**Railroads in Kentucky Resource Guide**

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**Introduction**

This resource guide is designed to provide you with tools to help people engage with the past and connect with others. There are images to share with your clients, clip art that can be copied and colored or used for another purpose, oral history interviews with Kentuckians that can be played and shared, information about railroad museums in Kentucky, and articles about railroads and trains in Kentucky.

**Images**

-Encourage your audience members to look through the images included in the kit and to share any memories they have about trains, either riding on them, working on them, or seeing them.

Some conversation prompts can include:

* What do you want to say about what is going in this picture?
* What do you think is happening in this picture?
* Did you ever ride on a train? What was that experience like?
* Was there a train station in or near the town where you lived? Did you ever hear the train whistle? Tell me what it was like to have train tracks or a train station near you and/or your town.
* What do you think about when you hear a train whistle?
* Were you or your family ever affected by the railroad going through your town?

-Encourage the audience members to talk about if they wore special clothes for a train trip, and if so, what did they wear? What kinds of preparations did they make to travel by train?

Please note, The Louisville and Nashville Railroad menu image is provided courtesy of The New York Public Library.

Rare Book Division, The New York Public Library. "DINNER [held by] LOUISVILLE & NASHVILLE RAILROAD - THE PULLMANA CO. [at] EN ROUTE (RR)" The New York Public Library Digital Collections. 1901. Retrieved from: https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47db-6ce3-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99

**Possible keywords or events to discuss**

Put the following words, phrases, and/or the following positions on cards and have your audience share what comes to mind when they see that word.

-Train

-Railroad

-Railroad tracks

-Choo choos

-Train whistle

-Train ticket/fare

-Railroad menu

-Junction City Railroad Days

-1946 railroad strike

-Santa Train or Santa Special

**Positions held on a train** (information gathered from O\* Net; https://www.onetonline.org/find/quick?s=railroad)

Engineer, loader, baggage handler, etc.

Transit and Railroad Police

Railroad Brake, Signal, and Switch Operators and Locomotive Firers

Railroad Conductors and Yardmasters

Rail-Track Laying and Maintenance Equipment Operators

Rail Yard Engineers, Dinkey Operators, and Hostlers

Locomotive Engineers

Rail Car Repairers

Civil Engineers

Chief Executives

Transportation, Storage, and Distribution Managers

Construction Managers

Purchasing Agents, Except Wholesale, Retail, and Farm Products

Accountants and Auditors

Surveyors

First-Line Supervisors of Food Preparation and Serving Workers

Cooks, Restaurant Bright Outlook

Baggage Porters and Bellhops Bright Outlook

Sales Representatives, Wholesale and Manufacturing, Technical and Scientific Products

Reservation and Transportation Ticket Agents and Travel Clerks

Production, Planning, and Expediting Clerks

**Types of rail cars**

-Share types of rail cars with your group.

The following information was retrieved from: "Railroad." *Britannica Academic*, Encyclopædia Britannica, 4 Sep. 2020. [academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/railroad/110739](https://academic.eb.com/levels/collegiate/article/railroad/110739). Accessed 4 Jun. 2021.

-Freight cars (“four basic types: the semi-walled open car, the fully covered boxcar, the flatcar, and the tank car.”

-“The first passenger cars were simply road coaches with flanged wheels. Almost from the beginning, railroads in the United States began to use longer, eight-wheel cars riding on two four-wheel trucks.”

**Some of the train lines that were in Kentucky:**

-Lexington and Ohio (chartered in 1830)

-Barren River Railroad (1836)

-Louisville and Nashville (1850s)

-Covington and Lexington (1849)

-Lexington and Danville (1850)

-Mobile and Ohio (1861) - There was a stop in Columbus, KY.

-Kentucky Union from Jackson to Lexington

-Cincinnati Southern

-Kentucky Central Railway

**Books**

*The L&N Railroad In Kentucky As Seen through Postcards* by

Charles Bogart (2018)

The Louisville & Nashville Railroad (L&N) was incorporated in 1850 to build a rail line from Louisville, Kentucky, south to Nashville, Tennessee. The railroad was completed in 1861 just in time for the Civil War. L&N, unlike most southern lines, thanks to providing transportation for the Federal Army during the Civil War, survived the war with money available for expansion. Thus L&N acquired a number of southern railroads that would provide the L&N with track extending south from Louisville to Pensacola, Florida; Mobile, Alabama; and New Orleans, Louisiana. L&N's Kentucky track was served by fifteen yards: Madisonville, Owensboro (Doyle), Bowling Green, Skilman, Louisville (Strawberry), Latonia, DeCoursey, Paris, Lexington, Winchester (Patio), Corbin, Ravenna, Hazard (Crawford), Loyall, and Harlan. (Summary provided by Amazon.)

*Railroading around Hazard and Perry County* by Martha Hall Quigley (2006)

Besides the 1795 settling of what later became Hazard, Kentucky, and the establishment of Perry County in 1821, no other event has had the historical significance of the coming of the railroad. Until the track-laying train came through the tunnel north of town and stopped briefly for a celebration, Hazard was landlocked, and the townspeople had never heard the earthshaking sound of the train whistle. Before the railroad, the river was their road. The only few household conveniences known to these isolated people were laboriously brought up the river on push boats. Many materials used to build the railroad were also transported on flatboats. As a bridge and tunnel were built, and a passage was made for the engine that carried the railroad ties, John G. Kinner documented the change with his camera. (Summary provided by Amazon.)

**Videos/Audio/Oral History**

This video has train whistle sounds and clanging/warning sounds that would be heard at train crossings. There are videos of trains too. The video is 4:47 minutes. https://youtu.be/iJxREYbGyDM

-Share the included CDs with your group.

