RAILROADS TOWN OF RUSSIA

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RAILROADS

The history of railroads is largely a story of the last 150 years. The 1800's saw the origins of a full-fledged "railroad movement," whose main promoters had plans to develop the railroad into a habitual and national mode of transportation.

The railroad served to open up, for the first time, vast regions of previously unsettled wilderness. It also helped launch the industrial revolution. Undeniably, the greatest economic factor in the transformation of American life during the nineteenth century was the development of the railroad.

The demand for railroads throughout the Adirondack region mounted in the 1830's. Speed and convenience were major factors for the early success of railroads. But as late as the 1840's there were many objections to railroads--great damage would be done to the farmers, horses would no longer be needed and there would be no market for oats and hay, domestic animals would be injured by the noise of locomotives, and the sparks from the engines would destroy property.

The impact of the railroads on economic, social, and political life was great and continued through the first half of the twentieth century.

Though the railroad came to Herkimer County in 1834 it didn't come north until 1855, to Remsen and Barneveld. Poland and the Town of Russia didn't have a railroad until the 1880's.

For many years after 1830, repeated efforts were made to penetrate the Adirondack region with railroads and to connect the St. Lawrence River with the Mohawk Valley. There were too many difficulties to be surmounted by men with inadequate knowledge. Numerous plans were proposed; none were accomplished.

In some cases, the route was surveyed and land along the right of way was bought or taken under option. In others, the surveys were conducted from a desk in New York City or Albany.

In 1836 a State Act was passed to provide for the construction of a railroad from Herkimer to Trenton and in 1837 a company was chartered to build a railroad from Trenton to Sacketts Harbor. No construction followed in either case.

Towards the end of 1852 and into 1853 there was a determined effort to build a railroad from French Bay Clayton to the Mohawk Valley. Although Herkimer made an effort to locate the southern terminal there, the railroad was built north from Utica as the Utica and Black River Railroad. This was later extended northwards but skirted the west side of the Adirondacks.

The New York Central was formed in 1853 when ten small New York railroads merged. Through acquisitions and control of other railroads, the New York Central became one of the most extensive rail empires in the United States. New York Central's New York-Buffalo main line followed the Hudson and Mohawk River valleys. The road advertised that it followed the "Water Level Route." From the very beginning the main characteristic of American railroads were curves instead of straight lines.

The New York, Utica, and Ogdensburg Railroad Company was organized in 1870 to build north through the West Canada Valley eventually reaching the St. Lawrence River at Ogdensburg. Very little work was done on this projected railroad before the project was abandoned.

The surveyed route for the Herkimer and Trenton Railroad followed the valley of the West Canada Creek through the whole length, from Herkimer to Trenton. The line began on the Erie Canal at the old Mohawk Bridge, a short distance east of Mohawk. It followed the common road to its intersection with the Utica and Schenectady Railroad near the center of Herkimer. It was then proposed to build the road on Main Street in Herkimer, turning north at Trenton Road (now German Street) and follow the west side of the West Canada Creek to Middleville. At that point the creek was to be crossed and the railroad lay on the east side through Newport and Poland to the Russia-Trenton Bridge where the creek was to be crossed again. The railroad was to follow the west bank until Steuben Creek was reached and there it crossed the latter near its mouth and followed it along to the village of Trenton (Barneveld) where the railroad was to terminate near Case's Tavern. The projected length was 26.9 miles and it ascended 388 feet with an estimated cost of $ 175,151.92. This project simmered for more than 40 years.

Despite the vital role that the railroad was destined to play in the development of the nation's economy, no industry ever presented as many or as great problems as those that accompanied its construction.

The large amount of capital required for the building of railroads in New York, coupled with the unwillingness of private investors to risk their money in railroad securities, frequently made it difficult for companies to raise sufficient funds for important projects. It was common practice for construction firms to take part of their pay in securities of the railroad that they were building.

The national government, which contributed heavily to the development of the nation's transportation network, gave only slight financial assistance to railroads. The state constitution of 1846 only restricted state aid to railroads; it did not forbid assistance altogether. Between 1827 and 1878 New York State by loan, lease, or donation of money subsidized the construction of sixteen railroads. On December 15, 1855 a railroad opened from Utica to Boonville, a distance of 35 miles.

In 1879, Thomas Spencer, an engineer of Utica, interested many residents of Herkimer, Middleville, Newport, and Poland in the possibilities of building a narrow gauge railroad. The project was almost abandoned in June 1880 because of the lack of subscriptions in Poland. It was then decided to have the terminus at Newport but this did not produce the desired result; for a while it looked like there wouldn't be a railroad. But construction was started within the next month with Poland being the designated northern terminus.

