



# The Mid-South Flyer

Spring 2016



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

## April Meeting Highlight

# Presenting Frank Ardrey — in color!

Anyone familiar with the name of Frank Ardrey knows of Frank's reputation as one of the South's leading black & white photographers from the post-WWII era. Pick up most any book of Southeastern railroad photography from the period, and you'll find examples of Frank's classic shots of steam and first-generation diesel power in an around the Birmingham District.

With the passing of steam, Frank laid down his camera and retired to his photo lab, where he spent many happy hours developing untold prints from his large format negative collection to sell and trade with other photographers.

Then in the mid-1960s, Frank picked up a 35mm camera and set out to document the remaining small-town railroad depots before they, too, had all disappeared. What isn't generally known is that during his depot rambles, Frank also photographed the trains that happened by, much as he did back in the day when he would shoot the occasional diesel-powered train as he waited to take a steam shot. But with one significant difference: While the bulk of his early photography was black & white, Frank's later shots were taken in color!



On one of his depot junkets, Frank grabbed this well-framed shot of Southern's "Birmingham Special" at Attalla, AL in January 1967



While shooting the Cedartown, GA depot in 1969, Frank caught a passing SCL freight en route to Atlanta

According to son Carl, from the mid-60s to mid-70s, Frank catalogued around 2,500 Kodachrome slides of freight and passenger trains across the Southeast. "Generally, these were trains he stumbled across on depot trips and on his business travels," Carl said. Also photographed were several head-end rides on early Heart of Dixie Railroad Club's diesel trips, and an occasional special event such as a derailment. (Your editor recalls one such occasion in the early 1970s, when he came upon Frank waiting patiently in Irondale to shoot a Union Pacific passenger special en route to the Master's Golf Tournament in Augusta, GA).

In a their first public showing, Carl will share some examples of Frank's color photography at the April 30 meeting of the MidSouth Chapter. You don't want to miss it!

**Meeting Reminder!** The next meeting of the MidSouth Chapter will be held Saturday, April 30, at 2PM at the Historic Leeds Depot. Before the meeting, Marvin Clemons will be signing copies of his new book on Terminal Station in the Agent's Office. See you at the depot!





# Mid-South Chapter Update

*by James Lowery, Chapter 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.

## Leeds Historic Depot Interior Walls Painted

The Chapter had a very successful “painting day” at the Leeds Historic Depot on March 26 with nine members participating and finishing before noon! The walls of the baggage room were painted in preparation for the Chapter’s planned mounting of railroad-themed large photographs and railroad-related artifacts on the walls. The Chapter donated the paint for this purpose, and the walls look really nice with their fresh coat of paint. The Chapter is very appreciative of the Leeds Historical Society for its support of our efforts at the Depot and our plans for railroad-theming the baggage room. Our next step is to select the photos to be enlarged into murals and have them mounted on the walls.

## Terminal Station Baggage Cart Restoration

A beautiful restoration (by Larry Kelpke with assistance from several Chapter members) of a baggage cart from the Birmingham Terminal Station has been completed and is on permanent display in the baggage room at the Leeds Historic Depot. We plan to have a dedication of the baggage cart at the April 30 Chapter Meeting. Come see the great job Larry did with the restoration.



**Terminal Station baggage cart, before and after restoration**



**James “planting” a sign along the BMRR (Photo by Bob Yuill)**

## Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project -- Update

The Mid-South Chapter’s Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project is moving along quite well. Already, 72 signs have been installed and more are scheduled for installation soon. As the project progresses, history continues to be uncovered. An example of that is, as a sign location was being scouted in southwest Birmingham, the Project Coordinator found two old, original concrete mile posts (Mile 395 and four miles farther along, Mile 399) as well as an old, original concrete “W” whistle post. All of these were on the BMRR North Branch and are still in use by the active CSX freight trains that use that roadbed. These BMRR mile posts and whistle signs join the others that have been found as part of this project – in Bessemer, Tarrant, Altoona (Alabama), and Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve. Finding such historical artifacts has been one of the rewarding aspects of this project and of installing the signs. In a broader sense, this project is designed to educate the general public about historic BMRR sites and, through the website and with PowerPoint presentations, to educate them about the historic railroad. This is working out wonderfully; a lot of people have mentioned that they have seen the BMRR signs and that they have learned a lot about the area’s history through the website. A lot of PowerPoint presentations have been given to various groups, and they all have enjoyed learning about an aspect of Birmingham’s history that they knew nothing about.



