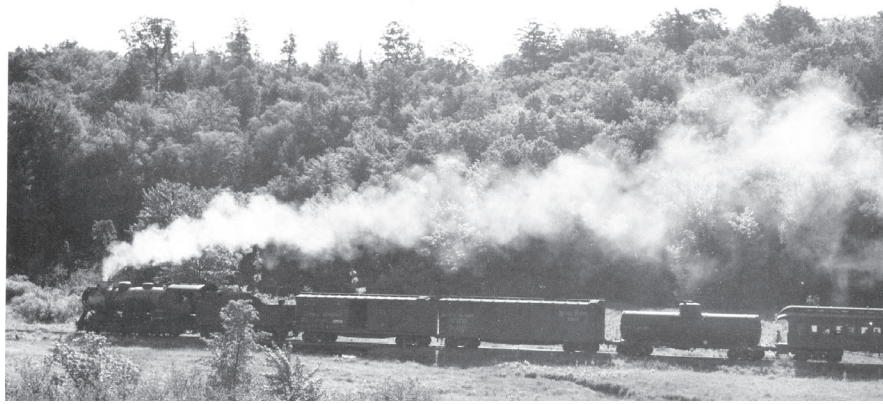


BURLINGTON
&
LAMOILLE RAILROAD
in
UNDERHILL, VERMONT
1875-1938

Stanton Hamlet
2008



Burlington & Lamoille Railroad

~~Railroad Fever

At the conclusion of the Civil War railroad fever hit the United States. It seemed that every community, large or small, had expectations of a railroad connection to the outside world. Underhill, Vermont was no exception.

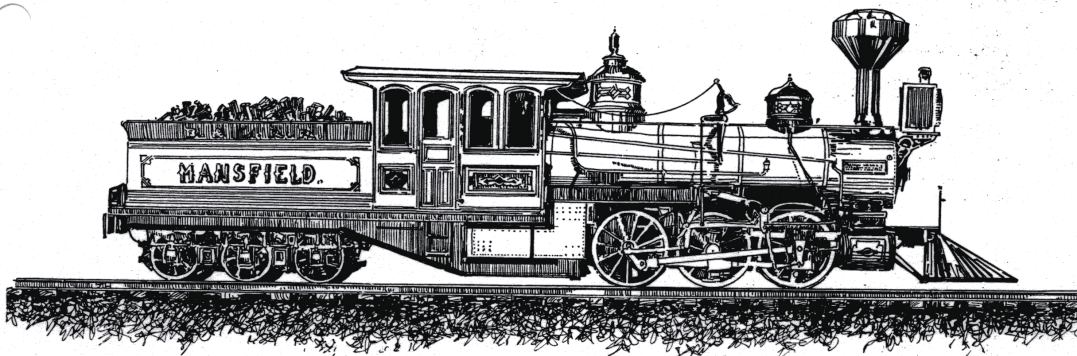
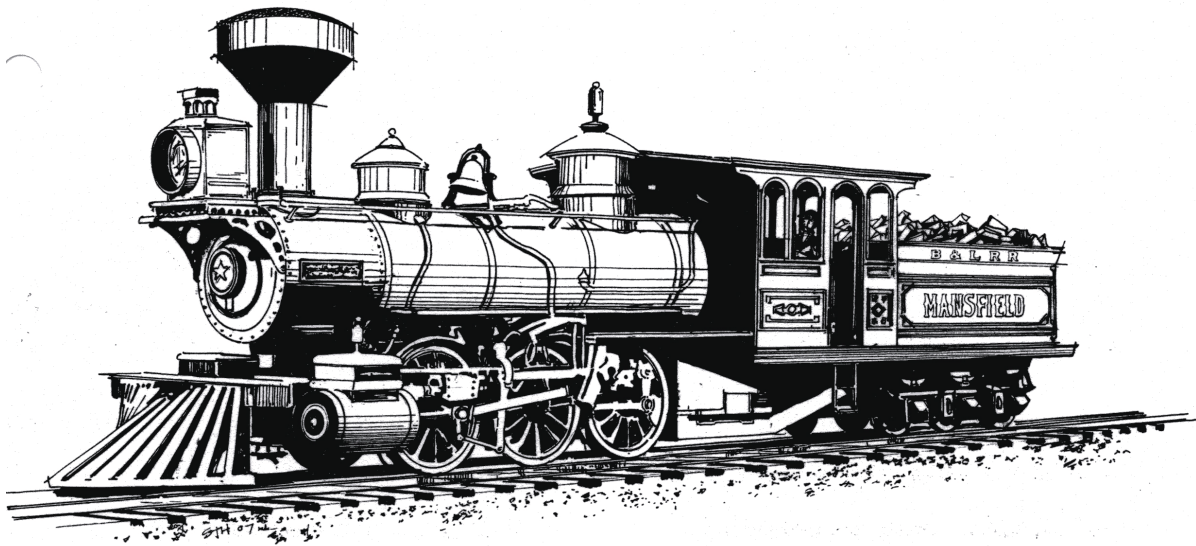
On February 24, 1875, the Burlington & Lamoille Railroad was granted a charter to build a line to connect the Rutland Railroad at Burlington with the Central Vermont Railway at Essex Junction and also the newly constructed Portland & Ogdensburg Railroad's Vermont Division at Cambridge Junction, (Jeffersonville). The Burlington & Lamoille was viewed as Burlington's second rail outlet to the world, thus providing competition to the Central Vermont and its lessee, the Rutland Railroad. In addition to through traffic that would be interchanged at Burlington, Essex Junction, and Cambridge Junction, the promoters of the line envisioned handling considerable traffic of locally-produced agricultural and forest products.

