



Southport Railroad Stations Collection

COLLECTION, MS 56

DATE

1885 – 1992

CONTRIBUTOR

Fairfield Museum

ADMINISTRATIVE/BIOGRAPHICAL HISTORY ELEMENT

The New York and New Haven Railroad first opened in Southport on December 25, 1848. The depot which currently stands on the eastbound side of the track initially provided both passenger and freight service in direct competition with the coastal trade that had dominated Southport's economy in the early 19th century. Connecticut railroads grew dramatically in the 1870's. Increased traffic led to the construction of a freight house in 1870 next to the passenger station. In 1872 the freight house was moved to the westbound side of the tracks. This was the same year in which the New York and New Haven Railroad merged with another rail line to become the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad.

Peter Sturges acted as depot master and freight agent from 1848-1853; Aaron Jennings followed as depot master from 1853-1883 and he was succeeded by William E. Purdy from 1882-1922. Freight agents over the same period of time include David R. Banks, John Burke, Jim Lafferty, Henry Archer, John Donahue, Edward Smith, Henry P. Callahan and Harry Disbrow.

In 1985 the state of Connecticut purchased the majority of the railroad tracks, buildings and rights of way from the bankrupt Penn Central Railroad, who had acquired the line in 1968. In 1988 the Connecticut Department of Transportation announced that the Southport freight station was available for lease. Three years later the DOT, the town of Fairfield and the Southport Conservancy arranged a lease. The Conservancy restored the building to its original appearance and has since leased the building to an art gallery and restaurant.

SCOPE & CONTENT

The items in this collection primarily came from two sources. Some were found in the Southport Passenger Station on the eastbound line by Messrs. Van-Eyck and Emerich when they had an antique shop in the station. The items were found stuffed in the rafters and relate to the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad Company. The station is now a restaurant. These items are from accession number L96.Jul.54. Other items are from accession number L93.May.26 and were donated by Leo Ott. He kept a scrapbook of materials related to the railroad. Other items are from V. Louise Higgins and unknown sources.

The collection consists of freight and financial records, reports, and memorabilia for the Southport depot and freight stations, 1886-1904, 1921; Western Union telegrams to and from the station, 1885-1890; and records of the Southport Conservancy's effort to restore the freight station, 1988-1992. Financial records are arranged first, followed by the telegrams. The materials from the Southport Conservancy encompass photographs, correspondence, and architectural drawings (blue line) of the renovation executed by Robert Hatch.

Collection Contents

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Drawings for Renovation of Southport Freight Station by Robert Hatch

Southport Conservancy Correspondence and Photographs

Western Union Telegrams

Pages from Scrapbook with Receipts, Forms, Telegrams, Memos, and Newspaper Clipping

Freight Tariff

Day Books for Freight Shipped

Reports

Western Union Telegrams

Accounting Department Forms

Treasurer's Records of Passenger Accounts

Agent's Remittance Forms

Freight Receipts