**Extant whistle post at Altoona**

## Noteworthy

# The Center for Railroad Photography and Art

*14th Annual Conference Review by David Lester*



The Railway & Locomotive Historical Society is a sponsor of the annual conference of the Center for Railroad Photography & Art, held each year on the campus of Lake Forest College, just north of Chicago. While the R&LHS is not affiliated with the Center, this growing national organization merits the attention of every R&LHS member, including those in the Mid-South Chapter.

John Gruber, who is well known in the railroad history community for his photography and other work, founded the Center for Railroad Photography & Art in Madison, Wisconsin in 1997, and served as president for many years. The Center “preserves and presents significant images of railroading, interpreting them in publications, exhibitions, and on the Internet.” Today, John serves on the Board of the Center with eleven other individuals, and noted photographer Scott Lothes, who is a regular contributor to Trains and other railroad publications, serves as the Center’s President and Executive Director. The Center is becoming the nation’s leading repository of important railroad photographs, and makes them available to the public through in-house programs, as well as programs throughout the country.

Foremost is the recent collaboration with the Chicago History Museum on the major exhibition, *Railroaders: Jack Delano’s Homefront Photography*, which was at the museum from April 4, 2014 through January 3, 2016. The Center prepared and published an accompanying 200-page catalog. The exhibit and the catalog tell the stories of forty-nine Chicagoland railroad workers during World War II and serve as a prime example of the kind of work that can be created from a significant, well preserved collection of rail photography.

Other key components of the Center’s activities include traveling exhibitions of the work of O. Winston Link, David Plowden and others. Venues have included Grand Central Terminal, the California State Railroad Museum, and Milwaukee’s Grohmann Museum. The Center publishes a quarterly journal, *Railroad Heritage*, with each issue featuring work by historic and contemporary photographers and artists, plus news in the field. Each spring, beginning in 2003, the Center has held an annual conference called “Conversations About Photography,” with all but one having been held on the campus of Lake Forest College, just north of Chicago.

The 2016 conference (the Center’s fourteenth) was held April 8-10, and included a dinner on Friday evening, presentations all day Saturday, a cocktail reception after the day’s presentations, and a half-day of presentations on Sunday. The conference was sold out for the third consecutive year.

Speakers included Wendy Burton and Kevin Keefe, discussing their book *Railroad Vision* a book of photographs taken from the files of *Trains* magazine, Emily Moser, a graphic designer and photographer who writes a blog, “I Ride the Harlem Line,” Steve Patterson, a well-known photographer who enjoyed a forty-two year career on the Santa Fe and successor BNSF, and retired in 2007, and John Sanderson, who presented his exhibition of large-format photographs entitled *Railroad Landscapes*. Steve Barry, the editor of *Railfan & Railroad* magazine discussed railroad photography with drones, and shared some impressive images made with a drone that includes a built-in, 20-megapixel camera.

During the business meeting of the conference, President and Executive Director Scott Lothes announced that the Center had received a major gift from Board Chairman Bon French, in the amount of \$1 million. The gift establishes an endowment for the Center, which will ensure the organizations longevity and



financial stability.

The Center has been chosen as the repository for the photographic collections of several prominent railroad photographers, including J. Parker Lamb, Wallace W. Abbey, Hal Lewis, Leo King, John F. Bjorklund, Glenn A. Oestreich, and Fred M. Springer. As these collections are processed, images from the collections are placed on the website for everyone to see. The Center's full-time Archives Manager, Jordan Radke, leads the processing of the images, with the help of interns.

The Center is worthy of the attention of all Mid-South Chapter members who are interested in the preservation of significant railroad photography. The organization is financially strong, led by experienced professionals, is very active in promoting excellence in railroad photography, and is well on its way to becoming one of the nation's most important repositories of railroad photographs. The Center is well known throughout the country and in many parts of the world. Indeed, the recent conference saw 180 attendees from thirty-seven states and four foreign countries.

