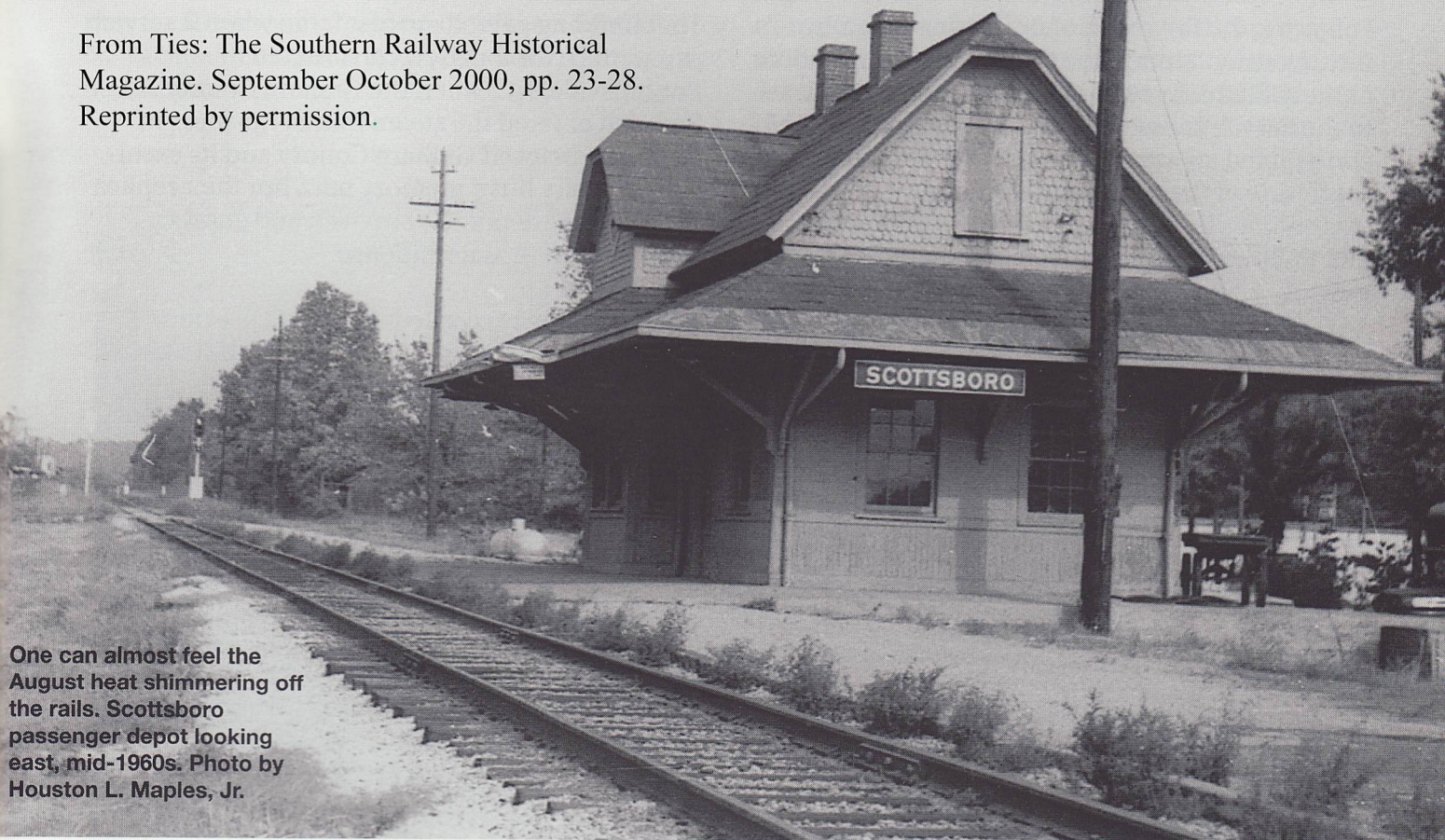


ONE TOWN, ONE RAILROAD, TWO DEPOTS

By Alan Maples.

