

The Railway
Historical
Southeast



& Locomotive
Society, Inc.
Chapter

Newsletter No. 29, June 1995

The Hotel Help Race of 1895

by
Larry Brennan

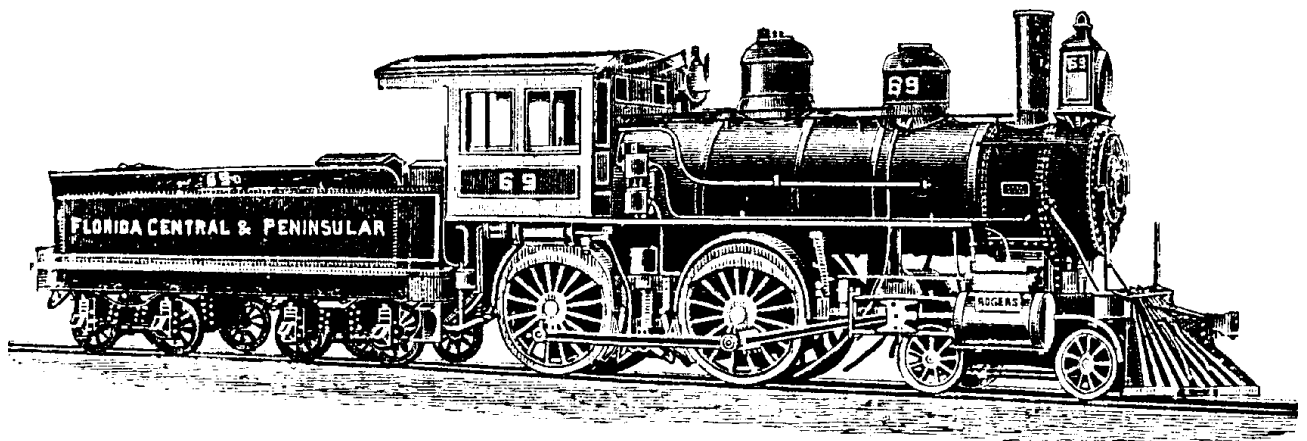
In the latter part of the Nineteenth Century, Florida became the nation's winter playground as the spread of railroads opened up the interior of the state which made possible the growth of the tourist trade. The state had a bad reputation in warm weather, therefore, in those days before air-conditioning and modern disease control, the season lasted only during the months of the worst weather in the north.

Some visitors arrived in November. Many hotels had their official opening with a grand Thanksgiving feast. The major hotels opened only after New Year's and closed around Easter. Few hostelrys remained open year-round, and the hotel staff from managers to house maids would head north in April and May to open the resort hotels in the mountains of New England and upstate New York. For many years, this spring migration was

handled with special "hotel help" trains, which left Jacksonville and operated pretty much as nonstop expresses. It was a great temptation to establish speed records and indulge in a bit of showy running, though, of course, racing was officially frowned on and would not be tolerated!

These trains were watched with great interest, nevertheless. Rivalries built up and wagers laid on the performance of a favorite. To illustrate, consider the operation of the hotel help trains which left Jacksonville on the morning of April 4, 1895, for Washington and New York over the Atlantic Coast Line and the Southern Railway.

Neither the ACL nor the Southern had any trackage into Florida in 1895. The Coast Lines's connection from Charleston south was Plant's Savannah, Florida & Western. The Southern's Florida traffic was handled by the Florida Central &



Peninsular south of Columbia. The FC&P would eventually be folded into the Southern's rival, the Seaboard Air Line. Southern then broke its connection with the FC&P in favor of the ACL. But in the spring of 1895, this was all in the future.

The two trains were marked to leave the Union Station on West Bay Street promptly at 10 o'clock April 4th. A large crowd gathered to see them off since these people were not only friends, they were about to be treated to a ride that was to put them into Washington before tomorrow's breakfast.

At ten, precisely, the conductors swung aboard and the locomotives coughed into action. The FC&P slipped, letting the SF&W get ahead. At LaVilla Junction, the Plant train was ahead by a length. The FC&P turned northward around the city on its 34 mile shorter direct line to Savannah, while the SF&W took the longer route via Waycross. (In 1902 the SF&W would open its Nahunta cutoff eliminating this handicap.)

The FC&P reached Yulee, 25 miles, in 29 minutes; Kingsland, 37 miles, in 45 minutes; and Savannah, 138 miles, in three hours flat arriving at 1:00 PM.

