

Two of the very importances relate to (1) the identity of the peoples p

Since occupancy of Northerners, and other cultural Cherokee, we may well a Norris Basin. If it may result of the advent of the dendrochronology the late Norris Basin, a close app Cherokee into East Tennesse

In 1673 Colonel Abraham Needham and a white settler reported on a tribe called the Yuchi, and, after the death of Needham, Arthur lived for a season with them. This tribe has been identified as Yuchi,⁶ and its early location placed on the westward slope of the mountains, on streams tributary to the Tennessee River.

It is interesting to speculate on the possibility that the builders of the rectangular large log structures in Norris Basin may have been Yuchi. In this connection Arthur mentions another tribe evidently closely associated with the Yuchi. He says: "All ye Wesock children they take are brought up with them as ye Ianesaryes are a mongst ye Turkes." If the Wesock of Arthur, probably a Siouan tribe, account for this other phase of culture in the Norris Basin, we may have a vague and uncertain suggestion of the identity of the people on the streams tributary to the Tennessee, before the coming of the Cherokee. Thus may we speculate.

Much of the final writing of the prehistory of East Tennessee is yet to be done. This Society and all Tennessee is to be congratulated on the attempt recently begun by the University of Tennessee to continue the study of prehistory in this state. The establishment of a department of archaeology at the University of Tennessee and its occupancy by so able a research worker in prehistory⁸ guarantee the solution of many of the unsolved problems of early times and a great advance in the knowledge of the prehistory of southeastern United States.

⁶Clarence Walworth Alvord and Lee Bidgood, *The First Explorations of the Tennessee-Allegheny Region by the Virginians, 1650-1674* (Cleveland, 1912), 212.

⁷John R. Swanton, *Early History of the Creek Indians and their Neighbors* [Bureau of American Ethnology, Bulletin 73] (Washington, 1922), 188-189.

⁸Alvord and Bidgood, *op. cit.*, 218.

⁹The reference is to Professor T. M. N. Lewis [Ed.].

This is an interesting history of the building of the railroad. Robert T. Scott did not start Scottsboro until he knew (?) which route the railroad would take.

Be certain to read pages 24+25 - I gave J. B. Perry's book to the library

THE BUILDING OF THE MEMPHIS AND CHARLESTON RAILROAD

By T. D. CLARK

The Memphis and Charleston Railroad grew out of numerous attempts made in the second quarter of the nineteenth century to connect the East and the West. The West at that time followed the line of least resistance, and so long as the Mississippi River brought a stream of traffic into Memphis, planters and merchants were little disposed to make efforts at improving transportation facilities from Memphis to other sections of the country. However, Memphis had well developed ambitions to become the gateway to the West, but to realize these she would have to connect with the Atlantic seaboard. Not only was Memphis vitally interested in intersectional transportation, but likewise the communities between Memphis and the seaboard; in fact, it was from one of these communities that the first move to form an east to west connection was made. Thus, this is the story of the building of a railroad from Memphis to Chattanooga, where connections were formed with the railways of East Tennessee, Georgia, and South Carolina.

Northern Alabama was a newly settled country at the time the railroad idea was introduced into the United States, but despite the newness of the section a thriving trade was plying its way up and down the Tennessee River Valley. A serious obstacle to this trade, however, was the Muscle Shoals, which prevented heavily laden craft from navigating the river except during the flush season. Profiting by the example the progressive citizens of South Carolina were setting, citizens of Tuscumbia, Alabama, became interested in the railroad as a possible solution of their problem of getting around the shoals. Agitation for a railroad was started as early as the first months of 1829. Few had ever seen a railroad, and they knew little, if anything, about what it was like. Nevertheless, many felt sure that the community could build at least the two and a fraction miles of road necessary to connect the town and the river.¹ A delegation was sent to the Alabama legislature, and on January 15, 1830, the Tuscumbia Railroad Company was chartered.

¹*Laws of Alabama, 1829-1830* (Montgomery), 46.

the first west of the Appalachian Mountains.² The capital stock, \$20,000, was subscribed almost immediately after the company was chartered, but construction was delayed until June 1, 1831. The right-of-way, when it was secured, was a winding affair, some of the curves having a radius of 400 feet, and the roadbed had a maximum inclination of twenty feet per mile. The roadbed was poorly graded. The track was laid transversely on five by seven inch string pieces, on top of which a two by one-half inch iron strip was placed. The gauge was five feet and nine inches, and the space between the sills was converted into a treadway for the horses drawing the cars.³ On June 12, 1832, the opening of the road was made possible.⁴

The completion of the Tuscumbia road sharpened the appetite of the railway supporters for more. On January 13, 1832, a charter was granted the Tuscumbia, Courtland, and Decatur Railroad Company, with Benjamin Sherrod as president. The new company was to be capitalized at any sum the directors deemed advisable, provided it did not exceed \$1,000,000. Subscribers accepting stock also accepted a joint responsibility for the financial future of the company, because their estates automatically became security for the debts of the company. The newly chartered road was to begin at Tuscumbia and extend to Decatur in Morgan county by way of Courtland, a distance of forty-three and one-tenth miles.⁵ The stock for the longer line was subscribed immediately; the company was organized; and plans were set on foot to start a survey by February, 1833. By May of that year a portion of the road was under contract, and the task of grading the roadbed was well under way. In March, 1834, the steamer *James Monroe* arrived at Waterloo, Alabama, with iron for the road. Damage to the vessel, on which two freight cars had been shipped, had delayed operations.⁶

On July 4, 1834, the horse-drawn cars of the infant railroad clamored into the little town of Courtland, a distance of twenty-three and one-fourth miles from Tuscumbia. As on the Tuscumbia road, the sills had been laid five feet and nine inches apart, allowing a suitable treadway for the horses in the center.⁷ The cost of the road, including turn-outs at intervals of every two miles, averaged around \$4,000 per mile.

