



# A Pilgrimage to the Singing Brakeman's Resting Place and a Ride on the M&B


by Lyle Key

This railroad story begins in the unlikely venue of Oak Grove Cemetery on the northeast side of Meridian, Mississippi. It's late afternoon on Friday, June 5, 1998, and I've come to pay my respects to Jimmie Rodgers, a star-crossed railroader who became a country music legend, and who's remembered as the Father of Country Music, the Singing Brakeman, and the Blue Yodeler. Meridian is in the midst of its Jimmie Rodgers Festival, an annual event which celebrates the colorful career of the town's favorite son.

Rodgers might have remained an unremarked railroadman if the onset of tuberculosis hadn't forced him to resign. In the Jimmie Rodgers Museum in Meridian, one can see a letter from Rodgers' superintendent on the NO&NE (a NS predecessor) recommending Jimmie as a good worker who was forced to leave railroading because of his illness. This turn of events gave Rodgers lots of time to hone his considerable musical talent, and he was "discovered" in 1927 during a Victor Talking Machine Company talent search in Bristol.

The rest as they say is history. Rodgers made a meteoric rise to stardom with songs such as *Blue Yodel*, *Brakeman's Blues*, *Waiting for a Train*, *California Blues*, and *Muleskinner Blues*. Rodgers' earnings doubtless would seem a pittance compared to the fortunes accumulated by today's country music stars, but as the Great Depression cast a pall over the land, Rodgers and his family were living very well for the times. He built a home in Kerrville, Texas that he dubbed "The Blue Yodeler's Paradise", and Jimmie and his wife Carrie were visited by many notables of the day such as immortal humorist Will Rogers. Jimmie Rodgers was riding high on the crest of fame, but the disease that had put him on a detour to star-

dom was about to end his career and indeed his life. In his heartrending *TB Blues*, Rodgers sings a straightforward commentary about his losing battle with tuberculosis: "Well I'm fighting like a lion, but it looks like I'm going to lose. 'Cause ain't nobody ever beat those TB blues."

Take A Ride On The  
1st Class  
**"Bonnie Brook"**  
"SHORT EAST-WEST ROUTE"  
  
**POSITIVELY NO REFUNDS**  
sponsored by M&B RR, LLC; Meridian Railroad Museum; and the American Cancer Society  
**ALL SEATS RESERVED**  
(Not Responsible for Valuables Left on Train)  
In arranging this transportation, the sponsors assume no liability for failure to maintain schedule, reserve the right to substitute equipment without notice, and are not responsible for passengers not on board train at departure time.  
All persons occupying a seat must have the appropriate ticket. Good on this day and date only.  
"In accord with Internal Revenue Code Sec. 170, 77% of the price of each ticket is deductible as a charitable contribution."  
Saturday, June 6, 1998  8:00 a.m.  2:30 a.m.  
Sunday, June 7, 1998  8:00 a.m.  2:30 a.m.  
 1st Class (\$120.00)  Child (\$80.00)  
Tickets Compliments of Southeastern Printing

## SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OFFICERS:

James A. Smith	Chairman
William F. Howes, Jr.	Vice-Chairman
Frank H. Dewey	Secretary
James H. Wilk	Treasurer
Clifford J. Vander Yacht	Editor

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In May of 1933, Rodgers and his nurse sailed on a steamship from Galveston to New York for what would be his last recording session. The ambitious list of songs to be recorded would require several days, and the session had to be suspended for lengthy periods due to Jimmie's weakened condition, but he managed to record 13 "sides" at \$250 each. In his hotel room during the early morning hours of May 26, Jimmie Rodgers finally succumbed to the ravages of TB at the sadly young age of 35.

In addition to featuring numerous performances by country music stars, the Jimmie Rodgers Festival includes a graveside service at Oak Grove Cemetery. This year's memorial service was held on Wednesday, and several floral arrangements are still in evidence around the Rodgers' family plot.

As you might imagine, I didn't travel to Meridian solely to visit the grave of the Singing Brakeman or to participate in the Jimmie Rodgers Festival. My primary objective is Saturday morning's excursion over the Meridian and Bigbee Railroad, the first of this weekend's four public excursions over this "freight only" carrier.

