Journey to Naptown

A trip in a drawing room on PRR’s Spirit of St. Louis remains a treasured memory

By Charlie Ardery
I was 13 years old in the summer of 1944. At that time I lived with my parents in Arlington, Va. My father had been National Secretary for the Forty and Eight, an organization within the American Legion formed by World War I veterans. The society was headquartered in Indianapolis, which then was sometimes called "Naptown" rather than its current nickname of "Indy." My father had been called back into the service in 1942, and we moved from Indianapolis to the Washington, D.C., area that year. He had kept close ties with the Forty and Eight, and had been granted leave by the Army to attend the group's executive committee meeting in Indianapolis in mid-1944. My mother and I were allowed to go with him.

I had loved trains since I was 3 years old. During my childhood, my family attended various annual American Legion conventions, held in cities throughout the United States. We traveled to them primarily by train, and the first such trip I remember was to Miami. We rode a New York Central (Big Four Route) train from Indianapolis to Cincinnati, where our car was switched into the Southern Railway’s Ponce de Leon. In mountainous areas of the Southern, the engineer would have to back up and then start forward like a freight train. I still remember the jolts from these starts.

I especially loved steam locomotives, most of all the Pennsylvania Railroad’s class K4s Pacifics, the road’s standard passenger engine outside electrified territory. I had seen them on numerous occasions at Indianapolis Union Station, and had ridden behind one on a trip to the New York World’s Fair in 1939, on the streamlined Spirit of St. Louis. I had become a Pennsy fan.

Consequently, when I learned of our upcoming trip to Indianapolis, I requested that we go on the Spirit of St. Louis, which had a section from Washington. My father previously used the Chesapeake & Ohio-New York Central connection to travel between Washington and Indianapolis, but he was curious about the Pennsylvania’s route, and consented to my request.

We arrived at Washington’s beautiful Union Station in the early evening. Out beyond the concourse, I saw numerous stub-end tracks. Most of these had large, royal blue and white signs for various Baltimore & Ohio trains heading for New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and Detroit. Our train was to the right of these B&O tracks and featured a red and gold sign lettered Spirit of St. Louis and the Jeffersonian, the latter being an all-coach train to St. Louis that was combined with the Spirit as far as Harrisburg, Pa.

Our train, PRR No. 21, was called, and we proceeded toward our car. On the way along the platform we passed a mixture of light- and heavyweight cars (to my surprise, since I thought this would be an all-streamlined train), all dressed in PRR’s “Fleet of Modernism” scheme of two-tone red accented with thin gold stripes.

Our Pullman was the last car we came to, the first car of the train. It was coupled to a big electric locomotive, a GG1, whose color appeared to me to be black with gold stripes. The GG1s were supposedly dark green, but they always looked black to me.

Our car was named Wake Island. I later found out that this was not its original name, that being Jack’s Narrows. The name had been changed to honor the servicemen who had fought in the Battle of Wake Island during the first weeks of World War II. Pullman-Standard built this car and two sisters, Juniata Narrows and Lewistown Narrows, for the Spirit of St. Louis in 1938. They were sleeper-observation-lounge cars, and the observation end of Wake Island was coupled to the GG1.

A publicity photo shows passengers enjoying the lounge in one of the three sleeper-observation cars built in 1938 for the Spirit of St. Louis.
The Battle of Wake Island had been a defeat for the United States, but this time in 1944 was optimistic. D-Day had occurred on June 6, and the greatest army in the history of the world was advancing into Germany; the amazing St. Louis Browns were winning the American League pennant; and Gabriel Heatter, the dynamic radio commentator who had led us through the darkest days of the war, was stating almost every evening, “Ah yes, there’s good news tonight.”

My father had booked a drawing room. Only a master room, which had a shower, was better. A drawing room was for three people, and there were three of us. It featured a lower berth, an upper berth, and a separate bed, along with an enclosed lavatory. It was the best accommodation available on this particular train.

The GG1 started our train so smoothly that we hardly knew we were under way. I recall this as typical for both the PRR and the NYC at the time, regardless of the motive power. The 40-mile trip from Washington to Baltimore was quick and uneventful.