²The Pontchartrain Railroad Company of Louisiana was chartered on January 20, 1830, and the Lexington and Ohio (Kentucky) was chartered on January 27, 1830 (John G. Starr, *One Hundred Years of American Railroading* [New York, 1929], 138; *Laws of Kentucky, 1829-1830* [Frankfort], 126).

³Albert Pickett, *History of Alabama, and Incidentally of Georgia and Mississippi from the Very Early Period* (Birmingham, 1909), 688.

⁴"Letter from Chief Engineer Deshler, August 19, 1834," in *The American Railroad Journal* [New York], October 4, 1834.

⁵*Laws of Alabama*, January 13, 1832, p. 67.

⁶"Letter from Chief Engineer Deshler, August 19, 1834," in *The American Railroad Journal*, October 4, 1834.

⁷*Ibid.*, October 4, 1834.

Until June 1, 1834, horses were used as the only form of motive power, but upon that date the company partly mechanized the road by placing in operation a little four and one-half ton locomotive with an eight-inch stroke. The engine was able to maintain the then unbelievable speed of forty miles per hour.⁸ On January 8, 1835, the cars passed over the entire length of the road from Tuscumbia to Decatur, and from that time the road was in active use day and night transporting the cotton crop of the up-country to the river front below the falls.⁹

Almost from the beginning the road encountered financial difficulties and it was necessary on October 1, 1833, to execute a first mortgage because of the failure of the stockholders to pay their pledges. To insure this mortgage, a lien was given upon the entire holdings of the company, and it was upon borrowed funds that the road was completed to Decatur.¹⁰ After the refusal of the Mississippi legislature to charter the road through the northeastern counties of that state, confusion arose between the directors and the officials of the company. The roadbed was allowed to run down, and in 1840 the company defaulted in its interest payments. A holding company was then formed to take over the road and to hold it until final payment was made. During the time that the settlement of the road's affairs was pending the creditors leased the road to Messrs. Reese, Farrier, and Banks to be operated in connection with their steamboat trade from Tuscumbia westward. They were the holders of \$76,000 worth of first mortgage bonds on which interest payments had been defaulted since 1840. The road was advertised for sale and foreclosed September 22, 1847, at public auction.¹¹ It was bought in by David Deshler, former chief engineer, and was incorporated into the Tennessee Valley Railroad Company on February 10, 1848. After the incorporation of the Tennessee Valley Company nothing seems to have been done with the road until 1850, when the newly chartered Memphis and Charleston Railroad Company effected an agreement with the Tennessee Valley Company to incorporate its holdings into a general system connecting the Mississippi River with the Atlantic seaboard.¹²

Memphis had possibilities of becoming the commercial center of West Tennessee, provided suitable transportation facilities could be developed. The soil of the Memphis territory was of an alluvial type, which in the history of road building never has proved conducive to successful highway construction, and especially is this true when the surface of the road is left exposed. From the beginning Memphis took her place as a cot-

⁸*Ibid.*, October 4, 1834.

⁹*Ibid.*, October 4, 1834.

¹⁰Fairfax Harrison, *A History of the Legal Development of the Southern Railway Company* (Washington, 1901), 717.

¹¹*Ibid.*, 717.

¹²*Laws of Alabama*, January 7, 1850, No. 128, p. 183.

ton market and distributing center for West Tennessee and the north-eastern counties of Mississippi.

Edmund Pendleton Gaines was transferred to the Memphis territory in the military service of the United States. He was a native of Virginia, and naturally was interested in developing the Atlantic seaboard. In 1807, when Gaines was sent out to arrest Aaron Burr, he began thinking of the possibilities of tying the West to the East with a system of turnpikes and canals. In 1826 he approached the national government through the war department with his plans for connecting the East and the West. The war department, however, was in no position to heed his suggestion.¹³ Undaunted by his government's indifference, Gaines proceeded to secure all the information possible about the territory east of Memphis, because there was the possibility that in the near future he would be in a position to use this information to good advantage. Certainly there was a possibility, for the citizens of Tuscumbia were already industriously engaged in building a link of road which could easily be extended into a Memphis to Atlantic project. Much thought was given the difficulty of passing to and from Memphis over the miry roads of Shelby and adjoining counties. A request was made to the state legislature, praying—a prayer the legislature granted—that a charter be granted a railroad company "for the purpose of facilitating intercourse between the towns of LaGrange in Fayette County, and Memphis in Shelby County, and for no other purpose whatsoever."¹⁴

Memphis was looked upon as the possible terminus of a railroad extending westward from Charleston as early as 1831 by John C. Calhoun and his followers. The chartering of the Memphis Railroad Company helped to strengthen the notion. That belief accounts for the change in name from the Memphis Railroad Company to the Atlantic and Mississippi Railroad Company.¹⁵

The citizens of Bolivar, Tennessee, in need of an outlet for their produce, on March 22, 1834, revived the question of constructing a railway by calling a joint meeting of the citizens of McNairy, Fayette, and Shelby counties. The question of prime importance at this meeting was the construction of a railroad from Memphis to some point on the Tennessee River.¹⁶

John C. Calhoun and Robert Y. Hayne had their eyes on the West as a source of supply for the South, but it was impossible for those gentlemen to agree on the point where the proposed road should tap the Mississippi River trade. Calhoun favored the Muscle Shoals route for

¹³St. George L. Sioussat, "Memphis As a Gateway of the West," in *Tennessee Historical Magazine*, III (1917), 8ff.

