

# Adirondack Railways

## Historic Engine of Change

By DUNCAN H. CAMERON

On October 12, 1892 near Big Moose Lake, the last spike was driven completing the Mohawk and Malone Railway, ending about 20 years of rapid railway expansion in the Adirondacks. Over the next four decades the railways would dramatically change the Adirondacks, opening up what was then a remote region to development.

The changes were widespread. Towns grew up along the railway lines. Summer resorts and hotels developed nearby attracting tourists to the region. Summer homes and grand Adirondack camps for the wealthiest were built. Lumber companies increasingly would use the railways to reach the forests and transport the timber to mills and then to markets. Mining companies would rely on the railways to get their products to industrial centers. Farmers used the railway to transport their dairy products to markets.

This article focuses on the impact that the railways had in the Adirondacks (the land within the Adirondack Park) from the time of the construction of the principal lines in the region until the 1930's when the automobile became a more commonplace means of travel. This is not intended as an exhaustive study of the subject but more as an outline describing how, in a few years, the railways helped to change the Adirondacks from a remote area in northeastern New York into a region connected with the rest of the country, both expanding its economy and changing its way of life.

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### The Building of the Adirondacks' Principal Railroads

In 1869, William H. H. Murray, a Boston clergyman, had published a popular guidebook, *Adventures in the Wilderness*, extolling the beauty and grandeur of the Adirondacks. The book resulted in a rush of tourists to the region. At that time travel to the Adirondacks was long and arduous. In his guidebook, Murray provides detailed suggestions on how best to travel there. For a person wishing to travel from Boston to Saranac Lake, for example, Murray recommended that the traveler take a train from Boston to Albany, another train from Albany to Whitehall at the bottom of Lake Champlain, followed by an overnight ferry from Whitehall to Port Kent at the northern end of Lake Champlain and proceed from there by stage coach to the Saranac Lakes—a trip of two days if all went well (Murray, 1989).

In the same year that Murray published his book, the transcontinental railway was completed by the Union Pacific and Central Pacific Railroads, allowing passengers to travel across the United States and opening up vast new regions of the country for settlement and commerce. Regional railways were also by then developed in the northeast of the United States. Railroads had, however, hardly penetrated the Adirondacks leaving the region isolated from the rest of the country. That changed, however, in a period of about 20 years, between 1871 and 1892.

The Adirondack Railway was the first railroad to enter the Adirondack Mountains. In 1863, Dr. Thomas Durant, one of the principal developers of the transcontinental railroad, had taken an interest in constructing a railway line from Saratoga to North Creek and from there to Canton and Ogdensburg on the St.

Lawrence River having been attracted by the timber and iron ore deposits along the projected route. In an editorial on August 9, 1864, *The New York Times* proclaimed that the planned railway line would make the Adirondack region “a suburb of New York.” The construction of the line, however, proceeded slowly and was not completed to North Creek until 1871. Dr. Durant and his partners did not have the financial resources to continue the line across the Adirondacks to Canton and Ogdensburg. Following the death of Dr. Durant in 1876, the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company (later known as the D & H Railway) purchased the railroad in 1889.

About 30 years after its completion, the railway and the train depot at North Creek became an important footnote in United States history. It was at the North Creek station on September 14, 1901 that Theodore Roosevelt learned that President McKinley had died in Buffalo and that he had become President of the United States. He then departed on a special train on this railroad to Saratoga and from there to Buffalo to join President McKinley's family.

Shortly after the completion of the Adirondack Railway in 1871, the D & H completed its railway line through the Champlain Valley and along the edge of Lake Champlain to Plattsburgh. Construction of the railway began from Albany to Whitehall in 1848. From Whitehall, passengers and freight were then carried north by steamboat and ferry on Lake Champlain. In 1875, however, the D & H completed its railway line from Whitehall through Port Henry and from Westport to Plattsburgh, providing competition to the steamship and ferry service between these ports along the coast of Lake Champlain. In Plattsburgh it joined the line from Montreal,

can best be understood by examining some of the communities through which the trains ran.

