

The Workman's Pay: The Effects of the Louisville & Nashville's Workshop
on the Local Economy in Paris, Tennessee, from 1900 to 1958

by
Kyle Liotta

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Thesis Committee:

Lynn Nelson, Thesis Director

Mary Evins, Thesis Committee Chair

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APPROVED:

Dr. Lynn Nelson, Thesis Director
Professor, History

Dr. Mary Evins, Thesis Committee Chair
Research Professor, University Honors College

Abstract

This essay argues that the Louisville & Nashville's (L&N) workshops in Paris, Tennessee, provided financial opportunity for the town of Paris to grow until other industries took their place. While the workshops operated, the stream of wages to the employees brought Working-class consumers into existence in a once agricultural town. Although the new reliance on the workshops, beginning in 1900, caused problems in the threats of layoffs, strikes, and shutdowns, the workshops continued as a prominent industry in Paris until the 1950s. By the end of the 1950s, the workshops ceased operations as the L&N sought better placement of its facilities. While a big operation leaving the county caused concern, Paris soon supported other industries inside Henry County and fears of dwindling pay and population proved unfounded. Yet, the workshops left their place in Henry County as part of a once important industry in a small city, the memories now tucked away in the archives.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Driving on West Wood Street in Paris, Tennessee, a bridge crosses over a rail line used by the Kentucky & West Tennessee Railway. Looking to the left while walking west on the bridge reveals a small railyard with various cars parked there, while to the right there is a small depot area. This section of Paris now involves the local freight carrier, the Kentucky & West Tennessee, which moves across the old rail lines that were made way back when. Back in the early 1900s, this area would have been bustling with passengers ready to board a train to Memphis or Paducah along the Louisville & Nashville Railroad (L&N), while the railyard workshop in Paris performed maintenance on the railcars and locomotives of the railroad company. The L&N's new workshop opened back on April 1, 1900, offering residents of Henry County, Tennessee, in which the town of Paris is located, the chance to earn a good wage for that era.¹ The L&N workshop soon developed into a symbol of what Henry County offered in terms of jobs for the populace along with growing urban development. The workshop also solidified the company's control of Henry County, which was greater than the financial impact, from the other railway in Paris, the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railway. 1900 marked a beginning of a new look at the railroads for many people in Tennessee. Following financial struggles coming from the late 1800s, a period of bankruptcies, high freight rates, debt from state aid, and strings of investigations between various politicians and railway companies had caused anti-railroad settlement to skyrocket in the South after

¹ F. Paschall Key, "Golden Days on the L&N," *P-I Times* (Paris, Tennessee), March 25, 1987, clipping, Louisville & Nashville Collection, Henry County Archive & Genealogy Library, Paris, Tennessee.

the Civil War.² Soon enough, the people of Henry County realized the value of the workshop. Many local newspaper articles written about the shop and the railway reflect on the positives that it gave the community. When the workshop eventually closed in the 1950s due to the changing times, the loss was noticeable to many, and the community suffered. Yet, as time went on, other industries replaced the workshop and Paris prospered.

To provide more background information on the railways of Paris for the workshop, one must go back to the history of railroad transport in Tennessee. When the railroads first came to the state in the 1850s, many realized the potential of the new form of transportation as a form of "economic salvation."³ It did not help that the rivers, such as the Mississippi and the Ohio, could not handle the larger boats required for industrial transport made later on in the mid-1800s. According to Thomas Clark, "By 1857, the conditions of the river had become such that it was considered nothing short of a gamble to risk valuable cargo aboard a boat."⁴ The Ohio River was also a concern, with Kincaid Herr describing it as having "a wide variety of unpleasant moods, ranging from snow-and-ice-clogged channels through flood to drought. During any of these, navigation was drastically curtailed and frequently cancelled entirely."⁵ Those who supported the new railroads for Tennessee sought networks with other railways up the Eastern Seaboard.⁶

² Jesse G. Burt, Jr., "James D. Porter: West Tennessean and Railroad President," *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers* 5 (1951): 82-83.

³ Forrest Laws, "The Railroad Comes to Tennessee," *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers* 30 (1976): 26.

⁴ Thomas D. Clark, *The Beginning of the L&N* (Louisville, KY: Standard Printing Co., 1933), 73.

⁵ Kincaid A. Herr, *Louisville & Nashville Railroad: 1850-1963* (Louisville: L&N Public Relations Department, 1964), 2.

⁶ *Ibid.*

Up in Kentucky, Louisville leaders were determined to connect with Nashville via rail as Louisville became "afraid of losing her commercial supremacy to other urban areas." Louisville leaders also hoped "to give the city a direct rail connection to the southern interior and to an additional southern port."⁷ Nashville businessmen, "in an attempt to end [Nashville's] dependence on the [Tennessee] river and to advance its bid to become the great distributing center of the South," also helped finance railway projects with success in 1850.⁸ There was also potential of passenger travel, with an estimated total of \$40,000 in revenue per year already coming from stagecoaches between Nashville and Louisville.⁹ Many people began to plan various routes that snaked through Tennessee and Kentucky in the late 1830s and 40s, such as the Memphis & Ohio Railroad.

Paris became one of the potential locations for such new railroads. In 1852, the Tennessee legislature granted a charter for a rail line to connect from Memphis and Louisville, with plans for the route that would include Paris.¹⁰ Why Paris was chosen came down to a few reasons: for one, Paris was around six miles closer to another stop, Brownsville, than the other proposed town, Trenton.¹¹ The geography of the location also played a role, as elsewhere "it would have been necessary to make a number of very steep grades," which was not preferred.¹² In fact, a review by Henry County officials after a speech by one of the proponents of the Memphis & Ohio, Colonel Trezevant, gave the

⁷ John C. Mehrling, "The Memphis & Ohio Railroad," *West Tennessee Historical Society Papers* 22 (1968): 52.

⁸ Maury Klein, *History of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2003), 3-4.

⁹ Herr, *Louisville & Nashville Railroad*, 3.

¹⁰ Klein, *History of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad*, 18-19.

¹¹ Clark, *The Beginning of the L&N*, 73.

¹² *Ibid.*, 76.

company a better deal rather than Trenton.¹³ Another company, the Memphis, Clarksville, & Louisville, also became a part of these new connections. Along with connecting Paris to Clarksville, the MC&L also suggested a rail link to Guthrie, Kentucky.¹⁴ Here, developments between other rail lines and the MC&L, including the newly-formed L&N that laid a branch line to Bowling Green, connected the two states together and gave the L&N the Memphis Division in the later years. As the three rail lines developed, Paris became a part of the linkage for the whole Memphis Division as "the gap between Paris and Clarksville was the only one remaining on the whole system from Memphis to Louisville."¹⁵

Construction began on October 24, 1860, being finished by March 21, 1861.¹⁶ Paris celebrated this final connection with "a big barbeque" and "free train rides up and down the road for those who were willing to take the chance."¹⁷ Still, the line operated under three companies, yet historian Thomas D. Clark noted that:

[In] reality a single system had come into existence. It was impossible to develop the resources of the country from which the wealth of any road leading out of Louisville would have to come without building in the direction of Memphis and Nashville....When the three roads were placed in operation, it was immediately seen that it was imperative they should be operated as one trunk system....¹⁸

¹³ Ibid., 79.

¹⁴ Mehrling, "The Memphis & Ohio Railroad," 53.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Clark, *The Beginning of the L&N*, 94-96.

¹⁷ F. Paschall Key, "Henry County's L&N Tracks are Retraced," clipping, Louisville & Nashville Collection, Henry County Archive & Genealogy Library, Paris, Tennessee.

¹⁸ Clark, *The Beginning of the L&N*, 96-97.

The L&N began to take control of both the M&O and the MC&L after the Civil War as the two lines became financially troubled. "Realizing the importance of the Memphis connection," the L&N offered to buy out both companies in 1866 but was refused.¹⁹ Yet, by 1871 and 1872, the L&N was able to purchase both the Memphis & Ohio as well as the Memphis, Chattanooga, & Louisville Railways.²⁰ With these purchases, the L&N had full control of the Memphis Division and began to look for ways to improve the line. One of the main concerns was to where to place a new workshop on the line. After consideration, Paris, Tennessee, became the main choice for the L&N.