-Share the video “Boxcar Willie-Wabash Cannonball”

There are visuals of trains that accompany the song.

https://youtu.be/nSrEcPdA0hE

-The video, “The Railroad in Folk Song [1966]” is from the RCA record *The Railroad in Folk Song*. The video is about 45 minutes long, so you may just want to share some sections with your audience.

https://youtu.be/bbLzx6zNbHk

Selected songs from the above record:

-Engine One-Forty-Three by The Carter Family

https://youtu.be/zPDbK\_GUfOs

-The Longest Train I Ever Saw by The Tennova Ramblers

https://youtu.be/xMw-YV72f7o

**Oral History interviews**

-Share some clips from these oral history interviews, which are available from the Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, University of Kentucky Libraries. After playing clips or an entire interview, encourage your audience members to share their own memories. Use the keywords and phrases listed above to help generate conversation too.

Permission to share this project in the guide has been granted.

*All rights to the interviews, including but not restricted to legal title, copyrights and literary property rights, have been transferred to the University of Kentucky Libraries.  Interviews may only be reproduced with permission from Louie B. Nunn Center for Oral History, Special Collections and Digital Programs, University of Kentucky Libraries.*

\*\*You may come across language in UK Libraries Special Collections Research Center collections and online resources that you find harmful or offensive. SCRC collects materials from different cultures and time periods to preserve and make available the historical record. These materials document the time period when they were created and the view of their creator. As a result, some may demonstrate racist and offensive views that do not reflect the values of UK Libraries.

“Corbin Railroad Museum Partnership Oral History Project”

There are 14 interviews from the project, and the interviews are dated 2015.

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt76dj58gm8q

Interview with Jean Patterson, March 20, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7qz60bzq8f

Interview with Willard McBurney, March 20, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7m639k6g4n

Interview with Jeffrey Cawood, March 20, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7gf18sf683

Interview with Michael Webb, March 20, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7bnz80nz5j

Interview with Edward Tye, March 20, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt76ww76wq2f

Interview with Patricia Parkey, March 20, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt737p8tdn81

Interview with Alan Dizney, March 19, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7zgm81p24s

Interview with Arlene Childers, Ralph Childers, March 20, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7tqj77wt2r

Interview with Ronald C. Flanary, March 19, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7pzg6g4j78

Interview with Mary Pennington, Earl Pennington, March 20, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7k6d5pc91r

Interview with Maggy Kriebel, March 19, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt7ffb4wm18z

Interview with Nina Calder, March 20, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt79p843ts5s

Interview with Steve Lee, March 21, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt76125qbr2n

Interview with Marilyn Bunch, March 21, 2015

https://kentuckyoralhistory.org/ark:/16417/xt72804xkg9v

**Railroad Museums**

https://www.kentuckytourism.com/ride-the-rails-on-these-scenic-kentucky-train-rides

Ask some of the following questions after reading the railroad museum information. You may want to pause at the end of specific sections of the histories to ask questions about the specific events covered.

* What did you find interesting about this history, or what did you find interesting about what we just read?
* What surprised you about what we just read?

**Big South Fork Scenic Railway**

https://bsfsry.com/

“Logging and Coal Kentucky History”

When Coal, Lumber, And Railroads Were King…

In 1902, Justus S. Stearns of Ludington, Michigan bought 30,000 acres of virgin timberland in southern Kentucky. When coal was discovered soon afterwards, the Stearns Coal & Lumber Company was established. The company built the town of Stearns to serve as the hub of a logging and mining empire that would control over 200 square miles of land, build the Kentucky & Tennessee Railway, erect the first all electric sawmill in the U.S. and employ over 2,200 people living and working in 18 coal and lumber camps.

Most of the buildings in the Stearns business district were painted in company colors – sage green with white trim. The Company office headquarters building and surrounding Company houses were painted white with dark green trim. Residents enjoyed services provided by the Company, such as water and sewage, electricity, and steam heat for their homes. Recreation amenities included a golf course, tennis courts, pool hall, and baseball field for their leisure time.

The Kentucky & Tennessee Railway once stretched over 25 miles into the Big South Fork River valley and operated 12 steam locomotives. It served as the primary passage not only for timber and coal, but also for workers and supplies going to camps along its line. The K&T, like many shortline railroads operated steam locomotives several years after the mainline railroads had switched to diesel power. One of the more notable steam locomotives, Southern Railway No. 4501 was purchased by the K&T, re-lettered K&T No. 12, and operated until 1964. The only original K&T steam engine still in existence today is the K&T No. 10. Both No. 4501 and No. 10 are now located at Tennessee Valley Railroad Museum in Chattanooga.

In the 1950’s, the Stearns Company closed several coal mines and the K&T discontinued passenger service. By 1976, the Stearns Coal & Lumber Company had sold its mining operations to Blue Diamond Coal Company. The Company’s vast land holdings transferred to the National Forest, the Big South Fork National River & Recreation Area, and private ownership. Coal mining ceased along the K&T in 1987. Today, the McCreary County Heritage Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization, has taken on the task to preserve, protect, and interpret the rich history of one of the few company towns in America still surrounded by its coal, lumber, and railroad roots. The National Historic District of Stearns, McCreary County Museum, and Big South Fork Scenic Railway provide the venues necessary for the Heritage Foundation to keep this thriving history alive.

The above information was taken directly from the “History” tab of the Big South Fork Scenic Railway website on June 15, 2021. Retrieved from: https://bsfsry.com/

**Bluegrass Scenic Railroad and Museum**

https://www.bluegrassrailroad.com/

Located in the heart of the Bluegrass Region, the Bluegrass Railroad Museum offers a journey through the gently rolling hills and picturesque farmland in Woodford County. After your train ride, visit the Railroad Museum, Model train layout, and Gift Shop. Outdoor displays at the museum site are open to the public. Train rides every Saturday and Sunday from mid-May through October with many special events. Visit our website at www.BluegrassRailroad.com for details and to purchase tickets. The excursion train is available for private charter. Group discounts are available for groups of 20 or more. For special events add $2 to regular fare except for children under 2.

