

The History of the Chautauqua Lake Railway

In 1880, Mr. Millard White of Boston, Mass. organized a company to build a railroad along the east side of Chautauqua Lake from Jamestown to Mayville and Mr. White became its president. The first survey was started in 1881, from the Boatlanding east to about five hundred feet east of Marvin Street [now Washington Street]. Then north and westerly to Clifton [Avenue], over high ground and would avoid going through the swamp along the Outlet. However, this route was changed and the route made direct from the Boatlanding to Clifton through the swampland.

In 1881, work was started at the Boatlanding but great difficulty was met as the road bed kept sinking, but by filling in with old ties and other methods of cribbing along with gravel, this was overcome, but continued filling and raising the track in different places had to be done for a long time after the road was in operation. Construction work was also started in other places on the proposed route to hasten the completion of the road. These were all connected later when the survey was made. I think the desire of the company was to build on high ground along the lake shore and I have heard the property owners did not want them to build through their farms, so the company was obliged to build near the lake shore in many places. The road was completed to the W.N.Y. & P. RR [Western New York & Pennsylvania] junction at Mayville in July, 1887 and on July 23, 1887, the first passenger train from Jamestown to Mayville was run over the road consisting of two engines, the Willard White and R. E. Fenton, and eight coaches decorated with flags and bunting. There was also a G.A.R. band on board to furnish music and about eight hundred people took advantage of the first trip over the new railroad.

The new road had but one outlet for its freight and passenger business and that was with W.N.Y. & P. RR at Mayville. This new road built for the convenience of Jamestown shippers and passengers was named Chautauqua Lake Railway.

A branch line of about five miles was to have been built and used by the B.C. & P. RR in 1881; was postponed for a short time as much opposition was made by the steamboat companies as they claimed it would cripple their business at the upper end of the lake; also by the commissioners of highway, who claimed the route was in the public highway and closer to it than the law allowed. This branch line was to run from Mayville to the Chautauqua Assembly Grounds. Evidently, the trouble was adjusted, as later Mr. T. H. Wilson, Supt. of the B.C. & P. RR [most likely, Oil City & Pennsylvania] at Oil City, Pa. issued a call to Mr. Charles A. Smith at Jamestown for one hundred additional men to work on Fairpoint railroad. Wages were \$1.50 per day and he would arrange to take them to and from Jamestown by steamer, July 15, 1881. The steamer "Vincent" was to leave Jamestown every morning for Mayville and return in the evening with laborers for work on this railroad. The parties interested in this proposed branch road building at the time were: George A. Baker of Mayville; T. E. [Theodore E.] Grandin of the steamboat company; Charles A. Smith, evidently the labor agent; and T. H. Wilson, Supt. B.C. & P. RR at Oil City, Pa. This branch road was leased by the Chautauqua Lake Ry. In 1897, and for a time, a combination freight and passenger train was run through to Chautauqua, using the W.N.Y. & P. RR tracks from the junction to Mayville. The road's name was changed to Jamestown and Chautauqua Railway. When the road built the Westfield extension, the name was again changed to Jamestown and Lake Erie RR. Through all the changes, the road had many financial difficulties and changes in officials and managements and often made appeal to the Jamestown manufacturing and business houses for their support by shipping their goods over this road.

June 17, 1890 – The Chautauqua Lake Railway was shut down due to a trust company taking possession of the rolling stock. The original equipment of the Chautauqua Lake Ry. was sold to Reginald Vanning Company, New York, N.Y., consisting of three engines and twenty-seven cars. When the road opened up again, L.S. & M.S. RR [Lake Shore and Michigan Southern] rolling stock was used until new stock was purchased by Mr. W. E. [Walter E.] Griggs, receiver of the road, which was headed by C. O. Granger, president.

In May, 1891 Mr. Griggs, receiver, purchased five passenger cars and two small engines from the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Co., New York.

In 1899, the Chautauqua Lake Railway officially passed out of existence. A new company was organized and Mr. W. E. Griggs became General Manager and Mr. F. S. [Francis S.] Jones, General Agent. The road was renamed the Jamestown, Chautauqua, and Lake Erie Railroad and remained that name until it was sold at Mayville Court House and purchased along with the Chautauqua Steamboat Company steamboats in 1913 by the Broadhead interests, and motive power changed from steam to electricity and renamed the J.W. & N.W. RR [Jamestown, Westfield & North Western], which I believe you are all familiar with, and perhaps have traveled over the road in their electric care.

In July, 1908 arrangements were made between the Erie Railroad and the J.C. & L.E. Ry. allowing J.C. & L.E. passenger trains to run through to the Erie station on West First Street. This was in effect about six months.

[Handwritten: I was conductor of this train at the time.]

In 1887, the C. L. Railway extended their track to their Steele Street freight house over West Eighth Street, but some opposition was met, as the Erie RR opposed this crossing and attempted to lay a switch and dug holes changing the grade. Injunctions were served, state guards were ordered assembled by Mayor O. F. [Oscar F.] Price, to be ready if necessary to prevent any trouble.

