

**Transcribed From the Pages of *Mrs. Grundy* newspaper, Dec 1922 - Jan 1923**

**“Reminiscences of Railroading”**

**By W. W. Knight, in Birmingham News, Dec. 10, 1922**

**Letter from Writer Birmingham, Ala, Dec 30, 1922 to Editor, *Mrs. Grundy***

“How dear to this heart are the scenes of my childhood—and every fond spot that my young manhood knew.” Such meditations led me to write this article regarding the early locomotives of the Tracy City branch which I understand you have deemed of sufficient interest to republish in your paper.

I have photographic reproductions of the “Sewanee” and the “Colyar”, and if arrangements can be made to permanently display them in a suitable public place, preferably the waiting room of the railroad station I will be very glad to forward them.

My vivid recollections of these engines are only surpassed by the cherished memories I have of my associates and acquaintances in that long ago, to whom I take this opportunity to extend each and every one my most cordial greetings.

Very Sincerely Yours,

W. W. Knight

*(This is not the beginning article, but this is where we start for lack of the Mrs. Grundy newspaper with previous articles in them.)*

Jim Rust

*(This is the Dec 21, 1922 article.)* Jim Rust was engineer of the “Colyar” in 1881, at which time the old shop and round house was located about half way between the “company store” and “old mines.” At the time this photograph of the “Colyar” was taken (1884), she stood opposite the “old shops,” across the turn table, beside an engine shed. She was then out of commission, and is here shown undergoing a stripping preparatory to being led away to her final destination, consigned not to his Satanic Majesty, but to a man named Moses at Cincinnati, who, being a greater economist than the former, will nevertheless completely dissect her, subjecting

each member to every form of torture metal is heir to in that purgatory from which they will speedily emerge a metal of greater refinement and value.

The railroad leading to Tracy City was that portion of the company entitling it to the full name, Tennessee Coal, Iron and Railroad Company, until 1887, at which time the line was sold to the N. C. & St. L. Railway. This branch line leaves the main line two miles east of Cowan, Tenn. It was dubbed the "Goat Road," because it ascends the Cumberland Mountain for a distance of six miles of almost continuous reverse curves at the grade of 112 feet to the mile. At the summit is situated the town of Sewanee, Tenn., and from there along a table land, the road extends to Tracy City, a distance of 12 miles.

Equal distant between these two points lays the town of Monteagle, famous as a summer resort and Chautauqua. Previous to 1881, this village was known as Moffat Station.

In 1883 (or 1888—jp), a new shop and round house of stone construction was finished, located nearer to and below the "company store," the third and top floor of which housed the general offices of the company in three rooms.

### **"Sewanee" Remodeled**

In this new shop, the "Sewanee" underwent a complete transformation, which accounts for her more modern appearance, the old crosshead water pumps having been discarded and an injector fitted to the right side of the boiler. The long straight smokestack had been replaced by the ten regulation diamond type of stack, having a screen in the center, supported horizontally within the stack at its widest portion. The tank of her tender had been cut away at the rear to the regulation slope. This style is still maintained by modern engines in switching service. The driving wheels were equipped with a Saulberry (?-jp) steam brake. This was not only the first power brake ever used upon a T. C. I. locomotive, but was of the very first type of steam brake applied to any locomotive south of the Ohio River.

The long boiler with its overhanging firebox extending to the back of the cab, sat centrally upon the driving wheels so as to give the maximum tractive power, they being but 40 inches in diameter. Provided with both front and rear sand boxes, she was at all times prepared to exert her maximum power in either direction.

The cylinders ( 1? by 24 inches) had flanges along their upper portion by which they were bolted to the sides of the smoke box, upon an angle to conform to the center line of motion; of the drivers, their lower portion being bolted to an extension of the engine frames that supported bumper timber, to which was fitted the link and pin coupler and front step. The cylinders were fitted with plain unbalanced side valves, which were oiled only through the tallow cups on top of the steam chest when the throttle was closed, this usually being done when the engine was drifting down grade, at which time the fireman would go out on the running board, open the tallow cup valve with his foot, fill the cup with melted tallow, or if no tallow could be obtained, cottonseed oil was substituted.

