

The Trolley Line from Geneva to Cayuga Lake Park

The Seneca Falls and Waterloo Railroad Co.

In June 1885, the Seneca Falls and Waterloo Railroad Co. began construction of a four mile line, using 40 pound rail. This line began at Church Street in Waterloo along Main Street and proceeded east along the highway (Routes 5 and 20 today) to Seneca Falls along Fall Street to Mynderse Street. It was agreed between the railroad officials and the village of Waterloo that the tracks inside the village would be “planked so as to make little or no obstruction to driving over them with wagons.” Because the street itself was not uniformly level, in some places between these wooden crosswalks, the rails were above the street level while in other places the rails were below street level.

The first locomotive had nine-horsepower to pull the cars. This was soon replaced with a small steam locomotive enclosed to resemble a passenger car. The Co. owned two steam dummies, three closed cars and two open cars. Conductors were paid \$1.50 per day, drivers earned \$2.00 per day, and other employees such as switchmen earned \$1.25 per day.

It took approximately thirty minutes for a train to make this four-mile run. The trains left either terminal (Waterloo and Seneca Falls) every forty minutes from 6:30 a.m. to 9:10 p.m. While today we would think that these thirty minutes to go four miles would be a slow speed, many residents of Waterloo complained of what they called the “break-neck” speed of the train along Main Street. They hoped that the speed would be limited to six miles per hour, the typical speed of a horse.

Cayuga Lake Park Company

A Cayuga Lake Park Company was incorporated on May 24, 1886. This company was affiliated with the Seneca Falls and Cayuga Lake Railroad which had constructed a 2.83 mile line, using 60 pound rail, along Bridge Street from the Franklin House on Bayard Street to about where Mechanic Street is today and then east via a private right-of-way to the Park. This line opened on August 19, 1886. This company owned one small steam tank locomotive, three first class coaches, two open cars and one freight car. Trains departed every 75 minutes from June 15 through September 15. (The picture shows the train at the Franklin House on West Bayard Street in Seneca Falls.)



Seneca Electric Railway

The Seneca Electric Railway was incorporated on December 7, 1889. Electric service began on Friday, July 11, 1890, over the entire route between Waterloo and Seneca Falls. The start of this new electric service was a big event, with many prominent citizens of Seneca Falls taking a ride on the trial trip to Waterloo, with hundreds gathered to watch. The company owned three single truck motor cars and two single truck open trailers. These motor cars were described

as “noiseless,” in that they did “not frighten horses, for teams were passed, without apparent excitement, and horses, cattle and sheep in pastures by the roadside, did not stop grazing to see it go by.” The car barn and power house were on the corner of Fall and Mynderse Streets.

Having been in business for less than a month, the power house burned as part of the disastrous fire in Seneca Falls on July 30, 1890. Service was restored on August 23.

There was quite a controversy in 1890 when the railway company was trying to extend its line in Waterloo the short distance from Church Street to Virginia Street. Businessmen petitioned the village trustees to not allow this. The railway company proceeded, however, working early on a Sunday morning and then the following evening to build this extension without village approval. A mass appearance of firemen threatening to douse the railway line laborers caused a stop in construction. The railway company sued the village to get the right to make this short extension. Service over the new extension began on November 15, 1892.

In June 1890, Lawrence Park was built where Seneca Falls Machine Shop now stands. This Park had a high board fence surrounding a baseball field. This Park became a popular recreation spot, and provided the trolley line with considerable revenue.

Geneva and Waterloo Railway Co.

The Geneva and Waterloo Railway Co. was incorporated on March 18, 1893. This company was controlled by the Geneva Brush Electric Light and Power Company which provided the power for the Geneva and Waterloo Railway. Service soon began inside much of Geneva. The Geneva and Waterloo Railway had four closed electric cars with open front platforms. Not surprisingly, they were numbered 1, 2, 3, and 4. (The picture at left shows the first trolley car on Exchange Street.)



