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and water. These water stops, established by the railroad, often grew into small communities, which were referred to as tank towns. The frequent stops were observed by an English traveler who commented, "Upon second-class lines, especially in the Southern states, the popular criticism upon a slow train, that 'it stops at every wood pile,' has in it not

much of exaggeration."

Although most of these depots are no longer extant, existing photographs indicate that they were built to one of several standard designs. The following article traces the construction history of the M&C depots across northern Alabama as recorded in the company's annual reports.

M&C Stations and Stops

by Catherine K. Gilliam

The Memphis & Charleston Railroad Company annual reports through 1898 were made available to Hugh Dudley of the Huntsville Depot Board through the courtesy of Southern Railway System, Washington, D. C. The following station report was abstracted for publication from these reports by Catherine K. Gilliam. The reports after 1880 all contain the statement that "The M&C Railroad Company does not keep any account of construction and betterments--all expenditures made for additions to and improvement of the company's property are charged to operating expenses," which accounts for the lack of detailed information on the later years of operation.

MARGERUM (MARJORAMS)

First mention of this place as a water stop was in the 1871 report, when a new water tank was built. However in the very earliest years of the railroad, a number of water stops (also used as wood stops) were built, but they were not individually listed in the reports. Margerum had no doubt been a water station since an early day. In 1890 the Birmingham, Sheffield and Tennessee River Railway built a branch line from Margerum to the Tennessee River, where they were building a new town called Riverton. The M&C

never built a station at Margerum, and it is never listed in the reports as a freight or passenger stop.

FOSSICK QUARRY BRANCH

In 1870 T. L. Fossick & Co. built a branch from the M&C main line to their "fine stone quarry" two miles north of Dickson, Alabama. No station was built here by the M&C.

DICKSON

A wooden, combined freight and ticket office depot was built here in 1857. It survived the

Civil War and is listed in the 1866 report as being "repaired." No other station was built here by the M&C, and in 1895 the report shows this depot to be "in very bad condition."

CHEROKEE

A wooden, combined freight and ticket office depot was built here in 1857. In 1860 the roof was "tinned" and in 1871 the "tin roof was painted." In the 1866 report this depot was listed as being "repaired," thus it survived the Civil War. No other depot was built here by the M&C, and in the 1895 report it is listed as "in good condition." Many repairs in the M&C reports were lumped together, and most often the repair work on a depot was not individually listed, except in the 1866 report following the Civil War where nearly every station was listed and its condition given.

BARTON

A wooden, combined freight and ticket office depot was built

in 1857, and additional work was done on it in 1861. This depot survived the Civil War and was repaired in 1866; the roof was tinned in 1871. A new depot was built at Barton in 1887; it was a combined freight and ticket office depot, having two small rooms with a somewhat larger room for the freight and coal bin. In the 1895 report this depot needed "slight repairs and painting."

PRIDE'S

This was not a stop on the M&C until 1869 when the depot (combined freight and ticket office) was built. Pride's had probably been a water stop before the depot was built. In the 1895 report this station was listed "in bad condition."

TUSCUMBIA

A wooden, combined freight and ticket office depot was built in 1854 and destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house and ticket office (combined) was built in 1866. In 1889 "a new passenger sta-

Tusculumbia Passenger Depot





Tuscum-bia Freight Depot

tion, with offices in the second story, and a new freight station" were built at Tuscum-bia. In the 1895 report it was in "good condition."

SHEFFIELD

This stop was first called Tus-cumbia Landing and later, South Florence. A wooden freight house was built at Tuscum-bia Landing in 1854, abandoned in 1859, and does not appear in the reports after that time. In 1867 "a new depot 30' x 70' with ample platform [was] erected at South Florence." The first time Sheffield shows in the reports was November, 1887 when freight shipments began from that place. There is a great deal in the reports about the iron works, etc. at Sheffield, and also much about needing a "union station" there; however, by 1891, this union station was not built, and it is not mentioned after that time. In the 1895 report the Sheffield depot "needs overhauling" and probably refers to the freight house (with ticket office, no doubt) which was probably built in 1887, but even that is not shown in the reports. The present Sheffield depot was built in 1951.

