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Spring

1981

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE
QUARTERLY

Of Local Architecture & Preservation

THE HISTORIC HUNTSVILLE QUARTERLY

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THE MEMPHIS & CHARLESTON

Muscle Shoals proved to be a strong impetus to the development of railroading across North Alabama in the mid-19th century. Located in that stretch of the Tennessee River between Decatur and Tuscumbia, the Shoals often were unnavigable for prolonged periods of the year, which made it difficult, if not impossible, to get locally grown cotton to market in New Orleans when the best prices could be obtained for the crop. In the early 19th century, all freight had to be transported along the natural waterways; where obstacles existed, such as the Shoals, local interests explored alternative means to by-pass them. This led first to the digging of canals and then to the construction of crude railroads.

The first railway in Alabama was the Tuscumbia Railway Company chartered by the state legislature in 1830. It ran a distance of two miles--from Tuscumbia to the Tennessee River--and consisted of iron straps laid on wooden stringers with the motive power provided by horses. Two years later the second state railroad was chartered, the Tuscumbia, Courtland & Decatur Railroad Company (TC&D), which had essentially the same board of directors as the Tuscumbia Railway. This company was organized to build a railway that would extend from Tuscumbia to Decatur thereby providing transportation around the Shoals, a distance of forty-four miles.

The Tuscumbia, Courtland &

The Railroad Comes to Huntsville

by Linda Bayer

The earliest American railroads were short lines designed to serve as connecting links between water courses and were initiated and financed by local markets to serve their own purposes. There was little attempt at first to make railroads an alternative system of transportation independent of the waterways.

Decatur Railroad was completed to Decatur in 1834 and used horses to pull the cars until their first steam engine arrived that year. The panic of 1837 forced this company into bankruptcy, and it was not until 1848 that the company was sold to a new owner who merged it with the Tuscumbia Railway Company to form the Tennessee Val-

RAILROAD IN ALABAMA

1850-1898

Huntsville Passenger Depot



ley Railroad Company (TVRR). At the time of the sale, the property of the TC&D consisted of the following:

Tuscumbia--Four acres containing a large depot and inclined plane connecting the depot with the Tennessee River, a stone wharf extending to low water mark, and a large frame building for storage. Also, another parcel of land contain-

ing a railroad warehouse, shop, offices and a foundry.

Leighton--A depot, stables, and a frame building.

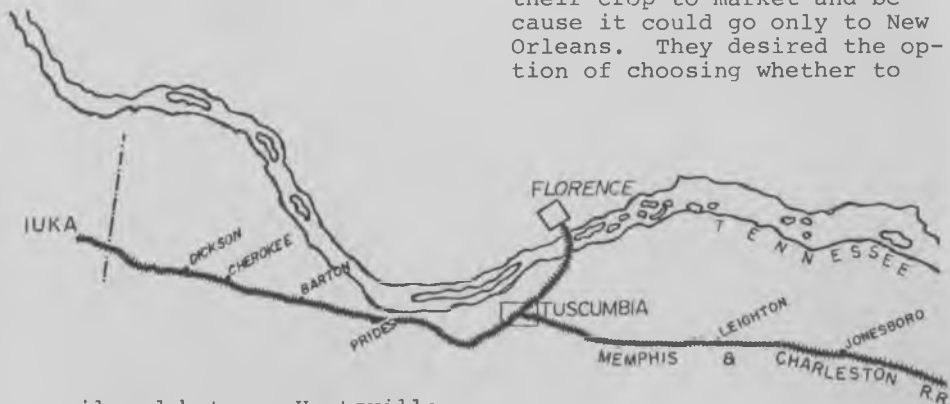
Courtland--A depot and stables.

Decatur--A large brick and stone depot on the Tennessee River, offices and shops at the head of the inclined plane, and a brick boarding house for the

railroad company.

Equipment--Ninety-one freight cars, two passenger cars, and five locomotives.

In the same year the TC&D was completed, a proposal was published in the *Southern Advocate*, a Huntsville newspaper, urging the construction of



a railroad between Huntsville and the Tennessee River at Whitesburg. The anonymous writer estimated that a railway would be cheaper than a turnpike, costing only \$40,000 for the road plus another \$10,000 for warehouses, cars, horses, and gears. He felt that it would attract additional freight shipments through Huntsville which would then connect with the TC&D at Decatur. The newspaper editorialized that "A railroad may, as yet, be regarded as a novelty among us, and the mind is always more or less startled by new enterprises. A thorough and comprehensive examination of a subject, however, soon divests it of all its difficulty, and reconciles us to schemes which at first appear visionary and impractical." Nevertheless, it was almost 60 years before a railroad was constructed along this route.