The Bluegrass Railroad operates antique passenger cars built in the 1920's and 1930's over track built by the Louisville Southern Railroad in 1889 to link Louisville and Lexington. Passengers traveled this line until the 1950's with freight operations continuing until the 1980's. The Bluegrass Railroad Museum has been operating in this location since 1986. The line runs from West Versailles to Young’s High Bridge at Tyrone on the Kentucky River. Young’s High Bridge, built in 1889, is the only cantiliver style railroad bridge east of the Rocky Mountains and stands unchanged from when it was built.

The information above was taken from the Kentucky Department of Tourism’s Bluegrass Scenic Railroad and Museum page on June 15, 2021. Retrieved from: https://www.kentuckytourism.com/versailles/attractions/museums/bluegrass-scenic-railroad-and-museum

**The Historic Railpark Train Museum\* L&N Depot**

https://historicrailpark.com/

https://historicrailpark.com/railcars/

The History of the L&N Depot

Located on a major north-south corridor between two major cities, Bowling Green has a long history tied to the evolution of transportation in Kentucky; from steamboats traveling the Barren River to the railroad, and eventually the current interstate systems. The current L&N Depot was built in 1925 to replace an older station. At one time, over 20 trains per day departed the current site, providing a hub for Bowling Green’s economic foundation and exposure to travelers between Louisville, KY and Nashville, TN.

**Kentucky Dinner Train-Bardstown**

https://www.kydinnertrain.com/

About Us: Train History

Railroad

The Bardstown railroad branch was originally constructed by The Bardstown and Louisville Railroad in 1860. Subsequently, the Louisville and Nashville Railroad purchased the line at a foreclosure sale in 1864.

R. J. Corman Railroad Company purchased the 20-mile branch from CSX Transportation in 1987 and developed the Dinner Train, which had its inaugural run in 1988. In addition to the Dinner Train, the railroad provides freight service to local industries.

Limestone Depot

The depot was constructed in 1860 and was used as a freight and passenger depot until 1953, when passenger service was discontinued on this portion of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad. The depot is constructed of native limestone and is the last remaining “dry-laid” limestone depot in the state of Kentucky. Because of its historical significance, the depot is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The original freight portion of the depot has been preserved intact as much as possible, while the passenger portion was demolished in 1953. A new waiting room addition was constructed in 1992.

Dining Cars

The three cars of the dinner train are all steel-skirted cars built by the Budd Company in the late 1940s after World War II. They have been refurbished extensively by R. J. Corman Railroad Company, far exceeding the original interior design. The RJC-007 was built for the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1941 as a 54-seat day coach. The RJC-021, built in 1948, was used on the El Capitan train by the Santa Fe Railroad and has been outfitted with the most up-to-date equipment to serve as our kitchen car. The RJC-777 was refurbished and added to the dinner train in May of 1992.

The information about the Kentucky Dinner train was taken from the About Us: Train History’ section of My Old Kentucky Dinner Train website on June 15, 2021. Retrieved from: https://www.kydinnertrain.com/

**Kentucky Railway Museum**

https://www.kyrail.org/

The Kentucky Railway Museum owes its beginning to a small number of rail enthusiasts who formed a local chapter of the National Railway Historical Society in 1948. In the early 1950s, the Chapter asked the Louisville and Nashville Railroad for the donation of a steam locomotive to form the nucleus of a railway museum.



The museum was officially chartered in 1954, and with the donation of steam locomotive #152, leased six acres of land on River Road, opening to the public on Memorial Day, 1958. The museum grew with the addition of other donated rail equipment and artifacts, with over 100,000 visitors coming through the gates by the early 1960s. Over 200,000 people came to the River Road site in the first 10 years of operation!

Because the original site was subject to flooding, and the museum required additional space for exhibits, the museum signed a lease for 40 acres of land near Ormsby Village on LaGrange Road, which would expire in 1993.

Meanwhile, a dedicated group of museum volunteers, with grant funds from the Brown Foundation and the National Park Service, began an operating restoration of L&N 152. The thirteen-year labor of love came to fruition in September 1985, when the engine was moved under its own power after thirty years’ retirement. All of this work was performed in an outdoor shop, totally by volunteers, and stands as one of the best examples of a preserved operating steam locomotive in the country today.

The museum acquired a fleet of passenger cars to operate behind #152, as well as operating diesel-electric locomotives, to operate off-site excursions on the L&N Railroad.

The euphoria of a permanent home did not last, however, as Jefferson County informed the museum that the Ormsby Village lease would not be renewed in 1993. Once again, a search was on, this time for a site the museum could purchase and call home for good.



No such site existed in Jefferson County, but CSX Transportation was considering abandonment of the Lebanon Branch of the old L&N from Boston east, eventually to Mt. Vernon, Ky. With strong support from the Bingham Foundation and a state economic development grant, the museum purchased seventeen miles, from just east of Boston to New Hope in LaRue and Nelson Counties. This cost some $30,000 per mile.

Two brothers in New Haven, Kentucky, just south of Bardstown, donated six acres of land and a building for museum headquarters. The move to permanent facilities opened July 4, 1990.

Since then, the museum has grown and prospered. More than 40,000 visitors, many of them students on field trips, visit the museum each year. A new 5,000 square foot museum, a replica of the original brick L&N New Haven depot, opened in the summer of 1995. Tracks are under construction for display of restored rolling stock, and the museum has over seventy pieces of rail equipment.

Most Class I railroads have discouraged or discontinued mainline excursion trains, so the decision to own its own railroad was a wise one for the museum. Today, the locomotive that started it all, L&N 152, still brings goose bumps when the whistle sounds through the scenic Rolling Fork River Valley, just as it did in those long ago days when America moved by rail.

Kentucky Railway Museum, a private non-profit organization, continues to tell the story of the people who built the railroad through interpretation and operation of the historic equipment.

