



The Mid-South Flyer

Spring 2017



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

Spring Meeting

Boyhood memories of a special steam engine

Back in the day, most young boys developed a fascination for trains from playing with their first toy train set, or in more recent times, from watching *Thomas the Tank Engine* on TV. But in the case of MidSouth member Warren Jones, a childhood infatuation for a certain steam engine ignited a life-long love for trains, and steam engines in particular.

That special steam engine was Gainesville Midland #301, a 2-8-0 Consolidation-type locomotive built in 1920 by Baldwin Locomotive Works. No. 301 was a familiar sight around Warren's childhood home in Gainesville, Georgia, where the railroad literally ran through his back yard.



Gainesville Midland #301

Warren recounts growing up in a railroad family and his love affair with the Gainesville Midland in an article appearing in *Good Old Days Magazine*. He will reprise his story with personal anecdotes and photographs at the next meeting of the MidSouth Chapter on Saturday, April 22, at 2 PM in the historic Leeds Depot. The following article excerpts provide a preview of Warren's presentation.

“The year was 1952 in Gainesville, Georgia. I was ten years old, and the location was a small Southern Railroad section house with the Gainesville Midland Railroad New Holland branch forming the boundary of the back yard, a short stone's throw from the house. The house faced the Southern double track mainline, a long stone's throw away. On the west side there was Chestnut Street, a dirt road that ran north and south crossing both the Midland and the Southern. Across the backyard we could see the busy Swift's poultry processing plant on the other side of the track and watch the Midland as it sometimes stopped at the switch on the way to New Holland to leave cars of coal and other supplies for the plant on the side track.

“Living between two railroads provided a lot of train action for youngsters to watch and it claimed a great deal of my attention. The family had immigrated to this location from Banks County near Lula, Georgia. I was two years old at the time of the move. My father's first job with the Southern was at the Lula coal chute. His second job was working out of the Southern Depot in Gainesville on track maintenance from Toccoa to Atlanta. After discovering that a thirteen mile commute from Banks County to Gainesville was not very practical, we moved into “temporary” quarters in the section house until a house could be purchased. “Temporary” stretched into the fall of 1955, eleven years. Convenience was the dominant factor. The Southern Depot was just a short walk down the tracks. Fortunately this eleven year period of close-up railroad action included not only the Midland steam, but also the last of Southern steam.

"I am glad to have lived in such close proximity and shared the fascination and emotions that these remarkable machines elicited. I watched the operation of the Midland engine number 301 from the edge of our backyard, a mere few feet away. The Midland was a struggling low budget short line railroad. I remember watching the 301 and its string of boxcars approaching our backyard and noticing the striking side to side wobble of the engine and cars as they moved up the grade toward me over the uneven track.

"The Midland had seven engines in its inventory. The 301 was one of the smaller ones and the only one I ever saw pass our house. According to the 2001 National Railway Calendar, it was one of the doubleheaders used to make up one of the last steam runs for the Midland on September 19, 1959 down the mainline from Gainesville to Athens. Only one of the seven engines was scrapped. Midland engines are on permanent display in towns along the mainline. The interesting exception is the 301, on display in Freedom Park in Charlotte, North Carolina" (*seen below*).



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The Mid-South Flyer is published quarterly 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 \$50 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 rlhs.org. Contributions, article ideas and reader comments are encouraged and may be emailed to:

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Editor's Corner



Greetings, and welcome to the Spring edition of *The Mid-South Flyer*! This issue features the return of one of the newsletter's earliest contributors, with his remembrances of what it was like for a young rail fan growing up along the Southern Railway's busy main line between Birmingham and Bessemer. Lyle Key's conversational writing style brings his childhood memories to life, and makes you wish you'd been along to share his experiences.

Back for his second byline in a row, fellow MidSouth member Stan Burnett provides a complimentary perspective with his observations on the last decade of private rail passenger train operations in and around the Birmingham District during the 1960s. Stan was very much "on the scene" as both a photographer and frequent passenger aboard many of the named (and not so glamorous) trains, and his first-hand account of their sad demise are sure to give you a taste of the "disappearing railroad blues."

I hope you enjoy these nostalgic accounts of railroading "back in the day." See you at the depot!

