



July 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

NO CHAPTER PROGRAM FOR JULY

SEPTEMBER PROGRAM

Behind the Scenes: An Insider's View of Daily Operations at Birmingham Terminal Station

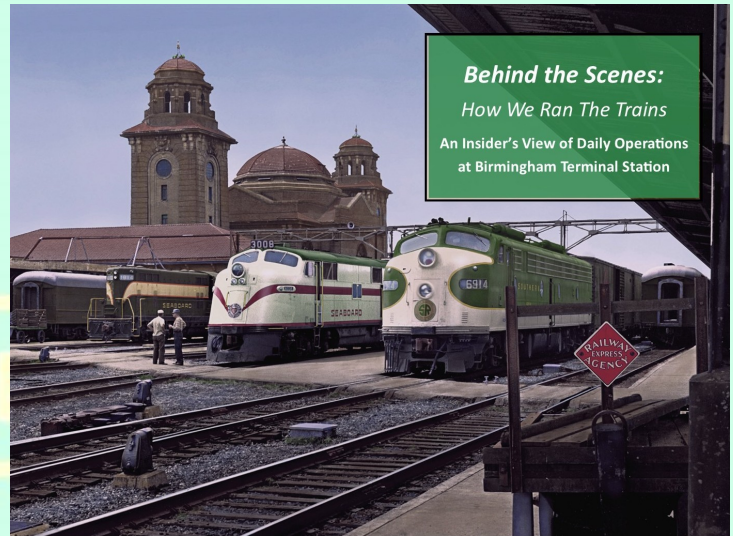
Marvin Clemons

September 19, 2020

2:00 p.m. at Historic Leeds Depot

Program Description:

Managing train operations at a major railroad passenger terminal like Birmingham's Terminal Station required a high degree of communication and coordination between the station operator, train crews, railroad dispatchers and station personnel. Using actual documentation, photographs and film clips of train movements, former control tower operator Marvin Clemons will demonstrate how passengers, mail and express were handled through Terminal Station on a typical day in the early 1960s.



Behind the Scenes:

How We Ran The Trains

An Insider's View of Daily Operations
at Birmingham Terminal Station

OTHER UPDATES AND NEWS

Road Construction at the I-20 Leeds Exit — Note that construction work at the Leeds exit is underway beside Interstate 20 and along Highway 78 at the base of the exit. Lanes are being added to provide access to the new Buc-ee's location across from the turn to Bass Pro and the Barber Museum. Buc-ee's will be a 50,000-square-foot convenience store, gas station and travel center and should be completed in late 2020.

Amtrak Is Reducing Service Beginning in October — Amtrak is cutting back its long-distance routes all across the country beginning this October as it confronts low ridership due to the coronavirus. The train routes being cut to three days a week include the California Zephyr, Capitol Limited, City of New Orleans, Coast Starlight, **Crescent**, Empire Builder, Lake Shore Limited, Palmetto, Southwest Chief, and Texas Eagle. The Sunset Limited and Cardinal trains already operate three times a week.

Member Moment

The Member Moment this month features Nicholas Costa. If you would like to be featured and tell your story, please contact Warren Jones (wjones1302@gmail.com).

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 and the *MID-SOUTH FLYER*. Contributions, article ideas and reader comments are welcome.

Ken Boyd, Editor
kenboydphotography@yahoo.com



CHAPTER UPDATE

James Lowery, President

Mid-South Chapter July 25 Meeting/Picnic Has Been CANCELLED

In case you had put the July meeting and picnic on your calendar, the Mid-South Chapter Board of Directors has decided to CANCEL the July 25 Chapter meeting and picnic. With the continuing COVID-19 situation and uncertainty as to when in-person meetings may resume safely, the Board felt that we should not have a meeting so soon. Some of you may be wondering why we don't have the meeting online such as with Zoom, but the Board felt that it would not do justice to a meeting speaker if the online attendance was uncertain and if not a lot of people "attended" online. We are still hoping to have the next Chapter meeting on **September 19, 2020, at 2:00 pm. Please put that meeting on your calendar.**

Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project Benefits from Orders Made through Amazon SMILE Donation Program

Please consider making **your regular Amazon online purchases** through AmazonSmile to benefit the BMRR Signs Project which has already installed 151 signs throughout the 6 counties in central Alabama served by the railroad. As a project of the Mid-South Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, the Historic Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project is registered in the AmazonSmile program which makes a donation to the project anytime someone orders through Amazon and uses the [AmazonSmile](https://smile.amazon.com) link to place the order. **Ordering through AmazonSmile is the same as ordering through Amazon, and NO additional amount will be added to your order. Amazon makes the donations to charity through its associated foundation. Please bookmark and use the following link if you order anything from Amazon so the donation by Amazon will go to the BMRR Signs Project: <https://smile.amazon.com/ch/46-4903587>** Thank you.

e-Newsletter

The Chapter is continuing to send its e-Newsletter to members and to people on the Chapter's email mailing list. You should have received several issues of the e-Newsletter, and we hope you are enjoying receiving it.

