

that the MW&CR was insolvent, and that the majority of its stock had been bought by Prince and two other directors of the New York & New England, who would personally benefit by the lease. It was further alleged that the road was in bad condition, that it had never earned operating expenses; that its stock was valueless and its bonds below par. The actual financial condition of the road was claimed to have been misrepresented.

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**T**HE ANNUAL REPORT of the Railroad Commission that Fall said that track was in generally good condition. "Some of the wooden structures at the east end have been renewed, while some have been partially filled, thus reducing the length of the openings. There are still some unsound ties in the structure first built which need to be renewed . . . The track on the end of the embankment which was substituted for the Cheshire trestles is somewhat out of line and should be put in proper shape before the coming Winter." This was at variance with the claim of the lease opponents.

The exact state of the finances of the New York & New England was also a subject of controversy at the meeting, with the juggling of figures claimed and the conduct of the meeting questioned. After much tilting, leasing of the MW&CR was voted by 168,227 out of the 169,677 shares of stock represented at the meeting, the opposition apparently having little backing from other stockholders.

# Grand All Rail Excursion

## To New York City.

Via Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River, and New York & New England, and New York & Northern Railroads.

### Saturday, July 23.

Special train. Through cars.

### Fare for the Round Trip, \$1.75.

Train leaves Meriden, West  
 Main street, . . . . . 7:02 a. m.  
 Hanover, . . . . . 7:06 "  
 Cheshire street, . . . . . 7:10 "  
 Southington road, . . . . . 7:15 "  
 Due, 155th street, New York, 11:00 "  
 Returning, special train leaves  
 155th street, New York &  
 Northern railroad, . . . . . 7:00 p. m.

### Elevated Railroad Tickets Included in Above Rates.

Connections are made on same platform at 155th street with Sixth and Ninth avenue elevated trains for South Ferry, where steamers for Coney Island may be taken. The last train leaves South Ferry at 6 p. m. to connect with special train leaving 155th street at 7 p. m. Take elevated railroad train marked "Harlem."

Excursionists can have several hours for shopping or visiting the many places of interest in New York city, or proceed direct to South Ferry and take steamers for Coney Island, Manhattan and West Brighton Beaches.

H. L. B. POND,  
 Gen. Freight and Pass. Agt.  
 C. M. CRAWFORD,  
 Superintendent.  
 July 18, 1892. jy20t3

Ad from 1892 Meriden paper.

Two days later the MW&CR held its adjourned annual meeting and ratified the lease unanimously, with 4,000 shares represented. The new board of directors consisted of Frederick Prince, Charles Parsons Jr. of New York, E. D. Steele, D. S. Plume and A. S. Chase, all of Waterbury, Samuel Dodd, George Rockwell, W. H. Lyon and Cephas B. Rogers of Meriden. President Prince said that

the road would have better connections, better rolling stock, and would try to reduce the number of grade crossings, etc.

There were rumors, confirmed by Secretary Rockwell, that it was hoped to eventually extend the road to Middletown, but this did not take place until the New Haven took over in 1898.

The schemes went further than that. It was reported in the press that "The extension of the line from Cromwell to Andover is practically agreed upon . . . as well as the old-time scheme of the New England to control the leading routes into New England for the delivery of coal . . . there is more fire than smoke in today's assertion that the Pennsylvania Railroad is perfecting a gigantic deal. As the NYNE is on particularly friendly terms with the Pennsylvania it will be seen that control of the MW&CR will be another important factor in the Pennsylvania's already extensive system of output." (Presumably coal).

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**A**NOTHER RUMOR had the New York & New England hooked up with the Reading. For this we refer you to other histories of the railroads in New England, but the claim was that the NY&NE could shorten its line from the east to Waterbury by a substantial number of miles if run from Andover through Cromwell and Meriden.

In October, 1892, the press noted that Engine No. 3 was in the shop for a complete overhauling. This was previous to ratification of the lease, or the unofficial taking over by the NY&NE, so apparently the

road's management was doing its best to keep the equipment in good condition.

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**T**HE Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad Company was no longer an operating organization, since its lines had been taken over by lease, but its corporate existence continued. The directors and stockholders must have been rather apprehensive about the future, watching the gymnastics, mostly financial, of its lessee, the New York & New England. This is not the place to go into details about that company, except to say that many people believed every move it made was to render itself more attractive—or more menacing—to the New Haven, and thus pave the way to selling out at a good price.

The New England was very much hampered—practically crippled—by not having a satisfactory entrance into New York City, and many were the efforts it made to get one. In almost every instance it was thwarted by some move of the Consolidated. The common stock was supposedly worthless, except for the control of the company which it carried, and it bobbed up and down from day to day and week to week as rumors of deals and counter-deals swept the financial market.

