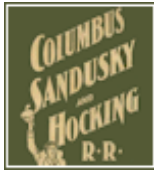


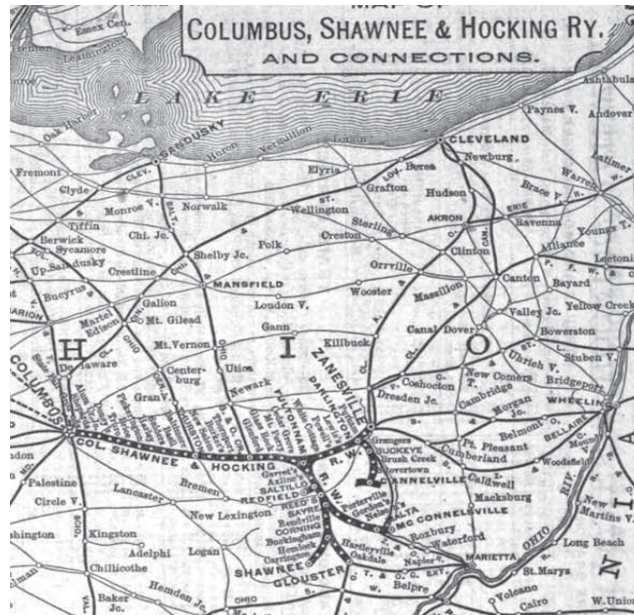
# The Zanesville & Western - Columbus's "Backyard Railroad".

by James M. Cavanaugh



Most Columbus railroad history enthusiasts consider the City to have been served over time by lines radiating out in 15 directions, on long-lived rights-of-way built by the big Class I railroads and their predecessors. However, there was also a little-remembered 16<sup>th</sup> line, originally known as the Columbus, Shawnee & Hocking Railway, and later as the Zanesville & Western Railway, connecting Columbus with Zanesville and the coalmining city of Shawnee in southern Perry County. This was one of the last Columbus rail routes established in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and was also the first to disappear almost completely. Its story is obscure but fascinating, well worth study and elaboration for posterity.

Developed in stages by several affiliated railroads between 1879 and 1890, this wandering Columbus-Zanesville line ran from Union Station north to the Ohio State Fairgrounds, eastward along what is today the Norfolk Southern right-of-way south of 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Woodland Avenue, then angling down to a crossing with the B&O/PRR Panhandle line at Stelzer Road, a point originally called Alum Creek Junction. From there it ran southeast through Whitehall to Truro (now Hamilton Road at Interstate 70), then due east 22 miles to the Fairfield County village of Thurston, and on another 37 miles to Zanesville. The rail running distance from Columbus to Zanesville was 67 miles, in comparison with the overland driving distance of 55 miles. The CS&H also developed a 44-mile southern division through Muskingum, Morgan and Perry Counties via Corning to Shawnee, featuring numerous "pea vine" branches snaking up hollows, around hills and through tunnels to coal mines and villages.



CS&H – 1893 Official Railway Guide

During its peak years between 1889 and 1902, the CS&H was the proud equal of most competitors, with 162 miles of main line and branches, a downtown Columbus freight house and terminal yard occupying an entire city block on Mt. Vernon Avenue, express passenger trains with connections to the north, east and south, stations in a number of then-rural Franklin County villages, and freight service to a rich, rapidly-growing hinterland in the coal counties. Still active but in gradual decline over the following eight decades, the line became a New York Central and later Conrail dead-end industrial switching track, skirting residential backyards, side yards and even a few front yards, angling across a peaceful golf course and over urban streets and unprotected intersections, disrupting rush hour traffic. The line also formed part of the boundary between Whitehall and the City of Columbus.

The history of this railroad is confusing and challenging to narrate. At the outset, one has to decide whether the route really was truly a single "railroad", as opposed to various contiguous lengths of track operated by several companies at different intervals in a somewhat coordinated manner. Secondly, it helps to give this line an appropriate and descriptive single railroad name, and that is likewise no easy task.

A reasonable definition of a "railroad" would be an enterprise with a right-of-way, owned or leased and operated by a single company, running through or connecting trains between its end points. Like many Ohio railroads, this Columbus-Zanesville route was quilted together from multiple short lines built by different companies over a period of four decades. This line's ownership, name and even its route changed frequently over its lifetime due to railroad bankruptcies, reorganizations and consolidations. However, the rails from Columbus to Zanesville and Shawnee were indeed operated by a single company under a single name and logo during several periods, offering through service end-to-end. At other times when portions of the route were owned by different railroads, these were closely affiliated by equity ownership and under common control, with train schedules coordinated as a single system. So it seems fair to call it a "railroad", and conveniently that makes its story easier to tell.

