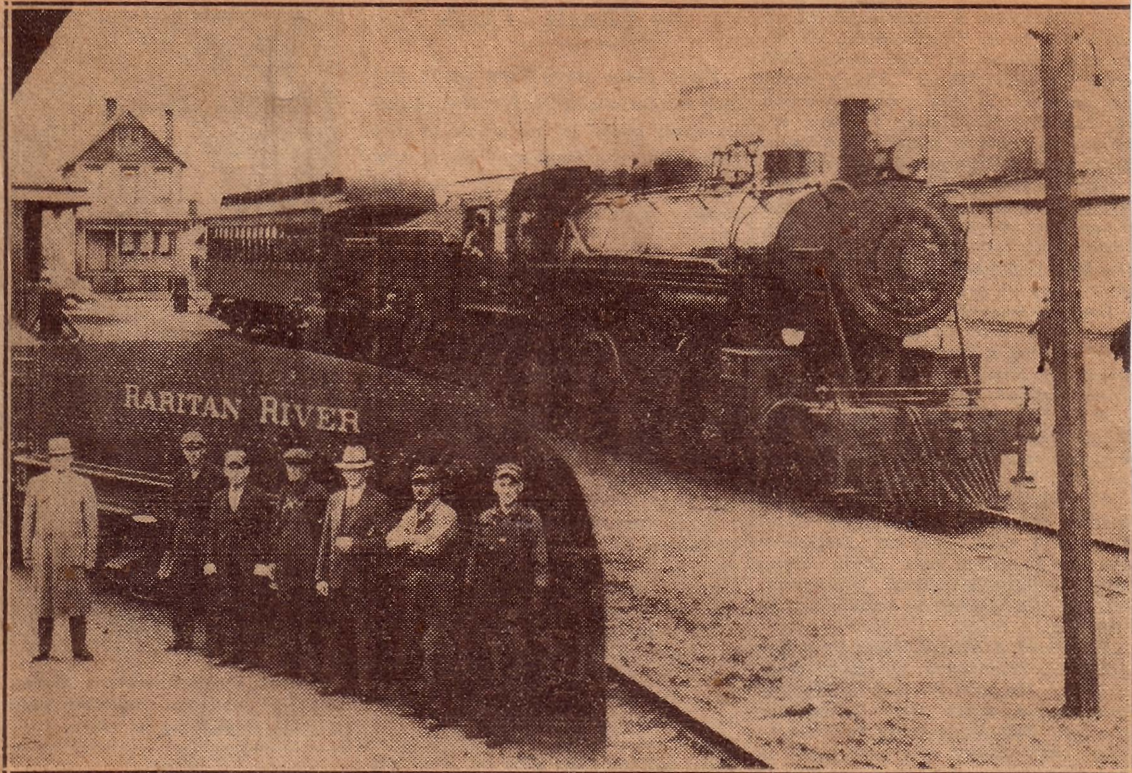


# Start of a History-Making Journey



The last passenger train of the Raritan River Railroad Company began the final run to the South Amboy yards yesterday morning just after the above photograph was taken at the Sandford street station.

In the inset are, left to right, Theodore R. Manduka, chief of the railroad police; William Bloodgood, brakeman; Benjamin Damon, flagman; Melvin Walling, conductor; Harold Filskov, assistant superintendent; Barney Novak, engineer, and Martin Nelson, fireman.

## LAST PASSENGER TRAIN TRAVELS OVER RARITAN RIVER RAILROAD

### Service Discontinued by Middlesex County Line After Half Century

By RAY ZIMMERMAN

Manned by a full crew and carrying only two regular paying passengers, also a Sunday Times reporter and officials of the road, the last passenger train of the Raritan River Railroad Company made the final trip from this city to South Amboy yesterday morning.

A passenger coach and a big Baldwin locomotive made up the train, last to provide passenger service on the 12-mile line, nearly 50 years old.

"Goodbye, no run no more, goodbye," called Joseph Lagoda of South Amboy as he left the train at Parlin.

The only other paying passenger was a casual rider who traveled between Milltown and South River.

If A. F. Thompson, of 165 Washington avenue, Milltown, worked on Saturday, he would have been on the train from Milltown to this city, but he has Saturday off and took his last ride Thursday.

Rather inglorious was the ter-

mination of the passenger service of a once amazing little railroad which carried as high as 9,000 passengers a day during the World War.

### Freight Service Goes On

The State Board of Public Utilities Commissioners approved the application of the railroad to discontinue its regular passenger service, consisting of a round-trip daily except Sunday. The usual freight service will continue.

No protest was made. The few passengers had paid a total of only \$76 during the past year, and the expenses amounted to \$5,704.

In 1918 the railroad carried almost two and a quarter million passengers in addition to the enormous freight loads.

"Yes, the rails were kept hot in those days," recalled Harold Filskov, assistant to his father, Thorvald Filskov, as superintendent of the road. The younger Mr. Filskov and his son, Harold T., were on the last passenger train run.

Theodore R. Manduka of South River, chief of the railroad's police, and Roy B. Sheppard of Milltown, the supervising agent, were also passengers.