I arrive early Saturday morning to secure a parking place close to Meridian's beautifully restored Union Station Multi-Modal Transportation Center. The restoration project was funded by the Federal Highway Administration, Mississippi DOT, Amtrak, the Meridian Public Improvement Corporation, and the City with the property donated by the Alabama Great Southern Railroad, a NS subsidiary. The station was restored to closely resemble its appearance during its glory years, and its long-removed tower has been replaced. The restored passenger station actually has the feel of a brand new building. On December 11, 1997, the station was rededicated to its new role as a multi-modal terminal for both trains and buses.

Do you remember the *Land of Cotton*, the all-Pullman streamliner that operated over the M&B en route between Atlanta and Dallas? Probably not since it was an 027 gauge electric train that ran on the Lionel pike of my youth. Most Deep South short lines of M&B's ilk at least offered passenger service with mixed trains, but the Meridian & Bigbee always has been simply a freight hauler. Given that background, it's strange to see the following deluxe consist waiting to roll over this backwoods railroad:

M&B	#107	GP10 locomotive	
NS	#5245	GP38 locomotive	
C&G	#1	<i>King Cotton</i>	Open platform business car - Pullman, 1916, as IC business car #1
MTM*	#5450	<i>LaBonheur Cadillac Club</i>	Lounge - Pullman-Standard, 1950, as ACL 54 seat coach #228 for various Florida trains
MTM	#6404	<i>Memphis</i>	Coach - Pullman-Standard, 1946, as NYC #3131 for general service
MTM	#515	<i>Federal Express</i>	Power car - Budd, 1953, as CRI&P RPO #515 for general service
SOU NYC	#664	<i>Fort Oglethorpe Laurel Stream</i>	Coach - Budd, 1947, as CofG #664 for <i>Man o' War</i> 6 DBR-Lounge - Budd, 1949 for <i>New England States</i>
NYC		<i>Bonnie Brook</i>	Observation-buffet-lounge (5 DBR) - Budd, 1949, for <i>New England States</i> and general service
HIGH IRON		<i>Caritas</i>	Open platform private car - Pullman-Standard, 1948, as Frisco 14-4 sleeper <i>Pierre LaCledé</i> for <i>Texas Special</i>

\*Memphis Transportation Museum

It was sunny Friday afternoon when I visited Oak Grove Cemetery, but during the night, a line of fierce thunderstorms rolled through Meridian. The skies are still leaden and threatening, and I hope they don't open up again before the train is loaded since the Union Station restoration project did not include restoring the train sheds. Thankfully, the clouds only threaten, and everyone stays nice and dry as they climb aboard the special.

As we board, the car hosts collect the signed release forms that are required for everyone making the trip. I encountered this practice last year on UP's Tennessee Pass excursion, and it's a sad commentary on our litigious society. It's no secret that railroads large and small are hesitant to operate excursions because of the staggering liability exposure, and one hardly can blame M&B for trying to protect itself. After all, this isn't a money-making venture for the short line which is donating the proceeds from the trip to the American Cancer Society. I'm willing to sign the release to ride over this rare mileage, but anyone who signs such a document should carefully weigh the implications of completely waiving claims against the operator in the event of an accident.

My seat is in observation-lounge *Bonnie Brook*. Unfortunately, the rear view is obscured by converted Frisco sleeper *Caritas* which is coupled to our observation end. We depart precisely on time at 8 o'clock and begin a lengthy backup move as a prelude to crossing the NS and KCS main lines. The M&B special backs down to the south side of downtown Meridian, and at 8:14, we move forward again. Almost half an hour after our departure, we roll past Union Station which is now on the other side of the NS and KCS trackage.

We're finally on M&B rails, and as we pass through the short line's Meridian yard, we see M&B GP10 #108 in the engine house. Our car host gives us a briefing on the train and the railroad and tells us that Jackie Gleason often traveled in a bedroom suite aboard *Bonnie Brook*. We're then served a continental breakfast that's included in the first class fare.

At 8:35, we pass beneath I-59. The train passes some commercial development beyond the interstate, and before long, we're rolling through the woodlands that line most of M&B's route.

M&B's railroad is 50.36 miles long with 19.66 miles in Mississippi, and 30.70 miles in Alabama. Shortly before crossing the state line, we pass the prosaically named community of Why Not, Mississippi.

This is quite a contrast to my last excursion over UP's Royal Gorge/Tennessee Pass line. M&B is not a scenic railroad by any stretch of the imagination, and as we amble along through mile after mile of unbroken woodland at a top speed of 40 mph, I find myself dozing in the comfort of the old NYC observation-lounge.

