

1895 Inspection Report of the Jamestown and Lake Erie Railway

JAMESTOWN AND LAKE ERIE RAILROAD.

This road has recently changed hands, and it is claimed a number of betterments are contemplated. It is twenty-two miles long, properly single track, and extends from Jamestown along Chautauqua Lake and has connection with the Western New York and Pennsylvania Railroad at Mayville. The rail is sixty pounds per yard and eight years old. Two firemen and thirteen men try to care for this road. Five thousand ties, mostly red beech, were placed this year. The condition and life of the sleepers is anything but good. Something surely must be done to improve the condition of the road. Trains should not be allowed to run long without many more renewals. Your inspector noted so many poor decayed ties, particularly at joints unable to hold spike, that danger is imminent. The red beech stands well in this locality; chestnut and oak ties are also used. This road has been neglected so long and is in such poor condition now that a large force of men should be put on and work should be pushed as late as possible. In placing new ties, spacing, spiking, tightening bolts, surfacing, adjusting and aligning should be attended to. Gravel ballast should be placed where possible, and the wooden structures thoroughly gone over for the winter. About seven-eighths of a mile of track close to the lake which is frequently submerged is to be raised about eighteen inches this fall. This should not be delayed. Good gravel is abundant and close at hand, and much of this work should be accomplished. A branch three and a half miles long is talked of being laid from Clifton station to Falkner's on the Dunkirk, Allegany Valley and Pittsburg Railroad. If this work goes on, and it is considered sure, a large surplus of material (mostly gravel) will be placed on the Jamestown and Lake Erie Railroad. Material is needed very much to grade with, fill out on shoulders and for ballast. The rail at present is not properly spiked, the ties not spaced, and bolts quite loose, and some missing. The alignment and adjustment of track is very poor. Generally the life of the rail is in very fair condition. The fences are maintained as well as the meagre force will allow. Grass and weeds were noted pretty much along the entire road, thick and high. This is bad in wet weather, and tends to rot the ties. In many places and for long distances sleepers could not be seen well because of this growth. The switches while cared for as faithfully as the small force will allow, need

much more attention in bolting, spiking, and the like. From present appearances the ditches, with small exception, have not been touched in years. The highway warning signs need paint badly, and the superintendent said the "painter" would be along soon. Not enough care is given the various items. Crossing planks should receive more attention. Too many were noted decayed and poor. More care should be exercised in keeping the track in gauge. Cattle guards are not in use upon this road. The superintendent informed your inspector that the road being so close to the lake, stock guards were not needed. There are four passenger stations with agents, the rest being used only in summer as flag stops. Very few shims were noted under the rail, the practice of wedging up under the ties being in vogue. The "Ajax" brace is used on some curves. Lack of water was noted for fire protection both on wooden bridges, stations, and covered platforms. Spare rails were not noted at mile posts; in fact, mile posts are not in use. Clearance marks do not prevail upon this road. Derailing switches should be placed where possible. Old and decayed trees, and many large and sound ones were noted too close to the track. Trees struck by lightning or blown down would easily cause a derailment and loss of life. No delay should be allowed in removing every tree liable to fall or be blown upon the track. Large heavy limbs are also very dangerous and should be removed. Drinking water easy of access should always be kept in sitting rooms. Meagre track force precludes proper surfacing, adjustment, and alignment on the numerous sharp curves. The speed of trains while not fast is too fast for the track, roadbed and bridges. Until this road is placed in proper condition, a speed of not over eight miles an hour should be maintained. The swamp spoken of above, where it is claimed the filling is to be placed this fall, is not safe. Trains pass at about five miles an hour. Five thousand more ties are needed immediately. Your inspector would suggest that all the old Hemlock piles be closely examined, and immediate renewals made where necessary. The plank used for flooring on cattle passes and single openings should be removed and good sound ties placed, with spacing timber and ties not over six inches apart. Too many poor stringers were noted, and chances should not be taken when white pine stringers are much decayed. The factor of safety should be ample. Rail joints almost square were noted for short ways. The spacing timbers on bridge floors should be bolted more firmly—drift bolts are not strong enough. Some work was noted since the last inspection in the matter of wooden supports at single openings, but many of the structures have been neglected. One structure near Greenhurst was noted positively unsafe. The ties at the end were so far gone that a spike would not stand up, and rail joints are unsupported. Guard rail should be placed upon all the trestles and long spans. A number of the openings are now supported by piles and caps which were bents. There are too many openings upon this road. Safety and true economy would demand a large number filled and piped. Near Midway Station are fifteen bays of low trestle, eleven and twelve feet centres of caps that should at least be half filled without delay. While your inspector was looking this structure over a freight train passed and the vibration and depression were too much. A third stringer was ordered to be placed immediately, but a general overhauling should be given and spans shortened or stringers trussed if allowed

to remain. This road has been neglected so long that unless as a whole it is overhauled and placed in positive safe condition, your inspector cannot vouch for public safety. The branch from Mayville on the westerly side of the lake is not used for passengers, and the superintendent informed your inspector that it would not be operated until it is made safe beyond chance. It remains in much the same condition as when last inspected, which was then very poor.