



The Mid-South Flyer

September 2013



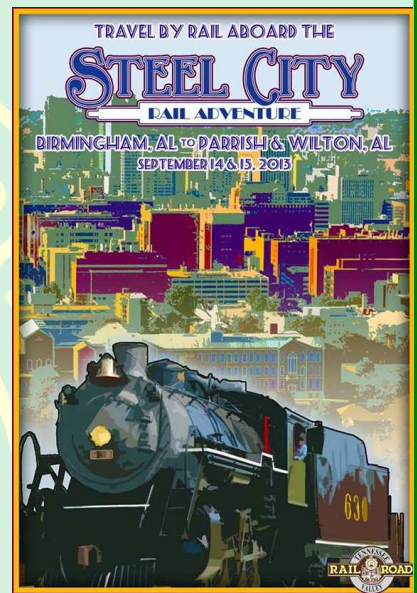
A Publication of the Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc

Chapter meeting rescheduled

Weekend steam excursions, depot open house fill chapter calendar for September

Back-to-back weekends featuring the return of main line steam excursions and the Leeds Depot annual open house will dominate the Mid-South Chapter's September event calendar. As part of Norfolk Southern's popular *21st Century Steam* program, the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum will host a pair of round-trip excursions behind Southern #630. The *Steel City Rail Adventure* will operate on Saturday and Sunday, September 14 & 15 from the site of the former Birmingham Terminal Station on half-day trips to Parrish and Wilton, Alabama. Complete details including ticket information can be found on page 2.

On the following weekend of September 21 & 22, the Mid-South Chapter will host our annual Depot Open House as part of the Leeds Fall Festival & John Henry Celebration. In addition to tours of the depot Agent's Office and exhibits, this year's Celebration will feature shuttle trips to view Coosa Mountain tunnel, a display devoted to the legend of John Henry located inside the Southern Railway caboose, and a return performance of *Let the Cold Steel Ring* depicting the life and legend of John Henry. Event details can be found on page 2.



LEEDS FALL FESTIVAL & JOHN HENRY CELEBRATION

Call for volunteers to host depot open house

Want to help your chapter showcase our progress in restoring the Leeds depot? We need volunteers to host our annual open house during the Leeds Fall Festival on September 21 & 22. Just a few hours of your time are needed on either Saturday or Sunday to greet and escort visitors around the depot. Contact John Browning (email john@cvcsllc.com, phone 601-1975 to check on available times for hosting.

Worth the wait

November chapter meeting to reprise popular program on Red Mountain

Good things come to those who wait, so the saying goes. And for proof, waiting until November for the next Mid-South Chapter meeting will bring the program highlight of the year. That's when Red Mountain park ranger and mining historian Eric McFerrin will reprise his multimedia presentation, *Railroads, Red Ore, and Red Hot Metal*. Eric's program premiered

to much fanfare at the 2012 R&LHS Birmingham convention, and we are fortunate that Mid-South members will have another opportunity to enjoy this comprehensive history of iron ore mining and manufacturing in the Birmingham district. So mark you calendar now to attend the next chapter meeting on November 9 at 2:00PM, and remember to invite a friend.



"Steel City Adventure"

Main line steam returns to Birmingham!

For the second year in a row, Mid-South Chapter members and local rail fans will be treated to two days of riding and chasing steam-powered passenger trains when Norfolk Southern's **21st Century Steam Program** comes to town.

On the weekend of September 14 & 15, the "**Steel City Rail Adventure**" will operate two round-trips daily behind ex-Southern Railway #630. Staffed and operated by the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum of Chattanooga, the half-day trips will feature climate-controlled coaches with comfortable seats and large windows. A commissary car selling snacks, soft drinks, and light food items, along with souvenir items, will be part of the train. All trips will depart from the former site of Birmingham Terminal Station (enter from Second Avenue, North at 26th Street).



#630 passing Sloss Furnace in September 2012

September 14 & 15 (morning): Birmingham, AL to Parrish, AL Approximate 4-1/2 to 5 hour, 82-mile round trip rail excursions depart at 7:30am and return around 1:30pm. These trips will operate over the Norfolk Southern (original Georgia Pacific Railway) via Jasper and return. Passengers will remain on the train for the complete round trip, including the turn around point in Parrish.

