



History of the Salisbury Point Railroad Depot

by

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Passenger Station Salisbury Point, Station #137+17



Salisbury Point Depot as it stands today on Water Street in Amesbury's Lower Millyard. (Amesbury Carriage Museum photo.)



Salisbury Point Depot on Rocky Hill Road c.1914. (Amesbury Carriage Museum Collection, original from Beverly Historical Society.)

Built:	1864	Size:	11 x 20 feet
Discontinued:	1936	Original location:	Rocky Hill Road
Built by:	Eastern Railroad Company	Current location:	9 Water Street

The Salisbury Point Railroad depot is a surviving reminder of the early history of the railroad in Amesbury. This small building has been moved several times, and now stands in Heritage Park in the Lower Millyard.

Origins of Salisbury Branch Railroad

The Salisbury Branch Rail Road was chartered by Stephen Webster, Capt. James Horton, Joshua Aubin, Nathaniel White, Robert Patten and Henry M. Brown in 1844. They almost immediately sold the charter to the Eastern Railroad Company. The Eastern Railroad connected Boston, Massachusetts, to Portland, Maine. The Salisbury Branch later became known as the Amesbury Branch and was taken over by the Boston & Maine Railroad in 1890.

Construction of the Salisbury Branch Railroad began with the grading of the road in August of 1846 and was ready for the laying of the rails by July of 1847. At the cost of \$70,000.00 and at least three lives lost during the construction, it went into service with the first passenger car arriving at the Salisbury Mills Depot on Water Street (now Amesbury) on January 1st, 1848. It ran three miles and 4,112 feet from East Salisbury main line.

Three depots were along this short span: the East Salisbury Depot, the Salisbury Mills Depot and in the middle the Salisbury Point Depot. In the first year of service, 28,200 passengers traveled over this line, exceeding all estimates by nearly five times! The Salisbury Branch started with two daily trains in 1848, and by 1889 there were eleven daily passenger trains to and from Boston.

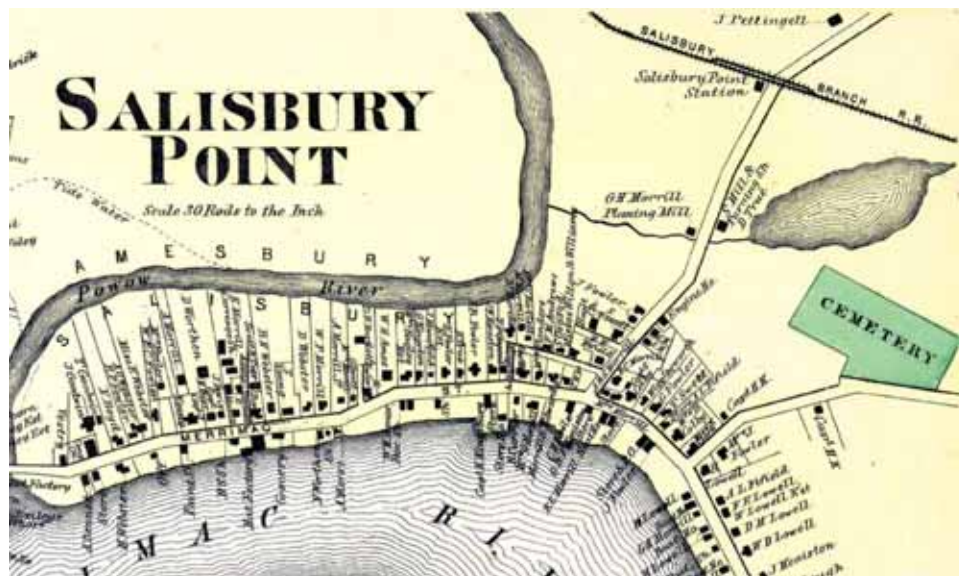
First References to Salisbury Point Depot

There are many references to the existence of the Salisbury Point Depot starting in December of 1848. It is believed the original Salisbury Point Depot was built with the Salisbury Branch railroad in 1847, but few maps show its placement until 1872. At this time, the Beers map shows the Salisbury Point Depot on the southwest corner of the crossing of Rocky Hill Road and Salisbury Branch R.R. As of 2019, this location would be behind the Dunkin Donuts parking lot, probably about where a bench now rests on the Amesbury Riverwalk.