The crisis came on December 28, 1893. The NY&NE had not been paying its interchange freight bills, and the receiver for the Philadelphia, Reading & New England, to whom it owed \$200,000, decided to force the issue. He slapped an attachment on the company's property in East Hartford, everything in sight, 27 engines, the shops, the cars, and even the incoming trains as fast as they showed up. As Hartford

was the hub of the system, the road was practically paralyzed. Eventually a way to unfreeze the trains was found, but there was a terrific legal rumpus. Presumably the MW&CR kept running, as there was no stoppage by attachment in Meriden.

Receivers finally took over the New York & New England and the trains continued to roll over the Cromwell road. It was the Meriden branch of the NY&NE and not much in the news. Little is on record about the traffic hauled, but in June, 1895, it was reported that a week's freight business was 325 cars, an average of 45 a day. Business in May had been 20% better than the year previous, and "business was picking up."

In July, 1895, the property

### **FREDERICK H. PRINCE, 3d MW&CR PRESIDENT**

**T**HE THIRD PRESIDENT of the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad, and one of the most colorful people to have been connected with the line, Frederick H. Prince, died in February, 1953, at the age of 95.

Mr. Prince was reputed to be the richest man in New England, and it was claimed that at one time or another he owned 46 railroads. (Controlled, perhaps, would be a better word, because in our history we see that he by no means owned the MW&CR).

In later years he was perhaps best known for his "Prince plan" for combining the railroads of this country into a limited number of systems. John W. Barriger, former president of the Monon, and for a few months in 1953 vice-president of the New Haven, prepared this plan for Mr. Prince in 1932.

Mr. Prince was practically the last of the old school of railroad financiers, whose operations thread transportation history of the 1880's, 1890's and early 1900's. The little we know of his operations in our own Meriden-Waterbury-Cromwell line indicate that his memoirs, if ever written and published, would be very interesting reading.

of the New York & New England was sold at auction to the owners of the second mortgage bonds, who turned out to be mostly friends or employees of the Consolidated. It was the "New England Railroad," as of August 31, 1895. The New Haven acknowledged it had control a month later. On the 13th of December all special rates were abrogated; in other words, all that the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad had been built for was lost!

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**L**AST payment on the lease had been made September 1, 1894. There were plenty of rumors that the New Haven had control of the MW&CR as well as the New England, but not until the Cromwell road's annual meeting November 12, 1895, did people have anything to confirm it. At that time the president of the New Haven, its vice-president, and some of its directors were put on the company board, plus a number of other known friends of the Consolidated. Reporters who asked about it were told to draw their own conclusions.

It is difficult to follow all the maneuvers, but there was apparently one million dollars' worth of MW&CR bonds outstanding, which the New England had acquired below par.

No interest had been paid. The bondholders foreclosed, and on May 19, 1896, the road was sold at auction for \$180,000 to A. Heaton Robertson of New Haven. The only other bid was that of the New England for \$110,000, but since the New Haven controlled the New England, and at the same time was believed to be behind Robertson, there was no real competition.

The New Haven manage-

ment was greatly impressed by the future of electric traction; it had just electrified its Nantasket line with the avowed purpose of finding out all it could about this new way of moving trains. It had big plans for running electric branches from main line cities to the small off-main-line towns.

\* \* \*

**W**HILE Charles E. Mellen, who came along later, is usually thought of as the New Haven president who tried to walk off with everything on New England rails, it is apparent that the move had been started before he became the president.

The Meriden Horse Railroad, which had tried the Daft system of overhead two-wire trolleys for a time, but went back to horsecars, had by 1896 converted to electric traction again, this time to the single wire system, and changed its name to the Meriden Electric Railroad Company. This outfit apparently had ideas about interurban transportation, too, because there was talk of competition between an electrified MW&CR and a parallel line by the Meriden Electric.

Almost immediately it was discovered that the Consolidated had acquired all the stock of the Meriden Electric Railroad, so that there might be co-operation but not competition. However, the Consolidated name did not go on the street cars for some years, and then only briefly, to be followed by the Connecticut Company. The New Haven has, therefore, been in street transportation since at least 1896.

Mr. Robertson was very coy about his Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River purchase, but nobody thought that after getting on the board of direc-

tors of the Waterbury road the Consolidated was going to let the property slip away. The next news, therefore, was rather unexpected.

With less than 24 hours' notice, on May 30, 1896, it was announced that as of that evening the New England Railroad (which was still operating the MW&CR) had given orders to close it down completely.

"It is reported that the chief reason is that it can only be run as a steam road at a loss, and that it will remain closed until the Consolidated people get ready to equip it with electricity next year. Two specials were run over the line today. The first contained officials of the New England taking a farewell look." Another newspaper

article gave the mission of the second special: "A train went over the road and at every switch the locks were removed. All loose railroad ties along the line were gathered in, and all the coal in the depots and the yards. The road is shut up as tight as a clam."