While the Tennessee Valley

Railroad was operating, it permitted cotton to be transported past the Shoals, but there still remained the long, arduous trip down the Tennessee, the Ohio, and the Mississippi Rivers to New Orleans. The North Alabama planters were at a disadvantage because of the time involved in delivering their crop to market and because it could go only to New Orleans. They desired the option of choosing whether to

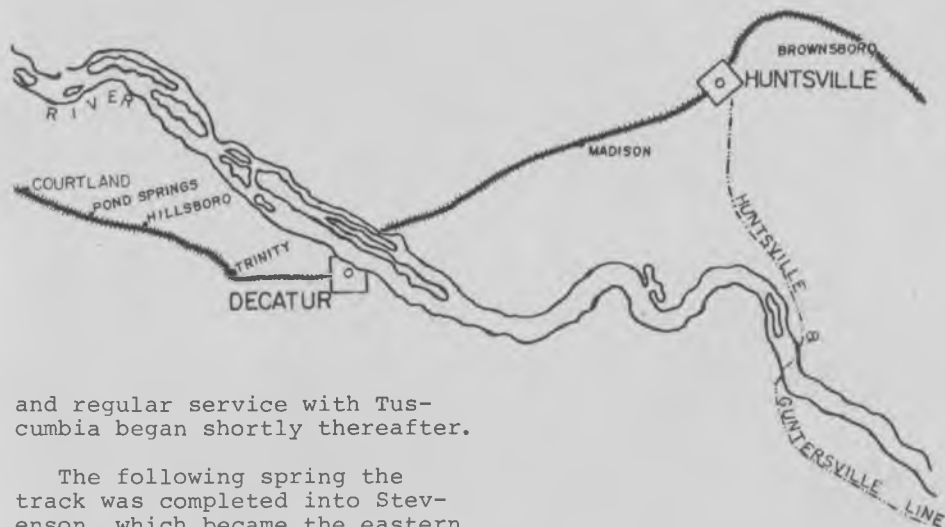
send their cotton to a Gulf coast or an east coast seaport for sale. Consequently, it was the planters who initiated the drive to locate an east-west railroad that would connect Memphis on the Mississippi River with Charleston on the Atlantic Ocean.

The Memphis and Charleston Railroad Company (M&C) was chartered through Alabama in 1850, and the Alabama commissioners then acquired the property of the TVRR along whose route the M&C tracks were laid. For \$75,000, paid in stock, the M&C received not only the tracks and land of the TVRR but also the warehouses, depots, shops, and tools.

Construction of the M&C began in Madison County in the summer of 1851 when the engineers arrived to survey the

route. The track was completed in sections so that by 1855 one could travel by train from Memphis to Pocahontas, then take a stage line into Tuscumbia, transfer back to the train for the trip from Tuscumbia to Huntsville, and continue to Stevenson, again by stage, to connect with the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad. The section of road between Decatur and Huntsville had been completed in October of 1855; the train whistle could be heard daily as the track layers approached within two miles of the Huntsville depot. Finally on October 13 the first engine "General Garth" entered town,

locomotive was run several hundred yards in advance of the train to signal should any obstacle be discovered on the tracks. The depots along the way were observed to be "tastefully and commodiously constructed, and pleasantly located." A reporter further noted, "Stevenson is THE town of Jackson County. It is only four or five years old, and already it contains a number of very pretty private residences, three hotels, and several large wholesale and retail houses, which are doing a thriving business." As for the railroad itself, the



and regular service with Tuscumbia began shortly thereafter.

The following spring the track was completed into Stevenson, which became the eastern terminus of the M&C when the directors elected to lease for thirty years the tracks of the Nashville and Chattanooga between that point and Chattanooga. To celebrate the completion of the eastern section of the road, the M&C provided a complimentary ride to Stevenson and return for the stockholders. The 300 passengers made the sixty mile trip in four hours. In order to prevent an accident, a separate

writer could not be too flattering: "The road, which was infinitely smoother than we had anticipated, in view of the great haste with which the work was done--the cars--the depots--the bridges, which are really superb--the cordial receptions on the way--the company--the dinner--in short, with one or two exceptions not worthy of notice, every thing connected with the trip pleased us vastly."

The following year, 1856, the M&C opened their Railroad Hotel on the present site of Dilworth Lumber Company, across the tracks from the depot. It was under the operation of James M. Venable and became known as Venable's Hotel. During the Civil War it closed but was reopened in 1866 as the Donegan Hotel after being thoroughly refitted and newly finished. In 1873 the railroad offered for sale all of its real estate along the tracks including "that valuable property in Huntsville known as the Donegan Hotel, together with many lots lying near the depot."

For operational ease, the M&C was divided into the Eastern and Western Divisions, with Huntsville being the headquarters of the Eastern Division. This meant that Huntsville received a more substantial depot than other towns of similar size because it contained the offices for the Eastern Division administration. In addition,

the shops were located in Huntsville which gave the town its first real industry. These shops consisted of a large roundhouse with turntable, engine house, car shop, and machine shop. The railroad employed machinists in the shops to carry out the necessary repairs and rebuilding of the rolling stock. The company also built homes for many of these employees near the depot.

By 1857 the M&C tracks were complete from Memphis to Stevenson, a distance of 272 miles. The M&C operated successfully until the Civil War interrupted. In a surprise move, Federal troops commanded by General O. M. Mitchel occupied Huntsville at dawn on April 11, 1862, and took possession of the telegraph office located at the depot as well as the railroad it-



self. Mitchel reported that "We have captured about 200 prisoners, 15 locomotives, a large amount of passenger, box and platform cars, the telegraphic apparatus and offices, and two southern mails. We have at length succeeded in cutting the great artery of railway intercommunication between the Southern States." With the exception of a few months, Federal troops occupied Huntsville for the remainder of the war.