Remember 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.

Annual Report to the National Railway & Locomotive Historical Society

As you are probably aware, the Mid-South Chapter is part of the national Railway & Locomotive Historical Society. The Chapter's President is a member of the national Board of Directors and represents the Chapter at the national Board meetings. Each year, the Chapter makes an Annual Report to the national Board and did so this year at its June meeting. If you would like to see a copy of that report, please let me know at JLowery2@gmail.com and I will be glad to send it to you.

Research Function of the Mid-South Chapter

One of the items included in the Annual Report mentioned above and that I would like to highlight here is the fact that members and associates of the Mid-South Chapter often provide historical information about various railroads in this region. In addition to exhibits, displays, tours, program meetings, the *Flyer* newsletter, etc., throughout the year, we receive questions from various sources (sometimes from Chapter members, sometimes from non-members, and sometimes from members of the general public) about past railroads and the railroad history of this area.

We research those questions to the best of our abilities and with the historical resources at hand and provide the answers, or we refer the person to other local experts who may be able to assist them. Members of the Mid-South Chapter Board of Directors have been very helpful with providing the answers or researching the information or providing referrals. We are always open to new inquiries and we often benefit from the inquiries because, along the way as we research the answers to the questions, we also learn additional historical information.



HEART OF DIXIE RAILROAD MUSEUM

OFFICIAL RAILROAD MUSEUM FOR THE STATE OF ALABAMA

Mark Walker

After three months of closure, the HoD returned to operation on June 13. However, to reopen, many proactive changes had to be made to address COVID-19 concerns. Seating capacity for trains is currently lowered to 40 percent; this provides better spacing for our guests. Safety signage, walking paths, queue lines, enhanced cleaning, along with other safety measures have all been taken. Depot ticket windows are open, but the museum is currently closed. The Boone Library is open by appointment only. Review and planning are taking place for future events, but changes will be required if we are able to offer them. Due to all the unknowns, we are currently unsure about our fall events. North Pole Express tickets usually go on sale in July but are now delayed until at least August, allowing time to evaluate our options. The photo below shows the new queue lines for train boarding and ticket pickup.



Current Restoration Projects

- ◆ 1926 L&N RR Tavern/Lounge Car "Alabama Club"
The Emery Grant has allowed for HVAC work to continue. Another grant is being sought for interior painting.
- ◆ Shelby & Southern Narrow Gauge RR is looking for a return to operation in late July! Hope to see everyone come out to ride!
- ◆ 1952 CB&Q RR dining car "Silver Cuisine" Only minor repairs taking place due to budget freeze but grant being prepared.

Ozan Winery Trains

HoD continues to partner with Ozan Winery to provide train rides for their patrons. The museum currently provides the Long Island Passenger Car for their exclusive use. Limited Seating for each run.

www.ozanwine.com

Railroad Preservation

We ask for your continuing support and patronage of our historic museum during these trying times.

Upcoming 2020 Train Rides:

Saturday Train Rides

Saturdays, June 13—September 26

- ◆ *New Departure Times:* 10:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.

Special event times may vary.

Stars & Stripes Special

Saturday, July 4, 2020

- ◆ *Departure Times:* 10:00 a.m. & 1:00 p.m.
- ◆ Main Street Calera providing Hot Dogs

Wild West Day

Saturday, July 18, 2020

- ◆ *Departure Times:* 10:00 a.m., 1:00 & 3:00 p.m.
- ◆ Limited seating & a revamped Wild West Show

Ozan Winery Departures

Saturday—Select Saturdays now through September

- ◆ Departs from Ozan Winery boarding location
- ◆ *Departure Times:* 10:10 a.m. & 1:10 p.m.
- ◆ Visit Ozan Winery website for tickets and info.

TRAIN WATCHING IN GREENE COUNTY

A REGIONAL DAY TRIP ON YOUR OWN

Ken Boyd

The May 2020 issue of *THE MID-SOUTH FLYER* included a column entitled “A Regional Day Trip on Your Own.” This column featured the Cowan Railroad Museum, and the intent was to suggest a possible day trip for railfans at this time of the COVID-19 pandemic when group travel and interactions are limited. The column was very popular with readers, so another, quite different, mid-south day trip feature is included in this issue.

To the west and south of Tuscaloosa and on the way to Meridian and New Orleans, the Norfolk Southern (NS) mainline passes through Greene County, Alabama. This is the line Amtrak travels every day. The track parallels U.S.

Highway 11 for much of the journey across the county as it meanders through Eutaw, Boligee and Epes and into Livingston. In Boligee, the NS line interchanges with the Alabama & Gulf Coast Railway.

