

# RAILROAD

25¢

MAGAZINE

SEPT.



Frederick  
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**SHAWANGUNK BARRIER**

ONTARIO & WESTERN BATTLES THE MOUNTAINS  
— AND THE PROBLEMS OF A CHANGE IN TRAFFIC



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By H. H. GROSS

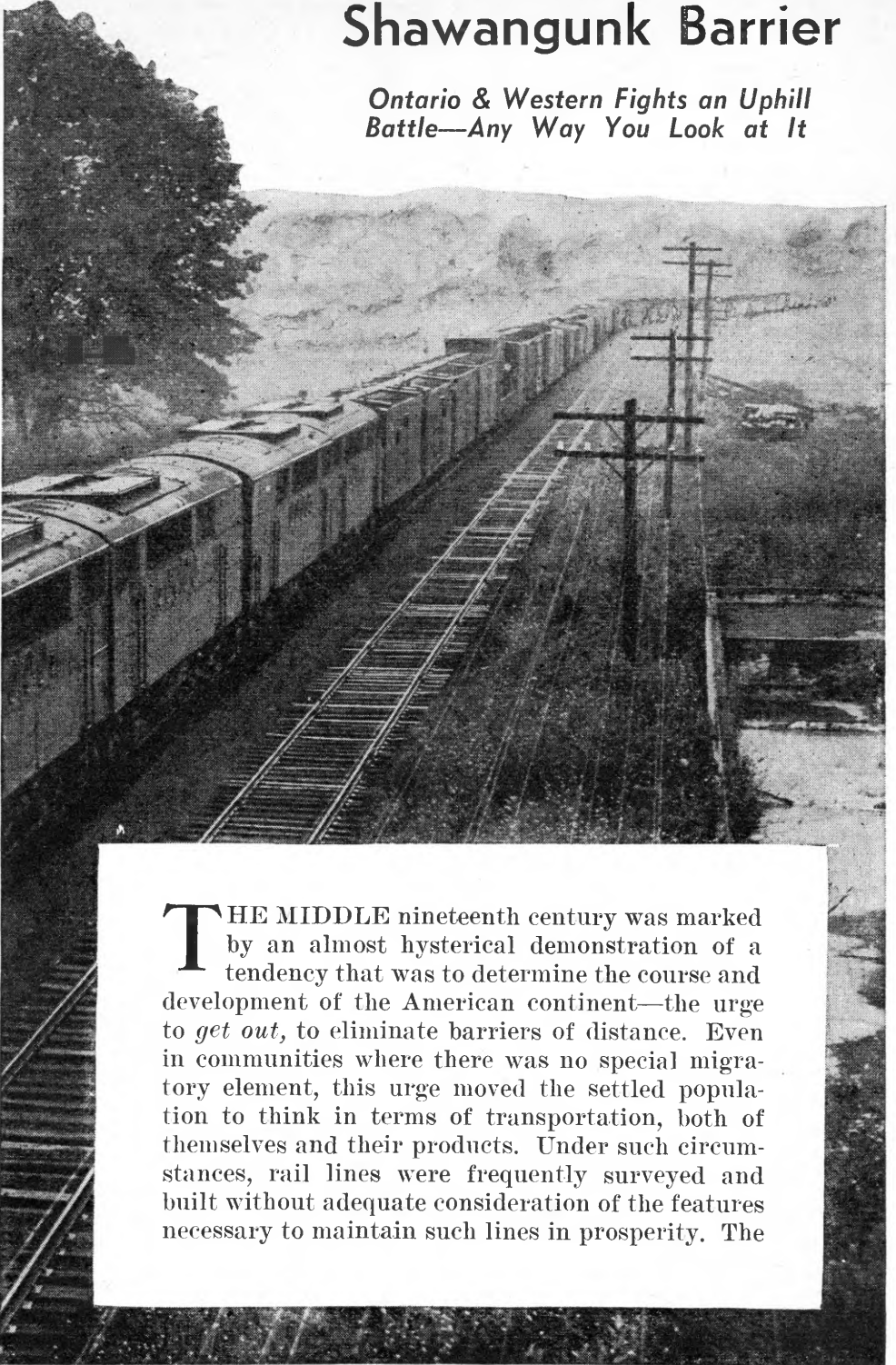
Associate Editor  
Railroad Magazine





# Shawangunk Barrier

*Ontario & Western Fights an Uphill Battle—Any Way You Look at It*



**T**HE MIDDLE nineteenth century was marked by an almost hysterical demonstration of a tendency that was to determine the course and development of the American continent—the urge to *get out*, to eliminate barriers of distance. Even in communities where there was no special migratory element, this urge moved the settled population to think in terms of transportation, both of themselves and their products. Under such circumstances, rail lines were frequently surveyed and built without adequate consideration of the features necessary to maintain such lines in prosperity. The





New York, Ontario & Western is such a road.

When in 1865 a correspondence was opened between the towns of Norwich, Delhi and Monticello in central New York state, the object was simply one of seeking an outlet from behind the mountain barriers which rendered that section of the state inaccessible; and not, as has frequently been stated, the purpose of building a specialized carrier. The eight counties of Sullivan, Onondaga, Madison,

Chenango, Delaware, Ulster and Orange were represented at the first meeting of the interested parties in Delhi on October 5th. The meeting had been planned for the day before, but the first snowstorm of the year rendered Brock Mountain impassable to all but a few of the delegates. This delay hurried the proceedings on October 5th.

Nevertheless, by noon of the 5th, a bitter argument had developed between Roundout and the more inland villages as to the superiority of a Hudson river route over the line proposed by Sullivan county. Suddenly, Major Cornell of Roundout announced himself as standing ready to pledge \$500,000 to the building of the river line. Delegates from sleepy Delhi and nearby Catskill villages immediately swung over to the Roundout faction, and the river road seemed assured, the





only thing being—the time was past four in the afternoon and milking hour was at hand. While the discussion continued, the Delhi farmers slipped quietly from the hall and out to their chores. When the vote was taken, the count stood against Roundout in favor of Sullivan county, and the fate of a railroad had been determined.

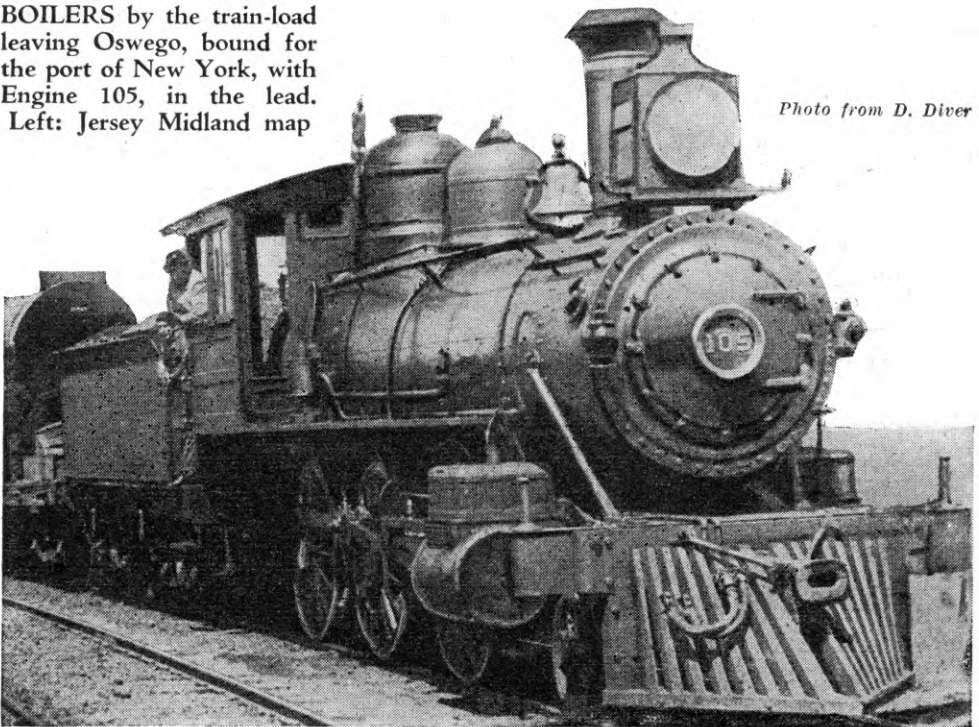
Through the next two meetings, on December 13th and 26th, the Sullivan contingent continued to hold sway, backed now by a New York financier, Samuel B. Ruggles, who visioned in the Sullivan route possibilities of a four-hundred mile trunk line between the two seaports of Oswego and New York City. At the third meeting, agreement between the delegates was achieved to the degree that DeWitt C. Littlejohn of Oswego was elected president and

was able, without dissent, to fill the corridors of Monticello courthouse with a good deal of rather bombastic oratory in which the words, “athwart the rivers and valleys, at right angles to the mountains,” occurred again and again. Unfortunately, no engineer was present to point the disasters inherent in these valiant plans.

During the following months, the representative from Sullivan county, Honorable H. R. Low, applied himself to the question of finances. He prepared and introduced at Albany the so-called “town-bonding law” to permit townships along the proposed line to tax themselves for its support. Forty million dollars was needed to build the road. The corporation, according to a contemporary news writer, “hadn’t as many thousands.” In April, 1866, Low’s bill became a law, and there was great press rejoicing though, unhappily, the total

**BOILERS** by the train-load leaving Oswego, bound for the port of New York, with Engine 105, in the lead. Left: Jersey Midland map

*Photo from D. Diver*





bonding permitted was \$5,606,800, little more than an eighth of the sum required. Nevertheless, preliminary surveys were ordered and made.

With the entrance of engineers into the scheme, the rosy atmosphere of general congratulation darkened. Technical pessimism swelled into rumor and even the layman began to question the route. Tunnel the Shawangunk? they cried. As soon straddle it! And where was all the money coming from? Inertia succeeded gloom. In this crisis, the honorable representative from Sullivan, inspired thereto by pre-election exigencies, continued to be practical; and in 1867, the law-making groups at Auburn decreed that town bonds should be exempted from taxation.

A drop in the bucket. But the Sullivanites had hold of a magnifying mirror which swelled that drop awfully. The formation of a Midland Company proceeded, and final surveys were made, resulting in the definite location in 1869 of the road from Oswego to Sidney Plains, a section of country which today comprises the Northern Division. Contracts were awarded on June 2nd, for \$260,000 to Hitchcock & Company of Oneida, and to Jackson and McDonald of Milwaukee for \$575,000. Stephens, Bennet & Company of Oneida contracted for the difficult construction of the Shawangunk Tunnel.

Nineteen days later the boom of cannon announced the beginning of work on the, by now, almost fabulous New York & Oswego

Midland; said work consisting of the driving of a stake at East Main Street crossing in Oneida and the lifting of a shovelful of sand. Though it is recorded by some historians that after a pause, during which the assembled company "hearkened to speeches and partook of a bounteous banquet," plows and scrapes were set to work to "show the form of an embankment to wondering eyes."

