

The Railway  
Historical  
Southeast



& Locomotive  
Society, Inc.  
Chapter

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TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA- During Sholtz Administration (1933-1937)

## Doodlebugs

By Larry Brennan

Thanks to Michael W. Savchak <Savchak@MNR.org> I had a starting point for microfilm research on the doodlebug at Tallahassee. The quest started when I was contacted by Nancy Dobson, Executive Director of the Florida Supreme Court Historical Association, for information about a photograph she found in their archives. I was asked to provide a date and occasion for the picture, which

showed Governor Sholtz and a number of State Supreme Court Justices standing in front of a self-propelled railcar.

Michael said there were three cars, built by ACF at their Berwick plant in late 1935 under ACF order 1432. I had seen photos of them somewhere but do not have the book in my collection. I went to the public library and spent a pleasant afternoon strolling

through the microfilm of The Florida Times-Union and the Jacksonville Journal. In less than a quarter-hour I struck paydirt; the remainder of the afternoon was spent refining it. Herewith the story:

On Wednesday, January 1, 1936, Jacksonville's Florida Times-Union carried a story with this head: "Public Asked to See Flyer-Motor Train of Seaboard on Display Tomorrow." The Seaboard would show its newest motorcar, which had arrived New Year's Eve after a leisurely trip from Richmond. Shopmen and North Florida division superintendent Gordon L. Hurley were inspecting the car and preparing it for the public display. Much was made of its streamlined, aluminum-sheathed body, roller bearings and rubber-insulated springs, which, along with the air-conditioning, guaranteed a smooth, quiet and comfortable ride. The aluminum shell was lined with aluminum foil and hair felt to further reduce noise. It was powered by a six-cylinder, overhead cam gasoline engine of over 700 cubic inch displacement. At 2,200 rpm, it developed 168 horsepower. It had seating for 38 white and 19 colored passengers (in a separate section) and a small baggage compartment in the front. Overall, the car was 64 feet one inch long; its width was nine feet and overall height ten feet three inches.

An ad in Friday's Time-Union showed a line cut of the car, numbered 2024. The public was invited to "Inspect the Latest in Transportation!" The Streamlined, Air-Conditioned Motor Coach Train sat on Track One at the Terminal from 9 AM to 9 PM, and about 10,000 people came to see it on Thursday, January 2, including Mayor John T. Alsop and representatives from the Florida State Hotel Association. Numerous Seaboard officials were on hand as well. Dubbed the Tallahassee Flyer, it was to inaugurate a daily round trip between Jacksonville and River Junction the following week. It was scheduled to be exhibited at several locations on its three-day tour to the western end of the Seaboard. Mr. C. A. Parker, Assistant Road Foreman of Engines, was the train's

engineer on its exhibition tour.

At 7:45 AM Friday, January 3, it started out with a full consist of railroad officials and local dignitaries. Stops for inspection were made at Lake City, Live Oak, Madison, Greenville, and Drifton. At its arrival in Tallahassee it was met by a crowd of State officers, including several justices of the Supreme Court, State Railroad Commission Chairman W. B. Douglass, and Governor Fred Sholtz. Mrs. Sholtz christened the train with a bottle of wine. The Governor was a busy man: earlier that day he had addressed the Florida Education Association in Orlando; early Sunday he boarded a train to Los Angeles, where he would address a Jackson Day dinner Wednesday evening to kick off the 1936 Democratic campaign. He planned to write his speech on the train out.

The Tallahassee Flyer was open to the public all day Saturday; Sunday it was viewed by more in Quincy and River Junction. It began regular service that afternoon with a 4:00 PM departure for Jacksonville. Monday, January 6, it left Jacksonville at 8:05 AM on the first daily round trip.

