



## Forward, into the Past

### Mementos for the Years Ahead

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Recent issues of *Wawarsing.Net* have explored the Delaware & Hudson Canal's history and the conveyance of much of its land to the New York, Ontario & Western Railway. Last month, Andy Helgesen shared his knowledge and commitment to the development of the D&H Canal Heritage Corridor Alliance.

For those who want more extensive information, Manville B. Wakefield's beautifully illustrated book, "To the Mountains by Rail," offers delighted readers a peek into the growth of the resort industry in Sullivan County (and the Ellenville area) as a result of "speedy" and con-



venient transportation via the O&W and other railroads. For readers who want more historical information about the Ellenville and Town of Wawarsing local resort business, buy – or borrow – a copy of Katharine T. Terwilliger's "Wawarsing, Where the Streams Wind." The files at the *Ellenville Public Library & Museum* are substantial.

The O&W's northern branch to Ellenville operated its first train on January 16, 1871, at a time when the Delaware & Hudson Canal was still operating. Passengers that winter day were accommodated in a single passenger coach and an attached boxcar. The famous Liberty Coronet Band and a large crowd from neighboring towns waited in the rain for the train's arrival. The new form of transportation offered increased speed, year-round service, protection from the elements, and lessened the gap between the Town of Wawarsing and "the city."

In 1878, the O&W offered special "huckleberry trains" for the benefit of berry pickers, but that service lasted only a year, and was eliminated when the daily shipments of berries fell to fewer than 50 bushels per day. For the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the railroad's impact was quietly steady, but that changed after the introduction of a plan to build a railroad from Ellenville to Kingston.

Part of that plan involved crossing parts of the Canal, some of which had been abandoned in 1898.

By June 7, 1901, the O&W had purchased from the Cornell Steamboat Company the portion of the Canal from Summitville to Alligerville, and the *Ellenville & Kingston Railroad* began. The new line opened the territory beyond Ellenville to the resort industry.

The 1898 issue of "Summer Homes," published by the O&W to promote boarding houses and hotels "in the mountains," had promoted Ellenville as the end of the line for resorts in Cragsmoor, Kerhonkson, Ulster Heights, Greenfield, Montela, and Lackawack. Tourists heading for those areas would have to change to horse-drawn vehicles for the remainder of their trip, but the slower method of transportation in the fresh air may have been a welcome change from the sooty, cindery train.

By 1901, "Summer Homes" listed more than 70 "homes" available for summer vacations. After 1902, all of the Town of Wawarsing was more quickly accessible, thanks to the extension to Kingston. A new Ellenville depot was necessary to handle the crowds of travelers and the many equipages waiting to take them to their summer homes.

One of the many postcards reminding us of this time in our country's history – when private automobiles were neither plentiful nor particularly reliable (*photo, left*) – shows the Ellenville depot with an impressive array of horse-drawn carryalls, carriages, and wagons waiting for the train "to come in." Today's surrounding buildings are different, but the depot still stands, (*photo, below*) preserved and restored, and with a new life.

The *Ellenville Depot* is the 2004 home of a local ➔

