

Part II

The Montpelier & Wells River Railroad 1867 to 1956

Wells River, Vermont

-Growth of a Transportation Hub-

1810

***Hartford, Connecticut to Wells River
Connecticut River Flat Boat Traffic.***

November 6, 1848

***The Connecticut & Passumpsic Rivers Railroad
Opened from White River Junction to Wells River.***

May 1, 1867

The C&PRR finally reached the Canadian Border above Newport, Vt.

November 24, 1873

***Montpelier & Wells River Railroad
Opened from Montpelier to Wells River***



***Typical Connecticut River Flat Boat
Maximum of 72 Feet Long X 11 Feet Wide; 2 to 3 Ft of Draft;
Crew of 7***



***The Coosuck House
Wells River Village***

The Connecticut & Passumpsic Rivers **Railroad**

First Incorporated in November 10, 1835.

***Became part of the Boston & Maine Railroad
system in 1893.***

***The track north of Wells River became part of the
Canadian Pacific Railroad in 1926.***

Erastus Fairbanks



1792 – 1864

***Founder of E & T Fairbanks
& Company ,***

***a scale manufacturer
located in***

St. Johnsbury, Vermont.

***21st Governor of Vermont
1852 – 53.***

***Director of the Connecticut
& Passumpsic Rivers
Railroad.***



***The Vermont Central Railroad's first depot building at Montpelier
Opened January 1852 at a cost of \$7,000***

The Montpelier & Wells River Railroad

Chartered November 6, 1867

Opened Montpelier to Wells River on November 24, 1873

1911 became operated by the Boston & Maine Railroad

1926 returned to Local Control in Montpelier

1945 re-organized as the Barre & Chelsea Railroad

Headquartered at Montpelier, Vermont

38 Miles Long

Financing the Construction of the Montpelier & Wells River Railroad

- ***The state charter authorized the company to issue \$500,000 in capitol stock.***
- ***Stock subscription books opened January 11, 1869.***
 - ***Town of Montpelier bonded for \$200,000.***
 - ***Town of Plainfield bonded for \$19,000.***
 - ***Town of Marshfield bonded for \$17,500.***
 - ***Town of Groton bonded for \$18,000.***
 - ***Wells River ? No record known.***

The Contract for Constructing the Montpelier & Wells River Railroad

- ***October 12, 1870 contract awarded to Norman C. Munson Company of Boston, MA.***
 - ***To build 38 miles of main line and 2 miles of sidings.***
 - ***Contract price of \$1,065,000. = \$26,625 per mile.***
- ***Munson agreed to accept \$400,000 in cash and \$665,000 in M&W Bonds.***
- ***Munson agreed to put up \$200,000 in a performance bond.***

Constructing the Montpelier & Wells River Railroad

Ground breaking at Montpelier fall 1870.

February 1871 six miles of rough grading was completed.

November 1, 1871 grading had reached Kinney's Mills near the summit of the road in Groton.

During 1871 the line of the road was relocated at Marshfield.

Rails opened from Montpelier to Plainfield on July 12, 1873.

September 10, 1873 last rail spiked into place at a point about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile below the Lake House in Groton.

November 24, 1873 the line opened from Montpelier to Wells River.



***Early Steam Powered Shovel Working at South Ryegate
Montpelier & Wells River Railroad
1873***

Cuts and Fills Approaching Wells River

***Looking West Towards
Boltonville***



Looking West From Bible Hill



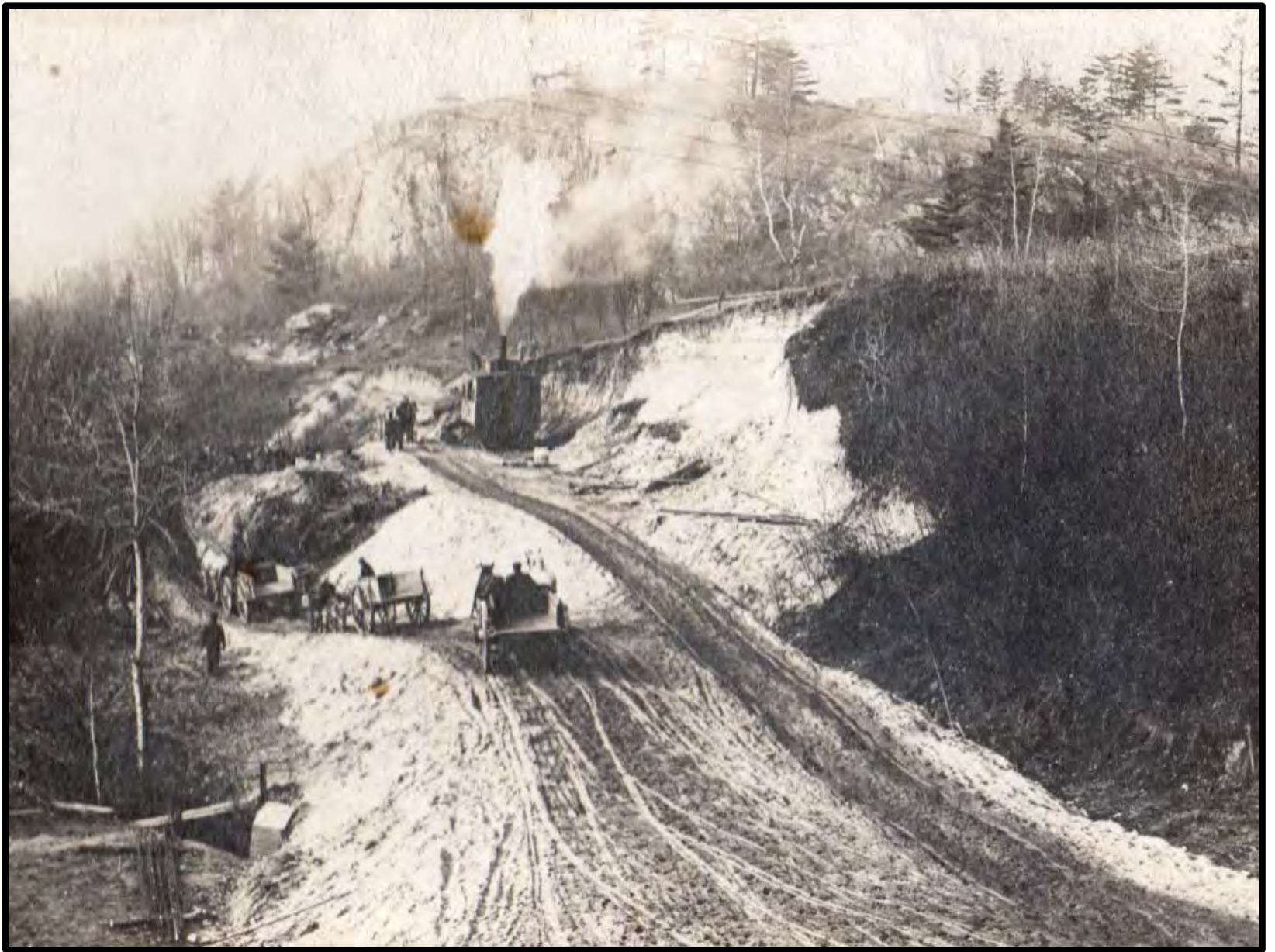
Getting the Montpelier & Wells River Railroad down into Wells River

***A Construction Fill
Looking East***



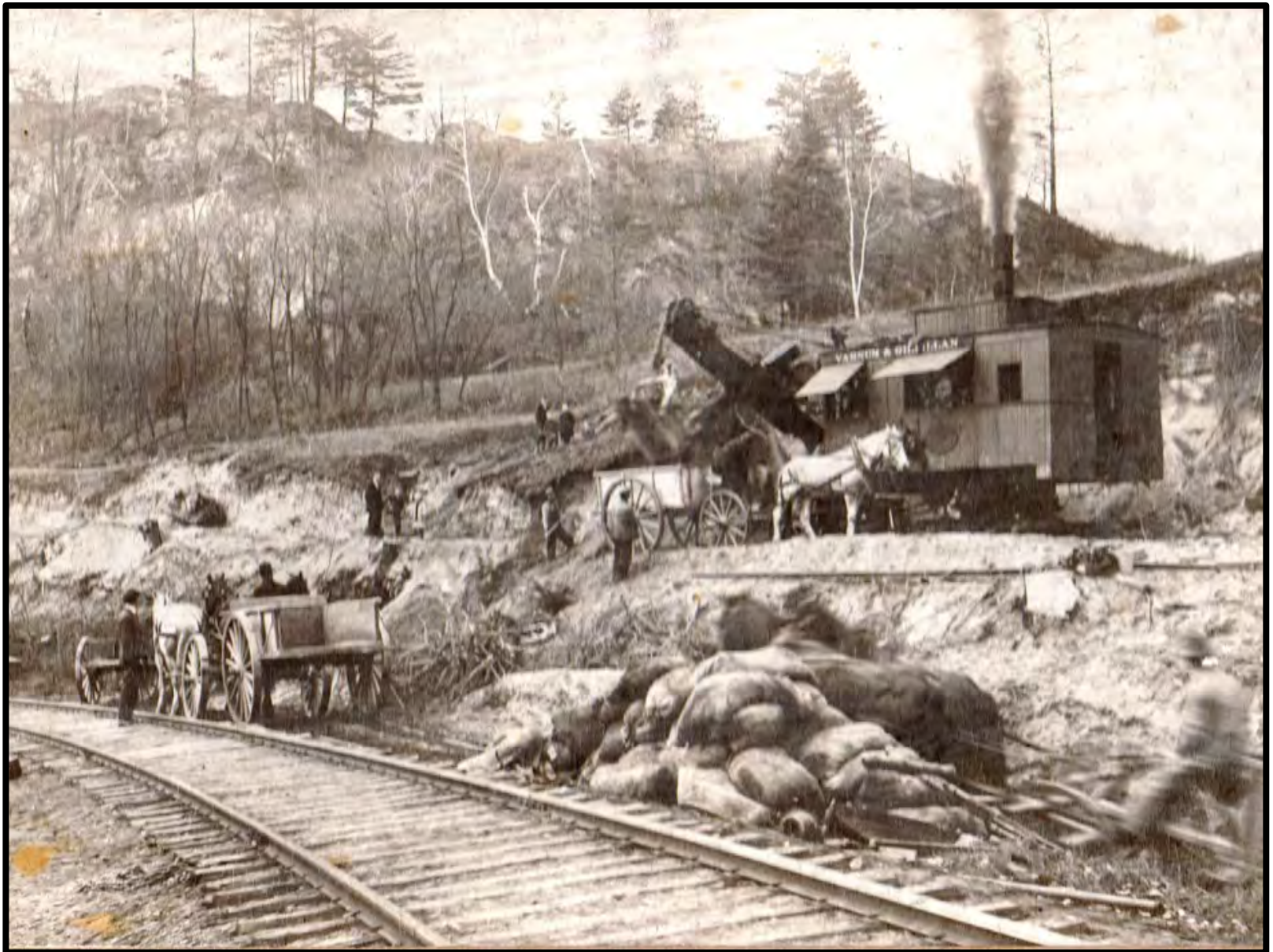
***The Rock Cut at Bible Hill
Looking West***





Bible Hill at Wells River Overview Looking West

1873



***Bible Hill at Wells River Detail View Looking North
1873***

***From the Montpelier Argus and Patriot
describing the first train into Plainfield on
Saturday July 12, 1873:***

***“At about 4 o’clock P. M. the first train moved
up to the depot in superb style, when it
received a salute of forty guns, which was
responded to by the whistle of the locomotive.
The citizens of the town and vicinity were
joyful over the event, for there is no point on
the line of this railroad that is likely to receive
greater benefit than this.”***

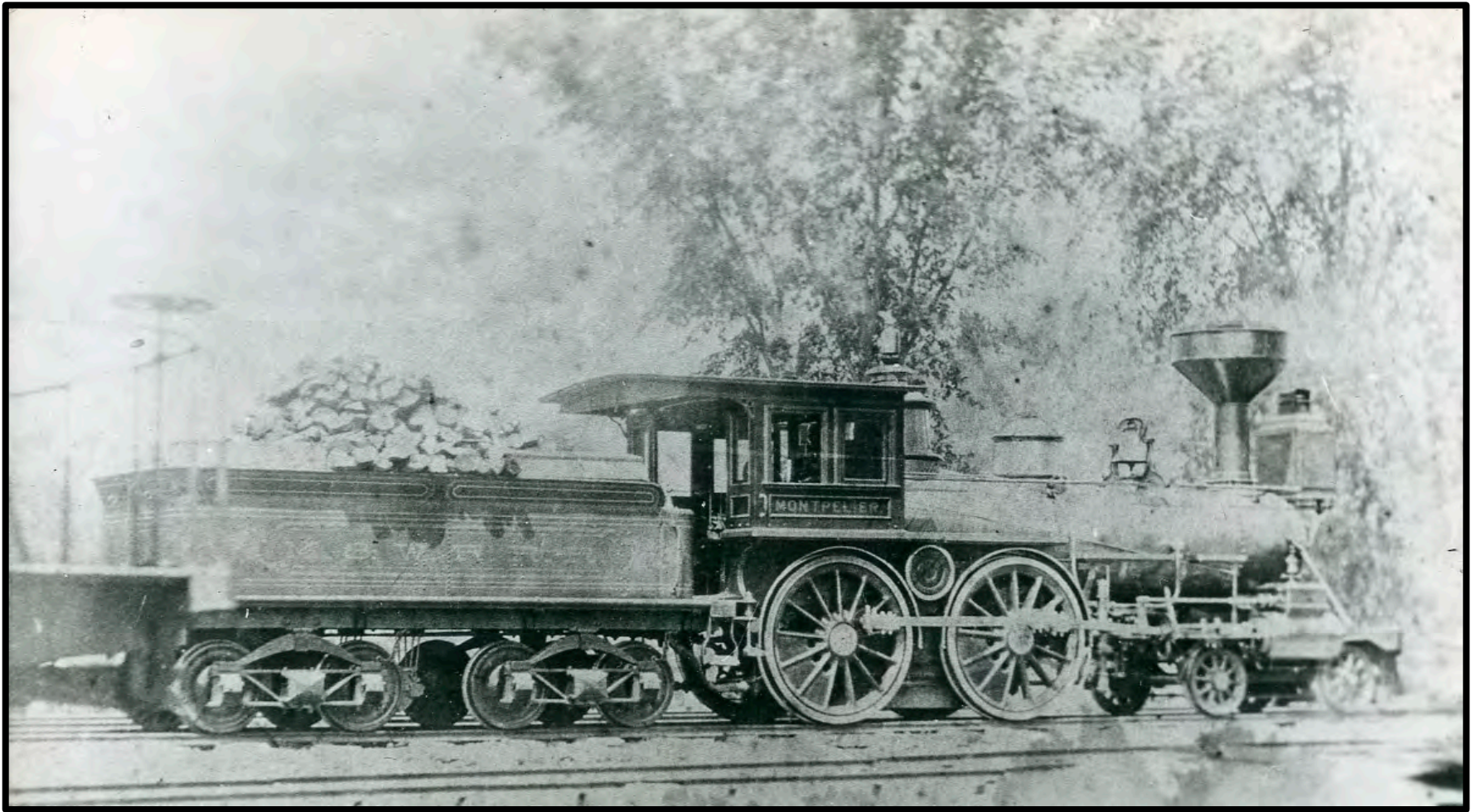
November 24, 1873

**Through Train Service Commenced Between
Montpelier and Wells River**

Train # 1: Mail – Lv Mtplr @ 7:30 AM - Arr Wells River @ 9:45 AM
3: Mixed “ 4:20 PM - “ 8:25 PM

2: Mixed – Lv Wells River @ 10:35 AM - Arr Mtplr @ 2:00 PM
4: Mail “ 3:55 PM “ 6:20 PM

