

Carolina Conductor



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Preserving the Past Active in the Present Planning for the Future

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Spartanburg Amtrak Station

298 Magnolia Street

Spartanburg, SC 29301-2330

Wednesday 10-2 & Saturday 10-2

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

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Articles can be submitted anytime.

Atlantic Coast Line

The Story of the Atlantic Coast Line Part 2

Period of Consolidation

In 1898 the Richmond and Petersburg Railroad was authorized by the legislature of Virginia to purchase the Petersburg Railroad and to name the resulting consolidation, totalling less than 100 miles of line, the "Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company of Virginia."

In the same year the South Carolina legislature chartered the "Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company of South Carolina" to absorb the Wilmington, Columbia and Augusta, the Northeastern, the Cheraw and Darlington, the Manchester and Augusta, and the Florence Railroad. This resulted in the consolidation of about 700 miles of line of which 600 were located in South Carolina.

The Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company of South Carolina had an existence of only two years. The most important event during this time was the securing of a lease, jointly with the Louisville &

Nashville Railroad, of the Georgia Railroad.

On April 21, 1900, the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company of South Carolina, the Wilmington and Weldon, the Norfolk and Carolina and other railroads, were sold to and merged into the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company of Virginia, which then changed its name to the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company.

This consolidation extended the lines of the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company from Richmond, Va., to Charleston, S. C., with various branch and feeder lines in Virginia, North Carolina and South Carolina.

After the War between the States there had been a period of extreme depression for the railroads in Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

Through the efforts of Henry B. Plant, a number of railroads in this territory had been brought together under the name of the Savannah, Florida and Western Railway Company, otherwise known as the "Plant System." This system

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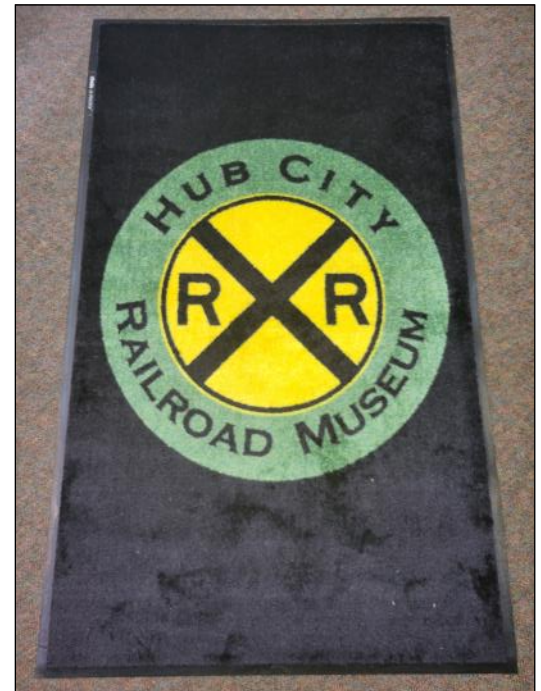
Museum Happenings



Two new pieces recently donated to the museum. ↑ Clinchfield crossing a bridge and Clinchcross where the Southern ← and Clinchfield cross each other.



Our president! You can take the circus out of the world but not the clown out of the man.



Entry logo carpet provided by the city.

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.

had a main line from Charleston to Port Tampa, Fla., from Savannah to Montgomery, Ala., and numerous branch lines in South Carolina, Georgia, Florida and Alabama.

New Lines Aid Development

In 1902 the Plant System was acquired by the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad Company and this purchase gave the Atlantic Coast Line substantially its present form. While there have been no further large individual increases in mileage since that time new lines constructed and purchased during the past 27 years have brought the total mileage from 4,138 in 1903 to 5,153 miles in 1930.

