

*Records*  
THE COCHECO RAILROAD ~~PIERS~~: REGISTER

*Historical Sketch of the Cochecho Railroad*

In 1847 a group of men living in and near Dover, N.H., obtained a charter from the state legislature for a railroad. One of the leading figures was William Hale, Jr. (1804-1893), son of the William Hale (1764-1848) who had been Representative, Senator, and Governor's Councilor of N.H. and three-term United States Congressman. The Hales were wealthy and prominent residents of Dover.

The directors of the new railroad wasted no time. Under Samuel Ashburner of Massachusetts as chief engineer, the road was laid out and built at once, and by September, 1849, the cars were rolling between Dover and Farmington, via Rochester.

The directors soon decided that by ending at Farmington the Cochecho Railroad (as the new road was named) was overlooking an important additional market, and began planning to extend the road to Alton Bay at the southeast corner of Lake Winnepesaukee, thereby tapping the established passenger and freight business carried on Winnepesaukee steamboats and on stage coach lines running from Wolfeborough, Centre Harbor and Meredith to the White Mountains.

Under the direction of Marshall Conant, the second phase of construction was carried out in 1851-2, and shortly thereafter a steamboat (the *Dover*) and wharfage at Wolfeborough and Alton Bay, the road's new northern terminus, were added to the complex. Despite occasional notions of extending the rails farther northwest to The Weirs (in Laconia) or Meredith (some maps of the period erroneously show this extension as built) and building an allied road from Dover south to Portsmouth, the 28½ miles between Dover and Alton Bay proved to be the final length of the Cochecho RR. (Both extensions were to come, but

not till the name of the "Cocheco Railroad" had disappeared, and one only in 1890.)

The road did not exist, of course, in isolation. Hale was in close touch especially with the Boston, Concord & Montreal RR, running in a great arc from Concord (and connection southward via the Concord RR) through Laconia, Meredith and Plymouth to Haverhill in the Upper Valley of the Connecticut River. Its president was the distinguished attorney Josiah Quincey, of Rumney, and it too had a steamboat on Winnipiesaukee and close ties to stage lines into the mountains.

Even closer was the Cocheco RR's relationship to the Boston & Maine Railroad. In fact, as various documents here make clear, the founders of the Cocheco never planned to run a railroad at all. What they intended was to raise the necessary capital and build a road, then lease it to the B&M to operate. How close the connection was is indicated by the fact that there were B&M directors among the Cocheco founders; that from its start the Cocheco used the B&M depot in Dover as its own depot, thus connecting to the B&M and obtaining access to the south, especially to Boston; and that William Hale was himself elected to the board of the B&M, serving very actively for two years while still president of the Cocheco. Yet time after time the B&M board rejected offers to lease the Cocheco, which led to much hard feeling on the Cocheco side. From the Cocheco's point of view this was an outright repudiation of a clear understanding.

Like many other New England railroads in and after 1851, when for some reason capital for such ventures became very scarce, the Cocheco directors spent a great deal of time and effort dealing with financial exigencies, using preferred stock issues, bonds, notes, mortgages, and so on. In 1859, after Hale's leaving the presidency, the road was reorganized and re-named the Dover & Winnipeseogee Railroad ("Winnipeseogee" was one of the frequent spellings at the time of that polymorphic

name), and in 1863 the D&W was finally leased by the Boston & Maine. The B&M operated it under lease for no fewer than twenty-nine years, finally buying it outright in 1892. The deed of sale bears William Hale's signature as president. He died a year later.

#### *The Scope of the Papers*

These "Cocheco Railroad Papers" are in fact mostly the papers of William Hale as the road's president. At some point in their history they were individually docketed as to sender or contents and usually date, folded uniformly, and for the most part tied up with pink tape into bundles. Some of the bundles were labeled, often with the year; some not. A few items remained loose. Most of them, of course, deal with the years 1848 through 1856 of Hale's presidency of the road, but there are some documents of both earlier and much later date, down in fact to the deed of sale of 1892. They were first opened, examined, and classified in 1989-90 for the New Hampshire Historical Society, which also holds other Cocheco RR material.

The papers have been classified into two major sub-series, Internal Affairs and External Affairs, the former comprising items relating directly to the Cocheco RR itself, and the latter to affairs between the Cocheco and other roads or institutions. There is in addition a minor sub-series, Miscellaneous, comprising items dealing with Hale other than as president of the Cocheco RR (as, for example, director of the B&M) and some genuine miscellanea which somehow chanced to be included among the other papers.

