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Southeast Limited

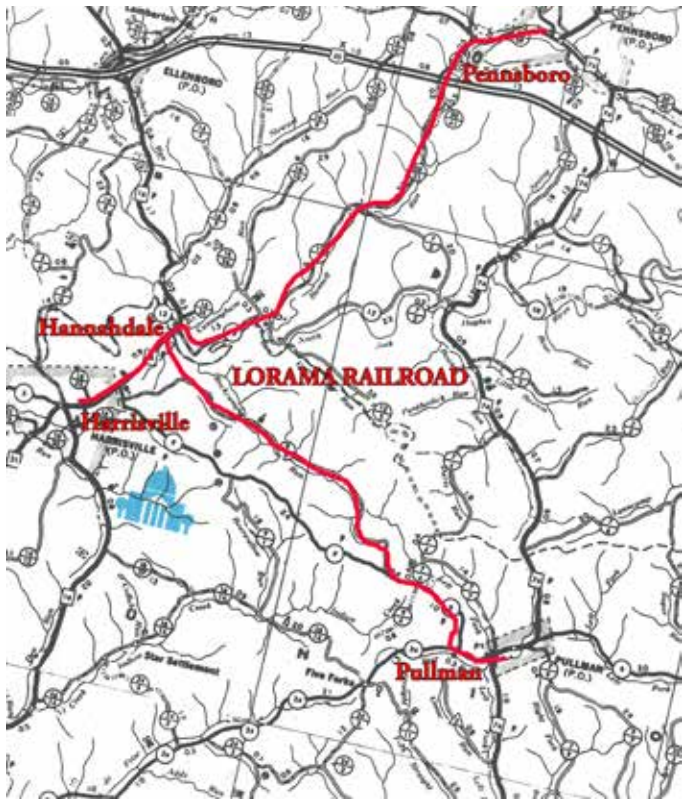
**The Pennsboro & Harrisville RR
and The Lorama RR of Ritchie County, WV**

By Donald R. Hensley, Jr



*Lorama RR #3, a small Porter 0-6-0 with a four wheel tender and a mixed train in tow, prepares to leave the depot at Pennsboro, WV circa 1910 for its eight mile and 45 minute journey to Harrisville..
Postcard from the collection of the author.*

It all started with Moses P. Kimball, a Connecticut Yankee who had learned the lumber trade in Herkimer, NY before finally settling down in Pennsboro, WV in the early 1870's. Kimball and his associates purchased the timber rights on Bunnell Run and built a barrel and stave factory in Pennsboro. A narrow gauge horse drawn tram line was built southwest along Bunnell Run to carry the logs to the mill. This line was expanded over the years towards the Ritchie county seat of Harrisville. Harrisville had no railroad connection so Kimball and his partners incorporated their little road in 1873 and named it the Pennsboro & Harrisville Railroad. The railroad was finished by November 30 of 1874 when the first carload of coal was delivered to Harrisville behind a very tired horse. The Ritchie Gazette



reported on the event: “ A HOME-MADE RAILROAD IN RITCHIE COUNTY- The Pennsboro & Harrisville Railroad is completed. A car load of coal was brought over it on last Monday. This road is eight miles in length and extends from this place to Pennsboro. At present it is intended to use horse power, but it is hoped that before a great while a locomotive may be placed upon the road. Even as it is, the road will certainly be a benefit and a convenience. At any season of the year goods, coal, lumber, ect. , can be hauled over it. Harrisville should now have an express office, and articles sent by express can be brought directly here. A passenger car should be placed upon the road, which, especially during the winter season , will be a much more comfortable means of travel than a hack. M.P. Kimball President of the road and all the officers and stockholders deserve credit for their energy in

doing as much as they have done, for their energy in doing as much as they had many discouragements against which to content.”



Lorama RR #4, a tiny Porter 2-4-0 with a four wheel tender and a mixed train in tow, prepares to leave the depot at Harrisville, WV circa 1916. One of the flat cars has been outfitted to excursion duty, so its possible this train was running during the Ritchie County Fair. Postcard from the collection of the suthor.



Lorama RR # 4 at Pennsboro, waiting for the box cars to be unloaded. The Lorama had two combines, an older model with seven round top windows and this one with eight straight top windows. Postcard from the collection of the author.

