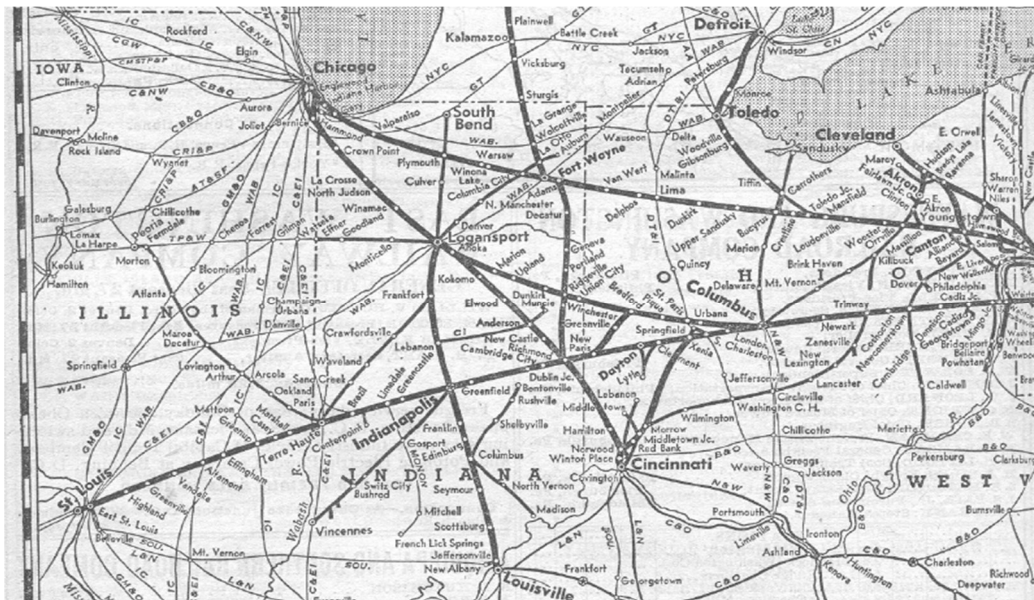


Columbus and the Coal Country Railroads

Part I - The Pennsylvania Railroad¹



With five rail lines converging in Columbus, the Pennsylvania Railroad (PRR) was a leading carrier of coal to and from the City during the entire big coal era (1880-1960). Two of the predecessor railroads eventually consolidated into the PRR, the “Panhandle” line between Columbus and Pittsburgh, and the Cleveland, Akron & Columbus Railway (CA&C), connected Columbus with Ohio’s coal producing counties. Two others, the PRR Sandusky Branch and the Bradford Line from Columbus to Logansport, Indiana, were major carriers of coal outbound from Columbus to the Great Lakes, Chicago and other destinations to the north and west. The fifth PRR predecessor, the Miami Line or “C&X” to Xenia and Cincinnati, carried to Columbus substantial volumes of coal interchanged onto the PRR in Cincinnati from the L&N, C&O and Southern railroads.



Pennsylvania Railroad Lines West of Pittsburgh, circa 1925

The PRR was among the largest coal hauling railroads nationally, moving as much as six million tons annually by 1880, 10 million tons by the early 1890s, 20 million tons by 1900, 40 million tons by 1910, and 60 million tons at the height of the 1920s industrial boom.² In 1939, still emerging from the Great Depression but before the World War II boom years, the PRR system carried 56 million tons of bituminous coal, representing some 15 percent of all soft coal produced in the U.S.

¹ This summary of coal traffic and interchange on the PRR in Columbus covers only a small sliver of the rich history of the five rail lines that eventually became the Pennsylvania Railroad in Central Ohio. For a good short read with a lot of this background detail, see *Roots of the Pennsylvania Railroad in Columbus, Ohio*, an unpublished 1952 manuscript by Rowlee Steiner which is available on the Columbus Railroads website at: http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/live/05Steam_Railroads/15Pennsylvania_Railroad/01Roots_of_the_PRR/prr%20by%20Rowlee%20Steiner.pdf

² For annual PRR coal tonnages, see reports set forth at: <http://pr-railfan.net/documents/AnnualReports.html> Note that about ten percent of these historical PRR coal figures was anthracite originating in Eastern Pennsylvania.

that year.³ As of 1956, as the peak coal traffic period was beginning to decline, the PRR still had 422 active bituminous coal mines on its rail lines east of Pittsburgh, and 63 west of Pittsburgh, and operated marine coal and coke loading terminals in Sandusky and Ashtabula, Ohio and others on Lakes Erie and Ontario, in the ports of New York, Philadelphia and Baltimore, and coal barge terminals on the Ohio River.⁴ In 1958, already suffering from economic ills that would soon lead to its ultimate decline, merger and demise, the PRR was still lifting 54 million tons of coal, or 13 percent of U.S. mine production, and operated the nation's largest fleet of coal hoppers with over 81,000 cars in service.⁵

Records of coal movement through Columbus by PRR's individual rail lines after about 1920 are scarce, because PRR, like other major railroads, tended to report only aggregated system-wide volumes. However, some individual year figures for the PRR lines and reliable anecdotal evidence show the PRR was hauling some 12-15 million tons departing annually north and west from its Columbus interchanges during the 1940s though the later 1950s.

The Sandusky Branch



One of the premier carriers of coal outbound from Columbus was the PRR Sandusky Branch. Built in 1893 as the Sandusky Short Line, running through Worthington, Marion and Bucyrus to Sandusky, this 112-mile railroad quickly became the northern extension of the Columbus, Shawnee & Hocking Railroad, which aptly changed its name to Columbus, Sandusky & Hocking (CS&H). At its zenith in 1895, the CS&H operated about 250 miles of main line and branch tracks connecting Columbus with Sandusky, Zanesville, Shawnee and numerous smaller coal mining towns in Southeast Ohio. The CS&H offered a dozen passenger trains daily, including connections with Lake Erie steamship lines.⁶ As part of a reorganization in 1902, the Pennsylvania Railroad acquired the portion of the CS&H west and north of the CS&H-CA&C crossing at Milo. CS&H lines to the east and south became the Zanesville & Western Railway (Z&W), later part of the New York Central (NYC) system.

Under PRR ownership, the Sandusky Branch was a single-track line with a three extensive double-track sections, including Grogan Yard in Columbus to Troyton (Milepost 31 north from Columbus), South Marion (MP43) to the Harvey coaling tower (MP52) and at the Carrothers interchange (MP73-77), and with an additional number of long passing tracks. The Branch initially ran north along the eastern border of the Ohio State Fairgrounds from a wye at the original west throat of Grogan Yard at Cleveland Avenue, curving to the west and joining the Big Four Cleveland line right-of-way at Hudson Street. In 1930, the PRR extended Grogan Yard westward to Fields Avenue, and relocated the Sandusky Branch track adjacent to the Big Four from 11th Avenue to Hudson Street, building a 2,462-ft. four-track elevated concrete viaduct for this track

³ *Ninety-Third Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, for the Period Ended December 31, 1939*, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UZvvCDKKIK01VJw5JOHpPCaK3s6MqvJO/view>

⁴ *Alphabetical and Geographical List of Anthracite and Bituminous Coal Mines on the Pennsylvania Railroad and Lateral Lines*, July 16, 1956, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qFryhW4akonzMTrUEFd6BawbcccIG63F/view>

⁵ *112th Annual Report of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, for the Period Ended Dec. 31, 1958*, www.multimodalways.org/docs/railroads/companies/PRR/PRR%20CAFRs/PRR%20CAFR%201958.pdf

⁶ CS&H Timetable, 1895: www.railsandtrails.com/PTT/CS&H/1895/CS&H1895PTTs.pdf

over the west side of the Fairgrounds between 11th and 17th Avenues.⁷ The PRR maintained the Branch with heavy-gauge rail and roadbed able to handle the constant pounding of its largest steam locomotives and high axle-load coal hoppers.

PRR Sandusky coal trains were typically 125 coal hoppers double-headed with 2-10-4 J1s to provide sufficient power to mount the grades up from Columbus. The helper engine would be cut off at Lewis Center, north of Worthington, backing all the way to Columbus on the 16 mile return leg. The remaining J1 road engine had enough muscle to take the drag on to Sandusky.

