

The Winnegance & Quebec Railway

A rural line based on Maine two-foot-gauge railroads

by Eric Schade | Phippsburg, Maine | Photos by the author



1. N° 9 rolls up to the Fiddler's Reach station with the northbound passenger train on a cool, misty evening. The lobed fronds of a native polypody fern grace a field on the right.

The Winnegance & Quebec Railway is an imaginary line running through the countryside of rural Maine. It was built to serve the locals, with transportation for logs and lumber, milk, agricultural products and supplies, and products of light industries in the area, as well as passengers. This part of the state is sparsely populated and the board of directors saw great savings in the use of two-foot-gauge equipment. Lighter rail and smaller equipment were prime considerations, as was the fact that less work would be required for building the line.

The year is 1910 and the little line is in its prime. Steam power is king and the little Forneys do the lion's share of the work, with big N° 24 sometimes on loan from the Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes Railroad. Small farms and woodworking industries are the mainstay of the freight department. Farmers, loggers, and townspeople keep the coaches filled on busy days.

I have been a garden railroader since about 1990, when I purchased my first locomotive, an Aster Climax. I have moved twice since then and have been here in Maine since 2006. While rolling up the driveway with the real-estate agent, I saw the prettiest spot for my new line. It was a moss covered, rocky stretch of forested hillside along the driveway. I thought a railway line meandering through the rocks in the shade of the trees would be very interesting. Construction started almost as soon as the first boxes were unpacked. I used as many local plants as I could, ranging from moss to small trees. I recycled track from my old lines in Connecticut for the first phase of the mainline, with some new track and switches added as improvements and additions were made.

Inspiration

Although I only recently moved to the state of Maine, I have long had a fascination with Maine two-foot-gauge trains. As I have learned more about the little train lines, I have come to like them all the more. They had diminutive equipment compared to standard-gauge railways. They all ran through rural areas and never made much money for their investors. Several organizations here in Maine have some restored equipment and run trains;



2. Dot's Place is a representation of a colonial farmhouse that once stood by the shore of the Kennebec River on the author's sister-in-law's property, just half a mile from the railway. The lawn is all local moss, probably a mix of fire moss and juniper moss.



3. The author's son Andrew's Accucraft Porter entertains the horse and piglet as it passes their farm with a load of logs. A few late-season blueberries decorate the scene.

my favorite is the WW&F Railway Museum. The Wiscasset, Waterville & Farmington Railway ran from Wiscasset, Maine, toward Quebec, Canada, but never made it very far, though it did get to China . . . Maine.

Landscaping

My goal in building the railway was to capture the rural feeling of the Maine Two Footers while retaining the natural

character of the hillside where it would be located. I roughly laid out the line through the rocks and trees using a spirit level and wooden stakes. I did not want to disturb the natural state of the area too much. I used natural rocks found around the lot to build up the right-of-way. Some fill left over from building the house was ideal for grading and ballasting the track. I did all the work with a pick, shovel, and a wheelbarrow.



4. N° 9 stops for water at the Popham tank. Water tanks in Maine were often housed and heated with wood stoves to keep them from freezing in the winter.



5. Winnegance & Quebec N° 1 rests between runs on a bright, snowy January morning.

I tried to use natural materials and local plants where possible, to blend the new line with the natural landscape. The focal point of the area is a moss-covered rock outcropping. I wanted to highlight this outcropping without damaging it. I chose

to build a wooden trestle past it so it would remain exposed. Where I did need to do some excavating, I used native stone, planting moss and ferns to blend it into the existing scenery. Many of the stones found around the yard were already nicely

covered with lichen and moss. These had to be carefully handled and placed to preserve their character. I avoided cutting too many trees at first but have since removed most of the large maples to reduce the amount of annual cleanup.

Much of the planting I did was with small native plants, ranging from a variety of mosses and ferns to small hemlock and spruce seedlings found nearby. I tried to transplant these in locations that approximated the habitat they came from. I enjoy moss and have found it to be robust in the right habitat, but it quickly dies when planted in the wrong conditions. Fortunately, several varieties of moss can be found around the yard and one can be found for any given spot on the railway.

Most of the soil I have around the line is quite acidic and low in nutrients, which helps the moss, and hinders the weeds; most of my railway is also shady, which also encourages the moss.

