

## Economic Benefits of the Local RR

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The first great economical changes in the town came with the arrival of the rail lines from Boston. The innovations made it possible for the people of Bedford to have a direct and inexpensive communication with business in the city and for them to enjoy the many fine cultural offerings found there.

The branch of the [Boston & Lowell] Railroad to Lexington was started in 1870—and three years later, the **Middlesex Central Line** from Boston to Bedford was formally opened.

Fast and comfortable trains carried many of our young men to the city where they became engaged in businesses far different from those which their small native town offered. The lure of the big city caused more than one farm to suffer because farm boys were tempted to try the adventures of the world around them rather than to continue to cultivate the fields and woods of Bedford.

The once indispensable **stage coach line** of Mr. Corey was one of the first businesses to feel the impact of the railroad line. Small home businesses, with little to offer but friendliness and convenience, soon were forced to give up because modern stores 16 miles and 15 cents away were more up-to-date.

### New Local Businesses

However, on the other side of the picture, newer businesses, some of them large enough to give employment to many men, began to develop along the roads near the Depot and Freight House. A **factory complex** on the east side of the Lowell line [on Loomis Street] made hundreds of window and door frames. Its tall chimney, puffing out the smoke from scraps of pine boards, could be seen for miles.

The **pickle factory**, situated on the Concord side of the Freight House, gave the inhabitants of Bedford a new crop to cultivate. The finished pickles, packed in small and large casks, were soon famous for their goodness wherever gourmets enjoyed life.

A new **livery stable**, with its barns and carriage sheds, became one of the most popular businesses in town. Its hacks met every train that came out from Boston, and transported passengers to every corner of the town.

The last train arrived at the Depot well after midnight and was called the **Theater Train**.

Many a summer night echoed to the sound of fast-stepping horses and the crunching wheels of carryalls full of happy people. Many a frosty night sang to the tune of sleigh-bells jingling on the harnesses of the livery stable horses.

### Shady Hill Station

About one mile west from Bedford Station was a smaller depot called **Shady Hill**, and almost one mile farther another, called **West Bedford**. A third depot, a mile north on the way to Lowell, was called **Bedford Springs**. This was an enclosed small station built to accommodate the passengers who came to the Springs Hotel.

West Bedford Depot stood on the south side of Concord Road, in the shadow of the overhead bridge. It was used by the entire Concord side of Bedford as a passenger station, and its spur track was used to bring in cars full of coal and fertilizers for the farmers who lived nearby.

Shady Hill Depot was different from the other three stations in Bedford. It had been established to accommodate the customers of **Shady Hill Nursery** which had its packing sheds near the tracks. In a day before trucks and automobiles, nursery customers arrived by **streetcar** at Concord Road or by train at the very door of the nursery offices. Small orders were carried away by the customers; some were sent through the post office, and by far the most were shipped out by freight or express.

Shady Hill Nursery was a busy place in the spring and fall. Before the days of trucks and tractors, all work was done by hand, and over 200 acres of fields under cultivation were kept in condition by the same means employed by our early farms.

A barn full of horses was kept by a barn crew; 50 men in the hoeing gang kept the fields free of weeds. Carpenters, sawing and hammering, kept the supply of boxes and bales ready at hand for the men who dug the orders. Freight cars, always standing on the siding near the platform of the packing sheds, carried trees and other plants into every state in New England, and into New York and New Jersey.

It was indeed, a **New England Nursery**, and so it came to be called early in this century.

### Landscaped Cart Path

For the convenience of customers who came by streetcar, the nursery built a cedar summer house near the car stop. It also built up and landscaped part of the **cart path** which led to the hay meadows and turf sheds.

**T**his small section of road was called **Shady Hill Lane**, a nice old name which has succumbed to the sophistication of modern nomenclature. It was designed by the men in the landscape department who gave it all the attention of a Newport, Pride's Crossing or Bar Harbor estate. The sides were ditched, each ditch running to the ditches along the railroad, and the whole was seeded with grass and kept mowed.

A long line of white pine trees reached from Concord Road to the Depot, each plant selected to be as nearly like every other as possible. The pines separated the road from the five-acre perennial field and greenhouses on the west side. On the east side, a plant of ornamental shrubs, containing every known species which could be grown here, made the path to the office building beautiful.

