

Carolina Conductor



Volume 5 Number 4

Monthly Newsletter of the Carolina Railroad Heritage Association, Inc.

April 2018

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

Web Site: hubcityrrmuseum.org
Facebook: Carolina Railroad Heritage Association

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

Officers:

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Vice-President:
Steve Baker - 864-297-0918
Secretary:
Marv Havens - 864-292-3852
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Marv Havens - 864-292-3852

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Articles can be submitted anytime.

Whitcomb Locomotive Works



George Dexter Whitcomb

The Geo D. Whitcomb Company was founded by George Dexter Whitcomb (1834–1914), of Chicago, Illinois, who started a modest machine shop in 1878, and began the manufacture of coal mining machinery, laying the foundation for the concern that became known as The Whitcomb Locomotive Company.

Beginnings

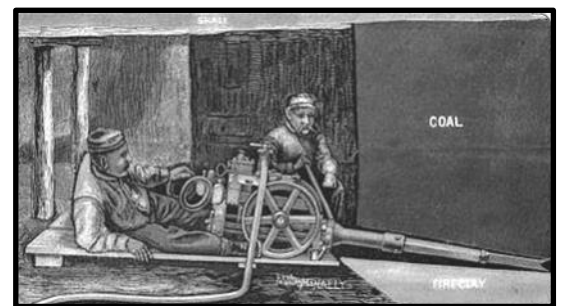
Early in life, George Dexter Whitcomb, moved with his family, from Brandon, VT, to Kent, OH. Here he started his business career, engaging with the Pan-Handle Railroad, as purchasing agent. While in this

employment, the air brake was invented, and he became very interested in its development. He cooperated in making the tests of the Westinghouse Air Brake and was one of the original stockholders and members of the Board of Directors of the Westinghouse Air Brake Company, when it was organized.

In 1868, George and his wife Ladora had a son, William Card Whitcomb. As an adult, William received an engineering degree from the newly founded, University of Southern California in 1889. Upon graduation he would join to assist and improve his father's business.

George left the Pan-Handle Railroad about 1870, moving to Chicago, where he took charge as manager of the Wilmington Coal Mining and Manufacturing Company's mines at Braidwood, IL. He also managed the Wilmington Coal Association which handled the output of the Braidwood, IL coal field.

He continued in charge of these mines until about 1878. While there, the Harrison Mining Machine was



Harrison Mining Machine

Continued on Page 4 - Whitcomb

Presidential Ramblings

March Meeting

Our March Meeting was held at the Woodmen of the World building in Greer on the 16th of March. Eighteen members and guests attended the meeting and enjoyed a program presented by Ryan Woods. Ryan gave us a short presentation on photography, including using your camera to get better photographs.

New Members

No new members this month.

April Meeting

Our April meeting will be held at the Woodmen of the World building on US 290 on April 20th at 7:00 pm. Anne Winans will be presenting a program on President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who traveled by rail more than any other President. His last rail travel from Warm Springs, GA to his resting place in Hyde Park, NY will be highlighted. The Presidential Train became the FDR Funeral Train upon Roosevelt's death 73 years ago, on April 12, 1945.



Historic Marker Unveiling

On Friday, March 23rd the Historic Marker that was installed at the Hub City RR Museum was unveiled. Mayor Junie White and Representative Glenn Reese did the honors of unveiling the monument that Jesse Guillory worked over the past year to obtain. Other speakers included Jesse, representatives from Norfolk Southern, The Boy Scouts, and historical societies. Over 50 attended, including 14 members of the CRHA. Refreshments were served after the ceremony.



Calendar of Events

Mark your calendars for the following events:

April 20, 2018 – Regular Meeting at Woodmen of the World Building

April 28, 2018 – Train Day at the Greenville Children's Museum

May 3, 2018 and **May 5, 2018** - Belk Charity Day—Volunteers needed.

