

## Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad

**O**N MAY 24, 1888 the Meriden & Cromwell and the Meriden & Waterbury were combined as the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad Company. Construction was far enough advanced so that a special train was run from Waterbury to Meriden carrying stockholders to the meeting. The capital stock of the new company was \$500,000 plus bonds, and it began life with three locomotives and a fourth on order with the Schenectady Locomotive Works. In October of the previous year the company had acquired engine No. 3, a used Pennsylvania Railroad machine, "for construction work," it was explained.

There were five Pullman-built passenger coaches of the latest design. The Meriden & Cromwell had 100 freight cars of one kind or another, and the

consolidation was to start with a total of 160 in that category. The "new and fashionable Pullman coaches" proved to be higher than expected, so that the bridges at Broad and Britannia Streets had to be raised 18 inches to clear them.

The Waterbury stockholders' trip to the meeting at Meriden was enlivened by several incidents. One of the Meriden papers reported: "A Cheshire farmer in an old fashioned top carriage left Dublin Street station at the same time the train did, and raced all the way to Cheshire. He reached there two minutes ahead of the train, and was as happy as a clam."

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**A**T MERIDEN horsecars met the passengers and took them downtown "... two large excursion cars and several closed cars. When the first car

of Waterbury visitors came down Linsley Hill heavily loaded, the horses began to run and the driver lost control of them. The car skated down the hill . . . and did not stop until it had crossed the Consolidated railroad track, but the passengers all jumped off at the corner."

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**T**HE Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad began business with Horace C. Wilcox as president; E. D. Steele of Waterbury as vice-president; George Rockwell, secretary and treasurer; H. L. Wade of Waterbury, assistant treasurer. The directors were the officers and Abiram Chamberlain (later governor of the State of Connecticut), George R. Curtis of Meriden and H. A. Matthews of Waterbury. This was substantially the same list

as the Meriden & Cromwell, with the Waterbury people added. In the original setup of 1882 Mr. Chamberlain was the treasurer, and Charles Parker vice-president. C. M. Crawford continued as superintendent, with H. L. B. Pond as general freight agent.

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**A**FTER the meeting, many stockholders went to Cromwell to inspect the docks and other railroad facilities. In Meriden progress was being made at the new West Main Street yards. A roundhouse and turntable were being built, and bids for a passenger station had been asked. The Waterbury yards were being laid out. It was announced that "the usual summer-time train connecting with the steamer 'Sunshine' on the river will leave Meriden station at 8:55 a. m. and on return leave Cromwell at 10:20 a. m. Passenger engine No. 4, which has been building in Schenectady, is on its way to Meriden and will arrive in a day or two. It is said to be a powerful and handsome machine."

Fourth of July, 1888 was the day of the big opening, and

the newspapers devoted much space to the story:

The formal and public opening happened auspiciously on the nation's 112th birthday . . . and four trips of the long and well-filled passenger trains were made without accident. The glorious Fourth could offer no more . . . opening the people's railroad . . . built by the people. There is not a rough spot on the whole road. Horseshoe Curve on the steepest grade of the mountain is well worth seeing, in Cheshire Notch.

The nine cars were at the West Main Street crossing at 8 a. m. Six of them were the new cars and the other three were old ones purchased of the Philadelphia & Reading, and which have not yet been put in repair, as they will be used for the excursion business . . . The Resolute (Baseball) Nine boarded the train as did 300 other Meriden people who wished to go out on the first public trip, and who also wished to see the game at Waterbury. Tickets were sold from a temporary office at the north end of the platform.

At 8:30 the train, hauled by new engine No. 4, started. A second engine hauled three open cars filled with seats, and in climbing the heavy grade assisted in pushing the first train over. The train ran slowly, and gave plenty of time for inspecting the glorious scenery, arriving in Waterbury in an hour. Right on top of Cheshire Mountain, near Rag Hollow Ravine, Mr. Dunham of Cheshire has built up a beautiful picnic ground. Here a large company was assembled, and greetings exchanged as the train went by. At this point a flag station will be established.

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**R**EGULAR schedules began several days later. The first

timetable of the completed line listed three westbound and four eastbound trains. There were nine flagstops in addition to the regular stations and terminals at Waterbury, Meriden and Cromwell. Connections with north and south lines were listed, including one with the New York-to-Hartford boats on the river. One train ran non-stop between Waterbury (Dublin Street) and Meriden (West Main Street). The old Center Street station was not on the completed line but it was continued for freight.