Within the steam dome was a v. shaped double ported throttle box into which a corresponding throttle valve lay. The throttle valve stem was housed within a pipe extending from the dome into the cup at which end a packing gland was fitted to projecting throttle valve stem was fulerumed (?-jp) a simple throttle lever without a quadrant.

### **Hard to Handle**

Since the full boiler pressure was exposed to the top of the throttle valve and no means provided for lubricating its large area of bearing surface, the power required to open and close the throttle made it desirous and almost necessary for the engineer to have at hand a 10 pound wooden block for that purpose. Through the use of this crude contraption, a great deal of physical labor was expended especially during the switching service. If the block was carried upon the boiler, where it could be more conveniently reached, it seemed to have a pernicious propensity to turn up on the toes of the engineer, so he was forced to deposit it upon the floor of the cab after each application to the throttle lever. The continued contortions of the engineer in that athletic exercise may have developed the muscles of the arms and back, but at the expense of his otherwise genial disposition, the evidence of which was audibly given together with much heavier blows upon the throttle lever than his cooler judgment would have dictated as necessary.

(*Jan 4, 1923 article*) Like a spirited horse surprised at an undeserved lash, the “Sewanee” would jump forward and register her indignation by a rapid succession of snorts when a blow of miscalculated force was applied toward opening the throttle in the emergency of curbing her, the block would again be so injudiciously applied to the opposite side of the throttle lever as to cut

off her character seemed to change to that of a mule as she began to sulk. In such a manner would she so convince the engineer of the futility of such intemperate treatment that he would immediately suppress his personal feelings in the matter and coax her forward with several light, friendly taps, when immediately a blast of better understanding would seem to be established between the two.

The reputation of these two engines as “men killers” was sufficiently established by the manual labor required to handle them, but to that had been added a record of more violent deaths.

There is one particularly atrocious murder to record against the “Colyar.” This happened one dark night along the 70’s when, like a tamed elephant suddenly gone bad, she, left the track while ascending the mountain.

### **Engineer Pursued**

Either by jumping or being thrown from the engine, the engineer, Jim Legg, lauded upon his feet and ran down a ravine. By chance, though seemingly vindictive, the engine, after turning a complete somersault sidewise, righted herself upon her wheels and followed the engineer, who, unfortunately, became tangled in a briar patch and was there caught by the engine and scalded to death. This incident seemed so uncanny, that the superstitious imaginations of the road men were quickened when passing the scene of that accident.

It was told at the expense of one engineer of the “Sewanee” that while ascending the mountain one night he imagined that he saw among the smoke and sparks issuing from the smokestack the form of a coffin, whereupon, at the completion of his job and never again ran a locomotive. It was not an unusual occurrence for such accidents to be recorded, especially upon the mountain side, for when an engine left the track there, it was most certain to roll over, or strike out oblique downhill such a distance from the track that a temporary track would have to be laid to the engine, connecting with the main line so that the engine could be recovered.

On one such an occasion during the winter of 1883 the “John H. Inman” turned turtle. I hailed with delight an opportunity to go down to that wreck as a food bearer to my father, who, with his crew, was recovering the engine in the manner mentioned above. The “Sewanee” had

been into temporary service as a substitute for the disabled engine, and, as that was before she had been rebuilt, she appeared as does the “Colyar” in the present picture of that engine.

Securing my two blankets upon the boiler head within the cab, I made the trip from Tracy City to the scene of the wreck with Jim Rust and Mat Cope upon that engine. As the engine reached the beginning of the steep descending grade of the mountain, Cad Roddy and Mack Summers, the two brakemen, who had been riding upon the engine for comfort (there being no caboose to the train) crawled out over the sleet-covered loaded coal cars, making that perilous venture upon all fours, to set up the hand brakes and, with Mat Cope twisting the tender brake wheel of the engine, the train was kept under control.

### **The Wreck**

Slowly passing the scene of the wreck in this manner, strong arms were held out to assist me to alight into a 10-inch blanket of snow, while the engine crew carefully handed down the two baskets to other eager hands.