May 7, 2018 – Board of Director's Meeting

May 12, 2018 – Train Day at the Depot, Magnolia Street, Spartanburg

May 18, 2018 – Regular Meeting at Woodmen of the World Building

May 19, 2018 - Train Show at Greenville Shrine Club, 119 Beverly Dr., Greenville, SC

May 19, 2018 – Clinton, SC - Rhythm of the Rails Festival

SC Railroad Museum BBQ Dinner Trains

The SC Railroad Museum will be running BBQ Dinner Trains in April, May and June 2018 at their Winnsboro location. The dates are April 28, May 5 & 12, and June 9. They may also have additional Dinner Trains later in the summer. Contact the SCRMM at 803-712-4135 for ticket prices.

Train Day at the Greenville The Children's Museum

We will be participating in a Train Day event at the Greenville Children's Museum located at Heritage Green in the old Greenville Library building. The event will take place on April 28th from 11 to 3. Mac is bringing his motor car, Bruce's will have his Lionel Thomas layout, and we will have a table with



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Arrivals

The Whitcomb Locomotive Co. Products



Departures

Continued from Page 1 - *Whitcomb*

brought to his attention. The concept of the power pick was that of a hand-held machine controlled by one person and operated by compressed air. He saw merit in the idea and took hold of the machine. He developed and perfected it into what is now known as the "Puncher Machine." This machine was the first successful undercutting machine put on the market in this country. He resigned his position with the coal company about 1878 to devote his entire time and attention to the mining machine business.

In 1886, he relocated to California, on account of his son, Carroll's, health. Here he purchased a tract of land and built a home and founded a suburb of Los Angeles, Glendora, California. He settled his family and spent most of the rest of his life at this place, he and wife Ladora and one of their daughters moved to Los Angeles where he died in 1914.

In 1896, his firm, then located at Orleans and Ohio Streets in Chicago, Illinois and was incorporated under the laws of Illinois as the George D. Whitcomb Company.

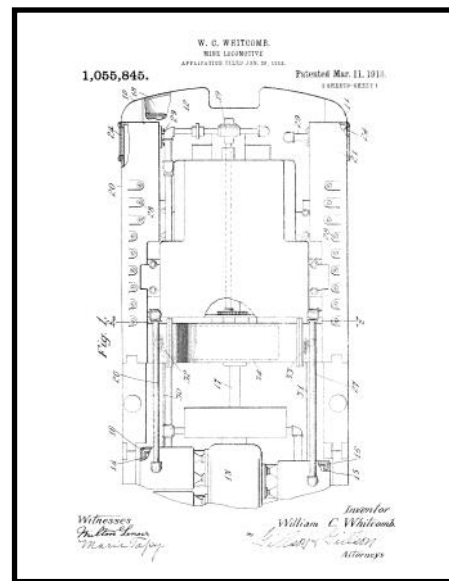
About 1900, William Card Whitcomb became Vice President of the company and soon hired William Frederick Eckert as an engineer. During this time the company was producing knitting machinery and



William C. Whitcomb

pneumatic mining equipment. In 1907, George D. Whitcomb resigned as an officer of his company, leaving William Whitcomb the president and majority stock owner.

Mules and man power had long been used exclusively as the motive power in moving coal from the mines, but this method was expensive and unsatisfactory. Because of the insistent demand for a more economical method, experiments were being conducted using for power—electricity, compressed air



Mine Loco Patent—W. C. Whitcomb

and rope drive. Gasoline engines were a novelty in those early days, nevertheless William Whitcomb, together with Eckert, decided the principle could be successfully applied to a small mine locomotive. In April, 1906 the first successful gasoline locomotive was built and installed in a large Central Illinois coal mine.

Rochelle Factory

The Geo D. Whitcomb Company's largest knitting machinery cus-

tomers was the Vassar Swiss Knitting Company of Rochelle, in northern Illinois. In 1907, the Geo D. Whitcomb Company moved to Rochelle, where they continued to build knitting machinery, and gasoline powered locomotives for coal and metal mining operation. The reputation of the Whitcomb gasoline locomotive spread at such a rapid rate, that before long, greater production facilities were needed. In 1912 the plant was again moved to larger facilities in Rochelle. At that time the company ended its knitting machinery production to concentrate on locomotive production.

George Dexter Whitcomb died in 1914, in Los Angeles, California. His son, William Card Whitcomb, assumed complete control of the company his father founded. Now, William became responsible for performing sales, accounting, engineering and assumed the function as the face of the company.

