

For more information:

Worcester Public Library • Rutland Public Library
Barre Public Library • Rutland Historical Society
Barre Gazette Archive
Harold Judkins Central Mass. Railroad binder

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The Rutland Train Wreck of 1932



Cody Kennedy
Eagle Project
April 2008

The Background and History of the Central Massachusetts Railroad in Rutland, MA

Introduction

Before the 1900s, a trip from Rutland to Boston would take at least two days by horse or stagecoach, and even longer by walking. When a train service in Rutland was proposed, the local citizens were excited because it opened up their world to many new possibilities.

History of the Central Massachusetts Railroad

Residents and businesses in the central part of Massachusetts wanted a faster way to ship goods through the area. On May 10th, 1869, the Massachusetts Legislature chartered the Massachusetts Central Railroad. The goal was to create a rail line from Boston to Northampton across the middle of the state.

In 1882, rail service between Boston and Jefferson began. However, due to mismanagement and financial problems, the railroad went bankrupt. On Nov. 10, 1893, the railroad reorganized as the Central Massachusetts Railroad. Service from Boston to Jefferson resumed on Dec. 14, 1885.

The Railroad in Rutland

The Rutland portion of the line began on Nov. 8, 1886. Workers were paid \$1.75 a day. The first train in Rutland passed through on Dec. 12, 1887 as it traveled from Boston to Northampton. Rutland had three railroad stations: Mushcoppage, Rutland Depot, and West Rutland.

The Purpose of the Railroad

Trains through Rutland carried passengers, mail, and freight. Travel to Boston only took two hours. Many of the

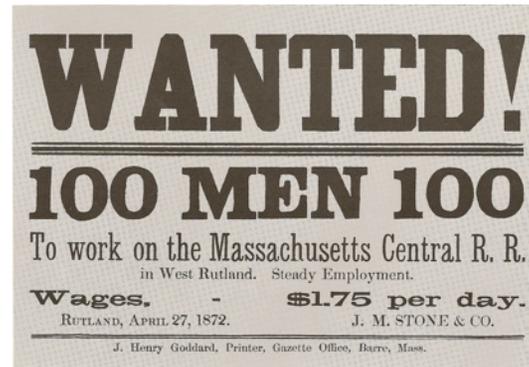
passengers on the train were tuberculosis patients coming to Rutland for treatment at the Rutland Sanatorium, the Rutland Veteran's Hospital, or other tuberculosis facilities in town. Captured WWI prisoners with tuberculosis were transported to the Rutland Prison Camp. Trains brought many summer vacationers to town at a time when Rutland had hotels, camps, and summer homes. The Central Mass. Railroad also carried mail.

Freight traveled through town as well. The major commodity shipped from Rutland to Worcester and Boston was milk from Rutland's many dairy farms. Special milk cars were used to keep the milk from spoiling. Coal was delivered from Pennsylvania coal mines to Rutland for heating homes and businesses.

Cotton was shipped in from the south to several local mills. The finished products were shipped to other cities. Area farmers transported dairy and meat products to Worcester and Boston. Rutland had several lumber mills and would transport lumber out to vendors. We would also import bricks and other building supplies to build the Rutland Sanatorium and the Rutland Veterans' Hospital.

The End of the Railroad

The last passenger train ever to go through Rutland was on April 23, 1932. The country was suffering from The Great Depression: the economy was in shambles, so the railroad shut down passenger service. The last freight train came to Rutland on Sept. 21, 1938. Central Massachusetts was hit with a major hurricane which damaged the tracks and rail beds. The estimated cost to repair the damage was more than could be justified, so the rail service was never resumed.



Central Mass Rail Trail in Rutland, 1932



The Accident

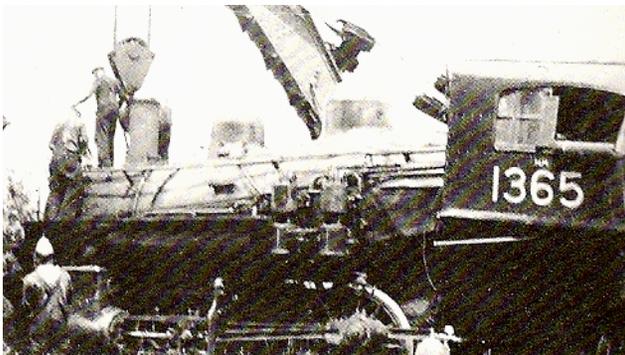
On the dreary day of August 3, 1932, two freight trains collided just half a mile east of Pommogussett Road in Rutland, Massachusetts, on the Central Mass. Railroad. Eastbound Engine #1435 was traveling between 20 and 25 miles per hour at the time of the accident; Engine #1365 was traveling 15 miles per hour.

Though the accident occurred at 12:45 PM, the cause of the accident occurred much earlier in the day. At 4:28 AM, Dispatcher Ingram issued a train order at Northampton Tower for Engine #1435. At 6 AM, Ingram was relieved of duty by Dispatcher Wood. Ingram informed Wood about the train order to Engine #1435, but Wood failed to read the train order book before issuing another train order to a different engine. Almost 4 hours later, at 9:59 AM, the fatal train order was issued to Engine #1365. Both train orders gave each engine the right to travel between West Boylston and Rutland, one traveling west, the other east.

When Engine #1435 pulled into the Rutland train station, Conductor Condon left the train with Head Brakeman Tremble to unload some cars and pick up new ones for delivery. When Tremble signaled Engine #1435 to pull ahead, the engine kept going, leaving Tremble frantically waving to stop the train. Instead of turning around and heading back to Northampton, the train was now heading toward West Boylston. The only men left aboard were Flagman Harrington,

who was on the platform of the caboose, and Engineman Young and Fireman Batcher, both in the engine. Flagman Harrington climbed on top of the train and proceeded to the front of the train. He looked over the coal car which was loaded with wood and saw neither Engineman Young nor Fireman Batcher. However, before any action could be taken, the train collided with Engine #1365 and Harrington was thrown violently into the coal car; at the time he thought an engine problem had caused the jolt. The dense woods hid Engine #1365 from the view of Engine #1435, but Engineer Goodfield and Fireman Boudreau of #1365 saw the oncoming train and jumped to safety.

Engineman Young and Fireman Batcher of Engine #1435 were killed in the collision. Flagman Harrington of Engine #1435 suffered leg injuries and lacerations of the head and face. Engineer Goodfield of Engine #1365 suffered a concussion and numerous other injuries. The Conductor Chamberlain of Engine #1365 suffered shoulder injuries. The town doctor of Rutland, Dr. Alexandrov, was summoned to the scene for first aid. Dr. Chestham of Barre viewed the bodies of the dead crew of Engine #1435 after their bodies were removed from the wreck. After the bodies were examined, they were brought to the Miles undertaking rooms in Jefferson. The injured were brought to the Holden hospital by the Rutland Veterans' ambulance.



Engine #1365.
Engineered by
Goodfield.
Traveling 15 mph
with four cars and
caboose at time of
crash.



Engine #1435.
Conducted by Condon.
Traveling 20-25 mph
with three cars and a
caboose at time of crash.