This is the story of how the Lehigh Valley Railroad consolidated many hastily built shortlines in upstate New York to create its Auburn Division in the late 1800s. Basically a rural railroad launched by colorful entrepreneurs, the division stood apart from the LV’s mainline segments—somewhat in the role of a gangly country cousin.

Traveling no less than 415 route miles in the scenic Finger Lakes region, light engines chugged along spindly single tracks, over bridges cheaply built to span glacial creeks and valleys. Business was mostly local, except a thread of Pennsylvania coal traffic. A healthy volume of farm products, particularly milk, made their way to urban markets. Passenger service, in great demand before the automobile appeared, was crude.

Despite all this, the Auburn Division was a serviceable railroad until the late 1930s. The arc of its growth followed that of most American railroads.

One prosperous stretch of the Auburn Division remains. Before the others were abandoned, they contributed richly to the history and economy of their region, recorded here in 190 illustrations and a graceful untangling of complicated tales.
The Lehigh Valley’s Auburn Division

The Gangly
Country Cousin
Demolition train backs south across the Brooktondale trestle about 1936, an early part of the gradual abandonment of the Elmira & Cortland Branch of the Lehigh Valley RR’s Auburn Division.
THE LEHIGH VALLEY'S AUBURN DIVISION

The Gangly
Country Cousin

Herbert V. Trice
Edited by John Marcham

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Passengers and a band emerge from a train to attend the Dryden Agricultural Fair in September 1898. The fair attracts large crowds in the days before automobiles, when railroads carry most Americans on holidays, vacations, and weekend outings.

(Another photo is on page 108.)
The Gangly Country Cousin

The Lehigh Valley Railroad System’s first and defining business was the shipment of coal, and New York State eventually gained the LV’s attention as it sought to expand its coal market. While the Lehigh Valley was occupied in the development of its Pennsylvania-based system, New York had become the province of other lines, including the Erie, the Lackawanna, and the family of shortlines that became the New York Central Railroad, the first of which appeared as early as the 1830s. The Lehigh Valley did not appear in New York State until 1876, when it began to use the tracks of the New York & Lake Erie Railroad in an effort to gain access to the Great Lakes at Buffalo, New York. In 1882, the Lehigh built its first roadbed in New York, a ten-mile terminal strip which diverged from the Erie at Lancaster, New York, and ran from there into Buffalo.

In its belated entry into and subsequent spread across upstate New York, the Lehigh Valley Railroad System reached a point of maturity in 1915 when it listed some 650 miles of mainline track divided among three New York divisions: Buffalo, Seneca, and Auburn. The first two divisions made up the mainline between Sayre, Pennsylvania, and Buffalo, New York, with all appurtenant branches, while the Auburn Division gathered in all the remaining trackage, which for the most part lay north and east of the mainline. Of the total amount of Lehigh Valley mileage in New York State, the Auburn Division had 315 miles, or nearly half. In fact, from a mileage standpoint the Auburn Division was the most extensive on the entire Lehigh Valley System. Using the Lehigh Valley’s total of 1,440 miles for the entire three-state system, a figure that would stay relatively stable for some years, the Auburn Division made up better than one-fifth of the Lehigh Valley’s system length.

A monthly ticket from Ira in 1922, when trains transport many rural pupils to and from their nearest high school.
The Lehigh Valley accumulated most of its Auburn Division trackage by acquisition of existing properties, though a few miles were added by new construction.

The genesis of the Auburn Division was in the Lehigh Valley’s early financial involvement with the Southern Central Railroad, which reached from the New York State line, near Sayre, Pennsylvania, to North Fair Haven on Lake Ontario. Never fiscally robust, the Southern Central sought Lehigh Valley funds to extend and maintain its tenuous 115-mile length. The Lehigh Valley was happy to comply, since it opened up a new coal market in upstate New York. However, despite the Lehigh Valley’s financial aid, the Southern Central was unable to operate independently at a profit and, after a decade of providing assistance, the Lehigh Valley assumed operation of the line in 1886. At that time, the Lehigh Valley named its new acquisition the Southern Central Division and placed it under the guiding hand of the Pennsylvania & New York Canal and Railroad Company, a Lehigh Valley satellite.

Similarly, the Cayuga Lake Railroad (laid on the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake from Ithaca to Cayuga) came under Lehigh Valley control. The Lehigh Valley then made this second acquisition more valuable by adding several miles of new construction which connected the Cayuga Lake Railroad with the Southern Central Division at Auburn.

By 1890, the Southern Central Division was renamed the Auburn Division and, with the Cayuga Lake Railroad appended, had a length of 160 miles.

In 1896, the Lehigh Valley purchased the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad, which reached from Elmira to Camden, New York, a distance of 139.2 miles. This in turn was added to the new Auburn Division, which it crossed at Freeville, New York, increasing the Auburn Division’s mileage to 300.

Finally, in 1914, the Seneca Falls Branch was added, connecting the Auburn Division with the Lehigh Valley mainline near Geneva and bringing the total length of the Auburn Division to 315 miles. This mileage remained stable until 1932, when the Auburn Division was placed under the Lehigh Valley’s Buffalo Division as four branch line segments and lost its identity as a separate division.
During the period of its autonomy, the Auburn Division stood apart from the other Lehigh Valley Divisions somewhat in the role of a gangly country cousin. Not being a part of the New York–Buffalo trunk line, it was not directly in the flood of traffic that began to develop on Lehigh Valley rails between the Atlantic seaboard and the Great Lakes. As a result of its offset location, the Auburn Division retained most of the characteristics of the lines from which it originated. Unlike the mainline divisions which, except for their branches, were double...
tracked and upgraded in roadway and rolling stock, the Auburn Division remained single tracked, without automatic signals, conducting its business on light rail with light motive power. The Auburn Division was actually a rural railroad system, subsisting for the most part on local business, though a thread of through freight in the coal trade was forwarded over the division to connections for the Northeast and to the coal dock at North Fair Haven on Lake Ontario. The Auburn Division also generated a healthy traffic of farm products for delivery to urban markets, particularly fluid milk.

Eventually, railroads lost favor with the public as a vehicle for commerce and travel, as they were replaced by improved highways and the ready availability of gasoline and dependable private motor vehicles. Amid this industry-wide decline, the properties of the former Auburn Division continued to exist for a while, but the threads of their fabric began to fray, separating and exposing embarrassing gaps. Finally, the entire cloth was discarded. The following chapters will attempt a reweaving of the original cloth from the scraps that remain.
LV Engine 230 with a northbound train approaches Updike's Cut on the Southern Central RR near Dryden, N.Y., about 1884. The Lehigh Valley had invested heavily in the SC, and in 1887 would take over management and put the line under control of the Pennsylvania & New York Railroad. See page 18 for the 230’s lineage.
The Southern Central Railroad was born at a railroad convention held in Auburn, New York, on September 6, 1865. The convention was a culmination of nearly three decades of effort to build a railroad from Lake Ontario to the Southern Tier of New York State. During those decades, a variety of construction schemes were introduced, but no plan came to fruition until the realistic Southern Central proposal appeared.

The Southern Central plan was given additional support by the New York State General Bonding Act of 1869, in which the New York State Legislature adopted a scheme to permit a town to issue bonds to fund the construction of railroads providing service in the town’s jurisdiction. Under this legislation, each town could borrow sufficient money from bondholders to pay for the relevant segment of railroad, up to a maximum amount equal to 20 percent of the town’s total assessed valuation. In order to make use of this legislative scheme, each town was required to seek passage of an “enabling act” from the Legislature, under which its specific effort was approved.

Although the Southern Central plan was a new approach to the old dream of linking the Great Lakes to the railroads situated in southern New York State, it in part was derived from an even earlier railroad scheme.

In 1852, the Lake Ontario, Auburn & New York Railroad was chartered to build a seventy-four-mile rail line from the village of Fair Haven to Pugsley’s Station (via Auburn), where a connection was planned with the Cayuga & Susquehanna Railroad, later to become the Lackawanna RR. (Pugsley’s Station was located on the would-be C&S in New York’s Tompkins County, south of Ithaca. The name was subsequently changed to Caroline.) The project languished for lack of funds, although $450,000 had been spent on the line by the time the Civil War brought its slow progress to a complete halt. For that amount of money, much of the grading between Fair Haven and Auburn had been completed.
At the close of the Civil War, George I. Post of Sterling, New York, set out to revive an interest in the Lake Ontario, Auburn & New York Railroad. The revival took the unexpected turn of abandoning the original southerly projection of the line from Auburn to Pugsley's Station, adopting in its stead a line to the east from Auburn through Moravia, Groton, and Dryden to Owego. In response to public interest, a meeting was held at Owego on August 9, 1865, at which Mr. Post was appointed a committee of one to call a railroad convention at Auburn. Accordingly, a meeting was convened in Auburn on September 6, 1865, where reports were received from communities along the proposed rail line between Fair Haven and Owego.

The Auburn Branch of the division is highlighted with the darkest line. The remainder of the division and other rail lines are shown as on the master map on page 10.
At this meeting, John N. Knapp of Auburn moved that a company be organized to build a railroad along the proposed route and a committee was appointed to consider this motion, which it later reported on favorably. Upon acceptance of the committee report, those present elected a board of directors composed of influential citizens residing in communities along the route. The first officers of this board, elected at a subsequent meeting of the directors, were Cyrus C. Dennis, president; John J. Taylor, vice-president; George I. Post, secretary; and William H. Seward, Jr. (son of President Lincoln’s secretary of state, William H. Seward of “Alaskan folly” fame), treasurer. Mr. Dennis, also of Auburn, provided the until then nameless company with the title of “Southern Central Railroad.”

At the September 6 meeting in Auburn, another committee was appointed to prepare a prospectus to interest potential investors. This committee promptly produced a lucid document that presented the Southern Central plan for construction. The prospectus showed the topography and geography that would be encountered along the proposed route of the new venture, the proposed connections with other transportation groups and the economic expectations, which were discussed in a practical tone devoid of any exaggeration (see map, page 9).

The prospectus was circulated to the public during October, 1865. In that same month, the directors of the Southern Central adopted the following resolution: “Resolved, That the several directors of the Company be, and are hereby authorized, to proceed in the procuring of subscription, of stock and contracts for right-of-way. And, that a competent Engineer be employed at once, to run a preliminary line with a view to obtaining contracts aforesaid; but no further sum of money than as such may be necessary for these purposes shall be expended, until two millions of stock shall have been actually subscribed for the construction of this road.”

Thus authorized, the directors retained Fred E. Knight of Cortland as civil engineer to provide the desired preliminary survey. On November 17, 1865, formal articles of association for the Southern Central were filed with the State of New York. Mr. Knight completed
his report in time for presentation at a meeting of the directors on January 4, 1866, and, on the same day, the stock subscription books of the Southern Central Railroad were opened to the public.

Stock subscriptions proved to be lethargic during the year 1866 in spite of an act passed by the New York State Legislature on April 7 authorizing the towns along the route of the Southern Central to subscribe in support of the venture, a popular means of providing construction capital at the time.

The investment tempo picked up during 1867, after the New York State Legislature passed a law on May 15 making town bonds issued in aid of the Southern Central exempt from taxation for ten years, providing that the Southern Central was built within three years. The Southern Central’s 1867 annual report noted a stock subscription of $1,968,450, which was approximately the amount stipulated by the directors as necessary for the start of construction.

In the spring of 1866, the death of Cyrus Dennis left the presidency of the Southern Central vacant and J. Lewis Grant was elected to the post on June 19. Mr. Grant was the possessor of a practical railroad background and proved to be an able and active executive. After preliminary work, the actual surveying for the right of way began in June 1866, and the 1867 annual report submitted over Mr. Grant’s signature stated that 99.5 miles of road had been surveyed and further stated, “The Southern Central have acquired by purchase the rights and franchises of the Lake Ontario, Auburn & New York Railroad in the county of Cayuga, comprising right-of-way and grading on some 28-30 miles of their line which will form a part of the Southern Central road north of Auburn.” South of Auburn, a similar wholesale acquisition of right of way was made by obtaining the property of the Auburn-Moravia Plank Road.

With the right of way between Owego and Fair Haven established by the end of 1867, the year 1868 was given over to grading activity. Newspapers reported that labor gangs were deployed from Weedsport south to Owego and grading was carried on simultaneously over the entire section. Then, as now, labor was restive and wage disputes and work stoppages were noted at Weedsport and Moravia. Right of way preparation nevertheless progressed and was substantially completed by the end of 1868.

Accordingly, in early 1869 purchases of rails, locomotives, and freight and passenger cars were made by the Southern Central. Local newspapers reported that, in January, Vibbard, Foote & Company of New York City were favored with an order for 7,000 tons of iron rails; and, in April, two locomotives, named the “Union” and the “Advance,” together with twenty-five flat cars built by the Ohio Car Company of Jeffersonville, Indiana were delivered to the railroad at Owego. The flat cars arrived at Owego loaded on Erie Railway cars,
due to the differing track gauges of the two roads. Although the same situation must have applied to the locomotives, no documentation is available as to the mode of their delivery.

With materials and equipment assembled at Owego, track laying began northward from that village during the late spring of 1869. The first rail was laid with appropriate ceremony to mark the event, using a silver spike. Construction continued at a steady pace through the summer and fall, so that by the middle of December the track was completed to Moravia. This occasion was celebrated by 1,500 people at an open-air feast.

To a lesser extent, Auburn was also used as a railhead during 1869. April news items noted the arrival of a new car from the Ohio Car Company, as well as delivery of at least two new flatcars from the Auburn foundry of John Curtis. Late in June, a new locomotive, named the “C. C. Dennis,” was delivered in Auburn and stored in the New York Central Railroad’s enginehouse. During the fall, a connection was made with the New York Central Railroad just west of Clark Street in Auburn. A Southern Central enginehouse was constructed near this connection and some interchange tracks were also put in. Grading of certain unfinished areas between Auburn and Moravia, near the northern end of the section (notably the Peterson Cut, located a little north of latter-day LV Milepost 351) was executed from the Auburn base in advance of the rail-laying program coming north from Moravia.

Concurrent with the right of way construction, a Southern Central telegraph system linking Owego with Auburn was built and put into operation during 1869.

As the track approached Auburn from the south, the final shipment of rails was received in late January 1870. A telegram published in the Auburn Daily Advertiser read, “New York, Jan. 21, 1870, 12:20 P.M., William H. Seward, Jr.; Ship ‘Arraldo’ arrived with balance of rails. Will be delivered immediately. Vibbard, Foote & Company.” Those rails served to complete the railroad between Owego and Auburn on March 5, 1870. Because there were no American rail manufacturers at the time, the Southern Central rails were of foreign manufacture and were probably made in Great Britain.
Accommodation trains were run daily between Owego and the railhead as the track advanced north and a freight service of sorts was provided. The first official through freight train, however, was reported on March 8, 1870, and passenger service began with a public timetable dated April 4, 1870. Lacking depot facilities in Auburn, the Southern Central arranged for their trains to call at the New York Central (NYC) depot. The NYC permitted the Southern Central passenger trains to operate over NYC tracks from Clark Street to reach the NYC depot, which was located on State Street. In Owego, connection was made with the Erie Railway for the interchange of passengers and freight.

On April 8, 1870, the first carload of anthracite coal to reach Auburn on the Southern Central was delivered to the Cayuga County Orphan Asylum in Auburn. Thus the coal traffic vital to the Southern Central’s well-being began.

With the road completed between Owego and Auburn and a measure of traffic developing, the Southern Central directors continued with the extension of the line from Owego south to the Pennsylvania–New York border near Waverly, New York, and from Auburn north to Lake Ontario.

Although the original Southern Central plan had been to build a 4-foot, 8 1/2-inch gauge railroad from Fair Haven to Owego and connect there with the 6-foot gauge Erie, the problems inherent in interchanging traffic with a railroad of a different gauge became apparent early on. Also, a direct connection with a Pennsylvania anthracite carrier had seemed nebulous when the Southern Central prospectus was issued, but in 1870 the presence of the Pennsylvania & New York Railroad at Athens, Pennsylvania, provided the Southern Central with a tangible relationship with a standard gauge railroad. Actually, groundwork for this portion of the scheme had been laid in the previously mentioned enabling Act of April 7, 1866, which also authorized extension of the Southern Central Railroad to the Pennsylvania state line.

Further, the Southern Central 1867 annual report indicated intent to press beyond the original southern limit of the road, stating, “From Owego to a point near Waverly, some 15 miles distant, it is arranged, by adding a third rail, to use the Erie Railway line. From the place of leaving the Erie road, the distance of 1 1/2 miles of road will be built to connect with the roads now being built to the coal fields of Pennsylvania and the seaboard…” Apparently, the Southern Central directors subsequently deemed the prospect of third-rail operation on the Erie undesirable, for a news item of July 22, 1869, stated that a decision had been made to build the Southern Central directly to the Pennsylvania state line. This decision placed the Southern Central on the path that led to eventual Lehigh Valley control.
The Lehigh Valley Takes an Interest

Construction funds available to the Southern Central at the time of its planned expansion to the Pennsylvania state line were only sufficient for (and intended for) building from Owego to Fair Haven, according to the Auburn Daily Bulletin, which discussed the circumstances at length. Additional trackage from Owego to the Pennsylvania state line would involve an estimated expenditure of an additional $500,000. Southern Central management borrowed this amount from Lehigh Valley interests. To secure the loan, the Lehigh Valley was tendered $500,000 worth of Southern Central stock as collateral, granted five years of trackage rights over the Southern Central, and permitted to have a director seated on the Southern Central’s board.

With the funds made available by the loan from the Lehigh Valley, the Southern Central began construction between Owego and the Pennsylvania state line during the latter part of 1870. By January 3, 1871, the new roadbed, although not in first class condition, was able to accommodate the first through coal train from Athens, Pennsylvania, to Auburn, New York, under the personal direction of Thomas Desmond of the Pennsylvania & New York Railroad and J. Lewis Grant, who was now the superintendent of the Southern Central Railroad. The train was drawn by Lehigh Valley Locomotive 142, the “Ulster,” and subsequent news items frequently mentioned the presence of Lehigh Valley engines on Southern Central rails, as the Lehigh Valley apparently made use of the trackage rights granted to it in connection with the loan.

Notable was the appearance of Lehigh Valley No. 145, the “Bradford,” which delivered a train of 77 loaded cars to Auburn on June 24, 1871, followed by Lehigh Valley No. 77, the “Commodore Stockton,” which delivered 105 loaded cars on July 13, 1871. This last lengthy train excited public interest as it made its way to Auburn, attracting crowds in the villages along the Southern Central route, and when the “Commodore Stockton” caused the failure of the Southern Central turntable at Auburn, it prompted the local press to observe that the Southern Central engines weighed only twenty-eight tons, compared with the Lehigh Valley No. 77’s fifty-eight-ton bulk.

At the same time that the southern end of the Southern Central was being extended toward Pennsylvania, construction continued north of Auburn toward Fair Haven.

At Weedsport a dock was built to deliver coal to the boats of the Erie Canal. An engine house and turntable were also erected there. On June 24, 1871, a shipment of coal was delivered to this dock and a news item of June 28, 1871, stated that five canal boats were loaded in seventy-two minutes.

During the summer and fall of 1871, construction was continued onwards to Fair Haven and on December 1, 1871, a special train of seven cars was run to Fair Haven for those persons interested in watching George I. Post drive a gold spike to symbolize the completion of the Southern Central Railroad. The Auburn Daily Bulletin’s description of the events of the day were
enlivened by an account of an attempt to derail the special train north of Cato by one George Van Wie, at the spot where the Southern Central right of way crossed his land. Mr. Van Wie was dissatisfied with the compensation he received from the railroad for its right to cross his property and decided to take justice into his own hands. With the aid of his son, he removed a rail, which fortunately was noticed by the engineer running the special in time to permit a safe stop. Mr. Van Wie and his son were taken into custody, the damage was repaired and the train continued to Fair Haven after only a short delay.

Despite the symbolic completion of the road on December 1, 1871, nearly seven months elapsed before the Southern Central was able to operate coal trains to Lake Ontario. When the first through coal train from the Lehigh Valley at Athens was forwarded to Fair Haven (by way of Auburn) on May 16, 1872, the intent of the Southern Central founders to build a railroad from the Pennsylvania coal fields to the Great Lakes became a reality.

The Southern Central Railroad was aptly named. When it left its Pennsylvania terminus near Athens, it crossed the southern tier of New York State to Owego, where it turned north to traverse the central counties of the state to Fair Haven. At that point, the road gained access to Lake Ontario shipping via dock facilities on Little Sodus Bay, north of the village. The
115-mile route was approved in a report by the New York State Railroad Commissioners that stated, “...the grades and alignment of the Southern Central Railroad are the most favorable of any line reaching across the state in a northerly and southerly direction, and the line follows the valleys of streams and over low divides— or watersheds— the most favorable for a railroad that probably exists in that portion of the state.”

Actually, the Southern Central ended at the Pennsylvania state line at a point approximately two miles east of Waverly, New York, and gained connection to the Pennsylvania & New York Railroad by leasing 2.3 miles of that company’s track between the state line and a junction point 2 miles north of Athens. This junction point subsequently became the site of Sayre, but, until a station was established there, the Southern Central passenger trains operated directly to Athens.

A reliable passenger service was instituted between Auburn and the Southern Tier of New York State as the physical plant of the Southern Central permitted its operation, beginning, as previously stated, on April 4, 1870. In Auburn, the use of the New York Central’s passenger station soon proved unsatisfactory. Late in 1871, property at 36 Washington Street was purchased and used to construct a depot building that eventually housed all of the Auburn passenger and freight-related offices, as well as the general and train-dispatching offices. The location of this Southern Central depot was immediately adjacent to the New York Central tracks on Washington Street and this led to the construction of a passenger platform at which NYC trains would stop, so that passenger interchange between the two roads was greatly facilitated.
With the extension of both ends of the road to their ultimate termini in 1872, the Southern Central was providing passenger service from Athens to Fair Haven. The demands of local excursionists added to the passenger volume, particularly during the summer and fall of 1876, when a round-trip fare from Auburn to the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia was offered for $8.25.

By 1883, the Southern Central was advertising four passenger trains daily between Oswego and Philadelphia, working in conjunction with the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg Railroad and the Lehigh Valley Railroad. During 1886, the last year of independent Southern Central operation, a total passenger volume of 202,838 persons was reported. Of this number, 1,512 were through passengers, the balance being local travelers using only the Southern Central trackage.

Freight volume on the Southern Central developed quite in keeping with the expectations of the original investment prospectus, with coal and lumber comprising the largest single percentages of the tonnage totals. The 1886 figures for freight traffic record that 495,000 tons were carried, with coal making up 353,000 tons or roughly 71 percent of the total volume. Approximately 31,000 tons of lumber were carried in the same year or 6.4 percent of the total freight tonnage. The remainder of the freight tonnage was mainly agricultural and manufactured products. A sampling of Southern Central reports from 1872 to 1886 reveals that, although the tonnage figures varied, the percentages for the foregoing commodities remained reasonably constant.

The United States Express Company operated over the Southern Central in 1886, paying the railroad company $230 per week for 30 tons carried and 30 cents per 100 pounds of any excess. For transportation of mail between 1872 and 1886, the United States Government paid $74.39 per mile per year, according to the 1886 report of the New York State Board of Railroad Commissioners.

To conduct the business of the company for 1886, the report added, the Southern Central employed 628 persons, including officers. A sampling of the monthly wages paid the various crafts for the year 1885 is: passenger engineers, $95; freight engineers, $80; fireman, $45; passenger conductors, $75; freight conductors, $70; brakemen, $45; telegraph operators, $32.50; and sectionmen, $26.

Construction of facilities to handle the freight traffic was accomplished along with the railroad’s right-of-way construction, so that, as the Southern Central became complete enough to move traffic over the rails, it had the freight houses, depots, and dockage facilities to handle it. Interchange points with other railroads developed at Owego, Freeville, Auburn, Weedsport, and Sterling.
However, the dock facilities on Little Sodus Bay were of prime importance to the Southern Central since, in addition to substantial export coal traffic, they also provided a means to receive import traffic of lumber, ore and grain. In 1872 the Southern Central provided the services of a steam tug, the A. J. Hoole, to facilitate the port movements of the sailing vessels that dominated Great Lakes shipping at the time. In the spring of 1874, a new tug purchased by the railroad, the E. P. Ross, was on hand to take care of the towing needs of the port and continued to provide this service throughout the Southern Central’s tenure.

Because traffic through the port facilities at Fair Haven was entirely dependent on the navigation season on the Great Lakes, activity declined during the winter months, but the inland markets served by the railroad helped to stabilize the coal traffic during this slow season, as did the stockpiling of coal in various storage yards in North Fair Haven and along the Southern Central in anticipation of the summer rush at Fair Haven.

The Southern Central was built with an eye towards economy, which was not unusual for railroad construction at that time. Many timber or otherwise less permanent structures were used in lieu of more expensive and long-lasting construction. While this provided a railroad at the lowest possible cost, the road from the start was saddled with maintenance costs and plagued by many track problems. Trestling, or timber piling, was often substituted for solid culverts and fills and, in the spring of the year, this type of construction permitted the rails to lose alignment and frequent derailments resulted.

The spring of 1873 proved to be quite troublesome to the still struggling Southern Central when the heavy snows of a harsh winter were melted suddenly by warm spring rains. From Smithboro (in the Southern Tier) north to Weedsport, slides and washouts covered or removed the Southern Central’s rails and, for the first two weeks of April, regular service was impossible to pursue. The disorder was hardly cleared away and traffic resumed, when, on April 14, 1873, a sixty-foot long bridge at Dryden Lake sank under the weight of a northbound coal train. The bridge and thirty loaded coal cars sank out of sight into the quagmire and for nearly a week the Southern Central lay in two pieces, while men groped in the morass in an effort to restore the bridge and return the railroad to normalcy. During this incident, passenger service was maintained by transferring the passengers around the break, but freight was brought to a standstill.