¹⁴*Laws of Tennessee* (Nashville), December 17, 1831, chapter cexxi, 185.

¹⁵*Private Acts of Tennessee*, 1833, chapter 49.

¹⁶Charles Robert, *Nashville and Her Trade for 1870* (Nashville, 1870), 304.

he believed that Memphis was the most satisfactory point at which the Charleston road should terminate in the West. With this idea in mind he made a joint appeal in 1835 to the citizens of Fayette and Shelby counties for a charter, and for their support in building such a road.¹⁷ The LaGrange and Memphis road was chartered December 14, 1835, with a capital stock of \$375,000.¹⁸ During the legislative session of 1835 and 1836 the Tennessee legislature felt that it was the duty of the state to assist the Memphians in reaching their goal by offering them state aid. The railroad company, according to the legislative plan, was asked to raise two-thirds of the capital stock and the legislature would provide the remaining one-third.¹⁹

In 1837 the LaGrange and Memphis Company finally secured enough financial support to begin construction. A roadbed from Memphis to LaGrange, Tennessee, was graded, and the track laid for a distance of six miles. Due to the poor construction, however, wrecks were numerous, causing serious damage both to coaches and to passengers.²⁰ The first coaches to be used on the new road were horse-drawn English stage-coaches equipped with flanged wheels. The first locomotive was of Philadelphia manufacture, and was brought to Memphis by boat. When it was made known that the boat bearing the locomotive was about to land, a goodly crowd gathered on the bluff to witness the unloading. Immediately after the boat had landed, the little engine was crowned with flowers. The president of the company then offered all who would assist with the unloading a free ride in the coaches. The engine was hauled through the streets of Memphis to the rails by the mob, preceded by a brass band. The ceremony of placing the locomotive on the rails was carried out in due style. A problem arose, however, when the engine was placed on the rails—who would drive it? No one knew how to operate the thing, and it was a day or two before a mechanic with enough courage and mechanical skill could be found to undertake the task. After the engine was started, it took a considerable amount of persuasion to find passengers enough to give a demonstration. Many of those who had so enthusiastically helped convey the engine from the boat-landing to the railroad allowed their courage to fail them. When the trial run was made, the bystanders were disgusted that the locomotive went no faster than the average coach team.²¹

¹⁷Robert Y. Hayne favored a road to Cincinnati and the Northwest. For Calhoun's views see Samuel C. Williams, *Beginnings of West Tennessee* (Johnson City, 1930), 171.

¹⁸*Laws of Tennessee*, December 17, 1835 (special act). Of this rare work the copy used was in the Tennessee State Library, Nashville.

¹⁹Williams, *op. cit.*, 171.

²⁰The Memphis and LaGrange Company had its offices in LaGrange.

²¹*Memphis Commercial Appeal* (historical edition), December 30, 1900.

The LaGrange and Memphis Company had a gloomy history, for the road was in operation for a period of only eight months.²² The farmers, coming in from the outskirts of Shelby county, had no reason for transferring their produce to the cars after they themselves had bumped over the roads of the county to the railway station; the transfer would relieve them of only six miles of additional road travel. The panic of 1837 afflicted the LaGrange and Memphis Company with an ill which proved too serious for it to overcome. There were various scheming friends who hoped to put the project back on its feet. One of these, John Christian McLemore, conceived a plan by which he hoped that both he and the railroad company might be benefited. He owned 208 acres of land to the south of Memphis at Fort Pickering, and he suggested that the railroad company should take over his land, paying him a stipulated sum, and then lay off the land in lots to be sold to those individuals who were in favor of building a town in competition with Memphis. The railway officials were foolish enough to accept the scheme, but it failed simultaneously with the railway venture.²³

Colonel Stephen H. Long expressed himself as being wholly dissatisfied with the survey which had been ordered by Lewis Cass, secretary of war, in 1834. Colonel Long objected to that early survey because it anticipated using the Tennessee River as an auxiliary carrier. The question of extending the railroad from the Atlantic to the Mississippi was one that was uppermost in the minds of the founders of the two early links of railroad between Memphis and the Georgia state line. A plan was put on foot as early as 1834 to extend the Tuscumbia, Courtland, and Decatur road as far west as Memphis. A convention, calling together the citizens of Madison, Morgan, Limestone, Franklin, and Lawrence counties, was called in the county courthouse in Huntsville, Alabama, on August 13, 1835, for the distinct purpose of considering the extension of the road to Huntsville on the east, and to Memphis on the west. Clements C. Clay was appointed presiding officer, and resolutions were adopted to the effect that \$200,000 be subscribed before the legislature was memorialized for a charter, and that a second meeting should be called to pass upon the charter to be granted by the legislative body.²⁴

The convention of the Alabama counties anticipated that the Memphis project would succeed, but when President Charles Potts made his annual report in 1839, it was to the effect that the LaGrange and Memphis Company was insolvent, that is, unless the solvent members, who had subscribed to its stock in order to enable the company to secure state aid, would redeem their pledges. A drive was made to secure at least

²²James D. Davis, *History of Memphis* (Memphis, 1873), 30.