September 14 & 15 (afternoon): Birmingham, AL to Wilton, AL - Approximate 6 to 6-1/2 hour, 98-mile round trip rail excursions depart at 2:00pm and return around 8:30pm. These trips operate over the Norfolk Southern (ex-Southern Railway's Mobile Division) via Bessemer. Passengers will remain on the train for the complete round trip, including the turn around point in Wilton.

Tickets are \$45 for adults and \$35 for children age 3-12. Children under age 3 not occupying a seat do not require a ticket. For reservations, visit TVRM's website at <http://tvrail.com/pages/21st-Century-Steam>.

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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 \$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.

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Mid-South Chapter observes John Henry Celebration with open house, tours

For the fifth consecutive year, the Mid-South Chapter will open its doors to the community in observance of the John Henry Celebration as part of the Leeds Fall Festival on Saturday and Sunday, September 21 & 22. According to Fall Festival Committee Chairman Jeff Falletta, the outdoor event will feature food trucks, a variety of live music and entertainment on three stages, an art show, a car show and lots of activities for children, young people and those young at heart.

Chapter members will host an open house at the depot with tours of the agent's office and exhibits from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Saturday, and from noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday. Members may volunteer to host for two-hour time slots by contacting John Browning at John@cvcslc.com, or phone 601-1975.

An added attraction to this year's event will be shuttle trips to nearby Coosa Mountain Tunnel, where legend has it John Henry lost his life after winning a contest with a steam drill in 1887. Tours will depart from the depot at 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.

The year will also see a return of the play "Listen to that Cold Steel Ring," an original outdoor drama about the local legend of John Henry performed by Leeds High School students at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m. on the depot grounds. The play will be directed by Jessica Frye, director of theater, Leeds City Schools.

On Sunday, an outdoor concert of gospel music, spirituals and traditional Christian hymns will be performed by the John Henry Singers on the depot platform. The singers represent the choirs of Leeds' historic Black churches.

*2014 Mid-South Chapter
Member Photo Calendar Preview*



NS freight passing Leeds Historic Depot. Cover by Ken Smith

The finalists for the Mid-South Chapter's 2014 Member Photo Calendar contest were chosen in July by member vote, and the editors have selected the winning images based on overall composition and subject matter. The 2014 calendar will be available in the Company Store in time for holiday gift giving. Once again, Mid-South members who renew their membership for 2014 by December 31st will receive a complimentary calendar. We are pleased to preview the selected images by name with a brief caption. Congratulations to the winners, and thanks to all of the talented photographers who contributed!



CSX at Nashville, TN, by Frank Orona



TVRM #610 at Grand Jct., by John Browning



Kansas City Southern at Meridian, by Frank Orona



Amtrak "Crescent" at Red Gap, by Marv Clemons



NS tank train at Lovick, AL, by Ron Mele



N&W #1218 in Georgia, by Robert Duncan



NS power at Wilsonville, AL, by Greg Owings



NS intermodal at Cook Springs, AL, by Robert Duncan



Amtrak "Sunset" in Florida, by Lee Singletary



CofG freight at Woodlawn Jct, by Marv Clemons



NS Veterans unit, by Greg Owings



BS switching at Woodward, AL, by Ron Mele

Member Column

Railroad History and Model Railroading, Part 2: Real or Substitute Reality?

by John Stewart

There is a guy on the TV show Mythbusters that wears a T shirt with the slogan “I Reject Your Reality and Substitute My Own”. In July I visited the National Model Railroad Association’s (NMRA) National Convention in Atlanta where I enjoyed a lot of clinics and activities about the hobby, not to mention a great big National Train Show. It was a lot of fun and included visits to see layouts as well as visits to actually operate layouts. I saw a lot of interesting model versions of “reality”.

It seems to me that most model railroads are quite a personal creation, and those that are willing to share them with others are revealing a bit of themselves. Of course there is the satisfaction of receiving praise as well as the risk of receiving constructive (we hope) criticism. I am not quick to criticize another’s model railroad creation, because I try to remember that it is personal, and it likely grows out of a vision or dream that each model railroader seeks to make into reality.

