

OLD COLONY RAILROAD

THE PASSING OF THE DUXBURY RAILROAD

DECEMBER, 1939

The other day I drove east on Harrison Street from Tremont Street and went over the old railroad crossing as I had many times before. From force of habit I slowed up the car as I approached the crossing and looked to the north. A sad sight met my eye. The rails had been removed but the ties remained somewhat indecent with the spikes protruding from them.

My mind went back to my boyhood days, to July 1871 just before the railroad was completed. I was nine years old at the time and an ardent Duxbury summer visitor. Our boy's costume consisted of a woolen shirt and pants reaching to the knees with no shoes or stockings, of course. Thus apparelled we were on and in and out of the water the livelong day, only reporting to the family mansion for meals. Thus passed many happy summers with only occasional heartbreaks. One of these was the stern requirement that once during the summer we were to dress up and call on the aunts.

Yet that was not the worst of it, for we liked the aunts' and their cookies, but we had to dress to make these calls. Horrors, we had to array ourselves in white shirts, stiff collars and ties. And above all, encase our feet in shoes and stockings.

On this particular occasion, which I remember very well, thus arrayed we walked up to pay our respects to Mrs. Abigail

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Chandler on St. George Street, just beyond the present Town Offices. Aunt Abigail welcomed us ~~and us~~ and fed us well with cakes and cookies. Then the conversation lagged for we were not comfortable, costumed as we were. Probably neither was Aunt Abigail or her two daughters. Suddenly the aunt said, "How would you boys like to see how the railroad is coming along?" We allowed we would and made our adieus as well brought up children should.

I don't remember the cakes even or the adieus, but I remember as if it were yesterday, although in fact it was nearly ^{seventy} ~~eighty~~ years ago, the blessed feeling of relief when we went behind the barn and tore off those accursed collars and shoes and stockings. Did we go up to see the railroad being built? We did not, but streaked it for home in our bare feet and made for the water as fast as we could.

Aunt Abigail's daughter, Miss Ella Chandler, who has just passed her ninety first birthday, told me an amusing and interesting story about the first day the Duxbury and Cohasset Railroad ran to Boston. This was a Duxbury gala day with free rides for everybody. The work of building this railroad had been rushed and ^{if was} not too well built. At one point where the road bed had sagged, the guests of the day of the first ride, August 17, 1871, had to get out and walk on the right of way until they were once again on solid ground.

Ella was escorting some school official who had never been to Boston. On the train they saw a young couple who had never

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been ~~to~~-Boston outside of Duxbury. At the Old Colony Station Ella and her companion said goodbye to this couple and went on to see the sights of the City of Boston. When they returned late in the afternoon to take the train for home, there sat the young couple about as they had left them in the morning. It transpired that they were too timid to take any chances in the big city, and had sat in the station all day, their only excitement being their lunch from a paper bag which they had brought with them.