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**F**REIGHT began to contribute revenue, one Waterbury coal dealer taking 400 tons which had been barged up-river to Cromwell. All sorts of ideas cropped up for extensions, including one to Willimantic. Optimism ran high. Arrangements were made with the U. S. Express Company for service over the line and by boat to New York, and a mail contract was confidently expected. Excursions were the order of the day, to Mr. Dunham's grove, or down the Connecticut River, or to any and every point of interest, by various organiza-

Terms, Cash on Delivery of Freight.  
All claims for Damages must be made on Delivery of Goods.

W. G. W. *W. G. W.* Waterbury, Conn. *Oct 15* 1888

To Meriden, Waterbury & Conn. River R. R. Co., Dr.

Transportation from *Cromwell* Date *Oct 13* Car { No. Initial

ARTICLES.	WEIGHT.	RATE.	DOLLARS.	CTS.
<i>8 Cars Stone - 79-81-107-257-171-153-9-3</i>	<i>309460</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>55</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Barge Blanche Oct 6</i>				
Expenses Total			<i>55</i>	<i>46</i>

Received Payment for the Company. Agent.

Facsimile of waybill for 8 cars of stone from Cromwell to Waterbury, giving car numbers.

tions in Meriden, Waterbury and vicinity.

One job remained to be done, a connection with the New York & New England at Waterbury, and the contract for this was made the latter part of July. The distance was only three-quarters of a mile, but the undertaking was very expensive because of the terrain crossed.

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**T**HERE WAS great excitement in South Meriden on August 10th, when engine No. 1, drawing a mixed train and running backward, jumped the track not far from Red Bridge. The tender went down a ten-foot embankment and turned over on its side, smashing its trucks and dumping its coal. The engine stopped askew the track. A shoo-fly was built around the wreck and service resumed the next day. The papers reported that the cause of the accident was not known, as an examination of the rails indicated that they had not spread. The engine was raised, put on the track and taken away for

repairs. Meanwhile an engine was borrowed from the Hartford & Connecticut Western to keep up service, as there were no spare engines on the road.

In the latter part of August, 1888, construction was started on the new passenger station at West Main Street, Meriden. The first story was brownstone, the second wood, and the architecture of a pleasing type which was quite common in public buildings of the period. It had a small tower, and a slate roof. The offices of the company were on the second floor. The car shop, roundhouse and other facilities were on the same tract of land.

The road received delivery from Schenectady early in October of No. 5, a 4-6-0. It was the heaviest machine on the road and old-timers claim it was very seldom used west of Meriden.

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**I**N SPITE of the Consolidated's distaste for the idea, plans were made to connect the two roads at the north end of Meriden, and it was actually accom-

plished in February, 1889. A certain amount of freight was routed that way to and from Boston and Waterbury, as well as from nearer points. Berlin bricks, 750,000 of them, made the trip over the hill in one shipment.

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**T**HE first annual meeting of the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad Co. came in November, 1888, and the stockholders were pleased, and surprised, to learn that in the short time it had been in operation, the road earned 7% on its investment.

When appraising these or any other figures on the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad, or for that matter any railroad or business enterprise in those days, it should be remembered that a charge against earnings for wear and tear, depreciation, or any other provision for eventual replacement of equipment, was completely ignored. As that was the happy time before income taxes, corporate or personal, were thought of, no one

—Photo from collection of D. W. Peckham.

**BRIDGE** over the Naugatuck River at Waterbury. Locomotive No. 1 and crew pose for this photograph.



Meriden, Waterbury and Conn. River R. R.										
	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	Lv 8 6 88 Ar	A.M.	P.M.	A.M.	P.M.	P.M.	P.M.
			4 00	New York			6 00			
	4 50	10 50	6 30	Cromwell	10 11	4 21	6 10	6 55	8 00	
	4 55	10 55	6 35	West Cromwell f.	10 06	4 16	6 05	6 50	7 54	
	4 58	10 58	6 40	Westfield f.	10 04	4 14	6 00	6 28	7 54	
	5 02	11 04	6 44	Smith's f.	10 00	4 10	5 56	6 24	7 54	
	5 06	11 06	6 48	Highland f.	9 56	4 06	5 50	6 20	7 44	
	6 30	11 25	7 15	Meriden	9 41	3 51	5 30	6 05	7 31	
	5 34	11 33	7 23	Hough's Mill f.	9 33	3 43			7 22	
	5 50	11 45	7 35	West Cheshire f.	9 21	3 31			7 11	
	5 57	11 52	7 42	Prospect f.	9 14	3 24			7 06	
	6 08	12 03	7 53	Summit f.	9 03	3 13			6 54	
	6 12	12 07	7 57	East Farms f.	8 53	3 03			6 49	
	6 21	12 16	8 06	Waterbury	8 50	3 00	4 30		6 44	