The M&B was chartered on January 19 (Gen. Lee's birthday), 1917, and its original name was "Meridian and Bigbee River Railway Company," "Bigbee River" of course refers to the Tombigbee River which is now part of the Tenn-Tom Waterway. Construction of M&B's railroad finally began about 10 years later, and on April 16, 1928, M&B commenced train operations over 30 miles of railroad between Meridian and Cromwell, Alabama. At Cromwell, M&B interchanged freight with the Alabama, Tennessee & Northern Railroad, a Frisco, BN, and BNSF predecessor. The old AT&N line through Cromwell has been abandoned, and all that remains is a trail of ballast and a rotting operator's shack at the former M&B-AT&N crossing. As most of you know, AT&N ultimately became the Frisco Lines' route to the Port of Mobile.

During its early years, M&B apparently aspired to haul passengers as well as freight. M&B's entry in the January, 1930 edition of the *Official Guide* states that: "Passenger service will not be inaugurated until line is completed to Myrtlewood, Ala." *ORG* (Jan., 1930 at p. 667).

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### MERIDIAN AND BIGBEE RIVER RAILWAY COMPANY

<b>G. M. NEVILLE, President,</b>	<b>Meridian, Miss.</b>
<b>H. B. CALHOUN, Traffic Manager,</b>	"
<b>J. E. DAVIS, Comptroller,</b>	"
<b>C. SULLIVAN, Treasurer,</b>	"

Passenger service will not be inaugurated until line is completed to Myrtlewood, Ala.	Mls 0 8 16 23 30	August, 1928. .. Meridian, Miss. <sup>1</sup> ..Cliff Williams, Miss.. .... Whynot, Miss..... .... Vantley, Ala..... ... Cromwell, Ala. <sup>2</sup> ...	Freight service operated in connection with manifest freight service of Alabama Tennessee & Northern R.R. and Meridian connections.
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#### CONNECTIONS.

<sup>1</sup> With Gulf, Mobile & Northern Railroad, Yazoo & Mississippi Valley Railroad, Mobile & Ohio Railroad and Southern Railway System.

<sup>2</sup> With Alabama, Tennessee & Northern Railroad.

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The Great Depression forced M&B into bankruptcy in June of 1933 (the month after Jimmie Rodgers died), but the fledgling railroad still managed to reach the L&N connection at Myrtlewood in 1935. Under normal conditions, M&B probably would have inaugurated passenger service, but with the economy in shambles, the M&B Trustee maintained the carrier's "freight only" status. Today, Myrtlewood serves as M&B's interchange for both CSX and BNSF. When M&B completed its entire 50 mile line from Meridian to Myrtlewood, it connected with GM&O and IC at Meridian, AT&N at Cromwell, Sumter & Choctaw at Choctaw City, Alabama, and L&N at Myrtlewood. Ironically, all of those connecting lines, including the little Sumter & Choctaw, offered some form of passenger service! M&B was content, however, to advertise itself as offering: "Fast Freight Service-Short East and West Route." ORG (Jan., 1942 at p. 58).

M&B emerged from almost two decades of trusteeship in 1952 under the new name: "Meridian and Bigbee Railroad Company." In 1955, Marathon Corporation purchased M&B as a primary transportation provider for Marathon's new paper mill at Naheola, Alabama. The mill's ownership changed in 1957 and again in 1982, and along with the mill, new owners American Can Company and James River Corporation acquired ownership of M&B's stock. On August 1, 1997, Rail Management and Consulting Corporation acquired M&B from James River Corporation and renamed it M&B Railroad, L.L.C.

At 10:28, our train enters the paper mill yard at Naheola, Alabama and crawls between long cuts of tank cars, CSX chip hoppers, and M&B boxcars. M&B #109, the third member of the Railroad's GP10 trio, is hard at work switching the yard. We're told that this is the world's largest towel and tissue mill and that it produces Brawny paper towels and Northern bathroom tissue. It seems ironic that a mill in Naheola, Alabama produces **Northern** tissue.