Marvin Clemons, Editor



Mid-South Chapter Update

Reported by James Lowery, President

Membership Renewal

If you have recently joined or renewed your membership in the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society and the Mid-South Chapter, we very much appreciate that and look forward to your participating in the Chapter during 2017. If you have not already renewed your membership, that time of the year has come around again! We would like to have you continue as an R&LHS and Mid-South member or to join if you are not already a member.

Mid-South Chapter's Support of Leeds' Main Street Alabama Application

The Mid-South Chapter is providing one of its rooms (front office room) at the Leeds Historic Depot as an office for the coordinator of Leeds' "Main Street Alabama" application. The Mid-South Chapter Board of Directors is fully in support of this effort and hopes that it will be approved for implementation. Arthur Phillips is the Leeds "Main Street Alabama" Coordinator, and his having an office at the Depot will enable the public to see the other two rooms maintained by the Mid-South Chapter – the Agent's Office and the Exhibit Room. If you come by the Depot and see Arthur in his office, introduce yourself, and offer to share your knowledge about the Depot with Arthur as he learns about it for sharing that information with the general public.

Mid-South Chapter Day At...

Thus far, the Mid-South Chapter has sponsored two events that are being called "Mid-South Chapter Day At..." These will be times when we encourage Mid-South members to attend an event held by another railroad-related organization. The first such event was a "Mid-South Chapter EVENING At the Alabama Theater" to view the silent film "The General" starring Buster Keaton. That was a fun evening for all the members who attended.

The first "Mid-South Chapter DAY At..." was held April 9th at the Huntsville and Madison County Railroad in downtown Huntsville at their "Railfan Day 2017" event. The Huntsville and Madison County Railroad is run by the City of Huntsville through the HMCR Authority. The event was outstanding and showcased diesel locomotives with the locomotives opened up and available for seeing the inside workings and exploring the cabs and walkways. Mid-South Chapter people spotted among the attendees were Carl Ardrey, Alan Maples, Latasha Bettis, Donnie Strickland, James Lowery, and Peggy Lowery. If other Mid-South Chapter people were there, I apologize for missing seeing you.



Lowery receives operating instruction on the locomotive simulator from HMCR employee Bill Kaufman. (Donnie Strickland photo)

An added bonus at the event was being able to see up-close a piston waiting to be installed in one of the engines, and those pistons are BIG! Another highlight was a diesel locomotive simulator at which a person could try a hand at "running a diesel locomotive." The photograph included here of the simulator shows yours truly "running a diesel locomotive." During my run in the simulator, I was told that my train driving would have landed me in court – multiple times! I seemed especially adept at running through crossings blowing his whistle AFTER we got through the crossing! As HMCR employee Bill Kaufman said, "Explain that one to the judge!" I certainly came away from the experience with a great appreciation for the fact that running a diesel locomotive is way more complicated than jumping in a car and driving off!

In Memoriam

We sadly relate the passing of long-time MidSouth Chapter member Robert "Bob" Smith on March 2, 2017. Bob was a stalwart supporter of the chapter and freely volunteered his time and talent whenever needed. One of Bob's projects was the restoration of several marker lamps, proudly displayed at right, for display in the depot exhibit room. At chapter meetings, Bob and his wife Connie could always be found on the depot platform enjoying the company of others and the passing trains. They will be greatly missed.



BIRMINGHAM TERMINAL STATION FINE ART PRINTS

BY TRANSPORTATION JOURNALIST & PHOTOGRAPHER DON PHILLIPS



Main Waiting Room, Southeast View



Main Waiting Room, Southwest View

These photographs show the southern view of the main waiting room at Birmingham Terminal Station in October 1968, just a year before the station's closure. These were made by noted transportation journalist and photographer Don Phillips, a long-time columnist for *Trains* magazine. The images appear in *Great Temple of Travel*, a history of the station penned by railroad author and long-time Birmingham resident Marvin Clemons. The prints were made from high-resolution scans of the original negatives, and were digitally processed and printed by David C. Lester of NatureBook Photography, LLC. Only archival inks and other materials were used. Each print is double-matted, ready for framing, and is being offered in a limited edition of 100.

Proceeds benefit the permanent Frank Ardrey Photography Exhibit of the Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society

PRICE PER PRINT: \$125.00

You are invited to view these professionally-framed, studio-quality prints on display in the Agent's Office during the Chapter meeting. Only two framed prints are available at this offering.

