

# The Black Diamond

**Official Newsletter of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society November 2021**

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## **Message from the Editor**

The November 2021 edition of "The Black Diamond" provides full details about all Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society events during the year. Featured in this issue are LVRR history articles with photographs written by Paul Shinal and Paul Templeton. An article about the Lehigh Valley Railroad roundhouse in Manchester, New York, is also included. Please send any Society news and/or historical articles about the Lehigh Valley Railroad to me by U. S. Mail at P. O. Box RR, Manchester, NY 14504 or by e-mail at [kemay59@hotmail.com](mailto:kemay59@hotmail.com). Thank you for your contributions.

Ken May, Editor/Trustee

## **2021 Station Museum Open Houses**

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society Station Museum was open to the public one Sunday afternoon a month from June to October this year. The Lehigh Valley Railroad Memorial Night in April and May 16 open house were canceled. Open house dates were June 20, July 18, August 15, September 19, and October 17. Attendance at the open houses was down because of the Coronavirus pandemic. Thanks to the LVRRHS members who volunteered at the open houses.

## **LVRRHS Station Museum Open House November 21**

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society Station Museum at 8 East High Street in Shortsville, New York, will be open to the public on Sunday, November 21. Hours will be 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. A large collection of historical artifacts from the Lehigh Valley Railroad is on display at the museum. Author Harry Tuttle will sell and autograph copies of his new book, "Lehigh Valley Railroad Stories: Manchester Yard." The gift shop will be open. Admission is free; donations are welcome. For more information, visit [www.lvrrhs.org](http://www.lvrrhs.org) or call 585-289-9149.

## **2022 LVRRHS Annual Meeting Notice**

The annual meeting of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society will be held on Sunday, January 16, 2022, at 2:00 p.m., at the Society's Station Museum at 8 East High Street in Shortsville, New York. Election results for officers and trustees will be announced, 2021 activities will be reviewed, and 2022 activities will be discussed at the meeting. The monthly meeting will be held after the annual meeting. All Society members are invited to attend as well as the public.

## **LVRRHS Facebook Page**

The Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society Facebook page has had much content added over the past year. Ken May has posted more historic photographs and postcards of LVRR locomotives, trains, structures, and facilities in Upstate New York in the photos section. Note that you do not have to sign up for Facebook to view the page. Contact Ken to contribute material for our Facebook page.

## **Membership Renewals**

If you have not already renewed your membership for 2021, we hope that you will renew now. Memberships received after September 30 will be considered good through 2022. We thank all of our members for their continued support of the Society.

## **Donations Needed**

Please consider making a donation to the Society when renewing your membership. Income from gift shop sales and donations by visitors at the station museum open houses was down this year due to reduced attendance. Thank you for your generosity.

## **Membership Drive**

We are actively seeking new members for the Society. Please ask anyone that you know with an interest in railroads to join our group. They can print and fill out the membership application from the Join section of our website. Thank you for your support.

## **LVRRHS Website**

Visit the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society website at [www.lvrrhs.org](http://www.lvrrhs.org) for the latest information about Society activities.

## **Lawn Care Donation**

Thanks to Joe Colasacco and his landscape business, Kingdom Proprietors, for mowing the station museum lawn during 2021.

## **LVRRHS Information**

“The Black Diamond” is published by the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society, P. O. Box RR, Manchester, NY 14504-0200. Displays and archives are located at 8 East High Street in Shortsville, New York. Hours by appointment. Contact the museum at 585-289-9149 and leave a message for a return call.

## **Ontario County Ready to Move on Lehigh Valley Railroad Roundhouse**

**By Julie Sherwood, Rochester Democrat and Chronicle, October 25, 2021**

The long-abandoned Manchester Lehigh Valley Railroad Roundhouse is in “remarkably good condition” and ideal for reuse, according to the consultant who presented findings on the structure Thursday night.

Jack Waite and his team with John G. Waite Architects Associates found a great deal of the original early 20th-century building has survived. “It’s a very unusual space and one that lends itself to a number of adaptive uses,” said Waite.