Did you ever wonder if you could write a novel – it seems that many of the successful novelists turn out about one book per year and seem to be quite well to do? I would love to do that, but I cannot imagine the ability to create a story, characters and all the twists of plot that make a good story. Yet, we model railroaders are story tellers if we create a working layout of any sort.



Thomas the Tank Engine is a character created by the Rev. W Ardrey in the early 1940’s to entertain a young son suffering from chicken pox. Rev. Ardrey was a train buff and he imagined that the trains he loved to watch had personalities. He further created a mythical world, the Island of Sodor, which is located between the English mainland and the Isle of Man. It fits so well on a map that it makes perfect sense. Like most real railroads, the lines on the island of Sodor are all about exploiting resources and serving a customer base. The locomotives, Thomas and his friends, are all admonished to be “really useful engines” by the Fat Controller, now known as Sir Topham Hat. And Rev. Ardrey managed to weave good life lessons into each of these stories – remember he was a cleric and a parent.

In any event, the Island of Sodor works quite well to provide a mythical setting to run a railroad. And don’t think it is just a child’s story. The railroad has very real problems of operations, weather, economics and other “real life” issues associated with running a business. There are mines, quarries, ports, and businesses to serve as well as passenger traffic. Sodor represents all the things that any railroad has to address in its business life while still making a profit. Sodor is a great example of “substituting my own reality” in creating a story, or a history for a model railroad. And like any good model railroad, Rev. Ardrey knew enough about the real thing to make it believable, challenging and fun.

At the National Convention in July, my friend Craig Gardner and I presented a “clinic” about “Implementing Operations on a 4 x 6 Layout” using the JMRI software operations module. This free open source software provides a very robust way to create and simulate car and train movements for a model railroad. And our presentation was aimed at those model railroaders who were reluctant to take the plunge and try to implement an operations system on their model rail-

road. I also gave a second clinic on "Loads for Le\$\$" which shows how to make open car loads that are inexpensive and may be easily "loaded and unloaded" using a magnet on a stick without having to pick up the car.

I mention these two clinics because both of them represent activities that a model railroader may do to better "tell the story" of his or her railroad. Moving coal with loads that are loaded and unloaded (appear and disappear), for example, becomes part of your railroad's story. In addition, operations and movement of goods or people, like on the Island of Sodor, add fun and enjoyment by giving the railroad a reason for being and giving you, the operator, a reason for running trains. After all, if there is not "work to do" on your railroad, one may soon grow tired of the railroad and let the cobwebs set in.

So, one may see that I am an advocate of having a story to tell with the model railroad especially if it leads to more operation and fun for the owner and his/her friends. Although there are many "lone wolf" model railroaders lurking in basements or attics, I find that there is much more enjoyment in sharing your railroad with others including getting help to plan, build and operate the system. The operators on my railroad understand that we have a job to do – in my case seeking

to get raw materials to the steel mill complex while maintaining general background flow of goods and services.

In developing an operating scheme for my model railroad, I read a number of articles about how to implement operations on a railroad. Most of these writers recommend that the railroad have a focus or a theme of operation – a "why" if you will. This in turn usually provides a reason to select a set of industries and a locale for the railroad. These help define the "work the railroad needs to do".

Other folks come at their model railroad from a different angle. They are what I call "memory builders" in that they seek to recreate memories from their own experience. Maybe it was lying awake at night and hearing a lonesome whistle of a train coming over the breeze. Maybe it was seeing

heavy mainline railroading up close a short bike ride away from home. Maybe it was a family member who worked for the railroad and told stories about the day to day. Or maybe it was a set of impressions of railroads woven into an overall fabric of memories of growing up. Typically these folks build a set of their memories showing buildings and locales that are important to bring their experiences to life.

Another approach is the person who has developed a strong feeling for a particular railroad for whatever reason. That is "their" railroad and anything about it is of interest to them. If it was western railroad crossing mountains then that is what they want to model. If it is a logging or mining railroad then that is what they seek to create. These folks typically like the railroad, its equipment, its logo, and all the images that railroad evokes for them. Joe will be Pennsylvania Railroad modeler just because Joe loves the Pennsy and all it stands for.