Getting electric railway service from Geneva east to Waterloo was much more difficult. The New York Central and

Hudson River Railroad delayed in giving permission for the Geneva and Waterloo Railway to cross its tracks on Exchange Street in Geneva, but the crossing was completed on August 19, 1894. Then, on the night of March 12, 1895, there was a major confrontation between workmen of the electric railway and the New York Central when the railway workmen tried to build a crossing over the New York Central line at Border City. At least one railway person was injured when struck on the head. It took a court settlement to resolve the matter.

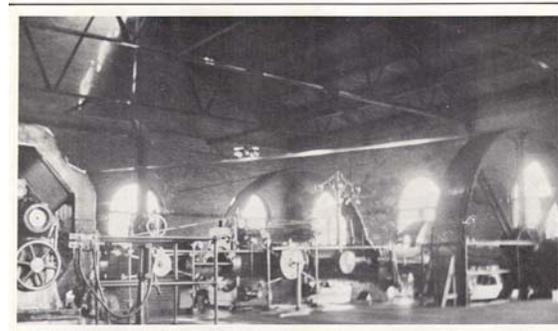
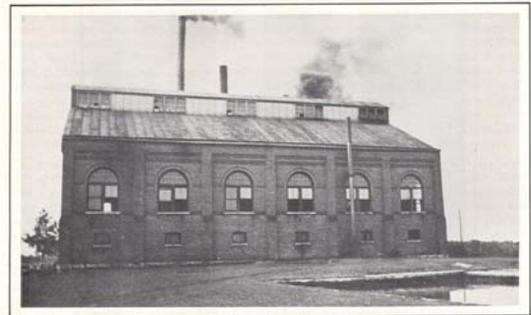


Geneva, Waterloo, Seneca Falls and Cayuga Lake Traction Company

A new company, the Geneva, Waterloo, Seneca Falls and Cayuga Lake Traction Company, was incorporated on March 27, 1895. By September, service was operating between Geneva, Waterloo, Seneca Falls and Cayuga Lake Park. In Geneva, the trolley cars began at Seneca Street at Linden Street, proceeded along Seneca Street to Exchange Street, to North Street, and then on the north side of the road (present Routes 5 and 20) east to Waterloo. (The picture shows the construction on West Main Street in Waterloo in 1895.) In Waterloo, the trolley tracks were in the center of Main Street until Chapel Street where they were on the south side of the highway. At the Van Riper farm just east of The Kingdom, the trolley tracks crossed to the north side of the highway. The tracks stayed on the north side of the highway until the village of Seneca Falls. In the village of Seneca Falls the tracks went down Fall Street and crossed the canal and Seneca River by using the Ovid Street bridge. Then the trolley tracks continued along Bayard Street to Stevenson Street, to Garden Street Road (called Easton Road in the 1890s) to Cayuga Lake Park. To enter the Park, the cars bore to the south of the highway and entered the Park via a natural ravine.



The main powerhouse and car barn was located just west of Waterloo on the north side of the highway. The powerhouse building still stands on the property of Frazier Industrial Company.



(The upper left picture shows the car barn at left and the powerhouse at right. The upper right picture shows the powerhouse. The lower right picture shows the interior of the powerhouse. The lower left picture shows an open trolley car leaving the car barn.)

Cayuga Lake Park

(The postcard at left shows a trolley car approaching Cayuga Lake Park.) The Geneva, Waterloo, Seneca Falls and Cayuga Lake Traction Company constructed a three-story pavilion at Cayuga Lake Park. The pavilion featured a dance hall on the second floor. (see postcard at right) The Park also had a grandstand, a baseball diamond and a picnic house. The dock was used by steamboats passengers coming to and from the park.

The Company in 1896 was paying conductors \$1.35 a day for a ten hour work day. The company owned 17.75 miles of track, of which 16.5 miles comprised the main line between Geneva and Cayuga Lake Park. The company owned nine single truck closed cars, one double truck closed combination car, eleven single truck open cars, four single truck open trailers and five work flat cars. Service on the main line was every thirty minutes.

Geneva and Auburn Railway

The company name was changed to Geneva and Auburn Railway by New York State Supreme Court order on July 26, 1909. New double truck cars, capable of going as much as fifty miles per hour, were put into service, so that the entire distance from Geneva to the Park could be easily completed in sixty minutes rather than the previous 75 minutes. There was serious talk of extending the railway line to Auburn, but the company entered into receivership on February 5, 1912.