The small building which served as a waiting room for passengers was built on a wide wooden platform which extended for many feet on both sides of the building. Trains came or went every hour of the day, beginning at 6:45 in the morning for early office workers and continuing until 8:15 in the evening.

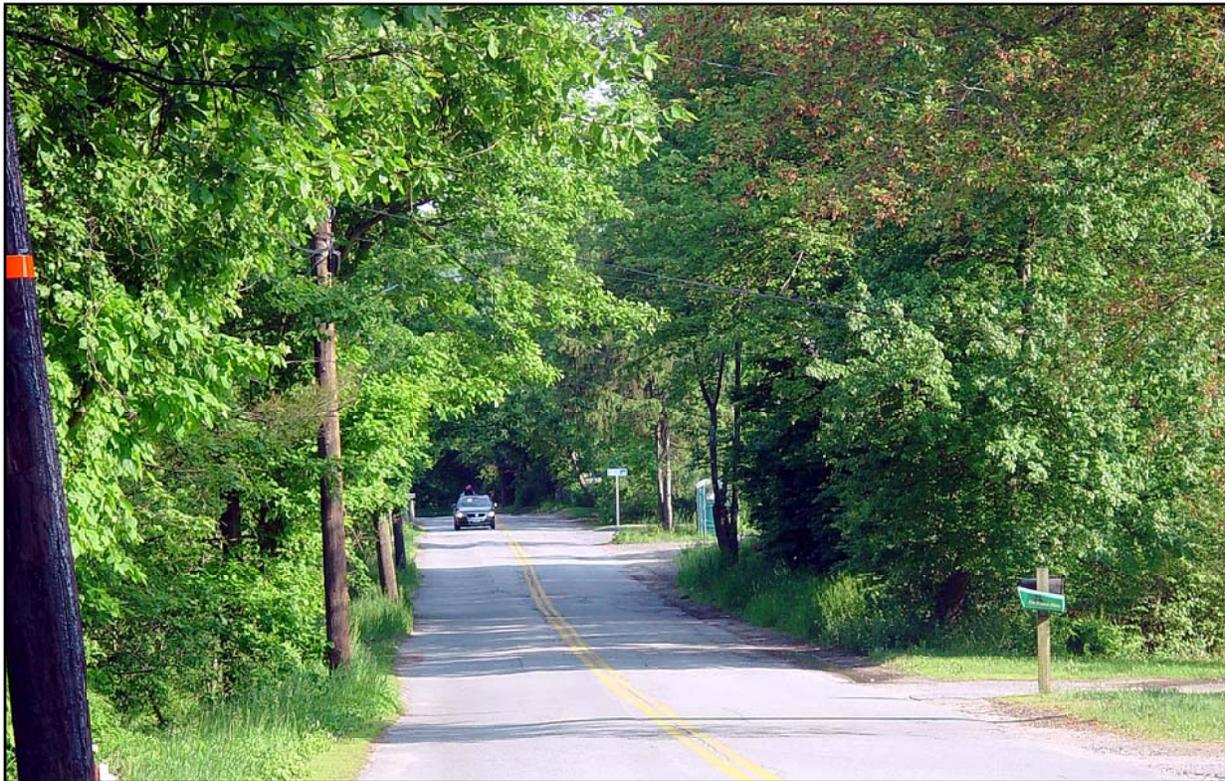
For earlier or later service, West Bedford passengers had to go to the station in the center. It was a short and inexpensive ride to Boston, far surpassing in comfort and convenience the trip made now in fine automobiles.

Many acres of Nursery land have now grown up into woods or brush, a natural protective home for small animals and birds. The long row of pine trees on Shady Line Lane has become stately with age.

The lane is thought by many to have become **Hartwell Road**, but the new road is not in the same spot as the old lane. Trucks bearing space missiles pass down the way which once led to the turf meadows and hay fields. The old offices, the packing sheds, the cold cellars, the barns and greenhouses have long since been forgotten.

In less than 100 years, the rich new economy of a rail line has given way to an uneasy, insecure war-based way of life. ✧

**View FBDP's slide show to see color photos of Shady Hill in June 2006.**  
[www.BedfordDepot.org/060607](http://www.BedfordDepot.org/060607)



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