The same historians add the information that actual construction did not begin until September, a flat contradiction of Midland legend, which is to the effect that on August 28th, *The Midland*, first of fourteen Rhode Island woodburners, scuttled

## TO EMPLOYERS OF LABOR.

*Having had a large experience for the last twenty years in the forwarding and handling of Emigrant passengers, I am in a position to judge of the qualifications and fitness of Emigrants for mechanical or agricultural labor. Should you, Sir, or any of your neighbors require help, skilled or unskilled, of any nationality, I can supply you with same at short notice.*

*Acting as Emigrant Passenger Agent for the New York, Ontario & Western Railway Co., and having at all times, access to Castle Garden, I have superior facilities for procuring laborers.*

*Any communication addressed to me will receive prompt attention, or you may obtain information on this subject from the Railroad Station Agent nearest to your residence.*

PETER McDONNELL,

*Emig. Agt. N. Y. O. & W. Railway Co.,*

*12 Greenwich Street, N. Y. City.*





LEFT: Vintage of 1880. Castle Garden was yesterday's Ellis Island. Thousands of immigrants moved west via Number 5

ABOVE: Of the same period is this shot of Number 68 equipped with rear pilot, Sylvan Beach her destination

*Courtesy New York, Ontario & Western*

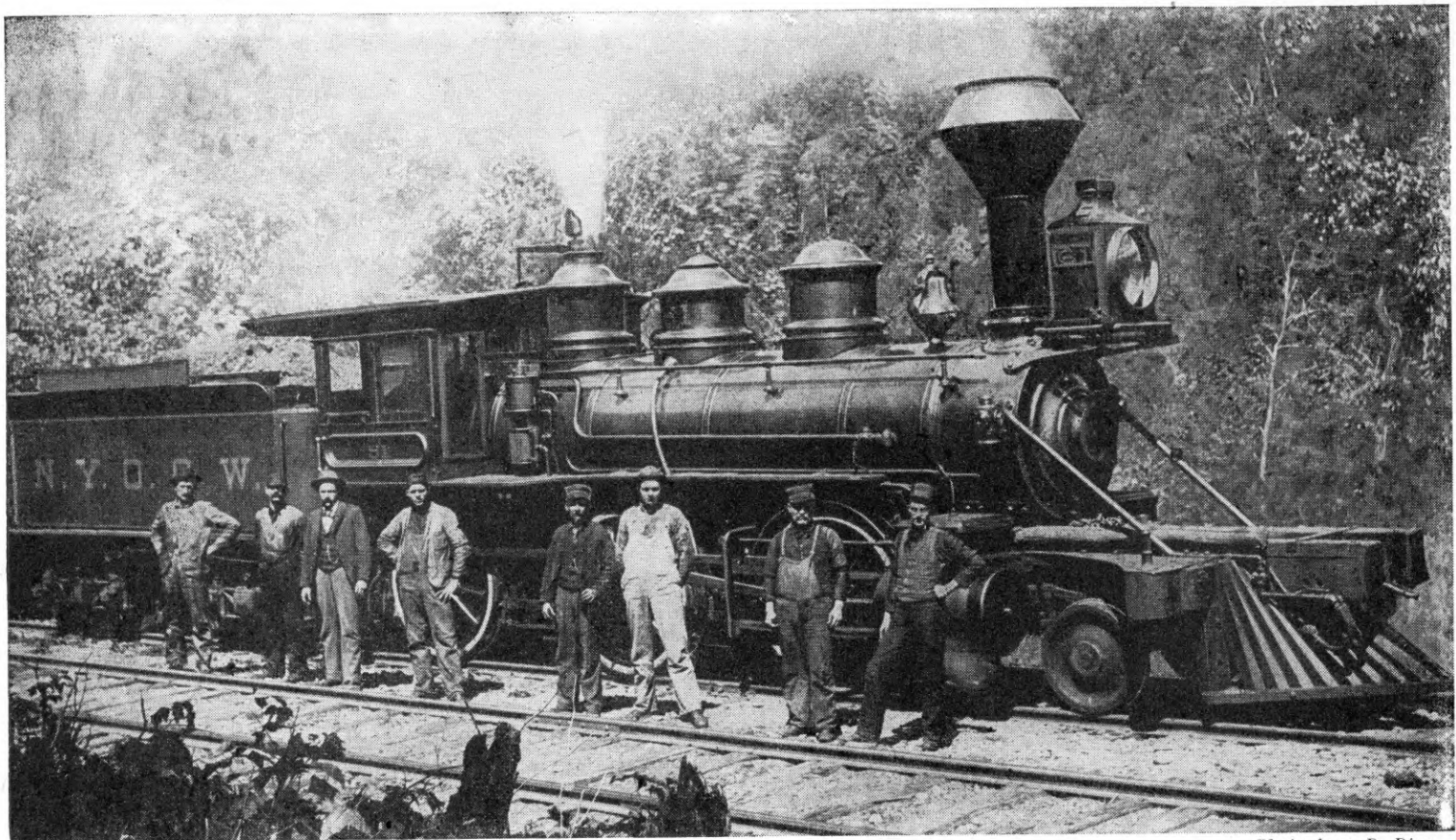
across the town of Norwich with Engineer Pat Crain at the throttle. *The Madison* and Crain together killed a pack peddler at a point south of the Norwich freight house just a few days later. Crain was again in the right seat when, on October 8th, the first passenger to click off Midland miles deposited in Norwich twelve carloads of Knights Templar and Masons from Utica and Waterville. No account of the festivities appropriate to such an occasion exists; nor is there any description of the first crossing of Lyon Brook bridge on Thursday, December 3rd.

Actually, on August 29th, over a month before the colorful Masonic-Knights Templar excursion, *The Delaware*, with Edwin Williams as engineer, had passed over the main line between Oneida and West Mon-

roe hauling a trainload of hop pickers. More circumstantial than the account of either of these trips is that carried by the *Utica Morning Herald* of Saturday, November 27th:

"On Thursday last, the first cars passed over the Midland railroad from Oswego to Norwich. Quite a crowd had gathered about the depot (at 7:30 a.m.) to witness the train's departure, but the first real burst of enthusiasm and public curiosity greeted us at Fulton. The night before, when the coaches were sent up, a large and eager crowd gathered; many went hurriedly through the cars. In the morning, the crowd was no less dense. Squads of country boys stepped cautiously inside the coaches to gaze at the gilding, the shiny panels of oak and walnut and the new red plush cushions, exclaim-





*Photo from D. Diver*

**THE MONTICELLO**, built by Baldwin in 1871; equipped with new boiler and double cab, she became Number 119. Photo taken in 1889. Engineer, M. L. Dicks; Conductor, W. Hehn



ing to each other, 'Gosh, ain't this old peaches!'"

After a pause to lament that "luxury and sophistication" should elicit no more original remarks than these from "the hinterland's youth," the *Herald* went on to describe these coaches as "twelve six-wheeled passenger cars costing six thousand each. They are plain but commodious and substantial with ash panels relieved with black walnut. They have luxuriously cushioned seats and are, withal, very easy carriages to ride in."

A fallen embankment under the "trestle bridge" at Pratt's Hollow caused an embarrassing delay of three hours. This, plus the intense cold, was too much for the crowds that had gathered at the stations since early morning. However, five hundred hardy souls persevered at Morrisville station until two o'clock. Then, the train still not coming, "the band of music set off up the track to meet the train, which they found at the bridge. A few of their stirring strains we were glad to accept in lieu of dinner."

Once on board, the band stayed. But nothing occurred until Norwich was reached. "Here we were greeted by a large and eager crowd, while, a short distance below, a cannon belched forth its notes of welcome, one hundred guns being the allowance for the day."

**T**HE road was still far from completion. It was almost two years later, on Monday, January 16th, 1871, that the first regular scheduled train ran north from Middletown. The train was scheduled for 5:30 a.m.: and notwithstanding the morning was dark, stormy and forbidding, a number of citizens ventured forth

to see Conductor Corwin give the signal and the train dash into darkness. At Fair Oaks (between Purdys and Crawford's Junction), the rain had caused "a great quantity of mud to flow down the track from the steep elevation alongside." There was a delay while a gang of laborers removed the obstruction. However, it was still dark when the train reached the Bloomingburgh Tunnel. The distance traveled was eight miles; yet the train could go no further, the tunnel not having been completed. The passengers were transferred to stage coaches and conveyed around the mountain to its northern side, also under construction. A second train awaited them there, and the journey was resumed.

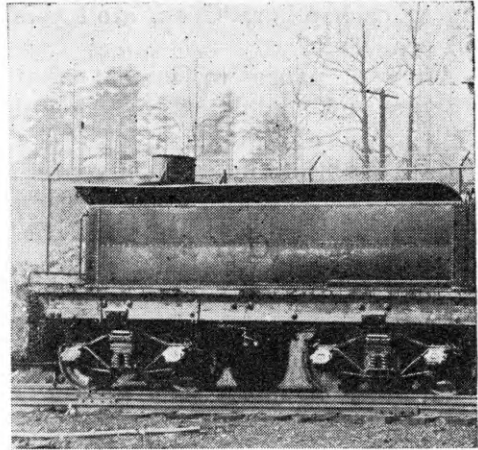
The Shawangunk Mountain remained a barrier for through traffic until the tunnel's completion on September 18th of the same year. About a mile in length, its building was a hazardous undertaking. The blasting was done with nitro-glycerin, which had to be transported in wagons. Harvey Moore, a young workman, was taking a load of the explosive over the mountain to the Mamakating entrance, when one of the containers sprang a leak, letting some of the liquid flow between the wheel hub and the axle. Suddenly, there was a loud explosion, followed by a shower of iron and splinters, after which the salvagers brought Harvey in from a pasture lot, where he had landed without serious injury. The wagon and horses were no more. Harvey lived to become a locomotive engineer, and the tunnel was formally opened for traffic on February 2nd, 1872.

The year 1870 had marked a change in the purposes which motivated the road's founders. With steel

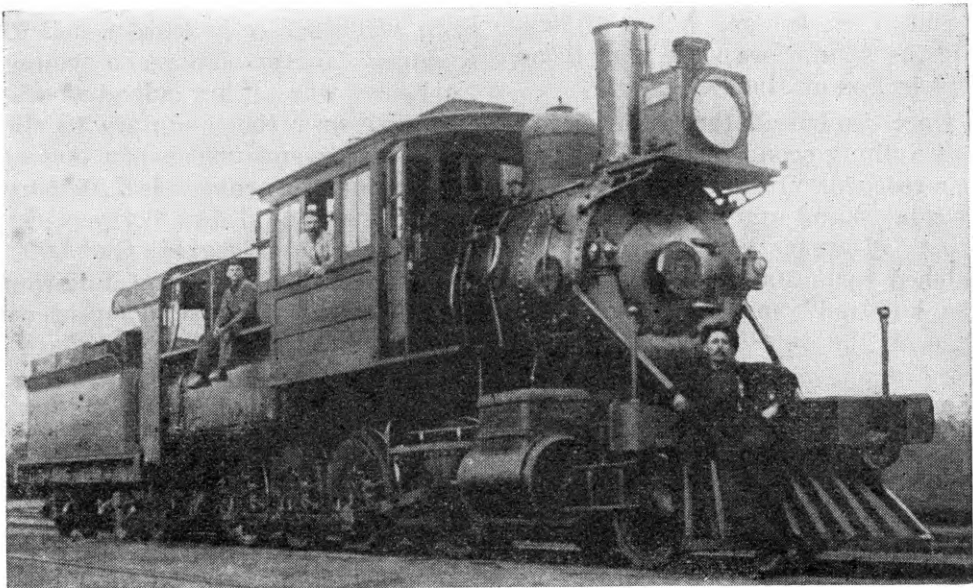


rails in the process of being laid from Norwich to Middletown, the problem posed by Samuel B. Ruggles, of an outlet through New Jersey to the port of New York began to assume meaning. In the minds of its projectors the road had grown from a local carrier supported by and run for the benefit of its village subscribers, to a potential trunk line for mighty freight and passenger traffic. These larger plans reflected the spirit of the times.

Between 1808, when Abijah Smith and Company floated several arkloads of anthracite to points on the Susquehanna river and 1869, Pennsylvania's coal regions had formed the basis for an industrial development unprecedented in scope and richness. Anthracite prosperity had changed the economy of entire states. Under these circumstances, Midland men could not be blamed if visions of the coal fields of Pennsylvania



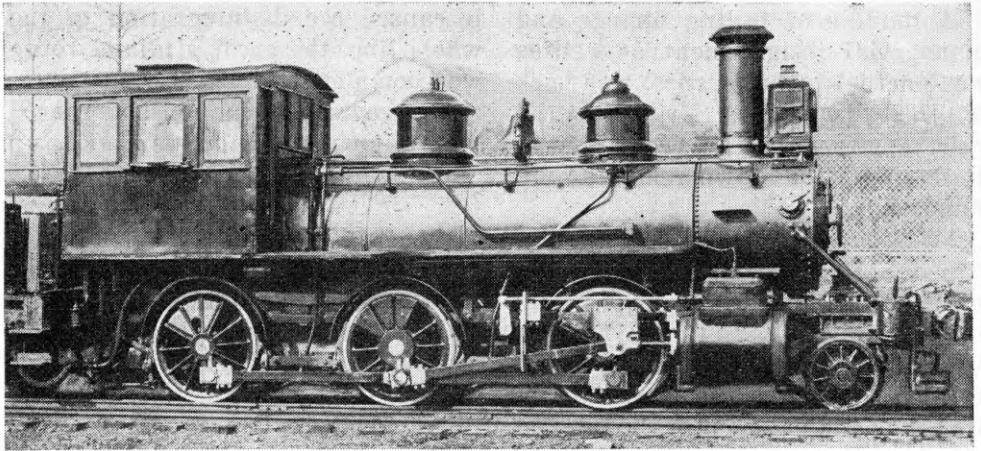
and the lumber forests of New England blinded them to the difficult gradients, the costly upkeep of tunnels and bridges and even to the fact that other roads before them had felt the lure of coal and lumber and had already built lines to points where they, for years to come, could only project them.



