

= Fairfax Harrison =

Fairfax Harrison (full name Reginald Fairfax Harrison : March 13 , 1869 ? February 2 , 1938) was an American lawyer , businessman , and writer . The son of the secretary to Confederate President Jefferson Davis , Harrison studied law at Yale University and Columbia University before becoming a lawyer for the Southern Railway Company in 1896 . By 1906 he was Southern 's vice @-@ president of finance , and in 1907 he helped secure funding to keep the company solvent . In 1913 he was elected president of Southern , where he instituted a number of reforms in the way the company operated .

By 1916 , under Harrison 's leadership , the Southern had expanded to an 8 @,@ 000 @-@ mile (13 @,@ 000 km) network across 13 states , its greatest extent until the 1950s . Following the United States ' entry into World War I , the federal government took control of the railroads in December 1917 , running them through the United States Railroad Administration , on which Harrison served . An economic boom after the war helped the company to expand its operations ; Harrison worked to improve the railroad 's public relations and to upgrade the locomotive stock by introducing more powerful engines . Another of his concerns was to increase the amount of railroad track and to extend the area serviced by the railway . Harrison struggled to keep the railroad afloat during the Great Depression , and by 1936 Southern was once again showing a profit . Harrison retired in 1937 , intending to focus on his hobby of writing about historical subjects including the roots of the American Thoroughbred horse , but he died three months later in February 1938 .

= = Background and early life = =

Harrison was born in New York City on March 13 , 1869 , to Burton Harrison and Constance Cary Harrison . Burton had served as private secretary to Jefferson Davis , the President of the Confederate States of America during the American Civil War , and Constance was a novelist . Harrison 's brother , Francis Burton Harrison , was Governor @-@ General of the Philippines from 1913 to 1921 . Another brother was Archibald , and all three brothers attended Yale University . Fairfax Harrison graduated from Yale in 1890 ; he was a member of the Skull and Bones secret society . He went on to attend Columbia University , earning a Masters in Arts .

= = Railroad career = =

= = = Early career = = =

Harrison was admitted to the New York State bar in 1892 and worked for the law firm Bangs , Stetson , Tracy & MacVeagh from 1892 to 1896 . He then joined the Southern Railway Company in May 1896 as a lawyer , becoming an assistant to the company 's president in 1903 . He served as vice @-@ president in charge of finance and accounting from 1906 . During the Panic of 1907 , Harrison successfully persuaded J. P. Morgan to purchase bonds in the Southern to keep the company solvent . After the panic had subsided , Harrison was named president of the Chicago , Indianapolis and Louisville Railway , later the Monon Railroad (succeeded Ira G. Rawn after Rawn 's death) , which was jointly owned by Southern and the Louisville & Nashville Railroad . William Finley , president of the Southern Railway , died on November 23 , 1913 , and Harrison was elected as his successor eight days later . Besides the chairmanship of the Southern Railway , he was also elected to succeed Finley on three subsidiary railroads . His election was considered to be a sign of change in the Southern United States , especially in its railroads , both because he was a southerner and for his activism on behalf of the south .

= = = First years as president = = =

One of Harrison 's first acts as president was to implement a new training program for college

graduates hired by the company . Rather than being placed in supervisory roles , they were given regular entry @-@ level jobs in the engine shops and on the building and repairing of railroad track , to give them an understanding of the basics of the railroad business . He also instituted a remedial education program for the regular workforce ; they were trained in mathematics and other subjects to high school level , as well as in engine and machine @-@ shop basics . The program was designed to help train new supervisors in the skills needed to oversee other workers .

Another of Harrison 's goals was to raise the morale of the workforce and locomotive engineers ; crews were assigned to the same locomotives , and senior engineers were allowed to paint their names on their engines . When business declined in 1914 Harrison reduced his salary by 20 percent , but introduced smaller and graduated cuts for other staff , with the smallest percentages at the lowest pay scales . Other efforts to improve morale included rewards for fuel efficiency and the improvement of safety , including stricter investigation of accidents .