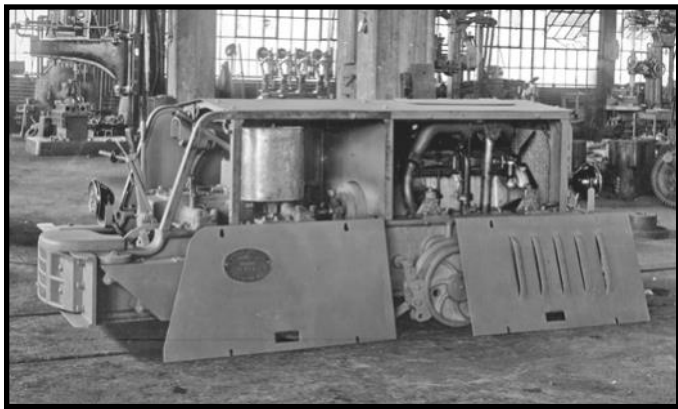
World War I saw the output of the Whitcomb Plant almost entirely devoted to government orders. Hundreds of armor-plated locomotives were built for overseas service on trench railways in France. These small 6-ton and 9-ton, narrow gauge locomotives proved highly efficient in trench warfare and they were used extensively in hauling needed supplies up to the front lines. In appreciation of their excellent contributions to the war effort, the Whitcomb Company was awarded the "Certificate of Merit" by the United States War Department.

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Manifest

Continued from Page 4 - *Whitcomb*

Many new innovations in the locomotive field were being introduced during this period. The first explosion-proof electric mine locomotive was designed and built by Whitcomb, in 1914. After exhaustive tests the United States Bureau of Mines issued Whitcomb a "Permissibility Plate." Whitcomb was the first builder of locomotives for underground work to receive such an endorsement. The first



Whitcomb internal combustion mine loco.

Whitcomb electric trolley locomotive was produced in 1921, and in 1929 Whitcomb engineers designed and built the largest gasoline-electric locomotive that had then been offered to American railroads. This development was closely followed by the diesel-electrics, which revolutionized and forever changed the American rail transportation system.

In September 1926 William Whitcomb now relaxed his personal oversight of the operation of his company. He hired Carl Heim from Chicago, to take over many of the company's operations management, including in the positions of Vice President and Treasurer.

Partin-Palmer Automobile

From 1914 to at least 1916 the Geo D. Whitcomb Company assembled Brass Era cars in Rochelle

Partin-Palmer Touring Car Model 32

SPECIFICATIONS	
Price, with touring body.....	\$675
Cylinder number.....	Four
Bore and Stroke.....	3 1/2 x 5 inches
Starting and lighting.....	Electric
Ignition.....	Connecticut
Cooling system.....	Thermo-siphon
Clutch type.....	Disc
Gears.....	Selective, three speeds
Wheelbase.....	110 inches
Tire size.....	32 x 3 1/2 inches

Manufactured by the Commonwealth Motors Company, Chicago, Ill.

Partin-Palmer Five-Passenger Touring Car with Streamline Body Selling for \$675.

for an automobile company, named Partin-Palmer.

The Partin Mfg. Co. was a large automobile sales agency in Chicago, that in 1913 joined with the Palmer Motor Car Co. of Henry Palmer in Detroit, to manufacture cycle cars,

with a model called Partin-Palmer. The company first moved to Chicago to take over the Staver-Chicago automobile factory. By 1914, Partin and Palmer were no longer with the company, and it moved to Rochelle where the Geo D. Whitcomb Company assembled them for a year.

In 1915 the company got into financial trouble in Chicago, and the car's name was changed to Commonwealth (1917-1922). In the 1916 catalog of the Commonwealth Motors Company, it states that Partin-Palmer automobiles were being produced in Rochelle under the personal supervision of Mr. W. C. Whitcomb, Vice-President of the Com-

monwealth Motors Company. Production moved to Joliet, Illinois. In 1922, Leland Goodspeed designed a new car for the company, which became the Checker Cab. A restored Partin-Palmer automobile is displayed at the Flagg Township Museum in Rochelle, Illinois.

