

The Hopewell and Pennington Train Stations (1876)

Rev. 12/3/2021 x - D. Dixon

The Hopewell and Pennington train stations not only are historic National Register-listed properties, but they also are iconic symbols of our communities. Built in 1876, these stations served over 20 trains a day between Philadelphia and New York in the heyday of the railroads, before sinking into disrepair with the decline of railroad traffic into the 1980s. But the stations have since been revived, as a private residence in Pennington and as a community park and gathering place in Hopewell Borough, and the train line continues in use for freight trains.

This brief discusses the history of the two train stations, describes their design and architecture, and concludes with an extensive chronology with references.

- See also the associated Hopewell Valley Railroad Lines brief for more on the larger picture of the railroad competition and consolidation during this period.

M&S and D&BB (1870s)

1/1876 - "Frog War" - D&BB crosses M&S (1874) at Hopewell
 5/1876 - Delaware and Bound Brook Railroad opened - Phila. to N. Y.
 1876 - Hopewell & Pennington train stations built
 1880 - Mercer and Somerset abandoned

Golden Age (1880s - 1940s)

1879 -1945 - Up to 15 to 20 daily stops at each station

Decline (1950s - 1970s)

By 1963 – Hopewell reduced to 6 weekday stops, Pennington 2
 1967 - Pennington passenger service ends
 1968 - Penn Central - merger Pennsylvania and New York Central
 1976 - Conrail absorbs Penn Central and Reading railroads
 1970-1980 - 4 weekday stops in Hopewell
 1976 - No ticket agent in Hopewell station (Bicentennial)
 1980 - NJ Transit takes over passenger operations from Conrail

Revival - Pennington Station (1980s)

1981 - Reading / D&BB sell Pennington station as private residence
 1980s - Station at Pennington condominiums developed

Revival - Hopewell Station (1980s)

c1980 - Hopewell Boro declines to buy station from NJ Transit
 1981 - Hopewell - 2 trains morning & evening
 1982 - Hopewell passenger service ends - West Trenton line
 1984 - Hopewell station bought by Fedor for development - \$85K
 1993 - Hopewell station bought by Boro - \$64K + \$250K donation
 1994 - US DOT grant for Hopewell station exterior - \$703K
 1995 - NJ Historic Trust grant for design & interior - \$586K
 1999 - Hopewell station open house - exterior renovations
 2001 - Hopewell station reopened as community center
 2014 - David Knights Community Center dedicated



Hopewell 1897



Pennington 1907



Stations Renovated



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Hopewell and Pennington Train Stations

The Delaware and Bound Brook Railroad (D&BB) built the Hopewell and Pennington train stations in the Centennial year of 1876, after its victory in the Frog War that January. The two stations look very similar because they were built by the same people - although the Hopewell station is constructed from brick, and the Pennington station from sandstone. The Pennington station was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, and Hopewell in 1981.

The stations are high-style examples of the Second Empire style, especially with the details in the mansard roofs, featuring gingerbread woodwork on the large central cross-gables on the front and back sides, and corbeled dormer windows topped with decorative arches.



Renovated Hopewell Train Station in 2003
[photo, Peter Gantz]



Pennington Train Station, early 1900s
[n/d, postcard, Steven Cohen]

The stations were built by Daniel Clarkson and John McPherson of Pennington [1880 Census]. The construction in Hopewell was quick: The D&BB ad for proposals was published in early September 1876, and at the end of the month McPherson and Clarkson received the contract for both stations. In October, they broke ground, completed the foundation, and were laying the brick exterior. The D&BB was operating in the station by early January 1877, when the freight station also was completed.

The Hopewell building was described in the Hopewell Herald [9/27/1876]:

Messrs. McPherson and Clarkson of Pennington have received the contract to erect the depots on the D. & B.B. R.R., at this place and Pennington. The one at this place is to be a handsome structure 19x52 feet, of pressed brick, three stories high, with mansard roof. The building to be divided into suitable passenger rooms, office, etc., and will be a decided ornament to this place. The depot to be erected at Pennington will be of stone the same size as the one at this place, and in all respects will be just alike.

The Pennington Station also was completed in January 1877, as described in the Trenton State Gazette [1/22/1877]:

The [station house] at Pennington is quite an imposing affair. It is built of brown stone and is 20 by 55, with a veranda 12 feet wide, all around it. The building is two stories high, with a mansard roof. The upper part is intended as the residence of the agent. ... A freight depot has been constructed at Pennington, 20 by 40, with a ten foot platform on the sides and ends.

There is some confusion about when the Pennington station was built. Multiple sources, including the National Register nomination, set the date as 1882.

However, the reports in the Hopewell Herald, along with this article in the Trenton State Gazette, all show that both stations were built in the latter part of 1876, and were in use in January 1877.

Each station also had a separate freight depot that was built at the same time.

The new ticket office for the Delaware and Bound Brook Railroad, in Warren street, will not be commenced before Spring. There is some talk of erecting a temporary office in Warren street.

This company is erecting station houses and depots all along the line. The one at Pennington is quite an imposing affair. It is built of brown stone and is 20 by 55, with a verandah 12 feet wide, all around it. The building is two stories high, with a mansard roof. The upper part is intended as the residence of the agent. It has a water tank in the attic. The interior building is just now receiving the brown coat. A freight depot has also been constructed at Pennington, 20 by 40, with a ten feet platform on the sides and ends. This depot is now partly occupied as the passenger depot.