Control of the M&C was critical during the war for it formed a vital link in the only completed east-west rail route across the southern states. Union detachments controlled about 100 miles of the M&C, thereby severing the Confederacy. When the railroad was finally bought back from the U. S. Government by the owners, it was a shambles. Both armies had fought over it for three years, and by the end of the war, most of the road west of Decatur had been completely destroyed. Bridges were gone, rolling stock scattered or destroyed, crossties rotted, and the iron rails had been heated and wrapped around trees to prevent their reuse.

The 1866 M&C annual report stated that the loss in Confederate securities sustained by the road during the war came to over one million dollars, in addition to the loss of track, equipment, and buildings. However it went on to say that the road then owned 52 locomotives, 41 passenger and baggage cars, and 349 freight cars. Although the road had borrowed heavily to make repairs and replace equipment, the president was confident that the M&C would soon be paying dividends again regularly. Unfortunately it was never able to overcome the

financial setback created by the war, and in 1877, the railroad was leased to the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia Railroad Company (ETV&G) for twenty years. The ETV&G was absorbed by Southern Railway Company in 1894, and four years later Southern purchased the M&C outright on February 25, 1898.

The technology of railroad-ing made tremendous advances during the period that the M&C was operational. During the 1850s, the railroads gradually began the change from wood to coal to power their steam locomotives, and the use of the telegraph to schedule trains became widespread. The North Alabama Telegraph Company--the second such company in Alabama--was chartered in 1852 and was located at the M&C facility in Huntsville.

But the major changes occurred in the decades following the Civil War. Companies were expanded and consolidated, lines were connected, locomotives and rolling stock became highly specialized, tracks were improved, steel rails replaced iron ones, and automatic air brakes were introduced. The resulting size and efficiency of the railway system in this country made imperative the regulation of local time. Train schedules had become hopelessly confused with each community setting its own time based on the sun. Consequently the railroad officials met at a General Time Convention in 1883 and adopted the system of Standard Time, which went into effect at noon on November 18, 1883.

Another problem that had to be solved by the railroads was the standardization of track gauge. During the antebellum

period, each company adopted its own gauge. The result was that the cars and locomotives from one line were incompatible with those of the next, necessitating the transfer of passengers, freight, and luggage between lines or the readjustment of the wheels on each car. In 1886 the railroads agreed to adopt a standard track gauge of 4'9", and during May and June, all tracks, cars, and locomotives were converted to this gauge. The M&C, which had been built to a 5' gauge, completed the conversion of its line from Memphis to Stevenson in a single day, May 31, 1886. No trains ran that day, and thousands of men, working in twenty mile sections, changed all the rails and adjusted the trucks on the rolling stock to the new standard gauge.

Although the railroads most pressing concerns throughout the 19th century were the operation of the trains and the development of new technologies, they were also forced to create a new building type--the depot --for which there existed no historical precedent. The earliest depots were designed for the purely functional considerations of selling tickets and providing shelter from the elements. However, by the end of the 19th century, they had evolved into something quite different: they had become the gateway to and the symbol of the city.

Earlier forms of transportation, the canals and turnpikes, usually had provided no special buildings for passengers but instead used convenient inns or taverns as their collection points. When railroading began, the companies were forced by economics to invest all their funds in track, bridges and equipment in order

to start operations as quickly as possible. There was no money to spare for depots, and railroads continued the earlier practice of operating out of public houses. However, the necessity for depots quickly became apparent, and they were soon erected in every town the railroad entered. The earliest and those in small towns tended to resemble cottages, perhaps in an effort to reassure a sceptical public that railroad travel was safe by providing it with a domestic image. Furthermore, unlike Europe, the United States at the start of railroading was composed of numerous small cities spread at great distances from each other so there was no need for large scale stations; but as the 19th century progressed, cities grew, the railroads became large and successful, and depots became the focal point for the whole community. Gradually railroads replaced water and turnpike travel; consequently, it was through the depot that goods, people, and news arrived and departed. In short, the depot became the most important building in the community. After the Civil War, railroad technology was concentrated on luxury, safety and speed. The depots grew into impressive, opulent structures and became "to the 19th century what monasteries and cathedrals were to the 13th century. They are truly the only real representative building we possess...Our metropolitan termini have been leaders of the art spirit of our time." (*Building News, 1875*) The railway terminal became the symbol of the age; it represented the progress of modern technology and civilization. It was this symbolic role of the station that led to the building of ever larger and more impressive structures. By the turn of the century, Grand

Central station in New York City had a concourse that was 125' wide, 375' long and 120' high. Obviously these gigantic dimensions were not based on functional considerations but rather were an "attempt to contribute splendid, monumental structures to the urban scene... public buildings should be supremely impressive." (*The Railroad Station, 1956*) The residents of each city identified with their local stations, and each station was viewed by travelers as the image of its city.

