



# The Mid-South Flyer

January-February 2014



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

## January program

### ***Riding the rails with Jack Ferris and company***

It's every rail fan's dream to one day own your own private railroad car, complete with rear platform and all of the amenities. But own your own *train*?

Well yes, if you happen to be Jack Ferris, the late father of Mid-South member Dan Ferris, The son of an Erie engineer and a very successful Midwest industrialist, Jack had both the penchant and the means to enjoy rail travel aboard his own private car train.

That's *train*, as in *eight* Pullman cars of various pedigrees, from the handsome *Capital Heights* observation-lounge-sleeper (pictured at right with Jack and wife Eleanor on the platform), to the *Wabash Valley* dining car, to the luxurious buffet-lounge-sleeper *Dover Plains*.



Painted in a handsome dark blue color with a gold band below the windows (*shades of L&N!*), Jack's private car operation was officially named *Private Rail Cars, Inc.* based in Ft. Wayne, Indiana. To make it even more official, the company had it's own listing in the *Official Register of Passenger Train Equipment*. One of PRC's cars, the *Clover Colony*, was literally saved by son Dan from a scrap yard in, of all places, Birmingham! Because of his rescue, "*The Clover*," as Dan affectionately calls the car, survived another half century and today runs in excursion service at the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga. A number of the other cars have also survived in various states of repair in railroad museums or under private ownership.

Following the Mid-South Chapter's annual membership meeting and election on Saturday, January 18, Dan will narrate a multimedia program featuring PRC's private car operations, including trips to the Kentucky Derby and a special charter over the Northern Pacific Railway. Along the way you'll see many scenes of railroading in the early 1960s with first generation diesels and a steam engine or two, including a special appearance by our old friend, Southern #4501. Whether your interest is in Pullman passenger cars, early diesels, or steam, you're sure to find plenty to enjoy in Dan's program. So bring along a friend or two and share the fun.

## ***Candidate slate shaping up for Chapter election***

The slate of announced candidates is filling out for the upcoming Mid-South Chapter annual election. The office of vice-president and four board positions are open for nominations. At press time, three incumbent board members, Natasha Bettis, Hal Holley, and Larry Kelpke, have announced for re-election. Donnie Strickland has offered his candidacy for the remaining board seat, and Dr. Carl Marbury has accepted nomination for the position of vice-president. Additional nominations will be accepted from the floor at the Annual Membership meeting. Your board encourages your attendance at the Annual Membership meeting and active participation in the business of your chapter.

***A reminder that R&LHS and chapter dues are due!  
Renew on-line now at [www.rlhs.org](http://www.rlhs.org). Thank you!***



# By the Board

## Minutes from the January 2014 Board of Directors Meeting

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Mid-South Chapter was called to order by John Browning on January 4, 2014, at 10:06 a.m. in the Agent's Office at the Leeds Depot, Leeds, Alabama. A quorum was present for the meeting.

**Board of Directors members present:** \_Natasha Bettis, John Browning, Marvin Clemons, Lamont Downs, Hal Holley, Larry Kelpke, James Lowery, Dr. Carl Marbury, Lee Singletary, John Stewart. Member (Tim Smith was absent)/

**Guests (non-voting):** \_Donnie Strickland, Pat Honsa

**Treasurer's Report.** James Lowery reviewed the Treasurer's report for transactions covering the period January 1-December 31, 2013. Marvin Clemons asked if we had received an advance for the 2014 expected dues from R&LHS national headquarters; Lowery responded that we have not. Lamont Downs asked why the dollar-of-the-month club was split into two time periods. Lowery explained that the board had decided to handle it through the regular checking account instead of as a separate petty cash fund. Clemons moved that the report be accepted by the Board. The motion was seconded and approved.

**Secretary's Report.** Downs reported that at the end of 2013 we had 69 paid up members. We have 27 renewals of existing memberships and 2 new members for 2014.

John Stewart moved that the minutes of the November 9 board meeting be approved. The motion was seconded and passed.

### Old Business

**Update on Caboose Repairs.** Larry Kelpke reported that he has boards cut and drilled for the security rails for the caboose, and plans to have them painted and mounted when the weather permits.

The deteriorating condition of the platform was discussed. Kelpke can put together a proposal for repairs, and asked if the boards could be turned over to extend their life.

**Update on Ardrey Exhibit Equipment.** Stewart reported that the equipment authorized for purchase by the board has been acquired except for the monitor, which will be purchased after reviewing the equipment setup and testing it on home monitors. He hopes to have it operational within the next few weeks.

**Archive Committee Report.** Clemons reported that the Committee met on December 12 at the Heart of Dixie Museum to discuss a proposal for the Leeds Library Board, with a target date of late January. Present were Clemons, Dr. Carl Marbury, David Lester, and David Coombs (from Heart of Dixie). The committee expanded the discussion to include the possibility of a regional archive. Additional venues other than Leeds were also discussed, as well as the potential for grants. The intent is to make the archives more attractive to those who want to donate entire collections.

Lowery asked how this would tie into the archives at the Heart of Dixie Museum, and Clemons responded that the Heart of Dixie collection is more of a library than an archive. Stewart mentioned several possible venues, and emphasized the need for digitization of the collections received.

Dr. Marbury emphasized that Leeds wants to revitalize the downtown and that the archives would be a significant asset. Clemons suggested that one possibility was to designate the Leeds area as a railroad historical district, which would be tied into the archives. Lowery mentioned the importance of environmental controls for the collections.

**Chapter Incorporation.** Lowery emphasized the need for feedback from board members, including verifying addresses and confirming the name of the organization. After the annual meeting, the list of board members will need to be updated.

Downs moved that "Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society" be adopted as the official name of the incorporated chapter. The motion was seconded and approved.

*(Continued on page 3)*

### *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](http://www.rlhs.org).*

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

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# By the Board

## Minutes from the January 2014 Board of Directors Meeting

Clemons moved that incorporation be delayed until after the annual meeting and new board members had been elected. The motion was seconded and approved.

