



Getting the farmers out of the mud: railroad fever in the 1870's in Newfield and its consequences

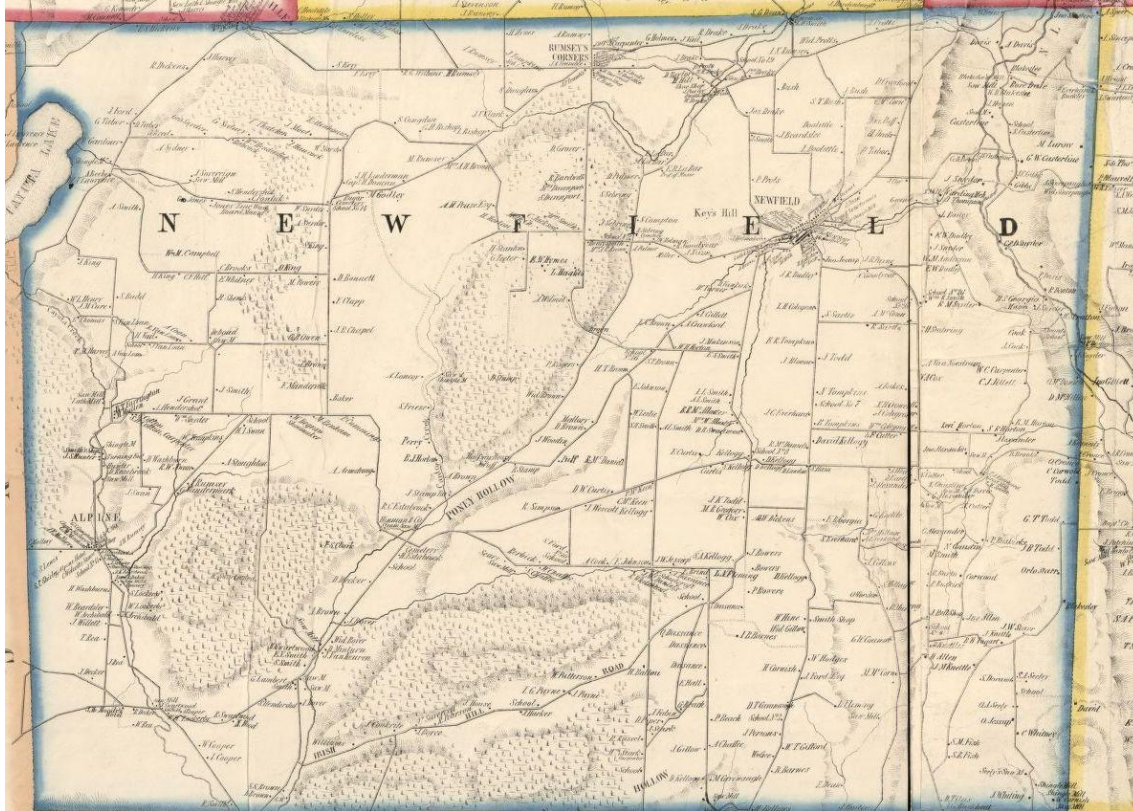
David Rossiter

Presentation to Newfield Historical Society

08-May-2018

How was transportation in 1865?

