

The Carrollton of Carrollton

The Story of a Little Road
Which Does a Big Business

By Ole Reliable



The Carrollton's spur leading into the Carrollton Furniture Manufacturing Company has such a sharp degree of curvature that the engine cannot negotiate it. The narrowers working is done by shoving a string of freight cars back into the plant to couple onto the cars to be hauled out. Engines are placed for leading in the same manner.

THE Carrollton Railroad, mighty rail atom of Northern Kentucky and a next-door neighbor of Butler State Memorial Park, is a link between rivers, The Kentucky and the Ohio at Carrollton, and the Old Reliable's twin rivulets of main line steel at Worthville. As such it has an importance that is much greater than its modest 8.8-mile length would indicate. Modern and progressive, it does a surprising amount of business for one so small, originating such diversified carload traffic as sand and gravel, tobacco, whiskey, furniture and canned tomatoes. The Carrollton, incidentally, is not only a connection of the Old Reliable; it is practically a member of the family, the L. & N. having acquired a majority of its capital stock in 1930. Its present president is W. E. Smith, our Company's vice president and general manager, who was elected to the executive post

on the short line on March 14 to succeed the late John M. Scott.

Personification of the Carrollton Railroad in its home town of Carrollton, and thereabouts, is R. L. Booth, who is the railroad's vice president and treasurer and who actually "runs" the little carrier. A native of nearby Owen

County, Mr. Booth has been with the Carrollton for some 25 years. He has held his present post since November 15, 1932, and is the only officer of the railroad who is not an L. & N. employe. He remembers the line in less happy times when it was known as the Carrollton and Worthville, an appellation which the writer recalls having heard occasionally trusted into the "Cage worn and Worthless."

That was back in the pre-Old Reliable days of the railroad, when traffic anarchy, resulting from highway competition, and a hells-for-the-money physical plant combined finally to boot the little line into the hands of a receiver. The year of this financial debacle was 1926, and the receiver ran the railroad until 1929. At that time P. F. Manning, general manager for the receiver, representing bond-

holders, purchased the Carrollton & Worthville at a foreclosure sale and operated the property as owner until September 1, 1930, when Mr. Manning



Above: The Carrollton's section gang under former Foreman Taylor Browning laid a job of new track to serve the nearby principal industry—the Nuygen Sand Company. Left: The construction of the Carrollton and the Old Reliable at Worthville, Ky. The Carrollton's track is on the left; the L. & N.'s bridge across the Kentucky River may be seen in the distance.



deeded the property to The Carrollton Railroad which was organized to acquire and operate the property. It has been a going business—and good business, too—under that name ever since.

The minutes books in Mr. Booth's office at 5th and Park streets in Carrollton show that the Carrollton and Worthville Railroad was completed in 1908, its first president being James Gayle and its incorporators consisting of John I. C. Watson, Theodore C. Sively, Harry R. Moore, Mr. Gayle, H. Ernest Rashall, Charles E. Davis, G. D. Crain and A. Z. Boyer. Carrollton even then was a prosperous town, its location at the joining of the Kentucky and Ohio rivers being a strategic one, and the idea of a railroad connecting it and the L. & N.'s Louisville-Cincinnati line at Worthville (until the advent of the Diesel's "moss" stop for all trains because of its watering facilities) seemed a happy one.

The cost of construction was not excessive, the builders following the valley of the Kentucky River between Carrollton and Worthville, and at first fortune seemed to smile upon the undertaking. The engine which had been secured from the L. & N. did a good business in the hauling of both passengers and freight but the little line lost money. Motor transport, whose appearance upon the scene was almost simultaneous with that of the C. & W., cut an increasing might upon the latter's revenues, and finally, as related, the road threw in the sponge in 1926. The track was in a very bad condition at that time and it was a common occurrence for the engine to become derailed.

The general manager for the receiver, F. F. Manning, did a capable job of operating the C. & W. and when it was finally taken over by the Carrollton, its physical condition had improved considerably, a notable innovation being the change from 56-lb. steel rail to 70-lb. steel rail. Since 1933 the metamorphosis from "L-A" to "L-N" has been even more complete, the 1937 bond which covered 50% of the Carrollton's trackage with some 10 feet of water raising some slight interruption to the program of improvement. Today, every inch of the line's 8.8 miles of main line track is laid with 90-lb. steel rail, the 1.54



Left: Vice President and Treasurer E. L. Booth takes a look at the record. Below: The offices of the Carrollton are located in the building at 5th and Park streets in Carrollton.

miles of yard track being laid with 70-lb. steel rail. The track is tie-plated, and is ballasted with cinders and gravel and all cross-ties are cross-tied. The line's two 250-foot bridges over White's Run Creek and Goose Creek are also supported by treated timbers. This program of improvement was completed in the fall of 1943.

