



***EDWARD
HUNGERFORD***

***THE STORY
OF THE ROME,
WATERTOWN, AND
OGDENSBURG
RAILROAD***

Edward Hungerford

The Story of the Rome, Watertown, and Ogdensburg Railroad

EAN 8596547236955

DigiCat, 2022

Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info



TABLE OF CONTENTS

[PREFACE](#)

[CHAPTER I](#)

[CHAPTER II](#)

[CHAPTER III](#)

[CHAPTER IV](#)

[CHAPTER V](#)

[CHAPTER VI](#)

[CHAPTER VII](#)

[CHAPTER VIII](#)

[CHAPTER IX](#)

[CHAPTER X](#)

[CHAPTER XI](#)

[CHAPTER XII](#)

[APPENDIX A](#)

[APPENDIX B](#)

PREFACE

Table of Contents

Some railroads, like some men, experience many of the ups and downs of life. They have their seasons of high prosperity, as well as those of deep depression. Such a road was the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburgh. In its forty years of life it ran a full gamut of railroad existence. Alternately it was one of the best railroads in creation; and one of the worst.

The author within these pages has endeavored to put plain fact plainly. He has written without malice—if anything, he still feels within his heart a burst of warm sentiment for the old R. W. & O.—and with every effort toward absolute impartiality in setting down these events that now are History. He bespeaks for his little book, kindness, consideration, even forbearance. And looks forward to the day when again he may take up his pen in the scribbling of another narrative such as this. It has been a task. But it has been a task of real fascination.

E. H.

A LIST OF THOSE WHO HAVE ASSISTED MATERIALLY IN THE PREPARATION OF THIS BOOK

RICHARD C. ELLSWORTH	Canton
HAROLD B. JOHNSON	Watertown
CORNELIUS CHRISTIE	Syracuse
RICHARD HOLDEN	Watertown
J. F. MAYNARD	Utica
DR. CHARLES H. LEETE	Potsdam
W. D. HANCHETTE	Watertown

RICHARD T. STARSMEARE	Kane, Pa.
W. D. CARNES	Watertown
ARTHUR G. LEONARD	Chicago
ROBERT WARD DAVIS	Rochester
GEORGE W. KNOWLTON	Watertown
L. S. HUNGERFORD	Chicago
HON. CHAUNCEY M. DEPEW	New York
ELISHA B. POWELL	Oswego
P. E. CROWLEY	New York
IRA A. PLACE	New York
F. E. McCORMACK	Corning
EDGAR VAN ETTEN	Los Angeles
D. C. MOON	Cleveland
JAMES H. HUSTIS	Boston
F. W. THOMPSON	San Francisco
HENRY N. ROCKWELL	Albany
CHAS. H. HUNGERFORD	Arlington, Vt.
CHARLES HOLCOMBE	Biloxi, Miss.

CHAPTER I

Table of Contents

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

In the late summer of 1836 the locomotive first reached Utica and a new era in the development of Central and Northern New York was begun.

For forty years before that time, however—in fact ever since the close of the War of the Revolution—there had been a steady and increasing trek of settlers into the heart of what was soon destined to become the richest as well as the most populous state of the Union. But its development was constantly retarded by the lack of proper transportation facilities. For while the valley of the Mohawk, the gradual portage just west of Rome and the way down to Oswego and Lake Ontario through Oneida Lake and its emptying waterways, formed the one natural passage in the whole United States of that day from the Atlantic seaboard to the Great Lakes and the little-known country beyond, it was by no means an easy pathway. Not even after the Western Inland Lock Navigation Company had builded its first crude masonry locks in the narrow natural *impasse* at Little Falls, so that the *bateaux* of the early settlers, which made the rest of the route in comparative ease, might pass through its one very difficult bottle-neck.

It was not until the coming of the Erie Canal, there in the second decade of the nineteenth century, that the route into the heart of New York from tidewater at Albany, was rendered a reasonably safe and (for that day) comfortable affair. With the completion of the Erie Canal, in 1827, there was immediately inaugurated a fleet of packet-boats; extremely swift in their day and generation and famed for many a day thereafter for their comfortable cabins and the excellence of their meals.

