

# Step back in time: Train's arrival in Gaylord 'great event with engine bells ringing'

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In the 1960s Dr. Richard H. Lyons wrote an informative history of the Wah Wah Soo Resort Association which was established on the east side of Otsego Lake in 1903. This week Lyons recalls early morning train trips to Gaylord.

A wonderful episode included a trip to Gaylord. The trip usually involved a reasonably early breakfast and breakfasts in those days were early enough to begin with.

We would eat around 7:30 a.m. so all of the breakfast paraphernalia could be taken care of and plans adequately laid. After breakfast there was a parade directly from lot #22 to the railroad by another wooded path where we tried to meet the 10 a.m. train.

Sometimes we could hear the train tooting for its stops at Otsego Lake and then again at Arbutus Beach before stopping at Wah Wah Soo. If we wanted the train to stop we raised a semaphore and then would wait in the station.

Usually the trains that stopped at Wah Wah Soo were relatively short trains. The conductor and engineer did not like to stop here because it was on an uphill grade and they usually had trouble getting started again. Once underway they might have to stop once again at Oak Grove and again at Salling's Junction. The junction is now abandoned but at one time was the junction for the Johannesburg Railroad and the Michigan Central Railroad as they were called at the time.

The trip to Gaylord was always an exhausting one and as a small boy I never did like it and very seldom took it. The train largely consisted of all the women getting dressed up, as well as myself, which may explain why I didn't like the trip. The raising of the semaphore and mounting the train, followed by the interminable time before finally arriving at the station in Gaylord may have contributed to my dislike for the trip.

Nonetheless arriving in Gaylord was a great event with the engine bells ringing and a great deal of confusion going on while unloading the train.

It should be remembered the train was the only real means of communication available to any of us so there was a great deal of shipping from one small locale to another which were carried by the train, as well as long distance shipping.

As I remember it, Gaylord had essentially the same wide street it has today but back then it was not paved, so when it rained the surface could become extremely messy. The road was not particular sandy and consisted, in part, of clay to help hold the road together.

It usually took two or three hours of shopping and the accumulation of a large number of parcels which burdened us all considerably before returning to the train station to await the southbound train back to Wah Wah Soo, which, if I remember correctly, left Gaylord around 2:30 p.m.

It was always a great relief to return to the cottage and a swim was immediately in order to get the dust of Gaylord out of my hair. Everybody else felt much the same way and the whole family usually went swimming upon our return which was usually around 3:30 in the afternoon.

Bill Granlund is a retired Gaylord High School principal and an Otsego County historian.