



# The Mid-South Flyer

September/October 2014



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

## The State of the Railroad Hobby, 2014 or, "Rumors of My Pending Death Have Been Greatly Exaggerated"

*Commentary by David Lester*

With apologies to Mark Twain for the subtitle, this essay addresses a growing notion among many regarding what's commonly referred to as the "railroad hobby." The story goes something like this: It's 2014, and for several years, the North American rail system has been slimmed down through merger and acquisition to seven Class I railroads, which carry the majority of the nation's rail freight. Norfolk Southern, BNSF, CSX, Union Pacific, Canadian National, Canadian Pacific and Kansas City Southern are the only trunk carriers remaining, and all of their locomotives look the same, except for the paint schemes. People lament the days when there were somewhere around 50+ individual railroads, each with their own paint scheme and assortment of locomotives.



"There is no variety today, 9/11 significantly reduced our access to rail lines, we don't have many steam excursions any more, the only passenger trains are run by Amtrak, railroad historical society membership is dropping like a rock, younger people only want to read on their tablet, and all kids want to do is play on their computers," goes the common refrain. My response to all of this? *Balderdash!*

Everyone knows that change is a big part of life. And, what we're experiencing in the railroad hobby at the moment is simply that – change. Change does not mean atrophy or death. Change simply means new ways of doing things, and some changes will supplement the current ways, and some changes will supplant them. Consider the time radio was introduced in the United States in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. I'm sure that many people felt that newspapers were going to shut down soon after. Just as no one would have a need for radio when television came along, and that televisions would hit the trash when the Internet came on the scene. None of those things happened. While there have certainly been changes in market share, these fluctuations have gone on for nearly a century, and what we're left with is a much richer media environment than we had one hundred years ago.

### September Meeting Announcement

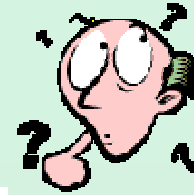
*Favorite slides and video images presented by Mid-South Chapter members will highlight the regular meeting of the Mid-South Chapter on Saturday, September 13. Held over from the July picnic, the all-member slide show will include images either taken or selected by Mid-South members. So break out the shoebox and slide tray and scan a dozen of your favorites along with a short video clip or two and bring them to the meeting on a thumb drive or DVD disk for presentation. See you at the depot for an enjoyable afternoon of great photography!*

Let's consider road-specific railroad historical societies. It's likely that, fifty years from now, there won't be as many Rock Island or Southern Railway enthusiasts as there are today, if any at all. Yet, do we really know this to be true? Who is to say that as today's younger generation of rail enthusiasts ages, they will not want to know more about the roads of the twentieth century, and how those lines became part of the rail system that exists in 2064, even to the point that the road-specific historical societies will remain with us? Or, it could be that, fifty years from now, most will have never heard of the Rock Island or the Southern,

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and the historical societies for those roads will be long gone. But, does that really matter? Let's go back to our radio analogy for a moment. Not many people today remember the classic radio shows "The Shadow" or "Fibber McGee," but radio is still vibrant with programming that people demand today. Any of us would mourn if nobody remembers Rock Island 50 years from now, but it's a fair bet that there will still be rail enthusiasts who have fond memories of today's railroads, and young people who relish those of tomorrow.

No one can forecast the future, but there may be robust historical societies for Norfolk Southern, BNSF, etc. There are many who are now in their late teens or early twenties, are rail enthusiasts, and employees of these roads. Why wouldn't they create a historical society when their favorite road reaches its hundred-year anniversary? It's instructive to consider that many of today's road-specific historical societies weren't founded until the subject road was founded 100 years prior, and/or was long gone from the scene. Or, what if, in fifty years, we have the same seven Class I carriers that we have today? Well, there is already an historical society for one of these – the Union Pacific – the UPHS is among the most robust of road-specific societies, and their favorite railroad continues to make history every day.



## The Mid-South Flyer

July/August 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).

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What about national railroad historical organizations? Most national railroad history organizations were founded in the early part of the twentieth century, in times that were very different from the ones we live in today. Print publications, such as they were, and fellowship were the two key offerings of national groups, and aside from a few railroad clubs in various parts of the country, the national organizations represented the primary, if not the only, opportunity to share information with other rail enthusiasts. As the national organizations grew, their stature grew significantly with the formation of local chapters that made it easier for folks to socialize, and have their own meetings, programs, and publications.

