

## BLYTHEWOOD HISTORICAL SOCIETY & MUSEUM

# The Train Room

Online Exhibit Panel Project

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Within the museum is a room that is dedicated to telling the story of the train in Blythewood. Why is the train so important? It is the whole reason that Blythewood exists! The train tracks, usually built by enslaved labor, finally reached this area by 1850. It later stretched north to Winnsboro and beyond. In South Carolina, the early trains were powered by steam, and Blythewood had a large water tank that supplied the locomotives.

Since the train provided a way to quickly move people and crops from area farms, a small town grew up around the train's water stop. The train was so important during the Civil War (1861-1865) that the Union Army destroyed parts of the track as they travelled through the South.

They tore up the line running through Blythewood in 1865, and ransacked some of the nearby homes, including the Hoffman House, which is still standing. Damage to the railroad was so extensive that repairs were not complete until over a year later, in 1866.

The town continued to grow over the years, thanks to the train, which employed African Americans and whites. In the Train Room you can learn more about the importance of the train and the local depot to Blythewood.



There are several neat things to see in the Train Room. A model train set runs the length of the rear wall, showing the many types of cars that were towed behind the train's locomotive. A model of the 1903 train depot, built by Jim McLean, is an exact replica of a building that was the center of Blythewood until its demolition in 1968.

The old sign that hung on the depot is within the train room, and the scales that weighed so many parcels is here as well. A large mural is the most striking item in the exhibit. Painted by local artist Harold Branham, it depicts the view from the train as it pulled into the station in Blythewood in the early 1900s.