Logically this Zanesville road might best be called the "CS&H". The Columbus Shawnee & Hocking Railway, and its predecessor the Columbus & Eastern Railroad, built, leased and pulled pieces of the route together in the early 1880s and owned it as a single rail property for 20 years. The CS&H was consolidated with the Sandusky Short Line in the mid-1890s and changed its name to "Columbus, Sandusky & Hocking Railway", requiring no change of initials on its company logo. From the mid-1880s onward, the Columbus & Eastern and then the CS&H advertised through trains with no change of cars from Columbus Union Station to Zanesville. However, following several reorganizations, the CS&H name disappeared. In 1902 the portion of the line east of its crossing with the Cleveland, Akron & Columbus Railroad (CA&C) at Milo became the Zanesville & Western Railway. Railroaders working on the portion that became the New York Central East Columbus Branch still occasionally referred to it as the Z&W in the 1960s. The most detailed Toledo & Ohio Central Railroad map of the 1930s labeled the upper part of the East Columbus Branch as "Z&W". The Zanesville & Western name continued to apply to the track east of Thurston in T&OC, NYC, Penn Central and Conrail timetables into the 1970s. A surviving stretch of track in Perry County still operates as the "Zanesville & Western Scenic Railroad". Accordingly, the "Z&W" label seems to be historically and colloquially defensible as a name for this line. "Z&W" also has a bit more colorful legendary appeal for story-telling purposes.

## The Z&W Route

Shaped like a gigantic question mark on the Columbus map,<sup>1</sup> the CS&H ran a mile and a half north from Union Station (High Street & Naghten Ave.) over the Big Four (CCC&StL) right-of-way to a point just southwest of the Ohio State Fairgrounds. Some historical sources indicate the CS&H had its own track just east of the Big Four.<sup>2</sup> However 1890s track diagrams suggest the CS&H trains used the Big Four rails up to a turnout between 8<sup>th</sup> and Bonham Avenues.<sup>3</sup>

The CS&H maintained a ten-track Columbus terminal yard and freight house on a site covering the block bounded by Mt. Vernon Avenue on the south, Neilston (then Neil Street) on the west, 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. (then Mozette) on the east, and Buckingham Street to the north. The tracks exited this facility to the northeast, with a yard lead curving all the way over to Cleveland Avenue, across the B&O/PRR and then back northwest joining the north-south Big Four tracks near 2nd Avenue.

From the Fairgrounds area, where the CS&H established a station near Fields Avenue, the track ran east for several miles following the corridor later occupied by the PRR's Grogan Yard, crossing the CA&C at Milo, and then east another mile just north of the acreage that later became the joint PRR-N&W Pennor Yard, to Woodland Avenue. This area was well beyond Columbus city limits in the 1880s. The CS&H maintained its Columbus locomotive facilities and another yard along this line just east of Cleveland Avenue, with a large brick machine shop built in 1891 just south of Bonham Avenue, with two tracks entering the building from the west.<sup>4</sup>

From Woodland Avenue, the line curved slightly southeastward across Leonard Avenue, through backyards in the village of Shepard, where there was another station, and then east across Sunbury and Nelson Roads and Alum Creek, through the edge of Mifflin Township, parallel to and just north of today's 7th Avenue across Cassady Ave. Several blocks east of Cassady, the track angled southeastward over 5th Avenue, cutting through side yards in the village of Rarig's, along the north boundary of the Ralston Steel Car Company works, to a junction with the B&O's Columbus & Newark line at East Columbus (originally called Alum Creek Junction), at its Stelzer Road crossing. Ralston operated its rail car plant here from 1905-53, having acquired the site from Rarig Engineering, which maintained a machine shop and foundry there from 1868-1903.

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<sup>1</sup> To follow the route of the CS&H in Columbus, I recommend opening the ***Columbus Railroads - Steam Railroads Maps & More*** site 1979 Conrail Terminal Map, or the 1934 Unification Committee Map.

<sup>2</sup> For the best detailed history of the CS&H and Z&W and affiliates, see the Rowlee Steiner article *Roots of the New York Central Railroad in Columbus, Ohio*, available on the ***Columbus Railroads*** website.

