

# Carolina Conductor



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Monthly Newsletter of the Carolina Railroad Heritage Association, Inc.

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## Preserving the Past Active in the Present Planning for the Future

**Web Site:** [hubcityrrmuseum.org](http://hubcityrrmuseum.org)

**Facebook:** Carolina Railroad Heritage Association & Hub City RR Museum

### Hub City Railroad Museum and SOU Rwy Caboose #X3115:

Spartanburg Amtrak Station

298 Magnolia Street

Spartanburg, SC 29301-2330

Wednesday 10-2 & Saturday 10-2

### Meeting Site:

Fountain Inn Presbyterian Church

307 North Main Street

Fountain Inn, SC 29644

Third Friday of the Month at 7:00 p.m.

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Articles can be submitted anytime.

# Samuel Spencer



## Railroad Executive Father of Southern Rwy System

Born: March 2, 1847, Died: November 29, 1906 (aged 59), Virginia, U.S., Burial Place: Oak Hill Cemetery, Washington, D.C., U.S., Occupation: President of Southern Railway

Samuel Spencer was an American civil engineer, businessman, and railroad executive. With an education interrupted by service in the Confederate cavalry late in the American Civil War, he completed his education at the University of Georgia and the University of Virginia.

Spencer spent his career with railroads, rising through the ranks during the busy growth years of American railroading in the late 19th century. He eventually became president of six railroads, and was a director of at least ten railroads and several banks and other companies.

Although his career was cut short when he was killed in a train wreck in Virginia in 1906. Spencer, North Carolina, site of the North Carolina Transportation Museum, was named in his honor.

## Railroads

In 1869, he began working with railroads as a surveyor, and rose through the ranks, learning many aspects of railroad management. He became superintendent of the Long Island Rail Road in 1878 and was president of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad (B&O) during 1887-1888.

In 1889, Spencer left the presidency of the B&O to become a railroad expert working for financier J.P. Morgan of Drexel, Morgan and Company. According to the *New York Times*, "It was said of him that there was no man in the country so thoroughly well posted on every detail of a railroad from the cost of a car brake to the estimate for a new terminal."

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# Museum Happenings



↑ Site prep for our donated storage container.

← Aerial view of the P&N and C&WC interchange tracks at the Hub City RR Museum site.



↑ Birthday party on the caboose baggage wagon.



↑ Hub City RR Museum sales tables at Easley train show.

## Wanted—Articles for the Carolina Conductor

Submit an article of 200 words or more with some photos and captions and see them in print. Every one of us has some unique railroad experience that would make interesting reading for our membership. Your editor always needs more contributions of railway history and news.



When the bankrupt Richmond and Danville Railroad (R&D) was acquired by Drexel, Morgan and Company in 1894, the new Southern Railway was formed by the financiers from a consolidation of the R&D and the East Tennessee, Virginia and Georgia Railroad.

Tapped to lead the new railroad for Morgan, Spencer became its first president. Under his leadership, the mileage of the Southern Railway doubled, the number of passengers served annually increased to nearly 12 million, and annual earnings increased from \$17 million to \$54 million. After his death, the Southern grew to become one of the strongest and most profitable in the United States, merging with the also strong and profitable Norfolk and Western Railway in the 1980s to form Norfolk Southern, a Fortune 500 company.

### Death in Railroad Collision

Samuel Spencer's career was cut short when he was killed at the age of 59 in a train collision in Virginia before dawn on Thanksgiving morning, November 29, 1906. The Spencer party were in his private car, at the rear of the train, enroute to his hunting lodge near Friendship, NC. When the coupling failed on the lead car, the train was left stalled on the track. A following train ran into the stranded cars in the pre-dawn darkness, crushing the Spencer car, killing Spencer & all but one of its occupants. Spencer was buried at Oak Hill Cemetery.

### Legacy

Spencer is credited with leading the Southern Railway and the South during a period of unprecedented growth. After his untimely death, 30,000 Southern Railway employees contributed to pay for a statue of him by sculptor Daniel Chester French, which was dedicated in 1910 and stood for many years at Atlanta's Terminal Station. Following the station's demolition in 1970, the statue was moved multiple times, first to Peachtree station, then in 1996 to Hardy Ivy Park, and finally to its current resting place in front of the Norfolk Southern building at the intersection of Peachtree Street and 15th Street in Midtown Atlanta.

