



The Mid-South Flyer

Fall 2015



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

October Meeting

Fall program to offer “double feature”

In the belief that if one is good, two are better, the Mid-South Chapter will host two presentations at its October 17 meeting.

According to program chair James Lowery, the new two-part program format will feature a main presentation on some aspect of regional railroad history. A shorter presentation will feature a local company or facility that is rooted in the past, and that continues to provide services or products to the railroad industry.

This month, Mid-South member George “Ike” Eichelberger will bring the featured presentation on the Southern Museum of Civil War & Locomotive History at Kennesaw, Georgia, focusing on the Museum’s archives and research assistance with an emphasis on Birmingham material. The Southern Museum houses the David Salter collection, which includes the Frank Ardrey collection.



The Museum also hosts the Southern Railway Historical Association’s archive, including the Southern Railway Presidents’ files, original and microfilm copies of equipment and structure drawings, photographs, and other documents chronicling the nearly 100 years of Southern Railway’s existence. Eichelberger serves as the SRHA’s archives director and is retired from Norfolk Southern Corporation, where he was Director of Marketing & Technical Services headquartered in Atlanta.

Bring some, take some!

Do you have a stack of old railroad magazines, timetables, or other items you no longer need and would like to share? Beginning with the October meeting, the Chapter will provide a “freebies” table to allow members to share unneeded railroad items with each other. Simply bring what you’d like to share and leave it on the table, or take what you’d like from the table. So start digging!

The second part of the program will feature a short presentation by Ryan Jenkins on the products and services of Birmingham Rail & Locomotive, Inc. Founded in 1899 and based in Bessemer, Alabama, BR&L operates within two distinct industries. Their Rail and Track Division supplies overhead crane rail and fasteners, railroad track material, track spike production, and switch material and turnouts.

However, among rail fans and locomotive enthusiasts, the company is best known for its Locomotive Division, which performs complete locomotive rebuilds and services. Many of the steam and early diesel locomotives to operate in the Birmingham District were rebuilt or brokered by BR&L, as are many modern locomotives operating today on industrial and short-line railroads across the country.

The October meeting will be held at the Historic Leeds Depot on Saturday, October 17 at 2:00 PM. The depot will be open at 1:30 for members and guests to view the chapter’s displays or enjoy train-watching on the platform. We look forward to seeing you there!



Mid-South Chapter Update

by James Lowery, Acting President

Interfacing with the Leeds Area and Community We continue to enjoy a good working relationship with the Leeds community that includes ways that the Mid-South Chapter can be involved in the Leeds area especially as local Leeds officials and historical organizations discuss ways to feature its history and especially its rich railroad history.

Mid-South Region Railfan Events Calendar The “Mid-South Region Railfan Events Calendar” produced by our Chapter is now online thanks to the excellent work of Lamont Downs (our webmaster and Board Secretary). You can find it at <http://www.rlhs.org/Chapters/msc/events.html> and be sure to check it frequently because new events are being added continually. If you know of an event of interest to railfans in the Mid-South area (Alabama and adjoining states) please pass the information on to Mid-South Chapter Secretary Lamont Downs at deshtiran@gmail.com. Thank you, Lamont, for a job well done!

Mid-South Chapter Facebook Page The Mid-South Chapter Facebook presence is at Mid-South Chapter RLHS and I encourage you to look at it often. Donnie Strickland is doing a fantastic job with that Facebook page and is posting outstanding photographs to it. Donnie also has been researching many of the historic photographs that are in several collections, and he posts information about each photograph along with the photograph. It is really an historical treasure trove, and the Chapter is grateful to Donnie for this excellent work!

Mid-South Chapter “Evening at the Alabama Theater” Many members of the Mid-South Chapter attended the August 1st showing of the Buster Keaton silent film “The General” complete with live organ accompaniment. If you missed that fun evening at the Alabama Theater, enjoy watching that classic movie on YouTube. Our thanks to Bob Yuill for originally alerting us to this event, to Board member John Troulias for his extensive volunteer work through the years at the Alabama Theater and for his information about the movie in the last *Mid-South Flyer* newsletter, and to Mid-South Chapter member Ken Smith for his volunteer work at the Alabama Theater which included behind-the-scenes work that evening to help make the showing of the movie a great success!

