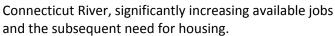# 99 North Stratford Railroad Station (Stratford Public Library)
74 Main Street, North Stratford, New Hampshire

The glory days of the northern New Hampshire railroad are alive and well at the Stratford Public Library. Evoking the days of early settlement and development for northern Coos County, the historic North Stratford Railroad Station has become the home of the Stratford Public Library, located next to the town's central common area.

When the Atlantic and Saint Lawrence Railroad designers contemplated a rail service from Portland, Maine to Montreal, Quebec in April 1853, North Stratford became the most appropriate location for a northern way point due to the emerging settlement started by the Baldwin family several years before. Brothers Elisha and William Baldwin built the area's first saw and grist mills on Mill Brook in 1848 and at the mouth of the Nulhegan River in 1849. Shortly thereafter, their Baldwin Bridge Company built a connector across the Connecticut River, significantly increasing available jobs and the subsequent need for housing.

During this period, George Van Dyke owned large tracts of land in Vermont and Quebec with a need to transport his timber commodity. Following the completion and connection of five charted rail sections, the North Stratford Railroad, known as the Upper Coos Railroad, extended track 44 miles in New Hampshire, 14 miles in Vermont, and 53 miles in Quebec.

As a result of the railroad and the North Stratford station, the town went from an undeveloped area to a thriving community, complete with a post office, drug store, jewelry store, blacksmith, furniture shop, saloons, meat markets and many other businesses. This expansion was further escalated, when four months after the station opened, the Grand Trunk Railroad leased the station and connected their Toronto-Montreal line with the new Montreal-Portland line, thus creating a major transportation rail route between the Atlantic coast and Canada's interior. To the south, the line connected to the Boston and Maine Railroad in Lancaster and Jefferson, New Hampshire, as well as the Maine Central Railroad in Carroll, New Hampshire.

In 1890, the Maine Central Railroad gained control of the line until the State of New Hampshire purchased the track from North Stratford and Beecher Falls in 1976. The North Stratford Railroad Corporation was formed to operate this stretch of rail, which was primarily utilized for shipping furniture from a factory in Beecher Falls. Eventually, as rail travel was replaced with over-the-road truck hauling, the North Stratford Railroad ceased operations. Today, the renovated station is home to the Stratford Public Library.

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