Not only that, but one coal dealer, who had a full car on his sidetrack, saw the switcher come and take it way without giving him a chance to unload. The prize was a grain dealer who had already started to unload a car of grain. The switch engine carried the car off half unloaded, with the dealer's scales which he had been using still inside. All such cars were taken to the New Haven's yard in Meriden and the consignees were given the privilege of unloading there instead of on their own sidings on the closed railroad.

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**T**HE NEXT couple of years brought no operation on the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad, but there were plenty of rumors and accusations. The Legislature was petitioned repeatedly to compel whoever owned the line to run trains. Robertson insisted he had purchased the road "for individuals," but almost nobody believed him. He claimed that the charter didn't require running trains at any stated times, so he ran none at all.

Several groups or their legal representatives, including petitioners from Westfield and Cheshire, appeared before the Legislature's committee on railroads in the Spring of 1897, but were told that all the State could do would be to revoke the charter. Robertson said that if that were done he would still have the land and equipment,

**D**URING THE PREPARATION of this history two of the men who helped to make it possible, and who would have been most pleased to see it completed and in print, passed away.

One, Mr. D. W. Peckham of Middlefield, Conn., a retired dispatcher of the New Haven Road, died in February, 1953. He was especially active in getting photographs, and several of his pictures will be found in this history. He is missed by many railfans and others who enjoyed calling on him and reviewing old times.

The other, Mr. C. B. Burr of Derby, Conn., who passed away in December, 1952, was responsible for our being able to reproduce some of the old documents on the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad, and also for records which have enabled us to give an almost complete roster of rolling stock.

Mr. Burr had a notable collection of papers and photographs, some of which will go to the Baker Library of Harvard University. He was a quiet, reserved, but most friendly man, and generous to a fault. His sudden death interrupted plans he had for other histories similar to this, the next on the docket being the Air Line; the writer was to be given access to Mr. Burr's remarkable resources.

but be unable to operate the railroad. He "would do the best he could toward running the road now."

Whatever his best may have been, there were no tangible results for over a year. Finally the Railroad Commission, in 1898, told Robertson the charter would be lost if service did not start by Summer of that year. The State also placed an assessment of \$12,000 on the line.

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### Middletown, Meriden & Waterbury Railroad Co.

**T**HIS brought action, and on July 1st a new corporation was formed, under the name of The Middletown, Meriden & Waterbury Railroad Company, with a capitalization of \$100,000. Robertson had 150 shares, the balance being in the hands of people who might be called "friends" of the New Haven Road. They were also the directors of the new corporation. One of them told a reporter, "The thing in a nutshell is this: the road has been reorganized and is to be leased to the Consolidated, and they are to run it. Repairs are already being made." The lease ran for a year, at a price of \$1,000.

The section between Westfield and Cromwell, 3.5 miles, was abandoned. Railroad officials said it would cost between \$12,000 and \$15,000 to put the rest of the road "in comfortable and safe" condition for passenger service. Trains were to run into Middletown from Westfield over the Middletown-Berlin branch of the New Haven, instead of going to Cromwell.

It was announced that an unusual kind of car would be used in the service. Instead of

a locomotive-hauled train there would be a combined engine, baggage room and coach all in one long car, seating about 40 passengers, no smoker, "much like third rail cars." It was claimed that one of these cars on the Milford branch of the New York & New England had made a speed on trial "equal to 70 miles an hour." "Electricity might be adopted later." John L. Billard of Meriden, one of the directors, said that the road probably would not handle freight for the time being. H. L. B. Pond, MW&CR man, would be superintendent.

What actually happened was quite at variance with all these plans. In spite of the statement of the railroad director in July that repairs were already being made, a work train "on the cleanup job" did not start until November 16th. Some months before, President Clark of the New Haven Road had run over the line with Robertson and a group of officials in Clark's private car to check the condition of the road. It was stated in the press that this was the only train to operate during cessation of service on the line

All of a sudden there was a great fever to get the road going. On November 22nd President Clark once more inspected the line with numerous other officials, using one of the Consolidated's "standard observation cars." They managed to make it to Waterbury and back, but on the Westfield end a pile of sand across the track derailed one truck, and a half hour was consumed getting it back on the track.

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**T**HE NEW steam car never materialized, and the first train on December 5, 1898, with New Haven locomotive No. 142 and a combine coach, went from Meriden to Waterbury, the Middletown end not being ready. There were five passengers on the train that left at 7 a. m. and arrived in Waterbury at 7:50. The return from Waterbury began at 8:50 a. m., again with five people aboard (whether they were the same ones or not, the newspaper account does not state). At Hanover Park they were stopped by a derailed work train engine, and the passengers were transferred to a flat

**Meriden, Waterbury & Conn. River Railroad.**

Car No. 1656 Date May 27/91

Initial N. England Line BR

Will be received at any point on this Company's line with the following defects:

One Draw Head Broken

E. B. Gilbert Inspector at Waterbury

Facsimile of "Bad Order" card used by MW&CR.

car for the rest of the ride to West Main Street.