The preponderance of coal volumes moving north on the Sandusky Branch from Columbus were whole trainloads interchanged from the N&W at Pennor and Joyce Avenue Yards,⁸ with additional trainload traffic from the C&O via Grandview Yard, and in later years, trainloads of L&N hoppers from Kentucky, Virginia and other southern origins arriving via Cincinnati over the PRR's Miami and C&X line. This volume was enormous. Eastern and Southeastern Ohio coal also reached the PRR in Columbus over the PRR Panhandle line, the NYC-affiliate Toledo & Ohio Central (T&OC) and the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O). Portions of this latter traffic also moved on to Sandusky, typically in smaller quantities by individual hoppers or cuts of cars in mixed freight trains. Although the PRR generally did not disaggregate individual branch traffic in its annual reports, a PRR directors' trip report in 1954 stated that the Sandusky Branch moved 134,400 loads of interchange coal in that year.⁹



Sandusky coal loading Piers 1 and 2 in the 1930s, with the site of the future Pier 3 Sandusky Coal Dock to the left. Source - Sandusky History Blogspot.

The northern termini for Sandusky Branch coal were PRR's Bayside Yard and the Sandusky Coal Docks. Sandusky Branch coal traffic was transloaded at the Docks onto Great Lakes steamships destined for industries in Canada, the upper Midwest and Upstate New York ports, and for overseas export. The original Sandusky Docks, Piers No. 1 and 2, were built in 1891-3 when the CS&H

⁷ See Columbus Railroads, Railway Age Sept. 12, 1931 article on the PRR Fairgrounds Viaduct: http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/live/05Steam_Railroads/15Pennsylvania_Railroad/44Fairgrounds%20Viaduct/PRRViaductarticle.pdf

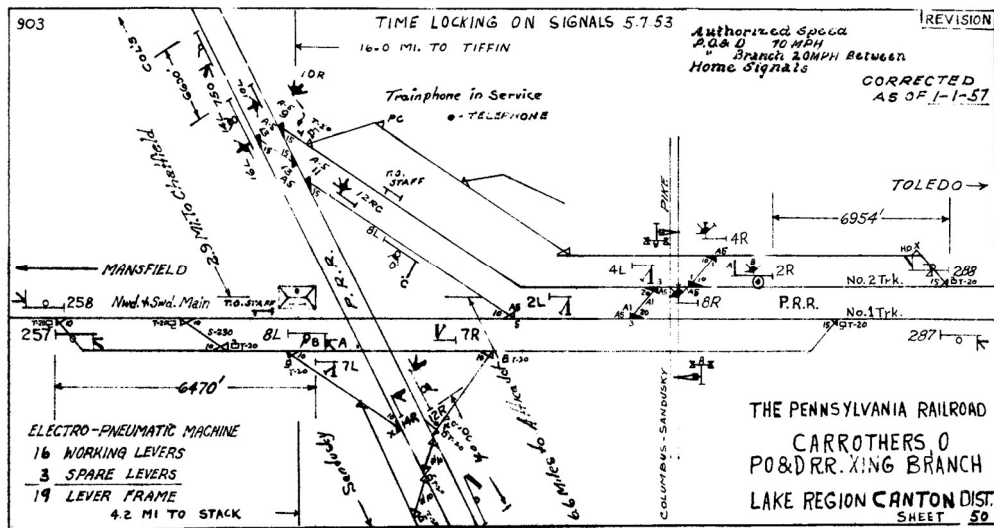
⁸ Rick Tipton historical notes. https://prg.groups.io/g/Prototype/topic/foreign_hoppers_on_the_prr/20467933

⁹ Pennsylvania Railroad, Board of Directors Inspection Trip Report, November 1955, p.8, <https://www.multimodalways.org/docs/railroads/companies/PRR/PRR%20Inspection%20Trip%2011-1955.pdf>

Sandusky Line was constructed. By 1898, the Docks had a steam-powered "dumper" capable of emptying 25 cars an hour. Pier No. 3, built in 1937-39, is a 600-ft. wide rock fill marine coal transloading wharf protruding a mile into Sandusky Bay, which accommodates 1,000-ft. vessels, using 2.5 miles of coal handling conveyor belts, and has capacity to store 875,000 tons of coal. The "new" dumper system installed at the Dock in 1939 pours coal hoppers directly into ships alongside the pier. This facility was built to handle 100-ton cars, even though the norm at the time of its construction was 50-ton hoppers. The Dock has a loading rate of over 2,500 tons per hour.

Docks 1, 2 and 3 loaded a record 14 million tons of coal in 1944. Postwar years still saw as much as eight million tons annually, and it is easy to see how this kept the PRR Sandusky Branch very busy. Piers 1 and 2 were closed in the late 1960s, with utility coal traffic dropping away, but metallurgical coal traffic for the steel industry remained steady at Pier No. 3.

A portion of the coal moving north on the Sandusky Branch was also diverted to the northwest at Carrothers onto the PRR Toledo Branch for destinations in Michigan, and likely at times for the several big coal transloading marine terminals in Toledo. Carrothers junction featured several mile-long transfer tracks, with interchange tracks in three of its four quadrants to accommodate transfer of big coal drags and the turnaround of engines.



Track Chart for PRR interchange between the Sandusky and Toledo Branches at Carrothers (Lake Region Interlockings, 1957). Note - "North" to Sandusky is at the bottom of this chart.

The Sandusky Branch also interchanged coal traffic with the Toledo & Ohio Central's Eastern Branch at the T&OC's Bucyrus Yard, which was still switching coal for local users into the 1960s.

Coal traffic on the Sandusky Branch was seasonal, with virtually the entire volume hauled during the eight-month Great Lakes navigation season (mid-April to mid-December). During the winter months, the PRR only carried local traffic on the Sandusky Branch, and "mothballed" a number of its heavy steam engines normally assigned to these Lakes coal drags.

The Sandusky Branch was one of the last lines in Columbus to maintain a roster of active steam locomotives, including some of the PRR System's most powerful engines. A favorite spot for

photographers and videographers shooting these lumbering giants was Attica Junction, where the Sandusky line crossed the B&O's Chicago main line.¹⁰

The Panhandle



Long the densest traffic railroad in Ohio, the Panhandle route between Columbus and Pittsburgh originated in 1864 via a combination of several end-to-end rail lines running through Newark, Coshocton, Uhrichsville, Mingo Junction and Steubenville, and across the West Virginia panhandle (and thus the railroad's popular name) to Pittsburgh.¹¹ This road, consolidated in 1890 with the Little Miami Railroad between Columbus and Cincinnati, and the Columbus, Piqua & Indiana west from Columbus, did business as the Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, Chicago & St. Louis Railway Company (PCC&StL) before finally combining further by lease to become part of the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1925.

The Panhandle departed Columbus to the east over the B&O's three and four-track C&N Division, diverging eastward from the B&O at Lake Erie Crossing in Newark onto its own right-of-way. Double-tracked early on, with lengthy passing tracks and huge steel overhead signal bridges, the Panhandle was built for high-speed, heavy-haul railroading. In a massive project stretching from 1943-50, the PRR bypassed, widened or "daylighted" (i.e., removed the overhead rock) seven tunnels on the Panhandle east of Dennison which posed clearance constraints when the PRR began using its wide-elbowed J1 and duplex locomotives.¹²

The Panhandle was the biggest employer in Columbus for a time around World War I, carrying the largest railroad traffic volume, and operating the biggest yards, roundhouses, car shops and rail layout in the City. Consistent with the premiere position the Panhandle occupied in the Columbus industrial and social communities during this era, in 1901 employees from the Panhandle Shops formed a professional football team, the Columbus Panhandles. The Panhandles later joined the National Football League's predecessor, the Association of Professional Football Association.¹³

The Panhandle's largest tributary rail feeder of coal traffic, very active into recent years, was the PRR Cadiz Branch. This track extends from Cadiz Junction, some 120 miles east of Columbus, south for about ten miles to Cadiz, in Harrison County, the heart of a massive coal mining area (and the birthplace of Clark Gable, Hollywood icon of *Gone with the Wind* fame). PRR local mine runs dropped off empties and picked up cuts of loaded hoppers there. Electric utility customers in Michigan favored Cadiz coal, which the PRR delivered over the Panhandle.

