



Grand Scales

Q U A R T E R L Y

Pocono in Dairyland - The Centerville & Southwestern
Adapted from an article by Ray Haigh, Photo by Ray Haigh

© 2003 No Part of this article may be used without written permission from the author and Robinson & Associates.

Robinson & Associates, PO Box 8953, Red Bluff, CA 96080 USA grandscales.com

The Centerville & Southwestern, an engaging public railway of just 9 7/16" gauge, was located on the Becker Dairy Farm in Roseland, New Jersey. This line "arose not from economic need, but as a gesture of goodwill by a dairyman who wanted to show his appreciation of his customers' patronage over a long period of years."

The track plan took the form of an out-and-back run. The main station was located near a quaint duck pond, complete with picnic facilities. A beautiful scale turntable was employed at this end of the tracks. A cluster of farm buildings were also situated here. Tracks then ran out on a long stretch, crossing fields and wooded areas, until reaching a wye at the far end of the line. Over time, the ends of the wye were joined in a loop to increase the length of the ride.

What really lifted this small community railroad above the average park line, and gave it celebrity status, was the quality of the locomotives and rolling stock. Much of this equipment was fabricated in the farm's own shops. The

finished pieces that emerged were nothing less than spectacular! There was a beautiful scale caboos, a miniature refrigerated box car, and a string of passenger coaches with finely-detailed undercarriages.

Freight car designs were also fabricated to serve as passenger carriers. Roller bearings were in evidence throughout the fleet. All equipment was appointed with functional air brakes. The brakes worked just like a 'real' train - they were constantly applied, until the locomotive's pump produced enough pressure to release the shoes. This authentic touch provided an added measure of safety: it was impossible to move the train before sufficient pressure was available to work the brakes.

In recounting this roster, I have saved the best for last. As of Shaw's writing in 1958, motive power consisted of an unusual 4-8-4 internal combustion locomotive, and "one of the most perfect small scale steam locomotives for passenger hauling in the United States".

This was a 4-8-4 steamer, often referred to as a "Pocono" type. The full size version was designed to handle steep grades in Pennsylvania's Pocono Mountains. These design attributes came in handy on the farm, where the miniature version was often tasked with pulling 14 loaded cars up a 3% grade!

Design of the extraordinary miniature was han-

dled by H. B. Ayers (once president of the H.K. Porter Co) and J.B Ennis (vice-president, American Locomotive Company). The powerful steam locomotive carried the number 1501, while its gasoline counterpart was numbered 1502.

It should be noted that, while both these engines featured the same wheel arrangement, they looked nothing like one another. The steam engine was a perfect scale model of its prototype. The gas loco was a freelance design, which featured a streamlined body reminiscent of 1930s and 1940s diesels. It was mounted on a rigid cast frame and weighed an impressive 3 tons.

The Centerville and Southwestern was put in place with eight-pound steel rail spiked to 3" by 3" wooden ties. Twelve pound frogs were ultimately employed on the switches. Time had shown the heavy C&S locomotives capable of chewing up the original eight-pound frogs!

The Becker farm was open to public visitation every Saturday throughout the summer months. Picnicking by the pond was a popular activity, as was visiting with the farm's resident animals, and - of course - taking a train ride.

And there, good friends, the story ended -- as of 1958.

So what happened next? Story continues in the 7+RAILROADER.

(The whole article is available in the 7+RAILROADER magazine, Vol 11#1. For information on buying a copy, please visit www.7+railroader.com.)

