

# Targeted Tracks

The Cumberland Valley Railroad in  
the Civil War, 1861-1865

Scott L. Mingus Sr.  
and Cooper H. Wingert



Savas Beatie  
California

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Proudly printed in the United States of America.

Scott dedicates it to his wife, Debi,  
and Cooper dedicates it to his parents,

\* \* \*

In Memoriam

Lila Fourhman-Shaull,  
Director of Library and Archives, York County History Center



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## List of Abbreviations Used in Text and Notes

B&O: Baltimore and Ohio Railroad  
CCHS: Cumberland County Historical Society  
CVRR: Cumberland Valley Railroad  
FCHS: Franklin County Historical Society  
FRR: Franklin Railroad  
GNMP: Gettysburg National Military Park  
JCCW: Joint Committee on the Conduct of the War  
LC: Library of Congress  
LSU: Louisiana State University  
MMA: Mechanicsburg Museum Association  
NCRY: Northern Central Railway  
NYSNG: New York State National Guard  
PHMC: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission  
PMTD: Pennsylvania Military Telegraph Department  
PRR: Pennsylvania Railroad  
PSA: Pennsylvania State Archives  
PVM: Pennsylvania Volunteer Militia  
UNC: University of North Carolina  
USHEC: United States Army Heritage and Education Center  
USMRR: United States Military Railroad  
USSC: United States Sanitary Commission  
UVA: University of Virginia

## Foreword

Despite

the critical role played by railroads during the Civil War, very little has been written about one particular railroad that operated in Pennsylvania. Thankfully, that oversight has been rectified in fine fashion by Scott Mingus and Cooper Wingert in *Targeted Tracks: The Cumberland Valley Railroad in the Civil War, 1861-1865*, a fast-paced and exciting study that combines industrial, economic, social, and military history in narrating the fascinating story of this line.

Railroads in America came of age with the coming of the Civil War. By 1861, the country boasted more than 200 different railroads, with two-thirds of the track miles crisscrossing northern states. This modern technology would play a major role in the conflict from its very start. The North had a distinct advantage in this regard, and used railroads to ship hundreds of thousands of men and untold tons of supplies when and where they were needed throughout the war. Despite the multitude of problems plaguing the Confederacy, the South managed to use its railroads to strategic advantage on several occasions. Railroads played an important role during the Southern victory at First Manassas during the war's first summer, for example, when Confederate troops were transported via rail to reinforce Gen. P. G. T. Beauregard's army. Another classic use of railroads unfolded in 1863 when most of James Longstreet's First Corps rode the rails from Virginia to North Georgia to reinforce Gen. Braxton Bragg's Army of Tennessee. Bragg used the troops to

help win at Chickamauga—the only major Southern victory in the Western Theater during the entire war.

*Targeted Tracks* covers much more than rails, boxcars, and steam engines. Here, for the first time, is the complete study of not only the Cumberland Valley Railroad, but the region it traversed and served and the men responsible for running and maintaining the line. The authors reach back more than 150 years to give readers a capsule history of the 85-mile Cumberland Valley. Before European settlement, the major transportation networks consisted of nothing more than Indian paths crisscrossing the entire Eastern Seaboard. The authors discuss the development of roads in the area, the formation of the CVRR in 1837, how it was built, the obstacles it faced, and the men who faced them.

By the late 1850s, the CVRR was a prosperous line. John Brown and his associates used the railroad in 1859 to secretly ship weapons (listed as “hardware” on shipping manifests) to Chambersburg, where they planned much of the failed raid on Harpers Ferry. In late spring 1861, the CVRR was involved in the first extensive strategic use of a railroad during the war when a small Union army under Maj. Gen. Robert Patterson staged at Chambersburg for a failed foray to contain Confederate forces operating in the Shenandoah Valley. Several thousand men from Patterson’s command were transported south to Hagerstown, Maryland, via the CVRR and the Franklin Railroad. Patterson, however, failed to contain the small Confederate army under Gen. Joseph E. Johnston, which slipped away (partly by rail) to reinforce Beauregard at Manassas. The Southern victory changed the course and scope of the war.

The CVRR played a little-known but important role during the 1862 Maryland Campaign. After the battle of Antietam, Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan faced significant logistical problems, partly because of the disrupted Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. McClellan turned to the CVRR for help transporting badly needed supplies, ammunition in particular, to the railhead at Hagerstown, where it was shipped to the nearby Antietam battlefield. The railroad also played a role in transporting more than 400 wounded Union soldiers to Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, where hospitals had been established to care for them. Around this time, the CVRR transported Pennsylvania volunteer militia to the region as a bulwark against further Confederate incursions. A few weeks after Antietam, the railroad suffered its first major wartime loss when Maj. Gen. Jeb Stuart led around 1,800 Confederate cavalymen on a raid around McClellan’s Army of the Potomac.

On October 11, Stuart occupied Chambersburg and destroyed the round house and shops of the CVRR.

Devout students of the Gettysburg campaign and battle will thank Mingus and Wingert for their vivid account of that campaign in the Cumberland Valley. During this period the railroad suffered more damage from Confederate raiders, and learn about other aspects of Lee's invasion, including the abduction of free blacks for shipment back into the South. After the battle, the CVRR helped transport Confederate prisoners north to Union prisons. The entire book is outstanding, but I found this section, in particular, to be one of the highlights of *Targeted Tracks*.

The authors also include a detailed account of McCausland's Raid and the burning of Chambersburg in July 1864, when the entire inner core of the town was destroyed and the Confederates engaged in a drunken orgy of looting. Ironically, the CVRR suffered less damage in that raid than earlier Confederate incursions. At the war's end, the CVRR brought the soldiers home from the war. A third daily train was added to carry the many thousands home. On a sadder note, a special train traversed the Cumberland Valley north to Harrisburg on Saturday, April 22, jammed with people determined to view President Lincoln's funeral train, which had stopped at Harrisburg while taking the martyred president to his final resting place in Springfield, Illinois. Mingus and Wingert conclude their study with an overview of the postwar operations of the CVRR, how they repaired wartime damage, and role it played hauling veterans to their numerous reunions.

The engaging narrative is supported by impressive firsthand research and exceptional scholarship that will have great appeal to students of railroads during the war, and to anyone who wishes a fuller and richer appreciation of how Confederate incursions north affected key logistical lifelines. I commend the authors for taking the time and going to the trouble of researching and writing such a valuable contribution to Civil War studies. Their effort proves once again that there is still much to learn about our favorite subject.

Ted Alexander  
Chief Historian (ret)  
Antietam National Battlefield

## Acknowledgments

Cooper and I are extremely grateful that our mutual good friend Ted Alexander wrote the foreword to this book and kindly offered to share materials from his fine book, *When War Passed This Way*. His active participation in this project enriched the manuscript multiple times along the way. We are in your debt, Ted.

Due special consideration is long-time Cumberland Valley chronicler and collector M. L. "Mike" Marotte III. He graciously responded to emails and then met with me in person to discuss items in his extensive files. As we broke bread together in Gettysburg, we found much in common, and his enthusiasm and support for our project was simply outstanding. Thank you, Mike!

We also appreciate the fine efforts of Michele Wade of the Franklin County Historical Society, who graciously made available to us the library's collection of articles on the Civil War and the Cumberland Valley Railroad. Lila Fourhman-Shaull of the York County History Center did the same from their archives, including making available reference books and other useful materials. Robert L. Williams, my co-author on our book on the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad in the Civil War, offered many useful suggestions. Elizabeth Howe and John Frye of the Western Maryland Room of the Washington County (Maryland) Free Library searched through their records of the railroad and Civil War in Hagerstown.

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Richard Tritt, the photo curator at the Cumberland County Historical Society in Carlisle, prepared several images for us to use in the book. The staff of Dickinson College graciously gave us permission to use an image of the

burning of the Scotland Bridge from their collection. John Heiser of the National Park Service searched through the holdings of the library of Gettysburg National Military Park for references to the Cumberland Valley Railroad or Franklin Railroad.

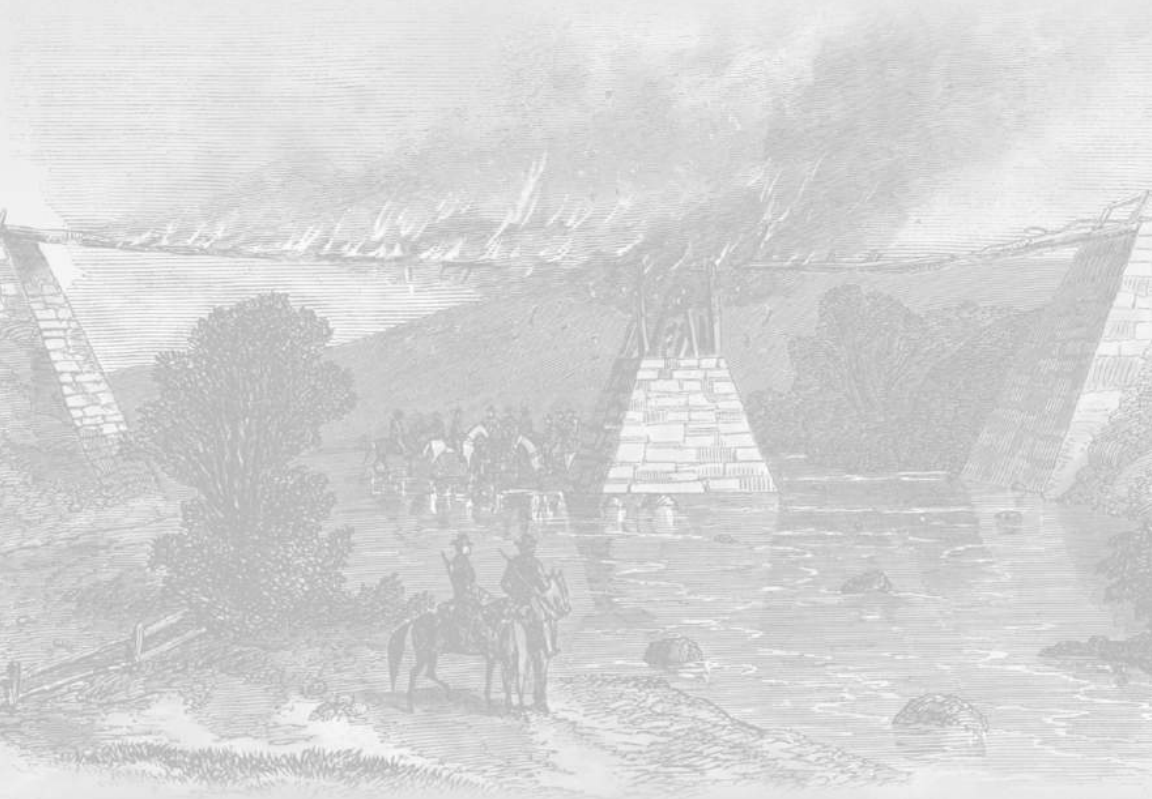
Jim Cassatt gave us advice, as well as providing an image of a postcard showing the CVRR station in Newville, Pennsylvania, late in the 19th century. The Washington County (Maryland) Free Library has a useful collection of Civil War-era Hagerstown newspapers, most notably the *Herald of Freedom and Torch Light* and the *Hagerstown Mail*. Well-known author and educator Dr. Matthew Pinsker of Dickinson College in Carlisle, PA, gave us permission to use images and documents from their collection.

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\* \* \*

Note: Several images appear here courtesy of M. L. "Mike" Marotte III, author/historian, [www.vintagefranklincounty.com](http://www.vintagefranklincounty.com).



## Chapter 1

# The Antebellum CVRR

*Thick*

clouds of acrid, oily smoke hung in the crisp morning air. Under the dark canopy, angry orange-colored flames crackled as a massive warehouse filled with mountains of Federal military uniforms, weapons and military accouterments quickly became engulfed in the roaring inferno. Nearby, Confederate cavalymen scurried about, ripping down the remaining telegraph wires of the Cumberland Valley Railroad yard.

