

# Carolina Conductor



Volume 7 Number 5

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

**Meeting Site:**  
**Woodmen of the World Bldg.**  
721 East Poinsett Street  
Greer, SC 29651-6404  
Third Friday of the Month at 7:00 pm

**Hub City Railroad Museum and  
SOU Rwy Caboose #X3115:**  
**Spartanburg Amtrak Station**  
298 Magnolia Street  
Spartanburg, SC 29301-2330  
Wednesday 10-2 and Saturday 10-2

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Articles can be submitted anytime.

# Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad

Story by:  
**Lynn Duncan**

In the early 1960s a young railfan by the name of Jim Pitts was chasing trains around the country. Today, Jim is a fellow CRHA member. He is still very much interested in railroading. When weather permits Jim can be found running his live steam model trains on his backyard track. The subject of this article is the Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Company of North Carolina. It was photographed by Jim in March of 1961.

The Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad in North Carolina is still operating today. This year marks its 128<sup>th</sup> year. The A&R began operations in 1892. It was organized by a North Carolina businessman and Civil War veteran named John Blue. The Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce honored Blue with a special dinner in 1913. A special booklet titled "Farmer Boy to Railroad President" was given to those attending the dinner. John Blue died in 1922.

It became a very successful rail system by hauling pine timber on its 45 miles of track between Aberdeen, NC and Fayetteville, NC. Along the route it made stops in towns such as Rockfish, NC. The A&R had some

difficult times during World War I. The United States Railway Administration controlled America's railroads during the war. The A&R had trouble keeping roadbed repaired as well as finding needed ties, rails, and labor. The A&R had limited passenger service until 1921.

The A&R had an important link to Fort Bragg, NC during World War I and after. It helped transport thousands of soldiers up until the 1960s. In 1947 the A&R was one of the first short lines in the South to dieselize.

The Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad has had 8 presidents in its 128 year history. One of those presidents would give cashmere sweaters to women employees and new suits to the men each Christmas. Sometimes the same president would throw firecrackers out of his second floor office window to liven things up.

In his classic book, "Mixed Trains Daily" (1947), Lucius Beebe included five pages about the Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad. Beebe stated that the A&R was a "briskly functioning railroad far off the beaten track of conventional commerce and travel." It is still a briskly functioning railroad. The railroad switches many cars to and from industries