A journey to Old Forge, for example, at the southern end of the Fulton Chain of Lakes prior to the completion of the railroad was difficult and often involved travel by stage coach on very poor roads, followed by travel on an eight-mile wooden railway, known as the “Peg-Leg Railway,” which was frequently in need of repair, and concluded with passage on a steamship to Old Forge. After completion of the railway in 1892, however, passengers arrived at Thendara (Fulton Chain Station) after a nine- or ten-hour trip from New York City. They would then transfer to the Fulton Chain Railway after it was completed in 1897 for the two-mile trip to Old Forge. Travelers would either stay in Old Forge or take one of the connecting steamships up the First Lake, which in turn connected with steamships on the Second Lake and on other lakes in the Fulton Chain.

The number of tourists arriving in Old Forge grew. One estimate given at the time was that the number of tourists arriving at Old Forge had increased from 1,200 a year to 25,000 a year after the completion of the railway in 1892 (Harter, 1979). Tourist hotels were built or expanded in Old Forge and elsewhere in the Fulton Chain. Summer residents

built camps along the shore of the lakes in the Fulton Chain. The Adirondack League Club was also formed in 1890 to promote the conservation of the forests and fish and game. It purchased a large tract of land near Old Forge attracting wealthy visitors to join the Club and to build summer homes on their grounds (Donaldson, 1992).

Summer residents wishing to go to Raquette Lake, however, had to travel through the Fulton Chain and then by road and boat—a long and tiring trip. Collis P. Huntington, one of the principals of the California Pacific Railway and a builder of the Transcontinental Railway, owned Pine Knot, a camp on Raquette Lake. Disgusted with the time that it took him to reach his camp through the Fulton Chain, Huntington, together with other wealthy and prominent camp owners and investors, decided to build a connecting railroad off the New York Central Railroad at Clearwater (later called Carter) to Raquette Lake. The Raquette Lake Railway started service in 1900 allowing passengers to travel directly on day or night trains along the New York Central and the Raquette Lake Railway to Raquette Lake.

Dr. Webb was deeply involved in these developments. He became an officer and/or director of the Fulton Chain Railway and the Fulton Navigation

Company, which operated steamships on the Fulton Chain of Lakes. He served as an officer and/or director of the Raquette Lake Railway and the Raquette Lake Transportation Company that operated steamships on the Raquette Lake and operated the Marion River Carry Railway, a narrow gauge railway on the Marion River, facilitating transportation between Raquette Lake and Blue Mountain Lake. Dr. Webb was also interested in conservation. He owned a vast amount of land in the region, which he had divided into building lots and sold subject to restrictions in the deeds, known as a Webb Covenant, prohibiting their use “for commercial, agricultural or manufacturing purposes” (Barlow, 2004).

The Railroad had a great impact on the communities and surrounding areas through which it passed. For example, because of the train, Big Moose Lake, a stop on the New York Central just north of Old Forge, developed as a summer community. The railroad was the principal means of travel to Big Moose Lake for both year round and summer residents. Construction materials and other supplies for summer homes and hotels arrived by train, and timber from Big Moose Lake went by train to urban areas in the northeast. The arrival of the train in Big Moose Lake became an event in



Stagecoach departing from North Creek station in 1888 (Photo: courtesy of the Adirondack Museum)

the lives of its residents, attracting people to the station simply to see the train's arrival (Marleau, 1986).

Brandreth Park, a family summer community north of Old Forge, also depended on the train. There were no roads into Brandreth Park, making travel for a family very difficult. With the arrival of the train, families could travel from the New York City area to the Park within a day with their household help, food, and other supplies. The Railroad provided this summer community a connection to the outside world (Potter & Potter, 2011).

There was no single factor more important in the development of Tupper Lake than the railroad (Simmons, 1976). The town formed the junction of two railways—the Northern Adirondack Railroad (also known as Hurd's railroad), which arrived in 1889, and the New York Central, which arrived in 1892. Both railroads transported lumber to Tupper Lake and its vicinity for milling and processing, and shipment of milled lumber and wood products from there to markets in the United States and Canada. The railroad proved to be an indispensable link for the lumber industry. Tupper Lake grew from a small, scattered settlement before the arrival of the railroads to become a vibrant but rowdy lumber town (White, 1985).

By the end of the 19th century, both the D & H and the New York Central had reached the Saranac Lake and St. Regis Lake regions. The New York Central had a stop at the Saranac Inn, a large summer resort at the end of the Upper Saranac Lake, and for summer residents on the Upper Saranac Lake, thus encouraging travel to the region and the construction of summer camps. A few miles further north, the small community of Lake Clear became an important train junction. Passengers on the New York Central could either take the branch line to Saranac Lake and Lake Placid or continue towards Malone and Montreal.

