

# The Remains of the Ontario and Western Railway Fifty Years after Abandonment

## Oswego to Cadosia



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# New York Ontario and Western Railway *Oswego to Cadosia*



## ***Background***

It has been 50 years since the Ontario and Western Railway was abandoned in 1957. In those 50 years many signs of the O&W have been removed by nature and by man. Some remnants are well preserved, while others are soon to be lost unless efforts are made at preservation. The O&W right of way is still accessible in many areas – from Fulton to Cleveland the right of way is maintained as a recreation trail for the public. Other parts are now private property or completely grown over by nature. Key areas of the O&W between Cadosia and Oswego that are now lost forever include the yards at Norwich (a high school), any sign of the railway at Sidney, Humphrey's Trestle, and the bridges at State Bridge and Fish Creek.

Fortunately, however, there are still many reminders of the O&W as long as one knows where to look. These remnants include the stations at Central Square, Hamilton, Eaton, Munns, Parker, Walton, and Cadosia; the bridges across the Chenango, Unadilla, and Susquehanna Rivers; many other bridge abutments, supports, and culverts; and revered O&W locations such as Northfield Tunnel, Summit, and the Lyon Brook Bridge.

These pictures were taken between 2003 and 2007 during many explorations of the old right of way between Cadosia and Oswego. The pictures were often obtained after pushing through thick underbrush, climbing up and down steep embankments, biking for many miles, or talking to local citizens. Much research was performed on the internet from topographical maps (topozone.com) prior to outings. John Taibi was invaluable as a guide to the Northern Division as well as obtaining access to key sites which reside on private property such as the Tank Pond area. His book, Remembering the New York, Ontario & Western Railway Oswego to Sidney & Branches, was a key resource for identifying potential existing sites of interest. While not all inclusive, the photos represent the most interesting and important remains of the railroad that I have been able to locate. There are still several bridges and other sites that I have yet to locate and/or photograph due to either being on private property or otherwise inaccessible.

## *Oswego to Fulton*

Oswego was the northern terminus of the O&W. There are a number of remains of the railroad in the city. Better yet, much of the right of way through the city has been restored as a walking trail with historical markers and photos of the railway. In Oswego the O&W and the New York Central joined rails in downtown. The NYC bridge across the Oswego River and the NYC tunnel through the city to the O&W station at Bridge Street are now part of the walking trail. The tunnel is incorrectly labeled as being part of the O&W rather than the NYC. The wye on the northeast side of Oswego is still intact and the O&W power house within the wye is still standing – unfortunately in the middle of what appears to be a scrap yard. There are still rails in the pavement at 10th street and it is possible to walk along the old rail bed. An O&W warehouse still survives at the port of Oswego.

Between Oswego and Fulton, the O&W right of way is still in use today and can be followed by Route 481 which runs parallel to the railroad. There are several minor bridges along the route which are readily seen from the highway.

Fulton was a significant station on the O&W. The right of way was rerouted around the city in 1928. On the old right of way at Tucker's Crossing the roadbed is easily located and there is a stone bridge in excellent condition along with a standing whistle post. The bypass around the city is still in use and there is ready access to bridges 439.5, 440, and 440.5. On the south side of the city it is difficult to find the exact location of where the O&W right of way interchanged with the NYC, but the general area is accessible.



