

## Executive Summary:

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**The Leatherstocking Railway Historical Society (LRHS), a 501(c)(3) educational corporation** was created to preserve, protect and present the rich railroad heritage of Otsego County and the surrounding area of New York State. The company's mission statement and goals are as follows:

### Leatherstocking Railway Historical Society Mission Statement:

- **To establish**, maintain and operate a center for the historical preservation and exhibition of railroad equipment and memorabilia.
- **To acquire**, index and make available literature and other related publications and periodicals pertinent to railroads and their history.
- **To record** and preserve the recollections and memories of the local craftsmen and workers of the railroad.
- **To collect** and acquire by purchase, gift, loan or otherwise, artifacts of railroad history and to preserve and exhibit same in such a manner as to be accessible to the public.
- **To bring forth** the origin and life of the railroad worker.
- **To stimulate**, promote and excite interest in the modern railway industry.
- **To promote** the writing and arts pertaining to local railroad history.
- **To establish** a living museum by operating passenger service on the Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad.
- **To create** and set up exhibits of the crafts and activities of the railway industry, past and present.
- **To record** the impact of the railroads on the community development in the Central Leatherstocking and the northwestern Catskill Regions of New York State, with primary emphasis on Otsego, Delaware, Schoharie and Chenango Counties.

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### Leatherstocking Railway Historical Society Goals:

- **Acquire a site** and facility for the museum to house exhibits, a library and office space for the Society.
- **Acquire, preserve and restore** railway equipment.
- **Design exhibits**, displays and operating models for the museum.
- **Prepare and present exhibits** of art, photographs and audiovisual programs on local railroading, past and present.
- **Hold meetings** to further educate Society members and the public on railroad history.
- **Collect and publish information** on the restoration, conservation, documentation and proper care of railroad artifacts.
- **Develop and implement** a collection plan for library materials and museum artifacts.
- **Establish a railroad passenger operation** between Cooperstown and Cooperstown Junction over the Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad.
- **Acquire locomotive and car shop facilities** by purchase, lease or new construction at Milford, NY.
- **Acquire, erect and preserve** railroad buildings and structures.
- **Continued preservation of the Little Red Caboose**, founding home of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen, in Oneonta's Neahwa Park.

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**Since its creation in 1982** LRHS has achieved or made considerable progress towards these mission statements and goals. Several properties have been purchased and renovated. The Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad has been acquired and work is underway on its renovation for use as a tourist railroad operation. Many pieces of rail equipment have been acquired for use on the train operations and for static display. Thousands of artifacts have been donated or purchased for the museum's archives.

**The Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad, a 16-mile shortline**, is an ideal rail line to become a tourist passenger operation due to its proximity to the Cooperstown, one of Upstate New York's most popular tourist destinations. With over 150,000 people a year visiting Cooperstown's National Baseball Hall of Fame the market for such an operation is in place. Making the necessary renovations to the railroad and plugging in to the existing market are all that's needed to make the operation a success. The railroad and museum sites are easily accessible from Interstate 88 by way of NYS Route 28. When the entire project is completed the Leatherstocking Railway Museum will consist of three separate facilities, the Cooperstown Passenger Handling Facility, The Milford Depot Complex and the Cooperstown Junction Museum Site. All three facilities will be connected by the Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad. In addition, the Cooperstown Dream Park and the Cooperstown Fun Park, two separately owned facilities adjacent to the CACV, are planning station stops at their operations to allow passengers to come and go from their sites.

Leatherstocking  
Chapter  
NRHS,  
Oneonta,  
NY

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## L.R.H.S History

**The Leatherstocking Railway Historical Society (LRHS), with headquarters on NYS Route 7 in Cooperstown Junction, New York** is incorporated as a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational corporation and was granted a provisional charter by the New York State Department of Education on December 16, 1983. An absolute charter was granted on December 10, 1987. On May 7, 1983 the Society became an affiliate, under the name Leatherstocking Chapter, of the National Railway Historical Society (NRHS), a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit educational corporation incorporated in the State of Maryland in 1937. The NRHS currently has more than 20,000 members and 175 chapters in the United States, Canada and Great Britain.

**LRHS was organized in the summer of 1982** by Oneonta residents **Jim Loudon, Russ Hawkins, Dave Jones and Bruce Hodges** with two primary objectives in mind. The first objective was to preserve the Little Red Caboose and prevent its removal from Oneonta. This small four-wheel caboose, one of the most historic railroad cars in America, was the site of a meeting on September 23, 1883 at which time eight Oneonta railroad workers organized the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. This tiny group developed into the first national union for railway workers and brought about many of the reforms that made railroad work a less hazardous area of employment. The BRT went on to become the largest transportation union in the world.