Railroad Artifacts Donations Historic railroad artifacts continue to be donated to the Chapter for display or for use at the Leeds Historic Depot. We greatly appreciate all such donations, especially as relates to Southern Railway which is featured at the Depot, a former Southern Railway facility. If you have items to donate, please contact Mid-South Chapter President James Lowery at JLowery2@gmail.com.

Chapter Projects The following projects of the Chapter are progressing well and are moving along toward their goals:

- Frank Ardrey Photography Exhibit (Project Lead: Marvin Clemons)
- Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project (Project Lead: James Lowery)
- Digital Archives (Project Lead: Donnie Strickland)
- Restoration of Birmingham Terminal Station Baggage Cart (Project Lead: Larry Kelpke)

Join or Renew If you are a member of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, membership renewal time is coming, and we hope that you will renew your membership. If you are not yet a member, we would very much like for you to join and to participate in our Chapter and meetings.

Mid-South Roundhouse

*News from around the
Mid-South Region*



First pictorial history of Birmingham Terminal Station set for January release

Publication of the first pictorial history of Birmingham's iconic Terminal Station is set for January 2016, according to publisher Mid-South Media, LLC. Authored by Mid-South member Marvin Clemons, the new book, ***Great Temple of Travel***, is a sequel to *Birmingham Rails*, co-authored in 2007 by Clemons and Mid-South member Lyle Key. *Birmingham Rails* was selected to receive the national R&LHS George Hilton Book Award for 2009.

Covering more than a century of railroad history, from the arrival of Birmingham's first railroads in 1870 to the end of private rail passenger service in 1979, the book details the circumstances leading to the formation of Birmingham Terminal Company and the opening of Terminal Station in 1909. Details of the building's classic design are given in the words of its noted architect, P. Thornton Marye, and the station's construction is seen in rare early photographs and vintage post cards.

A photographic tour of Terminal Station's interior highlights the magnificent main waiting room, with its vaulted 100-foot high dome and soaring windows. Photographs include multiple views of the waiting room and other facilities, including the ticket office, lunch counter, and soda shop.

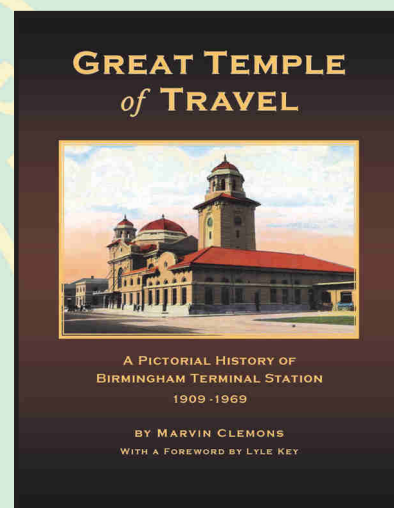
Every great rail station is noted for its trains, and the book includes a chapter on the passenger trains of each of the station's five tenant railroads -- Southern, Seaboard, Central of Georgia, Frisco, and Illinois Central -- spanning six decades of operation. Chapters includes a history of the evolution of each railroad's passenger service, from steam-powered heavyweight trains to sleek diesel streamliners. Featured are dozens of black & white and color photographs, many never before published, of many famous and lesser-known trains. A selection of professionally colorized black & white photos show the variety of color schemes applied to steam and early diesel locomotives.

Recovering from the strain of record rail travel during World War II, in 1947 the station underwent a much needed facelift, as the railroads updated their schedules and accommodations in an attempt to stem competition from highway and air travel. This "last golden era" of rail passenger service is illustrated by sharp Kodachrome images of the final years of Terminal Station's trains and the colorful diesel engines that pulled them.

The last years of Terminal Station are documented in images of the few remaining trains, ending in poignant scenes of the nearly abandoned station and its demolition. A post-mortem explores the circumstances leading to the decision to demolish the station, and lays to rest the many rumors as to the probable causes for the station's removal.

The book concludes on a positive note, with a chapter devoted to Southern Railway's *Southern Crescent*, Birmingham's last privately operated passenger train, until its surrender to Amtrak and the end of the Birmingham Terminal Company.

Great Temple of Travel will be available for pre-ordering beginning November 1, 2015 on the publisher's website at www.templeoftravel.net. A book signing is planned for the Mid-South Chapter's winter meeting on January 23, 2015.



