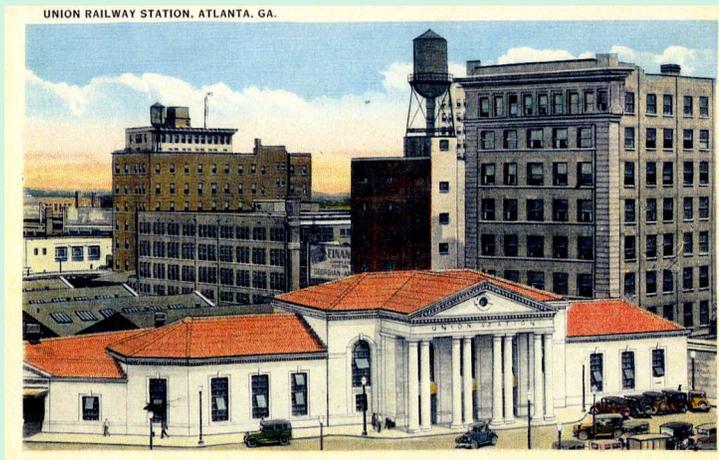
Martin O'Toole photo

In 1900, five years before the opening of Terminal Station, all railroads serving Atlanta called at the old Union Depot, which had long outgrown its usefulness. The old depot was dirty, crowded and served too many trains. In May of 1902, Samuel Spencer, then president of Southern Railway, announced that Atlanta was going to have a new depot, and would be called Terminal Station. The railroad owners, each of which moved their Atlanta trains to the new station, were Southern Railway, the Central of Georgia, the Atlanta & West Point, and the Seaboard Airline. In 1914, the Atlanta, Birmingham & Atlantic moved their trains from the old depot to Terminal, and five railroads now served the new station.

When the new Union Station was opened in 1930, the roads that had been using the old Union Depot moved into the new station. These roads were the Georgia Railroad, the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis, and the Louisville & Nashville. In addition, when the Atlanta Birmingham & Atlantic became part of the Atlanta,

Birmingham & Coast in 1933, that railroad moved its trains from Terminal Station to the new Union Station. So, at this point, Termi-

nal Station served four railroads, and the new Union Station served four, as well.



One of the interesting stories surrounding Union Station is how it came to be located on Forsyth Street. For years prior to the opening of Terminal Station in 1905, there was considerable debate between state officials and railroad officers about a proposed plan to rebuild the old Union Depot, which sat near the intersection of Pryor and Wall Street in the heart of downtown, on its existing site. The plan was for one large passenger station built on the site of the old Union Depot, which would serve all railroads in Atlanta. Samuel Spencer, on the other hand, argued that there was not enough land on the old depot site to build a facility that was large enough to handle the traffic demands of today, as well as provide room for expansion in the future. Therefore, Spencer announced that Southern and its partner

roads in the Atlanta Terminal Company were moving ahead with their plans to build Terminal Station, and would not be party to any effort or agreement to build a new Union Station on the site of the old one.

Discussion and debate around the location of a new Union Station continued for years until 1928, when it was announced that a private corporation had been studying the City of Atlanta to examine the possibility of building a large storage warehouse and office building in the city, and where such a facility might be located.⁽¹⁾ Engineers conducting the study concluded that the site of the old Union Depot would be an ideal location for such a facility.

Once this proposal was made, city and railroad leaders, along with the Georgia Public Service Commission had second thoughts about whether this site would be suitable for a new railroad terminal, and concluded that the limited amount of space would not allow for a modern station to be built, and one which included room for expansion. So, on May 16, 1929, the Georgia Public Service Commission ordered that a new railroad station would be built on the west side of Forsyth Street, about one thousand feet away from the original depot site. Moreover, the order paved the way for the United States Cold Storage Company of Chicago to incorporate a company known as the Dixie Terminal Building Company. ⁽²⁾

At this point, construction on the new Union Station commenced, and the station opened for business on April 19, 1930. Union Station was not a lavish station, but had a neoclassical design, and faced Forsyth Street at a 45-degree angle, with steps leading down to track level. Union Station served Atlanta for forty-one years, until it was torn down in 1972. As with Terminal Station, which was demolished in 1971, the destruction of Union Station took place with absolutely no thought to historic preservation. Union Station served Atlanta through the Great Depression, World War II and other conflicts, and many young men and women departed this station for wartime service, never to return.



