

The B&M operated in all 3 Northern New England States, but most of the track and service was in New Hampshire. The B&M also operated in Massachusetts and New York. In 1983, the railroad had 1574 miles of track. 46 miles were in Maine, 103 in Vermont and 600 in New Hampshire.

The main line of the B&M was Portland, ME to Rotterdam Jct., NY, travelling mostly through Massachusetts. However, a second main line was the 224 mile Connecticut River Line from Springfield, MA north along the Connecticut River, sharing some trackage with the CV. From White River Jct. north to Wells River, the line continues as B&M and then crosses into New Hampshire for the run up to the paper mills in Groveton and Berlin.

In southern New Hampshire, a series of enchanting branch lines, many featuring covered railroad bridges, entered from various points to serve small customers and small towns:

- The Ashuelot Branch went from Brattleboro, VT east to Keene, NH.
- The Conway Branch left the Portland mainline and traveled north up to Ossipee (at one time going all the way to Conway).
- The Portsmouth branch cut off the Portland mainline and headed towards the New Hampshire coast to serve Portsmouth, Kittery and Seabrook.
- The Hillsboro branch went northwest from Nashua, but only as far as Bennington, having been cut back from Hillsboro.
- The Goffstown branch, also leaving Nashua and travelling 8 miles to Goffstown.
- The Claremont branch, from the Conn River line east through Claremont to Concord
- The Pemigawasset Valley branch, from Concord north past Lake Winnipisaukee and to a paper mill in Lincoln
- Other branches, such as the Cheshire though Keene to Bellows Falls and the Peterboro, were out of service prior to the 1970s.

Freight carried by the B&M was largely from the forests of north. Pulp, paper and lumber made up over a third of all traffic. Other freight included food, plastic pellets, grain, gravel, sand, salt, cement, fuel, and chemicals.

B&M interchanges in Vermont include the Green Mountain in Bellows Falls. There are also pool trains operated with the CV and CP. An official CV interchange is at White River Junction, and the CP interchange is a little further north in Wells River.

In New Hampshire, the B&M Conn River Line interchanged with the Springfield Terminal in Charleston, Claremont & Concord in Claremont Jct., the Maine Central in Whitefield, the Grand Trunk in Groveton and the Berlin Mills Railway in Berlin.

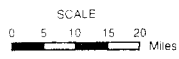
Off of the Conn River Line, other interchanges are with the Goodwin RR in Concord, NH (later New England Southern), the Wolfeboro RR in Sanbornville, NH and the Maine Central and Portland Terminal in Portland, Maine.

Locomotives used by the B&M in the 1970s and 1980s were almost exclusively EMD. Some older Alco RS3s, S1s, S2s and S3s were still around but were quickly being sold or scrapped. GP7s, GP9s and GP18s still were important main line locomotives, and F3s and F7s were still being used when extra power was needed. SW1, SW8, SW9 and NW2 switchers worked many of the yards and smaller branches. Sorely needed new power was added in the 1970s with the acquisition of



