

Special wedding or steam enthusiast train in the 1960s  
crossing Chelmsford St. at Fletcher St.  
Posted on Facebook by Derek Delorey



*ad beaucoup*

# Framingham – Lowell Railroad

## A Brief History

adapted from: *The Rail Lines of Southern New England*, by Dale Ronald Karr



# Miles N of Framingham vs Station Site
27 Lowell, MA
23 Chelmsford
20 South Chelmsford (Byams)
16 North Acton (Nagog) (North Acton Junction)
14 Acton
13 Middlesex Junction
12 West Concord (Concord Junction)
8 North Sudbury (Raymonds)
6 Sudbury
5 South Sudbury
2 Nobscot (North Framingham)
0 Framingham Centre, MA

**BUILT: 1870-71.**

**OPERATORS:**

*Framingham & Lowell, 1871-72; Boston, Clinton & Fitchburg, 1872-76; Boston, Clinton, Fitchburg & New Bedford, 1876-79; Old Colony, 1879-93; New York, New Haven & Hartford, 1893-1968; Penn Central, 1969-76; Conrail, 1976- , Springfield Terminal, 1982-83; Guilford, 1983- ; Bay Colony, 1985-. 1993.*

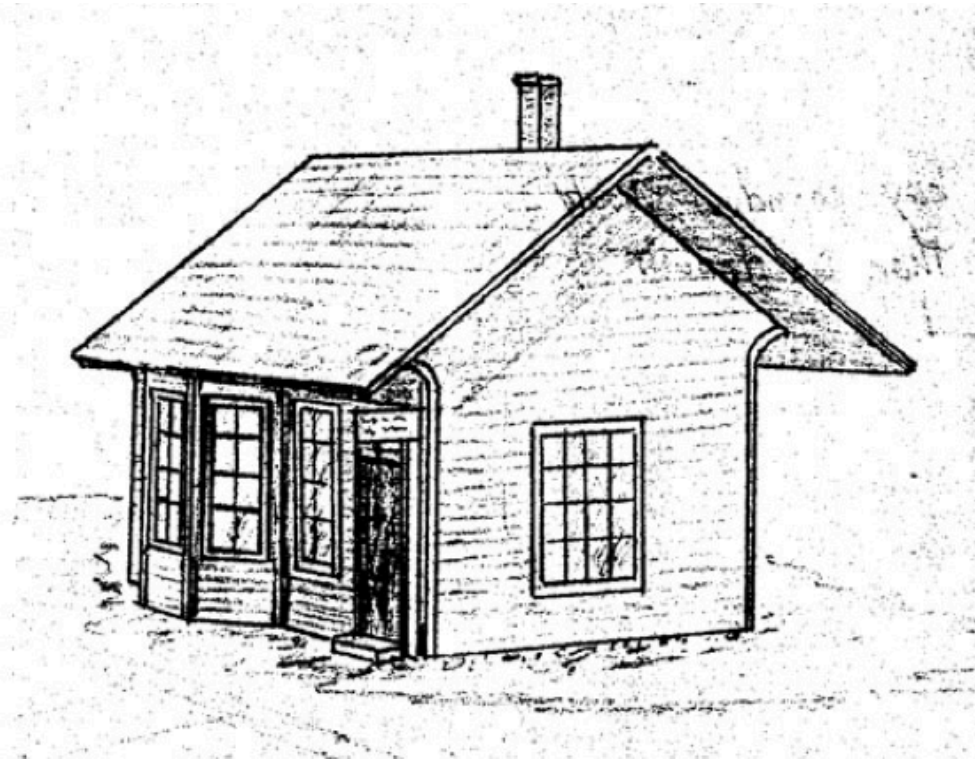
**DAILY PASSENGER**

**TRAINS:** 1893: 6/day,  
1919: 4/day. Passenger service ended in 1933.

**ABANDONMENTS:** Lowell-Chelmsford, 1976; Chelmsford-South Chelmsford and South Sudbury-West Concord 1982; at Lowell, 1994.



