



Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc.

Southeast Chapter

Newsletter No. 106 – April, 2008

SAM SHORTLINE EXCURSION TRIP - MARCH 15, 2008

Sometimes it's intriguing to take the back roads – the back RAILROAD's that is! On March 15, 2008, ten members and friends of the Southeast Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society boarded the SAM Shortline excursion train from Cordele, Georgia to Archery, Georgia and back on former Seaboard Air Line trackage. The all day adventure departed the depot in downtown Cordele at 9:30 in the morning. The first order of business was for the train to cross the railroad junction in Cordele which features diamond crossings with CSX's Fitzgerald Subdivision and the NS mainline between Macon and Jacksonville. The route of the trip is along very rural Georgia farmland. We witnessed peanut farms, pecan trees, and a cattle ranch. The rails traverse the trestle and fill over Lake Blackshear, providing riders a water's edge view. The car attendant opened a vestibule window, allowing folks to take photos and video train-side while the train was crossing the lake, boaters in view. SAM is the abbreviation for the former Savannah, Americus and Montgomery railroad. It was not the best morning for photography as a much needed rain fell until early afternoon. Sunshine then emerged through patchy clouds accompanied by strong winds from the Southwest. Tornadoes were spawned near Atlanta by the storm, earlier that same day. The high winds also blew down a pine tree across the tracks, causing a short delay, as described later in this article.

Continued on page – 2.



Passengers boarding the SAM shortline excursion train on the Heart of Georgia Railroad in Cordele Georgia for the day's trip.

Southeast Limited



On the siding at Americus Georgia.

The stop in Americus afforded folks gathered an opportunity to eat lunch in the classic Windsor hotel, built in 1892. The buffet featured baked chicken, roast beef, and hot vegetables. A small hobby store in downtown Americus was a welcome discovery for some. The train traveled about thirty miles and hour, but slowed for bridges and trestles. Between Plains and Americus on the return trip, the excursion was delayed by a pine tree with a 16" diameter base, which had fallen across the tracks. The train came to a stop short of the tree. After some engineer & conductor discussion about the lack of a chain saw aboard the train, a plan was set in place. The locomotive eased forward and pushed the tree aside. After ten minutes of delay due to the bad weather mother nature threw at the railroad, the trip resumed without further incident. We arrived back in Cordele about 15 minutes late, owing to the pine tree. Tourist railroads bring alive excursion trips and allow railfans and the public to view and travel parts

of railroading that are intriguing, because they are off the mainline. For information about the SAM Shortline Excursion Train, call 877-GA-RAILS or visit www.samshortline.com

Southeast Chapter - Meeting Minutes Recap:

The **February 14th** meeting was conducted by President Bill Howes with ten members present.

Paul Newtson reminded everyone about the upcoming chapter trip riding the SAM Railroad out of Cordele, Georgia on March 15th (as reviewed in this issue).

The **March 13th** meeting was conducted by President Bill Howes with nine members present.

Five new members were signed up at the Jacksonville Train Show, held on Feb 23rd. Ed Mueller and John Leynes presented a proposal to make a Henry Plant DVD. The motion was approved by the members.

There is a change in the Chapter PO Box. The National PO Box set up by Bill Howes, will now be used for the Chapter as well. Our new mailing address is: PO Box 600544, Jacksonville, FL, 32260-0544.

Announcements:

May 3rd - Prime Osborn Center train show, Jacksonville, FL

May 8th - Regular SE Chapter meeting, 3rd floor CSX GOB, Jacksonville, FL 6:30PM

May 28-June 1 - R&LHS Annual Convention, Lancaster, PA

July 12th - Model Train Show, Deland, FL

Oct. 4th - Model Train Show, Deland, FL

Nov. 2nd - Gaithersburg, MD Train show

SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OFFICERS

William F. Howes, Jr.	President
John A. Leynes	Vice-President
Reid Adams	Secretary
Robert Van Nest	Treasurer

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The ACL 1504, a 4-6-2 steam locomotive, is back in the news recently associated with the activity that will transform the present Prime Osborn Convention Center, formerly the Jacksonville Union Terminal complex, into the planned Jacksonville Transportation Center. This multi-million



Rendering of the planned Jacksonville Transportation Center

dollar project is planned to see the return of Amtrak to the facility as well as bringing a multi-modal approach to include the other forms of transportation currently in service in the area, into the facility. Local R&LHS chapter members are split on the prospect of whether or not the 1504 should be restored for static display or returned to service, due to cost factors. Local NRHS chapter members have come out on record in favor of full restoration and return to excursion service. Current thoughts include the belief that CSX would not allow the 1504 trackage access, while others believe that the FEC might, as the FEC has expressed interest in steam operations in the past. All appear to believe that the 1504 should be at least cosmetically restored to present a proper appearance for the former ACL giant that served the line well during its time, and a shelter constructed to minimize further deterioration of the magnificent locomotive. The project is being undertaken in conjunction with the Florida Department of Transportation.

The ACL 1504 was built in 1919, by the American Locomotive Company, ALCO, Richmond Works, for the U. S. Railway Administration to haul troops during WW I, but was not completed until the war ended. The locomotive is a “Light Pacific” type 4-6-2, Class P-5-A, and could easily exceed 70 MPH. In its heyday, it was the pride of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, hauling premier passenger trains in and out of Florida. It was in service on the ACL for over 30 years. In 1960 the engine was placed on display in front of the new Atlantic Coast Line building, now CSX, in Jacksonville. It remained there until 1986 when CSX presented it to the Prime Osborn Center as a symbol of the city’s railroad history and heritage. The engine was completely refurbished in 1989 by the Great Atlantic Boiler Services of Jacksonville to preserve it for the enjoyment and education of future generations. Its detailed condition today is unknown.



**Make your opinion known by e-mail to Craig_Teal@dot.state.fl.us or US Mail to:
Mr. Craig Teal, P. E., Fla. Dept. of Transportation, Lake City, FL 32025**



Southeast Chapter members pose for a photo before re-boarding the SAM, at Archery, Ga.

Tweetsie Railroad Museum destroyed by fire Sunday March 16, 2008

Investigators shoveled through ashes to determine what caused an early morning fire that destroyed the Tweetsie Railroad Museum and gift shop at the 50-year-old park off U.S. 321 between Boone and Blowing Rock N. C. about two hours northwest of Charlotte. It could have been a lightning strike or some type of electrical problem. The one-story wood building – believed to be an original train depot – was consumed with flames fanned by high winds. The Tweetsie Railroad, used to run between Boone and Johnson City, Tenn. Today there is nothing left of the memorabilia, train timetables and railroad lanterns that were housed in the old structure.

The Southeast Chapter of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society will discuss the museum loss at the April meeting. The Tweetsie railroad, formerly East Tennessee and Western North Carolina Railroad, ET&WNC, is within the territory encompassed by the Southeast Chapter. For more info go to: www.tweetsie.com

The depot as it appeared in 1957 and the remains of the building after being consumed by the fire.

