



# THE MID-SOUTH FLYER



November—December 2022

Entering a New Decade of Service

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

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## Mid-South Chapter Annual Meeting and In-Person Program

**Saturday, January 14, 2023, 2:00 p.m.  
Historic Leeds Depot**

At this Annual Meeting, the Chapter will be electing/re-electing officers and members of the Board of Directors. Please let James Lowery at [JLowery2@gmail.com](mailto:JLowery2@gmail.com) know if you would like to serve on the Board of Directors or if you have a suggestion for someone to serve on the Board of Directors.

**Program Speaker: Bob Greene**  
**Mid-South Chapter Board Member**

***PROGRAM TITLE: A TALE OF TWO SYSTEMS***



**Bob Greene**

The January Chapter meeting will feature a presentation by Board member Bob Greene.

Based on nearly forty years of experience riding European railroads and running (really playing with) Marklin European model HO trains, Bob will discuss the differences between the European and United States railroad systems. Bob also will describe his involvement with European Train Enthusiasts (ETE) and will bring some of his Marklin “loks” and goods wagons for “show and tell.”



# CHAPTER NEWS

## CHAPTER NEWS

**Membership Renewal Time** — We value your membership in the Chapter and your staying connected with us. It is time to renew your Mid-South Chapter and national R&LHS memberships for 2023 or to join if you are not already a member. The web addresses to join, to renew online, or to print the application form are as follows:

Main Membership page:

<https://rlhs.org/WP/membership-in-rlhs/>

Membership form:

<https://rlhs.org/WP/membership/>

If you have any questions about membership or joining, please contact Warren Jones (Membership Chair) at [wjones1302@gmail.com](mailto:wjones1302@gmail.com).

**Leeds Depot Is Open Again!** As you may recall, the historic Leeds Depot had been closed for most of this year in order for the City of Leeds to mitigate a sinkhole that had formed under the viewing platform, to replace the platform, and to repair termite damage under the depot building. We are glad to report that all those repairs have been made and that the depot is now open for events and meetings. As you will see elsewhere in this newsletter, the Chapter Annual Meeting will be held at the depot — our first in-person meeting at the Leeds Depot since the beginning of COVID-19.

## THANKS AND APPRECIATION

The Mid-South Chapter expresses its thanks to the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum for inviting Mid-South Chapter members to the recent HODRRM picnic for members.

On behalf of the Chapter, I would like to express appreciation to Ken Boyd for his years of service as Editor of the Mid-South Chapter Flyer. He has done a wonderful job and has contributed many articles and photographs to the Flyer in addition to editorial duties. Thanks, Ken, from all of us in the Mid-South Chapter.

## Member Moment

The Member Moment this month features Alan Maples. If you would like to be featured and tell your story, please contact Warren Jones ([wjones1302@gmail.com](mailto:wjones1302@gmail.com)). The story should total 400 words or less and ideally include a photo or drawing.

## TERMINAL STATION EXHIBIT AND HISTORICAL MARKER UPDATE

Plans for the Terminal Station exhibit are moving forward. Grants have been secured to fund the exhibit, with additional funding to theme other rooms with the history of Leeds and other small-town depots. We are presently awaiting a design proposal from the exhibit curator, with plans to commence installation in early 2023.

On a related topic, the Chapter is working with the Jefferson County Historical Society and the City of Birmingham to erect a historical marker commemorating Terminal Station. Funds have been raised to purchase the marker, and a tentative location has been identified within sight of the station's former location. Our thanks to James Lowery for leading the effort on behalf of the Chapter.

## THE TRAINS ARE COMING FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

### Celebrate the Season with Model Trains at McWane Science Center

— The holidays will be picking up steam at McWane Science Center starting Saturday, November 19, 2022, and continuing until early January 2023 with the return of the intricately hand-assembled **Magic of Model Trains** exhibit!! Designed by *The Wrecking Crew*, there is joy to be found all across the layout. See how many hidden scenes you can find in the model train layout.

**Smokey City Rails** — The amazing Smokey City Rails club is set up and running for the holidays and also throughout the year. The layout is located in Suite 378 at Grand River shop-ping center in Leeds. Open hours are 11:00 am – 7:00 pm on Saturdays and 12:00 noon – 6:00 pm on Sundays – check their website for any additional hours or changes in schedule.

## 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*.





## THE MID-SOUTH FLYER

Ken Boyd, Editor

Since inception some 15 years ago, *THE MID-SOUTH FLYER* has become a popular publication for not only members of the Mid-South Chapter of the R&LHS, but also for several hundred additional readers across the region and the country. Originally conceived as a basic newsletter, the *THE MID-SOUTH FLYER* has grown to include features on historic railroading topics, vintage locomotives, travel, regional events, the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum and member experiences.