These are very active and heavily traveled railroads, and this is a fascinating and historic region of Alabama. Anyone living around Birmingham, Tuscaloosa, or Meridian and with an interest in trains and southern history, should enjoy a road trip through the area.

For most railfans and those who appreciate striking geologic scenery, the highlight of this trip will be the remarkable Epes Railroad Bridge across the Tombigbee River at the



The Epes Railroad Bridge at the spectacular Alabama White Cliffs on the Tombigbee River. This mixed freight train is headed north toward Tuscaloosa with three Kansas City Southern locomotives in the lead. Photo by Ken Boyd.



Previous Epes Railroad Bridge, in December 1954. Photograph by J. Parker Lamb, © 2016, Center for Railroad Photography and Art. Lamb-01-115-10.

spectacular Alabama White Cliffs. The cliffs are part of the Selma Chalk Formation and extend for about a mile along the river at Epes and rise about 30 to 80 feet above the water level.

The bridge is a massive, tall single-span truss structure. It replaced an earlier lift bridge to improve navigation along the Tenn-Tom Waterway. This bridge, together with the white cliffs and the river, has to be one of the most impressive railroading panoramas in the mid-south region.

Historically, the bridge is located near the site of the 1735 Fort Tombecbe, constructed by the French at the direction of King Louis XIV. The French chose a spot for the fort along the cliffs that was 80 feet above the river for their campaign against the Chickasaw Native Americans who inhabited the region. Later, the Spanish established a more substantial fort on the site when they assumed control of the river in 1794. Eventually, the fort was abandoned because of the remote location.

The more modern day town of Epes was incorporated in 1899 and named for Dr. John W. Epes, who donated the right-of-way through the area to Southern Railway if the town would be named "Epes." By the turn of the century, the town was already a busy cotton shipping center for steamboats using the Port of Epes, and the rail-

road further expanded the town's importance in shipping and commerce. During its prime, Epes had three cotton gins, a cotton compress, cotton seed oil mill, a creamery and a handle company. The Casey Hotel, The Bowers Boarding House, a school, two grocery stores, a drug store, general merchandising stores, and two livery stables highlighted the significance of the town. The second stockyard in the State of Alabama opened in Epes in 1936. Today, a barge shipping center still operates downstream of the bridge, but less than 200 people live in the town.

Trains run across the Epes bridge regularly throughout most days (about every 30 or 45 minutes) and the nearby Highway 11 bridge provides a perfect view of the action. The relatively new highway bridge is only a few hundred yards from the rail bridge, and it is wide with a good pedestrian walking area. Traffic on Highway 11 through Epes is generally light. Parking is easy at the south end of the bridge and the walk onto the bridge is short. Rarely do two vehicles meet on the bridge, and standing on the bridge to observe the cliffs and watch for trains seems relatively safe. For anyone not interested in walking on the highway bridge or with a fear of heights, the trestle can be clearly viewed by pulling off the road just south of the river.

Trains crossing from the north and out of Tuscaloosa arrive with little warning because there are no crossings for sever-



Norfolk Southern crossing at historic Boligee, Alabama. Photo by Ken Boyd.



The United Methodist Church (established 1845) in Livingston was built in the Victorian Gothic Style in 1890 (left). The Greene County Courthouse in Eutaw was rebuilt in 1869 in Greek Revival Style and Italianate influence after the original burned post Civil War. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971. (below). Photos by Dori Boyd.



al miles on that side of the river. The trains are fast but slowing as they approach nearby Livingston to the south. Trains crossing from the south are slower and are announced as they blow through numerous crossings around Livingston.

Interestingly, the locals shared stories about the bridge with my wife, Dori, and me during a recent visit. The boys would, and may still, jump into the river from the railroad bridge. Because the track is so busy, they would “climb down under the concrete if they were not in position to jump when a train arrived!”

Just a few miles up the road from Epes is the quaint little town of Boligee. The drive between the two towns is through river swamp land, which means both Highway 11 and the parallel train track are set on long bridges. The train track is clearly visible from the highway. Just before reaching Boligee, multiple rail lines split with three tracks crossing under the highway to the south, and a small siding with rail cars on the north and west side of the tracks. The colorful little town of Boligee is just beyond the rail siding and to the north and west of the highway. The main crossing in town is a good place for train watching, but be careful because the trains are often rolling at speed as they pass! Expect the locals to ask what you are doing and visit a little. This is a very friendly area.

Still further north is Eutaw with the Greene County Courthouse, old churches, antebellum homes and much history. A number of these buildings date to the early 1800s. NS has a small maintenance operation a few block east of the town square. During our recent visit, the gravel NS parking lot was full of vultures in the late afternoon!