After leaving Jacksonville, the schedule called for stops at Lake City, 9:20 AM; Live Oak, 9:50 AM; Madison, 10:24 AM; Greenville, 10:42 AM; Drifton, 11:02 AM; Tallahassee, 11:40 AM; Quincy, 12 :17 PM; arriving at River Junction, 12:45 PM. Eastbound, the Flyer left River Junction at 4:00 PM; Quincy, 4:29 PM; Tallahassee, 5:10 PM; Drifton, 5:47 PM; Greenville, 6:07 PM; Madison, 6:28 PM; Live Oak, 7:10 PM; Lake City, 7:40 PM; arriving in Jacksonville at 9:10, which allowed for connections to South Florida points and late-night trains to the North and Midwest. A few weeks later, conditional stops were added at Macclenny, Wellborn, Lee, Aucilla, Lloyd and Midway. 207 miles in four hours forty minutes westbound and five hours ten minutes eastbound: twenty years later the Gulf Wind took still four hours and thirty-five minutes between those points. Don't even ask about #36-37 the Passenger, Mail &

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Express!

Several Tallahassee civic groups immediately voted resolutions of gratitude to the Seaboard for the improved service, something they had been requesting for some time. In the summer of 1935, President and receiver Leigh Powell had visited the state capital and promised that something would be done.

The Seaboard ordered three cars. Another was put in service between Richmond and Raleigh. The third arrived in Jacksonville a week later. On January 14th and 15th, the railroad ran another ad, similar to the first, again inviting the public to inspect the car for the Jacksonville-Tampa route. It would be displayed on the tracks at the foot of Hogan Street in downtown from 9:00 AM to 9:00 PM on Wednesday, January 15. Following the all-day display in Jacksonville,

it, too would make a slow trip to Tampa, with exhibitions along the way. George Z. Phillips, general passenger agent, gave the list: Thursday, January 16, it would stop at Baldwin, Lawtey, Starke, Hampton, Waldo, Hawthorne, Citra, Anthony, ending the day at Ocala. Most stops would be for half an hour, although Baldwin got 90 minutes and the car would remain open at Ocala from its 3:30 arrival until 9:00 PM. On Friday, January 17, it would continue the tour, pausing at Belleview, Summerfield, Oxford, Wildwood, Bushnell, Lacochee, Dade City, Zephyrhills, ending the day at Plant City, where it would remain open from 4:45 until 7:45 that evening. On Saturday, January 18, it would be open all day at Tampa; the next day it would begin its daily round trips to Jacksonville. The 210 miles would be covered by a 7:50 AM departure from Tampa, arriving in Jacksonville that afternoon at 1:20. The return trip left Jacksonville at 3:30 PM and arrived in Tampa at 9:00 PM. The schedule was slightly slower than the "Tallahassee Flyer" but there were more stops, too. The Tampa train apparently did not rate a Flyer designation.

Students at Jacksonville's three white senior high schools were invited to submit essays on the topic, "Why Should the Modern Streamlined Motor Coaches of the Seaboard Air Line Railway Be a Success?" The contest entries were judged by J. M. Elliott, business manager of the Times-Union; James T. Daniel, manager of the Chamber of Commerce; and T. W. Parsons, Seaboard's assistant general manager. The \$15 first prize was awarded to Louise Smith of Julia Landon High School; the \$10 second went to Robert Hopkins of Andrew Jackson High.

That's how they came to the Seaboard in Florida. Someone from Richmond or Raleigh may be inspired to check those papers of the period and see how the third Streamlined Motor Coach train was received. How they came to be withdrawn, and when, will require more information and more research.

And one more footnote: Why were the Supreme Court Justices so heavily represented in the ceremony? The presence of the State Railroad Commission chairman was obvious, but why the Court? One must remember that in January, the Legislature was not in session; the only officials likely to be in Tallahassee would be the Governor, the commission chairmen, and the Supreme Court!

**EXHIBITION**

**NEW  
STREAMLINED  
AIR-CONDITIONED  
Motor Coach Trains**  
Come - Inspect the Latest  
in Transportation!

**PUBLIC SHOWING**  
Terminal Station, Jacksonville, Fla.  
9:00 A. M. - 9:00 P. M., Thursday, Jan. 2

Three streamliners are augmenting Seaboard's great fleet of air-conditioned trains. Two are to be placed in daily service on convenient, local schedules in Florida.  
The Tallahassee Flyer—eastbound, from River Junction Jan. 5 at 4:00 P. M., from Tallahassee 5:10 P. M., arriving Jacksonville 9:10 P. M.; westbound, from Jacksonville Jan. 6 at 8:05 A. M., from Tallahassee 11:40 A. M., arriving River Junction 12:45 P. M.  
The second "streamliner" is to go into service between Jacksonville and Tampa shortly after Jan. 7.