We paused briefly at the Baltimore station, and then something weird happened. We started going backward. From my vantage point in our drawing room, I thought the train was just being switched, but we didn’t stop. A few people waved at us as we passed them, as if our car was at the end of the train. In fact, we were at the end of the train.

I later found out that, because of the track arrangement at Baltimore, PRR trains from Washington to Harrisburg began their runs by being towed backwards out of the nation’s capital. At Baltimore, the GG1 would be cut off and a steam locomotive (or two) would be attached at the opposite end of the train. Steam would then haul the train, in its correct order, up the PRR’s old Northern Central line, which was not electrified, toward Harrisburg.

During that 1944 trip, I didn’t know any of this, so I wondered, Where was the GG1? Was it pushing us? It didn’t
The Washington train — including our stream-styled heavyweight sleepers from the previous order to St. Louis, the other two trains proceeding in continued until 21 arrived at Indianapolis. This sequence (31 first, followed by 21), the Spirits 21 and 31 were named which terminated at Indianapolis. Both Washington would continue west as train 21, as well as curvy. After what appeared to be a great struggle, we finally reached the summit at New Freedom, Pa., just north of the Maryland state line. After this, we went mostly downhill, at least to York, Pa. From there the doubleheader streaked to Harrisburg, running on the west bank of the Susquehanna River for the last 20 miles or so, and then crossing it to enter the Harrisburg station.

There, things really became interesting. Sure enough, there were catenary wires overhead, used by trains from the east. Train 31, the New York section of the Spirit of St. Louis was next to us in the station, and train 65, the all-coach Jeffersonian from New York, was also there. Real switching took place, not the kind I had imagined in Baltimore. Coaches from our train were added to the Jeffersonian, and the lightweight and stream-styled heavyweight sleepers from the Washington train — including our Wake Island — were added to No. 31 for the trip to St. Louis. The old heavyweight weights that had come up from Washington would continue west as train 21, which terminated at Indianapolis. Both 21 and 31 were named Spirit of St. Louis. Between the departures of the two Spirits (31 first, followed by 21), the Jeffersonian slipped out for St. Louis. This sequence continued until 21 arrived at Indianapolis, the other two trains proceeding in the previous order to St. Louis.

Upon leaving Harrisburg, it was time to go to sleep. A single K4 had been assigned to our train, with our car serving as the observation car at the rear. It was somewhat of a surprise to learn that the observation car of the Spirit of St. Louis, primarily known as a New York–St. Louis train, was actually on the Washington section, and that the Spirit carried no obs car between New York and Harrisburg.

As I began to fall asleep, I heard the steady beat of the K4 from the head of the train. Later I awoke to hear a staccato sound, and I wondered if there was something wrong with the locomotive. It turned out that a helper engine had been added for the Allegheny Mountain grade west of Altoona, Pa.

The next morning we headed for the diner. The car next to ours was a lightweight 10-roomette/5-double-bedroom sleeper named Cascade Melody. Next to this was Fox Oaks, a remodeled heavyweight containing open sections. Then came another lightweight of the Imperial series, an all-room car with 4 compartments, 2 drawing rooms, and 4 double bedrooms.

Arriving at the diner, we ate a great breakfast after which we returned to our car. The train was really rolling as we approached Richmond, Ind. During the night we had turned southwest at Pittsburgh, traveling over PRR’s Panhandle line, so named because it passed across the northern panhandle of West Virginia. The other side of the split at Pittsburgh went west-northwest on to Chicago.

Once clear of the Ohio River valley, the Panhandle was an extremely fast route. On a curve leaving Richmond, I could see the superb K4 up front cranking up for the breathtakingly fast journey to Indianapolis.

We soon pulled into Indianapolis Union Station, on time. As we descended from the platform level to the main floor, I could hear a deep-voiced announcer stating, “Taxi cabs, side out; side out for taxi cabs.”

“Side out” meant that cabs were lined up for passengers on the east side of the station. I remember the term well, since, being a baseball fan, especially of the St. Louis Browns (as well as the Cardinals in the National League), I associated “side out” with “side retired” at the end of a half inning of ball. It is weird what a person can remember from age 13.

The fantastic trip was over. After a great visit in Indianapolis, we returned to Washington, again on the Spirit of St. Louis. As on the trip out, our drawing room was in the observation car, Juniata Narrows this time, which followed a beautiful 10&5 named Cascade Bay. Our car’s porter, named Williams, was superb.