Although the railroading sights are impressive, non-railfans may find Livingston, which is actually in Sumter

County, more pleasing. This is the only town in the area with modern and familiar services, food and restrooms. The University of West Alabama campus is beautifully maintained and features several historic structures, including a covered bridge and a beautiful white 1820s chapel.

Please give this trip some serious consideration. You will not be disappointed and the drive is easy. If you go, let us know what you think. We are always looking for day trip stories to share!

MEMBER MOMENT

A LOVE FOR TRAINS, RAILROADS AND LOCOMOTIVES

Nicholas Costa

My love for trains, railroads, and locomotives probably started out for me as it did for many others. I grew up listening to Ringo Starr, George Carlin, and Alec Baldwin narrate *Thomas the Tank Engine* and being fascinated by the way the valve gear moved. My father had a few Lionel model trains, and I remember the commercial for *Lots & Lots of Trains* coming on television several times as a kid. In 2014, I downloaded the game Train Simulator after being reintroduced to my love for trains by a fellow sousaphone player from Oak Mountain. He and I went down to The Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum one day the following year, and I remember also being set on buying something Big Boy related from the gift shop. This jumpstarted a reawakening in me, so to speak. Many hours were spent playing Train Simulator, watching YouTube videos on British and American steam locomotives, scrolling through railroad related sites, and much more.

The biggest step that I took regarding joining an organization is when I found out that my family and I were moving to the town of Calera, where the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum is located. It was September of last year that I picked up a membership form and made the donation to join the museum. Afterwards I joined the National Railroad Historical Society, only because it was mentioned on the museum form. I started putting some time in at the museum working on whatever projects I could be a part of at the HoD. I know I haven't really put in a lot of time compared to other members, but I have already learned so much just from working alongside them. My decision to join the R&LHS came after another member, Jeff Murphree, recommended that I join the organization. After receiving my first package, I can certainly say that R&LHS gives a lot more content than NRHS.

A few of the things I have had the honor and pleasure of doing while at the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum are working as a car host, undergoing some brakeman training, being involved in the restoration and operation of a narrow-gauge steam locomotive, and bringing knowledge and a smile to every one of the riders on the Calera & Shelby Railroad. I may only be 20 years old, but I know more railroad adventures await me in the future!



Nicholas Costa

WITHOUT THE RAILROADS, NONE OF THIS WOULD HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE

JAMES LOWERY

Project Coordinator

Birmingham Mineral Railroad Signs Project

Birmingham, Alabama

THE RAILROADS TIED IT ALL TOGETHER

What is the “It” that the railroads tied together? All of the mineral resources, their intermediate products, and their final products that are discussed in this field guide had to be transported from their sources, to intermediate processing facilities, and then to their ultimate destinations; and the railroads are what did that. Without the railroads to haul the materials, the mines would not have been feasible, and the large number of blast furnaces would not have been built. For the Birmingham area and the Cahaba Coal Field, railroads were the major transportation method for moving the materials shown in table 1. In each case, movement from one box in the table horizontally to the next box involved the railroads.

The principal railroad accomplishing this in the Cahaba Coal Field was the Louisville & Nashville Railroad’s Birmingham Mineral Railroad. The “Birmingham” part of this railroad name was because it originated as serving the Birmingham District, but, by the time its extensive system of trackage had been completed (in general by 1905 and lasting until the 1980s), it was serving the entire Cahaba Coal Field and thus served six counties in central Alabama. Even today, its successor railroad (CSX Transportation) still uses some of the original roadbeds for the modern tracks, and CSX still serves Birmingham and central Alabama with freight, coal, and coke haulage even though iron ore mining in the Birmingham District ended in the early 1970s and the last blast furnace ceased

Table 1. Movement of Cahaba Coal Field materials through their uses and processes. In each case, movement from one box in the table horizontally to the next box involved the railroads.

Source material	Extraction method	Intermediate product	Destination: Blast furnace	Destination: Railroad roadbeds	Destination: Product-producing facility	Final destination (consumer)
Iron ore	Surface or underground mine	Crushed and sized ore	Product: Pig iron or molten iron	Waste product: Slag	Pipe mills, rolling mills, etc.	Cast iron and steel products
Limestone	Quarry or underground mine	Crushed and sized rock	Purpose: Flux	Waste product: Slag		Waste slag: Railroad roadbeds
Coal	Surface or underground mine	Coke (made near mine or near furnace)	Purpose: High-carbon fuel	Waste product: Slag		Waste slag: railroad roadbeds
Limestone (second use)	Quarry or underground mine	Crushed and sized rock		Ballast rock under crossties and rails		Railroad roadbeds
Sandstone	Quarry	Huge cut, sized, and dressed (chipped) blocks		Railroad roadbed water drainage culverts		Railroad and other building construction

operations in 2015. Today's coal, coke, and limestone are put to other industrial uses.

