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Rail Lines in the Finger Lakes Region of New York State Historical Quick Facts

Central New York Southern Railroad (New York, Auburn & Lansing Railroad) (New York & Oswego Midland Railroad)

Ithaca to Genoa to Scipio to Auburn:

The original roadbed was constructed by the New York & Oswego Midland (NY&OM) Railroad in 1872 from Freeville to Merrifield (Scipio). Financial difficulties eventually led to this line being sold to the Ithaca, Auburn & Western Railroad in 1876 (IA&W). The IA&W completed the line into Auburn in 1881. In 1883 the paralleling Southern Central Railroad began leasing the line, but by 1889 the line was in total disrepair. Except for a small section from Auburn to Genoa Junction, the line was removed in January 1891. The track to Genoa Junction remained as part of the Auburn & Ithaca Branch of the Lehigh Valley. The New York, Auburn & Lansing Railroad was chartered in 1900 to use the old NY&OM roadbed & connect with the Ithaca Street Railway in South Lansing, taking it to Ithaca. Only the street railway between Ithaca & South Lansing was electrified (using overhead wire). The line from Auburn to South Lansing was completed March 1, 1908, with the portion to Ithaca opening on December 12, 1908. Streetcars were used from Ithaca to South Lansing with steam engines running from South Lansing to Auburn. After entering receivership in 1912, the line was reorganized in 1914 as the Central New York Southern Railroad and the steep streetcar section of the line was reconstructed and made gentler. Two McKeen cars were now in use. The line's final run was on October 19, 1923, and was formally abandoned in 1924. Most of the rail was removed in 1925.

Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad

Ithaca Branch – Owego to Ithaca:

The Ithaca & Owego Railroad was chartered in 1828 and the 35-mile line was completed between its namesake cities on April 1, 1834. It was built with flat strap rail spiked to heavy longitudinal timbers, fastened at eight-foot intervals to crosspieces. Until the spring of 1840, only horses were used to pull freight and passengers. Initially, the track width was standard gauge. Foreclosure occurred in 1842 and reorganization of the line on April 18, 1843, renamed it the Cayuga and Susquehanna (C&S) Railroad. In 1849 the road was sold to New York parties and rebuilt with heavy rail, now using the broad gauge of the Erie it connected to in Owego. At Ithaca the terminus was changed to avoid the old inclined plains used there. On April 21, 1855, the C&S was leased in perpetuity to the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western (DL&W) Railroad, which was created in 1853 from the merger of the Delaware & Cobb's Gap and Lackawanna & Western Railroads. The line initially

retained its old name, but was actually referred to as the Cayuga Division of the DL&W. In 1878, the DL&W returned the track to standard gauge. By 1900, there were 3 daily passenger trains between Ithaca and Owego. The DL&W's December 1939 timetable lists four daily passenger trains, two in each direction. In 1942 passenger service ended and the last freight train operated in 1956.

Syracuse Branch – Binghamton to Syracuse to Oswego:

The first part of the line was built by the Oswego and Syracuse (O&S) Railroad, using standard gauge. Running from just south of Oswego to Syracuse, the first train operated on October 16, 1848. The Syracuse and Binghamton (S&B) Railroad completed its broad gauge connection to the Erie at Binghamton in October of 1854. The S&B failed in 1856 and was reorganized and renamed the Syracuse, Binghamton and New York (SB&NY) Railroad in 1857. In 1869, the Delaware, Lackawanna and Western (DL&W) Railroad purchased controlling interest in the SB&NY and leased the O&S. At that time the DL&W added a third rail to the O&S to handle broad gauge movements. On May 27, 1876, a widely acclaimed feat, changed the SB&NY within 13-hours to standard gauge and the third rail was removed from the O&S. In 1912 the DL&W began to lease the SB&NY. In the 1940's, the DL&W took full control of both railroads. In 1940 the DL&W began to elevate its tracks through the streets of Syracuse and completed the project on October 21, 1941. Replacing the old depot, a new station opened that day on West Jefferson and South Clinton Streets, across from the NYS Armory.