At Hopewell there is being erected a passenger depot of the same size and style as the Pennington depot except that is built of brick instead of stone, with stone trimmings. This building is nearly completed.

[Trenton State Gazette 1/22/1877]

Pennington Train Station

The Pennington Borough train station was built in 1876, and still stands at 16-18 Railroad Place, off West Franklin Avenue. It was added to the National Register in 1974.

The station was served by up to 16 to 20 trains a day into the 1940s, but train service declined by the 1960s, and all service was discontinued in 1967. The building was purchased from the railroad in 1981 for \$50,000 and converted into a private residence. The surrounding area was developed into condominiums in the 1980's.



Pennington Train Station by 1907
[postcard, Steven Cohen]



Renovated Pennington Train Station in 2021
[photo, DD]

From the Pennington National Register Nomination [1974]:

The [Pennington] station is an excellent example of textbook Victorian architecture put into practice. The design is competent and well-executed. The Pennington station is an upright three-story structure made of sandstone with a mansard roof and a center pavilion. Its height and width cause the building to loom out of the background, making it a prominent landmark. This forcefulness is tempered by the smooth curved lines of the roof. ...

The interior waiting rooms were simply designed, with vertical bead woodwork. The designer kept in mind their usage with his utilitarian design. Presently, the interior has been remodeled into an apartment on the second floor, and the office space on the first floor. The third floor is unused. ...

The [Pennington] station was a center of town life for forty-five years. It provided important transport for all goods. Every morning, farmers would bring their milk to the station for the 6:45 a.m. train to Philadelphia. Frequently, train officials would hold up a train for a tardy farmer, as an act of good will. Cattle were driven from the station, through the streets of Pennington, and to the buyer. For the Pennington School, a private Methodist school founded in the 1830's, the station was vital. It provided transportation for the students, teachers, and guests. The school was dependent on the railroad for supplies and mail.

An early evening walk down to the station to sit on the benches beside the fountain and catch a glimpse of the luxurious lining cars on the 5:09 p.m. from St. Louis via Washington was considered one of the biggest events in the town.

Until the first World War, the station was surrounded by beautifully landscaped grounds, ornamental flower beds, and shrubberies. The grounds were maintained by a crew of gardeners who arrived each spring with fresh plants. During the summer, the lawns were cut every week, and the hedges and shrubs were trimmed. In the fall, the old plants were removed and the beds were prepared for winter. Up to 1925, there was a large fountain in the center of the lawn and it was turned on every summer afternoon.

Hopewell Train Station

The Hopewell Borough train station was built in 1876, and still stands at 2 Railroad Place off North Greenwood Avenue. It was added to the National Register in 1981.

The station was served by up to 16 to 20 trains a day into the 1940s, but train service declined by the 1960s, reducing to 4 trains a day, and all service then was discontinued in 1982.

In the early 1980s, NJ Transit offered the station to Hopewell Borough, but the municipal government, fearful of restoration and maintenance costs, refused.

In 1986, NJ Transit sold the station and its 4.3 acre property for \$85,000 to a private developer, Bernard Fedor, who had plans to develop the property, including a restaurant and condominiums.

In 1993, Hopewell Borough bought the station from Fedor for \$300,000, assisted by an anonymous donation of \$250,000.

After extensive renovations, funded by over \$1,200,000 in federal and state grants, the station reopened as a community center in winter 2001.



Hopewell Train Station by 1897
[1905, pc, Steven Cohen; in HHH 1897]



Renovated Hopewell Train Station in 2003
[photo, Peter Gantz]

From the Hopewell National Register Nomination [1981]:

The Hopewell station, very similar in form to the Pennington station nearby, is a very good example of a late nineteenth century suburban station in the Second Empire style, and as such it is a rarity in New Jersey. With the Pennington station, Hopewell is one of the last survivors of the Delaware & Bound Brook Railroad, which was acquired in 1879 by the larger Reading system. ... The decorative details, applied to an undistinguished mass, display a more careful design than was usual with stations in New Jersey.

The station has served a large number of commuters to both New York and Philadelphia. Hopewell was a suburb of choice, and there once were many large houses in the area. Express trains for the B & O and CNJ - RDG would make conditional stops here to receive or discharge first class passengers only (timetables).

Architectural Details

The Hopewell and Pennington train stations share a common design in the Second Empire style, with a few differences related to the brick vs. stone construction. The descriptions below are derived from the National Register nominations and the 1996 Hopewell Railroad Station Preservation Plan.

From the Hopewell Station Preservation Plan [1996]:

The Hopewell Railroad Station is an archetypical example of the local depot. A side station, it was located, as was customary on the inbound track. It exhibits the characteristic forms that define such a station: the rectangular massing, with the long side parallel to the tracks; the prominent bay window at trackside; and the broad overhanging canopy around all sides of the building. The plan of the first floor also is typical with two waiting rooms, a baggage room, toilet room and stationmaster's office.

The Hopewell station is distinguished, however, by the richness of its architectural treatment. Most such stations, especially in rural areas and at this relatively early date, were simple vernacular expressions of the popular building modes of their day. But the Hopewell Railroad Station is a high-style example of the Second Empire style. This is particularly evident in the mansard story with its elaborately patterned slates and extensive gingerbread woodwork.