According to an article in *The Villager* dated December 15th, 1864, a new depot better than the last was built by the Eastern Railroad Company at the Salisbury Point Station. This is the Salisbury Point Depot now standing in the Lower Millyard on Water Street (after restoration).

The Salisbury Point Depot of 1864 measured 20ft x 11ft with two outbuildings – a modest size compared to its neighboring depots. One outbuilding was a baggage room, with a section used for a coal bin. The other, smaller building was an outhouse. The depot had shutters on each window and a center entrance. A coal stove provided heat and a ticket window inside let passengers purchase their tickets out of the weather. Over 500 passengers came and went through the Salisbury Point Depot in December of 1864. Credit was given to the new depot for the increase in traffic. But despite the new depot, there were still complaints about mud and dirt – probably not an uncommon complaint.

The Beers map of 1872 (below) depicts the side track running across Rocky Hill Road. This may be the reason it was moved, as this would have left freight cars blocking the road. Later references indicate the side track and freight depot were on the east side of Rocky Hill Road.



1872 Beers map of Salisbury Point. Salisbury Point depot upper right. (Accuracy is questionable.)

Growing Traffic and Border Change

In 1873 an average of 1,000 carriages a month were being transported over the Salisbury branch. By the end of 1879, 16,000 carriages were shipped. By March of 1885 it was estimated that 2,000 freight cars a month would come and go over this branch. In July of 1886 the boundary of Amesbury and Salisbury was moved 1 mile east, placing the Salisbury Point Depot within the town lines of Amesbury, so the Salisbury Branch became known as the Amesbury Branch.

By 1888, 40,000 passengers and 42,000 tons of freight were received by the Amesbury railroad branch and 15,200 carriages were shipped out, making this a busy line. This included the three depots, Salisbury (Amesbury) Mills Depot, Salisbury Point Depot and East Salisbury Station. In the records, no distinction was made as to how the freight was divided among the depots, but it can be assumed the Amesbury/Salisbury Mills Depot got the most traffic. At times, more than 50 train cars would be lined up waiting for freight and passengers, making it challenging for those who needed to walk the length of the train to get to the passenger cars. Then add in foul weather. Must have been quite a challenge, but an amazing site to see.

Boston & Maine Railroad Takes Over

The Boston & Maine Railroad bought out Eastern Railroad and dissolved the company on May 9th, 1890. In the years 1898-1902, B & M was busy making improvements. New planking was laid for the Salisbury Point freight platform, and sidewalk changes to the station and changes to the grade of Rocky Hill Road leading to the station were made.