*Photo from D. Diver*

**TAKING** their ease in 1892 were Engineer Weeden and Fireman Caswell and negligent gentleman caught on the pilot. Number 163 was scrapped after thirty-seven years





Courtesy C. M. Witbeck

**THE MOUNTAIN VIEW**, a slick chick in her day, looks the landscape over somewhere between Oswego and Jersey City. This 2-6-0 was built by Rhode Island in 1873

The Midland charter, obtained in 1866 before any part of the line had been surveyed, contained no provisions for the extension of the road by construction into the state of New Jersey. Now, in 1869, with work completed on the Utica branch and progressing southward to Sidney, the directors turned their attentions to the efforts of Cornelius A. Wortendyke to organize a New Jersey line which should pass from Jersey City northward through Paterson to a junction with the Montclair Railroad at Pompton on the state line and extend westward through Unionville, New York. Tentative surveys had been made and some actual construction was under way on the two lines known as the New Jersey, Hudson & Delaware and the New Jersey Western when President Littlejohn approached Wortendyke.

Wortendyke's plan to construct a road from Paterson to the coal regions was, according to the *Paterson Daily Express*, "only temporarily set aside for the purpose of becoming part of the Oswego Midland through

route." In spite of such pious assurances, New Jersey citizens were wary. Neither the hard fact that the Jersey Midland had its bonds guaranteed by the New York line while retaining independence of management nor the brave announcements of land purchases in Weehawken and the launching of the first ferry, *The Midland*, warmed the uneasy Jerseyites. Editorial comments on mismanagement followed fast upon the issue, on June 17, 1872, of the first advertised timetable calling the road New York Midland. This was corrected in a subsequent issue, but by that time Wortendyke was out and C. W. Douglas, formerly of the Erie, was superintendent of the Oswego Midland's so-called Jersey Division.

During the latter part of 1871 rumors of trouble disturbed both lines. In January, 1872, when the New Jersey section went on strike, its men not having been paid for the months of November and December previous, the opinion was unanimous that "under Wortendyke's management, this could never have happened."

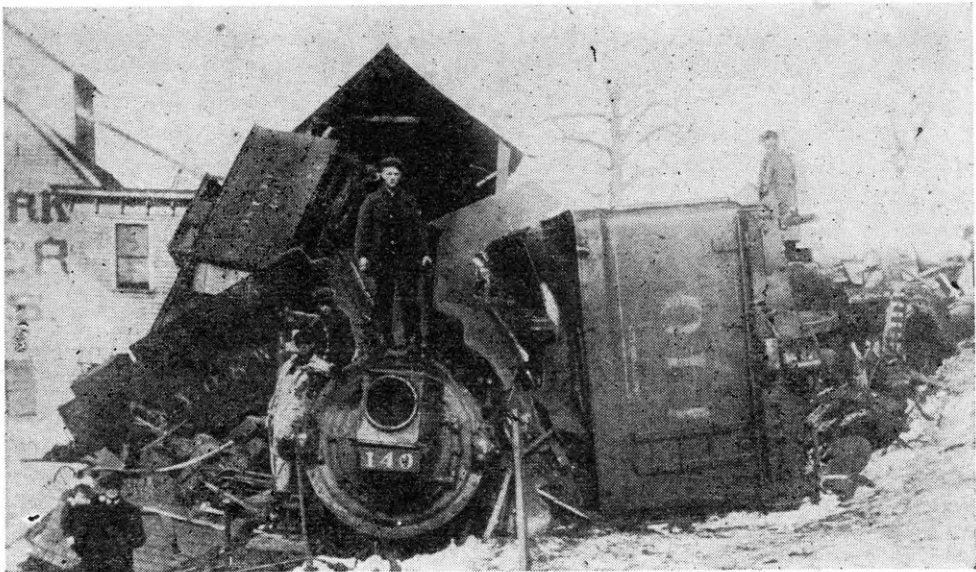


A muddle of failing finance and managerial disagreement, as well as some actual incompetence, was back of this discontent. By 1872, the thirty-eight miles between Liberty Falls and Middletown remained unfinished.

Work had progressed at enormous expense. In addition, the lease agreement with the Jersey road had bound the New York line to the payment of two thousand dollars per day to the former road, plus the guarantee of its bonds and payment of the interest thereon. When the Oswego Midland defaulted on its payments, its stated preference for the Montclair over the Unionville route and its expressed intention of consolidating the Jersey Midland with the Montclair and the Hudson Connecting Railroad in Jersey City, became increasingly obnoxious to Jersey stockholders. Then, at a cost so enormous that—taken in conjunction with the panic depression which hit the country in 1873—

it caused the disintegration of the whole line, the great Midland route was completed.

For years now cannon had roared with fairly monotonous regularity up and down the thinly ballasted NY&OM right-of-way. Now, again, at Westfield Flats while E. P. Wheeler of Middletown drove the last spike with ceremonious blows of the iron mallet, the great-mouthed engine of war belched harshly. The date was July 9, 1873. The warning note implicit in its sullen tones made as small impression as Littlejohn's unconsciously sinister "athwart rivers and valleys, at right angles to the mountains" had done four years before. Even the New Jersey malcontents grew rosy with anticipation. So fine was the disregard for unpleasant reality that on September 4th, Jerseyites and Midlanders met in jovial session to consummate a permanent lease, whereby the latter assumed all the obligations and liabilities of the



*Photo from D. Diver*

AMONG rare O&W wrecks, plunge of 140 and 177 into Conrod's coal dump at Port Jervis, N. Y., occurred against backdrop of beer and ale sign at left above



leased road, including a floating debt of \$265,000.

Fifteen days later the Oswego Midland was in the hands of receivers.

Abraham S. Hewitt of Passaic county, N. J., was designated as receiver, an appointment that, in view of New Jersey-New York hatred, might waft tainted odors even to modern nostrils; were it not for the fact that his first official act was a highly virtuous refusal to pay the daily two-thousand dollar installment to the Jersey road. J. G. Stephens, co-receiver with Hewitt, acted as the Oswego Midland's general manager.

The remainder of 1873 and the following years reveal a nightmare involvement for the bankrupt road. Constable Lynch of Paterson began a series of tax raids with the seizure of furniture and cash in the Paterson office. Negotiations to transfer through trains to the Montclair broke down when the Montclair's light track refused to bear Oswego Midland trains. Only the fact that the Jersey Midland's rolling stock consisted of but five locomotives and a scant number of coaches and freight cars prevented a complete tie-up of Oswego Midland traffic in Middletown. By furnishing rolling stock to the Jersey line, the OM was able to force through a trackage agreement.

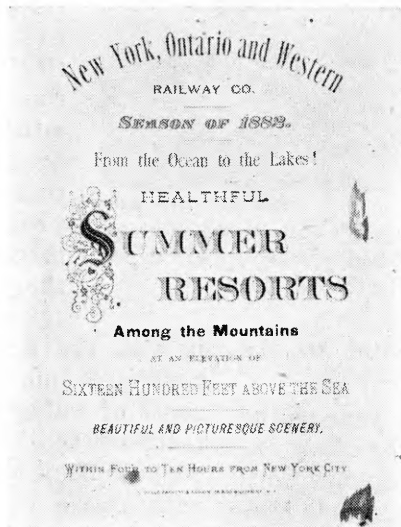
Quarrels between trainmen sprang up out of the feud; not only were wrecks frequent in consequence of

races between the engineers of the two companies, but a complete blockage in the handling of Oswego freight occurred in the Jersey road's freight offices. In October, 1874, Manager Stevens ordered all eastbound freight transferred to the Erie. The New Jersey road capitulated, and business was resumed, along with its attendant frictions.

**WHEN**, in 1875, three unpaid landholders along the Jersey right-of-way applied to the state chancellor to appoint a trustee or receiver for the road, alleging it was insolvent and mismanaged, the *Paterson Press* angrily accused Oswego

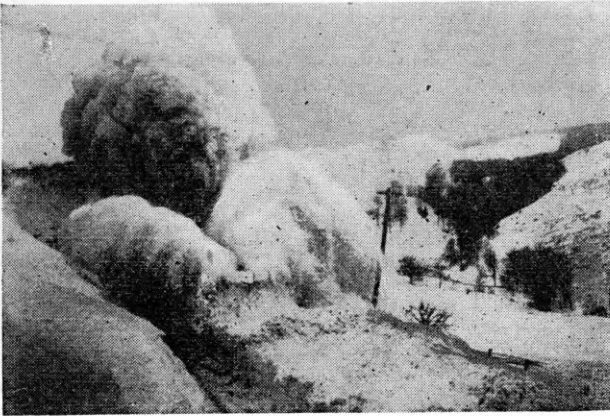
Midland bondholders of instigating the move in an attempt to regain control. Whatever the accused bondholders may have had in mind, receivership for the Jersey Midland, ordered on March 8, 1875, did not result in Oswego control.

The northern road was in no position to control even its own branch lines. The report of the manager to the bondholders in August of 1874 lists a total of one hundred and twenty-one and nine-tenths miles in branch lines. The Utica and Rome branches, as well as the ten-mile Pine Bush line, were incorporated as separate railway companies in 1868 and '69. The latter line, extending eastward from Crawford Junction and known as the Middletown & Crawford, was to be leased to the Erie in



*Courtesy D. Diver*





*Courtesy Otto Hillig*

**SNOW-PLOW** at Washington's cut above Liberty, N. Y., buried the distinguished photographer, tripod and all. Time: March 3rd, 1914

1882 at an annual rental to the amount of \$10,500.

Chartered in the same year as the Utica, Clinton & Binghamton, the Rome & Clinton was not opened until 1872, at which time the Ontario Midland owned the entire controlling stock in both lines. Of the four remaining branches, three—Ellenville, Delhi and New Berlin—remained negligible in interest until the late eighties when extensions were effected on The Ellenville and New Berlin lines.

Far different is the story of the ill-fated Auburn branch.

Begun in 1870, at a time when construction of the main line was at its height, track was rapidly extended north of Norwich to DeRuyter and westward to Cortland where it connected with the Ithaca & Cortland, a short line completed in 1871. Track from Cortland to Freeville was leased from the I&C. At Freeville, the Midland branched off to the north above the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake, with Auburn as its immediate destination. Not much profit was expected from the exten-

sion to Auburn; a determination to reach Buffalo, there to compete with such level route carriers as the New York Central for the Great Lakes trade lay behind the present plan to extend to Auburn. Viewed realistically, the completion of the branch to Buffalo could scarcely have brought prosperity to the company since almost prohibitive expenses were attached to operation over the mountain-valley contours of the Midland. As it was, the branch never extended beyond Scipio Center, twelve miles south of Auburn. The first passenger train on the branch ran from Norwich to DeRuyter July 26th, 1871, with David Shattuck as conductor and Engineer David Cord in charge of woodburner No. 15.

By June of the following year, regular mixed trains proceeded as far as Cortland. In October the line celebrated another of those "grand free excursions" which mark its early history with climactic outbursts of extravagance. There was a turnout of five thousand merrymakers, many of whom overflowed into hastily knuckled-on flat cars. A "bountiful collation in a mammoth tent" was served at the point of destination, Venice, a few miles south of Scipio Center. When, in December, regular passenger service was instituted, traffic was so far below expectations that within the year the frightened directors curtailed the service to three trains a week. This disappointment, plus the financial pinch now making itself felt over the entire line, halted construction at Scipio Center



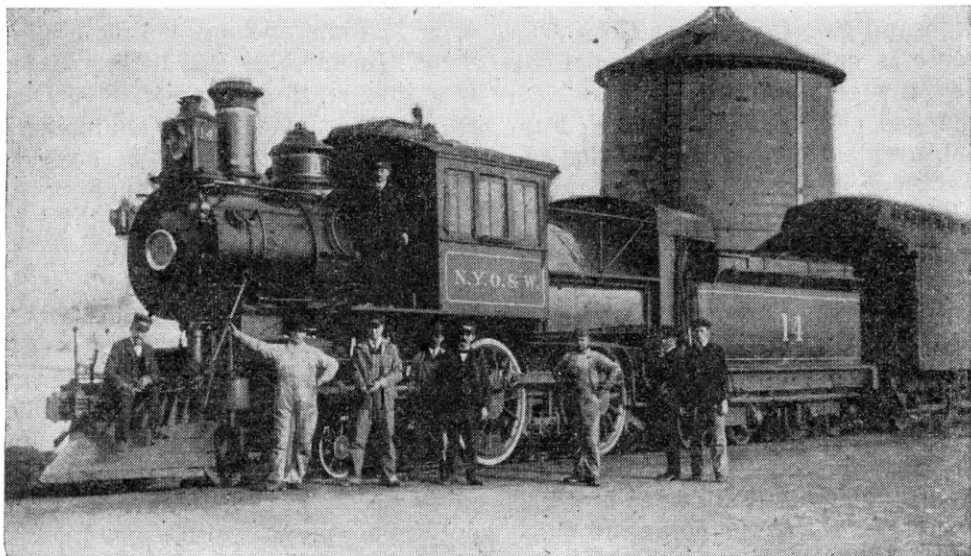
—permanently and not, as was hoped, temporarily.