Trouble often seemed to come to the Southern Central in bunches. On December 13, 1875, a fire broke out at 5 a.m. in the wooden enginehouse at Fair Haven. By the time the flames subsided, they had consumed the enginehouse with two engines inside, together with an ice-house and two water tanks that adjoined the enginehouse. The engines exposed to the fire...
were the “Weedsport” and the “C. C. Dennis.” (A news item dated March 27, 1876, states the “C. C. Dennis” returned to service after rebuilding at Paterson, New Jersey, but no subsequent mention is made regarding the “Weedsport.”) Almost exactly a month later, on January 11, 1876, the Southern Central tug E. P. Ross sank while tied up to her dock as a result of being coated with ice. A terrific gale accompanied by freezing temperatures drove water over the vessel, eventually forming an ice load which caused her to “turn turtle” and sink in twelve feet of water. However, the Southern Central survived these blows. On land and on water, the damage was repaired and spring found the Fair Haven dock doing business as usual.

About a year later, the “C. C. Dennis” again appeared in the news when, on January 6, 1877, the engine was involved in a rear end collision with a coal train that had stopped on a bridge over Owego Creek. As a result of the collision, the “Dennis” and the caboose of the coal train were deposited in the creek bed, with the caboose on top. The engine and train crews jumped before the crash so that no personnel were injured and damage to the bridge was slight. While Southern Central officialdom pondered how to remove the locomotive from the creek bed, other problems arose. On January 13, 1877, the “Tompkins” threw a driving wheel tire and had to be helped home and, at the same time, snow began to pile up to the extent that the north end of the Southern Central was closed.

On January 17, four engines that had been coupled together for snow train service in an effort to open up the snowbound railroad were derailed. Although the lead engine, the “Auburn,” was overturned with its tender piled on top of it and the other engines derailed, both the personnel and the machinery escaped serious damage. By the end of the month, the uproar had subsided enough so that attention was refocused on the “Dennis,” which was finally lifted from the water on February 6, 1877.

Probably the most serious and tragic Southern Central accident occurred on February 14, 1884, at the Seneca River bridge north of Weedsport. A southbound accommodation train (No. 19) due at Weedsport at 3:40 p.m., consisting of Engine 65 (the “Owasco”), two boxcars, a caboose and a passenger car—in that order—had started to cross the bridge when the first span collapsed, dropping the engine and the boxcars into the river. The engineer, the fireman, and a brakeman on the engine were drowned, but seven passengers and two other crew mem-

Above: Heavy snows challenge the Auburn Branch in its early years. Encrusted engines sit on the ash pit track at Auburn in the early 1900s.

Below: Southern Central No. 65, “Owasco,” in the early 1900s, involved in an accident described on this page.
bers riding in the passenger car, which remained on the rails, escaped injury. When the incident occurred, the river was at a high level and covered with ice, so that immediate salvage efforts were impeded. The bodies of the men on the engine were eventually recovered one at a time, only after patient dragging and diving efforts extending over one and a half months.

On April 7, 1884, the state railroad commissioners forthrightly found the Southern Central Railroad (and its chief engineer) at fault in the bridge collapse. The commissioners’ report declared the Southern Central Railroad Company to be “responsible only for having neglected to examine the bridge as often and as thoroughly as a structure of this kind demands.” No finding was made regarding financial liability for the crew members killed in the accident. Three days later, a coroner’s jury determined that the deaths of the engineer and fireman were due to suffocation and that the death of the head-end brakeman was due to drowning.

Top: Owasco station on the Auburn Branch, between Auburn and Freeville, looking south toward Moravia about 1924.

Bottom, left: Glenwood Beach in the 1920s, a private stop on Owasco Lake for the Letchworth family, for whom a state park is named.

Bottom, right: Locke station, 1900–1910, with a cold storage building in the distance. I. J. Main, agent for 32 years, is at left.
The Lehigh Valley Takes Over

On January 1, 1887, the Lehigh Valley assumed management of the Southern Central Railroad (and its leased lines) by placing the Pennsylvania & New York Railroad, a Lehigh Valley subsidiary, in control of Southern Central operations. By this time, the Southern Central had accumulated a deficit of $900,000, composed mainly of unpaid interest on its financial obligations. In all likelihood, this factor precipitated the change in management. To understand how the deficit accumulated and how the Lehigh Valley management crept into the picture, it is best to return to 1872, when the Southern Central first began a through operation from the Pennsylvania state line to Fair Haven.

As noted earlier, the original funding of the Southern Central provided only for construction from Owego to Fair Haven. To continue the line to its Pennsylvania connection, the Southern Central borrowed $500,000 from the Lehigh Valley and, in return, granted the Lehigh Valley trackage rights for five years, accepted a Lehigh Valley director on the Southern Central board, and deposited $500,000 of Southern Central stock with the Lehigh Valley as collateral.

Once the road was completed from the Pennsylvania state line to Fair Haven, the Southern Central needed additional funds to develop its terminal facilities and to purchase needed rolling stock and equipment. The necessary funds were made available by acceptance of a $600,000 mortgage on the Southern Central property in April 1872, $400,000 of which was guaranteed by Lehigh Valley interests. At the annual Southern Central directors meeting on September 4, 1872, Robert A. Packer, Asa Packer’s son, and Charles F. Welles, a Pennsylvania railroad investor, were elected to represent the Lehigh Valley interests, thus doubling the number of Lehigh Valley directors on the Southern Central Board. (Welles subsequently died, reportedly of “apoplexy” or heart disease, at the St. James Hotel in Auburn, while attending a Southern Central Board Executive Committee meeting in 1872.)

The fiscal performance of the Southern Central never permitted the discharge of these financial obligations and, over the years, the Lehigh Valley influence on Southern Central operations grew ever stronger, culminating in assumption of the operation of the road by the Pennsylvania & New York Railroad, a subsidiary of the Lehigh Valley, on January 1, 1887.
The Pennsylvania & New York management was in effect until December 1, 1888, when operation of the Southern Central was taken over by the Lehigh Valley itself. Then, except for an 18-month interval between February 11, 1892, and July 31, 1893, when it experienced Reading management under the Reading-Lehigh merger of that year, the Southern Central remained a separate entity, but under Lehigh Valley control and management until 1895.

The first change in management was announced to the public on January 3, 1887, by the Auburn News & Bulletin in a “Post Script” story: “Control Passes. The Southern Central now under its new managers. A circular wired from Sayre this morning announced the assumption of control of the Southern Central and the Ithaca, Auburn & Western roads as a branch of the Pennsylvania & New York Railroad.” Before this change in control, the Southern Central had leased the trackage of the Ithaca, Auburn & Western Railroad, which is why the IA&W is referred to in the newspaper report. (A discussion of the role of the IA&W follows in chapter 2.)

This notice aside, no radical change was apparent: Southern Central officials were retained in their usual roles and the operating personnel were not affected.

However, beginning in late January 1887, a gradual effacement of the Southern Central name is noticeable in the public timetables and other advertisements, where the road became successively the Southern Central Division of the Pennsylvania & New York Railroad and then the Southern Central Division of the Lehigh Valley. At about the same time, the Southern Central legend apparently began to disappear from the motive power and rolling stock: some former Southern Central engines appear in the 1887 Lehigh Valley locomotive roster with Lehigh Valley numbers and Sayre construction dates, which were probably rebuilding dates. After 1888, the tabulation of Southern Central locomotives and rolling equipment disappears from the state railroad commissioners reports, evidently being subsumed in the overall Lehigh Valley report.
As early as 1890, the title of Auburn Division replaced the title of Southern Central Division as applied to the lines running out of Auburn, including the Auburn & Ithaca line, discussed later. In 1892, the new Auburn Division briefly found itself a part of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad when that company leased the Lehigh Valley railroad properties for 999 years. This lease was the result of a proposal made to the Lehigh Valley by Archibald A. McLeod. McLeod, then president of the Philadelphia & Reading, sought to form a combination of certain anthracite coal carriers in an attempt to form a monopoly controlled by the Philadelphia & Reading. Because McLeod's proposal offered the Lehigh Valley profits rewards greater than the Lehigh Valley roads were earning at the time, it was initially welcomed. As far as the Auburn Division was concerned, little
change occurred other than the appearance of the Philadelphia & Reading imprint on its timetables and other paperwork. The Lehigh Valley personnel did not change and apparently no change was made to permanent markings on equipment or buildings.

The Reading lease was short-lived. On August 8, 1893, the Lehigh Valley terminated it due to the failure of the Philadelphia & Reading to pay money due for coal delivered by the Lehigh Valley. While a flood of recriminations washed between the two companies, the lease was effectively ended, although it took some years for the Lehigh Valley to recover the sums legally due to it. An announcement on August 10, 1893, stated that the Auburn Division was again under the control of the Lehigh Valley.

Table 18

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<th>Auburn Division</th>
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| Sterling | 8 12 | 6 12
| Cato | 11 8 | 7 10
| Auburn | 11 8 | 7 10
| Lehigh Fair Haven & Fair Haven | 12 23 | 9 05
| Sterling | 8 12 | 6 12
| Cato | 11 8 | 7 10
| Auburn | 11 8 | 7 10

Left: View north toward the new Auburn station about 1905, with the coach track at right and, in the background, a passenger train southbound nearing the New York Central crossing.

Below: Condensed timetable of the Auburn Division dated Sept. 28, 1924, showing a schedule of the Auburn Branch of the LV.
Despite the gradual disappearance of its name, the formal demise of the Southern Central Railroad did not occur until August 1895. At that time, the Southern Central was still deeply in debt to the Lehigh Valley for the sums borrowed in connection with its original construction. The Lehigh Valley, in its role of major creditor, pushed for a foreclosure on the original debt to recover its investment. Under the foreclosure plan developed, the Southern Central’s name and ownership would change and new bonds would be sold to pay off its debt. The Lehigh Valley would receive 60 percent of the proceeds of the bonds and 60 percent of the stock of the renamed railroad. On August 23, 1895, the property and franchises of the Southern Central Railroad were officially acquired by a newly formed company, the Lehigh & New York RR.
York Railroad, by a foreclosure action. The Lehigh & New York was, in turn, leased to the Lehigh Valley Railroad on the following day for a term of 999 years. This lengthy lease was terminated on December 31, 1949, when the Lehigh & New York was merged into the Lehigh Valley by an order of the Interstate Commerce Commission.

The transition from the Southern Central to the Lehigh & New York involved no physical change; the Lehigh Valley had already in practice absorbed the Southern Central. However, beginning in 1895 and for many years thereafter, the Lehigh Valley listed the Lehigh & New York, reaching 115 miles from Sayre to North Fair Haven, as the Lehigh & New York Branch of the Auburn Division, although gradually the title “Auburn Branch” (of the Auburn Division) came into use.

Approaching King Ferry on the Auburn & Ithaca Branch about 1915. The view is north, with Cayuga Lake on the left.
Note the water crane between the tracks.
An Auburn & Ithaca Branch Emerges

Almost immediately, the Auburn Division had two branches: the previously discussed Southern Central (which after 1895 became the Lehigh & New York Branch, the Auburn Branch, and was sometimes referred to as the division’s mainline); and the Auburn & Ithaca.

In fact, a very small segment of the Auburn & Ithaca Branch of the Auburn Division came into the Lehigh Valley fold along with and as part of the Southern Central Railroad, which had previously leased the Ithaca, Auburn and Western Railroad. The majority of the trackage of the Auburn & Ithaca Branch was acquired by the Lehigh Valley at the time it absorbed the Geneva & Van Ettenville Railroad in 1890. The Geneva & Van Ettenville was, at the time, in control of the Cayuga Southern Railroad, formerly the colorful and scenic Cayuga Lake Railroad, which ran from Ithaca to Cayuga, along the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake.

The Cayuga Lake Railroad

The Cayuga Lake Railroad was incorporated as of July 1, 1867, with Henry Wells as president. Wells, better known as a principal in the famed Wells-Fargo Express Company, was a leader among the group of local citizens living in the communities on Cayuga Lake who were interested in forming the railroad. The group seemed centered in Aurora, New York, home of Wells College and the dwelling place of both Wells and the enterprising Morgan family. (It is rumored that Colonel Edwin D. Morgan was the real grain of sand who produced the pearl of the railroad, because he frequently traveled to New York City to tend to his business interests and wanted a faster, less
strenuous journey.) Their intent was to construct and operate a railroad along the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake, a distance of thirty-eight miles.

Activity lagged on the venture until September 5, 1871, when a formal groundbreaking was staged at the home of Henry Morgan in Aurora. By this time, a construction contract reportedly had been negotiated with Colton, Smith & Mills of Palmer, Massachusetts, which firm began work at Union Springs on September 26, 1871. By late 1872, $713,974 had been spent on the Cayuga Lake Railroad, a sum that included the purchase of a 4-4-0 locomotive from Hinkley Locomotive Works and twelve miles of track for it to run on between Cayuga
and Aurora, where trains began regular service on November 24, 1872. Construction had been carried forward on the line between Aurora and Ithaca at the same time; track laying was completed in this direction on January 30, 1873, and the first train between the two communities was run on January 31, 1873.

On Tuesday, February 25, 1873, an excursion was conducted over the new Cayuga Lake Railroad for a group of citizens prominent in the railroad, mining, industrial, and banking callings, gathered from as far away as Philadelphia, who were transported to Ithaca on the Ithaca & Athens Railroad. The excursionists had a busy day, breakfasting and visiting the Cornell University campus which had opened five years earlier, before boarding the waiting Cayuga Lake Railroad engine and coaches. The excursion stopped first at Ludlowville for speeches and band music and then at Aurora (at a point opposite the new Wells College campus) where food, floral tributes, and more oratory were heaped on the entourage at the Aurora House. Late in the day another stop was made at Union Springs for a final speech and a toast.

After nightfall, delivery of the new Cayuga Lake Railroad coaches and their occupants was made to the New York Central at Cayuga, where they were attached to a westbound train on the New York Central’s Auburn Road for transportation to Rochester, New York. After a night’s rest in Rochester, the group was scheduled to visit Niagara Falls and to return to Rochester on Wednesday. On Thursday, a 5 a.m. departure from Rochester was planned to return the visitors to Philadelphia by 10 p.m. A local newspaper gushed, “The party comprised as splendid looking a set of solid men as ever it has been the good fortune of citizens of Cayuga county to entertain in their midst. Robust in physique, large headed, with faces full of energy, they were representative men and men of wealth. Nearly all were millionaires.”

The Cayuga Lake Railroad so ceremoniously ushered into public service had little to offer riders and shippers other than its connection between the small roads at Ithaca and a branch of the New York Central at Cayuga. The road was aptly named, since it was laid along the shore of the lake, where fencing was held to a minimum by the lake on one side and steep banks on the other. Grades were gentle, with the track rising to its highest point only twenty-nine feet above the mean lake level.

For the conduct of its business, the Cayuga Lake Railroad listed two Hinkley-built 4-4-0s and a handful of cars. Engine and car facilities were established at Ithaca near the foot of Cascadilla Street, where the Cayuga Lake Railroad connected with the Ithaca & Athens, and in Cayuga near the connection with the New York Central.

Though the lakeshore track location provided advantages in fencing and grading, it also introduced the disadvantages of washouts and the constant curvature of the track, which followed the undulating lakeshore. The total curvature was estimated to be one-third the
length of the line. Washouts occurred both on the land side, where water runoff caused landslides, and from the lakeside, due to high water or wave action from a westerly storm. In fact, the railroad was washed out by a spring freshet shortly after it began operation in 1873 and, though service between Aurora and Cayuga was restored by May 1, through service did not resume on the entire line until August 7.

Once again intact, the Cayuga Lake Railroad began to receive shipments of Lehigh Valley coal from the Ithaca & Athens at Ithaca for delivery to the New York Central at Cayuga, where it was forwarded to Rochester and points west. Despite the Lehigh Valley traffic, the railroad finished the year with a loss and it was immediately apparent that the road was in financial distress.

In response to this state of affairs, the Cayuga Lake Railroad was sold on October 1, 1874, to satisfy the claims of its second mortgage bondholders, in the process changing its name to the Cayuga Railroad and rearranging its directorate considerably. Though the presidency of the new company remained in local hands (along with one-half of the directorate), the remaining directors furnished addresses in Philadelphia or New York City, as did the vice-president and the secretary-treasurer. Apparently, financial control of the new enterprise was vested with distant bankers.

While the stated intent of the new company was to put the road in full working order with abundant rolling stock and other facilities, three years later, on July 26, 1877, it was again necessary to sell the Cayuga Railroad to satisfy the first mortgage bondholders. Again, the name changed, this time to Cayuga Southern Railroad, but there was little change in the railroad’s officers and directors.

Cayuga Southern Railroad coal traffic reached 142,000 tons during 1877, with a July news source noting the presence of six coal trains per day on the road, averaging a capacity of 50 tons each. Since the Cayuga Southern Railroad presumably owned only two locomotives and no coal jimmies, the extra motive power and coal cars were probably loaned by one of the Lehigh Valley roads. (During this increase in traffic, the railroad suffered its first reported fatality when Coral Finch, a brakeman on one of the trains, was thrown from the coal cars at Ithaca.)
On December 10, 1878, Henry Wells, the former president of the railroad, died in Glasgow while traveling in Scotland. Despite the rudimentary state of international communication and travel at this time the news of his death appeared in Auburn newspapers by December 12, with the statement that his body would be returned to Aurora for burial. At this time, early winter storms had caused washouts on the Cayuga Southern, completely interrupting service on its entire length. A disparaging news item had labeled the railroad a “wheel-barrow road” and suggested it might never be rebuilt. Another more sympathetic news item commented on the dullness of life in the communities along the Cayuga Southern due to the stoppage of service, bemoaning the “pitiable aspect” of the road, which would not permit operation again for the winter except between Cayuga and Aurora.

By the middle of December, stagecoach service reportedly had been revived between Cayuga and Aurora and marine operations were substituted in part for the lack of railroad service, with a lake tug towing a barge along the Cayuga Southern route. In an entry in his diary for December 17, E. B. Morgan notes that he had arranged for lake delivery of lumber needed for construction at Wells College, with the returning boat carrying out passengers from the college.

On December 18, the Cayuga Southern superintendent and other officials toured the length of the road by tug to determine the extent of the damage and the nature of the repairs required. Later entries from the Morgan diary state that the Cayuga Southern was restored sufficiently between Cayuga and Aurora to permit the delivery of Henry Wells’s body on December 27. At the Wells funeral conducted in Aurora on December 31, those attending from a distance were able to reach Cayuga on the New York Central and transfer to the Cayuga Southern to reach Aurora in time for the services.

Though the north end of the line was capable of service by the end of 1878, the south end was more severely damaged and it was mid-June 1879 before the Cayuga Southern was totally restored to service. In the interval, an observant Auburn newspaper noted the Cayuga Southern engines were laboring on for the Southern Central in its burgeoning coal trade.

On April 16, 1879, the Cayuga Southern Railroad surrendered its independence when it was acquired by the Geneva, Ithaca & Sayre Railroad, becoming the Cayuga Branch of that road. For the next eleven years, the ex-Cayuga Southern bobbed and eddied within the Lehigh Valley corporate stream, being successively under the control of the Gl&S, the Geneva & Sayre, and the Geneva & Van Ettenville, all of which roads came under the Lehigh Valley.
A separate series of railroads now figure in the history of the Auburn & Ithaca Branch. In the twilight of its days as an independent railroad, the Southern Central had leased the Ithaca, Auburn and Western Railroad, which paralleled the Southern Central on its western flank between Auburn and Freeville, thereby adding 37.72 miles of leased line to the Southern Central property.

The Ithaca, Auburn & Western, was a segment of the original New York & Oswego Midland Railroad that was draped across the New York hills in reversing arcs north and west of Norwich, in an effort to reach Buffalo. The Midland had been forced to abandon construction of its so-called “Western Extension” at Merrifield, south of Auburn, in 1872, due to financial weakness and eventually gave up the operation of the branch altogether. The portion between Freeville and Merrifield languished, except for an interim operation by the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira Railroad, until the late 1870s, when it was acquired by an independent group who named it the Ithaca, Auburn & Western Railroad and completed the line into Auburn in 1881. Despite its name, the Ithaca, Auburn & Western never reached Ithaca, although, at the time of its lease by the Southern Central, it did interconnect with the UI&E line to East Ithaca at Freeville.

According to reports of the state railroad commissioners, the Southern Central lease of the Ithaca, Auburn & Western became effective April 1, 1883, and public timetables published in the Auburn papers beginning April 9, 1883, list the IA&W Division of the Southern Central operating one train daily in each direction between Freeville and Auburn. At the time it entered the Southern Central fold, the Ithaca, Auburn & Western owned two locomotives and eighteen cars that, presumably, were subject to the lease. The condition of the property was poor according to the state’s railroad commissioners, who had examined the road in 1883.

Their report devoted considerable detail to the right-of-way and structures, particularly a trestle at North Lansing, about which they observed, “...a trestle near the south end of the line, about 700 feet in length, and at the highest point about 80 feet, was completely decayed with dry rot, nothing but the shell of the vertical members remaining, and at places this shell was broken through at the sides of some of the timbers, but the corners were unbroken. This structure was condemned as unsafe for life and limb. A plank walk covered the deck of the trestle and passengers and crew walked over the bridge, the engine given sufficient steam to barely move, and was caught at the opposite end, and yet this trestle was in perfect vertical and horizontal plane, while the timbers—if subjected to a cross strain—
would not have held even the tender...” In the spring of 1884, this trestle was replaced by an iron bridge fabricated at Athens, Pennsylvania, and a news item in the Auburn News & Bulletin announced the new bridge had been completed on March 28.

The Ithaca, Auburn & Western was not robust financially when it came under Southern Central management and matters did not improve under Southern Central direction. (Local folklore has it that a loyal employee of the IA&W hid an engine in the woods between Freeville and South Lansing to keep the sheriff from seizing it to satisfy the railroad’s debts.) The Southern Central administration of its own property faltered at the same time, so that on New Year’s Day 1887, the Lehigh Valley assumed operation of the Southern Central (and its leased lines) by placing the Pennsylvania & New York Railroad in control (discussed in the previous chapter, pages 26–27).

The Ithaca, Auburn & Western picture apparently was not attractive to the Lehigh Valley management, for, on August 1, 1888, the Pennsylvania & New York terminated the Ithaca, Auburn & Western lease. From that date until the end of the year, the Southern Central directors attempted to continue the Ithaca, Auburn & Western operation, but on December 31, 1888, after filing a last report, the Ithaca, Auburn & Western slipped into limbo and does not appear in the reports of the state railroad commissioners under that title after 1889.

On the other hand, unofficial sources such as news items and contemporary correspondence indicate that the Ithaca, Auburn & Western road remained intact for several years after 1888 and that there was intense local pressure to keep it operating, as discussed below. Nevertheless, the road was abandoned and torn up during January 1891, except for a short segment which was acquired by the Auburn & Ithaca Railway (see below).

The Auburn & Ithaca Railway

On October 14, 1889, the Ithaca, Auburn & Western was sold under foreclosure to the Auburn & Ithaca Railway, a new company that had been chartered on October 5, 1889, and would be, within months, merged into the Lehigh Valley Railway.

The new owner was not interested in the total Ithaca, Auburn & Western property. South of Genoa the line was torn up and the North Lansing bridge was dismantled. The rails from Genoa north to Auburn, however, were left intact. At this time, it became evident that the role of the Auburn & Ithaca was to build a link between Auburn and Ithaca, using two miles of the existing Ithaca, Auburn & Western trackage and constructing six miles of new track westward from the Ithaca, Auburn & Western to the Cayuga branch of the Geneva & Sayre Railroad on the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake. The Auburn & Ithaca would run from this point to Ithaca.

Construction of the new track was begun promptly by the Auburn & Ithaca. A junction on the Ithaca, Auburn & Western (subsequently named Genoa Junction) was established two...
miles southwest of Auburn. From Genoa Junction, the new line ran six miles in a southwesterly direction to another new junction (subsequently named Cayuga Junction), which was located 1 1/2 miles north of Union Springs on the Cayuga branch of the Geneva & Sayre.

The fall of 1890 saw regular train service between Auburn and Ithaca on the new rails, which were now the property of the Lehigh Valley Railway. The Auburn & Ithaca had been leased to the Geneva & Van Ettenville Railroad on April 23, 1890, and the Geneva & Van Ettenville was, in turn, merged with the Lehigh Valley on June 21, 1890.

At the time of the Auburn & Ithaca’s acquisition of the Ithaca, Auburn & Western, there was significant public protest at the proposed closing of the latter line between Genoa Junction and the village of Genoa. In response, George M. Diven of Elmira, an attorney representing the Lehigh Valley
interests, agreed that the Lehigh Valley would operate this section on a trial basis for one year to determine its worth as a public carrier. The Lehigh Valley made good on this promise by operating trains to Genoa until January, 1891, when it determined that this was not profitable. At that time, the rails south of Genoa Junction were removed.

The Auburn & Ithaca Branch of the Auburn Division

The diminutive Auburn & Ithaca's effort to link Genoa Junction and Cayuga Junction ultimately grew to be the Auburn Division's Auburn & Ithaca Branch, a forty-three-mile segment between those two cities. The branch consisted of the ex-Cayuga Southern trackage south of Cayuga Junction, the link between Cayuga Junction and Genoa Junction built by the A&I itself, and a short remnant of the old Ithaca, Auburn & Western road, which ran between Genoa Junction and Auburn. Track running north of Cayuga Junction to the village of Cayuga was listed as the Cayuga Branch of the Auburn & Ithaca. By 1892, three round-trip passenger trains per day were scheduled between Auburn and Ithaca, with branch service for each train provided to Cayuga.
Bridge over Six Mile Creek at present-day Brooktondale, believed to have
been taken at the opening of the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira RR span December 11, 1875.
This is the south end, at Brookton, formerly known as Mottville and
Mott’s Corners. The train is headed to Elmira.
Soon after its formal acquisition of the Southern Central Railroad in 1895, the Lehigh Valley considerably expanded the new Auburn Division by acquisition of the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad. At the time of this acquisition, the Elmira, Cortland & Northern operated 139.2 miles of single track line in New York State between the Southern Tier city of Elmira in Chemung County and the northern New York village of Camden in Oneida County. The EC&N did not actually construct any of this route under its own name. Upon its incorporation in 1884, the railroad assembled two existing small railroads and the leases of two other existing properties to form its original rail system between Elmira and Canastota. In 1886, it organized and then added another existing railroad to its structure to reach its northern terminus at Camden. Although another organization was formed in 1890 that would have extended the line farther north to Watertown, this plan was later abandoned and the track that the Lehigh Valley took under its banner in 1896 as its Elmira & Cortland Branch represented the zenith of Elmira, Cortland & Northern growth.

