



Society for Industrial Archeology · New England Chapters

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CONTRIBUTORS

Cindy Bronson, John Laurence Busch, Dave Coughlin,
Marty Grover, Sara F. Mascia, Sara E. Wermiel

NORTHERN CHAPTER OFFICERS

David Coughlin, President
Richard Russack, First Vice President
David Dunning, Second Vice President
Dennis Howe, Secretary
Carolyn Weatherwax, Treasurer

SOUTHERN CHAPTER OFFICERS

William Burt, President
Craig Austin, Secretary
Sara Wermiel, Treasurer

EDITOR

David Starbuck
PO Box 492
Chestertown, NY 12817-0492
dstarbuck@Frontiernet.net

NNEC-SIA President's Report

The NNEC Spring Meeting and Tour featured a return to Maine with a presentation and tour of the Grand Trunk Railroad sites on Saturday, May 21st (see below).

This fall will mark five years as NNEC president which seems like a good time for a new president. With that in mind, David Dunning, currently our 2nd vice-president, has agreed to take over the presidency following our fall meeting and tour. David arranged our spring tour last year and has broad industrial archeology knowledge and many good ideas for the chapter.

I'd like to thank our chapter members who've sent in their yearly renewals from our email reminder. This saves the chapter funds from being spent on envelopes, paper, and stamps. In the end, we're all helping ourselves save money by keeping the yearly membership dues as low as possible. Those who've sent in their dues, give yourselves a pat on the back. Those who haven't (and there are a few), please help the treasurer save time, and the chapter save money, by mailing in your 2011 dues. Thank you.

Dave Coughlin
NNEC President

NNEC-SIA Spring Tour (May 21)

The Grand Trunk Railroad

After a week of rain, the skies cleared for our chapter's afternoon tour of the remaining Grand Trunk Railroad sites. The morning began at the Narrow Gauge Railroad Museum in Portland, Maine, with a presentation on the founding and history of the Grand Trunk by Prof. Joel Eastman.

Originally the Grand Trunk line was slated to run



Above, Dr. Joel Eastman makes a salient point about the diamond at Yarmouth Junction, ME, to the attending members of the SLA's Northern New England Chapter. Right, the diamond at Yarmouth Junction, ME: the track arrayed right to left is the St. Lawrence & Atlantic Railroad line; leading into the distance is that of the Maine Central Railroad (Guilford or PanAm). Nelson Lawry photo.



from Montreal to Boston because the St. Lawrence River was frozen in winter and Canada needed a winter port. In the winter of 1845, John Poor, a Portland resident, drove a sleigh from Portland through N.H. and Vermont to Montreal to show this was a viable shorter route. He convinced the Montreal businessmen to build this shorter route to an open port and construction soon began.

Eight years later on July 18th, 1853, the Grand Trunk Railroad was opened, and the next year lumber, flour, grains and other goods were shipped to Portland via Montreal from the vast Canadian interior lands. The line was called "The Atlantic and St. Lawrence" in the US. The first grain elevator was built in Portland in 1860 with very large ones in 1897 and 1901. There were also warehouses, wharfs, and stockyards in Portland with the majority of these goods being loaded onto ships and sent along the east coast and to England and other foreign countries.

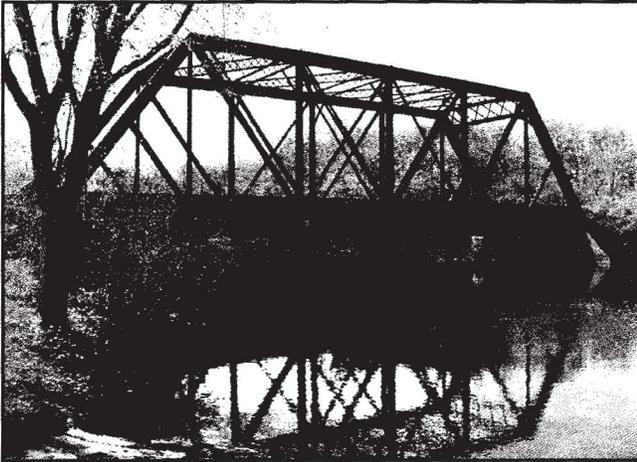
There had been passenger travel on the Grand Trunk, and in 1903 a new large passenger terminal was constructed along with other improvements. Passengers would use the adjacent and still-standing brick maritime building to book passage by steam to Europe. This was the golden age of the Grand Trunk and many

acres of Portland waterfront were devoted to moving goods and passengers that came from throughout Canada. Goods and materials were also shipped into Montreal and through Canada from Portland.

