

THE **Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society**
Incorporated

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.”

March - April 2020

Meeting/Membership Telephone Number (978) 454-3600

www.bmrrhs.org

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*Somerville, MA, April 1972. F7A #4268, #4268B, #4266B, and a GP9 depart the “hump” with a freight.
Image from a color slide by Henry W. Marrec, B&MRRHS Archives.*

TIMETABLE OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, March 14:

B&MRRHS March meeting at Rogers Hall in Lowell, MA. 3:00 PM start. Justin Winiarz will present on New England railroading during 2017 and 2018; trips to the Southwest, North and South Carolina and elsewhere in the Northeast; coverage of shortlines and tourist trains; and Union Pacific #844 and the last “Frontier Days” steam run from Denver to Cheyenne!

Saturday, April 4:

New England Train Show, Dover Lodge of Elks #184, 282 Durham Road, Dover, NH 03820. Hours 10:00 AM – 3:00 PM. The Society will have a table at the show with clothing, merchandise, DVDs, models, books and more. We hope to see you there!

Saturday, April 11:

B&MRRHS April meeting at Rogers Hall in Lowell, 3:00 PM start. “Rambling with Railroaders” - Several former B&M employees including Mike Enos, Lee Atkins, Marty LaCarbonara, and Russell Monroe will lead a living history discussion. Please join us for what will be a fantastic program!

Sunday, April 26:

Hooksett, NH Lions Club 25th Model Train & Modeling Show. 10:00 AM – 3 PM, Hooksett Cawley Middle School, Route 27 (89 Whitehall Road), Hooksett, NH 03106. The Society will have a table at the show with clothing, merchandise, DVDs, models, books and more. We hope to see you there!

Saturday, May 2:

B&MRRHS May meeting, Plymouth, NH Senior Center. See enclosed flyer for more information!

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, 136 Harvard Avenue, Auburn, NH, 03032* or email rickkfoury51@gmail.com.

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. © 2020 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 (via PayPal). 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

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Notices are sent monthly based on members' renewal dates. Envelopes are clearly marked "RENEWAL NOTICE." If a member does not pay within the renewal month, he or she may receive two reminder letters. Not responding may 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.)
- Please review your label for the renewal date. Refer questions to the Membership Secretary.
- Renew by credit card at bmrrhs.org. Renew by mail using check or money order. You may pay by cash at a membership meeting or trains show at which the Society is present.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Please advise the Membership Secretary of your new address before you move. Returned and forwarded mail costs the Society money. Write Kathy LaValley, Membership Secretary, B&MRRHS, P.O. Box 9116, Lowell, MA 01853.



DIRECTIONS TO SOCIETY MEETINGS

Meetings in Lowell are usually held at Rogers Hall, 196 Rogers St., Lowell, MA 01852.

- From I-495 take exit 38 and go north on Mass. Route 38; this is Rogers Street. Approximately 1.3 miles from I-495, Rogers St. forks to the left at a stop light, so bear to the left here. Rogers Hall (white pillars) is about 3/10 of a mile farther on your right. Directly across the street is Rogers Park where parking is available.
- From Mass. Route 133 (which is Andover St., Lowell, coming west from Tewksbury): Follow Route 133 west. After going straight through the intersection of Route 38 take your third left on to High Street. Take a left on to Rogers St. Rogers Hall will be on your left. Directly across the street is Rogers Park where parking is available.
- From Mass. Route 38 or Mass. Route 113 in Dracut: Get off at the overhead traffic circle as if going to Saints Hospital. Follow this to the intersection of Routes 38 and 133, take a right on to Andover St., and take your third left on to High Street. Take a left on to Rogers St, Rogers Hall will be on your left. Directly across the street is Rogers Park where parking is available.
- By MBTA commuter rail from Lowell: If you come to Lowell by train, take the LRTA Route 2 "Belvidere" bus from Gallagher Transportation Center. This bus stops at Rogers Hall.

NEW MEMBERS

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

- John Powers, Winthrop, MA
- Eric Gouvin, North Hampton, MA
- Gerald Lucente, Arlington, MA
- Paul Prior, Medway, MA
- Sarah Bauhan, Hancock, NH
- Tom Tremblay, Peabody, MA

Welcome Aboard!