All of these approaches are great – there is no right or wrong when you create your model world. It is, after all, yours to enjoy.

I submit that IF you don't have a basis for modeling your railroad then you may be a modeler or a collector and not a model railroader. And that too is perfectly fine. It's your hobby and you should be the one to decide how you enjoy it. There are many in model railroading who believe, sadly, that there is only ONE correct way to do anything, and they can't wait to tell you what is NOT correct about yours. To these, I say, phooey! There are lots of ways to enjoy any hobby.



Now to remember “who” we are in the R&LHS. Last month I suggested that if you were reading this you had the “train gene”. I think we can take that for granted. If you are reading this you also likely have an interest in railroad history, which is quite a broad subject. That is because railroads impact our lives, and our history in so very many ways. Ten of us rail history lovers will likely have at least ten different points of view on how to enjoy railroad history. And there is certainly no “right” way to do that. It is for fun after all, and likely one manifestation of a hobby.

When I was at Georgia Tech we had a mandatory course in History of Technology taught by a professor who many of the students didn't care for. They thought the course was boring and a waste of time. Most of us, as we grow older, seem to find an increased interest in history. Maybe because life is complicated and history sometimes offers a view of life in which the outcome may be understood. This is in contrast to our day to day worries and cares for which the outcome has yet to be revealed. So, history may be a comfort because we know how it turns out. In any event, my interest in the history of technology (at least in Birmingham) has increased a great deal since Professor Kranzburg's course.



What is your interest in railroad history, and if you are a model railroader, how does it manifest for you?

As I mentioned in last month's article, my interest has evolved into a study of the Birmingham industrial district and the railroads that served it. It is a complex and fascinating story. It begins with a chicken and egg story of natural resources and railroads to move them. The railroads needed the resources and the resources needed the railroads. But in the early days of Birmingham, it was found that capital was needed to build the railroads.

Once they arrived and the City of Birmingham was begun, there was no industry to “need” the railroads or the resources. Venture capitalists were the third leg of the stool needed to get things moving over the first 10-15 years of the City's history.

Your interest in railroad history and model railroading may be nothing like mine. You may be interested in a different railroad, location, era or theme. Or you may be a collector or simply love to build models. The great thing about a model railroad is that it can tie all of these together. And I submit that if and when it does, the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. That is, the working model railroad will provide a greater enjoyment for you than each of the other activities taken one at a time.

So, if you are a modeler, or a model railroader, I suggest that you consider your railroad's history and theme. Personally, I think it is “easier” to do this based on fact, but some like to create their “history” from scratch. If you have either history or theme, you will likely have the other in hand pretty quickly. Then consider creating a model world to bring the elements together. It may be like Sodor, completely mythical but “real” in your model. Or it may be a detailed recreation of a real aspect of an industry served by rail. Or it may be a representation of an amalgam of items that taken together provide a set of images and vignettes that bring to mind a real working railroad in a real working location.

Whatever you chose, it is up to you. The goal of creating a reality for your railroad is simply to enhance your enjoyment. If you are fortunate enough to share it then others may enjoy it as well. What a great way to spend your time!

(Editor's note: Our thanks to John for piquing our interest in modeling railroad history. A goodly number of Mid-South members, like John, are modelers with an interest in railroad history and who enjoy sharing their complimentary interests with others. In his case, John has blended an interest in the history of the Birmingham District's railroads, mining, and manufacturing with the construction of an operating HO layout of the Birmingham District, right down to actual operation by timetable and train order. When not busy with his duties as a Mid-South board member, John wears the superintendent hats of both his Birmingham District Model Railroad and the Steel City Division of the Southeastern Region of the National Model Railroading Association. John welcomes any Mid-South member with an interest in model railroading to attend the Steel City Division's monthly meetings on the third Thursday at Vestavia Hills United Methodist Church. For more information, contact John at jstew@BHAMRAILS.INFO. For a copy of the SCD newsletter with news of layout tours and modeling events, contact Jason Parham at gmo1515@comcast.net.)