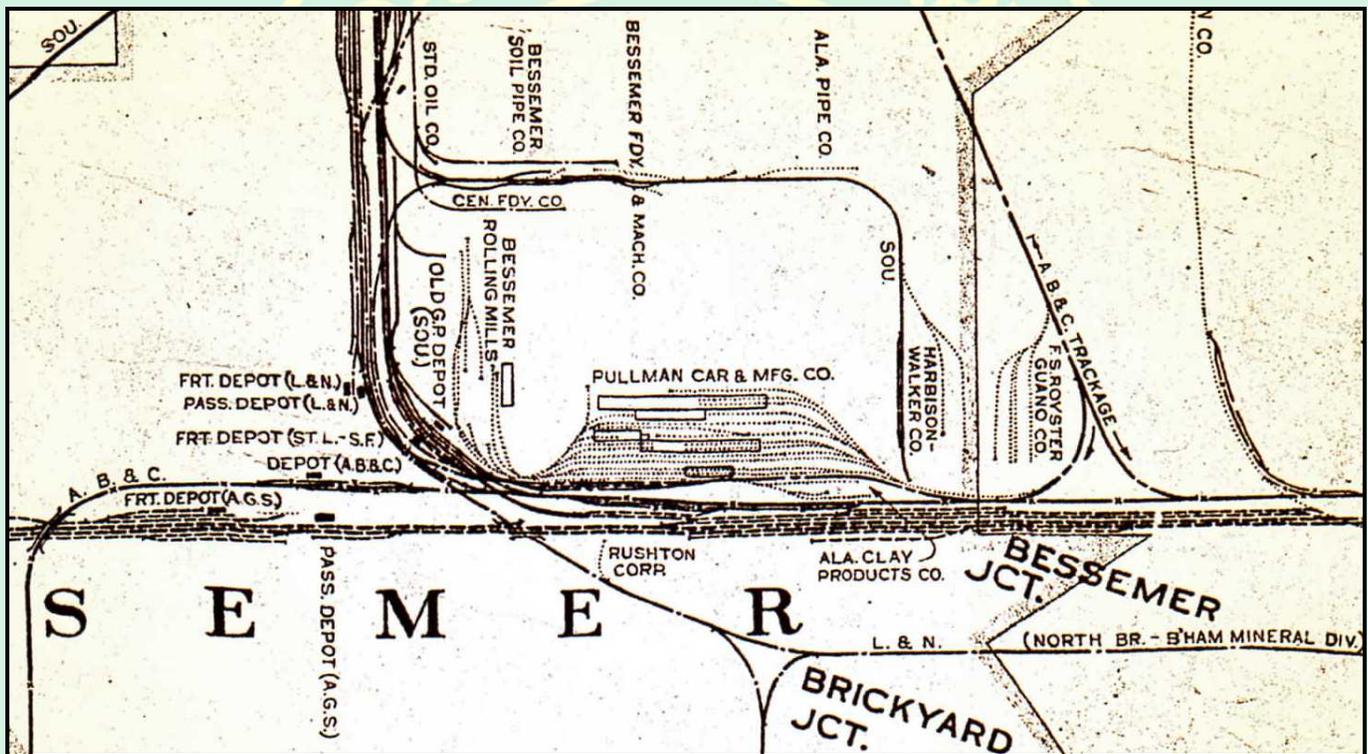
MidSouth Member Memories

Bygone days on Bessemer's railroads

by Lyle Key



Bessemer was a blue-collar town situated 11.4 miles southwest of Birmingham Terminal Station via Southern Railway's main line to New Orleans. In a sense, railroading in Bessemer was a microcosm of railroading in Birmingham since with just one exception, every Class I railroad that operated through Birmingham also operated through Bessemer. That one exception was the Central of Georgia. Bessemer had quite a bit of industry, but the single biggest attraction was the huge Pullman-Standard plant that built railroad freight cars. In addition to the seven Class I carriers that operated through Bessemer (ACL, Frisco, GM&O [overhead trackage rights only], IC, L&N, SAL, and Southern), Birmingham Southern served Bessemer, and Woodward Iron used trackage rights on ACL's line through Bessemer to reach its Pyne Mine.