Policemen were on guard, patrolling the area, and men and teams were put to work filling the excavation the Erie Railroad had made. However, the trouble was legally settled and a cross-over was installed. This was near the old Erie RR bridge at the Boatlanding on West Second Street, as I recall West Second Street then ran along the east bank of the outlet to West Eighth Street and Fairmount Avenue.

The proposed C.L. Railway passenger station was to have been built later at Main Street, as there were tracks in their Steele Street yard extending nearly to Main Street. A long stone pier was built in the center of the Outlet at the bridge. That crossed the Outlet on Main Street. This stone pier and place where the depot was to have been built is now covered by part of the Warner Block. The station was never built.

In the early days of the C.L. Ry., their tracks ran through to Brocton using W.N.Y. & P. track from Mayville, but on March 14, 1890, the W.N.Y. & P. RR issued notice they would no longer permit the use of their tracks by the C.L. Ry. between Mayville and Brocton. This refusal, I think, had something to do with the building of the Falconer branch from Clifton to Falconer in connection with the D.A.V. & P. RR [Dunkirk, Allegheny Valley, and Pittsburgh] to give an outlet for Jamestown shipments and through service in connection with the L.S. & M.S. Ry. at Dunkirk, as well as with the W.N.Y. & P. RR at Mayville.

The Falconer Branch

On April 15, 1896 a contract was signed by Haines Bros., owners of the C.L. Railway and Brady Bros. of Bayonne City, N.J., contractors to build this branch, and work was started a few days later. This branch cost a great deal of money and many difficulties were encountered in its construction, especially between the Outlet and through the hill at Fluvanna Avenue, where it

connected with main track. The dirt from the hill was hauled by small dump cars to this place, which sank about as fast as it was hauled in, as there was about twenty feet of soft muck soil above the hard bottom and the weight of this filling caused the soft muck to move out in the Outlet, which made it very difficult for the steamboats to pass through at this point for about three seasons, but it finally passed on down the Outlet and steamers could use the regular channel without much difficulty.

[The Sanborn map of the time did not map that area of Fluvanna Avenue, but the road appears to have followed a path from the east end of Clifton Avenue to the east end of lower Fluvanna Avenue plaza, and then may have followed the general path of I-86.]



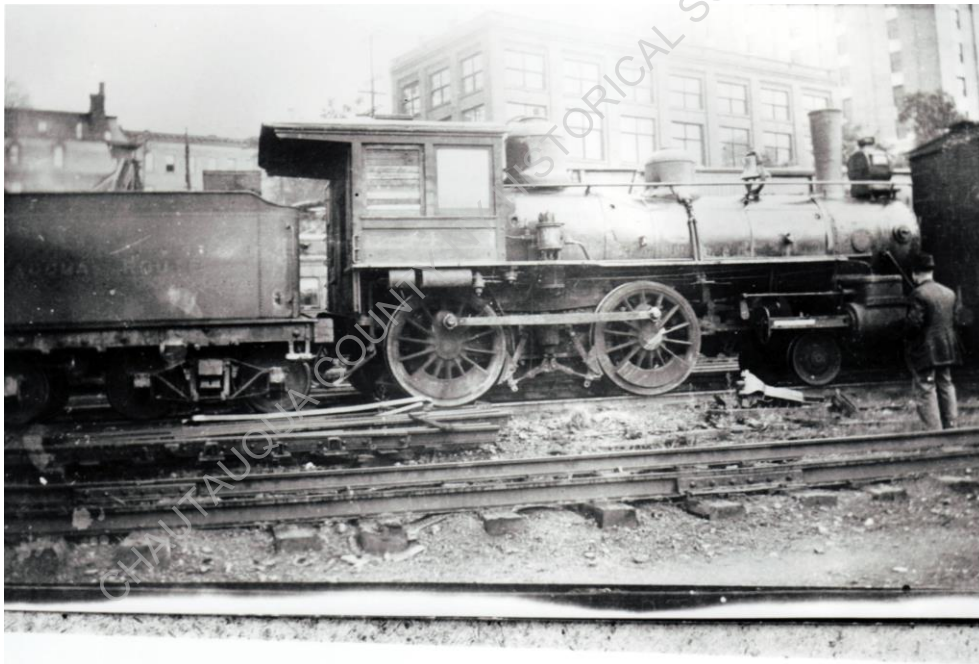
Google Earth view of Clifton-Fluvanna area. The Jamestown & Lake Erie bridge crossed Fluvanna Avenue near today's lower plaza. The bridge burned in 1909. Photo from William J. Rapaport.

In February, 1897, the branch was completed and train service started March 1st, 1897. The branch was not a paying proposition as the percentage of revenue on freight charges for the short haul of a little over two miles was small. The owners desired another outlet where revenue would be greater, on a thirty-three mile haul, so in 1901, work was started on the Westfield extension,

from Mayville to Westfield and connections could be made with the L.S. & M.S. Ry. and N.Y.C. & St. L. Ry. [New York, Chicago & St. Louis], as well as delivery to the W.N.Y. & P. RR at Mayville. While the Westfield extension was being built, the Falconer branch was kept in operation for an outlet for freight shipments. The branch was never used for passenger business to any great extent, other than excursion trains to Niagara Falls via D.A.V. & P. RR and L.S. & M.S. RR and to and from Lily Dale and Chautauqua Lake.