Logging Railroads in the United States, Part 2: Hauling the Lumber – Shays, Climaxes and Heislars

by David C. Lester, Contributing Editor

As we discussed in a previous installment of this series on logging railroads, the tracks of these railroads were often hastily built and poorly constructed. Regular rod steam locomotives were used on roads that had well engineered and constructed track, but the conventional locomotives were not suitable for the “rough and ready” logging roads. The general characteristics of these roads included rough track, often made of wood, along with tight curves and steep grades. This situation gave rise to the construction of three remarkable geared locomotives – the Shay, the Heisler and the Climax. These locomotives were able to provide more tractive effort, negotiate tight curves and haul trains up steep grades. This installment focuses on these three locomotives.

The Shay

Ephraim Shay, who operated a sawmill in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, invented the Shay locomotive. Interestingly, Shay had studied medicine and opened a medical practice in Ohio, which was not successful, and prompted the move to Michigan and his entry into the sawmill business. Like many sawmill operators, he soon found that one of his greatest challenges was transportation of the logs. Having served in the Corps of Engineers in the Union Army during the Civil War, Shay had developed significant mechanical capabilities, and applied them to the building of the prototype Shay locomotive. He turned to the Lima Machine Works to help refine the design and construction of the locomotive, which was patented in 1881. (1)



Shay #3 at Cass Scenic Railroad on September 12, 1992. Image used with permission; copyright Sid Vaught

The Shay was one of the early locomotives that the Lima Machine Works built, and this eventually led to the Lima Locomotive Works, which built some of the most famous and powerful steam locomotives in the United States. Interestingly, some photographs of the Lima plant show Shays being used as switching locomotives for the company, moving larger locomotives and tenders in various parts of the plant. (2)

The genius behind the Shay was that it was perfectly suited for the tracks of most logging railroads. Here is a description of how the early Shays were constructed:

As initially conceived by Shay, the locomotive was a double-truck flatcar weighing around 6 tons and about 22 feet long, with a vertical boiler, fitted at one end with a water tank, and at the other with a fuel supply. Attached on the right-hand side of the boiler was a pair of vertical cylinders, which powered a crankshaft that was linked by means of a longitudinal shaft with universal joints and sliding shafts to each wheel of the locomotive. Bevel spur gears were mounted on the shaft at each wheel and linked to a larger bevel gear on the outer rim of each wheel, reducing the operating speed and increasing the locomotive's torque. (3)



Cass Shays #5 and #11 making switching moves at the Cass Scenic Railroad before coupling on to their log train on May 18, 2012. Used with permission. Copyright Chase Gunnoe.

While the early Shays had a vertical boiler and two vertical cylinders, most Shays were built with a horizontal boiler and three vertical cylinders, as this proved to be a more practical design. The boiler was set to the left side of the engine to allow room for the vertical cylinders on the right. And, Shays were built with either two trucks or three trucks, depending on the amount of power needed by the customer.

The Shay could push or pull a train easily, and because of the gearing design, all wheels were powered. In addition, since the tender had drive wheels under it as well, the weight of the engine was distributed over all of the wheels, providing extra tractive power. This allowed Shays to pull trains up steeper grades than conventional locomotives. The engine's short wheel base allowed operation on sharp curves, up to about 40 degrees. (4)

The Lima Machine Works to help with the refinement of design and construction of the locomotive, and Lima manufactured these engines for 65 years, when the last one was built in 1945. During the 65 years of building the Shay, Lima delivered nearly 3,000 of them to customers in the United States and in other countries. Several Shays are preserved today, most notably at the Cass Scenic Railroad in West Virginia, where they continue to operate on tourist trains.

The Climax

While the Shay was the most successful of the geared locomotives used by logging railroads, the Climax, produced by the Climax Manufacturing Company in Cory, Pennsylvania, made a major contribution to fleet of geared logging locomotives. (5) This company operated from 1888 to 1928, and sold approximately 1,100 locomotives during its years in business. The Climax was designed by George Gilbert, and, while similar to the Shay, it was designed differently.