¹⁰ Excellent video of 2-10-4s on Sandusky Branch, 1956: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5zOCNNw6t0>

¹¹ The Panhandle was a segment of the PRR's Pittsburgh to St. Louis Main Line, running from Columbus (U.S. Tower, MP190.4 from Pittsburgh), through a division point at Uhrich Tower (MP91.9) crossing the Ohio River at Steubenville, through the WV "panhandle" and on to Pittsburgh. For decades, the destination of most Panhandle eastbound manifest trains from Columbus was Pitcairn Yard, 12 miles east of Pittsburgh. In the 1950s, the PRR developed Conway Yard on the north shore of the Ohio River just east of the Ohio-Pennsylvania state line, and eventually closed Pitcairn in 1967. After this, eastbound Panhandle manifest traffic flowed to Conway, 191 miles from Columbus, diverting from the Panhandle to the PRR River Branch at Steubenville, onto the Bayard Branch at Yellow Creek, Ohio to Rochester, PA, and onto the PRR Pittsburgh to Chicago Main Line to Conway.

¹² <https://www.railsandtrails.com/PRR/InpsectionTrip1952/index.htm>

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Columbus_Panhandles

The Panhandle passed through areas dense with active on-line coal mines along the Ohio River and between Mingo Junction and Dennison. The PRR River Branch also delivered coal onto the Panhandle from mines in Hopedale and Martins Ferry. The PRR's Marietta Branch, which interchanged with the Panhandle at Newcomerstown, had active mines near Cambridge and Byesville delivering coal up through the 1950s.

Due to transport economics, much of the coal originating at Cadiz and to the east most likely would have flowed toward the Pittsburgh industrial area, and especially "Steel Valley" as the portion of the Ohio River Valley between Bridgeport and East Liverpool, Ohio is known. The River there was lined on both sides with a nearly continuous belt of coal-consuming steel industry complexes, utility power stations and tall-smokestack heavy manufacturing facilities.

The other source of coal feeding onto the Panhandle, and probable origin of more of this line's Columbus-bound loads, was the interchange with the PRR Zanesville Branch at Trinway, in Coshocton County (Panhandle MP136.0, 55 miles west of Columbus). The Zanesville Branch was originally the PRR affiliate Cincinnati & Muskingum Valley Railroad (C&MV) to the south of Trinway, and the Dresden Branch of the PRR affiliate Cleveland, Akron & Columbus Railway (CA&C) northward from Trinway. The C&MV was built from Morrow to Zanesville in 1856, taken over by the PRR and extended to Trinway in 1870. The CA&C Dresden Branch was built from Killbuck in Holmes County to Trinway in 1886. The C&MV and CA&C merged in 1911, giving the PRR a through route from Cincinnati to Cleveland via the Ohio coal producing counties. The Zanesville Branch had active coal producers in Roseville and New Lexington into the 1950s.¹⁴ The CA&C had trackage rights on the C&MV, over which the CA&C switched coal mines as far south as New Lexington, 38 miles south of Trinway. The CA&C also originated coal traffic from mines at Millersburg, 38 miles north of Trinway. The C&MV served numerous coal mines in heavy-producing Muskingum and Perry Counties. The Panhandle connection at Trinway provided an efficient interchange point to move coal from this area to Columbus without giving up any revenue share to competing roads serving the region.

Another Panhandle coal connection was the Toledo, Walhondling Valley & Ohio Railway, completed in 1893, connecting the Panhandle line at Coshocton with Loudonville to the northwest on the PRR's Pittsburgh-Chicago main line, and crossing the CA&C Dresden Branch at Warsaw. The TWV&O provided a direct link between Coshocton and the PRR Toledo Branch west of Mansfield, and with the PRR Sandusky Branch at Carrothers. The TWV&O reportedly "carried immense traffic in coal from the Cambridge coalfields to Toledo and lake ports."¹⁵ Built by the PRR mainly as a connection for northbound traffic (and drive an adjacent canal competitor out of business), it is unlikely the TWV&O contributed much additional coal traffic to PRR's Columbus-bound volume. The TWV&O was cut west of Warsaw in the mid-1930s by construction of the Mohawk flood control dam, and the remainder of that line was abandoned in 1941.¹⁶

Other coal traffic for the Panhandle originated in southern Coshocton County. A six-mile coal spur along Mill Creek connected various Peabody Coal operations with the Panhandle a mile east of Trinway. However, much of the Coshocton area production from Peabody's Broken Arrow

¹⁴ *Alphabetical and Geographical List of Anthracite and Bituminous Coal Mines on the Pennsylvania Railroad and Lateral Lines*, July 16, 1956, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qFryhW4akonzMTrUEFd6BawbccccIG63F/view> p.43.

¹⁵ <https://www.wvhistoricalsociety.org/ct-menu-item-3/ct-menu-item-21>

¹⁶ <https://www.abandonedrails.com/walhondling-valley-branch>

Mine, and the adjacent Simco mine operated by Peabody but owned by Columbus and Southern Ohio Electric Company, was delivered directly to the latter's 2,000 megawatt Conesville Power Plant, and did not move toward Columbus.

There was strong competition for Columbus-bound Perry and Muskingum County coal traffic among the B&O Zanesville line and B&O's Rock Run Branch (the former Newark, Somerset & Straitsville Railway), the T&OC's Western Branch, which shared the C&MV track between Bremen and New Lexington, and the Zanesville & Western. But it appears the Panhandle and its PRR affiliates held their own in securing coal bookings from this area. The 1890 annual report of the PCC&StL indicates the line handled 2,668,000 tons of coal that year, which accounted for more than 20 percent of its traffic by tonnage, high for a principally east-west carrier. The Panhandle reported delivering 138,978 loaded cars to Columbus in 1890, but does not break out the portion of that represented by coal.

Interestingly, in spite of hauling 2.7 million tons of coal and another million tons of coke in 1890, the PCC&StL reported that only 626 of its 10,261 cars were "gondolas," the equipment used to move coal in that era just prior to hopper-bottom cars coming into widespread use. This suggests that much of the coal moving on the Panhandle was originating on other railroads and interchanging in those other lines' gondolas and hoppers onto the PCC&StL.

A significant portion of the coal traffic arriving in Columbus on the Panhandle from eastern Ohio was destined for utilities and other consumers in Toledo and Michigan, and for "Upper Lakes" destinations, including steel and paper mills, which received coal via water carriers. This traffic off the Panhandle moved north via the PRR's Sandusky Branch.

The Cleveland, Akron & Columbus Railway



Possibly the most obscure of the railroads historically linking Columbus with coal producing regions of Ohio was the Cleveland, Akron & Columbus Railway Company (CA&C), including both its original main line to Columbus and the CA&C Dresden Branch into the heart of Ohio's Coal Country.

