



THE NEWSLETTER

“Every foot of track on the B&M, mainline or branch, rain or shine, was the scene of legitimate human endeavor.”
– Robert W. Jones, *Boston and Maine: Three Colorful Decades of New England Railroading*.

May-June 2023

Meeting/Membership Telephone Number (978) 454-3600

www.bmrrhs.org

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Boston & Maine EMD GP9 1720 at Danvers, MA, summer 1963. Robert J. Robl photo, Rick Kfoury Collection.

TIMETABLE OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, May 6:

B&MRRHS Monthly Public Meeting

Plymouth Senior Center, 8 Depot St, Plymouth, NH 03264.
1:00 pm start. Bruce Davison will present on his time working for the Wolfeboro Railroad's Central Division operating the former B&M White Mountain Branch in 1976-1977.

July 28-30:

Lowell Folk Festival

The B&MRRHS will have combination coach #1244 open to the public with railroad exhibits and a working model railroad.
Be sure to stop and visit during the festivities!

Sunday, August 20:

Concord Model Railroad Club Show

Everett Arena, Loudon Road, Concord, NH, 03301
We will be at the show with merchandise, clothing, books, and DVDs. We hope to see you at the show!

BOSTON & MAINE RAILROAD HISTORICAL SOCIETY

is a non-profit, 501(c)(3) organization composed of people who want to share their knowledge, and learn more about, the history and operations of the Boston and Maine Railroad, its predecessors, and successors. Formed in 1971 by a group of interested B&M employees and railfans, the B&MRRHS now has nearly one thousand active members.

Our principal activities are publication of our journal, the *B&M Bulletin*, and our *Newsletter*, monthly speakers, archives and hardware preservation, preservation of the B&M 0-6-0 switcher No. 410 and coach-baggage combine No. 1244, participation in railroad shows, and maintaining two web sites: www.bmrrhs.org and www.flickr.com/photos/bmrrhs. If you would like to join the Society, you can join on-line or download an application at www.bmrrhs.org.

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About the Newsletter

The Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society *Newsletter* is published six times a year. We welcome your articles, photographs, and news items about the Society, the Boston & Maine Railroad, and current railroad events in New England. It is best to query the editor before writing articles. Please address correspondence to the Newsletter Editor at:

Rick Kfoury, B&MRRHS Newsletter
B&MRRHS, P.O. Box 9116,
Lowell, MA 01853
or email rkfoury@bmrrhs.org.

Opinions expressed in the *Newsletter* do not necessarily represent the views of the Society, its officers, or members. Reference in the *Newsletter* to products or services is for the convenience of readers and does not constitute an endorsement by the Society. © 2023 B&MRRHS.

MEMBERSHIP AND DUES

Join us on-line or renew your membership on-line at bmrrhs.org. Credit cards may be used if you join or renew on-line. Dues are also payable by check, money order, postal money order, or cash (in person only). All payments in U.S. dollars. Please allow four to six weeks for processing.

Basic Individual - \$40	Basic & Spouse - \$43
Contributing - \$50	Sustaining - \$55
Supporting - \$80	*Canada & Overseas - \$75
Benefactor - \$100	Corporate - \$500

* *Canada & Overseas members please pay via PayPal*

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Notices are sent monthly based on members' renewal dates. If we have an email on file for you, a renewal reminder will be sent via email. Envelopes are clearly marked "RENEWAL NOTICE." Not responding will result in removal from the member list.

- When members renew, typically the month of renewal does not change. (A member with a 06/19 renewal date who pays in August would have a 06/20 update to renew.)
- The label on your *Newsletter* envelope shows your renewal date.
- Refer questions to the Membership Secretary Stephen DeFrancesco at bmrrhsmembership@gmail.com.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please advise Membership Secretary of new address before you move. Returned and forwarded mail costs the Society money. Write *Stephen DeFrancesco, Membership Secretary, B&MRRHS, P.O. Box 1438, Tewksbury, MA 01876.*

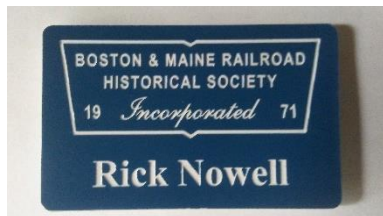
NEW MEMBERS

We would like to take the opportunity to our welcome new members who have joined the Society since the last *Newsletter* and into late January:

William D. Becker; Montello, WI
Michael Cole; Albany, NY
Reid Cooper; Burlington, MA
Tom Gebbie; Telford, PA
Harvey MacLeod; Kennebunk, ME
David Weiss-Horowitz; Great Neck, NY
Joe Leccese; Woburn, MA
Joseph Mulligan; Marshfield, MA
Michael Pieklniak; Remsen, NY
Jonathan Wood; Madison, CT
John A. Abreu; Tyngsborough, MA
Dennis Adams; Gray, ME
David Foote; South Berwick, ME
Don Ghostlaw; Broad Brook, CT
Rebecca Ekholm; Plymouth, NH
Robert Bastedo; Hamilton, NJ
William Henry; Ayer, MA
Bradford Kippen; Beverly, MA
Thomas W. Casey; Hackensack, NY
Keith Margenau; Dunbarton, NH
Brett Stankiewicz; Orwigsburg, PA
G. Edward Quackenbush; Mechanicville, NY
Matthew and Emily Hoffman; Peabody, MA
Benjamin Walter; Rindge, NH

MEMBERSHIP BADGES AVAILABLE

B&MRRHS members are entitled to wear the official membership badge at all society events. The badge is an attractive shade of blue with white lettering, 3 inches wide by 2 inches tall. The badge has a secure magnetic attachment system that eliminates pinholes from shirts and sweater. The Society sells and mails badges at cost. Please make checks for \$12 payable to B&MRRHS and send to: Name Badge, B&MRRHS, P.O. Box 9116, Lowell, MA, 01853. Please specify name for the badge. NOTE: Magnets are known to be harmful to those who utilize Pacemakers.



NEW MAILING ADDRESS FOR MEMBERSHIPS

Please be advised that we have moved our P.O. Box for new and renewed memberships, and we are **no longer using** the Derry, NH P.O. Box address. Our current P.O. Box address is:

Membership Secretary, B&MRRHS
P.O. Box 1438,
Tewksbury, MA 01876

WEBMASTER'S REPORT

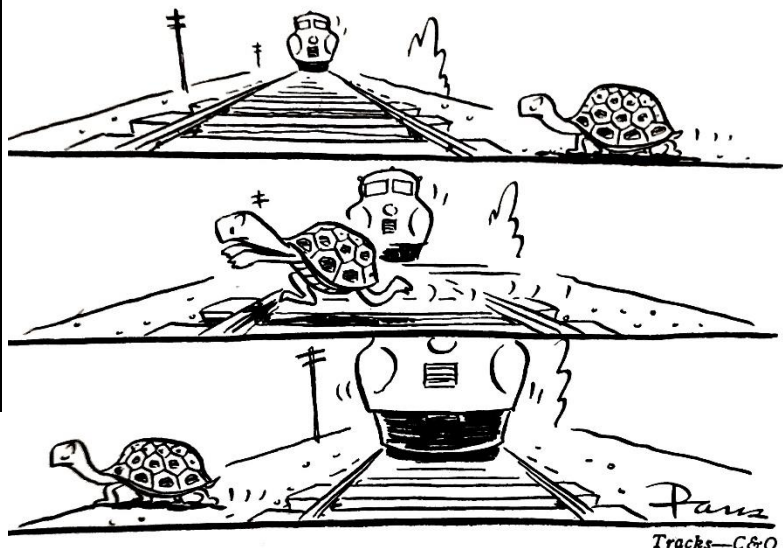
To say that the Online Committee has been busy and productive the last two months would be an understatement! We uploaded a new episode of *Minuteman Tales* to YouTube, covering Bedford, MA. We have an episode on West Concord in post-production. We also uploaded a number of other videos; one of which, on the 1966 wreck at Exeter, NH became a "runaway hit" reaching over 50,000 views! Andrew Riedl organized an interview with historian and author Bill Deen, discussing the Lexington branch, for our podcast *High Green*. Our YouTube channel has reached 2,000 subscribers (up from 1,400 at last *Newsletter*). We hope you have been enjoying! Thank you, and stay tuned!