Bessemer was a microcosm of Birmingham railroads, with seven of the eight major rail lines serving the District either directly or via trackage rights. The AGS (Southern) rail corridor described in the article runs southwest to northeast, with Birmingham to the right and Tuscaloosa to the left. The ACL (former AB&C) is seen approaching from the south in the lower left corner. (Marvin Clemons collection)

By some quirk of fate, I spent most of my early childhood along Southern's rail corridor between Birmingham's West End and Bessemer. Our house on Munger Avenue in West End was across the street from the railroad, and when I visited my great-grandmother's house on Pearson Avenue, I could watch streetcars in addition to trains on the same Southern Railway main line. We also made frequent trips to Bessemer to visit Aunt Patsy, Aunt Judy, and Aunt Sallie, my three elderly great-aunts who lived on Clarendon Avenue. Their house wasn't too far from the Southern passenger station, but it was even closer to the ACL main line that crossed Clarendon Avenue and the parallel streets on a high fill. Years later, that ACL fill would save Bessemer from considerable destruction by deflecting a tornado that was bearing down on the community from the southwest.

Southern Railway's old passenger station in Bessemer now serves as a local museum – the Bessemer Hall of History – but back in 1949, it was a daily stop for three northbound and three southbound passenger trains. In fact, the only passenger train that didn't stop in Bessemer was the streamlined *Southerner*. One of the trains that served Bessemer was Southern #41, the southbound *Pelican*, and it was scheduled to make its nightly run from Birmingham to Bessemer in 26 minutes. That was much faster than it sounded since #41 had to back out of Terminal Station 'til it reached the main line on the other side of Sloss Furnace.



Officially rededicated in 1987 as part of the city's centennial celebration, Bessemer's former Southern (AGS) depot now houses the Bessemer Hall of History. The museum contains a wide array of artifacts from the city's history as a mining, steelmaking, and industrial center founded in 1887 by industrialist Henry Fairchild DeBardelaben. Built in 1916 by Southern's own design and construction department for the then grand sum of \$30,000, the Craftsman-style depot contained one of the first vapor steam heating systems in the South. The building sat unused for several years following Southern Railway's exit from the passenger business in 1979, but was later donated to the city and reopened in 1985. The museum building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. (Photo by Jim Thorington, Marvin Clemons collection)

The *Pelican* wasn't one of Southern's premier streamliners, but back in the late '40's and early '50's, it still was quite an impressive train. When #41 left Birmingham for its overnight run to New Orleans, its consist included through coaches from Washington to New Orleans and through sleepers from New York to New Orleans, New York to Shreveport (via a connecting IC train west of Meridian, Mississippi), Washington to New Orleans, and Atlanta to Shreveport (from a connecting Southern train east of Birmingham). The southbound *Pelican* was due to arrive in Bessemer at 8:56 in the evening, and several minutes typically were required for the station stop. A few passengers might board and detrain, and some checked baggage might be loaded and unloaded, but most of the time spent in Bessemer was devoted to handling mail and express. In any event, a Bessemer resident could leave home around 8:30 in the evening, climb aboard one of the *Pelican*'s sleepers, and sleep until around 6:30 when the Pullman porter would announce "We're coming into New Orleans."

My grandfather Tom Scruggs hadn't followed his dad into railroading, but he still loved to watch and ride trains. He often took me to visit my great-aunts in Bessemer in the evening, and it seemed that he invariably said "Good night" to them just in time for us to get down to the passenger station for the *Pelican*'s arrival. Long before the train

came over the vertical curve to the north, one could hear its whistle blowing and see its Mars Light oscillating through the darkness. The anticipation would build as #41 got closer, and finally, two sleek green E-units would come roaring out of the night and spot the train alongside the platform amid the sounds of ringing bells, melodious whistles, and groaning brake shoes. The conductor and Pullman porters would step onto the platform to greet passengers, and men with baggage carts would set about loading and unloading baggage, mail, and express. From my vantage point, there seemed to be a well-orchestrated sense of urgency about the whole exercise.

One balmy summer night, after witnessing the *Pelican's* dramatic arrival in Bessemer, I was standing beside my grandfather near the front of the train's lead unit. The engineer looked down with a smile and said, "Would the boy like to come up in the cab?" I was struck speechless, but granddad knew the right answer. "He sure would," he said as he handed me up to the fireman. The engineer gave me a quick tour of his domain, and then he asked a fateful question, "Would you like to blow the whistle?" "Yes sir," I said with great excitement, so he lifted me up to pull the whistle cord. When I pulled the cord, the sound of the whistle seemed to penetrate every fiber of my being. Simply stated, the noise scared the heck out of me, and for a fleeting moment, I wondered if it had blasted out my eardrums. My eardrums were still intact, but I wanted to get out of the cab before anyone blew that whistle again. Departure time was at hand in any event, so the engineer obligingly handed me down to my waiting grandfather.

