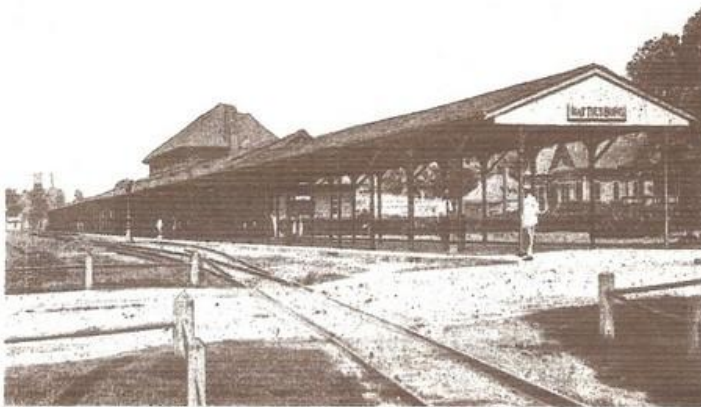


Hattiesburg Area Historical Society

HAHS MUSEUM
Hattiesburg Cultural Center
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Hattiesburg, MS 39403-1773



Postcard of Hattiesburg Depot circa 1910

IT'S NOT YOUR GRANDPARENTS' DEPOT ANYMORE

(Word choices: preservation, rebuilding, re-creation, reconstruction, refurbishing, reinventing, remodeling, renovation, repairing, restoration)

The New Orleans & Northeastern Railroad brought William Harris Hardy to our area, and it was Hardy who had the privilege of picking the spot for the station and naming it Hattiesburg. Before the depot was even built, the first news of the 1908 Purvis cyclone arrived at this whistle stop, and the first help for that stricken community departed from here. After its construction in 1910, the

Southern Railway Depot, along with the depots for other lines, soon made our town the Hub of South Mississippi's trade and transportation. Troops by the thousands covered the platform as they disembarked here during two world wars. Hundreds of children have stepped from this pavement for their first ride on a "real train."

Now that the (fill in the blank with word of your choice) of the Hattiesburg Depot nears completion, society members and long time area residents were asked to share their memories of going to the train station. Nearly all mentioned the long platform with its 924' canopy. Mary Elizabeth Moore went so far as to describe it as "interminable" as it seemed to be endless and stretch on forever. Unfortunately, the roof didn't last forever. When it eventually fell into disrepair, it was shortened to the area in front of the building.

Charles Newcomer remembers his father telling him about the station's length and a trip he made from Laurel during WWI. The flu of 1918, which killed 20 million people worldwide, was racing through the nation's military bases. Frank Newcomer arrived in Hattiesburg to find the lengthy platform covered with coffins containing the bodies of soldiers who had died at Camp Shelby. It was such an overwhelming sight that he would still talk about it decades later, when his son was old enough to comprehend the severity of the epidemic.

According to Martha Polk Douglas and Ms. Moore, it became quite popular in the 1920's and 1930's to travel by train to New Orleans to shop. Mrs. Douglas said that the train stopped at the station for a longer time then. When she and her mother, Ruth Polk, heard the whistle blow they would run the two blocks to the station and head out for a day of shopping. Most days they rode an early train south and came back on the night train, but sometimes they stayed over night.

The Moore family did much the same thing. "Those were fun days," said Ms. Moore. "I loved going early in the morning and taking the night train back. Of course, sometimes we took the late afternoon train down and spent the night." She fondly remembers a Sunday trip to New Orleans with the entire family when she was a child, "Mama and Daddy both went. We ate at a fancy restaurant and went to the zoo. I had never seen a zoo that large before. It was a grand day!"

Dee Abbott recalls the fish pond and the large waiting room at the station. "There was a concession stand and all kinds of magazines for sale." She rode the train alone at the age of seven or eight. "Daddy knew the conductor. He would put me on the train and tell the conductor to put me off at Heidelberg. When we got there my cousin would be waiting." She remembers another ride as a teen, "When *Gone With the Wind* opened, they said it would never come to Hattiesburg because we didn't have a large enough screen. I boarded the 3 a.m. train with a number of other people also going to New Orleans for the movie." On the train she met a woman and child, and they decided to stay together. In New Orleans they ate and saw the live broadcast of WWL Radio's popular "Dawn Busters" program hosted by Henry Dupree before going to the movie. She returned on the late train.