In 1907, Paul Smith, the proprietor of a renowned resort hotel on the Lower St. Regis Lake, also built an electric railway

to Lake Clear Junction. Guests staying at Paul Smith's, as well as summer residents on the St. Regis Lakes arriving by train in Lake Clear, could transfer to the electric train for the 6.5-mile journey to the Hotel and return at the end of their vacation on the same electric railroad to Lake Clear to connect with their train to New York City or other urban centers. Some of Paul Smith's most affluent guests would travel in even grander style, arriving at Lake Clear in their private railway car and attach their railway car to the electric railway for the journey to the Hotel. Prior to that time, guests at Paul Smith's and the summer residents living on the St. Regis Lakes had first to travel by train on either the D & H or New York Central and then by stagecoach from the nearest railway station to the Hotel.

The D & H extended its line to Saranac Lake in 1887, and the New York Central arrived in Saranac Lake in 1892. They soon shared the same depot, Union Station, which still stands, beautifully restored, today. Until the publication of Murray's book in 1869, Saranac Lake was a small, poor logging community. Murray's description of the Adirondack wilderness had encouraged some of the more venturesome tourists to visit the Saranac Lakes to fish, hunt, and to explore the many lakes in the area. It was, however, the arrival of the train that enabled Saranac Lake to attract year round and summer residents to the area.

In 1884, Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau, a pioneer in the treatment of tuberculosis, established a sanatorium just outside of Saranac Lake, which first opened with only two patients (White, 1985). The sanitarium soon proved successful, and Saranac Lake became a center known internationally for the treatment of tuberculosis. Saranac Lake, with a population of 1,200 in 1892 tripled to 4,000 by 1903 (Caldwell, 1993). The number of patients kept increasing, and in 1922, more than 1,600 new patients came to Saranac Lake for the treatment of tuberculosis (White, 1985). Nearby in Gabriels and Ray Brook, sanatoriums

were also established. Small communities developed around both Gabriels and Ray Brook, and each of these hamlets had a station stop on the railway. The train enabled patients to come to the Saranac Lake region for treatment and for their family and friends to visit them, serving as a connection between this remote community and the communities from which they came.

The train had made a difference, as Dr. Trudeau noted in his autobiography. "Many times in late years I have travelled in an hour on the New York Central from Malone to Paul Smith's, and as I looked out of the comfortably heated Pullman over the snow-covered wilderness I have thought, though not without pleasure, of how different the journey was when I brought my little family to Paul Smith in 1875!" (Trudeau, 1951, p117).

Until 1893, the only way to reach Lake Placid was by stagecoach. Lake Placid was by then already well known as a resort town. Before the arrival of the train, stage coaches from Saranac Lake or Westport brought guests to hotels, such as the Stevens House and the Grand View Hotel in Lake Placid offering magnificent views of both Mirror Lake and Lake Placid as well as the surrounding mountains. Both President Cleveland during his honeymoon and President McKinley had stayed at Stevens House on Signal Hill. In 1893, the D & H extended its railway to Lake Placid, and the New York Central soon followed using the D & H line to Lake Placid.

The Lake Placid Club opened in 1895. A private institution, the Club was to become one of the largest residential clubs in the United States and was a dominating presence in the town employing a staff of about 1,000 (Manchester, 2001). The Club and its founder, Melvil Dewey, brought winter sports to the Adirondacks, beginning in 1904 when a small group of members elected to remain at the Club for the winter. Lake Placid became both a winter resort offering skiing, skating, and other winter games as well as a summer resort. Lake

There were major forest fires in the Adirondacks in the 1880's. Tupper Lake was destroyed by fire in 1899, although it was rapidly rebuilt. There was no single reason for these fires. Sportsmen were negligent in failing to extinguish campfires in the woods. Sparks from the growing number of locomotives in use were a contributing factor. Fires were also caused by the debris left by lumber companies on land that they had clear-cut.