BIRMINGHAM'S FIRST ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

When did it all begin in the Cahaba Coal Field? Before the Civil War, the value of the iron ore, coal, and limestone resources in isolated locations in the Cahaba Coal Field had been recognized and had been mined in a few places to supply the very few iron furnaces in existence in central Alabama. The Confederacy made use of those facilities and the iron they produced until their destruction by the Union forces. After the war, some facilities were rebuilt, and a few more came on line; however, haulage and connectivity before and after the Civil War was a major issue holding back full development of the extraction and use of resources in the Cahaba Coal Field.

Prior to the beginning of the Birmingham Mineral Railroad in 1884, ox-drawn wooden wagons and a few small-gauge tramways were used to haul resources (often extracted and loaded by hand) from the few mines that had been opened to the few railroads in operation in the Birmingham area for transport to the few iron furnaces that were in operation. An iron-industry-giant city is not built on wooden wagon transportation.

The post-Civil War entrepreneurs in Birmingham and central Alabama wanted to open more iron and coal mines and wanted to build more and larger blast furnaces to capitalize on those resources. One thing stood in their way – how to move the resources from the locations (mines and quarries) where they were extracted to locations where blast furnaces could be built. Therefore, in the early 1880s, the entrepreneurs explained to the officials of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad that they needed a railroad for mineral transportation in the Birmingham area. L&N saw the potential for such a railroad to be a major moneymaker for L&N, and, indeed, it was.

In 1884, L&N laid the first tracks of its Birmingham Mineral Railroad as the "South Branch" in what is today Red Mountain Park (its "BMRR South Trail"). From that beginning, the BMRR transported the raw materials from the mines and quarries to the furnaces, coke from coke ovens to the blast furnaces, pig iron from the

furnaces to processing facilities, and products from the various facilities to major rail lines that connected to points across the Birmingham area and beyond.

This inaugurated Birmingham's first economic development, and the railroads (especially the Birmingham Mineral Railroad) were the underpinning of that economic development. Birmingham's phenomenal early development was due in large part to the BMRR.

THE BIRMINGHAM MINERAL RAILROAD (BMRR)

The Birmingham Mineral Railroad was a full-size (standard-gauge) railroad starting during the steam engine era and continuing well into the diesel engine era. It lasted for a century starting in 1884 and lasting until 1988 when original tracks on one branch were still used to handle the movement of train cars. The BMRR's 31 major branches (segments) totaled 253 miles, which is equal to the distance from Birmingham to Mobile! Adding to that its various sidings and spurs to the mines, quarries, coke ovens,

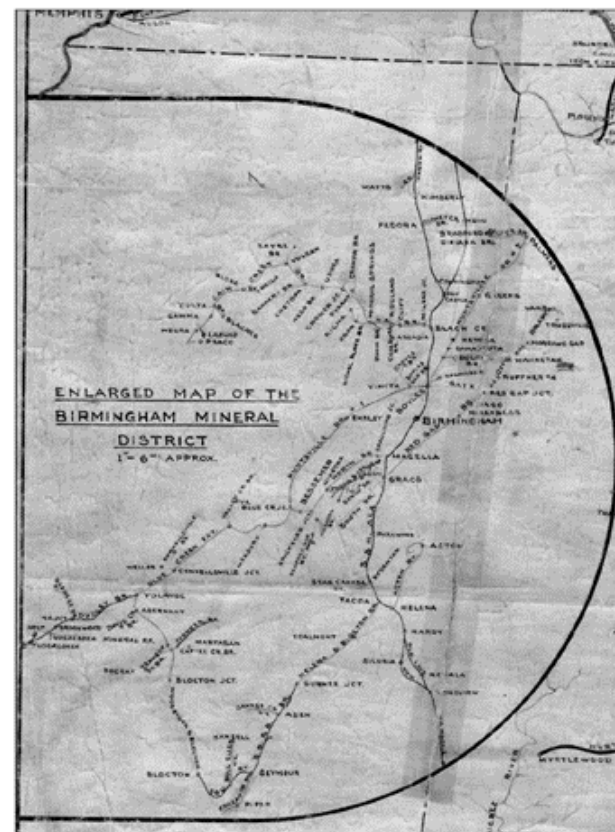


Figure 1. Map showing many of the BMRR Branches, 1910 Revised 1927

Without the railroads, none of this would have been possible

furnaces, etc., would put its length well over 300 miles. It was a major railroad!

In addition to the various iron-industry-related materials that the BMRR carried, in spite of “mineral” being in its name, it also became a “general” railroad. It provided passenger service to outlying cities and communities as well as Railway Post Office (RPO) service which included gathering full mail bags (often grabbed “on the fly” while still moving through a small town) and sorting the mail in special RPO train cars so the mail would be ready for delivery at upcoming stations or towns.