Passenger service between Syracuse and Oswego ended in 1949 and was discontinued between Binghamton and Syracuse on September 14, 1958. On October 17, 1960, the DL&W merged with the Erie Railroad to become the Erie Lackawanna (EL) Railroad. In 1975 the EL filed for bankruptcy. On April 1, 1976, the EL became a part of the federally sponsored Consolidated Rail Corporation (Conrail). Conrail ended through service north of Binghamton and suspended service north of Fulton. Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation acquired the track from Fulton to its Oswego power plant in 1978. Conrail removed EL's Syracuse yard and engine facility. Being out of service for awhile, Conrail applied in 1981 to abandon the track south of Jamesville. In 1982 Walter Rich's Delaware Otsego Corporation purchased this and other nearby trackage going into Utica. Operating as the Syracuse Branch of the New York, Susquehanna and Western Railway, the line once again became active from Binghamton to Jamesville (Conrail still owned the line north of Jamesville to Fulton). Coupled with state funding, in 1993 the Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency purchased the track from Jamesville to Syracuse from Conrail with plans to develop passenger operations between the new Carousel Mall, Armory Square and Syracuse University. The NYS&W restored the former Syracuse, Binghamton & New York name, but it quickly was dubbed OnTrack, offering daily city shuttles and excursions. A bridge allowing it to connect with the Regional Transportation Center was never built and its ridership never fully developed. Service was discontinued in July 2007. In 1999, CSX Transportation acquired the Conrail lines in the Syracuse area, including the line from Syracuse to Fulton. This track became CSX's Baldwinsville Subdivision. Since 2011, the Baldwinsville Subdivision north of Radison Yard has been out of service. The NYS&W still operates the line from Binghamton to Syracuse.

Lehigh Valley Railroad

Auburn Branch

Sayre to Owego to Freeville to Auburn to North Fair Haven:

Initially chartered in 1852 as the Lake Ontario, Auburn & New York RR to connect with the Cayuga & Susquehanna RR, the line was graded between Fair Haven and Auburn before the Civil War. In 1865 a revised line idea created the Southern Central Railroad. On March 5, 1870, the line from Owego to Auburn was completed. Freight service began March 8 and passenger service on April 4, 1870. Initially, the railroad shared the NYC Auburn Road's depot in Auburn. A line from the Lehigh Valley in Athens, PA to Owego was constructed and in service by January 3, 1871. The line from Auburn to Fair Haven was opened on December 1, 1871. The first coal train to run from Athens to the new North Fair Haven trestle on the Southern Central Railroad was on May 16, 1872. The southern terminus across the state line eventually became Sayre. By 1872 a new Southern Central depot was opened in Auburn on Washington Street next to the crossing of the NYC Auburn Road. By 1893 the Southern Central was referred to as the Auburn Division of the Lehigh Valley.

Passenger service ended to Fair Haven in 1938 and to Auburn on March 20, 1948.

Abandonments were as follows: August 1937: Fair Haven to North Fair Haven; January 1953: Cato to Fair Haven; August 1957: Throop to Cato; January 1961: Auburn to Throop; April 1966: Moravia to Fleming; 1971: Fleming to Auburn; 1976: Locke to Moravia; 1978: Dryden to Locke; 1979: Harford Mills to Dryden; April 1976: Sayre to Owego. The line from Owego to Harford Mills is still active.

Elmira & Corning Branch

Elmira to East Ithaca to Freeville to Cortland to Camden:

This line involved many charters, visions and track arrangements. The first section opened in the spring of 1871 between Freeville and East Ithaca (Cornell) and by late that year from Freeville to Cortland. The next section opened between Horseheads and Park Station in the fall of 1872. By late 1873 the two gorges at Swartwood Hill were spanned and the rails now went to Van Etten. On December 11, 1875, what would be later called the Brooktondale trestle was completed and the track was now open from Horseheads to Cortland. In 1876 a station at East Ithaca was built. In late 1878 with the inclusion of the Cazenovia & Canastota RR (opened in 1870), the Cazenovia & DeRuyter RR (opened in 1878) and the defunct New York & Oswego Midland RR trackage between Cortland and DeRuyter (opened in 1872), the railroad now ran from Horseheads to Canastota via East Ithaca and Freeville. In 1881 the Canal Railroad was completed, bringing the line into Elmira with eventually one final extension to a new terminal at Fifth Street in 1883. The line from Elmira to Canastota became the Elmira, Cortland & Northern RR in March 1884. Lastly, in August 1887 the line was extended from Canastota to Camden with the completion of the Canastota Northern. In 1905 the line formally became part of the Lehigh Valley as the Elmira & Corning Branch.