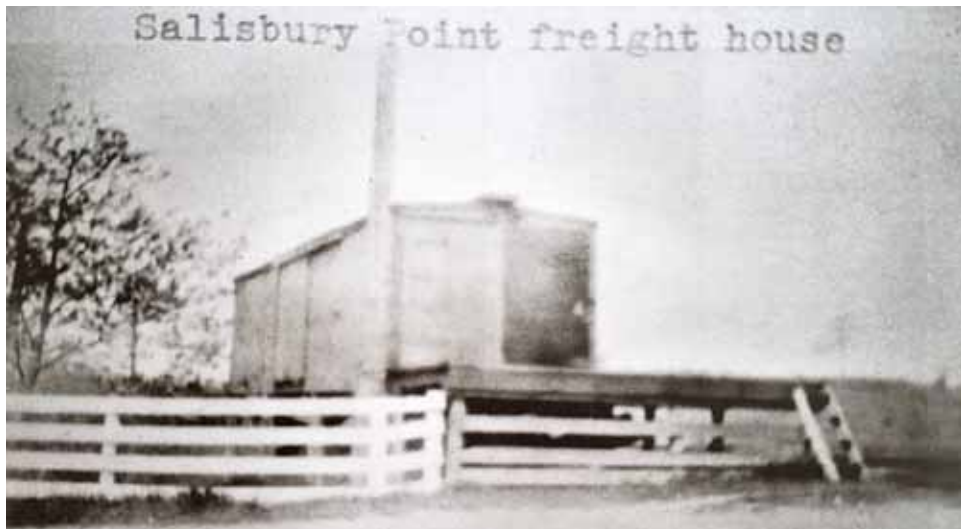
In a series of photos of the Salisbury Point Station dating from 1905 to 1917, one can see that the depot has been moved to the northeast corner of the intersection between Rocky Hill Road and the railroad crossing. A picture dated 1905 clearly shows a house up on Rocky Hill behind the depot, which still stands today (as of 2019). Currently a large "Salisbury Point" sign hangs above the garage.

The Salisbury Point freight house is believed to have been directly across from the passenger depot on the other side of the tracks on the southeast corner of Rocky Hill Road and the railroad crossing. It is unclear when the freight platform was added, but likely it was very shortly after the Salisbury Point Depot was built. The Salisbury Point freight house caught fire and was completely burned to the ground on May 4th, 1906. A new freight station was in place as of Sept 8th of that year.

In a report by the Interstate Commerce Commission in 1916, the depot is listed in "good" condition. The freight platform is described as four years old (more likely 10 years old) and being 36 x 15 feet, with the freight house occupying a 9 x 30 foot corner. In pictures dating from the early 1900's, the cedar shingle siding appears to be left unpainted and weathered.



Salisbury Point Station, looking northeast and up Rocky Hill Road, 1915-1916. (Amesbury Carriage Museum Collection, Original Beverly Historical Society.)



Salisbury Point freight platform and freight house, c. 1914, Rocky Hill Road. (Amesbury Carriage Museum Collection, original from the collection of the Boston & Maine R.R. Historical Society.)

Tiny Transportation Hub

Despite its small size, this depot was a busy place. It received the daily mail to and from Boston for the residences and businesses of Salisbury Point and the ferry area. The freight platform handled the raw materials for the surrounding businesses, such as lumber for the nearby boat shops and for construction projects such as the hat mill addition and the Chain Bridge. The finished goods from local merchants, such as dories, were then loaded back onto the freight platform to be transported to the big cities for sale.

And let's not forget the passengers who traveled in and out of town this way. Those arriving at the Salisbury Point Station could meet trolley and coach services that ran regularly from the depot to other parts of town.

Inevitable Decline

But nothing could stop the steady decline of the railroads. B & M reported a \$50,000 loss in 1914 on the Amesbury line. The company tried cutting back on train service but restored it after the townspeople had very strong objections. In 1916 saw another upgrade to the depot. A "new" type of concrete called "bitulithic cement" (asphalt and crushed stone) was poured and new curbing and gravel was laid.