Shortly after returning to Arlington from my fabulous trip, I ran into an issue of Trains magazine for August 1944. Beginning on page 38 was a fascinating article entitled “From Baltimore to Harrisburg on the PRR” by the great writer William M. Moedinger Jr. It answered many of my questions concerning the arduous trip between these cities, as well as the fact that the trains went backward between Baltimore and Washington. Not being the collector that I am now, I eventually lost track of this issue of Trains, but I never forgot the trip.

Charles M. Allen
Like the Biblical Lazarus, Norfolk & Western class J No. 611 has had its second reincarnation, much to the delight of a new generation plus others who witnessed its 1982–94 excursion years. A few folks even saw No. 611 and her 13 sisters in regular service. The Js were the pride of N&W’s self-proclaimed “Precision Transportation” system, but before they came along another engine was the railroad’s top passenger power.

This started in 1916, when the rapid addition of all-steel passenger cars to replace steel-underframed, wooden equipment began to tax the fleet of Pacifics and Ten-Wheelers handling mail, express, and passengers across the N&W.

To handle the increasingly heavy consists, the mechanical department devised a heavy 4-8-2 design. N&W proceeded to build 16 class K1 locomotives, Nos. 100–115. They rode on 70-inch driving wheels, weighed 347,000 pounds and developed a healthy 62,920 pounds tractive effort, quite sufficient to conquer the grades west of Crewe, Va.,
and east of Williamson, W.Va.

These stout passenger haulers claimed use on two other primary routes. The six daily trains that came and went on the Southern Railway between Washington and Chattanooga, Tenn., took a shortcut across Virginia between Monroe (Lynchburg) and Bristol via N&W. Although shorter by almost 200 miles than the Southern main line via Charlotte and Atlanta, the route snaked through valleys and passed over three major summits that challenged early 20th century locomotives. Contemporaneous with the K1’s development, the Southern obtained Mountain-type engines to handle these trains in Tennessee and beyond.

Finally, passenger service on the north-south N&W secondary line between Winston-Salem, N.C. and Hagerstown, Md., via Roanoke, somewhat similar to the Bristol–Lynchburg alignment, also cried out for heavier power.

Two years after the K1 class entered service, during the government control period of World War I, the United States Railroad Administration allocated 10 standard-design Brooks-built heavy Mountains to N&W, on which they were class K2 Nos. 116–125. Close in size to the 16 originals, they rode on 69-inch drivers but otherwise matched the capabilities of the Roanoke design.

Finally, in 1923 N&W acquired a dozen duplicates of the K2 from Baldwin. Nos. 126–137 were classed as K2a, making a total of 38 K-class passenger locomotives that operated across the mountains via Roanoke. They powered most of N&W’s heavy mainline passenger trains from post-World War I to the eve of World War II, when the first five class J 4-8-4s rolled out of Roanoke Shops.

(N&W’s last 4-8-2 was a low-driven freight engine, the K3. Roanoke built 10, Nos. 200–209, in 1926. One of the road’s few steam missteps, the K3 was unsuccessful, and all 10 were sold to other railroads during World War II.)

To illustrate just how dedicated K-class engines were to passenger service, the December 12, 1935, employee timetable for the Radford Division — the heart of N&W operations — made only a footnote mention of them in its tonnage tables for freight locomotives: “When class K engines are used in freight service they should be given the same rating as class M2 engines, unless otherwise shown.” Lumping the Ks with 1910-built M2 4-8-0 freight power was akin to equating a mule with a racehorse, although their lugging ability was similar. Fifty-six-inch drivers versus 70-inch drivers would make a long point-to-point day for an M versus a K with any kind of consist.

As passenger service dwindled between 1920 and 1940, the operating territory of the Ks expanded from the core of the system — the mountains and the Shenandoah Line — to reach the end points at Norfolk, Cincinnati, and Columbus. Thus until fall 1941 N&W passengers could be assured that the regular power up front on mainline trains such as the Cavalier, the Pocahontas, and Nos. 23 and 24 would be a stout K-class Mountain. Likewise, the Lynchburg–Bristol “Scenic Route” runs of Southern Railway’s Memphis Special, Birmingham Special, and the New York, Chattanooga
& New Orleans Express — renamed the Pelican after World War II — were entrusted to the capable Ks, with one noteworthy exception.