<sup>3</sup> A detailed track diagram from the Norfolk & Western Historical Society Archives shows the Big Four as the sole occupant of the track north from Union Station, with the CS&H freight house lead branching off around 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue, and the CS&H tracks branching eastward from the Big Four at 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue, south of the Ohio State Fairgrounds. <http://www.nwhs.org/archivesdb/selectdocs.php?index=co&id=652>

<sup>4</sup> The shell of this 1891 machine shop still seems to be standing. For interesting photos and background on this building and later Columbus, Sandusky and Hocking Railroad roundhouse and other shops at this site, see the ***Historic Railroad Structures and Rail-Served Industries of Columbus*** website at: <http://rrstructuresandindustries.org/columbus/>



**East Columbus Tower and Junction** - John Fuller photo from the *Columbus Railroads Towers and More* website. This place was called Alum Creek Junction in the 1880s - not to be confused with the latter-day Alum Creek Tower on the B&O 1.5 miles to the west where the B&O crosses the N&W. This view shows the B&O three-track C&N line, shared by the Pennsylvania Railroad Panhandle main line, running beneath James/Stelzer Road due east toward Newark, with the former Z&W track angling across from left foreground to the right toward Truro. The Davco Fertilizer plant is to the left, and trees ahead to the right of the B&O right-of-way are on the Defense Supply Center campus. Z&W's small yard was just out of view to the right. The B&O-PRR's<sup>5</sup> tiny three-track livestock rail yard was behind the photographer to the right.

Beyond the diamond at East Columbus, the line ran southeast past a small four or five-track Z&W freight yard into the area that became the Defense Supply Center in 1918, curving through the site of the U.S. Army Officers' Club golf course built in the 1940s (now called the Eagle Eye Golf Course). In the 1960s the railroad was literally on the fairway or just in the rough on what were then holes Nos. 2, 3 and 5, with golfers occasionally dodging the Local's slow-footed SW7s. For a time, golfers teeing off on hole No. 3 hit straight across the right of way. From the golf club, the line turned due south, transiting a big warehouse area on the military base, and then across Broad Street by the former Creith Lumber and the exotic Kahiki Restaurant site at Napoleon Avenue. This area was originally the village of Doney's, where there was a station and an at-grade crossing with the east-west Columbus, Newark & Zanesville interurban line. From Doney's, the line ran just east of and parallel to Napoleon Avenue across East Main Street, where there was a switching lead into Cotton Lumber, which operated here for many decades. Between Broad and Main, the tracks (and now their remnant earth berm) constitute the city boundary between Columbus and Whitehall.

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<sup>5</sup> For a diagram of the very extensive rail complex at Ralston and East Columbus in 1937, see Columbus Plat Map No. 33 "Ralston Steel Car" in the *Maps and More* site on the *Columbus Railroads* website.

South of Main, the rails curved southeast through Whitehall and across Livingston Avenue, running between Vilardo and Bostwick Streets, to Truro (originally called Burt's) near the present-day Landmark grain elevator near the intersection of Hamilton Road and Interstate 70. From Truro, the line ran east through Brice, Pickerington, Basil and Baltimore to Thurston. From there the line edged around the south shore of Buckeye Lake, crossing the B&O's Newark, Somerset & Straitsville line at Walser, and on through Mt. Perry, Glenford and Fultonham to Zanesville.



**Truro** - This 1975 Galen Gonser photo from *Columbus Railroads Towers and More Site*, shows the East Columbus local, with a Penn Central liveried switching and terminal caboose and what appears to be an SW7, sitting on the former CS&H/Z&W right-of-way just west of the T&OC main track switch.

The Z&W's tortuous Shawnee Branch veered southward off the Zanesville line at East Fultonham, crossing the PRR's Cincinnati & Muskingum Valley Railroad at Crooksville, then proceeding south through Sayre to Rendville. From there it paralleled the T&OC line for several miles into Corning, where it crossed to the west over the T&OC and Sunday Creek, and ran through the Corning Tunnel over to Congo and Drakes. There it forked northwest to Shawnee, where it connected end-to-end with the B&O's Newark, Somerset & Straitsville line, and south to the Z&W's southernmost terminus at Glouster. The 15 miles of branch line between Buckingham, just north of Drakes, and the interchange with the T&OC at Glouster was originally built by the T&OC predecessor Kanawha & Michigan Railroad. This track was shared by the Z&W and T&OC. After the Z&W was abandoned from Sayre to Drakes, it became the T&OC's Buckingham Branch.