The Southern horsemen were hoping to wreck the railroad for a considerable period to deny its use to the Yankees. The roundhouse and extensive machine shops soon met the torch. As the roof collapsed on the engine house, three steam locomotives sustained significant damage. Boxes of ammunition began exploding, adding to the growing tumult. Other soldiers loaded piles of supplies previously pilfered from the warehouses into heavy freight wagons. Horrified citizens watched from a distance, hoping the deliberate destruction did not extend to their homes or businesses. Some of their fellow Franklin County residents were in Confederate custody, facing a grim trip to military prison in Richmond, Virginia, to be used as future political pawns. Others, including the town's telegrapher and postmaster, had fled to safety before the Rebels arrived.

The date was October 11, 1862; the place was Chambersburg, Pennsylvania. Famed Confederate Brig. Gen. James Ewell Brown "Jeb" Stuart had led 1,800 veteran troopers north from Darkesville, in western Virginia, through Maryland and into south-central Pennsylvania, targeting the CVRR. The small but

strategically important railroad ran southwest from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, through the verdant Cumberland Valley to Hagerstown, Maryland. It was a vital supply route for Union Maj. Gen. George B. McClellan's Army of the Potomac, which was spread out between Harpers Ferry and Bakersville, Maryland, following the battle of Antietam the previous month. On their way north, Stuart's men had procured fresh horses from the bountiful farms of the Cumberland Valley and looted the village of Mercersburg in southwestern Franklin County. The lead elements of Stuart's column had reached Chambersburg, the county seat, about 8:00 p.m. the previous evening, when their bugles bleated their unwelcome arrival to the startled townspeople. Soon, a trio of concerned civic leaders had met the Rebel leaders to seek terms for the peaceful surrender of the town of 5,200 people. In a pouring rain, a detachment of the 2nd Virginia Cavalry headed five miles north to Scotland to burn the sturdy CVRR bridge over the Conococheague Creek—its loss, if the mission was successful, would sever McClellan's heavily used supply line. The rest of Stuart's command had occupied Chambersburg and vicinity, and were now smashing the railroad infrastructure before leaving and heading eastward toward Gettysburg.<sup>1</sup>

War had come to the Cumberland Valley and its most important economic link to the outside world, the railroad. Long before the advent of the "iron horse," the broad valley in south-central Pennsylvania and northern Maryland had been a major trade route and portage between the Susquehanna River and Potomac River, first for Native American tribes such as the Susquehannock and Iroquois and later for pioneer explorers and settlers, many of which were Scots-Irish or English. Part of what is today known as the Great Appalachian Valley, the Blue Mountain and Bear Pond ranges of the Appalachians constituted the western and northern boundaries of the Cumberland Valley, with the South Mountain range forming the southern and eastern perimeter. Narrow gaps gave access and egress for travelers and settlers. The valley, typically about 10 to 12 miles wide in most places, runs 73 miles from a point near the Susquehanna's West Shore near Harrisburg in a general southwesterly direction to the Potomac near Hagerstown, Maryland. In between those towns, in Franklin and Cumberland counties, lay a plethora of smaller Keystone communities, including Bridgeport (now Lemoyne), White Hall (now Camp Hill), Mechanicsburg, Carlisle, Newville, Shippensburg, Chambersburg, and Greencastle. The highest point, "the summit" at 783 feet

1 Adapted from W. P. Conrad and Ted Alexander, *When War Passed This Way* (Greencastle Bicentennial Publication/Lilian S. Besore Memorial Library, 1982).

above sea level, is in the central part of the Valley between Shippensburg and Chambersburg along the line of the Cumberland Valley Railroad.<sup>2</sup>

### Origins

The early Native Americans referred to the densely timbered North Mountain range as Kau-ta-tin-chunk (later anglicized as Kittochtinny), meaning “endless mountains” or “main mountains.” The setting sun cast shadows into the fertile, well-watered valley, teeming with wildlife and thick vegetation, mostly field grasses, low shrubs such as juniper and laurel, and a variety of stately oak, walnut, hickory, and maple trees. Berries and fruit abounded, as did rich deposits of iron ore and limestone. “It is said that the white men that first came to the valley were greatly impressed with its beauty and the natural productions of the soil,” a 19th-century historian penned. “The grass was rich and luxuriant, wild fruits were abundant, and there was a great variety of trees in places... while in the open country the strawberry, dewberry and wintergreen made a luscious carpeting and furnished the Indians in their season a tempting and welcome partial supply of food.” Game was abundant, providing food and pelts. In 1720, French fur trader James LeTort established a small outpost along what is now known as LeTort Spring Run near the later settlement of Carlisle. Over the next three decades, additional trappers and traders arrived, as did later waves of colonial settlers, their sturdy Conestoga wagons brimming with household goods. Most had moved westward across the Susquehanna River from the Philadelphia area, and trains of eager settlers headed deep into the rural interior of Pennsylvania. Many now called the Cumberland Valley home, while others passed through the gaps in the North Mountain range and headed for the Ohio River and beyond.<sup>3</sup>

By 1750, enough people lived in the Valley to allow the creation of a separate county, Cumberland, to be carved from Lancaster County. It stretched the length of the Cumberland Valley. The largest town, Carlisle, located near the site of James LeTort’s fur trading post, became the seat. The Cumberland Valley played a key role in the French & Indian War from 1754 to 1763. Trade routes, control of the entry points to the Ohio Country, alliances with the Native Americans, and

2 Harriet Wylie Stewart, *History of the Cumberland Valley, Pennsylvania* (n.p., 1918), 1-10. See also, George P. Donehoo, *A History of the Cumberland Valley in Pennsylvania* (Susquehanna History Association, 1930).

3 *Ibid.*; Samuel D. Bates, *History of Cumberland and Adams Counties, Pennsylvania* (Warner, Beers & Co., 1886), 4-6.

national pride were all at stake for the British and French as the Seven Years' War spread from its European origins across the ocean to North America. Several small engagements were fought in the valley. Settlers constructed five small wooden forts at key points in the valley, including sites near what became Carlisle and Shippensburg. Inspired by the French, Native American warriors occasionally attacked the outposts and isolated settlements. The Treaty of Paris in 1763 finally brought an end to the global war, although strife remained for years in the Cumberland Valley between the natives and the ever-increasing population of whites, free blacks, and occasional slaves. During the American Revolution, several local farms provided food, forage, and supplies to the Continental Army, and ironworks produced cannonballs and other military equipment.<sup>4</sup>

To the south in Maryland, Washington County was carved out of Frederick County in 1776, largely through the efforts of German immigrant Jonathan Hager. He had founded Elizabethtown, named for his wife, in 1762. After that town became the county seat, people began referring to it as Hagerstown, a name that became official in 1814 when the Maryland State Assembly approved the change.

Industry and agriculture in the Cumberland Valley flourished, offering steady employment and fueling the growing prosperity of the region. By 1784, enough people lived in the southern part of the Valley in Pennsylvania to justify the creation of a new county, Franklin, to be split off from Cumberland County. Chambersburg became the county seat. Massive freight wagons hauled cargo on well-maintained paved turnpikes down through Hagerstown and on to Baltimore, or west toward Pittsburgh or east across South Mountain to Gettysburg and on through York and Lancaster to Philadelphia. Secondary roads, mostly well-packed dirt, connected the valley's communities to markets in Hanover and Frederick. The burgeoning economy gave rise to the need to move even larger quantities of freight and passengers quickly. Leading merchants in Baltimore considered several alternatives. In August 1827, they began discussing constructing railroads into the Susquehanna and Cumberland valleys. Investors in Massachusetts were operating a freight line to haul granite from mines to a riverport for subsequent transportation to Boston for use in the new Bunker Hill Monument. Several horse-drawn railroads were in service in Great Britain, and steam power loomed on the horizon.<sup>5</sup>

4 Ibid.

5 The Granite Railway is generally considered the first commercially successful US railroad company.

At the time, Baltimore and Philadelphia interests were competing to tap into the riches of the Cumberland Valley and the interior of Pennsylvania. In March 1828, the Canal Commission met in downtown Harrisburg to discuss connecting a railroad to the canal and portage system. Surveyor William R. Hopkins surveyed two possible routes from the Susquehanna River to Chambersburg, dismissing a possible route from Wrightsville in eastern York County west through Gettysburg and on to Chambersburg because of the difficulty of crossing South Mountain. He recommended a route from Harrisburg through Carlisle, but the state legislature took no action.<sup>6</sup>

Baltimore was closer to Chambersburg than Philadelphia, and thus suggested itself as the opposite terminus of a likely less expensive route for hauling freight, but in both coastal cities, investors were formulating their own plans to construct railroad lines. In 1828, the Baltimore & Susquehanna Railroad received its organizational charter in Maryland, with a goal of running track from Baltimore north to York and then on to the Susquehanna River. Plans were being developed to connect the B&S with additional lines that ran west through Hanover to Gettysburg, and then through the South Mountain gaps to Chambersburg in the Cumberland Valley. However, opposition to the plan in the Pennsylvania legislature stalled the project, and by 1832 the tracks were only completed from a few miles north from Baltimore through the countryside to Timonium. Pennsylvania legislators did not authorize the northward expansion into the Keystone State until 1834.<sup>7</sup>

Meanwhile, several prominent Philadelphia businessmen also sought access to the riches of the Cumberland Valley and began planning their own railroad through Harrisburg to Chambersburg. In January 1831, in Carlisle, Cumberland Valley civic leaders Frederick Watts, Dr. J. David Mahon, Charles McClure, John Harper, and James Woodburn were named to a committee to write a petition that would be forwarded to the Pennsylvania state legislature urging them to charter a railroad for the good of the valley's residents. "Its citizens have a right to expect," they wrote, "that they will be allowed, at least to participate in the advantages of those improvements which promise to enrich the state in its eastern and western borders." On April 2, Pennsylvania Governor George Wolf signed an act to

6 Paul J. Westhaeffer, *History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad 1835-1919* (National Railway Historical Society, 1979), 5.

7 For more on the early history of the B&S and its successor the Northern Central Railway, see Scott Mingus, *Soldiers, Spies & Steam: A History of the Northern Central Railway in the Civil War* (Amazon CreateSpace, 2016).

incorporate the Cumberland Valley Railroad to run initially from Carlisle to the Susquehanna River at or near Harrisburg. Several appointed commissioners began selling 4,000 shares of stock in the new railroad at \$50 per share, with the expectation that a minimum of 1,500 shares had to be sold before the state would issue a charter to the new company. The merchants and farmers, however, did not support the initiative and the deadline for raising the start-up capital expired.<sup>8</sup>

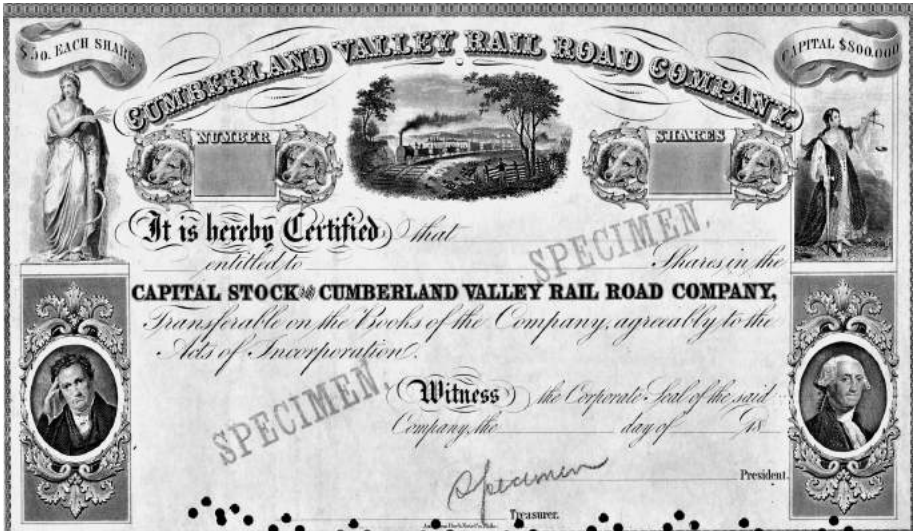
### The CVRR Finally Begins Construction