Promptly gathering around a big fire, one making coffee in the tallow pot of the No. 7, another using her coal-scoop as skillet, others for a gin for persimmons and black haws, a never-to-be-forgotten feed was enjoyed by all.

About two hours later, my attention was attracted to what appeared to be the continuous firing of a gun into the sky, but, being at so great a distance below the mountain, we could hear no report. Upon asking one of the men what it was, he told me it was the “Sewanee” backing up to the “V” and that she would pass us after a while on her return trip.

The “Sewanee” having no screening in her front end or smokestack, continued the pyrotechnical display by throwing upward high into the sky the incandescent cinders small enough to pass through her flues, by which we could trace her progress. Slowly, but surely, she wove in and out around the reverse curves, picking her way carefully around each spur of the slope and then recede closer to the mountain side to avoid a chasm, all the while illuminating the wilderness around her. Now we would hear her exhaust as she rounded a point, then, as if  
.....*(continued on last page which I cannot find-jp)*.

*(Jan 11, 1923 article)* Clamorously announcing her arrival at our side by a slipping of her driving wheels, producing a fit of demoniacal laughter, as thought to frighten us, she temporarily gasps while the engineer sounds upon the sand pipes, and immediately resuming her monotonous berating upon the weird wilderness of snow, rocks and barren trees, as disclosed by her garish eye, she thunderously asserts for the benefit of all in general and of those behind her in particular: "Turn me- loose and hell can't-catch-me."

Goaded on by the fireman and head brakeman, one opened the fire door at intervals of 15 seconds each for the other to throw in a scoop of coal, and she rebelliously coughing it up the stack in a veritable apoplectic fit, disdainfully sweeps on with her train (of ten empty coal cars of 30,000 pounds capacity each), following in a serpentine motion on-on-with the ever insistent, tough diminished voice of protest; "Turn-me-loose-hell-can't-catch-me," until again the only evidence we retain of her continued wrath is the distant view we have of her upward shower of fire, and we are prone to believe that she has at last discovered the futility of making further audible protestations.

### **"Sewanee" Overhauled**

Within a short period of time after the No. 7 had been restored to usefulness, the "Sewanee" was placed in the back shop for a well merited reconstruction. When she emerged from that hibernation she was like a butterfly transformed from the worm she had been. She was given into the charge of P. H. Farrell as engineer and George Barnett as fireman and put into service as a switch engine. She was placed on the East Fork branch track in front of the tool house, and near the front entrance of the old school house, at the time this photograph was made.

These photographs were loaned by the writer in 1893 to *Locomotive Engineering*, a monthly journal published in New York, which accounts for that name appearing upon them.

In addition to the "Sewanee" and the "Colyar," there were six other locomotives in the service of the T. C. I. on the Tracy City branch: The "James O. Warner," No. 3, was of the same type as the "Sewanee" and the "Colyar," but slightly larger. The "A. M. Shook," No. 4; the "E. O. Nathurst," No. 5; the "Thomas O'Connor," No. 6; and the "John H. Inman," all of the same size and built by the same locomotive company as were the first three engines mentioned. The No. 8 was purchased for the South Pittsburg division, and received no name. The No. 9 was of

the consolidated type built by the Baldwin Locomotive works. This engine, which was purchased in 1886, was about as large as any at that time in service anywhere, having cylinders 20 X 24 inches and perhaps was the first consolidated engine south of the Ohio River. So epoch-making was her ponderosity that a cigar manufacturer of Nashville, Tenn., produced a brand of cigars in her honor (?) by giving it the name of the "9-Spot" and further identified it by having a picture of that locomotive appearing upon the lid of the cigar box. Just what motive impelled him to commit this libel upon the "9-Spot" still remains a mystery. No doubt his intentions were legitimate, but it was the result of an inspiration of his advertising genius, it is only fair to say that his idea, as well as the product, fell flat upon an outraged public. It requires a good memory to cherish such a prejudice for 36 years but loyalty to the "9-Spot" demands it.