– James P. Nizgus, Webmaster

EDITOR'S NOTE

Happy May! We've enjoyed a number of great programs and presenters at monthly meetings recently. Brad Kippen discussed the astounding progress on the Society's Robert E. Chaffin negative preservation project; Peter Violette discussed the restoration of Maine Central Railroad 4-6-2 #470; and Keolis dispatcher Nathaniel Hurst discussed modern-day commuter operations on the former B&M. It has been great to see wonderful attendance numbers at the meetings! We are very much looking forward to our May meeting in Plymouth, NH, and hope that you will be able to join us. As always, thank you for all your support and cooperation in what we do. ☘

– Rick Kfoury, Newsletter Editor





FROM THE ARCHIVES

B&MRRHS Archives Report
Rick Nowell, Archives Chairman

April 8, 2023

We held a work session on March 29, at North Chelmsford. Our group of eight volunteers shelved boxes of material, cataloged acquisitions, scanned steam locomotive drawings with the large format scanner, sorted negatives, and labeled photographs and slides. We also had one guest with us.

The following lot numbers have been assigned to donations received so far in 2023:

2023.1	Earl Tuson
2023.2	Brad Blodget
2023.3	Steve Olney
2023.4	Nashua Historical Society
2023.5	Bradley Kalk
2023.6	Robert J. Liljestrand
2023.7	Vicky Dumaine
2023.8	Brendan W. Nolan
2023.9	Richard Symmes c/o Rick Kfoury
2023.10	Ken Akerboom
2023.11	William M. Deen
2023.12	Henry V. Taves
2023.13	Robert J. Liljestrand
2023.14	Andrew Gleason
2023.15	Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Historical Society
2023.16	James Stoetzel c/o Rick Hurst
2023.17	Howland Scott c/o Rick Hurst
2023.18	Dave Santos
2023.19	Robert R. Bahr
2023.20	Larry Kemp

Rick Hurst has donated additional materials from his collection. They are cataloged under lot number 2013.23

Lot numbers form part of our cataloging system. Individual items within a lot are numbered 2023.1.1, 2023.1.2, etc.

Our next work session has not yet been scheduled.

New volunteers are always welcome. Volunteers to are needed to organize, catalogue, and preserve photographs and other paper materials. Also, we need data entry assistance that can be done anywhere. No experience required. Contact Rick Nowell, Archives Chairman, fnowell3@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Rick Nowell
 Archives Chairman
 Boston and Maine Railroad Historical Society

BOSTON AND MAINE RAILROAD

Summary of EQUIPMENT

May 1, 1957

Loco. No.	Year Built	No. Loco. Owned	Total Loco.	Total Units	Class	Service	Builder	Diam. of Drivers	Weight on Drivers	Total Weight of Loco.	Traction Effort	Horse-Power	Cab Signal	Steam Gen.	Radio Tele.
3800-3801	1945	2	2	2	DPIa	Pass.	EMD	36"	215,500	320,765	53,875	2000	2	14	2
3802-3815	1946	14	14	14	DPIa	Pass.	EMD	36"	215,500	320,765	53,875	2000	14	14	2
3816-3819	1948	4	20	20	DPIa	Pass.	EMD	36"	217,642	322,436	54,410	2000	4	4	4
3821	1950	1	1	1	DPIb	Pass.	EMD	36"	221,920	328,770	55,480	2250	1	1	1
Total Pass.		21	21	21											
1700-1749	1957	50	50	50	DRS4a	Freight	EMD	40"	247,600	247,690	61,910	1750	50	1750	1
4250-4264	1946	14	14	14	DF2	Freight	EMD	40"	231,200	231,200	57,800	1350	14	14	1
4265-4283	1949	4	4	4	DF3	Freight	EMD	40"	462,600	462,600	113,650	3000	4	4	1
Total Freight		68	68	72											
4224-4226	1946	3	3	6	DFlb	Pass. Frt. or Pass.	EMD	40"	479,180	479,180	119,790	2700	3	3	3
4227-4228	1948	2	2	4	DF3a	Pass. Frt. or Pass.	EMD	40"	488,095	488,095	122,020	3000	2	2	2
Total Frt. or Pass.		5	5	10											
Total Road Sw.			63	63											