Architecturally the stations were representative of the numerous revival styles which achieved popularity in 19th century America, and often they influenced architectural taste through their prominence. To the designer, either the railroad engineer or a professional architect commissioned by the company, stations were a challenge since they were a totally new type of building. There existed no historical precedents to consult for either plan or style so that numerous experiments were tried in both areas. Those architectural styles that were considered most suitable for depots were Italianate, Gothic, Romanesque, and Classical Baroque. The first three could incorporate towers of various design which provided an immediately identifiable image and also housed the railroad clock, which in early days often served as the official time for the town.

After 1900 the railroads began to experience steady competition from the automobile which was more convenient, the bus which was cheaper, and the airplane which was quicker. In order to meet this competition, the railroads found it necessary to cut expenses, the most obvious being the massive, or-

nate terminals. Economy often forced several railroads to consolidate their operations in a single building in each city, which produced the union station serving the trains and customers of more than one road.

Siting was another factor that contributed to the prominence of the terminal. In the pre-automobile era, it was slow and tedious to move goods and people to and from the station so that a centralized location within the business district and convenient to the most people was essential. Conversely, a business site near the depot was the most desirable causing the city to grow up around the station.

In 19th century America, the train's arrival at the local depot was the primary means of contact with the outside world through its delivery of merchandise, mail, newspapers, food, money, and people.

During the years of its operation, the M&C erected numerous stations along its line. The first building phase was completed just in time for the Civil War. Because of the road's strategic importance during that conflict, many of these depots were destroyed and had to be rebuilt in the late 1860s. The M&C ran through a sparsely populated, rural area so that the depots were, for the most part, modest frame structures. The railroad was principally a freight line built to haul cotton, although after the Civil War the tonnage of both lumber and stone exceeded that of cotton; because of this, the M&C stations were predominantly freight depots incorporating a ticket office. Also common during the days of steam were stops without depots where the train took on fuel

and water. These water stops, established by the railroad, often grew into small communities, which were referred to as tank towns. The frequent stops were observed by an English traveler who commented, "Upon second-class lines, especially in the Southern states, the popular criticism upon a slow train, that 'it stops at every wood pile,' has in it not

much of exaggeration."

Although most of these depots are no longer extant, existing photographs indicate that they were built to one of several standard designs. The following article traces the construction history of the M&C depots across northern Alabama as recorded in the company's annual reports.

M&C Stations and Stops

by Catherine K. Gilliam

The Memphis & Charleston Railroad Company annual reports through 1898 were made available to Hugh Dudley of the Huntsville Depot Board through the courtesy of Southern Railway System, Washington, D. C. The following station report was abstracted for publication from these reports by Catherine K. Gilliam. The reports after 1880 all contain the statement that "The M&C Railroad Company does not keep any account of construction and betterments--all expenditures made for additions to and improvement of the company's property are charged to operating expenses," which accounts for the lack of detailed information on the later years of operation.

MARGERUM (MARJORAMS)

First mention of this place as a water stop was in the 1871 report, when a new water tank was built. However in the very earliest years of the railroad, a number of water stops (also used as wood stops) were built, but they were not individually listed in the reports. Margerum had no doubt been a water station since an early day. In 1890 the Birmingham, Sheffield and Tennessee River Railway built a branch line from Margerum to the Tennessee River, where they were building a new town called Riverton. The M&C

never built a station at Margerum, and it is never listed in the reports as a freight or passenger stop.

FOSSICK QUARRY BRANCH

In 1870 T. L. Fossick & Co. built a branch from the M&C main line to their "fine stone quarry" two miles north of Dickson, Alabama. No station was built here by the M&C.

DICKSON

A wooden, combined freight and ticket office depot was built here in 1857. It survived the

Civil War and is listed in the 1866 report as being "repaired." No other station was built here by the M&C, and in 1895 the report shows this depot to be "in very bad condition."

CHEROKEE

A wooden, combined freight and ticket office depot was built here in 1857. In 1860 the roof was "tinned" and in 1871 the "tin roof was painted." In the 1866 report this depot was listed as being "repaired," thus it survived the Civil War. No other depot was built here by the M&C, and in the 1895 report it is listed as "in good condition." Many repairs in the M&C reports were lumped together, and most often the repair work on a depot was not individually listed, except in the 1866 report following the Civil War where nearly every station was listed and its condition given.

BARTON

A wooden, combined freight and ticket office depot was built

in 1857, and additional work was done on it in 1861. This depot survived the Civil War and was repaired in 1866; the roof was tinned in 1871. A new depot was built at Barton in 1887; it was a combined freight and ticket office depot, having two small rooms with a somewhat larger room for the freight and coal bin. In the 1895 report this depot needed "slight repairs and painting."

PRIDE'S

This was not a stop on the M&C until 1869 when the depot (combined freight and ticket office) was built. Pride's had probably been a water stop before the depot was built. In the 1895 report this station was listed "in bad condition."

