

ALBA DEAN
Pennsylvania Railroad Station Agent
Petoskey, Emmet County, Michigan
Agent 1930 - 1958

AGENT HERE CLOSING 50 YEARS OF RAILROADING, CAN RECALL HEY DAY

Alba Dean, Petoskey Pennsylvania Railroad station agent since 1930, plans to retire come the opening of deer season and terminate half a century of railroading. And he'll be off for camp in quest of his buck.

Dean started with the Grand Trunk Railroad, as a "student," for a year, then spent six months in Cedar Springs as a helper, warehouseman and agent.

In 1910 he went to work for the Grand Rapids & Indiana RR which about 1917 became Pennsylvania. He spent time at Birch's Mill near Cedar Springs, then worked at Forman's Crossing and Kegomic. Between 1924-1930 he was relief agent and worked in just about every station between Mackinaw City and Ft. Wayne.

Dean was here during the hey-day of the railroad when just about everything from groceries to people, merchandise and wood moved in and out by railroad. "We used to have five passenger trains daily each way in Petoskey," he recalled. "We also had a double track to Harbor springs and dummy trains every 15 minutes. Trains left every hour from 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. to Walloon Lake and Alanson—even had special stops at Emmet St. as well as at the depot.

On these runs, dummies made stops at Bay View, Round Lake, Roaring Brook and Wequetonsing. The railroad promoted a summer pageant "Hiawatha" at Round Lake and brought many spectators from a wide area. In those days freight was booming too. The tannery at Kegomic kept them busy with bark and hides. The Lime Kiln which operated on the waterfront in what is not Pioneer Park needed lots of wood and shipped lime. Michigan Maple Block Co. shipped at least three cars a week.

"I had to deliver 125 paychecks twice a month in those days—now it's six," he said.

Railroad crew here in the early days included three operators, a ticket agent, a station agent, bill collector, a clerk, a yard master, a round house crew, a watering crew; two track crews and two switch crews.

The railroad had agents at Bay View, Harbor Springs, Conway, Alanson, Brutus, Pellston, Levering, Carp Lake, Mackinaw City, Clarion, Boyne Falls, Elmira, Mancelona, Alba and Kalkaska. Now there's an agent at Petoskey, Mancelona and Kalkaska and the Harbor Springs agent covers Pellston.

Dean likes gardening and working with power tools. He and Mrs. Dean, who comes from New Mexico, haven't made up their minds what they'll do when he has free time. He has sort of a hankering to live out West, perhaps in Colorado where they recently visited and the hunting, fishing and climate proved mighty popular to him.

Extracted from Petoskey News Review dated November 7, 1958.



CLOSING AN ERA. Alba Dean, Pennsylvania station agent here for 28 years and a railroader for half a century, will retire come the opening of deer season. Here he is shown at work in his office, surrounded by papers, rubber stamps, files and his two telephones—one operated by the railroad which connects everything from Mackinaw City to Ft. Wayne. He's seen the rise and fall of the railroad in the north—from five passenger trains each way daily to none, and from 125 employees here to six.

(News-Review photo by Jim Doherty)