*THE MID-SOUTH FLYER* is published bi-monthly and is designed to feature beautiful and historic photographs, maps and drawings that are worthy careful study and consideration. For most readers, the distribution is electronic and occurs by email in early January, March, May, July, September and November of each year.

In 2018, I became your editor for *THE MID-SOUTH FLYER*, and with this issue, I have served for five years. It is now with mixed emotions that I announce that this will be my last issue as editor. I have thoroughly enjoyed working on each and every page, and I have especially appreciated your nice emails, calls and comments.

After five years, I must move on to other projects. As many of you know, I have authored several books, I write for journals and magazines and I lead tours and make numerous presentations throughout the year, in addition to my teaching responsibilities at Samford University. I continue to research, photograph and share on historical railroading and other preservation subjects.

Looking ahead, this will begin a new era for *THE MID-SOUTH FLYER* with a new editor and a fresh perspective. As the new year begins, you are encouraged to submit information on trains, railroading and model train events, to both the editor and the Mid-South Chapter website (contact, Lamont Downs). Also, sign up, post and like the Mid-South FaceBook page (contact, Tim Smith). Spend some time with the digital archives, so carefully preserved at the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum, and share and submit your photos and digital information (contact, James Lowery).

Happy holidays and all the best for the new year! I hope to see you soon at the Leeds Depot or somewhere down the tracks!

*KEN BOYD*

Editor *THE MID-SOUTH FLYER*



# A LIFETIME OF RAILROADING

## MEMBER MOMENT

### Alan Maples

I was born in Washington, DC, in 1961 and grew up in the nearby Maryland suburbs. Our home was within sight of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) Georgetown Branch, and my parents indulged my railroad interests with Lionel trains, rides on tourist railroads, and visits to obscure rail yards. Every summer, we headed south to visit my father's parents, who had a house directly across from the Southern Railway depot in Scottsboro, Alabama. The Southern was "big time" railroading compared to the B&O local back home. My younger brother grew up in the same circumstances but never developed an interest in trains. I have yet to figure out why.

In 1983, I purchased the defunct four-mile Everett Railroad in Everett, Pennsylvania, one of the last remnants of the Huntingdon & Broad Top Mountain Railroad, chartered in 1852. Through a series of transactions, we acquired several former Pennsylvania Railroad branch lines and brought the Everett Railroad back to life. Today the Everett operates twenty-two miles of line, connecting for freight service with Norfolk Southern at Hollidaysburg, Pennsylvania.

In 2015, we began operating steam excursions using a light 2-6-0 built by Alco in 1920. Despite a pandemic-abbreviated season last year, over 22,000 people rode our train. We presently have six passenger cars in service with seven more awaiting restoration. Our second steam locomotive, former Huntingdon & Broad Top 2-8-0 No. 38, is under repair and will hopefully return to service in a few years.



**Photo of Alan Maples. (Photo taken at Duncansville, PA location by Washington Examiner photographer Shannon Venditti)**



**Engine No. 11 arriving at the Hollidaysburg depot. Built by Alco in 1920 and intended for export but never left the country. We restored it to operation in 2015. Since this photo was made, it has been converted from coal to oil firing. (Photo by Alan Maples)**

In addition to the Mid-South Chapter of the R&LHS, I am a long-time member of the National Railway Historical Society, as well as the Southern Railway Historical Association and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Historical Society. I was recently elected vice president of the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum (TVRM) and serve on the museum's board of directors. My professional affiliations include serving on the board of directors of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association as well as past service on the Keystone State Railroad Association's executive committee.

I divide my time between homes in Scottsboro and Hollidaysburg. While my professional commitments somewhat limit my free time for railfan activities, I was happy to help put together the 2015 R&LHS convention in Altoona, Pennsylvania. Should your travels bring you our way, please let me know you are a visiting R&LHS member. Within an hour of our railroad, you can visit the East Broad Top, the Western Maryland Scenic, and of course world-famous Horseshoe Curve.





# HEART OF DIXIE RAILROAD MUSEUM

*OFFICIAL RAILROAD MUSEUM FOR THE STATE OF ALABAMA*



Through the dark night, the North Pole Express makes its way by starlight to the top of the world. On the way, you'll listen to a whimsical Christmas story, sing your favorite holiday carols, and watch out the windows for the bright lights of the North Pole to appear!

Weekends beginning November 18th  
through December 18th

Christmas at the Station is a newly reimagined daytime holiday event at the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum each Saturday before Christmas in December. Bring the family for a fun-filled Christmas experience riding trains, seeing Santa, exploring a festive maze, and more on the Museum grounds!