Z&W – 1904 Official Railway Guide

There were also three smaller Z&W branches serving many active coalmines that dominated this region from the 1880s to 1950s. The Brush Creek Branch, built in 1886, ran south from Muskingum, forking at Cannelville and reaching several mines and smaller communities beyond. From about 1900-1930, the San Toy branch ran south from Sayre for several miles through a tunnel to the town of San Toy, a major coal producer in that era. (For interesting old photographs and information about San Toy, see the *Little Cities of Black Diamonds* website.) At least one 1898 Ohio rail map shows a branch of the Z&W predecessor CS&H running east from Sayre through Porterville and Triadelphia to Shawnee Junction on the B&O, just north of McConnelsville in Morgan County. This branch, formerly part of the Shawnee & Muskingum River Railroad that the CS&H acquired as part of its 1890 southward expansion, appears on Ohio rail maps up through 1902 but is not present on a 1906 resource map available on the *Columbus Railroads* site. From the 1890s until some point in the 1930s, another small Z&W track called the Buckeye Branch ran off to the southwest from Saltillo through Redfield, forking southeast and northwest from that point to reach now-long disappeared mines and small villages.

The Z&W maintained some 53 stations stretching from Columbus Union Depot on the west end to Zanesville, Shawnee and Glouster to the east and southeast. The stations were small wooden structures built in the style of the era, with overhanging gables, a bay window for the operator, a passenger waiting room and freight office with a wide sliding door. The signage on the stations gave the name of the place in large letters, with mileage indicators on either side stating the distance to Columbus, Zanesville and Shawnee.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>6</sup> For the definitive collection of photos and data about Z&W stations, and 1898 maps of the Z&W and nearby lines, visit the *Ohio Railroad Stations Past and Present* website and pages for Franklin, Fairfield, Perry, Morgan and Muskingum Counties at: <http://www.west2k.com/ohstations/stations.htm>



**Z&W and T&OC Thurston Station** - Formerly called Bush's Station and later Hadley Junction, Thurston was a large and busy station at the Z&W junction with the T&OC's Eastern and Western Branches.

<i>Route &amp; Year Constructed</i>	<i>Miles</i>	<i>Original Railroad</i>
Union Station to Woodland Ave., 1886-7	3.5	Columbus & Eastern Railroad
Woodland Ave. to East Columbus*, 1886	2.4	Columbus & Eastern Railroad
East Columbus* to Thurston, 1879-80	24.1	Columbus & Sunday Creek Valley Railroad
Thurston to Saltillo, 1883-4	31.8	Columbus & Eastern Railroad
Fultonham to Cannelville and mines beyond, 1886	15.6	Columbus & Eastern Railroad
Saltillo to Sayre, 1890	11.2	Columbus, Shawnee & Hocking Railway Co.
Muskingum to Zanesville, 1890	4.7	Zanesville Terminal Railway Co.
Sayre to Drakes, 1887-9	13.7	Shawnee & Muskingum River Railway Co.
Sayre to San Toy	7	Z&W?
Saltillo to Redfield and mines beyond	8?	Z&W?
Carrington via Drakes to Glouster, 1881-3	13.7	Kanawha & Michigan Railroad
Carrington to Shawnee, 1887-9	3.2	Shawnee & Muskingum River Railway Co.

\* East Columbus was originally called Alum Creek Junction

### **Ancestry and Construction<sup>7</sup>**

The genesis of the Z&W was the advent of substantial coal traffic moving north and westward from Hocking, Perry, Athens and Muskingum Counties in the 1870s and 80s. Originally carried by rail mainly toward Cleveland, this lucrative flow found additional industrial Midwest markets via steamships on Lake Erie. The Atlantic & Lake Erie Railway Co. (which changed its name to the Ohio Central Railway in 1876, then was reorganized into the Columbus & Sunday Creek Valley Railroad in 1878, which in turn became the Ohio Central Railroad in 1879, and finally the T&OC in 1885) completed its initial rail line from Corning through Thurston and north to Toledo

<sup>7</sup> To follow the complicated timeline of construction of the various portions of the Z&W, please view the Northern Part of the color-coded T&OC 1932 system map in the "NYC Maps and More" section of Columbus Railroads. Also see Sherman Cahal's detailed research on the Z&W history at: <http://abandonedonline.net/locations/railroads/zanesville-western-railroad/> and the T&OC timeline research at: <http://members.kconline.com/plank/tocpred.htm>

via Johnstown, Bucyrus and Fostoria (later to be known as the T&OC's Eastern Branch) in the mid-1870s. Columbus was also growing rapidly, with a big appetite for coal, minerals and building materials, and more destinations for these commodities were expanding to the west. By 1879-80, the Columbus & Sunday Creek Valley constructed a line connecting Thurston to Alum Creek Junction (today called East Columbus). This gave the Ohio Central coal traffic access to Columbus, albeit over the tracks of the PRR Panhandle line predecessor Pittsburgh, Cincinnati & St. Louis for the last six miles.