FLORENCE

This six mile branch from the M&C main line at Tuscum-bia was opened for business in January, 1860, when the bridge there across the Tennessee River was finished. In 1859, the "depot buildings, including turntable," were built, and all were destroyed, including the bridge, during the Civil War. This bridge was not rebuilt until 1869, by which time a depot had also been erected at Florence. The 1871 report shows "tin roof put on brick depot at Florence." In 1883 the depot at Florence was thoroughly repaired, and in 1895 the report states that the station "needs overhauling." In 1888 the reports show that "arrangements are made for the joint use of a passenger station built by L&NRR at that point."

LEIGHTON

A wooden freight house was built in 1854 and destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1866, and the platform and depot were repaired in 1870. In 1884 a new wooden depot was built at Leighton, and in 1887, a large

coaling station was constructed nearby. The 1895 report shows this depot in "good condition."

TOWN CREEK

This stop was originally called Jonesboro and was only a water stop through 1859. The 1860 report states that a wood shed and water tank were built, and in 1861, a wooden freight house was erected, which was destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1866. Another new depot was built there in 1887 and shows in the 1895 report as in "good condition."

COURTLAND

A wooden freight house was built in 1854 and destroyed during the Civil War. A new freight and ticket office depot was built of wood in 1866 and remodeled in 1885. The 1895 report indicates that the "freight depot needs a new roof."

WHEELER

The first depot here was built in 1872 and was a frame struc-

ture measuring 20' x 35'. The 1895 report listed it "in bad condition." In 1897 the M&C built a 50,000 gallon water tank at Wheeler Station, and this was the last bit of construction done on the line by the Memphis & Charleston Railroad Company. The railroad was sold the next year to Southern Railway.

HILLSBORO

A wooden freight house was built in 1854 but destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1866. In 1871 the depot at Hillsboro was "removed about one mile west of the old site, and placed on grounds owned by the Company, under an arrangement with William Gilmer, who has purchased of the Company some 320 acres of land which he designs in laying out in suitable town lots...retaining five acres for depot purposes--Gilmer grading side track and removing old depot to new site." In the 1895 report this depot "needs eight squares of new roof."



TRINITY

From 1857 to 1860 this stop was a water station only. A wood shed and a new water tank were built in 1860. The following year a wooden freight house with ticket office was constructed and this depot survived the Civil War. In 1885 a new wooden depot was built at Trinity, and in the 1895 report, it was "in good condition."

DECATUR

A warehouse and engine house were built in 1853 for \$1080, both of wood. A new wooden passenger house in connection with the Tennessee & Alabama Central Railroad was completed in early 1861, survived the Civil War, and was repaired in 1866. In 1887 "extensive repairs were made to the passenger station, including painting." In 1888 the Decatur Land and Improvement Company erected a "union passenger depot" about two miles from the M&C depot and planned to build track off the M&C to the new union depot, but in 1892, this track still had not been laid. In the 1895 report, the M&C depot was "in good condition."

DECATUR JUNCTION

This is where the Tennessee & Alabama Central Railroad intersected the M&C main line on the north side of the Tennessee River. Both railroads used the M&C bridge into Decatur. The 1883 report shows "one small depot was put up at Decatur Junction to replace the one lost by fire."

BELLE MINA

Originally called Bibb's Lane, this stop appears in the M&C reports for years as Mooresville, but this was not the

original Mooresville Station location. In the 1867 report is: "The removal of side track from Mooresville to Bibb's Lane, and the erection of a depot, is contemplated as soon as the Company can secure a deed to the necessary quantity of land." In the 1868 report is: "New side tracks have been put in at Bibb's Lane, Jones' Lane [Greenbrier], and Huntsville, and the one at Mooresville removed, the station at that point having been abandoned." The same year a combined freight and ticket office depot was built at a cost of \$850. The Belle Mina station was reported as Mooresville in the M&C reports until 1883. In 1887 the Belle Mina depot was remodeled and also a large coaling station was established there. In the 1895 report, the depot was "in good condition."