At 10:44, we experience the scenic highlight of the trip. The special eases onto the 582 foot long steel lift bridge over the muddy Tombigbee. This, by the way, is no ordinary railroad bridge. In 1952, it was converted for joint use by both vehicles and trains over the same roadway surface! I've seen several bridges with rails on the

inside and vehicular lanes on the outside (e.g., the Huey P. Long Bridge near New Orleans and the K&I Bridge near Louisville), but on this bridge over the Tombigbee, everyone has to share a single lane with a track down the middle. When a train isn't waiting to cross the river, traffic lights on the highway let eastbound and westbound vehicular traffic make alternating use of the bridge. When a train is ready to use the bridge, a traffic light mounted by the railroad turns green, and the lights beside the highway both turn red. We're told that this shared use arrangement is unique to this bridge.

We reach the east end of the bridge at 10:48, then back up to the photo stop on the Naheola side of the river. We unload for photos at 10:55, and wonder of wonders, the clouds part to provide the only sunny interlude of the entire day! By the way, this is a photo **stop** rather than a photo **run-by**. Mile Post 46 is located at Naheola so we have covered all but about 4 miles of the M&B. At 11:18, we're loaded and backing into the paper mill yard. The two locomotives run around the train, and at 11:31, they couple onto the platform end of the *Caritas*. At 11:40, we head west for Meridian.

During the return trip, M&B President Dale Jefferson goes through the entire train to greet and welcome the passengers. He exchanges introductions and handshakes with everyone and patiently answers a multitude of questions. Dale is a CSX alumnus who seems very enthusiastic about his role as CEO of a well-trafficked short line. We're told that in 1996, M&B handled 25,951 carloads with 82% of that traffic generated by the paper mill at Naheola. Dale is also working hard to promote M&B as a bridge route between CSX and KCS. He sees the M&B route as a logical way to avoid the heavy traffic and terminal delays in New Orleans. Dale will ride all four excursions this weekend, and I suspect he'll be relieved to return to his normal work routine on Monday.

Most of the passengers are from the Meridian area, but some rare mileage collectors have come from various distant points to ride the M&B. A friend of mine from Southern California will be riding the last trip on Sunday afternoon. I read about the excursion in the Heart of Dixie Railroad Museum newsletter, and several folks from Birmingham will be riding today and tomorrow.

We have to wait for a southbound stack train at Meridian, and by the time we've retraced our circuitous route into Union Station, it's 1:58 pm. We were due back at noon, but everyone seems to be taking the delay in stride. Friends who rode on Sunday tell me that time keeping improved as the weekend progressed. The trip has been fun in any event, and on my way out through the station, I can't resist buying a \$25 souvenir pack with a M&B patch, cap, T-shirt, and mug.

Unlike so many Southern short lines that have passed from the scene, the M&B's finances and physical plant are both in good shape. That shouldn't change as long as the huge mill at Naheola keeps turning out towels and tissues. Will there be more excursions? The American Cancer Society folks would like to do it again next year, but Dale Jefferson will have to ponder whether he wants to make the passenger runs an annual event. Running a railroad is hard work at best, and it's tough to ask your people to give up an entire weekend even if it is for a worthy cause. There's also the specter of lawsuits notwithstanding the release forms. I think there's a good chance of future excursions over the M&B, but it's a safe bet that the railroad will maintain its unusual record of never operating regularly scheduled passenger trains.

### **Some parting thoughts on Jimmie Rodgers and the M&B**

Jimmie Rodgers was a traveling man, and many of his songs reflect his wanderlust. For example: "I'll eat my breakfast here; get my dinner in New Orleans." (*Brakeman's Blues*). If Rodgers

had been born in more recent times, he might have sung about "leavin' on a jet plane", but he lived during an era when railroads were woven throughout the fabric of American life. With his signature yodel, melodious voice, and custom made guitar embossed with his name, Rodgers sang about trains, railroaders, and hobos with a genuine familiarity drawn from his prior life as a railroadman. In his poignant *Waiting for a Train*, Rodgers conveys the misery of a depression era hobo who's "A thousand miles away from home, waiting for a train." Even his non-railroad songs are full of railroad analogies. In *TB Blues*, he sings, "My body rattles, like a train on the old SP."