The last small piece of this line into Columbus, from Alum Creek Junction up through Rarig's and Shepard, across the CA&C at Milo to the Fairgrounds and over to the Big Four right-of-way to Union Station, was built in 1886-7 by the CS&H's predecessor, the Columbus & Eastern Railroad. This completed the portions of what would become the CS&H and Z&W west of Thurston.



Z&W Consolidation and two-axle caboose, probably 1903-1910, from the Galen Gonser collection.

By 1883, the Columbus & Eastern, which had obtained running rights over the Ohio Central from Thurston to Alum Creek Junction, had built its own tracks from Thurston to Saltillo, with a branch eastward at Fultonham to Darlington, and then over the tracks of the Cincinnati & Muskingum Valley Railroad into Zanesville. Later this connection was revised to an interchange at Muskingum with the Zanesville Terminal Railway, which ran the last four miles into the city. The CS&H, incorporated in 1889 to take over Columbus & Eastern, extended this line from Fultonham to Shawnee by 1890, constructing a 56-lb. track south from Saltillo to Sayre, and acquiring the Shawnee & Muskingum River Railway's line running west from Shawnee Junction on the Muskingum River near McConnelsville through Sayre to Drakes. The Ohio Central had



built a line north from Glouster up through Drakes to a point north of Carrington in 1881-2, and the Shawnee & Muskingum River built the Carrington-Shawnee link in 1887. Thus by 1890, through its takeover of the Columbus & Eastern, acquisition of the Shawnee & Muskingum River Valley line, construction of new connecting track segments, and acquisition of trackage rights on the T&OC, the CS&H had assembled its main lines extending from Columbus to Zanesville, Shawnee and Glouster, and for a time, Malta near McConnelsville.

During the mid-1890s the character of this operation changed dramatically. In 1894-5, the principal CS&H affiliate, the T&OC, which previously reached downtown Columbus via Alum Creek Junction and over the B&O/PRR, built a connection into Columbus westward from Truro across the N&W at Bannon, through South Columbus and up the Scioto over Miami Crossing to its West Columbus Yard on McKinley Avenue, connecting with the recently-completed T&OC Western Branch to Toledo. This enabled the T&OC to move Columbus coal traffic directly on its own line instead of interchanging it to other railroads. In 1903, the T&OC acquired the Z&W and established its own Columbus passenger depot and freight house on West Broad Street. Under the T&OC, passenger and freight traffic into Columbus from Truro moved over to the South Columbus line and away from the old CS&H route up through East Columbus and Shepard and the CS&H freight house on Mt. Vernon Ave.



Photo from the Bruce Warner Collection, **Truro, summer 1940**. Looking west on the T&OC toward Bannon; the East Columbus Branch is visible to the right.

After the 1902 reorganization and division of the CS&H, the Sandusky Short Line became a Pennsylvania Railroad affiliate, and the Z&W leased its track between the Fairgrounds and Woodland Avenue to the PRR. With the T&OC acquiring the Z&W in 1903 there was no more need for a connection from the upper end of the East Columbus Branch to downtown Columbus. By the early 1930s the track west of Woodland Avenue was disused, notated as "Track not in Service" on the 1934 Unification Committee Map. Ironically, that fragment is one of the few scraps of the East Columbus Branch that has been restored and is back in use today as a switching lead – see photo at end of this article.

The line east of Thurston is best remembered as the Z&W, the name it held from 1902 onward. It eventually was designated as the Z&W branch of the T&OC, which in turn was acquired by the New York Central, which became the Penn-Central and eventually Conrail. Its final abandonment and removal in large part occurred in the 1980s when it was part of Conrail.

## **Working on the Z&W**

As a brakeman working off the T&OC extra board from West Columbus in the 1960s, I occasionally rode NYC through freight and local trains over about a quarter of the Z&W's original lines in Columbus and to the east and down into Perry County. I will not repeat in full the tedious details here -- please refer to the "East Columbus Local" and "T&OC Trains South from Columbus" articles at the Columbus Railroads Steam Railroads NYC site for accounts of what it was like to ride the Local and T&OC through trains over this line.