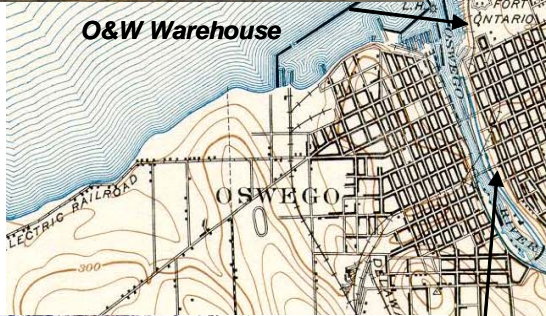
**O&W Powerhouse**



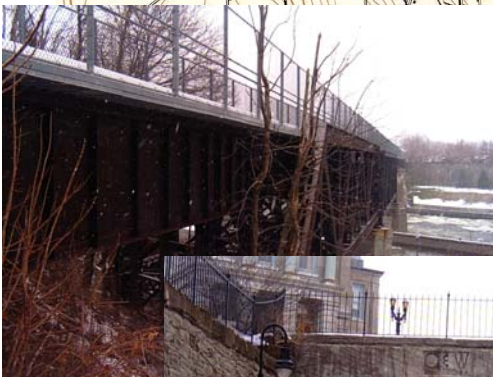
**O&W RAILS in Pavement**



**O&W Warehouse**

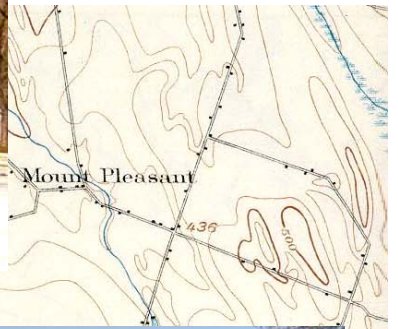
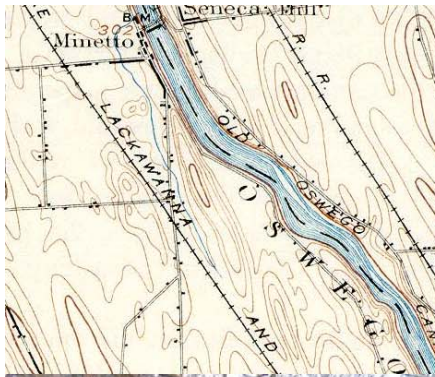


**Wye**



**NYC Bridge and Tunnel to O&W**





**Bridge # 440.5 on Bypass**



**Bridge at Tucker's Crossing**



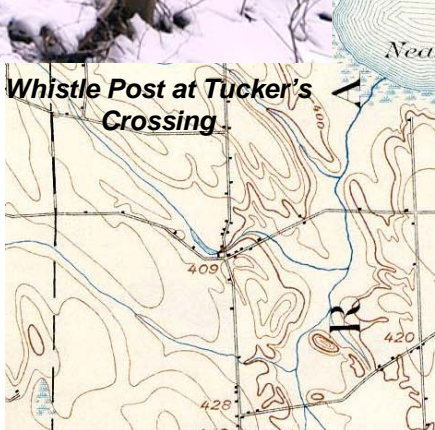
**Bridge # 440 on Bypass**



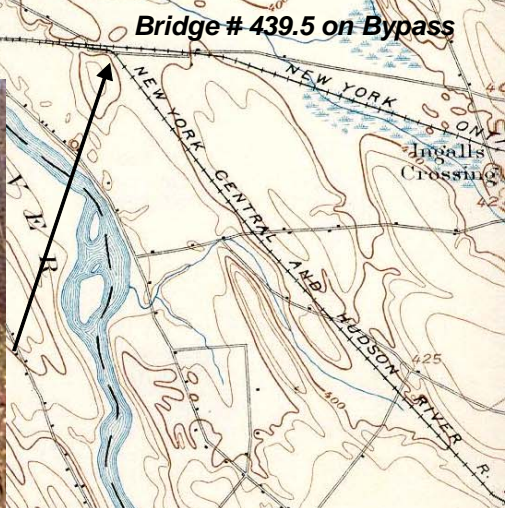
**Whistle Post at Tucker's Crossing**



**Bridge # 439.5 on Bypass**



**New York Central Jct**



## *Fulton to Central Square*

Across Oswego County from Fulton to Cleveland the Ontario and Western roadbed is maintained as a recreation trail. Therefore access and documentation of the remains of the railway is not difficult. The railroad heads almost due east across the county with very few curves and no difficult grades. It is an enjoyable bike ride along the trail.

There are several minor bridges still intact along the right of way between Fulton and Pennellville. Pennellville is one of the more interesting places in the entire Northern Division. It is possible to walk across a reconstruction of Bridge #422. In addition there are extensive remains of Rosemary's Creamery on the north side of the roadbed on the east side of town. A smoke stack and loading docks still remain, but are rapidly being overgrown by nature. As a bonus, mile marker 306 is still intact along the road.

