



The Mid-South Flyer

Winter 2016



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

Birmingham's "Great Temple of Travel" to be featured topic at Annual Membership Meeting

A book signing and slide program on Birmingham's late "great temple of travel," Terminal Station, will highlight the MidSouth Chapter's annual membership meeting on January 23 at the Historic Leeds Depot beginning at 2:00PM.

Author and Mid-South member Marvin Clemons will give a talk on his recently released book, "*Great Temple of Travel—A Pictorial of Birmingham Terminal Station*." Clemons will also sign copies of his book both before and after the meeting, beginning at 1:00 in the depot Agent's office, and in the main meeting room at the conclusion of the program.

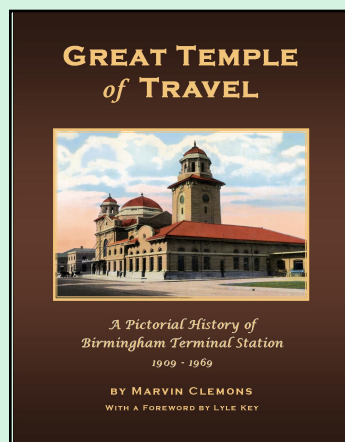
"*Great Temple of Travel*" is a sequel to "*Birmingham Rails*" published in 2007 and co-authored by Clemons and fellow Mid-South member Lyle Key. It is the first published pictorial history of Terminal Station, which was constructed in 1909 to serve Birmingham's burgeoning rail passenger business. Designed by Atlanta architect Thornton Marye, who also designed stations in Atlanta and Mobile, the European cathedral-like structure was then considered the finest railroad station in the New South, and one of the finest in the world, according to the leading London architectural society. At the time of its grand opening, the *Birmingham News* heralded Terminal Station as Birmingham's "great temple of travel," the moniker chosen for the title of the new book.

"*Great Temple*" begins with a discussion of the early evolution of Birmingham's passenger railroads, beginning with the first simple wooden passenger station built in 1873 to serve the Louisville & Nashville and Alabama Great Southern railroads, followed by the Romanesque-style Union Station built in 1887 to accommodate the phenomenal population growth from expanded mining and manufacturing in the "Magic City." As more railroads entered the district, the increase in rail passenger service soon outstripped Union Station's limited capacity, and plans were laid for the new Terminal Station. In following chapters, the book details the station's design and construction, the local rail network that connected the five railroads that served it, and a detailed history of each railroad's passenger service.

The book includes a discussion of the conditions that led to Terminal Station's demise, and lays to rest much of the speculation surrounding the station's untimely removal in 1969. A final chapter, aptly entitled "A Southern Revival," pays tribute to station owner Southern Railway's resurrected premier passenger service during the last decade of Birmingham Terminal Company. A detailed synopsis of the book and a short history of the station is available on the book's website at www.templeoftravel.net.



Terminal Station looking east along Fifth Avenue N. (Ed Dismukes)





Mid-South Chapter Update

by James Lowery, Acting 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 2016. 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.

Election of Board Members and Officers

At the Chapter's Annual Meeting on January 23, 2016, the membership will be asked to elect or re-elect members of the Board of Directors and Officers for terms that have expired or that have been vacant. The Board of Directors has nominated the following persons to fill the positions indicated:

Re-election of Board members Larry Kelpke and Donnie Strickland
Election of new Board members Frank Little and Brad Watson
Re-election of Carl Marbury as Vice President
Election of Acting President James Lowery as President

Year in Review -- Chapter Projects

The Mid-South Chapter has had a great year, in part due to several member-led projects such as the following:

Frank Ardrey Photography Exhibit (See more information below.) (Project Lead: Donnie Strickland)
Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project (See more information below.) (Project Lead: James Lowery)
Digital Archives (Project Lead: Donnie Strickland)
Mid-South Chapter Facebook Page Creation and Postings (Project Lead: Donnie Strickland)
Mid-South Region Railfan Events Calendar (See Mid-South Chapter website.) (Project Lead: Lamont Downs)
Website Creation, Implementation, and Updating (Project Lead: Lamont Downs)
Railroad Theming the walls in the Leeds Historic Depot (Initial and continuing project) (Project Lead: Tim Smith, Larry Kelpke, and Donnie Strickland)
Restoration of Birmingham Terminal Station Baggage Cart (Project Lead: Larry Kelpke)

Frank Ardrey Photography Exhibit -- Update

The Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society is pleased to announce it has completed digitizing the Frank Ardrey Collection of historic photographs. Chapter member Donnie Strickland recently completed the scanning and editing of a little over 2,000 images, and member Lamont Downs has placed them on the chapter's website, which can be viewed at the URL: <http://rlhs.org/Chapters/msc/ardrey/index.html>

Frank Ardrey was a longtime Southern Railway employee and an enthusiastic rail photographer. His images are some of the most well-known of his era, from the 1940's and 1950's. At his death, Mr. Ardrey bequeathed his photographic print collection to the Mid-South Chapter; the collection includes images taken by Mr. Ardrey and other contemporary photographers, who traded images with him. One room of the Leeds Historic Depot has been transformed into the Frank Ardrey Exhibit, with a video screen that plays a slideshow of images from the Collection. The Ardrey Exhibit was made possible through contributions to the R&LHS national organization's Friends Campaign.

Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project -- Update

Another major project of the Mid-South Chapter is the Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project which Chapter member James Lowery is coordinating and implementing. This project is installing signs throughout the Birmingham area and into outlying cities such as Oneonta, Helena, West Blocton, Woodstock, etc., where the historic steam-train era L&N Birmingham Mineral Railroad (BMRR) ran and provided industrial rail service, as well as passenger service on some of the branches. The project is progressing on schedule with 50 signs having been installed as of early January 2016 and 30 more signs scheduled for installation. The project's website at <http://Bham-MRR.com> contains project information as well as historical maps, photographs, and documentation. The purpose of the signs project is to raise awareness among the general public, historians, teachers, students, tourists, etc., about the locations and extent of L&N's Birmingham Mineral Railroad. The BMRR signs project was made possible through contributions to the R&LHS national organization's Friends Campaign.

MidSouth Chapter News

Bookmark This!

The Mid-South Chapter's website is back bigger and better than ever, now with an updated, easier to use home page. You can access issues of the *Mid-South Flyer* back to the beginning of publication in 2009 (issues are available online one year after issue). View the beginnings of an online Frank Ardrey Exhibit, with photos arranged by state or railroad (an additional listing by photographer is coming soon). You can easily access our Facebook and YouTube pages, as well as information on the Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project. And, of course, read more about the Mid-South Chapter and the Historic Leeds Depot.

Be sure to check out our Mid-South Region Railfan Events Calendar (<http://www.rlhs.org/Chapters/msc/events.html>) for information on regional meetings, conventions, and train shows; we now have listings for 2016. If you know of events in the Mid-South region not listed please let us know; this calendar will only be as useful as the information we receive.

You can access our pages in two ways: Either go to the National R&LHS site at www.rlhs.org and choose Chapters > Mid-South from the menu bar along the top, or go directly to www.rlhs.org/Chapters/mid_south.shtml. And don't forget to bookmark us!



Community education regarding the role of railroads is an important task of the MidSouth Chapter, especially among our youth who have little contact with the railroad. So we were delighted when we received a call from Cathy Fowler, the Bear Den Leader of Cub Scout Pack 275 of Leeds, to take her Scouts and their parents on a tour of the depot. On Saturday, January 9, Cathy (seated second from left) and Cub master Jason Storey (seated to Cathy's right) and their five "Cubs" spent the morning exploring the agent's office and exhibits with member Marvin Clemons (standing at left). Cathy reported that the group thoroughly enjoyed learning about the 132 year old depot and local railroad history. The Scouts have offered to assist the chapter on future projects, and we look forward to hosting them again. (Photo by Donnie Strickland)

The “Texas” finds a new home

Text and photo by David Lester



Anyone familiar with the U.S. Civil War has likely heard the story of the "Great Locomotive Chase," also known as "Andrews Raid." While this was not a major event in the war, the story is filled with daring and intrigue. On the morning of April 12, 1862, a group of northerners, led by James Andrews, commandeered a northbound passenger train pulled by the locomotive *General*. Once they were in control of the train, they moved it to "Big Shanty," north of Atlanta, which is now the city of Kennesaw. While the crew and passengers were eating breakfast at a hotel adjacent to the line, Andrews and his team uncoupled most of the cars, and took off with the train. Their plan was to do as much damage as possible to the Western & Atlantic railroad, a vital link from Atlanta to Chattanooga. However, they did very little damage, cutting a few telegraph wires and pulling up some rails, all of which were repaired quickly.

Upon realizing what had happened, several railroad men began chasing the train, first on foot, then aboard three locomotives. The last locomotive the southern railroad men used was the *Texas*, which eventually caught up with the *General* as it ran out of coal and steam. The northern raiders dispersed, but Confederate soldiers captured most of them, while some escaped and eight, including Andrews, were caught and hanged as spies. Several who escaped back to the North were given the first Congressional Medal of Honor. In my view, the best account of the locomotive chase is a book entitled *Stealing the General - The Great Locomotive Chase and the Medal of Honor*, by Atlanta attorney Russell Bonds, published in 2008. The Wall Street Journal called this book "magnificent and definitive."