All photos by Alan Maples except as noted.

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One can almost feel the August heat shimmering off the rails. Scottsboro passenger depot looking east, mid-1960s. Photo by Houston L. Maples, Jr.

My grandfather, Houston L. Maples, hailed from Scottsboro, Alabama, nestled in the beautiful Tennessee Valley between Chattanooga and Huntsville. His father, Dr. W.C. Maples, was a respected physician who moved his family to a large house across from the train station so he could conveniently travel to neighboring communities tending to the ill, and, according to family legend, simply because he liked trains. While the Scottsboro of today has witnessed decades of economic and social change since my grandfather's time, it remains one of those small, friendly, courthouse-and-town-square communities typical of the south.

Scottsboro's development can be traced to the 1858 arrival of the Memphis & Charleston Railroad. The neighboring community of Bellefonte wanted nothing to do with the noisy, smoky trains

and their threat to Bellefonte's Tennessee River trade. So the M&C bypassed that town and established a stop on land ceded by Robert T. Scott. "Scotts Station" soon became Scottsboro and Bellefonte would regret its intransigence when the latter's status as the county seat transferred to the new settlement along the railroad.

The Memphis & Charleston soon provided Scottsboro with an appropriate depot. A sturdy brick building was constructed in 1861 (some sources say 1860) for both freight and passenger use. Control of the Scottsboro station alternated between Confederate and Union troops more than once during the Civil War, but the structure survived, unlike a number of M&C depots elsewhere which were destroyed during the conflict. After the war years the building faced a different threat when a great fire swept through the north side

Scottsboro in 1881. According to Wendell Page of the Jackson County Heritage Museum, it is believed the depot was saved by heroic volunteers who climbed the roof and extinguished burning embers with wet blankets.

Following the fire much of the business community relocated around the town square to the south of the railroad. In 1891, the M&C (then under lease to the East Tennessee, Virginia & Georgia Railroad) constructed an attractive frame depot on the south side of the tracks and a block east of the old station. This became the passenger stop, while the first building was relegated to freight handling only.

For the younger generation it is hard to appreciate that once the railroad catered to all comers, but in an earlier age nearly every community along the rails had a depot and an agent. An old Southern Railway employee timetable provided by Carl Ardrey shows that between Stevenson and Huntsville, a distance of 59 miles, the Southern maintained passenger ticket offices in no less than ten station buildings (plus the NC&STL depot in Stevenson). Towns with depots, from east to west, included Fackler, Hollywood, Scottsboro, Larkinsville, Lim Rock, Woodville, Paint Rock, Gurley, Brownsboro, Chase (joint with NC&STL), and Huntsville.

Bill Borden, now retired after over 40 years of service with the Southern and NS, first came to Scottsboro on "temporary" assignment as Southern's agent in 1964 - and ended up holding the post for 29 years. According to Borden, prior to his arrival three people had staffed the freight depot, but a cutback reduced that to just one job and nobody would bid on it. Borden would start the day by opening the "ticket office" (as he called the passenger depot) about a half hour before train 35 arrived from Chattanooga. After taking care of any passenger business, he would close up and head down the street to the freight depot. When local passenger trains 35 and 36 were discontinued January 30, 1967, Borden simplified this routine by closing the "ticket office" for good and converting the back of the freight depot into a waiting room. Thus the old building, having been constructed as a combination station, came full circle. Trains 45 and 46, the Tennessean, came off March 30, 1968 and despite its freight-only status since then, a small "Waiting Office" sign remains

to this day on the depot's side door entrance. The frame passenger depot was considered for preservation by the Smithsonian Institute and was later saved by a local attorney, relocated to private property and restored for use as a guest house.

That building gained modest fame when it served as a pattern for a station constructed in Robbinsville, NC, when the Graham County Railroad entered the steam tourist business in 1966. The beloved Graham County and its excursion train are but a memory now, but their replica "Scottsboro" depot has survived and enjoys a similar afterlife as a residence.

