



Season's Greetings!

The Mid-South Flyer

December 2012



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

Depot agent's office acquires real-time train monitor

Train-watching at Leeds depot has always been a favorite activity of Mid-South Chapter members, to the extent that chapter meetings are briefly suspended to observe passing trains, particularly if it happens to be Amtrak's high-stepping *Crescent*.

Now, thanks to the Automatic Train Control System (ATCS) monitor installed in November, train-watching at Leeds has taken on an entirely new dimension. For the first time, a video monitor in the agent-operator's office allows visitors to see train movements in and around Leeds in real time. Member John Peterson and son Donnie spent two days installing the display and related hardware, which includes a live audio feed of conversations between the Birmingham dispatcher and local train crews.

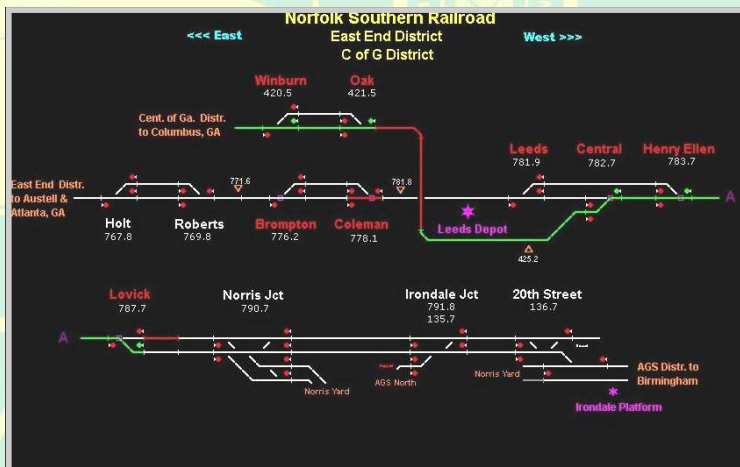
As shown by the screen shot at right, the display is tailored to include track and signals between Irondale and Pell City on the Birmingham District, and Winburn on the Columbus (GA) District. The trackside ATCS relays are activated by microwave signals from the dispatcher, which are picked up by an antennae at the depot. Whenever a signal is detected, the white letter of the location name (Leeds, for example) turns red.

As the dispatcher clears a route or "block" for an oncoming train, the signals and track circuit turn green for "clear." This permits the viewer to know when a train is cleared or "lined up" to pass the depot. As the train passes the clear signal and enters the block, the circuit turns red indicating the train's approach. In addition, a bell signal rings to indicate that the train has entered the block, providing an audible as well as visual indication.

While the ATCS display is new technology, it isn't the first time that train movements have been monitored electronically at the depot. It's a little known fact that 50 years ago, the Leeds agent controlled train movements between Leeds and Brompton by use of a Centralized Traffic Control panel. How's that for progress?



A video monitor displaying train movements in and around the Leeds area was installed by Mid-South member John Peterson, seen standing next to the newly installed display with chapter president Marv Clemons.



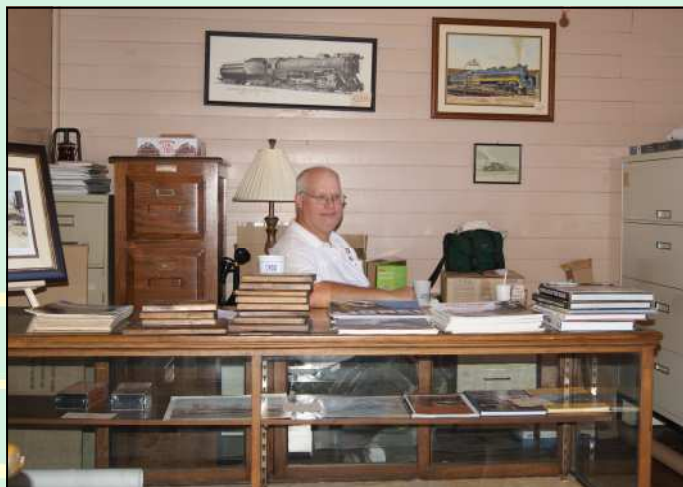
Dues Reminder!

Hard to believe, but another New Year is upon us, which also means it's time to renew your R&LHS and Mid-South Chapter membership. A renewal notice can be found in the recent issue of *Railroad History*, or you can renew on-line at www.rlhs.org. Members renewing by **January 15** will receive a complimentary copy of the Mid-South Chapter's **2013 Photo Calendar** a \$10 value. So don't miss out — renew today and enjoy another year of outstanding benefits, starting with a free photo calendar!

