



Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Inc.

Southeast Chapter

Newsletter No. 118 – April 2010



A message from Reid Adams, Chairman

As I enter my second year as chairman of your Southeast Chapter, I want to say thanks to each and every one of you for continuing to make our Chapter second to none. In particular, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to John Leynes, vice-chairman 2009, for stepping in to facilitate our monthly meetings while I was away for work.

The R&LHS officers appreciate the support and enthusiasm of our valued members and contributions each one of you make to help our chapter grow and prosper. This last year we had a lot of exciting things happen with our Chapter. We produced a DVD Documentary of Henry Plant's Railroad which has been very well-received. Our own members wrote, produced and narrated the video. If you do not already have a copy, by all means please contact us and we can send you one for only \$20. We also strengthened our involvement with the ACL 1504 Preservation group by assisting with the preparation for a State Grant application and regularly attending the joint venture meetings. Several members even volunteered their own money and man-hours to assist with the preservation, and we sincerely appreciate the dedication of the group. We believe this to be a worthwhile endeavor to preserve this piece of history that is important to the Southeast. I am pleased that so many groups, along with the City of Jacksonville, have mobilized to preserve the locomotive.

Our monthly Chapter meetings continue to be an exciting time for members that can attend. They feature a variety of excellent presentations from our Chapter members as well as guests from the railroad community. Presentations have included 15-minute talks about each member's favorite locomotives, to classic slide shows, to Signals and Timetables 101 lessons. As always, we encourage out-of-town members to stop by and attend a meeting if Jacksonville is ever part of your travel itinerary. Please feel free to email or call any of the officers for additional information.

This year we also got our new chapter website up and running, and we need everyone's ideas of how we can make it better. This is your website, and is a great place to share information, photos, and hopefully attract new members. The website can also be an important way to advertise our Chapter to outsiders and keep members up-to-date on Chapter activities.

I want to make 2010 a year for Chapter growth and increased member participation. As with other historical society chapters around the country, we realize the importance of growth in order to sustain our Southeast Chapter. We especially need to encourage growth and participation from some of our younger railroad enthusiasts. All it takes is word of mouth or a friend of a friend to tell them about our organization and the benefits. *You* can be the key. If every one of our 66 members talked about our organization to just *one* other person, chances are we would get a dozen or so new members by the end of the year.

In closing, I want to thank you again for being a part of the Southeast Chapter. I encourage each of you to send me ideas regarding membership, website improvement, Chapter activities, and newsletter ideas. Feel free to email me at: wradams30@gmail.com. I look forward to hearing from you!

Southeast Limited

The West India Fruit & Steamship Company

Short life and quick death - by David Moat

Reprinted with the kind permission of David Moat and the “The Interchange” the newsletter of the Ottawa Valley Associated Railroaders – OVAR Canada - January 2010 Issue 441.

Editor’s note: David Moat contacted me requesting my permission to use the photographs of the WIF car that accompany this article. He was writing the article reprinted here, about the West India Fruit & Steamship Company. He found the pictures on my Florida Railroad website, which were in my father’s photo collection. John A. Leynes Sr., was a WWII veteran, a sergeant in the 8th AAF, and B-17 / B-24 aircraft mechanic. Prior to the war, he had gained employment with the Fruit Growers Express Company. After the war, he returned to them as a mechanical supervisor in Jacksonville, Florida, with a short assignment at the FGE headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia. Unfortunately for him, our mother was a Southern girl, and after one Virginia winter, she advised him that she would be back in Florida, if he wanted to be with us. That settled that, and the rest was family history. The WIF car shown was built by FGE, in November of 1957 at the West Jacksonville shops, Moncrief Yard.

David has done a splendid job of research for this wonderful article! Thanks also to Seth Bramson for reviewing it.

David’s Article:

Starting about ten years ago, each time I accessed the Accurail website and stoged around in the refrigerator car section, my eye was increasingly drawn to a picture of their kit #4806 near the upper right hand corner of that section. It showed a bright yellow car emblazoned on the right side with a silhouette view of a large steamship on which the slogan “Florida-Havana” was prominently displayed, while the left side of the car showed that it belonged to the “West India Fruit & Steamship Co.” with reporting marks “W.I.F.” Every time I entered the site I became a little more intrigued, to the point that to satisfy my own curiosity, I set out to answer questions such as: “Who were the WIF&SS Co? What did they do? How many cars of what type did they own? How about the steamships alluded to in their rather grandiose title? What eventually happened to the WIF&SS Co.?” An initial web-crawl (my spidy senses were tingling!) through several sites enabled me to ascertain that from 1915 until 1935, the Florida East Coast Railway operated a subsidiary railroad car ferry service under the name of “Florida East Coast Car Ferry Company” between Key West and Havana. After a 1935 hurricane completely destroyed the section of the FEC that ran down through the Florida keys, the US port was moved to Port Everglades (Fort Lauderdale), where three substantial car ferries—the Estrada Palma, the Henry M. Flagler, and the Joseph R. Parrot—continued to provide regular service between the United States and Cuba up to the beginning of WWII. (continued)