But the comfort of these ancient craft should not be overrated. At the best they were but slow affairs indeed, taking three days to come from Albany, where they connected with the early steamboats upon

the Hudson, up to Utica. And at the best they might operate but seven or eight months out of the year. The rest of the twelvemonth, the unlucky wight of a traveler must needs have recourse to a horse-drawn coach.

These selfsame coaches were not to be scoffed at, however. Across the central portion of New York; by relays all the way from Albany to Black Rock or Buffalo, they made a swift passage of it. And up into the great and little known North Country they sometimes made exceeding speed. That country had received its first artificial pathways at the time of the coming of the Second War with England, when it was thrust into a sudden and great strategic importance. With the direct result that important permanent highroads were at once constructed; from Utica north to the Black River country, down the water-shed of that stream, and through Watertown to Sackett's Harbor; and from Sackett's Harbor through Brownville—the county seat and for a time the military headquarters of General Jacob Brown—north to Ogdensburgh, thence east along the Canada line to Plattsburgh upon Lake Champlain.

These military roads still remain. And beside them traces of their erstwhile glory. Usually these last in the form of ancient taverns—most often built of limestone, the stone whitened to a marblelike color by the passing of a hundred years, save where loving vines and ivy have clambered over their surfaces. You may see them to-day all the way from Utica to Sackett's Harbor; and, in turn, from Sackett's Harbor north and east to Plattsburgh once again. But none more sad nor more melancholy than at Martinsburgh; once in her pride the shire-town of the county of Lewis, but now a mere hamlet of a few fine old homes and crumbling warehouses. A great fire in the early fifties ended the ambitions of Martinsburgh—in a single short hour destroyed it almost totally. And made its hated rival Lowville, two miles to its north, the county seat and chief village of the vicinage.

There was much in this North Road to remind one of its prototype, the Great North Road, which ran and still runs from London to York, far overseas. A something in its relative importance that helps to make the parallel. Whilst even the famous four-in-hands of its English

predecessor might hardly hope to do better than was done on this early road of our own North Country. It is a matter of record that on February 19, 1829, and with a level fall of thirty inches of snow upon the road, the mailstage went from Utica to Sackett's Harbor, ninety-three miles, in nine hours and forty-five minutes, including thirty-nine minutes for stops, horse relays and the like. Which would not be bad time with a motor car this day.



CHAPTER II

Table of Contents

LOOKING TOWARD A RAILROAD

The locomotive having reached Utica—upon the completion of the Utica & Schenectady Railroad, August 2, 1836—was not to be long content to make that his western stopping point. The fever of railroad building was upon Central New York. Railroads it must have; railroads it would have. But railroad building was not the quick and comparatively simple thing then that it is to-day. And it was not until nearly four years after he had first poked his head into Utica that the iron horse first thrust his nose into Syracuse, fifty-three miles further west. In fact the railroad from this last point to Auburn already had been completed more than a twelvemonth and but fifteen months later trains would be running all the way from Syracuse to Rochester; with but a single change of cars, at Auburn.

Upon the heels of this pioneer chain of railroads—a little later to achieve distinction as the New York Central—came the building of a railroad to the highly prosperous Lake Ontario port of Oswego—the earliest of all white settlements upon the Great Lakes.

At first it was planned that this railroad to the shores of Ontario should deflect from the Utica & Syracuse Railroad—whose completion had followed so closely upon the heels of the line between Schenectady and Utica—near Rome, and after crossing Wood Creek and Fish Creek, should follow the north shore of Oneida Lake and then down the valley of the Oswego River. Oswego is but 185 miles from Lewiston by water and it was then estimated that it could be reached in twenty-four or twenty-five hours from New York by this combined rail and water route.

Eventually however the pioneer line to Oswego was built out of Syracuse, known at first as the Oswego and Syracuse Railroad; it afterwards became a part of the Syracuse, Binghamton and New York and as a part of that line eventually was merged, in 1872, into the Delaware, Lackawanna & Western Railroad, which continues to

operate it. This line of road led from the original Syracuse station, between Salina and Warren Streets straight to the waterside at Oswego harbor. There it made several boat connections; the most important of these, the fleet of mail and passenger craft operated by the one-time Ontario & St. Lawrence Steamboat Company.