**HISTORY OF 40-ET-8 BOX CAR**

The 40-et-8 boxcar was a standard European Box Car made in France and used during WW1 and WW2. During both wars, the boxcar was used to transport 40 soldiers or 8 mules and horses around Europe. This car was built in Lyons, France in 1905 or 1908 (?) for use on the Paris – Lyon – Mediterranean Railway (PLM.)



After WW2 the French people donated one car to each state plus one to be shared by the District of Columbia and the Territory of Hawaii. The boxcars were filled with items of appreciation that may have included crafts, food, art, and gift items. In 1949 the cars were presented to each of the states.

This 40-et-8 car was given to Kentucky Railway Museum in 1958. Between 1997 and 2001 the Nelson County Technical Vocational School located in Bardstown, Kentucky restored the car to its original state under the supervision of Mr. Chris VerDow.

The Plaques that are displayed on each side of the boxcar represent the Provinces of France. The car was returned to Kentucky Railway Museum in May 2001 where it is on display.

Funding for the restoration project was provided in part by the Kentucky Order of Colonels and the 40-et-8 Society of Elizabethtown. For more information, please see www.rypn.org/.

The information above was taken directly from the, “History of the Kentucky Railway Museum” page on Kentucky Railway Museum’s website on June 15, 2021. Retrieved from: https://www.kyrail.org/history/

**Articles to share/read to your members**

Share one or more of the articles below, and ask your group questions about them. You can read the articles to your audience members or have them take turns reading the articles you select.

Questions:

* What do you find interesting about what the article discusses?
* What memories do you have about the events discussed in the articles? Would you like to share your memories with the group?

**Article 1:**

From Our Files

May 27, 2021 | Advocate-Messenger, The (Danville, KY)

Author: Robin Hart | Section: Features

75 YEARS AGO — 1946

The full effect of the nationwide railroad strike which began Thursday was being felt today by the Southern Railway in Danville, where five northbound and fie southbound daily passenger trains and an estimated daily average of 50 to 60 freight trains failed to run.

**Article 2:**

The Vault: Amtrak's storied history and short-lived service in Louisville - Louisville has a long history with the passenger train. It started in 1971 when the Floridian first traveled from Chicago through Louisville to Miami.

May 23, 2021 | ABC - 11 WHAS (Louisville, KY)

Author: Shay McAlister | Section: The Vault

LOUISVILLE, Ky. — Amtrak, also known as "America's Railroad," is celebrating its 50th anniversary.

The beginnings of Amtrak date back to the passing of The Rail Passenger Service act of 1970 which consolidated the country's 20 existing railroads into one. Amtrak also originally serviced 43 states with 21 routes.

Louisville has a long history with the passenger train. It started in 1971 when the Floridian first traveled from Chicago through Louisville to Miami.

"She starts in Chicago and rumbles through the night to Louisville. She stops in Bowling Green on her way to Nashville. And she rolls on south through Alabama, Georgia and Florida on the way to the sun and beaches of Miami. Her name was the South Wind until Amtrak took her over in 1971 then she was renamed the Floridian."

The Floridian became notorious for lackluster on-time performance, poor track conditions and low ridership. In September 1979, passengers and staff said their final farewell.

It would be 20 years until Amtrak would resume in Kentuckiana – departing Jeffersonville at night and rolling for 12 hours, reaching Chicago the next morning.

The first train rolled in 1999 and it wasn't long until Amtrak set its sights on Louisville.

The bridge was already in place to carry trains over the river, but the city hadn't found land to build a train station.

One year after debuting the Jeffersonville destination, WHAS11 anchor Doug Proffitt covered the consideration to bring it one step further to the old Union Station in downtown Louisville.

At the time it was an office, preserved like a museum, with original stain glass, tile flooring, wooden benches and even over the doors was a sign that read, "to the trains."

The plan gained steam with support from politicians and in 2001, the Kentucky Cardinal crossed of the Ohio River for first time.

After a golden spike ceremony with former Mayor David Armstrong, it was all aboard in southern Indiana.

Proffitt was there as the unofficial Amtrak beat reporter.

"The trains may run on time but midway over the river, the Kentucky Cardinal had to stop so that a barge could pass through," he explained. "The passenger train bends and weaves as it moves its way across the bridge. As it leaves the bridge train watchers greet the cardinal when it hits Louisville for the first time."

Nearly a month after the celebrations started, there was talk the city's $300,000 investment could be worthless.

Amtrak was losing money nationwide, asking Congress for a bailout but targeted 18 long distance routes for cancellation including the newly christened Kentucky Cardinal line from Chicago to Louisville.

Just a short time later, the last passenger train passed over the tracks in July 2003.

Since then, it has been only freight locomotives ruling the Louisville tracks like they had for so many decades before.

**Article 3:**

Tuesday 150th anniversary of local rail service

NewspaperFebruary 25, 2021 | Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer (KY)

Author: Keith Lawrence Messenger-Inquirer | Section: News

These days, most of us rarely think about trains, unless we're stuck at a crossing watching a long line of boxcars go by.

But there was a time when trains connected Owensboro to the world.

The era of the "iron horse" arrived here late.

Tuesday will mark the 150th anniversary of rail service in Owensboro.

The first locomotive the town had ever seen — the Jo Daviess, named for Joseph Hamilton Daveiss (yeah, we misspell his name) for whom the county is named — arrived by steamboat on July 14, 1870.

But there were no tracks yet for it to run on.

The Jo Daviess, built by the Baldwin Works in Philadelphia, weighed in at 24.5 tons.

It cost $11,325 — worth about $226,139 today.

Crowds jammed the riverfront that day 151 years ago to see the "horse" that would put Owensboro on the map.

A passenger coach arrived on Feb. 15, 1871, and the Owensboro & Russellville Railroad made its first run on March 2 that year — taking passengers on an excursion all the way to Livia, 14 miles away.

In time, the Owensboro & Russellville became the Owensboro & Nashville.

When the railroad tracks reached Central City, passengers could transfer to a line running from Paducah to Elizabethtown.

A trip to Louisville by rail then took 12 hours and cost $5.