Third-generation railroader recalls grandfather's days as station agent

Playing tennis with Fred Astaire and receiving a \$500 tip from a grateful passenger are just two stories Carl Ardrey recounted about his grandfather, the late Frank E. Ardrey, who was the ticket agent at the Aiken railroad depot during the city's golden age as a winter resort.

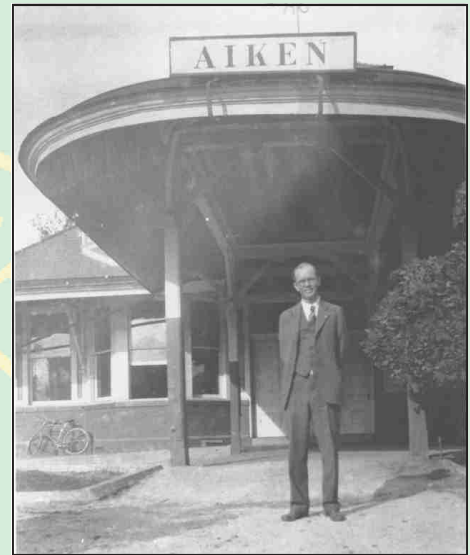
Ardrey, a third-generation railroad man who is a train master supervising the departure and arrival of trains for Norfolk Southern, spoke Thursday evening at the fifth-anniversary celebration of the rebuilt depot, which is home to the Aiken Visitors Center and Train Museum on Park Avenue.

His grandfather was the last ticket master at the depot from 1922 to 1954. During that time, he began professional acquaintances with some of Aiken's most famous Winter Colony residents. Most were wealthy businessmen and socialites from the North who came to Aiken for equestrian and other sports from mid-fall to early spring. Ardrey, who lives in Florence, Alabama, said the inspiration for his presentation began when he and his son, Thomas, stopped overnight in Aiken during a Civil War battlefield tour. They visited his grandparents' former house on Newberry Street and saw a sign in front indicating it was the station master's cottage. "We thought that was pretty cool and gave me an idea of what a big deal he was here," Ardrey said. "This town meant a lot to him, too."

In addition to playing tennis with Astaire, Ardrey said his grandfather had keys to many of the private clay courts at Winter Colony estates. When the millionaires, as the late Ardrey called the Winter Colony residents, weren't in town, he kept up their courts, his grandson said. Ardrey said his grandfather received the \$500 tip in a letter dated June 1930 from George Galt Bourne, son of the president of Singer Sewing Machine. Hearing that the late Ardrey was planning a vacation, Bourne wrote: "I herewith enclose my check for \$500, which I hope will come in handy and help you to enjoy yourself." "It would help me," said his grandson, drawing a laugh from the audience, who added that in 1930 his grandfather made about \$100 a month.

To end his presentation, Ardrey showed an image of a canceled check for \$700 written on the Farmers and Merchants Bank to Lucy Rutherford, another Aiken winter resident known for her relationship with U.S. President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Ardrey said his son has a Steinway baby grand piano with ivory keys that has been valued at \$80,000 that his grandfather had bought at an estate sale in Aiken.

"I was reading a book a few years ago about Roosevelt's funeral train and told my dad about how Lucy Rutherford was with the president in Warm Springs, Georgia, when he died and had to drive back to Aiken before the public found out," Ardrey said. "My dad said, 'Yeah, that's where the piano came from.' That's the canceled check in his scrapbook."

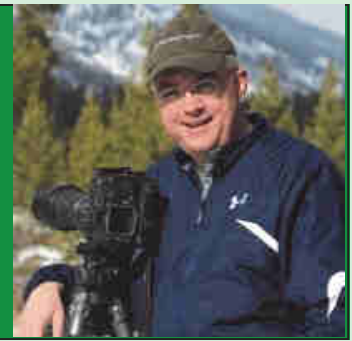


Frank E. Ardrey Sr. at Aiken, SC depot
(Aiken Standard photo)

(Editor's note: Our thanks to the Aiken Standard, Aiken, SC, for granting permission to reprint the preceding article)

Coal and The Railroads

by David Lester



There is no commodity more closely associated with the railroads than coal. As the industrial revolution progressed, coal seemed ubiquitous, particularly in urban areas, where steam locomotives gathered to handle freight and passenger trains about and through town. Coal not only powered the railroads, but was also, and remains today, its number one commodity for transportation. Coal was used to heat homes and businesses, and in the late 1800's, coal-fired steam plants came on line to provide electricity in the community.