By the 1880's, sportsmen and tourists were visiting the Adirondacks in greater numbers. They did not view the Adirondacks as a business opportunity, but as a place for a vacation and a wilderness area to enjoy. They were shocked by the environmental devastation taking place and urged the New York State Legislature to take action to preserve the Adirondacks. Responding to public opinion, the Legislature acted. In 1883, the State Legislature withdrew from sale all State land in the Adirondacks. The Legislature took further steps in 1885 placing State land in the Adirondacks in a Forest Preserve as "wild forest lands," providing that the land shall not be leased or sold. The Legislature also established a forest commission to oversee the Preserve. Although the law barred the sale of State land, it did not specifically prevent the cutting of trees on the land. Several years later, there was a public outcry when the State Legislature, on the recommendation of the Forest Commission, authorized the Commission to sell the right to cut trees on State land. At a State constitutional convention in 1894, an amendment to the Constitution was adopted confirming that State land in the Adirondacks shall be forever wild and providing that the land would not be sold, leased or exchanged, and that its timber would not be sold (White, 1985).

The constitutional amendment was to have a far-reaching effect. Lumber companies could no longer buy State land or timber State land without a constitutional amendment. Railways also could no longer expand by buying State land or by exchanging private land

for State land without a constitutional amendment, although a controversial exception, described below, was later made in the case of the railway line extension from North Creek to Tahawus.

### **The Railroad and the Mining Industry**

The railways were also a major factor in the development of the mining industry in the Adirondacks. There were more than 200 active mines and furnaces in the Adirondacks in the 19th century (White, 1985) and many of them were located in the eastern part of the Adirondacks. There were particularly large deposits of iron ore along Lake Champlain near Crown Point and Port Henry, at Tahawus west of Crown Point and Port Henry, at Lyon Mountain to the west of Plattsburgh, and at Benson Mines in the western part of the Adirondacks. Many of these deposits were discovered by the middle of the 19th century. Transportation was a problem and companies looked to find a practical and economical way of shipping the iron ore to market.

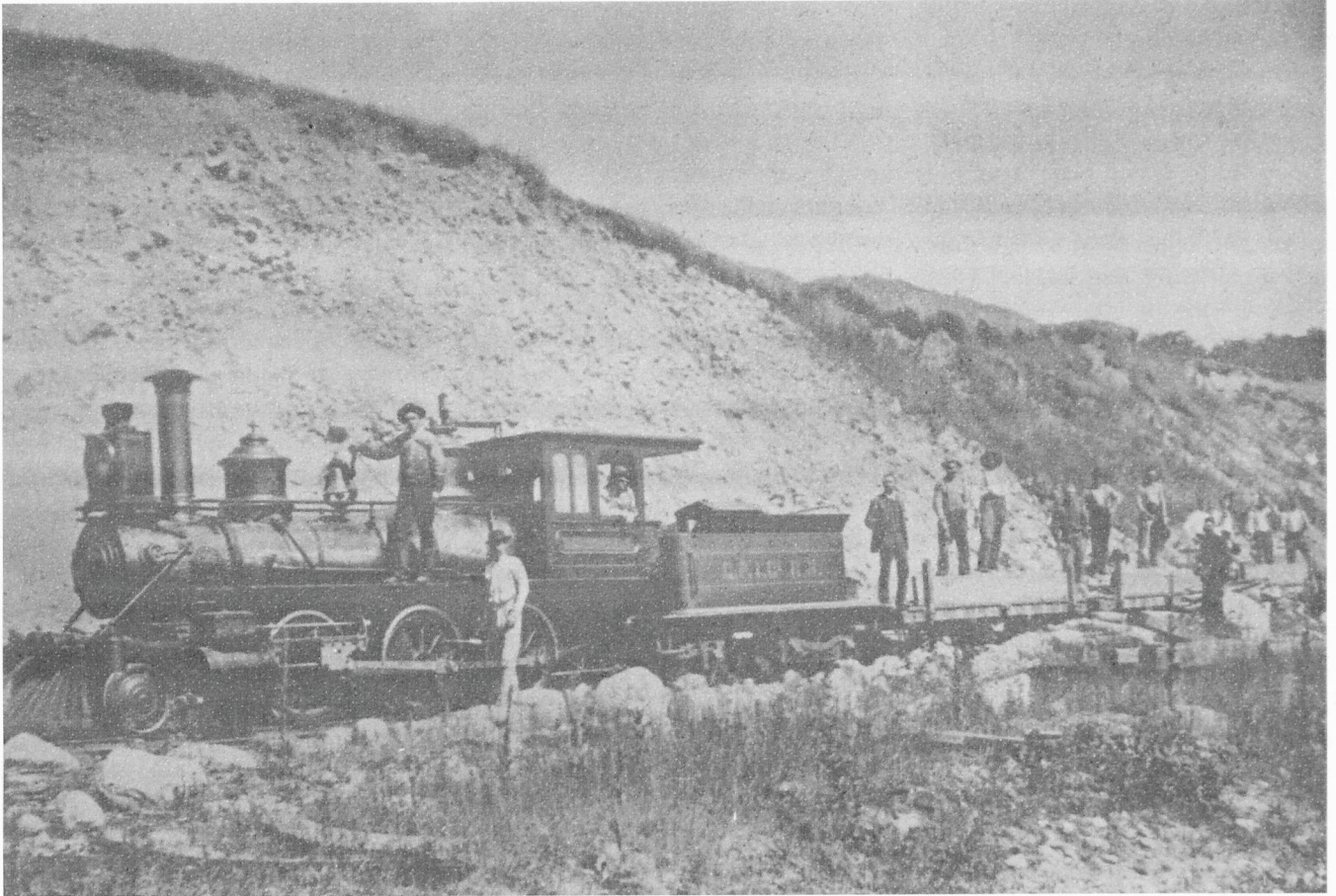
Mining of the large iron ore deposits in the town of Moriah, in the hills above Port Henry, illustrates this problem. Beginning in 1804, the mining at Moriah was both by open pit and tunneling. The iron ore was taken in horse-drawn wagons to Lake Champlain where it was then transported by barge to furnaces. These mines were the largest and had the richest iron ore deposits known in the United States until after the Civil War, and its iron helped to build the Civil War naval vessel, the Monitor (White, 1985).