The plan of not carrying freight was also given up, and the trains ran mixed. Mr. Pond, who was slated to run the road, almost missed out, but eventually he was rehired. He had been sort of caretaker for Mr. Robertson during the shutdown.

January 2, 1899, was the day slated for through service from Waterbury to Middletown. In spite of the rather inauspicious start of the Meriden-Waterbury service, it was reported in the latter part of December, the month of reopening, that passenger traffic had been very good. "Both cars are being filled on trains each day. Monday had 400, but that was way above the average."

An interesting news item appeared in the Meriden papers on January 2, 1899:

The first train from Middletown over the Middletown, Meriden and Waterbury RR left there at 6:20 this morning, and arrived here at 7 A. M. There was no special train from Waterbury this afternoon to the polo game in this city, as enough cranks in the Brass City did not secure tickets for a special. About 100 people from this city left for Waterbury on the noon train today.

The superintendent of the road said that business was "as good as could be expected," and on February 3, 1899, it was said that "travel on the road since it was opened has steadily improved. The trains are carrying about 100 passengers a day." There was quite a little freight to be carried and cars to be switched, and the market gardens along the line shipped their produce into Waterbury and Meriden by train. However, to discourage the agitation for electrification, it was given out that much money had to go into ties, bridge timbers, stations, etc., "to bring them up to standard."

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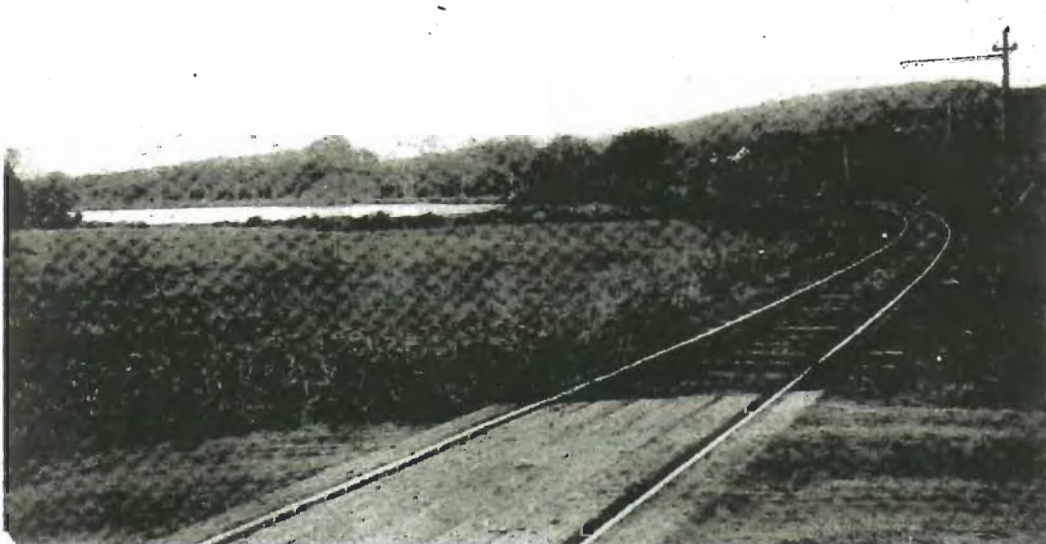
**T**HERE was considerable discussion in the papers around 1899-1900 about the likelihood of conversion to third rail operation and more frequent service as had been done between Hartford and Bristol. A Middletown correspondent of a Meriden paper said that enough improvements were to be made in the line "so that there can be no complaint on which to base a petition to the General As-

sembly for construction of an electric road."

With no motor car competition, the railroad continued to do well. Excursions were an important source of business. The November 7, 1899, issue of one of the Meriden papers speaks of 2,200 spectators at a polo game in Hanover Park, between Meriden and Waterbury. Four hundred of these people came over in two special trains from Waterbury, flourishing cowbells and blowing horns. On this same date, incidentally, it was reported that the Middletown, Meriden & Waterbury Railroad had just passed into direct control of the New Haven Road, by action at a meeting of the stockholders. However, the New Haven continued to lease the road by the year until 1902, when the lease was made for 50 years. The tracks from Westfield to Cromwell were not actually torn up until 1903.

The lease made in 1902 was on different terms than the previous yearly ones. In place of the \$1,000 figure there was a payment of one dollar per

*View from Highland Station, Looking North,  
Westfield, Conn.*



From  
an  
old  
post  
card.

share per year on the stock, plus the principal and interest on all outstanding indebtedness, taxes, charges, etc. This was apparently only preparatory to the final move in 1905, when the Middletown, Meriden & Waterbury was merged with the New Haven and completely lost its identity.

