

THE LEHIGH VALLEY'S AUBURN DIVISION

The Gangly Country Cousin

BY HERBERT V. TRICE

This is the story of how the Lehigh Valley Railroad consolidated many hastily built shortlines in upstate New York to create its Auburn Division in the late 1800s. Basically a rural railroad launched by colorful entrepreneurs, the division stood apart from the LV's mainline segments—somewhat in the role of a gangly country cousin.

Traveling no less than 415 route miles in the scenic Finger Lakes region, light engines chugged along spindly single tracks, over bridges cheaply built to span glacial creeks and valleys.

Business was mostly local, except a thread of Pennsylvania coal traffic. A healthy volume of farm products, particularly milk, made their way to urban markets. Passenger service, in great demand before the automobile appeared, was crude.

Despite all this, the Auburn Division was a serviceable railroad until the late 1930s. The arc of its growth followed that of most American railroads.

One prosperous stretch of the Auburn Division remains. Before the others were abandoned, they contributed richly to the history and economy of their region, recorded here in 190 illustrations and a graceful untangling of complicated tales.

Herbert V. Trice is one of the deans of Lehigh Valley historians. The son of an LV employee, he has in his 86 years traveled the line, taken pictures, and put together a vast library of photos, books, and papers on the LV. Many other books on the Lehigh and other New York lines have drawn on his knowledge.



The author at Geneva in 1973.

Cover design by Phil Wilson

Front cover: First train across Six Mile Creek, joining Cortland and Van Etten, NY in 1875. Photo from the Trice collection.

Back cover: Author photo by William McLane.

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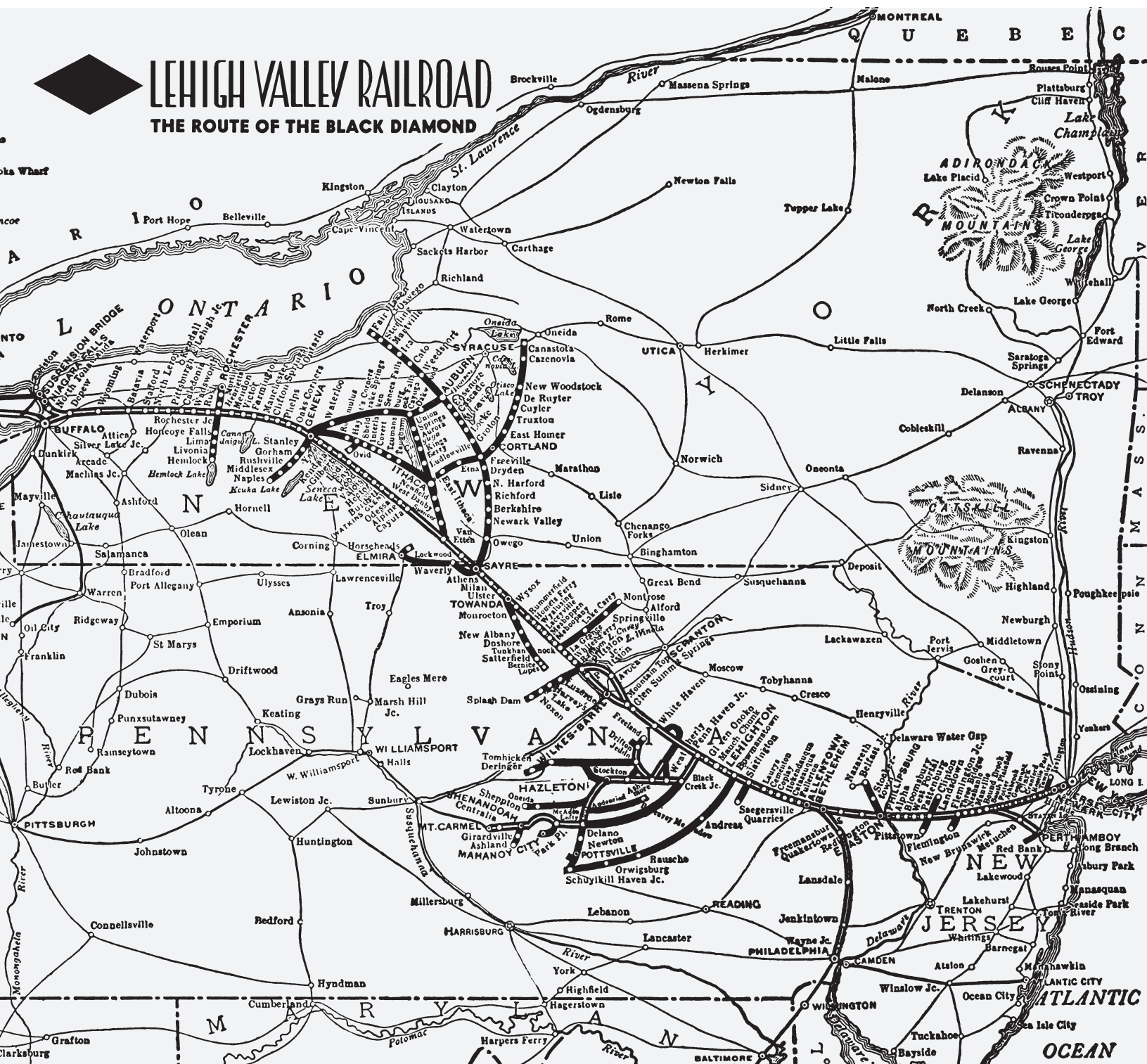
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The Lehigh Valley Railroad about 1940, after it began to contract by dropping segments of rural branches, including Canastota-Camden and East Ithaca-Horseheads trackage on the Auburn Division. The division's full extent is shown on page 10 and subsequent maps.

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