Around the mid-point of the twentieth century, national organizations, along with their chapters, began a long and significant growth curve due to the steam excursion programs launched by Union Pacific, Southern Railway, and a few smaller operations. The Union Pacific and Southern Pacific ran excursions for the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society on a number of occasions during the 1950's, as the use of steam power in regular service began to wane. These generated a lot of excitement among enthusiasts because, not only did they get to ride on the trips and admire the steam locomotives, but local chapters of national organizations would also help with ticket sales and manning the train with volunteer positions. And, with insurance liability not being the primary worry of the day, folks were able to watch the train through the open door of the vestibules, and some lucky folks even got to ride in the cab.

Perhaps the most powerful boost for national organizations, particularly for the National Railway Historical Society, came from the thirty-year steam program operated by Southern Railway and Norfolk Southern. From 1964 to 1982, Southern Railway ran one of the most

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robust steam excursion programs in history. Using four of its own engines, as well as several larger leased engines to pull the longer trains generated by the popularity of the trips, Southern's program introduced many people to the railroad industry, the beauty of steam, the opportunity to ride on a passenger train, and the opportunity to witness first-class freight railroading in action. Heady stuff for an industry that many considered to be on the brink of nationalization in the 1970s. Local NRHS chapters benefited tremendously from these trips. Chapters supplied on-board safety personnel, commissary operations, handled ticket sales, and worked closely with Southern officials on trip plans. If one became a member of an NRHS chapter that sponsored an SR trip, there was usually an opportunity to get involved in the operation.



**Savannah & Atlanta #750 storms up Rose Hill with a Southern Railway excursion in January 1971. Marvin Clemons photo**

With the merger of Southern and Norfolk & Western to form Norfolk Southern in 1982, no one was sure what to expect from the merger as far as the steam program went. Much to everyone's pleasure, the program grew to even larger proportions. With the rollout of N&W J611 and N&W A1218, along with the larger merged railroad, the program grew beyond anyone's wildest dreams. NRHS chapters all over the eastern half of the United States were sponsoring and supporting trips, and gaining members all the while. It is hard to know how many hundreds of thousands of people were impacted by these trips.

Just when many believed that the party would never end, Norfolk Southern abruptly announced the termination

of the steam program in 1994, when membership in the NRHS was at its peak. This came as a shock to nearly everyone who enjoyed the program, as well as the railroad society chapters that were fueled financially and with new members as a direct result of the program. The end of the program after thirty years left many wondering what to do next. Clearly this resulted in membership declines in several national organizations, not only in the NRHS, which was actively involved in running the trips, but in other organizations whose members lost the opportunity to be close to the railroad and ride behind steam as often as they were accustomed to. Some chapters looked inward and re-invented themselves, and found that they actually performed better without relying on the steam program. For others, though, this was hard to do, and resulted in a loss of both chapters and members over the following years.



**N&W "A" #1218 visits the Historic Leeds Depot in the final days of the first Norfolk Southern steam program. Hal Holley photo**

National organizations are now reviewing their operating practices, and trying to figure out how to adapt to the new world order. Will they be successful? I believe so. But, it will likely require a few lean years, and, like any period of change, success will require strong leadership from people who are not afraid to try new things. Some things will work, others will not. I submit that the level of interest in railroads and railroad history is still strong, but the way the hobby is practiced has changed considerably. But, more on that later.

*(David's commentary will conclude in the November issue of **The Mid-South Flyer**.—Editor)*

## Chapter Project Update

# Historic Birmingham Mineral Signs Project wins support

The Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project, a local initiative being coordinated by James Lowery through the Mid-South Chapter, continues to progress, expand, and receive additional endorsements. Three cities through which the Birmingham Mineral Railroad (BMRR) ran have given their approval for installation of the signs on their street right-of-ways. Additional locations for the signs are being identified, most recently multiple sites in the Helena area. Included for signage are the Hillsboro Trail, which uses the former roadbed of the Birmingham Mineral Railroad as the walking trail, and the new Helena High School which is built on the site of Eureka Mine Number 4.

Lowery reports that on frequent occasions, when this signs project has been presented at meetings, attendees have mentioned their memories of the Birmingham Mineral Railroad. Though they may have grown up with the railroad, typically they are unaware of the extensive area served by the Birmingham Mineral and its extensive role in Birmingham's iron industry. One area that many local residents remember is the railroad running through English Village. The photograph shown (*below*) is of the BMRR's Red Gap Branch as it passed



through English Village, in what became today's Mountain Brook. As a point of reference, the original name for this part of Mountain Brook was "Hedona," named after the Hedona Mine near English Village.

