

# Railroading In Merrimack

## The REEDS FERRY STATION

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*March, 2010*



The Reeds Ferry railroad station was located in the area of the present boat ramp parking lot and was one of five railroad stations that served Merrimack beginning in 1842. The original station was the northern most of the three stations originally constructed by the Concord Railroad Corporation. The Concord Railroad Corporation was chartered by an Act of the New Hampshire legislature on June 27, 1835. The act specified that the line must join the Nashua and Lowell Railroad in Nashua, thereby legislatively requiring the route to travel down the west side of the Merrimack River.

According to the Bi-Centennial History of Merrimack of 1946, construction of the railroad was delayed by the Financial Panic of 1837, general lack of public interest, the frequency of accidents on railroads of the day and the opposition of property owners along the proposed route to sell a 100 foot right-of-way through their property. This later was overcome by another act of the legislature, in 1841, which allowed the State of New Hampshire to use its power of eminent domain to purchase the required land and re-sell it to the Concord Railroad for the price paid by the state.

Construction began in early 1842. The first passenger train, carrying railroad officials and other dignitaries, went over the line on June 28, 1842. The first public train from Nashua to Manchester ran on July 4, 1842. The line reached Concord in September 1842. The line was double tracked beginning in 1846 and reverted back to single track in 1976. Canal boat traffic on the Merrimack River held on for about 10 more years after the railroad's arrival before being abandoned. The Concord and Nashua Railroad was absorbed into the Boston and Maine Railroad in the 1880's.

The Reeds Ferry Station was located 25.54 miles from Concord. While records of the original station are scarce, an insurance report from 1909 indicates that the station was built in 1856. It was a rather large affair measuring 15' x 60' divided into a Ladies room, Gents' room and a Freight room. There were also two sheds, one 25' x 125' and the other 20' x 100', a water-house with one cistern, and a coal bin, all located on a little over 2 acres of land. The station was furnished with sofa, rocker and chairs. The sheds are listed as Section Houses and were used by maintenance crews to store equipment and supplies. The section houses, with coal and watering facilities, indicate the importance of the station as a track gang probably maintained the rails from Nashua to Manchester.

The station was the site of a train wreck reported in the January 7, 1860 edition of the Nashua Telegraph. A slowing freight plowed into the rear of the passenger train en route to Concord. There were several injuries but no deaths.

The center photo indicates a siding or team track that was used for loading and unloading freight and produce from area businesses and farms. The Reeds Ferry Station also served the McGaw Normal Institute. Proximity to the station allowed the Institute to receive daily commuting students, as well as boarders. The McGaw Normal Institute served as the town's high school until 1954. The last remaining school building is located just up Depot Street, and serves as a kindergarten.

Rail traffic slowly declined and a Boston and Maine RR Employee timetable of 1941 shows a stop to drop off newspapers at 2:11 AM as the only scheduled stop at the station. The final passenger train ran on June 30, 1967.