East of Pennellville and north of Caughdenoy at the Caughdenoy station site, the foundation of the depot and the storehouse are on the southside of the right of way. In addition, the concrete bridge is still in place across Caughdenoy Creek. There are few remains of the railway in Central Square due to the construction of Rt 81, but the station is impeccably maintained by the Central New York Chapter of the National Railway Historical Society. On the east side of Rt 81, the central support and abutments still remain of the bridge across Little Bay Creek.



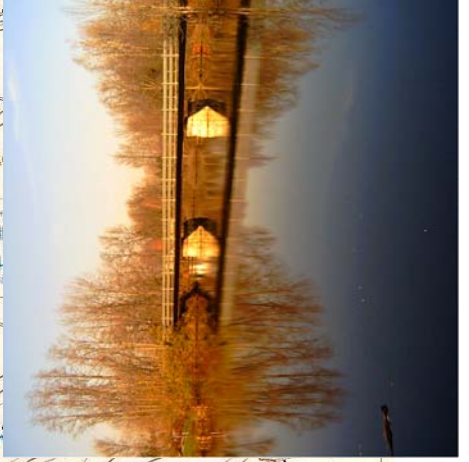
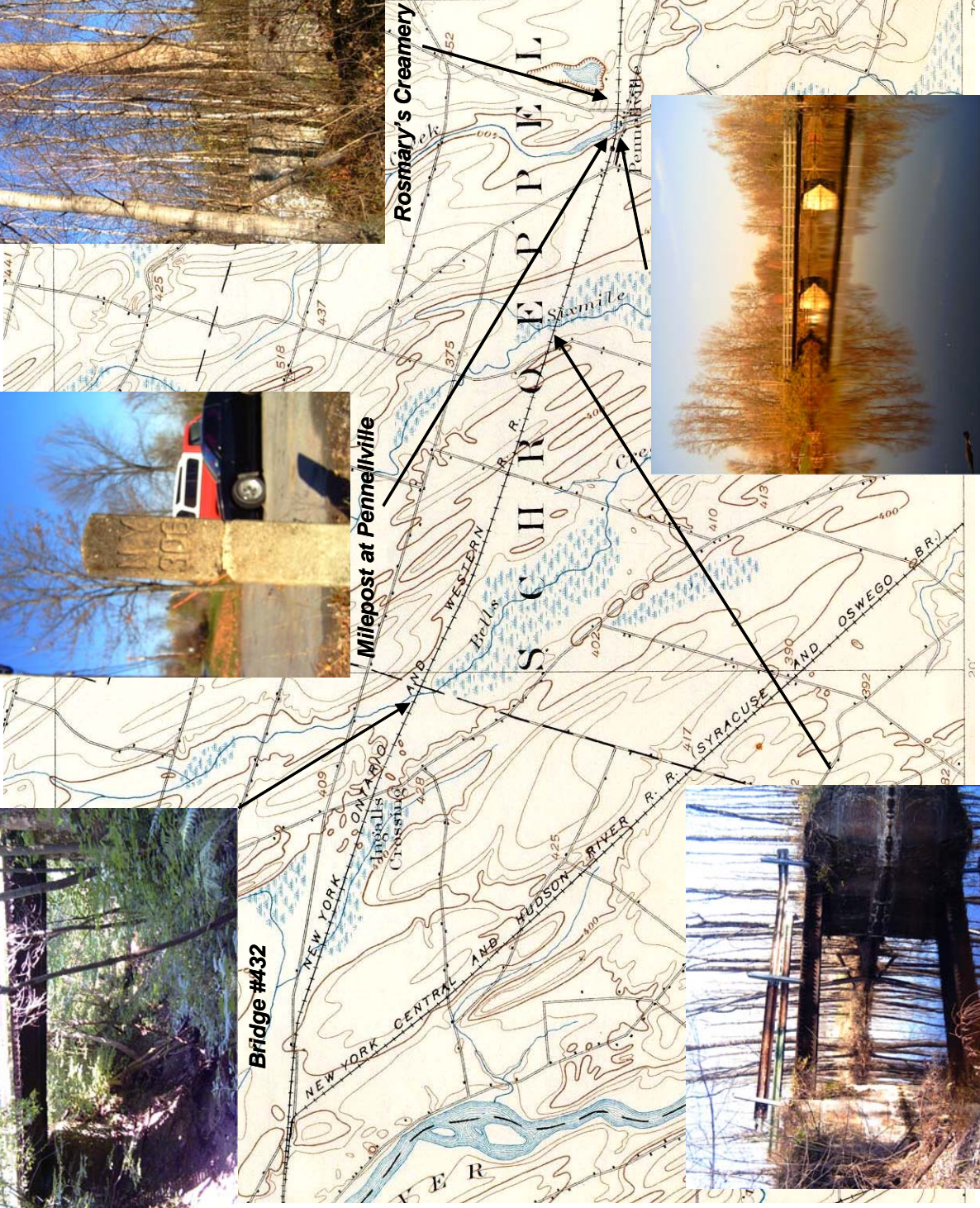
**Bridge #432**