TUSCUMBIA

A wooden, combined freight and ticket office depot was built in 1854 and destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house and ticket office (combined) was built in 1866. In 1889 "a new passenger sta-

Tusculumbia Passenger Depot





Tuscumbia Freight Depot

tion, with offices in the second story, and a new freight station" were built at Tuscumbia. In the 1895 report it was in "good condition."

SHEFFIELD

This stop was first called Tuscumbia Landing and later, South Florence. A wooden freight house was built at Tuscumbia Landing in 1854, abandoned in 1859, and does not appear in the reports after that time. In 1867 "a new depot 30' x 70' with ample platform [was] erected at South Florence." The first time Sheffield shows in the reports was November, 1887 when freight shipments began from that place. There is a great deal in the reports about the iron works, etc. at Sheffield, and also much about needing a "union station" there; however, by 1891, this union station was not built, and it is not mentioned after that time. In the 1895 report the Sheffield depot "needs overhauling" and probably refers to the freight house (with ticket office, no doubt) which was probably built in 1887, but even that is not shown in the reports. The present Sheffield depot was built in 1951.

FLORENCE

This six mile branch from the M&C main line at Tuscumbia was opened for business in January, 1860, when the bridge there across the Tennessee River was finished. In 1859, the "depot buildings, including turntable," were built, and all were destroyed, including the bridge, during the Civil War. This bridge was not rebuilt until 1869, by which time a depot had also been erected at Florence. The 1871 report shows "tin roof put on brick depot at Florence." In 1883 the depot at Florence was thoroughly repaired, and in 1895 the report states that the station "needs overhauling." In 1888 the reports show that "arrangements are made for the joint use of a passenger station built by L&NRR at that point."

LEIGHTON

A wooden freight house was built in 1854 and destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1866, and the platform and depot were repaired in 1870. In 1884 a new wooden depot was built at Leighton, and in 1887, a large

coaling station was constructed nearby. The 1895 report shows this depot in "good condition."

TOWN CREEK

This stop was originally called Jonesboro and was only a water stop through 1859. The 1860 report states that a wood shed and water tank were built, and in 1861, a wooden freight house was erected, which was destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1866. Another new depot was built there in 1887 and shows in the 1895 report as in "good condition."

COURTLAND

A wooden freight house was built in 1854 and destroyed during the Civil War. A new freight and ticket office depot was built of wood in 1866 and remodeled in 1885. The 1895 report indicates that the "freight depot needs a new roof."

WHEELER

The first depot here was built in 1872 and was a frame struc-

ture measuring 20' x 35'. The 1895 report listed it "in bad condition." In 1897 the M&C built a 50,000 gallon water tank at Wheeler Station, and this was the last bit of construction done on the line by the Memphis & Charleston Railroad Company. The railroad was sold the next year to Southern Railway.

HILLSBORO

A wooden freight house was built in 1854 but destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1866. In 1871 the depot at Hillsboro was "removed about one mile west of the old site, and placed on grounds owned by the Company, under an arrangement with William Gilmer, who has purchased of the Company some 320 acres of land which he designs in laying out in suitable town lots...retaining five acres for depot purposes--Gilmer grading side track and removing old depot to new site." In the 1895 report this depot "needs eight squares of new roof."



TRINITY

From 1857 to 1860 this stop was a water station only. A wood shed and a new water tank were built in 1860. The following year a wooden freight house with ticket office was constructed and this depot survived the Civil War. In 1885 a new wooden depot was built at Trinity, and in the 1895 report, it was "in good condition."

DECATUR

A warehouse and engine house were built in 1853 for \$1080, both of wood. A new wooden passenger house in connection with the Tennessee & Alabama Central Railroad was completed in early 1861, survived the Civil War, and was repaired in 1866. In 1887 "extensive repairs were made to the passenger station, including painting." In 1888 the Decatur Land and Improvement Company erected a "union passenger depot" about two miles from the M&C depot and planned to build track off the M&C to the new union depot, but in 1892, this track still had not been laid. In the 1895 report, the M&C depot was "in good condition."

DECATUR JUNCTION

This is where the Tennessee & Alabama Central Railroad intersected the M&C main line on the north side of the Tennessee River. Both railroads used the M&C bridge into Decatur. The 1883 report shows "one small depot was put up at Decatur Junction to replace the one lost by fire."

BELLE MINA

Originally called Bibb's Lane, this stop appears in the M&C reports for years as Mooresville, but this was not the

original Mooresville Station location. In the 1867 report is: "The removal of side track from Mooresville to Bibb's Lane, and the erection of a depot, is contemplated as soon as the Company can secure a deed to the necessary quantity of land." In the 1868 report is: "New side tracks have been put in at Bibb's Lane, Jones' Lane [Greenbrier], and Huntsville, and the one at Mooresville removed, the station at that point having been abandoned." The same year a combined freight and ticket office depot was built at a cost of \$850. The Belle Mina station was reported as Mooresville in the M&C reports until 1883. In 1887 the Belle Mina depot was remodeled and also a large coaling station was established there. In the 1895 report, the depot was "in good condition."

