



May 2020

THE MID-SOUTH FLYER



Entering a New Decade of Service

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

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CHAPTER NEWS

LONG-TIME MID-SOUTH CHAPTER MEMBER THURMAN ROBERTSON, JR., WILL BE MISSED

Thurman Robertson, Jr., will be missed at the Leeds Depot. Thurman died April 18, 2020, at the age of 93. For several years, he lived at St. Martin's in the Pines where I picked him up for Mid-South meetings. He recently moved from an apartment to a room adjacent to his wife, Virginia, in Cottage A-Skilled Nursing.

He and Virginia had been life-long train railfans, especially steam, and had ridden many trains across North America and Europe. A gentleman with several hobbies, Thurman had a lifelong interest in World War II airplanes and working on Ford automobiles.

I observed that we were not alone in our interests in pipe organs and trains. Traveling about the country to experience some of the remaining theatre organs, we met many who also were interested in trains. When we've held organ shows in Birmingham, some of the attendees went out of the way to ride a train to town. In this issue of *MID-SOUTH FLYER* you'll read about the *Royal Hudson* which is located at the Nethercutt Museum. The museum is home to one of the largest theatre organs ever built (1918). On the east coast is the Northlandz Museum in New Jersey, home to another pipe organ as well as the world's largest model train display. It must be the pipes and various pressures that are the link between these two realms. I met the Robertsons at the Alabama Theatre as part of the pipe organ club. I'm glad Thurman insisted I join the R&LHS. Thurman was an early member of the Mid-South Chapter and was a wonderful friend.

A memorial service will be scheduled later at Huffman United Methodist Church.

John Troulias



Thurman Robertson, Jr.

2020 CHAPTER PROGRAM SCHEDULE 2:00 PM AT HISTORIC LEEDS DEPOT

May 9 -- No Meeting or Program

July 25 -- TBD

September 19 (Possible John Henry Festival)

November 7

Member Moment

The Member Moment this month features Pittman Owen. If you would like to be featured and tell your story, please contact Warren Jones.

The story should total 400 words or less and ideally include a photo or drawing.

MID-SOUTH FLYER

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 \$50 annually and include subscriptions to the Society's twice-yearly magazine *Railroad History*, quarterly newsletter, and the chapter's e-newsletter, the *MID-SOUTH FLYER*. Contributions, article ideas and reader comments are welcome.

Ken Boyd, Editor
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TRAINS AND THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Warren Jones

THE POTENTIAL OF TRAINS IN THE CONTROL OF PANDEMICS

Trains can be particularly effective tools in the control of pandemics. They have proven their value in the past in similar situations. For example, after the 1935 Pakistan earthquake at Quetta that killed over 23,000 people, two hospital trains were used to transport the seriously injured from Quetta to the larger city of Karachi.

In England during WWII, when cities were being subjected to aerial bombardment, 30 special "Casualty Evacuation" trains were a standardized collection of 10 ward cars capable of carrying a total of 300 patients and medical staff. This collection of trains could accommodate 9,000 patients.

This concept could easily be adapted to the current COVID-19 pandemic situation, providing a medical-care surge capacity to areas where treatment is needed and facilities are limited. It is also clear that this flexible type of medical resource could be viewed as a "Disaster Train" for any type of disaster need, as noted in the book "Three Seconds Until Midnight."

INDIAN RAILWAYS PROVIDE SURGE CAPACITY FOR ISOLATION WARDS

In India, about 20,000 railway carriages are being converted into "Quarantine Coaches" with 16 beds each for a total capacity of 320,000 patients. This action is taken in anticipation of the health-care system capacity being overwhelmed by the rising number of COVID-19 patients. Part of the concern is related to hundreds of thousands of migrant workers who made long and dangerous journeys back to their home towns and villages in defiance of the lockdown.



An Indian railway employee works to convert a train coach into an isolation ward for the fight against the new coronavirus [Anupam Nath/AP Photo].

A KILLER IN GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL

Grand Central was built in 1913 by Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt when railroads were intent on making travel easier and more comfortable than ever before. It is one of the most beautiful train stations in the world and a well-known landmark in New York City. Tourists are told that Grand Central hides many secrets.

One of the most interesting has to do with the spectacular painting of the constellations of the night sky on the ceiling of the concourse by artist Paul Helleu. Do you know the ceiling secret? The constellations were painted in reverse by mistake. The railroad officials brilliantly recovered from their embarrassment by suggesting that while no mortal had ever seen the heavens from this perspective, the celestial mural represented God's view.