Perhaps even more important than those services were the other materials and products that the BMRR transported to and from the outlying communities and agricultural areas. It provided the means for products produced in Birmingham to be transported to communities in the six-county region of central Alabama and the means for farming and other products produced in those outlying communities to be transported to Birmingham markets. This proved to be a tremendous economic boost for those areas, and it had nothing to do with transporting "minerals." That "other stuff" carried by the BMRR is

mentioned in an 1895 article from The Montgomery Advertiser, November 6, 1895: "The Birmingham Mineral Railroad handled during the month of October 25,087 car loads. While the cars were loaded mostly with raw material for the furnaces, still many of them were filled with manufactured products and other stuff. This is the largest amount of loads handled in any one month since 1891."

CONNECTIVITY WAS THE KEY COMPONENT

Throughout the Cahaba Coal Field, the railroads (especially the Birmingham Mineral Railroad) provided the following connectivity throughout six counties in central Alabama:

1. Connected the coal mines to the coking facilities to the blast furnaces
2. Connected the red iron ore mines to the blast furnaces
3. Connected the limestone quarries and limestone mines to the blast furnaces
4. Connected the blast furnaces to the manufacturing facilities
5. Connected the sandstone quarries to facilities making use of that resource.

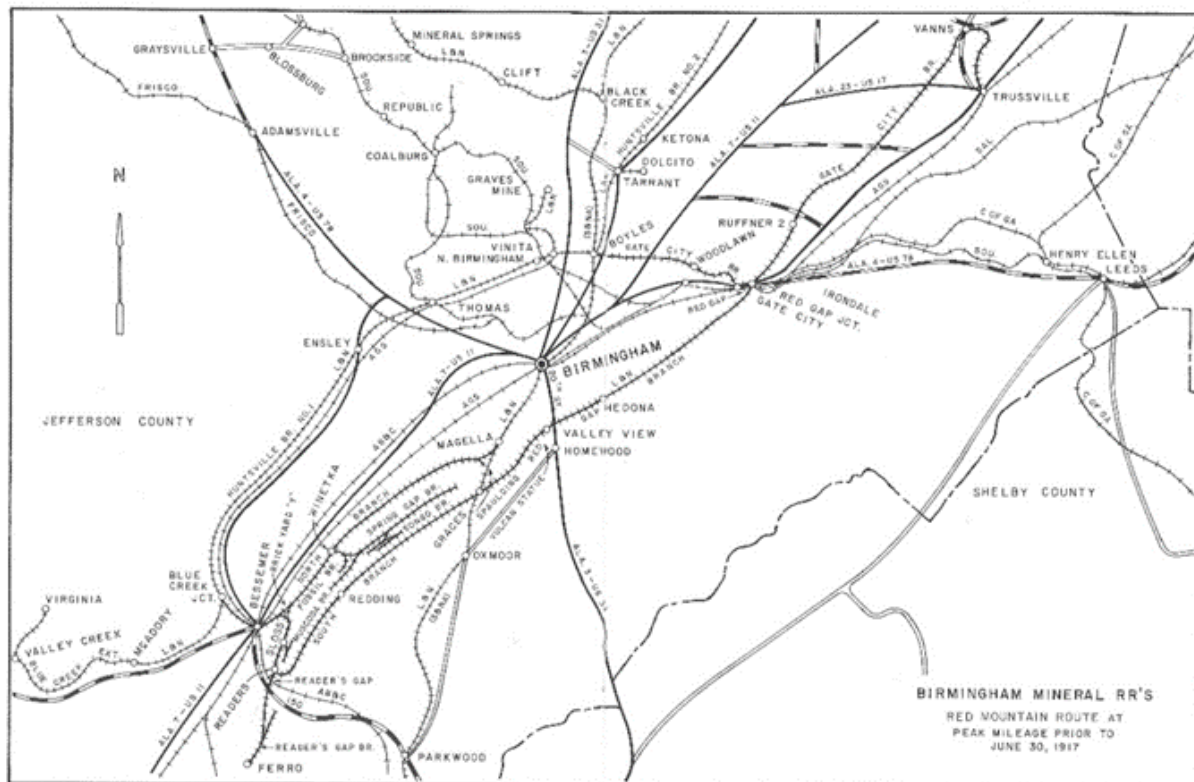


Figure 2. 1917 map of the BMRR in the Birmingham Area, Dixie-Line, June 1997.