The L&N at the time already had a presence in the town, considering that "The division offices of the Memphis Line were located in Paris at the time" as well as "a small locomotive service shop near the Paris depot for years and it had been looked upon as a servicing point."²¹ There was another reason for using Paris as a hub: the city lay halfway between Memphis, Tennessee, and Bowling Green, Kentucky.²² The geographical location meant that the Paris shops were perfectly situated for trains traveling through the Memphis Division. The negotiations that took place over the location are unrecorded, but according to F. Paschall Key in the March 25, 1987, issue of *P-I Plus*, the towns of "Big Sandy and McKenzie were said to have made efforts at getting the shops in their localities."²³ Paris also "agreed not to annex the area on which the shops were to be located for a specific number of years."²⁴ For this expansion, the

¹⁹ Herr, *Louisville & Nashville Railroad: 1850-1963*, 42.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 43.

²¹ Key, "Golden Days on the L&N."

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

L&N began moving equipment to Paris from its Bowling Green shops on March 27, 1900. The Henry County newspaper, the *Parisian*, reported that the relocation "[would] take away from Bowling Green several hundred thousand dollars annually."²⁵ New equipment and machinery brought to Paris, according to the L&N's 49th Annual Board of Directors report, included a band saw, engine lathes, a drill press, and more tools for the new workshop.²⁶ The cost for all this new equipment totaled \$38,470.10.²⁷

Henry County sought to attract the L&N shops for the financial benefits from the creation of new jobs. According to the United States Department of Agriculture in its 1946 report titled "About Henry County, Tennessee," the population had grown to 4,000 people by 1900, with other improvements such as paved roads and a water plant in Paris.²⁸ Most the economy came from the 3,000 local farms, with each farm averaging around 150 acres.²⁹ Other sources of income were the recently discovered clay pits "near the village of Whitlock," which were "the beginning of a most important nonagricultural industry for the county."³⁰ The L&N workshops provided benefits to the entire county with all the specialized workers needed to run them. Having the workshops in Paris added to the economy and industrial base. Robert Gates, a Special Industrial Agent of the L&N, saw the workshops as "both an object lesson and a magnet. [The workshops] stand

²⁵ "Railroad Shops," *Parisian* (Paris, Tennessee), March 30, 1900.

²⁶ *Forty-Ninth Annual Report of the Board of Directors of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company to the Stockholders* (Louisville: F.C. Nunemacher, Railway Printer, 1900), 139.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ US Department of Agriculture, *About Henry County Tennessee* (Washington, D.C.: US Department of Agriculture, 1946).

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ W.O. Inman, *Henry County, Tennessee: A Short History*, [Memphis, TN: Memphis State University Press?]: n.d.

out a tangible, pulsating fact that this is an inviting field for capital; that manufacturing may prosper here; and they will draw other enterprises as surely as the magnet attracts the steel."³¹ As time would later show, the Paris workshops proved both an asset and a source of conflict for the community as they operated.

³¹ W.F. Greene, *The City of Paris and Henry County, Tennessee* (Paris, TN: Paris Publishing Co., 1900), 62.

CHAPTER II

The Early Years, 1900-1930

When it came to build the Paris workshops, the L&N contracted with the Alabama-based R.M. Newbold Company of Birmingham. For \$60,000 in total cost, the construction firm finished the shops on April 1, 1900.³² When writing about Paris, Tennessee in 1900, author W.F. Greene enthused:

The value of such an industry to the growth, prosperity, and wealth of the city and county can scarcely be estimated. It is so far-reaching in its consequences, and touches so many interests, that no computation can be made of the benefits resulting from it. It is not too much to say, however, that every citizen of the county will be profited by the establishment of the industry at Paris.³³

According to the *Parisian* in its April 3rd, 1900, issue, these new shops "are easily the largest maintained by the Louisville & Nashville in this State," reporting as well that the Paris workshop had up to 400 new jobs available.³⁴ W.F. Greene figured that the shops could hire up to 600 workers when running fully.³⁵ Considering that Greene figured that Paris housed 2,000 people who were "primarily the heads of families," at the turn of the century, the shops gave the town a huge population and economic boost.³⁶ Twenty percent of the populace had the prospect of working in these new shops. When it came to hiring those who would operate the workshops, money did not become an issue.

³² Dennis R. Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line* (Port Charlotte, FL: MFS Line Publishing, 1999), 58.

³³ Greene, *The City of Paris and Henry County*, 64.

³⁴ "The Shops at Paris," *Parisian* (Tennessee), April 3, 1900.

³⁵ Greene, *The City of Paris and Henry County*, 64.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

"Labor and materials were very cheap, so [the L&N] could afford the best."³⁷ In the beginning, employees working in the new shops earned wages ranging from \$1.00 for helpers (to as much as \$2.56 for "blacksmiths, boilermakers, and machinists") for each ten-hour workday.³⁸ Most of the work in the shops centered on the maintenance of the wooden rail cars. When the cars could not be repaired, local Parisians used them for homes so as not to waste good wood.³⁹ The local government benefited from the workshops as well. W.F. Greene continued his listing of "passive or remote benefits" of the Paris shops including "the increase of taxable wealth; the strengthening of social, religious, and educational institutions; the enhancement of real estate values; and above all, the invitation held out by a largely-increased population to other industries and enterprises."⁴⁰

Looking into the impact of the workshops in their first decade, the *Paris Post-Intelligencer* reported in its 100th anniversary issue that "the L&N shops was the reason Paris population almost doubled from 1900 to 1910," as the town grew from 2,018 inhabitants in 1900 to 3,881 in 1910.⁴¹ Sanborn Fire Insurance maps document the increase in the size of Paris. Looking at January 1901 map, the Paris workshops were not yet on the map and the town was smaller in size. In the 1913 insurance map, the neighborhood between Fentress and Blythe streets (spelled "Blithe" in the 1901 map) had

³⁷ Key, "Golden Days on the L&N."

³⁸ Herr, *Louisville & Nashville Railroad*, 168.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Greene, *The City of Paris and Henry County*, 64.

⁴¹ "Shops Meant Prosperity for Paris," *Paris Post-Intelligencer* (Tennessee), June 2, 1966.

been built up.⁴² On the 1913 map, the city's overall housing had increased significantly, but the most important part was the entire new residential neighborhood located next to the now-pictured shops on page 10.⁴³ Blythe Street now intersected with the new Irvine Street, where it can be assumed that many of the shop employees lived.⁴⁴

Businesses also increased between 1901 and 1913, which can be seen at the courthouse square. Looking at the 1901 Sanborn map, a good number of stores, from drugs to furniture, were in business on the square.⁴⁵ Nearby was the Caldwell Hotel, which opened back in 1894 and strived "harder to give its guests only the very best service that is to be had in any first-class hotel."⁴⁶ While there is not any surviving business directory for 1901, E. McLeod Johnson includes an 1899 directory in his book *A History of Henry County*. Paris in 1899 supported a variety of businesses, including coopers, grocers, two banks, tailors, and even a bowling alley.⁴⁷ Businesses largely congregated around the Henry County Courthouse in downtown Paris, with the surrounding areas mostly being housing.⁴⁸ The 1901 map does show a few industries within Paris beyond the square, such as Barton, Lasater & Co. Lumber, which had two railway sidings from the NC&St.L railroad connecting to their warehouse.⁴⁹ Another

⁴² *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Paris, Henry County, Tennessee*, Sanborn Map Company, Jan, 1901, map, accessed September 28, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08362_004/.

⁴³ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Paris, Henry County, Tennessee*. Sanborn Map Company, Jan, 1913, map, accessed September 28, 2021, https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn08362_006/.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Paris*.

⁴⁶ *Pictorial Souvenir* (Jackson, TN: West Tennessee Publishing Company, 1911), 7.

⁴⁷ E. McLeod Johnson, *A History of Henry County: Descriptive, Pictorial Reproductions of Old Papers and Manuscripts*, Vol. 1 (1958), 233-234.

