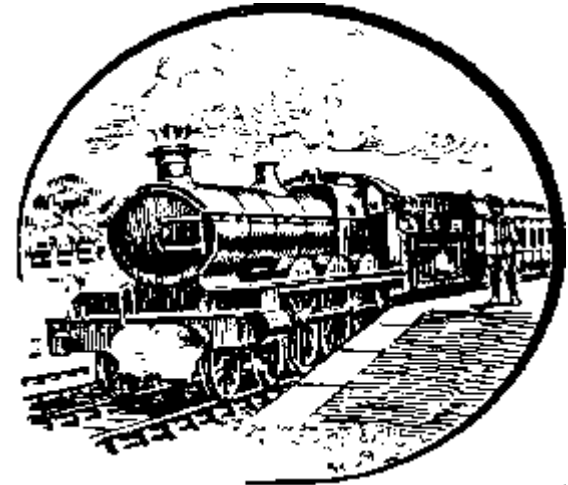




Kandiyohi County Historical Society
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Some slang used on the railroad during the old days are:

Hog: Steam Engine

Hoghead: Engineer-because he was “hoggish with power” the boss.

Ash Cat: fireman- because he dumps ashes.

Gandy Dancer: Section man- he (normally Chinese) would fix sections of the track only during the summer in-groups of about 50-100 men.

Highball: Train is ready to go

Dumped the air: Locked all breaks- trains used air pressure to work the brakes

Slugging the coal: Putting too much coal in the firebox- the engine would lose pressure.

Some Jobs a person might have with the railroad are:

Office worker-Clerks doing payroll

Depot Agent- Boss of shipping

Maintenance aways- fix track, make sure it's always in good shape

Switchmen- switch tracks in yards

Foremen- in charge of switchmen

Timekeepers- 45-60 workers

Officials- Train masters

Superintendent- boss

Cops- 700 watching railroad

Conductor- drives train

Fireman- Keeps fire burning



What types of clothes were worn?

Denim overalls- they were easy to wash, they dry fast, they are comfortable, they keep you warm during the winter, and they were cheap.

Handkerchief- keep the coal from going down your shirt, and wipe sweat from face, each worker carried three or four

Leather gloves- prevents hands from being burnt.

Why do some lanterns have different color bulbs?

Green = Go

Yellow = Prepare to stop

Red = Stop

White = train following

Who is Bill Taylor?

Bill Taylor spent most of his life working on the railroad. When he was 18, he was drafted into the navy. He was assigned many different roles including horizontal aimer, and head cook. When he was 27, he was released from the navy, and came back to Willmar where he worked as a meat cutter. This is where he met Mr. Richie. Mr. Richie was the head maintenance man and was very powerful. Bill asked Mr. Richie if he could get a job because working on the railroad paid a lot of money. Mr. Richie said he would, and did. Bill started out as a fireman, where he had to shovel 15 tons of coal 16 hours a day. After five years he was promoted to engineer. Bill was in three train wrecks. The first one happened when he was blowing snow. A grader's plow got stuck on the crossing, and Bill's train plowed right into it. The huge grader was spilt right in two. The train's pony trucks were derailed and the train bounced to a stop. No one was hurt.

The second wreck was the worst. Bill was driving a diesel train when a huge milk truck collided with him at an intersection. He and the firemen were both stuck inside the train. They were covered in a combination of diesel fuel, milk and water. The smell was horrible, and it was pitch black. Bill's arm was cut on the inner fore arm. He wrapped it with his handkerchief, and put his arm inside his suspenders as a temporary sling. A nearby farmer witnessed the accident and called for help. Help came and opened a door on the top of the engine. Bill lifted the fireman out and he was pulled to safety, but there was no one to lift Bill out, so with his one good arm, he moved a cooler under the opening, and climbed out. The cops had not arrived yet, but there was a guy with a brand new Plymouth willing to transport them to the nearest hospital. Bill refused the ride because he didn't want to get a brand new car full of blood, but the Good Samaritan pushed him into the car and took off down the road. About halfway to the hospital they met up with the cops. They flagged them down and the cops took them the rest of the way. The cop car was also brand new and the tires had not been aligned yet, so while they were going 90 down the old road the car was shaking like crazy. Both Bill and the other man were okay after about a week in the hospital, but Bill's vision was effected. He could no longer judge distance as well as he used to, and had to give up his job as a conductor.

The third wreck involved a passenger train. Bill was working as a fireman, when he noticed the flag on the switch wasn't right. He quickly notified the conductor. The conductor dumped the air, but it was too late. The train derailed going 90 miles per hour. It slid in its side most of the way. Bill now spends his time volunteering at the Kandiyohi County Historical Society giving tours of the train, and he frequently visits the Willmar train yard.