



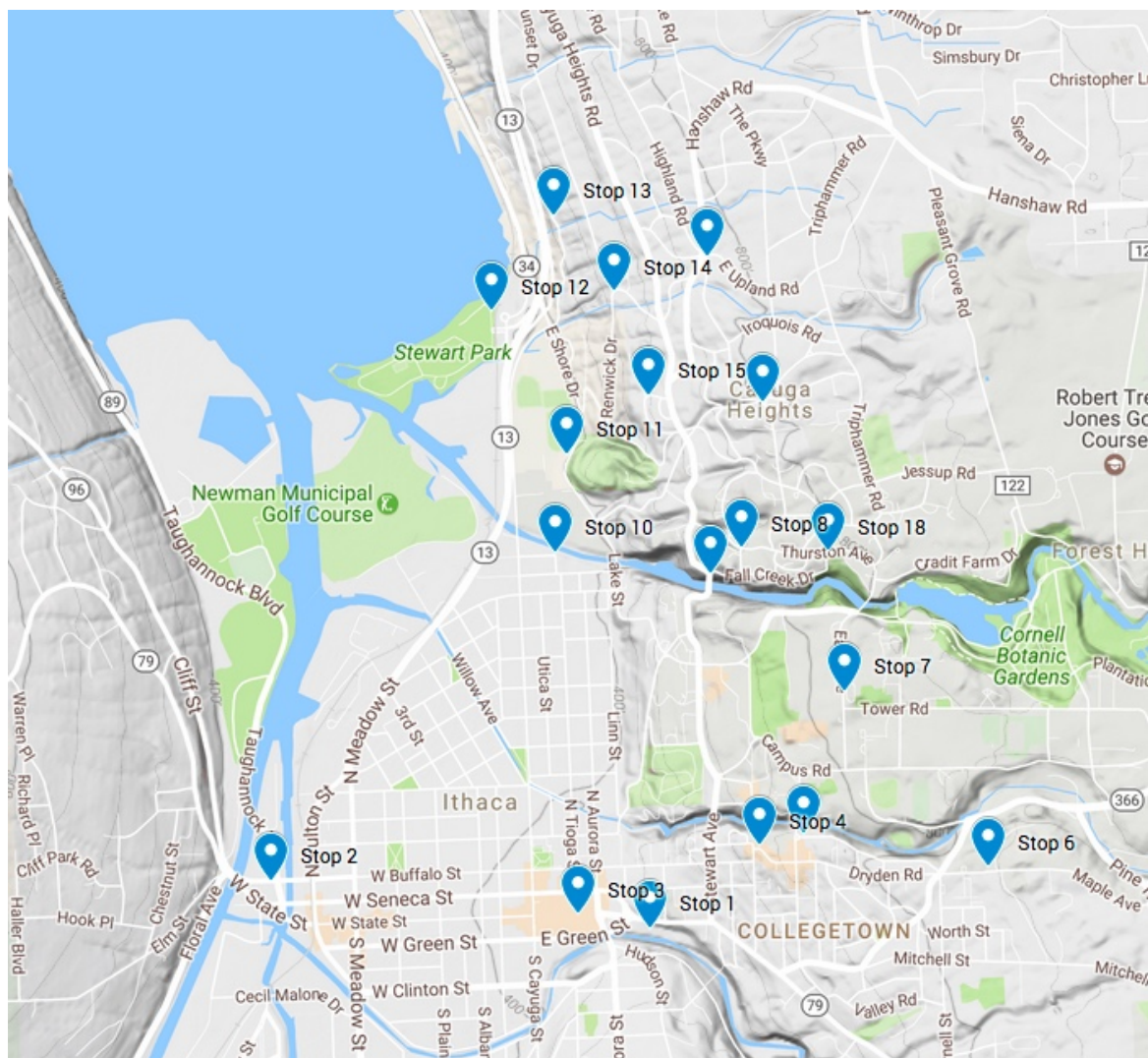
## ITHACA STREET RAILWAY BUS TOUR

The tour will follow the entire route and view all remnants of the Ithaca railway system. The tour includes five stops with some walking; we estimate the total time at about 2 1/2 hours, including an introduction in the History Center to view the railroad component of the "Altered and Preserved Landscape" exhibit. Commentary by David Rossiter

Sunday, May 14th, 2017  
1:30 pm to 4:30 pm

Tour leaves @ 1:30 pm  
Departure point:  
The History Center  
401 East State St. Ithaca, NY  
Cost: \$20

[CLICK the ticket to SIGN-UP!](#)



Stop 1: Gateway Plaza parking lot, behind the History Center

This is the site of the main car barns and repair shop, probably built after the change in power system of 1892 (see next). From here the connecting line came along the W

side of Gateway Plaza and onto E. State St.

Stop 2: Lehigh Valley Railroad station, N side of W. Buffalo St.