MOORESVILLE STATION

This station was not at Mooresville, which was not on the main line of the M&C, but was located about two miles north of Mooresville between the present Belle Mina and Greenbrier. A wooden freight house was built there in 1856 and was destroyed during the Civil War. This depot was not replaced after the war, the stop being abandoned in 1868 when a depot was erected at nearby Bibb's Lane [Belle Mina].

GREENBRIER

This stop was originally called Jones' Lane. New side tracks were put in at Jones' Lane in 1868, but there is no mention of a depot being built--it probably had only a cotton platform. It appears in the M&C reports from 1868 through 1870, but is not listed in the 1871-1877 reports. From 1878-1887, this stop appears in the freight



reports, but its shipments were very small. There is no mention of it after 1887, and there is never any mention of a depot being built.

MADISON

This stop was called Madison Station until the town was incorporated as Madison in 1869. A wooden freight house was built in 1856 and a wood shed was built in 1860. The depot was destroyed during the Civil War and was replaced in 1866 with a new, wooden freight house with ticket office having a "new platform for the accommodation of passengers." In 1885 the Madison depot was "re-built," and in the 1895 report the station was listed "in good condition."

HUNTSVILLE

This was the Eastern Division (all track in Alabama) headquarters for the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, thus Hunts-

ville received lots of attention and money from the railroad company. According to newspaper accounts, grading work began in Madison County in 1852; however, the first train did not arrive in Huntsville until October 1855. It is probable that some temporary wooden structures had been erected on the Huntsville depot grounds by 1855; however they do not show individually in the M&C reports. Beginning in 1856, the M&C reports show construction in Huntsville every year until the Civil War as the fine brick buildings were built for use of the road. These included the freight depot, built in 1856 and still in use, the machine shops and engine houses, all gone now, and the three-story passenger depot and Eastern Division headquarters, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Railroad buildings built in Huntsville, as taken from the M&C annual reports, are as follows:



Huntsville Freight Depot

- 1856 Brick FREIGHT HOUSE built, no cost given in report. This building is still in use by Southern Railway System and is very likely the oldest railroad building in the country in continuous use as a railroad facility. It has had only two owners, the Memphis & Charleston Railroad Company, 1856-1898, and Southern Railway System, 1898-1981. It is known to be the oldest railroad building still in existence in Alabama.
- 1856 VENABLE HOTEL built for \$2,376. This hotel was gone by the late 1890s when a lumber yard, now Dilworth Lumber Company, was located there. Additions were made after 1857 to enlarge this hotel.
- 1857 STORE HOUSE built for \$3,000. The location of this store house is not known.
- 1857 Large brick ENGINE HOUSE and MACHINE SHOP built for \$19,466. These structures are no longer standing but were located on the present site of the Southern Cotton Oil Company.
- 1857 TURNTABLE and shop machinery for \$7,000.
- 1859 TICKET OFFICE built, no cost given. This was a wooden, temporary building.
- 1860 CAR SHOP of brick completed in February for \$6,169.49.
- 1860 PASSENGER HOUSE of brick built for about \$10,500. "Ticket office at Huntsville moved and building passenger shed \$430." The passenger depot in Huntsville was not completed until December 1860, but was far enough along to have the

ticket office and telegraph equipment moved into it by the report of July 1860. This building was used by the Federal army during the Civil War and was left, except for the handwriting on the walls, much as it was when they occupied it in 1862. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971, the first such designation for a Huntsville building.

1861 "Negro Hospital Arrangements \$550." No additional information is given on this, but this entry does show that slave labor was used to build the Huntsville railroad buildings. This entry appears only under "Huntsville" expenses.

1861 STORE HOUSE for railroad stores built for \$1,500. This building, the last built before the Civil War, was located just east of the freight depot. It was brick and in the early 1900s was rented to the Cudahy Packing Company and was torn down about 1910.

CIVIL WAR No construction by the railroad company and no destruction by the Federal army.

1868 "New LUMBER SHED at Huntsville" and "One CORN MILL has been put up at Huntsville and the tolls are sufficient to supply the Eastern Division."

1869 "A PASSENGER CAR SHED, 35' x 126', has been built at Huntsville for sheltering coaches. A LUMBER DRYING KILN needed at Huntsville, to be built next year."

M&C Shops in Huntsville during the Civil War



1870 PLATFORM SCALES put in at Huntsville.

1875 "Owing to the suspension of the Huntsville shop, (except for repairs)...." The Huntsville shops were completely shut down and moved to Tuscumbia in 1876. All the shop buildings remained vacant until 1881 when they were rented to an oil company, which is now Southern Cotton Oil Company.

1887 "...extensive repairs to passenger station at Huntsville, including painting." At this time the first "colored waiting room" was provided and major changes were made to the interior first floor of the passenger station. Also at this time, the "posts from the shed, which were in the way, were removed," and the shed which is on the building today was constructed. These changes were made "to conform to the requirements of the Alabama Railroad Commission."



1888 New 50,000 gallon WATER TANK built at Huntsville for \$596.

1895 Condition of Station Buildings Report: Huntsville--"In good condition." (The only other changes made in the passenger depot were made in 1912 by Southern Railway. The express building just east of the depot was built in 1913, also by Southern.)