1853
Tompkins
County map;
pre-Schuyler
(1854)



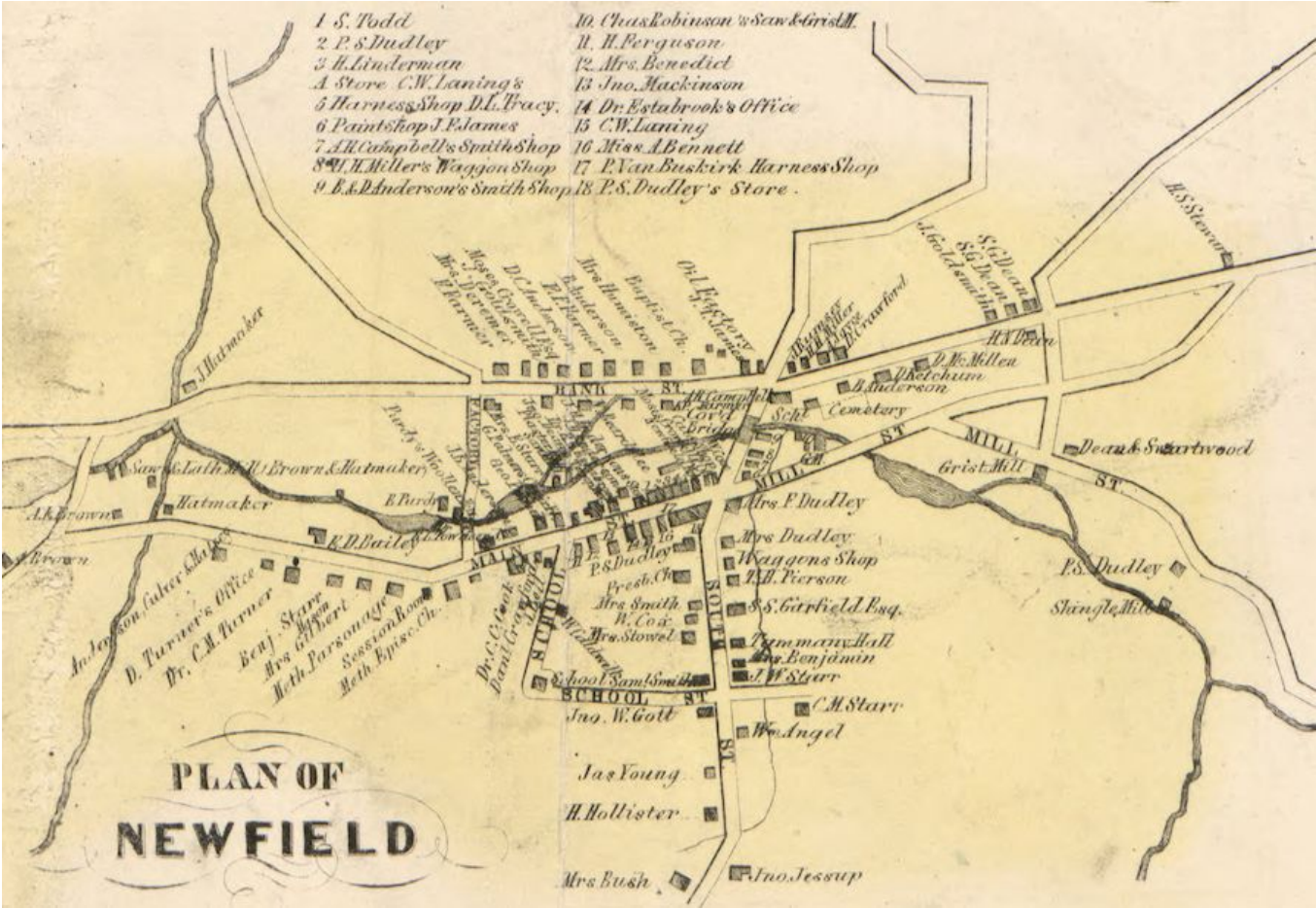


HORACE & CHARLES T. SMITH,
Publishers
PHILADELPHIA

NEW YORK
FROM ACTUAL SURVEYS BY L. FAGAN.

ROBERT PEARSALL SMITH
15 Minor Street
PHILADELPHIA.

41x57





Tough conditions for the farmers

Newfield, Enfield, and Ulysses are “practically isolated from any public thoroughfare and for four or five months of a year are nearly hermetically sealed by mud or snow” -- *Seneca Falls Reveille*, 1869

“In 1834 Chauncey L. Grant and Company started stagecoach service from Elmira to Ithaca. ... A four horse stagecoach went from Newfield to Ithaca on Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday ... In the spring the roads were very muddy and stagecoaches often sank up to their axles. This required four or more horses to pull them out. In the winter the roads were covered with snow and ice.” -- Newfield Historical Society

Developments in railroading to 1865

- early 1800's canals (Erie Canal 1825), obviously not suited to hilly terrain
 - Ithaca the head of navigation to Erie Canal
- 1820-1840 trial technology
 - Mohawk & Hudson 1831
 - Ithaca & Owego 1834: link between Susquehanna (PA North Branch canal 1856) and Cayuga Lake; inclined planes Cayuga Lake level to Willseyville level
- **Rapid improvements 1850s** (technology, industry), especially during the Southern rebellion
 - I & O rebuilt as Cayuga & Susquehanna 1852; replaced planes with switchbacks
 - Other upstate railroads: New York Central, Syracuse & Binghamton etc.
- A huge improvement in transportation (time, energy, reliability)
- End of rebellion freed up **energy and investment**, especially European investors
- "Civic improvement", competition between cities
- **Railroad fever**



Railroad fever 1865-1875

- A huge improvement in road or canal transportation
- Technology well-proven and improved during the rebellion
- Manufacturers prepared for rapid supply (rails, locomotives)
- Railroads built in 1850's were great successes
- US promoting westward expansion via railroads: Union Pacific/Central Pacific chartered in 1862, "Golden Spike" Utah Sept. 1869
- Plenty of energy and capital available
- **Any place without a railroad would be at a severe disadvantage**

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Street On House Rail

100's of railroads chartered -- here a partial list from 1874



Tompkins County 1865-1870

- **Cayuga & Susquehanna** (later DL&W) Ithaca-Candor-Owego (via switchbacks) since 1852
 - controlled by Ligget's Gap (DL&W precursor), Scranton interests
 - broad gauge (6') until DL&W system change to standard gauge (4' 8.5") 1878
- **Ezra Cornell**
 - founded the University 1865
 - active railroad promoter after retiring from Western Union
 - determined to make Ithaca a transportation center: links to Athens, Geneva, Cortland, Horseheads
 - Died Dec. 1874



Newfield's geography

- Mostly a broad upland high above Cayuga Lake level 380'
- **Newfield Hamlet, Pony Hollow, Fishkill not too hilly, at 1000-1200' level**
- Gently sloping upland to the south, reaching summit at Arnot Forest/Picnic Corners 1670'
- Other high ground Prott's Hill, Connecticut Hill
- Inlet valley: well below the village (Newfield Station 580'), moraine topography, inlet creek prone to floods
- **Railroads need fairly level terrain, maximum preferred grade 2% (Baltimore & Ohio standard), maximum possible with adhesion 6% (very rare! Saluda Grade NC)**



What were Newfield's options in 1870?