- **One round trip mail train a day with passenger service – no freight.**
 - 2:15 hours Montpelier to Wells River**
 - 2:25 hours Wells River to Montpelier**
- **One mixed (freight and passenger) round trip a day**
 - 4:05 hours Montpelier to Wells River**
 - 3:25 hours Wells River to Montpelier**



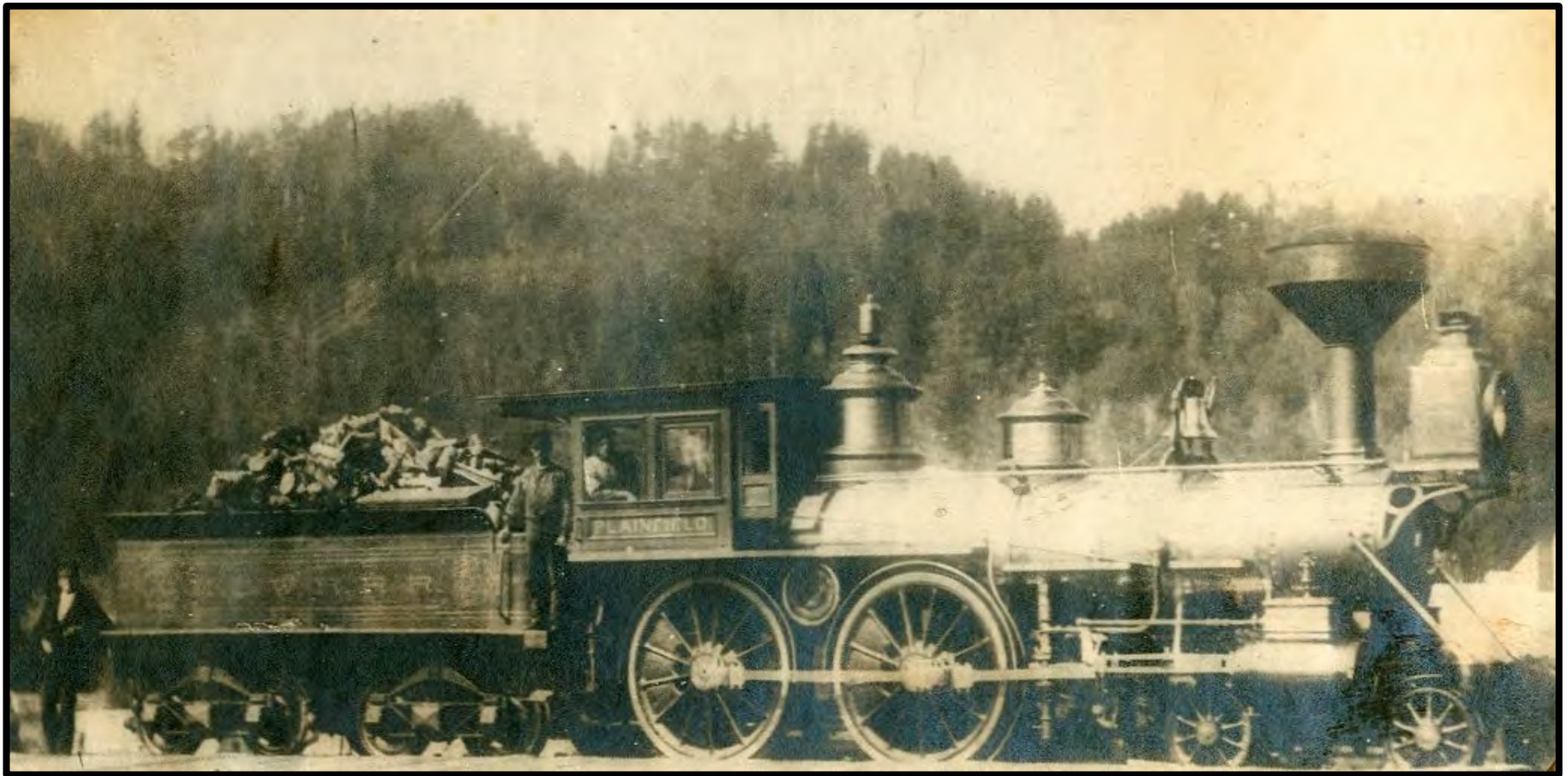
Locomotive #1 "Montpelier"

Built by Manchester April 18, 1873 and acquired June 23, 1873

14"X22" Cylinders and 60" Dia. Driving Wheels

Wrecked at East Montpelier August 23, 1876 and Rebuilt

Off the company roster by 1909



Locomotive #2 "Plainfield"

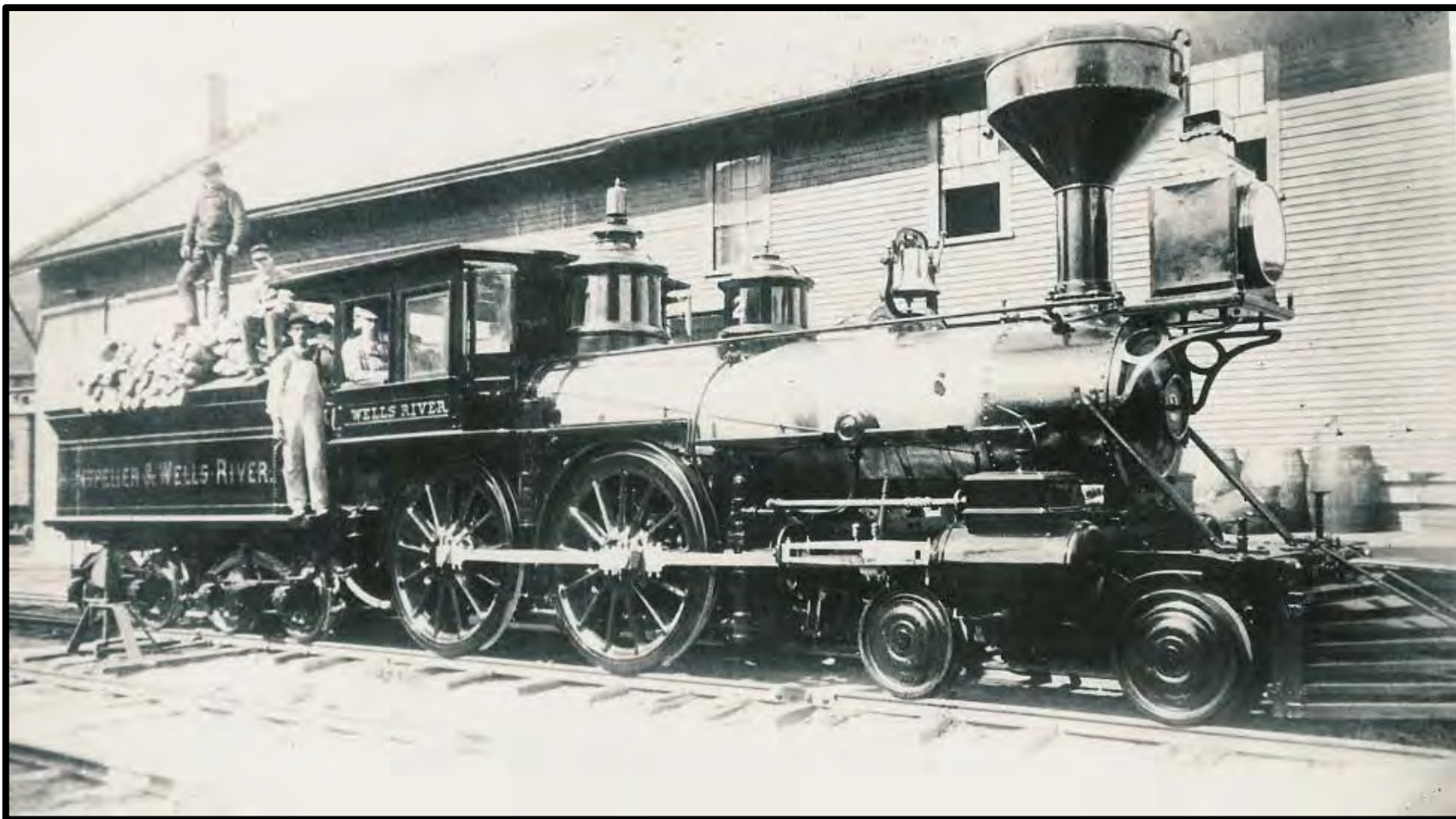
Built by Manchester April 18, 1873 and acquired June 23, 1873

14"X22" Cylinders and 60" Dia. Driving Wheels

Wrecked at Barre Junction September 25, 1876 and rebuilt

Renamed "Wells River" and changed to coal April 1, 1891

Off company roster by 1909



Locomotive #2 "Wells River"

***Weighed about 32 tons; Produced about 560 horse power at 20 MPH;
Comfortably traveled at about 25 to 30 miles per hour. Top speed of about
45 – 50 mph pulling 120 tons. Consumed about a cord of wood and 1,000 gallons of
water every twenty-five miles.***

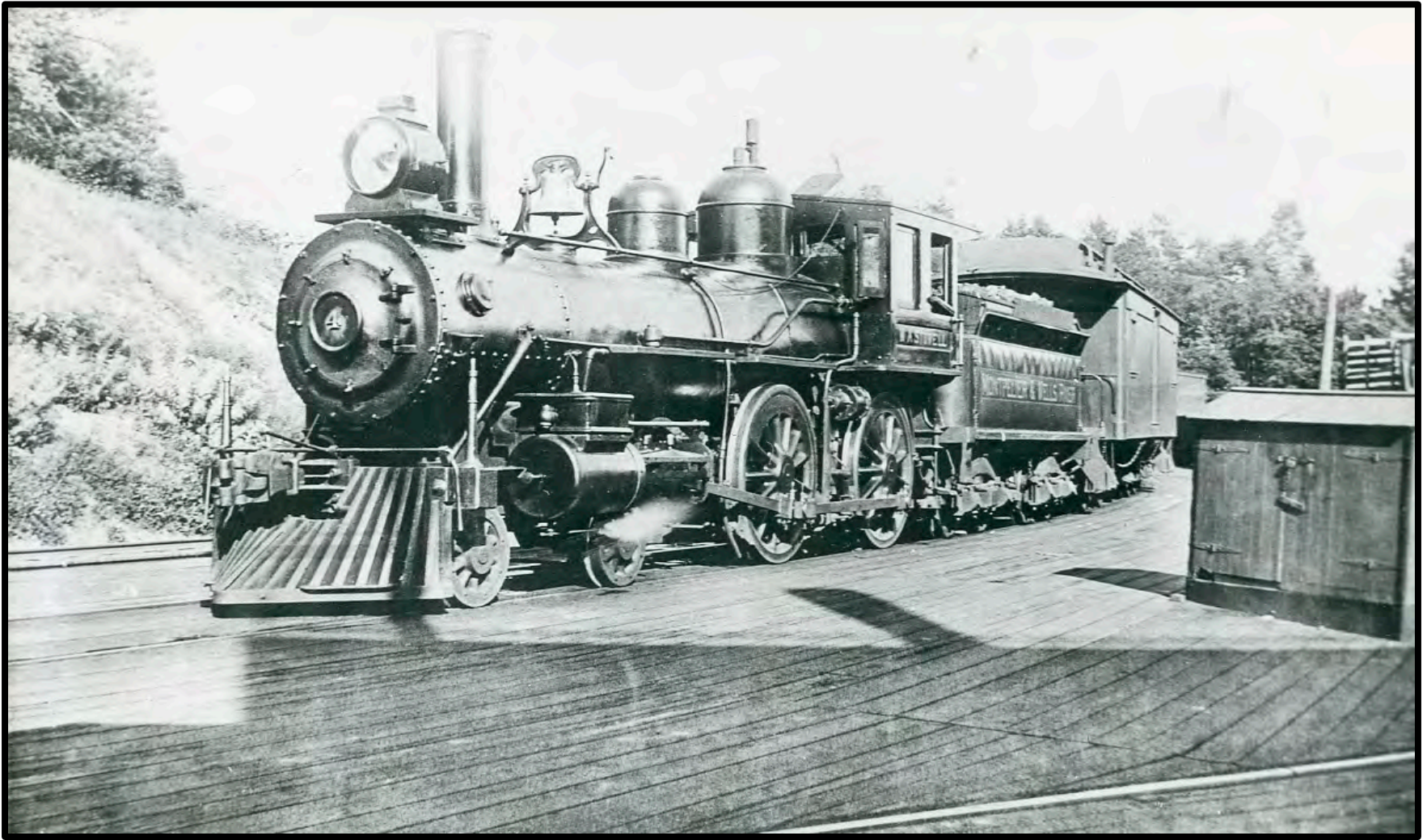


Head on collision a mile west of the East Montpelier Station

August 23, 1876

West bound locomotive #3 the "D. R. Sortwell" with a mail train (left)

East bound locomotive #1 the "Montpelier" with a mixed train (right)

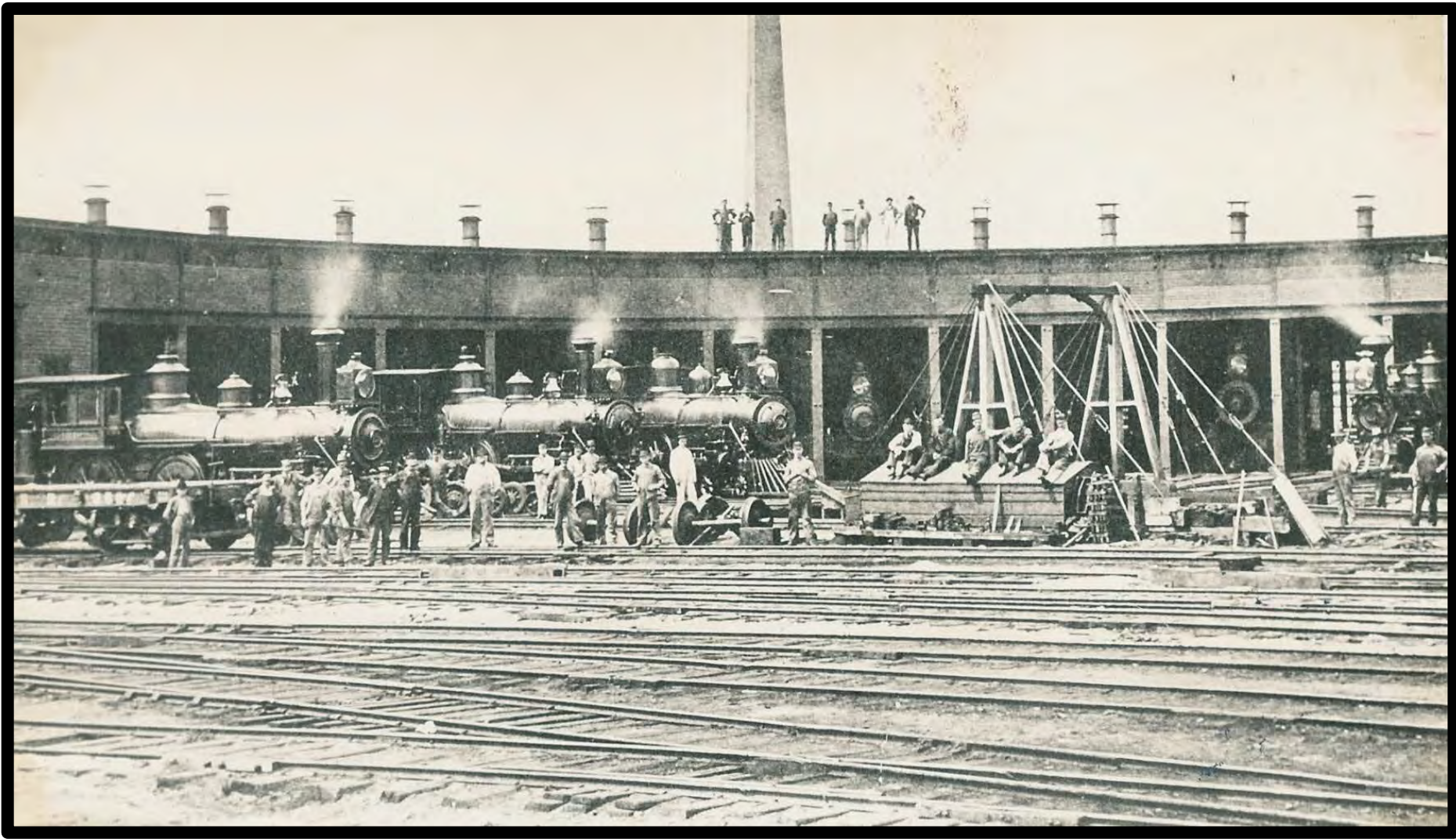


Locomotive #4 the "W. A. Stowell" at Wells River circa 1900

Built by Manchester in April 1885 and acquired by M&WRR in May 1885

63" Dia. Drivers and 16"X24" Cylinders

Rebuilt for coal 1890; Burned and Rebuilt 1907; Scrapped 1920



***Boston & Maine Railroad round house circa 1900
Woodsville, New Hampshire
The M&WRR kept locomotives here as well***



***The Woodville Engine House Completely Burned
May 15, 1907***

Two M&WRR and Five B&MRR Locomotives were destroyed



May 15, 1907
Woodsville Engine House Fire
One B&M locomotive ended up in the turntable pit



***The aftermath of the old Woodsville Engine House Fire.
The damaged locomotives were pulled out of town and
rebuilt in B&MRR shops at Concord, NH
and elsewhere.***

MONTPELIER & WELLS RIVER R. R.