Key promoters of the B&L included Horace Fairbanks of Fairbanks-Morse fame, D.C. Linsley, civil engineer who later was the builder of the New York City subway system, William Hatch, stockbroker in New York City, and A.C. Spaulding, a highly regarded Burlington banker. Other promoters came from towns adjoining the line. Underhill had three appointed commissioners: A.C. Humphrey, L.F. Terrill, and William C. Naramore.

Voters in Underhill agreed to bond the town to an amount of three times the Grand List towards building the railroad. Much discussion within the town occurred about building the line to Underhill Center and on through, up and over, Pleasant Valley to Cambridge. This, of course, was never really considered as it was cost prohibitive. Later, discussion ensued about only building a branch line to Underhill Center. This, likewise, never happened.

Ground was broken in May of 1875 and completion of the Burlington to Cambridge Junction 34.6 mile line took place in June of 1877. During its first 12 years the Burlington & Lamoille functioned as an independent railroad, all the time maintaining a friendly working relationship with the Central Vermont Railroad. However, the B&L RR defaulted on its bond payments and was soon leased to the Central Vermont for 95 years beginning in May of 1889.

Two of the B&L's earliest locomotives were of unusual configuration. The two were Forneys – that is the engine and tender were built on a single frame. Engine Lamoille was a 2-4-6T, and its sister Mansfield was an 0-6-6T (see sketch). The locomotives were wood burners built by Mason Machine Works out of Taunton, Mass.



'MANSFIELD'
 B&L Woodburning Locomotive 0-6-6-T Mason Machine Works, Taunton, Massachusetts
 (Drawing by Stanton Hamlet 2008)

For some 60 years (1877-1937), Underhill enjoyed relatively good passenger service. Passengers boarded at a flag stop at Riverside, a full-fledged station in the Flats, and at another flag stop at North Underhill in their efforts to travel to Burlington or to Cambridge Junction for connecting trains to Montreal or Portland, Maine. Freight-wise the railroad carried mail, transported cattle, sheep, milk, butter, maple sugar and maple syrup in barrels. Lumber from several Underhill sawmills was also shipped to the huge lumber yards on the Lake Champlain waterfront in Burlington. In the middle-late 1800's nearly five million board feet of lumber was shipped from the Underhill station in the Flats, along with some 60,000 pounds of butter and some 15,000 pounds of potatoes.

Perhaps one of the B&L's finest moments occurred in 1906 when a special train with a Burlington fire engine aboard raced to aid Underhill to put out a fire that threatened to destroy the Flats. The time of the trip was 35 minutes. However, it is understood that the fire was under control by the time the train arrived, thanks to the fine efforts of the Underhill bucket brigade.

Underhill had two trackside creameries. The Borden Company had a facility in the Flats, located between the depot and Park Street. The other creamery was a Cloverdale located at the Route 15 crossing just north of the Underhill-Westford town line.