AJ Jones spoke of waiting at the station with E. C. Polk for a group of teens, including his brother Cecil Ray Jones and future wife Jacq Polk, to return from a trip to Mardi Gras. "Mardi Gras wasn't anything special," said Mrs. Douglas, "There were a number of families who went or allowed their children to go every year."

Mrs. Douglas' most vivid memory of the depot was learning to skate on the concrete platform. "There were no paved sidewalks, and the station was a wonderful place to skate." A generation later, her niece would skate at the station-probably using some of the same skates. Ursula Jones enjoyed the smooth surface and weaving in and out of the posts that supported the roof. "It was a great place to skate without getting wet when it rained" she said. "You could go for two blocks before having to turn around. Figure eights around the posts were an accomplishment on skates, but on a bicycle it took real skill to keep from falling off the platform and onto the tracks. Of course, we did it anyway, but only when there were no people on the platform and no trains coming."

Mr. Jones recalled a large crowd gathering at the depot one day in the 1930's. He could see them from where he was working at Central Electric on Main Street, so he walked over to see what was happening. A wheel from a freight car was laying on the platform, and a man was betting bystanders that he could stand it upright without touching it with his hands. "There were 100 or more people there, and many of them were willing to bet. I just watched. After a while, I guess he figured he had all the bets he was going to get. He reached into his back pocket and took out an iron rod. It was about twelve or so inches long. Then he began to tap on the wheel. He got a rhythm going, and pretty soon the wheel began to wobble. One side lifted; then the other. Finally it stood straight up."

Gloria Coleman remembered seeing off the midnight trains during WWII with the girls from Court Street Methodist Church. The church provided a place for soldiers to write letters, play games, and listen to music while they were training at Shelby. After training the men were given furlough before returning the Shelby to be deployed. The church members felt it was their duty to be there as the men awaited the northbound midnight train.

"There was no taxi service in those days so porters from the hotels met the arriving trains and called out to the passengers," stated Mrs. Abbott. Dr. Fred Tatum remembers how they would call out the same way at the IC station, "Ho-tel Hattiesburg! Leaf Ho-tel! Forrest Ho-tel, Hattiesburg's new hotel!" Then they would collect the baggage and carry it across the tracks.

Lynn Meador liked the sights and sounds of the station. She was fascinated by the luggage carts with their big iron wheels and long tongues. "It was dark and cool under the awning. It was an interesting, exciting, exotic place to be when the trains came in with the steam under the cars and the porters carrying the luggage around. The train would sit hissing and then the conductor would call, 'Alllll abooooard!'" "The steps were picked up. Then all those doors would close one after another, and the whistle blew as the train steamed out of the station," added Ms. Jones.

"I remember in the 50's the top-of-the-line Streamliner came through. That was the way to travel!" stated Mrs. Meador. "I loved seeing the people sitting in the dining cars, especially at night when the cars were all lit up. It made you wish that you were going somewhere too."

One longtime Hattiesburg resident expressed it this way: "The trains and the station have always been an important part of our city's heritage. Even if one never rode the trains, just seeing the Hattiesburg signs on the ends of that long covered walkway gave one a sense of home and security. I was pleased to hear that the building was to be saved and repaired. I was excited when I learned that the canopy would be restored over the platform-until I saw the new construction. Shock and dismay don't adequately describe what I felt. But I guess that's what some people might call progress. I've seen the steam engines give way to the diesel and heard the rhythmic clickity-clack of the wheels replaced by the smoother whoosh of the ribbon rails. That's the way it is in life. Things change; few things are definite. But there is one thing I know for sure: that's not our grandparents' station anymore!"



Southern Depot Fish Pond circa 1941.





GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

December 1, 2004 - June 5, 2005



- ★ Post card of the USO Club - Earline Roseberry
- ★ Books: *Hattiesburg in Vintage Postcards* and *Live Like You Were Dying* - Laurie Crowson
- ★ 1994 Hattiesburg/Petal City Directory and office paper - Jim Freeman
- ★ 1933 circa pictures of the third grade, Walthall Elementary School - Helen Horn Wedgeworth
- ★ Hattiesburg 100th mug and 2 silver military Captain's cluster insignia - Anne Carpenter
- ★ Choctaw deerskin ball for stick ball game, handmade by Reydale Henry - Bettie S. Ross
- ★ Red and gold formal dress worn at Jan. 1976 Lt. Governor's reception and Photo of Abbie Whigham Gandy, Evelyn and Frances Gandy at the Jan. 1976 reception-Evelyn Gandy.
- ★ Playing head for the museum victrola - Ed B. Crockett
- ★ Photos: 1920's Woolworth picture; Assorted zeroxed photos of P. W. Clark Lumber Co. of Petal; Soapbox Derby rule book and newspaper clippings with photos of Steve Mozingo owner of the soapbox derby car on display - Anne Clark Talbert.
- ★ Arthur Spencer's 1936 HHS Reunion Notebook, Class Reunion Program - Dee Abbott
- ★ Handmade wooden easel - Dee Abbott
- ★ Memorabilia from the HHS class of 1940 - Martha Ann Gunn
- ★ Assorted Hattiesburg American newspapers - Louisa Williams
- ★ 136 black and white photos of the USM Century Club members - William P. Harrington, Jr.
- ★ TV cart in memory of Bonnie Anglin - Magnolia Chapter, Questers
- ★ Framed picture of the Bayliss Overstreet Nov. 1920 Memorial Class of Free Masonry - David Shemper.
- ★ Ed Morgan election memorabilia - Elizabeth Herrington

Recent Monetary Contributions

October 21, 2004 - July 5, 2005

Life Members

Mary R. Saucier
Betty C. McSwain
Charlotte W. Yandell
Bobby L. Chain
Luther Ott
Milam Cotten
A.T. Tatum, Jr.
Mary Louise Breland

Donors

CD & Ruby Galey
Martha Polk Douglas
HHS Class of 1945
Helen H. Cullefer
Martha R. Tatum
Walter Warren
A J Jones
Hattiesburg Area Assn. of Realtors
Dee Abbott
Bradford L. Bradley
Morning Garden Club
Multifloral Garden Club
Barbara Aldridge Curry
Jean T. Thompson
Lorraine Smith Ott
Emma Aplin

HHS Class of 1947
HHS Class of 1945
Ab Jones and Family
Lynn J. Meador
Rawls Springs Baptist Church
In Memory Of:

Austin Ferrell, Jr.
Jacq Polk Jones
Leon McDaniel
Rowland W. Heidelberg, Jr.
Jean Nelson
Rebecca Grove
Don Graham
Georgia Seifort
John D. Howell, Jr.
Ethelyne Bradley
Bill Hetrick
Nina Clearman
Louise S. Thomas
David Hemeter, Sr.
W. E. McInnis
Grady Harrison
Dudley Carr
Junie F. Berry
John E. Schwartz, Jr.
Robert T. Jones
Elizabeth Ruffin Bennett
Bonnie Anglin

Grace C. Green
Ray "Buck" Wells
Randolph Langford
Bernice Cole
Virginia White
Earl Vinson
Overton Currie
Lillian Moody
Jasper Love
Maurice McWhorter
Marguerite Batson
William Yeatman, Sr.
Drew St. John
Martha Richardson Tatum
Sara Riggs
Margaret Gillespie Sewell
Merle Kirkwood McMillan
Burns Dews, Jr.
Nell McInnis
Nevie McArthur
Dorothy Hardee Myers
Annie Shelton
Frances Godbold
Vivian Vinson
Larry McDuff
Powell Ogletree
Robert Stone
Sarah Thompson