

JENNINGS, FRASER, PARSONS & TREBILCOCK
LAWYERS

1400 MICHIGAN NATIONAL TOWER

LANSING 8, MICHIGAN

August 8, 1957

EDMUND C. SHIELDS 1871-1947
HARRY A. SILSBEE 1871-1936
BYRON L. BALLARD 1890-1952
CARROLL R. TABER 1903-1946

TELEPHONE IV 2-1366

CLAYTON F. JENNINGS
ARCHIE C. FRASER
RICHARD A. PARSONS
EVERETT R. TREBILCOCK
JAMES R. DAVIS
JOE C. FOSTER, JR.

EUGENE F. TOWNSEND, JR.

Mr. John J. Holden, General Attorney
The Chesapeake and Ohio Railway Company
Law Department
General Motors Building
Detroit 2, Michigan

Dear Jack:

In re: Proposed discontinuance of C & O trains
25 and 26 between Grand Rapids and Petoskey

I've been giving some more serious thought to what you big city lawyers have been trying to do to old 25 and 26. It makes me so damned mad.

We used to have four passenger trains every day in Alden (except no train down Saturday night, when nobody cared anyhow, and no train up Monday morning, when nobody was out of bed).

They were good solid steam engines and every once in a while they'd set a dandy brush fire for which the volunteer firemen got paid 75¢ an hour for fighting. The state only pays for fighting brush and forest fires and there hasn't been a one since you put those lousy diesels on.

Furthermore, you drove Frank Clafner crazy. He's over in the Traverse City hospital now. He was a real modest fellow and also a mite close about money so he didn't have electricity. Unlike most folks he wouldn't carry his thundermug out back in the morning but he'd wait until dark.

There's a straight stretch just north of town so when the 10:10 used to come breezing south each night (about 10:55), the headlight used to shine right straight at Frank's house, through which the train would have run if the track didn't curve. Frank used to sprint to the privy with his mug while the light was shining and then dash back. Since the train was slowing down (so as not to hit any cars too hard at either of the unmarked crossings in town), he managed to make it both ways with nobody but God and the engineer seeing him.

Mr. John J. Holden

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Well, then you big city birds bought those damned diesels with the headlights that flop around like the rear end of a fat lady bobbing for apples. Poor Frank. He'd start running and the light would flop around and he'd stumble and fall or hit a tree or drop the pot.

Old Doc Miller from Rapid City, who can't see so well anymore but still can smell, used to make Frank bathe before he'd set his bones.

Frank figured he was just slowing down from age because he never made it all the way to the privy, much less there and back to the house. That headlight flopping really caused that man pain.

But broken bones and a dented thundermug weren't enough for you big city lawyers. No, sir. You took the night train off altogether, except Sundays in the summer. Result was that folks began avoiding Frank's place. Since he was pretty crippled up by then, he couldn't get out much and he'd just crouch there night after night waiting to run and empty that mug.

Finally it was just too much for him, this waiting and waiting, and he cracked up. The neighbors took him to Traverse City and he's rooming with his two brothers and his father at the state hospital.

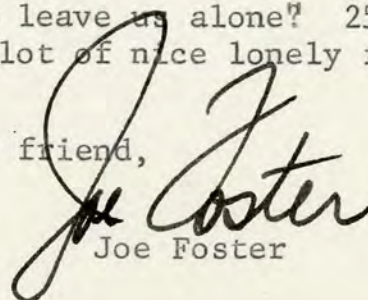
And how about that land right on Torch Lake across from the station? All summer we live right next to this scrubby piece of weed covered sand and we've offered several times to take this off your hands at a nice modest price. But you big city lawyers always talk about all the trouble of getting it released from a trust mortgage. Mortgages, indeed.

You should know that in Alden we only like to deal with folks who pay cash.

And another thing. Where did you get those horns on the diesels? Lord, those are awful. Right after those diesels started honking, Elmer Pappas' cows quit being interested in his bull. Now, to get them freshened, Elmer has to have a guy called an inseminator come all the way up from the ag school in East Lansing.

So why don't you big city lawyers leave us alone? 25 and 26 aren't hurting you much and there are a lot of nice lonely fellows working on those trains.

Your friend,


Joe Foster