

CHESTER TIMES – July 30, 1912

OLD TIMES AT SWARTHMORE – An Interesting Account of the Early Days There – Railroad Methods

“The Swarthmore”, the very newsy weekly journal published by the people of the borough of Swarthmore, has an interesting account of the beginning of things in the beautiful college town and the early days on the old West Chester Railroad, now the Central Division of the P.B. & W. R.R. The Times borrows it with full credit:

When the first railroad was put through this section of the country in the eighties a little shack of a station stood on the north side of the track known as Westdale. At that time the only houses visible from the station were the West house, the house now known as the College farm and the house on the side of the hill where “Lover” Lane now runs, occupied by Mr. Frank Getz. The section on the south side of the tracks was all a dense woods.

THE WEST CHESTER RAILROAD – This railroad was not, of course, either built or operated by the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. It was called originally the West Chester and Philadelphia Railroad, and was incorporated April 11, 1848. The first survey was made the same year. The contract for building the road except the rails, was signed January 17, 1862 for \$300,000 in cash and \$300,000 in stock and work was begun the same year. By 1853 the road was completed and trains were running to Kellyville near Burmont. Bridges were then built over Darby and Crum Creeks, and during 1854 the road was opened to Media. In 1855 the Ridley Creek Bridge was built, and the road was extended to Rockdale, now known as Glen Riddle, which remained the terminus for about two years.

The company then commenced to build the road from the West Chester end, and had about two miles finished, when it was torn up and all the material used to build a road from Rockdale to a junction with the Philadelphia and Baltimore Central Railroad, now known as Wawa. This was done so as to give the Baltimore Central which was then under construction and completed at that time as Chad’s Ford, a connection for its road to Philadelphia. This section was completed in May 1858 and an extension built to West Chester in November of the same year.

The first train reached West Chester over the completed line at about noon on Thursday, November 11, 1858, and was drawn by the engine “Rockdale,” a quaint, little long-barreled affair with a smokestack like an inverted hoop-skirt that belched forth clouds of smoke from the burning wood, then used almost entirely for fuel. Peter Fagan was the engineer of this first train and Edward Miller, later known familiarly all along the line as “Ed” Miller, was conductor.