⁴⁸ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Paris*.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

lumber company, Paris Lumber Company, was located down on Brown street near rails owned by the NC&St.L railroad.⁵⁰ Another point of interest on the map is the Paris Milling Company, a small flour mill located on Brewer Street.⁵¹

After 1900, though, businesses quickly expanded around the square. The book *Pictorial Souvenir* noted the many businesses that had opened in Paris by 1911. By 1911, the courthouse square's businesses included "substantial two-story brick business houses, occupied altogether by the retail trade and banks and offices, while in the sections adjoining are the wholesale houses, planning and flour mills, two modern hotels, two handsome opera houses, machine and plumbing shops, and other enterprises affording employment to labor."⁵² The unnamed author of the book continued writing about the various shops that had opened in Paris since 1911, with one of the bigger operations in downtown Paris now included the "13,000 square feet of floor space" Erwin & Arnett Co. grocer, which opened in 1907.⁵³ Other new operations that appeared on the 1913 Sanborn map includes the National Toilet Company. National Toilet, while "organized in 1899..., reorganized in 1903, since which time the business has pushed aggressively until today the volume of business done is very large," mostly producing "high class toilet articles."⁵⁴ *Pictorial Souvenir* ended by boasting about Paris's businesses, saying that the town "is known throughout the country for its manufacturing only goods of the highest standard and of merit. And every citizen of this thriving little city should feel complimented for

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² *Pictorial Souvenir*, 1.

⁵³ Ibid., 9.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 19.

having a business of this charter and magnitude carried on here in Paris."⁵⁵ The 1913 Sanborn map showed this expansion throughout, with new enterprises being built beyond the square, including the NC&St.L depot that is still standing today.⁵⁶ Paris Milling Company had a small expansion as well with new storage, neighboring the new Dixie Theatre.⁵⁷ Meanwhile, the warehouse of Lasater Lumber Company moved closer to the NC&St.L railroad's freight depot, with its former spot being taken by a wholesale grocer.⁵⁸ All of this growth within a decade resulted from the workers of the L&N workshops who were spending their pay on various goods and products, and from L&N passenger and shipping traffic coming in via both the L&N and NC&St.L railroads.

For those employed in the shops, how many hours they worked depended on the season. The *Parisian* gave a look at how the working schedules in their February 4, 1916, issue. In the article, the *Parisian* tells of the typical workday being nine hours, six days a week, and yet sometimes these hours decreased during less active months.⁵⁹ At the time of the February 1916 issue, the shop employees had been working "eight hours for more than seventeen months," five days a week, around the start of World War I.⁶⁰ When the L&N announced that the regular schedule was coming back, with increased schedules for workers, the *Parisian* hailed "the return of prosperity to Paris." This shows the huge effect that any changes to the shops payroll meant for the community's economy.⁶¹ One

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Paris.*

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ "Again Shop Employes [sic] Are Working Nine Hour Day," *Parisian* (Tennessee), February 4, 1916, Newspapers.com, <https://newscomwc-newspapers-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/image/664384860/>.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

of the more important moments in the relationship between the workshops and the local economy came with the implementation of an extra workday. In the May 19, 1916, issue of the *Parisian*, reports came in from other businesses in the area about "record-breaking sales Saturday."⁶² The small report continues, telling that "Grocers, dry goods merchants, clothiers, hardware stores, jewelers, druggists, and in fact everybody reports a great day."⁶³ The reason for this newfound wealth came from "The extra day's work that the railroad boys are now getting each week... Everybody is apparently convinced that the 'close money' period has ended and that prosperity in big chunks is again with us."⁶⁴ Still, hours were subjected to change, and in 1918, "an eight hour law passed by Congress" decreased the working hours nationally during World War I.⁶⁵

By 1920, Paris had grown to "between six and seven thousand persons," interpreted as "a sort of passive expansion that few interests here have failed to aid."⁶⁶ Yet, the 1920s would prove to be a challenge to the workshops. On February 8, 1920, the boiler shop building suffered a destructive fire, but fortunately "Quick action to contain the fire within the boiler shop building prevented the fire from spreading."⁶⁷ This fire caused an "estimated damage" of \$90,500, which included the combined value of the damaged building, the contents of it, as well as two locomotives damaged from the fire.⁶⁸

⁶² "Extra Workday at Shops Causes Trade Stimulation," *Parisian* (Tennessee), May 16, 1916.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "To the Ladies of Paris," *Parisian* (Tennessee), October 4, 1918, Newspapers.com, <https://newscomwc-newspapers-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/image/664397745>.

⁶⁶ "The Town's Increase, A Natural Growth," *Parisian* (Tennessee), April 16, 1920, Newspapers.com, <https://newscomwc-newspapers-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/image/664411075>.

⁶⁷ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 67.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Two days later, employees of the shops held a conference to discuss rebuilding, resulting in an announcement that the L&N would expand, "[constructing] a more modern and larger shop."⁶⁹ Thankfully for the shop employees, no one was laid off during this time, according to T. H. Hogan, the master mechanical officer.⁷⁰ The employees that worked in the boiler shops got "provision[s] made for them in other shop buildings" to make getting through that tough time possible.⁷¹ Still, the fire "brought forth a general regret and expression of sympathy from the entire town" as "[Paris has] appreciated the presence of the shops from the very first, when we made such a bid to procure them... because the men directly connected with the shops and their families are such an addition to the citizenry of Paris."⁷²

Another problem for the shops came with cases of smallpox discovered in Paris in 1920. Employees were stopped from working as of February 20, 1920, "without such vaccination certificates."⁷³ The shopmen, seeing a threat to their livelihoods, and also seen by the local health board as part of the reason for the cases of smallpox.⁷⁴ So they sent in a petition to "J.W. Ross of the Chancery Court for an injunction," saying that "the order hereto attached, and the notice placed at the shops this morning, is unwarranted and

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ "Shop Building Will Be Rebuilt," *Parisian* (Tennessee), February 13, 1920, Newspapers.com, <https://newscomwc-newspapers-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/image/664410909/>.

⁷² "An Expression of Sympathy," *Parisian* (Tennessee), February 13, 1920, Newspapers.com, <https://newscomwc-newspapers-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/image/664410901/>.

⁷³ "Shopmen at Work Pending Hearing of Case Tonight," *Parisian* (Tennessee), March 12, 1920, Newspaper.com, <https://newscomwc-newspapers-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/image/664410960/>.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

not effective."⁷⁵ The shopmen also wrote that neither they nor their families had had smallpox in their lives.⁷⁶

A year later, in 1921, the *Parisian* newspaper reported that the L&N ordered "the subtraction of 166 men at the local shops, effective December 19th, [which,] although expected as an annual event in normal times, came as sad tidings to the men just at Christmas time," with "\$21,000 lopped off the \$85,000 pay roll monthly."⁷⁷ These staff cuts happened because rail business after World War 1 slowed considerably as automobile traffic increased. From looking at a chart made in Klein's history of the L&N, a total of 8,131,522 cars and 1,107,639 trucks had been registered in the U.S. by 1920, and that number had increased significantly every five years.⁷⁸ But this new competition "would be to drive the rail carriers almost entirely from the passenger business and seriously curtail their portion of freight traffic except in those areas, such as bulk commodities."⁷⁹ Not helping matters, "In 1920, the [L&N] ran a deficit for the first time since 1884 even though gross earnings and tonnage carried rose sharply" after World War I ended.⁸⁰ The Federal Government had taken control of various railways companies during World War I under the Army Appropriation Act of August 29, 1916. The Act ended on March 1, 1920, but during that time major changes occurred.⁸¹ General Order

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ "Sad Tidings for Railmen Holiday," *Parisian* (Tennessee), December 16, 1921, Newspapers.com, <https://newscomwc-newspapers-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/image/664417438/>.

⁷⁸ Klein, *History of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad*, 421.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 417.

⁸¹ Herr, *Louisville & Nashville Railroad: 1850-1963*, 213-14.

27 put in the eight-hour work day as well as raising wages on May 25, 1918.⁸² As a result, this new order "was to potentially increase the [L&N's] wage bill to \$16,000,000 annually."⁸³ Looking at the total cost, Herr writes that the "L. & N., at the time, was laboring under an unaccustomed wage load which had increased over 200 per cent since 1916," and "In 1920, [the total amount paid for wages] was \$86,099,731."⁸⁴ In fact, the total amount paid for wages on all railroads in the United States for "Steam-Railroad Repair Shops" came to be \$687,617,312, a 193.2% increase during the years 1914-1919.⁸⁵ With all of these problems, it is no wonder that the retractions in jobs and wages came to the Paris shops once the Army Appropriation Act expired.