The signs project is being partially funded by tax-deductible donations to the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society and passed through to the Mid-South Chapter. Donations may be made by check made payable to the "Railway & Locomotive Historical Society (R&LHS)" and marked for the BMRR Signs Project.

Please include your name, address, telephone number and email address and mail to R&LHS, c/o John Atherton, 16 Coachlight Drive, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603-4241. Thanks for your support!

## Railroad Prototype Modeling

# ***Mid-South Chapter to take part in Kennesaw RPM September meet***

Railroad modeling and railroad historical groups from across the Southeastern states will gather in September for the first of its kind meeting to learn about and share information on prototype railroads.

The first Atlanta Railroad Prototype Modelers (RPM) Meet is a joint effort of the Southern Railway Historical Association, the Atlantic Coast Line & Seaboard Air Line Railroads Historical Society, Central of Georgia Railway Historical Society, Nashville Chattanooga & St. Louis Preservation Society, Tennessee, Alabama & Georgia Historical Society, the National Model Railroad Association, and the Mid-South Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society.



The meeting will focus on sharing and learning what modelers are doing and how they're doing it. The meet welcomes models in any scale, finished or under-construction, based on prototype locomotives, rolling stock, structures, and scenes, regardless of the modeler's skill level. Nearly forty clinics, a large display of models, and dealer areas will be open to attendees. Modular model railroad layouts will be up and running during the meet.

An impressive agenda of clinics and presentations will include two programs by Mid South Chapter members and Birmingham area modelers. On Friday at 2:30 pm, Phillip Griffith, NMRA Steel City Division member is giving a presentation on "Historical Research to Build the Cahaba River Pump Station Narrow Gauge Railway." On Saturday at 2:30 pm, Mid-South Chapter and Steel City Division (NMRA) member John Stewart will give a presentation on "Modeling the Birmingham Industrial District in a Steel Mill Themed/Steam Era/Operations Oriented HO Layout."

The Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History at Kennesaw, Georgia is the home of the Western & Atlantic No. 3, The Civil War "General" and the Glover Machine Works exhibit. Among numerous railroad collections, the museum's archive holds the David Salter and Marvin Black photograph collections and houses the Southern Railway Historical Association's archives. Admission to the museum, adjacent to the CSX Chattanooga Subdivision mainline, is included in the RPM registration.

Mark your calendars for September 19 – 20, 2014, get your models ready to display and plan to bring a friend. SRHA Archives work session will begin on Tuesday, and open house at the Canton, St. Paul & Pacific live steam layout will be on Thursday afternoon.

Advance registration is \$45, on site \$50. C,StP&P open house: (only with RPM registration) \$10.00. Information, on-line registration and clinic schedule can be found on the SRHA web site at: [www.srha.net/RPM](http://www.srha.net/RPM). Canton, St. Paul & Pacific [www.csprry.org](http://www.csprry.org) Southern Museum [www.southernmuseum.org](http://www.southernmuseum.org). Sponsoring organizations' dealer tables (\$0), commercial dealers (\$25), contact Paul Faulk @ [aclsalshelp1@att.net](mailto:aclsalshelp1@att.net).

## Railroad History

# Bar-B-Que and the Warrior Mineral RR

*By John Stewart*

I moved to Birmingham in 1992 from Nashville and was immediately struck by the obvious historical presence of so many railroads. Being from Nashville, I was sort of an L&N fan, but Nashville was sort of a “one railroad town”.

I learned that Bar-B-Que plays an important role in the day to day life of folks in Alabama, along with church and uh, football. I did a lot of work in my career for the Highway Department and soon heard about the Top Hat Bar-B-Que in the south end of Blount County. So, not long after I moved I had a chance to be in that area and stopped in for a late lunch.

The Top Hat wasn't busy that day, and I got to talking to the “pit man”. You know that you have to get up pretty early to start a day's run of butts and shoulders. Some mornings he told me, he would be working alone, very early. “It's the strangest thing”, he said, “but some mornings, real early, I'd swear that I hear an old time steam engine goin' by – right by, close – you know? And I hear that old steam whistle just talking...” He finished up with “I just hears it sometimes, not all times – sure do sound lonesome...”

Sometimes where I live, I can hear the CSX trains on the mainline not so far from my house and I would swear that the diesel horn was a steam whistle... I understand the Pit Man's story.

Recently, your editor, James Lowery and the author took a field trip to the Helena Museum to talk with Ken Penhale about railroad history in the area. Ken's people came from the mines in Cornwall to the mines in Helena in the 1870's. That goes back to the roots of Birmingham's industrial and railroad history. Helena was near the end of track through the end of the Civil War. Coal mined near Helena, was brought on a spur to the interim mainline of what became the South and North Alabama's mainline to Birmingham – after the War.