The “Texas” loaded aboard a lowboy trailer for transport to its new home at the Atlanta History Center

For many years, the *General* has been displayed in Kennesaw at the Big Shanty Museum, which is now known as the Southern Museum of Civil War & Locomotive History. The *Texas*, on the other hand, has been on display for decades in a Civil War museum in the Grant Park section of Atlanta, which was one of Atlanta's earliest suburbs. Grant Park is now adjacent to downtown Atlanta, and has become a popular neighborhood for young professionals. The Cyclorama Building in Grant Park has been home to the *Texas* since 1927, which has only received minor cosmetic repair during the decades it has resided there. In addition to the *Texas*, the museum has housed a magnificent painting/diorama that depicts the Battle of Atlanta, which will also be restored to its original beauty.

Both the *Texas* and the *Battle of Atlanta* painting/diorama will be moved from the Cyclorama Building in Grant Park to the Atlanta History Center, located in Buckhead, just down the street from the Governor's Mansion. The Cyclorama Building will be renovated by Atlanta's zoo, Zoo Atlanta, which is right next-door, and will use it for their purposes. A new building is being constructed on the Atlanta History Center campus to house both artifacts, and the *Texas* will be visible at night through large glass windows that will front West Paces Ferry Road. The Atlanta History Center has raised \$38 million to fund this project, which will give new life and increased visibility to these Civil War treasures.

Along the Mid-South Rail Trail

North Alabama depot marks site of historic Civil War railroad junction

(Editor's note: The following article by Kelly Kazek appeared in the December 11, 2015 edition of the *Birmingham News*)

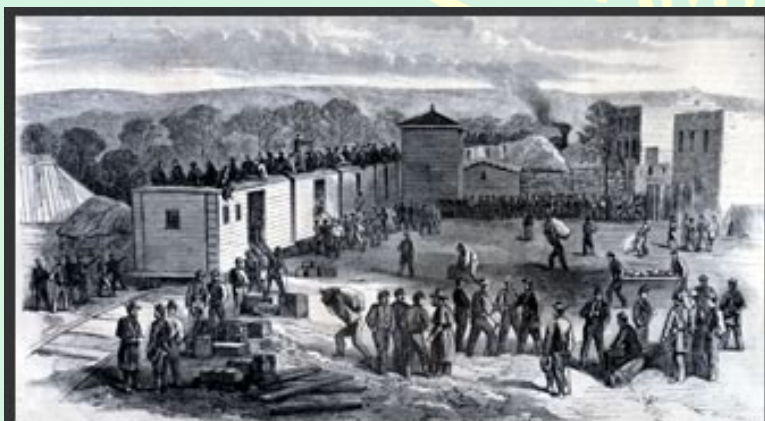
The Jackson County town of Stevenson, Ala., is small and quiet today, but in the mid-1800s it was a bustling rail hub targeted by Union troops during the Civil War.

According to an application to place downtown Stevenson on [the National Register of Historic Places](#): "The town of Stevenson owes its very existence to the railroads; it was founded by and named for Vernon King Stevenson, who was president of the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad Company from 1846-1864. In 1851-52, the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad was built through what was to become Stevenson." Today, it is home to about 2,000 people who celebrate their town's origins with a Depot Days Festival, held the first week of each June.



Stevenson in the Civil War

By the start of the Civil War, just nine years after a depot was completed through Stevenson to serve the Nashville & Chattanooga and the Memphis & Charleston Railroads, the town was an important transportation and supply hub, making it a target for Union troops. An article on [Encyclopedia of Alabama](#) says: "The town contributed many members of Company G of the Seventh Regiment of Alabama 12 Month Volunteers to the war effort. In 1862, the town was first occupied by Union forces, who maintained a supply depot there. The Confederacy countered in August 1862, only to find out that Union forces had already pulled out of the town. In July 1863, Union forces under the command of General William Rosecrans retook the town and maintained control of it until after the surrender of Robert E. Lee in 1865."



Stevenson Rail Depot

Some Civil War sites have been preserved, including the earthwork remains of three

military redoubts at Fort Harker, a Union fort built in the summer of 1862 by soldiers and freed slaves who made up the Army of the Cumberland. It is now a park and tourist attraction. According to the City of Stevenson, the fort was located where it could easily fire on the depot, supply centers, warehouses and the town itself. The fort was the headquarters of Gen. William Rosencrans.

