

RARITAN AND DELAWARE BAY RAILROAD
Crossing Compton Creek and Church Road
(Bounded North by Port Monmouth Road, and South by Broadway)
Belford Vicinity
Monmouth County
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-117

HAER
NJ
13-BELFD.V,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

RARITAN AND DELAWARE BAY RAILROAD

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Location: Crossing Compton Creek and Church Road (Bounded north by Port Monmouth Road, and south by Broadway)
Belford vicinity
Monmouth County, New Jersey

UTM: 18.577200.4475450
Quad: Sandy Hook, 1:24,000

Dates of Construction: Between 1856 and 1860

Present Owner: The Township of Middletown, New Jersey

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The former Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad line was significant to the history of the bay shore region of Monmouth County as an important freight line that conveyed various products to market. The noted "financiers" Jay Gould and James Fisk, both important figures in the business history of the United States during the second half of the 19th century, were involved in the ownership and operation of this line during a substantial portion of its term of operation. The line was also important for the role it played as an ultimately unsuccessful opponent to the monopoly of cross-state traffic enjoyed by the powerful Joint Companies. The interests supporting the monopoly were dominant within the government of New Jersey during this period, and the Raritan and Delaware Bay's attempts to resist this power are important elements within the state's political and railroad history.

Project Information: The owner has proposed the quarrying of the fill corridor that formerly carried this rail line across the marsh and the reuse of this material in filling activities required for segments of new roadway alignments. In addition, the marshland in the area of this former rail corridor is to be restored as part of the wetlands replacement requirements associated with this project. The recordation of the rail line combined with a program of interpretation was agreed upon as an appropriate mitigation measure for these planned actions.

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History of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area

On March 3, 1854 "An Act to incorporate the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad Company" was passed by the New Jersey Legislature.¹ This new company was given the right to build a railroad that would extend from a point on the Raritan Bay somewhere east of Keyport southward to the tip of Cape May and the Delaware Bay. The original incorporators of the company were William Haight and Samuel W. Jones of Monmouth County, Washington McKean and William Torrey of Ocean County, Thomas H. Richards and George McHenry of Burlington County, Jonathan Pitney and Edward Taylor of Atlantic County, and Edmund L.B. Wales and Samuel S. Marcy of Cape May County.

The passage of this legislation was the culmination of several years of effort as the proposed project had been resisted by the powerful Joint Companies, which had been formed through the consolidation of the Camden and Amboy Railroad and the Delaware and Raritan Canal in 1831. The Joint Companies were granted what was essentially complete control of all transportation across New Jersey between New York and Philadelphia. This monopolistic privilege provided great economic advantage and allowed for the accumulation of impressive governmental influence and power. During the middle decades of the nineteenth century the Joint Companies were, in fact, the dominant political element in the government of New Jersey. By mid-century, however, the southeastern part of the state was aggressively seeking to acquire the benefits of rail transport, and it was as an eventual consequence of this movement that the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad was chartered.²

Several proposed projects that would have both served southeastern New Jersey and provided competing cross-state rail lines were successfully defeated through the use of the Joint Companies' political power in Trenton. However, this conflict also spread to Washington, D.C., as attempts were made to get the federal government to sponsor the construction of a rail line to connect Washington and New York, a line that would obviously include a segment through New Jersey and compete with the Camden and Amboy. This effort was defeated as legislators representing the interests of the monopoly in Congress were able to attract the support of fellow Congressmen by invoking the concept of state's rights. Finally, in 1853, the New Jersey Assembly approved a charter for the Southern Railroad, which was to connect Keyport and Camden as part of a larger line that was to provide the sought-after New York to

¹*Acts of the Seventy-Eighth Legislature of the State of New Jersey 1854:214-22*

²see Lane 1939

Washington connection. The forces of the monopoly mustered quickly, however, and the bill was immediately recalled and subsequently defeated.³

The defeat of the Southern Railroad charter galvanized the opponents of the monopoly in southeastern New Jersey. The Joint Companies, fearing this growing opposition as a potential threat to their continued dominance within the state legislature, chose not to actively contest the incorporation of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad. The planned course of this new rail line was to run quite close to the Atlantic coast, and it was the view of the monopoly that little traffic would be drawn away from the Camden and Amboy. It was intended from the beginning, however, that the Raritan and Delaware Bay would compete with the Camden and Amboy, and it was also to be part of what was referred to as the New York and Norfolk Air Line Railroad, another proposed New York to Washington line. These lofty goals assured that the Raritan and Delaware Bay would have a strong leadership, with active local interests combining with powerful support from northern New Jersey, New York and Philadelphia. William Torrey of Bricksburg in Ocean County was the most active of the local interests and was also involved with the leadership of the Air Line. The Torrey family viewed the proposed rail line as important in promoting the development of their vast landholdings in Ocean County. The Torrey's and other supporters also expected that the line's economic viability would be enhanced by successful competition with the Camden and Amboy and by heavy seasonal passenger traffic to and from the growing resort areas on the Atlantic coast.⁴

The Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad was formally organized during the summer of 1855. The original Board of Directors included Francis B. Chetwood of Essex County, William H. Bruere and B.F. Randolph of Monmouth County, William Torrey of Ocean County, Thomas H. Richards of Burlington County, Edward Taylor and Judge Walker of Atlantic County, Thomas Williams and W.B. Miller of Cape May County, and Samuel Branson and Clayton Allen of Philadelphia. The Board elected Chetwood as the company's first President, with Randolph to serve as Treasurer, William A. Torrey (the son of William Torrey) as Secretary, and Israel Pemberton as Chief Engineer. It was also in 1855 that supplemental legislation was passed by the state legislature giving the company the right to alter the course of their main line and build branch lines extending eastward to the Atlantic coast. It was also this act that formally recognized the right of the Raritan and Delaware Bay to unite with other railroad companies in other states as part of the proposed New York and Norfolk Air Line Railroad.⁵

³see Lane 1939

⁴see Salter and Beekman 1887; Lane 1939; Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981.

