



(The following is an excerpt from *Borough of Anglesea: 1885-1906* by W. Scott Jett, City Clerk)

Frederick Swope believed that the key to building a new development on a remote barrier island was accessibility. People and animals could be brought over from the mainland in limited numbers by boat, but building materials, supplies, provisions, equipment...

What Swope needed was a railroad to Five Mile Beach, and shortly after purchasing the land from William Sperry, he set out to get one. The West Jersey Railroad already ran through the center of Cape May County towards Cape May,<sup>i</sup> and on February 11, 1880 Swope asked the West Jersey Board of Directors if they would consider running a line across the marshes to Anglesea.<sup>ii</sup> Swope proposed that his Five Mile Beach Improvement Company would provide the right-of-way on the island if the West Jersey would provide the rails and rolling stock. A Committee of the West Jersey Board accepted his proposal on February 25, and within two months Swope had found a contractor.<sup>iii</sup> The Railroad Gazette reported on April 18, 1880: "A railroad about five miles long is to be built from the West Jersey road near Cape May Court House. N.J. to Anglesea, a new summer resort on the Atlantic above Cape May. The contract has been let to Mr. Peter F. Collins, of Philadelphia, who will begin work at once."<sup>iv</sup>

Collins did in fact get started at once, as the Railroad Gazette reported on June 18: “West Jersey: A branch line is now under construction which leaves this road a mile south of Cape May Court House and runs eastward five miles to a new summer resort at Anglesea, formerly known as Five Mile Beach. It is now all graded and work is in progress on the draw bridge over Grassy Sound.”<sup>v</sup> This draw bridge would be the most difficult and time-consuming segment of the construction; Grassy Sound at the railroad’s right-of-way was almost 600 feet wide with strong tidal currents. A smaller, fixed trestle would bring the line across Beach Creek into Anglesea.

In the meantime, Swope knew that if he wanted people to come to Five Mile Beach he would need to provide them with lodging. In 1880, he began construction of the 50-room Hotel Anglesea just to the east of the Lighthouse. Construction lagged, however, as Swope’s concentration was divided between the Hotel, the Railroad, development of the area, and his real estate endeavors in Philadelphia. The Hotel did not officially open until 1884, by which time another hotel, the Hereford House, had been built and a number of visitors had erected homes of their own.<sup>vi</sup> In 1886 Swope sold the Hotel and its surrounding property to Jonas Bowman, who had an interest in the property as early as 1882.<sup>vii</sup>

The tracks and bridges onto the island were completed by late 1882, and it was necessary to actually form the company that would operate the railroad. The Articles of Incorporation of the Anglesea Railroad Company were executed on November 20, 1882, with the following elected as a Board of Directors: John J. Burleigh, Josiah S. Hackett, George W. Reed, John T. Ryon, Frederick E. Swope, Marmaduke B. Taylor and Ebenezer Westcott. The seven Directors were stockholders of the line, with Ryon<sup>viii</sup> owning 1,040 shares, Swope 420, Reed and Taylor both 100, and Burleigh, Hackett and Westcott 10 each. Swope was elected as President, Reed as Secretary and Treasurer, Westcott as Superintendent and Taylor as Solicitor. Headquarters of the company was located in Camden, NJ.<sup>ix</sup> The Railroad’s right-of-way map was filed with the Secretary of State in Trenton on January 30, 1883, along with the fees for incorporation of \$8,000 (\$2,000 per mile for the four-mile track).<sup>x</sup> The terminus was marked by a post about 1,250 feet southeast of the bridge crossing Beach Creek.<sup>xi</sup> This terminus left the railroad more than a mile from the Lighthouse neighborhood where homes were being built and streets laid out, so it is obvious that the \$2,000 per mile filing fee played a large role in determining at what stage of development the company would actually be formed.<sup>xii</sup>