The road that was laid out to be followed by the Herkimer, Newport, and Poland Narrow Gauge Railway was to start from the eastern end of Herkimer close to the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad and proceed north from that point. It roughly followed the line of the 1836-1837 survey until it reached Middleville and north of there it crossed West Canada Creek and re-crossed it so that it came into Newport on the west side of West Canada Creek. It had to cross the creek again to reach Poland and it did so at the southern boundary of the village.

Difficult engineering was required in surveying, locating, and building the railroad. Clearing a path for the railroad required cutting a swath through Middleville. Above Middleville, the cut through an outcrop of Adirondack granite required the use of steam drills. Riverside stonewalls

were built along the rapids south of Poland to prevent washouts. Additional obstacles were that the West Canada Valley is very narrow and West Canada Creek with its many rapids was difficult to cross and maintain a stable roadbed.

At first they were going to cross the creek four times before reaching Newport. But the line was altered to run around the lower dugway; this avoided two bridges, which greatly reduced the cost of construction and maintenance.

It was also difficult for the engineers at the upper dugway. Tons of hardpan were taken away, a substantial stonewall was constructed and the railroad built on this wall between the creek and the road.

A long, high board fence separated the ordinary road from the railroad. Thousands of dollars were expended on the dugways and the roadbed was considered strong and firm. This routing of the railroad via the two dugways, one between Kast's Bridge and Dempster's Bridge and the other between Dempster's Bridge and Countryman's, may have saved the building of two bridges, but for nearly all the years of the railroad's existence, the dugways presented problems. There were many mud and rock slides; an engineer was killed in one slide.

Eventually, because of all the problems with the dugways the southern terminal of the Mohawk and Malone passenger trains was permanently shifted from Herkimer to Utica; the trains being switched over at Remsen.

There were two certificates of incorporation of the Herkimer, Newport, and Poland Narrow Gauge Railway Co. filed with the Secretary of State; one on December 18, 1879 and the other on July 8, 1880. The railroad was chartered on June 29, 1880. It was projected to run from Herkimer to Poland, 16.5 miles. The original amount of capital stock was $88,000.

The three locomotives were named for three of the directors: Edward Burns of Middleville, Henry Dexter of Newport, and William Smith of Herkimer.

Poland's Directors were: Stephen Millington, Warren Brayton, and John Hemstreet. Newport's were: Henry R. Burlingame, Henry W. Dexter, and Newell Mory. Middleville's were: Edward M. Burns, George H. Thomas, and Wallace Mosher. Other directors were: John Vrooman,

Warner Miller, and William Smith of Herkimer, and Thomas W. Spencer of Utica. Spencer was president and Thomas was secretary and treasurer.

Excerpts from the first annual meeting of the railway company stated, "the Engineers began work July 7, 1880; the work of grading began August 8, 1880; the right of way was secured in but two instances; that about one mile of the road has been graded from Poland south; that from Newport to the point where the road crosses the West Canada Creek, the railroad is mostly completed, that one locomotive, eight freight cars, and two service cars have been delivered, and an engine house and water tank built at Herkimer; that connection has been made with the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad."

The railway to Middleville was completed September 6, 1881. This was an amazing amount of construction for the first year of work considering that all of the work was done by manual labor and the use of horses for grading. The Herkimer-Middleville Railroad was put into operation immediately following with two trains each way daily. The schedule called for 40 minutes for the nearly nine miles and the fare was set at 45 cents. In its annual report for 1881, the company reported that it had carried 1,635 passengers and 1,400-ton miles of freight and had lost $144.82 in the process.

On January 1, 1882 the first passenger train entered Newport. In February 1882 three trains ran each day from Herkimer to Newport. The speed of travel for business and pleasure made the narrow gauge a success. Poland was reached May 29, 1882. In that year's annual report there were two locomotive engines, one passenger car, one combination car, and eighteen box, flat, and coal cars, plus two freight cars that were leased by the company. They transported 9,129 tons of freight, at the average rate of 11.66 cents per mile and 33,840 passengers at five cents per mile. Earnings were $ 27,076.77, with $18,902.19 charged against earnings leaving a surplus of $ 8,174.58.

Up to September 1884 it was reported that $ 182,518 had been used for grading, masonry, bridges, rails, etc. In 1884 the company reported an $ 8,000 profit but its stock never paid dividends.