The Auburn branch was divided into two sections for operational purposes; the first from Norwich to Cortland, a distance of forty-eight miles; the second, the twenty-seven mile track from Freeville to Scipio. The section between Cortland and DeRuyter was leased in 1874 to the Ithaca & Cortland, which ran two trains a day from Ithaca to DeRuyter. The Midland's one daily to DeRuyter made no connection with the Ithaca & Cortland. This short-sighted arrangement aroused such protest that in 1875 the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira took over the DeRuyter-Cortland section. A year later, the Ithaca, Auburn & Western was organized to take over the entire division on behalf of the bondholders.

During 1873 and '74 Constable Lynch's tax raid was repeated so often up and down the line that the railroad found it impossible to do

business. February 27th, 1875, the entire line was shut down. Such locomotives as had not been seized by irate townships were stored in shop buildings along the route with trainmen standing guard to prevent more seizures. Miscellaneous rolling stock took its chances at Guilford Summit. Thirty days later, with an agreement reached between the railroad and the taxing bodies, service was resumed.

The timetables of these years were expansive and gaudy affairs. Five first-class trains traveled each way through Middletown to various destinations, north and south, and made convenient connections for such points as Albany and Syracuse. Service to Chicago was maintained via the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg and via the Wabash. Two second-class up trains traveled daily between Norwich and Oswego, while outgoing freight demanded seven down trains per day. However, J. G.



*Photo from D. Diver*

**THE SANDBURG**, second Number 14, formerly Engine 37, at Summitville, N. Y. Rebuilt by Cook in 1897, this 1871 Baldwin design went to the scrapheap in 1911



Stevens, acting general manager, was forced to report the following figures: stock had been sold to the amount of \$6,800,000; construction and equipment had cost \$26,284,394.04; the company debt was \$22,587,053, of which sixteen million had been borrowed on bonds. And truth to tell, the scuttling trains frequently ran in as meaningless a maze as electric rabbits. They were on the advertised, and they ran, whether they carried traffic or not. Twenty-two million dollar deficits are not transferred to the "black" by that kind of magic.

**N**O BETTER picture of the old Midland exists than Manager Stevens' 1874 report. Beginning with a mention of the twenty-two foot rise in the seven and five-tenths miles between Middletown and the Shawangunk Kill, he records the steep ascent to the Bloomingburgh Tunnel; the downward grade of fifty feet to the mile into the Valley of Mamacating, and thence upward over two thousand feet to Young's Gap. The route is substantially the same today, though many of the names have changed. From the Fallsburgh Tunnel, over a thousand feet in length, the road descends to Cadosia, following the continuous valleys of the Willewemoc, the Beaver Kill and the East Branch of the Delaware. Passing through Cadosia tunnel, the grade ascends, descends, and ascends again to Walton. The zig-zag, or old Northfield switchback, is described as a "temporary expedient by means of which an ascent is made of eighty-six feet and a descent of one hundred and eight feet to the mountain slope which leans toward Sidney on the Susquehanna." Upward again, in spirals and loops, the line moves

into Norwich and downward into the valley of the Chenango to Sherburne Four Corners; thence up and down to Oneida, over varying grades, the maximum being sixty-six feet. The grades on into Oswego were light.

Yet Stevens advised cutting them down, since these grades, unlike those on the rest of the line, could be eliminated at a moderate cost. At the same time he counseled sixty-five pound steel rails to replace the fifty-six pound iron rails between Sidney and Eaton, a forty-eight mile stretch of heavy grade used in transporting D&H Canal coal. He estimated an expenditure of slightly over one million dollars to replace the rotting hemlock ties all along the line, re-ballast the road and take care of falling fills and decaying hemlock trestles.

The Midland owned at this time ninety-three locomotives, forty passenger cars, twelve milk cars and 1,472 freight cars of various types, plus six snow plows and other necessary loading and unloading equipment. In numbers this rolling stock remained stationary until 1886. Discussing the matter of new equipment, whether or not it should be bought, Stevens described the branch lines, with the exception of the Delhi section, as dead weights draining the life-strength of the main trunk. Any re-location of the road to modify the grades, he concluded, would of necessity be so radical as to involve an outlay of impossibly vast sums. The main reliance of the road was on local business, he said, of which the gross receipts were now a million dollars per month, with expenditures always exceeding receipts.

Stevens' report concludes: "The comparatively small amount of busi-

ness that seeks an outlet at Jersey City is well accommodated by the Erie Railway and the New Jersey Midland. Should business so increase in time as to demand an independent outlet, arrangements can doubtless be made by consolidation of interests in some way to effect that object."

The old Ruggles-fired dream could not be dismissed so easily. Between 1874 and 1883, the Midland was almost wholly concerned with schemes for building an outlet of its own into the port of New York. In spite of the differences which the two Midland roads had suffered, the New Jersey company continued to give trackage for passenger hauls to the New York line. Freight was another matter. The lease in 1874 of the Unionville & Watergap, later the Middletown & Unionville, did not solve the problem of difficult freight transfer at Middletown.

The NY&OM had entered the milk transportation field in 1871 with a single milk car attached to a passenger train on the Bloomingburgh-Middletown route, the milk car transferring to the Erie at the later point. In April of the following year a milk train was run via the Jersey Midland to Jersey City, but there was no real extension of the milk traffic until 1877, and it was not until ten years later that a Sunday milk train on the New Berlin branch tapped the rich dairying section of Otsego county.

The history of early coal traffic was similar. Between 1871 and 1890, when the Scranton branch was built, the line received a fair share of anthracite at Sidney from the D&H Canal Company. But once at Middletown, coal cars must be shifted to an Erie or Jersey Midland train.

Therefore, until the opening of the West Shore gave it an outlet in 1883, the line found no chance to develop itself as a freight carrier.

Meanwhile, the road's paying tourists were bringing prosperity to the section of country it served. The NY&OM advertised summer resorts at sixteen hundred feet above sea level, four to ten hours from New York, in leading papers and magazines all over the state. Brightly colored leaflets offered special excursion rates in a pointed challenge to a clientele "not disposed to spend a year's income on two months of fashionable dissipation," and the counties of Orange, Sullivan, Ulster, Green and Delaware became the favorite resorts of many thousands of vacationists.

Butter was seven cents a pound, rents six to seven dollars a week in a land of unrivaled hunting and fishing facilities. Six miles north of Middletown was Pundys; a little further on lay quaint Bloomingburgh, settled before the Revolution. Wurtsboro, named for Maurice Wurts, first president of the D&H Canal Company, boasted Masten Lake. Sandburgh, on the eastern slope of the Delaware Mountains, commanded an unparalleled view of the Neversink river and of Bashas Kills. From Fallsburgh and Hurley, now Luzon, stage lines penetrated the mountains. Further north, "the rounded summits of Walnut and Thunder Hill, the wilds of Mongaup Valley, the broad expanse of Breadlead and Lily Lake"—all created the atmosphere of vacation. From Young's Gap to Westfield Flats, where the Willemoc and Beaver Kill join, the packed coaches of the Oswego Midland poured vacationists into the region.



Scarcely any town in New York state offered attractions to compete with those of Oneida. Located in the Mohawk Valley, scene of the famed Indian wars, the nearby reservation held the last of the peaceful Oneida, or Oneyotka-Ona, tribe. The town of Oneida, as distinct from Oneida Castle, the Indian village, was founded in 1829 by Sands Higginbotham, a follower of John Humphrey Noyes, who believed himself to have rediscovered the ideals of early Christianity. Settling at Oneida, Noyes' adherents practised communism combined with an odd mixture of polygamy and polyandry referred to in their writings as "complex marriage." That the term held some correctness, its practitioners learned during the seventies when the Oswego Midland brought the first curious

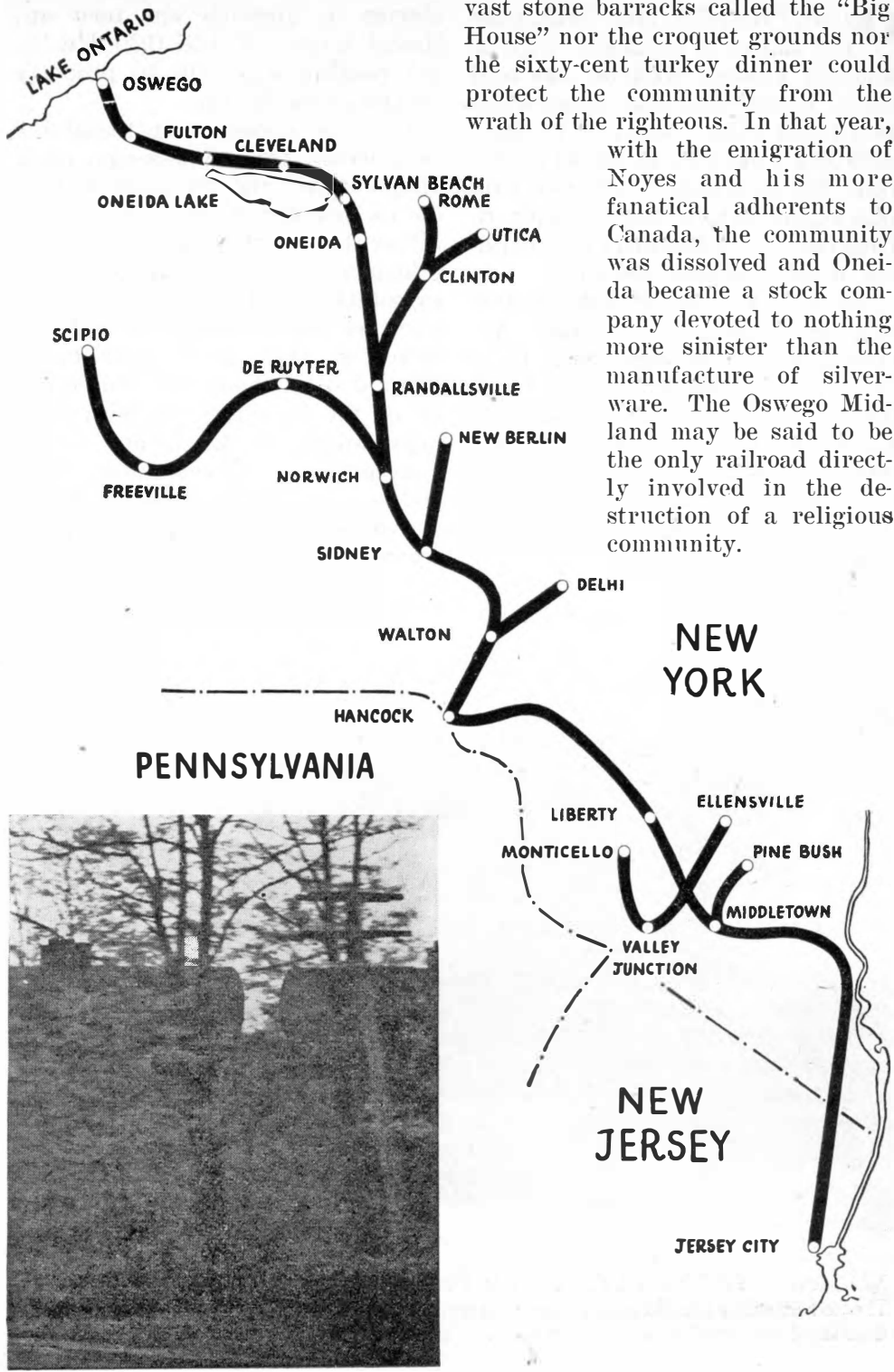
**OIL CARS on the Port Jervis branch. Engine 245, Class U-1, was a Mogul until 1924, when the change to 4-6-0 was made. Right: Stylized map of the New York & Oswego Midland, 1876**

*Photo from Steve Maguire*

trainloads to the doors of Oneida's "Big House."

The times were black with depression. The Oneidas needed ready cash for their communally produced wares and the Midland needed passenger traffic. An agreement was reached between the railroad and the community whereby the wares were to be hauled and, in return, the passengers were to be allowed to view the "Big House" and its, perhaps as communally produced, offspring. Unfortunately, the outside world, thus brought to see what it had only heard rumored and had not believed, went tight with disapproval. Not quite tight enough for a boycott at first. A contemporary reporter notes that Father and Mother still rode the eleven o'clock train to Oneida—"Father in an aura of sanctity and with a sly batch of mental reservations; Mother to protect Father from the wiles of brazen hussies, steeling herself against the Devil and all his works—" but by 1880 neither the





vast stone barracks called the "Big House" nor the croquet grounds nor the sixty-cent turkey dinner could protect the community from the wrath of the righteous. In that year, with the emigration of Noyes and his more fanatical adherents to Canada, the community was dissolved and Oneida became a stock company devoted to nothing more sinister than the manufacture of silverware. The Oswego Midland may be said to be the only railroad directly involved in the destruction of a religious community.