The first steam engine was ordered from Porter in early 1875 and a little 0-4-0 with a four wheel tender was delivered in May. This number 1 was proudly named "Harrisville" and I'm sure she was a vast improvement over horses in getting the trains over the hills of West Virginia. No spare engine was purchased for another ten years so horses must have been used from time to time when the "Harrisville" was in the shops.

Even though they now had an engine, it appears that the original construction would not support it. Being originally a horse drawn road, it's been my opinion that the original was of wood rail construction which even a small Porter 0-4-0 could not stay upright and there were several trestles that probably needed rebuilding to support a steam locomotive. Because of this it was on Thanksgiving Day of 1875 before the first official scheduled train was run to Harrisville. A Railway Age news release from November of 1875 describe the finances of this early narrow gauge: "NARROW GAUGE RAILROAD- We have noted several cheaply-built local railways, but the Pennsboro & Harrisville, in West Virginia, (3-foot gauge,) is about the cheapest yet. The president writes us the whole cost of the 9 miles of road, including a locomotive, a passenger car, and two gondola cars, was \$30,000, which is an average of \$3,333 per mile. The capital stock is \$12,000, and the property is mortgaged for the iron, ect., for \$12,000, running ten years at 8 per cent. The earnings average from \$500 to \$600 per month; the expenses from \$260. At this rate the net earnings are from \$210 to \$340 a month, or say, from \$2800 to \$4000 per year.

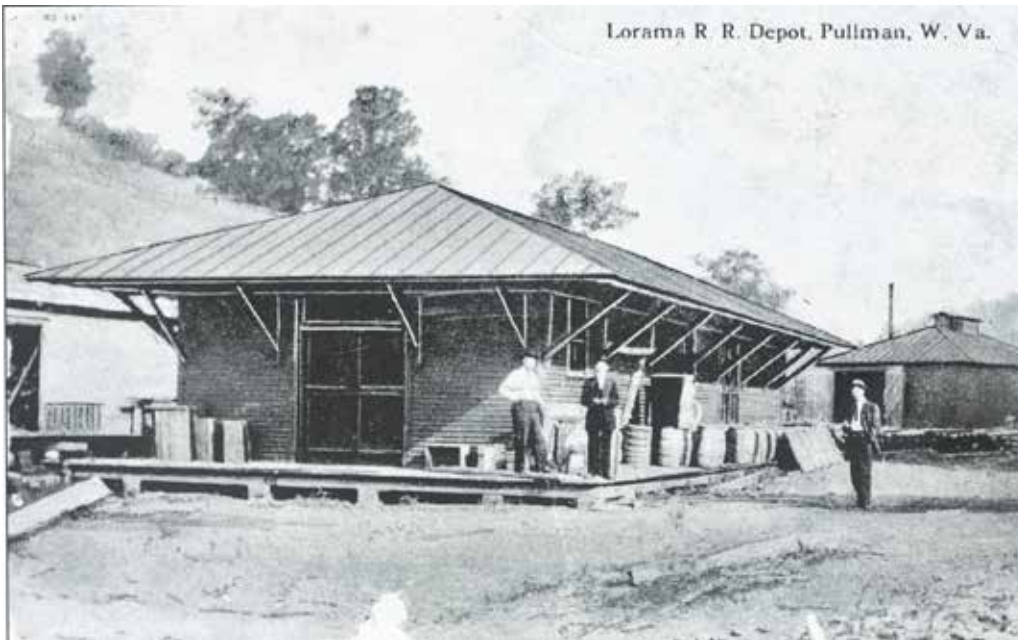
Train on Lorama R. R.,
Pennsboro to
Harrisville, W. Va.



The lowest figure would pay a handsome interest on the entire cost of this property, which is what very few railways in this or any other country do nowadays. We would like very much to have the exact figures for an entire years operation. One other noteworthy feature besides the remarkably small cost of the road is suggested in this item: No paid officers on this road, but two freight agents, who are paid \$100 per annum each. Here is something for other companies to read and consider. When they get the aggregate pay of their officers and agents down to \$200 per year they will begin to make money.”