## A REGIONAL DAY TRIP ON YOUR OWN

### Stevenson Railroad Depot and Hotel Museum

The Historic Stevenson Railroad Depot and Hotel in Stevenson, Alabama, were built in about 1872 as a joint project of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad and the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad, whose lines converged in Stevenson. Stevenson's first railroad depot was built around 1852 for common use by the two railroads. The original depot was destroyed either during, or shortly after, the Civil War. Bricks salvaged may have been used in the building of the present structure.

When the Memphis and Charleston was purchased by the Southern Railway in 1898, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (who had taken over the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad in 1880) took sole control of the depot and operated it until 1976. It was converted into a history museum in 1982. The buildings are brick with gable roofs and Italianate details. The depot has a central, second-story tower that was added in 1887. The three-story hotel had a lobby, dining room and kitchen on the first floor and eight large guest rooms on the upper floors. The buildings were listed on the Alabama Register of Landmarks and Heritage in 1975 and the National Register of Historic Places in 1976.

The museum is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am until 3:30 pm and admission is free. When planning a visit, be sure you allow time to explore the historic downtown area.



The Stevenson Railroad Depot and Hotel Museum. (Photo by Ken Boyd)

#### SOURCES:

<https://cityofstevensonAlabama.com/Depot-Museum.html>

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevenson\\_Railroad\\_Depot\\_and\\_Hotel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stevenson_Railroad_Depot_and_Hotel)

<https://alabama.travel/places-to-go/stevenson-railroad-depot-museum>

# THE LOCAL WORKHORSES OF THE NATIONAL RAILROAD NETWORK

Warren T. Jones, Sr.



**Gainesville Midland Railroad Maintenance Shops in Gainesville. (Warren Jones collection. Photographer unknown)**

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century my hometown of Gainesville, Georgia in North Georgia could legitimately be called a three-railroad town, two of which were short lines, the Gainesville & Northwestern (G&NW) and the Gainesville Midland (GM). The G&NW connected Gainesville with Helen, Georgia, in the mountains, and the GM operated between Gainesville and Athens, Georgia. The third railroad was the Southern Railway high-iron mainline.

I grew up in a Southern Railway section house near the Southern depot where my father worked. The Southern mainline was not far from our front yard, and the GM track (the New Holland Mill branch) was literally our backyard boundary [1]. The G&NW faded away in the early 1930s and the GM was merged with the Seaboard Air Line in 1959, so from my limited perspective at that time, short lines were going the way of the dinosaur.

Many years later when I became interested in railroad history and specifically what happened to a particular short line steam locomotive (GM No. 301) that was a regular visitor to our neighborhood [2], I was surprised to learn that the

short line species had survived and was doing remarkably well.

The purpose of this article is to introduce the short line railroad world of today. Since the mission of the American Short Line and Regional Railroad Association (ASLRRRA) is to represent the entrepreneurial owners and operators of short line and regional railroads, much of the following information is taken from the website of this organization ([aslrra.org](http://aslrra.org)) with the permission of Amy M. Krouse, ASLRRRA VP, Communications.

## SHORT LINE RAILROADS

Short line rail freight is a critical part of the U.S. freight network. The nation's 603 short lines provide the first and last mile service for one in five cars moving each year. Operating 47,500 route miles, or 29% of freight rail in the U.S., these small railroads play a vital role in the hub-and-spoke transportation network, providing the connection between farmers, manufacturers and other industries, and ulti-



## Railroad Classifications

(U. S. Surface Transportation Board – STB)

**Class I Railroads:** Annual operating revenue in excess of \$489,935,956.

**Class II Railroads:** Annual operating revenue of less than \$489,935,956 and more than \$39,194,876.

**Class III Railroads:** Annual operating revenue of less than \$39,194,876

The threshold figures are adjusted annually for inflation using the base year of 1991. The figures above are based off 2018 numbers (the most recent year for which deflator factors have been calculated).

Most short line railroads fall into the Class II and Class III categories.

mately, the consumer. For large areas of rural and small-town America, short line and regional railroads are the only way shippers can be directly connected to the national network, helping business and employment stay local.

Most short lines meet the definitions of small business. On average, short line railroads employ fewer than 30 people, run an average of only 79 miles, and have \$7.7 million or less in revenue. Short line rail service provides safe, efficient, competitive and environmentally responsible access to transportation for nearly 10,000 rail customers.

### The Short Line Role

Short lines provide high value to their customers and to the North American Class I railroads. In their service areas, short lines place cars, consolidate shipments and move the goods to the mainlines. At the junction point, it is often the short line that manages adding the carloads to a larger train for the next leg of the journey. At the destination, the process is reversed and short lines deliver the cars to the customer or to another form of transportation, such as barges, container ships or trucks.