In 1868 and 1869, the local firm, Witherbee, Sherman & Co., built the Lake Champlain and Moriah Railroad from Port Henry to Mineville and to Witherbee in the Town of Moriah, a distance of more than eight miles and a climb of about 1,450 feet. A number of major mining companies, including Republic Steel and Witherbee, Sherman & Co., became active in developing the mines. Both Mineville and Witherbee

became company towns. The railway brought the iron ore down to Port Henry, which soon became a transportation hub with blast furnaces for the iron ore and freight houses, engine houses, turntables, and other facilities for the railways.

By 1870, the D & H had decided to extend its railway north along Lake Champlain, anticipating that the company would profit from the growth of the mining industry in the Adirondacks. However, the first main railway line to reach Port Henry in 1872 was the Addison Railway from Vermont that crossed Lake Champlain at Addison Junction, providing transportation to the New England states. Two years later, the D & H reached Port Henry providing transportation to markets both north and south. Mining at Moriah was to continue, and the Lake Champlain & Moriah Railroad remained in operation until 1971.

The D & H also played an important part in the development of another very large iron ore deposit at Lyon Mountain. By the late 1860's, Andrew Williams, a local mining industrialist, had identified a plentiful source of iron ore at Lyon Mountain. Williams and Smith M. Weed, a prominent Plattsburgh lawyer, formed the Chateaugay Ore & Iron Company in 1873 to develop the mines at Lyon Mountain. Processing and shipping the iron ore from Lyon Mountain to an industrial center proved challenging. The Company refined the iron ore in a separator at Lyon Mountain and transported some of it by wagon to the Upper Chateaugay Lake where it was taken by barge to the Belmont forge on the Lower Chateaugay Lake and then again loaded onto wagons or sleighs and shipped to the town of Chateaugay, outside of the Adirondacks. The unfinished steel was then placed on the Ogdensburg & Lake Champlain Railroad, the nearest railroad to Lyon Mountain at that time, and sent to industrial centers in Pennsylvania and Ohio. Iron ore was also taken by wagon to furnaces in the Saranac River valley and then to Plattsburgh.



*Miners at the railroad of Crown Point Iron Co. in Ironville ca. 1890 (Photo: courtesy of the Adirondack Museum)*

The iron was plentiful and of high quality. It was reportedly used by wire manufacturers in the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge and in the construction of the George Washington Bridge and the Golden Gate Bridge (Gooley, 2004). Lyon Mountain was, however, remote and far from reliable lines of transportation. By the late 1870's the Company decided that it needed a quicker and more secure form of transport to a main line market. The Company could either build a connecting line to the Ogdensburg & Lake Champlain Railway to the north at Chateaugay or to the D & H in Plattsburgh. Weed, who had maintained a close connection with the D & H and who had earlier persuaded the D & H to extend its line from Whitehall to Plattsburgh, persuaded the Chateaugay Ore & Iron Company to build a railroad from Lyon Mountain to connect with the D & H in Plattsburgh,

providing the Company with access to markets both in the northeast of the United States and in Montreal.

