

Railroad Days in Scottsville

The train rumbles through Scottsville several times a day. For a moment, conversations are suspended on the patio of the Tavern, but mostly we barely notice. The train hauls coal from West Virginia and returns with empty cars going west. But it has little to do with us.

The arrival of the train was once a big event, bringing crowds to the platform to wave good-bye to parting friends and to see who was getting off in Scottsville. It was frequently late, and we hear that the Londeree brothers at one time entertained the waiting crowd with singing in close harmony.

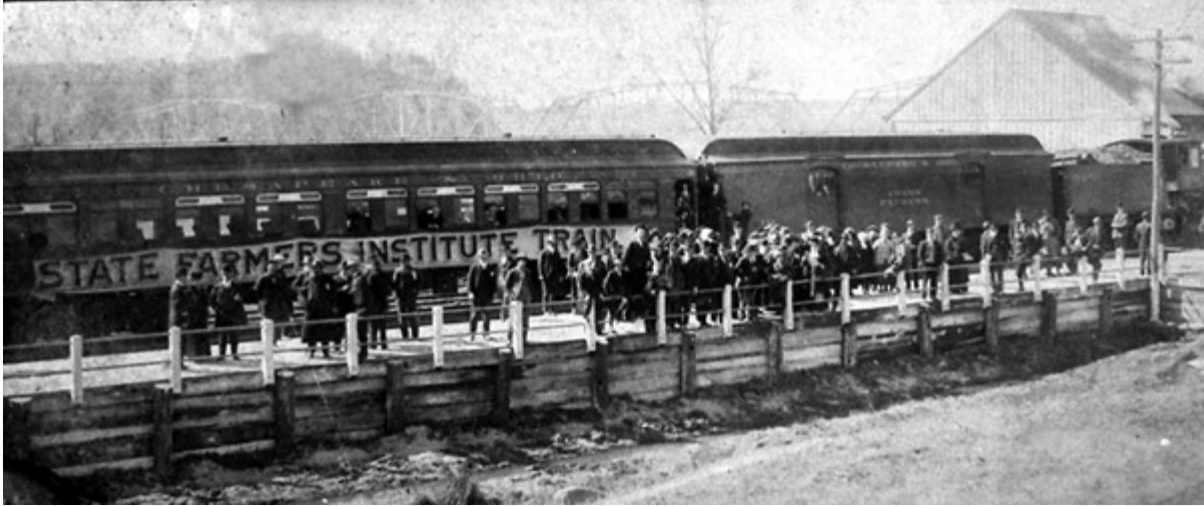


Train-watching at Scottsville Depot, ca 1914. A purely Scottsville amusement in the early 1900's was watching the train go by. As shown here, it was common to see a good-sized group of townsfolk strolling down to the depot with Postmaster Gault to meet the Number 11 from Richmond and pick up the day's mail.

William Burgess Collection

The train had replaced the fabled canal in the 1880's. The then-called Richmond & Allegheny Railroad had bought the canal right of way and laid its rails on the old towpath. By 1890 the newly constituted Chesapeake and Ohio ran four passenger trains a day as well as freight trains that roared into town, stopping at the old depot. The trains brought not only passengers but also the mail. Among those waiting on the platform was Sam Gault, Scottsville's postmaster for nearly forty years. He was succeeded by Ashby Mayo in 1939. After the train left, he took the mail up to the old Post Office on Main Street and handed it out. "He could have let people wait till the next day. But he didn't. He was that kind of man," wrote John Randolph Phillips in *Town and the River*. During World War II Shirley Dorrier remembered eagerly

awaiting a letter from her husband Chick who was serving in the Navy in the Pacific Theatre. It was both a relief and a joy to hear the call, "A letter for you, Mrs. Dorrier!"



The passenger train from Richmond made 4 trips daily to Scottsville in 1915; each trip took three hours. This photo taken by W.E. Burgess at the C&O Depot in Scottsville, shows the State Farmers Institute Train, which Virginia Polytechnical Institute outfitted with agricultural displays in the coaches. At each stop, local farmers boarded this train to learn about the latest new seeds and farm techniques.

William Burgess Collection

Number 9, one of the passenger trains through Scottsville, was a real train with a dining car. Its last run was in October of 1957. Only a few train fanciers, C.R. Dorrier and F.E. Paulett, were on hand to witness its final stop. It was, of course a little late.

Thanks to Ruth Klippstein for her research and Connie Geary for the photos.

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