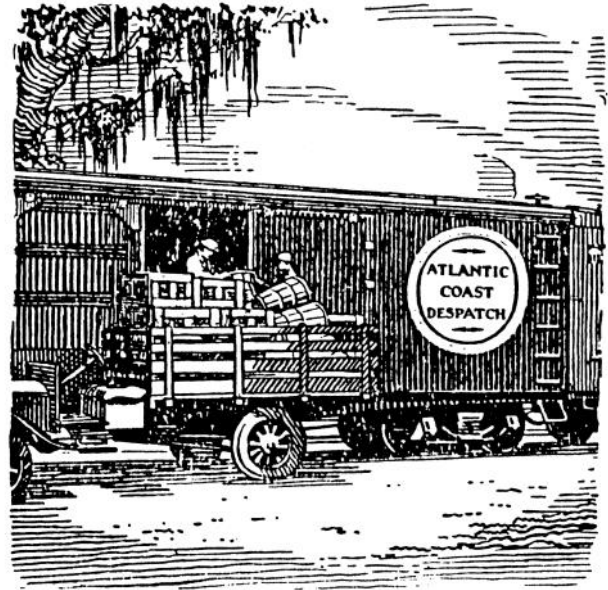
Each of these lines performed a valuable service in opening up new areas to development, or in making Coast Line service available to sections in need of additional transportation. Thus Fort Myers, FL, prior to 1903, was an isolated village, but with the aid of transportation furnished by the completion of a railroad by the Atlantic Coast Line it made a vigorous and rapid growth and soon became an important city.

The construction of a line of road from Haines City to Sebring, FL, and later to Moore Haven, FL, through territory entirely undeveloped and almost uninhabited at the time, resulted in the development of the Scenic Highlands, one of the show places of Florida, and one of the large citrus producing sections of the State, and also made possible the development of the rich lands west of Lake Okeechobee.

Other lines constructed or purchased performed much the same service in other places.

Of even greater importance, however, was the steady improvement in the entire transportation plant of the Coast Line that was made through successive years. From the time the first interest in the constituent companies of the Atlantic Coast Line was acquired it has been the policy of the management to provide railroad facilities to meet every transportation need of the territory and thus contribute most to its growth and prosperity.

Millions of dollars were spent for double



track, heavy rail, ballast, new motive power and other equipment and all the accessories that go to make up an efficient railroad. As a result, the Coast Line steadily improved its service.

Recent Improvements

Following this policy an extensive program of improvement was begun shortly after the return of the railroads from Government operation in 1920 that has resulted in the spending of \$89,590,278 up to December 31, 1929. After deducting all retirements this represents an actual addition to the property of \$80,131,143.

This program of improvement embraced the purchase of large amounts of equipment, the completion of double track between Richmond and Jacksonville and at other points ; the construction of a line from Perry to Monticello, Fla.; from Thonotosassa to Vitis, Fla., and from Immokalee to Everglades, Fla., as well as construction of a line from Bradenton to Sarasota, Fla., and thence to a point near Fort Ogden; also construction of a line from Fort Myers to Collier City, Fla.

All of these lines opened up new territory which promise to become heavy producers of traffic and, like other lines constructed by the Coast Line, paved the way for agricultural, in-

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dustrial, and recreational development.

Construction of double track began in 1904 and was continued from year to year with the growth of traffic. Points first selected were important junctions and terminals where the volume of traffic was heavy and where double track would facilitate the in and outbound movement.

In the fall of 1925 double track was completed between Richmond, Va., and Jacksonville, Fla., automatic signals being installed currently with construction.

Since that time, the Coast Line has constructed double track between Moncrief and Yukon, Fla. ; between Orange City Junction and Sanford, Fla.; between Winter Park and Orlando, Fla.; between Tampa and Uceta, Fla., and between Dunnellon and Vitis, Fla., on its West Coast line.

Practically all of the Atlantic Coast Line main line is equipped with modern train dispatching telephone circuits that enable the utmost efficiency in directing train movement. Practically all main line is ballasted with gravel, crushed stone, or slag, and 100 pound steel rail 39 feet long, is the standard used.