The Framingham & Lowell RR was incorporated in 1870 and opened on October 1, 1871. Shortly afterwards it was leased by the Boston, Clinton & Fitchburg RR, a small carrier serving Fitchburg, Framingham, and Worcester. It eventually became a northern extension of the Old Colony RR, and



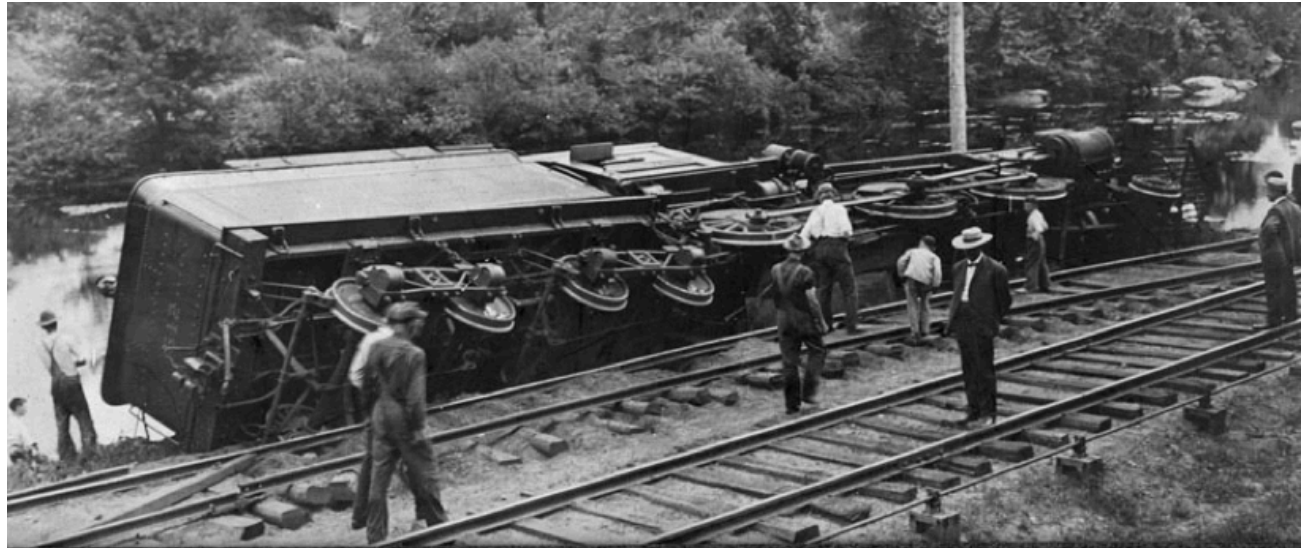
**First F&L RR Station, (moved to 37 Mill Rd.)**

later of the Old Colony's successor, the New Haven RR. Lowell for many years was the northernmost point on the NYNH&H, deep in the territory of the B&M. Although through trains used the line, the F&L never generated much local traffic for the New Haven. Steam-powered passenger trains were replaced, first by gas-electric rail cars in the 1920s and then by highway buses in 1933.

The B&M interchange at Lowell was important, since most rail traffic between Maine and southeastern Massachusetts took the F&L. After 1970, however, Penn Central,

which had taken over the New Haven, exchanged little traffic with the B&M at Lowell. In the early 1970s, trains used the F&L only about twice each week. The USRA, noting that more than 70% of the traffic from this line originated in Lowell, recommended that the F&L not be transferred from Penn Central to Conrail, and when the latter took over in 1976 only the section between Framingham Centre and South Sudbury was included. The tracks between the Lowell city line and Chelmsford Center were abandoned. The state of Massachusetts then paid Conrail to operate the remainder of the line for several years, except for the first few miles within Lowell, which were then served by the B&M (in 1994 Guilford abandoned three-quarters of a mile of this Lowell trackage). In 1982 operation was assigned to Springfield Terminal RR, but service on the line

between South Chelmsford and North Acton was discontinued. The line between South Sudbury and West Concord and from Chelmsford to South Chelmsford was abandoned, dividing what remained of the F&L into two branches. In 1985 the Bay Colony RR took over the tracks between West Concord and North Acton.



**F&L ca 1913 Train Wreck, south bound, behind Ginger Ale Plant**

Until recently, the line between West Concord and South Chelmsford remained intact although out of service. Sporadic train service was provided to a lumber yard in North Acton by the Bay Colony RR (using a Whiting trackmobile (aka a “Mule”) until 1993. Conrail operates the southern section as its South Sudbury Industrial Track. The right of way between Lowell and South Sudbury, now owned by the state, is being converted, incrementally, into a bike path. A short stretch of track in Lowell continues to be operated by Guilford.