Martin O'Toole photo

Endnotes:

1. Johnston, James Houstoun – Western and Atlantic Railroad of the State of Georgia, Georgia Public Service Commission, 1932 p. 181
2. Ibid, p. 188

Railroad History



The Birmingham Grade Separation Project – Part II

By John Stewart

Last issue we set the stage for the development of the big project to separate the railroad and roadways in downtown Birmingham. Taking stock, let's see what had been accomplished by 1924:

- Birmingham Terminal Station opened in 1909 and had a “subway” underneath carrying 5th Avenue N. with a streetcar stop in the tunnel leading up to the station
- Weatherly Viaduct opened in 1915 and carried 1st Avenue N vehicles and streetcars over the L&N northbound mainline as well as the Sloss Furnace yard activities; 1st Avenue N. was a main passage from downtown to Avondale, East Lake and Woodlawn bedroom communities
- Rainbow Viaduct opened in 1919 and carried 21st Street over the Railroad Reservation; it replaced an older steel structure built by the City
- 22nd Street's wooden streetcar viaduct built by the Ensley Land Company (1885) was still in place
- Terminal Station, Weatherly Viaduct and the Rainbow Viaduct were all funded jointly with railroad and City participation, yet the railroads balked at funding the overall grade separation
- The Weatherly Viaduct (1915) and the Rainbow Viaduct (1919) were apparently designed as part of an overall plan developed by the City Engineering Department addressing railroad grades

An interesting research tool for this article was created in 1924 by Birmingham Commissioner Jones who later became the Commission President (de facto Mayor). He started a scrapbook of clippings pertinent to the City's business which provides day-by-day accounts of many issues of the day, including the Grade Separation Project. In addition, the *Birmingham Magazine* published by the Chamber of Commerce also provides insight into both developments and delays to this big project. Both of these resources are available at the Birmingham Public Library.

Another interesting question is, “What would the Grade Separation cost today?” There is no simple answer to this question, but one website “Measuring Worth” (www.measuringworth.com) gives various amounts based upon the type of expenditure. For large capital projects like the Grade Separation we find the value of \$1 in 1924 range from about \$11 to almost \$190 today. Let's say that we use the lower figure, and we find that the cost of the Grade Separation project (about \$5 million at the time) would be between (at least) \$50 and \$60 million dollars today. For comparison, the big interchange project for Corridor X/I-22 underway today near Birmingham is about \$170 million. Likewise, the controversial Intermodal Terminal opened last year in McCalla, AL cost about \$100 million and was largely paid for with a federal “TIGER” transportation grant, which is quite rare for railroad infrastructure, typically required to be funded solely by the railroads. Times change.

It is interesting to note that railroad grade separation projects were very much in the mainstream at the time, including other locations on the L&N such as Louisville, KY. One project that received a lot of attention at the time was in Detroit MI. All this is to say that what the leaders of Birmingham wanted to accomplish was not unique or inappropriate at the time. It was a public safety and a commercial trade issue, as street congestion impacted not only residential commuters but movement of goods and services as well.

It seems that there are two key issues regarding Birmingham's grade separation project. One is the interesting political and legal battle that raged over the project, particularly in the 1920's. The other is the actual pro-

ject as an engineering solution containing a variety of complex tradeoffs. We can rely on the media of the day for the former, and have an excellent resource for the latter from trade media: the *Railway Age/Gazette* and the *L&N Magazine*. Birmingham Public Library has the *Railway Age* on microfilm and the *L&N Magazine* has been provided by R&LHS member Lee Singletary via the L&N Historical Society.