The Coast Line is notable for its long stretches of straight tracks, few and easy curves and light grades. There are no tunnels and no rock cuts. The fills are broad, and the drainage is not surpassed by that of any railroad in America.

The territory that the Coast Line serves is aptly known as the Nation's Garden. Here bountiful crops of fruits and vegetables are produced at a season of the year when the big markets of the North, East and West offer the best prices.

Atlantic Coast Line Standards of Service

One of the most important services rendered by the Atlantic Coast Line has been in making possible the growth and expansion of fruit and vegetable growing in the Southeast. The value of these products depends, of course, entirely upon fast and reliable transportation to the great consuming markets. Recognizing the vast possibilities of the sections it serves, the Coast Line has developed a type of service that carries perishable products from its territory to the markets of the country in the shortest possible time. By extending its rails into new areas suited for production of fruits and



vegetables, as for example, in the case of the line from Haines City to Moore Haven, Florida, it has made development possible and encouraged the settlement of hitherto unproductive areas.

In spite of the development that has taken place along the Coast Line, the resources of the sections it serves have, literally, hardly been scratched. The ability of this vast garden to increase its output of fruits and vegetables is limited only by the quantities that can profitably be marketed. And its proximity to the great consuming centers, with fast service over the Coast Line, gives it an advantage that is attracting increasing numbers of skilled fruit and vegetable growers and other specialized farmers.

The passenger service of the Atlantic Coast Line has, like the freight service, been developed to meet highly exacting demands. Long before the formation of the present system, the constituent roads made up the most direct route between Florida and other parts of the South-east and the North.

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In 1887 these roads established the Florida Special, operating between New York and Florida, which was, so far as can be learned, the first deluxe tourist train in the world. It has been continued every season since that time and is the dean of all fine tourist trains.

Coast Line passenger trains have long set a standard that appeals to the most discriminating taste. A schedule of 23 1/3 hours between New York and Florida, the fastest service ever offered, was established for the season 1929-30.

The Atlantic Coast Line has long been known for its progressiveness in keeping its facilities adequate to handle all traffic. Especial care is taken to provide ample motive power and equipment suited to the needs of traffic and the climate. The lounge cars, for example, on the Havana Special were built especially for that train and are unique in their comfort, fittings, and appearance. So, with the freight equipment. Ample numbers of box and ventilated cars are owned, and the Coast Line is one of the largest stockholders of the Fruit Growers Express, the agency through which the larger number of refrigerator cars are supplied to the Southeast.

On December 1, 1929, the Atlantic Coast Line owned 1,021 locomotives, 32,696 freight equipment cars, 798 passenger equipment cars and 1,840 work equipment cars.

The Coast Line is one of the largest taxpayers in the Southeast. In 1929 its tax accruals amounted to \$6,240,000. This represented an increase of about 214% of the amount

of taxes paid in 1919.

The employees of the Atlantic Coast Line have always been known for their loy-

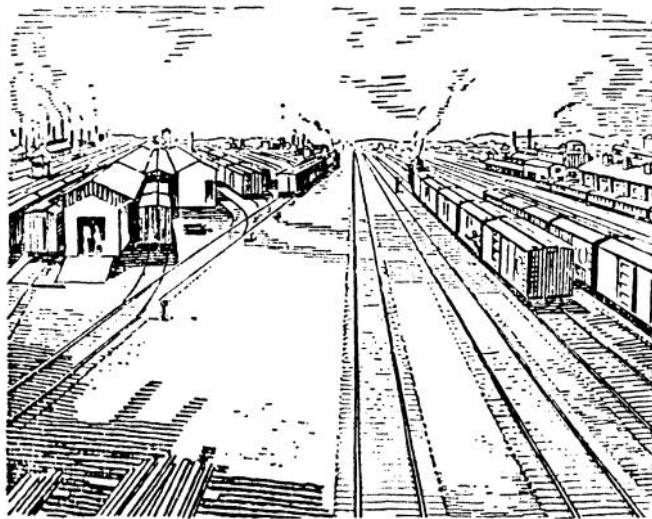
alty and efficiency. The close ties of a common interest have bound them all into the Coast Line family, whose members work and live together in a unity that is seldom found. Thirty-four men have worked for the Coast Line -50 years or more, and 1,384 have been in its service 25 years or longer.