With the Corporation created and its map filed, Swope and associates continued the line further southeast towards the settled area of Anglesea.<sup>xiii</sup> The plan was to eventually continue the line through Anglesea to Holly Beach Borough, allowing the Railroad to carry out commerce with the entire island. On February 29, 1884, the Railroad Gazette reported that “another line is proposed from Anglesea at the north end of Five Mile Beach to Holly Beach, a distance of five miles.”<sup>xiv</sup> To do business in Holly Beach however, the Railroad had to get operations rolling smoothly in Anglesea. The Railroad Gazette reported on August 8, 1884, “Anglesea: This line is now in operation from Anglesea Junction, N.J. about three miles south of Cape May Court House, on the West Jersey Railroad, to Anglesea, a new summer resort. The road was built last year, and is about 4 miles long.”<sup>xv</sup>

There were problems from the start, however. The same month that the Railroad Gazette stated that the Railroad was now in operation, Frederick Swope's creditors brought suit against him in Trenton seeking a Court-appointed receiver to recover their investments.<sup>xvi</sup> Their petition was granted.<sup>xvii</sup> Superintendent Westcott immediately went to see then-President John T. Ryon to try and get the Railroad in good enough shape (physically and financially) for the West Jersey Railroad to buy it.<sup>xviii</sup> Westcott informed West Jersey Director William J. Sewell of his discussions with Ryon, noting that there were five miles now built with rails available for another mile. Westcott asked if paying off the infant railroad's floating debt and guaranteeing 5% on its \$50,000 in bonds would encourage Sewell to answer favorably.<sup>xix</sup> Sewell, for his part, did not see enough evidence that the line could be a profitable one, at least in its present condition, and the two companies did not come to an agreement until more than three years later.



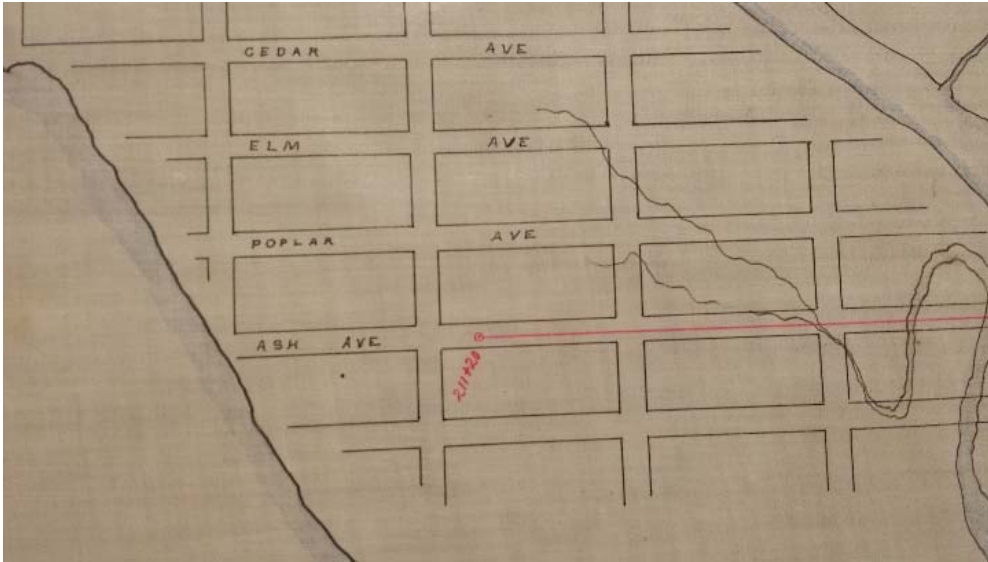
The Court appointed J. Alfred Bodine of Camden as Receiver on September 9, 1884.<sup>xx</sup> Bodine supplied the Court with a report<sup>xxi</sup> of the Railroad's operations, dated Christmas Day, 1884; it showed that the chances of Swope's creditors recovering their investments were slim. The Balance Sheet read:

Income for Period September 10-December 25, 1884:

Passengers:	\$667.47
Freight:	\$379.34
Other Sources:	\$71.92
Total Income:	\$1,337.91

