

RECOLLECTIONS OF EARLY TIMES ON THE OHIO AND PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD

BY

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The following reminiscences of the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad were written in the year 1896 in compliance with a request made by one of the officials of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, but were not used at the time. Some sort of a history was designed but the scheme was not carried out so far as the writer knows.

My connection with the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad, which was the original eastern division of the Pittsburgh Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad, extended from 1852 to 1856. In the first part of that period the road was still being built and was opened only as far as Wooster, Ohio. Some time in 1853 the road was extended to Crestline, which was the western terminus. The station was located on the line of the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad, and was about four miles above Galion which was the eastern terminus of the railroad running to Indianapolis. I commenced my service in the fall or winter of 1852, with John Fleming, the general ticket agent, as second clerk in his office. Mr. Fleming was at the time about sixty years of age. He had been a business man and accountant, before beginning his connection with the railroad company, and was the author of a system of book-keeping used in the commercial schools of the day. My duties were to keep an account of the local tickets, which were distributed to the station agents monthly. These tickets were of the cardboard variety, no dates were stamped on them and there was no limit as to the time of using. The coupon tickets of today had not yet made their appearance. At Enon Valley we connected with stage lines to New Castle, Warren and Youngstown, and passengers by those

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lines received a card for the stage part of the trip. The chief clerk of the office was John A. Harbach who afterwards removed to Omaha, Nebraska, where he still resides; and he is said to be quite wealthy. Another clerk was employed in the office named N. P. Kerr, of whose subsequent history I am ignorant. Mr. Fleming, or the head clerk, were accustomed to settle with the other railroad companies monthly for the through ticket business, such as that over the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati Railroad, and the Sandusky, Mansfield and Newark Railroad whose headquarters were in Cleveland. The through ticket business was then quite small. Passengers for Cleveland, Chicago &c changed at Alliance to the Cleveland and Pittsburgh Railroad, which had been built sometime before, from Wellsville on the Ohio River to Cleveland.

A line of steamers formerly ran from Pittsburgh to Wellsville connecting with the Cleveland and Pittsburgh Railroad. One of these steamers was named the "Forest City." The general superintendent of the Cleveland and Pittsburgh Railroad was John Durand. The equipment of this road in engines and cars seemed to be of a much better quality than that of the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad. In those days the locomotive engines were named after prominent stations on the line, such as Alliance, Allegheny, Salem, Wellsville, &c., a much more interesting method than the present system of numbering the engines. When the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad was extended to Crestline in 1853 or 1854, there was quite a celebration there of the event, and many prominent citizens from all along the road attended. After this time passengers for Chicago were ticketed by way of Mansfield and Sandusky to Toledo, and thence to Chicago via the Michigan Southern Railroad.

For Cincinnati and St. Louis passengers were sent by way of Crestline. The trains of the Bellefontaine Railroad ran up on the Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati tracks four miles from Galion to Crestline, and St. Louis passengers were then changed to that line, as were also those for Indianapolis &c. Railroad traveling for long distances, was a formidable undertaking on account of the many changes of cars to be made, the condition of the tracks through imperfect ballasting &c., and the fact that most of the lines had only a single track. The writer remembers that during

the years 1857 and 1858 it took him from thirty six to forty hours to make the journey from St. Louis to Pittsburgh, the same distance being now accomplished in from twenty to twenty four hours. There were no sleeping cars in the early fifties to minister to the comfort of the traveling public. You just had to double up on the seats and make yourself as comfortable as possible, but the nights seemed very long, and the coming daylight was hailed with enthusiasm. The abominable habit at the eating houses, of fifteen or twenty minutes for refreshments was already the rule. You watched the movements of the conductor as he came in and went out of the dining room, and governed your consumption of the viands set before you by his haste or delay. One great menace to safety in traveling was the number of animals straying on the tracks. Frequently the engine would plow its way into a drove of sheep; in that case it was bad for the sheep, but when a horse or cow was struck, it was very frequently bad for the train.

Many terrible accidents occurred, caused mostly by the want of system in operating the roads, due to inexperience. The writer recalls a collision in which a Sunday school train was struck, on the Fourth of July, 1855, near Philadelphia, by which sixty or seventy children were killed. Then a drawbridge was left open at Norwalk, Connecticut, just as a train came along, causing it to plunge down forty feet into the water beneath. Also near Chicago, a Michigan Central train plowed through one of the Michigan Southern at a crossing. At Angora on the Lake Shore road near Dunkirk, a train ran off the track and into an embankment causing a fearful loss of life.

Perhaps something should be said about the general offices of the company which were located in a homely brick structure of eight rooms situated on Federal Street, Allegheny, the eastern terminus of the road. There was no railroad bridge across the Allegheny River until about 1858. The building in which most of the business of the railroad was done, stood just where the present Federal Street station of the Pittsburgh, Fort Wayne and Chicago Railway is situated. The Pennsylvania canal was located near the building, on the south side, and ran into the Allegheny River a short distance westerly. Considerable traffic was still carried on over the canal which was connected with Pittsburgh by an aqueduct at Eleventh Street. The

transportation of freight to the Pennsylvania Railroad was done by drays, vehicles which have long since disappeared from our streets. Passengers destined for the East were taken in omnibuses to Pittsburgh.