To learn more about the organization, and to view some of Parker Lamb's remarkable images, visit [www.railphoto-art.org](http://www.railphoto-art.org). And, if you have a collection of significant railroad photographs, or know someone who does, consider talking with the Center and see if your work would fit the Center's mission and needs.



**Speaking of significant railroad photography**, the MidSouth Chapter is fortunate to have its own “center” of contemporary railroad photography to compliment the archived works of more notables like Frank Ardrey, Hugh Comer, Parker Lamb, and others. A recent example is this nicely silhouetted image taken by James Lowery, showing the old and the new signaling at Birmingham's 32nd Street interlocking on the last day of service for the original cantilever signal (seen at right) on January 31, 2016. Nice photo, James.

## Along the Mid-South Rail Trail

# Historic Decatur, AL depot beautifully restored as a transportation museum

(Editor's note: The following article is excerpted in part from AL.Com and the *Decatur Daily News*)

On Saturday, March 26, 2016, one of Alabama's oldest surviving depots was opened as a newly restored transportation museum and public safety facility.

The \$2.5 million restoration of Decatur, Alabama's joint Southern Railway and L&N depot focuses on the history of the city's railroads, and includes exhibits on all the transportation history that made Decatur a vital crossroads town. The key for the museum's long-term success will be keeping exhibits fresh, and with Decatur's rich history in railroads, there is no shortage of artifacts it can rotate through the museum.

A rail line built in the 1830s from Decatur to Courtland to Tuscumbia was the first railroad west of Pittsburgh, Pa., and later, with the L&N Railroad connecting Louisville, Ky., with Birmingham and the Deep South, Decatur became a major cog in post Civil War Reconstruction. Investors billed it as the "Chicago of the South." At one time as many as seven rail lines were proposed to run through Decatur, but the promising prosperity it showed at the end of the 19th century ended with a recession and Yellow Fever outbreaks in the early 20th Century.



The existing depot was built in 1904 by Southern Railway. Decatur had become a transportation hub of North Alabama by the 1870s, with its connections to the Tennessee River, the east-west Tuscumbia, Courtland and Decatur Railroad (later operated by the Memphis and Charleston Railroad and the Southern Railway), and the north-south Louisville and Nashville Railroad. It functioned as a passenger station until 1979, when Amtrak cancelled its *Floridian* service.

The station is built of brick painted white, with quoins on the corners. The building has a rectangular central section with narrower wings stretching along the tracks. The central section has a hipped roof, while the wings

have gable roofs; both have deep eaves with decorative brackets. The main entrance is covered by a porte-cochère with arched openings. The depot was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1980.

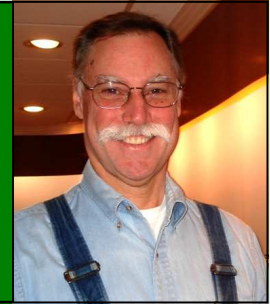
For more information, visit the depot's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Southern-Railway-Depot/277745599089082>.