Announcements:

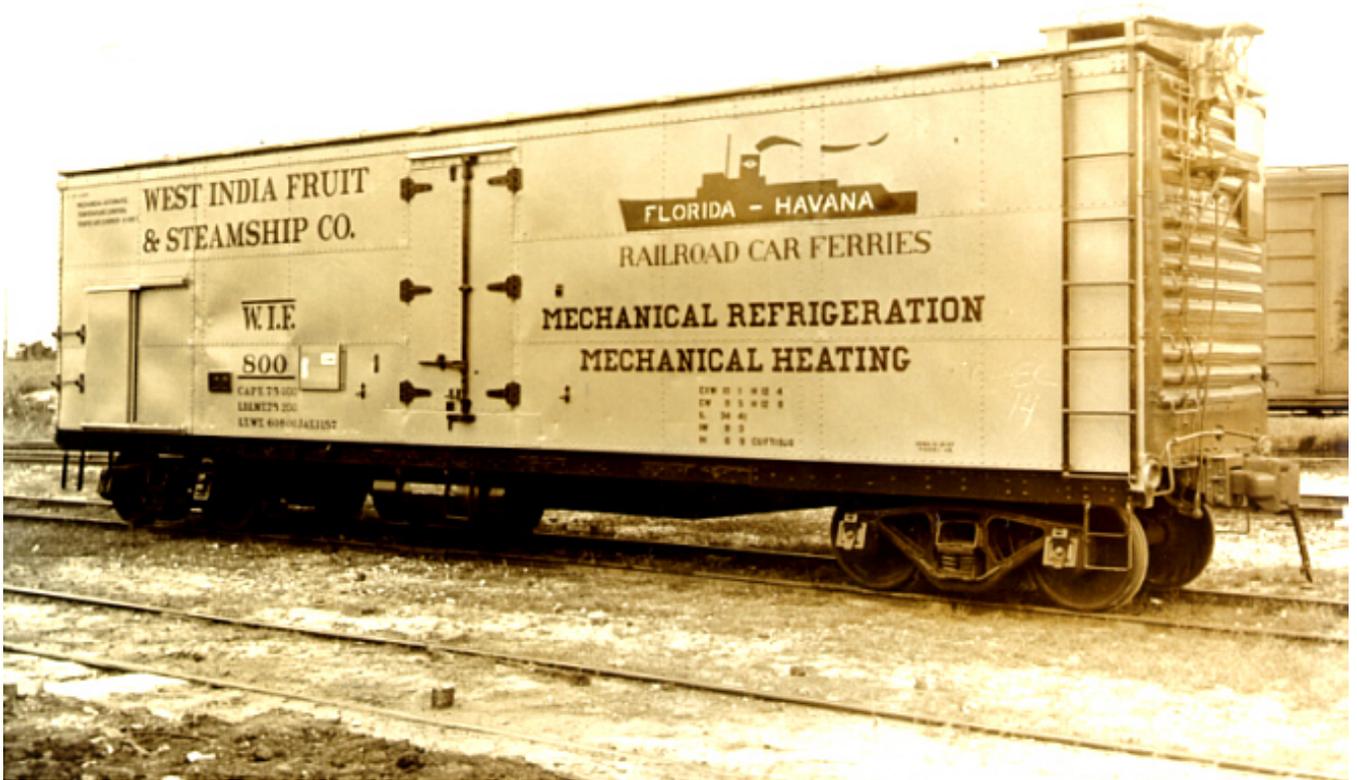
Our regular meetings are the 2nd Thursday of the month @ 6:30 PM, in the CSX Bldg., 500 Water St. Jacksonville, FL.
May 13th - May monthly meeting at the CSX building.
June 10th - June monthly meeting at the CSX building.

SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OFFICERS

W. Reid Adams,	Chairman	904-400-4680
Jim Smith	Vice-Chairman	904-276-2972
Paul Newton	Secretary	
Robert Van Nest	Treasurer	

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WIF #800, built November, 1957 by Fruit Growers Express Company, Jacksonville, Florida shop.