1. Ithaca & Athens

- Backed by Ezra Cornell, along with the Geneva & Ithaca
 - other prominent backers: King, Esty, Halsey, Williams, Treman, Boardman
- Only practical route from Athens to Ithaca via **Inlet Valley**
 - linking Susquehanna navigation with Erie Canal navigation, competing with C & S
- **Steep grades in both directions from Ithaca**, but served Ithaca flats and Cayuga Lake
- Ithaca & Athens station at **Newfield Station** along Inlet Creek (location also called "Nina")
 - about 400' below and 2 miles E of Newfield village

2. Pennsylvania & Sodus Bay

- **Low-grade route** through Newfield, Enfield, Trumansburg, to Lake Ontario
- Did not descend to Cayuga Lake level
- Served Newfield hamlet directly, close to much of rural upland Newfield town



What was required of Newfield?

- Common practice to finance railroads in NY State was for **Towns to sell bonds for the railroad**
 - charter from NY State legislature allowed this and set terms
 - decided by Town Board or a ballot question
- Guaranteed by the Town
- Revenue to cover bonds would come from taxes paid by the completed railroad
 - if no revenue from the railroads, the Town's taxpayers had to pay the bonds
- Railroads needed the ready cash to complete
- Newfield was approached by the **Ithaca & Athens** for about \$50,000 (2018: \$730,000)
1860 population 2,984 -> \$16.75 (\$235) per person
- Competing request from the **Pennsylvania & Sodus Bay**



The Pennsylvania & Sodus Bay: purpose

- **Main purpose was coal traffic from the Pennsylvania fields to Lake Ontario**
 - tranship to Canada; also transfer to New York Central for the Albany-Buffalo corridor
 - gradients should be easy! northbound from about 1070' (N Spencer), 1160' (Harford) down to Lake Ontario at 250'
 - Ithaca & Athens steep downgrade to Cayuga Lake at 380', then canal traffic; if continued by rail, climb over the hill to Geneva via Hayt Corners (approx. 800')
 - **A better route: stay up on the hill, do not descend to the Ithaca flats**
 - 1070' N Spencer -> high point Trumbull Cors. Rd. below Sebring Cemetery 1160' -> Stone House (Enfield) 1150' -> Trumbull Cors. Rd/NY327 1100' -> Halseyville Rd. divide 1200' -> T-burg fairgrounds 920' -> Ovid NY96/414 890' -> Waterloo 450'
 - Already an idea in the 1850's: "Murdock Grade" Owego -> Caroline Depot (990') -> E Ithaca -> Auburn
 - Idea revived by the Lehigh Valley in 1890: freight main line Van Etten 1000' -> Alpine 1180' -> Geneva 500'
- **Secondary purpose:** serve rural areas Newfield, Enfield, Trumansburg, Farmer [Interlaken], Ovid



The P & SB: Competing projects

- Syracuse and Binghamton (1854) -> **Oswego** and Syracuse (1848) (**Delaware Lackawanna & Western**)
- Southern Central (Owego-**Fair Haven**) (1865) (**Lehigh Valley**)
- Ithaca & Athens (1871) / **Geneva** & Ithaca (1873) (**Lehigh Valley**)
- Chemung Railway (Elmira-Jefferson [Watkins Glen] (1850) -> Canandagua & Elmira (1851) -> **Sodus Point** & Southern (1873) (**Pennsylvania RR**)