From Helena, the coal was taken south to the Alabama and Tennessee River Railroad, later the Selma, Rome and Dalton, and shipped to Selma for use in the foundries there. When the Eureka Company was formed (at Oxmoor furnace) to experiment with making iron using coke instead of charcoal, the coal came from Helena mines. Upon the success of the experiment in 1876, a hundred coke ovens were built at Helena – the ruins are still there, adjacent to the Hillsborough Subdivision. And there are other old ovens nearby on Buck Creek – Ken Penhale knows all about the area. Go visit the museum at Helena!

At the time of the Eureka experiment, carried out at Oxmoor Furnace, Birmingham was hardly even born. There had been a financial “panic” in 1873, and the newly built railroad struggled for lack of freight much less passengers. As Ethel Armes says in her landmark history “The Story of Coal and Iron in Alabama”, no one traveled much in Alabama in those days. And there was little capital for mines.

She also tells us that at this time, there were only a few coal mines opened in the area that became the Birmingham District. The mines at Helena, some of which dated before the War, were located in the Cahaba Coal Field. The other mines, brand new at the time, were also tried for coking coal. But these mines were far to the north around the Jefferson and Blount County line. That was called the Browne coal seam of the Warrior Basin, later changed to the Pratt



**Top Hat BBQ, Blount Springs, AL (on original L&N right of way)**

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Seam.

When the South & North Alabama Railroad was completed north of what was to be Birmingham, toward Decatur, the railroad was in dire financial shape. In fact the founding of Birmingham hung in the balance in 1871 because the new company couldn't raise the money to pay interest on the State backed bonds. A competing railroad, the Southwest and Northeast, wanted to ship the area's mineral wealth to Chattanooga. Just in the nick of time, a man named James Sloss stepped in and offered a deal to the L&N Railroad which had been extended south to Nashville. Sloss offered his Nashville & Decatur line, and urged the S&NA backers to offer their line, still incomplete, to the L&N as a lease and build deal.

The short version of this story is that the deal was worked out in Louisville, finally, and the L&N stepped in to provide capital to pay the interest on the bonds, and to provide for the completion of the line from Elyton, Birmingham's predecessor to Decatur. This was a win-win-win for all involved as it provided a logical extension of the L&N toward the Gulf, saved the S&NA and allowed James Sloss to move toward a Birmingham where he entered the iron business. That is another story.

But, since the finances were so constrained, the S&NA's Chief Engineer, John Milner, who knew better, had no choice but to direct the contractor "more curves, more curves, more stiff grade" as the line was built north in the hills and valley of Jefferson and Blount County toward Decatur. So, every effort was made to avoid cuts and fills, to avoid tunnels and to minimize bridges. But the line was completed in 1872 and traffic, as little as there was, could move from Montgomery to Nashville with the L&N as lease holder of what was called the S&NA Division for many years. But the line and grade were rough!

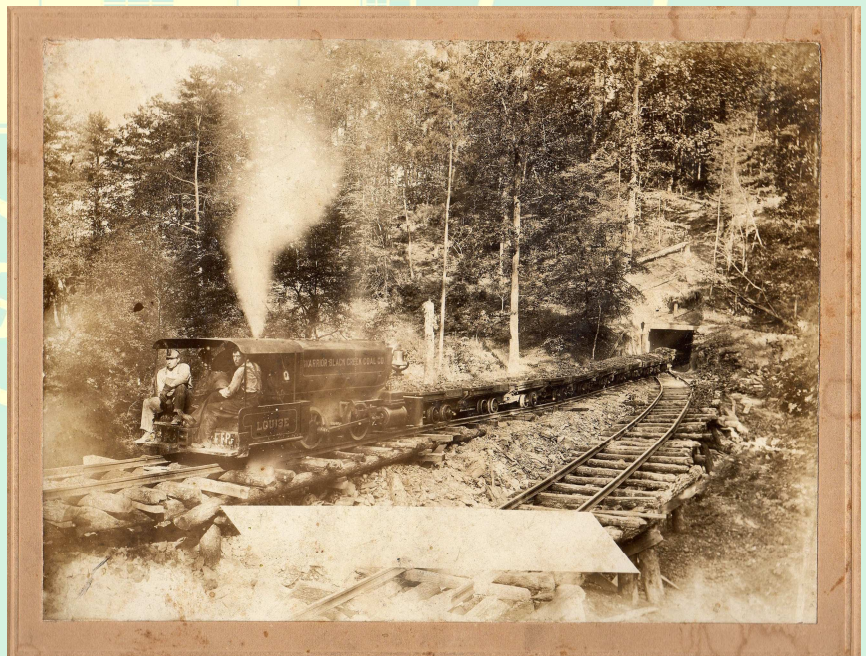
So, in the latter years of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century Birmingham slowly started to become the workshop town envisioned by its founders who were also the leaders of the S&NA. The S&NA's mainline soon had new spurs being extended to serve mining efforts of the pioneer coal entrepreneurs. This included mines in the area whose towns became Warrior, Kimberly and Morris as well as colorful names like Majestic and New Castle to name a few.