**SEABOARD  
AIR LINE RAILWAY**

# Last Call for Dues

To date we still have some members who have not paid their dues. If your address label has a red star next to it, then this will be the last *Southeast Limited* newsletter you will receive. However, if you im-

mediately renew your R&LHS/Southeast Chapter dues then we will continue your membership. Thank you for your continued support.

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## Convention Update

It is not too late to register for the National R&LHS Convention being hosted by our chapter June 1<sup>st</sup> through 3<sup>rd</sup>. Even though you can no longer get the Early Bird Discount, just send in the form from last month's *Southeast Limited* and we'll add your name to the list of attendees. We have a great program planned, which includes a number of speakers and two speaker panels. We'll also take a day trip to see the

FEC shops at New Smyrna Beach and the NASA railroad (which includes a visiting the Vehicle Assembly Building not normally open to the public). Please take a moment and send in your registration now. Note: If you want the R&LHS \$89.00 rate at the Radisson convention hotel, please call them direct at (904) 396-5100. I look forward to seeing as many Southeast Chapter members as possible at the convention.

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## Talleyrand Railroad Update

As an update to Jim Smith's article on the Talleyrand Railroad in our December *Southeast Limited*, we've included a photo from the prior operation, the Municipal Docks Railway. The 1950 photo is from the Spottswood Studio collection (image # SP02095) and it shows the new Municipal Docks Railway #101, a GE center cab locomotive that obviously replaced an older steam engine (note slope back tender to

left of the GE). The employees of the MD&T are all standing on or by the #101. When Jim showed this picture to the current Talleyrand employees, they noted the dress and obvious officials proudly standing by the new engine. This photo is from the Florida Photographic Collection which has over 80,000 digitized images and can be viewed on-line at:

<http://fpc.dos.state.fl.us/>.

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

The March Meeting of the Southeast Chapter was held at the CSXT General Office Building in Jacksonville, Florida, March 8, 2001. The minutes of the preceding meeting were approved subject to one minor correction. No treasurer's report was available.

### Old Business

1. Book sales - books on consignment with the NRHS should be retained by the NRHS for future sales, but all receipts for books sold should be forwarded to the R&LHS treasurer. Mark Bennett to contact the NRHS Chapter treasurer for a status report.
2. Convention - Convention flyer has been issued. Jim Smith will personally extend an invitation to the North Florida Chapter - NRHS to attend the convention. Invitations will be extended to other area chapters as well.
3. Book Committee - the review of possible photos for inclusion in the publication is on-going.
4. Locomotive parts - distribution of the two machine nuts from the locomotive GENERAL may be handled at the National Convention
5. Rail Camp - support for the Rail Camp program will be postponed due to the financial obligations resulting from the National Convention.

### New Business

1. Newsletter - Chairman Smith again noted the need to review ways to reduce newsletter reproduction costs.
2. Program Committee - volunteers are needed to get the committee functioning.

### Committee Reports

1. Newsletter - on schedule
2. Trip - further consideration of possible trips will be postponed until the Fall.
3. National R&LHS news - the convention for 2002 will be in Colorado and in Baltimore in 2003.

### Meeting Program

The program was presented by Bill Howes who traced the link between passenger se of the SAL and ACL with those operated by the B&O/C&O.

The April meeting program will be on Civil War railroading presented by Art Towson.

Respectfully submitted,

Mark S. Bennett,  
Secretary



Municipal Docks Railway #101 in 1950. The Florida Photographic Collection, Spottswood Studio collection (image # SP02095) (<http://fpc.dos.state.fl.us/spottswood/sp02095.jpg>)

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