²³Williams, *op. cit.*, 171.

²⁴*Southern Advocate* (Huntsville), August 6, 1836.

fifty per cent of the pledges, but the subscribers refused to advance any further payments.²⁵

By a series of legislative acts the LaGrange and Memphis Company acquired the rights and privileges to build as many branches into the counties of West Tennessee as it might see fit to build.²⁶ The privilege of building branch roads was a millstone about the company's neck, however, for the legislature went to the extent of moving up the time limit for the completion of the road, but to no avail.²⁷ The directors of the company were unable to stir themselves from their suicidal lethargy. A desperate effort was made at the LaGrange convention on July 4, 1849, when a special committee was appointed to discover, if it could, means by which the road might be completed. The committee failed in its efforts. The legislature remained ambitious for the road, but the venture failed. Plans had already been made for the Memphis convention of 1849, so the LaGrange Company gave up the ghost.²⁸ The affairs of the old LaGrange and Memphis Company were finally brought to a close under an act of the legislature authorizing the final settlement of the company's affairs.²⁹

The people of Memphis were thoroughly conscious of the importance of a direct means of communication between the Mississippi River and the Atlantic ports to the east. As to resources, there was no question, because the road, as already indirectly projected in the LaGrange and Memphis, and the Tuscumbia, Courtland, and Decatur projects, had proved the existence of sufficient resources. The proposed east and west road would tap the rich cotton producing counties of southern Tennessee and the Tennessee River counties of northern Alabama. Without these resources, however, the trade from the east to the west and *vice versa* would have served as a sufficient stimulus for the construction of the road. The railroad companies and the citizens of Georgia and South Carolina were favorably disposed toward the idea. The federal government also favored the project for it looked upon the road as a solution to the problem of patrolling the western frontier.

In 1845 the cotton growers and merchants of the neighboring towns to Memphis brought up once again the question of building a railroad from Memphis to Charleston.³⁰ The general agitation came to a head in the Memphis convention of 1845. That convention marked the triumph of the group headed by John C. Calhoun. That group had argued since 1830 that such a project was feasible. The convention was

²⁵*Annual Report Tuscumbia and Decatur [Railroad Company], 1839.*

²⁶*Laws of Tennessee*, December 30, 1841, chapter 28, p. 25.

²⁷*Ibid.*, January 10, 1844, chapter 73, p. 93.

²⁸*Memphis Tri-Weekly Appeal*, October 25, 1849.

²⁹*Laws of Tennessee*, February 9, 1854, chapter 328, p. 771.

³⁰James Phelan, *History of Tennessee* (Boston, 1888), 286.

presided over by Calhoun and he threw open the floor to free discussion of several projects which the friends of internal improvement had in mind. Calhoun avowed himself in favor of federal aid for the improvement of the channel of the Mississippi River.³¹

The Tennessee legislature, largely due to the influence of the Memphis convention of 1845, chartered the Memphis and Charleston Railroad Company February 2, 1846.³² This newly chartered project was broader in scope than ever could have been possible with the two local companies which it absorbed.³³

The convention which met in Memphis October 23, 1849, was composed of enthusiastic Memphis and Charleston Railroad supporters from West Tennessee, Mississippi, Georgia, and South Carolina. Ex-Governor "Lean Jimmy" Jones of Tennessee, a staunch railway supporter, acted as presiding officer. His first official act was to open subscription books. The results were most gratifying, as \$50,000 were subscribed in less than thirty minutes.³⁴ That convention was followed by still others along the proposed route. In Huntsville, Alabama, on November 4, 1849, the interested citizens expressed their desire for a road which would link them with the trade of South Carolina and Georgia. Memphis had already made known the fact that she would subscribe \$500,000. That liberal promise on the part of Memphis stirred other towns to do likewise.³⁵ The agitators favoring the road used the plea that the newly chartered Memphis and Charleston project would link the communities of West Tennessee, northern Mississippi, and northern Alabama with the markets of Charleston, and with Nashville.³⁶

It was fortunate that the Memphis and Charleston Company had in its ranks two able supporters, "Lean Jimmy" Jones and Sam Tate.³⁷ The former took the stump in favor of the road. Books were opened immediately, and within three days \$295,000 had been subscribed. A delegation was present at the Huntsville convention to represent the Tennessee River Valley Railroad Company. The delegation agreed to submit its franchise to the Memphis and Charleston Company and to make an additional subscription, provided the latter company would appoint a competent commission to inspect the properties of the Tennessee Valley Company and to make a joint estimation of its value. The convention adopted resolutions to the effect that the proposition of the

³¹*Ibid.*, 285.

³²*Laws of Tennessee, 1845-1846*, chapter 182, p. 266.

³³The road was not built until in the fifties, however; all the intervening time was spent by officials of the company in stirring up sentiment favorable to the project.

³⁴*Memphis Tri-Weekly Appeal*, October 25, 1849.

³⁵*Southern Advocate*, October 25, 1849.

³⁶*The American Railroad Journal*, November 10, 1849.

³⁷Sam Tate became president of the road on April 1, 1854. He succeeded A. F. Mills, who in turn had succeeded "Lean Jimmy" Jones (*Annual Report*, 1854).