My wife can't understand how I could enjoy riding a train from Meridian to a backwoods paper mill in Alabama. The realities of contemporary travel (e.g., eating a Delta Airlines "Sky Deli" sack dinner in the tight confines of a coach seat) have tempered my wanderlust, but I still get a boyish thrill from a trip over a "new" railroad. Each railroad has its unique story to tell, and it pains me to see an abandoned line like the AT&N and know its book is closed forever. I think Jimmie Rodgers would have understood those feelings, and I went to Oak Grove Cemetery to commune with a kindred spirit who had an unmatched talent for expressing the wonderment of railroading in song. He doubtless would have enjoyed the excursions over his hometown railroad, and he might have sung one of his old verses from *Brakeman's Blues* about Dale Jefferson's dream of M&B's becoming a major bridge carrier: "I went down to the depot and looked up on the board. It said there's good times here, but it's better down the road."

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## 1999 ELECTIONS

### **Southeast Chapter Members**

At the November meeting, the Nominating Committee's slate of officers for 1999 was approved. The slate is as follows:

Chairman	James A. Smith
Vice Chairman	William F. Howes
Secretary	Paul V. Newton
Treasurer	James H. Wilk

Attached to this Newsletter is a ballot for you to fill out. Note that you can also vote *for* a write-in candidate if you so desire. Your ballot should be returned to Southeast Chapter's Post Office Box no later than January 14th.



**TOP PHOTO:** A BNSF intermodal train is at the Fourth crossing of Tehachapi Creek enroute from Woodford to the famous Tehachapi Loop on the morning of February 20, 1997. The photographer's first visit to one of railroading's most impressive engineering feats turned out to be severely limited by a thick blanket of fog. In fact, when standing on the Loop directly above Tunnel #9, one could not see the tracks entering the tunnel only 77 feet below! Conditions enhanced the impression of big trains disappearing into the clouds. Photo by B.A. Baines

**BOTTOM PHOTO:** We're at the National Museum of Transport near St. Louis, MO, on June 6, 1982. The lineup includes Southern Railway FT #6100 (The first FT). To celebrate the FT's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1989, GM cosmetically restored the FT and repainted it in original demonstrator colors and placed it on display at LaGrange, IL. The unit then spent two years touring the country. In the foreground is Frisco 4-8-2 #1522, which returned to steam operation in 1988 after a three year restoration effort by the St. Louis Steam Train Association. In the background sits Camelback #952 which is owned by the R&LHS and is on loan to the Museum. The variety of 'faces' coupled with the lineup of steam and diesel power makes for an interesting composition. Photo by B. A. Baines



## Minutes of the Southeast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society

The September meeting of the Southeast Chapter of the R&LHS was held on Thursday, September 24, 1998 at CSXT's Southside Office Building in Jacksonville, FL. Chapter President, Jim Smith, chaired the meeting. This month's meeting was part of a joint North Florida Chapter NRHS meeting involving a number of Jacksonville area railroad groups. Consequently, our business meeting was very brief. The following items were discussed.

**Chicago R&LHS Directors Meeting** - Bill Howes reviewed the agenda for the October 11th meeting. Some of the items to be discussed will be: a) DL&W 952 proposals for restoration, b) Railroad History editor search, c) possible "Book Review" consolidation with the Lexington Group, d) membership, and e) future meetings, including the joint R&LHS/NRHS Sacramento convention June 22-27.

**Bulletin #86** - Jim Smith presented our reprint of *Bulletin #86*, which had just been picked up from the printer. Everyone agreed that it turned out just great. As a special thanks for assisting in this project, books were given to: Bill Howes, Ed Mueller, Jim Wilk and Cliff Vander Yacht. Now we need the help of the entire Southeast Chapter in promoting and selling the remaining 1,000 copies!

**Steamtown Railcamp 99** - Art Towson advised that Steamtown is reviewing the program and that a decision will be made soon regarding their plans for *Railcamp 1999*.

**Future Meetings** - October will be our annual Southeast Chapter Photo Contest. November will feature a video on CSXT's Bone Valley and sale slides from the Bill McCoy collection.

**Program** - The special NRHS program featured speaker, Dr. E. K. Fretwell, Interim President of the University of North Florida. Dr. Fretwell has been closely associated with the development of passenger service in North Carolina and is on the North Carolina Governor's Transit 2001 Commission, a board member of the North Carolina Transportation Museum at Spencer, NC and is Chancellor Emeritus of the University of North Carolina-Charlotte. Dr. Fretwell gave an interesting speech titled "A Look Down The Tracks." followed by a question and answer period which included special guests Darrel Murray of Amtrak, and CSX Director Editorial Services, Gary Sease, (who is also a Southeast Chapter member).

