

History of The Sackets Harbor & Saratoga Railroad Company 1848 - 1857

[The village is spelled both "Sackets" and "Sackett's" in the documents but the correct spelling is the former according to the village.]

March 7, 1848 **Senate Document #39**

"Report of the Railroad Committee on The Petition for a Railroad from Sackett's Harbor to Saratoga." "...the petitioners solicit the grant of a date to construct a railroad from Sackett's Harbor up the Black River to its source - thence along the east branch of the West Canada Creek to the Sacandaga River, and down it to some point near Saratoga Springs." "...allowing for curvatures it is estimated at 140 miles."

April 10, 1848 **NYS Legislature**

The legislature passed an act incorporating the Sackets Harbor and Saratoga Railroad Company with preemption rights to State lands. (H&SG) The company was organized with \$2,000,000 capital. It was to connect the two towns of its name and tap the iron mines at Sanford Lake. It was only partially graded from Saratoga.

Senate Document #55, 1844

When the railroad was organized, they were required to pay New York State \$5,000 to have the right to select any quantity of land up to 250,000 acres within the next three years. They had three years to commence work and ten years to complete the line or the company was liable to be dissolved and its franchise forfeited.

November 18, 1850

A meeting was held at the American Hotel in Saratoga Springs to discuss the railroad and promote the reasons for its progress.

November 28, 1850

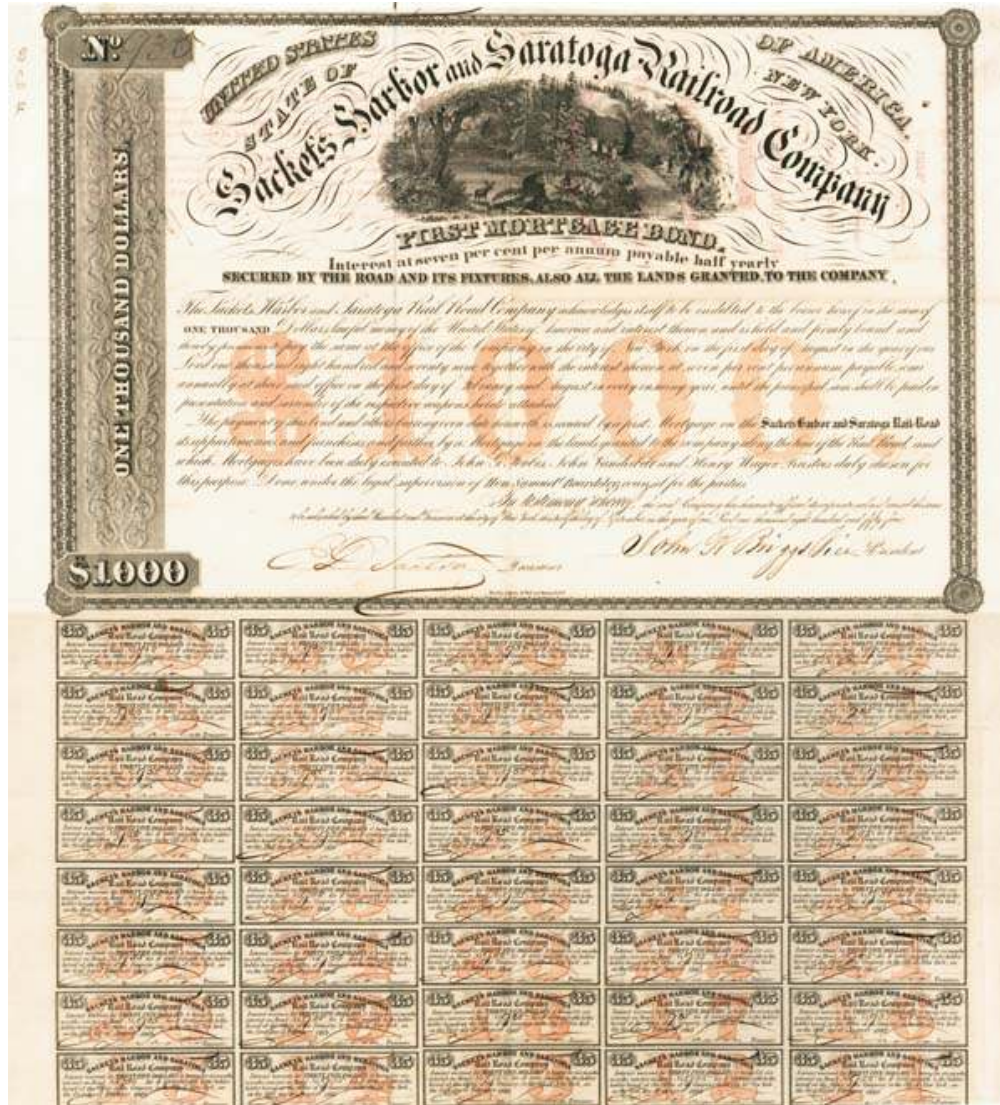
The company drew up and signed an Article of Association under the name Sackets Harbor and Saratoga Railroad Company with an estimated length of 140 miles. The amount of capital stock was set at \$2,500,000 with 25,000 shares. The directors were:

*William C. H. Waddell	NYC
Elisha Camp	Sackets Harbor
Frederick Hollister	Utica
Lyman Lyon	Collinsville
Horace Woodruff	Watertown
Morris Ketchum	NYC
William Eggleston	Albany
Le Grande B. Cannon	Troy
Joseph Warren	Troy
Thomas Marvin	Saratoga Springs
G. M. Davison	Saratoga Springs

James Cook

Ballston

[*Waddell was born in NYC, was President Jackson's personal secretary and was later appointed US Marshall of the Northern District of NYS. Martin Van Buren later appointed him Register of Bankruptcies for the region. He was part of a wealthy family and a successful businessman. He was the first president of the railroad.]



1851 **Senate Document #55, 1884**
The requirements of the 1848 deal were extended one year.

1851 Bryant Tilden (1817-1859) is listed as an engineer working for the company. He was a West Point graduate from 1840 and is said to have published a map for a prospective railroad from Carthage to Saratoga in the 1840's.

1851-1855 Thomas Cochran was an engineer for the company.

February 23, 1852

The company filed papers of incorporation in the office of the secretary of state.

March 10, 1852 1853 Report

Abraham Franklin Edwards was appointed chief engineer for the railroad and started the surveys in April.

April 14, 1852 Northern NY Journal

A ground breaking ceremony was held in Lewis County on April 8th with about 1,000 people attending. The procession started at noon at the hotel of Charles Loomis and included Directors, Engineers and the Carthage Brass Band. About four rods of the road were graded while the band played "Speed The Plow". A map was filed with the Lewis County Clerk.

April 26, 1852 1853 Report

A survey crew under A.R. Field started work in Saratoga, heading westerly. They explored several routes covering a total of 423 miles by January 10th, 1853 and ended at Lake Ontario.

May 1, 1852 1853 Report

A second survey crew, under P.H. Green, started work at Ballston and worked westerly.

May 10, 1852 1853 Report

A third survey crew, under N.R. Harlow, started work at the forks of the Sacandaga River in Wells and worked westerly toward Lake Piseco.

June 24, 1852 1853 Report

Due to financial reasons, the third party was disbanded after completing 33 miles.

July 2, 1852 1853 Report

The second party was disbanded after reaching the start of the third parties work in Wells, having completed 80 miles.

12/29/1852 Northern NY Journal

Engineers were contemplating ending the SH&S at French Creek instead of Sachets Harbor. Engineer Edwards was to issue a report.

1853 Senate Document #55, 1884

The Legislature confirmed the previous powers granted in 1848 and approved incorporation filed by the company.