## Railroad History

# The Birmingham Belt, Part 2

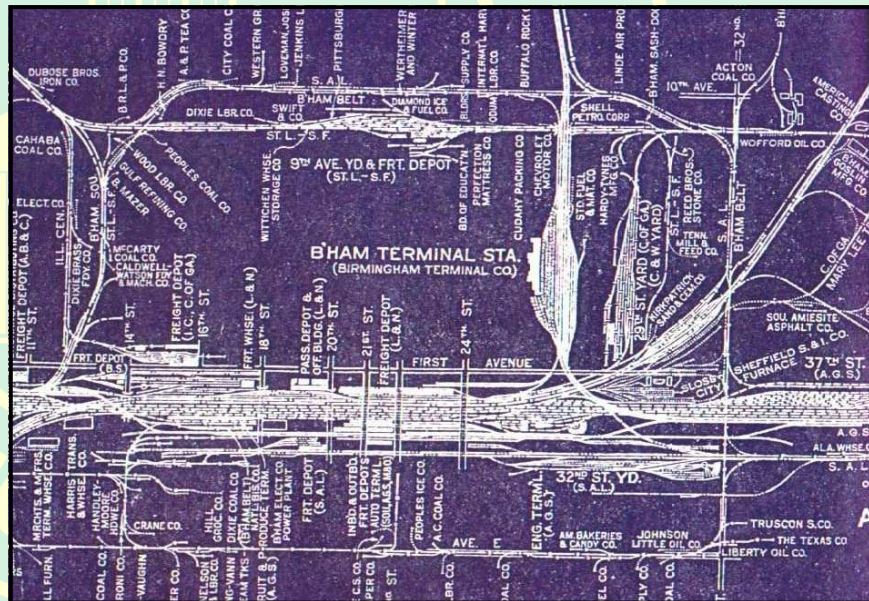
*By John Stewart, Contributing Editor*



In our first installment about the Birmingham Belt RR we followed its early history up to the year 1888, some 14 years prior to its purchase by the Frisco RR in 1902. As noted, Birmingham's development as a new industrial city had hit a lull after the boom years of the middle 1880's which saw a number of major industries develop along the "Railroad Reservation" including Alice Furnace, Birmingham Rolling Mills, Sloss Furnace and a half dozen others.

This same time period saw the development of Birmingham's early streetcar system, starting with horse cars, then "steam dummies" and subsequent electric streetcars. The Highland Avenue and Belt RR (HA&B), developed by the Elyton Land Company (ELC) in 1885, was among these street railways and saw the transition of motive power to steam dummies like the rest of the early systems. There would soon be an effort to consolidate the various streetcar companies and the Highland Avenue and Belt was to be included in that effort.

By 1888, The Highland Avenue and Belt as developed by the ELC did, in fact, build a two part system. One part served the "South Highlands", a residential development of the ELC. The other part developed as a freight belt-line, nearly circling the emerging central business district of Birmingham on the south (Avenue E/5<sup>th</sup> Ave. South), on the east (32<sup>nd</sup> St) and on the north (10<sup>th</sup> Ave N) as well as several other lines including a lead track that ran parallel to the Kansas City, Memphis and Birmingham RR (13<sup>th</sup> St.) on the west side of downtown. A branch line ran north to the new water works in North Birmingham.



The Belt is clearly evidenced by the rail route circling downtown Birmingham

In this same time period, on a national level, there was continuing activity of the so called "Railroad (Robber) Barons", as well as the beginning of the age of Corporate Trusts, later giving President Teddy Roosevelt the nickname "The Trust Buster". The Sherman Anti-Trust Act was passed in 1890, but many of the legal constraints on corporate behavior didn't come to pass until the subsequent passage of the Clayton Anti-Trust Act in 1914; Clayton was a congressman from Alabama.

So, this was the national context of the early years of Birmingham's development involving the streetcar boom years and the high rolling stock manipulations of the railroads. Birmingham's future was very much on the mind of Wall Street and the large banking houses of New York and New England. (The L&N RR and the Tennes

see Coal, Iron and RR Company would be part of the Dow Jones index). Birmingham was also on the mind of every railroad that could seek a path to Birmingham in hopes of high traffic volumes and potential regional connections.

By 1888, there were five trunk line railroads in Birmingham. Three of these were through routes: the South & North Alabama, 1871, (L&N), the Alabama Great Southern, 1871, and the Georgia Pacific, 1883, (Southern). Two more railroads had reached Birmingham by 1888: the Columbus & Western, 1884, (Central of Georgia) and the Kansas City, Memphis and Birmingham, 1887, (Frisco).

After the boom years of the mid 1880's, development slowed for the Elyton Land Company, and ultimately the Land Company entered reorganization in 1895; subsequent reorganization occurred in 1900 when the name changed to Birmingham Realty Company.

Since the first installment was written, the author had the opportunity to access the corporate minute books of the Birmingham Belt Railroad. These are held by The State Historical Society of Missouri (SHSMO); the Frisco was a Missouri Company and their extensive archives are housed by the SHSMO. Although these minute books don't contain every aspect of the Belt RR's story, they contain helpful information as well as interesting "clues" leading one to investigate deeper into the story of the Belt RR.

