



Katy Railroad in Dallas

By Rose-Mary Rumbley

The beloved Katy Railroad engine with passenger and Pullman cars left the Union Station in downtown Dallas, ran north through the eastern part of Oak Lawn, continued running by the east edge of Highland Park, and then took off through the cotton fields of north Dallas County. This was in the early 1900s, when there was nothing north of Dallas Hall at Southern Methodist University. The mighty engine with passengers and some freight sped on northward to St. Louis.

Depending on the schedule the train would make stops along the way, but there was one stop it never missed. Fifteen minutes out of that Union Terminal the train would stop at Highland Park. Yes, the favored child of the Metroplex, Highland Park, had its own railroad station and a stationmaster who served there for over forty years, Frank Wakefield.

In June of 1965, passenger service came to an end. The Dallas Morning News headline read "No more 'Cornettes.'" A "Cornette" was a dainty, tasty little cornbread muffin that was served to all the passengers. They were also served Mountain Valley Spring water. Rest assured there was no creek water given to the Katy patrons. Only the best!

The Katy Railroad in the early days was dominated by Jay Gould. In 1865, it started as a branch of the Union Pacific, the southern branch. Later, it was called the Missouri Kansas Texas Railroad. It went through Oklahoma, but Oklahoma was Indian Territory then and the name couldn't be included in the title. It was called the MKT and later shortened to the KT, the Katy.

When Highland Park got its own station, the ad read, "Drive right up to the station. Worlds of space to park. No maddening traffic. No surging crowds. No frantic hurry, noise, or tiresome steps to climb." The station was on Abbott just a little north of Knox Street.

In the 1960s, the Union Pacific took over the Katy and there were no more trains running on the Katy track. The track, along with the overhead trestles, just sat in its place for years.

Then the Union Pacific gave the land to the Dallas Park Foundation, and a jogging and bike trail was created for all to enjoy. And believe me, it's being used. One can walk, jog, or bike from Knox Street to the back door of Baby Doe's Mine (Steak House), which is on Stemmons Expressway. It's a terrific asset for the city.

But the jogging trail didn't just happen without a skirmish or two. It seems that DART was interested in the rails for passenger service. The Oak Lawn and Highland Park neighborhoods protested. One irate Highland Park resident shouted at a meeting, "No trains! There are houses backing up to that track!" That statement really brought back memories.

When I was a kid, I took expression lessons. Students learned to "express" themselves. The course was once titled elocution. Then it was expression. Then it was public speaking. And now it's called communication! Same thing! Students learn to enunciate and project!

Well, sir, I had two expression teachers and they both lived and taught in homes which backed up to the Katy Railroad. Teacher number one, Mrs. O. D. Woodrow, lived in an old Victorian

home on the corner of Abbott and Knox. She would sit at one end of the living room and I would stand at the other end and give "readings" all by memory, of course.

Later, when Mrs. Woodrow went to the great podium in the sky, I took lessons from Mrs. Chester Howard, who lived in the last house on Princeton, by the Katy track! Mrs. Howard was extremely talented. She could do all the dialects, and I learned to do them all from her!

Both of my teachers were wonderful and insisted that I enunciate and project! I learned to do just that, because when the Katy came by, no one could hear anything but a roar for at least two minutes! That's why I project so well today, I had to shout over the trains!

I would hear that whistle blow in the SMU area, and I would begin to raise my volume and then when the train got to Princeton, I was in full voice!

I thought of Mrs. Howard the first time I ever saw that Lucy show where Lucy and Ricky were spend-ing the night in a mountain cabin. They didn't know they were next to a train track until the train came by and their bed danced across the floor from the vibration. I thought of Mrs. Howard's living room! The same thing happened.

All trains stopped running in the 80s, the property value rose, and million dollar homes were built on the lots there at the end of those Highland Park streets that run across Abbott and Airline. So, I can easily understand why there was such a furor over the trains! No one wants a train in their backyard unless they're learning to enunciate and project!

Katy Railroad Depot

**HIGHLAND PARK STATION
WILL BE OPENED TODAY.**

First use of the new passenger station of the Katy Railway at Euclid and Abbott avenues, Highland Park, will be made Saturday afternoon when the northbound Texas Special, leaving the Union Station at 4:10 o'clock is to stop at the suburban station at 4:20 o'clock.



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