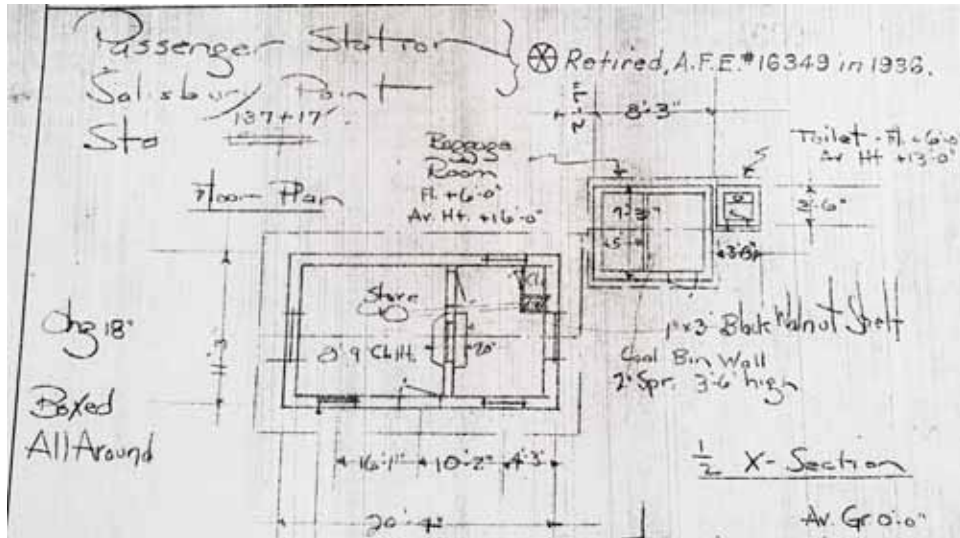
The 11 trains a day from Boston to the Amesbury branch in the 1880's diminished to just two trains daily by the 1920's. In 1924, the financially suffering Boston & Maine Railroad Co. cut expenses by laying off the two men working at Salisbury Point Station, leaving the depot unmanned.

Many factors influenced the decline of the railroads, but one big factor was the automobile industry. The convenience of traveling where and when you pleased by automobile outweighed adjusting your plans for a train schedule, and roads were improving too. Another factor was the growing trucking industry, which could move freight less expensively than railroads, since they did not have to maintain the roads they used or deal with the taxes placed on the railroads.

Boarded Up and Moved Away

Although times were changing, the Salisbury Point Station remained in use until 1936. But that year, the B & M Railroad discontinued its use due to loss of revenue. The once-busy little depot was boarded up and left to fate – and fate arrived in October of 1936. The Salisbury Point Depot was purchased by a local resident, and a team of rented horses moved it from Rocky Hill Road to 15 Prospect Street in Amesbury.

In its new location the small building became an aviary on Frederick H. Sargent's poultry farm. The depot remained on the Prospect Street property as it passed through a series of owners.



A section of the *Division of Valuation Report* by the Interstate Commerce Commission, dated April 18, 1916. Created by the U.S. Government to inventory and document U.S. railroads.



Lowell's Boat Shop dories ready to be shipped from Salisbury Point Depot in 1931 and Ralph Lowell, age 10. (Photo courtesy of Lowell's Boat Shop, Amesbury Mass.)