Historic District

The remains of Fort Harker are part of Stevenson's preserved historic district listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The district also includes 34 buildings, a 19th-century railroad water reservoir, the ruins of a large Queen Anne Victorian home, the site of a military hospital, and 1.5-miles of track of two historic railroads that formed a junction in town.

The historic depot and hotel, built to accommodate rail passengers, date to 1872. They were built on the site of the original 1852 depot, which was destroyed near the end of, or just after, the Civil War. The buildings were originally simple in design, although an observation tower was added to the depot later in the 1800s and some design elements were later added to the hotel.



A wonderful story about the hotel is recounted in the [application for the National Register of Historic Places](#): "The Stevenson Hotel was the center of all cultural activities for Stevenson in the 1800s. Here in the dining room was served the first ice tea and shown the first motion picture show in Stevenson's history. One day in April, 1913, the hotel was unexpectedly inundated by trainload after trainload of hungry former Confederate soldiers who were on their way to a reunion in Chattanooga. The townspeople of Stevenson pitched in, made sandwiches and brought them down to the hotel. That day about fifty trains passed through Stevenson,



Railroad History

The Birmingham Belt, Part 1

By John Stewart, Contributing Editor



The Birmingham Belt RR was a subsidiary of the St. Louis and San Francisco (Frisco) RR and operated around the central business district of the City of Birmingham, AL. Many of the references to the Birmingham Belt indicate it was chartered in 1899 and purchased by the Frisco in 1902. This information is accurate, but it is not the whole story of the Birmingham Belt. In fact, the Belt was a “teenager” of about 14 in 1899 when it was reportedly “founded”. Like many teenagers the Belt had grand dreams but limited means to carry them out. Let’s take a look at the Belt from the time of its suggested “real” birthday about 1885.

The Elyton Land Company (ELC) founded the City of Birmingham in 1871 at the junction of two railroads in order to take advantage of the remarkable occurrence of the three natural resources needed to make iron on either side of Jones Valley in Jefferson County, AL. The new city was laid out on either side of the “Railroad Reservation” where it was planned that new industry would locate along the South and North Alabama RR (later L&N) and the Alabama & Chattanooga RR (later Al Great Southern). The original plat of the City labels this “Railroad Reservation – Reserved for Mechanical Enterprises”.

In spite of the well laid plans of the ELC to develop an industrial city called Birmingham, it would be over 10 years before serious development occurred. There was a cholera epidemic and a national financial “panic” in 1873 which slowed development. Nevertheless, the stockholders of the ELC held on to their dreams and the City did begin to develop in the early middle 1880’s.

In 1883, the Georgia Pacific RR arrived in Birmingham from Atlanta and entered into negotiations with the ELC for right-of-way into and through the City. It is interesting to understand that the ELC had chartered the City of Birmingham even though the ELC owned the (over) 4,000 acres where the city was located. The City government theoretically controlled the public streets but the ELC effectively placed the first three mayors of Birmingham in office. Thus in these early days of the City the railroads apparently came to the ELC to determine how they would be routed into town.



1885 Aerial Drawing of Birmingham showing Highland Ave RR, 22nd St Viaduct and proposed “Union Station” at 20th Street

The first mention of a “Belt” railroad is found in the Minute Books of the ELC in May, 1883. These Minute Books were transcribed and printed in a fine bound edition by the late Thomas West for the Birmingham Jefferson Historical Society; the original minute books are in the Birmingham Public Library Archives. The Minute Books indicate that the ELC and the Ga. Pacific negotiated for the location of the Ga. Pacific and a “Belt Railroad”. Ultimately the locations were agreed upon. It is not clear but the location of the Georgia Pacific in 27th Street North along the City Limit line may have been considered a “belt” location. Regardless, the Georgia Pacific did not end up as the “belt railroad” in Birmingham.

Once development began to occur the ELC realized that they needed a water supply system as well as a transportation system. Both of these enterprises were started and developed. In his book "Street Railways of Birmingham" (1976) Alvin Hudson tells us that "the Highland Avenue Railway was a horse carline which first ran on July 1, 1885". This date is suggested as the true "birthday" of the Birmingham Belt RR. The horse cars soon were replaced with steam "dummies" about June, 1886; these were small steam engines shrouded to look like horse cars. The Highland Avenue Ry started on North 1st Street and then followed 22nd Street on a wooden viaduct over the Railroad Reservation to Avenue E where it split to follow Avenue E both east and west. This formed a loop to the "Highlands" which was undeveloped residential land belonging to the ELC. The Highlands needed transportation access in order to develop.