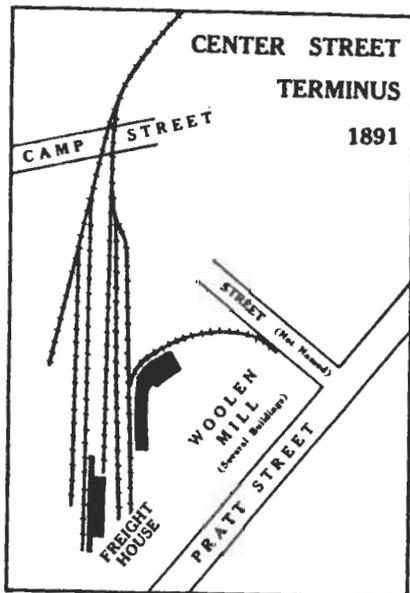
f. Flag Station.

Facsimile of a printer's proof of the new MW&CR timetable for August 1888. Note error in "Smith's."

was obliged to keep books to any further extent than he thought necessary. Probably this was one of the reasons why many early railroads, after a season of reporting earnings and paying dividends, would suddenly discover themselves insolvent and go bankrupt.

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WHEN the New York & New England connection was finished early in 1889, it was expected that hard coal would come from the west that way, in addition to shipments up the Connecticut River. There were recurring rumors of an extension through Wallingford to tidewater at New Haven, but



the Wallingford people, who would presumably benefit most, did not come forward with any financial backing and the idea was forgotten.

The Hartford correspondent of the Springfield Republican said the Hartford-New York boats had a prosperous year chiefly because of the business coming to them from the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad. The Consolidated had taken control of the Valley Road, and there was no longer a combination Winter service by boat between New York and Saybrook and thence by rail to Cromwell.

"Meriden manufacturers who built the Cromwell road to escape extravagant freight rates can now ship to New York via Waterbury, the New England Road, the Housatonic, and then transfer to boat at Norwalk." This New England connection at Waterbury, therefore, took the road out of a rather tight spot.

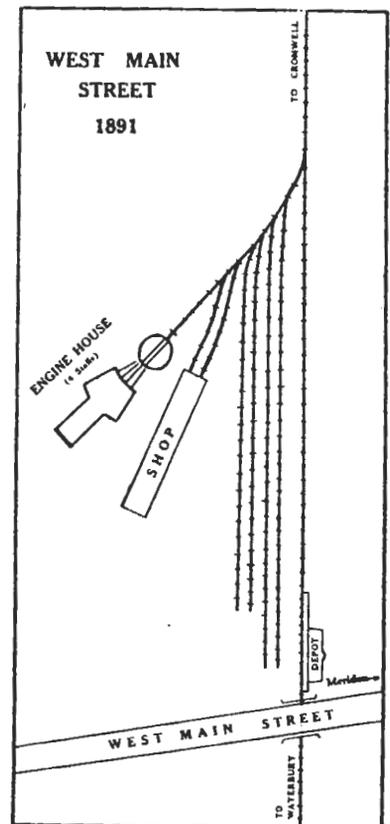
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AFTER the New Haven took control of the Valley Road, the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad was obliged for one Winter season before the New York & New England connection at Water-

The 6:05 p. m. train out of Meriden was the only one leaving from the Center Street station after the line to Waterbury was put into service.

bury was in operation to take its New York bound freight to Cromwell, forward it to Middletown on the Valley Line, then over the Air Line to New Haven where it could be put aboard the New Haven-New York boat. A Middletown paper used this predicament as a peg to hang up a story that the Consolidated was going to "gobble up the MW&CR."

The writer professed to see "the hand of the Consolidated in this move" (killing the boat service from Saybrook to New York). He stated it was the intention of the New Haven to take over the MW&CR and run trains into Middletown instead of Cromwell. This brought a prompt reply from one of the Meriden papers whose editor declared that the "Graveyard City" (as he termed it) would never get a connection with the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad until its



"proverbially slow" people got busy and paid for it.

The same Middletown paper alleged that the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River was "doing practically no business," but against that must be placed the news item from the Deep River correspondent of a New Haven paper to the effect that low water on the river, together with the heavy amount of freight received from the railroad at Cromwell made the Hartford boat late most nights.