This meeting was the first of what the North Florida Chapter NRHS hopes to be a series of Jacksonville area railroad enthusiasts to hear special speakers and enjoy the interaction and comradeship of various local railroad groups, including model railroad clubs, historical and preservation societies, and others.

Respectfully submitted,



## Minutes of the Southeast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society

The October meeting of the Southeast Chapter of the R&LHS was held on Thursday, October 8, 1998 at CSXT's General Office Building in Jacksonville, FL. Chapter President Jim Smith chaired the meeting. The business meeting included the following items:

A. Motion made by Mark Bennett and Arby Vandenbossche to compensate Southeast Chapter Vice Chairman Bill Howes \$50.00 for representing our Chapter at the recent Board of Directors meeting in Chicago. Motion approved.

B. A Nominating Committee was selected consisting of Mark Bennett and Barry Baines to report at the November meeting with ballots to be sent in the December *Southeast Limited*.

C. Discussion of future joint meetings with the NRHS similar to their September meeting where 50 people attended. No decisions were made.

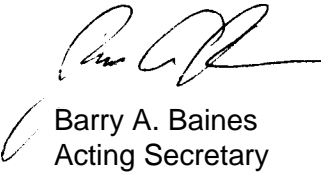
D. The Southeast Photo Book Committee consisted of Art Towson, Mark Bennett, and Barry Baines, had been previously designated by Jim Smith. Art Towson will speak to Jim Smith about the Committee's progress and thoughts on future steps. Mark and Barry provided their initial thoughts to the meeting. The Committee had reviewed materials and spent time attempting to define the purpose and context of potential projects.



E. Announcements: The Chapter will be selling copies of the Bulletin #86 reprint at the February 1999 Train Show.

Following the business meeting, the evening's program was the annual Photo Contest. The Photo Contest Committee (Larry Brennan) reviewed slides that were submitted for the evening's program. Barry Baines submitted slides that were judged First and Second Place.

Respectfully Submitted,



Barry A. Baines  
Acting Secretary

### **Minutes of the Southeast Chapter, Railway & Locomotive Historical Society**

The November meeting of the Southeast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society was held in the 13th Floor Conference Room of the CSXT GOB on Thursday, November 12, 1998 at 6:00 P.M. A quorum was present. Chapter Chairperson Jim Smith chaired the meeting. There were no secretary's or treasurer's reports.

#### Old Business -

Jim Smith reported sales of eighty-seven copies of the Florida railroad history reprints. Still plenty of copies available.

Art Towson will report on the Scranton Rail Camp at next month's meeting. There was a meeting held to discuss the Camp, but he has not heard the results of the meeting.

The Nominating Committee reported the current chapter officers would be the slate for election of chapter officers with the exception of Paul Newton replacing Frank Dewey, who will be unable to hold the secretary's position due to the Conrail merger.

#### New Business -

Two corrections to the Florida railroad history reprint have come in. They will be collected and printed at a later date in the *Southeast Limited*. Larry Brennan will compile them as they arrive.

Don Hensley has volunteered to help with the construction of a chapter website.

Bill Howes reported on the status of the National based on the President's Letter. There will be no price increase for dues. National wants to create a website and needs a webmaster.

#### Committee Reports -

Reid Adams reviewed several ideas for future chapter trips. Further discussion will be held next month.

#### Announcements -

The Greenburg Show will be January 9 and 10. The February show is Feb. 13.

*Our First Locomotives* will be free to contributing members or \$15.00.

#### Meeting Programs -

The program featured Jim Herron's video of CSXT operations in Florida's Bone Valley furnished by Paul Newton.

The December 10th program will be furnished by Reid Adams about his trip to the Carolinas.

The January program will be the annual banquet at a site to be determined by Reid Adams.

The February meeting will feature a presentation by Ed Mueller on Henry Plant's express system

Respectfully submitted,



*The officers and staff of the  
Southeast Chapter of the Railway &  
Locomotive Historical Society wish you and  
yours a joyous Holiday Season and a  
railroad New Year!*

## *Special Notice*

# **January Annual Banquet Meeting**

Our January 14th meeting will be at the Hilltop Inn at 2030 Wells Road in Orange Park. We'll begin at 6:30 PM with cocktails (cash bar) and have dinner at 7:30 PM. Cost will be a flat fee of \$25.00 per person off a limited menu. Wives and special friends are welcome. Mark your calendar now! We look forward to having YOU attend our annual banquet.

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