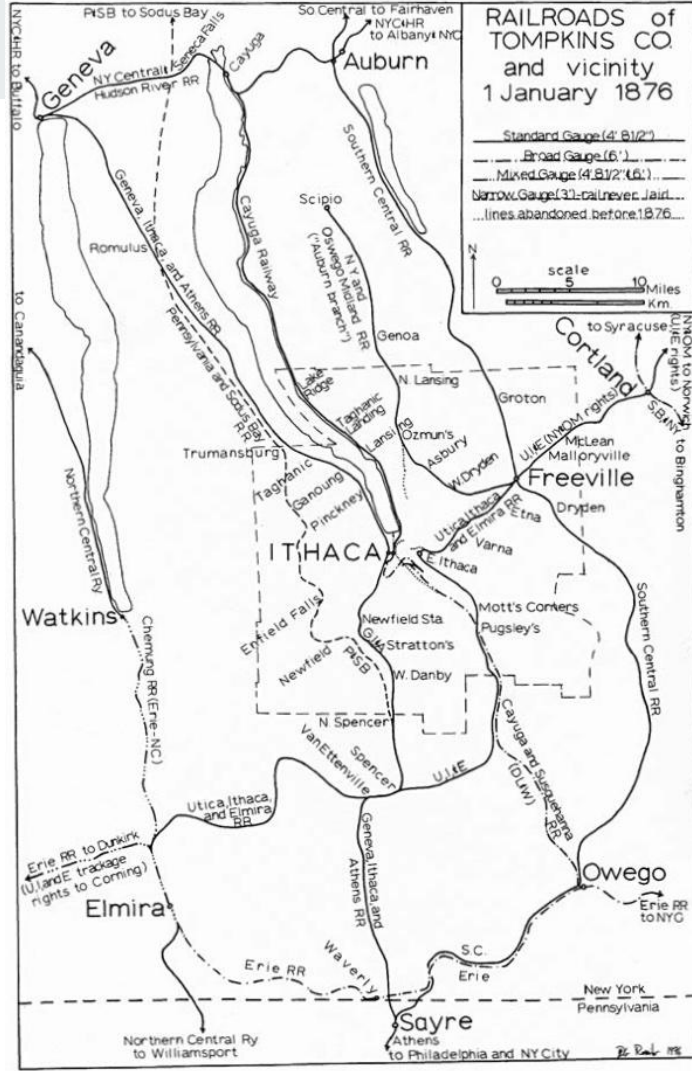
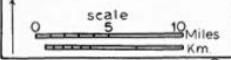


Newfield's decision

- P & SB chartered May 1870, Geneva & Ithaca June 1870
- both northern outlets for the Ithaca & Athens
 - P & SB much more favourable route for coal traffic
 - Ezra Cornell and Ithaca interests favoured the Geneva & Ithaca
- **Newfield bonded for \$52,000 to the P & SB**
- Enfield & Ulysses (especially village of Trumansburg) also supported the P & SB; total bonds \$152,000

RAILROADS OF
TOMPKINS CO.
and vicinity
1 January 1876

- Standard Gauge (4' 8 1/2")
- - - Broad Gauge (6' 1")
- ... Mixed Gauge (4' 8 1/2" & 6' 1")
- ... Narrow Gauge (3' 6") - never laid
- ... lines abandoned before 1876

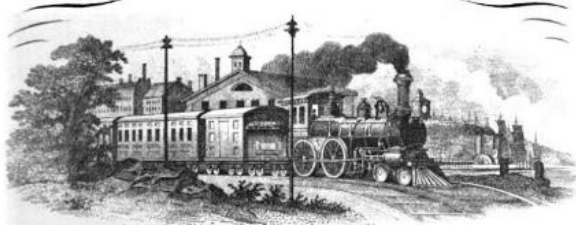




The failure of the P & SB

- Difficulty raising capital, paying workers, buying supplies
- During the project, due to financial difficulties, decided for a narrow-gauge line (3'), how the connection at N Spencer would be made to the Ithaca & Athens (4' 8.5") not clear
- Stopped work in summer 1872 -- line not quite completed to N Spencer
- Some rails and bridgework delivered but not (?) installed
- **Panic of 1873** and **completion of Geneva & Ithaca** Sept. 1873 put a definitive end to the project
- 1876 relics bought by Merritt King (Ithaca lawyer) but only aimed to complete part of the Seneca County section (Ovid-Seneca Falls), but did not achieve even that
- **Bonds being paid off well into the 20th century**

Annual Report
OF THE
State Engineer & Surveyor
OF THE
STATE OF NEW YORK.



AND OF THE
TABULATIONS AND DEDUCTIONS FROM THE REPORTS
OF THE
RAIL ROAD CORPORATIONS
FOR THE
Year ending September 30th 1871.

ALBANY:
WEED, PARSONS & CO.
1872.

(No. 114.)

PENNSYLVANIA AND SODUS BAY.

STATE OF NEW YORK, } ss:
Seneca County, }

WILLIAM PIERSON, President, and CHARLES A. HAWLEY, Secretary of the Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay Railroad Company, being severally sworn, each for himself deposes and says, that the statements in the annexed report, which have been signed by each of them, at the end thereof, are true and correct, according to the best of his knowledge, information and belief, and that said company has now no acting superintendent of operations.

(Signed) WILLIAM PIERSON, *President.*
CHAS. A. HAWLEY, *Secretary.*

Subscribed and sworn to before me, }
this 30th day of November, 1871. }

WM. K. MILLER,
Notary Public in and for Seneca Co.

STOCK AND DEBTS.

Capital stock, as by charter.....	\$1, 000, 000 00
Amount of stock subscribed.....	853, 100 00
Amount paid in, as by last report.....	10, 310 00
Total amount now paid in of capital stock.....	393, 774 41

CHARACTERISTICS OF ROAD.

Length of road..... 81 miles.

NAMES AND RESIDENCES OF OFFICERS OF THE COMPANY.

Directors.