In response, the entire system of railway maintenance workers in the U.S. began to go out on strike. Before then in 1921, the local government made sub-committees "for the purpose of making a complete survey of the city with a view to perpetuating business and providing sustenance during any strike period."⁸⁶ The threat of a strike came from up North as various unions called for a walkout on October 30 due to wage reductions.⁸⁷ The unions only called off the strike after negotiations with the National Railway Labor Board, who "[assured] that wage reductions proposed by railroad executives would not be considered by the board until all disputes concerning working rules and others issues

⁸² Ibid., 221.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 224.

⁸⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States in the Year 1920: Manufactures 1919*, Vol. 10 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), 916.

⁸⁶ "City Prepares for Strike if One is Coming," *Parisian* (Tennessee), October 28, 1921, Newspapers.com, <https://newscomwc-newspapers-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/image/664417278/>.

⁸⁷ "5 Brotherhoods Sign Call," *New York Times*, October 16, 1921.

before the board had been finally determined."⁸⁸ Yet, that event foreshadowed what came the year after, when Paris became a part of a huge strike.

In 1922, the National Railway Labor Board cut the wages of shop employees by "12 percent."⁸⁹ The final wages for "skilled mechanics" were reduced seven cents an hour to "an hourly rate of 70 cents."⁹⁰ According to volume 73 of *Railway Age*, these cuts caused great anger among shop employees along with other issues they faced with contracts and overtime changes.⁹¹ As such, the president of the International Brotherhood of Blacksmiths, J. W. Kline, telegraphed his members that "all shop craft employees below the rank of general foreman are hereby granted sanction to suspend work [at] 10 a.m. [on] July 1 on all railroads and Pullman shops in the United States."⁹² Attempting to justify their decision, NRLB Chairman Hooper responded to the threat of a strike by saying, "the wages fixed by the recent decisions of this Board will purchase more than the wages received by them prior to the war."⁹³ Many of the workers at the Paris workshops joined the strike when the day came. Before the strike began, master mechanical officer T. H. Hogan tried speaking to the workers at 9:45 a.m., "[praising] them for their efficiency and assuring them of his kindly feelings toward them."⁹⁴ Still,

⁸⁸ "Quiet Prevailing in Rail Men Rank," *Parisian* (Tennessee), November 4, 1921, Newspapers.com, <https://newscomwc-newspapers-com.ezproxy.mtsu.edu/image/664417309/>.

⁸⁹ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 64.

⁹⁰ "Economic Status of Rail Workers Still 18.75 Per Cent Above 1914," *Railway Age* 73 (New York, NY: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company, 1922): 62, <https://archive.org/details/railwayage73newy/mode/2up>.

⁹¹ "Shopmen Begin First General Strike on July 1," *Railway Age* 73 (New York, NY: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company, 1922): 53, <https://archive.org/details/railwayage73newy/mode/2up>.

⁹² "Economic Status of Rail Workers," 62.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 55.

⁹⁴ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 64.

once 10 a.m. came, around 375 workers, along with African American laborers, walked out in protest of the new wages.⁹⁵ The leader of the strikers and "local president of the six striking shopcraft unions," Frank Wright, "[assured] the L&N officers that the Paris Shop employees deplored the circumstances that forced the strike, and insisted that all strikers would do everything within their power to avoid violence of any kind."⁹⁶

With 375 or more workers now striking, the shops now only had "roundhouse laborers, coal chute and pit men, and [the] ordinary labor gangs" on the job.⁹⁷ Even with their best efforts to work with an understaffed force, traffic slowed down and trains were delayed.⁹⁸ The national response by the Railroad Labor Board to these strikes was simple: there should be new unions. Under this new resolution, various railroads needed to "take steps as soon as practicable to perfect on each carrier such organizations as may be deemed necessary...to function in the representation of said employees before the Railroad Labor Board, in order that the effectiveness of the Transportation Act may be maintained."⁹⁹ With that, the striking organization had "[ceased] to represent its class of employees."¹⁰⁰ This still did not stop the strikers, even if L&N vice president E. G. Evans would promise that seniority rights would not be removed if the striking workers started back to work on July 6.¹⁰¹ Another strategy used by the L&N when it came to the strike was to hire 175 strikebreakers for the Paris shops.¹⁰² As the strike went on, service on the

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 65.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ "Labor Board Calls for New Unions," *Railway Age* 73 (New York, NY: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company, 1922): 57.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 65.

¹⁰² Ibid.

L&N suffered, with losses to perishable food as the company decided to "[embargo] all livestock and perishable shipments," due to difficulty in scheduling since "freight engines were being pressed into passenger service and large engines were being used to move small trains. It was also becoming apparent that without the help of skilled mechanics, all of the L&N's locomotives and cars would eventually break down."¹⁰³

President Warren G. Harding's response to the nationwide situation, at first, was to rely on the Labor Board to deal with the strikes.¹⁰⁴ Yet, as the situation grew worse, he responded "by issuing a formal proclamation, signed also by the Secretary of State, directing all persons to refrain from interference with the lawful efforts to maintain interstate transportation and the carrying of the United States mails and inviting the cooperation of all public authorities and the aid of all good citizens to uphold the laws and preserve the public peace."¹⁰⁵ As such, the strikes now interfered with government business and the strikes were required by the federal government to stop.¹⁰⁶ Anything from "Engaging in picketing" to "Conspiring or agreeing to hinder railroads in the transportation of passengers, property and mails" was forbidden.¹⁰⁷ For the strikers at the Paris shops, "The order came like 'an unexpected bolt from the clear blue sky.'"¹⁰⁸

By early August, the strikes had died down due to agreements between the government and the strikers, although many men lost their seniority or employment as a

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ "No Interference from Washington," *Railway Age* 73 (New York, NY: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company, 1922): 58.

¹⁰⁵ "President Calls for Law and Order," *Railway Age* 73 (New York, NY: Simmons-Boardman Publishing Company, 1922): 103.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 469.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 65.

result.¹⁰⁹ The loss of jobs also impacted the Paris shop strikers, with 500 new men replacing them.¹¹⁰ While Frank Wright had said that no violence would come to the shops, one skirmish did happen. On August 13, 1922, "thirty-five to forty shots were fired into the shop yards," causing a huge disruption to the line as "enginemen refused to run locomotives, claiming they were at risk from stray bullets." Other acts of violence were small, such as a shop employee being whipped by strikers. By September 18, the strike ended "insofar as the [L&N] is concerned," as reported by Superintendent A.B. Scates to the Paris Chamber of Commerce. Scates also asked the Chamber of Commerce if there could be permanent arrangements for the new 300 workers who were being cared for at the temporary housing at the shops, that were set up by the L&N at the cost of "\$1,000 per day during the strike to feed and temporarily house the new employees."¹¹¹ After the strike, an exodus of Paris strikers left the shops to find employment on other railroads.¹¹² "The loss of the skilled shop employees at Paris who went on strike would be felt for years to come," according to Mize.¹¹³

While the shops suffered hardships due to the strike, business had improved by 1926. The total number of people employed at the Paris shops had reached 500, with historian Dennis Mize claiming that Paris had "one of the largest shop forces assembled," with \$74,000 being paid monthly.¹¹⁴ Even though another small fire damaged the shops and caused disruption to the work schedule, expansion continued with a planing mill that,

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 65-66.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 66.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., 67.

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 69.

according to T.H. Hogan at the dedication, "would add to the \$1,000,000 annual payroll for L&N employees of Paris."¹¹⁵ Two years later, the May 1928 issue of the *L&N Employees' Magazine* reported that the workshops gave Paris a large amount of money annually and that the 1,000 employees there in 1928 collectively received \$150,000 a month, which would have been approaching two million dollars annually.¹¹⁶ It seemed that nothing would stop the prosperity of the shops and Paris itself from increasing in the years after the early hardships of the 1920s.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ "The Story of Paris," *L&N Employees' Magazine* 4, no. 3 (May 1928): 46.