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**A**BOUT this time it was reported that there was a curve at the dam of the American Brass Company's pond, "which never has given full satisfaction," and alterations were being made. In the same news item the ten-wheeler is mentioned as having "already proved itself such as was long wanted," which may indicate that this was the machine that had trouble on that curve.

On March 25, 1889, the railroad's stockholders held a special meeting at which second mortgage bonds of \$400,000 were voted. The Waterbury extension had been enormously more expensive than expected, so that the previously issued stock and bonds had been insufficient to cover the cost, and Horace C. Wilcox, true to his declaration that he would see the job through, had found the needed funds. The bonds were issued to him as a measure of security, although in the end they proved a rather weak one. These details did not come out in the newspapers at the time.

On the fifth of April, 1889, passenger trains began to run into the New York & New England station at Waterbury, using Dublin Street station as a way stop. The first freight train

made the run into the New England yards on the 15th of January previous, amid much gaping on the part of the citizens of Waterbury, as the bridges and trestles rose over the tops of houses and factories in a way which was quite novel to the inhabitants. It was claimed that the route showed engineering skill unequalled this side of the Rockies, which seems to be stretching the truth a bit, but it probably was unusual in these parts.

The New York & New England connection made possible the handling of a lot of business for the West. For example, Portland brownstone was sent to Bridgeport and even as far as Chicago. Full cars of merchandise went to many points west of the Hudson River via MW & CR. The connection with the New Haven at the north end of Meriden brought business, whether that road liked it or not.

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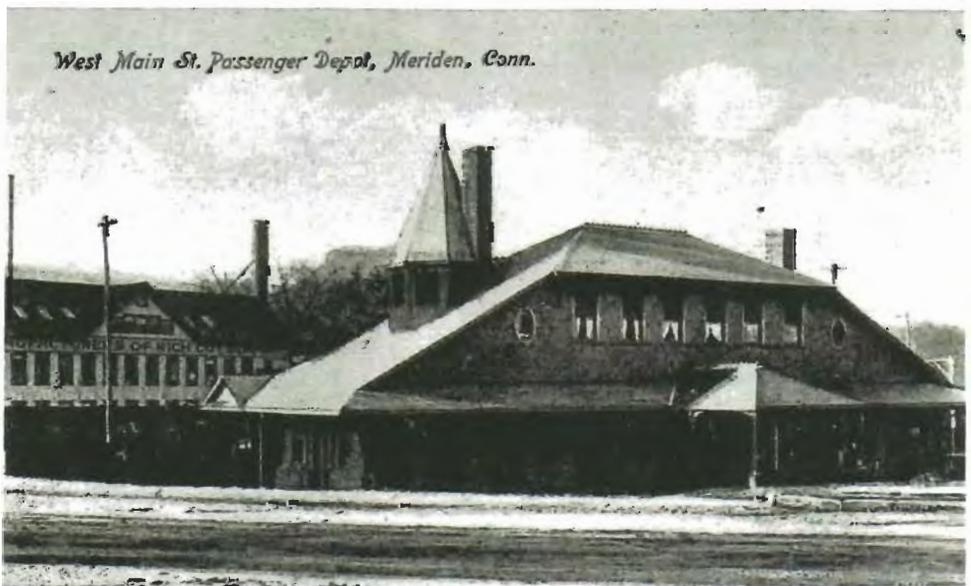
**I**N THE SPRING of 1889 the Consolidated Road applied to the Legislature for an increase in its capital stock, which brought some unexpected reactions. The Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River and the Derby Road both sent dele-

gations to Hartford requesting that the Consolidated charter be amended to compel it to interchange cars with other railroads without prohibitive switching charges.

Several persons testified that President Clark of the Consolidated had told them that the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River was built "to injure" his road, that they could expect no favors, and that the switching charge was made on that basis. After much wrangling, it was left out of the charter, but an agreement was made that no road which got any of the haul could make a switching charge. "Everybody was satisfied," according to the final reports.

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**T**HE waiting room and ticket office at West Main Street station were put into use June 17, 1889. The depot and other buildings erected by the railroad there were on the old site of Fenn's Pond, a favorite spot for ducks. The improvements discommoded the ducks considerably, but they stayed around until the rails were right in their territory. One cold night during the Winter of construction, some of them tried to cross the cold rails with



wet feet and wings. Probably much to their astonishment they found themselves stuck on the track, and kind bird lovers had to cut them loose the next morning.