But on Dec. 3, 1888, a new railroad — the Louisville, Henderson & St. Louis — reached Owensboro, making the trip to Louisville much shorter.

It would later become the Louisville & Nashville.

A year later, the Owensboro, Falls of Rough & Green River Railroad opened passenger service to Whitesville and Ohio County.

In time, it would become part of the Illinois Central.

By then, Owensboro was a modern, bustling railroad town.

I remember stories the old timers told years ago about climbing aboard the trains at Union Station, relaxing in the dining car over coffee, reading the newspaper, stopping in Irvington for "the best pie in the world."

But trains were too slow by 1958.

At 4:25 a.m. on Nov. 16, 1958, old No. 156 pulled out of Union Station headed for Louisville.

And 87 years of passenger train service ended without a whimper.

Ironically, there were people still living then who had seen the Jo Daviess arrive on a steamboat.

Keith Lawrence, 270-691-7301 klawrence@messenger-inquirer.com.

**Article 4:**

Santa Train

For 76 years, the Santa Train has delivered Christmas to Appalachia

By Joseph Gerth at the *Courier Journal* (Novembe4 24, 2018).

Retrieved from:

https://www.courier-journal.com/story/news/local/joseph-gerth/2018/11/20/santa-train-christmas-appalachia-csx-kentucky/1941097002/

It was pitch black outside as the old rail cars jolted to life with a groan. Then another jolt and a subtle and quickening clack, clack, clack as the Santa Train left the Shelby Yard in Pike County.

It was 5:50 a.m.

Over the next nine hours, the train would wind its way 110 miles through the mountains of Eastern Kentucky and Western Virginia, and into Eastern Tennessee, making stops at coal towns and crossroads to give out toys, food, school supplies and coats.

Mary Hughett came from Bristol, Virginia, with her 2-year-old son Aiden, and followed the train, stop after stop, from Shelbiana, in Pike County, Kentucky, to Dungannon, in Scott County, Virginia, collecting gifts along the way.

"This has been the worst year," said Hughett, a single mother who has struggled to pay bills. "We've hit rock bottom.

Saint Nick tossed toys from the back of the Santa Train to kids in Haysi, Virginia. Nov. 17, 2018

Without the Santa Train, she couldn't give presents to her son and others who otherwise wouldn't have much of a Christmas, said Hughett, as she stood, her arms loaded down with a coat, toys and other gifts.

For many along the route — through impoverished coal fields where money is scarce and jobs are even harder to come by — the only Christmas presents to be had this year will be the ones given them by the jolly old elf on the back of the CSX train and the hundred or so volunteers who help him.

Looking back: 'Mountain Santa' Mike Howard saved all his miracles for the children

Past Garden Village and Justiceville, the train rolled. Clack, clack, clack.

“It’s a tradition,” said Reanna Adkins, who waited in the dark of Marrowbone, Kentucky, as volunteers waded through the crowd with bags of gifts. Santa stood on the back platform of the West Virginia, the 65-year-old hospital car that serves as his sleigh, and tossed stuffed animals to the crowd.

A young girl catches a Santa Claus doll on a stop by the Santa Train in Ft. Blakemore, Virginia. Nov. 17, 2018.

“I’ve done this since I was a little kid, and I wanted to bring my daughter to see it,” said Adkins, who has since moved to Georgetown, Kentucky, three hours away.

It was 6:25 a.m. and Chloe, 3, nestled in her mother’s arms, looked tired and may not have understood what was going on around her as volunteers gave out color-coded backpacks and toys and rolls of wrapping paper.

The stop lasted only 15 minutes. Two toots of the train whistle and the volunteers scrambled back to the train.

“They will leave you,” Leslie Higgins, the manager of crisis and event planning for CSX, told volunteers the night before at an orientation and appreciation dinner at The Social, an events center along the train tracks in Kingsport.

Past Road Junction and Draffin and Belcher.

The Santa Train tradition began in 1943 when Flem Dobyns decided he wanted to thank the folks in the region who traveled through the mountains to buy implements of their life from his hardware store in Kingsport, Tennessee.

That year, a group of businessmen boarded the Clinchfield Railroad’s passenger train near Shelbiana and rode it home, tossing candy off the back of the train to kids along the way.

When the Santa Train started, World War II was raging and the coal industry in Appalachia was booming, said Gurney Norman, a longtime professor in the Appalachian Studies Program at the University of Kentucky.

He estimated that there would have been more than 100 coal mines operating in a small sliver of Virginia where the Santa Train runs.

But the coal industry began to decline, and over the years the Santa Train has gone from giving away candy to the kids, to providing the only toys and gifts some of the children will receive, he said.

Past Dunleary and Cedarville and into Elkhorn City. It was 7:05 a.m. and the sun was coming up. Clack, clack, clack.

“Lots of good boys and girls in the crowd,” shouted Ted Marquis, who works for City Year, a non-profit group out of Boston, Massachusetts. Marquis was working the train for the ninth year.

At each stop, he shouted instructions, especially for the first-time volunteers just before they exited the train — things like “Don’t give out gifts until you get away from the train.” And then he finished his speech shouting two final words.

“Santa Train!”

“Santa Train!” the volunteers responded.

And they were off, climbing down the steps of the New York, CSX’s most historic passenger car, which was altered to have an extra-large rear platform that could accommodate Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s wheel chair.

Barbara Tackett waited with a large black garbage bag to collect whatever the volunteers handed her.

“I come to get my grand-baby a Christmas present,” she said. “You think I’ll get anything? Looks like they’re giving everything to the kids.”

It’s been a rough stretch for Tackett’s family. Her husband, who used to install double-wide trailers, has been out of work for six years and there’s really not many jobs to be found, said Tackett, 65. The poverty in Pike County was 23.4 percent in 2013, the last time the U.S. Census Bureau measured it.

Hattie Duty was there to get presents for her 5-year-old daughter. The doll and stuffed animals she held in her arms, and whatever else she collected, would likely be the only presents the girl would get this year.