ON NOVEMBER 14th, 1879, near the end of a seven-year depression, the Oswego Midland was sold under foreclosure, and reorganized as the New York, Ontario & Western with New York City investors in control. The final name in the new title was significant; it harked back to Ruggles' dream, forward to the building of the Scranton branch.

The first act of the new officials was the lopping of the dead Auburn limb from the main trunk. O. F. Peete paid twenty-five thousand dollars for the Freeville-Scipio section, which in later years, was extended into Auburn and Ithaca. Already, in 1878, the Cortland-Freeville section had passed into Ithaca & Elmira hands.

Coincident with the termination of the receivership, the track from De-

Ruyter to Norwich was torn up; though it was not until 1930 that the old roadbed was sold to property owners along the line.

The new management found the New Jersey Midland passenger route "impractical" and preferred to handle its own freight into New Jersey rather than transfer it to the Erie in Middletown. The "arrangements and consolidations of interests" to which Manager Stevens had so blandly referred in 1874 were about to be realized—and the results would not be of the blandest, whatever they might appear on the surface.

According to Gerald Best, *Locomotive and Historical Society Bulletin* writer, "There is a confusion of records as to whether the NYO&W tracks (between Middletown and Cornwall) were completed before the

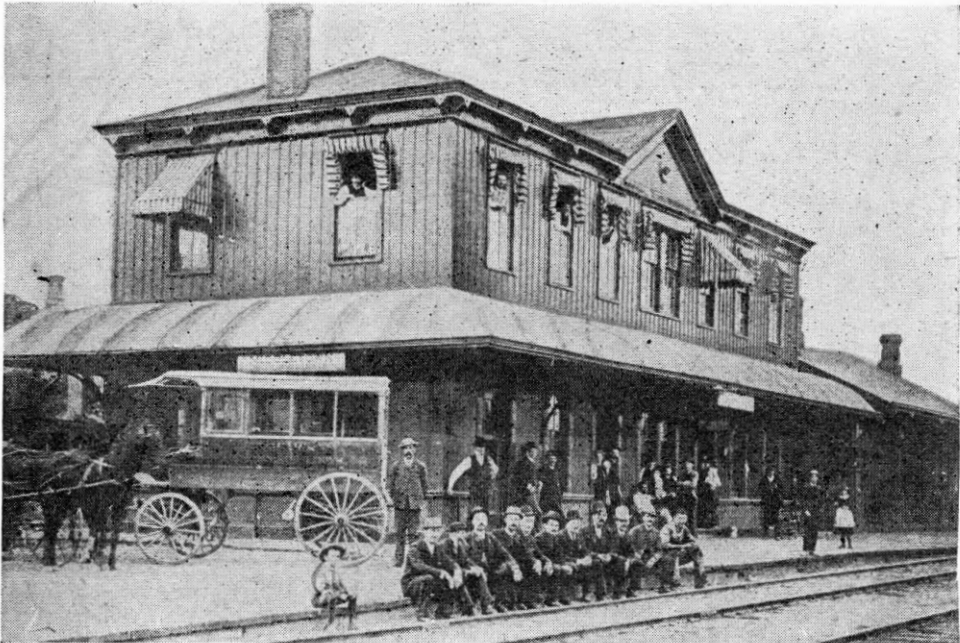


Photo from D. Diver

**WICKHAM AVENUE STATION** at Middletown, N. Y. as it looked in 1886. Erected in 1874, the building, later removed to opposite side of street, was used as dwelling house until dismantled in 1925. New station faintly resembles old, has three stories instead of two, housed once-famous lunch room, now closed

West Shore got under way." It has been stated that the New York, West Shore & Buffalo was organized solely for the purpose of giving the O&W an entrance to New York City. But the only certainty, as Best recognizes, is that the real organization of the NYWS&B was coincidental with the first construction in 1881 on the connecting line to Cornwall. Old newspaper accounts indicate the lease agreement between the West Shore and the O&W was made after the extension was built.

The NYWS&B was a merger of several small lines to which seventy-seven and one-half miles of new line was added. The lease gave the West Shore the O&W ferries across the Hudson to New York in return for ten Consolidation engines numbered 80 to 89. The West Shore's new line was completed in 1882; thereafter all NYO&W trains operated over it east of Middletown.

Two years later, in 1885, when the West Shore went bankrupt, bondholders bought it for the sum of twenty-two million dollars. After a year of reorganization it was leased to the New York Central for a term of four hundred and seventy-five years, with the O&W retaining its trackage rights into Weehawken to the year 2079.

The reorganized O&W was suffering many official changes; yet for trainmen things went on pretty much as before—without improvement. An old Midland employe recalls the time it took five engines to bring eighty-two gondolas from Sidney to Norwich. The train stopped at Oxford, and the Oxford section of the crew were asked to hold the brakes going down hill. About a mile down, the train broke in seven places. It went over Lyon Brook Bridge so

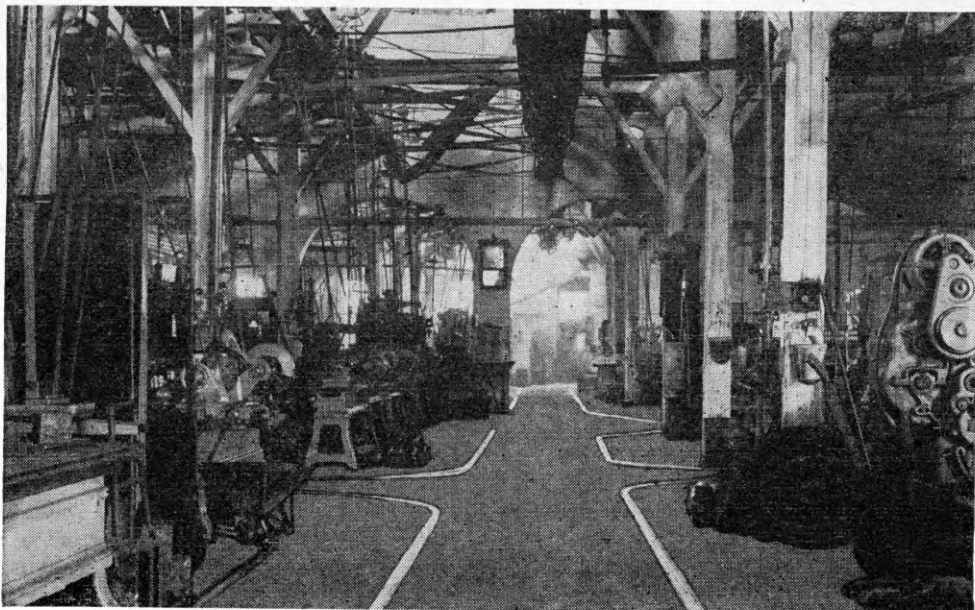
fast, he says, "it looked about twelve inches long." Luckily, the main line was clear, so no casualties occurred; but when the engineer finally managed to bring the train to a stop, the lead engine was just this side of North Norwich.

Another curious incident occurred at Liberty, where the road was still singletrack in the early 'eighties. Billy Harmes, the night op, had orders to stop the down-train in order to avoid a collision with the up-train, which had left the previous station. Harmes got the message just as the down-train flashed past on track which described a half circle around the hill in front of the station. Mindful of this fact and its corollary, that a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, Harmes leaped into a wagon hitched in front of the station and whipped the horse straight up the hill. Men say that horse was still foam flecked three days afterward—but Harmes managed to flag the train!

The Pine Bush branch had been leased to the Erie for \$10,500 annual rental in 1882. Now, in 1886, the Rome & Clinton railway, a thirteen-mile cut-off at Clinton from the Utica, Clinton & Binghamton was leased in perpetuity to the Delaware & Hudson under an agreement which permitted the O&W to operate it under a contract terminating thirty-five years from the date of the lease.

Simultaneously, negotiations were opened with the Port Jervis & Monticello Railway, a twenty-three mile line which had been organized in 1868, coincidental with the Old Midland's organization. Completed in 1871, the small road had never paid its way. Expenditures for two locomotives, plus four passenger and a few freight cars, had resulted





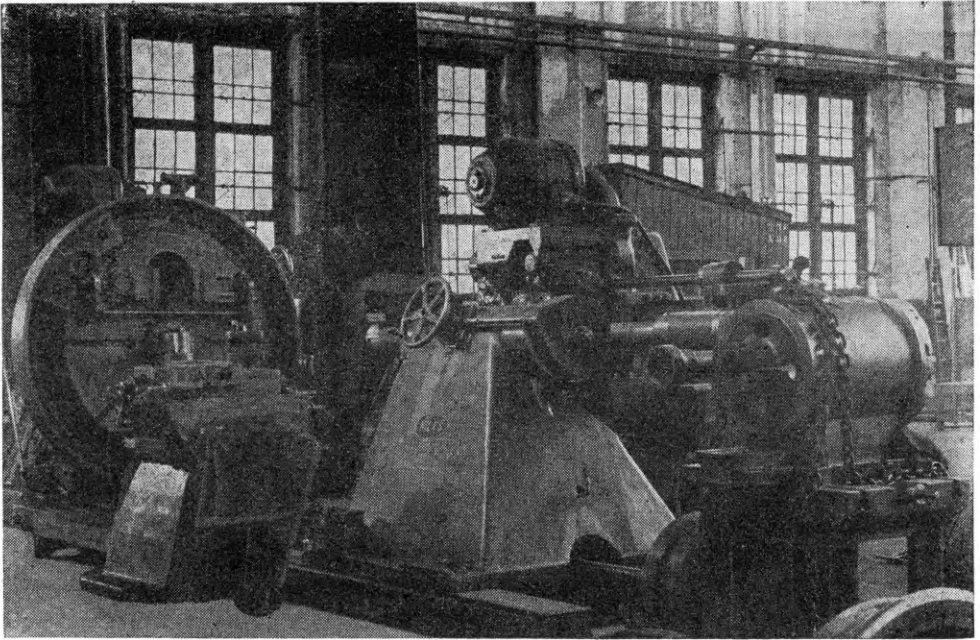
in foreclosure and reorganization. Again, in 1886, a brakeman's injury costing the road nine thousand dollars, sent the little line spinning down the path to receivership. At a public auction held in Port Jervis, on November 6th, 1886, Mr. George Lea had the railroad knocked down to him for the sum of \$20,100. Mr. Lea sold the road two days later to H. R. Low, of Middletown. In 1889, the road was extended to Summitville to meet the O&W main line.

By charter of the Wharton Valley Railway, the New Berlin branch was extended about seven miles from New Berlin to Edmeston in 1889. In the same year, the Rome, Clinton & Binghamton line was leased to the Delaware & Hudson and subsequently released to the O&W, along with the Rome & Clinton, at a minimum yearly rental of seventy-five thousand dollars for both—which sum represented an eight thousand dollar profit from the joint rental paid by the D&H.

With these changes and extensions,

all of which involved financial maneuvers favorable to the O&W, the railroad was at last ready for an extension into the anthracite fields of northeastern Pennsylvania. Chartered in 1889 as the Ontario, Carbondale & Scranton Railroad, the Scranton Division was opened in 1890. President Fowler of the O&W was also president of the new road, which ran from the main line at Cadosia a distance of fifty-four miles to Scranton, Pa. As a part of the same project, the O&W acquired coal interests in and near Scranton by loaning funds to mine owners. In return, the road received a rapidly growing tonnage.

Unfortunately, a large percentage of the profits was of necessity expended in construction. For instance, it was impossible as late as 1889 to acquire a right-of-way through the city of Carbondale at ground level. The building of a long trestle over Carbondale, plus the construction of large yards at Mayfield, just south of Carbondale, cost the line many



Courtesy New York, Ontario & Western

thousands of dollars, as did the tunnel which replaced the old Northfield switchback in 1891. Included also in these costs was the construction of a large trestle at Oswego for transferring anthracite from coal cars to lake vessels, and the completion at Weehawken of a similar trestle to provide for delivery to vessels at tidewater. Aggregate tonnage for 1889 was 495,336 gross tons. These figures were to rise to a peak of 937,117 in 1917; and drop to 65,295 in 1929.