Passenger service (gas-electric car) ended September 1, 1948. Abandonments were as follows: 1932: Van Etten to Spencer (used the Ithaca Br. track); May 1935: Spencer to East Ithaca; June 1938: Horseheads to Van Etten; August 1938: Canastota to Camden; December 1967: River to Canastota; 1972: Cortland Jct. To River; 1972: East Ithaca to Freeville embargoed, removed in 1978; April 1976: Freeville into Cortland, some industry trackage retained; December 1975: Elmira to Horseheads.

Ithaca Branch (Passenger Mainline)

Sayre to Ithaca to Geneva:

In the summer of 1871 the line opened from Southern Central Junction (renamed "Sayre" in 1873) to Ithaca, as Ezra Cornell's Ithaca & Athens RR (I&A). The Geneva & Ithaca RR opened its line from the NYC Auburn Road in Geneva to the I&A in Ithaca in September 1873. In May 1874 the lines merged to become the Geneva, Ithaca & Athens RR Co. In receivership the line was purchased by the Lehigh Valley in October 1876 & reorganized as the Geneva, Ithaca & Sayre RR. In 1890 it became the Ithaca Branch of the Lehigh Valley.

Local passenger train service ended in November 1949. The last through passenger trains, Nos. 7 & 8, the Maple Leaf, operated during a blinding snowstorm on February 4, 1961. In September 1961 the last freight train cleared the line of cars between Trumansburg and Ithaca with the tracks being removed in 1963. The line from Trumansburg to Geneva Junction was abandoned in 1967. The rail line still exists today from Sayre to Ithaca.

Auburn & Ithaca Branch

Ithaca to Cayuga Junction to Auburn:

Financed by Henry Wells & Col. Edwin D. Morgan of Aurora, the line opened on January 31, 1873, as the Cayuga Lake RR. The railroad went from the NYC Auburn Road in Cayuga to the Ithaca & Athens RR in Ithaca. Due to financial failures and restructuring its name changed to the Cayuga Railroad, then the Cayuga Southern Railroad and was finally made a branch of the Geneva, Ithaca & Sayre RR. In early 1890 under the ownership of the newly formed Auburn & Ithaca Railway, the line was extended from Cayuga (Cayuga Junction) to Genoa Junction. Track already existed from Genoa Junction into Auburn, connecting to the Auburn Branch at Ithaca Junction. Later in 1890 the entire line from Ithaca to Auburn by way of Cayuga Junction became the Auburn & Ithaca Branch of the Lehigh Valley.

As passenger patronage waned, only gas-electric cars were in use. Passenger service ended on September 1, 1948. The line between Auburn and Cayuga Junction was abandoned in 1969 with the rest of the line north of the electric plant in Milliken completely abandoned by 1971. The line still exists from Ithaca to a stone quarry north of the Milliken electric plant.

Willard Branch

Hayt's Corners to Ovid to Willard:

Initially, this 3-mile line was a narrow gauge railroad. The Hayt's Corners, Ovid & Willard Railroad opened it in 1883 and leased it to the Geneva, Ithaca & Sayre Railroad. In 1890

the Lehigh Valley acquired it and made it a dual gauge line. When the new mainline was built between Van Etenville and Buffalo, the branch connected to it in Willard. It became a bridge line between the new mainline and the Ithaca Branch. In 1936 the line between Willard and Ovid was abandoned with the remaining portion taken out of service in 1959.

Mainline

New York City to Sayre to Buffalo:

In 1892 the Lehigh Valley's contract with the Erie RR to operate its trains from Waverly to Buffalo would expire. The Lehigh chose to create its own line to Buffalo, which required extending its trackage from Geneva to Buffalo. Because its roadbed from Ithaca to Geneva was far too steep for heavy freight trains, another line from Van Etenville to Geneva was also needed. By late 1891, the new line was graded and a major freight transfer yard neared completion in Manchester, NY. The entire new trackage opened in September 1892.

Passenger service ended on February 4, 1961, with the final runs of the Maple Leaf in a blinding snowstorm. On April 1, 1976, Conrail silenced most of the Lehigh Valley's main line in New York State. The mainline from Victor to just east of Shortsville (where it now connects with the former NYC Auburn Road) and from its former NYC connection in Geneva west to Kendaia (site of the former Seneca Army Depot) are still in use. The mainline (and original Ithaca Branch) still exists from Van Eten south to Sayre.