These secrets are fun to know, but there is one secret that is not on any tourist list. If you did not know in advance, you would probably never guess. It is this: There is a killer in beautiful Grand Central. This killer is not the kind that would probably first come to mind. A hint? It is one of the features that makes the Grand Central so beautiful. What is it? The copper metal! What does it kill—pathogens like bacteria and viruses, if they make physical contact with the metal.

The phenomenon is called "contact killing" and has great potential for reducing infections in hospitals and elsewhere. A research study investigated copper alloys on surfaces in hospitals including bedside rails, tray tables, intravenous poles, and arm chair rests and found a 58-percent infection reduction.

Thousands of years ago, the sea-faring Phoenicians inserted shavings from their bronze swords into battle wounds to prevent infection. We can hope that the medical and engineering communities also find innovative ways for this killer to maximize its impact during COVID-19 and beyond.

SOURCES:

Morrison, Jim, "Copper's Virus-Killing Powers Were Known Even to the Ancients", Smithsonianmag.com, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/copper-virus-kill-180974655>
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 Roberts, Sam, "Grand Central: How a Train Station Transformed America", Grand Central Publishing, New York, 2013.



CHAPTER UPDATE

James Lowery, President

MID-SOUTH CHAPTER AND COVID-19

Elsewhere in this issue, Ken Boyd and Warren Jones have done an excellent job of providing several railroad articles that relate to the current COVID-19 situation. Thank you both for those articles. You all are aware of what is going on with the pandemic, so I will not re-hash that except to say that, during this time and during the upcoming months, for an organization like the Mid-South Chapter, the main word is “flexibility” especially as relates to programming. For the organization’s members, the main things are to stay safe and to be flexible as plans change.

CANCELLATION OF THE MAY 9TH CHAPTER MEETING

One consequence of the COVID-19 situation is that the Chapter’s Board of Directors has decided to cancel the May 9th meeting. We had hoped to have that meeting at Sloss Furnaces and to include a tour of the facility especially focusing on the two locomotives on display there. Because we will not be able to do that for our May meeting, we hope to have such a meeting and tour at Sloss Furnaces later this year.

e-NEWSLETTER

As was explained in the first issue of the Chapter’s new e-Newsletter, during the current time of staying home more than usual and trying to find things to occupy our time productively, Mid-South Chapter Board members Warren Jones and Ken Boyd have put forth the idea of having a “Mid-South Chapter e-Newsletter” that will provide Internet links to railroad videos or other resources that you might want to view on your own. This will NOT replace the regular Mid-South Chapter Flyer newsletter that Ken does such an excellent job of creating and providing to you. That will continue on the same basis that it has been in the past.

We also asked for anyone to send us material or online links to railroad and railroad history information that we can share with other members via the e-Newsletter. Several members already have sent such material, and we appreciate that. Please send Warren Jones (wjones1302@gmail.com) or me (JLowery2@gmail.com) material you know about or come across as you explore the Internet. We would like to share it in the e-Newsletter.

“MARCH WINDS AND APRIL SHOWERS BRING MAY FLOWERS”

Because we cancelled the March Chapter meeting and have now cancelled the May Chapter meeting, that means that most of us will not be going by or seeing the Leeds Depot for several months. So...I want to share with you the following photos Peggy and I took toward the end of April to show you that the roses along the front were in full bloom and add a lot to the attractiveness of the Depot.



Roses in Full Bloom at the Historic Leeds Depot. Photos by Peggy Lowery.



HEART OF DIXIE RAILROAD MUSEUM

OFFICIAL RAILROAD MUSEUM FOR THE STATE OF ALABAMA

Over the short period of time since our last *MID-SOUTH FLYER* article, things have gone in a completely different direction than what we were thinking. Last article, we were looking forward to our spring events and the exciting new events that were being planned. Just like most businesses during these troubling times, we have had to close our doors completely to the public. Our museum, gift shop, and trains are currently closed. The museum grounds are still open, with an occasionally family stopping in to wander around. With no trains running, we have no revenue stream. We have made numerous spending cuts, and the museum is currently operating off reserve funds. Most of our projects have also been placed on hold to reduce spending. Our Ex Director continues to maintain a presence at HoD, as he searches for ways to cut spending and locate outside funding sources.