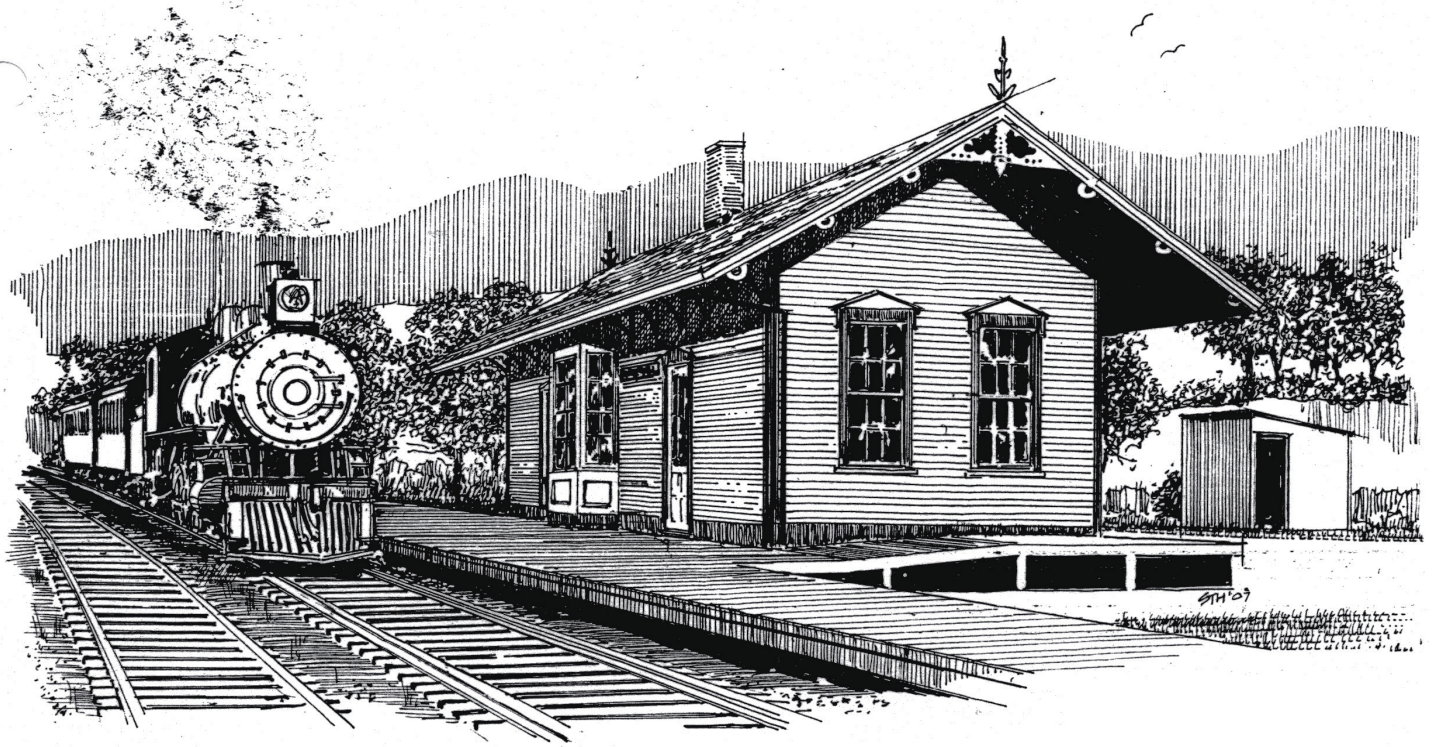
Originally a flag stop for the railroad, the North Underhill station was built in 1914 as a two story structure. A short distance across North Underhill Station Road, heading towards Cambridge from the station, was a water tower for the steam engine tenders. A little beyond the tower was a boarding house for train crews. Farther up the line, about half way between the North Underhill Station and the railroad crossing at the Cloverdale route 15 crossing, was a track siding for cordwood that was used for the early wood-burning locomotives. Cordwood, cut in four foot lengths in various woodlots along Poker Hill Road, was transported by teams of horses or oxen to trackside. The cordwood was then resawn, stacked, and loaded onto locomotive tenders.

The stretch of railroad bed paralleling Route 15 along the present wetlands was often in difficult repair because of the marshy ground. Many derailments over the years were caused by flooding and washouts. The most famous derailment was that of a locomotive that went into the swamp in December of 1910. Even though stories exist to the day that the engine is still there, such is simply not true. Engine No. 328, after considerable effort, was extracted the following spring.