“I have no income,” said Duty, who is 40. “I ain’t got no job and her daddy had a massive stroke,” she said.

Two more whistles and the volunteers clambered over the ballasts, the big rocks along the tracks, and back up onto the train. Some CSX workers who trailed behind the train would stay and distribute even more toys, food and coats at each stop.

The train rolled into Virginia and made a quick stop at Toms Bottom and then through the Jefferson National Forest, past Barlick.

Along the way, Don Royston stood on the back platform of the train and waved. In real life, he’s a retired CPA. On one Saturday a year, for nearly 20 years, he’s Santa Claus.

People wait in their backyards, on their front porches and along the tracks to get a glimpse of him.

He never leaves his post.

“In 76 years, some of these people have never missed the train,” he said. “I don’t want to go inside and miss Grandma, who’s standing in her backyard waiting to see me.”

It used to be that Santa chucked toys and candy off the train to folks on the tracks as it chugged along. It’s been years since CSX stopped that tying to limit liability.

At first, the old Clinchfield Railroad partnered with the Kingsport Merchants Bureau to sponsor the Santa Train, and then it was Seaboard System after it swallowed up Clinchfield in 1982. CSX Transportation has carried on the tradition since 1986.

Higgins said it's impossible to know how many people benefit from the Santa Train, and she doesn't know how much money CSX spends each year to pull it off.

The main sponsors of Santa Train, in addition to CSX, are the Kingsport chamber of commerce, Food City grocery stores, Appalachian Power and Soles4Souls, a Nashville-based non-profit that provides clothing and business opportunities for poor people here and abroad.

Buddy Teaster, CEO of Soles4Souls, said this year Macy's department stores donated 5,000 coats to the effort. "This is a phenomenal experience," he said. "It really opens your eyes to the need in rural parts of America."

At Haysi, Tackett was back. So were Darla and Rick Stacy, who had also been at the previous stop. She's a stay-at-home mom; he's a "retired" strip-miner who wants badly to go back to work.

There wouldn't be much of a Christmas at their house without the Santa Train, Darla Stacy said.

Laura Phelps, a spokeswoman for CSX, said it's not odd to see the same family at stop after stop. "We don't ask any questions," she said.

The train crept along at no more than 25 mph. It rolled along the McClure River, past the towns, if you can call them that, of Steinman and Tenso.

When the train arrived at Clinchco, a crowd had gathered at the small crossroads. It was 8:40 a.m.

Amber Willis and her boyfriend, Jelane Mock, and their two children were among the crowd.

She’s a social service worker for Dickenson County, Virginia, and has been coming since she was 13. He’s an Army veteran who works at Food City, one of the Santa Train sponsors, and has been coming for 25 years, since he was 5.

“It’s just tradition,” he said.

Children and parents try to get Santa Claus’ attention to receive gifts from the back of the Santa Train, in St. Paul, Virginia. Nov. 17, 2018.

At the next stop in Freemont, Michael Scarberry, 48, brought his daughter and granddaughter and a family friend. He stood holding coats the three had received from some of the 120 volunteers who walked through the crowd.

Scarberry said he’s made the trip from Grundy, Virginia, for the past three years. “We heard about it for years and finally came and got hooked.”

Past McClure and Stratton and Trammel, to Dante — pronounced not like the poet but like “Dant” or sometimes “Daint’ — where a crowd has gathered.

At 10:30 a.m., there was still rime on the crossties and the grass and weeds along the tracks. As you travel along the route, the local economic conditions gradually improve. There seem to be fewer mobile homes with rusted roofs and more stick-built homes that are larger and in much better shape.

Past Morefield and Boody to St. Paul, where a huge crowd, the biggest of the day, is waiting.

Becky Slote was there wearing a red Christmas sweatshirt with snowflakes on it. She wasn’t there for gifts or wrapping paper or coats or anything like that.

She was just there.

“I’m 41 years old, and I don’t have any kids,” she said. “We just come for the tradition of it. ... It’s just a way of life here.”

The train, rolling through the Clinch River valley, passed the crossroads of Burtons Ford and Carfax and Bangor and stopped at Dungannon.

The train, an engine and 12 cars, rolled past Clinch and into Fort Blackmore. It chugged along the Clinch River, past Rhoton Mill and Clinchport and Speers Ferry and into Kermit, the last big stop for the Santa Train.

Three generations of the Shepard Family greeted the train there.

Donna Housewright Shepard, 60, lived just up the hill from the tracks when she was a child.

“We’d be in the barn grading tobacco and we’d hear that train whistle and go running down the hill,” she said. Back in those days, Santa would toss out candy and note pads as the train roared past, and she and other children would scramble to find candy on the ground.

Last week, she came with one of her sons and her grandsons.

Braydon Shepard, 9, a stocking cap pulled over his ears, bounced in excitement over the backpack and Adidas water bottle and toys — so many that he needed help holding them.

“My dad had to work and they (his grandma and his uncle Everett Shepard) just brung me,” he said. “And look what I got.”

There was a final, quick stop at Waycross on the Virginia-Tennessee line, where the last of the toys and the gifts were handed out, and then onto Kingsport, where there was a huge party expected to attract 5,000 people.

The Santa Train tradition has gone on for 76 years now and has continued even as CSX considered shutting down the Clinchfield road a few years ago as the downturn in the coal industry meant fewer hopper cars coming out of the mountains.

The industry has stabilized now, Higgins said, which suggests the line will remain open at least for now, and Santa's train will continue to help the people of the region.

"I've been told we would run this train as long as a railroad track runs through here," Higgins said.

**Article 5:**

The Santa Train pulls into town

Posted by Dave Tabler on November 14, 2017

Appalachian History.net

Retrieved from: https://www.appalachianhistory.net/2017/11/santa-train-pulls-into-town.html

In Appalachia Santa Claus comes the weekend before Thanksgiving.

