

HARVEY'S LAKE.ORG

Trolley and Railroad Notes of D.A. Waters

(I) *Rambling Around, by The Old Timer*

D.A. Waters, *The Dallas Post*, May 24, 1962. Copyright *The Dallas Post*, 1962.

To secure the right of eminent domain, available to steam railroads in Pennsylvania under certain conditions, the local trolley road was incorporated as a steam railroad, The Wilkes-Barre and Northern. Everyone knew that the steam part of it was only a subterfuge as the grades and curves laid out were not good for efficient steam operation. However, the first cars into Dallas were actually pulled by steam engine, and such an engine was stored for many years in the car barn at the lower end of town near the present motel. Electric power was soon substituted. After a few years the controlling interest was sold and the new owners changed the name to Wilkes-Barre, Dallas and Harveys Lake Railway Co. Under neither management was any attempt made to build the road into Wilkes-Barre. Connection was made with the tracks of the Wilkes-Barre and Luzerne Street Railway where the turn was made at Courtdale Avenue. About opposite the present Luzerne Lumber Co. the track swung to the left and followed the side of the mountain to Hillside, whence it ran fairly straight to the lower end of Trucksville hill. Here it swung to the left and followed the fill on the opposite side of the creek nearly to Mt. Greenwood, where it crossed to the opposite side and followed the side of the hill to Shavertown.

Passing about where the main intersection is now, it followed the line where the highway cut off to Fernbrook as recently built, then ran roughly parallel with the Lehigh Valley to the center of Dallas and on to the Lake, to the left of the Lehigh Valley and not close to it beyond Dallas.

On November 7, 1899, as reported at the time in *The Dallas Post*, the first fatal accident under electric operation occurred. Frank Kniffen, age about forty, who shortly before had purchased a farm near Ketcham, was returning home from the valley. Near the stone crusher just below Ice Cave, now Hillside, he apparently lay down on the track to rest and was struck in the darkness by the car which had left Wilkes-Barre at 8:20 p.m. Josiah Rood of Dallas was motorman and A.L. Snyder, the conductor. This was entirely away from the usual path of travel and his presence was unexplained. His skull was crushed, one arm torn off, and both legs nearly severed. The crew put the body on the car and continued on to Dallas and turned it over to Undertaker B.W. Brickel. The coroner authorized Esq. C.H. Cooke to select a jury and hold an inquest. They rendered a verdict of accidental death. The man had been addicted to occasional use of liquor. A funeral was conducted in Dallas Church.

About the same time the same Mr. Snyder, acting as motorman, struck a colt that jumped in front of the car. The brake having been applied, the blow was not too severe and the colt was not seriously hurt.

Car No. 2, the unlucky car of the road, ran away from Fernbrook to Luzerne one time, knocking another car into the side of a house and smashing a milk wagon.

About a week before Christmas in 1900, the same car No. 2, motorman Josiah Rood, Conductor M.D. Thomas, was completely demolished at the iron bridge in Luzerne. The trolley was coming toward Dallas and tried to stop at the grade crossing with a Lehigh Valley mine branch

which runs up through Luzerne along the creek. The rail was frosty and somewhat greasy and the car did not stop quickly enough to clear the railroad. A Lehigh Valley mine crew was pushing a train of coal up the creek and the leading car struck the trolley. Dr. C.A. Spencer, as passenger, was bruised in the head and shoulders and one side of his body was partly paralyzed. E.J. Newman, of Beaumont, fell through one of the car windows, sustaining a wrenched back and bruises and was taken to Wilkes-Barre Hospital. Mrs. C.B. Barker and Mrs. Thomas Oldershaw of Dallas were slightly bruised and cut by flying glass. Other passengers, all more or less shaken up and scared, were Mr. and Mrs. James Ely of Hillside, Leslie Bertram of Huntsville, Mr. and Mrs. A.T. Gandloff of Luzerne, later of Dallas, Joseph Hagen, A.L. Snyder and John Hildebrandt of Dallas.

With the coming of automobiles, minor crossing accidents were common for a while. In our own time the most common cause of difficulty was falling ice and trees in the winter season. Lowest-numbered car remembered by the writer was "Old No. 4," a combination baggage and passenger car that was used sometimes on night trips. No. 3 may have been around. For summer service to Harveys Lake, cars open at the sides were used with seats across the cars and a running board along both sides for the conductor to pass along and also serve as a step entering or leaving the cars.

