

# RAILPACE NEWSMAGAZINE



*Remembering...*

**D&H  
Albany-Montreal  
Passenger Service**

*Staten Island - Rahway Valley  
Finale*







LEFT: Staten Island Railway train AL-1 has just crossed the Arthur Kill River into New Jersey, and negotiates a wooden trestle at Bayway, N.J., on April 20, 1986. The train has several empty freight cars in tow for the Conrail interchange at Staten Island Junction in Cranford.

BELOW: NYO&W NW2 116 is seen trundling through Bayway, N.J. on Staten Island Railway trackage, March 29, 1988.

BOTTOM: NYS&W SW9 120 has two former NJ Transit E8 locomotives in tow for interchange with NJT in Cranford. From March 30, 1988 through March 29, 1991, Kasten Rail Car leased space at the Rahway Valley Kenilworth enginehouse to repair former NJT E8's 4258, 4324, 4325, and 4327.

**A**pril 21, 1992 was a dismal day, for it marked the final operation of Delaware Otsego's Rahway Valley Railroad and Staten Island Railway. The Delaware Otsego Corporation, also operator of the New York, Susquehanna & Western Railway, had assumed operations of the Rahway Valley and Staten Island railways during the mid-1980's. Both railroads enjoyed colorful histories, but competition from trucks and the loss of their traffic base rendered the lines unprofitable.

### *Seven Years Of Change...*

## THE FINAL YEARS OF THE RAHWAY VALLEY AND THE STATEN ISLAND RAILWAY

By Carl G. Perelman

### RAHWAY VALLEY RAILROAD HISTORY

The Rahway Valley was chartered in 1894 as the Junction Four Railroad. In 1897 it was incorporated by the Legislature of the State of New Jersey as the New York and New Orange Railroad. Construction began on 11.8 miles of track, connecting the Central Railroad of New Jersey, in Roselle Park, with the City of Summit, N.J. Freight and passenger service flourished during the early twentieth century and the railroad offered joint passenger ticketing in conjunction with the Central Railroad of New Jersey. In 1904 the railroad was renamed the Rahway Valley Railroad. The Unionbury Branch, serving Union and Maplewood, was constructed in 1911. Daily passenger service was discontinued in 1919 due to competition from the automobile, but the railroad continued to offer mixed train service to Summit into the early 1920's. During the next several decades, a lively freight service continued



on weekdays. The railroad began to dieselize in 1952 with the purchase of General Electric 70-tonner No. 16. A second diesel, General Electric 70 tonner 17, was purchased in 1954. This marked the end of steam locomotives on the Rahway Valley. Eventually, steam locomotive

2-8-0 No. 15 was purchased by Nelson Blount of Bellows Falls, Vermont for his Steamtown Museum. Today the locomotive is on display at the Steamtown National Historic Site in Scranton, Pa.

By the 1960's, competition from the trucking industry had started to erode





**RIGHT:** On January 6, 1988 NYS&W SW9 120 has crossed from the Staten Island Railway onto the Rahway Valley at NJ Transit's Excee Tower in Cranford, New Jersey. The train has five loads of lumber for Ply Gem and Jaeger Lumber.

**BELOW:** Rahway Valley GE 70 ton No. 16 is at the Conrail interchange at Roselle Park, N.J. on April 1, 1986 with two cars for Jaeger Lumber and a covered hopper for Monsanto.

**BELOW RIGHT:** The RV-1, powered by NYS&W GP18 1804, is awaiting clearance onto NJT's Raritan Valley Line at Cranford, N.J. on February 21, 1991. A westbound Raritan train, powered by NJ F40PH 4128, is passing the RV-1.

**BOTTOM:** Engineer Bill Donahue and conductor Richard Travis, the crew on the final RV-1, pose with their train in Kenilworth before departing for Cranford on April 21, 1992.



photography  
the author

the freight base of the Rahway Valley. In the mid 1970's a management change occurred, and Bernard Cahill, a shortline entrepreneur, assumed control of the line. Improvements during his tenure included rehabilitation of trackage between Roselle Park and Kenilworth with better rail, and the repainting of the line's two well-maintained locomotives.