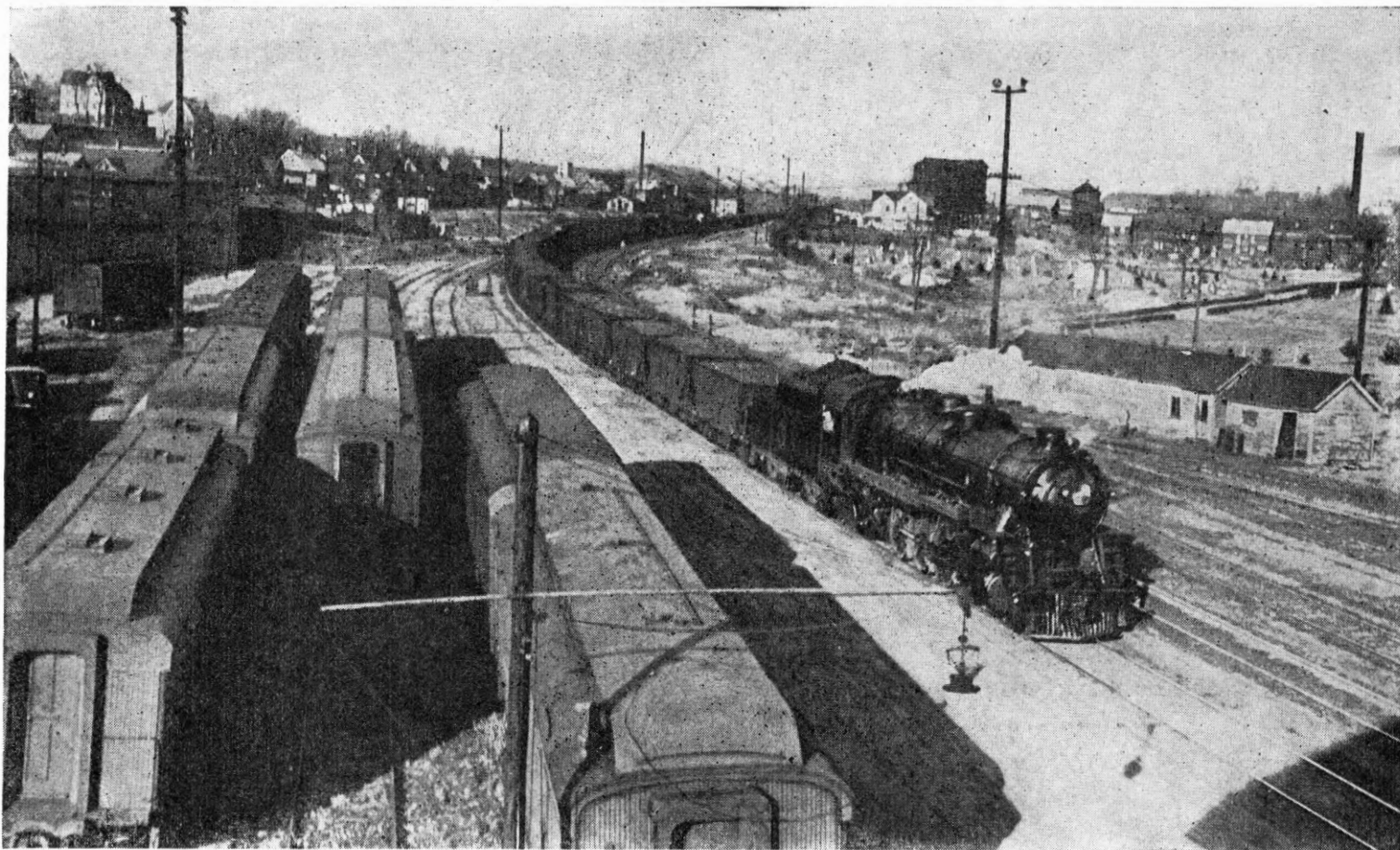
**T**HE new O&W was fated for a scarcely happier career than the old Midland had known. Meanwhile the new branch seemed to have brought success to the road and the years between the 'eighties and the new century were hearty years. The flamboyant scream of endless excursion varnishes sometimes threatened to drown out the dull roar of coal trains grinding toward a slow stop in the strike season of 1925. Ballast

**MIDDLETOWN SHOPS** serve New Haven, other roads. Above: View of wheel repair section housed to left of steam and Diesel departments. Left: from roof center, Morgan is dwarfed in perspective

was light, rails not much heavier than when Stevens made his monumental report in 1874; and if iron and steel had replaced the earlier hemlock bridges, the route was still the most difficult and the most expensive in upkeep east of the Mississippi. But excursions made a virtue of the line's roller-coaster topography. Seven dollars paid the fare from New York to Oswego on No. 2, the *New York Day Express* and on No. 6, the *Night Express*. Or you could come down from Oswego to Sylvan Beach for \$1.50. Now that communists and polyandrists had left Oneida, Excursion Agent Thomas Flintcraft advised: "Take the children."

Eight first-class trains rolled north and south daily, and five second-





*Photo from Steve Maguire*

AERIAL view of Middletown yards, taken from station window. Number 407 steams past siding where old coaches take their rest

class trains. The Northern Division sported six locals in addition to the through trains and three Sunday specials. Every branch boasted its four or five dailies, and Manager J. E. Childs was able to announce fourteen scheduled trains on the Utica Division alone.

Six years later, in 1897, timetables reflected the extent to which the rising coal traffic had absorbed the road. Now the New Berlin branch afforded only two passengers each way. The Utica Division had suffered a similar fate. These cut-downs were partially balanced by the Delhi branch's acceleration to six dailies each way. Even the old romantic names of stations were giving way to terms that reflected, not the excursionists' taste, but the harsh, short sounds easier to transfer to bills of lading. Homowee on the Ellenville branch became Spring Glen; Beer's Switch suffered a change to Beerston; Genung on the Southern Division degenerated to Little Britain.

A certain expansion in milk traffic had occurred during these years. The capacity of the early O&W refrigerator was 225 cans—and incidentally the O&W claims to be the first road to use them in milk traffic—but in 1897 the reefers held 318 forty-quart cans. The O&W, in common with many other railroads, had to convince farmers that there was money in milk. Such convincing is always costly. Here it took the form of subsidizing herds and guaranteeing the cost of milk-cans; and in 1892 extended to the construction of creameries which rented for only ten percent of their cost. By 1896, the road had either leased or built nineteen of the seventy-seven creameries along its routes. The same year, the line

transported 17.8 percent of the milk brought into New York City. The action of the I.C.C. in reducing freight rates on milk carriers, the following season, greatly affected O&W profits.

Rival carriers, running on lines less expensive in upkeep and more direct in their routes, began to edge in on freight and passenger traffic. By 1892, practically all the country tapped by the O&W had access to other through lines. Within two years, O&W milk traffic dropped two percent. Passenger fares spiraled slowly downward.

When in 1902 and '03, the Port Jervis branch was reorganized with O&W in complete control, the move was one of attempting to compensate by expansion for losses sustained elsewhere. For a while the enlargement proved successful. By 1905 the popularity of Sullivan county as a summer resort had again brought the passenger list up to five trains per day. However, these passenger profits scarcely paid for the construction of a tidewater pier at Cornwall. Later, piers for handling coastwise and intercoastal steamship cargoes were built, but the advantage to the company of increased tonnage in such commodities as north and northeast coast lumber was partly offset by the low freight rates it had to set to attract this business.

O&W had acquired the Port Jervis & Monticello under foreclosure. Ironically, a year before, the New Haven president, C. S. Mellen, had purchased in the open market 5,800 shares of O&W stock. The New Haven was an anthracite burning road and a large coal carrier; but it had no entrance to the coal fields and, therefore, no independence in re-



gard to prices paid or collected. Having acquired the above shares, Mellen opened negotiations with Kuhn, Loeb & Co. for the purchase of the 284,000 shares which had been mortgaged to that company when the Middletown-to-Cornwall extension was built. Jacob H. Schiff, representing Kuhn, Loeb & Co., set the price of the shares at approximately forty-five dollars per share. The New Haven borrowed fourteen million dollars from William Rockefeller to consummate the deal. The outlet to New York port had been bought at the price of O&W independence.

Thomas B. Fowler remained as president of the stock-controlled road, and except for an attempt in 1912 to purchase O&W's outstanding minority stock, there appeared little attempt to treat the subsidiary line as anything but a separate road. Naturally the emphasis on coal traffic, fostered now by New Haven interests which, after all, were involved solely for the purpose of gaining an entrance to the anthracite mines, tended to denude the line of its remaining passenger appeal and, therefore, of much of its local value to the communities which had formed and built it.

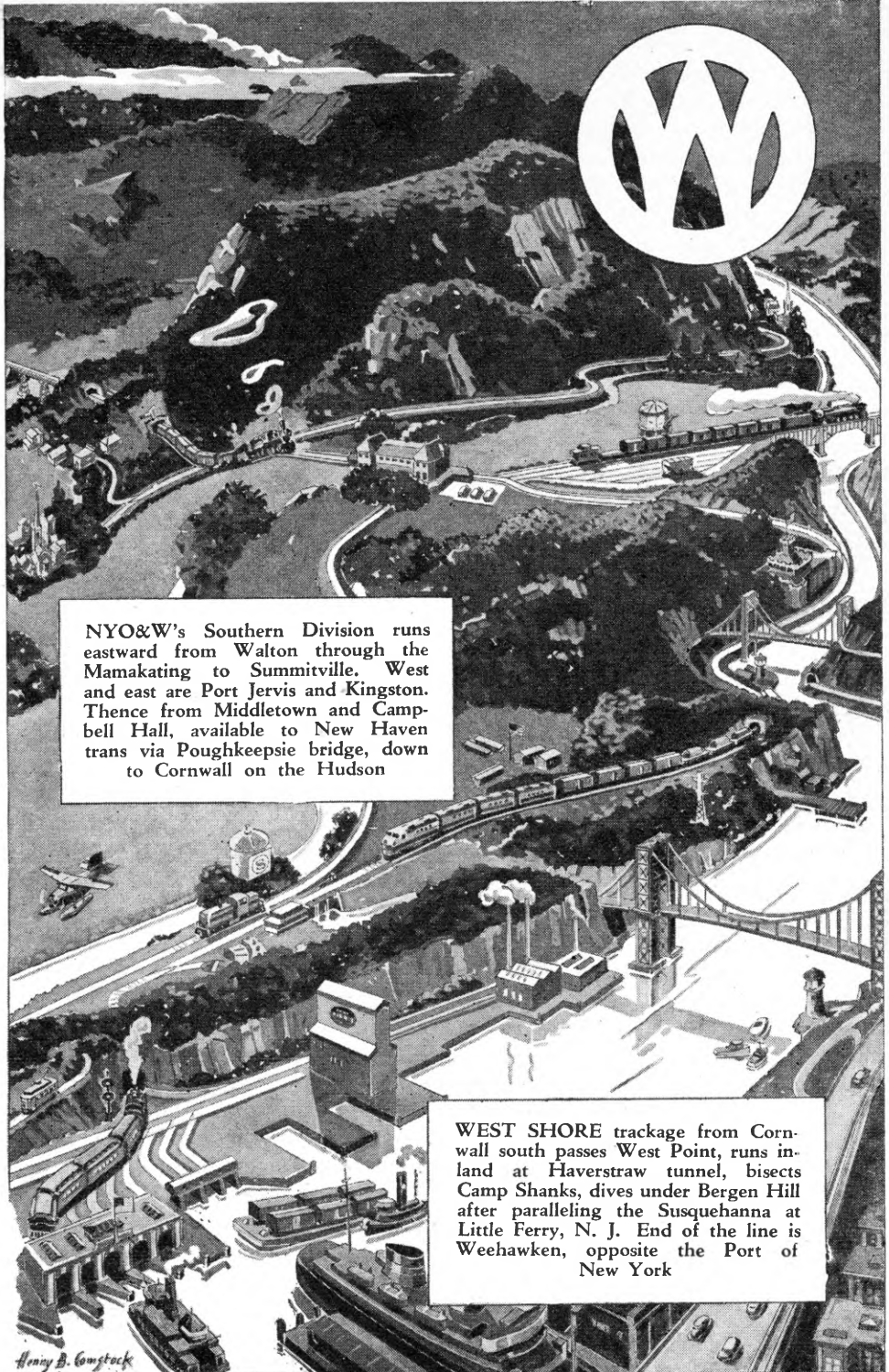
By 1916, passenger traffic had decreased from 2,065,411 in 1909 to 1,863,434; and the 1909 figures are vastly lower than earlier ones. Improvements continued to be made in freight facilities. The extension of the Capouse branch to Lehigh Valley's Sibley Junction was completed and put in operation in 1910. A year later, second track was extended from Carbondale north to the main line at Cadonia and from Mayfield yard south to Olyphant.

Despite these improvements and the occasional bursts of optimism

which accompanied them, the O&W was still "in the unhappy position of being obliged to pay for itself by dragging freight up and down steep grades, around sharp curves, over trestles and through an interminable series of tunnels." In addition, the line had the heavy expense of winter storms. The famous snow storm of '88 had cost the line thousands of dollars. The succeeding years saw lesser repetitions of that hazardous and expensive winter. Then, in March of 1914, the worst blizzard since '88 tied up traffic over the entire road.