A Waterbury paper humorously referred to the MM&W as "The Boston Short Line," calling attention to the fact that Boston to Waterbury via Meriden and Middletown was four miles shorter than via Hartford, and warning Hartford that if it didn't behave Waterbury could short-circuit them. It further commented: "If ten years ago anybody had predicted that in 1898 the Consolidated system would have included the New York & New England lines and the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River property, people would have thought he was crazy, but perhaps it is all for the best." Actually, the seeds of trouble were being sown, but nobody realized it at the time. There were a few people who wondered about the complete safety of the usual 8% New Haven dividend, but for the time being the combined system seemed able to make a go of it.

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**W**HEN the New Haven Railroad electrified its Nantasket Beach branch in 1896, the road at the time fully expected to eventually electrify its whole system. At the time a company official predicted that within 10 years electric trains would be running between New York and Boston. When the Meriden and Waterbury line was revived in 1898, it was stated that eventually electrification would take place, and that steam was only temporary.

By 1906 the New Haven was apparently convinced that the electrification could best be handled by overhead wires instead of the third rail system in use on the Hartford-Bristol run and New Britain-Berlin branch. The road moved swiftly to equip its Berlin to Middletown branch and the Meriden to Middletown part of the former MW&CR (via Westfield) with overhead wires. High speed cars were used, giving hourly service. They were an immediate success. Instead of running to West Main Street station, a connection was made at Brookside Park with the city trolley tracks in Pratt Street, and the New Haven Road's Meriden station was the terminus for the Middletown inter-

urban cars. While the Berlin-Middletown service was run by the New Haven Road, the Meriden to Middletown service was operated by the Connecticut Company, the street railway subsidiary, even though both services used the same track between Westfield and Middletown.

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**F**OR some reason the Waterbury end was not electrified. A New Haven-Waterbury service via Cheshire was begun in 1904 after building a connection from the Canal Line tracks to the MW&CR at Cheshire. This service was well patronized for a couple of years before New Haven-Waterbury trolley service was established. In 1909 the Meriden-Waterbury schedule was cut to one train in the morning to Waterbury, with the return to Meriden in late afternoon. There were recurrent rumors of electrification, but it was never carried out.

At the beginning of World War I there was talk of making more use of the line because of the enormous congestion of freight traffic, but nothing was done. Later, when the United States got into that war, the New Haven Road, being short of manpower, equipment and about everything else, simply discontinued service between Meriden and Waterbury. On June 24, 1917, trains stopped running.

In those days permission of the Public Service Commission was not required, nor was that of the Interstate Commerce Commission needed. Just how many people were inconvenienced is a question. There are rumors that one man went to Washington to complain, but as the ICC couldn't do anything about it, this seems doubtful.

### ACCIDENTS

**W**HEN the New York & New England Railroad took over the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River under lease, some of the press reports noted that the road had had a number of costly mishaps in its career. Actually, there doesn't seem to have been much trouble until the building of the Waterbury extension. The derailment of No. 1 near the Red Bridge in South Meriden has already been mentioned.

In February, 1889, the 10:26 train at Cromwell, with two freight cars and a coach, left the rails near the station, and poked its nose over the river in such a way that a little farther would have put it in the water. The cars stayed on the track, and nobody was badly hurt. There were no passengers in the coach. The fireman got a little banged up, and the locomotive required some repairs.

The worst accident occurred on July 19, 1889. The train which left West Main Street at 5:55 p. m. for Cromwell split the switch at the North End crossing of the New Haven Road. Four freight cars, the engine and tender fell 30 feet. The engine turned a complete somersault and came to rest under the bridge. The tender fell on the engine, and one box car landed on them both. The coach and combination cars left the rails, plowing

A man who traveled on the line just before World War I says he thinks a half dozen would be about the average passenger list, although at one time about 1912 a jewelry plant at the Cheshire Street station (near the Meriden city line) used so many workers who commuted that an extra car had to be put on the train.

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**F**OLLOWING discontinuance of service in 1917, trackage west of West Main Street was frequently used for car storage, particularly for those in bad order, and tramps found in them made-to-order hide-outs. Occasionally they would set a car on fire, and the Meriden Fire Department would have to come to the rescue.

In 1920 the Interstate Commerce Act was amended to require assent of the ICC for abandonment, so that in 1924 when the New Haven Road decided it wanted to tear up the tracks, permission of Washington was required. Application was filed to abandon that portion from East Farms Station, Waterbury, to a point 1,000 west of West Main Street bridge (No. 2.69) Meriden, a distance of 11.78 miles. This left about six miles in Waterbury for switching purposes, and all the trackage east of West Main Street. Permission was granted February 25, 1924, and the tracks were taken up during the year.

Meriden-Middletown hourly interurban service was continued until 1927, when buses took over. However, Meriden-Middletown bus service was via Route 6A and trolley service continued to run as far as Westfield until 1932 when all street railway service in Meriden was abandoned. There was no high-

way route that could serve the section traversed by the old Meriden & Cromwell line and the area was left without public transportation.

