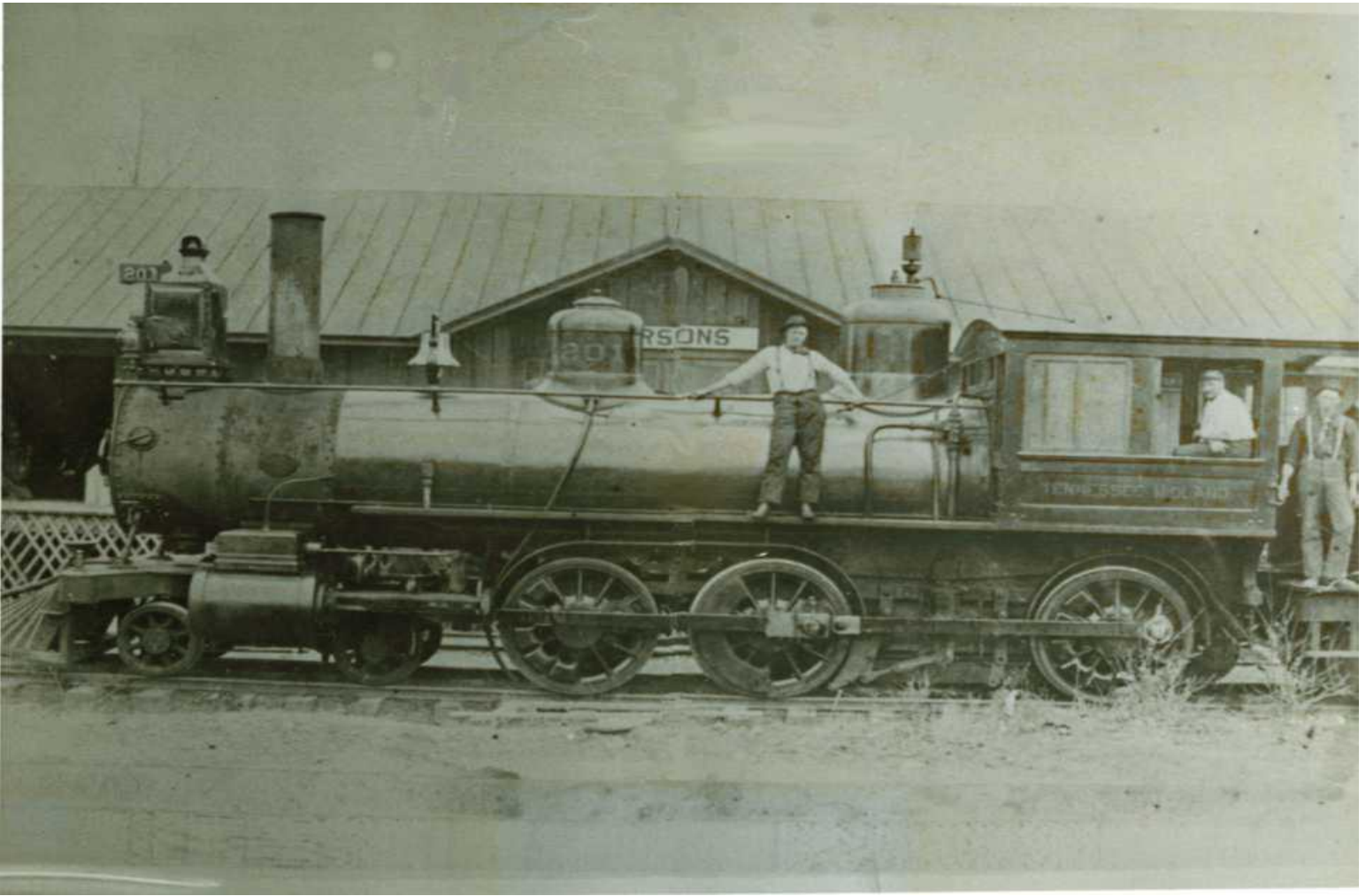


Memphis and the Tennessee Midland

by Tom Parker



Tennessee Midland # 201 at Parsons, TN

The Richmond and West Point Terminal

To understand the history of the Tennessee Midland, it's necessary to know a little bit about the Richmond and West Point Terminal Company. The "Terminal Company" was a holding company incorporated in 1880 to promote the interests of the Richmond and Danville Railroad. The R&D was prohibited in its charter from owning stock in any railroad with which it did not have a direct connection. The Terminal Company was created to circumvent this restriction.