At the throttle of the locomotive—Number 15—was Barney Novak of Sayreville, an engineer for the

### Will Continue Carrying Freight; Declined Since War Days

road since 1911. Novak was accustomed to crowds waiting for the train back in the days of war time hustle, he said.

### In Train Crew

Martin Nelson of South Amboy was the fireman; the brakeman was William Bloodgood of South Amboy, and the flagman was Benjamin Damon of Jamesburg.

Collection of the fares was left to Melvin Walling of Perth Amboy, the conductor. After the final passenger run, Walling made plans to work on freight service.

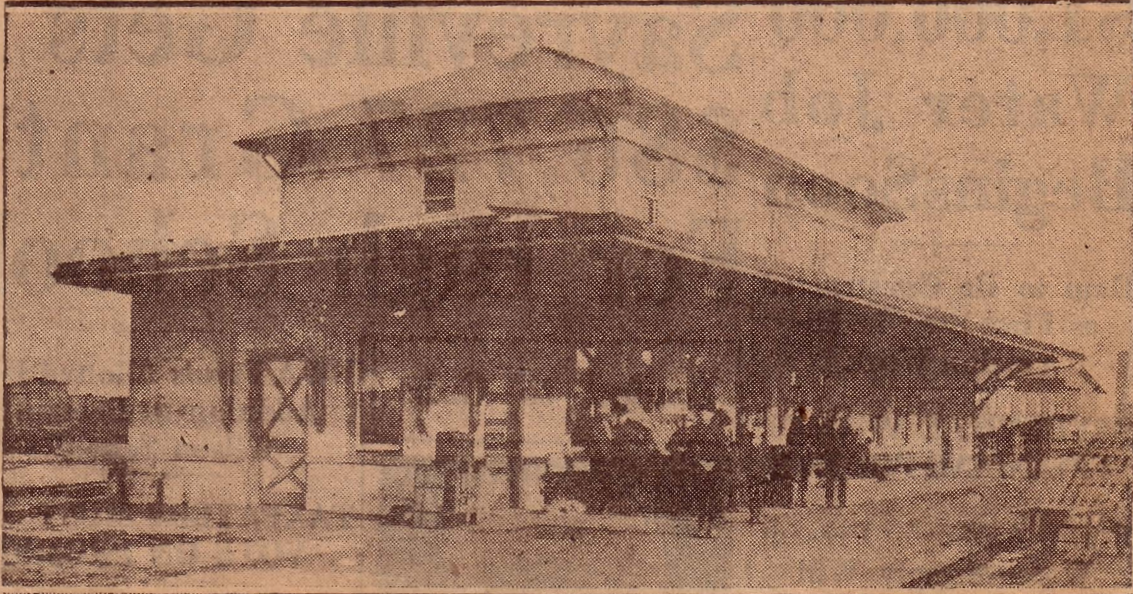
The train moved from the South Amboy yards shortly after 6:30 o'clock yesterday morning, picked up a baggage car and continued toward this city. Stops were made at Bergen Hill, Parlin, South River, Milltown and New Brunswick stations.

"The round-trip can be made in about the same time as a bus makes a one-way trip," explained Mr. Filskov. "We have a fairly direct route to New Brunswick."

As the locomotive chugged along,

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# Passenger Service Discontinued By Raritan River Railroad After Half Century; Freight Goes On



New Brunswick station of Raritan River Railroad, located on Sandford street. Here last passenger train pulled out yesterday on final trip after many years of service.

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Mr. Filskov pointed out the extensive clay fields and industrial properties.

#### Moving Pictures Taken

Duck's Nest Pond, where the moving picture, "The Juggernaut", was made, is near the Hercules Powder plant. Part of the trestle protrudes from the pond recently drained so men could salvage the remains of a locomotive and cars which plunged into the water to create a film thriller.

"The Vitagraph Company was in Brooklyn, and the railroad was an ideal spot for them to take pictures," said Mr. Filskov.

Head-on collisions, runaway cars, and other exciting events happened on the railroad. A load of wild animals was supposed to escape from a car after one movie "wreck". A high fence was built at the rear of the George Smith fruit farm on Milltown road to keep them "in bounds". But a bear went over the fence in no time, ambled to a house and was seen sticking his head out the second-story window. He was caught later.

#### Never Halted Service

The railroad enjoyed the reputation of never halting service because of snow.

Mr. Sheppard recalled when the lights of South Amboy were kept burning because kerosene was transported from the Standard Oil Company here.

"The roads were blocked by snow, and if it wasn't for the Raritan River Railroad the lights of South Amboy would not have been lighted," he said.

A round-trip ticket from South Amboy to New Brunswick cost 60 cents, and rides between stations



**HAROLD FILSKOV**  
Assistant Superintendent of  
Raritan River Railroad

constructed by the line at South Amboy to keep the rolling equipment in perfect condition. A bad axle might cause a car loaded with powder to leave the rails, explode and touch off other explosives to blast away a large section of the county where the accident occurred.