CHAPTER III

The Great Depression and Fluctuations

On October 29, 1929, the stock market crashed, which started what became known as the Great Depression. Many people lost their savings and banks failed, causing even more financial trouble for the L&N railroad. Many in the United States, as well as the whole world, felt the shocks. By 1930, Henry County housed a total of 26,432 in population.¹¹⁷ The number was a decrease from 1920 total of 27,151.¹¹⁸ In Paris, the population had reached 8,164 in 1930 up from 4,730 ten years before.¹¹⁹ To compare Henry County and Paris with national statistics, the total population of the continental United States reached 122,775,046 in 1930, up from 105,710,620 in 1920.¹²⁰ In Tennessee, according to the 1930 census, a total of 15,884 male laborers lost their jobs.¹²¹ Many railway companies began cost-cutting where needed to try and keep themselves afloat during these times of turbulence. The total amount paid in wages for "Steam-Railroad Repair Shops" fell to \$590,202,724 in 1929 compared to 1919's \$687,617,312.¹²² The L&N decided it they needed to shut down certain locations to save

¹¹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States in the Year 1920: Population*, 301; U.S. Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States 1930: Population*, Vol. 3, pt. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1932), 893.

¹¹⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States in the Year 1920: Population*, 5.

¹¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States 1930: Population*, Vol. 3, pt. 2, 905; U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States in the Year 1920: Population*, 301.

¹²⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, *Fourteenth Census of the United States in the Year 1920: Manufactures 1919*, Vol. 10 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1928), 916.

¹²¹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States 1930, Unemployment*, Vol. 1, 925.

¹²² U.S. Census Bureau, *Fifteenth Census of the United States: Manufactures: 1929*, Vol. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1933), 1248.

money, and unfortunately for Henry County, that meant that the shops closed in Paris during the Great Depression. The L&N, seeing its profits vanishing, decided to act after passenger traffic dropped significantly.¹²³ One of its reduction efforts included cutting back on L&N divisions through consolidations. The Memphis Division became a target for consolidation on January 16, 1934, when it was merged into the Louisville Division.¹²⁴ Before the cutbacks at the shops, the Paris shops had done well enough to get a small raise of "5 cents an hour...which will mean a raise in pay [from] \$1.44 to \$2.40, starting on July 1, 1929."¹²⁵ The *Parisian* calculated that "the weekly pay roll at the shops after July 1st will total \$600 more than at present."¹²⁶ The other option for the shop employees was a "temporary shut-down at the shops."¹²⁷ With that, as reported by the *Parisian* on July 12, 1929, the L&N decided to cut into the Paris shops' workforce, laying off "fourteen men...in accordance with an order from headquarters received the first of the week."¹²⁸ While T.H. Hogan "hoped that it would be a temporary lay off," the L&N decided to let even more workers go soon thereafter.¹²⁹ A year later, on June 20, 1930, the L&N "ordered a reduction in force at the [Paris] shops, laying off twenty-three more men."¹³⁰ These layoffs continued as 1930 went on, with October bringing 36 more let go, as reported by the *Parisian* on October 17.¹³¹ Another fourteen shopworkers were laid off

¹²³ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 125.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 126.

¹²⁵ "Shopmen at L. & N. Get Salary Raise," *Parisian* (Tennessee), June 28, 1929.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ "Cut in Force is Ordered at Shops," *Parisian* (Tennessee), July 12, 1929.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ "L. & N. Shops Lay Off Twenty-Three," *Parisian* (Tennessee), June 20, 1930.

¹³¹ "Thirty-Six Let Go at Railroad Shops," *Parisian* (Tennessee), October 17, 1930.

a month after that as reported on November 28.¹³² All these layoffs, while understandable due to the Depression, were also a strategic move by the L&N. In the *Parisian's* October 17, 1930, article, the paper theorized that most of the work would head to Louisville, leaving little in Paris.¹³³ Then, according to the *Parisian* on March 6, 1931, the L&N decided to go to a four-day week at the Paris shops instead of laying off employees.¹³⁴ Still, there are conflicting sources as to what happened to the Paris shops. According to Richard E. Prince, the L&N simply just closed the Paris shops.¹³⁵ Yet, this cutback on shop forces was not only for Paris but across the whole L&N system as well, with the only shops left open being in South Louisville and in Corbin, Kentucky.¹³⁶ According to Mize, the L&N just reduced how many worked at the Paris shops.¹³⁷ It is to assume that Prince is right as he worked on the L&N as part of the Mechanical Engineering division.¹³⁸ Whatever the case, either way the populace suffered during the Great Depression as jobs became scarce, especially in the Paris shops. It seemed uncertain if the railroad would make it out of the Depression, but the L&N survived due to its cost-cutting measures.¹³⁹

Still, better conditions in the economy caused the L&N to employ more people on the line for repairs. The *Parisian* on July 21, 1933, reported that "Improvement in general business conditions, with an accompanying increase in freight shipments, has made it

¹³² "Fourteen More of Shopmen Let Off," *Parisian* (Tennessee), November 28, 1930.

¹³³ "Thirty-Six Let Go at Railroad Shops," *Parisian* (Tennessee), October 17, 1930.

¹³⁴ "Four-Day Week is Adopted at Shops," *Parisian* (Tennessee), March 6, 1931.

¹³⁵ Richard E. Prince, *Louisville & Nashville Steam Locomotives*, rev ed. (Bloomington & Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1968), 201.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 126.

¹³⁸ Prince, *Louisville & Nashville Steam Locomotives*, 1.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 127.

possible for the Louisville & Nashville Railroad Company to return approximately 400 men to work recently [in Paris.]"¹⁴⁰ Then on June 9, 1939, the *Parisian* wrote of potential negotiations between Paris' Young Business Men's Club and the L&N to try and get the Paris shops open again, to gain back jobs for the railroads employees.¹⁴¹ As a bargaining chip, they added the benefits of the Tennessee Valley Authority's new power for Paris.¹⁴² Within the same article, T.H. Hogan attended the meeting during the club's conference, saying that "At one time, the monthly L&N payroll was around \$125,000. Now it is a small fraction of that figure."¹⁴³ To compare wages nationally, most under the heading "Railroads (incl. r.r. repair shops)" in the 1940 census received pay between \$800 and \$999, with 48,385 workers nationally receiving these wages out of the 244,555 in total.¹⁴⁴ A few weeks later, on June 23, 1939, these negotiations seemed to have worked. The men's club was talking to L&N agent Charles Chase who would "consult J. B. Hill, the president of the road, about the matter soon."¹⁴⁵ By September 15, 1939, the L&N gave the shops back the original six-day schedule, but with some slowdown during certain months leaving five-hour workdays, according to the *Parisian*.¹⁴⁶ The economy generally improved for many as the Depression waned, and soon enough the Paris shops found themselves back working in full capacity with the advent of World War II.

¹⁴⁰ "L. & N. is Putting Men Back to Work," *Parisian* (Tennessee), July 21, 1933.

¹⁴¹ "Club Seeks L&N Shop Extension as Business Aid," *Parisian* (Tennessee), June 9, 1939.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Sixteenth Census of the United States: 1940: Population*, Vol. 3 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1943), 122.

¹⁴⁵ "L&N Looks into TVA Power Rate," *Parisian* (Tennessee), June 23, 1939.

¹⁴⁶ "L. & N. Shops Now on Six-Day Schedule," *Parisian* (Tennessee), September 15, 1939.

World War II gave the shops the chance to have one final period of prosperity. Because of wartime rationing on gas and rubber, car travel was restricted for the time being.¹⁴⁷ As a result, railroad travel became necessary for many, and with the increase in manufacturing, the L&N soon gained busy rail lines and more profits.¹⁴⁸ With the increase of traffic and the limitations on building new rail cars, the Paris shops became active in the war effort. The Paris shops opened their doors again in 1939 as "125 men were added to the workforce" to refurbish cars, leading to "407 cars [being] reworked by the extra force...believed to be the best record of any of the shops on the system" between "October 1939 to February 12, 1940."¹⁴⁹ On September 22, 1939, the *Parisian* reported the L&N decided to use Paris again, as "Anticipations of increased business based on prevailing trends" as well as the "Inconvenience and added expense of taking [repair] work to the distant shops [of Louisville] is held to be a likely cause of the projected reinstatement here."¹⁵⁰ The *Parisian* reported on the opening in September 29, 1939, and noting that 125 men, along with 175 more extra spaces for new employment, laid-off workers from years ago began working again.¹⁵¹ Everything that needed service, the Paris shops could handle. According to the *Parisian* on November 24, 1939, the L&N held a rally in Paris, where "Mayor John Beeves emphasized the good-will which has always existed between Paris and the railroad with its employees and assured that it will continue," and also saying that the L&N symbolically was a "citizen and taxpayer" of

¹⁴⁷ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 147.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 70.