Railyard at the Huntsville and Madison County Railroad Authority

(Photo by Ken Boyd)



## Short Line Railroad Challenges

Short line railroads are small businesses. The majority of these businesses were created by entrepreneurs who purchased or leased marginal or unprofitable segments of large Class I railroads. The preserved service and jobs on these rail lines were otherwise deteriorating and heading for abandonment.

## Short Line Railroad Evolution

Short lines were in business as early as the mid-1800s. Two of the earliest were the Granite Railway, incorporated in 1826 in Quincy, Massachusetts, developed to carry stone from the Bunker Hill Quarry three miles, to the Neponset River, and the 13-mile-long Baltimore & Ohio (B&O) in 1827. The original B&O is now part of the CSX Corporation, a Class I railroad. But it was the Staggers Act of 1980 that saved the national railroad industry from near collapse. It did so by eliminating much of the suffocating regulation that made it impossible for railroads to operate in a free market system.

In many respects, the Staggers Act is also the genesis of the short line industry as it exists today. The economic freedoms and regulatory flexibility embodied in that Act allowed entrepreneurs to save light-density branch lines rather than abandon them. The results were quite remarkable. Short lines have grown from 8,000 miles of track in 1980 to 47,500 miles today. They operate in 49 states. In five states, short lines operate 100% of the state's total rail network. In 15 states, they operate more than 50% of the railroad network and in 36 states, at least one quarter of the rail network.



*Birmingham Terminal Railway.*



*Alabama Southern Railroad.*

**Short Line Railroads Often Operate Interesting and Colorful Regional Motive Power, Such as These Watco Locomotives.**  
(Photos by Ken Boyd)

Short lines inherited track that had experienced years of deferred maintenance by their previous owners and must therefore devote a significant portion of revenue to rehabilitating that infrastructure. Most short lines must invest a minimum of 25% of their annual revenues in such rehabilitation, which is a percentage far higher than almost any other industry in the country.

The majority of short line customers are also small businesses that ship modest volumes. In other words, short lines must do more with less. They compete aggressively for business in order to achieve the kind of carload volumes necessary to succeed. They do so by providing flexible local service, by utilizing their real estate assets to attract new business to the line and by working closely with their customers to provide high quality and cost-effective freight service. They are the local workhorses of the national rail network.

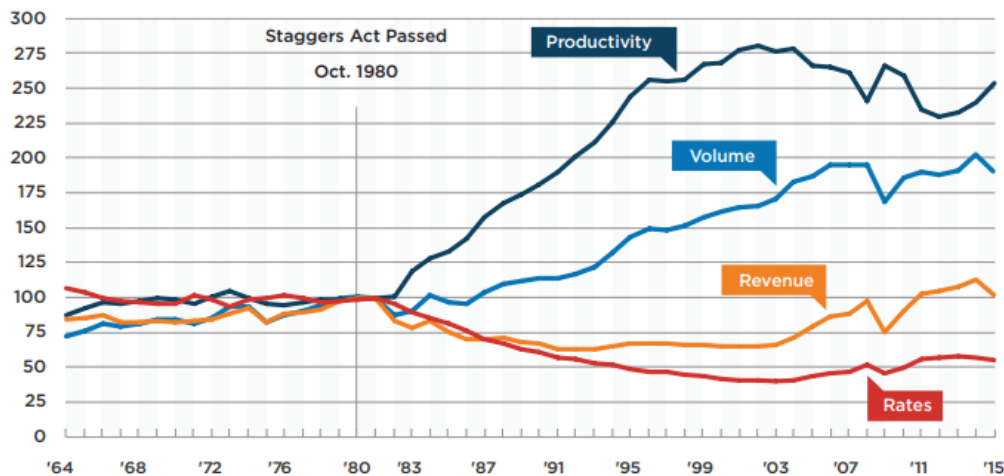
In saving the Class I industry, the Staggers Act preserved the private national railroad network. In creating the modern-day short line industry, the Staggers Act ensured that huge areas of rural and small-town America would stay connected to that national railroad network. For the small business and farmers in those areas, the ability to take a five-car train 15 miles to the nearest Class I interchange is just as important as the Class I's ability to attach that block of traffic to a 100-car train and move it across the country. Thousands of rail customers cannot make the journey without short line service.

The Staggers Act has also been good for the customers and suppliers of the short lines. The Association of American Railroads (AAR) reports that the Staggers Act has led to a 45% reduction in average shipping rates, a doubling of rail traffic, and an investment of \$600 billion into the rail system.



