



COUNTY OF OCEAN BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

BARNEGAT BRANCH TRAIL

DEPARTMENTS OF PLANNING, ENGINEERING AND PARKS & RECREATION

LEARN ABOUT HANDCAR & SAILCAR



Handcar at Ostrum Station, circa 1916.

Photo Credit: National Archives.



LBI Handcar Shack relocated to Stafford.

Photo Credit: Stafford Historical Society

A **handcar** (also known as a pump trolley, pump car, jigger, Kalamazoo, velocipede, or draisine) is a railroad car powered by its passengers or by people pushing the car from behind. It is mostly used as a maintenance or a mining car, but it was also used for passenger service in some cases. A typical design consists of an arm, called the walking beam, that pivots like a seesaw on a base, which the passengers alternately push down and pull up to move the car.

It is not clear who invented the handcar, but Handcars were absolutely essential to the operation of railroads during a time when railroads were the primary form of public transportation for people and goods in America, from about 1850 to 1910. There are reports of handcars being used as early as the late 1840s. They were quite common during the American Civil War. Considering there was a handcar assigned to at least every ten miles of that track, there would have been a minimum of 13,000 handcars operating in the United States. Telegraph company Western Union and other rail-users had their own handcars, adding to the overall handcar population.

While depictions on TV and in movies might suggest that being a member of a handcar crew is a joyride, in fact pumping a traditional handcar with bronze bearings rather than modern roller bearings can be very hard work.

Handcars were normally used by railway service personnel, known as Gandy dancers, for railroad inspection and maintenance. Because of their light weight and small size, they can be put on and taken off the rails at any place, so that trains can pass. Handcars have since been replaced by self-propelled vehicles that do not require the use of manual power, instead relying on internal combustion engines or electricity to move the vehicle.

Handcars are now used by handcar enthusiasts at vintage railroad events and for races between five person teams (one to push the car from a halt, four to pump the lever.) Aside from handcars built for racing, new handcars are being built with modern roller bearings and milled axles and crankshafts.

Adapted from Wikipedia



Motorized Railcar at Toms River.

Photo Credit: Ocean County Historical Society



Motorized Railcar at Toms River.

Photo Credit: Stafford Historical Society



Clamtown Sailcar.

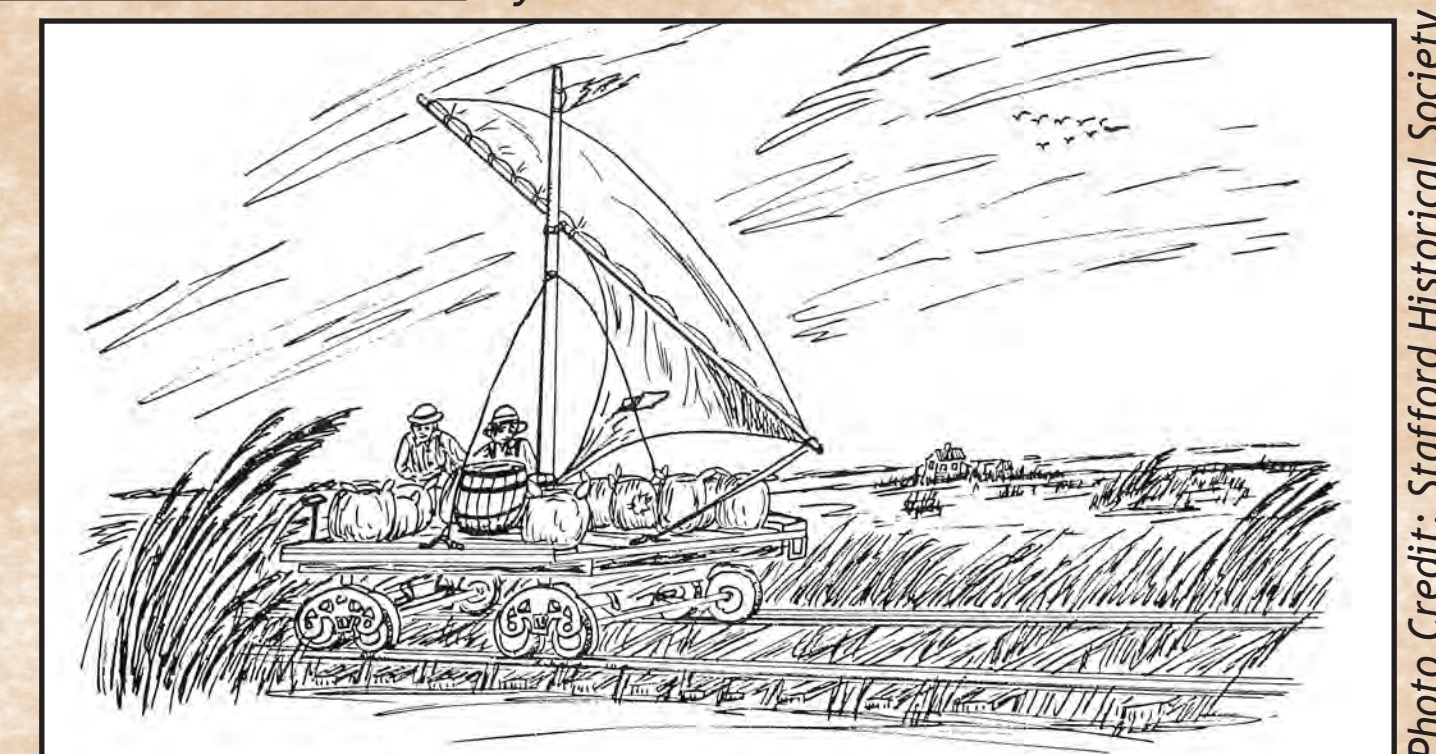
Photo Credit: Tuckerton Historical Society

