

Train Time

The centre of activity in those early days

As the train approached and whistle sounded, people gathered. Who might be on it? Who was about to embark? What freight had arrived? Were the BC apples in? What about my Eaton's catalog order?

They congregated slowly on the platform and in the station waiting rooms. The mail-carrier arrived with his locked mail sacks, the editor with his notebook to record departures and arrivals, the commercial traveler, with his rain coat over his arm and a cigar in his mouth, was followed by the hotel porter with his bags on a hand cart.

A businessman or two with leisure and curiosity joined the group. A citizen, late with his letters, dashed to the station and thrust them into the mail carrier's hand for late posting.

The train slowed to a stop. The conductor swung to the platform. The passengers alighted and were watched by the idle observer and were greeted by their friends. The departing travelers climbed in the coaches. The grown ups envied the lucky ones who were departing.

The children, yet unfamiliar with the wide world, weren't sure where those tracks led, but were nevertheless sure they wanted to go wherever the shining engine went. The express baggage and mail were disposed of, the train pulled out and the crowds dispersed to form again when the next train was due to arrive.

For many years Train Time was the occasion of the day, but the station was always busy. There the grain buyers of the elevator companies received telegrams advising them of the daily grain prices. There the farmers came to collect their freight and express parcels. There the draymen loaded the boxes and parcels for delivery to the local merchants.

Excursions

Along with regularly scheduled service, another feature of improved rail service involved special excursions. The railways were eager to capitalize on special events such as fairs, sporting events, and educa-

tional presentations. Organizations, clubs and even schools chartered trains for their events.

The first excursion train to be chartered from Deloraine was by the Oddfellows when they travelled to Boissevain for the institution of a new lodge there. A sumptuous supper was served about 3 a.m. after which the train returned with its 34 passengers.

In 1912 an Agricultural College special train came to the region with three coaches for lectures on dairy, garden and field crops, and a boxcar with livestock for demonstration work. Ladies were instructed in the care of the sick, and home nursing.

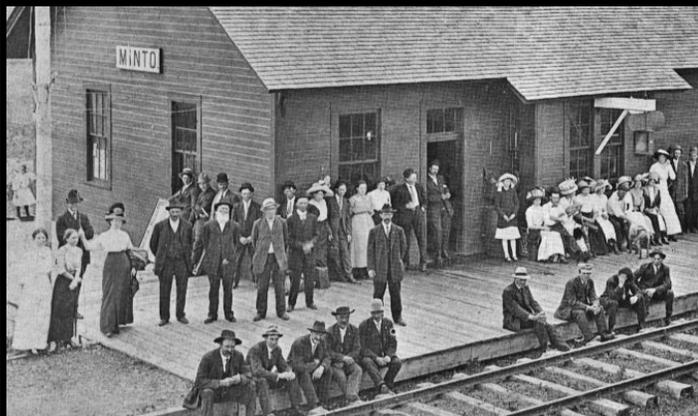
School Field Days began in the first decade of the 20th Century, and for many years were held at Killarney, with trains carrying students from both east and west. The first Field Day held in Deloraine was held in 1916, with excursion trains bringing 1,250 pupils from as far as Cartwright, and other trains bringing those from the Napinka line and the Lyleton branch.

Sources:

Deloraine History Book Committee. *Deloraine Scans a Century 1880 - 1980*. Altona. Friesen Printers, 1980.
McKenzie-Cochrane, Ken. "Brandon's Steamy Past." Video. 2017. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeYXRp2OhwI>.

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▼ The Great Northern Railway station in Minto. Passengers waiting for the excursion train to the Brandon Fair.



▼ The Hartney Band entertaining a crowd at the Hartney Station.