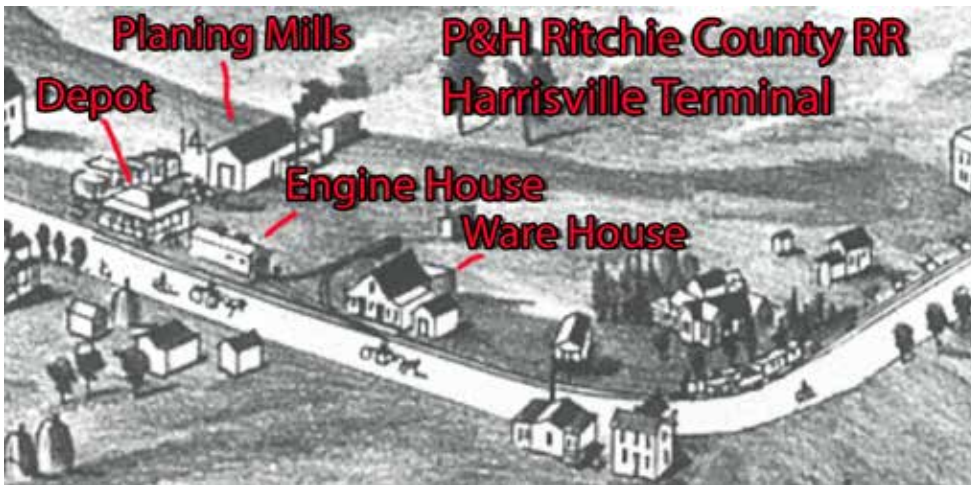
While this paints a nice rosy picture, the earnings and expenses were just calculated from a couple of days as the trains had just started running and I’m sure everybody wanted to ride and ship over this new railroad. However, the railroad defaulted on its mortgage by 1879 and was sold under foreclosure on December 30, 1879 right back to Moses Kimball and a new set of partners.

Lorama R. R. Depot, Pullman, W. Va.



The depot at Pullman, WV about 1915. In the background is the engine house and what appears to be pipes for the oil drilling business. Postcard in the author’s collection.

Mr. Kimball reorganizes the company as the Pennsboro & Harrisville Ritchie County Railway on February 12, 1880. On April 5th of 1882 it was announced that the Railway would rebuild its road, replacing the 12 pound rail with heavier 20 pound steel. A Poores Manual of 1885 explains that the \$3,000 net earnings for that year would be use to rebuild the final three miles of road and add one more



engine. This locomotive was a similar engine to their first, though they purchased it used from the WV Gas Coal & Mining Co. It's unknown if this number two ever received a name. By the end of 1886, the newly rebuilt Railway had a new \$14,800 mortgage at six per cent interest paid twice a year for 20 years.

Mr. Kimball died in October of 1891 at the age of 63. His wife, Hattie Kimball was elected president of the railroad later that month. She had long assisted her husband in running the road and had assumed full charge during his illness. It was said that she was the one and only female railroad president in the United States. This did not last long as James E. Tyler of Baltimore quickly became the new president and treasurer of the company. Mrs. Kimball remained a director for many years.



Locomotive number 3 arrived December of 1896, new from Porter. This 0-6-0 was named "Ritchie" and also had a four wheel tender, though she was bigger than the two previous engines. The equipment these three engines pulled consisted of two passenger cars, one box car and three platform (flat) cars. The platform cars could easily be converted to gondolas by adding stakes into the pockets and boards on the side, as well as excursion cars by adding roofs and seats.

The railroad also served the 4 day Ritchie County Fair outside of Pennsboro so these excursion cars were used to carry most of the town of Harrisville to the Fairgrounds.

One of the things I love about these small country railroads was their service to the communities that they served. Passenger service was personalized and friendly and the train would stop any where the rider wanted to get on or off. Special trains would be assembled for spur of the moment excursions (like a trip to a local swimming hole) or for life emergencies that required a doctor. The narrow gauge would met the standard gauge trains of the B&O four times

a day, exchanging mail, express and passengers. Harrisville depended on the narrow gauge for all its transportation needs. There were no large manufacturing or mining enterprises needing hundreds of carloads. The narrow gauge owned four freight cars which were all that it needed to carry on the commerce of the area. Ritchie County was in the center of the West Virginia Oil and Gas fields, so supplies for those industries were carried. A Carbon Black plant was located on line with a siding a little north of Harrisville. Carbon Black is made by burning natural gas and collecting the black carbon. The Carbon Black was carried by box car to Pennsboro where it was stored in a warehouse near the B&O interchange.