FEARN'S SWITCH

Now called Chase, this stop was probably a water station on the M&C since the beginning of the railroad in Madison County; however, it was never a regular stop. From the M&C report ending July 1, 1869: "Should conditions be confirmed by the Legislature of Tennessee between the Winchester & Alabama Railroad and the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, it will be in our interest to build, at once, a Branch Road from Fearn's Switch, six miles east of Huntsville, to the Alabama and Tennessee State line, there connecting with the Winchester & Alabama Railroad." (This railroad was not built by the M&C. In 1889 the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railroad [now L&N] built this line into Huntsville, thus giving Huntsville its second railroad.)

BROWNSBORO

A brick freight house was built in 1856, but it was destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house with tick-

et office was built in 1866 and was remodeled in 1885. In the 1895 report, this depot was listed as "needs new roof."

GURLEY

Known variously as Gurley's, Gurleysville, and Gurley's Tank, this stop was an early water station on the M&C. In 1861 a new wood and water station were built at Gurley's, but the station was not mentioned in the 1866 report. In 1870 a new tank with masonry foundation was erected there to hold about 6500 gallons. Next year, the first depot was built there of frame construction measuring 22' x 40'. In 1890 a new wood station was erected at Gurley, and in 1895, it was listed "in good condition."

PAINT ROCK

Paint Rock was originally called Camden. A wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1856 and painted in 1860. This depot survived the Civil War and was repaired in 1866. On January 17, 1870, the



depot was blown away by a cyclone, and a new frame depot built there in 1870 and remodeled in 1885. In 1888 this depot was destroyed by a storm, and a frame one built to replace it. In 1895 this depot was listed "in good condition." (This depot was destroyed by a cyclone in 1932; another one built there, and it is now gone too.)

WOODVILLE

The location of "this" Woodville is about 3/4 mile from the location of the original Woodville; the town was moved and rebuilt on the railroad in 1856. A wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1856 and was destroyed during the Civil War. In the 1866 report the station at Woodville was "yet to be rebuilt." In 1869 a new frame depot was built there, and in the 1895 report it was listed "in good condition."

STEPHEN'S GAP

Located about two miles west of the present Lim Rock, Stephen's Gap was an early water station on the M&C. The 1861 report states that a wood shed and water tank are "to be built." In 1872 a new water tank was needed at Stephen's Gap, but the stop was not mentioned in reports after that time.

LIM ROCK

Originally called Boyd's Switch, Lim Rock first appeared in the M&C reports in 1880. It is probable that a cotton platform or small depot was built there about that time, although none was listed in the M&C reports. In the 1895 report, the Lim Rock depot is listed "in good condition."

BELMONT COAL MINE BRANCH

In 1879 a six mile private branch railroad was built from



Boyd's Switch [Lim Rock] to Belmont Coal Mine near the top of the Cumberland Mountains. They furnished coal for the M&C Railroad.

LARKINSVILLE

A brick freight house was built in 1856, but it was destroyed during the Civil War. A wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1866 and was remodeled in 1885. In 1895 this depot was listed as "needs a new roof." On April 10, 1866, the M&C put into operation a saw mill near Larkinsville to provide lumber to build stations along the line. The M&C purchased the machinery for the new mill from the U. S. Military Railroad Authorities, a mill house was built, and the mill put into operation. In 1890 a new 50,000 gallon water tank was erected at Larkinsville.

SCOTTSBORO

Originally called Scott's Mills, Scottsboro was probably an early water station on the M&C, but no depot was built there until 1861 when the brick freight house and ticket office combined was completed. This depot survived the Civil War and was repaired in 1866. In 1871 a new water tank was built at Scottsboro, and in 1885 the brick freight depot was remodeled. The first separate passenger depot was built there in 1891 at a cost of \$1944.05. The 1895 station condition report shows "Passenger depot in good condition; freight depot needs repairs and painting."

MORRISON'S MILL BRANCH

From the report ending July 1, 1870: "A spur track has been placed at Morrison's Mill, east of Scottsboro."



HOLLYWOOD

Originally this was the Bellefonte Station stop, but this was not the original town of Bellefonte. This railroad stop was named after the original town, which had objected to the railroad, and thus it ran several miles north of the old town. For a short while this settlement was known as Samples before being renamed Hollywood. A wooden freight house was built there in 1856, but it was destroyed during the Civil War, and a new wooden depot was built in 1866. The 1886 report says a new depot is needed at Bellefonte, and the 1887 report states that a new depot has been built at Hollywood, the first year the reports show the new name. In 1891 this depot burned, and in 1892 a new one was built at a cost of \$1103. The 1895 report shows this building "in good condition."

FACKLERS

A Jackson County history states that in 1873 there was only one store at Facklers, thus this town developed in the 1870s and 80s. The M&C reports show Facklers as being a freight stop for the first time in 1887, but there is no mention in the reports of a depot being built, and this station is not listed in the 1895 Condition of Buildings report, so it probably had only a cotton platform and a water tank for a while. A local history relates that a station was built there in 1890, but there is no mention of it in the M&C reports.