Boston & Maine

Circa 1983



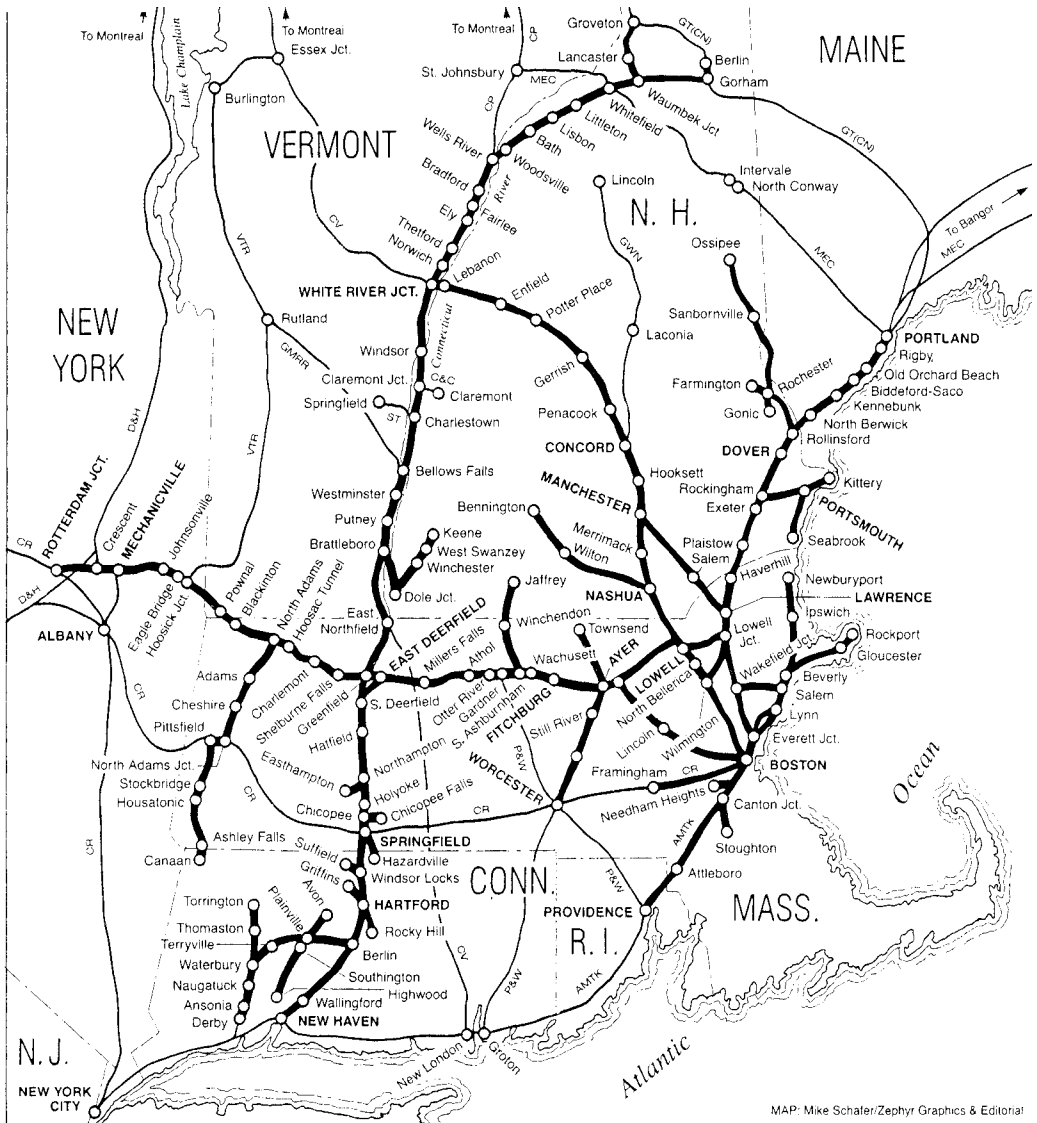
— B&M
— Other lines

Not all rail lines are shown

NOTES

Attleboro-Providence dropped 1981
Needham branch suspended 1979

- AMTK Amtrak
- C&C Claremont & Concord
- CN Canadian National
- CP Canadian Pacific
- CR Conrail
- CV Central Vermont
- D&H Delaware & Hudson
- GMRR Green Mountain Railroad
- GT Grand Trunk
- GWN Goodwin Railroad
- MEC Maine Central
- P&W Providence & Worcester
- ST Springfield Terminal



MAP: Mike Schaler/Zephyr Graphics & Editorial



PHOTO BY CAMERON GREENE

Three of the Boston & Maine's last new motive power, GP40-2s, are seen here in Rigby Yard in Portland, Maine. Photo by Cameron Greene.

The Claremont & Concord started out as a small electric railway created to move passengers and freight to a nearby Boston & Maine connection. In 1953, the Claremont was sold to Samuel Pinsley, a short line entrepreneur. The following year, Pinsley negotiated the purchase of the entire Claremont branch from the B&M. Thus the C&C was born, as a shortline running 62 miles from Claremont Junction all the way to Concord.

GE 70 tonners and 44 tonners painted in the Pinsley family red with black stripes and yellow lettering were used. These replaced the electric locomotives and all overhead wiring in Claremont was removed. Customers included a few paper mills, fuel dealers and various mills, factories and manufacturing companies.

A flood in 1958 wiped out a bridge just west of Concord and the line was cut back to Contoocook. The branch south of Contoocook to Henniker was removed when an Army Corps dam project was undertaken in 1963. With no customers, the line was scrapped all the way back to Newport. In 1977, the Newport to East Claremont section was abandoned and the line was now just a few miles long.

Customers continued to no longer need service, by closing up or converting to trucks. Then in 1987, an enginehouse fire destroyed the 3 remaining C&C 44 tonners. A trackmobile was used to move cars in the next few weeks, but a replacement 44 tonner was quickly purchased. As traffic continued to dry up, the railroad was put up for sale.

One of the lines remaining four customers, La Valley Building Supply purchased the line in 1988, renamed it the Claremont Concord RR and operated 2.5 miles of track from the B&M interchange to the La Valley property. A new enginehouse was built and one of the burned 44 tonners was restored. Operations occur on an as-needed basis.

The C-C continues to operate today for La Valley Building Supply and also does repair work for other railroads. It currently is under contract to restore and rebuild the B&M-MEC Flying Yankee for the State of New Hampshire. An occasional tourist extra is operated in the summer months.

To the west of Claremont, the track is no more, but 3 covered bridges remain on what are now hiking trails on the former right-of-way.