SPECIAL POULTRY TRAIN!

— SHIPPERS OF —
Butter, Cheese, Eggs, and POULTRY,
Will be accommodated with a SPECIAL TRAIN,
Friday, Nov. 18th, 1881.

Leave	Montpelier,	-	-	-	-	8.00 A. M.
	East Montpelier,	-	-	-	-	8.45
	Plainfield,	-	-	-	-	9.15
	Marshfield,	-	-	-	-	10.15
	Peabody's,	-	-	-	-	10.32
	Groton,	-	-	-	-	11.00
	South Ryegate,	-	-	-	(Meets No. 4.)	11.17
	Boltonville,	-	-	-	-	12.10 P. M.
Arrive	Woodsville,	-	-	-	-	12.30

SPECIAL TRAIN leaves Woodsville 12.45 P. M., and arrives in Boston 7.30 A. M., Saturday, Nov. 19.

Freight must be at Depots at least ONE HOUR before the Train is due to leave, and Packages must be in GOOD ORDER, and PLAINLY and FULLY marked,—otherwise will not be taken on Special Train.

W. A. STOWELL, Supt.

Montpelier, November 14, 1881.

By the later nineteenth century:

The M&WRR helped to build a strong regional economy that included:

*dairy
poultry
logging
wood products
granite*

Many special excursion trains were also run to as far as Lake Winnepesaukee and the White Mountains in New Hampshire.

March 18, 1911

The Boston & Maine Railroad acquired the M&WRR

***The B&MRR was
first chartered to run in southern New Hampshire
June 27, 1835.***

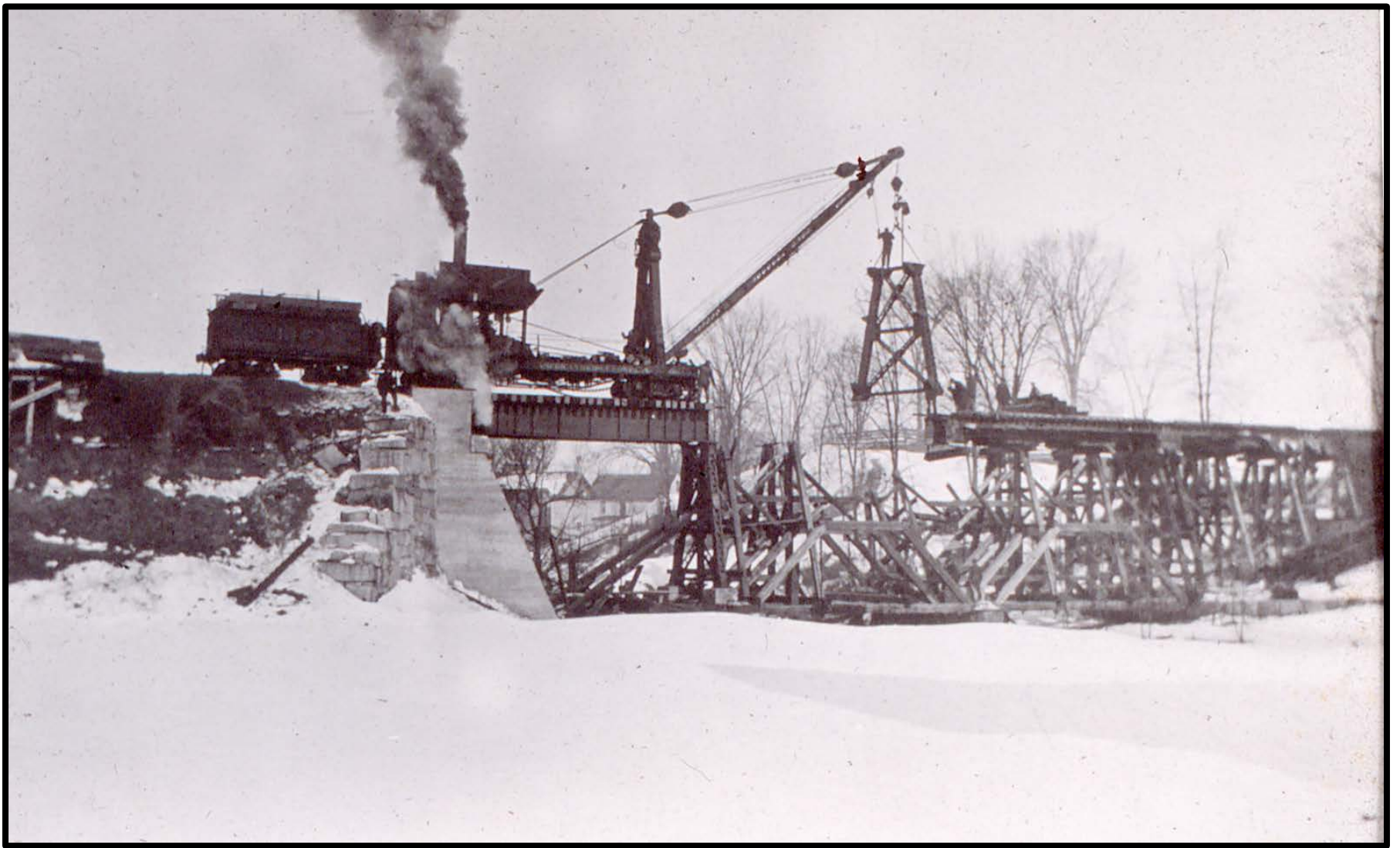
By 1900 the Boston & Maine Railroad:

- ***Was made up of 178 separate cooperations***
 - ***165 were chartered as railroads***
- ***111 were railroads that were actually built***

***The Boston & Maine Railroad was headquartered in Boston,
Massachusetts.***



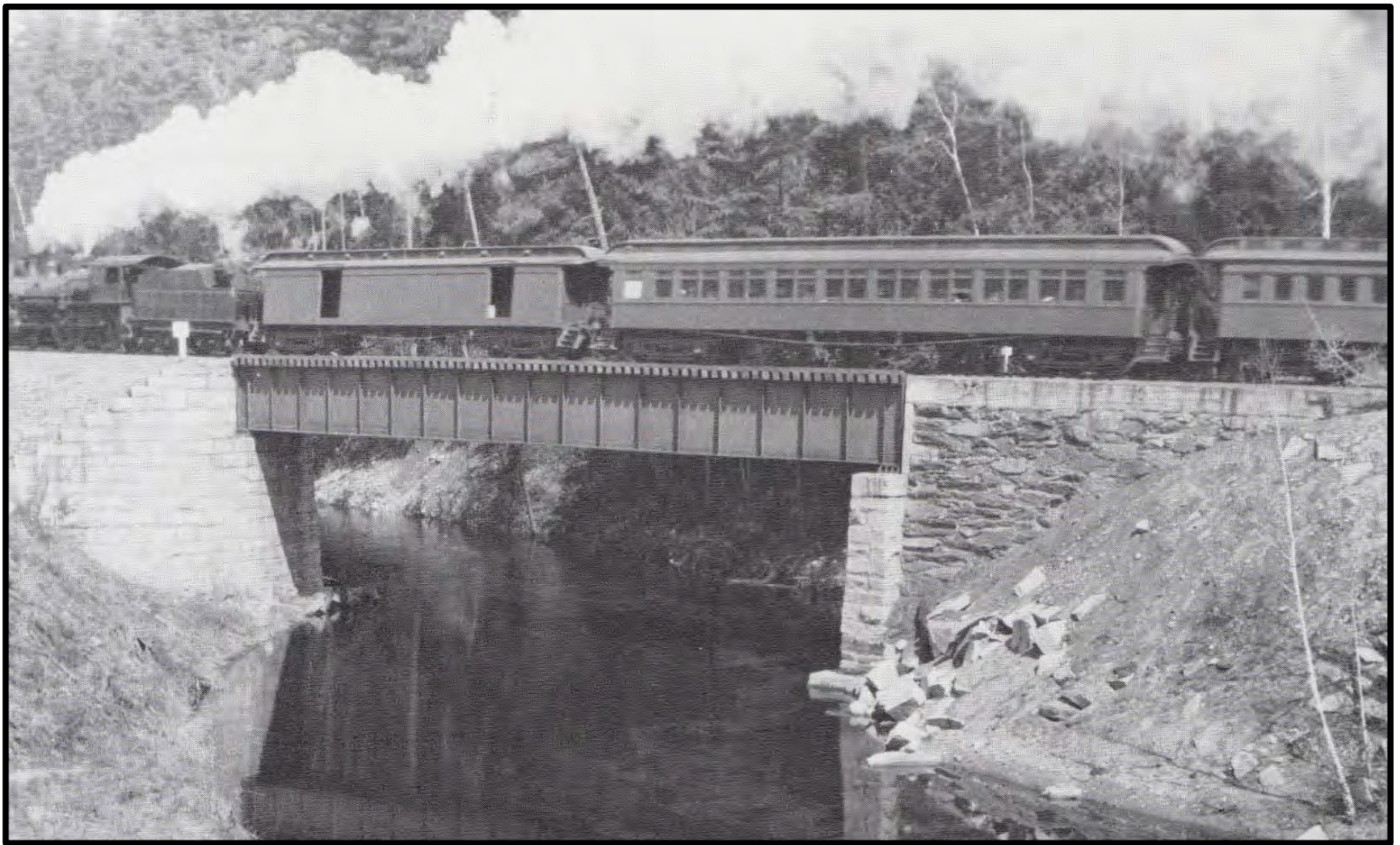
***Replacing the bridge across Great Brook in Plainfield
Removing a section of the old wooden trestle***



Lifting into place a pre-fabricated steel upright support section



Replacing an old wooden span with a new steel plate girder bridge across the Wells River several miles west of Wells River Village.



That same bridge rebuilt in steel with a west bound passenger job headed to Montpelier circa 1920.



***Damage from the November 3 and 4, 1927 flood to the
Montpelier & Wells River Railroad.
Same bridge west of Wells River Village.***

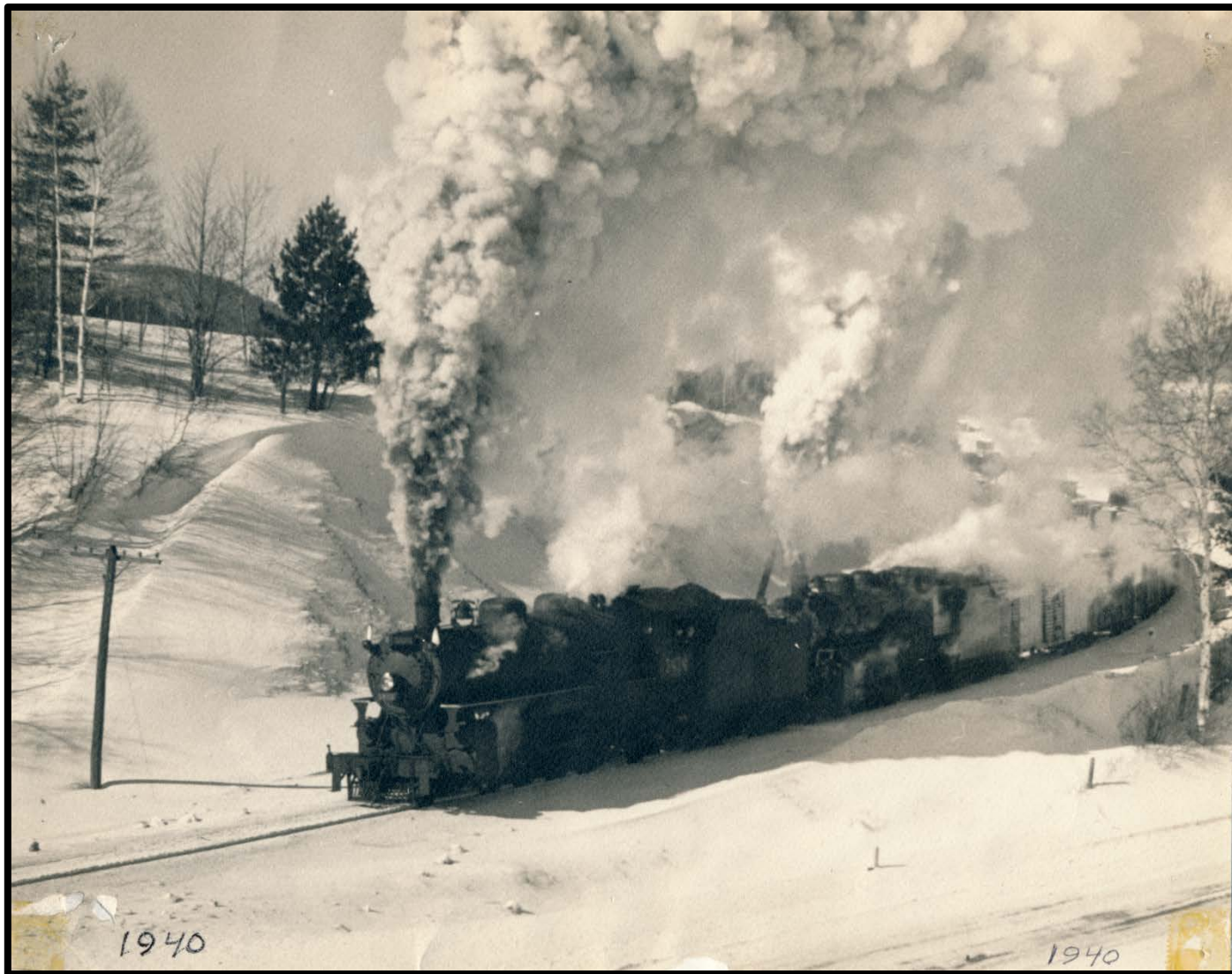


***M&WRR Track and the Wells River Station
after the November 1927 Flood.***

The M&WRR was back in full operation by November 28th.



The aftermath of the November 1927 flood at the M&WRR station in downtown Montpelier on Main Street looking east.