Geneva and Auburn Railway Co.					
Schedule in Effect Sept. 9th, 1912.					
Subject to change without notice					
TRAINS EASTBOUND					
Leave	Leave	Leave	Arrive	Arrive	
Geneva	Waterloo	Seneca Falls	Seneca Falls	Seneca Falls	Park.
6:02	6:15	6:25			
6:32	6:45	6:55			
7:00	7:15	7:23			7:30
7:30	7:45	7:55			
8:00	8:32	8:45	8:55		
9:00	9:32	9:45	9:55		10:00
10:00	10:32	10:45	10:55		
11:00	11:32	11:45	11:55		
12:00	12:32	12:45	12:55		
1:00	1:32	1:45	1:55		
2:00	2:32	2:45	2:55		
3:00	3:32	3:45	3:55		
4:00	4:32	4:45	4:55		
5:00	5:42	5:15	5:23	5:30	
5:00	5:32	5:45	5:55		6:00
6:00	6:32	6:45	6:55		
7:00	7:45	7:55			
7:30	7:45	7:55			
7:30	7:45	7:55			
8:00	8:32	8:45	8:55		
9:00	9:32	9:45	9:55		
10:00	10:32	10:45	10:55		
11:00	11:32				
11:30	12:00				

Geneva and Auburn Railway Co.					
Schedule in Effect Sept. 9th, 1912.					
Subject to change without notice					
TRAINS WESTBOUND					
Leave	Leave	Leave	Leave	Arrive	
Park	Seneca Falls	Seneca Falls	Waterloo	Geneva	
	6:30	6:45	6:55	7:00	7:05
	7:00	7:15	7:23	7:28	7:35
7:30	7:45	7:55			
	8:05	8:15	8:20	8:25	8:30
7:30	7:45	7:55			
	9:05	9:15	9:20	9:25	9:30
7:30	7:45	7:55			
	10:05	10:15	10:20	10:25	10:30
	11:05	11:15	11:20	11:25	11:30
	12:05	12:15	12:20	12:25	12:30
	1:05	1:15	1:20	1:25	1:30
	2:05	2:15	2:20	2:25	2:30
	3:05	3:15	3:20	3:25	3:30
	4:05	4:15	4:20	4:25	4:30
	5:05	5:15	5:20	5:25	5:30
	6:05	6:15	6:20	6:25	6:30
7:30	7:45	7:55			
	8:05	8:15	8:20	8:25	8:30
	9:05	9:15	9:20	9:25	9:30
	10:05	10:15	10:20	10:25	10:30
	11:05	11:15	11:20	11:25	11:30

Geneva, Seneca Falls and Auburn Railroad

On May 28, 1913, a new company, the Geneva, Seneca Falls and Auburn Railroad Company, was incorporated. It acquired two new 34 foot cars with steel under frames. In 1915, a double track was constructed in the Exchange Street business district in Geneva, and on the Ovid Street bridge in Seneca Falls.

(The postcard shows a trolley car about ready to cross the Ovid Street Bridge on its trip from Cayuga Lake Park to Geneva.)



Accidents

Like almost any trolley line, the trolley line to Cayuga Lake Park had its derailments, accidents, and collisions with other

vehicles. An open car numbered 27 was so prone to derailment that it gained the nickname “Hoodoo car.” On April 26, 1904, car number 4 headed for Geneva jumped the track at Kingdom, rolled down the embankment, and injured 10 of the 37 aboard.

On Sunday, June 5, 1910, a car returning from the Park derailed as it turned onto Bayard Street from Stevenson Street in Seneca Falls and tipped over. Herbert N. Funnell lost his life, Mrs. L. Strong lost a leg, and others were injured. Litigation from this accident may have been one of the major reasons why the railway company went into receivership in 1912.

On October 22, 1914, four year old Bernardo Santamello died instantly when he ran in front of a westbound car as it entered the passing siding at the west end of the business district on Fall Street in Seneca Falls.



Car 22 awaits passengers for Waterloo and Geneva at the Hoag House (later the Gould Hotel) in Seneca Falls. (Onondaga Historical Association)

Fall Street, From Town Clock, Looking West from Cayuga Street, Seneca Falls, N. Y.



