



RAILROAD RECOLLECTIONS

By Roy C. Long

REMEMBERING CARL GARTEN GWINN AND THE GWINN FAMILY RAILROADERS:

I first met Carl Garten Gwinn when I came to Hinton as a telegraph operator in July 1940. I was a neighbor living in the home of Frank and Stella Ripley at 106 Main St. Carl lived across the street at 101 Main St. with his wife, Mary, two sons, Nelson and Charles, and daughter, Jannelle. Later, early 1941, I had a room in the Gwinn residence in exchange for teaching their son, Charles, to be a telegraph operator.

Carl Gwinn went to work for the C&O as a track laborer, dubbed Gandy Dancer, about 1914. He and a neighbor, Silas Kincaid, strung a wire between their homes, made storage batteries from copper, lead and copper sulfate and, through practice, taught each other to telegraph. The Morse Code came easy with Carl and he was employed at Hinton as a telegraph operator Apr. 6, 1916. Seven years later Mr. Kincaid began work as a telegraph operator for the C&O. Carl was promoted to train dispatcher Mar. 23, 1927 doing relief work at Hinton, Raleigh and Clifton Forge, VA.

Sometime during the early Spring of 1937 Carl was working third trick train dispatcher at Clifton Forge. Although I didn't know Carl at the time, I became involved with the movement of passenger train No. 3 one morning at Moss Run, VA. I was a student operator at Moss Run, 16 years of age, and had a lot to learn about railroading and the telegraph, but I knew everything there was to know about the physical plant, i.e., the switches, locks and signals at OX Cabin.

A west bound freight of empty coal cars was preceding No. 3 up the east slope of Allegheny Mt. It became delayed and failed to clear at Allegheny making it necessary for Mr. Gwinn to divert No. 3 to the east track between OX Cabin and

During his overseas service he was kept abreast of news at home every Fri. from his family at McKendree. Included in the letters were articles titled "Friday Story Teller," thought to be edited by his brother, Leonard Cyrus Gwinn. In a letter dated Mar. 21, 1919, was the following "Friday Story Teller" article of railroad interest:

"Local News: All McKendree was surprised last Mon. morning to hear of a big wreck on the switch below Thayer. A train going west pulled by engineer John Bess was going too fast and a car of pig iron left the track wrecking some of the train. There was, in all, fourteen cars on the ground and they stood across the track packed together so tight they looked like sardines in a can. One of the cars of iron went through a car of victrolas and almost completely destroyed them. They were burned when they began to clear away the wreck. Among the other cars was one of cigarettes, one of blankets, and other valuable cars of goods. There were eight cars of the iron. Guards were stationed around the wreck to guard the goods while the wreck was being cleared up. Four of the victrolas were thrown into the river from the track and were seen floating away.

"Four work trains came to the wreck and for twelve hours they worked at clearing the track, while the section men worked for three days to repair the damaged track. It was caused by speed and by one set of trucks giving away under the heavy car of iron."

My appreciation is extended to Nelson Gwinn, of Grand Rapids, Mich., for sharing a copy of the above "Friday Story Teller" with me.

Several members of the Gwinn family, in addition to Carl, for many years were valuable employees of the C&O Railway Company. During the '40s Carl was assigned first trick train dispatcher at Raleigh. He transferred to Hinton on a swing position early '50s and was assigned

Creek for the Nicholas, Fayette and Greenbrier Railroad. From 1926 until 1930 he was agent at Springdale. He then transferred to Rainelle, W. VA., and promoted to train dispatcher. In 1955 he was promoted to Chief Train Dispatcher, at Rinelle, which job he held until retirement. Russell's son, Jim Gwinn, was also employed at Rainelle, WA., as a telegraph operator for the NF&G and retired as Train Master at Rainelle.

Carl's brother, Leonard Cyrus Gwinn, was employed at Hinton as telegraph operator Sept. 11, 1925, and promoted to train dispatcher May 24, 1938. Leonard was active in the American Train Dispatchers' Association as Vice General Chairman of the System Committee. Leonard died in 1950 following lung surgery. Leonard's son, Marshall Gwinn, was employed at Hinton as a telegraph operator July 12, 1943 and retired as a telegraph operator.

After an extended illness Carl was taken in death in the C & O Hospital (Emmett Memorial) at Clifton Forge, VA., 10:30 A. M., March 16, 1965. His wife, Mary, was taken in death at the home of her daughter, Jannelle in Newark, Del., June 14, 1990. Both were laid to rest in Greenbrier Memorial Park, Hinton.

My appreciation is also extended to Leonard Gwinn's daughter, Mrs. Leona Brown, of Daniels, W. VA., who aided me with information from her book, "The Gwinns of Round Bottom."

School Reunion Set

I am pleased to announce that we had a good turn out at the reunion of the Suck Creek School, Ellison Ridge, Summers County, last year which will be held again on Aug. 9th. starting about 9:00 A. M. till late afternoon. Bring your lunch or covered dish and plan to stay all day, there will be rest rooms available.

I am hoping that more will attend

Allegheny around the freight. No. 3 was pulling extra cars and powered with a small engine. The time was 5:30 A. M., and there was a heavy frost on the rails causing No. 3 to stall in the crossover. In the meantime, the freight cleared in the side track at Allegheny. No 3 backed off the crossover but telegraph operator, Everett Shanklin, could not line the switches to normal position so a signal could be given for No. 3 to take its normal route. My father got me out of bed and instructed me to go see why No. 3 was being delayed. When I arrived at the telegraph office I found Mr. Shanklin had failed to restore the signal lever to normal position before No. 3 backed off the track circuit. This necessitated running down a four minute "screw release" but Mr. Shanklin was running down the wrong one. As soon as the correct screw release was run down, all switches were restored to normal position and No. 3 departed after being delayed about 40 minutes.

Born in Fayette County, Nov. 24, 1894, Carl grew up with his siblings in their home at "Round Bottom" on the south side of New River at McKendree, WA. His wife was the former Miss Mary V. Johnson of Nicholas Co. whom he met while she was a teacher in the school house across the tracks from McKendree depot. PFC Carl Gwinn enlisted in the army May 25, 1918 and served with Co. B, 108 Field Signal Corp. in France and Luxembourg during WWI. He participated in the battles of Verdun and the Aragon Forest, and received a medal for his participation in the battle of Verdun.

second trick Assistant Chief Train Dispatcher at Hinton in 1953 following the explosion of locomotive 1642 at CW Cabin. He retired Nov. 30, 1959 after 43 years, 7 months 24 days of railroad service. His son, Nelson, was employed at Hinton as a telegraph operator Oct. 16, 1938 and retired as Train Master. Carl's other son, Charles, was employed at Hinton as a telegraph operator Dec. 17, 1941 and soon afterward transferred to another department with C&O. Carl's brother, Russell B. Gwinn, began his railroad career as a yard clerk for the C & O. In 1923 he became a billing clerk at Meadow

from the other one room schools of the area and anyone else that cares to come would certainly be welcome.

No alcoholic beverages please.

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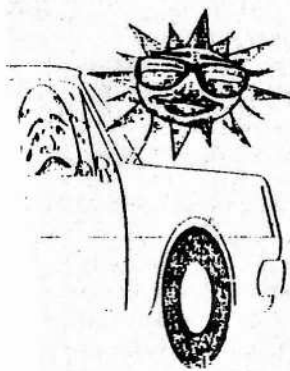
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