Station Design

The 1996 Hopewell Station Preservation Plan provides a possible source of the architectural plan for the stations:

Although no documentation has been found of an architect for the station, it clearly was influenced by a design patented by an architect from Elizabeth, New Jersey, Charles Graham. Published in Bicknell's Village Builder in 1871, the design featured a large mansard crossgable, with a convex lower slope and gabled upper slope, outlined in with band of jigsaw ornament with open circular motifs. Centered in this cross-gable is a pair of round-arched windows fronted by a balconette.

One local comparison is the Ewing Lodge, which stood until 1966 at the intersection of Pennington Road (Route 31) and Ewingville Road / Upper Ferry Road. The mansard roof design is very familiar, including the arch ornamentation with open circles. However, an illustration in the 1875 Mercer County Atlas shows the building without the arch, so it was perhaps added after the stations were built.

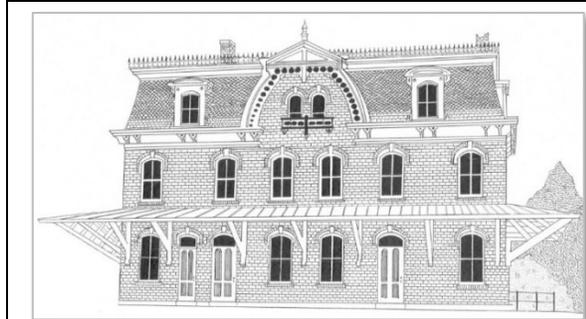


According to newspaper reports, the original structure was constructed in the early 1700s, and also has been known as the Halfway House, Ewingville Hotel (1875), Cross Keys Tavern (1915), and Park House (1915, for the adjacent racing track). The building, then also a food store, was gutted by a fire in 1964 and replaced by the current 7-11 in 1996.

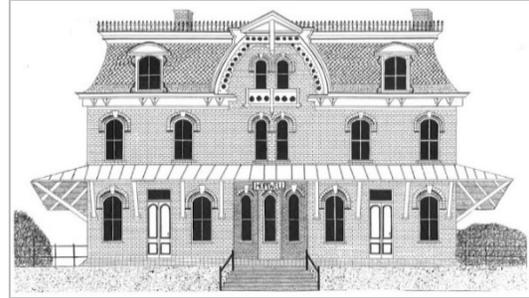
Ewing Lodge / Food Store, c1952-1966
[Ewingville, NJ Facebook group]

Station Exteriors

The Hopewell and Pennington train stations are relatively compact buildings at around 20 by 55 feet. They are two stories high, plus a third story under the steeply sloped mansard roof with slate shingles. The Hopewell station is just over 12 feet from the ground to the second floor, and 22 feet to the third.



Hopewell Train Station - Street side
[2003, Audrey Jones]



Hopewell Train Station - Track side
[2003, Audrey Jones]

The mansard roof has short corbeled interior brick chimneys rising above the roof at each end. There are no fireplaces in the buildings.

The Hopewell station originally had a fence-like spiky metal cresting running around the perimeter of the mansard roof. This no longer appears in photographs by 1900, but was restored when the station was renovated in 1999 - 2001. (There are no known images of cresting on the Pennington station.)



Hopewell Train Station - Street side - Mansard roof with cresting and chimneys
[2012, photo, Geoghan]

At the street level, an 8-foot wide canopy carried on molded wooden brackets surrounds the entire building between the levels of the first and second floors. The Hopewell canopy originally was painted in stripes of contrasting color so that it would resemble an awning or canopy.



Hopewell Train Station - Street side
[2012, photo, Geoghan]



Hopewell Train Station - Track side
[2012, photo, Geoghan]

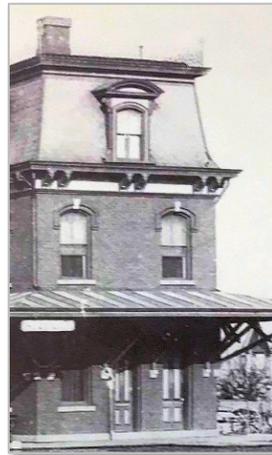
Building Sides and Ends

The station design is very symmetric across the long sides:

- The **street side** has three doors on the ground floor, one on each side for the two waiting rooms, plus a third door on the left for access to storage and the upstairs.
- The **track side** has a bay window in the center for the stationmaster's office, plus a door on each side for the waiting rooms.



Hopewell Station
East end
[1909, pc, Steven Cohen]



Hopewell Station
West end (doors)
[c1990, HVHS]



Pennington Station
South end (doors)
[1907, pc, Steven Cohen]

The two narrow ends have one window in the mansard roof, two on the second floor, and then different ground floors:

- The **east/north (Bound Brook) end** has windows on the ground floor for the large waiting room.
- The **west/south (Trenton) end** has two doors - the right side door is for the small baggage room, and the center door is for the men's bathroom. The window on the left is for the ladies bathroom, off the ladies waiting room.

Mansard Roofs

Both the front and back facades of both stations have a large central cross-gable arch projecting from the mansard roof, with a convex lower slope and gabled upper slope, outlined with a band of jigsawed ornament with open circular motifs. Centered in this cross-gable is a pair of windows. The gables also were ornamented with drops and finials at the apex. The Hopewell station has round-arched windows in the brick, while the Pennington station has a suggestion of a curve above the windows in the stone.

