

= La Stazione =

La Stazione (Italian pronunciation : [la statˈtʃione] , " The Station ") is an Italian restaurant and former train station in the village of New Paltz in Ulster County , New York . The building was the first of two railroad stations constructed in the town of New Paltz , and it is the only former Wallkill Valley Railroad station standing at its original location .

After a lengthy public debate over whether to place the station to the east or west of the Wallkill River , it was built in 1870 on the east bank , within the village of New Paltz . The rail line was formally opened during a large ceremony on December 20 , 1870 . A decade later the station had become a popular departure point for the Mohonk Mountain House by many vacationers , including two U.S. presidents . In the late 19th century , over a dozen stagecoaches ran between the station and Mohonk daily .

The station burned down in 1907 and was rebuilt later that year . The rise of the automobile caused the railroad to end passenger service in 1937 ; by 1959 the station was completely closed and sold off . After closure , it was used for a variety of businesses , including serving as a public @-@ access television station . Freight service along the Wallkill Valley line continued until 1977 , when the corridor was shut to regular rail traffic .

The building was in such a state of disrepair by the 1980s that it was almost demolished , and the nearby tracks were torn up and sold for scrap by 1984 . However , the station avoided demolition and was renovated in 1988 . It was used as a real estate office , and the rail corridor itself was formally opened five years later as the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail . In 1999 , the station became an Italian restaurant and received its current name , La Stazione . The building was expanded in 2003 and served as the setting for a scene in a 2008 mob film .

= = Planning and construction = =

In February 1864 , plans were in place to extend the route of the proposed Wallkill Valley Railroad between the towns of Shawangunk and New Paltz . A civil engineering survey to determine a possible route and cost of such an endeavor was undertaken in March of that year . The proposal sparked a controversy as to whether the route would run east or west of the Wallkill River in New Paltz . The western route was roughly 100 feet (30 m) shorter , and the eastern route would cost \$ 25 @,@ 000 more . However , it was felt that the increased economic activity from having the rail line run east of the river , and directly through the village of New Paltz , would offset the expense . Bonding for the rail line through New Paltz , at a cost of \$ 123 @,@ 000 , was completed by January 1869 . The Wallkill Valley Railroad was the first rail line in Ulster County , and was heralded as a cure for the region 's isolation from the rest of the industrialized world .

By November 1869 , the Gardiner rail depot , to the south of New Paltz , was ceremoniously opened by the railroad 's president , Floyd McKinstry . The station immediately began to see regular traffic . A second Gardiner station was constructed in the hamlet of Forest Glen , in the northern part of Gardiner . The railroad company was contractually obligated to start construction in New Paltz by May 18 , 1870 , and work on the New Paltz station commenced that day . The depot was designed to be 20 by 80 feet (6 @.@ 1 by 24 @.@ 4 m) . The design included freight and baggage rooms , as well as a water tank and engine house . The station had two waiting rooms , while most stations on the Wallkill line only had one . The New Paltz station , as with the other Wallkill Valley stations , was based on " standard patterns ... rather than [being designed] by individual architects " .

Half the station 's lumber came from Honesdale , Pennsylvania , via the Delaware and Hudson Canal and its framework was raised on July 1 , 1870 . Work was completed by September 1870 . John C. Deyo had provided the carpentry , Snyder and Fuller painted it , and John C. Shaffer was the contractor . Shaffer had also constructed living quarters for the railroad 's workers .

The masonry for a bridge over the Plattekill Creek between Gardiner and New Paltz was completed by late June 1870 , and trestle work was done by July . Beginning in late September 1870 , the railroad had begun laying tracks between Gardiner and New Paltz . The tracks reached the Plattekill Creek bridge by the end of October , and the rail line reached New Paltz on December 1 , 1870 .

= = Opening and early operation = =

The rail line was officially opened in New Paltz on December 20 , 1870 , during a day @-@ long celebration . At that time , the Wallkill Valley line was connected to the Erie Railroad 's Montgomery ? Goshen branch to the south ; an inaugural train containing about 350 passengers ran to Goshen , making stops at each station along the way , before heading back to New Paltz . The station 's telegraph was used to " receive ... election returns " throughout the 1870s .