MOORESVILLE STATION

This station was not at Mooresville, which was not on the main line of the M&C, but was located about two miles north of Mooresville between the present Belle Mina and Greenbrier. A wooden freight house was built there in 1856 and was destroyed during the Civil War. This depot was not replaced after the war, the stop being abandoned in 1868 when a depot was erected at nearby Bibb's Lane [Belle Mina].

GREENBRIER

This stop was originally called Jones' Lane. New side tracks were put in at Jones' Lane in 1868, but there is no mention of a depot being built--it probably had only a cotton platform. It appears in the M&C reports from 1868 through 1870, but is not listed in the 1871-1877 reports. From 1878-1887, this stop appears in the freight



reports, but its shipments were very small. There is no mention of it after 1887, and there is never any mention of a depot being built.

MADISON

This stop was called Madison Station until the town was incorporated as Madison in 1869. A wooden freight house was built in 1856 and a wood shed was built in 1860. The depot was destroyed during the Civil War and was replaced in 1866 with a new, wooden freight house with ticket office having a "new platform for the accommodation of passengers." In 1885 the Madison depot was "re-built," and in the 1895 report the station was listed "in good condition."

HUNTSVILLE

This was the Eastern Division (all track in Alabama) headquarters for the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, thus Hunts-

ville received lots of attention and money from the railroad company. According to newspaper accounts, grading work began in Madison County in 1852; however, the first train did not arrive in Huntsville until October 1855. It is probable that some temporary wooden structures had been erected on the Huntsville depot grounds by 1855; however they do not show individually in the M&C reports. Beginning in 1856, the M&C reports show construction in Huntsville every year until the Civil War as the fine brick buildings were built for use of the road. These included the freight depot, built in 1856 and still in use, the machine shops and engine houses, all gone now, and the three-story passenger depot and Eastern Division headquarters, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Railroad buildings built in Huntsville, as taken from the M&C annual reports, are as follows:



Huntsville Freight Depot

- 1856 Brick FREIGHT HOUSE built, no cost given in report. This building is still in use by Southern Railway System and is very likely the oldest railroad building in the country in continuous use as a railroad facility. It has had only two owners, the Memphis & Charleston Railroad Company, 1856-1898, and Southern Railway System, 1898-1981. It is known to be the oldest railroad building still in existence in Alabama.
- 1856 VENABLE HOTEL built for \$2,376. This hotel was gone by the late 1890s when a lumber yard, now Dilworth Lumber Company, was located there. Additions were made after 1857 to enlarge this hotel.
- 1857 STORE HOUSE built for \$3,000. The location of this store house is not known.
- 1857 Large brick ENGINE HOUSE and MACHINE SHOP built for \$19,466. These structures are no longer standing but were located on the present site of the Southern Cotton Oil Company.
- 1857 TURNTABLE and shop machinery for \$7,000.
- 1859 TICKET OFFICE built, no cost given. This was a wooden, temporary building.
- 1860 CAR SHOP of brick completed in February for \$6,169.49.
- 1860 PASSENGER HOUSE of brick built for about \$10,500. "Ticket office at Huntsville moved and building passenger shed \$430." The passenger depot in Huntsville was not completed until December 1860, but was far enough along to have the

ticket office and telegraph equipment moved into it by the report of July 1860. This building was used by the Federal army during the Civil War and was left, except for the handwriting on the walls, much as it was when they occupied it in 1862. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1971, the first such designation for a Huntsville building.

1861 "Negro Hospital Arrangements \$550." No additional information is given on this, but this entry does show that slave labor was used to build the Huntsville railroad buildings. This entry appears only under "Huntsville" expenses.