*New members from the show at West Springfield will appear in the next Newsletter

GENERAL FUND DONORS

We would like to extend its heartfelt thanks to the following members who have donated to the General Fund so far:

- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| Mr. Brewster Ames | Mr. Carl W. Leaman |
| Mr. David Ashenden | Mr. John Leonard |
| Mr. Henry P. Binney III | Mr. Carl A. Libucha |
| Mr. William M. Deen | Mr. Edward A. McCabe |
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| Mr. Paul S. Larcom | Lorna and Robert Terhune |
| Mr. Lee. E. Laroche | Mrs. Karen Dooks |

WEBMASTER'S REPORT

We currently have 3,147 likes on Facebook, and 3,700 website views since the last *Newsletter*. Our new video series, "Minuteman Tales", continues to grow in popularity. At the Springfield show we handed out fliers to promote the new series. We're looking for new places to record! If you have any place in mind please send me an email. Our website has some new long term goals to make it more user friendly. We have also uncovered past recording of B&MRRHS events on VCR; we are in the process of digitalizing them and hope to release them soon. ☘

– James P. Nizgus, Webmaster

EDITOR'S NOTE

Welcome back to another edition of the B&MRRHS *Newsletter*! With warmer weather in sight we are on the fast track to a busy and productive spring. This edition, we are pleased to feature the comprehensive 2019 year-end reports from the Hardware and Archives Committees, and a great new recurring feature titled "Andrew's Excursions" in which member Andrew Riedl will share some of his personal experiences exploring B&M history. We finish this issue off with a fantastic newspaper article which has recently surfaced, penned back in 1971 by railroad author Edgar T. Mead titled "The Glory of White River Junction". Hope to see you at the upcoming spring meetings and shows! ☘

– Rick Kfoury, Newsletter Editor



FROM THE ARCHIVES

B&MRRHS Archives Report
 Rick Nowell, Archives Chairman

To the Board of Directors and Members of the Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society:

The Archives Committee is pleased to submit the following report for the year ended December 31, 2019.

General Information: The Committee acquires, preserves, and organizes photographs, documents, drawings, and other paper materials related to the history of the Boston and Maine Railroad, its predecessors and successors, and other New England railroads. We furnish archival information to many different patrons including researchers, writers, preservationists, surveyors, engineers, lawyers, modelers, and genealogists.

The Archives are located in the Patrick J. Mogan Cultural Center at 40 French Street in Lowell, Massachusetts. This building is owned by the National Park Service and is part of the Lowell National Historical Park. Our Archives are housed within the Center for Lowell History, one of the UMass Lowell libraries, which occupies a large part of the Mogan Center. The collection is owned by the Society and managed by the Archives Committee. We occupy an area of about 1,000 square feet where we have shelving, cabinet storage, and workspace for researchers. Our cooperative agreement with the University gives our collection a secure, climate-controlled environment and an accessibility that is unmatched by most other railroad historical societies.

At Lowell the visitor will find photographs, slides, negatives, right of way and track maps, valuation surveys, timetables, books, periodicals, mechanical drawings of structures and equipment, and a wealth of data organized alphabetically by subject—Abandonments, Accidents, Baggage, etc. Researchers may browse the collection on their own or meet with the Archives chairman for assistance. The current hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM. The Archives are also open on the third Saturday of the month from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM. Since the Center for Lowell History observes the University’s calendar intending visitors should call ahead to confirm hours, 978-934-4997.

Special thanks to Janine Whitcomb and Tony Sampas at the Center for Lowell History who give valuable assistance to Archives visitors. We are very appreciative of what they do for us.

The Society rents additional space in a warehouse building in North Chelmsford. This space is used to receive and catalog donations and to store primary source material, principally records and drawings. Thanks are due Jim Nigzus, Jimmy Nigzus, and Steve DeFrancesco, who built additional shelving and secured file cabinets and other furniture, during 2019.

Our Volunteers: Active committee members (those who attended one or more work sessions or engaged in “homework” in 2019) are Ken Akerboom, David Ashenden, Len Bachelder, Brad Blodget, Steve Butterworth, Carl Byron, Rick Conard, Eric DiVirgilio, Jack Dziadul, Bob Farrenkopf, Mark Fecteau, Marguerite Gropp, Rick Hurst, Alan LePain, Caleb LePain, Matthew LePain, Jack Madden, Bryan Miller, Dick Miller, Rick Nowell, Keith Scarlett, Jimi Smith, Mal Sockol, Wayne Slaughter, Leo Sullivan, Henry Taves, Al Taylor, Jim Teed, Gareth Thomas, and Dave West.