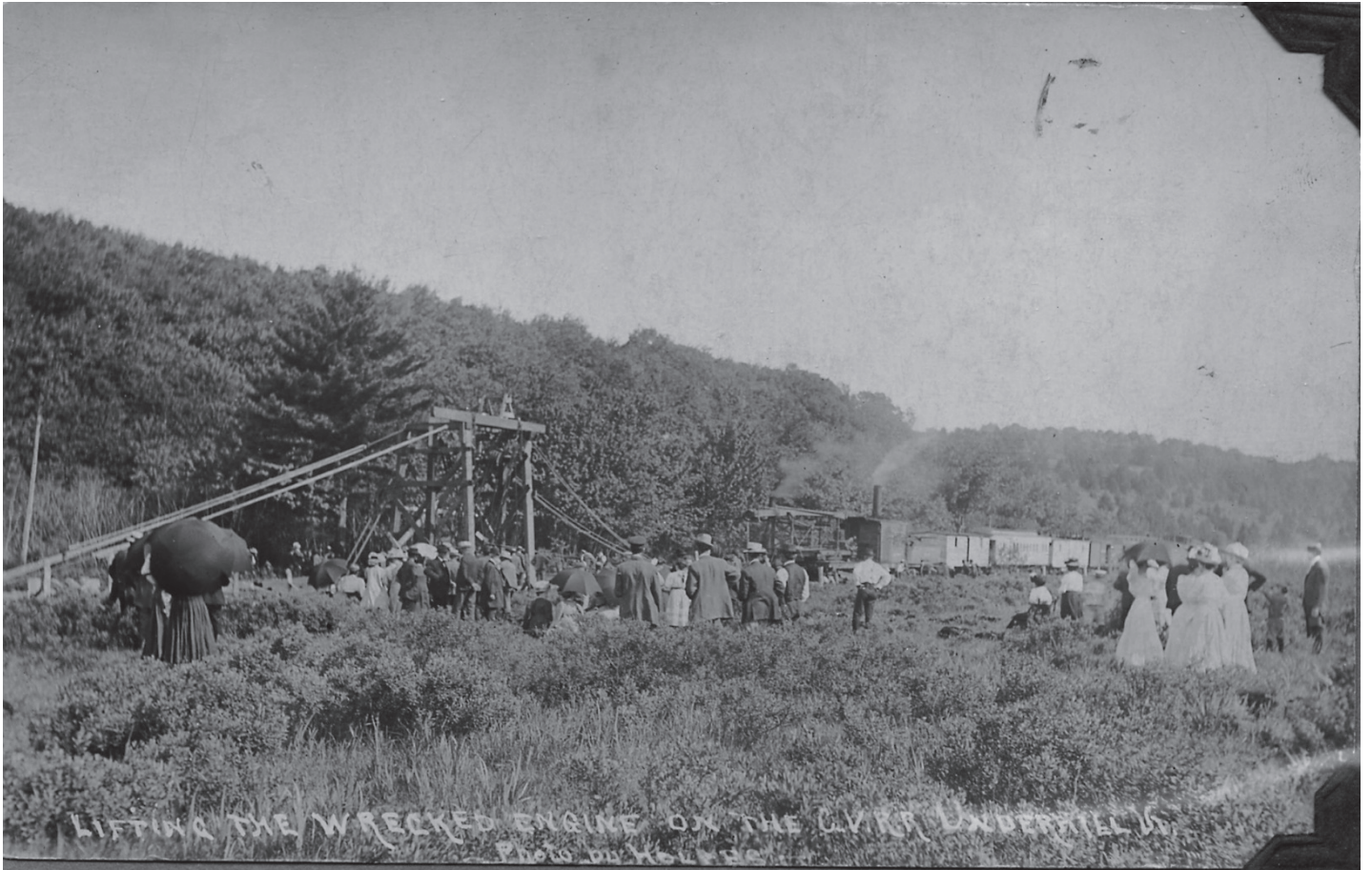
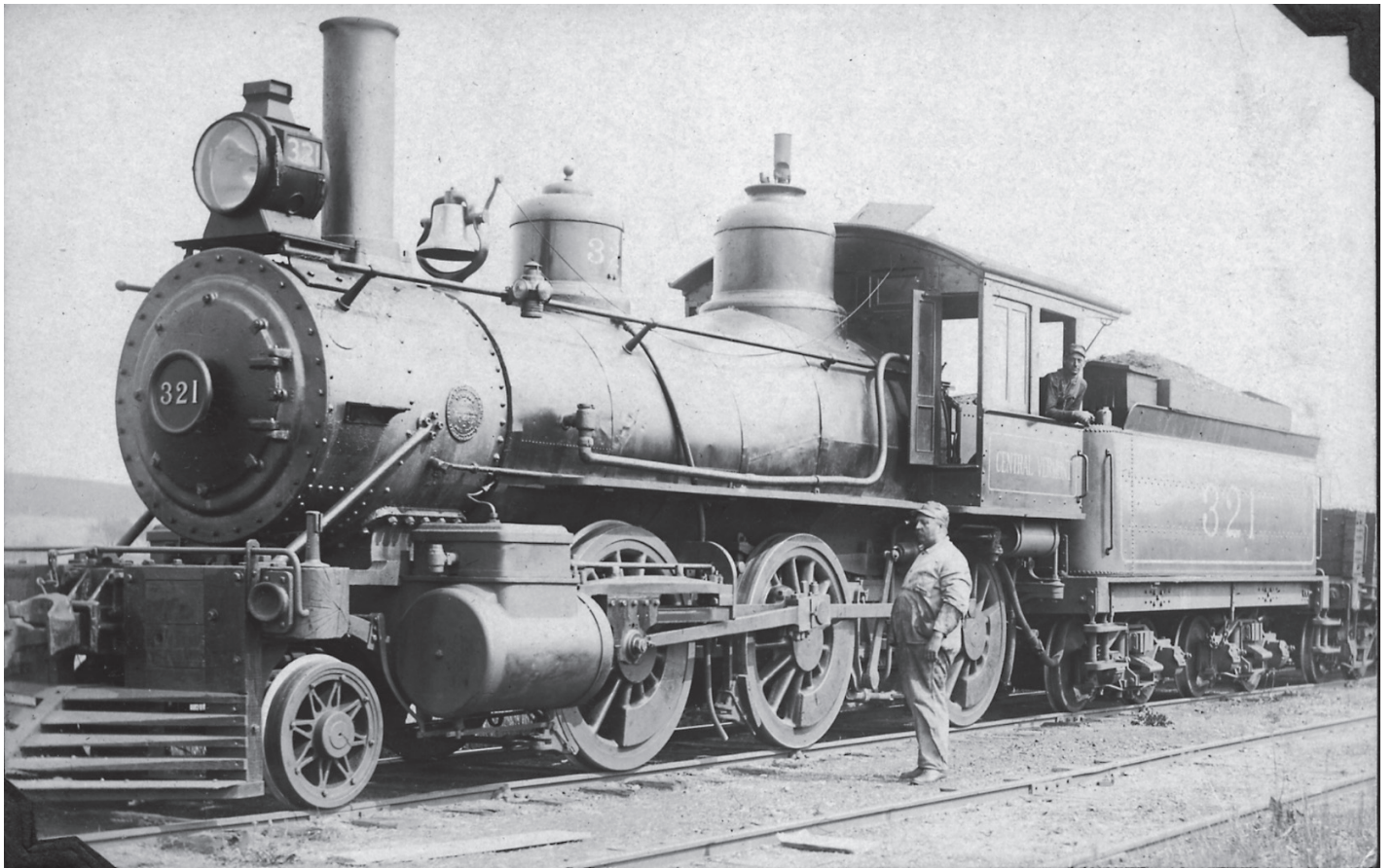
Only one person was killed on the B & L during its 60-year operation. In March of 1902, following a period of heavy rain, a section of the roadbed near Cloverdale failed under the evening train. The baggage and passenger cars tipped over and slid down a 16-foot embankment. A four year old child was thrown across the car he was riding in and received fatal injuries.