DIESEL ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES

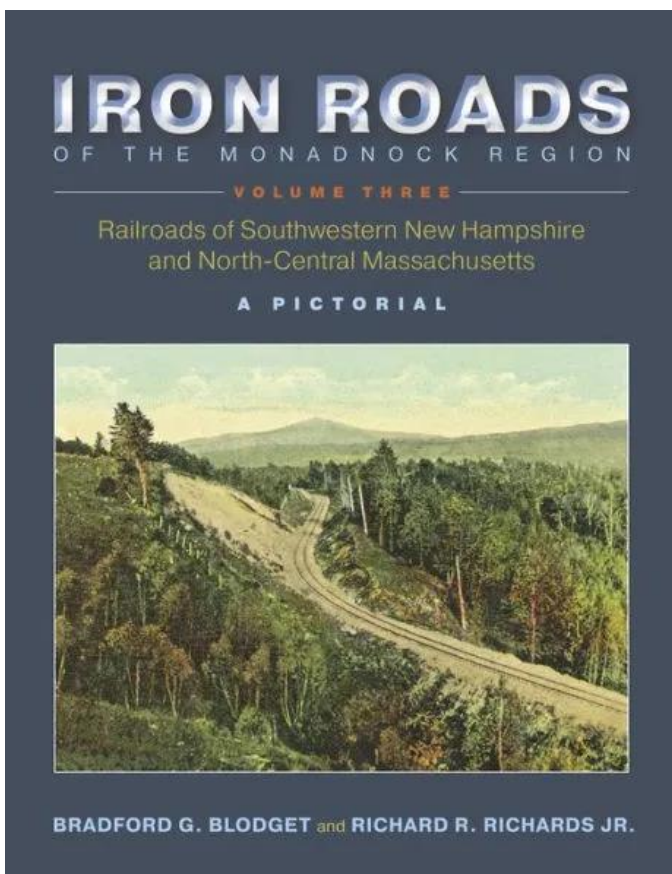
Loco. No.	Year Built	No. Loco. Owned	Total Loco.	Total Units	Class	Service	Builder	Diam. of Drivers	Weight on Drivers	Total Weight of Loco.	Traction Effort	Horse-Power	Cab Signal	Steam Gen.	Radio Tele.
110-112	1940	3	3	3	DS1a	Yard Sw.	G.F.	33"	88,740	88,740	22,185	380	3	3	3
114-116	1941	3	3	3	DS1a	Yard Sw.	G.F.	33"	88,740	88,740	22,185	380	3	3	3
117	1942	1	1	1	DS1a	Yard Sw.	G.F.	33"	88,740	88,740	22,185	380	1	1	1
118	1947	1	9	9	DS1a	Yard Sw.	G.F.	33"	88,740	88,740	22,185	380	1	1	1
119	1948	1	9	9	DS1a	Yard Sw.	G.F.	33"	88,740	88,740	22,185	380	1	1	1
800-807	1953	8	14	14	DS2a	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	247,400	247,400	61,850	800	8	8	8
860-865	1954	6	14	14	DS2b	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	246,200	246,200	61,350	800	6	6	6
1102-1105	1936	3	3	3	DS2b	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	201,320	201,320	50,350	600	3	3	3
1106-1108	1938	3	3	3	DS2b	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	203,500	203,500	51,250	600	3	3	3
1109-1110	1941	2	2	2	DS2c	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	198,250	198,250	49,560	600	2	2	2
1112-1113	1941	2	2	2	DS2c	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	196,500	196,500	49,125	600	2	2	2
1114-1117	1946	4	4	4	DS2c	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	195,500	195,500	49,125	600	4	4	4
1118	1949	1	1	1	DS2c	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	195,500	195,500	49,125	600	1	1	1
1119-1132	1953	14	31	31	DS2d	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	197,300	197,300	49,325	600	14	14	14
1161	1938	1	1	1	DS2d	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	197,300	197,300	49,325	600	1	1	1
1162	1939	1	1	1	DS2a	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	197,360	197,360	49,340	650	1	1	1
1165	1944	1	1	1	DS2b	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	198,500	198,500	49,650	650	1	1	1
1168-1172	1949	5	5	5	DS2b	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	198,600	198,600	49,650	650	5	5	5
1173-1176	1950	4	4	4	DS2b	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	194,600	194,600	48,650	650	4	4	4
1177-1188	1952	12	27	27	DS2b	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	196,100	196,100	49,025	650	12	12	12
1200-1201	1941	2	2	2	DS4a	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	247,000	247,000	61,750	1000	2	2	2
1202	1942	1	1	1	DS4a	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	246,400	246,400	61,600	1000	1	1	1
1208-1204	1942	2	2	2	DS4a	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	247,600	247,600	61,900	1000	2	2	2
1205-1206	1946	2	2	2	DS4a	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	248,500	248,500	62,125	1000	2	2	2
1208-1209	1946	2	2	2	DS4a	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	248,500	248,500	62,125	1000	2	2	2
1210-1213	1949	4	4	4	DS4a	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	249,200	249,200	62,300	1000	4	4	4
1260-1262	1944	3	3	3	DS4b	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	229,500	229,500	57,375	1000	3	3	3
1263-1265	1945	3	3	3	DS4b	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	229,500	229,500	57,375	1000	3	3	3
1266-1271	1930	5	28	28	DS4b	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	245,500	245,500	61,375	1000	5	5	5
1272-1273	1930	2	2	2	DS4b	Yard Sw.	ALCO	40"	245,500	245,500	61,375	1000	2	2	2
1220-1223	1932	4	4	4	DS4a	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	247,700	247,700	61,195	1200	4	4	4
1224-1226	1932	4	4	4	DS4a	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	247,700	247,700	61,195	1200	4	4	4
1227-1231	1933	5	12	12	DS4a	Yard Sw.	EMD	40"	248,300	248,300	62,075	1200	5	5	5
Total Yard Sw.			121	121											
Grand Total			278	287											