The original Hopewell station had balconettes projecting under the windows, which has been restored. The Pennington station now has a balconette on the street side after restoration, but none is visible in early photographs.



Hopewell Station - Street side gable (restored)
[2003, photo, Peter Gantz]



Pennington Station - Street side gable (restored)
[2021, photo, DD]

The mansard roof has window dormers along all four sides, with segmental-arch pediments projecting out from the slate roof.



Hopewell Station - Side of mansard roof
[1909, postcard, Steven Cohen]



Pennington Station - Side of mansard roof
[1907, postcard, Steven Cohen]

Station Windows

One difference between the two stations (besides brick vs. stone) is that the Hopewell station has arched pediments with a keystone above the first and second floor windows, while the Pennington station has the windows set in rectangular openings in the stone.



Hopewell Station
Front window, second floor
[1970, postcard, Meszaros]



Pennington Station
Front window, second floor
[c1907, postcard, Steven Cohen]

Station Floors

The Hopewell station and its interior are described in the 1996 Hopewell Railroad Station Preservation Plan. There is less information (and no known images) available on the interior of the Pennington station.

The ground floor of these buildings was primarily used for the men's and ladies waiting rooms and the station master's office. One side also contained the stairs to the upper floors, the ladies and men's bathrooms, and a small baggage / storage area.

As was common for these types of railroad stations, the second and third floors were used as a residence, typically for the station master, and also were used for offices. The third floor also was used as general attic storage space.

The cellar of the stations extends under the entire building and is full height. It is accessed through covered steps on the front left corner of the street side.

After restoration, the Hopewell station retains much of the original structure on the ground floor, while the Pennington station was more extensively renovated for residential use.

Ground Level

The track side of the stations at the ground level has the bay window for the station master's office in the center, with two symmetrical doors for the two waiting rooms. The left end from the track side is the large waiting room, with two windows on the side of the building.



Hopewell ground level - Track side (north) and east end [2021]
 - Track side - Center bay window for station master,
 with two doors for waiting rooms.
 - East end - Windows for large waiting room.



View south through small waiting room [2021]

The street side of the stations at the ground level has two symmetrical doors for the two waiting rooms, plus an additional door on the left that leads to the stairs to the upstairs residence / office space. The left end from the street side has the utilitarian spaces, with the left window for the ladies bathroom, the center door for the men's room, and the right door to the baggage / storage space.



Hopewell ground level - Street side (south) and west end [2021]
 - Street side - Two doors for waiting rooms,
 plus left door for stairs to residence .
 - West end - Ladies bathroom window,
 men's bathroom and storage room doors.
 - Cellar stairs through ground-level doors in left corner.

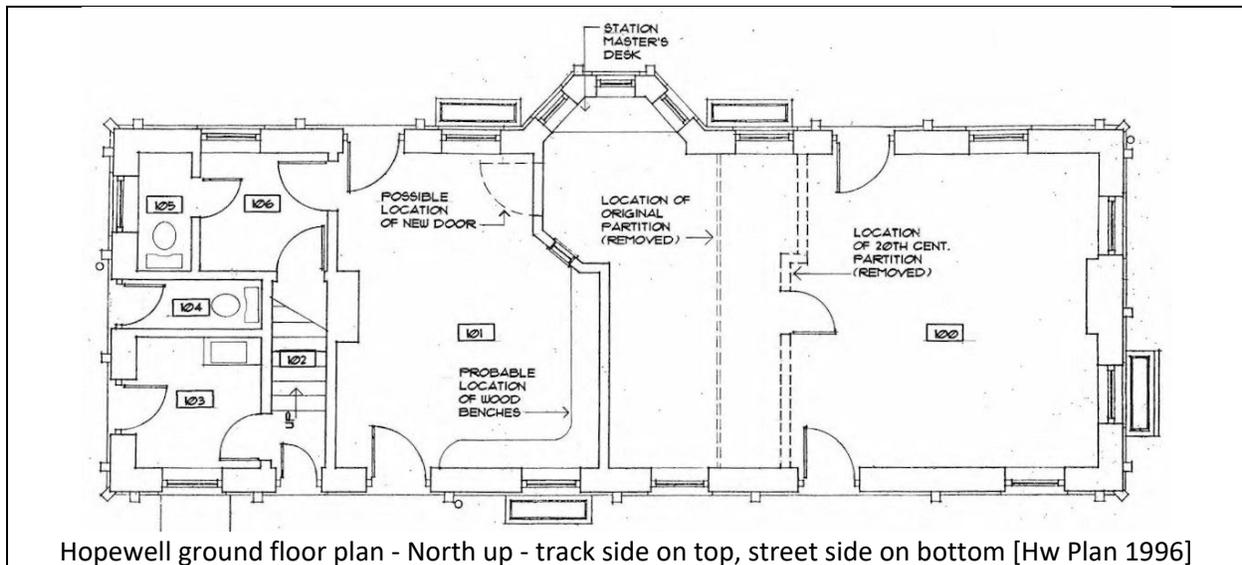


Left front door to stairs [2021]

Waiting Rooms

The ground floor of the Hopewell station originally was divided into four sections: the larger men's waiting room on the east side (#100, right side from the front), the station master's office in the center adjacent to the bay window on the track side, a smaller ladies waiting room (#101), and then the stairway with adjacent restrooms and storage on the west side.