This is the terminus of the original line, opened 27-Dec-1887. The current station building is from 1898, from a design by Ithaca architect A.B. Wood. In 1887 the railroad here was the Geneva, Ithaca & Sayre, later absorbed into the Lehigh Valley system. First-class passenger trains operated north and west to Geneva, Rochester Junction, Buffalo and Niagara Falls, and south and east to Wilkes-Barre, Bethlehem (through cars to Philadelphia over the Reading) and New York City. Last passenger service 1961.

From here the line turned S onto Taughannock Blvd. and then E on W. State St. Just after turning onto State St. and crossing the Inlet, the line served the DL&W Ithaca branch station at W. State and Fulton streets (site of the current bus station, rebuilt by the DL&W during the Truesdale<sup>1</sup> years). Despite being the terminus of a branch line to Owego, the DL&W was popular with students for a faster trip to New York. Passenger service was discontinued in 1942.

The original Ithaca Street Railway ran from the west end to the Ithaca Hotel at E. State and Aurora St. The original electric system was the Daft Electric System. This used two overhead wires for current (i.e., the rails were not part of the circuit). The current collector was a small inverted two x two-wheeled device called a "troller" from which two flexible cables extended to the car roof and then down to the traction motors. Current was low-voltage D.C., perhaps as low as 120 volts.

A single passing siding was located between Plain and Corn streets, in the middle of the run. This was sufficient for the two 14-passenger cars on a 10-minute headway.

Below is a photo looking N of the first car crossing Cayuga St. This may be from the first day of operation.

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<sup>1</sup>William H. Truesdale, President of the DL&W, 1899-1925, responsible for upgrading the DL&W to a super-highway of railroading (Tunkhannock viaduct, Lackawanna cutoff).





The electric system was replaced in July 1892 with a conventional single-wire current (Sprague system) with a trolley pole, using the rails for the current ground. This followed the acquisition in 1891 of the railway by the Hand and Bergholtz (an electrical engineer) consortium. Current was D.C., probably 500 volts.

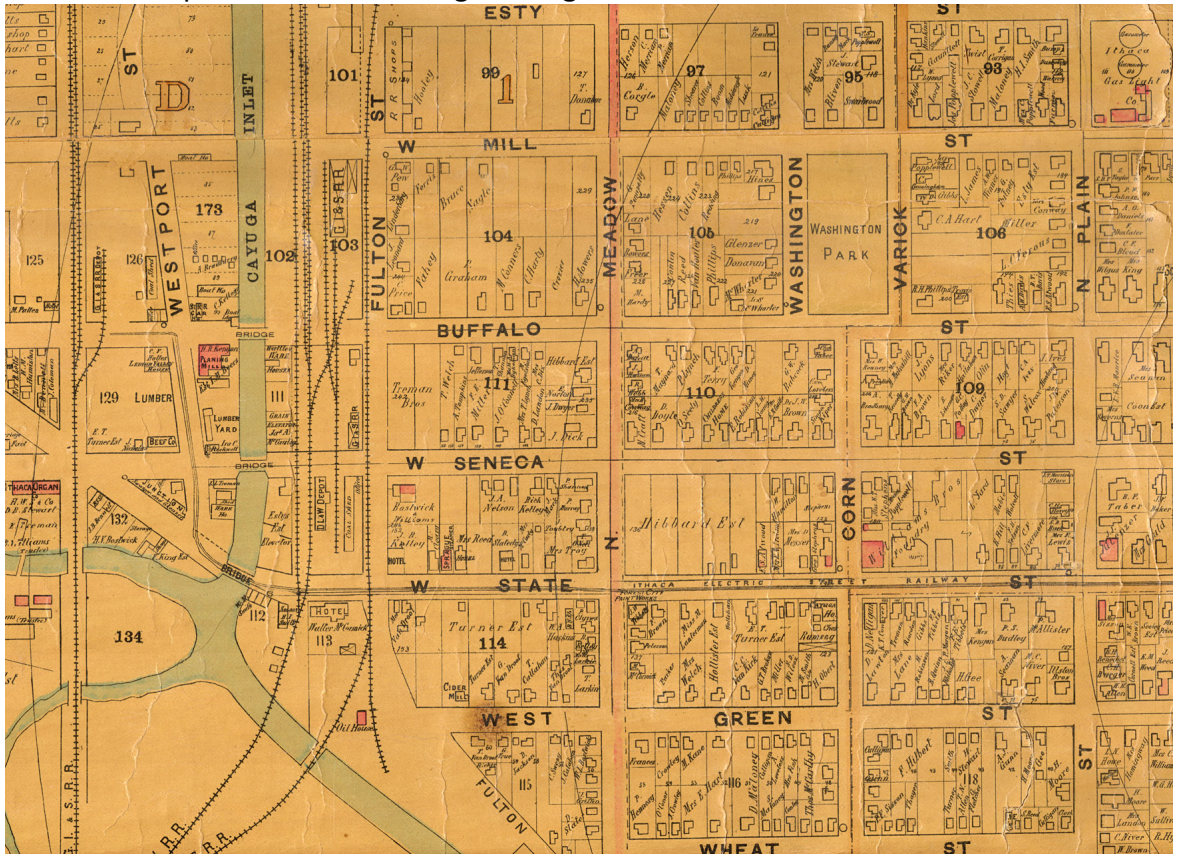
The main line was double-tracked in 1914. The last run on the main line was 22 June 1935, with brief reprieve for the 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend.

