

# Trains, Trolleys, and Trails

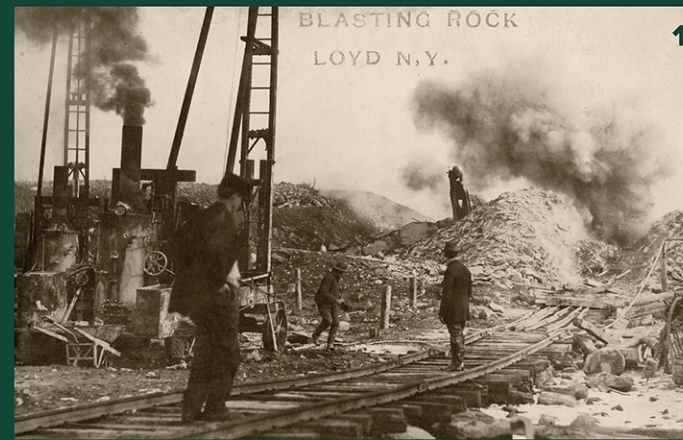
The Lloyd gap in the Newburgh–Kingston Marlboro Mountains ridge is part of a historic east–west transportation route between the Hudson River and the Shawangunk Mountains. Once part of a Native American trail, the gap was a passage for the 1832 New Paltz Turnpike, 1889 “Maybrook Line” railroad, 1897 New Paltz–Highland electric trolley, 1959 Route 299, and in 1997, the Hudson Valley Rail Trail.

## Maybrook Line History

The first rail line here, the Hudson Connecting Railroad, was completed in 1889. This allowed the Central New England & Western Railroad to move freight between Hartford, Connecticut, and railroads in Orange County, New York, via the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge, now the Walkway Over the Hudson State Park. The New Haven Railroad acquired the CNE route in 1904 and eight years later completed its massive freight yard at Maybrook, New York, at the west end of its growing New England freight route, known as the Maybrook Line.

## Lloyd Track Realignment

Locomotives and trains were getting larger and heavier at the start of the twentieth century. The New Haven and other railroads realigned routes to reduce curves and grades to run longer, faster trains. At Lloyd, the New Haven relocated and double-tracked nearly two miles of the steep, winding 1889 route across the Black Creek valley. Construction contractors built a higher, level, straight embankment across the creek wetlands and blasted new rock cut approaches. Progress slowed when the embankment and creek culvert sank into deep swamp muck. One worker was killed in a blasting accident. The new alignment opened in December 1914, and the 1889 railbed was abandoned. The last train ran on this part of the Maybrook Line in 1982, and the first section of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail opened here in 1997.



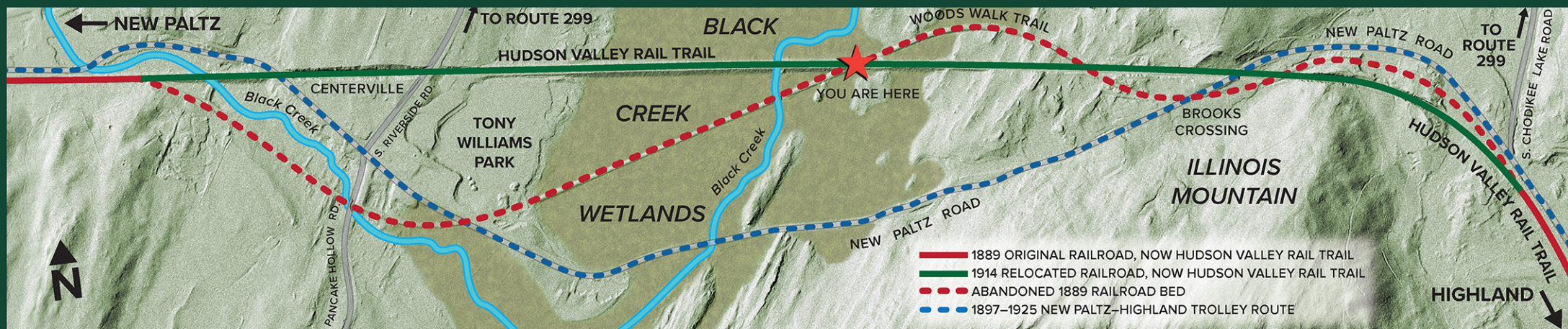
▲ **RELOCATION CONSTRUCTION**  
Postcards show 1912–1914 O'Brian's Construction Company Maybrook Line relocation work: **1.** Steam drills at left made bedrock holes for placing explosives; smoke billows from a blast at right. **2.** Steam shovels like this one at Centerville excavated railbed cuts through rock and soil. **3.** Temporary timber trestle was used for dumping rock and soil from the cuts to build the embankment you are standing on; the 1889 track is visible at left. **4.** Construction workers pose on the temporary trestle. Sources: John “Jack” Auchmoody and Vivian Yess Wadlin.