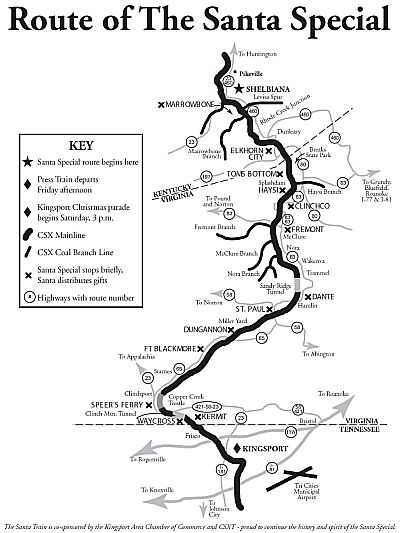
Since 1943, the Santa Special, more commonly known as the Santa Train, has traveled 110 miles through the mountains of eastern Kentucky, southwest Virginia and northeastern Tennessee to distribute loads of candy, toys and other goodies to eager bystanders, most of whom have made it a family tradition. The train typically passes through more than 30 towns delivering Christmas cheer.

This year 14-time Grammy winner Ricky Skaggs is joining CSX as the special guest on the 2017 Santa Train. Celebrities who have ridden the train include Amy Grant, Thompson Square, Alison Krauss, Wynonna & Naomi Judd, Patty Loveless, Travis Tritt, Kree Harrison, and Kathy Mattea.

The 75th annual Santa Train will make 14 stops on November 18. Ricky Skaggs, Santa Claus and volunteers will deliver 15 tons of toys to thousands of Appalachian residents who live along the route. Train staffers throw candy, crackers, popcorn, bubble gum, cookies, stuffed animals, electronic games, hats, handmade gloves, mittens, toboggans, T-shirts, wrapping paper and other treats from the train’s caboose.

“The Santa Train”—print commemorating the 50th Santa Train Special. Sponsored by the Kingsport Chamber and CSX

The Santa Special was the brainchild of Kingsport, TN businessmen who wanted to show their appreciation to the people of the coalfields for their patronage throughout the year.



Santa Special officials have said that the first Santa Train pulled just one car and a meager load of gifts. It reached towns and cities that at the time had no other means of transportation. Some believe the train provided many children the only toys they received during World War II.

Joe Higgins played the role of Santa Claus in 1943-44 — the run’s first two years.

Sources: https://trn.trains.com/news/news-wire/2019/11/25-csx-santa-train-makes-its-77th-journey  
https://www.ffa.org/foundation/the-csx-santa-train-is-a-comin/  
http://www.appvoices.org/index.php?/site/voice\_stories/santa\_train\_rides\_again\_through\_appalachia/issue/523

**Article 6:**

That durn old noisy train

July 18, 2020 | Richmond Register, The (KY)

Author: Glenmore Jones Columnist | Section: Columns

As I am awakened at 4:30 a.m. by the shrill whistle of ole freight train No. 99 struggling up the grade from Red House to Richmond, I can't help but wonder how many thousands of people have had the same wake-up call.

For about 20 years, I lived within a half a mile of the railroad and it has interrupted my dreams many, many times.

Back in the 1920s, 30s and 40s, before the advent of air conditioning, almost everyone slept with their windows open in the summer and on a still summer night that whistle would shatter your dreams and the train would sound like it was coming up your street, and in your window.

Ouch!

One Richmond family who lived near the railroad had 11 children. When someone kidded the father about what caused so many children, he said, "It's that durn ole train blowing the whistle at 4:30 in the morning. It wakes me up and it's too early to get up and go to work and it's too late to go back to sleep, sooooo ..."

Although it was irritating to be awakened so early in the morning, it was somewhat comforting, and would trigger good thoughts like travel, adventure and faraway places.

Back during the Depression, when a lot of people didn't have enough money for coal to heat their house, some of the daring and desperate men would jump on a slow moving coal train and throw lumps of coal off. Someone in the family, would follow with a kid's wagon or a wheelbarrow and pick the coal up.

We saw this a lot of times when playing golf at the Madison Country Club.

I remember the hustle and bustle that used to be around the depot when a passenger train came in.

The old steam engines were much noisier than the present day diesel engines and would come into the station with the whistle blowing and the brakes squealing and when it stopped it would set there and belch steam like some giant iron dragon. The train would discharge its passengers and welcome aboard new ones. The baggage cars would surrender the mail, packages and baggage to the handlers who pushed four-wheel carts up to the freight doors and unloaded everything.

When all the freight was unloaded and passengers were aboard, the flagman at the rear of the train would swing a lantern as a signal for the engineer to get rolling. The engineer would hit that throttle and spin the wheels for traction and off they would go with the whistle blowing, headed for foreign parts.

The biggest thrill for me was when dad would drive us to the station to see Uncle Thornton Jones, who was a flagman on the Southland (a passenger train that ran from Cincinnati to Knoxville). When the train stopped he would step off the last car in the train (the caboose) and we would all hug him.

Wow!

I thought Uncle Thornton was just a notch above the president of the country in importance to be able to swing that lantern and make that big old train move along. Uncle Thornton retired for a couple of years, then went back to work and died of a heart attack on the job.

My Dad also lost his brother, Bill, who was killed in a tragic accident working as a switchman on the L&N Railroad.

Back then a lot of businesses surrounded the depot, as it was the business hub of the city. There were a lot of passengers coming and going and also a lot of freight being shipped in and out by rail. For years, John Durham ran the freight office and every week my dad and Bob Oglesby picked up their Dolly Madison cakes, which were shipped from Cincinnati.

Close by the depot was the old Dixie Restaurant located on the corner of Estill Avenue and Main Street. It served good old country cooking and was a popular place to eat for locals as well as railroad people. It was owned for years by Reed Williams.

On the corner of Laurel Street and Main was the L&N Hotel, now where Hicks Lumber Company is located. The Richmond Ice Plant was located close by and probably shipped ice by rail. Arnold, Hamilton and Dykes, a grocery supply company was located on Irvine St. near the railroad and also the Richmond Stockyard was close by.

