

RAILS: The once-proud locomotives eventually sold for scrap metal

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the loader, which would whistle a short toot for the locomotive to move forward and two to back up. A long blast meant to stop.

At the age of 17, Knight started running extra as a substitute engineer on the 8 Spot and he also ran some on the 10 Spot, a larger engine that operated on the main line. He did this for about two years before becoming a full engineer, Scotch's youngest. He was paid \$4 a day with room and board provided.

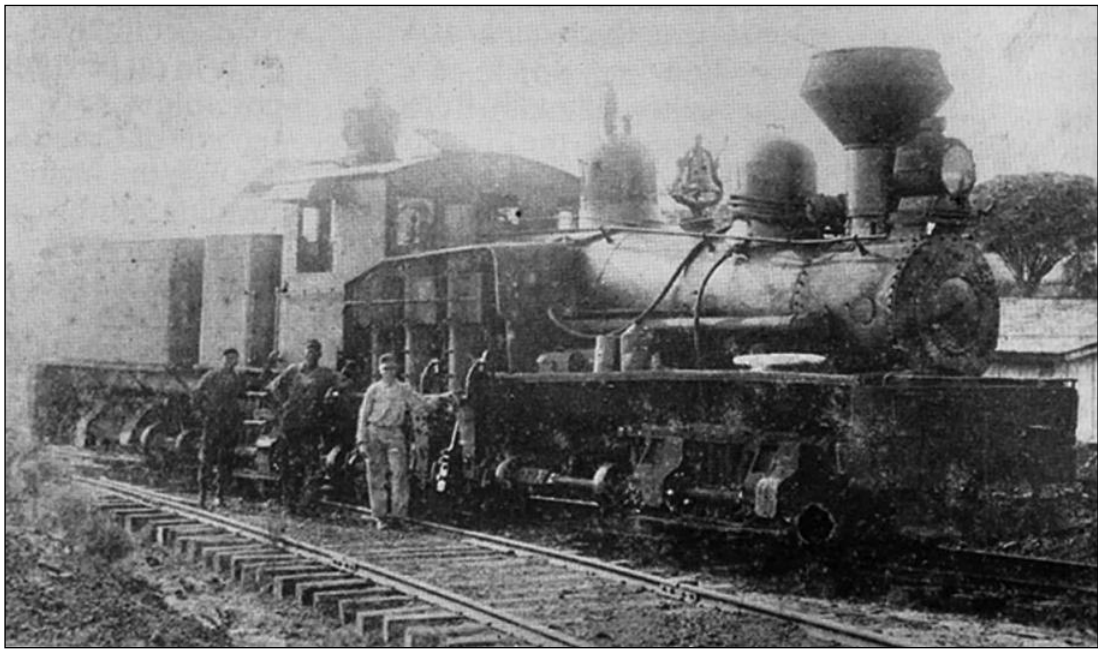
He was single and had plenty of money and was having a great time when he wasn't working. He bought a new 1924 Ford Model T from Jamie Leonard in Grove Hill.

Throttle fever

Being an engineer was the ambition of every Scotch worker. "We called it 'throttle fever,'" Knight said.

He suspected that competitive jockeying for an engineer's slot was the reason he was taken off as a regular engineer in 1928. He took a job on a logging railroad in Washington County but was back in Clarke County by 1929 doing substitute engineering. He did this until the Fulton mill burned in 1930.

Robert "Rob" Smith was another of Scotch's engineers. He was interviewed in 1984 when he was 100 years old.



Scotch's "9 Spot" at Fulton sometime during the 1920s. This is a Class 703 Shay purchased in West Virginia about 1913. It was scrapped at Fulton in 1935. This photo was provided by Mrs. G. T. Reid to Scotch Lumber Company's photo archives. G. T. Reid was an early engineer. The photo was printed in "Logging Railroads of Alabama," by Thomas Lawson Jr., published in 1996.

He also started as a fireman and worked his way up to engineer.

Smith said 10 to 12 railcars would be loaded with either 16- or 32-foot logs and the engineer would pull out down the main line to Fulton.

There, the tracks took the train behind the mill, where it turned in a hollow on a "Y" that allowed it to head out in the opposition direction. The logs were dumped into the mill pond on the west side of the mill. "We kept that pond full," Smith recalled.

40 miles of main line

The main rail line covered almost 40 miles and there was probably three

times as many miles of smaller lines extending off it. The lines stretched as far east as Silver Creek near the Alabama River and as far west as the Brunson Field Camp, near the Tombigbee River, and to Tallahatta Springs on the north and almost to Grove Hill on the south.

Camps grew up along the tracks where workers stayed during the week while working in the woods.

Camps included the Brannon Crossing Camp, the Bradshaw Camp (named for Scotch's railroad superintendent), Hopewell Camp (near Hopewell Baptist Church in Chilton) and the Burl Goodman Camp (named for a nearby resi-

dent).

The biggest tree

According to Knight, the largest tree Scotch ever cut was cut near the Pump Branch, named for a Scotch pump there that carried water to the Hopewell Camp.

Knight said the tree was eight feet in diameter and a special nine-foot crosscut saw had to be shipped in for the job. The average crosscut saw was six feet and useless on the tree.

"They cut 16s [16-foot logs] out of it and could have gotten another 10 or 12," Knight said.

One log was all that could be loaded on a railcar.

Knight said there was some fine virgin timber

back then. Crews cut nothing but 16- and 32-foot logs. The 32s were then cut in half to make 16s when they arrived at the mill.

No one limbed

The crews didn't do any limb trimming. Once they started getting into a few limbs, they abandoned that tree to cut another.

A lot of what would be used today was simply left in the woods.

Smith recalled the skills it took to drive the trains across the hills and hollows of Clarke County.

Smith said he'd usually push five cars and pull the others. When he got to the steep Lowder Hill, he'd cut loose from the rear cars and push those in front over the top. Then he'd back the engine over the hill and hook up to the cars he had dropped off and pull them over the hill. He'd then reconnect all and "let'er rip" to Phillip's Hill, where he'd repeat the process.

The problem at Phillip's Hill was that it was only two miles into Fulton and it was all downhill. The cars in front had to be chocked to make sure they didn't run away while he retrieved the rear cars. If they had gotten loose, they would have zoomed into Fulton "and would have torn up the town," he said.

Although there were hazards, Smith recalled only one fatality on the railroad "and that was caused by carelessness."

"I raised my family off Scotch Lumber Company," he declared in 1984. After his stint as an engineer and during World War II, he worked in Mobile building war materials. He said he was glad when he could come back home.

Mill burned in 1930

The 1920s was the boom years for Scotch's logging railroads. The stock market crash of 1929 brought on the beginning of the Great Depression but it was a great fire on Aug. 13, 1930, that brought hard times to the area. That is when the Fulton sawmill burned, bringing an abrupt halt to logging and to the logging railroads.

Because times were so tough, the mill would not be rebuilt and reopened until 1938. Scotch got by with some small peckerwood sawmill operations out in its woods but they didn't provide many jobs.

By the time the mill reopened, roads were better and trucks were bigger and stronger. The old steam engines and the rails weren't needed.

The once-proud locomotives were idled, parked on side tracks at the Fulton mill.

The 12 Spot was eventually sold to the Montgomery Gravel Co. and then to Sabel Scrap Metal, where it was later cut up for scrap. All the locomotives were eventually cut up for scrap.



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