That sentiment changed over the next few years as the economy continued to expand and freight needs increased. Supporters of the proposed railroad continued their efforts to shore up funding. On April 15, 1835, Governor Wolf signed a bill reviving the railroad company, giving it six years to commence and finish the construction. The line was also to connect with the Main Line Works, most notably the canal system. This supplement expanded the railroad into Shippensburg and Chambersburg, and this time there was more enthusiasm for the ambitious project. “If a railroad is made from Harrisburg to this place [Carlisle], we can leave Carlisle at nine o’clock in the morning and reach Philadelphia at six o’clock in the evening,” a reporter mentioned. “A farmer can put his produce into a railroad car in the morning and the same evening have it on Broad street, Philadelphia, and that, too, at *one-half of the expense* it would have cost him to have it taken by wagons.” He urged that “our wealthy citizens (and we have many such amongst us) will step forward and subscribe liberally towards making ‘Cumberland Valley Railroad.’”<sup>9</sup>

Starting in mid-May of 1835, sufficient stock was sold in three weeks, through subscription plans, to raise \$642,000, and on June 2 Wolf signed the necessary paperwork to authorize the formation of the state-chartered Cumberland Valley Railroad Company. Stockholders met in Carlisle on June 27 and elected long-time Chambersburg attorney and former Federalist congressman Thomas Grubb McCulloh, a War of 1812 veteran and former U. S. congressman, as the first president. The board consisted of twelve appointed directors who would serve staggered terms. They included early railroad supporters Frederick Watts and

8 Frederick D. Brumbaugh, “A History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad Company, 1831-1837,” in *Kittochtinny Historical Society Papers*, Kittochtinny Historical Society, vol. 16, 176.

9 *American Volunteer* (Carlisle, PA), May 14, 1835.



A specimen of an early \$50 share of stock in the Cumberland Valley Rail Road Company that belonged to T. B. Kennedy, an early investor and company legal counsel who became the president of the CVRR. *Mike Marotte*

David Mahon, the latter a prominent Carlisle physician. Philadelphia, Carlisle, Chambersburg, and Shippensburg were all represented on the board.<sup>10</sup>

The directors set the compensation packages for the officers in the charter. President McCulloh received an initial salary of \$1,500 a year plus travel and office expenses. The secretary, Abraham Hendel, received \$300. Each of the directors would get two dollars a day plus ten cents per mile when traveling on company business. Surveyors, civil engineers, and anyone else needed to plan and construct the line would also receive compensation determined by the company officers. William Milnor Roberts came on board as chief engineer in early August 1835 at an annual salary of \$2,000. Roberts was only 25 years old, but the Quaker-educated Philadelphian already had considerable practical field experience to augment his formal education in mathematics, architectural drafting, and engineering.<sup>11</sup>

10 Ibid., 179; *Laws of the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (State Printer, 1836), 28-30. McCulloh, spelled McCullough in several accounts, served in the US House of Representatives from 1820-1821.

11 Brumbaugh, "A History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad," 180. Roberts's papers, including an extensive autobiography, are held in the Montana State University Library, Merrill G. Burlingame Special Collections.

Roberts soon began surveying possible routes for the proposed railroad. He soon focused on the two most promising, one that ran closer to North Mountain and one closer to South Mountain. A key was to locate the tracks close to as many potential customers as possible. Cumberland and Franklin counties contained 152 grist mills (with an annual total output of 340,000 barrels of flour), 80 distilleries making more than a million gallons of whiskey each year, nine iron furnaces and 14 associated forges and a rolling mill, three paper mills, 132 sawmills, 25 clover mills, and 45 factories making coarse cotton and woolen goods, as well as other assorted products. More than 250 retail merchants supplied the residents with sundries and other merchandise. He estimated that the new railroad had the potential to carry up to 86,000 tons a year of freight, produce, and general trade goods.<sup>12</sup>

Roberts recommended the southern route, but the directors were concerned that this path bypassed Newville, an agricultural center in Cumberland County about eleven miles west of Carlisle. In the end they compromised, using the southern route except for the section between Carlisle and Shippensburg, which would follow the northern route to include Newville and vicinity. In exchange, the borough and citizens of Newville would be required to pay the railroad \$2,500 for the extra distance. Roberts and his associates began planning the right of way and obtaining the necessary five-rod-wide contiguous strips of land. The charter documents allowed the railroad to seize, for a fair price, any property it needed to complete its surveyed right of way, with the exception that it could not obtain burial grounds, churches, or dwellings (or any major outbuilding valued at more than \$500) without the owner's consent.<sup>13</sup>

Roberts began advertising for contractors to submit proposals by sunset on November 14, 1835, to grade about 25 miles of the new line. "It is expected that the proposals of those who are not personally known to the Engineer will be accompanied by proper references," he advised in several newspaper notices. Dozens of potential bidders traveled to Carlisle to present their proposals in person before the deadline, thronging the hotels and restaurants of the suddenly bustling town. After careful consideration, Roberts selected Joseph S. Snowden of

12 Samuel Hazard, "Cumberland Valley Railroad," in *Hazard's Register of Pennsylvania*, vol. XVII, no. 20, November 14, 1835, 306-308, citing the *Harrisburg Chronicle*. Clover mills used rough grindstones to crush the flowered heads of clover to extract and clean the seeds, which were important in the rudimentary crop rotation system then practiced.

13 *Ibid.*; Brumbaugh, "A History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad," 177-78; *Carlisle Weekly Herald*, November 25, 1863.

Philadelphia as the general contractor for the project. Construction of the CVRR roadbed, graded wide enough for eventual double-tracking, began in January 1836, but it soon became evident that additional funding would be needed to complete the entire 52-mile length, acquire rolling stock, and begin operations. The board of directors agreed to augment the company's capital with additional cash from their own pockets to complete the line.<sup>14</sup>

Railroad officials contracted with William Norris's manufacturing firm in Philadelphia for the delivery of three new locomotives by the spring of 1837 at not more than \$6,800 apiece. While the CVRR and Norris planned its initial engines, progress on the railbed through the valley slowed considerably. Many of the temporary construction workers were also farmers, and most of them needed to return home to bring in the summer harvest. They returned to work in August. A year later, the work was progressing, although costs were higher than expected.<sup>15</sup>

In his annual report to the board in December 1836, Roberts was more optimistic about the company's financial picture, although the cost to finish the line would still exceed the available capital. He now estimated the cost to begin operations, including acquiring engines and rolling stock, would be \$681,400. He had re-worked the numbers based upon the work in progress and recent technical advances. As the roadbed progressed, crews needed to excavate much less rock than anticipated. He also now believed that he had underestimated the amount of freight and passengers that the railroad would carry, and had overestimated the cost of maintaining and repairing the line. Raw material increases, however, mitigated some of the cost savings.<sup>16</sup>

CVRR management petitioned the state legislature for aid, but it was not forthcoming. By April 1837, the board agreed that it needed to take out a loan for \$200,000 to ensure the completion of the line within the original deadlines. However, a financial crisis leading to a depression, known as the Panic of 1837, soon gripped the country, and the banks and private investors were unwilling to take the risk of lending money to the struggling railroad company. The board sent

14 "Cumberland Valley Railroad: To Contractors for Grading," *Daily Pittsburgh Gazette*, October 17, 1835; "Cumberland Valley Railroad," *Carlisle Weekly Herald*, November 18, 1835.

15 W. Williams, *Appleton's Railroad and Steamboat Companion, Being a Travellers' Guide through the United States of America, Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia* (D. Appleton & Company, 1848), 254; Brumbaugh, "A History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad," 180-81.

16 *Second Report of William Milnor Roberts, Chief Engineer of the Cumberland Valley Rail Road Company, Made to the Board, on the 29th of December 1836* (Chambersburg, PA: Hickok & Blood, 1836), 6-9. Copy in the William Milnor Roberts Papers, Montana State University Library, Bozeman.



A so-called CVRR “shinplaster,” an early promissory note that dates from 1837. Mike Marotte

a representative to Europe to seek funding, but he came back empty-handed. They managed, however, to obtain \$50,000 from the Franklin Railroad Company to help keep the construction moving forward. When those funds dried up, the railroad began issuing promissory notes, known colloquially as “shinplasters,” to its creditors and suppliers. They were redeemable in one year at six percent interest. Even so, the CVRR had to suspend construction on a bridge in July to keep the scrip in good credit, and the board members issued a public notice they would individually and collectively guarantee future redemption of the specie.<sup>17</sup>

The fledgling railroad received a license as a freight forwarder, but all the available capital was being put into construction, building the infrastructure, and acquiring locomotives, tenders, and passenger cars. Nothing was left to purchase freight cars (also known then as “burthen” or “burden” cars). As a result, several Valley firms already in the freight-forwarding business, over time, purchased their own cars that operated from their private warehouses. These companies hired their own conductors who accompanied their cars to supervise loading and unloading. Some of the more enterprising freight companies also sold tickets to passengers across different forms of transportation, including various railroads. The inability to control its own freight and the loss of associated revenue would plague the Cumberland line for several decades and limit its earnings.<sup>18</sup>

17 “House of Representatives,” *The Keystone* (Harrisburg, PA), December 17, 1836; Brumbaugh, “A History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad,” 182-85.

18 Mechanicsburg (PA) Museum Association, “The Cumberland Valley Railroad & Mechanicsburg,” [www.mechanicsburgmuseum.org/cvrr.html](http://www.mechanicsburgmuseum.org/cvrr.html). Accessed January 7, 2018.

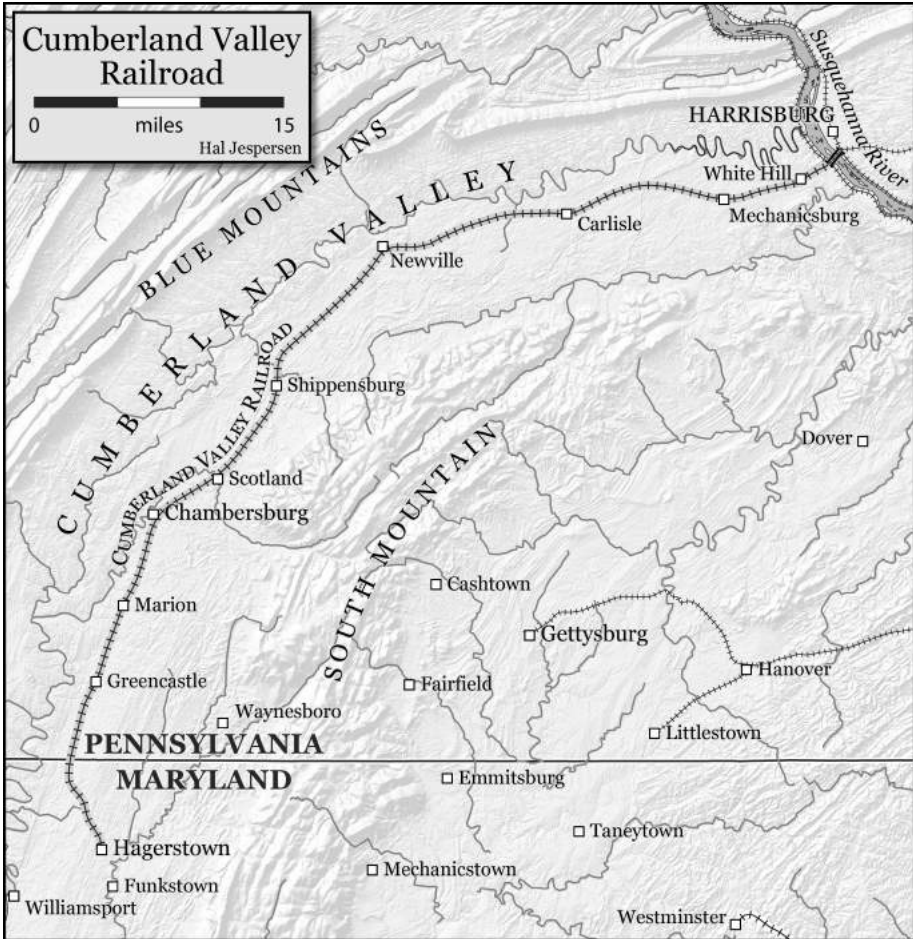
The plan was to connect the CVRR at Chambersburg to the Franklin Railroad, an independent company chartered in Pennsylvania in March 1832 and then in Maryland in January 1837. Early investors envisioned a connection with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad and/or the Chesapeake & Ohio Canal system, but neither would be accomplished for several decades. The FRR, when completed at a projected capital cost of \$300,000, would run 22 miles from Chambersburg south through Greencastle to Hagerstown, Maryland, where it would connect with the heavy freight and passenger traffic on the National Road. Civic officials in Hagerstown pledged \$20,000 to the project, which would have its terminus on Walnut Street. Danish-born Hother Hage served as the chief engineer of the FRR; the Royal University of Copenhagen graduate would go on to a long career with various Pennsylvania canals and railroads. He finished the Chambersburg-Greencastle section in April 1837, with teams of draft horses providing the motive power on rather crude, strap-iron-capped wooden sills.<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile, work continued throughout 1837 on the CVRR line from the Susquehanna River south toward Chambersburg. Soon, preparations were made to begin commercial operations. Much of the track was laid, using light flat rails made of bar iron. Crews constructed a fuel and water stop, along with platforms for passengers and freight, in Mechanicsburg. With capital still a premium, the only station buildings would be in Chambersburg and Carlisle. CVRR agents purchased a plot of flat land on the north side of Chambersburg near a tannery. The company erected an engine house with a turntable and a freight forwarding business soon constructed a warehouse nearby.<sup>20</sup>