Highland Ave & Belt RR, steam dummy and open coaches at Lakeview Park, Highlands, Birmingham (Hudson & Cox)

The Historic American Building Survey and Historic American Engineering Record (HABS-HAER) had a team in Birmingham in the early 1990's. One work product of the team is "Birmingham District Railroads" (1992) by Scott C and Mark M Brown. This includes a section on the Birmingham Belt and references several early works about Birmingham's development. One is Willis J. Milner's manuscript "History of Highland Avenue", which was built to follow the steam dummy line through the Highlands. Willis J. Milner was the brother of John T. Milner who was the engineer for the South and North Alabama RR, and a key player in the location of Birmingham.

Willis Milner became the secretary of the ELC and also their de facto engineer laying out the company's railroad. As told in Birmingham District Railroads, Willis Milner had a vision that the ELC would develop a railroad to serve a large part of the Birmingham Industrial District which would be far larger than the ELC's original land holdings of the original City plat. It is stated that the original charter of the ELC's railroad included lines to the Warrior River, although this never came to pass.

In 1887, the ELC issued stock for a company settling on the name "Highland Avenue and Belt Railroad Company". The new stock created a free standing railroad company and the stock was given to the stockholders of the ELC as a "dividend". This was effectively an ELC subsidiary as was the Water Works.

Thus, in concept, the Birmingham Belt might be considered to be an ill-fated forerunner of the Birmingham Southern, or as noted by Historian Ethel Armes in The Story of Iron and Coal in Alabama, a forerunner of the Birmingham Mineral, which was developed by the L&N and did in fact serve most of the Birmingham District. The L&N began to extend the Mineral RR in about 1885; the forerunner of the Birmingham Southern to the Warrior River, the Ensley Southern was completed in 1902.

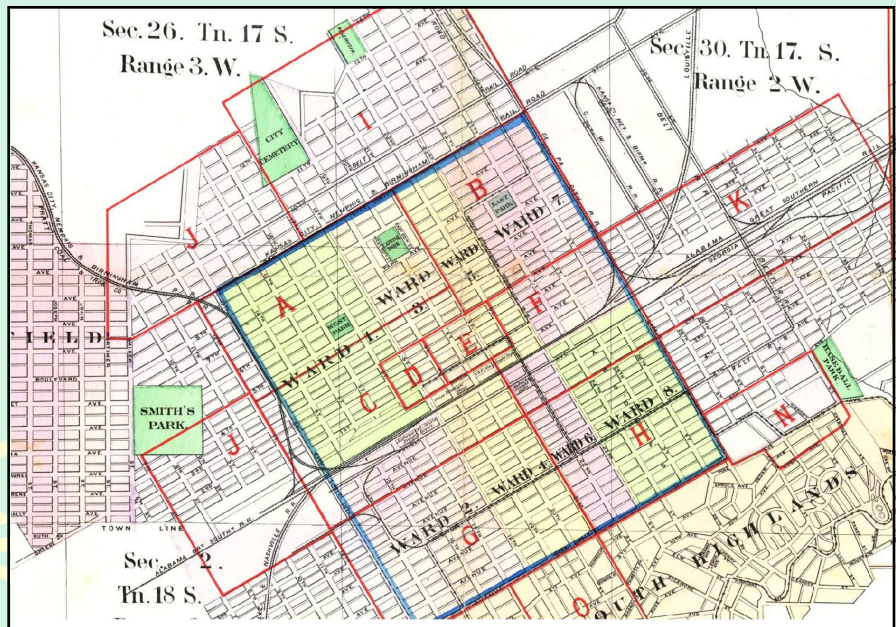
The real estate business of the ELC boomed from about 1883 to late 1886, and then began to slow down to a crawl. Ultimately there was yet another national financial panic in 1893 and the effects lasted for several more years.

Apparently the ELC and their subsidiary the Highland Avenue and Belt RR made hay while the sun was shining. Maps of 1887 show the Belt RR had extended lines from Avenue E to the east to 32nd Street, turning north and crossing the Railroad Reservation, past Sloss Furnace all the way to 10th Avenue North.

At 10th Avenue North the line split with one branch following 10th Avenue North to the west, paralleling the Kansas City, Memphis and Birmingham (future Frisco) one block to the south on 9th. The other leg of the Belt

extended north to the new Water Works on Village Creek, with another branch shown along the aqueduct of the water works to the dam further upstream on Village Creek. Another branch is shown extending north into newly developing "North Birmingham" which was not a development of the ELC.

The leg of the Belt RR extending west along 10th Avenue North is shown extending to about 15th Street North. It is shown on some maps to extend on a diagonal to 13th Street North and then extending south along 13th Street North to a terminus about 3rd Avenue North.