¹⁵⁰ "Shops May Take Back 125 Men on Local Rip Track," *Parisian* (Tennessee), September 22, 1939.

¹⁵¹ "Shop Increase Assured, Call for Men Begins," *Parisian* (Tennessee), September 29, 1939.

Paris."¹⁵² Service increased as the war gained momentum in 1941, and a March 4, 1941, *Parisian* article announced that the Paris shops had gone to "three 8-hour shifts for all-day night services" due to "an upswing of business."¹⁵³ Even as World War II came to an end, the Paris shops kept themselves busy with repair orders.¹⁵⁴ Yet, in late 1945, rail traffic decreased months after the end of the conflict, with the *Parisian* reporting that "other freight originating on the L. & N. rails dropped to the lowest percentage during the entire year."¹⁵⁵ This decrease in traffic continued through 1949, causing a reduction in the workforce at the Paris shops.¹⁵⁶ On April 1, 1949, "33 men, mechanics and their helpers, [were] transferred from the Paris shops to the South Louisville shops," and the *Parisian* wondered, "Just what connection, if any, the raise in pay and the shorter work days had in making.... In October 1948, the men were granted a 7 cent raise, and in September 1949, the five-day work week, with six-day pay, is about to go into effect."¹⁵⁷ The cutoffs continued though, as a month later the L&N laid off 103 men, as reported by the *Parisian* on May 20, 1949.¹⁵⁸ The reason for the layoffs was said to have been "an effort to centralize repair operations at a point where lumber and iron materials are easily available, as in the Birmingham [Alabama] area," as the Paris jobs were transferred from to Boyles, Alabama, meaning a loss of "\$45,000 monthly payroll."¹⁵⁹ The same *Parisian*

¹⁵² "L&N Rally Gets Good Reception from Parisians," *Parisian* (Tennessee), November 24, 1939.

¹⁵³ "Railroad Shops Department Adds Third Trick Here as Some Men are Transferred," *Parisian* (Tennessee), March 4, 1941.

¹⁵⁴ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 169.

¹⁵⁵ "L & N Decrease is in War Traffic," *Parisian* (Tennessee), October 19, 1945.

¹⁵⁶ "Rail Officials Have Abolished Paris Shop Jobs," *Parisian* (Tennessee), April 1, 1949.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ "New L&N Layoff Means \$45,000 Loss in Payroll," *Parisian* (Tennessee), May 20, 1949.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

article gave a grim statement that "the decimation of the L. & N. shops here marks the end of an era that saw Paris established largely on the strength of the railroad's activities here."¹⁶⁰ That statement proved to be right during the 1950s, as the Paris shops' lifespan neared its end.

The 1950s proved to be the final decade that the Paris shops operated. While the Korean War raged, the Paris shops busied themselves repairing cars that came in during that time to help with the war.¹⁶¹ It seemed operations went well, as the workers "exceed their quota each week."¹⁶² Still, in an article by Floyd L. Berry, the L&N correspondent for Paris wrote about how "Recently the repair shops at Paris have been somewhat curtailed but a force is still employed there to make light repairs to cars and locomotives."¹⁶³

However, as the 1950s went on, the shops soon found themselves obsolete. 1958 was the final year that the Paris shops operated. The end of the workshops can be blamed on two developments: the emergence of diesel locomotives along with steel-body rail cars, and the merger of the L&N with the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis railway in 1957. For the first point, it was not that diesel locomotives were new at the time. The first mainline diesel locomotive in America dates to the 1930s with the Burlington Route's *Pioneer Zephyr*.¹⁶⁴ But the widespread adoption of diesels helped seal the Paris shops' fate. By the late 1940s, the L&N sought to modernize its locomotive fleet with

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 169.

¹⁶² Floyd L. Berry, "Mechanical Department," *L&N Employees' Magazine*, March 1952, 45.

¹⁶³ Floyd L. Berry, "Tennessee's Paris," *L&N Employees' Magazine*, January 1950, 11.

¹⁶⁴ David P. Morgan, *Diesels West!* (Milwaukee, WI: Kalmbach Publishing Co., 1963), 41.

diesels due to their lower operating costs.¹⁶⁵ Diesel also made the L&N less dependent on coal in case of strike, as seen in 1948 and 1950 when coal strikes had hurt the railroad.¹⁶⁶ What ultimately sealed the deal for the L&N was the testing of EMD G7 no. 300, a demonstrator diesel engine, in March of 1950.¹⁶⁷ These tests concluded that such diesels performed better than steam locomotives in fuel efficiency and traction effort.¹⁶⁸ In April, the L&N ordered 37 new diesel units built, satisfied by these successful tests.¹⁶⁹ Down the line, the new technology became a problem for the Paris shops. Since opening back in 1900, the shops maintained the steam locomotives for the L&N, as well as its wooden cars. For those purposes, the L&N designed its Paris facilities with these types of maintenance in mind. Diesel engines, on the other hand, are significantly different from steam, and the L&N sought to develop its future line with diesels in mind through new repair services.¹⁷⁰ The L&N also began to focus its efforts on updating its car fleet by introducing "Modern cars with larger capacities."¹⁷¹ For older cars, the L&N preferred to let them "serve out their years without replacing them."¹⁷² The *Parisian* also mentioned this change in a May 27, 1949, article, reporting that "the [L&N] is replacing its wooden cars with steel, [executive vice president John S. Tilford] said, and the local shop was set up to repair the [older] cars."¹⁷³ Now that the L&N was switching to diesels, those working at the Paris shops saw the end of an era. Watching the change happening,

¹⁶⁵ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 185.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 186.

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ Klein, *History of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad*, 466.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 463.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ "Lost Payroll Gone for Good, Group Advised," *Parisian* (Tennessee), May 27, 1949.

mechanical department correspondent Floyd L. Berry at Paris lamented that "the thrill and luster of railroads is gone," as diesels replaced steam.¹⁷⁴ The shop's main source of work began disappearing due to scrapping and replacement.

The other issue for the Paris shops, the corporate merger, meant that Paris was removed from the main line. From the L&N, after the merger, there were "no words of changes in operations [at Paris]," according to the *Parisian* on September 4, 1957.¹⁷⁵ Rather, with the merger integration of the L&N and the NC&St.L, "changes took place in train operations to begin the elimination of the redundant routes."¹⁷⁶ One such change involved abandoning an extra route to Memphis gained from the merger, with the railroad "[estimating] that it could save \$131,666 per year by rerouting all freights onto the Memphis Line between Memphis and McKenzie."¹⁷⁷ The L&N also decided to reroute freights to Nashville through Bruceton, Tennessee, to take advantage of the Radnor Yard.¹⁷⁸ The L&N also saw that the original line through Paris had numerous repair problems while the one to Bruceton was "in splendid condition."¹⁷⁹ As such, Bruceton became the major town for the Memphis Line.¹⁸⁰ This meant one thing for the Paris shops: The shops, and Paris in general, had become obsolete for the L&N. As reported by the *Paris Post-Intelligencer* on August 21, 1958, the L&N decided to bypass Paris entirely when it came to freight by "next week."¹⁸¹ While passenger operations would

¹⁷⁴ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 190.

¹⁷⁵ "No Changes Announced for Paris," *Parisian* (Tennessee), September 4, 1957.

¹⁷⁶ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 208.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 209.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 213.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁸¹ "L&N Through Freights to Bypass Paris," *Paris Post-Intelligencer* (Tennessee), August 21, 1958.

continue, the lack of freight going through Paris mean lower workloads for the shops.¹⁸² What resulted from this change was that the shops, the depot, and everything the L&N owned in Paris would move to Bruceton. The transfer started with movement of 32 personnel. As reported by the *Paris Post-Intelligencer*, "32 shop personnel now working in Paris would be moved to Bruceton. None of the employees would lose their jobs, an [L&N] spokesman said today."¹⁸³ Yet when it came to negotiating with the unions for the move to Bruceton, workers' representatives blocked the movement after protest.¹⁸⁴ The October 30, 1957, article revealed the total number of employees still at the Paris shops: thirty-two workers.¹⁸⁵ This is a shockingly low number, but not surprising, considering that decades before hundreds had worked full time. The reduction at Paris was not an abnormal issue, as the work force was reduced across the system. In fact, at the time of the Bruceton move in 1957, there were over 24,109 employees on the L&N line compared to 33,505 back in 1947.¹⁸⁶ These workers came under threat in general due to the increasing railroad modernization, not just on the L&N, but all over the United States.¹⁸⁷ Reprinting an article from the *United Press International*, the *Paris Post-Intelligencer's* August 13, 1958, issue looked at how the railroading industry was dying at that point, as modernization replaced many workers with machines, along with the

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ "L&N Plans to Move 32 Shop Men to Bruceton," *Paris Post-Intelligencer* (Tennessee), October 23, 1957.

