

The Railroad Comes to Town (1867)

The following article is a contemporary account of the opening of the railroad between Utica and Waterville on November 14, 1867, as published in The Waterville Times.

Village Entertained 10,000 Persons at Celebration - Four Trains Carried Visitors From Utica On First Trip Over New Road - History of Beginning of Railroad Contains Many Points of Interest

On Thursday, November 14, 1867, a crowd of some 10,000 people visited Waterville to celebrate the opening of the railroad between Utica and this village.

About half past ten, a thousand persons welcomed the first passenger train from Utica and by 11:30 about 2,500 visitors saw the last of the four trains arrive. Lively music and hearty cheering were replied to by the thundering of cannon, each train having a piece of brass ordinance mounted on a platform car. The four trains comprised 29 cars, each carrying 75 guests.

From the time Utica began to assume the proportions of a city, the necessity of railway communication southward was felt, both by the city and also by the country. The objective was to reach a point near Sherburne, thereby opening up a "vast territory," traversed only by stages and horse travel. It was felt that once a road should be built to this point, little trouble would be experienced in extending it either way, to Binghamton or to Colliersville, thence to New York and Rondout.

Plans Inaugurated

A meeting was held on September 30, 1865, when a committee of 25 was appointed to take a trip south and make a general survey of the country and to sound the sentiments of the people along the route with respect to their desire for a road, and their willingness to help on the enterprise.

On October 14 the committee set out upon their journey. The route was up the Saquoit Valley to Cassville, thence to Winfield, Richfield Springs, Cooperstown, Colliersville, Sherburne, Waterville, and back to Utica.

At a meeting in Utica on November 29, after the report was given, a railroad association or company was formed, "with appropriate articles, the association to continue one hundred years." The Board of Directors named at the meeting consisted of Lewis Lawrence, Daniel Crouse, A. J. Williams, James F. Mann, James Hitchcock, John Butterfield, Thomas Foster and John Thorn of Utica; Geo. W. Chadwick, New Hartford; N. W. Moore, Saquoit; Daniel B. Goodwin and Daniel Conger of Waterville, and Devillo White of Sherburne.

Financing the Road

Lewis Lawrence was later chosen president; Daniel B. Goodwin, vice president, and M. E. Comstock, secretary. The length of the road contemplated by the company was set down as 84 miles, the capital stock to be \$2,500,000, divided into 25,000 shares of \$100 each.

The important question of raising funds was next to be met. The stock was to be taken by individuals and by towns, the latter bonding for the amount subscribed for according to act of Legislature.

The amount of stock which Utica was required to take was \$500,000. The bonding of the city for so great an amount was the result of long deliberation and canvassing. The election upon the question of bonding took place on the 8th, 9th, and 10th of March, 1866. After three days' voting the majority for bonding the city was 716, the entire vote being 1,334.

Utica having set so noble an example, other towns through which the road was to pass, fell into line until a sufficient amount of stock was taken to begin the road.

Operations Started

On the first of July, 1866, ground was first broken at Saquoit, by Farrel and Heath, contractors. From that day on the work was carried on and the first train was run over the line on September 14, 1867.

The building of the road from Utica to Cassville was done with great difficulties, the only course being "well up along the side of the mountain, through woods and rocks, and around sharp curves," until it struck the elbow of the route below at Cassville. The curve there, built upon a heavy fill, was the longest and sharpest on the route, the radius being 1,360 feet.

The "summit," being the water-shed between the source of the Sauquoit and Oriskany Creeks, was reached three and one-half miles beyond Cassville. The remainder of the road to Waterville was down grade and over a comparatively smooth surface.

When the road was first opened a large, new brick building, 100 feet long, 40 feet wide and three stories high, was used for storage room and passenger depot. This building, which had been erected by George Putnam, is now one of the buildings of the Waterville Textile Mills. A suspension truss turn-table was built in front of a temporary "locomotive stables."

The first two locomotives, coal burners of 28 tons weight, were named "Lewis Lawrence" and "Daniel B. Goodwin." The stock of cars consisted of two passenger coaches, one baggage car, ten box and freight cars and fifteen platform cars. They were all new and built after the best model. It was planned to add other stock as the necessities of business required.

First Journey Over the Road

On the day of the celebration the firemen of Utica and the "military" formed in procession and marched to the Utica depot, headed by the bands.

The first train, seven coaches and a platform car, carrying the whole fire department of Utica, and about 100 of the military, left at 8:40, drawn by the Utica, Chenango and Susquehanna Valley Railroad Company's locomotive, "Lewis Lawrence, No. 1." Being the first heavy train over the road, its progress up the graded trestlework and around the curve, was watched with great interest.