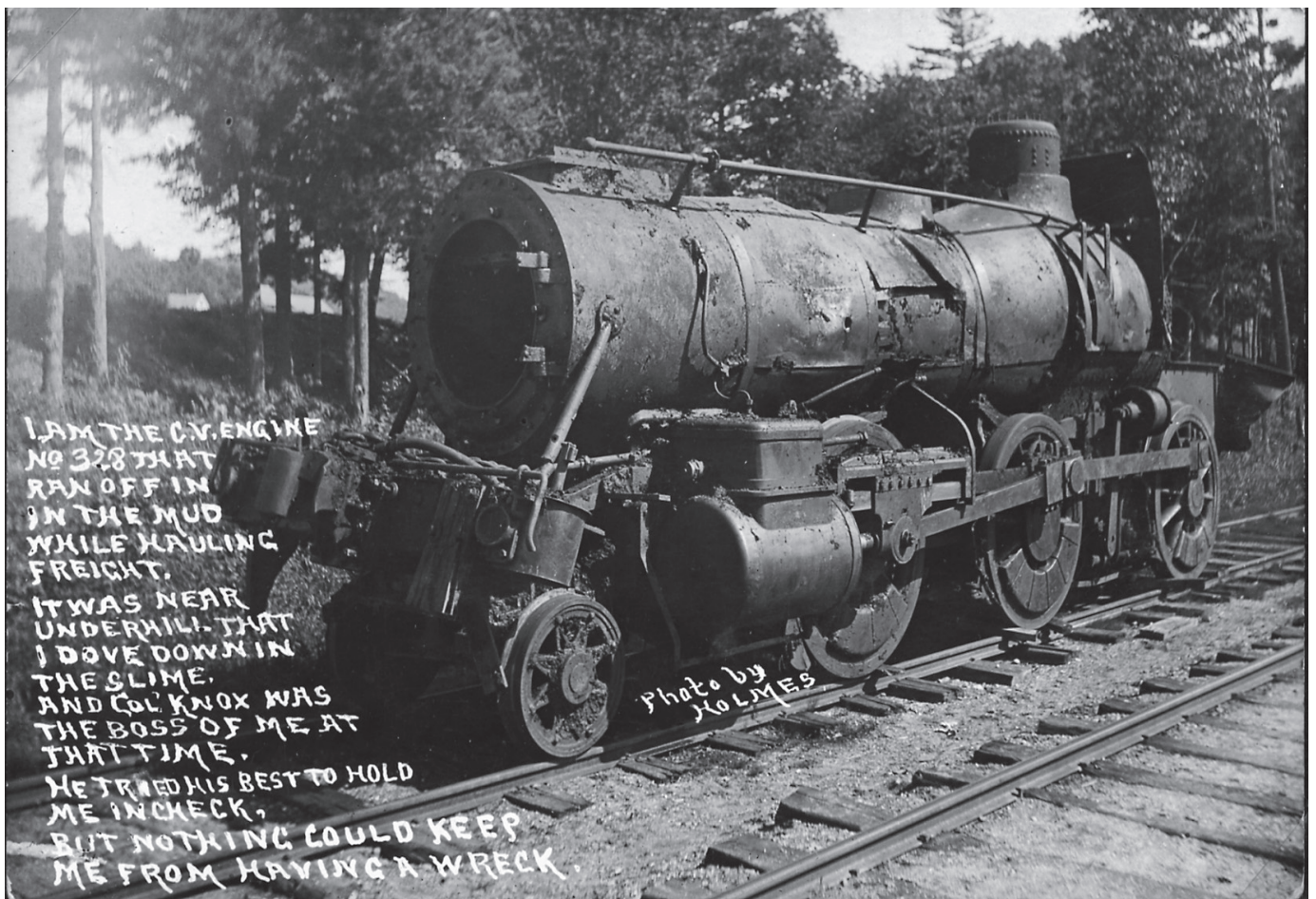
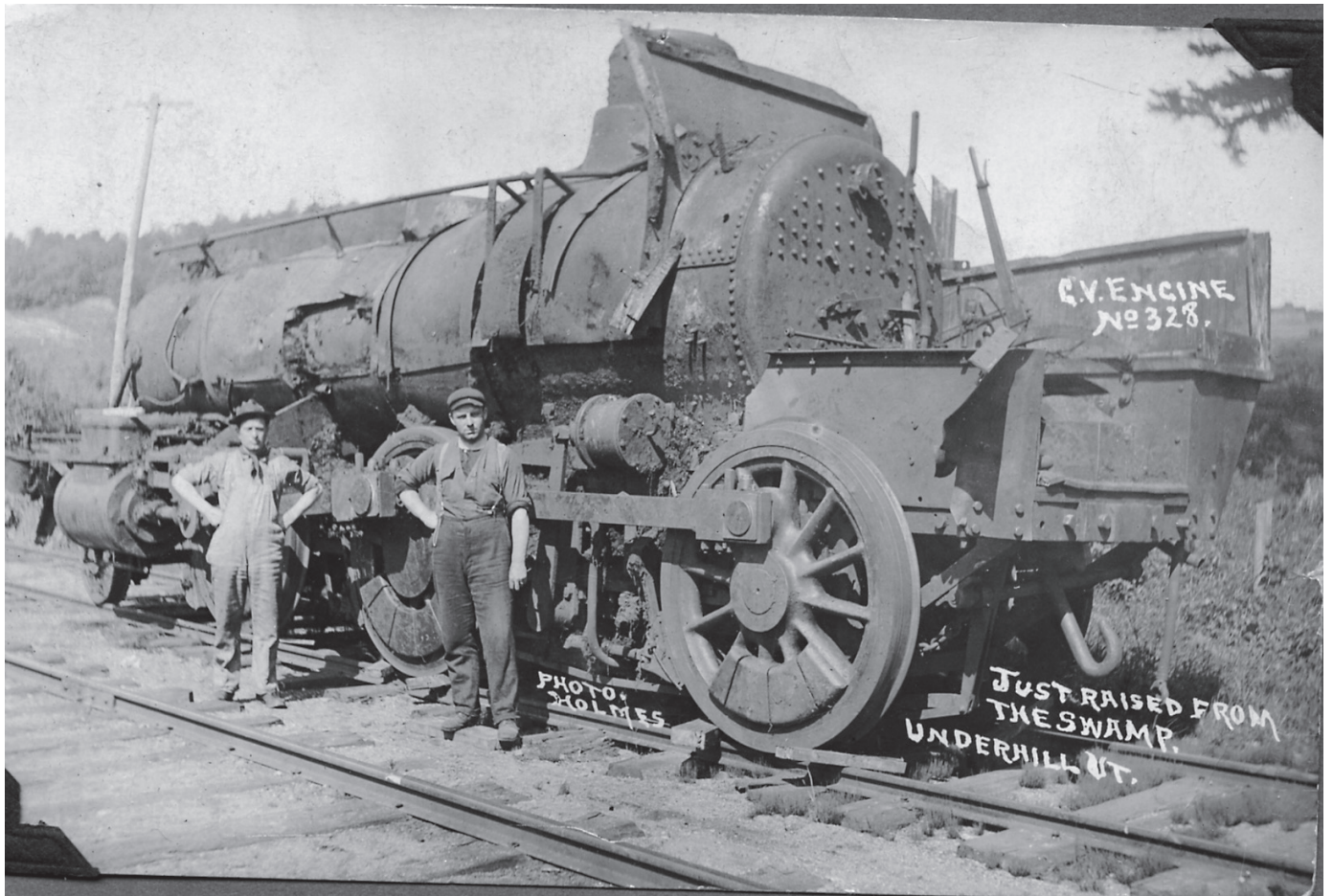
Business was brisk on the B & L during the 1920's. In May of 1926 the St. J. & L.C. began delivering milk to the B & L at Cambridge Junction. Trains were added to the timetable to handle the business. In 1927 heavy Central Vermont 400 class 2-8-0 locomotives appeared on the B & L thus making it possible to consolidate these trains. Unfortunately, however, the St. J. & L.C. discontinued the milk deliveries in November of 1929, preferring to carry the business to St. Johnsbury where the Canadian Pacific shipped the milk to Boston. The loss of this business was a crucial blow to the B & L. It perhaps signaled the beginning of the end of the railroad.