The old Meriden & Cromwell tracks are still maintained from Meriden to the York Hill Trap Rock Quarry, and have been renewed with 107-pound re-lay rail in recent years, with tie plates and creosoted ties. One of the peculiarities of the line in the old days was its con-

struction with rail joints opposite, so that the interurban cars could be heard for a long distance as the wheels bumped over the parallel connections, particularly when the track needed attention. Probably the roadbed is better today than it ever was when regular service was maintained.

The tracks to the old Center Street yards are used for industrial switching, mostly for the New Departure plant of General Motors, which occupies all the land in that vicinity. The tracks in Waterbury are likewise used for industrial switching, and the Dublin Street station was not closed to less-than-carload freight until July, 1950. The tracks in Meriden are also maintained as far as West Main Street to take care of sidings in that vicinity. The overall distance from York Hill Quarry to West Main Street is about 5½ miles, with a mile or more for the Center Street spur.

The need for freight facilities like the old Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad largely passed with the advent of over-the-road trucking. But many of those who remember the old railroad find it rather sad to see most of the roadbed abandoned and overgrown with trees and bushes.

### ACCIDENTS

through the ballast until they hit the bridge abutment, where they stopped.

Nobody was hurt in the coaches, but the engineer, fireman and brakeman were injured, and the fireman eventually died of pneumonia brought on by the accident. It was raining hard at the time, and fire from the engine which caught some of the splintered wood, was extinguished before it did any great harm.

A spike was found wedged between the rail and the switch point, and sabotage was alleged. The coroner was not so sure, but the road got the superintendents of both the Consolidated and the New York & New England Roads to testify that the wrecking was, in their opinion, a deliberate act.

This theory was given substance

**WRECK AT RED BRIDGE on 10th of August, 1888, showing "shoo-fly" track around Meriden & Cromwell No. 1 which is being blocked up for re-railing.**



## ACCIDENTS

by the finding, about a month later in Cromwell, of five ties so placed across the track near a curve that if a trackman had not discovered them they would have caused another wreck. This latter attempt was kept secret for some time, but eventually it got into the papers.

The road offered a reward of \$1,000 for evidence which would convict the "fiend" who had been responsible for the North End derailment, but there is nothing to indicate that anyone claimed it.

The locomotive was shipped back to Schenectady for repairs, which would indicate that No. 4 was the one involved.

In September, 1890, a pair of horses crossing a bridge east of Southington Road station became frightened, and bolted through the railing, taking wagon and driver down onto the roof of a passing train. They fell off to the ground, the driver and one horse uninjured, but the wagon and the other horse were a total loss.

Southington Road was the scene of a much more serious accident on November 21, 1890, when Train

No. 2 was wrecked just east of the station at 6:15 a. m., injuring two men, one of whom later died from the effects.

A brake beam from a coal car dropped. The car kept to the rails until the Honey Pot River bridge was crossed and the 400-ft. embankment following it was reached, when it left the tracks and carried seven cars with it out of the 13-car train. Before the train could be stopped, the coupling broke and two coal cars went down the 30-ft. bank, with a half dozen other cars piled up along the track. The coach and three freight cars were left on the rails, and the engineer, having loaded the injured men into the coach, carried them to Meriden.

On the 12th of January, 1891, the rains and melting snow were too much for the bridge over the Little River, just east of Westfield station. The engineer of the early morning train from Cromwell found visibility at 6:30 on this particular day even poorer than usual, but as he came to the bridge he could see that it had sunk two or three feet. He whistled for the brakemen and reversed the engine, but before the brakes could take hold, the locomotive, tender and

smoking car crashed through into what was said to be 15 to 20 feet of raging torrent filled with ice cakes. The coach was left on the tracks at the bank edge.

There was one passenger in the smoker, and he, together with the conductor, engineer, fireman and two brakemen, were precipitated into the icy water. The engine remained upright, with only the top of the stack and cab visible, and the tender was completely submerged. The smoker was carried by the current 300 feet down the stream.

Miraculously enough, nobody was killed or seriously injured. The fireman managed to get to shore first, pulling himself up on the bridge timbers. He saw the engineer struggling in the water, and put out a plank which his comrade caught hold of, and was dragged ashore.

The conductor, although a good swimmer, was handicapped by his heavy Winter clothing and the icy water and went under twice, practically giving himself up for lost. By a mighty effort he grabbed a bush on the shore. Feeling himself slipping, he called for help. Fortunately, the two brakemen who had previously managed to get out themselves, heard him and pulled him up on the bank.

The passenger in the smoker was carried several hundred feet down the river, but was finally rescued. They were all taken to a nearby house, where the most exhausted were put to bed, and the rest lay around and dried out.

The trackwalker responsible for the section claimed the bridge was intact at 6 a. m., but people nearby said they had heard noises which led them to believe otherwise. They had no explanation as to why they had not notified anyone, except that they supposed the trackwalker would check up.