Lowery

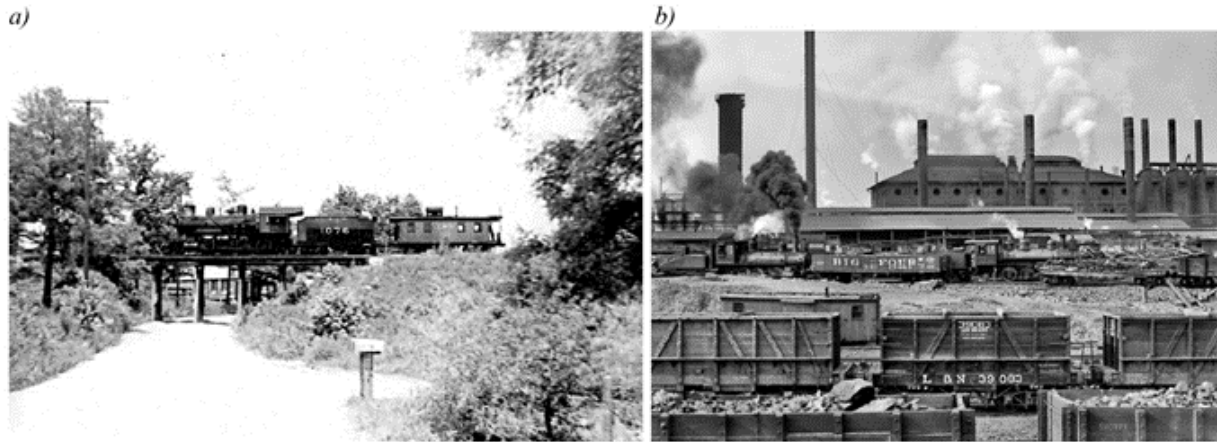


Figure 3. a) BMRR Red Gap Branch crossing Oporto Road near today's Eastwood Village (Matt Lawson, photographer; provided courtesy of Marvin Clemons); b) Ensley Furnaces circa 1906 showing L&N (BMRR) train cars and steam locomotives. SOURCE: SHORPY -- EMAIL 12-13-13.



Figure 4. Birmingham Mineral Railroad tracks serving ACIPCO (American Cast Iron Pipe Company). Date and photographer unknown.



Figure 6. L&N (BMRR) train in Tuscaloosa with McFarland Boulevard overpass in the distance. April 1975 by Robert Harris. Provided courtesy of Donnie Strickland.

On many of the railroad maps of that era, not only is the railroad system of the railroad company making the map shown, but often also the railroads of other companies are shown because many of the railroads leased trackage

rights from one another in order to share connections to get to the mines or blast furnaces they owned or were serving. This extensive connectivity is one of the key components that enabled the Birmingham District to be so

Without the railroads, none of this would have been possible

successful and to tie the mines to the furnaces and manufacturing facilities.

As an example, during the height of mining operations in the Birmingham area, there was a mine on average every one-fourth to one-half mile all the way from Trussville to Bessemer. Three branches of the Birmingham Mineral Railroad (Gate City Extension, Red Gap Branch, and South Branch) composed that route and connected all those mines (and quarries). During that same period, in 1893 there were 5,500 coke ovens in operation in Birmingham, connected by the Birmingham Mineral Railroad to the facilities using the coke.

WHERE DID THE BIRMINGHAM MINERAL RAILROAD RUN?

As indicated above, the Birmingham Mineral Railroad was the main railroad serving the Cahaba Coal Field, and, in so doing, served mines and facilities in a six-county area in central Alabama. Those six counties were Bibb, Blount, Etowah, Jefferson, Shelby, and Tuscaloosa. It also ran through a small corner of Walker County on its way to some mines in northwest Jefferson County, but the railroads of other companies served the Walker Coal Basin (Field).

It should be noted that mines in some of the six counties served by the Birmingham Mineral Railroad were served instead by spurs off the mainline Louisville & Nashville Railroad (originally the South & North Alabama Railroad) that ran primarily north and south through Alabama and Birmingham. Also in operation at the same time was L&N's Alabama Mineral Railroad that served the mines and iron industry facilities in the Coosa Coal Field. The Alabama Mineral Railroad connected (by way of the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway) with the Birmingham Mineral Railroad in Attalla (Etowah County) and the mainline Louisville & Nashville Railroad at Calera (Shelby County) to complete its "loop" back into Birmingham.

In order to provide a feel for how extensively the Birmingham Mineral Railroad reached throughout the central part of Alabama, table 2 shows some representative examples of communities served by the BMRR in the various counties.

MAPS OF THE BIRMINGHAM MINERAL RAILROAD

The maps included here show the extensive connectivity that the railroads provided throughout the Cahaba Coal Field (Figs. 1-2). Because trackage rights were leased among the various railroad companies in order to provide seamless connectivity (as also is the case with today's railroads), maps of that period often included all the railroads in the coverage area, not just the trackage of the company producing the map.

The Birmingham Mineral Railroad system was so extensive and covered so much area (six counties) that, on many of these maps, it is hard to see the detailed railroad trackage without enlarging the map. On the digital versions (available by contacting the author), that detail can be seen, and the routes of the various railroads can be followed.