## U.S. FREIGHT RAILROAD PERFORMANCE SINCE THE STAGGERS ACT

Today's Balanced Regulatory System Has Benefited Shippers and Allowed Railroads to Flourish



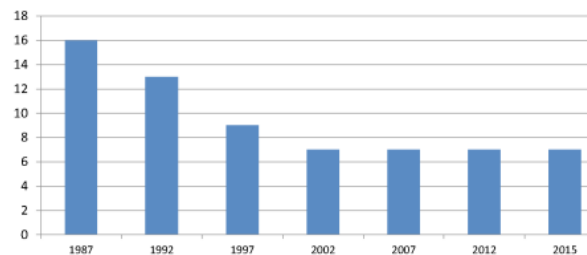
Source: AAR

### Growth Over Time

In 1976, there were 56 Class I railroads organized into 30 separate systems. By 1987, as a result of a long series of mergers and acquisitions, Class I railroads had declined to only 13 and today, there are seven Class I railroads, a reduction of 46%.

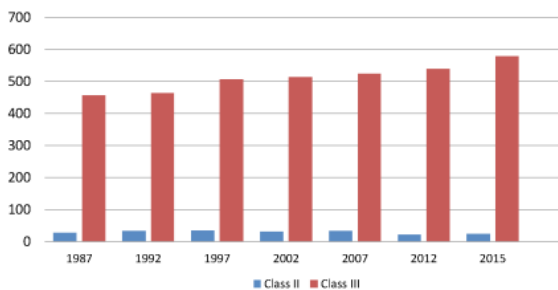
### Number of Railroads Over Time

#### Class I Railroads



### Number of Railroads Over Time

#### Regional and Short Line Railroads



To the contrary, since 1987 short line and regional railroads have increased 20% over the same time period.

Source: AAR, *Railroad Facts*, various years; 2016 ASLRRA Data Survey

Many short lines operating around the country are now owned by large conglomerates/holding companies. According to American-Rails.com, there were 27 holding companies that controlled nearly 270 short line railroads during 2021. Some holding company examples are described below. (This information was taken from company websites and Wikipedia during September 2022.)

### SHORT LINE CONGLOMERATES

#### Watco ([watco.com](http://watco.com))

Seeing opportunity in the newly deregulated railroad industry, Charles R. "Dick" Webb and his wife, Kaye Lynne,

leveraged everything they had and purchased a locomotive. With eight team members, they started an industrial railcar switching operation in DeRidder, Louisiana in 1983. Today Watco is a transportation and supply chain services company based in Pittsburg, Kansas with locations throughout North America, including Birmingham, Alabama, area and Australia that operates a diverse network of 41 short line railroads, terminals, ports, and repair terminals. As of December 2018, it operates 5,500 miles of leased and owned track. Alabama holdings includes Alabama Southern Railroad, Alabama Warrior Railway and Birmingham Terminal Railway.



Alabama and Tennessee River Railway Trestle over the Coosa River at Gadsden.

(Photo by Ken Boyd)

### **OmniTRAX** ([omnitrax.com](http://omnitrax.com))

OmniTRAX is a transportation and transportation infrastructure holding company based in Denver, Colorado. It primarily owns or operates railroads, with a network of 25 regional and short line railroads in 12 U.S. states, and three Canadian provinces. It also invests in, develops, and operates ports, multimodal transportation terminals, and industrial parks.

### **Genesee & Wyoming (G&W)** ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))

G&W owns or leases 115 freight railroads worldwide organized in locally managed operating regions with 7,300 employees serving 3,000 customers. G&W's four North American regions serve 43 U. S. states and four Canadian provinces and include 112 short line and regional freight railroads with more than 13,000 track miles. G&W's UK/Europe Region includes the UK's largest rail maritime intermodal operator and second-largest freight rail provider, as well as regional rail services in continental Europe. G&W subsidiaries and joint ventures also provide rail service at more than 30 major

ports, rail-ferry service between the U.S. Southeast and Mexico, transload services and railcar switching and repair.

### **Iowa Pacific Holdings** ([iowapacific.net](http://iowapacific.net))

Iowa Pacific Holdings (IPH) was formed in March 2001 to acquire railroads and create rail-related business. It has focused on smaller feeder railroads with annual revenues of \$10 million and less. IPH has acquired and operated six railroads, while working to increase their value to rail customers and the communities they serve, through improvements in services, facilities and equipment.

NOTE: According to Wikipedia, IPH and its subsidiaries have had severe financial trouble and held large debts. IPH filed for Chapter 7 bankruptcy in U.S. bankruptcy court in Northern Illinois in late March 2021.

### **Pioneer Lines** ([pioneerlines.com](http://pioneerlines.com))

Formerly Pioneer RailCorp, Pioneer Lines is a freight and logistics leader since 1986 and owns 15 short line railroads across 12 states, including Arkansas, Alabama,



Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Mississippi, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Tennessee. Headquartered in Denver, Colorado, Pioneer Lines is the link for over 100 industries from rural and small-town America to domestic and global markets. Pioneer Lines directly or indirectly supports over 17,000 jobs in the United States and transports diverse commodities, including agriculture and food products, iron and steel, plastics, chemicals, building materials and forest products.