▲ **TROLLEY BRIDGE**  
The 1897–1925 New Paltz–Highland electric trolley line followed New Paltz Road and passed over the Maybrook Line on this steel viaduct at Brooks Crossing until the railroad and overpass were relocated northeast in 1914. Illinois Mountain rises in the background. Source: Town of Lloyd Historian's Collection.



▲ **ORIGINAL RAILBED**  
An 1889 Maybrook Line bridge abutment stands surrounded by Black Creek floodwaters. Abandoned 1889 railbed cuts and fills are still visible along the rail trail between South Chodikee Lake Road and Centerville. The Woods Walk Trail, built on a portion of the 1889 railbed, begins at the nearby steps and rejoins the rail trail a quarter mile to the east. Source: Milestone Heritage Consulting.



# Highland Station

Highland was once an Ulster County transportation gateway via Hudson River ferries and steamboats, a New Paltz–Highland electric trolley, the West Shore Railroad along the Hudson, and the New Haven Railroad “Maybrook Line,” now the Hudson Valley Rail Trail. The passenger depot and freight house built here after the railroad was completed in 1889 were part of community life for many years.

## Passenger Depot

In its early decades the depot served passenger trains running between Hartford, Connecticut, and Campbell Hall, New York, and a shuttle to Poughkeepsie. The depot became a social center where people came and went, sent and received packages, got their world news, and exchanged local gossip. The US Mail moved by Railway Post Office, and before the telephone, the station agent provided communication via telegraph. Highland passengers included commuters, salesmen, shoppers, schoolchildren, and patrons of local resorts and Shawangunk Mountain hotels.

## Freight Service

The Maybrook Line was mostly a freight route and served a freight yard west of the station. The freight house next to the depot handled packages and less-than-carload freight. The Great Depression beginning in 1929 and the rise of the automobile impacted passenger traffic, and passenger service ended here in the 1930s. Freight traffic peaked during World War II but dropped off dramatically after the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge, now the Walkway over the Hudson State Park, burned in 1974. The depot and freight house were demolished, and the last freight train ran here in 1982.



### ▲ PASSENGER STOP

Passengers stepping off a Central New England & Western Railroad train at Highland station in 1889. Source: Town of Lloyd Historian's Collection.



### ◀ HIGHLAND DEPOT

Trackside view of Highland depot in the 1930s. The bay window gave the station agent a clear view of the platform and tracks. The freight house stands at right. Source: Vivian Yess Wadlin.

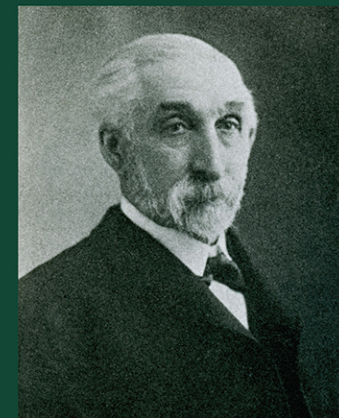


### ◀ FREIGHT TRAIN

New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad diesel locomotives pulling a Connecticut-bound freight train from the Maybrook freight yard past the Highland depot and freight house in the early 1960s. Source: Ronald Hall Collection / Archives and Special Collections, UConn Library.

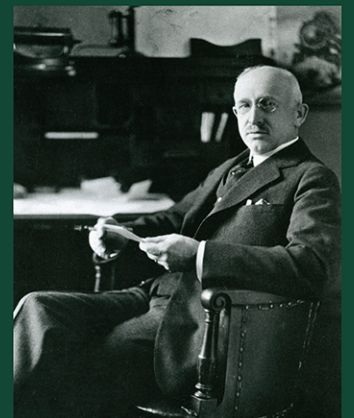
## Pratt Lumber

In 1889, George Washington Pratt relocated his lumber and container business here to take advantage of the new railroad line and Twaalfskill Creek waterpower for his sawmill. George and his son Harcourt Joseph Pratt established the George W. Pratt & Son Company and sold coal, grain, ice, and lumber from here. George Pratt was a founder and president of the First National Bank of Highland. Harcourt Pratt served as a US congressman for Ulster County from 1920 to 1932. After over a century of ownership the Pratt family sold the lumber yard in 1993, and it closed in 1995.



GEORGE W. PRATT (1840–1931)

Source: Town of Lloyd Historian's Collection.



HARCOURT J. PRATT (1866–1934)

Source: Town of Lloyd Historian's Collection.