The early 20th-century, 62,000-square-foot roundhouse in the village of Manchester has been off the tax rolls since 1993. An eyesore and source of vandalism and contamination concerns, the property has also cost the county about \$100,000 in village, town and school taxes, said Ontario County Planning Director Tom Harvey.

“It’s not free letting it sit there,” said Harvey.

In a PowerPoint presentation, Waite presented multiple success stories of roundhouses restored, repurposed or resurrected as rail facilities.

Examples given: Roundhouses reused by the railroad such as in St. Albans, Vermont, or repurposed for industry such as a boiler works in Troy, New York. A roundhouse in Portland, Maine was taken over by the state to be offices and court system.

Roundhouses turned rail museums include those in Jamestown, California, and Spencer, North Carolina, where it is the North Carolina Museum of Transportation. In Scranton, Pennsylvania, a roundhouse was transformed into Steamtown National Historic Site railroad museum. Roundhouses have become convention and event centers, with pubs, shops, and restaurants.

In Aurora, Illinois, where the building had collapsed, investors led by Chicago Bears Hall of Fame running back Walter Payton took over the site and created a hub with a brew pub, restaurant, and coffee house.

“What we found is that roundhouses are eminently suitable for adaptive uses. When they have been adapted they are by and large quite successful,” said Waite. “The degree to which they have been adapted depends on the vision, foresight, and energy of the communities.”

The consultants suggested three approaches. All would require the structure first be stabilized and the property protected and secured. One option, and the least expensive, would be its use as a vast storage facility with parking and loading areas estimated to cost \$800,000.

A more elaborate option, exceeding \$1 million, would be as a storage facility with parking area for office suites and studios. A third option would be full redevelopment that might include a museum, restaurants, shops, event space and more.

“There are a whole lot of visions and ideas,” said Ontario County Senior Planner Maria Rudzinski, who has been instrumental in moving the project along. Addressing contamination and other aspects began in 2015. Rudzinski called it a “pleasant surprise” when an environmental probe of the property showed it wasn’t as bad as many had feared.

In its heyday, the Manchester Lehigh Valley Railroad Roundhouse was one of the largest rail yards between Chicago and the East Coast. Rudzinski likened it to “a super FedEx for

Amazon, with packages in, packages out,” along with hotels, offices, and restaurants — a center of transportation activity, employing 1,000 people or more.

Waite's presentation included details on the structural makeup of the roundhouse whose steel, concrete, roof slab and other materials have by and large weathered well the test of time. Stabilizing the structure would entail taking down one east wall that had originally been built as a temporary section of the building.

Harvey said the next step is to take the latest findings on the roundhouse to the Ontario County Board of Supervisors. He suggested the county take title of the building and work with developers or other entities on a plan for the site, to ensure the property is not a financial burden on the county.

Waite said the roundhouse is “a really significant resource, economically and culturally.” He said that obtaining status on the National Register of Historic Places would be an important tool in obtaining government grants.

The New York State Office of Historic Preservation has already determined the roundhouse is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, the Preservation League of New York State named the roundhouse one of its 2018-2019 “Seven to Save,” and the Landmark Society of Western New York has recognized the roundhouse as one of its “Five to Revive.”



LVRR Manchester NY Roundhouse, September 21, 2020 (Peter Bellisario Photograph)

## **The Seneca Falls Branch of the Lehigh Valley Railroad**

### **By Paul J. Shinal**

Chartered as a proprietary company of the Lehigh Valley Railroad on February 24, 1891, the Seneca County Railway was organized for the stated purpose of constructing and maintaining a railroad between Geneva and Seneca Falls along the south side of the Seneca River. Its unwritten purpose was likely to compete with the lucrative business of the "Auburn Road," a branch of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad, operating since 1841 on the north side of the Seneca River. At the time of its charter, the Lehigh Valley was completing its new freight bypass mainline along the eastside of Seneca Lake. In 1892, the original mainline crossing Seneca County out of Ithaca was connected to the new bypass at a place named, "Geneva Junction." The junction was located at the northeast end of Seneca Lake at the same place where the Seneca River enters the lake. Occurring at the same time, the Lehigh was finishing its mainline westward between Geneva and Buffalo.