Starting in the second half of the Great Depression and lasting well into World War II, mail, express and Pullman heavy trains 41 southbound and 42 northbound routinely drew one of the 10 new A-class 2-6-6-4 simple articulateds to avoid doubleheading. Delivery in 1943 of the second order of Roanoke-built J-class locomotives (unstreamlined and temporarily classed J1) released an A-class for fast freight service by assigning a J to the Bristol–Lynchburg route.

In fall 1941 the Southern put new streamlined equipment in service on the route of the Memphis Special. Trains 25 and 26 were rebranded as the Tennessean, with new Electro-Motive E6 diesel power between Bristol and Memphis. Trains 45 and 46, the new designations, commanded improved power for their entire Washington–Lynchburg–Bristol–Memphis route. Thus came the first assignments for the newly designed class J engines, built in fall 1941. The Southern also came up with its only streamlined steam locomotive, a Ps-4 Pacific, to handle the Washington–Monroe leg of the new train. The Tennessean forced one or more Ks out of the passenger pool and started the general downgrading of steam power normally caused by new and greater-capacity equipment. The modern, roller-bearing-equipped class Js daily made the 676-mile run from Norfolk to Cincinnati without change, replacing two or more Ks and eliminating the need for doubleheading.

Eventually the class J fleet, which topped out at 14 with the construction of Nos. 611–613 in 1950, took charge of all the postwar streamliners and through passenger runs. The 16 K1 4-8-2s were moved to local freight service, bumping an even greater number of 4-8-0s and 2-6-6-2s into the scrap yard.

The 22 members of the K2 and K2a classes continued to handle secondary passenger trains all over the system, but particularly on the Winston-Salem to Shenandoah line, which hosted double daily through passenger runs. In fact, N&W proceeded to streamline the entire group in 1945, providing a consistent Tuscan red and black paint scheme on a look-alike bullet-nosed design that had been designed for the J. From a distance it was difficult to tell the two classes apart, and the streamlined Ks became known as "J Juniors."

After the K1 came 10 similar 4-8-2s of class K2 in 1919, which were duplicated to the tune of 12 class K2a engines in 1923. This is K2a No. 137, the last-built of the class.
K1 locomotives 104 and 105 eventually became the assigned power for the six-day-a-week local freights between Bristol and Pulaski on the Radford Division. Each made the daily 106-mile trip one way, laying over nightly and all day Sunday at opposite end points. No. 104 gained fame in 1957 by being featured in night views from the camera of the notable O. Winston Link. Other displaced Mountains operated in freight service out of Bluefield, Crewe, Shenandoah, and Portsmouth. An interesting aspect of the K1 appearance after the mid-1940s was the unusual sand dome design. It seems to have been a prelude to streamlining even the K1s, since it conformed to the sleek lines of its sisters.

The 38-member K class survived intact until 1957, when N&W dieselization began with a vengeance. Train-off petitions and internal combustion combined to rapidly reduce K-class assignments. An unlucky 13 were written off the roster in 1957, followed by 18 more the following year. By 1959, the entire group was a memory. They served well for as much as 42 years in all classes of service except switching.

By comparison, their steam replacements, the 14 storied class J locomotives, worked a brief 9 to 18 years. Some of them also experienced the ignominious destiny of local freight service in their waning months of operation.

As historians look back at N&W steam power — the high-performance 2-6-6-4s, the powerful and beautiful 4-8-4s, the remarkable evolution of the USRA 2-8-8-2 Mallet, and so much more — the letters A, J, and Y capture the most attention. However, the Ks filled important roles on the steam-powered route of Precision Transportation for much longer than their stylish, younger sisters.
Boylan Wye in Raleigh, N.C.

**Boylan Wye** has always been the rail hub of Raleigh, North Carolina’s capital city. It dates to the mid-1850s when the Raleigh & Gaston, a predecessor of Seaboard Air Line Railroad and the first railroad into the city, in 1840, built a connection to the state-owned North Carolina Railroad to avoid losing money to drayage firms that carted freight across town between the two roads. The NCRR, begun in 1851, would be leased to Southern Railway (and, later, to today’s Norfolk Southern).