By 1890 freight hauled was: 21% lumber, 17% coal and coke, 21% agricultural products, and 41% manufactured goods and general merchandise. This was to be the last year of operation of

the railroad under its original name, Herkimer, Newport, and Poland Narrow Gauge Railway, and original management. It was in 1890 that a framed depot was built in Poland; Roger's Fence Company now occupies the building.

It would appear that the narrow gauge was well managed but was not going to be a great financial success though it certainly was a means of increasing the general welfare and economy of the West Canada Creek Valley and its environs. But the cost of running the railroad outpaced income.

The greatest advantage of a narrow gauge railway was that it was much cheaper to build. It could turn sharper curves, thus lessening the need for earthworks. The narrow gauge railroad, three feet six and a half inches wide rather than the standard four foot eight and a half inches, with its lighter engine and cars requiring smaller bridges, lighter rails, and a narrower roadbed, was less expensive to build and operate.

The narrow gauge led; the standard gauge followed. It cost a little more initially, but the advantage of being standard outweighed the cost. People were now dependent on the railroad; no one wanted to return to the days of stages and freight wagons.

In 1890 the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad did not control any rail lines north of the Mohawk Valley.

On October 31, 1890 the Mohawk Valley and Northern Railway Company filed with New York State to have its terminals at Poland and Noblesboro. On April 30, 1891, these two companies consolidated into the Mohawk Valley and Northern Railway Company.

The Herkimer, Newport, and Poland Extension Railway Company and Saint Lawrence and Adirondack Railroad Company were incorporated on September 11, 1891. These companies were a reorganization of two divisions of the Mohawk and Adirondack Railroad Company, which was incorporated March 5, 1891, its railroad extending from Poland to Malone. The first name of the new companies covered the line from Poland to Remsen and the second covered from Remsen to Malone.

The company would operate a standard gauge line from the point of intersection with the Herkimer, Newport, and Poland Narrow Gauge Railway, at or near Poland, northerly to Remsen,

with a branch line from Prospect to a point at or near Northwood. The total length of this railroad would be twenty miles.

But as late as 1891 newspapers were declaring that there was no public need for a railroad through the Adirondacks and that a railroad would increase the devastation of the forests by lumber companies. A prophecy that proved more accurate was that sparks from the locomotives would start fires endangering the whole Adirondacks.

By 1892 Dr. William S. Webb gained control of the railroad and reorganized it as the Mohawk Valley and Northern Railway Company; incorporated June 23, 1892. The enormous wealth of Dr. Webb and his investors quickly turned the small time railroad big time. Less than a year after he gained control, the narrow gauge tracks were converted to standard gauge. Crossings were replaced with stronger and wider iron and steel bridges and the extension of the railroad through Gravesville, over Trenton Falls and on to Prospect and Remsen had begun. Railroads caused the transition to iron bridges from wooden bridges because of the weight of the "iron horse."

The spike driving took place October 12, 1892. Herkimer even postponed Columbus Day until October 25, the day of the first through train, and then celebrated both at once, with a parade and an ox roast.

For more than 50 years railroaders had been trying to link up the Mohawk and the St. Lawrence Rivers. The Mohawk and Malone Railroad was officially known as the St. Lawrence and Adirondack and unofficially as "Fairy Tale Railroad" or the "Golden Chariot Route."

Dr. Webb started by acquiring, straightening, and extending the Herkimer, Newport, and Poland Narrow Gauge Railroad; no special bargain since the road had four complete circles of curvature in sixteen miles.

By July 1, 1892, the line being built north from Herkimer had reached Fulton Chain, and the line coming south from Malone had reached Childwold, leaving a gap of 50 miles to be closed before winter.

Getting workers wasn’t easy though pay was considered tempting at $1.50 a day. The harshest stretch was between Remsen and Tupper Lake. Deterrents were black flies, rock that had to be drilled by hand and blasted with black powder, and stumps that had to be dynamited.

It cost five million dollars to build the Mohawk and Malone. Extra heavy steel rails were used and 3,000 ties were needed for every mile.

During 1892 both the Adirondack Park was dedicated and a spur of the Mohawk and Malone Railroad from Poland, joined with the Black River Railroad and opened in Prospect and Hinckley.

Before the railroad came, the Central Adirondacks were only accessible to the sturdy adventurer or the wealthy. Afterwards vacationers flocked there. The fare in 1892 from New York City to Old Forge was $6.70. Tourists, buyers of private campsites, hunting and fishing clubs, hotel builders, and lumbermen descended into the Western Adirondacks in Webb's wake. Lakes, which had been one to two days' travel from the nearest railroad, found them within sight of the new line.