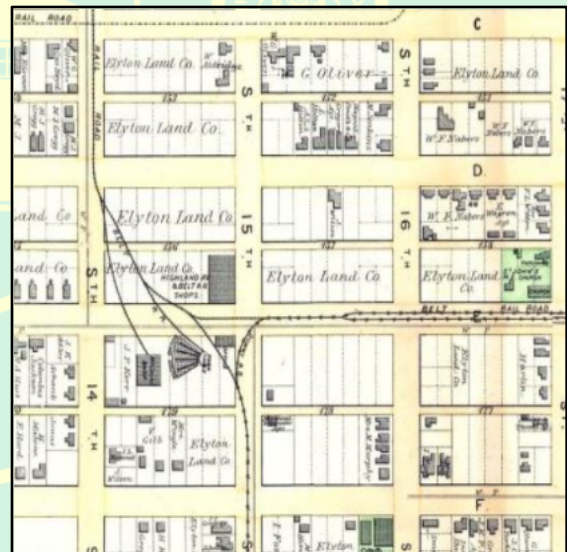
The line described above would "box in" the east side and north side of downtown Birmingham. Some of the line in the NE corner of this "box" was apparently located outside the ELC holdings.

On the south side of the City and south of the Railroad Reservation, the Belt occupied Avenue E (5th Avenue South) from the curve to 32nd Street South extending east to 15th Street South. There the line turned northwest on a diagonal to 14th Street South and occupied 14th Street going toward the Railroad Reservation.

The Belt operated an engine terminal and office at the SW corner of Avenue E and 15th Street South complete with a turntable, engine house and fuel station. No photographs of this facility have been found to date.

As 14th Street South approached the Railroad Reservation there are different versions of the Belt's track arrangement shown on different maps of the 1887-88 time period. It seems clear that the Belt did not extend north across the Railroad Reservation. It is not clear if the Kansas City, Memphis and Birmingham extended south across the Railroad Reservation at this time, although eventually it would.

Thus, the Belt did not make a complete loop of Birmingham's downtown area, instead making a partial loop that did not close on the west side. A study of different maps of this period creates some questions about the details of track location on the NW, NE and SE corners. The map above appears conceptual.



Beers, Ellis Atlas of Birmingham 1887

This is where we will leave the development of the Birmingham Belt RR for Part 1, about the year 1888. We know that the railroad continued to operate in its basic "almost-a-loop" configuration around what would become downtown Birmingham. And we know that the fortunes of the new workshop city would take a turn toward economic doldrums during much of the next 10 years, leading up to 1899. In the next installment we will seek to learn more about this time period, and the transition to the ownership by the Frisco in 1902. We will seek to answer the question: "Just what did the Frisco buy in 1902?"

Virtual Model Railroading: Threat or Menace?

By Lamont Downs

A look at *Trainz*

Trainz was first released in 2001 and since then has been updated every one or two years. The latest version is *Trainz: A New Era (T:ANE)* which appeared earlier this year. *Trainz* is published by N3V, an Australian game developer (formerly Auran), but features railroads from all over the world, including a great deal of North American content.

Following in the footsteps of *Microsoft Train Simulator*, *Trainz* includes a Driver module which places you in the locomotive cab, where you have a choice of simple ("DCC") mode or full Cab mode with control over braking, throttle positions, etc. *Trainz* comes with a number of built-in layouts ("routes") to choose from, often featuring challenges or puzzles of various sorts, and some users never go beyond this point.

However, what really sets *Trainz* apart is the Surveyor module, in which you can build your own routes using a large collection of very powerful tools. Perhaps the best way to describe these is to use them.

Building a Scene Step By Step

The basic building block for any landscape is a "board," a 720x720 meter square gray surface marked off with a 10 meter grid. (You can set your route under construction for non-metric units if you wish, but this will remain unchanged). You can add as many boards as you want; some layout builders have built routes with over 10,000 boards without problems.

The board is flat to start with, but unless you're modeling western Kansas this will not be very useful. Therefore there are tools to raise and lower selected areas. You can also create "displacement maps," grayscale images where the lighter the color the higher the land. Using programs available online, you can even use government topographic information to create a landscape replicating a real geographic area, with colored lines showing the locations of roads, tracks, waterways, etc. There are also USGS maps available online for free download going back to the early 1900s as well as aerial photos starting in 2011. In our case we are simply going to use the raise/lower tools, first to create a range of hills along the left side (Fig. 1).