Baldwin Locomotive Works

Beginning in 1927, the Baldwin Locomotive Works began representing the Geo. D. Whitcomb Co. in the sales division, using the global organization of Baldwin to assist Whitcomb in overseas sales.^[6] In 1928, Whitcomb and Heim conducted a recapitalization of the Whitcomb Company, and invited Baldwin to participate. Baldwin accepted and purchased about half of the offered stock, with William

WHITCOMB

JOINS
BALDWIN

Pioneer in the adaptation of the internal combustion engine to industrial locomotives . . . originator of many outstanding advancements in industrial locomotive design . . . producer of powerful, economical locomotives in sizes from 3 to 80 tons . . . famed wherever industrial hauling is to be done, the Geo. D. Whitcomb Company has reorganized . . . has incorporated as The Whitcomb Locomotive Company . . . has joined the group of manufacturers headed by that ever progressive, hundred year old leader in Motive Power, The Baldwin Locomotive Works. The new executive personnel extends greetings to all Whitcomb clients, both present and prospective.

THE WHITCOMB LOCOMOTIVE COMPANY
ROCHELLE, ILLINOIS

WHITCOMB
LOCOMOTIVES

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Rare Mileage

Continued from Page 5 - *Whitcomb*

Whitcomb and Carl Heim remaining in control of the majority of the company stock. In March 1930 Baldwin placed three of its officers on the Whitcomb board of directors, including then Baldwin President George Houston. This gave Baldwin three out of the seven board members.

By late 1930, in the Great Depression, The Whitcomb Company was having cash flow problems. Baldwin offered an unsecured loan for \$125,000, in the form of a 90-day promissory note issued in December 1930. The condition of the loan was that Baldwin would be given a fourth board member for the duration of the loan, giving Baldwin four out of the seven board members, and so majority control of the board. On March 5, 1931, the bank holding the largest cash reserve of the G. D. Whitcomb Company seized the account to apply towards another debt that the company owed the bank. This left the Geo D. Whitcomb Company unable to pay its debts.

With a majority of members on the board of directors, Baldwin was able to direct the board to file for



Typical small Whitcomb switcher.

voluntary bankruptcy. Although William Whitcomb voted against the action, the bankruptcy was filed in Federal Court in the Northern District of Illinois. This move ended the Whitcomb family ownership of one of the most innovative industrial companies of its time.

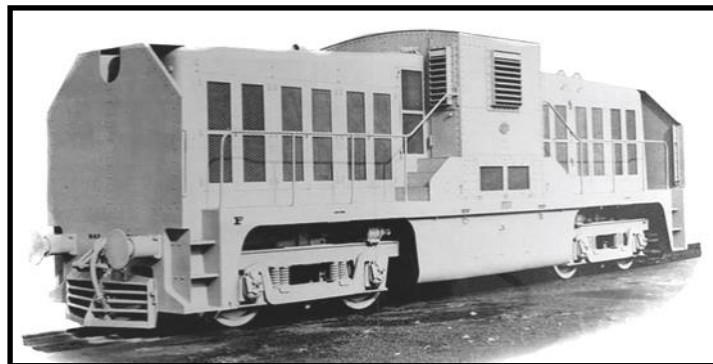
Whitcomb Locomotive Company

In April, Baldwin created a new corporation and called it the "Whitcomb Locomotive Company," in the state of Delaware. On April 13, 1931, the Federal Court put the assets of the Geo D. Whitcomb Company up for sale. Those assets were then purchased by the newly formed Whitcomb Locomotive Company, a fully owned subsidiary of the Baldwin Locomotive Works. Both William Whitcomb and Carl Heim were removed as officers of the company. Heim was tried for embezzlement of approximately \$75,000 of Geo D. Whitcomb Company funds but was acquitted.

On July 19, 1932, the Whitcomb Locomotive Company acquired the Milwaukee Locomotive Manufacturing Company. In February 1934, William Whitcomb filed suit against Baldwin Locomotive Works in Chicago Circuit Court, to recover the lost value of his company stock. However, after several years of litigation the case was ultimately dismissed in May 1937.