The history of the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad is primarily found in the story of the earlier companies from which it was formed. Though small and obscure, these lesser ventures attracted the attention of men who achieved considerable stature in the nineteenth century. At the outset, Ezra Cornell, Henry V. Poor, and, in a minor role, John B. Jervis made significant contributions to what would become the EC&N. Later, Austin Corbin appeared on the scene to build on these earlier efforts by creating and sustaining the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad until it caught the attention of the Lehigh Valley, which was still seeking new markets in New York State in the 1890s. With its absorption into the Lehigh Valley system, the EC&N story ends. For its start, we must return to the rural New York counties of Cortland and Tompkins in the period shortly after the end of the Civil War.
Promotion of a Utica-Elmira route

In the years immediately after the Civil War, a rail route linking the Southern Tier of New York at Elmira with the Mohawk Valley at Utica was proposed by William L. Burt and other supporters. The plan was logical when drawn on a map: a straight line of railroad from Utica through Cortland and Ithaca to Elmira. The success of the plan was predicated, quite reasonably, on the growth of through coal traffic between the Southern Tier and the Mohawk Valley, which traffic would sustain the railroad’s operation, while the railroad, in turn, would serve as a vehicle for development of the rural areas through which it would pass.
The planners anticipated that new coal customers would be found in the remote farming areas, that a reciprocal trade in farm products to the non-agricultural mining areas would develop and that fresh industrial sites would be discovered. The new railroad would have good access to coal supplies since, as projected, it would intersect with the major anthracite carriers of Pennsylvania and would reach extensive bituminous coal deposits by an extension towards Blossburg, Pennsylvania, from its southwestern end at Horseheads, New York.

Mr. Burt, the apparent originator of the Utica-Elmira rail enterprise, was neither a resident of the area nor an experienced railroad developer, save for a horse-drawn venture in the Boston area, where he was a postmaster. Yet, what Mr. Burt may have lacked in experience he made up for in other qualities that won him a dominant position in the formative years of the undertaking.

In 1866, about the same time the Southern Central was getting organized, Burt approached Ezra Cornell as a likely sponsor of the Utica-Elmira project. Cornell was a founder of Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. No formal organization crystallized until mid-1869, when the Ithaca & Cortland Railroad was chartered with Burt as its president. In the interval, Burt worked to create a friendly climate for his plan and to secure the interest of responsible investors along the intended route, an assignment for which he was well suited. A graduate of Harvard Law School with experience practicing law in Boston, Burt was mentally agile and resourceful in the presentation of his idea. Introduced as General Burt, a military title he gained in service as a judge advocate general in Massachusetts during the Civil War, he was an imposing figure and a persuasive speaker at private and public gatherings, as he sounded the call to enlistment in the Utica-Elmira cause in the 1866–1870 period.

His efforts were aided by the town bonding laws of New York State and his success was evidenced by the investors he attracted to the scheme and the emergence of at least four companies interested in providing various segments of the railroad's framework.

Much of Burt’s success, however, was due to the presence of Ezra Cornell as a patron, for Cornell’s name added solidity and permanence to the plan. After a strenuous career in telegraph construction that provided him a comfortable estate based on his Western Union holdings, Cornell had retired to Ithaca and assumed the role of community leader and benefactor. The university bearing his name was only one, though the major, benefaction. By becoming involved in railroads, Cornell primarily intended to provide the university and Ithaca with improved transport and, secondarily, to improve his financial fortunes, on which the wellbeing of the university was based. Already a participant in the Ithaca & Towanda Railroad, of which he was president, Cornell found Burt’s plan worthy of attention, too. Though his initial involvement in the Utica-Elmira plan was only token in nature, he ultimately became its main investor, much to his own financial disadvantage.

Burt’s goal was to stimulate the organization of small local companies backed by investors along the route. By late spring of 1870, four companies had been formed to provide the necessary components of the route and one was actually under construction. The route proposed by these four companies, although connecting Utica with Elmira, was not a straight line. They found it necessary to abandon the straight route so easily drawn on maps.
for more feasible passageways through the rugged New York terrain. Their route was further influenced by the need to serve the towns responding to the initial call for investment. Finally, since rails already occupied portions of the proposed route, the new companies in some instances contemplated the acquisition of trackage rights to reduce the expense for new construction.

In summary, the four companies initially formed to carry out the Utica-Elmira plan were:

**The Utica, Georgetown & Elmira Railroad**, chartered March 28, 1870. This company proposed to fill in the section of the route from Utica to Otselic by negotiating trackage rights over the Utica, Clinton & Binghamton Railroad (later to become the Utica Division of the New York & Oswego Midland Railroad on January 15, 1872, and the Utica Division of the New York, Ontario & Western Railway on June 1, 1886) from the Utica suburb of New Hartford to Smith’s Valley (today, Randallsville) and by constructing eighteen miles of new track from Smith’s Valley to Otselic, where it would connect with a proposed Utica, Chenango & Cortland Railroad. No construction was ever accomplished and the UG&E announced the abandonment of this plan in its report to the New York state engineer in 1873.

**The Utica, Chenango & Cortland Railroad**, chartered April 9, 1870. This company proposed to build from Otselic to Cortland via Cincinnatus, Solon and McGraw, a distance of thirty-two miles. During the early 1870s, the line was graded from Cortland toward Cincinnatus and considerable sums were expended on its roadbed. Later, changes in the building plans of the Utica-Elmira promoters erased this section from their scheme and it did not become a part of the later EC&N Railroad. The UC&C lay dormant until 1883, when it was re-named the Erie & Central New York Railroad and eventually completed as far as Cincinnatus in 1896. Purchased by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad in 1903, it continued as the Lackawanna’s Cincinnatus Branch until it was abandoned in 1962.

**The Ithaca & Cortland Railroad**, chartered July 21, 1869. This company proposed to build twenty-two miles of new track from Cortland to Ithaca, of which twenty miles were actually built from Cortland to the Cornell University campus in Ithaca. This road was ultimately consolidated with the Utica, Horseheads & Elmira Railroad. (See below.)

**The Utica, Horseheads & Elmira Railroad**, chartered April 2, 1870. This company proposed to build from Ithaca to Horseheads on a route including trackage rights over the Ithaca Branch of the Lackawanna and over the Ithaca & Athens Railroad. The UH&E never filed any report indicating actual construction, although a contract was entered into on May
11, 1871, with H.V. Poor & Company, the contractor already at work on the Ithaca & Cortland Railroad. In October 1871, the UH&E was consolidated with the Ithaca & Cortland Railroad to form the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira Railroad, the road which ultimately emerged as the primary Utica-Elmira route and eventually became the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad.

As noted above, the Ithaca & Cortland Railroad was the first company of the original Utica-to-Elmira group to accomplish any construction. On May 27, 1870, the I&C entered into a contract with H.V. Poor & Company for the building of the line between its two namesake communities. The construction firm was headed by Henry Varnum Poor, his son Henry William Poor, and Duncan MacDonald. Earlier in his career, the elder Poor had been involved with railroads as, variously, a railroad writer, economist, analyst, and lobbyist. In 1867, he established the firm of H.V. & H.W. Poor to engage in the sale of railroad insurance and securities, as well as the importation and sale of railroad iron rails. The publication of railroad data was soon added to the firm's activities under the title of Poor's Manual of Railroads, a forerunner of today's Standard & Poor's. Nevertheless, the 1870 contract with the I&C (later expanded by the UH&E contract of 1871) to build from Horseheads to Van Etten was the Poors's first venture into actual railroad construction—and it would be their last.

Under the contract terms, Poor agreed to construct the required railroad, complete in every detail including telegraph line, for $25,000 per mile. Of this figure, $20,000 per mile was to be spent on the roadbed and $5,000 per mile was to be applied to the purchase of rolling stock. Payment for the completed road and the rolling stock was to be made to Poor in cash or in the railroad's securities, a common provision at that time.

Work was started on the Ithaca & Cortland beginning at Freeville and moving westward toward Ithaca, using the Southern Central Railroad at Freeville as a railhead. Grading was carried on during the summer of 1870 and track laying began in the fall with the aid of a Southern Central locomotive. By the spring of 1871, the Ithaca & Cortland rails reached Judd Falls on Cascadilla Creek near Cornell University and, in early May, the first I&C engine appeared. The locomotive was purchased second hand and was named the “Amherst College.” On May 25, 1871, the I&C published its first timetable in the Ithaca newspapers, advertising two daily trains that connected with the Southern Central Railroad at Freeville.

Construction east of Freeville lagged while the Ithaca & Cortland management deliberated over a route change that would alter their original plan radically. The I&C had learned that the New York & Oswego Midland Railroad was building a new branch into Cortland from Norwich via DeRuyter, with the plan of continuing west to Auburn. During 1870 the Ithaca & Cortland managers vacillated between the possibility of a connection with this new Auburn Branch by uniting with the Oswego Midland or the continuation of their original planned route. After bruiting the possibility of a route change in the local press, the Ithaca & Cortland filed a new route plan on November 19, 1870, that would bring the line through Cortland to connect with the Oswego Midland, thus abandoning the eastward route that would have involved the UC&C and the UG&E. With this decision made, construction was begun from Freeville to Cortland in the spring of 1871.
Forming the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira Railroad and Building an Ithaca-to-Cortland Route

On October 25, 1871, the Ithaca & Cortland and the UH&E merged to form the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira Railroad, which was the dominant company on the Utica-Ithaca route for the next thirteen years. The merger was salutary, gathering the two smaller companies into one organization with a larger horizon and mustering the most dynamic directors of both companies into one group. The Ithaca & Cortland had made good progress by late 1871, having completed its track from Freeville into Cortland and also having moved its western terminus down Cascadilla Creek onto the Cornell University campus, near the present-day College Avenue. However, the UH&E had lain dormant, faced with uncertainties in the selection of its route and the difficulties of the terrain through which it was projected. The new merger meant that the forward motion of the Ithaca & Cortland would now be applied to the UH&E's original plan to provide service between Ithaca and Horseheads.

On March 22, 1872, the newly formed Utica, Ithaca & Elmira took a major step in the expansion of its property and operations by entering into a lengthy and involved agreement with the New York & Oswego Midland Railroad. Approaching Cortland from its extension westward from Norwich in the spring of 1872, the Oswego Midland planned to continue west to Auburn, using part of a right of way of the now defunct Lake Ontario, Auburn & New York Railroad. It was the prospect of connecting with this Auburn Branch of the Oswego Midland that had caused the Ithaca & Cortland Railroad to change its own route so radically in 1870.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Oswego Midland was granted trackage rights over the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira between Cortland and Freeville, at which point the Oswego Midland resumed its own construction toward Auburn. In return, the UI&E was granted trackage rights over the Midland between Cortland and DeRuyter specifically for the purpose of connecting with the Cazenovia & Canastota Railroad and was deeded that portion of the defunct Lake Ontario, Auburn & New York Railroad grade that lay between Cascadilla Creek and Pugsley's (now Caroline). Both companies further agreed to the joint operation and maintenance of a depot at South Main Street in Cortland.

On March 26, 1872, in voting their acceptance of this agreement, the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira board of directors resolved, with respect to the construction plans for the UI&E's western end, "That an application be made to the New York State Legislature for a confirmation of our purchase of the roadbed and rights of the Lake Ontario, Auburn & New York Railroad Company from Cascadilla Creek in Ithaca southerly through the counties of Tompkins and Tioga. Also to extend and construct our road parallel for a short distance with the Cayuga & Susquehanna Railroad and the Ithaca & Athens Railroad, provided satisfactory agreements cannot be made with said companies for the use of their track. Also to extend and construct our road from Horseheads to Corning and to extend our track through the Village of Ithaca."

This terse proposal for construction kept the directors of the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira occupied for several years, particularly with respect to the proposed extension through the
Village of Ithaca. However, these trials were still in the future when Ezra Cornell presented the resolution to the State Legislature shortly after the March meeting of the Board of Directors. On May 8, 1872, the Legislature duly passed an enabling Act, making the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira Railroad resolution a law.

The UI&E Development of a Horseheads-to-Ithaca Route

With their construction plans legally sanctioned, the UI&E directors were prompt in pressing their advantage. On May 11, 1872, they met to authorize a bond issuance to finance 118 miles of track that included the twenty miles already built between Ithaca and Cortland. Actually a first mortgage on the UI&E, the bonds were issued in $1,000 denominations and numbered 1 to 2,950 inclusive, with numbers 1 to 440 issued for the work already completed and equipment already furnished. (Numbers 2,200 to 2,950 were reserved for a proposed branch from Cortland to Syracuse. Although this latter plan reached the paper stage in 1876 as the proposed Syracuse & Southwestern Railway, it became formally extinct in 1877 due partly to difficulty in obtaining the right-of-way.)

With the road established financially, at least on paper, construction of the section between Horseheads and Ithaca began at Horseheads. By the fall of 1872, thirteen miles of track had been completed eastward to Park Station. There the end of the track remained until construction was resumed the following year, after the removal of some obstructions, both financial and physical.

The financial obstacles impeding the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira were the sluggish sale of the mortgage bonds, which failed to attract investors even though they were discounted by 15 percent, and difficulties which had developed in the performance of the original I&C construction contract with H.V. Poor & Company, which had now been expanded to include the UI&E construction proposals.

In a long and plaintive letter to the UI&E directors on October 4, 1872, Henry V. Poor revealed the details of his disenchantment with his contract.

As Poor acknowledged, much of his difficulty resulted from his acceptance of William Burt as a supposedly silent partner in the construction project. Upon being awarded the Ithaca & Cortland Railroad construction contract in 1870, H.V. Poor & Company had entered into a private contract with Burt, who was then president of the Ithaca & Cortland, giving Burt one-half of the profits accruing from the contract “... in consideration of services in working up the project.” In addition, Burt was to be allowed a one-third share in any rail construction by Poor east or west of the I&C under the Utica-Elmira plan, though, in the case of any such additional construction, Burt would also have to assume one-third of the risk, an element he was not exposed to on the Ithaca & Cortland portion of the construction.

Poor’s difficulties began almost immediately upon the start of the Ithaca & Cortland construction. Acknowledging his inexperience in actual railroad building, he deferred readily to Burt, who proclaimed himself an expert in such matters. Soon, Burt had pre-empted control of the construction from Poor. Unfortunately, Burt’s arbitrary and capricious conduct of the project soon created hostility at all levels, which was focused on Poor as the
apparent responsible party. The labor sub-contractors and the Ithaca & Cortland directors alike were alienated, making it, for Poor, “... unpleasant, if not dangerous, to appear on the line.” Further, Poor complained that Burt’s administration of affairs resulted in locating the line in such a way as to greatly increase the cost of construction and, at the same time, creating an environment where no work could be accomplished economically. Poor alleged, for example, that Burt appeared at the construction site and issued direct orders to the workmen himself, ignoring the superintendent. Poor further described how, in one instance, Burt had personally attempted to ram a locomotive through a mudslide, derailing the engine three times and completely disabling it.

(As an aside, Poor also revealed that Burt had suggested to him that the Ithaca & Cortland should be offered to the Lackawanna Railroad on the premise that the I&C would be of value as a means of improving the Lackawanna's entry into Ithaca, of augmenting the Lackawanna trackage in central New York, and of eventually linking the Lackawanna to the Atlantic & Great Western Railroad. Burt said that Poor would be the proper person to present the proposition to Samuel Sloan, then president of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, but that Ezra Cornell should not be informed that the approach to Sloan was to be made. Apparently sharing Burt’s vision, Poor did present the matter to Sloan who, as it turned out, was not interested in the Ithaca & Cortland Railroad. However, regardless of Burt’s wishes, Poor averred that he kept Cornell informed of the proposal.)

At any rate, by the fall of 1872 Poor could endure his role as contractor no longer. Added to his other aggravations was a deep financial involvement in the new enterprise which Poor feared might ruin him. He had accepted I&C stock as payment for work completed and the stock proved to be of little value in the marketplace. To keep the work going, Poor drew on his personal funds and credit for the necessary capital, a source that was soon exhausted. In the event of default by the railroad, Poor would be bankrupt.
Fortunately for the UI&E, at this point Ezra Cornell stepped into the role of its financial savior by purchasing large quantities of the company’s bonds and by offering to assume the construction contract vacated by Poor.

Early in January 1873, Poor formally asked for release from the construction contract and tendered a settlement proposal to the board of the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira. The proposal was accepted and, in accordance with its terms, Poor executed an assignment of his contracts, the completed construction, the materials and equipment purchased, and the securities he held to Ezra Cornell, who became the UI&E’s new contractor. In return, Poor was to receive an audited payment covering his actual costs up to the date of the settlement. Unfortunately for Poor, total payment of his claim and the desired severance from the UI&E were not immediately forthcoming. Reluctantly, Poor was forced to continue an association with the UI&E until 1881 in order to safeguard his involuntary investment, ini-

Ezra Cornell, director and principal financier of the UI&E, founder and a trustee of the university at Ithaca that bears his name. He was believed to have invested more than $2 million in railroad ventures in the Ithaca area.

East Ithaca station about 1910, since moved two blocks east and become a restaurant. The Ithaca Street Ry. on Maple Ave. in the foreground intersects an E&C Branch siding. The through track passes on the far side of the depot, going to Elmira to the right and Cortland to the left.

tially becoming a trustee of the UI&E mortgage bonds in 1874. In 1875, Poor transferred the family vigil to his son, Henry, who became a UI&E director, continuing in such capacity until 1881, with an interim year as UI&E president in 1877. The elder Poor also served as a director during 1876–77.

The Elmira & Cortland Branch 51
With its financial problems alleviated, thanks to Ezra Cornell, the UI&E could now turn its attention to resolving some of its physical problems in order to continue its expansion.

By late 1872, at the time of Poor’s disaffection, the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira Railroad had been officially divided into two parts: the Ithaca & Cortland Division between Ithaca and Cortland, which was already completed; and the Horseheads Division between Horseheads and Ithaca, which was complete only between Horseheads and Park Station. The official division point separating the two operating departments was named Ithaca Junction, a site near Cascadilla Creek where the track diverged to the Cornell University campus. By this time, two handsome and ornate Portland-built 4-4-0s were on the road, supplementing three used engines picked up from unnamed sources at an earlier date. Of the new engines, the “Horseheads” was the first to appear and was assigned appropriately to the Horseheads Division. The second engine, the “Cornell University,” was placed on the Ithaca & Cortland Division. A few months after its arrival, the “Cornell University” narrowly escaped destruction when the wooden enginehouse in which it rested on the Cornell campus burned to the ground at the end of December 1872.

Two major physical obstacles existed in the remaining thirty-two-mile gap between Park Station and Ithaca on the Horseheads Division, where construction had halted late in 1872 at Park Station: Swartwood Hill and the deep valley at Mottville (later, Brooktondale).

The problem of Swartwood Hill, involving a sinuous change in elevation of 450 feet in four miles and the crossing of two deep ravines, was tackled first. After weighing the merits of hemlock trestles, solid fill or iron bridges, the UI&E choose iron bridges as the appropriate means of spanning the ravines and, in the first part of 1873, Clark, Reeves & Company of Philadelphia were engaged to erect two Phoenix wrought iron column bridges at the site.

First train over Deep Gorge on the Elmira end of the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira RR, Nov. 11, 1873. Ezra Cornell wears a top hat; John C. Gauntlett of Ithaca stands on the tender of the locomotive “Horseheads.”
Block House Gorge, the ravine nearest the summit at Park Station, was spanned by a structure 600 feet long and 78 feet high, incorporating a 6-degree curve.

Conquering the other ravine, Deep Gorge, required a structure 480 feet in length, 135 feet high, with only a 3.75-degree curve. Both bridges were on the 2.4 percent grade leading to the summit. The work of the bridge builders was completed by fall and, with the track extended to Van Etten in the latter part of October 1873, the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira ran a special one-car train from Ithaca via the Ithaca & Athens Railroad to Van Etten, where it entered the new UI&E track and continued to the end of the line near Block House trestle. From that point, less than a mile of track was needed to connect with the existing railhead at Park Station.

It took the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira two more years to begin construction of a trestle over Six Mile Creek at Mottville, after much difficulty in determining its path through Ithaca.

With track laying completed between Park Station and Van Etten, on December 15, 1873, the UI&E initiated rail service between Elmira and Ithaca, using the rails of several other companies. For example, the UI&E operated over 3.65 miles of the Erie 6-foot gauge track on a third rail laid to standard gauge as far as Chemung Junction, at which point they...
entered the Northern Central tracks for 1.6 miles to reach the UI&E tracks at Horseheads. From Horseheads, the UI&E then continued on its own track to Van Etten, where it transferred to the Ithaca & Athens tracks to Ithaca, depositing its passengers at the Ithaca & Athens station. From this point, passengers intending to continue east on the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira were left to their own devices in reaching the UI&E station on the Cornell University campus two miles distant from the I&A depot.

The UI&E directors desired to fill this awkward gap between their railroad on the eastern fringe of Ithaca and the other railroads on Ithaca’s western edge. Though the distance of two miles was not great, the rails would have to be laid through the village streets and on up the steep slope of the village’s East Hill, where the natural contour exceeded 10 percent in grade. Some Ithaca citizens and academics resented the possibility of intrusion by the railroad on village streets and the campus, but impetus for the plan was provided by Ezra Cornell, whose personal interest in the matter quelled any public outcry.

Despite resistance from man and nature, the UI&E exercised the rights incorporated in the enabling act of 1872 to gain a right-of-way. By April 10, 1873, a route had been surveyed through the village and up East Hill on a flanking reverse grade to reach the campus station. For service on this steep grade, a Mason-built locomotive named the “Shoo Fly” was purchased and delivered in the village in August 1873, before any construction on the connection had commenced.

Upon its arrival in Ithaca, the “Shoo Fly” was placed on public display, so that its mechanical peculiarities could be examined. The local press devoted a couple of columns to the incident, giving Ezra Cornell and William Burt proprietary status over the new locomotive. The news coverage also explained the odd name that the engine bore. It stemmed from the pejorative title of “Shoo Fly Railroad” bestowed upon the UI&E by unappreciative patrons who likened the road’s initial service to the pesky insect immortalized in the tune,
“Shoo fly, don’t bother me.” While some UI&E managers were annoyed by this nickname, others found it amusing, among them Mr. Cornell and Mr. Burt, who named the little Mason hill climber.

Despite the UI&E lettering it carried, the “Shoo Fly” apparently never ran on the road for which it had been built. Since the track had not been laid, the UI&E had no immediate use for the engine and the “Shoo Fly” was given a temporary assignment on the Geneva & Ithaca Railroad, of which Ezra Cornell was also a director. As the likelihood of the construction of the Hill Line faded with the passage of time, the “Shoo Fly”’s temporary assignment became permanent, the engine continuing for many years in the service of the G&I and its successor companies.

Another effort to build the connection was made by the UI&E directors in February 1874, when they filed a survey entitled “The Hill Line” in the Tompkins County Clerk’s Office. This line also began at the station on the campus and descended East Hill on the north side of Cascadilla Creek, paralleling the creek’s watercourse through the village. Another Mason locomotive, the “Leviathan,” was purchased specifically for service on the grade, this one equipped with a pinion gear on the driving axle to provide rack operation as needed. As before, the idea of a railroad traversing the campus and the village was abandoned. Although the hill-climbing engine was delivered in early 1875 and used on the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira’s Ithaca & Cortland Division briefly, it was soon returned to the builder.

The reason that the connecting line was not built and the need for the “Leviathan” was forestalled was the death of Ezra Cornell. Mr. Cornell was the driving force behind the Hill Line proposal; when he died, so did the idea he espoused. Cornell was personally convinced of the need for and the value of the hill connection. Had his life continued, the line in all likelihood would have been built and put into operation. After his death, university trustees who had not previously risked offense to the institution’s founder and citizens who had
not cared to oppose the community’s most prominent member were less reticent about revealing their true feelings about a railroad passing through the village and the campus. In this unfriendly climate, the Hill Line proposal faded away.

With Cornell’s death, the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira lost a staunch supporter. Assuming the role of UI&E construction contractor had cost Cornell dearly. In early 1873, in a personal effort to bolster the UI&E financial picture, he purchased $550,000 worth of its bonds that, even discounted to 80 percent of face value, cost him $440,000. Moreover, the transaction was accomplished by the sale of Cornell’s Western Union stock, a move that appreciably reduced his estate, since in effect he exchanged the blue-chip, dividend-paying telegraph stock for the valueless UI&E securities that were paying no dividends. Added to this were his personal notes to Clark, Reeves & Company in the amount of $43,000 to cover the construction cost of the two bridges on Swartwood Hill. This and other commitments he made in connection with the UI&E brought Cornell’s UI&E investment to over one-half million dollars. In the deteriorating financial climate of 1873, Cornell continued to work doggedly to make his investment pay, trying to cope with the continuing construction costs in the absence of any worthwhile UI&E revenues.
During mid-1874, when Cornell’s health began to fail, he withdrew from the UI&E construction contract in an effort to preserve his reduced estate for the endowment he had pledged to the university. He died on December 9, 1874. As a token of respect, all locomotives running out of Ithaca were draped in mourning, a fitting tribute to the leading proponent of Ithaca’s railroads.