Connecting also allowed the north-south R&G to expand 8 miles via trackage rights over the east-west NCRR west to Fetter (now Cary) before turning south again to reach Hamlet, Columbia, S.C., and points south, a move that by 1899 led to the Richmond–Florida Seaboard Air Line system.

From the Civil War until the 1890s, passenger trains of both R&G/SAL and NCRR/SOU used the 1861 NCRR station at the right center of the photo. Raleigh Union Station (RUS) opened.
in 1892, serving both railroads and, later, the old Norfolk Southern Railway (absorbed by SOU in 1974). The NS Railway tracks do not appear in this 1949 photo, which looks northeast. RUS tracks cut awkwardly across the east leg of the Boylan Wye. Longer trains in the late 1930s led Seaboard to build its own station in 1942, near its roundhouse and coal wharf. That SAL station closed in 1986 when Amtrak, facing CSX’s removal of the Silver Star route into Petersburg, Va., moved all Raleigh service to the 1950 Southern depot that remains in use today. This photo shows the 1892 Union Station on its last legs; it closed when the Southern’s station opened in 1950.

Today a new Raleigh Union Station is planned to open in 2017 in the center of the wye where the West Martin Street via-duct was. In addition to 8 Amtrak intercity trains, 20 to 30 NS and CSX freights pass through Boylan Wye every day.

Oddly, no motive power is evident in the photo, though the caboose of a northbound SAL freight is exiting the wye, and five heavyweight passenger cars are on a center track of RUS. Among the interesting rolling stock visible are an SAL boxcar advertising the Orange Blossom Special (at the foot of W. Davie Street) and a Santa Fe Scout boxcar (spotted at the old Raleigh [Capital] Feed & Grocery, whose building still stands). A number of ancient outside-brace boxcars are seen, plus two Sinclair tank cars. The tracks south of Martin Street were the Southern yard; the two tracks north of Martin were for SAL/SOU interchange. SAL’s yard is not in the photo. — William A. Allen III
THE

“BRIDGEBORO BOOGIE”

A shortline interchange in south Georgia’s “Pidcock kingdom” had a brief life

By Russell Tedder • Photos from Sanborn Collection, Lakeland (Fla.) Public Library

“Boogie time”: We look northwest at Bridgeboro (above) in 1955. Georgia Northern SW8 801, with train 20 from Albany, has arrived to exchange cars with GAS&C train 11 from Ashburn, which, with General Electric 70-tonner 71 (opposite page, lower left), has pulled through the north leg of the wye and uncoupled its caboose (lower right). The stock car on No. 20 may be destined for the Swift plant at Moultrie.
Bridgeboro, a hamlet in Worth County, Ga., southeast of Albany, is about as far into the heart of the Deep South as you can get. Today it’s situated on curves in both State Highway 112 (the road in the 1955 photo at top) and a lone railroad track operated by the Georgia & Florida, although when Bridgeboro had two railroads, neither was part the “classic era” Georgia & Florida (1906–1963) profiled in the Spring 2012 CLASSIC TRAINS “Fallen Flags Remembered.” The closest the old G&F came to Bridgeboro was on a branch from the east into Moultrie, Ga., 20 miles to the south. Moreover, Bridgeboro is unusual in that for more than 60 years, from the dawn of the 20th century into the mid-1960s, it was a shortline intersection, with neither line that crossed there being associated with a Class 1 until Southern Railway entered the picture in 1966.

Bridgeboro and its two short lines characterized the spirit of Mixed Train Daily, the classic book Lucius Beebe penned after visiting short lines across the United States at the end of World War II. Observed Beebe: “The Southern Railway, traversing as it does a territory more opulent than any other in short lines, connects with no fewer than 57, all various, like the pickles, all operated independently and in patterns of their individual devising . . .”

As for Bridgeboro’s railroads, Beebe noted that “the little kingdom of the Pidcock family of Georgia embraces three interlocking short lines of varying degrees of importance.” Long-time readers of TRAINS magazine might remember the term “Pidcock lines,” or that two of the three would wind up with hand-me-
down Southern FT diesels [page 65], or possibly the article in Trains’ April 1969 issue, “When It’s Shortline Time Down South,” by the late Jim Boyd.