Rochester Branch

Rochester Junction to Rochester:

In 1891 as the new mainline was being completed, a new railroad was being constructed northward from a location named Rochester Junction into downtown Rochester. Controlled by the Lehigh Valley, the 12.9-mile Rochester & Honeoye Valley Railroad opened along with the new mainline trackage in September 1892. Later, the line was extended south from Rochester Junction to Hemlock Lake with the entire 29-mile railway becoming the Lehigh's wholly-owned Rochester Southern Railroad. The extension opened in August 1895.

Passenger service ended in 1938 between Hemlock & Rochester Junction and in 1951 from Rochester Junction to Rochester. Abandonments: 1968: Hemlock Lake to Honeoye Falls; 1981: most of the line from Rochester Junction to Rochester; 1982: Honeoye Falls to Rochester Junction. In Henrietta part of the line still exists as an industrial spur to the Mortimer connection with CSX (former West Shore).

Naples Branch

Naples to Stanley to Geneva:

Graded originally by the Geneva and Southwestern Railroad, the 29-mile line was built by the Middlesex Valley Railway in 1894 and acquired by the Lehigh Valley in 1895.

Passenger service ended in 1938. In 1970 the line was abandoned between Naples and Rushville with the remaining portion taken out of service in 1972 and removed in 1978.

Seneca Falls Branch

Geneva (Geneva Junction) to Seneca Falls to Cayuga Junction:

Originally chartered in 1891 as the Seneca County Railway (controlled by the Lehigh Valley), the 8-mile line from Geneva Junction on the Lehigh Valley into Seneca Falls opened in October 1897. In August 1903 the line formally became the Seneca Falls Branch of the Lehigh Valley. By 1904 an extension of the branch to Cayuga to connect with the Ithaca & Auburn Branch was contemplated. As a result of the state's pending canal project in Seneca Falls, the Lehigh Valley chose a new route for its planned extension. It started in Seneca Falls at a new switch at Kingdom Road (Seneca Junction) and created a southern loop around the village to a point where it joined the NYC's Auburn Road (Lehigh Valley Junction) near Cayuga Lake. From there it crossed the lake into Cayuga, where it regained its own trackage. This extension opened on July 1, 1914.

Passenger service was discontinued on October 1, 1914. In 1959 the stub-end of the line from Seneca Junction (Kingdom Road) along the canal into Seneca Falls was abandoned. By 1969, as a part of the Penn Central, the line fell into serious disrepair. In 1971 it was eventually abandoned in favor of using the former NYC's Auburn Road.

Marcellus & Otisco Lake Railway

Otisco Lake to Marcellus to Martisco:

A plan started in 1871 to build a rail line from the Marcellus station on the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad (NYC&HRRR) to Preble or Homer. No rail line was begun until the Marcellus Electric Rail Road was incorporated on June 4, 1887. Even then, construction did not commence until 1898. After only two miles of roadbed were completed, the rock formations encountered at Marcellus Falls proved too much. Construction resumed in 1902, but was disrupted by financial difficulties. The line was finally completed to Amber by the fall of 1904. Trolley poles were erected and brackets installed, but no electric car was ever used. Financial reorganization led to the new Marcellus & Otisco Lake (M&OL) Railway being incorporated on May 25, 1905. Passenger service began in June of 1905 with two newly purchased Pullman coaches. Three round-trips daily (except Sunday) began. In Marcellus it connected with the Auburn & Syracuse Electric line. From 1907 to 1913 the railroad also owned the Otisco Lake Navigation Company.

Passenger service was discontinued at the end of 1914. Though a petition in 1919 to abandon 6 miles of the line south of Marcellus was denied, approval was finally granted twenty-one years later on July 14, 1940. When the Allen V. Smith Company closed its plant in Marcellus Falls in 1959, the last train operated on July 18, 1959. The petition for abandonment of the 2.84-mile line was filed on February 8, 1960 and approved by the ICC on April 15, 1960. The corporation was officially dissolved on December 16, 1965. During its life, the M&OL Railway operated 6 steam locomotives, including two Shays, and a Vulcan 65-ton, 400-HP diesel.