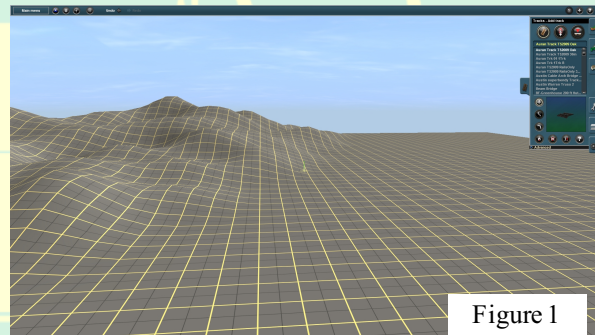


Figure 1

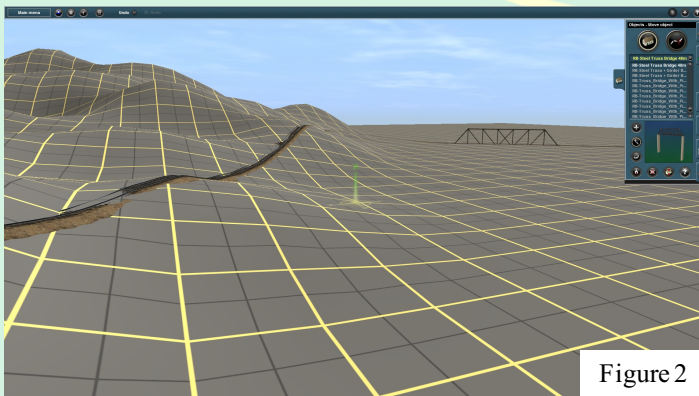


Figure 2

Of course, no model railroad is much to look at without tracks, so the next step is to use the tracklaying tools to add a track descending along the hillside and eventually crossing a river on a bridge. Tracklaying is a simple operation: click on a selected type of track, click on the board (a white circle will appear called a "spline point") and move the mouse pointer to where you want the track to end and click again. Your track will appear, draped over the landscape (Fig. 2). To add a second piece of track, click on your ending

spline point and move the mouse again to where you want the second section to stop and click again. You can straighten the resulting track with another tool; otherwise the program will create a smooth curve where they join. There are two kinds of bridges available: one is a kind of track and can be stretched to any length, to create very long bridges over wide waterways or valleys; the other is similar to sectional track with a fixed length with spline points at each end to attach tracks to. This particular bridge is a fixed length bridge.

At this point your track looks like it was created by an intoxicated roller-coaster designer, so the next step is to create a smooth descending grade by adjusting the height of the spline points. You can do this by eye, simply raising or lowering the spline points with an appropriate tool, but it's much more accurate to use a different tool to set a specific gradient, such as 2% descending. This will also get our bridge up off the ground (Fig. 3). Notice that part of the track is now buried in the hillside.

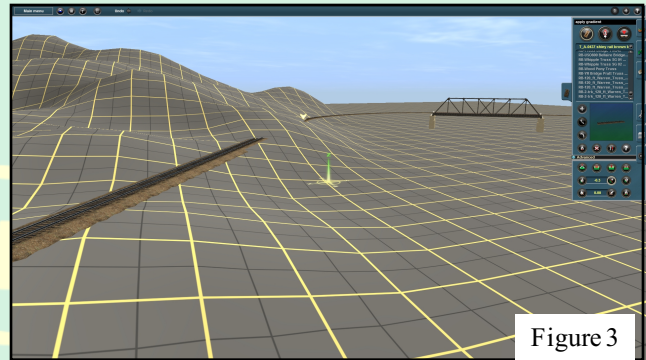


Figure 3

Therefore, we now use another very powerful tool called "Smooth Spline" which in effect grades our right of way for us. Click on a section of track and instantly the ground along the track is raised or lowered appropriately.

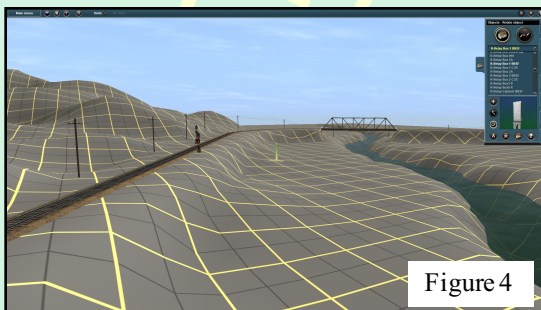


Figure 4

Trainz provides a bewildering variety of additional "assets" (objects) that can be placed anywhere. These include buildings (including stations), lineside relay boxes, and just about anything else you can think of. There are also "stretchable" objects, called "splines" (track is a kind of spline that trains can run on), which can include roads and power lines. In this case we've added a trackside pole line.

