

The Beginnings

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

“A MUD HOLE.”

Imagine a scene of unpaved paths called “streets;” a single store next to the railroad; an upright plank shack used for the depot; black smoke rolling over the trees onto freshly washed sheets, carrying with it cinders and smut from the wood and coal fires in the chuffing steam engines; all of this could describe what Flomaton was like in its formative years.

James A. Wilkinson came from Illinois to Evansville, Alabama, a town just north and east of Canoe. Wilkinson was the bookkeeper at the sawmill there until it burned and the owners decided to not rebuild. He eventually came to Flomaton and became one of its doctors. R. W. Brooks worked at the sawmill in Evansville, too, and was well acquainted with Wilkinson.

Brooks decided to move to Bluff Springs and was employed by a mill there. While living there, he became friendly with Rube Burrow and Bob Hardy, two desperados mentioned later on in this book. In his later years he became a prolific historian and writer. He even started a newspaper in Century, called the *Century News*, in that town’s seminal years of the early 1900s.

He began writing a column for *The Flomaton Journal* and wrote primarily of his own experiences while in this area. In December of 1939, he commented in the *Journal* on what he recalled from 1872 of the condition of the settlement eventually called Flomaton. This is his writing, just as it was printed in that newspaper:

“I stood on the streets of Flomaton a few days ago and looked at the nice paved streets and fine sidewalks and splendid brick business buildings, and the fine residences, and as I stood and looked at these improvements, my mind ran back to 1872 when the Pensacola contractor, Major Reuter, drove the last



spike on the 9th day of April of that year, which connected it with the main line of the Mobile & Montgomery Railroad.

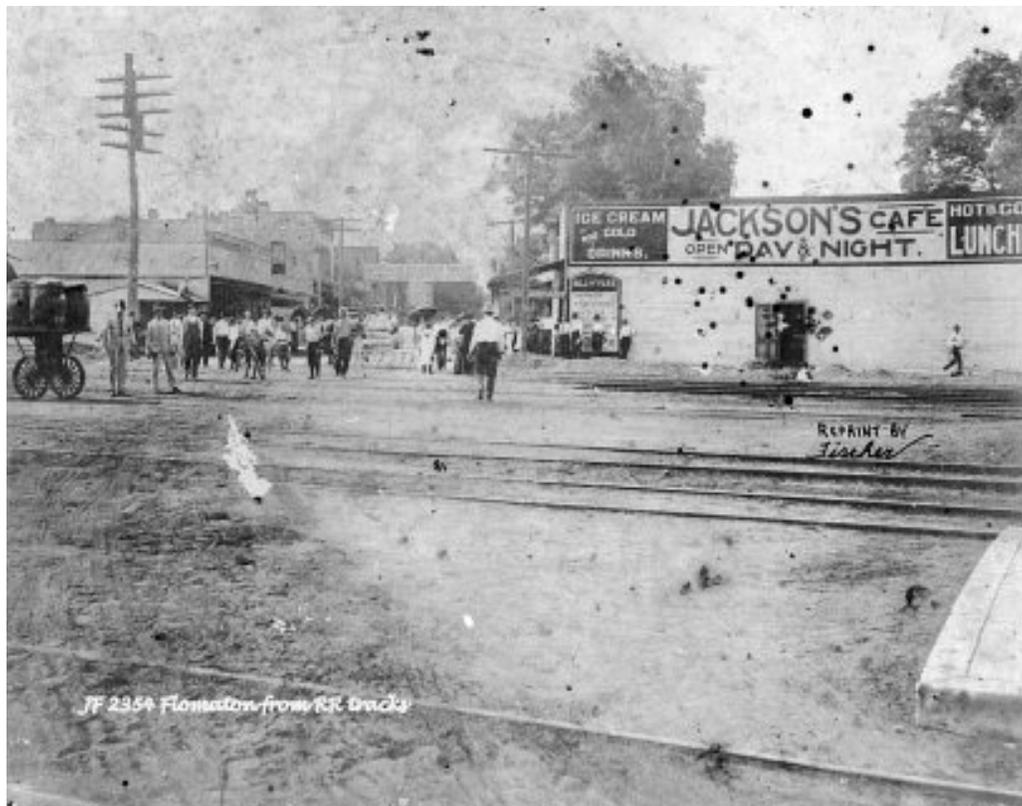
“As I thought of these improvements, I marveled at the change and if I was to put down here just how it looked at that time many of the younger generation would think I was overdoing the thing and that the town of Flomaton could never have been that bad looking, but I want to assure the younger generation of Flomaton that it can't be over drawn.

(Continued on page 4)

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



On this page are two different views of Palafox Street looking north from the tracks: Above is dated 1914. On the left is Vogel's restaurant; next door is a two-story building, the Bank of Flomaton. On the right is Jackson's Café and Gordon's Bargain House.



**CHRISTMAS
GROCERIES**



A Christmas basket packed with assorted Christmas foods is a convenient way to buy your own Christmas dinner or as a charity gift you wish to make on Christmas day. Priced according to the assortment selected.

Oranges, per dozen	20c up
Pork, per lb.	20c up
Beef, per lb.	20c up

**COME IN AND GET A NICE PORK OR BEEF
ROAST FOR CHRISTMAS DINNER**

**WE WISH YOU A MERRY
CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR**

D. C. Nolin
MARKET AND GREEN GROCERIES
WE DELIVER—PHONE US

Everything Will Be Strictly Cash After January First

(Continued from page 2)

"The south wye was the last to be connected with the main line and an upright plank make-shift of a Depot was placed just about two car lengths of the main line and there the freight and tickets was to be dispensed to the public that could brave the mud and slush that was all around it.

"A Mr. Frisbee, a northern man, was the agent. He came from some where in Illinois coming down with Dr. James A. Wilkinson who practiced medicine in Flomaton and died

there. Mr. Frisbee was the most belligerent man I ever knew. He was always talking about fighting and said just what he would do to a man that attacked him.

One day he was talking that way when one of the log drivers of Big Escambia was in the office and he promptly floored the gentleman and was pounding him in the good old fashioned way when the boys pulled him off. Mr. Frisbee got up with a bloody nose and a black eye. From that day I never heard the gentle-

(Continued on page 5)

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

(Continued from page 4)

man bragging as to he could do to any body.

“The road was first coupled up Pollard, the County seat had about six saloons in it as ever store in those days sold whiskey so a Mrs. Wisner who lived there decided she would move to a new place and put up a store. She built just where the Jackson Hotel is now, wading around in the mud till they got her a small shack and she opened up a store.

“Nobody there to buy as she was actually the lone inhabitant of the town to be but business was flush as logs were driven down the creek and those men got good wages and they liked their liker and spent it freely and soon the lady was taking in shekels enough to build her a good store and she kept it up for years and later other people came and other stores located there and see what it is today

“The first time I saw Flomaton it looked like it was about worth fifty cents provided you could do anything with a mud hole. When Col. W. D. Chipley was made Superintendent of the Pensacola division he came to Flomaton to build a depot right where it is now and if the people that is in Flomaton could see the car load after car load of sand and gravel and cinders, anything that fill up, they certainly would be astonished at the amount of stuff that is under that nice looking station.

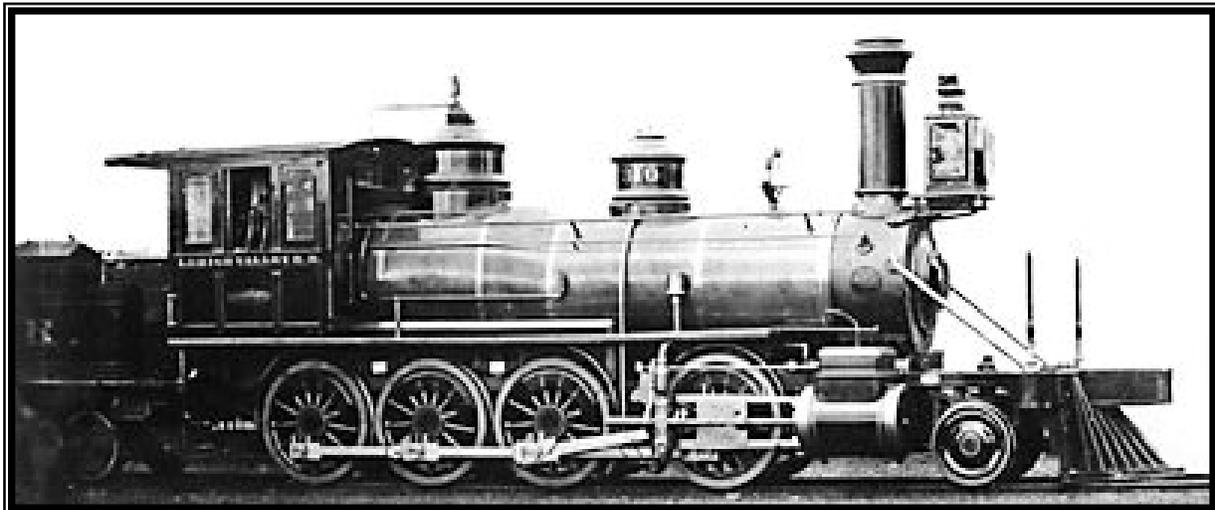
Col. Chipley made a success of building the station but not the one that is there now as it has been burned a couple of

times since then.