To build this line, the Chateaugay Ore & Iron Company succeeded in leasing the railway line that New York State had already built from Plattsburgh to Dannemora to transport supplies, fuel, and personnel to the State prison. The Company extended the line from Dannemora to Lyon Mountain. The Chateaugay Railway Company was organized in 1879, with Thomas Dickson, who was also president of the D & H, appointed as its first president—a sign of the close working relationship developing between the Chateaugay Railroad and the D & H. The railway began service from Lyon Mountain to Plattsburgh in December 1879.

The mining operation at Lyon Mountain continued to expand, making the traffic on the Chateaugay Railway from Lyon Mountain to Plattsburgh an

important part of D & H's business in northern New York. The D & H had also invested in both the Chateaugay Railroad and the Chateaugay Ore & Iron Company. By 1900, however, the Chateaugay Ore & Iron Company was having difficulties meeting its financial obligations (Kudish, 2009) and the D & H agreed to guarantee certain bonds of the mining company to assure its continued financial stability, and taking as security the shares of both the mining company and the railroad. Because of the continuing financial problems experienced by Chateaugay Railway and the Chateaugay Ore & Iron Company, the D & H took control of both companies in the following year, and in 1903, it made the railway the Chateaugay Branch of the D & H, thus completing the absorption by the D & H of both the mining company and the railway. The D & H sold the mining company to Republic Steel Corporation in 1939.

No mine in the Adirondacks better illustrates the importance of a railroad than the Tahawus mines. In a well-known story told in detail elsewhere (see Donaldson, 1992; White, 1985), a group led by David Henderson was looking for iron ore near Lake Placid when in 1826, they met a Canadian Indian who offered to take them on a several day journey to iron deposits much larger than the one they were exploring. They followed him through the Indian Pass to a very large and rich iron deposit on the Upper Hudson River. The place eventually became known as Tahawus, the American Indian name for Mt. Marcy.

Beginning in 1826, under the leadership of Archibald McIntyre (the father-in-law of David Henderson) and a group of his colleagues built a forge and blast furnace to develop the mines and unsuccessfully attempted to make steel. The iron ore deposits were extensive, and the early indications were that the iron ore would produce a very good grade of steel. At this very isolated location, there were, by 1840, about 200 workers and a small community including a school, a bank, and housing (White, 1985). There was, however, no good way of transporting the processed iron ore to a market. The only available means was on a very rough road over the mountains to Crown Point on Lake Champlain. Transportation was arduous and costly, making it difficult to compete in the market even though the product was of good quality. There were several plans proposed, but never implemented, to build a railroad from Tahawus through to either Lake Champlain or to Sackets Harbor on Lake Ontario.

Following the death of Archibald McIntyre and David Henderson, who died in a tragic accident, the mine was abandoned in 1857, and the small community at Tahawus was also abandoned. There was hope that the railroad built by Dr. Thomas Durant after the Civil War from Saratoga to North Creek would be extended the additional 30 miles as

originally planned to Tahawus, but there were no available funds to do so. Shortly thereafter, the owners of the mine leased the property to a fishing and hiking club in 1867, which eventually became known as the Tahawus Club.

Although the mines remained closed, their owners continued to look for a way of transporting the processed iron ore to industrial markets. Unexpectedly, that opportunity arose at the beginning of World War II. Because of the conflict, the United States had a shortage of titanium used in making white paint and of vanadium used as an alloy in certain steels. The iron ore at the Tahawus mines had a substantial percentage of both titanium and vanadium. Although there was by then a rough road from the mines to North Creek, the Federal Government announced plans in 1942 to build a railroad from North Creek to the mines at Tahawus appropriating land that crossed the State Forest Preserve. The Federal Government leased the railway line to National Lead Corporation, which had purchased the mines. In 1944, the D & H began transporting on its line the titanium and vanadium from the mines to industrial centers, providing Tahawus, at long last, with access to a market.

The appropriation of this State land for an extended period of time by the Federal Government resulted in litigation. Since the railroad line crossed the State Forest Preserve in the Adirondacks protected by the New York Constitution, the State of New York in 1944 challenged in court the right of the Federal Government to appropriate the land from the Forest Preserve for any period beyond World War II. A U.S. District Court disagreed and confirmed that the Federal Government could under its power of eminent domain appropriate the land for an extended period, if necessary. After World War II, New York leased the State land on which the railway extension to Tahawus ran to the Federal Government for 100 years without an authorizing amendment to the State Constitution.

