

***Testimony by Robert Owen against the dismantling of the Mountain  
Division Track***

**It was John Alfred Poor, a Bangor lawyer and fervent railroad supporter, who first proposed a railroad to connect the ice free Portland harbor and Montreal. That route would be the shortest overland route from the Atlantic to Montreal. This would invigorate the 1840s Portland economy and Quebec would have freight move year round, instead of only when the St Lawrence River was ice free. Also, the railroad would open the interior of the Pine Tree State for economic development along its route. Poor's dream was realized in 1853. A decade later, the Anderson brothers saw a chance to compete by building a track along another shortcut from Portland through Crawford Notch in the White Mountains and west through Vermont to Ogdensburg, NY, on the St Lawrence River, due south of Ottawa and central Canada. In addition to through freight and passenger traffic, there was rail service inland from Portland to northern NH and Vermont. Their track was completed to St Johnsbury Vt.**

**The Maine Central took over operations in 1888 and for over a century rail service was provided from Portland to St Johnsbury and all points in between. It would have continued if ownership of Maine Central had not gone to Guilford Transportation. Guilford chose to move freight on their east west tracks in Massachusetts. They believed hauling freight a longer distance would still be cheaper than the cost of keeping the Mountain Division maintained. What they did not consider was, by their actions, rail service to the Maine interior and northern NH would cease and all hauling would have to be done by trucks which today are adding to the wear and tear and congestion of our two lane highways.**

**The state of Maine had the foresight to take over ownership of the Mountain Division corridor so it would be there for the future if needed. We're now at a point where once again, rail service could alleviate the wear and tear and congestion on our highways as well as once again provide bulk and oversize load shipping services to industry along the Mountain Division track.**

**The track right of way is wide enough to accommodate both track and recreational pathways giving both the opportunity for growth. Fryeburg's five mile rec path is a great example of that. The potential benefits of shared use of the Mountain Division is a win win situation for all concerned. Please vote to keep the track in place and then go forward looking at a shared use to fully realize the potential of the Mountain Division rail corridor for the state of Maine.**