



The
**NEW YORK,
ONTARIO & WESTERN
RAILWAY**
*was a unique
and fascinating
anachronism.*

Camelbacks with ancient wooden coaches running side by side with first generation diesels in view of the Empire State Building ...
heavy coal drags with smoke-belching pushers assaulting the precipitous grades of northeastern Pennsylvania ...
milk trains serving the farmers of rural upstate New York ...
a trainload of hungry vacationers descending on the Middletown station restaurant for a ten-minute lunch stop ...



... all this added up to a fantasy not duplicated anywhere.

Prosperous and poor, beloved and despised – the "Old Woman" somehow managed to survive for nearly a century. Her memory is preserved for future generations by the **ONTARIO & WESTERN RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**.

THE RAILROAD

The **NEW YORK & OSWEGO MIDLAND RAILROAD**, the O&W's predecessor, was the grandiose vision of Dewitt C. Littlejohn, a dynamic politician and Abe Lincoln look-alike. His concept of a rail route northwest across New York State, serving virgin territory not reached by any existing line, seemed logical. Thus in 1868 the "Midland" began building, meandering this way and that to reach the towns which had put up money for its construction – and bypassing those which hadn't, including the major city of Syracuse. Its twisting route was built "at right angles to the mountains" requiring steep grades, high bridges and enormous fills. Construction costs far exceeded the estimates, and within a month of completion in 1873 the Midland was bankrupt. But it survived, and was reorganized in 1880 as the **NEW YORK, ONTARIO & WESTERN RAILWAY**.

For a while, milk from upstate farms and coal from the new Scranton branch made the O&W prosperous. Each summer thousands of happy vacationers bound for Catskill Mountain resorts piled into the O&W's wooden coaches. But after World War I, improved highways attracted the milk and passenger business. The lucrative coal traffic declined as gas and oil became more competitive.

The road tried many innovations to attract business. Otto Kuhler transformed an aging locomotive and cars into the "streamstyled" black, orange and maroon "Mountaineer." The O&W even created a little moon-faced man from the letters "O" and "W" named – yes, "**OWEN W.**" (That's him above.) But all efforts failed, and after 20 years of bankruptcy the "Old & Weary" finally met its demise on March 29, 1957. However, the Ontario & Western wasn't forgotten. Its bucolic charm had attracted a faithful following.

THE O&W SOCIETY

Six years after the O&W's demise the Ontario & Western Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society was chartered, and a few years later the O&W Technical & Historical Society was founded. Their common interest brought them together in 1979 as the **ONTARIO & WESTERN RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.**, a tax-exempt non-profit 501(c)(3) organization devoted to preserving the history of the NYO&W Railway. Society activities appeal to both the modern railfan and the serious historian:

Monthly Meetings. Each month (except in summer) we meet in Middletown, NY. A brief business session precedes a railroad movie or slide program, and socializing. We also meet periodically in other parts of "O&W country" such as upstate New York, and we have an annual convention with displays of O&W models and artifacts.

Historical Trips. We run excursions to see and photograph the remaining vestiges of the "Old Woman" and other railroads. Each day-long bus trip covers a portion of the railroad using a detailed guidebook and is narrated by a knowledgeable historian.

Museum. In 1984 we established a museum in a caboos at Roscoe, NY, which is now the **ROSCOE O&W RAILWAY MUSEUM**, housed into a separate building full of O&W artifacts and displays. A two-day festival is held there each summer.



ON LINE AT www.owrhs.org

Our accomplishments have earned us much favorable publicity, including a front-page article in **THE WALL STREET JOURNAL**.

WEB SITE

Our web site began in 1997 and is maintained by society member Ron Vassallo. The site has received over 200,000 visitors since that time. It is filled with numerous articles, photos, maps and diagrams representing many facets of O&W history. Many members and others have contributed regularly to the site over the years including Doug Barberio, Mal Houck, Robert Mohowski and John Taibi. We also have a "Members Only" area which is full of premium information about the history of the Old Woman. Many of the web site's regular contributions are only available in the Members Only section. You can access this area by becoming a member and requesting your user name and password by emailing rpinglora@nyswths.org

Also, each year we produce a calendar with over a dozen rare O&W-related photos from the 1940s and 1950s. We also publish our **MOUNTAINEER** Newsletter three times a year, featuring NYO&W tidbits and Society activities and news. And we have an informative Web Site full of O&W photos and articles, many of them accessible only to Society members.

THE ARCHIVES CENTER

Our greatest accomplishment is our **Archives Center**, established in 1990 in a 100-year-old building in Middletown, NY to house our extensive collection of O&W history. Thousands of drawings, maps, track plans, diagrams and photos are being catalogued and made available for research. With our document and engineering copiers, we can provide copies of much of this material for a small fee. **If you are an O&W historian or modeler, here is where you may find the information you've been seeking.**

MEMBERSHIP

REGULAR Membership brings you a year's worth of the **OBSERVER** and **MOUNTAINEER** and access to the Members Page on our web site. **SUSTAINING Membership** gives you these benefits plus the satisfaction of aiding the Society's historical activities.

Contributions are always welcome, and may be tax-deductible. Reprints of some of our archival material, as well as original O&W paper goods, **OBSERVER** issues, calendars, color prints, and books, are offered in our Sales List. It's available for the asking. Please come to one of our activities and meet our members. We meet at 7:30 PM on the first Friday of each month (except July, August and November) in Middletown Senior Citizen Center 62-70 West Main Street Middletown, NY. But you don't have to be near Middletown to enjoy O&W Society membership – our 750 members live in more than 35 states and several countries!

Whatever your interest is in the O&W – whether you or your family worked for it, rode on it, lived near it, or are just fascinated by it – the Ontario & Western Railway Historical Society cordially invites you to join us. Please fill out this application and mail it to **O&W RHS, PO BOX 713, MIDDLETOWN, NY 10940-0713**. Or you can learn more about the O&W and the Society by visiting our renowned web site at **www.owrhs.org**.



ONTARIO & WESTERN RAILWAY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, Inc.

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please **Sustaining** O&W RHS membership..... **43.00**
Check
Category **Regular** O&W RHS membership **32.00**
Desired:

If you are joining after OCTOBER 1, your membership will be valid for the balance of the year and all of next year. Member benefits will commence in January.

I would also like to contribute to the O&W RHS Archives Endowment Fund.....

TOTAL ENCLOSED.....

NAME (please print) _____

**SEND THIS FORM AND REMITTANCE
PAYABLE TO "O&W RHS" TO:
O&W RHS, c/o R. Pinglora
49 Old Dutch Hollow Rd
Monroe, NY 10950-4539**

ADDRESS _____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

I agree to abide by the Constitution and By-Laws of the Ontario & Western Railway Historical Society.

SIGNATURE _____ E-MAIL ADDRESS : _____

How did you hear about us? _____ PHONE : (_____) _____

SPECIAL OFFER TO NEW MEMBERS: Our 104-page Observer, "MIDDLETOWN, HOME OF THE O&W AND THE O&W RHS" is full of maps, photos, structure plans and text describing all the facilities in the O&W's headquarters city. It sells for \$12.00, but you can order a copy when you join by adding just \$10.00 to your dues. To order, check **HERE**.

09/09