The Carrollton Railroad's rolling stock consists of Engine No. 528, which it leases from the L. & N., a rail motor car, one freight car and a highway motor truck. There has been no passenger service on the line since 1926; hence no "parish" cars are owned. The Carrollton's last passenger service incidentally was performed by a hybrid vehicle with stanged wheels which at one time had been a Ford truck. It seated more or less comfortably, about 30 people, and made several round-trips a day between Carrollton and Worthville.

At the present time Engine No. 528 makes one round-trip daily—except Sunday—between Carrollton and Worthville, leaving Carrollton around 7:30 a. m., and making the trip to Worthville in about 30 minutes. Grades are steep on the Carrollton, some of them running at high as 100 per cent.



If the "consist" includes as many as 15 cars, as it frequently does, the going is rather slow for the engine. This is a former yard engine which still keeps its hand in as a "yard goat" by doing the necessary switching at Carrollton and Worthville. (There are no stations along the line of road and the L. & N.'s agent at Worthville also looks after the interests of the Carrollton.)

The motor truck, which also doubles in brass as a pick-up and delivery vehicle, makes one round-trip daily between Carrollton and Worthville, handling express shipments.

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This is how the passenger traffic was handled on the Carrollton some 27 years ago. The man at the controls right is George W. King, present day engineer for the little road.



Above: The crew of Engine No. 528 gives her a grooming. Left to right: Conductor Wilbur L. Conforty, Engineer George W. King and Fireman William G. Webb.

for the former adding for the engineer on No. 932.

Since the Carrollton necessarily has such a limited personnel each member of it also performs tasks that are ordinarily performed by specialists on larger roads. Thus, the engineer, fireman and engine watchman extend light or running repairs to the engine (it is moved into South Louisville for heavier repairs), the conductor conducts fireman tests of the water used in the engine's boiler and Mr. Booth, whose official personality is somewhat gruff, thinks nothing of jerryrolling, distorting, stuffing and a host of other activities, in addition to his executive duties.

The foregoing all adds up to the following: The Carrollton is in first-class physical condition and it is paying its way. Traffic could be heavier, but, on the other hand, it is quite adequate. Total operating revenues in 1943 were \$49,456.56, a decline as compared with \$52,022.23 in 1942, but sufficient to show a net income of \$6,817.67. The road doesn't owe a cent and it is the third largest taxpayer in Carroll County, its payments being exceeded only by those of the L. & N. and the Kentucky Utilities Company. Worthy of note also is the fact that in the past 17 years the Carrollton and the L. & N. have jointly shared \$2,028,364.23 in revenue.

The Carrollton

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Principal revenue producers for the Carrollton are sand and gravel and tobacco in the order named. Thus, of the 4,265 carloads of freight handled by the road in 1942, a very good year, 1,700 carloads were sand and gravel and 525 were tobacco. Furniture, whiskey, canned tomatoes and a scattering of other commodities, including 256 cars of inbound freight (coal, lumber, cement, etc.) also ran. Last year was not as good a year for the Carrollton as 1942, principally because of building restrictions; nevertheless, 3,572 carloads, or 175,463 tons were moved.

Carrollton is one of the largest local tobacco markets in the state of Kentucky, its recent sales being exceeded only by those at Maysville and Lexington. The Carrollton itself passes through a fertile tobacco-growing region in the bottom-lands of the Kentucky River. Numerous tobacco warehouses line Polk Street, or "Tobacco Road," and the railroad is right in the middle of things with its main line running down the center of the street and side tracks permitting the loading of cars at the warehouse doors. A chronic occasional worry of Mr. Booth's is the possibility of some growers of parking their trucks and wagons smack dab across the Carrollton's tracks.

In the three-month period, December 1, 1943-March 1, 1944, the Carrollton transported 652 carloads of tobacco, and Mr. Booth estimates that there are still some 10,000,000 pounds of the choicest leaf in Carrollton's R. M. Barker Tobacco Company's loading warehouses. He hopes that his railroad will have the job of moving the bulk of this to manufacturers.

The Nugent Seed Company, whose Ohio River plant at Carrollton supplies much seed for the L. & N.'s right-of-way, the Carrollton Furniture Manufacturing Company, the Carrollton Canning Company and the George T. Stage Distillery are the Carrollton's other principal shippers. All cars of outbound freight are turned over to the L. & N. at Worthsville, the connection between the two lines being several hundred yards south of the L. & N.'s station at that point.

It takes less than a dozen full-time employees to operate the Carrollton, eleven to be exact. In addition to Mr. Booth, these are: Mrs. Edna D. Lancaster, agent at Carrollton; C. F. Ehalt, truck driver; Taylor Browning, section foreman; Wilbur J. Crockett, conductor; George W. King, engineer; Wallace G. Noot, fireman; R. J. Bradley, engine watchman; and Oscar Scott, Daniel Payne, Henry White and Jack Harris, section laborers. Each of these employees is versatile and willing; and, indeed, in some other cases, may occasionally necessitate one of the section laborers taking the truck driver's place,