We held 11 work sessions in 2019, as compared to 11 work sessions in 2018, and 8 in 2017. Average attendance was 9 on 2019, as compared to 7 in 2018, and 8 in 2017. At our work sessions we research requests for information, organize our collection, and process and file new acquisitions. Lively exchanges of railroad information are an important side benefit.

Throughout the year Rick Hurst organized several impromptu work sessions at North Chelmsford. These sessions concentrated on scanning and processing the large Donald B. Valentine and Boston and Maine Corporation/MBTA collections. The goal of Rick’s sub-committee is to arrange these records in a fashion that makes them more accessible to researchers.

We held two cataloging classes. Participants learned the elements of the Archives cataloging system and processed new items into the collection.

Several people made important contributions by performing work at home. Ken Akerboom is working on a freight car data base for the Society’s website. David Ashenden scanned our collection of Maine Central employee magazines. David, along with Carl Byron, Len Bachelder, Steve Butterworth, Rick Conard, Roger Hinman, Paul Kosciolk Alan LePain, Richard Nichols, and Tom E. Thompson answered a variety of historical inquiries. Jack Dziadul updated his *B&M Bulletin* and *Modelers Notes* indexes. Mark Fecteau transcribed handwritten catalog records to enable us to update the on-line catalog. Marguerite Gropp transcribed our accession list. Rick Hurst found good homes for duplicate and off-topic materials. Keith Scarlett processed photographs. Mal Sockol took charge of the Archives calendar on the web site. Gareth Thomas continued to scan steam locomotive photos. Eric DiVirgilio prepared and mailed letters to members whose membership had lapsed, encouraging them to re-activate. Peter Violette provided guidance on formatting large digital files. All this activity demonstrates that it is not necessary to live in the Lowell area to participate in the work of the Archives.

Digital Services: In 2013 we began to digitize Archives materials to enable us to pursue the Society’s educational objectives on a wider scale. It is not out of place to list some of the accomplishments in this area:

- Over 1,900 historical photographs are available on our Flickr site (flickr.com/photos/bmrrhs). We often record as many as 7,000 picture views per day. Archives photos also appear on the Society’s Facebook page, courtesy of Rick Kfoury and Jimmy Nizus
- *B&M Bulletin* 1971-2017 available on CD. (See below)
- On-Line Archives at bmrrhs.org containing among other things
 - *B&MRRHS Newsletters*
 - Maine Central employee magazines
 - Authority for expenditure record abstracts
 - Passenger and freight car rosters
 - Time tables, public and employee
 - Archives catalog and classification system
 - Diesel locomotive diagrams
- Over 1,000 large format documents have been scanned. These include valuation plans, dispatcher sheets, bridge plans, station plans, and locomotive and car plans. Most of them will be posted to the Internet Archive (archive.org) and will be accessed from links on the On-Line Archives page.

This record has been made possible by volunteers, scanning at Chelmsford and at home, as well as by generous monetary contributions to defray the cost of our large format scanner. Members or friends who would like to contribute to the purchase of the scanner may mail donations payable to B&MRRHS to: B&MRRHS, P.O. Box 9116, Lowell, MA 01853. Please to mark your check “For Scanner.”

Our Donors: We logged in a total of 66 donations in 2019 as compared to 52 in 2018 and 52 again in 2017. Donors in 2019 included John Clemons, B&MRRHS Sales Dept., Ed Hiller, Paul Kosciolk, PanAm Railways, Leah Ann Weston, Doug Browne, Jim Teed, Estate of Henry Marrec, Jerry Kelley, Bill Walsh, L.E. Green, Marty Waisnor, Mike Schleigh, Pat Esgate, Rick Conard, David Ashenden, Peter Violette, Richard Nichols, Volker Antoni, Scott Batson, Ron Palmquist, Dick Bond, Donald Stephenson, Richard Marion, Cheryl Grimes, Bill Deen,

B&O RR Historical Society, Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Allan C. Moore, Dave West, Dwight A. Smith, David Hutchinson, Rick Nowell, George Kocur, Robert Greene, Henry Taves, Seashore Trolley Museum, Roger Hinman, Frank Kyper, Ann Gagnon and Family, Friends of Bedford Depot Park, Thornton Waite, Bob Chambers, Carl Byron, Christine Morin, Craig Weed c/o Joe Burgess, Melissa Amadon, Eric Glallanza, Tom Coughlin, Donald Dollard, Bruce Penttinen, Janet Jackson Thanks for all these donations, large and small.