WILLIAM PIERSON.....	TRUMANSBURGH, N. Y.
ALBERT JEWETT.....	SENECA FALLS, N. Y.
ERASTUS C. GREGG.....	TRUMANSBURGH, N. Y.
C. C. COOK.....	NEWFIELD, N. Y.
E. S. LEGGET.....	COVERT, N. Y.
GEORGE W. JONES.....	OVID, N. Y.
HORACE C. SILSBY.....	SENECA FALLS, N. Y.
JOSIAH T. MILLER.....	SENECA FALLS, N. Y.
STERLING G. HADLEY.....	WATERLOO, N. Y.
WILLIAM H. BURTON.....	WATERLOO, N. Y.
ERON N. THOMAS.....	ROSE, N. Y.
AARON GRISWOLD.....	CLYDE, N. Y.
D. W. PARSHALL.....	LYONS, N. Y.

WILLIAM PIERSON.....	PRESIDENT.
MYNDERT D. MERCER.....	TREASURER.
CHARLES A. HAWLEY.....	SECRETARY.
ALFRED F. SEARS.....	ENGINEER.

Communications intended for this company should be addressed WILLIAM PIERSON, Trumansburgh, Tompkins county, N. Y.

The undersigned have caused the foregoing statements to be prepared by the proper officers and agents of this company, from the books and records, and have examined them as far as practicable, and believe them to be correct.

(Signed) WILLIAM PIERSON, *President.*
CHAS. A. HAWLEY, *Secretary.*

1872 report: note 'subscribed' vs. 'paid in'

(No. 129.)

PELHAM AND PORT CHESTER.

NEW YORK, December 15, 1874.

JOHN A. COOPER, Esq.,

Deputy State Engineer and Surveyor:

DEAR SIR— Besides making the necessary surveys and locating the road, nothing has been done on the Pelham and Port Chester Railroad. Nothing new to report.

Yours respectfully,

CHARLES W. DORN, *Secretary.*

No. 20 Nassau street, New York.

(No. 130.)

PENNSYLVANIA AND SODUS BAY.

STATE OF NEW YORK, }
Seneca County, } ss.:

WILLIAM JOHNSON, President, and CHARLES A. HAWLEY, Secretary of the Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay Railroad Company, being severally sworn, each for himself deposes and says, that the statements in the annexed report, which has been signed by each of them, at the end thereof, are true and correct, according to the best of his knowledge, information and belief.

(Signed) WILLIAM JOHNSON.
CHARLES A. HAWLEY.

Subscribed and sworn to before me, }
this 12th day of November, 1873, }
WM. K. MILLER, *Notary Public, Seneca County, N. Y.*

STOCK AND DEBTS.

Capital stock, as by charter, \$1,000,000, and increased
by vote of stockholders \$1,200,000 00
Amount of stock subscribed..... 853,600 00
Amount paid in, as by last report 567,873 48
Total amount now paid in of capital stock..... 699,261 50
Total amount now of funded debt..... 2,000 00
The amount now of floating debt Not ascertainable.
Total amount now of funded and floating debt 2,000 00
Average rate, per annum, of interest on funded debt. . 7 per cent gold.

COST OF ROAD AND EQUIPMENT.

	By last report.	By present report.
For graduation and masonry.....	\$365,805 41	\$406,825 85
For bridges.....	12,465 80	43,894 10
Superstructure, including iron.....	19,888 72	26,622 22
Land, land damages and fences.....	108,035 32	161,861 57
Engineering and agencies.....	46,583 89	65,863 98
Total cost of road and equipment....	\$552,779 14	\$705,067 72

CHARACTERISTICS OF ROAD.

Length of road.....	81 miles.
Length of road in this State.....	81 "

NAMES AND RESIDENCES OF OFFICERS OF THE COMPANY.

Directors.

D. W. PARSHALL.....	LYONS.
E. N. THOMAS.....	ROSE.
GEO. H. HOYT.....	CLYDE.
S. G. HADLEY.....	WATERLOO.
WILLIAM JOHNSON.....	SENECA FALLS.
JOSHUA T. MILLER.....	SENECA FALLS.
ALBERT JEWETT.....	SENECA FALLS.
H. C. SILSBY.....	SENECA FALLS.
GEO. W. JONES.....	OVING.
E. S. LEGGETT.....	COVERT.
WILLIAM PIERSON.....	FORT DODGE, IOWA.
C. P. GREGG.....	FREMANSBURGH.
HOWARD ELMER.....	WATERLY.
WM. JOHNSON.....	PRESIDENT.
N. H. BECKER.....	TREASURER.
CHAS. A. HAWLEY.....	SECRETARY.
JAMES AITKEN.....	ENGINEER.

Communications intended for this company should be addressed, WILLIAM JOHNSON, Seneca Falls, Seneca county, N. Y.

The undersigned have caused the foregoing statements to be prepared by the proper officers and agents of this company, from the books and records, and have examined them as far as practicable, and believe them to be correct.

