

Operations on David Godwin's Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee

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Revised January 20, 2026

Table of Contents

Introduction	Page 3
Waybills – revised 12/3/25	Page 4
Planning for Operations – revised 1/20/26	Page 5
Setting Up the Schedule – revised 12/3/25	Page 6
The Dispatcher Sheet – revised 12/3/25	Page 7
Train Numbering – revised 12/3/25	Page 8
Freight Trains	Page 9
Freight Yards – revised 12/4/25	Page 10
Communications – revised 12/5/25	Page 12

Supporting Documents

Central of Georgia Employee Timetable No.5 – revised 12/8/25
Central of Georgia Newnan Yard Instructions – revised 12/8/25
Central of Georgia Lyerly Yard Instructions – revised 12/8/25
Central of Georgia Dispatcher Sheet – revised 12/4/25
Central of Georgia Waybill Procedure – revised 12/10/25
Central of Georgia Waybills – revised 1/20/26

Introduction

The following information sheets and documents will help explain the operations on David Godwin's Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee. They include the prototype inspiration, the routes, the operation scheme development, an explanation of the waybills, and other helpful information.

David is interested in many railroads that served the South, including the Atlantic Coast Line, Central of Georgia, Louisville and Nashville, Seaboard Air Line, and Southern Railway. His Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee railroad was to be a freelanced line that provided trackage rights to several of his favorite railroads. The towns do not replicate real places, and the track plan and industries are fictitious. The goal was to build a layout that was interesting and fun to operate.

While thinking about how the layout could be operated I came up with a different idea. I proposed that we take one of David's favorite railroads, find real routes, and then name the towns after those found along the right of way. The locations and track arrangement would not look like the real ones but most people would not know the difference. So instead of a freelanced railroad that may or may not have been inspired by the Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia (that's Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee in reverse), it would be a real railroad modeled with a healthy dose of creative license.

Since the Central of Georgia is David's favorite, it was selected as the prototype inspiration for the current operation. The towns are real places along two Central of Georgia routes. One route runs from Chattanooga in the north (railroad west) to Savannah, and the other runs from Atlanta south to Columbus (railroad east). The two lines are combined between Newnan and Raymond.

While we operate as the Central of Georgia now, this may not always be the case. Alternative scenarios have already been developed for the Atlantic Coast Line, the Seaboard Air Line, and the Southern Railway. When and if the time comes to switch prototypes, the routes and town names will be changed, the Central of Georgia equipment will be swapped out, and a new schedule will be adopted.

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Waybills

We use a Tab-on-Car waybill system to convey car destinations. Cars heading to one of the online industries will have a waybill with a two-digit number. Those destined for Chattanooga, Villa Rica via the Southern Railway, Atlanta, Savannah, or Columbus will have a three-letter code (CHA, SOU, ATL, SAV, COL). Though not as prototypical as other systems most operators find it easy to learn and use.

Each town or group of towns is assigned ten waybill numbers. The current setup, from north to south (or west to east in railroad terms), is as follows:

- Series 10: Chickamauga
- Series 20: Mill Creek Branch and Lyerly
- Series 30: Rome
- Series 40: Cedartown and Bremen
- Series 50: Mandras
- Series 60: Newnan
- Series 70: East Newnan
- Series 80: Turin
- Series 90: Luthersville, Greenville, and Chipley

For detailed waybill assignments, refer to the Central of Georgia Waybills sheet. This document includes the specific spots, the types of cars each spot can accept, and the number of cars allowed.

Only cars to be picked up or dropped off at an industry or a yard will have waybills. For example, Train No. 84 is a manifest freight from Chattanooga to Columbus. It typically drops a block of cars off at Lyerly Yard, Newnan Yard, or perhaps both. Cars to be dropped will most likely have numbered waybills. Those not to be dropped off will not be waybilled. After making its drops No. 84 picks up more cars with COL waybills to fill out the consist if they are available.

Another train, No. 82, is a coal drag from Chattanooga to Savannah. It has no waybills since it has no work to do.

If a train needs to be blocked, numbered waybills make it easy. Let's look at Train No. 201, the Mandras Local. No. 201 starts its run at the Newnan Yard. A quick review of his instructions tells the yardmaster that the train heads to Mandras with cars with 50-series waybills that should be arranged in numerical order. There are four spots in Mandras labeled 50, 51, 52, and 53. The yardmaster places cars with 50 waybills behind the locomotive, followed by any 51s, then 52s, then 53s. The train is now perfectly blocked.

