

Pennsylvania Railroad Technical & Historical Society

LINES WEST – BUCKEYE REGION CHAPTER

Bulletin No. 2022-01 --- March 2022

The President's Corner

Lines West-Buckeye Region Chapter Meeting

The next chapter meeting is scheduled for **Sunday, 27 March 2022**

The meeting will take place at the **Grandview Public Library, 1685 W. First Avenue, Columbus, OH 43212-3301**. The library opens at **1 pm**.

We will meet in Conference Room B. We have the room reserved from 1 to 4 pm. Thanks to Chad Cook for setting up our reservation. The current mask policy at the library is that masks are recommended to enter the library, and are required for attending group programs. Their web address for those interested in looking them up is; www.ghpl.org.

We will plan to start a short business meeting at 1:30. After the meeting our program will be presented by member Pete White. Pete had a long career as a railroad tower operator and currently volunteers at the Marion Depot Society. He is working on presenting a program of his choosing. He may give a talk on his career, or a slide show or a mixture of both. We will see on the 27th!

Al Doddroe, President
Buckeye Region Chapter

Chapter Officers

Al Doddroe, President
Chad Cook, V-President
Jim Kehn, Secretary
Dick Briggs, Treasurer



Email your comments to
Alex Campbell
columbusrr@att.net

Stopping a Starting Train

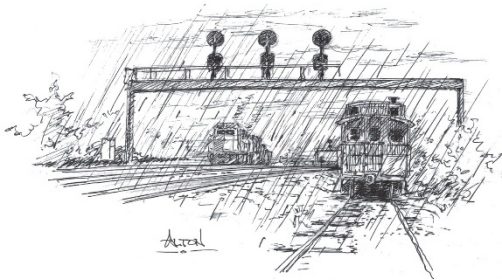
By William B. Westhoff



I was re-reading Jim Cavanaugh's T&OC Caboose essay in Columbus Railroads this morning... man, what a great account (as all his submissions are). Though my few short lived eight years with PC and Conrail were with the track department, there were some wonderful memories conjured up by his writing.

My caboose memories started early. Growing up in Hillard not far from the relay yard that skirted the Bradford main exposed us kids to the mystical wonders of the railroad. The sidings were over a mile long and ran from the Scioto Darby crossing to Cemetery Road. Three tracks on the south side and two on the north. The area was that forbidden playground that was just too enticing to ignore. As I look back, it was foolish and dangerous, and we were fortunate to not be harmed. Yet, I can remember with childish Disney like fantasy the interior of a caboose that would occasionally sit silently, stoically waiting for a crew. In winter the stove was left burning, I can still smell and hear the sounds it created against the quiet of a cold night. We would sit at the desk trying to make sense of the reports and forms we found or rest on the bunks to dream, warming ourselves against the winter games we played, hardly making sounds ourselves for need to hear adult footsteps that might come crunching through the snow or cinder ballast. Though not seeing ourselves as vandals we could not resist taking a fusee or two, which could be tied to the rear frame of your bike, becoming an imagined booster rocket, that lit the house fronts as we would peddle as fast as possible down a dark residential street. The gurgle of the molten and nose blistering sulfur added to the effect. And, yes, there were such things as green fusees. There was a past discussion of this somewhere. And yes, a fusee would burn under water! ... I still don't understand how.... Sorry, mentally derailed again.

Working for the railroad and being part of a work train gang placed me back in the



caboose again. We would drive out to where the train was tied up and prepare for the day. Unloading the truck we'd grab the portable radio, tools, coats and gloves, and for goodness's sake don't forget your lunch. Soon we were aboard waiting clearance to get out of the hole and take the main. Eastward siding along the C&X main between Alton and East Alton, Westinghouse siding between Wilson and Phillipi roads, or mounting a work train

parked between canopies in the shadow of the Union Depot concourse; each renewed, a little, that childish excitement in my heart and mind.

Interesting too was that at times I noticed a seeming aggravation on the part of some train crew members. Not all, but a few viewed our appearance as if we were an

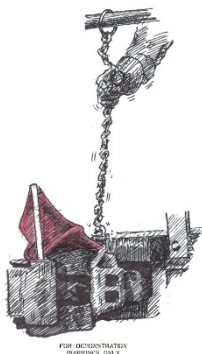
invasion of alien life forms. We had trodden into sacred ground with abundant clumsy, and noisy disregard. We totes no UTU card, we were not welcomed. But for me, that uncomfortableness vanished as soon as I got settled into a seat or braced between grab irons and wall on the back platform waiting to move. I do regret that it was partially this sense of experiencing an occupational caste system that dulled my conscience and enable me to commit an evil act.