On October 11, 1902, the company issued notice to shippers and connecting lines to the effect that on October 15, 1902, the Falconer branch would be abandoned and train service discontinued in connection with the D.A.V. & P. RR and finally closed forever in 1906. Work on the Westfield branch was started at different places between Mayville and Westfield on the proposed route, large cuts had to be made and deep ravines had to be filled and a bridge over the Gulf was built, which was later filled with dirt. Objections made by the W.N.Y. & P. RR at the junction to this crossing by obstructions in many ways, including old locomotives to prevent the C.L. Ry. from installing the crossing. This, however, was overcome by legal means and crossing completed on June 17, 1901. After all the difficulties were overcome and the road was completed, the first freight train was run through to Westfield in July, 1903, and all freight and passenger service was routed via Westfield and L.S. & M.S. Ry. and N.Y.C. & St. L. RR. When the road was completed to the L.S. & M.S. RR, a crossover was installed in their tracks and the J.C. & L.E. RR entered Westfield Yards and station on the north side. In July, 1904, a new station was built by the L.S. & M.S. RR and all crossovers were removed from their tracks and the J.C. & L.E. trains entered on the south side to their yards and station, as is done at the present time by the J.W. & N.W. RR.

In 1892, passenger service was put in operation between Jamestown and Buffalo via Mayville and W.N.Y. & P. RR with W. & N.Y. P. [should this be W.N.Y. & P.?] equipment being used, leaving Jamestown in the morning and returning in the evening. This service only lasted a few months. During the summer seasons in 1902 and 1903, a special Pullman sleeping car service was put in operation from western and southern cities to Chautauqua Lake via L.S. & M.S. RR and J.C. & L.E. RR. Passengers were transferred by steamer from Point Chautauqua to the Chautauqua Assembly Grounds. At one time, the J.C. & L.E. RR was controlled by the Mayer-Sheen Syndicate in New York, and also the Buffalo and Lake Erie Traction Co.



J.C. & L.E. RR Locomotive #4

In June, 1913, labor trouble developed between the company and the trainmen for a wage increase of 2-1/2¢ an hour, negotiations were carried on for some time between the company and the trainmen, numbering sixteen men. The company refused to grant the increase, resulting in the strike, which lasted

about ten days and badly tied up the road and cost many thousands of dollars. The pay of conductors was 25¢ per hour, engineers 30¢, trainmen 22¢, firemen 22-1/2¢ per hour and there was no 16 hour law then and when a crew started to work, they kept on until the trip was completed and all switching done, which was generally 12 to 18 hours. There was no overtime pay. With a few hours rest, the crew went out again. I think this labor trouble and the large amount of money it cost the company in freight loss and damage to shipments not being moved as well, the small increase in wages asked by the trainmen might have been the reason for the company to sell the railroad to the highest bidder, along with steamboats, and the Broadhead interests got both. The P. RR nor the L.S. & M.S. Ry. did not seem to be very interested to buy the road. During the strike tie up, the U.S. Mail was carried by steamboat to Bemus Point and to Point Chautauqua. That for Dewittville was hauled by station wagon from the County Farm.

During the fourteen years I worked on the J.C. & L.E., I saw many changes in official personnel and management, naming a few I can recall. Ralph W. Taylor; F. L. Chase; R. J. [Roswell J.] Bootey; J. M. Africa; W. S. Stinchcomb; C. O. Granger; E. W. Evans; E. T. Haines; J. A. Barry; W. H. Smith; H. W. [Harry A.] Macbeth; M. C. Brusck; C. M. [Cornelius M.] Harrison; Frank S. Jones; F. R. Ford; G. W. Mason; George F. Asper; John Moynihan; D. F. Parish; J. C. Calish, and W. E. Griggs and also Mr. W. H. [William H.] Pickard, now Traffic Manager of the J.W. & N.W. Ry.

[Handwritten: I also think of the good meals served us by the good farm folks along the right-of-way, when trains were either broken down or stuck in the snow drifts, which the latter happened many times in those days.]

In all my railroad services, which started in November, 1892, and my connections with the Erie Railroad, I have seen many changes in management and construction and am thankful to be alive and have the opportunity and pleasure to be here with you folks today.

I thank you.

[Signed: Martin N. Arend, 1927]

Martin Nicholas Arend was born in Jamestown, August 16, 1875, one of seven children of Nicholas and Josephine Homan Arend. He married Grace E. Tousley and had two sons, Clarence Tousley Arend (1896-1981) and Harry Richard Arend (1898-1947). Martin, a railroad switchman, and his family lived at 49 W. 10th Street in 1900. By 1910, the family had moved to 53 Stewart Avenue, and Martin was a railroad conductor. Martin and Grace were still on Stewart Avenue after the sons had left home by 1920, and Martin was now a railroad inspector. By 1930, they had moved to 25 Hess Street, where they remained until their deaths. Grace, born September 7, 1875, died April 22, 1956. Martin passed in 1963; both are buried in Holy Cross Cemetery in Jamestown.