The steamers of this once famous line played no small part in the development of the North Country. They operated through six or seven months of the year, as a direct service between Lewiston which had at that time highway and then later rail connection with Niagara Falls and Buffalo, through Ogdensburgh, toward which, as we shall see in good time, the Northern Railroad was being builded, close to the Canada line from Lake Champlain and the Central Vermont Railroad at St. Albans as an outlet between Northern New England and the water-borne traffic of the Great Lakes. The steamers of this line, whose names, as well as the names of their captains, were once household words in the North Country were:

Northerner	Captain	R. F. Child
Ontario	"	H. N. Throop
Bay State	"	J. Van Cleve
New York	"	————
Cataract	"	R. B. Chapman
British Queen	"	Laflamme
British Empire	"	Moody

The first four of these steamers, each flying the American flag, were deservedly the best known of the fleet. The *Ontario*, the *Bay State* and the *New York* were built at French Creek upon the St Lawrence (now Clayton) by John Oakes; the *Northerner* was Oswego-built. They burned wood in the beginning, and averaged about 230 feet in length and about 900 tons burthen. There were in the fleet one or two other less consequential boats, among them the *Rochester*, which plied between Lewiston and Hamilton, in the then

Canada West, as a connecting steamer with the main line. The steamer *Niagara*, Captain A. D. Kilby, left Oswego each Monday, Wednesday and Friday evening at eight, passing Rochester the next morning and arriving at Toronto at four p. m. Returning she would leave Toronto on the alternating days at 8:00 p. m., pass Rochester at 5:30 a. m. and arrive at Oswego at 10:00 a. m., in full time to connect with the Oswego & Syracuse R. R. train for Syracuse, and by connection, to Albany and the Hudson River steamers for New York. A little later Captain John S. Warner, of Henderson Harbor, was the Master of the *Niagara*.

The "line boats," as the larger craft were known, also connected with these through trains. In the morning they did not depart until after the arrival of the train from Syracuse. In detail their schedule by 1850 was as follows:

Lv.	Lewiston	4 p.m.	Lv.	Montreal	9 a.m.
"	Rochester	10 p.m.	"	Ogdensburgh	8 a.m.
"	Oswego	9 a.m.	"	Kingston	4 p.m.
"	Sackett's Harbor	12 m.	"	Sackett's Harbor	9 p.m.
"	Ogdensburgh	7 a.m.	"	Oswego	10 a.m.
Ar.	Montreal	6 p.m.	"	Rochester	6 p.m.
			Ar.	Lewiston	4 a.m.

Here for many years, before the coming of the railroad, was an agreeable way of travel into Northern New York. These steamers, even with thirty foot paddle-wheels, were not fast; on the contrary they were extremely slow. Neither were they gaudy craft, as one might find in other parts of the land. But their rates of fare were very low and their meals, which like the berths, were included in the cost of the passage ticket, had a wide reputation for excellence. Until the coming of the railroad into Northern New York, the line prospered exceedingly. Indeed, for a considerable time thereafter it endeavored

to compete against the railroad—but with a sense of growing hopelessness. And eventually these once famous steamers having grown both old and obsolete, the line was abandoned.

A rival line upon the north edge of Lake Ontario, the Richelieu & Ontario, continued to prosper for many years, however, after the coming of the railroad. Its steamers—the *Corsican*, the *Caspian*, the *Algerian*, the *Spartan*, the *Corinthian* and the *Passport* best known, perhaps, amongst them—ran from Hamilton, touching at Toronto, Kingston, Clayton, Alexandria Bay, Prescott and Cornwall, through to Montreal, where connections were made in turn for lower river ports. The last of these boats continued in operation upon the St. Lawrence until within twenty years or thereabouts ago.