Harrison oversaw changes in the railway 's Board of Directors . Until 1915 most of the members of the board were from the northern United States but , after 1915 , a majority of the board members were southerners . In 1914 there were two unusual appointments to the board : Edwin Alderman and John Kilgo . Alderman was the president of the University of Virginia and Kilgo was a bishop in the Methodist Episcopal Church .

Harrison established a foreign trade department for the railroad , hoping to take advantage of the railway 's ability to connect to the Mississippi Valley and Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico ports . In 1915 , when the railway lost 12 percent of its revenue owing to disruptions in trade caused by the start of World War I , Harrison was concerned about longer @-@ term changes underway . In the annual report that year he warned stockholders that automobile ownership could severely impact railroad passenger revenues . His words proved to be prophetic , as automobiles eventually resulted in the disappearance of most passenger train traffic .

= = = World War I = = =

From 1913 to 1919 , Harrison oversaw the extension of double @-@ track on the railway 's mainline between Washington , D.C. and Atlanta , Georgia . The project was hampered by the war effort , but eventually covered the complete 638 @-@ mile (1 @,@ 027 km) distance between the two cities . In 1916 , Harrison acquired a railroad line that ran from Meridian , Mississippi to New Orleans , Louisiana . This brought Southern Railway 's track total to more than 8 @,@ 000 miles (13 @,@ 000 km) , covering 13 states . After the United States entered World War I in April 1917 , some military training camps were located in the south and much of the construction material used to build them was hauled over the Southern Railway . Harrison was elected chairman of a coordinating committee of railroad presidents , known as the War Board . Its five members were tasked with eliminating bottlenecks , and fostering cooperation between the various railroads .

The board 's efforts failed to meet the government 's expectations ; in December 1917 , Woodrow Wilson , the President of the United States , ordered the federal government to take control of the railroads , setting up a United States Railroad Administration (USRA) to run them . Harrison worked for the USRA during the war and , under its regulations , was required to step down as chairman of the Southern Railway . By the time the USRA returned control of Southern in March 1920 its treasury was bare . A few years of operation returned a surplus to the company , which led to the stockholders requesting in 1923 that the railroad pay a dividend to the holders of the common stock , something Southern had never done . Harrison managed to block the request , but in March 1924 a subsequent demand was successful , and a dividend of \$ 5 (approximately \$ 69 as of 2016) per share was declared . That was increased to \$ 7 (approximately \$ 94 as of 2016) per share in 1926 and \$ 8 (approximately \$ 110 as of 2016) in 1928 .

= = = 1920s = = =

An economic boom in the south following the end of World War I greatly increased Southern 's revenues . Harrison spent a good deal of time traveling around the southern United States ,

endeavoring to increase southern industry . When he traveled , he used two private railroad cars , named the Carolina and the Virginia . Other railroad presidents used only one , which made Harrison 's practice unique . The Carolina was a sleeping car and the Virginia was set up to serve members of the Board of Directors , with a kitchen , dining room , and observation area .

Harrison attempted to increase the power of Southern 's locomotives . In 1923 , engineers under his direction created the plans for the P @-@ 4 class of Pacific type locomotives , which became famous and a symbol of the Southern Railway . On a visit to England , Harrison had seen the paint scheme used by the London and North Eastern Railway , which used apple green @-@ painted engines . Returning home in 1925 , he ordered the newly delivered Pacifics painted a forest green , which he called Virginia , with gold lettering and silver trim . The roof of each engine was painted brick red . These engines pulled the newly refurbished passenger trains that Harrison had begun work on before the war . He also instituted new passenger lines . In 1921 the Suwannee River Special began to run between Chicago , Detroit , and Cleveland down to Tampa and St. Petersburg in Florida . The Crescent Limited began service in 1925 between New Orleans and New York , with a scheduled time for the one @-@ way trip of 37 hours and 50 minutes .

Harrison continued the public relations and advertising efforts of his predecessors ; in 1924 an advertising campaign was launched with the slogan " The Southern Serves the South " , which soon became well known . Harrison also spent long hours in negotiations to secure the legal foundations of the railway , consolidating the railroad 's debt and acquiring majority control of some of the smaller lines that made up the railway .