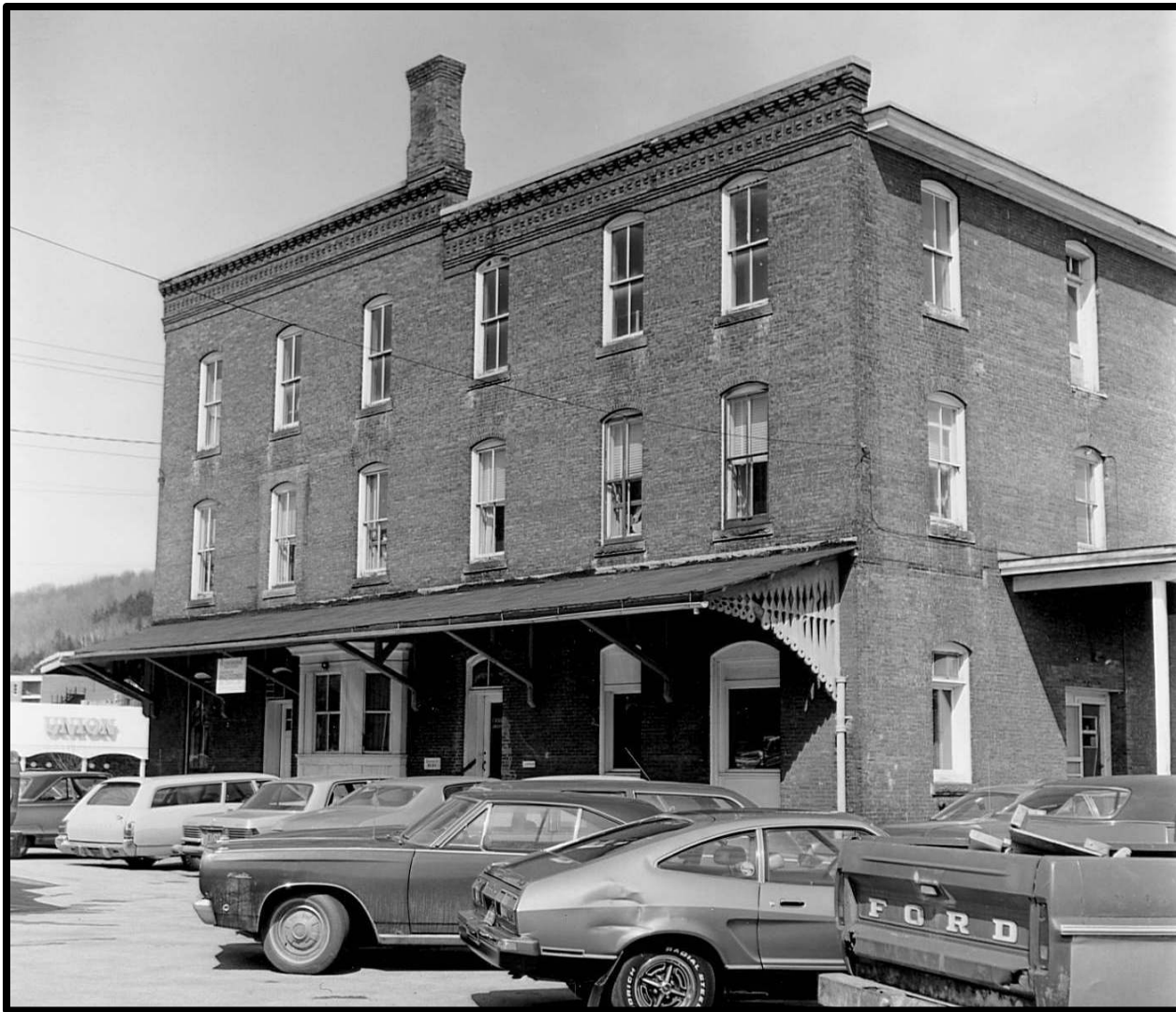


***Montpelier & Wells River Railroad in the Winter of 1940.
Mixed freight with a two locomotives working uphill heading east.***



***Montpelier & Wells River Railroad
A mixed freight at Groton – Winter 1941***

***A Ride on the
Montpelier & Wells River
Railroad
Circa
1947 - 1954***



***M&WRR station and headquarters building Main Street Montpelier.
Built in 1876 as the Murray Block.***

Purchased and refurbished by the M&WRR in 1881 for \$8,000.

Photograph taken in 1974 by Dwight Smith



***A M&WRR mixed train about to leave Montpelier July 23, 1936.
The Montpelier station is in the back ground.***

Between 1947 and 1949 the Barre & Chelsea purchased 5 of these Type B-B 70 ton diesel electric locomotives from General Electric.

By 1948 all former M&WRRR steam locomotives had been scrapped.



***Engineer Pete Michaud in the cab of
#14 October 11, 1953***



***#13 was acquired October 1947
Scrapped at Montpelier September 1974***

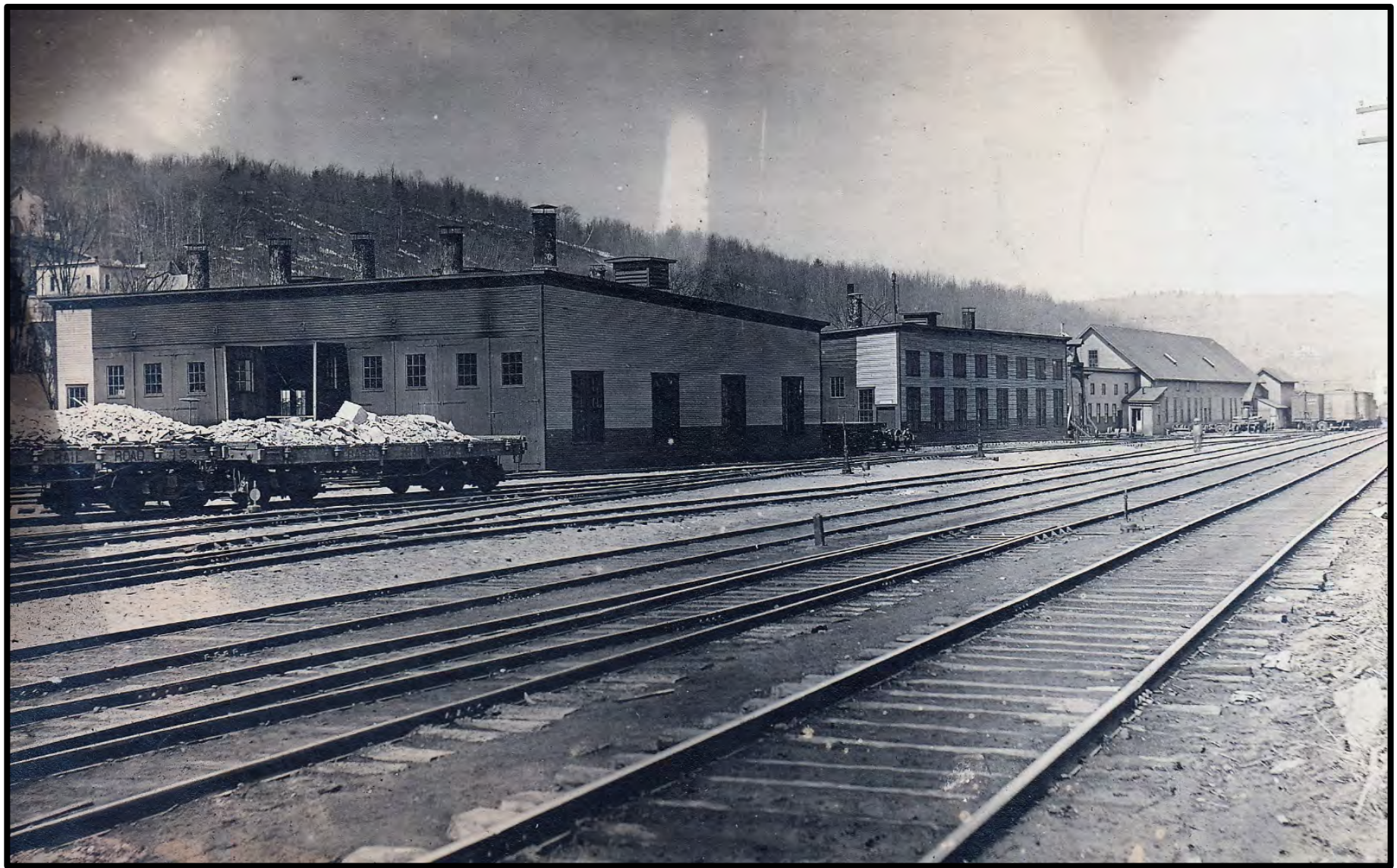


Car #14, a railway post office (RPO) – baggage – coach combination car, is being made ready for the twice daily round trip run to and from Wells River.



Former M&WRR and later B&C No. 14

***Former Rutland RR Railway Post Office (RPO) –baggage – coach combination car.
In service on mixed trains between Montpelier and Wells River right to the end of
operations in November 1956.***



The M&WRR engine house and car shop in the Montpelier yard. These buildings were built after the massive fire of February 7, 1907.

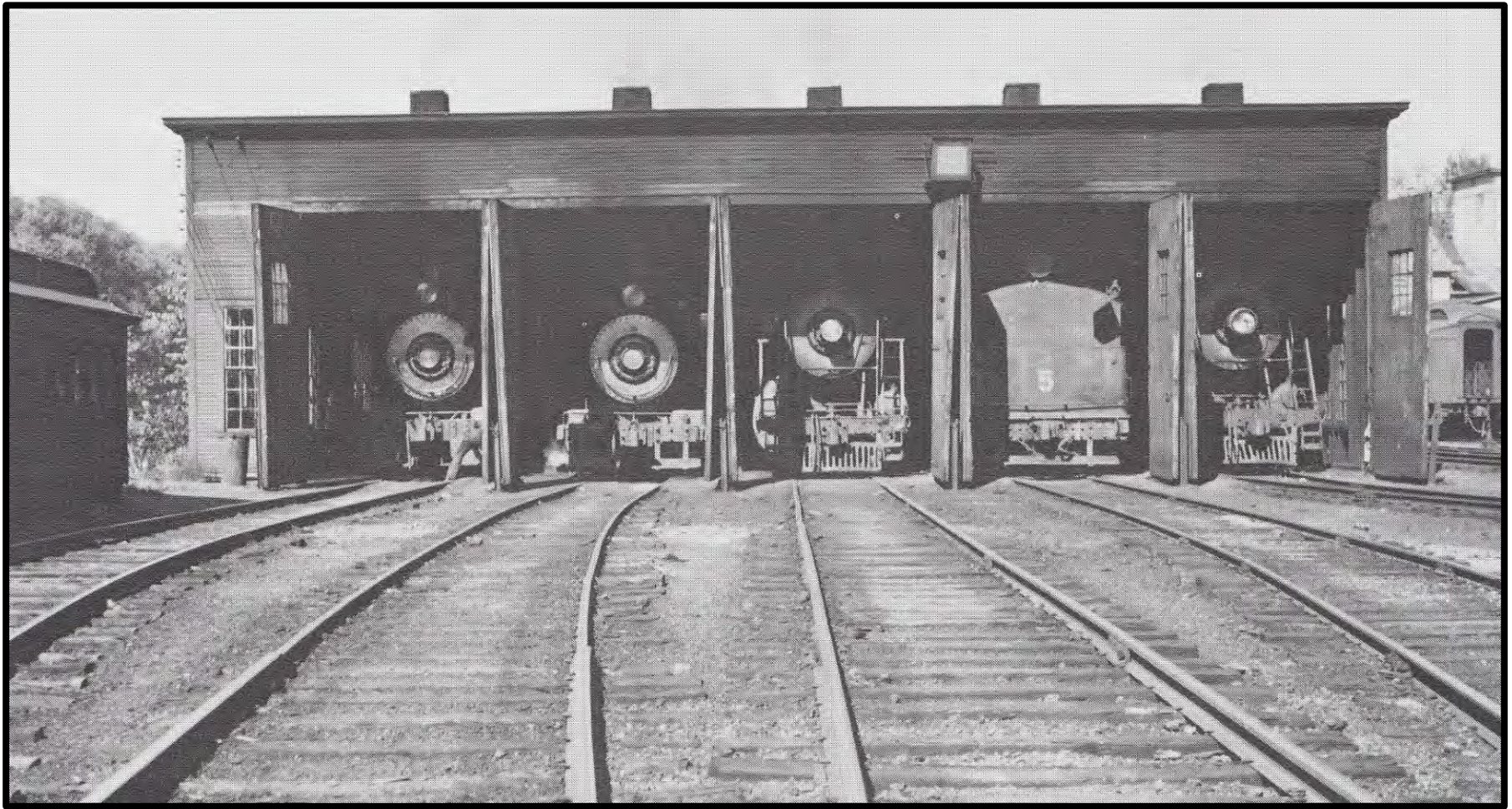


M&WRRR Locomotive #20 at the Montpelier Engine House.
***Built by Schenectady in 1911; Former B&MRR locomotive; Acquired by the
M&WRR October 1932; Sold to STJ&LC RR in October 1947.***

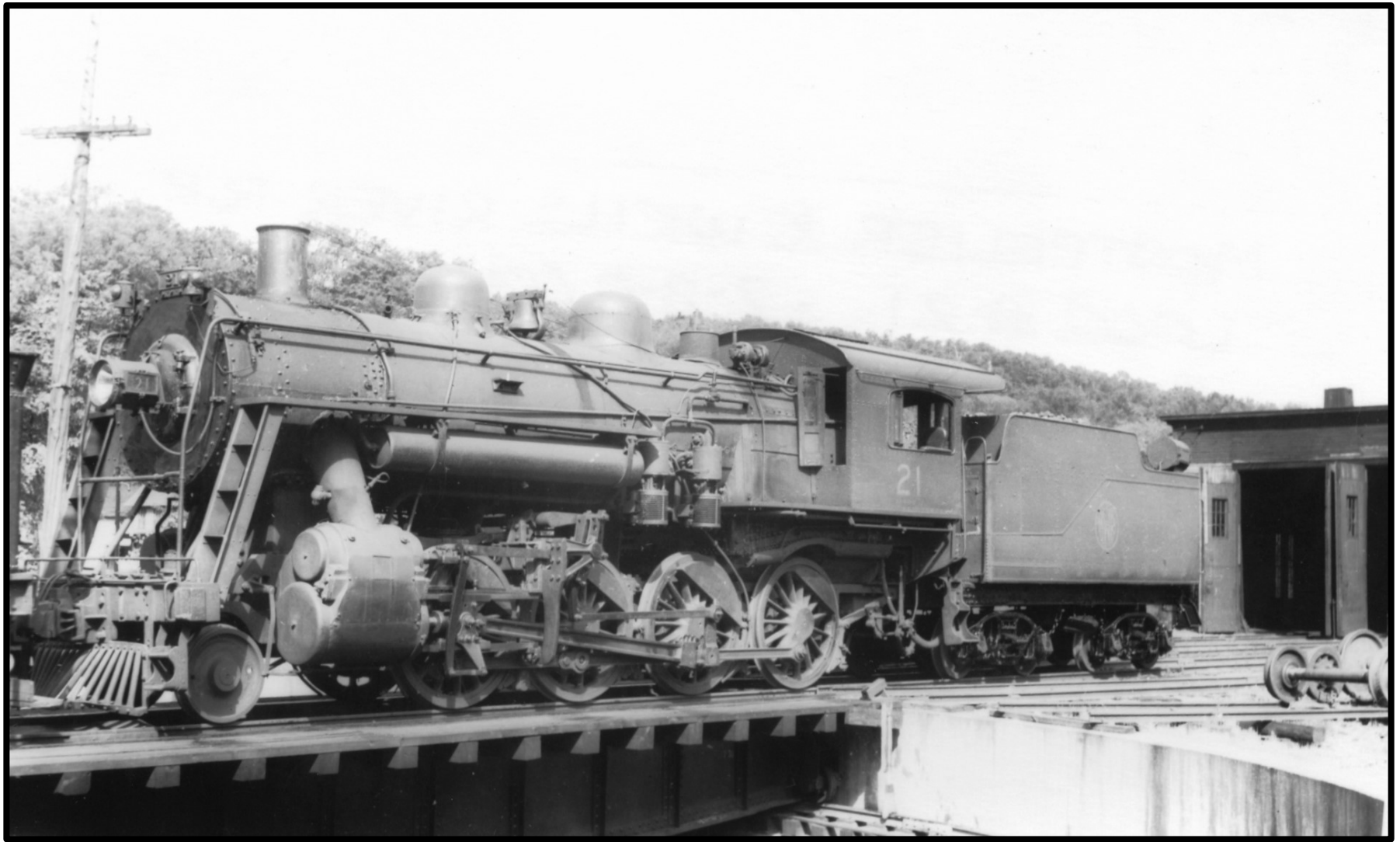
Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith August 6, 1947



Another view of M&WRR #20 and the Montpelier engine house in the background.
These were 2-8-0 "Consolidation" type locomotives designed primarily for freight hauling.



