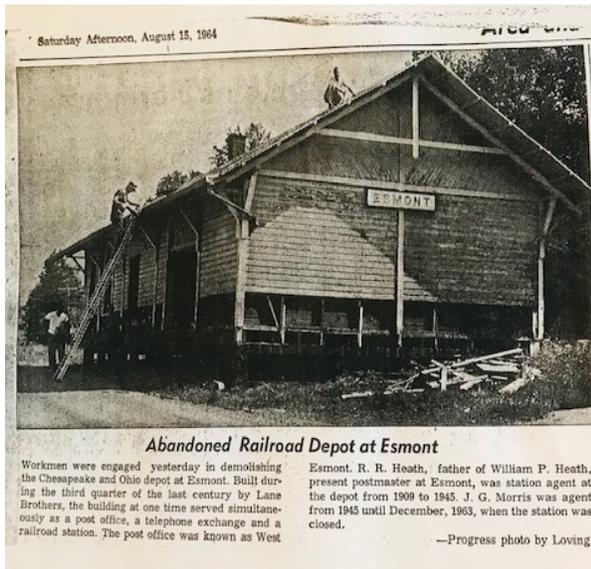


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Esmont Landmark Being Torn Down

By Royce Loving, Daily Progress Staff Reporter



Another Albemarle County landmark passes. This time it is the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad station at Esmont, abandoned in December 1963.

The Lane brothers of Esmont, railroad contractors who double-tracked the Southern Railway from Washington to Atlanta, built the railroad from Rockfish to in Nelson County to Warren on the James River. Although the definite date of construction could not be learned, it is thought the branch-line road was built before 1875.

It is said to have been sold to the C&O by the Lanes about the turn of the century for \$80,000. Esmont was one of the principal stations on the road.

The disastrous flood of the Rockfish River in 1944 caused the line to be abandoned between Schuyler and Rockfish. Bridges and sections of track washed out were not replaced. The road at one time was connected with the C & O at Warren.

The six-mile length of road from Esmont to Warren is said to have been at one time the best paying section of the C & O, as it hauled most of the soapstone from the quarries and mills at Schuyler.

Prior to 1904, S. E. Payne, who died several years ago at an advanced age, was agent at Esmont. In 1904 C.C. Steed, who celebrated his 90th birthday at his home, "Hillcrest," in Esmont, Tuesday was agent from 1904 to about 1907. Steed said he began his railroad career in his teens by studying telegraphy with a friend at the Old Trinity station. He said he attended the high school department of Trinity College in the mornings and studies telegraphy in the afternoons.

His first job as a railroad telegrapher was with the Southern Railway at Lexington, N.C. Later he was telegrapher at Fall Creek, near Danville, at the time of the widely publicized wreck of "Old 97," but said he did not visit the scene of the wreck.

From Danville Steed was transferred to North Garden and from there to Esmont in 1904. In 1907 he opened in Esmont a store which he conducted for 56 years – 1907 to 1963. He said he had worked two or three years in a store at Liberty, S. C.

On April 20, 1904, Steed married the former Miss Hattie Bailey of Charlottesville. Mrs. Steed said the Rev. George Petrie, for 55 years pastor of the First Presbyterian Church in Charlottesville performed the ceremony. They had five children. Bailey, the eldest, is now deceased. The others are Mrs. L. S. Clark of Palo Alto, Cal.; Mrs. George S. Clark of Alexandria; Franklin Steed of Richmond; and James R. Steed of Charlottesville. There are five grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Steed said his family originated in Kent County, England. The Steeds celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary on April 20 this year.

Before the infirmities of age overtook him, Steed said his favorite hobby was hunting. Mrs. Steed's hobby is flower gardening.

Thomas Coleman of Scottsville, who purchased the station and is having it torn down, said he will use the materials in other construction.