“When the rail road was connected up the town of Flomaton was not much as that was what the contractor named it.” ■



Col. W.D. Chipley circa 1894



Baldwin assembled Lehigh Valley 2-8-0 No. 310 in 1876 - the heaviest locomotive the firm had built up to that time – may be typical of the engines seen passing through Flomaton

HUNTERS AND GATHERERS

There's a lot to be said of the days prior to the time of railroading. Even before the era earlier than the American Indian – eons before then, the earth was beginning its work toward making itself as it is today. Geologists tell us as the last ice age was coming to a close and the giant glaciers were receding, the sandy loam left behind became ideal soil for the longleaf pine, part of Flomaton's past, and some of its present.

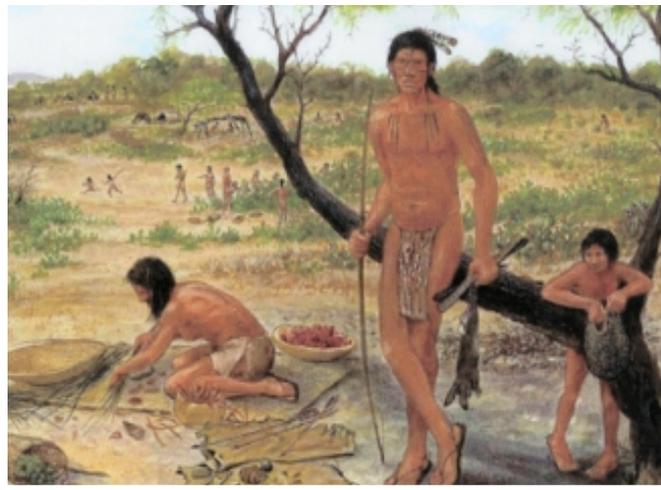
Thick pine forests, abundant throughout this region of South Alabama and Northwest Florida, provided plenty of game for the first inhabitants. The relatively mild weather made for long growing seasons so domesticated vegetables, berries, fruits, and grains fit well into the lifestyle of these "hunters and gatherers."

(<http://mcclungmuseum.utk.edu/pernex/archaeol/xra-text.htm>)

It's believed the trees were so tall that it was as if a canopy covered the ground. Though the forests were thick, underbrush such as we know in the woods today could not grow for lack of direct sunlight. There was no obstacle for seeing long distances while hunting in the pine flats.

Trails, such as the trading paths created by the Indians, crisscrossed at random intervals and provided the means of transportation as Native Americans made their way on foot from one village to another.

One such path ran very near what was to become Flomaton: the Wolf Trail. (See note below) Named for a powerful chief, this trail made it possible for the Spanish and the English in Northwest Florida to barter for animal skins to send back to their homeland. The pelts brought wealth and status to the traders who soon learned that providing guns and ammunition in exchange for the Indians' goods was not only more profitable, but expedient.



A "Hunting and Gathering" family gathering berries in the background and in front, other members of the group making baskets in their camp.

It was a trading expedition that sparked many fatal encounters between settlers and Indians. A group of Indians were returning from Pensacola on the Wolf Trail with weapons and ammunition when militia ambushed them at Burnt Corn Creek, near what is now the Escambia-Conecuh county line. It is widely held that was what precipitated the long Creek Indian War between the years 1812-1819.

The Indians were encouraged by the Spanish and the British to wreak havoc on the white settlers who were taking their land. They were unwittingly playing into the Europeans' strategy of making the region hostile for American settlers to come near the border with Spanish West Florida. This reduced the military threat to the security of Spanish Pensacola, the southern terminus of the Wolf Trail. ■

NOTE: Also known as The "Old Wolf Path," it is one of many Indian trails and horse paths that passed through South Alabama and led to Pensacola, Florida. The "Old Wolf Path" was often used by the Creek Indians to travel to Pensacola to trade with the Spanish who controlled Florida during that period. An expedition of Creek Indians was returning from Pensacola and were surprised and attacked on the path by the U.S. military at Burnt Corn Spring on July 27, 1813. That unsuccessful attack became known as the "Battle of Burnt Corn" which led to the Creek Indians War of 1813 and 1814.)

FLOMATON'S FORTUNES ARE
DIRECTLY LINKED TO PENSACOLA

RAILROADS WERE SEEN AS KEYS TO PROSPERITY FOR PENSACOLA

Flomaton is located on the L&N railroad in Sections 23, 22, and 34, Township 1N Range 8E, on the south side of Big Escambia Creek, and borders the State line between Alabama and Florida. The town became a railroad center in the late 19th century. It soon had several hotels and businesses.

However, the town did not do all this on its own. The part Pensacola, Florida took in birthing the town of Flomaton should be told.

A railroad to Alabama was considered to be the key to growth and prosperity for Pensacola. Forward-thinking men there believed in the city's success as far back as the 1830s and Pensacola just needed to open another avenue of commerce to the north; railroads gave that opportunity. Still in the late 1800s, they spoke of the L&N doubling the city's size with the development of "steel plants, shoe factories, woodenware works, tanneries, shipbuilding yards, soap factories and kindred enterprises." (*Pensacola of Today: Bliss' Quarterly*, p 89). Exports to "Spanish America" and Scandinavian vessels handled that trade and found it lucrative.

Although a charter for the Ala-Fla railroad was granted in the 1830s by territorial Florida, surveys were done and right-of-way purchased to Columbus, Georgia, it wasn't until the early 1860s that a Pensacola-Pollard link was completed. Nevertheless, almost as soon as the Pensacola-Pollard connection was completed, the railroad was destroyed, a victim of the conflict of the War Between the States. ■

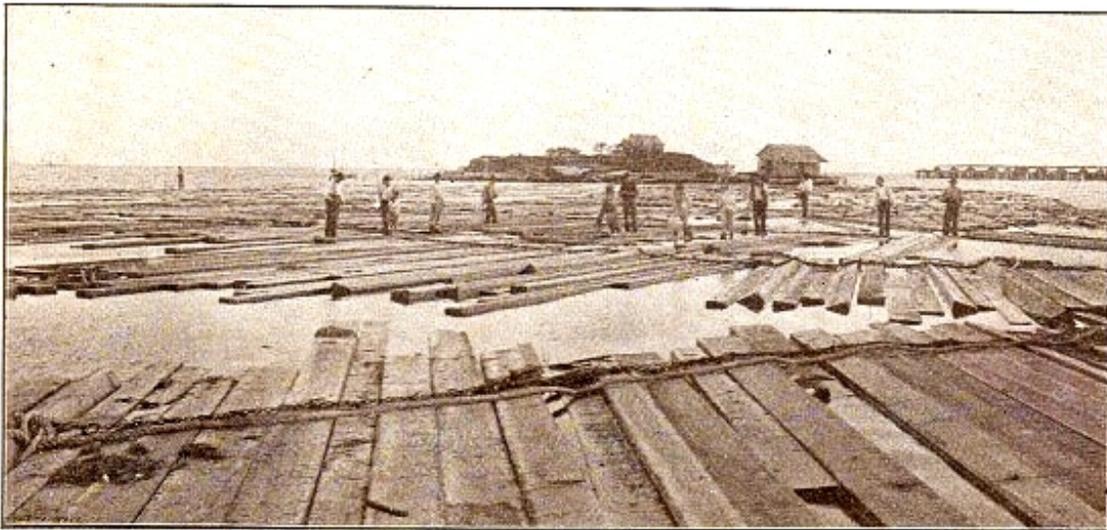


Photo by Sala.

Sea of Timber Awaiting Ships.

A "Sea of Timber" in Pensacola Bay after having been floated down the Escambia/Conecuh River. Pensacola's hopes for expanded markets was based on railroads.

Bliss's Quarterly, 1896

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

“NO MAN IS AN ISLAND”

Some may say that what happens in Pensacola or Mobile doesn't matter to Flomaton, but that is far from the truth. Events occurring in these cities since the 1700s, particularly in Pensacola, had far-reaching consequences on Flomaton and Escambia County, Alabama.

Over time, both Mobile and Pensacola had developed a thriving commerce in shipping and overland trade, although Mobile far surpassed Pensacola. River traffic along the numerous rivers emptying into Mobile Bay was several times what Pensacola experienced. The comparatively tiny Escambia River was rarely deep enough to support commercial vessels for any distance, while the Mobile, Alabama and Tombigbee rivers were navigable for miles.

Even so, Pensacola became an important trade center for the Creek and other Indian tribes in the immediate region, probably due to the trade paths that had few creeks, rivers and swamps over which to cross.

In West Florida during the British period

from the 1760s until the 1780s, England increased its military presence in Pensacola. Being strong here gave them nearly absolute control of West Florida against the upstart Americans in the possible expansion of the Alabama Territory and any designs they might have for the upper Gulf of Mexico. However, the American Revolution

stopped further development of the region by the British.

In 1781, Spain regained control of Florida. During this last period of Spanish control, Pensacola remained a small isolated settlement. Spain was weak and could not control or govern Florida effectively.

control or govern Florida effectively.

During the turmoil of the early 1800s, even inciting local tribes to harass settlers in the Alabama Territory wasn't enough to curtail an influx of white settlers from points north. The southern Alabama wilderness gradually became filled with pioneers willing to face danger to make new lives for themselves and their families.

Much may be said about General Andrew Jackson's army traveling near the site of the town of Flomaton. Many historical documents indicate that



o by Turton.