There were a number of conflicting stories as to the condition of the bridge before the freshet washed it out. It was of wood, with wood cribbing on the bank ends. Some claimed it had been held together with "iron rope" and had been unfit for use. Be that as it



### NORTH END CROSSING WRECK

of July 19, 1889, showing four derailed freight cars and tender on its side under box car. Locomotive No. 4 is on bottom of the pile-up. Bank at right is connecting link from New Haven track in lower foreground.



FROM a New Haven Railroad timetable of 1900  
when service was given between Waterbury  
and Middletown.

HARTFORD DIVISION.										
Meriden Branch.										
994	990	Ms	June 10, 1900.				991	995		
P. M.	A. M.		LEAVE	ARRIVE	A. M.	P. M.				
6 15	7 50	0	Waterbury	7 50	4 00					
6 24	9 00	4	East Farms	7 40	3 50					
6 29	9 06	5	Summit	7 34	3 44					
6 35	9 12	7	Prospect	7 28	3 38					
6 40	9 18	8	West Cheshire	7 22	3 32					
6 45	9 24	10	Southington Road	7 16	3 26					
6 55	9 35	14	Hanover	7 05	3 15					
7 00	9 40	15	Meriden	7 00	3 10					
7 14	9 58	21	Highland	6 41	2 51					
7 23	10 03	23	Westfield	6 30	2 40					
7 26	10 12	23	Newfield	6 26	2 36					
7 31	10 18	29	Middletown	6 20	2 30					
P. M.	A. M.		ARRIVE	LEAVE	A. M.	P. M.				

## ACCIDENTS

may, the road seemed rather tardy about making repairs—perhaps because the river boats were not running and there was little business out of Cromwell. Nothing could be done until the engine was fished out of the river, and it stayed in the water until February 9th, when it was hauled into an adjoining field, but was not re-railed immediately.

It was then reported that another wooden bridge was to be erected, but after considerable agitation the company had an iron bridge fabricated by the Berlin Iron Bridge Company, and this was put in place on the 13th of March, two months after the accident. Through service from Cromwell to Waterbury was then resumed.

Accidents were expensive in many ways. Aside from the cost of repairs, the road had no reserve of power to substitute, and had to rent equipment if its own were damaged. The wreck at Red Bridge on August 10, 1888, put Engine No. 1 out of commission for over a month, and necessitated rental of Hartford & Connecticut Western's No. 6 from August 11th to September 15th, at a cost of \$465.

Wrecks smashed cars of other roads, which had to be paid for. The Cromwell Road received a bill from the New Haven for its box car No. 2123, "destroyed near Meriden," about October 31, 1887. Evidently there was some discussion on the subject, because the bill was not paid until July, 1888, and was figured on the original cost of the car in 1880, less 6% depreciation per year, making a net loss of \$285.33 for the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad.

The Meriden & Cromwell Railroad started with two passenger trains each way daily, with freights and excursions as needed. This service was increased to three trains each way in the Summer of 1886. With the opening of the Waterbury extension, a fourth train was added.

Over the years there were variations. At one period shortly after the Waterbury line was opened, there were three passenger trains and one freight from Cromwell straight through to Waterbury, but in the Fall of the year this was changed so that two of the passenger trains terminated in Meriden.

Upon the opening of the connection with the New York & New England in Waterbury, passenger trains ran through to the New England station, although they also stopped at Dublin Street. This was to give good connections with trains for Danbury, Winsted and points west. This service was in effect only from from April 8, 1889, to August 5, 1890, when Dublin Street again became the terminus.

A great deal of effort was made to attract special parties and groups. Lodges, clubs and church organizations were given special trains. During State Fair Week in Meriden a temporary station was set up near the Fair grounds. The Hartford Camera Club once made a trip from one end of the line to the other, and later presented the management with an album of scenes they had taken.

The timetable of December, 1892, showed a fourth train between Meriden and Cromwell. On the other hand, when the New York & New England took over, and up to the time they gave up the lease, there were three trains, one of which ran between Meriden and Waterbury only. When the line was revived as the Middletown, Meriden & Waterbury Railroad, two mixed trains were put on each way. (All scheduled passenger trains ran "mixed" if there were freight cars to haul).

In 1904 interurban trolleys were beginning to give the New Haven Railroad competition in many parts of the state, and to forestall this as much as possible the road tried to improve its local service. In that year, taking advantage of the fact that the shortest rail distance between New Haven and Waterbury was via the

Canal Line to Cheshire and thence via the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River to Waterbury—26 miles as against 32 miles via Derby and Ansonia—a new service of four trips a day was begun over the route via Cheshire.