¹⁸⁴ "Two Trains Taken Off[,] Crewmen Out of Jobs," *Parisian* (Tennessee), April 2, 1958.

¹⁸⁵ "L&N Plans to Move 32 Shop Men to Bruceton," *Parisian* (Tennessee), October 30, 1957.

¹⁸⁶ Klein, *History of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad*, 489.

¹⁸⁷ "Railroad Workers Are Hit Hard by Changing Industry," *Paris Post-Intelligencer* (Tennessee), August 13, 1958.

increasing success of airlines, trucks, and cars.¹⁸⁸ The L&N suffered as the line's income fell "down 60 per cent from 1957" in 1958.¹⁸⁹ The same article mentioned that "if the slump continues, the railroad will lay off additional men. [L&N President John Tilford] said about 300 already had been laid off [in Paris]." Because of all these issues, it is not surprising that Paris, once an important spot on the L&N, now began to have operations shut down. In 1956, the L&N "petitioned the Tennessee Public Service Commission for permission to remove the depots and discontinue service at Henry, Springville, Porter, and Routon stations in Henry County," along with other stations all over Tennessee.¹⁹⁰ The reason for this, as said by the L&N, was that "traffic does not justify continuance of less-than-carload freight service."¹⁹¹ The L&N then started to close services inside of Paris: First being the trainmaster's office, and then the dispatching office at Paris was moved to Bruceton.¹⁹² Finally came the day the Paris shops closed their doors entirely for the L&N. While the specific date is uncertain, based on an article from the *Nashville Banner*, the shops seemed to have closed around mid-1958.¹⁹³ The L&N decided to shut down the Paris shops for the simple reason that they were not needed anymore. The last paragraph of the *Banner* report tells that Paris now became a "relatively quiet way station.... The L&N shops there, which once employed hundreds, ceased their last operations recently."¹⁹⁴ After faithfully serving the L&N for 58 or so years, the Paris

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ "L&N Railroad Says Income Down 60% in Quarter," *Paris Post-Intelligencer* (Tennessee), April 3, 1958.

¹⁹⁰ "L&N Seeking Removal of Four Depots," *Parisian* (Tennessee), October 24, 1956.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 210-211.

¹⁹³ "'City of Memphis' Set for Final Run," *Nashville Banner*, August 23, 1958.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

shops rested, with the final workers either moving to the Bruceton shops or simply losing their jobs.

CHAPTER IV

Epilogue: The Memories, 1958-Today

By 1960, Henry County's total population had declined to 22,275, a 6.5% decrease from the 23,828 population in 1950.¹⁹⁵ For comparison, the United States saw a major increase in population from 1950 to 1960, going from 154,233,234 in 1950 to 183,285,009 in 1960.¹⁹⁶ Tennessee had been a part of this growth. The state's total population grew to 3,567,089 by 1960 compared to 3,291,718 in 1950.¹⁹⁷ With the final closure of the Paris shops, the L&N did not take long to demolish most of the buildings. Bob Bell Jr.'s photos in Dennis Mize's book on the L&N's Memphis Division dates the deconstruction to around 1960 to 1961.¹⁹⁸ Surprisingly, though, there seems to be a lack of documentation concerning the closure. Even looking at both Paris newspapers during 1958, neither tells anything about the closure. The demise in the late 1950s does not mean, however, that the Paris shops were forgotten. The official *Henry County Sesquicentennial* book from 1973 houses a section telling of the importance of the railroads to the community, along with "the many colorful characters that worked on the railroad."¹⁹⁹ The L&N continued to serve Paris with a passenger line, although a threat of trains being removed from the Memphis to Bowling Green, Kentucky, line caused the Henry County Chamber of Commerce to file a protest to the Interstate Commerce

¹⁹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population: 1960*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 44-13.

¹⁹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population: 1960*, 1-3.

¹⁹⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population: 1960*, Vol. 1, pt. 44, 44-9.

¹⁹⁸ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 210-211.

¹⁹⁹ Barbara Baggett and David Cooper, *Henry County Sesquicentennial* ([Paris, TN?]: 1973?), 23.

Commission in 1959.²⁰⁰ Although the ICC ruled in favor of the Chamber of Commerce until the ICC was able to set up a hearing, the city's anticipation of loss was a further sign of the L&N's abandonment of Paris.²⁰¹ Ultimately, Paris lost the connection to the L&N in 1968, when trains 101, 102, 103, and 104 of the Memphis Pan passenger line discontinued.²⁰² After service ended in 1968, it took two more decades before any rail service came back to Paris, and then only as a local line. On March 2, 1987, the *Paris Post-Intelligencer* showed an image of a new railway working on the line: the Kentucky & West Tennessee (KWT) railroad.²⁰³ The local railroad uses a once-defunct CSX line between Bruceton, Tennessee, and Murray, Kentucky.²⁰⁴ The KWT in Paris adopted the old L&N locations for their operations, with the grounds of the former L&N depot housing its offices.²⁰⁵ As of 2005, the KWT was under the ownership of the Genesee & Wyoming railroad company, with a total of 72 miles of rail line connecting Murray, Kentucky to Dresden, Tennessee.²⁰⁶

It is hard to assess what the KWT is doing for Henry County. Statistics regarding what KWT contributes to the community are scarce. Not even the official website of the KWT offers any information. The best that can be done at present is to look at the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) to try and get a glimpse of the situation. Looking at the BLS "Industry supersector data table" for private industries, employment in the "Trade,

²⁰⁰ "Chamber Protests Loss of Trains," *Parisian* (Tennessee), April 22, 1959.

²⁰¹ "ICC Rules L&N Must Keep Trains Until Case Heard," *Parisian* (Tennessee), April 29, 1959.

²⁰² Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 241-243.

²⁰³ "New Firm's First Train," *Paris Post-Intelligencer* (Tennessee), March 2, 1987.

²⁰⁴ Mize, *L&N's Memphis Line*, 290.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 291.

²⁰⁶ "KWT Railway (KWT)," Genesee & Wyoming Inc., accessed September 25, 2021, <https://www.gwrr.com/kwt/>.

Transportation, and Utilities" section has gone down by 4.0%, with a total of 2,260 people employed at private workplaces out of 8,733 in total.²⁰⁷ Most of the economy in Tennessee is focused in the "Service-Providing" section, where 5,545 people are employed in the service area.²⁰⁸ Going deeper into occupation statistics for the whole state, there are only 150 people who are in the "Rail Car Repairers" section for Tennessee as of May 2020.²⁰⁹

As such, the KWT is just a small part of the entire workforce of Henry County today. When looking at the statistics posted by the Paris-Henry County Industrial Committee, most of the County's labor force is in the "Manufacturing" trade, numbering 2,271.²¹⁰ "Transportation and Warehousing" make up only 234 of the total 13,540 people employed in Henry County.²¹¹ In fact, the KWT is not even in the top ten "Top Employers" section, most of which are either in the medical, education, or retail fields.²¹²

Yet, the question remains: What happened when the L&N shops shut down in 1958? The focus on shop wages in the newspapers reflected the fears of a dwindling community population when the L&N shifted jobs away from Paris for many different

²⁰⁷ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Industry Supersector Data Table, Private Ownership, Dec 2020*, accessed September 28, 2021, https://data.bls.gov/maps/cew/TN?period=2020-Q4&industry=1021&geo_id=47079&chartData=2&distribution=1&pos_color=blue&neg_color=orange&showHideChart=show&ownerType=5.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, *May 2020 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates Tennessee*, accessed September 28, 2021, https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes_tn.htm#53-0000.