The new Seneca County Railway was to begin with a connection to the Lehigh Valley's original line from Ithaca, near Geneva Junction. Construction began in February 1896. The first train entered Waterloo on September 18, 1897, and passenger service between Geneva and Waterloo was inaugurated on Sunday, October 24, 1897. Trains departed Geneva using Lehigh Valley's new (1893) Torrey Park station off North Genesee Street, while in Waterloo an existing building at the Fayette Street crossing was obtained for use as its passenger depot. In early 1898, the line was completed to Seneca Falls with its terminus at Ovid Street, where a combination passenger and freight facility was built. Upon reaching Seneca Falls, passenger trains made returns to Geneva with little delay. When completed, the line consisted of 8.2 miles of single track. The track was standard gauge and used 76-pound rail, except for one mile built using 80-pound steel rail.

Initially, passenger service provided several daily round trips (excluding Sundays), but by January 12, 1902, this had been reduced to two. Passenger patronage was weak because the line could not easily compete with both local trolley service and passenger trains operating on the competing New York Central. By May 1902, there was only one round trip daily from Geneva to Seneca Falls. Briefly in 1903, passenger service on the Branch was discontinued. From the middle of February until May passenger operations ceased and the United States Express Company closed its offices on the Branch in Seneca Falls. On May 1, service was restored and the Express Company was re-opened. The Seneca County Railway was officially merged with the Lehigh Valley Railroad on August 3, 1903, and the line became known as the Seneca Falls Branch. By late 1903, two daily round trips were again offered, one in the morning and the other in the evening.

**SENECA FALLS BRANCH  
Lehigh Valley R. R.**

<b>604</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>MIs</b>	<i>November 29, 1903.</i>		<b>603</b>	<b>605</b>
P M	A M	.....	LEAVE	ARRIVE	A M	P M
†6 05	†7 30	0	+..... <b>Geneva</b> .....	‡	8 23	7 00
6 18	7 43	7.2	..... <b>Waterloo</b> .....	‡	8 08	6 43
6 30	7 55	10.6	+.... <b>Seneca Falls</b> ....	‡	†8 00	†6 35
P M	A M	.....	ARRIVE	LEAVE	A M	P M

Explanation of Characters:

† Daily, excluding Sunday + Coupon Stations ‡ Telegraph Station

In 1910, the Branch was part of Lehigh's Buffalo Division and both Waterloo and Seneca Falls had station agents. Waterloo was recognized as station number 347 and its agent was H. B. Forrest. Seneca Falls was station number 348 and its agent was W. G. Cushing. Telegraph call letters were "WR" for Waterloo and "FC" for Seneca Falls.

On July 1, 1914, the American Express Company took over the contracts of the United States Express Company. Given no shipments, it closed its offices on the Branch in both Waterloo and Seneca Falls in favor of its offices on the Auburn Road line. When the Lehigh had attempted to cease passenger operations two years earlier, local businesses objected because this would close the express offices. This objection was now mute. Average daily passenger revenue in July 1914 was only \$.17 and \$.42 in August, while the average cost of the service was \$5.07. In September 1914, the Lehigh Valley applied to the State of New York's Public Service Commission to suspend all passenger service on the Seneca Falls Branch. Along with these facts, the Railroad noted that the Waterloo crew was also assigned work on the Naples Branch and in the Geneva yard. Because of the additional time needed to operate in Seneca Falls, the crew typically required overtime pay to finish its assignments. On September 16, 1914, the Commission granted the application for discontinuance of passenger service on the Branch.

**SENECA FALLS BRANCH  
Lehigh Valley R. R.**

	<b>604</b>	<b>MIs</b>	<i>January 4, 1914.</i>		<b>605</b>	
.....	P M	.....	LEAVE	ARRIVE	P M	.....
.....	†4 49	0	+..... <b>Geneva</b> .....	‡	5 54	.....
.....	5 09	7.2	..... <b>Waterloo</b> .....	‡	5 35	.....
.....	5 24	10.6	+.... <b>Seneca Falls</b> ...	‡	†5 28	.....
.....	P M	.....	ARRIVE	LEAVE	P M	.....