**Pensacola's busy waterfront needed railroads for commerce to grow
(Bliss Quarterly, 1896)**

(Continued on page 9)

No Man is an Island The entire quote: *“No man is an Island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the Continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as if a manor of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in Mankind;...”* John Donne (Meditation XVII; English clergyman & poet 1572 – 1631).

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

(Continued from page 8)

Jackson made camp with his army on Big Escambia Creek about seven miles from what is known today as Flomaton in June, 1816. The following officers were listed as being there: Captains Richard Whartenby, August I. Langham, David E. Twiggs, Richard R. Bell, George Vashon and John S. Allison.

With Andrew Jackson's appearance on the scene, Pensacola and Spanish Florida became a territory of the United States in 1821. "Little is [documented] of the area after that time until the Civil War era." (*Tri-City Ledger*, November 18, 1981).

By then two major industries had taken hold in Pensacola: brick-making



Daguerreotype of Andrew Jackson in his latter years, possibly taken April, 1845

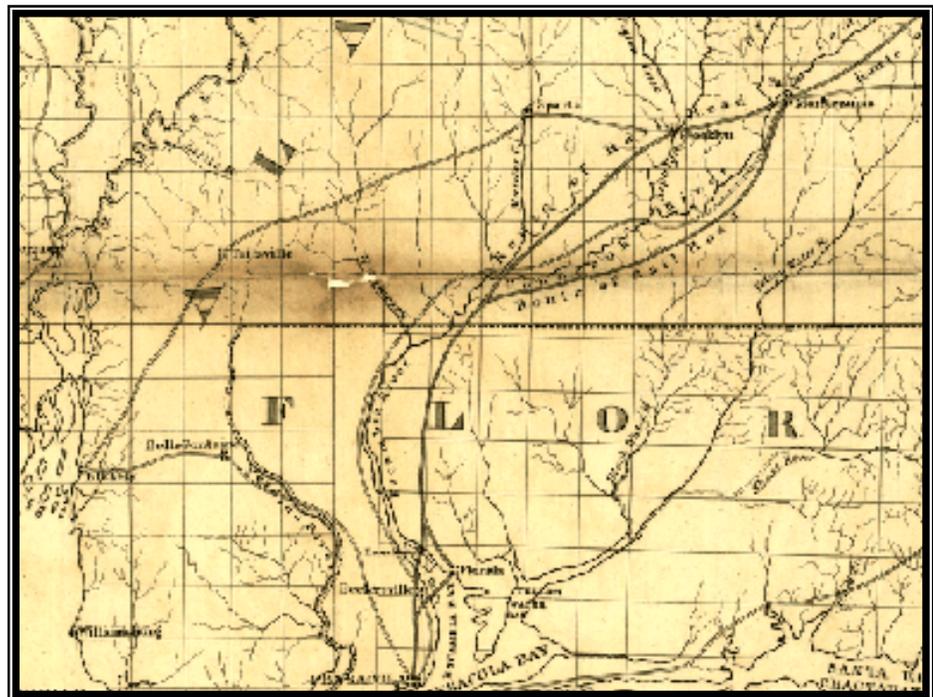
and lumber. With its perfect harbor and ready access to the open waters of the Gulf of Mexico, Pensacola slowly developed into a major Gulf Coast seaport. The only question was how could they get more exports to the port and more quickly?

RAILROADS EXPANDED AREA MARKETS

The Escambia/Conochee River had proven to be one way to get timber to the port in Pensacola. Squared-off

(Continued on page 10)

An 1836 map showing one of the many proposed railroad routes from Pensacola, Florida. This map shows one to Columbus, Georgia



Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

(Continued from page 9)

timbers and logs were lashed together and floated downstream from landings deep into southern Alabama. Yet, the town harbor's under-used capacity to handle more trade was eating at the hearts of some capitalists in Pensacola. They needed a way to bring more goods in and ship more out.

The best way, they envisioned, was to build a railroad from Pensacola to Montgomery, Alabama, where already established railroads could transport lumber and bricks to markets all over the nation.

Going back to near the beginnings of the railroads in this region, in 1834, intense lobbying by West Florida businessmen, influenced the Florida territorial legislature to issue a charter for The Florida, Alabama & Georgia Railroad. Nothing significant happened beyond that until Alabama chartered the Alabama, Florida & Georgia Railroad (notice that the state issuing the charter was listed first in the name). Florida accepted the Alabama charter in 1835. Construction was started and the plan to con-

nect Pensacola with Montgomery was on its way.

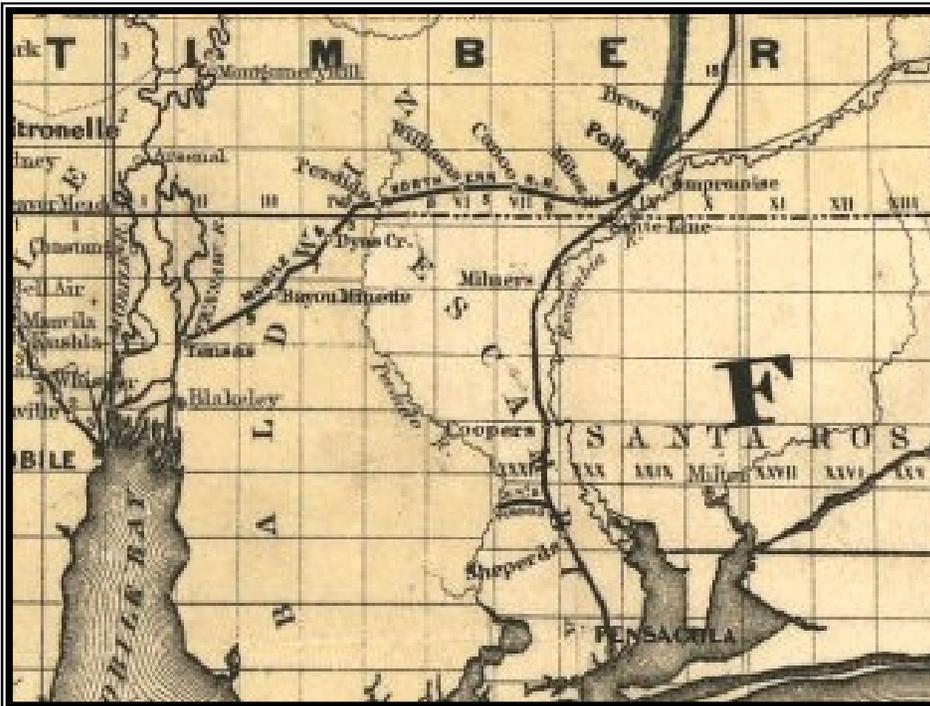
However, the Panic of 1837 caused the Bank of Pensacola, which had floated the bonds for the railroad, to fail, and the Territory of Florida repudiated its backing of the bonds. The company collapsed without ever operating a train.

(Turner, Gregg. (2003) A Short History of Florida Railroads. Charleston, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing. ISBN 0-7385-2421-2. Retrieved from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_railroads_incorporated_in_Florida)

In 1853 The Alabama & Florida Railroad was chartered by the State of Florida. In 1861, just in time for the War Between the States, its first track between Pollard and Pensacola was opened. About at the same time, the Mobile and Great Northern was begun between at Pollard and the western end at Tensas [now Hurricane], Alabama, on the east bank of the Tensaw River.

March 28, 1861 was the date the work began for the M&GN. The schedule for this section's completion was at first in September of that

(Continued on page 11)



**Map showing
Ala-Fla RR from
Pensacola to
Pollard, ca.
1865**

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

(Continued from page 10)

year, then October. But money ran out and the Confederate government provided an emergency loan of \$15,000. The track was opened for service November 15. Southward and Westward from Tensas, the connection to Mobile was completed by ferries.

The route of the Alabama & Florida Railroad was just east of the junction now at Flomaton, from just below what's now Century, Florida. The track was laid almost at a straight line to Pollard. (You can prove its route to Pollard by drawing a line from Jefferson Avenue in old Century straight toward Pollard). This route went across the Escambia River (Big Escambia Creek was then called "river"), adjacent to Hardy Ferry (now "Hardy Ferry Bridge" or "Fannie Bridge").

Although the Alabama and Florida portions of the A&F shared similar names, they were actually two different railroads. The notion of states' rights before the Civil War required that each state should bear the responsibility for its own improvements.

WAR BETWEEN THE STATES

In 1862 the Confederacy tore up the line between Gonzalez, Florida and Pine Barren, and later all the way to Pollard, to prevent it falling into Union hands. They used some of the rail and ties at Canoe, among other places,

to build sidings along the Mobile and Great Northern railroad, which ran from Montgomery toward Mobile.

