



# *Season's Greetings!*

## *The Mid-South Flyer*

December 2010



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



## A desk fit for an operator!

The only thing missing from the newly restored operator's desk at the historic Leeds depot is the operator. Thanks to the diligent efforts of Mid-South member **Eddie Cook** (seen proudly smiling at right beside a piece of his handiwork), the much-anticipated restoration was made ready in time for the chapter's September open house. Eddie painstakingly refinished the wood cabinetry and metal casings housing several pieces of original telegraph and telephone equipment. The operator's desk completes the first phase of the restoration of the depot agent's office, which will eventually resemble a small depot agent's office from the 1950's. The chapter is also indebted to **Jim Wilson**, a retired Missouri Pacific communications supervisor and Southern Railway fan, for his generous donation of the vintage equipment used in the restoration project.



## Chapter News and Events

### Oneonta's L&N depot site receives historic marker

The former site of the L&N depot in Oneonta, Alabama has been recognized with an historical marker by the State of Alabama. The occasion was marked by a presentation on October 23 by Mid-South member **Lee Singletary** speaking on the importance of the Alabama Mineral and Louisville & Nashville Railroad to the development of Oneonta and Blount County.

The Alabama Mineral and L&N Railroad had particular importance to the Champion mines, the Cheney Quarries, and to the various coalmines in the area. For many years the L&N operated passenger service between Oneonta and towns along the Alabama Mineral "loop" route between Birmingham and Calera. The depot was eventually closed in the late 1970's and donated to the city of Oneonta, which relocated and restored the depot as a meeting facility at the city's nearby community center.

Mid-South member **Stan Burnett** prepared the marker inscription on behalf of the Blount County Historical Society, where Stan also serves as a board director.



*Mid-South Chapter members Lee Singletary (right) and Stan Burnett (center) with Blount County Historical Society member Stan Moss stand at the site of the former L&N depot in Oneonta, Alabama.*

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*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 \$42 and include subscriptions to the Society's twice-yearly magazine ***Railroad History*** and quarterly newsletter, and the chapter's bi-monthly newsletter, ***The Mid-South Flyer***. For membership information contact:

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### The Bulletin Board

- **The Smokey City Model Railroad Club** will hold it's annual Holiday train show on **Saturday, December 11** from 9am to 5pm at the First Baptist Church of Zion City, 1104 Gene Reed Road in Roebuck. The Mid-South Chapter will have tables for the Company Store and membership. Support your chapter and come out for the show!
- **Two "after-holiday" events** are being planned for Mid-South members, including an evening slide show at the depot featuring vintage "seasonal" railroad scenes. Also, rescheduled from last year will be a members-only tour of Joe Fiore's magnificent 0-gauge layout. Watch your email for further announcements regarding dates and times.
- **Mid-South Chapter Annual Membership Meeting** will be held on **Saturday, January 29**, at 2 pm at the Leeds Depot.



**Your 2011 membership dues are due!**  
For your convenience, a renewal form is attached to this newsletter. **Thanks** for your continued support!





# *By the Board*

## *Highlights from the Mid-South Chapter Board Meeting*

The Mid-South Chapter Board of Directors convened its' bi-monthly meeting on Saturday, October 30, 2010 at the Leeds Depot at 9:30 a.m.. In attendance were members **Marvin Clemons, Dan Ferris, Stan Burnett, Tim Smith, Lee Singletary, Eddie Cook, and Dr. Carl Marbury**. Chapter members **Larry Kelpke** and **Jeff Johnson** also attended at the board's request. A quorum was present to consider the board's business.

Minutes from the board meeting of August 21, 2010 were deferred. Stan gave the Treasurer's report. The checking account balance is \$728.64, the "DAM" fund balance is \$88.37 (cash), with no outstanding bills due. Our chapter's paid membership stands at 55.

Marvin gave a report of the Executive Committee meeting of October 18. Marvin also reported that the November program speaker would be **Warren Stephens** who will present a talk on the TAG Railroad.

Dan reported on membership. The goal is for 100% renewal in 2011. A renewal form will be included with the next newsletter. Renewal forms will also be available at the next meeting.

Tim reported on Archives and Exhibits. There may be another meeting with the "Expo" group. Railing for the cupola stairway was discussed and approved with a \$40.00 budget and free labor provided by **Bob Smith**. Tim will contact Frank Little for approval. The prospects of doing a mural and work on the caboose were discussed. We have been informed by Frank Little, chairman of the Leeds Historical Society, that the caboose will remain available to the chapter for restoration and display.

