

SOME GOOD READING

From Friends of Historic Rochester

*The following is a brief excerpt from **The Accordian** of September 2007. **The Accordian** is a twelve- page quarterly publication on local history by Friends of Historic Rochester.*

THE O&W RAILWAY IN THE TOWN OF ROCHESTER

Picture this: a large steam engine chugging and whistling its way across Main Street in Accord.....or a train rumbling across Kyserike Road/County Route #6 at the bottom of the “station hill” in Kyserike. What a scene that was for over half a century, from 1901 until 1956.....

Prosperity for the Town of Rochester

The coming of the O&W Railway to our valley and Town in 1901 had far-reaching impacts, both economically and socially. Directly related to the railroad were the development of larger farms, the establishment of creameries, the opening of feed mills and coal companies, the expansion of tourism, the extension of educational opportunities, and a general improvement in the quality of life for local residents.....

Personal Memories

A number of local residents have personal memories relative to the railroad era in our Town’s history. In *The Accordian* of July, 1993, Margaret Miller wrote, “Let us pause for a few moments and once again hear of those times through the eyes of individuals who recall the days when the “iron horse” was king of transportation in the Rondout Valley.”

Memories of the late **Franklin Kelder**, former Town Supervisor, civic leader, and farmer:

“Mike Palmer, the station-master, his wife, Thelma, and children, Doris and Pierce, lived in the apartment over the station before they moved into a house across the tracks. I remember when it was a very active station. On Monday mornings the farmers would bring eggs in for shipment to New York City. Jerome Enderly (Charles Anderson’s grandfather) would bring in a pickup truckload of eggs from his thousand hens. The Schoonmakers and Davenports shipped their vegetables to Sullivan County. One of their men would meet the train there and sell the produce to the hotels. Feed and coal came to Anderson’s mill, and the coal was shoveled off by hand. Just north of the station at Accord Farmers Cooperative, feed in 100 lb. bags. Anderson also had the Ford agency. The Ford cars came in by freight, partially disassembled. Final assembly occurred in the building behind the mill.

“In the summertime, the station became a very active place. The city people rented rooms on the farms, in bungalow colonies and hotels, coming in by passenger train because automobiles were not that plentiful.....

“The Accord creamery was owned by the Dairymen’s League.....Milk was delivered to the creamery each morning in thirty-gallon cans. Arriving early with your milk was the best practice, otherwise a long back-up line developed with an hour or two to wait. I believe the early shipments were in cans that were iced; later they had refrigerated tank cars on the railroad.....

“Another area of activity was Henry DeVoe’s lime kiln. In the early spring he would go to Delaware County and take orders. Soft coal for the kilns came in by rail on the spur south of Accord, and carloads of bulk lime were shipped out.....

“Shawangunk millstones were also shipped out, by Wally and Vinnie Lawrence..... The local stone is the hardest in the world with the exception of a location in France.....

“Hoop poles was another thriving enterprise that moved from the canal to the railroad. Small farms accumulated large stacks of hoop poles (young sapling trees) that were shaved in their hoop shops during the winter months. In the early spring, they were taken to the railroad for delivery to coopers for barrel making. Many probably went to Cooperstown. In those days Rosendale cement was shipped in wooden barrels, so of course barrels were in big demand.”

We suffered a big loss as the railroad got into financial trouble that led to bankruptcy and their taxes went unpaid. “A lot of taxes were taken from the town; all the land that the tracks laid on, plus the buildings. It really took a lot out of the town when the railroad closed down.”

.....

Eddie Fehring, antique dealer:

“I came to live here and played along the fracks by the railroad station in 1946, and I recall that same year a passenger train came loaded with dignitaries taking pictures. What I overheard from the crowd was that they were stopping at each station and taking pictures because this was the last O&W passenger train through this valley. From that point on, it would only be freight trains. However, luggage for the hotels and bungalows still arrived by freight, and my stepfather and I would help unload it onto those large station carts, and then into waiting pickup trucks. Each piece of luggage’s destination was marked. For example, Louis Cohen’s Bungalow Colony, Bungalow #___, Unit #___, and which side of the road, and so on for the other resorts. The reverse of this was repeated in the Fall.

“I remember being fascinated watching Mike (Palmer, the Station Agent) through the railroad station window working his telegraph key with his green visor and puffy shirt sleeves, caused by the elastic bands around each arm. It’s real interesting to me now to recall the sound of that telegraph.

“North of the station, before the bridge spanning the Rondout Creek, was a hobo jungle located in a stand of birches, near a spring. In good weather you could always find four or five of them there with a campfire, cooking cans that they hung over the fire on a stick. I guess they must have ridden the freights.

“When going to school, (at the Accord School which is now the Grange Hall building next to A&M Hardware), most kids walked down Main Street in Accord, then north on Route 209 to the school near Whitfield Road. I used to take the shortcut up the tracks and across the railroad bridge. As kids, we sneaked rides on the train by grabbing onto a ladder as the train passed, and jumped off just before the bridge.”.....

.....Quoting again from **Margaret Miller**: “Now that our O&W has become part of that which once was and is no more, and the pathway of those rails has become an elongated park aptly named the Linear Corridor, perhaps a note of caution is in order. As you walk this corridor, occasionally glance over your shoulder and strain to hear the far-off whistle of that phantom train that still silently roars through our valley, carrying the spirits of hundreds of passengers and tons of freight to unknown destinations on those missing ribbons of steel.”

*Anyone who would like to receive issues of **The Accordian** in the mail can join Friends of Historic Rochester for \$20 per year (P.O. Box 229, Accord, NY 12404). For more information, please contact Alice Cross at 845-687-9998. Single issues of **The Accordian** may be purchased by members and non-members, or the whole series dating from 1987*