Let's take a look at the political and legal issues first and try to summarize these as they played out in the 1920's. You'll recall there was a plan on the table that was apparently viable from the City Engineering Department since at least 1915. And remember that there was been a precedent for the railroads to participate in the funding of the projects built to date at 1st Avenue N and 19th Street. Bear in mind too that there were multiple railroad companies occupying the Railroad Reservation – the L&N, Southern, Alabama Great Southern, and to some extent the Seaboard Air Line and the Atlantic Coast Line (former AB&C). Of these the main players, the L&N and the Southern already had joint ownership corporate consolidations in place. For example, construction of the 1st Avenue North viaduct was split five ways.

The political issues were fairly straightforward in that City Hall wanted to reduce congestion and improve safety to best serve the constituents. The Chamber of Commerce supported this concept. The legal issues seem to boil down to the City's ability to force the railroads to participate in the cost of the project. Historically, railroads have developed a reputation of being powerful entities with strong legal and political ties. For example, Abraham Lincoln's legal career grew to include representing the Illinois Central on key legal fights in the 19th century. Railroads were used to getting their way.

The City on the other hand was a bustling industrial center, with a national reputation for growth and a strong player with national corporate residents such as US Steel, Woodward Iron, Republic Steel and Sloss Iron and Steel. So, the City was feeling its oats as well.

By the 1924 the City's attorneys had developed a two-pronged approach to making the railroads participate in the cost of the project. One was to pass an ordinance that said that the railroads had to participate. The railroads apparently didn't seem to be too impressed by that. The second approach by the City was to seek a legal ruling to enable enforcement of the ordinances. The City believed it had "police powers" which enabled it to protect the "public health and safety". That seems to be to say to the railroads, "You shall not ignore our ordinance, because we have the authority to compel you (by ordinance) to participate in order to do protect the public health and safety."

This might seem pretty straightforward in that the City would seek a court to rule on its ordinance and the legal doctrine behind it. But the train sort of went off the tracks in the "court of public opinion." The City had a plan and there was certainly precedent for the City doing similar public projects with railroad cost participation. What went wrong was that the business community couldn't agree on the best way to solve the engineering problems of separating rail and street traffic. So, the political issues debated in the court of public opinion included the following:

- Businesses on either side of the Railroad Reservation didn't want to be disturbed by construction or cut off from street access if the roads were raised or lowered.
- Many apparently favored either the "up and over" viaducts or the "down and under" tunnels as their version of the best solution. Engineers knew that it takes multiple methods to solve problems depending on circumstances, but the public "experts" didn't seem to think that way.
- Some in the public didn't want to pay for the project via tax dollars. If you didn't use the streets crossing the railroads, you didn't care about the issue.
- The Chamber of Commerce wanted to see the improvement completed, but they too had opinions on how best to do it, the methods of payment, general opposition to taxes, and then some of their members didn't like one or another aspect of the project.
- The City seems to have resented the Chamber's participation and felt that the City should be calling the shots.

Finally as noted previously, the City engineering staff, in particular City Engineer Kirkpatrick and his successor City Engineer Hawkins, had a plan that seems to have met all of the engineering considerations given the typical tradeoffs already discussed. This plan seems to have developed with some detail after about 1911, and to have been in pretty good form by about 1915.

So how did the matter unfold? We know the project got built, starting about 1928 and officially opening in 1933. We can even say that the railroads participated in the cost. But how did it all happen? Hang on, it's going to be a bumpy ride!

By the spring of 1924, the *Birmingham Age-Herald* reports that the Chamber had hired an "expert" in Major General William Siebert, who had experience with the Panama Canal. The Chamber also had a "committee" seated to work on the issue, including George Gordon Crawford, R. A. Porter and R. I. Ingalls. Crawford was the head of TCI/US Steel and Ingalls was the head of Ingalls Steel, a major fabricator. The Chamber had graciously provided their expert to "consult" with the City and the railroad companies, represented by L&N President W. L. Mapother and Southern Vice-President R. B. Pegram. The City Commission had a representative at the table in W. E. Dickson.