Lee discussed the Company Store. **Ron Mele** is to do an inventory of store items. We will have tables at the Smoky City RR Show on December 11. The new maps will be featured. The purchase of logo items such as cups and t-shirts was discussed. Jeff offered to get some t-shirt prices.

Eddie reported on Community Relations. There was a good local reaction to the John Henry Festival and the chapter's open house and train show. Security and the phone installation were discussed. The phone rate has been corrected to a lower rate. It was noted that locks are being changed so that all secured rooms may be opened with one key. The protocol for arming and disarming the security alarm was reviewed.

Dr. Marbury commented on the Chapter's excellent relationship with the Leeds Historical Society. Dr. Marbury is overseeing maintenance and landscaping of the depot grounds on behalf of the chapter. He requested that a new supply of chapter brochures be provided for visitors to the depot.

Under Old Business, the board discussed the new depot telephone and security system. The chapter phone number is 699-0440, and we are working on having an answering machine for the new phone. Also under Old Business, the board discussed the after-action report from the chapter's September open house and train show as part of the John Henry Days celebration. The board expressed support for continuing the open house as part of John Henry Days, but sponsoring a separate train show, perhaps in conjunction with the Smokey City Model RR Club.

Under New Business the board discussed the Proposal for hosting the R&LHS 2012 convention. This is generally a three-day convention typically held in the mid-May to mid-June time frame featuring two or three local venues of historical importance. The chapter's responsibility would include event planning, registration, setup of venues, bus escort, spouse activities, and arrangements for a dinner banquet and breakfast meeting. The national organization would handle all finances and national publicity. The national board needs our tentative commitment in time for their November board meeting. After discussion, the board unanimously endorsed the proposal and will refer it to the membership for a final decision at the January general membership meeting.

The last agenda item was a discussion of proposed changes to the chapter's elected leadership and board of directors. Recommendations will be discussed at the November chapter meeting. (See the following "November program" article for specific details). Following a discussion the board unanimously appointed Larry Kelpke and Jeff Johnson to the board of directors. The meeting was then adjourned with the next board meeting set for January 15, 2011.

*Edited from minutes provided by Stan Burnett)*

## November program

# TA&G Railway history highlights chapter meeting

An historical account of the Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia (TAG) Railway, one of Alabama's more colorful short-lines, was the featured presentation at the Mid-South Chapter's regular meeting on November 11, 2010.

TAG Railway Historical Society president **Warren Stephens** brought an informative two-hour program featuring detailed images of TAG locomotives, rolling stock, depots, and yard facilities. Warren's intimate knowledge of the personalities and politics provided a fascinating behind-the-scenes look at the line's development and operations. While the TAG may not have the fan base of a larger "fallen flag," Warren's presentation proved the road's history was as interesting as any could be, in no small part due to the dedicated people who managed and worked for the railroad.



Preceding Warren's program, Chapter president **Marvin Clemons** presided over a short business meeting. Under old business, Marvin reported on the chapter's successful open house and train show as part of the John Henry Days celebration in September. Marvin expressed special gratitude to the member volunteers who participated.

Board member **Eddie Cook** reported that depot security is in place and seems to be working fine. Marvin thanked Eddie on behalf of the chapter for his diligence in getting the alarm system and telephone line installed in the agent-operator's office, and also for refurbishing and installing the restored telegraph and telephone equipment on the operator's desk.

Board member **Dan Ferris** discussed a proposal for having a chapter calendar published in 2012. The calendar would feature member photos selected by a photo contest. More details will follow.

Under new business, Marvin announced that the board is working on developing a succession plan for the chapter's leadership. The board proposes to establish the offices of president-elect, president, and past president to replace the current positions of chairman and vice-chairman. The president-elect will be elected for a one-year term and will then serve as president for a second one-year term before rotating to the past-president position, at the discretion of the board. In addition, the secretary-treasurer's position is proposed to become a two-year term of office.

In addition to changes in the designations and terms of elected officers, the board proposes to add two elected members-at-large to the board for a total of 11 board members, comprised of four officers and seven directors. The proposed changes will be reflected in an amendment to the chapter by-laws, to be published and voted on the annual membership meeting in January.