**Milepost at Pennellville**



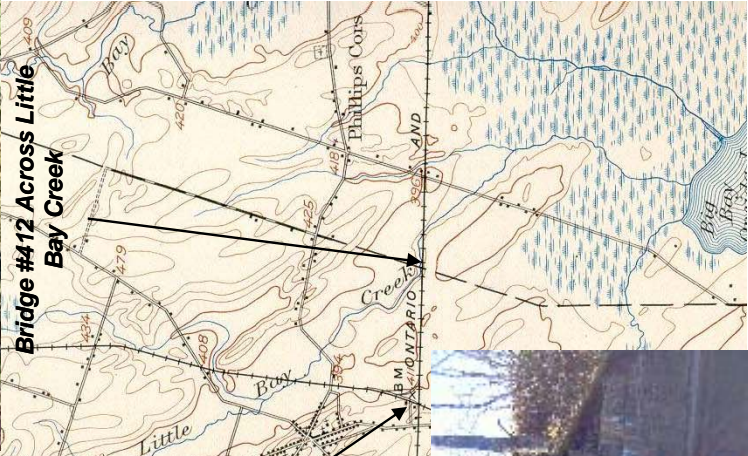
**Rosmary's Creamery Remains**



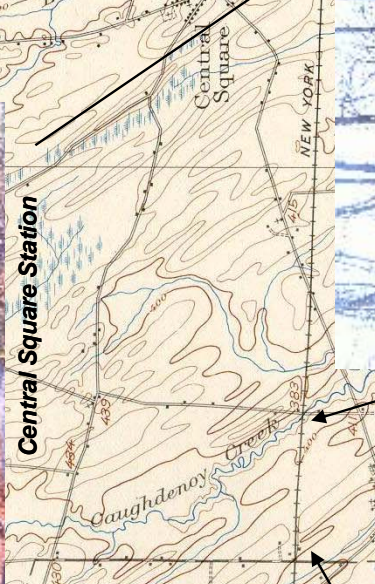
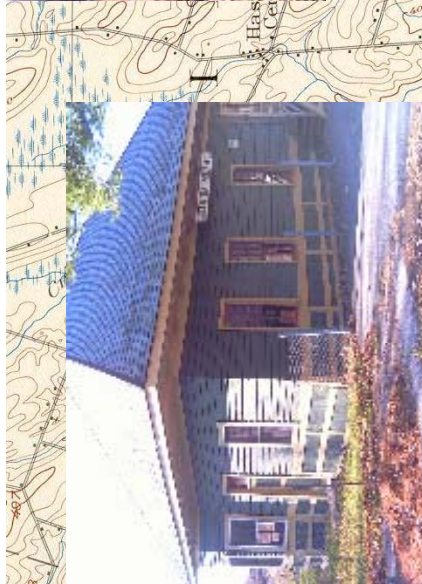
**Bridge #422**