The utilitarian rooms along the west side included the ladies bathroom accessible from the waiting room (#105,106 on the track side), the men's bathroom (#104) accessible from the outside left door, and a baggage / storage room (#103) accessible from the outside right door and from the front alcove at the base of the stairs.



The partition between the station master's office and the larger waiting room was adjusted over time, and was removed during the 1999 - 2001 renovations. A new door also was added next to the ticket window to connect the remaining two rooms. The ladies ticket window and shelf remains on the angled wall between the ticket office and the ladies waiting room.



Hopewell - Small to large waiting rooms [2021]
Ticket window to right of new door



Door and bay window (station master's desk)
in large waiting room [2021]

Station Master

The Hopewell stationmaster's desk was positioned in the bay window.

There are no known images of the interiors of either train station when they were in active use. However, Ranulph Bye did paint a view of the Hopewell ticket office, published in his book, *The Vanishing Depot* (1973), which includes over 80 paintings documenting train stations from Maryland to New England.

This painting shows the stationmaster sitting at his desk, located in the still-existing bay window that provides a view of the tracks, and with cars parked across the tracks around the small passenger shed.



The stationmaster is Michael Denshaw, who served in Hopewell from 1972 until Conrail remove the ticket agents in 1976. Several of the items in the painting were Denshaw's personal property, including the railroad clock and rubber stamp tree. [JED]

Mike Denshaw's daughter, Joanne Denshaw, describes the station master's duties [2021]:

Typically in the morning, the Station Master arrived at least an hour before the first scheduled train was due. They inspected the premises, tended to the boiler, heater or ceiling fans, swept the waiting room and platforms, made sure the windows were clean and the public areas including restroom were in good order.

During the morning commuter rush, the Station Master sold tickets and monthly passes, answered questions about railroad routes, schedules, transfers and other travel related queries. Later they fielded freight consignments, put prospective clients in touch with the sales team who could help them build or refurbish a railroad siding so they could ship and receive inventory and supplies at their company's site. Sometimes they would help educate freight customers and help negotiate settlement of outstanding demurrage charges stemming from cars held on customer rails beyond the scope of their contract.

The Station Master also served as a Community Relations Ambassador providing information about the Reading Railroad Company, the industry and addressing local concerns.

In smaller station like Belle Mead, the Station Master was also the groundskeeper. In all stations it was the Station Master who secured the business and premises. Vandalism was an ongoing problem everywhere.

Hopewell was a busier station not necessarily by passenger count but by the number of neighbors and visitors who stopped by each day. Some regulars came just to talk with Dad and exchange news. Other frequent station guests included staff from the Hopewell Valley News whose office was just across the street on the corner, the neighboring deli, Mr. Nevius the local mail carrier and quite a few railroad buffs and trades people of all kind.

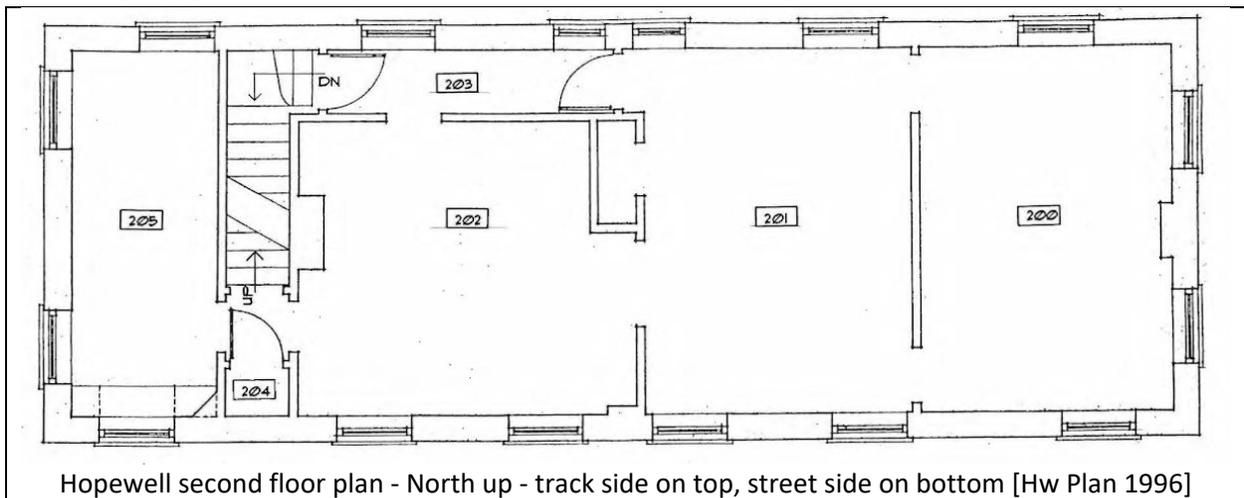
Second and Third Floors

The second and third floors of these types of stations were designed as the residence for the station master, or for use as offices. They were later rented by the railroads as residences. The third floor also was used as general attic storage space.