The A&F was left intact to Montgomery, although it took an emergency loan from the State of Alabama of \$30,000 in the spring of 1861 to hasten its completion. (*The Railroads of the Confederacy*, Black, Robert C.; University of North Carolina Press; 1998; originally printed by Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1952)

Even though the trestles were not all intact between Pollard and Gonzalez, Florida, they



Typical of wood-burning steam locomotives used during the War Between the States through the late 1800s

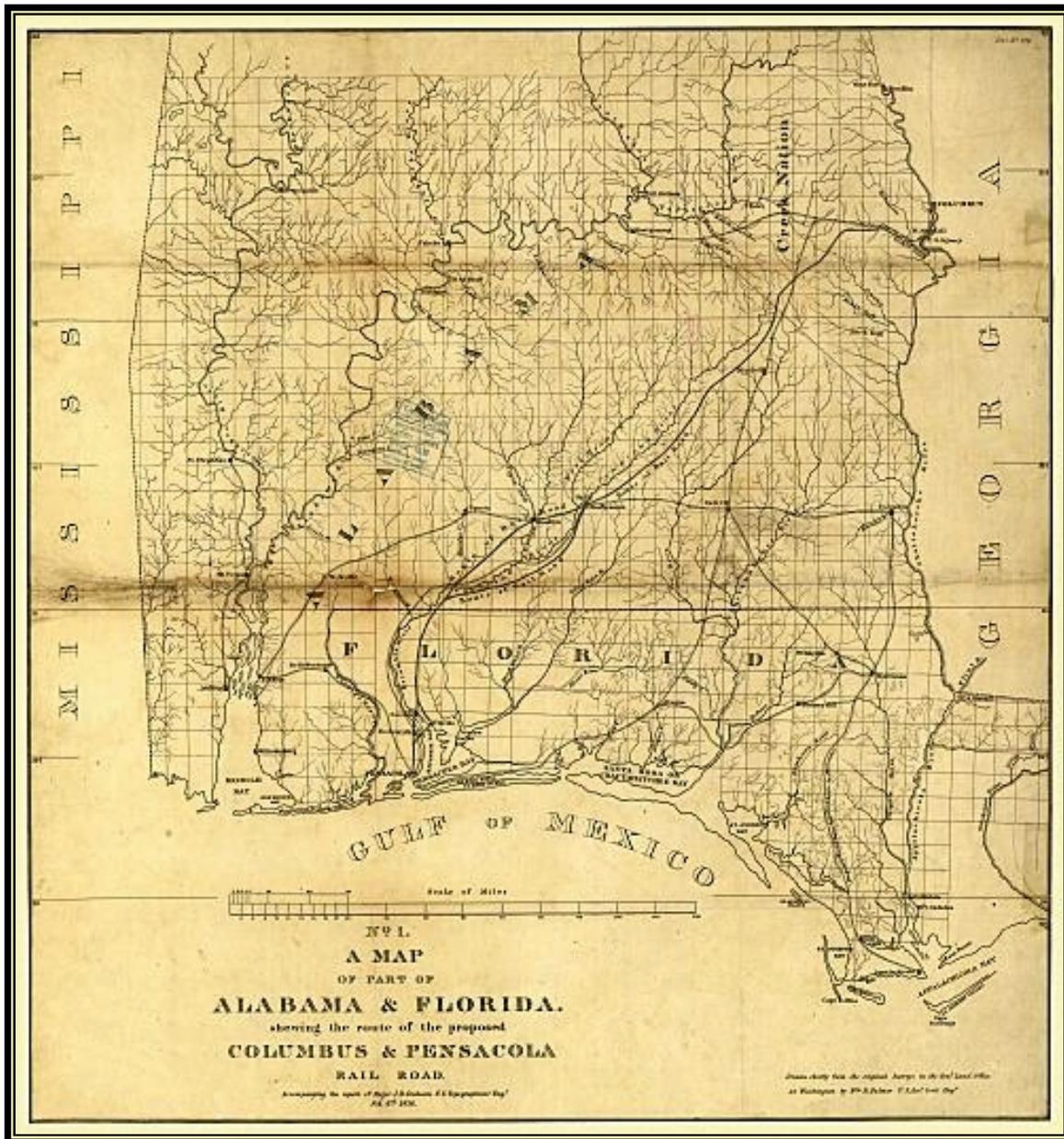
were closely guarded by Confederate soldiers during the last two years of the war (*Word From Camp Pollard*, William Davidson). Federal troops succeeded in destroying "...a supply depot, filled with military clothing and equipment, along with several bridges and miles of railroad track over the Little Escambia River [Big Escambia Creek at Fannie] were destroyed" in 1864. Between the Confederacy and the Union, the A&F (FL) didn't have a friend in the

world. The decimation of the A&F (FL) was complete (*Buckman, Rob. Flomaton, Alabama 1861 to 2001: A Brief Chronological Railroad History*, Rob's Railroad Images Online. 09 Jul 2006 <<http://www.3ri.com/flomaton>>).

In 1869 the aftermath of the War, the A&F (FL) tried to rebuild from Pensacola to Pollard. The task caused the company to go bankrupt and its prime stock holder, the City of Pensacola, sold it at foreclosure to the new Pensacola & Louisville (P&L) Railroad. It was reorgan-

(Continued on page 13)

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



Another early map showing the proposed route from Pensacola to Columbus, Georgia among several other routes in the region

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

(Continued from page 11)

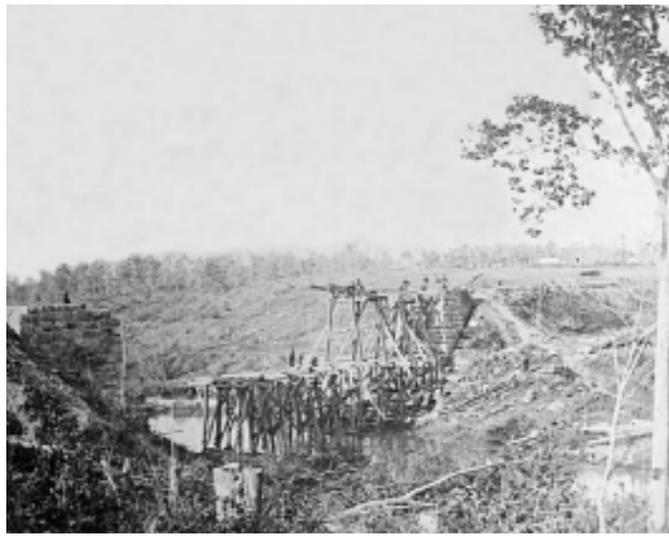
ized as the Pensacola Railroad in 18770 which leased it from the L&N, and its interests were sold to the Louisville and Nashville Railroad a few years later. For all intents and purposes the M&GN owned & operated the A&F (AL) from Pollard to Montgomery. The companies later combined to become the Mobile & Montgomery (M&M) Railroad.

Earlier, in 1868, two cases heard by the Supreme Court of the United States make the 1868 merger year uncertain. The Court cases indicate the sale of the A&F (FL) to the P&L wasn't completed until 1872

The P&L completed rebuilding the Pensacola portion in 1870 with a new path connecting to the M&M Railroad at the newly named Pensacola Junction, instead of Pollard. One of the reasons given for this move was the expense of rebuilding and future maintenance of the 2,000 foot trestle across the Escambia River at Fannie. Speculation also has it that rising water during flood periods frequently washed out other trestles and rail beds. Moving the track further away from the river and swamp would avoid those recurring costs.

The activity of the railroad companies was far from being finished, even if the track itself was laid. In 1880, the Selma & Gulf (S&G) deeded its line from the M&M at Pensacola Junction north to Pineapple, Alabama to the Louisville and Nashville (L&N), changing the name to the Pensacola and Selma (P&S).

(Continued on page 15)



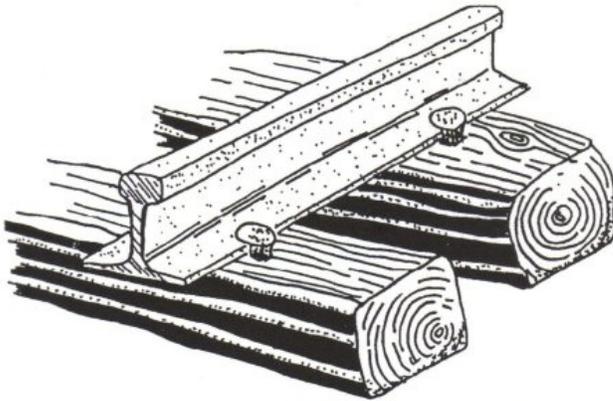
(Above) Damage like this trestle was done by both sides during the War of Yankee Aggression

**(Below)
Utter destruction of a railroad station in Richmond,
Virginia—1865**

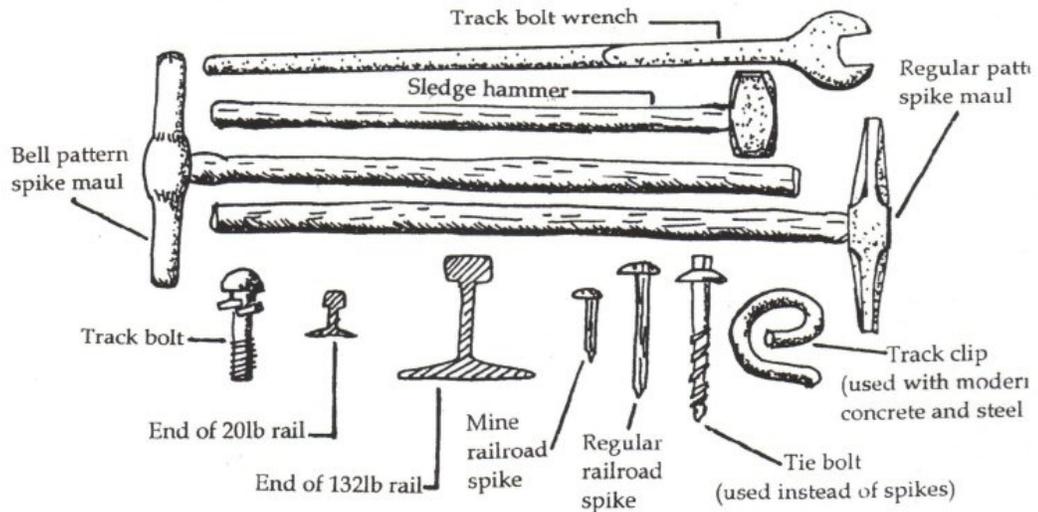


WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD

Putting together railroad track is called track-laying. Laying railroad track was hard work using heavy tools. Today, track laying is usually done with the help of machines. Sometimes short lengths of track are still laid by hand. Railroad track is very heavy, sometimes one hundred and forty pounds per yard.