Mid-South Chapter News



Pickin' and grinnin' — Mid-South member "Big John" Stewart relaxes "out on the porch" while listening to some mighty fine bluegrass music during September's Leeds Folk Festival.



Minding the store — The Mid-South Chapter's company store is open for business, says store manager Lee Singletary. Store sales of books, maps and donated items are the chapter's primary source of revenue.

Looking good, looking good!

How else could you describe this beautifully framed shot of Southern 4-8-0 #630 leading an excursion at Deason Hill just west of Cordova en route from Parrish to Birmingham on September 23, 2012. The steam excursion was one of several weekend trips operated by Norfolk Southern to celebrate the railroad's 30th anniversary as successor to Southern and Norfolk & Western railway. The event marked the return of main line steam to Birmingham, once the headquarters for Southern Railway's steam program, for the first time in nearly two decades. A number of Mid-South members rode or photographed the train as it wound its way through the kudzu patches of rural Alabama. Our thanks to John Higginson for contributing this fine photo.



2013 Mid-South Chapter photo calendar now available



The Mid-South Chapter has published its first photo calendar featuring photos contributed and chosen exclusively by the chapter membership. Printed on heavy enameled paper with card stock covers, the all-color calendar contains 13 original member photos of railroading in the Birmingham District spanning three decades. Included are images of Southern Railway green-and-gold passenger units pulling the **Southern Crescent**, Norfolk & Western #1218 crossing Leeds trestle with a steam excursion, and Amtrak's Heritage unit with the **Crescent** at Weems. The calendar will sell for \$10 through the chapter's Company Store. New and renewing Mid-South members will receive a complimentary copy with their membership.



By the Board

Highlights from the Mid-South Chapter Board Meeting

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Mid-South Chapter was called to order by Marvin Clemons on October 27, 2012, at 9:45 a.m. at the Leeds Depot, Leeds, Alabama. Board of Directors members present were Marvin Clemons, Tim Smith, Larry Kelpke, Lee Singletary, James Lowery, John Stewart, John Browning. A quorum was present for the meeting.

Marvin Clemons presented the minutes of the August 25, 2012, meeting of the Board of Directors. John Stewart made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, the motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

Marvin gave the Secretary/Treasurer's report for Stan and indicated that the balance in the chapter's checking account is \$2,227.86. He indicated that the current membership roster had been sent to the members of the Board of Directors with the materials for this meeting.

Under **old business**, Marvin reported that the following are the current possible nominations that will be made for chapter officer positions at the January Annual Meeting of the membership: President – To be filled; Vice President – John Browning; Treasurer – James Lowery; Secretary – To be filled; Immediate Past President (if asked by the Board to serve) – Marvin Clemons. Marvin reported that Lee Singletary and Tim Smith have indicated their willingness to continue to serve on the Board of Directors. John Stewart indicated that he would be glad to continue to serve on the Board of Directors but that he would not be able to serve as President next year. Marvin indicated that he would be willing to serve on the Board of Directors as the Immediate Past President and that he would be willing to continue to produce the chapter newsletter. He also indicated that there will be four positions open on the Board of Directors, so members need to be asked if they would like to serve on the Board. The membership roster was reviewed to determine if there are members in the local area who might be asked to serve on the Board of Directors.

Progress Report - ATCS Installation. Marvin reported that the ATCS display has been installed in the Agent's Office by John Peterson. Plans are to have a radio also installed. John Browning agreed to check to see if an Internet connection also could be obtained in addition to the telephone line. Marvin made a motion to approve giving John Peterson \$200 to cover his expenses for the ATCS installation, the motion was seconded, and the motion passed.

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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 \$47 and include subscriptions to the Society's twice-yearly magazine *Railroad History* and quarterly newsletter, and the chapter's newsletter, *The Mid-South Flyer*. For membership information email Stan Burnett, Treasurer at stan7742@otelco.net

News, articles, photos and comments should be sent or emailed to:

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Report from John Henry Railroad Symposium/Open House. Marvin reported concerning the symposium that was held as part of the Leeds Festival and noted that John Stewart had been one of the presenters. It was proposed that maybe next year the Mid-South Chapter could sponsor a swap meet in the Depot and the Liv-
ery.

Friends of R&LHS Solicitation. John Stewart reported concerning the "grant" proposal that is being submitted to the National R&LHS for \$2,500.