DIESEL ELECTRIC LOCOMOTIVES

VOLUNTEERS FOR B&M 410

We are continually maintaining and B&M 0-6-0 steam locomotive 410 and combine coach 1244 in downtown Lowell and are always looking for new volunteers. This year we will be doing some cleaning and painting. If you would like to help, contact 410 Committee chairman Jim Nigzus at 978-866-8504. Thank you!

NEW BOOK “IRON ROADS OF THE MONADNOCK REGION, VOLUME III” ANNOUNCED



trains, are quiet places but for the wind and the calls of birds. While a fascination with the region’s railroad past is almost tangible, the importance of railroads to the region from the 1840’s through the mid-twentieth century is just unimaginable to most people today. In *Iron Roads of the Monadnock Region Volumes I and II*, the authors presented the rich history of the formation and operation of the Region’s railroads from their glory years to their abandonment, enriched by over 700 images, maps, and tables.

Iron Roads Volume III is a pictorial, carefully prepared to complement and enrich the first two volumes. Thumbnail historical reviews of the railroads discussed in the two earlier volumes are included, as well as yet another 300 images (ninety-seven in color). Selected pictures—the work of numerous photographers—represent mostly newly-discovered, unpublished material, rich in historic landscapes, railroad action, and people. An expanded look at the sole remaining major line—the former Vermont & Massachusetts Railroad—that runs across the southern edge of the Region is included. Since Volumes I-III are intended to be an integrated work, Volume III also contains both an errata and addenda for the first two volumes and a consolidated index for all three volumes.

The remains of abandoned railroads, slowly fading away, grow fewer by the year. Many former railroad structures and landscapes are scarcely recognizable at all today. Images in *Iron Roads* bring “railroad days” in the Monadnock Region back to life and come as close as possible to transporting the reader back to those days. *Iron Roads* is a ticket-to-ride. All aboard!

Iron Roads Volume III is being published by Bauhan Publishing and is on pre-publication sale through the Historical Society of Cheshire County in Keene.

KEENE, NH – The last passenger train departed Keene, New Hampshire nearly sixty-five years ago and all of the railroad branch lines that once threaded their way through the river valleys and rugged hill country of the Monadnock Region felt their last trains almost forty years ago. Today, the old roadbeds that were once busy arteries of daily life and commerce, resonant with the sounds of



“Line of the Minute Man”

CHANGES TO THE OLD CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS BRANCH

SOUTH SUDBURY, MA – Benjamin Campbell reported on Facebook that the old Central Massachusetts Branch has undergone some major changes in recent months.

In early February, brush was cleared at the diamond where the branch crossed the former Framingham & Lowell line, famously operated by the New Haven Railroad (later Penn Central and Conrail). By February 17, the diamond, and the nearby rails on both lines had been removed. The removal of the unused Central Mass Branch in this area is an Eversource project to bury a new underground power line, but an accompanying rail trail will also be a result.