The SF&W reached Waycross at 11:19 AM. After a stop of nineteen minutes, it set off for Savannah arriving at 1:33 PM, or 172 miles in three hours thirty three minutes (see below). The FC&P had waited at Savannah only sixteen minutes for dinner, and was seventeen minutes on its way to Columbia by then.

The FC&P arrived at Columbia, 280 miles, at 3:55 that afternoon, covering the 142 miles from Savannah in two hours and 39 minutes, giving a total time of five hours and fifty-five minutes from Jacksonville. From that point, the train was in care of the Southern. Third Vice-President Baldwin had ordered that there was to be no racing, but that the train would run to the regular schedule. It was carded for arrival in Washington at 7:35 the next morning.

The SF&W roared out of Savannah to Ashley Junction, near Charleston, where the ACL took charge for the rest of the run. The time to that point, 284 miles, was five hours and fifty-four minutes. The ACL ran the train as the first section of its Number 32 from there. That train was normally due in Washington at 7:00 AM, so the race — if it could be called a race, because, after all, that's not what it was — would be over when the ACL eased into the station a full 35 minutes before the Southern!

At least, that's what they expected. The Coast Line train did arrive right on the money, at 7 AM. But the Southern had arrived five minutes earlier — nearly three-quarters of an hour ahead of its schedule! Imagine what would have happened if Third Vice-President Baldwin had not forbidden racing! The trains left Washington within half an hour — The Southern at 7:23 AM, the Coast Line two minutes later.

But what we now call the North East Corridor was then, a century ago, a crowded, busy railroad, and in a final irony, the Pennsylvania combined both trains at Philadelphia and sent them on to New York as one. They arrived at 1:30 PM, having made the total run of a bit over a thousand miles in the same time: twenty-six and a half hours.

Between Jacksonville and Charleston or Columbia, the overall speed for these runs was nearly identical: the FC&P being a bit over 47 mile per hour, and the SF&W a bit over 48 miles per hour, stops included. However, it should be noted that the stops on the SF&W run between Jacksonville and Savannah totaled 47 minutes. One of the cars developed a hot box, thus being set out and its passengers shifted. The corrected running time was nearly two hours and forty-six minutes for an average speed of nearly 63 miles per hour! Henry B. Plant's roadbed and equipment was as fine as any in the country, but that was probably a ride that few of the 114 passengers on board ever forgot.

From April 4-5, 1895 issues of *The Florida Times Union*.

SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OFFICERS:
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An Amtrak Sampler from October, 1993

The *Silver Meteor* and the German *ICE* Train in the NEC

by Lyle Key

[This article is based on an Amtrak trip from Jacksonville to New York City in October, 1993.] Up until a few months ago, Amtrak's *Silver Meteor* had an ideal overnight schedule for business travel from Jacksonville to Washington, D.C. One could put in close to a full day at the office, depart Jacksonville at 5:38 in the afternoon, and arrive in Washington at 6:48 the next morning. Unfortunately, that convenient schedule was a casualty of the harangue between FDA and Amtrak over sanitary conditions on Amtrak trains. As part of its peace making agreement with FDA, Amtrak scheduled the northbound *Meteor* to run almost two hours earlier to allow more time to clean the equipment in New York City. The new schedule calls for a 3:45 PM departure from Jacksonville and a 5:06 AM arrival in Washington. [The *Meteor's* schedule that went into effect on 4/2/95 calls for a 4:00 PM departure from Jacksonville and a 5:16 AM arrival in Washington.]

At 3:35 on the afternoon of Wednesday, October 20, 1993, I arrive at the Jacksonville Amtrak station en route to meetings in Washington and New York. The *Silver Meteor* is going through a complex switching maneuver which will combine its Tampa and Miami sections into a single train. The station platforms are also occupied by Amtrak train no. 2, the eastbound *Sunset Limited*. The *Sunset* was due to depart for Miami at 2:45, but it was involved in a grade crossing accident while backing into the station at Jacksonville. A Superliner sleeper is at the rear of the *Sunset's* consist, and its rear knuckle has been knocked over to one side by its recent impact with a pickup truck. The pickup sustained much more serious damage.

The *Sunset* is assigned two locomotives, a baggage car, a Superliner coach-dorm, four Su-

perliner coaches, a Sightseer Lounge, a Superliner diner, and a Superliner sleeper. The transcontinental train finally leaves Jacksonville at 4:20 PM, one hour and 35 minutes behind schedule.