We met our work extra parked on the siding close to Rome Hilliard Road at Alton on the C&X side. The train was made up of several gons of tie plates and a caboose. We had been dumping materials for a coming rail gang working their way east toward Columbus. Hard work actually. Plates for 131/140-pound rail weight about 20 – 25 pounds each. As the train moved slowly each man would make a stack of 10 tie plates on the top of the car side and when the foreman gave you the sign, you shoved your stack over the side and started rebuilding the next pile. Bending over and making that stack all day made for an aching back the next morning. It had been raining all morning. Pennsy men did not have to work in the rain unless considered an emergency. When we were assigned to meet the material train, I knew it was going to be an easy day... until a certain track foreman showed up. He was a hot shot. With something to prove to anyone but us, he decided this work had to be done rain or no rain. So, now bending over and stacking tie plates was going to be done while soaked to the bone.

The train crew would arrive not long after and our fate had been decided. Making obvious their distain in having to share this already cramped Pennsy cabin with 8 to 10 trackmen, my desire to forgive and forget was numbed. Through the cries, whines, and complaints of the track crew at seeing the foreman climbed in, a plan was hatched and all I needed was the aid of cohort. Bob W. and I sat on a bunk and he readily agreed that it would be very much fun, based on the amount of very much frustration it would create and must be enacted. It went like this: said foreman was going to be distracted on the back platform of the caboose, being asked his opinion on any given subject. Perfect, that would be good for at least an hour! And I would work my way to the front of the caboose, block the view with my body, slowly raise the chain, that pulled the pin, that released the knuckle, that held the hack to the train that was going to work in the rain. Almost poetic isn't it. By now the car was quiet in the same manner a child's room does when he hears is father coming to discipline him.



As Jim Cavanaugh so beautifully explained in his description of being in a caboose, there is a certain sequence of sounds that occur nearly every time you hear your train begin to depart. You hear brakes release, brake and draft gear move. The steady slow



idle of the diesel in the near distance begins to rev up a little. “lumm lumm lumm lumm “ Then the cadence increases with the pitch. Faster “ lum lum lum lum lum “. Then faster, higher pitch, louder. A soft kunk as the first slack is taken up and you can hear the slack drawn out as it comes closer and louder with each car in a short train. Then you hear and feel the jolt of the caboose yanked into motion. . . . well, unless some prankster has pulled the pin. Then there is no jolt and the sound is just a sort of “pun tink” as the pin falls free of the knuckle. When the expected doesn’t happen it often creates, for a split-second, silence. And it did, until the air hoses stretch out and uncouple with that huge blast that mixed with brakes squealing and a rumble that races back up the spine of our little work train as it

jars and jitters to a stop.

I will not transcribe the words our conductor yelled; it wouldn’t be polite. As the radio squawked his discussion back and forth with the engine crew, the uproar from the gang was thrilling. The conductor dropped down the steps out into the rain. Bob and I just stared straight ahead at the opposite bunk looking something like those stone heads on the beach of Easter Island. That view was soon blocked by Mister Foreman who stood in front of us, puffing his pipe and making more smoke than a rookie steam locomotive fireman. “I know it was one of you two! I’ll be watching you all day!!” well, he was wrong.

It was both of us. And though it made us smile whenever we would look at each other through-out the day, we still got wet; really wet.

The Pennsylvania Railroad in Columbus, Ohio

The Pennsylvania Railroad Technical and Historical Society has lowered the price of Rick Tipton’s *The Pennsylvania Railroad in Columbus, Ohio* from \$70 to \$45. If you are looking for a way to deepen your knowledge of Columbus’ rich railroad history I highly recommend Rick Tipton’s book.

https://www.prrths.org/content.aspx?page_id=586&club_id=171391&item_id=11845

Sunbury – Accident Prone?

By Alex Campbell

Twenty-one miles north of Columbus, Ohio is the Village of Sunbury on the Cleveland Akron & Columbus Railroad. With a 1900 population of 464 it was big enough to have a depot and a few industries served by the CA&C. In that regard Sunbury was typical of the hundreds of villages that lined railroads in the 19th and early 20th Century.

To the south 1.9 miles was Galena with its depot and to the north 9.8 miles the Centerburg station. The railroad came to Sunbury in 1873.

Just to the northwest of Sunbury the Cleveland Akron & Columbus Railroad crossed Big Walnut Creek. The railroad's bridge spanned a gap of 270 feet, 50 feet in height over the creek.

The citizens of Sunbury were witnesses to some bad luck on the part of the CA&C over the years. Not once but twice the Big Walnut Bridge collapsed under the weight of a passing train. The first collapse in 1878, when the railroad was just five years old, the bridge was unable to support the load and gave way. The second time in 1902 a preceding train set wooden timbers on fire weakening the structure for the following train.