Tennessee Valley Company be accepted, starting from Memphis as the western terminus, and following the old LaGrange and Memphis and the Tusculumbia and Decatur lines as a general guide.³⁸

The securing of the right-of-way between the points covered by the charters of the two railways which had merged with the Memphis and Charleston Company was a much more difficult problem than the commissioners ever had supposed it would be.³⁹ The topography of the country through the southern part of Tennessee was a very influential factor in the location of the route. It was necessary to drop down into the northern counties of Mississippi in order to avoid the steep grades which existed along the southern boundary of Tennessee. The Mississippi route was over a gentle rolling terrain. If the road were to be constructed over the Tennessee route, it was quite obvious that it would have to turn south almost at a right angle in order to connect with the Tennessee Valley road. Then, too, the gorge formed by the Tennessee River was not a very cheerful inducement to the Memphis and Charleston builders attempting such a thing. It was a certainty from the time of the Memphis convention of 1845 that the Holly Springs, Mississippi, group would hold out for the projection of the road through that city. With these facts in hand the commissioners of the railroad company approached the legislature of Mississippi for legislative sanction of their intentions to direct the route of the Memphis and Charleston Company through the northern counties of the state.⁴⁰

The commissioners were not as hospitably received in Mississippi as they had been in Alabama. The legislature passed an act, which became a law without the governor's signature, that if the road were to be built through Mississippi, it would have to pass through Holly Springs, else the legislature would refuse to sanction a charter. The act giving the company permission to pass through Mississippi read in part as follows: "That the said company shall have the right-of-way through the territory of this state, to construct their said road, beginning at some point on the northern boundary of the state, and to pass through the town of Holly Springs, and thence easterly through the state to the eastern boundary thereof, so as to cross the western boundary of the state of Alabama at any point which may be desired."⁴¹ The act was wholly unacceptable to the Memphis and Charleston Company, and it was necessary for the legislature of Tennessee to come to the rescue of the Memphis and Charleston Company. Tennessee's legislators passed an act granting a Mississippi company, the New Orleans, Jackson, and

³⁸*The Southern Advocate*, December 7, 1849.

³⁹The LaGrange and Memphis and the Tennessee Valley companies.

⁴⁰The legislature of Alabama sanctioned the building of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad through that state (*Laws of Alabama, 1849-1850*, No. 128, p. 183).

⁴¹*Laws of Mississippi* (Jackson), 1850, chapter 336, p. 509.

Great Northern, the privilege of building its line all the way across the state of Tennessee from the southern boundary, west of the Tennessee River, to the northern boundary of the state.⁴² At the same time legislative provisions were made for the Memphis and Charleston Company to extend its line across the southern section of Tennessee to a connection with the Nashville and Chattanooga road at some point in Tennessee.⁴³ Thus fortified, the commissioners re-appeared before the Mississippi legislature to implore that body to charter the Memphis and Charleston road through that state on more generous terms. The legislature finally yielded by passing a bill allowing the company to survey the right-of-way across the state at any place it chose, provided the governor would sanction the measure with his signature. The governor refused to sign the bill unless he were granted the privilege of selecting an engineer to make the survey. The engineer was to instruct the governor as to the most advisable routes, and the governor was then to select the route that best suited him. The bill also stipulated that the road should pass, as nearly as possible, through the center of Tishomingo, Tippah, and Marshall counties. It was to pass through the center of Marshall county to Holly Springs, thence to the northeastern corner of the state. As a reward for the location of the road over the right-of-way just described, the legislature provided that \$500,000 should be subscribed to the capital stock of the company, but the joker in the situation was that the act failed to state who should subscribe the stock, whether the state, or the town of Holly Springs and the surrounding counties. There was one section of the act which provided that the commissioners of the railroad company could go ahead and locate the road where they saw fit, provided the engineer employed by the state of Mississippi decided that the Holly Springs route was wholly impractical.⁴⁴

Had the route by way of Holly Springs been accepted, it would have necessitated the building of ten miles more trackage at an additional expenditure of \$195,000.⁴⁵ Already LaGrange and Tuscumbia had been selected definitely as points on the road,⁴⁶ and to distort the route

⁴²*Laws of Tennessee, 1851-1852, chapter 20, p. 314.*

⁴³On the failure of the Memphis and Charleston Company to secure favorable legislation at the hands of the legislatures of Mississippi and Tennessee, the Alabama legislature made provisions for the construction of a railroad of its own, this road to be known as the Mississippi and Atlantic Railroad Company (*Laws of Alabama, February 12, 1850, No. 129, p. 185*).

⁴⁴*Laws of Mississippi, March 11, 1852, chapter 35, p. 101.*

⁴⁵The railroad company asked for only seventy miles of right-of-way through Mississippi, but at the first signs of the legislature giving way to the company, the citizens of the northern part of the state said the road either should be built through Holly Springs or not pollute the soil of Mississippi. The citizens said further that if the legislature did permit the railroad company to choose its route, they would resist the act legally and forcefully (*Southern Advocate, March 10, 1852*).

