

Wreck scattered clocks, cars

By KIMBERLY BRANDT

To this day Gerold Kolsky can remember the loads of fresh peas and that each of the older students in Jennings had new alarm clocks.

It seemed like a typical Monday, he said, but on the way home from school the buses took a different route, to drive past the train wreck which had happened at 8:36 p.m. the night before, Sunday, Sept., 1930.

The trains had been carrying baskets of peas that were stacked next to the highway by the time the kids saw the wreck. Mr. Kolsky said each of the older boys had already checked out the accident and had an alarm clock from one of the freight cars. The trains were also carrying Ford, Buick and Dodge car bodies. The Fords were badly smashed but the others seemed to come to rest on top of the accident and didn't get crushed, according to an article in the *Jennings Gazette*.

The two freight trains No. 92 and 97 crashed head on just three miles east of Jennings on the Rock Island line along U.S. 83. Mr. Kolsky said it was amazing because neither of the engines



PEOPLE FROM THE JENNINGS AREA lined up along U.S. 83 to see the train wreck in September 1930.

left the tracks.

Rumors of the time say that the two trains crashed because west bound No. 92 had passed a train in Clayton which the crew thought was No. 97.

The crew traveling east on No. 97 saw the oncoming train first and set the air brakes. There was no stopping though and the engines hit "with such a force that the engines telescoped and 18 cars was badly smashed or derailed," the *Gazette* said.

Both of the engineers were scalded to death but most of the other crewmen were able to jump off the trains and survive. Engineers, said Mr. Kolsky aren't allowed to leave the engine until it is fully stopped. The engineers stayed at their posts.

Mr. Kolsky said there were several thousand people parked along the roadside of U.S. 83 to watch the cleanup. The railroad company wasted no time, they went to work right away to build another track around the wreck.

The two engines were locked together on the track so the company left them there and just went alongside. There were lots of trains in those days, he said, and the track had to be repaired quickly to keep people and freight moving.

Mr. Kolsky's father was interested in the big cranes which were operated off the tracks, so the family went to watch the track rebuilding.

Mr. Kolsky said the Rock Island when through Norton, Jennings, Colby and Goodland, but he never got to ride it as a child.

Now at 79 he said he will never forget the day

the buses lined up outside the Jennings School to take the kids past the train wreck.

This wasn't the first accident along the Rock Island. There was one on Sept. 22, 1910, in which 15 people were killed near Clayton. The railroad followed along the Prairie Dog Creek and in 1910 the engine and four cars went into that creek.

On June 2, 1941, the engine and two cars of passengers went into the creek one mile west of Jennings and killed the engineer.

In 1980 the Rock Island line was terminated. The Burlington Northern Railroad maintained the tracks from April 1980 until the line was bought by the Mid-States Port Authority and leased out on Feb. 12, 1982.

Running out of room?

Call us for our listings.

RJ METCALF REAL ESTATE
181 S. Penn • Oberlin, KS • 785-475-2111
www.metcalfrealestate.com

Home Decorator® Latex Flat Wall Paint

- Better Quality
- Durable Washable
- For Use in Living Rooms, Dining Rooms, Bedrooms
- Good Hiding

\$13.99 per gal.

Home Planning Center
180 South Penn, Oberlin — 785-475-2325
We are glad to be part of Oberlin's history.

Exceptional Quality Bright Life® Latex Flat Wall Paint

- Best Quality
- One-Coat Hiding
- Durable-Washable
- Fade, Spot, and Stain-Resistant

\$15.99 per gal.

We can offer everything "Financial" to our customers....from banking to investments.

FIRST NATIONAL BANK

Proudly serving the community we call home.

Bird City, Colby, Goodland, Kirk, Oberlin,
Quinter, Sharon Springs, & St. Francis

