

HIGH-LIGHTS OF THE LAWDALE RAILWAY AND INDUSTRIAL COMPANY

By—Jim Osborne

(The following article was published in a recent issue of the Shelby Daily Star. Thinking that some of you boys might enjoy it also, we are re-printing it in your own little paper.)

A little railroad with a big official name, almost as long as its ten miles of twisting, rolling narrow gauge track, has chugged to a halt after 43 consecutive years of faithful service and the final chapter is written on the Lawndale Railway and Industrial Company. Trucks have displaced steam for locomotive transport in the inexorable march of progress.

In the early days of the growth of Cleveland Mill and Power Company, the late MAJOR H.F. SCHENCK foresaw the need of a more efficient method of transporting finished products of his mill and also the in-coming supplies, between Lawndale and Shelby, which were being hauled by way of wagon-train at that time. As a result of his wish for more efficient and faster service, the railroad came into being in the latter part of 1899.

WHEN ORGANIZING THE railway company, there developed considerable discussion, "fer and ag'in" the use of the standard tract. But MAJOR SCHENCK settled the question, once and for all, by using one of his favorite expressions to emphasize his decision, "By doggies, I don't want my freight cars traveling all over the country"; hence, the narrow gauge road, believed to be the last of its kind, in this section of the country, started out with two very small engines, known as the ONE and TWO SPOT. They were similar in size to any small logging engines. There were five or six boxcars, four "flat" cars, with removable sides, that could be used for hauling coal, bricks, heavy timber, machinery, etc. It was a familiar and amusing sight to see this train, stop anywhere along the line, at a convenient cordwood pile, for refueling.

In 1903, the road, was converted from a private line to a public carrier adding two passenger cars and three "summer coaches," the latter, being "fresh-air" passenger cars, with open sides, having all the advantages of "Amos n' Andy's taxi-cab"—plus an occasional cinder in your eye. Many young courtin' couples preferred this type of car, hoping that the cinders would be plentiful, thus providing them the extreme pleasure of removing the common offender, from their adored one's eye, at close quarters. Soon, due to both passenger and freight revenue, being heavy, it became necessary to establish a strict schedule—leaving Lawndale at 9:00 A.M. arriving in Shelby at 10:00 A.M.—then leaving Shelby at 2:00 P.M. and arriving at Lawndale at 3:00 p.m.—making two station stops, between the two terminals, Double Shoals and Metcalf.

THIS TRAIN WAS MAJOR SCHENCK'S "pride n' joy," and during his lifetime, the engineer had strict orders to blow the whistle when within a mile of the Lawndale station to give the MAJOR ample time to gather his hat and walking cane in order that he might meet the train, rain or shine. One day, he failed to hear the "station-blow" and missed meeting the train, which irked him to such an extent that he gave prompt orders at the machine shop to make him a whistle, big enough and loud enough that it could be heard for miles around. Needless to say, he never was known to miss the train, after that.

HAIG METCALF is the one and only employee that served during the entire history of the road, having supervised the laying of the original track; since its completion, he had charge of all transferring of freight and the up-keep of the road. In any emergency he was complete master of the situation—he tolerated no advice from either his section crew or the train employees—and curious bystanders were given advance notice that he had no time to answer "fool questions."

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