Moments later, the conductor gave the highball, traps folded shut, and the old engineer gave two short blasts on his whistle. He eased out on his throttle and then gave my grandfather and me a last wave as the train slowly began moving forward. The train accelerated very quickly, and it was rolling along at a rapid clip when the lighted markers on the last Pullman flashed by us. The show was over for that evening, but it would play out again the following morning at 6:32 when the northbound *Pelican* arrived in Bessemer.

(Editors note: In the next issue of The MidSouth Flyer, Lyle relates his memories of the "great train race" along the AGS mainline south of Bessemer, plus a cab ride over the former ACL through Bessemer just before the line was discontinued).



The southbound *Pelican* described in Lyle's story passed through Bessemer at night, but its northbound counterpart could be seen in morning daylight as it passed through Birmingham. In the scene above from April 1949, AGS #42 leans into a curve at Ironton en route to Chattanooga. *(Frank Ardrey photo, Marvin Clemons collection)*

Bessemer Train Show Returns!

Speaking of Bessemer, the Steel City Division, NMRA is bringing back the once popular Bessemer train show. The two-day show is being sponsored in conjunction with the Southeastern Regional NMRA convention and will include model train layouts, railroadians, and historical societies, including the MidSouth Chapter. Make plans now to attend and show your support for bringing back the Bessemer train show as an annual event.

Model Train Show



Fri & Sat, June 9th & 10th, 2017

Conventioneer "Early Bird" Access Friday 10 am—Noon

Public Show Access Friday 12 — 5pm & Saturday 9 am — 5 pm

\$6 per person, Kids under 13 free with adult

Birmingham, AL

Bessemer Civic Center

Exit 108, I-59/20

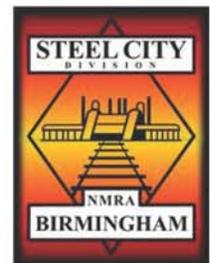
[Map: 1130 9th Ave SW, Bessemer, AL 35022]

15,000 ft² Vendors & Layouts

Sponsored by the Steel City Division, NMRA

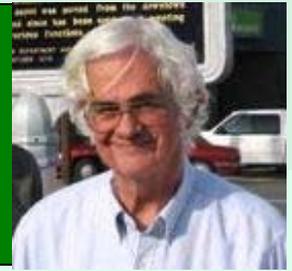
In conjunction with the Southeastern Regional NMRA Convention

www.2017serconvention.com



Vintage Railroad Operations

Going off the rails: The last decade of passenger rail service before Amtrak

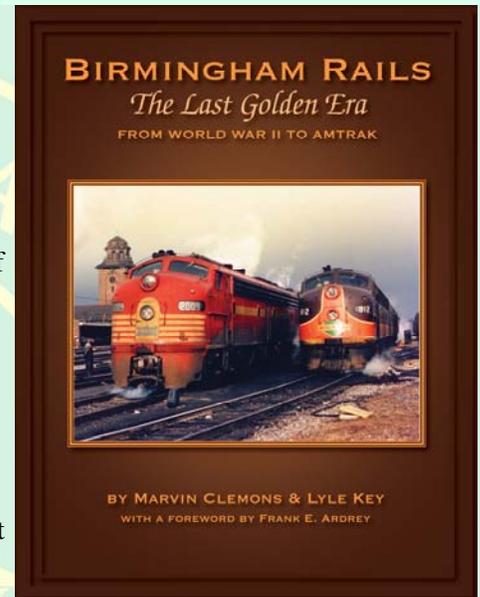


By Stan Burnett

As most know, the railroad companies in the United States ran their own passenger service until the advent of Amtrak in 1971. I would say that the “high water mark” of pre-Amtrak service was reached in the late 1940's or early to mid 1950's. By high water mark, I am referring to the time of the greatest daily frequency, to the most destinations, with the best on-board services. Although I had been interested in rail history and travel in the late 1950's, I did not become a “fan” until about 1960, basically leading into the last decade of rail travel before Amtrak. The slow, painful fade-out of individual passenger train service occurred during the '60's, and I was there to experience it.