Current Restoration Projects

- ◆ 1926 L&N RR Tavern/Lounge Car "Alabama Club" budget spending frozen but did receive a \$20,000 Emery Rail grant for the HVAC system. This funding has allowed us to continue with this work!
- ◆ Shelby & Southern Narrow Gauge RR has completed track repairs. Some repairs to the locomotive continue.

Volunteers

Most volunteers are sheltering at home, but a dedicated few continue to maintain our equipment & grounds. Photo above was a recent litter patrol to the interstate.

Steam Days in June

This event was recently cancelled due to the high cost of hosting the event, something we could not risk.

Upcoming 2020 Train Rides:

ALL EVENTS CURRENTLY CANCELLED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE

Saturday Train Rides - CURRENTLY CLOSED

Saturdays, March 21—September 26th

- ◆ *Departure Times:* 10:00 am & 1:00 pm

Except special events

Cottontail Express - CANCELLED

Saturday, April 11, 2020

- ◆ *Departure Times:* 10:00 am, 1:00 pm & 3:00 pm

Day out with Thomas - CANCELLED

Friday, April 17

Saturdays, April 18 & 25

Sundays, April 19 & 26

- ◆ *Departure Start Times:* Fri & Sun-9:45 am;
Sat-9:00 am. Train departs every 45 min

COWAN RAILROAD MUSEUM

A REGIONAL DAY TRIP ON YOUR OWN

Ken Boyd

This spring, with the COVID-19 pandemic, social distancing and stay-home orders, life has been very confining. Mixed signals about the medical aspects of the disease and the politics of restrictions and directives are ongoing challenges until a vaccine and better treatment options are in place. For Mid-South Chapter members and friends, we have spent weeks indoors and sheltered in place for our safety and the safety of others.

Most of us will travel very little this year, and, at least in the near-term, travel will likely be by car. Under these circumstances, what are our options to get out of the house this spring and summer?

Day trips are one good option to consider. Fortunately, there are a number of “safe” day trip options for those living in this region and with an interest in historic railroads and locomotives. Take a look at a map or do a web search and begin thinking about destinations you might like to visit within a few hours driving time.

One interesting trip that is within reach for many readers of the *Mid-South Flyer*, and a destination that most have not visited before, is the Cowan Railroad Museum in south-central Tennessee. This is a highly recommended trip for railfans and it can be managed with social distancing and a return trip home by evening.

The Cowan Railroad Museum is located in Cowan, Tennessee, just north of Huntsville, Alabama. The town dates to the mid-19th century and developed mostly as a railroad town. Back in the day, several branch lines met the



The 1904 Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway Depot, now the Cowan Railroad Museum.

(Above)

Photo by Brian Stansberry.

Helper Locomotives Returning to Cowan after Pushing a Heavy Freight up Cumberland Mountain to Cowan Tunnel.

(Right)

Photo by Ken Boyd.





Cherokee Brick & Tile Company No. 1, 1920. Photo by Ken Boyd.

Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway mainline in Cowan at the base of Cumberland Plateau and just below the historic 1852 Cumberland Mountain Tunnel, commonly known as the Cowan Tunnel.

Cowan was the last stop for trains making the steep climb up the mountain. Helper/pusher engines have always been used to assist trains on the grade, and the practice continues today with CSX. The mainline through Cowan remains a busy connection between Nashville and Chattanooga, and helper engines are coming and going regularly most of the time. For locomotive fans, this means the small town is always busy with a steady parade of railroading action.

The historic Cowan depot is sited near the tracks, and today is the centerpiece for the railroad museum. The depot was built in 1904 and has been fully restored as a focal point of the downtown area. With COVID-19 virus, touring the actual museum may not be an option, but the museum grounds around the depot are wonderfully landscaped and feature two locomotives, a boxcar, a flatbed car, a caboose and a pair of restored Fairmont motorcars. The museum is not large and train rides are not offered. The site is more like a city park with a historic railroading theme and an adjacent CSX mainline to set the mood.

VISIT DETAILS

Cherokee Brick & Tile Company No. 1, 1920 (Rare Columbia-Type Locomotive)

By far the most interesting and exotic display at Cowan is *Cherokee Brick & Tile Company No. 1*, a rare 2-4-2 Columbia-type locomotive that was designed for industrial and switching applications. The “Columbia” name was coined because Baldwin Locomotive Works submitted a locomotive of this wheel arrangement as one of the first

entries at the 1893 Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, a festival to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of Columbus in the New World. Historically, the 2-4-2 wheel arrangement is rare because it was never very popular with the railroads or industrial operations.