In the old days, railroad ties were often made from the green wood of local trees. They were sometimes only flattened on top and bottom. The rails were put directly on the ties and held down by railroad spikes. The first picture shows how old time track was put together. The second picture shows some of the tools and parts you would use if you were "workin' on the railroad."



Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

(Continued from page 13)

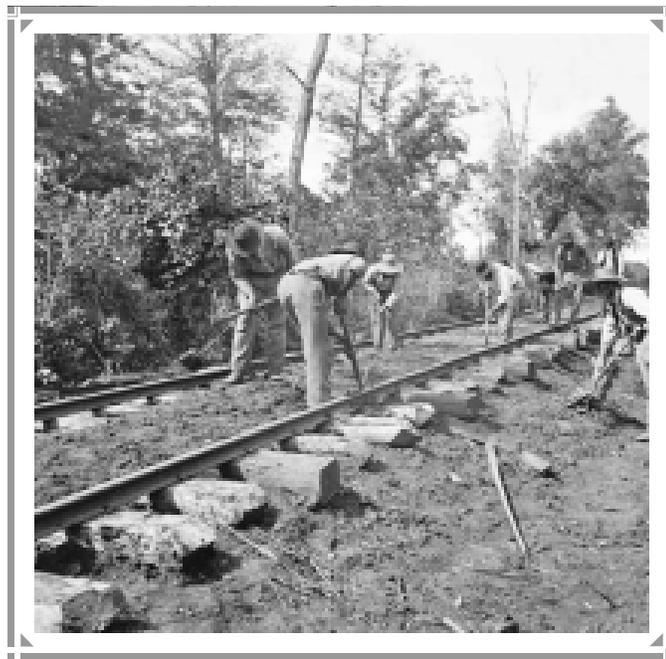
The L&N completed its acquisition of the M&M this same year.

Incidentally, in 1881 an eastward connection from Pensacola began. Construction of the Pensacola & Atlantic (P&A) was supposedly underwritten by the L&N to connect Pensacola to eastern railroads at Chattahoochee. In 1882 the P&A bridge was completed across Escambia Bay under Col. W. Chipley's management.

The P&A line to Chattahoochee was com-

pleted in August, finally giving Pensacola a rail route to the east and increasing the traffic, both passenger and freight, through the Pensacola Junction.

In 1885, a majority share of the P&A was obtained by the L&N. The L&N retained ownership of the M&M, P&A, and P&L for the next 97 years, until 1982. After some other name changes, Seaboard Coast Line, for example, we know the railroad now as CSX Transportation. ■



Above, circa 1863
Just about all work on railroads in the 1860s was
done by hand

A WILDERNESS

At first, there was no such thing as “Flomaton,” even after the railroad came through. The iron rails that bore the goods and people from Mobile to all points north and back again were the only things that divided the forest at this spot near the Escambia River, as Big Escambia Creek was then called.

One would likely not recognize the Conecuh/ Escambia River with all the traffic. It was once a busy highway, traveled mostly by men transporting logs to sawmills along the river or timber to Pensacola. There was also a need to cross the river and that called for bridges and local ferries.

At first there were no bridges spanning the river. Some industrious men met the need and operated ferries or flats as they were called. Ferries operated at various places along the Conecuh and Escambia rivers. They made it simple for people, horses and even wagons to cross the river.

According to Roy Brewton from McDavid who was quoted in an article by writer Nancy Brook years ago in *The Tri-City Ledger*, “The

ferries moved on a taut cable stretched across the river. The ferryman would attach a hook to the cable and walk backwards on the ferry, pulling the ferry forward. He would do this repeatedly until the ferry was across..

“The ferries operated for a while after bridges began to be built in the area, but soon were put out of business. “Along about that time, the timber industry began to start booming around here too,” said Brewton.

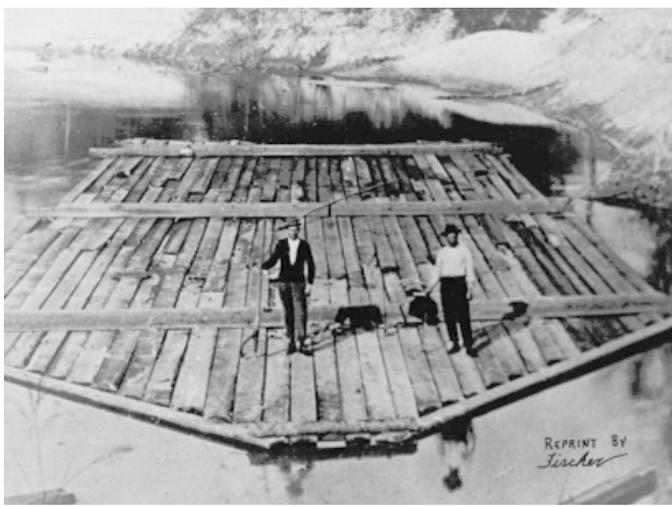
Log and timber rafts “ran the river all the time transporting timber from various places to Pensacola,” he said.

The rafts were made of several hundred pieces of timber pegged together and were guided by oar blades, one at the back of the raft and another at the front. The front of the raft came to a kind of point similar in shape to an arrowhead. This helped prevent the raft from hanging on driftwood and stumps in the river.

“Some of the last rafts to run in the river were put in at Brewton in about 1937,” Brewton said. As time went on, there was a new mode of transportation of goods and materials:

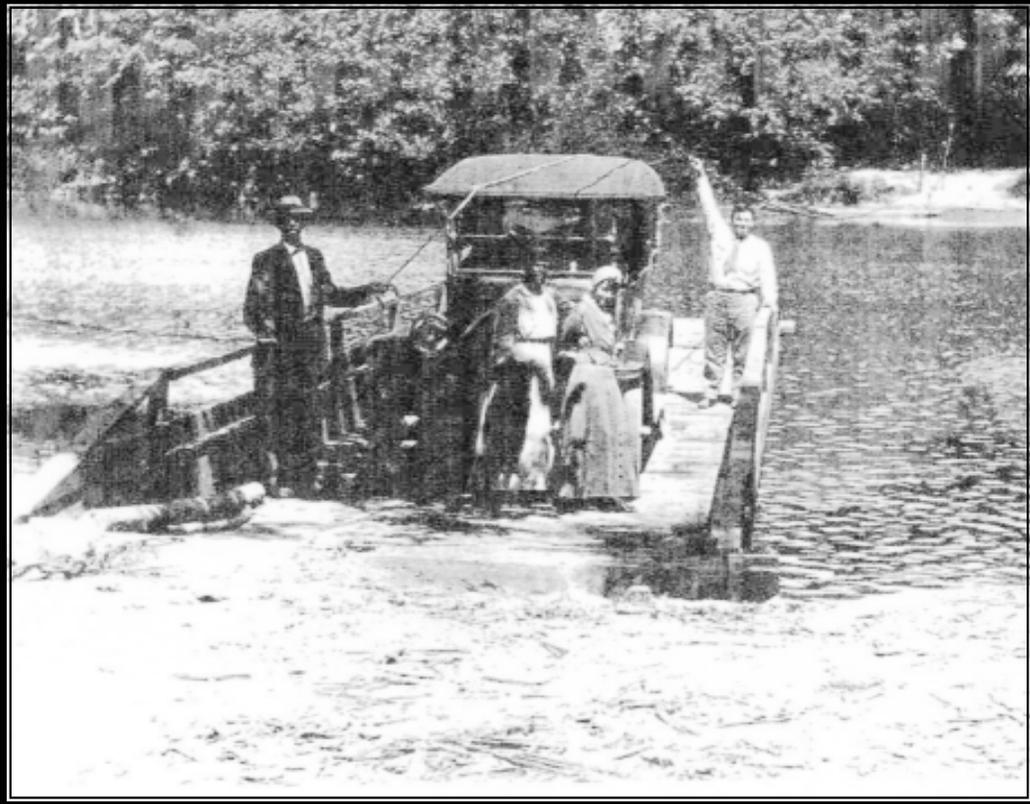
the railroad. There were a few farms but no highways across land. There were plenty of squirrels and other game, but even they didn’t even stay around once the loud, rumbling, smelly locomotives came thundering through. The fish in the creeks probably hunted for a safe place when they felt the earth shake as ton after ton of steel and noise rolled over the wooden trestles.