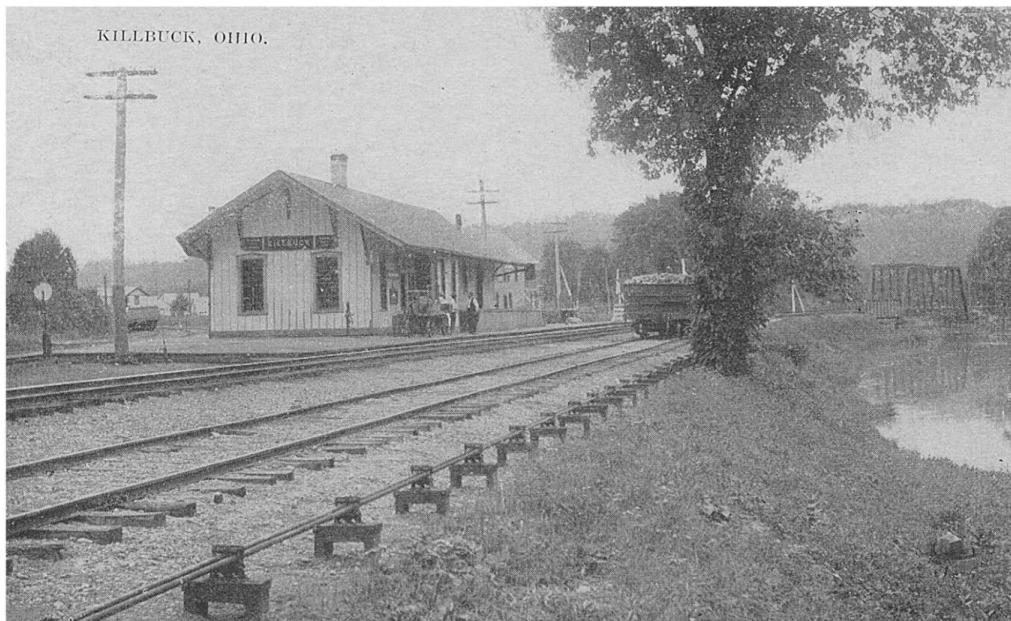
The CA&C began with a charter granted in 1851 to build a branch of the Cleveland & Pittsburgh Railroad to run from Hudson, some 25 miles southeast of Cleveland in Summit County, through Akron and Millersburg in Holmes County, where coal mines opened around this time, and on to Columbus. The CA&C predecessors also opened short branches to very productive mines at Clover Hill in Stark County and Turkey Foot Lake in Summit County. This line was not completed to Columbus until 1873, and was single track for its entire length. The CA&C became affiliated with the Pennsylvania Railroad by 1899, merged with the PRR affiliate Cincinnati & Muskingum Valley Railway in 1911 and was fully consolidated with the PRR in 1925.

There is little history available regarding coal traffic over the CA&C into Columbus. Most likely Pittsburgh and Cleveland were initially bigger destinations for the Holmes, Summit and Stark County coal originating on the CA&C. However, available annual reports of the CA&C from the

early 1890s show that a significant and growing portion of the company's rolling stock consisted of "gondola coal cars" and 40 percent or more of its tonnage hauled was bituminous coal.¹⁷

The CA&C's 260-car Chase Avenue Yard in Columbus, with a maximum track length of only 35 cars, was ill-suited for interchange of coal traffic. However, Chase Avenue was augmented by the PRR's later addition of a dedicated CA&C portion of Yard B on the north side. This expansion would have facilitated coal traffic in both directions on the CA&C, as well as interchange to other PRR lines.

The CA&C's stake in coal haulage expanded dramatically with the completion of its Dresden Branch in 1888. This 36-mile track ran from Killbuck, in Holmes County, south through Warsaw, crossed the Panhandle at Trinway, and terminated two miles farther south at Dresden in Muskingum County, some 15 miles north of Zanesville. The Dresden Branch connected end-to-end with the C&MV. The CA&C had operating rights by contract (railroaders often call this "running powers") over the C&MV, enabling the CA&C to run trains between Dresden and Zanesville, and south from Zanesville as far as New Lexington. Ohio government reports and other resources indicate the CA&C served various coal mines in Muskingum and Perry Counties. A 1914 Ohio Industrial Commission Division of Mines Annual Report shows the CA&C serving mines along the C&MV track at Roseville, Crooksville, Goston and New Lexington.



Killbuck Junction on the CA&C. The main line from Hudson to Columbus is in the foreground, with the Killbuck Creek bridge to the right. The Dresden branch curves off to the south toward Zanesville to the left of the station. Photo from West2k, <https://www.west2k.com/ohpix/killbuck.jpg>

The southern portion of the CA&C Dresden Branch below Warsaw was cut in 1936, due to a washout and the 1,500-ft. Noland Tunnel south of Warsaw becoming unstable, and the branch was

¹⁷ See CA&C Annual Report, 1890: <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/4da5c8b0-debb-0131-2753-58d385a7b928#/?uuid=4dd274b0-debb-0131-2769-58d385a7b928>

abandoned from Trinway to Blissfield in 1941.¹⁸ However, coal mines on the northern stretch of the Dresden Branch between Blissfield and Killbuck remained active through the 1950s.¹⁹ Between 1936 and 1941, the PRR still had a connection between the Dresden Branch at Warsaw and the Panhandle at Coshocton over a remaining small portion of the former Toledo, Walhondling Valley & Ohio Railway.²⁰ However, historical references indicate coal on the northern fragment of the Dresden Branch moved toward Cleveland. An eight-mile stub of the Dresden Branch between Killbuck and Blissfield remained in the timetable as the "Dresden Industrial Track" of the CA&C after the PennCentral merger, into the 1970s. The orphaned piece of the Dresden Branch running north a few miles from Trinway was still in service as a Panhandle industrial lead until the 1960s.

After World War I, the CA&C also became a joint owner of the 4.8-mile Zanesville Belt & Terminal Railroad, along with the New York Central's Zanesville & Western Railway. However, this switching and terminal railroad connecting with the C&MV and the Dresden Branch likely did not handle significant Columbus-bound coal.

Other than Columbus coal loads interchanged into the PRR Panhandle at Trinway, it seems unlikely much on-line origin CA&C coal country traffic would have been destined for the capital city. The Dresden Branch ran 50 miles from the coal mining area to the CA&C junction at Killbuck, which was 80 miles from Columbus, with the challenging Baddow Pass with 1.25 percent grades over five miles of sharply curving track in between. The track arrangement at Killbuck was set up primarily for movements toward Cleveland. In contrast, New Lexington was only 52 miles from the T&OC's South Columbus coal receiving yard, with gentle grades, and this would have been the most competitive route for Muskingum and Perry County coal into the City.



CA&C Dresden Branch, Noland Tunnel, abandoned in 1936, North Portal (left) and South Portal (right) (2012).

¹⁸ ICC Docket No. 13545, Nov. 25, 1941, <https://www.abandonedrails.com/walhondling-valley-branch>

¹⁹ *Alphabetical and Geographical List of Anthracite and Bituminous Coal Mines on the Pennsylvania Railroad and Lateral Lines*, July 16, 1956, <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qFryhW4akonzMTrUEFd6BawbcccIG63F/view> p. 43.

²⁰ See, Walhondling Valley History comments,

<https://www.wvhistoricalsociety.org/ct-menu-item-3/ct-menu-item-21>

and ICC abandonment Docket 13545, Nov. 25, 1941, <https://www.abandonedrails.com/walhondling-valley-branch>

For all its shortcomings, the CA&C was the PRR's link between Columbus and the traffic-rich Cleveland area and various Great Lakes coal docks in Northeast Ohio. In the post-war era, it still supported some 18 daily trains, operating as the PRR Akron Division through the 1960s. However, the CA&C would not have likely been a competitive option for significant coal traffic moving north from Columbus, especially full trainloads of coal, due to its length, grades and limited capacity. After the 1968 PRR-NYC merger, the PennCentral held both the mostly double-track 137-mile Big Four line between Cleveland and Columbus and the meandering 170-mile single-track CA&C route to Cleveland through Hudson. The PCRR moved overhead traffic to the Big Four line, and re-branded the 108-mile segment of the CA&C between Columbus and Orville as the "Akron Secondary Track," maintaining service with a pair of daily locals, all while eagerly looking for abandonment opportunities. After a July 4, 1969 storm caused a section of a bridge between Holmesville and Fredericksburg to collapse, the PC elected not to repair the damage, leaving the line cut at that point, effectively ending any CA&C role in Columbus coal traffic.

The Bradford Line



Also called the "Piqua Line" and "Bradford Side," this busy PRR line that departed Columbus to the west via High Street Interlocking Tower, Grandview and Hilliard. The Bradford Line did not originate coal traffic but requires prominent mention as a significant hauler of coal outbound from Columbus toward the massive Chicago and Northern Indiana industrial markets. It was also one of the earliest components of what ultimately became the Pennsylvania Railroad in Central Ohio.

The Bradford Line began life as the Columbus, Piqua & Indiana Railroad between Columbus and Urbana in 1853, adding service through Piqua to Union City at the Ohio-Indiana border by 1856, and later becoming the Columbus & Indianapolis Railroad. The line forked at Bradford, in Miami County, 83 miles from Columbus (High Street Tower) with the southern branch heading for Indianapolis via Richmond, Indiana, and the northern fork, known on the PRR as the "Logan Side," running via Union City to Logansport, Indiana and on to Chicago. After multiple reorganizations, the Bradford Line was leased to the Pittsburgh Cincinnati & St. Louis Railroad, which became the Pittsburgh Cincinnati Chicago & St. Louis Railroad (PCC&StL), and later was leased to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

This line was reworked in 1900 to eliminate its steeper grades, making it more suitable for heavy coal drags, although as noted below, much of the route continued to be helper territory for heavier trains. It was double tracked up through the 1950s, after which portions west of Union City were reduced to single track.

