

# Central Square Station Yesterday & Today By Richard Palmer



Original Central Square station which burned in 1908.

The railroad station in Central Square was from the beginning a joint operation - first by the Syracuse Northern (later, Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg and New York Central and the New York, Ontario & Western railroads. The current station building station was built by the NYO&W in 1910 but operating costs were shared by the two lines. The switching tower (now demolished) was built by the Central.

The original Central Square Station was built about 1869. The first Midland train passed through Central Square on October 1, 1869. Regular passenger service commenced between Norwich and Oswego on November 25, 1869. The Syracuse Northern between Syracuse and Sandy Creek opened with a grand excursion on November 6, 1871. Mail was first carried on January 1, 1872.

The depot has always been located on what is still called Railroad Avenue. The original building design was a standard station, built along the Northern Division-batten and board, with large eaves and slate roof. Similar stations were built at Caughdenoy, West Monroe, Pennelville etc. In some stations, living quarters were provided for the depot agent on the second floor. A good example of this is the Wicks family in Caughdenoy.

The original station stood until early on the morning Oct. 23, 1908 when it burned down along with the freight house.

As mentioned, the station was used by both lines. The O&W was built in 1869 as the New York & Oswego Midland. The north-south line, the Syracuse & Northern, was completed to Sandy Creek in 1871. The lines cross on a diamond protected by signals. Interchange and sidings were built east and north of the station. Freight houses were built on this location as well as oil bulk plants. The Syracuse Northern became the Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg, later New York Central, Penn Central, Conrail and now CSX. We referred to them as Central and the O & W. Both railroads had frequent passenger service. The railroads provided frequent passenger service in all directions which was a great convenience in would have otherwise been quite an isolated community.



New station which was built in 1910 and now serves as a railroad museum.

Before they passed away, several local residents offered their recollections. Earl Getman said, Arthur, his father, was O&W agent there for 30 years. Tower operators there included Ray Geersworth, Ed Wands, Cleon Marks, and Howard Riker. Earl said that sleighs and carriages met the trains to take travelers up to the village center, which was about three quarters of a mile away. Vernon Goettel remembered the railroad station very well as he was down there every day to pick up newspapers from the trains. He started his working career as a paper boy and years later he owned and operated the local lumber yard and feed mill. He was in constant touch with the railroads for delivery information on cars of lumber or feed.

Goettel greatly assisted in the restoration of the then-ong-closed station when it was by the Central New York Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. He was one of the few still living who knew exactly how the station looked when it was in operation.

Goettel stressed the importance railroads played in the development of markets for agricultural products such as milk, strawberries, hay, onions, etc. He said most O&W stations including Central Square had a milk plant or receiving station. Another important Borden plant was just down the line to the west at Pennellville. Borden's manufactured powdered milk and a variety of lactic concentrates.