**In 1924 the Little Red Caboose was restored, placed on display in Oneonta's Neahwa Park** and dedicated as a shrine by the national union. The caboose sat safely at its new home until the late 1970's and early 1980's, during which time it was repeatedly the victim of attacks by vandals. It was also during this time that the Smithsonian Institution cast its eyes on the caboose and, in cooperation with the national railroad union, proposed removing it from Oneonta to Washington, DC. Many Oneontans, including the original members of LRHS, felt that if this were to happen it would be a tragic loss for the city and the railroaders who worked for the Delaware and Hudson. After weighing several options, LRHS decided that the best way to protect the caboose and prevent its removal would be to erect a protective enclosure around the car, utilizing the existing canopy as a part of the structure. LRHS designed the enclosure and, after receiving approval from the City of Oneonta, generated \$10,000 for its construction through individual donations and radiothons. Work was completed by a local contractor and a formal dedication of the enclosure was held on September 5, 1983 to mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the **Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen**. LRHS has been the official caretaker of the caboose since that date and opens it to the public every year on Memorial Day. It is also available throughout the year upon request. The second objective of the Leatherstocking Railway Historical Society was the development of a regional railroad museum, which would enable the group to preserve and disseminate the tremendous wealth of railroad history that exists in the Central Leatherstocking Region. The first step toward this objective was taken on September 10, 1983 when the Society obtained an option to purchase a piece of property in Cooperstown Junction from the New York State Department of Transportation that consisted of 1.5 acres of land and a two-story Victorian wood frame dwelling. LRHS **purchased the**



Lantern

**property from the Department of Transportation** on February 6, 1987. The Cooperstown Junction property is ideally situated for use as a railroad museum, in that the land abuts the southern terminus of the Cooperstown and Charlotte Valley Railroad, and sits directly across NYS Route 7 from the Delaware and Hudson Mainline. Work on developing this site has continued since it was purchased, and has included brush and tree clearing, removal of decaying out buildings, bringing in fill, replacing the foundation of the Victorian style house, and reestablishing electric and phone service to the property.

**The Society gained firsthand knowledge in operating train excursions during the fall of 1983**, when it took part in the Little Red Caboose Festival, celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Brotherhood of Railroad Trainmen. LRHS was responsible for all contract negotiations between Delaware Otsego Corporation, who supplied the equipment, and the Delaware and Hudson Railroad, over which the equipment ran. The Society successfully carried 1300 passengers over a three day period, handling all marketing, concession and administrative responsibilities.

**In November 1992 the Society moved its office from 140 Main Street in downtown Oneonta**, where it had been located for 5 years, to the museum site. A wide-vision Delaware and Hudson Caboose was converted into an office facility which allowed the administration of the museum project to be located on-site. In November 1993 the Delaware Otsego Corporation petitioned the Interstate Commerce Commission for abandonment of the former Cooperstown and Charlotte Valley Railroad (CACV), a 16 mile shortline running from Cooperstown Junction to the Village of Cooperstown.

**The Leatherstocking Railway Historical Society was formally offered an opportunity to purchase the rail line from the owner**, Delaware Otsego Corporation, on December 27, 1993. The Society immediately undertook a fund-raising campaign for the purpose of purchasing, renovating and placing the line in operation as a tourist rail ride. Several programs were initiated to generate funds, including the Leatherstocking Partners Program, the Leatherstocking Associates Program and the Leatherstocking Loan Program. These programs, along with ordinary donation solicitations, raised almost \$20,000.

**Major funding became available** starting in May, 1995 with the receipt of a \$225,000 Member Item in the Department of Transportation portion of the New York State Budget acquired through the efforts of NYS Senator James Seward, a Milford, NY resident. These funds were used as a required 20% match for an Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) Grant in the amount of \$900,000 which was announced in June, 1996. These funds were designated to allow Leatherstocking Railway to purchase the rail line from Delaware Otsego Corporation and to renovate the northern 8 miles of the railroad for passenger service.

**In April 1995, LRHS took a major step forward in establishing operation of the CACV Project by purchasing the Milford Train Station** which

will become the midpoint of the overall operation. This 20 x 70 foot wood frame building was erected in 1869 and served as a combination freight and passenger facility for the Cooperstown and Susquehanna Valley Railroad, predecessor of the CACV. The building underwent extensive alterations in 1903 when the line was taken over by the Delaware and Hudson Company, but the basic plan had been retained. The Society embarked on a total renovation of the structure, which was in poor condition at the time of acquisition, shortly after purchase. Roof repairs, reestablishment of utilities, painting and replacement of roof overhangs and brackets highlighted the renovations and a grand opening was held on June 6, 1996. The Depot has been open every weekend since during the summer months providing visitors a glimpse of a portion of LRHS's archives which are on display as well as providing information on the company's future plans. Railroad souvenirs are also sold out of the building.