⁵see *Acts of the Seventy-Ninth Legislature of the State of New Jersey* 1855; Ellis 1885; Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981

In 1856, the proposed route of the northern section of the Raritan and Delaware Bay was officially filed with the State of New Jersey (see attached Plan of Part of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad of 1856). At its far northern end the railroad was to run almost due north in a straight line from the present Leonardville Road immediately to the west of East Road. After crossing Belford Main Street it would leave fast land, enter the marsh, and cross a branch of Comptons Creek while passing through land owned by Cornelius C. Compton. The line would then cross Comptons Creek and continue through that section of the marsh owned by the Seabrook family, crossing the Port Monmouth and Middletown Plank Road (now Church Street) and several small branches of the creek. The railroad would then leave the marsh to cross the present Park Avenue and Port Monmouth Road (then known as Seabrook Avenue) before reaching the bay shore to the west of the Port Monmouth Association's "Pavillion" and hotel.

The Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad Company quickly began to purchase the lands necessary for their proposed rail line. The company was able to acquire a 50-foot wide corridor of land extending southward from Comptons Creek, the corridor segment within the marsh adjacent to the south side of the creek was purchased from Cornelius C. Compton in 1856.⁶ The construction of the new line formally began with a ceremony held at Port Monmouth on May 20, 1856. The firm of E.D. Hammond & Company, which included William A. Torrey as a junior partner, was granted the contract to build the railroad. This firm was reorganized as S.W. & W.A. Torrey (consisting of William A. Torrey and his brother Samuel W. Torrey) shortly thereafter, and William A. Torrey is credited with the supervision of the construction of the line.⁷

The Panic of 1857 brought construction to a halt, but work began again in the following year. It was also in 1858 that the railroad company purchased the bulk of the lands they would require at Port Monmouth from the Seabrook family for \$1200. The company received most of what would be developed as their Port Monmouth terminal facility (bounded on the north by the bay shore, west by Port Monmouth Main Street, south by Port Monmouth Road, and east by the lands then owned by the Port Monmouth Association) from the Seabrook estate. Other former Seabrook lands acquired by the railroad included most of the land within the triangle bounded by Port Monmouth Road, Port Monmouth Main Street, and Park Avenue and a corridor that extended 1,039 feet southward from Park Avenue to a ditch draining into Comptons Creek.⁸

⁶Monmouth County Deed P6 300

⁷see Ellis 1885; Lane 1939; Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981

⁸Monmouth County Deeds Z6 256, 262,265, and 267; see also Lane 1939; Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981

The railroad company also acquired the western section of the adjacent Port Monmouth Association property to provide additional land for their planned terminal. This deed included several restrictions relative to the development and use of that portion of the terminal between the main line of the railroad and the Association's new western property line. The only construction to be permitted on this land would be a platform of no more than 3.5 feet in height to be used for the accommodation of passengers. It was also required that the railroad company open a public way to access this platform and that the company build a fence on the property line shared with the Association.⁹ In 1859, the railroad company completed its acquisitions in the bay shore area with the purchase of a 100-foot wide corridor that extended between the corridor segment acquired from the Seabrook family and the corridor segment acquired from Cornelius C. Compton that ended at Comptons Creek.¹⁰

By 1860, the section of the main line of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad between Port Monmouth and Eatontown was completed and open for traffic (see attached S.N. and F.W. Beers map of 1861). The railroad had also extended a branch line from Eatontown to Long Branch, thereby becoming the first of the state's rail lines to reach the Atlantic coast. The company's rolling stock was initially quite limited, including only 3 locomotives, 20 passenger cars, and a number of freight cars. By this time the domination of the company by the Torrey family and their associates from Ocean County was well established. Although Francis B. Chetwood of Essex County continued as President, Robert Campbell of Bricksburg was now serving as Treasurer and Riley A. Brick, also of Bricksburg, was serving as Secretary. William A. Torrey held the position of Superintendent and was responsible for the general management of the railroad until 1863.¹¹

The Raritan and Delaware Bay's new Port Monmouth terminal was centered around an impressive pier that would eventually extend about a mile out into Raritan Bay to reach the deep water required for steamboat navigation. The subsidiary firm of W.S. Sneden & Company was established by the railroad to lease the vessels necessary to provide the all-important connection between the Port Monmouth terminal and New York City. The first vessel to berth at the new terminal was the *Alice C. Price*, which arrived on January 13, 1860. This vessel handled the Port Monmouth to New York run only briefly, with successors including the *Taminend* (active 1860 - 1861), the *Naushon* (1860 - 1862), the *Aurora* (1861 - 1862), the *Thomas Collyer II* (also known as the *Antelope*; active 1862 - 1863), the *Wyoming* (1863 - 1869), the *Magenta* (1863 -