On March 3 , 1880 , four men robbed the station 's safe . They broke into the depot late at night and dragged the safe to the center of the station . They then attempted to drill holes into the safe and explode it with gunpowder , but failing that , cut off one of its sides . The contents of the safe were 300 cigars and a few bills and papers . After the suspects were arrested in Poughkeepsie , the local sheriff was reluctant to transfer the suspects to New Paltz . The Poughkeepsie police were insistent that they be paid immediately for their services . The day after their arrest , the men were allowed to go to a barber shop for a shave ; some witnesses were unable to identify the suspects because of this , and the officers were publicly chided for incompetence . Cigars in the suspects ' pockets were identical to the cigars in the safe , and along with tools recovered from the site , they were used to identify the men . The suspects were brought to a jail in Kingston pending the ruling of a grand jury that April . A large crowd gathered at the New Paltz depot to watch them depart . The men were described as " cracksmen of the first water " , possibly " stylish " , and so proficient at safe @-@ cracking that , " if they [had] any chance at all , or [got] hold of any weapon , they [would] pick their way thro ' the jail as easily as boring through a lime heap " . The men were subsequently convicted . As a result of the burglary , station agent Dwight Marsh was given a revolver , and it became policy not to keep valuables in the safe overnight . On December 8 , 1880 , another thief broke a window at the depot and stole a box of cigars .

Two sheds had been built adjacent to the station by 1881 . The land the sheds were built on was purchased the previous year by Mohonk Mountain House co @-@ founder Albert Smiley for \$ 500 . The sheds were built for the resort 's horses . During this period , as many as 14 stagecoaches each day transported guests between the station and Mohonk . The West Shore Railroad purchased the Wallkill Valley line in June 1881 , and placed an additional siding by the depot in 1887 to allow daily " special extra @-@ fare trains ... for the Minnewaska and Mohonk visitors " .

President Chester A. Arthur visited the station with his daughter in 1884 . He was welcomed by the railroad 's director and brought to Lake Mohonk . President Rutherford B. Hayes occasionally attended conferences at the Mohonk Mountain House . In 1892 , several townspeople held a reception for him at the station , giving him " three rousing cheers " . Other notable Mountain House guests who arrived by train were opera singer Ernestine Schumann @-@ Heink and orator William Jennings Bryan . A sewage line was installed from the station to the Wallkill River in 1905 .

= = Springtown station = =

As soon as the station in the village was completed , a second station was built at Springtown , a hamlet in the northwestern part of the town of New Paltz that once sported " its own post office , church , school , hotel , a gambling den ... and a bevy of bars " . The station was planned to be two stories tall with an area of 16 by 40 feet (4 @. @ 9 by 12 @. @ 2 m) . A 413 @-@ foot (126 m) bridge across the Wallkill River to Springtown was completed by December 1870 , and the station was constructed at the point where the rail line crossed Coffey Road . Throughout its history , the Springtown station was occupied by various tenants who took up residence .

The original New Paltz station burned down around 4 : 45 A.M. on April 23 , 1907 , damaging freight and killing station agent E. J. Snyder 's dog . The fire originated in the office stove , and spread rapidly before local fire companies could arrive . A passenger car was used as a temporary station while the building was rebuilt . By late September 1907 , the concrete foundation and the framework of the new building had been put in place , but work on the interior did not begin until November because the lumber had not arrived . The depot was completely rebuilt by December 31 ,

1907 , and in active use by February 7 , 1908 . While the original station had a gabled roof , the rebuilt station was hipped . The direction of the new station 's battens was horizontal ; the original station had had vertical slats . The rebuilt freight house was placed a distance from the depot .

The building was not fully rebuilt until 1911 . A house was constructed at the site of the Springtown depot the year before it was rebuilt . The New York Public Service Commission , a regulatory agency founded in 1907 , ruled in May 1911 that the new Springtown station was adequate . The Springtown station had no station agent or freight house . In 1925 , sparks shooting off a passing train caused a fire in Springtown that burned down six buildings , causing \$ 7 @ , @ 000 in damage . The prominence of the New Paltz station , as well as the growth of SUNY New Paltz in the village , caused the decline of Springtown as a community .