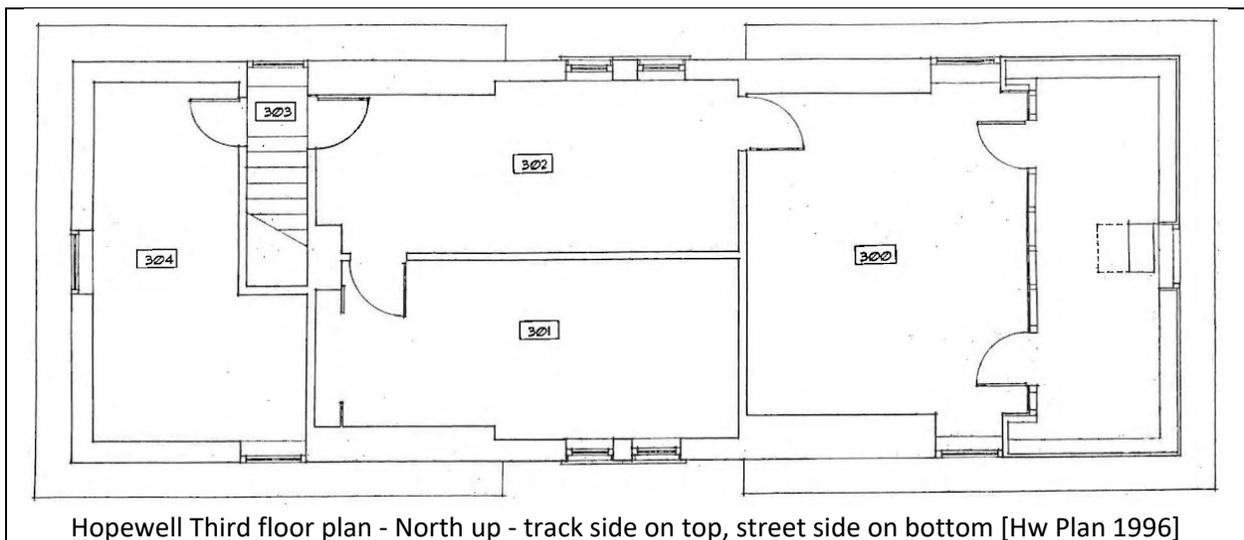
When the Pennington station was built, the upper floors were intended as the residence of the agent, and there was a water tank in the attic. [Trenton State Gazette 1/22/1887]

When the Hopewell station was built, the upper stories were "filled up" as offices for the Resident Superintendent, Road Master and Assistant Engineer. [HH 1/10/1877]

In Hopewell, as described in the Hopewell Station Preservation Plan [1996], the second floor was divided into four rooms, each running from front to back. The kitchen was on the west end (#205).



The third floor in Hopewell had the bathroom for the station master's residence (to the left of the stairs, #304), and the remainder originally may have been an unfinished attic. Additional rooms in the third floor were probably added in the first quarter of the 1900s.



In Pennington, some of the railroad laborers were assigned temporary residence in the station as it was being built; faint marks were visible on the ceiling where the rooms had been divided into smaller units. [JED]

When the Hopewell station master's family lived in the Pennington station in the 1970s, they occupied the second and third floors, as reported by Joanne Denshaw [2021]:

[Second floor]

From the street side, a narrow staircase led to a shared landing. If you turned left you entered a large kitchen which opened onto the living room. If you turned right you entered the living room. That led into the dining room and then into the master bedroom which had a walk in closet. There was originally a hallway which ran the length of the living room to the back of the master bedroom closet. Dad closed it off and created a small library in the space, accessed from the dining room.

[Third floor]

The staircase from the second floor to the top also had a shared landing. To the left took you into the one and only bathroom which still featured a claw foot bathtub. To the right you entered into a narrow hallway which led into my brothers room which had an adjoining walk-in closet behind the bathroom with access into both rooms. My bedroom was on the track side of the building and you had to go through my room to enter the attic.

All of the windows were original with very tall panes in wooden frames which could be raised in the summer to accommodate screens to cool the house. The window sills were very deep and cat approved as well as a great place for my mother to grow African Violets.

As you might imagine, the attic was drafty and there were spots where you could see straight through the lathe and stone to glimpse outside. We sometimes had visitors including a barn owl. Mice were frequently found despite the presence of cats. Yes, we did have to straighten anything hung on the walls after an especially heavy freight train rolled past and the floors were uneven.

Hopewell / Pennington Train Chronology

Train Lines and Service Chronology (1870s - c1980s)

Timeline of the development of railroad service to Hopewell and Pennington station, with references. See the separate Hopewell and Pennington Station timelines below for more details on the revival of the stations.

Beginnings (1870s)

- 5/11/1874 - Delaware and Bound Brook Railroad chartered [RR Manual 1880]
- 1/5-6/1876 - "Frog War" - D&BB wins legal permission for frog [NYT 1/7, 1/8/1876]
- 5/1/1876 - D&BB line opened - single track [HH 4/27/1876, NYT 4/27 & 4/28/1876]
- 1/1877 - Hopewell train station built and occupied [HH 1/10/1877]
- 1/1877 - Pennington train station built and occupied [Trenton State Gazette 1/22/1877]

Golden Age (1880s - 1940s)