By 1887 the Terminal Company controlled 4,500 miles of railroad but by 1892 the company had gone broke and entered receivership. It was re-incorporated in 1894 as the Southern Railway Company.

Both the Virginia Construction Company, who constructed the Tennessee Midland and the Tennessee Midland shared a number of officers and directors with The Richmond and West Point Terminal Company and were possibly separate entities only on paper.

For example, when the Tennessee Midland was sold, the majority stockholder was the Virginia Construction Company. James C. Pace a wealthy Virginian, President of the Planters Bank of Richmond, VA and tobacco company owner, was the President of the Virginia Construction Company and a director of the Terminal Company. A. S. Buford, a former president of the Terminal Company, was a director of the Tennessee Midland and was later the president of Virginia Construction. The Tennessee Midland was sold in 1892, the same year the Terminal Company entered receivership.

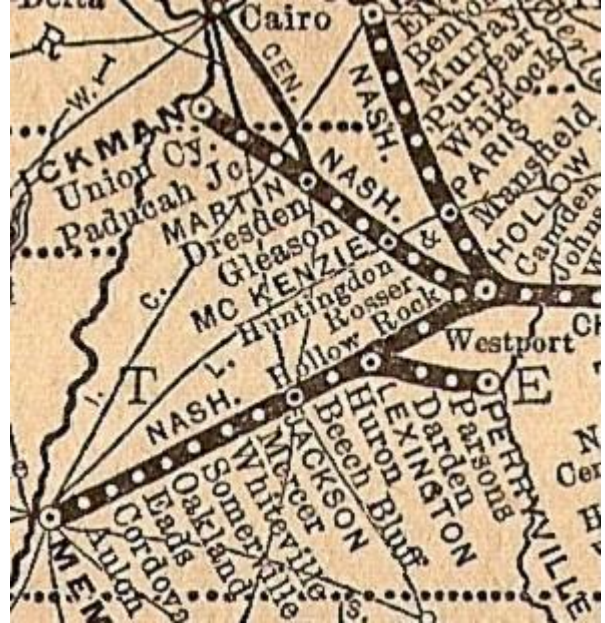
The Short History of the Tennessee Midland

The New York Times reported that on December 21, 1886, the Virginia Construction Company, under the auspices of the Pace Railway Syndicate had dispatched surveying parties from Jackson Tennessee on December 13, 1886, to map out the proposed Memphis and Nashville Road, which Mr. J.C. Pace and other owners of the Richmond and Danville intend to build. Two surveying parties left Jackson, one going toward the Tennessee River, the other towards Memphis.

No provision had yet been made to survey beyond the Tennessee River, but it was expected that such work would be done as soon as the work in West Tennessee was completed. Chief engineer was Mr. R.H. Temple of Richmond, Va. It was the intent of the Case Syndicate to extend the tracks as far as Knoxville, TN, thereby making direct connection with their Atlantic roads. Mr T. C. Leake, Jr. was to be in charge of construction.¹

On December 29, 1886, the Tennessee Midland Railway received a charter to build a railroad from Memphis, TN, to the Virginia state line.² A meeting of Memphis citizens was held on January 5, 1887, where it was agreed that Memphis should agree to a subscription of \$100,000 of capital stock of the proposed "Memphis & Nashville" railroad. The action was endorsed by the Merchants' Exchange and six prominent men were selected to solicit subscriptions. Fifty percent of the subscription was payable when the road was completed to the connection with the Illinois Central at Jackson, TN, and the remaining fifty percent when the road was completed to the Tennessee River.³

On February 18, 1887, A meeting was held in Memphis concerning the new railroad. Tennessee Midland President A. S. Buford said that the railroad would extend 700 miles from Memphis to Bristol at a cost of fifteen to twenty million dollars and would be completed in two years. It would connect to the Atlantic seaboard via the Richmond and Danville and