Explanation of Characters:

† Daily, excluding Sunday + Coupon Stations ‡ Telegraph Station

Unlike its passenger experience, freight volume on the Seneca Falls Branch fared much better. A team track and stock loading pens were used by customers in Waterloo, with a distillery and a sauerkraut plant becoming regular customers. Business in Seneca Falls was even brighter, where its tracks came very close to the highly industrialized area known as, "The Flats." The tracks ran down Canal Street alongside Seneca Woolen Mills, a lumber/coal yard and a scrap yard. George Townsend, an Interlaken resident interviewed in 1961, noted that in its early days the Lehigh's station in Seneca Falls loaded more hay for shipment than any other railroad station in the United States. Trumansburg had the distinction of being second in such shipments.

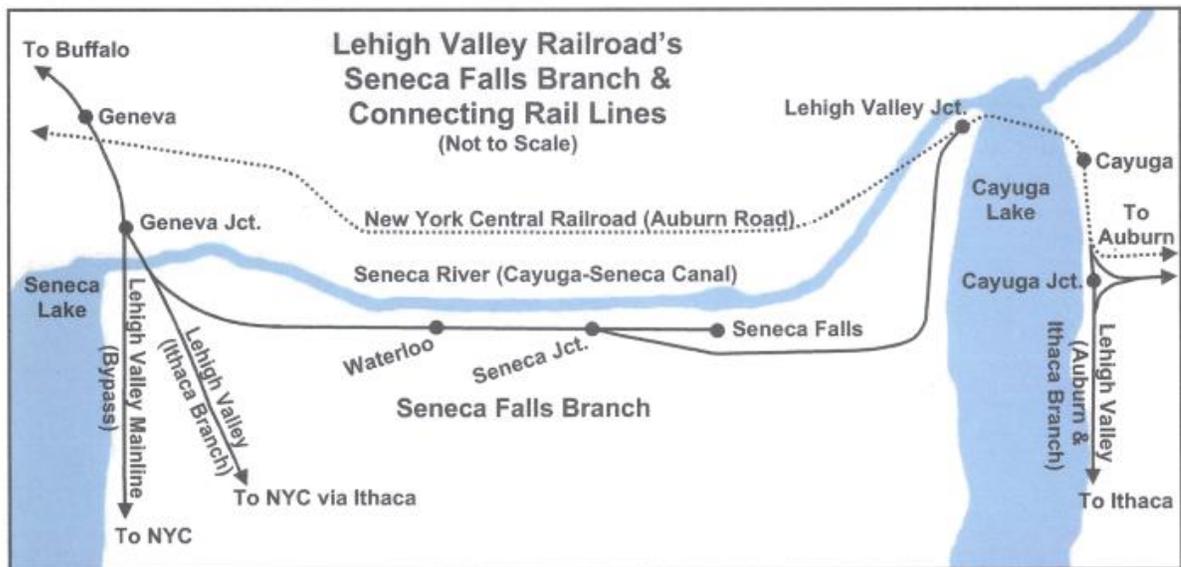
In 1904, the Lehigh Valley contemplated extending the rail line east from its present Ovid Street terminus in Seneca Falls. It planned to build along the south side of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal to a point where it would join the competing Auburn Road track in order to cross the northern end of Cayuga Lake. In Cayuga, it would then connect with the Lehigh's Auburn & Ithaca Branch, which traveled up the eastside of Cayuga Lake and at Cayuga turned east to Auburn. The connection of the new extension into Cayuga to the existing branch would become "Cayuga Junction." When the railroad learned that the State of New York was going to reconstruct the Cayuga-Seneca Canal, it postponed its plan.