⁹Monmouth County Deed 149 486

¹⁰Monmouth County Deed 146 416

¹¹See Ellis 1885; Lane 1939; Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981; Rosenbaum and Gallo 1985; Wood et al. 1985

1869), the *Nelly White* (1866 - 1870), the *Josephine* (active during the 1860s), the *Neversink* (also active during the 1860s) and, most notably, the *Jesse Hoyt*. This latter vessel, which was briefly known as the *J.D. Beers*, was leased by W.S. Sneden & Company in 1863 and remained in the service of the Raritan and Delaware Bay for a number of years.¹²

As might be expected, the Torrey family was also involved in this segment of the company's business. In 1862, William Torrey, his sons William A. and Samuel W. Torrey, his brother Joseph Torrey, and a single outside investor established the Alliance Steamboat Company. This company acquired a number of steamboats, including the *Jesse Hoyt*, the *Taminend* and the *Thomas Collyer II*, and leased them to W.S. Sneden & Company for use on the Port Monmouth to New York run. The Alliance Steamboat Company was not financially successful, however, and it was placed under the control of a trusteeship in 1864. The trustees continued to operate the company in the same manner, however, and lease agreements with W.S. Sneden & Company were maintained.¹³

The construction of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad continued, and by 1861 the main line was completed to Bricksburg and Ocean County. By this time, however, the planned course of the railroad, as originally proposed, had been significantly altered. The line, instead of running close to the Atlantic coast, was shifted considerably to the west. The Torrey family's interest in having the railroad pass through lands they wished to develop was certainly a contributing factor in this change of plans. The primary factor, however, was the desire to compete with the Camden and Amboy Railroad for cross-state traffic. In 1862, the Raritan and Delaware Bay reached Atsion and quickly extended a short branch line to Atco and the Camden and Atlantic Railroad. The latter railroad had been chartered in 1852 to connect Camden with Atlantic City and had been completed in 1854. With this connection the Raritan and Delaware Bay was able to run through trains between Camden and Port Monmouth by the fall of 1862. It was this development that brought the Raritan and Delaware Bay into direct conflict with the Joint Companies¹⁴.

By this time the concept of the "Air Line" between New York and Washington had been abandoned as a consequence of the three lengthy water crossings that would have been required. The Torrey interests, now fully controlling the Raritan and Delaware Bay, viewed the ability to provide cross-state service as vital to the economic survival of the line. The outbreak of the

¹²See Ellis 1885; Salter and Beekman 1887; Leonard 1923; Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981

¹³See Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981

¹⁴See Ellis 1885; Lane 1939; Dewey 1981; Anderson 1984; Rosenbaum and Gallo 1985; Wood et al. 1985

Civil War and the great demand for military transport provided an opportunity to develop that service. In 1862, the Raritan and Delaware Bay formally offered to provide the federal government with through transport service for Union troops and supplies to supplement the heavily used Camden and Amboy. The inefficient handling of the government's business by the Camden and Amboy led to a quick acceptance of this offer by the Secretary of War. The response of the Joint Companies was also swift as a protest was lodged with the War Department and an injunction was successfully sought in state court. The conflict ultimately reached the United States Congress as a bill introduced in the House Representatives seeking to grant the Raritan and Delaware Bay the right to conduct cross-state operations for the federal government. This proposed legislation was defeated as the monopoly was able to rally support once again around the issue of states rights despite the fact the nation was at war.¹⁵

Despite the aggressive opposition of the Joint Companies, the Raritan and Delaware Bay appears to have been able to attract a considerable amount of cross-state traffic during the war. Ellis, in describing the Port Monmouth terminal, stated that after the opening of this new through route "a large business was done, particularly during the War of the Rebellion."¹⁶ For a brief time this terminal ranked as one of the most important land-water transshipment points in the region, rivaling the Camden and Amboy's facility at South Amboy. The end of the war brought to an end the Raritan and Delaware Bay's government business, and this combined with other factors to begin a steady decline in the fortunes of the railroad and its Port Monmouth terminal.¹⁷

One of the other factors that contributed to the decline of the Raritan and Delaware Bay was competition from the Long Branch and Sea Shore Railroad, which was completed in 1865. The Long Branch and Sea Shore had been formed in 1863 as a replacement for the proposed Long Branch and Sandy Hook Railroad, which had been incorporated in 1856. The stated goal of these railroad companies to connect the growing shore resort of Long Branch to a steamboat terminal facility on Sandy Hook was finally realized in 1865. The new line, which ran north from Long Branch along the coast to a newly developed terminal at Spermacetti Cove at the base of Sandy Hook, represented immediate competition for the Raritan and Delaware Bay. The Long Branch and Sea Shore provided a more direct route from the bay shore to Long Branch that was half the distance of the Raritan and Delaware Bay's circuitous route via Eatontown. The new line immediately earned a significant share of the valuable shore resort passenger traffic