### ◀ AERIAL VIEW

Aerial photo of the Highland station taken about 1960 showing the attached depot, freight house, and platform north of the tracks at left and Pratt Lumber buildings south of the tracks at center. Bridge over Vineyard Avenue / routes 44-55 and Twaalfskill Creek is at bottom center. Source: Town of Lloyd Historian's Collection.



Hudson River Valley Greenway

# Railroad Caboosees



▲ CABOOSE AT HIGHLAND  
A New Haven Railroad caboose on an eastbound train from Maybrook on the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge at Highland, New York, in August 1967. The bridge is now the Walkway Over the Hudson State Park. Source: J.W. Swanberg photo.

◀ PRR CABIN CAR  
A Pennsylvania Railroad N5 cabin car being coupled to a freight train at the East Altoona, Pennsylvania, freight yard in 1957. Source: Bud Swearer photograph / Thomas M. Olsen Collection.

## PRR Cabin Cars

The Pennsylvania Railroad cabin car displayed at this trailhead is a PRR N5, the first all-steel, mass-produced U.S. caboose type. By 1912 safety laws mandated all-steel cabooses, which were safer in collisions than earlier wooden ones. The PRR built hundreds of N5s at its Altoona, Pennsylvania, shop complex between 1914 and 1942. Also built for comfort, the N5 included bunks, a heating and cooking stove, an icebox, a water cooler, a toilet, and lockers. Lionel Corporation made the N5 famous, adopting the type for its popular electric toy trains. N5 cabin cars operated through the 1990s under PRR successors Penn Central and Conrail.

## Caboose History

The word “caboose” comes from Dutch or German words for a small room or hut. The origins of the first caboose are shrouded in folklore, but they appeared on New York railroads by the 1850s. Early cabooses were converted boxcars, and by the 1870s they incorporated rooftop cupolas. In 1925, there were almost 35,000 cabooses in the U.S. Cabooses were dangerous workplaces and expensive to operate. In the 1980s new communication and safety technology and changing work rules made cabooses obsolete, and they were replaced by electronic devices attached to the rear of freight trains.

## Safety and Comfort

A caboose was a rolling operations center for the crew at the rear of a freight train. It was an office for the conductor, who was responsible for freight car records and train movements. During unplanned stops, a brakeman walked back along the track with a flag or lantern to warn approaching trains. On moving trains, a brakeman sat in the cupola and watched for signs of trouble like smoke from overheated axle bearings. Crews worked long hours, sometimes in remote locations, and cabooses were a “home away from home” where workers could eat, sleep, and stay out of the weather. Cabooses were also used to store safety equipment, tools, and spare parts.

▶ TRAIN PROTECTION  
A Pennsylvania Railroad brakeman signaling with a flare beside a stopped PRR N5 cabin car on a winter night in the 1960s. Source: Don Wood photograph / Railroad Museum of Pennsylvania, PHMC.



◀ SPARTAN INTERIOR  
A 1942 photograph of a New Haven Railroad caboose shows a bunk, conductor's desk, canteen, sink, and stove with railings to keep pots from sliding off when the train was moving. Source: David Peters Collection / Archives & Special Collections, UConn Library.



▲ ROLLING MOTEL  
New Haven Railroad workers enjoying a meal and hot coffee in their caboose in the 1950s. Source: New Haven Railroad / Golden West Books.

*Cabooses were an iconic part of American railroading. A caboose's main function was to protect the rear of a freight train, and it provided shelter for a train's crew. The cabooses on the Hudson Valley Rail Trail, which follows part of the former New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad's "Maybrook Line" to southern New England, originally ran on the Pennsylvania Railroad, which called them "cabin cars."*



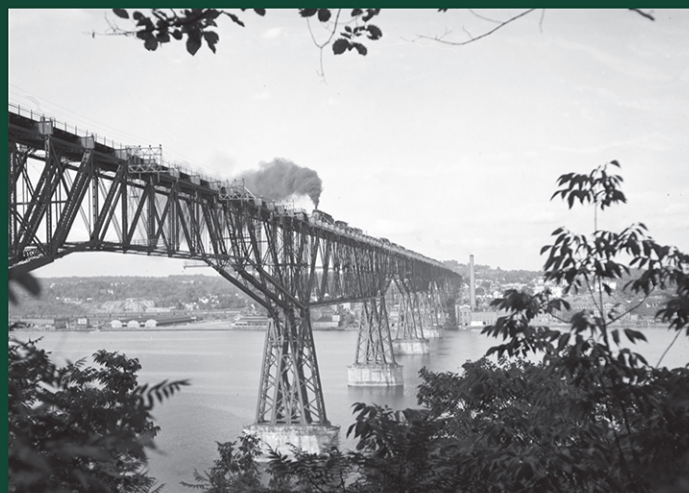
Hudson River  
Valley Greenway



# The Maybrook Line

Welcome to the Hudson Valley Rail Trail in Lloyd, New York, a segment of the Empire State Trail that follows part of the former New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad “Maybrook Line,”

once an important southern New England freight rail gateway.