### STATEN ISLAND RAILROAD HISTORY

The Staten Island Railway was completed in 1860 as a passenger railroad between Tottenville and Clifton, Staten Island. In 1880, the Staten Island Rapid Transit was incorporated. Four years later, it leased the original Staten Island Railway. By the mid 1880's, the SIRT came under the control of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.

By 1889, construction of the line between the Arthur Kill and Cranford, N.J., commenced. A 500-foot swing bridge was erected across the Arthur Kill. By early 1890, SIRT was operating train service between Staten Island and a connection



*Story continues on page 36...*



# THE FINAL YEARS OF THE RAHWAY VALLEY AND THE STATEN ISLAND RAILWAY

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between Staten Island and a connection with the Central Railroad of New Jersey in Cranford. Cars were moved to the B&O in Philadelphia via the CNJ and the Reading railroads. Freight traffic on the SIRT began to boom with the opening of Proctor & Gamble's Port Ivory, N.Y. plant in 1905. In the same year, a steam powered McMyler car dumper was installed at the railroad's St. George docks. From 1900 until 1903 the SIRT offered passenger service, in conjunction with the CNJ, between St. George and Plainfield, N.J. Although the New Jersey passenger service proved to be unsuccessful, passenger service in Staten Island boomed. By 1921, the SIRT carried 21 million annual passengers. In 1924, the SIRT began to electrify trackage between Arlington, St. George, and Tottenville and began to operate electric passenger trains on this route. In 1925, a tunnel under the Narrows was proposed as a means to connect the SIRT with New York's BMT subway line. This tunnel was never constructed. In 1955, work began on a new Arthur Kill lift bridge. In August 1959 the 558-foot long lift span was opened, and it held a world's record as the longest vertical lift bridge.

Change came to the B&O's SIRT subsidiary in the 1970's. The deficit-ridden SIRT passenger operation between St. George and Tottenville was taken over by the City of New York in 1971 and freight operations were reorganized under the banner of the Staten Island Railroad Cor-

poration. By 1976, SIRC had terminated all marine operations on Staten Island. Freight operations continued on a week-day basis into the mid 1980's.

## DELAWARE OTSEGO TAKEOVER

In the early 1980's, Baltimore & Ohio's parent company, Chessie System, merged with the Seaboard System to form CSX Corporation. CSX was sought to reduce the amount of trackage it operated. In April 1985, the Delaware Otsego Corporation of Cooperstown, N.Y. agreed to assume operation of the Staten

Island Railroad Corporation. The SIRC's name changed to the Staten Island Railway Corporation. Delaware Otsego sought to implement cost control by reducing crew size to two employees per train. Freight service continued on a four to five day per week basis from Staten Island's Arlington Yard to the Conrail interchange in Cranford.

While Staten Island Railroad operations were being assumed by Delaware Otsego, nearby shortline Rahway Valley continued independent operation several days per week with a pair of immaculate 70 ton locomotives. But the end of Rahway Valley independence occurred suddenly on March 28, 1986, when the California General Insurance Company, the railroad's insurance carrier, notified the RV that its insurance policy was not renewable. The railroad's management was forced to either discontinue or contract out its operations. RV management arranged with the Delaware Otsego to handle its operations. By April 1986 the Rahway Valley was under control of Delaware Otsego Corporation.

## RAHWAY VALLEY MAP NOTES

Trackage west of Carter-Bell Springfield to Summit last operated in 1976.

Trackage east of Carter-Bell to Unionbury Jct. (Branch Jct.) last operated in 1986.

Trackage to Monsanto from Kenilworth last operated April 13, 1990, torn up Fall 1990.