Spencer was also a member of the Jekyll Island Club, which operated as an exclusive millionaire's retreat from 1888 to 1942. Spencer's former apartment

in the Clubhouse Annex is said to be haunted by his ghost.

The Southern Railway's Spencer Shops and the town of Spencer, North Carolina were named in his honor. In 1977, the closed Spencer Shops formed the basis of the new North Carolina Transportation Museum.



**Statue of Samuel Spencer**



# Spencer Shops

The Spencer Shops in Spencer, North Carolina, is one of the few remaining intact 20th-century railroad locomotive facilities in the United States.



Spencer Shops interior as it looked in 1907.

A majority of the buildings, used originally in steam locomotive repair and maintenance, are still intact, including the backshop (erecting shop), roundhouse, flue shop, paint shop, and parts storage buildings. The 37-stall roundhouse is one of the largest remaining roundhouses in North America still in continuous operation. The site contains other significant buildings including the car repair shed, yard office, oil house, sand house, and wheel balancing shed.

There are four known preserved railroad shop complexes in the United States: Spencer Shops, Southern Pacific Sacramento Shops (California State Railroad Museum), Baltimore and Ohio Shops (B&O Railroad Museum) and the Central of Georgia Shops and Terminal in Savannah, GA (Railroad Roundhouse Museum). Spencer is the only preserved shop complex designed and constructed primarily during the 20th century. The backshop at Spencer is the only preserved erecting shop, utilizing the longitudinal design for locomotive overhaul.



Spencer Shops complex as it looked at it's zenith.

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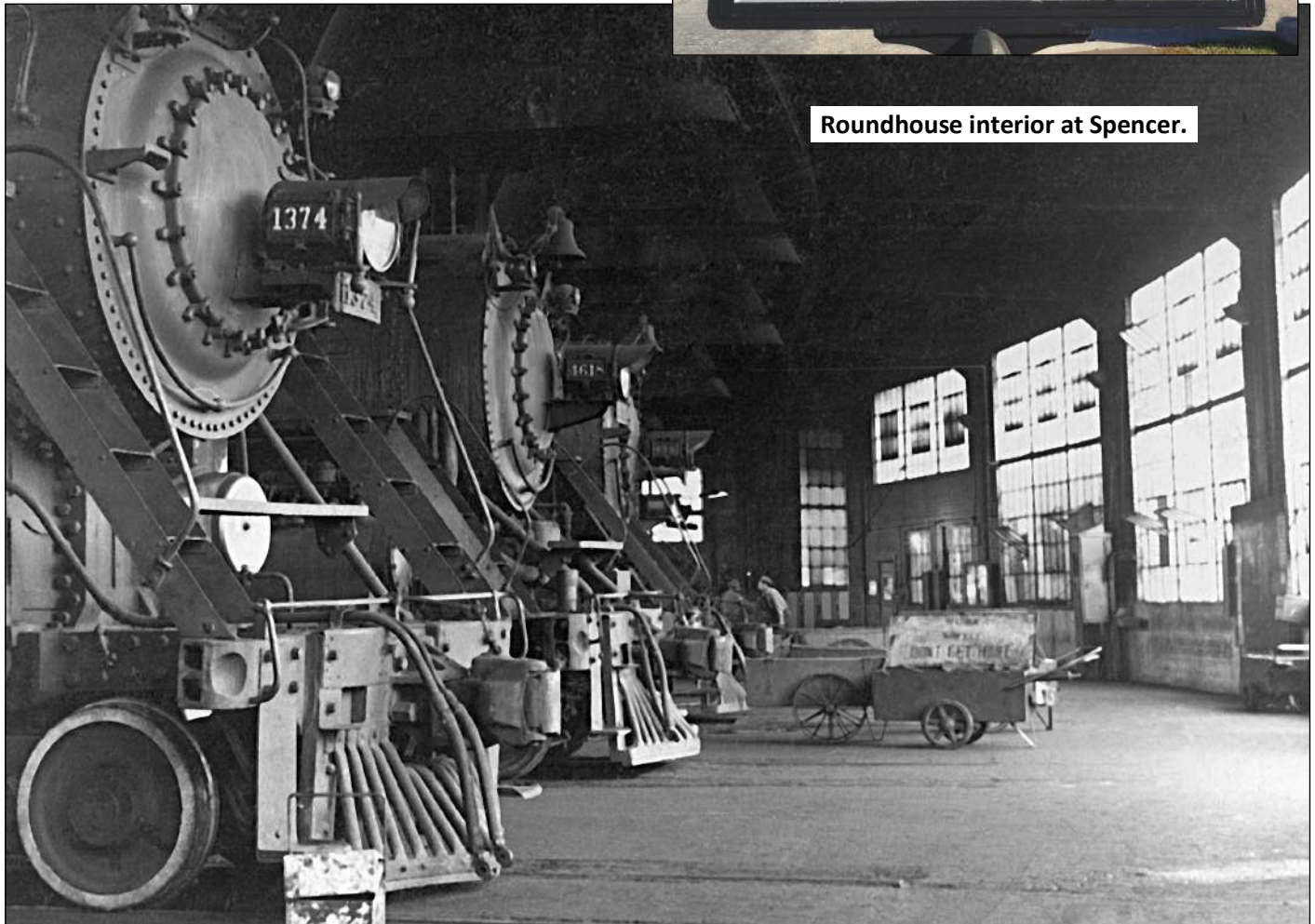