⁴⁶A promise had been made at the time of the purchases of the LaGrange and Memphis, and the Tennessee Valley companies.

so as to go by Holly Springs would have been preposterous. After a heated argument of four years, the Mississippi legislature finally yielded, and the Memphis and Charleston Company was allowed the privilege of locating its Mississippi right-of-way where it pleased.⁴⁸

While the Mississippi controversy was being settled, the citizens of Madison county, Alabama, were busy making preparations to build the road through their community. Already \$340,000, two-thirds of which had come from the town of Huntsville, had been subscribed. Two survey parties were placed in the field west of Huntsville to make surveys of two separate routes to the western line of Alabama. A railroad of such far-reaching influence was of vital concern to Madison county, because that county had a large amount of capital, and 13,000 slaves seeking employment.⁴⁹ The railroad company was faring decently elsewhere in its territory. The engineers estimated that the total cost of the road from Memphis to Stevenson, Alabama, would range between \$2,500,000 and \$3,000,000.⁵⁰ On April 29, 1850, the company was formed with "Lean Jimmy" Jones, R. C. Pickley, Daniel Looney of Tennessee; Judge Clayton of Mississippi; and Robert Ferne, George Berine, R. M. Patton, and J. C. Goodloe of Alabama, as directors. "Lean Jimmy" Jones was unanimously elected president of the board of directors, and the young company set forth upon its own feet.⁵¹

Two survey parties had been in the field, one since July 12, and the other since August 26, 1850, for the purpose of making a thorough survey of the whole route. A survey of 539 miles of line, using Huntsville as a starting point, was made.⁵² The route of the survey by way of Jackson, Tennessee, showed a saving in distance of several miles, but it had a gradient of 45.24 feet per mile with only slight curvatures. The southern route through Mississippi was longer, but had a much

⁴⁸*Chief Engineer's Report (Memphis), April 1, 1853. Copy in Bureau of Railway Economics, Washington, D. C.*

⁴⁹The company in an earlier act had been forced to grant aid to the Mississippi Central Company, and the state of Tennessee had been asked to grant a charter to the New Orleans, Jackson, and Great Northern Company. The final act, however, granted the Memphis and Charleston Company the following privilege: "That the said company shall have *unrestricted right-of-way* to construct their road through the territory of this state, entering the state at any point that they may desire on the eastern boundary thereof, so as to form a connection between Memphis in the state of Tennessee and Charleston, South Carolina, or other Atlantic ports" (*Laws of Mississippi, March 1, 1854, chapter 9, p. 83*). With the exception of certain temporary complications arising out of the relations with the Mississippi Central Company, the Memphis and Charleston Company accepted the charter (*Hester v. Memphis and Charleston Railroad Company, 3 George, Mississippi Reports, 378*).

⁵⁰*Memphis Appeal, September 12, 1850.*

⁵¹*Mobile Advertiser, January 30, 1850.*

⁵²"Annual Report," in *The American Railroad Journal, April 27, 1850, also June 1, 1850.*

⁵³*Ibid., June 1, 1851.*

more even gradient.⁵³ Immediately following publication of the engineer's report, the mayor of Memphis authorized the issuance of \$200,000 in city bonds, to be paid to the company not later than April 1, 1851.⁵⁴ At the same time that the city of Memphis was offering its support, the citizens of Marshall county, Mississippi, voted favorably upon the proposition to extend the railroad company a subscription of \$100,000. The Marshall county stock was subscribed, however, on the condition that the road would pass through the town of Holly Springs.⁵⁵

"Lean Jimmy" Jones took it upon himself to see the road through its financial troubles. He visited New Orleans on a speaking tour in favor of the road. As a result of his first speech in that southern city, he secured a subscription of \$700,000, and upon making a second speech, he secured an additional \$100,000.⁵⁶ Jones pointed out to his New Orleans hearers that more than 250,000 bales of cotton would be lost to the New Orleans trade unless Memphis and New Orleans beat the Mobile and Ohio Railroad Company to the territory east of Memphis with a railroad. He also said that because of the cheaper freight rates which the cotton planters would receive, the Memphis and Charleston Railroad Company would be able to maintain the cotton trade for New Orleans.⁵⁷ Unwilling to neglect any opportunities to secure subscriptions for the road, Jones visited Charleston, where he made a strong plea to the citizens of that city. There, as in New Orleans, he met with a fair amount of success. The citizens of Charleston voted to extend the city's credit, to the extent of \$250,000, to the construction of the road.⁵⁸

In Huntsville the citizens of Madison county and of the town "rebuked Robert Rhett and secession in one moment, and sustained a substantial subscription for the Memphis and Charleston Railroad in the next," voting 1,195 "for" and 726 "against" aiding the road.⁵⁹

The funds to pay for the construction of the road were forthcoming from two sources; first, from the private and public subscriptions, and from the cities of Memphis, New Orleans, and Charleston; and, second,

⁵³*Engineer's Report*, January 15, 1851. Copy in Bureau of Railway Economics, Washington, D. C.

⁵⁴These bonds were issued on condition that the company give a lien on the road, and comply with the conditions of locating the depot in Memphis (*Southern Advocate*, February 19, 1851).

⁵⁵*The American Railroad Journal*, February 22, 1851.

⁵⁶*Southern Advocate*, March 12, 1851.

⁵⁷*The American Railroad Journal*, March 15, 1851.

⁵⁸The city of Charleston refused to make this subscription until the Tennessee legislature would allow it to elect one director (*Southern Advocate*, January 29, 1852). This adjustment was made, and the city of Charleston was allowed to select one director (*The American Railroad Journal*, February 7, 1852).