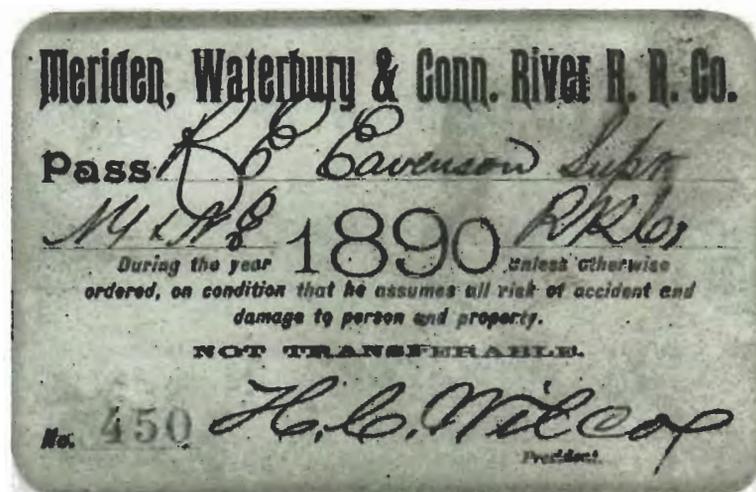
In the annals of the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad as chronicled in the papers there were many similar human interest stories. Many of them indicate changes in attitudes and customs over the past 70 years which make them like peeps into an entirely different world. Dirt roads, horses and buggies, immigrants on the railroad construction, many of them looked upon as curiosities by the townspeople, no electricity to any extent, very few telephones—almost the sole modern touch was the railroad. If you got off the rails, you either had to take a horse or walk. Freight had no way of moving to and from the depot except by horse-drawn vehicles.

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**W**ITH the New England connection it was possible to make some interesting passenger routings, and a West Point excursion was announced for September 12, 1889 with through coaches from Meriden to Fishkill Landing on the Hudson (now Beacon), a sail up and down the river, with dinner at Newburgh, and time to visit West Point. Note was made that the boat would pass under "the great cantilever bridge at Poughkeepsie," which was one of the wonders of the East at that time.

The annual meeting in November 1889 re-elected the incumbent officers and directors. Stockholders "were pleased with the report of President Wilcox. Business is increasing."

The road resumed use of



—From collection of Elmer Kressly.

**Facsimile of a pass signed by President Horace C. Wilcox. Passes like these were exchanged with officials of all roads with which the MW&CR enjoyed friendly relations.**

Dublin Street station as a terminus for passengers in August of 1890. Apparently the complications of getting down to the New England station offset the advantages. Seventeen minutes had been allowed on the timetable for the extra run of hardly a mile.

On the 26th of the same month Horace C. Wilcox, president of the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad, its original promoter, and head of several large industries, died. He, more than any other man, was responsible for the growth of Meriden from a small village to a busy city, and likewise, there would have no independent railroad without his efforts. "A Century of Meriden," published in 1906, says of him: "His last and largest enterprise was the organizing and construction of the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad. In this enterprise he invested more than a million dollars, with little expectation of any return except the benefits the community he loved so much would receive."

Mr. Wilcox was born in 1824 on a farm on the Highland Road, near the point where the Meriden & Cromwell Railroad crossed it—before there was a single mile of railroad in the whole state of Connecticut. He lived to see rails spread all over the country, including a close network in his own state, but his many accomplishments in other lines, which had brought him wealth, were hardly enough to take the sting out of his uphill struggle for the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River. His death was without a doubt hastened as a result.

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**H**ORACE WILCOX greatly loved the Highland section of Westfield, the place of his birth, and when the railroad project was first announced, he said it was his aim to build a good sized Summer hotel there to be ready as soon as passenger service was available. He was as good as his word, and for many years the Highland House, as it was known, catered to a large clientele. Meriden and Waterbury business men commuted in the Summer