I personally like to refer to 1963 as the peak year for passenger train travel, because of the changes that I personally observed during that period. From my observations, 1963 decidedly marked the true beginning of the end of the “last Golden Era,” as described by Clemons and Key in their book, *Birmingham Rails*. The cracks in the veneer of the overall picture widened into a great sluice gate, and out of the gate rushed most of the remaining attributes that had made wonderful travel experiences by rail possible.

What had begun in the preceding years really snow-balled starting in '63. By that year, some railroads such as the St. Louis-Southwestern, a medium-size railroad, and the Atlanta & St Andrews Bay Railroad, a small regional line, had already lost their passenger train service. One transcontinental route, the Milwaukee Railroad, gave up service on all of its transcontinental route. Other larger railroads had only a modicum of railroad passenger service remaining, a wistful reminder of what used to be. Some of them tried to maintain good service, but not at previous levels.



In March 1965, L&N Local #1 zips across the Mulberry Fork of the Warrior River with a flag stop at Hayden just ahead. (Stan Burnett photo)

During the early part of the 1960s passenger trains began to lose their connections with other railroads. Before 1963, you could connect to other railroads in most major cities. Interestingly, you could even connect to other railroads in unlikely places, such as Decatur (Louisville & Nashville to the Southern), Opelika (Central of Georgia to the Atlanta & West Point/Western Railway of Alabama), or Dothan (Atlantic Coast Line to the Atlanta & St Andrews Bay). I have done this myself in the case of the first two examples. Connections in small cities and towns went away before the connections in larger cities. And then, you could also “upgrade” to other trains on the same railroad, changing from a lowly local to a classier named train. An example would be to ride the L&N local from the small flag-stop community of Hayden to Birmingham, then transferring to the *Pan American* to continue on to New Orleans.

The loss of on-board passenger amenities began before 1963, however, it accelerated greatly during the remaining years before Amtrak. Trains began to lose Pullman sleeping cars, and then the Pullman Company itself went out of business. The individual railroads began to staff their sleepers with their own porters. On board, occasionally the crews mirrored the changes. Mostly what I encountered were conductors, dining car crews, and porters trying to be agreeable in the face of change. On occasion one would find the surly conductor who no longer cared to put on his best face for his customers.



Silver Comet dining car menu

Dining car passengers had fewer menu options, with food not necessarily prepared on board. There was also a loss of regional appeal for the entrees on the menus. It became less likely to be able to order fresh grilled Gulf Coast seafood on your trip home from coastal areas to Chicago or New York. Lounge cars disappeared, or had in some cases been converted from lounge configurations to coach. Passenger train representatives on board disappeared. The last one I remember in Birmingham was on the Seaboard's *Silver Comet*. The Seaboard's passenger representative was a sort of traveling concierge. Even "name trains" lost their courier nurse, who helped traveling families with children and provided information. The *California Zephyr's* "Zephyrette" was probably the best known example.

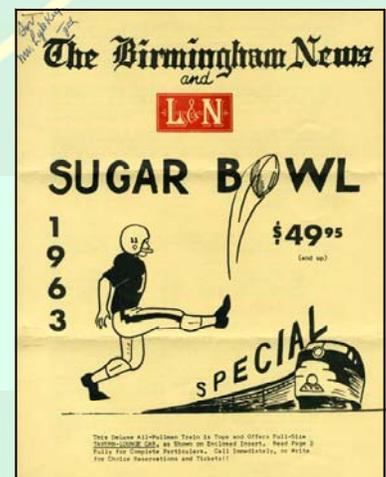
From appearances, you began to notice that coaches and sleepers were not as clean inside and out. When a passenger train reached its destination, it was not thoroughly cleaned inside, and not thoroughly washed outside. Cloth antimacassars became paper towels. And long before Amtrak, no new passenger train equipment was being built.

