

# Railroads



In 1904 Frederick F. Searing, an industrial banker, visited the area. Tourism in the Catskills was just beginning and hotels and boarding houses often were funded or had arrangements with the railroad lines. Searing and his party arrived in East Branch on the O&W line from Manhattan. The next day he chartered a horse and carriage to make the fourteen mile trip up the river to Downsville. The trip took over four hours over the rough roads. When Searing arrived he was completely surprised to find the quaint little village of Downsville. He was very impressed by this little gem that was complete with prosperous businesses, stores, a newspaper, churches and hotels, but yet isolated from the outside world. The only transportation in and out of Colchester was by stage coach. Searing felt the time was right to bring a railroad into the beautiful mountain valley and started work on the development of the Delaware and Eastern Railroad (later called the Delaware and Northern). Between 1904 and 1906 teams surveyed the river banks and track was laid between East Branch and Downsville, and then continuing up the valley to Margaretville the cost was \$1,200,000. Creameries and depots were built in Arena, Shavertown, Pepacton, Downsville and Margaretville.



The "Red Heifer" was a combination 30 passenger and express U.S. Mail car which ran daily from East Branch to Arkville from 1926 to 1942.



Downsville Station and Borden's Creamery

The railroads ushered in a new era. Colchester residents could now move their farm products to the metropolitan markets quickly and economically. This railroad was the link between the Ontario and Western Railroad at East Branch and the Western and Delaware at Arkville. The Delaware and Northern sold its rights of way to the Board of Water Supply and the last train ran in October of 1942.



The D&N became known as the "Damn Nuisance" because of their frequent derailments and wrecks.