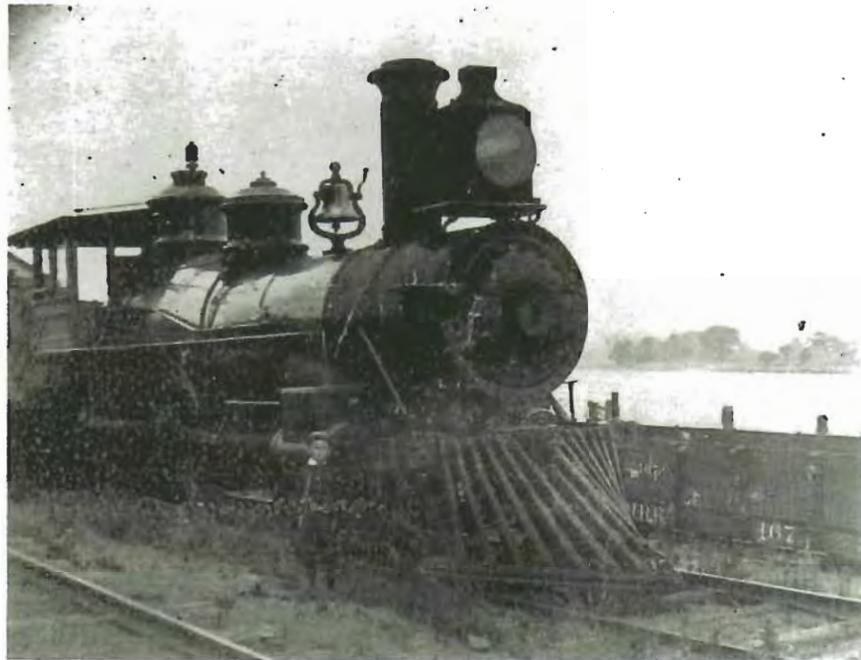
from their places of business, while their families enjoyed Highland Lake. When changes in the times made it no longer profitable, the building was taken over by the newly organized Highland Country Club. The original building burned down sometime after the turn of the century, but it was replaced, and when the country club disbanded it was made into apartments.

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**I**N THE EIGHTIES the Boston to Washington trains went via Hartford and Waterbury, then to Fishkill Landing (Beacon) and across the Hudson by ferry. One day in December of 1889 there was an accident on the New York & New England at Forestville which tied up the line. The suggestion was made that the Washington Express be diverted to the New Haven Road from Hartford to Meriden and run over the mountain to Waterbury on the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad.

Superintendent Farley of the New York & New England decided against it because of the possible difficulty of "getting the long cars to run around the short curves." But on the first of March of the following year a rockslide occurred at Greystone, near Terryville, and this time it was decided to make the attempt. None of the details were recorded, but the papers reported that the Washington Express went over the mountain, and in doing so at least made history for the line.

The directors of the road met September 19, 1890, and made E. D. Steele of Waterbury the president pro-tem, deciding not to elect anyone regularly to that office until the annual meeting in November. Meanwhile, all kinds of rumors were



—Collection of Glover A. Snow.

#### **No. 1 AT CROMWELL—Connecticut River in background.**

rife on possible sale of the line. One despatch from Boston had several Philadelphians and Bostonians interested in purchasing it to form part of a line from Pennsylvania, with extensions to New Haven and Hartford. MW & CR officials "would neither affirm or deny reports of negotiations."

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**O**NE STOCKHOLDER said that while he knew nothing official, he heard the road was for sale to the highest bidder. He went on: "The road, as is well known, has never been a direct paying investment, and should the sale be made, the stockholders would not receive a dollar in return for their holdings. The late H. C. Wilcox endorsed notes to the amount of \$1,100,000 for which bonds were finally issued, they being held as security by Mr. Wilcox. It is thought that the settlement of the Wilcox estate may have something to do with the bonds being placed on the market." This man thought the

Consolidated was most likely the interested party, and that the sale would not bring half the amount of the bonds.

This news came out in October, less than a year after glowing reports had appeared in the papers as to the road's success and condition. While Mr. Wilcox was alive, it was stipulated that the bonds should not be sold, so that the minority stockholders would be protected, but the general opinion seemed to be that his estate was not bound by this. As a matter of fact, if the financial condition of the road was as pictured by the anonymous stockholder, the estate could hardly afford to hold on any longer.

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**T**HE PUBLIC was informed that their fair-weather Waterbury friends had never lived up to their agreement to pay for their stock, and that even some Meridenites had not come through entirely.

At the 1890 annual meeting, George H. Wilcox was elected

Recorded in \_\_\_\_\_ 189  
 Number \_\_\_\_\_ Meriden, Conn., AUG 31 1892 189

Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad.

To *Montpelier, Wells River, P.R.R.* DR.  
 Address, *F. W. Moore, Cashier, Montpelier, Vt.*

Approved,	For mileage of Freight Cars, month of <i>July 1892</i>			
	<i>24</i> Miles, at $\frac{3}{4}$ ¢	<i>10</i>	<i>10</i>	

Montpelier and Wells River  
 AND  
 Barre Branch Railroads.  
 OCT 5 1892  
 CASHIER'S OFFICE,  
 MONTPELIER, VT.