The photo below shows a post-1914 (double-tracking) car heading down W. State St., perhaps at Albany St., towards the "R" railway stations.





Below is a map<sup>2</sup> from 1893 showing the original line in the west end.



### Stop 3: State and Tioga St. intersection

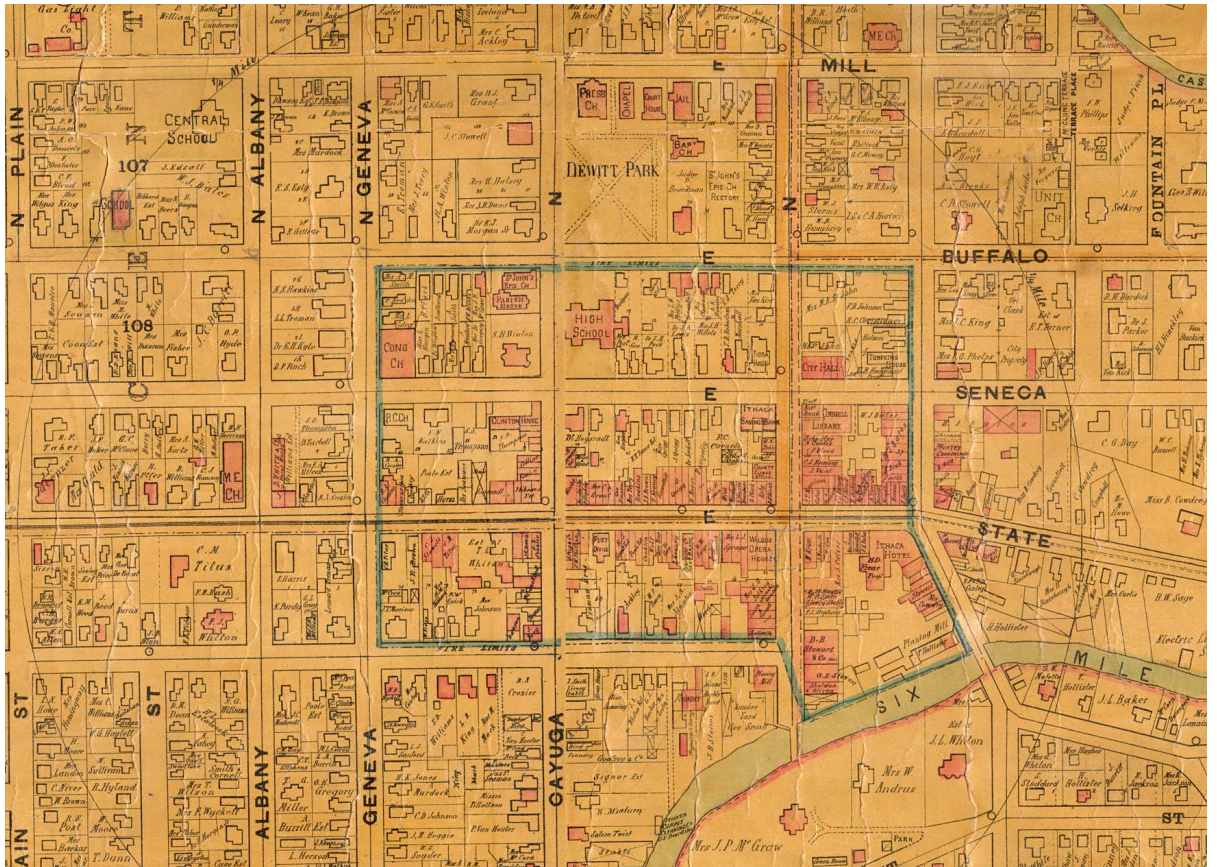
This is the junction between the main line and the Tioga St. line (service starting in July 1892), suggested today by the symbolic wye in front of Center Ithaca. The wye was only used to move cars between lines and for special moves, such as excursions to Renwick Park or Percy Field from the Lehigh Valley station or East Hill. The 100 block of N Tioga St. was the terminus for the Tioga St. line, and also of the Ithaca-Auburn Shortline streetcars to South Lansing and Rogue's Harbor.

Below is a map<sup>3</sup> from 1893 showing the east end of original line and the beginning of the extension up E. State St. Surprisingly, it does not show the Tioga St. line.

<sup>2</sup> <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures350/35054small.jpg>

<sup>3</sup> <http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures350/35053small.jpg>





From here the main line continued along E. State St. Before February 1893 the terminus was at Aurora St. (Ithaca Hotel); that year it was extended up the hill to Eddy St., with a sharp curve onto Eddy St., and a passing track was installed in front of the Hotel. The State/Eddy curve is the site of a 1920 crash, when a car on Eddy St. lost control and smashed into trees across State St., killing two passengers. This was double-tracked as far as the Eddygate in 1914.