One of the things that the L&N did showed wise business acumen by its leader, Milton Smith. Smith was willing to support the extension of lines to mining areas. Different arrangements could be worked out, but a typical approach was for the L&N to "lend" the hardware to build the rail spur, as well as capital to pay for grading and draining the new line. At the time, the 1890's and early 1900's terms might be 6-7% interest for the mining company and the interim use of adequate hardware from the railroad.

Herein lies the real subject of this story – an example of one such effort by a railroad that the author had not heard of until recently – The Warrior Mineral RR. I had certainly heard of the Birmingham Mineral, and that was our reason to visit Ken Penhale, but I had never heard of the Warrior Mineral.

You've heard that a picture is worth a thousand words. This story involves three rare photos shared by **Mid-South member Larry Kelpke**. Three pictures and three captions were all that there was to start solving a puzzle about coal mining and railroad history – an example like so many.

The caption of this wonderful image reads, *"Louise" was a "dummy" that had no fire and was charged with steam from a power plant thus, no fire in the mine. Samuel [sic] T. Moss, Supt. Mine owned by Uncle Albert and son Everett. RR ran from Nyota to Warrior, about 10 miles circa. 1915."*



We pretty well knew where Warrior was, on the "old" S&NA mainline. The author had heard of Nyota, and a search revealed it to be on the "new" mainline of the L&N, somewhat to the east. The image shows that "Louise" bears the

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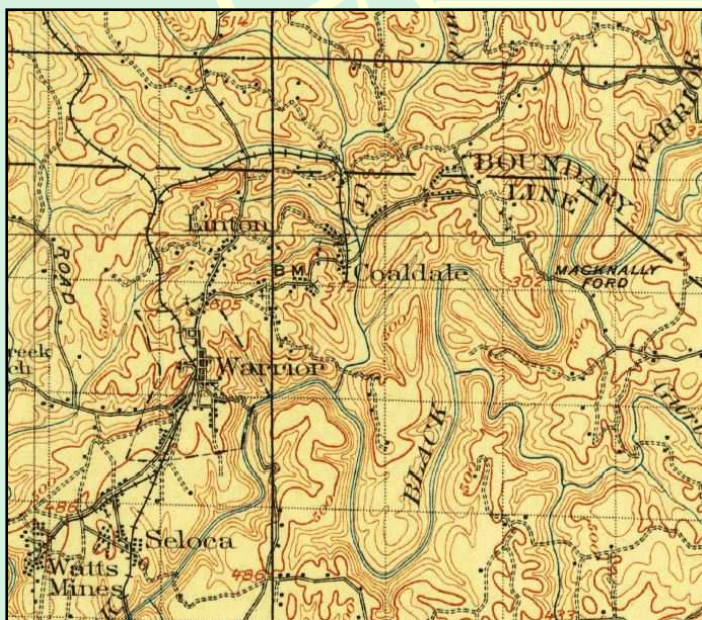
name “Warrior Black Creek Coal Co. Research indicated that the WBCCC was active in the era of WWI and included members of the Moss family – quite a few of them in fact. There were three mines opened by the company, Liberty, No. 2 and Carbon. This was found in the Coal Directory of 1920, although the directory didn’t say a word about Louise, only referring to mule and rope haulage. These directories typically did say if the company owned any locomotives, but for reasons we don’t know, Louise didn’t make the directory. But we know she was there, cause we have pictures.

The caption of the second image (at right) reads, “Owned by Uncle Albert and son Everett. #404 is probably an ex-L&N loco RR ran from Nyota to Warrior, a distance of about 10 miles. Also serviced the Sibleville [Sibleyville] Brick Co; Samuel [sic] T. Moss Supt. of the mine. Circa 1915. Part of the Moss-McCormack Coal Co.” The caption doesn’t say that the lettering on the tender is “**Warrior Mineral RR**”!