Charge to \_\_\_\_\_  
 Mileage. *10* Received from *The Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad Co.* 1892

Dollars, in full of above account.  
*\$0.00* *F. W. Moore Cash*

*DATE and Sign this Voucher and return with all papers attached to Geo. Rockwell, Treas., Meriden, Conn.*

**FREIGHT CAR MILEAGE paid to other railroads was quite often for less than \$1.00.**

president to succeed his late father. A gratifying increase in business was reported. Any negotiations for sale of the road — if there had been any — were not referred to in the published reports. The annual report to the Railroad Commission late in the same month showed there were gross earnings of \$81,793.07, but total operating expenses amounted to \$90,743.39. This was, of course, without provision for interest on floating and funded debt.

The number of passengers carried was 74,439 and tons of freight moved 108,672. The number of people employed by

**TYPICAL FREIGHT INTERCHANGE BUSINESS  
 1892**

Mileage bills for use of other roads' cars on the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad show that it handled quite a few freight cars in interchange. In July, 1892, the road paid for 9,149 miles, and in August the total was 8,295. When it is recollected that most of such interchange at the time came onto the line at Waterbury and left at Meriden, or returned to Waterbury from Meriden after emptying, only 15 miles each way, it indicates many individual car movements.

For example, during the two months mentioned, there were 56 different railroads or car companies represented, 34 of which were paid for less than 100 miles and 22 for over. The New York & New England came in for the largest payment,

naturally enough, with over 3,000 miles a month. The Union Tank Line was paid for almost 500 miles per month, showing that the MW&CR was getting the business of the Standard Oil Company.

Car rental in most cases was figured at three-quarters of a cent per mile, with some at two cents. The small mileage accumulated by a lone car owned by a participating road meant issuing checks for considerably less than a dollar in many instances.

Evidence that a substantial amount of long haul business from the West was handled is shown in the total for the New York, Lake Erie & Western, whose cars averaged over 1,000 miles a month for July and August, 1892.

the road was given as 107. There were 10 passenger cars, 154 freight cars and five locomotives, and 21,342 cars had been moved during the year. Of the operating expense, over \$30,000 was for maintenance of way, structures and equipment. The road needed more business.

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**E**ARLY in January of 1891 the road met with a serious tieup when a bridge went down under a train just east of Westfield. Service from Westfield to Cromwell was tied up for two months until the bridge was replaced. But the road kept on going through the year and into 1892, hoping that some good angel, more specifically one of the bigger lines, would want it badly enough to buy it.

In February there was suddenly a lot of under-cover activity and many rumors. Finally, on the 25th, a few facts came out, accompanied by a vast amount of speculation. The fact was that a group, syndicate as they called it in those days, formed by Frederick H. Prince of Boston, W. H. Starbuck, J. A. Bostwick and N. Erb of New York, had bought a controlling interest in the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad. A new

board of directors had been elected and Mr. Prince was the new president. A. Chamberlain, Samuel Dodd and C. L. Rockwell of Meriden were still on the board, joined by Messrs. Prince, Erb, Bostwick, and Starbuck of the syndicate and A. S. Chase and E. D. Steele of Waterbury. Mr. Erb was vice president, Mr. Rockwell continued as secretary and treasurer and the operating management remained as before.

That was about the extent of the facts. Rumors took over from there. One was that a couple of people had spent the previous week getting what they thought were options on the stock only to find, after Frederick H. Prince arrived in Meriden, "the deal would not hold." Mr. Prince checked into Hotel Winthrop on a Sunday night, and the would-be purchasers did not learn they were out of luck until 9:30 a. m. on Tuesday.

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**N**OBODY THOUGHT the syndicate planned to run the road for itself, and speculation as to whom they were acting for was rife. Some said it was for the Housatonic Railroad, and in fact quite a little later a Meriden business man claimed the only thing that killed this

deal was discovery of a state law prohibiting one railroad owning another unless the two were physically connected.

Reporters quizzed the vice-president and general manager of the New York, New Haven & Hartford, who volunteered the belief that it was the work of those interested in the New York & New England. "The Consolidated never cared for it," he continued. "It was not a paying company, in fact it generally ran behind from year to year." Mr. Prince was a director of the New York & New England, which strengthened his belief.

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**I**N BOSTON it was said the Consolidated was bidding for it before the Prince group took it over. It was intimated that Standard Oil was involved—"more important than appears on the surface," according to the newspapers.