Expenditures Same Period: \$1,738.51

Bodine, filing his initial report on February 27, 1885, stated that the Railroad had not operated since December 25.<sup>xxii</sup> The Railroad Gazette reported on January 16 that the Angelsea Railroad "is to be abandoned and the track taken up. The company has been in financial difficulties ever since the road was completed."<sup>xxiii</sup>



The right-of-way chosen for the tracks made the situation worse. The line across the marshes was prone to flooding during coastal storms, and washing the tracks even a few inches off course would cause maintenance nightmares.<sup>xxiv</sup> The area at the north end of Five Mile Beach was also low, marshy, and vulnerable to high tides during storms. The extension of the tracks from the original terminus towards the settlements near the Lighthouse was laid out close to Hereford Inlet, along what is known today as Anglesea Drive, which is now protected by a large stone seawall. In the 1880s there was no seawall, and almost as soon as the tracks were laid storms began to wash out the ballast and shift the rails.<sup>xxv</sup> The Railroad's later extension towards Holly Beach Borough went down New York and Delaware Avenues, low areas also prone to flooding. From its beginning, the Anglesea Railroad seemed destined, at least physically, to sink and drown.

Alfred Bodine's Balance Sheet of late 1884 is also significant. Passenger revenues were almost double the revenues from freight service. That is not a good foundation for a railroad in its infancy (or at any other time for that matter), as freight has always been more profitable for railroads than passenger service.<sup>xxvi</sup> Most companies were more than happy to cede passenger service to the Federal Government when Amtrak was formed in 1971, but Amtrak continues to survive only because of huge subsidies each year.<sup>xxvii</sup> In 1884 private development on Five Mile Beach was not sufficient for the Anglesea Railroad to run a profitable freight service.

Only when the Borough of Anglesea was formed in 1885 did the Railroad see a slight upturn, mainly due to the Borough's constant ordering of gravel (for street improvements) to be transported from Millville.<sup>xxviii</sup> The Cape May Wave reported on May 16, 1885:

"Certain parties are trying to raise stock for an extension of the Anglesea Railroad. If successful, it will be an excellent improvement to both Holly Beach and Anglesea. The former place will certainly make it a paying investment, and the latter will have the benefit of the railroad communication, which of itself it could not support. When this road is again put in operation arrangements should

be made to carry passengers and freight through to Holly Beach, otherwise they will continue to come by way of Rio Grande.”<sup>xxix</sup>

With this seemingly promising business expansion in the near future, improvements were quickly made, a new superintendent appointed, and plans for resuming operations put into place, as the Wave reported just two weeks later:<sup>xxx</sup>

“The Anglesea Railroad is to be put into operation today. Mr. Humphrey Cressee has lately been appointed Superintendent of the road. He has been down the past week looking after the interests of the company. The road bed and the rolling stock have been repaired, and everything is said to be in good running order.”<sup>xxxi</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> The Keystone, Vol. 23 No. 2, 9.

<sup>ii</sup> Pennsylvania Railroad Chronology, 1880, *prrrths.com*, 8.

<sup>iii</sup> Pennsylvania Railroad Chronology, 1880, *prrrths.com*, 11, 22.

<sup>iv</sup> The 1880 Railroad Gazette, 210.

<sup>v</sup> The 1880 Railroad Gazette, 338.

<sup>vi</sup> Francis, Francis and Scully, *Wildwood-By-The-Sea*, 16.

<sup>vii</sup> Office of the Cape May County Clerk, Deed Book 75, Page 136. Swope had formed the Anglesea Hotel Company earlier that year, transferred title from himself to the Company, then from the Company to Bowman. Swope may have decided to sell the Hotel because his Hotel manager, William A. Tompkins, passed away in January 1886.

<sup>viii</sup> The Times of Philadelphia, July 19, 1888, stated that John T. Ryon had invested \$80,000 in the railroad “before he had ever seen the beach.”

<sup>ix</sup> New Jersey State Archives, Dept. of State Transportation Corporation Files 1816-1950s, Box 1, File 4.