(Signed) WM. JOHNSON.
CHARLES A. HAWLEY, *Secretary.*

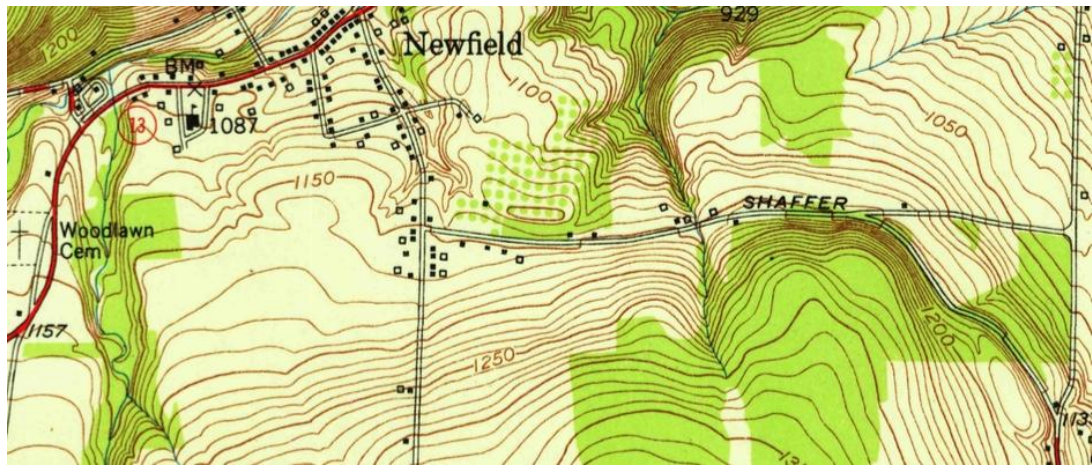
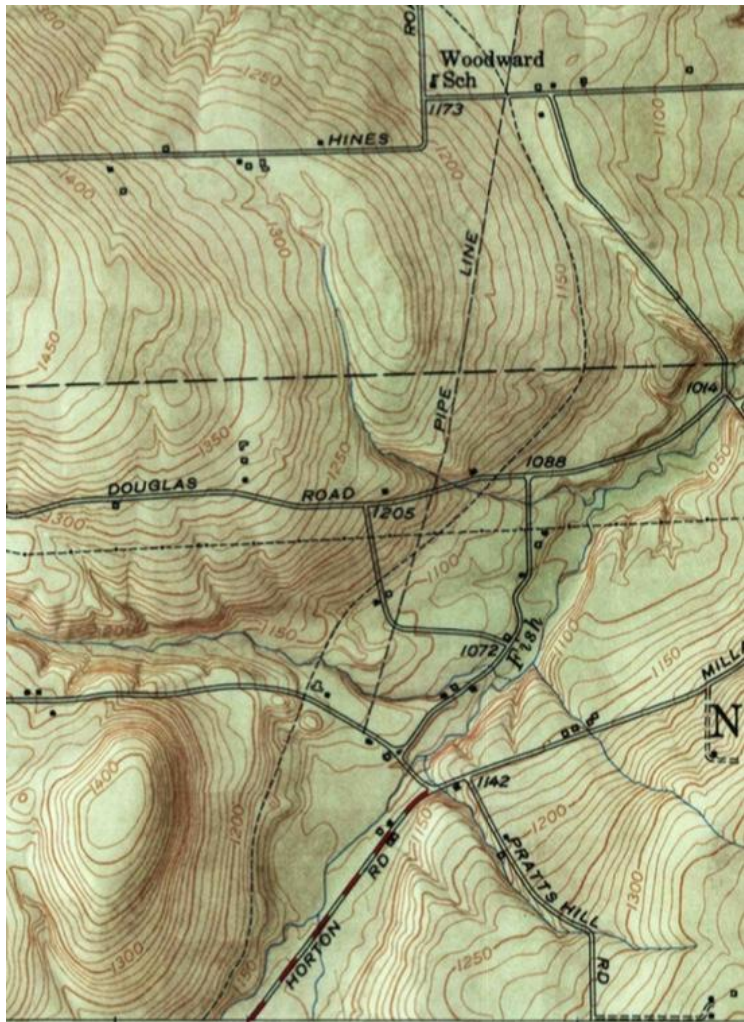
[Assem. Doc. No. 154.] 88

1874 report -- note increase in capital, but seriously under-subscribed; expenses exceed capital



Remnants of the P & SB

- Grade N from near Hillview Rd. (N Spencer) -- never graded to connection with Ithaca & Athens
- Grade crossing van Buskirk Gulf, stone facing at Piper Rd S side (N side removed to widen road).
- Cut above the High School, embankment on E side of Newfield Creek
- Crossing Main St./NY13 missing due to road/apartment construction
- Along Fish Kill, crossing Millard Hill Rd.
- behind the Stone House above Treman Park (town of Enfield)





N of Van Buskirk Gulf Rd. 20-April-2018



Piper Rd. S side. 20-April-2018



Littletree Orchards (Shaffer Rd., just S of Adams Rd.) 20-April-2018
P & SB grade is the main driveway