= = Closure = =

Passenger service along the Wallkill Valley line ceased in 1937 , due to the increased usage of automobiles . By December 1958 the building (then owned by the New York Central Railroad) was no longer used as a railroad station . It was sold off in 1959 , and hosted a number of local endeavors , serving as a chapter house for the Knights of Columbus and as an office for a public @ - @ access television station . Under the ownership of the television station , the roof and floorboards were repaired .

In April 1977 , the owner of the property , Fetner and Gold Associates , attempted to open the building as a bar . Their zoning permit was rejected ; the village mayor was " unalterably opposed " to the prospect , and the board believed the proposed bar would lead to complaints from nearby apartments . It was also believed that it would be unsafe to open a bar adjacent to an active rail line , and that such a venture would threaten the nearby Huguenot Street Historic District . On December 31 , 1977 , all regular freight service ceased along the Wallkill Valley line . By the early 1980s the depot had become a " hangout for youths to drink and carouse " and the village considered dismantling it . Conrail , at that time the owner of the rail line , removed all tracks along the corridor between 1983 and 1984 and salvaged the steel .

= = Renovation = =

Robert Mark Realty bought the former station in 1986 and renovated it at a cost of \$ 175 @ , @ 000 . Work began in October 1987 and was more than halfway done by January 1988 . Matt Bialecki , the architect who had overseen the renovation of the former New Paltz opera house as a restaurant , served as the project 's architect . Wilro Builders served as the contractor . The building 's design follows a Shingle Style architecture and its sidings are both shingle and clapboard . There are bay windows on the east and west faces , and rafters are partly visible . The building served as a real estate office .

On February 9 , 1999 , the village approved a plan to allow the building to open as a 36 @ - @ seat Italian restaurant under the co @ - @ ownership of two men , Jeff DiMarco and Rocco Panetta . It was at this time the station was given its current name , La Stazione . DiMarco had previously managed construction for an adjacent restaurant , the Gilded Otter . He sold his ownership of La Stazione in August 2000 .

The building is adjacent to a rail trail , and there is a 3 @ - @ foot (0 @ . @ 91 m) bike rack by the building 's northern end . The village of New Paltz purchased its section of the former Wallkill Valley rail corridor from Conrail in 1991 , formally opening it on October 9 , 1993 as a public walkway , the Wallkill Valley Rail Trail . The permit allowing La Stazione to operate as a restaurant also required the placement of a sign in the building 's parking lot to indicate the presence of the trail . The village allowed La Stazione to place a public picnic table under an overhang by the rail trail , on the condition that the restaurant did not provide outdoor food service . In August 1999 , the restaurant was forced to remove a gas tank and gas line that were placed under the trail ; failure to do so could have resulted in the revocation of La Stazione 's certificate of occupancy , preventing the building from being operated as a restaurant .

In 2001 , the village was experiencing water drainage issues in the area by the restaurant . By early 2002 , the village approved plans for an expansion of La Stazione , which addressed the drainage issues ; the restaurant offered to install larger pipes than were necessary in exchange for the village " defray [ing] their costs " . When the Gardiner station burned down on October 10 , 2002 , La Stazione was left as the last former station of the Wallkill Valley Railroad remaining at its original location . The building 's addition was completed in 2003 .

A scene from the 2008 mob film Front Man was filmed at La Stazione ; the film 's director , Ray Genadry , is the cousin of the restaurant 's owner , Rocco Panetta . The scene featured Chris Colombo , son of the late Joseph Colombo , a former boss of the Colombo crime family . Colombo had previously starred in a 2005 mobster documentary on HBO . The building was added to the New Paltz Downtown Historic District on July 24 , 2009 .

= = Former Wallkill Valley stations = =

Binnewater Historic District
Campbell Hall (Metro @-@ North station)
Kingston , New York railroad stations