<sup>x</sup> Pennsylvania Railroad Chronology, 1882, *prrrths.com*, 93. See also the 1882 Railroad Gazette, 742 and 743. The Articles of Incorporation of the Anglesea Railroad Company are located in the New Jersey State Archives in Trenton.

<sup>xi</sup> The location of the original terminus of the Anglesea Railroad is commemorated by a Historical Marker of the City of North Wildwood, unveiled as part of the first “Anglesea Day” activities on June 3, 2015.

<sup>xii</sup> The 1882 Pennsylvania Railroad Chronology, 94, states that Anglesea Railroad President Frederick Swope accepted, on November 22, 1882, the West Jersey Railroad’s original offer to lease it upon completion.

<sup>xiii</sup> The Times of Philadelphia reported on December 9, 1883 that trains of the Anglesea Railroad were making connections with the West Jersey Railroad’s week-day trains between Cape May and Philadelphia.

<sup>xiv</sup> The 1884 Railroad Gazette, 176.

<sup>xv</sup> The 1884 Railroad Gazette, 594.

<sup>xvi</sup> The 1884 Railroad Gazette, 611: “The Vice-Chancellor granted a rule to show cause why a receiver should not be appointed for this company. The application was made by Mr. S. H. Morrison of Camden, a creditor. The line is a short summer road running from the West Jersey line to Anglesea Beach near Cape May.”

<sup>xvii</sup> The 1884 Railroad Gazette, 675: “The New Jersey Court of Chancery has granted the petition of certain creditors of this company and has appointed a receiver for the road. It is a short line running from the West Jersey Railroad to Anglesea near Cape May, and was completed only a few months ago.” Also, Pennsylvania Railroad Chronology, 1884, *prrrths.com*, 59.

<sup>xviii</sup> The Chicago Tribune on August 13, 1884 reported that “There are judgments for over \$10,000 against the road, and the road is bonded for all that it is worth. The Anglesea Land Company own [sic] a large share of the road. The capital stock was \$25,000 and the bonds were \$50,000.” The Anglesea Land Company was, of course, Frederick Swope and John T. Ryon.

<sup>xix</sup> Pennsylvania Railroad Chronology, 1884, *prrrths.com*, 61.

<sup>xx</sup> Pennsylvania Railroad Chronology, 1884, *prrrths.com*, 63; The 1884 Railroad Gazette, 673.

<sup>xxi</sup> Annual Statements of the Railroad and Canal Companies to the State of New Jersey Comptroller of the Treasury, 1885, 15-16.

<sup>xxii</sup> See also Philadelphia Inquirer, December 27, 1884.

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<sup>xxiii</sup> The 1885 Railroad Gazette, 46.

<sup>xxiv</sup> The Keystone, Vol. 23 No. 2, 10 & 12.

<sup>xxv</sup> The 1900 Anglesea Map shows a large portion of the original Anglesea Railroad right-of-way under water, having been washed out by Hereford Inlet.

<sup>xxvi</sup> For an excellent, detailed explanation on the decline of passenger rail service and the reasons why most railroad companies had either ceased passenger service or were anxious to relinquish the service to the Federal Government, see *The Decline of Rail Travel: Three Decades of Turmoil* at [www.american-rails.com](http://www.american-rails.com). Freight costs remain quite constant and can even drop as a line gets more efficient. Operating costs for passenger service can continually rise as customers want warmer or cooler cars, better food, softer seats, faster service; gravel, on the other hand, does not complain about the condition, speed or temperature of its hopper car.

<sup>xxvii</sup> Cato Institute, *Amtrak Subsidies: This is no Way to Run a Railroad*, by Stephen Moore, May 22, 1997.

<sup>xxviii</sup> See Borough of Anglesea, Minutes, Volume 1, for the numerous occasions in which the Anglesea Railroad transported gravel to the Borough.

<sup>xxix</sup> Cape May Wave, May 16, 1885.

<sup>xxx</sup> The Cape May Wave was a weekly paper, published every Saturday.

<sup>xxxi</sup> Cape May Wave, May 30, 1885.