Along with the loss of proper grooming came the simplification of color on the outside of the cars and locomotives. The L&N lost its striking "pine tree" color scheme. The Frisco went from red with gold stripes, to solid red, then to red with a wide wrap-around white stripe. The Atlantic Coast Line's (ACL) purple-and-silver became a somber black with yellow lettering, and the Seaboard Air Line's (SAL) colorful "citrus" diesel color scheme became a vaguely "pistachio green" hue. Along with color change, even company emblems on the locomotives changed. The Illinois Central changed its iconic green diamond logo to the simplified "split rail" logo. One IC train, the *Green Diamond* which ran from Chicago to St. Louis, was named for the logo. It's a wonder that at the last the train was not renamed *Split Rail!*

Seasonal Specials

Every year at the end of college football season, the Southern and the L&N ran special trains from Birmingham to New Orleans for the Sugar Bowl. These were called "specials" because they were non-scheduled trains. They were also called "specials" simply because they were special, especially if your team won. One tradition that I remember was that Cullman (AL) high school seniors rode the *Sugar Bowl Special* each year with one Pullman reserved for them, chaperoned, of course. Other special trains that I saw were for religious conventions, Boy Scouts going to Jamboree, and military movements. Such specials had largely disappeared by the mid-1960's.

On occasion scheduled trains operated seasonally. The ACL ran the *Florida Special* only in the winter season. It was all-Pullman and used only the choicest of available sleepers, cleaned up for that very special assignment. In the summer time, the Santa Fe ran the *Super Chief* and the *El Capitan* as



L&N Sugar Bowl Special flyer (Lyle Key collection)

separate trains, though in the off season the two trains were combined. In the early 60's the railroads began to combine different trains into one year round, separating them as needed at some point along the route. The Union Pacific ran its famous "City of Everywhere West" train out of Chicago to just about everywhere west! The Southern Pacific combined the *Sunset* and the *Golden State* into one monstrous train from El Paso to Los Angeles. In the late '60s the L&N combined several trains between Montgomery and New Orleans into a "trifecta," the "*Piedmont/Pan American/Gulf Wind*."

Even with the consolidation of trains, the 1960s still saw the need for occasional extra sections of scheduled passenger trains to accommodate overflow crowds. On more than one occasion, I saw Illinois Central run the *City of Miami* through Birmingham in two sections during Christmas. Typically the IC would run one section of the "City" as all coach and the second section as all Pullman. When the West Coast Florida cars were switched out in Jacksonville, the two Miami sections, coach and Pullman, would combine for the run from Jacksonville to Miami. Even lowly locals might run in sections due to vastly increased mail at Christmas time. The need for sections of scheduled trains had just about vanished before Amtrak took over in 1971.

Speaking of train mail, when trains began to be dropped from the schedules, frequently the first to go were the locals due to the loss of mail contracts. As a result, small-town passengers were deprived of their sole passenger trains. For example, when the L&N dropped its Local Nos. 1 and 4, it was no longer possible to board a train in Hayden or Calera. When the Southern got rid of its local between Birmingham and Atlanta, Leeds lost passenger train service.

There were many other manifestations of the changes taking place the decade before Amtrak. I will mention a couple of personal vignettes. I used to see the *Birmingham Special* roar through Trussville northbound in the spring with two or three roller bearing-equipped Railway Express cars carrying strawberries on the rear end of the train, bound for New York City. That was glamorous in a way, and it certainly outclassed the liquid fertilizer cars that used to ride behind the *Kansas City-Florida Special* on the Southern from Atlanta to Birmingham! I have seen special REA cars in the winter time, on the head end of the *Seminole*, taking thoroughbred horses from Illinois to sunny Florida pastures. That had a certain glamour to it, and the horses got to Florida a half minute before the human passengers did.

Some less obvious contributions to passenger train downsizing and loss should be mentioned. Track became less well maintained, making the ride more uncomfortable. If a passenger train still had dining car or lounge service, many a cup of coffee was spilled in someone's lap. In the early '60s you had a choice of four departure times from Birmingham to Montgomery. Just before Amtrak, there was only one departure available. Railroads quit advertising in newspapers and magazines. To see what I mean, take a look at the pages of advertising for rail passenger service in a late 1950s *National Geographic* or *Holiday* magazine.