By 1913, new plans ensued for the Seneca Falls extension, but this time given the State's new canal project, the line would run on an elevated roadbed around the southern perimeter of the village. It would entail the construction of five girder bridges that would cross six village streets, including one bridge that would cross both Bridge Street and Ovid Street. The extension began at "Seneca Junction," diverging from the existing line in the town of Seneca Falls, just east of the intersection of Kingdom Road and West Bayard Street, not far from Sucker Brook. It then followed the village line south, then east, then northeast until it joined the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad at a point just west of NY Route 89 named, "Lehigh Valley Junction." Here it was granted joint trackage rights for 2.2 miles over the northern end of Cayuga Lake, where it joined the other Lehigh Valley branch at Cayuga Junction. The original 1.5 miles of dead-ended track from Seneca Junction along the canal to Ovid Street in Seneca Falls became known as the Seneca Falls Spur. Freight traffic began operating over the newly extended branch on July 1, 1914. Trains now ran between Geneva and Auburn via the extension's new connection with the Auburn and Ithaca Branch at Cayuga Junction. Over the years trains originated in both Geneva and Auburn. As customer needs evolved, the Lehigh would also revise its operations. During most of its existence, a weekday train would service the Branch in both directions, usually with the same locomotive and crew. Freight business continued to keep the line financially sound into the early 1960's.

As trucks began to erode its revenues, the Branch began to suffer and maintenance neglect of its right of way became apparent. In 1958, the Seneca Falls Spur was abandoned and its tracks were removed. In 1962, the Pennsylvania Railroad formerly took over control of the Lehigh Valley. It was not a complete merger, but the Lehigh was no longer an independent entity. Following the mega-merger of the New York Central and Pennsylvania Railroads in 1968, the Lehigh Valley now had options transporting thru freight between Geneva and Auburn. For such service it would now use the former competitor's better maintained Auburn Road tracks, especially for its major customer, Beacon Feeds in Cayuga. This left the Branch with a few customers in Waterloo, requiring service only as needed. When such service required eastbound transportation, it sometimes

was more feasible to haul the freight over the entire Branch, rather than return it from Waterloo to Geneva and then ship it east over the Auburn Road. Though the Public Service Commission had approved the abandonment of the line between Geneva Junction and Lehigh Valley Junction in 1969, these infrequent locals kept the Branch barely alive into the early 1970's. By 1975, the line was fully abandoned and its rails removed.

Today, from the former site of Geneva Junction alongside NY Route 96A by the Seneca River into Waterloo, the roadbed has become the Cayuga-Seneca Canal Trail. In Seneca Falls from the Bridge Street bridge to Sucker Brook, the former railbed is now the Ludovico Sculpture Trail. Aside from these trails, some remnants of the old line still exist. The original Passenger Station at Torrey Park in Geneva still stands and is occupied. The foundation of the interlocking tower at the former Geneva Junction along NY 96A can be seen alongside the old mainline track, owned and operated now by the Finger Lakes Railway. At the same location along NY 96A on the other side of the highway is the original girder bridge over the Seneca River (now part of the trail) once used by both the Ithaca and Seneca Falls branches. In Waterloo, two small girder bridges still remain, one easily seen crossing the stream on River Road next to Waterloo's Waste Management Facility across from Silver Creek Golf Course. In Seneca Falls, the abutments for the many village girder bridges are still evident along West Bayard Street (near Sauder's Market), East Bayard Street, Ovid Street and Garden Street Extension. Lastly, if you are fortunate enough to be aboard a Finger Lakes Railway excursion train, Lehigh Valley Junction (close to NY 89) can be identified. Whenever our area is threatened by severe weather, I smile as I typically see the threat locations listed on the Weather Channel and read, "Lehigh Valley Junction." Though the railroad and this junction have been gone now for nearly fifty years the name, "Lehigh Valley Junction" gets transmitted from satellite into our homes and businesses, even if almost no one today knows where it was. (Now you do!)