Crews built a depot along the west side of Chambersburg's North Second Street, beyond the Falling Spring Creek, not far from the engine house. Its ground floor was planned to be level with the platforms of the passenger cars. Riders could get into and off of the cars without stepping up or down, unlike many other railroads of the day. A long, covered platform extended along the west side to give passengers some protection from the sun and rain. For refreshments, a bar room occupied the southwestern corner of the station. The CVRR erected its machine

19 *Appleton's Railroad and Steamboat Companion*, 1848, 254-55; *Commemorative Biographical Encyclopedia of Dauphin County, Containing Sketches of Representative Citizens, and Many of the Early Scotch-Irish and German Settlers* (J. M. Runk & Company, 1896), 224. The line from Greencastle to Hagerstown was finished in Feb. 1841, well after Hage left in 1838 for other opportunities.

20 John M. Cooper, *Recollections of Chambersburg, Pa., Chiefly Between the Years 1830-1850* (A. Nevin Pomeroy, 1900), 11, 59.



shops along a nearby alley, in the shadow of an impressive stone Catholic church. Hotels and other services for the passengers began to be constructed.<sup>21</sup>

The railroad soon took delivery of the shiny new locomotive *Cumberland Valley*, which arrived from William Norris's factory in Philadelphia after being hauled to Carlisle through Harrisburg by canal boats and hay wagons. The other two contracted engines were still under construction and would be delivered later that summer. At 8:00 a.m. on Saturday, August 19, 1837, the 16-mile First Division of the railroad from the new depot in Carlisle on High Street to White Hill on the west shore of the river opened when the *Cumberland Valley* steamed

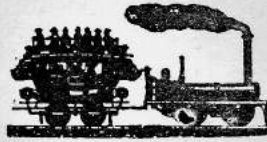
21 Ibid., 60-61. The station, at 229 N. Second Street, served the CVRR from 1837 to 1876. Two other depots were later erected on the same site.

northeast on its initial run. Fifty-seven minutes later, the gaily decorated train reached the eastern terminus at White Hill without incident; it only took 47 minutes for the return trip. Work continued throughout the autumn southwest from Carlisle to Chambersburg, although construction had not yet resumed on the expensive covered bridge into Harrisburg.<sup>22</sup>

The CVRR held its formal grand opening on November 16, 1837, when two heavy locomotives pulled a seven-car train filled with dignitaries and invited guests from White Hill down to the new Chambersburg depot at North Second Street. “The cars left Harrisburg early on Thursday morning filled with guests, among whom were some of the most prominent in the state,” the *Carlisle Herald and Expositor* reported. “Stopping at Carlisle another engine and cars were attached crowded to overflowing.” Soon, the whistle sounded and the train, filled with more than 500 passengers, slowly pulled out for Chambersburg to the thunderous acclamation of the crowd of onlookers and well-wishers. At Newville, almost the entire populace was on hand to greet the novelty of the train. From there, the line ran through the most populous portion of the Cumberland Valley down to Shippensburg. There were few curves in this section of the road, and the locomotives made good time, despite frequent stops for wood and water. Just before the train arrived in Shippensburg, a delegation of local officials boarded it. A band gaily played “Hail Columbia” as the train steamed into downtown before throngs of flag-waving spectators. More cars were added there, increasing the passenger count to nearly a thousand. “When they arrived at Chambersburg [at 3:00 p.m.],” a Harrisburg newspaperman noted, “the cars, both inside and outside, presented a solid mass of heads, being loaded as thick as they could sit or stand.” The dignitaries enjoyed a sumptuous banquet, replete with several toasts, at Culbertson’s Hotel on the town square (known as “the Diamond”). Railroad president T. G. McCulloh praised the board and Chief Engineer Roberts for completing the project. Financier Thomas Biddle of Philadelphia and other prominent men, including Thaddeus Stevens, also spoke. After the festivities concluded, they crowded back into the cars and took an overnight trip back to the state capital, arriving at 6:00 a.m.<sup>23</sup>

22 *Daily Pittsburg Gazette*, August 26, 1837; S. P. Bates, *History of Franklin County, Pennsylvania: History of Pennsylvania* (Chicago: Warner, Beers & Company, 1887), 231; Brumbaugh, “A History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad,” 185. The locomotive had two driving wheels with wooden spokes.

23 *Carlisle Herald and Expositor*, November 21, 1837; “Opening of the Cumberland Valley Rail Road,” *Harrisburg Telegraph*, November 20, 1837.




# Cumberland Valley Rail Road.

ON THE FIRST DAY OF FEBRUARY NEXT,  
the regular train of **PASSENGER CARS** will  
commence running daily as follows :

*Leave Chambersburg at Four o'clock in the morning,*  
arrive at Harrisburg at 8—at Lancaster at 12—and at  
Philadelphia before 6 P. M.

*Returning it will leave Harrisburg as soon as the*  
Cars from Philadelphia arrive, *about five o'clock in the*  
evening, and arrive at Chambersburg *at ten P. M.*

 It is expected that this Train will in a short  
time leave Philadelphia *at six* instead of *eight o'clock* in  
the morning, and then arrive at Chambersburg *before*  
*dark* of the same day.



There will also be a daily line of **FREIGHT**  
**CARS** from Chambersburg to Harrisburg and back,  
which will carry produce & Merchandize to and from  
those places in the most safe, cheap and expeditious  
way.

**T. G. McCulloh,**

Pres't Cumb. V. R. R. Co.

25th January, 1838.

This early commercial advertisement for the new Cumberland Valley line shows the initial timetable. *Mike Marotte*

The CVRR soon initiated a regular schedule of two trains per day carrying through the broad valley between Chambersburg and the Susquehanna River. With the railroad bridge over the river still unfinished, freight wagons and stagecoaches carried the passengers and cargo from White Hill into downtown Harrisburg. Two sections of track in the state capital still needed to be completed by the end of the year. Fortunately, the state legislature finally released the necessary funding, beginning with the first installment in June. Those tracks would eventually connect the CVRR to William Milnor Roberts's concurrent construction project, the Harrisburg, Portsmouth, Mount Joy and Lancaster Railroad. Roberts reported to the CVRR board that he had expended \$406,831.50 in the little less than two years of construction at a "cost less per mile than almost any other railroad of equal importance in the world." Fortunately, the route was largely straight, without any mountains or high hills, featuring a level grade and few major water crossings other than the Susquehanna.<sup>24</sup>

In his third, and what proved to his final, annual report as chief engineer of the CVRR, Roberts congratulated the board and stockholders for the "signal success which has thus far attended this important undertaking." He also thanked the board members for pledging their individual fortunes to finish the job, especially in light of "this most trying crisis"—that is, the financial panic in 1837 that had threatened to suspend construction after the board had exhausted nearly all available funds. Now, however, the railroad was a reality, at least from Chambersburg to the West Shore.<sup>25</sup>

Former CVRR supporter Thaddeus Stevens soon became a potential rival. In 1838, he asked the commonwealth to build a railroad, at government expense, from his iron mines and furnaces in Franklin and Adams counties to the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad. That, of course, would help line his own pockets and likely divert much-needed freight hauls from the CVRR. A transportation-focused committee of the state senate eventually ruled in favor of the CVRR, and Stevens' project was abandoned.<sup>26</sup>

24 *Minute Book of the Cumberland Valley Railroad, 1837*, as quoted by Brumbaugh, "A History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad," 185; *Philadelphia Public Ledger*, June 21, 1838.

25 *Third Annual Report of William Milnor Roberts, Chief Engineer of the Cumberland Valley Rail Road Company, Made to the Board, on the 28th of December, 1837*, 2-3. Copy in the William Milnor Roberts Papers, Montana State University Library, Bozeman. Roberts, his work completed, soon resigned and moved on to other projects.

26 "James Weston Livingood, *The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry, 1780-1860* (Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1947), 146-47.

Perhaps the most expensive engineering challenge on the CVRR was the planned 4,000-foot-long covered bridge over the Susquehanna River between Bridgeport and Harrisburg. Estimated to cost at least \$95,000 to construct, it would have 23 spans (averaging 173 feet in length) with two arched viaducts, one 53 feet long and the other 84 feet. The design of the wooden lattice bridge featured two carriageways, with the second pair of railroad tracks laid on top of the flat roof. Draft horses would pull the cars across the span.<sup>27</sup>

In mid-January 1839, the latticed bridge over the Susquehanna River finally opened to the cheers of throngs of onlookers as the first train rumbled across the rooftop tracks. The “splendid structure,” almost a mile long, enabled continuous service from Chambersburg through the state capital to Philadelphia via the Harrisburg, Portsmouth, Mount Joy and Lancaster Railroad and the connecting Philadelphia and Columbia Railroad. Stagecoaches took passengers west from Chambersburg to Pittsburgh, offering passengers a cost-effective alternative to the Pennsylvania Main Line of Public Works, a state-owned enterprise of canals, inclines, and the Allegheny Portage Railroad to travel between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh. Civil engineer Hother Hage studied the possibility of building a continuous railroad from Chambersburg over Cove Mountain and the Alleghenies and on to Pittsburgh, but this was deemed too expensive at the time and was soon discounted.<sup>28</sup>

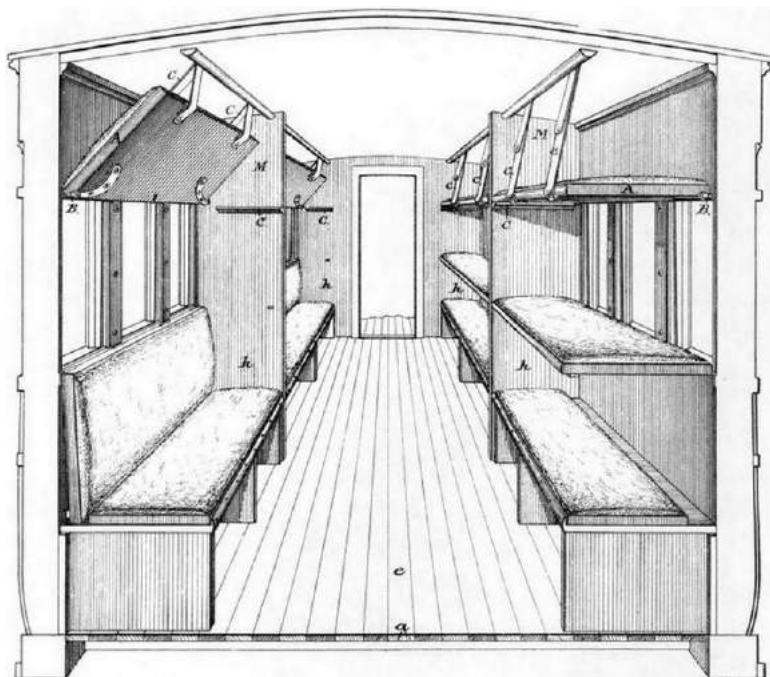
CVRR President T. G. McCulloh issued a broadsheet with an illustration of the locomotive and the stagecoach-like passenger cars and announcing that “on the first day of February the regular train of passenger cars would commence running as follows: Leave Chambersburg at 4 o’clock in the morning; arrive at Harrisburg at 8, at Lancaster at 12, and at Philadelphia before 6 P.M. Returning, it will leave Harrisburg as soon as the cars from Philadelphia arrived, about 5 o’clock in the evening, and arrive at Chambersburg at 10 P.M.”<sup>29</sup>

The early cars, as well as the unusual engine design, attracted attention. Some fifty years later, a commentator recalled them: “The crude and simple beginnings;

27 W. Williams, *Appleton's Railroad and Steamboat Companion, Being a Travellers' Guide through the United States of America, Canada, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia* (D. Appleton & Company, 1848), 254; Brumbaugh, “A History of the Cumberland Valley Railroad,” 180-81.