Our committee welcomes new volunteers. We need researchers, catalogers, and organizers. No experience required—just an interest in railroad history. Get started by attending one of our work sessions. I am, as always, impressed and inspired by how much can be accomplished by volunteers. ☞

Respectfully submitted,

Frederick N. Nowell, III
Chairman, Archives Committee

HARDWARE COMMITTEE REPORT

Hardware Committee Chairman, Daniel Hyde
Hardware Committee Curator, Richard Nichols

To the Board of Directors and Members of the Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society:

The Hardware Committee is pleased to submit the following report for the calendar year ended Dec. 31, 2019

Our Hardware Collection is housed and maintained in an annex in North Chelmsford, MA occupying an area about 1,000 square feet for storage, work and research. We collect material related to the Boston & Maine Railroad, its predecessors and successors, and other New England Railroads.

The Collection is owned by the Society and managed by the Hardware Committee, made up of volunteers who are interested in railroad history and the preservation of historical materials. The Hardware Committee members are Frederick Brown, Richard Faucher, Daniel Hyde, Richard Nichols, James Nizgus, and Mal Sockol, logged in 448 hours for 2019.

Member Carl R. Byron proof read the Hardware Collections website & inventory list. We scheduled once a month meeting in 2019. The average attendance at our meetings, inclusive of members, 5 in 2019. The work at our meetings consists of registering railroad hardware, organizing our collection, processing and filing new acquisitions.

We have now registered 2246 items. In 2019, a total of 142 --- donations of artifacts have been received from the following: B&MRRHS Archives items Transferred to Hardware Collection, 8 Anonymous Donors, Melissa Amadon, Carl R. Byron, Belinda Champeau, Roger E. Davis, Jack Dziadul, Ann Gagnon, Reuven L. Grehan, Robert Grodzicki, Paul T. Kosciolk, Frank Kyper, Michael Lee, Henry W. Marrec, Russell F. Monroe, Great Brook State Park, Douglas Peters, Stephen Pronovost, Mal Sockol, Richard W. Symmes, Vincent R. Terrill, Allan P. Vaughan, Craig Weed Jr., David West, H. Arnold Wilder,

During the year, we have uploaded a variety of photographs of the Hardware Collection to the Society's web site, bmrhs.org. This involved preparing a copy of photographs from each file with the help of the Webmaster, Frederick N. Nowell, who shares responsibility for updating the site with Richard Nichols (Hardware). Our Committee welcomes new members. We need researchers, catalogers, and organizers. No experience required-just an interest in Railroad History. ☞

Contact the Hardware Committee for details. E-Mail: railroad.nichols@gmail.com.

“WHILE WE WERE OUT...” - PAST MEETINGS AND EVENTS -

JANUARY MEETING

Our meeting on Jan. 10, 2020 featured a fantastic and thorough presentation by David Saums, who spoke extensively on the history of snow train operations in New England. Dave highlighted that it was the B&M who started these popular excursions, which soon spread out to other railroads in the region. These popular trips starting in the Depression-era did wonders for winter activity and sport in New England.

Following the presentation a number of involved questions added to the discussion, proving that these famous trains are an important and beloved part of B&M history. A recording of the presentation can be viewed on the “videos” section on our Facebook page. ☼

FEBRUARY MEETING

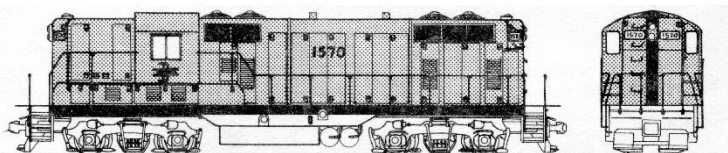
At Rogers Hall on February 8, Newsletter Editor Rick Kfoury presented on the final years of freight service on a section of the B&M’s Portsmouth Branch from Manchester to Rockingham Junction until abandonment in 1982. Following the end of passenger service in 1954, the branch was used for local freight and high-and-wide service. Notable were loads of heavy equipment bound for the Seabrook Nuclear Power Plant project, which traveled the branch in the late 1970s due to its suitable clearance.

