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(Information Related by William Brinkman, from Kevin Musser)

Unique Trains on the Copper Range Railroad

School Trains

In 1908, Adams Township high school students were moved to Painesdale from Atlantic Mine under the supervision of Superintendent Fred A. Jeffers and his wife, Cora Jeffers. In 1909, the Copper Range Railroad, at the request of Stanton Township, began a schedule of trains to carry Stanton Township high school students to Painesdale. This special school train was the first and only one in the nation and carried about three hundred children.

The train left Houghton at six o'clock in the morning, dropped an empty coach off at Atlantic Mine, and then at Mill Mine Junction it turned west and traveled twenty miles to Freda from the first pickup of students from Beacon Hill, Edgemere, Stanwood (Redridge), Salmon Trout, and Obenhoff, and went back to Mill Mine Junction. There the locomotive would back track to Atlantic Mine and hook up with the coach that had been left there, now filled up with Atlantic Mine students. Then the train would head east with some four or five coaches and pick up students in South Range and Tri-Mountain, and it would arrive at Painesdale at 8:30 in the morning with about three hundred children. The high school at that time had an enrollment of over four hundred children.

In the evening, the trip would be reversed. This train, according to the Associated Press, was the only one of its kind in America and ran even through the severest winter weather. The last school train to Stanton Township was in June 1941. The last school train for Adams Township was in June 1944. Since then, Stanton Township high school students are bused to Houghton, and Adams Township students are bused to Painesdale.

Ferris Dennis of Atlantic is what might be known as a railroad "fanatic". He's dedicated to the railroads of the nation and he's ridden on so many of them that seldom does he spot box car initials that are strange. What makes him interesting at the present time is that he's establishing the Ferris Dennis Railroad of 30 feet in the Atlantic area. The only mobile equipment that he will have will be a Copper Range caboose, No. 05. Not long back the CRRR locomotive switched the end car onto the old Flour Mill spur at Atlantic and there it was resting when these words were written. The car, substantial in its construction, began to be used by the Copper Range in 1913. It came from the Pittsburgh Shawmut and Northern Railroad and was built by the Russell Snowplow Co. Since its purchase it has been used all the way from McKeever to Gay and from Senter to Freda. Dennis says his line will be the shortest in the United States at 30 to 40 feet in length. The wheels will be retained on the mobile unit and it is noted that there are eight of these. When placed on the Flour Mill spur Dennis well realized that in the former days of Atlantic this is where the town had a flour mill. In the days between 1900 and 1906 Copper Range got a big business life out of Atlantic which operated until the latter year when the mines ceased to function. Later came the Stratton Lumber Co. which also gave the line a big haulage boost. On the very spur on which the 'boose now is perched the former Adams

Township Schools student train also stopped. There it waited for pupils while either rock haulage or Freda caterance to pupils from Stanton Township was indulged in. Ferris will tell one that his wife, the former Miss Ester Heikkinen, used to ride the CRRR school train. So did her mother, the former Miss Marie Lehti who used to be a teacher on the range. The No. 05 is in excellent condition. Its windows are unaffected by the long period of service it went through and its doors, fore and aft, are near perfect. There are two ladders leading to the cupola and these are also in A-No. 1 state of preservation. When Mr. and Mrs. Dennis have completed moving their essence of railroading three blocks to their homesite they will drive a "golden" spike to commemorate the activity they have engaged in. As for the purpose of the line and cabooses, Dennis says it is primarily for the grandchildren. [Daily Mining Gazette Green Sheet Article 1972]

Title: Railroad Cars
Photographer: Gagnon of Gazette
Date: 1972
Description: Car No. 05 on the preliminary tracks to the real Ferris Dennis Railroad rails in Atlantic Mine. Because of the vast traveling via rail the Dennis duo well could tabulate information for Mrs. Dennis' travelogue, "Life on the old Atlantic Railroad, Circa 1872-1906". [Image of caboose No. 5 sitting on the tracks, looking very much abandoned.]