Clamtown Sail Car

The Clamtown Sail Car is a legend that incorporates fact and perhaps a little fantasy. From 1886 to 1916, the abandoned 1.75 mile spur of the Tuckerton Railroad from the train station in Tuckerton to Edge Cove was contracted by Horner & Company (E.A. Horner and F.R. Austin) to transport clams from Little Egg Harbor Bay to the freight station in Tuckerton. In return for maintaining the track in sufficient repair for traffic and for transporting all clams by rail and none by boat, the Tuckerton Railroad Company agreed to a lease of \$1 per year with a 90 day cancellation clause. The flat car was hauled by horse or mule. But there is also a claim, that the local baymen fitted a mast and canvas sail on the car and literally sailed from the bay to the station.

The "sail car" is reported to have met an untimely fate in a Hallowe'en ramble by local pranksters who caused it to jump the rails and nose into the swampy brine where the broken hulk supposedly rots unperceptively in the undergrowth.

Adapted from *The Tuckerton Railroad* by John Brinkman 1973.



Sketch by Lillias Brescia.

Photo Credit: Stafford Historical Society

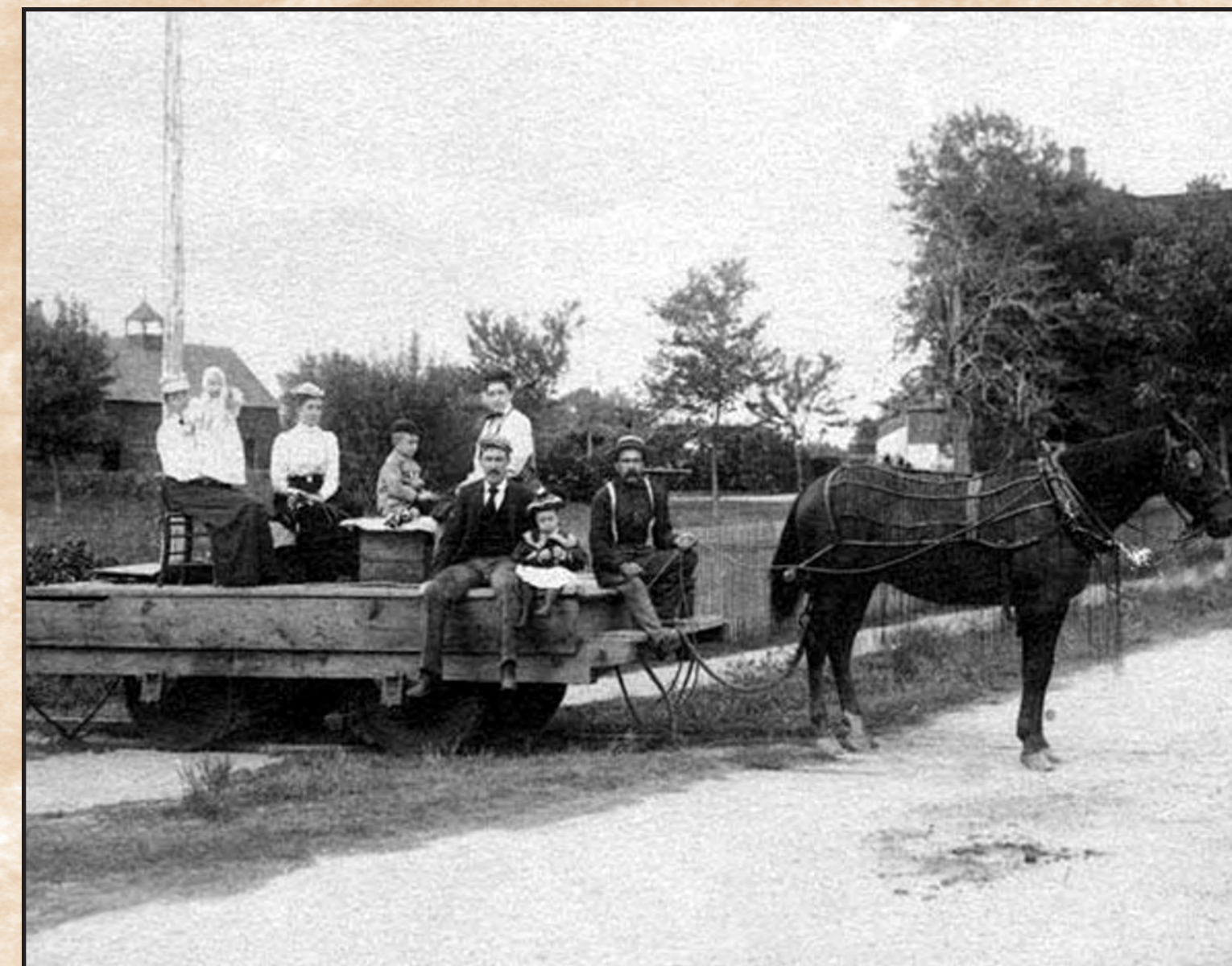


Photo of Clam Car.

Photo Credit: Tuckerton Historical Society



The Barnegat Branch Trail logo was explicitly designed with history in mind: Lady Liberty's silhouette is reminiscent of the Central Railroad of NJ (CNJ) logo, adopted by the railroad in 1944 to reflect the close proximity of the CNJ Terminal in Jersey City to the Statue of Liberty. The BBT logo also includes a ghost locomotive, as well as Ocean County's most recognizable environmental features.