No. 1 was erected by H. K. Porter in 1920 as a small tank-type locomotive, and not as a Columbia-type engine, for Cherokee Brick & Tile Company. The locomotive operated mostly in Macon, Georgia. The saddle water tanks were



Inside the Cab, Cherokee Brick & Tile Company No. 1. The Cab is Open to Visitors and Steps Make Access Relatively Easy. Photo by Ken Boyd.



Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway No. 100, 1950. Photo by Ken Boyd.

later removed and the tender was added, creating an unusual and unique Columbia-type design! The locomotive operated until the early 1970s, most recently in South Carolina for rail enthusiasts. After retirement, it next became part of the collection at the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum, and from there made its way to Cowan.

Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway No. 100, 1950 (General Electric 44-Tonner)

The other locomotive on display is a historically significant General Electric 40-Tonner, an engineering design that will forever be noted in the annals of locomotive development. The story of the 40-Tonner is as humorous as it is remarkable.

The story goes something like this. As the transition from steam to diesel-electric locomotives began, the railroad unions recognized that jobs were at risk because diesel-electric locomotives could be operated with a smaller crew and in some applications by a single driver. In 1937, the 90,000-pound (45-ton) rule was implemented by the unions to require a crew of at least two for any locomotive exceeding 45 tons.

In response, General Electric developed a 44-ton locomotive to be operated by a single driver. The locomotive design featured a center cab and diesel engines, generators and traction motors at each end. The 44-Tonners were sold between 1940 and 1956. The design proved extremely popular not only for industrial and switching application but also for shortline railroads.

No. 100 was erected in 1950 with 190-horsepower V8 diesel engines that could be operated independently of

each other. It was assigned to Huntsville, Alabama, for the Louisville & Nashville Railroad on their "Dixie Line." Historically, as of 1962, this is said to be the first locomotive ever equipped with remote radio control for operation without a driver or engineer onboard.

The twin-engine, 44-Tonner concept was so popular that larger versions, such as 60-Tonner and 80-Tonner and even 90-Tonner locomotives, were marketed. Many of these locomotives continue in service in the 21st century.

Additional Information

The website indicates that admission to the museum is \$2 for adults and \$1 for children but often, and especially now, the formal collecting of money is very relaxed. Be sure to provide a donation when you arrive or before you leave.



Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway Caboose No. 153 beside the Historic Cowan Railway Depot. Photo by Ken Boyd.

For those along on the trip but with limited rail interest, the downtown area is just across the tracks and is also fun to explore. In this part of Tennessee, other nearby attractions include the architecture of the campus at the University of the South at Sewanee, Falls Mill, a massive 19th century woolen and gristmill at Belvidere, and Jack Daniels Distillery to the north at Lynchburg. These attractions are also likely impacted by the virus and a visit may

be limited to a walk around the grounds or what can be seen from the car windows.

So, pack a lunch and plan to get out and enjoy the historic Mid-South this spring! We would love to hear about your experiences in a future issue of *The Mid-South Flyer*. The sharing of ideas for day trips is always encouraged.



The 1904 Cowan Railroad Museum from Trackside. The CSX Mainline Is Just out of View to the Left of the Depot. Photo by Brian Stansberry.

SOURCES:

Boyd, Ken, [Historic North American Locomotives](#), Kalmbach Media (*Trains*), Milwaukee, Wisconsin, 2018.

<http://cowanrailroadmuseum.org/> <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/User:BrineStans>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cowan,Tennessee>

MEMBER MOMENT

THE END OF CABOOSE NO. 1

Pittman Owen

The Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway (NC&StL) Guntersville to Gadsden branch was unique in that it was isolated from the rest of the system by a 22-mile car ferry that plied the Tennessee River from Hobbs Island, near Huntsville, to Guntersville. The ferry was powered until after WWII by two sternwheel steamboats, which were replaced by diesel towboats after the war.

I grew up in Boaz, on this branch, and spent many hours watching the daily local switching. Looking through a 1919 Car Builder's Dictionary, I found a builder's photo of NC&StL Caboose No. 1, which was used as an example of a modern car of this type. (See next page.) The description in the illustration mentioned that the frame was reinforced to allow the car to be used in pusher service and that leads me to believe it was originally used in the Cowan, Tennessee, pusher district. (See feature article on Cowan in this issue of *The Mid-South Flyer*.)

