

Roots of the Pennsylvania Railroad in Columbus, Ohio

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THE COLUMBUS & XENIA RAILROAD (1850)

One of the companies chartered to build and operate a railroad was the Columbus & Xenia, which built a line about fifty-five miles long between the two cities mentioned in the company name. At Xenia connections were made with another railroad to Cincinnati. The Xenia road was constructed thru London and West Jefferson, entering the west side of Columbus in the area north of and parallel to Broad Street, crossing the Scioto River thru a covered bridge in front of the Ohio Penitentiary, and extending to its depot at High Street north of Naghten Street where two other lines, then under construction, were to have their passenger depots. The company was chartered on March 12, 1844, but construction was not started until 1848.

Construction was completed and the first passenger train was operated over the line on February 20, 1850. This was the first railroad train to enter Columbus. The centennial of this event passed without any ceremonious public notice two years ago.

The Ohio State Journal of March 1, 1850, stated - "Both houses of the Ohio Legislature have voted to accept the invitation of the Columbus & Xenia Railroad to take a free ride over the line, and will leave tomorrow. The lawmakers will go as far as Xenia on the new road and then go on to Cincinnati over the Little Miami tracks. It will be a novel sight to see the government of the great State of Ohio going off at the rate of 25-miles per hour".

In 1853, the Little Miami Railroad and the Columbus & Xenia entered into a contract by which the two roads were operated as one line, serving southwestern Ohio. In 1868, the property of the Xenia road was leased to the Little Miami, and in the following year the Little Miami and its leased properties were leased to the Pittsburgh Cincinnati & St. Louis Railroad. The latter line became the Pittsburgh Cincinnati Chicago & St. Louis Railroad, which is under a long term lease to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

Columbus railroad men still refer to the old Columbus & Xenia road as the Little Miami. Its rails bear the traffic of several deluxe name trains - the Spirit of Saint Louis, the Jeffersonian, the American, the Cincinnati Limited, and the PennTexan.

THE COLUMBUS PIQUA & INDIANA RAILROAD (1853)

The company of this name was chartered by the Ohio Legislature in February, 1849, and built its road between Columbus and Union City on the Indiana line. The road passes thru Piqua, Urbana, Milford Center, Plain City and Hilliards, entering Columbus thru Marble Cliff and the southern edge of Grandview Heights, crossing the Olentangy River south of Goodale Street, and extending eastward across Dennison Avenue, north of the Ohio Penitentiary, into the union depot.

The first train passed over the new road from Columbus to Urbana on July 4, 1853, and in the fall of that year train operations were extended to Piqua. It was thru to Union City in 1856.

Its westward extension from Union City was chartered by the Indiana Legislature, and by continued construction and consolidations, the road operated thru Logansport to Chicago. The road became known locally as the Piqua line.

The Columbus Piqua & Indiana Railroad became financially embarrassed and the road was sold by court order to a re-organized company under the name of the Columbus & Indianapolis Railroad. The latter company likewise acquired a road from Covington (Bradford Junction) to Richmond and Indianapolis. The Columbus & Indianapolis Railroad was involved in numerous consolidations, reorganizations, and changes of name, and in 1869, the consolidated properties were leased to the Pittsburgh Cincinnati & St, Louis Railroad. The latter road eventually became the Pittsburgh Cincinnati Chicago & St, Louis Railroad which is under a long term lease to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

THE STEUBENVILLE & INDIANA RAILROAD (1864)

In 1864, another railroad joined the Columbus group, although no new construction was required for its entry, it having come in from Newark over the tracks of the Central Ohio Railroad. The new line with its connection later developed into the popular Pan Handle route between Columbus and Pittsburgh.

In the late 1850's three separate companies were operating railroads which eventually formed a continuous line between Pittsburgh and Newark. They were the Pittsburgh & Steubenville Railroad, the Holliday's Cove Railroad, and the Steubenville & Indiana Railroad. The first named road, a Pennsylvania corporation, extended westward from Pittsburgh to the West Virginia state line; the second road, a Virginia corporation, was a westward extension of the first road, and connected via a bridge over the Ohio River

north of Steubenville with the third road of the group which was an Ohio corporation.

The third road, the Steubenville & Indiana Railroad, extended westward from Steubenville thru the towns of Urichsville, New Comerstown, Coshocton, to Newark. All three companies were struggling to keep their poorly maintained rolling stock moving over unballasted roadbeds with numerous sharp curves and steep grades.

The Steubenville & Indiana Railroad was chartered by the State of Ohio in 1848, but construction was delayed until the mid 50's. The company went into receivership in 1859. During the Civil War, the road transported a heavy volume of war materials, much of it originating in the Pittsburgh steel producing area, and the resultant revenue enabled the receiver to improve the roadbed and facilities, provide new equipment, and even to retire a great part of the road's debts.