28 *Adams Sentinel*, January 21, 1839; Albert J. Churella, *The Pennsylvania Railroad, Volume 1: Building an Empire, 1846-1917* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 59, 75; Randy Watts, *Mainline Railroads: 1828 to 1993, Railroads of the Cumberland Valley, Book 5* (Keystone Computer Services, 1993), 37-38.

29 Bates, *History of Franklin County*, 231-32.



Schematic interior end view of the Chambersburg—the CVRR's first sleeper car. *History of the CVRR, from an image from Pullam vs. Wagner, 1887*

the old strap rails that would so playfully curl up through the car and sometimes through a passenger; the quaint, little, old engines that the passengers had to shoulder the wheels on an up-grade, where they would 'stall' so often with five of the little cars attached to them; the still more curious coaches, built and finished inside after the style of the olden-time stage coaches, where passengers sat face to face, creeping along the country—what a wonder and marvel they were then to the world and now in the swift half century what a curiosity they are as relics of the past."<sup>30</sup>

McCulloh and Managing Director Philip Berlin oversaw one of the railroad's earliest innovations—the dedicated sleeping car, reportedly a first in the world. It would facilitate passengers who were traveling from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, using the CVRR before transferring to westbound stagecoach. Berlin contracted Philip Imlay of Philadelphia to construct the special car, named the *Chambersburg*.

30 Durant, Pliny A., *History of Cumberland and Adams Counties, Pennsylvania* (Warner, Beers & Co., 1886), 75.

It featured three rows of upholstered wooden berths stacked one above another, held by leather straps which provided a degree of comfort as the car swayed during the overnight journey over the rough rails and stringers. In the daytime, the berths folded back against the walls for seating. A wall separated the men's section from the women's. The railroad provided a round pillow and a blanket at no extra charge. Two years later, workers in the Chambersburg car shops converted a day coach into a second sleeper car, the *Carlisle*.<sup>31</sup>

One contemporary observer complained, "Obviously, the sleeper was for men only; no woman would have ventured inside that foul-smelling, candle-lit dormitory with its creaking wood floors, its row of brass spittoons, and its tiers of grumbling male bodies, laid out with their boots on like cadavers in a morgue." Ignoring such naysayers, the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad inaugurated its own sleeping cars in October 1838. It was a few years before the idea caught on with other railroads, with the Baltimore and Ohio using more luxurious, custom-built sleepers between Baltimore and Wheeling, Virginia, in 1848.<sup>32</sup>

Despite the continuing national depression, the Cumberland Valley Railroad soon contracted for three additional locomotives at a purchase price of \$21,250 and two new passenger cars at \$4,175. The board was pleased that, to date, the CVRR had operated without any injuries to its riders, a rarity for start-up railroads in that day. The *Robert Morris*, *Nicholas Biddle*, and a dedicated freight engine became the main locomotives in use from 1840 through the next ten years.<sup>33</sup>

At the time, the CVRR did not have formal ticket offices at most of its stops. "Passengers paid their fare to the conductor after they got on the train," elderly Shippensburg resident James P. Matthews recalled in the late 1890s. "There were no baggage checks. Trunks were put on the street as near the baggage car as practical, and were lifted into the car either by the owners, or the hotel porters. Chalk marks answered very well for checks." He noted, "The trains coming up from the east stopped at the Black Bear Hotel, and those coming down from Chambersburg stopped in front of the Union Hotel... The was abundant [sic] time for the passengers to get on and off as the trains waited for the changing of

31 Bates, *History of Franklin County*, 232. The exact date the car entered service varies from account to account, but it was likely sometime after February 1838 when regular service began between Harrisburg and Chambersburg.

32 Richard Reinhart, ed. *Workin' on the Railroad: Reminiscences from the Age of Steam* (The University of Nebraska Press, 1970).

33 Bates, *History of Franklin County*, 232.

the mails... The engineers and other trainmen gossiped with the bystanders and gave them such choice bits of news as they picked up along the route, and there was no rule against entering the neighborhood bar-rooms and toning up for the run to the next station.”<sup>34</sup>

Believing he had accomplished his goals with the railroad and seeking new opportunities, Thomas McCulloh submitted his resignation as president in April 1840 to take over management of the Bank of Chambersburg. His replacement was Charles B. Penrose, a long-time CVRR board member from Carlisle and an early advocate in getting the railroad chartered and constructed. Penrose, an attorney and prominent Whig politician who was the speaker of the state senate, only filled the leadership role for a year. Under his capable but brief leadership, the railroad turned a profit of \$77,000 which the directors applied to the payment of interest and reducing the principle of the outstanding debt. Penrose resigned on April 26, 1841, to accept a Federal government position as solicitor of the treasury under President William Henry Harrison. The CVRR board that same day named Frederick Watts as president of the company.<sup>35</sup>

### Effective New Leadership

No one would have as much impact on the affairs of the Cumberland Valley Railroad Company as Frederick Watts. He would serve capably for the next 26 years, presiding over a period that saw sustained profitability and growth. Watts was born in Carlisle on May 9, 1801, to one of the valley’s leading families. His father, David Watts, was one of the region’s most influential and distinguished attorneys, “a large and athletic gentleman” and “a man of very positive character, of great grasp and vigour of mind.” His mother Julia Ann was a daughter of General Henry Miller, a career military officer who served with distinction in the American Revolution and later commanded U. S. forces at Baltimore during the War of 1812. His namesake grandfather, the first Frederick Watts, a Welsh immigrant who had served on the twelve-man Supreme Executive Council of colonial Pennsylvania, was also a general during the Revolutionary War, leading

34 “Recollections of James Peebles Matthews,” *The News-Chronicle* (Shippensburg, PA), June 18, 1954. Ticket sales would be initiated in Shippensburg in 1850 at a local drugstore. Several smaller communities along the route of the CVRR did not have ticket offices until after the Civil War.

35 CVRR Annual Report for 1840, in *Journal of the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, Volume 2 (State Printer, 1841), 92-95; Bates, *History of Franklin County*, 232.

Pennsylvania's "Minute Men." The younger Frederick was a member of the Dickinson College class of 1819, but did not graduate because of the school's financial woes. He later moved in with an uncle, William Miles, who operated a successful farm in Erie County in the northwestern part of the commonwealth. Watts returned to Carlisle in 1821 and studied law, passing the bar exam and building a lucrative, extensive practice on East High Street. He owned a prosperous farm outside of town, and was an early advocate of mechanical reapers, once bringing in inventor Cyrus McCormick for a demonstration. In July 1838, with his law partner Charles B. Penrose, Watts bought the Pine Grove Furnace at a sheriff's sale for \$52,500. The ardent Whig later became the reporter of the Pennsylvania Supreme Court for several years, resigning the prestigious post in 1841 to assume the leadership of the CVRR.<sup>36</sup>

Watts inherited an undercapitalized company deeply in debt and facing serious cash flow issues that limited its ability to invest in much-needed repairs. The road was "out of repair, unproductive, and in a dilapidated condition" when Watts took over. Rolling stock needed replacement or upgrading, and several locomotives were in disrepair. He applied his high energy, strong organizational skills, and keen judgment to tackle the most pressing problems first.<sup>37</sup>

Watts arranged with the Franklin Railroad Company, which connected with the CVRR at Chambersburg, to take over day-to-day operations of its line, and he began using his extensive machine shops in Chambersburg to repair and improve the rolling stock and locomotives. His crews constructed the first enclosed cab ever put on an American locomotive, the Franklin Railroad's *Washington*, in 1841. Over time, Watts sold the line's engines and replaced them with the CVRR's heavier and more reliable motive power. The FRR, however, never demonstrated a sustainable profit, so after a short time, the CVRR withdrew its engines and turned over operations of the FRR to D. O. Gehr, a businessman from Chambersburg, who switched to horse power to pull the railcars. The Franklin Railroad underwent several ownership changes over the next decade due to its persistent unprofitability.<sup>38</sup>

36 Frederick Watts files, Archives & Special Collections, Waidner-Spahr Library, Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA; Thornton Osmond, "Hon. Frederick Watts," (A paper read before the Hamilton Library and Historical Association of Cumberland County, February 28, 1930), Cumberland County Historical Society (CCHS), Carlisle, PA.

37 Alfred Nevin, *Centennial Biography: Men of Mark of Cumberland Valley, Pa. 1776-1876* (Fulton Publishing Company, 1876), 94-95, 204, 214, 307-309.

38 Bates, *History of Franklin County*, 232-33.

Despite its struggles, the survival of the Franklin line also appeared to hold importance for the CVRR's future. Only through the Franklin Railroad, Watts explained, did the CVRR connect to the famed National Road that ran through Hagerstown, through which the line gained "a considerable amount of trade and travel." If the Franklin Railroad had stopped service, he argued, the result would have proved "injurious" to the CVRR's own interests.<sup>39</sup>

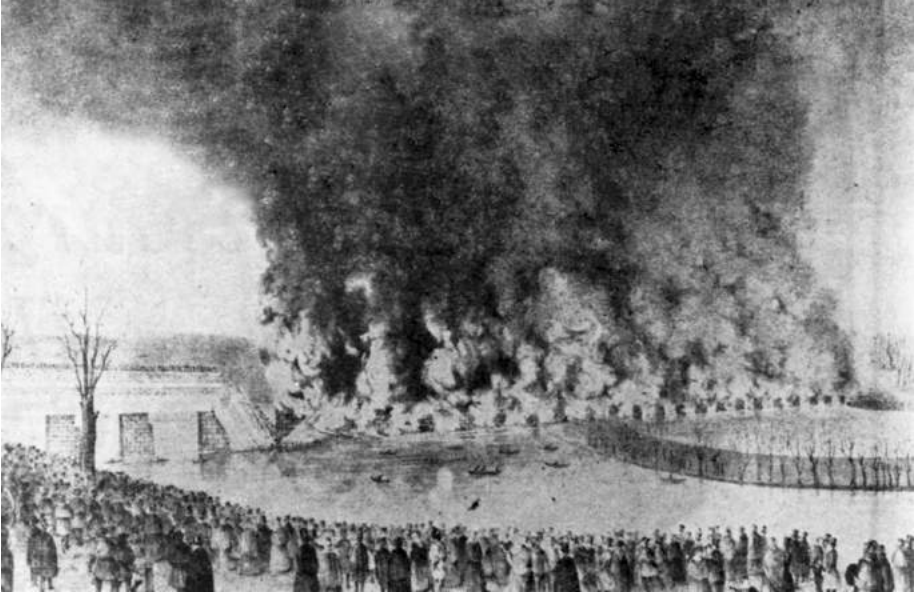
The brief financial partnership with the Franklin Railroad, however, was one of Watts' few regrettable business decisions after taking the presidency of the Cumberland Valley Railroad. Among his many early accomplishments was to balance the CVRR's expenses with its revenues, including setting new rates for travel between the communities the railroad served: 50 cents to ride the 12 miles from Harrisburg to Mechanicsburg; 87½ cents for the 22 miles to Carlisle; \$1.25 for the 34 miles from the state capital to Newville; \$1.50 for the 45-mile one-way trip from Harrisburg to Shippensburg; and \$2.00 for the passengers who went the 56 miles from the riverside city to Chambersburg. By the end of 1842, he reported total earnings of \$70,116.82 to the board of directors and publicly expressed his optimism that "prosperity will again bless the county," despite the ongoing national recession. If it did, he affirmed that the railroad would make money for its shareholders.<sup>40</sup>