The “Pidcock kingdom” included the Georgia, Ashburn, Sylvester & Camilla Railway, which connected with the main line of Southern Railway subsidiary Georgia Southern & Florida at Ashburn, Ga. The GAS&C became known variously as the “Gas Line” or “the Camilla.”

But GAS&C was a junior in the Pidcock family, joining the system in 1922. The Pidcocks’ “flagship” was the 68-mile Georgia Northern Railway, acquired November 3, 1894. The family’s third road was the Albany & Northern, running 35 miles northeast from Albany to Cordele. Completed in 1891, A&N went through several leases, names, and reorganizations before coming under Pidcock control in 1939 and resuming the A&N name in 1942. The Pidcocks abandoned a fourth line, the Flint River & Northeastern, not long before Beebe’s odyssey.

THE B&A OF GEORGIA

James N. Pidcock Sr. was a former congressman and builder and owner of the Rockaway Valley Railroad in New Jersey. His railroad interests in Georgia began in 1892, when he visited his son Charles, who was working as a lumber mill clerk at Boston, Ga., near the Florida state line. The elder Pidcock shared his son’s enthusiasm for the business potential in the yellow pine forests and the rich sandy soil in the rolling hills of south Georgia. Searching for a promising local venture, the father and son found a dormant railroad charter for the Boston & Albany Railroad of Georgia, which they acquired from a group of Boston (Ga.) businessmen. Like its big namesake linking New England’s hub city with New York’s state capital, the B&A of Georgia was projected to run between the Peach State towns of Boston and Albany (the latter, though, pronounced locally as All-binn-ee).

Charter in hand, James and Charles Pidcock set out to build a railroad. At first, the B&A wasn’t much of a line, just a typical logging track deep in the heart of south Georgia’s timberlands, going north 12 miles from Pidcock (4½ miles east of Boston), serving on-line sawmills and turpentine stills. By 1893 it was 30 miles long, having reached Moultrie. Soon, though, the infant pike was thrown into receivership during the Panic of 1893. Although it appeared the little railroad was doomed, circumstances dictated its survival.

Rather than accepting defeat, the elder Pidcock and son Charles persuaded Charles’ two brothers, James N. Jr., and John F., who still lived in New Jersey, to join them in a venture to save the B&A. Together, the family bought all B&A property at a receiver’s sale on October 3, 1894. Perhaps sensing the confusion that could result from keeping the same name as the big B&A up north, the Pidcocks on November 3, 1894, surrendered the old charter and got a new one in the name of Georgia Northern Railway Co.

Over the years, J. N. Pidcock and sons developed the Georgia Northern into a thriving line that served several towns up to Albany, reached on its own rails in 1905. (Georgia Northern had served Albany beginning in 1902 via 3 miles of trackage rights from Darrow on what became an Atlantic Coast Line route.) Also in 1905, the ACL connection at Pidcock was moved to Boston.

The Pidcocks soon established an industrial development program in Georgia Northern’s rich timber and agricultural area, an integral part of which was the Whitehouse Land Co., which they formed in 1895 to buy, sell, and develop timberland as a traffic source for shipping on their railroad. As the timber was cut and the fertile land left idle, the Pidcocks joined with others in promoting...
and developing agriculture and other industries. Georgia Northern continued industrial development until selling the railroad to Southern Railway in 1966.

James N. Pidcock Jr. took over the presidency from his father in 1897 and held it until 1906, when he stepped down in favor of his co-founder brother Charles, who held the office for the next 30 years.

**ADDING THE GAS&C**

The Georgia, Ashburn, Sylvester & Camilla Railway Co. was born of the 96-mile Hawkinsville & Florida Southern, for which the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1922 authorized total abandonment. This anticipated loss was a matter of great concern to the Georgia Northern as well as to H&FS on-line business leaders and shippers. Together they and other citizens tried to persuade Charles Pidcock to buy and run the 51-mile H&FS segment between Ashburn and Camilla, which crossed the Georgia Northern at Bridgeboro.