In 1893 the New York Central acquired control of the Mohawk and Malone Railway from Dr. Webb and two years later the southern terminus was shifted from Herkimer to Utica, fourteen miles west. Webb retained his ownership of the line north of Malone.

In 1894 the famous amendment to the New York State Constitution, which decreed that no timber on the state-owned forestlands could ever be sold or removed put an end to railroad construction in the Adirondacks.

Webb's railroad was described in an 1895 newspaper as being, "a thoroughly good railroad, equipped in first-class style, a source of health, comfort, and pleasure to thousands of enthusiastic lovers of the North Woods."

Originally, the train was run primarily for passenger service stopping at Herkimer, Kast Bridge, Countryman, County Home, Middleville, Newport, Poland, Gravesville, Trenton Chasm, Prospect Junction, Remsen, and up north. Some of these were flag stops where the train only stopped if someone waved a green and white flag or lantern, which signaled the train to stop for a passenger.

Railroads expedited travel, but journeys by train had many drawbacks. Accidents were frequent; sometimes passengers were injured. There were long waits when the train broke down, which

occurred more often than desired. The cars usually had no springs and the train was stopped by a hand foot brake, which jolted the cars severely.

Around 1900 railways began to take more consideration for their passengers' comfort. Roomier, heavier, more comfortable coaches, running smoothly became universal. The old oil lamps were replaced first by gas and then by electricity; sleeping cars became more numerous, and dining cars began to appear while more and more attention was paid to inside and outside appearance.

Travel time was four times as fast as stagecoach, and freight capacity was astounding. The Mohawk and Malone improved and created business in the valley. Milk stations, icehouses, coal, freight, and stockyards were established at villages along the route. Old industries were enlarged and new ones created. Logging increased in the North Country with the advent of the railroad. Every village shipped butter and cheese. Poland and Cold Brook sawmills and manufacturers shipped lumber and wood products from the Poland terminal. Farms and most businesses benefited enormously and new businesses were created.

After 1900 the railroads were the principal means of transporting people, mail, and freight. Railroads changed the dairy industry immeasurably. Raw milk could be iced down and shipped to downstate cities in a day, creating an enormous market. In the early 1900's the conveniently located cheese factories gave way to milk stations along railroad lines.

Harry Newman of Cold Brook remembers helping in his father's and grandfather's slaughterhouse when he was a boy in the late 1920's. Once they had 300 calves hung up in the barn in Cold Brook. The next day they hauled the calves to the Poland Depot and loaded them onto the freight train.

With this spectacular increase in speed and freight capability up and down the valley, each village developed dominant industries. Poland's was lumber and wood products. There was a creamery at Gravesville and at Newport. Middleville had a milk station and a feed mill. A milk station and coal yard were at Prospect Junction, a half mile west of the village of Prospect. Hinckley had a sawmill and pulp mills.

This was also the junction of the 2.65-mile spur line, which ran past Prospect, following the general route of what is now Route 365 to Hinckley. Just west of Hinckley the line branched, and

ran up both sides of the creek to the sawmill and pulp mills. A wooden trestle bridge crossed the south side of the West Canada. This spur line, which was the most profitable on the entire railroad, insured the continued operation of the Hinckley mills into the 1900's.

Remsen Depot, where three railroads ran side by side and came together, became one of the busiest terminals in the North Country.

The volume of freight that could be carried was tremendous compared to hauling freight over dirt roads with horses and wagons. The time and effort saved made using the railroad good business sense for many people.

An article in a Poland newspaper, dated February 11, 1907 stated, "Lumbermen are taking advantage of this good sleighing and many logs as well as lumber is being delivered at the mills and at the railroad."

Despite the spectacular growth of rail freight traffic from the 1890's onwards passengers still generated about a quarter of the railroads' income in 1916, the peak year for volume of American rail travel. Some railroad men were not ecstatic at this ratio. They resented the passenger as a nuisance who occupied track space, which could be put to more lucrative use for the booming freight business.

But the importance of passenger service to the general public was a fact. From 1893 until the 1920's, trains and the railroad were mentioned almost daily in Cornelius Schermerhorn's diaries. Cornelius and his family were residents of the village of Poland and did not own a car. The convenience of the train schedule with several trains running daily was a regular means of transportation for many area residents. Mr. Schermerhorn would catch the 8 a.m. train for Poland to go to a doctor's appointment in Newport and be back on the noon train. Many Poland residents were active members of the Masons and Eastern Star. They rode an afternoon train to Herkimer for quarterly meetings and came back by the evening train.