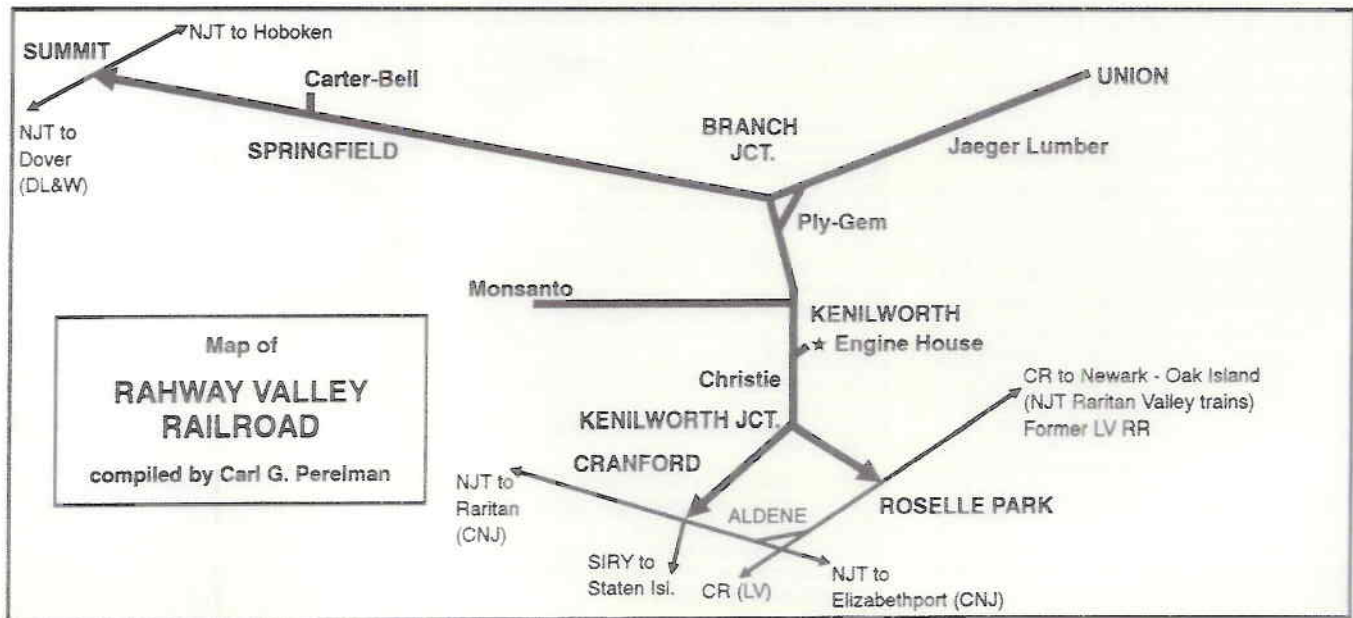
Trackage from Unionbury Jct. (Branch Jct.) to Ply-Gem and Jaeger Lumber embargoed during Winter 1991. Service cut back to points east of Kenilworth Enginehouse.

Trackage from Kenilworth Jct. to Roselle Park (former Lehigh Valley RR connection) last operated in April 1988. Trackage torn up January 1992.

Last train from Kenilworth enginehouse to Cranford interchange operated April 21, 1992.

## SEVEN YEARS OF CHANGE

With the takeover of the Rahway Valley in April of 1986, Delaware Otsego sought consolidation of operations to further reduce costs. Former Rahway Valley employees were offered employment with the Delaware Otsego; they declined. Delaware Otsego initiated operations on both the Staten Island Railway and the Rahway Valley with one crew, which would begin its day by operating the SIRC from Staten Island to Cranford,





where they would crank up one of the former Rahway Valley locomotives, and switch the line. After completing work on the RV, the crew would return to Cranford and complete the run back over the SIRY to Staten Island. Operations continued in this fashion until 1987, when the former Rahway Valley Aldene Spur, between Kenilworth and Cranford, was been upgraded. The Staten Island Railway crew could then cross NJ Transit's Raritan Valley Line at EXCEE Interlocking in Cranford and then operate onto the Rahway Valley.

By April 1988, Delaware Otsego had opted to close the Rahway Valley-Conrail interchange at Roselle Park, N.J. All interchange cars for both the Rahway Valley and Staten Island Railway were then handled through the Conrail interchange at Staten Island Junction in Cranford.