**Chapter Election.** Clemons has sent out an email soliciting volunteers for vacant board positions as well as the still-vacant office of vice-president. All three incumbents whose terms are expiring have volunteered to stand for re-election to the board, along with Donnie Strickland for the vacant board position. Dr. Marbury volunteered to run for vice-president. Clemons will publish the existing slate of candidates in the upcoming newsletter. Nominations will remain open until the actual election. Downs said he will not be able to attend for family reasons; Lowery volunteered to take the minutes for the chapter meeting and election.

**Other Old Business:** Clemons asked about the current status of the internet connection. Apparently a modem and other equipment have been misplaced and cannot be found. [Found by Marvin Clemons after the meeting.] Clemons suggested that if we can't get a connection up and running by the next board meeting that we should consider discontinuing the efforts (and accumulating costs) of establishing the connection.

Poor calendar sales was also discussed.

### New Business

**Agenda for 2014 Annual Meeting.** The main purpose of the annual meeting is nomination and election of open positions, which will precede the program segment. Clemons is working on bringing in a speaker (Dan Ferris) for the program segment. Committee chairs should provide reports.

The depot projection screen has been missing for some time. Dr. Marbury will check with the Leeds Historical Society. The option of purchasing our own projection screen was raised. Various screen formats were discussed. John Stewart volunteered to provide a screen for the annual meeting, and Lee Singletary volunteered to research screens for a possible purchase by the chapter. The board will continue to discuss the issue via email in the meantime.

**2014 Chapter Meeting Schedule.** The schedule for 2014 will remain as follows, with the exception of the January meetings: The chapter meetings will be on the second Saturday of odd months, with the Board meeting the last Saturday of the preceding month. Therefore chapter meetings will be March 8, May 10, July 12, September 13 and November 8; Board meetings will be February 22, April 26, June 28, August 30 and October 25.

**Possible Field Trips, Off-site Meetings, etc.** Clemons raised the issue of the annual picnic, and suggested April or June so that we don't lose a chapter meeting date.

Browning asked for programming ideas. Stewart suggested inviting Tom Lawson to do a program on the steel industry. Stewart will see if he is available for the March meeting.

Lowery will be attending a program on the Cahaba bridge collapse and will see if it would be worthwhile for one of our meetings. Clemons raised the possibility of walking the roadbed up Ruffner Mountain to the quarry. Stewart suggested a program on Nortrak, manufacturer of high-speed turnouts. Browning mentioned Kershaw in Montgomery, who might host a motorcar ride. Lowery suggested the possibility of having a field trip in each of the months between the months of the Chapter meetings. Downs asked about liability, and various options were discussed.

Browning mentioned two upcoming shows in Helena (March 8) and Gadsden (April 19).

### Other new business

Downs brought up the Streamliners at Spencer event planned for May 9-June 1 at the North Carolina Transportation Museum in Spencer, N.C., and distributed flyers provided by the Museum. They have offered to provide free table space to organizations during the event.

Stewart reported that the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum has purchased the former National Model Railroaders Association (NMRA) headquarters building; the Al Kalmbach Memorial Library has been moved to Sacramento. The NMRA SE regional meeting will be in Memphis, highlighting the new trolley museum. The national NMRA meeting will be in Cleveland, Ohio this year.

Browning reported on some of the Norfolk Southern steam excursions planned for the spring. Clemons suggested having the Mid-South Chapter reserve an entire car for one of the fall Birmingham Steam excursions.

**Adjournment.** Stewart moved for adjournment. The motion was seconded and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 11:42 am.

## Regional Feature

# Atlanta Terminal Station: Gateway to the South

*By David Lester, Contributing Editor*



At the beginning of the twentieth century, Atlanta had made significant progress in recovering from the Civil War, but the recovery was by no means complete. The incomplete recovery was nowhere more evident than the dilapidated Union Station located in the center of downtown. The old Union Station was built in 1871, after Union General William T. Sherman burned the original station in 1864 during his famous “March to the Sea” toward the end of the war. By the early 1900s, Union Station had reached a point where railroaders despised it, along with the traveling public because it was overcrowded, dirty, and was serving too many trains.

The situation in Atlanta was not unique in the South. With the entire region trying to get back on its feet, railroad passenger traffic was growing by leaps and bounds. “Passenger traffic in the South rose from 5,429,953 travelers in 1880 to 41,717,224 in 1900, and the increase in business alone would have meant newer and larger facilities” notes rail historian Keith L. Bryant, Jr.(1)

In addition to needing larger passenger stations to handle traffic growth, the railroad passenger terminal met a variety of needs. The railroad station offered an array of services to the traveling and non-traveling public, and often served as a social gathering place. The families of travelers were major patrons of the stations, often outnumbering the number of travelers using the station. Since the railroad station was usually located downtown, it served as a gathering place for local business people to gather for lunch or casual meetings. Other amenities that attracted business people, as well as average citizens, were the newsstand and the Post Office. The Western Union telegraph office was also a key attraction, as telegrams were the most efficient way to send detailed messages that either didn’t require a phone call, or where a phone call was not practical. Express package service was also available at the station through the Railway Express office, making it convenient for those near the station to drop off and pick up parcels requiring fast transit.

Civic leaders were interested in having grand stations as a way to convey the importance of their city to the rest of the region, or the nation. Railroad executives, too, wanted a large and impressive station to convey to the business community and to the traveling public that their railroad was first class in every way. All of these factors came together in the early 1900s to spark a wave of railroad terminal construction in major southern cities.

In May 1902, Southern Railway president Samuel Spencer was quoted in the *Atlanta Journal*, stating that Atlanta was going to have a new depot, and said that work on the new station would begin on December 1, 1903. On Sunday, May 14, 1905, just eighteen months after construction began, Atlanta Terminal Station was opened. The terminal was managed by the Atlanta Terminal Company, and the railroad owners, each of which moved their Atlanta trains to Terminal 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 Union Depot to Terminal, to make a total of five railroads serving the station.