The postcard below shows the situation in front of the Ithaca Hotel between 1893 and 1914, looking W. along State St. from Aurora St.



The junction with the lower loop at Stewart Ave. was from 1900 (see below).

#### Stop 4: Eddygate

This gate was built in 1896 as the main entrance to campus. The streetcar line did not pass through it, instead, it followed a private right-of-way along the S side of Cascadilla Hall (built 1859 as a water-cure establishment) to College Ave. The lower part of this is now a sidewalk, ending where the Schwartz Center blocks it. Above this the original line made a sharp turn to the N and then again E, around the site of the millpond; at some point, probably when Sheldon Court was built in 1902, the millpond was filled in and the line was relocated to run straight uphill along the W edge of Sheldon Court and into the College Ave. triangle.

#### Stop 5: College Ave., Cascadilla Creek bridge, E. Ithaca line

The Cornell line, opened in 1893, crossed College Ave. on an angle and onto the private right-of-way that is now a walkway, leading to bridge across Cascadilla Creek, and then to the base of what is now the Engineering Quad to the corner of South Avenue, just above the Armory; this is close to what is now the rock display in front of Thurston Hall. Since 1935 the bridge was used as a footbridge to campus; it was replaced with a modern structure in 2006.

Just before the walkway, the E. Ithaca line, also from 1893, continued up the N side of Oak Ave. Just after Oneida Place it angled through what is now an apartment block to the Dryden Rd./Maple Ave./Ithaca Rd./Cornell St. intersection and further up the N side of Maple Ave. to the S side of the depot.

The flat grade you see heading E along the S bank of Cascadilla St. is not a railroad grade. It is the millrace for one of Eddy's mills, from the takeout next to the tennis



courts upstream. A large millpond was located at what is now the College/Oak Ave. triangle. This was drained a few years before the streetcar extension.

Below is a fanciful map from 1928 by Ellen Edmonson<sup>4</sup> showing this portion of the line, including the extension along East Ave. (see next).



Stop 6: Site of East Ithaca Lehigh Valley Railroad station, Maple Ave.

This is the terminus of the East Ithaca line (last run 30 April 1930), along the N side of Maple Ave. adjacent to the depot of the Elmira, Cortland & Northern, later absorbed into the Lehigh Valley system. The depot is now part of the Agave Restaurant next to East Hill Plaza. The EC&N south to Horseheads was abandoned in 1935, the line east to Cortland was out of service in late June 1972 following Hurricane Agnes, and officially abandoned on 01-April-1976 (Conrail day). The main use of this station was for travel to Cortland and on via DL&W to Syracuse, also for the Albany and New England connection to the New York Central at Canastota, especially for Cornell sports teams playing Dartmouth, Harvard or Brown.

Stop 7: East Avenue at President's Drive

In 1895 the Cornell line was extended diagonally across what is now the Engineering Quad to South Ave. between Central and East Aves., then up South Ave. to East Ave, then after a sharp curve, along the W side of East Ave. to President's Drive, then turned W along the front of Boardman Hall (now the site of Olin Library). Reportedly this was done "on the sly" while President White was out of town. Below is a photo of a "summer" car waiting at the end of line in front of Boardman Hall; Morrill Hall in the background. Notice the professorial passenger!

<sup>4</sup> <http://tompkinscountynyny.gov/files/gis/historicmaps/oldcornell.pdf>



In 1898 Bergholtz and Hand sold out to a consortium organized by Edward G. Wyckoff, which developed the Cornell Heights tract. This consortium needed streetcar service. They built the Triphammer bridge over Fall Creek in 1897, and then arranged for the extension of the streetcar system.

In July 1899 the line to Boardman Hall was abandoned in favour of an extension along East Ave. to the new Thurston Ave. bridge. The line did not follow the current curve of East Ave., rather, it went straight to University Ave. and then turned E on University for a short stretch before then turning onto the bridge. For the construction of Rand Hall in 1911 East Ave. was relocated to the present curve and the streetcar was moved onto the new alignment.

A passing track was added in front of the site of Day Hall as part of the Cornell Heights project. See the Edmonson map “ye trolley car waiting for ye other trolley car”.

This new loop line then followed the S side of Thurston Ave. The junction with the Cayuga Heights line (1906) was at Wyckoff Ave.