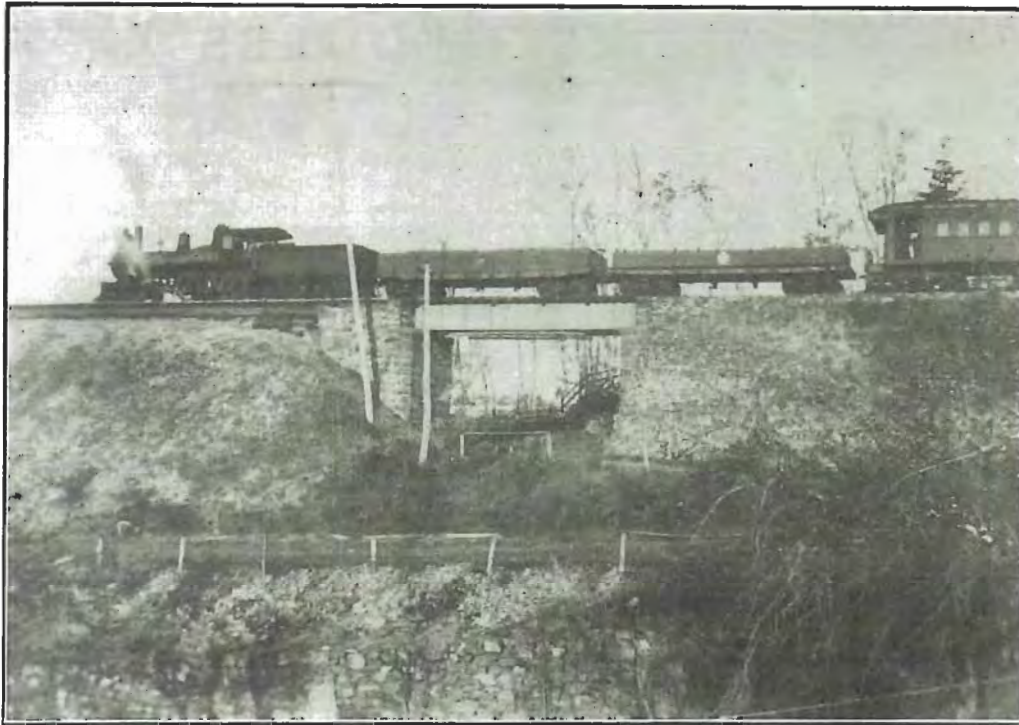
This New Haven-Waterbury schedule caused the building of a curved connection between the Canal Line and the Meriden-Waterbury line. Previously there had been no physical connection between the two lines, as the Meriden-Waterbury line crossed the old canal and its railroad line successor on bridges—iron over the railroad and a stone culvert over the canal. East of this crossing there was quite a high fill with one of the railroad's most ambitious structural jobs, the bridge over Honeypot Brook.

Running time on this New Haven-Cheshire-Waterbury route was 50 minutes northbound and 45 minutes southbound; five minutes extra were needed to climb from Cheshire to Summit. The service was immediately popular, and probably would have continued to be so if an even more direct trolley line had not been opened up, cutting both running time and fares. Trains were given up in 1906, but while they lasted, the west end was busier than it had ever been.

Up to 1906 there were still two trains a day each way from Middletown and Meriden to Waterbury, but with the opening of trolley service on the tracks between Meriden and Middletown, trains were run to what was called East Meriden Junction (where the Waterbury line joined the original Meriden & Cromwell tracks from Center Street) to give a connection with the new interurbans. However, it was not long before the steam trains made West Main Street their terminal.

Excursions continued to bring in revenue. One particularly fruitful time was Meriden's Centennial Week, in June 1906, when a land-office business was done from both Middletown and Waterbury to Meriden.

The Meriden-Waterbury service was cut back to one train a day each way between 1909 and 1910. The exact time schedule varied on this run, but in general it was based on a morning train from Meriden, and a return from Waterbury at night. During the day the engine and crew would do the switching in Waterbury to industries on the line such as Scovill. This schedule continued until trains stopped running June 24, 1917.



## Fares, Notes

Passenger fares on the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River Railroad in 1888 were as follows: Meriden to Waterbury 50 cents, to Cromwell 30 cents, to Highland House 15 cents, Westfield 25 cents, West Cheshire 25 cents, Summit (Prospect) 35 cents. Passenger business was good, too.

A June 1, 1903, article in the Meriden Journal mentioned over 6,000 people at a balloon ascension at Hanover Park, saying that there were 1,000 excursionists from Waterbury — another indication of what the road did in excursion business.

In the days of the the horse and wagon, short hauls by railroad were common and profitable. As an exaxmple, the Meriden Ice Company, ice houses on Hanover Lake at South Meriden and Highland Lake in Westfield, found it most convenient to use the new railroad for transporting ice into Meriden, horse carts picking up their loads at the local platform.



**TICKET** issued by the New Haven Railroad good between Meriden and Waterbury.

**SCHEDULED** passenger trains were always "mixed" (passenger and freight) when there was freight to haul on the Meriden, Waterbury & Connecticut River —even after the New Haven Railroad took over. The train shown above at West Cheshire station shortly after the Waterbury extension was opened, was a typical MW&CR passenger train. In the scene below, the same West Cheshire station is shown about 1900, with a New Haven Railroad train at the station.