When the wooden rafts were sold in Pensacola, the men either wound up walking home or after the trains began making regular trips to Flomaton, they might catch a train ride. ■



A raft of timbers on its way to Pensacola

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



Ferry across the Escambia River near the present-day Highway 4 bridge. The ferry was run by McCurdys first and in later years, by Jacksons. This picture is circa 1920.

In 1930 two children of William E. and Mary Rittenberry drowned at this crossing. L.D. Weaver recovered the bodies.



Snagboats removed snags, underwater trees, stumps, or branches that created obstructions to river navigation. A large grapple or clamshell on the snagboat's boom pulled these obstacles from the river. Daily operations removed approximately 120-170 snags per day!

Snagboats operated along the Escambia/Conecuh river. The most renowned in this area is the ill-fated *Shaw*, which hit a snag

and sank about four miles south of Brooklyn on the Sepulga River in the 1800s.

The last one to ply the Escambia/Conecuh burned in 1908 but was saved and operated several more years.. It had no name; it was called simply "*The Snag Boat!*"

<http://montgomery.sam.usace.army.mil/>

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



The photo above was sent to the website *Old Alabama Rails* by Joe Brown, of Atmore, Alabama, who wrote that he'd like to find out the names of the people in the photo. He knows that his father, E.B. (Shorty) Brown is third from the left. The man on the far right is identified as Mike Mashburn by his son, Joe Mashburn of Brewton.

On the back of the photo are listed the names Robert McPherson, Kimbrough, Mike Mashman, Johnny James, and Pete Cheatman.

*Credits: Photographer unknown;
Joe Brown Collection Photo: <http://www.oldalabamarails.org/album6.html>*



(Left) The *Dixie Flyer*, one of the L&N's crack passenger trains

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

The garden behind the Flomaton Depot ca. 1918

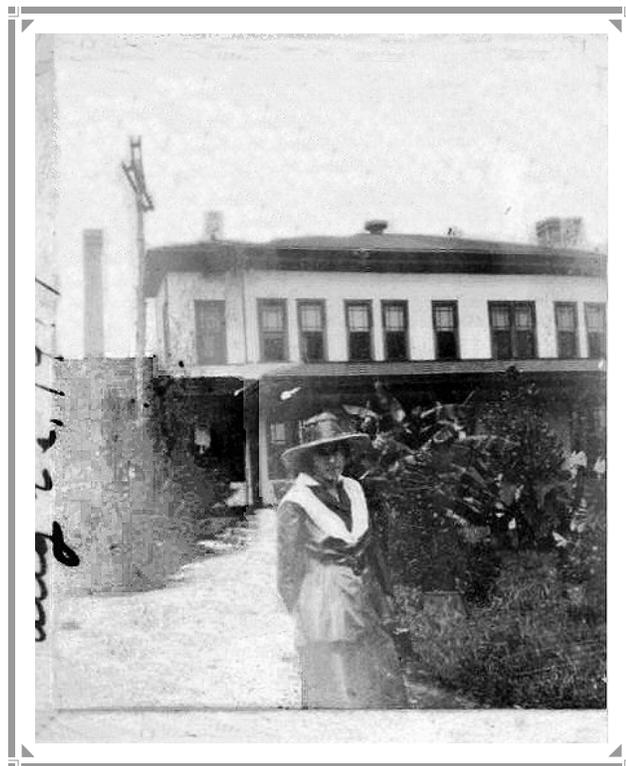


Several views of the beautiful depot at Flomaton from about 1914 through 1919. In 1902 a fire destroyed a depot and several other buildings in town.

When the depot was rebuilt again in 1906, two other stations, Brewton and Tyson, were planned to be rebuilt at the same time. The Flomaton depot cost was planned for \$28,000, while Brewton was to be \$5,000 and Tyson \$3,500. It was stated that Flomaton was "one of the most important stations on the Mobile and Montgomery division, being a junction for both the Pensacola and the Pineapple divisions."

*From the Brewton Standard
July 5, 1906*

That depot was built, only to catch fire and burn down in 1911. That building that most today remember was built in 1912 and demolished in about 1976-77. ■



Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



More views of the
L&N depot at
Flomaton

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



(Above and below) Flomaton depot was a busy place. The last passenger train came through in 1971.
These photos are circa late 1950s or early 1960s



Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



(Above) The depot before its destruction. Who is the man looking out the ground floor window?



(Right) Coal chute, built in 1943—a Flomaton railroad landmark and still standing today



Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

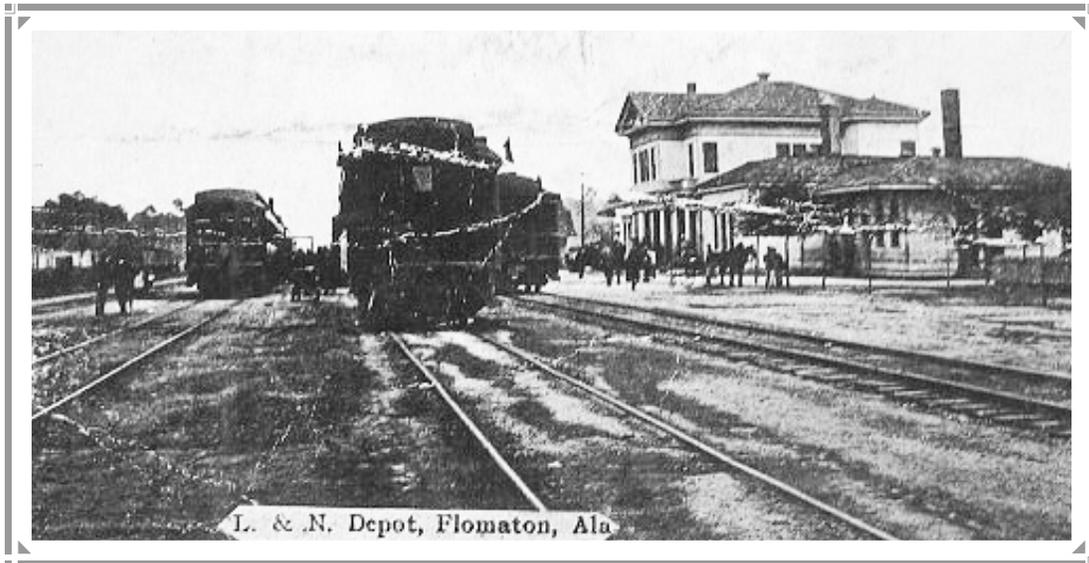


(Left and below)
In these pictures the baggage room, the depot, the express office and the water tank may be seen.

(Below) One of the oldest known photos of the Flomaton L&N depot, circa 1914



Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



(Above) This is likely the oldest photo around of the old depot. From the *Tri-City Ledger*, 1973. The caption read:

"This photo of the L&N depot at Flomaton may be one of the earliest photos taken of the structure, according to Robert Gordon, Jr. of Atmore, who brought the photo to the Ledger in 1973. Gordon said the picture postcard which carried the photo is post-marked March 1910 [Editor's note: the de-

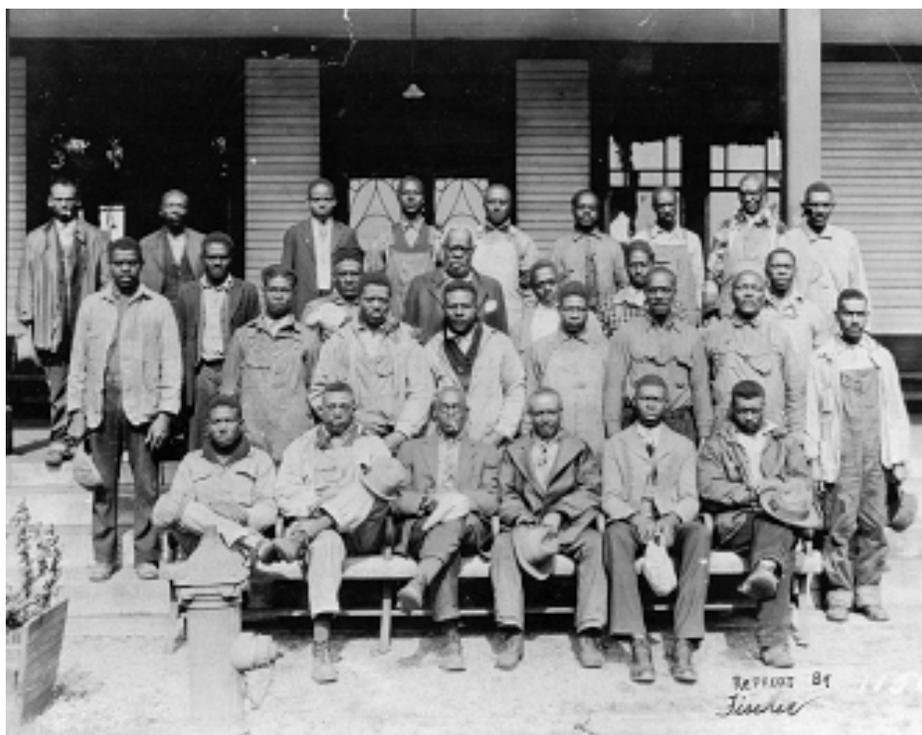
pot wasn't officially finished until 1912].

The photo was taken before the canopies were built between the tracks. They were taken down in 1968, said Gordon. The postcard was written to Gordon's mother, the late Mrs. Yancey Gordon, by someone named 'Aunt Em' who lived in Flomaton. She wrote, 'Kate, Sena and I had a nice walk this afternoon. Went nearly to Century. Hillary Bedgood brought us home in a buggy.'"