By late May, 1924, meetings had been held and it is reported that the City officials are barred from attending Chamber discussions! The *Post* reports that the City is "ready for a fight" but agrees to wait for a report from General Siebert of the Chamber.

In June, 1924, the *Post* reports that the City Attorney has completed an ordinance to "compel" the railroads to build underpasses at 14th, 18th and 20th Street (19th was not a through street at the time). There is a separate ordinance for each structure and the City is ready to go to court. But the City concedes to wait for General Siebert's report from the Chamber. It took General Siebert until late July, 1924, to review and render his opinion. It was reported in the *Age-Herald* that the General was thought to be favoring viaducts and that this approach likely was at odds with the City's existing plans. Then the *Age-Herald* reported that the General reported out to the Chamber but in "secret session", and that the Chamber wouldn't discuss with the City Engineer until early August. The *News* later reports that this meeting has been delayed and won't be scheduled until September!

The *News* reports in late August that the 21st Street Viaduct (Rainbow Viaduct) which opened in 1919 has already helped the situation on that thoroughfare. There are discussions about the potential "death of streets" if they are not addressed. The businesses on 20th Street are concerned about being "left out in the cold" if not helped by the project.

The *News* also reported that a viaduct was being proposed for 19th Street, which was not a through street. The railroads take the position that they already control the right of way that would be 19th street. In the meantime other reports support the Chamber's secrecy but state that the City shall not operate in secret. The L&N states that its station (at 20th Street) shall be "flush with street" but that 20th Street is a "great street and shall be unimpeded." Furthermore, the agreements between the railroads and the City shall not "deter the City from its duty to the people".

During August there is great debate on the Siebert plan and the City Commissioners are reported to be back and forth on different proposals. But it does seem that 20th Street is not being considered to cross the Reservation and that a newly proposed viaduct at 24th Street is gaining favor with both sides. Siebert's plan postpones activity on 20th Street indefinitely, but one editorial in the *News* argues that new viaducts would give relief in the meantime. This also indicates that the railroads may be in for 65% but won't go to 75% of the total cost.

By the end of August, 1924, the Siebert plan is apparently out on the table. It favors viaducts at 18th and 20th and "modified" viaducts at 14th and 24th Streets, while the City and the City Engineer favor underpasses. The Siebert plan is reported to lower the tracks some 7 feet and bring a viaduct from between Morris and 1st Ave-

nue north to a point at Avenue B (today's 2nd Avenue South). The viaduct will be 40 feet wide with 10 foot sidewalks. Morris would be "humped up to the viaduct at 20th" and closed at 18th.

A new argument also surfaced in August, 1924, as to whether prior agreements existing between the City and the railroads enabling the viaducts to be built at 1st Avenue N and 21st Street were pertinent. Mr. Weatherly (attorney and former Commissioner) indicates "yes" and Mr. Ullman (former City Attorney) indicates that this was not the case – each agreement stood separately. He also is quoted that the damages to adjacent property owners were "slight" for the 21st Street Viaduct including "building an entrance to Steiner Brothers Bank" (still in place today as offices of an architectural firm).

Ullman also sheds light on the existing City Plan stating (*News* 8/18/24) that previous City Engineer Kirkpatrick made a thorough study from 28th Street to west of 14th Street. The study concluded a viaduct should replace the (then) steel viaduct at 21st Street and should raise the railroad at 20th Street. This led to the Rainbow/21st Street Viaduct being built higher in 1919 since there was a considered plan already in place which anticipated raising the railroads. At the same time, current commission members are apparently changing sides between viaducts and underpasses. And at least one, Mr. Harrison is ready to go to court to fight the railroads.

