

Seaboard Air Line Railway Freight Depot, 1902  
1000 Block (west side) of Front Avenue  
Columbus  
Muscogee County  
Georgia

HAER GA-21

HAER,  
GA,  
108 - COLM,  
15.

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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## HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

Seaboard Airline Railway Freight Depot

HAER GA-21

Location: Columbus, Georgia. 1000 block  
(western side) of Front Avenue

Construction Date: 1902

Original Owner: The Seaboard Airline Railway Terminal

Present Owner: W. C. Bradley Company

Significance: In 1902 the Seaboard Airline Railway built this freight terminal to serve the industries and businesses along Front Avenue. The building continued to function in that capacity until 1971. Since that time it has been used as a warehouse. The W. B. Bradley Company purchased the building within the last two years. On August 10, 1977 the building burned, but its brick walls and piers still remain, and the company plans to renovate this structure to make it a part of the convention center and hotel complex proposed for this portion of Front Avenue.

Historians: John S. Lupold  
J. B. Karfunkle 1977  
Barbara Kimmelman

Note: See drawing sheet 4 of 13, GA-33, for Front Avenue elevation of building and sheet 13 of 13 for site location map and short descriptive statement.

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## The Seaboard Airline Freight Depot

In 1902 the Seaboard Airline Railway leased the freight (dummy) line, running down Front Avenue in Columbus, from the Columbus Railroad Company. The latter company was primarily involved in operating streetcar lines within the city and in retailing electric power, and had not been very active in the railroad freight business. The industries, cotton warehouses, and other commercial operations along Front Avenue were eager for Seaboard to acquire those tracks, since that railroad would provide competition to the Central of Georgia Railroad, the primary carrier out of Columbus. [1]

The Columbus Railroad Company also owned the Alabama Warehouse and hoped to sell that building to the Seaboard Airline Railway for them to use as a freight depot. [2] Seaboard built its own depot, however, in the 1000 block of Front Avenue in 1902.

The small brick depot (48 x 65 feet), built on a hill sloping westward, contained two stories; the upper story was the street level on the eastern side. Its most distinctive feature was a series of arches along its southern and eastern sides on the upper level (SALT photo 1) and the southern and western sides on the basement level (photos 2a-f, 3a-f). Tracks, supported by a trestle, adjoined the western side of the upper story.

The building incorporated many wooden elements. All the archway doors, and the western wall of the upper end, were of wood (SALT photos 1 & 4) and the roof was composed of wooden trusses. The second story contained a raised wooden platform accommodating goods unloaded from and destined for the railway cars. [3]

The building functioned as a freight depot until 1971. The Seaboard Airline continues to service Front & Bay Avenues out of its main yard east of 6th Avenue.

After 1971 the building served as a warehouse for White Tulip Flour, Meal, Seeds and similar products. In 1976 the W. C. Bradley Company bought the building and planned to convert the structure to a new function that would be compatible with the trade center/hotel complex being developed in that area of Front Avenue. On 10 August, 1977 during the sandblasting operations, the building burned, destroying all its wooden elements. The piers and brick walls still remain and the company plans to continue remodeling the building.

Footnotes: The Seaboard Airline Freight Depot

1. Correspondence (1901-1902) in the Columbus portion of George Baldwin Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.
2. Ibid.
3. Examination of site.
4. Conversation with Rollins Aldridge, vice president, W. C. Bradley Company, conducted by John S. Lupold.

Bibliography

George J. Baldwin Papers (Columbus files, 1901-1902), Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Baldwin was president of the Columbus Railroad Company, and the papers nicely reflect the difficulties the company had in servicing the line before the transfer to Seaboard.

Conversation with Rollins Aldridge, vice president, W. C. Bradley Company, conducted by John S. Lupold. Mr. Aldridge could offer much clearer information on future plans for the railway than on its history.