

# **THE ONE HORSE RAIL ROAD**

By H. E. Lamb

## **The Calais Railroad**

“Sealed proposals will be received till the 15th of February for the leasing of the Calais Rail Road with the furniture belonging thereto, together with 1 Horse and Harnesses, and the Stable belonging to said company, for one or more seasons. Persons proposing will please state the amount offered for the Rail Road as it is, the lessee to make the needful repairs, and also the amount offered provided the Company put the Road in order for the running the cars. Also the amount offered for one season if more than one season is proposed for.

Bonds satisfactory to the Directors will be required for the performance of the contract. Further particulars may be learned on application to

Charles Copeland, Treasurer of C. R. Co.

January 30, 1843”

The above advertisement appeared in the Calais Advertiser a hundred years ago and brings to light an almost forgotten era in the history of Calais--the One Horse Railroad.

By 1830 men all up and down the country were experimenting with railroads. In 1825 Stevenson in England had run the first steam locomotive but over here they tried horses. In South Carolina they put the horse on the same level as the passengers and he worked a treadmill. Speed 12 miles an hour. It was called the Flying Dutchman. In Quincy, Mass. they built a unique road from a quarry. It was run by gravity. The loaded cars going down pulled the empty ones up.

The men of early Calais were progressive even if they were apt to have whiskers and high hats.

We learn from Knowlton's "Annals of Calais" that in 1832 William Delesdenier, Jones Dyer, Geo. Downes and O. S. Bridges organized the Calais Railway Company and got a charter from the Legislature to build a railroad and haul lumber from the mills in Milltown to the wharves in Calais at the-rate of fifty cents per thousand feet. They had three years to complete the road. The Legislature gave them three more years and Neal D. Shaw, Luther Brackett and Seth Emerson were added to the company. The charter had to be renewed another time but in 1839 the road was done and lumber was going to Calais by rail. Knowlton says that the road was a failure and the company suspended operations after two years.

As you see by the above advertisement this is not accurate, besides, D. W. Milligan has a part of an account book kept by his grandfather, William Milligan, who operated the road during 1844 and 45 and perhaps longer. The book to headed "Act. of Boards Delivered at the Rail Road to Lendell Tyler in 1844.

## **Where the Rail Road Ran**

It seems to have started somewhere near the Upper bridge in Milltown and the Calais and was, of course, at the wharves, but there was no cut as now under Main street then called Point street, but the road ran along the river bank and came down back of where the Border station in built and down onto the wharves where the Eastern Pulp Wood Company's brick building stands now. The steam road ran that way for years and there is a shallow cut near the old electric car barn site and where you could find some old sleepers a few years ago.

## **The Rails**

The present T shape rails had not been invented and so the strap rail was used. These rails were strips of iron three inches wide and five eighths of an inch thick with the ends cut on the bias. There were several holes for square headed spikes.

The road bed was prepared and sleepers laid. The road had to have a smooth bed and all bridges had to have solid planking so that the horse could walk or run on them. On top of the

sleepers were laid the wooden part of the rails, three inch planks just as they came from the saw with their edges untrimmed, and spiked to the sleepers. The iron straps were laid into position and gauged, and the inner edges of the planks were marked. Then these inner edges of the planks were dubbed down to the line with a broad axe. The broad axe and the adz were much used in those days especially around ship yards. Then the iron strap was spiked into place. It did not make any difference about the outer edge of the plank. With the sleepers, the three inch planks and the iron straps in place the road was ready for the cars.

### **The Cars**

The cars were four wheel trucks with the frames made from heavy timber. Lengthwise through the middle of the frame of a truck ran a heavy piece which projected beyond both ends and which had a strong iron spike sticking up at each end. On the top of the truck was a rocker with stake holes at each end. Two trucks were fastened together with a shackle, a heavy piece of timber with holes in each end to go over those iron pins. When lumber was short, a short shackle was used but when they hauled long lumber like ship's masts a longer shackle was put on.

