

Passenger Station

The display case houses a model of the passenger station that replaced the original depot in 1901.

The South Carolina Canal and Railroad Company was founded in 1828 to aid in the commercial growth of Charleston. The goal of the company was to provide an overland method for shipment of goods from Northern Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. A 136-mile system was designed from Charleston to Hamburg, SC near Augusta, Ga.

The first locomotive, "The Best Friend", made its first run on December 25, 1830, for a distance of six miles. By 1831 construction was underway from Charleston to the Edisto River. The track was opened to Summerville in 1832 and to Ridge Road between Cypress and Four Hole Swamp by October of that year. Passage from Charleston to Summerville was 75 cents. The entire line was finished in 1833 to Hamburg (present day Augusta) with the total cost of building the railroad amounting to \$931,148.36. Trains ran from 6:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. and did not operate on Sundays. This was also the first railroad to carry U.S. mail.

The company purchased 1800 acres of land near Summerville at 37½ cents an acre. This tract provided timber for 45 miles of railroad. To encourage settlement, the company laid out 200 lots into a town of North-South streets named after trees and East-West streets that were numbered. Because the railroad developed the town lots Summerville is considered the first railroad town in America.

The Railroad became the South Carolina Railroad in 1842 and a line was added from Branchville to Columbia. This was extended in 1848 to Camden thus increasing the amount of cotton that could be shipped to Charleston. The Charleston to Hamburg trip took 10-12 hours in 1838. This was decreased to 7-8 hours by 1851 and in 1855-night travel was added. The company was enjoying financial success by 1860 and this prosperity carried over into the Civil War. The Railroad was used to move troops and materials of war along with private travelers. However, receipts were in Confederate currency which decreased in value with each succeeding month.

During the war, materials for maintenance could not be brought through the blockade. Rolling stock and structures deteriorated and old stations were abandoned. If supplies did make it through the blockade, there were no facilities or labor to do the work; all had been moved to Columbia. The railroad continued to operate until 1865 when Sherman's troops invaded the state and tore up rails, burned crossties, and twisted rails around trees. Although much damage occurred on the Orangeburg to Columbia line and elsewhere, the Charleston line was intact from Charleston to two miles below Orangeburg. Reconstruction of the entire line began in December, 1865 and was completed in April, 1866.

On August 31, 1886, the Summerville-Charleston area suffered from a major earthquake. The Railroad experienced track displacement with alternate depressions and elevations (some were as much as 18 inches); culverts were destroyed and hundreds of yards of track were shoved to the southeast with resulting bending of rails. There were three trains wrecked resulting in two deaths. After major difficulties, the Railroad became the South Carolina and Georgia Railroad in May 1894, and later became part of the Southern Railway system in 1899.