In addition to photos from various collections, information from abandonment inquiries in the 1970s and various freight documents outlined the various customers and the gradual decline of that western section of the Portsmouth Branch, the eastern half of which is still in service between Portsmouth and Rockingham. The presentation was recorded and can be viewed on the “videos” section of our Facebook page. ☼

THE AMHERST RAILWAY SOCIETY’S WEST SPRINGFIELD TRAIN SHOW

The B&MRRHS made its annual appearance at the Amherst Railway Society Railroad Hobby Show in West Springfield, MA on January 25th and 26th. Sales were brisk with copies of the newly remastered DVD version of the “Films of Robert Chaffin” and the new Historical Society of Cheshire County books “Iron Roads of the Monadnock Region” proving extremely popular.

Among the crowds were many old and new friends, and it was great to put a face to many of the names that have appeared on Facebook and that have come over to us through email over the last year. A great many joined as members or renewed their membership; to you we say hello! A big thank you goes out to all who volunteered to help the Society at the show; Jim and James Nigzus, Donald and Dave Hampton, Paul Kosciolk, Rick Kfoury, Carl Byron, Steve DeFrancesco, Bill Marnik, Andrew Wilson, Mal Sockol, and Rick Hurst. ☼



REMNANTS OF GEORGETOWN BRANCH TO BE REMOVED FOR RAIL - TRAIL

BRADFORD - Austin Logan reports that the remaining rails on what used to be the B&M's Georgetown Branch in Bradford, MA are planned to be torn up this spring. It is likely also that the railroad overpass which carried the branch over Elm St near the junction with the Western Route Mainline will be removed.

The Georgetown Branch originally ran through to Georgetown, with a connection there to the Newburyport Branch. Though that was abandoned by the B&M in 1941, a short section remained in service into the 1980s from Bradford along the Merrimack River to serve Haverhill Paperboard, located at S. Kimball Street. Over the past few years work has progressed to convert the right of way to a rail-trail; a section from just east of the junction to the Basiliere Bridge was recently completed.

Despite the trail progress, rail is still in place in a few different spots, the first of which is a short stretch running from the South Elm overpass behind an auto repair shop. The other starts east of the Basiliere Bridge near the Haverhill Yacht Club and runs along Railroad Street to the old factory site. The telltale for the eastern approach to the Basiliere Bridge on the yacht club side is still in place for now, but the telltale on the western side was removed a few years back, possibly in conjunction with the completion of trail construction there.

While the rails by the yacht club will most likely be removed, it is unknown whether the rails along Railroad Street will be lifted as they practically run through the front yards of several residences. Between Railroad Street and the old mill site the right of way passes in very close proximity to several businesses in less-than-scenic territory, so it is possible bikers may need to utilize the road from the yacht club to the Georgetown Branch right-of-way beyond the old mill site. ☞



Above: The first section of rails up by the Elm Street overpass, looking west towards the overpass and the old junction with the Western Route Mainline. November 9, 2019.



The remaining rails east of the Basiliere Bridge looking back towards the bridge (above) and towards Railroad Street and the old paperboard factory site (below) as seen on November 25, 2017. Dirt was recently placed, covering these rails.

All photos by and courtesy of Austin Logan.



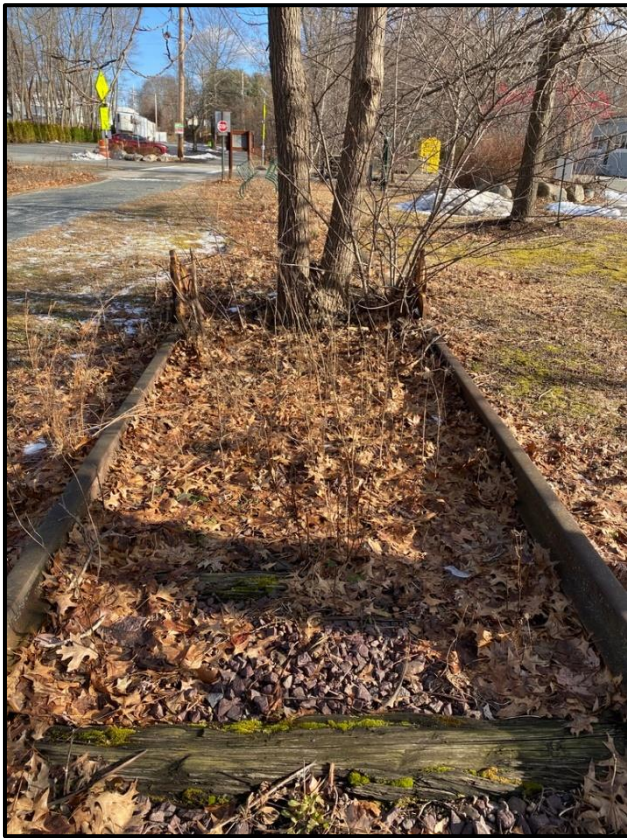
Above: The old telltale east of the Basiliere Bridge.