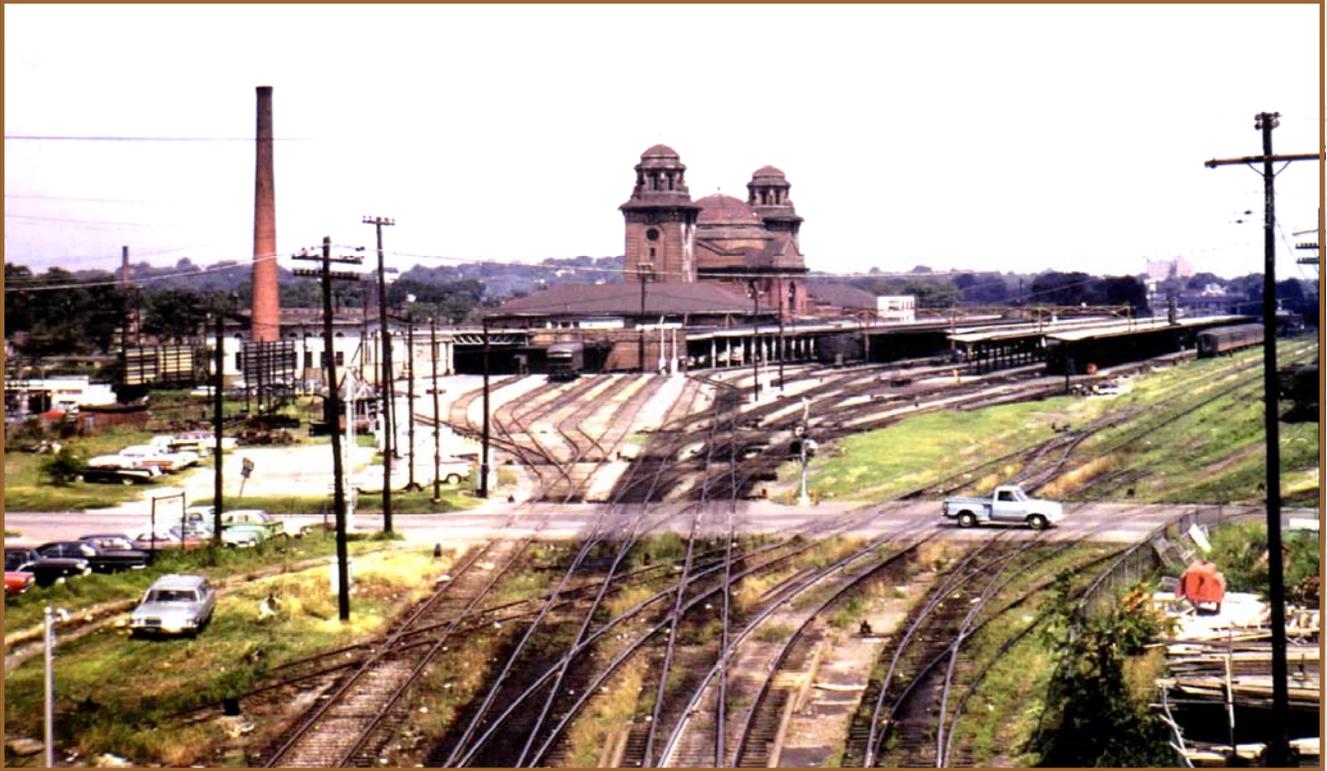
A vacant and forlorn Terminal Station in 1969



In July 1966, a late-running northbound *City of Miami* sits at Birmingham Terminal Station waiting departure for Chicago. (Dan Gray photo)

One day in the mid-1960s, a senior Birmingham Terminal Station employee, speaking to my railfan friend Marvin Clemons, waved his hand towards the station tracks and exclaimed that within a few years "all of this will be gone." To a young employee who had just spent a busy day switching trains in the interlocking tower, or to a passenger who might have just arrived in Birmingham from Chicago on the *Seminole*, there was cause to wonder about the validity of that statement. But in fact, by 1969 the once "great temple of travel," the tracks, and nearly all of its trains *were all gone*.

Golden Era Classics



We've read about the changes to the Birmingham rail scene that took place in the 1960s, but words cannot convey the dramatic loss of rail passenger service more profoundly than these "before and after" photos of the former Terminal Station property. Seen above in the summer of 1965, the station rests quietly on a warm summer's day before the afternoon rush of trains arriving from Memphis, Atlanta, New Orleans, and Chattanooga. A scant four years later, nothing remains but a lonely platform and two tracks to serve three remaining trains. In 10 years they too would be gone, leaving nothing but a vacant lot where the "great temple of travel" once stood. (Top photo, Dennis Conniff; bottom photo, William Harwell, Marvin Clemons collection)



Quick Reference Alabama Rail Map