Rail removal on the former F&L, for conversion into an extension of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail, progressed north in the direction of West Concord, reaching Hudson Road (Rt. 27) in Sudbury by February 25. An excavator outfitted with rail gear operated on the rusted tracks to assist in the removal and will be the last piece of rail equipment to be used on the F&L. Conrail had operated the line from Framingham north to serve lumber customers in Sudbury into the late 1990s.

On the old B&M Central Mass, rail removal is progressing from the old junction at South Sudbury eastward towards Wayland (where remaining rails have already been removed) and westward as far as Parmenter Road in Hudson by this writing. B&M last ran freight service on this section of the Central Mass in 1981. ☞



Bottom Left: Rails on the Central Mass Branch at Route 20, looking east before removal in March. The section house will be saved.

Above: On the old F&L north of Sudbury, an excavator with rail wheels will be the last piece of rail equipment to ever use the line.

Below: The crossing of the old B&M Central Mass Branch (foreground to background) and the old F&L (left to right) at South Sudbury just before the rails and diamond were removed. The small B&M South Sudbury station, a replacement for a larger station demolished in the mid-1950s, can be seen in the background.

All photos by Benjamin Campbell.



PEABODY'S ROUSSELOT PLANT TO CLOSE AT END OF 2023

PEABODY, MA – Rousselot's plant in Peabody will close at the end of the year, putting an end to over 200 years of manufacturing operations at the site.

The factory, which is located off Allens Lane and Washington Street, primarily produces pharmaceutical-grade gelatin that is used by different industries and has about 100 employees, who will be offered severance packages as operations wind down, said Suann Guthrie, a spokesperson for Darling Ingredients, Rousselot's parent company.

With just under 330 acres of property in Peabody, Rousselot is one of the city's largest landowners in addition to being one of its largest employers. The company owns 14 properties on Allen's Lane, an area around Cedar Pond near Route 128, Jubilee Drive, Washington Street, Lynnfield Street, May Street, Adelaide Avenue and Granite Street, where it leases out the majority of its land for the city to use as the Meadow Golf Course. In total, the city values the properties at \$27.8 million.

It was not immediately clear if Rousselot will sell off these properties or what might come of them after the plant closes. The plant, which originally opened as a glue factory in 1817, transformed over the years to meet changing needs and was focused on creating gelatin for Kodak camera film through the early 2000s. With the rise of the digital age squandering the demand for film, the plant shifted its focus to creating gelatin for biomedical products in the 2010s.

Rousselot is the last freight customer on the Danvers and South Reading Industrial Tracks (comprised of remnants of both the former Danvers Branch and the South Reading Branch) and the last remaining freight customer on any lines east of Everett Junction. It is currently served by BO-1, the last Boston-based local freight job, twice a week and usually on Tuesday and Thursday. With the future of rail freight service on the North Shore in question, and with rail service to the plant expected to end in June long before plant closure, railfans have flocked to the area to document what they can before the end comes.

Adapted from an article in The Salem News by Caroline Enos, March 1, 2023.



On Friday February 17, new owners CSX finally removed the Pan Am Railways sign from the North Billerica office. If you look closely, you can see that the ghost lettering from the original B&M sign, seen below, (Kodachrome dated 5-75, photographer unknown). Photos courtesy Mike Clements.



NEW SOCIETY VIDEOS!

Have you visited our YouTube channel lately? Find a number of new releases there including *Minuteman Tales: Bedford, MA*, *Minuteman Diesels Episode 1: The F7s*, *Minuteman Steam Episode 4: The P-1 and P-2 Pacifics*, and a number of vintage New England railroading videotapes provided by Russell F. Munroe, Jr. Just head on over to YouTube and search for B&MRRHS or the Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society! ☘



Vignettes from the Archives



Above: Photographer Tom Nelligan captured Boston & Maine RDC-1 6148 at the station platform at South Sudbury, MA, in this Spring 1971 photo. In the final years, South Sudbury was the furthest extent of passenger service on the Central Massachusetts Branch from Boston until that service ended in 1971. The diamond crossing with (at that time) Penn Central's Framingham Secondary would be just behind Tom.

