

The School Train by Elias F. Messner

Some time in the mid 1920's the school train changed its course and quit coming into the Redridge Depot. Therefore the students had to catch the high school train at the Stanwood Depot about a mile or so through the woods towards Freda.

The Stanwood depot was just a shed with three sides (picture shows four walls), a roof, benches around the wall inside and the whole front was open. In winter snow blew in and often it was up to 3 feet deep. I was glad we did not have to wait long for the train to return from picking up the kids in Freda.

The fall of 1929 I remember so well was when Bernard Morin, Emma Raisanen, Andrew Brinkman and myself were going to school. The train would blow its whistle at the Redridge Junction on its way to Freda. That meant we would have to leave our houses and walk to Stanwood Depot to catch the train on its way back to take us to Painesdale High School. We three boys lived close together on the same street in Redridge. At the bottom of our street we were joined by Emma Raisanen and a tame crow belonging to the Lieppas; also Morin's dog "Don" and another dog belonging to someone living near the Redridge School. That crow would go with us all the way to the depot and drive those dogs crazy. It would fly and land on a low branch of a tree just ahead of us with the dogs in hot pursuit. When we caught up and went a little past, the crow would take off, pass us, and land on a low branch just ahead again. It kept this up until we arrived at the depot where it would sit on the roof until we got on the train and then it would return to Redridge.

The train picked up high school students at Freda; then backed up and picked up the students at Beacon Hill. It would continue to back up a little way out of Beacon Hill where there was a "Y". The train could turn around and go forward towards Painesdale High School. It passed through the back end of the Hiltunen farm, stopped to pick up Ruth and Evelyn Hiltunen; then forward to pick us up at Stanwood Depot.

From there it proceeded forward and picked up a student at Salmon Trout; then on to Obenhoff where it picked up several students; then on to Mill Mine Junction where the train uncoupled our car, leaving us on a side track and backed down to Atlantic where it picked up a coach of Atlantic students and then came back to pick us up and proceed to South Range where students from Baltic and South Range boarded the train.

The train passed through Trimountain not picking up any students. They had to walk to school.

After arriving at Painesdale Depot we walked up the big hill to school where first class was already in session. Train students were allowed to miss first period as it was never certain when we would arrive. The other seven periods we were kept very busy and didn't have any time in assembly where we could do our home work.

When school was dismissed at 4 P.M. we marched out in order from the assembly room to the tune of someone playing the piano on the stage. We were in perfect order.. no running or clowning around!! We picked up our outer garments and lunch boxes and went down the hill to catch the train waiting for us. The train was hooked up to about 30 to 35 rock cars filled with copper ore for the stamp mills on the lake shore.

After the South Range and Baltic students were discharged we were parked at Mill Mine Junction while the train took the coach with the Atlantic students down to Atlantic and then returned to take us to the lake shore towns.

On the homebound train we would commence to do our home work and believe me, our teachers, Mrs. Rhodes and the Nancarrow sisters, Cora Jeffers and Mr. Stiemli, really dished out plenty for us.

In winter we gathered on each end of the coach where there was a coal stove and bucket of coal so that we could keep warm. We also saved some of our lunch so we could have a bite to eat on the trip home as we never knew when we would get there (sometimes very late) as the train seemed to crawl.

In the winter the Baltic Mining Company put up a rope along the roadway from the Woodsman Hall all the way to the depot so that if it was stormy we could find our ways home.

At last we were home in time to go to bed and prepare for another day.