1861 STORE HOUSE for railroad stores built for \$1,500. This building, the last built before the Civil War, was located just east of the freight depot. It was brick and in the early 1900s was rented to the Cudahy Packing Company and was torn down about 1910.

CIVIL WAR No construction by the railroad company and no destruction by the Federal army.

1868 "New LUMBER SHED at Huntsville" and "One CORN MILL has been put up at Huntsville and the tolls are sufficient to supply the Eastern Division."

1869 "A PASSENGER CAR SHED, 35' x 126', has been built at Huntsville for sheltering coaches. A LUMBER DRYING KILN needed at Huntsville, to be built next year."

M&C Shops in Huntsville during the Civil War



1870 PLATFORM SCALES put in at Huntsville.

1875 "Owing to the suspension of the Huntsville shop, (except for repairs)...." The Huntsville shops were completely shut down and moved to Tuscumbia in 1876. All the shop buildings remained vacant until 1881 when they were rented to an oil company, which is now Southern Cotton Oil Company.

1887 "...extensive repairs to passenger station at Huntsville, including painting." At this time the first "colored waiting room" was provided and major changes were made to the interior first floor of the passenger station. Also at this time, the "posts from the shed, which were in the way, were removed," and the shed which is on the building today was constructed. These changes were made "to conform to the requirements of the Alabama Railroad Commission."



1888 New 50,000 gallon WATER TANK built at Huntsville for \$596.

1895 Condition of Station Buildings Report: Huntsville--"In good condition." (The only other changes made in the passenger depot were made in 1912 by Southern Railway. The express building just east of the depot was built in 1913, also by Southern.)

FEARN'S SWITCH

Now called Chase, this stop was probably a water station on the M&C since the beginning of the railroad in Madison County; however, it was never a regular stop. From the M&C report ending July 1, 1869: "Should conditions be confirmed by the Legislature of Tennessee between the Winchester & Alabama Railroad and the Memphis & Charleston Railroad, it will be in our interest to build, at once, a Branch Road from Fearn's Switch, six miles east of Huntsville, to the Alabama and Tennessee State line, there connecting with the Winchester & Alabama Railroad." (This railroad was not built by the M&C. In 1889 the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railroad [now L&N] built this line into Huntsville, thus giving Huntsville its second railroad.)

BROWNSBORO

A brick freight house was built in 1856, but it was destroyed during the Civil War. A new wooden freight house with tick-

et office was built in 1866 and was remodeled in 1885. In the 1895 report, this depot was listed as "needs new roof."

GURLEY

Known variously as Gurley's, Gurleysville, and Gurley's Tank, this stop was an early water station on the M&C. In 1861 a new wood and water station were built at Gurley's, but the station was not mentioned in the 1866 report. In 1870 a new tank with masonry foundation was erected there to hold about 6500 gallons. Next year, the first depot was built there of frame construction measuring 22' x 40'. In 1890 a new wood station was erected at Gurley, and in 1895, it was listed "in good condition."

PAINT ROCK

Paint Rock was originally called Camden. A wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1856 and painted in 1860. This depot survived the Civil War and was repaired in 1866. On January 17, 1870, the



depot was blown away by a cyclone, and a new frame depot built there in 1870 and remodeled in 1885. In 1888 this depot was destroyed by a storm, and a frame one built to replace it. In 1895 this depot was listed "in good condition." (This depot was destroyed by a cyclone in 1932; another one built there, and it is now gone too.)

WOODVILLE

The location of "this" Woodville is about 3/4 mile from the location of the original Woodville; the town was moved and rebuilt on the railroad in 1856. A wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1856 and was destroyed during the Civil War. In the 1866 report the station at Woodville was "yet to be rebuilt." In 1869 a new frame depot was built there, and in the 1895 report it was listed "in good condition."

STEPHEN'S GAP

Located about two miles west of the present Lim Rock, Stephen's Gap was an early water station on the M&C. The 1861 report states that a wood shed and water tank are "to be built." In 1872 a new water tank was needed at Stephen's Gap, but the stop was not mentioned in reports after that time.