Bill Borden once recalled that the Scottsboro agent's job was hard work in the early days and that none of the men with seniority wanted the post. The local textile industry contributed considerable LCL business and after tending to the morning passenger train the agent was responsible for unloading boxcars on the house track, looking up rates, preparing bills, and then repeating the whole process in the afternoon for out-bound shipments. Borden also recalled part of the daily routine was depositing the passenger ticket receipts in the bank. After about a week on the job he was approached by the town sheriff who wanted to know just who he was and what business he had at the bank every day! Borden assured the lawman that he was on proper business for the Southern Railway and that he was not engaged in nefarious activity.

Borden also handled freight billing for the large Reynolds aluminum plant which had been built on the Tennessee River in the early 1960's and to which the Southern constructed a lengthy spur track. Other duties included billing and interchange work with the L&N at Stevenson, which provided reciprocal switching service for the Southern to the Mead paperboard mill located there. At one time Scottsboro was a loading point for potatoes; the bagging shed was demolished years ago and in its place is a concrete loading dock for occasional team track freight. Long gone too are the stock pens and loading chute for cattle that once contributed revenue to the Southern.

Scottsboro closed as a freight agency on December 1, 1993 after which Borden transferred Huntsville, and then later to Decatur. Today agency work for Scottsboro is handled by Norfolk Southern's

customer service center in Atlanta. CSX now handles any Mead cars for NS's account via Chattanooga, so the local no longer runs to Stevenson. The old freight depot continued to be employed as a sign on - sign off point by crews for local train 80, which still ties up overnight at Scottsboro, until new facilities were provided a few years ago. After NS vacated the station it was deeded to the city of Scottsboro.

With its peeling paint, deteriorating roof and collapsing brickwork, time almost ran out for the Scottsboro freight depot. Fortunately, modest structural repairs and a new metal roof have stabilized the building, and the city is now applying for a \$50,000 federal grant to further restoration efforts. Persons interested in assisting may make donations to the Jackson County Historical Society, P.O. Box 1494, Scottsboro, AL, 35768. My thanks to Bill Borden, Carl Ardrey, and the Jackson County Historical Society.



The passenger depot with its ever-present REA truck, mid-1960s. A signal maintainer's shed now occupies this approximate site. Photo by Houston L. Maples, Jr.



The contemporary replacement provides train crews with a sign-on point but lacks the photogenic qualities of the 1861 depot. Scottsboro, Alabama, Dec., 1997.



Photo Above: The freight depot has seen better days as evidenced by this December 14, 1997 view.

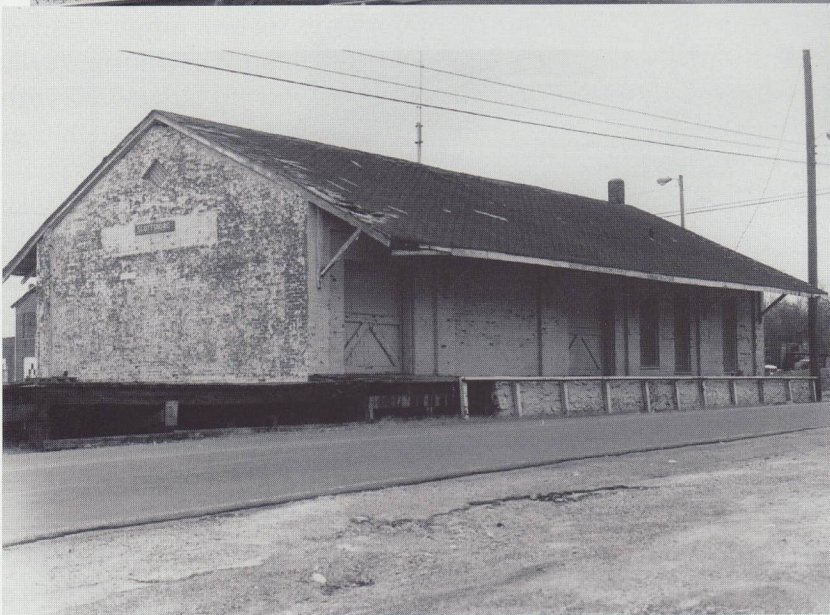


Photo at Left: Back side of the depot showing dock and loading doors for LCL freight

Photo at Right: An eastbound freight passes the Scottsboro, Alabama freight depot on Dec. 14, 1997. The Jackson County Historical Society has since removed the train order signal mast and has provided the building with a new roof.



