

Spanning the Gap

History along Karamac Trail: New York, Susquehanna & Western Railroad Karamac Hotel

In 1870 the *New Jersey Midland Railway* was organized, connecting with the *Sussex Mine Railroad* and with various trade centers in Sussex and Warren counties. The rail line gained access to the Hudson River, and a year later was running from Weehawken NJ through the Paulins Kill Valley to Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, by way of the New Jersey side of the Water Gap. Soon it was renamed the *New York, Susquehanna & Western Railroad*.

Unlike more powerful rail lines, which crossed the Delaware downstream near Portland PA, the NYS&W crossed the Delaware here, at LaBar Island just north of the Gap, on a truss bridge built around 1882. In doing so, it offered small communities along the New Jersey side of the river, such as Columbia and Dunnfield, a chance to participate in the growing tourist trade centered in the more-famous Pennsylvania village of Delaware Water Gap. NYS&W "mixed" trains carried both passengers and freight, and small flag stops provided boat service to riverbank hotels. Some stations were typical of period railroad architecture; others now seem more like local sheds pressed into service for passengers.

The NYS&W bridge to Pennsylvania may have had some problems—trains crossing it were limited to 10 m.p.h. — but it was on the job until 1940, when the financially strapped railroad abandoned the bridge and discontinued service to Stroudsburg. Soon after, the truss structure was removed. The stone piers remain today as reminders of an era of trade and tourism that has passed.



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A train crosses the NYS&W truss bridge at Karamac in 1931.



A "mixed" train crosses the Columbia-Dunnfield Road in 1931.



Dunnfield Station in 1910.

Karamac Trail bears the name of a river resort that was built here around 1880, and named *Karamac* in 1920.

In the 1800s there were a string of small communities along the New Jersey side of the Water Gap, served by the New York, Susquehanna & Western line across New Jersey, which crossed the Delaware here beginning in 1881. Some villages, like the slate "company town" of Browning, had sprung up for industry. Other enterprises grew with the tourist trade spreading from the town of Delaware Water Gap PA. Still other place names had already come and gone.

Fairview House, a hotel built here in 1880, was in an area once known as Brotzmanville. It overlooked the NYS&W rail bridge, whose stone piers remain today. Fairview House offered ferry service across the river from Pennsylvania for guests arriving on rail lines that crossed the Delaware further downstream.

In 1920, under new owners, the facility was renamed *Camp Karamac*, and Fairview House became *Karamac Hotel*. In 1924, the hotel accommodated 100 visitors at \$15.00 per week each, and a round-trip ticket from New York City on the NYS&W cost \$3.59. The rail line discontinued service to Pennsylvania in 1940, however, and today this one-mile stretch of the abandoned NYS&W rail bed forms Karamac Trail.

Karamac Trail is one mile long each way from the traffic light to Karamac Parking Area on Old Mine Road. Northward from the traffic light, the first 3/4 mile of the trail follows the flat railbed, and reaches a good view over the river at the stone piers. From there northward 1/4 mile to Karamac parking, the trail is at first a rugged footpath, then becomes a fairly smooth path but with a steep climb to the Karamac parking area. The trail has a total climb of 200 feet northbound, most of it at the northern end approaching the parking area.



Howeys, a summer flag stop, in 1931.



Karamac Hotel.



Camp Karamac in 1967

Photographs courtesy of the New York Susquehanna & Western Technical & Historical Society.