Compiled from information gratefully provided by:

Richard Palmer - Librarian and Archivist, Central New York Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society

Walter Gable - Seneca County Historian

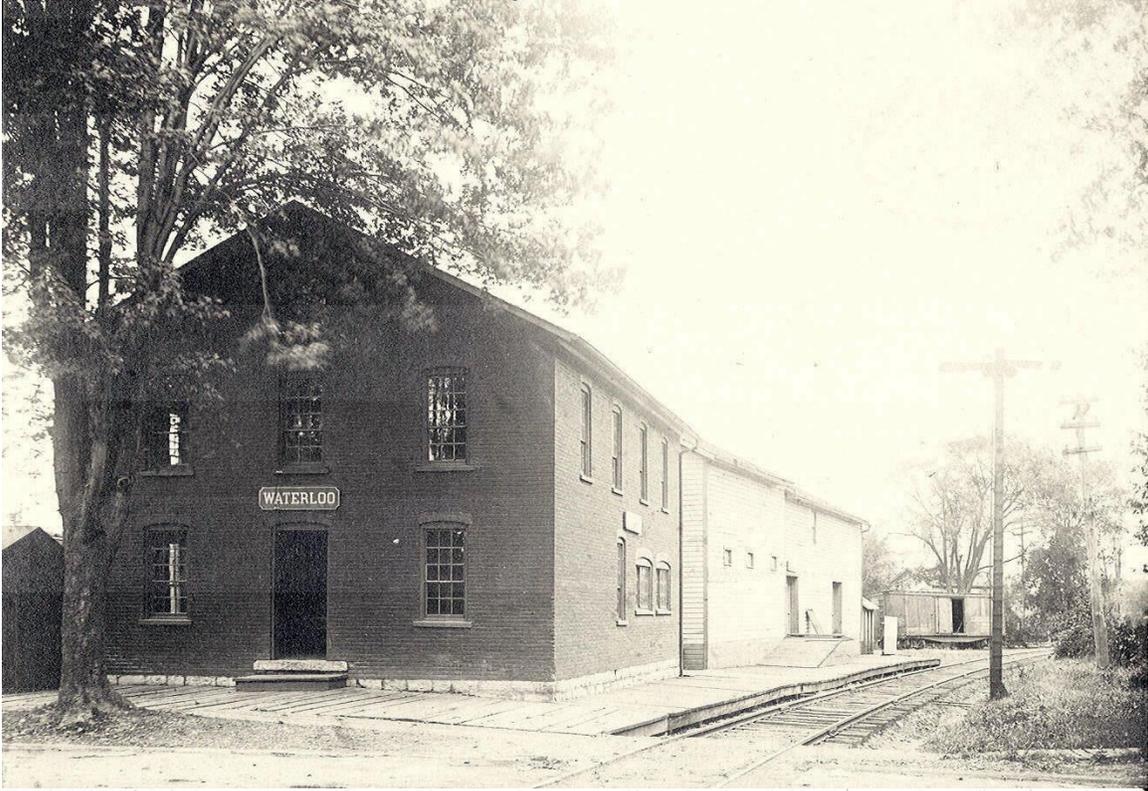
Herbert V. Trice - *The Gangly Country Cousin*, DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, 2004

Robert F. Archer - *A History of the Lehigh Valley Railroad*, Howell-North Books, 1977