#### Stop 8: Thurston Ave. at Barton Place

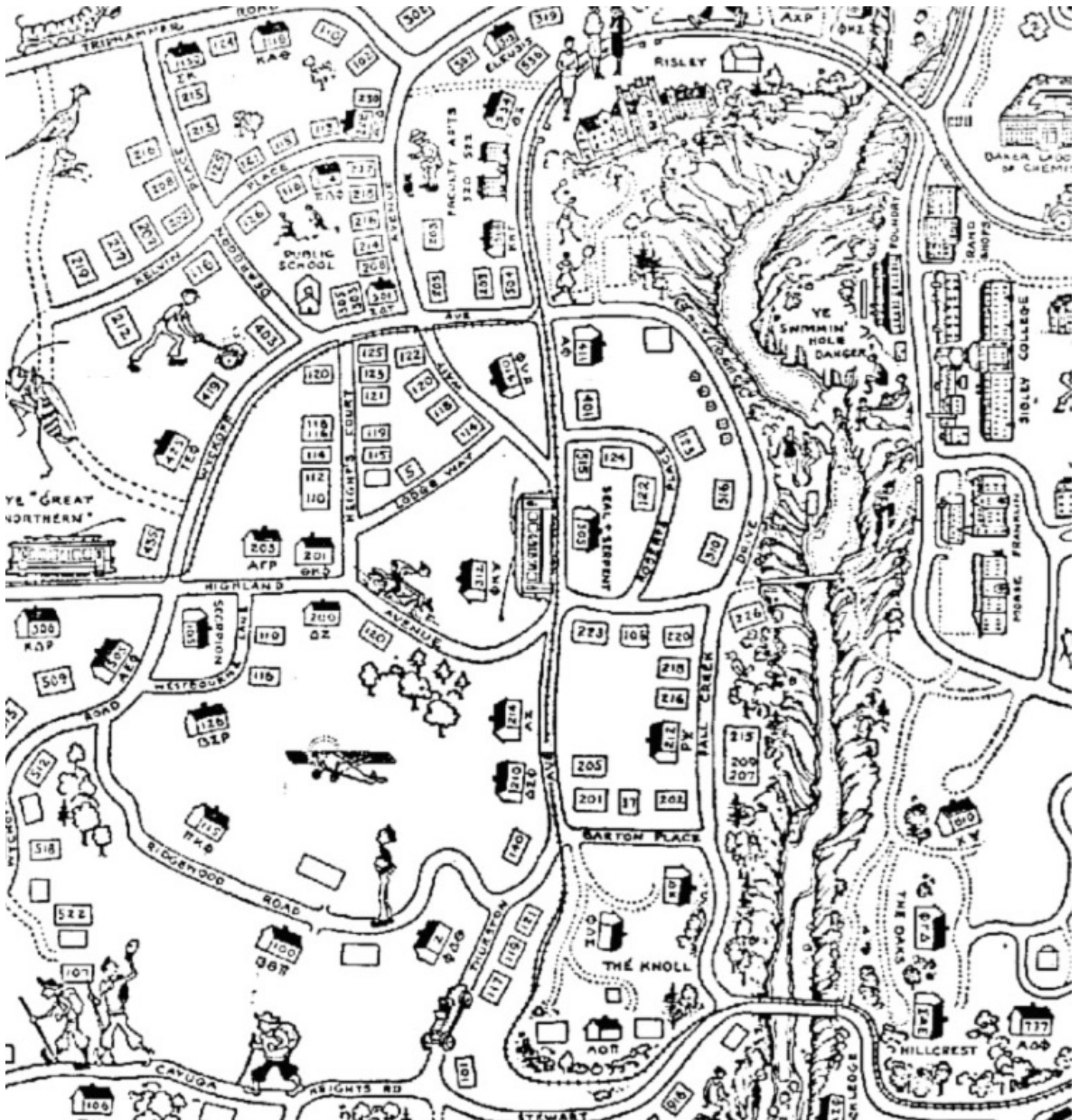
The driveway parallel to Thurston Ave. as it heads downhill is the N end of the trolley loop around “the Knoll”. It is used now as a driveway for the houses below on Thurston Ave. This section was a passing track.



From here the loop line followed the N, W and S faces of the Knoll. The point above the Thurston/Stewart intersection was known as “Inspiration Point” for the spectacular view of Cayuga Lake.



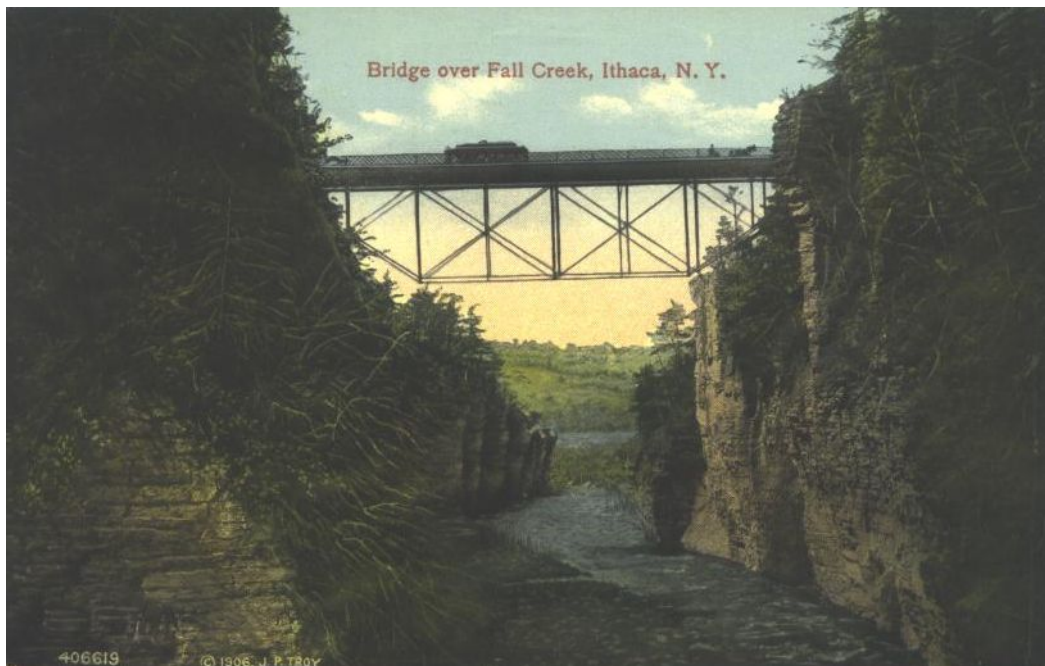
Below is another portion of the Edmonson 1928 map showing the entire Cornell Heights loop, and the “Great Northern” into Cayuga Heights (see below).