### **Significance of Names**

As to the significance of the names attached to the other engines: The "Sewanee," No. 1, represented the first terminus of the road, that geographical as well as educational eminence where is situated the University of the South. The "A. S. Colyar," No. 2, like many of these namesakes of eminent personages, failed most lamentably to position to sustain the dignity of that gentleman and scholar, the editor and propriety of The Nashville American, under whose name she masqueraded.

The "James O. Warner," No. 3, except for two minor exhibitions of willful perversity, led a most exemplary career. By the versatility of her talents, rising from the monotonous drudgery of switching service to become the first passenger engine per se of that line, she honored the name and energetically emulated the activities of the vice president, who somewhere, Nashville or New York, labored as valiantly and progressively for the interests of the company herself.

The "A. M. Shook," No. 4, and the "E. O. Nathurst," No. 5, being under the close surveillance of their sponsors, conducted themselves decorously, perhaps recognizing the fact that those two gentlemen, general manager and superintendent, respectively, might frown up any unseemly antics. However there have been occasions when, out from under that sobering influence, they became as exhilarated or as, drowsy as the state of their engineers according to the frequency of the applications of the latter to the jug of applejack secreted in the tool box.

The “Thomas O’Connor,” No. 6, and the “John H. Inman,” No. 7, represented to my youthful imagination a couple of older brothers or uncles of the company. The first having too much business at Knoxville, Tenn., and the other in like condition at Atlanta, Ga., to visit Tracy City and witness the prodigious efforts of their bellicose representatives to sustain the prestige of their sponsors, apparently discouraged at time of having to bear this double burden, they would go upon a periodical toot and, leaving the tortuous path of *residue*, ramble down the mountain.

Little sympathy was aroused over the condemnation of the “Colyar” because of her villainous treachery to Jim Legg.

### **“Sewanee” Mourned**

But it was quite different with the passage of the “Sewanee.” Consistently feminine, with an abbreviated bustle, new bonnet and other regalia of bright colors, she made every appearance and manifestation of rejuvenated youth.

Modulating the tone of her voice from the rasping screech of a vixen to one harmoniously suited to her altered appearance, but with her old persistence maintained to the very last (apparently to sustain her in her false courage) that if someone would only turn her loose, hell could never catch her. In such confidence of her ability (if turned loose) to escape such an extremity, she labored diligently for three years, when constitutional complications began to sap her vitality and she was placed in a back stall of the round house to await her fate.

Despoiled of first one armament and then another to deck the graces of her rivals, she soon became a melancholy sight. With the removal of her headlight lamp, she stared sightlessly upon the slope wall, at the time the agent of that ultimate destination, she had so long sought to flee from arrived to appraise the value of her carcass (involuntarily I thought the name of Faginmore appropriate than Moses).

How unfortunate that no one there in executive authority could have looked into the future and seen what a valuable historical relic the “Sewanee” would have become, and preserved her for that purpose.



Being stripped of her driving rods and eccentric straps, so that she may not do herself an injury, she is attached to the end of a string of coal cars and dragged ignominiously like a felon out from the presence of men who had witnessed her previous periods of triumph.

Incidentally, if not ironically, the “John H. Inman” leads this inglorious parade. Slowly she is led past the company store, where the eyes of the curious note her fallen state. Perhaps a fleeting sentiment passes within the minds of those occupying the throne room above, but she passes on.

At the sawmill, the sawyer stops the carriage that he and his helper may take a last look, and still she passes on. The shop is reached.

The smiths take their irons from the fire and, with their helpers, assemble outside, the men find occasion to group around the grindstone at the big side door, others more bold go outside beside the track, and still she passes on, while good old Uncle Bill Law and Mike Flynn comment upon her history; “I mind the times, etc.”

Passing the roundhouse and water tank, without her customary stop for supplies, on, on past the residence of the officers of the company, with no more sign of a salute than that received from several of her early masters sleeping within the cemetery, which she passes most fittingly last, within our sight.

Drifting back to us, not in the voice of the “Sewanee,” but that of her exultant captor, we hear in the same old measured tone, as if mocking or derision. “Turn-me-loose, and hell-can’t-catch-me.”