The main Bradford Line coal traffic originating in Columbus was Chicago-bound L&N and N&W coal hoppers. Outbound PRR coal trains for the northwest were made up on four PRR leased tracks on the south side of the N&W Joyce Avenue Yard. In the early 1950s, PRR departing trains on the Bradford Line included 125 coal loads daily, arriving off the N&W, bound for the U.S. Steel works at Gary, Indiana.²¹ Other westbound coal on this line included occasional shipments for power plants in Ft. Wayne and Chicago. In later years, trainloads of L&N coal from Cincinnati also moved over the Bradford line to various customers, including the General Motors works in

²¹ PRR Board of Directors Inspection Trip Report, November 1955, p.8.

Marion, Indiana. For a time during World War II, to avoid congestion at the CA&C crossing at Milo, outbound Chicago coal trains were made up or delivered at the Bradford Line's Hilliard Relay Yard, ten miles west of High Street.

Bradford Line coal trains were double headed, in later years with a pair of J1s, with both road engine and helper running all the way through to Bradford. In addition to the grade up from Columbus, that line in the westbound direction had the "Blue Hill" up from the Mad River Valley west of Urbana, and lesser but still challenging grades up from the Great Miami River Valley west of Piqua, and near Covington and in the Stillwater River Valley. Bradford had coaling facilities and a turntable to send the helper back toward Columbus facing in the forward direction.²²

The Miami Line



The PRR Miami Line connecting Columbus and Cincinnati also did not have on-line coal mines. But it should be included here, briefly at least, because it handled substantial overhead coal traffic coming up to Columbus from Kentucky, interchanged at Undercliff Yard in Cincinnati. Much of this was L&N coal, moving in that road's distinctive red-orange "Old Reliable" and "Dixie Line" hopper cars,²³ destined for Chicago markets. During peak years, some 30–35 million tons of northbound and westbound coal moved through Cincinnati annually, including about three million tons arriving by river barges.²⁴

The Miami Line, which departed Columbus from High Street Tower via West Jefferson to London, was an end-to-end combination of the Columbus & Xenia, completed in 1850, and the Little Miami Railroad running between Xenia and Cincinnati. The Little Miami and the C&X entered a joint operations agreement in 1853, thereafter competing as a single rail line. In 1869, the Little Miami was leased to the Pittsburgh Cincinnati & St. Louis Railroad, which became the PCC&StL, and was later leased to the Pennsylvania Railroad.

The Miami Line featured relatively easier grades, making it more attractive for Eastern Kentucky coal haulage north from Cincinnati toward Great Lakes ports than other options such as the C&O's Cincinnati-Chicago line.

Coal-Hauling Steam Power on the Pennsylvania Railroad

From World War II through the end of steam on the PRR in the mid-1950s, standard power on Sandusky Branch, Bradford Line and Miami Line coal drags would be J1 class Texas-type 2-10-4s. Some 125 J1s were built in 1942-44 at PRR's Altoona Works²⁵ from C&O plans under restrictions of the War Production Board. They featured wagontop profiles instead of the PRR's signature squared tapering Belpaire fireboxes, plus elegant Baker valve gear in place of PRR's otherwise universal radial apparatus. Rated at 95,000 lbs. of tractive effort, plus a 15,000-lb. steam booster engine on the trailing truck, the PRR "War Babies" were among the most powerful steam

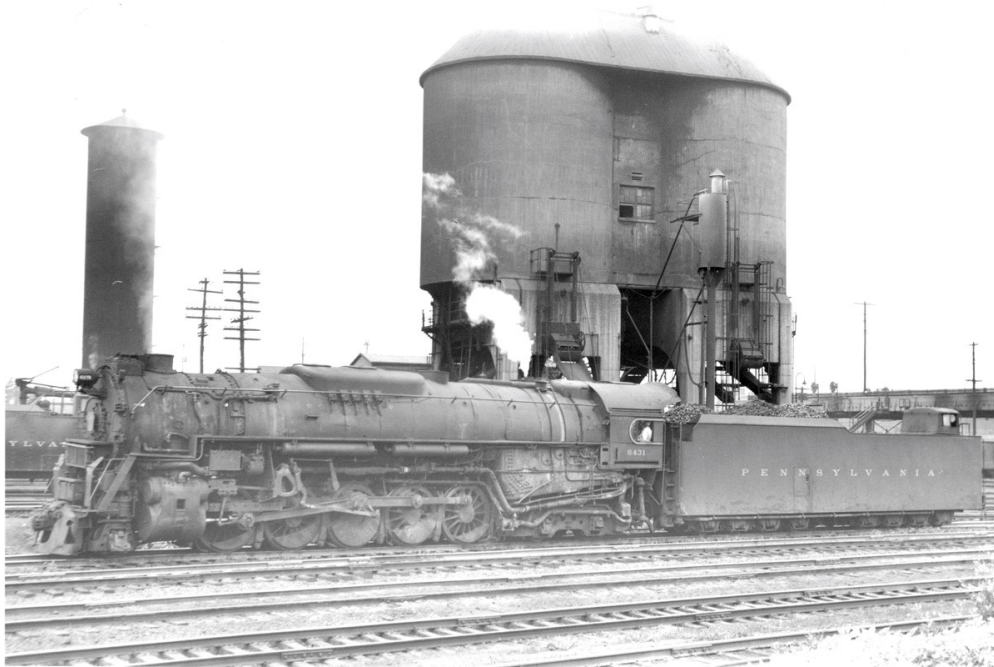
²² Notes provided by Scott Trostel.

²³ There is a significant body of literature on rail car livery colors. See, *L&N, Louisville & Nashville Color Guide to Freight and Passenger Equipment*, Vol. 1 Hardcover – January 1, 2000, by Steven D. Johnson, Morning Sun Books.

²⁴ PRR Board of Directors Inspection Trip Report, November 1955, p. 13.

²⁵ The PRR's locomotive erection facility in Altoona, PA, set up in 1891, was originally called the "Juniata Shops." The "Juniata" name was dropped in 1928 with the entire complex thereafter being called the "Altoona Works."

locomotives ever to work in Central Ohio. With a fire grate area of 122 ft², 6,568 ft² of evaporating surface, and 2,930 ft² of superheater surface, the J1s were never short on sustained horsepower. The PRR J1 fleet was famously supplemented with oil-burning Santa Fe 2-10-4s leased in to support PRR's overload of heavy coal trains during the 1956 Great Lakes shipping season.



PRR J1 2-10-4 No. 6431 at the St. Clair Roundhouse, July 1957. Photo by Donald Etter from the Jay Williams Collection, courtesy of Columbus Railroads.

Prior to the arrival of the J1s during the war, PRR used I1-class "Big Hippo" 2-10-0 decapods, along with the somewhat camera-shy N2 Santa Fe-type 2-10-2s, as its premiere coal hauling power on PRR's Central Ohio lines. The PRR locomotive fleet included 598 I1s, with 123 built at PRR's Juniata Shops in Altoona in 1916-19 and 475 delivered by Baldwin in 1922-23.²⁶ Eventually 479 of these were converted to I1sas, which provided 96,060 lbs. of tractive effort on 62-inch drivers. This impressive low-speed tractive effort figure was achieved by increasing the original design's maximum 50 percent steam cut-off ratio to 78 percent, deemed to be the maximum the engines and the PRR's heavy-gauge rails could tolerate.

The Decapods were the PRR's standard system-wide heavy mineral train power between the wars. Often matched with eight-axle "Coast-to-Coast" tenders²⁷ carrying up to 30 tons of coal and 25,000

²⁶ The 598 I1 and I1as and I1sas (the "s" designated superheater-equipped engines) was the largest single class of locomotives in PRR history.