(These two postcards show trolley cars in Seneca Falls and Waterloo.)

The Final Years

In 1924, the company made its first retrenchments. A short stretch of track alongside Pulteney Street in Geneva was abandoned in late spring. In October, the company abandoned the line from Stevenson Street at Garden Street in Seneca Falls to the Park.

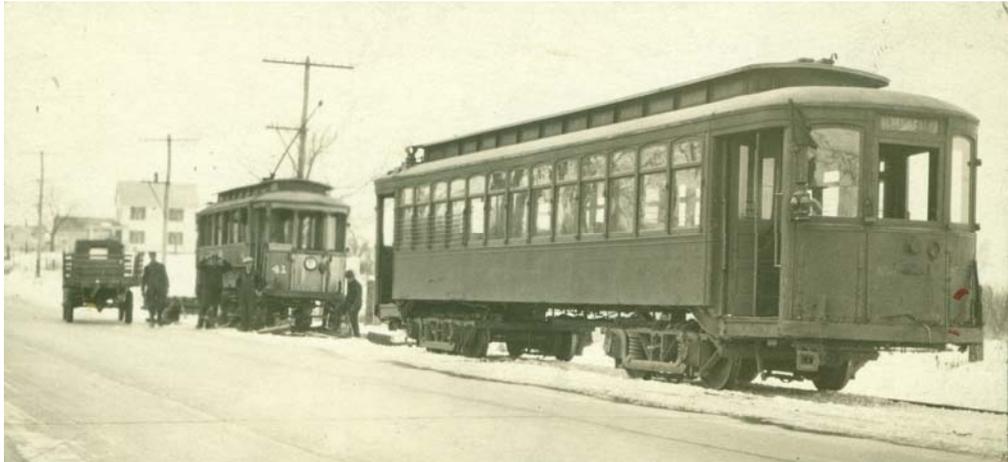
On October 27, 1925, the Geneva, Seneca Falls and Auburn Railroad ended local service. The Geneva Railway Bus Lines, Inc, a subsidiary, took over the service, and the trolley operators were employed by this company as bus drivers. This new subsidiary went into receivership in 1926.

It was in 1927 that the State of New York constructed the present Routes 5 and 20 between Geneva and Waterloo. The Town of Waterloo floated a \$7000 bond issue to relocate the railway tracks from the center of the road to the north side of the street.

Effective December 5, 1927, the track from Garden and Stevenson Streets in Seneca Falls to State and Cayuga Streets in the business section of Seneca Falls was abandoned.

In June 1928, the Geneva, Seneca Falls, and Auburn Railroad Company and all its rolling stock and properties were sold at a foreclosure sale to a group of Geneva people represented by Lansing M. Hoskins for \$2000, plus the taxes against it. Settlement of those taxes added \$53,300 to the \$2000 purchase price.

On December 4, 1928, the Geneva Railway Bus Lines, Inc. began its franchise bus service. This company was part of Colonial Coach Lines, a predecessor of Greyhound.



The final run of the trolley service was Wednesday, December 5, 1928. (The photo shows workmen starting to dismantle one of the trolley cars after completing this final run.) Buses commenced operating on the trolley schedule the following morning.

Many of the wooden cars were burned at the rear of the car barn. The three Birney cars were sold in February 1929 to the Ithaca Railway, Inc. These Birney cars served Ithacans and Cornell students until trolleys in that city made their final runs in June 1935.



Deming Bishop used three railroad cars as chicken coops. They were located about where Abigail's restaurant is today.

(One picture shows Deming Bishop in a wooden chicken coop configured from a wooden trolley car. The other



picture shows the three railroad cars he used as chicken coops.)

[Information for this article is taken primarily from the 1977 publication of the Seneca Falls Historical Society entitled *Trolleys to Cayuga Lake Park* by Sheldon S. King. Pictures supporting this article come from that publication, and from the Waterloo Historical Society collection, and from postcards owned by various local individuals. Seneca County Historian Walter Gable acknowledges and thanks the Seneca Falls Historical Society and the Waterloo Library and Historical Society for their assistance in making this article possible]