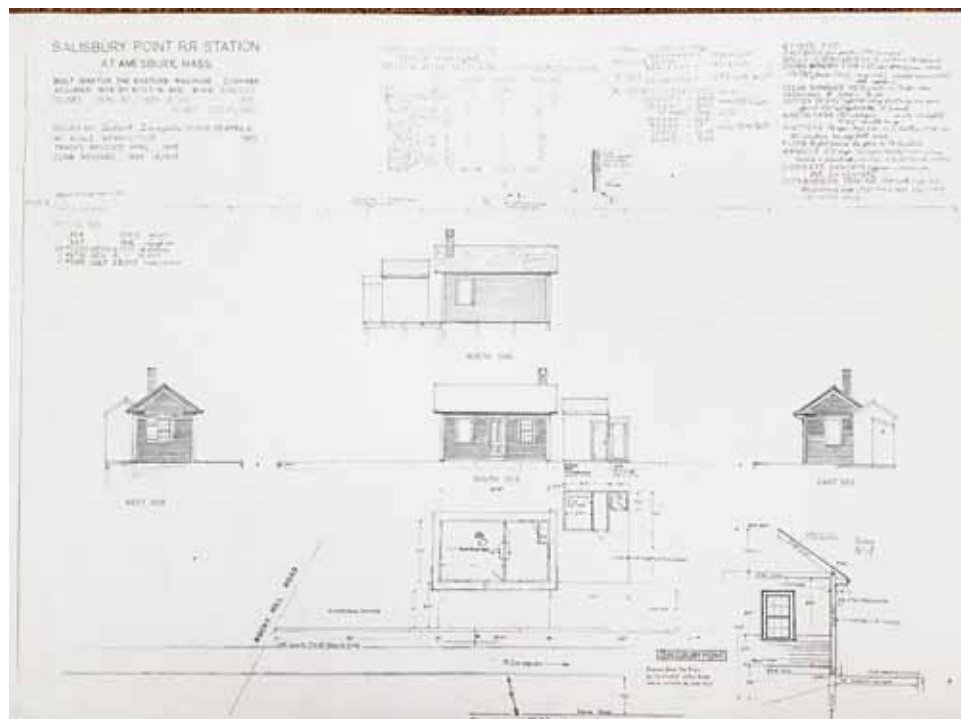
Rescue by Richard Nichols

Ronald Greenwood purchased the property in 1974, and in 1980 railroad historian Richard Nichols rediscovered the depot there. The structure was in bad shape, but Richard was determined to save it. He purchased it from Greenwood for \$1.00 with the condition that he would move it off the property.

Richard secured a location for the depot on the property of the Bartlett Museum on Main Street. The station had to be cut into four sections so it could be moved, which made the restoration no easy task. Funds were needed along with a team of volunteers to assist with the work. After three years of effort, the restoration was completed. The flooring, siding, roof and many pieces of rotted wood had been replaced. (At some point the rear window was removed, but this may have happened while on Prospect Street.)

The dedication of the restored depot was held on Saturday, June 25, 1983. The building was placed on a concrete foundation and painted cream and maroon. A duplicate of the original "Salisbury Point" sign was installed and the interior was plastered, painted and varnished as was the typical of early 1900's depots. With the addition of electricity the job was complete.

Unfortunately, the location near the Bartlett Museum building overcrowded this historic site, and plans were soon under way to find a new home for the restored building.



Drawing by Robert Grodzicki, April 25, 1985. (S.P.R.R.H.S. Collection, Amesbury Carriage Museum.)

Two Final Moves

Few depots have experienced so many relocations. This time, the move was to Water Street on April 21st, 2005, on a large boat trailer – all organized by Peter Bryant, president of the SPRRHS. The depot had to be placed in a temporary location on Water Street until restoration work in the lower millyard was finished. “Temporary” turned out to mean nine years.

While awaiting a final relocation, the beleaguered little depot was almost taken by the overflowing Powow River in 2006. But once again, fate smiled and the water stopped rising just a few feet away. At last, on November 3rd, 2014, the depot was moved AGAIN onto a new foundation where it stands today.

For more than 70 years the depot served Amesbury as a simple but integral part of daily life. Then it served some of the residents of Amesbury as a birdhouse and shed. But now it stands as it looked when used as a depot – a tribute to Amesbury’s carriage and automobile industry in the days of the great railroads. The Salisbury Point Depot remains part of the Amesbury Carriage Museum’s collection and a piece of Amesbury’s treasured history.



Salisbury Point Depot being moved to Water Street on April 21, 2004. (Amesbury Carriage Museum Collection.)