West India Fruit & Steamship Company – continued

This service was terminated by the onset of hostilities and the requisition of all three ferries by the US Navy for the duration. Although the Henry M. Flagler and the Joseph R. Parrot were available for return at the end of the war, the Florida East Coast, for whatever reasons, decided not to re-instate the car ferry service. Instead, a new company, the “West India Fruit & Steamship Company” was formed and began operations in 1946 between Port Everglades and Havana. However, better yard facilities, the close proximity of the FEC main line, and a good port facility soon prompted the WIF&SS Co. to move the US terminus from Port Everglades to West Palm Beach. The new service was so successful that it eventually required a total of four vessels to handle the Florida-Havana railroad traffic. In addition to acquiring and operating the former FEC vessels SS Henry M. Flagler and SS Joseph R. Parrot, they also acquired and operated the SS Grand Haven (a former Grand Trunk boat that had operated on Lake Michigan), and the SS New Grand Haven which was built by Canadian Vickers Ltd. in 1951. The original SS Grand Haven was retired in 1960.

Two other vessels, the car ferry SS City of New Orleans and the freighter SS Sea Level, operated between New Orleans and Havana, while a very well appointed large automobile and passenger vessel, the SS City of Havana, ran between the old Key West terminal and Havana to satisfy the tourist and business traveler trade. The main advantage of the railroad car ferry service, and a point that was repeatedly made in its advertising literature, was that cars were directly transferred between Cuban and North American points without the need to load and unload freight at port facilities, thereby avoiding the attendant problems of lost time, re-packaging, pilferage and damage. Freight cars to or from any destination in North America were transferred to or from the FEC and thence to or from the WIF&SS Co. by the West Palm Beach Terminal Company. At the Havana end, the Ferrocarriles Unidos de la Habana handled the Cuban connections. By the middle 1950s, up to 80 railroad cars each way per day (with a maximum of 26 per ferry) were being transferred between the United States and Cuba. Commodities such as pineapples, tomatoes, refined sugar, and tobacco moved northward, while apples, pears, machinery, and manufactured goods moved southward.

By 1957 this required a fleet of 260 WIF&SS Co, refrigerator cars and boxcars with reporting marks “W.I.F.”, in addition to railroad cars from all over North America. It seems that while the North American cars freely made the trip to and around Cuba, few if any Cuban cars made the reverse trip to North America. During the 11 years from 1946 to 1957, the WIF&SS Co. car ferries provided the principal means of moving freight between the United States and Cuba with ever-increasing loadings, reaching a maximum of more than half a million tons in 1957. However, as the 1950s drew to a close, troubles beyond the control of the company began to make themselves felt. After 1957, freight tonnage totals began to decline, slowly at first, and then exponentially, as the onset of the Cuban revolution resulted in increasing economic disruption within Cuba.

That revolution resulted in Fidel Castro’s forces successfully overthrowing the regime of dictator Fulgencio Batista and, despite assurances from Castro to the contrary, instituting a communist government. At that time and in the peak decades of the “cold war,” any form of pink-to-red government was anathema to the United States, and in very short order relations between the United States and Cuba were deteriorating at a precipitous rate, finally culminating in the October 1960 United States embargo against all trade with Cuba. Citing the fact that trade had dwindled to the vanishing point, the WIF&SS Co. put all six of its remaining ships up for sale in June of 1961 and ceased operations in August of the same year. As a footnote to having piqued and assuaged my interest, culminating in my writing this article, my final act has been to order a pair of the WIF refrigerator car kits from Accurail—just in time too, as an exchange of e-mails between myself and Accurail has revealed that this item is being discontinued after the remaining stock of fourteen (now twelve) has been sold out.

Editors note: I can confirm that Accurail has in fact sold out. I called them when putting together this issue, to see if they might have any left, and they advised me that all remaining stock of these are gone.

Electronic Distribution of Newsletter

There has been further discussion about distributing the newsletter via electronic mail. The newsletter is one of the main benefits of and inducements for becoming a chapter member. At our March meeting, those present discussed the cost of printing the *Southeast Limited*. It was felt that we should change from mailing a hard copy to sending the newsletter via email, as is done by other chapters. This idea was first presented to our membership in the October, 2009 *Southeast Limited*.

This process would speed up the delivery of the newsletter to you, before the news becomes stale, significantly save money on ink, paper, envelopes, postage and conserve SE Chapter funds on the overall cost of providing the newsletter. Consequently, we are planning to use electronic transmission to send the June *Southeast Limited* to you in the form of an email, with a PDF attachment.