Architect P. Thornton Marye of Virginia, who moved his offices to Atlanta in 1904, designed the station using the Spanish Colonial Revival style of architecture. Although Marye’s architectural influences were primarily from his native state of Virginia, he served in the Spanish-American War, and was stationed in Cuba. While in Cuba, he admired the many Spanish colonial examples of architecture, and used this style in varying degrees in his later commissions. In addition to Atlanta Terminal Station, designs for the Southern Railway stations in Mobile and Birmingham reflected this influence, as well as the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, which Marye had originally designed as a Masonic temple.



***The similarity of design favored by architect P. Thornton Marye in the construction of Atlanta Terminal (left) and Birmingham Terminal stations is apparent in these side-by-side post card views. Considered to be architectural masterpieces, both buildings were demolished to make way for urban development. (David Lester and Marvin Clemons collections)***

When completed, Terminal Station stood four stories high, and boasted the second largest train shed in the United States, with the train shed at St. Louis Union Station being the largest. Terminal Station was one of the early buildings in Atlanta to be built with reinforced structural concrete. Every modern appointment that one would want in a big-city railroad station was present in Atlanta's new station.

On opening day, 5/14/1905, the *Atlanta Journal* included the following report: "the main waiting room is 166 feet by 66 feet and contains the largest single shafts of marble ever quarried in America. It contains ticket offices, telegraph offices, telephone booths, and [an] information bureau. There is a private waiting room for ladies and another for gentlemen, each containing lavatories and baths."<sup>(2)</sup> The newspaper went on to report that the station included several cafes and lunch rooms operated by the Atlanta Terminal Company, that the facility contained one of the largest "vacuum cleaning plants" in the world, which would "draw every particle of dust out of the air and fresh air [will be] pumped into the depot every moment."<sup>(3)</sup>

The *Journal* report on the opening went on to discuss details of service in the café and lunch rooms. "The lunch room itself will accommodate 65 people at one time, while in all 175 people can be served simultaneously [in the other cafes and lunch rooms, collectively], and given a service one does not usually find in depot lunch rooms and restaurants.

"The massive silverware used in the lunch rooms and café was especially manufactured in New York. From France, the china is coming, while the glassware is mostly from New York. It was the intention of the terminal company officials to serve lunches and meals in this depot that would do credit to a club, with its ablest of French 'chefs-du-cuisine', and they have exceeded beyond their expectations."<sup>(4)</sup>

While the interior amenities of the station received rave reviews in various publications, the capacity and operation of the station were among its impressive features. The station handled hundreds of trains and thousands of passengers each day, and during World War II handled a peak of approximately 30,000 passengers per day. A coach yard was built at North Avenue, approximately two miles north of the station, to handle car storage, maintenance and cleaning needs.

In 1917, just twelve years after the opening of Terminal Station, the Atlanta Terminal Company hired architectural consultant Alfred Fellheimer of New York to prepare an evaluation of Atlanta's railroad passenger facilities, and make recommendations for improvement. One recommendation of the report was for the Atlanta Terminal Company to tear down the original train shed to eliminate maintenance needs, and to avoid locomotive smoke collection within the boarding area. The train shed was torn down in 1925, and replaced by butterfly sheds for each boarding track. In addition, the upper portions of the station's twin towers were removed, as they had been targets for lightning strikes for years.

The key recommendation of the report was to enlarge Terminal Station to the point that it could accommodate the trains of railroads still using the old Union Station, which were the Georgia Railroad, the Western & Atlantic Railroad, and the Louisville & Nashville Railway. This recommendation was never adopted, and the owners of the old Union Station opted to construct a new Union Station in 1930, less than a mile from Terminal Station.(5)

After World War II, the railroads sought to improve their image and offer new streamlined trains to the traveling public. During Terminal Station's life, it saw the rapid development of the personal automobile begin to eat away at the number of passengers traveling by train. The war was over, and the American people were interested in something new and exciting.

The railroads responded by purchasing new, lightweight passenger trains with comfortable coaches, inviting dining cars, and world class sleeping accommodations in the form of roomettes, double bedrooms, drawing rooms, and master bedrooms that often featured a shower. Matching locomotives in attractive paint schemes were ordered to pull these new trains, and many passengers enjoyed traveling aboard them.



*The demolition of Atlanta Terminal Station begins in earnest in 1972. Note how the statue of Samuel Spencer has been removed from its pedestal. It was on display at Peachtree Station, on a small brick pedestal, for 24 years. (Martin K. O'Toole photo)*

One of the most disturbing things about the fate of Terminal Station was that the decision to tear it down was made so quickly, and with no public objection whatsoever. The historic preservation community in Atlanta was not a strong lobby at the time, and once the station was torn down, it was summarily forgotten. Today, there are no historical markers at the site, and the majority of Atlanta's citizens have no memory of the station.

Endnotes:

<sup>1</sup>Keith L. Bryant, Jr. "The Railway Station as a Symbol of Urbanization in the South, 1890-1920," *South Atlantic Quarterly*, Vol. 75, No. 4, pp. 499-509.

<sup>2</sup>*Atlanta Journal*, May 14, 1905, Vol. 23, No. 84.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid .

<sup>5</sup> Alfred Fellheimer. *Railroad Passenger Terminal Facilities, City of Atlanta, Georgia*. Privately published by the author, April 20, 1917.



*As is evident from this 1967 aerial view, the Atlanta Terminal and Union Station complex occupied a very large and hence very valuable piece of real estate in the heart of Atlanta. (Marvin Clemons collection)*

However, as the personal automobile and commercial aircraft began to lure the business traveler away from the trains, rail passenger service in the United States declined rapidly. And, so did the stations. In its final years, traffic at Terminal Station was down to about six trains per day. And, very little was spent to maintain the station, resulting in a sad situation for this historic and grand terminal that was once a centerpiece of life in Atlanta.

The station was closed in 1970, and the process of demolishing it began in 1972. Nearby Union Station was demolished the following year, leaving Peachtree Station, originally built as a Southern Railway suburban station in 1918, as the only passenger station serving Atlanta.