Alice Schermerhorn and her daughter, Mabel were zealous members of the W.C.T.U. (Women's Christian Temperance Union). They often took the morning train to Utica for regional meetings and were home by dusk, via the train. Florence Schermerhorn, who was a piano and music teacher, would go to Thendara and the Fulton Chain weekly to give lessons. She also would

board the 1:00 p.m. train for Gravesville, give two hours of instruction and be back in Poland in time for dinner.

Everyone owned trunks, which held all of one's possessions when one traveled aboard the train to a new job or to college. If no one was there to pick you up, the depot had a stage and a horse and red cart to deliver you and your baggage to your home. Listed in an 1893 railroad brochure was the following: "Poland-Stage leaves daily, except Sunday, 9:00 a.m., 1:15 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. for Cold Brook, and 1:15 p.m. for Gray. Arrives from Gray and Cold Brook, 8:00 a.m., from Cold Brook, 1:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Fare to Cold Brook, 15 cents; Gray, 50 cents; 150 lbs. Baggage free. Teams may be had at the Poland liveries for Piseco Lake landing, 38 miles, at a charge of $5.00 for one person, $7.00 for two, $8.00 for three or four, $10.00 for five persons, including hand baggage only. For more than five persons, livery rates on application."

Railroads were the first to feel the full draught of new forms of overland transportation. Once Henry Ford devised an assembly-line production for his Model-T Ford in 1914, the days of the railroad's monopoly were numbered. The price of a new auto tumbled to less than $ 400 within three years bringing purchase within the means of a greater range of the population.

As late as 1916 many railroad promoters believed that the fad of automobile riding would gradually wear off and the time would soon come when a very large portion of the people would cease to think of automobile rides. But the fact was that the automobile severely cut into the railroad's business.

From the early 1920's the Model-T, bus services, and better highways began to draw people away from the railroads. The Herkimer-Cold Brook bus service started in 1912 to supplant the old Mohawk and Malone Railroad passenger service, which operated throughout the Kuyahoora Valley.

The main-line railroads took it all fairly complacently in the 1920's. A few branch lines were shut and timetables trimmed slightly. The most miles of railroad peaked in 1915.

When the Hinckley pulp mills ceased operation around 1922, the downhill decline of the Poland to Remsen section of the Mohawk and Malone Railroad began.

During the 1920's the U.S. population increased by 13.5 per cent, but the railroads' aggregate passenger-mileage and passenger service slumped almost 43 per cent. At the end of the decade Americans were doing five times as much travel in their family autos as by train. The picture grew even bleaker as the Great Depression followed the Wall Street crash of 1929. Also by 1929 the average operating ratio of the railroads' passenger operation had regressed to an unhealthy 90 per cent, whereas in sharp contrast the freight ration had been slightly improved to 67 per cent.

In 1931 the Hinckley spur was abandoned. The last day of passenger service from Herkimer to Poland was October 31, 1934. Much of the railroad was soon abandoned; tracks and bridges were left to rust until their iron was needed during World War II.

The railroads wouldn't countenance any reduction of the coach-class fare to counteract the recession's drain of traffic until 1936, which was too late for the continuation of most passenger service. After the rate was dropped, the gross passenger revenues of the five big eastern systems climbed sixteen per cent over the next three years.

Freight was still very profitable for railroad companies. The route was continually being improved and updated. The railroad passed by the west side of the Old Iron Bridge below Poland creating a dangerous intersection so the bridge was removed in 1929.

In the 1930's a milk train ran every day and a 25 to 30-car freight train carrying lumber and other supplies traveled the route. The line was shortened in 1936, running from Herkimer and stopping at Poland.

In 1943 U.S. railroads transported one and a half billion tons of freight an average distance of 473 miles. At the same time, with gas rationing and tire shortages that inhibited the use of automobiles, passenger traffic that year was actually climbing faster than freight tonnage. Extraordinarily, World War II reversed the trend into which the passenger business seemed locked during the 1930's.

In 1948, when Ed Luther of Gray began employment as a brakeman for the New York Central Railroad there were two brakemen, an engineer, a conductor, and a fireman on each run. A third brakeman was necessary when there were over 25 cars on a run.