⁵⁹*Memphis Enquirer*, October 7, 1851.

from the sale of the state bonds of Tennessee.⁶⁰ Further aid was extended by the commissioners' courts of Madison and Marshall counties in Alabama at called sessions in June. The Madison county court subscribed \$50,000, in addition to the \$100,000 which the county had already subscribed. The Marshall county court unanimously subscribed \$100,000 on the part of that county.⁶¹

Work was begun simultaneously on each end of the road. The first spike was driven on the west end of the road in Memphis on April 1, 1852; by April 1, 1853, the first forty miles of the road were completed and in operation. The fact that the company was in a position to put the west end of the road into operation almost immediately was a big factor in impressing the people with the importance of the project.⁶² On the east end of the road the citizens of Huntsville were awakened on May 21, 1852, by the boisterous shouts of a long procession of Irishmen who were in the employ of "Mister" Grey and Company and who were on their way to break ground for the railroad.⁶³

At the meeting of the board of directors in Memphis on February 19, 1853, much important business concerning the future of the road was transacted. A contract was issued to George Peabody and Company of London for 800 tons of iron at the rate of forty-five dollars per ton. The iron was purchased to lay the Somerville and Moscow branch, which had been accepted as a part of the Memphis and Charleston system.⁶⁴ The Somerville route was important to Memphis because it would connect that city with a rich cotton and slave belt. The counties tributary to the Somerville and Moscow branch owned 20,300 slaves, and were producing cotton in proportion.⁶⁵

Despite the early construction of the east and west division, the Memphis and Charleston Company experienced extreme difficulties

⁶⁰This state aid was provided for in an act entitled: "An Act to Establish a System of Internal Improvements in This State." It provided that when certain railroad companies, of which the Memphis and Charleston was one, had prepared thirty miles of roadbed for the rails the governor of the state was to be instructed to deliver the state's six per cent bonds to the extent of \$8,000 per mile, for each mile of road in readiness for iron. This money was to be used only in the purchase of rails, chairs, spikes, and other road equipment. The state was to be given a mortgage on the right-of-way, masonry, bridges, subscribed stock, and materials purchased and delivered (*Laws of Tennessee, 1851-1852*, chapter 151, p. 204).

⁶¹*The Daily Appeal*, May 21, 1852.

⁶²*Ibid.*, May 21, 1852.

⁶³*The Southern Advocate*, May 26, 1852.

⁶⁴*Mobile Daily Advertiser*, March 18, 1853.

⁶⁵*Memphis Daily Appeal*, November 15, 1853.

when an attempt was made to build westward from Tusculumbia.⁶⁶ In 1854 iron and labor prices went up; labor which had cost \$100 per year went up to \$175, and iron prices advanced to more than fifty dollars per ton.⁶⁷

In 1854 the internal improvements laws of Tennessee were amended so as to allow the governor to lend \$10,000 per mile to the railroad companies for each mile of roadbed prepared for the iron. Aside from the increase in the amount allowed by the state for ironing the road, generous provisions were made for use in building bridges over the larger streams. The original requirements that "twenty miles" of the road be prepared for the rails was amended to read "ten miles" instead.⁶⁸ The Memphis and Charleston Company took advantage of this offer of state aid, thinking at the time that only the main line was entitled to assistance. In 1856, however, an act was passed by the state legislature entitling the Somerville and Moscow branch to state aid, which assisted materially in its completion.⁶⁹

The completion of the road was only a matter of time after 1854. Plans were made to avoid cutting through Walden Ridge by connecting with the Nashville and Chattanooga Railroad at Stevenson, Alabama. The Nashville and Chattanooga tracks were used jointly from this place on into the city. The Tennessee legislature sanctioned that decision.⁷⁰ It is interesting to note that at the time the two companies agreed to cooperate there was no rivalry between the two roads. "Lean Jimmy" Jones, perhaps, was the biggest factor in maintaining peaceful relations between the companies. Too, the freight of the two roads was gathered from sources far removed.⁷¹

The legislature of Alabama in the past had shown a tendency to aid projects of internal improvements by state aid. As the Memphis and Charleston Company was in need of some ready funds, a delegation composed of C. C. Clay, L. P. Walker, G. B. Berine, and Sam Tate was sent to Montgomery to request the legislature to grant the company state aid. The request was made in an impressive manner. The committee

⁶⁶"Scizzors," in his letter of December 10, 1854, said "the western end of the Memphis and Charleston Railroad, fifty miles to LaGrange in the southeast corner of Fayette County has been doing a smashing business this season. The results are wonderful and surprise the most sanguine friends of the enterprise. Where all the freight comes from, and where the crowds of passengers come from and whither bound puzzles every one. It is shrewdly suspected that the railroad makes them and keeps them going hither and thither as a means of illustrating the creative genius of the railroad" (*Memphis Daily Appeal*, January 1, 1854).

⁶⁷*Annual Report*, April 1, 1854. Copy in Bureau of Railway Economics, Washington, D. C.

⁶⁸*Laws of Tennessee*, February 8, 1854, chapter 131, p. 205.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, February 18, 1856.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, February 23, 1854, chapter 113, p. 699; *Laws of Alabama*, February 7, 1856, No. 302, p. 298.