(II) The History of Dallas (1973)

A. The Trolley

The wooden trolley station [at Dallas] had two floors, but the upper one was seldom used. The ground floor was equipped with benches along the walls, backed by electric heaters. Boys, or others, frequently stuck something into the heating units making a short. After various methods to protect them, heaters were taken out. The building was shaped to conform to the adjoining tracks with full length platform.

Most of the track to Harveys Lake was single, with passing sidings. Starting just above Main Street, double track was installed most of the way to Luzerne. The service was frequent and dependable. Express service, with few stops, arrived from Public Square, Wilkes-Barre, in 28 minutes, regular service a little longer. The period before the War was probably the best in the history of the company, with constant improvement in equipment and other facilities, including the Union-Division Street line to by-pass central Luzerne. Regular and excursion schedules were run to Harveys Lake, the best day July 4, 1923.

B. The Railroad

Parallel to the trolley tracks through the center of Dallas ran the Lehigh Valley Railroad, Bowmans Creek Branch, about fifty miles from Wilkes-Barre to Bernice, with connections at Bernice to the main line at Towanda. It was a common saying that the railroad had built Dallas, causing it to pass several nearby villages in activity and size.

It was single track, including several branches, with over eighty sidings at one time or another. Although the big virgin forest to the north, to cut which the branch was built, had been lumbered over before the last century ended, it was still a busy facility in the period before World War I. Beginning at the southern end of the Township, westward, there was a siding at Leonards Clearing (Fernbrook), later extended across Demunds Road to serve Glenview Co. Much later another one was put in for the feed business of Brown and Fassett, later Huston. Below the Ryman and Shave sawmill was a connection with the Wilkes-Barre and Northern, later the

trolley line. Opposite the mill there was another siding called Rymans.

A teamtrack siding was located back of the station. On the flat, opposite the foot of Baldwin Street, there was a passing siding called Kirkdale (probably from Kirdendall), and three sidings to serve the Albert Lewis sawmill. A temporary siding was put in at Center Hill to unload steel for College Misericordia. There was a long passing siding on top of Chestnut Ridge, and a whole complex of railroad facilities at Alderson, some of which may have been in Dallas Township. A private branch owned by Albert Lewis ran from a point east of Alderson to Ruggles and Noxen. The railroad owned track ran via the Picnic Ground.

Although the writer worked as a trackman in the summer of 1912, during which the top of Trucksville trestle was renewed, his full time railroad career started in 1919, after World War I. In the 1920s he rode a track motor car over the entire Wyoming Division of the railroad, including this branch.

Facilities at Dallas included passenger and freight stations, a wagon scale, a stock pen to handle live stock, a flat unloading dock with ramp for machinery, automobiles, etc., and a supply building for trackmen.

For decades, everything locally was in charge of the Agent, Louis L. Horning, called Louie by everyone. He was one of the busiest men in town. Dallas was a block station with semaphore and lantern signal system, and train operation and covered by train orders. He sold passenger tickets, and received and forwarded express. His office had telegraph service, both railroad and Western Union. He was ambidextrous. He could answer his telegraph key with either hand, and write out a message or train order with the other. He had the train dispatchers line with a separate telephone, plus the usual commercial telephone. Luzerne and Alderson for block purposes. He accepted and billed outbound and inbound freight.

Mr. and Mrs. Horning were Mennonites. They lived in a railroad-owned house in the angle between the track and Lake Street. Their oldest daughter, Mattie, became the second wife of Rev. W.S. Crandall. Their other daughter, Bessie, married Dr. W.E. Strous, Kingston dentist. A passenger train went west, weekdays, at 7:34 A.M. to Towanda, passing [Dallas, and] returning at 8:30 P.M., with locked mail east at 10:10 A.M., returning at 4.62 P.M. westbound, also having an P.P.O. mail car with clerks, giving Dallas the best mail service it ever had.

In ice harvesting season, a through freight went west, returning in the evening. This writer personally weighed as many as sixty-five cars in a single night shift at Coxton. Originally a through local freight to Towanda and return, and one in reverse direction, took two days, which was replaced by turn-around service daily from both ends as far as Bernice. These stopped anywhere, being the only means of handling persons and merchandise for isolated North Mountain points.

Special excursion trains were run to Harveys Lake, in earlier days some also to Ganoga Lake. Steam engines [pulled all] trains before World War I. Freight sometimes had more than one engine [on] account [of the] heavy grade, and to assist in placing cars at facing point switches. Polluting soft coal smoke soon blew away. Later gasoline-electric motors were put on lighter passenger trains, and diesels on freights. The new post office covers the former station area. The last railroad facilities were removed in 1964-65.