Stop 9: Stewart Ave. bridge

The loop line followed what is now a line of telephone poles and a faintly visible grade, to the corner of Stewart Ave. and Fall Creek Drive, and then across the E side of the new (1899) Stewart Ave. bridge. This is the site of the famous Wharton Films “trolley disaster” on 01-August-1914 for the movie “A Prince of India”.





Directly underneath the bridge was a power plant for the railway, probably built at the time of the loop extension, but burned in 1906 and probably replaced with power from the Remington Point power plant.

A bit further on Stewart Ave., a spring was located at the intersection of Willard Way, where trolley crews would refresh themselves on hot days. This was also a passing track.

From here the line followed the E side of Stewart Ave. to South Ave. and then the center of the street to the junction at State St. The section from South Ave. to the Cascadilla Creek bridge was the site of "rail greasing" pranks by the occupants of nearby fraternity houses. The section from Cascadilla Creek to E. State St. was double-tracked at the same time as the State/Eddy double-tracking.

#### Stop 10: N. Tioga St. at E. York St.

Now we turn to the Tioga St. line. Opened in June 1892, this followed the center of the street to E. Lincoln St. (then called Railroad Ave.), and turned W along Railroad Ave. to the steamboat landing along Cascadilla Creek. The Railroad Ave. line was replaced in summer 1894 by a line to Renwick (now Stewart) Park (purchased in spring 1894 by the Bergholtz interests), along N. Tioga, including the "kink" at E. Falls St., and across Fall Creek on a trolley bridge. The line was double-tracked as far as the end of N. Tioga St. in 1914.

A freight house for the Short Line was on the site of the Fall Creek Pictures (ex-P&C) building.

The N foundation of the bridge can be seen from the S levee; the S foundation is mostly buried by the levee.

Across Fall Creek the line continued as a single track through what is now IHS, and what was then the W boundary of Percy Field, and then angled to behind Deeb's Service and then along the base of E. Shore Drive.

#### Stop 11: E Shore Drive at IHS football stadium/track.

From here we can see the traces of the streetcar line in two directions.

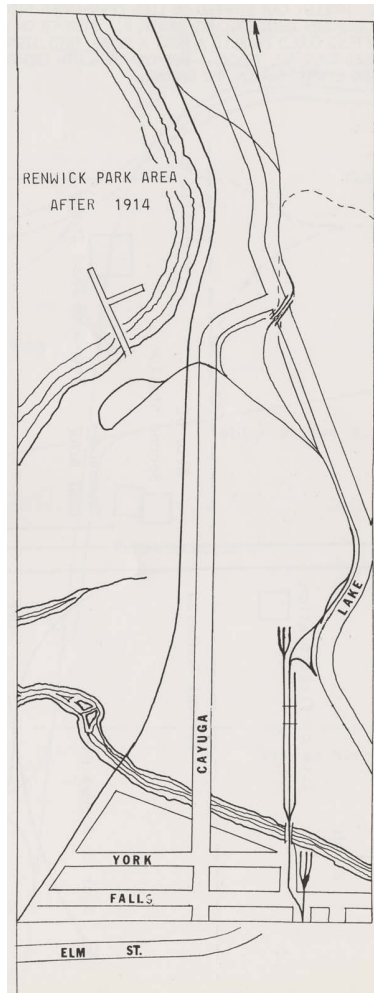
Looking S behind Deeb's Service, the slight elevation just below the curve is the waiting track for the McKeen gasoline cars of the Ithaca-Auburn Short Line, where passengers transferred from the streetcar, following the rebuild of the Short Line's lowest section into an S-bend in 1914. The gas cars were not allowed on Ithaca streets.

Further S the line angled behind Percy Field and then to the Fall Creek trolley bridge. Storage tracks were located past Percy Field, about where the IHS parking lot is now; these were mainly to hold cars during games at Percy Field. These car barns burned down in 1918.