¹⁵See Lane 1939; Dewey 1981; Rosenbaum and Gallo 1985; Wood et al. 1985

¹⁶Ellis 1885:544

¹⁷See Ellis 1885; Leonard 1923; Lane 1939; Dewey 1981

that was important to any railroad company operating in the region. The Joint Companies supported the development and early operations of this new line in a successful attempt to damage the economic viability of the Raritan and Delaware Bay.¹⁸

In 1866, Congress reopened the debate on the question of the Raritan and Delaware Bay's right to carry through-state traffic. Despite the continued resistance of the supporters of the Joint Companies, legislation was eventually passed that granted this long sought after right. In actuality, however, this action did little to help the struggling Raritan and Delaware Bay. The indirect nature of the main line coupled with the complications of the required connection with the Camden and Atlantic Railroad and the long trip between Port Monmouth and New York made true competition with the Joint Companies impossible. This did not prevent the monopoly from seeking relief from the federal legislation, and in 1867 a state court found that the Raritan and Delaware Bay had deviated from its planned course as filed with the state in 1856. The court ordered that the use of the connection with the Camden and Atlantic was to cease.¹⁹

The dissolution of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad Company finally came in 1869. In that year the company defaulted on a mortgage of \$1,000,000 and the railroad's property was purchased by Benjamin Williamson and George N. Titus in the resultant foreclosure sale.²⁰ Williamson and Titus immediately joined forces with John P. Stockton, Charles Gould, George B. Upton, Henry M. Alexander, and eleven others in reorganizing the former Raritan and Delaware Bay.²¹ The newly reorganized company, which was known as the Raritan and Delaware Railroad Company, included among its leadership the noted capitalists and financiers Jay Gould (1836 - 1892) and James Fisk (1834 - 1872).²²

In 1870, the company was again reorganized as the New Jersey Southern Railroad Company. The act approving this second reorganization noted the northern terminus of the new company's main line was at Port Monmouth, but it also included an authorization that would contribute to the further decline of the terminal located there -- the New Jersey Southern was granted the right

¹⁸See Salter and Beekman 1887; Reussille 1975; Jelliffe 1982; Rosenbaum and Gallo 1985; Wood et al. 1985

¹⁹See Lane 1939; Dewey 1981

²⁰Monmouth County Deed 220 138

²¹*Acts of the Ninety-Fourth Legislature of the State of New Jersey 1870*

²²See Lane 1939; Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981; Wood et al. 1985

to lease the Long Branch and Sea Shore Railroad.²³ Gould was the dominant figure in the newly reorganized railroad, while Fisk essentially controlled the Long Branch and Sea Shore. Both men had property development interests in Long Branch and were seeking to improve the transport connections between the resort and New York City. As a result they focused their attention on the improvement of the Long Branch and Sea Shore as this line offered the best connecting route.²⁴

The formal acquisition of the Long Branch and Sea Shore Railroad by the New Jersey Southern was completed later in 1870. The old Spermacetti Cove terminal on Sandy Hook was immediately abandoned and replaced by a new terminal sited on Horseshoe Cove a short distance to the north. The New Jersey Southern continued to use the former Raritan and Delaware Bay terminal in Port Monmouth, but its role was decidedly secondary to the new Sandy Hook terminal. The line's passenger activities were concentrated at Horseshoe Cove, although some passenger service to Port Monmouth did continue for a time. Both terminals handled freight traffic, with Port Monmouth coming to be dominated by freight-handling activities.²⁵

Water transport to New York from both terminals was handled by Fisk's Narragansett Steamship Company. The *Jesse Hoyt*, which had been sold off by the Alliance Steamboat Company in 1867, acquired by the Raritan and Delaware in 1869, and passed to the New Jersey Southern in 1870, was sold to the Narragansett Steamship Company in a deal arranged by Gould and Fisk. This vessel, along with the *Antelope*, the *Neversink*, the *Plymouth Rock*, the *St. Johns*, the *Thomas V. Arrowsmith*, and the *Fall River*, served both the Sandy Hook and the Port Monmouth terminals during this period. The death of James Fisk in 1872 led to the takeover of the Narragansett Steamship Company by Gould, and title to the several vessels serving the New Jersey Southern terminals was transferred to the railroad.²⁶

In 1871 the powerful Pennsylvania Railroad concluded a lease agreement that placed the Joint Companies under its full control, an action that signalled the end of the monopoly that had long dominated both transportation and politics in New Jersey. In the wake of this development the New Jersey Southern Railroad was able to quickly move to extend its main line to the Delaware Bay. The Vineland Railroad, a subsidiary company, was incorporated to run southwest from the main line at Atsion to a terminal on the bay at Bayside in Cumberland County. This new line, which also passed through the towns of Vineland and Bridgeton, was completed in 1872,

²³*Acts of the Ninety-fourth Legislature of the State of New Jersey 1870*

²⁴See Reussille 1975; Wood et al. 1985

²⁵See Reussille 1975; Wood et al. 1985

²⁶See Reussille 1975

and the goal of establishing a cross-state through route, first stated in the charter of the Raritan and Delaware Bay in 1854, was finally achieved. The New Jersey Southern was never a primary route across the state, however, as other lines offered far better connections and service.²⁷