Upon Cornell’s withdrawal from the UI&E contract in 1874, William Burt and Joseph Rodbourn assumed it in his stead. Joseph Rodbourn had migrated to the United States from England as a boy. By the late 1860s, he and his brother James were well established in the lumber trade in the Breesport area, where they had made their homes. When the concept of a Utica-Elmira railroad appeared, Rodbourn became an enthusiastic proponent of the scheme, since the route would provide the remote Breesport section—and his lumber business—with rail transport. After joining in the early promotion of the plan, Joseph Rodbourn was elected president of the new Utica, Horseheads & Elmira Railroad when it was formed in early 1870. Burt, who had publicly promoted the UH&E, was made a director. When the Ithaca & Cortland merged with the UH&E in 1871, Burt became president of the resulting Utica, Ithaca & Elmira Railroad, with Rodbourn as his vice-president. The most dynamic advocates of both parts of the combined plan were thus united in a single management coalition.
When Burt and Rodbourn assumed the UI&E contract from Ezra Cornell in 1874, only the portion between Van Etten and eastern Ithaca remained to be completed. Progress on this section had been delayed contingent on the outcome of the Hill Line proposal and the negotiation of trackage rights between Van Etten and Ithaca with the Geneva, Ithaca & Athens Railroad and the Lackawanna. When, following Cornell’s demise, it became evident that the Hill Line would not be built, the UI&E directors decided there was an acute need for construction of a line skirting Ithaca on the east, electing to forego any negotiations for trackage rights in favor of new UI&E construction for the entire distance, although this meant paralleling their rail neighbors for a third of the way.

The proposed section was easy to build except for one feature, the crossing of Six Mile Creek at Mottville, a physical obstacle which now came to the forefront of the UI&E’s agenda. The track was run to each side of the abyss and, late in October 1875, the erection of a wooden trestle to span the valley was begun. The structure was 1,600 feet long and 90 feet high for half its length. It required 750,000 feet of timber, which was sawn and shaped in Rodbourn’s mill. The bridge was erected speedily; forty days after it was begun, it was finished.

On the stormy Saturday of December 11, 1875, the bridge was opened with appropriate ceremony. At 2 p.m., a special directors’ train appeared at the east end of the bridge and paused while the last rail was formally placed. Then the special’s engine, UI&E No.4, was run across the structure as a test load. Having proved the bridge was strong enough to sup-
port it, the engine returned to pick up the directors' coach and its occupants, transporting them across the trestle. Reportedly, the UI&E treasurer, O. B. Curran, balked at the prospect of a train ride over the extensive timberwork and made his way across the bridge on foot. When the special continued toward Elmira, it paused to take him back on board.

The crossing of the Mottville trestle by Engine 4 in late 1875 represented the end of a quest of almost three years by the UI&E for a path from Horseheads into and through Ithaca which overcame significant physical obstacles to provide through service on UI&E lines to Cortland. At the time this quest began in late 1872, the only revenue-producing portion of the UI&E was the Ithaca & Cortland Division, running between its two namesake cities and connecting at Freeville with the Southern Central. The Ithaca & Cortland Division also connected at Cortland with the Syracuse, Binghamton & New York and the Oswego Midland railroads. As noted earlier, the newly formed Utica, Ithaca & Elmira entered into an agreement with the Oswego Midland in March 1872, under which the UI&E was granted trackage rights over the Oswego Midland between Cortland and DeRuyter and interconnected with the Oswego Midland’s proposed Auburn Branch at Freeville, thus potentially greatly extending the service provided by the Ithaca & Cortland Division.

This extension of service was, however, dependent upon the Oswego Midland’s completion of new construction. The Oswego Midland reached Cortland from Norwich in June of 1872 and, exercising trackage rights over the UI&E to Freeville under the 1872 agreement, continued building from Freeville towards Auburn. By December 1872, track had been laid as far as Scipio, where construction ceased due to lack of funds. During the year of 1873, a period of financial suffering nationwide, the Oswego Midland operated trains from Norwich to the railhead at Scipio until its straitened finances, unrelieved by the sparse branch line revenues, forced the curtailment of train service west of Cortland.

This virtual abandonment of its Auburn Branch by the Midland following the financial panic of 1873 led to temporary UI&E operation of this trackage in the ensuing years. On December 20, 1873, the UI&E assumed operation of the Midland track between Freeville and Scipio, the so-called “Western Extension” of the Midland, a function it performed sporadically.
until 1880 when this section was purchased by the Ithaca, Auburn & Western Railroad, which then began its own operation on this line. Actually, the UI&E operation on the Midland’s Western Extension was never more than minimal, since the UI&E traffic volume was no greater than the Midland’s. Because the UI&E enjoyed the use of the property rent free (except for necessary maintenance), the revenue from this branch was ordinarily sufficient to support a round trip accommodation train on a daily basis.

By October 1874, Utica, Ithaca & Elmira trains were venturing east on the old Midland trackage as far as DeRuyter. In March 1875, when its continuing financial bind forced the Midland to retreat further and to suspend operation between Norwich and Cortland altogether, the UI&E began running its own trains from Ithaca through to Norwich on the Midland-built track to maintain the existing traffic. This arrangement lasted until May 1, 1876, when the Oswego Midland again resumed service between Norwich and Cortland in its final effort to operate this sector successfully.

By 1879 the Midland had abandoned the Auburn Branch in its entirety. The Western Extension between Freeville and Scipio had already been sold to the Ithaca, Auburn & Western Railroad in 1876 for use as an independent shortline (see page 38), although the UI&E continued the operation on the Western Extension until the IA&W was strong enough to turn the wheels under its own power. In 1878, the Midland-built section between Cortland and DeRuyter was leased to the Cazenovia, Canastota & DeRuyter Railway for $5,000 per year. (This section eventually became part of the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad.) On the remainder of the line between DeRuyter and Norwich, regular service was discontinued in 1879, though the rails were not fully removed until 1882.

Thus, given the expansion of service on the Ithaca & Cortland Division which existed in 1875, the safe passage of the special engine over the Mottville trestle in that same year symbolized the completion of the UI&E between Elmira and Cortland and beyond, as well as the end of the need for two separate divisions of the UI&E itself. The railroad was now all of one piece, though track remained to be laid parallel to the Geneva, Ithaca & Athens between Spencer and Van Etten, as the UI&E was still exercising its earlier trackage rights on this section. Finally, the last rail was laid and, on February 2, 1876, the UI&E was certified as complete and operating between Elmira and Cortland.

At Ithaca, UI&E patrons would no longer have cause to complain of the inconvenience of changing to other UI&E trains at a distant station. Now, they would only grumble if transferring from a UI&E train to the GI&A, which still required a trip to the downtown Ithaca station via horse carriage. In 1876, the UI&E bowed to pressure from the community and the university and removed even the possibility of some future “Hill Line” between the campus
and the downtown station by lifting the offending track and removing the campus station. The new tracks only bordered the university grounds on the southeast corner and a new station was built at East Ithaca to replace the former campus depot.

During 1876 William Burt was finally unseated as president of the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira. Despite disapproval among the directors concerning his actions, Burt had managed to cling to the top UI&E post since the formation of the company in 1871. During his tenure, many forward steps had been taken to improve the UI&E, among them the agreement with the Oswego Midland, an agreement with the Erie providing the UI&E with trackage rights to Elmira and Corning and an agreement with the Fall Brook Coal Company guaranteeing the UI&E certain annual tonnages of Fall Brook coal for transport from Blossburg, Pennsylvania. Nevertheless, with Cornell gone, opposition to Burt grew in strength and his influence slowly evaporated. Leaving the Ithaca area, Burt transferred his talents to other rail ventures in New York and New England, among them the Boston, Hoosac Tunnel & Western Railroad, of which he was president until his death in 1882.

Edwin Eldridge, who replaced Burt as the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira president, was a wealthy physician from Elmira. In June 1875, when Eldridge joined the UI&E board of directors, a newspaper expressed the hope that his presence on the board would give confidence
to prospective investors and would result in the desired extension of the railroad to the Blossburg coal fields. Another news story suggested he might be able to fill the place of Ezra Cornell as a benefactor. Eldridge was elected president of the board in June 1876, but before he could demonstrate his healing powers on the UI&E, he died late in the same year. At that time, executive power devolved to Joseph Rodbourn, who was still the railroad’s vice-president and general manager.

During 1872–1875, when the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira entertained great hopes of deriving sustaining coal traffic from the Blossburg area, George J. Magee became a director of the company. Of the second generation of the family controlling the Fall Brook Coal Company, Magee at the time was president of the Corning, Cowanesque & Antrim Railroad, to which the UI&E planned to connect at Corning. After two years of airing to the public what it planned to do to handle Blossburg coal, the UI&E announced during 1874 that it would put down track between Horseheads and Corning in keeping with its charter. However, in February 1875, before any construction was begun, the UI&E entered into a trackage agreement with the Erie for the same stretch. To accommodate the standard gauge UI&E on the Erie’s 6-foot gauge track, the UI&E directors authorized purchase of the necessary “third” rail to accommodate both standard and 6-foot car trucks for the distance between Horseheads and Corning in March 1875.

Although the UI&E appeared ready to tap into the Blossburg coal traffic at Corning in 1875, there is no evidence that any UI&E coal traffic ever ran to Corning. Actually, in its untried state and with a roster of not more than four roadworthy locomotives, the UI&E would have seemed incapable of handling more than a token amount of coal traffic, even on its own lines. Whatever the facts, by 1878 the Corning connection was given over in favor of an arrangement under which any Blossburg coal destined for the UI&E was delivered in Elmira via the Tioga Railroad. Although in later years some of the Blossburg coal product would travel on the UI&E and its successor railroad, the majority of the Blossburg output for the northeastern market in 1877 was flowing over the Fall Brook Railway to the New York Central main line at Lyons. This was traffic the UI&E had hoped for but never really developed, primarily because the rough saw-toothed topography of the UI&E right-of-way made the hauling of heavy freight difficult.

By 1877, the UI&E was still far short of its goal of a terminal in the Mohawk Valley at Utica. By this time, more than two and a half million dollars had been spent on the sixty-six miles of track from Horseheads to Cortland and the rolling stock that served it. During 1874, the railroad’s meager rolling stock had been augmented by the arrival of a new Portland-built 4-4-0 locomotive, the No. 6, and several new passenger cars from Jackson & Sharpe. During 1875, a self-propelled steam coach, numbered 10 and named the “H. P. Goodrich,” made a brief and mystifying appearance on the UI&E – mystifying since its origin, ownership, and disposition are all unknown.
Expansion to Canastota on the Cazenovia, Canastota & DeRuyter Railway

Despite its slowly improving physical condition, the UI&E was a mostly unprofitable operation, kept afloat only by assiduous bailing on the part of the directors. In 1877 Henry W. Poor assumed the presidency of the UI&E for one year, during which the road experienced a change both in ownership and in approach to the achievement of the desired Mohawk Valley terminal.

On April 30, 1878, a foreclosure sale of the UI&E gave control of the road to British investors. Following the sale, the former UI&E Railroad emerged as the UI&E Railway and an agent of the British investors, George J. Rice, was seated as a director. After June of 1878, Rice became president of the new Railway.

The change in approach to the Mohawk Valley was concomitant with the change in ownership. The new owners promptly arranged an alliance with the Cazenovia, Canastota & DeRuyter Railway that provided the UI&E with a connection to the Erie Canal and the New York Central mainline at Canastota. Though in default, the UI&E had at last gained a valuable connection to the northeastern section of New York State—and of the nation—at a site just a few miles west of Utica, its initial Mohawk Valley goal.

The Cazenovia, Canastota & DeRuyter Railway, with which the UI&E became allied in 1878, was an outgrowth of two smaller roads: the Cazenovia & Canastota Railroad; and the Cazenovia & DeRuyter Railroad. Both of these latter roads were projected to run between the villages named in their titles.

Of the two, the Cazenovia & Canastota was the first organized and constructed. Chartered on January 22, 1868, the C&C began work on its grading and masonry during 1869. In early 1870, track laying on its tortuous and hilly route was begun at Canastota,
reaching Cazenovia on September 14 of the same year. For motive power, the C&C acquired two new 4-4-0 locomotives from Schenectady during August, 1870. They were No. 1, the “Cazenovia,” and No. 2, the “Canastota.”

The balance of the rolling stock consisted of 2 passenger cars, 2 baggage cars, and 12 freight cars. Both engines and several of the cars were present at Perryville on September 7, 1870, when that community celebrated the arrival of the C&C. A crowd estimated at one thousand, including the C&C construction workers, was fed at this celebration. A highlight was the loading of the first revenue freight on the road, which consisted of seven tons of cheese. On September 14, the “Cazenovia,” decorated with evergreens and flowers, headed the first train into her namesake village, where C&C President Sidney T. Fairchild capped the occasion by driving home the final spike.

The Cazenovia & Canastota had retained the eminent John B. Jervis as its chief engineer for its construction. Already in retirement after a long and varied career in the civil engineering of such projects as the Erie Canal, the Croton, New York, aqueduct, and the Delaware & Hudson canal and railroad, Jervis accepted the C&C appointment at the request of his brother, Benjamin, who was a director as well as secretary and treasurer of the C&C. Jervis, as chief engineer, assumed total responsibility for construction and equipping of the Cazenovia & Canastota. Despite this, a faction among the C&C directors, headed by Sidney Fairchild, felt the board should have some right to decide the same matters. Before long, a power struggle developed within the directorate that culminated in Jervis’s withdrawal from the project in 1870 and the withdrawal of the directors supporting him (including brother Benjamin) from the C&C, leaving Fairchild in command.

The Fairchild touch exerted no immediate magic on the Cazenovia & Canastota, although it provided the framework for future expansion and eventual inclusion of the C&C in the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad. In 1871, Sidney Fairchild became one of the trustees of the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira Railroad’s mortgage, in which position he was able to promote the linking of the C&C with the UI&E. Another step toward this link was made in 1872, when the agreement between the UI&E and the Oswego Midland provided the UI&E with trackage rights over the Midland between Cortland and DeRuyter for the purpose of connecting with the C&C.

No construction was accomplished to close the gap between Cazenovia and DeRuyter during the period between 1872 and 1877, although there was plenty of paper activity in that direction. For one thing, on January 26, 1872, the Cazenovia & DeRuyter Railroad was formed to build the connecting track between the two communities. The interlocking directorates of the C&C and the C&D made them, in effect, one road and this reality was soon formalized: on March 4, 1873, the C&D was reorganized and on June 17, 1873, it was consolidated with the C&C as the Cazenovia, Canastota & DeRuyter Railway.

Finally, in 1877, the newly named CC&D had found sufficient favor with investors and a mortgage on its property had provided sufficient funds for construction to begin between Cazenovia and DeRuyter. Funds that permitted the CC&D to go forward were from the same British source that chose the UI&E as a worthwhile investment and George J. Rice became a director and president of the CC&D at the same time he assumed similar duties on the
UI&E. As the construction proceeded in 1878, a skirmish occurred between the men of the CC&D and the men of the Syracuse, Chenango & New York Railroad at Rippleton, where the CC&D was to cross the SC&NY at grade. Reportedly, the SC&NY occupied the crossing site with a locomotive to prevent the CC&D advance, but eventually a peaceful crossing arrangement was negotiated and, by November 8, 1878, the track was completed to DeRuyter, where the CC&D established an engine terminal.

The Cazenovia, Canastota & DeRuyter was lengthened further in 1878 by the acquisition of a lease of the New York & Oswego Midland track between DeRuyter and Cortland, making the CC&D in effect an extension of the UI&E from Cortland to Canastota. Through passenger trains were put into operation between Elmira and Canastota over the combined roads, employing timetables that named both roads, although the UI&E was given the dominant heading. The timetables continued to be printed in this manner until early 1884, when both the UI&E and the CC&D were absorbed by the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad.

Expansion to Elmira Via the Canal Railroad

In 1881, the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira gained its own access to Elmira over the Canal Railroad line. The Canal Railroad had been chartered in 1878 to build from Horseheads to Elmira, a distance of about five miles, essentially along the path of the abandoned Chemung Canal. Upon its completion as far as the newly built New York, Lackawanna & Western tracks near Eldridge Lake in 1881, the Canal Railroad was leased to the UI&E and, in early 1882, the UI&E passenger trains that had formerly run to the Erie station in Elmira were routed over the Canal Railroad to the new NYL&W Elmira station.

(The NYL&W was formed by the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, built a mainline from Binghamton to Buffalo, New York between 1880 and 1883, and was leased in perpetuity to the DL&W.)

Hoping to continue to a terminal site closer to the center of the city of Elmira, the Canal Railroad had laid a piece of track near Eldridge Lake across the path of the westward-building NYL&W in 1881, thus establishing a crossing. Originally granted the right to build as far as Fifth Street by the City of Elmira, the Canal Railroad pressed for the right to continue several blocks further south along State Street to the vicinity of Second Street. This issue occupied sessions of the Elmira Common Council at length during 1880–81, but enough resistance was present within the council to prevent the granting of the railroad’s request.

On June 23, 1883, the railroad attempted to accomplish their objective by cloak and dagger. Between 3 and 6:30 a.m., some 300 feet of track was laid south of Fifth Street along State Street and was occupied by UI&E cars. This dramatic nocturnal attempt was ultimately unsuccessful, as the city used the courts to force the railroad to remove the tracks. Consequently, the new terminal was built at Fifth Street in 1883, from where it witnessed the passing scene for some seventy years. However, an official memento of the thrust toward Second Street appeared in latter day Lehigh Valley track charts, which indicated that Milepost 0 of its Elmira & Cortland Branch was at Second Street, even though the track ended at Fifth Street.
The Advent of Austin Corbin

George Rice’s association with the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira and its accompanying railroads resulted in personal disaster. Although his efforts produced a working rail system between Elmira and Canastota, in early 1882 there were rumblings of discontent among the UI&E directors concerning his methods and their effect on the railroad’s security holders. On May 1, 1882, the groundswell of disapproval forced the UI&E into receivership. Oddly enough, Rice was appointed the receiver, but he was cited for contempt of court in July 1882, for failing to follow the court’s directions concerning the railroad. Within a month, he was removed from the post.

During this legal turmoil, Rice’s employer, Henry King of London, whose eponymous banking firm represented British investors in the UI&E, made a visit to the scene to investigate matters. King’s findings led to the arrest of Rice on charges of forgery, embezzlement, and larceny. On January 12, 1883, Rice was formally arraigned on these charges in New York City and committed to jail in lieu of bail. The upstate New York press made light of his incarceration, reporting that, although originally confined in the Tombs prison, Rice was soon transferred to the more comfortable quarters of the Ludlow Street jail, from which he was released daily and was seen visiting about New York City and dining frequently at the Astor House. The Elmira newspapers soon lost interest in Rice and the outcome of his case was not reported.
During the turbulence marking Rice’s departure, Austin Corbin succeeded Rice as president of both the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira and the Cazenovia, Canastota & DeRuyter in 1882. By the time of this venture into upstate New York, Corbin had attained a place of considerable prominence in the railroad world. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Corbin soon left the practice of law to engage in real estate and banking, first in the Midwest and later in the metropolitan New York area, where he became involved with the Long Island Railroad. At the time that he became the head of the UI&E, Corbin was president of the LIRR and most of the LIRR’s subsidiary lines. Corbin was experienced in the restructuring of railroads, and the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira was a property well suited to his talents.

Although the motive power of the UI&E had been improved during 1879 by the addition of two Brooks-built 4-4-0 locomotives (UI&E 8 and 13) and two Hinckley-built 2-6-0s (UI&E 9 and 14), in 1882 the condition of the UI&E and CC&D properties was only marginal, as the original hasty construction was now feeling the strain of years of service. During 1883 the Corbin administration improved the physical plant by laying 60-pound steel rail between East Ithaca and Cortland in place of the 56-pound rail originally used there and by adding two new locomotives. Both engines were from the Rogers Locomotive Works; a 2-6-0 became UI&E No. 12, but a 4-6-0 received at about the same time is not identifiable among the UI&E engines, although it later became the EC&N’s No. 13. In addition, to improve safety for the traveling public, the UI&E passenger cars were equipped with the Eames vacuum brake system during 1883.

Apparently feeling that the time was right for a public relations campaign, the UI&E ran a special train to Cazenovia on May 25, 1883, so that rowing fans could watch the famed Charles Courtney in action on Cazenovia Lake. Later, on June 28, 1883, a special car was placed at the disposal of New York’s governor, Grover Cleveland, as he made a trip over the road. Also, in July 1883, the UI&E provided a complimentary trip to Cazenovia for representatives of the Ithaca press and their invited guests. On their return, they described the road in the local newspapers as “much improved!” The campaign seemed successful.

In October 1883 the need for more improvements became apparent when the UI&E’s shops at Breesport were totally destroyed by fire. The shop facilities were located at this remote site as a result of the influence of Joseph Rodbourn, who was anxious to see his home shire prosper. Following the conflagration, the new management capitalized on the sudden need by locating the new shops at a more central location in Cortland, where a suitable building formerly occupied by a nail factory was available. During this same period, construction of a new brick terminal building at Fifth Street in Elmira was begun, which would serve as a passenger and freight depot as well as the road’s general offices.
The EC&N Becomes the Division’s Elmira & Cortland Branch

By February of 1884, President Corbin, in combination with J. Rogers Maxwell, a fellow financier, had personally acquired:

- the lease of the Canal Railroad, extending from Elmira to Horseheads over a distance of 5.28 miles;
- the line from Horseheads to Cortland formerly known as the Utica, Ithaca & Elmira Railroad, extending 65.8 miles;
- the lease of the old Oswego Midland (now New York, Ontario & Western Railway) trackage between Cortland and DeRuyter, a distance of 20.22 miles; and
- the line from DeRuyter to Canastota, extending 28.54 miles.

This assemblage constituted 119.84 miles of single-track railroad between Fifth Street in Elmira and the New York Central mainline at Canastota. The properties and the leases were immediately conveyed by Corbin and Maxwell to the new Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad upon its incorporation on March 7, 1884. The rolling stock of the former UI&E and the former CC&D were now identified as EC&N property.

Despite the voluntary efforts to renovate the UI&E and the CC&D begun by the Corbin regime in 1883, the emergent Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad received some bad publicity caused by its poor physical condition, particularly north of Cazenovia. A complaint to the state’s railroad commissioners on March 20, 1884, from disgruntled passengers alleged generally that the EC&N was unsafe for operation between Cazenovia and Canastota be-
cause the newer engines, with a longer wheelbase, were constantly derailing.

On March 22, 1884, a more specific passenger complaint stated that a passenger train running between the same two villages derailed, with the locomotive and tender plunging ten feet into a ditch, although fortunately the passenger car remained upright and no one was injured. The conductor was forced to return to Cazenovia on foot to obtain a second locomotive and car. This relief train in turn derailed on its return to Cazenovia with the rescued passengers from the first mishap. At this point, some of the male passengers walked the rest of the way to the village, one of them thoughtfully mailing a description of the incident to the state’s railroad commissioners.

In response to these complaints, the railroad commissioners promptly inspected the property and verified the deplorable condition of the track. They then issued an order to show cause why this condition, which had been previously noted during an inspection in 1883, had not been corrected and why passenger service on the EC&N should not be discontinued until the road was put in a safe condition. In the interim, the commissioners recommended that passenger train speed on the entire EC&N be restricted to 10 miles per hour.

President Corbin quickly responded to the commissioners on April 10, 1884, outlining the difficulties his management had encountered in taking over the “hopelessly insolvent and almost complete wrecks” of the railroads that now comprised the EC&N. Corbin detailed the remedies he planned, including new ties, rails, locomotives, and a general overhaul. He was as good as his word. By the fall of 1884, new ties and rails had been laid as needed, the roadbed had been overhauled, station buildings had been renovated and
repaired, and seven new engines had been added to the motive power roster. Cooke Locomotive Works was the supplier of the new engines, all of which were of the 4-6-0 wheel arrangement and were assigned Elmira, Cortland & Northern numbers 12 through 18.

In 1884, 405 persons were listed as employed on the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad, including officials. The figure peaked at 452 in 1888 and declined to 346 by 1895. In 1885, the following monthly rates were paid: passenger engineers, $90; freight engineers, $84.50; passenger firemen, $46.50; freight firemen, $45; passenger conductors, $75; freight conductors, $69; passenger brakemen, $40.50; freight brakemen, $44.20; engine wipers, $35; machinists, $63.70; carpenters, $50.70; telegraph operators, $28.70; section foremen, $40; and sectionmen, $26.78.

During this same year, the EC&N maintained three passenger crews composed of engineer, fireman, conductor, brakeman, and baggage man and nine freight crews composed of engineer, fireman, conductor, and three brakemen. The length of the railroad was divided into twenty-two track sections, with a section foreman and four sectionmen assigned to each section.

By 1885, tonnage on the improved Elmira, Cortland & Northern had increased to three times that of the 1883 Utica, Ithaca & Elmira operation, much of the increase being coal. Unfortunately for the EC&N, one of the added coal trains was the origin of a fatal accident of major proportions on the steep Swartwood grade. On October 15, 1885, at 2:30 a.m., a twenty-three-car coal train, eastbound from Elmira, approached the top of the grade at Park Station. Pulled by two locomotives, the train stopped at Park Station to uncouple the lead engine, which then proceeded to run light down the grade in advance of the coal train.

In subsequent switching moves, the coal train edged over the brow of the hill and, with no hand brakes set, began to run out of control down the hill toward Swartwood. Part way down the grade, the runaway overtook the lead engine, the two colliding with such force that the lead engine and nineteen of the loaded coal cars were overturned, although the engine still coupled to the train remained upright. As a result, the engineer of the lead engine and a brakeman on the coal train were killed and others of the crew were seriously injured.

The subsequent investigation by the state railroad commissioners revealed that only two brakemen had been on the train, one of them a 19-year-old youth who was making his first trip on that part of the road and was not familiar with it. The commissioners concluded that the EC&N was primarily to blame in not properly manning its train and that the train's conductor was secondarily at fault in not having enough brakes set to hold the train before starting the switching moves. The commissioners recommended the EC&N consider the application of vacuum brakes, or any future automatic braking system that proved practical, to its coal and freight cars.

As long as it existed, the Swartwood grade was a trouble spot, the site of numerous near disasters and harrowing operating incidents. With the advent of automatic air brakes in later years, Lehigh Valley trains operated under rules prudenty prescribing the use of retaining valves to maintain braking action on this grade. One hundred percent use was specified for freight trains and 50 percent for passenger trains. The same rules applied on the northern
end of the line between Blakeslee and Canastota, where steep grades (although not as severe as Swartwood) required extra braking effort and train-handling caution.