The Atlantic Coast Line is closely affiliated with the Charleston and Western Carolina Railway and the Northwestern Railroad of South Carolina. It owns a majority of stock of the Louisville and Nashville; the Columbia, Newberry, and Laurens; the Atlanta, Birmingham, and Coast; the Tampa Southern; the Fort Myers Southern and other railroads. Together with the Louisville and

Nashville it leases the Georgia Railroad and the Clinchfield Railroad, and controls through ownership and under the lease of the Georgia Railroad a majority of stock in the Atlanta and West Point. Through the Louisville and Nashville, it is interested in the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis, and has a leasehold interest in the Western Railway of Alabama and other lines. These railroads, in connection with the rails of the Atlantic Coast Line, have a total mileage of 14,480.

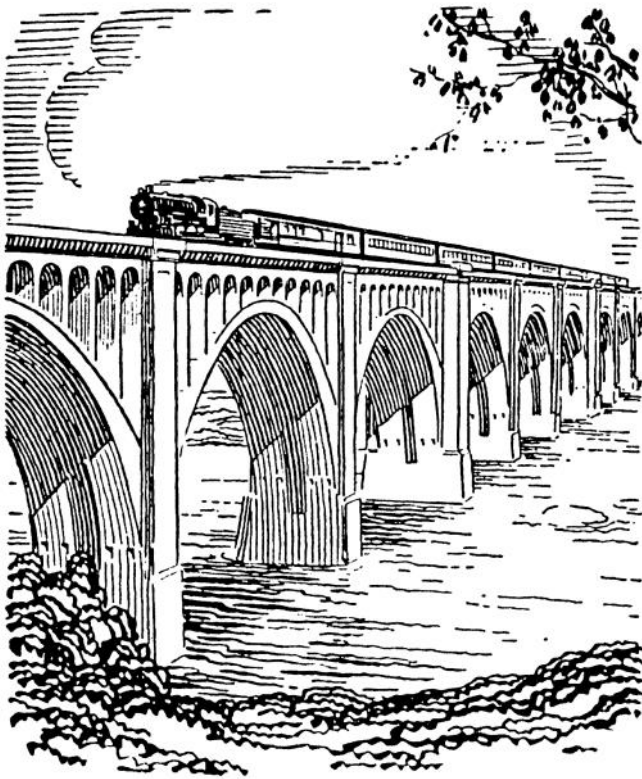
The Atlantic Coast Line is also interested in the Peninsular and Occidental Steamship Company, operating a line of steamers between Port Tampa, Key West and Havana, and the Chesapeake Steamship Company which operates steamers between Baltimore and Norfolk, Richmond and West Point, Va. Indirectly, it is interested in Pan-American Airways, Inc., and certain of its trains furnish connections at Miami with planes of this company.

The Atlantic Coast Line, however, is not merely a big railroad. The constituent companies of the Atlantic Coast Line were built and operated by the



people of the sections they served, and when merged into the present organization their employees brought with them that tradition of loyalty to their employers, pride in their occupation and intimate knowledge of the people and transportation needs of their communities, which makes the Atlantic Coast Line so in-tegral a part of the economic life of the Southeast.

The fortunes of the Coast Line are those of the people of the Southeast. It has prospered with them when times were good; it has suffered with them when times were bad. It has grown with the Southeast because its management has conscientiously devoted every effort and all the Com-pany's resources to anticipating and meeting the transportation needs of its patrons.