***The M&WRR enginehouse in Montpelier October 1936.
Left to right: Engines nos. 9, 7, 20, 5, and 19
are ready to be called for service.***



M&WRRR Locomotive #21 on the Montpelier engine house turntable.
Built by Schenectady in 1902; Former B&MRR Locomotive; Acquired by
the M&WRR February 1935; Scrapped in January 1947.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith 1945



M&WRRR Locomotive # 9 in the Montpelier Yard.

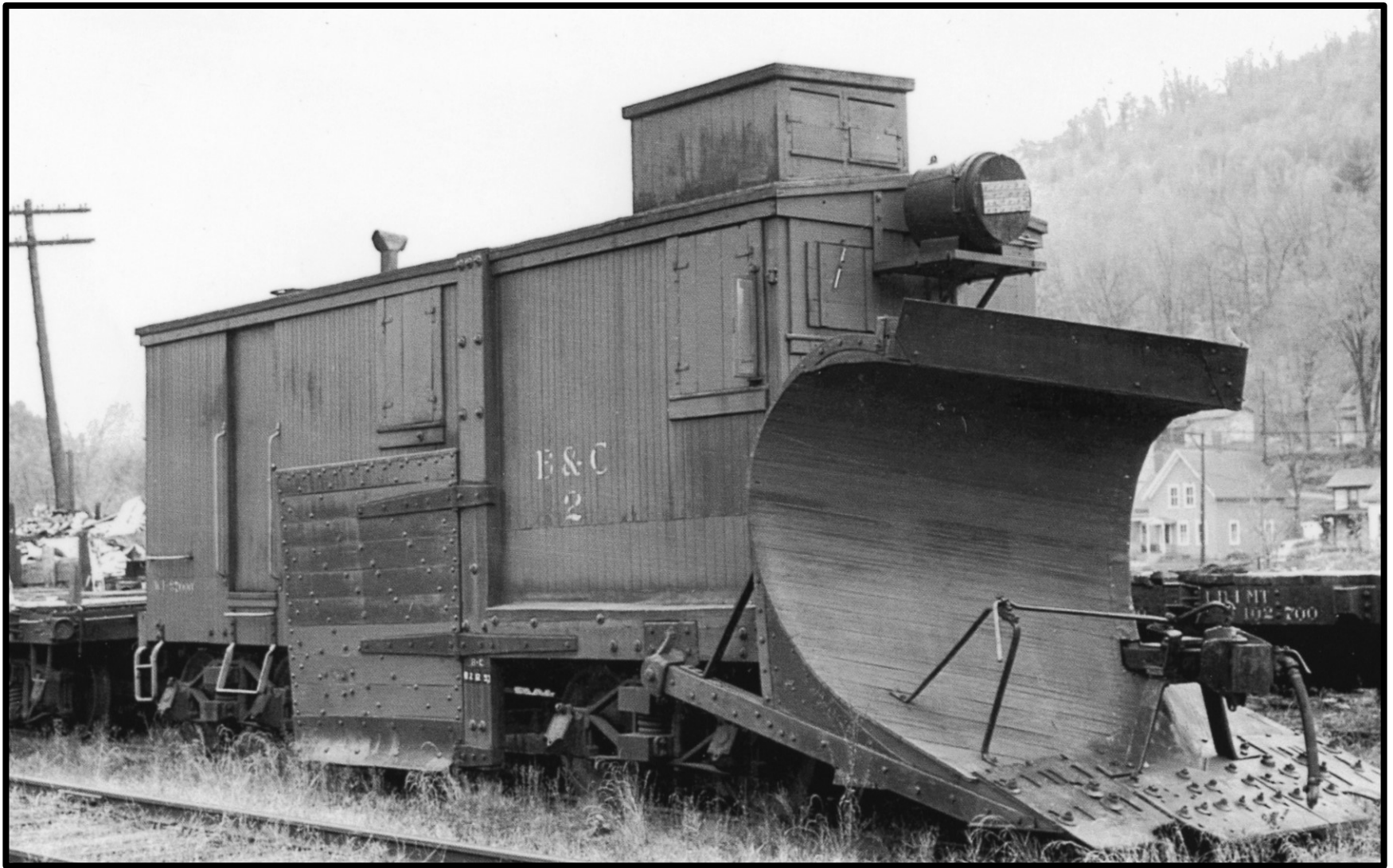
Built by Manchester in 1908; Former B&MRR Locomotive; Acquired by the M&WRR January 1945; Scrapped in January 1947.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith 1940



B&C flat car No. 113 with a load of granite photographed in the Montpelier yard in 1934.

The car was capable of carrying 60,000 pounds.



***Barre & Chelsea Snowplow #2 parked in the Montpelier yard
Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith October 1953***



The Barre Transfer February 21, 1948.

Train No. 4 westbound to Woodsville passes switcher No. 11 returning to Montpelier after working in Barre.



***The East Montpelier (Fairmont) station.
Looking west in the early twentieth century.
The building was destroyed by fire in 1982.***



Barre & Chelsea Mixed Train Heading West
Photograph Taken by Dwight A. Smith August 1952



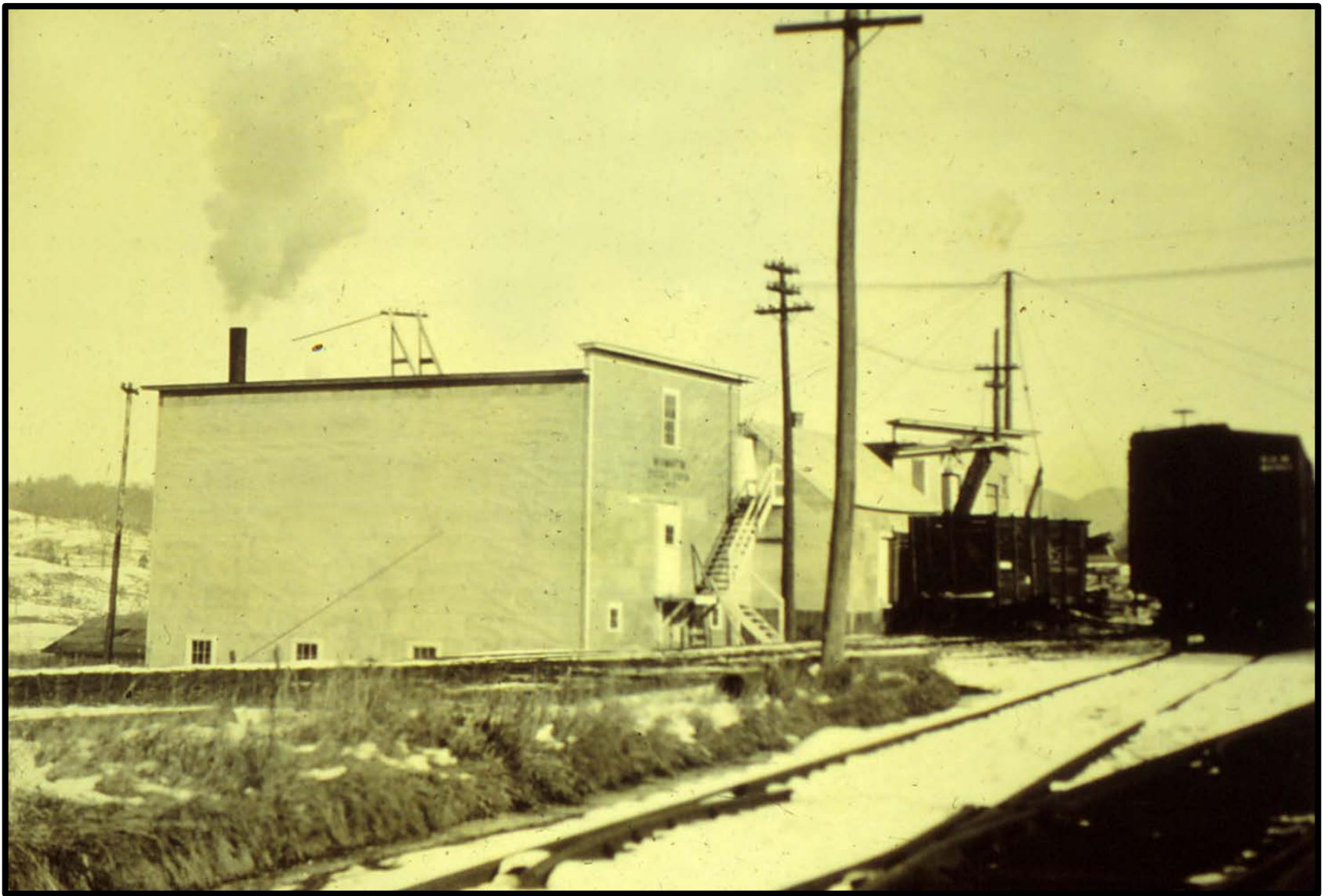
***An Early View of the Plainfield Station
The building was razed in 1961***



Plainfield Station Circa 1900
Note the addition of the roof canopy



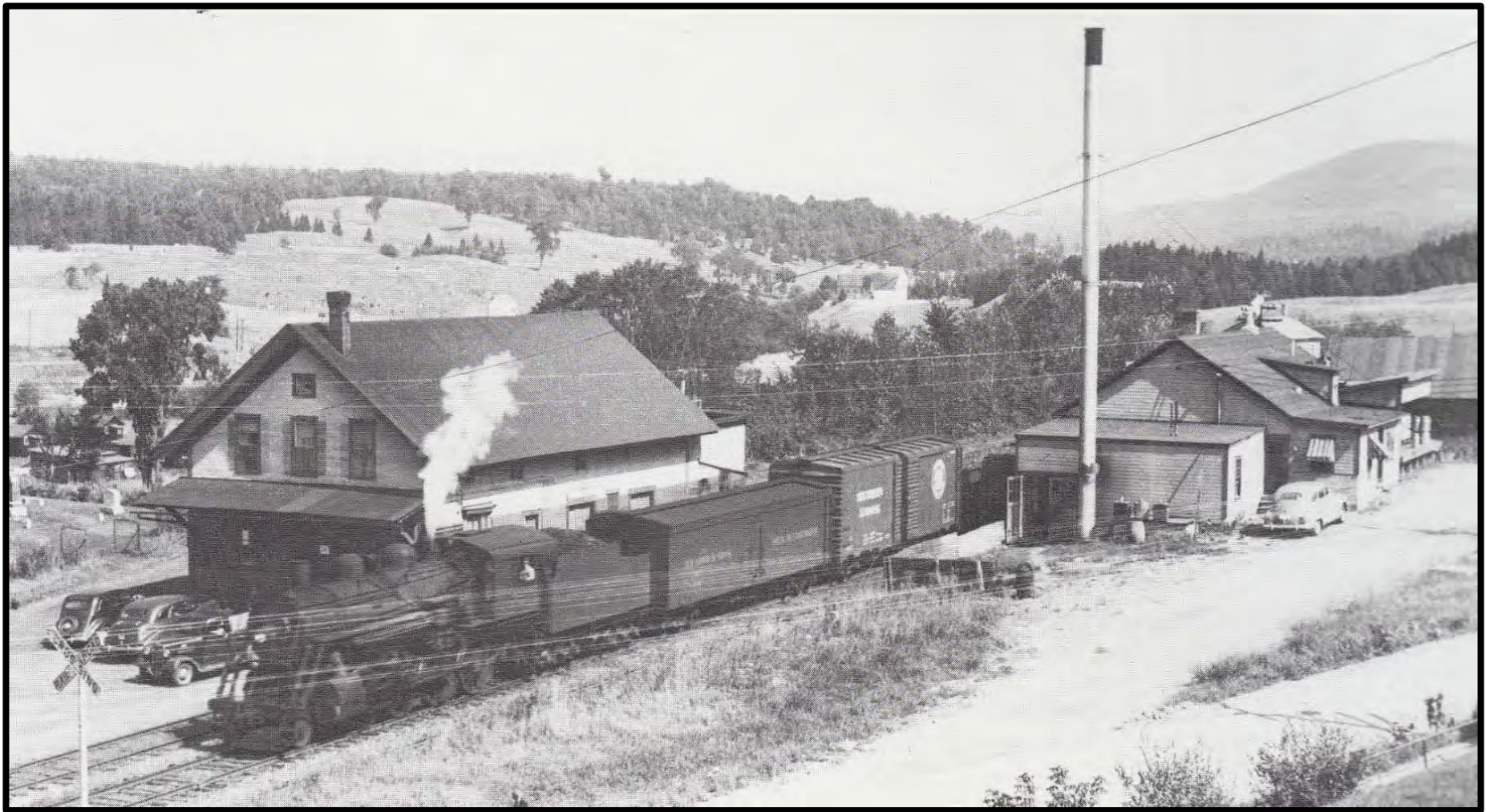
Plainfield Station Circa 1915



The Bobbin Mill in Plainfield.



***Logs delivered by rail to supply the Bobbin Mill with wood product.
Looking easterly towards Marshfield.***



Plainfield on September 15, 1947.

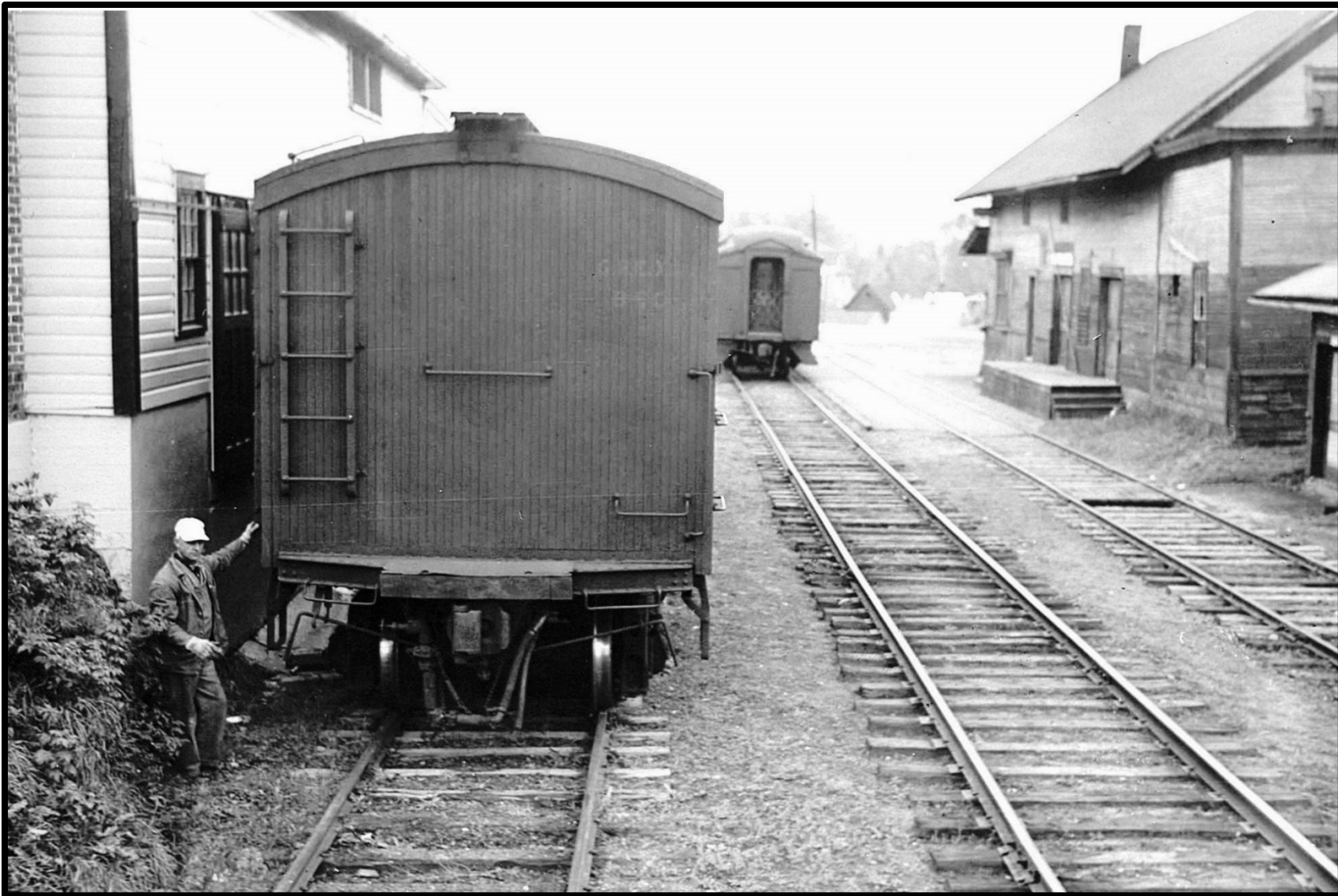
For many years, one milk car a day was picked up at Plainfield, and farmers received two or three cars of feed weekly.