During the depression years of the 1930's B & L traffic declined drastically because of the economic climate along with the increase of automobiles and trucks on Vermont roads. By 1937,



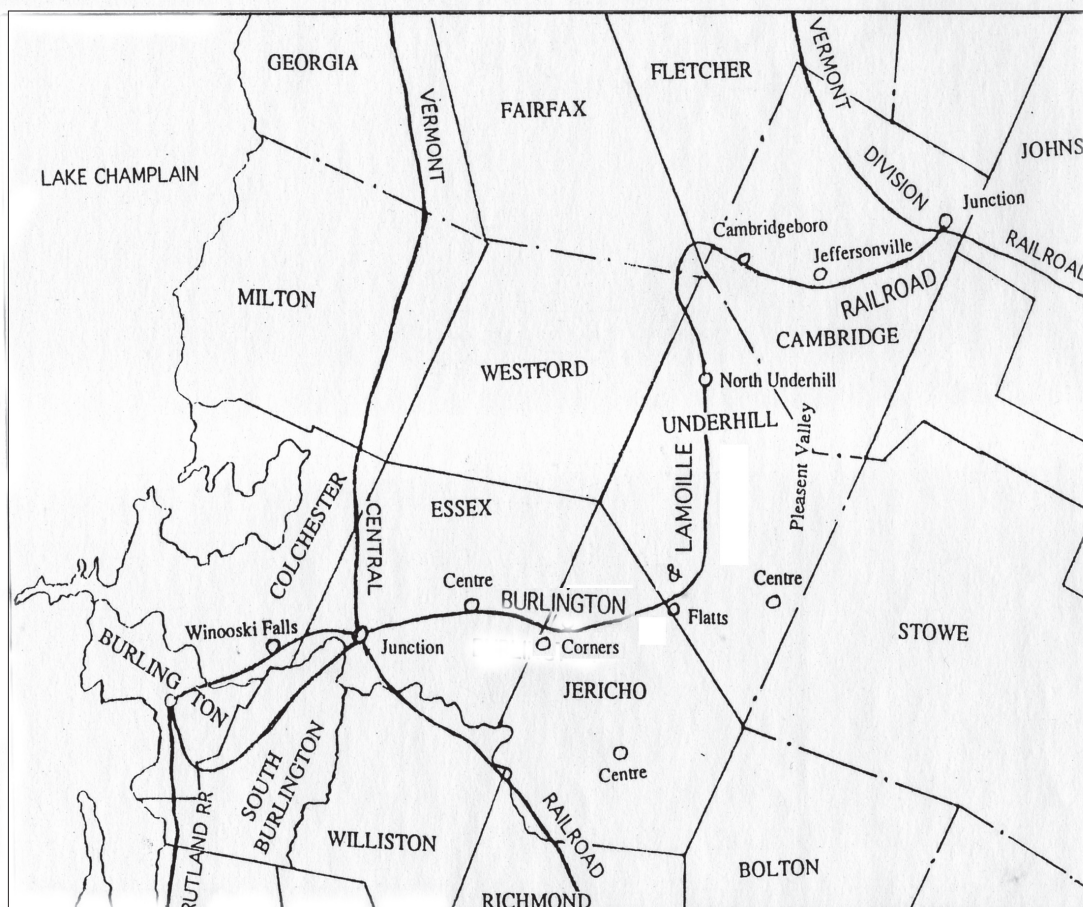








Railroad Bridge over the Brown's River



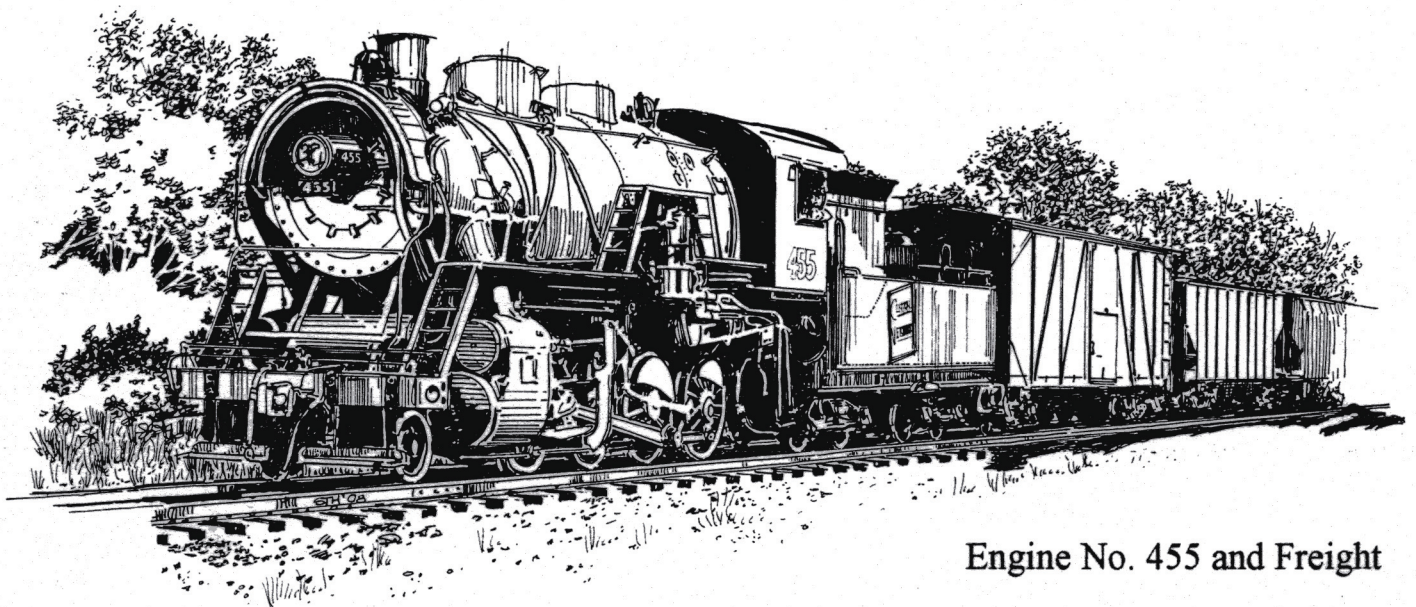
The route of the Burlington & Lamoille Railroad: Adapted from County and Township Map of the States of New Hampshire and Vermont. (Philadelphia: S.A. Mitchell, 1879)

the Central Vermont sought abandonment which the ICC granted with unusual haste. The last train ran on the 16th of June, 1938, with 20 passengers aboard, two of whom had been passengers on the B & L 61 years earlier. One of those passengers was Mrs. Lillian Cross, mother of Earl Cross who was responsible for his many photos of the B & L, some of which currently grace the walls of the Underhill Town Hall.

Dismantling operations began almost immediately and were completed before the year was out. It might be noted that much of the grade is still visible along Route 15 from Essex through Jericho and Underhill, and on to Cambridge and Jeffersonville. Also, interestingly enough, all the B & L stations on the line – Essex, Jericho, Underhill Flats, North Underhill, Cambridge and Jeffersonville are extant and are residences, with several in very good repair.