Now the story expands a little bit. We have mention of the L&N Railroad, the Moss-McCormack Coal Company, and the Sibleyville Brick Company. Both images give us a time frame of 1915. Research yielded the Moss-McCormack Coal Company (MMCC) as a successor to the WBCCC between 1920 and 1921 editions of the Coal Directory. This series of Directories covered the entire United States, and was published by the Keystone Publishing Co of Pittsburgh.



When faced with research of this type, maps are a key tool in the effort. One source is the United States Geological Survey, USGS, and these maps are available free on line at the “USGS Map Store” website. For the Birmingham area, the author knew that maps might be found in three time frames, c. 1890, c. 1907 and after that, sometimes the 1930’s and sometimes the 1950’s and newer. A wonderful map was found of the area around Warrior, dated 1907. This map image



shows the “old” S&NA/L&N mainline through Warrior and shows two obvious spurs to Watts Mines and to Coaldale. The place name “Nyota” is not shown on this map which indicates that it was obscure or that it “hadn’t happened yet” – one doesn’t always know which. But Nyota does show on the new maps “sitting straddle” on the “new” L&N mainline. Nyota would be in toward the upper right hand corner, toward the “WA” in Warrior, above the “Y” in Boundary.

“When in doubt, ask Google”, is another tool of the intrepid rail history “researcher” (nut). So, Google was asked about the “Warrior and Nyota” as well as the “Warrior Black Creek” coal company. The company name search results included a reference to the company incorporation charter, which in turn led to the Secretary of State’s online business records archive. Oh my, this website is a treasure trove of arcane data. For a \$20 bill (credit card) the researcher downloaded documents from 1911 and 1912 about WBCCC which add much to our puzzle and the story behind it.

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Milton Smith would have been proud! In fact he might have approved this business deal. The documents indicate that the WBCCC had a railroad called the Warrior Mineral RR. The Warrior Mineral desired to extend a spur to its parent's new mine, but lacked the resources. The parent also lacked the resources, and so turned to the S&NA RR for "aid". Aid was forthcoming in the amount of \$40,000 as well as "lend"-ing the railroad all the necessary hardware to build the line.

Of more help was a solid location on this venture. First, it states that track will be extended from the Hogeland Br of the Linton Br of the S&NA R.

From our 1908 we can see Hogeland Creek and we can see Linton, so the names of the spurs make sense. And the other location is "hard stuff" – the "NW Qtr. of the NW Qtr. of Section 8, Township 14S, Range 2 West". Without going into all the details, this narrows the site down to 40 acres on the USGS map of 1908. You just have to know how to read the map. And 40 acres is a pretty specific area on a map of this scale. This form of land reference is called Range and Township and is used throughout Alabama, which is a very good thing for this type research.

Now we take a look at the third picture (*seen above*). The caption reads, "Coal train of Moss-McCormack at Nyota, AL about 1914. Loco in background with a box car indicates some general *merchandise hauling*. Warrior River to left." [Closer review makes this "boxcar" out to be a work car or a homemade caboose.

The plot certainly began to thicken at this point. In looking at our 1908 map and the range & township location, this was nowhere near the Warrior River. Granted, it's in the neighborhood, but we see no track alongside the Warrior River. What other maps might show this information?

Your Mid-South Chapter sells maps to its members as well as the general public. One of these is Kelly's 1905 Mine, Railroad and Industrial Map. It is a wonderful resource and proved helpful in this puzzle. This map doesn't show "Nyota" but it does show "Sibleyville" and the brick company from caption two. It shows Coaldale, and Hog[e]land Junction, referred to in the railroad loan contract and it shows a mine far off to the right, labeled Warrior-Black Creek Coal Company. But it doesn't show the river – that is, this map doesn't show any rivers, so it is of no help there.

More research was in order. The author dug deep and realized he had a mine directory downloaded several years ago, dated 1986, that ostensibly documents "every" coal mine in Alabama with data on location, ownership and mine name. Skipping some details, this led to a search of Blount County properties of the Moss-McCormack Coal Company, labeled "Upper Creek" with range & township locations. When these were plotted, low and behold, they were close to the Warrior River! They were also close to the "mine" shown on Kelly's map labeled for the WBCCC.

Another resource collected by the author are a series of aerial photos taken in 1940-41 by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS), now a component of the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NCRS). But the collection only covers Jefferson County, and a little bit over the line. Would there be any coverage? Fortunately, the answer was "yes" and it was exactly the coverage needed.