Once a car loaded with black powder did tip over on top of a switch containing a burning lantern. Nothing happened, however, and when the car was lifted and the wrecked switch cleared it was

transported from the Standard Oil Company here.

"The roads were blocked by snow, and if it wasn't for the Raritan River Railroad the lights of South Amboy would not have been lighted," he said.

A round-trip ticket from South Amboy to New Brunswick cost 60 cents, and rides between stations were 10 cents.

When the Michelin Tire Company was turning out hundreds of tires daily, three car loads of passengers were transported to the factory from this city every day. Other plants along the line were also furnished transportation service for their employes.

No employe will lose his position because of the curtailment of the passenger service, Mr. Filskov stated. The day's work will begin at 8:30 instead of 6:30, however.

#### Glamorous History

Gun powder, shells, picnic crowds and motion picture stars—What an odd assortment! But all have figured prominently in the life of the Raritan River Railroad.

The Raritan River Railroad, which runs from New Brunswick to South Amboy, with all its trackage within Middlesex County, was started 50 years ago this month. And though its equipment and length is limited this small railroad-concern has played a major role in the industrial development of the county.

With nearly a half century to its credit, for it was founded in 1888 and construction was completed in 1899, the Raritan River Railroad has been largely instrumental in the industrial growth of the land south of the Raritan River, from which it got its name.

Rise of the sand, clay and brick business in the South River, Sayreville and Milltown area is traceable largely from the opening of the railroad. From the earlier days sand, clay and bricks had been hauled by teams of horses and mules to the river and then shipped by water to New York harbor, to compete with the products of the pits and plants of the middle Hudson valley, Haverstraw and other famous brickmaking towns.

#### Railroad Spurs Progress

But the railroad opened new trade routes and soon the pits were dotted with figures of men working, digging and tunnelling into the clay banks. New and enlarged brick plants were constructed until Middlesex County could boast of having the largest brick plant in the United States at one time. Its products were eagerly sought for use in many of the larger buildings of New York City and other eastern coast municipalities.

But sand and clay and bricks are rather prosaic materials. And while few can vision romance from the products of the clay pits the fact that the Raritan River Railroad was largely responsible for the presence of two powder plants in Middlesex County grips the imagination.

Gun powder and shells—instruments of war. Millions of tons of these were hauled over the lines of the little railroad during the World War. Before the United States entered the conflict the munitions were sent from the plants in the Parlin area to the ports to be sent to the allies, and later to provide large and small shells for American guns and troops in France.

#### Ticklish Business!

This munitions business of the railroad called for the best of equipment and the utmost care in handling the powder and shells. Larger railroad shops were con-

tact touch off other explosives to blast away a large section of the county where the accident occurred.

Once a car loaded with black powder did tip over on top of a switch containing a burning lantern. Nothing happened, however, and when the car was lifted and the wrecked switch cleared it was found the lantern had fortunately been extinguished when the car fell on it.

At another time during the hauling of explosives a carload of loaded shells was derailed and tipped at an angle of about 45 degrees. It did not tip over entirely for workmen, scarcely daring to breathe lest the car crash and cause the shells to explode, rammed heavy timbers under it and with cranes and jacks restored it to the tracks.

But the service of the little railroad during the World War was more than just carrying the products of the Parlin powder plants. Each day it hauled thousands of workmen to the plants to meet the demands of belching cannon.

In 1918 a total of 25 daily passenger trips were made during the week on the railroad, and on Sunday 13 passenger trips were made, when production of the plants was at its peak. That year the railroad transferred a total of 2,234,653 passengers and carried approximately 1,500,000 tons of freight.

#### Traffic Drops Off

From that record peak of passenger and freight traffic the railroad dwindled steadily in the handling of passengers. Buses and private cars have provided transportation from New Brunswick to South River, Parlin, and Milltown since.

Last year the Raritan River hauled only 901 passengers, while its freight tonnage totalled 666,083. The freight tonnage for 1937 was greater than it had been during the several previous years and the line's earnings per share of stock compared favorably with the profits of the large railway systems of the nation.

The growth of the little railroad can be traced in great extent to the love and labor of Thorvald Filskov, who has been connected with the company since 1898. Since 1916 he has been chief engineer and superintendent and the modern equipment, trackage and bridges are monuments to his determination to fit the railway to provide service for Middlesex County. For years Mr. Filskov has had as assistant superintendent his son, Harold, who has worked shoulder to shoulder with his father to improve equipment and personnel. Today the company provides employment for 90 workers.

When the line was first opened to New Brunswick the station was located on Commercial avenue. In 1900 the line was extended to the present Sandford street terminus.

#### Now 42 Miles Long

During the past several years new spur lines have been constructed, until today the Raritan River Railroad has a total of 42.17 miles of tracks, although its main stem is only 12 miles long. At present its rolling stock consists chiefly of seven locomotives and 17 freight cars.

Outside of the service given in hauling munitions and workers to the powder plants during the World War perhaps New Brunswick and Middlesex County residents think of the railroad chiefly in connections with the picnics formally operated over its tracks.

It wasn't so many years ago that picnics were held in Asbury Park