<https://www.trains.com/ctr/railroads/locomotives/largest-2-10-0-decapod-fleet-pennsys-i1-hippos/>

²⁷ The "Coast-to-Coast" tender was not a single design, but rather this term refers generally to extended-body high-capacity tenders, usually with seven- or eight-axle "centipede" wheel arrangements or two four-axle "Buckeye" trucks. These were used by a number of railroads for big engines in the later steam era. Unlike the NYC and certain other lines that relied heavily on track pan water pickup, the PRR expanded the range of high-speed trains with oversize tenders enabling engines to steam for extended hours and distances without stopping. This was also ideal for enormous high-powered locomotives like the Decapods with outsized hourly consumption rates for coal and water, pulling trains

gallons of water, assigned in pairs to move heavy loads up steep grades, the ugly Decapods were rough-riding brutes. Only the PRR, with its unusually heavy rail (up to 155-lb.) and robust roadbed and infrastructure and maintenance standards, could take the super-heavy axle-loads and pounding from the Decapods' notoriously inadequately-balanced drivers. The Decs were unpopular with engine crews, and were considered to be "the holy terror of the PRR."



PRR 11sa 2-10-0 Decapod at the St. Clair engine house, 1952. Photo by Donald Etter from the Jay Williams Collection, courtesy of Columbus Railroads.

The PRR's 130 N2s, built by ALCO and Baldwin from U.S. Railroad Administration plans in 1917-18, offered 73,829 lbs. of tractive effort, on 63-inch drivers. The 2-10-2 N2s had an 82 ft² fire grate over their one-axle trailing truck (compared with the Decapods' 70 ft² with no trailing truck) and 350 ft² more evaporating surface than the Decapods, which gave them greater sustained horsepower. N2s were generally assigned to heavy mineral haulage on the PRR west of Pittsburgh.

Reportedly, the 125 J1s delivered during the war took the place of some 200 I1s and N2s in the PRR Western Region. These older locomotives were then relegated to helper, transfer service, smaller steep branch lines in Central Pennsylvania, and other less glamorous assignments. PRR used H10 2-8-0s for local traffic on most of its branches and switching at Bayfront in Sandusky.

that would be difficult to restart after a water stop. The PRR's "Coast-to-Coast" tenders for freight service carried 20 – 30 tons of coal and 20,000 gallons of water or more, and usually featured a "doghouse" cabin at the rear for the head brakeman. These big tenders were used with many different types of trains on the PRR, including star passenger and express trains pulled by locomotives ranging from duplex Q, S and T-class engines to standard K4 Pacifics, in which case the tender would dwarf the locomotive, and with the PRR's J and M-class freight engines.



PRR N2sa 2-10-2 No. 7937 in storage, 1935. Once the Great Lakes shipping season ended each year, a portion of PRR's Lake Region heavy engines would be laid up until the following spring. Photo by J.H. Dean from Alex Campbell Collection.

The other major function for which the PRR needed enormous locomotives was local transfers and interchange with other railroads in Columbus, and among the PRR's own multiple coal receiving and departure yards. During World War II and the post-war era, the PRR often received over 1,000 coal hoppers daily in Columbus off the N&W, C&O and T&OC. These loads, and corresponding volumes of empties being moved for rebalancing, had to be lugged to various outbound tracks mainly in Grogan, Pennor and Hilliard Yards. The PRR transfers moved through steep, curving and highly congested interchanges and crossings, and often involved multiple stops and starts. For this, from 1919 onward, the PRR turned to compound articulated steam engines. These included ten 0-8-8-0 CC2s, built by Baldwin, with 99,792 lbs. of starting tractive effort, and six Y3-class 2-8-8-0s acquired from the N&W in 1943 and re-designated as HH1s. The latter featured 114,154 lbs. of tractive effort when working compound, and could be worked "simple," with high-pressure steam in all four cylinders, providing 136,985 lbs. of tractive effort. These ponderous engines, also used in hump service and as helpers on the Sandusky Branch, served the PRR well until retirement in 1951.

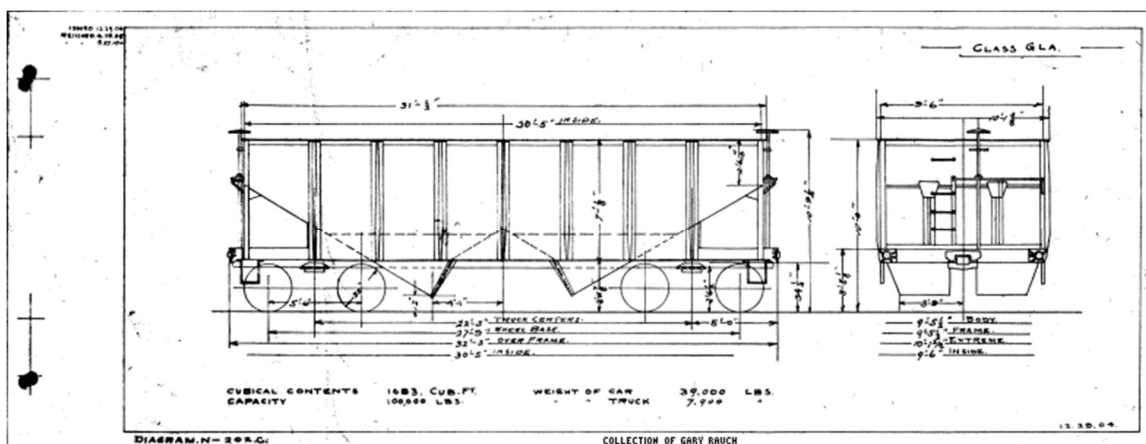


HH1 No. 374 at St. Clair Roundhouse, 1947. Photo from the Jay Williams Collection.

Pennsylvania Railroad Hopper Cars

The PRR also played a significant role in the evolution of modern coal hopper railcars, worthy of special mention here. The ancestral lines of the PRR, like other railroads, handled coal using open-top wooden gondola cars, loaded and discharged by men using shovels and wheelbarrows.²⁸ As the PRR's coal tonnage skyrocketed, exceeding ten million tons annually by the early 1890s, the PRR quickly came up with innovations for greater loading and discharge productivity. The goal was to develop a design with capacity for substantial loads that could be discharged entirely by gravity, *i.e.*, a “self-clearing” mechanism. Beginning in 1895, the PRR built 35-ton wooden class GG cars with featuring two “sawtooth” bays with sloping ends and chutes with angled doors at the bottom, with hinges running across the car frame instead of along its length, permitting discharge between the rails instead of to the side of the track. PRR improved and replicated this design in steel with its GLa class hoppers in 1902.

From this point, sticking with the same conceptual design, the PRR ordered successive classes of self-clearing hopper cars. These included 50-ton two-bay GLs and GLAs (30,256 delivered beginning in 1904), 55-ton two bay H-31s (2,212 built starting in 1942 at Altoona Shops), and starting in 1909, some 39,699 four-bay 70-ton H-21s. These were followed from 1919 onward by the 70-ton H25 model, originally with “drop-door” bottom hatches but eventually converted to “sawtooth” design by 1928, and starting in the 1950s, double-banked three hopper H-35s²⁹ and numerous other H-class variations totaling over 5,600 cars. The larger 50-70 ton capacity cars dominated traffic statistics, but the PRR also continued to maintain large numbers of 50-ton GL models preferred by smaller mines with modest daily output and tighter loading gauge mine tracks that could not accommodate the longer and heavier 70-ton hoppers.³⁰



PRR GLa 50-ton Hopper Design, 1904

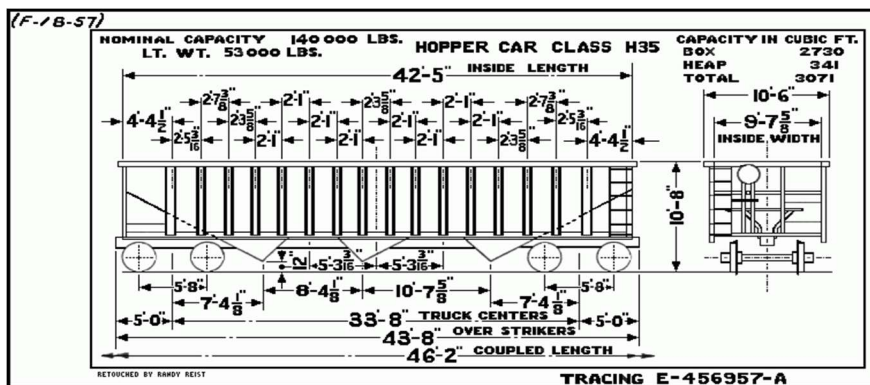
²⁸ As noted in the Introduction to these articles, an excellent short read on the evolution of hopper cars is David Thompson's “A Brief History of Coal Hopper Cars” (1999)

<https://appalachianrailroadmodeling.com/a-brief-history-of-coal-hoppers/>

²⁹ *Alphabetical and Geographical List of Anthracite and Bituminous Coal Mines on the Pennsylvania Railroad and Lateral Lines*, July 16, 1956 <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1qFryhW4akonzMTrUEFd6BawbcccIG63F/view>

³⁰ See John Teichmoeller, *Pennsylvania Railroad Steel Open Top Hopper Cars, a Guide for Enthusiasts*, 2000.