⁷¹*Huntsville Advocate*, November 21, 1855.

visited Governor John Winston, whom it assured that the Memphis and Charleston Company was in a position to offer four times as much security as it was asking aid. Governor Winston dismissed the committee after having given it the impression that he was favorably disposed toward the loan. A bill was put through both houses of the legislature granting state aid to the railroad company to the extent of \$300,000,⁷² but to the astonishment of the friends of the road the governor vetoed the bill.⁷³ The bill was returned to the legislature and was passed over the governor's veto by a majority of one vote. The governor, not to be outdone, however, absolutely refused to allow the treasurer to pay over the \$300,000 prescribed by the legislative act.⁷⁴ In the meantime, the railroad company had sold \$250,000 worth of its bonds in the city of Charleston⁷⁵ and had managed to keep construction work going without the Alabama loan.⁷⁶

Construction work was pushed through at a very rapid rate. Had it not been for the misfortune of having the bridge over the Tennessee River burn, through operation would have been possible at a much earlier date. Only about sixty miles of the whole road were in an unfinished condition, and iron for this unfinished portion was being hauled up from Charleston.⁷⁷ Twenty-nine more miles between Tusculumbia and Stevenson were placed in operation on March 10, 1856, making in all eighty-eight miles in operation on the eastern end of the road. During the year 1856, the eastern end of the road earned over \$250,000.⁷⁸ On the western end the completion of the road was taking place rapidly. The citizens of Corinth, Mississippi, near the place where the road entered Alabama from Mississippi, extended an invitation to the citizens of Memphis to attend a barbecue which the city was giving in honor of the completion of the road to that point.⁷⁹

At last the two ends of the road were brought together, and on March 28, 1857, the final rail was swung into place and all the spikes except the last one were driven down. It was "Lean Jimmy" Jones who had driven the first spike, and it was "Lean Jimmy" who drove the last one. Jones was forced to content himself with a very short address. As Ten-

⁷²The Memphis and Charleston Company was to be loaned \$300,000 on the company's furnishing a sufficient amount of security to be made payable in the city of New York, or elsewhere, as the governor might stipulate. The railroad company was to hypothecate not less than \$500,000 of its bonds (*Laws of Alabama*, 1855, No. 20, p. 13).

⁷³*Memphis Morning Bulletin*, January 16, 1856.

⁷⁴*Ibid.*, January 20, 1856.

⁷⁵The governor repudiated the proposed loan on the ground that the people of the state of Alabama were opposed to it (*Mobile Daily Advertiser*, January 20, 1856).

⁷⁶*Memphis Morning Bulletin*, March 13, 1856.

⁷⁷*Charleston Courier*, January 28, 1856.

⁷⁸*Memphis Morning Bulletin*, March 12, 1856.

⁷⁹*Ibid.*, November 25, 1856.

nessee had enjoyed the privilege of driving the final spike, Alabama was granted the privilege of making the first major address on the occasion.⁸⁰

Immediately following the completion of the road, plans were made for a gigantic celebration of the achievement. On April 28, 1857, all roads leading to Memphis were thronged with revelers who were on their way to see the Atlantic formally wedded to the Mississippi. A special through train was run from Charleston to Memphis, carrying on board the mayor, the common council, and the Phoenix Fire Company of Charleston, and the fire company of Augusta, Georgia, besides numerous excursionists.⁸¹ Newspaper men and politicians from almost every section of the South were present.⁸² There were no less than 10,000 visitors. O. H. Douglas, mayor of Memphis, was made president of the celebration, and all visiting notables, such as governors, mayors, and railroad presidents, were made honorary vice presidents. As the day wore on speeches became more numerous, in fact, too numerous. The Memphis schools and academies put on special exhibits in the morning.

At high noon the crowd gathered at the river front to witness the marriage ceremony between the "Old Ocean" and the "King of Floods." The editor of the *Morning Bulletin*, in an excited mood of editorial eloquence, said of the assemblage on the river bluff: "It was a beautiful spectacle when the throng repaired to the river, to see our rude bluffs garlanded with such an array of female loveliness." But to the dismay of the "female loveliness"⁸³ assembled at the bluffs no signs of the anticipated ceremony appeared. The crowd prepared to leave just as the belated firemen put in their appearance. They had been detained in Court Square, where they had been regaled with speeches by the mayor of Charleston and by some of the lesser lights among the visitors who had not been given an opportunity to speak earlier in the day. The firemen pushed their cart, "Old Betsy," down to the water's edge and there emptied the barrel of ocean water into the tank of their cart. The mayors of Charleston and Memphis marched down on the right hand side of the hose, while the firemen and their paid orator marched down on the left hand side. Reaching the end of the hose, the procession came to a halt, and Mayor Niles of Charleston extended his ring finger and received from Mayor Douglas of Memphis the ring of betrothal, Mayor Douglas exclaiming: "What these great people hath joined together let nothing put asunder." Mr. Boyce, the firemen's paid orator, then delivered the address of the occasion. Following this speech, the firemen pumped the salt water of the Atlantic into the air, allowing it to fall as

⁸⁰*Ibid.*, March 29, 1857.

⁸¹*Ibid.*, April 28, 1857.

⁸²*Ibid.*, May 2, 1857.

⁸³*Ibid.*, May 3, 1857.

spray into the river.⁸⁴ Thus the ceremony passed off without a hitch, and left everybody happy, except one irate clergyman who took the Charleston visitors to task for desecrating the Sabbath by riding on the trains upon returning to their homes.⁸⁵

⁸⁴John M. Keating, *History of Memphis* (Syracuse, 1899), 338.

⁸⁵*Memphis Morning Bulletin*, May 19, 1857.