1853 **A History of Lewis County, 1883**

"About 1853, a building, 40 by 100 feet, was erected for a machine shop in anticipation of the completion of the Sackett's Harbor and Saratoga Railroad, the route of which was to pass near [New Bremen] and the work on which had been commenced." The building remained unused until 1859 when it became part of the Crystal Creek Tannery.

May 4, 1853 **Norther NY Journal**

Fredrick Hollister of Utica is sailing to Europe to sell bonds of the SH&S Railroad. Hollister and H. C. Hamilton of NY have taken the contract to build the road for \$3.5 million.

October, 1853 **Engineer's Report of the 1852 Survey**

Company Officers:

Wm. Coventry H. Waddell	President
Gen. S.P. Lyman	Superintendent of Operations, NYC
Henry Stanton	Treasurer, NYC
Samuel Ellis	Secretary, Boston
Hon. Samuel Beardsley	Counsel, Utica

Directors: Charles Clarke, P. Somerville Stewart, Lyman Lyon, E.G. Merrick, Robert Speir, James Marvin, John Thurman, Anson Thomas, Zadock Pratt, Otis Clapp, Wm. Coventry Waddell, S.P. Lyman, and Henry Stanton.

Engineering Department:

A.F. Edwards	Chief Engineer, Saratoga Springs
John Mills	Consulting Engineer, NYC

Company Office: 80 Wall Street, NYC

From January 10th until May 15th, the engineering department, consisting of from three to six men, assembled the results of the preliminary survey to find that there were excellent routes available with mostly easy grades. On June 1st, two survey parties were in the field and a third was added on July 4th, numbering in all about fifty men. During the summer, they surveyed up to 1,000 miles and by September, the engineering department was increased to seventy men, using the surveys to design the route.

The report goes on to extol the virtues of the country and what a great investment the railroad would make. The several routes surveyed are described along with detailed accounts of the construction costs for each area.

[2010 - I obtained an original copy of the 1853 map of the survey (below) which shows the main proposed route with some side branches. I also obtained a copy of the 1853 report from the internet.]



Feb. 15, 1854 **Northern NY Journal**

Surveys are done but work is delayed waiting for the legislature to pass a bill adding Warren and Essex Counties.

March 7, 1854 **NY Times**

"The Saratoga and Sackett's Harbor Railroad Company ... has been urgently applying to the legislature this winter for such an amendment as will authorize a change of route. They allege that by a blunder in their Articles of Association, as filed in 1852, the parties concerned having never explored the wilderness, the counties of Warren and Essex,

through the corners of which the route surveyed must run, were omitted, and that the county of Fulton was unadvisedly included. The true reason for the change desired, we believe, is somewhat different. By the original charter the State granted to the company about 250,000 acres of land at the nominal price of five cents and acre. After a time the company paid the purchase money but on attempting to locate the lands, they found that they had already been bought by speculators. They now ask that the route may be so changed as to enable the State to deliver them the tract of land for which it has already been paid. The Railroad Committee, after hearing argument on both sides, has reported in favor of the amendment sought."

1854 Chapter 273, Laws of 1854

"An Act to permit the Sackett's Harbor and Saratoga Railroad Company to construct a portion of its road through a portion of Warren and Essex Counties."

1854 Samuel Dale is listed as a Civil Engineer for the company.

1854-1856 Theodore Grenville Ellis (b.1829) was the Chief engineer. He later became Union General in the Civil War then the Surveyor General for Connecticut. He was a Civil Engineer in Hartford and published papers on railroads and mining. He died in 1883. [In 1855 A.F. Edwards is listed in the Annual Report as the Chief Eng. but in the 1856 report this changed to Consulting Eng. By 1857, he was back to Chief Eng. An article by the 14th Connecticut Volunteer Infantry historical society from 2013 says that Ellis was the Chief Engineer for the S.H. & S. when in his early twenties then went to Mexico in 1856 to oversee a silver mine.]

