

**"Meola's Special" On The O&W
Chenango Telegraph - Friday, January 29, 1943**



Commuter train at the station in Norwich, taken August 11, 1943. Left to right: Fireman George Osterhout, William Rhodes, Inspector; George Hitchcock, Traiman; William Gould, Conductor; and States Ray, Engineer. John Taibi Collection.

**Success in Carrying Scintilla Workers.
All are Gratified with Comforts Afforded by Train Service.
Jolly Good Natured Crowd of Men and
Women Either Play Cards, Read or Take Naps Between Stations.
Conductor Flanagan Busy Man in Taking Tickets to and from Sidney.
Total of 865 Patronize Three Trains Wednesday,
Greater Number Yet Seeking Accommdation.**

Railroad officials and war council transportation leaders are both amazed and pleased over the success of the O. & W. train service between Norwich and Sidney for the benefit of Scintilla plant workers, after a week's trial.

Traffic on the three trains operating between the two points has been increasing daily since the initial trip of last Friday and those in a position to know are confident that the peak has not been reached.

Frederick E. Lyford, trustee of the road, had an opportunity to gain first hand information on the success of the step when he made an official visit at the Norwich station Wednesday just prior to the departure of the 1:45 train in the afternoon.

Trustee Lyford seemed immensely pleased with the success of the train service during a chat of several minutes with John B. Meal, county war council transportation chairman and prime mover in the

the inauguration of train service, expressed satisfaction with what has been accomplished so far.

Mr. Lyford was skeptical of the step at first but was willing to take a chance. Now that success has been assured he is highly elated. So pleased is he that he told Mr. Meola Wednesday afternoon just before leaving for New York: "John, I am going to believe everything you tell me in the future."

Mr. Meola had just concluded telling the trustee of another angle in the train service and which he hoped to put into effect soon. Under the present schedule office workers at Scintilla are unable to ride on the trains from Sidney to Norwich and points in between. Their hours are such that they could travel from her to Sidney on morning train but there is no train to bring them back after they have finished their day's work.

It is now the plan of Mr. Meola in cooperation with railroad officials to provide some means of train service for these office workers. Train No. 1, New York passenger, ties up at the Walton terminal each day. It is now proposed that this train instead of stopping at Walton come to Norwich and make this station the terminal. The train would reach Norwich about 6 o'clock each night and in that way office workers at Sidney could ride home on the train after work.

Accompanying Trustee Lyford on his inspection trip to Norwich Wednesday were R. L. Gebhardt, vice president in charge of operations and W. C. Heidenthal, engineering consultant to Mr. Lyford.

Another official to observe train service Wednesday afternoon was Rollin H. Kohler of Albany field representative from the state war council's transportation committee. He made the roundtrip to Sidney and return in company with Mr. Meola and also expressed his satisfaction with the undertaking. Agent Frank L. Hamilton of the O. & W. at Norwich was also on the train.

It was stated that Tuesday a total of 842 passengers were carried on the three trains between Norwich and Sidney. This was an increase of 48 over Monday.

With the departure of the train leaving at 1:45 Wednesday afternoon a total of 131 boarded the train out of Norwich. Thirty-seven more were added at Oxford, an additional 22 at Guilford and three more at Parker, making a grand total of 193 workers carried to Sidney in the three coaches. Returning, the number was 136, due to the fact the morning shift does not have as many local workers as the latter shifts. This makes a total of 329 who rode over and back on the afternoon train.

It was stated by railroad officials that 581 were carried on the early morning train and afternoon trains to and from Sidney.

Agent Hamilton reported that the three trains carried the greatest number of workers Wednesday of any day since the schedule started. A total of 865 were carried on the three trains Wednesday. The prediction is made that the number will reach 1,000 before long.

Bus service has been instituted at Oxford to bring the workers from the village to the O. & W. some distance away. A school bus has been put into use for this purpose, and Mr. Meola said the bus is parked and acts as a waiting station for arrival of the train.

Workers are delighted with the service. It is so great a favorite with them they call it Meola's Special. The coaches are warm and comfortable and one may relax with ease. Partner pitch and rummy afford diversion for many of the workers in the daily trips to and from Norwich and their place of work. Those who do not play cards, either read or smoke or take a quiet nap between trips.

In fact it is a happy throng boarding the train all along the line. Some bring their lunch in pails, others carry

it in paper bags and still others buy theirs at the plant cafeteria.

But defense workers are not the only ones taking advantage of the service. Others engage passage why paying the regular fare. The commuters pay less for their rides why purchasing a \$20 trip ticket for \$5.

About the busiest man on the train is the man who pushes the tickets. Alderman James W. Flanagan is the conductor on both the early morning and the afternoon trains. He keeps stepping every minute of the journey to and from but none escape him. He travels on on orders and must register the time and departure even though the run is short.

Alderman "Jim" also keeps a record of the number traveling and when he is called upon to take the cash fare of a rider it doubles his work for he must give the man a receipt and make change. Engineer Hector Wells is at the throttle of both the morning and afternoon war specials. Everett Stratton is the conductor on the evening train.

Persons from Guilford and Oxford who desire to come to Norwich are among the passengers for they have considerable time in the city on arrival here before the time of departure for the return trip. Only a few days ago a theatre party came from Guilford to Norwich on the afternoon train and returned on the evening train, giving them a stay of more than four hours in this city.

It is believe the O. & W. railroad is a pioneer in being the first railroad to operate a train for war workers. Credit for this is due largely to the efforts of Mr. Meola in an effort to save gas and tires. Nearly all who went by bus or private car are now going by train to Sidney, and of the few yet remaining it is expected they soon will join the caravan of jolly workers now riding in comfort in a railroad coach.

When other workers at the Scintilla plant heard how well satisfied were workers from this area to ride by train, they planned to seek the inauguration of train service from other points.

It was said Wednesday at the Scintilla plant, a petition had been signed by 300 employees asking for the institution of O. & W. train service between Walton and Sidney. When this petition has secured all the available names Mr. Meola will send he request to Trustee Lyford, and he believes a train may be put on to take care of those workers south of Sidney.

Additional information on commuter service provided by the contributor of this article, Richard Palmer.

- The first southbound train from Norwich to Sidney was put in service on January 22, 1943.
- Gas rationing was effective on the east coast on July 22, 1942, making it difficult to commute.
- As war production wound down at the Scintilla plant the number of trains was reduced from three to one round trip on January 1, 1945. It was discontinued altogether on August 10, 1945.
- Trains from Cadosia to Sidney commenced on June 9, 1943 and were discontinued on September 6, 1944. After that, bus service was established.
- Gas rationing expired on August 18, 1945. Originally these were trains 50, 52 and 54 southbound and 51, 53 and 55 northbound.
- The distance from Cadosia to Sidney was 40 miles, and from Sidney to Norwich, 25 miles.



Commuter train at Apex by Robert Collins on July 18, 1943. Jeff Otto Collection.