Trainz also provides a wide variety of trackside objects, such as signals. At present one has a choice of Safetrans, older "Nickel Plate" style color-light, searchlight, position-light

(Pennsylvania), color-position-light (B&O), and semaphore signals, including many railroad-specific versions of these. Almost all of these were created by devoted community modelers, as the *Trainz* programmers pretty much stick to improving the program itself. Currently the "Download Station," to which registered *Trainz* users can contribute their own creations, includes well over a hundred thousand different models. We've added a set of color-light signals, as well as using the lower-land tool to create a river and the water tool to add shimmering water (Fig. 4).

So far we still have that ugly grey and yellow grid staring at us, much like raw benchwork. It's time to use our artistic skills and start painting. However, we don't paint solid colors; we paint textures (such as ballast, weeds, grass, bare rock, etc.) from a palette of hundreds of choices. As you can see in Fig. 5, it makes all the difference. (We've hidden the water to see the riverbed more easily).

Now this is just fine if we're modeling a desert scene, but most of us will want some vegetation as well. Fortunately, among its immense catalog

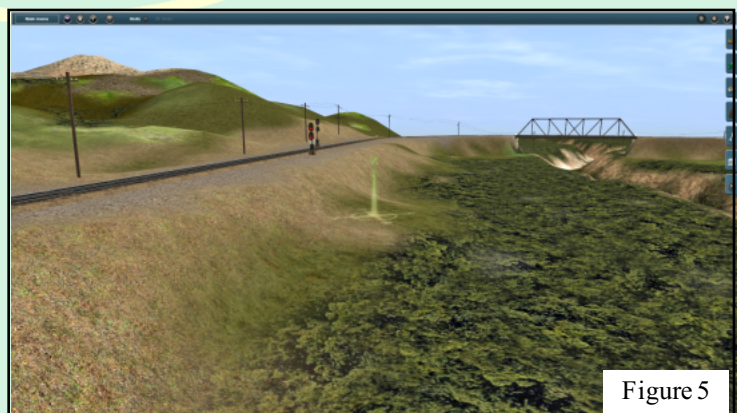


Figure 5

of available "assets" (objects) *Trainz* includes a wide variety of trees, bushes and shrubs. In Fig. 6 we've added a few to make our scene a little greener. Some modelers have added literally thousands of trees to their routes, so if you want forests you can have them (up to the limits of your computer and graphics card, of course).

One thing is still missing: a train! Since the UP Big Boy is a perennial favorite, to finish up we've chosen one to head a short way freight (Fig. 7). Total time to create this scene: about 35 minutes.



Figure 6

At this point you're ready to run your train (although in this case you only have a few hundred feet of track, so there's no place to go).

However, if you prefer to do your train watching from trackside, you have another option: AI trains. Yes, AI means Artificial Intelligence (although after battling with some of *Trainz's* quirks you may dispute the "intelligence" part). You can place a train on your route and set up a route for it to follow by adding markers to your track (called, not surprisingly, trackmarks). You can have your train follow a complex route through junctions, large yards, and intricate industrial trackage by adding enough trackmarks and including them in

your schedule. You can set up multiple trains to run at once as well, and if you've placed signals in the right places those trains *should* stay out of each others' way. Best of all, thanks to a piece of specialized track called a "portal," you can have trains appear seemingly randomly (you specify the consists and how many minutes between, and the portal will randomly emit a fresh train to your specifications). How many you can run depends upon the power of your computer; the author has found that on his equipment *Trainz* starts to get a bit squirrely with more than fifty trains running at once (your mileage may vary).



Figure 7

So, to return to our initial question, is virtual model railroading a threat to traditional modeling? There's no real answer except your own personal opinion. The author's is that different kinds of people do physical versus virtual modeling. Those with manual skills, who enjoy working with tools and materials, will probably gravitate to the former. Those who are computer-oriented and/or computer game-oriented will likely prefer the latter. Those with limited space who want to create large railroads don't have a lot of choice, though a quite fascinating switching layout can be created in a remarkably small area. And, of course, some will want to do both.

Certainly there's no support for brick-and-mortar hobby stores in virtual model railroading—or is there? Even if physical modeling were to disappear (which is doubtful at best) there will continue to be a wide market for prototype information (books, videos, plans). In the virtual world there is a modest market for "payware," digital models built to a higher standard that cost real money.

Ultimately both are different but related hobbies. Each will have to survive on its own merits.

Golden Era Classics



Alright, Central of Georgia fans, heads up! These two classic 1960s Alabama slides of (above) ALCO RS3 #147 switching Camp Hill, and (below) manifest freight #29 pulling the grade at Rose Hill, were taken by none other than our own Frank Ardrey. And you thought Frank only shot in black & white! Frank's son (and MidSouth member) Carl sent these "teaser" scans from his dad's slide collection, and Carl says there are many more. Anyone interested in a future chapter program featuring "Frank Ardrey, In Color?"