There are also several wildflowers growing around the railway, some suitable as scale plants; others are just pretty. One of my favorites is a small bluish-white flower called a bluet (*Houstonia caerulea*),

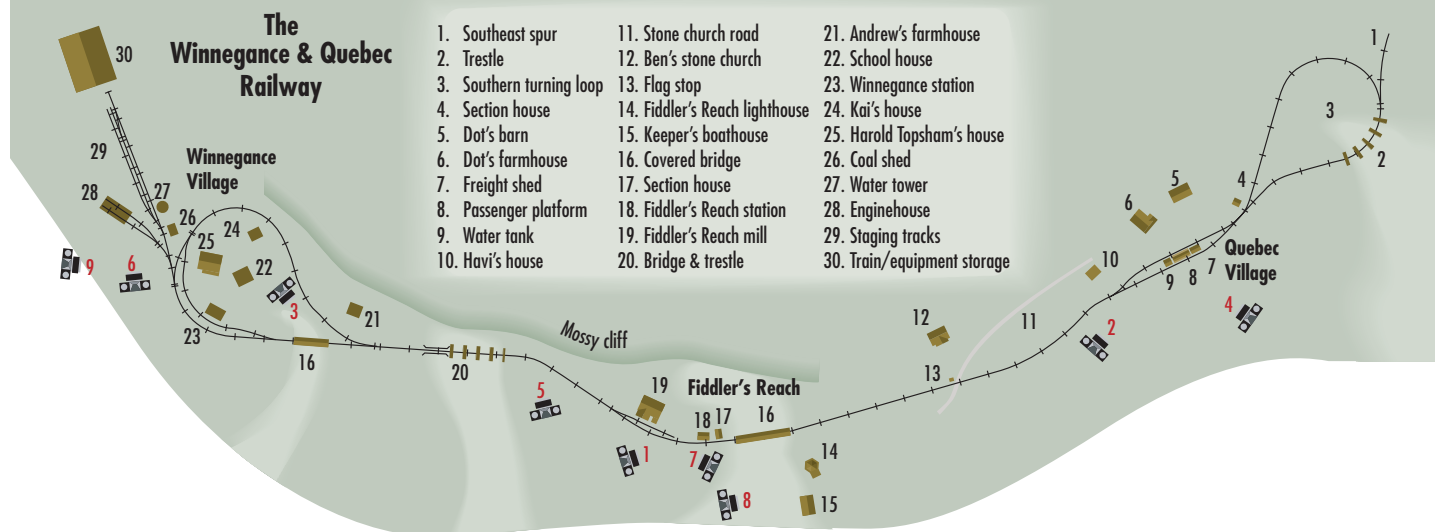


ILLUSTRATION BY MARC HOROVITZ

which blooms in the spring and grows about 2" tall. Even when overgrown, it is not overpowering. It easily transplants and I have used it along the right-of-way and as plantings in front of buildings. Another wildflower that is doing well along the trackside is pink lady's slipper (*Cypripedium acaule*).

I have planted a number of dwarf and small-scale trees, like most garden railroaders do. Dwarf Alberta spruce trees are inexpensive, look great, and thrive in the harsh Maine weather. I have also used boxwood and azalea to represent deciduous trees and to give a splash of spring color. I had a Japanese maple self-seed in my last garden railway in Connecticut, which was too nice to leave behind.

The railway

As I love running live-steam locomotives, I have tried to build the line as level as possible. The track is basically a single-track mainline with turning loops at each end. The new "Southeast" spur has its own turning loop. Most of the detailing is located on the mainline; the spur heads off into the woods to extend the run. Switch points to the return loops are spring loaded so the weight of the locomotive is enough to flip the switch as it comes back through. There are two passing sidings, one at Winnegance and the other at Popham. The equipment storage shed, engine terminal, and staging tracks are at Winnegance. At Fiddler's Reach there is a team track at the mill.

In New England, trains are seen meandering around hills and flashing through trees rather than having long runs visible from any direction. My railway is built so

that the trains are visible only in vignette scenes. It is built along my driveway to encourage visitors to stroll along with the train as it snakes its way through covered bridges and behind trees and shrubs.

Where the track is raised above the natural ground level, the roadbed is made up of fill that usually starts out as random stone rubble and a little dirt. I use dry-laid-stone walls as retaining walls where needed. The entire roadbed then receives a layer of coarse, crushed stone to achieve the grade. I finish the roadbed with "crusher fines" as ballast and I collect handfuls of washed coarse sand from my dirt driveway as a visual dressing for the ballast, which looks better than the crushed stone.