And Frederick Watts proved true to his word. The CVRR, over time, began paying dividends to Long and its other investors, despite setbacks such as in December 1844, when a disastrous fire consumed the Susquehanna River bridge, and again the following year when spring flooding in mid-March claimed most of the replacement bridge then under construction. (It was finally reopened in 1846.) Because of fears that sparks from passing locomotives might again ignite the superstructure, engines were banned from crossing the bridge under power. Railroad workers at Bridgeport disconnected the locomotives and allowed the force of gravity to propel the cars on the slight downhill grade across the bridge into Harrisburg. Teams of draft horses and mules pulled the cars in the opposite direction.<sup>41</sup>

39 *Annual Report of the Cumberland Valley Rail Road Company, With their Receipts and Expenditures From the 1st January, 1842, to the 1st January, 1843* (E. Beatty, 1843), 3-5.

40 *Appleton's Railroad and Steamboat Companion*, 1848, 254.

41 "Spring Freshet of 1846," in *Niles' National Register*, March 1846, 34; Mechanicsburg (PA) Museum Association, "The Cumberland Valley Railroad & Mechanicsburg," [www.mechanicsburgmuseum.org/cvrr.html](http://www.mechanicsburgmuseum.org/cvrr.html). Accessed January 7, 2018.



The CVRR bridge across the Susquehanna River was engulfed in flames and badly damaged in December 1844. The bridge was repaired and reopened in 1846. The fear of a future fire resulted in the ban of engines from crossing the structure under power, relying instead on a downhill grade and gravity to cross the roughly mile-wide river. *Davis Collection, Cumberland County Historical Society*

By the end of fiscal 1849, revenues had risen to more than \$100,000. Freight, first reported that year in the annual report, totaled 74,877,924 pounds, the leading quantities consisting of 15,627,530 pounds of flour, 10,252,782 pounds of iron ore and 8,494,260 pounds of coal. The agricultural bounty of the Cumberland Valley was regularly hauled over the road, with 2,109,088 pounds of livestock, and over 1,500,000 pounds each of bacon, salt and various “agricultural productions.” Significant amounts of leather, lard, whiskey, hardware, stone, fish, furniture, oysters, and paper were also freighted along the CVRR, rewarding a range of livelihoods in the company’s namesake valley. However, the tonnage was a fraction of what it could have been, had the railroad been better capitalized in its early years before the network of private freight forwarders gained a dominant position along the line.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Bates, *History of Franklin County*, 232; *Report of the President and Directors of the Cumberland Valley Rail Road Company, to the Stockholders, January 18th, 1850* (Herald Office, 1850), 14.

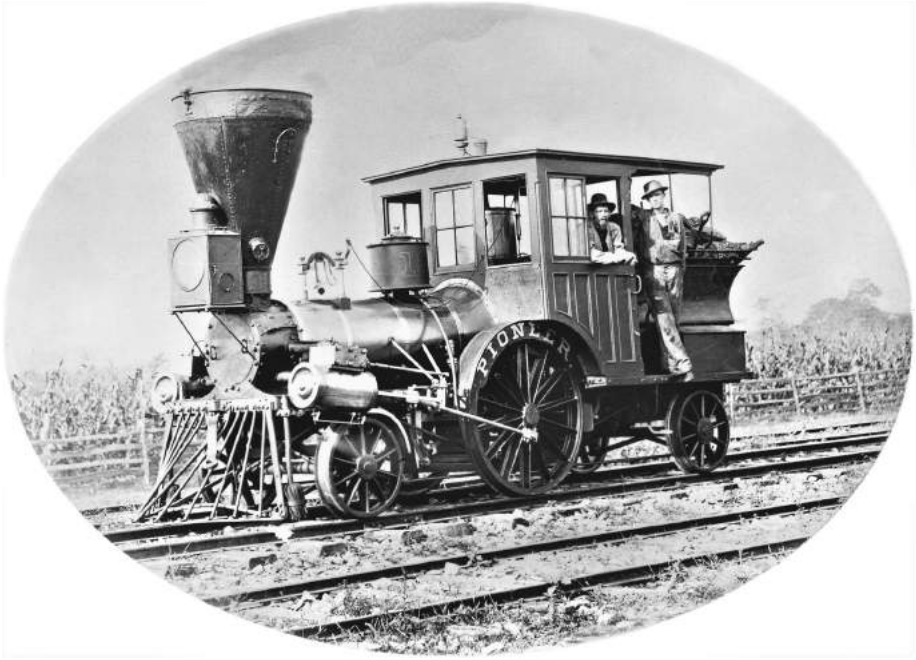
In 1849, the same year that he entertained President Zachary Taylor at his home in Carlisle, Watts accepted an appointment to become the presiding judge of Pennsylvania's Ninth Judicial District. Knowing that he needed to leave the day-to-day administration of the CVRR in capable hands, he brought in several new men who soon proved themselves to be capable, trusted subordinates. They included Ormond N. Lull, a Vermont native who joined the railroad to take charge of the mechanical department. Watts, valuing Lull's leadership ability, later named him as the superintendent of the road in 1856, a position that Lull capably filled for the next 18 years before becoming the chief engineer and supervisor of motive power.<sup>43</sup>

Watts also hired Daniel Tyler, an 1819 West Point graduate and former army officer, to supervise the gradual replacement of the CVRR's outdated rails to heavy iron T-rails, which were much sturdier and less prone to breakage and lifting than the existing ones. Tyler was also tasked with reducing the grades and curves. At his recommendation, Watts hired young Alba F. Smith to modernize the motive power, rolling stock, and other equipment. Two years later, after carefully studying the railroad's operations and comparing it with other lines, Smith recommended obtaining lighter engines for passenger service, dedicating the heavier ones strictly to haul freight. The normal passenger train at that time normally consisted of two passenger cars and a baggage car, rarely more. Smith expected the lighter engines would "effect a great saving both in point of fuel and road repairs."<sup>44</sup>

Watts and the board of directors adopted Smith's suggestion, and the company soon contracted two light-weight 2-2-2 tank engines, the *Pioneer* (CVRR engine number 13) and *Jenny Lind* (engine number 14) from Seth Wilmarth's Union Works of South Boston, Massachusetts, at a stated cost of \$7,642 apiece (the railroad eventually purchased the *Pioneer* for \$6,200 in gold.) Both were damaged in transit when another train ran into them near Middletown, Pennsylvania. After repairs and slight modifications in the Chambersburg shops, the two engines were placed in service. They proved to be able to pull a four-car passenger train at speeds up to 40 miles per hour, enabling the CVRR to achieve its desired cost reduction goals. In his annual report to the board for fiscal 1851,

43 Civic Club of Carlisle, *Carlisle Old and New* (J Horace McFarland Company, 1907), 119.

44 *New York Tribune*, September 11, 1850; John H. White, "The 'Pioneer': Light Passenger Locomotive of 1851 in the Museum of History and Technology," Smithsonian Institution, United States National Museum, Bulletin 240, Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology, Paper 42, 1966.



The *Pioneer* (circa 1880), photographed by George M. Primrose.  
*Cumberland County Historical Society*

Watts noted that the lighter locomotives were “admirably adapted to our business.” Two more of somewhat similar design, the *Boston* and the *Enterprise*, would join the CVRR fleet in 1855. These four engines would form the backbone of the regular passenger service through the early years of the Civil War.<sup>45</sup>

Ridership saw a surge in 1850 after Capt. Henry H. Etter purchased a defunct hotel and warm springs on Blue Mountain in Perry County. He expanded the main lodge with a 75-foot extension and reopened the facility to the public. “The springs are situated on the banks of and empty into Sherman’s Creek, a stream associated with the thrilling scenes between the early settlers of that part of Pennsylvania and the aborigines, whose hunting grounds lay in its margin,” Etter advertised in several newspapers. “They are 11 miles from Carlisle (through which the Cumberland Valley Railroad passes from Chambersburg to Harrisburg) from which place visitors can at all times procure excellent conveyances.” He went on

45 White, “The ‘Pioneer.’” Tank engines did not require a separate tender; they carried their own on-board water supply.



An 1853 drawing of Harrisburg, the capital of Pennsylvania and the starting point for the Cumberland Valley Railroad. Note the train crossing the CVRR bridge over the Susquehanna River on the right. *House Divided Project at Dickinson College*

to attest that “the qualities of the water at these springs are most extraordinary indeed for the speedy and permanent cure of scrofula, tetter, eruptions of the skin, in fact every species of Cutaneous Diseases.” The CVRR enjoyed the free advertising and resulting spike in ticket sales. The Warm Springs Hotel soon gained a widespread reputation as a leading summer resort.<sup>46</sup>

In the meantime, the CVRR bridge at Harrisburg was emerging as an unwelcome competitor to the nearby Camelback Bridge, an iconic covered toll bridge privately owned and operated by the Harrisburg Bridge Company. The directors of the Camelback—who included some of Harrisburg’s leading citizens—complained that the CVRR was cutting into their business, which thrived on charging passengers who came by foot, horse, and carriage, in addition to farmers driving their livestock to market. In November 1850, they signed an agreement with the CVRR, which secured the Camelback’s monopoly on non-rail traffic. The CVRR pledged to no longer “permit passengers on foot, horseback, wheels or... carriages... or live stock of any description to pass over their bridge”

46 The *Lewistown (PA) Gazette*, June 7, 1850, and the *Carlisle Weekly Herald*, June 12, 1850, offer two examples of the frequent ads that Etter ran in newspapers across south-central and central Pennsylvania.

during a period of 10 years, extending until 1860. In return, the Harrisburg Bridge Company would pay a fee of \$5,000 annually to the CVRR.<sup>47</sup>

By April 1851, the railroad was healthy enough for the board of directors to declare a four percent semi-annual dividend on its preferred stock based upon having a surplus from the previous six months' earnings. "The road is now free of debt," reported the *Baltimore Sun*, "its stock divided into \$700,000 preferred and \$400,000 common stock." Watts continued to pursue cost savings, increases in operating efficiency, and additional sources of revenue while stressing safety.<sup>48</sup>

That October saw another short-term surge in ridership and corresponding windfall profit for the CVRR. Promoters in Harrisburg organized a heavily advertised Pennsylvania Agricultural Fair that proved to be highly popular. On October 30 alone, "the Cumberland Valley Railroad brought down this morning twenty-three cars, and one thousand two hundred passengers in one train," according to newspaper reports.<sup>49</sup>

The enterprising Frederick Watts also formed convenient working relationships with neighboring railroads, including in 1851 with the York and Cumberland Railroad, which connected with the CVRR's tracks near Bridgeport. This finally fulfilled the decades-long idea of continuous rail service between the Cumberland Valley and Baltimore. However, Watts began to lose passengers and mail service a year later when the Pennsylvania Railroad completed its line from Harrisburg west to Pittsburgh, enabling riders to bypass the longer route on the CVRR to Chambersburg and the subsequent stagecoach trip by turnpike through the mountain passes. The CVRR became a regional railroad serving Harrisburg and the valley. He did accomplish a key milestone: strengthening the Susquehanna River bridge to allow the passage of a small locomotive to replace horsepower to pull railcars across the structure. The CVRR purchased a specially designed engine, the *Utility*, specifically to use for bridge duty. It would enter service in 1854.<sup>50</sup>

A Lebanon newspaperman marveled in early 1853 that the CVRR could make money, given its limited reach. "[I]f the Cumberland Valley Railroad," he penned,

47 Minutes of the Harrisburg Bridge Company, November, 6, 1850, MG 112, HSDC.

48 *Baltimore Sun*, May 2, 1851; *Carlisle Weekly Herald*, May 21, 1851.

