

CHAPTER 7 - Transportation

A Short History Of The "New Road" By Doris L. Rothermich

The first road laid out in the Town of Enfield was a section of road running southwesterly from Applegate's Comers to where Nicholas Kirby lived, and thence west over the hill past the Lovell farm. This road was the first stage and post route, and was a part of The Susquehanna and Bath Turnpike. The Turnpike, incorporated in 1804, ran through Tompkins County in the Towns of Caroline, Dryden, Ithaca and Enfield. The road was also known as the Catskill Turnpike. Early settlers could travel by stagecoach from Ithaca to New York City by way of Catskill for a fare as low as \$1.50 due to competition among the numerous stage providers.

That portion of the first road described as running southwesterly of Applegate's Corner to the residence of Nicholas Kirby can be described today as extending from John Neno's house southwesterly to Ernest Laue's family farm. This portion of the road was discontinued as a public road by the 1860's, and thereafter used as a farm lane by adjoining landowners.

That portion of the first road described as running west of Nicholas Kirby's residence and thence west up the hill can be described today as extending west of Ernest Laue's family farm, across Route 327, through Harold Laue's dooryard and straight up the hill. This was a difficult grade for horses pulling wagons, surreys and sleighs. Other east and west roads such as the road running west from Bostwick's Corners (now Harvey Hill Road) were even steeper. The road running due west of Applegate's Comers (now Route 79) also had some steep grades and some serious mud holes. About 1870, the Enfield Town Board contracted with Wheeler Smith and Sam Curry, Town of Enfield residents, to build a "new road." The "new road" to extend from a point on the road running north and south through Enfield Center and just south of the Christian Church and Cemetery, and thence westward through woods and along a creek until it intersected the existing stage coach road. The new road was approximately one-half mile long, but the "New Road" name seems to have been applied to the entire section of road running west from the Enfield Center Main Road. Nevertheless the "New Road" eliminated a steep grade. This change produced a pleasant and scenic ride, whether by horse and buggy or by automobile through the woods. This particular area is also noted for a spectacular display of trillium flowers in early May.

The Lovell farm referred to in the old description of the stage coach and post road may be identified today as being across the road from 319 Fish Road, the residence of Calvin and Doris Rothermich. The Lovell house and barn were destroyed by fire prior to 1930. The Lovell farm, as well as the Nicholas Kirby farm and Wallenbeck Inn, are located on the sketch entitled "New Road, Town of Enfield."

This "New Road" also has been called the "Ice House Road" as a dam was made in the creek to form a pond just west of The Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay Railroad right of way embankment. In the winter ice was cut and stored in a building located near the pond, and the ice was used by Thall and Purdy for the cooling of meat in their store and slaughter house located in Enfield Center. When electricity came to Enfield, ice was no longer needed for meat cooling, the building fell into disrepair, and the dam washed out, and so ended the "Ice House Road" name.

In 1979, the "New Road" name was changed to Fish Road according to official documents held by the Enfield Town Clerk.

The Train That Never Was by Sue Thompson

The Ithaca and Owego Railroad, incorporated January 28, 1828 was the second railroad chartered in the State of New York. It was not until after the Civil War that the railroad industry really got a good start in Tompkins County.

At the end of 1869, The Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay Railroad (P&SB RR), an unchartered railroad

sponsored by E.C. Gregg and J.H. Biggs of Trumansburg offered the towns of Newfield, Enfield and Ulysses an end to their public transportation isolation. Enthusiasm was high throughout the towns to the point that the town of Enfield in support of this railroad purchased bonds in aid of the project for \$25,000.00. The amount of interest on bond was 7% and payable to the Bank of Union Trust Company of New York City.

The Pennsylvania and Sodus Bay Railroad was chartered May 26, 1870, two weeks later, the Geneva and Ithaca Railroad was chartered. This created much debate in Tompkins County as to whether both the railroads could economically exist.

Surveys and Rights of Way were obtained during the summer of 1870. Ground was broken and the track grading for the P&SB R.R. was started by the end of 1871. The track was to go from a point in the town of Spencer, where connection was to be made with the Ithaca and Athens railroad, through Newfield, Enfield, Ulysses, Covert, Ovid, and Varick, to Seneca Falls.

The P&SB R.R. was rumored to have bought 5,000 railroad ties during May of 1872. These ties were never seen and never laid. Work on the Sodus Bay Railroad ceased completely. In 1876, the P&SB R.R. was bought by Merrit King, an Ithacan lawyer. His objective was to complete the line or at least the section from Seneca Falls to Romulus. The railroad was never completed.

Although the P&SB R.R. no longer existed, the Town of Enfield had to continue to pay on the Bank bonds. Each year the Railroad Commissioner for the town reported to the Board of Supervisors of Tompkins County the amount still owed and paid on the railroad bond.

November 1901 Enfield town officers: Supervisor James H. Hine, Town Justices of the Peace: Charles Fletcher, Charles Gray, Fred Chase and H.A. Rockwell, and Town Clerk Clinton J. Updike, passed a resolution that the office of Railroad Commissioner for the town be abolished and the duties transferred to the Supervisor of the Town.

On March 1, 1911, payment of Bond No. 10 plus the interest of \$24.50 was entirely paid off by the Town of Enfield ending a dream of 41 years .

Following the map in the, "A History of Railroads in Tompkins County." 1977. H.C. Lee and W. Rossiter. A large part of the graded railroad bed is still traceable through the town.

Railroad Commissioners for the Town of Enfield (1872 – 1901): William Miller, Isaac H. Newman, Edgar Brewer, George W. Budd, D.W. Bailey, Wm. H. Ammack, Wheeler Smith, F.T. Stevenson, S.H. Curry.