Timeline of Historical Events for Salisbury Point Depot

Date	Event	Source
Apr 24, 1844	First meeting organizing the Salisbury Branch R.R.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 4, Thurs., Oct. 12th, 1876.
1844	Salisbury Branch Rail Road was chartered.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Thurs., Nov 1, 1866.
Mar 25, 1846	Act to revive incorporating the Salisbury Branch Rail Road Co.	<i>The Essex Transcript</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Thurs., April 2, 1846.
1846	Grading of the road commenced.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Thurs., Nov 1, 1866.
1847	Grading finished as of July 15, 1847, ready for rails to be laid.	<i>The Essex Transcript</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Thurs, Jul 15, 1847.
Jan 1, 1848	Salisbury branch of the Eastern Railroad goes into service, including the Salisbury Point Depot.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Thurs., Nov. 1, 1866.
1848	Total of 28,200 passengers, five times the estimate, through the Salisbury Branch R.R.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2 Thurs., Nov 1, 1866.
1848	Two passenger trains daily.	<i>The Amesbury and Salisbury Villager</i> , pub Amesbury Mass. Page 2, Thur., Jan. 24, 1889.
Dec 1, 1848	Salisbury Point R.R. reference in sale of Jonathan Smith's land.	<i>The Daily Herald</i> , pub in Newburyport, Mass. Page 4, Wed., Dec. 27th, 1848.
July 26, 1849	Salisbury Point R.R. Depot referenced in auction of Joseph Stickney's land.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 3, Thurs, July 26, 1849.
Oct 27, 1853	Salisbury Point R.R. depot referenced in newspaper article "Steam Factory."	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Thurs., Oct 27, 1853.
Apr 23, 1857	Salisbury Point R.R. Depot referenced in newspaper article regarding land of R. B. Lawton for sale.	<i>The Daily Herald</i> , pub in Newburyport, Mass. Thurs., Apr. 23, 1857
Dec 1, 1864	New Salisbury Point Station built to replace existing one.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Thurs. Dec 15, 1864
1864	Over 500 passengers at S.P. for Dec., 1864.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass., Thurs., Jan 5, 1865,

Date	Event	Source
Jun 1, 1875	Over 600 passengers in a single month. Hats and dories shipped out at S.P.	<i>The Daily Herald</i> , pub in Newburyport, Mass. Page 2, Friday, Jan. 27, 1865.
Apr 19, 1866	Public auction of land with reference to Salisbury Point Depot.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Thurs., Apr 19, 1866.
July 23, 1868	House for sale referencing Salisbury Point Depot.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Thurs, July 23, 1868.
1872	Beers map, showing Salisbury Point Depot on the southwest corner of the crossing of the railroad and Rocky Hill Road (behind the current Mobil Station lot).	<i>Map of Salisbury Point. West Newbury. (Essex County- Massachusetts)</i> . Issued Philadelphia, 1872, by D. G. Beer.
1873	Estimates of about 1000 carriages a month departing this station.	
1879	16,000 carriages shipped out by year end.	<i>The Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Thurs., Jan. 8, 1880.
1884	Salisbury Point Depot shown on southwest corner of railroad crossing and Rocky Hill Road.	<i>Map of Amesbury</i> , pub by Geo. H. Walker & Co., 1884.
1885	2000 freight cars for March.	<i>The Weekly News</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Fri., Mar. 20, 1885.
July 1, 1886	Boundary lines between Amesbury and Salisbury moved one mile East. Salisbury Point Station now in Amesbury.	
1888	Total of 40,000 passengers.	<i>The Amesbury and Salisbury Villager</i> , pub. in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Thurs., Jan. 24, 1889.
Jan 1, 1889	Map, no depot shown, area not shown.	Sanborn Maps 1889
1889	11 daily trains, 3,300 passengers leave via Amesbury branch.	<i>The Amesbury and Salisbury Villager</i> , pub in Amesbury Mass. Page 2, Thurs., Jan. 24, 1889.
May 9, 1890	Boston & Maine buys out Eastern Railroad and dissolves company.	<i>Wikipedia</i> , 2019, Eastern Railroad, en.wikipedia.org.