New York Central (& Hudson River) Railroad

Auburn Branch (The Auburn Road)

Syracuse to Auburn to Geneva to Canandaigua to Rochester:

The entire line was built by two railroads. In 1834 the Auburn and Syracuse Railroad was chartered and it was completed between the two cities in 1839. In 1836 the Auburn and Rochester Railroad was chartered and completed from Rochester to the Auburn and Syracuse RR in Auburn on November 4, 1841. On August 1, 1850, the two railroads merged to become the Rochester and Syracuse Railroad. On May 17, 1853, the original “ten” short lines between Buffalo and Albany (including two that never laid any track) were consolidated, becoming the New York Central (NYC) Railroad. In June of 1853, a new mainline north of the Auburn Road between Syracuse and Rochester was opened. In 1869 Cornelius Vanderbilt merged his recently acquired NYC RR with his Hudson River RR, making it the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad. In 1914 its name reverted back to that of the New York Central Railroad.

Passenger service ended on the branch on May 18, 1958, with the morning westbound no. 107, followed by the evening eastbound, no. 108. In 1959 the NYC RR abandoned the track between Victor and Pittsford. In 1968 the branch became a part of the Penn Central Transportation Company, which filed for bankruptcy on June 21, 1970. By 1970, the Lehigh Valley RR, controlled by the Penn Central, began operating its trains from Geneva to Cayuga and Auburn via the Auburn Road. On April 1, 1976, Consolidated Rail Corporation or Conrail took over the Auburn Branch. In 1978 Conrail abandoned the line between Canandaigua and Victor and in 1982 it abandoned the tracks between Pittsford and Brighton (Rochester). On July 1, 1995, the remaining track of the Auburn Road was turned over to Finger Lakes Railway (FGLK). In the summer of 2012, FGLK stub-ended the west end of the former NYC freight house double-ended siding at Skaneateles Junction.

Mainline (The Water Level Route)

Syracuse to Rochester Section:

In August of 1850, the Rochester and Syracuse Railroad began construction of this more direct line between the two cities, under the name of the Rochester and Syracuse Direct Railroad. The line opened on June 1, 1853, as part of the newly created New York Central Railroad. Operating next to rivers and canals with few grades, it was called the “Water Level Route,” alluding to a ride of ease and comfort.

Batavia Branch (The Peanut Line)

Canandaigua to Honeoye Falls to Batavia to Niagara Falls:

On January 1, 1853, the Canandaigua and Niagara Falls (C&NF) Railroad operated its first train on this broad gauge, 50-mile line between Canandaigua and Batavia. By July 1, 1853, the line was extended another 36 miles to Niagara Falls. On July 28, 1853, the railroad operated its first passenger train (excursion) over the entire line. On April 1, 1854, the line

was extended another 3 miles to the Niagara Falls Suspension Bridge. On August 25, 1858, the foreclosed C&NF RR was reorganized as the Niagara Bridge and Canandaigua Railroad, which was leased to the New York Central (NYC) Railroad on September 1, 1858. It was then re-gauged to standard gauge. A NYC vice-president, Dean Richmond, referred to the acquisition as “only a peanut of a line,” thus the title “Peanut Line” was born. The line was very prosperous until the arrival of the Lehigh Valley’s new mainline with trackage also going to Niagara Falls. In the early 1900’s timetables show three passenger trains a day. In Honeoye Falls the line crossed Honeoye Creek by means of a covered bridge. This bridge was replaced by an iron one on July 31, 1893.

Passenger service ended in 1933. On January 5, 1939, abandonment of the line from Holcomb to Caledonia was announced. The last train operated on January 15, 1939. By June 1, 1939, the iron bridge over Honeoye Creek was gone.

Corning Secondary (NYC Fallbrook Branch and Lyons-Newberry Branch)

Corning to Lyons:

The part of the line known today as the Corning Secondary from Corning to Geneva was completed in 1877 by the Syracuse, Geneva & Corning (SG&C) Railroad. In 1878 the Geneva and Lyons Railroad completed tracks to Lyons, connecting to the New York Central & Hudson River RR. It was leased to the SG&C until 1892, when all came under the control of the Fall Brook Railway, a newly formed company separating the rail interests of the Fall Brook Companies from its coal operations. The Fall Brook Railway operated approximately 257 miles of track from Lyons, NY, south through Jersey Shore, PA, to Newberry Yard at Williamsport, PA. On May 1, 1899, the Fall Brook Railway was leased to the New York Central & Hudson River (NYC&HRRR), becoming its Pennsylvania Division. In 1909 all assets were sold to the NYC&HRRR and the line was named the Geneva, Corning and Southern Railroad. In 1914 it became a part of the New York Central Railroad. Later, the NYC would refer to this line as the Lyons-Newberry Branch. By the time of the Penn Central it was the Syracuse Division’s Corning Branch. Today, it’s known as Norfolk Southern’s Corning Secondary.