Railroads and industries developed significant infrastructure to handle coal. For example, on the railroads, coal for use in steam locomotives was stored in and distributed from massive coal towers near yard and maintenance facilities. Early coal towers were made of wood, but later ones were built with concrete. The concrete towers were built so well that, in most cases, it is less expensive to let them stand than to make the effort to demolish them. This accounts for the many concrete coaling towers still standing today.

Infrastructure for coal delivery was built, ranging from an elevated track at a small industry so coal could be dumped on the ground from one or two hopper cars, to massive yards and transloading equipment located at ports to handle shiploads of coal exported to other nations.



Coal train lineup at Wilsonville Steam Plant, Alabama
(Greg Owings photo)



Frisco coaling tower at Carbon Hill, AL
(Lyle Key photo)

The need for continuous supplies of large amounts of coal at power plants spawned the development of the unit train, which is a dedicated set of cars forming an entire train that shuttles back and forth between the mine and the steam plant. Massive loop tracks and storage areas at the plant provide room to dump a trainload of coal. Some steam plants are equipped to handle "rotary dump" cars, where a single car can be rotated upside-down and the contents dumped quickly. Once the coal is dumped, the car is turned upright and the train moves ahead so the next car can be unloaded. This is all done without the cars in the train being uncoupled; cars that are equipped with

devices that keep them coupled together, but allow each car to be rotated upside down for unloading.

While there are other technologies that have supported the loading, transportation, and unloading of coal by rail, this historic commodity has rapidly lost favor in the United States and other nations around the world. The key reason is that citizens and government leaders have become increasingly concerned about the damage that burning coal has done to our environment. Regardless of one's political views or thoughts about the environment and global warming, no one can deny that burning coal is not healthy for people or for the planet.

Environmental regulations have reached the point where the technology required to build a coal-fired steam plant is prohibitively expensive. Adding to the decline of coal use is the low price of natural gas, much of which has been obtained through fracking, where oil and gas are forced from deep in the ground by the injection of high-pressure chemicals.

The reduced role of coal in generating the nation's electricity has been reflected in the latest railroad traffic statistics. For example, most railroads reported double-digit declines in both coal volumes and coal revenues for the second quarter of 2015, when compared to the second quarter of 2014. Moreover, both of these measures have dropped since 2011, and there are no signs of this trend slowing.

Where all of this is going is anybody's guess. If the price of natural gas rises in the future, it could be that the cost of building coal-fired steam plants that can meet emissions standards would be cost-effective. If the price of natural gas remains the same as it is now, or drops, the demand for coal will continue to decline. Breakthroughs in other energy sources, such as solar and wind, could impact the overall equation as well.

Energy analysts say that coal will continue to be used for at least the next couple of decades, and for at least that long, railroads will continue to haul it. However, it remains to be seen if the railroad industry's historic relationship with the coal industry will be restored to twentieth-century levels at some point in the future.



Led by a mix of eight F-units, a Southern Railway unit coal train is seen passing through Bessemer, Alabama in March 1966 with an empty consist of coal hoppers returning from the Wilsonville Steam Plant to the mines at Parrish, Alabama for reloading. (*Jim Gibson photo*)

Along the Mid-South Rail Trail

Southern Museum of Civil War & Locomotive History, Kennesaw, GA

Of the many historic rail sites located in the Mid-South region, few bring together two of the South's most historic aspects, the Civil War and railroads. That's what you'll find at the Southern Museum of Civil War & Locomotive History at Kennesaw, Georgia, just a few hours' drive from Birmingham.

The Southern Museum has first opened in Kennesaw in 1972 as the Big Shanty Museum. This early iteration of what is today a Smithsonian Affiliate housed the steam locomotive General and was dedicated to telling the story of the April 12, 1862 "Great Locomotive Chase," and event which briefly rose that engine and Kennesaw to prominence during the Civil War.