It is worthy of note that the completion in 1829 of the first Welland Canal began to turn a really huge tide of traffic from Lake Erie into Lake Ontario, and for two decades this steadily increased. In 1850 Ontario bore some 400,000 tons of freight upon its bosom, yet in the following year this had increased to nearly 700,000 tons, valued at more than thirty millions of dollars. In 1853 a tonnage mark of more than a million was passed and the Lake then achieved an activity that it has not known since. In that year the Watertown & Rome Railroad began its really active operations and the traffic of Ontario to dwindle in consequence. Whilst the cross-St. Lawrence ferry at Cape Vincent, the first northern terminal of the Rome road, began to assume an importance that it was not to lose for nearly forty years.

Steamboat travel was hardly to be relied upon in a country which suffers so rigorous a winter climate as that of Northern New York. And highway travel in the bitter months between November and April was hardly better. A railroad was the thing; and a railroad the North Country must have. The agitation grew for a direct line at least between Watertown, already coming into importance as a manufacturing center of much diversity of product, to the Erie Canal and the chain of separate growing railroads, that by the end of 1844, stretched as a continuous line of rails all the way from Albany—and

by way of the Western and the Boston & Worcester Railroads (to-day the Boston and Albany) all the way from Boston itself—to Buffalo and Niagara Falls. Prosperity already was upon the North Country. It was laying the foundations of its future wealth. It was ordained that a railroad should be given it. The problem was just how and where that railroad should be built. After a brief but bitter fight between Rome and Utica for the honor of being the chief terminal of this railroad up into the North Country, Rome was chosen; as far back as 1832. Yet it was not until sixteen years later that the construction of the Watertown & Rome Railroad, the pioneer road of Northern New York, was actually begun. And had been preceded by a mighty and almost continuous legislative battle in the old Capitol at Albany ... of which more in another chapter.

In the meantime other railroads had been projected into the North Country. The real pioneer among all of these was the Northern Railroad, which was projected to run due west from Rouse's Point to Ogdensburgh, just above the head of the highest of the rapids of the St. Lawrence and so at that time at the foot of the easy navigation of Ontario, and, by way of the Welland Canal, of the entire chain of Great Lakes.

The preliminary discussions which finally led to the construction of this important early line also went as far back as 1829. Finally a meeting was called (at Montpelier, Vt., on February 17, 1830) to seriously consider the building of a railroad across the Northern Tier of New York counties, from Rouse's Point, upon Lake Champlain, to Ogdensburgh, upon the St. Lawrence. The promoters of the plan averred that trains might be operated over the proposed line at fifteen miles an hour, that the entire journey from Boston to Ogdensburgh might be accomplished in thirty-five hours. There were, of course, many wise men who shook their heads at the rashness of such prediction. But the idea fascinated them none the less; and twenty-eight days later a similar meeting to that at Montpelier was held at Ogdensburgh, to be followed a year later by one at Malone.

So was the idea born. It grew, although very slowly. Communication itself in the North Country was slow in those days,

even though the fine military road from Sackett's Harbor through Ogdensburgh to Plattsburgh was a tolerable artery of travel most of the year. Money also was slow. And men, over enterprises so extremely new and so untried as railroads, most diffident. For it must be remembered that when the promoters of the Northern Railroad first made that outrageous promise of going from Boston to Ogdensburgh in thirty-five hours, at fifteen miles an hour, the railroad in the United States was barely born. The first locomotive—the *Stourbridge Lion*, at Honesdale, Penn.—had been operated less than a twelvemonth before. In the entire United States there were less than twenty-three miles of railroad in operation. So wonder it not that the plan for the Northern Railroad grew very slowly indeed; that it did not reach incorporation until fourteen long years afterward, when the Legislature of New York authorized David C. Judson and Joseph Barnes, of St. Lawrence County, S. C. Wead, of Franklin County and others as commissioners to receive and distribute stock of the Northern Railroad; \$2,000,000 all told, divided into shares of \$50 each. The date of the formal incorporation of the road was May 14, 1845. Its organization was not accomplished, however, until June, 1845, when the first meeting was held in the then village of Ogdensburgh, and the following officers elected:

President, GEORGE PARISH, Ogdensburgh

Treasurer, S. S. WALLEY

Secretary, JAMES G. HOPKINS

Chief Engineer, COL. CHARLES L. SCHLATTER

Directors

J. Leslie Russell,
Canton

Anthony C. Brown,
Ogdensburgh

Charles Paine,
Northfield, Vt.