The numbers of hoppers operating on the PRR at any point are difficult to determine from company annual reports, which generally aggregate all open-top “gondolas,” including both closed-bottom classic gondolas as well as self-clearing bottom hatch hoppers. Interestingly, the PRR’s annual reports around 1880 began to include separate line items for “gondolas” and “coal cars,”³¹ but this distinction disappears in later years. For example, PRR’s 1931 annual report lists the company as having over 160,000 gondola cars, representing about two-thirds of its freight car fleet.



PRR H35 70-ton Hopper Design, 1950s

Official Railway Equipment Registers (ORERs) and various PRR car interchange rosters compiled by modern writers (no doubt a most tedious task) put the size of PRR’s system hopper fleet as more than 93,000 in the late 1920s, 81,000 during the World War II coal traffic peak, and declining to 70,000 by the mid-1950s and further by the 1960s.³² The PRR’s annual coal haulage volume did not decline substantially over this period, but the line was able to handle bigger volumes with fewer cars as average hopper capacities grew larger, and average train speeds and loading and discharge turnaround times improved, especially after the diesels arrived.



PRR GLa hopper. Photo from: <http://srcc.redmansefarm.com/PRR-001.htm>

³¹ PRR Annual Report for Year ending December 31, 1880. https://drive.google.com/file/d/1nxVFZUuvxtjcQdQng_u3OuaORPhHYEPL/view

³² J. Britton, *Makeup of the Pennsy Freight Car Fleet over Time*, <https://jbritton.pennsyr.com/index.php/tpm/blogs/latest-articles-blog/733-makeup-of-the-freight-car-fleet-over-time> and <https://jbritton.pennsyr.com/index.php/tpm/blogs/latest-articles-blog/248-1954-freight-class-model-cross-reference>

While the bulk of the PRR's cars were built in its Altoona Shops, a number of independent car builders, most notably Cambria Iron Works starting in 1901, also built the various PRR GL and H design cars. The useful life of a hopper can be 30-50 years, in spite of the punishment it takes from handling coal, ore, gravel and other heavy and rough mineral commodities. A handful of GLa hoppers built in the 1930s and 1940s survived into the post-PRR PennCentral era. However, hoppers suffer wear and tear from regular use and damage from wrecks and other incidents, and must be repaired or sometimes entirely reconstructed in the railroad's shops. At the apex of the big coal era, the PRR was building, rebuilding or replacing some 25,000 hoppers annually.

PRR Coal Interchange and Distribution in Columbus

The Pennsylvania Railroad and its predecessor companies were the first to bring coal into and through Columbus by rail.³³ With lines coming into the City from the east, north and west, the PRR did not carry a sizable portion of the inbound coal arriving at Columbus, which originated largely from the south and southeast. Nevertheless, from the beginning the PRR was a leading player, hauling huge volumes of coal interchanging onto its Columbus tracks from other railroads toward major consumption points in northern Ohio, for loading to Great Lakes steamships, and to the Chicago and Detroit industrial complexes. The PRR was also a major distributor of coal for local industrial, institutional and household consumption in Columbus and populous areas to the north and northeast.

<i>PRR Columbus Interchange Points</i>				
<i>Railroad</i>	<i>PRR Sandusky Br.</i>	<i>Panhandle</i>	<i>PRR CA&C</i>	<i>PRR Bradford and Miami Lines</i>
<i>N&W</i>	Grogan and Pennor Yards, CW Tower	Interchange Track at East End of Yard A, and Taylor Ave.	Grogan and Pennor Yards, CW Tower	Grogan and Pennor Yards, CW Tower
<i>C&O</i>	Via Panhandle	LM Crossing	Grandview and C&O Yard "A" near HV Crossing	Grandview and C&O Yard "A" near HV Crossing
<i>B&O</i>	Via Panhandle	Yard A	Via Panhandle	Grandview
<i>NYC T&OC</i>	Via Panhandle	LM Crossing "Auburn Track"	Via Panhandle	Via Panhandle
<i>NYC Big Four</i>	Via Panhandle	Grandview Crossing - T&OC West Columbus Yard	Big Four East Yard	Big Four East Yard

Source: 1934 Unification Committee Map, Columbus Railroads at: <http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/pdf/map-1934-steamroad.pdf>

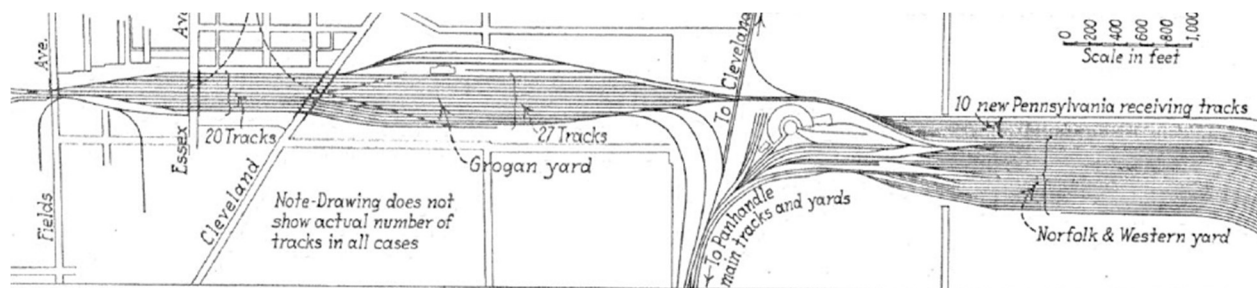
A main source of traffic interchanging onto the PRR at Columbus was Pocahontas and Thacker Coal from vast fields in eastern Kentucky, western Virginia and southern West Virginia. The N&W and C&O lines from Kentucky, and the single-track T&OC, which reached far into southern

³³ For a far more detailed and well-researched history of PRR coal traffic and interchange in Columbus, and in particular the Sandusky Branch, with photographs, see *The Pennsylvania Railroad in Columbus, Ohio* by Rick Tipton, Pennsylvania Railroad Technica; 1st Edition (January 1, 2011), especially Chapters 8-10.

West Virginia and connected end-to-end with the Virginian Railway, were major northbound haulers of this coal to Columbus.

The N&W was the largest supplier of interchange coal for the PRR at Columbus. Most N&W coal arrived in full trainload lots, onto which the PRR just coupled its engines and cabooses for departure, with no car switching at Columbus.³⁴ The PRR's main handling facility for this traffic was its 1,162-car capacity Pennor Yard, built in 1930, consisting of ten long tracks on the north side of the N&W's "L"-shaped Joyce Avenue Yard. The PRR used these tracks for N&W coal moving north over the Sandusky Branch. From World War II on through the end of steam, the PRR would dispatch pairs of its J1 2-10-4s to back down to Pennor Yard to pull 125-car coal drags across the CA&C, through Grogan Yard, and swing north up the hill through Worthington toward Sandusky. As noted above, a portion of the Sandusky Branch traffic was also destined for Toledo and Michigan, via Carrothers.