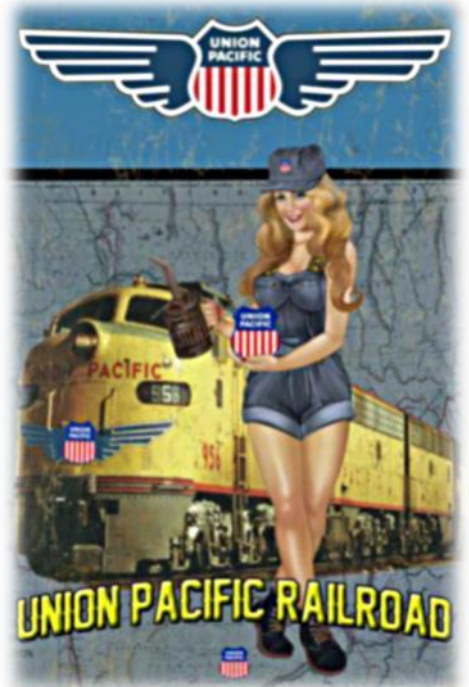
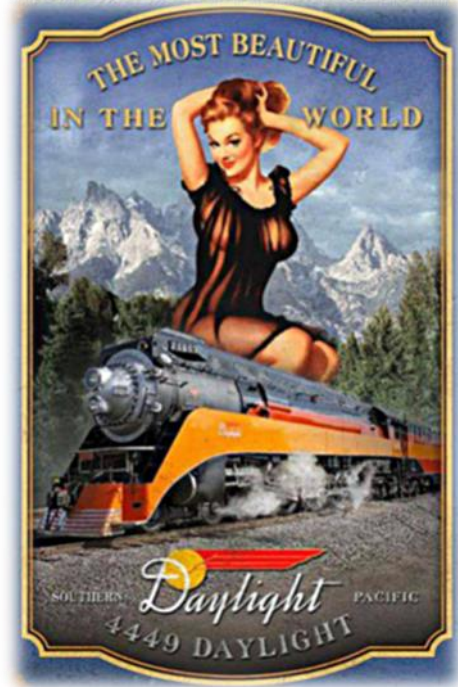
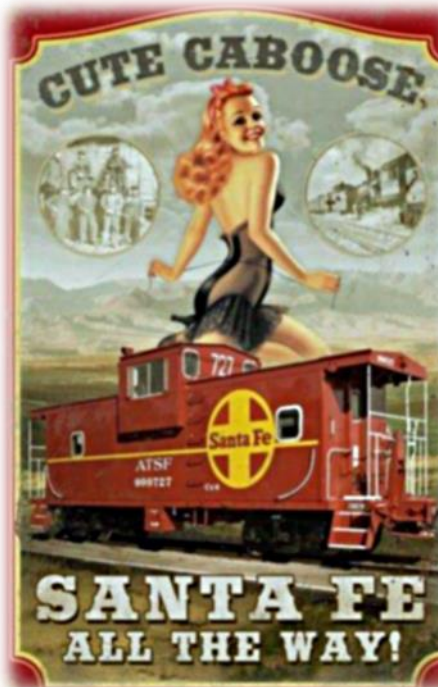
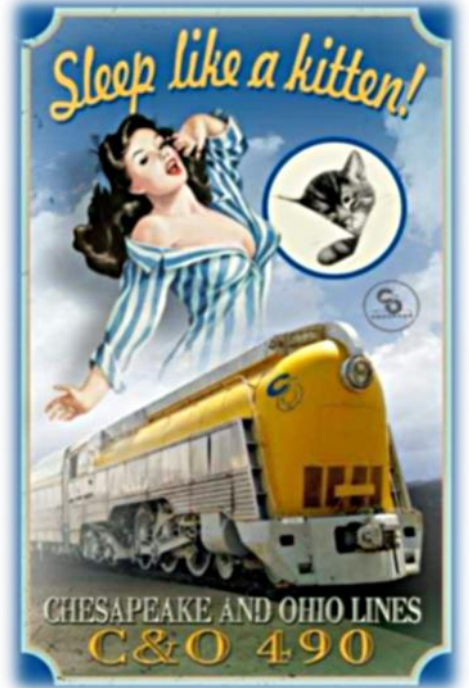
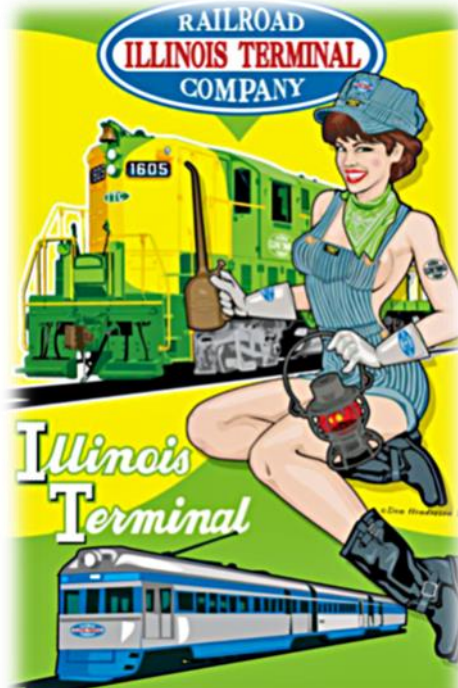
Continued on Page 3 - A&R

# President's Message

Due to the present health situation and the ill feeling presi-

dent there is no message this month. If he is feeling better later I will send it in a separate email. A

little something from the 1940s to brighten up your day instead. Ed.



## 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 local railway history and news.

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in Fayetteville, NC and has connections with CSX and Norfolk Southern.

During its history the Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad has used motive power that has included a 2-4-0, 4-4-0s, 4-6-0s, light 2-8-2s, and a 2-8-0. Today they are operating with a GP7, GP18, and a GP38. The A&R owned a Mikado steam locomotive until 1977. The Mikado is now with the Valley Railroad Company in Essex, Connecticut. One of the two cabooses once owned by the A&R is now on display at the Union Station Railroad Museum in Aberdeen, NC. The Union Station Railroad Museum seeks to preserve the Union Station Depot and to preserve and exhibit artifacts and memorabilia collected from the community, the Aberdeen and Rockfish Railroad Company, and other railroad enterprises that passed through Union Station or operated in the surrounding region. Built circa 1900, Union Station features Victorian architecture and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The museum features one of only two inspection cars left in the U.S.

The Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad Company is still owned by members of the Blue family. The



**Two of the Aberdeen & Rockfish Railroad's diesels in 1961. The EMD F3A #200 on the left was built and purchased in 1947. The EMD GP7 #205 road switcher on the right was built and purchased in 1951. This picture was taken in the Aberdeen Yard by Jim Pitts on March 28, 1961.**



**Combination #308 of the Aberdeen & Rockfish RR in the yard at Aberdeen, NC on March 28, 1961. This was a "homemade" caboose. The side door was added for less than carload freight. This caboose was used by A&R until the 1980s. The photo was taken by Jim Pitts.**

company also includes the Pee Dee River Railway Corporation in South Carolina. The A&R still operates under its original motto of "The Road of Personal Service."

Over its 45 miles of trackage from Aberdeen to Fayetteville the A&R passes through the North Carolina towns of Ashley Heights, San-

atorium, Timberland, Raeford, Dunarrach, Rockfish, Clifdale, Skibo, and Owens. If CRHA members are looking for a future field trip site a visit to Aberdeen, NC might be something to consider. It is only a 3 1/2 hour drive from Greenville. Hopefully this article will inspire CRHA members to do their own research and learn more about this short line railroad's long and colorful history.

## Short A&R History

The AR was incorporated in 1892 by businessman John Blue. He built the railroad to get his timber and turpentine products to market. On June 30, 1895, the first stretch of road was opened from Aberdeen to Endon. In 1898 the company added a line from Ashley Heights to Raeford which soon became the main line with the Endon line as a branch. Shortly thereafter, the Endon branch was extended to Juniper.

The main line was extended to Dundarrach in 1900, Rockfish in 1902, Fenix in 1904 and a branch from Rockfish to Hope Mills was added in 1905. For a while, Aberdeen-Hope Mills became the main line, with branches to Juniper and

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Fenix.

On November 14, 1909, another branch from Raeford to Wagram was opened. In 1912, the company abandoned the Endon branch and used the rails to construct an extension from Fenix to Fayetteville which opened on December 23 that

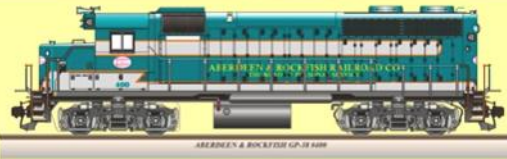
year. At the same time the line to Hope Mills was abandoned, as it became unnecessary with the new link to the main line of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad in Fayetteville. Over the years the railroad's traf-






## Aberdeen & Rockfish


*"The Road of Personal Service"*




ABERDEEN & ROCKFISH GP-35 4000




ABERDEEN & ROCKFISH GP-7 4201



ABERDEEN & ROCKFISH GP-35 1100



ABERDEEN & ROCKFISH F-41 6200



Headquarters: Aberdeen, North Carolina  
Miles Operated: 27  
Route: 1909-1974 Operated member of A.C.  
Principal Freight Carriers: Building Materials,  
Chemicals, Feed Grains and Bulk Logistics

Stations and Interchanges from the 1950's			
No. 22	Miles	Station	No. 21 Interchanges
5.01	0	Aberdeen	3.30 SAL, Norfolk Southern
8.25	9	Suttonville	2.40
8.40	13	Turkhead	2.25
9.20	18	Rockfish	2.10 Laurinburg & Southern
9.50	30	Slatts	1.25
10.25	40	Slatts	1.85 Cape Fear (Fort Bragg)
11.15	45	Fayetteville	12.15 MCL, Norfolk Southern



fic has shifted from lumber to agriculture products. The AR is still owned by the Blue family and operates freight trains from Aberdeen to Fayetteville. The Wagram branch was sold to the Laurinburg & Southern RR in 1921. Passenger service ended in 1949.