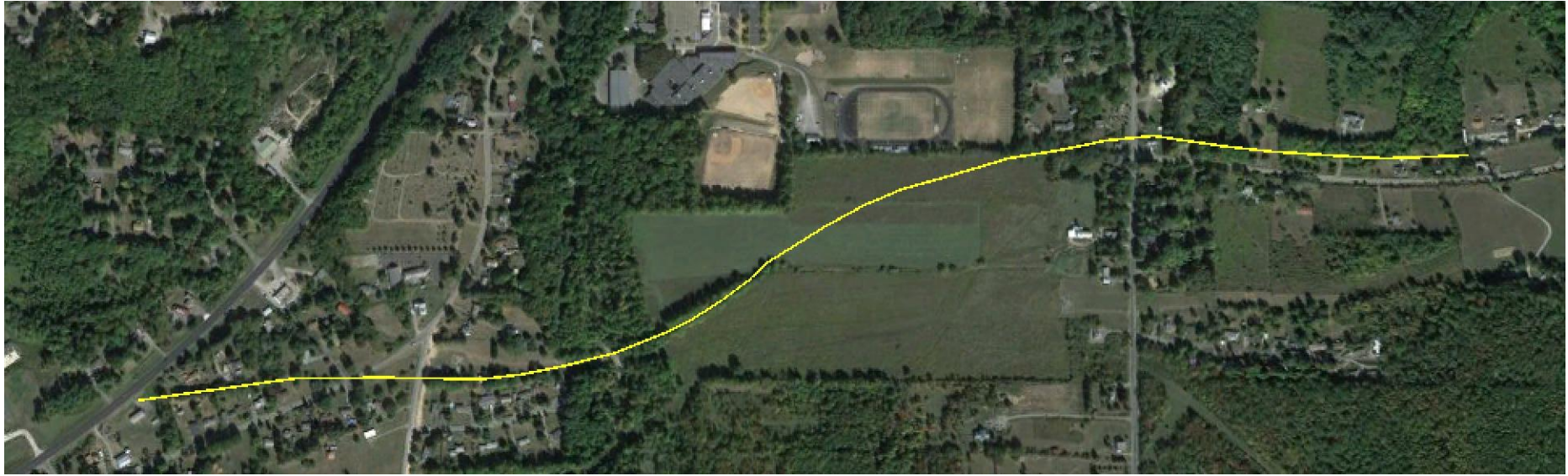


N of Shaffer Rd. 20-April-2018



Site of P&SB Newfield Depot?? Shaffer Rd. at end of Benjamin Hill Rd. 20-Apr-2018
P&SB grade running across photo E-W, here not traceable







Agricultural Research Service photo 1938: ARU-1-25

Source: <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:201632>



Agricultural Research Service photo 1938: ARU-1-25

Source: <https://digital.library.cornell.edu/catalog/ss:201633>



Above Newfield High School, looking N. 20-April-2018



Crossing Newfield Creek; looking E (left), W (right). 20-April-2018
P&SB S fill removed by pipeline? creek? would pass S edge of Dominion pumping station



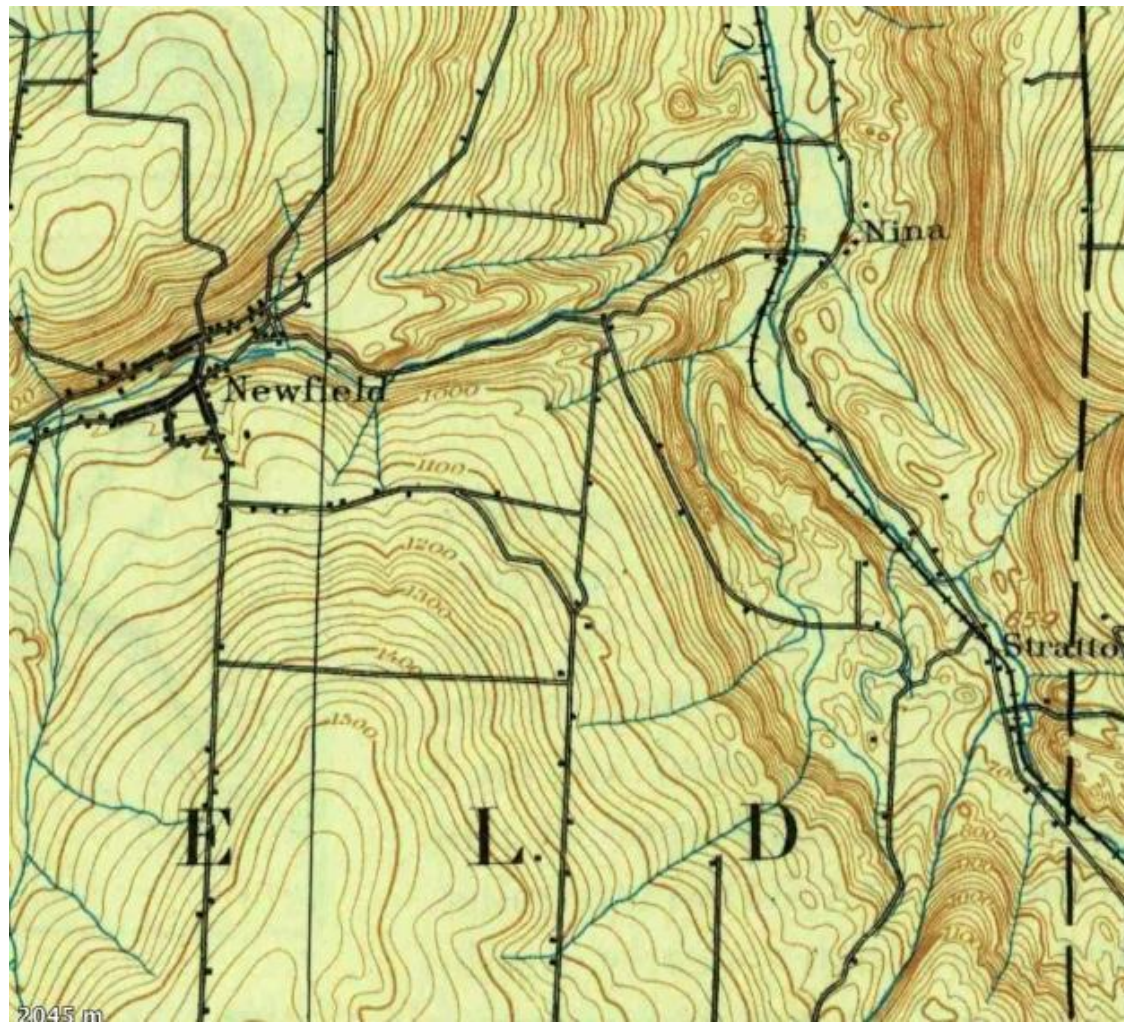
cut at Millard Hill Rd., facing S. 29-October-2003