The East Columbus Local, dispatched on weekdays from the West Columbus Yard, switched out the Landmark elevator at Truro, which in the 1960s had a much more extensive rail layout than it does today. The Local also covered shippers on the T&OC Western Branch between Bannon and Truro, including the Buchsieb slaughterhouse just east of Alum Creek. The Local served a dozen or so active points "up the Branch" to Woodland Avenue. This made for a long hard day's work, but a rewarding one as the crew would do virtually every physical railroading maneuver that was legal in the State of Ohio, and perhaps a few that were questionable. My favorite was a gravity drop with the train at the Alum Creek bridge. After setting up the Barneby-Cheney works at Cassady Avenue (today Calgon Carbon), which had west-facing points, we would switch the caboos onto the front end of the train, and then pull the locomotive in the clear up the Barneby lead. We would bleed off all the air brakes on the caboos and train, and let everything roll downhill across Alum Creek, using hand brakes to stop short of Nelson road on the west side, then pull the engine out and couple onto the rear (east) end of the train, cut in the air and recharge the brakes. Next we would crawl caboos-first across Nelson and Sunbury Roads, hand-flagging the streets with the conductor Mr. Prenkert tweeting "long/long/short/long" grade-crossing signals on the high-pitched air whistle on the rear brake stanchion, possibly frightening a few robins. The remaining Branch work at the McNally and Blaine lumber yards, Flickinger warehouse (which I recall supplied Albers supermarkets), and other shippers near Leonard Avenue, as well as the return trip to Truro, required the engine to be on the east end.

The East Columbus Branch above Truro all the way to Woodland Avenue boasted a well-drained right-of-way, moderately graded except for a dramatic "dip" at Alum Creek, with well-ballasted new ties, and, it appeared, our standard New York Central 127-lb. "road" rail rather than the smaller NYC 105-lb. "yard" rail. This was in sharp contrast with some other remote NYC lines like the St. Marys Branch, which in places had decrepit 90-lb. rail from the 1890s sitting atop rotting 40-year old ties. Regulars working on the East Columbus Local said at some point the NYC had decided to give it a serious fix-up, investing in its longer-term sustainability. With that big rail and good ballast, carrying only the weekday Local with her light SW7s moving at 15 miles per hour, and short mixed freight trains seldom including heavy mineral loads, the Branch would have lasted forever with little need for preventative maintenance.

## **The Z&W in Its Heyday**

By a number of historical accounts, the CS&H and later the Z&W offered the preferred passenger service from Columbus Union Depot to Zanesville, with the CS&H through trains via Thurston covering the 67 miles in two and a half hours in the 1890s. (Columbus-Zanesville passenger service was also available on the PRR via Trinway, the B&O via Newark, and by the Columbus, Newark & Zanesville interurban line.) The last four miles up into Zanesville ran over

the tracks of the Zanesville Belt & Terminal Railroad, an interesting combination of rights of way resulting from one of the many rail reorganizations in the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. The complex of tracks and interchanges of the four bigger lines serving Zanesville and its immediate surroundings during that era was extensive.

Prior to the 1902 division, CS&H trains ran over its line from downtown Columbus up past the Fairgrounds through Shepard and East Columbus to Truro. In the Official Railway Guides, after 1903 Z&W service from to and from Columbus is shown as being via West Broad Street, where the T&OC had opened its pagoda-like station, and these trains would have used the T&OC track through South Columbus to Truro. Advertised Z&W departures from Columbus appear to be T&OC trains, with a change at Thurston onto Z&W trains. For example, T&OC train No. 2 (a through train from Columbus to Corning and West Virginia) and Z&W No. 102 (Columbus to Zanesville) show identical 7:30 AM (then Central Time) departures from Broad Street, and the T&OC train shows arrival at Thurston at 8:30 AM, with the Z&W No. 102 showing an 8:35 arrival there, and an 8:40 AM departure to Zanesville. The train numbers and times of other advertised Z&W trains also match up with T&OC trains.<sup>8</sup> (This looks similar to airlines “code sharing” practice today.) Running time between Columbus and Zanesville, with the change of cars, was a respectable 2:40 - 2:50, only slightly longer than the CS&H’s through trains of the early 1890s.

