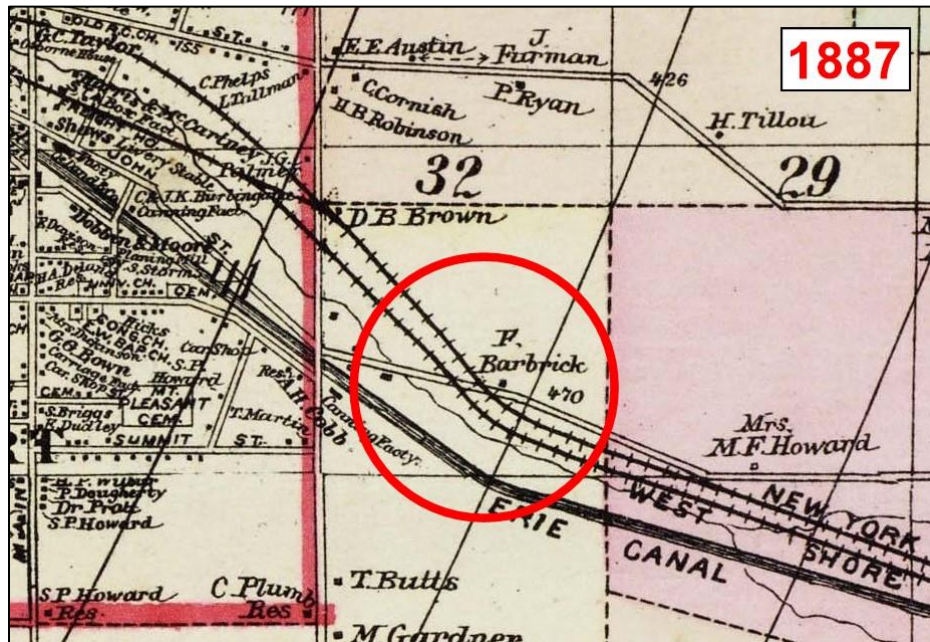


The Railroad Crossing at Old Macedon Center Road

By Bill Poray, Perinton Town Historian

North of the canal bridge at Turk Hill Road is the intersection with Cobb's Lane, named for the canning factory which stood across the canal on the south bank. The western end of Cobb's Lane traces the path of an earlier road, which meandered northeast, across Thomas Creek and multiple tracks of the New York Central and West Shore railroads. Known at different times as Brown's or Howard's Crossing, pedestrians, vehicles, and livestock passed this way at their own risk.



1887 map, highlighting the dangerous railroad crossing

Sometimes known as Old Macedon Center Road, the swampy cut-through still appeared on a 1935 assessor's map, however was closed off by the time a 1952 topographic map was drawn. The eastern end of the road still exists today. As with most early railroad crossings, unprotected in any way, sad stories are commonplace.

One snowy day in March of 1885, the father of Civil War veteran Chester Hutchinson, Lewis, was thrown from his horse-drawn cutter at the railroad crossing. Traveling from his home on East Whitney Road, called Cheese Factory road in that era, the 81-year-old man suffered serious injuries, which no doubt hastened his death not long after.

A neighbor of the Hutchinsons nearly lost his life at the troublesome crossing the following year. John Howell was on his way to a meeting, in his capacity as an overseer of highways. The local newspaper reported that Howell "had a narrow escape from a serious accident at Howard's crossing... one of the worst known." Blowing coal dust and snow made visibility to the west impossible. Howell crossed one set of tracks, when a fast-moving train slammed into his buggy, sheared off one wheel, and collapsed the front of the contraption upon the driver. Through good fortune, neither Howell nor his

horse were badly injured. The newspaper surmised, “It is a wonder that with the wind blowing and the draft created by the train, the buggy was not drawn under.”

A cattle drive of five dozen head in the spring of 1886 was crossing the tracks when an express train split the group in two, causing loss several prize steer for farmer Smith Bills. More incidents followed, including the death of a pedestrian found on the tracks at the crossing.



A portion of an image from about 1906 or slightly later, with the railroad tracks in the foreground. Part of the Cobb Preserving Company buildings are across the canal. A dirt road is visible winding across the lower-center part of the image, where it crosses the tracks, just out of view at the lower-left. The crossing of this winding road at the railroad tracks is the subject of this story.

By 1893, and reports of “another man nearly killed at Howard’s Crossing, town supervisor Egbert Hodskin took on the railroad, A resolution was passed to seek from the railroad companies the assignment of a flagman at the Howard Crossing. As described in the Monroe County Mail, “There are six tracks, crossing the highway diagonally, making it a very dangerous crossing, and our citizens generally will be very glad that the town authorities are taking steps in the matter.”

Two weeks after the resolution, yet another narrow escape punctuated the need for the implementation of safety measures. An express train struck the wagon of 68-year old Percy Budlong of Walworth, who was thrown to the ground but escaped death. Soon after, Dan Crowell of Fairport’s East Avenue was assigned the position of flagman at the notorious crossing. A thirty-year veteran of the railroad, the newspaper reported, “It is a good thing to have him there, and all who use the crossing will feel much safer because of it.”

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