

## The Railroad Comes to the Town of Huntington (1868)

In 1866 the railroad system on Long Island was made up of several competing railroad companies, including the Long Island Rail Road, which operated the main line to Greenport with branches terminating at Oyster Bay and Syosset, and the New York and Flushing Rail Road, which terminated at Port Washington in Nassau County. There was no service to any of the north shore villages in Suffolk County. The Town of Huntington, which was settled beginning in 1653, was quite populous by 1866 and the townspeople were clamoring for rail service. In April of that year, Josiah Sterns, President of the New York and Flushing Rail Road addressed a mass meeting at Huntington, giving the townspeople facts and figures and assuring them that his backers were ready to absorb one-half of a proposed stock issue to build rail lines to Huntington along the north shore from Port Washington. During the summer of 1866, this stock was issued and sold well.



Huntington Station after construction of the current station building in 1909. In the center of the picture is the trolley that provided connecting service to Huntington Village and Halesite from 1890 to 1927.

Convinced that his competitor meant business, Oliver Charlick, President of the Long Island Rail Road, decided to build his own line along the north shore from Syosset to outflank his rivals. In July 1866, agents of the LIRR approached the owners and began purchasing land for the proposed track. Since Charlick's treasury at the time was solvent, he was able to pay the high prices demanded by the owners and began construction. He then executed a masterstroke of diplomacy by buying out the rival New York and Flushing in July of 1867, thus eliminating his competition for the Huntington service.

The townspeople anticipated that the station in Huntington Village would be located at Main Street and New York Avenue, the center of town. However, in right-of-way negotiations with G.W. Briggs, owner of crucial real estate on the west side of New York Avenue, and other property owners, Charlick found that the price they were asking (\$10,000) was to his thinking greatly inflated. Therefore, acting in his usual fashion, he simply located the Huntington station a mile and a half south of the village, where the land was cheaper and thus created Huntington Station. This also meant that the Cold Spring Harbor station had to be south of that village as well. The track continued east from that point, putting the Centerport Station (today Greenlawn) south of that village until the line turned north and terminated at a station in Northport Village (today the King Kullen shopping center). Northport was the end of the line until 1873 when the track was laid south of Northport and continued to Port Jefferson. A second station was located in what today is called East Northport (not named Northport Station because the first station remained in Northport Village). Because of the existence of the railroad stations, the hamlets of Huntington Station, Centerport Station (Greenlawn) and East Northport grew up at these locations.



Rodgers #47 Engine on the L.I.R.R. in 1915.

The people of Village of Huntington were furious with the decision to locate the station south of the village, but could do nothing to dissuade Charlick and by New Year's day, the track from Syosset was completed to New York Avenue. Service began to Huntington on January 13, 1868, with two trips a day, the fare being \$.95

Oliver Charlick and the people of Huntington never forgave each other. When Charlick died two weeks out of office in 1875, Huntington was the only station on the Island that did not drape itself with mourning black. As for Charlick, in his will, he forbade the "citizens of Huntington to celebrate my death."

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