Theodore Grenville Ellis



March 22, 1854 Northern NY Journal

The bill allowing the SH&S Railroad to change its route was passed on the 17th.

June 5, 1854 (HL)

Ground was broken in Hadley and approximately twenty miles of roadbed in disconnected sections was built before work was suspended due to lack of funds. [Other reports say 30 miles. In 2010 you can still see several sections of this roadbed in western NY near Crystal Dale as well as a 4,000 foot section starting at the Warren / Saratoga County line and heading north toward Stony Creek and disconnected sections north of Stony Creek up to the 1,000 Acres Dude Ranch.]

From "Child's Gazetteer of Jefferson County, New York"

"Russelle Bingham, of New Bremen, bought it [a 32 lb cannon from Sackets Harbor that was used in the war of 1812] of Mr. Lord to celebrate the breaking of ground of the Sackets Harbor and Saratoga Railroad Company."

From "The Story of the Rome, Watertown & Ogdensburgh Railroad"

"...one today [1922] can still see traces of [the roadbed] across the forest. In the neighborhood of Beaver Falls, they become most definite; a long cutting and an embankment reaching from it ..."

From "John Brown's Tract", 1896

"Today the traveler going from Lowville to No.4, Brown's Tract can see on one side of the road a high embankment grown over with bushes and small trees and a large stone culvert in the same unfinished condition as left when the funds ran out nearly fifty years ago."

Road crossing abutment on McPhilmly Road in Lewis County (author's photo)



Roadbed near Crystal Dale in Lewis County (Russ Nelson photos)



From "A History of Stony Creek, NY", 1988

"In Stony Creek the railroad was to be 100 to 500 feet west of the present highway and railroad. Until a few years ago when the river flats started to grow up one could easily see the fill for this railroad. On the river flats the fill looked to be about 30 feet high and gaps were left in the fill where culverts and road crossings would have been installed. By looking to the west from the highway when the leaves are off one may still glimpse the grading in places as far as the location of the River District School, and again opposite the golf course. Probably the unused fill east of the highway just south of Cameron Road in Thurman was part of this project."

July 26, 1854 Northern NY Journal

Rapid progress is being made on the SH&S Railroad and some 5,000 men are at work. Little armies of men with steam excavators, pick axes, shovels, wheel barrows, carts and horses are daily being transported to numerous sections between here [Saratoga] and Jefferson County. A contract for the iron rails has been negotiated with the Adirondac Iron Works.

NY GIS map showing old grading just west of the D&H line south of Stony Creek



Photos of this section in 2010 by Jon Patton



Next section to the north at Stony Creek with D&H line on right.



Next section to the north near Thousand Acres Ranch



Photos near Thousand Acres Ranch in 2010 by Jon Patton



Along highway near Cameron Road as mentioned in 1988 book above.



Photo of this area in 2010 by Jon Patton with highway on left.