Below: In the summer of 1971, Tom photographed B&M ALCo RS-3 in local freight service in Ayer, MA. The RS-3s, and ALCo power in general, were fast disappearing from the Boston & Maine's locomotive roster in the early 1970s.



ANDREW'S EXCURSIONS #1 **ESSEX BRANCH ARTIFACTS –** **ON THE EDGE OF THE MARSH**

B&MRRHS DIRECTOR ANDREW RIEDL



What could possibly be part of the foundation of Essex Falls depot sits beside the former right of way of the Essex Branch. The roadbed can be seen slightly elevated from the foundation to the left of it. While I'm not certain that this in fact was the depot, I welcome any other information on this structure. Andrew Riedl Photo February 18, 2023.

As the reader can no doubt imagine, all of this was a delightful little ride through a beautiful stretch of countryside - pastoral railroading in the finest sense of the term” - A Recollection of the Essex Branch by Dana Adams Story B&M Bulletin Winter 1975-1976

Like many three-year-olds, my son has a fascination with owls. From almost the time he was saying his first words, he was excitedly exclaiming “Owl!” every time we’d read a story (owl’s make appearances in many more children’s books than I ever would have imagined) and is always finding them when we’re out and about. From decoys on porches to decorations in windows of local businesses, we’re always being reminded of the nocturnal birds of prey and what a prominent role they play in our daily lives.

It was no surprise when my sister-in-law got him tickets to a “Snowy Owl Prowl” at Crane Beach in Ipswich, MA for his birthday. I soon found out an “Owl Prowl” encompassed a two-hour family friendly hike through the magnificent sand dunes which my son, wife and sister-in-law would do together in the hopes of spotting snowy owls. Upon learning that the day of the event was supposed to be a glorious mid-February day (mid-thirties and sunny is about the best we New Englanders can wish for in what is generally a pretty dreary month, right?) I opted to drive my wife and son to the beach and while they hunted for the elusive snowy

owl, I would do some hunting of my own, for remains of the long-abandoned Boston and Maine Essex Branch.

At one time a short branch off the Eastern main line at Hamilton, the Essex Branch was constructed in 1872 by the Eastern Railroad and that soon fell under ownership of the B&M. The 5.31-mile-long branch featured four intermediate stops before reaching its terminus just shy of the Essex salt marsh on the southern edge of the downtown. The branch was extended through the marsh to Conomo in South Essex in 1887 giving it a total distance of approximately six miles from the junction at Hamilton. Freight business was comprised of primarily shipbuilding products for the boatyards in Essex as well as ice from Chebacco Lake. On the passenger side, commuters to Boston made up the bulk of the revenue. Centennial Grove stop was a popular destination for picnickers as well.

Traffic on the Essex branch started to decline with increased use of the automobile and trucks for passenger travel and shipping, respectively. While the B&M first attempted to abandon the branch in 1926, only the short extension to Conomo was approved. Service on the rest of the branch continued through the 1930’s (I have always found it interesting that the branch survived both the Great Depression and the 1938 Hurricane, given that by this time the B&M was clearly looking for any excuse to abandon it). Finally in 1942, with WWII impacting all corners of the globe, the B&M tried again. This time the railroad emphasized the value of the scrap iron that the branch would yield for the war effort. With that, the final trains ran to Essex on December 19, 1942. Incredibly, the tracks were removed within a week of abandonment, and by the start of 1943, the B&M in Essex was a memory.

On this February day, I had a two-hour window to explore the line, and to get the most bang for my buck, I decided to drive to the park in downtown Essex next to town hall which was built roughly on the site of the former railroad yard and depot. I had been there years back, but didn’t give the location the time it deserved, and came back empty-handed thinking there was nothing left to be discovered. This time I was determined to spend more time carefully exploring and was confident that I would find some evidence that the railroad once ran through there. Walking to the edge of the baseball field, which I also think existed in the days of the railroad, I kept going to the edge of the park, and sure enough continuing off in the woods between homes on Route 22 and Alewife brook was a path through the trees that undoubtedly was wide enough to have been a railroad. My first discovery of the day, which would end up being one of many!