Early in 1886 six new locomotives were added to the EC&N roster, bringing the number of engines on the road to twenty-four, its highest engine count. Four of the new engines were Cooke-built 4-6-0s, numbers 19–22, and two were Grant-built 2-8-0s, numbered 23 and 24. These latter two engines were the largest power the EC&N would own and operate.

At the same time, the EC&N began a program to extend its line farther north from Canastota to Camden. This was accomplished by organizing a separate company, the Canastota Northern Railroad, that was chartered on March 24, 1886, and charged with building the new railroad from Canastota to Camden, a distance of 20.73 miles. After its completion, the Canastota Northern was permanently leased to the EC&N in August 1887. With this new extension, the Elmira, Cortland & Northern gained connection with the New York, Ontario & Western Railway at Sylvan Junction on the Wood River, near Sylvan Beach, and the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburg Railroad at Camden.

Above: Men employed at the Lehigh Valley–New York Central union station at Canastota in 1917. LV single track in front of the men heads left toward Camden.

Left: LV intersection with the NYC at Canastota, looking southwest about 1915. NYC mainline is in the immediate foreground, leading right toward Syracuse. LV enters from Cortland between the signal tower at left and the LV freight house at left center, crosses the electrified West Shore line at grade, and curves left to Camden at the lower left corner. Power for the West Shore comes from a transmission tower at left center. LV also bridges these tracks, a yard, and the Erie Canal to the north.
Construction of the Canastota Northern was relatively straightforward except at Canastota, where bridges were necessary to cross over the New York Central main line and the Erie Canal.

In addition, the crossing of the Wood River near the eastern end of Oneida Lake was accomplished by the EC&N and the NYO&W jointly building a new bridge over the river. On the bridge, the EC&N tracks were interlaced with the O&W’s main track in a gauntlet pattern. The layout was further complicated by a crossover in the middle of the bridge that incorporated sliding rails to effect its purpose. Because of this unique track arrangement, the state railroad commissioners paid close attention to operation by the railroads across the span. After some incidents where EC&N trains ended up on the O&W track, and vice versa, this arrangement was abandoned in 1891, when just a single track was laid across the bridge. This track had switches at each end, so that the EC&N could enter or exit the O&W track to cross the Wood River bridge.

In 1888, Corbin assumed the presidency of the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad. Archibald McLeod accompanied him to become vice-president and general manager of the larger railroad. In addition, both men retained their official status on the Elmira, Cortland & Northern for some time after 1888. McLeod finally resigned from the EC&N in 1890, to devote full time to the Philadelphia & Reading. Corbin did not resign until 1891, when he was succeeded by his son-in-law, George S. Edgell, as president of the EC&N. McLeod is best remembered for his meteoric rise on the P&R, where he ultimately became president and, for a brief period, effected a coalition of several major anthracite carriers in an unsuccessful attempt to create an anthracite monopoly (see chapter 1, page 28).

The association of Corbin and McLeod with the Philadelphia & Reading introduced the possibility of an Elmira, Cortland & Northern extension to the P&R at Williamsport, Pennsylvania. Two routes to make this connection were reportedly surveyed in 1888: one from Elmira south to Williamsport; the other south from Van Etten through the Pennsylvania towns of Sayre, Towanda, Dushore, and along Loyalsock Creek to a connection with the P&R outside Williamsport. Neither plan was realized.

The Elmira, Cortland & Northern made a contribution to public recreation in 1889 by adding a short length of track from its Sylvan Beach station to the waterfront area directly at the foot of the Wood River. (The Sylvan Beach station was actually in Verona Beach on the south side of the river, with Sylvan Beach itself located on the north side.) Here, excursion trains delivered holiday patrons to the end of a bridge providing pedestrian access to Sylvan Beach proper.
Above: EC&N No. 4 leads an excursion train on the wye at the LV’s first Sylvan Beach station, hidden by the first coach. The bridge at left carries pedestrians to Sylvan Beach.

Left: The LV Sylvan Beach station, concealed in the picture above.
The following year, an effort was made to extend the EC&N further north from Camden to Watertown. The Camden, Watertown & Northern Railroad was chartered on December 17, 1890, with Corbin as president. The new company made a token start on the proposed route near Watertown by purchasing two plots of land and laying a few feet of track. However, because of pressure from the RW &O, which fought to protect its Watertown fiefdom, the idea of the northern extension was abandoned within a short time and the northern terminal of the EC&N remained forever after at Camden. Before this time, the EC&N had used the RW &O depot in Camden. After this competitive friction arose, the EC&N had to provide its own depot facilities.

The final years of the EC&N as an independent railroad saw some physical improvements of a significant nature made to the property. In 1889, the 1,600-foot wooden trestle spanning Six Mile Creek at Brooktondale was replaced by an 850-foot iron trestle erected by the Philadelphia Bridge Company. The reduction in length was accomplished by adding high fills at both ends of the new structure. The EC&N also obligingly elevated itself over the new Lehigh Valley mainline being built to Buffalo in 1892 by the construction of an eighty-foot iron bridge at Van Etten. The original UI&E bridges at Block House Gorge and Deep Gorge on Swartwood Hill, which had been knocked out of plumb by the heavier EC&N engines, were repaired at a cost of more than $44,000. During the same period, steam heating apparatus was installed in all passenger-hauling equipment.
In the mid-1890s, at the peak of its development, the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad provided a worthwhile local carrier service to the area it served. Although it was sometimes referred to as the “Empty, Crooked & Nasty” or the “Empty Cars & No Railroad” (in the same vein that its predecessor, the UI&E, had been labeled the “Useless, Idle, and Expensive”), the nicknames were not wholly merited. In 1883, the year of its last annual report covering a full year’s operation, the UI&E reported carrying 77,000 tons of freight and 115,000 passengers. From 1884 onward, the EC&N improved on these figures, reaching a peak freight year in 1890, with 490,000 tons of freight and 261,500 passengers carried. For the remainder of the EC&N’s independent existence, its freight tonnage was below this level, reaching a low of 255,000 tons in 1894. At the same time, the passenger traffic grew slightly and remained relatively constant. The peak year for passenger operations was 1893 when 274,000 passengers were carried, the increase probably due to promotion that year of excursion tickets to the World’s Fair in Chicago.

After eleven years of existence as an independent carrier, the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad, although greatly improved by Corbin’s management, was still not a paying concern. Although good operating profits were produced (except in 1884), those profits were insufficient to meet the railroad’s fixed expenses, which were in large part interest
payments on bond indebtedness. Although a portion of the current interest was not charged to the company's books after 1884, by 1889 the EC&N had nevertheless accumulated a deficit of more than $300,000. This negative picture was brightened by the EC&N's issuance of twenty-year debentures in 1889, the proceeds from which brought a surplus to the EC&N balance sheet. The picture looked even brighter after these debentures were temporarily retired and the related interest payments cancelled. The EC&N's surplus in 1894 amounted to more than $400,000.

However, on the eve of the EC&N's sale to the Lehigh Valley in 1895, the debentures and the uncharged interest on the other prior indebtedness for the period 1884–1895 were restored to the EC&N's general income account as liabilities. When the balancing was complete, the EC&N, rather than possessing any surplus, showed an accumulated deficit of over $600,000 for the twelve years of its operation.

Despite these financial shortcomings, the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad had a strong appeal for the Lehigh Valley, which was still seeking new coal markets in upstate New York in 1895. Already physically connected with the Lehigh Valley at Van Etten and at Freeville, the EC&N would give the Lehigh Valley direct access to Elmira, as well as to regions north and east of central New York that were not yet supplied with Lehigh Valley coal. The Elmira access had been lost to the Lehigh Valley in 1892 when the Lehigh Valley built its own mainline and stopped using the Erie. Accordingly, on January 1, 1896, the Lehigh Valley purchased all the capital stock, property, and assets of the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad. The transaction was formalized on February 19, 1896, by an agreement and bond.

From that date forward, the Elmira, Cortland & Northern continued in existence as a proprietary company owned and operated by the Lehigh Valley until February 17, 1905, when it was formally merged and consolidated with the Lehigh Valley Rail Way, which comprised the Lehigh Valley properties within New York State. One bit of business was to take even longer to discharge: the lease of the original New York & Oswego Midland track between Cortland and DeRuyter. It was August 11, 1915, before the NYO&W, successor to the Oswego Midland, conveyed ownership of this piece to the Lehigh Valley.

Since the Elmira, Cortland & Northern was a functioning entity, it was comparatively easy to merge it with the existing Auburn Division of the Lehigh Valley, where it became the Elmira & Cortland Branch under the direction of Division Superintendent H. D. Titus, with little actual change to the EC&N property or its operation. The former EC&N train dispatching office in Cortland remained functional and in control of its usual domain. The usual EC&N trains ran on their accustomed routes, piloted by their regular crews. The motive power and the rolling stock previously owned by the EC&N remained on the new E&C Branch track, although the equipment gradually assumed the identity of its new owner.

The engines at first retained their former EC&N number, but with the numeral 9 added as a prefix under the Lehigh Valley system. For example, EC&N No. 19 became LV No. 919. More changes were made as some of the original Cooke-built 4-6-0s were rebuilt to 2-6-0s and 0-6-0s...
and the subsequent Lehigh Valley general renumbering of 1905, that established engine numbers and classes according to wheel arrangements, eradicated any traces of EC&N heritage. By 1913, the EC&N engines were scrapped and deleted from the Lehigh Valley locomotive roster, with the exceptions of Nos. 914 and 917, that had been rebuilt as 0-6-0s and endured until 1916 and 1933, respectively. One veteran 4-4-0, original UI&E No. 13, experienced EC&N and Lehigh Valley ownership before it was sold to the New York, Auburn & Lansing Railroad in 1906, where it continued to serve for another ten years.

Other small changes occurred. For example, before 1896 the Lehigh Valley and the EC&N had interchanged passengers and freight at Freeville. With the combination of the two roads, this service was improved. In addition, the former EC&N station at Ithaca was renamed “East Ithaca,” to distinguish it from the larger depot serving the Ithaca Branch of the Lehigh Valley mainline and the A&I Branch of the Auburn Division on the west side of the city. (The Ithaca Branch of the LV mainline was a high-speed line for passenger service that ran between Geneva Junction and Van Etten Junction.) Also, the timetable direction of train movement on the EC&N, which was established as eastward to Elmira (or northward, if towards Camden), was changed to conform with the Lehigh Valley practice of identifying all train movements away from New York City as “westward.”

As the original EC&N engines wore out and were scrapped, they were replaced by available Lehigh Valley types that met the weight restrictions imposed by the light superstructure and limiting curvature of the Elmira & Cortland Branch. In 1917–1918, a dearth of lightweight engines suitable for the branch caused the Lehigh Valley to build thirty-five small 4-6-0s (numbered 1131–1165 on the LV roster). A great success in branch line work, a stable of these sturdy ten-wheelers served on the Elmira & Cortland Branch until the end of steam operations on the division.

Although the 4-6-0 was the prevalent type of wheel arrangement on the E&C Branch, 4-6-2s later saw some use, after track abandonments resulted in the routing of E&C Branch trains from Freeville to Sayre on the Auburn Branch of the division. Also, for a period from 1927 until the end of passenger service, gas-electric motorcars supplanted steam power on the E&C passenger trains, as the Lehigh Valley put motor units into general use. When these self-propelled cars were on the rails, four motorcars appeared at Freeville simultaneously, twice daily, as the Auburn and E&C branches’ passenger trains crossed paths.

One lasting memento of the Elmira, Cortland & Northern remained untouched: when the Elmira terminal building was destroyed in the 1950s, there was still an arched stone bearing the inscription “E. C. & N. R.R.” embedded in the masonry above the second story windows (photo on page 148).
Geneva local at Geneva Junction on its return trip to Auburn in the late 1940s on the Seneca Falls Branch, which in 1903 had become the fourth, and last addition to the Auburn Division of the Lehigh Valley RR. The local crosses both mainline tracks leaving Geneva Yard. Just out of the picture at right the train departed to the right to the Ithaca Branch, then to the Seneca Falls branch.
Adding a Seneca Falls Branch

The latter-day development that brought the Auburn Division to its greatest size also provided it with a direct western connection to the Lehigh Valley mainline at Geneva. This new branch line was initially called the Seneca County Railway, chartered on February 24, 1891, as a proprietary company of the Lehigh Valley. The venture was organized for the stated purpose of constructing and maintaining a railroad between Geneva and Seneca Falls.

The Lehigh Valley did not build the Seneca County Railway in impetuous haste. The project was inactive for five years after the charter date.

Construction was finally begun during February 1896 and completed eighteen months later. Construction was not particularly demanding. The line began at a connection with the Ithaca Branch of the Lehigh Valley mainline, just south of that branch’s bridge over the Seneca River, southeast of Geneva. A nearby interlocking tower at Geneva Junction that controlled the connection of the Ithaca Branch with the new Lehigh Valley mainline to Buffalo was also enlisted to control the infrequent Seneca County Railway trains.

Diverging from the Ithaca Branch on a curve to the east, the Seneca County Railway aligned itself with the Seneca River for 8.3 miles through the village of Waterloo, until it reached its terminus at Ovid Street in Seneca Falls. En route, the single track followed a line of gentle curves and grades with only one short deck plate girder bridge necessary, at Silver Creek. In Waterloo, an existing building at the Fayette Street crossing was obtained for use as a passenger station. In Seneca Falls, a new combination passenger and freight facility was built.

Operation of the Seneca County Railway began on October 24, 1897. Passenger trains originated at the new Lehigh Valley mainline Geneva station, returning without delay from Seneca Falls. Passenger equipment reportedly was the same as that used on the mainline, except that lighter engines sufficed.
On August 3, 1903, the Seneca County Railway was merged with the Lehigh Valley Railway, where it became known as the Seneca Falls Branch. The Seneca County Railway was actually only one of five small companies originally formed for construction purposes and absorbed by the Lehigh Valley on the same date, in an effort by the LV to streamline its cumbersome corporate structure to foster greater economy and good management. In its 1904 annual report, the Lehigh Valley stated its intent to extend the Seneca Falls Branch of the Auburn Division to the village of Cayuga on the east shore of Cayuga Lake, for connection with the Auburn & Ithaca Branch, but a decade passed before this plan was realized. In the
meantime, a major enlargement of the New York State canal system led to changes in the original planning at Seneca Falls.

Passenger service was never a strong suit on the Seneca Falls Branch: the New York Central’s Auburn Road service was well entrenched on the other bank of the river and would never be dislodged. In 1902, before the merger, the Lehigh Valley was providing one round trip daily, except on Sunday, from Geneva to Seneca Falls. The service increased to two daily round trips in 1904. After a decade of serving an unresponsive public, the Lehigh Valley management was eventually convinced that passenger service was no longer needed and, on October 1, 1914, the stations at Waterloo and Seneca Falls were closed and passenger trains on the branch were discontinued.

The Seneca Falls Branch fared better with freight service, since a fringe of shippers were attracted to the new rails on the south side of the Seneca River. A team track and stock loading pens were of use to customers at Waterloo and a distillery and a sauerkraut plant became permanent customers. Even more important was the business at Seneca Falls, where the Lehigh Valley’s branch was cosied into a narrow, cluttered, and busy area alongside Locks 3 and 4 on the Cayuga-Seneca Falls Canal, close to the Seneca Falls Flats. The Flats...
was a highly industrialized area on the north side of the canal in the center of the village, which housed such well-established manufacturers as Goulds Pumps and LaFrance Engine Company. Although the Flats were on the other side of the canal from the Seneca Falls Branch, which the Lehigh Valley must have regretted, at least a fair share of traffic originated on the Lehigh Valley’s side of the water.
In any event, by 1913 the Lehigh Valley was pursuing its plan to continue the Seneca Falls Branch east to Cayuga. The original track layout for this plan would have placed the Cayuga extension track on the south side of the Seneca Falls station. There, beginning at the intersection of Ovid and Bayard streets, it would have continued east along the south side of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal to intersect with the New York Central’s Auburn Road at a point northeast of Seneca Falls, where the New York Central crossed both the Seneca River and the canal.

However, plans formulated by New York State for an enlargement of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal caused a radical change in the proposed route of the Lehigh Valley. The canal enlargement plan put significant portions of the original LV route to Cayuga under water. Under the revision, the Lehigh Valley tracks already laid in Seneca Falls would remain unchanged and the proposed connection with the New York Central at the Seneca River would be completed as planned, but the new Lehigh Valley’s tracks would take surprising twists to reach that point.

To extend the road to Cayuga, the Lehigh Valley now created a junction point, called Seneca Junction, on its existing trackage west of Seneca Falls at Kingdom Road and the 1.5 miles reaching into Seneca Falls from the junction became the Seneca Falls spur. Continuing east from Seneca Junction, the revised Lehigh Valley route swung 90 degrees to the southeast, then 70 degrees east and, finally, 90 degrees north to pick up its original survey at the point where the Seneca Falls corporation line crossed the Seneca River.

Apparently intent on circumnavigating the southern half of the village of Seneca Falls, the Lehigh Valley added approximately 250 degrees of curvature and 1⅛ miles to its route, which now had the advantage of being free of grade crossings and congested village areas.
In April 1913, the Lehigh Valley was reportedly buying its new right-of-way, on which it began construction on May 1, 1913, at Kingdom Bridge. In all, 5.7 miles of new railroad was necessary to reach the point of connection with the New York Central, which was called Lehigh Valley Junction by the New York Central and simply LV Junction by the Lehigh Valley. That year, a trackage rights agreement was made between the two roads, granting the Lehigh Valley permission to use 2.2 miles of New York Central track from LV Junction to Cayuga. During early 1914, the Cayuga Branch, formerly a spur of the Auburn & Ithaca Branch of the Auburn Division, was refurbished and appended to the Seneca Falls Branch with a wye connection at Cayuga Junction.
All was in readiness by July 1, 1914, when the first through freight train over the new route from Auburn to Geneva left at 2 a.m. Some puffery was present in a June 26 news item that stated that four trips per day were planned on the new route (actually two round-trips from both Auburn and Geneva); the July 1 single round-trip from Auburn was the only newcomer, although the railroad planned to add more trains later on. A trip from Geneva to Seneca Falls was mentioned, which was presumably a holdover from the Lehigh Valley local freight service before the extension was built or a remnant of the passenger service between Geneva and Seneca Falls that was to be discontinued in October. The passage of time proved the additions unwarranted and they were never made.

Nevertheless, one bit of passenger service stubbornly persisted between Cayuga Junction and Cayuga on the Seneca Falls Branch. After the inception of the Auburn & Ithaca Branch passenger trains made the village of Cayuga a byway, this passenger service dwindled to space on mixed trains which on any published timetables were “contingent upon the handling of freight.” Eventually, the lone through freight train on the Seneca Falls Branch, originating in Auburn as the Geneva Local, was designated a second class train only between the points of Cayuga Junction and Cayuga and authorized to carry passengers in either direction between those two points. This designation endured until the final days of the Seneca Falls Branch operation, circa 1965.

After completion of the Cayuga extension, the Seneca Falls Branch settled down to a comfortable freight diet fed, for the most part, by the single local train based in Auburn, although there were occasional extra movements from the Geneva end or from ice trains, originating at Cayuga during the winter harvesting months and destined for Manchester on the Lehigh Valley mainline. Obviously, the Seneca Falls branch dramatically shortened the haul between the Auburn Division and points west, attracting new shippers.
Lehigh Valley's second diesel, No. 125, built in Auburn, is ready for a test run from Auburn to Manchester and back with two coaches and 75 guests, June 14, 1927. The diesel came out of the McIntosh & Seymour plant in the background, later acquired by American Locomotive Co. This was part of a change to diesel and to gas-electric motor units to haul light passenger and mixed trains on the Auburn Division and elsewhere on the system.
When the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad was added to the Auburn Division in 1896, the existing division was nearly doubled in size overnight by the new track mileage, personnel, and motive power. The newly enlarged division now reached from the Susquehanna River Valley to the shore of Lake Ontario and from the Chemung River Valley to the Adirondack foothills. En route, it threaded its way along the shores of two of the Finger Lakes, Cayuga and Owasco. It linked four upstate New York cities: Auburn, Cortland, Elmira, and Ithaca.

At the time, the Auburn Division was mostly single track with light rail for its entire length. Its buildings were modest. Its locomotives were light. Its signaling was manual, unorthodox at some locations, and lacking uniformity. Its passenger appointments were crude. Despite all this, it was a serviceable railroad on the verge of improvement.

Improvements began with the erection of a roundhouse in Auburn, followed in 1899 by a new and substantial two-story brick depot located close by at 140 Clark Street. The new station provided for the needs of the travelling public on the first floor, while the second floor was given over to the offices of Henry D. Titus, division superintendent, who had been the former superintendent of the Southern Central and earlier Auburn Division incarnations. (Titus's initials were H.D.T., translated by his employees as “heavy dog turd.”)

Other division officials shared the second floor with the “super,” as did the train dispatchers who controlled the division’s mainline Auburn Branch and Auburn & Ithaca Branch operations. The engineering and communications offices were located on the third floor of the new Auburn station.

The dispatchers who controlled the former Elmira, Cortland & Northern line (now the Elmira & Cortland Branch) remained in Cortland. In general, this was the mode
under which train operations on the Auburn Division were conducted for some years: the E&C Branch maintained a seniority district for its train crews which was totally separate from the rest of the division.

Nonetheless, Auburn was the major terminal on the Auburn Division, with a sixteen-stall roundhouse and a turntable providing locomotive service for the assigned motive power. A car repair department and a wreck train were also based there and enough switching was
done in the Auburn yard to require the use of day and night yard engines. Auburn’s importance is explained by its location on the Sayre-North Fair Haven mainline at its junction with the A&I Branch and to the existence of large manufacturing enterprises in the city that used the Lehigh Valley for shipping. These companies included Columbian Rope, McIntosh & Seymour (later American Locomotive), and International Harvester.

The new station and its passenger platform were built parallel with the Auburn Branch main track along Monroe Street, eliminating the deadend moves formerly required of passenger trains at the original Southern Central depot on Washington Street. At the north end of the new station’s platform, an L-shaped section served the New York Central’s Auburn Road, which crossed, in close order, Monroe Street, the Auburn Branch tracks, and Clark Street. This station was called “Auburn-Monroe Street” on the New York Central timetables to differentiate it from the NYC’s main depot on State Street. All NYC passenger trains stopped here to permit passengers to transfer to the Lehigh Valley. Also, in 1899 a new LV freight station was added close to the site of the former Southern Central depot for handling and storage of less-than-carload freight shipments, as well as to provide better accessibility for freight patrons.

In the next four chapters, we’ll discuss the most significant components of the business of the Auburn Division, both freight and passenger.
**Right:** Yard at Auburn, the northern hub of the Auburn Division, looking north in the 1940s. The main track of the Auburn Branch at left runs along the passenger platform past a tower in the distance that controls the LV-NYC crossing. Track to the left with hopper cars runs to a NYC interchange track and LV freight house tracks on Washington St. Tracks curving to the right lead to the LV turntable.

**Below:** LV Engine 1153 leans into her work of helping the north end local out of Auburn yard about 1943. Columbus St. crosses at center. Switch in the left foreground connects to Columbian Rope Co.; building at right is the E. D. Clapp Co. Twin stacks in the left distance locate the LV boiler house which heats the passenger station and roundhouse.

**Right:** The view north at the Auburn Branch bridge over the Seneca River a mile north of Weedsport. The Erie Canal was relocated into the river channel about 1910, removing it from its original route through Weedsport.
Above: Sayre, Pa., yard, southern terminus of the Auburn Division, a Lehigh Valley mainline stop, and home of locomotive shops and a major freight yard. By about 1950 most traces of steam operations have disappeared; the roundhouse was gone in 1953. The Lehigh mainline to Buffalo is at left. Arrows indicate the SC Junction and SC Yard, last traces of the Southern Central, and track to Auburn at right.

Left: LV Engine 2010 at Cato pulls a local freight toward North Fair Haven on Labor Day 1937.
Above: Engineer tries out an early experimental General Electric gas-electric motor in 1908 near Horseheads, said to be the first use of such a motor unit on the Lehigh Valley. Gasoline drove a generator that powered an electric motor. Operators reportedly had trouble with the separate controls and it was 1927 before gas-electrics began to replace steam on the LV.

Right: Motor 30 at Cortland makes the first trip of a gas-electric on the E&C Branch from Elmira to Camden on Jan. 2, 1927.
Above: LV Motor 21 waits on the coach track at the Auburn station about 1937. At 4:40 p.m. it will lead Train 284 to Sayre on the Auburn Branch with an express car attached. Gas-electrics like 21 gradually took on passenger and mixed train duty after the Lehigh introduced them in 1927. In annual reports, the LV said it had 19 gas-electrics in service by the end of 1927. Unlike diesels, these used gasoline to power the motors that drove their electric generators.

Left: Loading southbound Train 302 at Union Springs about 1940.
Hopper cars of coal leave the Auburn yard headed for delivery to the NYC mainline at Weedsport about 1943. View is south through the yard from the Orchard St. gate tower. Baker Ave. crosses in the foreground. The Auburn Branch to Sayre is at center; the track diverging to the right is the Auburn & Ithaca Branch to Ithaca. Shabby yard office is in the right foreground, smokestack of Firth Carpet Co. is behind, and the stack of Columbian Rope is behind Firth’s.
The Auburn Division was created and sustained throughout the period of its divisional existence by the anthracite coal trade. As early as 1869, Robert Sayre, then superintendent of the Lehigh Valley, was regarding the area served by the Southern Central Railroad favorably as a potential coal market. It was Sayre's opinion that the line would carry heavy tonnage of hard and soft coal into the area and an equally heavy tonnage of farm, forest, and factory products out, and the passing years proved him correct in his thinking. Coal was the major commodity carried by the division for seven decades, beginning in 1871.

On January 3, 1871, Sayre dramatized the Lehigh Valley's annual report for the previous year by adding a telegram announcing that LV Locomotive 142 and sixty-two loaded coal cars had reached Auburn at 3 p.m. on that day. During the next year, 1872, the Lehigh Valley reported delivering more than 110,000 tons of anthracite and 31,000 tons of bituminous coal over the Auburn Division, beginning a coal traffic that crested in the 1930s, after which hard coal began to decline as a favorite fuel for home heating.