A further change in operations occurred in January 1989. The railroad had been basing the Staten Island Railway crew at Arlington Yard in Staten Island. The locomotive was kept inside a fence at the Howland Hook Marine Terminal in Staten Island, and was subjected to weather conditions and brutal winter winds. The railroad decided to keep the locomotive protected inside the engine house at Kenilworth, N.J. The SIRY crew was now assigned to Kenilworth, and designated RV-1.

By mid 1989, traffic on both the SIRY and Rahway Valley began to erode. The railroad retrenched to triweekly operations. On October 25, 1989, the SIRY track was embargoed between John Street, Staten Island and St. George, which cut New York City's Staten Island Rapid Transit line from an outside railroad connection. On November 30, 1989, Monsanto Corporation, the largest customer on the Rahway Valley, ceased manufacturing operations. Service on both the RV and SIRY was reduced to twice weekly. On April 13, 1990 the last train operated on the RV Monsanto Branch to the Monsanto Corporation. This customer was once the bread and butter for the railroad. In the fall of 1990 the Southward Salvage Co. of Rockaway, N.J. tore up the Monsanto Branch.

In July 1990, NJ Transit closed Excee interlocking in Cranford. It was now necessary for RV-1 to travel west on the Raritan Valley Line to CP Clark in Westfield, to cross over from the Rahway Valley onto the Staten Island Railway.

The year of 1991 marked the beginning of the end for both the RV and SIRY. In February 1991, the Rahway Valley embargoed track west of Route 22 due to poor trackage conditions. This caused Ply-Gem and Jaeger Lumber, two impor-

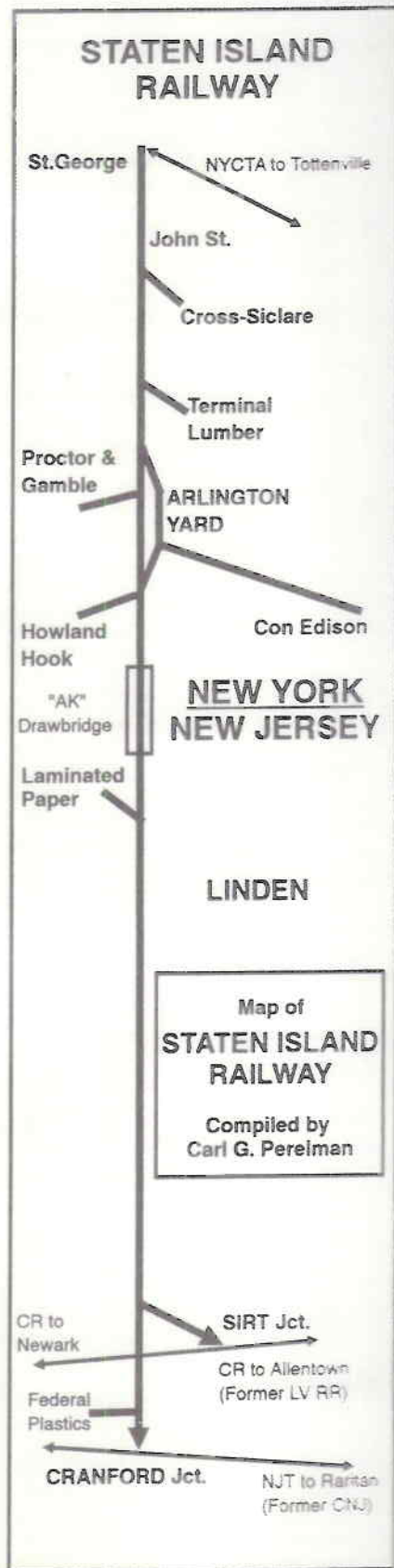
tant customers in Union, to receive lumber by truck instead of rail. Proctor and Gamble, the major customer on Staten Island, announced plans to close its Port Ivory, N.Y. manufacturing facility. On June 14, 1991, the Staten Island Railway petitioned for abandonment. The last SIRY train departed Staten Island, N.Y. on June 19, 1991. Several days later, AK Drawbridge was removed from service. By December 1991, the Interstate Commerce Commission approved the abandonment of the entire Staten Island Railway. However, freight operations on both the Staten Island Railway and the Rahway Valley continued into 1992. Two freight customers remained; Christie Enterprises, on the RV in Kenilworth, N.J., and Federal Plastics, on the SIRY, in Cranford. On March 9, service was discontinued to Federal Plastics, leaving only one customer remaining.