Pioneer Lines operates two segments of the Mississippi Central Railroad totaling approximately 115 miles of track. One segment runs from Corinth, Mississippi to Red Bay, Alabama. The other segment runs from Oxford, Mississippi to Grand Junction, Tennessee.

#### **Rio Grande Pacific Corporation ([rgpc.com](http://rgpc.com))**

Rio Grande Pacific Corporation (RGPC) was founded in 1986 as a privately-held, Texas-based railroad holding company for regional freight railroad, signal construction and design, passenger operations, equipment manufacturing, dispatching services and investment grade tenant lease assets and ranching.

The firm's operations include four short line railroads operating on some 700 total route miles in six states, including Oregon, Idaho, Nebraska, Kansas, Texas and Louisiana. RGPC properties serve approximately 140 freight customers, including many Fortune 500 firms and move a diverse mixture of commodities in the agriculture, lumber, mineral and recycling industries.

#### **Patriot Rail Company ([patriotrail.com](http://patriotrail.com))**

Patriot Rail operates 16 regional and short line freight railroads (including two properties with two railroads operating as one), a scenic rail excursion train, and two rail-related services companies with over 600 rail miles across the United States. Service capabilities include railcar storage, railcar repair and maintenance, railway clean-up and transfer, tank car cleaning and environmental services, contract switching, transloading, engineering services, excursion railroad, real estate and track access.

The excursion railroad is the 26-mile Blue Ridge Scenic Railway along the Toccoa River between Blue Ridge, Georgia and the sister towns of McCaysville, Georgia and Copperhill, Tennessee.

#### **Pinsly Railroad Company ([pinsly.com](http://pinsly.com))**

Pinsly Railroad Company is one of the oldest short line railroad companies in the United States. It was founded in 1938 when Samuel M. Pinsly purchased and rehabili-

tated the hurricane damaged Hoosac Tunnel and Wilmington Railroad in Massachusetts and Vermont which was threatened with abandonment.

Pinsly remains today a company focused on acquiring short line railroads and revitalizing branch and feeder lines of Class I and regional carriers. Pinsly has achieved steady growth by maintaining a focus on the needs of its customers and by developing strong partnerships with its connecting carriers.

Through its operating subsidiaries of Pioneer Valley Railroad (PVRR) and Railroad Distribution Services (RDS), Pinsly Railroad provides service to direct-rail customers and non-rail served accounts via transload. PVRR and RDS handle products for major industries such as Lowes, NGL Energy, Nucor Metals and Packaging Corporation of America.

#### **Gulf & Ohio Railways ([gulfandohio.com](http://gulfandohio.com))**

The Gulf & Ohio Railways (G&O) was established in 1985 as a holding company for four short line railroads in the states of Tennessee, South Carolina and North Carolina and the *Three Rivers Rambler* train ride. The railroads operate on 200 miles of track, using approximately 30 locomotives, to haul freight for 64 industrial customers. With over 50 full and part-time employees, G&O plays an important role in the local economies where it operates.

The *Three Rivers Rambler* is a tourist train operation located in the heart of Knoxville, Tennessee. Since the year 2000, it has provided memorable train rides from downtown Knoxville to the Tennessee River. The depot is located at University Commons near the University of Tennessee Campus.

### **ALABAMA SHORT LINES**

The list of Alabama short line railroad descriptions below is reproduced with permission from Adam Burns of American-Rails. (Last updated in 2016) Similar lists for other states can be found at [american-rails.com/guide.html](http://american-rails.com/guide.html). The website link shown by the name of each Alabama short line is either the site of the short line itself or the associated holding company. Additional information for some short lines can be found on Wikipedia.

#### **Alabama Export Railroad ([mserr.com](http://mserr.com))**

This short line, a division of the Mississippi Export Railroad ([mserr.com](http://mserr.com)), serves the Mobile waterfront and the Port of Mobile. It operates a short loop of track from the Mobile River, north of the port, stretching to the north-



**Autauga Southern Railroad Locomotives at Maplesville, Alabama, Still in Pacific Rim Livery.**

**(Photos by Ken Boyd)**

west, and then reaches the Mobile Bay waterfront at McDuffie Island. Mississippi Export Railroad celebrates its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2022.

It maintains connections with Canadian National, CSX Transportation, Norfolk Southern, Kansas City Southern, CG Railway, Terminal Railway Alabama State Docks and Alabama & Gulf Coast Railway.