In August of 2013, Norfolk Southern petitioned the Surface Transportation Board to discontinue service on 11.5 miles of the line from Geneva to Lyons. Since 2010, this section of the Corning Secondary has been left unused by Norfolk Southern with its grade-crossing signals de-activated.

West Shore

Weehawken, NJ to Buffalo:

Begun as the New York, West Shore and Buffalo Railway, the line was an abortive attempt to break the Vanderbilt’s New York Central & Hudson River RR (NYC&HRRR) monopoly. Employing mostly Italian immigrants to build it, the line between Syracuse and Buffalo opened on January 1, 1884. Fostered by the Pennsylvania Railroad & the Pullman Company, William H. Vanderbilt was so enraged at the line’s opening that he banned all Pullman cars from the NYC&HRRR fleet. The West Shore was built at great expense,

directly competing with the mainline of the NYC&HRRR. Almost immediately the NYC&HRRR began a vicious rate war against the West Shore. Undercapitalized and forced to offer cut-rate fares, the railroad was bankrupt by 1885. That summer, J.P. Morgan mediated a deal whereby Vanderbilt would gain control of the West Shore in exchange for ending construction of the South Pennsylvania Railroad, a line paralleling part of the Pennsylvania Railroad's mainline (now used by the Pennsylvania Turnpike). The NYC&HRRR acquired the West Shore through a long-term lease and created a new corporation, the West Shore Railroad Company.

Around 1953, passenger service was discontinued west of Albany and by the late 1950's most freight service here ended. By 1960 the line from Syracuse to Fairport was abandoned. Its track from Fairport to Chili remains in service today.

Penn Yan Branch

Dresden to Penn Yan:

The Penn Yan & New York Railway built this 7-mile line from Dresden to Penn Yan to service milling companies along the Keuka Lake Outlet. The first train operated over it on August 3, 1884. The railroad was then consolidated with the Syracuse, Geneva & Corning (SG&C) Railroad. The SG&C became part of the Fall Brook Railway in 1892 and by 1914 was fully a part of the New York Central Railroad.

Passenger service consisted primarily of mixed trains and continued until 1953, when service had become relegated to caboose seats. The last timetable for the line showed no. 19 as the morning westbound train and no. 20 as the afternoon eastbound train. The line was abandoned in the late 1960's, but tracks still existed into the early 1970's, until Hurricane Agnes obliterated the remains of the rail-bed in June of 1972.

Owasco River Railway

Auburn

Incorporated June 2, 1881, the Owasco River Railway was built to provide local switching service to the many mills along the Owasco River, known today as the Owasco Outlet. It opened in 1886 and was controlled by International Harvester Corporation. It connected with the New York Central & Hudson River RR and had trackage rights over it to the Lehigh Valley Auburn Branch. The New York Central (NYC) Railroad gained control of the company and sold half of the stock to the Lehigh Valley Railroad in 1931. The line ran along Auburn streets and on wooden trestles built along and around the Owasco River. In the 1940's the NYC provided a Shay locomotive to handle the very tight curves and substantial grades.

Most of the tracks were removed in the 1960's. The company was eventually acquired by the Penn Central Transportation Company, successor to the New York Central, and was abandoned in 1976 when Conrail was formed. Interestingly enough, Penn Central later used the company to own real estate from abandoned rail lines, and it remains as a subsidiary of American Premier Underwriters, successor to Penn Central.