Over time the museum changed its name to the Kennesaw Civil War Museum and began to collect and interpret other artifacts from the War. The General, for obvious reasons, was still the main attraction at this humble facility. It wasn't until the mid-1990s that the impressive locomotive-building collection of the Glover Machine Works of Marietta, GA became available that the museum was able to grow into what it has become today. Following a two-year renovation and expansion, the facility reopened in 2003 as the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History. The nearly-50,000 square foot facility houses three permanent galleries – Railroads: Lifelines of the Civil War, Glover Machine Works: Casting a New South, and The Great Locomotive Chase – and is home to various temporary and traveling exhibits as well. In addition to this broader focus, the museum also became a member of the prestigious Smithsonian Affiliations Program. This program allows the Museum to host traveling Smithsonian exhibits, book Smithsonian historians for lectures and feature Smithsonian artifacts within its permanent collections.



In 2007 the museum expanded again with the opening of the Jolley Education Center, an 8,000 square foot facility devoted to educating and entertaining youth through railroad history. This area offers classroom space for programs and rentals, as well as separate space for the very young to safely play alongside their older siblings. The Jolley Education Center also houses a "40 & 8" Merci Boxcar, a gift from the French people to the state of Georgia following World War II.

The newest addition to the Southern Museum will come in 2015 with the opening of a new Research Center. This 8,200 square foot structure will house the museum's large and ever-growing collection of archival material: documents which trace the growth and operations of some of the South's largest railroads. You can check it all out on the Museum's website at www.southernmuseum.org



Virtual Model Railroading: Threat or Menace?

By Lamont Downs

Bring up the subject of model railroading on a computer in a roomful of serious modelers, and you might risk being stared at (and possibly permanently ostracized). After all, doesn't virtual model railroading spell the end of hobby shops, the modeling press, model railroad clubs, and in fact the very hobby itself? This article will endeavor to answer none of these questions.

What is virtual model railroading? And how does one create a functioning model railroad in a computer? Some readers will remember primitive DOS software for planning your layout, in effect creating plans for building a physical layout. However, today's best software provides support for route building, adding full scenery (including landscape shaping and an almost infinite number of buildings, trees, shrubs, etc.), working signal systems and grade crossings, and then running trains over your creation, with views from the cab, some passenger and freight equipment, and trackside.

The other major difference is that you don't build your models on a workbench stocked with drills, glues and paints, but instead create them in a program similar to the kind used to design automobiles, buildings and space shuttles: a Computer Aided Design (CAD) program. Or, instead of buying parts (or a complete model) in a box you download a file and install it in your modeling program.

In effect, your computer screen becomes a window into your alternative world. Computer gamers will find this a comfortable, familiar world, but others may find it completely alien.

The Pros and Cons

If this sounds like a cold, heartless world, consider the advantages. The most obvious is space. The author's workstation (not including books, maps and piles of printouts) takes up about 25 square feet of floor space. Within this



relatively tiny space, about 5 feet square, resides a layout containing the complete cities of Montgomery and Birmingham, plus the Louisville and Nashville main line connecting them (and major chunks of the other lines entering/leaving both cities). The L&N mainline is over ninety scale miles, and after adding in yard trackage and double track the total could easily approach a thousand scale miles. The author's computer starts to strain running fifty trains at once; your experience may vary depending on your equipment.

The largest single expense for all this is the computer; expect to pay at least \$1200 for a system powerful enough to provide decent performance. The software runs around \$40-\$80; subscribing to a download service that gives you access to hundreds of thousands of otherwise free digital models is typically \$25/year. And of course the cost of your online access could be factored in, although you probably already have it in any case for your email and Web access.

You become part of an online community with online forums, which are obviously invaluable for resolving problems and sometimes just arguing over trivial issues. One can also run multiplayer routes, in which you're running some of the trains while others are under the control of players possibly thousands of miles away.

And then there are those of us with ten thumbs, for whom the simple effort of painting a boxcar can easily turn into a sticky, smeary disaster. On the computer no manual skills with tools are required (though being able to type accurately helps). It's also relatively easy to re-paint an existing piece of rolling stock (or other object) with a little basic skill in an image editing program such as Photoshop Elements or PhotoPaint.