### **The Columbian Equipment Company**

One of these clues was a company called The Columbian Equipment Company with whom HA&B RR had a lawsuit. In late 1894, apparently due to financial difficulties, the ELC caused the HA&B to enter a lease agreement with Columbian under certain terms, including that the Columbian company would operate the line and that they would pay certain fees to the ELC for this privilege – it was essentially a lease to purchase deal. Of the several terms of the deal, one of the most interesting is that the HA&B RR would secure a right of way to connect the HA&B to the Birmingham & Gate City Railroad (B&GC RR). This RR was the third reorganization (1893) of a street railroad which sought access to downtown Birmingham but had significant ROW issues between 1886 and 1893. Gate City was located near Red Gap, the eastern gateway for rail access through Red Mountain to Birmingham. So Columbian was apparently trying to cobble together a rail right of way into Birmingham.

The lawsuit against the HA&B RR moved through the courts and the ELC went through reorganization in 1895. These circumstances led to the foreclosure sale of the HA&B RR in 1899 to Elmer E. Whittaker. We will come back to him directly.

The Columbian Equipment Company was a West Virginia Corporation whose President was named Wayland Trask and Secretary was Clarence Stump. The Columbian Equipment Company was what was then termed a "vagrant corporation". It had no business activity in West Virginia, but found that state's laws for corporate registry attractive as they didn't require much transparency. The New York Times (NYT) reported in the fall of 1894 that the officers of Columbian were working with the East and West RR of Alabama, seeking to extend that railroad to Birmingham. The NYT article also reported that "these persons stated that the Birmingham Belt RR has been secured for terminal facilities and that the purchase [of the Belt] would be made."

If you know your Seaboard Airline RR history you know that this Railroad eventually made its way to Birmingham by acquiring several short lines in Georgia and Alabama then connecting them to complete a line to Birmingham. The Seaboard finally reached Birmingham in 1904. Hold on to this clue, as it will come into play again.



## The Frisco's (Early) Story

The St Louis and San Francisco Railroad first reached Birmingham in 1887 via a predecessor railroad, the Kansas City, Memphis and Birmingham RR (KCM&B), later acquired by the Frisco in 1901. The Frisco story is complex and grand at the same time with respect to goals, mergers and acquisitions. As it relates to our story of the Belt, the Frisco's part of the story really begins in 1901 when Benjamin Franklin Yoakum became the President of the Frisco. According to one history of the Frisco this began a period known as "Yoakum's Dream", [when] one of the most spectacular and rapid developments of rail growth in western and Mississippi Valley history took place."

But in 1887, as the bloom began to fade in Birmingham's first major growth boom, the KCM&B had reached the northwest corner of downtown Birmingham and began to develop a very small terminal on 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, east of 16<sup>th</sup> Street North. This line continued in 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue N turning south on 30<sup>th</sup> Street and connecting to the L&N mainline for access to Birmingham's Union Station. A second line went south along 13<sup>th</sup> Street N ending well short of the Railroad Reservation.

Thus, the Frisco's predecessor, the KCM&B reached Birmingham from the west, with its main line running parallel to the Belt RR's line also located in 13<sup>th</sup> Street North plus the 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue North line parallel to the Belt RR's line in 10<sup>th</sup> Avenue North.

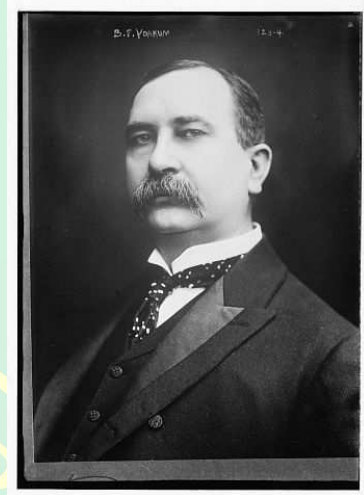
## Back to the Belt RR

Belt RR's financial and legal issues were not over, and by 1899, the Belt was in foreclosure as noted above. It was purchased under court decree by Elmer E. Whittaker who, it is usually noted, proceeded to divide the Highland Avenue passenger street railway from the freight (street) railway. The freight railway portion became the Birmingham Belt RR which was bought by the Frisco in 1902. And this is often all that is said of the Belt's history from 1899 to 1902.

