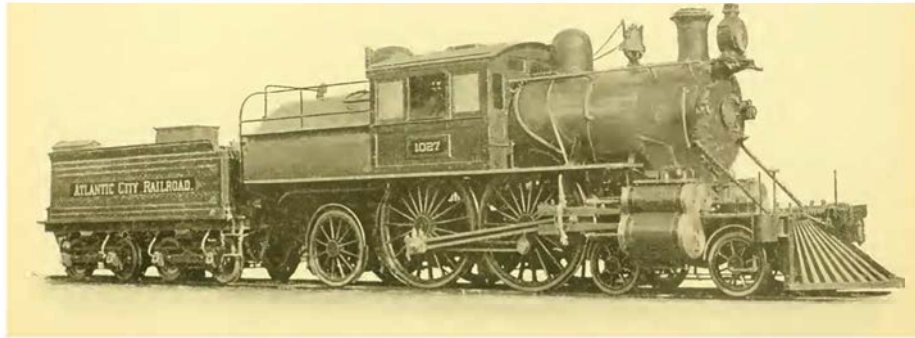


# TRAINS THROUGH STRATFORD

## THE PHILADELPHIA AND ATLANTIC RAILROAD

The popularity of Atlantic City as a health resort and tourist attraction led to the building of competitive railroad lines throughout, what is now, Camden County. In the 1850's, the Camden & Atlantic City Railroad which ran through Kirkwood, competed with the Philadelphia and Atlantic City Narrow Gauge that, beginning on July 11, 1877, ran along Atlantic Avenue. With easy access to business and industry centers like Camden and Philadelphia, towns were developed along both train routes. In 1889, Camden entrepreneurs developed such a town and named it Stratford. Soon, vacationers taking the Philadelphia and Atlantic City Railroad to The Old Orchard Inn and Kirkwood Lake, began purchasing lots and settling in Stratford.

## THE PENNSYLVANIA READING SEASHORE LINE, PRSL



*The locomotive used on the Philadelphia & Reading Fast Trains, between Camden and Atlantic City*

In 1883, the Camden and Atlantic City Railroad went bankrupt and was replaced by the standard gauge, double track, Pennsylvania Reading Seashore Line, PRSL. As roads were improved and automobiles became the preferred mode of transportation, in 1933, the Camden & Atlantic City Railroad and the PRSL merged in order to remain solvent. They became The Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Line.

In the 1920s competition between the West Jersey and Seashore Railroad (owned by the Pennsylvania Railroad) and the Atlantic City Railroad (owned by the Philadelphia and Reading Railway) was so intense that at one time both lines boasted some of the fastest trains in the world. The trains are said to have often, raced one another to be the first to arrive at their destination. Racing was encouraged by the fact that in many areas, like

Stratford and Kirkwood, the two lines were only several hundred feet apart.

(The famous "Boardwalk Flyer" made history by traveling the 55 miles between Camden and Atlantic City in less than 50 minutes.)

### STRATFORD, N. J.

Eleven miles. Fare, 28 cents; 10 days' Excursion, 44 cents. 60-trip Monthly Ticket, \$5.50; 180-trip Quarterly Ticket, \$13.80. Twelve trains each way on weekdays. Four trains each way on Sundays.

This is a comparatively new but growing village, high, dry and healthy, and well supplied with good spring water. Boating, trout and pike fishing on the numerous streams in the vicinity, on Laurel Lake or at Lakeside Park. Good roads delight the wheelmen who come this way.

Old Orchard Inn, with wide verandas, in a beautiful grove, three minutes from the station, is a desirable house, having accommodations for fifty guests. Rates, \$5.00 to \$7.00. J. W. Dore, proprietor. P. O. address, Kirkwood, N. J.

*The village of Stratford is promoted in a 1901 booklet "Pleasant Places on the Philadelphia & Reading Railway".*



*Stratford's Train Station, 1925. Due to the drop in passengers, it was not economically prudent to keep the building maintained. It is thought to have been demolished, pre-WWII.*



*One of the last Steam Engines, built in the United States, traveling through Stratford. The structure that replaced the Stratford Train Station, can be seen on the right. Bob Long photo.*

Before diesels took over, the PRSL network including the entire line from Camden to Atlantic City, was powered with traditional locomotives, almost entirely of the rare, Baldwin models.



The Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Line continued to decline after the 1933 consolidation and the end of Great Depression, resulting in service cutbacks. Gas rationing brought on by WWII, saw passengers temporarily returning to use the railroad. Renamed the “Clementon Branch”, the line only had passenger service through Stratford, in the morning and evening, serving employees of businesses in and around Philadelphia and Camden. Up until 1952, passengers could use the ferry service between Camden and Philadelphia. Once the Delaware River Port Authority’s Bridge Line opened, followed by the PATCO High Speed Line, in 1965, the Clementon Line through Stratford ended. In 1976, PRSL became part of Conrail. The track base that once saw over 50 trains a day pass through Stratford, remains in use by Conrail.



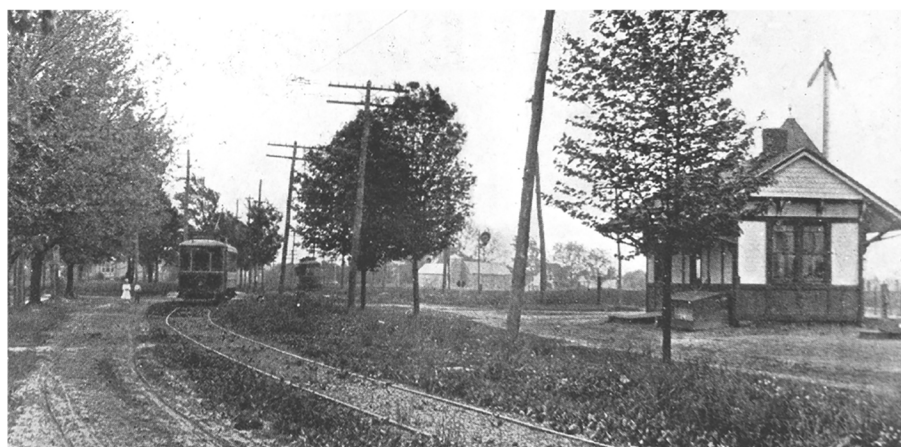
*Vassar Avenue at PRSL Crossing. April, 1954. Bob Long photo*



*In 1922, a train hit a car at Laurel Road and Atlantic Ave. The wreckage can be seen covered, behind the signal. The Camden/Clementon Trolley is seen approaching Laurel Rd.*

#### THE CAMDEN/CLEMENTON TROLLEY

Beginning in 1907, Public Service trollies ran along Atlantic Avenue, parallel to the train tracks. With additional stops between Camden and Clementon, they not only accommodated workers, they were also used by shoppers and visitors to Clementon Lake Park. As passengers found new bus lines more convenient, in 1935, the trolley service ended. This was the last trolley car line in Camden County.



*The Camden to Clementon Trolley travels down Atlantic Avenue, about 1912.*

Written by Carole Dadino, Stratford Historian



*“Reading Company G-1sa # 128 meets a Reading I class with freight at Stratford N.J. on the PRSL Clementon Branch. Laurel Road’s searchlight signal is lit up, in the distance.” Bob Long photo*



*This Pennsylvania-Reading Seashore Line. Atlantic City bound train, is powered by Baldwin Locomotive Works AS16 PRSL# 6016*