The Auburn Division provided a substantial domestic market for coal in itself. In addition, the division was blessed with important canal and rail delivery points for more distant markets, including the E&C connection at Freeville and New York Central connections at Auburn, Weedsport, and Sterling. In the division's early years, a small coal dock at Weedsport on the Erie Canal required deliveries of light tonnages.

After the acquisition of the Elmira, Cortland & Northern, the canal dock at Canastota was used until it was made obsolete by the larger Erie Canal. More importantly, at Weedsport the New York Central mainline and its West Shore connections provided avenues to coal markets in Syracuse and points further north. A similar connection with the New York Central at Canastota made it easy for shipments to go east. In addition to provid-
ing access to even more domestic customers, the E&C Branch opened up a market with industrial customers in Cortland, as well as affording access to a second coal dock on the Erie Canal at Canastota.

The location that really attracted and held the interest of the public, however, was the Lehigh Valley coal dock at the North Fair Haven end of the Auburn Branch of the Auburn Division. The gaunt timberwork and bayside setting of the structure, with the added attractions of railroading and shipping activities, drew the attention of vacationers and local folks alike. The coal dock’s structure was 30 feet high and 1,500 feet long. It was double tracked on its deck and had room for about sixteen cars that could be unloaded into pockets of the trestle that were capable of holding 1,300 tons each. At the base of the trestle, on the east side away from the bay, was a small storage yard with room for seventy-five coal cars and a ground storage area with the capacity for 45,000 tons of coal.

Operation of the dock was seasonal, corresponding with the navigational season on Lake Ontario. When shipping began in the spring, a switch engine and crew were assigned to perform all necessary car handling. Otherwise, the transfer of coal from the dock to the marine vessels was accomplished manually, except for any assistance in keeping the black diamonds flowing into the ships that might be gained from the height of the dock itself and the force of gravity. Mainly, the coal was moved about by large wheelbarrows, scoops on small job cranes,
and large coal shovels, all powered by the dock-workers. While the dockside work was not easy (the wheelbarrows reportedly carrying 400-pound loads), the work in the dark and dirty holds of the ships was even less desirable.

At times, resentment of their lot caused the coal loaders to rebel. In 1900, the coal trimmers working in the ship holds and others unloading cars up on the trestle struck over working conditions. Not being regular employees of the Lehigh Valley, the seasonal dockworkers were paid on the basis of coal actually handled. In June, the Lehigh Valley, which had formerly paid the trimmers $2 1/2 cents per ton, reduced the scale to just 2 cents. At the same time, the trestle workers, who had been receiving $1.50 a day for unloading coal hopper cars, quit when the Lehigh Valley began to ship coal in boxcars that required much hand shoveling to fully unload.

The use of boxcars for coal shipment was not that unusual when a shortage of hopper cars occurred or when coal pilferage en route reached unreasonable limits. Additionally, their use provided a means of moving otherwise empty boxcars closer to sites where they could be loaded with outgoing freight of other types. Peace was restored to the dock after negotiation with Division Superintendent Titus. The trimmers’ pay was restored to its
previous rate and the Lehigh Valley furnished an extra deck hand to ease their cramped labor. The trestle hands received an increase to $1.75 per day for the added inconvenience of working within the boxcars.

Fortunately for those on stowage duty, the cargoes handled were not large, ranging from 105 to 2,400 tons, in keeping with the holds of the small steam and sailing vessels that called at North Fair Haven, the size of which was limited by the bay’s shallow depth. A hybrid group of barges, many of them converted from sailing vessels, was also present, either towed or self-propelled. Vessels that needed towing were served by the tugs owned initially by the Southern Central and later by the Lehigh Valley, which kept the tug Cortland in service until the late 1920s.

By that time, a number of factors combined to affect the fortunes of the coal dock adversely: a state of decrepitude from nearly sixty years of use; a condition of obsolescence caused by the absence of any modernization programs; and, finally, a lessening demand for anthracite coal by the public. Faced with operation of an uneconomic facility or its expensive renovation during a declining market, the Lehigh Valley chose to abandon the trestle in 1936 and at the same time petitioned for abandonment of the railroad between Fair Haven and North Fair Haven. The petition was granted by the New York State Public Service Commission on August 19, 1937.
At times, the coal traffic strained the seams of the single-tracked Auburn Division, particularly at Auburn itself, where yard space was usually at a premium. This was overcome in part by using a yard located in Auburn, but on the Auburn & Ithaca Branch, for switching coal trains. A better solution was provided in 1912, when a small yard was built at Throop, three miles north of Auburn, to handle the coal traffic. This allowed the coal trains to be run through Auburn without stopping, relieving the yard congestion.

During this same period, a curious intra-company struggle between the independent Lehigh & New York (L&NY) stockholders and the Lehigh Valley management (also see chapter 1, pages 30–31) led to a radical change in the routing of the coal traffic on the Auburn Division. In 1909, the Lehigh Valley announced a substantial loss from the operation of the L&NY (later designated as the Auburn Branch) and, in 1910, all coal traffic consigned to Auburn and points north was routed by way of Ithaca, thus avoiding the L&NY–Auburn Branch trackage. Apparently the Lehigh Valley management thought starving the patient was the best way to restore its health. Before long, the Lehigh Valley acknowledged that it was in a legal contest with a group of ungrateful stockholders who, although a minority, were questioning the LV management practices that removed traffic from their L&NY tracks.

This argument went on until 1917, when the L&NY–Auburn Branch once again became the chosen route, except for the Elmira & Cortland Branch traffic, which continued to be received by the E&C at Van Etten, rather than Freeville, which had been the delivery point before the diversion. Peace was restored to the ranks of the L&NY stockholders, but seven years had been consumed in what appears to have been an exercise in futility. This period of running coal trains from Ithaca along the shore of Cayuga Lake to Auburn was still the subject of stories among train crews sixty years later.
Combination milk and passenger Train 282 is ready to leave Auburn headed for Sayre July 30, 1947, with bulk milk cars each from Throop and Auburn and a car of crates of bottles from Auburn. It will accumulate more cars of milk down the line.
In the late nineteenth century, the need for a prompt and reliable transportation system for fluid milk became apparent, as a market relationship began to grow between the New York metropolitan area and the milk-producing districts of upstate New York. In 1890, one agile mind conceived of a pipeline filled with water through which the milk (in tight containers) would be pumped like projectiles, at high speed. On the Lehigh Valley, the transport technology never developed beyond placing the fluid milk in sanitary containers near the point of production and rolling it to market in insulated milk cars drawn by steam locomotives.

The first Lehigh Valley milk statistic appears in the company’s 1893 annual report, showing some 8,600 tons carried. The tonnage increased to over 120,000 tons by 1914, when the statistic was discontinued for unknown reasons. Although it appears that milk shipping began in quantity on the Lehigh Valley in 1893, Lehigh Valley ownership of milk cars did not begin until four years later, when forty cars were purchased from the Dairy Car Company for a little over $2,000 each. The milk car roster increased gradually to a high of 172 cars in 1927, after which a decline is noted in succeeding annual reports. Given that Lehigh Valley ownership of milk cars increased by 48 percent between 1912 and 1927, it is probable the tonnage of milk being shipped continued to increase after 1914.

Substantial milksheds developed along both the Auburn Branch and the Elmira & Cortland Branch of the Auburn Division. One milk train served the Auburn Branch from North Fair Haven to Sayre. Another milk train operated on the E&C Branch from Canastota to Freeville, where its collection of milk was added to the Auburn Branch train.

For a brief time around 1902, the Lehigh Valley had run a through milk train daily from North Fair Haven to Jersey City. Within two years, this train was replaced by its branch line successor running from North Fair Haven to Sayre only. Evidently the Lehigh Valley found a
through milk train from Lake Ontario to the Hudson River too cumbersome to operate. The method of putting branch line trains together at Sayre to create a Lehigh Valley mainline milk train did permit greater flexibility as collection points changed and this method prevailed during the remainder of the milk traffic’s existence.

The E&C milk train ran independently to Sayre by way of Van Etten for some time between 1910 and 1930. When this E&C Branch milk train began to use the Auburn Branch tracks to get into Sayre (because of bridges that were torn out), a big turf war between the two branches resulted. At one point, when an E&C Branch train had to dump its milk onto an Auburn Branch train at Freeville, the crew then took the empty E&C milk train on into
East Ithaca in accord with the published timetable, just to make a statement. Once in Sayre by whatever route, these two milk trains made up the major portion of the mainline milk train assembled there which served the entire Lehigh Valley.

Initially, the milk was transported in tight-capped forty-quart cans that were filled and adequately cooled at the farms where the milk was produced before delivery to the nearest shipping point. The cans were then loaded into the milk cars by the train crew, who acquired a certain dexterity in rolling cans from the loading platforms to the racks at the interior of the cars, where they were secured during their ride to Gotham. Ice harvested from the lakes adjacent to the Auburn Branch supplied the cooling medium for the interior of the insulated milk cars.

As time passed, great changes in milk shipping practices occurred as individual milk producers joined milk cooperatives such as Dairymen's League, Borden's, and Sheffield. The new companies organized collecting and processing plants, where mechanical cooling and pasteurization were provided. In the 1920s, sanitary milk tanks began to replace the familiar ten-gallon cans and their rapidly working handlers. Two sanitary tanks placed face to face in the ordinary milk car in effect converted the car into a tank car, with all the advantages of loading and unloading by pipe instead of by human hands. By the end of 1931, when the Auburn Division ceased to exist as a division, the art of milk handling by rail had not yet reached its apex, but it had become a stable and well-organized traffic.

Too soon the wave of progress swept over the dairy industry, leaving the railroads behind. In 1937, the only first class train remaining on the Elmira & Cortland Branch was the milk train, which also carried passengers between Canastota and East Ithaca. By the end of 1947, as the result of truck competition and the establishment of dairy herds close to the New York metropolitan area, fluid milk traffic ceased on the Lehigh Valley and milk trains were removed. On July 7, 1948, a Lehigh Valley timetable change no longer listed the Elmira & Cortland milk train.
At Groton about 1906, Dr. George Albon returns from visiting a patient in Auburn Hospital. On the trip engineer Dan Silke gave the physician’s daughter Marjorie a ride in the cab. See page 135 for another picture of Silke.
U ntil the privately owned automobile became the preferred mode of personal trans-
portation in upstate New York, the Auburn Division provided comfortable and reli-
able passenger service in the counties where its rails were laid. After the addition of
the Elmira & Cortland Branch to its original Auburn Branch, the Auburn Division
formed an X-shaped traffic pattern through the central New York counties and Freeville,
conveniently located at the intersection of the X, became the division’s hub for
passenger operations.

In 1896, trains originating at the extremities of both the Auburn Branch and
the E&C Branch staged a four-train meet in the early morning in Freeville, after
which the four participating trains continued forward to the opposite end of
their respective branches. Late in the afternoon there was a turnaround for all of
the trains and the show at Freeville was repeated. Until the early 1930s, Freeville
played host to these twice-daily four-way gatherings.

In addition, trains were operated between intermediate points on the branches,
such as the Cortland to Canastota train on the E&C branch and the Auburn to North
Fair Haven train on the Auburn Branch. Some local freight trains, also known as
mixed trains, offered further passenger accommodations with the timetable caveat:
“Time shown contingent upon the handling of freight.”

Like most railroad timetables, those of the Auburn Division carried the warning: “sub-
ject to change,” and change they did, but not radically. Initially, many of the passenger trains
were “daily except Sunday,” a gap filled by the appearance of “Sunday only” trains with a
dual role— that of a milk train that also carried passengers. During the summer months,
Sunday trains were added on the Auburn Branch running to North Fair Haven and on the
Elmira & Cortland Branch running to Sylvan Beach.
Passenger service on the Auburn & Ithaca Branch by 1901 had steadied at two round trips daily except Sunday between Ithaca and Auburn, originating at Ithaca. This arrangement continued until the 1930s, when service was reduced to one round trip. Aside from its local service, the Auburn & Ithaca Branch provided passengers with a connection to the Lehigh Valley mainline trains at Ithaca until 1948.

As the twentieth century wore on, passenger service gradually disappeared. When the Auburn Division made ready to surrender its divisional authority in 1931, generally speaking the scheduled trains still in operation on the division had been running since shortly
after the division came into existence in about 1890; after 1927 they were powered by gas-electric motor units.

Later, when the E&C Branch milk train was dropped in 1948, passenger accommodations on that branch devolved to two daily mixed trains, one running between Cortland and East Ithaca and the other between Cortland and Canastota. By 1951, passenger service was provided only on the mixed train between Cortland and Canastota and, by the mid-1950s, the notation “available for passengers” ceased to apply to this train. For the Elmira & Cortland Branch and the Auburn division, the passenger era had ended.
During the heyday of passenger service, special trains for important social events shared the tracks with the regularly scheduled passenger trains on the Auburn Division. Some of these trains originated on the division and were destined for places of interest on the eastern seaboard, such as New York City, Philadelphia, and Atlantic City. Other local “specials” were intended for a day’s outing at some lakeside vacation area in the Auburn Division area. During the summer, the passage of private cars was newsworthy: they carried prominent people, often from railroad or industrial circles, usually to a leisure spot in the Thousand Islands area. In addition, special cars sometimes appeared at Aurora on the Auburn & Ithaca Branch when parents visited their daughters attending Wells College.
When the Lehigh Valley Veterans Association picnic was held at Lakeside Park near Auburn on the weekend of July 19–20, 1924, approximately 2,000 people attended, most of whom traveled by special train. The Veterans Association was formed in 1921 with an original membership of thirteen, who established the requirement of twenty years of continuous Lehigh Valley employment for future members. At the time of the Auburn gathering, 2,600 employees had joined the association and a majority of them were present. Attendees represented New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.

A special train, originating in New York City, carried the members from the eastern portion of the railroad. A second special brought western attendees from the Buffalo area, and
others closer to Auburn came on the regularly scheduled passenger trains of the Auburn Division. Details of the event are scant. Apparently Saturday, July 19, was given over to arrival and getting settled in. A Masonic band provided music and some of its members were included in a contemporary photograph said to depict 1,000 individuals. Although the religious mores of the day precluded an organized program of sports on Sunday, the picnickers were apparently not prevented from watching two local baseball teams play a ten-inning game. Late on Sunday, the specials wheeled the tired Veterans home.

Other special trains carried recruits to service in World War I and at mid-century many summer extras took National Guard units from New Jersey to Auburn for transfer to the NYC and training at Camp Drum, later Fort Drum, in northern New York.
Cornell University boat trains were excursions unique to Ithaca and the Auburn & Ithaca Branch of the Auburn Division. The trains paced the intercollegiate boat races rowed along the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake near Ithaca. Boat trains were run as early as 1899 and were continued by the Lehigh Valley until 1936. They were composed of about forty gondolas equipped with bleacher benches four rows high, facing the lake side of the track, with steps and railings to provide passenger safety. The train was powered by a locomotive pulling at either end. The passengers were loaded along Fulton Street in Ithaca, before going to the starting point of the boat race, which was a little north of McKinney’s station. The train then followed the race two miles south toward Renwick (now Stewart) Park (photos on pages 113-115).

The promoters of the boat trains wanted to make sure that race officials and other occupants of high-priced seats had a good view of the finish line. To that end, dignitaries were seated in the same section of the train, along with a Lehigh employee whose job was to alert crews of the engines at each end of the train of the correct speed and direction to take as a race developed. This was done by means of bells in each engine, connected to the dignitary car by long strings. The bell-ringing employee pulled the strings in accordance with a pre-designated code, in an effort to keep his car opposite the lead racing shells on the water.

On Decoration Day 1899, as an example, at 7:45 p.m., when the lake was calm, Cornell beat Penn by half a length. A crowd estimated at 35,000 people was present at and around Renwick to see the thrilling finish. A race between another Cornell shell and Cascadilla, a
local preparatory school, was rowed just before the main event and an Edison movie camera took pictures of not only the rowing, but also the observation train.

At other times, when the races were held away from Cornell, the crews and their shells were loaded on a special train at East Ithaca. It was on such a trip to Poughkeepsie for a rowing meet that the famous Charles Courtney, long-time rowing coach at Cornell, was thrown against a berth when the train stopped suddenly. Courtney sustained a skull fracture in the accident, which adversely affected the rest of his life.

When the excitement and stir of special trains had stilled and the workaday world was again in control, the comparatively spartan trains on the Auburn Division (light engines each pulling a baggage car and one or two coaches) went about their daily business, identified only by train number. Nevertheless, they sometimes approached the throne for, although not on the route of the Lehigh Valley’s famed Black Diamond, they carried passengers for delivery to that sleek eminence.
Lehigh Valley marshals crew race fans onto flatcars equipped with bleachers on Fulton St. near the Ithaca station. The train, with an engine at either end, will follow Cornell rowing races along the east shore of Cayuga Lake, a practice started in the late 1800s. The raised stand is for judges.
Above: By the 1900s, bleachers are mounted on safer gondola cars for race-day rides along the east shore of Cayuga Lake.

Right: Engine 795 is one of two engines with select crews and anthracite coal to pull crew race spectator trains, polished and burning fuel that is as smoke- and cinder-free as possible. About 1918.
A last rowing observation train heads north from Ithaca at McKinney’s in 1936. Motorists at right line the highway to Auburn. Rough water cancelled the day’s events. The year marked the end of a special rail era along Cayuga Lake.
Lehigh Valley Milliken train on the Auburn & Ithaca Branch carries empty salt hopper cars to the Cargill mine at Portland Point and loaded coal hoppers to the New York State Electric & Gas Co. Milliken steam generating plant at Lake Ridge. Remains of the Penn-Dixie cement plant are in the distance, looking south on October 8, 1973, with Cayuga Lake on the right.
The late-blooming Auburn & Ithaca Branch was attractive in several respects once it was completed to Auburn. Primarily, it provided the Auburn Division with its best mainline passenger connection at Ithaca, putting the Lehigh Valley in serious contention with the New York Central for the passenger traffic between the upstate area and New York City. It also eased the remoteness of Wells College. Further, the relatively unimportant spur to Cayuga eventually became part of a route to Geneva that linked the Auburn Division directly with the western end of the Lehigh Valley system.

Last but not least, the Auburn & Ithaca was found to be running over valuable deposits of salt and limestone that, when developed, provided substantial lasting traffic for the railroad.

In 1891, the discovery of salt brine in economically viable quantities just north of Salmon Creek, near Ludlowville, resulted in the construction of a plant that, by 1893, was producing 140 tons of salt daily. The salt production required coal to heat the plant’s evaporators, providing reciprocal traffic on the Lehigh Valley. By 1904, the site was owned by the International Salt Company, which demanded a daily train from the Lehigh Valley until the 1960s.

Farther south, nearer Ithaca, the Remington Salt Company began salt extraction in 1900, although production here never reached the proportions of the International Salt Company. Interestingly, at Remington there was an intent to use the turbine that created power for the electrified portion of the Ithaca-Auburn Short Line—a separate railroad between Auburn and Ithaca which ran just behind the plant—also to heat the plant’s evaporators, a plan that did not reach fruition.

Another major salt production site was located just to the north of Portland Point, where rock salt was found in 1916, resulting in the formation of the Cayuga Rock Salt Company.
This company mined salt extensively under Cayuga Lake until 1968. Both the Remington and the Cayuga companies shipped salt via the Lehigh Valley and the Remington plant also received coal by rail. Cargill continues to mine and ship rock salt from Portland Point.

Limestone deposits discovered in 1900 above the falls in Gulf Creek, near Portland Point, led to the development of the Portland Point Cement Company, which built a plant at lake level on Cayuga Lake along the Auburn & Ithaca Branch line. The elevation of the limestone quarry permitted operation of a gravity-powered overhead tramway to carry the quarry’s output to kilns, from whence it was shipped out by barge and railroad. By 1923, this plant had been purchased by the Penn-Dixie Cement Corporation, which continued in operation until 1947, when the cost of quarrying the limestone became prohibitive.

Between 1909 and 1927, the Lehigh Valley timetables reflect that a passenger shuttle service operated daily except Sunday between Ithaca and Ludlowville, apparently to accommodate residents of Ithaca who were employed by the industries around Portland Point and Ludlowville. In the morning, the employees could ride to work on a regularly scheduled Auburn & Ithaca passenger train; in the late afternoon, they could return to Ithaca on a train originating at the Ludlowville salt works that was especially intended for their use.

Ice harvesting was an industry native to upstate New York that flourished at several points along the Auburn Division. Confined to the coldest days of late winter and generally beginning in early February, ice was cut at locations where pure ice could be obtained and the ice trains could be loaded conveniently. Such locations usually included Dryden Lake (also known as Barney Lake), Cayuga Lake near Cayuga village, and North Fair Haven Bay.

The Lehigh Valley itself had a year-round need for ice to cool its perishable cargoes and the drinking water provided for its passengers and tried to get enough ice cut and stored in company ice houses to satisfy this need during the brief winter window of opportunity, which might last for only a few weeks. Nine ice houses were listed on the Auburn Division, but larger storage facilities at sites such as Manchester, on the mainline, also drew on the Auburn Division’s production at nearby Cayuga. When the ice was ready for cutting, all available ice service cars were rounded up, loaded, hustled to ice storage houses for unloading, and quickly returned to some ice source for another load of the short-lived product.
A January 1910 news item reported one hundred cars of ice per day were being shipped from Cayuga, probably to Manchester. By the early 1930s, however, mechanical refrigeration and artificial ice making had replaced the winter harvest of the natural product.

Harvesting and loading ice at Dryden Lake and the Borden Creamery in the 1920s.

Above, left: Workmen float blocks along a path to a ramp which raises them to a distribution tower. Some will go to the creamery for storage.

Above, right: Blocks slide down another ramp to load into waiting freight cars on Barney’s Siding, for transport to distant customers.

Left: Crew uses a tower-sled to support a sawyer who cuts blocks of ice.
Company engine used by the Wickwire Works at Cortland to switch cars of iron ore, steel, and wire cloth and screening for the manufacturing firm.
Grain and Manufactured Products

When the Seneca Falls Branch was completed, new manufacturing shippers were attracted to the Auburn Division because of a streamlining of the route between Auburn and points west. One of these new shippers was Beacon Milling Company, which set up shop at Cayuga in 1921. Beacon was engaged in the manufacture of animal feed and its Cayuga plant was devoted to milling and flavoring grain into forms usable in animal husbandry. The company was dependent on a reliable source of western grain as a base for its various products, as well as access to a widely dispersed market. The Lehigh Valley was able to fulfill the first requirement admirably, carrying the grain from its lake delivery point at Buffalo directly to Cayuga. The LV was also happy to assist Beacon in distributing its goods, to the extent that the line served markets for the product. At times, the Lehigh Valley handled thirty-five cars of raw material and thirty cars of finished product a day for Beacon.

Beacon was located across New York Central tracks from the Auburn Division. The New York Central, using two shifts of switch engines, performed all switching for Beacon to or from the Lehigh Valley, as well as on their own tracks. Beacon erected a building for the loading of box cars which was large enough to hold thirty-three box cars at once. The steam from the New York Central engines was also used by Beacon to melt molasses, which arrived frozen on barges on the Barge Canal. The NYC fee for the service: $980.

Smaller grain mills along the Auburn and E&C branches also called on the Lehigh Valley for rail service during this time.

In addition to Beacon, the division served factories of Wickwire in Cortland, a distillery in Waterloo, Gould Pump, American LaFrance, and Seneca Falls Woolen Mill in Seneca Falls, and, in Auburn, Columbian Rope, McIntosh & Seymour (later American Locomotive), and International Harvester.
Above: Bliss Mills at Newark Valley on the Auburn Branch, in the 1950s.

Right: Columbian Rope Co. at Auburn about 1928, where the Auburn Division had several sidings and provided all switching.

Aerial view of Beacon Milling Co. at Cayuga, looking north, in the 1970s before the mill closed. Track in the foreground is the NYC Auburn Road, from which a connection to Beacon was made at right just out of the photo. Three tracks were laid between the tall mill buildings at center leading to a train shed between them, which could enclose more than 30 covered hoppers at one time for sheltered loading. When the mill was busy, two consecutive NYC yard jobs were needed daily and the LV brought in over 30 loads of grain daily from Buffalo, using the NYC track. The LV had trackage rights over this track for two miles to cross Cayuga Lake at the left, out of the photo. Hidden by the tanks at left is a dock on the State Barge Canal where Beacon brought in molasses for its feed products, molasses pumped into tanks at left, the flow speeded by steam supplied from a NYC steam locomotive rented by Beacon for the purpose. The plant was subsequently dismantled, the land now used for a marina.
American Locomotive Co. in Auburn, originally McIntosh & Seymour, looking north about 1928. Both the LV and NYC switched the plant. LV depot and roundhouse are visible at right.

Wickwire Works at Cortland about 1910. A contemporary postcard described the view as: “[O]f the older part of the plant. The first floor along the railroad is a shipping room for wire cloth; offices are in front on the street. Furnishing of the offices cost $10,000. On the floors above are looms for weaving wire cloth for window and door screens.” The white strip in the foreground is asphalt paving from Main St. to the Lehigh Valley R.R. depot just off the picture to the right. Away down the railroad off the picture is the steel plant where ore and old iron are made into steel.


Below: Cars loaded with pipe for the Tennessee Gas Transmission pipe line at Cazenovia, looking north about 1950.
A derailment about 1880 near Flemingville on the southern end of the Southern Central RR.
“Headaches and heartaches and all kinds of pain, they’re all a part of the railroad game”—this tremulous plaint rendered in a humorous strain by Jerry Colonna could well be applied in a grimly serious tone to the wrecks and other setbacks suffered on the Auburn Division over the years.

Fire, crippling snows, even rotted outhouses added to the division’s woes. Of all these, the wrecks were the most dramatic.

Van Etten, 1920

The first of five well known twentieth century wrecks on the division was a tale of simple bad luck. Brake riggings fell down frequently on the LV and on other railroads as well. Indeed, such an occurrence often caused no more than momentary annoyance—like a flat tire on an automobile. But, in this case, the brake rigging on an LV freight train fell under the wheels of a slowly-moving locomotive tender and unexpectedly jacked it sideways into the path of an oncoming high-speed passenger train on an adjacent main-line track.