The Tennessee Midland extended 135 miles from Memphis to Perryville, TN. The Paducah, Tennessee and Alabama Railroad built the connecting track between Hollow Rock Junction and Lexington. (1906 Rwy Guide)

the Baltimore and Ohio systems.⁴

The Tennessee Midland secured \$350,000 in private, town and county money and on July 19, 1887, contracted the Virginia Construction Company to build the railroad. Virginia Construction issued \$2,000,000 worth of stock for this purpose.⁵ On May 14, 1888, the Tennessee Midland was authorized to build a bridge across the Tennessee River "on any point on a line between the counties of Decatur and Perry" by the United States Congress.⁶ The track from Memphis to Jackson was completed on June 1, 1888.⁷ The next year the track was completed to Perryville on the Tennessee River and on June 30, 1889, the first train operated from Memphis to Perryville. It consisted of a baggage car, two passenger cars and three freight cars. Perryville's importance was due to the transfer of passengers and freight between boats on the Tennessee River and the railroad⁸.

4 "Planing a New Road", New York Times, 2/19/87

5 http://www.southernhistory.net/articles/shnet_10226.pdf

6 Statutes at Large, USA, 12/87-3/89, Chapter 249

7 H. V. Poor, Poor's Manual (New York) 1889, P. 707

8 <http://www.decatourcountyonline.com/article.asp?acat=1&archive=yes&art=303>

1 "The Pace Syndicate", New York Times, 12/22/1886

2 <http://www.decatourcountyonline.com/article.asp?acat=1&archive=yes&art=303>

3 "A New Road to be Built, New York Times, 1/5/87

The company continued to solicit financing from individuals and government entities along its proposed route. The fledgling railroad hit a brick wall, however, when, it sought subscriptions from Davidson County. Powerful interests in Nashville blocked the subscription, backed by the Louisville and Nashville Railroad, who, along with its subsidiary, the Nashville and Chattanooga (the future NC&StL), held a monopoly on rail traffic to and from Nashville. Advocates of the Tennessee Midland continued to seek a referendum on the public subsidy of the railroad through 1892, but were unsuccessful. Later, the Tennessee Central would also be thwarted for many years by the L&N in their attempt to enter Nashville.⁹

It was reported in February, 1892, that the Illinois Central was in negotiations with the Tennessee Midland to acquire the track between Jackson and Memphis, TN. At the time the IC did not have tracks to Memphis from the North but reached Memphis from the south through Grenada, MS. While it had no interest in the forty five miles east of Jackson, the IC offered to arrange through a third party to complete the road beyond the Tennessee River to Nashville and to guarantee the bonds for its construction.¹⁰

The deal with the Illinois Central evidently fell through and on April 2, 1892, the Tennessee Midland was sold for \$2,350,000 to Mr. T. J. Mors of St. Louis, the principal owner of the Paducah, Tennessee and Alabama Railroad. The PT&A operated from Paducah, Ky., to Hollow Rock, Tenn., with a connection under construction between Hollow Rock to the Tennessee Midland at Lexington, Tenn.¹¹

In 1893 both the PT&A and the Tennessee Midland went into receivership. The Trustee was the St. Louis Trust Company and John Overton, of Memphis and W. L. Huse of St. Louis were named joint receivers. There was no change in the operation of the two lines.¹² In 1895 both lines were sold at foreclosure to the L&N Railroad. The L&N in turn leased both lines to its subsidiary, the NC&StL, for 99 years.¹³

Epilogue

With the sale of the Tennessee Midland in 1892, the former mainline between Lexington and Perryville became a branch line. Highway improvements and the construction of the Alvin C. York Bridge over the Tennessee River at Perryville in 1930 diverted traffic from the railroad. Revenue suffered and service was discontinued on October 31, 1936.

Around 1968 the remainder of the Tennessee Midland was abandoned east of Cordova with the exception of some track in Jackson, Tennessee. On September 6, 2001, the line between Aulon and Cordova was embargoed. The CSXT received discontinuance authority in 2002 and 2003 and has now requested full abandonment authority from the Surface Transportation Board. In the last couple of months the CSXT has had brush removed from the right of way to facilitate removal of the track when final approval is received. Except for trackage within Memphis and Jackson, TN, what once was the Tennessee Midland will be gone forever when this track is removed.

9 http://www.southernhistory.net/articles/shnet_10226.pdf

10 "To Buy the Tennessee Midland", New York Times, 2/14/92

11 New York Times, April 3, 1892

12 New York Times, November 1, 1893

13 Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway, Richard E. Prince, p 60.