## Book Review by Marv Havens

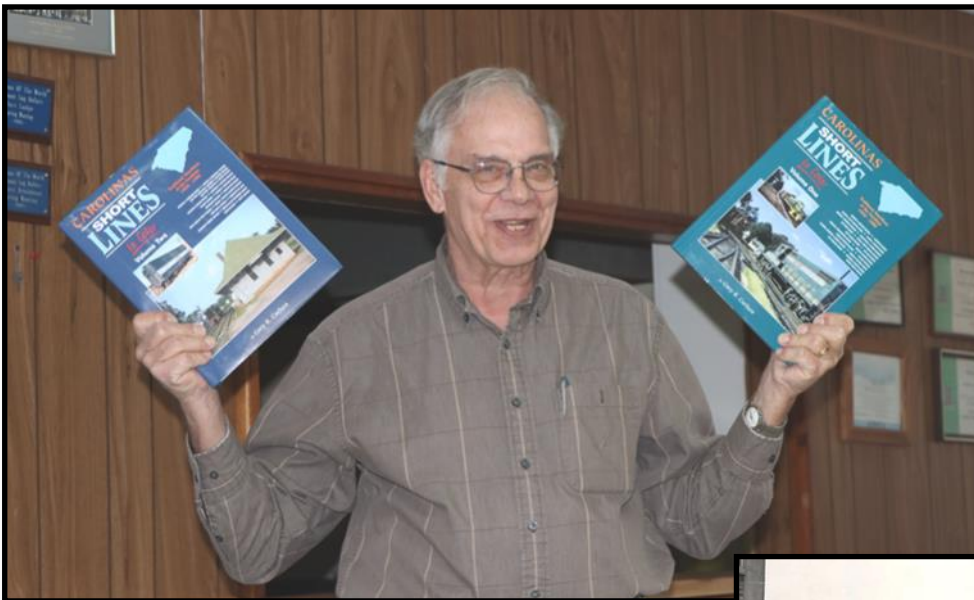
A word – my corner of the vast railroad hobby is books. I will try to have occasional book reviews when I think that there is a general interest among group members. Meanwhile, I will encourage all readers to write up their interests into articles or reviews to help

Lines alphabetically:

### Volume 1 (2015) \$59.95

Aberdeen & Rockfish RR  
 Alexander RR  
 Atlantic & East Carolina Rwy  
 Atlantic & Western Rwy  
 Beaufort & Morehead RR

Bennettsville & Cheraw RR  
 Blue Ridge Rwy  
 Buffalo, Union-Carolina RR  
 Camp Lejeune RR  
 Cape Fear Rwy  
 Carolina & Northwestern RR  
 Carolina Southern Rwy  
 Carolina Western RR  
 Cliffside RR  
 Columbia, Newberry & Laurens RR  
 Durham & Southern Rwy  
 East Carolina Rwy  
 Edgemoor & Marietta Rwy  
 Graham County RR



Marv Havens displays the two volumes discussed in this review.

your editor. *Ed. Amen!*

### ***Carolinas Short Lines – In Color: Volumes 1 and 2***

By Gary R. Carlson  
 Morning Sun Books

A brief word about Morning Sun Books. This publisher has published an extensive series of books with the title ending in “– *In Color.*” They are literally in-color treatises on railroads and railroad equipment seldom found anywhere. The print quality is usually very good. But the emphasis is on the photos with extended captions, not the history. In the case of the two volumes of *Carolinas Short Lines*, there is one page of a history outline and a marginal map then a few pages of color photos for these lines. Most pages have two or more good color photos with extended captions. If you want quality photos that tell a good story about that image – you will enjoy Morning Sun books. The only issue is simply that high quality reproductions with modest press runs are not cheap.

The two volumes cover railroads of Carolinas Short



Cliffside Railroad, seen in Volume #1, locomotive #110 in 1940.

### Volume 2 (2019) \$69.95

Greenville & Northern Rwy  
 Hampton & Branchville RR  
 High Point, Randleman, Asheboro & Southern RR  
 High Point, Thomasville & Denton RR  
 Lancaster & Chester Rwy  
 Laurinburg & Southern RR  
 Pickens RR  
 Piedmont & Northern Rwy  
 Rockingham RR  
 Rockton – Rion Rwy  
 South Carolina

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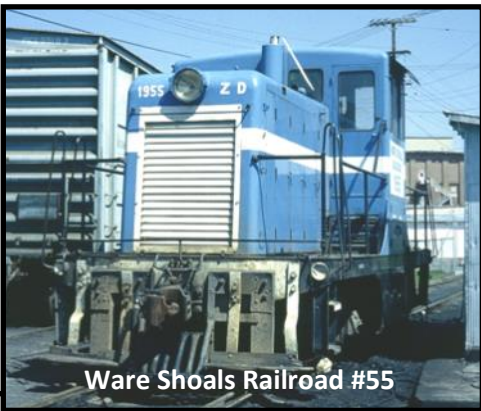
- Public Rwy
- Virginia & Carolina Southern RR
- Ware Shoals RR
- Warrenton RR
- Wilmington Terminal RR
- Winston – Salem Southbound Rwy
- Yadkin RR
- Yancey RR

Most railroads are given several pages of coverage. The Greenville & Northern, for example, gets seven pages, the Piedmont & Northern – ten, the Yadkin – two.

