

## Incident At The Centerville Station By Richard Palmer



Original depot at Centerville shown in this early postcard was “nothing but a box.”

It would be hard to find worse accommodations on the line of any railroad in the country than those provided by the New York, Ontario and Western Railroad at Centerville.” So wrote W. V. Babcock of Brooklyn in a letter to the editor of the Brooklyn Eagle, published on September 13, 1901.

At that time Centerville, near Fallsburgh (renamed Woodbridge in 1917) was a typical Catskill Mountain resort community in Sullivan County, boasting several hotels. During the summer season it was served by five daily trains out of Weehawken. More than 100 miles from New York City, Mr. Babcock wrote “the little station here is nothing but a box, with a waiting room 12 feet by 18 feet, capable of holding about 30 people, yet there are often 200 arriving on a single train.”

On the Saturday before Labor Day in 1901, he wrote: “between 200 and 300 people were dumped out at this station in the pouring rain. All but about 30 had to stand on the platform, and were soaked through while waiting to be transported by stages to various points from three to ten miles way from the station.”

Since the people then had to wait for several hours while the stagecoaches made their trips, many of the travelers got sick from fatigue and exposure. They took refuge in a nearby livery stable while they waited their turn..

“Over 30 trunks were out on the platform all night in the soaking rain.” Many of the sojourners placed their luggage in a freight car spotted on a siding. But when they went to retrieve it they discovered the car had been coupled in a train and had left for parts unknown. “We were left without any accommodations in this regard,” Mr. Babcock said.

A telegraph message to the next station alerted railroad officials what had occurred and the car shortly brought back go Centerville. Of this episode, the newspaper commented:

“The wretched depot accommodations at the Centerville station of the Ontario and Western Railroad have resulted in a universal growl from summer visitors here, of whom there have been 1,500, mostly Brooklynites.”

Within a short time a more substantial depot was built.



©-Depot, Centerville Station, N. Y.