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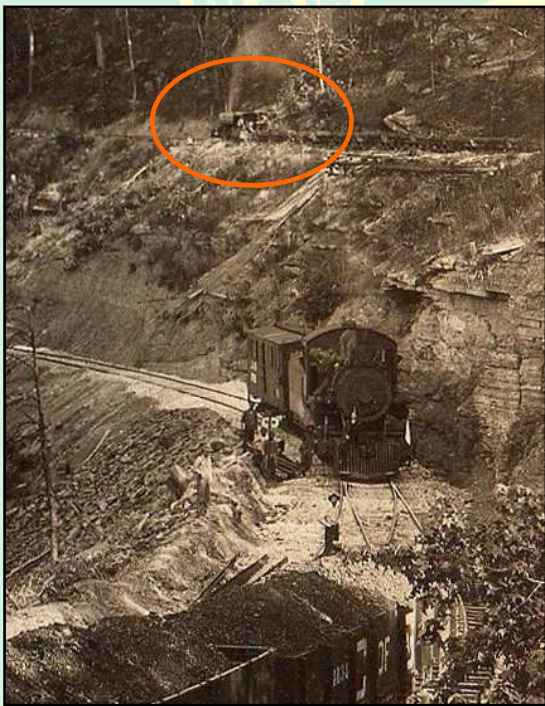
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This image (at right) is dated 2/17/1941 and shows a large coal mining property, as indicated by the many workers houses and telltale shape of spoils piles. The line running up and down the picture (north-south) is the “new” L&N mainline. If you look closely you may be able to see a “wye” track near the top to the right of the mainline. That is the location designated “Nyota” on modern USGS maps.

What is more important is the line in the trees coming in from the left, and going just above the bend in the river, in the middle of the picture. This line is a rail spur, and it is “next to the Warrior River” just as shown in picture number 3!

A detail from image three (below) shows the “Louise” in the background on a tramway on the bluff. There seems to be a semblance of a coal dump (slide) to enable the tramcars to dump from the bluff to the hoppers or gondolas below on the spur.

Putting all the pieces of the puzzle together, confirms that the rail spur for which the company borrowed \$40,000 from the S&NA/L&N extended from the Linton Spur to Nyota and it does end up next to the river as shown in the image. By the time of the 1941 aerial it is pretty clear that the rail spur was likely abandoned. And why not – the main line of the Old Reliable ran right through the middle of the mines at Nyota!



So, what became of the spur when the mainline was relocated? Kincaid Herr, in his landmark L&N History tells us that this work was done around Birmingham between 1911 and 1914. And the line from New Castle to Bangor, which required the 2,200 foot Hayden Tunnel, was “completed by November 15, 1914.” It certainly appears that image three, dated 1914 is a brand new line, freshly graded and ballasted, recently cut trees and blasted rock in evidence. So, did the coal company borrow \$40,000 only to complete the line in time for the L&N to relocate the mainline right through the area served by the mortgaged spur track? Did the L&N do the mine company dirty? Did the spur get some use to amortize it before being abandoned?

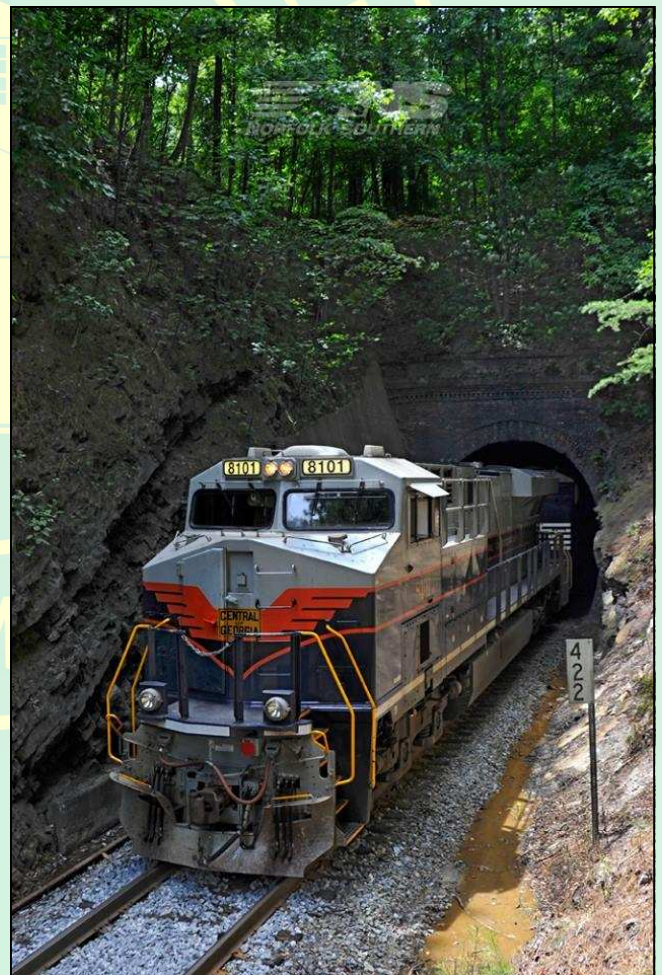
We don't know at this point in our puzzle solving. Staring at the 1941 aerial there appears to be a mine tipple served by the tramway “Louise” that would *not* have been readily accessible to the L&N mainline. And there appears to be a formal tipple from the tramway to the spur track – maybe! A field trip to the woods might help tell the tale. More research may help explain the timing of improvements at Nyota.