My train is also running late thanks to the tardy arrival of its Tampa section, but from my standpoint, that's actually a desirable development. My meeting in D.C. isn't until 9:00 AM, and I'm not overly excited about the prospect of waking up at 4:00 AM to prepare for the scheduled 5:06 AM arrival. While waiting on the platform, I note that my sleeper's skirts bear a handsome sailfish symbol signifying that the car is maintained at Hialeah Shops in Miami. I climb aboard ex-Union Pacific sleeper *Pacific Beach*, and it's 5:00 o'clock before the *Meteor* finally departs on its northbound journey. As we leave the station, the Dining Car Steward announces that all three seatings for dinner will be set back approximately one hour. I have a reservation for the first seating which was scheduled for 5:00 PM, and as promised, my group is called for dinner just prior to 6 o'clock.

The buffet service and plastic plates used on the *Silver Meteor* are certainly a far cry from the elegant dining car service that was offered on the train of the same name operated by the Seaboard Air Line Railroad and the Seaboard Coast Line. In the buffet line, one can select prime rib, a baked half chicken, or baked fish. Most of my fellow passengers choose the prime rib, but recalling an awful piece of prime rib I had aboard the *Coast Starlight*, I opt for the fish. The fish and the rest of the meal are actually pretty good, and as a sleeping car passenger, I receive the dinner without charge. It would normally be difficult for me to go asleep at 8:00 PM, but I've been getting very little shut-eye due to a series of trips around the Southeast. The

old UP sleeper is in excellent condition, and I'm in roomette no. 2 near the middle of the car. I drift off quickly, and thanks to a D.C. arrival that's one hour and 15 minutes late, I feel well rested for the first time in a week.

The Sleeping Car Attendant brings me a cup of coffee and a newspaper, and I'll have plenty of time to read the *USA Today* in Washington Union Station. The dining car won't be open for breakfast until sometime after departure from D.C., so I'll have breakfast under the golden arches in the Station. All in all, it has been a good ride, and for once, I'm thankful for a late arrival!

On to the Big Apple aboard the *ICE* Train

My business in D.C. completed, I'm off to New York City on the noon Metroliner. This trip will be special since during the fall of '93, the noon Metroliner run is being covered by the German InterCity Express Train, popularly known as the "ICE Train." The *ICE* Train has been in service since 1991, and 60 trainsets currently cover 110 scheduled trains per day over three routes in Germany and Switzerland. The longest of the three routes is the 600 mile run between Hamburg and Zurich, Switzerland. In Europe, the typical *ICE* Train consists of 14 cars and can operate at speeds up to 175 mph. In test runs, the *ICE* Train has achieved speeds in excess of 250 mph.

The Amtrak version of the *ICE* Train has only six cars with a power unit on each end. On my train, the lead power unit is followed by four coaches, a bistro-restaurant car, a first class car, and the rear power unit. To pass between the cars, one goes through automatic, plexiglass doors and walks through an unbroken corridor with a flexible connector plate providing a transitional walkway.

The coaches seat 66 passengers each, 42 in traditional coach seats and 24 in European style compartments. The bistro and restaurant sections can accommodate 24 and 26 people, respectively. The first class car seats 33 in 2 - 1 club car type seats plus 15 in three compartments. The train's total capacity is 312 passengers.

The coach next to the bistro-restaurant car features two public telephones and a fax/copy machine. In marked contrast to the buffet service and plastic plates on the *Silver Meteor*, the *ICE*

Train's restaurant section features first class meal service with traditional white tablecloths and ceramic plates. Every revenue seat has a jack for an audio program, and the first class seats have video screens available. There is also a passenger information screen where one can inquire about current events such as the status of Amtrak's Northeast Corridor improvement project.

Amtrak tested the *ICE* Train at speeds up to 162 mph in the NEC, and asked FRA for a waiver permitting it to operate in regular service at speeds up to 140 mph. FRA granted a waiver permitting a maximum speed of 135 mph which exceeds the normal NEC speed limit by ten mph.

The sleek white train has a very aerodynamic look about it although the roof line is broken by the bulge of the bistro-restaurant car's higher ceiling.

The train departs D.C. precisely at the scheduled time of 12 noon, and eases out onto the old Pennsy main line. The level of activity around Union Station has really increased in recent years with the expansion of Maryland's MARC service and the advent of Virginia Railway Express service to points in Virginia. The NEC runs through some beautiful countryside, and on this October afternoon, the fall foliage is very much in evidence. The long bridge at Perryville provides a sweeping vista of the Susquehanna River, and we also encounter several other major waterways.