My father's cousin, William L. Heath, was raised in Scottsboro, Alabama. Following distinguished service in the Army Air Corps in World War II, he returned stateside and finished a degree in English Literature at the University of Virginia. Although Bill spent a number of years in the family textile business, his true passion was writing and he authored several novels themed around life in a small southern town. His 1955 book "Violent Saturday" was made into a feature motion picture by 20th Century Fox. "The Good Old Boys", published in 1971, had an illustration of the Scottsboro passenger depot on the dust jacket. Now retired, Bill at my request once again sat down at the typewriter to share his memories of life and times around the Scottsboro passenger depot.

- Alan W. Maples

DEPOT MEMORIES

By Bill Heath

When I was a boy growing up in Scottsboro in the early 'thirties, the railway station, with its environs, was the garden spot of the town. Well-kept and clean, (despite six passenger trains a day and numerous freights all belching smoke from coal-burning engines), it was such an attractive locale it gave rise to a social custom known as "meeting the train." Every Sunday afternoon carloads of people would show up to await the arrival of the "36" for Memphis - not because they knew someone getting on or off, but simply because it was a pleasant place and a suitable occasion for convivial folks to share their leisure.

The depot, as it was commonly referred to, was typical of small-town station houses up and down the line. It had deep eaves and steep gables, and dual waiting rooms, one designated WHITE, the other COLORED. As I recall, the building was painted a mustardy shade of yellow with dark green trim, and inside there were heavy oak benches like church pews, varnished and polished to a high gloss. The ticket office, with its characteristic bay window, was in the middle. The station master, wearing sleeve garters and a green celluloid eyeshade, reposed in a swivel chair, reading pulp magazines (when he wasn't busy), while the telegraph sounder clacked away in its wooden box.

Outside, along the platform there were shade trees, and across the tracks, directly opposite the depot, there was a lily pond stocked with goldfish and skewbald carp. This area, a landscape of rocks and ferns and carefully tended flower beds, was a pretty as any garden in town. In a photo album commemorating the events of my family's history there's a picture of me sitting among the rocks and flowers of that beguiling place - - a barefoot boy of nine or ten, gazing expectantly up the track. Both the old station house and the boy are gone now, and the last passenger train has long since departed. But I remember them well, and with much affection.