ANDREW'S EXCURSIONS #1

TAPLEYVILLE, MA

B&MRRHS MEMBER ANDREW RIEDL



Remains of a siding is about the only evidence left of the station location at Tapleyville which is a section of Danvers, MA. The former B&M Newburyport Branch which once ran to the right of this siding is now a rail trail. Andrew Riedl Photo.

One of my favorite parts of exploring the remains of the Boston and Maine Railroad that once was is that it gets me outside and to new places that I may never have ordinarily ventured too.

On a brisk late December day after the craziness of the holidays passed, I drove up to Danvers, MA to take a walk on the rail trail that was fairly recently constructed along the former B&M Newburyport Branch. I also brought our family's Yellow Labrador who is always up for a walk in a new area especially one that includes new smells for him!

On our excursion I was able to locate the site of the former Tapleyville Depot which was one of nine passenger stations that were once sprinkled across this town during the height of the railroad craze. Tapleyville was located about half a mile from the

center of Danvers heading west towards Peabody and Wakefield Junction at the Pine Street crossing.

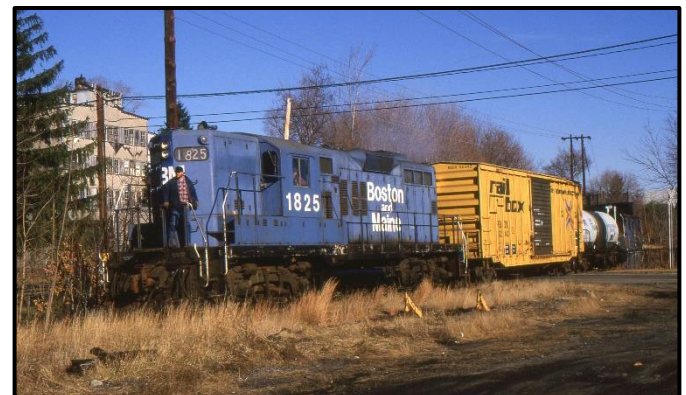
Passenger trains last served this location in the late 1950's when all passenger service to Danvers ended. The rail lines through Danvers were slowly abandoned over the second half of the 20th century, including the Newburyport Branch, until finally the last freight train served Danvers around 1998.

When the rail trail was created years later, most of the railroad artifacts were removed, but to the careful observer, there are still plenty of interesting items to find. The remains of this siding at the Tapleyville Depot site caught my eye, particularly the trees that have been growing through the unused tracks for many years. A 1954 B&M employee timetable states that the siding at Tapleyville was long enough to handle approximately 13 cars.

A walk on a rail trail may be a sad reminder of the rail lines that could not be profitable in modern times, but they also offer the chance to connect with some fascinating history as well! I also highly recommend this rail trail for runners, cyclists and dog walkers in addition to railroad archeologists! ☼



Danvers, MA, December 1986. Boston & Maine GP9r #1825 and a westbound local the Newburyport Branch passing Tapleyville. Note the track with the wheel stops, still visible in Andrew's modern day photograph. David E. Trask images, B&MRRHS Archives.





“THE GLORY OF WHITE RIVER JUNCTION”

BY EDGAR T. MEAD

Connecticut Valley Reporter, June 23, 1971

Courtesy Carl Byron, Transcribed for the *Newsletter* by Rick Kfoury



I remember visiting the station platform at White River Junction in the spring of 1940. I was small then, but the memory has grown with the years. It was a real junction in those days, with steam freight and passenger trains coming in and leaving from every direction; north to Woodsville, west to Montreal, and south to New York. There were times during the day when two or three passenger trains would be in the station at once, and as soon as they left, a heavy freight would clomp by, and then the heavy eight-wheeled switch engine would keep the hills and valleys reverberating with the rise and fall of its powerful exhaust sounds. There was plenty of smoke around, but railroading was the lifeblood of the community, and since railroad men lived to the ripest of old ages, no one could possibly associate smoke with shortness of life.