Isaac Spalding, Nashua, N.
H.

Hiram Horton, Malone

Lawrence Myers,
Plattsburgh

S. F. Belknap, Windsor,
Vt.

Abbot Lawrence, Boston

J. Wiley Edmonds,
Boston

T. P. Chandler, Boston

Benjamin Reed, Boston

S. S. Lewis, Boston

Soon after the organization of the company, T. P. Chandler succeeded Mr. Parish (who was for many years easily the most prominent citizen of Ogdensburgh) as President, and steps were taken toward the immediate construction of the line. After the inevitable preliminary contentions as to the exact route to be followed, James Hayward made the complete surveys of the line as it exists at present, while Colonel Schlatter, its chief engineer and for a number of years its superintendent as well, prepared to build it. Actual construction was begun in March, 1848, in the deep cutting just east of Ogdensburgh. At the same time grading and the laying of rail began at the east end of the road—at Rouse's Point at the foot of Lake Champlain—with the result that in the fall of 1848 trains were in regular operation between Rouse's Point and Centreville. A year later the road had been extended to Ellenburgh; in June, 1850, to Chateaugay. On October 1, 1850, trains ran into Malone. A month later it was finished and open for its entire length of 117 miles. Its cost, including its equipment and fixtures, was then placed at \$5,022,121.31.

It is not within the province of this little book to set down in detail the somewhat checkered career of the Northern Railroad. It started with large ambitions—even before its incorporation, James G. Hopkins, who afterwards became its Secretary, traveled through the Northern Tier and expatiated upon its future possibilities in a widely circulated little pamphlet. It was a road builded for a large traffic. So sure were its promoters of this forthcoming business that they placed

its track upon the side of the right-of-way, rather than in the middle of it, in order that it would not have to be moved when it came time to double-track the road.

The road was never double-tracked. For some years it prospered—very well. It made a direct connection between the large lake steamers at the foot of navigation at Ogdensburgh—it will be remembered that Ogdensburgh is just above the swift-running and always dangerous rapids of the St. Lawrence—and the important port of Boston. The completion of the line was followed almost immediately by the construction of a long bridge across the foot of Lake Champlain which brought it into direct connection with the rails of the Central Vermont at St. Albans—and so in active touch with all of the New England lines.

The ambitious hopes of the promoters of the Northern took shape not only in the construction of the stone shops and the large covered depot at Malone (built in 1850 by W. A. Wheeler—afterwards not only President of the property, but Vice-President of the United States—it still stands in active service) but in the building of 4000 feet of wharfage and elaborate warehouses and other terminal structures upon the river bank at Ogdensburgh. The most of these also still stand—memorials of the large scale upon which the road originally was designed.

Gradually, however, its strength faded. Other rail routes, more direct and otherwise more advantageous, came to combat it. Fewer and still fewer steamers came to its Ogdensburgh docks—at the best it was a seasonal business; the St. Lawrence is thoroughly frozen and out of use for about five months out of each year. The steamers of the upper Lakes outgrew in size the locks of the Welland Canal and so made for Buffalo—in increasing numbers. The Northern Railroad entered upon difficulties, to put it mildly. It was reorganized and reorganized; it became the Ogdensburgh Railroad, then the Ogdensburgh & Lake Champlain, then a branch of the Central Vermont and then upon the partial dismemberment of that historic property, a branch of the Rutland Railroad. As such it still continues with a moderate degree of success. In any narrative of the

development of transport in the North Country it must be forever regarded, however, as a genuine pioneer among its railroads.