#### FINAL DAY

April 21, 1992 was a gloomy, overcast day, with only a few peaks of sunshine. For several weeks it had been rumored that the final day of operations was approaching for the RV and SIRY. The crew for the day, engineer Bill Donahue and conductor Richard Travis, reported on duty at the Little Ferry Yard office at 2:00 p.m. The NYS&W Southern Division manager drove the crew to the Kenilworth enginehouse, where local railroad enthusiast Fred Jones had produced a farewell banner for the front of NYS&W SW9 locomotive 120. After adding water to the locomotive, two empty covered hoppers cars were picked up from Christie Enterprises. The RV-1 departed Cranford for the last time at approximately 5:00 p.m. After crossing onto the Staten Island Railway, via NJ Transit's Raritan Valley Line, the train arrived at the Conrail interchange at Staten Island Junction in Cranford early that evening. The crew was driven back to Little Ferry to mark off-duty. It was truly the end for two colorful railroads.

#### THE FUTURE

The New Jersey legislature has drafted a bill to commit bond money to purchase the New Jersey portion of the Staten Island Railway. The fate of the New York portion is uncertain. There has been political pressure in the City and State of New York to acquire the railroad, however, a financial crisis has put the acquisition of this portion in doubt. At least one area shortline operator has previously expressed an interest in operating the line. The Union County Board of





Freeholders has requested that the New Jersey State Department of Transportation preserve the Rahway Valley line for future transportation purposes. It has been reported in the *Newark Star Ledger* that the State is disinterested in maintaining freight service on the Rahway Valley. However, it would like to preserve the right-of-way as an opportunity to connect NJ Transit's Raritan Valley Line in Cranford with the Morristown Line in Summit. The New Jersey RailTrails organization has established a Rahway Valley Trail Association. It is lobbying to establish a linear recreational park along the Rahway Valley right-of-way.

### NEED FOR PRESERVATION

The Rahway Valley remains a fond memory for many. Such nostalgia could live on with the preservation of Rahway Valley locomotives No. 16 and 17. Both locomotives had been removed from the Rahway Valley by 1989. For the final years of operation, the NYS&W had assigned an assortment of locomotives to the RV and SIRY including NYO&W NW2 116, SW9 120, and GP18's. The two Rahway Valley locomotives still retain RV paint and lettering. The No. 16 is currently in storage at the Sears Siding in Maywood, N.J., while No. 17 is in storage at Binghamton, N.Y. Hopefully, at least one of these locomotives can be preserved within the State of New Jersey.

## STATEN ISLAND RAILWAY RAHWAY VALLEY RR

### MAINLINE

Station	Milepost
St. George	SIRY 0.0
West Brighton	SIRY 2.5
Arlington	SIRY 5.1
Travis Ind. Track	
AK Drawbridge	SIRY 6.8
Bayway	SIRY 9.2
Bantas	SIRY 10.9
Staten Island Ry. Jct. (connection with CR Lehigh Line)	SIRY 11.7
Cranford Jct. (connection with NJT Raritan Valley Line and Rahway Valley R.R.)	SIRY 12.2
Kenilworth	RV 1.7
Branch Jct.	RV 2.8
Springfield	RV 4.4
Summit	RV 7.1



TOP: Train RV-1 trundles through Aldene, N.J. on January 6, 1992, with a pair of empty covered hoppers for the Conrail interchange at Staten Island Junction in Cranford.

BELOW: The Rahway Valley and Staten Island have had their share of derailments. Delaware Otsego maintenance forces are rerealing NYS&W SW9 120 at Kenilworth on February 4, 1987.

BOTTOM: *Finis*. RV-1 is passing through Kenilworth on the last day of operations on April 21, 1992.