THE STORY OF THE ATLANTIC COAST LINE RAILROAD COMPANY

The Next 60 Years

The 30's A Lull

The collapse of the Florida land boom of the 1920's was followed by the depression of the 1930's, forcing the Coast Line to change its ways. All expenditures were curtailed as rail traffic and profits dropped sharply. However, the Coast Line was able to survive those trying times without losing money or letting the railway or equipment fall into disrepair, because of the massive rebuilding and replacement program of the past decade.

A Decade of Progress

The Coast Line followed the lean years of the 1930's with what was later called in a company publication "A Decade of Progress". As we will see it might be better called a decade of change. The decade really began in 1939 with the purchase of the Coast Line's first diesel locomotive. It continued with more diesels, passenger cars, freight cars and improvements to the right-of-way, track, and structures, amounting to a total expenditure of \$400,000,000, which was greater than the total assets of the company at any given time during the decade.

The big changes in motive power started in December of 1939 with the inauguration of the Coast Line's premier passenger train, The Champion, using locomotives in royal purple and silver pulling lightweight stainless steel passenger cars. Diesel locomotives for yard switching duty were purchased in 1940 and 48 freight locomotives in 1943. The unique demands of WW II forced the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad to purchase its last 5 steam locomotives in 1943 for \$276,845 (or lose the lease). Over 15,000 freight cars were replaced in 10 years and most of the lightweight passenger cars were purchased over this 10 year span.

Roadway improvements were high on the list with the relaying of the Jacksonville to Richmond main-line with heavier rail, 131 pound per yard, (1000 miles), new crossties (13,000,000), replacement of timber trestles and the complete replacement of signals from Richmond to Orlando. Central Traffic Control was also installed at this time. The bill for roadway improvements was over \$150,000,000.

One major improvement which still effects Wilmington was the construction in 1945 of the fourth unit in the general office group of buildings. Designated as "Office Building D", it is now used by the Wilmington Police Department.

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Champion McDowell Davis

Many men made their living on the Railroad, but few men were able to mold the Railroad to their vision. The most famous man whose career was the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad was a local boy from Porter's Neck named Champion McDowell Davis. He began his career with the Wilmington and Weldon Railroad in 1893 as a messenger boy. By 1916 he had become the general Freight Agent (system wide), Manager of Traffic (1925), Vice President of Traffic (1928), Executive Vice President (1940), and finally President in 1942.

Davis was responsible for the Coast Line's use of royal purple and the inauguration of modern streamlined passenger service (The Champion) on the Coast Line. At his retirement in 1957 at the age of 79 he had 64.5 years of service with the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad. He died in Wilmington on the family farm at Porter's Neck in 1975 at the age of 95.

Passenger Service

The main purpose of the Coast Line's passenger traffic department was delivering the tourists from the snowy northeast and Midwest to sunny Florida. Famous Florida bound trains have always graced the Coast Line's rails. Starting in 1878 with the Havana Special, which ran from New York to Miami and Key West, Florida. Other well known named trains were The Florida Special, Dixie Limited, Palmetto, The Floridian, Flamingo, The Miamian, The City of Miami and of course the Champion. Several of these trains lasted into the Amtrak era, with the Palmetto still operating.

Throughout the Coast Line's existence their passenger service was considered one of the best, even after ridership declined and it became unprofitable.

Post War Years

The Coast Line continued its program of expansion in 1945 by merging the Atlantic, Birmingham & Coast Railroad into itself, thus creating the Western Division. Stock control of the AB&C RR had been gained in 1926 when the Atlanta Birmingham & Atlantic Ry was reorganized after receivership. As an experiment, and because modern communications were nonexistent, the Western Division became the first part of the Coast Line to become fully equipped with radios.