Marvin announced the appointment of **Larry Kelpke** and **Jeff Johnson** as new directors. Larry is a charter member of the chapter and a Leeds resident. He will work closely with Eddie Cook as the chapter's local community liaison. Jeff is one of the chapter's newest members and brings a strong organizational background to managing the chapter's affairs. We welcome and thank Larry and Jeff for offering to serve their chapter.

In closing, Marvin encouraged everyone's participation in the annual membership meeting to be held on Saturday, January 29. In addition to the election of officers and consideration of proposed changes to the chapter by-laws, the board will make its annual report to the membership and discuss goals for the coming year. One very important agenda item will be a vote to decide whether the chapter will accept an invitation to host the 2012 national convention of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society in Birmingham. This decision is crucially important to our chapter's plans and goals for the next two years, and we need the input and support of every member. *(Edited from notes provided by Stan Burnett)*



# A Mid-South Chapter Photo Album

On the third weekend in September, the Mid-South Chapter hosted an open house and train show during the John Henry Days festival. An estimated 400 guests toured the depot and visited the train show. Our candid camera caught all the action, including the following scenes featuring many of our member volunteers. *Thanks, everyone!*



**Bob Smith** stands proudly by his beautifully crafted homemade sign pointing the way for visitors



**"The Smith Brothers and Dad."** No, this is not a road act, but it should be!



Tour guide **"Big John" Stewart** poses with visitors in the depot Exhibit Room.



Looking like he's done this before, retired railroader **Harry Barnes** works the phone at the operator's desk



Outside, it was standing room only for a performance of the John Henry play, **"Hear That Cold Steel Ring"**



Even **Chessie** the depot cat found a spot to watch the play while waiting patiently for a handout



# A Mid-South Chapter Photo Album

Meanwhile, across the street from the depot at The Livery event center, a merry band of Mid-South members staffed the train show and greeted guests. As can be seen by the smiles, a good time was had by all!



*No couple looks better or does a better job at the membership table than **Sam and Dan Ferris***



*The Mid-South's "gang of four" (**Jeff Johnson, Ron Mele, Eddie Cook and Dan Ferris**) pose for a photo*



*Sharing the memories of railroad days gone by is **Eddie Cook** with guests **Susan and Jamie Williams***



*"Are you sure this 20 is genuine?" asks **Jeff Johnson** of fellow chapter member "**Slick Bob**" **Smith***



*A young guest contemplates which freebie to take home from **Eddie Cook's** giveaway box*



*What better way to keep little paws off your prized model locomotive than have a giveaway box for the kids, says **Eddie**!*



## Golden Era Classics



***Sugar Bowl Special, Southern Style*** — Those familiar with the “golden era” of passenger trains will recall the famous football specials that carried legions of loyal fans to the big games. Among local lines, the Louisville & Nashville’s all-Pullman ***Sugar Bowl Special*** to New Orleans was undoubtedly the best-known. While L&N’s chief competitor Southern Railway didn’t routinely operate a special train to the Sugar Bowl *per se*, Southern did run extra Pullmans for Sugar Bowl fans in the regular consists of the ***Southerner*** and ***Crescent***, both which served New Orleans. A typical version of Southern’s “Sugar Bowl Special” would be #48, the ***Southerner***, seen here eastbound at Brompton, Alabama on a sunny late afternoon in January 1970. Wouldn’t you just love to be warmly tucked away in a double bedroom behind those gorgeous E8 passenger diesels on this cold winter’s day! (*Marvin Clemons photo*)

### Where are we?

Recent entries in this column have featured vintage photos of trains and locations, making it easy for us “old heads” to pick out the scene. This entry is for our “Amtrak generation” of railfans who should be quick to pick out both the train and, for those familiar with the Leeds area (hint), the spot. It’s also a bit of a rarity to see a photo of a train taken by the engineer, who is himself a rail fan (second hint). So where are we, and what’s the occasion for this great photo taken so close to home?





## **From the Observation Platform** by Marvin Clemons, Chairman

Well, folks, here we are, just two years out from the start of our journey, and what an interesting ride it has been. From the first gathering in November 2008 of a couple of dozen local rail fans in a borrowed meeting room, today the Mid-South Chapter has grown to 55 members, more than doubling our charter membership in less than two years! And thanks to the generosity of the Leeds Historical Society and the City of Leeds, in addition to our regular meeting room we have secured permanent space inside the depot for historical exhibits and restoration projects.

