

AVON RAILROADS

FIRST PASSENGER TRAIN 1853
CONNECTED AVON TO NEW YORK
19 TRAINS A DAY SERVED AVON BY 1900,
BENEFITING FARMS AND INDUSTRY.
ONE LINE CONTINUES TODAY.

TOWN OF AVON
HISTORIAN 2019

Dedication of the Historical Marker
at the Railroad Depot (Duffy's) on Rochester Street

Special thanks are extended to John Liccini, and the Avon Village Highway Department

Welcome: Tom Freeman, Mayor, Village of Avon, and David LeFeber, Supervisor, Town of Avon

Introductions and recognition of special guests: Maureen Kingston, Town of Avon Historian

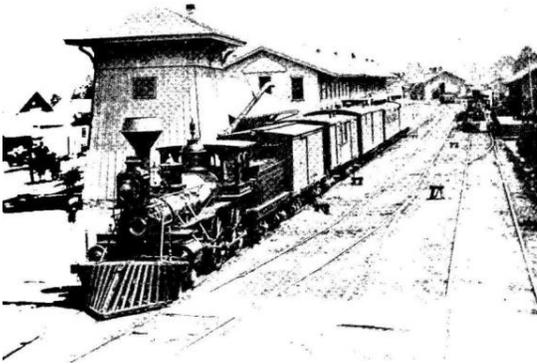
Greetings: Holly Watson, Livingston County Deputy Historian

September 25, 2020

Avon Railroads

When the Genesee Valley was first opened to settlement, horses, wagons and walking were the primary means of transportation. With the advent of canals, transportation was greatly improved for passengers and especially movement of freight. However, canals were closed 3 months each year because the water froze. They were further limited in effectiveness by the walking speed of mules and they did not serve many towns due to the topography of the ground and high expenses in construction.

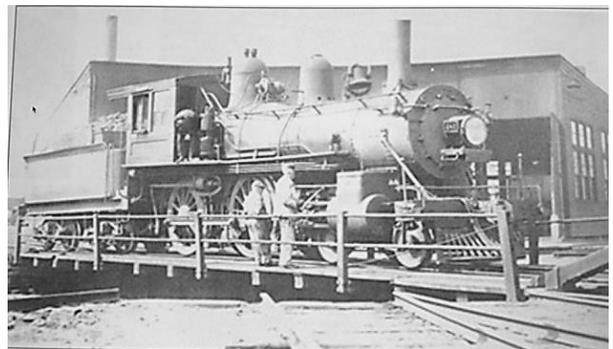
Railroads appeared even before the canal system was completed, quickly becoming the transportation system of choice due to their speed, comfort and effectiveness in moving both passengers and freight reliably and safely. Railroads operated every day through all types of weather, eventually coming to almost every town and village in the Genesee Valley.



Original Avon station, in 1875

The role of the railroad shaped daily life in the Genesee Valley and Avon by bringing easy and fast access to the region. Passenger traffic to Avon increased substantially for people to “take the Water Cure” at the many sanitariums located in Avon. Workers from Avon, Geneseo and Mount Morris could commute to work in Rochester each day and continue to live in their respective homes. Farmers could economically ship grain, meat, dairy products, lumber products and ice to markets in Buffalo and New York City quickly and competitively. Industrial products to support farms and homes could be shipped into the region, and manufactured goods could be shipped out with the same efficiency. Prosperity of Avon and the surrounding region grew immensely through the access that railroads gave to the area.

The first passenger train left Avon to New York City at 7 AM, July 21, 1853 on the Buffalo, Corning and New York Railroad after tracks were completed to the south from Corning. At this time tracks were already being laid to the west in Caledonia. Access north to Rochester occurred when the Rochester and Genesee Valley Railroad arrived in 1854. The Buffalo, New York and Erie Railroad completed westward expansion to North Buffalo on October 29, 1857. Trackage arrived to Mount Morris via Geneseo on January 13, 1859. This line was operated as the Avon, Geneseo and Mount Morris Railroad and was electrified for trolley service on May 12, 1907. All lines were taken over by the Erie Railway in 1863 and stayed within Erie’s control until the merger with the Lackawanna Railroad to form the Erie-Lackawanna Railroad on October 17, 1960. The Erie Lackawanna was merged into the Conrail system on April 1, 1976 and remained there until Conrail dispersed its trackage to the CXS and NS systems in 1999. During this period the Livonia, Avon and Lakeville Railroad bought sections of trackage from Livonia to Avon, then Avon to Rochester. They remain today operating from Lakeville to Rochester and with trackage rights from Rochester to Silver Springs, New York.



Engine on roundtable, Avon roundhouse in background, in 1907.



The present Avon railroad station, in 1907

The existing Avon Station is the second station built on this site, completed in 1879. The first station was consumed when a fire at the Pattee House, a boarding house located 100 feet west, jumped the tracks and set fire to the station. The architect of the present station was the famous Bradford Lee Gilbert. Architect Gilbert's career consisted of designing 21 railroad stations, many of significant size. In private practice, Mr. Gilbert designed and supervised The Tower Building at 50 Broadway, New York City (NYC) which is considered the first internal stressed steel skeleton building in the world and was NYC's first skyscraper, completed in 1889. He was the architect for the Flatiron Building in Atlanta, GA, completed in 1897, five years before the Flatiron building in NYC. The "Gingerbread" between the gables of the passenger station is unique to this structure. This Avon station was one of Mr.

Gilbert's first designs. There was a freight station constructed at the same time as the passenger station was completed, but disappeared when extensive yard work and electrification was completed. The concrete floor of the freight station located immediately south of the passenger station is all that remains.

Submitted Respectfully,

John L. Liccini Jr.
September 4, 2020

PHOTO CREDITS

- 1) c. 1875. Photograph of the first station and water tower taken just prior to being destroyed by fire on December 11, 1875. The Pattee boarding house, located about 100 feet immediately west of the station, caught fire first and embers blew across the tracks and consumed the station and water tower. The present existing station was constructed in 1879. Source: Preston, Marie. *Avon, Heart of the Genesee Country*.
- 2) c. 1907. An engine on the turntable with the 5 stall roundhouse in the background. Location is at the site of the present Aldon Chemical Corp., west of Rochester Street and Reed Street intersection. Source: railroad.net
- 3) c. 1907. The present Avon Station. Catenary support tower still stands today and is the only one existing. Source: Steamtown National Historic Site collection.

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Collaborated efforts by railroad buff John Liccini, and Avon Town Historians Maureen Kingston and Clara Mulligan 9/2020