Other features of the lineside scenery are rather depressing, however. In the areas around Wilmington, Philadelphia, and Newark, one sees scores of abandoned plants and other commercial buildings.

The *ICE* Train definitely lives up to its advance billing as a comfortable and well appointed high speed train. The ride is pleasant in every respect, and we run on time all the way to New York's Penn Station. As we ease to a stop, the *ICE* Train rolls by two sets of Rohr turbotrains. The turbotrains remind us that Amtrak's current tests with the X-2000 and the *ICE* Train aren't its first experiments with innovative, high speed train sets.

During the trip, an Amtrak representative distributed marketing questionnaires seeking passenger input on features that should be incorporated into its next generation of high speed trains in the NEC. Based on my ride from Washington to New York City, I will not be surprised if those high speed trains turn out to be very similar to the *ICE* Train.

Meetings

July 13th

We all know it's a "zoo out there," but here is your chance to really find out what is going on at the Jacksonville Zoo. The Southeast Chapter will have as its guest Mr. Jeff Boyd, who works for CSXT and helped construct the new zoo railroad. He'll tell us the details of building the three foot gauge line and answer any questions you may have. So get out our your cage and come on down for a wild night with the animals and a three foot line that is not the DRG&W. We'll also hear from our own Southeast Chapter Editor, Cliff Vander Yacht, who will have a talk and slide show on the Pere Marquette's passenger cars. As usual, we'll meet at 6 PM, 13th floor of the CSXT building.

August 10th

This month will be a **Colorado Railroad Open Forum**. So gather your Colorado material and join in an impromptu session with material from a number of chapter members. We'll DRG&W railroading along with a trip through the DSP&P Alpine Tunnel. So bring something with a Colorado slant (slides, videos, models, or spike) and let's talk railroading. Unfortunately, the meeting will not be taking place in Silver Plume, Georgetown, Alamosa or Durango, but we will be visiting some of those places via the 13th floor in the CSXT building in good ol' downtown Jax. Come on down and help Flank, Lloyd, Jim and others plan their dream vacation!

September 14th

Join the Southeast Chapter in celebrating the vibrant colors of the Fall season and the vibrant orange, white and black of the former New Haven. Our subject will be New England railroading with an emphasis on the NYNH&H. Look over your slides and pick out some fall colors on the New Haven. Our host and coordinator will be our resident NYNH&H expert Barry Baines. Maybe you can surprise him with a New Haven slide that he has NOT seen!

Minutes of the Southeast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society

The April meeting of the Southeast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society was held in the 13th floor conference room of the CSXT GOB Wednesday, April 12, 1995 at 6:00 P.M. A quorum was present. Chapter Chairperson Jim Smith chaired the meeting. Treasurer Paul Friederich was not able to attend the meeting, so there was no Treasurer's Report. The minutes of the March meeting were distributed and accepted after a motion by Arby that was seconded by Bill Howes.

Old business -

Bill Howes has started an accounting of the slide sales.

Bill Howes reported on the items most likely to be brought up at the annual meeting in Newark. They included a new membership chairman, the status of the research project, the need for a new editor of the Newsletter and the overall financial condition of the organization. He also outlined the speakers and trips included in the weekend.

New business -

Jim Smith asked for assistance identifying the locomotive and railroad in a picture taken in Puerto Rico.

Bill Withuhn has requested the chapter act as an archival source for historical research. This is part of the overall R&LHS effort to assist in railroad research.

Jim Smith needs a written report of the chapter's events to be sent to the national secretary for the annual meeting.

Southeast Limited -

Don Hensley has made an offer to print the *Southeast Limited* at cost. It was decided to not take advantage of the offer at the present time.

