



East Lyme's Overlook Park Progress Report #49

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On March 29, 2016, eighteen months after reconstruction started on the western half of the Niantic Bay Overlook Boardwalk, it was opened to the public.

The eastern half was completed by Amtrak and opened to the public on July 12, 2013. The two halves are now joined to recreate a 1.1 mile long walkway coupled with a new 14 acre beach.

That new beach was created by trucking 76,000 cubic yards of sand from a quarry in Canterbury, CT., which was spread along the Amtrak beach and is retained there by the new 230 foot long stone groin, part of the Amtrak bridge construction project. The beach makes a significant 10% addition to the total statewide non-private recreational beach access by the public to Long Island Sound.

The photograph shown above locates one of the eight newly remanufactured educational signs that dot the western half of the Boardwalk. This one is described in detail in the March 2016 issue of Post Road Review. It is located on the Boardwalk opposite the foot of Pennsylvania Avenue (i.e. Rt. 161) where the long gone Niantic rail road station/freight depot once stood, the remnants of which comprise the vacant Ocean Express Food Store, now owned by the Town of East Lyme.

The text on the sign that commemorates the train station reads: "Prior to the 1800s, travelers came to East Lyme by boat or horse and wagon. With the advent of the steam train, countless horses were replaced by the "Iron Horse." The railroad connected people and towns like never before. Built between 1850 and 1852, the New Haven and New London Railroad connected with the railroad between Stonington and Boston. The passenger station once stood where Pennsylvania Avenue and Main Street intersect. A nearby freight station allowed for convenient transport of goods in and out of East Lyme and the region. In 1872, the railroad became part of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad. Many visitors came to the area to enjoy the Niantic Bay and beaches. A second rail station was built at the end of Lake Avenue in Crescent Beach due to the popularity of that beach community.

"The railroad through Niantic has been owned and operated by Amtrak since 1976. In 1999, the shoreline route between New Haven and Boston was electrified. This completed an all-electric high speed mainline between Washington D.C. and Boston. The 460-mile Northeast Corridor is the busiest in the United States."

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