I followed the path behind these homes and while it's not exactly hidden as people certainly use it for a walking path, I felt like I had finally uncovered a lost piece of B&M history. I soon also found pieces of coal slag, which I'm discovering are common along most rights of way that were abandoned during the steam era. Even more interesting was what I discovered as I approached the former Landing Road crossing site. On the south side of the roadbed was the remains of a stone foundation about 20 feet away from where the tracks would have been and down a slight hill. With the knowledge that I was close to the site of the Essex Falls Depot, I initially assumed that this was likely part of its remains. This, however, may not be accurate at this writing though, as information I have since uncovered in the Winter 1975-1976 edition of the B&M Bulletin shows this depot was located on nearby Apple Street. Looks like I'll be making another trip back up there to confirm this, but the stone foundation off Landing Road was fascinating nonetheless!

Still having some time on the clock before I had to be back at Crane Breach, I decided to keep following the branch through Essex towards Hamilton and see if there was anything left at the site of the Centennial Grove stop. There was never an actual station building at this location as it was used primarily by picnickers at nearby Chebacco Lake. I drove down appropriately named Centennial Grove Road and soon I was at the right of way. I then discovered that to the right the roadbed became a private driveway, but to the left the roadbed was a public road. Slowly driving down through the residential neighborhood, I was about to hit the jackpot of Essex branch artifacts.

First up was on my left side as I was driving down the road towards Essex. A stone retaining wall on the right side of the right of way clearly dated back to the days of the railroad. The wall was likely about 100 feet long and immediately adjacent to the road. The roadbed then crossed over a small bridge made of stone that traversed a small brook and was certainly also a railroad bridge at one time. On the left side of the right of way, there was even some very rusty B&M era railroad fencing next to the road. Then finally, there it was; relocated from its original location, because they were always installed on the outbound direction of the tracks, but fully intact nonetheless. A triangular concrete milepost at the top of the driveway of a home still proudly displaying: "E2" and "H4". I had seen a picture of this post from the archives of my friend Ken Jackman as he and his uncle had located it years back, but I had no idea whether it still remained or not. The post is in great shape with both markings

clearly legible. The owners of the house have even taken care to put driveway stakes around it to prevent snowplows from hitting it in the wintertime. Whether this is the only remaining milepost on the line I do not know, but it was a truly remarkable find.

The final artifact I found on this two-hour adventure was at the eastern end of the road built on the roadbed and I was likely only able to see it because of the lack of foliage on the trees. A stone bridge abutment with the right of way continuing on towards Essex Falls depot site sat in the woods just beyond the street, unused for just over 80 years. A testament to how well built it was and it looks like it's simply waiting for another bridge to be set down on top of it. I did not know that this abutment existed here, but I was obviously thrilled to find it as it helps define the direction of the right of way in an area that it could easily get lost due to the thick undergrowth.

I snapped a few pictures of the abutment, and by then it was time for me to end my excursion for the day and meet my wife and son. I departed Essex very excited about that fact that there are many more remains of this line than what I had imagined, and there is still more for me to explore in the future. The section of the line in Hamilton I touched on briefly that day, but that is going to warrant its own separate journey (and article) in the future.

The Essex Branch may have been a minor part of the B&M system, but there is enough history and mystique about it to capture the interest of almost any B&M fan, and I encourage you to check it out for yourself. I arrived back at Crane Beach only to discover that the snowy owls had remained elusive that morning, but everyone still enjoyed the hike in the dunes. On a similar wavelength, the Essex branch had always seemed elusive to me, but on this February morning, much of it had become much more real. I look forward to my next opportunity to explore the line and answer more of my questions. It also might have to happen well before the next Snowy Owl Prowl is scheduled. Happy Explorations! - AR



A concrete triangular milepost at the base of a driveway in Essex, MA still clearly indicates that Essex is two miles down the long-forgotten branch line. This was one of many fascinating historical discoveries I made on my morning exploring this line. Not the driveway stakes to keep this irreplaceable artifact safe from snowplows! Andrew Riedl Photo February 18th, 2023



Progress or painful? Boston & Maine Railroad president Patrick B. McGinnis poses on a Caterpillar bulldozer in Concord, New Hampshire during the construction of the Capital Shopping Center in 1960. The shopping Center replaced previously demolished Concord Union Station, a much beloved and sorely missed landmark. The destruction of the station, and subsequent construction of the plaza, was at the time heralded as progress for the city of Concord by city, state, and railroad officials.

Negative from the *MacMillan/Hutchinson Collection B&MRRHS Archives.*



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