

## The Ghost Train

The New England Limited was a luxury train that made daily excursions between New York and Boston. It was also known as the Ghost Train because of its creamy white color with gold trim. Even the black coal used for fuel was whitewashed. The crew wore white uniforms and much of the interior was adorned with white and gold trim. In addition, there were velvet carpets, gold plush seats, gas lighting and steam heat. A Ghost Train passenger desired to travel as quickly as possible in the most luxurious fashion. This Limited was utilized by the wealthy traveler between the two of the most important cities on the east coast in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Boston and New York. This train service operated at the height of America's "Gilded Age" during a period of immense economic boom. The New England Limited made its initial run on February 18, 1891.

The Ghost Train travelled on tracks through Eastern Connecticut on what we now rereferred to as the Airline. The Airline name derived from advertisements for rail service between Boston and New York that boasted the route was as "if a line had been drawn through the air" between the two cities. Construction of the track began in the late 1860's and by 1873 the line was complete from New Haven to Thompson. The first dedicated passenger runs began in 1876.

Before the Air Line route was put into service the shortest time to travel between Boston and New York ran along the Connecticut shoreline and was approximately 6 hours. The Air Line was promoted as a 5-hour trip, but in reality, it was closer to 5 hours 30 minutes. As railroad engines became more powerful and car lengths longer, the winding grades the hills of Eastern Connecticut and weight restrictions limited the efficiency and competitiveness of the route. Thus, by the early 1900's the line was used for slower freight trains and local passenger traffic that kept it alive until the 1950's.

The White or Ghost Trains left from Boston and New York simultaneously at 3:00 PM every day on a 213 mile, 5 Hr. long journey between the two cities. The trains traversed the rolling countryside of Eastern Connecticut (including Pomfret), plus the coastal metropolitan areas of New Haven and Greenwich. The trains only stop along the way was a Middletown, CT to replenish coal supplies and take on passengers. Water for the boiler was needed frequently and in order to eliminate stopping, water scoops were incorporated into the engine design that when lowered picked up water at troughs at various locations along the way. The train(s) ran 7 days a week. The north and south bound trains most likely passed each other somewhere around Middletown area.

The Ghost Train was initially successful. However, it catered to an affluent cliental thus drastically limiting the number of potential passengers. The Ghost Train was all white inside and out and the employees wore white uniforms. This situation was not really compatible with a coal fired engine spewing black soot over a 213 mile journey. The train cars required constant washing and cleaning to keep them up to an acceptable standard. This further contributed to straining the operating cost and ultimately affected the profitability of the line.

The Ghost Train ended operation in October of 1895 after four years of service. The demise of the New England Limited was can be attributed maintenance expense and dwindling passengers. It was an innovative idea at the time Rudyard Kipling who was living in Brattleboro, Vermont at the time the New England Limited Service was launched and was inspired by the Ghost Train to write his short story titled ".007". Reportedly Kipling also traveled on the train



The New England Limited "The Ghost Train" at Middletown Station



Advertisement for the Ghost Train