According to the records, some little "momentum was obtained on the short level before striking the grade. With no hesitation and no frightful puffing, the Lewis Lawrence mounted the trestle and rolled majestically around the curve and over the bridge. Hughes' battery on the rear car belched forth a farewell when the train started and a salutattion when it struck Schuyler Street."

During the journey the battery saluted every station and the salute was answered by waving of handkerchiefs, flags and hats by the gazing admirers. At Chadwicks a magnificent flag was stretched from the factory to the road. Residences all along the route were decorated with flags and bunting and groups of people cheered the progress of the trains.

The train stopped at Clayville for water and then moved on to Waterville, "welcomed at Cassville and other places with commendable enthusiasm. The approach to Waterville was through a dense crowd who had assembled to get a sight of the first train of passenger cars up in their highland country."

The second train left Utica at 9 o'clock, drawn by the engine, "D. B. Goodwin." The third train, which started at 9:30 a.m. was drawn by the engine, "John Butterfield," owned by the New York Central, while the fourth train, at 10:10, was drawn by another Central engine, the "Gen. Z. C. Priest."

Train Carries President of the Road

The last train carried the president of the road, Lewis Lawrence, the Common Council, the clergy of the city, and many of their brethren from surrounding villages, as well as prominent men from other places.

The train reached Clayville, a distance of 12 miles, in 33 minutes. After a delay of ten minutes the train moved slowly away. At the outskirts of Clayville, President Lawrence made the announcement that "this is the crookedest part of our road; we shall turn almost a right angle and then at Cassville, leave the Sauquoit and go towards the Chenango Valley."

After passing Cassville the whistle of the engine sounded and President Lawrence said: "We are going to stop at the summit, 1040 feet above the point where we started."

After a short stop the train started again. "Look to your brakes," the conductor called, "the grade is the other way." Two miles from Waterville, according to the records, the thundering of the cars disturbed "the sleeping dust of the first white man buried in that town. "At 11:35 the train stopped at the Waterville depot and the whistles of the four engines blew "their longest and shrillest shrieks; the cannon roared their loudest notes, awakening reverberations that were never before disturbed among the hills of Waterville."

Gradually the din ceased, the sounds grew fainter, and finally died away. The people shook hands and all pronounced the Utica, Chenango & Susquehanna Valley Railroad successfully opened.

Reception to Guests

The reception of the excursionists by the people of Waterville was a hearty and generous one. Shortly after the guests on the last train had disembarked, President Lawrence, Vice President Goodwin, Mayor Wilson and other gentlemen, proceeded to the front of the depot building, where they were formally welcomed by Rev. William Clark, pastor of the Waterville Baptist Church. Mayor Wilson of Utica responded to the welcome.

Following the reception speeches the procession formed for the march through the principal streets of Waterville. Homes and business places on the line of march were decorated with flags and presented a fine appearance as the procession, a half-mile in length, passed by.

The marchers returned to the depot where the guests were entertained at a dinner. Three places were provided for dining rooms: Putnam's new three-story building, his large hop house, and a large tent. Among the list of items prepared for and served during the festivities were 11 roast pigs, 30 roast turkeys, 15 roast ducks, 155 roast chickens, 53 quarters roast lamb, 11 roast spare ribs, 22 boiled hams, 10 chicken pies, 52 pans pork and beans, 82 pounds corned beef, 116 pounds butter, 125 pounds roast beef, 272 pounds cheese, 130 pounds coffee, 175 pounds sugar, 9,000 biscuits, 30 loaves bread, 100 mince and apple pies, and 40 bushels of doughnuts.

A beautiful cake, furnished by Mrs. William Osborn, graced the head of one of the tables. Around the outside of the cake were the letters, "U. C. & S. V. R., Nov. 14th, '67." On the top were three miniature locomotives on a circular railway, while the center had a figure representing the Goddess of Liberty, bearing the American flag. Each engine bore the letters, "U. C. & S. V. R. R." As the cake was the only artistic ornament furnished, it was voted that it should be held in reserve for the next celebration in the village of Sherburne.

Following the dinner a program of speech making was held in front of the depot, with Mayor Charles Wilson of Utica as chairman. Among the speakers were President Lawrence, Hon. Ward Hunt, Judge William J. Bacon, Mayor Flagg of Troy, Rev. Samuel Fisher of Utica, Hon. Ellis H. Roberts, Dr. Skinner and Judge Denio of Utica, Hiram Hurlburt, H. G. Eastman, Rev. Dr. Patton and Gen. Priest.

At the conclusion of the program cheers were given for several of the guests and finally for the future success of the new railroad. The excursionists left Waterville in the same trains that carried them here, cheering until all were hoarse and rejoicing that the road had been completed as far as Waterville and had been so successfully opened.