**Also included in the depot property** is a 35 x 85 foot steel **engine house**, built in the early 1970's, having its own run through track, in addition to an inspection pit and two furnace systems. This building will allow the Society to bring equipment inside for restoration and maintenance work. One of the project's main concerns involved the condition of the **three 19th Century wrought iron bridges** that cross the Susquehanna River between Portlandville and Cooperstown. All three bridges are of the Wagner Truss design and range in length from 94 to 183 feet. In August 1995, LRHS contracted with Northwest Engineering of Tidioute, Pennsylvania to perform the necessary inspection required to obtain certification for passenger operations. An engineer from Northwest spent over six hours inspecting the three bridges on August 18, 1995 and determined that there were no major structural defects in any of the spans. Aside from installing new deck timbers, the bridges will not require any major investment of capital and this will allow the Society to concentrate its resources on restoring the rest of the line to service. In October 1995, Northwest Engineering revisited the line and inspected the smaller bridges, track and right of way. LRHS expended \$11,100 of its own funds to have these reports completed.

**In September, 1996 LRHS purchased the Milford Auction Barn Property** adjacent to the Milford Depot. This 12 acre site contains a large barn which used to be used for cattle auctions. This building will be renovated for more display area, an archive center, and when renovated the auditorium where auctions used to be held will become an audio/visual presentation facility. While designated wetlands on the property restrict its development LRHS has been working with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation on developing portions of the land for parking and other uses.

**Also in September, 1996 local business man Gene Bettiol, Sr. donated the Lindee Park Railway**, built by the late Donnell Sullivan of Otego, to LRHS. Mr. Bettiol had purchased the train at an estate auction to see that it didn't leave the area. Mr. Sullivan had spent 30 years building this foot and a half gauge railroad which used to run around his property. After working on the engine and the two coaches the repainted and renamed Milford Park Railway made its debut at the June 7, 1997 Second Annual Milford Railroad Days. Running on temporary track next to the Milford Depot the Milford Park Railway carried 543 paying passengers throughout the day. The train has been operated for visitors throughout the summer months. Plans are underway to construct a permanent right-of-way around the wetlands behind the Milford Auction Barn before the end of 1997.

**Culminating over ten years of efforts** the Leatherstocking Railway Historical Society took ownership of the 128 year old Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad on July 1, 1997. Work on **clearing brush along the line** has been completed and engineers from Clough Harbour & Associates have completed inspections in order to prepare bid packages for contractors.

Over the years LRHS has acquired, through donations and purchases, an extensive collection of railroad artifacts, including ephemera such as blueprints, photos, magazines and books; hardware items including lanterns, switch locks and oil cans in addition to railroad signal equipment and track components. The Society has also acquired a varied assortment of railway equipment including box cars, passenger coaches, cabooses and two unique GG1 Electric Locomotives.

**In addition, LRHS has been able to obtain historic railroad structures** which have been dismantled and moved to the site for future erection. One such structure is the former **Delaware and Hudson Railroad FA Interlocking Tower** which at one time controlled all the D&H switches and signals from Oneonta south to Nineveh, NY. **LRHS dismantled this structure**, which stood in the D&H's Oneonta Yards at Fonda Avenue, and moved it to the Museum Site after being informed that the tower was scheduled for demolition by the Company. This structure will be reassembled and become part of the Cooperstown Junction Museum Complex. This was the last wooden interlocking tower on the entire D&H System, thus making it a worthy candidate for preservation and restoration. The Leatherstocking Railway Historical Society currently has over 280 members and is very active in the local community. Its activities include the presentation of slide shows on railroad history for schools and organizations throughout the area and holding monthly meetings for members and the general public during which those in attendance are informed of the Society's activities and presented with a railroad-related program. **LRHS also videotapes interviews with retired railroaders** so that their experiences may be preserved for future generations, in addition to serving as an information source for researchers, students, writers and any other individuals interested in local railroad history. In addition to its other activities, the Society continues to acquire railroad memorabilia for its ever expanding collection which will be incorporated into museum displays and archival storage. The Society also **publishes a monthly newsletter, Railtimes**, which informs members of LRHS activities and rail industry news, and a quarterly newsletter, The Leatherstocking Journal, which contains museum news and historic articles. LRHS has published **one book, The Oneonta Roundhouse, which has sold over 1,800 copies**. This 100 page book documents the birth, life and death of what was once the largest roundhouse in the world. Books about the Oneonta Shops and the Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad are also planned for the future.