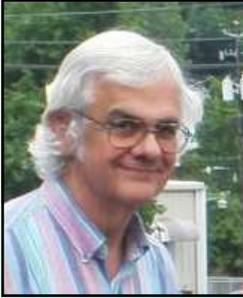
A local engineer Julian Kendrick weighs in with a very thoughtful editorial opinion that indicates all should forget about the railroads being lowered as the cost of drainage would be too expensive. He points out that the clearance for railroads is greater than for roadways, and that the tolerable grade on a roadway may be much steeper than a railroad. Kendrick was involved in the successful 1st Avenue and 21st Street projects and points out that the 24th Street viaduct is the only place that the City has undisputed right to cross the railroads by title between 22nd and 32nd Street. In other words, the 24th Street viaduct is the only project (over or under) that might be built without the railroad's involvement and approval as far as right of way. He also refers to the very successful grade separation in Detroit that addressed 22 street crossings in the same length as the disputed 6 crossings in Birmingham.

So, at the end of 1924, we find the grade separation project apparently stalled. On the one hand, there is certainly some broad movement in the direction of separating the railroad and street traffic. There is also movement on a national level in other large cities with heavy railroad and street traffic to do what is being proposed in Birmingham. On the other hand, the issue seems to clearly be destined to go to court. Both the railroads and the City seem confident and willing to go to court. To a large extent, it seems that the railroads had little to lose other than the legal expense. The status quo for the railroads would be to continue business as usual.

The City on the other hand had a political issue that needed to be solved. It would be hard for the City to wait on the status quo. Even though there were different ideas of a solution, it was clear that from a political standpoint 'something' must be done. By Christmas 1924, the economy and business were in pretty good shape. The City was growing and traffic was congested – yet an indicator of growth. There were storm clouds on the horizon, but likely no one paid attention to them.

In the next and final installment we will see how the project came to fruition in spite of legal battles, politics and a variety of public opinions. Remember, we know what happened, but we don't know how just yet.





The Art and Romance of Named Passenger Cars

by Stan Burnett

Most long-distance passenger trains with any claim to special amenities have usually been named. Some short-haul passenger trains are (or were) named. When seeing Amtrak's long-haul New York to New Orleans *Crescent* passing through Leeds, you may note that the sleeping cars are "named" in addition to having a number. An example is *Mountain View*, Amtrak car number 62022. This continues a long tradition of the naming of some, but not all railroad passenger equipment. Just as yesterday's passenger trains had a number and frequently a name, so passenger equipment had a number and frequently a name, just to give the car a little extra appeal to the traveling public.



Amtrak sleeper "Mountain View" in the consist of the "Crescent" (Photo by Ted Blank)

Let's have a little exercise in nostalgia by taking a look back at "named" passenger equipment on passenger trains that regularly passed through Birmingham in the 1960s. For the reason of brevity I am mostly concentrating on "light weight" or LW equipment. As a young railfan, I was more familiar with the LW cars than the older "heavy weight" (HW) equipment they replaced.

Long before the arrival of Amtrak's named sleepers, private railroad passenger trains regularly carried named passenger cars in their consists. Pullmans were almost always named and both heavyweight and the newer lightweight Pullman cars were assigned a unique name. Generally, the more deluxe any passenger equipment might be, the more likely it would be named. The more plebian coaches were typically not named. I must add that some coaches were not plebian and were very, very nice. Any generalization about passenger cars has at least one exception.



Other than the sleepers, some passenger cars such as diners or observation cars might also be named. Most named passenger trains in Birmingham had diners, observations cars, and lounges that were, for the most part, only numbered. One important exception were L&N's diners and lounges that were frequently named. One named L&N diner was the *Duncan Hines* and one lounge car was the *Kentucky Club*. Naturally, a Pullman or "sleeper" with lounge or observation space would be named. The Southern's original *Southerner*, an all-coach streamliner, had a named observation car, the *Louisiana*. In a bit of an anomaly, the Southern operated three different numbered observation cars, all named *Louisiana*!