## Railroad Modeling



# Railroad History and Model Railroading, Part 4

by John Stewart

This is the 4th installment in a series of articles on modeling railroad history by Mid South member/modeler John Stewart. John invites your comments and questions by contacting him at [jstew@bhamrails.info](mailto:jstew@bhamrails.info).

So, ultimately it comes down to, “How in the world do I put my dream railroad into the space available?”

Several years ago I attended a seminar that included a really interesting fellow who talked about “right and left brain” personalities. We learned that right brain folks may have a wonderful inner vision of the outcome but may have a hard time explaining how to get it done. Left brain folks can plan themselves into oblivion, and might just spend more time planning and step-by-stepping but never get finished.

Maybe it is better to say that there are two types of layout builders: those that plan, detail, evaluate and build versus those that just start and figure it out (or make it up) as they go. Since we are about railroad history, remember that we should be seeking to represent some place and time as we dream.



Consider folks who spend a lot of time looking in magazines and books for a track plan they think they'll like versus those who develop their unique track plan based on their very own dream. Which will work?

I submit that any way to get your layout built may be fine, but there is more chance of a successful long term relationship between you and your model railroad if you put time and effort into thinking about what you want, planning how to fit your available space and then building the layout from your well-conceived plans. This will help you be able to play with your layout as early as you can and figure out what you want to change as you build to make it better. Real railroads tend to evolve as they operate over time and yours may too.

So how do you fit your model railroad dreams into available space? I think one of the most important considerations to acknowledge is “model railroaders NEVER have enough space to do what they want”. If can accept that fact, you'd be one step closer to “happy training.” Consider that your model railroad is linear – think “narrow and long”. In other words, the items of interest are most likely close to the track. If you were running a locomotive on a railroad, even in your imagination, your frame of reference and sense of place would be somewhat limited. Even

if you were in the middle of the great far west you could only see to the horizon a matter of a few miles, yet in our railroad dream we tend to want to include the entire distance from Chicago to Los Angeles or wherever it is we want to model.

Consider too that some things adjust to “scale” (the difference between prototype and model size) and some don't. *Size and distance* may scale in a pretty straightforward manner. HO scale is 1:87<sup>th</sup> real size, so an 85 foot passenger car is about a foot long, and an HO scale mile is about 61 feet.

*Time* does not scale in model railroading even though we make some effort to adjust time to our scale. John Allen, the modeling “wizard of Monterey”, observed that model switching activities take pretty much the same time as the real thing. If you have tried to develop a timetable, you realize it takes VERY little time to travel between model stations. We have to deal with this compromise in space and time.

Some modelers consider a scale mile and then consider a “time adjusted scale mile” which they call a “*smile*”. That is, if

an HO mile measures about 61 feet, and you (somehow) compress time by a factor of 6 with a “fast clock” then a “smile” would be about 10 feet in HO scale. (Einstein was OK with this idea.)

This has some advantages. If an HO scale “smile” is about 10 feet, then a “smile-long freight” might be 10 feet long on your railroad. In HO scale depending on era and car type/length this is an 10 to 20 car freight train. I have found that this train length begins to “work” for me in terms of how I see it moving on a layout. This perception is improved considerably with scenery and buildings to reduce the view of the entire train length. It improves even more if I am focusing on “why” my train is going and what work it is doing rather than simply “where” it is going or how long it is. We can handle a 20 car train of 34 foot hoppers snaking along a creek in the hollow from the mine in a narrow 10 foot long shelfspace on a layout.

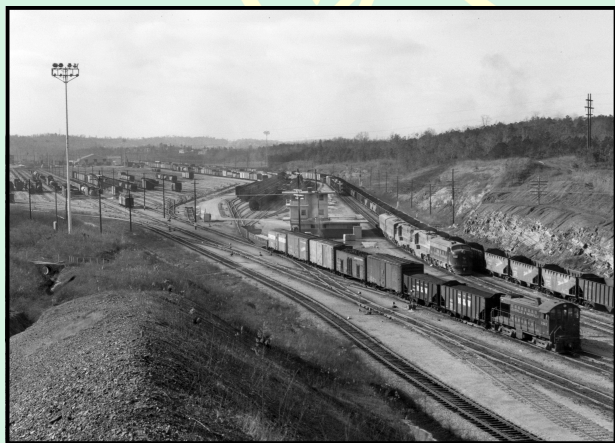
You may argue that if the BNSF runs 125 car unit coal trains to Birmingham’s West Jefferson steam plant then a “prototypical” model railroad of the BNSF near Birmingham must run 125 car unit trains – a train that might be 90 feet long! If that works for your dream and your model railroad then have at it. The next question is “where are you going to park that train”!

The answer to that rhetorical question is answered by “you never have enough space to do what you want to do”, noted above. Think about, fuss if you want, but get over it – you can’t fit all that you want into the space available. I suggest you’ll find that you enjoy moving 125 hopper cars spread across the layout with 3 to 15 cars per location. This implies at least a dozen industries served by the hoppers and may provide more fun and history to model, than one 125 car train even as grand as it may be.



Imagine that you are out along the railroad somewhere railfanning – waiting for and observing trains when they come by. Before the next train comes to your location there is only track and no train. Once that train has passed, there is only track and no train. I believe that what most of us love is the train itself more than the track. So, I will argue that the amount of track is not the metric you want to measure in determining the ability of your layout to encompass your dream of model railroading.

If you look back at our previous installment in the *Flyer*, you will see a picture of a couple of guys and a very cute little girl standing in a room that is not quite finished. This is a real room, and real couple of guys, and a “real” cute little girl – trust me on that one. In other words, somewhere around here is a guy pondering the very question that we are considering. How does he get his dream of the 1960-70’s era L&N RR into the space available? What does he include to characterize “Birmingham’s L&N”?



This fellow is somewhat knowledgeable about railroading as it is in his family. He has selected his “favorite” railroad and a locale to include in his layout. He is pretty sure that he wants L&N’s Boyles Yard as the main focal point of the layout. And he has figured out that he enjoys running trains for a reason rather than only running trains round the track. “Running trains for a reason” is another way of saying that the layout will be able to support some type of “operations”. Trains don’t just run - they move to do work.