LIM ROCK

Originally called Boyd's Switch, Lim Rock first appeared in the M&C reports in 1880. It is probable that a cotton platform or small depot was built there about that time, although none was listed in the M&C reports. In the 1895 report, the Lim Rock depot is listed "in good condition."

BELMONT COAL MINE BRANCH

In 1879 a six mile private branch railroad was built from



Boyd's Switch [Lim Rock] to Belmont Coal Mine near the top of the Cumberland Mountains. They furnished coal for the M&C Railroad.

LARKINSVILLE

A brick freight house was built in 1856, but it was destroyed during the Civil War. A wooden freight house with ticket office was built in 1866 and was remodeled in 1885. In 1895 this depot was listed as "needs a new roof." On April 10, 1866, the M&C put into operation a saw mill near Larkinsville to provide lumber to build stations along the line. The M&C purchased the machinery for the new mill from the U. S. Military Railroad Authorities, a mill house was built, and the mill put into operation. In 1890 a new 50,000 gallon water tank was erected at Larkinsville.

SCOTTSBORO

Originally called Scott's Mills, Scottsboro was probably an early water station on the M&C, but no depot was built there until 1861 when the brick freight house and ticket office combined was completed. This depot survived the Civil War and was repaired in 1866. In 1871 a new water tank was built at Scottsboro, and in 1885 the brick freight depot was remodeled. The first separate passenger depot was built there in 1891 at a cost of \$1944.05. The 1895 station condition report shows "Passenger depot in good condition; freight depot needs repairs and painting."

MORRISON'S MILL BRANCH

From the report ending July 1, 1870: "A spur track has been placed at Morrison's Mill, east of Scottsboro."



HOLLYWOOD

Originally this was the Bellefonte Station stop, but this was not the original town of Bellefonte. This railroad stop was named after the original town, which had objected to the railroad, and thus it ran several miles north of the old town. For a short while this settlement was known as Samples before being renamed Hollywood. A wooden freight house was built there in 1856, but it was destroyed during the Civil War, and a new wooden depot was built in 1866. The 1886 report says a new depot is needed at Bellefonte, and the 1887 report states that a new depot has been built at Hollywood, the first year the reports show the new name. In 1891 this depot burned, and in 1892 a new one was built at a cost of \$1103. The 1895 report shows this building "in good condition."

FACKLERS

A Jackson County history states that in 1873 there was only one store at Facklers, thus this town developed in the 1870s and 80s. The M&C reports show Facklers as being a freight stop for the first time in 1887, but there is no mention in the reports of a depot being built, and this station is not listed in the 1895 Condition of Buildings report, so it probably had only a cotton platform and a water tank for a while. A local history relates that a station was built there in 1890, but there is no mention of it in the M&C reports.

TIMBERLAKE'S

The only time Timberlake's is mentioned in the M&C reports is in 1861 when a new wood and water station was built there. (Could it be that this water stop became Facklers at a later date?)

STEVENSON

A wooden freight house was built there in 1856, and the report for that year also states that "it is contemplated to build a passenger house and a covered platform for transshipping freight, to be built and used in common by the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad and ours. They can be ready for use in a short time." This building was constructed, and in 1858 a machine shop was erected. These buildings survived the Civil War and are listed as being repaired in the 1866 report. In 1872 a brick passenger station was built at Stevenson as shown by the following from the M&C report for 1872: "A neat and commodious brick depot has been built at Stevenson costing about \$6000, the half of which was shared by the Nashville & Chattanooga Railroad Company." These costs are given: brick, tin, etc. for Stevenson \$2,147; plumbers work at Stevenson \$63.25; and lumber, laths and plastering at Stevenson \$475.51. In 1887 extensive repairs, including painting, were made to this station, and in 1895 this depot was listed "in good condition." In 1892 a new freight house was built for \$857.24 to replace the one which burned.



(Photographs courtesy of Hugh Dudley and the Huntsville Public Library.)