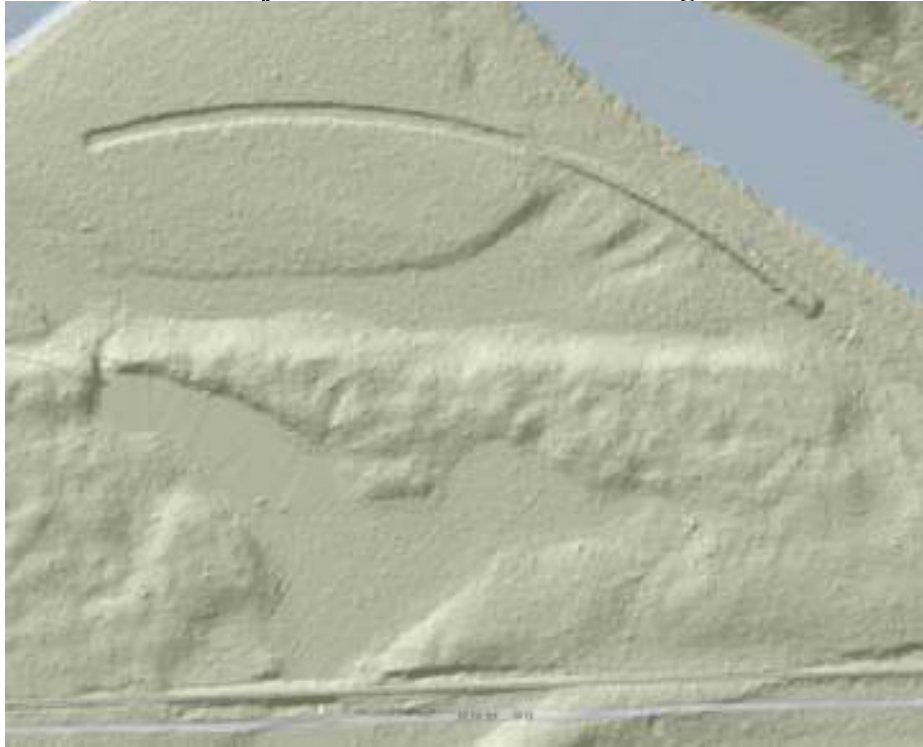
Short section in Thurman just north of old station site.



Photo of this section in 2010 by Jon Patton



1,800' section just south of North Creek along River Road



Photos of this area in 2020 by Jon Patton





July 27, 1854 D&H 1916 Valuation Map

The earliest date for land deeded to the Sackets Harbor and Saratoga RR in Corinth.

July 27, 1854 D&H 1916 Valuation Map

The earliest date for land deeded to the S.H. & S. RR in Hadley.

September 12, 1854

A company publication says that the first mortgage bonds for the company were dated this day at a cost of \$1,000 each for a total of \$4,000,000. They were due on 9/1/1879 with interest at 7%. The Capital Stock of the company was originally \$2,500,000 but had been increased to \$6 million divided into shares of \$100 each. They planned to start laying rails in June of 1855.

December 13, 1854 Northern NY Journal

Work on the railroad was suspended due to failure on the advancement of money on the bonds. The contractors had not been able to pay the workers for the past two weeks. This was a cause of great problems since there were about 5,000 workers at the time and many who were far from home. About \$500,000 worth of work had already been done.

1855 Senate Document #55, 1884

The rights extended in 1851 and 1853 were extended another six months.

June, 1855 NY Times

The owner of the paper was invited along with others for a trip through the Adirondacks following the proposed railroad route. He mentions that lack of funds had suspended work last fall and that the leader of the expedition was Chief Engineer A.F. Edwards. Assistant engineer Mr. Newell was also along. The route went from Saratoga following the Hudson to the meeting with the Boreas River, where a branch was to go to the mine, then west to the south shore of Raquette Lake to Old Forge, Carthage and Sackets Harbor.

February 14, 1857 NY Reformer

The SH&S were petitioning the state to allow them to connect lakes and rivers near the railroad with canals and locks. The article also expressed a lack of faith that anything is actually going to be finished.

November 27, 1856 NY Reformer

The Albany "Argus" says that the SH&S Railroad is about to resume work and mean to complete the first thirty miles of it by next August.

December 27, 1856 D&H 1916 Valuation Map

The earliest date for land deeded to the S.H. & S. RR near White's Feed south of Corinth.

1857 **Chapter 98, Laws of 1857**

The SH&S lands were exempted from taxation until the sale of the company or the maturity of their bonds.

March 19, 1857 **NY Reformer**

The SH&S said that construction has started again and will be finished. Engineers have been surveying different routes between Watertown and Carthage. The eastern terminus was still in question. The NY Evening Post reported that the SH&S closed in contracts with the Lawrence Machine Co., Boston and the T.W. Wilson Co., Springfield for cars and locomotives to the extent of \$150,000. [from the "Saratoga Pres."]

April 6, 1857 **Chapter 280, Laws of 1857**

The SH&S was reorganized as the Lake Ontario & Hudson River Railroad.