Photos are all color which limits the era to diesels although there are exceptions. The Rockton – Rion is all steam locomotives except for two diesel photos. The color photos of steam are well selected and presented showing good details without dissolving into blackness. Members will recognize several photographers – notably Jim Sheppard for the G&N and the P&N.

All that said, I appreciate Morning Sun books for

their excellent color photos that document otherwise obscure subjects – like *Carolina's Short Lines in Color*.



Ware Shoals Railroad #55

**Sidebar by Marv**  
 A word about buying railroad books. I have worked with Ron's Books for nearly three decades now. They advertise in most railroad and model railroad magazines, often with full page, small print ads. Their stock is excellent, and they have a good selection of used books. The best news is that their typical price is 10% off list and free shipping (over \$25). The owner passed away recently but the family plans to continue operating their bookstore. They take orders by mail, internet and phone.



Virginia and Carolina Southern #32 pulling a mixed train.



Greenville & Northern #70



Greenville & Northern Railway #5 at the Greenville freight house in 1941.

# New Easley

*Jim Hopkins wrote the editor asking the following questions about the new Easley depot.*

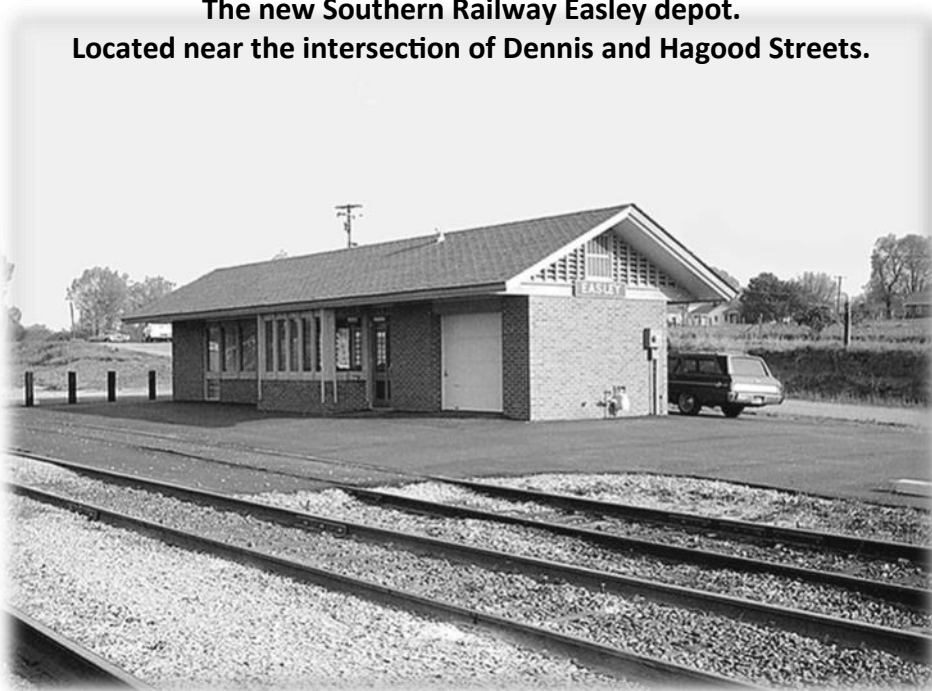
“So, I need some investigative help here. In 1967 the Southern Depot in Easley, SC was demolished. Oddly, Sou RWY built a new depot north of downtown near Glenwood Mill by Hagood Street and Dennis Drive. Built in 1968 and demolished in the 70s. Please see photos courtesy of USC Libraries taken by Ben Roberts. The new station is odd in that it was built when the "writing was on the wall with passenger rail travel." Also, it was designed by a well-known Easley architect in his usual style. I was born in 1976 but do not recall this station still being present, and I was a train fan as a small child and would have noticed it.

