

## **Rough Riding on the T.S. & M. R. R.**

By

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Around 1895, I had the pleasure and the bumps of a ride on the T. S. & M. freight train from Greenville to Carson City. In those days one could ride a freight on this line, provided one had the hardihood and was not in too big a hurry to reach one's destination.

There were only two passenger trains a day - from Durand to Muskegon. And the trains usually consisted of two coaches, one for mail and express, and the other, of course, for passengers. There were also two freights a day - one each way - making the same run.

I could never understand why this road was called the Toledo, Saginaw & Muskegon, as virtually its line starts at Ashley, a junction point with the Ann Arbor Railroad, and runs west through many small towns to Muskegon. From Ashley their trains run south over the Ann Arbor tracks to Durand, their starting point on their northwesterly passage across the state. At the above mentioned time the road was operating under a lease by the Grand Trunk Railway System.

It was an early summer morning when I boarded the caboose at Greenville and it happened I was the only passenger. There were four or five passenger seats on one side for the convenience of the patrons. After the conductor collected my cash fare to Sheridan, I climbed the ladder to the look-out on top of the caboose. The brakemen and conductor were rough [rough], rugged men, but jolly good fellows, and made no objection to my riding in the look-out. While the going was rough, I derived considerable pleasure from the ride, as I had a good view of the surrounding country which, at that time, had many pine stump fences. There was also a good breeze blowing through the open windows, but one had to be careful of the cinders which came from the smok-stock of the engine.

Somewhere between Greenville and Sheridan, where there was only a watchman's shack, the freight pulled in on a spur to give the westbound passenger a clear track. As soon as the train stopped there was a rush of the two brakemen and conductor for the shack. After what seemed a long wait I decided to investigate. Accordingly I went to the shack and on opening the door I observed an interesting four-handed game of draw poker in progress. The betting was fairly good, each pot representing several dollars. After perhaps fifteen or twenty minutes the whistle of the passenger train broke up the game. I took my position in the look-out, and after the train got under way, one of the brakemen, who was sitting at the opposite window, informed me that the poker game was a regular occurrence. From the long, wait, I have often wonder if the conductor did not run ahead of schedule to have more time at the game.

Arriving in Sheridan, I decided to continue my journey to Carson City where an aunt of mine resided. Thus, as the train pulled out I ascended the ladder and took a seat. When the conductor came in I tendered him the money for my fare, but he good-naturedly refused it with the comment: "We will split 50-50, my lad. I keep the first and you get the second."

When I left Carson City I boarded the eastbound passenger for my long and wearisome journey to my home at Charlotte, Michigan. I expected the ride would be much faster and smoother than the freight. The first was true but the latter was not, as the faster moving train increased, instead of diminishing, the jolts when passing over the two or three-inch gaps between the rails. The train swayed from side to side and one had the feeling that it might jump the track at any moment. Gripping the arms of the seat in order to keep from bouncing about too much, I heaved a sigh of relief when the train arrived at Ashley where it was transferred to the Ann Arbor's smoother tracks. Thus ended my rough ride on the T. S. & M.