Looking N, the Lake Source Cooling project pipeline follows the grade of the Renwick Park line, just below E. Shore Drive, to about the the S end of Boyton Middle School. The line then angled across to the entrance of Renwick Park.



The track diagram below is from Richard Palmer's book "Ithaca-Auburn Short Line" (2011)<sup>5</sup>. It also shows the car barns at N. Tioga/Falls St., the barns past Percy Field, the Short Line waiting track behind Deeb's, the rebuilt and original Short Line grades, and the freight track to the Remington power station.



Stop 12: Stewart Park east park road (NE edge of park).

The streetcar line from 1894 crossed the Lehigh Valley's Cayuga Lake line and entered the park at a now-removed entrance just N of the current automobile entrance and directly across to an auditorium near the present main pavilion.

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[http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures382/shortline\\_web/pages/38333.htm](http://freepages.genealogy.rootsweb.ancestry.com/~springport/pictures382/shortline_web/pages/38333.htm)



In May 1914 the original line was replaced with a “balloon track” (loop), to the back of the main pavilion, and then circling back about half-way across the present grass area (the current park road was then still in the Renwick Woods).

By the 1930’s the park access was blocked and the streetcars terminated just short of the LV tracks. This may have been as early as 1915, when Renwick Park closed and was then leased to the Whartons for their movie studio. The city reorganized the park as Stewart Park in 1921, but it seems streetcars were not extended into it, due to a small piece of private right-of-way.

### Stop 13: Remington Road at Cayuga Heights Railway grade

We now follow the line of the Cayuga Heights Railway, opened 16-June-1906. This was an enterprise of Jared Treman Newman and Charles Hazen Blood, who had purchased most of what is now Cayuga Heights. This lower portion of the line (below Highland Ave., see below) was abandoned after the 1908 summer season. The grade is easy to see in the winter, the photo below is looking uphill from Remington Road.





This line joined the Renwick Park line just outside the (old) main gate, and then across E. Shore Drive just opposite the Tompkins County Visitor's Center, then angled NE across what is now NY13, to a hairpin bend a bit north of this stop, returning along a SE alignment to this stop, and continuing uphill along the clearly-visible grade through what is now the driveway of 104 N Sunset Drive.

Stop 14: Renwick Drive/N Sunset Drive/Devon Rd. corner

The Cayuga Heights railway reached the level of N. Sunset at the culvert (original) between 102 and 104 N. Sunset, crossed the intersection, and continued straight across what is now the Roy Park mansion (205 Devon Rd.). The original culvert crossing Pleasant Grove Brook is just E of the Renwick Drive bridge over the same brook. This gives a good idea of the high quality of the construction; it seems hardly weathered after 111 years since its construction.

Stop 15: Sunset Drive at Sunset Park Drive.

Sunset Drive to this intersection is on the line of the railway. About at the triangle it made a sharp bend to the NE, crossed the lawn of what is now 218 Cayuga Heights Rd. (built 1930) and followed the W side of Hanshaw Road.

Stop 16: Upland/Hanshaw/Highland "Cayuga Circle"<sup>6</sup>

Here the story gets complicated. The small flat area on the E side of Highland Rd. just before the E. Upland Rd. corner is not part of the original Cayuga Heights railway

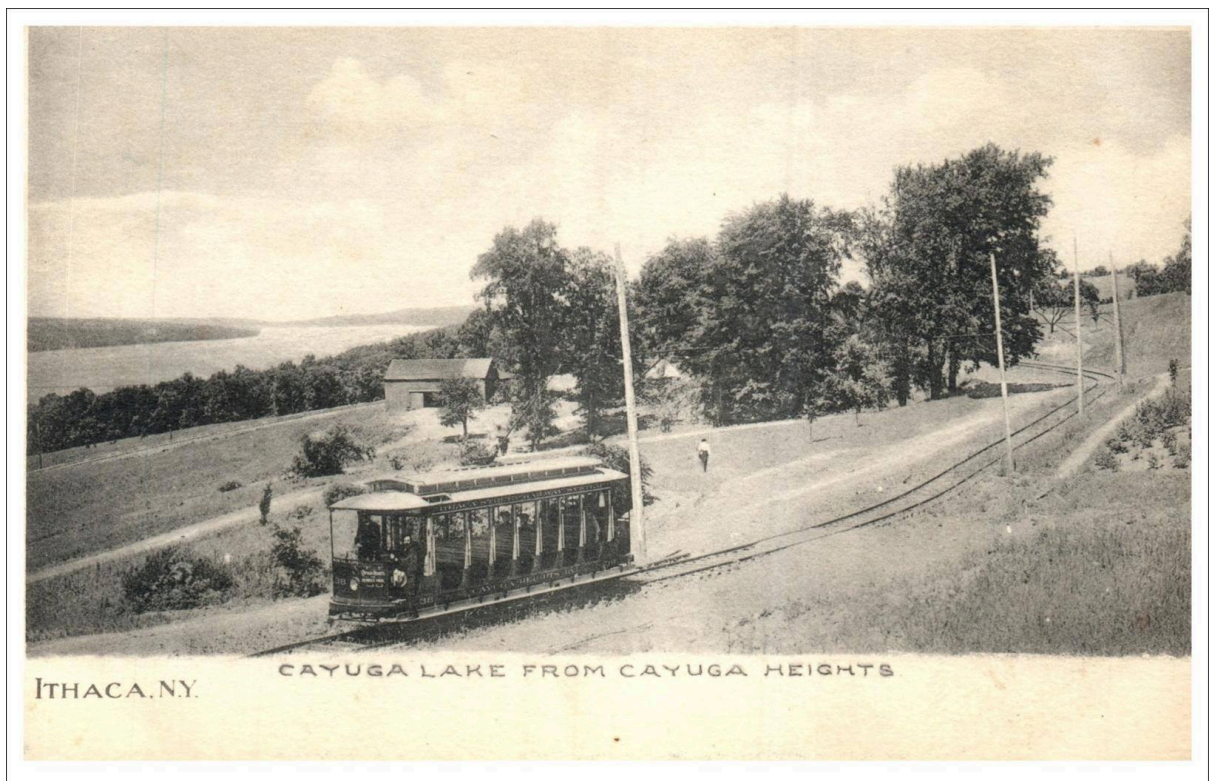
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<sup>6</sup> <http://www.cayugaheightshistory.org/cayuga-circle.html>

