



Mid-South News Bulletin

September 2009



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

September highlight

Chapter to host first open house at Leeds Depot

The Mid-South Chapter, R&LHS will make its community debut when the chapter hosts its first open house at the Leeds Depot during the annual Leeds Folk Festival and John Henry Celebration on September 19-20.

On Saturday from 9 am to 4 pm and again on Sunday from 1 to 4 pm, the depot will be open for tours and chapter fund-raising activities. Member volunteers will escort visitors through of the 125-year-old depot, including the former agent-operator's office, passenger waiting room, and baggage and express room. During the tour, guests will learn about the chapter's plans for restoring the depot's telegraph and telephone system and developing a permanent exhibit devoted to the area's railroad history featuring a display dedicated to John Henry, the local folk hero of "steel-drivin" fame.

The chapter will also have tables displaying various historical railroad artifacts. A variety of donated railroad collectibles will be available for purchase with proceeds going to restoration of the depot's telegraph and telephone system.

In addition, the chapter is co-sponsoring a lecture by folklorist Dr. John Garth on the life and legend of John Henry. Based on Dr. Garth's research, the State of Alabama has recognized the Leeds area as the likely locale for the famed contest between John Henry and the steam drill used to bore Oak and Coosa Mountain tunnels on the former Central of Georgia Railway. Dr. Garth will present his latest research on John Henry on Saturday, September 19 at 1 p.m. in the depot's Meeting Room.

An Operation LifeSaver display, hosted by Bryan Schaffer of BNSF, is also planned as part of the open house. Other railroad-themed festival highlights include a presentation of the play "Listen to that Cold Steel Ring," written by Leeds historian Marie Cromer. The play depicts the life of the railroad steel driver and the contest he waged against a steam drill at Oak Mountain Tunnel near Leeds in September 1887. The play will be presented on the depot grounds on Saturday at 10 am and 3 pm and again on Sunday at 3 pm.

For more details on the folk festival, visit www.leedsfolkfestival.com/index.php.

Important notice!

Change in September program

In preparation for the open house, the chapter's board has designated the September 12th meeting date as "Depot Cleanup" day. More details inside!

Call for volunteers!

Your chapter needs members to welcome and escort visitors during our open house on September 19 & 20. We offer flexible hours and excellent working conditions! Please sign up by calling Marvin Clemons at 205-836-3457 or use this link to email