But the L&N did relocate some 25 miles of mainline, serving Warrior for some more years from the south by connecting another old mine spur to the new mainline. Eventually the spur to Warrior from the south was abandoned.

And what of the old mainline to the north of Warrior? It was abandoned in 1914 and some years later the Highway Department built a road on the roadbed. That road is US-31 which is the address of the Top Hat Bar-B-Que next to Blount Springs in Hayden, AL. Now, the Top Hat didn't open till 1967. So, maybe the old Pit Man *wasn't* hearing things, all alone, in the early hours, after all. What do you think? *Could we still hear it 100 years later?*

## Golden Era Classics

As our readers will testify from previous editions of *The Mid-South Flyer*, the Mid-South Chapter is blessed with a cadre of excellent photographers working in a variety of formats and railroad themes. Each has his or her own niche or favorite subject matter, and one “photographer for all seasons” is Donnie Strickland. Donnie never met a train he wouldn’t photograph, but if pressed to decide we suspect Donnie would admit his favorite might be the former Central of Georgia. The Central had it all for photography — a variety of colorful diesels, sleek passenger trains, trestles, tunnels, and neat depots. While nearly all of the old Central has disappeared from view, one shining example of its colorful heritage has reappeared in the form of Norfolk Southern’s Heritage unit #8101. Dressed in original CofG livery, the locomotive has become a regular visitor to home rails. Donnie routinely monitors the movement of Heritage locomotives in Alabama, and his diligence paid off when he and NS photographer Casey Thomason captured the following scenes of #8101 passing through Birmingham. The following locations are, clockwise from upper left, 7th Avenue & 27th Street, leaving Oak Mountain tunnel, and crossing over the Leeds trestle and the former Southern Railway mainline to Atlanta. Thanks, guys, for the updated memories!





# *From the Observation Platform*

*By John Browning, Mid-South Chapter President*



Dear friends and fellow Mid-South Chapter members,

I certainly hope this finds everyone doing well. Once again, fall is approaching and college football season is underway! With all of the hot weather we have had this summer, hopefully we will have some nice cool fall days to enjoy.

I hope that everyone who attended our picnic in July had a good time. I know I did. After we ate, everyone got involved in train watching on the deck and we never got around to looking at the photos and video clips that members brought to share. Since several people have expressed interest in having a member photo share, we will do this for our September 13<sup>th</sup> program. Dig out those pictures and short videos that you would like to share with everyone. We will need to have them in a digital format. If you can put them on a thumb drive or burn them to a DVD, we will have a computer and projector set up to show them.

As many of you may already know, Norfolk Southern has announced that they will not be running any 21<sup>st</sup> Century Steam mainline trips this fall. Norfolk Southern said that this is due to a shortage of road crews and an increase in freight traffic. Hopefully they will be able to resume the program next spring. Since TVRM has completed the restoration of 4501, I am sure everyone would like to see this beautiful locomotive out on the mainline.

The Leeds fall festival will be held on Saturday, September 20<sup>th</sup>. We would like to have enough volunteers to keep the depot open for short tours during the festival. If you can spare a couple of hours, please let me know. We will have a sign-up sheet at the September 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

I am looking forward to seeing everyone at the upcoming chapter meeting. Please remember that there is always a place for you to get involved in the chapter. It is YOUR chapter. Please share your ideas with me or any other board member. Until next time....

*John Browning*

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

Saturday, September 13 — Board Meeting — Agent's Office — 11:00AM

Saturday, September 13 — Chapter Meeting — Depot Meeting Room — 2:00PM

Saturday, September 20 — Chapter Open House — 9:00AM to 4:00PM

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

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