

(Transcript: Railroads Come to Hattiesburg)

(A photo of a miniature replica of William Hardy as a surveyor)

Hattiesburg's founder, William H. Hardy, is credited for bringing major railroads to south Mississippi. Hardy was a surveyor by profession and was directly involved in the initial layout of track in our area.

(A photo of a trains passing the Hattiesburg train station)

While railroads were crucial to the success of the timber industry, they also contributed to the growth and development of the city itself.

(A photo of early telegraph equipment)

Railroads brought the telegraph which provided a critical communication tie with the rest of the country.

(A photo of assorted railroad signs and equipment on display in the museum)

Trains also brought new people to Hattiesburg. Some stayed to help the fledgling city take root, while others only visited as layover passengers on their way to other destinations like New Orleans.

(An artist's conception of the "Hub Sign" in downtown Hattiesburg)

Downtown businesses that catered to rail customers seemingly sprang up as fast as track was laid. Yes, tourism was alive and well even back in Hattiesburg's early days.

(A photo of the Hotel Hattiesburg located next to the downtown train station)

The Hotel Hattiesburg, for example, was built by the Gulf and Ship Island Railroad in 1906. Located adjacent to the downtown train station, rail visitors could disembark and immediately walk through the hotel doors.

(A photo of serving pieces used in the Hotel Hattiesburg's dining room)

The hotel was known for its elegant decor and fine dining as evidenced by these serving pieces (circa 1920) which are on display in the historical society's museum.

(A street view of the Hotel Hattiesburg)

Over the decades that followed, the advent of automobiles, highways and motels lead to the decline of both passenger train service and patronage at The Hotel Hattiesburg. When the building closed its doors for the last time as the Milner Hotel,

(A photo of a home with columns from the original Hotel Hattiesburg)

local residents with emotional ties to the old structure purchased bricks, timber, stair rails, marble and even elevator cages. Sadly, The Hotel Hattiesburg was demolished in 1961. It lives on, however, in the memories of area residents and the remnants of the original building that reside in and around their homes.