***Exchanging U. S. Mail bags at Plainfield June 6, 1955.
The next stops will be Marshfield, Groton, South Ryegate, and Wells River.***

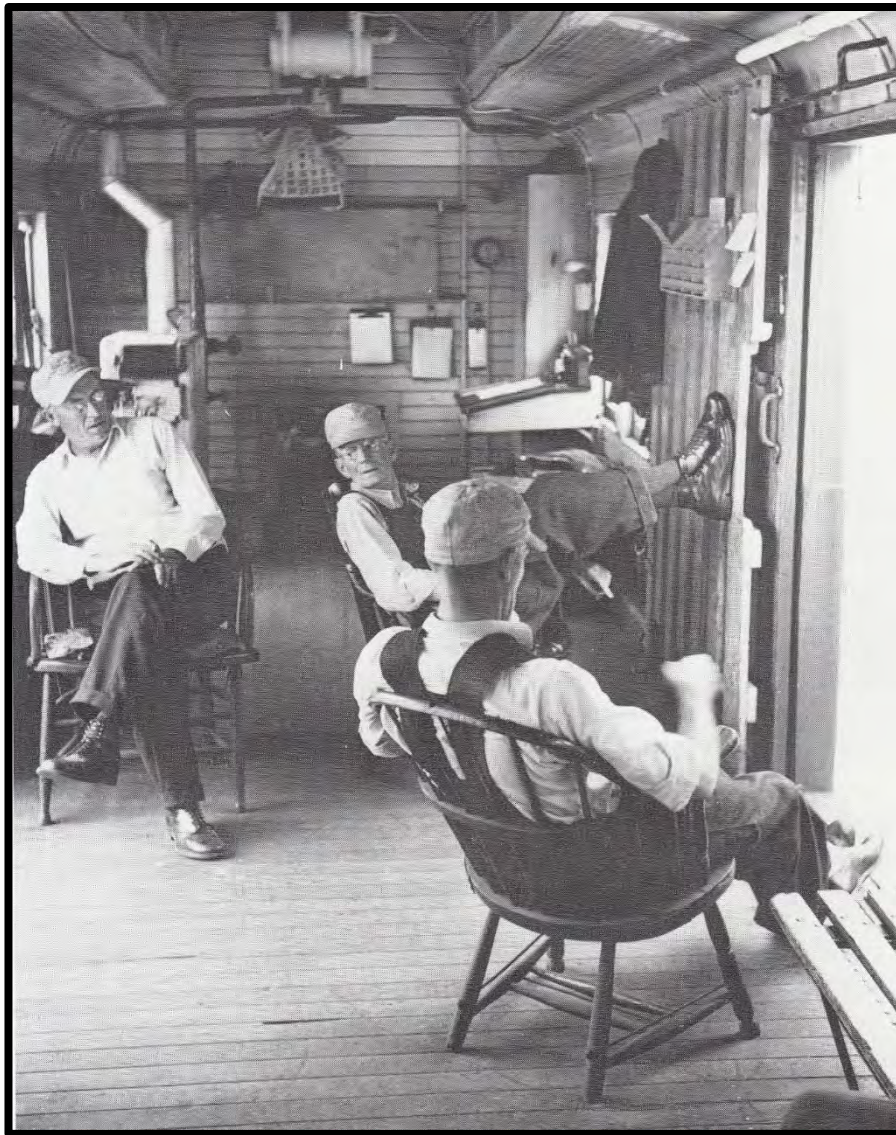


***A flagging operation just west of the station in Plainfield as railroad cars are being switched.
November 26, 1955.***

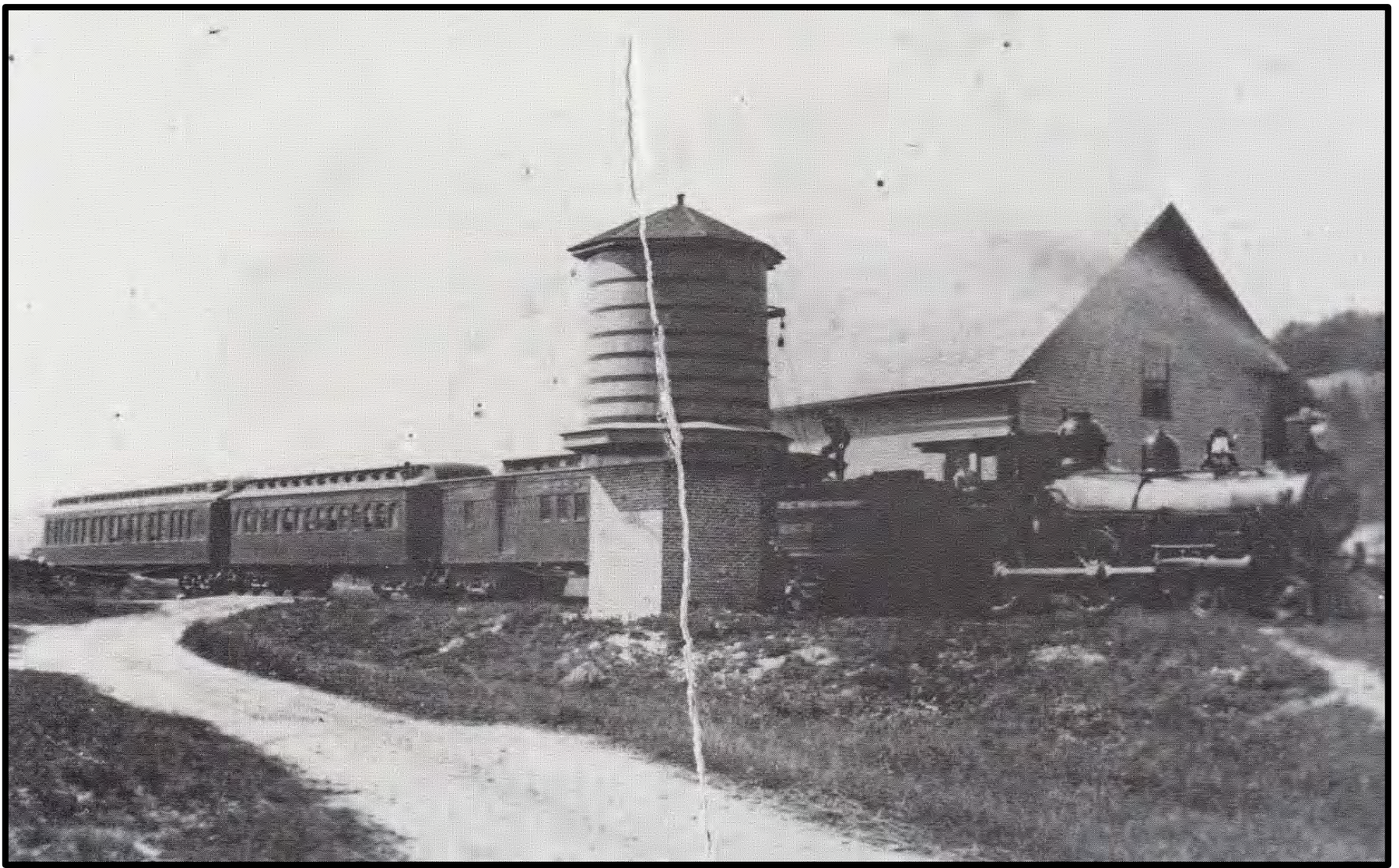


Picking Up Milk at Plainfield

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith October 11, 1953



After picking up a milk car at Plainfield, the crew of Train No. 4 relaxes in combine car No. 14 circa 1948.



***An early view of the station at Marshfield taken in 1886.
The building burned in 1897 and was replaced.***



Marshfield Station Circa 1910.



***Pulling away from Marshfield and heading east towards Groton.
June 6, 1955.***



***Passengers waiting to flag the train at Edgewater circa 1920.
Edgewater served hunters and vacationers around the Marshfield
Pond area.***



Lanesboro looking east in the 1890's.

***The large sawmill operation was a major source of business.
Owl's Head Mountain and the M&WRR depot are in the distance.***



***Groton Pond filled with logs and the Groton Lumber Company sawmill,
formerly Hazen's Mill.
Circa 1900.***



***A “clear” signal at the Still water flag stop on September 15, 1947.
The “station” was an old Montpelier – Barre commuter car.***



***Another view of the “station” at the
Stillwater flag stop near Stillwater Brook and Groton Pond
Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith July 1954***



Rocky Point "Station" on Groton Pond.



This building , which was privately owned, served as the station house at Groton Pond was called “Lakeside”. The M&WRR’s own station building burned in 1883 and was never replaced.



Ricker's Station at Groton Pond looking west February 1947.



Ricker's Station Looking East August 1953.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



East Bound Train No.4 with No. 20 on the head end at Ricker's Station and Groton Pond February 1947.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



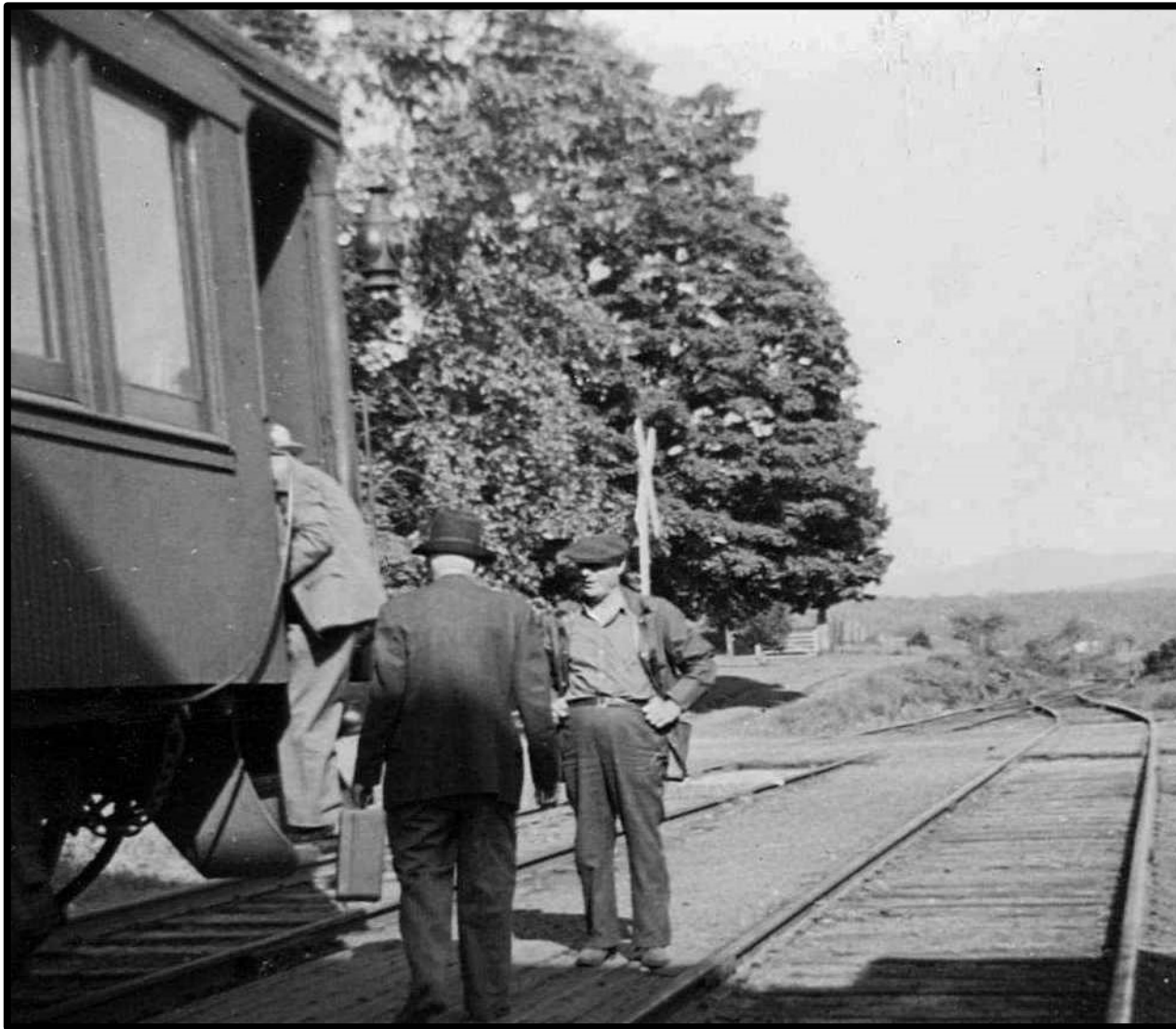
West Bound at Ricker's Station and Groton Pond August 1953.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



Groton Station Circa 1942
The original station burned in 1894
The building is still standing and largely preserved

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



Passengers Boarding at Groton July 1942.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



Mail Messenger George McLam Off-Loading Mail at Groton July 1942.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



Loading Granite Monuments at Groton July 1942.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



Setting Off Wooden Box Cars at Groton July 1942.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



East Bound M&WRR Train Taking on Water at Groton 1941.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



Taking On Water at Groton July 1942.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