I use sectional track for most of the line, except for large, sweeping curves, where I add some flex track. My minimum radius is 5', which works well, but I try to have larger-radius curves on the mainline so that trains can run faster and have fewer problems. All my track is brass; many sections have been used and reused several times. Because I do not have to worry about track power, I just use the stock track connectors. I do leave some space between the ends of the rails for expansion, which gives a nice clickity-clack sound to running trains.

Structures

One of the things I love about living in Maine is the history of the area and how it's reflected in the buildings and landscape. Old Maine towns have a distinctive look because of their wood frame, clapboard-sided homes and businesses. I have tried to give my railway the feel of Maine

Railway at a glance

Name: Winnegance & Quebec Railway

Size of railway: about 10' x 200'

Scale: 1:20.3

Gauge: No. 1 (45mm)

Era: ca. 1910

Theme: Rural Maine two-foot-gauge line

Age: 6 years

Motive power: Live steam and battery power

Length of mainline: 200'

Maximum gradient: Less than 1%

Minimum radius: 5 feet

Structures: Scratchbuilt

Control: Manual and radio control



The author's son Ben proudly runs his much-modified Accucraft "Ruby." Father and son worked together to rebuild this model to resemble the re-gauged, former plantation engine, that currently runs at the nearby WW&F Railway Museum in Alna, Maine.



6. The big SR&RL N° 24 is preparing for a run after an early fall snowstorm. This live-steam engine was built in England by Roundhouse Engineering and is one of a few fine models of Maine two-foot-gauge prototypes available on the market. Wet snow sticks to a dwarf Alberta spruce.



7. The Fiddler's Reach mill makes small items from wood that was delivered on flatcars by the Winnegance & Quebec Railway. The team track is surrounded by a beautiful carpet of moss that resembles a well-kept lawn.

by the style and feel of the buildings on it.

I design and scratchbuild my own buildings. I find that building structures is a large part of the fun of this railway and I have turned to buildings in the area for inspiration. I do not try to copy buildings exactly but do try to achieve the proper style and proportions. Many of the details, such as windows and doors, also have to be scratchbuilt. I use techniques I either developed on my own or adapted from things I learned by reading articles in *Garden Railways*.

I tend to use wood as my primary building material. My buildings are basically decorated plywood boxes. I use my table saw with a dado blade to carve clapboards into the surface of the plywood. Then I cut the pieces to shape, add trim, windows and doors, wood-shingle roofing, and a coat of paint. I think they look fine and they hold up to the elements quite well. I mount them on stone or concrete-block foundations to keep them out of the dirt. I leave the windows unglazed, which leaves ventilation so that the inside of the

buildings can dry out in our moist climate.

Figures

To bring the railway to life, I have made a number of characters to populate station platforms and railway cars. Most of my figures have been modeled from Sculpey clay, then painted. I have also made silicone molds of some of them and produced several copies. I often perform cosmetic surgery on these molded guys in order to pose them in different positions or dress them differently. If you wander around the line you may see "Joe" in several spots, performing different tasks or just standing around.

Locomotive and rolling stock

My first locomotive, an Aster Climax, is a wonderful model of a three-truck logging locomotive. I assembled it from a kit, which taught me a lot about how steam locomotives work. Since then, I have collected several other live-steam locomotives. I have an LGB/Aster *Frank S*, a German, Henschel meter-gauge engine; a Roundhouse Engineering Sandy River & Rangeley Lakes Railroad N° 24, the largest of the Maine two-foot-gauge engines; and now three Accucraft "Rubys," two of which have been modified to resemble Maine narrow-gauge Forneys and one slightly modified "Ruby" N° 5 Porter.

When my sons were small, I did not run much live steam. Instead, I ran a battery-powered LGB Forney. As the kids have grown, I got each of them their own electrically-powered model, which was converted to battery power. Ben has worked with me on the modifications to his engines, including a heavy modification of his "Ruby" to resemble WW&F N° 10, a small Vulcan Forney, which was a 30"-gauge plantation engine and is the current workhorse of the WW&F Railway Museum. In the past couple of winters, I scratchbuilt a model of WW&F N° 9, a Maine-built Forney that is being restored at the museum.

Except for the Roundhouse engine and N° 9, which are radio controlled, all of my engines are manually controlled. I have replaced the stock knob supplied on the "Ruby" throttles with levers, which are much easier to reach and adjust as the engine steams along.