L&N passenger train typical of 1920s and earlier

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



Men who worked in and around the L&N depot over the years

Seated, L-R: Ramus Jordan, David Stanley, Harry Barber, Joe Lee, Kyle Lee, Emmitt Hamilton
 2nd row: ??, Clarence Lee, ? Smiley, Bob Cunningham, John Grimes, ??
 3rd row: ??, ??, ??, ? Tolbert, Sam Short, ??, Isem Blackmon
 Back row: Jack Bird, ??, Jack Smith, Tad Franklin, ??, ??, Ames Goldsmith

Circa 1930s—Identified by Irma Lee, 12/2000



Circa 1920s

No names are available for this picture

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



(Above) **Teddy Roosevelt**, October, 1905

The Atmore Spectrum reported, "At Flomaton the President appeared at the rear of his coach and made a speech to an interested crowd who had gathered to see 'The greatest man in the world.'"

(Below) **Woodrow Wilson** circa 1919



Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

Timetable for L&N
From *The Pine Belt News*,
December 19, 1901

Louisville & Nashville Railroad.

◁MOBILE AND MONTGOMERY DIVISION.▷

SCHEDULE IN EFFECT APRIL 14, 1901:

Numbers of South Bound Trains.					Numbers of North Bound Trains								
1		3		5		STATIONS		2		4		6	
A M	P M	A M	P M	A M	P M	A M	P M	A M	P M	A M	P M	A M	P M
.....	9 35	7 20	Lv	Montgomery	Ar	6 15	6 30	6 10	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	9 51	7 38	.....	McGehee	.....	.....	.....	5 52	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	10 02	7 50	.....	Tyson	.....	.....	.....	5 40	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	10 10	7 57	.....	Letohatchie	.....	5 40	.....	5 30	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	10 20	8 08	.....	Calhoun	.....	.....	.....	5 17	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	10 30	8 18	.....	Fort Deposit	.....	.....	.....	5 07	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	10 50	8 42	.....	Greenville	.....	4 56	22	4 50	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	12 37	11 00	8 53	Forest	.....	.....	.....	4 39	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	12 41	11 04	8 58	Bolling	.....	.....	.....	4 33	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	12 50	11 15	9 13	Georgiana	.....	.....	.....	4 19	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	12 54	11 19	9 20	Dunham	.....	.....	.....	4 12	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	1 00	11 26	9 28	Garland	.....	.....	.....	4 02	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	1 14	11 40	9 44	Owassa	.....	.....	.....	3 46	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	1 22	11 49	9 53	Evergreen	.....	3 46	.....	3 36	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	1 35	12 06	10 10	Castleberry	.....	.....	.....	3 16	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	1 45	12 19	10 24	Kirkland	.....	.....	.....	3 04	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	1 55	12 32	10 38	BREWTON	.....	2 59	.....	2 53	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	2 08	12 45	10 53	Pollard	.....	.....	.....	2 38	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	2 17	12 55	11 05	Flomaton	.....	2 25	3 20	2 22	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	2 44	1 27	11 30	Canoe	.....	.....	.....	2 02	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	2 53	1 36	11 40	Atmore	.....	.....	.....	1 53	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	3 08	1 52	11 55	Perdido	.....	.....	.....	1 37	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	3 27	2 11	12 18	Bay Minette	.....	.....	.....	1 17	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	3 41	2 22	12 34	Hurricane Bayou	.....	.....	.....	1 03	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	4 04	2 44	1 05	Magazine Point	.....	.....	.....	12 40	.....	.....	.....	.....
.....	4 12	2 55	1 20	Ar	Mobile	Lv	12 30	1 35	12 30	.....	.....	.....

Trains Nos. 7 and 8 will do local passenger work between Pensacola and Mobile, No. 7 leaving Flomaton at 8:50 a. m. daily. No. 8 leaves Mobile at 5 p. m. These trains will stop on signal at Morriston, Carney and Dolives. Nos. 5 and 6 are local passenger trains between Montgomery and Flomaton. Nos. 27 and 28 carry passenger coaches, making all stops between Montgomery and Geneva. Freight trains do not carry passengers. For information regarding rates, routes, etc. apply to any agent of this company. J. Z. CARSON, Agent at Brewton.



(Right) In the summer of 1942, a freight being switched beside this passenger train obviously had something hanging out that demolished these cars. There's no word if anyone was injured.

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



(Above) 1974 excursion train; engineer, J.R. Phillips of Eight Mile, Alabama. This was a passenger train made up exclusively for rail fans. It traveled from Mobile to Pensacola and back again in 1974. Notice that the porch and passenger covers are missing at the depot in the background of the picture on the right. The depot was in disuse since passenger service stopped in 1971, although the offices were still being utilized. The depot was torn down in 1976 or 1977

Passenger Trains

The 1920s saw the zenith in passenger travel on the L&N. Other means of conveying mail, besides by the mail cars in passenger trains, were being subsidized by the government. In 1967 the government mail contracts held by most railroads were cancelled. The railroads were already going in the hole with passenger service and this was the death knell. Some

trains survived the next few years, but in 1971, the last passenger train came through Flomaton.

Amtrak began a passenger service in 1993 that went through Flomaton, but the closest boarding stops were Brewton and Atmore. In 2005 Hurricane Katrina destroyed the main line on the Mississippi and Louisiana Gulf Coast and Amtrak has not restarted its Sunset Limited run from the west coast to the east coast. ■

Side Track

Almost all the L&N train crews were friendly and if you waved to them, they'd wave back. J.R. Phillips, a long-time engineer mentioned above, recently related the story how he saw this little girl every day as he passed her home which was right on the tracks. One year near Christmas, Phillips stopped his train and walked to her house and gave her a doll he'd bought especially for her. ■

THE HUMMING BIRD



(Above) The Louisville & Nashville Railroad's Humming Bird picks up speed leaving Montgomery on its way to the Crescent City in December, 1965 with E7 758 pulling the load. These L&N colors were once called "Confederate Gray and Yellow."

Credit: David W. Salter

The *Humming Bird*, perhaps the most well-known passenger train (others included the *Gulf Wind* and the *Pan-American*) to pass through Flomaton. It was one of several named trains of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad (L&N). The train, inaugurated in 1946, originally ran from Cincinnati, Ohio to New Orleans, Louisiana, via Louisville, Nashville, Birmingham, Montgomery, Flomaton and Mobile, and later via a connection at Bowling Green, Kentucky to Memphis, Tennessee. The L&N Railroad earned some unwanted publicity in 1968, when they terminated the train enroute after a Federal Judge lifted the order keeping the train running after the ICC (Interstate Commerce Commission) approved its discontinuence. The passengers were then bussed to their destinations.

In the mid-1950's, the Humming Bird (Train 5) departed Louisville, KY at 10:05pm for New Orleans. Train 6 was its northbound number.

The original equipment was part of a 28 car order of 4 train sets of lightweight aluminum cars built in 1946 by ACF. 14 cars were assigned to the "Humming Bird" and 14 to the "Georgian." Many of those cars were removed from service in the late 1960's due to severe corrosion problems.

The Humming Bird was finally canceled in 1968. ■

Adapted from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humming_Bird_\(passenger_train\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humming_Bird_(passenger_train))

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

AGENT'S STAMP

L.&N.R.
AUG 29 '49
FLOMATON, ALA.

One Way Reservation
Only For
Date Stamped

LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE R. R. CO.
COACH RESERVATION IDENTIFICATION
On Train Indicated by Punch Mark

L&N

Dixie Flagler.....*
The Georgian.....*
The Humming Bird.....*
The South Wind.....*

SEAT 24 CAR 7132 LEAVE 3:55 P M
FROM Flomaton, Ala. Ticket No. 4132
TO Birmingham, Ala.

This check should be shown when boarding train and presented to conductor with ticket. Please retain for identification and show to conductor upon request.
If You Cancel Trip Please Notify Agent at Once
Farm C. R. I. NOT GOOD FOR PASSAGE ©-43159 Punch Here

FROM Conductor
Punch Here

AUG 29 '49
FLOMATON, ALA.

One Way Reservation
Only For
Date Stamped

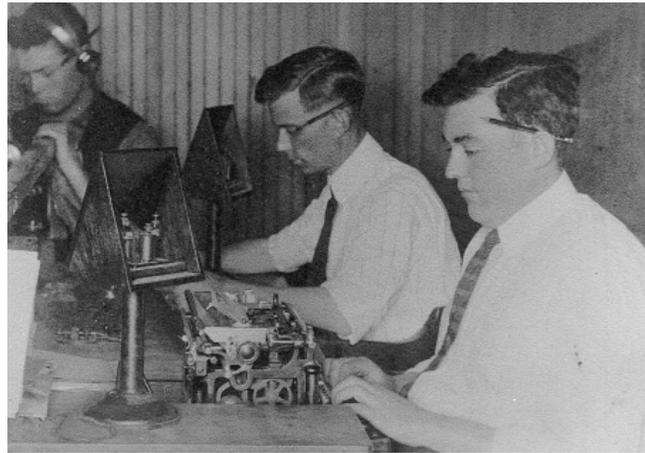
SEAT 23 CAR 7132 LEAVE 3:55 P M
FROM Flomaton, Ala. Ticket No. 4133
TO Birmingham, Ala.