In other words, the “why” of a smile-long train is likely more important than the “length” of that train. It is another way of saying that “the train” moving on the layout is more important than “the track” that comprises or tends to define the size of the layout. So, he is figuring out some industries that he wants to represent on the layout – the businesses that his railroad will serve. Now his ideas for the layout and the railroad it represents have a purpose that becomes more the focus than how big a space he is trying to fill. If he does this well, our friend will be enjoying this layout when that cute little girl is all grown up.



So, at the risk of crude allusion, I am suggesting that “size doesn’t matter; it’s what you do with it that counts”. Or, put another way, the biggest model railroad you can build could also be the least successful. Likewise, a small jewel of a well-planned layout may provide the owner with more enjoyment, satisfaction and fulfillment than anyone could imagine. I believe that is the goal of a successful layout – providing the builder(s) with enjoyment, satisfaction and fulfillment.

This is not to say that one doesn’t enjoy a great big layout that is well done – most of us do. If a group of like-minded folks can build and operate a large layout and enjoy both the layout and each other’s efforts and company, it is a wonderful thing to see. And I am in favor and recommend that anyone planning a layout consider sharing the effort and the layout with other folks. It is a lot more fun to play with others than to play by yourself, even if one is left-brained and somewhat anal retentive as many of us are.

Up to this point I have used a lot of space suggesting that how you fill the available space is more important than simply filling it. Figure out what will be fun for you and be willing to adjust it if needed.

Filling the available space includes the amount of **railroad space** and the amount of **people space** required for your dream. Railroad space is the fairly obvious space required for benchwork to hold our vision of places, track and rolling stock. People space is the not-so-obvious requirement that we can access the railroad to build, maintain and most important PLAY with it. And as suggested above, I believe that in the long run, you SHOULD consider providing space for friends to work and play with you.



The appropriate required railroad space is best understood by creating detailed and accurate PLANS of your empire. A subset of the rule stated above (never enough space) is that track desired ALWAYS requires more space than you think it will. So, if you want to model Terminal Station to the “nth” degree with an HO scale Marv Clemons working as a tower operator, then you will be dismayed when you try to fit that in your railroad space. Curve radius and turnout geometry devours space quickly.

As a sidebar, you likely understand that there are a number of model “scale” sizes. As noted, HO scale is 1:87 real size. N scale is 1:167 real size – that is, if an HO scale mile is about 61 feet, an N scale mile requires about 32 feet. This is roughly half as much space. So, clearly if one wants twice as much railroad then one should go to the smaller scale. Hold on there, pilgrim...



You would get more railroad into the same space, but not necessarily twice as much. The “people” required space for working, walking and playing with others, doesn’t get

smaller by two because we stay the same size (if we’re lucky). In fact, you might consider that more railroad in a given space requires more people to enjoy it, and therefore the people space might be more rather than less.

The second thing to consider is whether you are able to enjoy and manipulate a smaller scale. Neither our eyes nor our fingers are getting any younger. There is a compromise to be considered between scale and capability to use and enjoy the railroad models. If you want to run those 125 car unit coal trains and sit back and marvel at them while enjoying a toddy, then N scale might be just right for getting your dream into the space available. But if you want to operate that train to serve a number of businesses on your empire, switching cars and maybe matching car numbers to your train manifest, then you might want a larger scale, or a magnifying glass and a flashlight.

We have considered two dimensions in terms of scale, and the fourth dimension in terms of time, which doesn't tend to scale. But there is the third dimension, in this case the vertical one. Some folks build multi-level layouts! This could literally be not just a "mountain" division on the pike, but could involve one level above another connected by track. The vertical is not just about representing tall terrain. It could be that you want more of that length between Chicago and LA for your long runs across the high desert. In other words, this might be a way to get more main line "smiles".

There are two basic ways to achieve a multi-level layout. One is providing a constantly changing grade, say, along the walls with the layout eventually finding itself on a "next" level. The other way is to utilize a "helix" in the track plan. This is a series of stacked loops like a spring standing on end so that each turn of the loops takes the train toward another level. The use of multiple levels is quite practical IF you have the skills to build a dependable layout that is more complex than average. I submit that it also requires more planning. For example, what if you built two layout elements, say a yard and an industrial district one above the other. Can your operators work in the same "people space" on the railroad without getting in each other's way. Will you be able to see, to light and to reach the layout components in a lower level beneath a structure that is the upper level?



Much as suggested regarding changing scales to get more railroad into a given space, the use of multi-levels does provide more railroad, but it may require more planning and choreography for the people space. Experience will show that bumping tummies and middle aged cabooses with your colleagues might be less fun than having more railroad in a given space. Aisle size *really* matters.

A final thought is to consider how railroad layouts have evolved in the last 75 years. In 2010, I received a DVD of 75 Years of *Model Railroader* (MR) which tracks the evolution of model railroading since the 1930's. It is an interesting evolution.



Previously I have mentioned Frank Ellison as a wonderful model railroad pioneer who advanced the hobby for all of us. His layout was a "spaghetti bowl" style with track everywhere in his basement and operating "holes" in the layout. Newer layouts have evolved toward a "walkaround" style that allows the operator to follow the train more closely. I am very much an advocate of the latter style because it helps you to enjoy the train more than the track. It puts you with the train at the train's location, doing the work of the train and filling the role of the imaginary crew.

Have we answered the question of "how in the world do I put my dream into the space I have available?" No, we haven't answered it completely, and much of it will be driven by your dream. We are considering important concepts that go a long way to making a "dream" rather than a "nightmare" layout. It is important to plan the best use of space to represent

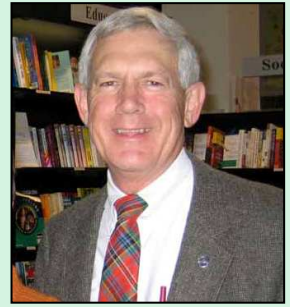
the layout elements, railroad history and operating features that will be fun for you. Doing this well requires much research and planning. But available space will drive the *railroad* and *people space* needed - your concept must fit that. This implies that you may be able to build your layout concept, play with it and enjoy the development of details and scenery as you learn to enjoy the layout - much of your history is in the scenery not the plan.

