

# CONTOOCCOOK RAILROAD MUSEUM

## SELF-GUIDED TOUR

- 1 Boston & Maine Railroad Station** – You are here at one of today’s best preserved railroad depots of its era. Built in 1849 by the Concord & Claremont Railroad, this depot served as the first substantial railroad station west of Concord on this line. In 1884 the second telephone office in Contoocook was installed here. The Boston & Maine Railroad purchased the line in 1887 along with the depot, and operated passenger service until 1955, and freight service until 1962. The Dodd Insurance Agency occupied this depot from 1954 to 1985.
  
- 2 Men’s & Women’s Waiting Rooms** – As you first enter the depot, you are walking into what once was the men’s waiting room. The ladies waiting room is located on the opposite end of the depot. Men and women would traditionally enter the station separately, purchase their train tickets, and reunite on the platform outside the station to board the train. This was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.
  
- 3 19<sup>th</sup> Century Locomotive Bell** – This bell was once mounted on top of the boiler of a steam locomotive. A rope from the cab connected to the bell was pulled to sound it, alerting bystanders that a moving train was approaching or leaving the station. The bell was generally not used away from stations or terminals unless pedestrians or railroad workers were observed near the tracks.
  
- 4 Luggage Dolly & Express Wagon** – Here is a luggage dolly, heavily built for moving larger luggage and steamer trunks. You may have also noticed the large express-and-baggage wagon that sits out front of the depot. This wagon is original to the Contoocook station. Such wagons were commonly used by the Railway Express Agency as well as the railroads, and were placed near the tracks at train time. Most passenger trains had baggage cars directly behind the locomotive, used for transporting express, baggage, newspapers, and other material that now travels by air or highway. *Express Wagon generously donated by Herb Benedict.*
  
- 5 Stationmasters Office** – Also referred to as a “ticket office” or “operators cabin” among other names, it was the operational hub of the station. The station master/agent/operator was essentially in charge of station operations. These windows are where passengers would purchase their tickets. Some of the items in this office:
  - Original 1859 United States Territories map on the wall
  - Various track maintenance tools
  - Agent’s desk with telegraph key & sounder, ticket validator, comptometer (calculator), a Boston & Maine Employee Rule Book, a 1920s era telephone on a scissor mount, a locomotive engineer's oil can with long spout, a Pullman Co. fire extinguisher, a train order pad, and various other items.
  - Leaning against the wall on the right is a train order “hoop”. This would be used to deliver orders from the train dispatcher, who was located in another city, to trains along the line.
  - The red levers control the train order signals. The train order signals, a type of semaphore, are located high above the stationmasters office on the tall wooden mast, one for each direction of travel. Known in railroad jargon as an “order board”, when the arm is moved to diagonal or 45 degrees by the operator, an approaching train can see that orders are waiting at the station. The operator delivers the orders to the moving train by holding the “hoops” loaded with string and orders, up to the level of the engine cab where they can be grabbed while passing. A friction clip on the hoop allows the engineer and conductor to pull the string with orders from the hoop without stopping.

- 6 Steamer Trunk** – These trunks were traditionally used when travelers would emigrate from Europe to the United States by steamship. These elegant boxes would be capable of holding the entire wardrobe of a 19<sup>th</sup> or early 20<sup>th</sup> century traveler. Many had shelves, dividers, and drawers inside for holding smaller items.
- 7 Boston & Maine Open Platform Day Coach #1246** – Built in 1907, this car provided suburban and short distance passenger service on the B & M system until the mid-1950s. The term “day coach” means that this car was not designed for overnight travel such as a “sleeping” car, so only simple bench seating was installed over the full length of the car with a small restroom on either end. This particular car likely ran along this very line in front of you at one time. *Generously donated by David Woodbury.*
- 8 Switch Stand** – This mechanism is used to throw track switches in order to route a train from one track to another. There are many styles, both short and tall, that are used where a switch is hand operated. Power operated switches are usually found in terminals or at remotely operated sidings and junctions and are constructed very differently.
- 9 Semaphore** – The signals on the mast that extends above the roof of the depot were used as a means to tell oncoming trains that a message(s) was waiting for them. The position of the “arms”, or “boards” would convey either that the train must stop to pick up restricting orders and sign a register, or could pick up less restrictive orders “on the fly” without stopping, or could simply go through without getting orders. The arms are raised and lowered by the signal levers in the stationmasters’ office. For night time use, a lantern is set between the colored lenses, which would be lit every night by a worker who climbed to the top of the mast. The color of the light conveys indications at night, when the arms aren't clearly visible, that correspond to the arm positions in daylight.
- 10 Covered Railroad Bridge** – This bridge was built in 1889, replacing the original bridge built in 1850. This is the oldest of four surviving “double-web”, “Town Lattice”, covered railroad bridges in the United States. The robust design of the lattice structure proved its value after the whole bridge was swept off its abutments twice, yet remained intact, during major floods in 1936 and 1938. The steel rails that used to run through the bridge held it from falling into the river. In both instances, a mighty effort by the Boston & Maine's resourceful crews restored it to its proper location. The bridge served the railroad until 1962 and is now owned and preserved by the State of New Hampshire.
- 11 Section House** – This building, or house-like structure, was originally located across the river along the tracks and was used for housing railroad workers, or for the storing and maintenance of equipment for a section of railroad. These buildings were once located all along the railroads that existed in New Hampshire from the 1890's to the 1960's. The building sat on its original foundation in the location it was erected by the Boston & Maine Railroad company, likely in the 1890's. After the abandonment of the railroad in Contoocook, the building was used as a storage shed for the telephone company. The association acquired the building and relocated it to its current location in 2019 and extensive restoration work is being completed.

Don't forget to visit us online for more information at [www.ContoocookDepot.org](http://www.ContoocookDepot.org)

Thanks for visiting!