

Railroad Transcript from Recorded Interview of Elmer Ruschman

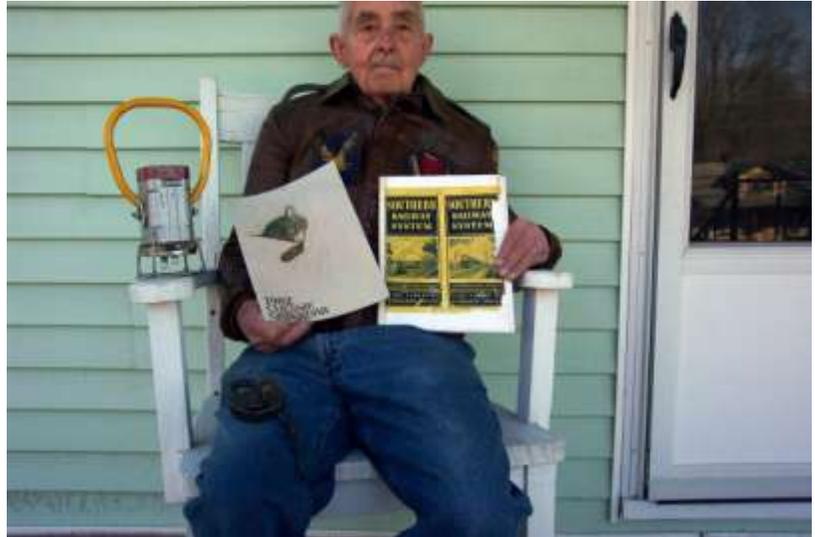
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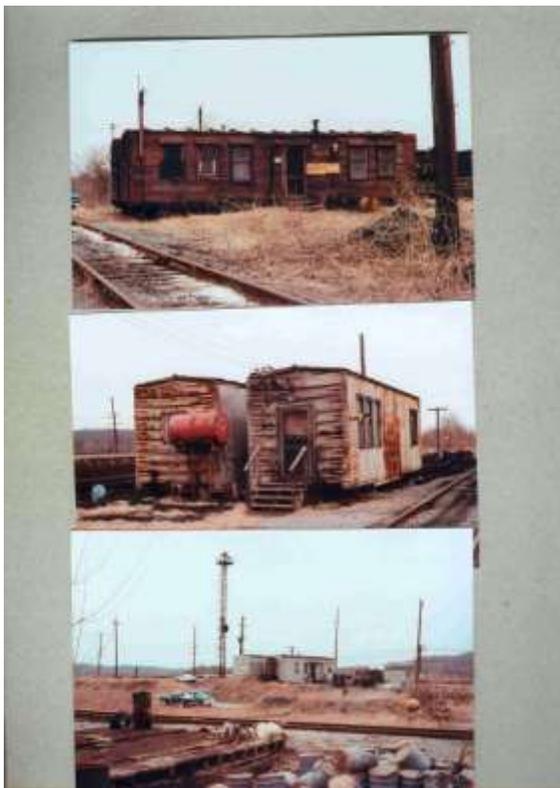


Railroad transcript
from recorded
interview
of Elmer
Ruschman
by Brigid Anneken
March 7, 2011



Elmer held a
railroad clerk
position at Steven's Yard which is now Lafarge in
Silver Grove, KY.

One of his duties was "call boy". When a man was



called for a job of
switchman, engineer etc.
the call boy would go to
the person's home to tell
him when to show up for
work.

Early on, as a call boy,
Miss Mathais told me "Do
your work right, you will
have a job for the rest of
your life", she was right.
Shortly after WWII, Elmer
took a job at Steven's
Yard to meet the early
passenger trains to take

delivery of the mail for the train's station. When
Elmer worked 3rd shift with his lantern, he walked the



freight yards checking cars that sat in the various locations for coal, lumber etc.

Then he would go back to the East End Shanty to document what he had confirmed

about the line of cars.

Elmer has seen a lot of coal pass through, that was transported in Hopper cars, Box cars carried lumber, Flat cars carried farm machinery and Gondola cars carried pipes.



Elmer was talking to an employee that asked him about the problem that had to go through an investigational

committee concerning a loaded car that was documented empty, so it sat there for days.

Elmer documented it loaded but somehow it was considered empty

so everyone but Elmer had to go to the meeting.



On one of my family train trips to Montana: As we



passed many stations, our train kept getting later and later. It stopped in Great Falls and I asked the conductor if he was going to stay with the regular time or leave early? He said he would not

leave early. Mary and I got off and went to tour the town, walking the streets we had walked when I was based there. At Eighth Street I told Mary we should turn around but she wanted to go a little further. Shortly, I heard the whistle blow, so we ran back as fast as we could. We watched the last car pass us by. We ran inside the station to ask if they could stop the train. But it was a few minutes too late. We looked around and saw a taxi cab at the station. We got in the cab and followed the train seeing it come and go through the trees. We didn't know if we could catch up with it. We had been riding in the taxi for almost an hour then stopped. The driver wanted \$20. I asked the driver to "wait here" and in a short time I heard the whistle blow and stood at the station, took off my coat and flagged down the train. The conductor asked us where we were going, I said to my room and I won't be getting off the train again! The conductor remembered me and said "Are you going to turn

me in for leaving the station early”? I said no, to report it would have gotten him in trouble.