The freight train on May 31 was an E&C Branch extra in the Van Etten yard, headed for Cortland on a track known as Swamp Siding. It consisted of fifty-four cars and a caboose, pulled by two engines. The passenger train was mainline No. 6, eastbound from Buffalo to New York, three passenger coaches, one club car, and four Pullman sleepers, all steel. At this time, the No. 6 was routed on the Ithaca Branch in order to serve the City of Ithaca. The Swamp Siding was located next to the Ithaca Branch main track, so both trains should have passed, headed in opposite directions. However, as the freight train moved through the siding, the tender of the lead engine and the second engine were suddenly derailed by a fallen
brake beam and were thrust toward the adjacent Ithaca Branch track, encroaching on the space between the tracks.

Unfortunately, the swiftly-moving No. 6, the proper occupant of the space, appeared in the darkness right on time and caromed off the tender of the intruding freight engine, derailing along with most of its accompanying passenger cars. The engineer and fireman of the passenger train were killed, along with one passenger. Thirty-eight passengers were reported injured. The Interstate Commerce Commission judged the accident was caused by the fallen brake beam. No criticism was made of the employees, all men of experience with good records.

Auburn, Election Day 1920

The same year, a wreck occurred in the LV Auburn yard on November 2, an Election Day that saw Warren G. Harding elevated to the highest office in the nation. In Auburn, it witnessed the destruction of two locomotives and attendant equipment, along with the lives of three LV employees.

The hard coal traffic was a booming trade on the LV in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Auburn Branch felt the vigor of its movement to the extent that an auxiliary yard was built at Throop, three miles north of Auburn, to ease the sometimes overcrowded yards in Auburn. On the rainy morning of November 2, at 7:35 a.m., a yard engine, No. 598, entered the main track running through Auburn, bound for the Throop yard with forty-four loads. The Auburn yard had the topographical disadvantage of being at the bottom of a sag
and No. 598 promptly stalled, leaving its rear cars about at the mid-point of the yard. While it was standing at this point, a double-headed freight with Engines 1139 and 1148 appeared on the main track, heading into Auburn from Sayre.

Witnesses say hand signals to stop were immediately passed to the oncoming train, which nevertheless continued at a speed estimated to be 15 to 20 miles an hour until it struck the rear end of the stalled train. Both the 1139 and the 1148 were crushed between the two trains, along with nine other various cars. The human cost was reflected in the deaths at the site of both engineers and the headend brakeman, who were in the engine cabs at the time of collision. Two firemen escaped injury by jumping from the train before the collision.

As part of the ensuing official investigation, a duplicate train was operated under duplicate conditions on the sector entering Auburn yard. This test train was easily controlled to a stop in the space where the actual train failed to stop. Operating rules were quoted and conjectures were made about improper air brake operation, but no conclusive evidence was unearthed to determine the actual cause of the collision. In the end, one terse sentence in the ICC report stood apart: “This accident was caused by extra 1139 being operated at an excessive rate of speed within yard limits.”

Dryden, 1927

On June 12, 1927, the rural peace of a late Sabbath afternoon in Dryden was shattered when a westbound passenger train headed to Auburn was unexpectedly diverted from the main track to a milk plant siding. Traveling at a speed estimated at 35 to 40 miles an hour, the locomotive and its three cars became a tangled mass in their unplanned rapid transit of the siding, with only the last car remaining upright. The locomotive turned over on its right side, killing both engineer and fireman.

An ICC investigation of the fatal derailment included testimony from the last train crew which had used the milk plant siding switch before the accident. These crew members testified they had left the switch properly closed and locked. Following the investigation, an LV official advised the ICC that a statement had been taken from a thirteen-year-old boy who admitted he had opened the switch, which he had found unlocked. The ICC commissioners concluded that the accident was caused by an open switch tampered with by the boy, after acknowledging the conflicting testimony. The commissioners observed gratuitously that automatic train control might have prevented the wreck.

Young’s Creek Near Owego, 1929

At 2:25 a.m. on May 3, 1929, the locomotives on an LV freight train moving from Owego to Sayre were abruptly overturned when the rails beneath them collapsed. The incident, which occurred about two miles east of Owego, proved fatal to the engineer and fireman on the lead engine. The headend brakeman, also riding on the lead engine, was injured, as were the engineer and fireman of the second engine. A topographical map indicates that the LV shared a narrow
shelf with the Erie Railroad at this point, which was close to the Susquehanna River. The small Young’s Creek stream was bridged by both railroads. At some time previous to the arrival of the LV freight train, the creek had overflowed, eroding the LV embankment, and leaving track suspended over empty space. As it rolled over the unsupported rails, the lead engine crashed into the void beneath, with the second engine and four following cars derailing in disorder.

The resulting investigation produced the brusque comment that the accident was caused by a washout. Acknowledging the occurrence of an unusually heavy rainfall, the ICC stated that proper action should be taken to keep the stream channel clear of debris in order to prevent similar accidents in the future.

Smithboro, 1940

A tangled sequence of events led to the deaths of two LV employees and the total destruction of three LV locomotives in a collision near Smithboro, New York, on March 10, 1940. Although it was in fact a collision between two trains facing each other on a single track railroad, the accident is labeled in reports as a rearend collision, because it involved a train which had stalled (due to locomotive failure) and was being pulled backward by a helper engine at the time of the impact.

Engines 2056 and 1139 were dispatched from Sayre to Owego with fifty-five loads of coal at 12:01 p.m. At a point 1 1/2 miles past Smithboro, the 2056 experienced a mechanical difficulty, which made the engine inoperative. As a result, the train stalled. After communication between the train conductor and the dispatcher, a helper engine, No. 305, was dispatched to return the stalled train to Sayre, a distance of approximately ten miles. However, the 305 was able to move the stalled train only twenty car lengths toward Sayre before stalling itself.

Meanwhile, a passenger-milk train, No. 282 with Engine 2064, which was dispatched from Auburn earlier in the day, had reached Owego at 1:36 p.m. and was scheduled for prompt delivery of its milk cargo to the waiting mainline milk train at Sayre (No. 36). At Owego, 9.6
miles west of Smithboro, the Train 282 crew received clearance and permissive cards authorizing operation to a point 1 1/2 miles west of Smithboro, but were told to expect another train on the rails at that point. What happened next remains conjectural, but, according to the testimony of several witnesses, Train 282 continued past the mandated danger point on the permissive card, past the headend brakeman who vainly signaled for a stop and, ignoring stop signals from others of the coal train crew, crashed into the stalled train. In an instant, three engines were reduced to scrap: No. 2064 on the milk train; No. 2056 on the coal train, facing her sister; and the smaller 1139, which was trailing behind No. 2056. The engineer and the fireman on the 2064 died in the wreckage.

Although two handsome, serviceable 4-6-2s became enmeshed pilot to pilot with a smaller 4-6-0 mixed in the frightening chaos, the ICC deemed the accident a rear-end collision. Technically, the ICC is correct, since LV 305 was on the other end of the coal train with an order to run to Sayre with rights over No. 282. Apparently, 282 did not agree.

The six crew members of the coal train who were on the stage of this drama—two engineers, two firemen, and two brakemen—somehow escaped injury.
Maintenance-of-way crew stops next to the Borden Creamery in Dryden.
Foreman Joe Basl is in front, his brother John at right, the other man unidentified,
and Rockwell’s coal sheds in the background.
With the addition of the Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad to the Auburn Division in 1896, the division’s labor pool of all crafts increased to an estimated 925 employees. The Auburn Branch contributed 517 workers, the EC&N Branch 368, and the A&I Branch 40. By 1926, after the Seneca Falls Branch had been added to the division, the division supervisor of employment reported 1,180 employees in all were at work on the division. The maintenance of way force used the largest number of employees with 415 men or about 35 percent of the total. The division was divided into forty-five sections, each section being about seven miles in length, and was assigned a section foreman and an average of eight section laborers.

Many on the 1926 roster were “old heads,” employees of the various predecessor companies who came and stayed with the Lehigh Valley until the end of their working days. Others came and went, some of them gaining news mention in the process.

Hal Roach, born in Elmira in 1892, reportedly worked on the Elmira & Cortland Branch before he went on to greater fame in Hollywood, originally with the “Our Gang” comedies.

Hiram Odell, a rural schoolteacher from the Richford area, was drawn to railroading when the Southern Central Railroad was built through his village in 1870. He became an SC engineer and was injured in a derailment at Martville, which killed his fireman. While convalescing from these injuries at his home in Oswego in 1879, Odell voiced his concerns about the physical risks associated with railroad employment to John D. Rockefeller, a former pupil from his schoolteacher days who had since become prominent in the petroleum industry. At about this time, the Rockefeller interests were constructing an oil pipeline from Olean, New York, to Bayonne, New Jersey.

Steam-powered pumping stations were located about every twenty miles along the pipeline. Conveniently for Odell, one of these stations was built in Catatonk on the
Ithaca Branch of the Lackawanna Railroad, five miles north of his home. Here the Rockefeller magic installed Odell as a stationary engineer. In early 1881, Odell described the pumping station and its operation in a long letter to Ransom Cross, a dispatcher on the Southern Central Railroad at Auburn. Cross thoughtfully sent it on to an Auburn newspaper where the letter was printed in its entirety, thereby preserving a splendid bit of industrial history.

Apparently the Rockefeller-Odell relationship was lifelong. Allan Nevins, in volume 2 of his biography John D. Rockefeller: The Heroic Age of American Enterprise, explains that Odell had begun to use a three-wheeled track velocipede on the Lackawanna tracks to commute from his hearth to his workplace every day, a practice the Lackawanna summarily ended. Odell was not happy with this outcome, so he referred the matter to Rockefeller, who addressed a request to Samuel Sloan, president of the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, asking that Odell be granted special permission to commute on the tracks. Apparently the Rockefeller magic failed: the request was not granted. How this may have adversely affected the fortunes of the Lackawanna is not known, but Odell had to commute by other means.

Then there was Tom Carrigan, who found railroad employment attractive early in life and stuck with it for a long time. Tom hired out on the Cayuga Lake Railroad in 1872. Initially a water boy, he became a section hand and eventually found his way into train

Fireman Grover Timerson, left, and engineer “Black Jack” Fisher pose with a young helper next to Engine 2629 on the NYC crossover at Auburn about 1910.
service. Most of his working life was spent as a conductor on the Auburn & Ithaca Branch in freight and passenger service and he was not unaware of the beauty available on that line to those who looked for it.

Train No. 304 on the Auburn & Ithaca Branch was an evening train which returned to Ithaca from Auburn, its schedule running it along the unlit, untenanted shore of Cayuga Lake south of Aurora at about 7:45 p.m. On those nights when a clear sky coincided with an early moonrise, most passengers would be unaware of the glorious radiance bathing the lake until Tom extinguished the interior coach lights and let them experience the rare evening beauty, at no extra fare. On his eightieth birthday in 1934, Tom spent the morning making his usual round trip from Ithaca to Auburn, before knocking off to spend the rest of the day with family and friends, celebrating his long career.

Employees of the Auburn Division beneath the administrative level experienced great changes in their workplaces during the era of the division’s existence. From 1890 onward, the railroad slowly began to rectify its arbitrary personnel decisions and the hazards common to work in a milieu where the safety of the general public, much less that of employees, was not regarded as important. However, changes by management did not come voluntarily.

Both management and the workers were impressed by the power of concerted action demonstrated in the nation’s general railroad strike of 1893, although the Lehigh Valley’s labor ranks were divided on the issues causing the strike and did not benefit from it.
Actually, the Lehigh Valley management seemed more sensitized to the feelings of labor
by the fact that the neighboring Central Railroad of New Jersey refused to help the LV
management keep its railroad operating during the strike, than by the walkout of some
3,222 Lehigh Valley employees.

The Lehigh Valley’s 1894 annual report indignantly observes: “During the strike . . . we
found it impossible to continue to run our freight trains between Jersey City and Roselle
over the tracks of the Central Railroad Company of New Jersey. That company first posi-
tively declined to furnish pilots for our trains, and subsequently gave us such hesitating
and qualified assurance of aid as to be practically of no avail; and although every effort
was made by us to put trains over their line between the points named, little could be
done owing to the hostility of their employees and the apparent indifference of their oper-
ating officers.”

Unionism was not yet entrenched on the Auburn Division, so the operation of its
trains was affected during the strike only because of the general slowdown on the Lehigh
Valley lines. Still, the Auburn Division contained sufficient sympathizers to initiate a
tide of local resentment against those who had refused to stop work. Decades after the
strike, the mild epithet of “he was a ’93 man” would sometimes be applied to scabs and other offenders.

The 1893 strike on the Lehigh Valley systems
was not lengthy, running from November 18 to De-
cember 6, but it was long enough to plant the seeds
of future employee organization. Eventually all of
the crafts would become organized, but separately,
despite the 1893 movement to combine all railroad
workers into one order. On the Auburn Division,
those employed in actual train service were numer-
ous enough to maintain local brotherhood lodges.
In the other employee categories, where member-
ship was smaller or more dispersed, union mem-
bers maintained affiliation with mainline lodges.

Earlier in 1893, on March 2, President Benjamin
Harrison signed into law the Federal Safety Appli-
cance Act, applicable to all United States railroads,
which mandated the use of air brakes, automatic
couplers, and uniform grab irons on all motive
power and rolling stock. With the introduction of this act, the Lehigh Valley was forced to
upgrade its equipment, grumbling the while how the legally required improvements
added largely to its equipment costs. As a secondary benefit to management and labor
alike, the Act precipitated the discontinuance of the use of four-wheel coal “jimmies” on
the Lehigh Valley (see photo, page 20).

When the abandonment of these primitive cars was announced by the Lehigh, their
history as the cause of countless wrecks, deaths, and dismemberments went unmen-
tioned. Rather, management stated it had chosen the new eight-wheeled, thirty-ton coal cars replacing them because of the economy of using cars with a large capacity and because connecting railroads were becoming reluctant to run the four-wheelers over their lines. The abandonment of the “jimmys” and the application of air brakes and couplers did not occur overnight. Disposition of the last four-wheeler was not accomplished until 1900, while costs for installing air brakes and automatic couplers continued to be listed in the Lehigh Valley reports through 1907.

The year 1907 also brought relief from the burdensome length of daily shifts for railroad employees. Traditionally, the management had complete and arbitrary power to decide the length of time an employee must remain on duty, sometimes working the train crews to the point of exhaustion, or past it, when traffic was heavy on the rails. The passage of the Federal Hours of Service Act on March 4, 1907, during the second term of President Theodore Roosevelt, limited to a maximum of sixteen hours the amount of time an employee could work without having at least eight hours off to rest. Commonly known as the “Sixteen Hour Law” or as the “Hog Law” by railroaders, it was welcomed by the workers.

Left: Fireman Charles Blaisdell stands beside Engine 2055 at Auburn in September 1942.
Right: Engineer Dan Silke in 1942 with 2055, ready to lead the Auburn Branch milk trains 282–283, which originated two blocks from his home in Auburn. He walked to work. An earlier picture of Silke, who died in 1944 after 41 years on the LV, is on page 105.
Lehigh Valley Engine 1131 at East Ithaca on June 7, 1942 leads a parttime milk train, with no milk cars and no railroad behind its combine because tracks to the west had been torn up. Note the difference between the E&C milk Train 325 of 1937 (page 102) and this E&C milk train just five years later. At 5:17 p.m., the 1942 train will return on the Elmira & Cortland Branch as Train 323 and run to Freeville to pick up a couple of milk cars from the Auburn Branch milk train, leaving them at strategic places between Freeville and DeRuyter before going home to rest at Cortland.
On January 1, 1932, as part of a system-wide change on the Lehigh Valley which consolidated its six divisions into three divisions, the Auburn Division was merged with and subsumed by the Buffalo Division. Initially, there was little outward change except in corporate paperwork, which listed the former Auburn Division branches as Buffalo Division branches operating under the Buffalo Division superintendent. Soon, however, the economic depression sweeping the nation caused railroad companies to reduce services and abandon unprofitable operations.

The first significant physical shrinking of the Auburn Division began in the 1930s on both the Auburn and Elmira & Cortland branches.

The actual track abandonments that brought about the dissolution of the E&C Branch affected first the central portion of the line and then both ends. In 1933, the first piece of the old Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad was lifted between Van Etten and Spencer, where the Elmira & Cortland Branch ran side by side with the Ithaca Branch of the Lehigh Valley mainline. Service was not immediately affected, since the E&C trains were simply transferred to the Ithaca Branch for the short distance, and traffic continued as usual.

On June 30, 1935, however, service was discontinued between Spencer and East Ithaca and the succeeding year witnessed removal of the rails on this section.

With the Elmira & Cortland Branch now in two separated pieces, E&C trains began to use Sayre as a terminal. Service on the E&C track remaining between Elmira and Van Etten was routed on the mainline to Sayre, while traffic on the East Ithaca to Camden section was routed via the Auburn Branch to Sayre.
As previously mentioned, in 1937 the North Fair Haven coal dock was abandoned on the former Southern Central, later the L&NY/Auburn Branch—mainline of the Auburn Division. Its location was preempted by a state park, which is still in place today.

On June 25, 1938, Locomotive 1165 hauled the last train out of Elmira on the Elmira & Cortland Branch. Dismantling of the road between Horseheads and Van Etten followed soon, isolating Elmira from direct connection with Lehigh Valley rails. The Lehigh Valley did continue to serve Elmira and Horseheads, however, obtaining trackage rights from the Erie. This permitted Lehigh Valley trains to run on the Erie between Waverly, New York, and Fifth Street in Elmira, where access was gained to the five miles of LV track remaining between Fifth Street and Horseheads.

Jumping to the opposite end of the Elmira & Cortland Branch, the section between Canastota and Camden was abandoned after Engine 1163 made a last roundtrip on August 7, 1938. The following day, track removal on the old Canastota Northern Railroad began at Camden and, after several weeks, the entire right-of-way was devoid of rails.

After this abandonment of the former Canastota Northern section, the Elmira & Cortland Branch remained untouched for nearly thirty years. During the early part of this period, coal and milk traffic, as well as shipment of other freight commodities common to the upstate New York rural economy, sustained the branch. Local industry in Cortland also contributed to the total freight and created a need for switching services. The normal six-day schedule of the branch was comprised of a through train from Cortland to Sayre (and return), a local train from Cortland to East Ithaca (and return), a local train from Cortland to Canastota (and return), and day and night yard switchers at Cortland. Milk traffic at first required a complete train on the E&C Branch, which ran to Sayre via the mainline from Van Etten. When this thoroughfare was closed in 1935 by the abandonment of the East Ithaca–Spencer section, the E&C milk trains were routed to Sayre via the Auburn Branch. As the milk traffic declined altogether, there was no further need for a complete milk train on the Elmira & Cortland Branch and the E&C milk cars were delivered to Freeville, where they were added to the Auburn Branch milk train.

As passenger trains were discontinued for lack of patronage, a semblance of passenger service was maintained by running combination coaches on the milk trains. The discontinuance of the milk trains and the A&I passenger train in 1948 brought an end to regularly scheduled passenger service on the former Auburn Division. For several years after this, however, the combos were hung on local freights on the Auburn and E&C branches to quiet public outcry about loss of passenger service.

The once flourishing coal traffic on the Auburn Branch had first experienced shrinkage with the discontinuance and removal of the North Fair Haven coal dock. It received a mortal...
blow when, following World War II, construction of the New York State Thomas E. Dewey Thruway, north of Weedsport, appropriated the Lehigh Valley approach to interconnection with the New York Central at that point, thus eliminating the interchange tracks. Subsequent rerouting of this coal traffic to other rails led to total abandonment of the Auburn Branch north of Auburn in the 1950s.

By the time diesel power appeared on the Elmira & Cortland Branch in 1950, the milk traffic was gone and all other traffic was greatly reduced. A yard switcher at Cortland and two road switchers ordinarily met the needs of the branch and even this small complement shrank as the general branch traffic and local industry output in Cortland faded.

On December 30, 1967, the Elmira & Cortland Branch once again felt the chill of abandonment, as RS-3 No. 215 cleared all rolling stock from the branch between Canastota and Cortland, leaving the empty rails to be gathered up by scrappers. All that was now left of the old Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad was the twenty-mile stretch between Cortland and East Ithaca and the five-mile section from Elmira to Horseheads. On both sections, service continued on an ever diminishing scale. The final Lehigh Valley operation was one train, originating at Owego, that served the remains of both the Auburn Branch and the Elmira & Cortland Branch.

Elsewhere, selective abandonments continued to riddle the trackage of the former Auburn Division. In the 1950s, the A&I Branch was lifted between Ludlowville and Aurora and eventually from Aurora to Cayuga. Service on the E&C Branch between Cortland and Canastota was discontinued at the end of 1967 and on the Auburn Branch between Auburn and Moravia in early 1968. Trackage of the Seneca Falls Branch, long on a deferred maintenance diet, became unusable, leading to the rerouting of the Lehigh Valley Geneva local serving Auburn to the Penn-Central in the 1970s.

In the early 1970s, a washout on the E&C Branch between Freeville and East Ithaca rendered that section unfit for further service, a condition that was permitted to remain. Operation was continued as necessary on the rest of the line between Freeville and Cortland until the formation of Conrail on April 1, 1976, when any former E&C Branch business was transferred to the former Lackawanna trackage at Cortland.

At Elmira, the story was a little different, because construction of a World War II army depot at Horseheads (and its later conversion to industrial uses) provided worthwhile traffic for the Lehigh Valley for some years. Nonetheless, by 1975 the track between Elmira and Horseheads had so deteriorated for lack of maintenance that it was taken out of service and
rail access to the industrial park was gained over the tracks of a former Pennsylvania Railroad line instead. As at Cortland, the final traces of the Lehigh Valley here are lost in the shadow of Conrail’s new operation.

Despite the overall grimness of the 1970s, business continued, even if poorly. Though they were not on home rails, local freights continued to reach Auburn and Elmira. On the Auburn Branch, a catch-all local ran from Sayre to Freeville and then served the stubs radiating from Freeville: to Moravia, to East Ithaca until a washout made this stub unserviceable, and finally to Cortland. Return to Sayre was made the next day.

Also running out of Sayre was the Lehigh Valley’s interchange job to the D&H at Binghamton (and the D&H counterpart, Binghamton to Sayre), which ran on the Auburn Branch between Sayre and Owego.

There was one bright spot: the coal traffic to the New York State Electric and Gas generating plant near Ithaca. In 1952, NYSEG built its Milliken Station on the east shore of Cayuga Lake at Lake Ridge. The A&I Branch between Ludlowville and Lake Ridge had been removed in 1950, but was replaced to accommodate the new power plant. In 1958, a second unit was added, the two units together consuming a reported 800,000 tons of bituminous coal annually. The coal was handled via Sayre to Ithaca and then on the A&I Branch to Lake Ridge, serving also the rock salt mine near Portland Point.
On April 1, 1976, Conrail assumed operation of the Lehigh Valley rails and changes were soon felt on the jobs (trains) remaining in the territory of the former Auburn Division. The work formerly done by the Lehigh Valley between Geneva and Auburn, including LV switching in Auburn, was assumed by Conrail. At Sayre, the D&H interchange jobs were discontinued. The former LV local on the Auburn Branch continued in operation as far as Locke, but under a subsidy agreement between Conrail and the State of New York. Soon the local was based in Owego and, when the subsidy agreement expired in 1978, Conrail terminated the operation. Conrail continued the service to the NYSEG generating plant on the A&I Branch.

At present, the old Elmira, Cortland & Northern Railroad is totally unused except for about three miles in the city of Cortland still in use on the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railroad. A few miles of idle rails, long stretches of overgrown grading, a few stone abutments and old markers are all that remain to outline the formerly important route. Now, in truth and without rancor, the old nickname of “Empty Cars & No Railroad” seems to apply.

A vestige of the former Southern Central Railroad remained for a while in the old Sayre yard. The train crews there, still loyal to the Lehigh Valley, still referred to “SC Junction” and “SC Yard” under the Conrail administration.
Conrail Engine 1913 on August 12, 1992, derailed at Columbus St., Auburn, on track of the former Auburn & Ithaca Branch.
More than seventy years have elapsed since the formal dissolution of the Auburn Division on January 1, 1932. The event went unmarked in the stockholders report for that year which rather made capital of the appearance of twenty-two new 4-8-4 steam locomotives on the Lehigh Valley equipment roster for use on the mainline between Buffalo and New York. But the announcement of a 10 percent pay cut applicable to all employees followed by a terse paragraph advising of the cessation of dividends for the year 1932 was a truer indication of what would follow shortly on the Auburn Division and systemwide. Like the Sultan in the *Rubaiyat*, the Auburn Division abode its destined hour and went its way. Fortunately, it left a few marks and monuments in its passing.

The Auburn Branch

Perhaps the Auburn Branch (formerly Southern Central and Lehigh & New York) from Sayre to North Fair Haven is best marked with durable monuments at either end and intermediate sections of track still in use. Close to Sayre, Bridge L271 over Cayuta Creek has been converted to vehicular use serving the Sayre adjunct of Milltown as an alternate entry. Its maintenance along with a short stretch of former roadbed seems assured. At Owego, a shortline railroad connects with the present Norfolk Southern and uses the former roadbed to Harford, designated as North Harford on the Auburn Branch. Three-and-a-half miles north of North Harford, at about 1,200 feet above sea level, the branch crested a divide, leaving the
Susquehanna River watershed and entering that of Lake Ontario; this was the highest point on the branch. Giving away a little altitude, the roadbed eased northward to Freeville and a crossing at grade with the Elmira & Cortland branch, today occupied by a housing development fittingly named Lehigh Crossing.