We have talked about "time scaling", but not so much about "time frame" of a layout. Creating an historically appropriate layout is important to those of use interested in railroad history. If you enjoy history you will likely enjoy the research to plan an historically appropriate layout. So, ask, "which year or span of years do I want to model in my available space and does it matter"? Consider that some folks model a specific *day* in history at a specific location for their model railroad. If you are *detail* oriented, you'll wonder what color a West Virginia license plate was in 1957 so you can paint your model Ford correctly down by the depot. I recently heard *that* discussion - after all, it's part of modeling railroad history.

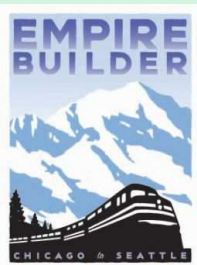
## Member Trip Report

# WESTBOUND ON AMTRAK'S OREGON TRAIL

*Text and photos by Lyle Key*



*Mid-South member Lyle Key has been riding and writing about passenger trains since his teens. His first contribution for publication was a regular column in the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum's newsletter in the 1960s. Now retired and enjoying more time to indulge his favorite pastime, Lyle has filed this account of his recent journey aboard Amtrak's "Empire Builder." As we go to press Lyle is off again, this time traveling across Canada aboard VIA Rail's "Canadian" in the dead of winter. Watch for his tale of snowy rail travel aboard North America's most luxurious train in the next issue of the "Flyer."*



Our *Empire Builder* would leave Chicago on its westbound run on September 10<sup>th</sup> with two locomotives, a baggage car, and ten Superliners. The four Portland cars (a *Sightseer Lounge*, two coaches, and a sleeper) were on the rear of the train with my sleeper on the very end. The baggage car would go to Seattle along with the dormitory car, two coaches, two sleepers, and the dining car. Our sleeping car attendant introduced himself as "Gregory" over the car's intercom, and he told us that he would be bringing around some chilled champagne after we left Milwaukee.

Departure was right on time at 2:15 pm, CDT, and we headed north over the old Milwaukee Road. Unfortunately, the fast timing that once characterized Milwaukee Road's *Hiawatha* fleet is a thing of the past. My old *Official Guide* for April of 1955 showed that the *Afternoon Hiawatha* was scheduled to leave Chicago at 1:00 pm, CT, and arrive in Minneapolis at 7:45 pm, CT, for a running time of 6 hours and 45 minutes for the 421 mile trip. We won't get into Amtrak's Midway Station (roughly midway between St. Paul and Minneapolis) for the Twin Cities until 10:31 pm, CDT, so it will take our train 8 hours and 16 minutes to run off 418 miles.

Back in the days when train travel still was popular, the Chicago - Twin Cities market was quite valuable and awfully competitive. Today, Amtrak's *Empire Builder* is the only passenger train that operates between Chicago and Minneapolis/St. Paul, but back in April of 1955, travelers between those cities had choices of different routes and different trains including Burlington's *Morning Zephyr* and *Afternoon Zephyr*, Chicago and North Western's *Twin Cities 400*, and Milwaukee Road's *Hiawathas*.



*Amtrak's "Empire Builder" (Amtrak photo)*

The *Empire Builder* pulled into Milwaukee at 3:40 pm, CDT, and departed right on time at 3:55 pm, CDT.

After we left Milwaukee, Gregory brought around some small chilled bottles of champagne. We might not have been running as fast as the old *Hiawathas*, but one had to admit that this was a nice way to begin our transcontinental train ride! Most of the old westbound main line had been removed west of Milwaukee with some segments left in place as passing sidings. It was sad to see the abandoned portions of the old right-of-way going back to nature since Milwaukee Road once had double track almost all the way between Chicago and the Twin Cities.

From my standpoint, the economy rooms on a *Superliner* sleeper essentially are enclosed sections since they

don't have toilets and sinks. On the positive side, however, each *Superliner* sleeper does have a shower, and as veteran train travelers know, showers weren't available on the old Pullmans except in a few deluxe rooms.

At Portage, we met an eastbound Canadian Pacific freight and then both trains sat in Portage for about 30 minutes. The westbound *Empire Builder* then moved out and engaged in some fast running to the next stop of Wisconsin Dells. We left Wisconsin Dells 27 minutes behind schedule.

Despite the attempts by some members of Congress to micro-manage Amtrak's dining car service, I enjoyed an outstanding steak dinner and excellent service on the *Empire Builder's* diner. The tables were covered with real table cloths, the food was served on real china, and we enjoyed eating it with real metal flatware instead of with plastic knives, forks, and spoons! My tablemate was a man who was returning to his home in Seattle after visiting family members in Philadelphia. By the way, I have to admit that it's nice to get complimentary meals in the dining car as a sleeping car passenger!



*Dining aboard a Superliner diner provides a rooftop view of the passing scenery. "Enhanced dining car" features included white tablecloths and silver tableware.*

Even though the train seemed to move along pretty well after sunset, we weren't making up much of the 30 minutes we lost in Portage. I turned in early at 8:30 pm, CDT, as we rolled along beside the Mississippi River. When I woke up at 6:15 am, CDT, we were

running an hour behind schedule across the wide open spaces of North Dakota. In my opinion, the *Superliners* aren't as accommodating as the Pullman cars they replaced. The big cars ride well, and the showers are a nice addition, but I suspect the people who designed the *Superliners* were told to squeeze in as many berths as possible and that they didn't travel on trains very often. For instance, the *Superliners* don't have the handy little pouches where Pullman passengers could store their small personal items while they slept. Also, the *Superliners* have two small restrooms on the lower level and just one on the upper level, and they remind one of the tiny unisex restrooms that one finds on airplanes. The old Pullman cars had individual toilets and sinks in the private rooms and relatively large restrooms for the passengers travelling in sections. The larger restrooms recognized that most people like to use the sinks and the toilets at about the same time every morning!