Obviously this is not for everyone. There are no physical models to handle and display, none of the tactile satisfaction gained from hefting a brass Shay or E7A. If you're uncomfortable around computers you may find it a frustrating and unrewarding experience, especially when (not if) things go wrong; virtual model railroading software is very powerful, very complex, and can at times be quite ornery. Creating new models does require some experience with a 3D modeling program (or some effort in learning one). And don't even think about trying to use an underpowered computer or you risk watching a slow-motion slide show; many of those sold in the big box stores are plenty powerful but don't contain a separate graphics card, an absolute must for something as graphics-



oriented as model railroading.

Finally, you won't get the kind of social contact that you get inviting a crowd of fellow modelers over for an operating session, or participating in a modular railroad show. Even with the forums and multi-player routes virtual model railroading is essentially a solitary hobby.

A Brief History of Railroad Simulators

Model railroading software has generally fallen into one of three categories (often with considerable overlap): games, driving simulators, and route builders.

Of these, games go back the furthest, at least back to the DOS era. These included switching and business simulations, of which the first blockbuster title was Sid Meier's *Railroad Tycoon* (1990). The graphics were primitive and the actual business choices were pretty primitive, but it was a RAILROAD! And you built it YOURSELF! On your COMPUTER! RT was a revelation at the time and this author's recommendation led more than one of his co-workers to stay up all night playing it, thereby significantly disrupting the work environment. Best of all, not long after its release the publisher provided a cheat code (a not-so-"secret" key combination) that provided you with an extra million dollars whenever you needed it, enabling you to build as large a layout as you wanted without worrying about whether it would be profitable, thus also making it the first practical route building software. Later versions of RT had improved graphics, but it never did quite look like a real railroad; it was a start, though.

Railroad Tycoon was followed by such simulations as *A-Train* (ported from a 1985 Japanese rail game and released in the United States in 1992), and *Transport Tycoon* (1994), which added trucks and ships to the mix and was later upgraded and re-released as *Locomotion* in 2004.

The second category is driving simulators. Of these, *TrainMaster Simulator* (2000) had considerable impact, as it attempted to include appropriate train physics when accelerating and braking. It was probably the first driving simulator to actually show the skill needed to brake a heavy train and stop before that red signal instead of running it. Its popularity created a market for a physical control stand that took the place of a joystick.

Of course, the real breakthrough title was *Microsoft Train Simulator* (2003), which spawned an immense online community with multiple forums and download sites. Although creating routes for MST was always a challenge (involving much home-grown software and complex procedures) a large number were still posted by enthusiasts for download, including the Northern Pacific and Milwaukee Road lines from Butte over the Rockies.

A related title was *Train Dispatcher*, which simulated the activities of a CTC dispatcher. It was originally developed in the 1980s as a training tool for an actual railroad, and later released to the public and upgraded several times.

The third category, route builders, started out with programs such as *Design Your Own Railroad* (1991) intended for planning real physical model railroads. They ultimately led in 2001 to *Trainz*, published by the Australian company Auran, which combined both a driving simulator and a seriously easy-to-use route creator in one package, arguably revolutionizing the genre. Today it has only one real competitor, *Rail Simulator* (2007), developed by the company which originally developed *Microsoft Train Simulator* and which has a devoted following but has not yet quite achieved the ease of use of *Trainz*.

In the next issue of the newsletter, I'll use *Trainz* as its example to demonstrate the possibilities of model railroading in a computer. See you in January!

Golden Era Classics



In 1913, Birmingham's Terminal Station was just four years old when the above photo was taken. From all appearances, you would think that all of the land had been cleared to make way for tracks and structures. But not quite, for as the remarkable photo below shows, a patch of vegetation could still be found to serve as background for a group photo. For reference, that's the same South tower appearing in both photos. (Top photo, courtesy of the University of Kentucky; bottom photo, author's collection)



Parting Shots

It's a known fact that the Mid-South Chapter has a number of accomplished photographers with a keen eye for framing railroad subjects. As evidence, we submit this masterful photo taken on August 26, 2015 by member Donnie Strickland of the Norfolk Southern's Office Car Special (OCS) crossing the trestle at Leeds en route to Birmingham. The only thing that could make this photo more complete would be the Central of Georgia's original timber trestle, but we'll settle for the F's wearing Southern Railway's "finest tuxedo" color scheme.