World War II

During World War II the Whitcomb Locomotive Company built road switchers for military service in Europe and the Middle East. The United Kingdom ordered the first fifty-two in 1941, from Baldwin Locomotive Works, who allocated the order to their Whitcomb Locomotive Company. They were center-cab Bo-Bo locomotives built as Whitcomb type 65-DE-14 and were followed by variants 65-DE-14A and



Armor plated locomotive for WWII.

65-DE-14B in 1942 and 1943.

They served in the North African Campaign and on military trains in Palestine and Lebanon, and then in the Italian campaign. The order was received by Whitcomb for the new design in December 1941, and the first locomotives were delivered to Africa by June 1942, less than half the normal development time for a new design. By late 1944 the company was producing one 65-ton locomotive a day.

On December 31, 1943, the War Department conferred the Army-Navy Production Award ("E" award) to the Whitcomb Locomotive Company and the presentation ceremony was held in the Rochelle

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Manifest

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plant on January 26, 1944. By the end of the war two additional stars (each star representing six months) were added for continued production performance.

From this design Whitcomb developed the 65-DE-19A for the US Army Transportation Corps. They were built in 1943 and 1944 and served in many theaters of operations including Great Britain,



France, Italy and Belgium.

Whitcomb 65-ton locomotives powered the first Allied trains into liberated Rome (July 4, 1944), Paris, the first supply and hospital trains into Belgium, the first train into Germany (April 9, 1945) as well as the first American powered military trains used during WW II (North Africa, early June 1942).

After the war many were sold to civilian railways and industrial railways in the U.S., while others were sold to Canada, Cuba, Mexico, and the Netherlands. However, the Dutch soon found theirs unsatisfactory and replaced both the diesel engines and the electric traction motors in the early 1950s.

Post World War II

Whitcomb continued to expand and progress after the war and the increased volume of business made it essential to expand storage and shipping facilities. A warehouse complete with the latest in material handling equipment was erected in 1947. A ten-ton overhead yard crane was installed to facilitate handling and storage of steel slabs and sheets. During 1948, a combination loading dock and locomotive test building was erected.

The End

The last Whitcomb Locomotive Company locomotive manufactured at Ro-

chelle was shipped on January 4, 1952 (construction number 61189). It was a 25-ton diesel-electric locomotive delivered to the Central Procurement Agency of the Transportation Corps. This locomotive was lettered and numbered USN No. 65-00330.

In February 1952 locomotive production was moved from Rochelle in Illinois to Baldwin's factory in Eddystone, Pennsylvania. Industrial locomotives continued to be built under the Whitcomb name at Eddystone through the end of December 1952, when the name was dropped. All Whitcomb line locomotives built after then carried the B-L-H identification name.

Production of the Whitcomb Locomotive Company line, with the latter ones under B-L-H name, came to an end in March 1956 — after producing approximately 5,000 locomotives.



Gulf Oil Whitcomb 65 ton loco in 1979.

Marker Lights



Continued from Page 2 - *Ramblings*

museum artifacts and photos, old railroad videos, and the P'n'S Modular N scale club will have a small N scale layout.

The museum has a display that features the books about "The Box-car Children" that includes a very well-done replica of a box car. If you would like to help with this event, please let us know. We can use a couple more volunteers to man all the different tables.

Future Programs

If you would like to present a program to the group in 2018, please let Steve Baker know of your desire. We will be glad to schedule you into an open date.

Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are always needed at the Spartanburg Museum and Caboose on Wednesdays and Saturdays from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Typically at least one Director

will be there to open and close the facility, but members are needed to welcome guests, receive donations and handle sales of items. For the first three months of 2018 our visitor number have increased by approximately 35 percent. Your help as a volunteer would ensure that every visitor leaves having an enjoyable visit. Please let me know at the email or phone number below if you have a day you would like to spend as a volunteer. Volunteering one day each month would help us out greatly. Thanks go out to those who have volunteered recently.

Thanks, Dave Winans
864-963-4739
dwinans4739@charter.net



CRHA President making remarks at the historical marker unveiling.

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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CAROLINA CONDUCTOR



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