Selected Resources

Through Covered Bridges To Claremont, Edgar T. Mead (out of print)
New England Shortlines 1970-1980, Tom Nelligan (available from amazon.com)

The Claremont & Concord Pt. 1, November 1993 Railroad Model Craftsman, p. 62-69
The Claremont & Concord Pt. 2, December 1993 Railroad Model Craftsman, p. 100-107
The Claremont & Concord Pt. 3, January 1994 Railroad Model Craftsman, p. 80-84
Light Rails Around Claremont, December 1987 Railpace, page 22-28

Railfan Site: <http://www.nh.ultranet.com/~petlick/clco.htm>

Flying Yankee site: <http://www.flyingyankee.com/>

In 1977, the Maine Central ceased operations of its Beecher Falls branch, from North Stratford, NH to the end of the line in Beecher Falls, VT. The State of New Hampshire purchased the rail line for \$310,000 and the North Stratford Railroad Company was created by a former owner of the White Mountain Central tourist RR to operate the line.

The Maine Central's Beecher Falls branch was an extension off of the Mountain Division. The branch diverted north at Quebec Junction and went north in NH and Vermont to get to North Stratford. From there, Maine Central trackage crossed the Grand Trunk and continued north to Beecher Falls. At one time the line extended as far as Lime Ridge, Quebec, but this was taken out of service in 1925. In 1949, the parallel line between North Stratford and Lancaster was abandoned in favor of trackage rights over the GT and B&M. Throughout the 1970s, the MEC wanted to divest itself of this unprofitable rail line. A washout in 1973 didn't help matters, and the line did shut down for 17 months. The ICC finally let the MEC cease operations in 1977, when the state of NH and the NSRC took over.

The North Stratford Railroad's main customer was the Ethan Allen Furniture factory in Beecher Falls. Boxcars of furniture were brought down the line and interchanged with the Grand Trunk. Occasionally, boxcars of furniture sub-assemblies also traveled back to the Beecher Falls plant. An on-line Agway store also received feed in bulk and bagged. Unfortunately, this traffic was diverted to trucks in 1984.

NSRC operated 100 rebuilt 40' boxcars, numbered 400 through 499, painted green with a large state of New Hampshire, the Old Man In The Mountains and the state motto, "Live Free Or Die". These cars were frequently seen on other railroads throughout New England and the US as they hauled finished furniture to Ethan Allen distribution points.

Two locomotives served the railroad. An ex-US Army GE 44 tonner, #76, and an ex-MEC Alco S1, #959, were painted in a green scheme with a light green stripe and the NSRC logo. #76 was named Arch McDonnell for a famous railroad artist from New Hampshire. #959 was named George



Map from Prototype Modeler article

Van Dyke for the lumber baron who created the rail line from North Stratford to Beecher Falls in the 1880's.

The ex-MEC facilities in Beecher Falls included a single stall roundhouse (reduced from 3) and a turntable. These were used by the railroad to store and service the locomotives.

Operations usually occurred 2 days a week. On Wednesday, all of the loaded boxcars were pulled out of the plant and empties were spotted in the enclosed loading track. The boxcars were then taken to the small yard in Beecher Falls. On Thursday, the train departed Beecher Falls for North Stratford and the interchange with the GT. Loaded cars were spotted and the empties were pulled onto the train. After lunch, the train returned to Beecher Falls.

Usually the 44 tonner was used because of its greater fuel economy. The Alco was used whenever heavier tonnage dictated.

It is interesting to note that the State of New Hampshire owned the rail line and helped subsidize the railroad, but the main customer and the engine facilities were both located in neighboring Vermont.

Today

The NSRC operated the 25 mile rail line from 1977 until 1989 when the Ethan Allen plant shut down. Since 1993, the New Hampshire Central has leased a portion of the line from North Stratford to Columbia. A new sand and gravel operation, a new fuel facility and a new NHC-operated railcar repair facility generate most of the traffic now.

The New Hampshire Central started operations using the same NSRC GE 44 tonner, repainting it into a yellow and black scheme and renumbering it 360. Later, a chop nose GP16 (ex-SAL GP9) was added to the roster and painted red with a white stripe, numbered 1732. Interchange still occurs in North Stratford, now with the GT's successor, the St. Lawrence & Atlantic. The S1 959 is still in service, now on the Hobo Railroad in Lincoln, NH.

Selected Resources

New England Shortlines 1970-1980, Tom Nelligan (available from amazon.com)

Maine Central Mountain Division, Ron Johnson, 1986

North Stratford RR, June/July 1985 Prototype Modeler, p. 21-27

Railfan Site: <http://www.nh.ultranet.com/~petlick/nhcr.htm>

NSRC 44 Tonner #76 sits in the weeds near the end of the railroad's existence. But it will soon be repainted and operating again on these lines, but further south for the New Hampshire Central.