### The Railroad and the Dairy and Tannery Industries

Although the major freight on the D & H line was iron ore, there was an active dairy industry in the Champlain valley, which used the railroad as well. New York State had one of the largest dairy industries in the United States in the late 19th century. In order to sell in urban markets, dairy farmers in the Champlain Valley beginning in the late 19th century would take their milk in milk cans to creameries at or near railways stops along the D & H. The creameries would pasteurize and bottle the milk and make butter or cheese. The farmers would then have their products transported on the train to markets (Alberti & Denning, 2010). There was also a dairy industry in the southern edge of the Adirondacks around Poland and Newport, which used the Adirondack Division of the New York Central to deliver its dairy products to markets (Harter, 1979).

The use of the railroad for milk transportation declined during the 20th century as new regulations required milk to be transported in refrigerated trucks, rather than in milk cans, to processing facilities. Dairy farmers marketed their products through cooperatives, which transported the milk in refrigerated trucks from the dairy farms to a processing center.

Tanning was also an important industry in parts of the Adirondacks in the 19th century, but the railroads in the Adirondacks did not have a pivotal role in its development (McMartin, 1992). Large-scale expansion of the tannery industry in the Adirondacks began in the 1850's before the railways reached the Adirondacks. The Adirondack Railroad, completed in 1871 between Saratoga and North Creek, did assist the tanning industry located nearby. By the 1890's, most of the tanneries in the Adirondacks had either closed or had moved and combined with other segments of the tanning industry, such as meat packers or shoe manufacturers, in order to control costs (McMartin, 1992). The

railways in the Adirondacks did, however, play a continuing role in shipping hemlock bark to the tanneries at their new locations to provide the tannin required in the tanning process.

### The Closing of the Railroads

The closing of the Adirondack railways took place over a short period of time. Prior to the 1930's, families would come to the Adirondacks by train and stay in one place for several weeks or for a month. The arrival of the automobile and the paving of roads would, however, radically change the way people travelled in the Adirondacks. The automobile gave tourists the freedom to travel whenever and wherever they wished without depending on a train schedule, and tourists soon enjoyed this freedom. Passenger service on the railways began to decline in the 1930's and declined more markedly after World War II.

Freight service to and from the Adirondacks also declined most notably after World War II. Much of the freight affected was lumber products and iron ore, the most important commodities of the Adirondack economy. The reasons for this decline were numerous. One reason was that there was less land available in the Adirondacks for timbering after the amendment to the State Constitution in 1894, which made State land and subsequent transfers of private land to the State subject to constitutional protection. Secondly, lumber companies often did not carefully reseed and manage forests, which they had heavily timbered, thus limiting future timbering on these properties. Lastly, the heavy-duty truck also began to replace the train, particularly in the case of smaller timber cuts.

Foreign and domestic competition and the declining quality of the iron ore contributed to the closing of Adiron-

dack mines. The mines at Moriah closed in 1971, the Lyon Mountain mines shut down in 1967, the Benson Mines closed in 1978, and mining at Tahawus ended in 1989. The railway lines to the mines closed as well.

The short passenger lines—Paul Smith's electric railway, the Marion Carry Railway, the Fulton Chain Railway, and the Raquette Lake Railroad—were among the first to close in the late 1920's and early 1930's. In 1946, the D & H terminated service between Lyon Mountain and Lake Placid and in stages closed the rest of its line between Lyon Mountain and Plattsburgh over the next 30 years. In 1956, the D & H received approval to end its passenger service from Saratoga to North Creek, and the D & H's last freight train on this line left Tahawus in 1989.

The New York Central had terminated its line in 1937 from Tupper Lake



*Train at the depot at Faust (Tupper Lake), NY in ca. 1910 (Photo: courtesy of the Adirondack Museum)*

to Ottawa, and the tracks were promptly removed between Moira and Tupper Lake. The New York Central closed its passenger service from Lake Clear to Malone and Montreal in 1957, and the tracks were removed. The New York Central passenger service continued between New York and Lake Placid with one train daily travelling in each direction until 1965 when the New York Central received approval to end passenger service. The passenger service reopened briefly for the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid. The Penn Central, successor to the New York Central, continued freight service between New York City and Lake Placid until 1972 when they also received permission to terminate freight service.

