

Please Note: These original documents are the personal property of Janice Brown (e-mail janicebr@earthlink.net). You are not authorized to copy, reproduce, distribute, publicly perform, publicly display or modify these photographs or documents in any way, without my written permission. Copyright 2003. All rights reserved.

=====

*Pageant          June 30, 1946*  
*Compiled and Narrated*  
*by*  
*Mattie Kilborn Webster for*  
*The Two Hundredth Anniversary*  
*of the*  
*Town of Merrimack NH*  
-----

EPISODE 12 - Presented by Arthur Bruce and Hazel Metcalf

BOSTON AND MAINE RAILROAD

1842 - In 1842 the Concord Railroad was open to the people of this Town. The first passenger train went over the single track on June 28, 1842 with the Officers of the railroad, and a few men invited to witness the trial trip. The President was Isaac Spaulding of Nashua, a native of Amherst. All the others except the Treasurer, Mr. Lovering of Boston, were New Hampshire men.

Foster Stearns a valuable citizen of Manchester lost his life because of this trial trip. The day was rough and windy and he took a severe cold, was seized with violent pains on the cars. After his return to his home, about 1 o'clock PM he became delirious and he died July 1<sup>st</sup>.

It was called the Concord and Nashua Railroad and was 36 miles long; being incorporated in 1835 with a capital stock of over one million dollars. It was chartered June 1835 but owing to the following difficulties it was slow in being completed.

1. The financial panic of 1837
2. The general lack of public interest
3. The opposition by the landowners
4. The frequency of accidents on the railroads

So many accidents occurred the Governor asked the Legislature to require the Railroads to be held responsible. The Legislature voted to do this, and also a person being found guilty because of neglect could be sentenced to hard labor for life.

Litigation with the landowners continued for years. Questions of the constitutionality of law were constantly being raised until the Supreme Court decided that a railroad is such a public use, that is affords just grounds for taking private property for public use, and the United States Constitution does not interfere with this right.

July 4, 1842 - A free ride was given to all citizens between and including Concord, Manchester and Nashua, and thousands were present from adjacent towns to take their first ride or to witness their incoming or outgoing.

Business increased to such an extent that a double track was thought necessary and it was built in 1846, 1847, 1848, \$50,000 being borrowed from the State of Massachusetts. It was incorporated with other Railroads in 1853 and called Boston and Maine.

When the railroad was built it was the original intention to continue along the westerly bank through West Manchester to Amoskeag where had been built the

canal and the early mills of Manchester.

Opposition developed and the story was that Thomas Chandler, an influential man at the Legislature, who ran a Tavern at the corner of Meeting House Road where Harry Peaslee now lives in Bedford was opposed. He gave as his reason that the smoke and cinders from the locomotive, and the dust from the train would soil the wool of his sheep; as the proposed track would go through his pastures. His influence was so great that they bridged the River at Goffs Falls with a wooden bridge. Bernice Pritchard, a well known woman, predicted that the timbers of the bridge would rot from the heart out and that the outside would be apparently sound, when the inside was entirely decayed. The cause would be the mist rising from the Falls. On boring into these timbers when the bridge was repaired in 1867, this was found to be true.

Another story was told by an old resident of Bedford, now long dead; remembering his first view of the train. He had gone with an older brother to Anderson's store in Reeds Ferry to buy a pair of boots. While engaged in making the selection, the cars were heard to whistle in the distance. Instantly the boots were forgotten, and a hasty run was made for the railroad station. They arrived just in time to see the cars leave the station. To a boy of 11, this secured the greatest wonder he had ever seen.

Three more attempts at railroad building were undertaken in this Town. Two succeeding. The Manchester and Milford, abandoned. The other by an act of Congress approved July 8, 1846 a body of men headed by Charles Atherton were incorporated as the Souhegan Railway and invested with power usually held by such corporations. By this charter the Concord Railroad was authorized with the consent of the Souhegan Railroad Company to construct a railroad from some point on the Concord Railroad at Souhegan Village (now Merrimack) to Amherst Village; the expense of such construction to be added to the stock of the Concord Railroad. The Souhegan Company agreed and held a meeting September 2. The matter was postponed. It was taken up again by the stock holders at Nashua October 1, 1846 at which time it was turned down by a vote of 63 in a negative majority.

The Souhegan Company tried to raise money to build it on their own, but a sufficient amount of stock could not be subscribed and the matter was dropped. Later a railroad was built from Wilton to Nashua, with a Railroad Station at South Merrimack Village.