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Planning for Operations

When setting up the operations plan, it was essential to ensure an appropriate number of freight cars on the layout. We needed enough to serve the industries and fill the various trains, but not so many that the railroad became overwhelmed, as this can lead to gridlock.

The total number of freight cars largely depends on the capacity of the staging yards, online yards, and the industries served. It's important to remember that online yards are not merely storage spaces. In his article "The Ten Commandments of Yard Design," Craig Bisgeier noted that "generally, a yard that's half full - is full." While it is not strictly necessary for a yard to be exactly half empty to maintain fluidity, it is a good practice to be conservative when calculating capacity.

Since waybills are assigned randomly, repetitive patterns are not a concern with our Tab-on-Car system. For example, if there is a boxcar on a train in Chattanooga, it can be routed to thirteen different industries (as shown in the Central of Georgia Waybills sheet). After arriving at one of these industries, the boxcar can be re-waybilled to five different staging yards (soon to be six). This means that in just one cycle—where a car starts at a staging yard, goes to an industry, and then returns to a staging yard—there are up to 65 different routing patterns ($13 \times 5 = 65$). After two cycles, the potential combinations increase to over 4,200!

After consulting with David, I created a list that included all industry spots, the types of cars needed for those spots, and the maximum number that could be accommodated. This list became the Central of Georgia Waybills sheet. Additionally, I developed one other document, the Waybill Procedure, which provides a step-by-step guide to waybill the railroad.

Currently, there are 24 different industry spots that accommodate 80 cars. For every car with a numbered waybill, there is another car of the same type with a three-letter waybill. This ensures that there is always an equal number of cars heading to an industry and those going to one of the staging yards.

The current breakdown of three-letter waybills is as follows:

- 20 cars: CHA - Chattanooga
- 10 cars: SOU - Villa Rica via the Southern Railway
- 20 cars: ATL - Atlanta
- 10 cars: SAV - Savannah
- 20 cars: COL - Columbus

Currently, there are 160 cars that have either numbered or lettered waybills. The manifest trains contain several cars that are not dropped and therefore do not have waybills. Additionally, there are two coal drags that also lack waybills.

Setting Up the Schedule

When developing the initial schedule, my goal was to minimize interference between trains and people. I intentionally spaced out local trains to give the yards enough time to manage their operations effectively. Similarly, manifest trains were scheduled with ample intervals for this same reason.

For trains terminating in one of the staging yards, careful planning was essential to ensure that a track would be available upon their arrival. This is particularly important for Atlanta, which is just a single-track loop and needs to accommodate six trains in a single day. Columbus presents its own challenge, as it has only two tracks.

With the first two schedules, we completed an entire day's operations in one session, lasting about three hours. However, with the addition of more mainline trackage and industries on the upper level, along with Lyerly Yard, it became necessary to divide the day into two shifts.

We are currently operating with schedule No. 5, which will remain in effect until more industries and the Mill Creek staging yard come online. Minor modifications may be made in the meantime if deemed necessary, similar to adjustments made with previous schedules.

By splitting into two shifts, we are now able to run more trains per day. Some train sets, such as the Man o' War, can be turned around and run again during the second shift. This allows us to have two round trips per day, just like the prototype. Another benefit is that the layout only needs to be re-waybilled once every two sessions, resulting in a significant time savings.

We are not using a clock, fast or otherwise; the trains are simply run in a sequence.

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The Dispatcher Sheet

Since the main routes from Chattanooga to Savannah and from Atlanta to Columbus are combined between Newnan and Raymond, the Dispatcher Sheet was designed to prevent the dispatcher from accidentally clearing trains into areas where the two lines converge. The Southern Railway's connection to Villa Rica added further complexity when it became operational, and the upcoming completion of the Mill Creek Branch will introduce additional challenges.