The first detailed graphic representation of the rail facilities in the Port Monmouth area was included within the atlas of Monmouth County published in 1873 (see attached F.W. Beers map of 1873). The rail line ran in a northerly direction that essentially followed the course that had been originally surveyed in 1856 (see attached Plan of Part of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad of 1856). After crossing the present Belford Main Street the line crossed the recently opened Compton Street and passed between a railroad company water tower (on the east) and a coal yard (on the west) before entering the marsh. The line's single track ran through the marsh and across Comptons Creek to a junction just below the present Park Avenue. Two tracks extended northward from this junction, with the main line track running past the new Port Monmouth Hotel, through the bay shore terminal, and out into the bay on the long steamboat pier that extended to deep water. A spur line ran from the junction to the west of the main line to provide access to the terminal. The main line and the spur were connected by a short segment of track within the yard. The terminal facility was shown to consist of five primary structures, including a "Depot" and a poorly identified structure on the east side of the main line, an engine house at the end of the spur, and two unidentified buildings sited to the west of the west branch.

The Panic of 1873 combined with competitive difficulties and the financial maneuverings of Jay Gould to force the New Jersey Southern into receivership in 1873. William S. Sneden, the former principal in W.S. Sneden & Company and the Superintendent of the railroad since 1865, was named as receiver. It was also during this period that the Central Railroad of New Jersey began to acquire shares in the this struggling line. Gould's activities continued, however, and in 1874 he arranged to have the *Jesse Hoyt* and several of the railroad's other steam vessels sold, ostensibly to meet company debts. The subject vessels were all purchased by associates of Gould, who then conveyed them to the Narrangansett Steamship Company, which Gould controlled -- this company then transferred the vessels to Gould. In the meantime a trusteeship was appointed to take over the supervision of the railroad, with Sneden named as General Manager. Sneden promptly arranged to purchase the *Jesse Hoyt* from Gould.²⁸

²⁷See Beers 1873; Lane 1939; Sebold and Leach 1991

²⁸See Ellis 1885; Salter and Beekman 1887; Lane 1939; Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981

The opening of the New York and Long Branch Railroad in 1875 was yet another blow to the economic viability of the New Jersey Southern. This line, which is still active today as the North Jersey Coast Line, had been chartered in 1868 to run from Long Branch through Red Bank to South Amboy. In the following year this charter was supplemented to allow for a crossing of the Raritan River at South Amboy and a connection with the Perth Amboy and Woodbridge Railroad, thereby providing access to New York harbor. It was also in 1869 that the Central Railroad of New Jersey formally became involved in the development of this rail line, agreeing to construct it and to lease it upon completion. The New York and Long Branch provided vastly improved connections between New York and Long Branch that avoided the long steamer trip across the Raritan Bay. This new line immediately represented significant competition for the New Jersey Southern. The Port Monmouth terminal was heavily impacted by this competition, with passenger traffic essentially disappearing and freight activities also suffering.²⁹

In 1879, the New Jersey Southern Railroad declared bankruptcy, with another reorganization orchestrated by Jay Gould resulting. His involvement ended shortly thereafter, however, as the newly reorganized company was leased to the Central Railroad of New Jersey. In 1882 the Jersey Central acquired full control of the New Jersey Southern, reorganizing the property as its Southern Division. The arrival of the Jersey Central did not, however, signal an end to the economic struggles of the former New Jersey Southern. The commencement of steamboat service from a new terminal facility at Atlantic Highlands in 1879 had provided yet another competitor for local water-borne freight and passenger traffic. In 1882, the New York and Atlantic Highlands Railroad Company was organized to build a branch line to extend from the former New Jersey Southern line just south of Port Monmouth to the new terminal at Atlantic Highlands. It was the completion of this line, accomplished with the support of the Jersey Central in 1883, that most directly led to the eventual closing of the Port Monmouth terminal³⁰.

By 1885 the former Raritan and Delaware Bay line was controlled by the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad, which had acquired the Jersey Central. It was noted that this line "has never been a very prosperous road, but its construction and opening has been of great advantage to that part of Monmouth County through which it runs".³¹ It was further reported that Port Monmouth and its rail terminal were "now a place of much less importance than formerly"³².

²⁹See Rose and Woolman 1878; Ellis 1885; Leonard 1923; Lane 1939; Reussille 1975; Jelliffe 1982; Anderson 1984; Wood et al. 1985; New Jersey Transit Corporation 1991

³⁰See Leonard 1923; Lane 1939; Reussille 1975; Dewey 1981; Anderson 1984

³¹Ellis 1885:381

³²Ellis 1885:544

The great steamboat pier, which had always been a difficult maintenance problem due to damage from the effects of storms and ice, was described as the "late railroad dock" in 1887 (see attached Wolverton and Breou map of 1889).³³ The terminal apparently remained active during this period, but it served in a role that was decidedly secondary to both the Atlantic Highlands and Sandy Hook terminals.³⁴

In 1889, the Jersey Central purchased a controlling interest in the New York and Atlantic Highlands Railroad and announced plans to extend this line to connect with the New York and Long Branch at Keyport. The New York and Atlantic Highlands was also extended to the east to connect with the former Long Branch and Sea Shore line at the base of Sandy Hook. In 1892, the Jersey Central abandoned the terminal at Sandy Hook to focus terminal operations at the Atlantic Highlands facility. It seems likely that the Port Monmouth terminal was abandoned at the same time, leaving Atlantic Highlands as the sole terminal facility on the bay shore. By 1901, the segment of the former Raritan and Delaware Bay line that had run through the marsh to the north of present Compton Street had also been abandoned. The remaining segment to the north of the New York and Atlantic Highlands line extended a short distance to the north of Compton Street to serve the several shippers still located there. The portion of the abandoned right-of-way north of Church Street was in use as a road.³⁵