... the early designs used two cylinders mounted on the center line of the locomotive, which powered a set of spur gears connected to a longitudinal shaft linked to the trucks by means of universal joints and sliding shafts to permit them to swing freely, while bevel gears were used to transmit power to the wheels. A lever permitted the Climax to obtain two gear ratios, based upon torque requirements. A later version, in 1891, used inclined cylinders, one on each side of the boiler, and in 1903, Climax developed a three-cylinder version. (6)



Moore-Keppel Climax #3 running along the Greenbrier River at Durbin, West Virginia on May 17, 2009. Used with permission. Copyright Jonathan Hallman



Cass Scenic Railroad #6, a Heisler, in the Cass Shops, May 17, 2012. Used with permission. Copyright Chase Gunnoe

The Heisler

The Heisler locomotive was also a popular geared locomotive for logging railroads, although not as popular as the Shay and the Climax. Developed by Charles Heisler, a Brooks Locomotive Works engineering student, the Heisler was successful in that approximately 600 units were built during the company's history, which began in 1891 and ended in 1941. The design of the Heisler was as follows:

"It used two cylinders centrally arranged across the engine in a 90-degree V, extending upward on either side of the boiler. The cylinders were connected to a crankshaft under the center of the boiler, which drove the two truck axles through universal joints and bevel gears. The bevel gears drove

the outer axle of each truck; side rods connected the outer and inner axles.” (7)

An early marketing piece trumpeted the advantages of the Heisler, including the fact that all parts of the locomotive were within easy reach of the mechanic. “ALL PARTS ARE EASY TO GET AT. Adjustments and repairs to a Heisler are comparatively few and far between, but when needed, are easily made without the use of pits or extensive shop facilities. All wearing parts are easily accessible for inspection.” (8)

In the next, and final, installment of this series on logging railroads, we’ll take a look at the logging and lumber industry in more detail. This will provide more insight into the business that the logging railroads faithfully served for decades.

1. Middleton, William D., George Smerk and Robert Deal, eds. *The Encyclopedia of North American Railroads*, 2007, Indiana University Press, p. 626.
2. Hirsimaki, Eric. Lima Locomotive Works
3. Middleton, op. cit.
4. Ibid, p. 627
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Heisler Locomotive Works. *Why You Can Haul At Least 30% More Per Ton of Locomotive With the Modern Heisler*. Marketing Brochure reprinted by Periscope Film, LLC, 2008-2010. www.PeriscopeFilm.com.



Crewmen preparing Sumpter Valley Railway Heisler #3 for a photo charter in McEwen, Oregon on May 14, 2010. Used with permission. Copyright Dave Crosby.

Regional History

A Brief History of the North Alabama Railroad Part 2: The Fossick Branch

Text and Photo by Jim Sims

That iron ore and limestone exists in the Russell Valley has been known since the beginning of the nineteenth century. But after the demise of the Cedar Creek Furnace operation in the early 1830s, the explosive 19th century industrial growth bypassed Russellville and Franklin County until the arrival of the early 1880s, when talk of a new industrial city on the Tennessee River began to take shape. It was clear that the planned new city would be a workshop town with influential industrialists focused on producing iron. Included in their plan was to exploit the iron ore and limestone that was plentiful in Franklin County's Russell Valley.

According to an article by Buford Parker that was published by Source Publications, Volume 8, Issue 2, On February 12, 1884, T.L. Fossick, Sr. purchased land, in Franklin County, from the Wood's family and moved his quarry operations from a quarry located a few miles west of Cherokee, in Colbert County, Alabama, to his newly acquired land, naming this new location, Rockwood. Again, according to the Parker article, T.L. Sr., with his sons, T.L. Jr., and George, opened a quarry about four miles southwest of Russellville. (This quarry was not more than one-half mile from the ruins of Joseph Eslip's Cedar Creek Furnace, constructed in 1815.1) There was also a company town that included the County's only Catholic Church.

A great deal of clarification is due here: With the splendid overview of the History of the Northern Alabama Railway, by Evan M. Tidwell, many missing elements have greatly improved the accuracy of the Northern Alabama Railway history. You can read his narrative on his Facebook Page4 at:

<https://www.facebook.com/NorthernAlabamaRailway/info?ref=stream>

The Birmingham & Tennessee River Railway was chartered in 1884 but was renamed the Sheffield & Birmingham Railway about a year later. (Probably when the original constituents of The Alabama Improvement Company fell apart and the company was reorganized2).