Those broad, dull, sunbaked expanses of cement super highways hadn't slashed through the woods and fields in 1940, and DC-3 plane travel out of the White River Junction Fairgrounds carried its own set of hazards. In a word, people took the trains, and the trains were there for them to take. The chief railroad in White River Junction was the Boston and Maine, but bear in mind that much of its equipment dated to prior to World War I. Imagine driving a 30 year old automobile or airplane at the same speeds permitted when factory-new. Yet the old Moguls, Pacifics and Consolidations huffed and puffed along over hill and dale, running on time more often than not despite blizzards, rainsqualls, frost heaves and other torments of the rugged northern climate.

The place to stand, of course, was close to where the line from Boston crossed the Connecticut River line. From there one could spot train movements in every direction, with the bonus of keeping tabs on locomotive operations all day and night, but certain times were more exciting than others, for instance between 2 and 3 P.M. when the east and west bound “Ambassadors” rolled through town. The Ambassador No. 332 bound for Boston would leave Montreal at 9:10 A.M., reaching WRJ about 2 P.M. With luck, a traveler could catch southbound train 74 for Bellows Falls and Brattleboro. Stopping only a minute or two to change engines, the Ambassador would accelerate across the river bridge, stampeding uphill through Lebanon towards Boston, which it would reach at 5:30 P.M. Often there would be a cleanlined B&M P-3 Pacific on the headend. The train was a reserved seat affair, and carried a buffet-lounge car. The two Ambassadors passed at Canaan, and if on time, the westbound would squeal into WRJ at 3 P.M.

Service north was limited to two passenger roundtrips daily. There was a morning mail, express and general accommodation train that whistled out of WRJ at the unholy hour of 6:25 A.M. It stopped at all local villages and at 7:47 stamped into Woodsville, another of those wonderful northern New England junction towns that came alive at certain hours of the day when the “big” trains roared up for an engine change of a tank full of water. This same 6:25 train wound up mid-morning at Berlin, New Hampshire, a town then so impossibly remote as to defy access by any other route but the train. But the important train at Woodsville was the “Alouette”, a Canadian Pacific high-stepper that came with a brightly-painted small Pacific and on the tail end a magnificent Canadian Pacific broiler-buffet car with a brass open observation platform.

Back at White River Junction, 300-class Boston & Maine 2-10-2 “Mudhens” lumbered up and down with anywhere from 20 to 100 cars, doing local and mainline work without caring greatly which. Modern 4100-class Mountain 4-8-2s came in to do the fast freights, with an occasional 4000-class Berkshire 2-8-4. 3600-class Pacifics worked most of the ordinary passenger trains. The Central Vermont used massive 2-10-4 railpounding monsters, supplemented by 2-8-0 Consolidation types, for freight. There was a variety of passenger power, ranging from ten-wheel 4-6-0 types through Pacifics and Mountains. Then as now, Canadian National and Grand Trunk power circulated freely. On the River line north, bridge restrictions necessitated the use of medium-heavy B&M Consolidations and Canadian Pacific ten-wheel types, often double and even-triple-headed south of Newport, VT.

On a typical weekday, there would be six passenger trains bound for New York (and two or three extra trains in summer), four for Boston, two for Woodsville, and three for Montreal. There was a story that Edward S. French, the B&M president who hailed from Springfield, VT, provided an extra excuse for good service, but people then were travelling by train. Remember too that most of the passenger trains carried milk, mail, newspapers, express, perishables and all manner of fast freight that rumbles night and day over public highways today. There were night sleeper and milk jobs that would head out of town with two big Pacifics and 14 or 15 cars regularly.

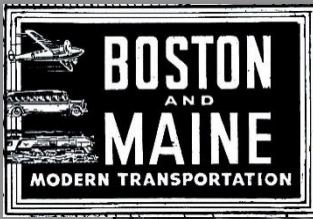
Train No. 77, which originated in New York at 8 A.M. daily except Sunday, was called “The Dartmouth”. It carried the usual mixture of New Haven and B&M coaches, a parlor-broiler-buffet car winters and a full length diner in summertime. If “The Dartmouth” was on time, it required seven hours for the trip, but this involved engine changes at New Haven and Springfield, plus stopping to offload mail at any settlement busier than a cowpasture. In fifty years, the B&M had made little improvement in road time, preferring plenty of slack in the schedule considering the hazards of floods, snow drifts, time lost at meets and so on.