Stan Hamlet

Sources: Bob Jones, *History of the Central Vermont Railroad*, Volumes III and IV.
Loraine S. Dwyer, *History of Underhill*, (1970)
Various periodicals on the Burlington & Lamoille Railroad.

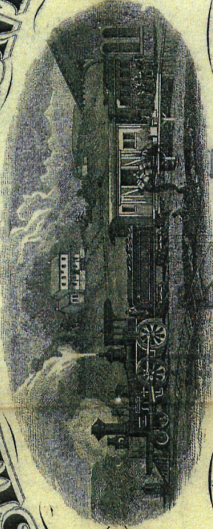


Engine No. 455 and Freight

The

6 PER CENT AUTHORIZED
LOAN BOND ACT BY LAW

REDEEMABLE
AFTER FIVE & PAYABLE TWENTY
YEARS FROM DATE.



THE BOOK OF THE

Know all men in and out of the Town of Underhill
that I, **JOHN W. UNDERHILL**, the said Town Clerk,
do hereby certify and hereby make public that the sum of
ONE HUNDRED DOLLARS lawful money of the United States
is indebted and hereby is made payable to the order of
the said **JOHN W. UNDERHILL**, Town Clerk, for the sum of
one hundred dollars, and that the same is hereby
received and paid to the said **JOHN W. UNDERHILL**,
Town Clerk, on the presentation of the proper coupons, each amount of
one year on the said **JOHN W. UNDERHILL**, Town Clerk, after the fifteen days of March, 1888.

[illegible]

Countersigned by

Edward Llanafod
Treasurer.

*Commissioners
of the Town of
Underhill.*

A decorative banner with a repeating zig-zag pattern. The text "IN AID OF B. & O. R.R." is written across it in a stylized, serif font. The banner is framed by ornate scrollwork and floral patterns.

THE TOWN OF THUNDERHILL