The External sub-series has been subdivided by the source or subject of the items: for example, correspondence from officials of the Boston, Concord & Montreal RR is filed under that road's name. These subjects are filed alphabetically, and the items in each subject then filed chronologically. The forty-

four folders in two boxes have been labeled and numbered as follows:

**SERIES I: INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**Subseries A: Planning & Construction**

Bx 1, fld 01 1845 - 3/18/50  
 02 4/25/50 - 7/30/50  
 03 8/1/50 - 2/6/51  
 04 3/1/51 - 5/5/51  
 05 5/13/51 - 12/13/51  
 06 1/2/52 - 12/31/52 (includes proposed Ports. & Dov. RR)  
 07 1/22/53 - 2/3/54  
 08 1863

**Subseries B: Operations**

Bx 1, fld 09 1/8/50 - 7/10/50  
 10 9/1/50 - 7/21/51  
 11 8/11/51 - 12/17/51  
 12 1/6/52 - 6/14/52  
 13 to end 1852 and undated 1852  
 14 1/9/53 - 12/22/53  
 15 1/4/54 - 11/13/54  
 16 1/8/55 - 12/31/55  
 17 1/16/56 - 7/12/56; 1862; 1863  
 18 8/1892

**Subseries C: Finance**

Bx 1, fld 19 1/2/50 - 9/30/50  
 20 1851  
 21 1/2/52 - 8/26/52  
 22 9/11/52 - 12/20/52  
 Bx 2, fld 01 1853  
 02 1854-5  
 03 1857  
 04 1862-3

## SERIES II: EXTERNAL AFFAIRS

## Subseries A: Individual RRs by name

- Bx 2, fld 05 - 09: Boston & Maine RR  
 05 to 1852 and undated  
 06 1852  
 07 1/53 - 7/54  
 08 10/54 - 12/55  
 09 1856 - 1892, incl. Dover & Winnepeseogee RR
- 10 Boston, Concord & Montreal RR
- 11 Great Falls & Conway RR thru 1853
- 12 GF&CRR 1854 - 1870
- 13 Various RRs (A - M):  
 Boston & Worcester RR; Cheshire RR; Concord RR;  
 Eastern RR; Hartford, Providence, & Fishkill RR;  
 Lowell & Lawrence RR; Manchester & Lawrence RR;  
 Montpelier & Conn. River RR
- 14 Various RRs (N - Z):  
 Northern (N.Y.) RR; Portland & Rochester RR;  
 Portsmouth & Dover RR; Providence & Worcester RR;  
 Vermont & Mass. RR; Vermont Central RR
- 15 Various RRs: Combinations

## SERIES III: MISCELLANEOUS AFFAIRS

- Bx 2, fld 16 Equipment (Sales letters and circulars)
- 17 - 19: Hale as Director B&M RR  
 17 1850  
 18 1851  
 19 1852
- 20 Copies of Letters from Hale to "Sundry Persons," 1848-1852
- 21 Miscellaneous, Dated
- 22 Miscellaneous, Undated

## Cards made for catalog:

Railroads-Cocheco	Hale, William Jr.	Dover, NH
Railroads-B&M	Harvard College-Regattas	

COCHECO RAILROAD RECORDS  
 Addition to the Collection  
 1/2 Box, 91 items  
 Box 3 of 3

Correspondence to William Hale, President of the Cocheco Railroad from stockholders and representatives of various other railroads, 1847-50. Two stockholders lists, 1855-1871. The letters are arranged alphabetically by the last name of the correspondent.

These papers were found in the box with the papers of Joab N. Patterson (Acc.# 1962-19). Both of these collections spent many years in the Manuscripts annex. They were unprocessed and shelved with other materials as subject collections, Railroads and Civil War. I can find no relationship between Patterson and the Cocheco. The Cocheco papers are 20 years earlier than anything in the Patterson collection and were written when Patterson was still a teenager. I suspect that these papers were accidentally interfiled years ago. I have therefore processed them as an addition to the main Cocheco collection.

- Fld 1 Letters from names starting A-C, 1849 (13)
- Fld 2-4 Letters from S. Ashburner, Boston 1847-1850 (32)
- Fld 5 Letters from names D-H, 1848-49 (12)
- Fld 6 Letters from names K-T, 1848-49 (13)
- Fld 7 Letters from names V-W, 1849 (11)
- Fld 8 Letters from William F. Weld & Co., 1848-49 (10)
- Env 9 Stockholders Lists 1855-1871 (1 vol)
- Env 10 Stock sale list, n.d. (1 vol)

CARDS MADE FOR THE CATALOG:

Ashburner, S. (Boston)  
 Marston, Gilman  
 Weld, William F. & Co.