We need to update our records to include current email addresses for those members who have one and use the Internet.. If you use email, please send a message to the editor at: john@flarr.com so that we can update our records and include you on the list of email users. This will also give us the capability of sending notifications of various activities or other information to those who have the capability for electronic mail.

If you do not use electronic mail, or you still prefer a printed copy, you will continue to receive a hard copy by US mail. We will contact each member by electronic mail or by phone to determine which method of distribution is preferred.

We will be sending this same information to those for whom we presently have an email address, so look for it please.

Please respond to us right away with your current electronic mail address, if you have one!

Minutes of the March 11, 2010 meeting

The meeting at the CSX General Office Building in Jacksonville, Florida was called to order by Vice Chairman Jim Smith. Nine members and zero guests were present.

Secretary's Report: In the absence of the Chapter's Secretary, the members present reviewed the Minutes of the prior meeting on February 11, 2010 and found that they accurately reported the matters discussed and the business conducted. The motion was approved by unanimous vote of the members present.

Treasurer's Report: Chapter Treasurer Robert Van Nest reported that the chapter has \$4,982.11 in its account at the Coast Line Credit Union and \$4,000.00 in a certificate of deposit at Sun Trust Bank at Regency. The certificate of deposit earns 3% interest, and the \$4,000.00 is split into two \$2,000.00 increments, one of which is invested for 29 months and one of which is invested for 49 months. The motion was approved by unanimous vote of the members present.

Committee Reports:

- Newsletter: Jim Smith reported that he and John Leynes will send out an e-mail advising chapter members that the Southeast Chapter is going to begin distributing its newsletter via e-mail as a PDF attachment. Jim and John will attempt to get e-mail addresses from members who haven't made them known to the chapter. John proposed that a notice also be published in the next newsletter. Distribution of the newsletter by e-mail potentially could save the chapter considerable expense by limiting costs for stamps, envelopes, labels, printing ink and paper.
- Trip Committee: No report.
- Website Committee: John Leynes reported that he hopes to put some timetables Larry Brennan is scanning on the website. He also wants to set up a section of the website for members who have railroad items to sell.

Old Business:

- Bill Howes reported that a grant application has been submitted to the appropriate state agency for funding for the restoration of ACL steam locomotive #1504. He noted that we did not have enough matching funds to qualify for the maximum grant, but the grant was submitted on the basis of the matching funds that were available. The Southeast Chapter had better participation in this project than any other organization. On March 22 and 23, applicants will be able to appear in Tallahassee to make last minute appeals on behalf of their applications. John Leynes will represent the chapter at those hearings, and other members may accompany him to Tallahassee. Art Towson moved that the chapter reimburse John Leynes for his expenses associated with the Tallahassee trip, and Lyle Key seconded that motion which was approved by unanimous vote of the members present.
- Bill Howes also reported that three new members joined R&LHS and the Southeast Chapter during the Jacksonville Train Show on February 20. Bill and the other chapter members who represented us at the Train Show not only covered the cost of the chapter's table – largely through sales of FEC headrests – but also earned an extra \$26.50 which was presented to the treasurer.
- With regard to the disposition of Richard's book collection, Ed Mueller reported that the Jacksonville Historical Society is trying to acquire the old St. Luke's Hospital and the adjacent casket factory. Ed said that until those acquisitions either come to fruition or fall through, we will be unable to move forward with possible donation of Richard's collection to the Jacksonville Historical Society.

New Business:

- At the urging of R&LHS's national officers, Bill Howes will represent the Southeast Chapter at the Deland Train Show on April 3, 2010. National wanted the chapter to solicit memberships at the Deland show, but Bill is not optimistic that the effort will be successful since the Deland show is basically a model railroad event and since it will occur on Easter weekend.
- Jim Smith noted that Paul Newton will present the program at the next meeting on April 8. John Leynes volunteered to provide a program on "Extreme Railway Construction" at the May 13 meeting, and Art Towson will show a video on June 10.
- Jim Smith also noted that the R&LHS National Convention will be held in Ft. Worth, Texas in May.
- Ed Mueller was appointed Chapter Parliamentarian by Vice Chairman Smith.

Adjournment: Since there was no further business to be brought before the members, Lyle Key moved to adjourn, and Bill Howes seconded that motion which passed by unanimous vote of the members present. Vice Chairman Smith adjourned the meeting at 7:40 pm, Eastern Standard Time.

Respectfully submitted by *Lyle Key*, Acting Secretary