- 1879 - Hopewell schedule - Weekday 16 stops, Sun 3 [Official Guide]
- 1879 - Pennington schedule - Weekday 17 stops, Sun 3
- 1881 - Hopewell to Phila. schedule - Weekday 8 stops, Sun 2 [Official Guide]
- 1881 - Pennington to Phila. schedule - Weekday 10 stops, Sun 2
- 1910 - Hopewell schedule - Weekday 20 stops, Sundays 17
- 1910 - Pennington schedule - Weekday 20 stops, Sundays 14
- [1914-1917 U.S.-1918 - Word War I]
- 1917 - 16 daily stops in Hopewell, plus 11 on Sundays
Commuters objected to the cut of 2 daily trains in each direction [HH 8/8/1917]
- 1921 - Hopewell schedule - Weekday 16 stops, Sundays & Holidays 12
- 1921 - Pennington schedule - Weekday 16 stops, Sundays & Holidays 9

Decline (1940s - 1960s)

- [1939-1942 U.S.-1945 - World War II]
- 1945 - Hopewell schedule - Weekday 16 stops, Sundays & Holidays 9
- 1945 - Pennington schedule - Weekday 14 stops, Sundays & Holidays 5 (Pennington flag stop)
- 11/1945 - Hopewell station closed on Sundays [HH 12/5/1945]
- 4/1962 - Hopewell to Phila. schedule - Weekday 5 stops, Sat 2, Sun 4
- 4/1962 - Pennington to Phila. schedule - Weekday 2 stops (8:02a,9:35p), Sat 1 (8:07p), Sun 1 (11:34p)
- 4/1963 - Hopewell to Phila. schedule - Weekday 3 stops, Sat 1, Sun none
- 4/1963 - Pennington to Phila. schedule - Weekday 1 stop (8:08a), Sat none, Sun 1
- 1967 - All service at Pennington discontinued [Penn NR 1974], station closed [HVN 1/13/1983]**

Penn Central / Conrail (1970s) [see Pennington]

- 1968 - Penn Central formed by merger of Pennsylvania and New York Central Railroads
- 1970 - Penn Central declares bankruptcy
- 1976 - Conrail began operations - Penn Central and Reading Railroads**

N. J. Transit (1980s) [see Hopewell]

Jan. 1980 - NJ Transit takes over passenger operations

- 1981 - West Trenton Line - 2 trains daily morning and evening between Philadelphia and Newark
- 12/3/1982 - NJ Transit West Trenton rail line eliminated - Hopewell passenger service ends**
- 1/1983 - NJ Transit takes over commuter train service from Conrail [TET 1/2/1993]
- 1997 - Conrail privatized through public stock offering

Pennington Train Station Chronology (from 1960s)

Timeline of the development of the Pennington station: Key railroad service milestones and notes on changes to the station complex, followed by details on the revival of the station.

Growth and Decline (1870s - 1950s) [see Train Service]

5/20/1876 - Service inaugurated for Pennington and Hopewell on Delaware and Bound Brook

Gala ceremony at Pennington. railroad gave 700 townspeople free round trips to the Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia. [Penn NR 1974]

1/1887 - Pennington train station built and in use [Trenton State Gazette 1/22/1877]

1879 - 1945 - 16 to 20 to 15 daily stops in Pennington

1900 - 1st decade - over 50 daily trains arrival and departure at Pennington station(!?) [Penn NR 1974]

c1904 - 53 trains a day stopped at Pennington(!?). Staffed by agent and three clerks [Seabrook 2000]

1925 - Pennington station fountain removed?

- Pennington freight station removed?

Closing and Revival (1960s / 1970s)

1962[63] - Reading cut service from 14 to 2 trains stopping at Pennington. [Penn NR 1974]

1967 - All service at Pennington discontinued, station closed [Penn NR 1974, HVN 1/13/1983]

1977 - Pennington station sold as private residence for \$50K [DB 2050-27, 1977-08-11 - Reading / D&BB]

1981 - Start of Pennington condominiums development

- Pennington passenger shelter still exists
- Underpass still open - vandals and graffiti
- Freight shed burned down - Larger shed by N. Main remains

c1987 - Pennington station part of Station at Pennington Condominiums development [DB]

Hopewell Train Station Chronology (from 1970s)

Timeline of the development of the Hopewell station: Key railroad service milestones and notes on changes to the station complex, followed by details on the revival of the station.

Growth and Decline (1870s - 1960s) [see Train Service]

1/5-6/1876 - "Frog War" - D&BB wins legal permission for frog [NYT 1/7, 1/8/1876]

5/1/1876 - D&BB line opened [HH 4/27/1876, NYT 4/27 & 4/28/1876]

1/1877 - Hopewell train station built and occupied [HH 1-10-1877]

1879 - 1945 - 16 to 20 daily stops in Hopewell

by 1934 - Passenger shed [postcard MZ]

12/1945 - Hopewell station closed Sundays [HH 12/5/1945]

by 1950s - Signal house & bridges [photo REL]

6/6/1952 - Hopewell signal tower closed [RML]

1952 - Reading consolidated towers, reduced number of tracks [RML]

Conrail (1970s)

1976 - Conrail began operations - Penn Central and Reading Railroads

10/1976 - No ticket agent but station open at Hopewell and Belle Mead

Conrail closing stations [Ridgewood News 10/10/1976]

1976 - 2 trains daily for Hopewell between Philadelphia and Newark [Courier-News 9/9/1975]

by 1976 - Waiting room boarded up [TET 7/26/1981]

1978 - NJ pays Conrail & Amtrak \$17.5M for 374 miles of track, 130 stations

\$17,559 for West Trenton, \$7,850 for Hopewell - Belle Mead for free

9/11/1978 - State of NJ buys Hopewell station from Conrail \$7,850 [DB 2177-718, 12/23/1981]