Article (1878) –

<http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/pdf/accident%20reports/crash%20steamroad%201878.pdf>

Columbus Dispatch Article (April 21, 1902) –

<http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/pdf/accident%20reports/crash%20steamroad%2019020421.pdf>

A third wreck, in July 1899, near Sunbury was a perfect example of the idiom “Asleep at the switch.” Perhaps it was the first use of the now popular phrase which Google dates to 1900.

Columbus Dispatch (July 26, 1899) –

<http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/pdf/accident%20reports/crash%20steamroad%2018990726.pdf>

A fourth wreck that must have tied up the railroad for a couple days is only known by the two photos shown on **page 6**. This wreck is unique as it included a large steam crane that must have made cleaning up a challenge. There is some evidence this wreck took place in 1905.

A fifth wreck in 1952 was the result of kids lining a mainline switch for a siding. Photos of the results can be seen on **page 7**.

The Ohio Memory Collection describes this wreck as being in Sunbury. However, a newspaper article from 1905 describes a CA&C wreck in Galena caused by a broken wheel. The photos are likely of that accident.



A steam powered crane in the ditch. Ohio Memory Collection



View from the other end of the wreck scene. Ohio Memory Collection

The 1952 Wreck at the Nestle Plant Switch caused by kids tampering with the switch sending the train into the siding. The train was traveling too fast for the siding



Photo from the Jane Lawry Collection

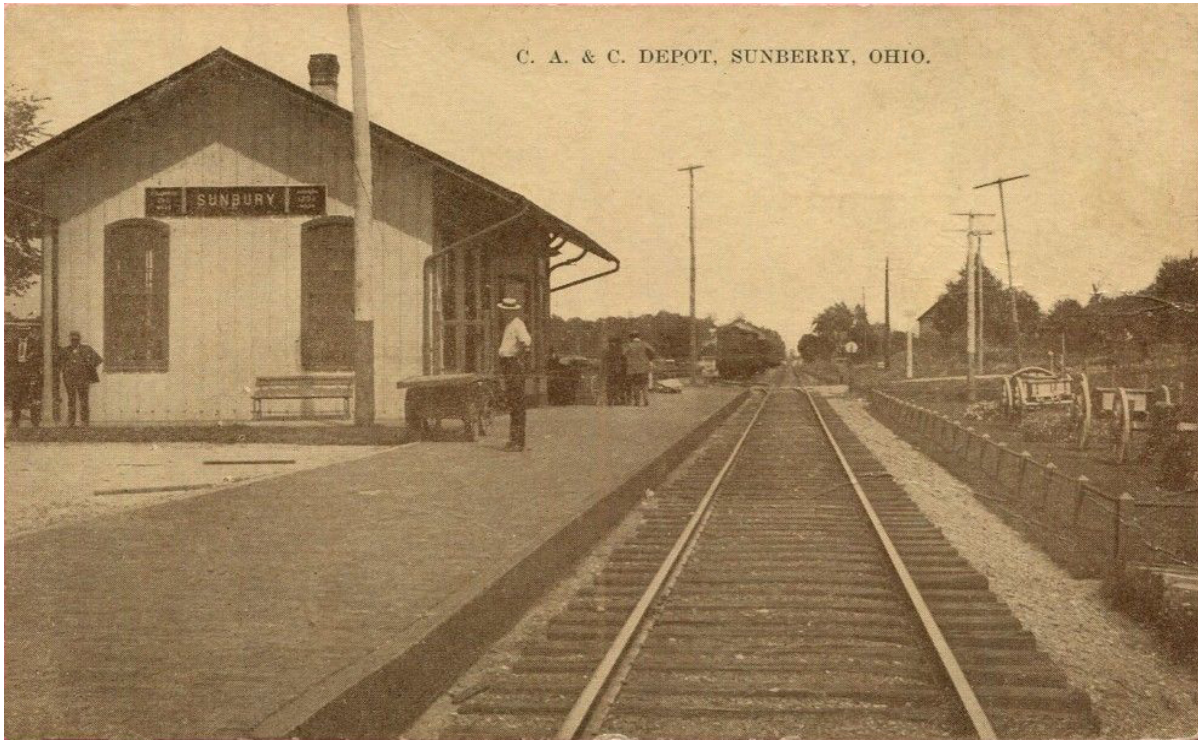


Photo from the Jane Lawry Collection

While Sunbury may have had more than its fair share of railroad accidents Columbus Railroads has identified 73 wrecks within 30 miles of Columbus.

http://www.columbusrailroads.com/new/?menu=05Steam_Railroads&submenu=73Accident_Accounts

Sunbury in 1910



CA&C depot, Sunbury, circa 1910. Alex Campbell Collection



Public Square, Sunbury, Ohio, circa 1910. Blakely Williams Collection

Sunbury Industry



A Tile factory. Ohio Memory Collection



The Creamery. From the Alex Campbell Collection