W.L. Heath - 1999

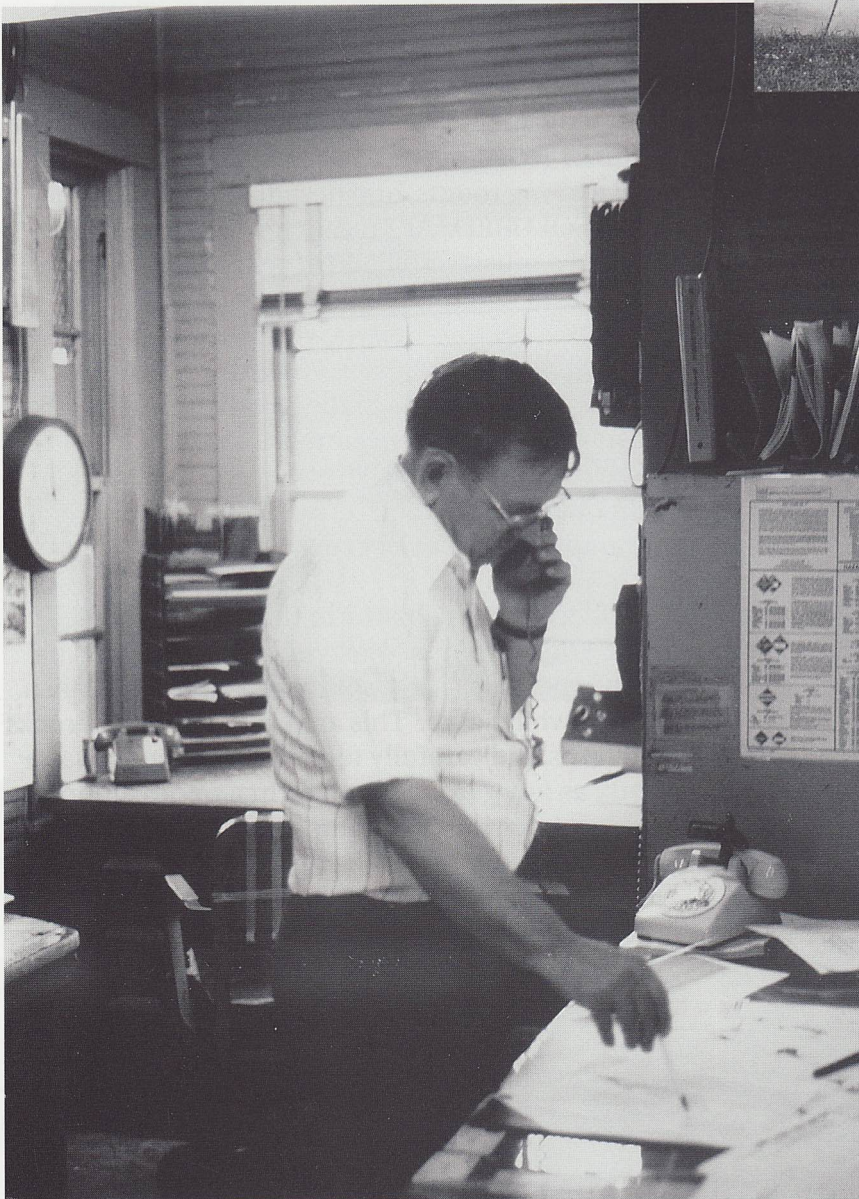
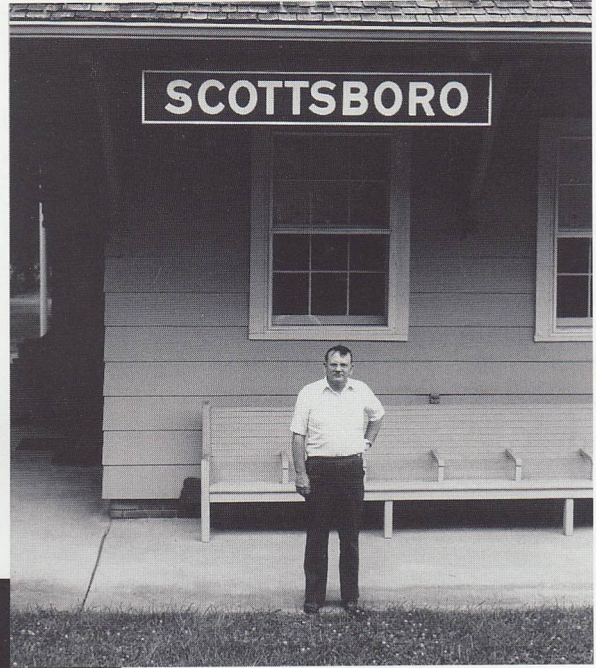


Southern Railway People at Work

Bill Borden, now retired after over 40 years of service with the Southern and NS, first came to Scottsboro on "temporary" assignment as Southern's agent in 1964. Scottsboro closed as a freight agency on Dec. 1, 1993 after which Borden transferred to Hunstville, and then later to Decatur.

According to Carl Ardrey, "He (Bill Borden) was the last of the old-time agents. He handled everything. He was so efficient, he was hard to keep up with."