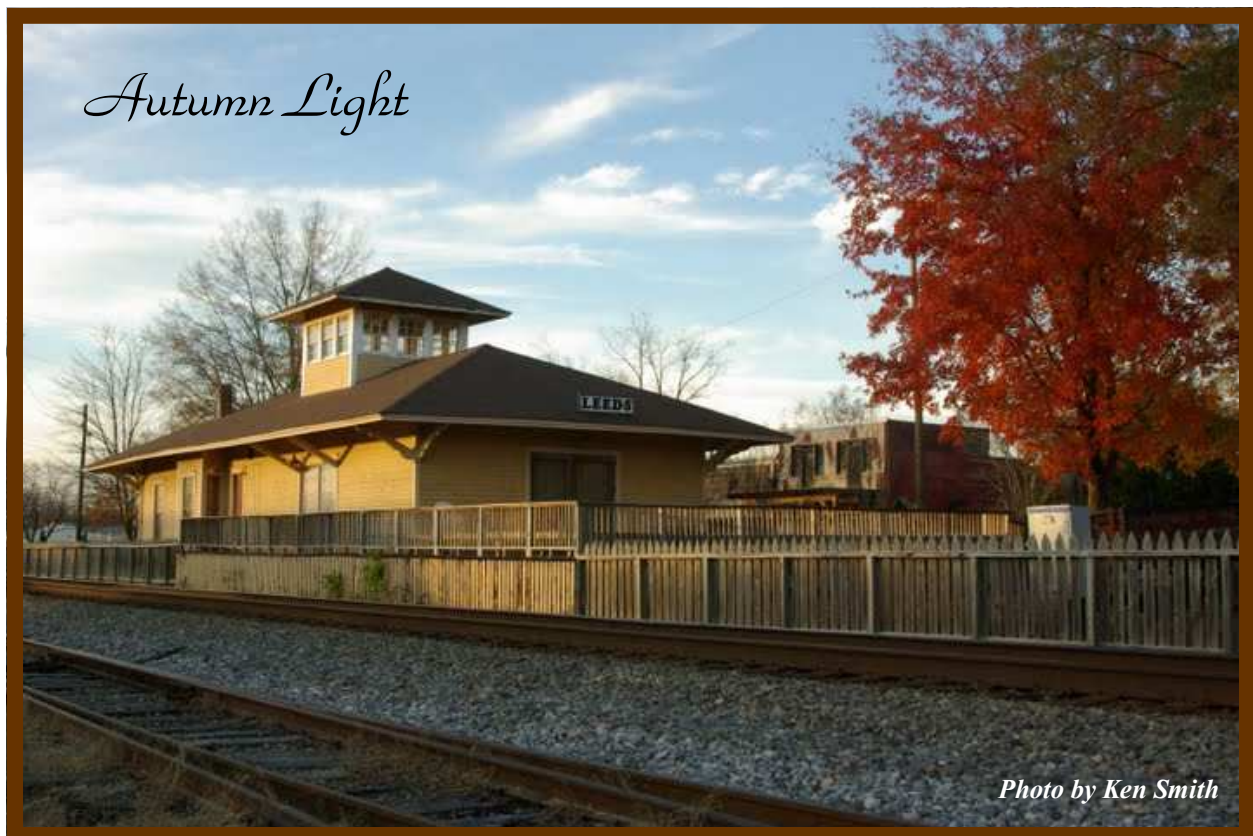
Not a bad beginning for a new startup, but we've only just begun. As you'll note from the cover page, we've made a good start on restoration of the agent-operator's office. After months of tweaking, we're finalizing plans for a permanent exhibit featuring legendary folk hero John Henry and historical artifacts from the Birmingham railroad district. In recognition of our ability to get things done, the Mid-South has been invited to host the national R&LHS convention in 2012, which will provide a wonderful opportunity to showcase Birmingham's colorful railroad history to a national audience.

There's still much our young chapter can and will accomplish, but only if our members are willing to commit their time, talent, and financial support. Renewing your membership is a vote of confidence for your chapter's plans and programs. I hope you'll signal your support and send in your renewal today!



## *Featured Member Photo*

*Beginning with this issue, our newsletter will feature a chapter member's photograph of a local railroad scene. Members are invited to submit a high-resolution photo with caption by email to the editor at [MClem46@att.net](mailto:MClem46@att.net).*



*Photo by Ken Smith*