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## The Product

A common comment made by visitors to the area is what do we do after the **Baseball Hall of Fame**? The potential impact of the CACV's conversion to a tourist railroad is especially significant due to its proximity to the village of Cooperstown, long established as one of the major tourist destinations in

North America. **The CACV operation would complement the existing museums in Cooperstown**, providing an additional activity for visitors from out of the area to enjoy. Of equal importance would be the available option of parking at the museum site in Cooperstown Junction or Milford and riding the train to Cooperstown, thereby easing the continual problem of vehicular congestion in the village, while at the same time reducing air pollution from exhaust emissions.

**The Leatherstocking Railway Museum** and the **Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad Train Ride** will make an excellent addition to the area's present attractions and will give visitors a reason to stay in the area longer. The museum sites, with their displays and archives, as well as the train ride would provide entertainment and educational opportunities for visitors. The Leatherstocking Railway Museum complexes will give visitors a glimpse of the area's rich railroad heritage through displays and exhibits which will be as interactive as possible.

The Cooperstown Junction Site's **primary purpose** will be the **exhibition of railroad rolling stock and equipment**. The two-story Victorian style house on the property will house paper displays and office space. The dismantled FA Tower will be reassembled on property leased from the Delaware & Hudson Railway across NYS Route 7 from the site. Also on that site will be constructed an enlarged version of the original Cooperstown Junction Depot, in addition to a large parking lot.

**The Milford Depot Complex will consist of several structures.** Centerpiece of the complex is the totally restored Milford Depot, a wooden structure built in 1869. The waiting room and station agents office have been restored to their original appearance. The freight room contains exhibits and a gift shop. Next door is the former Milford Auction Barn. When renovated it will contain exhibits, a large archive space, a snack bar, and an auditorium for railroad related audio/visual presentations. LRHS monthly meetings will also be held in the auditorium. Behind the former Milford Auction Barn is the new right-of-way for the **Milford Park Railway**. A quarter mile loop track **takes passengers around wetlands on the property**. Next to the Milford Park Railway is the Milford Engine House. All repairs and renovations to LRHS rail equipment current takes place in this structure. Once rail operations begin this structure will be used for servicing the locomotives used on the rail ride. Behind the Milford Engine House a two track, four car shop will be built to renovate and service the passenger cars to be used on the train rides as well as equipment to be displayed in Cooperstown Junction. While they won't be open to the public on an unlimited basis, special tours of the engine house and car shops will be conducted.



**The Cooperstown Passenger Handling Facility** located behind the New York State Electric & Gas Substation in the southern end of Cooperstown off from NYS Route 28, will be primarily a passenger handling facility. Located next to one of the Village's parking lots and served by its trolley bus system, this location is ideal for a passenger handling facility. For the first few years a restored former **D&H Railway**

**Post Office Car will serve as a passenger handling facility** on a stub track adjacent to the Village parking lot. A gift shop and limited exhibits will be incorporated in this car. Eventually a permanent structure, modeled after the train station constructed by the D&H in Cooperstown, will be constructed on the site that will serve as a transportation facility for the Village of Cooperstown.

The long term **employment benefits of this project would be significant**. The increased influx of tourists into the area, and the desire of tourists to stay in the region longer due to this added attraction, would necessitate additional employment at motels, restaurants and retail facilities. The overall **benefit to the State of New York** through increased and sales tax collections would also be substantial.

**The reopening of the Cooperstown and Charlotte Valley Railroad** would provide visitors the opportunity to personally experience one of the most beautiful rail corridors in America. As the CACV winds its way from Cooperstown Junction northward toward the village of Cooperstown, it passes through wetlands, forests, and pastures, skirting the upper reaches of the Susquehanna River. On its 16 mile journey it crosses three vintage 19th Century wrought iron bridges, and passes through **quaint villages with rustic wooden depots**. As the line draws near the head waters of the Susquehanna at Otsego Lake, the river narrows to a shallow stream. Finally, as the journey nears its end, the rails break out into rolling meadows at the Grasslands Farm.

