

Canal Line Rails-to-Trails Southington, Connecticut

To comply with SHPO recommendations, the Town of Southington retained AHS to survey, photograph, and prepare state-level documentation of historic features along a two-mile segment of the former Canal Line railroad right-of-way. AHS's historian and historical archaeologist walked the entire length of the project in the field; last used for freight in 1999, the line, which will become a pedestrian and bike path, was heavily overgrown. Track maps, archival photographs, and four separate railroad bridge lists were consulted to ensure that no feature was overlooked. The project documented six culverts, two plate-girder bridges, a steel-stringer cattle pass, a "subway" (an undergrade pedestrian passage built by a trackside hardware factory), and a small former freight and passenger station. The documentation also included minor rail-related features such as ties and tie-plates left in place (the rails themselves were salvaged), a semaphore signal mast, and remnants of adjacent freight sidings.



Plate-girder bridge, 1914, fabricated by Boston Bridge Works.



Brownstone box culvert, probably part of the original (1847) construction.

Two of the brownstone culverts probably date from the line's original construction in 1847 by the New Haven and Northampton Company, which earlier had operated a canal along the route. The station was built in 1894, when the route was part of the New York, New Haven & Hartford system. In the early 20th century, the line was upgraded to handle the heavy steam engines of the period, necessitating improvements such as the replacement of earlier bridges by heavy plate-girder structures.

The documentation is permanently archived as part of the Connecticut Historic Preservation Collection at the Dodd Research Center, University of Connecticut.



Former Milldale Station, 1894.