The towns are listed on the left side of each page as follows:

- Atlanta Staging
- **Mandras**
- Chattanooga Staging
- Chickamauga
- **Lyerly**
- **Rome**
- **Cedartown**
- **Bremen**
- Villa Rica (Southern Railway)
- Atlanta Junction
- **Newnan**
- **East Newnan**
- **Raymond**
- Luthersville
- Diamond
- **Turin**
- Macon/Savannah Staging
- Chipley
- Columbus Staging

Bold type indicates there is passing siding at that location.

As you read down the sheet, you are moving south (railroad east). This arrangement was intentional, as north is typically at the top of a map. For the same reason, the northernmost towns are located on the upper level of the layout.

Train numbers are listed at the top, with a brief description provided below. In the columns, an "S" indicates the starting point of a train, while an "E" marks its endpoint. Areas where a train should not operate are shaded gray. If a passenger train has a scheduled stop at a station, a lowercase "st" will appear on the right of the column. Additionally, if it has been determined that a train must always follow a specific route, this will be indicated. For example, all trains bound for Columbus must use the siding at Raymond; otherwise, they will end up in Savannah. This requirement is noted by the word "siding."

Train Numbering

Here is how train numbers are assigned on our Central of Georgia.

The Man o' War passenger trains that run between Atlanta and Columbus are assigned 17, 18, 19, and 20. These numbers reflect those used by the prototype.

Passenger trains 41, 42, 43, and 44 operate between Chattanooga and Macon (Savannah staging). In reality, Central of Georgia passenger trains did not serve Chattanooga; however, some creative license was taken to enhance our operation. In our scenario, these trains run only as far east as Macon, rather than continuing to Savannah. Travelers heading to Chattanooga and Savannah can transfer to or from one of the Atlanta-Savannah trains in Macon to complete their journeys.

Trains numbered in the 50s are long-distance freights that originate in Savannah. Those in the 60s originate in Columbus, 70s originate in Atlanta, and 80s originate in Chattanooga.

Trains in the 100 series are transfers with foreign railroads. Numbers 100 and 103 are operated to and from the Atlanta area and Newnan Yard by the Atlanta and West Point Railroad. Trains 101 and 104 are handled by the Southern Railway to and from the Lyerly Yard and Villa Rica.

Local trains designated with 200 series numbers operate out of Newnan Yard, while those with 300 series numbers work out of Lyerly. All locals have two numbers since they turn around and change direction.

Following typical prototype practices, eastbound trains have even numbers, and westbound trains carry odd numbers.

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Freight Trains

The online yards at Lyerly, Newnan, and Raymond are relatively small, even by model railroad standards. These yards are not typically where long-distance freight trains start or end their journeys. Therefore, all long-distance freight trains originate and terminate at one of the staging yards.

Most manifest trains will have cars to drop off at Lyerly Yard and/or Newnan Yard. They also pick up cars to fill out their consists. To accommodate the passing sidings and arrival/departure tracks, freight trains are generally limited to twelve cars.

Cars to be dropped off at Lyerly should be placed at the east end of the train regardless of the direction of travel. Those to be dropped off at Newnan should be at the west end of the train, again regardless of the direction of travel. That means that cars to be dropped should always be on the yardmasters' right for both yards.

Unit trains, such as coal drags, do not stop at the yards since they have no work to perform there.

The transfer train operated by the Southern Railway runs between Villa Rica (staging) and Lyerly Yard. Southern Railway trains enter Central of Georgia territory at Bremen. The Atlanta and West Point transfer operates between Atlanta (staging) and Newnan Yard. None of the transfer trains perform any work while traveling on Central of Georgia tracks.

All online industries are served by local trains based out of either Lyerly or Newnan. These local trains are called turns and are assigned two numbers: an even number when heading east and an odd number when going west.

All cars on local trains have waybills, unlike the other freight trains. Typically, the locals drop off cars with numbered waybills and pick up cars with lettered waybills. If there are any cars at an industry with numbered waybills that do not have the correct number, these are also picked up.

There may be one or more cars at an industry that do not need to be picked up. These cars may not have been unloaded or loaded, so they remain at the location.

Since all locals are turns, the engineer and conductor should only work the trailing-point sidings and bypass facing-point sidings. Facing-point sidings can be serviced after the train reaches the end of its route and turns around to head back, as they will then become trailing-point sidings. This procedure eliminates unnecessary run-around moves.