The Lehigh Valley

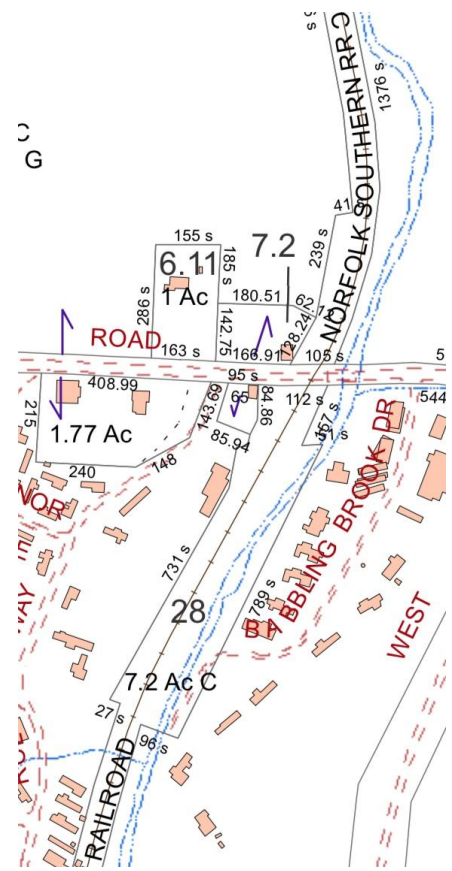
- Ithaca & Athens -> Geneva, Ithaca & Sayre -> Lehigh Valley (1890)
- Controlled by the LV interests from 1876 (Asa Packer bought it at auction)
- **Newfield Station** (524') -- on 1895 map as "Nina"
- Stratton Station (668') (VanBuskirk Gulf/Brown Rd.)
- grade southward 1.3% (Newfield Station), 1.64% (Stratton) to N Spencer summit 1065'
- local passenger service at Newfield Depot till 1949
- 01-April-1976 to Conrail; 1999 to **Norfolk Southern**
 - salt local H13 from Sayre to Cargill at Portland Point (Ludlowville Station, Myers Point)
 - unit coal train 524 from Shire Mills PA to AES station in Lake Ridge (Lansing)

USGS 15' quad
(1:62,500) 1895





Newfield Depot in Lehigh Valley days (source: Newfield Historical Society)



Site of Newfield Depot. 20-April-2018



Cayuga Inlet N of Newfield Station -- the enemy of the railroad!



Washout along Inlet Creek

20-June-2015; ; source: Mathieu Tremblay <https://flic.kr/p/uDDYz1>



NS unit coal train 524 Shire Mills (PA) - Lansing; NY34 looking S, just south of Van Buskirk gulf just coming into town of Newfield (see Town of Danby sign on right)
11-June-2017; source: Mathieu Tremblay; <https://flic.kr/p/HVKDxq>



Stratton (Brown Rd.), showing steep 1.64% grade to the S. 20-April-2018



Source: https://newfieldny.org/local-information/history/train_wreck/ Details??



Resources

- <http://newfieldhistoricalsociety.org/html/transportation.html>
- "A History of Railroads in Tompkins County", by Hardy Campbell Lee (1947), revised and enlarged by Winton Rossiter, published by the DeWitt Historical Society (1977) and in a revised edition by the re-named History Center in Tompkins County (2008)
<http://ecommons.cornell.edu/bitstream/1813/11518/6/A%20History%20of%20Railroads%20in%20Tompkins%20County.pdf>



Was this in Newfield's future?? (Huinan East railway station, Anhui, China) 淮南东站

Thank you!