The shops were proposed by Samuel Spencer, President of Southern Railway. The railway began construction on 141 acres of land purchased in 1896. Once completed, the Spencer Shops serviced four equal operating lines of 160 miles each at a point half-way between Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, GA.

The facilities were originally constructed to provide regular maintenance and overhaul of steam locomotives, freight, and passenger cars, and served as a base for track maintenance-of-way. The roundhouse, originally 15 stalls, was completely remodeled in the 1940's to accommodate diesel locomotives.



**Roundhouse interior at Spencer.**



From the National Register of Historic Places Inventory, Nomination Form's Statement of Significance: "The Spencer Historic District is the most intact area representing the development of the town

of Spencer, one of the largest single-industry towns in the Piedmont region of North Carolina. It was established in 1897 to house skilled workers and management at the Southern Railways' newly constructed



shop facilities, one of the largest railroad shops in the country, and experienced its primary development from that date until 1940." 🚂



↑ NS First Responders train used in training first responders on railroad responses.

← NS Heritage locomotives on display at the Bob Julian roundhouse.

↙ Streamliner locomotives from all over the country on display.

N&W #611 reposes next to the enormous shop building. ↓



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# North Carolina Transportation Museum



Established: 1982, Location: Spencer Shops, Type: Transport museum, Collection Size: Railroad artifacts and equipment, road vehicles, airplanes.

The North Carolina Transportation Museum is a museum in Spencer, North Carolina. It is a collection of automobiles, aircraft, and railway vehicles. The museum is located at the former Southern Railway's 1896-era Spencer Shops and devotes much of its space to the state's railroad history. The museum has the largest collection of rail relics in the Carolinas. Its Back Shop building of nearly three stories high is most notable for its size of two football fields long.

## History

The museum was founded in 1977, when the Southern Railway deeded 4 acres of land to North Carolina for a transportation museum. Two years later, another 53 acres was added to the original donation; the entirety of the railway's largest former steam locomotive repair shops. The museum's first exhibit called People, Places and Time opened in 1983. The museum grew over the years, most notably in 1996, with the opening of Barber Junction, a relocated railroad depot from some 30 miles away, and the newly renovated Bob Julian Roundhouse. Barber Junction serves as the museum's Visitor's Center and departure point for the on-site train ride. The Bob Julian Roundhouse serves as the hub for most of the museum's railroad exhibits, but also includes aviation exhibits and site history.

Several bays of the Spencer Shops roundhouse, built in 1924, are devoted to locomotives and rolling stock in the museum collection restored by volunteers. It was here that steam locomotives from 1924 to 1953 were repaired. In the first 16 stalls, visitors can walk among the massive locomotives and rail cars on display in an open-air setting. Moving into the enclosed Elmer Lam gallery in stalls 17 through 20, aviation exhibits dominate, with a full size replica Wright Flyer, Piedmont Airlines exhibits, and more. Moving into

the restoration shop occupying stalls 21 through 32, visitors may also see volunteers working on various railroad pieces, and even manufacturing parts. The remaining five stalls are dedicated to additional enclosed exhibits.

The museum is the largest repository of rail relics in North and South Carolina and averages 80,000 visitors annually. About three-thousand people were employed to repair the trains at the Spencer Shops in the first half of the twentieth century. The Flue Shop, where all the flues for steam engines were formerly produced, has become the Bumper To Bumper exhibit, featuring vintage and antique cars. These include: several Model Ts, a Model A, and even a Ford Model R (the 1907 predecessor to the Model T). A Highway Patrol car from 1935, a Divco Milk Truck, a Lincoln Continental and others are also part of the museum's collection.

