

THE ADIRONDACK

A 45 YEAR HISTORY

By Ben Turon

The Adirondack heads north along the shoreline of Lake Champlain.

From Manhattan Island to the Île de Montréal, the Adirondack travels one of the most scenic train routes in the world. Over its 381 miles, this once-daily Amtrak train passes through the scenic Hudson River Valley and along Lake Champlain with Vermont's Green Mountains rising from across the water. It passes by several historic sites, West Point Military Academy and popular tourist destinations like Saratoga Springs and Ticonderoga.

The Adirondack began its life in 1971 as one of the first state-sponsored Amtrak services, a new addition to the Amtrak's early, barebones, national network. Before Amtrak, the Delaware & Hudson and New York Central railroads operated two New York-Montreal trains, the daylight Laurentian and overnight Montreal Limited. However, like dozens of other trains nationwide, neither made the cut into the pared-down Amtrak system.

The energy crises of the 1970s changed the situation. For the first time since World War II, rail travel looked more favorable. The New York State Department of Transporta-

tion (NYSDOT) signed a contract with Amtrak to sponsor a restored New York City-Montreal rail service, using an extension of an existing New York-Albany Empire Service train.

On August 5, 1974, the Adirondack had its first day of service, a ceremonial run that according to the *New York Times*, "was greeted by bands, bunting, flag-waving crowds and orating politicians". The VIPs included then New York State Transportation Commissioner Raymond T. Schuler and Governor Malcom Wilson, who made a pitch for a \$250 million state rail bond. The bond passed later that year, triggering a major upgrade of the New York-Albany-Niagara Falls "Empire Corridor".

The *New York Times* continued, "...As the nine-car train made its way north along the Vermont border, towns that had been without passenger service since 1971 turned out in colorful force to welcome the Adirondack back to the Albany-Montreal corridor. The hoopla included... a salute from speedboat enthusiasts on picturesque Lake Champlain... [At Saratoga Springs] about 1,000 people were on hand, including the town's Bethes-

Another difference from today is that the Adirondack ran as a section of a New York-Buffalo Empire Service train, with the Montreal-bound cars coupled and uncoupled at the Albany-Rensselaer station.