Elmer E. Whittaker was in fact the Cashier of the Hanover National Bank of New York. In those days the Cashier of a major bank was a very high level position, typically noted on the company letterhead. The first president of the Belt RR was J. B. Cobbs, himself the cashier of the Birmingham Trust and Savings Bank, closely tied to the Elyton Land Company.

The Birmingham Belt was incorporated September 7, 1899 by Mr. Whittaker. Two days later, the New York Times reported that the passenger portion of the HA&B RR was transferred to the Birmingham Traction Company controlled by James T Woodward, President of the Hanover National Bank. Mr. Woodward was also the Chairman of the Executive Committee of Tennessee Coal and Iron, Birmingham's largest company. So, clearly the Belt RR was of interest at high levels. The first board members of the Belt RR included legal and banking leaders of the early City of Birmingham.

Whittaker's deal with the Belt called for \$500,000 in bonds to be assigned to him and backed by a mortgage on the entire property of the Belt RR. Reports at the time indicate that the HA&B was purchased for \$176,000 but there seems to be more to it than that. Apparently, \$500,000 in 5% bonds were issued and held by Hanover Bank of New York, Whittaker's employer.



Benjamin Franklin Yoakum



The NYT article (09/09/1899) went on to say "It is stated that this organization [the Belt RR] is only of a straw nature and that the property has really been sold to a railroad trunk line, either the Seaboard or the L&N". This rumor will only get more interesting as we go forward.

By April, 1900, the Directors of the Belt RR believed that they needed more capital – the original working capital had been \$50,000 in stock, the bulk of this was held by Mr. Whittaker as well as the \$500,000 in 5% bonds. It was decided that the stockholders should consider issuing \$1,500,000 in corporate bonds and this was discussed at a called stockholders meeting May 5, 1900. These bonds were not issued until January, 1902.

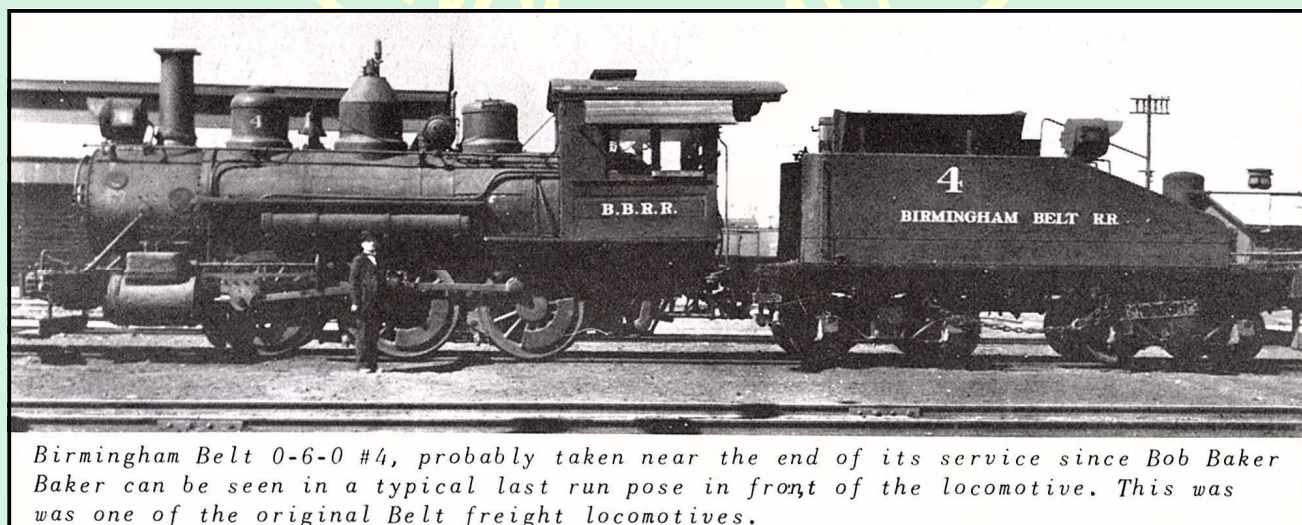
In the meantime, Whittaker was replaced on the Board by Alex T. London (12/16/1901), a very prominent Birmingham attorney. Alex London was later credited with being a key organizer of the Birmingham streetcar system. He did a lot of railroad related legal work and would certainly be a resource to the Belt RR.

