

Waynesboro News-Virginian

Monday, February 6, 1950

N & A Makes Final Passenger Trip

Little Traffic Closes 15-Mile, 2-County Line By Pat Velenovsky - News-Virginian Staff Writer

The Nelson and Albemarle Railway closed down its passenger service Saturday afternoon, but the train crew won't be lonesome because of the lack of passengers.

"We aren't used to having many", Conductor H.L. Drumheller pointed out. And no passengers is really the rule rather than the exception on the line which travels between Schuyler in Nelson County and Warren in Albemarle.

But Saturday was the exception. Members of the Old Dominion Railway Club, new men, photographers and residents of the area crowded the coach for the final trip.

One of Shortest

Completed in 1905 the N&A is one of the shortest railroads in Virginia, and one of the most famous. We were looking for history so Conductor Drumheller took the time out after collecting tickets to supply the information.

Pushing his cap back on his head he pointed out that the line once ran separate freight and passenger trains. "Until Aug. 28, 1947 we ran a train over to Rockfish. That was originally an electric line."

Number 9, which was pulling the train, and Number 10, he informed us, appeared in the picture "Virginia." "And that fellow Beebe, Lucius* I think his name was, came through here while he was writing a book of shortlines railroads."

Mr. Beebe according to Conductor Drumheller, said that the N&A is one of the few lines in the U.S. stuck using the old saddle-tank locomotive.

The side-saddle tank, in case you've never seen one, looks exactly like its name. The water tank, usually in the tender, is slung across the boiler, and the coal is carried in the end of the locomotive.

Following Conductor Drumheller and Brakeman Critzer through the coach we learned other things of interest. In addition to being one of the shortest lines in existence, 15 miles from Schuyler to Warren, it also has an enviable accident record.

One Accident

There has been only one serious accident since the line began operation. Soon after the road began running, a coach turned over near Esmont and one passenger was killed. "He was an employee of the road, but he wasn't working that day."

Never has snow stopped a single train, but there was a 60-day period in 1944 when no trains ran because of washouts.

Engineer J.C. Mayo pulled Number 9 out of Schuyler at 11 a.m. and headed up the three percent grade for Esmont running between 12 and 20 miles per hour.

Because of grade freight cars are divided into two groups. "We've already been to Esmont once today with some cars", said Mr. Drumheller.

The round-trip from Schuyler to Warren and back is made once a day, so no light is needed in the coach which the line borrows from the Chesapeake and Ohio. But just in case any should be needed there is one kerosene lantern on the coach wall.

Heat is supplied by a pot-bellied stove bolted to the floor. This is fed by coal from a built-in bin.

Bring Lunch

Arriving at Esmont the engine dropped its passenger coach and took several cars to the nearby soapstone quarry. The passengers who brought lunch took the opportunity to eat, while others scoured the grocery stores for loaves of bread, sliced meat, and other kinds of food.

Not to be outdone in courtesy by the other members of the crew, Engineer Mayo offered to share his lunch with some of his hungry passengers.

At 12:55 the N&A's last passenger train headed for Warren and a connection with the C&O.

Just about one-half hour north of Boiling Spring two deer jumped from over and raced ahead of the engine for a short time before heading into the woods.

While photographers scrambled for shots Number 9 dropped cars, picked up others, took on water, and broke an air hose connection. This took about ten minutes to fix, and everything was set for the trip back.

No train trip would be complete without the passengers running to catch the train, and three supplied the final touch by having to sprint down the track to catch Number 9 as she pulled out.

Shaking his head sadly, but grinning all the while Brakeman Critzer pulled the emergency cord to stop the train. Puffing mightily the three were pulled aboard. "We thought you were going to wait for the C&O", panted one. "It was late", stated Mr. Critzer as he gave the signal for the interrupted trip to begin again.

The trip back to Schuyler was smooth and uneventful except for the occasional flash of a flash bulb.

Big Haul

Conductor Drumheller sat talking to Brakeman Critzer while counting his tickets and fare. "Took in \$17.71 today", he said. "More than we took in during the entire month sometimes. Fifty-six passengers today. Some weeks we didn't even have one."

Number 9 pulled into the station and the passengers got off. "It's been nice having you fellows riding with us", Brakeman Critzer remarked. "Don't wait until we stop something again before you come back." "Sure hate to see her go", said Fireman A.L. Drumheller.

Dropping the cars Engineer Mayo backed Number 9 into the roundhouse. The last passenger trip of the Nelson and Albemarle Railway was over.

*Lucius Beebe

Intro by Peggy Denby: Seeing the name "Lucius Beebe" in the article, we wondered who he was. In fact, he was quite something in the Railroad world, and in many other worlds, as you will read below.

Bon vivant, railroad historian, photographer, pioneering food critic, chronicler of New York's café society, and noted newspaperman, Lucius Beebe (1902–1966) was an American original. In 1938, with the publication of *High Iron: A Book of Trains*, he transformed the world of railroad-subject photography forever by inventing the railroad picture book genre. In 1940, he met creative and life partner Charles Clegg (1916–1979), also a talented photographer. Beebe and Clegg produced an outstanding and diverse portfolio of mid-twentieth century railroad-subject photographs. Beebe, sometimes with Clegg, also authored about forty books, including many focused-on railroads and railroading.

The *Railroad Photography of Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg* brings their incredible story and best photographic work together. Providing an extensive biographic introduction to Beebe and Clegg, author Tony Reevy presents a multi-faceted view of the railroad industry that will appeal to rail enthusiasts as well as those interested in American food culture, the history of New York City, and LGBT studies. The *Railroad Photography of Lucius Beebe and Charles Clegg* is an indispensable history to the work of two men who forever changed the way we see and experience American railroads.

To learn more about Lucius Beebe, copy and paste this URL into your search browser:
<https://www.diffordsguide.com/people/51732/celebrity-drinker/lucius-beebe>

Photos



Number 9 moves toward a siding at Warren to drop cars and pick up others. The combination passenger-mail-express car is shown in the foreground. (News-Virginian Staff Photo)



"Lots of passengers today." Conductor H.L. Drumheller tells brakeman J.P. Critzer. They are standing in the mail-express section of the passenger coach. (News-Virginian Staff Photo)



Pot-bellied stove warms Carl Holt and F.L. Dean, passengers from Esmont, as they discuss former trips on the N&A. (News-Virginian Staff Photo)



Engineer J.C. Mayo (top) as Mrs. William Heath, acting Esmont Postmistress, and Fireman A.L. Drumheller talk of the days when Mrs. Heath's father-in-law was a depot agent on the line. (News-Virginian Staff Photo)