1979 - NJ Transit created by state legislature [TET 1/9/1980]

1979 - Mayor Walker rejects buying railroad station, restoration estimated \$500K [TET 3/13/1979]

N. J. Transit / Closing (1980 - 1983)

Jan. 1980 - NJ Transit takes over passenger operations

Commuter trains renamed NJ Transit, Conrail operates under contract [TET 1/9/1980]

1981 - West Trenton Line - 2 trains daily morning and evening between Philadelphia and Newark

Only stops West Trenton, Hopewell, and Belle Mead before Bound Brook; 200-260 riders

Jointly owned by SEPTA and NJ Transit, SEPTA equipment [TET 1/30/1981, NSL 7/12/1981]

2 2-car trains each way - Wall Street and Crusader [NSL 6/12/1981]

7:25 & 8:40 am to Newark, 4:54 & 5:40 pm from Newark [HVN 6/11/1981]

1981 - Conrail sold Hopewell station property to State of NJ for \$7,850 [DB 2177-718, 12/23/1981]

1980s - "NJ Transit offered Hopewell station to Borough for \$1, refused" [Hw Plan 1996]

- Boro rented station from NJ for \$1 a month in early 1980s [Boro records]

12/3/1982 - Hopewell passenger service ends - NJ Transit West Trenton rail line eliminated

1/1983 - NJ Transit took over commuter train service from Conrail [TET 1/2/1993]

1942 - 1983 - Hopewell station upstairs tenant evicted by Conrail - James Golcher [Phila Inq, 1/16/1983]

1983 - NJ Transit boarded broken windows [HVN 12/29/1983]

Fedor (1984-1993)

3/17/1984 - Hopewell Railroad Station entered into NJ Register of Historic Places [HwBoro letter]

12/1984 - NJ Transit sold Hopewell station to Bernard Fedor for \$85K [DB 2370-524, 12/23/1986?]

Plan family restaurant, apartments, 2 offices + townhouses, 4.3 acres [TT 2/10/1985]

1985 - Fedor redid slate roof, remade trim, redid windows (stored) - scaffolding still up [TT 2/10/1985]

1988 - Station boarded up - scaffolding on back [photo TET 4/17/1988]

Hopewell Borough (1993)

6/30/1993 - Hopewell Borough acquired station from Fedor for \$300K [DB 2706-258, 07/28/1993]

Used \$65,000 of Boro funds and \$250,000 from private donor [Hw Plan 1996]

1993 - Station boarded up - scaffolding on front [photo TT 8/15/1993]

1994 - Station boarded up - no scaffolding - painted as windows [photo TT 9/4/1994]

1993 - NJ Transit Railroad Feasibility Study for reviving West Trenton line [TET 2/9/1993]

1994 - Hopewell - lower train tracks (for bridge) [letter]

1994 - Hopewell Borough received \$703,400 grant for exterior restorations

From U.S. Dept. of Transportation

Interior needs overhaul plumbing and electrics, restoration of waiting room

Exterior needs new roof and windows [PrPacket 12/16/1997]

1995 - Hopewell Borough received \$586,050 grant for design work and interior restorations

From New Jersey Historic Trust - Bring facility up to code for fire, electric, plumbing and handicap accessibility; provide heating and cooling; restore architectural details and building components [CJ 10/31/2001]

1/1996 - Hopewell Railroad Station Preservation Plan

- Ford Farewell Mills and Gatsch & Heritage Studies

1997 - Station boarded up - painted as windows [photo Pr Packet 12/16/1997]

1/1999 - Hopewell Borough construction contract - Haverstick Borthwick - scaffolding [Hw Plan 1996]

3/1999 - Hopewell construction work began - complete scheduled 10/1/1999 [FFMG 4/99]

1999 - Interior renovation of freight shed, Eagle Scout Kevin Kirby [US1 11/27/2001]

12/1999 - Open house after exterior renovations - windows, balcony, not cresting

upstairs renovations not complete [TT 12/12/1999]

Winter 2001 - Hopewell station reopened as a community center - cresting, balcony

2014 - Dedicated the David H. Knights Community Center [CJ 6/3/2014]

References

Information extracted and summarized from sources including books, reports, maps, deeds, newspapers, and photos. There are obvious gaps and inconsistencies in this information; Comments, additions, and corrections are welcome.

Thanks to the many contributors to the Hopewell Valley History Project who help provide many of the original materials that are shared on the site - see the Acknowledgements page.

See also the associated Hopewell Valley Railroad Lines brief for more on the larger picture of the railroad competition and consolidation during this period.

People and Organizations

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[Audrey Jones 2003] - *A Stroll Through Historic Hopewell* (2003), Audrey Jones

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[Penn NR 1974] - National Register Nomination Form - Pennington Station, 1974

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[Hw Plan 1996] - Hopewell Railroad Station Preservation Plan, Jan. 1996

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[HH] - Hopewell Herald newspaper (through 1955)

[TET] - Trenton Evening Times newspaper

[TT] - Trenton Times newspaper

[NSL] - Newark Star-Ledger

[NYT] - New York Times

[CJ] - CentralJersey.com, e.g., Hopewell Valley News

[CN] - Community News, e.g. U.S.1, Hopewell Express