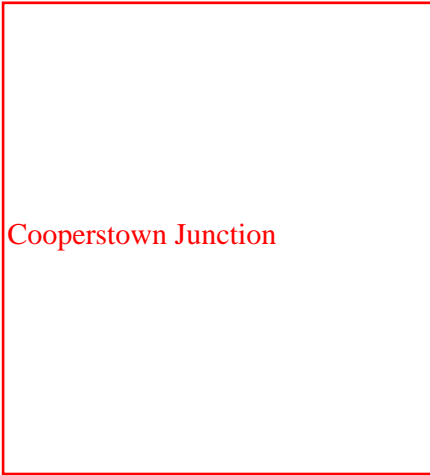
The last train of the day will be a **dinner train** with food provided by Falco's Junction Restaurant. Passengers on this train will be able to experience one of the **true pleasures of rail travel**, having dinner in the diner as the scenery passes by.

In addition to passenger service, the Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad will be **available for freight customers** and will be capable of moving in a timely any type of commodity currently shipped by rail. While no freight customers currently reside along the CACV, making this service available is crucial in attracting future industries to the Upper Susquehanna River Valley.

The **greatest benefit** for the location of the Leatherstocking Railway Museum and the Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad near Cooperstown, NY is the location of other well established tourist operations in the area. Largest by far is the **National Baseball Hall of Fame** on Main Street in Cooperstown. The Hall of Fame literally put Cooperstown on the map and gives the entire area national recognition. The following chart shows attendance figures for Cooperstown attractions over the past three years:

Cooperstown Attractions attendance figures

Attraction/Year	1995	1996	1997
National Baseball Hall of Fame	326,000	303,000	284,000
Farmer's Museum	63,435	62,806	71,640
Fenimore House	31,647	39,664	37,359



**Other attractions** in the area include the Hanford Mills Museum in East Meredith, The National Soccer Hall of Fame in Oneonta, and the Delaware & Ulster Railride in Roxbury.

**Trains have for more than 100 years held a fascination to Americans.** It's hard to find a family who doesn't have a relative who once worked for the railroad. Tourist railroads in the United States have seen a steady growth over the past 15 years. The Strasburg Railroad near Lancaster, PA has over 300,000 paying passengers per year. The National Park Service's Steamtown Historic Site in Scranton, PA has seen tremendous growth since opening several years ago. A train ride is a good family oriented activity that is enjoyed by adults and kids alike.

The financial benefits for the corridor region brought about by the opening of the CACV would be substantial. Based on a conservative estimate of 100,000 riders per season, the operation would have the potential to inject over \$6 million into the local economy. This estimate is based on the following:

Area Financial Benefits Estimates

Benefit Calculation Estimate

Increased Employment 25 new jobs @ \$12,000/ year	\$300,000.00
Ticket Revenue \$10 visitor/day x 100,000	\$1,000,000.00
One Night Lodging \$60, double occupancy	\$3,000,000.00
Dinner, Breakfast and Lunch (\$20/visitor)	\$2,000,000.00
<b>TOTAL ECONOMIC BENEFIT ANNUALLY</b>	<b>\$ 6,300,000.00</b>

**The estimate of 100,000 passengers per season** is considered conservative based on the success of the recently opened Adirondack Scenic Railroad in Thendara, New York. Like the CACV project, the Adirondack line is located in close proximity to Old Forge, a major northeast tourist center. This line, which started by operating on only 4 miles of track, carried over 60,000 passengers in its first season (1993).

In view of the fact that train excursions are becoming a **popular tourist activity in America**, and taking into consideration the location of the CACV line near Cooperstown, it is reasonable to anticipate a ridership of over 100,000 passengers per season. In addition to the patronage of railfans who visit the area primarily for the train excursion, the **CACV should expect a good percentage of Cooperstown tourists** to take the excursion while they are in the area. If, for example, only 25% of the Baseball Hall of Fame attendees for the 1997 season also took the train, 71,000 individuals would have enjoyed the train ride.

In addition to individuals **visiting the facility from other attractions** and/or specifically visiting the railroad, the Cooperstown Dream Park in Hartwick Seminary is planning to build a station on the CACV to transport passengers to Cooperstown. During the summer months 800 kids a week attend this baseball camp, with family accounting for about 1300 more individuals. During the week all 800 kids are transported to Cooperstown for a visit to the Baseball Hall of Fame, which is currently done by bus at great expense and more congestion in downtown Cooperstown. The operators of the Dream Park intend to transport attendees to Cooperstown by train, guaranteeing an 800+ ridership per week. Further up the line at Hyde Park the **Cooperstown Fun Park** is planning to build a large water park on property adjacent to the railroad, separated by the Susquehanna River. A peninsula jutting into the Susquehanna River from the railroad will be developed into a park with a station for the railroad and a pedestrian bridge will be constructed over the river to connect to the water park and other Fun Park facilities. In addition, ground transportation to the **Best Western Hotel** and the Commons Shopping facility in Hartwick Seminary is also in the planning stages from this location.