Prior to his replacement on the Board as a Director, Whittaker had also been listed as a stockholder of 473 out of 500 shares of the Belt RR. In the minutes of the meeting of December 17, 1901, there were listed 8 stockholders with 470 of 500 shares being held by "The Railway Construction and Equipment Company" (RCEC). The President and Treasurer of RCEC, Ferdinand Holmes and Henry F Knight, were both related to Old Colony Trust Company of Boston. Whittaker had assigned his claim of \$500,000 as the balance of the purchase of the Belt RR to the RCEC. So, apparently the Hanover Bank's interests in the Belt had shifted to the Old Colony Bank and Trust.

The RCEC was also a "vagrant" corporation, registered this time in New Jersey whose corporate registration laws were nearly as accommodating to the registrant as West Virginia's. In fact, in reading general railroad history of this era, any company that had the words "construction and improvement" in its name were cause for suspicion. This is the mechanism that many railroads had used to milk money from the stock and bondholders into the pockets of the railroad leadership. It is noted that there is not any evidence that this happened with the Belt, but it is the same mechanism apparently.

Thus of the total bonds issued January, 1902, \$500,000 were assigned by Whittaker to RCEC and the other \$1,000,000 were to be used by the Belt RR for "improvements".

Then on December 19, 1901, J. B. Cobbs resigned as President of the Belt RR to be replaced by G. H. Davis. (Mr.



*Birmingham Belt 0-6-0 #4, probably taken near the end of its service since Bob Baker Baker can be seen in a typical last run pose in front of the locomotive. This was one of the original Belt freight locomotives.*

Davis has not been identified but he was also a VP of Birmingham Railway, Light and Power Company. He may have been a principal in the engineering firm Ford, Bacon and Davis who did work for BRL&P at the time.) In the February, 1902, meeting, a draft Deed of Trust (mortgage) of the entire Belt RR was presented to the Board for consideration, made in favor of the Old Colony Bank and Trust of Boston.

On April 11, 1902, George H Davis resigned as President (remaining a Director) of the Belt RR and Henry M. Atkinson was elected President. Henry Atkinson was noted for helping to found Georgia Power Company, for consolidating the Atlanta streetcar system, for developing the Port of Brunswick, Georgia and for bringing the Atlanta, Birmingham, and Atlantic RR (AB&A RR) to Birmingham.

The first indication in the Minute Books of the coming Frisco RR purchase of the Birmingham Belt RR comes in the meeting of September 5, 1902 when John London resigned as Treasurer to be replaced by J. B. Bicknell and F. H. Hamilton, as treasurer and assistant respectively. Both of these gentlemen were officers of the Frisco Railroad.

Then on September 20, 1902 there were two meetings (which are entered in the minute books in the reverse order that they occurred at 3:30 and 4:00 pm). In the earlier meeting a proposal was read from the Railway Construction and Improvement Co (related to Old Colony Trust, Boston) which offered to give up claim to \$500,000 in 5% gold bonds issued January 1, 1902 if the Belt RR will issue \$1,000,000 in 4% gold bonds secured by a mortgage/deed of trust to Old Colony Trust. In particular, this proposal offers to convey to the Belt RR the real property previously conveyed to Railway Construction and Improvement Company by Birmingham Realty Company by deed dated September 30, 1901. There was a requirement to set aside \$115,000 to be used "with proper safeguard" in the future. This proposal was accepted.