Sources: Baker, *Formation*, 25, 35; *Chronological History of the New Haven Railroad* Cornwall and Smith, *Names First*, 42; Patton, "Old Colony Northern Division"; U.S. Railway Association, *Final System Plan*, 2:141-42; U.S. Railway Association, *Preliminary System Plan*, 2:504.

Conrail 9522 crossing through Central Square  
Photo by David Kruschwitz, summer 1977  
Posted on Facebook by David Haney



Conrail 9522 crossing through Central Square  
Photo by David Kruschwitz, summer 1977  
Posted on Facebook by David Haney



Conrail 9522 with boxcars next to the Central Square freight house

Photo by David Kruschwitz, summer 1977

Posted on Facebook by David Haney





Central Square freight house  
Photo by David Kruschwitz, summer 1977  
Posted on Facebook by David Haney



Former Central Square freight house  
converted to Tahitian Tan shop  
Photo by Fred Merriam, July 2004



# RR Whistle codes

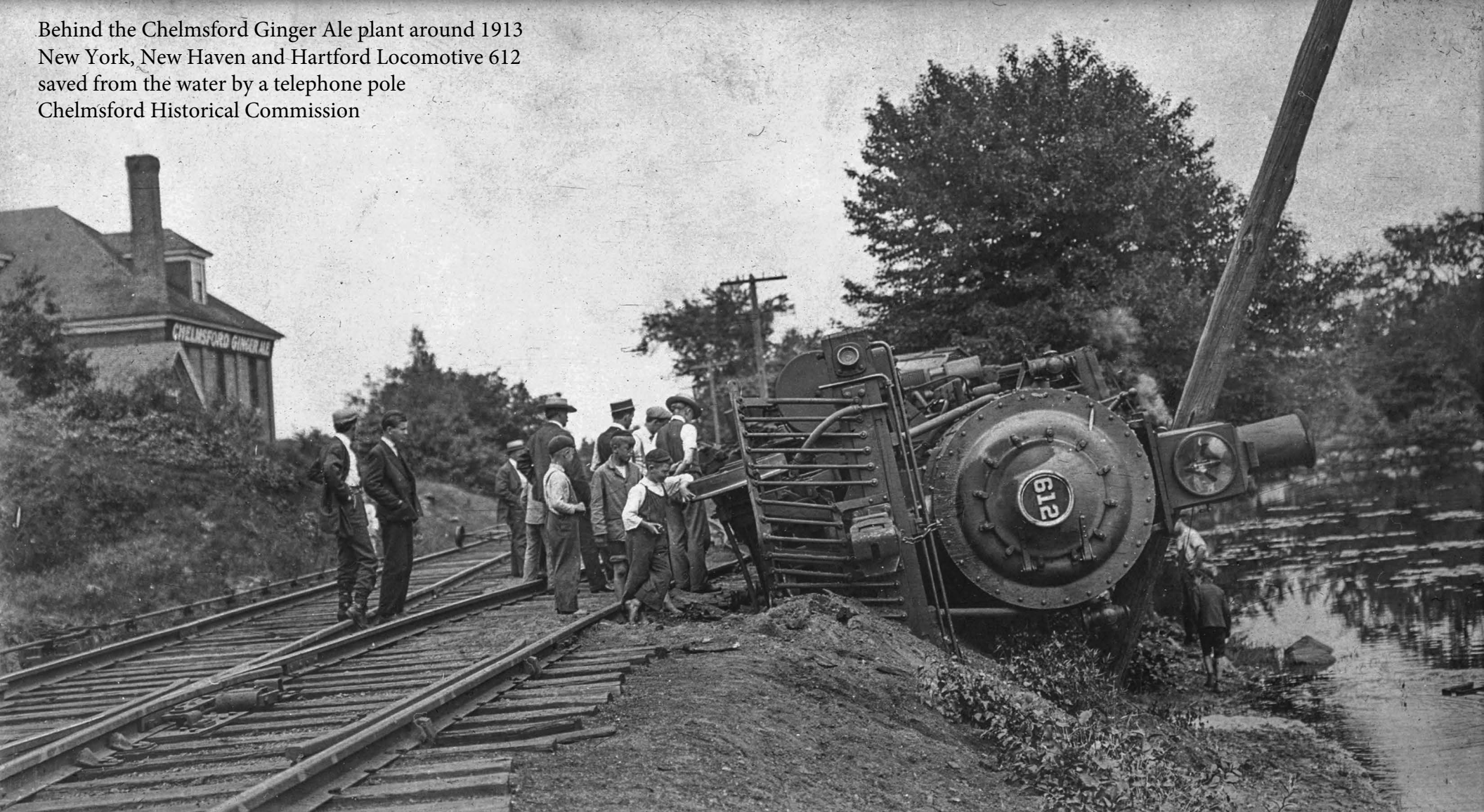
Train whistles are used to communicate to other railroad workers on a train or to railroad workers in the yard. Different combinations of long and short whistles each have their own meaning. They are used to pass instructions, as a safety signal, and to warn of impending movements of a train. Despite the advent of modern radio communication, many of these whistle signals are still used today.