The former Raritan and Delaware Bay line remained in this much reduced physical state in the Port Monmouth area for nearly a half century. In 1944, however, an agreement was concluded between the Jersey Central and J. Howard Smith, Inc., the owner of a large fish processing facility on the bay shore to the east of the former terminal, relative to "Sidetrack facilities at or near Belford, N.J." This agreement allowed Smith to build a new rail siding that was be partially on the abandoned former Raritan and Delaware Bay right-of-way and partially on a new right-of-way that would run to the factory. The construction of this siding was to be handled by Smith, with financial assistance from the Jersey Central. It was noted that the planned siding would require the construction of a "new Bridge over Compton's Creek"³⁶.

The new siding began at the northern end of what was now referred to as the Belford Branch of the Central Division and the Southern Sub-Division of the Jersey Central, which was located just to the north of Compton Street (see attached G.S. Brann plan of 1944). It then ran north along the abandoned former Raritan and Delaware Bay right-of-way to pass through the marsh

³³Salter and Beekman 1887:193

³⁴See Leonard 1923; Reussille 1975

³⁵Leonard 1923; Reussille 1975

³⁶Conrail Records

and cross Broadway, the new bridge over Comptons Creek, and Church Street. The siding left the old right-of-way approximately 750 feet to the north of Church Street, curving to the east to recross that street just south of Port Monmouth Road. It then divided into two spurs that crossed Port Monmouth Road to enter the Smith property.

In 1948, a supplemental agreement was concluded by the same two parties noting that Smith had built a spur line from the siding track to serve the western section of the fish factory³⁷. This spur branched off of the main siding a short distance to the west of Church Street to run north across Port Monmouth Road and into the Smith facility (see attached G.S. Brann plan of 1948). The extended Belford Branch remained in place and active in the service of the fish factory into the 1970s (see attached United States Geological Survey map of 1954). The Jersey Central's operations in this area were abandoned during the middle part of that decade, finally bringing to an end a tenure of rail transport in the Port Monmouth/Belford vicinity that had lasted well over a century.

Summary Description of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area

The former Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad line in the Port Monmouth/Belford area is located between Port Monmouth Road and just south of Broadway in Middletown Township, New Jersey. This section of the former main line extends north through the marsh associated with Comptons Creek and Raritan Bay from a point approximately 565 feet south of Broadway to a point approximately 700 feet north of Church Street (see attached Plan of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area). The section of the main line to the south of this defined area has been destroyed by the construction of the Summerfield Court housing development, while the section to the north is no longer extant, apparently having been removed for use in the construction of the spur in 1944. The bulk of this line was built as part of the main line of the Raritan and Delaware Bay between 1856 and 1860. By the turn of the century the section of this line to the north of Compton Street had been abandoned. In 1944, the southern segment of this section (from just north of Compton Street to just north of Church Street) was reactivated by the Central Railroad of New Jersey to serve as a spur line for the J. Howard Smith fish processing facility on the bay shore. The far northern end of the main line remained inactive, and a new section of track was built to extend northeast from the former main line just north of Church Street to access the fish factory. In 1948, a second new segment was built that extended from the 1944 segment just below Port Monmouth Road into the far western end of the Smith facility.

³⁷Conrail Records

The 565 foot length of the railroad embankment to the south of Broadway is approximately 4 feet in height. It is currently an open walking path, with marsh grass and other undergrowth flanking the pathway. The top of the embankment appears to be largely undisturbed with small gravel and slag on the ground surface. Several drainage ditches run perpendicular to the embankment, and at approximately 250 feet south of Broadway one of these passes beneath the embankment via a 2-foot diameter circular concrete culvert (see attached Plan of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area). Two rails survive intact within the macadam pavement of Broadway (see attached Photographs).

The railroad embankment continues to run in a northerly direction and rises steadily, reaching a height of approximately 8 feet at the bridge over Comptons Creek. The embankment is heavily wooded and overgrown with large trees, briars, and underbrush. Approximately 400 feet to the north of Broadway a branch of Comptons Creek passes under the embankment via a timber box culvert (see attached Plan of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area). The culvert is in extremely poor condition and appears to have been constructed using railroad ties.

The bridge over Comptons Creek survives as the most visually evocative remnant of the abandoned line (see attached Plan of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area and attached Photographs). This bridge, a timber deck and piling structure, was built in 1944 to allow for the crossing of Comptons Creek. The structure has timber abutments, both squared and circular, that are set into both banks of the creek. Eight rows of timber pilings with diagonal cross members are set into the creek bed. These abutments and pilings support two rows of horizontal beams, with each row consisting of three large rectangular timbers. These horizontal beams support the railroad ties, which are single track width. Every fourth tie on the western side of the bridge extends out four feet to support a walkway and associated railing. Most of the timber deck is in poor condition, with both decay and fire damage. The bridge's central bay is its widest in order to allow for the passage of boats beneath the bridge. Here the deck is formed by two rows of steel I-beams (two to a row) that provide the strength necessary for the wider span.