49 *Baltimore Sun*, October 31, 1851. Daily attendance at the state fair averaged more than 20,000 people.

50 Watts, *Mainline Railroads*, 39-40. Watts, an ardent Whig, lost the district-wide election in 1851 to remain as judge. He returned to Carlisle to resume his legal practice, while retaining his leadership of the railroad company and of the Pennsylvania Agricultural Society.

“which begins nowhere and ends nowhere could last year earn 8 per cent on its large capital, from a purely local business, this road running through one of the richest Valleys in the State...” would prove “infinitely more profitable” with a rail connection to the West and the Great Lakes.<sup>51</sup>

Efforts continued for some time to connect the CVRR with Pittsburgh to compete with the PRR’s popular new route, but insufficient capital and a lack of sponsorship at the state level kept the project on the drawing board. “The Cumberland Valley road would gain immensely by an extension to Pittsburg[h],” the *Valley Spirit* opined in February 1853. An informant in Harrisburg, who supposedly was “rubbing elbows with the members of the Legislature,” believed the long-dreamed-of connection would be made. “[Watts] may be right about it,” the newsman added. “We hope he is. But we will have more faith in what he says, when he informs us where the money is to come from. If Capt. [Daniel] Tyler and others of the Cumberland Valley Road would put their shoulders to the wheel, something might be done.” Alas, it was not to be.<sup>52</sup>

The CVRR board put the company’s modest profits, after paying a dividend to investors, back into railroad operations, including ordering nine new locomotives from Seth Wilmarth’s Union Works between 1850 and 1855. A new 4-4-0 freight engine, the *William Penn*, enabled the company to deploy longer and heavier freight trains. Judge Watts leased most of the older, undersized 4-2-0 engines to the York and Cumberland Railroad, but they proved to be underpowered and unable to handle the grades on the latter line. The agreement was soon voided, and the engines were sold in 1852. He also ordered the construction of passenger/baggage combination cars, designed to allow people and their personal bags to ride together in the same car. In 1856, the CVRR modernized the Susquehanna Bridge by adding two 90-foot iron spans in the middle.<sup>53</sup>

51 “Reading’s Subscription to the Lebanon Valley Railroad,” *Lebanon Courier and Semi-Weekly Report*, May 13, 1853.

52 *Valley Spirit*, February 24, 1853.

53 CVRR vertical files of the Franklin County Historical Society, Chambersburg, PA. In 1855, Watts, as the leader of the Pennsylvania State Agricultural Society, had spearheaded efforts to establish a school where the sons of farmers could learn science and agriculture. He helped select a suitable site in rural Centre County. Farmers’ High School would eventually evolve into Pennsylvania State University, and Judge Watts is often considered as the “Father of Penn State.” For more details, see Mark W. Podvia, “The Honorable Frederick Watts: Carlisle’s Agricultural Reformer,” *Penn State Environmental Law Review*, 299, 2009.

Starting in 1857, passengers embarking on a train in Chambersburg, Carlisle, or elsewhere in the valley could connect with the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad via the new Lebanon Valley Railroad's terminus in Harrisburg. A new regional competitor emerged that same year when the Western Maryland Railway began service from Westminster, a relatively short freight haul via wagons from Chambersburg, directly to Baltimore. Until then, merchants and shippers in the valley typically sent their goods via the CVRR to Harrisburg and then down to Baltimore on the Northern Central Railway. Now, increasingly, goods were loaded into wagons headed east on the busy turnpike through the gaps in South Mountain to Gettysburg. From there, the freight was loaded into burden cars and sent to Hanover Junction for relay down to Baltimore on the Northern Central. George P. Worcester, the engineer and surveyor for the Western Maryland, estimated that his line might draw more than \$145,000 annually from farmers and businessmen in the Cumberland Valley's Washington County, Maryland, and Franklin County, Pennsylvania, if the tracks could be extended from Westminster west to Hagerstown.<sup>54</sup>

That same year, in July, the CVRR took possession of a gleaming new 4-4-0 steam locomotive from the Lancaster Locomotive Works in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. "The driving wheels are nearly five feet," a Carlisle newsman related, "and the cylinders fourteen inches in diameter, with a stroke of twenty-two inches. Colorful drawings on the engine recalled events from the country's history and "the tank is ornamented with sketches of western life." The 48,000-pound engine was "splendid" in his opinion. "This Locomotive is used for freight trains alone, and she sometimes brings up so many cars that if the road had any short curves, the engineer might be afraid of running into the hind end of his own train." The engine was christened *Judge Watts*.<sup>55</sup>

An investment group headed by New York financier Jay Cooke purchased the Franklin Railroad (by now known as the Chambersburg, Greencastle & Hagerstown Railroad Company) in August 1857 and partnered with the CVRR to operate the line again. In March 1859, work accelerated on replacing the antiquated and inadequate rails of the FRR from Chambersburg to Hagerstown with modern T-rails. Over a period of several days, eighteen rail cars full of new

54 Harold A. Williams, *The Western Maryland Railway Story: A Chronicle of the First Century—1852-1952* (Western Maryland Railway Company, 1952). 16-23.

55 "New Locomotive," *Carlisle Weekly Herald*, July 22, 1857. The term 4-4-0 refers to the postwar Whyte notation: the number of leading wheels, the number of driving wheels, and the number of trailing wheels.

iron arrived at the depot in Chambersburg. “The iron is the best quality being first class T rail,” the *Valley Spirit* informed its readership. “The workmen have commenced operations on the first section of the road, and along the entire line the timber is being delivered as fast as it can be produced.” Lumber procured under local contracts was also arriving in large quantities to be transformed into ties.

The CVRR offered competent leadership for the project. “We are gratified to learn that the road is to be constructed under the Superintendency of Col. O. N. Lull,” the newsman added. “No better man could have been selected for the purpose. He is thoroughly conversant with railroad matters, and understands how to make as well as manage a road, equal to any other man in the country. We have no doubt whatever that this road will be completed and put in running order in a very few months.” The FRR’s president, A. J. Jones of Harrisburg, received praise for overcoming many difficulties to get the project moving forward. “We are well satisfied in our mind that he will find it a safe and good investment,” the paper believed, “and one from which he will realize a handsome remuneration.”<sup>56</sup>

### John Brown and the Cumberland Valley Railroad

In the mid-1850s, while Frederick Watts was busy modernizing the Cumberland Valley Railroad with new locomotives, rolling stock, and T-iron, the spotlight of national events narrowed on the bitter issue of the western expansion of slavery. Before the end of the decade, that spotlight would shine directly on the Cumberland Valley.

John Brown was a Connecticut native whose vicious ambush of pro-slavery men in “Bloody Kansas” had gained him national attention and made him a lightning rod in the slavery debate. In 1856, he returned with three of his sons to the East, where he spent time collecting funds and support for his anti-slavery militancy and a possible return to anti-slavery combat in Kansas. Over the next few years, he met with many of the country’s leading abolitionists, including Frederick Douglass, Gerrit Smith, and Harriet Tubman. His fervor led him to plan a daring raid in 1859 on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, where he hoped to spark a slave

<sup>56</sup> “The Franklin Railroad,” *Valley Spirit*, March 16, 1859. The FRR following Walnut Street into downtown Hagerstown, stopping at the intersection with Washington Street. The depot was diagonal across the street from St. Mary’s Catholic Church. For more, see Stephen R. Bockmiller, *Hagerstown in the Civil War* (Arcadia, 2011), 18.

revolt. Obtaining the financial backing of a small group later known as the “Secret Six,” Brown contracted for 200 Sharps rifles and 1,000 pikes.

In the late spring of 1859, Brown and an Ohio-born trusted lieutenant, John Henri Kagi, arrived in Chambersburg to prepare for the raid. He would stay, on and off, for four months. Having grown a long beard to avoid recognition, Brown used the alias Dr. Isaac Smith, claiming to be a mining expert looking for iron ore. They took upstairs rooms in the widow Mary Ritner’s boarding house on East King Street a half-block from the Cumberland Valley Railroad station. “Dr. Smith” quietly blended into the community, including teaching Sunday School at a nearby church and drifting in and out of town, at times taking CVRR cars to Harrisburg to connect with trains heading to destinations such as Philadelphia.<sup>57</sup>

At the time, Chambersburg residents were evenly split in their sentiments on the slavery question. “The community of which Chambersburg was the centre of business and sentiment was nearly equally divided on the political issues of that day;” newsman and prominent landowner Alexander K. McClure wrote, “but the undertow of anti-slavery conviction was stronger than the partisan dogmas which made one-half the people declare slavery a lawful and therefore a defensible institution.”<sup>58</sup>

Brown, with his sons Oliver and Owen and his friend Jeremiah Anderson, left Chambersburg on June 30, 1859, for Hagerstown. In early July, he rented a vacant farm near Sandy Hook, Maryland, for \$35 in gold from the estate of the late Dr. Robert F. Kennedy, saying he needed the property for nine months. It would serve as a secret staging area for the planned raid on Harpers Ferry, less than five miles away. Under the guise of transporting farm or mining implements, Brown’s accomplices, including another son, began shipping double-boxed loads of weapons to “Isaac Smith & Sons” in Chambersburg. Several mysterious shipments arrived on the trains from Harrisburg. The duo stored these implements of war, as well as locally purchased tools, in a sizeable warehouse situated at the northern end of town. “The railroad from Harrisburg here does no freight business itself,” Kagi noted, “that all being done by a number of forwarding houses, which run private cars. I have requested each of these (there are six to eight of them) to give me notice of the arrival of anything for you.” The

57 Cumberland Railroad vertical files, FCHS; James W. Cree, “John Brown at Chambersburg,” *Kittochinny Historical Society*, 1906, vol. XIV, 59-73. Mary Ritner’s late husband was the son of an anti-slavery former governor of Pennsylvania, Joseph Ritner.

58 A. K. McClure, “An Episode of John Brown’s Raid,” *Lippincott’s Magazine of Popular Literature and Science*, vol. 32, September 1883, 279-81.

rifles arrived in batches on July 22, 25, and 27, having earlier been transported from West Andover, Ohio, via river and canal.<sup>59</sup>

Showing more caution the closer he came to the Mason-Dixon Line, Brown often personally drove wagonloads of “hardware” from the Chambersburg warehouse some 50 miles south to the farm, removing them from the rail lines where they might attract more scrutiny. Emma Jane Ritner, the young daughter of Brown’s Chambersburg boarding house matron, recalled riding “for a mile or two” with the amiable “Dr. Smith” as he drove “farm tools” down to his new farm. Throughout the summer and into the early fall, Brown returned at intervals, hauling more weapons.<sup>60</sup>

Brown and Kagi met with Frederick Douglass in mid-August at an abandoned stone quarry outside of Chambersburg. Douglass did not approve of the planned raid and discouraged free blacks from joining Brown’s proposed militia force, although his associate, former slave Shields Green, did so. Over the next few weeks, a handful of Brown’s supporters continued to arrive in Chambersburg; several of the whites stayed at the Ritner boarding house while the black men found other lodging in town. The late arrivals included Osborne Perry Anderson, a free black man born in Chester County, Pennsylvania. He arrived on a CVRR train on the morning of September 16. “Dr. Smith” and his assorted friends did not arouse any suspicion while in Chambersburg. No one apparently knew that this was the famed revolutionary who had stirred up so much trouble in Kansas. “While residing here,” the editor of the *Valley Spirit* later wrote, “they kept to themselves—expressed no insurrectionary opinions to any one—paid their bills regularly, and in every respect behaved themselves in such a correct and orderly manner as to attract little attention.”<sup>61</sup>

Unknown to the townspeople, Brown continued to amass weapons for his planned slave insurrection. Railroad officials were equally unaware of the false manifests. On September 15, John Kagi, calling himself “John Henrie,” informed

59 John Brown vertical file, FCHS; F. B. Sanborn, ed., *John Brown: Liberator of Kansas and Martyr of Virginia, Life and Letters* (The Torch Press, 1910), 533.