By the time I shaved, showered, and got ready to head for the dining car for breakfast, the female dining car steward announced over the train's intercom that she had a full dining car and was working on a waiting list. I grabbed a cup of hot coffee in my sleeper, put my name on the waiting list, and then repaired to the lounge where I visited with a couple from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. The man of the family worked for Norfolk Southern and its predecessors for 42 years going back to Penn Central. After about 30 minutes, my name was called, and I returned to the dining car for a nice breakfast of pancakes and sausage.

After breakfast, we had a 30 minute service stop in Minot, North Dakota. Several of us got off to take pictures, and quite a few people took advantage of the long stop for a smoke break. The Amtrak route guide says that just like Birmingham, Minot is known as the "Magic City." It apparently sprang up almost overnight as soon as Great Northern announced its route across North Dakota. When I returned to my room in the Portland sleeper, I found that Gregory had made up my bed and left a copy of that day's *Minot Daily News*. We left Minot at 10:18 am, CDT, and proceeded at restricted speed over the former Great Northern track to the west. BNSF was doing extensive track work in western North Dakota and eastern Montana, and we would continue to run slowly – with a few bursts of track speed – until early afternoon.

By the time we left Wolf Point, Montana at 2:16 pm, MDT, we were running 2 hours and 35 minutes late, and

I was beginning to get concerned about getting to the Portland airport in time to pick up my wife who would be flying out from Nashville. A sign on the east side of Malta, Montana advertised the "Great Northern Motel." We lost still more time west of Glasgow, Montana waiting for a meet with our eastbound counterpart.

At 2:45 pm, MDT, Gregory announced that he and the other sleeping car attendants were hosting a wine and cheese tasting party in the dining car for sleeping car passengers. It was a fun event, and I sat at a table with folks from Philadelphia and Virginia Beach. I met people from Great Britain, Texas, Maryland, Florida, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, and many of them rode trains to Chicago to connect with the *Empire Builder*.

The train stopped in Havre, Montana while I was having dinner in the diner, and we were stopped right beside a former Great Northern 4-8-4 (a Northern). Lots of passengers were taking smoke breaks on the platform and taking pictures of the old steam locomotive with their cell phones. The route guide informed us that Havre was the county seat of Hill County which was named after Great Northern founder James J. Hill.

We departed Shelby, Montana at sunset at 7:34 pm, MDT, and I noted that we were 2 hours and 12 minutes behind schedule.

In Spokane, the train split with the seven Seattle cars up front heading more or less due west and with our four cars on the rear going to Portland behind a single diesel unit. I dozed off again after we left Spokane, and by the time I woke up, we were on the former Spokane, Portland & Seattle line in the Columbia River Valley. The diner went to Seattle, so the sleeping car passengers bound for Portland picked up box breakfasts in the *Sightseer Lounge*.

The ride down the Columbia River Valley was very scenic, and since it was a crystal clear morning, we got several good looks at Mt. Hood. Around Wishram, I spotted a UP freight on the south bank of the river while we were headed west along the north bank. The UP line once was the route of the *City of Portland*, a beautiful armor yellow domeliner that ran between Chicago and Portland.

The old Burlington/Great Northern/SP&S *Empire Builder* left Chicago at 1:00 pm, CT, on day one and arrived in Portland at 7:30 am, PT on day three. Thus Amtrak's scheduled time of 41 hours and 55 minutes for the 2,255 mile run via Milwaukee is only slightly slower than the old *Empire Builder's* 40 hour and 30 minute schedule for its 2,260 mile operation. The Amtrak train is carded for an average speed of 53.8 mph while its privately operated predecessor was scheduled to make the Chicago to Portland run at an average speed of 55.8 mph.

We arrived at Portland Union Station at 10:55 am, PDT, and I was pleased to see that we were only 45 minutes late! Now I would have plenty of time to pick up our rental car, check into our bed and breakfast, and meet my wife's flight at the Portland airport at 4:30 pm, PDT. Some of my friends had told me that the *Empire Builder* was Amtrak's best train, and I was impressed by its friendly and efficient crew, the complimentary meals in the *Amtrak* dining car, the chilled champagne Gregory gave us as we began our journey, and the wine and cheese tasting party for sleeping car passenger. All in all, it was a great trip – especially considering that it was in September of 2013!



*Great Northern 4-8-4 #2584 on display at Havre, MT*

## March program preview

# ***Mid-South Chapter to host book signing by local industrial railroad author Tom Lawson***

A book signing by industrial railroad specialist Tom Lawson for his new book, *Steel Mill Railroads, Volume 6, Southern Style*, will highlight the March meeting of the Mid-South Chapter.

The book signing will be held Saturday, March 8, at the regular 2:00 pm Chapter meeting at the Historic Leeds Depot. Tom will be available to sign his new book and answer questions in a very informal setting.

Tom co-authored the new book, *Steel Mill Railroads, Volume 6, Southern Style*, with Steve Timko. The sixth in a series on industrial railroads by Morning Sun Books, the book was released on January 5, 2014. Mid-South member John Stewart recently visited with Tom to discuss his new book and filed the following report.

According to Stewart, the book is a wonderful graphic catalogue of high quality color pictures of industrial locomotives from steel and steel-related industry around the southeastern United States.. Each photo caption is highly detailed, and a number of picture sets and captions tell stories from Tom Lawson's extensive career dealing with and helping to operate industrial railroads.

"If you are a railfan or a modeler with industrial sites on your railroad, you will really enjoy the color photos of industrial locomotives on-the-job," Stewart reports. "It's filled with full size diesels as well as "critters" and some interesting one-of-a-kind rolling stock, and you'll get a look that many rail fans could only wish for looking "through the fence" at their favorite industrial switching sites."

In response to one of John's many questions, Tom provided the following information. Note that items enclosed in "( )" are provided by Lawson and those enclosed by "[ ]" are by Stewart.