#### **Alabama & Gulf Coast Railway ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))**

This is a Genesee & Wyoming property operating nearly 350 miles of track running from eastern Mississippi, through western Alabama and finally terminating at Pensacola, Florida.

The route's heritage traces back to the eastern extent of the St Louis-San Francisco's network and today the railroad handles more than 61,000 carloads annually including coal, iron and steel, chemicals, scrap iron, pulp and paper and limestone.

#### **Alabama & Tennessee River Railway ([omnitrax.com](http://omnitrax.com))**

The Alabama & Tennessee River Railway is owned by OmniTRAX and has been in service since 2004 after acquiring 120 miles from CSX. The route's heritage can

be traced back to three predecessors including the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, Seaboard Air Lines Railroad, and Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway. Its current traffic includes steel, rubber, cement, agriculture, and other freight. The line's western terminus is a junction with the CSX main line in Birmingham, Alabama near CSX's Boyles Yard. The eastern terminus is Guntersville, Alabama near the Tennessee River. It also serves the Port of Guntersville.

#### **Alabama Railroad ([alabamarr.com](http://alabamarr.com))**

The Alabama Railroad was a Pioneer RailCorp property, originally operating 60 miles of trackage between Flomaton and Corduroy, Alabama.

A former L&N branch, the short line began service in 1991. The property filed for abandonment on April 18, 2019 but was reactivated in 2020 as the Alabama Railroad, LLC. It currently operates 48 miles from Flomaton to Peterman.

#### **Alabama Southern Railroad ([watco.com](http://watco.com))**

This Watco property began service on November 20, 2005 and operates about 85 miles of track between Columbus, Mississippi, and Birmingham, Alabama, under



lease with Kansas City Southern. The property was formerly Gulf, Mobile & Ohio trackage.

#### **Alabama Warrior Railway ([watco.com](http://watco.com))**

Formerly known as the Jefferson Warrior Railway prior to August 7, 2009, the Watco property operates about 15 miles of track around the Birmingham area. Current freight includes pipe, scrap steel, cement, aggregates, and other traffic.

#### **Autauga Northern Railroad ([watco.com](http://watco.com))**

A division of Watco the Autauga Northern launched in 2011 operating 43.62 miles of leased Norfolk Southern trackage between Maplesville and the International Paper Company plant near Prattville.

The line is formerly Mobile & Ohio, then later Gulf, Mobile & Ohio/Illinois Central Gulf. The short line also gains access to Montgomery via 10 miles of CSX trackage rights.

#### **Bay Line Railroad ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))**

The Bay Line was historically the Atlanta & St. Andrews Bay Railway which dated back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

It is currently a Genesee & Wyoming property operating more than 100 miles of trackage between the Florida panhandle and southern Alabama. It has been G&W-owned since 2005 and transports a wide range of freight.

#### **Birmingham Terminal Railway ([watco.com](http://watco.com))**

Formerly known as the Birmingham Southern, this 76-mile system is owned by Watco.

It operates west and south of Birmingham connecting Bessemer and Port Birmingham. The road has its own mechanical and locomotive shop. Its heritage can be traced back to 1899, and for many years was jointly owned by the Southern and Louisville & Nashville.

In 1988 it was sold to Transtar which subsequently sold the property to Watco which acquired it on February 1, 2012, renaming it as the Birmingham Terminal Railway.

#### **Chattahoochee Bay Railway ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))**

Chattahoochee Bay is a 25-mile short line serving Dothan and points east. It is owned by the Genesee & Wyoming (since 2006) with primary products including chemicals, forest products, and food and feed products.

#### **Conecuh Valley Railroad ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))**

The Conecuh Valley is another G&W-owned property operating 12 miles of track from Troy to Goshen. Its history

dates back to the Central of Georgia and currently handles about 3,000 carloads annually with freight including poultry feed ingredients, plastic, lead, vegetable oil and food products.

#### **Eastern Alabama Railway ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))**

The Eastern Alabama was a longtime RailAmerica (RA) property which operated former L&N trackage sold to Kyle Railways by CSX on November 26, 1990.

It was purchased by RA in 2002, which was then acquired by G&W in 2012. Today it operates about 31 miles of track carrying limestone, urea, paper and corn syrup, moving more than 15,000 carloads annually.

#### **Georgia Southwestern Railroad ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))**

This short line is primarily based in western Georgia but also extends into eastern Alabama at Eufaula. The road operates more than 230 miles of track and handles more than 13,000 carloads annually amongst a wide range of freight. It has been a G&W property since 2008.

#### **Huntsville and Madison County Railroad**

**Authority ([hmcrr.com](http://hmcrr.com))**

This locally owned short line operates on about 14 miles of former L&N track between Huntsville and Norton acquired from CSX in 1984. 2017 Short line Business Initiative Award Winner.