²¹⁰ "Henry County Population & Demographics," Paris-Henry County Industrial Committee, 5, accessed September 25, 2021, <http://parishenrycoedc.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/County-Profile-Tool-Tennessee-Department-of-Economic-and-Community-Development.pdf>.

²¹¹ Ibid.

²¹² Ibid., 6.

reasons over the years. Yet, research reveals holes in the theory. For example, when looking into the various U.S. Census data, the opposite happened when it came to population. The 1970 census indicates a total of 9,892 people living in urban areas such as Paris, Tennessee, with the 1960 population statistic being 9,325, giving a 6.1 percent increase in the city.²¹³ In fact, population kept rising to 10,728 in Paris in the 1980 census.²¹⁴ Any fears of the population decreasing were proved unfounded. There was a reason why the population increased: the economy did not dip into a recession at all.

The major source of jobs as the Paris shops decreased in employment came from other businesses in the industrial sector arriving in town after WWII. Patricia Brake Howard writes of this development in the wartime south, with defense contracts giving Southern industries a boom in business, and employment rising to "a total of 279,000 in manufacturing" by 1944.²¹⁵ After the war ended, "Throughout the South, the post-war years witnessed widespread industrialization....Due to the impetus of wartime employment, the post-war South enjoyed more disposable income and thus a larger market than it had during the war."²¹⁶ Looking at the years "between the war's end in September 1945 and December 1948," the now booming industrial sector of Tennessee grew to "seven hundred new industries [being] established...with a total investment value of \$1.75 million"²¹⁷ Yet, Howard points out two trends that industrialization brought to

²¹³ U.S. Census Bureau, *1970 Census of Population*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1973), 44-12.

²¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *1980 Census of Population*, Vol. 1 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1982), 44-10.

²¹⁵ Patricia Brake Howard, "Tennessee in War and Peace: The Impact of World War II on State Economic Trends," *Tennessee Historical Quarter* 51, no. 1 (Spring 1992): 51.

²¹⁶ Howard, 54.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 56.

Tennessee: the diversification and decentralization of industry in more rural areas.²¹⁸

Companies also had other reasons for moving to the South. According to Tami J. Friedman, business came to the South “lured by cheap and plentiful labor, an anti-union climate, and cooperative civic leaders eager to defend employers' interests as their own,” leading to “significant savings in wages, taxes, and other costs.”²¹⁹

Henry County became one of these places to which industry relocated during the postwar years. One example was Holley Carburetors, which according to the *Parisian* in 1949, “will ultimately employ about 300 here,” and supplied Paris with more manufacturing jobs.²²⁰ In fact, Paris' industrial economy diversified even more by 1950, with industries such as rubber moldings via the Bowling Green Rubber Company and shirt manufacturing by Salent and Salent.²²¹ Salent and Salent reportedly provided 500 people jobs in and around Paris.²²² All of these new industries coming in was the result of efforts by Paris Industries, Inc., which would “help locate industry in the West Tennessee metropolis, [and] would be glad to answer any inquiries as to the industrial possibilities of the city.”²²³ Floyd L. Berry described this effort, explaining that Paris Industries, Inc, “is authorized to make certain concessions to any interested industrialist, or manufacturer. The ample labor supply, the temperate weather and the splendid recreational

²¹⁸ Ibid., 54-55.

²¹⁹ Tami J. Friedman, “Exploiting the North-South Differential: Corporate Power, Southern Politics, and the Decline of Organized Labor after World War II,” *Journal of American History* 95, no. 2 (Sept. 2008): 325.

²²⁰ “Holley Carburetor Plant is Near to Final Stages; June Production Planned,” *Parisian* (Tennessee), April 29, 1949.

²²¹ Floyd. L Berry, “Tennessee’s Paris,” *L&N Employees’ Magazine*, January 1950, 11.

²²² Ibid.

²²³ Ibid.

facilities...combine to make Paris an ideal spot for industry and should enable the city to further advance as the exodus of business from the North to the South continues."²²⁴

There is some evidence for what Berry said about the labor market when comparing the 1950 census to 1960 for the number of craftsmen. In 1950, there were 809 male craftsmen in Henry County.²²⁵ By 1960, this number had only dropped to around 804.²²⁶ Only five total jobs had been lost over the decade, despite the closure of the L&N workshops. The U.S. census also reported on the family income, and looking at this section for Henry County; more families saw an increase in their income. In 1949, 1,140 families received incomes that ranged from \$500 to \$999.²²⁷ In the "Under \$1,000" category for Henry County families in 1959, the number of poor-earning families had declined to 1,006.²²⁸ Going further, the median household income rose significantly between the 1950s and 1960s. The 1950 census reported that Henry County's median income for families was \$1,548.²²⁹ By 1960, this median income had risen to a total of \$3,134, a huge increase from 1949.²³⁰ Based on the census statistics, incomes in Henry County rose throughout the decade as the economy shifted to other industries, so the problem of lost payroll seems unfounded.

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population: 1950*, Vol. 2, pt. 42, 42-102.

²²⁶ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population: 1960*, Vol. 1, pt. 44, 44-225.

²²⁷ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population: 1950*, Vol. 2, pt. 42, 42-117.

²²⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population: 1960*, Vol. 1, pt. 44, 44-241.

²²⁹ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population: 1950*, Vol. 2, 42-117.

²³⁰ U.S. Census Bureau, *Census of Population: 1960*, Vol. 1, 44-241. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Consumer Price Index for "All items in U.S. city average, all urban consumers, not seasonally adjusted" of December 1949 was 23.6, compared to December 1960 with 29.8; the "South region" CPI only goes as far back as 1966, <https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/surveymost>.

But along with new manufacturing, Paris also benefitted from a rise in tourism. In 1944, the TVA dammed the lower Tennessee River, creating the "largest man-made lake in the United States," Kentucky Lake.²³¹ A year later, Paris Landing State Park opened, opening the doors for outdoor recreation in the area.²³² Officially, Henry County promoted the tourist economy by the Henry County Tourism Board. Formerly called the Tennessee River Resort Act Committee, the Board's mission is to "maximize the economic, tourism, social and cultural benefits of major events to Henry County."²³³ This board was organized under the state's recent Public Acts of 2005 (specifically the Tennessee River Resort District Act), where counties that see themselves as resort districts "[receive] a percentage of actual sales tax collections."²³⁴ The *Paris-Post Intelligencer* reported in 2007 that Henry County, in a bid to promote tourism in the area, collects around \$500,000 yearly due to the Act.²³⁵ While there do not seem to be any official statistics about the tourism industry in Henry County, it can be assumed that, based on government support, tourism brings in many visitors from outside the county for Kentucky Lake, with Henry County gaining revenue from the tourists staying inside the county. With these new changes to the local economy, although the Paris shops ceased to

²³¹ "Henry County History," Paris-Henry County Chamber of Commerce, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.paristnchamber.com/home/community/history-of-paris-henry-county/>.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ "Henry County Tourism Authority," Paris-Henry County Industrial Committee, accessed September 25, 2021, <http://parishenrycoedc.com/henry-county-tourism-authority/>.

²³⁴ "Implementation of Tennessee River Resort District Act, Chap. No. 212, 2005 Public Acts," accessed September 28, 2021, <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/attorneygeneral/opinions/documents/2005/op05-161.pdf>.

²³⁵ "Resort District Readies for Action," *Paris Post-Intelligencer* (Tennessee), March 19, 2007, https://www.parispi.net/article_9ededadf-ec47-5e86-9797-e5c66d609c51.html.

be an active contributor to the economy, Henry County and Paris continued to grow and prosper.

Yet, when going over on Depot Street, one can still imagine the bustling activity of the area back in the 1920s, when men in the shops busied themselves with their tasks. The early growth of Paris and Henry County relied on the railroads, and many local people still remember when the railroads played a huge part in their lives. The Paris shops helped build the economy of Paris and Henry County and, as such, were a cornerstone of the community. Many families relied on the Paris shops for their livelihoods, with their good paychecks in turn giving support to local businesses. Even so, society changes along with the times moving forward, and with the decline of railroads in America, the Paris shops ceased to play a role in a new era of travel and transportation. While the Paris shops are a shadow of their former selves, the use of the land by the KWT Railroad serves as a reminder of how that area at one time housed one of the biggest employers in Paris, with all the stories about it recorded in the various materials now stored in the archives.

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