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Freight Yards

Newnan Yard

Newnan Yard is the busiest and most important yard on the railroad. The Chattanooga-Savannah and Atlanta-Columbus lines intersect here. Eight locals originate or terminate in the yard, as do the two Atlanta and West Point transfers. Six manifest freight trains pass Newnan. Most, sometimes all, have cars to drop off and/or pick up. There are eight passenger trains and two coal drags that also pass by.

As Newnan Yard goes, so goes the railroad, so it must run efficiently. If the yard gets clogged up, westbound traffic from as far away as Raymond and eastbound traffic from as far away as Atlanta and Bremen will be adversely affected. If traffic issues become too severe, the dispatcher may even find it necessary to keep trains from departing the Chattanooga, Savannah, and Columbus staging yards.

The Newnan Yard instructions provide the information needed to operate the yard correctly. (See the Newnan Yard instructions.) Here are some additional tips.

First, keep the main line clear! It should be considered a no-parking zone. Keeping the main clear will help ensure that trains that do not need to stop can continue their journeys without undue delays.

Communicate with the engineers of the inbound manifest freights to determine if yard work is necessary. A manifest freight should stop at Newnan only if:

1. It has one or more cars in the consist to drop or
2. The train has less than 12 cars in its consist and there are cars in the yard to be picked up.

Cars for Newnan should be on the west end of the trains (the yardmaster's right) regardless of the direction of travel.

Manifest freights must be given priority over the locals. *The goal is to keep them moving.* If a train needs to stop at Newnan to do drop-offs and/or pick-ups the yardmaster should get his locomotive and any cars out of the way to expedite the manifest train's entrance into the yard complex.

Once the train has arrived, a simple block swap (cars dropped and others picked up) should take a maximum of eight moves to accomplish, about four or five minutes at most.

Cars to be picked up should be positioned in the appropriately labeled yard track. Cars not ready to be picked up should be left for the next train heading for that destination. Having the yard switcher go back and forth to dig out cars wastes time.

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Raymond Yard

Raymond Yard is a small, two-track yard located where the eastbound lines to Savannah and Columbus diverge and is used to provide relief to Newnan. Trains 204/205 and 207/208 do work here. Train 209 may also pick up cars here.

Raymond Yard helps to keep Newnan from becoming overworked, limits local train lengths, and eliminates excessive and unnecessary backhauling.

Lyerly Yard

Lyerly Yard is the second busiest yard on the railroad and is becoming increasingly important as more trackage is completed on the upper level. As with Newnan and Raymond, Lyerly is located at the intersection of two lines, the main route to Chattanooga and the Mill Creek branch (still under construction). Currently, eight locals originate or terminate in the yard, as do the two Southern Railway transfer trains. Four of the manifest freights, four of the passenger trains, and the two coal drags that serve Newnan also call on at Lyerly.

Cars for Lyerly should be on the east end of the trains (the yardmaster's right) regardless of the direction of travel.

There are specific instructions for Lyerly just as there are for Newnan. (See Lyerly Yard instructions.) However, the general operating procedures for both yards are the same.

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Communications

Effective communication is crucial for successful operating sessions.

Here are a few rules to follow:

1. **Listen Before Speaking.** When using the radio, always listen before speaking to avoid talking over someone else's communication.
2. **Speak Clearly.** Ensure your speech is clear and understandable.
3. **Seek Clarification.** If you do not understand a communication, say so.
4. **Read Back Instructions.** Engineers should read back the dispatcher's instructions to confirm understanding.
5. **Report Locations.** Engineers **must** promptly report their locations as directed by the dispatcher.
6. **Notify the Dispatcher of Problems.** Any issues that arise during the session that might affect operations should be reported immediately. Contact the troubleshooter if you need assistance.
7. **Monitor the Radio.** Even if you are not directly involved in the conversation, what is being discussed may affect you. Pay attention.
8. **Limit Off-Topic Conversations.** Better yet, eliminate them! Off-topic conversations in the layout rooms are a distraction.
9. **Respond Promptly.** Respond to the dispatcher's calls as quickly as possible. It's understandable that an engineer or yardmaster might not hear the dispatcher's first call. A second call may be necessary, but additional calls should not be required.
10. **Direct Communication for Engineers and Yardmasters.** Engineers and Yardmasters should communicate directly without using the radio to keep the radio channel clear for other essential communications.

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