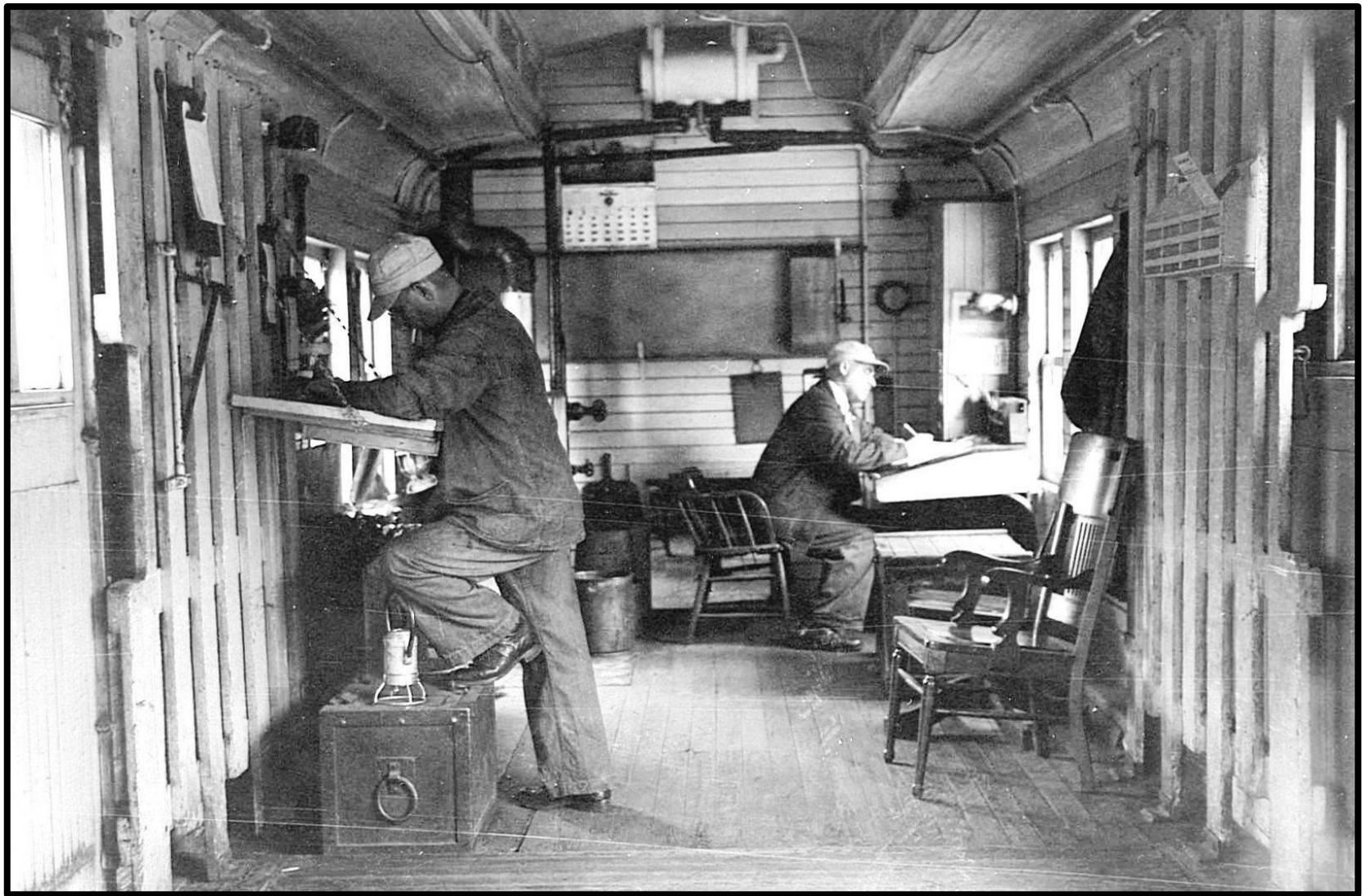
Train No. 4 Loading Mail and Express Freight at Groton July 1951.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



West Bound Train No. 2 arrives at Groton August 1950.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



Work Train Crew in Combine #14 near Groton in 1953.

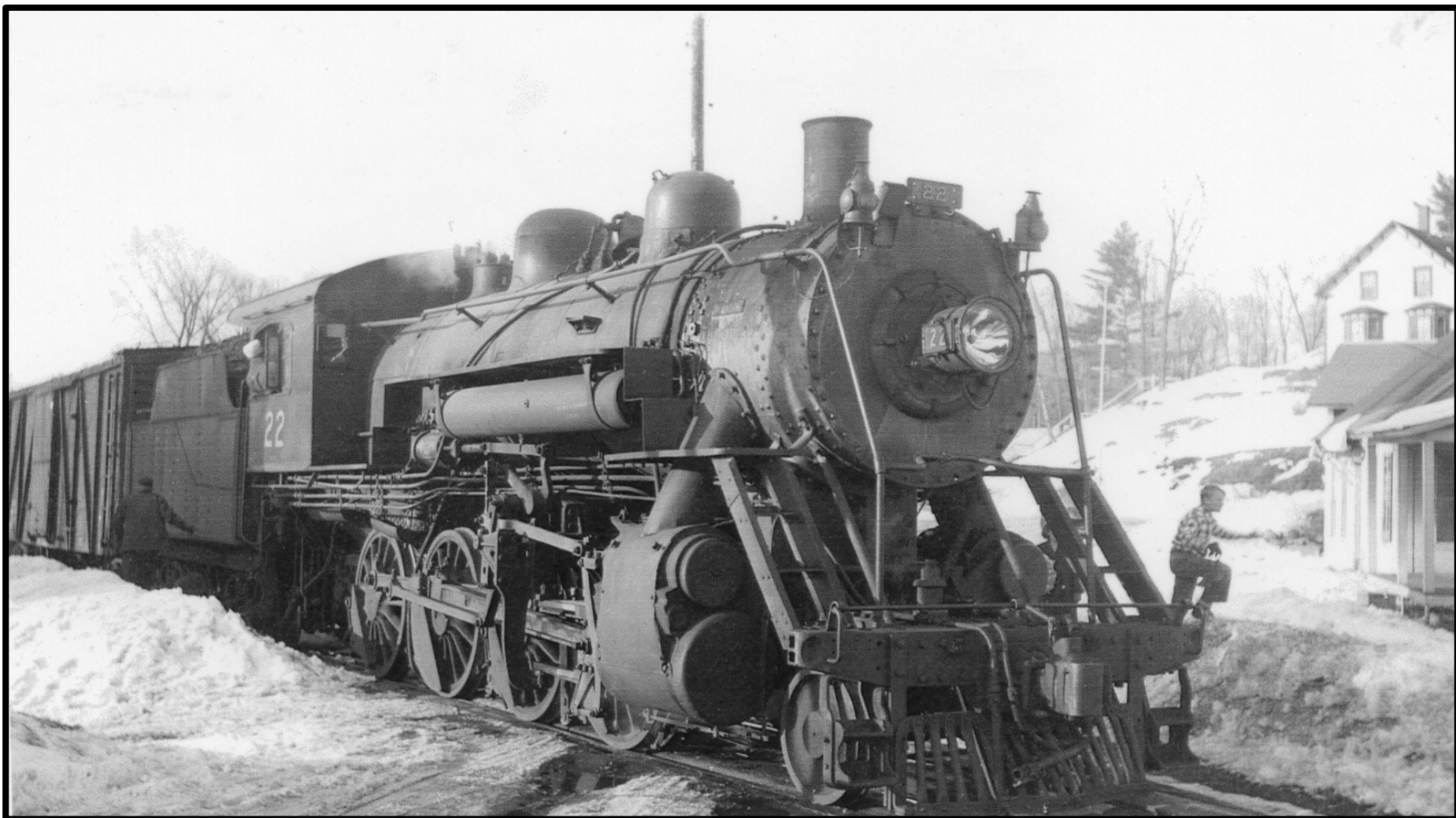
Photograph Taken by Dwight A. Smith



***A National Guard Extra on the M&WRR near Groton
August 4, 1951***

Three Locomotives and Ten Pullman Cars

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



***M&WRR # 22 at South Ryegate in February 1947.
Built by Schenectady in 1910 for the B&MRR; Acquired by M&WRR in
August 1946; Scrapped in April 1948.***

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



***The station at South Ryegate looking west in 1903.
The Station Agent and his family lived on the second floor.***



***The station at South Ryegate as it looked shortly before it was closed
in the mid – 1950's.***



***Boltonville Postmistress and west bound mail pickup
September 15, 1947***



***Boltonville Station in Earlier Times Circa 1900.
A west bound passenger job works past the
H. P. Hood creamery, ice house, and station.***



***A late afternoon westbound mixed train at Boltonville
June 6, 1955
Boltonville closed as a full agency station in 1925***



M&WRR Locomotive #21 brings an east bound mixed train across the Canadian Pacific Railroad's main line at Wells River heading towards Woodsville, NH in the summer of 1941.



***East bound mixed train entering Wells River from Montpelier
Southbound CPR-B&M freight waits in the background
1951***



***Wells River Station Looking South Circa 1950
Semaphores, Ball Signal, Water Plug, and Train
“Order Boards”***



***M&WR "Milk" Train No. 4
Arriving in Wells River from Montpelier in 1946***



Train N0. 4 west bound lets off passengers at Wells River April 1954

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



Wells River Station
Closed by the Boston & Maine Railroad in 1965
Built in 1888 – Burned by arsonists on July 4, 1974



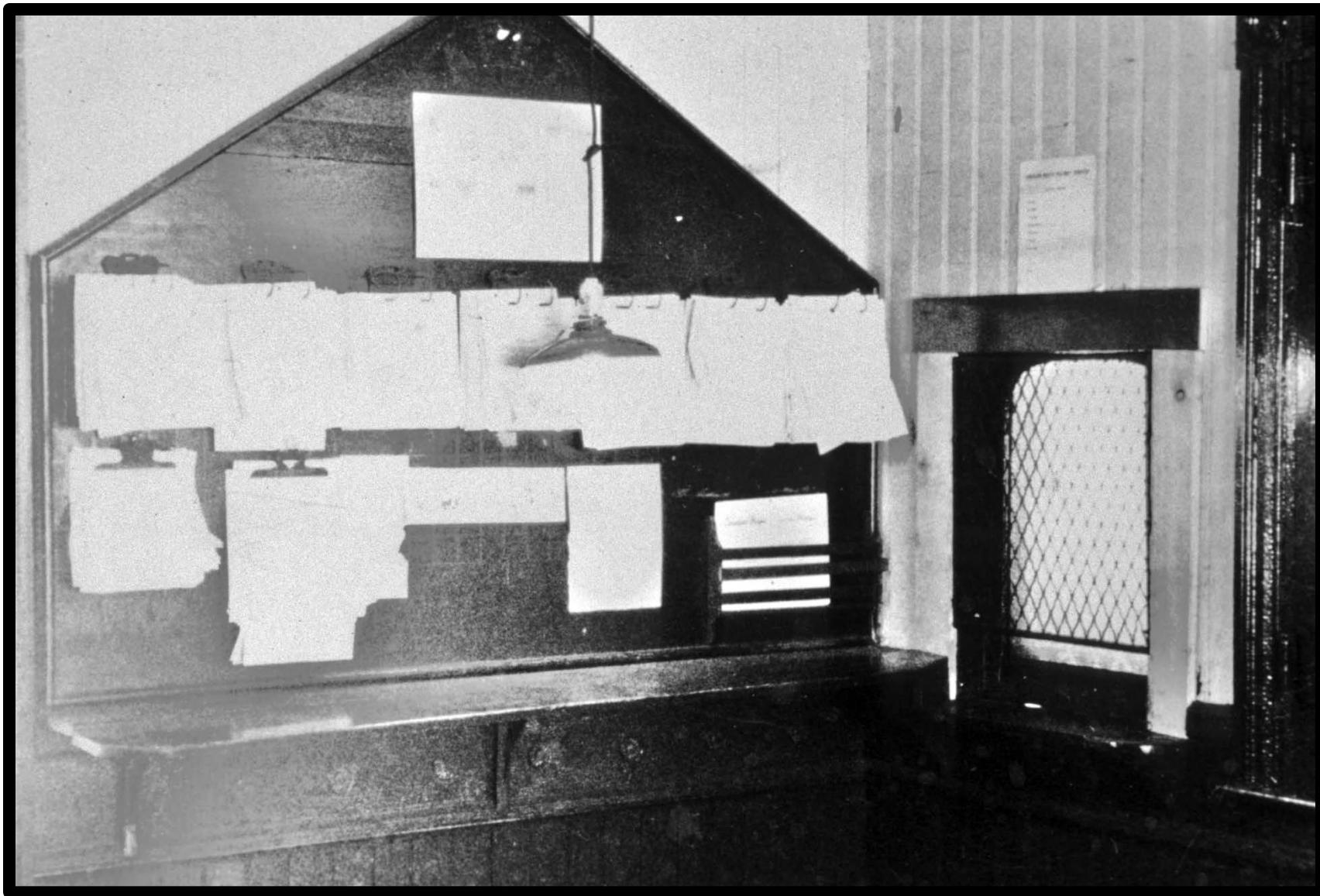
***Wells River passenger station and freight house
Circa 1910***



***Wells River Station
South Side of the Station - Early Twentieth Century***



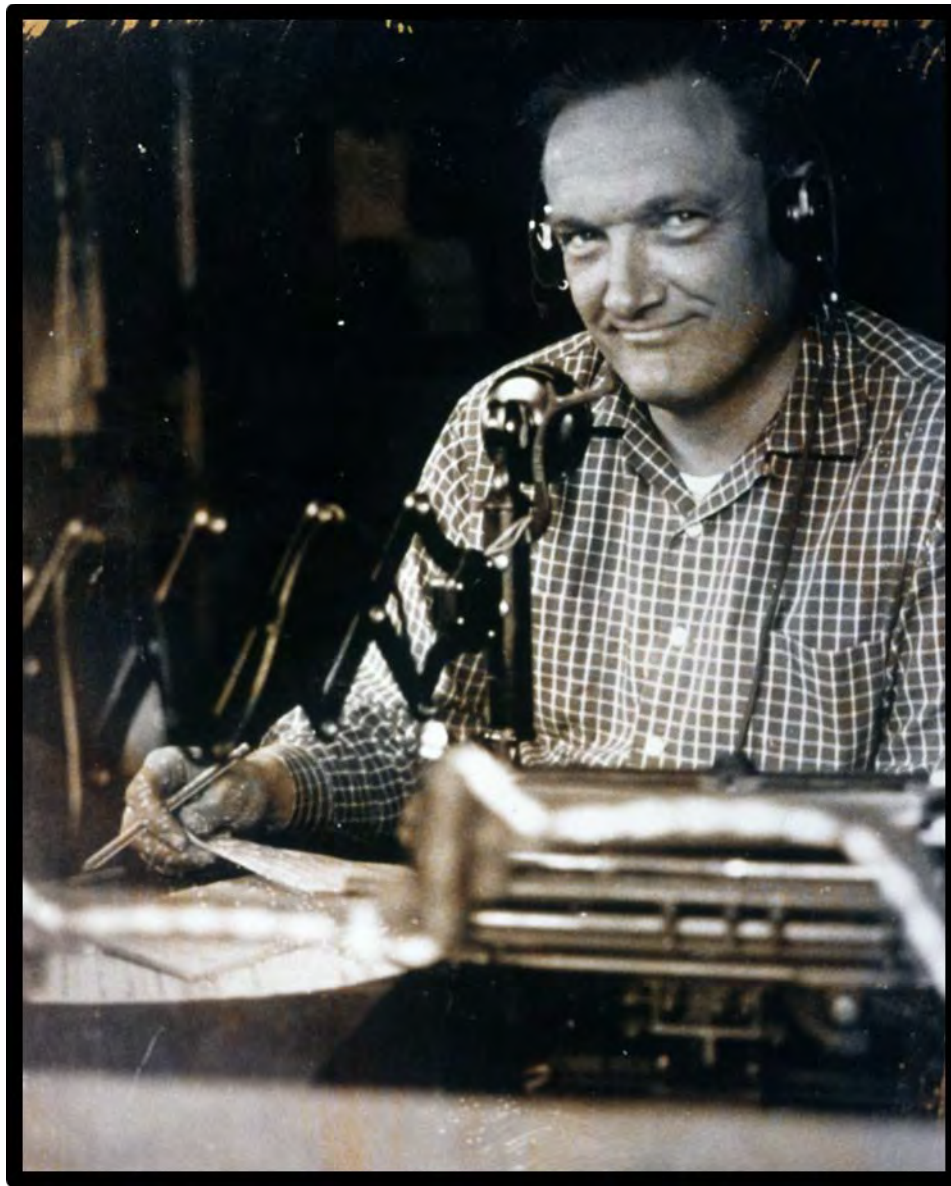
***Wells River Station Lobby Area
Note the free standing cast iron steam radiator***



***Wells River Station
Station Agent's Office and Ticket Window***



***Wells River Station
Station Agents Office and Telegraph Desk***



***Wells River Station Agent George Demick, Jr.
Agent from 1946 to 1965***



***Wells River Station Agent George Dimick, Jr
and a new Boston & Maine Railroad model E7A diesel locomotive
arriving in Wells River from Woodsville on the North Wye in 1948.
-Built by General Motors Electro-Motive Division-***