By 1900 the logging and lumbering people who controlled the railroad no longer needed it as the near by forests were depleted, so they shopped around for buyers and found that former State Representative Michael Kerns Duty and his wife Lora were interested. The couple and a few other partners made the purchase sometime in 1901 and they then planned an extension to Pullman, WV. By August of 1903 the two older 1875 engines were wearing out so they placed an order for a number 4 from Porter, another small 2-4-0 with a 4 wheel tender.

LORAMA RAILROAD.

M. K. DUTY, President and General Manager, Pennsboro, W.Va.

Trains leave Pennsboro¹ for Harrisville (9 miles) †8 30, *9 30 a.m., *6 00 p.m. Leave Harrisville for Pennsboro *7 15 a.m., *8 15 p.m. Running time 45 minutes. April, 1908.

*** Daily ; † daily, except Sunday.**

Connection.—¹ With Baltimore & Ohio R.R.

In 1905 they reorganized the company as the Lorama Railroad, named for Lora Duty. The extension to Pullman began in 1908, laying 4 miles of 30 pound rail to that village. After it was finished trains operated Pennsboro to Pullman via Harrison and return via the same route. Business picked up then and a new engine was ordered from Porter, a 2-6-0 in October of 1910. This last engine was given the number 5.

Competition reared its ugly head when the standard gauge short line railroad, the Harrisville Southern, was built to that town in 1915, siphoning most of the traffic to and from Harrisville. The State Road Department was also building roads in the area and both railroads were busy hauling gravel and sand needed, but the new roads would soon cost both railroads their lives. The Lorama RR was the first to go, when it shut down in 1924, the Harrisville Southern lasted a little longer but by 1928 it too was dead.

Roster of Locomotives

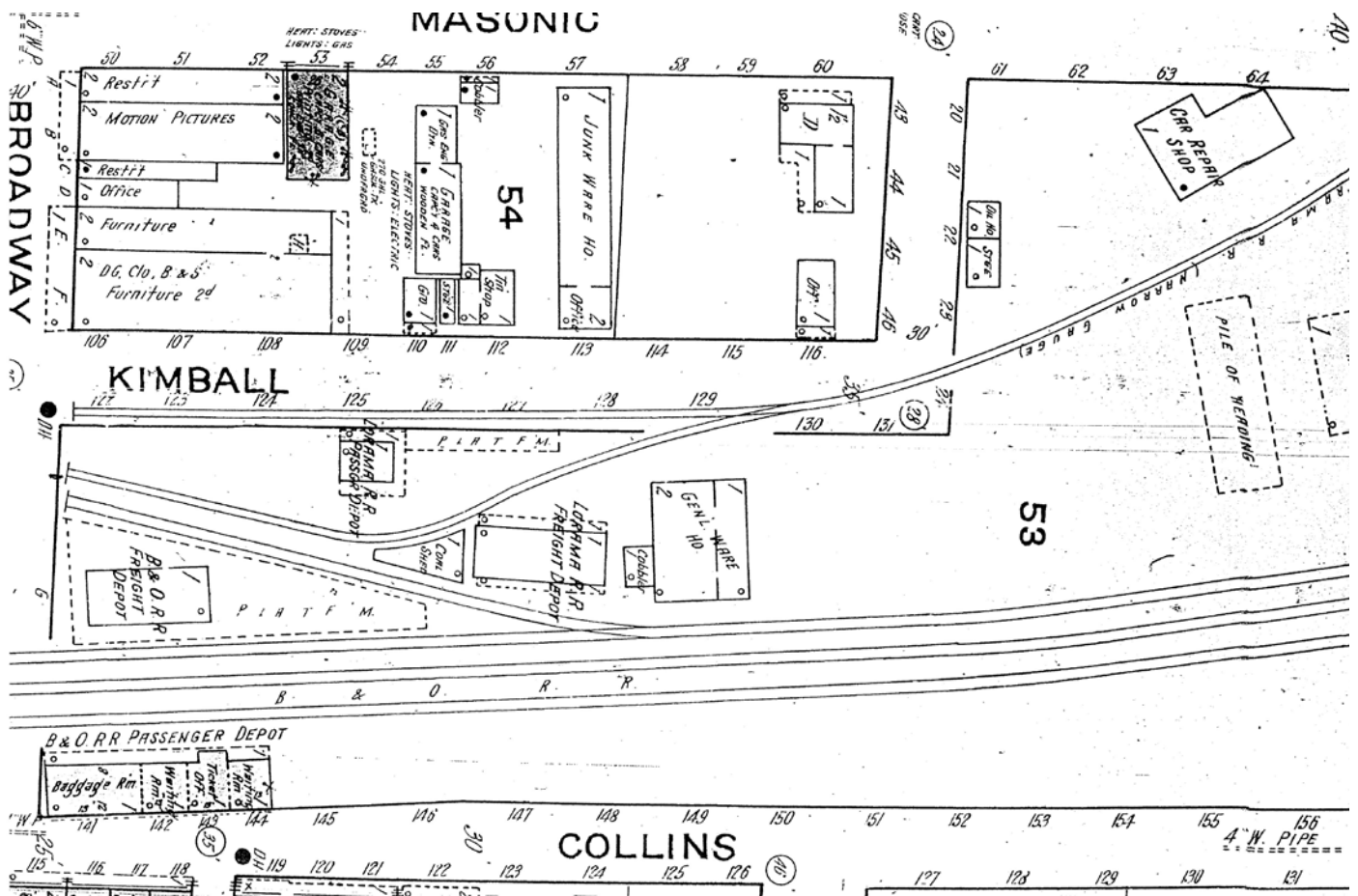
- 1 0-4-0 with 4 wheel tender Porter 221 5/1875 7x12-24" "HARRISVILLE"
New Pennsboro & Harrisville Ry (M.P.Kimball, Pennsboro, WV)