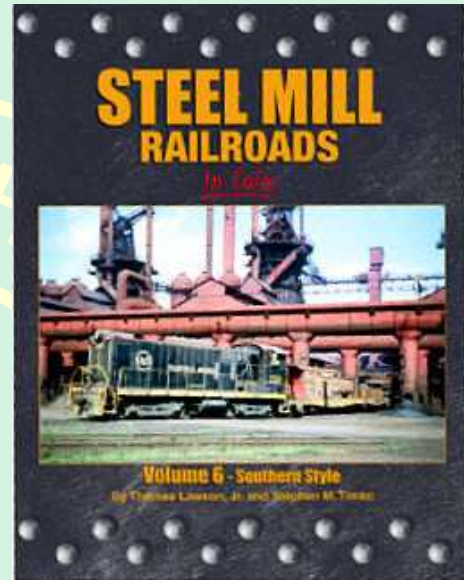
Stewart asked, "How many trains were run each day to serve the US Steel Works at Fairfield and Ensley?" Tom replied:

"When I became Locomotive Terminal Foreman at FWX [USS, Fairfield Works, Birmingham, AL] in 1968, there were 34 locomotives on the roster of active and maintained units.

"Usually, there were anywhere from four-to-six locomotives out of the "active" fleet not available on any given weekday because of inspections, light repairs or needed heavy rebuilding. So if I had only 28 or 29 locomotives available for service at 6 A.M. on a weekday morning, and I was expected to assign 27 of them for service, that sure didn't given you any room to service locomotives needing to be fueled and sanded, etc., or to have a back-up unit or two in case of breakdowns or other emergencies. Got to be a helluva' job at times, but I enjoyed it!

"Normally there were only three road jobs (worked each shift around-the-clock), but when things got really busy, they would put on a fourth road job (called "No. 10 Road") which worked dayshift, Mon.-Fri. only. Then when the need slacked off, the No. 10 Road job would be abolished and I wouldn't have to worry about an engine for it!

"The Fairfield blast furnaces would also occasionally have a fourth train crew just working dayshift. This was especially true if they were running the pig iron casting machine at Fairfield. That required extra switching that was not normally needed when the "pig machine" was not in use. But this fourth engine at the Fairfield furnaces only



happened maybe four times during my more than seven years at the Locomotive Terminal.”

In addition to his latest work, Tom has authored several books under his own publishing label, Cabbage Stack, including *Logging Railroads of Alabama*, *Shay: The Supplement*, and *Locomotives of the Southern Iron and Equipment Company*.

**Advance order your book through the Mid-South Chapter and receive a discount!** By special arrangement with Morning Sun Publishing, copies of Tom’s new book can be ordered in advance of the March meeting at a discount. Copies are **\$50.00 each** (retail is \$59.95) and must be paid in advance by check or cash (**plus postage if not picked up in person at the March meeting**). Proceeds from book sales will go to benefit the Mid South Chapter.

To advance order your copy or copies, please email John directly at [jstew@bhamrails.info](mailto:jstew@bhamrails.info). Your book(s) will be available at the March 8 meeting for signing, or you can arrange early pickup from John.

**Our thanks to John Stewart for arranging for this special opportunity to host Tom Lawson and welcome his new book!**

## Golden Era Classics



The year is 1965, and we’re at the diesel service facility at Southern’s Norris Yard as a lineup of Central power is being fueled and sanded for another trip down the “P-Line” to Columbus, Georgia. Aside from the obvious, what’s even more “classic” about this scene is the appearance of four coupled locomotives still in Central paint two years after the railroad’s merger into Southern. By then, nearly all locomotive consists were mixed units in a combination of Southern’s black and white “tuxedo” scheme. But the real standout is GP7 #166 still in original Central colors. According to Mid-South member and Central aficionado David Payne, this anomaly probably resulted from the #166 receiving one of the last repaints in original colors just before Central adopted its transition to a solid “Pullman green” color scheme in late 1959. So the old girl just ran off her remaining days as a poignant reminder of her proud Central of Georgia ancestry. (Clemons collection)



# *From the Observation Platform*

*Commentary by John Browning, Mid-South Chapter President*

Dear friends and fellow Mid-South Chapter members,

I hope everyone had a great Christmas and have started out a great new year. Sometimes it is a little difficult to believe that we are already into 2014. It seems like just yesterday that we in the 1990's.

Our chapter had a great year in 2013. We had several awesome programs and events. Our November program, presented by Eric McFerrin from Red Mountain Park was both informative and entertaining. Eric and some of his staff brought along several interesting artifacts from their archives so that we could get a firsthand look at some of the Birmingham area's industrial history.

Our chapter archive committee, headed up by Marvin Clemons has been busy working on plans for a permanent chapter archive. They are currently looking at options for a permanent location for the chapter's historical documents, photographs and artifacts. Once this archive has been established, it could become a place for rail fans and rail historians to donate their collections when they feel that the time is right.

Please make plans to attend the chapter meeting on **Saturday, January 18<sup>th</sup> at the Leeds Depot**. This will be our Annual Membership meeting where we will elect officers and board members for the coming year. Your board will also report to you on the past year's accomplishments and goals for the future. Come and learn what is going on in YOUR chapter and how you can get plugged in. We need everyone's input. And while at the meeting, don't forget to pick up a complimentary copy of the 2014 photo calendar with your membership renewal.

I look forward to seeing you all at the January meeting. Stay warm and be safe. Until next time....

*John Browning*

## **Chapter Meetings and Events Calendar for 2014**

***The following schedule is current as of January. Please consult the latest newsletter for any updates.***

Saturday, February 25 — Board Meeting — Agent's Office — 10:00AM

Saturday, March 8 — Chapter Meeting — Depot Meeting Room — 2:00PM

Saturday, April 26 — Board Meeting — Agent's Office — 10:00AM

Saturday, May 10 — Chapter Meeting — Depot Meeting Room — 2:00PM

Saturday, June 28 — Board Meeting — Agent's Office — 10:00AM

Saturday, July 12 — Chapter Meeting — Depot Meeting Room — 2:00PM

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

Saturday, November 8 — Chapter Meeting — Depot Meeting Room — 2:00PM