abandoned in 1908. It is the terminus of the "Great Northern" line, extended to here along Highland Rd. from Kline Rd. (see below) in 1919, with service ending in 1930. This connected to the Cornell Heights loop at Wyckoff and Thurston Aves.

As we proceed along Highland Rd., we come to the site where the original line of the Cayuga Heights railway (1906-1908) joined the E side of Highland Rd., just S of 518 Highland Rd., coming up at an angle from a loop just S of Pleasant Grove brook. From here the "Great Northern" is the remnant of the Cayuga Heights loop.

The following photo shows the original Cayuga Heights line along Highland Rd. just S of Iroquois Rd. Notice the next lower loop along Hanshaw Rd., below the barn.



Stop 17: Highland Rd. at Kline Rd.

This was the terminus of the "Great Northern" from 1908 to until the extension to Cayuga Circle in 1919. From here the line continued along the E side of Highland Rd.; immediately inside the City of Ithaca (Cornell Heights tract, annexed 1903) the line turned up the S/W side of Wyckoff Ave. to a junction with the Cornell loop at Thurston Ave (see Edmonson map, above).

Stop 18: Thurston Ave. at Wyckoff Ave.

This is the junction of the Cayuga Heights (a.k.a. "Great Northern") and Cornell loop lines. The points faced E and were only used for car moves, not for revenue service, after the Cayuga Heights line was cut back to the "Great Northern".





## Stop 19: History Center.

End of the line: the system was sold at auction in January 1928 and reorganized as Ithaca Railways; this led to the rationalization of 1930 (end of "Great Northern" and E. Ithaca lines). In 1934 the bus operators Sweet & Oster bought the franchise with the intent to replace the streetcars with busses, as was done in summer 1935. These car barns were used for the bus system until the early 1960's, although damaged in the July 1935 great flood (just after bus replacement).



## Resources

TCAT<sup>7</sup> – for the modern and much expanded replacement for the Ithaca Street Railway.

- Route 30 follows much of the East Hill line from the base of E. State St. to Thurston and Wyckoff, except for using College Ave. instead of Eddy St., and College Ave./Campus Rd. instead of the trolley bridge and line across the Engineering Quad. It also follows a short section of the Great Northern along Highland Rd. from Wyckoff Ave. to Kline Rd.
- Route 13 serves Stewart Park and passes the site of the trolley barns at N. Tioga and Fall Sts., also the line along Lake Shore Drive by the IHS track. As it climbs NY13 to the Ithaca Mall it crosses the site of the lowest Cayuga Heights loop.
- Route 14 follows the original line of W. State St. from Taughannock Blvd. to Albany St.
- Route 31 and many commuter routes follow the Stewart Ave. line from the base of E. State St. to Stewart Ave. at Campus Rd.

[Cornell Campus 1928](#) (PDF)<sup>8</sup> by Ellen Edmonson; a charming map which shows the exact alignment of the street railway: entire Cornell loop, Great Northern to the Cayuga Heights boundary, and East Ithaca branch. Scanned and provided as part of the historic map collection<sup>9</sup> of Tompkins County GIS.

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.tcatbus.com/>

<sup>8</sup> <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/files/gis/historicmaps/oldcornell.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> <http://tompkinscountyny.gov/gis/maps/historic>

Kerr, Richard D. (1972) "Ithaca Street Railway Co.", Harold E. Cox, Forty-Fort PA. 48 pages. Available at the Tompkins County Public Library, call number *LH-REF 388.46 Kerr*.