The main line continued in a northerly direction to cross Church Street, Park Avenue and Port Monmouth Road and enter the former terminal facility on the bay shore at Port Monmouth (see attached Plan of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area). The embankment in the southern 700 feet of this section, or below the point where the new section of the spur line to the Smith fish factory began, survives intact and averages approximately 6 feet in height. It is covered with low vegetation and some small trees. There is no visible remnant of the former main line within the marsh to the north of the point where the new spur line was built. It seems quite possible that this section of the main line embankment was quarried in 1944 to provide the fill necessary for the construction of the new spur. At a point approximately 170 feet to the south of Park Avenue there is some indication

of the railroad's right-of-way -- notably a low, wide "platform" of fill that is heavily overgrown and contains large amounts of modern trash including concrete, macadam, wood and tires (see attached Plan of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area). This "platform" may have formerly supported the switch and two lines that ran into the terminal facility to the north. There are no indications of the rail line north of Park Avenue, and there is similarly nothing visible of the former terminal between Port Monmouth Road and the bay shore.

As noted above, the section of the spur to the Smith fish factory was built in 1944, with an additional line segment built into the western part of the facility in 1948. The embankment in this area curves to the east from the main line and averages approximately 3 feet in height. The right-of-way here is covered by low vegetation and some small trees. The location of the junction of the two line segments built in 1944 and 1948 are visible in the approximately 90 linear feet of timber railroad ties preserved in place approximately 222 feet southwest of Port Monmouth Road (see attached Plan of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area). These ties are in fair to poor condition and are spaced at 1 foot intervals. They vary from 9 to 16 feet in length, with the longest relating to the former juncture of the two line segments. The two westernmost ties are nearly 16 feet in length and probably mark the former site of the switch. Some spikes and tie plates still remain attached to some of the ties.

The low embankments for both of these line segments are somewhat disturbed in the vicinity of Port Monmouth Road. The embankment of the 1948 segment is bounded on the north side by a modern wire fence and is heavily wooded and overgrown. The two rails are still visible within the macadam pavement of Port Monmouth Road, and two ties survive just south of the road. The embankment of the 1944 segment is covered by marsh grass, and portions of the two rails are visible within Port Monmouth Road (see attached Photographs).