Even today, many of the old, abandoned railroad roadbeds are still shown on printed and digital maps. Likewise, many of the abandoned roadbeds can be followed on Google Earth because they have not been built over and because vegetation is different from that on either side of the roadbed. So, just as geologists can often tell what is underground by looking at what is growing on the surface, railroad historians often can determine where an old railroad or mining facility was located by looking at what is growing (or not growing) on the surface.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

November 6, 1895, article from The Montgomery Advertiser provided courtesy of Thomas Denney.

In preparing this essay I benefited from discussions with many people who have shared their knowledge or personal experiences. Among those wonderful local resources are the following, all located in the Birmingham area unless noted otherwise: Robert Yuill, Thomas Denney, Jeff Newman, John Stewart, Dixon Brooke, Jr, Ken Penhale (Helena), Stanley Moss (Pinson), Max Pate (Pinson), Hoyt Sanders (Pinson), Van Gunter, George Wurtele, Martha Wurtele, Charles Allen (West Blocton), Jack Bergstresser, Terri Hicks, Commissioner Joe Knight, Zach Brooks, Thomas Talbot, James

Lowery

Table 2. Representative examples of communities in the six-county area served by the Birmingham Mineral Railroad. This is not a complete list.

County	Community
Bibb County	Blocton (now West Blocton) Coleanor Marvel Piper
Blount County	Oneonta (Near Oneonta, Champion Mine's brown ore had the highest percent iron content of all the ore in the entire Birmingham District, thus the name "Champion". The BMRR transported that ore to the Birmingham furnaces to mix with Birmingham's lesser-grade oolitic hematite, thus producing a higher grade iron.) Remlap Tait's Gap Many communities between Village Springs and Oneonta Village Springs
Etowah County	Altoona Attalla (by connecting to the NC&StL Railway) Moragne [sic] Tumlin Gap (NOTE: The only tunnel in the BMRR system was at Tumlin Gap east of Altoona.)
Jefferson County	Adamsville Bessemer Birmingham (BMRR ran in every one of today's Birmingham City Council districts.) Bradford Brookside Dixiana [sic] Ensley Fairfield Fultondale Irondale Lipscomb Morris Mountain Brook Mt. Pinson (now Pinson) Palmer (now Palmerdale) Pratt City Red Mountain Ruffner Mountain Tarrant Trussville Woodlawn Unincorporated Jefferson County (BMRR ran in every one of today's Jefferson County Commission districts.) Many communities through west Jefferson County between Bessemer and the Tuscaloosa County line Many communities through northwest Jefferson County between Fultondale and the Walker County line Many communities through northeast Jefferson County between Tarrant and the Blount County line
Shelby County	Boothton Coal Mont (Coalmont) Helena
Tuscaloosa County	Abemant Brookwood Tuscaloosa University of Alabama campus Many communities through east Tuscaloosa County between the Jefferson County line and downtown Tuscaloosa

Without the railroads, none of this would have been possible

House, Keith Gwin, David Shaddix, Sandy Ebersole (Woodstock), Phil Sankey, Marvin Clemons (Hayden), Eddie Cook, John Troulias, Donnie Strickland, David Coombs, Jamie Nobles, Tim Smith, Marty Schulman, Tom Badham (Union Grove), William Eiland (Bessemer), Chris Eiland (Bessemer), Ryan Cole, Stephen Guesman, Eugene Melton (Trussville), Terry Oden, Alice McSpadden Williams, Miller Peterson, Harold I. Fisher, Jr, Bart Morrow, Dr. Carolyn Green Satterfield, David (Dave) Phillips, Stanley E. Weir, Clyde Dykes, Jerome Lachaussee, Bebe Lloyd (Tuscaloosa), Bill Lloyd (Tuscaloosa), Alan Dismukes, George Jenkins, Don Cosper, Dr. Robert Glaze, Eddie Robbins (Oneonta), Patti Pennington, Marjorie White, Mimi Wilson Tynes, Frank Tynes, Herb Griffin (Homewood), Gary Bostany, Jason Parham, Jim Baggett, George Stewart, Dr. John Lyons, Mary Beth Newbill, Milo Washington, Paula Fancher, and many other individuals who have mentioned to me things they know about the Birmingham Mineral Railroad or who have had first-hand experiences with it.

THE MID-SOUTH FLYER



The Federal Railroad Administration, Office of Safety, DOTX 221 rolls into the Birmingham historic district with *The Crescent* on June 25, 2020. DOTX 221 is a 1954 vintage research car used for track inspection and assessment. Most of the buildings at the left background of the image are known as “The Heaviest Corner on Earth.” The tall building behind DOTX 221 was formerly the Southern Railway Transportation Building. The tall art deco building at the right is the City Federal tower. Immediately behind the rail lines is Belgium-blocked Morris Avenue, an early commercial district. Most of these buildings are now repurposed as lofts, hotels or tech and professional offices.

Photo by Ken Boyd.