When the construction of the new railroad reached Franklin County, Alabama, the railroad had probably already been re-named the Sheffield and Birmingham Railway. As soon as the railroad arrived in Darlington (now Isbell), about two miles south of Russellville, Mr. Fossick promptly constructed the "Fossick Branch line" from the newly arrived railroad, at Darlington, to their quarry at Rockwood. The Fossick company had acquired a small wood burning locomotive that was used to haul their product to the Sheffield & Birmingham interchange. How often the stone was delivered to the S&BRy is unknown. The Fossick branch was one of the first branches on this new railroad. It would also survive the longest.



The mill building is at the far end of the gantry. Here the oolitic limestone is cut to dimension and the final finish is applied. This is the building that was converted during World War II into plant to manufacture shells for the war effort. The Fossick branch came toward the camera on the right side of the mill. There seems to be room for a small yard

The Fossick Company sold the Fossick spur when the parent company of the Sheffield & Birmingham Railway, the Alabama, Tennessee Coal & Iron Company, reorganized and again changed the name of the of the railroad to the Birmingham, Sheffield & Tennessee River Railway, in 1888. Mr. Fossick's price was \$10,000. The Southern Railway acquired the BS&TR, in 1898 and the railroad was again renamed the Northern Alabama Railway shortly thereafter.

Early on, the Fossick Company opened quarries for cutting dimension stone and for processing flux stone for the Tennessee & Alabama Coal & Iron Company and Enoch Ensley's Sheffield Furnace Company. With the death of Enoch Ensley and the collapse of the Alabama, Tennessee Coal & Iron Company, these furnace companies would soon become the property of Sloss-Sheffield Steel and Iron Company and the Tennessee Coal, Iron, & Railroad Company (TCI or frequently called, The Tennessee Company). Both of these corporations developed large ore mining operations. They also opened quarries in the area; some were served by the Fossick Branch. The T.L Fossick Company maintained their main office in the First National Bank Building, in Sheffield, AL.

By the 1920s, the majority of the T.L. Fossick properties were acquired by Foster & Creighton Company. The succession of ownership continued with Foster & Creighton and Russellville Stone Companies being the major players. Foster & Creighton opened Aday quarry, near Waco, AL, located east of the Northern Alabama Railroad. The company placed an 0-6-0 locomotive at this quarry. The major products continued to be dimension stone and flux stone, for the blast furnaces. By this time the iron industries and Florence had failed, the Sheffield industries were failing, but the stone company's flux stone was finding favor with the Iron and steel works in Birmingham.



Large stones line the edges of the road through the complex. An entrance earlier mine can be seen just to the right of center in this photo.



This is the second or third mine opening since the company began mining underground. The mine entrance looks to be nearly forty feet wide and about eighteen feet high. The wife of a previous owner of the company hired artisans from Russia to do the sculpturing on the left side of the entrance and across the mantle

The oolitic dimension stone was gaining National recognition in its own right. Noted for its beauty, hardness and durability, this product was sought after for the façades on premium buildings in cities and universities.

In 1927, Rockwood Alabama Stone Company, a subsidiary of the George A. Fuller Company, of New York, acquired the properties of Foster & Creighton and Russellville Stone Companies.

With the outbreak of World War II, the Rockwood Stone Company converted its mill into an assembly plant for producing shells for the military. The description of the shells made there is unclear but the indications are that they were significantly large. After the war the mill building was reverted to its original purpose of cutting and finishing stone.

In 1956, the company opened its first underground mine. Today's mine is the second or third opening. It is a room and pillar design, with large rooms and with eighteen foot ceilings. The opening is large – at a height of about 18 feet and probably 40 feet in width. When this mine was opened the mining technique was to drill and blast. As we entered the mine, the drilling was very evident by drill marks in the walls and ceiling. However, at some distance into the mine we ceased to see the drill marks in the ceiling and walls. Blasting was banned several years ago and today CNC diamond tipped saws



This is a closer look at the sculpturing that is on the left side to the mine's active entrance.

– Jonathan Stoddart photo

trees that have grown over it. The rails have been removed from US-43 and the track ends short of Alabama Stone's Rockwood plant.