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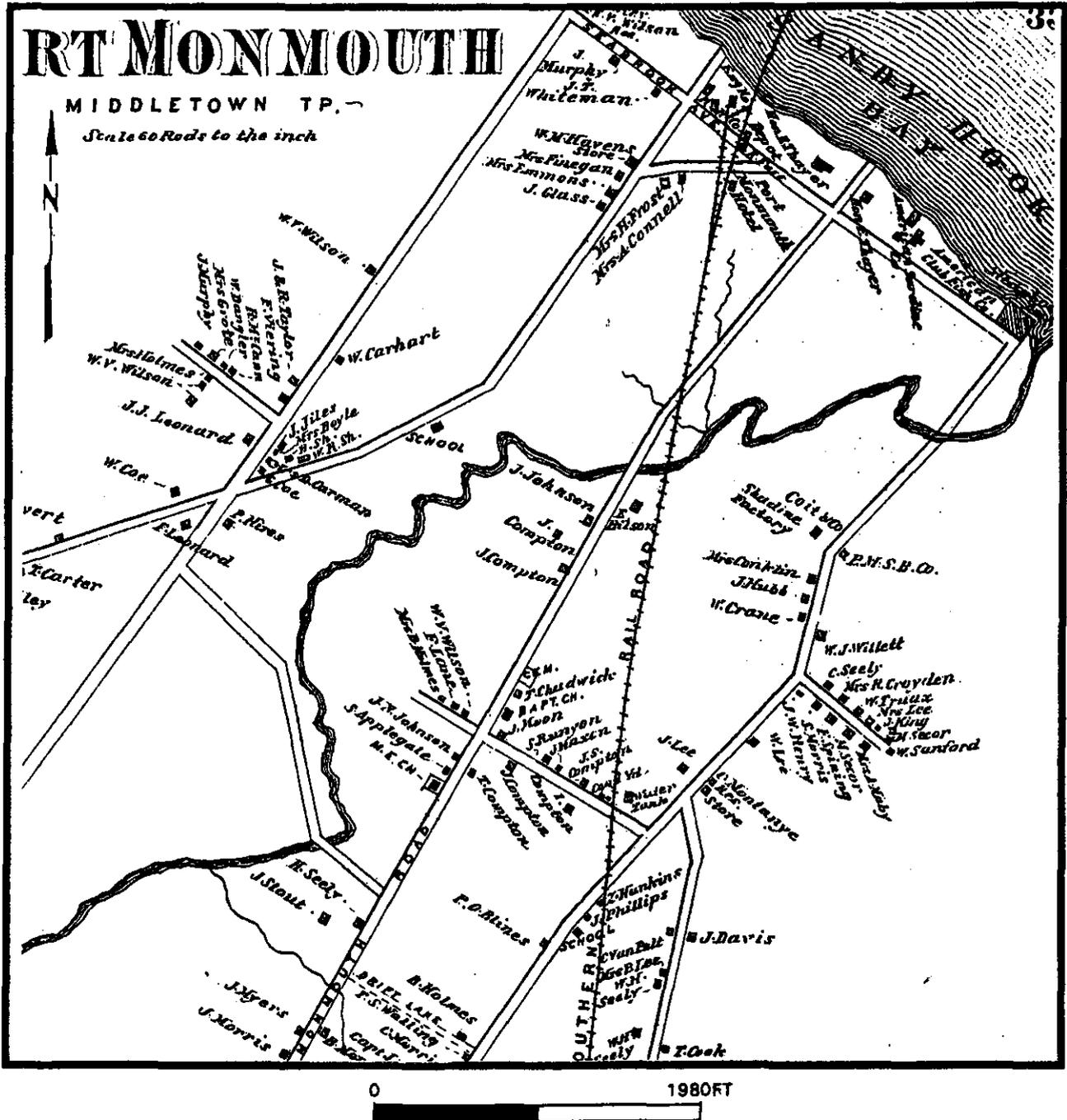
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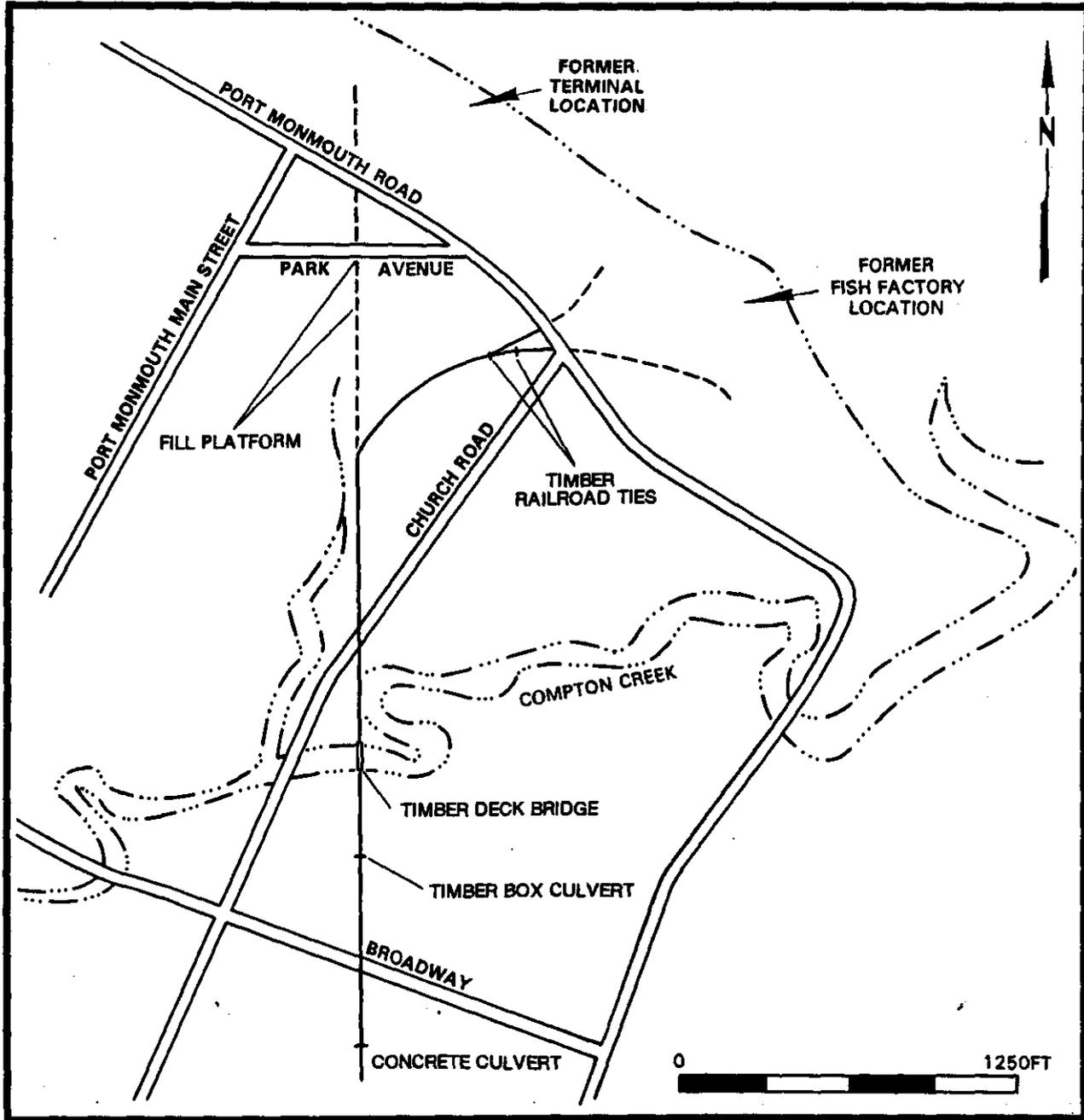
Map of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in 1861.
Source: S.N. and F.W. Beers 1861.



Map of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area in 1873.
Source: F.W. Beers 1873.



Map of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area in 1954.
Source: United States Geological Survey 1954.



Plan of the Raritan and Delaware Bay Railroad in the Port Monmouth/Belford Area.
Source: United States Geological Survey 1954 (traced).