However, the Canadian Pacific RR completed a line to St. John, New Brunswick, and this began to cut into the Grand Trunk's freight and passenger business. By 1930 Canadian exports had dropped to 80,000 tons from 627,000 tons just seven years earlier.

With peak times in the past, the railroad struggled to survive with less freight and fewer passengers each year. There was a minor revival after WWII with Canadian wheat being shipped to starving European countries through Portland for a few years. The one remaining grain elevator was modernized and used until 1969.

Summer-only passenger service began in 1960 and only two years later the terminal was closed down. All passenger service ended in 1967 with freight continu-



Two views of the Atlantic & St. Lawrence Railroad's steel through-truss bridge spanning the Royal River in Yarmouth, Maine. In the photo on the left, note the space on the left once occupied by a second track.. Nelson Lawry photo.

ing until 1969. The Grand Trunk line had run for over 100 years, from 1853 until 1969. Twenty years later the line was sold to the Auburn, Maine, short line and became the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railroad.

After lunch at the Chowder House we observed the remaining Grand Trunk brick buildings along the waterfront. We then carpoled to the 1903 Yarmouth passenger station which is now used as a floral shop. The owner allowed us to view the interior and access the back room where an original luggage wagon is stored. We even had a quick trip to the cellar where old railroad items were deposited. This station has a beautiful fireplace made of local stones.

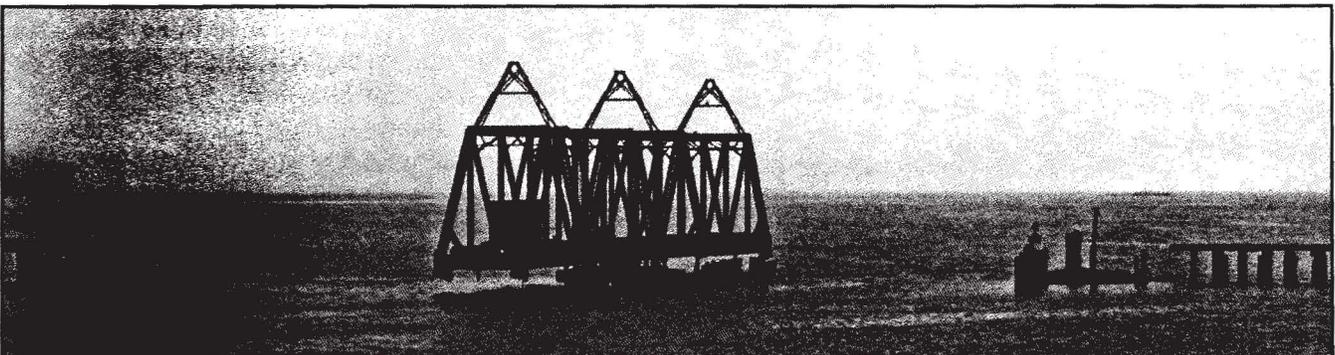
Next stop was to view an iron truss RR bridge over the Royal River. Currently one active track runs over the bridge, but in the past there were two tracks over the river. Next, many chapter members had the opportunity to see a diamond crossing for the first time. The old Grand Trunk line crosses the Guilford freight line at a 90 degree angle. Soon the new Amtrak service from Portland to Brunswick will ride over the diamond

crossing and a new crossing will be installed; this was sitting off to the side of the tracks.

Moving along, our next stop gave us a look at the former Presumpscot RR yard which still has a few original brick buildings. The roundhouse is gone, but a brick locomotive storage building remains which once curved around one side of the roundhouse.

The final stop was to see the long timber pile bridge with central swing span running across Back Cove on the north side of Portland. This bridge suffered serious damage by fire in 1984 and has been unused since. There was hope of restoring it for use by the Maine Narrow Gauge Railroad but it now looks like that will not happen. In fact, the NGRR may eventually move to a new location sometime in the future. We returned to the Narrow Gauge Railroad Museum and thank them for allowing us to use their facilities.

Dave Coughlin
NNEC President



The Grand Trunk Railroad built a long timber pile bridge, with a central steel swing span, to carry its trains across the mouth of Back Cove to its station on India Street on the Portland waterfront. Part of the bridge suffered serious damage from fire in 1984, and has been out of service since then. Nelson Lawry photo.