The snow started gently, with a light fall, on Sunday morning of March 1st. At noon there were only two inches of snow on the ground. Shortly after one a coal train left Livingston Manor for Middletown. It backed over at Fallsburg to let No. 6, a passenger, and No. 10, a milk train, by. No. 30, a freight, followed them. In that short time so much snow had fallen that No. 6 couldn't leave the station. Four trains were tied up for a whole night and a part of the next day. At Woodridge, a passenger was sunk in the snow, and a mile below Parksville, No. 14, a milk train, was stalled in a snowdrift for twenty-five hours.

On the Scranton Division a coal train in charge of Conductor Martin Somers stopped at the Delaware river bridge so as to double over the grade at Hancock. When they'd brought the first half of the train into Cadonia, they started back for the rear end; but the engine stalled in the snow by the Cadonia lunch room and the rear end of the train had to remain on the hill until the next Tuesday evening. A snow plow, which had left Mayfield yard for Cadonia on Sunday evening, got off

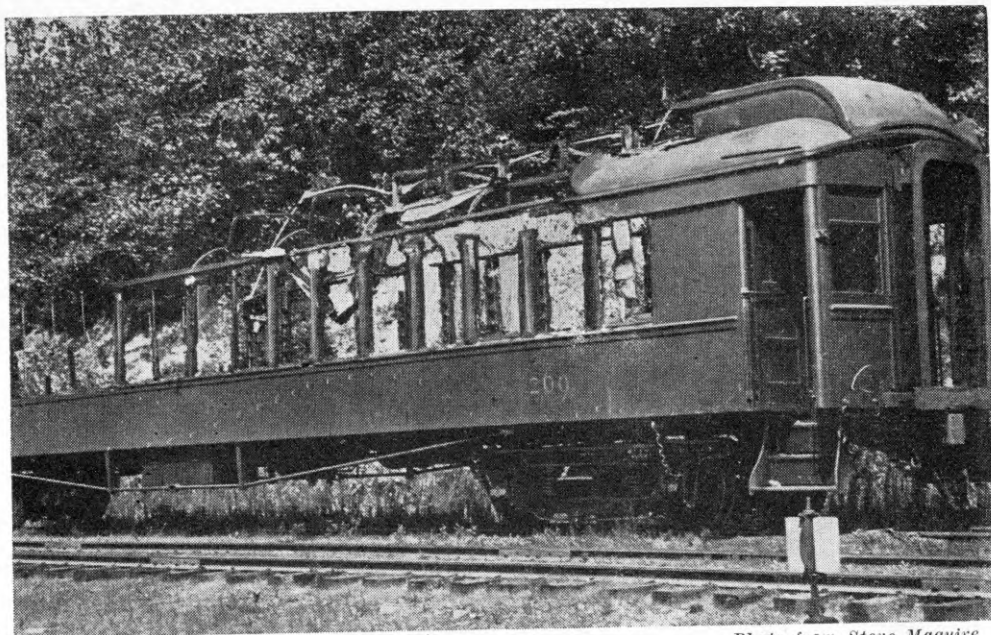


NYO&W's Southern Division runs eastward from Walton through the Mamakating to Summitville. West and east are Port Jervis and Kingston. Thence from Middletown and Campbell Hall, available to New Haven trans via Poughkeepsie bridge, down to Cornwall on the Hudson

WEST SHORE trackage from Cornwall south passes West Point, runs inland at Haverstraw tunnel, bisects Camp Shanks, dives under Bergen Hill after paralleling the Susquehanna at Little Ferry, N. J. End of the line is Weehawken, opposite the Port of New York

Henry B. Gowstock





*Photo from Steve Maguire*

**FIRE-GUTTED COACH** burned when No. 1 caught fire just short of High Bridge tunnel in 1941

the track at Brown's Cut north of Poyntelle and was buried, along with one of the two pusher engines, in the snow.

At noon on Tuesday, two engines and one train crew were able to leave Cadosia for Brown's Cut. This outfit stalled in the snow at Lakewood station for a couple of hours. After they were shoveled out, the two engines proceeded ahead, coupled together, tank to tank, but stalled again for four hours in Bennetts' Cut, where snow was higher than the engines' running boards. The crew managed to shovel out and reach Cadosia for breakfast on Wednesday.

The Kingston branch had been reopened the previous Monday. On Tuesday, a crew in charge of Conductor Jim Morgan with engines 140, 177 and 13 left Summitville enroute to Port Jervis and Monticello. No. 140, on the lead, was headed south, as was No. 177, while

No. 13 on the rear was headed north. In Port Jervis, 140 took the switch into Coonrods' coal dump, dragging 177 and the flanger after it into the dump, out the other end and onto the ground. Engine 13 stayed in the dump. No one was killed, but several were injured.

By Wednesday evening the line was cleared of stalled trains, but traffic remained suspended until telegraph poles and wires could be repaired. The train dispatcher said afterward that from Sunday afternoon on he had not known exactly where any of the trains were.

In view of such extended tie-ups, with consequent damage to rolling stock and loss of revenue, it is not surprising to find the financial situation growing worse instead of better. A study of the figures in print reveals a steady decline in motive power and rolling stock with a corresponding rise in the funded debt.

President John B. Kerr, in his report for 1924, lists 188 locomotives, 169 passenger cars and 5,193 freight cars, as against the 212 engines and 6,200 freight cars in possession of the road in 1916. In every instance, the equipment figures are less than those for 1916, which in turn are smaller than the figures for 1904. The report goes on to say that "business on the line reflected the conditions that prevailed throughout the eastern section of the country. . . . The management is constantly studying the inroads of motor bus and cars on passenger travel, with a view to reduction of passenger train mileage. A considerable reduction has been made by consolidation of trains and by discontinuance of service between points where public patronage has become negligible. . . ."

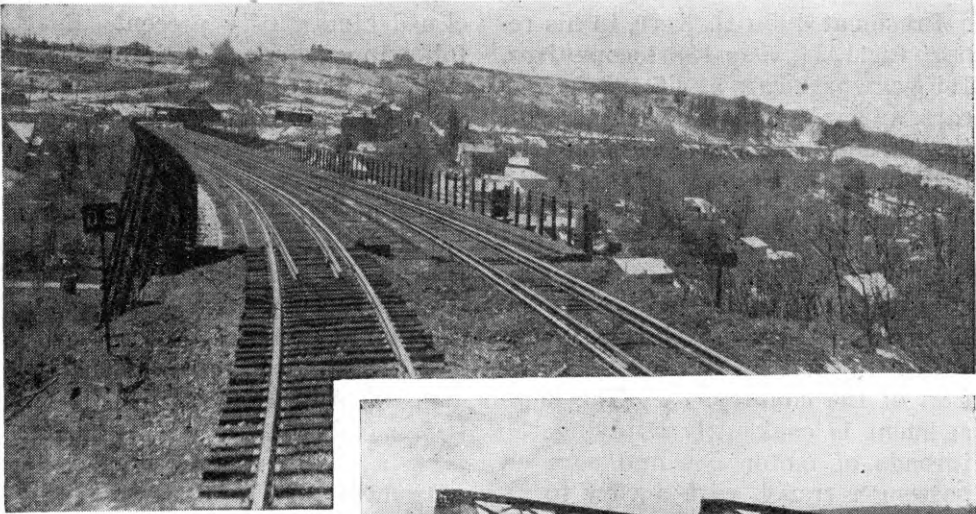
**I**NCREASED costs in wages and supplies, larger taxes and an increase in the per diem charge on foreign freight cars, which charge had risen from forty-five cents in 1916 to one dollar; plus the fact that no back load originated on the O&W line for the vast proportion of incoming freight cars—all contributed to an overhead out of all proportion to the volume of business done. At the same time company cars could not be put in service for coal from mines on connecting lines, for there the originating line loaded only its own cars!

The following year saw the disastrous coal strike. In 1927, it was announced that the road was running more than \$700,000 behind the revenue total for the same period in 1926. The precipitous drop in income was ascribed to the falling off in coal traffic from the Pennsylvania fields. It was estimated that in six months the coal traffic de-

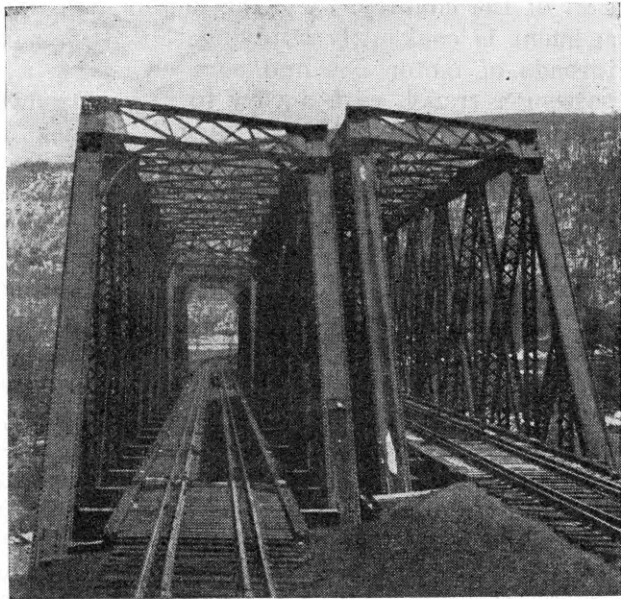
clined almost fifty percent. By the following year, a deficit of \$24,059 existed. Some reason for this downward trend in O&W freight business may be gleaned from figures for the same period which show a net increase of \$2,171,069 for the Pennsylvania Railroad; and for the New Haven—beginning to be referred to the O&W's "parent road"—a net increase of \$1,087,093. More westerly roads also showed substantial increases. At the same time, it must be remembered that there had also been a distinct slackening in the output of the Lackawanna Valley mines for tidewater consumption.

These were depression years. Total number of fares carried by the great trunk roads was cut thirteen million in 1930. The New Haven lost over a million passenger fares while, according to Transit Commission figures, the O&W carried 90,578 fewer passengers in and out of New York than in 1929. Passenger service between Oneida and Oswego was abandoned in 1931. According to J. H. Nuelle, new president and general manager, receipts between the two points over a period of fifteen days amounted to \$139.77 only. Express handled during the same period other than by American Railway Express totalled \$84.00. Even the milk traffic on this route had dropped to so low a point that it could truthfully be stated there was none to haul.

The Port Jervis branch had been abandoned in 1930. Five years later, with considerable opposition from Thompson township which, as many a village along the line was later to do, fought to preserve the \$150,000 still due to bond purchasers, the Summitville and Monticello line saw the last of its varnish. A year later, only the Kingston branch could still



**ABOVE:** Middle Branch Creek bridge, Ferndale station visible in distance. **Right:** One of nine crossings over the Willowemoc, tributary to the East Branch, N. Y. Bridge curves suggest O&W's endlessly winding route



boast of passenger service, though there was one mixed train on the Delhi extension. Main line lopping, having cut the passenger run to Oneida, shortened it to Norwich, then to Sidney and later to Walton.

The razing of the Oneida station in 1939 was the occasion of a funereal notice in the *Oneida Press*. After recording the circumstances of the station's erection in 1870, the article fondly recalled the halcyon days when Seonondoa Street witnessed the heaviest traffic ever seen on the O&W.

The notice ended with a reference

to freight business as "the big item with the O&W today." In 1933, the management had announced its total freight moved as 7,587,596 tons, of which coal constituted more than seventy-eight percent. It was proudly claimed that "later groups controlling the property" had found the road's proper field. Operations had been stabilized and finances kept well in hand. To some observers the last claim only emphasized the fact that no new locomotives had been purchased since the Y-2's, built in 1929 by Alco, were acquired.