PRR also leased an additional four tracks on the south side of the Joyce Avenue yard, which were used for arriving N&W coal in full trainloads moving outbound toward the Chicago area over the PRR Bradford line, most notably 125-car trains bound for U.S. Steel in Gary, Indiana over the PRR Bradford Line. Grogan Yard, just to the west across the CA&C diamond at Milo, was also a receiving and departure point for the PRR's outbound coal. These PRR yards all fed directly onto the Sandusky Branch and CA&C, with easy access to the Panhandle, and thereby onto the PRR's westward Bradford Line, via the CA&C-N&W shared track south from Milo to Yard B. The PRR also operated an interchange track from the east end of Yard A over to the N&W right-of-way near the junction of Maryland Avenue and Sunbury Road.



Grogan, Pennor and Joyce Avenue Yard. Diagram courtesy of Columbus Railroads.

Inbound C&O coal arrived at Parsons Yard, south of Columbus, and would be transferred to the PRR at Grandview Yard. C&O coal for PRR Bradford Line outbound trains departed directly from Grandview, while C&O coal destined for the PRR Sandusky Branch had to be pushed up a one percent grade from Grandview to Grogan Yard for departure to the north, heavy work for PRR's transfer engines. Like the N&W, the C&O generally delivered full trainloads of coal

³⁴ Rick Tipton historical notes. https://pr.rgroups.io/g/Prototype/topic/foreign_hoppers_on_the_prr/20467933. For a description of this process and photos of the PRR changing locomotives and cabooses to prepare a trainload of N&W coal for departure from Pennor Yard north to Sandusky, see Columbus Railroads *PRR Steam at Pennor Yard*, at: <http://www.columbusrailroads.com/prr%20pennor.htm>

hoppers, and the PRR just coupled its locomotives and cabooses onto these for departure to the north and west.³⁵

Virginian Railroad coal which reached Columbus via the T&OC over those two railroads' connection at Deepwater, WV, occasionally transferred onto the PRR via the T&OC's Auburn Track just west of LM Tower. Cuts of colorful L&N coal hoppers originating in Kentucky were routed to Columbus via the PRR in Cincinnati, and north on the PRR's Miami Line past High Street Tower to Grogan Yard, usually with a helper engine up through Columbus Union Depot.³⁶



The PRR Coal Interchange Epicenter - PRR 7693, CC2s-class 0-8-8-0, June 10, 1936 crossing the Norfolk & Western - Cleveland, Akron & Columbus junction at Milo, later called Pennor Crossing in the PRR timetable, MP 142.0 (distance from Hudson, OH) on the CA&C. This crossing was controlled by N&W's CW Tower. Grogan Yard is to the west behind the camera. The west throat of Pennor Yard is in the background, and the N&W roundhouse is on the right. To the rear is what appears to be a Norfolk & Western "Y" class compound 2-8-8-2, brakeman hanging wide off the tender, likely backing down the lead to the N&W Joyce Avenue Yard just behind the roundhouse. Photo by Dick Acton, Sr. from Jay Williams Collection. For an excellent map and photos of this area see: <http://www.columbusrailroads.com/N&W%20joyce%20ave.htm>

The PRR shipped significant volumes of coal to the high-demand Chicago market via the Bradford Line, through Logansport, Indiana. The PRR made up its coal trains for Chicago principally in the four leased tracks in the south side of the N&W Joyce Avenue yard, with the trains departing via High Street onto the Bradford Line. As noted above, during World War II, as traffic congestion through High Street reached a near-paralysis level and the leased tracks at Joyce Avenue were in high demand for inbound coal from the N&W, PRR began transferring Chicago-bound loads to the Hilliard Relay Yard for train make up and departure. These Hilliard transfer coal drags were often double-headed with a pair of PRR N2 2-10-2s, or with a rear helper engine. C&O coal transferred to the PRR at Grandview Yard also moved on the Bradford Line toward Chicago, and

³⁵ Rick Tipton historical notes. https://prg.groups.io/g/Prototype/topic/foreign_hoppers_on_the_prr/20467933

³⁶ For the best view of historical rail yards and interchanges in Columbus, see the 1934 Unification Committee map on the Columbus Railroads website.

a portion of the Virginian loads PRR occasionally received off the T&OC was also Chicago-bound via this route.

The PRR also had one of the larger industrial and switching track layouts in Columbus, distributing coal by the carload to perhaps several hundred wholesale and retail commercial consumers along its lines. The detailed Columbus City maps provided on Columbus Railroads' links show the web of PRR tracks, especially to the south of the B&O Panhandle Line between East Columbus and downtown, and West of High Street.

Today

The once dominant Pennsylvania Railroad now survives only in fragments in Central Ohio.

In 1964, the Norfolk & Western bought the Sandusky Branch from the PRR in connection with the N&W's merger with the Nickel Plate and as a precursor to the PennCentral merger. The economically healthy N&W, now the Norfolk Southern, still operates the former Sandusky Branch as its Sandusky District. This Sandusky connection has become one of the N&W's busiest, and the company has double tracked additional portions of the line. What was the massive Grogan, Pennor and Joyce Avenue Yard complex, the largest hub for coal traffic interchange in Columbus, is now just the Norfolk Southern's through right-of-way along Bonham Avenue.

The Sandusky Coal Dock is still in operation, now almost exclusively handling metallurgical coal for the steel industries in the US and Canada. For a fascinating look at how the Dock's gigantic full carload dumper works, along with its roller-coaster like gravity return for empty hoppers coming off the dumper, see video at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ynjSgkwDL8c>

The mighty Panhandle, long among the busiest lines in Ohio with upwards of 100 trains daily at its peak over the joint PRR-B&O C&N Division's three and four-track main line between Columbus and Newark, still exists as the Ohio Central Railroad. But now it is a quiet single track, with the PRR's iconic ponderous overhead signal bridges removed. The interchange track between the former Yard "A" and the N&W near Sunbury Road is still there.



CW Tower, in repose. Photo by Ron Widman, 2014, from Columbus Railroads. CW controlled coal and other traffic moving to and from Grogan, Joyce Avenue and Pennor Yards, and on the CA&C track south to the Panhandle, High Street and the PRR Bradford and Miami Lines to the West.

All but 1.7 miles of the original 105-mile CA&C Akron Secondary Track between Grogan Yard and Orrville was abandoned in stages beginning in 1969, continuing into the Conrail era, with the Columbus to Mt. Vernon portion hanging on until the very end. The formerly bustling CA&C Grogan-Pennor Crossing is now a lonely diamond plus a few switches in a weedy industrial area just off I-670. But the shared track with the N&W still runs down toward the former Union Station site, and portions of it still serve several regularly active industrial shippers via a re-connection with the former Z&W and T&OC East Columbus Branch right of way near Woodland Avenue.

Fragments of the Bradford Line continue to serve as switching tracks west of Columbus, but most of the original route was abandoned during the Conrail era. The Miami Line remains intact as far as London, where its traffic moves over to the former Big Four toward Springfield. Some of the abandoned PRR rights-of-way have been repurposed as recreational trails, with the rest of the routes now growing new forest covers with only a few bridges and abutments remaining.

Notes and References:

Note: If the link does not work, copy and paste the link into your browser.

For an excellent Ron Widman 2014 photo essay and narrative about what remains of the main PRR peak coal era interchanges, see the Columbus Railroads Pennor Crossing/CW Tower page at: http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/utility/display_html.php?color_primary=99&color_secondary=176&color_text=173&header_photo=rw-012-270.jpg&htmltitle=Pennor+Crossing%2FCW+Tower&file=.%2Ffive%2F05Steam_Railroads%2F30Remnants%2Fcw.html

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PRR Hoppers Rosters, 1944-1968: <http://pr.railfan.net/freight/classpage.html?class=GL>

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History of the Sandusky coal docks, 1891-present:

<http://sanduskyhistory.blogspot.com/2018/12/a-history-of-coal-docks.html>

Video of PRR J1s and Santa Fe 2-10-4s at Sandusky, 1956-7: <https://youtu.be/u5zOCNNw6t0>

Video of J1s double-heading a Sandusky Branch coal drag north over the Fairgrounds viaduct:

https://locomotive.fandom.com/wiki/Pennsylvania_Railroad_Class_J1?file=PRR_J1%27s_6425_and_6435_Doubleheader_-_Columbus%2C_OH