The rooms of the old station or "depot" as it was called, were occupied by the general superintendent, the master of transportation, the general ticket agent and the general freight agent, or freight auditor as he was called. The local freight office, baggage department &c., occupied other rooms. Long sheds extending along the tracks were used for freight. The chief engineer and general superintendent of the road was Solomon W. Roberts, a tall and distinguished looking man of about forty five years of age, who had more the appearance of a college professor than of a railroad superintendent.

The assistant superintendent or "master of transportation" was D. U. Courtney, an affable and energetic man who had been the conductor of the first passenger train on the road, while it ran from Allegheny to New Brighton. The auditor of the freight department (equivalent to general freight agent) was J. E. Jacks, who held that position for several years and resigned about 1854.

The late Frank M. Hutchinson was assistant road engineer and had his office in the building, but was mostly absent, attending to his duties out the railroad. The local ticket agent was George Parkin an elderly, stockily built individual who had formerly been publisher of the *Pittsburgh Gazette*. The local freight agent in 1852 when I entered on my duties, was J. A. Biavis. He was succeeded by Charles Rea and he again in 1856 by Samuel F. Barr who afterwards removed to Eastern Pennsylvania and became a member of Congress. The late Wm. P. Shinn was what was called "wood agent." His business was to buy and have stored in proper places, wood for the engines, for it must be borne in mind that wood was the only fuel used on the locomotives. Coal was afterwards introduced, but at the earlier date the trains were light and wood was plentiful and cheap. The long rows of cord wood at all important stations were prominent features in the landscape. Mr. Shinn was a talented young man and afterwards became general freight agent of the Pittsburgh Fort Wayne and Chicago Railroad, and for a time was superintendent of the eastern division of the road. This was after the Ohio and

Pennsylvania Railroad had become a part of the through line to Chicago, formed by its consolidation with other companies. He afterwards engaged in the manufacture of steel rails at Braddock, being one of the original owners of the Edgar Thompson Steel works. Mr. Shinn died a few years ago in Pittsburgh. The secretary of the Ohio and Pennsylvania Railroad Company up to the year 1856 was James Robinson (son of the president), his office being on Third Avenue near Market Street, across the river in Pittsburgh. The treasurer was General William Larimer, a banker on Fourth Avenue, and a man of great prominence in the business affairs of this vicinity. About 1854 he failed in business, and his failure entailed a large loss on the railroad company as well as on the multitude of depositors in his banking house.

Since that time the railroad company has required its treasurers to confine themselves exclusively to that service and has forbidden them to engage in other lines of business.

The directors up to the year 1856, as far as I can recollect, were Hugh S. Fleming, Frederick Lorenz and General William Robinson, Jr., of Pittsburgh, John Larwick of Wooster, C. T. Russell of Massillon, and Zadok Street of Salem. General Robinson was the president, and was a well preserved old gentleman of about seventy five years of age. He was somewhat irascible, but a man of strict integrity and of great influence in the community. The failure of General Larimer, the treasurer, caused a revolution in the directorate, and the following persons were elected directors about 1856, viz: George W. Cass president, George Darsie, James Marshall and James McAuley of Pittsburgh, C. T. Sherman of Mansfield, and C. T. Russell of Massillon. There may have been others but I cannot recall their names just now.

Mr. Darsie acted as treasurer for a time and the late T. D. Messler of New York was appointed general secretary and auditor. Mr. Roberts, the superintendent having resigned was succeeded by J. H. Moon of Chicago, an experienced railroad man. Of the history of the railroad after 1856 I know very little, as I left the service of the company in the fall of that year, but believe the company had its share of the troubles of 1857 and 1858. The writer remembers inquiring about the price of the stock of the Ohio and Pennsylvania railroad company in the year 1857 and found

that it was without any value, being informed that it was not worth a dollar a share.

During the period from 1853 to 1856, the railroad business being in the experimental stage, many mistakes were made and much energy misdirected, but the early workers in the development of the railroad enterprises deserve a meed of praise from their successors.

As I review this paper again (1903) the old directors and officials have, I think, all passed away; only a few of the old employees still linger on the "shores of time." Of these I might mention Charles Jenkins, the veteran baggage agent at the Union Station, John Kilroy, general passenger agent at that place, and Andrew Morrow, a conductor. Of the others there have lately died J. P. Farley, J. A. Biavis, Samuel McCleary (formerly conductor of the New Brighton accommodation), Abner C. Ela, formerly of the mail train running to Crestline, and Richard Wiggins, formerly conductor of the express to the same place. "Peace to their ashes".

In conclusion the writer would say that though these reminiscences may not be of value in a historic sense, yet it has been a pleasure to recall the men and affairs of the "vanished years".