When President Nuelle went over

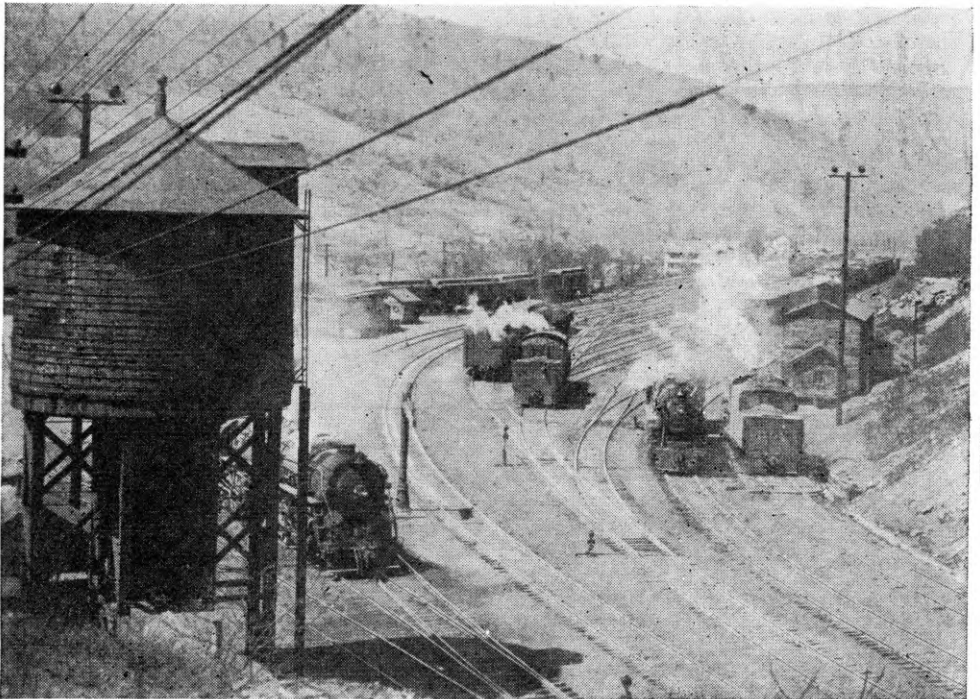


to the Delaware & Hudson in 1937 the bottom had fallen out of the anthracite market. In that one year, the Scranton Coal Co., the Monarch Mining Co., and the Penn Anthracite Co. were forced to curtail their shipments over the line. The new trustee appointed under the Federal Bankruptcy Law, Frederic E. Lyford, found the road saddled with a promise to pay \$100,000 in back wages to Scranton Coal Co. miners on behalf of the mine.

Viewing the coal situation for what it was, Lyford made it clear that the road could no longer depend on the revival of coal traffic but must face a transformation to a general merchandise carrying road. In an effort to increase the volume of this traffic, some \$300,000 was expended in building dock, storage and

terminal facilities at the Lake Ontario port of Oswego.

Unfortunately, negotiations with the Canadian Pacific and Canadian National with regard to the establishment of a car ferry connecting Oswego with the Canadian port across the lake, came to nothing, and Canadian-bound traffic continued to move via water from New York into Connecticut and thence north by the New York Central or the Lackawanna. This failure, plus the fact that the O&W merely served as a transfer between the New York Central, the Lehigh Valley and the New Haven at Maybrook, resulted in the disastrous financial situation of 1941. General merchandise had not made up for the loss of coal tonnage, which in the five years through 1941, had made the disastrous drop from 5.1 millions



*Photos from Joseph A. McClellan*

**CADOSIA YARDS, looking north. Scranton branch moves left, behind water tank; main line, north and south, between hills—softly contoured at this point**

to about 1.7 million gross tons.

Income had surpassed operating expenses and taxes only in 1938; in that year, the paper profits had amounted to \$108,000—but when fixed charges, such as payment of principal and interest, had been deducted, the result was a “red” figure of \$1,124,000. The possibility of RFC aid was held out as the only hope. During the following three years the road was in the courts. The New Haven still owned 50.8 percent of O&W’s stock, and no actual reorganization took place, although Mr. Raymond L. Gebhardt and Mr. Ferdinand J. Sieghardt succeeded Mr. Lyford in the trusteeship upon his resignation. A survey of the next year resulted in the trustees’ recommen-

dation that the double tracking between Cornwall, Middletown and Scranton be reduced to single tracking. In December of 1944, passenger service between Weehawken and Middletown was temporarily restrained, leaving a milk train to offer the only passenger transportation for the time.

**O**THER reductions which were permanent involved the sale of the New Berlin branch to the Unadilla Valley. Numbers of old engines, box cars and coaches had been scrapped in the late thirties. With the purchase in 1942 of five Diesels—a form of motive power which had proven itself in economy of operation on the New Haven—the O&W sold



thirty-five additional steam engines to the Machine Tool & Equipment Co. Most of the Class Y's were resold to the Savannah & Atlanta, while the Y-2's went to the Bangor & Aroostook. At this writing only two of the old coaches remain in the Middletown yard.

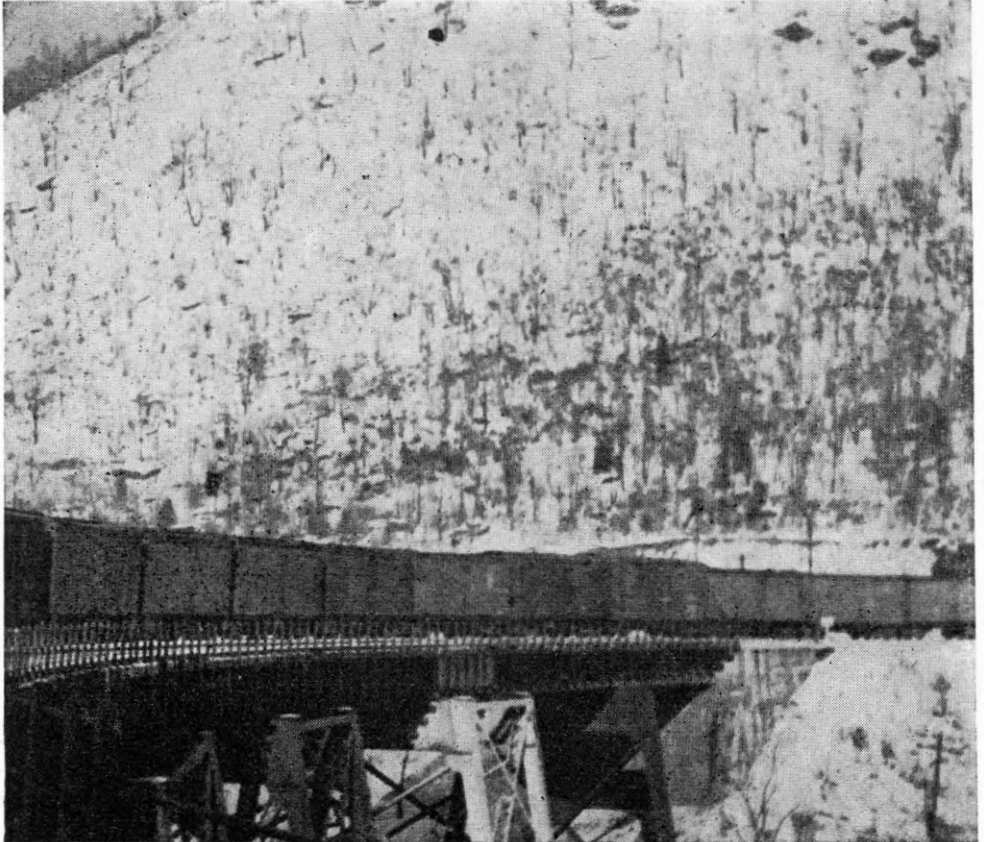
The *Walton Reporter* of May 25th, 1945, recorded the passage through Walton of the first Diesel-powered train on the previous Sunday night. The consist was eighty-two cars. At the same time, it was reported that enough Diesels were on order to replace practically all the road's steam equipment. Such replacements, it was stated, involved crew changes of enormous significance to the railroad families along the O&W line,

the Diesel crew consisting of only five men instead of the twelve needed for a steam-powered train of the same size. In addition, the *Walton Reporter* added, numerous layoffs were expected in the Middletown shops and at other installations.

Under the circumstances, a good deal of bitterness was generated. Federal Judge Hobart in 1941 felt that the taxes which the railroad was called upon to pay were grossly excessive, based as they were upon the much higher income of former times. He added, "If the people along the

SYMBOL freight, powered by Mountain-type 453, Class Y-2, leaving Cadosia, N. Y., enroute from New Haven connection at Maybrook to WL&W and Lehigh Valley connections near Scranton, Pa.

Photo from A. V. Neusser







*Photo from Steve Maguire*

RARE shot of passenger engine, Number 244, at water tower on the Monticello branch, commemorates 1941 fan trip. This branch saw the last regularly scheduled varnish ten years ago

line want the road to continue, they must make a contribution to that end." The inference, that factories and private individuals who should have supported the line did not do so, is borne out by a glance at the freight and passenger figures of any of the other roads operating in this territory. The people, naturally, had their excuse: service offered was not commensurate with their needs or their desires. The obvious reply, that empty coaches do not buy new ones, was drowned out in the roar of the new Diesels. Which roar, in its way, was also an answer to the problems posed on that long ago winter's dusk when, as now, men wanted over the mountains and out and the accident of a vote taken at milking time chose the way.

More than two generations of railroaders had fought the terrific difficulties and handicaps of that route. The new generation was continuing the fight. Now, in 1946, for the first time it can be said that the battle

seems on the way to be won. Contrary to the *Walton Reporter's* assumption of last year, not a single man has lost work under the new Diesel regime. In fact, management boasts that many an engineer, too old for the racket and jar of a steam engine, pilots one of the new 5400's with ease. Coal and water stations are being maintained, and no dislocation of labor has resulted in that connection. Fuel saving for three months alone amounted to \$166,787, a figure which does not include the saving on water bought from town reservoirs. The expensive water softener at Oneida is scarcely in use at all these days.

The road looks forward to complete Dieselization—at present four 5400's and one 2700, aided by five yard switchers, carry the main burden of heavy freight. The economy of their operation within the last year gives the road its first victory over severe gradients. Management feels that the best advantages will be

obtained when oil completely replaces coal in the company's locomotives.

Already, in the traffic field, coal has given way to general merchandise. Total tonnage carried in 1944 was over eight million, of which more than six million was general merchandise, figures representing a clear gain of three million gross tons since 1938. While it is true that general merchandise is competitive traffic and requires more servicing than coal, the handicap here is offset, management claims, by the new tendency toward diversification of industry. Within the last years, numerous industries have decentralized themselves, and have located non-urban branches along the O&W right-of-way. This means originating freight, with consequent full rates.

With a growing merchandise traffic shuttling over its Diesel-conquered grades, the New York, Ontario & Western looks confidently toward preservation on a self-sustaining basis. The possibility that, in view of recent wage-scale increases, the Interstate Commerce Commission may augment freight rates, does not dazzle management. They have profited by their early failure in coal traffic, which has given them time to realize themselves as a general carrier; and, in consequence, are better prepared for the wholesale competition in this traffic which is expected to result from the recent coal wage increases. Many another road, just going into Seventy-seven, might well study the O&W's program for the last ten years and benefit thereby.

As for passenger traffic, Nos. 1 and 2 will continue to run between Weehawken and Walton, winter as well as summer. The new 1946 *Vacation Guide* advertises skiing and numer-

ous other winter sports to be had in Orange, Ulster, Sullivan and Delaware counties. The road is not too optimistic in this regard; rooming house associations, though, feel that Midland tourist traffic may well become year-round. Whatever the success of the winter venture, the NYO&W cannot fail in service to the communities which are responsible for its existence.

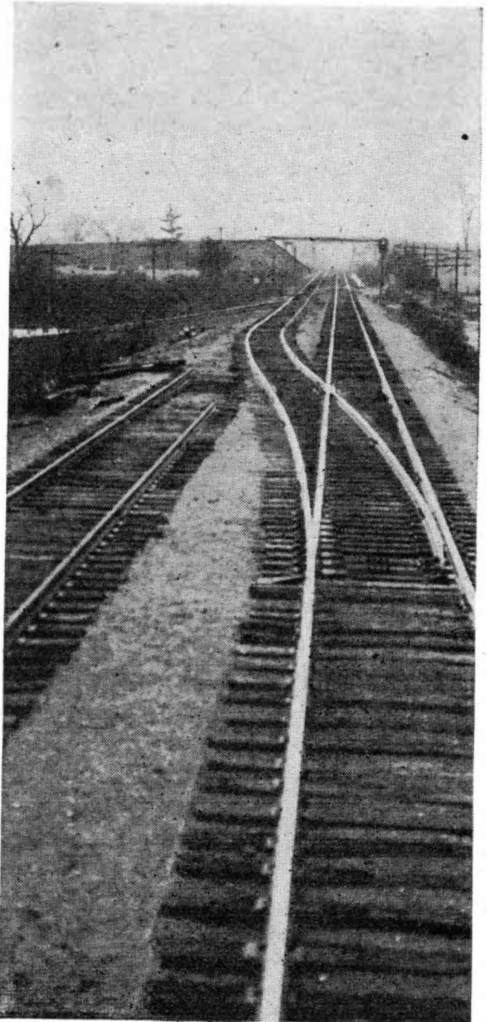


Photo from Joseph A. McClellan  
**TRAINS** north of Middletown go into the hole at this manually operated switch point. Unused second track on left is red with rust, will go for scrap soon