Update on Development Plan for Depot Exhibit. John Stewart indicated that there is nothing new to report concerning this but that he will follow up on it. Tim Smith showed two possible layouts of the Depot and the grounds/caboose. These conceptual plans could be used with the general master plan. John Stewart agreed to have a master plan update for presentation to the membership at the January 2013 meeting. Marvin reported that the lumber for the caboose steps is in the caboose and that the steps now need to be built. Larry Kelpke is working on replacing the windows, probably with Plexiglass®.

Website Updating. Marvin indicated that John Grubber has begun handling the National R&LHS website, and, as part of that effort, the chapter's website portion will be updated better and the chapter will not be charged for that updating.

Update Concerning Chapter Photo Calendar. Marvin indicated that he plans to have the chapter's calendar ready in time for the Smokey City Rails Show in December.

By the Board (Continued)

New Business

November Program. John Browning described the program plans for the upcoming November chapter meeting and indicated that it will be sort of a “members’ photographs and videos” program.

Model Railroad Shows. It was noted that the Mid-South Chapter plans to have 4 tables at the November 10th TCA/Smokey City Rails show and one or two tables at the December 8th Smokey City Rails show. Lee Singletary and Marvin Clemons plan to staff the tables at the November show, and Lee will coordinate who will staff the tables at the December show. John Stewart indicated that the Mid-South Chapter might want to have a table at the big show next year in Atlanta.

Interfaces with Other Railroad Historical Societies. It was discussed that the Mid-South Chapter might want to have an inventory of items to sell from other historical societies of railroads that served the Birmingham area. It was discussed that the chapter also might host a gathering (with seminars, a swap meet, etc.) of such railroad historical societies at the Depot and a local school. Marvin indicated that the chapter would need the other societies to coordinate it and the Mid-South Chapter co-sponsor and host it.

December Visit to Joe Fiore's Layout. Possible dates for this field trip were discussed, and it was decided that December 15 would be the best date. Marvin will follow up concerning that date and the visit.

Proposed Dates for January Board and Chapter Meetings. It was agreed that the following would be the dates for the indicated meetings in January 2013: Board of Directors Meeting – January 5, 2013, 9:30 a.m. ; Chapter (Program) Meeting – January 19, 2013, 2:00 p.m. Marvin indicated that he will confirm these dates with the Depot facility coordinator.

Proposed Chapter Banquet - Winter 2013. Marvin led a discussion concerning the possibility of the chapter hosting a banquet perhaps in February at the Tutwiller Hotel with the same railroad-related menu as was used at the recent national convention. The possible program could be Lyle Key presenting his portion of the street cars presentation. Members and spouses would be invited, and the target number of attendees would be 60 people. The price for attendees should be set to cover expenses of the banquet, but the price should be low enough so that people will attend. The event will require having a person designated to coordinate it, and Marvin requested anyone who would be willing to be the coordinator to let him know. Other historical societies should be invited to attend. Marvin will mention the possible banquet at a meeting of the membership and/or will formulate an online survey to judge interest by the chapter members.

“Railroadiana” Auction. Drew Tucker with the Garden City Auction in Leeds attended and discussed with the Board the two ways that an auction of railroad materials could be structured—as a standalone auction or as part of one of their regular auctions—depending on the number items and the values of those items. He explained how they would list online the items with photographs. He indicated that the fees would be on a commission basis and that they would take a 15% commission for this instead of their normal 25%. All the net proceeds (after deduction of the commission) would go to the chapter for its work.

The Mid-South Chapter would have individuals donate items for putting in the auction with the understanding by the donor that the items would be sold and that the money would go towards the work of the chapter. It was noted that the chapter must be very clear with potential donors that the items they are donating may be sold if not retained by the chapter for historical purposes. Since the items would be acquired over a period of several months and receipts would need to be produced for tax-exempt purposes (under the national R&LHS 501(c)(3) status), the chapter would need to find out how to handle the intrinsic value of each item in relation to the amount for which it was sold. James Lowery will contact the Internal Revenue Service for clarification of how to handle such donations that are intended for an auction or otherwise to be sold.