Two miles south of Groton, the branch encountered the inlet of Owasco Lake which it bridged repeatedly to take advantage of the easy gradient provided by the stream on its way to the south end of the lake at Cascade. Today, sections of the abandoned roadbed together with its bridges provide pleasant recreational space. The branch was laid on the western shore of Owasco Lake as far north as Owasco Lake station where it chose to climb over glacial ridges to reach an entry to Auburn at its southwest corner. The vacated roadbed on the lake shore was eagerly purchased as private lots for recreational or residential use which for the most part preserved its original outline. Swinging away from Owasco Lake on its way into Auburn, the original builders eased a gentle climb with a cut through a particularly pesky contour. The land had been acquired from a land owner named Peterson; the slash through the hill became known as Peterson’s Cut, well-known and unloved by railroaders on the branch as they struggled to free stalled trains trapped by snow in this man-made declivity.

In Auburn, the most outstanding remnant of the branch is a portion of the brick roundhouse built off Clark Street in 1896. The Finger Lakes Railway based in Geneva operates the former NYC Auburn Road section surviving in Auburn as well as the LV Auburn Division bits and pieces, which consist of an estimated three to four thousand feet of marginal track of several parentages. This motley collection connects with the FLRy near the roundhouse and curves around it on the northwest side to reach the site of an Agway plant between Wright Avenue and LaFayette Place. Wheels rolling on this rickety right of way touch on history of the Southern Central and Ithaca, Auburn & Western railroads, layered in with the Lehigh & New York and the Auburn and the Auburn & Ithaca branches of the Auburn Division. Far easier to comprehend is a nearby L-shaped piece of concrete that serves as a locator for the LV station about 200 feet north of the roundhouse. This, at least, had one purpose and one parent: it was the passenger platform for the Lehigh Valley depot, used also by the NYC Auburn Road passenger trains.

During the period of 1937–1957 as the Lehigh Valley milk and coal traffic dwindled, the branch’s trackage was abandoned from North Fair Haven to Auburn. The empty roadbed...
from Auburn to Weedsport found use as a right of way for a natural gas line extending to the Fulton area. Through Weedsport to the north bank of the Seneca River used as the New York State barge canal, however, the branch’s tracks were summarily removed, leaving little to note their passing. In a two-mile stretch where the branch had used six bridges to span the West Shore RR, the Rochester, Syracuse & Eastern interurban, several village streets, the original Erie Canal, the NYC mainline, the New York State Thruway, and, finally, the Seneca River, all railroad relics were excised, save some embedded stone abutments.

On the site of the West Shore Railroad grade where the Auburn Branch crossed, new housing is built which the owner chose to name West Shore Apartments, denying the Lehigh Valley any recognition. Similarly, at the site of the depot in Weedsport, the LV lost any opportunity for historical recognition by removal of its building. But north of the Seneca River, the LV fared better. In Cato, a tasteful replica of the station on its original site is now the property of local government intending its continued use as an office. And north of Cato toward Fair Haven, the branch’s grade has been perpetuated as an all-season recreational trail. Likewise from Fair Haven to North Fair Haven, much of the railroad bed is used as village streets. The best marker, however, is embedded in North Fair Haven where the original turntable pit has been filled flush with the intact circular retaining wall, providing a site for a new home.

Not a Lehigh Valley relic, though a part of Auburn Division history, is the Rome, Watertown, & Ogdensburg tower once located at Sterling Station. Any need for the tower was eliminated about 1932 with the discontinuance of passenger trains by the RW &O at Sterling. The structure was bought by a resident of Sterling village who had it moved to his home, about three miles distant from Sterling Station. The tower was moved bodily to its current site by a Linn snowplow owned by the Town of Sterling. Ownership of the building, however, is now vested in the Sterling Historical Society.

The Elmira & Cortland Branch

Nothing remains to mark the place in Elmira from which Lehigh Valley No. 1165 departed with the last train on the Elmira & Cortland Branch on June 25, 1938. On that day, however, a handsome brick depot occupied the departure site on Fifth Street. The structure had been built in 1882 to provide the Elmira, Cortland & Northern railroad with a depot suitable for Elmira and further to house the offices of the road on the second floor. The building would endure until the 1950s. But shortly after this train’s leaving, demolition of the section between Horseheads and Van Etten began, focused initially on the two spectacular bridge structures east of Park Station (chapter 13). Today, a small recreation area and a man-made lake dominate the wooded Park Station area, inundating the site of the EC&N grade. Nevertheless, it
makes a good starting place for an exploration of the nearby bridge sites and the notorious four-mile Swartwood grade.

Once Swartwood was reached, the EC&N wended its way generally northeast to East Ithaca, finding convenient creek levels until Brooktondale. Here it was necessary to span Six Mile Creek on two successive eye-pleasing bridge structures, all now gone. At East Ithaca, the depot functions as a restaurant but is removed from the original station site. Part of the right of way east has become a town recreational trail.

Cortland seems to have an outstanding collection of E&C relics: the passenger station built in 1911 which had housed the dispatchers’ offices on the second floor, the freight house, also built in 1911, and a portion of the roundhouse on Owego Street. More important, though, are about three miles of active railroad track diverging from the former DL&W operation near the site of Cortland Junction close to Pendleton Street, continuing east to McLean Road. This track section remains in use by the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railroad. Continuing toward the original northern terminus of the EC&N, existing depots are found at Cuyler and New Woodstock, the latter housing a small railroad museum. At Cazenovia, a tasteful photo studio puts the depot to good use, while a steel Lehigh Valley caboose stands guard. The Lehigh Valley freight house is also close by.

With its wealth of curvature, grades, bridges, glens, stream crossings, etc., the EC&N could have been a modeler’s delight. Leaving Elmira at the level of the Chemung Valley, within twenty miles the road reached its highest point at Park Station, 1,504 feet. From this point it roller-coasted to an intermediate low, still far above Cayuga’s waters, at East Ithaca (873 feet). Then another climb to another peak at Sheds Corners, 1,390 feet. And another roller coaster ride to Canastota at 434 feet. The employees’ timetable mandated 100 percent retainer valves on the air brakes between Park Station and Swartwood and between Blakeslee and Canastota.

Once safely in Canastota, the train crews could relievedly knock off the retainers and enjoy the pretty little town, where the Elmira & Cortland Branch wormed its way over the West Shore, the NYC mainline, and the Erie Canal in its quest for commerce. Initially, the E&C Branch was at a grave disadvantage in its entry to the area on the south side of the teeming NYC mainline, which separated the E&C from its goal of the canal. However, ingenuity and capital expenditure eventually bridged a crossing of both the NYC and the canal, leaving only the West Shore to be crossed at grade. Nearly all the ingenious works of man coincidental to this venture are erased. Again, as at North Fair Haven, only the circular retaining wall of the E&C turntable remains as a location point, a remembrance of a time when railroads were expanding.

Another twenty miles north to Camden along the shore of Oneida Lake was the farthest reach of the E&C, sharing the one-time busy scene at Sylvan Beach with the New York, Ontario & Western. The E&C is only traced here with minimal use of its former roadbed as area streets. The former McConnellsville depot has been noted in a collection of small buildings not far from its original site, but only in Camden is there any formal recognition of the E&C, a piece of roadbed in the center of town now paved and named Lehigh Avenue.
The Seneca Falls Branch

The branch fell into such disrepair that derailments became common and in the last days of its service on this branch, the LV used the New York Central’s tracks. The old LV tracks were eventually torn up. However, some signs of the route from Seneca Falls to Cayuga still remain. The Ovid Street bridge in Seneca Falls is gone, but its old abutments are still visible. Also, one can identify the site of the Cayuga lift bridge, even though the bridge itself has been removed. At Cayuga, the Beacon Milling plant is gone, replaced by a marina. The company lives on at Liverpool, New York, under the corporate name Cargill Animal Nutrition.

The A&I Branch

Early Auburn Division employee timetables (1896–1901) indicate that the point of connection of the A&I Branch in Ithaca was identified as Auburn Junction, while the opposite end of the branch in Auburn was called Ithaca Junction. Today both sites see active rail traffic, although not connected; indeed, most of the branch has been abandoned between the active spurs. In Auburn, a combination of NYC and LV remainders enables the present Finger Lakes Railway to serve an agri-business supply organization on the A&I Branch. From the end of this track, the abandoned grade wends to the site of Cayuga Junction, where it becomes a utility road for a colony of shore properties on Cayuga Lake (off Route 90, near Plaster Point). From this point south to the electrical generation plant at Lake Ridge, the abandoned right of way is used, in large part, the same way. The former depot at Union Springs has become a municipal building and a brass plate commemorates a small salt factory nearby.

At Aurora the former depot has been moved to a nearby site to become a residence. On the Wells College campus, the ramps on which coal hoppers carried coal to the college powerhouse are pleasing grass terraces on the lakeshore. The abandoned right of way returns to active duty at Lake Ridge, where the Norfolk Southern is the present operator of the former A&I Branch. The NS is the coal supplier to the former NYSEG Milliken Station at Lake Ridge and provides rail service to the Cargill rock salt operation at Portland Point. The NS continues on the original A&I route to its connection at erstwhile Auburn Junction in Ithaca and thence to Sayre.

While the highways and byways available on the east side of Cayuga Lake provide splendid viewpoints at selected spots, the A&I Branch had a virtual monopoly on lake scenery. Built as it was on the very shore for its entire length, daylight trips were a delight, rain or shine. One conductor, as mentioned earlier, had an eye as well for the beauty of moonlight on the water. The scene remains, day and night, for those who would seek it. But alas the Lehigh Valley and its passenger trains are of the past.
Stone arch of the Elmira station still carries the letters of the Elmira, Cortland & Northern RR in 1937. Built in 1883 and demolished in the wave of urban renewal in the 1950s. A reminder of the rich and complex heritage of the Lehigh Valley’s Auburn Division.
From the Author

To Elizabeth, who made room in a hectic life for an errant seed to sprout, and to Judith, who firmed the author’s wavering intent;

To my father, Jim Lathrop, Bill McLane, and other active railroaders who provided entrée where entries didn’t exist;

To Dave Field, big ol’ Bruce Tracy, and Jack Koehler who wanted to see where every bit of the Lehigh Valley was laid; and

To John Taibi for boundless and enthusiastic counsel of all sorts in a technically, artistically challenging world.

Looking back, the year of 1918 seems to have been a good year in which to experience birth—and the borough of East Mauch Chunk in the Lehigh River Valley was a most satisfactory birthplace, particularly after the passage of about six years educated this childish resident to the teeming transportation scene available for audit just by standing on the Lehigh Valley station platform at East Mauch Chunk. From this entirely safe and sanctioned vantage point, the mainline of the LV was on view, passenger and freight alike, trackage being provided to pass freight trains around passenger trains stopped at the station. Across the river in Mauch Chunk was a show quite equaling the LV, that of the Central Railroad of New Jersey (the “Central” in local parlance, as the LV was the “Valley”). Binding my family to both railroads was the employment of my father by the Valley and of three of his brothers by the Central. A county bridge linked the quite separate boroughs of East Mauch Chunk and Mauch Chunk, spanning from east to west the LV, the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Canal (still infrequently hauling by mule power as late as 1924), the Lehigh River, and the CNJ. The bridge also functioned as a roadbed for the electric street railway serving the area, in addition to its municipal duty to pedestrians and vehicles. Unofficially it was a splendid observation point for all that came in view, though smoky and sooty, a fact noticed by my mother.

This serene, if smoky, period was interrupted by the death of my mother, resulting in the temporary residence of my brother and me in Tompkins County in upstate New York, where we briefly attended a one-room rural school. I remember little of this experience except an initial introduction to what would become a long-term acquaintance: the Lehigh Valley A&I Branch along the eastern shore of Cayuga Lake. I soon learned that a daily eastbound passenger train on the A&I, No. 302, would presage the appearance of the eastbound Black Diamond No. 10 on the west side of the lake in the vicinity of Interlaken. No. 10 could be smoke-traced en route to Ithaca for its meet with No. 302 at noon. In the late afternoon, this procedure was reversed at about 5 p.m. Though daylight trains excited only my train in-
terest, the whistles in the night brought a loneliness beyond description. Fortunately, the Tompkins County interval was short-lived. In 1925, my father remarried and chose to move the family to Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, site of the LV general offices. My family acquired a new home on the north side of Bethlehem and I became a local resident.

Bethlehem was not without bridges. Chief among them was the so-called Hill-to-Hill structure built circa 1925, which spanned the same railroads, canal, and river as the Mauch Chunk bridge. Though lacking the charm of the sooty old bridge over the Lehigh at the Mauch Chunks, it was grander in its design, affording countless observation points. One had an impression of grace and space— and it was free of soot accumulation. An added attraction was the new railroad station on the south side of the river, which was shared by the LV and the Reading.

East of the new Union Station was the shaky New Street bridge, which skirted one edge of the clangorous, glowing steel works. Some nights it seemed that the whole of south Bethlehem was aflame. New Street also extended further south to Lehigh University and football games. The Union Station became the embarkation point for countless family rail journeys to New York, Philadelphia, Mauch Chunk, and upstate New York, all made possible by the pass privileges accompanying my father’s railroad employment. Even so, my railroad family often chose auto upholstery over railroad cushions to visit the Poconos, the Delaware Water Gap, or Asbury Park.

Since my new stepmother was a native of Lansing, New York, and my father was a pass-bearing LV employee, his pass privileges were put to frequent use in travel between Bethlehem and Lansing. Because passes were not honored on the Black Diamond trains, we traveled by night, arriving in Ithaca at about 7 a.m. and transferring to the A&I morning train to reach the Lansing mud. Later, when passenger trains were less plentiful, passes became valid on the Black Diamond and we traveled in the daylight. As soon as my brother put his foot on a coach step, he began complaining bitterly, but for me there was always something to keep my attention and relieve the tedium. Each trip was different, though the same. At Bethlehem, a Reading sleeper was hung on overnight westbound passenger trains. Leaving Bethlehem, the train would accelerate with loud exhaust. Within a mile, the brakes would come on and the engine would labor. Then the brakes would release, the exhaust would ease, and the train would grease into Allentown. That was a running air test after adding a car, sonny.

Lights from houses and factories outlined both sides of the Lehigh River to Mauch Chunk, where a more powerful engine replaced the one in place or else a helper was added. Then for the next hour, in the darkness of the upper Lehigh Gorge, the passengers were treated to the staccato of hard working steam locomotives; locomotives in pairs varied the synchronicity of their exhaust sound. Helpers cut off at Mountaintop and left the passengers to appreciate the beautifully lit Wyoming Valley in comparative silence as the train eased downgrade toward Wilkes-Barre, viewed first from the right windows and then, after the big curve near Newport, the left. After a surfeit of heavy braking on steep grades coming into Wilkes-Barre, travel toward Sayre along the Susquehanna seemed like flying. Daylight began as we left Sayre. At Ithaca, we transferred to the A&I train, which began moving forward by backing to Auburn Junction at Clinton Street. On weekdays, a good patronage of
male workers destined for Portland Point and Ludlowville occupied the seats. Lansing, a flag stop, was the first station west of Ludlowville, on a road so muddy that at times it was only reachable on foot. Conductors would obligingly signal the train to stop so patrons could be discharged, but stopping a moving train to get on it was the responsibility of the passenger and was accomplished by waving a green and white flag (furnished by the LV on site) during the day or a light of some sort (furnished by the passenger) at night.

Because my dependent's pass provided only a coach seat, it was in a coach seat that I rode and, though not luxurious, I judged them comfortable. My only concern was to get a window seat—and, preferably, at a window with a river view, either the Lehigh or Susquehanna—since the view across the aisle was confined by the hills lining the river valleys. Coaches would often be totally filled, so that sharing a seat with a stranger was a common event and I stayed alert for solitary seats. I also learned that seats were sometimes available in the smoker, if one didn't object to tobacco smoke and leather seats. At any rate, LV passengers on the mainline could expect solid (but not opulent) equipment operating sometimes at speeds of 60 miles per hour and leaning a little on the curves, interiors sometimes redolent of soft coal, a high noise level, abrupt equipment moves, and treacherous toilets which at high speed gyrated like those on the airlines in rough weather. It was a dramatic change to dismount from a mainline train which had just plummeted into Ithaca from Spencer and board the sedate gasoline-powered train destined for Auburn as, with puttering pace, it carefully looked for a safe place for its wheels on the way. Slow and easy, maybe, but it was a good time to plan the next trip.

Coming north one Sunday morning on Train 301 on the A&I Branch, I politely answered the questions of a very proper fellow passenger, a missionary on leave from a post in Southern Rhodesia who was traveling to Auburn to speak at the Second Baptist Church. He zealously pursued his calling even with a not-eager congregation of one, who began to consider flight from a moving train.

Times were changing for the railroads. Our lives would similarly change and rather abruptly. At the end of 1930, when the LV Telephone and Telegraph Department (the T&T) was merged with the Signal Department, the supervisory forces of both departments were reduced drastically and the position held by my father was eliminated. Fortunately, he was able to attach himself to the Signal Department and was assigned to Auburn, New York, where a signal maintainer job was vacant.

Accordingly, in early 1931 my family relocated to Auburn, where, to my eyes, everything was different in a disappointing way: schools, climate, housing, libraries, and the LV—especially the LV. I tried to adjust to the change from the best ambience the LV had to offer to a gangly branch line that ran in all directions. Time would change my original haughty appraisal as friendship improved on acquaintance. The remembered grandeur we had left behind became less compelling. In addition, the portion of the LV now patrolled by my father became user-friendly to me. As the son of an identifiable employee, I was provided all manner of cab and caboose rides in response to the most timid requests. Eventually, I gained a measure of familiarity with the railroad, its employees, and its equipment, although it went mostly unrecorded, since I did not own a camera.
In early 1931, when I was registered unwillingly in the Auburn school system, the LV was intact. At Auburn, J. Frank Maguire drove his ponderous square-edged Packard sedan to the first parking space at the LV Auburn depot, where he ascended to the second floor and occupied his seat at the Auburn Division superintendent’s desk. After January 1, 1932, Mr. Maguire occupied the same desk but in the reduced rank of a trainmaster on a branch location. The sudden change in status was the result of a summary realignment of the LV from a six-division format to only three divisions. In the process, the Auburn Division was abolished and became part of an enlarged Buffalo Division.

The years slipped by, the diesels appeared and the once respectable LV property began to slide into oblivion, carrying with it the formerly sturdy, self-sufficient Auburn Division. It can't be said that the diesels came without notice. As early as 1927 one had nosed around Auburn, shortly after its construction at McIntosh & Seymour. When the squatty No. 125 made an initial trial run from Auburn to Manchester (photo, page 86), a local newspaper snidely compared the small newcomer to its larger, stronger steam brothers. Well, the baby grew up.

My first impression of a diesel came during a trip on a track speeder with my father in search of telephone trouble on the LV Seneca Falls Branch in 1931. Instructed to clear the speeder to accommodate an approaching switch engine, the expectant speeder riders were left slack-jawed by the appearance of a boxy motor unit instead of the usual steam yard engine. The motor unit was the LV 125, providing a glimpse of the shape of things to come.

Fortunately, in high school I became acquainted with a fellow student, David Field, who shared my growing LV interest. He provided the camera while I provided transportation to LV activity sites. Our friendship was terminated by his untimely death in 1947 from Hodgkins disease, at which point I inherited the 616 Kodak Vigilant camera and his collection of black and white negatives.

This seems a terse account of the fourteen years Dave and I spent in an undemanding association, a period that saw us graduate from the same high school in the same year and later marry and become parents at the same time. In between, we managed to tour the several railroads of New York and Pennsylvania in questionable cars, while he cranked out surprisingly good 616-size black and white negatives from his camera, which I totally disregarded at the time. In 1947, when I became heir to both negatives and camera, they still went neglected. Finally, with the popular acceptance of the SLR camera in about 1975, I began a thumbs-on relationship with 35 mm equipment, which led to at least partial mastery of the mysteries of photography. As a part of this experience, I acquired an elderly Federal 4x5 enlarger, which permitted the printing of the neglected 616 and larger negatives. I also bought a smaller and more manageable enlarger for 35 mm and smaller negatives, such as 2" x 2." Some 5" x 7," 6" x 8," and 8" x 10" glass oldies that I found had to be contact printed.

In the 1970s, my wife Elizabeth began work for an accounting degree and with more time on my own I found myself frequently in Seymour Library in Auburn, where I became aware of the century-old newspaper files then located there, although they were later removed to Cornell. At the same time, Seymour Library disposed of its holdings of state railroad reports, which I was able to acquire. From such material I made a long-hand compila-
From the Author

The use of railroad data to write a history and to augment my recollection of the life and times of the rail industry. By the time I was mature enough in my thinking to see beyond the pretty locomotives and realize the sound of air horns was really a dirge, I was looking at the space where the rails had been. But at least they had been there and for awhile had done their work admirably.

Thanks

This book reflects the work of a lifetime spent under the influence of the Lehigh Valley Railroad, buttressed by odd lots of reading and research, the whole talked through with many friends and acquaintances. The passage of time makes it difficult to fully acknowledge the wealth of assistance and resources made available to me, but I will try.

I am immeasurably indebted to Bruce Tracy for his unstinting, quiet, reasonable, ongoing participation in the production of the book, often without my acknowledgement. Bruce helped to seek out publishers and, as you will see from the credits, opened his large collection to me as well as helping me to search out the appropriate illustrations for the text. As I recall, Bruce’s growing collection of railroad postcards led to our first acquaintance more than fifteen years ago. There was an element of mutual aid: I enjoyed wallowing in a wealth of immaculately maintained postcards cared for by someone else, and sometimes I could provide identifications or locations which went over big with the owner.

When doubt existed about a location it was often resolved by a trip to a site, which began field study that has a strong chance of continuing after work on this book is done.

In the front rank of those to whom I am beholden in the production of this book are wife Elizabeth and daughter Judith, not only for family and filial concerns, but also for endless professional guidance of this unwary writer through accounting and legal shoals and past the reef of computer incompetence. Judith can often truthfully say: “I’ve been working on the railroad all the live-long day – and part of the night.”

I would like to thank all those who provided access to materials, which legion of people and organizations is listed in the illustration credits on page 155.

Thanks are due to all those named in the dedication and to many others who contributed ideas, materials, and enthusiastic support over the years. Among them I recall: the late Joseph Boyd of Elmira, a retired Pennsy conductor interested in history; rail historian/authors Richard Palmer, Shelden King, Charles Yungkurth, and Jack Koehler; Ed Milks, retired agent for the LV Auburn Branch; William Caloroso, rail photographer, book dealer, and author; Richard Pearson, possessor of an admirable rail photo slide collection which he shared; and Art Volbrecht, rail historian now retired. I am also indebted to Paul Templeton who before moving west created excellent latter-day LV photos.

Two people are due special thanks: Phil Wilson, for innovative, elegant design and layout, and John Marcham, for selfless, tireless application to the needs of editing this book. When John is confronted with any obstruction, he makes only one move: onward!

Although this book could not have been completed without their help, any inaccuracies or omissions are my own.
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From the Editor
Chapter 1 is adapted from an article Herb Trice wrote for Railway History, Bulletin 122, April 1970, of the Railway & Locomotive Historical Society, Urbana, Illinois.
Herb possesses and we hope in time to publish a roster of motive power of the Auburn Division and its predecessor lines, photos of stations not used in this volume, and tables of mileage between stations.
My many thanks go to the Trices, Bruce Tracy, designer Phil Wilson, and my brother David, author of Lehigh Valley Memories, for help with production, to the LV Veterans and Cornell RR Historical Society where I met Herb and Bruce, and to the DeWitt Historical Society, Donna Eschenbrenner, and Carl Koski.
—John Marcham
List of Illustrations

In this listing, the page or location in the book appears first, followed by the name of the owner of the illustration (or an abbreviation), and the name of the photographer or illustrator if known. Where a page has more than one illustration, they are listed left to right, top to bottom.

Abbreviations
Collection of:
ABT = A. Bruce Tracy, Locke
AV = Arthur Volbrecht, Brooktondale
CCTM = Canastota Canal Town Museum
CMHA = Cayuga Museum of History and Art, Auburn
CUL = Cornell University Libraries, Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections, Ithaca
DHS = DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, Ithaca
DSP = Depot Square Publishing, Loveland, Ohio
FHSM = Frontenac Historical Society & Museum, Union Springs
HVT = Herbert V. Trice, Auburn
NYSM = New York State Museum, Historical & Anthropological Surveys, Albany
PW = Phil Wilson, Ithaca
RN = Rails North, Syracuse, Central New York Chapter, National Railway Historical Society, 1990
SHS = Sterling Historical Society

Inside cover Lehigh Valley Memories by David Marcham.
Frontispiece 2, AV—Town of Caroline.
Introduction 6, HVT; 7, ABT; 8, ABT & HVT; 9, ABT; 10, PW; and 11, ABT & Ronald Sampson.

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Chapter 5 86, HVT; 88, ABT & by HVT; 89, Jean True & ABT; 90, HVT & HVT; 91, HVT with John Taiibi & NYSM; 92, ABT & HVT by Harold Seltzer; and 93, HVT by David Field & HVT.

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Chapter 7 100, HVT by David Field; 102, HVT by David Field, ABT & Allan Gilmore; and 103, DSP & DSP.

Chapter 8 104, Jean True; 105, Ronald Sampson; 106, HVT, RN & DSP; 107, HVT; 108–9, HVT; 110, HVT & ABT; 111, CCTM; 112, Anthracite Railroads Historical Society, Lansdale, Pa., by A. T. Withiam; 113, CUL & ABT; 114, CUL & HVT by Ed Moon; and 115, CUL.

Chapter 9 116, by Paul Templeton; 118, ABT & SHS; and 119, all Dryden Town Historical Society.

Chapter 10 120, Norman Mack; 122, ABT, Rick Doll & HVT; and 123, Edward Pettet, HVT & HVT.

Chapter 11 124, Charles Youngkurth; 126, HVT by Ed Moon; 128, HVT & HVT by David Field; and 129, HVT & HVT.

Chapter 12 130, HVT; 132, HVT; 133, James Lathrop; 134, RN; and 135, HVT & Eleanor Wilbur, Dan Silke’s daughter.

Chapter 13 136, HVT by David Field; 137, HVT & Elmira Star-Gazette; 138, Erin Historical Society; 139, DHS; 140, HVT from New York State Electric & Gas & Rick Doll; 141, HVT, HVT by David Fairbanks & by HVT.

Chapter 14 142, by HVT; 144, William McLane—HVT & AV; 147, by HVT; 148, ABT; 149 by HVT.

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