During the late 1940's and early 1950's all of the steam locomotives were retired and replaced by

diesel power. For example, of the 628 active steam locomotives in 1948 most were gone by 1952, and the last one was retired in 1955. Of all the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad locomotives only 4 still exist. Wilmington is fortunate to have ACL #250 poised to relive its last assignment on the local passenger run to Fayetteville.

Black Thursday

December 15, 1955, Black Thursday, was the day the Board of Directors of the Coast Line announced from New York that the headquarters would move from Wilmington to a "more centrally located east coast city". For over 121 years the Coast Line had made its home in Wilmington, but the center of its trackage had moved southward. This made Wilmington's location illogical as the company's headquarters. Another factor was the bankruptcy of the Florida East Coast Ry, which the Coast Line was in a lengthy court battle to control. (The Coast Line lost and the FEC still exists as an independent railroad.) In any case, five years later on October 2, 1960 the new headquarters building opened in Jacksonville Florida and Wilmington lost 1500 paychecks pumping over \$7,000,000 per year into the area's economy.

More Expansion

In 1958 the Atlantic Coast Line and the Seaboard Air Line Railway announced plans to merge as one company. For the most part the Coast Line and the Seaboard paralleled each other from Richmond to Florida. In fact over 75 cities were served by both railroads. It would take until June of 1967 to finally get approval from the Interstate Commerce Commission to merge the two companies to form the Seaboard Coast Line Railroad (SCL). The SCL turned out to be a Coast Line company, run from Jacksonville by Coast Line men.

In the meantime the Coast Line merged another of its affiliated roads, the Charleston & Western Carolina Railroad into itself. Again control of the C&WC had been gained years ago (1897) and the C&WC had always been run as a miniature Coast Line with second hand equipment painted in the Coast Line scheme but lettered for the C&WC.

The Late 1960's

After the ACL-SAL merger the railroad had to react to changing times and the changed railroad. Duplicate routes, stations, and yard facilities were trimmed.

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The rise of the automobile and the interstate highway system forced two major changes on the rail industry. As more people traveled by car, passenger trains were no longer needed and began to be discontinued. Contracts to haul the mail kept many trains going in these lean years, but when the U.S. Post Office went to trucks the trains began to lose more money. First the locals and then some of the name long haul trains. In the 11 years between 1960 and the formation of AMTRAK to take over most of the nation's passenger rail service, one half of the trains out of Rocky Mt. were discontinued.

Long-haul trucking took cargo away from the railroads. At first most of what disappeared was local traffic, without local traffic the small depots closed. Then all the LCL (less than car load) freight went to trucks and companies, like United Parcel Service, forced the railroads more toward moving large quantities of bulk freight. But what also happened is that containers and truck trailers, loaded on flat cars, began to be pulled across the country by train, opening new business opportunities.

A New Identity

Starting in 1974 all the railroads owned, leased, or controlled by Seaboard Coast Line Industries (SCL, Louisville and Nashville RR, Georgia RR, Clinchfield, and the West Point Route) assumed the name Family Lines System. The individual railroads maintained their separate identities; no mergers took place. One local merger was the purchase of the Durham & Southern Ry by the SCL in 1977. By 1981, the D&S was completely absorbed and partially aban-

doned.

A giant holding company, called CSX, was formed in 1980. It started as a paper company, controlling the Family Lines System and the Chessie System, but soon took over all operations. The beginning of this consolidation came trains began to lose more money. First the locals and then some of the name long haul trains. In the 11 years between 1960 and the formation of AMTRAK to take over most of the nation's passenger rail service, one half of the trains out of Rocky Mt. were discontinued.

The Future

Railroads today are changing philosophies. Around the turn of the century short lines were merged into huge systems, now railroads are spinning off excess trackage and streamlining. In the process many new short lines are being created. CSX is continually reducing its system by removing unprofitable lines. Some of these routes have become short lines. The rest were just simply abandoned and removed. In the future the major railroads will control just the main lines, while a multitude of short lines will supply them with business. ✓



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