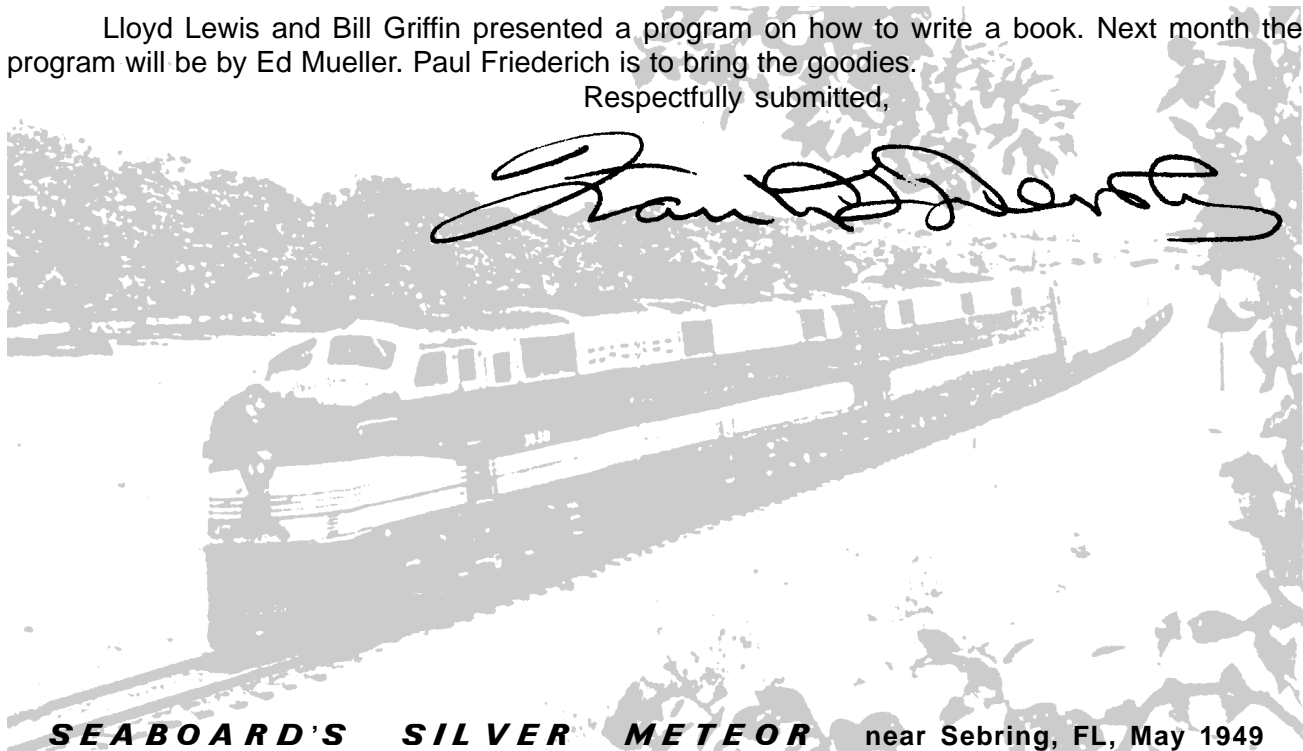
Committee Reports -

The trip committee is looking into a trip to South Florida for a possible visit to Tri-Rail.

The photo committee said the next contest will be limited to six pictures, preferably slides, with no time restrictions and the only subject restriction being it must be related to trains and railroad-ing.

Lloyd Lewis and Bill Griffin presented a program on how to write a book. Next month the program will be by Ed Mueller. Paul Friederich is to bring the goodies.

Respectfully submitted,



Minutes of the Southeast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society

The May meeting of the Southeast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society was held in the 13th floor conference room of the CSXT GOB Thursday, May 11, 1995 at 6:00 P.M. A quorum was present. Chapter Chairperson Jim Smith chaired the meeting. Treasurer Paul Friederich reported \$1530.21 in the treasury. The minutes of the April meeting were approved after a motion by Ed Mueller that was seconded by Mark Bennett.

Old business -

Jim Smith reported that Seth Bramson has a copy of R&LHS Bulletin 86 and is asking \$75 for the book. A motion was made by Paul Friederich and seconded by Cliff Vander Yacht to purchase the book and ask Mr. Brisky for the \$75.

Chairman Smith reported on the annual meeting held in Newark, NJ on May 4-7. On Thursday, the Board of Directors meeting lasted most of the day. Bob Kredel is the new membership chairman from the Southern California Chapter. The finance report showed the national spent more than was taken in, but the organization is OK. In order to reduce some expenses, the Bulletin will be printed on a lower grade of paper. The proceeds from the auction will go into the general fund with \$68,000 placed in a trust to help pay the archivist. There was no further news on the D&LW 952 at St. Louis, but it was agreed the R&LHS would not back away from the ownership issue. Bob Church continues to work on a book of pictures from the R&LHS collection. The national will sell back issues of the Bulletin to help generate money. The Chapter may acquire some of the back issues to start a railroad research library if they can be purchased cheaply. The R&LHS is asking for help to increase membership. The Directors Meeting will be September 28-30 in Portland, OR and the 1996 convention will be in San Francisco or Reno. The fall 1996 meeting will be in Fort Worth and the 1997 convention will be in Ogden. Jim Wilke will be taking over the Newsletter.