In 2005, the museum's Back Shop underwent a massive renovation, which included repairs to the roof, re-pointing of the brick, and a stabilization of the building's floor. This building, where the full overhaul of steam locomotives once took place, is most notable for its size. It is two football fields long and nearly three stories tall. However, it may be most notable for the words "Be Careful," standing some three feet tall, visible from nearly anywhere on the north end of the site. In 2009, the museum opened the Back Shop to the public for the first time, with an access ramp on the south end. In 2017 the back shop was opened completely, allowing more exhibits.

## Heritage Railroad

The museum has a heritage railroad, which operates passenger excursion trains on a seasonal schedule. Trains are usually powered by either Norfolk and Western GP9 No. 620 or Southern GP30 No. 2601 diesel locomotives. Sometimes the Southern FP7 No. 6133, Southern E8A No. 6900, and Atlantic Coast Line E3 No. 501 streamlined diesel locomotives are used. The museum has no operating steam locomotives of its own, but occasionally has visiting steam locomotives such as Lehigh Valley Coal 0-6-0T No. 126, Flag Coal Company 0-4-0T No. 75, and Jeddo Coal Company 0-4-0T No. 85, all owned by the Gramling Locomo-

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tive Works of Ashley, Indiana.

In 2012 and 2013, the Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum's Southern 2-8-0 No. 630 visited the museum offering employee and public excursions to Barber Junction and Winston-Salem, North Carolina. From 2014 to 2015, the Norfolk and Western 611 was restored to operating condition at the museum and ran public excursions departing from Spencer. In 2015, the American 4-4-0 "Leviathan" locomotive visited the museum for the Lincoln Funeral Train event, commemorating 150 years.

### Events

The museum hosts a number of annual events and some one-time railroading events that bring rail fans from across the country. In 2012, the Bob Julian Roundhouse was the stage for all 20 of Norfolk Southern's Heritage locomotives. In 2014, the museum hosted Streamliners at Spencer, with 1930s - 1950s era locomotives gathered around the turntable and included the #611 steam locomotive.

Annual events include Day Out With Thomas, the Polar Express, Fire Truck Show, Automobile shows, Tractor Show, Harvest Festival, Easter Bunny Express, Valentine Wine and Dine trains, and Brew and Choo Beer Train. The NCTM is also host to Boy Scout Rail Camp, which allows for Boy Scouts and Leaders to camp out on the historic facility and earn the railroading merit badge.

In the late 1940s and the 1950s diesel locomotives replaced trains driven by steam, and the need for the kind of service delivered at Spencer declined. In 1960 the main shops closed, and only a few employees remained to make light repairs and refuel diesel locomotives

and repair freight cars. All work stopped in 1979, when the Southern Railway moved to a modern complex across the Yadkin River at Linwood, site of the new freight switching yard.

When it became known that Spencer Shops would be closing, preservationists and local legislators took action to preserve the historic buildings as a Transportation Museum. Funds were appropriated for a feasibility study, and Southern Railway was approached about selling or donating the property and buildings. In September 1977 railway president L. Stanley Crane presented a deed to nearly 4 acres on the site as a gift to the people of North Carolina. In 1979 the company donated 53 more acres of land and several historic buildings. Funds from the General Assembly made it possible to begin to stabilize and restore the buildings.

The first exhibit area opened in 1983. Others followed as restoration and repair of buildings and equipment could be completed; next to open were the master mechanic's office, flue shop, roundhouse, and a narrated on-site train ride for visitors. The North Carolina Transportation History Corporation was chartered in 1977 as a nonprofit support group to assist in fundraising and in the acquisition and restoration of artifacts. Numerous former employees of the Southern Railway, retired but still living in the vicinity, spent countless hours restoring and maintaining equipment as well as operating locomotives to pull rolling stock to give visitors a true feel for rail transportation.

In addition to railroads, the Museum features automobiles, fire trucks, the state's first highway patrol car, airplanes, motorcycles, wagons, and other means of moving people and goods in North Carolina. ✓



CHECK OUT THE CRHA:

[WWW.HUBCITYRRMUSEUM.ORG/CAROLINA-RAILROAD-HERITAGE-ASSOCIATION](http://WWW.HUBCITYRRMUSEUM.ORG/CAROLINA-RAILROAD-HERITAGE-ASSOCIATION)  
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