- 2 0-4-0st Porter 215 1/1875 7x12-24"
orig Brown & Mosgrove "Jim", Kittanning, PA 1/1875
to West Virginia Gas Coal & Mining Co. "Little Burky" 3/19/1881
to Pennsboro & Harrisville Ry (M.P.Kimball, Pennsboro, WV) 1885

- 3 0-6-0 with 4-wheel tender Porter 1702 12/1896 8-1/2x14 "Ritchie"
New Pennsboro & Harrisville Ry., Pennsboro, W.Va.
To Lorama RR #3

- 4 2-4-0 Porter 2937 8/03 8x14
New Pennsboro & Harrisville RR , Pennsboro, W Va.
To Lorama RR #4.

- 5 2-6-0 Porter 4715 10/1910 9x14-26"
Lorama RR #5, Pennsboro, W.Va.



A Sanborn Fire Insurance map of Pennsboro, showing the interchange between the narrow gauge Lorama RR and the standard gauge B&O.

Happy Holidays

Southeast Chapter R&LHS Annual Banquet

The annual banquet will be held on Saturday, January 10th, at member Larry Shughart's home at 5216 Lourcey Road (off Sunbeam Road), Jacksonville, FL. Come prepared to run some S Gauge trains around his large layout. We will have some social time, a brief chapter meeting and dinner between 3:00 and 8:00 PM.

2015 Election of Chapter Officers

At our October meeting we discussed the election of chapter officers. It was agreed that we would combine the duties of Secretary and Treasurer to one person. It was noted that none of our out of town members were interested in running for office. Consequently, it was agreed that the following members would become our officers in 2015.

Chairman: Bill Howes
Vice Chairman: Steve Baxendale
Secretary/Treasurer: Stephen Vertescher

Since we have three members running for three offices, they will be installed at our January banquet mini-meeting by using the Acclimation by Proclamation process.

Announcements:

February 12th - Regular Southeast Chapter meeting at CSX headquarters
February 14th - Golden Spike Train Show at the Prime Osborn Center, Jacksonville, FL
March 12th - Regular Southeast Chapter meeting at CSX
April 9th - Regular Southeast Chapter meeting at CSX
April 11th - Florida Rail Fair at Volusia Fairgrounds, Deland, FL
May 14th - Regular Southeast Chapter meeting at CSX

SOUTHEAST CHAPTER OFFICERS

William F. Howes Jr. **Chairman**
Arthur L. Towson **Vice-Chairman**
Stephen J. Vertescher **Secretary**
Robert L. Van Nest **Treasurer**

The Southeast Limited is published bimonthly by the Southeast Chapter of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, P. O. Box 600544, Jacksonville, FL 32260-0544

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