The caboose later came to Guntersville and ran on the Guntersville branch for many years. The conductor normally rode this car, using the desk to do his paperwork, while the brakemen handled switching and less than carload (lcl) freight and express at the depots. The car was nicely appointed, with railroad photographs on the walls, and was kept neat and clean. Since the same conductor and crew used this caboose six days a week, they took pride in keeping it in good condition.



Pittman Owen

Around 1956, shortly before NC&StL was merged into the Louisville and Nashville (L&N), a brakeman was spending the night in the caboose which was parked in Guntersville, when the oil heater caught fire, setting the caboose on fire. Quick work by the fire department extinguished the blaze, but the car was badly damaged. Since it was the only caboose on the branch at that time, the hulk was used for several days with the burned out interior until a replacement could be sent down the river. The crewman protecting the rear of the train had pretty austere accommodations during this time.

In 1957, the NC&StL was merged into the L&N, and the branch gained connections in Attalla and Gadsden. The ferry operation was no longer needed. Traffic was much heavier due to new feed mills adding business in Guntersville, and the branch, though busier, lost the character I had enjoyed during my early years of train watching. Today, the branch continues to prosper as part of the Alabama and Tennessee River Railway (ATN).

Accompanying picture on the next page: Caboose No. 1 builder's photo (Car Builders Dictionary, 1919, Simmons and Boardman Publishing Co.)

THE ART OF THE LOCOMOTIVE

THE ROYAL HUDSON AND SOUTHERN RAILWAY NO. 2839

Ken Boyd



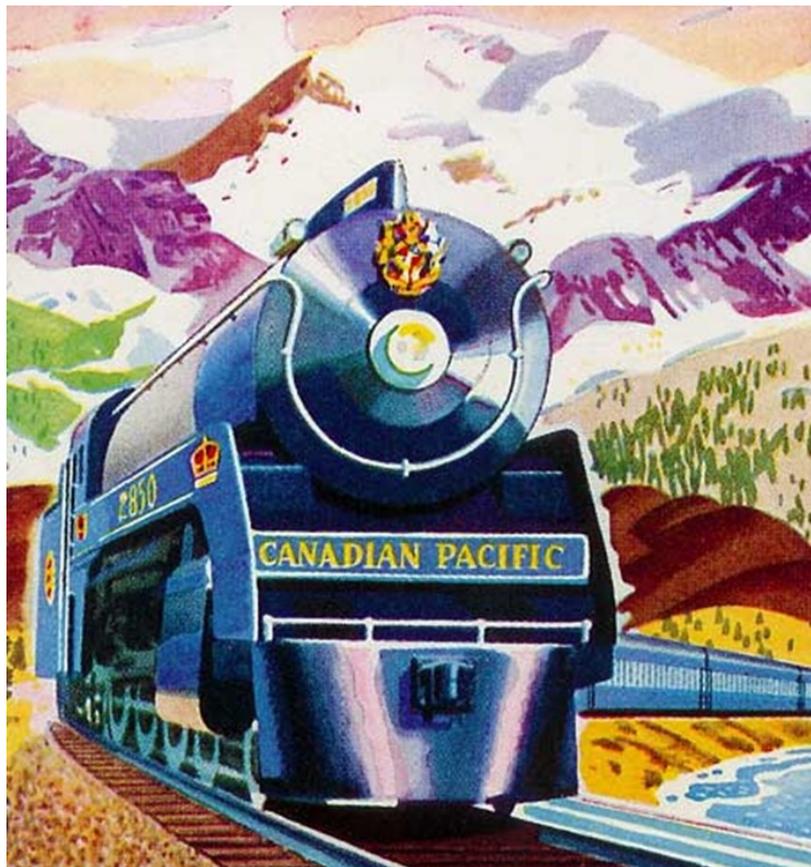
Every railfan, modeler, and railroad historian has a list of their favorite and most beloved locomotive designs. These lists are typically based on factors like the enthusiast's personal background and experiences, age, childhood memories and geographical location. A locomotive on many of these lists and a long-time favorite with locomotive design experts is the *Royal Hudson*.

The *Royal Hudson* is a sleek, 4-6-4, semi-streamlined engine with a smooth and clean boiler jacket, recessed headlight, solid pilot, enclosed cab and an elongated and tear-dropped stack. These locomotives feature 75-inch drivers, 33-inch

Southern Railway *Royal Hudson* No. 2839 Steaming South Near Calera, Alabama, in 1980. Photo by Ken Boyd.

leading wheels and stylish six-wheel tenders. They weigh almost 650,000 pounds including the tender and were capable of speeds in excess of 90 miles per hour during commercial service. A total of 45 were built by Montreal Locomotive Works in three batches and they operated commercially between 1937 and 1960. Mechanically, they were very reliable and provided high-mileage service.