Although many of the railway lines are now closed, several of the lines remain in operation. Passenger service continues once a day in each direction on the former D & H line, now run by Amtrak, from Albany along Lake Champlain to Plattsburgh and to Montreal. Freight service continues as well. In 2012, the Saratoga and North Creek Railway, a subsidiary of the Iowa Pacific Holdings, announced that it planned to reopen the railway line from Tahawus to carry crushed limestone left at the mine to markets for use in highway construction. The Iowa Pacific Holdings also proposed in 2012 to run a luxury sleeper car railway service from New York City to Lake Placid on the former New York Central line, although the financial and regulatory arrangements for doing so are still not in place. Instead of regularly scheduled passenger service, there are now tourist excursion trips in the summer and a few in the spring and fall on the New York Central line, now owned by the State of New York and on the D & H line now owned by the Saratoga and North Creek Railway.

Adirondack Scenic Railways runs tourist excursion trips between Utica and Big Moose and between Saranac Lake and Lake Placid on the former

New York Central line. The Saratoga and North Creek Railway also runs tourist excursion trips between Saratoga and North Creek. A coalition called the Adirondack Recreational Trail Advocates and others have urged the removal of the former New York Central line between Lake Placid and Thendara, claiming that the use of the line by snowmobile enthusiast and bicyclists would provide much better benefits to the local economy. Other groups dispute these claims and favor the continued use of the line from Lake Placid to Thendara for excursion trains and for commercial purposes.

The railway line between Remsen and Lake Placid has been placed on the National and New York State Registry of Historic Places. Non-profit organizations have, on their own initiative, restored or rebuilt railway stations on the former D & H and the New York Central lines. Prominent among these are the Union Depot in Saranac Lake and stations in North Creek, Westport, Tupper Lake, and Thendara. They are used as railway stations (except for the station in Tupper Lake) and for other purposes, such as a museum or theatre. A number of railway stations in the Adirondack Park and just outside of the Park are also listed in the National Registry of Historic Places, including those in North Creek, Port Henry, Lyon Mountain, Sacandaga Park, Lake George, Ticonderoga, and in Plattsburgh.

### Conclusions

The railways built in the Adirondacks late in the 19th century dramatically changed the way people lived in the region. The railroad connected isolated rural communities within the Adirondacks with each other and with urban areas in the northeastern United States. The trains impacted the lives of nearly everyone who lived in the Adirondacks in the early part of the 20th century providing employment on the railroads or in major Adirondack industries, such as tourism, lumbering, or

mining, which heavily depended on the railways. People living in the Adirondacks also used the railroad to visit each other, to send their children to school, or to go shopping, thus knitting together communities, which until then, lived in isolation. The railroad also allowed people of different backgrounds, who lived in different towns either year round or in the summer and had different occupations, to form personal ties and encouraged a sense of community in the Adirondacks, which had not existed before. The train was therefore not only of great economic benefit to the region, but of social and cultural benefit as well.

Because of its significance, the railroad has an important place in the history of the Adirondacks. The memory of that period in Adirondack history and the nostalgia for it remains strong in the Adirondacks. Associations in the Adirondacks have tried to preserve this heritage by restoring or rebuilding many of the more important stations on the Adirondack railways and by registering the railway tracks from Remsen to Lake Placid on the National and State Registry of Historic Places. As an expression and reminder of this heritage, the Adirondack Scenic Railway runs excursion tours on parts of the former New York Central line, and the Saratoga and North Creek Railroad offers tours from Saratoga to North Creek.

The train had an important role in the economic and social development of the Adirondacks, transforming it from a region of isolated villages and settlements into an economic and social community. The question, however, of whether the Adirondack railways still have an economic value in the region is open to debate. Recently, the New York State Departments of Transportation and Environmental Conservation have announced the holding of public hearings on the unit management plan for the former New York Central railroad corridor between Lake Placid and Remsen, providing an opportunity for those



groups wishing to preserve the railway line and those wishing to remove the tracks in favor of trails for snowmobile and bicyclists an opportunity to express their views. Hopefully the State Plan adopted following these hearings will retain the railway line, recognizing that the tracks are an important expression of the heritage of the railways in Adirondack history and of possible future commercial benefit to the region while at the same time allowing the use of the rail corridor for recreational purposes.

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