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Crossing The Northway

I always get asked questions about the Troy & Schenectady Railroad. The T&S was a New York Central Branchline that connected it's namesake cities. I was built by the city of Troy in the 1830's and then became part of the Central later on. THE most popular question I receive is about a crossing that existed on the line for a short period of time.

Towards the end of it's life, New York State began building The Adirondack Northway, also know as I-87. It was a major project and many bridges were created to cross various right-of-ways. One such place where the landscape didn't accomodate crossing under or over a railroad was in the Town Of Colonie. The easiest way to do it was to just build a grade crossing. Now, this was a temporary solution. DOT told the railroad that THEY needed to put their railroad over or under the highway. The Central knew the traffic wouldn't warrant the expense, so they decided to abandon their right-of-way between Crescent and Aqueduct. Being there were no customers between these points, no big deal. Any customer on the Cohoes or Schenectady side could be serviced on those ends.

So, that leads me to this blog post. Not only has this been a popular question, it's eaten me up for years. I grew up on the T&S and always was interested in information on her. It's hard to find the bits and pieces. I have some postcards of her and a few photos have been posted to my webpage of her later-day operations. The one thing I didn't have was the Holy Grail. In my book at least. When I was told that the railroad crossed the Northway and at the time was the only crossing on an interstate in the US, I was interested to say the least. After years of looking, photos have been found.

There's a great guy who is the Town Of Colonie Historian. Kevin Franklin is his name and he has hooked me up in the past with other photos of the T&S as well as Schenectady Railway photos. He asked me about the crossing and the availability of photos. I told him I talked to Jim Shaugnessy and even HE never took a photo of it. He remembered it, but like some other friends, they never say a train on it. Well, fast forward to the present and Kevin has come through again!

After putting his feelers out, Kevin was able to locate some of these photos. The person who had some in his collection is Jeff English and he's associated with RPI in Troy. The photos were taken by the late Francis T. Poulin of Schenectady. Mr. Poulin was the historian for Schenectady and also a big railfan. He enjoyed walking the Delaware and Hudson as well as the New York Central and taking photos.

Thank God he was interested in capturing the T&S Crossing on May 9th, 1965. The Railroad officially took the track out of service on January 15th, 1965.

Mr. Poulin's collection now resides at the Schenectady County Historical Society on Washington Ave. in Schenectady. Sadly, Francis passed away right before he was to give a historical lecture at Proctors in Schenectady.

Alas, here are the photos. I hope you enjoy them as much as I did! Special thanks to **Kevin Franklin** of The Town Of Colonie Historical Society, **Jeff English** of Troy and of course the

late *Francis Poulin* of Schenectady...

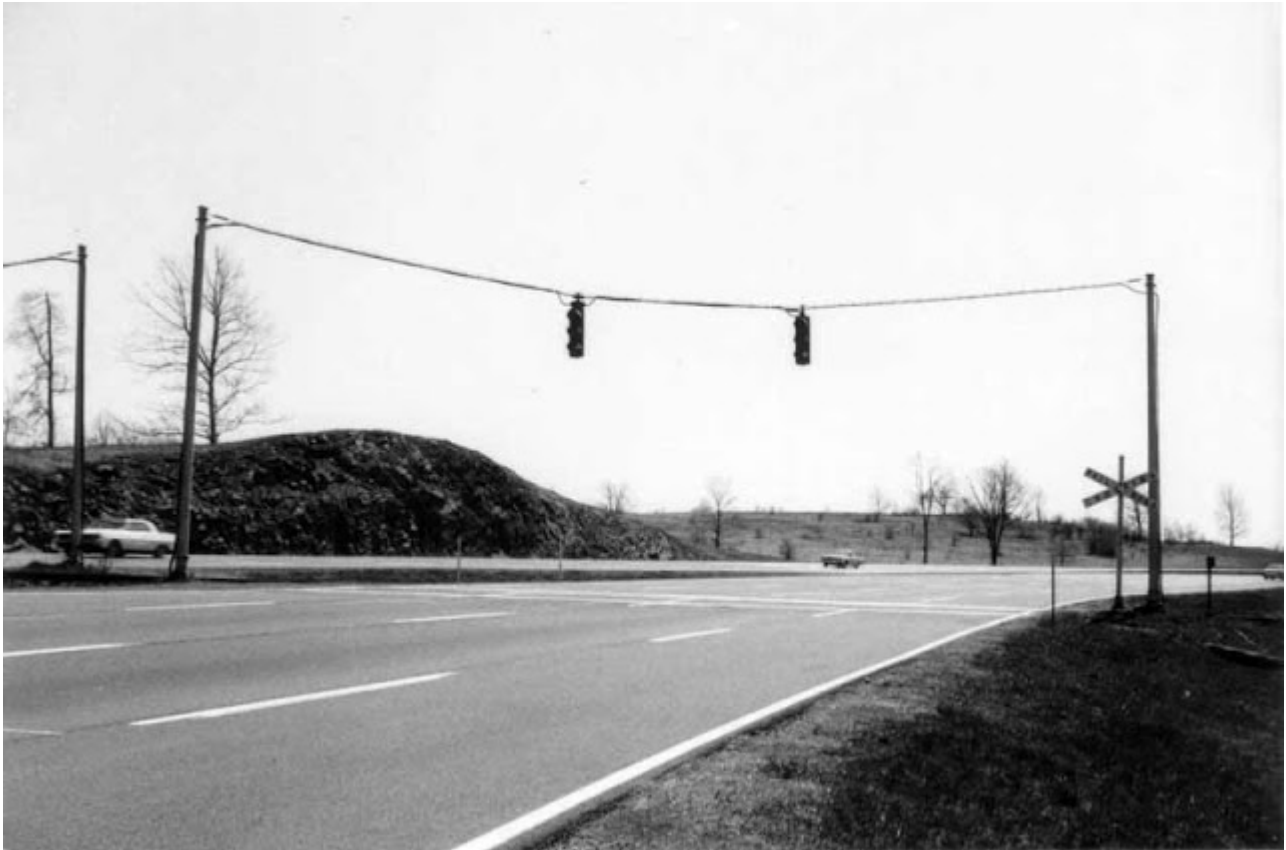


Here's the East Bound view taken from the center of the twin lanes of I-87. The building in the background was a church and is still a landmark on your trip up the Northway, just before the Twin Bridges. **(PHOTO: Francis Poulin, Jeff English Collection)**



Same building, but this is the north-bound view. The approach to the Twin Bridges is on the left. As you can see, no crossing gates were installed, just cross-bucks and traffic signals. I was also told by the late Jim Odell, that the State Police were called whenever a train planned to use the crossing.

Flares were used since there is a curve before and after. **(PHOTO: Francis Poulin, Jeff English Collection)**



The south-bound view from the shoulder of the south-bound lane. Notice two sets of traffic signals. **(PHOTO: Francis Poulin, Jeff English Collection)**



Finally, we see the west-bound view including both lanes of the highway. There is also a neat little stop sign for our train crews. **(PHOTO: Francis Poulin, Jeff English Collection)**

According to Mr. Poulin's notes, the signals were removed on July 12th, 1965. The track was removed from the Northbound Lane also on the 12th, and the tracks of the Southbound lane were removed the next day on the 13th.

Special Thanks To Jeff English for helping with the information in this post...

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