***An H. B. Hood milk car askew at the Wells River Station
Circa 1960***



***Train No. 4 crossing into Woodsville from Wells River
June 1954***

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



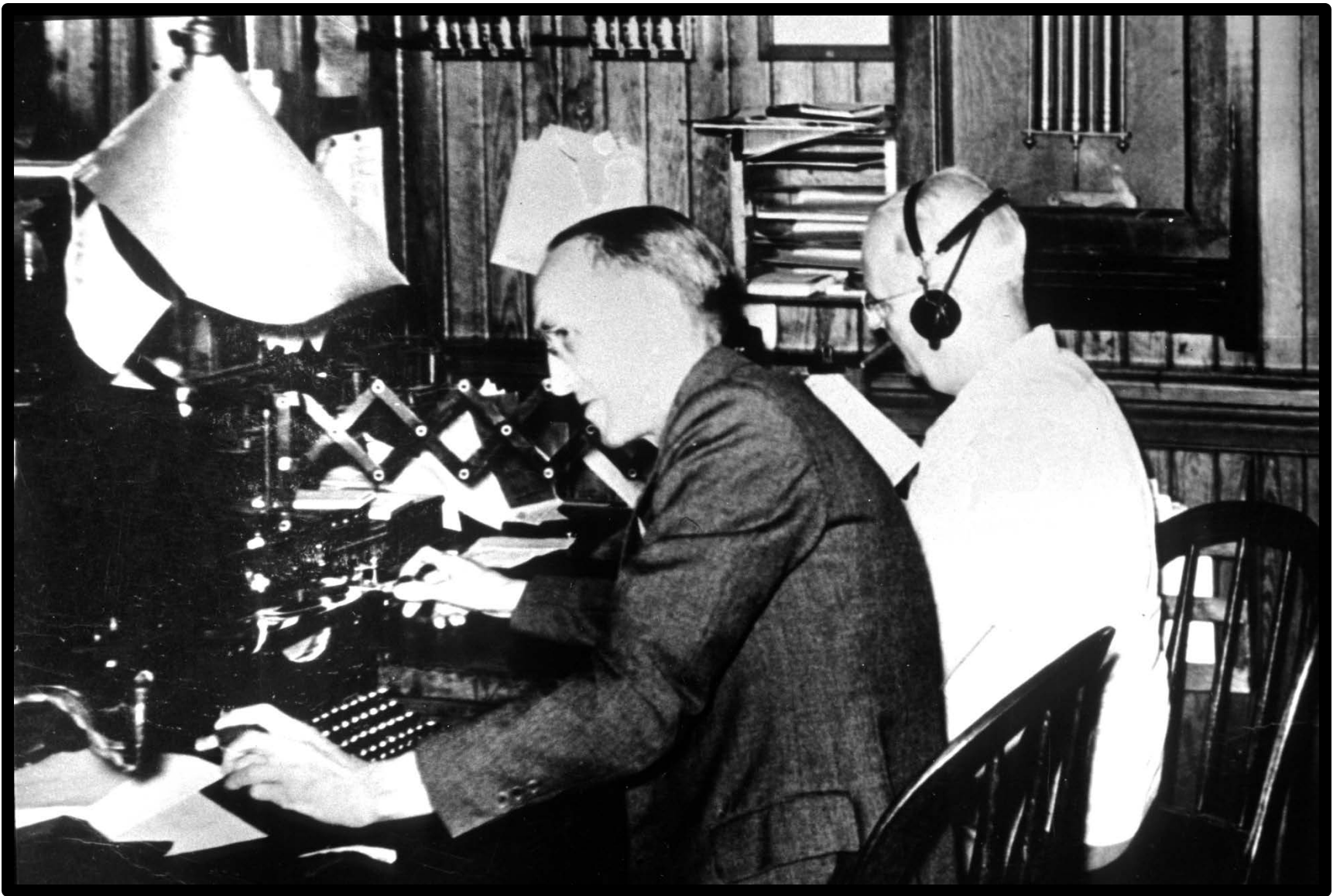
Train No. 4 arriving in Woodsville June 1954

Note the H. B. Hood milk car

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



***The third Woodsville Station rebuilt after a fire in 1922.
The Boston & Maine Railroad's White Mountain Division Offices.***



***Woodsville Ticket Agent and Telegraph Operator George Demick, Sr. (L)
and T. G. Wilson of Bath on the telephone***



Woodsville Station in 1945

The passenger station was closed in 1960

The freight office closed in September 1974



***A new B&MRR Model BL2 diesel locomotive at Woodville June 1950
Built by General Motors Electro-Motive Division
Woodville station was still a busy place with
trains arriving and departing from three directions***



Conductor Charles Annis helps a passenger into combine No. 14 at Woodsville on a summer day in 1949. The mixed train was scheduled to leave Woodsville for Montpelier at 4:55 P.M.



***Mixed Train No. 4
moves past the
Woodsville engine
house down into the
B&MRR's lower freight
yard to drop off and
pick up freight cars.***

***Unlike in years past,
things are now very
quiet around the
engine house.***

September 15, 1947



***The Woodsville engine house, coal ash pit, and a full machine shop at left as it looked in earlier days.
Photograph circa 1920.***



In 1895 the Boston & Maine Railroad constructed new rail yards south of Woodsville at a cost of over \$100,000.



***Woodsville railroad yard and yard office circa 1900 looking south
The new yard had a capacity of 1,400 freight cars
12 men were employed handling the cars***



***M&WRR Mixed Train No. 91, headed with Locomotive #21, makes its way through the B&M's lower Woodsville yard on July 14, 1946.
The freight Yard looks to be a very quiet place by this time.***



***Afternoon mixed train leaving Wells River for Montpelier with only an
H. P. Hood milk car and a combine on behind.
Circa 1955***



***On October 30, 1954 the B&MRR stopped all service on their line from
Woodsville to Plymouth, NH; and by 1955 the rails had been pulled.
This was a crippling blow to the M&WRR.
Glenclyff Looking East May 1955 – Photo by Dwight Smith.***



***A view of a short mixed train taken near Plainfield in November 1956
several days before the end of service that month.
Looks like an H. P. Hood milk car and the combine on behind
locomotive #14.***

The Last Run

November 15, 1956

***and then the
Scrappers***



***Preparing for the last run – November 15, 1956.
General manager Charles Morrell, conductor John Spaulding, and
brakeman Calvin Richards are registering their train and checking
bulletins.***

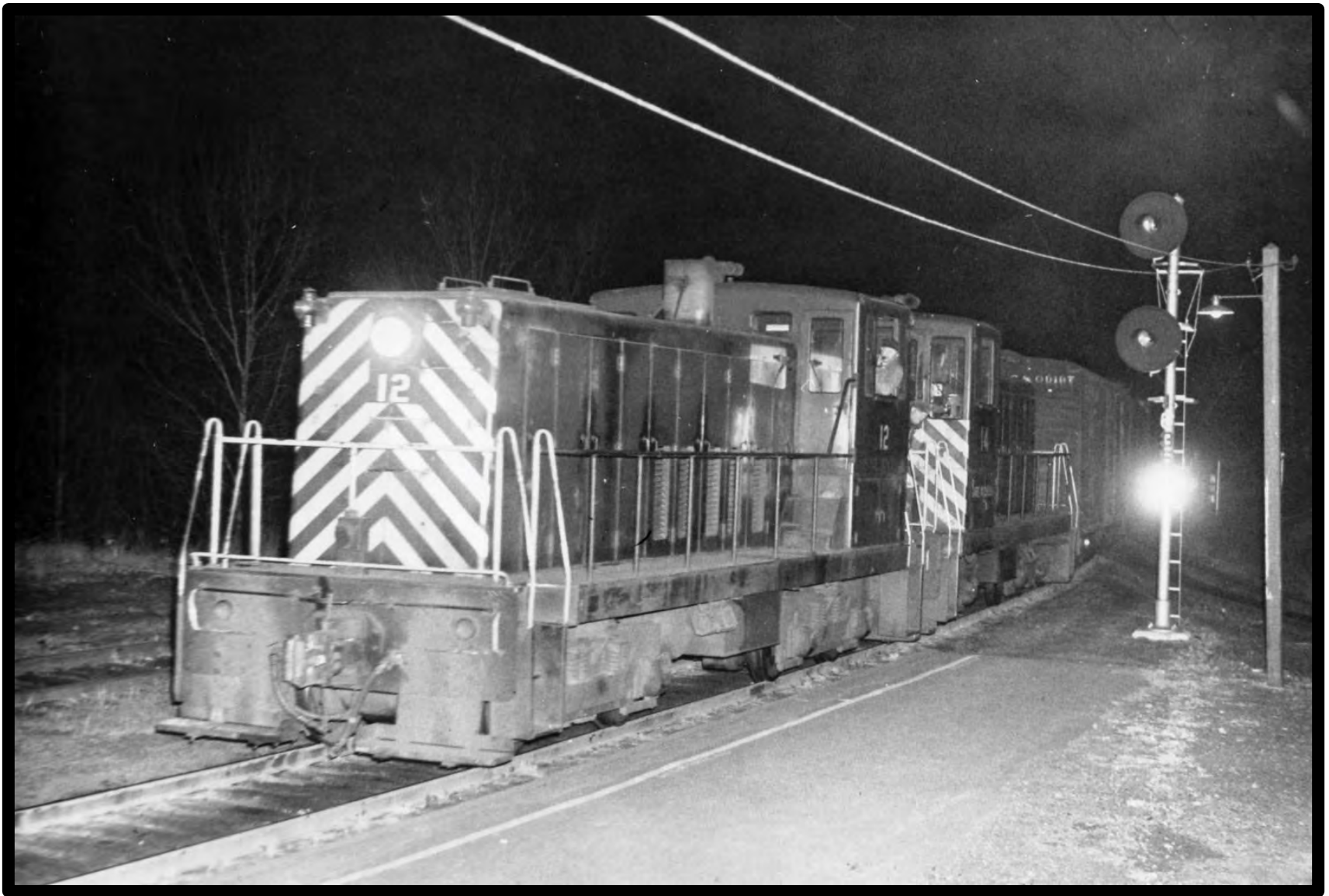


November 15, 1956.

Making up the last train of 17 cars at Montpelier.

Stops were made at Fairmont (East Montpelier) Plainfield, and South Ryegate to pick additional up cars.

The train with 21 cars arrived in Woodsville at 6:16 P. M.



***The last train at Wells River heading back to Montpelier
Thursday Early Evening November 15, 1956.***

The Montpelier & Wells River Railroad

***The last train arrived back in Montpelier at 9:35 P.M.
November 15, 1956.***

***On November 21st an unpublicized run was made to
move any remaining cars off the line.***

***Forty-Two railroad employees lost their jobs and the
Montpelier & Wells River Railroad ceased to exist.***

83 years (less 9 days) of excellent service.



***December 2, 1956 scrappers
from the Horton
Construction Company of
Taunton, Massachusetts
pulled the first rail at
Gallison Hill Road in
Montpelier.***

***By the winter of 1957 the
scrappers had reach the
station in Groton.***



Scraper's train between Groton and South Ryegate – March 1957.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



***Through the winter of 1957 the scrapper's train worked its way west to east towards Wells River. The scrapper's train near South Ryegate.
March 1957***

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



The scrapper's train moving through South Ryegate Village – March 1957.

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith

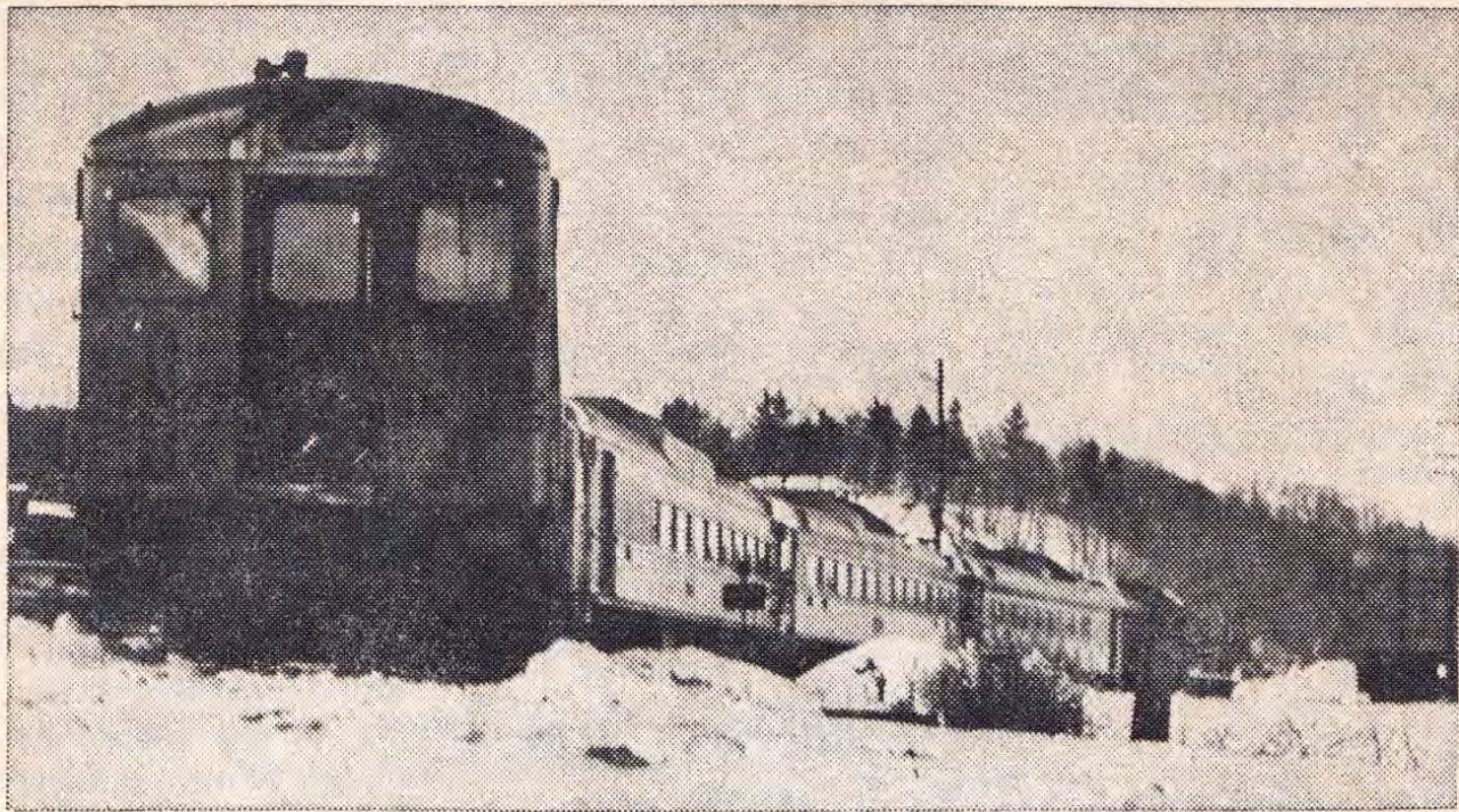


***The scrapper's train" taking up rails between
South Ryegate and Boltonville – March 1957.***

Photograph taken by Dwight A. Smith



***The last M&WRR rail was pulled at Wells River
Friday Morning at 8:10 am March 15, 1957***



THERE WON'T BE any more sleek aluminum passenger cars pulling out of White River Junction for Boston. 'All aboard for Boston' is an echo from the past now. That part of White River Junction's past is over. It ended at 4:40 p.m. Sunday when the last train, loaded with 300 passengers, pulled out of the depot and headed south into the gathering dusk one last time.

End Of An Era *Jan 3 - 1965*

***The Last Boston & Maine Buddliner Leaves White River Junction
Sunday afternoon January 3, 1965
The end of all passenger service in Northern New Hampshire***



Canadian Pacific Budd RDC-2 # 9108. Wells River. VT. 5/2/65

***The Last Canadian Pacific RR Buddliner in Wells River
May 2, 1965***

The last passenger rail service in Wells River – Woodsville

***Boltonville Looking East
2015***

The End