Although sympathetic to their cause, President Pidcock believed that any investment he might make would need financial help and the full support of on-line interests, who formed a citizens committee. Accordingly, he asked them to put up one-half the necessary working capital as evidence of their support. Negotiations resulted in the organization of GAS&C, with more than 200 shippers and citizens owning half of the stock. The new road then bought the H&FS segment from its receiver, and GAS&C started operations in June 1922. Part of the purchase pact was that the Pidcocks would manage and run GAS&C. Other economies were realized from joint use with Georgia Northern of locomotives, cars, other equipment, and facilities.

In 1936, Charles W. Pidcock Jr., grandson of Georgia Northern founder James N. Pidcock Sr., succeeded his father as president of the three family short lines. He served in that capacity until his death in 1961, after which W. Leon Pippin Jr., his son-in-law, took over as president and general manager.

**THE “BRIDGEBORO BOOGIE”**

From its earliest days, the Georgia Northern had relied on its Class 1 connections — lines that became part of ACL at both Boston and Albany plus the Central of Georgia at Albany — for car supply as well as access to the national rail system. It was not until the 1950s, though, after Leon Pippin married into the family and became heir apparent to
the Pidcocks, that management fully recognized the substantial benefits that could be derived from GAS&C’s connection with the Georgia Southern & Florida (Southern Railway) at Ashburn. Accordingly, Pippin started promoting routing to and from Georgia Northern points and GS&F via the familial GAS&C interchange at Bridgeboro. Not only did the Pidcock lines increase revenues, shippers at Albany and Moultrie benefitted from the additional outlet. Soon the interchange at Bridgeboro — a tiny place described in print by Jim Boyd in 1969 as consisting of “a few houses, a combination gas station and general store, and one trackside industry” — became the focus of intense switching activity when the daily-except-Sunday locals on Georgia Northern and GAS&C would meet in the morning to exchange cars. The accompanying photos of that action, on pages 60–63, taken circa 1955 by the late Harold Sanborn of Lakeland, Fla., capture the drill.

The Pidcock Lines’ 1950s strategy of promoting the Southern connection at Ashburn not only increased revenues for Georgia Northern and GAS&C, it also altered traffic patterns. One result was the downgrading of the 28-mile Moultrie–Boston end of the Georgia Northern. While the ACL connection at Boston had been active in the past, after Georgia Northern discontinued the Moultrie–Boston passenger train in 1956 — employing self-propelled motor cars, which lingered on the property for years in typical shortline style — that 29-mile segment saw the Moultrie yard crew go down to Boston only when required.

EPILOGUE

Alas, the old Georgia Northern segment, from Albany through Bridgeboro to Moultrie (and extending east on the former G&F branch to Sparks), didn’t last as a Class 1 freight route, although service has continued under a series of new shortline owners. In 1995 Norfolk Southern spun off the Albany–Moultrie–Sparks line, plus the old Georgia & Florida north from Valdosta, Ga., to Nashville, Ga., to shortline portfolio manager Gulf & Ohio, which began operations on April 14, 1995, using a name from yesteryear — Georgia & Florida.

On January 21, 1999, Gulf & Ohio consolidated its holdings in the region and sold them to another shortline company, North American RailNet, which renamed the carrier Georgia & Florida RailNet. Then in 2005, OmniTRAX acquired the operation from RailNet, renaming it Georgia & Florida Railway.

So some of the old “Pidcock kingdom” today remains as part of “what goes around comes around,” and if you happen by Bridgeboro, Ga., at the right time, you might see a train. But it won’t stop to “boogie.”
Albany & Northern’s only unit, GE 70-tonner No. 70, halts for a portrait at Albany on May 31, 1965. By 1967 it would have a new number — 1.

Georgia Northern Brill motor car 55, also at Moultrie on March 27, 1957, likewise was on hand in 1965, in the shop.

Its paint scheme reflecting its Southern Railway origin, FT No. 14, re-numbered from 4105, rests at Albany. GAS&C also had an ex-SOU FT.

Sporting six exhaust stacks, Baldwin DS-44-660 No. 172 burbles to itself at Moultrie on November 21, 1965. It would become No. 12.

Albany & Northern’s only unit, GE 70-tonner No 70, halts for a portrait at Albany on May 31, 1965. By 1967 it would have a new number — 1.

Formerly No. 71, Georgia, Ashburn, Sylvester & Camilla 70-tonner No. 15 sports fresh-looking paint at “off-line” Moultrie on May 28, 1967.