

ISCHUA VALLEY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

MERLE BULL'S MEMORIES OF RIDING THE TRAIN IN FRANKLINVILLE

The railroad station . . . once a busy place . . . the nerve center of our contact with the outside world . . . gradually less used because of changing trends in transportation and finally in the name of progress bulldozed in the 1980s.

Waiting for the train . . . it was an experience that was just as exciting the 20th time as it was the first time. A passenger train would come from the south about 7 A.M. You could wait in the waiting room. You could keep fairly warm if you stood about 2 feet from the huge coal burning heater. You purchased your tickets, you rubbed your hands, stomped your feet and discussed the weather with the other natives. One eye was kept on the track to the south. Everyone had a secret desire to be the first to spot the plume of smoke on the horizon at the end of the straight away.



There would be a shout. "There it comes!" Larger and larger it loomed, finally slowing. The ground would shake, black smoke would blot out the sun. Steam would envelope you. The throb of those powerful pistons penetrated your very body and always the clinging of that bell.

All of this was enough to make the heart beat faster. The fact that this monstrous mechanical marvel was within 3 feet of your own fragile frame could surely burst the heart of the weak.

The uniformed conductor swings from the steps, puts the footstep on the ground. People scurry, good byes are said, baggage carts wheeled about, loaded and unloaded, mail pouches secured. There are a couple of short toots, doors slam, black smoke pours forth wheels start moving. People wave. Then silence. The departing passengers are settling down, already a part of another day, another adventure.



The ones left at the station watch till the train is out of sight. They are a little sad. They feel deprived of the excitement an adventure that those tracks led to. Don Mahoney and Duncan Hatch were the station masters.