While the Z&W main line in Franklin and Fairfield Counties was well-engineered, flat and largely straight, the routes through the hillier Perry and Muskingum Counties were almost all curves and cuts. Veteran Z&W crews joked that the Shawnee line was so curvy that an engineer could reach out his cab window and shake hands with his conductor on the caboose. Surviving folklore also suggests the tracks were not well maintained, leading local people to call the Z&W the “Zigzag & Wobble”. This legend inspired composition of a very nice bluegrass tune by the same name. Here is a link to a Perry County band that does an excellent rendition: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o9TATBSYbMO>

#### CS&H Statistics - Poor’s Railroad Manual - 1894

**Poor’s Railroad Manuals** (a predecessor to today’s Standard & Poor’s investor services) published basic information about publicly-traded railroads. Key statistics for the Columbus, Shawnee & Hocking Ry. as of consolidation with the Sandusky Short Line on December 23, 1893, included the following:

Total owned and leased lines at June 30, 1893 - **162.03 miles**

Rolling Stock: **29 locomotives, 13 passenger coaches, 3 baggage cars, 275 box cars, 153 flat cars, 2173 coal hoppers, 18 cabooses, 30 miscellaneous cars**

Annual gross revenue: **\$768,000**

<https://archive.org/details/poorsmanualofrai27newyuoft>

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<sup>8</sup> See 1904 Official Railway Guide, Ohio Central listing at p, 468 and Z&W listing at p, 473.

The Z&W's economic lifeblood was obviously hauling coal to Columbus and its interchange railroads near Zanesville. These lines, including the B&O, PRR precursors Cincinnati & Muskingum Valley and CA&C, and predecessors of the N&W such as the Wheeling & Lake Erie, offered good connections to Cleveland, Pittsburgh and Cincinnati markets. Ohio governmental reports from the 1910s and 1920s indicate the Z&W was serving over 100 on-line active coal shippers.<sup>9</sup> Of course, some of these mines were very small, only originating a few cars weekly.

### **Last Days of the Z&W**

Following the T&OC absorption into the New York Central in 1922, the Z&W was kept intact and continued to be run as part of the T&OC and eventually the NYC system. The T&OC discontinued service on the Cannelville, Redfield and San Toy branches in the 1920s and 30s after the coalmines there played out.<sup>10</sup> The Central also eventually abandoned the portion of the Z&W Shawnee line between Crooksville and Congo and its smaller branches. The T&OC's Buckingham Branch between Glouster and Carrington through Drakes allowed it to reach Shawnee and the still-active mines up at Congo and along the branch without maintaining the rail connection and crumbling tunnel between Corning and Drakes. I recall from my time working on the T&OC seeing the barely-visible remnants of the weed-covered Z&W right of way, including a lonely gray lichen-covered wooden crossbuck at what must have been a highway grade crossing north of Rendville. The abutments of the bridge across Sunday Creek in Corning, where the Z&W swung across the T&OC and off to the west through the Corning Tunnel, are still visible just downhill from St. Bernard's church.

After being cut off at its west end, the old Z&W main from Truro up to Woodland Avenue served on for another six decades as the T&OC's East Columbus Branch. This line continued to have a wealth of active shippers mostly feeding the building boom as Columbus expanded eastward in the postwar years. The territory north of East Columbus eventually was served via the Panhandle from Yard A after the Penn Central merger implementation in 1968. But eventually all that ended. Conrail abandoned the segment between Truro and East Columbus in August, 1982. The tracks near the old Ralston works remain in service for several shippers in that immediate area, but the rails between 4<sup>th</sup> Ave. and Brentnell Ave. are now gone.

The 37.1 miles of Z&W between Thurston (Z&W Milepost 28.8, distance from Columbus) via Fultonham to Zanesville (MP 67.9) was still in service as the NYC's "Z&W Secondary Track." when I worked on the T&OC lines in the 1960s. A portion of the Z&W's former Shawnee Branch between Fultonham and Crooksville also survived as the NYC "Crooksville Running Track" in that era. There were switching jobs for which NYC crews reported, per our Employee Time Table, at Fultonham or Crooksville. A few old-time railroaders I knew referred to a Z&W "engine house" at East Fultonham, but I cannot find any surviving evidence of it. Steam engines in this territory could have been supported for heavy repair service by the big roundhouses at West Columbus or Corning (both 50-60 miles distant), but would have needed local routine service facilities somewhere around Thurston or Fultonham for daily inspection, lubrication, fire grate and smoke box shake-out, sand and the like.

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<sup>9</sup> Great information on Z&W and coal mines in Perry, Hocking and Athens Counties 100 years ago: [http://www.genealogytrails.com/ohio/athens/ahp\\_coal.htm](http://www.genealogytrails.com/ohio/athens/ahp_coal.htm)

<sup>10</sup> Formal abandonment of these rights-of-way took place in the 1960s.

