The Albany-Hudson Rail Line

Welcome to the Albany-Hudson Electric Trail, built on the route of a thirty-seven-mile-long electrified rail line that connected its namesake cities and the communities between them from 1900 to 1929.

Transportation Improvement
Before 1900, inland transportation between Columbia and Rensselaer Counties was horse drawn on unpaved roads. In 1900, the Albany & Hudson Railway & Power Company completed this interurban rail line, using electricity to power high-speed travel between cities and villages separated by rural areas. Ownership changed several times. The longest ownership was the Albany Southern Railroad between 1909 and 1924.

Passengers and Freight
Albany-Hudson trolley cars made hourly trips, moving at speeds up to 60 mph, stopping at fourteen stations on runs taking about one hour and forty minutes between Albany and Hudson. At its peak, 1.4 million passengers rode the line annually. It also served local industries, hauling freight including milk, farm products, cotton and wool for textile mills, and finished goods.

Industry and Recreation
The Albany-Hudson line was the first US interurban line to power cars via an electrified third rail. The company generated electricity at its Stuyvesant Falls hydroelectric plant and provided the first electric service to communities along the line. To increase ridership, the rail company developed “Electric Park,” an amusement park at Kinderhook Lake that was a popular getaway until it closed in 1923.

Impact and Decline
The Albany-Hudson line shaped development of the rural communities it served, spurring economic growth and opening them to recreational and residential development. The line was successful until after World War I when automobiles and bus lines eroded ridership. The last trolley car ran on December 22, 1929, two months after the stock market crash. This marked the end of almost thirty years of fast intercity public rail transport in Columbia and Rensselaer Counties.

INTERURBAN RAIL
This scene of Albany-Hudson line passengers ready to board a car at Kinderhook Crossing at Nassau captures the spirit of interurban railroading, which provided fast intercity service through largely rural territory. Source: Nassau Village Historian.

CARS AND CREWS
Proud Albany-Hudson line motormen and conductors pose in front of their gleaming trolley cars, sometimes coupled in pairs to handle busy summertime traffic to the company’s “Electric Park” amusement destination. Source: Chenette Public Library.

DOWN AT THE DEPOT
Albany-Hudson line depots like Kinderhook’s were busy centers of community life along the route. Depot agents handled ticket sales, freight, mail, and railway-secy communications. Source: Village of Kinderhook.

ELECTRICAL POWER
Generators at the rail line’s hydroelectric plant at Stuyvesant Falls produced electricity to power the trolleys and to service communities along the route. Source: Albany Engineering Corporation.

ELECTRIC PARK
To boost weekend revenue, the Albany-Hudson line created “Electric Park,” a popular amusement destination on Kinderhook Lake featuring entertainment, food, and rides. Source: Mantua Heritage Consulting.

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