TIMBERLAKE'S

The only time Timberlake's is mentioned in the M&C reports is in 1861 when a new wood and water station was built there. (Could it be that this water stop became Facklers at a later date?)

STEVENSON

A wooden freight house was built there in 1856, and the report for that year also states that "it is contemplated to build a passenger house and a covered platform for transshipping freight, to be built and used in common by the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad and ours. They can be ready for use in a short time." This building was constructed, and in 1858 a machine shop was erected. These buildings survived the Civil War and are listed as being repaired in the 1866 report. In 1872 a brick passenger station was built at Stevenson as shown by the following from the M&C report for 1872: "A neat and commodious brick depot has been built at Stevenson costing about \$6000, the half of which was shared by the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad Company." These costs are given: brick, tin, etc. for Stevenson \$2,147; plumbers work at Stevenson \$63.25; and lumber, laths and plastering at Stevenson \$475.51. In 1887 extensive repairs, including painting, were made to this station, and in 1895 this depot was listed "in good condition." In 1892 a new freight house was built for \$857.24 to replace the one which burned.



(Photographs courtesy of Hugh Dudley and the Huntsville Public Library.)

News...

MR. AND MRS. GEORGE HARSH have again donated a large quantity of architectural materials to the Foundation. These include 75 window sashes with glass, porch railings, five-panel poplar doors, and a large selection of hardware. The glass will be used in buildings at Constitution Park, and the remainder of the components are in the Foundation warehouse, awaiting a new use. The Foundation's thanks go to the Harshes for their generous contributions and to Joe and Carolyn Harris and Ralph Allen, who gave up a weekend to move these items to the warehouse.

THE FOUNDATION is happy to welcome the following new patrons:

Mr. and Mrs. Dennis C. Brown
Bryson Construction Company
Mrs. Robert N. Cummer
Dr. and Mrs. William Goodson
Dr. and Mrs. Silas Grant
Mr. and Mrs. B. Bart Henson
Mr. and Mrs. Harvie P. Jones
Mrs. R. J. Lowe
Mr. and Mrs. Royce E. Mitchell
Dr. and Mrs. R. Charles Morley
Mr. and Mrs. Carl H. Morrison
Mr. and Mrs. Max D. Murray
Mr. and Mrs. Charles T. Paludan
Mr. Harry M. Rhett, Jr.
Col. and Mrs. Paul Schuppener
Mr. and Mrs. Edward G. Samson
Mr. and Mrs. John Switzer
Mr. and Mrs. George D. Wallace

and the following business:

First Alabama Bank
W. L. Halsey Grocery Company
Jones and Herrin Architects
McAlister and McQuinn Construction Company
Peoples National Bank



THE OLD TOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT Association has placed these attractive signs on all the streets entering the district to mark the boundaries. The Association is to be commended for this project which will greatly increase public awareness of the extent and location of Old Town District.

Old House Festina

(Remembering Howard Weeden)

Summoned to tour, our feet hesitate on the murmuring threshold
of this house where the shimmering fanlight, like a transparent butterfly,
just barely out of reach--but its light, mellowed by old glass, marks faces
inside the door with the dim familiar lambence of a lost time
long past, so distant now that even the oldest citizens alive
must imagine memories. The secret tales

we tell ourselves, each on the edge, are fascinating tales;
and, crossing the promising threshold
in turn, all the characters of our animated imaginations come startlingly alive
under the scroll-trimmed stairs, and we walk into our silent multiple vision
over oriental carpets worn blue and faded by time.

How many of our faces

resemble old portraits of the once-living blue-veined faces
who were the breathing originals of fabulous tales
unrecorded, having somehow eluded us in time?

What were their thoughts upon this then-recent threshold--

did any guest command a vision

of old trees, soughing overhead, branches at neck-craning height, anachronistic
as Ripley specimens and hauntingly alive?

Did they know that those trees and their memories would be preserved alive
at this museum; that late faces
would search nail-holes and door-facings for a vision
of their lives, seeking in mantels and firebrick hidden incommunicable tales--
did the poet who once lived behind this threshold
foresee that she would become an artifact in due passage of unfamiliar time?

But new visitors arrive. We are guided; it is more than time
to pass through hall, out to porch, where old recipes are kept alive
in heritage cookbooks, hawked just beyond the back-door threshold
by women whose faintly eager, heat-dewed faces
summon us to read of puddings and eye one or two reproduced tales
by the departed artist whose vision

was of simple people, simple lives--a vision
grown oddly antiquated to a time
whose tourists, instead of her productions, prefer tales
of the real facts of the real life of the real artist when she was still alive
in the sight of those impassioned, venerable faces
they imagine crossing her lighted threshold

and telling her tales of what the world was like when their dead grandfathers
were still alive,
when they were young and there was untried vision in every lineament of their
faces,
when time was transparent, when they came to a new world vacant from sea to sea
and the world too edged its toe hesitantly
up to the vanished threshold
now forever lost in realized time.

susan luther



from

Historic Huntsville Foundation, Inc.

P. O. Box 786

Huntsville, Alabama 35804