#### **Luxapalila Valley Railroad ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))**

This short line operates about 38 miles of track from Columbus, Mississippi, to Belk, Alabama, handling forest and waste products. It is another G&W line with interchange connections including NS, KCS and Columbus & Greenville.

#### **Meridian & Bigbee Railroad ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))**

The historic Meridian & Bigbee has been in service since the 1930s and still operates its original route from Montgomery, Alabama, to Meridian, Mississippi. It is currently owned by G&W and handles a wide range of freight.

#### **Mississippi Central Railroad ([pioneerlines.com](http://pioneerlines.com))**

This trackage was originally an independent short line known as the Piedmont Railway that had operated since 1995 over about 41 miles of track on former Illinois Central trackage. According to Wikipedia, famed engineer Casey Jones regularly operated passenger trains along the line and it was said locals could set their watches by him due to his strict adherence to published schedules.

Its traffic is primarily based in agriculture but does include some other freight. In 2013 it was acquired by the Mississippi Central Railroad and now owned by Pioneer Lines which operates two segments totaling approximately 115 miles of track. One segment runs from Corinth, Mississippi to Red Bay, Alabama and the other segment runs from Oxford, Mississippi to Grand Junction, Tennessee.

#### **RJ Corman/Childersburg Line** ([rjcorman.com](http://rjcorman.com))

This unique property is actually owned by the United States government, running 13.32 miles between Childersburg, where connection is established with Norfolk Southern, and a CSX connection to the north. RJ Corman took over operations in September 2019.

#### **Sequatchie Valley Railroad** ([ironhorsesources.com](http://ironhorsesources.com))

This railroad just penetrates Alabama's northern region and is mostly located in Tennessee running from Kimball, Tennessee to Bridgeport, Alabama.

Its origins can be traced back to a carrier by the same name but was for many years leased by the NC&St.L. It handles about 1,500 carloads annually with freight including plastics and lumber.

#### **Terminal Railway - Alabama State Docks** ([alports.com](http://alports.com))

This terminal switching railroad is based in Mobile and has been in service since 1928. The railroad has a total of 75 miles of track and serves the local port moving everything from coal and scrap steel to automotive products and chemicals. It is a subsidiary of the Alabama State Port Authority. Port of Mobile is Alabama's only deep-water port, and is consistently ranked among the top ten ports in the nation based on tonnage handled.

The company interchanges with numerous systems including CSX, BNSF, Alabama & Gulf Coast, CG Railway, Canadian National, Norfolk Southern, and Kansas City Southern.

#### **Tennessee Southern Railroad** ([patriotrail.com](http://patriotrail.com))

This short line is owned by Patriot Rail and operates primarily in Tennessee from Natco and Pulaski as well as southeasterly to Florence, Alabama.

It operates about 118 miles in all handling several thousand carloads annually with freight including scrap iron, coal, coke, wood pulp, pulp-board, sand, chemicals, steel, aluminum, and fertilizer raw materials.

#### **Three Notch Railroad** ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))

Another G&W property, the Three Notch operates about 34 miles of track from Georgiana to Andalusia on track-age once owned by the L&N. It handles slightly more than 1,000 carloads annually which includes chemicals, polypropylene, fertilizer and agricultural products.

#### **Wiregrass Central Railroad** ([gwrr.com](http://gwrr.com))

This G&W line is located in southern Alabama operating 20 miles between Waterford and Enterprise. Its history dates back to the Atlantic Coast Line and was originally sold to Gulf & Ohio in 1987 by CSX. Today, the line handles more than 8,000 carloads annually.

### **ADDITIONAL SHORT LINES RESOURCES**

#### **HawkinsRails** ([hawkinsrails.net/shortlines.html](http://hawkinsrails.net/shortlines.html))

An extensive website photo collection of short line locomotives, rolling stock, and location shots from dozens of independent and conglomerate short line railroads both current and defunct, both well-known and obscure.

#### **Trains Magazine**

Every other month, *Trains* magazine features a short line railroad, typically including the following information:

- Roster of locomotives
- Short description and location
- Radio frequencies
- Typical day of operation
- Special locations for viewing and photography
- Reasons to visit
- Nearby locations of railroad activity

#### **References**

- [1] Jones, Warren T., "Soot on Mama's Clothes", *Good Old Days Magazine*, p.32, June, 2005.
- [2] Jones, Warren T., "Chasing the 301: A Biography of a Steam Locomotive", *Lines South*, 4 – 11, Third Quarter, Volume 35, No. 3, 2018.



# THE MID-SOUTH FLYER



**Alabama and Tennessee River Railway Locomotive No. 5387 Emerging from the 19th Century Laney Tunnel  
South of Gadsden, Alabama.**

**(Photo by Ken Boyd)**