The roundhouse was in Herkimer, where Hannaford's Grocery Store presently is. The railroad yard was where Wal Mart is now.

The freight train, on the Poland branch of the New York Central Railroad, operated at 25 miles per hour. Some crossings had to be flagged such as Middleville and Route 5.

During the 1940's the speed was 45 miles per hour from Utica to Remsen. Speed was lowered to 40 miles per hour from Remsen to Malone because of the conditions of the track, roadbed, and bridges.

Working on the railroad could be dangerous. Mr. Luther remembers a Sunday night in the spring of 1952 when he was involved in the Nehasane train wreck, just above Big Moose. Ed was a brakeman on the train, from Utica to Tupper Lake, comprising a caboose and a car of wallboard. It picked up nine cars of logs in Thendara and proceeded towards Nehasane where they were to meet a larger freight train.

Their orders were to take a siding that could hold about twenty-two cars, which was close to their meeting site. But it was a dark, black night when they came down a grade and around a little curve, at 46 miles per hour, directly into the path of the larger train.

Ed yelled to the conductor that the engineer wasn't stopping. Ed then put on the emergency brake but it was too late. Two were killed from Ed's train, a fireman and a brakeman who were up front on the engine.

Mr. Luther escaped injury because he was closer to the caboose and the car of wallboard separated him from the cars of logs. The logs, which had been loaded on flat cars, scattered like matchsticks.

In the early 1950's when Ed was assigned to the northern line, the trains he worked on carried stone from the Prospect Quarry to Sebatiss where a state highway was being constructed. The freight train also delivered dynamite and coal to the Fisher Coal Company in Remsen. When working these runs Ed and the crew would stay overnight at Tupper Lake and return to the valley the next day.

By the mid-1950's Mr. Luther had enough seniority to be assigned to the Herkimer to Poland run, which was closer to his home in Gray and didn't involve overnight stays.

Freight trains were convenient and could carry an enormous amount of tonnage. Standard Furniture Company, in Herkimer, used the freight train the most of any business in the valley. Going north the train would stop at Kast Bridge's barrel factory.

At Middleville they picked up a car of milk every other day at the milk station, which was the most productive station in the valley. The train would drop off soft coal and hides for tanning at the tannery. Other Middleville businesses using the freight train were Harris' where hard coal was delivered and Smith's Feed Store.

Then it was on to Borden's Coffee Plant in Newport where the train dropped off coal, coffee beans, and jars. The plant only shipped finished product in one or two freight cars a day. Trucks transported most of the factory's products.

In Poland, Northern Lumber shipped out four or five cars of board a day. Jamestown Veneer transported two cars of veneer a week. They received soft coal by train. Five or six cars of anthracite and feed were delivered weekly to the G.L.F.(Grange League Federation). Poland Central School got all of their coal for heating from the G.L.F. Agway purchased the G.L.F. in the mid-1960's.

When most of these businesses closed or relocated in the 1960's and early 1970's the Poland branch line was neither needed nor profitable. The advent of tractor-trailers and improved highways, including the building of the New York State Thruway, also had decreased the use of freight trains.

The Herkimer to Poland stretch continued to operate into the 1970's, serving the Poland sawmill and veneer mill. When a section of the railroad washed away in 1973 it was never replaced. The line was abandoned and scrapped, starting in 1977.

Ed Luther worked the Poland branch line until it folded. He then transferred to Conrail from which he retired in 1990 after 42 years of employment as a brakeman and conductor on the railroad.

By 1968 U.S. railroads were operating no more than 500 long-haul passenger trains a day, compared with 15,000 at the start of World War II. Railroads were running into huge losses as passengers decamped to the expanding airline and highway systems and the train's staffing expenses were swollen by inflation.

The railroad line from Herkimer to Poland had several titles and owners throughout its history:

1880's - Herkimer, Newport, and Poland Narrow Gauge Railway

1892 - Mohawk and Malone 1900's-New York Central and Hudson River Railroad

New York Central Lines

1968 - Penn Central Railroad

1976 - Conrail.

Though the railroad didn't prevail for even 100 years in the Kuyahoora Valley it had a long-lasting influence on the businesses and residents of the Towns and villages.

This booklet was not written to be a complete history of railroads but a brief narrative of the importance of the development of the railroad to the Kuyahoora Valley and the Adirondack's during the 19th and 20th centuries.

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Bosak, Michael Lecturer and expert on railroads

Keesler, M. Paul Author

Luther, Edward Railroad employee for 42 years

Schultz, William former Town of Russia Highway Superintendent

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