The Deed of Trust from the Belt RR to Old Colony Trust Company occupies 43 pages in the minute book and includes a complete and detailed description of the track locations of the Belt RR. First given as rights of way and then given again in locations by street and block number. (One wonders if they were trying to make the little Belt RR look bigger!)

Of interest to the author is the question of whether the Birmingham Belt RR was possibly worth \$1,000,000, to secure a 20 year bond issue. Granted there was a potential value of future business and good will, but all indications in the minute book up this point in time are that the railroad's operating expenses and income were only a few thousand dollars per month. Profits if any were very small.

Nevertheless, the bond issue was approved and a "temporary bond" is included in the Minute Book to be used until the proper bonds are printed. On the back of the bonds is a guarantee of payment of each bond by the Kansas City, Memphis and Birmingham RR Co. This means that the Frisco subsidiary owns the Birmingham Belt by guaranteeing its bonds.

There follows the Bond Guaranty Agreement between the KCM&B RR and the Belt RR dated October 1, 1902. This agreement of course promises to guarantee the bonds and also states that various improvements and connections are to be made to the Belt RR although they are not specified.

As an amateur historian and railroad buff it is very difficult to believe that the Belt RR per se was worth \$1,000,000. The Belt had very little in the way of real property other than its 10 or so miles of track and a small engine terminal and office. However, in real estate, they say that "location is everything". What could location have to do with the Belt RR's value in this case? ***(To be continued)***



## *Golden Era Classics*



### *A Fine Summer Day Along “The Right Way”*

Back in the halcyon days of “fallen flag” railroads, the Central of Georgia was a “down-home” road known for friendly crews and prototypical trains. The “Central” liked to mix it up with early diesel power from both EMD and ALCO, as evidenced by this six-unit lashup of and EMD F3s, GP7s, and ALCO RS3s leading manifest freight #29 between Columbus, GA and Opelika, AL in June 1960. Credit Alabama native Parker Lamb with this classic image, with digital colorization by Tom Alderman.



## Late Breaking Regional News

# Team to restore a 'Dixie' 4-8-4

Group to return Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis No. 576  
to operating condition — By David Ibata, *Trains News Wire*

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. (From the Trains News Wire)**

— One of the rarest members of “the greatest generation” of modern American steam has languished in a Nashville park for more than six decades. Multiple efforts to bring it back to life have come and gone.

Now, though, steam buffs hope the stars are aligning for Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway No. 576.

The big J3 engine, the sole survivor of a class of 20 built during the desperate days of World War II, is a 1942 product of the American Locomotive Company. The last time someone proposed removing the 4-8-4 from Centennial Park, in 2001, the parks board declined the offer.



Photo by Jim Wrinn

Today, though, “it almost seems as if the timing is right, with all the things coming together,” says Shane Meador, a Nashville native and president and chairman of the recently formed Nashville Steam Preservation Society.

Meador’s \$5 million vision calls for leasing 576 from the Nashville Metro government and moving the engine to the Tennessee Central Railway Museum on the Nashville & Eastern Railroad. The restored J3 would lead excursions over the 108-mile N&E — the former Tennessee Central Railway east of Nashville — using 14 passenger cars from the museum’s collection.

Museum President Terry Bebout, who was involved in the failed 2001 effort and is now preservation society vice president, thinks it really could happen this time.

“This is definitely a much better team of people with the professional skills to raise money and do the restoration,” Bebout says. “We didn’t have that the last time we tried to make this happen. This team effort is what’s going to be the success of this project.”

What’s changed in the last 15 years? In 2001, Meador says, “the Music City Star (commuter service) hadn’t happened yet, so the Nashville & Eastern was not capable of supporting the operations of a large steam locomotive.”

Also, the parks board today has a deadline to move 576 somewhere so it can start a major renovation of Centennial Park. Nashville’s historic riverfront has become both a popular tourist draw and home to Riverfront Station, where excursion trains would depart. Most important, Meador says, “We have the people with the technical skills to make this happen, people who have been involved with over 30 successful steam locomotive restoration projects around the country.”

For more details, visit the *Trains* website at <http://trn.trains.com/news/news-wire/2016/04/26-ncstl>.