One other route was seriously projected from the eastern end of the state into the North Country—the Sackett's Harbor and Saratoga Railroad Co. which was chartered April 10, 1848. After desperate efforts to build a railroad through the vast fastnesses of the North Woods—then a *terra incognita*, almost impenetrable—and the expenditure of very considerable sums of money, both in surveys and in actual construction, this enterprise was finally abandoned. Yet one to-day can still see traces of it across the forest. In the neighborhood of Beaver Falls, they become most definite; a long cutting and an embankment reaching from it, a melancholy reminder of a mighty human endeavor of just seventy years ago. If this route had ever been completed, Watertown to-day would enjoy direct rail communication with Boston, although not reaching within a dozen miles of Albany. The Fitchburg, which always sought, but vainly, to make itself an effective competitor of the powerful Boston & Albany, built itself through to Saratoga Springs, largely in hopes that some day the line through the forest to Sackett's Harbor would be completed. It was a vain hope. The faintest chance of that line ever being built was quite gone. A quarter of a century later the Fitchburg thrust another branch off from its Saratoga line to reach the ambitious new West Shore at Rotterdam Junction. That hope also faded. And the Fitchburg, now an important division of the Boston & Maine, despite its direct route and short mileage through the Hoosac Tunnel, became forever a secondary route across the state of Massachusetts.

The reports of the prospecting parties of the Sackett's Harbor & Saratoga form a pleasing picture of the Northern New York at the beginning of the fifties. The company had been definitely formed with its chief offices at 80 Wall Street, New York, and the following officers and directors:

President, WILLIAM COVENTRY H. WADDELL, New York

Supt. of Operations, GEN. S. P. LYMAN, New York

Treasurer, HENRY STANTON, New York

Secretary, SAMUEL ELLIS, Boston

Counsel, SAMUEL BEARDSLEY, Utica

Consulting Engineer, JOHN B. MILLS, New York

Directors

Charles E. Clarke, Great
Bend

P. Somerville Stewart,
Carthage

Lyman R. Lyon, Lyons Falls

E. G. Merrick, French
Creek

Robert Speir, West Milton

James M. Marvin,
Saratoga

John R. Thurman, Chester

Anson Thomas, Utica

Zadock Pratt, Prattsville

Otis Clapp, Boston

Wm. Coventry H. Waddell,
New York

Gen. S. P. Lyman, Utica

Henry Stanton, New York

Mr. A. F. Edwards received his appointment as Chief Engineer of the company on March 10, 1852, and soon afterwards entered upon a detailed reconnoissance of the territory embraced within its charter. He examined closely into its mineral and timber resources and gave great attention to its future agricultural and industrial possibilities. In the early part of his report he says:

“In the latter part of September, 1852, I left Saratoga for the Racket (Racquette) Lake, via Utica. On my way I noticed on the Mohawk that there had been frost, and as I rode along in the stage

from Utica to Boonville, I saw that the frost had bitten quite sharply the squash vines and the potatoes, the leaves having become quite black; but judge my surprise, when three days later on visiting the settlement of the Racket, I found the beans, cucumber vines, potatoes, &c., as fresh as in midsummer.”

His examination of the territory completed, Mr. Edwards began the rough location of the line of the new railroad. From Saratoga it passed westerly to the valley of the Kayaderosseras, in the town of Greenfield, thence north through Greenfield Center, South Corinth and through the “Antonio Notch” in the town of Corinth to the Sacondaga valley, up which it proceeded to the village of Conklingville, easterly through Huntsville and Northville, through the town of Hope to “the Forks.” From there it went up the east branch of the Sacondaga, through Wells and Gilman to the isolated town of Lake Pleasant. Spruce Lake and the headwaters of the Canada Creek were threaded to the summit of the line at the Canada Lakes. The middle and the western branches of the Moose River were passed near Old Forge and the line descended the Otter Creek valley, crossing the Independence River and down the Crystal Creek through and near Dayansville and Beaver Falls to Carthage where for the first time it would touch the Black River.

From Carthage to Watertown it was planned that it would closely follow the Black River valley, crossing the river three times, and leaving it at Watertown for a straight run across the flats to Sackett’s Harbor; along the route of the already abandoned canal which Elisha Camp and a group of associates had builded in 1822 and had left to its fate in 1832; in fact almost precisely upon the line of the present Sackett’s Harbor branch of the New York Central. At the Harbor great terminal developments were planned; an inner harbor in the village and an outer one of considerable magnitude at Horse Island.