On the whole, a New York & New England deal looked more logical, but for a few months nothing further happened. The papers did carry more complete information about the financial history of the road than they had before: namely, that when built in 1883 "it was supposed that it would pay . . . after running four years without an all-



**DUBLIN  
STREET  
FREIGHT  
STATION  
in  
Waterbury.  
From  
an old  
wood cut**

rail route to New York and the West, the Meriden & Waterbury was formed. The Meriden & Cromwell had a capitalization of \$300,000, the Meriden & Waterbury of \$200,000.

"The Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River is mortgaged for \$1,000,000. Of this \$600,000 is the first mortgage, and the remaining \$400,000 the second. Meriden held \$375,000 of stock, most of the balance was in Waterbury. Of the Meriden part, the Horace C. Wilcox estate had \$176,000 and the Meriden Britannia Company \$100,000."

In other words, Mr. Wilcox and the company of which he was head had put up \$276,000, or over half. This in addition to \$1,100,000 in notes and bonds which he had taken, or lent his credit for. Thus, anyone who bought out the Wilcox Estate and the Meriden Britannia Company would control the railroad, and that is apparently what the Prince interests did.

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**S**TRANGELY ENOUGH, even though Frederick H. Prince was an important financial figure in the country and the deal was engineered by him and in his name, it later turned out that he had bought six-sevenths of the equity for J. A. Bostwick, and that the remaining one-seventh was divided among him and the other three members of the syndicate. This was disclosed because Bostwick died before the MW & CR could be leased to anyone and his estate had to go to court to obtain permission to carry out terms of the lease.

The lease in question turned out to be to the New York & New England. This touched off a bitter controversy among elements in the latter road, some of whom, headed by

## The Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad from THE HOME OF THE WILCOXES

By E. B. Tyler — Printed about 1888

If we take the cars on the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad at their Center Street Depot, and start towards the river terminus, we are soon impressed with the 19th century spirit of business enterprise, that was bound to preserve a straight line in the railroad layout, even though it carried the road lengthwise through a swamp, where piles were driven, some of them 100 feet, to secure a permanent foothold.

But hardly have we passed the swamp, and crossed our Meriden town limits into the northwest district of Middletown—better known as Westfield—when the train, as if in sympathy with those of its passengers who admire the beauties of the New England scenery, checks its headlong career, and turns to the left and right and left again, now with Chauncey Peak standing boldly and defiantly north, then turning so that you hardly need move in your seat to get as good a view of the equally imposing Mount Higby on the south; now skirting a

pond almost concealed by its wooded banks, past the neat little cemetery, we pause at the pretty little station of Highland.

Starting on again, we see the Highland House on the hill at our left, and as we follow the shore of another bright little sheet of water that our fathers called a pond, but well deserves the name of lake, the view northwards toward the Highland House is excelled only by the opposite view southward from the broad piazzas of the same. With hills on our right and valleys on our left, through cut and turn and meadow, we arrive at the next station, Smith's Crossing. Then, as though the beauties of the place were past and forgotten business suddenly remembered, the road straightens and gets down to work. A moment's stop at the next station, Westfield, where a junction is formed with a branch of the Consolidated Railroad, and the train leaves Westfield and whirls its way to Cromwell and the river.

Paine, Webber & Co. of Boston, fought it tooth and nail. Summons were served by sheriffs on Prince and Rockwell, president and secretary-treasurer, respectively, of the Waterbury road, to go to court and testify as to the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad's affairs. All this seemed to do was to postpone the annual meeting, or rather adjourn it, until November 23.

Meanwhile the New York & New England was running the road, as of October 15, 1892. It was styled the Meriden Branch of the Western Division. Superintendent Crawford was out of a job. President Parsons and General Manager Mellen inspected the road for the NY & NE about a week before the transfer—the same Mellen who later took over presidency of the New Haven Road and attempted to gain control of all transportation in New England.

The stockholders of the New York & New England met on November 21st to act on the lease, as well as one on the Providence & Springfield. The group headed by Paine Webber opposed both leases. President Parsons said he would stake his reputation that it was a good move for the NY & NE. The MW & CR was not self-sustaining because it was a short line, and expenses were too heavy, but the New England got \$65,000 freight business a year from it. "Those who opposed the lease were there in the interests of the Consolidated."

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**T**HE PROPOSITION before the stockholders was to lease the MW & CR for 99 years at an annual rental of \$22,500 plus all charges, taxes and assessments and floating debt up to \$10,000. The opposition had already asked for a court order to prevent the lease, alleging