I am sure I left out a lot of important and interesting details concerning the railroad during this era of time but I wanted to record these wonderful memories before my screen goes blank.

Every time I drive out Main Street and cross the railroad tracks. I wish, I wish, I could look over and see that beautiful, sturdy built old depot building, with the high ceilings and the gable roof and the covered platform that ran for four or five hundred feet along the railroad.

It also makes me sad to think that kids today will never have the thrill of seeing one of the old steam belching railroad engines of yesteryear come into the train station, with the whistle screaming and the brakes squealing.

Well, as Bob Hope said many times, "Thanks for the memories."

Final thought

Don't let yesterday take up too much of today -- Will Rogers

Until next time ... live, love, laugh and learn, Glenmore.

**Article 7:**

Passenger train service was a losing proposition for the L&N Railroad

June 10, 2020 | The Gleaner (Henderson, KY)

Page: B8 | Section: News

So, it shouldn't come as any surprise to learn that at the height of World War II Henderson saw 28 passenger trains pass through Union Station on a daily basis. But the prosperity that followed the war – when everyone could afford a Chevy beside the barn – marked the end of passenger trains' glory days.

But all the towns and people seem

To fade into a bad dream

And the steel rails still ain't heard the news

The conductor sings his songs again

The passengers will please refrain

This train's got the disappearing railroad blues

– City of New Orleans by Steve Goodman

Passenger train service was slipping away from Henderson 50 years ago and would survive only until the following spring.

Henderson still sees a lot of train traffic but was once a much more important railroad town, according to research done by Netta Mullin, president of the Henderson County Historical and Genealogical Society. In 1871, we had a roundhouse, a machine shop, a carpenter shop, a blacksmith shop, and a paint shop. That was the same year local tracks were connected to a line serving Nashville, which allowed service to the south and east of us.

And the importance of the railroad bridge here can hardly be overstated. When the first bridge opened in mid-1885 it was the only Ohio River crossing between Louisville and Paducah. Its replacement, which opened at the end of 1932, is still the only rail crossing between those two points.

So, it shouldn't come as any surprise to learn that at the height of World War II Henderson saw 28 passenger trains pass through Union Station on a daily basis. But the prosperity that followed the war – when everyone could afford a Chevy beside the barn – marked the end of passenger trains' glory days.

The L&N Railroad shut down its route from Evansville to Louisville Nov. 16, 1958, according to The Gleaner of the same date. Engine No. 155 stopped at Union Station and left for Louisville at 3:30 a.m.

"With it went almost 100 years of history of service to this area." That Evansville-Louisville passenger route had lost $128,000 the previous year. "The greatest blow, perhaps, was when the railroad lost the mail contract to trucks several years ago."

The story went on to report that automobiles were carrying about 90 percent of intercity traffic as of 1958.

The L&N route from St. Louis to Atlanta was also starting to run out of steam little more than a decade later. The Gleaner of Oct. 1, 1969, reported on a hearing held in Evansville by Interstate Commerce Commission examiner Burch Moore, which was in response to an L&N request to shut down the route.

"It was a morning, for the most part, when the 'little man' spoke up against the corporate being." One of the witnesses was Harold Lee "Happy" Kellems, a member of the Clown Hall of Fame, who had toured with all of America's most famous circuses.

He drew a "roar of laughter" from the audience when he said, "You see me coming to Evansville on one of my circus elephants one day and you'll know what you've done to my railroad."

That hearing was not particularly successful for those who wanted to keep the railroad operating, since most of the 15 who testified admitted to rarely using it.

Two months later, on Dec. 4, The Gleaner carried a front-page photo of a forlorn baggage cart at Union Station, "a reminder that the age of passenger train travel is slowly taking a place in history.... Only two passenger trains move through Henderson now, one bound for St. Louis and the other Atlanta. In the past two weeks no passengers have boarded either."

Just how bad the passenger train business had become was revealed in a lengthy letter to the editor from Bob Ethridge, assistant to the L&N's vice president of traffic, which appeared in The Gleaner of June 13, 1970.

The L&N had been keeping detailed statistics on passenger travel and Ethridge posted the numbers for February, March and April of 1969 juxtaposed against the same months in 1970. It wasn't pretty. Two of the trains showed ridership down by nearly 300 people. One route was down by only 75. The fourth train was up from 884 to 912, but that was attributable to 80 Mount Vernon students temporarily attending school in Evansville during April 1970.

"In the above period, an average of 13 passengers a day used the train northbound and only 16 passengers a day southbound."

This was despite a number of improvements made for the benefit of passengers. For instance, the cars were refurbished, pillow service was added, and the schedule was adjusted to eliminate long layovers at Nashville and Evansville.

Perhaps most significant to passenger comfort was making food available at reasonable prices: sandwiches, soups, stews, rolls, doughnuts, coffee, milk, fruit juices, soft drinks, candy bars and potato chips.

The L&N's package express service was lost to trucks in April 1968, and the contract for carrying the U.S. mail was taken over by highway and air routes on Nov. 29, 1969.

"The diversion of mail and express traffic, and the lack of passenger traffic on these trains, has resulted in accelerated losses, which have now reached the alarming figure of approximately ($1 million) per year.

"Since these trains are obviously not rendering a needed public transportation service, it is downright wasteful for L&N to continue their operation and suffer these substantial losses. I think you will readily agree that this is not sound business practice."

Consequently, Ethridge wrote, L&N had filed statements with the Interstate Commerce Commission to discontinue passenger train service on July 6, 1970. (That did not happen that quickly. The last passenger train stopped at Union Station April 30, 1971, according to Mullin.)

Ethridge noted he would not be able to meet in person with the editor and was instead sending his letter, which ended: "I am sure you that will agree that we have made a concerted effort to provide a good transportation service to the traveling public but it is not being used and there is no justification for its continuance."

Yesterday's News

Frank Boyett