Date	Event	Source
Aug 17, 1898	New planking for platform of the Salisbury Point freight station.	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Wed., Aug., 17, 1898.
1899	Sidewalk to Salisbury Point Station improved.	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury Mass. Sat., Oct. 28, 1899.
1899	Sanborn maps, area not shown.	Sanborn Maps, 1899.
1901	Referenced in article "Memorial Park."	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury Mass. Tues., Apr. 30, 1901.
1902	Grade of Rocky Hill Road to depot reduced.	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury Mass. Sat., May 24, 1902.
1905	Photo of Salisbury Point Station - Rocky Hill Road (ladies in front of Station).	Amesbury Carriage Museum Collection, collected by Richard Nichols of The Boston & Maine Railroad Historical Society.
1906	S.P. freight station burns and is replaced by Sept. 1906.	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury Mass. Page 2, Sat., May 5, 1906.
c. 1914-1917	Photo of Salisbury Point Station - Rocky Hill Road with outbuildings.	Amesbury Carriage Museum Collection, original Beverly Historical Soc. Collected by Richard Nicholas of The Boston & Maine R.R. Historical Society.
1914	Photo of Salisbury Point freight house c. 1914.	Amesbury Carriage Museum Collection, original source unknown. Collected by Richard Nicholas of The Boston & Maine R.R. Historical Society.
1914	B & M losing \$50,000 a year, tried cutting six trains to Amesbury branch, met with huge resistance from residents.	
c. 1915-1916	Photo of Salisbury Point Station - facing east at Rocky Hill Road with house in back.	Amesbury Carriage Museum Collection, original Beverly Historical Soc. Collected by Richard Nicholas of The Boston & Maine R.R. Historical Society.
1916	Bitulithic cement poured at Salisbury Point Freight Depot	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury Mass. Page 2, Thurs., Oct 5, 1916.
1924	B & M cuts the two men on duty at station.	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury Mass. Wed. Nov., 23, 1949.
Jul 29, 1926	Train holdup. Thieves take mail bag containing \$65,000 of Biddle and Smart payroll.	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Page 2, Friday, Jan. 28, 1927.

Date	Event	Source
1927	S.P. depot shown on northwest corner of Rocky Hill Road and railroad track intersection.	<i>Atlas of Amesbury</i> 1927. Essex County Registry of Deeds, Plate 33.
1931	Lowell's dories on train at Salisbury Point Depot.	Photo courtesy of Lowell's Boat Shop, Amesbury, Mass.
1936	Station retired.	Interstate Commerce Commission Division of Valuation, Page 33, April 8, 1916.
1936	Depot purchased by Fredrick H. Sargent and to be moved from Rocky Hill Road to Prospect Street. Notes depot in existence for 75 years.	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury, Mass. Wed., Oct 28, 1936.
1949	25 years ago B & M Salisbury Point Depot no longer manned.	<i>The Amesbury Daily News</i> , pub in Amesbury Mass. Wed., Nov., 23, 1949.
1974	Ronald Greenwood purchased Prospect Street property containing depot building.	<i>B&M Bulletin</i> . Page 17, Oct., 1986. (Essex Registry of Deeds has deed indicating Greenwood's purchase of property in 1974.)
1980	Richard Nichols discovered and purchased the depot.	<i>B&M Bulletin</i> . Page 17, Oct., 1986, Page 17.
Oct 1, 1980	The S.P.R.R. depot is cut into four sections and moved to Bartlett Museum property for restoration.	<i>B&M Bulletin</i> . Page 17, Oct. 1986.
Jun 25, 1983	Restoration completed.	<i>B&M Bulletin</i> . Page 18, Oct., 1986.
Apr 21, 2005	Depot moved to Water Street.	Amesbury Carriage Museum, Salisbury Point Historical Society Collection.
2006	Flood nearly damages depot.	Pictures, Amesbury Carriage Museum, S.P.R.R.H.S. file, 2006.
Nov 3, 2014	Depot placed on concrete slab foundation, Water Street.	Confirmed by date on slab and by Peter Bryant, previous president of S.P.R.R.H.S.

Additional Sources

General information from the Amesbury Carriage Museum, Salisbury Point Railroad Historical Society Collection.

Richard Nichols of the original Salisbury Point Rail Road Historical Society.

Peter Byrant of the Salisbury Point Rail Road Historical Society.