Signals illustrated below are for North American railroads, an "o" for short sounds, and "-" for longer sounds.

Sequence	Meaning
<b>Succession of short sounds</b>	Used when an emergency exists, or if persons or livestock are on the track.
–	When train is stopped. The air brakes are applied and pressure is equalized.
– –	Train releases brakes and proceeds.
o o	Acknowledgment of any signal not otherwise provided for.
o o o	When train is stopped: means backing up, or recognizes a hand signal to back up.
o o o o	Request for a signal to be given or repeated if not understood.
– o o	Warning that a second section of a timetabled train is following.
– o o o	Instruction for flagman to protect rear of train.
– – – –	Flagman return from the west or south.
– – – – –	Flagman return from the east or north.
– – o –	Train is approaching public grade crossing(s). This is known as <i>Rule 14L</i> in almost all railroad operating rules.
– o	Inspect the brake system for leaks or sticking brakes.

Source: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Train\\_whistle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Train_whistle)

Behind the Chelmsford Ginger Ale plant around 1913  
New York, New Haven and Hartford Locomotive 612  
saved from the water by a telephone pole  
Chelmsford Historical Commission



Central Square Mill Pond behind Chelmsford Ginger Ale Plant on Littleton Road c 1913

Same location, former Chelmsford Ginger Ale plant at left,  
Conrail caboose at center, Chelmsford Lumber Co. at right  
Photo by David Kruschwitz, summer 1977  
Posted on Facebook by David Haney



Same location, abandoned railroad bed used  
for materials and vehicle storage  
Photo by Fred Merriam, April 2007



Same location, Bruce Freeman Rail Trail completed  
Photo by Fred Merriam, May 2016



Abandoned railroad bed looking west  
Photo by Fred Merriam, April 2007





Same location, Bruce Freeman Rail Trail completed  
Photo by Fred Merriam, May 2016





Tracks still in place heading west with the  
large rock in Beaver Brook at center  
Photo by Fred Merriam, April 2007



Part of old switch mechanism  
Photo by Fred Merriam, April 2007



Beaver Brook Bridge looking west  
Photo by Fred Merriam, April 2007



Beaver Brook Bridge looking west  
Photo by Fred Merriam, April 2007



Beaver Brook Bridge looking east  
Photo by Fred Merriam, April 2007



Looking west toward High Street  
Photo by Fred Merriam, April 2007



Looking west toward Maple Road  
Photo by Fred Merriam, March 2006



Easter States Farmers Exchange c.1960  
Hallberg furniture and toy factory at right



Eastern States Farmer's Exchange

Courtesy Chelmsford Historical Society, Index #89\_25\_32H



Same location after Agway absorbed Eastern States  
Photo by Fred Merriam, February 2006



Looking west toward Pond Street Photo  
by Fred Merriam, February 2006



The tracks have been ripped up west of Maple Road  
Photo by Fred Merriam, February 2008



Looking east down the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail from Maple Road  
Photo by Fred Merriam, February 2011



Heart Pond Beach looking west from the tracks  
Photo by Fred Merriam, February 2006



Same view from the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail  
Photo by Fred Merriam, August 2009



Heart Pond Beach looking east from the tracks  
Photo by Fred Merriam, February 2006





The Rail Trail looking west from Pond Street  
Photo by Fred Merriam, August 2009