60 Emma Ritner Robert, “Recollections of John Brown,” Ritner File, FCHS; Louis A. DeCaro, Jr., *“Fire from the Midst of You”: A Religious Life of John Brown*, (New York University Press, 2002), 261; Osborne P. Anderson, *A Voice from Harpers Ferry: A Narrative of Events at Harpers Ferry; with Incidents Prior and Subsequent to its Capture by Captain Brown and His Men* (Printed for the Author, 1861), 22.

61 Richard J. Hinton, *John Brown and His Men* (Funk & Wagnalls, 1894), 259, 507; “Insurrection at Harpers Ferry,” *Valley Spirit*, October 26, 1859.

another conspirator, “A quantity of freight has to-day arrived for you in care of Oaks & Cauffman. The amount is somewhere between 2,600 and 3,000 lbs. Charges in full, \$25.98. The character is, according to manifest, 33 bundles and 4 boxes.” With a few of his band still in Chambersburg in the early autumn, Brown and more than a dozen other followers, black and white, secluded themselves on the remote Kennedy farm. There, they planned the final details of the operation to seize the U. S. Armory in Harpers Ferry and use the thousands of muskets stored there to arm the expected force of rebellious slaves.<sup>62</sup>

On October 16, Brown finally launched his long-planned attack with 18 followers, leaving three conspirators behind at the farm as a rear guard. The hoped-for uprising of area blacks failed to materialize. The Harpers Ferry raid quickly devolved into a disaster over the next few days, and ten of Brown’s band, including his “secretary of war” John Kagi and a few citizens died. The victims included the mayor of the town. Brown—along with many of his surviving compatriots—was later captured. U. S. military forces under the command of Col. Robert E. Lee forced him to surrender on the 19th after a brief siege of the town’s firehouse where Brown and some of his men had holed up. Brown’s supporters who could escape scattered throughout the countryside. Several men, led by one of Brown’s sons, managed a circuitous escape route to the north and west.

Two other accomplices, Albert E. Hazlett and Osborne Perry Anderson, again found themselves approaching Chambersburg, now as fugitives from the law. A native Pennsylvanian in his early 20s, Hazlett was having a hard time of it, slowed down considerably by painfully blistered feet. Unable to keep pace, he urged Anderson to go on without him. Hazlett staggered northward through poor weather, following the bed of the Cumberland Valley Railroad, a familiar line which he knew led north towards Harrisburg. It also made him easily visible. Given his condition and the rewards placed on his capture, Hazlett made it surprisingly far—almost to Newville—before he was apprehended on October 22. Another escapee, Francis J. Merriam, made it independently to the obscure station at Scotland, where he boarded a northbound CVRR train to Harrisburg. From there, he went on to Philadelphia. Fugitive slave bounty hunters from

62 Anderson, *A Voice from Harpers Ferry*, 22; “Important Documents—Giddings Clearly Implicated,” *Valley Spirit*, November 2, 1859. The owners of the warehouse, at the time, were David S. Oaks and Alfred D. Cauffman.

Waynesboro, who were well acquainted with the back roads of the Cumberland Valley, captured other members of Brown's fleeing band.<sup>63</sup>

The sheriff of Cumberland County brought the sullen Hazlett to the courthouse in Carlisle, where on October 29 local authorities complied with Virginia's request for his extradition. Judge Frederick Watts presented the court with a warrant signed by Pennsylvania Governor William F. Packer. Witnesses from Harpers Ferry had travelled to Carlisle, where they "testified positively that the prisoner was one of the persons who invaded Harpers Ferry[.]" The court was satisfied that a "monstrous crime" had occurred, and "that the prisoner was there and participated in it." Hazlett would later hang, alongside many of his fellow combatants, including John Brown and Shields Green. Osborn Perry Anderson managed to escape eastward, where he found comfort and aid in downtown York. He stayed for several weeks with prominent merchant and railroad entrepreneur William C. Goodridge, a former slave who was the town's leading conductor on the Underground Railroad in the 1850s. When the coast was clear, Goodridge secreted Anderson in one of his Reliance Line freight cars and sent him to Philadelphia. Anderson later made it to Canada and safety. He was the only survivor of the handful of free blacks who assisted John Brown in the ill-fated raid on Harpers Ferry.<sup>64</sup>

### The Eve of War

Judge Frederick Watts and his Cumberland Valley Railroad had played only an incidental role in the explosive Harpers Ferry affair. Most of the conspirators had purchased tickets (some, like "Dr. Isaac Smith," on multiple occasions) and took the CVRR cars to Chambersburg, but the rifles and pikes had all arrived in private rail cars (albeit pulled by Cumberland Valley locomotives over the company's tracks). The railroad, and Watts, faced no recrimination.

Major changes were on the horizon for the Cumberland Valley Railroad. In 1859, the Pennsylvania Railroad purchased enough outstanding stock to take a

63 Ibid., 517-518.

64 "The Harpers Ferry Insurgent at Carlisle," *Chicago Press and Tribune*, November 1, 1859; Anderson, *A Voice from Harpers Ferry*, 53-54, 56; McClure, "An Episode of John Brown's Raid," 279-280; David S. Reynolds, *John Brown, Abolitionist: The Man Who Killed Slavery, Sparked the Civil War, and Seeded Civil Rights* (Alfred A. Knopf, 2005), 371. For more on Anderson and Goodridge, see Scott Mingus, *The Ground Swallowed Them Up: Slavery and the Underground Railroad in York County, Pa.* (York County History Center, 2016).

controlling interest in the CVRR, which continued to operate as an independent company although the PRR appointed its own nominees to the board of directors. The PRR wanted to prevent the Reading Railroad from partnering with the CVRR to connect with the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. That proposed line would have been a significant rival to the PRR's freight and passenger business.<sup>65</sup>

Under Judge Watts' firm hand, the railroad had steadily improved its gross revenues, which had risen from \$108,000 in 1849 to more than \$180,000 in 1859. The cost of replacing the flimsy early rails with sturdier T-iron and of rebuilding the bridges had tempered profits in some years but, overall, the CVRR was on the right track. The company's preferred stock did well for its investors.<sup>66</sup>

Judge Watts and his ridership were keeping a wary eye on political events that threatened to tear apart the nation. The westward expansion of slavery, the very continuation of its presence in the South, ardent abolitionist feelings in sectors of the North, lingering regional partisanship over numerous economic and social issues, Federal versus state and local power—all had contributed to the tension that had risen for years between the slave states and free states. John Brown's ill-fated raid on Harpers Ferry sparked fresh, often vitriolic dialogue over the issue of slavery, and some in the South talked openly of secession and independence from the Federal government.

Even the country's railroad firms became embroiled in the simmering sectional split. Harrisburg's *Daily Telegraph* responded to reports that Southern rail companies "are displaying their . . . devotion to the slaveholding interest by passing resolutions, in effect, that they will not buy anything of us Northern sinners which they can obtain on better terms elsewhere. [I]f they were sensible financiers," the Republican editors of the *Telegraph* cackled in retort, "[t]hey should have done so always[.]"<sup>67</sup>

The Cumberland Valley Railroad was entirely a Pennsylvania road, but it connected at Chambersburg to the Franklin Railroad, which ran into a slave state, Maryland. Hagerstown, however, at least on the surface, was mostly pro-Union. Other southern Pennsylvania lines, including the Northern Central Railway and the Philadelphia, Wilmington & Baltimore Railroad, also had their termini in

65 Watts, *Mainline Railroads*, 40-41; Mechanicsburg (PA) Museum Association, "The Cumberland Valley Railroad & Mechanicsburg," [www.mechanicsburgmuseum.org/cvrr.html](http://www.mechanicsburgmuseum.org/cvrr.html). Accessed January 7, 2018.

66 John Majewski, *A House Dividing: Economic Development in Pennsylvania and Virginia Before the Civil War* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), 77.

67 "Southern Railroad Companies," *Harrisburg Daily Telegraph*, December 20, 1859.

Maryland, but they ended in Baltimore, a hotbed of growing anti-government feelings.

As the 1859-60 fiscal year drew to a conclusion, Watts could look back on his tenure as president of the Cumberland Valley Railroad with considerable satisfaction. He and his team of hand-selected senior leaders had rescued the ailing company, restored its profitability, satisfied its debts and creditors, and positioned it for future growth. Safety and reliability were now the railroad's hallmarks. In the past year alone, 118 tons of iron T-rails and 7,000 new white oak sills (ties) had been laid to improve operating efficiency and make for a smoother ride. A newly installed iron roof over the Susquehanna River bridge had been completed within budget and was now meeting all expectations. All motive power was in good condition and well maintained. Newer, more powerful freight engines such as *Tiger* and *Leopard* had been added to the fleet.

Watts planned to “withhold no expense necessary to keep our road and rolling stock at all times in the best possible order,” he penned in the October 1860 annual report to the stockholders. “Our entire freedom from accident, the perfect regularity with which our train are run, and the satisfaction which the public evince, in the manner in which the business is done, satisfactorily attest the care and solicitude of our superintendent, and all those who are employed in its transaction.”<sup>68</sup>

With the PRR's cash infusion, the CVRR leased the Franklin Railroad on January 26, 1860, formally extending its service from Harrisburg down to Hagerstown, Maryland. After being operated in 1842-43 by the CVRR, the Franklin Railroad Company had since resumed independent operations but had again fallen on hard times. The recent modernization of the ties and rails pleased Watts, but for the FRR, “like all local roads, it will require time to develop the business of the country through which it passes.” He expected that “it will amply remunerate its enterprising owners.”<sup>69</sup>

Little did the former judge, nor his railroad clientele, know how tumultuous the next few years would be for the Cumberland Valley Railroad. War clouds loomed as the November 1860 presidential election neared. Four men vied for the coveted position. The Democrats had failed to unite around a single candidate at their quadrennial convention and had split, with two regional candidates

68 *Twenty-Sixth Annual Report of the Cumberland Valley Railroad Company, to the Stockholders, Made October 1, 1860* (Printed by the Herald Office, 1860), 7.

69 *Ibid.*, Watts, *Mainline Railroads*, 42-43.

emerging—Illinois Senator Stephen A. Douglas in the North and Vice President John C. Breckinridge in the South. In the middle of the country, where conciliatory feelings ran strongest, the Constitutional Union Party emerged, with Tennessee Senator John Bell as its choice. Finally, the Republican Party, less than a decade old but enjoying a surge of popularity with its stance against the westward expansion of slavery, named former Illinois congressman Abraham Lincoln as its candidate at its convention in Chicago. In an often bitterly contested election, Lincoln won the Electoral College and became the president-elect. In local and state elections held at other points in the year, Republicans had won many other key positions throughout the North, including the governorship of Pennsylvania.

Reacting to the results, seven slaveholding states in the largely Democratic Lower South within a short time seceded from the Union. Over the winter, they formed the Confederate States of America, with its initial capital in Montgomery, Alabama, and quickly began organizing a new government. Mississippian Jefferson Davis, formerly the U. S. secretary of war in Franklin Pierce's administration, was inaugurated as the Confederacy's first president. The Confederacy soon began establishing a provisional army.

Decades of festering political, social, and economic disagreements between the North and South, often fueled by heated arguments in Congress and in the newspapers over the westward expansion and, indeed, the very existence of the “peculiar institution” of slavery, were about to come to a tragic head.