Surprisingly, a short piece of the Fossick branch still exist. This view is looking south, down the Northern Alabama main. the only portion of the Fossick branch, that apparently remains active, is from this switch, to just beyond the Norfolk Southern's distant signal, at the 248 mile marker.

do the work, much faster and quieter than the old manual saws and certainly much safer than blasting.

Back in May of this year, I called Alabama Stone to request a visit to their plant in Rockwood, AL. My request was quickly accepted and appointment was made. At noon, my grandson, Jonathan Stoddart and I arrived at the plant office. Shortly, Mike Hester, of Alabama Stone, greeted us and asked, "Are you ready to see the mine?" After a short safety lecture, we began the tour.

On the way out, Mr. Hester veered a short distance off the main corridor to show us a relic from the past. It was a very old Ingersoll-Rand two-stage compressor – once used to supply compressed air to run the pneumatic drills so many years ago. The compressor components were attached to an iron bed with a very large but thin electric motor mounted between the two cylinders. I believe the design was late nineteenth century. It was certainly a candidate for a museum, even though it had been somewhat vandalized by thieves wanting the copper wire.

The Fossick Branch survived into the 1990s. The railroad can still be found running alongside CR-36, under the weeds and

Today, the company is Alabama Stone, a Vetter Stone Company, and continues to cut and mill the oolitic limestone into dimensional blocks and columns as it's been done here since 1884. Stone product from these quarries are contained in many famous buildings in cities, Universities, and Federal buildings, in our nation's Capital, including the White House.

The Fossick branch served quarries first opened by T.L. Fossick, Sr. and served these quarries and mines for more than one-hundred years, likely making it the longest surviving spur on the Northern Alabama Railway.

I would like to thank Alabama Stone employees Mike Hester for showing us the mine, and Audrey Marsh for providing much of the background information about the company's history.

Footnotes:

1. The Source, Volume 8, Issue 2, Rockwood Stone Company and Shell Plant
2. The Story of Coal & Iron; Ethel Armes; page 29
3. Sheffield, City on the Bluff; Friends of the Sheffield Public Library; page 12
4. Evan M. Tidwell. His Facebook page at the address noted in the article.

Golden Era Classics



"Is this for real," you might ask? A color photo of the Illinois Central's "City of Miami" in its original tropical "bow-wave" color scheme? Well, yes and no. The enhanced image is in fact from an original black and white Pullman Company publicity photo taken at the Chicago plant in 1940. However, like many early railroad color images, the original photo has been painstakingly colorized "by hand" with the aid of photo editing software by a master of the art, Tom Alderman. Look for more of Tom's outstanding "pseudochromes" to be featured exclusively in future issues of The Mid-South Flyer.



From the Observation Platform

Commentary by John Browning, Mid-South Chapter President

I hope everyone has had a great summer and hopefully had time to work in a few railroad related activities. Summer usually provides most of us with a few rail fanning opportunities, whether on vacation or around home. This summer, my wife and I had the opportunity to take a day trip on the Saratoga and North Creek Railway in upper state New York. We had a great trip along the Hudson River through the Adirondack Mountains. One leg of the trip was pulled by a BL2 and an E8. I hope each of you also had a chance to have a little rail fanning fun.

I enjoyed getting to see and talk with many of you at our chapter picnic in July. Everyone enjoyed the slide show that Marvin Clemons presented and seemed to enjoy our annual calendar photo contest. We had some great entries this year and I believe that the new calendar will look great.

Your Board of Directors has recently looked at several issues. We are discussing plans to hopefully provide you with some really great programs and activities during the next year. The new wooden steps for accessing the caboose are now in place and really look great. Plans are moving forward for the long awaited Frank Ardrey exhibit. I personally think that this exhibit is something that our membership will be very proud of. Our new archives committee has already started working on plans to establish a permanent archive for the chapter. There are many potential projects available for chapter participation. If any of you are interested in serving on a committee or working on a project, please contact me or any other board member. We will gladly find a place for you to serve. Remember, this is your chapter and your help is needed.

I look forward to seeing you at our November meeting. We are planning to have a great program presented by Eric McFerrin from Red Mountain Park. You don't want to miss this presentation. Until next time....