So, my questions are:

- 1) When did Easley last appear on Southern Railway Timetables as a station stop and which train served Easley? (guessing Piedmont and around time it was cancelled?)
- 2) Why would Southern build a new station so late in the 60's and so close to the major stop in Greenville 15 miles away? And why would Southern care enough to hire a local architect to design it?
- 3) Does anyone know more about this final Easley Depot...who was the station master...when was it demolished?
- 4) Notice all pics show the second main with jointed rail. When did Southern finish the welded rail project on the second main of the Atlanta-Washington route? The track closest to the depot is the spur to Glenwood Mill, then track two and track one is partly visible in some



**The new Southern Railway Easley depot.  
Located near the intersection of Dennis and Hagood Streets.**



photos, all clearly visible still on Google maps.

Also note a rare photo from Pickens County Historical Collection of a train stopped at this station in the late 60's early 70s. Any idea which train? (It must be the close to 1970s as the weeds around the station are tall and the asphalt looks worn. In the 68's pics all are fresh and new.”

*So as the editor I asked Craig Myers for any info he might*

**Continued on Page 8 - Easley**

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have to shed light on Jim's questions. Here is what Craig had to say. Ed.

"After the old depot was gone, there had to be an office for a freight agent, so the depot was built out on town, if it was in the county and not in the city then it meant lower taxes. There was still enough business with mills and textile, grain elevator, Pickens Railway to have an agent. They added a small waiting room since one train stopped there. The last service listed in timetables was November 1971. The May 1972 schedule showed trains no longer stopped at Easley.

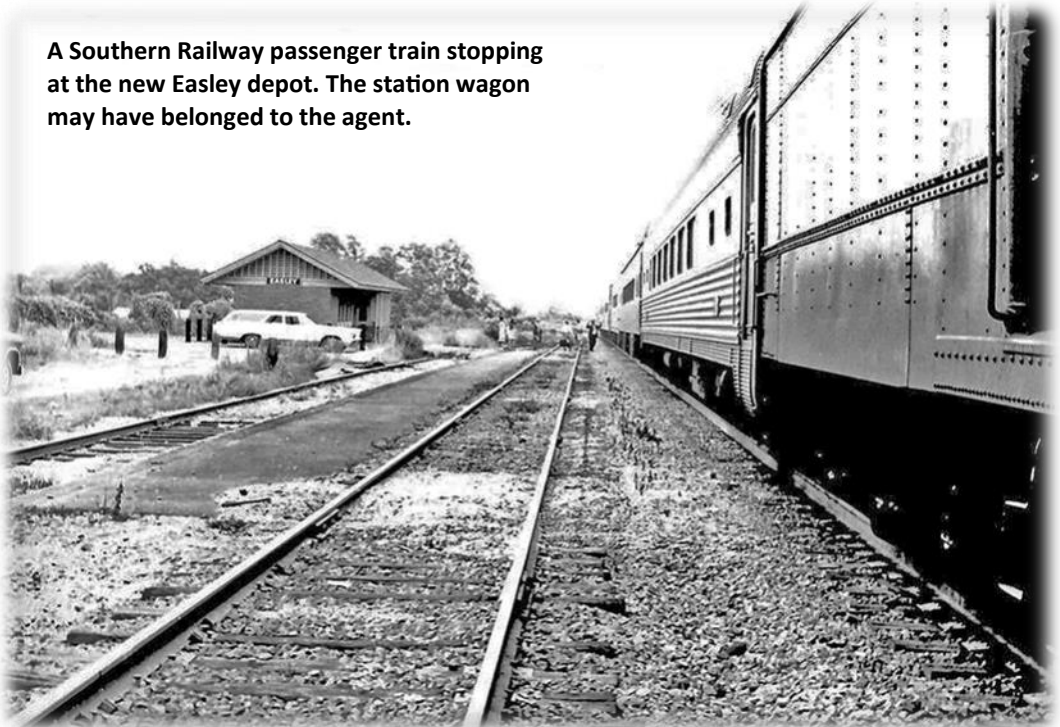
By the mid-20s, most agents were gone and station wagons with mobile agents took over. Anderson

and Toccoa were two of the last manned small stations on the mainline. Toccoa was the last.

As to welded rail, I am not sure. The last train to stop at Easley was the Piedmont. Only southbound service. No northbound.

Prior to this it was served by Washington, Atlanta & New Orleans express southbound and the

Peach Queen northbound. The Piedmont was inaugurated using the Crescent's northbound schedule and the Peach Queen's southbound schedule. The Southern Crescent too the Southerner's Northbound schedule and the Crescent's southbound schedule."



A Southern Railway passenger train stopping at the new Easley depot. The station wagon may have belonged to the agent.



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