These Hudson-type locomotives also hold the very prestigious and distinctive honor of being designated "royal" in 1939 by



Canadian Pacific Railway Promotional Poster.

King George VI. In the spring of 1939, King George and Queen Elizabeth arrived in North America for a political tour of Canada and the United States to strengthen military support for Britain in the coming war with Germany. The tour was also intended to solidify French-speaking Quebec as a province of Canada. King George suffered from a speech impairment and struggled with English, but, interestingly, he could speak perfect French and he was extremely popular with French Canadians. The tour involved two Canadian and four U.S. railroads and was very successful. Of these six railroads, at least some of the credit for the success of the tour must go to the Canadian Pacific Railway and a locomotive that would soon be designated *Royal Hudson* No. 2850.

No. 2850 transported the king and queen on a transcontinental trip from Quebec to Vancouver with numerous stops along the 3,300-mile journey. In preparation for the trip, Canadian Pacific decorated No. 2850 with a special blue, red and silver paint scheme and added a set of 12 matching cars. (The royal train was preceded down the tracks by a security and press train that usually ran about 20 minutes ahead.) For the duration of the

trip, no trains were allowed to overtake the king's train and any other trains nearby were limited to 30 miles per hour. All crossings along the way were carefully inspected and, in some cases, staked into place.

The beautiful Hudson locomotive performed flawlessly for the duration of the trip. King George, who was a railfan himself, rode with the crew in the cab as much as possible! He was fascinated with the scale and power of large American locomotives. The king was so pleased with his experience on No. 2850 that he granted the railway permission to designate the entire series of streamlined Hudsons as "Royal." Four of the 45 built remain, including one that is somewhat operational and another that has been partially restored mechanically.



Royal Hudson Cab. Photo by Ken Boyd.

The preserved *Royal Hudson* most familiar in the U.S. is probably No. 2839. Historically, this is a *Royal Hudson* that operated in Canadian commercial service for more than 3 million miles. After retirement in 1960, it was considered for museum exhibit in Canada but instead was sold to a group in Pennsylvania who restored the engine.

In 1979 and 1980, Southern Railway leased the restored *Royal Hudson* No. 2839 for their very popular steam excursion program. Southern Railway repainted No. 2839 in Southern livery and operated it across their service territory in the southeastern United States. At the end of the lease, No. 2839 was returned to Pennsylvania where it was stored for a number of years. For whatever reasons including power to pull heavy trains and the availability of other locomotives, Southern did not find the locomotive a good fit for the demanding and heavy excursions they were running during this era.

Subsequently, the locomotive was acquired from Pennsylvania by the co-founder of the Merle Norman cosmetics corporation and is now part of the company's exquisite Nethercutt Transportation Museum in Sylmar, California, where the engine has been returned to Canadian Pacific livery for display. The elegant silvery and "Royal" locomotive is a perfect fit at the museum which features some of the most superb and exotic automobiles in history. The entire museum is designed with all the style of the finest fashion magazine.

At the Nethercutt, the engine is displayed with a beautiful Pullman coach. Even the Pullman coach is so luxurious that it has been described as a "Lear Jet" of the era with all the creature comforts royalty and the wealthy would have expected in rail travel. The coach and the cab are open to museum visitors. No. 2839 has undergone some mechanical restoration, and plans are to make the engine operational.



Elegant Pullman Coach Interior, Nethercutt Transportation Museum,
Sylmar, California. Photos by Ken Boyd.



**Royal Hudson No. 2839 in Canadian Pacific Railway Livery at the Nethercutt Transportation Museum.
(Note the Royal Hudson Crest.) Photo by Ken Boyd.**

The other three remaining *Royal Hudsons* are preserved in Canada at the following locations:

- No. 2850, Canadian Railway Museum (Exporail) at Saint-Constant, Quebec, near Montreal. (This is the locomotive that pulled the Royal Train.)
- No. 2858, National Museum of Science and Technology at Ottawa.
- No. 2860, West Coast Railway Association at Squamish, British Columbia. (This locomotive has operated as recently as 2010.)

SOURCES:

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THE MID-SOUTH FLYER



Norfolk Southern *First Responders* Locomotive No. 5642.

Photo by Ken Boyd.