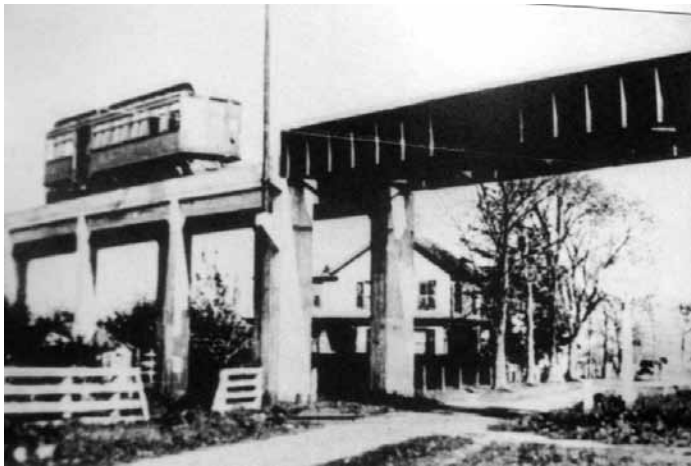


Old Saybrook Trains and Trolleys

The first train tracks in town helped connect passengers from New York and New Haven to points east like New London, Providence and Boston. (*And began the decline of the coastal steamship lines.*) The second set of tracks brought vacationers and revivalists to Fenwick. (*And began the decline of the river steamboats.*) The third set of tracks helped school children get to school, and shoreline neighbors visit each other. (*And began the decline of horse-drawn coaches.*) But perhaps more importantly, the third set of tracks meant less horse manure on the streets of Old Saybrook.



Viaduct crossing River St and the tracks to Fenwick. Beard's Lumber would now be to the right, Saybrook to the left.

First tracks: in 1852 the New Haven and New London Railroad built the first set of tracks through Old Saybrook. After building bridges across the rivers, this line became the main New York to Boston route. (*Today these tracks service Amtrak and Shoreline East trains.*)

Second tracks: 19 years later in 1871, the Hartford and Connecticut Valley Railroad built a second set of tracks, connecting Hartford to Saybrook. These tracks met at Saybrook Junction, where they crossed the New Haven tracks. By 1873 the line from Hartford extended down to Saybrook Point and across South Cove to Fenwick. (*Today these tracks are long gone, but the causeway across South Cove traces the old track route to Fenwick.*)

Trolley tracks: For a brief span of years, Old Saybrook had a third set of tracks. They carried the Shoreline Electric Railway Company's trolleys through town. The company was in business from only 1910 to 1924, was always unprofitable, and was bankrupt by 1919. But during that short lifespan, the line extended from New Haven to Rhode Island and up the River to Essex, Ivoryton and Deep River. It was the State's second largest *traction* system by 1916.

The trolley route ran mostly south of the Post Road coming up the coast to Old Saybrook. They crossed the Oyster River, and turned right along Old Boston Post Road, passing by the library. They then turned left onto Main Street where the firehouse is now, and ran up Main Street, turning right across what is now the Saybrook Country Barn property and Beard's Lumber. A viaduct near what is now Saybrook Ford crossed the rail tracks to Fenwick. The route then turned right past the car barn, (*which is still there*) and followed the Post Road down to the start of Ferry Road. That point was called Ferry Road Junction, where passengers either took the route across the River to New London (*traveling down Ferry Road past the Power Station, which is still there, and across the old Baldwin Bridge*) or they traveled up along what is now route 154 to Essex and beyond.

The cars were painted green and gold and had smoking and non-smoking sections. Fares ranged from 1 to 5 cents. Passengers were coastal commuters, school children, merchants and vacationers. In 1914 the line carried almost 20 million passengers. But the trolley line never made a profit. And in 1917 there was a terrible crash in Branford, killing several passengers, and sponsoring numerous lawsuits. Then in 1918, the wealthy investor and majority owner died. In 1919,



School children boarding trolley, Main St., 1910. Building which is now Esty's visible on right.

workers striking for higher wages finally put the line into bankruptcy. All operations stopped by 1924 and by then the popularity of automobiles had begun to rise. The tracks disappeared. Only the car barn on Ford Lane and the power station on Ferry Road survive today, 100 years later.

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