In 1864, the receiver acquired an interest in and trackage rights over the Central Ohio Railroad between Newark and Columbus, sharing trackage with the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad which was operating the Central Ohio line. Thereupon, the Steubenville & Indiana Railroad extended its train operations into Columbus.

In the meantime, the Pittsburgh & Steubenville Railroad, the State of Pennsylvania's member of the tri-group, was sold at foreclosure, and in the reorganization it became the Pan Handle Railroad. In 1868, the Pan Handle, the Holliday's Cove, and the Steubenville & Indiana were consolidated under the name of the Pittsburgh Cincinnati & St. Louis Railroad, and became known as the Pan Handle Route. The name, Pan Handle, was applied to the narrow strip of West Virginia which lies between Pennsylvania and Ohio and which, by a stretch of the imagination, resembles map-wise the handle of a pan. This railroad crossed the panhandle section of West Virginia, and the catchy name was applied to the new route.

By additional consolidations this road and other lines became the Pittsburgh Cincinnati Chicago & St. Louis Railroad, which is under a long term lease to the Pennsylvania Railroad, which [in 1952] now operates the properties.

The Pan Handle built and developed its extensive shop and terminal facilities in Dennison and Columbus. The Pan Handle shops in Columbus which serves all the Pennsylvania Railroad divisions in the Columbus area have been among the main industries of this city for many decades.

The old Steubenville road might well be considered as the eastern extension of the old Xenia road inasmuch as both roads are operated by the same lease holder, and the two roads form a continuous line thru Columbus

over which some of the nation's finest passenger trains are operated.

CLEVELAND MT. VERNON & COLUMBUS RAILROAD (1873)

The railroad from Mt. Vernon thru Westerville to Columbus was built to provide a second line between Cleveland and Columbus. In 1851, a charter was granted to a company to build a road from Hudson, twenty-five miles south of Cleveland on the main line of the Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railroad, to pass thru Akron and extend in the direction of Columbus over the most practical route. In 1854, the company completed such a railroad from Hudson to the coal fields southwest of Millersburg. This road operated with considerable financial difficulty, and after fifteen years it still was eighty miles from Columbus.

In 1869, a company was formed which became the Cleveland Mount Vernon & Columbus Railroad. This company bought the unfinished road, right-of-way, etc., of the insolvent Springfield Mt. Vernon & Pittsburgh Railroad which extended eastward from Delaware thru Mt. Vernon to Millersburg, the portion of the defunct line west of Delaware having been sold previously to the Big Four Route.

The new company then used as much as practicable of the old property over which to construct a railroad from Columbus to connect southwest of Millersburg with the road from Hudson. Construction was completed in 1873; the various roads were consolidated into one line, and thru trains were operated between Cleveland and Columbus.

The new road entered Columbus from the northeast, running east of and parallel to Cleveland Avenue to a point north of the Columbus Barracks, where it swung southwestward to parallel the Central Ohio road into the union depot.

This road later became known as the Cleveland Akron & Columbus Railroad, and by a corporate consolidation in 1925, the road with other lines became the Pennsylvania Ohio & Detroit Railroad, which leased the properties to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

THE SANDUSKY & COLUMBUS SHORT LINE (1893)

This railroad extended from Sandusky thru the cities of Bellevue, Bucyrus, Marion, and Delaware. Its right-of-way paralleled the Big Four line all the way from Delaware to Columbus. Its passenger tracks connected with the CS&H tracks just south of the state fair grounds, and its passenger trains enter the union depot over the CS&H tracks. Its freight tracks swung

southeastward from a point south of Hudson Street, passed north and east of the fair grounds, and entered the terminal yards of the CS&H in the area east of Cleveland Avenue and north of Fifth Avenue.

The official Railway Guide of January, 1893, carried the first announcement of the new road, stating that the line would open about March 1, and mentioned that new and elegant equipment including three luxurious parlor cars (painted blue, our standard color) would be placed in service between Columbus and Sandusky. Its local stations would be union depot, Fair Grounds, North Columbus (Hudson Street), North Broadway, Artz, and Worthington.

As mentioned earlier in our story, the Sandusky line and the CS&H had an interlocking management, and the two roads, although separate corporations, became known as the Columbus Sandusky & Hocking Line. In course of time, the CS&H portion of the line went under lease to the New York Central, and the Sandusky line, thru a foreclosure and consolidation, became a part of the Pennsylvania Ohio & Detroit Railroad and is [in 1952] now operated by the Pennsylvania Railroad under a long term lease.

Its Grogan terminal yard north of Fifth Avenue in connection with the Norfolk & Western yard has developed into extensive joint terminal facilities. Its principal commodity is coal, most of which is delivered to it by the Norfolk & Western. The bulk of this coal is transported to the Sandusky docks on Lake Erie.

* Text taken from *Columbus Railroads* by Rowlee Steiner, 1952, an unpublished manuscript.