The “Washingtonian” and “Montrealer” were Queens of the Fleet on the River line, and it was almost worth staying up all night to see them roar in and out of a station such as White River Junction. The train carried sleeping cars from Montreal to Washington and New York, and St. Albans to New York. There were deluxe coaches and also a lounge car. The train carried the reputation as quite a ballast scorcher, and the fact that it ran at ghostly hours of the night merely added to the magic. It left Montreal at 9 P.M. sharp, making stops at only the larger towns en route, arriving at WRJ at 1:38 A.M. Inevitably there would be some fast-paced switching, adding a car of express or mail, and a lightning change of motive power. Sometimes it would be a great greyhound such as the 6039, a modern Mountain-type 4-8-2 with Boxspok drivers, lightweight rods, and roller bearings throughout (you can see 6039 at Steamtown today, and someday she will run again). The B&M engine might be one of the giant P-4 Pacifics, such as the 3713, which you can see today at the Boston Museum of Science. Below Springfield, MA, the New Haven would tack on one of their speedsters, possibly the 1376, which often drew the Washingtonian about this time. At New Haven, the high-drivered Pacific would chug away smartly, to be replaced by one of the New Haven electrics for a quick run to pace the commuter rush into New York, arriving generally on time at Penn Station just before 8 A.M. Minutes later, the train would hum effortlessly out of Penn Station and through the Hudson tubes behind a Pennsylvania Railroad GG-1, and you would watch the scenery flash by at 90 miles per hour from the safety and comfort of a PRR diner. At noon, you would be in Washington.

Exciting? Practical? Effortless? Yes, the train trip was all of these things, but remember that we are talking here of an era 30 whole years ago. In the intervening years, more has happened technologically than in all history beforehand, but today, the railroad industry faces a fearful future. It can continue to run downhill, forced into oblivion by unequal regulation and the strangling of trade union and motor lobby groups. Or, it can revive under equal treatment, become profitable, rebuild its track and equipment, and restore service on the basis of contemporary demands for comfort, convenience, and availability.

With an amount of money comparable to what the Department of Defense spends in a matter of minutes, the New York to Washington mainline has been improved, and a fleet of Metroliners installed. The result is a reduction of time from four hours and 40 minutes to an even three hours, and this could be improved with better track. From White River Junction to Montreal in three hours, Boston in two and New York in less than five hours could be done. But it would have to be achieved through up-to-date thinking, and not with the oxcart rules and regulations hampering today’s vanishing American railroads. ☹

Edgar T. Mead (1923 - 2001) was a railroad advocate, Wall Street businessman and one of the premier railroad historians of the Connecticut River Valley. He authored 14 books, among them “The Woodstock Railroad”, “Over the Hills to Woodstock”, “The Claremont & Concord Railroad”, “The Upcountry Line: Boston, Concord & Montreal Railroad”, and “Busted and Still Running: The Famous Two-Foot Gauge Railroad of Bridgton, ME”.

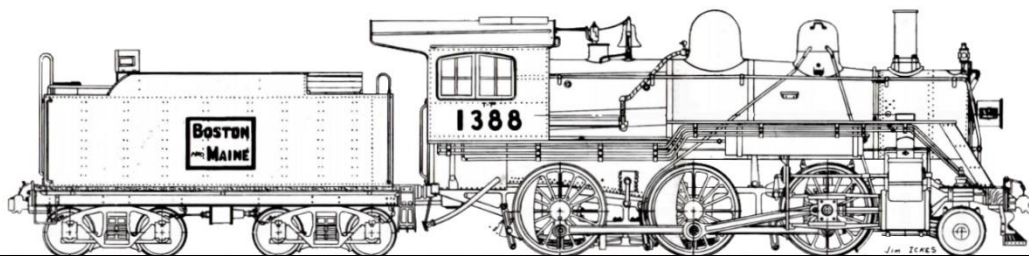


Vignettes from the Archives



The control room at Tower A, Boston Terminal, as seen on March 5, 1947. Digital image made from photograph in Harry A. Frye Collection, B&MRRHS Archives. Cat. No. 2001.21.13.

Source: B&MRR



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