New business -

A letter from Alan T. Tattersall of Jacksonville was passed out requesting information on a list of Florida railroads.

Paul Friederich made a motion to reimburse up to two people \$50 each if designated by the chapter to attend national functions. The motion passed.

Committee Reports-

An Amtrak timetable was given to the Trip Committee to research ways to get to south Florida. There was no report from the Photo Committee.

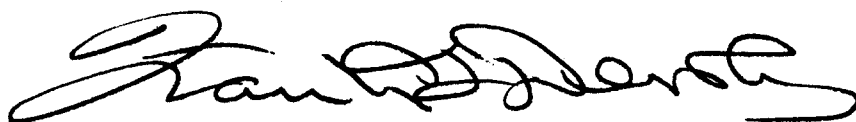
Announcements -

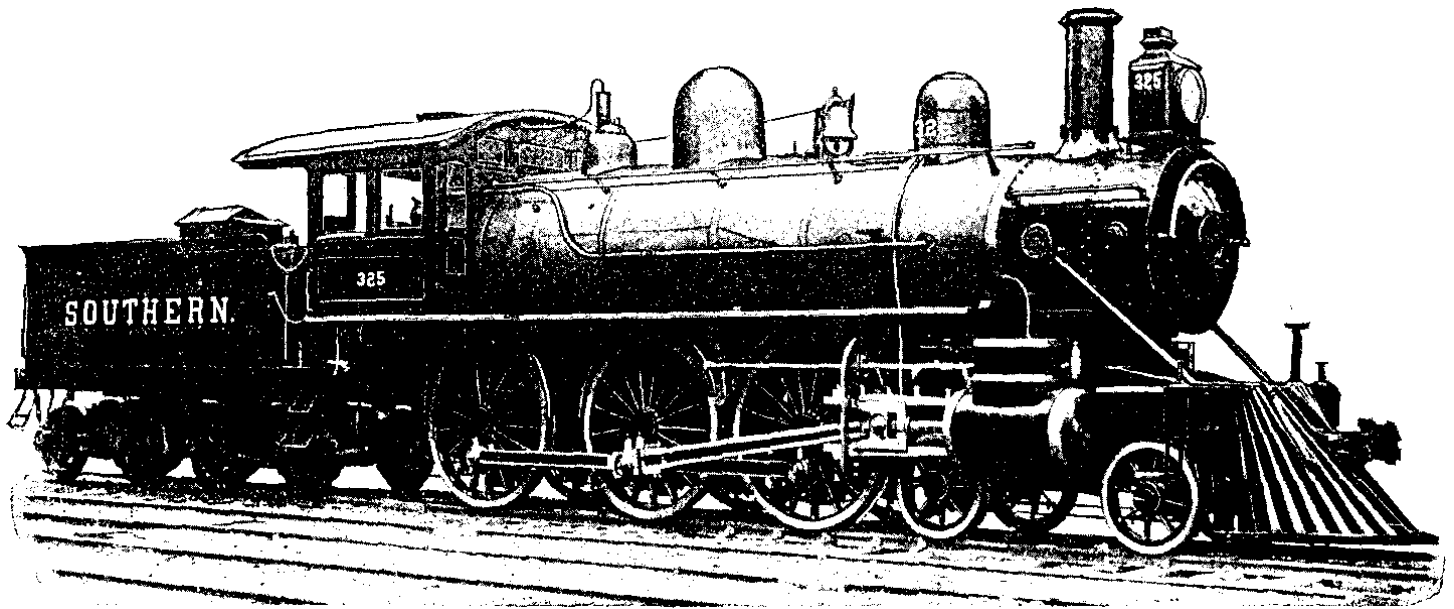
There will be a railroad show at Lakeland May 13 at the Lakeland Civic Center.
ACL 100 and 0795 will be at the Portfest on May 21 at Blount Island from 1200-1800.

Meeting Programs -

The June 8th program will be on PM passenger cars by Cliff Vander Yacht and the goodies will be from Mark Bennett. The July program will be on the Jacksonville Zoo Railroad.

Respectfully submitted,





The winner of the Hotel Help “race”

The above is one of the types of engines Southern used during that time period just as the engine shown on page one is typical of the FC&P’s engines.

Railway & Locomotive Historical Society
Southeast Chapter
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