

(More of:) A RAILROAD COMES TO THE BRIGHTON AREA

(Altho' "A Railroad Comes to the Brighton Area" was concluded in the August issue, related items of interest have surfaced which this writer believes will be of interest.)

The depot was, of course, the center of attention when the passenger trains stopped. Just to be able to see people and to be seen was a new and enjoyable experience. To top it off there was also the phenomenon of the tapping of the telegraph key relaying messages.

July 20, 1907 finds an excursion train carrying railroad employees and their families from towns and cities west of Brighton on an outing to Detroit. A west bound freight was on the same track. At Salem, Washtenaw County, the two trains met head on. Almost every one sustained an injury and 33 were killed. The high casualty list can be attributed to the wood, open vestibule type passenger coaches.

East bound trains soon filled the side tracks in Brighton as doctors, nurses, druggists, dentists, or anyone qualified to aid the injured were rushed to the scene. Women of Brighton donated bed sheets to be used as bandages. All afternoon and well into the night coaches filled with injured passengers passed through on the way to hospitals in Lansing. (Only large cities had hospitals.) Ambulances, paramedics and all the other emergency services now available were unknown at the time.

During that time women and children wore white clothing for a summer holiday. These now presented a gruesome sight, soiled and bloodstained. The white bandages, flaunting their crimson source, added to the grisly scene. And then, as now, an accident provoked a morbid curiosity in many. We all troop to the 'station' to see.

However about three weeks later that summer a seven coach train brought people with ties to the Brighton area to a homecoming celebration on August 7, 1907. They were properly welcomed at the depot by the Brighton Band and horses and buggies lined the streets to receive the visitors for transport to relatives' and friends' homes.

The residents of Brighton Village were almost outnumbered by the visitors. The week long celebration included parades, picnics and prayers, concerts, ball games and horseshoe pitching. It was a happy time of reminiscence.

Yes, the train still travels through Brighton. However the wail of the steam engine has been replaced by the horn of the diesel. Almost everything the rail road brought is gone: the depot, water tank, stockyards, ice houses, hoboes, steam engines, coal yards, grain elevators, the clicking telegraph key and the long lines of farm wagons bringing grain, beans, potatoes, apples, wool and livestock to be shipped to distant markets. However the Western House is still there and perhaps, if you don't look too closely to the north as you're crossing the tracks, you'll spot the ghosts of another day and another time in the Brighton area. (Marieanna Bair from "Lookin' Back" by Bill Pless.)

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