Steven’s Yard was a Hump Yard. This meant there was a hill or hump where the trains were sorted, going down the hill by gravity to the outbound train position. At the crest of the hill was the tower where the yard master supervised from.

At the bottom of the hill, the Switch Tender would



maneuver the car into position, for an east or west bound destination. This is making up a train. Retarders or Squeezers were built into the track. They were used to slow

cars to a safe speed to couple cars together. This was a noisy process. This was a yard man’s job but when it became automated, a switcher worker’s job was lost.

Chesapeake and Ohio trains from Cincinnati were frequent, mostly what he got, trains going eastbound.



Round Houses were enclosed buildings with track that could turn the Steam Engine around to travel back in the opposite direction.



Each railroad had a round house which served diesel engines as well. There is a converted round house in Covington that is now the Duro Bag Factory. The track made it easier to turn, push and used switches to stabilize an engine. The maintenance of engines and cars sometimes required positioning oneself underneath; there were cement trenches under tracks that allowed space for this.

Steam engines sometimes needed Pusher locomotives to help them up the grades. Depending on the amount of the load, extra engines may be connected to provide more traction. When you see more than one engine with some going in the opposite direction, the lead engine may need extra electricity or the reversed engine will be used for a return trip going in the opposite direction, which saves time.

In the older days the caboose was used for an employee to watch the condition of the train from the rear. He would be watching for stressed wheels, hot boxes etc. to keep them safe from fire. Then the Diesel engine came into existence.

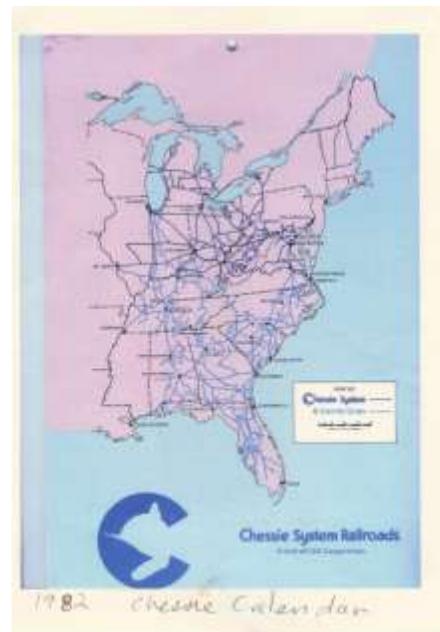
Elmer's father Pete was in the Car Department and his brother Ed was a conductor for the railroad.

As a result of various mergers in the NKY region, the Southern Railway became a leaseholder of the C&O rail.



At one time there were two railways at the Newport Depot, the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) and also the Louisville and Nashville (L&N).

The passenger trains were part of the Chessie System. The Chessie Era was a partnership between the C&O, Baltimore and Ohio and the Western Maryland. The C&O mascot for the passenger train was that Sleeping Kitten called the Chessie.



In 1980, the CSX was the result of a merger between the Chessie & Seaboard Train Systems. The "X"

indicated multiplied service or “and much more”, as their marketing strategy.



The Steven's Yard closed in 1981 and then a hump yard opened in Queensgate in Cincinnati.

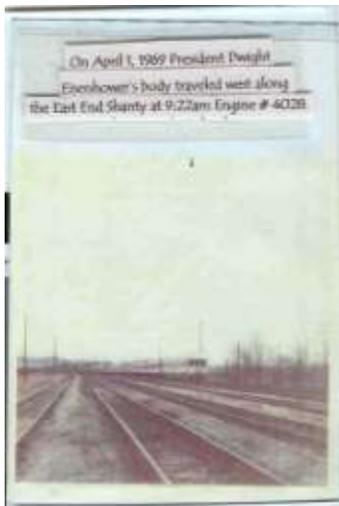
From the beginning of the railroad service until the 1950's train

stations were the heart and soul of the town.

Employees got free miles on passenger trains.

Elmer often traveled on the passenger trains.

Elmer retired when Steven's Yard at Silver Grove closed in 1981.



Elmer tells a story about when the hump office caught fire. There was a train coming east on the track and the fire department had fire hoses over the track trying to put out the fire. Because there was no way to alert the train, Elmer took off running down the

rail track ahead of the hoses to signal the train to stop. He used his coat to flag the engineer and the train did indeed stop.



Elmer got to see President Eisenhower's funeral train car pass by on the way back to Abilene Texas to be buried, in 1969.

The American Freedom Train ran through our town between 1975-1976 in celebration of the 200 year history of our country. The 26 car train was propelled by a steam engine.