**Six Mile Creek Bridge #426**



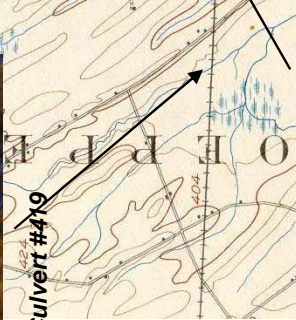
**Bridge #412 Across Little Bay Creek**



**Central Square Station**



**Bridge #418 Over Caughdenoy Creek**



**Culvert #419**



**Caughdenoy Storehouse Foundation**

## *Central Square to Sylvan Beach*

Across the northern shore of Oneida Lake extensive remains of the O&W may still be found. Between Central Square and West Monroe are many bridges including Bridge #408 across Big Bay Creek. Among the most interesting remains are the five Munnsville Plow culverts in the area. Some of these culverts have rare O&W markings on them (as originally identified by John Taibi). Unfortunately several of the culverts have cracked in half, but others are in excellent shape. These culverts can be difficult to find from the right of way, but are well worth the hunt. Culverts #406 and #407 are in excellent condition and both have O&W markings.

Both bridges in Constantia survive today and are part of the recreation trail. Many of the bridges in the area seem to have been rebuilt or eliminated. Perhaps the most interesting surviving bridge is the large concrete culvert across Cold Spring Brook.

Unfortunately no stations have survived on the north shore of the lake, but station sites can be found in all of the towns along the roadbed. The station grounds at Jewell are easily located, but no foundation or other sign of the station remains. The right of way is apparent at North Bay, but I have been unable to identify any other remnants of the railroad.

The O&W summer resort town of Sylvan Beach is one of the few places where rails can still be found. The rails are embedded in the pavement of McClanathan Avenue where the right of way cuts through the village. Unfortunately, besides the right of way, there is little evidence of the railway remaining in the town. However, the station on 16th street still survives as a private residence, but most traces of its history have been eliminated through the years.



**"Munnsville Plow Culvert" with  
O&W Markings - Bridge #407**



**Bridge #408 Over Big Bay  
Creek**



**"Munnsville Plow Culvert" - Bridge #402**



**Bridge #395 Over Frederick Creek**



**Bridge #397 Over Scriba Creek**





## *Sylvan Beach to Oneida*

The Sylvan Beach to Oneida section of the railway has some significant O&W remains, but also some significant disappointments where there are no longer any traces of key sites. Just south of Sylvan Beach, Fish Creek Station was a busy interchange with the LVRR. Although the right of way can still be located without much trouble, there are no remains of the station, tower structures, or of the bridge across the creek. Continuing south the roadbed through Walker's Cut is still intact, but it is difficult to identify the exact location of what used to be a deep cut that often filled with snow during the winter resulting in operational challenges for the railroad.

Although it is possible to locate the spot where the railway crossed the Erie Canal at State Bridge by the curvature of the canal at the site, there are no remains of either the approaches to the bridge, or of the bridge itself. However, at Durhamville, the large concrete abutments of Bridge #358 over Oneida Creek are still intact and well worth the search and hike down the creek to view the remains.

It is difficult to identify many of the O&W sites within the city of Oneida given the changes through the years. The crossing of the NYC and the O&W at Bridge #357 in the city center is still impressive even though both right of ways have been abandoned. The location of the unique two story Oneida Castle station is now occupied by a modern drug store, however part of the West Shore Line trestle is still intact behind the parking lot.



**Bridge #357 NYC Overpass of O&W**



**Bridge #358 Over Oneida Creek**



**Oneida Castle West Shore Overpass at O&W Station**



## *Oneida to Whites Corners*

From Oneida to Whites Corners, where the Pecksport Loop split off from the mainline, there are many reminders of the railway. In Kenwood, located south of Oneida Castle the remains of three bridges are still in place in the Sunset Lake area. The two most interesting bridges are #350 across Oneida Creek and #349 across Kenwood Road. The high stone abutments of #350 tower over the creek, and the south abutment of #349 can be seen up on the hill from the road. In addition to these two bridges, the right of way and the supports for Bridge #352 along the lake are still intact.

There are few reminders of the railway at Valley Mills although the station site and the right of way still remain. At Munns, the Munns depot and out buildings have been impeccably restored and is the current home of author John Taibi. The abutments leading up the depot are still in place as well.

Between Munnsville and Whites Corners the right of way and the location of the Harps Trestle fill can be seen in the valley, but there are no significant sites still remaining through Pratts to Whites Corners besides an abutment or two where the right of way crossed intersecting roads.