Pennsylvania Railroad

Elmira/Sodus Bay Branch (Northern Central Railway)

Williamson to Elmira to Watkins Glen to Stanley to Canandaigua to Sodus Bay:

The first part of this line was opened in 1850, as the Chemung Railroad (CRR) from Horseheads to Jefferson (Watkins Glen). It was a 17-mile branch of the Erie and connected to it in Horseheads, thus it operated using Erie's broad gauge track width. On September 15, 1851 another Erie-controlled broad gauge railroad was opened from the CRR in Jefferson (Watkins Glen) to Canandaigua with its name becoming the Canandaigua & Elmira Railroad on September 14, 1852. This 47-mile line became the Elmira, Jefferson & Canandaigua (EJ&C) RR, which operated the CRR, all still under Erie's control until January 19, 1866. On that date the two lines were leased to the Northern Central Railway and by May 1 the track was given a third rail to accommodate standard-gauged trains. On January 16, 1873 the Sodus Point & Southern Railroad opened a line from Sodus Point to Gorham, connecting with the EJ&C RR in Stanley. On February 16, 1873 the track between Gorham & Stanley was abandoned. By September of 1882 the Sodus Bay line became the Sodus Bay and Southern Railway. In 1884 it became a subsidiary of the Northern Central and a coal trestle and pier were then built at Sodus Point. On December 31, 1886, the three lines that operated the trackage from Horseheads to Canandaigua and Sodus Bay were consolidated as the Elmira & Lake Ontario (E&LO) Railroad Company. It was leased and operated by the Northern Central, which reached Elmira from Horseheads by trackage rights over the Erie. The line now also connected from Elmira south to Williamsport, PA, by the Elmira & Williamsport Railroad, another subsidiary of the Northern Central. In 1887 the Canandaigua Lake Railroad was incorporated to build a one and a half mile short line from downtown Canandaigua to a pier on Canandaigua Lake. This railroad was merged into the E&LO RR on December 27, 1888. The coal pier was enlarged in 1894. On January 1, 1911, the lease of the E&LO RR was transferred to the Pennsylvania Railroad, which controlled the Northern Central. A new coal pier was built during 1927-28, and its yard expanded. On January 31, 1956, the E&LO RR was merged into the Northern Central.

Regular passenger service ended on July 20, 1931, between Stanley and Sodus Bay. Service since 1924 used a gas-electric car. A mixed train operated until November 15, 1935. Passenger service on the rest of the branch from Williamsport to Canandaigua was discontinued on Monday, January 2, 1956, with the final runs of northbound train No. 595 and southbound train No. 596. Coal traffic increased to Sodus Bay with the opening in 1940 of a new power plant in Oswego and continued until 1963, when the Erie Lackawanna Railroad began running coal to the plant on its Oswego line. The pier closed in late 1967 and on November 5, 1971, while being dismantled, a red hot bolt dropped onto dust-covered timber below, resulting in a spectacular fire that virtually destroyed the trestle. Abandonments: 1972: Williamsport to Elmira, including Southport Yard in Elmira—line devastated by Hurricane Agnes in June. 1973: Seneca Castle to Newark; 1974-1975: North end of Horseheads to Watkins Glen; ???? : Stanley to Canandaigua; ???? : Benton to Seneca Castle; ???? : Wallington to Sodus Point. Tracks remain in service from the Norfolk Southern Railroad in Horseheads into the village; from Watkins Glen to Penn Yan with the track into Benton used for storage; from the CSX mainline in Newark to Wallington.

Marion Branch (Newark & Marion Railway)*Newark to Marion:*

Though construction began in 1901, the 8-mile Newark & Marion Railway from the Northern Central Railway in Newark to Marion wasn't built until 1905. The first train entered Marion on December 14, 1905. From financial woes the line briefly closed in 1917 and a group of citizens bought it for \$34,000 and created the Marion Railway Corp., Inc. S.C. Comstock of Newark took control of the company in December 1928, improving the railroad and expanding its yard. On May 4, 1930, the Pennsylvania Railroad acquired the line for \$140,000. A year later it was merged into the Elmira & Lake Ontario Railroad. Finally, on January 31, 1956, it all became a part of the Northern Central. Penn Central kept the line, but on April 1, 1976, Conrail chose not to include it. New York State subsidized service at this point until the new Ontario Midland Railroad took over operations in 1979. With deplorable track conditions and Conrail charging \$100 as a fee for trains to cross its tracks, in July 1984 the final train traveled the line.

Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay Railroad
*(Never Completed)**Waverly, PA to Newfield to Trumansburg to Seneca Falls to Sodus Bay:*

The line was proposed in 1869 to run from the coal region around Waverly, Pennsylvania to Sodus Bay on Lake Ontario. Though some name changes occurred, it was eventually incorporated as the Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay Railroad. No serious action was taken to construct the railroad until after 1869, when the New York State Legislature authorized towns and corporations to bond themselves in aid of railroad enterprises. On April 22, 1870, the railroad was organized by the election of thirteen directors. On June 3, 1871, a ground-breaking ceremony was held and its rail width was to be standard gauge. In 1873 much of the roadbed was finished, fences and bridges built, crossing signs and gates erected and everything was being prepared for the laying of rails. A lengthy stretch of this railroad was graded from Seneca Falls, past Trumansburg, and down to Newfield. An 1874 Seneca County map shows the railroad, as if it was actually completed and operating.

The financial Panic of 1873 abruptly ended plans to complete the railroad and the rail iron was never delivered. By spring of 1876, the line was up for foreclosure and sale. That same year, Merritt King, an Ithaca lawyer, purchased remnants of the line with the objective of completing it from Seneca Falls to Romulus. The Midland Central Railroad was formed for this purpose, but nothing ever transpired from it. The towns who had funded the railway were left with massive debts that the taxpayers spent years paying. Much of the land for the never-built railroad was sold to farmers through whose land the proposed line was to have run. In the end the railroad that almost existed was a costly proposition.

Skaneateles (Short Line) Railroad

Skaneateles to Mottville to Skaneateles Junction:

Construction of the Skaneateles & Jordan Railroad Company (S&J) started in 1836 to connect the village of Skaneateles with the Erie Canal in Jordan. Due to a lack of sufficient funds to purchase iron rails, wooden rails were originally installed. On September 30, 1840, the 5-mile line began operations north from its Skaneateles depot near the lake (across the road from today's Sherwood Inn) to Hart Lot (later renamed by the New York Central RR, "Skaneateles Junction"). In 1845 the wooden rails were replaced with those made of iron. With foreclosure on its mortgage on August 24, 1850, the first attempt to successfully operate a Skaneateles rail line had ended.

With the expansion of mills and factories along Skaneateles Creek after the Civil War a new Skaneateles Railroad formed. On April 18, 1866, an act was passed by the New York State Legislature to facilitate re-construction of the line. With the assistance of men hired from the New York Central Railroad construction immediately began. Skaneateles was the home of the line's engine barn (house) and car shop, just off Fennell Street. In 1887 the Skaneateles Railroad also opened a steam boat operation for cruises and mail boats along Skaneateles Lake. The steamboat operation was later sold in 1904 to the Auburn & Syracuse Electric Railroad.

In 1932 regular passenger service ended. With the closing in early 1940 of the U.S. Gypsum Plant at Skaneateles Falls, the railroad's president filed for abandonment of the line. That autumn, a group of area entrepreneurs bought the line for \$25,000 and incorporated it as the Skaneateles Short Line Railroad (SSLR). In the 1950's the SSLR's two remaining steam locomotives were sold for scrap to Abe Cooper of Syracuse. Two small diesel locomotives replaced the steamers. A GE 44-ton and a GE 45-ton diesel became engine nos. 6 and 7, respectively.

With the dwindling of rail business and washouts caused by Hurricane Agnes in 1972, the track between Skaneateles and Mottville was abandoned. The Skaneateles freight house and engine barn (house) were both demolished. A new cement block engine house was built near Skaneateles Falls. On the remaining tracks the ties and ballast were in a deplorable state and derailments were common, sometimes within only a few feet from where a car was just re-railed. By 1974, Stauffer Chemical Company was the only customer served by the short line and to ensure its operation it took control of it. In 1981, Stauffer Chemical Company announced it would close its Skaneateles Falls' plant. On Monday, July 13, 1981, the SSLR delivered its final shipment to Stauffer and the line was cleared later that night. From 1836 to 1981, the railroad had served a total of seventeen industries, maintained by a fleet of six steam and two diesel locomotives. The SSLR's two diesel locomotives were sold to the New York State Electric & Gas Corporation. The GE 44-ton engine no. 6 was later sold again to the Lowville & Beaver River Railroad. The GE 45-ton engine no. 7 (the last one produced by GE), was last seen at NYSEG's now closed Jennison plant, near Bainbridge, New York.