When eastbound trains get to Scottsboro they call the dispatcher so he can notify the CSX dispatcher to expect them. The night dispatcher tells the crews "Let me know when you go through BRB (Bill R. Borden)"



321 MEMPHIS AND CHARLESTON RAILWAY.

M. J. WICKS, President. G. ROBERTSON, Secretary & Treas.
W. J. ROSS, Gen. Superintendent A. A. BARNES, Gen. Ticket Agent.
& Purch. Agent, Memphis, Ten. J. C. LOPEZ, Gen. Freight Agent.
C. S. WILLIAMS, Asst. Superintendent F. U. TALLY, Gen. Agent,
Eastern Div., Huntsville, Ala. Memphis, Ten.
C. L. ANDERSON, Assistant Supt. M. BURKE, Master Mechanic,
Western Division. A. W. DREW, Master Car Builder.

Leave.			Arrive.		
Mail Exs.	Mis		Frs.	Mail Exs.	
F. M. A. M.			A. M. P. M.		
*8 00	13 45	o	4 30	7 10	
10 30	6 55	38	2 00	4 30	
10 51	7 14	44	1 38	4 01	
11 11	7 33	50	1 23	3 43	
11 28	7 49	55	1 09	3 28	
11 49	8 09	61	12 51	3 09	
12 25	8 41	72	12 25	2 40	
12 40	8 55	66	12 14	2 27	
1 18	9 29	85	11 42	1 53	
1 40	9 49	92	11 25	1 34	
2 01	10 09	97	11 12	1 20	
2 31	10 37	107	10 46	12 35	
2 58	11 02	115	10 25	12 11	
3 28	11 47	121	10 08	11 52	
3 51	12 09	127	9 46	11 29	
4 13	12 29	133	9 27	11 10	
4 39	12 54	141	9 03	10 43	
4 58	1 11	146	8 48	10 27	
5 22	1 34	153	8 29	10 04	
5 55	2 06	163	8 02	9 34	
6 31	2 43	175	7 30	9 01	
6 47	2 57	180	7 18	8 47	
6 55	3 04	182	7 13	8 40	
7 31	3 40	194	6 43	8 06	
8 05	4 05	201	6 24	7 45	
8 34	4 35	208	6 05	7 23	
9 30	5 30	216	5 44	7 00	
10 02	5 53	225	5 00	12	
10 36	6 26	235	4 36	5 44	
10 54	6 42	240	4 21	5 30	
11 10	6 54	242	4 15	5 23	
11 42	7 23	251	3 46	4 51	
12 25	7 45	257	3 30	4 35	
12 30	7 55	260	2 55	4 03	
1 10	8 24	270	2 21	3 57	
1 47	8 54	278	1 55	2 17	
2 08	9 16	285	1 27	1 35	
2 22	9 29	291	1 11	1 11	
2 37	9 44	294	12 56	12 48	
3 00	10 00	299	12 37	12 22	
3 11	10 12	303	12 20	11 56	
3 30	10 30	309	12 01	11 30	
F. M. P. M.	(ARRIVE)		(LEAVE)	*P. M. P. M.	

* Daily. † Daily, Sundays excepted.
Through Fare, \$15 50. Way Fares, about 5 cents per mile.

1. **Somerville Accommodation.**—A train leaves Memphis for Somerville and intermediate stations daily, except Sundays, 4 40 p.m., arriving at Somerville 8 30 p.m. Returning, leaves Somerville for Memphis, etc., 6 40 a.m., arriving at Memphis 9 45 a.m.

2. **Grand Junction Accommodation.**—Train leaves Memphis for Beal, St. Switch, Buntn's, White's, Germantown, Neville, Collierville, Lafayette, Somerville, La Grange and Grand Junction, 6 30 p.m., arriving at Grand Junction 10 45 p.m. Returning, leaves Grand Junction 4 50 a.m., arriving at Memphis 8 15 a.m.

3. **Florence Branch.**—Trains leave Tusculmbia at 9 50 a.m. and 2 30 p.m., arriving at South Florence 10 10 a.m. and 2 50 p.m. Leave South Florence at 9 00 a.m. and 1 40 p.m., arriving at Tusculmbia at 9 20 a.m. and 2 00 p.m.