## ◀ POUGHKEEPSIE BRIDGE

A westbound New Haven Railroad freight train on the Poughkeepsie Railroad Bridge approaches Lloyd in the late 1940s. Completed in 1889, this 6,768-foot-long cantilever truss bridge carried Maybrook Line trains 212 feet above the Hudson River. It burned in 1974, impacting regional freight rail routes. It is now the Walkway Over the Hudson State Park. Source: Kent Cochrane.

## The Maybrook

East-west rail traffic south of Albany crossed the Hudson River on freight car ferries between Beacon and Newburgh until 1889, when the railroad bridge across the river was completed at Poughkeepsie. The “New Haven,” then southern New England’s dominant railroad, consolidated several existing end-to-end rail lines by 1904 to create the 125-mile-long Maybrook Line. The Maybrook moved freight gathered from five railroads converging at a large freight yard west of the Hudson in Maybrook, in Orange County. From there New Haven trains carried freight east through Lloyd, across the river to Poughkeepsie, over the hills of Dutchess and Putnam Counties, and ultimately to the Cedar Hill freight yard outside New Haven, Connecticut.

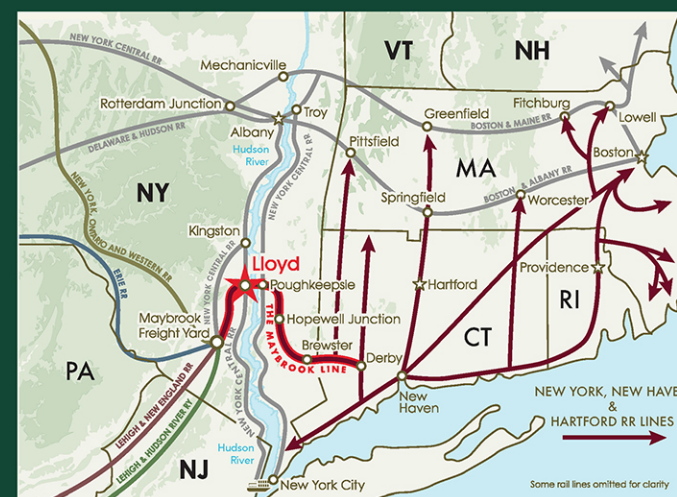
## Rise and Fall

Like its hilly route, the Maybrook Line had its ups and downs. It was busy during World War I but lost traffic during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The Maybrook’s finest hour was during World War II, when powerful New Haven steam locomotives moved record freight tonnage over the line. After the war, traffic declined again, and diesel locomotives replaced steam in 1947. Competition from Penn Central rail lines after 1968 and Interstate 84 after 1971 further eroded service. A 1974 fire shut down the Poughkeepsie bridge, ending Maybrook Line long-distance freight trains and altering regional freight rail patterns. The last freight train ran on the Lloyd-to-Maybrook portion of the line in 1982.



## ▲ “MAYBROOK BOUND”

This watercolor painting of New Haven Railroad diesel-locomotive-powered trains meeting at Poughquag, New York, captures the spirit of heavy freight service on the Maybrook Line in the 1950s. Source: William G. Dulmaine Jr.



## ▲ MAYBROOK LINE

The Maybrook Line was a key rail freight connection across the Hudson River, linking important railroad lines from the west with southern New England. In Lloyd, the Hudson Valley Rail Trail follows the Maybrook Line for 5.4 miles between the hamlet of Highland and Elting Corners. Source: Milestone Heritage Consulting / Emily Moser / Toelke Associates.

## ▶ END OF THE LINE

Salvage workers tore up the Maybrook Line tracks in Lloyd in 1983, the year after rail service ended here. The Hudson Valley Rail Trail Association opened the first short section of the Hudson Valley Rail Trail on the Maybrook Line right-of-way in 1997. The trail has expanded east and west and became a segment of the 750-mile-long Empire State Trail in 2020. Source: Austin McEntee photo, Vivian Yess Wadlin collection.

## Rail to Trail

Today the Empire State Trail follows the route of the former Maybrook Line for forty-four miles from Lloyd to Brewster, New York, over the Hudson Valley Rail Trail, the Walkway Over the Hudson, the William R. Steinhaus Dutchess Rail Trail, and the Maybrook Trailway.



Hudson River Valley Greenway