Of interest is the frequent naming of passenger equipment for features along the route. It was good advertising. Louisville & Nashville had Pullmans named for the different kinds of pine trees along the route of the "Old Reliable". Southern's Pullmans were named for rivers along the route. Similarly, some of Frisco's Pullmans were named for rivers that the Frisco crossed. Two of my favorite names for Frisco "River" sleepers are the *Cimarron River* and the *Osage River*. Other LW Frisco Pullmans were named for people associated with the city of St. Louis and/or the State of Missouri. The *Pierre Laclède*, and the *Auguste Chocteau* were two sleepers named for French fur traders who were founders of St. Louis. The *Eugene Field* was named for the journalist/poet from the St. Louis area. All of these Frisco cars were somewhat unique in that they were 14 roomette—4 double bedroom cars.



Probably the best-known exception to the generalization that sleepers were named, but not coaches, relates to the Illinois Central's flashy *City of Miami*. The original all-coach *City* had the following named coaches; *Bougainvillea*, *Camellia*, *Japonica*, *Hibiscus*, *Poinsettia*, *Palm Garden*, and the observation car was the *Bamboo Grove*. How fitting to the train, how evocative of your anticipated trip to Florida! And I ask, can you imagine that train on the trestle to the east of the depot in Leeds?

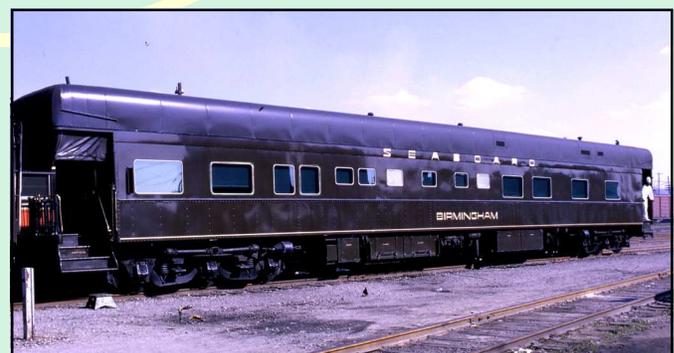


Ex-IC observation-lounge car *Bamboo Grove* in original colors

Later on in the life of the *City*, the coaches were numbered but not named. By numbered, I am indicating the permanent number of the car. An example would be Illinois Central coach #2622. The above named *Japonica* was IC coach #2601. By the way, the original lightweight observation car off the *City*, the *Bamboo Grove*, still exists in original tropical color scheme at a retirement community in Florida.

In addition, coaches would likely have another number affixed, usually placed at a special place at the end of the car as identification for ticketing. On the *City of Miami*, typically the coaches were numbered CM1, CM2, CM3 and so forth. These numbers were not permanently placed on the coach, but could be changed depending on the car's assignment in the train's consist. For example, a passenger's ticket might read "Seat 17, CM2" indicating reserved seat 17 in car CM2. The coaches on the L&N's *South Wind* were similarly numbered, in this case as SW1 through SW 7.

Passenger coaches on the Frisco were also named. Two of them are pictured in the book *Birmingham Rails*. One was the *Olivette* and another was the *Webster Grove*. In an effort to promote the notion of swift travel aboard their trains, Frisco also named its bright red with gold trim passenger locomotives for famous racehorses. For example, Frisco engine #2010 was the *Count Fleet*.



Seaboard office car *Birmingham*

Railroad office cars, known also as "business cars"

1967 SUGAR BOWL SPECIAL!
Deluxe
ALL PULLMAN
 Sponsored by
Birmingham Post-Herald
WAPI-TV

SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM

Full Size
LOUNGE CAR
 (SEE ENCLOSED INSERT)

THE SOUTHERN
 SERVES THE SOUTH

BUS
 TRANSPORTATION
 TO AND FROM
**SUGAR BOWL
 STADIUM!**



SEE PAGE TWO FOR
 COMPLETE DETAILS!
 Call or Write
 SOUTHERN RAILWAY SYSTEM
 FOR CHOICE
 RESERVATIONS & TICKETS!