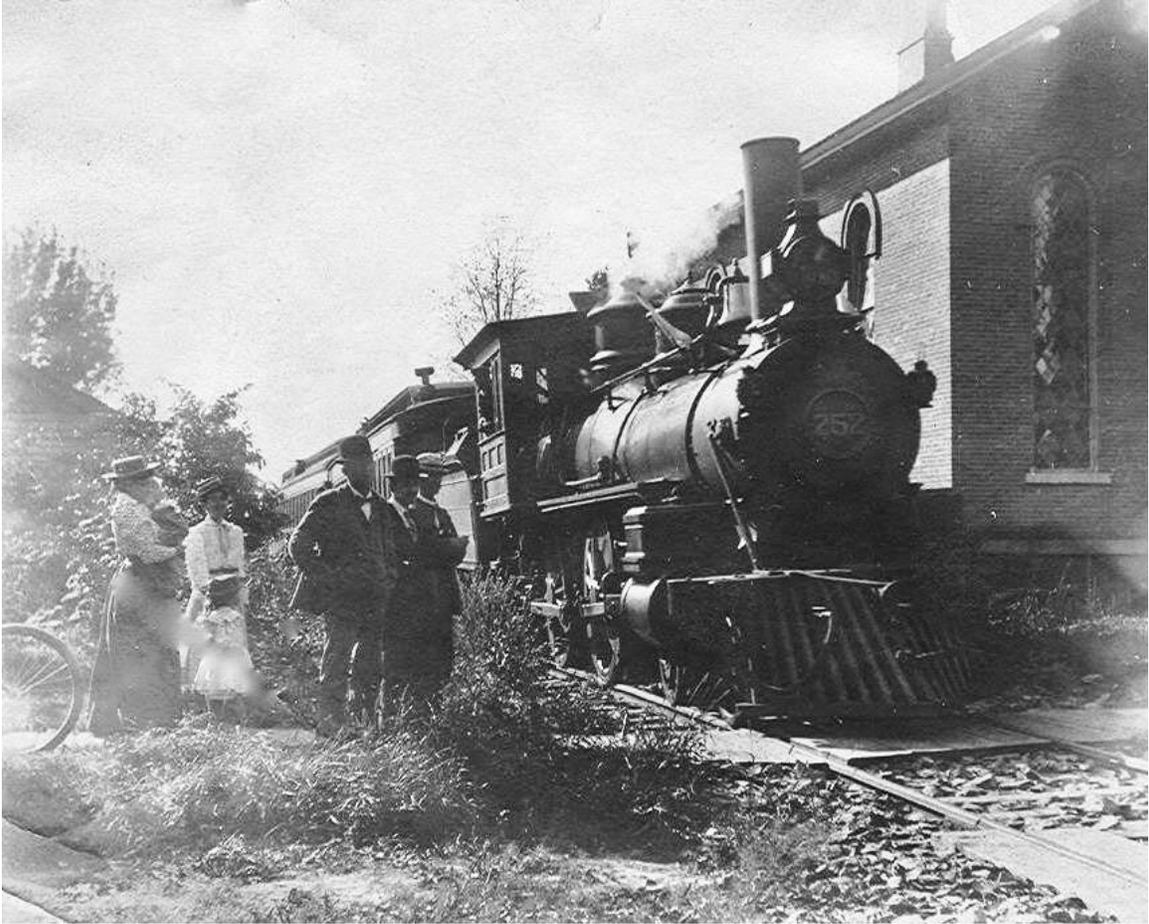
David Marcham - *Lehigh Valley Memories*, DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, 1998

Photograph captions listing:

- 1 Circa 1900 eastward view of the Lehigh Valley Waterloo station, shortly after it opened. In the distance, a freight siding can be seen.  
Courtesy of Seneca Museum of Waterways and Industry.
- 2 Waterloo station in 1966, before being abandoned and later demolished.  
Richard Palmer Collection.
- 3 Track laying train in Waterloo building the Branch in 1897.  
Courtesy of Seneca Museum of Waterways and Industry.
- 4 First train into Waterloo on the new Seneca Falls Branch, September 18, 1897.  
The track into Seneca Falls would not be completed until early 1898.  
Courtesy of Seneca Museum of Waterways and Industry.
- 5 First passenger train into Waterloo, October 24, 1897.  
Courtesy of Seneca Museum of Waterways and Industry.
- 6 Circa 1900 view of Lehigh Valley produce cars on a siding along Canal Street by the Seneca Woolen Mill in Seneca Falls.  
Courtesy of Seneca Museum of Waterways and Industry.
- 7 Circa 1900 westward view from Canal St. in Seneca Falls of the line crossing Bridge St. at the southern entrance to the former Bridge St. bridge, which crossed both the original canal and the Seneca River. At the bottom left in the distance can be seen the original truss bridge built by the never completed Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay Railroad. The bridge eventually became a vehicular and pedestrian bridge owned by the village.
- 8 Signal cabin on the Auburn Road at Lehigh Valley Junction in Seneca Falls.  
Richard Palmer Collection.
- 9 Circa 1900 westbound Lehigh Valley passenger train crossing Washington Street in Waterloo on its way back to Geneva on a snowy winter's day.  
Courtesy of Seneca Museum of Waterways and Industry.













Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century Real Photo Postcard of Odessa, New York

**The Odessa Branch  
By Paul J. Templeton**

A lesser-known result of Conrail on April 1, 1976, was the Odessa Branch. This line consisted of that segment of the former Lehigh Valley Railroad main line from Sayre (MP 271.0) to the Odessa Station Switch (MP 302.2). At 10:01 A.M. on Tuesday, January 18, 1977, per Conrail Atlantic Region Lehigh Division Bulletin Order No. 1-12 paragraph (c) that portion of the Odessa Branch between Van Etten Junction (MP 285.8) and the Odessa Station switch was redesignated as the Odessa Industrial Track. Paragraph (d) of this B.O. redesignated that part of the Odessa Branch between Sayre and Van Etten Junction as part of the Ithaca Branch. The Odessa Industrial Track was operated under the Low Density Line (LDL) subsidy program.

There was but one customer on the line, this being Cotton-Hanlon in Odessa which took delivery of lumber. The Conrail job that delivered this product and picked up empty cars was SI-7/IS-8 which went on duty in Sayre at 16:00. This job operated to Odessa only on Thursdays.

SI-7 would depart Sayre with any cars for Odessa on the head end. Arriving at Van Etten Junction, the power and Odessa cars would be cut off, the remainder of the train being tied down. Upon arrival at Odessa, the crew would arrange for the car or cars to be delivered to run around the power via a "flying switch" procedure. The car or cars were then shoved into the huge Cotton-Hanlon lumber storage shed after the removal of any empty cars. Work at Odessa completed, the job headed back to Van Etten Jct. then went

on to Ithaca after picking up the portion of the train that had been tied down. Any empty cars out of Odessa were tied down on the Odessa Industrial Track to be picked up by IS-8 on its return to Sayre.

The Odessa Industrial Track was officially abandoned between Van Etten Junction and the Odessa Station Switch on December 16, 1977, per Consolidated Rail Corporation Atlantic Region Lehigh Division Bulletin Order No. 1-71. The following summer, the track was removed by A&K Track Materials crews.



Conrail train SI-7 spotting a car of lumber to the Cotton-Hanlon storage shed in Odessa about 11:00 P.M. on March 31, 1977 (Paul J. Templeton photograph)



Conrail train SI-7 passing through what was Hinman Interlocking on May 26, 1977 (Paul J. Templeton photograph)



Conrail train SI-7 at Odessa having car of lumber for Cotton-Hanlon run around the power during what is termed a "flying switch" procedure on May 26, 1977 (Paul J. Templeton photograph)



Van Etten Junction during scrapping operations, June 25, 1978 (Paul J. Templeton photograph)

## ODESSA BRANCH \*

....	X	X	SAYRE .....	271.0	....	....	....	....
....			PA.-NEW YORK STATE LINE .....	272.4	....	....	....	....
X			STATE LINE ..... R-Sayre	272.6	....	....	....	....
....			EAST WAVERLY .....	273.0	....	....	....	....
....			LOCKWOOD .....	279.0	....	....	....	....
X			VAN ETTEN JCT. .... R-Sayre	285.8	....	....	....	....
....			RODBOURN .....	290.0	....	....	....	....
X			CAYUTA ..... R-Sayre	295.6	....	....	....	....
X			HINMAN ..... R-Sayre	299.7	....	....	....	....
....			ODESSA STATION SWITCH .....	302.1	....	....	....	....

The Direction Sayre to Odessa Station Switch is Westward.

\* Distance from New York.

Odessa Branch station page from Conrail Employee Timetable

### Officers and Trustees of the Lehigh Valley Railroad Historical Society

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