I recall the Z&W heading east from Thurston as a grass-covered line with rusty rails running between bright green brushy walls of black locust and wild cherry trees. Thurston was once a teeming junction between the Z&W Zanesville line and the T&OC's Corning-Toledo Eastern Branch. But it was rapidly eroding before our eyes in the 1960s. The track near the old crossing of the Z&W and Eastern Branch where the passenger station once stood had been re-routed to provide more of a high-speed straight shot for T&OC Columbus-Corning trains so they could bypass the former Z&W diamond on a very gentle curve to the south past Thurston Tower. After that reconfiguration, the Z&W line branched off the Eastern at a wye north of the local grain elevator, next to a stub of former yard track holding little-used maintenance equipment and a handful of decomposing bad-order cars. Now, five decades later, every trace of the Z&W east of Thurston is gone except a stretch retained by the Mt. Perry-based Z&W Scenic Railway between Fultonham (Z&W MP 56.2) or Glass Rock (MP 45.7) and the stub of the old PRR C&MV line south from Zanesville. See: <http://www.zwsr.org>

The only portion of the Z&W route surviving as a main line railroad is the T&OC (now the Kanawha River Railroad) 22-mile right of way between Truro and Thurston. This continues as a heavy-haulage track connecting Columbus with the petrochemical industries of the Charleston area. These few scraps of track aside, the Z&W now slumbers eternally in obscurity.



**June 2017** - View looking northwest - My brother Paul surveys a remnant of the Z&W crossing at 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in the Rarig's neighborhood, just north of the Ralston site.

The former CS&H downtown yard and freight house site is now a vacant block north of Mt. Vernon Ave. at Neilston, one of the largest open tracts in downtown Columbus. Small bits of the Z&W right of way, mostly minus rails and ties, remain visible on the east side of Columbus, especially at its former Sunbury and Nelson Road crossings in Shepard, in the Rarig's neighborhood (5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenues) and the Main Street and Livingston Avenue crossings. Last time I checked, the Z&W's Alum Creek bridge abutments just east of Nelson Road were still standing. Segments of the Z&W grade are also easy to see along rural roads south of Buckeye Lake and around the Fultonham-Zanesville area.

In the *Columbus Railroads* November 2016 Photo of the Month, an aerial view of the Joyce Avenue Yards which prompted me to write this piece, there is a fragment of the Z&W track barely visible in the lower right corner of the view, which comes into better definition if you use the magnification tool. This is the small bit of Z&W track marked as “Track out of Service” on the 1934 Unification Committee Map. Ironically, this Z&W fragment between Brentnell and Woodland Avenues, and the track westward from there to Milo (which was sold to the PRR in 1903) is once again active, serving an industrial shipper’s 20+ car storage yard near the Brentnell-Leonard Ave. intersection.



**TRACK BACK IN SERVICE!** - Z&W (East Columbus Branch) looking west from Woodland Ave. This refurbished section connects a shipper facility at Brentnell Ave. to an interchange with the Ohio Central (former Panhandle/B&O line) via a remaining fragment of the former CA&C.

## References

See pp. 352-353 of the 1893 Official Railway Guide for a map of CS&H and timetable showing the through line from Columbus Union Depot via the original track including Ohio State Fairgrounds, Shepard, Alum Creek Crossing, Doney’s (E. Broad St & Napoleon), Truro, Thurston and on to Zanesville, with branches to Shawnee, Glouster, Cannelville, Malta and Redfield:

<https://books.google.com/books?id=HsQsAQAAAJ&pg=PR28&lpg=PR28&dq=official+railway+guide+1893&source=bl&ots=Tv00HDKJnT&sig=a4dLlWPM3X1QloPvtgxOVXaGJIJE&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwis68WZ977QAhVHOCYKHXYkDpQQ6AEIJTAC#v=onepage&q&f=false>

<http://www.multimodalways.org/docs/railroads/companies/Z&W/Z&W%20Scenic%20RR%20ETT%20%231%206-1-2010.pdf>

Rarig Engineering Company - [http://www.fortwiki.com/Rarig\\_Engineering\\_Company](http://www.fortwiki.com/Rarig_Engineering_Company)

Ralston Steel Car Company -

[http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=06Industry&submenu=10Ralston\\_Steel\\_Car\\_Co](http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=06Industry&submenu=10Ralston_Steel_Car_Co)