Make Sure
 YOU ARE ON SOUTHERN'S
 "SUGAR BOWL
 SPECIAL"
 \$63.05 AND UP..

used by railroad officials, were usually named. Examples of cars that visited Birmingham included Seaboard's *Birmingham*, the Frisco's *Missouri*, and the Central Of Georgia's *Savannah*. Most of Southern's office cars were numbered only, with the notable exception of the *Virginia* and the *Carolina* assigned to the Southern's president.

The naming of passenger cars carried by "named trains" made rail travel more of an evocative adventure. When you saw "off-line" Pullmans in Birmingham, frequently on special moves, your imagination would go into overdrive at seeing the New York Central's *Imperial Vale*, or the Southern's *Crescent Harbor*, or the Great Northern's *Cut Bank Pass*. By special moves, I am referring to such trips as the "Sugar Bowl Specials" that the L&N and Southern used to run to New Orleans. Some off-line Pullmans regularly run to or through Birmingham because of pool service. Seaboard's *Silver Comet* regularly had RF&P Pullmans and the Southern's *Pelican* regularly had N&W Pullmans.

While the above named off-line Pullmans had an exotic appeal, I would certainly settle for an overnight's ride on the IC's *Haleyville*, or the Southern's *Warrior River*, or the L&N's *Alabama Pine*. Don't forget the IC's *Banana Road*, taking its name from the IC being called the "Banana Road", as well as being known as the "Main Line of Mid-America".

Let's briefly investigate the strange and wonderful entanglement of Pullman car names. Keep in mind that most named sleeper cars were part of a series of cars. Sometimes the cars had two names, with the name series based on the first name. Examples include Union Pacific's *American* series or *Pacific* series. The Southern's Pullmans mentioned above, the *River* cars, and the L&N *Pine* series were based on the second name. Many of the Pullmans had one name, but were in a series, such as Seaboard's "cities" series cars. Two of Seaboard's cars were *Birmingham* and *Lake Wales*, which was on the last SAL passenger train departing Birmingham Terminal Station.



Seaboard Coast Line sleeper *Birmingham* was a regular visitor to its namesake city in the consist of the *Silver Comet* (Photo by Bill Howes)

There are more points of confusion. One has to do with Southern Pacific's Budd-built sleepers on the *Sunset*, New Orleans to Los Angeles. What was confusing about those lovely sleepers? They were numbered but not named, which to me was not imaginative and not good advertising. Why do I mention the *Sunset* and its sleepers? Most of the SP's Budd sleepers went to Amtrak early on and regularly came by the depot in Leeds.

Lastly, I will mention that Pullman or sleeper cars, and for that matter other cars were frequently renamed. A good example of this is some of the Pullmans on the IC. The "H" sleeper series 4 bedroom, 4 compartment, 2 drawing room cars were not new to the IC. The IC's *Haleyville* was originally the New York Central *Imperial Chamber*. Imagine an ex-New York Central *20th Century Limited* Pullman coming down the middle of Birmingham's 10th Avenue North!

Golden Era Classics



When we received this timeless photo of the Central of Georgia's Alexander City depot from the early 1950s, we shared it with several CofG fans for comment. Mid-South member Donnie Strickland wrote back with words that perfectly captured the scene, and provides a perfect caption as follows: *"So much to look at here, starting with the structure itself. Alex City had such a pretty depot, which here is the very picture of activity. It shows so clearly how the depots were the centers of the towns. Here also is the requisite crowd of overall-clad bystanders, catching up on gossip or simply looking at the train to pass the time of day, the train crew (also in overalls) waiting just as crews do today in downtown Alex City, the town bank on the corner (with its clock reading 1:56), the drugstores, the A&P, the taxicab, the Jeep parked on the corner, which would in these years almost certainly have been Army surplus, the track speeder barely visible, sitting on the blacktop but ready to be lifted onto the tracks when the time comes -- all these things are familiar, and evoke their era so easily."* Thanks, Donnie, we couldn't have said it better ourselves.