This check should be shown when boarding train and presented to conductor with ticket. Please retain for identification and show to conductor upon request.
If You Cancel Trip Please Notify Agent at Once
Farm C. R. I. NOT GOOD FOR PASSAGE ©-43159 Punch Here

FROM Conductor
Punch Here

Mrs. William Britton Hendricks had a sister that lived in Birmingham whom she visited from time to time. At left are ticket stubs used on the Humming Bird on one of those trips in 1949.

(Right)
A group of telegraphers at work at the railroad office, circa 1930s.
On right, J.B. Hendricks, manager of telegraph business office in Evergreen



Two possible future railroad men posing with their mother on a manual four-wheel car near Deer Range, Alabama

The Pan-American

Although not as well-known, even locally, the *Pan-American* was a second named express train that made its way through Flomaton's railroad history. It, too, had a run from New Orleans to Cincinnati.

There is a story about a man recalling his childhood memories near Nashville, told that as a child he'd stop playing outside and come in to turn on the radio to WSM at about 5:15 every afternoon. The Nashville radio station's transmitter was located beside a railroad track. The engineer at the transmitter would turn on a microphone outside the window and one could listen to the Pan American as it passed by.

The 808-foot WSM-AM broadcast tower is still located beside a railroad track at Concord Road near Brentwood. But gone are the days (1933-45) when radio listeners across a good portion of the United States could hear a live broadcast of the whistle on the punctual Pan American passenger train.

The sound was a feature of the show "On the Bandstand" and was heard between pre-recorded musical numbers at various times between 4:06 and 5:39 p.m., adjusted over the years for train and broadcast point logistics. The show ran every day except Sunday.

This rare intersection of two giants of transportation (Louisville & Nashville Railroad) and communication (clear-channel WSM ra-



The Pan-American in its steam days
(<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:OP-12544.jpg>)

dio) was known to millions of radio listeners long before television or Internet links were available diversions.

"The full roar of the train as it swept by came through the loudspeaker of the radio with such reality that it seemed about to burst right into the room. The sounds then died in the distance — the Pan had passed!" an L&N employee magazine recalled.

The radio station's call letters [WSM] came from "We Shield Millions," the National Life and Accident Insurance Co. slogan. The station, owned by the Nashville-based National Life, was intended to increase company outreach to potential customers.

Public recognition did skyrocket. Helping that along were live Saturday WSM broadcasts, from 1925 to today, of the Grand Ole Opry.

(Continued on page 32)

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook

The Pan American itself was state-of-the-art train travel. Beginning in 1921 and discontinuing service in 1971, it initially linked Cincinnati with New Orleans on a 24-hour, fastest-ever schedule.

The economic Great Depression — somewhat like today's air travel concerns over terrorism, war and the economy — reduced L&N train passengers system-wide from 9.4 million in 1927 to 2.1 million in 1932. Fare reductions in 1933, the same year the whistle made its radio debut, helped fuel a passenger recovery.

Some Pan American passengers were lucky enough to sit in comfortable lounge chairs and hear the sound of their own train's whistle from a wood-cabinet table radio tuned to WSM in the observation car.

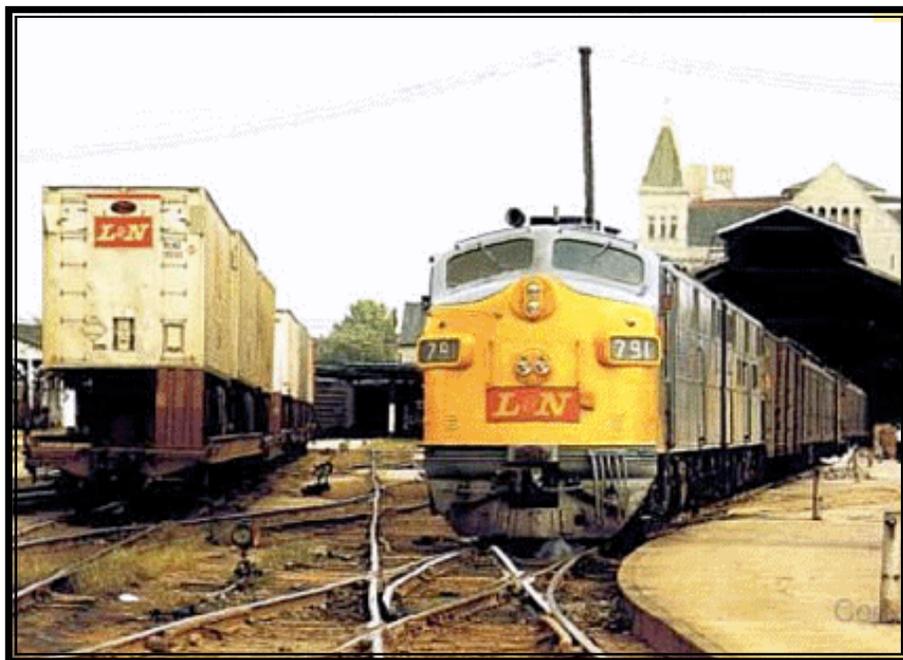
The WSM microphone location was eventually moved north into Nashville at the "Vine Hill interlocking tower," dangling from a second-floor window two miles south of downtown. So sensitive was the microphone that radio listeners sometimes heard mockingbirds or distant church bells just before the train whistle.

The whistle theme inspired three songs: *Pan-American Blues*, 1926, by DeFord Bailey; *The Pan-American*,

1948, by Hank Williams; and *Pan-American Boogie*, 1949, by the Delmore Brothers.

As for the WSM radio tower, it was installed in 1932 by the Blaw-Knox Steel Co. of Pittsburgh, Pa. By 1939, it had been reduced from the original 878 feet to 808 to aid reception. The rare cantilever design, which does resemble two towers, was an intentional architectural statement by Blaw-Knox and not really a pair fastened together, said W. Watt Hairston, WSM's chief engineer for transmitters.

National Public Radio featured the Pan American whistle's role in Nashville lore during a broadcast Nov. 24, 2000. The 20½-minute segment is archived in Real Player format on the NPR Web site. The whistle sound itself is heard in the first few minutes. ■



Pan-American awaits its southbound departure from Louisville Union Station during the summer of 1965.

(From *Classic American Railroads*, by Mike Schafer)
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:OP-12544.jpg>

RAILROADS IN THE AREA



Railway station, Foshee,
Alabama, 1919

Typical of engines passing through
Flomaton in the late 1800s



Pollard railroad station

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



Wallace Depot circa 1955



Pine Apple Station

Deer Range Depot circa 1919



Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



Railroad section crew in Pollard around 1926.

Top, L-R: unknown; C. Coleman; George Washington; unknown; unknown — Bottom. L-R: Coleman's brother-in-law; unknown; Claude Molton; Dan Long — Standing: Andy A. Driskell

Section Houses and Railroad Men

From the *Tri-City Ledger*, March, 1976

During pioneer times there were many wonderful people living in what was known as railroad section houses in the towns dotting the hills and valleys alongside the shining ribbons of railroad steel.

Inhabitants of section houses were families of maintenance crews of certain sections of the railroad line, hence the name section houses. The houses were close together for instant contact with the crew of emergency repair of the railroad tracks.

Once a local crew released a pretty little sway-back cow caught in a railroad cattle gap just before the animal was about to be bumped into milk cow eternity by the iron cow-catcher of the 12 o'clock train engine.

Transportation for the crew was a hand-propelled vehicle with no top. In returning from work, the rhythmic up-and-down motion of the crew members in propelling the almost silent-running car and the happy smiles of the men in anticipation of being with their loved ones again to enjoy a delicious supper of soup, broad-axe beans with hot buttermilk biscuits was a beautiful scene at the sunset of another day of work.

The men were active and one crew member said that he was the best railroad spike driver of the whole railroad division. A big day for the section gang was arrival of the pay train ("some called it the sugar train"). Money seems to have always fascinated man, especially gold and silver. The local crew was often paid in silver coins and in a short time everyone in town would be jingling beautiful new silver dollars.

Changes seem to exact their toll in moving all physical things. The simple section houses that once housed the laughter and the dreams of their people have been bulldozed into oblivion, but the goodness of their people lives on forever.

Charlie Webb

Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



(Above) "Pole" logging train with unique rails: logs. The cars and engine had concave (cupped) wheels to roll on logs that were being used as the rails.

(Eugene Allen Smith Collection from the University of Alabama)

(Right) Logging engines in 1911 belonging to the Alger-Sullivan Lumber Company at a logging camp near McCullough, Alabama. The ASLC in nearby Century, Florida was the "premier number one logging railroad in Alabama," according to the book Logging Railroads of Alabama, by Thomas Lawson.

Logging employed many from Escambia County, Alabama, including Flomaton and surrounding areas.



Flomaton Centennial Scrapbook



(Left) Logging camp near Canoe, Alabama. Notice the boxcar-like structures; these were home away from home for the men during the week.

*Photo courtesy
Kevin McKinley
author of Canoe: A
southern Town*



Logging was an integral part of the livelihood of many in the region. Above is an example of some of the huge pine logs cut from the forests of Escambia, Conecuh, and Monroe counties.

To some, it seemed there was a never-ending supply of timber, but now we know differently.