Most of my rolling stock is scratchbuilt to resemble Maine narrow-gauge



8. Fiddler's Reach lighthouse keeps ships on course as they navigate the tricky waters of the driveway. A solar patio light was re-worked to keep the light lit and the ships safe every night. The angled shed is the keeper's boat house, with a winch to pull his boat out of the water. Usually, this area is dry and one has to imagine the water, but heavy rains made a nice reflecting pond. Native mosses and ferns soak up the extra moisture.

equipment. I have pored through as many books of photos as I can find to get a feeling for the cars. I draw them to scale on my computer before starting. I use wood as much as possible, where wood would have been used, and metal where metal would be. I use only a little plastic, mostly for window glazing and purchased trucks. The plans included as pull outs and online bonuses in *Garden Railways* have been a great help. Both my kids have built cars too, with some help.

Playing with trains

Often, when I am puttering around the railway, I will run one of my battery-powered locomotives with a nice freight or mixed train. It will travel around the track unattended, passing my work area from time to time.

When I have some time, I pull out one or more of my live steamers. I sit on a large stone next to the engine house to service the locomotives. While the water is heating, I set out a train to pull. My

modified "Rubys" pull realistic trains—a pair of passenger cars or three or four freight cars and a caboose. Sometimes, Ben and I double-head our Forneys, and then we can pull quite a bit more.

Winter is a fun time to run trains. A light, powdery snow is great fun to plow with my snow plow, pushed by a live-steam or battery-powered engine. The real steam effects are at their best when it's cold out.

I enjoy sharing my railway with others.



9. This overall view of the village of Winnegance shows the engine house at lower left, with the engineer's sitting stone for firing steam locomotives. The station is in the middle right, with the mainline heading off though the covered bridge.

A partial plant list for the Winnegance & Quebec

Phippsburg, Maine
USDA Hardiness Zone 5

Many of the plants on this railway are native plants found growing on site or nearby. The following is just a sampling of the most interesting.

SMALL NATIVE TREES AND SHRUBS

Balsam fir

Abies balsamea (will grow to full-size tree)

Common juniper, ground juniper

Juniperus communis (will stay low)

Red spruce

Picea rubens (will grow to full-size tree)

Eastern hemlock

Tsuga canadensis (will grow to full-size tree)

NATIVE FLOWERS AND FERNS

Pink lady's slipper

Cypripedium acaule

Hay scented fern

Dennstaedtia punctilobula

Bluet, Quaker ladies

Houstonia caerulea

Partridgeberry

Mitchella repens

Bird on the wing, gaywings

Polygala paucifolia

Polypody fern

Polypodium virginianum

NATIVE MOSS

Fire moss

Ceratodon purpureus

Pincushion moss

Leucobryum glaucum

Ground pine, club moss

Lycopodium obscurum

Juniper moss

Polytrichum juniperinum

TREES FROM NURSERY STOCK

Japanese maple (self-seeded in author's old Connecticut garden)

Acer palmatum

Boxwood

Buxus sp.

Dwarf Alberta spruce

Picea glauca 'Conica'

Azalea

Rhododendron sp.

GROUNDCOVER FROM NURSERY STOCK

Pinks

Dianthus sp. (from author's grandmother's New Hampshire farmhouse)

Stonecrop

Sedum rupestre 'Angelina' (from an abandoned garden wall in Connecticut)

Neighbors seem to enjoy stopping by with kids, friends, and relatives. I have hosted open houses and steamups for the Maine Garden Railway Society and the Down East Steam Railway Guild. I was introduced to both of the groups through *Garden Railways* magazine.

Steamups in particular inspire me to get the railway in tip-top shape so that guest engineers may safely run their beautiful engines and trains. One guest has a 1:20.3-scale Accucraft Denver & Rio Grande Western K-27, which is huge compared to my equipment. I actually modified my covered bridges to allow his engine to pass.

Future projects for the railroad include a classic New England church (modeled after the Congregational church here in town), a store, and a scratchbuilt locomotive or two. I may even try building a locomotive and some cars in 1:13.7 (7/8") scale, which is the proper scale for two-foot-gauge equipment running on gauge-1 track, and which I hope will fit through my "new" bridges. That idea has some appeal, in that the equipment would be quite large compared to the trains I have now. A garden railway provides endless opportunities for fun! 🚂

Online Extra

For registered users: Enjoy a selection of videos featuring the W&Q. Visit www.GardenRailways.com and click on "User videos" under "How to."



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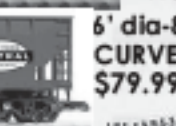
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