It was discussed that the volume and large amounts needed for a standalone auction probably would preclude the chapter’s doing it that way, but Drew indicated that, after the items had been donated, they could be reviewed to determine the best way to handle the auction. Drew indicated that Garden City Auction probably could store the items during the months leading up to the auction. It was thought that the items could be acquired during the first half of next year, and the auction then be held in late summer or fall. Marvin Clemons and James Lowery will create a draft donation solicitation letter to send to chapter members and to the Garden City Auction mailing list.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m. (*Minutes submitted by James Lowery, Acting Secretary*)

Golden Era Classic



A rail fan's winter wonderland — No holiday newsletter would be complete without a winter snow scene, and so we submit for your consideration this classic photo of rails in the snow. The air is still, disturbed only by the occasional rustle of snow dropping from sun-exposed tree branches. The silence will soon be broken by the growing rumble of a distant train coming around the sweeping curve. The signal beckons and the snow awaits the rush of steel wheels wrapped in a swirl of white powder. It's the **Silver Comet**, running late after trekking all night through the icy Carolinas en route to Birmingham with her tired but jubilant passengers heading home for the holidays. Never has the old Seaboard looked so good, nor will it ever again. **Marvin Clemons photo**

Where are we?

While we're looking at old structures, here's one to consider. This is an exceptionally rare photograph of what appears to be a station subway. A doorway located between track signs to the right is a clue to the location, if you know your Birmingham streetcar history. It's too dark to tell, but there is a set of wide stairs leading up to a concourse and the main waiting room beyond. There's not a soul to be seen in the late 1960s view, but at one time this underground corridor was packed with throngs of rail travelers arriving and departing on such named trains as the **City of Miami**, **Southerner**, **Pelican**, **Silver Comet**, and the **Sunnyland**. And to what most beloved railroad edifice does this structure belong? (**Thanks and a tip of the lantern to Stan Burnett for the photo**)



From the Observation Platform

Commentary by Marvin Clemons, Mid-South Chapter President

This past November was an important milestone for the Mid-South Chapter, marking the fourth anniversary of our founding in 2008 as the only R&LHS chapter located in the middle Southern states. A lot can happen over time and it's easy to lose sight of just how far we've come in four short years, so it might be instructive to take a brief look back at our accomplishments. In other words, *let's blow our horn!*

Starting with a fledgling membership of a couple dozen souls, today the chapter is nearing a robust roster of 70 members. We've hosted a series of interesting and informative programs brought by subject matter experts, including several among our membership, on both historical and contemporary railroading. We've restored the depot agent's office to much of its original appearance and added features, such as the ATCS real-time train monitor, to enhance the experience of train-watching. Lest we forget, we also hosted the R&LHS 2012 Annual Meeting and introduced Birmingham to an appreciative national audience of fellow railroad enthusiasts. Best of all, we've had some fun along the way, with our annual cookout and social events for members and their families.

These accomplishments and more have been achieved by a very diverse group of folks who dedicate a portion of their time and energy to preserving and celebrating the "railroad experience," both past and present. Our chapter is the sum of our individual abilities and personalities, and that's what makes it work. Besides a love for trains, if there's a common denominator that holds us together as a group, I'd have to say it's the fact that we are, first and foremost, friends who genuinely care about each other.

So much for who we are and where we've been. We have a bright future, and there's still much to enjoy and accomplish in the days ahead. One look at the minutes of the recent board meeting (found elsewhere in this newsletter) will tell you that we have exciting prospects for developing the depot and sharing our railroad heritage with present and future generations. *Onward and upward!*

With the support of our officers and board members, it's been my great privilege to lead our fledgling chapter and lay a foundation for the future. The mission will soon pass to a new leadership team, which will be elected and take office at our annual meeting in January. While I hope to continue my service to the board, I look forward to taking my seat in the audience and enjoying the view from the other side of the podium!

Several of our board members have offered to continue their service in elected positions, and I hope others will also step forward to serve. If you've been thinking about serving your chapter, please contact any board member for a no-obligation discussion. We'll even let you take her on a test drive!

In closing, I would like to thank each of you for your continued membership and loyal support. I especially want to thank my fellow officers and board members for their dedication, hard work, and honest criticism. I've learned and benefited from our association, and it's immensely satisfying knowing our chapter remains in good hands.



Mid-South Chapter Calendar

**Saturday, December 8 — Smokey City Rail Show @ FOP Lodge, Pinson, AL
9:00am — 4:00pm**

Saturday, December 15 — Holiday tour of Joe Fiore's O-Scale Layout (details TBA)

Saturday, January 5 — Mid-South Board Meeting — 9:30 a.m. @ Leeds Depot

**Saturday, January 19 — Annual Membership Meeting — 2:00 p.m. @ Leeds Depot
Guest Speaker: Lyle Key**

Program: "The Last Hurrah for Birmingham Streetcars"