If they wanted a car on another track four or five men would lift one truck off the rails, hitch on a horse, haul it to the other track, lift it on the rails and go back after the other. There were no brakes on those cars but a man would put the end of a lever under the frame of the car and over the top of a wheel and hang onto the other end until the car stopped and then trig it with a piece of board under each side of a wheel to make it stay put. These levers were often a long place of springy hornbeam but a car stake was used if nothing else was handy.

This would be crude today but it is safe to say that billions of feet of lumber were hauled along the banks of the St. Croix on cars like these.

These cars were made right here in town. The wheels, axles and grease boxes were cast at a foundry, either Slayton's or McCullough and Tait's and the frames by some ship carpenters. They were greased with mutton tallow and oil.

Only one horse was used unless on an up grade when a spare might be hitched on. The horse was fastened to the car by a long heavy rope. The trace chain was short so that the spreader would not come down against the horses heels. Do not think of the driver sitting on the load holding reins and a whip. He probably was away back ready to hold onto that hornbeam lever brake to keep the car from running the horse down. The horses knew his business and when the rope began to slacken he got down to earth and began to travel like one of Jehu's chariot horse to keep ahead of the load. This corn burning engine was more or less automatic.

It is hard to say just how many loads were hauled to Calais each day or whether more than one car was hauled at a time but the aggregate was big. The total from the first page of the account book (April 30 to May 2, 1843) was 946,000 feet. The account speaks of so many "joints" April 30, 1844: S. T. King to G. Mayhue 2 "joints" 13,000. Later when the word "load" was used the figures are about the same 4, 6 or 6 thousand to a load. One month records 2,800,000 feet of lumber moved.

Of course the same names are given over and over especially the ones who sent the lumber. L. McKusick sent many loads, but many names are not known today. J. McPhail, P. Avery, J. Polleys, F. Swan, O. H. King, Thompson W. Gould, J. Williams, N. Lamb. A. Holt, B. Horton, W. H. C. Steams.

Sometimes the name of the mill was given. Dyer Mills, W. Todd Mill, Point Mill, Pineo Mill, Gates Mill. C. and R. Smythe Mill.

The names on the Calais end of the road are more familiar. C. Copeland perhaps was Prof. Copelands grandfather. J. Stickney was a very familiar name in the lumber business. There was

the Stickney mill in Milltown at one time. All the Baptists ought to recognize the name of E. D. Green. He was an Insurance agent and one of the leaders in the Baptist Church and many meetings about building the Baptist church (now the Methodist) were held in his office.

Then there were T. Galvin, R. Watson, G. D. King, another very familiar name in Calais. J. Sargent, Rose and Thompson, John Knight, F. Todd, W. H. C. Stearns, Smyth and Lane. Ships Masts were hauled for S. T. King, R. F. Waite, J. Polleys, J. S. Pike, three to McClane, one for Wright and three for J. Polleys.

This gives a glimpse of the extent of the lumber business a hundred years ago but remember that a lot more came down by the old sluice.

Baring lumber deserves a paragraph by itself. If you stand on the bridge at Milltown and look up the river, near the bend you can see what was known as the sorting boom. Here the logs that came down the river were sorted according to kinds, sizes, owners, made into rafts, and sent to the various mills as ordered.

In Baring there were no good roads to haul lumber so it was sent down by water and on the N. B. side of the Milltown Boom was a gap called the Baring gap although it was never opened in later years, where it seems that the Baring lumber came, either for the sluice or the railroad for we find one list of 3,116,000 foot marked "from the river". The first road laid out in Baring was from the mill down to a landing.

I've been working on the railroad  
Through the live long day  
I've been working on the railroad  
To pass the time away.

And they did work in those days. No eight hour day with time and a half for over time and double time for Sundays. The custom was to go to work as soon as the marker in the mill could see, half an hour for breakfast, a half hour for dinner, and another for supper and work as long as the marker could see at night. The railroad had to keep pace with this.

But Calais was progressive and soon some engines were purchased and the road ran up to Baring which will make another story.