Chapter Meetings and Events Calendar for 2014

- Saturday, May 10 — Alabama Railfan Day at Heart of Dixie Museum, Calera, AL
- Saturday, June 28 — Board Meeting — Agent's Office — 10:00AM
- Saturday, July 12 — Annual Chapter Picnic — Depot Meeting Room — Time TBA
- Saturday, August 30 — Board Meeting — Agent's Office — 10:00AM
- Saturday, September 13 — Chapter Meeting — Depot Meeting Room — 2:00PM
- Saturday, September 20 — Chapter Open House — 9:00AM to 4:00PM
- Sunday, September 21 — Chapter Open House — Noon to 4:00PM
- Saturday, October 25 — Board Meeting — Agent's Office — 10:00AM
- November 8 — Chapter Meeting — Depot Meeting Room — 2:00PM



From the Observation Platform

Commentary by John Browning, Mid-South Chapter President

I certainly hope that everyone is doing well and looking forward to a great summer. Although everyone is always busy, hopefully you can work in a little time for rail fanning and pursuing other railroad related interests.

There are several chapter related things that I want to mention to you this month. The incorporation of our chapter is now complete. Thanks to the efforts of our Treasurer, James Lowry, our chapter has been officially incorporated in the State of Alabama. Information about the chapter's incorporation can be found on the Alabama Secretary of State's web site.

Our chapter archive committee is working to establish a permanent archive for historical railroad documents, photographs and other rail related items. They have prepared a proposal, in the form of a Concept Paper to present to the City of Leeds to request that the archive collection be housed in the Leeds City Library.

Equipment for the Ardrey Photographic exhibit has been purchased and is now being tested. Hopefully, this exhibit will be set up for display in the near future.

Repairs to the caboose platform, including safety railings have been completed. Efforts to complete other repairs to the caboose are continuing.

Our treasurer, James Lowry is continuing to work on a project that will place historical markers at key spots along the route of the old Mineral Railroad. This is a chapter endorsed project, and we have signed an agreement with the L&N Historical Society to allow the use of their L&N logo on these markers. This project should be a great asset to the Birmingham rail history community.

We had a great membership meeting in March. Tom Lawson came and talked about his new book on steel mill railroads in our area. We saw some unique pictures and had some great dialogue with Tom. The chapter's Company Store had copies of Tom's book available for purchase and Tom took time to autograph everyone's copy.

Instead of holding our regular May meeting at the Leeds Depot, we have opted to participate in the Alabama Railfan Event that is being hosted by the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum in Calera. This event is something that the Heart of Dixie is trying this year in conjunction with National Train Day to bring together area railfan and rail history groups from around the state. Each participating group will be able to tell about their activities and events and give out information on how to join the group. This is a trial event to see if there is enough interest in holding a larger event next year. Please visit the Heart of Dixie's web site at www.hodrrm.org for more information and to order event tickets. The tickets will provide admission to the conference, as well as a box lunch and a ride behind visiting Flagg Coal Company #75. This is an 0-4-0 coal burning steam locomotive that is visiting the Heart of Dixie for a couple of weeks. This should be a great opportunity for fun and fellowship. Please plan to participate.

Since we will not have our regular May meeting in Leeds, we have rescheduled our annual chapter picnic for our next regular meeting on Saturday, July 12. Start thinking about which of your favorite dishes you might want to bring and share.

I look forward to seeing everyone soon. Please remember that there is always a place for you to get involved. Please share your ideas with me or any other board member. This is YOUR chapter. Until next time....

John Browning