From Carthage a branch line was projected to French Creek, now the busy summer village of Clayton. The route was to diverge from the main line about one mile west of Great Bend thence running in a tangent to the Indian River, about a mile and one-half east of Evan’s Mills, where after crossing that stream upon a bridge of two spans

and at a height of sixty feet would recross it two miles further on and then run in an almost straight line to Clayton. Here a very elaborate harbor improvement was planned, with a loop track and almost continuous docks to encircle the compact peninsula upon which the village is built.

“At French Creek on a clear day,” says Mr. Edwards, “the roofs of the buildings at Kingston, across the St. Lawrence, can be seen with the naked eye. All the steamers and sail vessels, up and down the river and lake, pass this place and when the Grand Trunk Railroad is completed, it will be as convenient a point as can be found to connect with the same.”

All the while he waxes most enthusiastic about the future possibilities of Northern New York, particularly the westerly counties of it. He calls attention to the thriving villages of Turin, Martinsburgh, Lowville, Denmark, Lyonsdale (I am leaving the older names as he gives them in his report) and Dayansville, in the Black River valley.

“In the wealthy county of Jefferson,” he adds, “are the towns of Carthage, Great Bend, Felt’s Mills, Lockport (now Black River), Brownville and Dexter, with Watertown, its county seat, well located for a manufacturing city, having ample water power, at the same time surrounded by a country rich in its soil and highly cultivated to meet the wants of the operatives. Watertown contains about 10,000 inhabitants and is the most modern, city-like built, inland town in the Union, containing about 100 stores, five banks, cotton and woolen factories, six large flouring mills, machine shops, furnaces, paper mills, and innumerable other branches of business, with many first class hotels, among which the ‘Woodruff House’ may be justly called the Metropolitan of Western New York.”

In that early day, more than \$795,000 had been invested in manufacturing enterprises along the Black River, at Watertown and below. The territory was a fine traffic plum for any railroad project. It seems a pity that after all the ambitious dreams of the Sackett’s Harbor & Saratoga and the very considerable expenditures that were made upon its right-of-way, that it was to be doomed to die without ever having operated a single through train. The nineteen or twenty

miles of its line that were put down, north and west from Saratoga Springs, long since lost their separate identity as a branch of the Delaware & Hudson system.



CHAPTER III

Table of Contents

THE COMING OF THE WATERTOWN & ROME

The first successful transportation venture of the North Country was still ahead of it. The efforts of these patient souls, who struggled so hard to establish the Northern Railroad as an entrance to the six counties from the east, were being echoed by those who strove to gain a rail entrance into it from the south. Long ago in this narrative we saw how as far back as 1836 the locomotive first entered Utica. Six or seven years later there was a continuous chain of railroads from Albany to Buffalo—precursors of the present New York Central—and ambitious plans for building feeder lines to them from surrounding territory, both to the north and to the south. The early Oswego & Syracuse Railroad was typical of these.

Of all these plans none was more ambitious, however, than that which sought to build a line from Rome into the heart of the rich county of Jefferson, the lower valley of the Black River and the St. Lawrence River at almost the very point where Lake Ontario debouches into it. The scheme for this road, in actuality, antedated the coming of the locomotive into Utica by four years, for it was in 1832—upon the 17th day of April in that year—that the Watertown & Rome Railroad was first incorporated and Henry H. Coffeen, Edmund Kirby, Orville Hungerford and William Smith of Jefferson County, Hiram Hubbell, Caleb Carr, Benjamin H. Wright and Elisha Hart, of Oswego, and Jesse Armstrong, Alvah Sheldon, Artemas Trowbridge and Seth D. Roberts, of Oneida, named by the Legislature as commissioners to promote the enterprise. Later George C. Sherman, of Watertown, was added to these commissioners. The act provided that the road should be begun within three years and completed within five. Its capital stock was fixed at \$1,000,000, divided into shares of \$100 each.

The commercial audacity, the business daring of these men of the North Country in even seeking to establish so huge an enterprise in