In 1926 the United States government forced the railroad to move out of its headquarters on Pennsylvania Avenue in Washington , D.C. Although Harrison threatened to take the company headquarters to Atlanta , in the end a new headquarters building was built on McPherson Square . Harrison installed a private lobby entrance leading to a private elevator to the 10th and 11th floors . The railroad took occupancy of the building in the middle of 1929 .

During these years , Harrison exhibited a number of personality quirks that became legendary . One was his habit of calling in subordinates to dine with him in the executive dining room by sending them a blue chip that had the meal 's conversational topic written on it . Usually the topics were intellectual rather than related to the running of the railroad . Another oddity was his refusal to use his railroad pass , which entitled him to free travel . Instead , he personally paid for his commute between his home and the railroad 's offices .

= = = Great Depression = = =

Before the Wall Street Crash of 1929 , Southern 's stock sold for around \$ 146 (approximately \$ 2 @,@ 010 as of 2016) , with an all @-@ time high of just over \$ 151 (approximately \$ 2 @,@ 080 as of 2016) . In 1932 the stock hit a low of \$ 2 @.@ 50 (approximately \$ 43 as of 2016) . In 1929 Southern 's freight traffic had been 8 @.@ 4 billion ton @-@ miles ; it fell to 4 @.@ 4 billion ton @-@ miles in 1932 . Southern 's debt rose , and the company almost entered bankruptcy in 1932 . Harrison ordered the payment of dividends to be halted in 1932 , and many employees took pay cuts . Further efforts included a thorough check of expenses , with every item subjected to scrutiny to see what could be eliminated . By 1936 the railroad again showed a profit ; this marked the turning point for the company in dealing with the Great Depression .

Harrison chose not to be reappointed as president in 1937 , and nominated Ernest Norris as his successor . Harrison , who was 68 at the time , planned to concentrate on his hobby of writing historical works , but he died three months after his retirement .

= = Writing career = =

Harrison was an author as well as an industrialist , writing on Virginia history and genealogy . Among his works were a translation of the agricultural works of ancient Roman writer Marcus Porcius Cato and several books on the local history of Virginia , including The Landmarks of Old Prince William , Devon Carys , Proprietors of the Northern Neck and Virginia Carys . He also wrote

on the early history of the American Thoroughbred racehorse ; his work includes The Belair Stud , The Roanoke Stud , The Background of the American Stud Book , The Equine F.F.V 's , The John 's Island Stud , and Early American Turf Stock . The last came out in two volumes , the first on mares in 1934 , and the second on stallions in 1935 . Peter Willet , a later writer on Thoroughbreds , described him as an " indefatigable researcher in American pedigrees " . Harrison also served on the Executive Committee of the Virginia Historical Society , and was instrumental in the preparation of the 120 @-@ volume Virginia Historical Index .

= = Family , death , and legacy = =

Harrison married Hetty Cary in 1894 . They had four children : three daughters , Ursula , Constance , and Sally , and a son , Richard . He was a member of the Episcopal Church . Harrison was described as " physically imposing " , and gray @-@ haired in his middle age . Harry DeButts , an employee and protégé , described him as " a little cold when you first met him , but underneath he was a very warm , admirable , capable and wise man " . He died on February 2 , 1938 , of heart disease , and was buried in Ivy Hill Cemetery in Alexandria , Virginia . On the day after Harrison 's death , the New York Times carried his obituary , but instead of a photograph of Harrison , the picture that ran with the obituary was of John Jeremiah Pelley , the president of the Association of American Railroads , who was still alive .

The College of William and Mary in Virginia holds some of his papers . A selection of his letters was published in 1944 under the title A Selection of the Letters of Fairfax Harrison . The University of Virginia library has on loan another collection of Harrison 's papers . Correspondence and business files from his time as president of the Southern Railway are held by the Southern Railway Historical Society in their collection of president 's files . They were loaned to the Southern Museum of Civil War and Locomotive History in 2003 and were still there in 2008 .